



ENCYCLOPEDIA OF  
AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY



STEPHEN H. NORWOOD AND EUNICE G. POLLACK, EDITORS

Encyclopedia of  
**AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY**

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**Stephen H. Norwood and  
Eunice G. Pollack, Editors**

A B C  C L I O

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*To all our Bobbes and Zaydes*



*The Tenenbaum family, ca. 1917. Lower East Side. All but the son were born in Polish Galicia. From left to right: Jennie, Mendel, Sarah, Moshe. (Eunice G. Pollack)*



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# Preface

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**T**he *Encyclopedia of American Jewish History* records and analyzes the American Jewish experience from its beginnings in the mid-seventeenth century to the present. It examines the encounters with, and impact on, America of successive waves of Jewish immigrants and their descendants, including Sephardim, Ashkenazim, Holocaust survivors, Soviet Jews, and Mizrahim.

The *Encyclopedia* considers American Jews both as a religious and an ethnic group. Articles trace the continuity and the changes that Judaism underwent in America, covering all the major branches and religious movements: Orthodox, Reform, Conservative, Hasidic, Reconstructionist. Authors explore the identities Jews forged in America. Reflecting Jews' varying degrees and rates of acculturation and assimilation, these identities are arrayed along a wide continuum.

Several articles provide overviews of the transformation of the Jewish ethnic community in America. They analyze demographic patterns, occupational structures, and social and economic mobility, tracing changes over time. Authors assess what was unique about the American Jewish experience. Other articles analyze American Jews' voting behavior, political alignments, and general involvement in public affairs.

The *Encyclopedia* examines a multiplicity of Jewish communities in America. These range from small settlements in early colonial cities to large, heavily Jewish neigh-

borhoods in major late nineteenth- and twentieth-century metropolises, to concentrations in post-World War II suburbia. Authors assess what was distinctive about Jewish life in regions such as the South and the West, as well as in small towns and agricultural communities.

Although American historians and textbooks have generally marginalized and even ignored the Jewish experience, Jews have profoundly influenced American society. The *Encyclopedia* demonstrates that, despite the numerous barriers confronting them, Jews significantly shaped American culture. Jews have had a major impact on American literature, theater, film, and television. For significant periods they dominated comedy, and were of critical importance in the comic strip and comic book industries. Superman, Batman, and Spider-Man were Jewish creations. There were periods when Jews were heavily overrepresented in important sports, notably boxing and basketball, and in sportswriting. Their imprint on American art and music has been far-reaching.

Although Jews long encountered severe restrictions in American academia, their impact on many disciplines is striking. The *Encyclopedia* explores the Jewish role in such fields as psychoanalysis and psychology; the physical sciences and economics, in which American Jewish Nobelists have figured prominently; anthropology and sociology, and even African American history. Articles consider such social scientists as Franz Boas and Horace

Kallen, who pioneered in configuring a multicultural American identity.

Jews have been especially prominent in the American labor movement and in some sectors of American business, including department stores. Many Jews, such as Jacob Schiff and Julius Rosenwald, ranked among the nation's leading philanthropists. Many articles explore how Jewish men and women built thriving trade unions from the ground up, sparked some of the most important strikes and organizing campaigns in American history, and led national labor bodies, like the American Federation of Labor and the National Women's Trade Union League.

Jews were critical in molding important American political and social movements. These ranged from various forms of socialism on the Left to neoconservatism on the Right, all of which the *Encyclopedia* details. Jews played very significant roles in the twentieth-century civil rights movement, as frontline activists, advisors, lawyers, and financial supporters. Martin Luther King Jr. credited Jews with a massive contribution to the struggle for black advancement. Jewish women played decisive parts in initiating and leading the American feminist movement that resurfaced in the 1960s and 1970s.

As a minority, Jews have had complex and extensive relations with other religious and ethnic groups in America. Articles assess the nature, extent, and limitations of intergroup cooperation. The *Encyclopedia* examines the Christian majority's attitudes toward Judaism and treatment of Jews from the colonial period to the present. American Jews have been at the center of efforts to expand religious and civil liberties and to strengthen and maintain the separation between church and state. The work traces the relations between Jewish and Muslim associations in the United States, a subject of increasing importance. Several articles chronicle Jews' extensive contacts with African Americans, illuminating the significant commonalities and differences in the groups' experiences. Authors address black–Jewish cooperation as well as tensions between the groups, including the Crown Heights riot. Other essays highlight American Jewish social scientists' pioneering work on cultural diversity, recognizing America as the dynamic product of multiple ethnic influences.

Although often overlooked, the contribution of Jews to America's military endeavors has been significant. Articles detail Jews' participation in wartime service, often at rates higher than their percentages in the American popu-

lation. Authors address antisemitism in the U.S. armed forces and Jews' efforts to combat it. Particular attention is devoted to Jews' experience in the Civil War, Spanish-American War, World War I, the Spanish Civil War, World War II, and the Jewish veterans' organizations.

The *Encyclopedia* examines the wide range of Jewish women's activities in America, including their experience in, and impact on, religious life inside and outside the synagogue and temple. Several authors address the unprecedented expansion of Jewish women's roles in Judaism in recent decades. Significant attention is also given to Jewish women's very prominent role in the American labor movement, with articles profiling several leaders and activists. Essays explore the roles of Jewish women entertainers in Yiddish theater, on Broadway, in film, and on television. Authors discuss American Jewish women writers, poets, and artists. Articles assess Jewish women's major impact on the shaping of women's sport in America.

Antisemitism, while less virulent than in Europe and the Middle East, significantly constricted Jews' lives in America. Jews encountered Christian theological antisemitism and discrimination from the time of their first arrival in North America in 1654. Throughout the *Encyclopedia*, authors assess the changes in severity and the impact of antisemitic prejudice, examining the roles of churches, federal, state, and local government, corporate business, higher education, social organizations, and other institutions. One author underscores the antisemitism of many of America's eminent literary figures, a subject often accorded little attention in works about them.

Particularly intense outbreaks of antisemitism receive close scrutiny, such as the Leo Frank case, the waves of physical assaults on Jews during World War II in Boston and New York, and the 1991 Crown Heights riot. Attention is also given to such antisemitic episodes as General Ulysses S. Grant's General Order No. 11 during the Civil War. Several articles analyze twentieth-century antisemitic movements, including those stimulated by Henry Ford's concerted campaign against the Jews, Coughlinism and the Christian Front, and post-1960 right-wing extremist groups, like the Liberty Lobby, Holocaust deniers, and Christian Identity. Other articles focus on various strains of African American antisemitism, including that of the Nation of Islam, as well as Muslim antisemitism.

Authors explore the impact of the Holocaust on American society and on American Jews. One article ana-

lyzes the causes of the U.S. government's limited response to the Nazis' annihilation of Europe's Jews. Others concentrate on literary and artistic attempts to grapple with the horrors and implications of the Holocaust, a genocide unprecedented in history. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, embodying a commitment to educate about the Shoah and to preserve the memory of the lives destroyed, also receives attention. One author focuses on the responses to Holocaust survivors who settled in America and on the experiences of their children.

American Jews were significant in the development of Zionism. Articles examine the origin and growth of the American Zionist movement and its relations with European Zionism, exploring the debates and divisions over strategies and goals. Attention is given to prominent Zionist leaders and activists in America, such as Louis Brandeis, Golda Meir (Meyerson), and Marie Syrkin.

American Jews have established numerous national organizations that address and express the needs of the Jewish community, defending the rights of Jews and combating antisemitism and other forms of prejudice and discrimination. The *Encyclopedia* traces the formation and evolution of many of these groups, and assesses their impact on American society and Jewish life. The organizations considered include the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the Jewish War Veterans, the Workmen's Circle, and the Jewish Labor Committee.

The efforts of the American Jewish community to shape and sustain American Jewish identity found expres-

sion in Jewish education and journalism. Articles assess all levels and forms of Jewish education, covering the great variety of Jewish schools, including yeshivas, Talmud Torahs, day schools, Sunday schools, summer camps, seminaries for the training of Jewish teachers, and Jewish studies in universities. Authors explore the rich and diverse heritage of Jewish journalism, examining the proliferation of both Yiddish- and English-language newspapers in America. Jews have established major archival collections in the United States to preserve the record of Jewish life and culture in both pre-Holocaust Europe and America. The *Encyclopedia* contains articles on major Jewish archives in this country and on the scholars who first established the field of American Jewish history.

In formulating this *Encyclopedia*, we sought to provide a resource readily accessible to many audiences: to scholars across the humanities, the arts, and social sciences; to students and faculty in colleges, universities, and high schools; and to the general public. Articles both chronicle and analyze the American Jewish experience. In addition to offering a wealth of information, essays develop themes that give shape to American Jewish history, culture, community, and individual lives. The *Encyclopedia* brings together in one place multiple perspectives on the American Jewish experience, presented by eminent scholars in a wide range of fields, from the United States, Israel, England, and Canada.

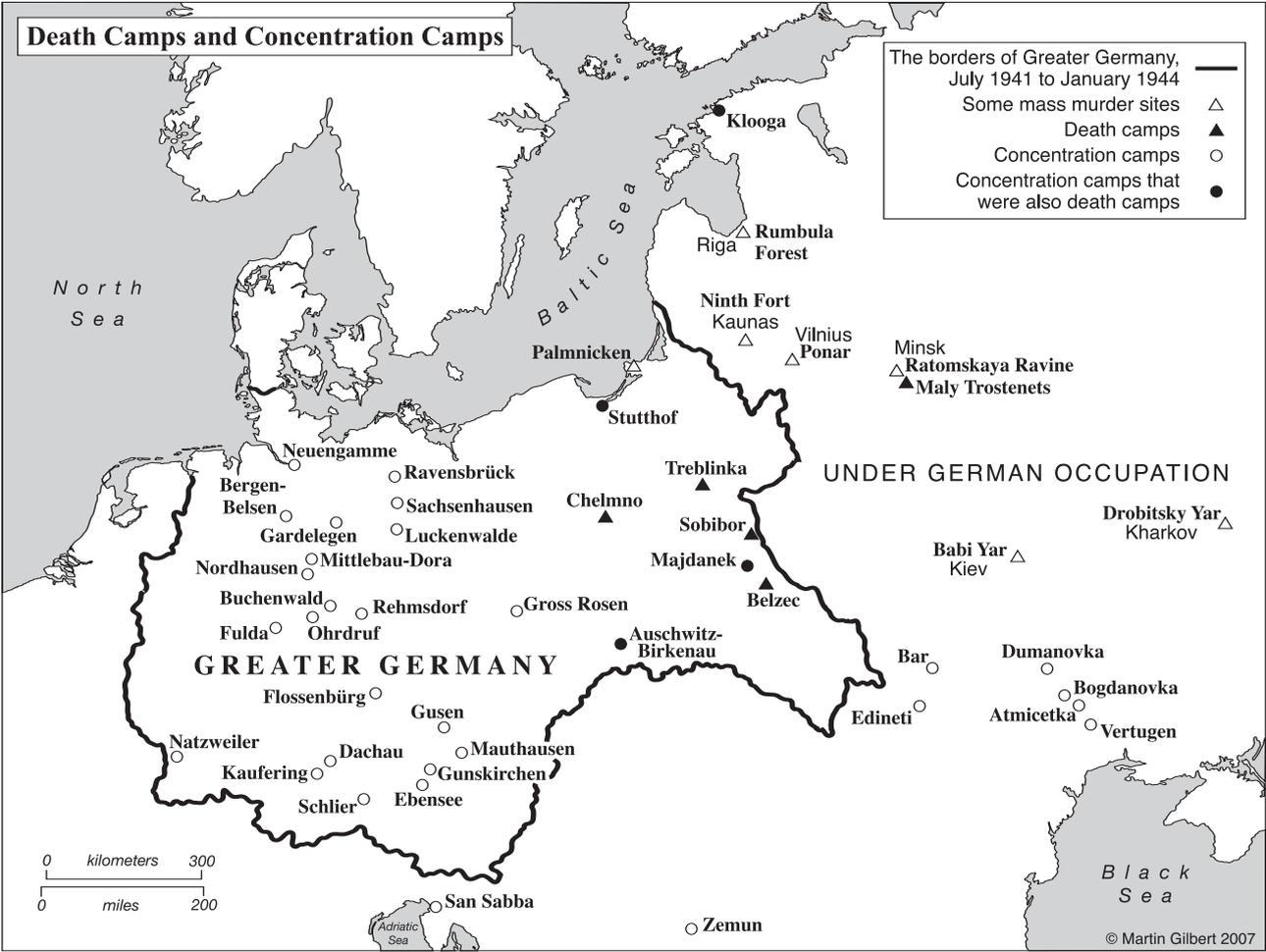
Eunice G. Pollack  
Stephen H. Norwood



# Maps

By Sir Martin Gilbert









# Immigration and Settlement

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## Sephardic Jews in America

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The first Jewish settlers in what is today the United States were Sephardim of primarily Portuguese origin, many of them New Christian refugees of the Inquisition. Though Ashkenazim outnumbered them by the 1720s, Sephardim continued to exercise religious and institutional hegemony in the general Jewish community until the 1840s. Their dwindling population was replenished in the 1880s by primarily Ladino-speaking Sephardim from the crumbling Ottoman Empire, mostly (Judeo-)Arabic-speaking Mizrahi, and (Judeo-)Greek-speaking Romaniote Jews, numbering 30,000–60,000 in all. Tens of thousands of Jews from Arab and Muslim lands, speaking mostly (Judeo-)Arabic and (Judeo-)Farsi, arrived as refugees after the founding of the State of Israel. Since the 1980s, Catholic Hispanics of the American Southwest have emerged from hiding to assert their crypto-Jewish origins, and many have joined the organized Jewish community.

Currently representing some 3 percent of the U.S. Jewish population, Sephardi, Mizrahi, and Romaniote Jews attest to the diversity of the Jewish people, overlapping culturally and linguistically with other ethnic groups that do not commonly interact with American Jews. Mizrahi Jews are native to the Maghreb and western and central Asia, while the Romaniote are indigenous to Byzantium, or the eastern Roman Empire. Although, strictly speaking,

Sephardim are Jews who trace their ancestry to what are today Spain and Portugal—*Sefarad* was the medieval Hebrew word for the Iberian Peninsula—in modern times *Sephardic* has come to function as an umbrella term for all non-Ashkenazic Jews. Indeed, some attribute the relatively recent and now widespread adoption by Arab and Persian Jews of the term *Sephardi* to the “aristocratic cachet” of a Hispanic origin, “more desirable than a connection to Moslem culture” (Elkin 1988).

Spoken Judeo-Arabic varied widely depending on dialect and was sometimes unintelligible to gentile neighbors; the written language was completely unintelligible to most outsiders because it was written in Hebrew letters. Twentieth-century Judeo-Arabic, now declining as a spoken language as rapidly as Ladino, includes elements of classical Arabic, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Judeo-Greek (sometimes called Romaniote or Yevanic) increasingly lost its distinctiveness after the influx of Judeo-Iberian refugees in the late fifteenth century. Modern Judeo-Greek, which has almost completely disappeared, is somewhat distinct from the Greek spoken by Christians (including phonetic, intonational, and lexical differences); unlike Judeo-Arabic and Ladino, native speakers of Judeo-Greek did not consider their language distinct from that of their Christian neighbors. Judeo-Farsi dialects were formed from largely extinct local Persian dialects and are mutually unintelligible, with relatively few additions from

Hebrew and Aramaic (in comparison to European Jewish languages). Iranian Jews also cultivated a jargon, combining Persian or a local dialect with a large number of Hebrew and Aramaic loan words, that permitted them to secretly communicate in the presence of non-Jews.

As a distinct subethnic group in the United States, Jewish descendants of Spain and Portugal gained popular exposure in the early 1970s with the publication of Stephen Birmingham's best-selling book, *The Grandees*. This popular history, though laden with distortions and factual errors and criticized for its gossipy nature, succeeded "in making the public aware of the existence of Sephardim." As one reviewer remarked, *The Grandees* "created a stir not only among Jews in general but among many of those of the Christian community who perhaps had not even heard in all their lives the word Sephardic." Birmingham chronicles the history of a people who envisioned themselves "an elite, the nobility of Jewry, with the longest, richest, most romantic history" (Ben-Ur 1998).

The *Grandees* of Birmingham's account were descendants of Iberian Jews, many of them refugees of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, whose mass migration to North America via Western Europe, the Caribbean, and South America began in the mid-seventeenth century. The first among them—twenty-three men, women, and children who arrived by mishap in Nieuw Amsterdam (present-day New York) after the Portuguese recapture of Recife, Brazil, in 1654—are considered the first Jews to settle in what is today the United States. Among the illustrious successors of the seventeenth-century arrivals are Judah Touro (1775–1854), merchant and philanthropist, and his father, Isaac, for whom the Touro Synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, is named; Mordecai Manuel Noah (1785–1851), politician, journalist, and playwright; Emma Lazarus (1849–1887), whose verses are inscribed on the Statue of Liberty; Annie Nathan Meyer (1867–1951), a founder of Barnard College; and U.S. Supreme Court justice Benjamin Nathan Cardozo (1870–1938). The public prominence of American Sephardim, their dramatic history of forced conversion to Christianity, Inquisitorial persecution, and subsequent return to professing Judaism, as well as their legendary noble descent (part of what Ismar Schorsch has called the "myth of Sephardi supremacy"), are what led Birmingham to nickname these acculturated Jews the *Grandees*.

As prominent as they eventually became in economic, literary, political, and civic affairs, Sephardic Jews also had

a decisive and enduring impact on the development of the American Jewish community. Until 1802, all Jewish houses of worship were founded by Sephardim and followed the Judeo-Iberian rite, distinctive for its stately decorum, occasional use of Spanish and Portuguese, vernacular sermons, western Sephardi cantillation, and expurgation of kabbalistic liturgy. The most distinguished of these, New York's Congregation Shearith Israel (Remnant of Israel, 1655), was later joined by Savannah's Mikveh Israel (1735), Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel (Hope of Israel, 1740), Charleston's Beth Elohim (1750), Newport's Jeshuat Israel, today known as the Touro Synagogue (Salvation of Israel, 1763), and Richmond's Beth Shalom (House of Peace, 1789).

The synagogue-community developed by the Sephardic Jews, in effect the Jewish communal government responsible for maintaining local Jewish life, was the paradigm that shaped America's Jewish settlements. Thus, until the late eighteenth century, the only Jewish institution in a given community was the local Sephardic synagogue, which provided for the ritual needs of its members and withheld privileges, with varying degrees of success, from religious transgressors (Sarna 2004). The first Jewish school in New York, Yeshibat Minhat Areb, opened by Sephardim in 1731, was reorganized as the Polonies Talmud Torah after the American Revolution and retained its Sephardi rite in its "translation of the Hebrew and the instruction of the service of the synagogue" until at least 1821 (Ben-Ur 1998). The founders of New York's Jewish Theological Seminary of America, eventually associated with the Conservative movement, first met in the 1880s in the elegance of the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue (Congregation Shearith Israel) and counted among themselves a number of Sephardim. Well after the American Revolution and the proliferation of Judeo-Germanic synagogues, a number of Sephardi congregations and institutions were founded in various cities by Ashkenazim accustomed to the rite of their Hispanic coreligionists.

The western Sephardi tradition of the *Grandees* was also manifest in the language and collective historical memory of a crypto-Jewish past (the major forced conversions of Jews on the Iberian Peninsula occurred in 1391 and 1497). When Haim Isaac Carigal, a native of Hebron, Palestine, visited North American Jews in 1773, he chose to address his Newport audience in "Spanish," interspersed with Hebrew (Chyet 1966). Many Sephardim treasured

heroic tales of escape from Iberia, among them Zipporah Nunes (1714–1799), great-grandmother of Mordecai Noah, who transmitted a harrowing account of her family's flight from the clutches of the Portuguese Inquisition in the early 1700s.

Travelers' descriptions, memoirs, letters, and genealogies suggest a community in an advanced stage of cultural integration with white Protestant society. Life in an environment that stressed consent over descent (i.e., an individual's choice over the constraints of tradition) and whose ruling class accepted Sephardim on some levels as equals facilitated this integration, as did the legacy of a former Christian existence. (The Catholicism of their ancestors, though at odds with Protestantism, gave Sephardim familiarity with Christian concepts and conditioned them for cultural adaptation.) Male members of the short-lived original Jewish community of Savannah, Georgia, first established in 1733, engaged in military service and were permitted to bear arms. A Protestant professor and promoter of conversion noted disdainfully in 1738, "The English, prominent and common alike, take the Jews for their equals. . . . They carouse, play, go for walks with them, and let them take part in all their fun. They even desecrate the Sunday with the Jews, which no Jew would do on his Sabbath to please a Christian" (Plaut 1939). The sons of Dr. Nunes, the community's heroic founding father, occasionally attended church. Malcolm Stern's thorough genealogical research of the 1950s revealed so many Christian branches grafted onto the trunks of colonial Jewish families (some 40,000 individuals) that it made sense to title the first edition of his book *Americans of Jewish Descent*. The acculturation of colonial Sephardim throughout the North American colonies paralleled similar patterns among contemporaneous Ashkenazim. Both groups, aspiring to middle-class status, quickly learned to emulate Christian ideals. To act respectably was to adopt the mores of Protestant, white, middle-class society.

The Sephardic population was always small relative to the gentile and was outnumbered by the burgeoning Central European Ashkenazi community by the third decade of the eighteenth century. New York City's Jewish population in 1810 numbered 300–400 Jews, 70–80 of those being unmarried male members of Congregation Shearith Israel. Acculturation and marriage with both gentiles and Ashkenazim weakened the distinctive traits of Sephardic Jews. By the close of the eighteenth century, Portuguese had com-

pletely disappeared as a spoken language and Spanish had nearly done so. Judge Benjamin N. Cardozo confessed in a 1937 letter that "[s]o far as my family is concerned it has no cultural traditions with reference to the survival of Spanish or with reference to its Spanish or Portuguese origin" (Benardete 1982).

Yet, largely due to its enduring religious institutions, the distinct Judeo-Iberian ethos (with its historical consciousness and sense of cultural refinement) was never completely abandoned. Mair José Benardete noted that, although Western Sephardim (also known as old Sephardim) may have lost their "Hispanic culture," they have "endeavored to maintain [their Sephardic] being through the substratum, that is, the Jewish religion" (Benardete 1982). Solomon Solis Cohen, addressing the congregation in 1903, with a derisive nod at the Reform movement noted that the remnant of Sefarad in America had "withstood the rising tide of innovation" by refusing to allow modernizing trends to infiltrate their religious ritual: Sephardim "have preserved in the synagogue the olden Jewish forms of worship and of thought" (Ben-Ur 1998).

During their roughly 250-year residence in America, the Grandees had defined what it meant to be a Sephardi in the United States. The influx of 30,000–60,000 Jews from the disintegrating Ottoman Empire between 1880 and 1924—representing the largest group of Sephardic Jews ever to immigrate to North America—portended a definitive transformation. The overwhelming majority of the new wave was Eastern Sephardic and spoke Ladino (not Spanish or Portuguese), a language based on early modern Castilian with admixtures of Portuguese, Italian, Hebrew, Greek, Arabic, Aramaic, and French and traditionally written in Hebrew letters. These Jews traced their ancestry to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and the subsequent home the exiles found in the Ottoman Empire, where they resided in relative calm for the next four hundred years.

Economically and educationally disadvantaged, speaking distinct languages, and exhibiting Middle Eastern dress and mores, the masses of Levantine Jews were, in Annie Nathan Meyer's words, "an altogether different sort" of Sephardi (Ben-Ur 1998). As newcomers, Levantine Jews had no American colonial or revolutionary history of which to boast. Not even their Sephardi rite easily united them with the Grandees, for it was distinctly "Oriental," a number of prayers were recited in Ladino, and the liturgical

melodies reflected Levantine, not Western, musical traditions. History, too, was a dividing factor. While both Sephardic groups shared a common medieval ancestry on the Iberian Peninsula, their postexilic experiences differed radically. Levantine Jews, by and large, had existed under Muslim dominion in the Ottoman Empire, in contrast to old Sephardim, who generally hailed from Christian lands. Unlike old Sephardim, whose Western communities were founded primarily by former secret Jews, most new Sephardim proudly identified with ancestors who had chosen expulsion over forced conversion.

As the leading American institution to preserve old Sephardic identity and communal cohesiveness, Congregation Shearith Israel stepped forward in 1912 to assist in the reception and integration of the immigrants. The attitude of Western Sephardim toward the new arrivals was complex. On the one hand, the established community accepted the easterners as “our nearest kin,” “whose ritual is our own, whose Hebrew accent is our own, whose traditions are our own, and whose ancestry and history are our own” (Ben-Ur 1998). Moreover, the congregation fretted over its dwindling numbers: “As we number the congregation to-day,” spiritual leader David de Sola Pool noted, “how many can we count bearing the honored name of Judah, Gomez, Hart, Hays or Seixas—families once so numerous in this synagogue?” (Ben-Ur 1998). The newcomers were regarded as a replenishing and enriching force that gave “promise of an efflorescence of Sephardic life in the metropolis which shall be worthy of the finest pages in the annals of Sephardic Jewish life on this continent” (Ben-Ur 1998).

On the other hand, Congregation Shearith Israel recognized important cultural and ritual differences, such as Middle Eastern–style cantillation and the use of Ladino in liturgy, that it alternately respected and derided as “Oriental.” The *Shearith Israel Bulletin* declared that “[t]he religious tradition that these descendants of medieval Spanish Jewry bring with them is of the finest; and our congregation must be foremost in every effort to preserve it” (Ben-Ur 1998). But outside observers and immigrants themselves quickly detected a class-based layer of condescension. *The World* noted that the congregation’s volunteer social workers “think them [Eastern Sephardic immigrants] unrelated to the famous Spanish Jews of the Middle Ages, for these latest arrivals are not distinguished intellectually. . . . The women are garment makers in the

poorest shops and the men are most frequently boot-blacks” (Ben-Ur 1998).

This haughtiness was also culturally motivated. In 1912, the congregation’s sisterhood eagerly sought to Westernize Levantine immigrants by offering piano instruction and language classes to enable the immigrants to replace their Ladino with “the true Spanish-Castilian” (Ben-Ur 1998). Eastern Sephardim were ambivalent about the partnership. While in desperate need of philanthropy and guidance, they preferred to retain their “traditions, their various customs and their ways of conducting things [synagogue services]” (Ben-Ur 1998). On several occasions, their deep offense at the congregation’s condescension led to boycotts of synagogue events or outright secession.

The conflicts between Western and Eastern Sephardim repeated earlier patterns within the broader Jewish community. Colonial Sephardim had initially been reluctant to intramarry with Central European Jews, regarding themselves as aristocratic and looking down upon Ashkenazim for their lack of refinement. Ashkenazim, in turn, looked askance at what they considered laxity in Sephardic religious observance. Still, the overriding pattern was Ashkenazic emulation of Sephardim and the unqualified acceptance of Ashkenazim into the Sephardic fold. A repeat performance occurred in the 1880s when Americanized Jews, predominantly of Germanic background, protested the influx of their Eastern coreligionists and regarded their Lower East Side enclave as an alarming mesh of medieval provincialism and political radicalism.

The two Sephardic subgroups, however, did not seriously endanger the reputation of American Jewry. Western Sephardim were a Jewish minority not commonly associated with mainstream Jewish America, in part because outsiders generally did not recognize the family names of both groups—Hendricks, Gomez, Nathan; and Soulam, Testa, Capouya—as Jewish. In addition, gentiles did not identify Levantine Jews physiognomically as Jewish but rather as Christian Greeks, Hispanics, and Italians. Thus, the conflict between Western and Eastern Sephardim was much more internal than the meeting of German Jews with *Ostjuden*, producing a subethnic conversation of which other American Jews were unaware. Western Sephardim did express concern for the image of Sephardim in the eyes of the American public but were more preoccupied with the achievement of public recognition as Jews by the Ashkenazic and non-Jewish communities in America. This

concern provided a powerful impetus for the formation and preservation of a unified American Sephardic identity.

Levantine Jews, with their unfamiliar physiognomy, Middle Eastern and Mediterranean tongues, and distinct religious and social customs, baffled their Ashkenazic brethren. In the words of a satirist, “[H]ow could you be a Jew when you looked like an Italian, spoke Spanish, and never saw a matsah ball in your life?” (Ben-Ur 1998). A female contributor to the newspaper *La America* lamented, “[O]ur existence almost until the present day was not recognized even by our coreligionists, the Ashkenazim, some of them taking us for Greeks, others considering us Italians or Turks, but none taking us for Jews” (Ben-Ur 1998). The misunderstanding also came to the attention of the New York municipality. Sometime between 1909 and 1913, a number of Ashkenazic Jews of the Lower East Side protested the presence of the “Turks in our midst” and petitioned Mayor William Jay Gaynor for their removal. Upon learning that these “Turks” were fellow Jews, the Ashkenazim withdrew the petition (Ben-Ur 1998). “Co-ethnic recognition failure,” defined as a co-ethnic’s denial of a group member’s common ethnicity, betrays the parochial self-awareness of Jews who assumed that only “Yiddish and its associated cultural symbols defined Jewish identity” (Ben-Ur 1998, Glazier 1985).

The reports of this experience from a variety of sources—contemporaneous and reminiscent, Jewish and gentile—make it clear that the experience was neither folkloric nor a case of snobbery. Forged of ignorance, it occurred everywhere Eastern Sephardim settled, including Seattle, Indianapolis, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. When Ladino newspapers were not available as evidence of Jewishness, an enlightened Ashkenazi leader, typically a rabbi, would undertake to enlighten his flock. Shortly after the arrival of Levantine immigrants, a Reform rabbi of Indianapolis began to visit various Ashkenazi communities and synagogues in the area, affirming that the new arrivals were “real Jews” (Glazier 2000). In Seattle, the spiritual leader of the city’s Orthodox Jews took “great pains to explain to his members that the Sephardim were just as Jewish as those of the Ashkenazim . . . and that they too were sons of Israel” (Adatto 1939).

The denial of shared ethnicity and religion was perhaps the most painful and frustrating reaction Levantine Sephardim encountered in their dealings with Ashkenazim, especially when it impeded their employment.

Ladino newspaper editor Moise Gadol lamented that “many of our Turkinos, with tears in their eyes, tell us how, when they present themselves for employment, they are not believed by the Ashkenazim to be Jews, except with very great efforts and with all sorts of explanations” (Ben-Ur 1998).

The Ladino press was an important medium through which Sephardim struggled to achieve recognition as Jews by their fellow Ashkenazim. Between 1910 and 1948, as many as nineteen Judeo-Spanish periodicals appeared in the United States, all but two printed in New York. Moise Gadol’s *La America*, dedicated to the adaptation of Levantine Sephardim to the United States, was the first enduring American Ladino tabloid, appearing from 1910 to 1925. In one of the earliest issues, Gadol observed that Turkinos seeking positions in Ashkenazic establishments were often able to convince incredulous employers of their Jewish identity “by showing our tabloid with [its] Hebrew letters,” peppered with announcements from the Ashkenazic Jewish press (Ben-Ur 1998).

Addressing a rally of immigrant Sephardi strikers, Gadol proclaimed that, since the appearance of his journal and the 1912 establishment of the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society’s Oriental Bureau, responsible for receiving Eastern Jewish immigrants at Ellis Island, “all Ashkenazim are now clear that you are Jews of the same blood and faith” (Ben-Ur 1998). Other reports from that decade and later contradict his self-congratulatory affirmation. Ashkenazim did not refrain from referring to their coreligionists as gentiles (e.g., “Turks”), an image Eastern Sephardim sometimes internalized. “We used to speak about the Jewish guys, and the Sephardics were different,” confessed American-born Ben Cohen, whose ancestors immigrated from Monastir, “really strange” (Glazier 1985 and 2000).

Where education campaigns failed, acculturation to mainstream America, intramarriage, and World War II, which effectively ended the isolation of Jewish subgroups, largely succeeded in breaking down barriers. Eventually, a number of Sephardic congregations accepted Ashkenazi rabbis as their leaders, there being few Eastern Sephardi rabbis. In 1972, Ashkenazi religious leaders headed Ladino-heritage congregations in Los Angeles, Seattle, and Cedarhurst (New York). Nearly all Sephardim who immigrated in the early twentieth century married fellow Sephardim; by the third generation, intramarriage “had

become the rule, rather than the exception.” Hayyim Cohen found in the early 1970s that 72 percent of second-generation Sephardim had married non-Sephardim, 87 percent of whom were Ashkenazim and 13 percent gentile. The figure jumped to 90 percent in the third and fourth generations (Angel 1973; Cohen 1971/1972).

Arabic-speaking Eastern Jews, generally with no ancestral or cultural bridge connecting them to Western culture, suffered particularly jarring encounters with Ashkenazi coreligionists and gentiles alike. Physiognomy, especially skin color, affected the experience of immigrants as well as their descendants. Dina Dahbany-Miraglia has examined the experiences of Yemeni Jewish immigrants and their children on street corners, in buses, and at social gatherings. When seeking housing in Jewish neighborhoods, these Jews dispatched the “lightest-skinned family member of a friend to do the necessaries.” To avoid complicated explanations to passersby initiating fleeting contact, Yemenis often accepted “ascription as black, Hispanic, Italian, American Indian, and East Indian” (Dahbany-Miraglia 1988). Syrian Jews, who, like Balkan and Turkish immigrants, settled largely in New York, faced similar quandaries. “The Ashkenazi Jews . . . thought them ‘queer,’ and the amazed cry of ‘*Bist du a Yid?* [Are you a Jew?],’ would often greet them as they appeared in a tallit, at a kosher butcher, or at the ritual bath. . . . This gulf of misunderstanding contributed to the Syrians’ tendency to withdraw from the general Jewish community” (Sanua 1990).

Such negative experiences contributed to the clannishness of Brooklyn’s Syrian American Jews, but fear of acculturation was likely more important. Unlike their Balkan and Turkish brethren, Syrians consistently established their own Jewish day schools and, when public education became mandatory, afterschool programs that maintained their children within the traditional cultural orbit (Sanua 1990, Sutton 1979). Demographers and community members have affirmed the resistance of Syrian Jews to extra-communal marriage with Ashkenazim or gentiles.

The central reason for this success was the presence of a strong rabbinical leadership representing Old Country values and, more importantly, the official acceptance of such values by all Syrian Jewish organizations. The relative rarity of intramarriage and almost nonexistent outmarriage can be traced back to a 1935 decree in Hebrew signed by Syrian rabbis in Bensonhurst (Brooklyn), ratified in 1942 and 1946 and reaffirmed in 1972 and 1984. Joseph

Sutton explained: “Such marriages would not be accepted under any circumstance, even when the non-Jewish partner had converted to Judaism; even if the conversion was not for the purpose of facilitating marriage.” A male accepting a gentile or converted spouse would be effectively excommunicated, deprived of religious honors in the synagogue, and forbidden burial in the communal cemetery, his children barred from Syrian schools and rejected as legitimate marriage partners (Sutton 1979 and 1988).

The efficacy of the decree can also be attributed to the geographic ethnic enclaves Syrian Jews have largely maintained. As David Sitton observed in 1962:

They generally live in one area, known as the Jewish neighbourhoods of Brooklyn, and they still preserve their ancient traditions and customs. This does not apply only to the elderly and the adult generation, for the youth are equally intent upon preserving their religious and cultural ties. Most of them receive a good grounding in religious values at home, learn to pray “*Arvit*” [evening prayers], and participate en masse in Shabbat and holiday services. Their synagogues are filled to capacity on the Sabbath, and the women’s section is no less crowded. (Sitton 1985 [1962])

Affluent lay leaders have also been instrumental in shaping the community’s ethnoreligious distinctiveness. The community’s leader in 1962 was Yitzhak Shalom, a philanthropist who placed special emphasis on religious instruction. He headed the educational institution *Ozar Hatorah* [Torah treasury], which ran a network of schools and *Talmudei Torah* in New York, North Africa, and Iran. Fund-raising efforts among Jews from Arab lands covered the budgets of these schools, as did support from the Joint Distribution Committee. In the 1960s, 90 percent of New York Syrian Jews enrolled their children in *yeshivot* and *Talmudei Torah*, and by the next decade Syrian Jews were considered “the best organized Sephardi-Eastern Jewish community in the U.S.A.” both spiritually and materially (Sitton 1985 [1962]).

The religious denominations that developed in Ashkenazi communities during the first half of the nineteenth century have no parallels in the Sephardi and Mizrahi worlds. This is because Jews outside of Europe were not affected by the challenges of Napoleon’s Sanhedrin (which, in exchange for citizenship, challenged French leaders in 1806 to prove that their Jewishness was solely a religion,

not an ethnicity or a peoplehood) and the various European emancipation movements. Once the descendants of Sephardi immigrants had become acculturated to American Ashkenazi society, however, a number of congregations adopted various denominations. Most Sephardi and Mizrahi congregations have found that their tenacity to religious traditions best coincides with the values of American Orthodox Judaism. New York's Congregation Shearith Israel, for example, belongs to the Orthodox Union, and its spiritual leader describes it as "a traditional, Orthodox congregation" (Angel 2004). Mizrahi synagogues, which constitute the majority of non-Ashkenazi congregations, are similarly affiliated with the Orthodox Union.

Subsequent waves of Jewish immigration from North Africa and the Middle East, tied directly to the founding of the State of Israel and the intensification of Arab anti-semitism, have further invigorated the Mizrahi community. About 10,000 Jews from Egypt, many of Syrian and Lebanese backgrounds, arrived in the United States after the 1956 and 1967 wars with Israel, most settling in the Syrian Jewish community of Brooklyn. Mizrahi *yordim* (a derogatory term for Israeli expatriates or, in this case, emigrés from Israel to the United States), numbering nearly 30,000 in the 1960s, have added diversity to New York's non-Ashkenazi population. The U.S. Yemeni community—which had nearly vanished—was replenished starting in 1959 with the immigration of 4,000–5,000 newcomers (Sitton 1985 [1962], Dabhany-Miraglia 1987).

Mashadi Jews are representative of the complexity of non-Ashkenazi communities. Mashadi Jews trace their ancestry to Iran, but their distinct history of forced conversion to Islam in the nineteenth century, subsequent return to Judaism, and current subgroup endogamy set them apart from the rest of the Persian Jewish community. Their principal organ, *Megillah* (published by the Mashadi Youth Committee of Great Neck, New York) appears in both English and Farsi, while their religious schools emphasize English, Hebrew, and Zionism. As a whole, Mizrahi Jews exhibit patterns of cultural retention (such as foodways, life-cycle rituals, and endogamy) not found in many far larger Ashkenazi communities and, particularly before the establishment of the State of Israel, nurtured ties to ethnic groups (such as Muslim and Christian Arabs) popularly considered inimical to world Jewry.

The crypto-Jewish phenomenon of the American Southwest gained national notoriety with the airing of a

documentary on National Public Radio in 1987. In Santa Fe, New Mexico, Catholics of Hispanic background had come forth with tales of secret Jewish customs preserved through the generations. Some claimed to have been initiated into Judaism during young adulthood, when an older relative whispered, "*Somos Judíos* [We are Jews]." In the enthusiastic aftermath of the program, hundreds purchased recordings, and reports of secret Jews in New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, and Arizona proliferated in the domestic and international press.

The dean of the movement, Stanley Hordes, recorded some of the earliest claims to Hispano-Jewish descent while serving as New Mexico's state historian in the early 1980s. In 1990, he and Rabbi Joshua Stampfer of Portland, Oregon, founded the National Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, self-described as "the major academic organization conducting and encouraging research on the Crypto-Jews." Struggling to delineate the boundary between the academic and the personal, the society recently resolved to make a clearer distinction between scholarly papers and reflections/life stories, and to professionalize its quarterly newsletter/journal, *Ha-Lapid: The Journal of the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies* (Ferry and Nathan 2000; <http://www.fiu.edu/~lavender/SCJS%20for%20adl%20website%201-13-04.htm>).

The secret Jewish customs and oral traditions from the American Southwest have come under scrutiny by historians, folklorists, and journalists, who wonder if this is not a case of mistaken identity. Judith Neulander has discovered that many of the purportedly Jewish customs, such as a game with a spinning top akin to a dreidl, are at best of Ashkenazi (not Sephardi) origin and has called crypto-Jews an "imagined community." She and others suggest that the will to be Jewish stems from racism turned inward. Chicanos/Hispanos strive to disassociate themselves from their Native American ancestry by grasping Jewish identity "as a postmodern marker for ethnic purity" (Ferry and Nathan 2000).

Historian David Gitlitz points to the general extinction of hidden Judaism by the late eighteenth century. In a recent interview, he declared the assumption that Jewish ancestry renders one Jewish a "major misconception" (Ramirez 1999). Thus, Hordes's most recent project—to verify the Jewish ancestry of the claimants—would not prove crypto-Jewish authenticity. Seymour Drescher (2001) has noted that the Inquisition was largely successful

in its goals. Even after the wars of independence, secret Jews of Iberian origin (if any survived) did not openly revert to Judaism. Roman Catholicism remained the dominant religion in Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking Latin America, and only in some isolated villages in Portugal and the Americas was crypto-Judaism “rediscovered or reinvented in the late twentieth century” (Drescher 2001). At the other end of the spectrum are academics who accept the self-proclaimed identity and do not seriously address the historicity of oral tradition or the controversy about invented heritage (Jacobs 2000).

Some doubts have sprung up in the organized Jewish community as well. Rabbi Marc Angel of Congregation Shearith Israel, while inspired by the romanticism of the phenomenon, has nonetheless issued a halakhic recommendation that such claimants formally convert to Judaism in order to eliminate all ambiguity (Angel 1994). Conversely, Daniel Bouskila of Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel in Los Angeles believes that those who seem sincere and have authentic family traditions should be “welcomed back to the community” without conversion (Ramirez 1999). A parallel controversy rages among non-Jewish Hispanics themselves.

Historian Elmer Martínez, director of Albuquerque’s Spanish History Museum, is dubious about the historicity of Southwest crypto-Judaism. He notes the absence of “solid documentation,” and concluded in the early 1990s, “All we have is rumors and people reading between the lines to try and find it” (Almond 1991). Numerous families in the Southwest have been torn apart by members claiming Jewish descent. Some, echoing Judith Neulander, see this as a fantasy heritage that betrays shame of mestizo ancestry. On the other hand, Hispanos whose families have embraced civil rights activism as well as their own “non-white” phenotypes and ancestry reject Neulander’s prestige claim as deeply offensive. With the increase in anti-semitism, some ask rhetorically, what could they possibly gain by being Jews?

The secret Jewish revival has raised many legitimate questions that are often stifled beneath accusations that Jews are reluctant to admit descendants of Native Americans and Hispanics into their ranks or that they are Orthodox bigots who lack compassionate tolerance (Angel 1994). The historian cannot, however, dismiss the questions. Nagging inconsistencies include the intense identification with Spain, even as the overwhelming majority of

New Christians, whether Judaizing or not, who immigrated to the Americas were of Portuguese origin. Moreover, the word *judío* (Jew) was applied on the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Iberian Peninsula to liberals, Freemasons, and others considered politically threatening. And the Southwestern disdain for Catholicism is strikingly similar to Native American hostility toward an imposed European religion. Self-proclaimed crypto-Jews who have been exposed as impostors motivated by eagerness for fame and financial gain have also stimulated scholarly caution. The survival of Jewish identity and heritage in the face of Inquisitorial persecution has been universally authenticated for converso descendants in Belmonte, Portugal (beginning in the first half of the twentieth century), but no study of a contemporary crypto-Jewish community can be complete without a consideration of the media’s role in creating and shaping ethnic identity.

Since the early twentieth century, attempts to unite Sephardim in the United States have ranged from focusing on Ladino-speaking organizations to including all non-Ashkenazi Jews under the label *Oriental* or *Sephardic Jewish*. Today, under the umbrella of the American Sephardi Federation, non-Ashkenazim with origins as varied as Yemen, India, Iran, Ethiopia, Morocco, Sudan, and Turkey are organizationally united and collectively refer to themselves as Sephardim. Sephardim, Mizrahim, Romaniote Jews, and other non-Ashkenazi groups, some 3 percent of American Jewry, have at last fulfilled the communal aspiration to organize a minority within a minority. Although often their legacies and destinies never intersected before their arrival on American soil, the identities of different groups have now become tightly entwined.

The overwhelming majority of monographs describing the American Jewish past and present seem largely unaware of non-Ashkenazi communities. Narratives stretching back to colonial times typically include a perfunctory mention of Western Sephardim arriving in 1654 and their subsequent assimilation into majority cultures. Studies focusing on the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries rarely devote even one sentence to Eastern Sephardim. Like the failure of the Sephardim’s twentieth-century co-ethnics to recognize them, the deep-seated assumption is that Ashkenazi heritage defines Jewishness. But the contemporary American Jewish community cannot be fully understood without considering its component parts, and the portrait of American Jewish history and society

remains incomplete without the integration of non-Ashkenazi Jews.

Aviva Ben-Ur

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## American Jews in the Colonial Period

Few Jews lived in colonial British North America. Ten men, a *minyán*, are required for synagogue services, and for much of the time even the five communities that had emerged by the time of the Revolution failed to muster one. The first Jews arrived in New Amsterdam in the early 1650s, but no evidence of Shearith Israel, the first congregation, exists before the 1680s—although it still holds services today at an uptown location. Newport, Rhode Island, probably had a *minyán* by the third quarter of the

seventeenth century, but by the mid-1790s, its beautiful new synagogue, built in the 1760s, was no longer in use. In Lancaster, Pennsylvania, a community related by blood and commerce to the town's leading merchant, Joseph Simon, had formed a minyan as early as the mid-1740s—before Philadelphia—but had gone out of existence when Simon died at age ninety-two in 1804. Philadelphia formed the still-functioning Mikveh Israel in 1771, whereas the congregation of the same name in Savannah, Georgia, begun in 1733 when forty-two Jews were among the town's earliest settlers, had to be founded three times before it achieved permanence in 1786. Jews lived in Charleston, South Carolina, in the late seventeenth century, but only in 1750 were enough men available to form Beth Elohim. Other Jews, usually merchants, peddlers, or frontier traders, were scattered throughout the colonies. In the Pennsylvania towns of Reading, Easton, Heidelberg, and Allentown, one Jewish family represented the faith in each location. Fewer than the 2,588—less than 0.1 percent of the population—counted in the first federal census of 1790 lived in the thirteen future states on the eve of the Revolution.

The fact that, for all the Jewish communities except Charleston and Savannah, it is unknown exactly when they began to hold religious services points to the precarious and, at first, obscure nature of Jewish collective existence in colonial America. Except for Savannah, the first Jews appear only occasionally in the surviving records. Most were males; yet if they were to remain true to the faith, they could only marry Jews. Consequently, more than 40 percent of traceable colonial Jews did not marry at all, and many of those who did, married and became Christians. Members of elite Jewish families, such as the Franks in New York and the DeLeons in Charleston, turned to England or the West Indies to find Jewish spouses. Indistinguishable in their portraits from gentiles, assimilated into an educated, cosmopolitan, and commercial world, and lacking knowledge of the Hebrew language and traditional literature—the United States only hosted visiting rabbis until the nineteenth century—those who wished to remain Jews clung tenaciously to their faith, insisting on the letter of the law when it came to observing the Sabbath, burying the dead, and defining who was Jewish.

Given the presence of so many single people and converts, Jews were exempt from the population explosion that characterized British North America. With so small a

marriage pool of the appropriate religion and class, the mature, late colonial Jewish communities centered around a few extended families: the Franks, the Gratzes, and the Simons in New York, Philadelphia, and Lancaster; the Lopezes and the Riveras in Newport; the Minises and the Sheffalls in Savannah; and the DeLucenas and the DaCostas in Charleston. But when a comparatively large influx of newcomers—largely poor and from Eastern Europe—arrived in the 1760s and 1770s, American Jewry splintered. Although some of the earlier settlers had been ethnic Ashkenazim who hailed from Central Europe and spoke Yiddish, they had married into and followed the religious service of the Sephardim, whose roots lay in Portugal and Spain and who had emigrated to England, Holland, and their West Indies possessions to preserve their religion and their lives. The post-French and Indian War migrants, however, frequently wore beards and caftans and spoke English poorly or not at all, and a fair number proved to be economic burdens on the community. Class and ethnic tensions emerged in America's tiny Jewish communities on the eve of the Revolution, paralleling those in the larger society.

Colonial Jews clung tenaciously not only to their religion; principal characteristics of their communities represent continuities with the Jewish experience in the Netherlands and England. Colonial Jewish merchants were but one branch of worldwide trade networks developed by leading Jews in London and Amsterdam. For instance, Barnard Gratz of Philadelphia first sought his fortune in India. Gratz's Jewish relatives, including the Simons of Lancaster and their commercial agents in the Ohio Valley, represented London's Moses Franks, who supplied much of the British army's North American needs in the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. Franks's father, Jacob, and brother, David, ran the family business in North America. The family of Francis Salvador of South Carolina was among the largest stockholders in the British East India Company. Many New Amsterdam, Rhode Island, and South Carolina Jews came to the mainland from the West Indies.

Elite, wealthy Jews were valued by leaders in both Holland and Britain for their loyalty and large financial contributions to the wars against Catholic France, Spain, Portugal, and (after 1740) Austria. Ordinary folk, especially farmers, encountered Jews as peddlers, merchants, tax farmers, or estate managers (in Eastern Europe),

reinforcing the traditional negative stereotype of the exploitative “wandering Jew.” In colonial America, too, with few exceptions, imperial authorities and cosmopolitan elites protected Jews; their enemies were typically found among the ranks of the populist, Dissenting (Protestants who did not belong to the Church of England), and more locally oriented farmers and tradesmen. Elite Jews and gentiles mingled especially in the Masons, a worldwide society dedicated to Enlightenment ideals, within which distinctions of rank and religion disappeared as members referred to each other as “brother.”

Also as in Europe, colonial Jews were perceived as both a religion and an ethnic group, which contemporary discourse referred to as a nation or race. Jews could change their religion; only with difficulty could they shed their ethnicity. Even people such as John Israel, western Pennsylvania’s leading Democratic Republican printer in the early nineteenth century, was subjected to antisemitic attacks, although only one of his grandparents was Jewish. Jews could have changed their names, yet they did not. Even where marriage or conviction caused them to leave the faith, they remained loyal to their ethnic identification, inaugurating a trend still characteristic of many secular Jews.

Although not absent in colonial America, antisemitism was far less virulent than in Europe. With one possible exception, until the nineteenth century no Jew was a martyr to his faith in what became the United States. There were no ghettos, and no riots occurred against Jews as in London and Barbados. Antisemitic violence instead took the form of desecration of Jewish cemeteries; by 1800, every Jewish cemetery had been attacked at least once. These were deliberate acts of vandalism, not the passing whims of groups of drunks, for, unlike Christian graveyards, which adjoined churches, Jewish cemeteries were located outside settlement boundaries to discourage such actions. Where Jews were attacked in print or in court or were forbidden the vote or the right to hold public office, they and their champions spoke up with at least equal vigor, eliciting attacks for being greedy and unpatriotic. Like every minority group seeking equality in America, Jews had to demonstrate exceptional virtue to obtain what white, Anglo-Saxon males claimed as a birthright. They would do so in the Revolution and the early republic.

In addition to these general patterns, the history of Jews in New Amsterdam/New York, Newport, Charleston, Savannah, and Philadelphia (in order of settlement) varied

according to political and economic circumstances and the personalities of the relevant Jews and gentiles. In 1654, twenty-three Jewish refugees arrived in New Amsterdam from Dutch Brazil, having been forced to flee when the latter was reconquered by Portugal. Jews had constituted about a third of the colony’s 1,450 white settlers. Although toleration varied in the Netherlands by jurisdiction—cosmopolitan Amsterdam was most liberal, the rural, Calvinist provinces least—the Dutch West India Company, a site of heavy Jewish investment, allowed Jews full religious freedom to develop the rich coastal territory.

Things were different in New Netherland, where Governor Peter Stuyvesant, backed by New Amsterdam’s local authorities, was a staunch Calvinist who permitted only the Dutch Reformed church to worship publicly. Nevertheless, the twenty-three 1654 arrivals were not New Amsterdam’s first Jews, and with the exception of Asser Levy, they left in short order. In addition to his personal antisemitism, Stuyvesant’s main objections to their presence were that they would start a synagogue, thereby providing a precedent for toleration of more threatening groups such as Baptists and Quakers, and that they would be a drain on the colony’s slender funds, as they were mostly destitute. Jewish merchants who preceded and followed them were allowed to practice their trades and, after petitioning the Dutch West India Company, to become burghers—full-fledged citizens of the city—and to serve in the militia, instead of being barred from service and at the same time forced to pay a fine.

When the English conquered New Amsterdam in 1664, the proprietor (the Duke of York and future King James II) supported toleration. Still, New York Jews lost almost all their privileges—including the right to engage in retail trade and the right to form a synagogue—with the so-called Charter of Liberties in 1683, coerced from the duke by the colony’s Dutch and English merchants who competed with them. The Jews’ status remained in flux for the next decade: Sir Edmund Andros’s autocratic Dominion of New England, which was instituted in 1685 and included New York, protected them (though no Jews lived at the time in the intolerant Puritan colonies of Massachusetts and Connecticut); Jacob Leisler, who overthrew Andros in 1689, required all inhabitants to swear loyalty oaths to the Protestant religion and again confined the Jews to private worship. It is no wonder that in 1692 the Jews welcomed the new royal governor, who executed Leisler, and

remained loyal to the Crown and its supporters into the eighteenth century.

Records list between twenty and thirty Jewish taxpayers in New York in the early eighteenth century. The Jews built their synagogue in the early 1690s on Mill Street and named their congregation Shearith (Remnant of) Israel. Increasing prosperity permitted its replacement in 1730. New York Jews, like those in South Carolina and Georgia and unlike those in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, were routinely allowed to vote and hold office. Yet the Jewish community itself was severely divided between the Franks faction and the Levy faction, a split springing from animosity between Abigail Levy Franks and her young stepmother, Grace Mears Levy. Abigail had lost a good deal of her inheritance and considered her stepmother personally obnoxious. Abigail's husband, Jacob, was New York's wealthiest merchant; while they educated their children genteelly in the secular way of the upper class, they insisted the children marry within the Jewish faith. Their son, David, married outside the faith, thereby denying them Jewish grandchildren. Their daughter, Phila, defied them, secretly marrying wealthy merchant Oliver Delancey; her parents never spoke to her again. The parents were justly worried that their family line would disappear from the community.

Several instances of antisemitism in midcentury New York can be traced to Delancey. In 1737, the colony's Jews, who had voted and held political office without incident, were disfranchised in a narrow election contested between the Delancey and the Livingston factions. Although they were soon exercising their political rights again, and the credentials of several other groups of voters were questioned in the same election, the Reverend William Smith clinched the case for exclusion by raising the traditional decide charge against the Jews. In the 1740s, Delancey, a young roustabout despite his family's high status, assaulted his wife's uncle, led a crowd that mocked a Jewish funeral procession by performing Christian rites as the corpse was interred, and broke the windows of a Jewish immigrant's house and threatened to rape his wife. He may also have been involved in the desecration of the Jewish cemetery that prompted Jacob Franks to offer a reward if the perpetrators could be found.

The Levy–Franks quarrels merged into another struggle, between the congregation's established rulers and Ashkenazi newcomers who arrived in the 1750s and 1760s.

Alignments were bewilderingly complicated, but people were expelled from the synagogue for quarreling and physically fighting, and enormous lawsuits were launched by Jews against other Jews for besmirching their reputations. The court cases meant that the Jews relied on Christian magistrates to arbitrate matters they could not resolve themselves. This was, however, exceptional; they resorted to the courts only twice in New York and never elsewhere.

On the eve of the American Revolution, the fifty-odd families of New York Jews were as severely divided among themselves as the province that probably produced the largest percentage of loyalists on the continent. Jewish revolutionary allegiances are maddeningly untraceable to colonial factional alignments, although the community split roughly in half. Paradoxically, the uniquely contentious colonial history of New York Jewry demonstrates just how well they had assimilated into the surrounding culture.

Philadelphia's Jewish community was an offshoot of New York's. In the late 1730s, representatives of the Franks and Levy families arrived (they seem to have worked much better together in the City of Brotherly Love), followed by the brothers Barnard and Michael Gratz from Silesia. The Gratzes intermarried with the family of Joseph Simon, the most prominent merchant in Lancaster. They all prospered during the French and Indian War, sending their agents to accompany the army and serve at frontier posts that included Pittsburgh and Detroit. Pennsylvania Germans, however, accused them of profiteering and of being as predatory as the Indians from whom the Quaker-led government had failed to protect them. By the late 1760s, two rival minyans—one Sephardic, dominated by the elite, and the other Ashkenazic, formed by poor Eastern European newcomers—existed within a community of some twenty-five families, although the division had been temporarily patched up by 1771 when Mikveh Israel built its first synagogue.

Nearly all Pennsylvania Jews were active in the resistance to Britain. Nine of twelve Philadelphia Jewish merchants protested the Stamp Act and supported non-importation. The Jews were especially incensed because they had invested heavily in the frontier and lost £25,000 of the £86,000 claimed to have been lost by all traders in the French and Indian War and Pontiac's War. Their nearly unanimous support of the Revolution can be explained by the passage of the Quebec Act, which gave the

Ohio Valley to Canada and vanquished their hope of obtaining compensation in the form of frontier lands. Nevertheless, lower-class Philadelphians, along with the Scotch-Irish and German frontier settlers, identified the Jews with the wealthy elite who overthrew the provincial government and wrote the radical Constitution of 1776. There, Jews were still excluded from office, as during the colonial period. Still, Pennsylvania Jews supported the Revolution nearly unanimously in the hope of obtaining political equality, which they finally achieved in 1790.

Newport's Jewish community, like Philadelphia's, suddenly came to public attention in the mid-eighteenth century. But obscure Jews had lived in the tiny colony from its founding in 1636, thanks to the ideas of the founder, Roger Williams. While Williams was intensely antisemitic, in addition to despising most Christians as hypocrites, he believed it was necessary to allow freedom of religion. True Christians would always be a tiny minority, and it was important that the larger body of Christians not pollute the religious purity of that small remnant. A strict separation of church and state would prevent the former from threatening the latter. Thus, Rhode Island tolerated Jews from the beginning, although it did not allow them to vote or hold political office until the nineteenth century, by which time the Jewish community had dissolved.

Rhode Island's Jews are almost impossible to trace individually or communally before the 1750s. Most came from the West Indies, and as early as 1677 they had purchased a burial ground and, it seems, had enough men to hold services. But by 1700, the congregation no longer existed and would not be revived until 1754. From that year until the Revolution, Newport Jews emerged as one of the wealthiest, most cultivated, and most noticed groups in the fast-growing port city. The Jewish population grew from ten families in 1761 to twenty-five in 1773. Nearly all of Newport's Jews ranked among the town's top 10 percent of taxpayers; the wealthiest, Aaron Lopez, paid twice the tax of any other inhabitant. The Reverend Ezra Stiles, congregational minister and future president of Yale College, maintained close friendships with several leading Jews and the six rabbis who visited the town in the hope of securing funds for overseas charities.

Refugees from the Portuguese Inquisition, members of the Lopez family began arriving in the 1750s and intermarried with the established Rodrigues clan. Notable Jewish business ventures included the manufacture of snuff,

soap, potash, and candles and oil from spermaceti obtained from their whaling ships. Newport was also the slave trading capital of British North America, and Lopez and Rivera were two of the town's leading traders—they sent out a dozen voyages and imported about 3,000 slaves in the 1760s and 1770s. Slave trading was, however, only a small part of their business; the vast majority of slaves—about 90 percent—were imported by Newport Christians.

Newport Jews were also active in the cultural institutions Rhode Island built during its age of prosperity. They helped to found and purchased books for the Redwood Library, and Lopez and Rivera contributed the wood to build the college that became Brown University, because it welcomed students regardless of religious affiliation. Most prominently, Newport's Jews built what is now known as the Touro Synagogue between 1759 and 1763. The most architecturally attractive colonial synagogue, acknowledged as the most beautiful building in Newport, the edifice took four years to construct because the town's Jews not only wanted a place to worship but wished to demonstrate their wealth and culture. The synagogue's construction prompted the congregation to change its name from Nephutse Israel (the Scattered of Israel) to Yeshuat Israel (the Salvation of Israel).

Despite their wealth, social prominence, and contributions to the community—or perhaps because of them—Aaron Lopez and other Jews who sought naturalization were denied it by the Rhode Island legislature. Antisemitism was one factor; another was that they were wealthy Newport merchants allied to a political faction opposed by the colony's agricultural majority, for Jews who had served the colony well had been naturalized previously. Lopez was naturalized instead by the Massachusetts Superior Court, headed by Thomas Hutchinson.

Not all of Newport's Jews were among the privileged. Poor immigrants from the West Indies were sent back, and Lopez caught at least two men of color who were trying to pass themselves off as Jews to take advantage of the community's charity and connections. Among those who remained, lawsuits for damaged goods and reputations, although not as frequent as in New York, pointed to similar divisions between rich and poor, Ashkenazi newcomers and established Sephardim, on the eve of the Revolution.

The Revolution was a disaster for Newport Jews, as it was for the town itself. Although they were opposed to trade regulations and signed protests against the Stamp

Act, Newport merchants embarrassed their colleagues in the other port cities by refusing to honor the Non-Importation agreements of the late 1760s and early 1770s. Their exasperated colleagues imposed an embargo on trade with Newport itself to force it into line. Although several of Newport's Jews were patriots, and although Christian loyalists far outnumbered Jewish ones, Newport Jews were specifically blamed, by Bostonians especially and James Otis in particular, for their noncompliance, as they would be for identifying revolutionaries to the British troops who occupied the town from 1776 to 1779. Loyalist Jewish merchant Isaac Hart, who was brutally bayoneted and beaten to death after the British left, may have been the only Jew murdered for his faith as well as his politics in early America. About half of Newport's Jews were active loyalists; several of the rest, including the Lopez and Rivera clans, moved to Leicester, Massachusetts, after having traded with both sides. Lopez's accidental death by drowning when he attempted to return in 1782 symbolized the fate of a city whose Jewish community would soon disappear along with its commercial prosperity.

Written by philosopher John Locke, the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, promulgated in 1669, offered full freedom of religion to Jews in addition to heathens and Dissenters. In America's first law against hate speech, the document forbade verbal criticism of any religious group. Jews, who probably came from Barbados, may have lived in South Carolina as early as the 1670s; three merchants joined with sixty French Huguenots in successfully petitioning for citizenship in 1697. Jews served prominently as interpreters and frontier representatives of the royal government. Moses Lindo was chief inspector for indigo and dyes in the colonies. While the Dissenters who dominated the legislature once South Carolina became a royal province limited voting and holding office to Protestants, the law seems not to have been enforced. Francis Salvador, the only wealthy Jew who settled outside of Charleston—he developed lands in the Ninety-Six district on the frontier—was elected to the revolutionary provincial congress in 1775 and became the first Jew to die in combat the following year. South Carolina Jews were nearly all prorevolutionary.

Georgia Jews entered the colony at its very founding. Forty-two arrived in 1733, having evaded the trustees' careful efforts to limit settlers to Christian poor folk and prisoners who would live in a strictly regulated moral com-

munity. Constituting one-third of Savannah's population when they landed, the Jews were fortunate to arrive in the midst of an epidemic that their physician, Samuel Nunes Ribiero, ended by using homeopathic remedies he had employed before he was forced to flee Portugal. The helpful Jews were well liked at first, even by Lutheran minister Johann Boltzius and Methodist preacher John Wesley, but their friendliness was mistaken for a sign that they wished to convert to Christianity. When they failed to do so, Dissenting religious sentiment turned against them, although they continued to be favored by the trustees and later by the royal government.

Except for the Sheftall and Minis families, who are still prominent in Savannah today, Savannah's other Jews during the 1730s were Sephardim. The two groups quarreled and held separate services, but in 1740, when war with Spain broke out, all the Sephardim left Georgia, fearing the Spanish Inquisition would kill them. The Sheftalls and the Minises rose to the top of the colonial hierarchy. Abigail Minis (1701–1794) managed a tavern and a plantation, assisted by five daughters who did not marry. Dr. Nunes Ribiero's sons returned, moved to the frontier, and were active in Indian trade and diplomacy.

Latent antisemitism in Georgia came into the open with the arrival of the Reverend Samuel Frink, a militant Anglican from Massachusetts, in the late 1760s. He refused to bury Jews or Dissenters in the Savannah burial grounds, prompting the Sheftall family to open its private cemetery to the community. The provincial council took a leaf from Frink and refused to expand the public graveyard granted to the Jews by the colony's founder, James Oglethorpe. As a result, Mordecai Sheftall emerged as the leader of Savannah's revolutionary committee and joined with every Jew in Georgia except two in supporting the American Revolution.

Newport's Jews were mostly loyalists, and New York's were evenly divided, whereas those of Philadelphia, Charleston, and Savannah supported the American Revolution. In each case, the community's colonial experience explains its allegiance. Newport was an anglicized, prosperous port; the Jews were recent arrivals who had suffered discrimination at the hands of the democratic Rhode Island assembly after having recently left an England that offered them refuge from Portuguese tyranny. New York Jews' factionalism reflected the larger colony's. Pennsylvania Jews were especially aggrieved by the

brusque denial of their frontier claims with the Quebec Act and also hoped to obtain full citizenship through fighting for the new nation. Charleston Jews joined that colony's united elite in overwhelmingly supporting the Revolution, whereas Georgia Jews, who might well have straddled the fence as did most of the colony's elite, were alienated by the Reverend Frink's and the provincial council's sudden challenge to their traditional privilege of burying their dead on equal terms with the general community. When tensions between rich and poor and Sephardim and Ashkenazim are added, it becomes clear that America's small Jewish communities endured the major divisions that plagued the midcentury colonies and shaped their revolutionary allegiances.

William Pencak

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## American Jews in the Revolutionary and Early National Periods

During the revolutionary and early national periods, American Jewry constituted a tiny proportion of the nation's population. In these years the number of Jews nearly tripled but remained fewer than 1 percent of the American population. Like their later coreligionists, the vast majority lived in the largest cities and proliferated in trade. Their relative acceptance there (compared to Europe) and the scarce religious resources, as well as their numbers, threatened the creedal solidarity of the Jewish enclaves, and this in turn promoted assimilation. Republican and multicultural impulses in the United States also undermined community cohesion. These forces fostered democratization of the synagogue, which weakened orthodoxy and traditional sources of authority. Another manifestation of American republicanism and cultural diversity, initiated during the Revolution and largely completed in the early republic, was the disestablishment of Christian sects and the removal of oaths attesting to the divinity of Christ as a prerequisite for public office. These elements of nation building, American style, enabled Jews to acquire civic equality and allowed Judaism to assume a place in the national civic religion. Nevertheless, antisemitism persisted. Sunday laws, resistance (though ultimately overcome) to political equality for Jews, and negative stereotyping continued to plague American Jewry but, unlike antisemitism in Europe, never seriously threatened to foreclose political rights or constrict economic activity.

### Community Profile

In the revolutionary and early national eras, well over a century after its beginnings in New Amsterdam, American Jewry remained tangential, at least numerically. In 1776, fewer than 1,000 Jews—and in 1820, fewer than 2,750—resided in the United States, constituting .03–.04 percent of the total population. New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston, ranked by

size of settlement, together contained two-thirds of the Jews in the nation. Unlike their gentile compatriots, who generally settled in rural areas, approximately 90 percent of the Jews were urbanites. Except in the South, the majority of America's Jews were foreign born; about three-quarters immigrated, in decreasing order, from England, Holland, and Germany. Here, too, Jews differed from other Americans, who were mostly native born. They did not resemble their European coreligionists or later generations of American Jews, who lived in ghettos. Jews were dispersed throughout American cities, although they concentrated in some neighborhoods. New York Jews were more concentrated than those in Philadelphia and Charleston. Proximity to the synagogue and occupational clustering motivated their residential convergence (Rosenwaike 1985).

American Jewry consisted of more males than females. About half the population was under twenty; less than one-fifth was over forty. Although the Jewish community was young, it was older than the gentile community. From colonial through early national times, the average number of children per Jewish marriage ranged from 5.1 to 6.4—a high fertility rate, though not as high as the total American birth rate of 7.0 in 1800 and 6.7 in 1820 (Rosenwaike 1985).

Contrary to myth, some of it antisemitic, Jews were not overrepresented among rich city dwellers. Although they appeared on lists of the wealthiest residents of New York, Baltimore, and Richmond, their numbers were in proportion to their percentage of each city's population. A survey of household heads indicated that most Jews in the workforce, whether well off or not, were in retail or wholesale trade, usually as shopkeepers. In New York and Philadelphia, the next most frequent occupation was manufacturing, but not in Charleston, a Southern city. Approximately one-eighth of the family heads were in the professions. This survey may undercount Jews in manual occupations because it derives from heads of households. Boarders (many of them transients or newcomers) and other family members were more likely to be in occupations of lower remuneration and status (Rosenwaike 1985).

## Cohesion and Assimilation

Meager in resources as well as in numbers and influence, the Jewish community struggled to achieve minimal cohesion. An ordained rabbi did not serve an American congrega-

tion until the 1840s; not until 1814 was a Hebrew Bible printed here, and another nine years passed before a Jewish journal was published in the United States. Unlike Jews elsewhere, those in America usually did not belong to a synagogue and sent their children to non-Jewish schools. Most American congregations depended upon West Indian, British, and Dutch congregations for financial support and theological guidance.

Creedal ignorance and institutional weaknesses combined with demography to deter Judaic integration. Small numbers and the tendency of Jewish settlers to be young, single men—the type least tied to tradition, family, and community, the conventional forgers of religious solidarity—promoted assimilation. As early as 1736, the minutes of Shearith Israel in New York were kept in English, and the Constitution of 1805 directed that services be conducted in English. This reflected an uncertain knowledge of Hebrew in the congregation and its *hazzan* (spiritual leader), Gershon Seixas (Pool and Pool 1955; Elazar, Sarna, Monson 1992). In architecture, as in language, American culture made inroads. Synagogues built in Newport, Rhode Island (1763), and Charleston (1794) derived respectively from the neoclassical Palladian style fashionable in London and the colonies and from a Georgian church.

Cultural assimilation proceeded much faster than in France or Russia, nations with larger, more cohesive Jewish communities. Jews entered Yale's and West Point's first class (1802) long before they matriculated at English and European universities and military schools. They were among the founders of the New York City and Georgia medical societies, masters of Masonic lodges, and members and officers of prestigious professional organizations, social clubs, and cultural societies in Richmond, Philadelphia, Charleston, and other cities (Jaher 1994, Pool and Pool 1955).

American congregations sought to function like their forebears, Old World *kehillot* (local Jewish community organizations). Maintaining communal order and cohesion, however, was more tentative in the United States, where congregations were not corporations vested by civil law and government with disciplinary and other powers. Here, they were just another religious voluntary association, whose leverage came from the will of members. Since Jews in America moved more comfortably in the larger society and did not live and work in ghettos officially administered by *kehillot*, they did not need the organized

Jewish community for survival or as a buffer between them and the host society. They could, for example, obtain schooling and charity from their local government, whose services were available to residents independent of belief (Faber 1992). Thus, Shearith Israel tithed all Jews in the vicinity but collected only from those willing to pay. Refusers and remitters alike had alternative associations and other identities, which could be assumed without the grievous consequences they triggered in Europe (Elazar, Sarna, and Monson 1992). Choice was also furthered by the presence of more than one congregation—a trend begun in Philadelphia in 1795 (Sarna 1986).

Sectarian diversity and voluntary association, separation of church and state, and Enlightenment influence eroded traditional authority. Unlike its European counterparts, American Jewry had no central organization, grand rabbi, or government participation in appointment of lay or religious officials or in community functions. Democratization of the synagogue reflected the national values of individual liberty, voluntary association, and republicanism, further distancing American Jewry from the mode of authority in European Jewish communities. During the colonial era, the *parnas* (president) and other congregation officials were chosen by an executive board; after independence, by the entire congregation. New bylaws and constitutions provided for a small number of ordinary members to call meetings of the whole to bring up business of their choice. The language of congregational constitutions even echoed that of the country's foundation documents (Marcus 1959, Pool and Pool 1955).

Orthodoxy and religious authority were mutually dependent, and weakening one ensured erosion of the other. Before the Revolution, Shearith Israel ejected violators of dietary laws and the Sabbath from the congregation; afterward, these infractions drew fines or other minor penalties. Jacob Cohen, who defied the Talmudic ban on *Cohanim* (descendants of high priests of ancient Israel) marrying converted Jews, became a member of Mikveh Israel (Philadelphia) and in 1810, its president (Marcus 1951). In colonial times, Shearith Israel used the Hebrew calendar to date its records; in the 1770s, it used Western and Hebrew dates, but by 1800 the Hebrew calendar had been dropped (Grinstein 1945, Jick 1976).

Mikveh Israel's appeal in 1785 to Rabbi Saul Lowenstamm of Amsterdam over a marriage—between the daughter of a *Cohain* and a gentile that had been solem-

nized as Jewish—reveals the centrifugal forces that threatened American Judaism. The appeal was made to the more established Jewish community in Holland because American Jewry lacked the knowledge and solidarity to handle the disintegrative issue of marrying out. The Philadelphia congregation's plea displays an apprehension of communal endangerment through American assimilative individualism and an awareness of the lack of resources that bolstered cohesion in the Old World. The "matter touches the roots of our faith, particularly in this country where each acts according to his own desire," the petitioners told the Dutch rabbi. "The congregation has no power to discipline or punish anyone, except for the minor punishment of excluding them from the privileges of the synagogue." But "these evil people pay no heed and come to the synagogue, since it is impossible to restrain them for so doing because of the usage of the land" (Karp 1969).

Acculturation, as working on the Sabbath or violating dietary laws, also drew protests from Shearith Israel and Mikveh Israel (Marcus 1959). Some Jews had mixed feelings about adapting to America. "There is no *galut* [diasporic exile and rejection] here [Petersburg, Virginia]," gloated Rebecca Samuel in 1791. "Anyone can do what he wants. There is no rabbi in all of America to excommunicate anyone. This is a blessing here." Samuel subsequently bemoaned the new liberty and amity and the conditions in which it flourished: "Here they cannot become anything else [but gentile], Jewishness is pushed aside here," she now rued. "We have a *shohet* [ritual slaughterer] here who goes to market and buys *terefah* [nonkosher meat]. . . . We have no Torah scrolls and no *tallit* [prayer shawls] and no synagogue. We do not know what the Sabbath and the holidays are. On the Sabbath all the Jewish shops are open" (Marcus 1959).

Americanization was facilitated by the circumstances of Jewish existence in this country. Typically, and unlike many coreligionists in Europe, American Jews did not live in ghettos, wear traditional Jewish dress, or grow beards and sidelocks. From colonial times onward, gentile observers noted that Jews ate nonkosher food, dressed in European fashion, and shaved regularly (Kalm 1964, Goodman 1969). They anglicized their first and last names. Already marked in the colonial period, this practice considerably antedated French Jewry's adoption of French names, which did not become frequent until the 1860s (Marcus 1989).

Adaptation to America was also manifest in intermarriage, the most radical mode of assimilation. According to one survey, of 699 North American marriages uncovered between 1790 and 1840 involving Jews, 201 wedded gentiles. As exogamous unions were more likely to remain anonymous, such matches were probably undercounted. The non-Jewish spouse converted to Judaism in only 12 of these unions (Stern 1967). A 28.7 percent share of mixed marriages considerably exceeded that in France or Eastern Europe, or in later periods, in the United States (Jaher 2002). One study estimates the intermarriage rate in the first half of the nineteenth century at about 15 percent, with 8 percent of the gentile spouses converting to Judaism (Dimont 1978). The small numbers and dispersion of Jews in America expedited absorption. By the 1750s, the few isolated Jewish families in Connecticut had embraced Christianity. A German mercenary in 1777 reported: “Jews and Christians intermarry without scruple” (Goodman 1969).

Assimilation appeared theologically in a Judaic form of American civic religion. Civic Judaism quickened in the atmosphere of cultural diversity, inclusive nationalism, and freedom of thought—aspects of the national culture inscribed even before the United States became a nation. Unlike European venues for Jews, America had been settled after the religious strife of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation had waned, and no single established Church existed in either the provincial or the early national eras. Moreover, from its founding, the new land had needed settlers to be economically viable and thus was relatively reluctant to exclude religious or ethnic minorities or constrain them occupationally. Hence, American Jews never experienced the sectarian, residential, vocational, and other restrictions that plagued Old World Jewry.

Enlightenment values, revolutionary utopianism, and liberal republican sentiments coalesced with economic needs to foster a unique acceptance of Jews on this side of the Atlantic. In France, the emancipation of Jews in 1791 occasioned prolonged and impassioned debate and was reversed by the Vichy government (1940–1945). By contrast, the permanent conferral of citizenship by Article VI of the U.S. Constitution (“ . . . no religious test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any office or public trust under the United States”) provoked no such controversy in the Constitutional Convention of 1787, in state ratification conventions, or in the widespread debate over the Consti-

tution (Jaher 2002). Article VI passed after little discussion or dissent, with only North Carolina opposed and Maryland divided (Farrand 1966).

The few wary of excessive religious latitude in the Constitution were barely visible compared to the many who feared an insufficient support of freedom. New York, Massachusetts, Virginia, and several other states ratified the Constitution with recommendations for further protection of individual rights, among them liberty of conscience. Accordingly, Congress passed the Bill of Rights in 1789, and the states ratified these amendments in 1791. “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” stated the First Amendment. Once again, the congressional discussion was brief and dispassionate (Levy 1986).

Jews became full citizens of the United States at the time of its creation; political equality was immediate, absolute, and permanent. In the states, by contrast, political rights were only gradually acquired after colonial charters were replaced by state constitutions. Nevertheless, the trend toward religious equality was clear. Rhode Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware never had an established church in the provincial age; during the Revolution, New York, Virginia, and North Carolina terminated public taxes for sectarian purposes. Disestablishment was completed in South Carolina (1790) and Georgia (1798) after the Northwest Ordinance (1787), the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights affirmed freedom of conscience. Other states (Vermont, 1807; Connecticut, 1818; New Hampshire, 1819; and Massachusetts, 1833) subsequently disestablished religion. No states formed after the United States became a nation funded any creed (Levy 1986).

The other state constitutional impingement on equality for Jews was swearing to belief in Christianity in order to hold government posts. This proviso reflected the historical Western tie between the state and Christianity. Membership in the body of Christ was deemed vital to the spiritual and social health of the commonwealth and therefore a necessary condition of membership in the body politic. While Article VI prohibited such oaths for federal service, many states initially required them for their own governments. This was true even for those with no religious establishments, as in the Pennsylvania, Delaware, and North Carolina Constitutions of 1776 (Thorpe 1909).

The influence of the Virginia Act for Religious Freedom (1786), the Federal Constitution, the Northwest

Ordinance, and the Bill of Rights helped ensure that new states did not require Christian oaths and that older states divested themselves of these tests. Within a decade of the Revolution, Delaware, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Vermont rescinded their abjurations, and Georgia did so in 1798. New York and New Jersey never required religious tests. Connecticut (1818), Massachusetts (1821), Maryland (1825), North Carolina (1868), and New Hampshire (1876) later discarded test oaths.

Many supporters of unconditional federal citizenship and, at the same time, religious qualifications for entering state government saw no incompatibility in these stances. Controls they regarded as an aggrandizement of national power were deemed appropriate for state and local governance. Sovereignty divided between state and federal governments was simply another aspect of an American pluralism that favored multiple attachments and tolerated variant institutions and beliefs. As citizens of the nation, Jews were equal to gentiles even when, as citizens of particular states, they may not have received equal rights. Still, equality on the national level accelerated a similar trend for civic parity for Jews in the states.

Unlike in France and the Soviet Union, Jewish emancipation in America occurred without a revolution. The French and Russian upheavals resulted not only in the sudden liberation of Jews—in 1791 and 1917–1918, respectively—but radically transformed the larger societies. The relatively moderate American rebellion, by contrast, generally led to gradual change. This was the case in relation to Jews as well.

The acquisition of *de jure* civic equality for American Jewry was incremental and prolonged (Jaher 1994). In this, America resembled its parent, Great Britain. Jewish political equality was also gradual there, although it started earlier and was completed later than in the United States. The experience of Jews in these countries was distinguished from those of continental Europe by historical contingencies. These nations had greater denominational variety and pluralism. For long periods, many in these nations deemed Catholics the most dangerous religious enemy. British and American Protestantism was also more philosemitic than French Catholicism, German Lutheranism, or the Russian Orthodox Church. America and Great Britain (since the Jews' return in the seventeenth century) enforced no ghettos or legally recognized communities, trade and vocational restrictions, or special tolls and taxes on Jews. And

American and British Jews entered their respective national cultures earlier than did Jews on the Continent, with the possible exception of those in Holland. Perhaps more important, the United States and the United Kingdom have historically had weaker *völkish* urges and political tribulations than the other Western countries. Comparatively free of foreign invasions and conquests, insurrections, constitutional crises, and governmental turnovers, their stability is reflected in a sturdier, less threatened national identity (Jaher 2002).

Legal guarantee of Jewish political equality in America derived from the founding fathers' larger conviction about religious freedom and their unprecedented (compared to Western Europe) recognition of Jews. Benjamin Franklin "respected" all religions and opposed the test oath in the Pennsylvania constitution. Thomas Jefferson authored the Virginia Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, an achievement he wanted etched on his tombstone, and James Madison maneuvered it through the legislature. Alexander Hamilton drafted an act to establish a state university in New York that forbade any religious qualification for its president and faculty; the charter he wrote for Columbia College forbade any creedal exclusion for its president.

America's first four presidents, Federalists and Republicans alike, included Jews in their avowals of religion, freedom, and equality, denounced prejudice against them, sympathized with their historical suffering, and praised their morality. No endorsement was more significant than that of George Washington. The substance and timing of his actions made him a paladin of creedal diversity and the legitimacy of American Jewry. Before various sectarian assemblies, he denounced "spiritual tyranny," proclaimed religious liberty and the moral and civic equality of all religious beliefs, and celebrated America for its dedication to freedom of conscience (Jaher 1994). Replying to encomiums from synagogues in Philadelphia, New York, Charleston, Richmond, Savannah, and Newport, Washington lauded freedom of worship and expressed respect for Jews (Blau and Baron 1963). These communications particularly reinforced the principles he pledged because they were voiced while he was president, and praised contemporary Jews instead of Old Testament Israelites. "[H]appily the government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean

themselves as good citizens,” responded Washington to the head of the Newport congregation, who had thanked him for visiting the synagogue. Americans “possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship.” Washington conjoined what in France, Russia, and other nations were confrontations between loyalty to Judaism and to country. In his America, Judaism and patriotism were not contradictory. Believing that creedal communities could harmonize with the national community, the president asserted that “toleration” is no longer “spoken of as if it were the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights.” In propounding this higher standard of religious liberty, Washington linked interfaith equality with respect for Jews. “May the children of the stock of Abraham who dwell in this land,” he told the Newport congregation, “continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants” (Marcus 1975).

Even more than his rhetoric, Washington’s behavior enhanced esteem for Judaism. The president’s visit to a synagogue was only the latest in a series of gestures that conveyed respect for Hebraic traditions. When the Continental Congress in 1776 considered designs for the nation’s seal, Franklin proposed a representation of Moses dividing the Red Sea while Pharaoh’s army drowned in its waters, and Jefferson suggested a portrayal of the Israelites in the wilderness following a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Stokes 1950).

More pointed legitimizations, aimed at contemporary rather than Biblical Jews, occurred at the July 4, 1788, parade in Philadelphia and the presidential inauguration in New York City on April 30, 1789. At the Philadelphia parade, Rabbi Jacob Raphael of Mikveh Israel marched arm in arm with Christian clergymen. Two signers of the Declaration of Independence remarked approvingly that this display of interfaith amity affirmed the new nation’s dedication to Article VI and religious freedom. After the parade, Jews ate a kosher meal at a separate table. The entire scene was emblematic of *e pluribus unum*, a core national value. Less than a year later, David S. Franks, scion of an eminent colonial Jewish family, was one of three marshals at the presidential inauguration. Hazzan Seixas walked in the procession beside twelve other clergymen. The early tendency toward civic parity for Judaism was reinforced in 1811 when New York mayor DeWitt Clinton drew up and sent to the state legislature a memorial for a charity school run by Shearith Is-

rael. The legislature granted the Polonies Talmud Torah privileges it previously had conferred upon Catholic and parochial institutions, and the city council made payments retroactive to the school’s beginning (Blau and Baron 1963, Karp 1969, Pool and Pool 1955).

America’s Jews responded to their acceptance by advancing claims of civic entitlement and incorporating a civic component into their creed. Civic entitlement on an individual or group basis took the form of demands for political equality. In 1776, Newport merchant Moses M. Hays was outraged that the General Assembly of the Province of Rhode Island doubted his commitment to the Continental cause and ordered him to sign a loyalty pledge. While proclaiming support for the war and love for America, Hays refused the oath: “[I] am an Israelite and am not allowed the liberty of a vote or voice in common with the rest of the voters,” he told the assembly. “I ask of your House the rights and privileges due other free citizens” (Marcus 1975).

Civic assertiveness also moved the Philadelphia *Kahal* (the community organization of Philadelphia Jewry) in 1783 to protest to the Pennsylvania Council of Censors (an official committee of the state charged with safeguarding the rights of the people) against the Constitution of 1776, which prescribed that members of the general assembly acknowledge the divine inspiration of the New Testament. “[T]his religious test deprives the Jews of the most eminent right of freemen,” asserted the “memorialists.” As a “stigma on their religion,” the petitioners “perceive that for their professed dissent to a doctrine which is inconsistent with their religious sentiments, they should be excluded from the most important and honourable part of the rights of a free citizen” (Marcus 1953).

Nearly a generation later, American Jews still vigorously protested infringements on their citizenship. Although the North Carolina Constitution (1776) required that only Protestants serve in the state government, Jacob Henry, a Jew, was elected to the House of Commons in 1808. His service there showed that, as in colonial times, informal arrangements and a rudimentary bureaucracy enabled Jews to defy legal and constitutional proscriptions. Henry was reelected in 1809, but this time his presence was contested on constitutional grounds. Henry argued that the state constitution guaranteed freedom of conscience in its Declaration of Rights. This “natural and unalienable right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates

of their own Conscience” took precedence over the test oath clause (Schappes 1971).

The theological component of Judaic civil religion was expressed in a 1783 resolution of Shearith Israel to New York governor George Clinton. Here a religious voluntary association articulated its civic bond to the state. “[N]one has Manifested a more Zealous Attachment to the Sacred Cause of America, in the late war with Great Britain,” the congregation told the governor. “[W]e now look forward with Pleasure to the happy days we expect to enjoy under a [New York] Constitution Wisely framed to preserve the inestimable Blessing of Civilization and Religious Liberty.” Shearith Israel assured Clinton: “Taught by our Divine Legislator to Obey our Rulers, and prompted by the Dictates of our own Reason, it will be the Anxious endeavor of the Members of our Congregation to render themselves worthy of these Blessings, by Discharging the Duties of Good Citizens” (Lyons 1920).

Shearith Israel, the foremost congregation in the largest Jewish settlement in the country, was the citadel of civil Judaism. Its leader was the original personification of Judaism sanctified in the nation’s civic cult, a process that currently mandates that a rabbi, a minister, and a priest bless important civic occasions. Seixas marched with other clergymen in the 1789 presidential inauguration procession, preached sermons on days officially designated for thanksgiving and prayer, and consulted with ministers of other faiths to plan such events. Thus he forged ties between Jewish and other religious communities, a role acknowledged by his being called “Reverend” and “minister.” Seixas even occasionally preached in St. Paul’s Episcopal Church and served as a Columbia College regent and trustee (1784–1815). The latter was unprecedented for a Jewish clergyman, and the former had not occurred since medieval disputations (Faber 1992, Jaher 1994, Karp 1975).

Civil Judaism was on display when President John Adams, alarmed at the prospect of conflict with Britain and France, on March 28, 1798, proclaimed a day of fasting, prayer, and national humiliation. Congregations flocked to their houses of worship to listen to sermons entreating God to rescue America. Shearith Israel’s members listened intently and probably with pride as their hazzan preached. Many were successful in business and their professions, and among them was a former parnas who was president and a founder of the Anti-Federalist Democratic

Society (Karp 1975). Their spiritual leader, Seixas, was respected by the genteel and gentile clergy and the urban elite in general and was the recipient of appropriate honors. He epitomized civil Judaism in a congregation that prided themselves on being citizens as well as Jews.

The leader of Shearith Israel, however, shied away from total assimilation. Although the event was national, his sermon remained Judaic: “Such are the works necessary to be done to procure redemption and salvation, that we may arrive at that glorious epoch, when we shall be taken from among the nations, and gathered out of all countries, and brought unto our own land.” Messianic reservation against diaspora absorption surfaced still more starkly when Seixas contemplated the blessing of American citizenship: “It hath pleased God to have established us in this country where we possess every advantage that other citizens of these states enjoy, and which is as much as we could in reason expect in this captivity” (Karp 1975).

A more extreme commitment to the civil Judaism exemplified by Seixas and his congregation came from Charleston, home of the most Americanized antebellum Jewish community (Jaher 1994). On October 15, 1807, Myer Moses, a scion of the city’s Jewish mercantile elite, addressed the Hebrew Orphan Society. Moses was its vice president; three years later, he would become a state legislator and, in 1823, commissioner of the city’s public schools. The speech epitomizes American Jewry’s exhilaration with equal rights. Moses began by saluting “that benign day [July 4, 1776], when man proclaimed and Heaven approved this our country, free and Independent!” He then substituted for the diaspora *mentalité* an American identity. “[F]rom that period must be dated that the Almighty gave to the Jews what had long been promised them, namely a second Jerusalem!” This epiphany prompted a plea to Jehovah to “collect together thy long scattered people of Israel, and let their gathering place be in this land of milk and honey” (Karp 1975). “Next year in Jerusalem” became this and every year in America. Loyalty to a new homeland supplanted hope of return to the Holy Land; the secular, not the sacred, now directed the Jewish mission. Israel was the beginning, but it was also the past; America meant fulfillment and the future.

For much of American Jewry, citizenship took priority over creed, modernity over history, and diaspora patriotism over Judaic messianism. Whether the messianic transpiration was to take place in America or Israel, eschatological

expectations were stirred by discovery and settlement of the New World and further inspired by the Revolution and the emergence of the new nation. From the early sixteenth century, European Jewish commentators discerned in that earthly revelation and dispersion a sign of messianic redemption for the Jews. As Jonathan Sarna insightfully notes, many synagogues in the West Indies and North American mainland bore “messianic names:” *Mikveh* (Hope of) Israel; *Shearith* (Remnant of) Israel; *Nidhe* (Dispersed of) Israel; *Jeshuat* (Salvation of) Israel. Whether through religious calculation or natural signs, in 1768, 1769, and 1783 some Jews in North America and Europe believed that the Jewish Messiah was about to come (Bernardini and Fiering 2001).

## Antisemitism

To many of America’s Jews, the revolutionary and early national epochs were uplifting; to some, even exalting. But dispiriting countercurrents, more pronounced in subsequent eras, challenged these halcyon claims. Securing civic rights and religious parity and significant advances in social respectability, economic equality, and prosperity diminished, but did not dissipate, the specter of antisemitism. Although an ineffectual and unimportant minority, dissidents opposed to Article VI of the federal constitution argued that the moral and political indispensability of a “Christian commonwealth” and “uniformity of religion” necessitated the retention of test oaths. Madison told Jefferson, “One of the objections in New England was that the Constitution by prohibiting religious tests opened a door for Jews [*sic*] Turks and infidels.” These arguments were used to retain test oaths—albeit temporarily—in several state constitutions (Jaher 2002).

Several prominent religious figures still harbored prejudices against Jews. Long a critic of Judaism, Massachusetts Baptist leader Isaac Backus applauded the state constitutional provision that kept Jews from becoming commonwealth officials. Another foe of Jews, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, the most famous German Lutheran pastor of the era, defended the exclusion of Jews from public office in the Pennsylvania constitution as preventive of Christian degradation. John Carroll, the country’s first Catholic bishop and archbishop, noted in the 1790s that Jews had “the shadow of Goodness, but [Christians] possess Truth itself. . . .” Liberal, as well as traditional, creeds voiced anti-

Jewish sentiments. The Unitarian Catechism of 1815 accused Jews of persecuting and killing Christ and being punished by God by the destruction of Jerusalem and the death, dispersion, and enslavement of the Hebrews (Jaher 1994).

Institutional disabilities were more important. The greatest controversy over granting Jews full citizenship occurred in Maryland, where the original state constitution (1776) required a pledge of Christian faith for state office holding. To no avail, Maryland Jews appealed to the legislature in 1797 and 1804 for repeal of the oath. A “Jew bill” was initially introduced in 1818 but failed to pass, as did similar legislation in 1822. The test oath was eliminated in 1825. In the election after the 1822 defeat, candidates running against the bill defeated sixteen incumbent supporters, including the main sponsor of repeal. The victor proclaimed that he was running on a “Christian ticket,” while his opponent campaigned for a “Jew ticket” (Blau and Baron 1963, Jaher 1994).

Antisemites could be found in both major political parties in the early national period, although they were more influential among the Federalists. Eminent Federalist editors James Rivington and John Fenno identified Jews with Jacobins and Democratic-Republicans (Karp 1963, Jaher 1994). History’s classic outsiders, Jews were now cast as America’s current subversives.

Revolutionary turmoil and the tensions of founding the new nation intensified traditional Christological antisemitism. In 1784, a Georgia pamphleteer charged that Jews in that state were enemy aliens who entered politics to line their purses. In the same year, a Quaker lawyer argued for a charter for the Bank of Pennsylvania that would lower interest rates and protect Christians from Jewish brokers speculating in money and stocks.

Jews were also often aversive figures in popular culture, caricatured and lampooned as villains in many plays and novels. In the theater, as in *Slaves in Algiers* (1794) and *Trial without Jury* (1815), Jews were presented as sly, greedy Yiddish-speaking peddlers or as exotic, treacherous North African usurers. Novels featured similar characters. Capitalizing on the fascination with Barbary piracy, the anti-hero of *The Algerine Captive* (1797) was a sinister, avaricious, and duplicitous Levantine Jew. The immensely popular *Modern Chivalry* (1792–1815) ridiculed many types, but Jews were invariably presented as grasping, Yiddish-speaking clowns. It also quoted folk maxims, such as “Don’t like to be as rich as a Jew” (Jaher 1994).

Political and religious attacks in popular culture led some observers to perceive widespread hostility, or at least contempt, for Jews. Rebecca Samuel Alexander, a Jewish convert to Episcopalianism, claimed in 1791 that respectable New Yorkers and Philadelphians of German stock disliked Jews. Renowned Unitarian minister and social reformer Samuel J. May recalled that “children of my generation were taught” in the early 1800s “to dread if not despise Jews” (Jaher 1994). M. Otto, the French minister to the United States, reported in 1786, “All Christian sects enjoy in America an entire liberty. The Jews have the exercise of their religion only.” He concluded that “prejudices are still too strong to enable Jews to enjoy the privileges accorded to all their fellow citizens” (Stokes 1950).

In the next generation, these impressions did not change. A Maryland legislator told that state assembly, “Most of us have been taught from earliest infancy to look upon them [Jews] as a depraved and wicked people.” New York’s *German Correspondent* reached the same conclusion. In America, “Jews are not generally regarded with a favorable eye, and ‘Jew’ is an epithet that is frequently uttered in a tone bordering on contempt.” The paper declared, “[P]rejudices against the Jews exist here and subject them to inconveniences from which other citizens of the United States are exempt” (Jaher 1994).

Historically, conflicting currents frequently coexist, and affirmations could counter the defamations of Jews. Nor need the condemnation result in hostile behavior, if the individuals also held the American values of diversity and liberty. Although the worst aspects of Jew-hatred never crossed the Atlantic, echoes of European antisemitism reverberated in the new land. Jews were not assaulted, eliminated, or massively boycotted, but they were insulted; they competed politically and commercially but faced obstacles not encountered by white Protestants. Lesser victims of bigotry than African Americans, Indians, and Catholics, Jews also suffered persecution.

Above all Western nations, the United States advanced Jewry’s struggle for freedom. Colonial legacies, which facilitated the assumption of full citizenship and differentiated America from Europe, continued after independence. America was the first country that did not have a medieval past that demonized, segregated, banished, and massacred Jews. Here, the early modern denominational conflicts that tore Europe apart reverberated only relatively faintly.

In America, Jews confronted a unique promise and a related challenge. Incorporated for the first time into a national society, they experienced unsurpassed acceptance of their faith as a private belief and a constituent of the civic religion. Secularization and individualism helped Jews gain civic equality but presented adversity as well. Secularism undermined Christianity and Judaism alike, and individualism fragmented Jewry as it did other traditional communities. National consciousness might not be as ancestral or as committed to Christianity as in the Old World, but Anglo-American ethnicity and Protestantism enjoyed priority over the heritage and creeds of other citizens. Old preferences and bigotries still had the potential to marginalize America’s Jews, and new liberties might lure them into complete absorption or disruptive individualism.

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made up a majority of American Jews for nearly half of that time. Arriving during the early history of British North America, they later created the first large Jewish communities in the United States and were the first to bring a Jewish presence into most of the country. They kept coming right up into the second half of the twentieth century, and German Jewish immigrants or their children still make up a distinctive part of the American Jewish population. It can truly be said that German Jews shaped and reshaped in fundamental ways much of the culture and many of the institutions that characterize Jewish America.

Over many centuries, Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazi [i.e., German] Jews, their language based on medieval German, spread out from the Rhineland to the far reaches of Poland-Lithuania. Frequent persecutions and expulsions, as well as the opening of new areas of settlement or the re-opening of old ones, kept the Ashkenazi population mobile and prevented the hardening of regional divisions. Individuals from the remaining Jewish communities of the numerous sovereign German territories (there were more than 200 from 1648–1789 and 39 from 1815–1871) went East to study in the *yeshivas* of Poland-Lithuania, while Jews from the East moved West to fill rabbinical openings or to seek commercial and other opportunities as some German states slowly opened their territories to limited Jewish resettlement.

Only under the influence of the strongly pro-German and anti-Yiddish *Haskalah* (the Jewish Enlightenment) and the opening of German-language public education to Jews in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries did increasing numbers of Jews abandon Yiddish for German and begin the creation of a new Jewish culture that was distinctively German in the modern sense. But even while many German Jews increasingly distinguished themselves from the Yiddish-speaking *Ostjuden* (Eastern Jews) in the nineteenth century, the influence of the *Haskalah* spread far to the East; "enlightened" Jews in Warsaw, Krakow, and even distant Lemberg (L'vov) in the Ukraine spoke German at home—as did Jews from the many predominantly German-speaking cities and towns across Central Europe, from Prague in Bohemia to Hermannstadt (Sibiu) in Romania—via Brünn (Brno) in Moravia, Pressburg (Bratislava) in Slovakia, and Klausenburg (Cluj) in Transylvania. In mid-nineteenth century Budapest German was so much the language of the Hungarian capital's

## German Jews in America

There have been identifiably German Jews in America for about three hundred years, and Jews of German origin



*German Jews, ca. 1876. (Library of Congress)*

Jews that the first Jewish newspaper designed to promote Hungarian nationalism had to be published in German rather than Hungarian. And some German rabbis who were epitomes of the new German Jewish culture went East to promote it in the Russian Empire—such as Bavarian-born Max Lilienthal, who was director of Jewish schools in Riga for several years before he left for America.

At the same time, many poor Jews living in rural areas of the southwestern and northeastern regions of the new German Empire of 1871 continued to speak Yiddish even into the twentieth century, as did their Western counterparts from French-ruled Alsace. Then, too, some Central European Jews Germanized by the Haskalah un-Germanized themselves in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries under the influence of rising anti-German nationalism in their homelands.

So the people who can be identified as German Jews cannot be limited to either the speakers of proper German or the boundaries of any particular collection of “German” states. Moreover, in determining whom to include under the rubric *German Jew*, we should not narrow the definition too precisely lest we exclude far too many Jews who need to be considered.

Thousands of Jews from German Central Europe moved west over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to take advantage of economic opportunities opening for them in the Netherlands and Britain—and their overseas empires. Some followed Dutch trade links to Dutch and British North America, while others arrived by way of England. There was even a sponsored group migration in 1733, when wealthy Sephardic Jews in London raised money to send sixty-seven of the city’s poorest Jews, mostly Germans, to the new British colony of Georgia. These colonists later removed themselves to Charlestown and New York when most of Georgia’s residents fled the endangered colony in 1741. By the middle of the eighteenth century, many of the leading Jewish merchants of America were of German origin and corresponded in Yiddish, including the Gratz brothers of Philadelphia, who later outfitted privateers and provided supplies for George Washington’s army.

The steady trickle of Ashkenazi migrants who arrived over the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was readily absorbed into the existing Sephardic Jewish communities, and not until the nineteenth century would Ashkenazi synagogues be established. Most of these migrants became urban shopkeepers and artisans, although a few became wealthy merchants or plantation owners. But despite the continuing Sephardic ritual of the synagogues, the reality was that by 1750 the majority of American Jews were of German origin. So even though the number of German Jews who came to eighteenth-century America was small—there were only a couple of thousand Jews altogether in the United States at the end of the century (Rosenwaike 1985)—there is a sense in which the “German” era of American Jewish history began almost a century before its usually assigned starting date of 1830.

The thirty years following 1789 opened many opportunities for Jews in the German lands as victorious French revolutionary armies forced many states to demolish their

ghetto walls and emancipate their Jews, but the extended warfare also virtually halted emigration from the European continent for a generation. The German nationalist reaction against defeat and French domination encouraged an increasingly strident sentiment directed against Jews, who were represented both as a foreign element and as one that had benefited from German defeat. So even though many German Jews volunteered in the war of liberation against France (seventy-one of whom were awarded Prussia’s Iron Cross), most of the German states revoked, limited, or ignored their emancipation laws in the wake of France’s defeat. Then came the Hep! Hep! riots of 1819, the worst outbreak of anti-Jewish violence in the German lands since the Middle Ages. While better-off German Jews often responded by redoubling their drive toward assimilation, others turned to migration to America—where the U.S. Constitution promised an equality denied in the German states.

In most of the German lands, strict limitations on the numbers of Jewish marriages combined with limited economic opportunities to provide an even greater incentive to emigrate than did the denial of political rights, and it was the young who led the way. The sons (and then the daughters) of petty traders joined young Jewish artisans denied the right to practice their trades and set off overseas. The retention or renewal of even the most limited political rights was generally accompanied by conscription, providing additional incentive for young men to emigrate—as did a second wave of Hep! Hep! riots in 1832. By the 1840s, a veritable “emigration fever” had set in, and so many young Jews left the villages and small towns of some regions that the viability of Jewish community life there was thrown into question.

Over the course of several decades after 1819, the renewed trickle of German Jewish migration to America increased to a steady flow that grew from the thousands of the 1830s to tens of thousands in the 1840s and 1850s. To some extent, this was part and parcel of the much larger, non-Jewish German migration to the United States, which totaled about 1.5 million by 1860. Not surprisingly, the influence of the German Jewish emigration quickly extended into adjacent areas of former Poland and even Russia, thereby laying the foundations for the massive Eastern European Jewish migration that characterized the end of the century. In some parts of the United States where their numbers were small, these Eastern Europeans

were absorbed into the larger German Jewish communities. But where they were numerous enough, they rapidly established their own congregations and communities even before midcentury—an indication of the increasing cultural divisions growing between German-speaking Jews and their Eastern coreligionists.

Unlike the small numbers of their predecessors who lived mostly in a handful of Eastern cities—and also unlike the Eastern European Jews who followed them at the end of the century—the German Jews rapidly fanned out across the United States. By 1860 there were organized Jewish communities in 50 cities, and readers of Jewish publications lived in more than 1,200 different places (Glanz 1972). This dispersion was largely the consequence of the petty trader tradition that so many German Jews brought from their homelands to America and the way in which it met the needs of the rapidly expanding and commercially undeveloped United States.

The scattered residences of the American farming population created a need for retail services that did not require a long, difficult trip to a village or town that might take a full day of traveling. Yankee peddlers from New England provided some of these services early in the century, but they were not numerous enough to meet the rapidly growing demand, and that left a great area of opportunity for newcomers. The Jews of Alsace and southwestern Germany had long specialized in peddling and petty trading, so it was natural for them to continue this in the United States, especially as peddling was a business that required virtually no capital. Traveling peddlers identified promising locations in small towns and burgeoning Western cities, where they then opened stores that soon became the centers of small Jewish communities. Successful store owners brought in relatives from the Old Country or gave goods on credit to newly arrived fellow Jews, who then spread the peddling net even farther.

Joseph Seligman, from the village of Baiersdorf in Bavaria, was one of the earliest such immigrants when he arrived in 1837. He learned about American peddling from a Yankee peddler and soon started bringing over some of his many brothers as he developed his own trade network based on a store he opened in Lancaster, Pennsylvania; he ran the store and maintained the stock while his brothers set out on foot and wagon to peddle dry goods through the countryside. Eventually he relocated the central operation to New York City, the commercial capital of the United

States, and his brothers spread out to regional trade centers across the country, where they set up their own trade networks of stores and peddlers. In 1844 Henry Lehman went from Rimpfing, Bavaria, to Mobile, Alabama, where he began peddling in style with a wagon rather than a backpack. He, too, founded a family-based trading network built on a number of brothers, and the Lehmans, too, soon found they needed a New York base. After Henry's death, his brother Emanuel took over the family network and established the New York office in 1858. This sort of family-based network was widespread, and it is only the later successes of the Seligmans and Lehmans that made them stand out from their more ordinary contemporaries.

Cincinnati was the commercial center for the farming districts most favored by German immigrants in the first half of the nineteenth century, and it became a major center for the new family trading networks established by German Jews. Linking themselves to national wholesaling operations and credit sources created by other German Jews in New York, they set up regional wholesaling operations in their "Jerusalem on the Ohio" that supplied family and friends who peddled and ran small country stores throughout a wide swath of rural and small-town America between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi, from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada—servicing both German- and English-speaking farmers and small townfolk. Another such regional center developed out of St. Louis to supply a network of German Jewish traders across the trans-Mississippi and mountain West.

Women were often indispensable to the success, or even the survival, of these businesses. Wives tended the store while their husbands peddled or went for supplies, and sometimes they displayed far more business acumen than their husbands did. Peddlers often gained access to the credit needed to open a store by marrying the sisters or daughters of their suppliers, as when Samuel Rosenwald and his bride were given a store in Peoria as a wedding present from her parents. Marriageable shopkeepers moved to larger cities and even moved up into wholesaling using the same technique. And the owners of successful businesses assured their continued expansion and long-term success by encouraging their daughters to marry bright young men who had demonstrated a good head for business—a quality that might be lacking in their sons.

Most of these peddler and shopkeeper family networks provided the basis for a comfortable, middle-class

family existence. Only a few grew rich off this trade, and some failed miserably, as Hasia Diner pointed out (Diner 1992). She attributed the great geographic mobility of German Jewish immigrants as much to business failures as to their successes and recounted the stories of a number of exemplary failures. One was Jacob Philipson, who died flat broke after having been the first successful Jewish merchant in St. Louis. Financially embarrassed Marcus Cohen, on the other hand, had never had any sort of success before he committed suicide in Brooklyn's Greenwood cemetery in 1849.

Some did indeed get rich as they built successful dry goods stores into large-scale wholesale and retail networks—while others turned their shops into department stores. Edward Filene of Boston, Adam Gimbel of New York, and the sons of Lazarus Straus (who parlayed their father's crockery business into the ownership of R. H. Macy & Co.) are just some of the most conspicuous examples of late nineteenth-century department-store magnates whose careers were rooted in their fathers' peddling careers—as was that of Sears, Roebuck & Co. co-owner Julius Rosenwald.

In some cases, retailing was only the first step toward a vastly more lucrative career in finance for some German Jewish peddlers-turned-shopkeepers. A few talented and lucky families were able to build great fortunes upon these small beginnings. Two of the Seligman brothers took a large inventory of goods to San Francisco in 1850 to open a store in the center of the California gold rush. The Seligmans not only sold their inventory at a great profit, they soon found themselves dealing in large quantities of gold with their New York-based brothers as agents. By the middle of the 1850s, the New York Seligmans were running a bank that financed the operations of many of the Jewish family trading networks across the country. From there they grew into one of the major investment banks in nineteenth-century America. The Southern-based Lehman brothers went from dry goods to cotton brokerage before they, too, became investment bankers. A few other German Jews, such as Joseph Sachs and Marcus Goldman, followed similar trajectories into investment banking.

By the last third of the nineteenth century, a small group of German Jewish families, mostly from Bavaria, was active in investment banking in New York and helping to finance America's industrial expansion. The children of these families soon intermarried, and promising young

employees were also brought into the family network—just like their counterparts with retail trade networks. By the early twentieth century, they formed a close-knit financial elite. None of them was as wealthy or powerful as the German American ex-Jew August Belmont or the Anglo-Americans J. P. Morgan, Jay Gould, and John D. Rockefeller, but they were conspicuous, and their visibility helped create the image of German Jews as wealthy businessmen who were extremely successful in America.

Less conspicuous but far more numerous were the German Jewish dry-goods merchants who moved into manufacturing as well as selling clothing. The most famous of these was Levi Strauss from Bavaria, who extended his half brothers' dry-goods operation from New York to San Francisco in 1853 and moved into manufacturing work pants (Levi's) as well as selling them. But Strauss was only one of many shopkeepers who took their stock of cloth and paid tailors to sew it into ready-made clothing. The demand for army uniforms during the Civil War transformed the ready-made clothing business from a shopkeepers' sideline into a major industry. The Seligmans alone provided the army with more than a million dollars worth of uniforms, but most contracts were for \$10,000–\$20,000 worth at a time, and relatively small operators could compete for them. With this experience in mass production and the capital accumulated from very profitable wartime production, these manufacturers created a new, high-quality, ready-made clothing industry after the war—and German Jews dominated the business.

While peddler–shopkeeper–wholesaler networks dispersed large numbers of German Jews around the country, many also concentrated in major cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. By 1850, New York City alone was the home of about a third of the entire Jewish population of the United States, a proportion that would only increase as the century wore on. Even as the great wave of Eastern European Jews began to flood into the country in the 1880s, the New York City region's 85,000 German Jews (Nadel 1990) accounted for a full third of America's entire Jewish population. Indeed, in 1880 a majority of Jews lived in just half a dozen large cities (Lee Shai Weissbach in Gurock 1998), so any attempt to depict the experience of German Jews in America must take them into account. But the German Jews of New York and other large cities differed from the stereotype of German Jews as mostly peddlers, shopkeepers, merchants, and bankers. Not that these

types were absent from the large cities; indeed, German Jewish bankers were hardly to be found anywhere else, while peddlers and shopkeepers were there in strength—but in most of the big urban centers they were vastly outnumbered by a very different population of German American Jews.

For much of the second half of the nineteenth century, these cities were home to a large German Jewish working class that more closely resembled the stereotypical Eastern European Jewish working class of the early twentieth century than it did the German Jewish elite of Stephen Birmingham's *Our Crowd*. New York's German Jews lived in Kleindeutschland (Little Germany)—the same Lower East Side inhabited later by their Eastern European successors—and they often labored in the same trades.

The needle trades employed German Jewish tailors early on, and when a group of striking German tailors was arrested for picketing in 1850, at least one of them was Jewish. By 1865 the city's tailors included large numbers of German Jews, and they belonged to a multiethnic union led by Jacob Morestadt, a German Jew. But while German Jews continued to predominate among the employers in this industry well past the end of the century, German Jewish tailors were driven from the trade in the late 1870s and 1880s by the willingness of more recently arrived "Polaks" to work for even lower wages. It was this wage competition that led the German Jewish tailor and union leader Charles L. Miller to get the citywide Central Labor Union and United German Trades to finance the creation of a United Hebrew Trades—to organize unions among Yiddish-speaking Eastern European Jews. The UHT would become an important factor in the creation of the Yiddish labor movement of the World of Our Fathers, but it was a product of German Jewish workers and labor activists.

Organized German Jewish workers also made hats and shoes. The capmakers' union did not have a Jewish president in 1874, just German Jews as vice president, secretary, and treasurer—while one section of the Knights of St. Crispin shoemakers' union was called the Purim Lodge. Other German Jews worked as butchers and bakers, but it was the cigarmakers who stood out as German Jewish workers, employers, and trade unionists par excellence. And not only in New York; it was the Chicago cigarmakers who sent the German American Jew Jacob Selig as their delegate to the 1867 meeting of the National Labor Union. But the cigarmaking industry centered in New York, and it

was there that Adolf Strasser, Louis Berliner, and Samuel Gompers rebuilt the Cigarmakers' International Union after the depression of the 1870s.

The English-born Gompers (of Dutch Jewish parentage) was a German Jew only by ancestry and association, having grown up among German Jews in New York, but he was also the most junior of the trio. The real leader was Gompers's mentor, Adolf Strasser, a Hungarian-born Jew who was a prominent Lassallean socialist first in Vienna and then New York. German-born Louis Berliner had been a leading member of a Marxist section of the International Workingmen's Association in America. All in all, these German Jewish workers, with their radical labor unions and socialist leaders, far more closely approximated our stereotype of the Eastern European Jew in America than that of the German.

German Jews in America also spawned a small criminal class. Jewish gangsters such as "Sheeny" Mike Kurtz, Little Freddy, and Johnny Irving led New York's "Dutch Mob" of the 1860s and 1870s. It was a minor gang by New York standards, but they provided a mid-nineteenth-century foreshadowing of later Jewish gangsters such as Monk Eastman and Dopey Benny—or even such later big-time organized crime figures as Arnold Rothstein, Dutch Schultz, and Meyer Lansky. Then there was Moses Ehrich, one of a number of German Jews in New York who followed the old tradition of mixing pawnbroker operations with fencing stolen goods—and they had their counterparts among some of the many German Jewish pawnbrokers who followed the peddlers and shopkeepers into small-town America.

Perhaps the most famous German Jewish criminal of the time was Fredrika "Marm" Mandelbaum of New York, who began her career peddling stolen goods door to door in the tenements of Kleindeutschland. Like many other peddlers, she moved up to keeping her own shop. But her shop was not only a front for selling stolen goods; it was also the headquarters of a gang of thieves who stole according to her instructions. At one point, before she retired to Montreal in 1884, she reputedly ran an academy of crime to train new associates, offering courses on everything from picking pockets to cracking safes. Mrs. Mandelbaum was also said to have been a generous supporter of her synagogue.

Like their later Eastern European counterparts, poor German Jewish women often worked hard to support their

families. Many took up the needle along with their tailor husbands, as it often took the work of two to make a living as a tailor in the growing mass-production clothing industry. Widows, too, took up the needle and worked long hours for little pay—that their exploiters were fellow German Jews provided them with little comfort. Sewing paid badly, but it could be done at home and fit in around other household tasks. Taking in boarders fit in even better with household work, and it often paid a lot better than sewing. While this work was an often unreported but vital supplement to the incomes of the poorest German Jews, it was also an important aspect of the shopkeeper–peddler nexus, as the wives of some shopkeepers provided clean beds, laundry services, Jewish cooking, and some of the comforts of home to the peddlers whom their husbands supplied. Taking in boarders was also an area in which German Jewish women could develop their own businesses. Many married or widowed women did not just take in a boarder or two; they operated full-scale boardinghouses. Other German Jewish women, such as Amelia Dannenberg from the Rhineland, not only ran their own clothing shops but had their own manufacturing operations similar to those of their male counterparts (Diner 1992).

German Jews in America also engaged in professional activities from early on. Two German Jews practiced medicine as early as the 1740s, and the numbers of German Jewish doctors swelled rapidly with the mass migration of the nineteenth century. By the late 1850s, perhaps a third of the doctors in New York City were German, and a large proportion of these were Jewish. Some, such as Joseph Goldmark, Ernst Krakowitzer, and Abraham Jacobi, were well-known political figures from the revolutions of 1848–1850, while others were responding to the limited career possibilities at the time for Jewish doctors in Central Europe. Jacobi was the most successful of the lot. Landing in New York with a hero's reputation after his acquittal in the Cologne Communist trial of 1852, he went on to become the “father of pediatrics” in America and a founder of New York's Mt. Sinai Hospital before being elected president of the American Medical Association in 1912. While Michael Reese of Chicago was not a doctor but rather one of those Bavarian peddlers who got rich in trade and real estate, in 1881 he founded the Jewish hospital that bears his name, which engaged the services of many German Jewish doctors, including his fellow Bavarian, chief of medicine Dr. Ernst Schmidt. Indeed, most German Jewish

settlements of any size had at least one German-trained doctor, and the larger communities usually had a German Jewish hospital as well by 1880.

Legal careers were far less portable than medical ones. Maurice Meyer was only one of a number of established German Jewish lawyers who found they could not practice law when they arrived in the United States. Meyer, a member of the revolutionary government of the Bavarian Palatinate in 1848, turned to the German Jewish fraternal movement for an alternative career and became general secretary of B'nai B'rith in 1863.

Nonetheless, some younger members of even this first immigrant generation became lawyers in the United States. Sigismund Kaufmann arrived in New York as a German radical 1848er like Dr. Jacobi, but, unlike Jacobi, he maintained his radicalism for decades after his arrival. He was a founder of the North American Socialist *Turnverein* [Gymnastics Union]; as editor of its newspaper in the 1850s, he published the writings of Karl Marx and other German socialists while he prepared for his legal career. He was a prominent abolitionist, an elector for Abraham Lincoln, a Republican candidate for lieutenant governor of New York in 1870, and a member of the State Board of Commissioners of Emigration that ran Castle Garden (the main immigrant landing depot before the opening of Ellis Island)—while also serving as a trustee for Temple Beth Elohim. Simon Wolf practiced law in Washington, D.C., and was the leading, albeit unofficial, Jewish lobbyist for decades. Like Kaufmann, he opposed slavery and supported Lincoln. He took the lead in protesting General Grant's 1862 order expelling “Jews as a class” from his military district and quickly got the order canceled; nonetheless, he was later closely associated with President Grant, who turned to him for advice on Jewish matters. Wolf also published *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen* (1895) to refute an influential *North American Review* article that had charged that Jews participated in the Civil War only as war profiteers. But it was the American-born generation of German Jews that produced the bevy of attorneys who led American Jewry for many decades into the twentieth century, one even reaching the U.S. Supreme Court. These included such luminaries as Max Kohler, Oscar Straus, Louis Marshall, and Louis Brandeis.

The most Jewish profession of all involved leading synagogues; German Jews provided innovative leaders who first influenced and then transformed the practice of

Judaism in America, which had never before attracted trained rabbis. Although Isaac Leeser from Westphalia had ended his formal religious training at age fourteen, it was still enough to make him stand out in 1830s America. At age twenty-four, he was invited to take over the religious leadership of Philadelphia's old Sephardic synagogue, Mikveh Israel, and he became one of the most prominent leaders of traditionalist Judaism in the country—especially after he founded a widely read monthly, the *Occident*, in 1843.

In 1845, as German Jewish migration grew, two German synagogues in New York recruited Leo Merzbacher to come from Bavaria to be the first fully trained rabbi in American history. But Merzbacher had already been influenced in Germany by a reform movement that wanted to “modernize” Judaism, and before the end of the year he left the Orthodox synagogues to become the founding rabbi of New York's Temple Emanu-El. This was one of the opening moves in the creation of Reform Judaism in America. In 1873 the Reformers formally organized the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and they founded the Hebrew Union College in 1875 to train Reform rabbis.

By the end of the 1850s, the Reform movement was making rapid progress as more reform-oriented rabbis arrived from Germany. Isaac Leeser's *Occident* led a traditionalist attack on the reformers in 1856. The defense of Reform fell to Max Lilienthal of Cincinnati, another Bavarian rabbi who had been brought over to be Merzbacher's Orthodox successor, before he too defected to the Reform movement and became co-editor of the *Israelite* with the moderate Reform leader Isaac Mayer Wise from Bohemia. Although they were traditionalist opponents of Reform, Leeser and his Orthodox colleagues also adopted some innovations. Leeser moved the *bimah* from the center to the front of the synagogue and faced the congregation while leading prayers. He also gave full support to Rebecca Gratz as she led the formation of a Jewish Sunday school movement in the United States.

The argument between traditionalists and reformers played itself out again at a more intellectually sophisticated level a generation later in 1885, by which point Reform had become the dominant form of Judaism in the United States. The defense of Reform again fell to a Bavarian, the Berlin-trained rabbi Kaufmann Kohler, who had succeeded the radical German American reformer David Einhorn as rabbi of Temple Beth El in New York. This time the tradi-

tionist attack came from the Hungarian-born but German-trained rabbi Alexander Kohut. As a traditionalist, Kohut was highly critical of Reform, but he, too, believed that Orthodox Judaism needed modification to prosper in America. The year after his influential attack on Reform, Kohut joined with a group of like-minded traditionalists to create their own Jewish Theological Seminary to provide training for more traditional rabbis in a “spirit . . . of Conservative Judaism” (Sorin 1992).

This set the foundation for the formation of a third denomination of American Judaism, one that prospered in the twentieth century with the financial support of a number of wealthy German American Reform Jews who had concluded that the Reform movement would not appeal to large numbers of Eastern European Jews. Eventually, Eastern European Jews and their descendants would take over the leadership of all three major Jewish denominations in the United States (though there would be a renewal of German leadership in the Reform movement in the latter part of the twentieth century), but in the nineteenth century it was German Jews who led all three and who had literally created both of the newer varieties of Judaism.

German Jews also created many other Jewish institutions and organizations in America. Leeser's *Occident* and Isaac Mayer Wise's *Israelite* (founded in 1854 and renamed the *American Israelite* in 1874) were major Jewish newspapers. Wise also published *die Deborah* in German for women who might not understand English. By 1861 there were nine German Jewish papers in German or English or both, and many more were added in later decades, including the *American Hebrew* (1878–1957). Some second-generation German American Jews such as Adolph Ochs, publisher of the *New York Times*, took to mainstream journalism and published major newspapers, while others such as pioneering scholar Dr. Cyrus Adler created the Jewish Publication Society (1888) and the American Jewish Historical Society (1892) to promote serious Jewish scholarship in America.

But publications were only part of the institutional framework created by German American Jews. Soon after large-scale migration began, they founded national fraternal-sororal orders such as the B'nai B'rith (Sons of the Covenant, 1843), the *Orden Treuer Schwestern* (Order of True Sisters, 1846), and the *B'nai Israel* (Free Sons of Israel, 1849), along with countless local organizations such as the Maimonides Library Association of New York City, the

# Deborah.

Ein Beiblatt zum „Israelite,“ gewidmet den Töchtern Israels.

Herausgegeben von  
**Bloch & Co.,**  
No. 43 Dritte Straße, Ecke der Spycamore.

„Es werde Licht.“

Redigirt von  
**Isaac M. Wise,**  
Redacteur des „Israelite.“

No. 1.

Cincinnati, den 24. August, 1855.

Erster Jahrgang.

## Die Deborah.

Endlich, endlich ist sie da, die liebenswür-  
dige Deborah mit ihrem blendend weißen  
Gewebe und rabenschwarzen Augen.

lieblichen Klänge der Mutter, in der Deine  
Kindheit lallte, mit Sanftmuth und Zartheit  
sprechen zu den Töchtern Israels, lehren,  
erzählen und unterhalten.

## Das israelitische Weib.

Griechen und Römer widmeten den Frauen  
die schönsten und herrlichsten Erzeugnisse  
der Kunst, die schönsten und

Masthead for Deborah. German-language supplement to the newspaper *Israelite*, written mainly for Jewish women in the United States. (New York Public Library)

German Literary Association of Albany, and the Minerva Society of Louisville. In 1854 the Young Men's Hebrew Association was founded as a local group in Baltimore, but by 1880 there were about eighty such organizations in twenty-five cities.

Synagogues had always engaged in charitable activities, but with the arrival of large numbers of unaffiliated and secular German Jews, charitable organizations were created to serve the larger community without making religious distinctions. These included burial societies, orphanages, old age homes, medical clinics, and hospitals. In the decades after 1859, they moved to professionalize and centralize their activities, forming numerous citywide United Hebrew Relief Associations and United Hebrew Charities wherever there were substantial numbers of Jews. Just as with synagogue sisterhoods, women often took the lead in supporting these philanthropic organizations, and German American Jewish women such as Hannah Solomon formed a National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) in 1893 to promote Jewish "religion, philanthropy and education" and "the work of social reform"—as well as opposing all religious persecution (Schappes 1965). The outbreak of World War I in Europe led to the internation-

alizing of American Jewish philanthropy, as German American Jews took the lead in organizing the Joint Distribution Committee to assist the hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees in their German and Austro-Hungarian ancestral homelands who had fled from marauding czarist armies and pogroms.

Indeed, it was Old World antisemitism that spurred several German Jewish moves to unify American Jewry. When the Jews of Damascus, Syria, were accused of murdering a Catholic priest so his blood could be used to bake matzah, Isaac Leeser and Rebecca Gratz organized a protest campaign and thanked President Van Buren for intervening with the Ottoman government. Jewish protests were less successful when the United States signed a trade treaty with Switzerland in 1850 that acknowledged a Swiss-claimed right to discriminate against American Jews. Despite a campaign sparked by Bavarian-born Sigismund Waterman and promoted by both the traditionalist Leeser and the Reformer Wise, the Senate ratified the treaty in 1855. Two years later, an American was ordered to leave a Swiss canton that prohibited Jewish entry, and protests resumed.

Then came the official kidnapping in Italy of six-year-old Edgardo Mortara after a nursemaid claimed that she

had secretly baptized him. By this time, most American Jews were German born, and German Jews took the lead in calling on President Buchanan to follow the precedent of Van Buren and intervene with the Vatican. Buchanan expressed sympathy to two separate Jewish delegations but refused to act because that might legitimate foreign intervention over American slavery—not to mention that it might alienate Irish Catholic voters from the Democratic Party.

Responding to this double failure, the representatives of twenty-five German Jewish congregations met in 1859 and founded the Board of Delegates of American Congregations to defend Jewish rights, the first such national organization in U.S. history. Four years later, the Board of Delegates convinced Secretary of State Seward to ask Morocco to protect its Jews from attack after a series of pogroms.

The wave of antisemitism that spread across the United States in the late nineteenth century failed to generate any new defense organizations. It only splintered Jewish unity, as many assimilated German Jews blamed rising antisemitism on the visibility of newer arrivals from Eastern Europe. It was only the renewal of Russian pogroms in 1903 that stimulated the creation of a new organization. Seeking to create an organization that might effectively influence U.S. policy toward Russia, a group of prominent German American Jews led by Louis Marshall, Jacob Schiff, and Oscar Straus met to form the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in February 1906. Although some moves were later made to bring a few leading Eastern European Jews into the organization, it remained predominantly German for many years.

Nonetheless, the AJC took the lead in opposing immigration restriction proposals directed against Eastern European Jews. It also won the abrogation of an old commercial treaty with Russia that permitted discrimination against Jews, thereby both vindicating the rights of American Jews and punishing Russia for its persecution of Russian Jews—an achievement eased by the appointment of AJC leader Oscar Straus as Secretary of Commerce. The AJC also undertook the lead in defense of Jewish rights in the United States. In 1913 the AJC led the successful campaign for a New York state law against discriminatory advertisements by summer resorts, and then it helped win a gubernatorial commutation of Leo Frank's death sentence after he was unjustly convicted of murder in Georgia.

Most German Jews in America long opposed Zionism on the grounds that their Judaism was purely religious. As Jacob Schiff put it in 1904, "I am an American pure and simple and cannot possibly belong to two nations" (Sorin 1992). Nonetheless, American Zionism found its organizational leadership among German American Jews. Reform Rabbi Richard Gottheil broke with most of his colleagues when he founded the Federation of American Zionists in 1898 after attending the first World Zionist Congress in Basle, and he served as its president until 1904. Fellow Reformer Stephen Wise was an important early popularizer of the movement, and the recruitment of Louis Brandeis to the Zionist leadership in 1912 was crucial to the movement's later growth and influence. A number of German Jewish women were also important figures in the Zionist movement in America, including Henrietta Szold, the translator of Heinrich Graetz's *History of the Jews* from its German original. Szold was the main figure in the 1912 creation of the women's Zionist organization Hadassah, leading it to become the largest Jewish women's organization in the world.

The relationship between the German Jewish immigrants of the nineteenth century and the German America created by the contemporary migration of millions of non-Jewish Germans was complex. Some German Jews were highly integrated into their German American communities and, like Sigismund Kaufmann of New York and Simon Wolf of Washington, played important leadership roles in the broader communities even as they continued to identify strongly as Jews. German-educated rabbis promoted German *Kultur* in America, organized German cultural associations, and were often invited to address German American celebrations. In 1859 Rabbi Bernhard Felsenthal of Chicago coined the label "American-German Jews," and at the beginning of the twentieth century, he defined his identity by saying "Racially I am a Jew. . . . Politically I am an American. . . . Spiritually I am a German" (Felsenthal 1924). By the same token, as German Jewish communities developed, they became increasingly distinct, and as collectivities (though not as individuals), they tended to participate less and less in broader German American activities. But this could also be said about German American Catholics and Lutherans, so even here they fit into the variegated mold of German America.

Like their labor movement colleagues, numerous German Jewish radicals in America generally functioned as

part of the large German American radical movement rather than in purely Jewish organizations—leading many Jewish historians to downplay or even deny their importance. But their importance often lay in the very fact that they led much larger and more influential organizations than would have been possible had they confined their activities to Jews. August Bondi was exceptional among German Jewish abolitionists in joining John Brown to fight against slavery in Kansas, but there were many German Jewish abolitionists—rabbis such as David Einhorn, Bernhard Felsenthal, and I. M. Wise but also radicals like Socialist Turnverein leader Sigismund Kaufmann and *Kommunist Klub* secretary Fritz Jacobi (First Lieutenant Fritz Jacoby died fighting slavery in 1862).

After the Civil War, German Jewish radicals continued to be active in the broader German American context. Augusta Lilienthal joined the Socialist Labor Party (SLP) and wrote on women's rights for its German-language paper, *die Neue Zeit*, while a generation later her daughter Meta "Hebe" Lilienthal did the same for the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* and served briefly on the Socialist Party's Women's National Committee before devoting most of her efforts to the fight for women's suffrage. Adolf Strasser and Louis Berliner were also important early socialist leaders in post-Civil War America, while Victor Berger started off in Kaufmann's Socialist Turnverein after he arrived in 1878. Berger soon moved on to the SLP and was a founding leader of the Socialist Party of America in 1901. As editor of the *Wisconsin Vorwärts*, he became the undisputed leader of the powerful Socialist movement of Milwaukee, where he was elected mayor before he became the first Socialist ever elected to the U.S. Congress. He was reelected five times, and by 1919 he was one of the leaders of the less radical wing when the Socialist Party splintered. Ludwig Lore, who arrived in the United States in 1903, joined the German Socialist movement in New York. By 1919 he was editor of the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* and executive secretary of the German Socialist Federation, which he led into the new Communist Party when the Socialist Party split apart. He led his followers out of the CP in 1925 and continued to be the most prominent leader of German American radicalism until he died in 1942. By then, another well-known socialist-pacifist German Jewish activist (part-time) had taken up residence in the United States: Albert Einstein. As these examples from nearly a century of radical activism suggest, German Jewish radicals were far

more numerous in America than their better-known German Jewish banker contemporaries.

In some ways, the German Jews' relationship with the rest of the American Jewish community paralleled their relationship with German America. They were a part of the larger whole, but they remained a distinct and separate part. The distinction was relatively minor until the later part of the nineteenth century, when the term *Germans* took on the connotation of greater assimilation, wealth, and status—to be contrasted with the recently arrived, unassimilated, poorer, lower-status Russians, or *Ostjuden*. Indeed, successful and assimilated early arrivals among the Easterners staked their claims to higher status by redefining their origins as German. When the term *German* took on this class connotation, large numbers of working- and middle-class German Jews and their descendants were consigned to a sort of invisibility until, with the appearance of American-born descendants of Eastern European Jews, they merged into a generalized category of "American" Jews. Without the financial resources to maintain a status distinction, and with the ancestral homelands of both groups declining in importance, they intermarried with the more numerous descendants of the Easterners and ceased to exist as a separate group.

The relationship between the high-status "Germans" and the newly arrived Easterners was fraught with tension. Fearing that the Easterners' distinctive appearance would heighten antisemitism, German American Jews sponsored a series of programs to disperse the Eastern Europeans into rural settlements. By 1882 thousands had been sent off to nearly two hundred different places, and in 1890 a Jewish Alliance of America was formed to expedite the dispersal. A decade later the German Jewish-supported Baron de Hirsch Fund, Jewish Colonization Society, and Industrial Removal Office all poured large amounts of money and effort into the dispersion program, but their small successes in funding some 160 agricultural settlements and tens of thousands of removals had little real impact on the growing concentration of new arrivals in a few major cities.

After toying briefly with support for immigration restriction to keep down the numbers of Eastern European Jews, most German Jews and their organizations (including the B'nai B'rith, the Board of Delegates, and the AJC, as well as the major German Jewish papers) campaigned vigorously against immigration restriction proposals that would have prevented millions of Jews

from fleeing persecution in Europe—until the combined effects of World War I and the Red Scare overwhelmed their opposition in 1921. In 1917, when they could no longer block a literacy requirement, German American Jews even got literacy in the long-despised “jargon” Yiddish included as grounds for admission—along with a total exemption for those fleeing religious persecution.

When mass immigration from Eastern Europe took off after 1880, the Jewish charities established by the Germans undertook the increasingly expensive task of aiding the new arrivals. Many German Jewish women, such as Hannah Solomon of the NCJW, took the lead in finding new ways to aid them. In 1896 Solomon founded the Bureau of Personal Service, staffed by German Jewish women, to channel aid to needy Jewish women, while other NCJW members helped create separate juvenile courts to deal with the rising level of Jewish juvenile delinquency in such cities as New York and Chicago. German Jewish men such as Isidor Straus, Jacob Schiff, and Julius Rosenwald funded the creation of settlement houses such as the Educational Alliance, the Jewish People’s Institute, and Lillian Wald’s famous Henry Street Settlement—along with orphanages, day nurseries, training schools, free medical clinics, hospitals, and old age homes, to aid the growing masses of poor Jews. These increasingly professionalized—and often patronizing—efforts of German American Jews were often resented by the Eastern Europeans as “cold charity and colder philanthropy” (Sorin 1992), but they provided important resources and created some degree of solidarity between the two groups.

The German Jewish migration of the nineteenth century did not end in 1880 but continued up to 1914, as another 40,000–50,000 German Jews made their way to America. It was overshadowed, however, by the much larger contemporary mass migration from Eastern Europe, and it is unclear what proportion was assimilated by the earlier German Jewish migrants and what was simply submerged among the Easterners. What is clear is that it had no special identity of its own.

The same cannot be said about the next wave of perhaps 150,000 German Jews who arrived as refugees and survivors of Nazi persecution in the 1930s and 1940s. There were so many scientists and intellectuals among them that the New School for Social Research set up the University in Exile to accommodate some of them. Columbia University took in Karl-August Wittfogel and encour-

aged Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, and Franz Neumann to re-create the Frankfurt School around Columbia’s Institute of Social Research. Albert Einstein went to the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and Leo Strauss went to the University of Chicago after a stint at the New School. These are just a few of the many famous figures who invigorated higher education and psychoanalysis in America. Other German Jewish academics, able to find work only on the margins of American academia, teaching at historically black colleges, helped inspire a younger generation of civil rights activists across the South. German-trained Jewish doctors also dispersed around the country, often ending up in medically underserved small cities such as Jamestown, New York.

But while this cohort of German Jewish immigrants is often dubbed the “Intellectual Migration,” the vast majority were not intellectuals and had no university training. Irene Fürst had worked in a restaurant before she married the owner of a small shop in Salzburg, Austria, so when she fled the Nazis and found herself in Charleston with no money and unable to speak the language, she opened a restaurant. In her *Landjuden* (small-town Jew) origins, she was far more typical of this migration stream than were the famous academics and scientists, but most of the small-towners gravitated to the American Jewish capital, New York City.

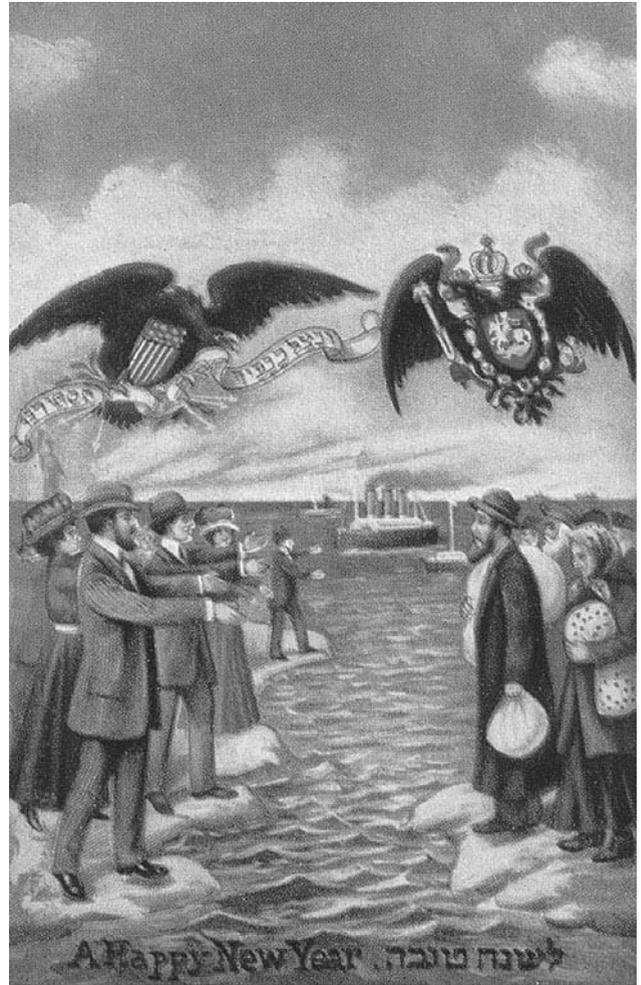
Perhaps 40,000 of them congregated in Manhattan’s Washington Heights–Inwood neighborhood, which became known as “the Fourth Reich” and “Frankfurt on the Hudson.” There they created a closely knit ethnoreligious community, read their own newspaper *die Aufbau* (*The Building*), and encouraged their children (such as Joseph Maier, Henry Huttenbach, and Henry Kissinger) to pursue higher education. By the 1980s, this community was aging rapidly, but many of their German-born children not only went on to great academic success but also reestablished German leadership of many Reform institutions and several Orthodox ones. But like their predecessors among non-elite German American Jews, the American-born children of these migrants have rapidly begun to merge with an undifferentiated American Jewish population of mostly Eastern European origin. And with the German lands virtually emptied of Jews, it is unlikely that there will ever again be a significant German Jewish population in America.

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## East European Jewish Immigration

Between 1881 and 1924, approximately 2.5 million Jews emigrated from the Russian empire (78 percent), Austria-Hungary (18 percent), and Romania (4 percent). This was not only one of the largest migrations in world history (one-third of East European Jewry permanently left the lands of their birth), but the vast majority, more than 2



American Jews welcoming Jews immigrating from Russia to the United States, ca. 1910. (Library of Congress)

million, went to the United States, eventually generating the largest, most vibrant Jewish community in the world.

The causes of this mass migration were many and complex. In 1880 close to 6 million of the world's 7.7 million Jews lived in Eastern Europe, more than 4 million confined to the Pale of Settlement, which consisted of the 15 western provinces of European Russia and the 10 provinces of Russian-held Poland. For Jews, life in Eastern Europe, and particularly in the Russian empire, had never been comfortable. Deeply rooted in popular legend and Russian official doctrine, including the teachings of the Russian Orthodox and Uniate churches, was the belief that Jews were guilty of deicide and constituted a pariah people standing in the way of the coming of the millennium. And the czars, though occasionally indifferent toward the Jews or even tolerant of them, were more often responsible for

extended periods of severe oppression. The most zealous of them instituted coercive policies for the “conversion” of the Jews. Nicholas I (1825–1855), under a general program of “modernization,” issued more than 600 anti-Jewish decrees, including expulsion from particular areas, censorship of Hebrew and Yiddish literature, and military conscription of young boys for periods of up to 25 years.

Under Alexander II (1855–1881), there was some liberalization, but despite increases in the right of residence for “useful Jews” and the increasing enrollment of Jews in Russian secondary schools and universities, legal humiliation and economic harassment continued. Heavily dependent on petty trade and crafts, Jews were generally kept out of the economic centers. Large cities such as Kiev and Moscow were closed to Jews without special permission. And St. Petersburg was open only to the upper bourgeoisie and a handful of students.

The restructuring of the East European economy, along with antisemitism, had a negative effect on Jews and proved a powerful force for dislocation. In many areas of Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth century, peasant-based economies were slowly eroding. Railroads and peasant cooperatives changed the distributive role played by large numbers of Jews in the small market towns, virtually eliminating local fairs. In addition, the emancipation of the serfs (1861–1862) left nobles in need of fewer stewards and administrators and left the newly freed peasants heavily in debt, unable to afford the services of Jewish middlemen. The dynamics of modernization, particularly in the Pale, where Jews in the 1890s constituted approximately 70 percent of those engaged in commerce and 30 percent of those engaged in crafts, led to the displacement of petty merchants, peddlers, and artisans as well as teamsters and innkeepers.

In the context of general economic dislocation and spreading Russian discontent, the government, in an attempt to deflect resentment, encouraged antisemitism by focusing on the Jews’ preeminence as middlemen. In addition, the government offered loans to a nascent indigenous class of commercial men waiting for businesses to be abandoned by Jews and encouraged native middlemen to organize boycotts of Jewish merchants. In Galicia (Austria-Hungary) in the 1880s, 60 percent of the Jews had to be supported by the community, and each year 5,000 died of starvation or of diseases brought on by malnutrition. Still, the death rate for Jews in most of Eastern Europe was relatively low, and the

Jewish population soared from 1.5 million in 1800 to 6.8 million in 1900, greatly exacerbating the decline of economic opportunity.

The pressures on Jews to seek livelihoods elsewhere mounted from year to year. In 1863, an unsuccessful Polish uprising, antisemitic in tone as well as extremely nationalistic, intensified those pressures. So did a famine in Lithuania (1867–1869) and a cholera epidemic in Poland in 1869. Galician Jews migrated toward eastern Hungary and Vienna; Polish Jews overflowed such cities as Lodz, Warsaw, and Vilna. Bialystock drew uprooted *shtetl* (small-town) dwellers, artisans, and laborers. By 1897, 41 percent of the urban population of the Russian empire was Jewish. But even the cities offered only a precarious existence. Jews, victims of Russian paranoia, patriotism at its most vulgar, and narrowly defined economic self-interest, were excluded from many branches of the economy.

Scapegoating became even more intense after terrorists assassinated Alexander II in 1881. Confusion reigned, and revolutionaries called on the people to rebel. The Russian press and the government, attempting to defend itself, stepped up the accusation that Jews were responsible for the misfortunes of the nation, and pogroms (anti-Jewish riots) broke out in numerous towns and hamlets of southern Russia. Between 1881 and 1882, there were pogroms in 225 communities, including Yelizavetgrad and Kiev. There was a massive pogrom in Warsaw in December 1881; 1,500 homes, shops, and synagogues were sacked before troops intervened. An even more bloody and destructive episode took place in the largely Jewish town of Balta in Podolia in late March 1882.

In the aftermath of violence, between 1881–1884 more than 70,000 Jews emigrated from Russia to the United States. This was more than double the number that had arrived in the United States in the entire decade of the 1870s. Russian commissions investigating the causes of the pogroms concluded that “Jewish exploitation” was at the root of the violence. Based on this finding, the government published the Temporary Laws (May Laws, 1882). These were designed to isolate the Jew from the peasant. They circumscribed movement within the Pale, prohibiting Jews from living in villages. This meant the expulsion of 500,000 Jews from rural areas. No business could be conducted by Jews in the larger towns, nor could any business be conducted on Sunday. Jews were forbidden to purchase real property or even to negotiate mortgages. And in 1886,

reacting to the virtual flood of Jews seeking entry to secondary schools and universities, the government, as part of the administrative harassment of the Jews, limited the number of Jewish students to 10 percent of the student body in the Pale and 3.5 percent outside it.

In 1887, more than 23,000 Russian Jews immigrated to the United States—the highest total for a single year up to that point. By 1891, 700,000 Jews living east of the Pale were driven into the confined area, and previously privileged Jews were subject to wholesale expulsion from Russian cities; 20,000 were expelled from Moscow alone. The press continued a campaign of unbridled antisemitic propaganda; K. Pobedonostev, the head of the governing body of the Russian Orthodox Church, clarified the goals of the government when he predicted that “one-third of the Jews will convert, one-third will die, and one-third will flee the country.” Between 1891 and 1892, 107,000 Jews left Russia for the United States.

After a short interregnum (1893–1898), the strict application of the discriminatory laws was continued under Nicholas II (1894–1918). His government subsidized close to 3,000 antisemitic publications, including the classic forgery *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Free reign was given to anti-Jewish agitation, particularly in reaction to the growth of the revolutionary movement, in which a disproportionate number of Jewish youth took part.

An explosion of pogroms filled the years from 1903 to 1906. In contrast to those that took place between 1881 and 1884, these involved a steep escalation of violence and mass murder. In the Kishinev pogrom of April 1903, 47 Jews were killed, and hundreds were severely beaten. In Zhitomer in April 1905, 29 were killed; 100 were murdered in Kiev in July; 60 in Bialystok in August, and 800 in Odessa in October. In 1906, pogroms became practically uncountable, with many hundreds dead, robbed, raped, and mutilated. As in the 1880s, the pogroms in the beginning of the twentieth century were followed by a steep jump in the rate of emigration from Russia to the United States. In 1900, 37,000 Jews emigrated. In 1904, 77,500 left; 92,400 emigrated in 1905 and 125,200 in 1906. Another 200,000 left between 1907 and 1908.

While pogroms were clearly a factor in mass emigration, a case can be made that pogroms alone do not explain the extraordinary movement of the Jewish population between 1881 and 1924. The highest rate of emigration was experienced, after all, in Galicia, where there were eco-

nomics hardship and some local repression but virtually no pogroms. The Ukraine, the heartland of pogroms in the Russian empire, produced a relatively low rate of emigration before World War I, and Lithuania, with relatively few pogroms, had a very high emigration rate. Also, concurrent with the acceleration of the Jewish emigration was an expanded emigration from the Russian empire of non-Jewish Poles, Lithuanians, Finns, and even Russians. Jewish emigration then can be seen as directly related to the economic strains and dislocations of Eastern Europe and particularly of prerevolutionary Russia. Persecution, however, was critical. Jews, constituting only about 5 percent of the population of the Russian empire, made up close to 50 percent of the Russian emigrant stream between 1881 and 1910. And from Romania, where Jews were treated oppressively and violently as aliens, more than 75,000 (30 percent of the Jewish population) came to the United States between 1881 and 1915.

Mass Jewish migration from Eastern Europe had been gathering momentum throughout the 1870s. After 1881, however, Jews had to face antisemitism not simply as a permanent inconvenience but as a threat to their very existence. The Russian government was encouraging pogroms as a matter of policy. This seemed a new and frightening matter, distinct from the government’s mere indifference to Jewish victimization in the past. By the time of Alexander III and certainly by Nicholas II, the desire was no longer to Russify the Jews but to be rid of them. At a conference of Jewish notables in St. Petersburg in 1882, a majority continued to maintain that mass emigration would appear unpatriotic and might undermine the struggle for emancipation. But thoughts about emigration soon became pervasive. Some eminent Jews who had once been enthusiastic assimilationists, including M. L. Lilienblum, the Hebrew writer and political journalist, and Leon Pinsker, an Odessa physician and author of the pioneering Zionist tract *Autoemancipation* (1882), now saw antisemitism as deeply rooted—not a vestige but a disease incurable in the foreseeable future. After 1881, more and more believed that emancipation for Jews was not possible within the intolerable conditions of the Russian Empire.

Fear had become a central factor in Jewish life in Russia. But fear, intensified by new and more violent persecution, dislocation, and deepening poverty, does not by itself account for the stunning uprooting and transplantation of millions of East European Jews. It is necessary to include

the ingredients of cultural ferment and renewal. East European Jewish life was based on deeply rooted tradition and for centuries had been relatively static. There was a reality, too, however, of internal conflict and change. The seventeenth century saw the false messianism of Sabbatai Zevi, which indicated a revulsion against passive waiting for redemption. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Hasidism, an enthusiastic, pietistic movement of religious renewal, challenged rabbinic authority. Later, from the West came the *Haskalah*, or Enlightenment, a secular expression of new intellectual styles and ethical concepts derived in part from Jewish religious tradition, which strove toward complete and equal citizenship for Jews.

This collective resurgence of Jews reached its height in the last three decades of the nineteenth century with the blossoming of a secular Yiddish literature and the self-education and increasing social awareness of the Jewish masses. Among city Jews and *shtetl* Jews, as they struggled to synthesize the forces of modernization with their tradition, was a widespread feeling that Jewish culture was experiencing a renaissance. The postliberal movements—Zionism and socialism and the various blends of the two—initially products of the failure of emancipation and the irresponsibility of radical Russia during the pogroms, also reflected the cultural renaissance. *Takhles*, or the aspiration “to become” all one was capable of being, was always central to Jewish culture. Modernization redirected and intensified that desire, and increasing East European antisemitism frustrated it. For large numbers, relocation seemed the only answer.

Without external assault and increasing poverty, this collective energetic resurgence, instead of leading to mass emigration, would more likely have produced a temporary culture of *Yiddishkeit* for the Jews as they moved toward assimilation. Persecution, pogroms, and poverty, without cultural renewal, would more likely have produced internal upheavals and perhaps new religious enthusiasms rather than an exodus. The combination, however, of spiritual hope and physical wretchedness proved explosive. Between 1881 and 1910, 1,562,800 Jews came to the United States from Eastern Europe—almost 72 percent from Russia, 19 percent from Austria-Hungary, and 4.3 percent from Romania. Another 435,000 would arrive between 1911 and 1914 and a quarter million more between 1915 and 1924.

In the 1880s, there was also the pervasive belief that overseas emigration was now finally a viable alternative. As

early as 1817, there existed in Eastern Europe a Yiddish translation of *The Discovery of America*, a popular celebration of the United States. Between 1820 and 1870, there had already been a trickle of Jewish emigration (7,500) to America from Eastern Europe. Between 1870 and 1890, however, America became more clearly the “distant magnet,” a place for potential collective renewal for Jews. In these years the American economy experienced a 28-percent growth in the number of industries and a net increase in the value of production of 168 percent. In addition, large-scale, regularly scheduled steamship transportation became more available; companies actually sent out agents to solicit travelers from the Old World. At the same time, published reports began to appear in Hebrew and Yiddish about the opportunities in the *goldene medine* (golden land). More than 3 million Jews would cross borders in Eastern Europe, seeking their fortunes elsewhere. Of these, 7 percent went to Western Europe, 10–13 percent to Canada, Australia, Argentina, South Africa, and Palestine, and more than 80 percent ended up in the United States.

Jews from the Ukraine and southern Russia crossed borders illegally, often to Brody in Galicia, traveled from there by train to Vienna or Berlin, and regrouped to go to Hamburg, Bremen, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and Antwerp, where for \$34 (by 1903) one could purchase a steamship ticket to the New World. Jews from western Russia came surreptitiously across the German borders, while the Austro-Hungarians could cross legally. And the Romanians arrived at the northern ports mainly through Vienna. Western Jewish organizations, at first reluctant and even ready to oppose emigration whenever hope arose that the position of Jews in Russia might be improved, began to face the reality of mass Jewish migration from Eastern Europe.

A group of German Jewish associations, the *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden*, organized to help their co-religionists and to avoid being overrun by the mass influx, set up information bureaus, negotiated special rates with railroad companies and steamship lines, and lobbied governments to ease the immigrants’ journey and speed them on their way. Between 1905 and 1914, 700,000 East European Jews passed through Germany, and 210,000 were directly aided by the Hilfsverein. Baron de Hirsch, scion of financiers to the Bavarian Royal Court, who had made a fortune in banking and railway finance, contributed large amounts to improve the conditions of East European Jews. In the late 1880s, however, after the pogroms and

mass expulsions, Baron de Hirsch encouraged emigration, and he set up the Jewish Colonization Association in 1891 with vast programs for international resettlement.

The several organized efforts, while important particularly in terms of making the idea of transplantation viable, directly helped move only a small number compared to the migration of individuals. The voyage of these individuals was filled with tribulation. In Europe they had to face rapacious peasants and smugglers and, often, brutal border guards. Even legal travelers had to deal with the bewildering confusion of various bureaucracies and the officious manner of German authorities, who, fearful of plague, among other things, conducted innumerable inspections. There were questions upon questions, disinfections, and the constant fear of being sent back or quarantined. Success meant facing a thirteen-to-twenty-day voyage in steerage in the most primitive conditions. The suffering endured by the travelers was real and persistent, exacerbated by swindlers and unscrupulous steamship agents. By the early 1900s, there was some improvement. Competition among steamship lines led to a modification of steerage into compartments on newer ships; the voyage was reduced to between six and ten days; and the Jewish organizations at various transit points now had more experience and were better able to serve and protect the emigrés.

Between 1899 and 1910, 86 percent of the Jews heading for the United States landed in the North Atlantic states, the vast majority in New York City. Here they faced a grueling ordeal at Castle Garden or, after 1891, Ellis Island. Immigration employees, always overworked (processing 4,000 immigrants a day at peak periods) and often insensitive, checked arrivals for “defects,” tuberculosis, “dull-wittedness,” eye problems, and “contagious and loathsome diseases.” Piled into massive halls in dozens of lines, the immigrants underwent incessant pushing, prying, probing, and poking. There were some exceptional officials, including Philip Cowen and Alexander Harkavy, who helped ease the immigrants’ predicament.

The Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society (HEAS), a makeshift organization (founded in 1880 by German Jews in America), despite fear of the consequences of the immigration of large numbers of East European Jews and some contempt for the “wild Russians,” cared for approximately 14,000 Russian immigrants. HEAS eventually evolved into the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society, which

by 1897 combined under one roof employment, training, housing, and legal aid for immigrants. From 1884 to 1892, the aid given Jewish arrivals was sporadic and unsystematic. In 1892, this changed when, with generous funding from Baron de Hirsch, several groups concerned with the welfare of the immigrants joined forces.

Aid was often necessary, for the average Jewish immigrant arrived with less money and more dependents than other immigrants. Between 1899 and 1910, 44 percent of the Jewish immigrants were female, and 25 percent were children under fourteen. For other groups in the same period, only 30.5 percent were females and 12.3 percent children under fourteen. The Jewish migration was much more a movement of families than that of other European nationalities and groups. More dependents meant more burdens but also more emotional sustenance in a relatively unfamiliar environment. Also sustaining the Jewish immigrants was the fact that they appear to have had better preparation for urban life than did most other immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. Before World War I, nearly two-thirds of Jewish male immigrants were classified as skilled laborers. There is little doubt that this is an exaggerated proportion, but many were craftsmen and artisans who had had at least some experience in living and working in semi-urban environments.

Of the skilled Jewish workers between 1899 and 1914, 60 percent were clothing workers. The American garment industry was undergoing a period of rapid expansion precisely at the time of the East European arrivals, and by 1910 New York City was producing 70 percent of the women’s clothes and 40 percent of the men’s clothes made in the United States. By the late 1880s German Jews owned more than 95 percent of the clothing factories and shops in the city, and their East European cousins believed that they would find familiarity in those shops and the possibility of not having to work on *Shabos* (the Sabbath).

When German Jews in the United States initially faced mass immigration of East European Jews, or *Ostjuden*, they had two responses. One was fear; the Germans were afraid that antisemitism, on the rise since the 1870s, would inevitably increase in the face of a Russian Jewish “tidal wave.” The second reaction was arrogance—a condescending attitude toward the East Europeans based on the Germans’ sense of class and cultural superiority. Leaders of the German Jewish community actually admitted in the 1880s that “immigration was not popular among our people,”

and claimed that the “mode of life” of the Russian Jew “has stamped upon them . . . marks of permanent pauperism.” Nothing but “disgrace and a lowering of the opinion in which American Israelites are held . . . can result from the continued residence among us of these wretches.” The widespread Russian pogroms (1881–1883) appeared to threaten the Germans with a significantly increased burden of impoverished Eastern newcomers, but even prior to the mass flight that the pogroms produced, many of the German philanthropic agencies cautioned against open immigration. Indeed, in 1880 the United Hebrew Charities of New York and the newspaper *American Hebrew* urged the passage of restrictive immigration laws.

A representative of the United Charities of Rochester in 1882 called the Yiddish-speaking Russian Jews “a bane to the country and a curse to all Jews,” and warned that the “enviable reputation” German Jews had earned in the United States was being “undermined by the influx of thousands who are not ripe for enjoyment of liberty.” He went on to say that all “who mean well for the Jewish name should prevent them as much as possible from coming here.” From as early as the 1870s, when the Easterners were few in number, German Jews, though generous materially, shunned their less assimilated coreligionists. The unofficial slogan of the Harmony Club in New York, perhaps the most prestigious German Jewish social club in the United States, was “More polish and less Polish.” Though there were very few visible reminders of their own peddler origins, the German Jews in the 1880s were apparently too insecure to feel comfortable with the poverty, the Yiddish, the Orthodoxy, and the socialism of the new arrivals from Eastern Europe.

German Jews eventually became champions of unrestricted immigration, but until the early 1890s, they remained ambivalent about the massive influx from the East. In June 1880, for example, the *American Hebrew* advocated tighter immigration laws and the diversion of immigrants to farms. But only eight months later, the editors demanded uninterrupted immigration: “Hither the tide of immigration should come,” they wrote, “these shores . . . have room for all.” In November 1881, however, there was another noticeable shift, the paper insisting that America was not the only haven for Russian immigrants. On June 30, 1882, the *Hebrew* went even further: “Jews of Europe!” the editors warned, referring to the European counterparts of HEAS, “Know that you are inviting a danger to us . . . !

You send us hither a multitude of men, women and children whom we cannot sustain.”

This last was a somewhat frantic exaggeration; most needy immigrants received aid from previously arrived relatives and *landslayt* (people from the same shtetl, or community) as well as from their own mutual aid societies, and no more than 5 percent ever turned to the German Jewish philanthropic agencies for help. The worry of the German Jews was not so much over economic cost as over the prejudice that would be generated by masses of Eastern Jews—prejudice “dangerous to the Jews of refinement and culture in this country.”

But things changed, especially after 1891, when the condition of Russian Jews under Nicholas II grew desperate. German Jews in America put aside considerations of comfort and even concern about the rise of antisemitism to support their Russian cousins. Indeed, at the same time that non-Jewish Americans generally inclined toward immigration restriction, leaders of the German Jewish community committed themselves to open immigration as well as to aiding the East Europeans materially. In 1891 the United Hebrew Charities, for example, began maintaining an agent at the old Barge office in New York City, and through March 1893 the Free Employment Bureau run by Boston’s German Jews found jobs for more than a thousand applicants. In 1894, the editors of the *American Hebrew* not only applauded these and many other philanthropic efforts, they loudly proclaimed their fears for the Jews of Russia. And while occasionally warning against the possibility of millions of Eastern Jews pouring “pell-mell . . . into the country,” the staff of the newspaper vehemently resisted all legislative efforts to curtail Jewish immigration.

If any uncertainty lingered on the part of German Jewish leadership regarding the mass arrival of Russian Jews, it disappeared in the face of the horrors of the pogroms in Russia between 1903 and 1906. The arrogance of the German Jews and their fear of antisemitism never fully dissipated. Likewise, the Eastern Europeans never quite put away their resentment over the condescension and what they called the “cold philanthropy” of the *Yahudim*. Despite the hostility and rivalry, however, the Germans and the Russians, everywhere in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, entered into and sustained a relationship marked ultimately by cooperation, if not the cozy warmth of *gemutlikhkayt*. Even after the East

European Jews were able to sustain their own aid agencies, the foremost of which was the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) founded in 1902, there were sporadic contributions from German Jews.

Ultimately, the Germans played an important role in the fight against immigration restriction and provided much philanthropy. In addition to fighting restriction directly, German Jewish leaders such as Simon Wolf, Jacob Schiff, and Louis Marshall involved themselves in relocation, agricultural colonization, and diversion of immigrants to ports of entry other than in the Northeast (e.g., Galveston, Texas). Dispersal, it was incorrectly believed, would ward off immigration restriction. There were several significant anti-immigration bills passed by Congress between 1875 and 1903, but anti-foreign sentiment did not seriously impede the flow of immigration until World War I, when in 1917 Congress passed a bill, over President Woodrow Wilson's veto, that required immigrant literacy. This affected the relatively more literate Jews less than other immigrant groups in this period. But in 1921 and 1924 stringent quotas were imposed for immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, which did radically restrict the Jewish influx.

Of the East European Jews who entered the United States in the period from 1881 to 1924, relatively few left. As many as 25 percent, however, did return to Eastern Europe prior to 1900 in response to variations in economic conditions in America and political conditions in Europe. But after 1903, the return rate dropped off radically, and between 1908 and 1914, only 7 percent of the number of entrants left. The rate of return migration for all other groups was higher, ranging from 9.5 percent to 57.5 percent and averaging 33 percent for the entire period of mass migration. Neither hardship upon arrival nor recurrent economic depression could drive the Jews back to Europe in significant numbers.

Jews voted with their feet for America and mainly for its urban centers. By 1920, 45 percent of the Jewish population of the United States lived in New York City. The next two largest Jewish cities, Chicago and Philadelphia, accounted for 13 percent, and seven other cities in the East and Midwest held another 14 percent. Between 1881 and 1920, the U.S. population experienced a general population increase of 112 percent, while the Jewish population rose 1,300 percent, mainly from the immigration of East European Jews. By 1928, of the 4.7 million Jews in the

United States, 3 million were of East European origin. Living on the West Side of Chicago, in Boston's North End, in Philadelphia's downtown, and especially on New York's Lower East Side (by 1925 one of every three New Yorkers was a Jew!), the Jews from Russia and other parts of Eastern Europe became a "conspicuous minority"—in factories and stores, on streets and in cafes, in *landsmanshaftn* (regional mutual-aid societies) and labor unions, in synagogues, in Yiddish theater and press, in philanthropic and self-help organizations.

Millions had left the *shtetlekh* (small towns) and Old World cities in which they had built their lives. Those who came were artisans, stewards, and peddlers faced with dislocation or obsolescence; socialist militants faced with repression and Jew-hatred; students and the religiously committed faced with grave uncertainties; and above all the innumerable *kleine yidn* (ordinary Jews) faced with impoverishment and persecution. They made the decision to leave Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But they did not merely flee. With a strength born of cultural renewal, they yearned "to become." The United States, in a period of extensive industrial expansion and economic growth and with its reputation as a land of opportunity, provided the context for fulfillment.

Gerald Sorin

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## Jewish Immigration to Galveston

Jewish immigration to Galveston began in 1814 and continued for more than a hundred years. From the Civil War to World War I, Jews were prominent in business, philanthropy, and municipal government in Galveston, one of the South's most important ports. Galveston Jews founded the first Reform congregation in Texas and established and helped administer several benevolent institutions. They assumed a significant role in the city's relief activities after the devastating storm of 1900. During the first decade of the twentieth century, some Jewish leaders, concerned that America's Jews were concentrated too heavily in New York City, developed a plan to distribute European Jewish immigrants across the country by making Galveston a major port of entry.

Before 1836, some 200 Jews came to Texas while it was under Mexican governance. Galveston served as a port of entry for most newcomers. One such immigrant was Jao de la Porta, a Portuguese Jew who arrived in Galveston in 1814. He sold land to the French pirate Jean Laffite who, with his crew, found shelter on the island between 1816 and 1821. Following Laffite's departure, Galveston was incorporated in 1839 with 1,000 residents and 250 dwellings.

After the Texas war for independence from Mexico in 1836, a full-scale campaign to attract settlers began. Broad-sides printed in German newspapers, "*Geh mit uns Texas*

[Go with us to Texas]," advertised the state as a haven for refugees. The first wave of Jewish immigrants came to Galveston and to Texas in the 1840s and 1850s mainly from the German states, and Central and Eastern Europe. In the years before the Civil War, Galveston became the principal port of entry for the state. The only deepwater port between New Orleans and Tampico, Mexico, the city relied on the harbor and shipping for its prosperity. Texas was an attractive destination for Jewish immigrants, who fled political persecutions, the revolutions of 1848 (particularly in Prague and Budapest), and the brutal conscription policies of Russian authorities. These immigrants sought political liberalism, economic opportunity, and religious freedom. By 1852 the tiny Jewish community of Galveston had established a Hebrew cemetery within the city cemetery. Another cemetery, Hebrew Rest, was added in 1868 in response to a yellow fever epidemic. The 1850 census indicates that, in a population of 6,000, there were 12 Jewish adults and 14 children living in Galveston. It was not until Yom Kippur 1856 that members of the faith held the first worship service.

Some of the first Jews known to settle in Galveston between 1838 and 1840 were Samuel Maas, Michael Seeligson, Joseph and Rosanna Dyer Osterman, and Isadore Dyer. Seeligson actively pursued politics, serving as alderman in 1840 and 1848 and mayor in 1853. Born in Dessau, Germany, Dyer was the younger brother of Major Leon Dyer, who fought for Texas independence, and Rosanna Dyer Osterman. It was in Dyer's home that the first worship service was conducted. Like Seeligson, Rosanna Dyer Osterman and her husband Joseph, who established a trading business with the interior of Texas, were civic-minded. During a yellow fever episode in 1853, Rosanna Osterman created a makeshift hospital on their property and cared for the sick and the dying. Outbreaks of the disease led to the founding of the Howard Association in Galveston to treat victims of the fever; Rosanna bequeathed \$1,000 to this association in her will. During the Civil War, Rosanna Osterman, then a widow, chose to remain in the city and opened her home to the wounded of both the Union and the Confederate armies, as they occupied the city at different times. Soldiers from the Eighth Texas Infantry Regiment published a letter of thanks to her in the *Galveston News*.

Rosanna Osterman died in 1866 and bequeathed the major share of her estate, valued at more than \$204,000, to

charitable organizations, including the Osterman Widows and Orphans Home Fund. The fund supported three Galveston orphanages and a home for elderly women, the Letitia Rosenberg Women's Home, between 1905 and 1951. Her will provided \$5,000 toward a synagogue in Galveston, which became Temple B'nai Israel, dedicated in 1871, the first Reform congregation in Texas; \$2,500 toward Congregation Beth Israel in Houston; \$1,000 each for Hebrew benevolent societies in Galveston and Houston (the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Galveston was founded in 1866); \$1,000 to fund a school for poor Jewish children in Galveston and Houston; \$1,000 for the expansion and upkeep of the Galveston Hebrew Cemetery; and \$1,000 for a Galveston Sailor's Home. In one of the first instances of interfaith charity, Rosanna Osterman bequeathed fifty shares of stock in the Galveston Wharves to be used "for the support of indigent Israelites, if any there be, if not, of any other denomination residing in Galveston."

In 1868, Galveston Jewish women formed the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society (LHBS). Although intended to be an auxiliary to the men's society, it remained apart and aided mainly Jewish women. Some members of the LHBS acted as midwives or nursed indigent or infirm Jewish women and upon a death prepared the body for burial according to Jewish custom. They established an efficient organization with committees for visiting the sick, distributing clothing, finding employment, and donating funds to the poor. Thus, the earliest Jewish immigrants to Galveston quickly established the religious and charitable institutions necessary to sustain community life and to help future immigrants.

In 1870 Galveston, with 13,818 people, ranked as the largest city in Texas; more than 1,000 were Jews. By 1880 the city had grown to 22,248; the foreign born numbered 5,046, or 23 percent of the population—a decrease in the percentage of foreign born from an estimated 40 percent in 1855. After the Civil War, a new influx of Jewish immigrants came to Galveston; many traveled via New Orleans, while others followed the trails west and south, often peddling merchandise in rural counties before making their way to Galveston. Among these adventurers was Harris Kempner, who with his family established cotton brokering, banking, and sugar refining businesses, including the Imperial Sugar Company in Sugar Land, Texas. Others who came were Marks Marx, Kempner's first partner in a wholesale grocery business, and Morris Lasker, the even-

tual owner of the Texas Star Flour and Rice Mills, who became a Texas state legislator in 1895. Following the arrival of new Jewish residents, Galvestonians founded a chapter of B'nai B'rith in 1875. More land was needed for burial; thus, in 1897 and 1951 additional Jewish cemeteries were created. In 1890 the first Jewish house of worship, Temple B'nai Israel, was constructed. As Reform Jews, the congregation voted to become a charter member of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in 1875; it also established a school, Temple B'nai Israel school, and Hebrew became a requirement in 1877.

As the Jews settled into community life, they conducted business with people of all faiths on the island; they socialized with gentiles after hours, belonged to the same clubs, and intermarried. By 1875, a coalition of Jews, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Lutherans, united by their class affiliation, established social societies and proto-welfare institutions. Jews and Christians belonged to Masonic orders, trade unions, political parties, city government, and cultural societies such as the German *Garten Verein*. In 1874, the Ladies German Benevolent Society was founded with about forty Jewish and Christian members. The Jews' early arrival, their small numbers relative to the gentile population, their non-Catholic status—Protestant leaders openly discriminated against Catholics socially—their rapid rise to wealth, and their goodwill toward the community brought about a high degree of acceptance and even assimilation.

Because wealthy Jewish families were an integral part of Galveston society, between 1878 and 1894 genteel Protestant and Jewish women founded or helped to found four permanent benevolent institutions: the Island City Protestant and Israelitish Orphans' Home (later the Galveston Orphans' Home, 1880), the Lasker Home for Children (1894), the Letitia Rosenberg Women's Home (1888), and the Johanna Runge Free Kindergarten (1893). Many Jewish women served on the boards of lady managers for these benevolent institutions and constituted between 6 and 25 percent of the boards' membership before 1920. Others joined social, literary, and culture clubs during the 1880s and 1890s. Galveston Jewish women enjoyed a high degree of assimilation with others of their economic station. One such person was Isabella Dyer Kopperl, the niece of Rosanna Dyer Osterman and wife of successful merchant, city councilman, and Texas legislator Moritz Kopperl. She served on the interfaith Board of Lady Managers of the

Galveston Orphans' Home from 1885 until her death in 1902 and presided over the board as first director from 1885 to 1887. The Kopperls bequeathed \$4,000 to establish the orphanage infirmary and kindergarten. Isabella Kopperl's uncle, Isadore Dyer, bequeathed \$5,000, half of his estate, to the orphanage in 1888. Thus, the Ostermans, the Dyers, and the Kopperls significantly underwrote charitable endeavors before the turn of the century, providing a model for Jewish philanthropy. In honor of their beneficence, the Women's Health Protective Association established the Isabella Kopperl Memorial Park after her death. In 1912 Morris Lasker donated \$15,000 for the expansion and renovation of the Home for Homeless Children, subsequently renamed the Lasker Home for Children. Later, the philanthropy of the Harris Kempner family would be made available to the city and the state through the Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund, which exists today.

The wave of new immigrants to the United States between 1880 and 1924 brought East European Jews to Galveston. As these Jews began to arrive, they formed the Hebrew Orthodox Benevolent Society in 1897, which associated with Congregation Ahavas Israel, first listed in the Galveston city directory in 1898. In 1930, Congregation Beth Jacob was founded, merging two Orthodox congregations into one. Earlier Jewish immigrants came to the aid of the Russian and East European Jews, although attitudes toward the newest arrivals ranged from benevolent altruism to outright resentment. Island City Jewish women, responding to the influx of newcomers, in 1910 formed a branch of the Jewish Council of Women. This organization, with a gift from Eliza Kempner and a donation from the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society, established the Jewish Free Kindergarten in 1913 to help Americanize the newcomers. The kindergarten opened in the rooms and yard of Temple B'nai Israel with eight children but soon grew to forty. Mothers, who suffered the greatest isolation due to language and custom barriers, were invited to form Mothers' Clubs. Teachers and administrators planned programs around child welfare work, in which they taught the fundamentals of hygiene.

The Storm of 1900, which swept through Galveston on September 8, was North America's worst recorded natural disaster. It destroyed one-third of the city, damaged the remaining buildings at an estimated cost of \$30 million, and took at least 6,000 lives. On September 9, survivors formed a Central Relief Committee for Galveston

Storm Sufferers (CRC), an emergency body that directed relief and recovery. Jewish civic leaders participated fully on the CRC and in the island's recovery. Rabbi Henry Cohen (1863–1952), English immigrant and beloved spiritual leader of Temple B'nai Israel from 1888 to 1949, served on the hospital committee and helped to maintain a tent city, which acted as a refuge for several hundred homeless. Isaac H. Kempner, son of Harris Kempner, served as financier and member of the finance committee. Ben Levy, a city alderman, chaired the burial committee. Morris Lasker chaired the correspondence committee and raised funds for the rebuilding committee. One long-term result of this disaster was the creation of a five-man city commission government, a model for Progressive municipal reform. Isaac H. Kempner was elected city treasurer from 1901 to 1915 and mayor from 1917 to 1919. He rescued the city from financial disaster and secured it an A1 financial rating. This resulted in Galveston's seawall construction and grade raising, a process that protected the island against future hurricanes and elevated the habited east end of the island to seventeen feet above sea level on the island's south side. By 1907, the city had largely recovered from the storm. It ranked fifth among U.S. ports and first among Gulf Coast ports in the number of immigrants arriving each year. In 1912 the county and city finished building across the bay a causeway that allowed for improved connections to the mainland via car, train, and interurban.

The new wave of Jewish immigration to the United States reached a peak of 100,000 arrivals a year before World War I. In 1914, 3 million Jews lived in the United States. Most of the recent arrivals came from Eastern Europe and from Russia, in part because of persecution. More than 300 pogroms between 1901 and 1906 alone resulted in the migration flow of Jews to the United States and areas such as Palestine.

As a result of this influx of humanity, in 1905 close to a million Jews lived in New York City, where many experienced crowded tenements, poor working conditions, and barriers related to language and antisemitism. Plans to divert immigrants were endorsed by national labor leader Terrence Powderly and by President Theodore Roosevelt, who believed the labor needs of the South and the Midwest could be supplied by the newly arrived immigrants. To relieve the congestion and give immigrants more opportunities in America's heartland, New York financier and

philanthropist Jacob Schiff devised a plan for routing through Galveston the flow of East European Jews to the South and the Midwest. The sponsoring organization for this migration, also known as the Galveston Movement, was the Jewish Immigrant Information Bureau (JIIB), financed with a gift of \$500,000 from Jacob Schiff. To expedite the migration, Schiff induced the Jewish Territorial Organization (JTO) in London to set in motion the plan for the redirection of Jews from Europe straight to Galveston. The JTO contacted the Jewish Emigration Society in Kiev to advertise the prospect of settling in the American West. Selected families were provided train tickets to Bremen, accommodations in Bremen, boat tickets to Galveston, and letters of introduction in English for their future employers. Rabbi Henry Cohen in Galveston became the local agent for this enterprise.

Galveston was chosen as the site of immigration for four reasons: the port's location away from New York City was ideal for redirecting immigrants to another part of the country; the steamship company North German Lloyd had direct routes from Bremen to Galveston; the city's size was such that it would not be able to absorb the immigrants, thus implementing the plan to populate the Midwest; and train connections to the cities of Texas and the Midwest facilitated migration to the nation's hinterland.

Between 1907 and 1914, approximately 10,000 Jews entered the port of Galveston, whence they traveled inland. The majority of these sojourners settled in Texas, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, and Minnesota. The JIIB acted as a traveler's aid society. Often Rabbi Cohen met these wayfarers at the dock, took them through customs, and escorted them to the bureau office, where they could eat, bathe, write home, and prepare for the journey inland. The JIIB had contacts with local representatives in towns and cities across the Midwest; their tasks were to help the immigrants find jobs and housing and obtain English language instruction. The JIIB provided train fare to selected cities and money to settle before employment began. The Galveston newspapers reported the arrival of each ship laden with Jewish immigrants with genuine enthusiasm, but at the same time, the U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor began to interfere with the movement and turned away more immigrants from Galveston than from any other port. The government agency found violations of the 1907 Immigration Law that forbade agents to pay for the immigrants' passage; others were turned away for

medical reasons, namely hernias and eye problems; others were deemed too poor and were likely, officials claimed, to become public charges. Single females were often excluded for fear of prostitution, white slavery, and organized crime.

In 1914, with the outbreak of World War I, the flow of Jews from Europe slowed to a trickle, severely limiting the number of Jewish immigrants to Texas through Galveston. Ironically, after years of planning and waiting for federal funds, Galvestonians opened an immigrant receiving station on Pelican Island in the middle of Galveston Bay. It lasted only three years, from 1913 to 1916; it was underused after 1914 and badly damaged in the 1915 hurricane. Once the war ended, Americans turned against the flood of immigrants entering the United States, and Congress imposed immigrant quota systems in 1921 and 1924. These acts effectively cut off the unfettered Jewish migration from Europe to Galveston and Texas.

After a century of immigration, first from Central Europe and then from East European nations and Russia, the tide of humanity flowing into Galveston slowed. Houston's port, built in 1914, competed with Galveston's smaller one, and the advantages of a larger city with oil refining prospects attracted future immigrants, including arrivals from Latin America. The 1900 and the 1915 hurricanes drove leading merchants inland to the Bayou City. Although only 300 of the 10,000 Jews who came through Galveston stayed in Texas, their presence and that of other immigrants, Catholics, and African Americans contributed to the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s. Galveston was not immune from Klan recruiting efforts, but Father James Kirwin of St. Mary's Cathedral and Rabbi Henry Cohen, who were great friends, publicly opposed the Klan. It was never able to establish a lasting tenure on the island. Notably, in 1905, when the five-man City Commission voted to segregate Galveston's streetcars, one of only two votes opposed was that of Isaac Kempner.

Galveston's Jewish population would not grow in proportion to the advance of other groups on the island or the Jewish population in other Texas cities. The number of Jews in the state, mainly in the larger cities, doubled from approximately 15,000 to 30,000 between 1910 and 1920, and from an estimated 50,000 in 1945 to 92,000 in 1988. Even so, Jewish contributions to the well-being of the commercial aspects of Galveston, accompanied by humanitarianism and the strong sense of social justice manifest in

their continued philanthropy, persist into the twenty-first century.

*Elizabeth Hayes Turner*

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## Soviet Jewish Immigration

Soviet Jewish emigrés began to arrive in the United States during the early 1970s. From that time to the early twenty-first century, nearly three-quarters of a million Jews left the Soviet Union (USSR) and the nations that succeeded it and settled in the United States. They have arrived in two major waves. The first wave was allowed to leave the USSR in response to years of pressure both from dissident Jews within the Communist bloc and from Jewish activists in Western Europe and the United States. Soviet authorities during this period granted exit visas to

Jewish emigrés only if they had received invitations from relatives in Israel.

The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) and other immigrant aid organizations met emigrés in Vienna and Rome to assist them in gaining required entrance visas to Israel. By the mid-1970s, an increasing number of emigrés wanted to emigrate not to Israel but to the United States. In response to pressure from American Jewish organizations, and over the objections of the State of Israel, HIAS and other immigrant aid organizations decided, in 1976, to help Soviet Jews who wished to emigrate to the United States. This wave of Jewish immigration from Europe to the United States lasted until the early 1980s, when Soviet authorities shut the door to further emigration. In total, it brought about 200,000 emigrés to the United States.

The exodus of Soviet Jews began again in the late 1980s, as the government of Mikhail Gorbachev began loosening restrictions of all kinds. This time, Soviet Jews could apply for exit visas to emigrate directly to the United States if they had family already living there. This emigration grew dramatically after the collapse of the Soviet Union, driven by the desire for family reunification but also by economic hardship, rising crime, ethnic violence, and the contamination of southwestern portions of the former USSR after the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear energy plant in 1986. This migration continues into the twenty-first century.

By far the largest number of Soviet Jewish emigrés settled in New York City and surrounding suburban areas. By the late 1990s, they numbered more than 300,000. Other cities with sizable populations of Soviet Jewish emigrés include Los Angeles, Chicago, San Francisco, and Boston. In each of these cities, this diverse and well-educated immigrant population has left a mark on commerce, culture, and Jewish community life—opening the food stores, restaurants, Russian language bookstores, and small businesses that characterize visible ethnic enclaves but also creating high-technology companies, medical practices, design firms, and international trading companies as well as distinctive art, theater, and music.

The most famous enclave created by Soviet emigrés is a tiny Brooklyn neighborhood called Brighton Beach. This crowded strip of Atlantic seashore soon became known as Little Odessa in recognition of the Ukrainian origins of most of its residents. By 1980, it was the largest Soviet emigré outpost in the world—home to more than 30,000

Soviet Jews. But by 1991, when the collapse of the Soviet Union sparked a new wave of Jewish out-migration, Brighton had lost much of its allure for new arrivals. Class condescension and regional snobbery among well-educated emigrés from Moscow and Leningrad had long generated cracks about “the Odessan riffraff” washing up on Brooklyn’s shores. The image of a rough-and-ready gangster ghetto was reinforced by sensational media coverage of “the Russian mob” and semiregular stories in both the local and national press about the neighborhood’s “exotic, foreign flavor.” Brighton’s ghetto image repelled many new immigrants. To them it had become what the Lower East Side was to an earlier generation of American Jews and their immigrant forebears: an ambivalent symbol of the immigration’s early years, a place to shop, to gather for family parties, to visit one’s elderly parents, and maybe to indulge in a bit of nostalgia for home, but not a place for ambitious new Americans to live. Whenever they could, the 1990s emigrés settled elsewhere.

Still, Jewish immigrant aid agencies, such as the venerable Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and the New York Association for New Americans, tended to settle newly arrived Soviet emigrés in neighborhoods with long-established Jewish communities. In New York, new arrivals were settled in Williamsburg and Brighton Beach. In Chicago, new arrivals were sent to West Rogers Park. In Los Angeles, Soviet emigrés were first settled in Fairfax and West Hollywood.

Settling emigrés in large groups in densely populated areas made it easier for Jewish social service agencies to provide adjustment counseling to help immigrants deal with the traumas of uprooting and resettlement, loneliness, generational conflicts, and marital tensions. Emigrés in the 1970s had more publicly funded services available to them because they were granted federal refugee status—entitling them to housing aid, health care, and a fast track to citizenship. Automatic refugee status for Soviet emigrés ended in 1988, and since that time new arrivals have had to depend more heavily on private resettlement agencies, usually funded by the American Jewish community.

In many cities, local Jewish agencies created “host family” or “one on one” programs, which paired immigrants with American Jewish families who had children of similar ages as well as matching professional and social interests. In these cities, Soviet emigrés have established bonds with American Jewish families. In cities such as New

York and Los Angeles with huge Soviet emigré populations, immigrants and their children have remained relatively insular, socializing with and often marrying within the Soviet emigré community.

In every city with a large Soviet Jewish population, the move to the suburbs and to less ghettolike urban communities began quickly. Suburban ethnic enclaves are now as common as urban ethnic islands. In Southern California, Soviet emigré communities now dot the San Fernando and Simi valleys. In the Bay Area, Soviet Jews have poured into the high-technology sector, settling in San Mateo, Hayward, and Berkeley as well as Silicon Valley. In Fairlawn, New Jersey, and Newton, Massachusetts, well-heeled towns near New York and Boston, Soviet Jewish emigrés have transformed the landscape. Like most suburbanites, they take comfort both in their closeness to urban centers and in their self-imposed distance.

The Soviet immigrant population in all of these major metropolitan areas is large enough that there can be no single Soviet Jewish community. There are pockets and subsets of immigrants, divided as they were in the former Soviet Union by economic and political differences as well as by region of origin. One can find more than a few neighborhoods or suburban streets where emigrés from Kishinev or Minsk, Moscow or Odessa gather together in mini-communities.

One of the most distinctive is the Central Asian emigré community in New York’s Forest Hills, Queens. Since the 1970s, more than 35,000 Jewish emigrés from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Armenia have created a bustling ethnic enclave there. Culturally, linguistically, and religiously distinct from their Western Soviet counterparts, Bukharan emigrés identify with the Middle East rather than Europe. They have never spoken Yiddish; rather, they speak a dialect of Persian written in Hebrew characters. They believe themselves to be descendants of an ancient Persian Jewish community and trace their origins in Uzbekistan back to the fifth century. Bukharan Jews have faced prejudice from other Soviet emigrés as well as from American-born Jews. If Soviet emigrés have bristled at charges by American-born Jews that they were not “real Jews,” Bukharans are angered by those who say that they are not “real Russians.”

Soviet emigrés are divided as well by class, gender, generation, and culture. Even in the “worker’s state,” those with university degrees experienced a far higher standard

of living than those who did not finish high school. While Boston and San Francisco are home to emigrés with an almost uniformly high level of education, one-third of emigrés to New York did not have high school degrees when they arrived. Many of these are elderly. Older and less educated emigrés have had a harder transition to American life than younger emigrés, especially those with university degrees from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Minsk, and Kiev.

Elderly Soviet Jewish emigrés—those over sixty make up about one-third of the immigration—have had the benefit of access to Social Security benefits and Medicare upon arrival in the United States. Settled in urban communities with large populations of World War I– and World War II–era Jewish immigrants, many were able to communicate immediately, having Yiddish as a common language. The oldest, like the youngest among the emigrés, have been able to forge bonds outside the emigré community, joining synagogues and senior centers and moving into senior citizen housing projects, where they come into contact with elderly Jewish immigrants from pre-Soviet Russia, Poland, Hungary, and Germany. Still, this elderly population is vulnerable economically. Federal legislation mandating cuts in social services to noncitizens has left thousands on the brink of hunger and homelessness. These cuts generated fear and panic among a population traumatized by two world wars and Nazi and Soviet repression.

Middle-aged and elderly professionals have had their own problems. Many say that they have experienced an intellectual catastrophe in the United States that has forced physicians and lawyers, PhDs and classical musicians to take jobs as store clerks, taxi drivers, and garment workers—at least for a while. *Science* magazine estimates that 15 percent of Soviet immigrants arriving in the United States between 1987 and 1990 had PhDs or equivalent degrees in science and engineering. Only a handful were able to pick up their careers in the United States. Many have found it difficult even to break into lower-level jobs in the sciences because they are considered overqualified. “In Russia,” one engineer commented, “we had to hide that we are Jews. Here, to get a job, we have to hide that we have a Ph.D.” (Orleck 1999).

The job market has been much harder for older women. According to a 1995 Office of Refugee Resettlement statistic, Soviet Jews have the largest gender-based wage gap of any recent immigrant group. Almost all Soviet Jewish women worked outside the home before emigra-

tion. And they were just as likely as men to have earned college degrees and to have achieved professional success. Of Soviet Jewish emigré women in the United States, 60 percent reported having held academic, scientific, professional, or technical jobs prior to emigration. Only 31 percent of these, mostly the young, have found employment in those fields in the United States. At the time of the survey, more than 55 percent of Soviet emigré women were working in clerical or service jobs in the United States.

By contrast, most young adults with strong educational backgrounds have been able to find work and move into the middle class. By the 1990s, Soviet emigrés had made their presence felt in New York, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and scores of suburban communities as physicians, entrepreneurs, stock analysts, industrial researchers, accountants, and computer specialists. Those who emigrated as children have begun to appear in large numbers in both public and private institutions of higher learning. By one estimate, one-third of students enrolled in Boston-area community colleges in the late 1990s were Soviet emigrés. They are also well represented in more selective institutions, Brandeis University having perhaps the highest percentage (Orleck 1999).

Despite complaints by some in the American Jewish community that Soviet emigrés are less strongly Jewish identified than American-born Jews, national surveys suggest otherwise. Although half a century of Soviet suppression of Jewish religious life and Yiddish culture has caused lapses in Jewish education as well as ambivalence about Jewish identity, Soviet Jewish emigrés strongly identify as Jews. Indeed, middle-aged and elderly emigrés, who have survived Cossack pogroms, Stalinist purges, and the Nazi *Einsatzgruppe* death squads, are outraged when Jews who have lived comfortably in the United States during all of those years dare to say that Soviet Jews are “not really Jews.”

Surveys done in the mid-1990s show that, in fact, Soviet emigrés relate to their Judaism in the same ways as other American Jews. They attend synagogue regularly, celebrate Jewish holidays in their homes, and send their children to Hebrew school in about the same percentages as American Jews (approximately 35 percent). But they are more likely than American Jews to say that being Jewish is central to their identity, a fact interviewees attribute to persecution at the hands of the Nazis and the Soviet authorities. And a staggering number of adult men have sought

circumcisions upon arrival in the United States, more than 10,000 in New York City alone (Orleck 2001).

Increasingly, there are signs that Soviet emigrés are reaching accord with American Jewish leaders. Emigrés have founded a Russian division of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies and have become active in a wide range of American Jewish charitable organizations. As for relations between Soviet emigrés and American Jews more generally, time is healing resentments and misunderstandings, just as it did between East European emigrés and German Jews in the United States earlier in the twentieth century. There never has been a monolithic American Jewish community. The Soviet emigrations of the 1970s and the 1990s have further complicated the demographics, culture, and politics of American Jewry. From New York to Seattle, Soviet Jewish emigrés are rapidly becoming American Jews, but what that means to each emigré and in each community is as varied as the immigration itself.

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## Jewish Identity in America

In his 1782 book *Letters from an American Farmer*, the Frenchman J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur asked the most important question in American history: "What, then, is the American, this new man?" This question of identity has been of particular concern to American Jews, and it is not too much to say that identity has been the grand theme of American Jewish history. In America, Crèvecoeur wrote, the European discards "all his ancient prejudices and manners, [and] receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds." And just as Crèvecoeur emphasized the newness of America, so have America's

Jews, who were never more American than when they were inventing and then reinventing their Jewishness. America's Jews have been particularly adept at leaving behind ancient prejudices and manners and receiving new ones compatible with this new way of life. Their combining of "the immediate and the transcendent, the quirky and the hallowed," the historian Jenna W. Joselit wrote, "was virtually without parallel in modern Jewish history." American Jewish identity, Joselit continued, was "a malleable and protean social construct." Little troubled by inconsistencies, contradictions, or the burdens of the past, Jews "fashioned a home-grown American Jewishness" (Joselit 1994).

If the social and economic conditions of America were new to European immigrants, this was especially true for Jewish immigrants. Antisemitism in America was relatively mild, citizenship was a matter of right and not of sufferance, barriers to economic and social advancement were comparatively low, and assimilation was not difficult. In 1783, Mordecai Sheftall, a Jew living in Georgia, emphasized to his son that "an entire new scene" had opened itself before America's Jews, "and we have the world to begin again" (Lipset and Raab 1995). But this new scene presented unique challenges to Jewish identity and continuity.

If America was not the promised land, it certainly was the land of promise. "God Bless America," wrote Irving Berlin, who had been born in a Polish ghetto. Here, the state did not reinforce any particular definition of Jewish identity, nor did it bolster the power of any Jewish religious establishment. The American Jew could be any kind of Jew (or non-Jew) he or she wished. It is not surprising, then, that American Jews brought forth novel definitions of what it meant to be a Jew or that Jewish intellectuals should be so concerned with analyzing and defining the nature of American and of American Jewish identity. Of America's major ethnic groups prior to the late twentieth century, only the Jews were both an ethnic minority and a religious one. Other ethnic groups were at least Christian. Jews from Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East had been the most isolated and communally organized of groups and had to make the most radical adaptation to the individualistic ethos of American society. The compatibility of Jewish and American identity could not be taken for granted but had to be continually asserted and defended.

The historian Paul Buhle noted that the word *identity* was at one time "a virtual monopoly of Jewish writers," and this was true whether the topic was American identity in

general or American Jewish identity in particular (Buhle 2004). It is not coincidental, as Marxists were fond of saying, that no American novel has probed more deeply the process of immigrant acculturation than Abraham Cahan's *The Rise of David Levinsky*. Nor was it coincidental that the three major paradigms of American identity—Anglo-conformity, the melting pot, and cultural pluralism—were most famously enunciated by Jews who had the condition of America's Jews uppermost in their minds.

Anglo-conformity, the belief that immigrants should conform to preexisting cultural and social patterns and values dating from the eighteenth century, was best expressed by Emma Lazarus, America's first Jewish poet of note. Lazarus, a member of a distinguished and largely assimilated Sephardic New York family, had her Jewish consciousness awakened in the 1880s when she encountered East European Jewish immigrants who were settling in New York City. Lazarus defended the immigrants against their detractors and was, in the words of the historian John Higham, "the first modern American laureate of their history and culture" (Higham 1975). Lazarus is best known for her sonnet "The New Colossus," which was inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty. When Frederic Auguste Bartholdi's statue, which he titled "Liberty Enlightening the World," was placed in New York harbor in 1886, it was supposed to denote America as the land of liberty. Soon, though, and largely because of Lazarus's poem, the statue came to symbolize the openness of America to oppressed immigrants. "Give me your tired, your poor/Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," it read.

The next line in the sonnet—"The wretched refuse of your teeming shore"—has puzzled historians. The immigrants hardly considered themselves the flotsam of Europe, and it was incongruous that Lazarus would describe them as garbage. In the 1880s, however, *wretched* often was used as a synonym for *distressed*, and *refuse* frequently referred to objects that were valueless as well as worthless. Whatever meaning Lazarus had in mind, "wretched refuse" was easily assimilated into the ideology of Anglo-conformity, and "The New Colossus" strengthened the optimistic assumption that the beneficent environment of America could transform even the "wretched refuse" of European immigrants into productive citizens.

Israel Zangwill, the most famous exponent of the "melting pot," had a different view of American identity and of its Jews. Born in 1864 in London's Jewish ghetto of

Whitechapel to impoverished Russian Jewish immigrants, Zangwill would become the most prominent English-speaking Jewish writer of his generation. He wrote nostalgic novels of the ghetto, and yet in his own life he was a militant assimilationist. An ardent Zionist, he argued that Jews who decided to remain in the Diaspora should follow his example and relinquish all Jewish peculiarities. He believed intermarriage to be the answer to antisemitism, and he himself married an English Christian. The couple's first son was neither baptized nor circumcised.

Zangwill's 1908 play, *The Melting Pot*, which was the sensation of that year's Broadway season, reflected Zangwill's universalistic ideology as well as his exalted image of America as a land in which all ethnic identities, including that of Anglo Americans, were being melted down to create a new American. The plot of *The Melting Pot* revolves around the romance of David Quixano, a Jewish immigrant in America, and Vera Revendal, a Christian settlement house worker. After they decide to marry, David discovers that Vera's father had been responsible for the pogrom in Russia in which his family had been murdered. The drama of the play revolves around whether David would remain faithful to his image of America as a land in which the nationalities of Europe were being fused into a new American nationality or would reject marriage with Vera as quixotic and return to the insular Jewish loyalties of his youth.

As might be expected, love wins out. The play's melodramatic conclusion has David and Vera standing on the roof of a settlement in lower Manhattan. David pleads with Vera to "cling to me till all these ghosts are exorcised, cling to me till our love triumphs over death." He then looks toward the harbor where the Statue of Liberty gazes benignly on the ships bringing the immigrants to America. He is inspired by the view and confirms his vision of an American national character being shaped in the crucible of New York City's harbor. "It is the fires of God round his Crucible. There she lies, the great Melting-Pot—listen! Can't you hear the roaring and the bubbling? . . . Ah, what a stirring and a seething! Celt and Latin, Slav and Teuton, Greek and Syrian—black and yellow. . . . Yes, East and West, and North and South, the palm and the pine, the pole and the equator, the crescent and the cross—how the great Alchemist melts and fuses them with his purging flame! Here shall they all unite to build the Republic of Man and the Kingdom of God."

Theatergoers, including President Theodore Roosevelt, were rhapsodic over Zangwill's vision of a new American identity free of the ethnic animosities of Europe. It is doubtful, however, that those such as Roosevelt, who traced their American lineage back to the colonial period, agreed with Zangwill that they, too, were obliged to jump into the melting pot alongside the immigrants. Jewish spokesmen also criticized the message of *The Melting Pot* for suggesting that Jewish identity had no future in America. An editorial in the *American Hebrew* called the play's thesis a "counsel of despair" (Gleason 1992). Zangwill believed that antisemitism and continued immigration from Europe might slow down but would not fundamentally impede the inevitable melting pot process. He suggested to those American Jews committed to remaining Jewish to settle in Palestine where they could help create a new Jewish society. Jews who chose to stay in America would inevitably be amalgamated within a couple of generations.

For Zangwill, American identity was all about ethnicity. His evolving American identity was a blending of the most desirable elements of the various ethnic groups being cooked in the melting pot. But American Jewish identity had a religious as well as an ethnic component, and Zangwill's metaphor did not speak to those American Jews who were committed to Judaism. A group such as the Jews, who were in part a community of faith, had no place in Zangwill's schema.

Zangwill's great opponent was another Zionist, Horace Kallen. Kallen, the son of an Orthodox rabbi in Boston, had rejected traditional Judaism as a youth, but, in contrast to Zangwill, he was optimistic regarding the Jewish future in America. While a student at Harvard, Kallen was influenced by Barrett Wendell, a professor of literature. Wendell believed that Hebraic ideals and the Bible had played an important role in the development of America. Wendell and William James, Kallen's dissertation mentor, encouraged Kallen to think of American culture as diverse rather than monistic. Kallen became even more convinced of the "*pluribus*" rather than the "*unum*" of American identity when he taught at the University of Wisconsin prior to World War I. He was impressed by the extent to which the various ethnic groups of Wisconsin were seemingly maintaining their separate identities, and he concluded that America was developing into a federation of nationalities similar to Switzerland. Kallen was a poor prophet. Most American immigrants did not live in isolated rural commu-

nities in the Midwest, where the maintenance of ethnic traditions was easier. And the attacks on German culture during World War I and the immigrant restriction legislation of the 1920s were more revealing of the attitudes of most Americans toward the cultural balkanization of their country than was Kallen's paean to ethnic diversity.

Kallen argued that ethnic identity was the most important and permanent part of a person's being, "the center at which he stands, the point of his most intimate social relations, therefore of his intensest emotional life." (One would think that the family and not the ethnic group was the setting of a person's most intimate social relations and his intensest emotional life.) The one thing a person could not change, Kallen said, was his grandfather. But neither could this grandfather predict the identity of his grandchildren. For example, America recently had a secretary of defense named Cohen who does not identify as a Jew and who is married to a black person. It is hardly likely that this was anticipated by his grandparents.

In 1915 Kallen published a seminal essay in the *Nation* titled "Democracy versus the Melting Pot: A Study of American Nationality." This is the seminal document of what would come to be known as cultural pluralism. Democracy, Kallen argued, required that the choices of groups as well as those of individuals be respected. Zangwill's melting pot concept was inherently antidemocratic because it called for the disappearance of group identity. Kallen replaced the metaphor of the melting pot with that of an orchestra. Just as every instrument in an orchestra makes a distinctive contribution to the music, so every ethnic group makes a singular contribution to America. "In the life and culture of a nation," he said, ethnic, religious, and occupational groups "compound their different activities to make up the national spirit. The national spirit is constituted by this union of the different."

Kallen's vision of a pluralistic America was influenced by his own Jewish identity. Although alienated from Judaism, he was not estranged from his people. Kallen was an ardent Zionist and an advocate of Hebrew culture, and he described himself as a Hebraist. For Kallen, Jewishness was a modern, secular, ethnic identity shorn of any supernaturalism and compatible with advanced thinking. In his 1932 book, *Judaism at Bay: Essays Toward the Adjustment of Judaism to Modernity*, a revealing title, he rejected the conflating of Jewishness with religion. Rather, it was "the Jewish way of life become necessarily secular, humanist,

scientific, conditioned on the industrial economy, without having ceased to be livingly Jewish.”

Sidney Hook, a philosopher at New York University from 1927 to 1973, also developed a theory of American Jewish identity compatible with modernity. While he was an agnostic and had no interest in Zionism or Hebrew culture, Hook nevertheless had a lifelong interest in Jewish matters and wrote intermittently on Jewish topics. In his writings, he equated Jewishness with the American democratic way of life. For Hook, a socialist, this involved three items in particular: economic justice, the recognition of group differences, and the pragmatic scientific method of John Dewey. “As I interpret Jewish culture,” Hook said in “Promise without Dogma: A Social Philosophy for Jews,” a 1937 *Menorah Journal* essay, “its noblest feature is the characteristic way in which its traditions have fused passion for social justice with respect for scientific method and knowledge. When Jews forsake this method, they forsake a precious part of their tradition.” The logic of Jewish identity, Hook claimed, led inexorably to socialism. Socialism, more so than liberalism or conservatism, joined “the ideals of the good life in the good society to the methods of intelligent analysis and action.”

In conflating Jewishness with Dewey’s instrumentalism and neo-Marxism, Hook presented his own ideological choices as a model for other Jews. But his definition of Jewish identity had no room for anything that was distinctively Jewish, whether it be language, religious ritual, or love of Zion. In the 1940s and 1950s, Hook warned American Jews that taking too much comfort in Israel’s economic and social development and military victories could lead to ethnic chauvinism. “A people that has . . . been rational and pacific,” he said, now seek to show that “they are like everyone else—inconsistent, fanatical, atavistic.” Hook admitted that the social philosophy he recommended to Jews was equally valid for gentiles as well. Jews did not have a monopoly on social justice, the scientific method, and pluralism. In fact, Hook’s model was not Moses Maimonides, the medieval Jewish philosopher, or even Moses Mendelssohn, the nineteenth-century founder of Reform Judaism, but John Dewey, a naturalistic philosopher (Shapiro 1990).

Alan Dershowitz, the Harvard Law School professor, grew up in a far more religious environment than Hook. During the 1930s and 1940s, his pious family lived in Boro Park, the center of Orthodoxy in Brooklyn. Early in his life,

Dershowitz rebelled against religious restrictions. He remained, however, deeply Jewish. His 1991 book, *Chutzpah*, attempted to ground American Jewish identity not in religious rituals but in political activism. If anything could drive him back to observance, he said, it would not be religious conviction but “a political desire to fight those who want to see Judaism and Jews relegated to interesting museum exhibits and poignant memorials.” For his generation, “political Judaism is not only possible, it may well be the most logical prototype” (Dershowitz 1991).

Dershowitz acknowledged that there was no specific content to his political Judaism. It was broad enough to encompass the entire spectrum of politics, and it included items with which he was in fundamental disagreement. But if Jewish politics encompassed everything, then it really stood for nothing in particular. And if it encompassed everything, then what was specifically Jewish about it? If some Jews believed that liberal politics was the essence of Jewish identity, others believed liberalism to be hostile to Jewish interests. If some Jews were pro-life, others were pro-choice. If some Jews believed that Jewish interests required that Israel take a hard-line attitude toward the Palestinians, others favored a more conciliatory approach. In espousing a political Judaism, Dershowitz seemed to be clutching at straws, determined to find something that would guarantee Jewish survival at a time when only a small minority of American Jews were attracted to traditional Judaism. And even he was skeptical that a Jewish identity revolving around politics could be passed on to children and grandchildren whose political experiences and memories were not his.

Despite these caveats, *Chutzpah* was enthusiastically received by American Jews. This reception indicated the extent to which American Jewry was evolving from a religio-ethnic community to an interest group. This metamorphosis was manifested in the frequent use by Jewish leaders of the word *agenda* when describing their objectives and activities. Philanthropic organizations, interest groups, and lobbyists have agendas and do things, while religions and ethnic groups have beliefs, rituals, and culture, and simply are.

The two major items on Dershowitz’s agenda were defending the state of Israel and attacking antisemitism. But how relevant were these concerns to most American Jews? Undoubtedly support for Israel was the lowest common denominator of Jewish identity during the 1960s and

1970s. But it is likely that this Israelism has receded as American Jewry's economic importance to Israel has diminished and as a generation of American Jews has emerged that does not have personal memories of the heroic days of the late 1940s when the State of Israel was created, or of the Mideast wars of 1967 and 1973. While older Jews view Israel against the backdrop of Jewish powerlessness and the Holocaust, younger Jews view Israel against the backdrop of its vast military power, its domination of more than a million restive Arabs, and its often sordid politics, particularly concerning religion. Surveys of Jewish attitudes toward Israel have noted a decline in emotional attachment to Israel among younger Jews. Critics also questioned the relevance of the second item on Der-showitz's political agenda—fighting antisemitism—in shaping American Jewish identity. By the late twentieth century, domestic antisemitism had ceased to be a serious problem, although antisemitism remained important in the Middle East and Europe.

Walt Whitman, in his *Democratic Vistas*, said that American identity would never be secure until “it founds and luxuriantly grows its own forms of art, poems, schools, theology, displacing all that exists, or as has been produced anywhere in the past under opposite influences.” Unhindered by restrictions on religious expression imposed by the state or by an established church, American Jews have been free to develop fresh forms of religious expression and theology. This was particularly true after World War II, when Judaism became the major context within which Jewish identity was expressed, supplanting competing forms of Jewishness such as left-wing politics and Yiddish secular culture. This was a creative period for American Judaism, and each of its major branches—Orthodoxy, Conservative Judaism, and Reform—spawned new movements offering novel alternatives of Jewish religious identity.

Out of Orthodoxy came Modern Orthodoxy, which sought to integrate American cultural and social norms with traditional Judaism. Conservative Judaism gave birth to Mordecai Kaplan's Reconstructionist movement, which emphasized Jewish peoplehood and was skeptical of many of the traditional supernatural tenets of Judaism. Reform Judaism produced the anti-theistic Humanistic Judaism. These new religious options reflected the openness of American life and the difficulty of imposing imported religious norms and practices in the new world, conditions that had existed for centuries.

In 1785, for example, the leadership of Congregation Mikveh Israel of Philadelphia complained to the chief rabbi of Amsterdam, Holland, about the spread of heretical practices within its membership. “In this country . . . everybody does as he pleases,” it lamented. “They consult so-called ‘scholars,’ thoroughly corrupt individuals, who flagrantly profane the name of Heaven and who contrive erroneous legalistic loopholes.” These “vicious people,” the leadership protested, continued to attend synagogue services “because under the laws of the country it is impossible to enjoin them from so doing.” Within a couple of decades, however, even Mikveh Israel was doing as it pleased. Thus, it rejected the advice of London's rabbinical authorities and accepted as a member a *mamzer*, a person born from a forbidden sexual union. In defending its decision, the congregation claimed that the ruling of London's rabbinate was “utterly uncongenial to the liberal spirit of the constitutions and laws of this enlightened age and country” (Sarna 2004). For Mikveh Israel's leaders and for American Jews, individualism and voluntarism trumped Jewish law and tradition. A century later, an enterprising rabbi on New York's Lower East Side advertised himself as the chief Hungarian rabbi of New York City. When asked what religious body had appointed him to this position, he replied, “the sign painter.”

There seemed no universally acceptable answer to the question of Jewish identity. As one joke noted, the only thing that two Jews could agree on was what a third should contribute. The lowest common denominator of American Jewish identity had little to do with religion. A Jew apparently was anyone who wanted to be viewed as such, and the motivation was usually social rather than religious. Jewish fraternal organizations such as B'nai B'rith and the National Council of Jewish Women, Jewish charities such as Jewish hospitals and Jewish federations, and Jewish political organizations such as the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress provided secular and voluntary options for Jews to act Jewishly, however they might define Jewish identity.

American Jews remained after 350 years what they had been when they first settled in New York in 1654: a choosing people. Some social scientists asserted that the most decisive determinant in American Jewish identity was the sociological choices that Jews made and not the causes they espoused or the religious rituals they practiced. These sociologists believed that it was far more important that Jews

belonged to Jewish organizations, that their friends were Jews, and that they lived among other Jews, rather than whether they kept kosher, read books on the Holocaust, and supported liberal causes. By the end of the twentieth century, however, most Jews were no longer living in neighborhoods in which the majority of people were Jews, nor were they confined to occupations in which most of their fellow workers were Jews. Critics of the social scientists wondered whether Jews would continue to relate to other Jews on a social basis if their religious and ideological ties to Jewish life atrophied.

In a nation that strongly values individual autonomy, the survival of a passionate Jewish identity among a large number of Jews is problematic. America's Jews have gone from being a chosen people to being a choosing people, and the choices they have made are troubling to Jewish survivalists. The 1990 National Jewish Population Survey estimated that there were 1.1 million Jews who practiced no religion and another 1.3 million born Jews who practiced a religion other than Judaism. There were also 185,000 converts to Judaism and more than 1.3 million gentiles living with Jews (Heilman 1995). For Jews, America has been, as is stated on the country's Great Seal, a *novus ordo seclorum*—a new order of the ages, something new under the sun.

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# Demographic and Economic Profiles of Twentieth-Century American Jewry

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## The Demography of Jews in Twentieth-Century America

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The Jewish population of the United States increased almost fourfold during the twentieth century, from an estimated 1.5 million in 1900 to between 5.5 and 6 million a century later. Population growth has not been evenly spread over this period. Rapid increase in population size due to immigration at the turn of the twentieth century was followed by small and steady increases through the 1970s and relative stability during the last three decades of the century. These changes in the size of the Jewish population have been accompanied by dramatic shifts in the level and sources of Jewish immigration, reductions in the size of Jewish families, significant changes in the timing of marriage and family formation, increases in life expectancy, and alterations in migration and the regional distribution of the Jewish population within the United States.

Population gains and losses through intermarriage are difficult to gauge, but by the end of the twentieth century, intermarriage had replaced immigration as the critical element of American Jewish demography. Increases in the level of intermarriages over the last century have resulted in Jewish population declines, with some compensating gains due to formal conversions and the identification of those not born Jewish with the Jewish community. The ethnic-religious identification of the adult children of

mixed marriages of Jews and non-Jews remains unclear and has become an important issue at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The American Jewish population has always been a small proportion of the total American population. Starting in the middle of the nineteenth century with a base population of around 15,000 in 1840, the American Jewish population increased to around 50,000 at mid-nineteenth century, largely due to the influx of German Jews, and increased substantially to almost 250,000 by 1880. The large increase reflected the beginning of the mass immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe, where there was the largest concentration of world Jewry. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the American Jewish population had increased to just over 1 million, representing about 1.4 percent of the total U.S. population (Goldstein 1971).

In 1907 the estimated Jewish population in the United States was 1.8 million, and by 1917 it had almost doubled to 3.4 million, or 3.3 percent of the total U.S. population. Another 1 million was added in the next decade and another 500,000 by 1937, when the Jewish population was estimated at 4.7 million, representing 3.7 percent of the total U.S. population. Smaller increases in population size characterized the U.S. Jewish population through the 1950s and 1960s. From an estimated 5 million Jews in 1950, the size of the American Jewish population has hovered between 5 million and 6 million during the

1990s. Jews represent around 2.2 percent of the total U.S. population (Goldscheider 2004).

Due to the problems of data collection and the absence of data by religion in official government documents, a demographic description of the American Jewish community can only be estimated. A general portrait and trends can be pieced together from a combination of government data sources, sample surveys on specific topics that include a relatively small number of Jewish respondents, and local Jewish community surveys. National Jewish population surveys sponsored by Jewish organizations and conducted around 1970, 1990, and in 2000 are important sources of information on the demography of American Jews, but these have also been limited in coverage and accuracy. In the absence of other national data sources, national Jewish population surveys represent the best available information on American Jews.

By the end of the twentieth century, it had become unclear how American Jews were to be defined for demographic purposes—by religion, by ethnicity, by self-definition, or by some combination. Much of the uncertainty about the size of the Jewish population reflects the limited data available and the changing definitions of who is Jewish. Nevertheless, it is generally agreed that Jewish population size has remained relatively stable over the last two decades of the twentieth century. The influx of Jews from the former Soviet Union starting in the 1970s, and to a lesser extent from the State of Israel, has contributed to the general stability despite the below-population-replacement fertility rate and the increasing rate of outmarriages. How adult Jews of intermarried parents are counted represents a major unknown factor in estimating American Jewish population size.

The internal movement of Jews within the United States over the twentieth century has resulted in the changing distribution of Jewish population by region, state, and metropolitan area. Increases in Jewish population in the southern and western regions of the United States balance the decline in the proportion of Jews in the Northeast. Along with regional shifts have come changes in the reconcentration of Jews in particular metropolitan areas, away from the large cities on the East Coast to cities on the West Coast and in the South. By the end of the twentieth century, an estimated 45 percent of America's Jews lived in the Northeast, 20 percent lived in the South, and 20 percent lived in the West (*American Jewish Year Book* 2005).

Since the 1920s, the Jewish fertility rate has been rather low, fluctuating on average around two children per family through the 1970s. Starting in the 1980s and 1990s, average completed Jewish family size dipped slightly below two children. The family size of the younger generation of American Jews hovers at below the level needed for population replacement. At the end of the twentieth century, later ages at marriage and the delay in the birth of the first child until women are in their late twenties, combined with higher educational levels and professional work commitments of women, characterized American Jews as well as other middle-class, urban, professional, educated whites. Low fertility over the twentieth century reflected the very careful family planning and contraceptive efficiency characteristic of American Jews in the context of their upward social mobility, high educational attainment, and professional life styles. The key family changes in the two decades before the twenty-first century have been delayed marriage and postponed childbearing, higher levels of divorce and remarriage, increased cohabitation, and greater gender equality in relationships.

Mortality rates are the least well documented of the components of American Jewish demography. There is little evidence that Jewish mortality levels are unique beyond the social class, urban, and age composition of the Jewish population compared to the total population. Certainly the decline in mortality and the improvement of health had an impact, particularly on the aging of the Jewish population and the changing size of the Jewish population in particular places within the United States. The trend toward high life expectancy over the twentieth century, the greater mortality rate of men compared to that of women, and the general tendency of changes in the specific causes of death toward cancer and heart disease have characterized the Jewish population as well as the general population.

The story of American Jewish demography can be told by focusing on two major themes: immigration to America and Jewish intermarriage. Immigration was the source of population expansion and development in the beginning of the twentieth century, and intermarriage was the story a hundred years later.

### **Immigration to America and Origins**

The immigration to the United States from the countries of Eastern Europe that began in the 1870s and continued

through the 1920s became the demographic foundation of the contemporary American Jewish community. Drawing on significant proportions of Jewish communities of origin, immigration to America involved 2.5 million Jews, mostly from towns and urban areas. Social and ideological changes had already characterized immigrants and their communities before they left, resulting in the greater receptivity of immigrants to the range of opportunities in America.

The volume of immigration and the distribution of immigrants converted the scattered local American Jewish communities into a national ethnic group, from a population size of 200,000 in 1870 to more than 4 million in the mid-1920s (Goldscheider and Zuckerman 1984). The guiding ideology of this immigration was secular–socialist, not religious. An ethnic Jewish identity in the broadest sense, not a narrowly defined Judaism, characterized the immigrant community. The economic motives underlying the immigration were dominant (an escape from economic discrimination and oppression, not only the fear of pogroms); the capitalist goal of the immigrants was to take advantage of the economic opportunities (grounded in political freedoms) that were available in America. Socialism was their politics; capitalism was their economics; Jewishness was their social and family life and their culture.

The heaviest volume of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe occurred between 1904 and 1908, when 650,000 Jews arrived, and in 1913 and 1914, when an additional 250,000 arrived. In no year was Jewish immigration more than 14 percent of general immigration, and more often than not it was less than 10 percent (Goldscheider 2004). Aided by local and national Jewish American organizations, informed by extended family members and persons from their towns of origin, the overwhelming majority of Jews remained in America, arriving with family members or bringing them in subsequent years. The permanent, family- and community-based immigration of Jews made it reasonable for them to invest in learning English, to form new families, and to finance the education of their children. With little or no incentive to return to places of origin, with economic opportunities available in America, and with financial assistance from earlier Jewish immigrants from Germany, Jews from Eastern Europe became citizens in their new homeland. They competed well with the millions of other immigrants who were less well prepared because of their more rural origins and lower levels of commitment to remaining in America.

As in other migrations, younger adults were more likely to move, as were skilled laborers. Many of the immigrants were already freed from the constraints of family and tradition and had experienced some social and economic mobility before migrating. Through immigration, Jews were becoming more independent of their families; yet, ironically, families were developing bonds of assistance for immigrants and supporting assimilation to America. Independence did not mean the rejection of family ties but the establishment of new forms of kinship bonds and family support.

Most of the religious leaders and their closest followers remained in Eastern Europe. They correctly viewed America as threatening to their authority and their religious traditions. As they defined America as the *trayfa medina*, the “unfit country,” the socialists and secularists, who represented a disproportionate share of the immigrants, viewed America as the “golden land” and often as the “Promised Land.” The immigrants brought with them the cultural societies, unions, and political parties of Eastern European Jewry, leaving behind most of the religious institutions, including the religious educational institutions.

Most Jewish immigrants did not sever their ties to their places of origin, even as they became American. Kinship and friendship ties were the bases of further immigration from communities of origin. Chain migration, not return migration, was a dominant feature of Eastern European Jewish immigration to America. Settlement and organizational patterns in America reinforced ties to communities of origin. Building religious and welfare institutions, coming from the same region, living close together in neighborhoods, immigrants conveyed to their children the sense of community and culture of places of origins, including the depths of their Jewish identification. By the first and second decades of the twentieth century, thousands of independent *landsmanshaftn* and local immigrant organizations existed in American cities where Jews were concentrated.

The immigrant generation was concentrated in particular neighborhoods in a few large cities. By 1920 almost half the Jews in the United States lived in New York, and almost two-thirds lived in only three states. Almost 85 percent were concentrated in cities of 100,000 or more population, compared to less than 30 percent of the total population; only 3 percent lived in rural areas, compared

to 46 percent of the total (Goldstein 1971). The economic activities of Jewish immigrants distinguished them from those they left behind in places of origin and from other immigrants. The overwhelming concentration of immigrant Jews in skilled labor and shopkeeping provided them with enormous structural advantages over other immigrants in the pursuit of social mobility. A distinct overlap of ethnicity and occupation emerged among Jewish immigrants, and powerful economic networks and occupational concentration developed.

Their common social and economic background, residential and occupational concentration, and family characteristics allowed immigrant Jews to take advantage of the expanding educational opportunities in America. Working in more skilled and stable occupations, Jews earned more money than did other immigrant groups. This facilitated their investment in the education of their children. Over time, the direction of the links between occupations and educational levels reversed, allowing those with better educations to obtain better jobs. But the mobility away from neighborhoods of initial settlement and to new jobs and higher levels of education was a group process. Most who attended college, for example, commuted from home, and even as they moved away from their families, they created new communities of Jews. By 1920 more than 80 percent of the students enrolled in City College and Hunter College in New York were Jewish. Before Columbia University instituted restrictive quotas after World War I, 40 percent of its student body was Jewish (Steinberg 1974).

The Jews of the immigrant generation could not shed their Jewishness, but they changed it. Their foreignness and their characteristics constrained their full assimilation, as did the discrimination they encountered. Residential, educational, and occupational networks joined family and organizational networks to reinforce a cohesive community. The bases of cohesion would inevitably change as the children of immigrants moved to new neighborhoods, attended different schools for longer periods of time, obtained better jobs, and faced the economic depression of the 1930s and war in the 1940s. Yet the children of immigrants were raised in families where an ethnic language was distinctive, where cultural closeness to origins was undeniable, where families were cohesive and supportive, and where networks and institutions were ethnically based. Combined, these powerful elements made the second generation Jewish by both religion and ethnicity. But their eth-

nicity (in the sense of national origin) was fading, and their Jewishness was becoming Americanized. Although sharply different from the Jewishness of their parents' generation, the children's Jewishness was clear and distinctive by American standards. The continuation of integration into the third and fourth generations, distant from cultural origins, raised directly the question of the changing quality of American Jewish life.

In the pre-World War II period, immigrant Jews and their children interacted with other Jews at work, in neighborhoods, in schools, and in religious, political, and social activities. Yiddish and socialist schools and newspapers competed with public and religious schools. Credit associations, *landsmanshaftn*, and local fraternal and communal institutions appeared and expanded. While learning English, Yiddish remained the language of business and social life among Jewish immigrants. Even when their children rejected Yiddish, it was still the cultural environment of their upbringing. And Jewish families and communities rejected those who rejected their community through intermarriage or by their behavior. The overlap of occupation, residence, and ethnicity was as high in America as anywhere in urban Europe. Jews left the Old World behind—but not all of it—to become American. Their Jewishness was conspicuous by their background, culture, and community.

### Intermarriage and Jewish Population Changes

In contrast to the first half of the twentieth century, when intermarriage rates were low and inconsequential demographically, the critical question of the last third of the twentieth century has been the impact of intermarriage rates on the quality of Jewish life and on American Jewish population growth. Estimates of the impact of intermarriages on Jewish population size have been made, but the identity of the children of the intermarried remains unclear.

During most of the twentieth century, when Jewish intermarriage rates were low, those who intermarried repudiated their religion, their families, and their communities. And their religion, their families, and their communities abandoned them. Intermarriage thus resulted in a loss of the intermarried to the Jewish community. Most Jewish parents at the end of the twentieth century grew up in

communities where intermarriage was low, where the intermarried were largely Jewish men married to non-Jewish-born women, where conversions to Judaism were not encouraged and were often seriously discouraged, and where the intermarried couple and their children were not accepted members of the Jewish community.

In the last decades of the twentieth century, as a result of increasing social contacts between Jews and others, intermarriage has become less idiosyncratic and less symbolic of alternative religious discovery or of political or economic necessity (as it had often been in the past in America and in Europe). Rather, Jewish intermarriages are now a reflection of the routine interaction among individuals, an integral part of the daily lives of American Jews. Marrying someone of a different ethnic or religious background has become consistent with the way Jewish parents and their children live and has become embedded in American Jewish culture.

The demographic issue of American Jewish continuity is not intermarriage *per se* but the Jewishness that characterizes families and households. Most American Jews are Jewish because they were born to Jewish parents. But an increasing number of Jews become Jewish through commitments to their newly formed families and their identification with the Jewish community. Becoming Jewish through having a Jewish home and identifying with the Jewish community, as well as formal conversion to Judaism, varies through the life course. Jewish identification often increases as families are formed and children need to be educated.

The rates of intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews in the United States vary nationally between 40 and 50 percent of those who married in the period 1990–2000 (Goldscheider 2004). There is a considerable range among communities in the level of intermarriage. In the past, Jewish men married out more than Jewish women did, but gender differences in intermarriages have diminished considerably. Because women tend to take a more active role in the home, the gender difference was the basis for more concern in the past, for the non-Jewish-born spouse would be more likely to define the ethnoreligious orientation of the home. The changing gender pattern of intermarriage may have a more positive effect on the Jewishness of the home. The relative rates of generational continuity of the intermarried within the Jewish community have increased during the last decades of the twentieth century (i.e., the

number of children raised in households where at least one parent was not born Jewish who remain Jewish as they form their own families). This new pattern is connected with the increased levels of intermarriage and conversions and the increased acceptance of the intermarried within the Jewish community.

High intermarriage rates may result in population stability when conversions occur or when the non-Jewish-born partner identifies with the Jewish community. More importantly, Jewish demographic stability with high rates of intermarriage occurs when many children are raised as Jews. The impact of Jewish intermarriages on American Jewish population size will reflect the extent to which Jewishness is an integral part of the homes and families of the intermarried.

Equal proportions (40 percent) of intermarried Jewish parents identify their children as Jewish and as non-Jewish. The rest (20 percent) are noncommitted (Goldscheider 2004). How they will identify themselves Jewishly as they grow up to have families of their own is open to speculation. Many non-Jewish-born persons identify themselves as Jews and are so identified by their family, friends, and the Jewish community without formal religious conversions. Many engage in family, communal, and organizational activities that are Jewish. The failure to have a Jewish marriage ceremony does not preclude subsequent Jewish commitments.

Unlike in the past, in most intermarriages the Jewish partner remains attached in some ways to the Jewish community. Often the non-Jewish-born partner becomes attached to the Jewish community in some ways, and many of the children of the intermarried identify Jewishly through family, friends, neighborhood, and Jewish organizational ties. Many of their friends are Jewish, support Israel, and identify themselves as Jews, and most have important relationships with Jewish relatives. Some proportion of spouses and their children formally convert to Judaism.

Thus, the increasing rate of intermarriage does not necessarily mean the demographic erosion of the Jewish community. Intermarriage rates unambiguously mean that vast networks of Jews are now affected and linked to the intermarriage issue. There is hardly a Jewish household in America that has not experienced the intermarriage of a family member, neighbor, or friend. The extension of intermarriage to encompass most of the Jewish community

has been the critical family transformation among American Jews over the last decades of the twentieth century.

*Calvin Goldscheider*

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## The Economic Status of American Jews in the Twentieth Century

The twentieth century was a period of rapid and profound change in the economic circumstances of American Jewry. It is best understood as a transitional period, from a community of struggling Eastern European and Russian immigrants centered in inner-city slums at the beginning of the century to a predominantly highly educated, thoroughly assimilated American group centered in upper-middle-class urban and suburban neighborhoods. As individuals and families pursued their private goals, the Jewish community developed institutions to support their needs and help them adjust to these new circumstances. Like much of American economic history in general, however, the upward socioeconomic mobility of American Jewry was both rapid and unplanned, a grassroots phenomenon whose leaders sometimes seemed to be struggling to keep up with their followers.

To begin to appreciate the magnitude of this change, consider the contrast between American Jewry in 1900 and in 2000. Although the United States already had a well-established Jewish community before 1880, one primarily of German origin, the immigrants arriving between 1880 and 1920 from czarist Russia and Eastern Europe were far more

numerous, and by 1900 their experience was already shaping the future of American Jewry. The immigrants earned their living primarily as machine operators, craftsmen, and shopkeepers. By the year 2000, their descendants would be primarily highly educated white-collar workers in professional and managerial occupations. The immigrant Jews in 1900 lived primarily in slum tenements or crowded, low-income neighborhoods, but by 2000 most of the Jewish community would be financially secure and living in upper-middle-class urban or suburban neighborhoods. In 1900 Jewish immigrants were familiar with antisemitism as a constant presence, and many families had direct experience with antisemitic violence (especially in the Old Country) and/or workplace discrimination, even in the United States. By 2000 the Jewish community would be well assimilated into the American mainstream, its identity and interests would be profoundly affected by the existence of a vibrant Jewish state in Israel, few American Jews would feel vulnerable to antisemitism, and even fewer would have experienced antisemitism directly.

In 1900 American Jewish religious institutions were in turmoil as Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox synagogue movements organized themselves to find "American" adaptations of Jewish observance appropriate for a socioeconomic environment of religious pluralism, personal freedom, and economic opportunity largely unprecedented in Jewish history. In 2000 American synagogues were again adapting, as the three dominant movements responded to challenges posed by changes in the interests of their members, by new offshoots and unaffiliated movements, including the growth of independent "post-denominational" congregations, and by an increasing number of members with non-Jewish spouses and other relatives.

In 1900 the primary communal issue facing American Jewry was how to Americanize the poor, non-English-speaking immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe, and socioeconomic advancement was its goal. By 2000 the focus would be on third- and fourth-generation American Jews who were so well assimilated that their attachment to Judaism and to Jewish continuity, as well as to the Jewish community, would be the primary concern.

## The Early Twentieth Century

In 1880 the small American Jewish community, which numbered about 200,000 persons or 0.5 percent of the U.S.

population, was comprised mainly of immigrants arriving from Germany since the 1840s and their descendants. By 1917, after a large wave of Jewish immigration primarily from Eastern Europe and the Russian Empire, American Jews numbered approximately 3.4 million, about 3.3 percent of the U.S. population. These new immigrants were culturally quite different from the earlier German Jewish immigrants. They came from a part of Europe that was much less developed economically, they spoke Yiddish rather than German, and they were more traditional in their religious practices. Unlike the German American Jews, who could be found scattered across the country, the Russian and East European Jews were intensely concentrated in the major industrial centers of the Northeast and Midwest, especially New York City.

Equally dramatic was the occupational disparity between the East European Jewish immigrant men, German Jewish men, and men in the non-Jewish population. Men in the German Jewish community worked primarily in sales occupations ranging from peddler to merchant and in clerical jobs. In 1910 Yiddish-speaking, male Jewish immigrants were also much more likely to be in sales occupations (27 percent) than either other white immigrant men (7 percent) or white native-born men (10 percent). Yiddish-speaking, Jewish immigrant men were concentrated in blue-collar jobs in light manufacturing, with 32 percent in craft occupations and 22 percent working in “operative” jobs (i.e., as unskilled or semiskilled machine operators). Many of these jobs were in the expanding garment industry, in which many of the immigrant Jews had worked in Europe. In contrast, 25 percent of non-Jewish, white male immigrants (most of whom had arrived at the same time as the Russian Jews) were in craft occupations, and 18 percent were in operative jobs; and among non-Jewish, native-born white males, these occupations accounted for only 18 and 15 percent, respectively. Farmers and laborers were major occupations both for non-Jewish immigrants (37 percent) and for white native-born men (also 37 percent) but accounted for only about 4 percent of the Jewish men.

Even by 1910, there was substantial evidence of upward occupational mobility among the immigrant generation as well as their American-born children. With time in the United States, the Jewish immigrants learned about the American labor market, adjusted their skills to the new economic environment, and improved their English language proficiency. Some continued as blue-collar workers,

no longer as the lowest-skilled workers but moving upward in craft and operative jobs, while others moved into sales and managerial occupations. Their sons, Yiddish-origin Jewish men born in America, were proficient in English and educated in the United States. As a result, by 1910 some 32 percent—nearly one-third—were in sales and another 20 percent in clerical occupations, while only 13 percent and 15 percent, respectively, were in craft and operative jobs.

Self-employment was important among the Jews, accounting for 38 percent of Yiddish-origin immigrant men in 1910, in contrast to only 22 percent of non-Jewish immigrant men. The self-employed accounted for 36 percent of the native-born white men, but most of these were farmers. By 1920, with more time in the United States, self-employment among the Yiddish-speaking Jewish immigrants had increased to 46 percent, while for non-Jews the proportions had remained constant over the decade. Self-employment also appealed to the second generation, the U.S.-born children of Yiddish-speaking immigrants. Although only 16 percent were self-employed in 1910, at that time they were still quite young. By 1920 about 33 percent—one-third—were self-employed in nonfarm activities.

During this period, young Jewish women typically worked for wages in the years after the completion of schooling, while others worked in small family businesses with their parents or husbands. Although early on they engaged in factory work (the garment industry being most important), later they would find jobs as clerical workers, secretaries, and bookkeepers. Once they married and became mothers, however, Jewish women were more likely to stay home to care for children. In this respect they differed from the women in most other European immigrant groups at the time, who were more likely to continue working and to have their older daughters care for the young children.

Two interrelated features of the Jewish immigration differentiated them from other immigrants and facilitated their investments in skills relevant to the U.S. economy. The Jews were more likely than other groups to immigrate as families—husbands, wives, and children—even if they did not all arrive at the same time. They also came with the intention of making the United States their permanent home; the proportion who expected to return or who actually returned to their country of origin was far smaller than

in other immigrant groups. America was the land of freedom as well as economic opportunity, and the Jews came not only for work but also to escape the antisemitism pervasive in the societies of Eastern Europe and Russia.

### **American Jewry at Midcentury**

There was relatively little immigration, including Jewish immigration, during and after World War I because of severe immigration restrictions that began in 1921 (and lasted until the mid-1960s) and the Great Depression of the 1930s. By 1940 there were about 4.8 million Jews in the United States, constituting about 3.7 percent of the population. By that time, it was evident that there had been dramatic changes in the occupational structure of American Jewry.

Among foreign-born Jewish men, 43 percent were still in craft and operative occupations in 1940, but 17 percent were in white-collar, sales, and clerical jobs, another 28 percent were in managerial occupations, and 6 percent were in the professions. In all, 41 percent of these men were self-employed. Non-Jewish white men also experienced upward occupational mobility during this period but at a more modest rate. By 1940 only 11 percent of non-Jewish white men, whether foreign born or natives of the United States, were in managerial jobs, with only 4 percent and 6 percent, respectively, in professional occupations.

Second-generation American Jews with Yiddish-speaking origins showed an even greater movement out of blue-collar jobs. By 1940 only 23 percent were in craft and operative jobs, 35 percent were in sales and clerical jobs, and 22 percent were in managerial occupations. Perhaps most dramatic was their disproportionate presence in the professions, despite discrimination against Jews in access to higher education and professional schooling. By 1940 professional occupations accounted for 6 percent of non-Jewish white males, 4 percent of non-Jewish immigrant men, 6 percent of Jewish immigrant men, and an impressive 15 percent of the American-born sons of Jewish immigrants.

Even more dramatic were the occupational differences within the professions. Among Jewish immigrant men, 2.1 percent were doctors, dentists, or lawyers; among the second generation, 6.4 percent were in these occupations. Among non-Jewish white men, immigrant or native, these occupations employed only 0.5 percent and 1.3 percent, re-

spectively. Jewish professionals were thus predominantly in medicine and law, two occupations in which self-employment was then the norm. In other professions, such as accounting, Jews were also much more likely to be self-employed. This helped Jews avoid discrimination in access to professional employment in large corporate firms, heavy manufacturing, and the banking and insurance sectors.

Self-employment remained high among Jews even as it was falling in the general population with the decline in farming. In 1940, 41 percent of the Jewish immigrant men (an older group) were self-employed, and 27 percent of the second generation of Yiddish origin were self-employed. In contrast, 21 percent of foreign-born, non-Jewish white men were self-employed, as were 27 percent of native-born white men, again primarily in agriculture.

The rapid increase in occupational attainment from the immigrant generation to their American-born children, especially dramatic in comparison with other immigrant groups at the same time and even in comparison with nonimmigrant Americans, can be attributed to their similarly rapid increase in schooling level. Jews valued education for its own sake, but also—perhaps primarily for many immigrants—as a means to improve economic opportunities in the United States for themselves and their children. Although sons often acquired more schooling than daughters, Jewish women were encouraged to stay in school much longer than young women in other groups, and many entered the professions, especially as teachers and social workers. The wife of a relatively well-educated, second-generation Jewish man was also typically well educated, and the home environment of their Jewish children was one that encouraged educational achievement.

### **The Late Twentieth Century**

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Jewish population increased from about 5 million shortly after World War II to about 5.9 million in the 1970s and then declined to about 5.2 million in 2000. As the non-Jewish population grew more rapidly from higher rates of fertility and immigration, the Jewish proportion of the population declined from a peak of about 3.7 percent to slightly less than 2.0 percent in 2000.

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, both Jewish and non-Jewish men experienced increases in

their occupational status, but again the increase was more dramatic for Jewish men. The proportion of Jewish men in professional occupations increased from 14 percent in the early post–World War II period to 20 percent in 1957 and 44 percent by 2000, about the same as its peak at 47 percent in 1990. In contrast, while professional employment increased dramatically among non-Jewish white men, it was still only 19 percent by 1990. Blue-collar employment also continued to decline during this period, leaving only 13 percent of Jewish men in crafts or low-skilled jobs by 2000. Managerial occupations comprised 23 percent of the Jewish male labor force in 2000, still a substantial fraction but far less than the 45 percent seen during the early post–World War II years.

Self-employment among Jewish men peaked at 56 percent in the early post–World War II period and has since declined to 27 percent in 1990, remaining substantially greater than the 14 percent for non-Jewish men, among whom agriculture still accounts for an important fraction of the self-employed. Jewish employment has thus shifted dramatically in recent decades, first from self-employed managers to self-employed professionals and then from self-employed professionals to salaried professionals. This is partly a consequence of the rapid increase in the educational attainment of Jewish men. It is also due to enhanced professional career opportunities in corporations, government, and universities previously closed to Jews or limited by antisemitism.

During the second half of the twentieth century, American women in all groups were more likely than ever before to enter the labor market in paid occupations, accelerating a trend begun in the century's early decades. This was due in part to a decline in fertility that greatly reduced the child-rearing responsibilities of married women. It was also due to the appearance of safe, inexpensive prepared foods (cans and packages) and newly affordable consumer durables—timesaving household appliances such as washing machines, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, and freezers. Thus, the same technological changes that increased women's productivity in the labor market and raised wage rates for all women, including those working as domestic servants, also reduced the amount of time needed for household chores.

Jewish women participated in this movement, but their labor force patterns differed from those of other groups. Before the birth of the first child, married Jewish

women were more likely than their non-Jewish counterparts to work in the labor market, but Jewish women were less likely than non-Jews to stay in the labor market when they had children of preschool age. Once their children were older, however, Jewish women would reenter the labor market, often in part-time or part-year jobs, and they were more likely than non-Jewish women to work full time after their children had graduated from high school. Jewish children had the advantages of better-educated mothers, more maternal time devoted to them during their early years, and higher parental income during their adolescence and youth.

This pattern of work among Jewish women undoubtedly contributed to the high educational attainment of both sons and daughters in the following generation. By the year 2000, fully 82 percent of married Jewish men of working age had wives who were also in the labor force, and only 12 percent had wives who were full-time homemakers. More than two-thirds of those in the labor force, whether men or women, were in high-level careers, with professional occupations alone accounting for 51 percent of the men and 46 percent of the women. Two-career couples had become the norm in the American Jewish community, and in a striking 28 percent of these couples, both husband and wife had professional careers.

## Prospects for the Future

At the turn of the twenty-first century, America's Jewish children tend to come from homes with few siblings and with highly educated, professionally employed parents. All the ingredients necessary for the next generation of Jewish children to become equally successful adults are present, yet there are also questions as to whether the high level of occupational attainment (and hence also earnings) of the American Jewish community can be sustained. If parents have high-powered careers, child care becomes an issue not only for the parents but also for the community as a whole. High-quality, early childhood day-care services are prized by working couples and have become common in the Jewish community; such services are often located in the local Jewish Community Center or a nearby synagogue.

After-school care and activities for older children (including attendance at Hebrew school) are also important. These may require some coordination that is complex for parents with demanding careers, especially if there are

several children in the family. The growing popularity of Jewish day schools—private schools that combine a high-quality general curriculum with education in Jewish subjects—is testimony to Jewish parents’ commitment to the future of their children with respect to both economic achievement and Jewish knowledge. The expansion of Jewish day schools, to more Jewish communities as well as from kindergarten through high school, also requires a re-focusing of Jewish communal institutions and resources and is thus a measure of the community’s ability to adapt to new economic circumstances.

Another question facing the Jewish community at the turn of the twenty-first century is whether the motivation to succeed economically that was so evident among the immigrants and their children will persist into the fourth and fifth generation of American Jews. Immigrants are typically a self-selected group that is adventurous, adaptable, and willing to work hard to achieve its ambitions. Some of this is passed on to their children, but their grandchildren and great-grandchildren are not self-selected for these qualities, and they grow up in high-income homes without the urgency of economic need. If the story of immigrant families includes many examples of “shirtsleeves to suits in two generations,” the phenomenon of “shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves in three generations” is not uncommon.

With socioeconomic assimilation into the American mainstream, Jews have become much more likely to marry non-Jewish partners. Rates of religious intermarriage were very low for Jews in 1900, rising slowly during much of the twentieth century and sharply in its last three decades, until at its end about half of all Jews marrying for the first time chose non-Jewish spouses. The non-Jewish spouses of Jews are similar to Jewish spouses of Jews with respect to education, occupation, and other economic characteristics, but intermarried couples are much less likely to raise their children with close attachments to Judaism and the Jewish people. The adult children of intermarriage are an increasingly large component of the American Jewish community,

raising questions about the very nature of its boundaries as well as the statistical definition of American Jewry. It also raises questions for Jewish economic success, as to whether families of mixed Jewish parentage will make the same financial and time commitments to the development of their children’s skills as those of families with two Jewish parents. These questions are still unresolved and will undoubtedly continue to occupy the Jewish community for decades.

At present it appears that Jewish families continue their commitment to high levels of education, although perhaps commitment is not quite so high as in the previous generation. In the meantime, the education levels of other immigrant groups and of native-born American youth are rising as they adopt some of the same paths followed earlier by American Jews. Thus, even if American Jews continue their record of high economic achievement well into the twenty-first century, this will no longer be as exceptional as it was in the twentieth. Already by the year 2000, the economic experiences of Jews and non-Jews are converging, and it may be a matter of only a few decades before the two groups converge and the economic assimilation of American Jewry is complete.

Barry R. Chiswick and Carmel U. Chiswick

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# Judaism in America

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## Orthodox Judaism

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The freedom and opportunities that America has granted to its Jews have posed daunting challenges to the perpetuation of Orthodox Jewish life in this country. The openness of American society and culture, and the desire of American Jews to advance and to live harmoniously with those around them, has led most Jews to ignore or to oppose traditional laws and regulations (*halacha*) that might retard their integration or mobility. And, given the legal separation of church and state and the religious voluntarism that has shaped the American way of life, Orthodox religious leaders and institutions have had few available means to prevent the masses of Jews from choosing to disconnect from the faith and practices of their ancestors. Moreover, since the mid-nineteenth century, American Jews who wished to maintain a religious identity but cared little for Orthodoxy's strictures have had the option to affiliate with other Jewish religious expressions, most notably Reform or Conservatism.

In response to these challenges, Orthodox officials and their institutions have exhibited two basic modalities of behavior. Despite the pressures of the host culture, *resisting* rabbis and lay leaders have made every effort to avoid changing the teachings and practices of the faith. At the expense of losing many potential adherents, they have often rejected making even sociological modifications in Ortho-

doxy's ways. These preservers of past policies and procedures have generally displayed a palpable lack of tolerance toward their coreligionists who responded very differently to the American challenges.

It is the *accommodationist* Orthodox leaders—sometimes even more than their Reform and Conservative counterparts—who have been the object of the resisters' ire and critique. The accommodationists, the more flexible cohort, have maintained that Orthodoxy can and must make sociological modifications—in both secular and sacred precincts—if this most traditional Jewish religious expression is to have a chance to attract and maintain the allegiance of the large numbers of acculturated American Jews. Far less disturbed than resisters by the ideas and activities of the more modern Jewish expressions, accommodationist rabbis and lay spokespeople have, on occasion, joined with Conservatives and Reformers in fighting against assimilation.

Still, despite the clear divide within Orthodox Judaism between the proponents of resistance and the advocates of accommodation to America, each side was far from monolithic. Not every rabbi who opposed acculturation was equally insistent on blocking modern ways from the lives of his followers. And not all who preached the viability of reconciling traditional strictures with American mores accepted the same extent of change. The various approaches of the rabbis could often be traced to where and how they

were trained. American-educated Orthodox rabbis usually were more lenient than those ordained in Europe. Strictness was also a function of where the rabbi was located in the United States. Generally, rabbis in large, Eastern, urban centers were more dogmatic than colleagues who served smaller Jewish communities. The responses of Orthodox lay leaders to the challenges of America have been even more variegated.

From the beginnings of Jewish settlement in America in the seventeenth century until the mid-1820s, whenever Jews attended a synagogue, they prayed and socialized in an Orthodox synagogue—most of which adhered to the Sephardic (descendant of Spanish Judaism) rite. (Liberal Jewish denominational life began in earnest only in the 1830s, with the arrival and Americanization of Central European Jews.) The reach of these traditional congregations was limited, however, and most Jews did not adhere to halachic strictures outside of the sanctuary. The unavailability of the basics for maintaining religious life—kosher meats or wines or Passover matzos or sacred books and objects—often made observance very difficult in this frontier Jewish society. American Jews' desire to prosper also led many to work on Saturday at the expense of Sabbath observance. In addition, the minuscule population pool made finding a Jewish spouse problematic. Moreover, there were few trained religious functionaries who could have helped those who wanted to maintain ancestral traditions. The first ordained rabbi, Abraham Rice from Gochsheim, Germany, did not arrive in the United States until 1840. Before that, itinerant—and in larger towns, permanent—all-purpose Jewish functionaries served their communities as cantors and ritual slaughterers, performed circumcisions, and officiated at weddings.

In response to religious nonconformity, the lay leaders who controlled American Jewish congregational life vacillated between inclusionary and exclusionary policies. Hard-line protocols called for the denial of synagogue rights and honors to—or at least the fining of—those known to be less observant than those who set the rules. Accommodationists, on the other hand, chose to overlook the activities of religious miscreants. Over time, synagogues often oscillated between the two positions. For example, in 1798, in coping with one of this country's earliest and more enduring communal problems—intermarriage—Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel denied “religious rights and privileges” to any Jew who intermarried. But

twenty-eight years later, it voted down a similar motion to withhold “all synagogue honors and privileges” from the exogamous.

Accommodationists introduced only a few changes in the conduct of the Orthodox service in an effort to make worship more attractive to potential communicants. In the mid-eighteenth century, for example, open galleries were created for women worshippers, who had chafed at their inability to see activities at the altar. This architectural departure—which was well within the boundaries of halacha—also satisfied the Jews' need to conduct themselves, and build their religious edifices, in an American way to garner the approbation of their non-Jewish neighbors.

Beginning in the 1830s, Orthodox Jewish leaders faced not only the ongoing dilemma of nonobservance but also the challenges posed by liberal Judaism, as incipient Reform and Conservative congregations were established. Ironically, most of the liberal congregations stemmed from immigrant Orthodox roots. These congregations, some with outspoken rabbis at their helms, proffered and preached forms of religious life that found wide acceptance among acculturated Jews, since they conformed to American styles of public prayer. Many who affiliated with these modern congregations liked their new synagogue's family pew seating arrangements, as well as the shorter, English-based service, which often included instrumental music and a mixed-voice choir. Moreover, these liberal expressions of the faith were popular because they tacitly or explicitly countenanced personal Jewish religious lifestyles that deviated from Orthodox practice. Reform Judaism ideologically supported a Jew's nonadherence to the traditional understanding of Sabbath rest and failure to follow the strictures of the kosher laws.

In attempting to forestall the fundamental transformation of their synagogues, some prescient Orthodox groups made social adjustments in their services. Seeking to project themselves, too, as American congregations, accommodationist elements added English prayers and discourses to the traditional devotions, emphasized the need for decorum during the prayers, and in most places curtailed or abolished the sale of synagogue honors. More combative Orthodox forces, however, rested their hopes for institutional survival on exclusionary control of synagogue governance—such as restricting who could vote on ritual policies. The most resistant cohorts placed their faith in even stricter exclusionary policies, such as denying

membership to Jews known to be Sabbath violators. And when Orthodox efforts failed within congregational ranks, some turned to the civil courts for relief. There they argued that the reforms violated publicly filed articles of incorporation that specified that services be run along Orthodox lines. Out-of-court agreements often provided the traditionalist plaintiffs with financial assistance to establish new institutions.

The survival rate of these breakaway synagogues was not particularly high, however, as over time many nominally Orthodox *shul*-goers became increasingly comfortable with the religious values that their more liberal coreligionist espoused. Few of these congregations remained Orthodox through the end of the 1870s. Some were drawn into the Reform or Conservative orbit. Others chose a hybrid ceremonial. They called themselves Orthodox but, despite halachic constraints, permitted men and women to sit together during prayers, even as they disdained other, liturgical changes. Indeed, when the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (OU)—Orthodoxy's first national organization—was created in 1898, a number of its constituent groups had family pews.

The leading accommodationist Orthodox rabbis of this period, Morris J. Raphall and Samuel Isaacs, and one uncommonly important *hazzan*/communal leader, Isaac Leeser, attempted to do more than just hold sway within their congregations. They battled against the tide of assimilation that threatened all religious efforts and opposed the most radical ideological deviations from traditional religious teachings. Thus, in 1855 Leeser joined with compromising Reform Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise and others to develop national religious unity schemes. The resultant Cleveland Conference tried to formulate a universally acceptable American ritual and also directly addressed the radicalism advanced by the inflexible Reform Rabbi David Einhorn.

Thirty-one years later, in 1886, Rabbi Sabato Morais brought together a more important coalition. To combat the antinationalist and antitraditional ritual postures that the Reform movement adopted in its 1885 Pittsburgh Platform, Morais led rabbis Henry W. Schneberger, Henry P. Mendes, Bernard Drachman, and other Orthodox spokesmen into an alliance with Conservative leaders. Together they formed an institutional bulwark against the unfettered growth of Reform in America. Together they created



Isaac Leeser. (Library of Congress)

the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTSA), a school that at its inception—and long thereafter—trained rabbis who would occupy both Americanized Orthodox and Conservative pulpits.

With the arrival of East European immigrants en masse that began in the early 1880s, the calculus of Jewish denominational strength in America changed dramatically. By 1890 the hundreds of immigrant Orthodox synagogues that served the spiritual and social needs of the newcomers outnumbered the existing Americanized synagogues of all denominations. But even as transplanted Orthodox piety was on display on a large scale daily and on the Sabbath within the sacred precincts of downtown neighborhoods, most Jewish immigrants also demonstrated a definite lack of commitment to Orthodox regulations. Thus, when Jews in the areas of first settlement attended services, they would go only to an Orthodox *shul*, in the East European mold. As the new immigrants strove to advance, however, the frequency with which they attended their *shtetls* (storefront synagogues) steadily declined. Many did not have time for the long Sabbath services, since they worked on the Sabbath day.

The world of transplanted Orthodoxy, embodied in the *landsmanshaft* shtetls (synagogues built to re-create the spirit and culture of ancestral hometowns), held almost no attraction for the children of the immigrants. Introduced to new values in the public schools and settlement houses, the young became rapidly Americanized, becoming estranged from Old World social mores and languages—Hebrew and Yiddish—that resounded through their parents’ synagogues. And as second-generation Americans anxious to succeed, they had even less patience than their elders for Orthodox religious obligations that would retard their progress.

Organized in 1887 and composed of representatives of fifteen of the largest congregations on New York’s Lower East Side, the Association of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations sought only to restore the religious patterns of the Old World. Its plan focused on the selection of a Chief Rabbi, who would inspire a religious revival among both the immigrants and their children. Indeed, that same year they recruited Rabbi Jacob Joseph from Vilna, Lithuania, assigning him the mission of engendering mass commitment to Old World religious values. Specifically, he was to motivate adults and young people to be more scrupulous in observance of the Sabbath. He was to convince parents to send their sons to the Yeshiva Etz Chaim, the small *heder* (Jewish school) established just a year earlier in the downtown immigrant neighborhood. In this highly parochial Jewish educational environment, youngsters would be spared the assimilationist pressures of American public education. Rabbi Joseph was also told to bring order to the rarely monitored and often corrupt kosher meat industry.

Despite his best efforts, this country’s culture proved too powerful to overcome. Even downtown rabbinical families often acted just like the immigrant masses. Caught up in the lures of the promises of public education, even they refused to remove their children from those temples of Americanization. Nor could the Chief Rabbi control the lay leaders, who impeded his efforts. The rabbi wanted to control the kosher meat markets without passing the costs on to consumers. The Association’s leaders, however, demanded the imposition of a surcharge on the meat, a move that infuriated many downtowners and further weakened Rabbi Joseph’s appeal to potential followers.

In the days immediately following Rabbi Joseph’s death in 1902, another, more enduring effort to inculcate an Old World religious way of life in America took root.

Made up initially of fifty-nine East European-trained rabbis, the Agudath ha-Rabbanim (Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, or UOR) recognized that it would take a continent-wide organization and considerable pooled resources and energies to defeat the forces of Americanization. They also understood from the outset that, if the masses did not heed their voices, they had to raise at least an elite group of young people who would fully commit themselves to the ways of the Jewish religious past. In one of its first acts, the UOR designated the Yeshiva Rabbi Isaac Elchanan—also known as the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS)—as its central American-based institution. Founded in 1897, this extension of Yeshiva Etz Chaim—the forerunner of the rabbinical school of Yeshiva University—trained rabbis as they were then being educated in the great Lithuanian *yeshivas*. It proffered Torah and Talmudic studies exclusively, rejecting the modern, professional, ministerial training—such as courses in sermonics—that obtained at an institution like the JTSA. Indeed, the UOR also looked askance at the mission and products of the Seminary, declaring its “unlearned” graduates, who had studied Jewish history and philosophy and modern Hebrew literature almost as much as the Bible and rabbinics, unqualified for the Orthodox rabbinate.

For all its difficulties, however, over time the UOR made some compromises with the realities of Jewish life in America. The Association maintained its support for the Yeshiva even as, between the turn of the twentieth century and 1915, the school gradually introduced the practical sides of modern rabbinical training, such as homiletics and pedagogy, into its curriculum. In acquiescing to the changes brought to the school by Dr. Bernard Revel, the Yeshiva’s first permanent president, the UOR tacitly acknowledged that for Orthodox ordainees to meet the challenge of assimilation and compete with graduates of the seminary, the Yeshiva must Americanize its operation.

Arguably, the UOR showed some flexibility, however slight, because its members were a somewhat idiosyncratic group, different in an essential way from the wider world of Orthodoxy in East Europe. The day these American-based rabbis (among the foremost of whom were Philip Hillel Klein, Moses Sebulun Margolis, and Bernard Levinthal) decided to ignore the view, widely held among the religious in Russia, that the United States was an unkosher land, hopelessly inimical to the survival of tradi-

tional life, they evinced a potential willingness to respond pragmatically to Judaism's conditions in the New World. These UOR members accepted the minority opinion of the Yeshiva's eponymous Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spektor that rabbis should migrate to America to assist that floundering community to create an enduring Orthodox life.

UOR members also differed from most of their East European counterparts in their attitudes toward the nascent Zionist movement. The majority of Old World Orthodox rabbis strongly opposed the modern national movement that aspired to return Jews to their ancestral land before the coming of the Messiah. The Agudath ha-Rabbanim's rank and file, however, lined up with the Mizrachi movement that was founded in Poland in 1902, the same year that the UOR was created in America. This Religious Zionist organization contended that Orthodox Jews must play an active role in directing the Zionist organizations to adhere to traditional religious values as they moved forward to develop their modern statehood plans.

If the Agudath ha-Rabbanim grudgingly acknowledged that some American realities had to be accepted, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America openly admitted that, to survive, Orthodoxy had to work with and within the country's larger culture. Formed from among the American Orthodox lay and rabbinical founders of the JTSA, this accommodationist organization developed new congregational, political, and educational initiatives to suit the lifestyles of its potential Americanized, second-generation constituents. As early as 1900, its youth wing began organizing "model" modern Orthodox services under the auspices of the Jewish Endeavor Society (JES). Conducting its devotions on Shabbat afternoons—after the American workweek ended—it opened its doors to the young who labored while Saturday morning prayers droned on in the half-filled immigrant synagogues.

The Endeavorers demonstrated their fidelity to Orthodoxy through their gender separation during prayers, use of the traditional *siddur* (prayer book), and maintenance of an unabridged service, complete with the Saturday afternoon Torah reading. Their modernity was evidenced through their weekly English-language sermons, the recitation of some prayers in that vernacular, and the introduction of numerous ancillary congregational activities, such as synagogue suppers and Saturday night dances. The wide range of tasks and events offered by the Endeavorers provided essential training for a generation of JTSA

students who would become both American Orthodox and Conservative rabbis. Such future national leaders as Mordecai M. Kaplan, Herman Abramowitz, Charles Kavar, and Elias L. Solomon all worked under the JES banner. Beginning in 1913, JTSA students also organized the (more enduring) Young Israel movement, which would continue the Society's work within and beyond immigrant Jewish neighborhoods for generations.

Even while the JES opened its doors to those who had to work on the Jewish holy day, OU's political wing lobbied hard in Albany, New York, to overturn the onerous Blue Laws, which undercut the opportunity to observe the Jewish Sabbath by requiring businesses to close on Sundays. Ever the activists, the accommodating organization also supported a Sabbath Observers Association and called upon those who rested from their labors on Saturday to hire their own.

On the educational front, the Orthodox Union accepted the incontrovertible fact that immigrant Jews wanted their children to receive a public school education. (As of 1900, at most 150 boys attended Yeshiva Etz Chaim.) Therefore, the OU developed modern *talmud torahs* to draw youths back to Jewish life. Operating after public school hours, these institutions offered boys—and girls—educational, social, and recreational activities designed to make them feel comfortable with a new American Jewish identity rooted in traditional teachings.

The years between the world wars witnessed the emergence of new challenges for both Orthodoxy's resisting and accommodating groups in America. The contingent that continued to embrace the model of Old World Judaism now confronted the fact that many of its transplanted rabbis and much of its base of lay followers would pass away during the 1920–1940 period. And, the strict immigration quotas that the U.S. Congress passed in 1924 limited the number of first-generation Jews whom the Agudath ha-Rabbanim might hope to reach. Those resisters who harbored any optimism about the future placed their faith in an idiosyncratic group of second-generation Jews who resided primarily in interwar Brooklyn, New York. Somehow the families of these young people had not succumbed to most of the lures of Americanization that had so transformed other Jews, and they supported the establishment of yeshivas such as Williamsburg's Mesifita Torah Vodaath—or its distaff counterpart Bais Yaakov—or Yeshiva Chaim Berlin of Brownsville. A few like-minded schools

could be found elsewhere in New York, Baltimore, and New Haven. These institutions sought to renew the effort that had earlier energized the Etz Chaim-RIETS crowd: to reconstitute the religious civilization of the past on American soil. As hard-core resisters, they looked contemptuously at Bernard Revel's compromises in educating well-integrated American Orthodox rabbis and laypeople. Although they comprised only several thousand families—including some strictly Orthodox newcomers who entered this country despite the quotas—these communities formed a base for efforts at even greater separatism in the post-World War II period.

Concomitantly, accommodating rabbis—mostly RIETS men—continued their struggle to engage the majority of generally disinterested American Jews with the values of religious life. These efforts of Orthodox leaders often paralleled those of their Conservative counterparts outside the sanctuary. Within their own synagogue centers, they promoted a broad range of ancillary activities, from dances to sports to theater productions—all predicated on the hope that those who came to play might be convinced to stay to pray. Some of these rabbis moved even closer to what Conservatives did, modifying synagogue practice to conform to potential congregants' lifestyles. Many Orthodox Union affiliates allowed men and women to sit together during services, particularly during the High Holidays, when many Jews appeared for their annual visit to the house of worship and wanted to have their entire families around them. These and other self-defined Orthodox synagogues often conducted late Friday night services to attract those who would not leave work at early sundown during the winter months. Indeed, by the early 1940s, such accommodations that violated halachic strictures were so commonplace that the lines between American Orthodoxy and Conservatism were effectively blurred. This lack of distinctiveness was particularly true in midwestern and southern Jewish communities. Such commonalities could also be found, however, within Orthodoxy's New York epicenter, though not in the heart of the resistant Brooklyn neighborhoods.

After World War II, accommodationist Orthodoxy followed American Jewry to new, suburban locales, where it began to battle Conservatives and, to a lesser extent, Reformers for the allegiance of the next generation of Jews. This robust competition among Americanized Jewish movements took place in an era of religious revival, when it was an important national value to affiliate with the reli-

gion of your choice. Founded in 1937 and consisting primarily of RIETS graduates, the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) sought to make their version of the faith a viable option by admitting all Jews who approached their synagogues' portals, regardless of personal levels of observance. In keeping with their traditions from the interwar years, these rabbis continued to approximate what liberal Judaism's leaders did outside sacred spaces. Work with youth groups was particularly important, as Orthodox synagogues attempted to capitalize on parental apprehensions that, in an increasingly accepting host society, their children might marry non-Jews.

Postwar modern Orthodox rabbis differed from their immediate predecessors in their lack of tolerance for congregations and religious leaders who called themselves Orthodox but deviated from the halacha in their synagogue practices. This insistence on more precise standards was an outgrowth, in part, of the many disputes that raged between accommodationist Orthodox and Conservative forces over control of long-standing synagogues that in the late 1940s–1960s moved from inner cities to suburban locales. There, far-reaching debates were held over whether it was appropriate for a so-called “modern Orthodox” synagogue to seat men and women together or to have Sabbath services without regard for when sundown occurred. The decisions that were made helped put an end to the period of endemic fluidity among Jewish movements.

Much of the confidence that this new breed of RIETS rabbi effused is attributable to the presence of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, a towering and charismatic figure. From his perch as the most distinguished *Rosh Yeshiva* (Talmudic sage) at RIETS, for hundreds of disciples he set authoritative parameters for what constituted an acceptable Orthodox approximation of what the Conservative movement was doing. Although accommodationist Orthodox rabbis and their lay supporters won only a minority of the campaigns for Jewish allegiance on the suburban frontiers, they were proud of, and secure in, their minority status.

The early postwar years, however, also saw a new beginning for strident, resistant Orthodoxy. Some refugees from, and survivors of, the Holocaust added members and vitality to the old-line forces. These newcomers were among those who had implicitly harkened to the advice of those East European sages who had warned believers against settling in the *treif* (unkosher) America. Now in

this country because antisemitism had destroyed their communities, these so-called Yeshiva World or Hasidic sects went about re-creating European Jewish conditions on American soil with emphatic zeal.

Whether they affiliated with the Agudath Israel, a European-based, Orthodox anti-Zionist organization (the American branch was founded in 1913 but rose to prominence after World War II), or with the long-standing UOR, which they effectively took over after 1945, or with independent Hasidic entities, their spokesmen had little positive to say about accommodationist Orthodoxy. And they were completely opposed to cooperation with or even recognition of more liberal forms of Judaism. Moreover, they were against the RCA's and the OU's long-standing advocacy of Religious Zionism and its strong support for the modern, secular State of Israel. In 1956, the UOR's Council of Torah Sages demanded that the OU and RCA cease their work with the interdenominational Synagogue Council of America, an umbrella organization that studiously avoided divisive religious issues. The accession by some RIETS faculty and RCA members to the demand marked the beginning of the resisters' impact on accommodationist values.

In the most recent period, the 1970s to the present, accommodating rabbis have ministered to a different type of Americanized constituency. During these decades, as the number of Jews who identified with the movement declined, a winnowing of Orthodoxy took place. Many of the less observant who had affiliated out of filial piety or nostalgia found that they were more comfortable in Conservative and Reform settings. The nonreligious lost interest in any form of Jewish religious expression and more easily assimilated into an increasingly open and often secular American society. Those who remained in most modern Orthodox synagogues—particularly in the largest Jewish urban centers—tended to be punctilious in their observances, notwithstanding their high degree of acculturation to American society in other ways. In smaller American towns and cities, however, many of the less devoted could still be found in Orthodox precincts.

The modern followers of halacha were usually products of the proliferating Orthodox Jewish day schools, founded by a movement that began in the 1920s and 1930s, but which had expanded exponentially in the postwar period. In these schools, the young were taught how to live harmoniously with both Jewish religious and American secular cultures. Although not all the graduates remained within the

fold, many of the alumni, Orthodox “baby boomers”—people who were in their late forties and early fifties at century's end—were in community leadership positions. When these men and women speak to their rabbis about accommodations, their talk is of such ancillary features as *eruvim* (enclosures permitting carrying on the Sabbath), which allow the parents to wheel baby carriages to services, enabling the Orthodox family to stay together while praying, albeit on opposite sides of a *mechitza* (partition separating the genders). For them, the modern Orthodox synagogue is not a center for the inculcation or intensification of Jewish identity. It is a place where the already committed assemble, worship, and learn, and familiarize themselves with tradition beyond what they were taught in school.

As the new millennium began, the growing camp of resisters—with a fertility rate much higher than any other cohort of contemporary Jews—became increasingly resolute in its mission. The social values and way of life of the resisters—from their way of dress and speech, to their strict rules on gender separation, to their undervaluing the importance of secular education—deeply permeated the behavior and consciousness of observant, modern Orthodox Jews.

Still, Orthodox resisters and accommodators are far from fully united on all social policy and religious issues. Their attitudes toward female roles in their communities' congregational and social life serve as a demarcation both between and within factions. Generally, resisters do not countenance the active participation of women within their synagogues. Indeed, these men and women have loudly opposed what they perceive as the deleterious impact of feminism on American Jewish life. They have censured liberal Jewish leaders for their broad redefinition of women's roles and have criticized those Orthodox accommodators who have stretched the halacha to allow women greater participation in public ritual and to hold religious leadership positions.

At the same time, those who have altered the architecture of synagogues to make women more comfortable in Orthodox precincts, or who have elected women as presidents of their synagogue boards, or who, beginning in the 1970s, have supported the creation of women's *tefilla* (Orthodox prayer) groups, have acted in accord with their long-standing belief that, for traditional Judaism to survive here, it must and can adjust to the American environment. Withal, these accommodationists have not always agreed

on the extent of female participation permissible in religious life. While the most progressive have even appointed women to quasi-clerical positions in their synagogues and have predicted that women will eventually be ordained and recognized as Orthodox rabbis, others have focused their efforts on providing girls and women with ever-increasing Jewish educational opportunities comparable to those available to males.

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## Reform Judaism

Reform Judaism, also known as Liberal or Progressive Judaism, was the first branch of American Judaism to be for-

mally organized into a denomination. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, it became the largest Jewish denomination in the United States with respect to the number of formally affiliated members. Reform Judaism is also the largest and oldest "liberal" religious tradition in the world, far exceeding Unitarian-Universalism, Ethical Culture, and Reconstructionist Judaism. Beginning in Germany early in the nineteenth century, the Reform movement quickly spread to the United States, where it has enjoyed its greatest institutional success. Still, the Reform movement in America has faced numerous challenges, including religious laxity, lack of ideological clarity, and severe criticism from external sources. Nevertheless, the Reform movement continues to demonstrate vitality, particularly among its core adherents and leaders, and an ability to retain members on a multigenerational basis.

Highly adaptive to its cultural environment, American Reform Judaism passed through several stages of ideological and religious development and at any one time often encompassed a spectrum of beliefs and practices. The polity of the Reform movement has been essentially congregationalist since its inception and generally views *Halachah* (rabbinic law) as advisory. The American Reform movement also spawned a strong, well-organized rabbinate, which has played a major role both in articulating the movement's ideology and in shaping its liturgical traditions. The movement established three major national organizations: a union of congregations, Union for Reform Judaism; a seminary system, Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR); and an independent association of rabbis, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR). A "work in progress," the Reform movement is currently being reshaped by gender egalitarianism, inclusion of gays and lesbians, outreach, folk-rock music, and neotraditionalism in its ritual life.

Constructing a history of Reform Judaism in America is complicated by a number of historiographical factors. Most studies of American Reform Judaism focus on the institutions and the elite of the movement, even though it may be as much a "bottom up" movement as a "top down" tradition. Second, despite its Central European origins, American Reform Judaism is both a transplantation of ideas and practices and a set of adaptations to a distinctly American environment. Thus, understanding American Reform Judaism requires knowledge of general American religious history as well as the broader American Jewish

experience. And, as noted by Michael A. Meyer, the movement's premier historian, the question of continuity versus discontinuity in American Reform Judaism is pronounced. "It is not possible," Meyer concluded, "to isolate a doctrinal essence of the Reform movement . . . it is perhaps more helpful to understand the movement in terms of dynamic tensions created by specific sets of polarities" (1988). Identifying what is normative in Reform is difficult, if not impossible.

Traditionally, scholars have focused on the reorientation of the Reform movement during the interwar years, when a broad shift from a rational universalism to a more ethnic Jewish particularism occurred. This reorientation did not result in a permanent schism within the Reform movement or a rejection of its fundamental religious liberalism. By contrast, by the end of the twentieth century many features of the movement's essential modernism had been called into question, including the divine origins of the Torah and the authoritative nature of Halachah. In many ways then, both ideological and ritual discontinuities within the Reform movement are potentially more profound today than during the movement's debate over Zionism in the 1930s and 1940s. Still, despite the intense debates about the movement's deepest spiritual foundations and religious practices, the institutional integrity of the Reform movement does not seem to be threatened.

### **Beginnings, 1824–1865**

Although muffled calls for religious reform in the American synagogue were heard in the eighteenth century, only in 1824 was there an overt call for significant changes. Led by a Jew of North African origin, Isaac Harby (1788–1828), a small group of young members of K. K. Beth Elohim in Charleston, South Carolina, petitioned the synagogue's *junta* (governing council), seeking numerous reforms in the worship, educational, and business practices of the congregation. Harby and his followers were probably moved to act after reading articles in the local paper about the Reform congregation in Hamburg, Germany. When the junta refused to consider their requests, the dissidents formed themselves into the Reformed Society of Israelites (1825–1833), producing a handwritten prayer book and other religious materials for themselves. Following Harby's untimely death, Abraham Moise, a young attorney,

emerged as the new leader. After a fire destroyed the city's synagogue, Moise and the Society gained the support of the congregation's *hazzan*, Gustavus Poznanski (1805–1879), who agreed to have an organ installed in the new structure. The traditional faction rejected the introduction of instrumental music in the Shabbat service and ultimately withdrew from the congregation, forming their own synagogue, Shearith Israel.

Although the first group of Reformers was largely Sephardic, the vast majority of Reform Jews in America are of Ashkenazic origin. With the end of the War of 1812 and improved transatlantic transportation, Jewish emigration from Germany soared from 1815 to 1855. Numbering only 2,700 to 3,000 in 1820, the American Jewish community reached 150,000 on the eve of the Civil War (Meyer 1988). Embedded in their ranks were Reform Jews and Reform rabbis, who would lay the foundation for a Reform movement during the 1840s and 1850s.

Lay German reformers organized nascent congregations in Baltimore (Har Sinai) in 1842 and New York (Congregation Emanuel) in 1845. Emanuel grew rapidly and recruited Leo Merzbacher (1809–1856) as its religious leader. Rabbi Dr. Max Lienthal (1815–1882) arrived in New York in 1845 and established a Jewish boarding school. Four years later, he became the Chief Rabbi of several of New York's orthodox German immigrant congregations. After settling in Cincinnati years later, Lienthal embraced Reform as the rabbi of the city's Bene Israel congregation.

Cincinnati, a gateway to the American interior, also attracted the indefatigable Isaac Mayer Wise (1819–1900) to one of its pulpits, Bene Yeshurun. Wise, more than anyone else, was responsible for creating the national organizations of the Reform movement and making Cincinnati its principal spiritual home for nearly eighty years. Born in Bohemia, Wise had limited Jewish religious training and minimal formal credentials. Energetic and resourceful, he came to America in 1846 and presented himself to Lienthal. Lienthal directed him to Albany, New York, where Wise proclaimed himself Chief Rabbi. There, Wise's soaring ambition put him at odds with his congregation's lay leadership, and following a physical scuffle with its president in the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah, 1850, he left the Beth El pulpit. After briefly serving a second, independent congregation, in 1854 Wise moved to Cincinnati, which became his home for the rest of his life.



Isaac Mayer Wise. (Bettman/Corbis)

In Cincinnati, Wise launched his own newspaper, the *American Israelite*, and published his own prayer book, *Minhag America*, which he believed could serve as a common text for American Jews of all religious persuasions. Wise's dream was to unite the increasingly factionalized American Jewish community of his time under a single banner and to become its leader. Wise had two principal opponents. Isaac Leeser (1806–1868), the religious leader of Philadelphia's Mikveh Israel congregation for twenty years and the editor-publisher of *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, relentlessly promoted his Americanized, modern, Sephardic-style Judaism in opposition to Wise's vision of moderate Reform as the religious common ground for American Jews. After years of public disagreement, the two men agreed to meet at a conference in Cleveland in 1855 to work out a common platform. However, the Cleveland Conference ended in failure, largely because of the fierce attacks of a newly arrived, radical reform rabbi from Germany, Dr. David Einhorn (1809–1879).

Although Isaac M. Wise was the principal institution builder of the national Reform movement in America,

Rabbi Dr. Einhorn was its leading ideologue and liturgist. Brilliant, uncompromising, and steeped in both rabbinics and German culture, Einhorn arrived in the United States in 1855 at the invitation of Baltimore's Har Sinai congregation. Ordained at the Fuerth Yeshiva and intellectually reshaped by his doctoral studies at several German universities, Einhorn was a veteran both of the Reform rabbinic conferences and of the Reform–Orthodox controversies in Germany. Shortly after arriving in Baltimore, Einhorn published his prayer book, *Olat Tamid (The Eternal Sacrifice)*, in German and Hebrew, as an alternative to Wise's book. Nearly forty years later, an English-language version of Einhorn's prayer book became the basis of the first denominational, Reform prayer book, the *Union Prayer Book*, published by the CCAR in 1892.

Although Einhorn developed his own systematic philosophy of Judaism, which he referred to as Mosaism, the three basic tenets of classical or radical Reform Judaism are all present in his work. First, he understood Judaism to be an "ethical monotheism." As a religious doctrine, ethical monotheism valued morals over ritual and universalism over ethnic particularism. Second, Einhorn maintained a belief in "progressive revelation," which mandated Reform's fundamental commitment to adapting to ongoing cultural change. Lastly, he strongly believed in the "mission of Israel," the principal idea that explained why Jews needed to stay Jewish and thereby serve the larger interests of humanity as they led the way to universal salvation. Notably, "the mission of Israel" or "the chosen People" concept provided Einhorn with a powerful argument against mixed marriage and rabbinic officiation at interfaith weddings.

Einhorn was also the most outspoken of the rabbinic abolitionists in the United States. Indeed, he was compelled to leave Baltimore and resettle in Philadelphia because of his staunchly antislavery views, which he published in his German-language journal, *Sinai*. By contrast, Wise was a Copperhead Democrat, while the majority of Reform religious leaders remained neutral on the great issue of human enslavement. A few, however, such as James Gutheim (1817–1886), were openly proslavery and Confederate patriots. The war ended on the evening of the first *seder* in April 1865. Shortly thereafter, Wise and Leeser went together to Richmond, Virginia, as an act of unity and healing. Einhorn and many other rabbis

joined together to eulogize Abraham Lincoln following his assassination.

## A Modern American Denomination, 1865–1900

Before the Civil War, despite the intense debates about and within the Reform movement, Reform Judaism in the United States was still very small and seriously divided into pro-Wise and pro-Einhorn camps. It was only after the war that the Reform movement began to grow. In part, its growth was a reaction to the war itself and the search for a deeper spirituality. An increasing number of American Jewish families of German origin were second generation, and they sought a more Americanized expression of Judaism. In addition, in the years following the war, religious modernism was on the rise in mainstream Protestant denominations in America. Religious modernism's rationality and proscientific worldview further strengthened Reform as an attractive religious ideology for upwardly mobile American Jews.

The first step toward galvanizing a Reform movement took place in Philadelphia in November 1869. David Einhorn convened a small group of like-minded, German-speaking, Reform rabbis to discuss "Principles of Divine Worship," "Marriage Laws," and "Circumcision." In each instance, the rabbis looked for ways to liberalize Reform practice and, in general, to help shape the direction of the movement in its "classical" phase. Soon, however, the German language, to which Einhorn was particularly devoted, lost its sway over the majority of Reform Jews in the United States.

By contrast, Isaac M. Wise advocated the use of the English vernacular as the principal language of Jewish worship and discourse in the United States and rallied a group of lay leaders, who founded the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) in 1873. The Union was to act as an umbrella organization for American Jews in general and to serve as the patron of a new American rabbinic school, the Hebrew Union College (HUC). Two years later, HUC opened; like the UAHC, it was located in Cincinnati. Wise's dream of uniting American Jewry under his theological banner seemed to be coming true. In 1883, at the graduation dinner for HUC's first class of rabbis, nonkosher food was served at the so-called Trefa Banquet, scandalizing Wise's more traditional supporters. Although

the culinary faux pas was probably more a case of insensitivity than a purposeful baiting of the kosher guests, the fallout was enormous and contributed directly to the founding of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York as a traditional alternative to HUC.

Assailed by the religious right, Wise also came under fire from his left. The Ethical Culture Society, founded by Felix Adler in 1876, rejected both Jewish ethnicity and Reform Judaism's inherent theism. The Society's philosophy proved attractive to an increasing number of Reform Jewish laity. To counter their views and reposition Reform between Ethical Culture and traditional Judaism, a second group of rabbis met in Pittsburgh to work out a centrist platform. The principal architect of the Pittsburgh Platform was Kaufmann Kohler, son-in-law of Einhorn and subsequently president of HUC.

The Platform declared, "Judaism presents the highest conception of the God-idea" and affirmed a "mission of Israel" theology. On the other hand, the Pittsburgh Platform (1885) supported Philadelphia's conference, the first meeting of Reform rabbis in America, in rejecting all vestiges of Jewish nationalism and historicizing a broad range of Jewish ritual practices—that is, the practice was appropriate for Biblical times but was no longer relevant. Opposed to some of the Platform's views and its endorsement of Einhornian principles, Isaac Mayer Wise declared it to be a "Declaration of Independence" from Judaism. In time, however, the Platform became the ideological banner of Classical Reform Judaism in America.

Not to be outdone, Wise turned to his rabbinic supporters, and in 1889 a national meeting of the UAHC founded the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the third leg of the national Reform movement. Within three years, the CCAR issued the first *Union Prayer-book*, which was widely (but not universally) adopted by Reform congregations across the country. A second volume for the High Holy Days was authorized a few years later and, in 1897, the CCAR issued the first *Union Hymnal*. A complete annual liturgy was now available to the Reform movement. By the time Isaac M. Wise died on March 24, 1900, the Reform movement had been transformed into an American denomination.

## Uptown Progressivism, 1900–1920

With the dawn of the new century, new forces began to reshape Reform Jewish life in America. Most important, a

rising tide of Jewish immigration from East Europe redefined the subethnic character of the Jewish community. As early as 1720, Jews of German origin had predominated in American Jewish life. By 1900, however, immigration had radically redrawn the demographic map. Unlike in Germany, where Emancipation in the nineteenth century had resulted in a denationalization of Jewish identity, Jews in czarist Russia and the eastern provinces of the Hapsburg Empire continued to understand themselves as part of a Jewish people. Moreover, despite the rise of revolutionary doctrines among Russian Jews, a widespread traditionalism, as well as *yeshiva* and Hasidic communities, persisted among East European Jews. East European Jews were often poor, and government policies in Europe were designed to further impoverish them. For a huge portion of the population in the Pale of Settlement, hope was to be found in immigration to America.

The traditionalism, sense of peoplehood, and poverty that the East European Jews brought with them to America presented the established Reform community with challenges that even the physical separation of uptown and downtown Jews could not resolve. Because the German Jews employed thousands of East European Jews, the two communities quickly became economically intertwined. Moreover, the larger society saw uptown and downtown Jews as a single community. Unable to divorce themselves from their Eastern cousins, the German Jews, often with disdain, were compelled to work with them, to promote their Americanization, and—in the case of the Conservative movement, sponsored in part by Reform Jewish elites—to reshape their Jewishness and mode of Judaism.

To accomplish these tasks, Reform Judaism in America adopted the broader strategies of uptown progressivism, including its rationalism, its quest for justice, and its belief in cultural conformity. Still, the traditionalism of East European Jewry also affected and reshaped the culture of the uptown German Jews. Thus, in 1902, the Central Conference voted to retain the traditional Jewish Sabbath on the seventh day and not reconfigure it on Sunday. In 1906 the Conference rejected the idea of establishing a synod, with its greater claim of ecclesiastical power, and instead formed the advisory Responsa Committee, thereby maintaining its ongoing advisory role in the Reform movement. On the progressive side of the equation, the Conference passed its first resolution on social justice in 1908 and spoke out against child labor, thereby invoking a long-dormant plank

of the Pittsburgh Platform. In 1913, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (NFTS) was formed, signaling the changing place of women in the Reform movement. However, typical of the more conservative side of progressivism, the CCAR did not vote in favor of women's suffrage until 1917.

### Reorientation, 1920–1945

The years following World War I again witnessed major changes in American Jewish life that would reshape the American Reform movement. Early in the 1920s, Congress restricted immigration to the United States. Anti-Jewish quotas in universities and restrictions in housing and employment also signaled the growing xenophobia and antisemitism of the period. Without a fresh supply of immigrants, the pace of Americanization among naturalized Jews quickened, and by 1940, for the first time in more than a century, the majority of American Jews were native born. Reaction to the horrors of war contributed not only to American isolationism but to a renewed commitment to pacifism in the Reform movement itself, which would put many Reform Jews on an ideological collision course with Zionism. Although by 1930 the UAHC could claim 285 affiliated synagogues, the combined membership was only 60,000.

The most significant change in Reform Judaism during the interwar years was in its attitude toward Zionism and, more broadly, toward Jewish peoplehood. Abroad, the issuance of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and the growth of the *yishuv* in British Palestine greatly bolstered world Zionism. Internally, a new class of Reform leaders emerged who advocated reorienting Reform Judaism away from universal ethical monotheism to a more particularistic view of Jewish life. Stephen S. Wise (1874–1949), no relation to Isaac M. Wise, not only spoke for Zionism and social justice within the broader Reform movement but also became the principal voice of Jewish nationalism in America up to the early years of World War II. Parallel to Wise's founding of his pandenominational Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR) in New York in 1922 (later merged with HUC) were the appointments of a Zionist, Emanuel Gamoran (1895–1952), as the head of the education program of the UAHC and of Jane Evans (1907–2004) as executive director of the NFTS. In 1922, the CCAR even introduced the Hebrew text of "Hatikvah," the national anthem of the

Zionist movement, into a revised addition of the *Union Hymnal*.

The main debate over Zionism and the nature of Jewish culture, however, focused on the writing of a new platform for the Reform movement. Reacting to the rise of Nazism in Central Europe, the increase in domestic anti-semitism, and the intellectual challenge posed by Mordecai Kaplan in his massive book *Judaism as a Civilization* (1934), a new generation of Reform rabbis was eager to reevaluate Reform's ethical monotheism and move it in the direction of a monotheistic ethnicity. In 1935, the CCAR took up the challenge and, led by Professor Samuel S. Cohon (1888–1959), drafted a new set of principles that was traditionally theistic and embraced Zionism.

The new "Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism" passed by the CCAR in Columbus, Ohio, in 1937 recognized "in the rehabilitation of Palestine, the land hallowed by memories and hopes . . . the promise of renewed life for many of our brethren. We affirm," the Principles continued, "the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its up-building as a Jewish homeland." The same year, the UAHC passed a resolution calling for "the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine." However, the new platform did not end opposition to Zionism within the Reform movement. In 1942, the American Council for Judaism was formed by Reform anti-Zionists resisting the call to raise a Jewish army in Palestine and for immediate statehood for the yishuv. News of the destruction of European Jewry and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 rendered the council largely ineffective.

A reoriented Reform Judaism was in need of a new prayer book. The CCAR turned to the distinguished scholar of Halachah and leading pulpit rabbi Solomon B. Freehof (1892–1990) to revise the *Union Prayer-book* (UPB) so it would reflect the new religious reality of the Reform movement, including the practices of Saturday morning worship and *bar mitzvah*, previously discarded by the Reform movement. A masterpiece of prose, the 1940 UPB initially met with stiff resistance from the classical camp. Ironically, neo-reformers criticized it as insufficiently traditional. A prayer book issued by the Jewish Welfare Board for American Jewish soldiers included many selections from the UPB, thereby introducing Reform-style worship to tens of thousands of American Jews. By the end of the war, a reoriented neo-Reform Judaism was poised for a period of remarkable expansion.

## Suburban Reform Judaism, 1945–1965

The mass movement of Americans to the suburbs after World War II transformed the Reform movement. Suburbanization, combined with the Cold War campaign against "atheistic" Communism, created an unprecedented boom in the building of new churches and synagogues across the country. Synagogue architecture took on a distinctly suburban look, with lawns, parking lots, and a movable wall between the sanctuary and social hall to accommodate uneven patterns in worship attendance.

New leadership guided the Reform movement through the unknown landscape of American suburbia. Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath (1902–1973), UAHC president, and Nelson Glueck (1900–1971), a world-renowned archeologist and president of the HUC-JIR, were the most important leaders. In 1943, Eisendrath was named executive director of the Union and, three years later, president. Intent on revitalizing and expanding the Reform movement, Eisendrath moved UAHC headquarters from Cincinnati to New York, resituating it in the capital of American Jewish life. After succeeding Julian Morgenstern as president of HUC in 1947, Glueck led a successful effort to merge Cincinnati's HUC with Stephen Wise's New York-based JIR. The new institution, the HUC-JIR, opened a third branch in Los Angeles (1954) and a fourth in Jerusalem (1963).

Driving this institutional expansion was exceptional growth in membership in both the United States and Canada. By 1955, the Union had 520 congregations with 255,000 affiliated families. Within ten years, another 140 congregations had joined the Union, and the number of Jews affiliated with Reform reached a million. Expansion also affected the CCAR, which hired its first executive director, Rabbi Sidney Regner, in 1954. The Conference started publishing the *Journal of Reform Judaism* and began regulating rabbinic placement, a process previously controlled largely by powerful faculty members at HUC-JIR.

In the years after World War II, the Reform movement expanded its youth activities. Founded in 1939 for people in their twenties, the National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) refocused on teenagers and grew rapidly. In 1947, the UAHC opened its first summer camp, Camp Swig, in California. Thereafter, nearly a dozen more camps were opened, and camping emerged as a critical program in the development of future Reform leadership.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, the central focus of the Reform movement was social justice, particularly the civil rights movement. In 1961, with financial help from Kivie Kaplan, a Reform Jew and civil rights activist, the UAHC opened the Religious Action Center (RAC) in Washington, D.C., and established itself as part of the broader liberal political coalition in the nation's capital. In 1964, Eisendrath actively began to oppose the growing American military involvement in Vietnam. Although most Reform Jews supported the liberal agenda, some, particularly in the South, were unhappy with the new activism. With the breakup of the civil rights movement and the withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam, the Reform movement lost its political focus. Malaise set in, sparking a period of self-reflection and uncertainty about the future direction of Reform Judaism in America.

### The “Big Tent” Years, 1972–1995

Despite considerable internal controversy, the Reform movement regained its institutional footing and began to expand again. During the last quarter of the twentieth century, it overtook the Conservative movement as the largest Jewish denominational body. In part, Reform benefited from the surge in American Jewish pride after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and from the continued upward mobility of American Jews. But it also took positive steps of its own, redefining and broadening its ideology and creating a new set of prayer books.

The outstanding Reform leader of the period and perhaps the most widely recognized since Isaac M. Wise had reshaped Reform into an American denomination was the German-born Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler (1925–2000). Energetic and daring, Schindler helped launch Reform's massive Outreach Program to meet the religious needs of the rising proportion of intermarried Jews and was the major force behind the 1983 CCAR decision to embrace patrilineal descent—the idea that any child with at least one Jewish parent could be presumed to be a Jew. Patrilineality played a major role in the global Jewish debate over the sensitive question, Who is a Jew? It sparked protests around the world and quickly presented the Association of Reform Zionists of America (ARZA, est. 1977) with a major challenge. ARZA attempted to balance the new Reform position with remaining part of the larger Jewish community.

German-born Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk (b. 1930), a scholar of the work of the cultural Zionist Ahad Ha-am, was another important leader of the movement in these years. An exceptional fund-raiser, under his tutelage the Jerusalem and Los Angeles campuses of the HUC-JIR became major cultural centers in their communities. Responding to vast social changes, Gottschalk helped usher in a new era in 1972 when he ordained Sally Priesand, the first woman institutionally ordained in the history of the Jewish people. By 1980, as the number of female ordainees of HUC-JIR grew, they established the first association of women rabbis, the Women's Rabbinic Network (WRN).

New prayer books and the “Centenary Perspective” reflected the broadening of the Reform movement. In 1975, at the urging of Rabbi Joseph B. Glaser (1925–1994), the new executive director of the CCAR, the Central Conference published a new, massive prayer book, the *Gates of Prayer*. With multiple Shabbat services, it reflected the religious diversity of the movement, although it did not anticipate the development of gender-sensitive language.

Religious diversity also became the organizing theme of the movement's new platform, drafted by Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, a professor of Jewish education and theology at the New York school of HUC-JIR. As adopted, the 1976 statement reflected the movement's “big tent” philosophy.

Although the broadly inclusive approach helped Reform Judaism expand, it also created problems for the movement, especially with respect to what became known as “border” issues. Most acute was the question of rabbinic officiation at interfaith weddings. In 1973, to reassert itself and anchor Reform Judaism in the historic tradition of classical rabbinic Judaism, the CCAR boldly declared its official opposition to rabbis participating in mixed marriage ceremonies. Despite the subsequent controversy and the establishment of marriage referral agencies outside the boundaries of the Reform movement, the rabbinate held firm and maintained its authority as the principal interpreter of the tradition. It used this to launch a reevaluation of the “big tent” philosophy, a reassessment that has become the hallmark of Reform Judaism in America at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

### Post-Modern Reform, 1995–Present

Currently, affiliation rates in many mainstream religious groups have declined, while right-wing religious activity

has increased. The Reform movement is no exception, and membership is flat at best. Still, interest in the spiritual in the United States is on the rise, although many observers of religion at this time point to a tendency toward postdenominationalism. The founding of nondenominational rabbinic seminaries, private ordinations, and a sweeping generational shift could all combine to produce unforeseen consequences for Reform Judaism in the next decade.

Equally complex are the seemingly contradictory trends in the religious life of the Reform movement. At the same time that Reform is reclaiming traditional rites and increasing the use of Hebrew, it is also forging bold new social policies, including the normalization of homosexuality and lesbianism. Although not unique to Reform, this elite bidirectionality, an expression of religious postmodernism, may present a significant challenge to the movement's rank and file. Notably, older members, as well as members of the some of the older, larger, and southern congregations, have sought to slow the rate of the revolution in Reform worship.

These tensions became evident and were heightened in the debate over the Central Conference's adoption of a new set of principles in Pittsburgh in 1999. Spearheaded by CCAR president and Hillel regional administrator Richard N. Levy (b. 1937), the text of the principles was rewritten six times before being brought to a vote before the rabbinic organization. A picture of Rabbi Levy wearing a *tallit* (prayer shawl) on the front cover of the 1998 winter edition of *Reform Judaism*, the official magazine of the UAHC, created a firestorm across the American Reform movement. The final version of the principles was decidedly more centrist than what Levy had originally proposed but clearly indicated the neotraditionalist trend within the Reform movement. A similar pattern of rewriting and repositioning has delayed publication by the CCAR of the proposed new Reform prayer book *Mishkan Tefillah* (*Sanctuary of Prayer*) for several years. By contrast, the CCAR took decisive action in passing the "Resolution on Same-Gender Officiation" at its 2000 Conference in Greensboro, North Carolina, at the urging of both the Ad Hoc Committee on Human Sexuality and the WRN.

The top leadership of both the UAHC and HUC-JIR also changed in the late 1990s. In June 1996, Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie, formerly a vice president of the Union and executive director of ARZA, was installed as president of the UAHC. He quickly established a neotraditional agenda, emphasizing

increased adult study, and called for a "revolution" in Reform worship that would combine classical liturgical texts and practices with folk-rock music. For budgetary reasons, early in 2003 Yoffie ordered the elimination of regional outreach offices and, later that year, triumphed in his efforts to change the name of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations to the Union for Reform Judaism. For nostalgic reasons, the term *union* was deemed nonnegotiable, *Reform* was introduced as a denominational marker, and *Hebrew* was removed as anachronistic. The removal of the term *congregation* may reflect a redefinition of the Union away from the prevailing congregationalism of the Reform movement toward its own corporate activism.

In recent years, HUC-JIR appointed two new presidents. In 1996, Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman, a nonacademic, charismatic, pulpit rabbi with strong fund-raising abilities, was installed as the head of the Reform seminary system. Compelled to resign because of misconduct, Zimmerman was succeeded in 2001 as president of the College-Institute by Rabbi David Ellenson. A respected and energetic scholar of Jewish thought and law, Ellenson served as a healer and brought a sense of vitality to HUC-JIR. Married to Rabbi Jacqueline Koch Ellenson, Rabbi David Ellenson fully embodies the bidirectionality of postmodern American Reform Judaism.

Speculations on the future of the Reform movement have generally been split between those who have confidence in the movement's ability to adapt to changing circumstances and those who see the corrosive effects of modernity as irrepressible. At present, Reform Judaism faces a number of significant problems, including the decline of liberalism in American society as well as in religion. Often tagged a "religion of convenience," the movement continues to struggle to define itself, its organizational boundaries, the extent of personal autonomy it assigns to its members, and its basic paradigms of worship, prayer, and sacred music. The Reform movement continues to attract and hold the attention of the socioeconomic elite in the American Jewish community. But it has a large, aging infrastructure to support at a time of declining membership and the aging of the American Jewish population. A shift toward nonsynagogue organizations (NSOs) presents yet another challenge to Reform's essential congregationalism.

Despite these challenges, Reform Judaism continues to offer a religious program that responds meaningfully to the deepest spiritual needs of its members and continues

to attract a solid core of lay and religious leaders. If the past is prologue, it is more than possible that an adaptive and daring Reform Judaism will not only endure but thrive in America for the foreseeable future.

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## Conservative Judaism

Conservative Judaism, until recently the largest stream of American Judaism, occupies the center of the Jewish reli-

gious spectrum, standing for the maintenance of tradition while at the same time allowing for change.

In contrast to Reform, situated to its theological left, Conservative Judaism upholds the binding nature of *Halakhah*, traditional Jewish law. But unlike Orthodoxy, which stands to its right, Conservative Judaism teaches that Halakhah can be interpreted flexibly to fit new conditions. Conservatism's middle-of-the-road orientation has tended to discourage emphasis on ideology, nurturing instead a healthy respect for the folkways of middle-class American Jews—a strategy that proved highly successful in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Beginning in the late 1960s, however, changes in American society and in the Jewish religious landscape raised serious problems for the movement, which have since accelerated, leaving great uncertainty over whether Conservative Judaism can regain its earlier strength and self-confidence.

Conservatism was not launched as a self-conscious movement, but rather evolved gradually over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as an informal coalition of Jews, both rabbinic and lay, slowly carved out a moderate middle ground between Orthodox and Reform Judaism.

This process began in Central Europe after 1815, when Reform first challenged the religious status quo through changes in liturgy, synagogue practice, and theology, aimed at removing medieval vestiges and modernizing Judaism. There were considerable differences of opinion among the Reformers over how much of the tradition had to be jettisoned, and one of the rabbinic moderates, Zechariah Frankel, who parted ways with his Reform colleagues in 1845 when they voted to abrogate the need for praying in the Hebrew language, is often cited as the ideological father of Conservatism. The rabbinical seminary Frankel headed in Breslau, Germany, beginning in 1854, the Juedisch-Theologisches Seminar, is similarly viewed as the prototype for later Conservative rabbinical training, as it emphasized a critical approach to texts along with a positive evaluation of Jewish ritual practice.

Whether there was a de facto Conservative Judaism in early and mid-nineteenth-century America is a matter of scholarly controversy, largely hinging on how one defines “Conservative” in the period preceding the emergence of a self-conscious movement. Historian Moshe Davis, in *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism* (1963), argues that vir-



*Zechariah Frankel. (American Jewish Archives)*

tually all the traditionalist leaders who opposed the surging Reform movement were in fact proto-Conservative, constituting a “historical school” of Judaism. Davis’s thesis has been criticized by other scholars, who categorize some of these men as modern Orthodox. This dispute highlights the indistinct boundary between the two religious camps that would only be clarified after World War II.

Conservative Judaism’s first institutional embodiment, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTSA), did not emerge until the 1880s, and even then without any sectarian “Conservative” identification. Two developments within American Reform, both indicating radical breaks with tradition, induced traditionalists to form their own seminary. The first, in 1883, was the serving of nonkosher seafood at the first graduation from Hebrew Union College (HUC), the Reform seminary in Cincinnati, and the second, in 1885, was the promulgation of the so-called Pittsburgh Platform, whereby Reform flatly declared that only the ethical principles of the Hebrew Bible were binding, not the rituals. The traditionalist response came the next year, as a small group of rabbis and laymen launched JTSA. It opened in 1887 in New York City with eight students,

under the leadership of Rabbi Sabato Morais, the Italian-born rabbi of Mikveh Israel, the old Sephardic congregation in Philadelphia. The school’s aim, according to its charter, was not to service a new movement but, more broadly, to train rabbis and teachers dedicated to “the preservation in America of the knowledge and practice of historical Judaism as ordained in the law of Moses expounded by the prophets and sages of Israel in Biblical and Talmudic writings.”

The new seminary was not a success. Not only was its faculty lackluster, its students few, and its finances shaky, but it had no real constituency. The existing Jewish community, to the extent that it identified religiously, was overwhelmingly Reform, and the newly arriving immigrants from Eastern Europe, whether or not they observed Jewish law, could only envision rabbis as they had been back home—bearded, Yiddish speaking, and lacking secular education.

In 1902 JTSA, on the verge of bankruptcy, was reorganized under the leadership of prominent and wealthy American Jews who themselves identified with Reform. Their purpose was to ease the acculturation of the children of the new immigrants by providing them rabbis who combined traditional Judaism with modern culture. To head the school, they hired a well-known Judaic scholar then on the staff of Cambridge University, the Romanian-born Solomon Schechter. Eager to make the seminary a center of modern, scientific Jewish scholarship, Schechter built a distinguished faculty.

Schechter was the first to spell out an ideological platform for what would become known as Conservative Judaism. It was based on the concept of “Catholic Israel.” This meant that Jews were to be guided in their daily lives neither by every detail recorded in the Code of Jewish Law (as were the Orthodox) nor by the dictates of universal ethics and reason (as was Reform), but by the practices honored by the mainstream of the Jewish people through the ages. Thus, the Jewish lifestyle that had evolved over the course of Jewish history was determinative. Schechter, however, was vague about which Jews constituted “Catholic Israel” whose practice would be considered normative—all nominal Jews, or only the observant ones—and who was authorized to determine the Jewish validity of deviations from precedent. These unresolved questions would later generate different schools of thought within the movement.

In the early twentieth century, however, few were interested in spelling out a hard-and-fast ideological platform. A distinct Conservative Judaism was taking shape not through the force of ideas but by the rise of rabbinic and congregational organizations allied with and devoted to the Seminary. The school's alumni association adopted the name Rabbinical Assembly in 1918 and broadened its membership to include rabbis who had not attended JTSA but were servicing congregations sympathetic with its approach.

Even earlier, in 1913, representatives of twenty-two of those congregations had met to organize the United Synagogue of America. Like JTSA itself and the Rabbinical Assembly, the United Synagogue avoided any explicit sectarian label, hoping to appeal to the broadest possible spectrum of American Jewry (it was not until the 1990s that the organization acknowledged that its appeal was confined to one sector of the community by changing its name to United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism). The new union's platform affirmed "the maintenance of Jewish tradition in its historical continuity," specifically mentioning Sabbath observance, the dietary laws, "the traditional character of the liturgy," and "the hopes of Israel's restoration." At the same time, "while not endorsing the innovations introduced by any of its constituent bodies," the United Synagogue was open to "all elements essentially loyal to traditional Judaism." Among the innovations in many of the synagogues were the mixed seating of men and women, recitation of certain prayers in English, and having the rabbi and cantor turn to face the congregation rather than forward to the ark; a few also incorporated organ music into the service.

Although their motives were to serve the religious needs of all Jews who were not Reform, by replicating the tripartite structure that Reform Judaism had pioneered—a seminary, a congregational body, and a rabbinical association—Schechter and his backers had, willy-nilly, created the Conservative movement. The fact that it was the JTSA that gave rise to the United Synagogue and the Rabbinical Assembly ensured the central role of the seminary within Conservative Judaism ever after. This was in contrast to Reform, in which the congregational organization created the seminary and its rabbinic group, and the lay leaders have always maintained control.

Upon Schechter's death in 1915, Cyrus Adler succeeded him as president of the Seminary, first on an acting

basis and, beginning in 1924, in a permanent capacity. A traditional Jew who had served as professor of Semitics at Johns Hopkins University and librarian of the Smithsonian Institution, Adler played a leadership role in virtually every national Jewish communal endeavor of his time. During Adler's tenure, which lasted until his death in 1940, the latent tensions in Conservatism between those viewing it as an organic continuation of traditional Judaism and those eager to mark it off as a denomination separate from Orthodoxy came to the surface at the Seminary.

Most of the faculty were comfortable with traditionalism and saw no need to sanction innovations, even those being practiced in Conservative congregations. In fact, these academicians rarely used the word *Conservative* to describe their orientation. But there was another, generally younger group, led by Mordecai Kaplan, that urged explicit renunciation of such doctrines as a supernatural God, the chosen people, revelation, and any divine sanction for the performance of ritual.

Kaplan, the son of an East European Orthodox rabbi, had himself started out in an Orthodox pulpit, but the intellectual impact of the philosophic pragmatism associated with John Dewey and the prevalent theories of the time in anthropology and sociology made it impossible for Kaplan to maintain the traditional beliefs. His book *Judaism as a Civilization*, published in 1934, suggested recasting Judaism as "a religious civilization" and its practices as "folkways." Ultimately, this school of thought, which Kaplan called Reconstructionism, would break away from the Conservative movement and constitute a separate branch of American Judaism, but in the fourth and fifth decades of the twentieth century it profoundly influenced the religious views of many Conservative rabbis. One of Kaplan's innovations, the *bat mitzvah* ceremony for girls upon reaching the age of twelve—the first was that of his daughter, Judith, in 1922—was adopted by a growing number of Conservative synagogues in succeeding decades. By the 1970s, it had become almost universal for young women in the movement and today is practiced in many Reform and Orthodox congregations as well.

More important for the future of the movement than the debates at the Seminary were far-reaching structural changes occurring in American Jewish life. A massive new constituency was entering Conservative Judaism, attracted not by ideas but by social needs. These new members would enable the movement to surpass Reform and be-

come, by the 1950s at the latest, the largest Jewish denomination. The process has been masterfully analyzed by sociologist Marshall Sklare in his 1955 book, *Conservative Judaism: An American Religious Movement*, a classic of American Jewish social science.

Sklare noted that Conservative synagogues tended to sprout in areas of “third settlement”—the suburbs—among the children and grandchildren of immigrants. Unlike the situation in the older, urban neighborhoods they came from, Jews moving into the suburbs constituted a small minority in a gentile area; furthermore, these gentiles were not the familiar Italian and Irish Catholics but Protestants, many of old American stock. The Jews, although possibly just as affluent as their new neighbors, felt uneasy about their social status and acted in such a way as to “pass” as true Americans—they stopped speaking Yiddish, for example, and minimized the hours of religious education so as to provide their children, like the other children in the neighborhood, time for sports and extracurricular activities. Ritual observance became less consistent and increasingly confined to the home and the synagogue, since public display of Judaism would mark these newcomers as different from the Christian families.

And yet these Jews, still not accepted socially by the gentiles, felt the need to associate with other Jews. This was an ethnic need, not a religious one, but since Judaism was understood, in the suburban American mind, as a religious grouping, “the local synagogue becomes the Jewish badge of identification to the neighborhood at large.”

But what kind of synagogue? An Orthodox one “bears the stigma of the ‘ghetto.’” A Reform temple, for most, was too jarring a departure from Jewish tradition. The Conservative synagogue fit perfectly. Its service was recognizable enough for comfort, and yet the unaccented English spoken by the rabbi, and his sermon topics—often issues of general social concern or cultural interest rather than homilies explicating Jewish texts—signaled the community’s acculturation. “Conservatism,” explained Sklare, “mediates between the demands of the Jewish tradition . . . and the norms of middle-class worship.” And, as an ethnic institution in the guise of a religious congregation, the suburban Conservative synagogue developed social programs for every age group, with special emphasis on the young, in the hope that “sports, entertainments, dances, social clubs, and similar activities” under Jewish auspices would ensure generational continuity (Sklare 1955).

Sklare surveyed the ways in which the typical Conservative synagogue managed to find just the right balance between tradition and innovation. By eliminating the separate seating of women characteristic of Orthodoxy and replacing it with “family pews,” it made women feel emancipated from second-class religious status and ensured their attendance at services in large numbers. Insistence on synagogue decorum and elimination of the traditional practices of auctioning off honors and publicly announcing monetary contributions marked “the adoption of middle-class norms of convention and aesthetics.” The rabbi, along with a corps of ushers, choreographed the services, just as was done at the Protestant church. The services remained traditional, but the synagogue was full only on the High Holy Days. Attendance was meager during weekday services and even on Sabbath mornings unless there was a bar mitzvah. Conservative congregations pioneered a new service, held on Friday evening after everyone had had time to eat dinner at home. This innovative service, noted Sklare, provided “some type of Sabbath observance” that was “free of the rigor and legalistic approach to observance characteristic of Orthodoxy,” typifying “the new norms assimilated by the Conservative group” (Sklare 1955).

As for the religious opinions and practices of Conservative Jews, Sklare found that most understood their Conservative affiliation as a means of preserving Jewish identity while allowing themselves a wide degree of latitude in the area of ritual observance. Not one of Sklare’s respondents suggested a theological reason for subscribing to the Conservative version of Judaism. Sklare warned that the movement’s lack of “a substantial ideological or theological superstructure” (Sklare 1955) might pose a danger for its future, but the Conservative laity did not share his concern. The October 15, 1951, issue of *Time* featured a picture of Louis Finkelstein, president of the Jewish Theological Seminary, on its cover, and the article that went with it presented Conservative Judaism as *the* form of traditional Judaism that would thrive in America.

Finkelstein, who assumed the presidency in 1940, sought to continue along the path of his predecessors in avoiding any open break with Orthodox Jewish law and theology, while retaining Mordecai Kaplan on the faculty and ignoring complaints by Kaplan’s colleagues about his deviations from tradition. But in the post–World War II years, as the growth of the movement accelerated—the number of Conservative synagogues jumped from 350 to

800 between 1945 and 1960—pressure mounted within the rabbinate and the laity for changes.

In 1946, the movement produced its first officially authorized prayer book. Although the traditional structure and almost all of the content were retained, two significant alterations were designed to eliminate conceptions deemed jarring to modern sensibilities: the ancient prayer in which a man thanked God for not making him a woman was dropped, and the stated hopes for the restoration of the sacrificial system in a rebuilt Jerusalem temple were recast into the past tense as historical reminiscences.

Another innovation sought to address a long-standing problem in Jewish life, that of the *agunah*, the “chained” woman whose estranged husband will not grant her a Jewish divorce. In the late 1940s, the movement began to insert a clause in the traditional Jewish marriage contract by which the groom obligated himself to give his wife the document should a rabbinic court so direct him. Many halakhic experts considered such a clause legitimate from the standpoint of Jewish law, but the reaction from Orthodox rabbis was universally hostile.

Far more significant than the prayer book and the marriage clause was the 1950 decision explicitly sanctioning driving to the synagogue on the Sabbath (use of any kind of electricity was barred by Orthodox interpretation of Jewish law). For one thing, it was the work of the movement’s Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, a body mandated to decide on questions of religious practice, which had existed under different names for years but only now, with this ruling, signaled its emergence as a powerful force within Conservative Judaism. Second, the rationale for the ruling—that in the neighborhoods where new Conservative synagogues were being built, it was unrealistic to expect people to walk to services—marked a recognition that Conservative Judaism was fast becoming a predominantly suburban phenomenon. Third, those who supported the change expressed the hope that enabling Jews in good conscience to drive to services would lead, in the end, to an enhanced Sabbath experience. The argument that leniencies could induce people to be *better* Jews would subsequently be used to justify other deviations from tradition as well. And fourth, the authorization to drive on the Sabbath marked an irrevocable break with Orthodox Judaism. To be sure, many Orthodox Jews drove to synagogue, but the practice was never given a stamp of approval. The distinction between the movements was now

clear: both contained sinners, but only one was prepared to change the rules to ease their consciences. The other held out hope for changing its members’ behavior or at least that of their children.

This decision was followed by two others enhancing the role of women that widened the gap with the Orthodox. In 1954, synagogues were given the option of calling women up to the Torah; in 1968 the *agunah* problem was solved by simply giving rabbis the power to annul a marriage if the husband would not give a religious divorce, a power that contemporary Orthodoxy did not recognize.

At midcentury, enjoying the allegiance of almost half of American Jews (according to a number of surveys), the Conservative movement expanded its institutional reach. In 1948 it founded a network of summer camps, Ramah, whose success was proven by the number of young people it interested in Judaism, some of whom rose to leadership positions in the movement. The Conservatives also started their own day schools in several cities, called Solomon Schechter schools (there were fifteen by 1965), but the great majority of Conservative families continued to send their children to public schools. The Jewish Theological Seminary opened a West Coast branch in Los Angeles in 1947 called the University of Judaism (fifty years later it would sever its ties with the Seminary and become independent), and a world council of Conservative synagogues was announced in 1957, followed shortly thereafter by the formation of a rabbinical seminary in Argentina to serve the needs of Latin American Jewry. In Israel the movement sponsored several synagogues (although the government, under the influence of the Orthodox establishment, refused to recognize the credentials of its rabbis) and, in 1963, set up an academic center in Jerusalem. A sign of the movement’s maturation was the entry into the rabbinate of young men who had grown up Conservative; until the 1950s, rabbis in Conservative pulpits generally came from Orthodox backgrounds.

Although Conservative Judaism continued to ride high in the early 1960s, the tumultuous events of that decade bore seeds of the movement’s decline. There were manifold assaults on the suburban American middle-class values that underpinned the Conservative enterprise: the counterculture spawned by the civil rights and antiwar movements, as well as the incipient wave of feminism, deeply affected young Jews, turning many of them against what they viewed as the culturally stifling, patriarchal, ma-

terialistic, cold, and unspiritual synagogues of their parents. Many of the early activists of Jewish feminism came from Conservative homes, where their religious impulses were often frustrated by the virtual male monopoly on synagogue ritual (in Orthodoxy, gender distinctions were considered religiously mandated, while in Reform ritual was far less important for either sex). Almost all the young people who set up Havurat Shalom, the first Jewish countercultural community, had been brought up in the Conservative movement. And *The Jewish Catalogue* series, the core text of the Jewish counterculture, was put together by people who were products of the Conservative youth movement.

Conservative Judaism faced a challenge on another front as well: Orthodoxy, long assumed to be on its way to irrelevance if not disappearance, was showing vibrancy and attracting some of the more seriously religious young people in the Conservative movement. Indeed, as much of the Jewish community turned inward, in the wake of the 1967 Six Day War and a much-delayed reckoning with the meaning of the Nazi Holocaust, to focus on such “Jewish” issues as Israel and Soviet Jewry, Orthodoxy’s more intensive preoccupation with matters Jewish contrasted favorably, for many, with the seemingly pallid, middle-of-the-road Judaism that had been the secret of Conservative success just a few years earlier.

Once again, it was sociologist Marshall Sklare who provided the most clear-sighted diagnosis of the movement. In a new epilogue he wrote for a second, augmented edition of *Conservative Judaism* that appeared in 1972, Sklare noted several trends: a drastic decline in the morale of Conservative rabbis; a dawning realization that Jewish observance, far from being strengthened by Conservative liberalization of the strictures of the law, was in rapid decline; the growing incidence of intermarriage among children of Conservative Jews (far more prevalent among the sons than among the daughters); and the movement’s inability to retain the allegiance of those attracted to the “Woodstock nation.”

A study of the movement released at the 1979 biennial convention of the United Synagogue confirmed that Conservative Judaism was in trouble. Conducted by Charles Liebman, a noted social scientist who was then a visiting professor at JTSA, and Saul Shapiro, a Conservative lay leader, the survey found a massive hemorrhaging of young people who had been reared as Conservative

Jews. Many were choosing to avoid any congregational affiliation, while those most serious about religion defected to Orthodoxy. Conservative leaders did not allow public distribution of the report’s recommendations, which included “greater affirmation of traditional Judaism” so as to maintain the allegiance of the movement’s observant constituency.

The reason for their sensitivity was that strong forces within Conservatism were pushing in quite another direction: ordination of women was on the agenda. A movement that prided itself on the harmonious balance of tradition and change was about to make a fateful choice between them.

The first indication of feminism’s impact on Conservative policy came in 1973, when the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards gave rabbis the option of counting women in a *minyán*, the ten-person quorum necessary for communal prayer. The following year, the committee took up the issue of female rabbis and cantors (Reform’s seminary, HUC, had begun admitting women to rabbinic and cantorial programs in the late 1960s and ordained its first female rabbi in 1972).

Battle lines were quickly drawn within the movement, as opponents of the change sensed that Conservative adherence to Schechter’s concept of “Catholic Israel,” maintaining mainstream Jewish tradition, was at stake. The decisive factor proved to be Gerson Cohen, chancellor of JTSA, who was at first wary of the innovation but then took the side of the innovators. Cohen appointed a special commission, whose 1979 majority report recommended the ordination of women and gave four reasons: that many of the responsibilities of the contemporary rabbi could be performed, according to Jewish law, even by women; that “ethical considerations” mandated equal career access for men and women; that a male-only rabbinate stood in contradiction to the gender equality prevailing in the Judaism practiced by Conservative Jews; and that evidence showed wide support within the movement for the ordination of women.

The JTSA faculty, the body that granted ordination and therefore would have to authorize the change, was bitterly divided and put the matter off. In 1983 a woman ordained by HUC applied for membership in the Rabbinical Assembly; her application was supported by a majority of the rabbis present at the group’s convention but not by the necessary three-quarters. That year Chancellor Cohen

brought the issue before the faculty, which since 1979 had lost a number of its traditionalist members through death and retirement. Women's ordination passed by a vote of thirty-four to eight, as several of the remaining opponents, knowing the numbers were against them, boycotted the vote in protest. By the fall of 1984, nineteen women had enrolled in the rabbinical school. Female cantors were accepted a few years later.

As soon as the Seminary faculty voted to ordain women, some opponents of the decision organized themselves as the Union for Traditional Conservative Judaism (UTCJ), ostensibly as an internal lobby to stave off further deviations from tradition. But its creation of a Panel of Halakhic Inquiry to rule on issues of Jewish law gave clear indication of secessionist tendencies, and in 1990 the Union deleted the word *Conservative* from its name and established its own rabbinical seminary.

Clearly, the Conservative ordination of women constituted a shift away from the movement's old preference for a "big tent" encompassing the right and the left. Conservative Judaism was hitching its future to feminism and to what was coming to be called egalitarianism. This sea change was evident, as well, in the pages of a new Conservative prayer book, *Sim Shalom*, published in 1985; its elimination of many traditional gender distinctions was a major reason for the UTCJ's Panel of Halakhic Inquiry to rule that it should not be used for prayer.

Having broken the logjam in Jewish practice by ordaining women, Conservative Judaism sought to do the same for Jewish theology in 1988 with the release of *Emet Ve-Emunah*, a statement of the movement's beliefs and principles. Although questions of ideology had been of little importance to the middle-class suburban Jews Marshall Sklare had studied in the 1950s, thirty years later such questions were high on the agenda of college-educated Jews, who could not find, in the fuzzy rhetoric of the movement, any clear description of what Conservative Judaism stood for and how it differed from the other denominations. *Emet Ve-Emunah*, however, drafted by a committee, could not escape the "on-the-one-hand-and-on-the-other-hand" approach that had bedeviled the movement from the start. The document's opening section, on God, is typical: after flatly stating that God is at the very core of Conservative Judaism, it goes on to discuss the "doubts," "complexities," and "confusions" this belief entailed.

The decade of the 1990s brought a new divisive issue that had the potential to divide the movement even more seriously than had women's ordination: the religious status of homosexuals. In 1990 the Rabbinical Assembly came out against all civil discrimination against gays and lesbians and welcomed Jews of whatever sexual orientation into Conservative congregations. The next year the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, taking up the question of whether homosexuals might be appointed as rabbis or to other positions of religious influence, produced two diametrically opposed opinions: one that Jewish tradition can countenance no validation of homosexuality, and the other that negative references to homosexuality in ancient Jewish sources were directed at coercive and exploitative relations and did not apply to "mutually exclusive, committed" relationships.

The debate, still unresolved, has since heated up, with rabbinic officiation at homosexual commitment ceremonies also coming up for consideration. In 2002 the president of the United Synagogue came out in favor of liberalizing the movement's position on homosexual rights, and JTSA students have been especially vociferous in support of the admission of openly homosexual rabbinical students. However, the school's chancellor, Ismar Schorsch, emerged as a staunch opponent of any change, warning that it could very well trigger a schism.

Should Conservative Judaism manage to weather the storm over homosexuality, an even tougher issue lurks on the horizon—intermarriage. In contrast to Reform Judaism, many of whose rabbis perform intermarriages and which can recognize as a Jew someone with either parent Jewish, the Conservative movement has so far hewn to the traditional line: its rabbis may not participate in weddings between Jews and non-Jews, and only children of Jewish mothers (or converts) are considered Jews. Not only has this placed Conservative rabbis under great pressure from families incensed that "their" rabbi will not marry their children, but it has undoubtedly contributed to the transfer of allegiances of many families from Conservative to Reform. Surveys of the Conservative laity have consistently shown a majority in favor of adopting the Reform patrilineal definition of Jewishness, which grants Jewish status to the children of Jewish men and non-Jewish women.

As the twenty-first century dawned, the Conservative movement was plagued by declining numbers and low morale. The 2000–2001 National Jewish Population Study

indicated that only 33 percent of Jewish households affiliated with a synagogue were Conservative, a drop of ten points since 1990. Reform, with 39 percent of affiliated households, was now the largest stream of American Judaism. A demographic survey of Jews in New York City, by far the nation's largest Jewish community, showed a similar trend: 26 percent of Jews self-identified as Conservative in 2002, a drop of eight points since 1991 (Reform declined in the city as well, though it still led the Conservatives). Furthermore, a sophisticated longitudinal study of young Conservative Jews, which tracked some 1,000 individuals from their bar/bat mitzvahs in 1994–1995 through college in 2004, gave little cause for optimism. Conducted by the Ratner Center at the JTSA, it found that the young people expressed continued positive feelings about being Jewish as they grew older, but their ritual practices steadily declined. In 2004, only 12 percent of the sample said that they had recently read a Jewish-themed book, and just 18 percent reported that they dated only fellow Jews.

The evident malaise in the movement has elicited several reactions. Some hope that ambitious new initiatives of “synagogue revitalization” will renew Conservative Judaism; others point to the impressive growth of Conservative schools as a foundation stone for resurgence; and yet another perspective cites the need for the movement's leadership to demonstrate greater vision. For his part, Chancellor Schorsch, Conservative Judaism's most visible leader, shocked the biennial convention of the United Synagogue in 2003 by going all the way back to 1950 to find what had led to the current state of decline. The decision that year to allow driving on the Sabbath, Schorsch argued, was a “mistake” because it “gave up on the desirability of living close to the synagogue and creating a *Shabbos* community.”

Toward the end of 2004, American Jews learned that the Jewish Theological Seminary, the venerable institution from which Conservative Judaism grew, was in serious financial difficulty. What the future held for the movement it had spawned, now in decline, was anyone's guess.

Lawrence Grossman

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## Reconstructionist Judaism

Reconstructionist Judaism, the youngest and smallest of the four denominations of American Judaism, was founded as an ideology by Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan in

the first decades of the twentieth century as a response to the unprecedented challenges posed to Judaism in America. It developed denominational institutions after World War II—the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation in 1955, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in 1968, and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association in 1974. It defines Judaism as the evolving religious civilization of the Jewish people. Initially, the movement was known for its bold stands in favor of gender equality, a nonsupernatural definition of God, and revisions of the words of the traditional liturgy, and for its repudiation of the belief that the Jews are the “chosen people.” As it grew rapidly in the last two decades of the twentieth century, to more than 100 affiliated congregations and *havurot* (smaller, lay-led groups that meet for worship, study, and/or celebration), it also became identified with participatory decision-making communities, liberal Jewish spirituality, the inclusion of gay and lesbian Jews, Jewish ethical decision making, Jewishly grounded social action, and progressive Zionism.

Reconstructionist Judaism began in 1922, when Mordecai Kaplan founded the Society for the Advancement of Judaism (SAJ) in New York City. The son of Rabbi Israel Kaplan, he immigrated from Lithuania with his family in 1889 when he was eight years old. His father was a product of the Lithuanian *yeshiva* world of Kovno and Volozhin and was a follower of the *Musar* movement, which emphasized the cultivation of ethics, and *Mizrachi*, the Orthodox Zionist movement; his mentor, Rabbi Isaac Jacob Reines, was distinctive for his advocacy of secular learning and reform in yeshiva education.

Mordecai Kaplan was an early graduate of the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1902 (where he served on the faculty for fifty-four years, 1909–1963) who also received Orthodox *semikhah* (rabbinic ordination) in Lithuania from Reines (1908). He studied at City College in New York and did his graduate work in the Columbia University Department of Philosophy. His intellectual influences included William James, the Biblical scholar Arnold B. Ehrlich, the sociologist Franklin Giddings, the philosopher Henry Sidgwick, Matthew Arnold, and the Zionist thinker Ahad Ha-am. While serving in New York at Kehilath Jeshurun and as the founding rabbi of the Jewish Center, both Orthodox congregations, Kaplan was often attacked in the Orthodox world for his controversial sermons and articles: he spoke in English from the pulpit, he condemned economic injustice, and he demanded that Orthodoxy liberalize its inter-



*Mordecai Kaplan, founder of Reconstructionist Judaism. (American Jewish Archives)*

pretation of ritual and theology. His experience in those pulpits put him at odds with traditionalists as he sought to formulate ways of addressing second-generation American Jews of Eastern European descent. In 1922 he finally left the Jewish Center and founded the SAJ with a group of his followers that included half of the Jewish Center’s members.

The SAJ became a laboratory for his efforts to reconstruct the institutions, beliefs, and practices of the Jewish community in order to address the unprecedented social and political circumstances facing American Jewry. The congregation experimented with revisions of the traditional liturgy, with “reevaluation” of ritual, with the inclusion of women—including the introduction of the first *bat mitzvah* ceremony in Jewish history in 1922—and with the application of Jewish values to current social and political issues in the greater society, including support of Palestine (which at the time was not the majority position in the Jewish community) and sensitivity to Arab-Jewish relations there; creation of a “seven-day synagogue” that would be the center of members’ social lives; support of labor unions, the five-day workweek, and socialism; integration of the arts into Jewish life; exhortation of members to

study and practice Jewish ethics; and the establishment of a Board of Arbitrators that mediated disputes between members. Kaplan began to publish his emerging program for the reconstruction of Jewish life in the *Menorah Journal* and the *SAJ Review* (1922–1929), thereby reaching a wider group of Jewish intellectuals.

In 1934, Kaplan published his first book, *Judaism as a Civilization*, a critical analysis of the challenges posed by modernity to the Jewish community and a fully developed proposal for the reconstruction of Jewish life based on current social scientific theory. Understanding religion as an outgrowth of the life of an organic community, Kaplan traced the crisis of Jewish life to the breakdown of autonomous, self-governing Jewish communities as the result of political emancipation, which granted Jews individual citizenship and eliminated their need for the Jewish community. He criticized Reform and Orthodox definitions of Judaism as a religion, maintaining that religious belief and practice could not survive without organic communities that nurtured them. His proposed reconstruction of Jewish life consisted of renewed emphasis on Judaism as a civilization that encompassed all aspects of a Jew's life and on proposals to create organic communities that would function effectively in the new political environment of Western democracy.

The book was unique in its application of the viewpoint of the university to an analysis of Jewish life and its bold criticism of supernaturalistic theology and *halakhic* (Jewish legal) authority. In addition, several of Kaplan's ideas—including his definition of Judaism as a civilization and his recognition that religion is only one aspect of Jewish peoplehood, his demand that Jewish leaders adapt to unprecedented circumstances, and his assertion of the importance of such values as democracy, citizenship, and equality for women—exerted a powerful impact on the American Jewish world, influencing several generations of leaders in the Conservative and Reform movements. Kaplan's book remains a classic of modern Jewish thought.

Building on that impact, he began publishing the *Reconstructionist* magazine in 1935 to promote his approach. Edited first by Kaplan and then by Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, the *Reconstructionist* served as a forum for progressive ideas across denominations in the Jewish community and significantly influenced its development.

In 1940, Kaplan and Eisenstein founded the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation and began to publish a se-

ries of prayer books, including *The New Haggadah* (1941) and *The Sabbath Prayer Book* (1945), in which contemporary readings were added and the traditional Hebrew text was altered—most controversially, eliminating references to the chosenness of Israel and to the resurrection of the dead. In 1945 several members of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis burned *The Sabbath Prayer Book* in a public ceremony of *herem* (excommunication), providing publicity that led to the growth of the SAJ.

Kaplan had not been interested in establishing a fourth denomination, but beginning in the 1950s, Eisenstein and others gave up on Kaplan's hope to remain a school of thought that influenced the entire Jewish community. In 1955, four congregations joined to form the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations, now called the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation (JRF). The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) opened in Philadelphia in 1968, and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association (RRA) was founded in 1974. All three bodies developed into established institutions that are recognized participants in the larger Jewish world. They are represented on such organizations as the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, United Jewish Communities, the National Council of Synagogues, the World Union for Progressive Judaism, and the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and have led in the formation of others, such as the Academic Coalition for Jewish Bioethics. The movement cooperates with the Reform and Conservative movements in such areas as rabbinic placement and social action and with all other denominations in the Conference on Rabbinic Education.

Although originally based in the New York area, the movement has spread across North America, with additional concentrations in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Southern California. It also has affiliates outside the United States in Canada, Curaçao, and Prague. Its members tend to be well-educated professionals and academics attracted by its emphases on participatory decision making for laypeople, intellectual inquiry, social justice, creative liturgy and ritual, and spirituality.

## Major Beliefs

Reconstructionists define Judaism as the evolving religious *civilization* of the Jewish people. The focus on Judaism as a civilization pointedly resists the American



*Students davvening during Sukkot at Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. (Reconstructionist Rabbinical College)*

impulse to understand Judaism as fitting neatly into a Protestant-influenced paradigm that assumes a dichotomy between sacred and secular, church and state. Until the modern era, Jews lived in self-governing communities in which Jewish law was the law and in which the culture, social services, languages, and so forth, were Jewish. When political emancipation granted Jews individual (rather than corporate) citizenship in the greater society, the Jewish community was ruptured beyond recognition. Reconstructionists believe that long-term Jewish survival depends on a reconstruction of Jewish communities that are essential to all aspects of their members' lives. They maintain that it is futile to identify Judaism with a particular set of religious beliefs, both because Jewish beliefs have always been diverse and because beliefs always develop within the context of the specific community in which individuals are raised. Thus, Reconstructionists have included study, language, literature, music, customs, and community services as primary components of Judaism alongside belief and ritual practice.

## Evolution

Seen through the Reconstructionist lens, Jewish civilization has *evolved* perpetually through the centuries in response to ever-changing historical circumstances. Rabbis-in-training at the RRC study the changes in Jewish practice, belief, and institutional structure in successive eras of Jewish history so that, when they are rabbis, they will be able to continue the reconstruction in response to changing circumstances in the future.

## The Reconstructionist Hermeneutic

The focus on change as one of the constants in Jewish history leads to a distinctive Reconstructionist hermeneutic. In contrast both to traditionalists, who assume that the Torah is divinely revealed and the interpretations of halakhic (legal) authorities divinely authorized, and to other liberals, who argue that their innovations are authentic elaborations of essential Jewish values, Reconstructionists do not begin with the assumption that there has ever been

an unchanging corpus of teachings, practices, or values. Based on the evolutionary perspective, Reconstructionists view innovation itself as a traditional Jewish approach. Tradition is given a vote but not a veto.

Reconstructionists value and study seriously the wisdom embedded in the teachings and practices of the Jewish heritage, but there is no assumption that the values of preceding generations should command allegiance when they conflict with contemporary values. To the contrary, it is a Reconstructionist principle that every generation has the *obligation* to continue to reconstruct in order to adapt to ever-emerging new circumstances. For example, the assumption of early generations of Reconstructionists that religious naturalism led to rationalism and trust in science has been replaced in recent decades by an embrace of the spiritual practices of more mystical strains in the tradition and by an appreciation of the mythic, poetic power of prayer to express mystery and nonrational truth. Similarly, the early inclusion of women has been expanded to pioneer outreach to interfaith couples and to the inclusion of gay and lesbian Jews. In all such cases, innovations are grounded in the Reconstructionist “tradition” of ongoing evolution in response to an ever-changing world.

### Peoplehood, Community, and Israel

Reconstructionists view the Jewish people as the unchanging constant through a history in which beliefs, practices, and institutions have continuously evolved. Jewish civilization has developed in the context of Jewish communities, so that belonging is prior to behavior and belief, both of which emerge as community members learn its language, symbols, customs, and values. Identification with the Jewish people in general and with a particular Jewish community is thus the common denominator of Reconstructionists; therefore, Reconstructionist communities embrace a wide diversity of belief and practice among their members. Members are expected—sometimes formally through congregational bylaws—to be active participants in communal life: on committees that study traditional sources together to formulate communal policies; as teachers and service leaders; in synagogue support networks in which members’ talent, time, energy, and expertise are shared with others; and in a host of other areas of communal life.

In this way, members of Reconstructionist communities, many of whom are highly educated and qualified in

their fields of expertise, are encouraged to continue their Jewish study and increase their Jewish knowledge and practice by way of contributing to their communities—thereby subjecting their own personal decision making to the influence of their fellow members. This communitarian approach neither requires nor desires conformity of belief, values, or practice; it seeks to construct the opportunity for members to see the world through “Jewish-colored lenses.” New members often describe the attractiveness of Reconstructionist congregations as the *heimish* (homelike) atmosphere created by those who are invested in creating communities that embody Jewish values.

Kaplan was among the early fervent advocates of the Zionist movement. He viewed the *yishuv* (Jewish settlement) in Palestine as an extraordinary opportunity to reconstruct Jewish civilization as a “religion of ethical nationhood” and counted himself among the cultural Zionists led by Ahad Ha’am. The logo of *The Reconstructionist* became a wheel with Zion at its center and with spokes radiating outward to diaspora communities that would derive their spiritual sustenance from the society in which Jewish civilization was primary and being rejuvenated on Jewish soil. After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Kaplan and *The Reconstructionist* sought to hold Israel up to the measure of ethical Jewish values, urging the state to embody a “religion of ethical nationhood.” Reconstructionists today remain fervently committed to the Zionist enterprise but tend to identify and ally with the Israeli peace movement, a position that follows directly from the notion of “ethical nationhood” and from the movement’s earlier identification with the Israeli Labor Party.

### Living in Two Civilizations and Democratic Values

The development of vital, participatory communities seeks to address the chief challenge posed by the modern political emancipation of the Jews—the fact that Western Jews live primarily in the secular and not the Jewish civilization. Reconstructionists thus speak about “living in two civilizations.” This is not a circumstance to be deplored but rather an opportunity for Jews to contribute to the larger culture and to enrich Jewish civilization by incorporating the noblest and most elevated values of Western culture. Kaplan was unambivalent in his enthusiastic embrace of American

democracy as a value system that built upon Judaism's prophetic strand and that Jews ought to incorporate into their communal life. Freedom, equality, inclusion of those who have previously been excluded, social justice, and the participation of *all* members with rabbis in communal policymaking—these are among the values that Reconstructionists celebrate as they continue the ongoing evolution of Jewish civilization.

Those who have joined the Reconstructionist movement since the 1970s often cite its commitment to “American” values as one of its attractions. Prominent among those values is a commitment to interreligious understanding and social justice. Many Reconstructionist synagogues are known in their communities for their members' commitment—following from living in two civilizations—to reaching out as Jews to address racism, sexism, poverty, and injustice. Among the many Reconstructionists who lead in this area are Rabbi Sid Schwarz (founder and president, Panim: Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values), Rabbi Steve Gutow (executive director, Jewish Council for Public Affairs), Rabbi Rebecca Alpert (board member of Faith and Public Life, The Family Planning Council, and the Women's Law Project), Rabbi Joy Levitt (board member, Americans for Peace Now), Rabbi Brian Walt (executive director, Rabbis for Human Rights North America), Ruth Messinger (president, American Jewish World Service), Jeffrey Dekro (president, Shefa Fund), Rabbi Fred Dobb (leader at Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life), and Rabbi Arnold Rachlis (board member, Mazon).

## Theology

Kaplan sought to address the disparity between traditional, supernatural Jewish beliefs about God and contemporary scientific and social scientific understandings of the world. He understood this as a major cause of Jews' alienation from their heritage. In the first half of the twentieth century, many Jews regarded the miraculous stories in the Torah and the images of God in the prayer book as antiquated and irrelevant.

Given his view that beliefs about the nature of God had varied widely throughout the evolution of Jewish civilization, Kaplan saw no problem with the construction of new descriptions of God. He offered his theology as one option. He neither wanted nor expected all Reconstructionists to share it. For him, it was essential for Jews to be-

lieve in God but not to believe in any particular conception, as long as their beliefs were grounded in Jewish tradition and study.

Kaplan spoke about God as the Power That Makes for Salvation, in general, and for Freedom, for Truth, for Altruism, for Love, and so forth, in particular. He was influenced by Process Philosophy and by Pragmatism. He saw God as the name we give to those forces in the universe that make for human virtue and that call to us to transcend self-interest and to work for the greater good. God, for him, was not a person and did not intervene supernaturally to effect the divine will in human affairs. Ever the pragmatist, he measured the “quality” of a particular belief in God by the way the believer behaves in the world. Rabbi Harold Schulweis built on Kaplan's theology in the 1970s in developing Predicate Theology. According to Schulweis, we cannot know what God is as a subject; we can only know when God is manifest in our experience. Thus, we cannot know that God is just, for example, but we can know that justice is godly.

The movement published a series of new prayer books called *Kol Haneshamah* (*The Whole Soul*) beginning in 1989. The series embodies Reconstructionist principles in a number of noteworthy ways: all passages to be recited or sung communally are accompanied by English transliteration on the same page so that those who are not yet skilled in reading Hebrew can participate. English translations, by renowned poet Joel Rosenberg, are placed on the left, aligned with the original Hebrew, to facilitate comprehension of the Hebrew for those in the process of learning it. English translations are gender neutral. Alternative gender-neutral and nonhierarchical Hebrew blessing forms are offered. There are explanatory and contemplative commentaries on each page from a variety of perspectives, so that worshippers can enrich their prayer experience. The *Kol Haneshamah* series has sold widely beyond affiliated congregations and has come to represent the movement's commitment to inclusiveness and feminism.

Reconstructionists have been accused of being atheists because of their rejection of a personal God who hears and responds to prayer. Kaplan, however, was an excellent model of an intensely religious man of faith with a life of serious prayer and ritual observance. Once the RRC began training rabbis in 1968, it attracted students who were enthusiastic about *davvening* (traditional Jewish praying) and

eager to adapt the traditional prayer and ritual forms to express contemporary values, most notably feminist values. This trend has continued as the RRC and the Reconstructionist movement have led in the recent return of liberal Jews to spirituality—leading in the 1980s and 1990s in the development of Jewish meditation and chanting, and founding in 1998 the first program in Jewish Spiritual Direction that emphasizes cultivating an awareness of God at every moment.

Although the movement has a reputation for rationalism among its detractors, it is not surprising that it developed a spiritual emphasis. Beginning with Kaplan, Reconstructionists' discomfort with inherited theologies has derived less from secular skepticism than from a yearning for a spiritual practice that they can embrace fully. Reconstructionists believe, for example, that the Torah is a record of the Israelites' experience of their encounters with God but that the record reveals more about the values and cultural conditioning of the fallible human beings who encountered God than it does about a literal transcript of what God said. This is hardly a denial of those encounters. Rather, it is an assertion that all human reports of divine revelation are necessarily filtered through the imperfect vessel of the human reporters, who are inevitably shaped by their historical context.

## Ritual Practice

The definition of Judaism as a civilization has also led Reconstructionists to emphasize the centrality of ritual observance. They seek to live in Jewish time and Jewish space, and they believe that ritual forms are vehicles for moving us toward a Jewish way of seeing the world, understanding reality, and living a sanctified Jewish life. Belonging to the community comes first; behaving in ways that constantly reinforce the community's beliefs and values follows directly. Reconstructionist liturgy is largely in Hebrew. Heads are covered, and *tallitot* (prayer shawls) are worn—by both men and women—at services. Traditional *nusakh* (liturgical chant) is followed. Communal kitchens are kosher. And a 1996 study of Reconstructionists found that Reconstructionists with a wide range of backgrounds maintain a significantly higher level of ritual observance than their parents (Rappeport 1996). Jews join Reconstructionist communities when they are interested in increasing the traditional component of their lives.

The guiding principle of ritual observance is that traditional practice is maintained and revalued. That is, the underlying values expressed in the ritual are determined, and the ritual then becomes the form through which those values are expressed or reinterpreted in a contemporary idiom. Reconstructionists contrast this *conscious* “revaluation” with the *unconscious* “transvaluation” that occurred in the premodern era, when Jews, lacking a historical consciousness, reinterpreted beliefs and practices but assumed that their interpretations were the original meaning (Kaplan 1936). Thus, the form of the Passover seder, for example, is maintained while participants reflect on contemporary political and personal issues of bondage and liberation.

Revaluation is abandoned and the ritual changed only when the values expressed by the traditional practice are determined to be objectionable, and only a change of form can address the concern. The best-known such change is the elimination of all liturgical references to the Jews as the chosen people. *The Sabbath Prayer Book* (Kaplan 1945) revised the traditional wording of the Torah blessing from “Who has chosen us from among all the nations” to “Who has brought us near to God's service.” It also deleted the phrase “Who has not made us like the nations of the Earth” from the concluding *Alenu* prayer. Kaplan and the other prayer book editors believed that there had been nothing objectionable about these words when they were recited by Jews who believed literally in the divinely revealed nature of the Torah and the *mitzvot* (the 613 commandments of Jewish law). In that context, the Jews are chosen to observe the Torah. When recited by Jews who do not believe literally that the Torah is God's word and that the commandments are binding, however, the words become an assertion of the supremacy of the Jewish people rather than of the Torah and are thus ethically objectionable and dangerous, insofar as they cultivate a chauvinistic sense of privilege and superiority.

Although not all Reconstructionists recite the revised words, the bold revision of the liturgy precisely at the moment when a person ascends to the *bimah* (the raised platform at the front of the synagogue from which worship is conducted), in a reenactment of the Sinaitic revelation, to recite the blessing over the reading from the Torah scroll, signals the basic Reconstructionist principle: that Judaism is not superior to other religions. Each people and culture has its own path to God, and all paths, like Judaism, are in

a state of ongoing evolution, so that each group has the responsibility to reconstruct its practices and values into ever more divine forms. Jews are Jewish not because Judaism is superior but rather because it is our path and contains the sum total of the wisdom inherited from the quests of preceding generations.

## Feminism and the Creation of an Inclusive Community

Reconstructionist Judaism has led the Jewish community with regard to the principle of gender equality since the SAJ instituted the first bat mitzvah ceremony in the first year (1922) of the congregation's existence. The principle has been straightforward: given the change in the social, political, educational, and economic status of women in the modern era, the reconstruction of gender differentiation in ritual and leadership follows directly. The SAJ began counting women in the *minyan* (prayer quorum) in 1950, the community voting to do so after a long, extended series of discussions. The RRC admitted women to study for the rabbinate from the moment of its founding in 1968. The RRA developed an egalitarian *get* (divorce document) in 1983. Movement milestones include the first woman president of a synagogue movement (1984), the first woman president of a rabbinical association (1987), and the first woman to serve as academic dean of a rabbinical seminary (2004).

Beyond gender equality, however, Reconstructionists have pioneered in the feminist transformation of Jewish culture—introducing gender-neutral language about God, including women's voices in the liturgy, developing rituals to mark previously ignored stages in women's lives. Kolot, RRC's Center for Jewish Women's and Gender Studies, continues to do groundbreaking work in rereading texts and traditions to bring issues to the surface and address them.

In line with its historic inclusion of women, the movement has sought to welcome other groups who had been excluded by the Jewish community. In 1979 the RRA affirmed a 1968 JRF resolution on patrilineal descent, recognizing as Jews those who have a Jewish father and non-Jewish mother and have been raised as Jews. In 1982, the RRA's Guidelines on Intermarriage publicly acknowledged the soaring rate of intermarriage and welcomed intermarried couples into Reconstructionist communities,

developing strategies to increase the likelihood that their children would be raised as Jews. In 1983, the RRC faculty passed a nondiscriminatory policy for admission to the rabbinical program based on sexual orientation. This was followed in 1989 by a movement-wide commission report that encouraged all affiliates to welcome gay and lesbian Jews and advocated the development of same-sex commitment ceremonies. Since then, lesbian and gay Jews have been fully integrated into all levels of the movement's lay and rabbinic leadership.

## Ethical Decision Making

The ongoing work of the RRC's Center for Jewish Ethics illustrates the Reconstructionist method of balancing traditional and contemporary values called values-based decision making. Directed by David Teutsch, former president of RRC, the Center has published materials on Jewish approaches to speech ethics, a volume on bioethics, and the first sections of a guide to Jewish practice. The method involves the study of inherited Jewish values and contemporary values and the resolution of issues in which there are conflicts between them. Its goals are to enable the voice of traditional teaching to be heard and taken seriously without being absolutely authoritative. For example, study of traditional texts has led to the conclusion that what passes through the feeding tube is medicine, not food, and so the tube can be disconnected when the patient is no longer alive, and that stem cells may be used for research as long as new embryos are not created solely for that purpose.

Jacob J. Staub

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## Hasidic Judaism

Hasidism is a populist, mystical, Jewish religious movement that originated in the Polish province of Podolia with the disciples of the charismatic teacher and faith-healer R. Israel ben Eliezer Baal Shem Tov of Medzibozh (ca. 1698–1760), popularly known by his acronym, Besht. The disciples of the Besht, most notably the *Magid* (preacher) Dov Ber of Mezeritch (d. 1772) and his many students, spread Hasidism's revolutionary, optimistic, mystical teachings that celebrated the immanence of God and His closeness to even the simplest, most uneducated Jews, throughout Eastern Europe during the last half of the eighteenth century. R. Dov Ber's disciples became charismatic Hasidic masters (known as *tsadikim*, or *rebbe*s) who established courts throughout Eastern Europe from the Russian Pale of Settlement to Austria-Hungary.

Hasidic life centers on the joyful worship of God through ecstatic prayer, song, dance, and feasting, all performed in the ambience of the rebbe's court. Unlike conventional rabbis, who are essentially teachers and adjudicators of Jewish law, the Hasidic rebbes are personal spiritual guides to whom are attributed great, even supernatural powers to intercede with God.

The emergence of Hasidism provoked a strenuous, organized opposition from the established Jewish communities and their rabbis, who became known as the *Mitnagdim* (opponents). The *Mitnagdim*, whose power base was in Lithuania, believed that the Hasidim's emphasis on prayer and religious ecstasy was a threat to traditional rabbinic Judaism, which placed Torah study at the pinnacle of the

hierarchy of religious values, so they excommunicated the Hasidim and banned the rebbes' courts.

Despite this opposition, Hasidism spread very rapidly, largely because of its popularization of Jewish mysticism's most optimistic and joyful doctrines and its celebratory approach to religious life. Hasidic courts, where the rebbes held forth royally, sprouted all across Eastern Europe, serving as community centers where the Hasidim gathered, especially on Sabbaths and Jewish holidays, to worship and celebrate in the presence of their revered masters.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Hasidim accounted for a majority of Eastern Europe's fervently Orthodox Jews. Though suffering some attrition to the rapid modernization and urbanization of Jewish life in Eastern Europe since the mid-nineteenth century, dozens of Hasidic sects flourished until World War II. On the eve of the war, Hasidic life was concentrated almost exclusively in Eastern Europe, which was home to more than 90 percent of the world's Hasidic population.

The Hasidic world was devastated by the Holocaust. Although a few of the most prominent Hasidic rebbes managed to escape the Nazis, approximately 95 percent of Europe's Hasidim were murdered during the war. Because of their distinctive appearance and general ignorance of European languages and customs, hiding from the Nazis or escape from war-torn Europe, while never easy, was more difficult for the Hasidim than for more assimilated European Jews. The Holocaust decimated hundreds of Hasidic communities across Europe, not one of which remained intact.

Most Hasidic Holocaust survivors emigrated to Palestine or America, where they tried to regroup, when possible, in accordance with their prewar Hasidic court affiliation. The largest Hasidic sects to reestablish themselves after the war were Ger, Vizhnitz, and Belz in Israel, and Lubavitch, Satmar, and Bobov in the United States. Significant Hasidic communities were also established in London, Antwerp, and Montreal. The large majority of Hasidim who found refuge in the United States settled in New York City. The first major Hasidic communities there emerged in the Williamsburg and Crown Heights sections of Brooklyn.

In the 1960s, as living conditions in those neighborhoods rapidly deteriorated, many Hasidim fled to the middle-class Boro Park section of Brooklyn. Nonetheless, at the insistence of their rebbe, the Lubavitcher Hasidim remained in Crown Heights. Similarly, the Satmar rebbe



*Hasidic Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson. (Corbis)*

and most of his Hasidim stayed in Williamsburg. In the 1970s, Boro Park had the largest Hasidic population in the country, numbering approximately 40,000 (Mayer 1979). Currently, about 12,000 Hasidim, mostly Lubavitchers, remain in Crown Heights (Fishkoff 2003), and some 50,000 Hasidim, mostly Satmar, live in Williamsburg (Rubin 1997). There are also some sizable suburban Hasidic enclaves, including Kiryas Joel, New Square, and Monsey, all about 30 miles northwest of New York City. Smaller Hasidic communities exist in Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Milwaukee.

### **Hasidism in America before the Holocaust**

Prior to the Holocaust, there were only three bona fide rebbes with Hasidic congregations in the United States. The

Boyaner Rebbe, Mordechai Shlomo Friedman (d. 1971), emigrated from Eastern Europe in 1927 and settled in Manhattan's Lower East Side. The Stoliner Rebbe, Jacob Perlow (d. 1945), arrived there in 1929, as did the Kapitchinitzer Rebbe, Abraham Joshua Heschel (d. 1967), in 1939. All three maintained only minor congregations in lower Manhattan.

The Kapitchinitzer Rebbe was succeeded by his son, Rabbi Moshe Heschel, while the Boyaner Rebbe was succeeded by his son, Rabbi Israel Friedman. Neither of these prewar American Hasidic sects has maintained a viable community. Kapitchinitzer Hasidism is today all but extinct, while the majority of Boyaner Hasidim live in Israel. A few dozen Boyaner families remain in New York, scattered in various neighborhoods from Manhattan's Upper West Side to Boro Park. While there remains a Stoliner synagogue in Boro Park, the current rebbe and most of his followers are today in Israel.

## Habad-Lubavitch in America

Since its founding by R. Shneur Zalman of Lyadi (1745–1813), two characteristics have set Habad (also known as Lubavitch, after the town in Byelorussia where R. Shneur Zalman’s son, R. Dov Ber, established the Habad court in 1815) apart from other Hasidic sects. The first is its unusual combination of radical mysticism with intense intellectualism. Hence the acronym for the movement—Habad—which stands for *Hokhma, Binah, Daat*, Hebrew for knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. The other distinction of Habad Hasidism is its evangelism and commitment to spreading Hasidic doctrine to Jews the world over, no matter what their Jewish education or level of religious observance.

At the beginning of the Nazi occupation of Poland, the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Joseph Isaac Schneerson (1880–1950), fled the Warsaw ghetto to Riga, Latvia, from which he finally managed to escape to America in 1940 with help from the U.S. State Department. Before the war, R. Joseph Isaac had been the most prominent Orthodox leader of beleaguered Soviet Jewry. Upon arriving in America, he immediately established a synagogue at 770 Eastern Parkway in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, which remains the world headquarters of the Lubavitch movement today.

R. Joseph Isaac died in 1950 and was succeeded a year later by his son-in-law, R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902–1994) who, after an unprecedented career of almost half a century, passed away, leaving no successor. R. Menachem Mendel raised Habad evangelism to new heights, transforming Lubavitch from a small, rather insular, Brooklyn-based sect into a powerful, well-endowed, and well-oiled international religious movement with branches in almost every city, town, and hamlet in the world in which there are Jews. It is estimated that Habad-sponsored programs currently reach more than a quarter of a million Jews worldwide (Fishkoff 2003; Feldman 2003).

Schneerson’s success in expanding Habad Hasidism was largely due to his willingness to enlist modern technology and social theory in the service of a premodern mystical theology, as well as his refusal to exclude any Jews—no matter how geographically or religiously distant—from his vision. Unlike most other Hasidic leaders, who have insisted on sealing their adherents off from every aspect of American life to ensure their piety, Schneerson was never intimidated by modernity. Unique among Hasidic leaders

in having received a higher secular education—in philosophy at the University of Berlin and mechanical engineering at the Université de Paris—before being appointed Rebbe, Schneerson directed his followers to establish a major presence on all the major American university campuses through the creation of Habad Houses. These campus outposts offer courses in basic Judaism and Hasidism in addition to providing college students with kosher meals and a variety of religious, social, and psychological services.

Schneerson’s pragmatism and his activist approach have inspired the Lubavitchers to develop an effective network of *shluchim* (emissaries), dispatched from the sect’s Brooklyn headquarters to disseminate Habad doctrine throughout America. The *shluchim* are today a highly visible presence in dozens of cities, spreading Hasidism from their “mitzvah-mobiles,” Habad’s trademark Winnebago synagogues-on-wheels, on hundreds of America’s main streets.

Long before Schneerson died in 1994, the majority of his followers had become possessed by the belief that he was the Jews’ long-awaited Messiah. When he passed away without having groomed an heir, and after many years of Messianic preaching followed by a four-year, stroke-induced silence, many observers predicted that the Lubavitch community would either be torn asunder between majority *Moshiakhists* (messianists) and the small number of more rational Lubavitchers who accepted the rebbe’s death, or that the *Moshiakhists*’ faith would not be able to survive the trauma of their “savior’s” death.

Despite these dire predictions and a clear ideological split within the community, and despite the absence of a new Rebbe, Habad/Lubavitch has continued to flourish during the decade since Schneerson’s death. More than one hundred new Habad synagogues and campus Habad Houses have been established, including multimillion-dollar facilities in Bal Harbor (Florida), Las Vegas, Pittsburgh, San Diego, Washington D.C., and Tenafly. During this same period, more modest Habad centers have been established in such far-flung Jewish communities as Anchorage, Des Moines, El Paso, and Little Rock. The Habad population continues to grow, thanks to its high birthrate and the continued attraction of “*ba’alei teshuva*” (“returnees”) responding to Habad’s outreach work across the land.

The spread of Habad influence is not entirely unproblematic, as it has created many religious and political challenges to the American Jewish establishment. Perhaps the

most conspicuous example is the Jewish First Amendment debate triggered by the array of Hannukah *menorahs* that the Lubavitchers annually erect in prominent public places throughout America, including the White House lawn. Though these religious displays have been challenged by many established Jewish organizations, such as the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress, and by prominent Jewish communal leaders and scholars as a breach of the constitutional “wall of separation” between religion and state, this has not deterred the Lubavitchers. Additionally, Habad’s support of the far right in Israel, rooted in Schneerson’s long-standing opposition to ceding so much as an inch of Israel’s territory to the Palestinians, has created significant tensions with the American Jewish establishment as well as successive Israeli governments.

As the menorah campaign and other Habad initiatives (such as the Lubavitchers’ vocal advocacy of prayer in public schools and their opposition to the legalization of abortion in America) indicate, the Lubavitchers have no regard for secular American values, but at the same time do not shy away from using any contemporary political device at their disposal to help advance their evangelical, politically rightist agenda.

In 1986, the Lubavitchers’ evangelical passion and desire to make American society more religious reached unprecedented levels, as the Rebbe initiated a campaign of religious proselytizing to the gentiles to ensure their observance of the seven Noahide laws, which are binding upon all gentiles. This new religious universalism, unheard of in traditional Judaism since biblical times, largely explains Habad’s use of such non-Jewish venues as public access cable television, highway billboards, and full-page ads in the *New York Times* to promote its agenda.

Habad’s apparent modernity, its high-profile evangelism, its striking messianic claims about Rabbi Schneerson, and its outspoken support of the political far right in Israel have all been the source of contempt for the group on the part of America’s more conservative Hasidic communities, most notably the largest and most religiously extreme sect, Satmar.

## Satmar

Unlike Habad, with its long history and distinctive mystical teachings, Satmar Hasidism—notorious for its open

hostility to Zionism and the State of Israel—is a relatively new movement forged largely by one man, Rabbi Joel Moshe Teitelbaum (1888–1979). Satmar Hasidism was established only in 1928, when Teitelbaum left his native town of Sighet in Carpathian Ruthenia to become the rabbi of the small Romanian city of Satu Mare (Satmar). The rapid rise, catastrophic destruction, and spectacular postwar growth of the Satmar sect are all the result of Teitelbaum’s personal charisma, political leadership, and strong survivalist instincts in the face of the most tumultuous and tragic era of Hasidism’s history.

While the majority of Hungarian Hasidim were killed during the Holocaust, a larger percentage of them survived than did the Polish, Belorussian, and Galician Hasidim, for the deportations of Hungarian Jewry to the concentration camps did not begin until May 1944, almost five years after the deadly persecutions had begun against the Jews of Poland. In December 1944, while his Hasidim were being rounded up by the Nazis, mostly for deportation to Auschwitz, the Satmar Rebbe escaped from the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp to Palestine, ironically enough on the transport arranged by the Zionist leader Rudolf Kastner.

In 1947 Teitelbaum left Jerusalem, where he had become one of the leaders of the radically anti-Zionist Neturei Karta sect, and settled in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. There he found a tiny Hasidic community of fewer than a hundred families. Most were Hungarian and Czechoslovakian survivors from a variety of prewar sects whose rebbes had perished in the camps. Teitelbaum immediately filled the vacuum of religious leadership to become the spiritual leader of these orphaned Hasidim. He was single-minded in his determination that Hasidic life would flourish in America exactly as it had in pre-Holocaust Europe, and he quickly established a Satmar synagogue, *yeshiva*, *mikvah* (ritual bath), kosher slaughterhouse, and *matzah* bakery, as well as a large charitable foundation devoted to helping Jewish refugees settle in his community.

Teitelbaum’s success in re-creating Satmar Hasidism in the new land exceeded all expectations. From the few hundred Hasidic families that Teitelbaum found in 1947, the Satmar community of Williamsburg today numbers almost 40,000 (Mintz 1992). In 1974 the Satmars established a satellite suburban center adjacent to the town of Monroe in Rockland County, New York, named Kiryas Joel in honor of the Rebbe. Although it began with just a few

dozen families, Kiryas Joel today has a population rapidly approaching 20,000 (Mintz 1992) and is the location of Satmar's central yeshiva. There are also smaller but not insignificant Satmar communities in Boro Park, Los Angeles, Montreal, London, and Antwerp.

Beyond his energy and talent for leadership, the key to Teitelbaum's success was his zealous resistance to any innovations or changes in the traditional way of life of his Hasidim. Satmar remains the most segregationist and ultraconservative of Hasidic sects, having remained hermetically sealed from all aspects of modern society other than those necessary for financial support.

The Satmar Rebbe was most notorious for his fierce struggle against Zionism, the inheritance of pre-Holocaust Hungarian Jewish ultra-Orthodoxy. The extent of the Satmar Rebbe's impermeability to the cataclysmic events of Jewish history in recent decades was remarkable. The eradication of Hasidic life in Eastern Europe and the subsequent rise of the State of Israel had a devastating, transformative effect on many religious leaders who had previously opposed any secular political solution to the "Jewish problem," that is, Zionism. But the trauma of the Holocaust and emergence of Israel, while converting most of these prewar Orthodox opponents of Zionism, had absolutely no effect on Joel Teitelbaum. He remained steadfast in his commitment to the old passive political posture of East European Jewry. Moreover, with each of Zionism's successes, his opposition to it became fiercer. In response to Israel's dramatic victory in the June 1967 Six Day War, Teitelbaum wrote an angry polemical tract entitled *Al ha-Geulah ve-al ha-Temurah (On the Redemption and Its Displacement)*, in which he argued that the Israeli military victory was a cosmic catastrophe engineered by Satan himself. The Satmar Rebbe's insistence on maintaining the prewar strategy of isolation from the outside world and his demonization of Zionism have not, however, hampered the growth of Satmar Hasidism, which today has far more adherents than before the Holocaust.

Thanks to the prominent role of charitable giving in the Satmar community, it is exceptionally well organized, boasting myriad institutions that see to the welfare of each and every member. These include a very effective refugee assistance board, a fund for those in need of food for the Sabbath, a highly subsidized kosher meat market, and a medical fund providing full health coverage for the needy.

The United Jewish Organizations (UJO) of Williamsburg, established as an intercommunal institution in 1966 by the Satmar Rebbe's right-hand man, Rabbi Lipa Friedman, today assists many other Hasidic sects while remaining firmly under Satmar control. The UJO is concerned with the community's economic and social well-being and has succeeded in attracting federal funding for increased housing subsidies for the Hasidic community. It negotiates the very tense relations with Williamsburg's majority Latino community, with whom the Hasidim are in fierce competition for the neighborhood's scarce housing and social services.

The Satmar community is also remarkable in the way it safeguards the physical needs of its members. The *Hatzolah* ambulance network, while today serving Jews and gentiles in all five boroughs of New York City, was originally established by Satmar in Williamsburg to serve the needs of ultra-Orthodox who spoke little English. The *Shomrim* is an all-Hasidic security patrol that has developed a reputation for swift and tough justice.

Despite its deep isolationism, the one realm in which Satmar has maintained a high and aggressive public profile is its opposition to Zionism and the State of Israel. To the dismay of most American Jews, the Satmar Hasidim regularly engage in public protests against Israel, issue press releases, and take out prominent advertisements denouncing Zionism. The Satmar Hasidim also frequently battle the other major Hasidic sects, most notably Lubavitch and Belz, both of whom R. Joel Teitelbaum accused of modernist tendencies and Zionist sympathies.

The Satmar Rebbe died in August 1979 and was succeeded by his nephew, Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum (b. 1915), who had previously served as the Sigheter Rebbe in Boro Park. He possessed neither the scholarship nor the personal charisma of his uncle, and the Satmar community began to experience numerous dissensions, which would have been unimaginable during the iron-fisted reign of R. Joel. A number of Satmar Hasidim refused to accept the new rebbe and pledged their allegiance instead to the late rebbe's widow, Feiga Shapiro, who resides in Kiryas Joel. Due to R. Moshe Teitelbaum's recent failing health, the Satmar community has become bitterly divided between the followers of his two sons, R. Aharon of Kiryas Joel and his younger brother, R. Zalman Leib of Williamsburg. Over the past decade, there have been numerous theological and civic disputes between the two brothers' followers,

occasionally resulting in violence. There are even two competing Satmar Yiddish weekly newspapers, both published in Brooklyn: *Der Yid*, which supports R. Zalman Leib, and *Der Blatt*, which endorses R. Aharon's leadership. Despite these divisions, the Satmar community continues to thrive in apparently blissful isolation from the rest of American Jewry.

### **Boro Park and the Bobover Hasidim**

The third-largest American Hasidic sect after Satmar and Lubavitch is Bobov, based in Boro Park, Brooklyn. As with Satmar, the Bobover sect is considerably larger today than it was before the Holocaust. Bobover Hasidism was founded by R. Shlomo (b. Meir Nathan) Halberstam (1847–1905), who established a major Hasidic Court and Yeshiva in the Galician town of Bobowa. His son, R. Bentzion Halberstam (1874–1944), was a popular Hasidic leader who continued to oversee the growth of Bobover Hasidism in Galicia until he and almost all his followers perished in the Holocaust. R. Bentzion's son, R. Shlomo Halberstam (1908–2000), was the sole survivor of the family and was appointed Rebbe after the war. In the early 1950s, together with the very few other survivors of prewar Bobov, he took on the daunting task of establishing the first sect of Polish Hasidim in America. The Bobovers were initially based in Crown Heights, but in 1966, responding to deteriorating urban conditions, the Bobover community relocated to Boro Park. R. Shlomo Halberstam was succeeded by his son, R. Naftali Halberstam, who passed away in 2005. His succession is being contested by his son R. Benzion Halberstam and his two nephews, R. Mordechai Unger and R. Yehoshua Rubin.

From fewer than 100 families in the early 1950s, the sect has grown to include some 10,000 adherents (Mintz 1992). Hundreds of Jews continue to gravitate to Bobov each year. Two key factors explain the rapid growth of Bobover Hasidism: the charismatic personality of the late Rebbe, R. Shlomo, and the impressive Bobover educational system he created. In rather sharp contrast to the Satmar Rebbe, whose religious extremism and isolationist vigilance kept his community intact, the source of Rabbi Shlomo Halberstam's wide appeal was his friendly, open, and relaxed demeanor, as well as his religious moderation and studious avoidance of partisan religious politics. The

Bobover attitude to Zionism and the State of Israel is a case in point. Although he was no Zionist, the Bobover Rebbe was careful never to attack Israel publicly. He was equally cautious in his attitude toward other Hasidic sects. For example, while the Bobover Rebbe disapproved of the Lubavitchers' crowning of Rabbi Menachem Schneerson as the Messiah, he refused to comment publicly on the subject, again in contrast to the open Satmar hostility to Lubavitch messianism. For many ultra-Orthodox Jews, tired of the intrigues and dissension that have plagued Hasidic life in America, the temperate Rabbi Halberstam proved to be a highly attractive leader. They therefore chose to affiliate with his court and send their children to Bobover educational institutions.

The Bobover educational network is another major factor in the growth of Bobov. The network Yeshivas and girls' schools operated by the sect quickly earned a reputation for high educational standards, leading hundreds of Hasidim from other sects, as well as many non-Hasidic Jews, to enroll their children. Very often, the children's educational experiences forged a family connection to the school's sponsoring institution and ultimately to the Bobover Rebbe himself. A major attraction of the Bobover educational philosophy to non-Hasidic parents is that, unlike other Hasidic sects, which categorically prohibit college education for their yeshiva graduates, the Bobover Rebbe tended to allow his followers to attend university in pursuit of practical disciplines that would enhance their financial security. Far from leading to assimilation and attrition as many stricter Hasidic leaders feared, this openness has actually strengthened and enriched the Bobover community. For, unlike more obscurantist Hasidic sects, the Bobovers today have their own homegrown lawyers, doctors, dentists, and architects who contribute significantly to raising the community's economic standards.

In addition to Bobov, there are about thirty smaller Hasidic groups active in Boro Park, most with their own Rebbes, synagogues, and Yeshivot. They include Amshinover, Belzer, Bostoner, Boyaner, Bialer, Gerer, Klauzenberger, Munkatcher, Rizhiner, Sigheter, Spinker, Stoliner-Karliner, and Vishnitzer Hasidim. The Council of Jewish Organizations of Boro Park (COJO), founded in 1972, represents almost two hundred religious, educational, and social institutions—the majority of which are under Hasidic auspices.

## The Skverer Hasidim and Squaretown

One of the important disciples of the Magid of Mezeritch was R. Nahum Twersky of Tchernobil (1730–1798). His paternal descendants all became Hasidic Rebbes in a number of Ukrainian towns, the two most important being Talne and Skvira. The Talner and Skverer Hasidic sects were almost completely wiped out by the Nazis. But the Talner Rebbe, Meshulam Zushe Twersky (d. 1972), left Europe before the rise of Nazism and settled in the Boston neighborhood of Roxbury, where he established a small *shtiebel* (private prayer-house). After his death, his son, Professor Isadore Twersky (1930–1997) of Harvard University’s Jewish Studies Program, officiated at the Talner shtiebel, which had been relocated to the suburb of Brookline. Isadore Twersky’s son, R. Meir, currently serves as the Talner Rebbe of Boston. But the members of Boston’s small “Talner shtiebel” are more likely to be Modern Orthodox philosophers and mathematicians than Hasidim.

One of Meshulam Zushe Twersky’s cousins, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Twersky, the Skverer Rebbe, came to New York after the war along with a handful of Hasidic survivors. The Skverer Rebbe was disheartened by the urban profanities and material temptations of New York City and yearned to re-create in America a rural, *shtetl*-like setting reminiscent of Skvira and more conducive to a life of piety. His Hasidim purchased several acres of farmland near Ramapo, New York, in 1954. The first sixty Hasidic families moved to the new settlement in 1958, and three years later—after numerous feuds over zoning and school board regulations with both the Jewish and gentile residents of neighboring Ramapo—the state Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Hasidim’s request to incorporate the Hasidic village of New Square.

Despite its deep poverty (since the late 1960s, New Square has consistently had the lowest per capita income of any township in New York State), zoning conflicts that have hindered its development, and the death of the charismatic Skverer Rebbe in 1968, the community has grown impressively under the leadership of R. Yaakov Yosef’s son, R. Dovid Twersky. It has a large yeshiva and girls’ school, and an impressive Kolel (advanced yeshiva for married students). Today there are close to 600 families, with an average of eight children per family: in other words, a community of almost 6,000 ([www.city-data.com/city/New-Square-New-York.html](http://www.city-data.com/city/New-Square-New-York.html)). New Square, New York, today has more Skverer Hasidim than ever lived in Skvira, Ukraine.

What is truly unique about New Square is the remarkable extent to which the dream of the old Skverer Rebbe has been realized: namely, to re-create the ambience of the prewar European Hasidic shtetl (Jewish village) in America. Unlike Satmar, the Hasidim of New Square are not politicized and do not publish in (or, for the most part, even read) the press. Radios, televisions, video recorders, and the Internet are absolutely banned from the town. A visit to New Square is the closest one can come to fathoming the vanished world of prewar European Hasidic life.

## Hasidic Congregations outside New York City

Although New York was and remains the center of Hasidism in the United States, several Hasidic rabbis are functioning in other American cities. Though some are rabbis of sizable congregations, none of them has a genuinely Hasidic following of any significance. Moreover, over the past fifty years many small Hasidic synagogues around the country—in such cities as Detroit, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh—have closed, and the few followers of these Rebbes have tended to assimilate into the local non-Hasidic community or have gravitated to New York’s Hasidic centers. The main reason for the decline of Hasidism outside New York has been the inability of these small enclaves to maintain Hasidic schools and other essential religious institutions.

Despite the disappearance of most of these smaller Hasidic communities, there remain several interesting congregations led by American Hasidic rabbis. Unlike the highly autonomous New York Hasidic world, the rabbis of these smaller congregations are, as a rule, far more integrated into the local mainstream Jewish community and tend to participate more actively in public Jewish affairs. They have little choice, since, possessing little more than a modest synagogue, they depend on the broader Jewish community for almost all of their religious and social services.

## The Bostoner Rebbe

The oldest and most significant of these Hasidic congregations outside New York, both numerically and in terms of its impact on the broader Jewish community, is Congregation Beth Pinchas in Brookline, Massachusetts. The congregation, which is also known as the New England

Hasidic Center, was originally founded in 1916 in Boston's West End (today, Government Center) by Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz, who immigrated to Boston from Palestine in 1914 and soon became known as the Bostoner Rebbe. Pinchas Horowitz was the first Hasidic Rebbe whose jurisdiction began in and was named after an American city. While in the West End, it was always a very modest congregation, with no more than fifty members. As the prospects for maintaining Hasidic life in Boston's inner city continued to diminish, Rabbi Horowitz left for New York in 1940 with his family and followers, where he died two years later. Although his elder son, Rabbi Moshe Horowitz, assumed the role of Bostoner Rebbe in Brooklyn, the few remaining, elderly Hasidim in Boston appointed his younger brother, Levi Yitzchok, to be their spiritual leader.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Horowitz returned to Boston in 1945 and pioneered a rejuvenation of Hasidic life there. In 1961, he moved his congregation from the declining neighborhood of Dorchester to larger quarters in the heavily Jewish suburb of Brookline and began to attract more members. The Boston-born Levi Yitzchok quickly earned a very positive reputation as a charming, genuinely spiritual, and deeply caring rabbi, and the majority of his Brookline congregation soon consisted of *ba'alei teshuva* (returnees) to Hasidism from the non-Orthodox and modern Orthodox communities.

The Bostoner Rebbe has made good spiritual use of Boston's two greatest human resources: students and doctors. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Bostoner Rebbe attracted hundreds of students from the Boston area's many colleges and universities. Special weekend *shabbaton* programs were aimed specifically at the city's unusually large Jewish student population. One of the most important communal services of the New England Hasidic Center is a medical referral and assistance agency known as ROFEH (Hebrew for "doctor"; English acronym for "Reaching Out Furnishing Emergency Healthcare"). Through this agency, the Bostoner Rebbe helps needy Jews who require specialized medical attention at one of Boston's famous hospitals, with referrals, hospitality, kosher meals, and financial assistance.

Despite the Bostoner Rebbe's impressive achievements as a religious and communal leader, his core community remains quite small. There are fewer than one hundred families in the Beth Pinchas congregation. Moreover, despite its official Hasidic affiliation, the majority of these

members are not true Hasidim but mainstream Orthodox Jews who identify to varying degrees with the Hasidic warmth of the Bostoner Rebbe's congregation.

## The Hornosteipler Rebbes of Milwaukee and Denver

The Orthodox Jewish community of Milwaukee was for many years led by the Hornosteipler Rebbe, Yaakov Israel Twerski, a cousin of the Skverer Rebbe. With his death in 1973, his son, Rabbi Michel Twerski, inherited the Hornosteipler community's leadership and has overseen its gradual growth. R. Michel Twerski's educational background and personal style have enabled him to retain the allegiance of the entire Orthodox Jewish community of Milwaukee, which consists mostly of non-Hasidim. From 1956 to 1961, he studied at the famous *mitnagdic* Yeshiva, Beth Midrash Gevohah, in Lakewood, New Jersey, where he was ordained by R. Aaron Kotler. In his own style of religious leadership and in fashioning Milwaukee's Orthodox community, he has retained elements of both the Hasidic and *mitnagdic* worlds.

Twerski is one of the founders of the city's most important educational institutions: the Yeshiva Elementary School, the Mesivta Yeshiva Gedolah of Milwaukee (a high school), and the Milwaukee Kotel (for advanced Talmudic studies). His own congregation, Beth Jehudah, also known as the Hornosteipler Shul, has about two hundred members. As is the case with the Bostoner Rebbe, very few of his congregants lead fully Hasidic lives. Another, slightly smaller Hornosteipler Hasidic community in Denver, Colorado, is led by his cousin, Rabbi Mordechai Twerski, another "modern Hasidic" rebbe who is deeply involved in general Jewish community affairs. As in Milwaukee, the vast majority of Hornosteipler Hasidim in Denver do not lead fully Hasidic lives. The nature of the Hasidic communities of these two cities serves as a reminder of the extent to which authentic Hasidic life in America today is almost entirely restricted to New York.

## Women in Hasidic Communities

The role of women in Hasidic communities is almost entirely limited to their domestic duties as wives, mothers, and homemakers. Given the Hasidim's unusually high fertility rate and their ultraconservatism regarding the Jewish

laws of sexual modesty that require the strict public separation of men and women, this could hardly be otherwise. The most important public rituals of Hasidic religious life all take place in the rebbe's court, where only males congregate during the Sabbath and holiday prayers and communal meals. In fact, according to the eminent Jewish social historian Jacob Katz in his classic work *Tradition and Crisis*, the emergence of Hasidism in the mid-eighteenth century originally had a seriously disruptive effect on traditional Jewish family life in Eastern Europe, as thousands of Hasidic men, along with their mature (post-bar mitzvah age) sons, began to journey what were often great distances to spend the Sabbath and Jewish holidays with their rebbes, leaving the women and girls at home.

The only time Hasidic women have any direct contact with the rebbe is during specially arranged, individual meetings, which are typically scheduled for Saturday night after the end of the Jewish Sabbath. A notable exception to this pattern was the innovative practice of the previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of meeting periodically in the central Habad synagogue in Brooklyn with hundreds of members of the women's organization N'shai U-Neshot Habad (the Wives and Women of Habad) during its quarterly conferences. The Lubavitcher Rebbe also approved of greater Torah study for women, for which he was roundly criticized by the late Satmar Rebbe, Joel Teitelbaum, and the Belzer Rebbe, Yis-sachar Dov Rokeach.

## Education

Today, the curriculum at most Hasidic Yeshivot is largely indistinguishable from that of traditional non-Hasidic Orthodox, or mitnagdic, Yeshivot, where the focus is almost exclusively on Torah (with the classical rabbinic commentaries), Mishnah, and Talmud. There is very little formal instruction in the classical, esoteric Hasidic mystical texts, which are mainly studied by adults or by yeshiva students under careful adult supervision, during the Sabbath and holiday afternoons. Hasidic girls' schools offer a more limited curriculum of religious studies in which only those aspects of Jewish law (*halakha*) relevant to women (e.g., the laws of *kashrut*, child-rearing, and ritual purity) are taught. A notable exception is the curriculum in the Habad network of Yeshivot, known as Tomchei Temimim (Supporters of the Pure), where there is a strong emphasis on the

study of *Likkutei Amarim: Tanya*, the work of Hasidism by the Habad founder, R. Shneur Zalman of Lyadi, and where girls are taught classical Jewish texts such as Torah and Mishnah. For the purposes of governmental accreditation by the states' departments of education, the minimally mandated curriculum of general studies is offered at all Hasidic schools but is usually treated perfunctorily.

## Occupations

Because university education is generally proscribed in Hasidic society, very few Hasidim work in the legal, medical, or scientific professions. A notable exception is to be found among adult *ba'alei teshuva* (returnees) to Hasidism, many of whom are professionals and academics. Also, there are a significant number of university-trained members of the Bobover Hasidic community due to the Bobover Rebbe's more lenient attitude toward university education. Most Hasidic men work in a variety of retail businesses, and a large number are shop proprietors in Hasidic neighborhoods. The Hasidim are very highly represented in the diamond and clothing industries in New York City. However, since the high-tech revolution, many Hasidim have entered almost all aspects of the computer industry, and quite a few have made significant fortunes in computer programming as well as hardware and software manufacturing and retailing.

## Conclusion

By all social, demographic, and religious indicators, the Hasidim in America constitute a secure and growing community in a country that only a generation ago was considered completely inhospitable to traditional Judaism. Unlike the mainstream American Jewish community, the Hasidim are not confronted with the specter of diminishing numbers in their ranks due to increasing levels of assimilation and intermarriage. To the contrary: attrition from the Hasidic community is far less common today than it was just twenty years ago.

Although the exact number of Hasidim—who are notoriously mistrustful of polls and who generally refuse to count their own numbers in accordance with a halakhic prohibition against “counting the heads of the children of Israel”—is very difficult to ascertain with any measure of precision, it is generally estimated that there are today

more than 200,000 Hasidic Jews in the United States, the large majority residing in the New York tri-state area. The remarkable growth of the American Hasidic Jewish community since the end of World War II has defied the expectations of almost all Jewish historians, sociologists, and demographers. Given the unusually high Hasidic fertility rate, the young age of Hasidic marriages, and the very low rate of attrition from the Hasidic community—all contrasted with the diminishing general American Jewish population—the proportion of Hasidim in American Jewry will grow exponentially for the foreseeable future, as the Hasidim remain its fastest-growing sector.

Allan Nadler

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## Women in the Development of American Judaism

In the years since the ordination of the first American woman rabbi in 1972, female access to religious leadership has brought far-reaching change to American Jewish religious and cultural life. Opening the male club of the rabinate brought forth a revolution of increased participation, the impact of which extends well beyond the relatively small number of women who have become rabbis or cantors. Changing ideas and expectations for women have opened new possibilities in every American Jewish denomination. Women have found a place in the once male-dominated arena of public Jewish worship through the creation of new ceremonies (such as baby naming), the adaptation of existing ceremonies (such as adult *bat mitzvah*), and the revival of traditional female ceremonies that had fallen into disuse (such as celebrating the new moon). Moreover, when women rabbis broke open men's control of Jewish spiritual leadership, they expanded access to Jewish leadership and learning for both men and women. As striking as these changes have been, they do not represent a new pattern in American Judaism. In fact, much of the growth and development of the American Jewish community over the last two hundred years has been keyed to women's evolving religious roles.

Historically, female Jewish religiosity has been most actively identified with home observance. Myriad rituals and practices that are critical to traditional Jewish life—from marital purity, to the laws of *kashruth*, to preparing holiday meals—fell within the purview of women. Overall, although a minority of American Jews have always maintained strict standards of personal observance, American Jewish life has been marked by laxity in religious observance, with mainly symbolic attention accorded Jewish law and life. In every era, however, women's choices, particularly among immigrants, have greatly influenced the varied levels of personal observance main-

tained by Jewish families; but that impact is difficult to isolate and evaluate.

Although public Jewish worship has not traditionally been associated with female religiosity, careful study reveals that many key transitions that defined a distinctly American Judaism have been related to women's changing roles within the synagogue. Change came early. Colonial American churches did not have to be bastions of gender equality to frame a critical perspective on women's place in colonial American synagogues. In a society that emphasized the centrality of piety and a religious nature to respectable female identity, American Jews quickly came to understand that perceptions of women's place in public worship would greatly influence how others would judge their religious tradition. Accordingly, transformations in women's place within the synagogue emerged early on in American Jewish experience.

In traditional European synagogues, women sat in balconies, separated from the male-led service by latticed, curtained, or grilled barriers. Unmarried women hardly ever attended regular worship services, and married women generally did so only on Saturday mornings. A shift in this pattern and in religious identity for American Jewish women found physical expression as early as 1763 with the dedication of the second synagogue built in what later became the United States. In the Newport, Rhode Island, synagogue, women sat behind a low balustrade, free of the opaque barriers of the European sanctuaries. This innovation was replicated in subsequent early American synagogues in Charleston (1794), New York (1818), and Philadelphia (1824).

This shift in gallery design combines with other evidence to suggest that, by the mid-eighteenth century, synagogue attendance had become important to both married and unmarried American Jewish women, and that male synagogue leaders were conscious of the need to reframe women's status in public worship. By the nineteenth century, expectations of women's presence within the synagogue had become an established pattern, as women began to incorporate a sense of themselves as synagogue-goers into their self-identity. Eventually, continuing adjustments to the gallery were no longer sufficient to address women's growing attendance or societal expectations that a woman's religious nature should be evident through her presence in the church as well as through her piety in the home. Ultimately, the American synagogue had to be re-

configured in order to address the changing ways in which women were expressing their Jewish identity.

In 1851 a breakaway Albany congregation, led by reformer Isaac Mayer Wise, introduced family synagogue pews. The congregation chose not to add balconies when they moved into a former church building but simply adopted the existing design. Three years later, the Emanu-El Congregation in New York also adopted the existing family pews of the church building that they were converting to synagogue use. These pews were one component of a wide range of revisions to traditional practices introduced at Temple Emanu-El, which quickly became an influential national model of a reformed and Americanized Judaism. Significantly, all the Emanu-El reforms in 1854 replicated the efforts of German Jewish reformers except the introduction of mixed seating, which remained an exclusively American innovation until well into the twentieth century.

By the late 1860s and the 1870s, family pews became requisite features both in the Reform temples that were emerging as the dominant religious institution of America's acculturated Jewish population and in the more traditional synagogues that are now seen as the pioneers of the Conservative movement. Even those (Sephardic) synagogues that saw themselves as Americanized guardians of Jewish orthodoxy had to withstand internal campaigns to seat women next to men. In resisting this pressure, these synagogues established that one of the defining divisions between American Orthodox Judaism and more liberal movements would be measured by women's place in the synagogue.

Although family pews seemed to imply a new equality between male and female congregants, they did not actually confer any additional religious agency upon women. As weakly educated male congregants became less participatory in synagogue ritual, and their role as worshippers was greatly devalued, women gained a sort of equality with men. Still, offered a place in the sanctuary, women, in a departure from the traditional pattern of synagogue worship, quickly came to dominate attendance at weekly Sabbath services. It took the arrival during the 1880s and 1890s of the first wave of what would be more than 2 million Russian and Eastern European Jewish immigrants, however, to spark a public activism among these acculturated women that would once again enable them to redefine their communities.

Immigrant aid work opened new public roles for acculturated Jewish women of all religious tendencies. Many soon turned their newly established public identities to the needs of their own synagogue communities. Congregations led by male rabbis and male boards began to draw upon women's groups to attend to the physical, charitable, and social needs of the community. The activation of female energy for the benefit of the congregation was a critical component of an effort to extend the synagogue sphere beyond the elegant and formal worship service. This expansion led to another wave of synagogue building in the 1890s and the early twentieth century. These large synagogue complexes were intended not only to frame respectable Jewish worship but also to house the variegated institutional life that women's activism made possible.

As existing synagogues expanded, new immigrants established communities of their own. Chief among the adjustments many faced was the need to resolve the tensions between accustomed ritual observance and a setting that undermined traditional practice. Many women in the immigrant communities continued to take quite seriously their responsibilities for seeing to the ritual observance of their families. This was evidenced by a series of sometimes violent kosher meat boycotts in several cities, in which women, in their role as household managers, rebelled against steep increases in the price of kosher meat. In general, mothers' choices about household observance helped to determine which of the many available religious paths were taken by other family members.

The earliest worship settings created by Jewish immigrants in this era were notable for their exclusion of women. Storefront *shuls* gathered men connected by kinship and region of origin for the purposes of worship, sociability, and mutual aid, and generally excluded women. As soon as some of these smaller assemblies gathered together for the purpose of creating larger synagogue edifices, however, organizers understood that, to attract more members, they would have to incorporate women and children. Their grand immigrant synagogues boasted large women's galleries, preserving the traditional separation of men and women but conveying an understanding that, in America, women were expected to be present and seen in the synagogue.

As Jews began to move beyond their initial immigrant neighborhoods, many sought Americanized synagogues that no longer reflected regional European differences.

This usually meant joining the emerging Conservative movement, which attempted to serve a traditionally inclined community that lacked extensive Hebraic knowledge and preferred rabbis without thick European accents. These synagogues adopted mixed seating as a key marker separating them both from the Old World and the immigrant ghetto. One key aspect of Americanized synagogues, whether Reform, Conservative, or Orthodox, was the role of women's groups in shaping and facilitating sociability within their congregations. The Conservative movement's National Women's League, under the leadership of Mathilda Schechter, was created in 1918, five years (to the day) after the creation of the Reform movement's National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. An Orthodox counterpart was created in 1926. These organizations coordinated the work of local groups that were fundamental to shaping their communities and defining Jewish women's public roles. Sisterhoods chose synagogue decor, created communal events, and by teaching, organizing, and fund-raising supported Jewish education both locally and nationally. Conservative and Orthodox sisterhood efforts also focused on encouraging and training women to preserve traditional Jewish ritual within their homes.

During World War II, as in many communities during World War I, sisterhoods helped Jewish women formalize their contributions to the war efforts—through knitting, baking cookies, organizing blood banks, selling bonds, and resettling Jewish refugees, among other activities. In the postwar years, women's work facilitated a period of great energy in synagogue organizational life, both in older urban settings and in creating new frameworks for community in the suburbs. Moreover, sisterhoods played a major role in shaping the child-centered focus of many of these congregations during the 1950s and 1960s.

Thus, for decades, twentieth-century sisterhood women sustained much of the communal, social, and practical aspects of American Jewish congregational life. This tradition of intense involvement and support led to calls for recognition of women's religious voice, participation, and leadership. Sisterhood Sabbaths, for instance, introduced by the Reform movement in the early 1920s, created an annual venue where, in many communities, women created and conducted liturgy and delivered sermons. The growth of religious education for girls did even more to raise questions about the religious involvement of the women they would become. The bat mitzvah, a

counterpart to the coming-of-age ritual for boys, was first introduced in 1922 when Jewish Reconstructionism founder Mordecai Kaplan asked his twelve-year-old daughter to read from (a printed text of) the Torah during Shabbat services. Bat mitzvah ceremonies—usually Friday-night variants of the Torah service led by *bar mitzvah* boys on Saturday morning—had taken hold in one-third of Conservative congregations by 1948 and grew more common through the 1950s (Schwartz 1997). Reform temples remained committed to the gender equality supposedly implicit in the group confirmation ceremony, but as bar mitzvah celebrations became more prevalent in Reform communities, confirmation seemed to become a girls' ritual. By the 1960s, however, bat mitzvah rituals had become more common in Reform congregations. After World War II, the growing Conservative and Reform camp movements also reinforced the importance of the participation of girls as well as boys. Orthodox communities, too, placed an increased emphasis on female education, symbolized by the inauguration of Stern College as a women's college within Orthodoxy's Yeshiva University in 1954, indicating a meaningful commitment to giving women access to serious Jewish study.

As the presumption of equality in religious education became more common and as American society became more attuned to issues of gender equality, questions began to arise about Judaism's complete denial of female access to formal religious leadership. With the rise of the feminist movement, the idea of distinctive rituals marking the religious obligations of boys and girls, or men and women, became increasingly untenable within the liberal movements. By the mid-1970s, a Saturday morning bat mitzvah service, identical in its requirements with the ceremony held for boys, was in place in many Reform and Conservative congregations.

Progress toward equality for women in the Reform and Conservative movements moved in fits and starts through the 1950s and 1960s, as the larger society became more engaged in questions of women's equality. Conservative leaders in the early 1950s attempted to mitigate the destructive impact of traditional Jewish divorce laws, which could leave women deserted by their husbands unable to remarry. In 1955, they voted to allow women the honor of being called to bless the Torah (*aliyot*), although this practice found expression in very few synagogues. In the Reform movement, the 1950s saw efforts to affirm women's

religious leadership, and in a few communities qualified women took on the role of spiritual leader. Sally Priesand came to Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in 1964 with every intention of becoming a rabbi. Finding support from the school's president, Nelson Glueck, she persevered in her studies and was ordained as the first American woman rabbi in 1972. The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College ordained its first woman rabbi, Sandy Sasso, in 1974. Barbara Ostfeld Horowitz became the first seminary-trained woman invested as a cantor by HUC-JIR in 1975.

The Conservative movement also felt the impact of societal feminism. In 1972, an activist group of young Conservative women calling themselves *Ezrat Nashim* challenged the Conservative rabbinate to bring true gender equity to the Conservative community. Change did occur: between 1972 and 1976, the percentage of Conservative congregations offering women aliyot went from 7 percent to 50 percent (Schwartz 1997). Questions of women's rabbinic leadership, however, brought forth intense internal conflict as some struggled to find a Jewish legal argument that would sanction women's religious leadership and others battled the great symbolic departure from traditional Judaism that women rabbis would represent. Following community-wide discussion, the faculty of the movement's Jewish Theological Seminary approved the ordination of women in 1983. Amy Eilberg became the first Conservative woman rabbi in 1985.

These pioneering steps in allowing women to take on the most prominent roles of Jewish religious leadership have had profound symbolic and practical implications for every variety of Judaism, reconfiguring expectations of what women should be allowed and encouraged to do. The last thirty years have brought a transformation across the religious spectrum of observance and belief, keyed, as so often in the nineteenth century, to accommodating changed notions of women as religious actors. The introduction of female religious leadership in the liberal denominations has led to significant changes in style, tone, organization, and experience of congregational life. Sally Priesand's ordination has been followed by more than seven hundred female ordinations in the mainstream movements. The leadership of these women has influenced tendencies ranging from a deepening emphasis on spirituality, a turn to the healing possibilities of Jewish tradition, challenges to continued exclusions within Jewish tradition

and life such as those against gays and lesbians, and a general democratization of access to ritual participation, education, and religious authority.

Orthodox congregations continue to exclude the mixed seating of men and women and women rabbis, but some of the most dynamic and creative expressions of Jewish feminism can currently be found within certain sectors of the Orthodox community. Recent decades have brought a transformative expansion of institutional resources directed toward the education of traditional girls and young women. Unprecedented female engagement in advanced textual study has intensified challenges to what remains the largely male domain of Orthodox public worship. The first International Conference on Feminism and Orthodoxy, held in New York City in 1997, led to the creation of the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, which has sponsored biennial conferences on feminism and orthodoxy. Each conference has brought together more than 1,000 women committed to using traditional Jewish legal processes to advance Jewish women's leadership and participation. These challenges, as well as regular women's *tefillah* (prayer) groups that have been organized in many communities, face strong opposition from within Orthodoxy; nevertheless, they have done much to shift possibilities and realities for Orthodox Jewish women.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, all aspects of American Judaism are marked by women's expanding involvement in worship and study alongside continuing tensions over their religious roles. Liberal denominations consider gender equity an established principle, yet rhetorical commitments to equality have not always been matched by institutional realities. There remain large pay inequities for men and women within similar rabbinic positions and high underrepresentation of women in the most influential rabbinical and denominational posts. Many women who have attained positions of status and authority previously occupied exclusively by men still must struggle to obtain respect and job security.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, American responses to women's traditional exclusions from Jewish practice and leadership are finding echoes in Jewish communities around the world. Historical perspective reveals that current transformations have grown out of a long American Jewish tradition of engagement with the broader society's often confusing expectations for proper gender roles. The achievement of full gender equality

within American Jewish culture, as within American society, may always remain elusive. The recognition, however, that a vibrant and relevant Judaism must respond to the challenges raised by the position of women in contemporary life derives from the earliest days and concerns of American Judaism.

Karla Goldman

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## Isaac Leeser (1806–1868)

### Religious Leader and Educator

Religious leader, educator, translator, and editor, Isaac Leeser was the major architect of American Judaism during the decades prior to the Civil War and an outspoken champion of an Americanized expression of orthodox Sephardic Judaism. Originally from Germany and not specifically trained for his remarkable career in religious leadership, Leeser advocated unity in American Jewish life and fiercely opposed the emerging Reform movement. Traditional in practice, he was a Biblical literalist and up-

held rabbinic doctrines while urging decorum and Protestant-style preaching in the American synagogue. A person of his time, Leeser quietly rejected abolitionist interpretations of the Bible and urged American Jews to remain apolitical on the great issues of the day. Many scholars have characterized Leeser as a proto-Conservative Jew. Leeser also supported the development of modern Jewish agricultural projects in the land of Israel.

Born in the Westphalian village of Neunkirchen but orphaned at an early age, Leeser was raised by his paternal grandmother. He received a traditional elementary Jewish education in nearby Dulmen. Typical of that time and place in Germany, he then studied in a Jesuit gymnasium in Muenster and received private instruction from the district rabbi, Abraham Sutro, a well-known preacher and opponent of Reform Judaism. Although Leeser wanted to be a pharmacist, since there were few prospects for advanced training or gainful employment for young Jews in Germany, he accepted the invitation of Zalma Rehine, a maternal uncle, to immigrate to America.

Leeser arrived in the United States in 1824 and initially lived with his uncle's family in Richmond, Virginia. He became active in the local synagogue and quickly learned the Sephardic rite practiced there. In 1828 Leeser published two letters in Richmond's *Constitutional Whig* defending Judaism against charges made by Joseph Wolff, an apostate missionary. Word of his intellectual and religious abilities quickly spread throughout the small, highly interconnected American Jewish community, and, despite his misgivings, Leeser accepted an invitation to become the hazzan of Philadelphia's prestigious Mikveh Israel Congregation.

Leeser arrived in Philadelphia in 1829 and surprised the congregation with his personal energy and industriousness. Friction with the congregation's leadership remained a constant, ultimately leading to an ugly public dispute and his departure from that pulpit in 1850. Nearly blinded and badly scarred by smallpox in 1833, Leeser never married but poured himself into his work. His indefatigable efforts on behalf of Judaism in America over the next thirty years permanently changed the landscape of American Jewish religious life and demonstrated the immense cultural potential of the Jewish community in North America.

From the inception of his work in Mikveh Israel's pulpit, Leeser was a productive though not always original writer. In 1830 he published a catechism, *Instruction in the*

*Mosaic Law*, followed by an antideistic work, *The Jews and the Mosaic Law*, four years later. He produced a second catechism "for younger children" (1839) in support of Rebecca Gratz's newly founded Hebrew Sunday school. Beginning in 1837, he published his sermons, which eventually included ten volumes of *Discourses* (1837, 1841, 1867) and a six-volume Hebrew-English *Form of Prayers According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews* (1837–1838).

In response to a medieval-style blood libel in Damascus, Syria, orchestrated by French imperial interests and spread by the Vatican, Leeser organized a multifaith response in Philadelphia in 1840 and encouraged similar protests in other American cities. The following year, he proposed the Plan for Union to unite all American Jews under a single religious banner. Essentially modeled on the centralized, government-sponsored French consistory system, the plan failed, exposing many of the heretofore unrevealed tensions in Jewish life.

Undeterred by his failure to create a religious union for American Jews, in 1843 Leeser launched the first sustained national Jewish periodical publication in the United States. Leeser served as the publisher, editor, and leading writer for *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* for twenty-five years. Through its pages, he became even more widely known within the American Jewish community, linked American Jews with other Jewish communities throughout the Diaspora, and created a journal of record that remains essential reading to historians of the American Jewish experience to this day. Two years later, in 1845, Leeser published his English translation of the Pentateuch, a vocalized text of the entire Hebrew Bible, and organized the first American Jewish Publication Society.

Leeser's remarkable productivity was not disrupted by his bitter public dispute with Mikveh Israel in 1850. Following his departure from the synagogue, he turned his attention to an English translation of the complete Hebrew Bible, which began to appear in 1853. To promote the newly translated Bible, Leeser took a railway tour of the United States, which brought him into contact with numerous Jewish communities in the South and Midwest.

Still committed to the idea of national religious unity, Leeser, a theological traditionalist, attended a conference of a broad spectrum of American rabbis held in Cleveland, Ohio, and organized by his ideological opponent, Isaac M. Wise. The purpose of the conference was to

create a common theological platform for all American Jews. Last-minute objections raised by a recently arrived radical Reform rabbi, Dr. David Einhorn, resulted in the collapse of the conference but not of the idea of religious unity. Wise revived the idea in 1873 with the founding of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. However, instead of becoming the umbrella organization of all American synagogues, it quickly evolved into the synagogue arm of the emerging Reform movement.

By contrast, Leaser discovered more fertile ground for unity in nonreligious Jewish organizations. In 1859 he was elected a vice president of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, the first Jewish defense organization in the United States. Although initially opposed to B'nai B'rith (founded in 1843), Leaser eventually joined the men's organization and with its support helped found the Jewish Hospital of Philadelphia during the Civil War.

Four years before the Civil War, Leaser found himself back in the pulpit at Philadelphia's Congregation Beth El Emeth, but he carefully steered clear of political controversy. During the war, he worked to preserve Jewish civil rights and to establish a Jewish chaplaincy corps in the Union army. Immediately following Lee's surrender (which occurred on the first night of Passover, 1865), Leaser worked to bring relief to southern Jewish communities devastated by the fighting.

Leaser's final achievement was the founding of Maimonides College in 1867 in Philadelphia. Although short-lived, Maimonides was the first rabbinic school in the United States to ordain rabbis. It failed shortly after Leaser's death on February 1, 1868. Leaser's funeral was the most attended Jewish event in the United States up to that time, and friend and foe alike eulogized him.

Although largely forgotten today, Leaser played a major role in shaping Judaism in America from 1830 to the period of Reconstruction. Although his hope for Jewish religious unity in the United States remains unrealized, his belief in the possibility of creating a vital center of Jewish life in America continues to inform new visions for the American Jewish community.

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## David Einhorn (1809–1879)

Radical Reform Rabbi, Liturgist,  
and Abolitionist

Erudite, principled, and uncompromising, Rabbi Dr. David Einhorn was a leading architect of Reform Judaism in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Although in Germany Einhorn was one of the main voices calling for a systematic expression of Reform Judaism, it was principally in the United States, through his original prayer book and journalistic activities, that he helped shape Judaism's most liberal modern movement. Ironically, Einhorn resisted linguistic assimilation, advocating the preservation of the German language as the essential vehicle of Jewish religious reform in America.

Born in the village of Dispeck in Bavaria and raised by his strong, widowed mother, Einhorn was enrolled in a traditional *yeshiva* in nearby Fuerth under the tutelage of Rabbi Wolf Hamburger. Ordained at age seventeen, Einhorn sought out private lessons in mathematics prior to his studies at several local universities, where he became deeply influenced by contemporary German philosophy, particularly that of Friedrich W. J. Schelling. Einhorn was transformed by his advanced secular training, and for ten years his earlier mentors repeatedly blocked him from assuming a rabbinic post.

Perhaps embittered by his trials, Einhorn finally received an appointment in 1842 as "Chief Rabbi" of Birkenfeld, where he remained for the next five years, married Julie Henrietta Ochs, and quickly became embroiled in religious controversy. On the one hand, Einhorn defended his colleague Abraham Geiger against charges of antirabbinic heresy, but he also attacked radical and antirabbinic lay reformers in Frankfurt am Main. Although widely remembered as a radical himself, throughout his life Einhorn continued to support what was a middle position in the context of nineteenth-century Reform Judaism.

Einhorn, whose religious philosophy was already formed in the 1840s, generally referred to Judaism as

“Mosaism.” He believed that Judaism had an infinite capacity “for continuous development both as to its form and its spirit,” as he wrote in a letter in 1844. “Its essence,” according to Einhorn, “is truth uniting all men.” However, until the messianic “mission of Israel” is fully achieved, the Jews need to retain select elements of “the priestly garb of Israel among the nations” (Kohler 1909). In short, Einhorn believed in the necessity of Judaic particularism as a means to an ultimate, divinely sanctioned universalism.

The great Reform rabbinic conferences in Germany during the 1840s helped Einhorn sharpen his views on Reform Jewish practice, particularly on questions of ritual and the expanded role of women in the synagogue, which he openly championed. Einhorn also openly argued that dietary restrictions, Biblical and rabbinic, were contingent on the existence of a priestly cult and were therefore abrogated in contemporary Jewish life. After becoming Chief Rabbi of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Einhorn became engaged in a highly nuanced controversy over circumcision—he believed that circumcision was necessary for adult converts but not for children of Jewish mothers—that spread beyond the Jewish community.

In 1849 he proposed writing a prayer book based on the principles of the rabbinic conferences but was unable to complete the task because of continual opposition to his views in the community. Two years later, he moved to Pest, Hungary, to head the Reform congregation there. However, after he had been there only two months, the government closed the synagogue. Compelled to give up the active rabbinate, Einhorn determined to write a systematic account of his philosophy of Judaism. He completed two volumes of his *Das Prinzip des Mosaismus (The Principle of Mosaism)* but suspended the project when he accepted an invitation in 1855 to serve a newly formed congregation, Har Sinai, in Baltimore, Maryland.

At age forty-six, Einhorn and his family resettled in the United States, a country whose democratic ideals he passionately supported but whose culture remained essentially alien to him for the rest of his life. True to form, Einhorn quickly became engaged in controversy in his new domicile, and in November 1855 publicly condemned the attempt of Isaac Mayer Wise and other reformers to construct a hybrid religious platform for all American Jews at a conference in Cleveland, Ohio. Ever the champion of Reform Judaism, early in 1856 Einhorn

began publishing a German monthly journal, *Sinai*. Over the nearly seven years it appeared, the journal not only gave Einhorn a critical platform but attracted the intellectual support of Samuel Holdheim and other elite leaders of the Reform movement in Europe. Moreover, to help frame his view of Reform Judaism in America and to provide his congregation with an authentic Reform liturgy, Einhorn prepared his own prayer book, *Olat Tamid*. Ironically, although it sold few copies, it became the model for the immensely popular *Union Prayer Book* nearly half a century later.

Einhorn’s stay in Baltimore was complicated by his openly proabolitionist views. He was smuggled out of the city in 1862 to protect him from potential mob action and relocated in Philadelphia at Keneseth Israel Congregation. Einhorn helped consolidate Reform Judaism in his new synagogue, which grew rapidly under his tutelage and was able to build its first major sanctuary. While in Philadelphia, he also prepared a catechism for home and school, the *Ner Tamid (Eternal Light)*.

Increasingly recognized as a first-class preacher, Einhorn accepted a call to serve New York’s Adas Jeshurun congregation in 1869, which merged with Anshe Chesed in 1874 to form Temple Beth El. In New York, Einhorn began to advocate the establishment of an American rabbinic school. Unwilling to support the efforts of Samuel Adler at New York’s Congregation Emanu-El, Einhorn later helped strengthen Isaac M. Wise’s Cincinnati-based school, the Hebrew Union College, despite his tremendous cultural, liturgical, and theological differences with Wise. He also supported Wise’s efforts to create the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the first national umbrella organization of synagogues in the United States.

Shortly after leaving Philadelphia, Einhorn returned briefly to help lead the first conference of Reform rabbis in the United States. Widely viewed as the most radical of all the American Reform platforms, the Philadelphia document restated Einhorn’s split view on ritual circumcision and offered a highly universalistic account of the mission of Israel. Still, Einhorn later publicly disagreed with his successor at Keneseth Israel, Rabbi Samuel Hirsch, and continued to argue against rabbinic officiation at mixed marriages. He also took exception to the theory of evolution and early expressions of Zionism in America. Einhorn died in New York in 1879. Out of respect for his relentless

advocacy for Judaism, and despite their own philosophical differences with him, a broad spectrum of Jewish leaders attended the funeral of Einhorn, the principal nineteenth-century architect of American Reform Judaism.

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# Jewish Communities

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## The Lower East Side

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During the 1880s and into the first decades of the twentieth century, the Lower East Side of Manhattan, a neighborhood that runs from Fourteenth Street south to Fulton Street and from Broadway east to the East River, became home to more than half a million immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe. These residents produced a culture of *Yiddishkeit* more intense and more pervasive than any other in the world up to that time. Not only did they build a vast network of religious, cultural, political, and social institutions for their own use, but many of those institutions, including the Yiddish press, the mutual aid societies, the labor movement, and the Yiddish theater, produced cultural styles and texts that flowed from the Lower East Side (LES) to much of American Jewry elsewhere as well as to the larger non-Jewish community beyond. The site of the densest and most animated mass of immigrants in the nation's history, the LES remained an emotional point of reference, a collective memory and a common heritage for Jews in the United States regardless of where they or their forbears lived.

Of the 23 million immigrants to the United States between 1880 and 1920, 17 million came through the port of New York. Although some newcomers dispersed to other places, great numbers collected in immigrant enclaves on the island of Manhattan. No group outdid the Jews in this

regard. Practically all East European Jewish immigrants arriving after 1870 initially found their way to the Lower East Side, and the vast majority stayed within that nucleus. By 1892, 75 percent of the city's Jews lived on the Lower East Side. The percentage declined—to 50 percent in 1903 and to 23 percent by 1916. But the absolute number of Jews,



Lower East Side, New York, ca. 1907. (Library of Congress)

augmented by newcomers crowding into the district, continued to climb until it reached its peak of 542,000 in 1910. The Lower East Side literally bristled with Jews. Jacob Riis, the acerbic and energetic journalist interested in “how the other half lives,” observed in the 1890s that “nowhere in the world are so many people crowded together in a square mile” as in the Jewish quarter. The Tenth Ward averaged 730 people per acre by the turn of the century, while some other areas of the Lower East Side approached the astounding rate of 1,000 per acre. Only Bombay and Calcutta had higher densities.

The great Jewish influx pushed the district’s middle-class Germans and Irish, as well as the remnant of the German Jewish community north of Houston Street, to less crowded quarters. Their places were taken by five major varieties of Jews in an area described by one young immigrant as “a miniature federation of semi-independent allied states.” Hungarian Jews were clustered in the northwest section just above Houston Street; the Galicians lived to the south between Houston and Broome. From Chrystie to Allen Streets in the west lay the Rumanian quarter, within which, after 1907, the Sephardic Jews (mainly from Syria, Greece, Turkey, and Spain) settled. The remainder of the Jewish quarter, from Grand Street south to Monroe, was the territory of the Russians—the most numerous and most heterogeneous of the Jewries of Eastern Europe.

In every Jewish section, there were streets like Suffolk Street, where, as Abe Cahan wrote, one “had to pick and nudge his way through dense swarms of bedraggled half-washed humanity, past garbage barrels rearing their overflowing contents,” and “underneath tiers and tiers of fire escapes barricaded and festooned with mattresses, pillows and feather beds not yet gathered in for the night.” The streets were crowded, but the congestion there was often preferable to the constriction experienced in the tiny flats. One immigrant boarding with the family of a cantor remembered that his two-room apartment on Allen Street contained parents, six children, and five other boarders. Two daughters took in dresses to sew at home, and one boarder plied his shoemaking craft in the apartment as well. “[The] cantor rehearses, a train passes, the shoemaker bangs, ten brats run around like goats, the wife putters in her ‘kosher restaurant.’ At night we all try to get some sleep in the stifling roach-infested two rooms.”

Only a small number of flats had hot running water, and there was often only one hallway toilet for every ten

people. These conditions persisted even in the face of remedial legislation in 1884 and 1887 regarding water closets, light, air, and fire safety. Despite these circumstances, new immigrant Jews continued to pour into the Lower East Side and, to a lesser degree, into Chicago’s West End and other population centers in Philadelphia and Boston. This was so because few of the smaller cities and towns of the American interior offered so great a possibility of Jewish communalism and Yiddish-based culture as the major cities. Equally important, the ghettos, particularly the largest one on New York’s Lower East Side, offered the possibility of employment for Jews.

At the time the masses of East European Jews were coming to America, the garment industry was undergoing rapid expansion, and New York City was central to this development. By 1910 the city was producing 70 percent of the nation’s women’s clothing and 40 percent of the men’s clothing. As early as 1890, almost 80 percent of New York’s garment industry was located below Fourteenth Street, and more than 90 percent of the clothing factories there were owned by German Jews. Lower New York, therefore, remained a powerful magnet for the East Europeans throughout the period of mass immigration. The immigrants were attracted by jobs and by Jewish employers who could provide a familiar milieu, as well as the opportunity to observe the Sabbath. By 1897 approximately 60 percent of the New York Jewish labor force was employed in the apparel field, and 75 percent of the workers in the industry were Jewish.

Newly arrived immigrants found advantages even in the sweatshops in lofts, storefronts, and apartments, where the worst conditions of the factory and the tenement came together in one place. The workers could communicate in their own language. The work, however arduous, did not prevent the performance of religious duties, the observance of the Sabbath, or the celebration of religious festivals. Moreover, by working together in small units, the immigrants thought they could preserve the integrity of their families.

Jews on the LES were also drawn to innumerable other crafts outside the garment industry, including bookbinding, watchmaking, cigarmaking, and tinsmithing, all of which became part of a growing ethnic economy. It has been estimated that only about one-third of heads of LES families retained their original East European vocations, but almost 24 percent of Jewish breadwinners moved out

of factory work and into self-employment in small businesses at the earliest opportunity. In the virtually all-Jewish Eighth Assembly District, there were 144 groceries, 131 butcher shops, 62 candy stores, 36 bakeries, and 2,440 peddlers and pushcart vendors, many selling such traditional foodstuffs of Eastern Europe as blintzes, bagels, bialys, and herring. And in the late 1890s, Jews in relatively large numbers began moving into the building trades. Most were employed in the alteration and remodeling of old tenements on the Lower East Side as ironworkers, masons, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, and painters.

The remodeling business, the garment industry, and the general ethnic economy of the Lower East Side provided wide opportunities for Jews seeking employment. Nevertheless, most immigrants were poor, and with poverty came the full measure of its attendant ills: prostitution, juvenile delinquency, adult crime, and relatively high rates of desertion and divorce. Concerned discussion about East Side delinquency and vice filled many columns in the Yiddish papers. Accounts from Jewish and non-Jewish sources, including the respected and extensive Lexow and Mazet investigations of the 1890s, indicated that prostitution, gambling, and extortion rackets thrived in the Jewish district, as in every poor district in the city. As Michael Gold correctly pointed out in *Jews without Money* (1930), it was hard not to trip over the prostitutes who “sprawled indolently” on Allen Street, “their legs taking up half the pavement.” And the names of Jewish gangsters such as “Dopey Benny” (Benjamin Fein), “Gyp the Blood” (Harry Horowitz), and “Kid Dropper” (Nathan Kaplan) were well known in the community. Racketeer Arnold Rothstein, who by 1906 had acquired, through a variety of illegitimate means, a \$12 million bankroll, had become something of a minor folk hero on the Lower East Side. Crime was a marginal phenomenon confined to a relatively small proportion of the ghetto dwellers, but that it had roots in the Jewish community and that it befouled the life of the East Side was undeniable.

No one was more disturbed by the revelations of Jewish crime in the “downtown” ghetto than the established, “uptown” German Jews. Already distressed by the religious Orthodoxy and what they perceived as the political radicalism of their cousins from Eastern Europe, and repelled by their “strange ways and speech,” the Germans saw the “immorality” and vice of the new immigrants as a great threat to themselves. By the twentieth century, the Ger-

mans, who had initially resisted massive Eastern European immigration, had become the champions of unrestricted entry, but they remained anxious over increasing anti-semitism among the general population. Spurred by this anxiety and by insecurity over their own status, the German Jews sponsored a series of programs to transform their coreligionists as quickly as possible.

One of the major social and educational vehicles for “remaking” the East Europeans was the Educational Alliance, a curious mixture of night school, recreational center, and settlement house quartered in a five-story building on East Broadway and Jefferson Street. It was for several decades an important source of help to the East European immigrants as well as a major source of friction and hostility between uptown and downtown Jews. The hostility diminished somewhat after 1898, when the directorship of the Alliance was assumed by David Blaustein, an acculturated East European immigrant who had made his way through Harvard and was sensitive to the immigrants’ desire to retain the cultural supports of their language and folkways and their religious rites and rituals. While the formal, stated objective of the Alliance remained rapid Americanization, the daily programs, increasingly bilingual, became more responsive to immigrants’ needs.

Many other institutions were created by the Jewish establishment in the 1890s to serve the needs of the LES ghetto, including the Hebrew Orphan Asylum, the Hebrew Technical Institute for boys, and a school to teach domestic arts to girls, the last two sponsored by the Baron de Hirsch Fund. In addition, the National Council of Jewish Women, an important philanthropic and protective organization, helped female arrivals avoid the “white slave” traders who circulated at ports of entry. And the Clara de Hirsch Home, endowed by the baroness in 1897 to provide recreational facilities and vocational training for immigrant girls, soon took on the task of “uprooting the evil” of prostitution by providing young women, Jews and non-Jews, with decent living arrangements and opportunities for employment, and occasionally by matchmaking.

One of the most notable German Jewish benefactors in the neighborhood was the Cincinnati-born settlement house social worker Lillian Wald (1867–1940). A nurse who, with the help of Jacob Schiff, founded the Henry Street Settlement, Wald grew into a woman of legend, acclaimed and adored on every street of the Lower East Side. As her work proved successful, Wald’s reputation

and influence grew, and she used them to persuade the city to start a program of public nursing and to put nurses into the public schools. In addition, she actively opposed child labor, supported the playground movement, lined up with the striking cloakmakers in 1910, and was a committed pacifist during World War I. Even as she became a figure of wide renown, Lillian Wald remained dedicated to her East Side neighbors. One of the most respected and genuine liberals of the Progressive Era, Wald, within the narrower Jewish world, was expert at creating links between the uptown Germans and the East Europeans, and she continued to work at gaining the confidence of the former on behalf of the latter.

Some of the attempts by the German Jews to bring order to the ghetto, however, fell short. This was especially true of the *Kehillah*, a comprehensive communal structure designed in 1908 to unite New York City's multifarious Jewish population. It did useful work in philanthropy and Jewish education, but the experiment was severely strained by ethnic, ideological, and class tensions. The Kehillah never matched its Eastern European namesake in reach or power and was defunct by 1922.

But from the start, East European Jews created their own web of voluntary organizations and improvised a viable, decentralized, collective existence. In spite of the disturbing new influences and internal stresses, the Jewish immigrants sustained general tranquility and relative order in the ghetto. The family, the *shul*, the *landsmanshaft*, the club, the mutual aid society, the cafe, the union, and even many workplaces were arenas of genuine interaction and psychological sustenance. Informal social networks, including the people of the block, those gathering on the rooftop, and the group at the candy store, provided similar kinds of contact and mutual support. Within these immigrant enclaves, protected from some of the chaos and brutality of the outside world, Jews in association with one another could borrow supports from the Old World and the New. Here they could achieve a sense of stability and remake their identities at their own, less bewildering pace.

Religion clearly played a role. Although the spiritual life of observant Jews did not show many signs of vitality on the Lower East Side before 1910, the ghetto's six hundred religious congregations testified to the "authenticity of the Jewish religious imperative to worship." Most of the congregations operated out of storefronts, but in addition to these smaller *shuln* there were also imposing and archi-

tecturally impressive houses of worship on the Lower East Side, including Beth Hamidrash Hagadol on Norfolk Street, Anshe Poland on Forsyth Street, and the Eldridge Street Synagogue.

Many of the congregations on the Lower East Side developed around *landslayt*, groups of Jews from the same East European towns, and they often operated as mutual aid societies, reflecting the Old World tradition of *tsedakah* (sometimes meaning "charity," but more often meaning "social justice") and communal responsibility. *Landslayt* groups frequently went on to form officially registered *landsmanshaftn*. As early as 1892, there were 87 East European *landsmanshaftn*, and by 1910 there were more than 2,000, representing more than 900 European cities and towns and embracing virtually every Jewish family in New York City. Some were independent, but most were connected to synagogues, unions, extended family circles, or fraternal orders. And all *landsmanshaftn* maintained some link to the Old Country location, particularly in times of crisis when the *shtetlekh* from which they sprang were in need of material relief. All continued to maintain important communal services, such as burial arrangements and poor relief, as well as a context for a shared and collective expression of nostalgia.

Equally important, the *landsmanshaft* was a context for reconciling American Jewish and East European identity. It served as a sanctuary from the excessive strains of acculturation, ambition, and even ideology, and it gave the immigrants a breathing space, a place to be themselves, to continue the tradition of communal self-help but also to settle into a game of pinochle. At the same time, it resembled an American fraternal order with its rites and constitutions, its camaraderie, and its opportunity for "doing a little business."

The strong ethnic and religious ties and the need for mutual aid that gave birth to the *landsmanshaftn* also promoted the creation of other institutions on the LES. Many hospitals, orphanages, and nursing homes that observed dietary laws and had Yiddish-speaking doctors were founded by the East Europeans in New York City, including Beth Israel Hospital (in 1890) located on East Broadway. This medical facility was specifically designed "to meet the peculiar needs of . . . sick poor among the Jewish immigrant population." In addition, there were so many political organizations, labor union locals, philanthropic organizations, loan societies, credit unions, and educa-

tional institutions that, by the second decade of the twentieth century, the East European Jews of the LES possessed a more elaborate organizational structure than any other ethnic group in America.

Many of the institutions created by the East European Jews became vital elements in the new transitional culture. Outstanding in this respect was the Jewish labor movement, which included the International Ladies' Garment Workers, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the United Hebrew Trades, the Workmen's Circle, the International Workers Order, and the Socialist and Communist press, all centered on the Lower East Side. This left-leaning Jewish labor movement combined socialist principles with day-to-day practical experience to build a power base for East European Jews in America. Without jettisoning their idealism, labor activists and propagandists used that power to establish an enduring union movement, to institutionalize labor-management cooperation, and to improve the conditions of life and labor for the Jews of the LES as well as for Jewish and non-Jewish workers in other U.S. cities. In the process, by bringing the Jewish workers into the American socioeconomic and political arena, the radical labor movement served the East European immigrants as a powerful agent of acculturation.

The Yiddish theater, too, served as a vehicle of Americanization. It had its origins in the Old World, but Yiddish theater arrived in New York City in its infancy. And it was nurtured on the LES at the turn of the century by its greatest audience, the largest, most heterogeneous aggregation of Jews in the world. By 1900 there were three major theater troupes in New York City (twenty by 1918) and numerous smaller endeavors in other Jewish population centers. But it was on the Lower East Side that the theater came to enjoy an unrivaled position as a major cultural institution in which all the problems, hopes, and dreams of the immigrant Jews were dramatized. By combining aspects of Old World culture, American culture, and the transitional culture of the ghetto, and by dealing with many of the immigrant dilemmas of that transitional culture, the Yiddish theater of the LES held up a mirror to its audiences. How to be an American *and* a Jew? How to protect the family from destabilization and religious values from disintegration in a secular, seemingly normless society? How to enjoy the opportunities for material success in America without giving up the spiritual values of Judaism? By posing these dilemmas, the Yiddish stage helped Jews

gain a better understanding of their role in the historical process of relocation, and even as it helped revitalize Yiddish, the theater gave the immigrants greater insight into the problems of creating new identities in the new world.

Intellectuals and political radicals also had an important role to play in the creation of a revitalized Yiddish language in New York. As in Eastern Europe, so on the LES, many intellectuals and political activists at first viewed Yiddish as merely a useful tool for "enlightening" the masses, but they soon helped develop the language into a compelling means of discourse. Yiddish, partly by promoting reading about American events, and partly by incorporating English words—*that'll do*, *politzman*, and *alle right*, for example—eventually became a vehicle for Americanization, and ultimately and ironically, for its own demise. But the continuing mass immigration, the momentum of Yiddish literary activity, and the involvement of Yiddish in the progressive social and political movements of the early twentieth century invigorated the language beyond all expectation.

In New York City, and especially on the LES, the hub of the Yiddish American universe, more than 150 Yiddish dailies, weeklies, monthlies, quarterlies, festival journals, and yearbooks appeared between 1885 and 1914. Some 20 dailies came into existence during that period, and for a time at the turn of the century, as many as 6 competed simultaneously for readers. The *Tageblatt*, founded in 1885, represented the Orthodox religious point of view. The *Morgen Journal*, also Orthodox, was the first (1901) truly successful Yiddish morning paper. The 1890s saw the beginning of the *Forvarts (Jewish Daily Forward)*, a socialist paper that, under the guiding hand of Abraham Cahan, became the largest Yiddish newspaper in the world. In the same decade, the *Freie Arbeiter Shtime (Free Voice of Labor)* was born, representing the anarchists. Even the weekly *La America* (1910–1925), a Ladino paper for Sephardic readers, printed a Yiddish column to attract advertisers in the greater East European community. And in 1922 the *Morgen Freiheit*, the newspaper of the Jewish branch of the American Communist Party, launched its first issue from Chrystie Street. As Abraham Cahan pointed out, "the five million Jews living under the czar had not a single Yiddish daily paper even when the government allowed such publication, while [Russian Jews] in America publish six dailies . . . countless Yiddish weeklies and monthlies, and [enough] books [to make] New York the largest Yiddish book market in the world."

Producers and disseminators of the vibrant Yiddish culture of the ghetto often met in small restaurants and cafes to eat, talk, and argue. The staff of the *Jewish Daily Forward* were daytime regulars at the Garden Cafe on East Broadway. In the evenings, writers and poets left their factories and shops to gather in the Cafe Royale on Second Avenue or at the basement cafe Zum Essex on Rutgers Square, as well as in Sachs' Cafe on Norfolk Street.

"At most hours of the day and night," the sensitive gentile journalist Hutchins Hapgood reported, "these places are filled with men who have come here to sip Russian tea out of tumblers, meet their friends, and discuss everything under heaven. . . . It is Bohemia." Hapgood also correctly sensed the dominant "socialistic feeling . . . in these cafes," but as writer Harry Roskolenko, who sold papers to the tea-sipping patrons, astutely observed about his customers, they were not ideological purists: "Ideas about God, the synagogue, the union, intermeshed. It was difficult, then, for me to see how men could be two things—like Zionist-anarchists; or Zionists who were also atheists; or socialists who were Zionists and atheists. It was like a chess game—with no rules. . . . Who was not at least two or three separate spiritual and physical entities on the Lower East Side? My father managed socialism, Orthodoxy and Zionism, quite easily, and so did the kibitzers and the serious."

To most immigrants, the cafes probably seemed exotic, perhaps even frivolous, appropriate for free thinkers who "had nothing to do during the day" and who could stay up late into the night, but not for workers who had to rise early to earn a living. What many workers did take seriously, however, was the endless stream of lectures and public meetings sponsored by the Socialists, the Zionists, the unions, the Board of Education, the People's Institute at Cooper Union, and the Educational Alliance. A "certain grandeur of aspiration" was to be found in those men and women who toiled long hours in the shops and then somehow mustered the energy to drag themselves to evening lectures in pursuit of learning. On the Lower East Side, learning for its own sake or for the sake of future generations and learning for the social revolution all merged into one explosion of self-discovery.

Those who mastered at least the rudiments of English often attended the public night schools. In 1906 Jews constituted a majority of the 100,000 students enrolled in New York City evening classes. Almost 40 percent of the stu-

dents were women. "I admit that I cannot be satisfied to be just a wife and mother," one woman wrote to the *Forward*. "I am still young and I want to learn and enjoy life. My children and my home are not neglected, but I go to evening high school twice a week."

The virtual craze among Jewish adults of the LES for secular education appears to have been part of a general release of energy that for generations had been suppressed in the Old World. And the same passion for learning that adults displayed was instilled in the children. According to immigrant writer Mary Antin and repeated in nearly every immigrant autobiography, Jewish parents brought their boys and girls to the first day of school "as if it were an act of consecration," and parental encouragement was sustained throughout the child's school career.

This respect and drive for education partly explains Jewish economic and occupational mobility and helps us understand why a disproportionate number of immigrants achieved professional status relatively early. There was no large-scale social ascent to the professions in the immigrant generation or even in the second generation; but by 1907 the number of Jewish doctors making a living on the Lower East Side had doubled to 200 since the 1880s, and the number of lawyers increased almost as fast. There were also 115 Jewish pharmacists and 175 Jewish dentists serving the neighborhood.

Success in small business actually played a more important role than education in the relatively rapid mobility of the Jewish immigrant generation. Thousands of East Siders were involved in the pushcart trade and in subcontracting, and hundreds more had groceries, butcher shops, candy stores, and bakeries. Many of these businesses remained marginal in character, but some entrepreneurs advanced enough to constitute the beginning of a middle class.

As early as the 1890s, the apparel trade and the real estate business also became arenas for immigrant energy and aspiration. By 1905 German Jewish manufacturers and landlords had been virtually replaced by East European Jews. It is the "Russian-Jewish employer" now who hires the "Russian-Jewish laborer," wrote immigrant economist and statistician I. M. Rubinow in 1905; and it is the "Russian-Jewish landlord" now who collects "his exorbitant rent" from the "Russian-Jewish tenement dweller." The vast majority of gainfully employed Jews on the Lower East Side did not become manufacturers or property owners;

they remained proletarians for at least one generation, but the Jewish middle class was clearly growing. Consumption patterns on the Lower East Side reflected the growing affluence of the immigrant generation as well as the desire of Jews to Americanize. Significant numbers of families, pursuing both the “sanctification” of the home and the American ideal of social equality, installed gas ovens, turned bedrooms into “parlors” for daytime use, and bought pianos on the installment plan.

A much smaller number of immigrants grew rich. Harry Fischel, who arrived penniless in New York, became a millionaire in the building industry. Israel Lebowitz, who started as a peddler, graduated to a men’s apparel shop on Orchard Street and by 1907 was among the largest shirt manufacturers in New York City. This was impressive, but the very thin crust of East European wealth remained unimportant in comparison to the wealth of the German Jews or the American elite. The East Europeans were not at the centers of American economic power. The major heavy industries, Wall Street, banking, and insurance remained closed to them. They were primarily confined to economic mobility in the fields of real estate, merchandising, and light manufacturing.

A considerable proportion of Jewish immigrants on the LES continued, of course, to be petty tradesmen, and a large majority stayed in the shops and factories throughout their working lives, about half of them in the garment industry. Life remained hard during these years, especially during the depression of 1893–1895, but working and living conditions, general amenities, and incomes did improve slowly for many immigrants. Real earnings of immigrant Jews on the LES rose at an average annual rate of 1.3 percent between 1890 and 1914. This enabled these workers to sustain a modest increase in standard of living and to underwrite education and economic mobility for their children.

Economic mobility often meant geographic mobility. For more than thirty years, immigrant Jews from Eastern Europe had sustained, in the Lower East Side ghetto and in its satellites in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and upper Manhattan, a vibrant transitional culture laced with elaborate institutional arrangements. But neither the Lower East Side Jewish community nor its spinoffs were destined to be permanent communities, and after 1910 mobility meant lower population density, declining attendance at the Yiddish theater, declining circulation of

the Yiddish press, and declining membership in the United Hebrew Trades.

Yet it was only well after the Jewish crowds had dwindled, after the Yiddish language and the dietary habits of Eastern Europe had given way to the accents and foodways of China and the Caribbean, and well after the synagogues had become churches that the story of the LES was made to dovetail with American legend and became virtually archetypal of the story of Jewish life in the United States: a people fleeing religious persecution and political oppression in Eastern Europe came to New York, created an intimate, all-Jewish world, and suffered materially, but through moral discipline and hard work ultimately rose out of the neighborhood to become educated, middle-class Jewish Americans.

As the focal point of Jewish American memory, the LES was canonized to the level of myth. But the mythic dimensions of the story are challenged by a variety of facts: non-Jews also lived in the neighborhood; many Jews not from Eastern Europe lived on East Side streets, and many did so well before the 1880s when the tale of the LES is thought to have begun; the emigrés from Eastern Europe came to the United States for economic reasons as much as for political or religious ones. Moreover, in its heyday as an immigrant Jewish neighborhood, the LES did not have a fixed name. Visitors, writers, and reformers called it variously the Jewish quarter, the downtown Russian quarter, the Hebrew quarter, and most often, the ghetto. And there is little persuasive evidence that the Jews who inhabited what we now consider the LES ever thought of themselves as living in a unified neighborhood with fixed boundaries.

Indeed, for the first half of the twentieth century the Lower East Side held no special significance for American Jews and may even have been an embarrassing reminder of their unacculturated past. But after World War II and especially after the 1960s, the status of the Lower East Side was raised in Jewish American consciousness and memory. As they confronted the European Holocaust and a sense that their own Jewishness was eroding, and as ethnic identity became *de rigueur* in the age of “black is beautiful” and “the rise of the unmeltable ethnics,” American Jews, as part of their culture of memory, reconstructed a venerated Lower East Side and transformed mundane urban real estate into something approaching sacred space.

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**Brownsville**

Brownsville, a poor, working-class district in East Brooklyn, was by the middle decades of the twentieth century home to one of the largest concentrations of Jews in the United States. Jewish social and religious institutions, including eighty-three synagogues in less than two square miles and dozens of Hebrew and Yiddish schools in the

area stretching from Saratoga Avenue east to Sackman Street and from Pitkin Avenue south to Riverdale, helped define the Jewish character of the neighborhood that had come to be known as the "Jerusalem of America." Except for the high holy days, when *shuln* were packed to overflowing, most residents failed to attend religious services with any regularity; but virtual ethnic homogeneity in the neighborhood, visible Jewish fraternal and mutual aid institutions, and the Yiddish language of the street, home, and business allowed Brownsville Jews to develop a sense of Jewish identity independent of religious organizations. In this way, the area played an important role for Jewish immigrants to America, helping to ease transplantation and acculturation for tens of thousands. And although many residents agreed with writer Alfred Kazin, who called Brownsville "a place that measured all success by our skill in getting away from it" (Kazin 1951), just as many Jewish inhabitants looked back on their former "nurturing neighborhood" with nostalgia for the feeling of community and the opportunities it provided. By 1965, however, deteriorating infrastructure, worsening economic conditions, rising rates of crime and juvenile delinquency, and the shortsighted segregationist housing policies of the City of New York, along with Jewish social mobility and African American in-migration, had reduced the Jewish population of Brownsville to negligible proportions.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Brownsville was primarily farmland, with low-lying marshes prone to flooding. The area was also the site of the city's largest waste dump and home to significant numbers of stone and building material suppliers. Although aesthetically less appealing than other parts of Brooklyn, the neighborhood of open spaces attracted a diverse population of English and Irish families, Jewish immigrants, and a small number of black farmers. Then, in 1861, Charles Brown, a real estate speculator, purchased a vast swath of what was then called New Lots, renamed the area Brown's Village, and set out to market it to the working classes of congested Manhattan.

By 1883 the village had 250 frame houses occupied in the main by Jews. In the 1890s, Jewish residency grew even more significantly. Immigrants eager to escape Manhattan's increasingly crowded and industrialized Lower East Side moved to Brownsville, from which they could now commute by trolley over the newly constructed Brooklyn Bridge to work in factories back in their old neighborhood.



*Brownsville, Brooklyn. (Library of Congress)*

Brooklyn land was also purchased by New York clothing manufacturers, wholesale garment merchants, and contractors, who, in the hope of producing goods at lower cost, established “outside” shops in Brownsville. The increased possibility of jobs, as well as the promise of less dense living conditions, further stimulated migration, and by the end of the nineteenth century a sizable “Jewish town,” pronounced “Brahnzvil” or “Brunzvil” by its mainly Yiddish-speaking inhabitants, had taken shape.

By moving to Brownsville, some Jewish manufacturers, including Elias Kaplan, who built an industrial unit on Watkins Street in 1882, sought not only to reduce costs but also to avoid the union organizers active on the Lower East Side. Kaplan, who employed more than one hundred Jewish men and women, was not, however, entirely unconcerned about his workers. He built relatively low-cost

housing for them and located Brownsville’s very first synagogue, Ohev Shalom, in his factory.

As the neighborhood’s Jewish population multiplied, more synagogues were built, including Eitz Chaim Machzikei Horov (1883), Beth Hamedrosh Hagadol (1889), and Thilim Keshet Israel (1891). These were relatively large congregations housed in impressive buildings and were still operating as late as the 1950s. But at the beginning of the twentieth century, most shuls were to be found in storefronts or converted residences and were generally short-lived.

The growing number of Jews in Brownsville led to ethnic tensions and even anti-Jewish violence, perpetrated mainly by English and Irish residents of neighboring East Flatbush and East New York. In 1890, the attacks moved Brownsville Jews to create the Hebrew Protection League, a

self-defense organization. Antisemitism also included the refusal of many landowners in outlying districts to sell to Jews, and this helped push Brownsville's development upward rather than outward, leading to increased congestion in rows of multistoried buildings of railroad flats. Congestion was exacerbated by the construction of entrance ramps to the Williamsburg Bridge (1903) and the Manhattan Bridge (1909), which dislocated thousands of East Siders and helped relocate them and others to several Brooklyn neighborhoods, including Brownsville.

By 1904, Brownsville had nearly 25,000 people and the feel and look of an urban settlement. In the next decade, population skyrocketed, fed by steady streams from Europe, the Lower East Side, and Williamsburg. The expansion of the IRT and BMT subways to Brownsville continued to push the population upward even as World War I and legislation restricting immigration reduced the flow from Europe. By 1910, with nearly 90,000 inhabitants, the neighborhood was 85 percent Jewish, and it remained overwhelmingly so as it grew through 1940 to nearly 110,000 people.

With a higher population than many American cities, Brownsville included several clusters of small-scale manufacturing enterprises and a variety of shopping districts. Brownsville-born writer William Poster remembered "seven blocks of furniture stores on Rockaway Avenue . . . ; five teeming, pungent blocks of pushcarts, groceries and 'appetizing' stores on Belmont Avenue," and "a huge six-block square of junkshops, tinsmithies, stables, and garages and miscellaneous small enterprises" (Poster 1950). Brownsville's commercial section was the largest in Brooklyn, and Pitkin Avenue was at its center. The palatial Loew's Pitkin Movie Theatre with 3,600 seats, which opened in 1929 at the corner of East New York Avenue, was the showpiece of this shopping street and entertained Brownsville residents with "talkies" as well as Yiddish theater pieces.

By 1942, 372 stores lined Pitkin Avenue from Stone to Ralph. As many as 8 banks, 43 men's clothing establishments, dozens of stores for women's apparel, several restaurants, florists, furniture dealers, and liquor stores, and scores of other enterprises employed 1,000 people and did \$90 million of business annually. A number of Brownsville businesses, including Abe Stark's Pitkin Avenue outlet for men's suits and Fortunoff's Jewelry on Livonia Avenue, grew from small shops to large stores that served all of Brooklyn. Still, few Brownsville families

achieved economic success or middle-class status. Large numbers of residents were employed in the garment and construction industries, and Brownsville remained a working-class neighborhood, one that the Great Depression hit especially hard. In the 1930s and 1940s, almost everyone, even owners of small businesses, barely scraped along.

Density provided the critical mass necessary to sustain Brownsville's commercial life, but it also meant a variety of unhealthy conditions, including overcrowding, and hastened the departure of the more upwardly mobile from the neighborhood. Between 1925 and 1940, Brownsville's population declined by 9,000, even as Brooklyn's increased by more than half a million. Still, Brownsville was the most heavily populated neighborhood in the borough (140 per residential acre) and was marked by considerable tenement deterioration and congestion, as well as overextended water and sewage facilities, crumbling schools, and many of the pathologies associated with widespread poverty: poor health, crime, and juvenile delinquency (Pritchett 2002, Sorin 1990).

In 1939 the New York City Department of Health reported that infant and maternal mortality rates for Brownsville were somewhat higher than for Brooklyn generally, and the morbidity rates for venereal disease, tuberculosis, and diphtheria were considerably higher. Similar rates were reported through 1942. Civic activists, including the writer, lawyer, and leftist social reformer Milton Goell and the liberal-minded Rabbi Alter Landesman of the Hebrew Educational Society (HES), were concerned about these "unwholesome" effects of impoverished living conditions. Areas with poor health and those with inadequate housing, it was argued, tended to coincide. Reformers drew an even stronger link between bad housing and lack of recreational facilities on the one hand and crime, gang fights, and juvenile delinquency on the other.

When Brownsville teacher and novelist Arthur Granit wrote that in Jewish "Brownsville, decaying even in those days . . . it was nothing unusual to have a body shot up and thrown in some side alleyway," he surely exaggerated (Granit 1985). But by the late 1920s, serious crime, mostly the activities of "murder-for-money" gangsters in Brownsville, had put the neighborhood on the national map. In 1940 William O'Dwyer, the new district attorney for Brooklyn, announced that crime in the Brownsville section had been getting worse for some

time. Twenty murders had been committed in the district in 1939, mostly by the gang of Brooklyn hit men dubbed “Murder, Inc.”

At its modest headquarters at Midnight Rose’s candy store in Brownsville at the corner of Livonia and Saratoga avenues, the gang, including Lepke Buchalter, Abe (“Kid Twist”) Reles, Motl (“Bugsy”) Goldstein, and Philip (“Little Farfel”) Cohen, met to sip egg creams as well as to plan assassinations. With men such as Joey Adonis, Lucky Luciano, and Albert Anastasia at or near the top of the organization, Murder, Inc., was certainly not a Jewish monopoly. And although Jewish criminals would be fewer in the postwar period and much less tied to a Jewish environment, adult crime in the 1930s and 1940s was clearly part of the Jewish ethnic milieu of Brownsville. As was juvenile delinquency: Henry Roth’s novel *Call It Sleep* (1934) and Arthur Granit’s *The Time of the Peaches* (1959) drew attention to the problem of poverty and youth crime in Brownsville. So did Irving Shulman’s *The Amboy Dukes* (1947), a startlingly graphic picture of Brownsville Jewish youngsters involved with gangs, guns, rape, and murder. The Amboy Dukes were hardly meant to be representative of pervasive behavior patterns, but the novel, a fusion of the sociologist’s analysis and the writer’s art, proclaimed that Jews, like other groups in modern urban America, had the problem of juvenile delinquency.

Brownsville was clearly a squalid and dangerous neighborhood—indeed, a slum—looked upon with contempt by the “better classes” of Brooklyn and the rest of New York City. But it was also a vibrant Jewish community with supportive social and religious institutions. There were educational, charitable, and mutual aid institutions visible every few blocks. The largest library in Brooklyn (until 1940), with signs in Yiddish and an annual circulation of 330,000, sat on Glenmore and Watkins in the heart of the immigrant Jewish community (Tenenbaum 1949). And the first children’s library in New York City, a Tudor-style brick building perhaps more at home in the English midlands than in Brownsville, was built on Stone Avenue in 1914. Also on Stone Avenue were the Brooklyn District office of the Jewish Board of Guardians and the New York Free Loan Society. The Ladies’ Free Loan Society, the Hebrew Ladies’ Day Nursery, and the HES were on Hopkinson Avenue. The Pride of Judea Children’s Home on Dumont Avenue, the Hebrew Free Loan Society on Pitkin Avenue, and dozens of other organiza-

tions, such as the Daughters of Israel, which distributed food and medical aid to the poor, also did social service work in the neighborhood.

Brownsville also had a significant history of left-liberal activism. In 1915, the neighborhood sent Abraham Shiplacoff to the New York State Assembly, the very first Socialist to hold a seat in that legislative body. And in 1916, on Amboy Street, Brownsville witnessed the opening of the nation’s first birth control clinic by the progressive pioneer Margaret Sanger. Jewish immigrant radicalism in Brownsville persisted into the 1920s and through the 1930s, when Jewish women of the neighborhood continued to be well represented in meat and rent strikes and in mobilizing voters, and when disproportionate numbers of Brownsville Communists were active in a variety of protest movements.

Brownsville had long been home to Workmen’s Circle and Industrial Worker’s Order clubs (Socialist and Communist mutual aid societies, respectively) as well as to local headquarters of militant unions such as the United Hebrew Trades and the International Ladies’ Garment Workers, and on Sackman Street to the Labor Lyceum, which was often an arena for political mobilization and a forum for radical speakers. By 1942, the left-leaning Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) had also set up its own community councils in Brownsville.

Earlier, a confederation of neighborhood organizations created in 1938, the Brownsville Neighborhood Council (BNC), aimed to stimulate effective citizen participation in public affairs, to secure neighborhood improvements, and to cooperate with public and private agencies to promote the welfare of the Brownsville community. The BNC, whose public leaders included left-liberal activists Milton Goell and Alter Landesman, also worked to prevent juvenile delinquency by focusing on housing needs, health care, and education, and in the 1940s it was successful in securing public housing, child-care centers, and a new health center for Brownsville.

Also very much involved in the struggles for social welfare was the Brownsville Boys Club (BBC), which grew from an informal association of teenagers in 1940 fighting for access to gyms, playing fields, and increased recreational facilities generally into an agency of mutual aid, dedicated to social justice. The BBC was run for years by the youngsters themselves; through sports and various social and educational programs, it helped ameliorate youth

violence and cooperated with the BNC in the struggle for racial integration and improved housing.

Public housing came to Brownsville just as the black population there was exploding and the general population, including the Jewish majority, was declining. Despite the facts that the Brownsville Houses were integrated in 1948 (a notable exception in NYC public housing) and that liberal Jewish Brownsville was more receptive to black neighbors than any other white neighborhood in Brooklyn, Brownsville would become, over the course of the next decade and a half, an African American and Latino ghetto.

Activist groups, including the Brownsville–East New York Jewish Community Council (formed in 1943), the BBC, and the BNC, joined now by such black leaders as the Reverend Boise Dent, tried to revitalize Brownsville and keep it a viable, multiethnic community. But, in the face of Cold War antileftism, government intransigence, entrenched racism, and a generally segregationist New York City housing policy, they failed to achieve the necessary reforms. Over time, this failure led to the departure of mobile, white, mostly Jewish residents, who, with the help of the GI Bill and Veteran's Administration loans, pursued comfortable quarters, safety, good schools, and modernized infrastructure.

With the Jewish exodus, Brownsville's synagogues declined in number from seventy-three in 1939 to fifty in 1951; many of these, without measurable congregations, were synagogues in name only. In the mid-1960s, with membership dwindling to a precious few, two of Brownsville's most distinguished synagogues, Chevra Torah Anshei Radishowitz and Beth Israel of Brownsville, sold their architecturally impressive buildings. The Hebrew Educational Society became virtually the last vestige of the Jewish community that had been founded in Brownsville in the late 1800s; and when the organization moved to new quarters in Canarsie in 1965, there were no significant Jewish institutions left in the neighborhood.

Jews continued to play a role, however, even as African Americans and Puerto Ricans came to constitute more than 90 percent of the population of Brownsville (Pritchett 2002). In 1962, for example, during the battle at Beth-El hospital (the largest employer in Brownsville) for union recognition and higher wages, African American and Latino activists (as independents and members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League) and strikers led by Local 1199 of

the Hospital Workers Union were joined by white, mostly Jewish liberals. These included representatives of the Jewish Labor Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Congress, and the *Jewish Daily Forward*, who argued that Jews (all thirty-six of the hospital's trustees were Jewish) had a special obligation to be fair to workers. Victory reinforced the notion that interracial cooperation could go a long way toward solving problems in changing neighborhoods such as Brownsville.

In 1968, the bitter struggle over community control of schools in Ocean Hill–Brownsville between the fledgling United Federation of Teachers, predominantly white and Jewish, and the largely black and Latino Brownsville Community Council led many to a less optimistic outlook. But from the 1940s to the 1960s, Jews, blacks, and Latinos in the Brooklyn neighborhood, though hindered by obstacles at the local, regional, and national levels, had, in the long tradition of their progressive community, worked together well in attempts to secure resources and rights for the beleaguered residents of Brownsville.

Gerald Sorin

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## South Florida

During the 1970s, there was a popular television show, *All in the Family*. One day, a friend asked Archie Bunker, the star, about another friend, "the Hebe," whom he had not seen for a while. Archie answered, "He's gone to the 'Promised Land.'" "Oh," the friend replied, "the Hebe's gone to Israel." "No," Archie snapped back, "the Hebe's gone to Miami Beach." Between 1960 and 1972, the Jewish population in Florida grew three times faster than the general population. In Southeast Florida (Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami–Dade counties), the Jewish population grew from 50,000 in 1950 to close to 500,000 by 1980. The greater Miami Jewish population comprised nearly half of that total (230,000) and close to 20 percent of the total county population. Miami Beach, a small island off the mainland, was more than half Jewish (Sheskin 2005, Millon 1989). For those smitten with colonialism, "The Beach" was endearingly referred to as "New York South." South Florida, a peninsula encroached upon by malaria swamps (the Everglades) and bounded by water on three sides (the Atlantic, the Caribbean, and the Gulf of Mexico) and Lake Okeechobee on the north, had been transformed in three generations: from an absence of Jews in 1900 to the third most populated area for Jewry in the Americas.

By the 1970s, South Florida Jewry was engaged in every type of local industry and professional undertaking—finance, tourism, real estate, retail and wholesale merchandising, and manufacturing. They thrived on the high-rise condominium boom and took advantage of regional, national, and international expanding markets. As a result, those living in South Florida—particularly in greater Miami—built one of the foremost Jewish economic infrastructures in North America while erecting

scores of synagogues, Jewish schools, and community centers.

Jews were politically active, committed voters, and Democrats. In the 1970s, the mayor of Miami Beach was Jewish, as were members of the city commission. Democratic Jewish state legislators were visible and influential. In 1974 Richard Stone of Miami Beach became the first Jew since David Levy Yulee, the "architect" of Florida statehood in 1845, to be elected to the U.S. Senate from Florida. On voting days, Miami Beach Jewish seniors were sighted marching to the polls en masse, organized by voting captains.

For many South Florida Jewish residents, Israel was a surrogate for Judaism and influenced their voting patterns. Political candidates who shared their pro-Israel ideology and liberal agendas were well received. South Florida Jews were frequent visitors to Israel and witnessed firsthand the uncanny similarity between Tel Aviv and Miami Beach. Both were around 26 degrees north latitude and had real estate on the water's edge. Both were modern cities founded in the early twentieth century, with international style (Bauhaus and Art Deco) architectural districts. Both had a significant concentration of Holocaust survivors. Just as Tel Aviv had blossomed into a Jewish tourist haven for American Jewry, so had Miami Beach become the American Jewish tourist capital for Israelis. Jokingly, Israeli fund-raisers visiting Miami would comment to their close friends that they had chosen the "wrong Promised Land."

Yet, three decades earlier (1940), fewer than 10,000 Jews lived between Palm Beach (on the eastern side of the peninsula), Sarasota (on the western side of the peninsula), and Key West, the southeasternmost tip of the United States (Sheskin 2005). Moreover, two decades earlier, in the 1950s, "Gentlemen's Agreements" still restricted Jews from purchasing land in South Florida. Yet South Florida, an invisible oasis with a handful of Jews on the eve of World War II, became paradise in one generation.

### From Statehood (1845) through World War II (1945)

Sephardim were the early Jewish frontiersmen of Florida. They traveled as conversos (forced converts) with Columbus when he sailed to the Americas in the late fifteenth century and may have accompanied Ponce de León when he landed near St. Augustine, Florida, in 1513. Some scholars argue that Pedro Menendez Marques, the third Spanish

governor of Florida (1577–1589), was a converso. The introduction of a Spanish Inquisition tribunal in Mexico in 1528, followed by others in Colombia and Peru, acutely reminded Sephardim of the consequences of visibly practicing their Judaism in the face of Catholic colonialism. The project MOSAIC: Jewish Life in Florida has hypothesized that Sephardim and conversos in the mercantile trade, escaping these tribunals in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, may have passed through South Florida. The twenty-three Jews who arrived in New Amsterdam in 1654, celebrated as the “founders” of American Jewry, were also Sephardim evading Catholic persecutors.

On March 3, 1845, Florida became the twenty-seventh state of the Union. There were a few dozen Jews in North Florida but no visible Jewish community. None lived in South Florida. Senator David Levy Yulee was a northern Floridian, a Southerner, and a Sephardic Jew. Levy County and the town of Yulee in Nassau County honor him. Levy Yulee, who married a Christian and agreed to raise his children as Christians, supported the Southern plantation system. Yulee was the first Jew to serve in the U.S. Senate, chosen seven years before his Louisiana cousin, Judah P. Benjamin. The Yulee family saga paralleled that of Sephardic Jewry following expulsion from Spain in 1492. They were “wandering Jews.” In three centuries, they had migrated from Morocco to Gibraltar, to St. Thomas, to Cuba, and eventually to Spanish Florida.

The new twin engines of transportation—railroads and steamships—opened up north and central Florida in the post-Civil War era, but it was only in the 1890s, when Henry Flagler’s Florida East Coast Railway pushed into Palm Beach and Miami, that they affected the development of South Florida. The few Jews who had migrated previously were lone pioneers who arrived by ship or on the Bay Stage Line that linked Lake Worth (Palm Beach) to Lemon City (Miami), a two-day stagecoach trip. Flagler, John D. Rockefeller’s partner in the Standard Oil Company, can be considered the “father” of South Florida. Flagler appreciated that Americans, especially northern Protestants, would be attracted to his concept of an integrated hospitality (hotels) and transportation (train) system and to the land he made available for sale. Fiercely determined to exclude Jews, Flagler instituted the practice of restricted hotels and covenants. After Miami Beach was founded as a city in 1917, Carl Fisher, the owner of Prest-O-Lite (automobile lights) and the Indianapolis Speedway, followed

Flagler’s precedent and offered “places in the sun” to non-Jewish clients on the beach. Miami’s Chamber of Commerce slogan, “It’s Always June in Miami,” was parodied as “It’s Always Jew’n in Miami” by the Ku Klux Klan, even though only a few hundred Jews lived there on the cusp of the Roaring Twenties.

The Jewish communities in South Florida grew slowly. Jews migrated especially from Key West (an American island that served as a commercial port for the Caribbean until the railroad arrived) and from Jewish communities in Georgia and the Northeast. Mitchell Wolfson arrived in Miami from Key West in 1915. Cofounder of WOMETCO (Wolfson Meyer Theater Company), Wolfson opened the first television station in Florida, WTVJ, and built the Miami Seaquarium. In 1943 he became the first Jewish mayor of Miami Beach. Joseph and Jennie Weiss, a New York couple, founded Joe’s Stone Crab Restaurant at the tip of Miami Beach. Ninety years later, the family-run business is thriving and caters to American presidents and the Miami Dolphins football team. Max Lehrman and Rose Seitlin married in Miami in 1913 and moved to Ft. Lauderdale after their second daughter, Anne, was born in 1916. They opened a dry-goods store.

Some Jews immigrated directly from Russia and Romania, escaping pogroms. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) sent a few. Among them were Zionists Henry and Louis Zeitlin, Romanians, who tried to establish a *protokibbutz* (collective farm) in Homestead. The experiment attracted no Jews, and they moved on to Miami, the growing hub of South Florida. David Sokolow, a Russian immigrant, came with his bride, Gussie Rubinstein, to Dania; with their relative, Louis Brown, the couple started three stores in the county (Dania, Pompano, and Hollywood). Only a trickle of Jews settled on the gulf side of southern Florida during this period. The maintenance of Jewish identity and ritual was a challenge. When Isidor and Ida Cohen of Miami, early leaders in the Miami Jewish community, needed a *mohel* (ritual circumciser), they called on Rabbi Julian Shapo from Key West. The circumcision was front-page news in the *Miami Metropolis* (July 17, 1907). Little changed until after World War I.

The land boom of the 1920s, an expanding automobile transportation system (Dixie Highway), and commercial aviation (Pan American), packaged with appealing advertising campaigns, drew thousands to South Florida. Up and down the east and west coasts, land fever became

an epidemic. Even the Jewish Agricultural Society sent Jewish immigrants from New York. Miami had special assets. Many northerners viewed Miami as a pleasure site with ample opportunity for gambling and access to illegal alcohol.

However, most of the development was short-lived. The boom went bust, and the hurricanes of 1926 and 1928 devastated South Florida. With the stock market crash, headlines screamed, “Miami Is Wiped Out.” However, one change was immediately noticeable once the Depression rolled in: the center of gravity for the Jewish Floridian community had migrated from northern to southern Florida (Jacksonville to Miami). By 1939, a dozen Jewish-owned hotels took out ads in the Yiddish *Jewish Daily Forward* to spur Jewish tourism from New York.

By the 1930s, greater Miami’s Jewish community in many ways resembled the Jewish community in New York institutionally, albeit with fewer organizational spin-offs. National philanthropic, social, and cultural institutions had offices in greater Miami: the United Jewish Aid Committee/the Jewish Welfare Bureau/Jewish Family Services (1920), the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA, 1926), Jewish newspapers (*Jewish Unity*, 1927; the *Jewish Floridian*, 1928), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL, 1933), the Jewish War Veterans (1937), the Greater Miami Jewish Federation (1938), and the American Jewish Congress (1939). There were local chapters of B’nai Brith, Hadassah, Young Judea, the Workmen’s Circle, and the National Council of Jewish Women. Cemeteries (the earliest in 1913), synagogues (the earliest of the major denominations were Conservative, B’nai Zion/Beth David, 1912; Reform, Temple Israel, 1922; and Orthodox, Beth Jacob, 1927), congregational schools, community centers, and kosher hotels (the earliest, Nemo, in 1921) provided ample opportunity to live a Jewish life.

The onset of World War II dramatically changed South Florida. Tourist facilities, including restricted hotels, were converted to accommodate troops. The art deco hotels, designed by architects such as Henry Hohauser with his streamlined and nautical modern style, also came under this edict. One-fourth of all Army Air Forces officer candidates and one-fifth of its enlisted men trained at Miami Beach. Many were Jewish. Frequently, their families traveled to South Florida to be close by. They got “sand in their shoes” and vowed to return when the war was over.

## The Golden Years: 1945–1980

After World War II, Jews increasingly migrated to the Sun Belt to live or vacation. South Florida’s Jewish population grew from 10,000 in 1940, to 50,000 in 1950, and to 134,000 in 1960. A decade later, it nearly doubled again, and then again a decade later to 500,000 (Sheskin 2005). Although much of the growth was within greater Miami, Jews became more and more visible in every city up and down the peninsula, from Naples and Sanibel Island on the west side to Boca Raton and Bal Harbor on the east. In each case, a Jewish microcommunity developed institutionally and organizationally. Temple Sinai of Hollywood was founded in 1956; Temple Beth El, the first congregation in Boca Raton, was established in 1967, the year of the Israeli Six Day War.

With the transfer of aviation technology from the military to civilians in the postwar years and the development of air conditioning to cool homes and hotel rooms in the early 1950s, greater Miami became the number one destination for Jews migrating to the South. Ad firms sold Miami Beach to northern Jewry as a winter Catskills. With the opening of the Fontainebleau Hotel in 1954, Miami Beach became the easily accessible winter playground for American Jewry. A decade later, condominiums began competing with hotels for the tourist dollar, and condominium owners began identifying themselves as “snowbirds.”

With tourism came entertainment, especially in Miami Beach. In 1960, the Miss USA and Miss Universe pageants became annual events. In 1963 the Jackie Gleason television show was launched. In 1964 Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali) won the world heavyweight boxing championship in Miami. Judy Garland, Frank Sinatra, Ed Sullivan, and Louis Armstrong are only a few of the celebrities who drew audiences night after night during “the season.” Jewish hotel owners lured superstars who had converted to Judaism—Marilyn Monroe, Sammy Davis Jr., and Elizabeth Taylor—to the Beach, where they were photographed with their Jewish clientele. Isaac Bashevis Singer lived in Surfside. Elie Wiesel and Meyer Lansky had condos on the Beach. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Miami Beach was in a “league of its own.”

After Castro’s revolution in Cuba in 1959, about 3,500 Cuban Jews arrived in Miami. In subsequent years, Central and South American Hispanics escaping political persecution and seeking social justice and human rights flooded

the gates of greater Miami. A significant number were Jews. Over time, they reestablished their institutions (the Cuban-Hebrew Social Circle; the Cuban Sephardic Hebrew Congregation; the Cuban-Hebrew Congregation of Miami).

Because South Florida was antisemitic, racist, and segregated, liberal Jews migrating from the North built partnerships with African Americans to weaken discriminatory practices and change laws. The ADL played a vital role in this process, prodding private educational institutions, golf clubs, and other organizations to open their doors. Following the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* in 1954, African Americans began to be admitted to formerly segregated public schools and universities in the South. After the decision, Senator Richard Stone's father, Alfred, hosted an African American Baptist convention at his Blackstone Hotel in Miami Beach. He had to send his son, Richard, and the family off the island because of death threats during the convention. In the following decade, rabbis throughout South Florida advocated for civil rights. Congregations were bombed. The Ku Klux Klan snarled. Slowly, desegregation occurred. Ironically, some of the liberal parents who strongly supported civil rights and integration were not in favor of busing their white children to black schools or busing blacks to white schools. Miami Beach High School, with 90 percent Jewish students, required a Florida Supreme Court decision (1970) before African Americans on the mainland (Overtown) could be bused across the causeway to Miami Beach. Miami Beach white children were not bused to black schools on the mainland.

Among the many rabbis in South Florida who supported civil rights and built nationally prominent institutions in this period, three stand out: Joseph Narot (Temple Israel), Irving Lehrman (Temple Emanu-El), and Leon Kronish (Temple Beth Shalom). Among the three, Leon Kronish of Miami Beach was critical in bringing an Israeli presence to South Florida, Diaspora Jewry, and Reform Judaism. Under his direction, El Al began flights to Miami, and an Israeli consulate was established. Kronish led the effort to establish the American Israel Histadrut (labor union) Foundation. In addition, he was instrumental in shaping the policy that called for entering rabbinical students in the Reform movement to spend their first year of study in Israel. In short, Kronish was committed to "Israelization"—transforming Zionism to strengthen the bond between American Jewry and Israelis (Green 1995).

Many in South Florida shared Kronish's passion for Israel. Zionists such as Shepard Broad (a member of the Sonneborn Institute) and Ed Kaufmann (president, ZOA) led the clandestine effort to procure arms, boats, and planes from South Florida's World War II surplus to be shipped to Palestine/Israel in the late 1940s. Max Orovitz, Sam Blank, Dan Ruskin, and Samuel Friedland, affectionately known as the "Miami Group," were instrumental in raising capital and in developing the Israeli Dan Hotels. On the other hand, Israeli politicians (Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin, Menachem Begin, Abba Eban) made frequent trips to South Florida to inspire the flock and meet with local and national leadership. For Israelis, Miami was the "winter campaign capital of American Jewry."

These three decades, the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, were the golden years for greater Miami and South Florida Jewry. One snowbird summarized the significance for North American Jewry: "What we have here is a cumulative 800 million years of Jewish experience walking around. Everywhere is the 'world of our fathers and mothers'" (Green 1995). Soon, however, this would all change. The generation that had escaped pogroms and European persecution, experienced the Holocaust and empathized with social justice issues, and had strong Zionist sentiments with an ample dosage of *Yiddishkeit* would be part of history.

## Reshaping Jewish Identity 1980–2007

In the early twenty-first century, about 10 percent of the American Jewish population lives in South Florida (600,000). Only New York and Southern California have larger concentrations of Jews. Yet, books on American Jewry, such as Jonathan Sarna's *American Judaism* (2004), a tribute to 350 years of Judaism in American life, still ignore Miami and South Florida. The Jewish population of greater Miami, once the jewel of South Florida Jewry, has shrunk to less than half its size a generation ago (113,000) due to mortality and the preference of many northerners, especially retirees, for other South Florida locations, such as Marco Island, Naples, Venice, Sarasota, and Ft. Myers on the west coast. All have substantial Jewish populations with a vibrant organizational life. On the east coast, Jews choose Broward County first (234,000: Hollywood, Hallandale, Ft. Lauderdale, Coral Springs, Deerfield, Margate, Pembroke Pines, and Plantation), with Palm Beach County a close

second (218,000: Boca Raton, Delray Beach, West Palm Beach, Boynton Beach, and Jupiter) (Sheskin 2005). The center of gravity of the Jewish South Floridian community has moved forty miles north to Boca Raton, a suburban, upscale, gated *shtetl* (community).

In contrast to the Golden Years, twenty-first century South Florida Jewry is disproportionately a retiree population. Compared to 18 percent nationally, 50 percent of the Jews are age sixty-five and over. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been expended on developing Jewish institutions; yet South Florida Jewry's commitment to their Jewishness (measured by synagogue and community center membership and Jewish Federation participation) remains well below the national median. Moreover, it is unclear whether South Florida's Jewish population will be replenished in the next generation. The challenges facing Jewish organizations are overwhelming.

Natural forces have also played a role in reshaping South Florida Jewry. In August 1992, Hurricane Andrew smashed into South Miami and destroyed much of the Jewish community. It was the costliest disaster in American history until Hurricane Katrina traumatized New Orleans in 2005.

Today, South Florida's Jewish community is being transformed by the changing ethnic American landscape: the Hispanicization of America. In 1960 the Hispanic population of Miami was 5 percent; today it pushes 60 percent. One-fifth of South Florida is Hispanic (Beacon Council 2002). This has changed the composition of Miami Jewry. Jews from Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, and Argentina have joined "Jewbans" (Jewish Cubans) to strengthen their ethnic (Hispanic) voice. In 1989, South Floridian Hispanic Jews made the difference in sending a Catholic Cuban to Congress rather than a Jew. Ethnicity, not religious identification, was the deciding factor.

The Hispanicization of greater Miami has led to "white flight." The non-Hispanic white population of greater Miami has decreased from 80 percent in 1960 to 20 percent in 2000. Consequently, the "winter Catskills" have evaporated, and a significant number of non-Hispanic Jews have left Miami and migrated to other parts of South Florida. The ensuing migration to Boca and its environs bred many unanticipated outcomes. Synagogues, day schools (Donna Klein, Solomon Schechter, and Yeshiva High School), and communal agencies were opened. Jews are now well represented politically throughout South Florida in municipal,

county, state, and federal councils and legislatures. Many representatives are women (Nan Rich, Debbie Wasserman-Schultz, and Gwen Margolis). Jewish federations and institutions reach out to the Jewish Hispanic population and cater to their specific needs, often under the guidance of organizations such as the Miami chapter of the Federation of Latin American Sephardim (FeSeLa). Jewish Hispanics have served as a bridge into the non-Jewish Hispanic community and have repeatedly used their political capital to gain support for Israel and American Jewish causes (Holocaust curriculums, hate crime legislation, and Jewish History Month).

In addition to Hispanic Jews, South Florida has welcomed Israelis, Soviet Jews and, more recently, Jews from France evading Islamization. In Aventura, one hears Hebrew; in Sunny Isles, Russian; in Hollywood, French. These are often combined with other languages such as Yiddish, Ladino, Spanish, and Portuguese. Yet despite language differences, generation gaps, and variances in year of immigration, the integration of these communities is reflected in a number of projects (e.g., The March of the Living). Educational institutions such as the University of Miami seed many: the Sue and Len Miller Center for Contemporary Judaic Studies, Sephardic Studies, MOSAIC: Jewish Life in Florida, the Jewish Museum of Florida, and the Miami Beach Holocaust Memorial.

The multiculturalism of South Florida Jewry has created a unique "New South." The climate, cruise ships, and real estate continue to draw Jews—the East European retiree, the Hispanic refugee, and the dual-citizen Israeli, all seeking the "Promised Land." Together with third- and fourth-generation American Jews, all have found in South Florida a Jewish haven, "a state of mind and a state of being."

Henry A. Green

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## Los Angeles

Early in the twenty-first century, Los Angeles Jewry, with a population of nearly 520,000, constitutes 10 percent of the U.S. Jewish population. Jews make up about 5 percent of the population of Los Angeles County. Though Jewish names appear in the census of 1850, and Jews were active in the life of the booming City of Angels in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was in the post–World War II era that Los Angeles became the second most populous center of Jewish life in America. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Los Angeles Jewry had become a vibrant, well-rooted community, serving as a bellwether for emerging trends in Jewish life.

When California became a state in 1850, a census of Los Angeles County included eight recognizably Jewish names (Vorspan and Gartner 1970). Religious services seem to have been held intermittently in Los Angeles starting in 1851, and a Hebrew Benevolent Society was established in 1854. The Hebrew Benevolent Society, which extended aid to Jews and non-Jews, was the first charitable group of any kind to be established in the rough-and-tumble city, and it eventually metamorphosed into the Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles. As in other areas of Jewish settlement, one of the first acts of the society was the acquisition of burial grounds.

By 1860, 100 Jews are estimated to have settled in Los Angeles, constituting fewer than 1 percent of the more than 11,000 residents of the developing county (Vorspan and Gartner 1970). Yet, a synagogue (Congregation B'nai

Brith, today's Wilshire Boulevard Temple) was formally established in 1862 with the arrival of Rabbi Abraham Wolf Edelman (of Poland by way of San Francisco), who served as rabbi, *hazzan*, *shochet*, *mohel*, teacher, and ambassador to the larger community. The congregation's first building was dedicated in 1873.

Among the early Jewish residents of Los Angeles were such successful business families as the Newmarks and the Hellmans, whose mercantile interests ranged from wholesale groceries to apparel to banking. Jews were integral to the economic, civic, and social life of the community; indeed, one of the city's first eight Jews, Morris L. Goodman, was a member of the first City Council in 1850. Although most Jews were lax in their religious observance, Congregation B'nai Brith, led by Rabbi Edelman, maintained a traditional ritual—albeit with mixed seating—from its inception to 1884, when it moved toward religious Reform, joining the Union of Hebrew American Congregations (now the Union for Reform Judaism) in 1903.

By 1900, 2,500 Jews lived in Los Angeles within the larger population of 170,000 (Vorspan and Gartner 1970). One-third of these Jews lived downtown, the area of first Jewish settlement, representing one-third of that area's inhabitants (Sandberg 1986). In the ensuing decades, as Los Angeles experienced a population boom, Jews settled in a variety of neighborhoods, including Exposition Park, Central Avenue, Temple Street, West Adams, the Wilshire District, and Hollywood. With rising migration in the 1920s, Boyle Heights—east of downtown—became the largest visibly Jewish neighborhood on the West Coast, though it was also home to large numbers of Latinos, Molokan Russians, Japanese, and African Americans. Secular Yiddishists, political progressives, traditionally observant Jews, and Zionists—American-born and recent immigrants—were to be found in the culturally diverse streets of Boyle Heights.

The growth of the Jewish population of Los Angeles in the 1920s and 1930s outpaced the city's population surge. Although the great majority of Jewish newcomers to the city were Eastern European immigrants—often relocating to Los Angeles after stops in New York or Chicago—Sephardic Jews from Turkey, Greece, and Rhodes also joined the westward migration, many of them settling in South Los Angeles. Each immigrant group established schools, synagogues, and social welfare organizations that primarily served its subcultural population.

During the boom period of the 1920s, Jewish entrepreneurs stood at the forefront of the developing film industry, founding Columbia Pictures, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Paramount Pictures, Warner Brothers, and Universal Studios. Jews were also extensively involved in the clothing industry, as workers as well as manufacturers. Increasing numbers of Jews were engaged in clerical, managerial, and sales occupations. As elsewhere in the country during this period, social prejudice against Jews penetrated all levels of society. Jews were excluded, for example, from the Chamber of Commerce and the California Club, as well as from other communal and civic groups that they had helped to establish.

Jewish social organizations, as well as more than thirty congregations, served the needs of a growing community. By 1940, nearly 2.3 million people lived in Los Angeles County, among them nearly 130,000 Jews (Sandberg 1986); by 1951, 315,000 Jews were among the county's more than 4 million inhabitants (Vorspan and Gartner 1970). In the immediate post-World War II years, 1945–1948, 66,000 Jews are estimated to have settled in Los Angeles (Vorspan and Gartner 1970). Among the army veterans who settled in Los Angeles were many Jews who had been introduced to the area through periods of training at West Coast army bases. A disproportionately high percentage of the Jewish postwar newcomers were from the Midwest.

The San Fernando Valley, sparsely populated before the war, was home to more than 1 million inhabitants by the late 1950s. Jews made up 10 percent of valley residents, though in some areas they constituted 20–30 percent of the local population (Moore 1994). Today, some 250,000 Jews, about 50 percent of the Jewish population of Los Angeles, make the greater valleys area their home (Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles [JFGLA] 1998).

In the late 1940s and 1950s, the New York-based Jewish Theological Seminary (Conservative), Hebrew Union College (Reform), and Yeshiva University (Orthodox) all established branch institutions in what was, by 1955, the second-largest Jewish community in the country. Though Yeshiva University eventually closed its Los Angeles Teachers' Institute, the Orthodox-sponsored Touro College launched a Los Angeles branch in 2005. Jewish summer camps were established in the greater Los Angeles area, including the innovative Brandeis Camp Institute (later known as Brandeis-Bardin Institute in memory of its visionary founding director, Shlomo Bardin), operating re-

late experiences in Jewish living for collegians and adults. An expanded Bureau of Jewish Education (1945) organized and advanced Jewish educational opportunities for children and youth. The Jewish Community Council, an umbrella of local Jewish service delivery organizations (later to merge with the Federation of Jewish Welfare Organizations and to become known as the Jewish Federation-Council), built the Jewish Community Building at 590 North Vermont in 1951. Following the Jewish population, in 1976 it moved west to Wilshire Boulevard on the Beverly Hills border.

In 1953, Rosalind Wiener (later Wyman) became the first Jew elected to the Los Angeles City Council in more than fifty years, only the second woman to be elected to the council and, at age twenty-two, the youngest member ever elected. In the ensuing decades, Jews forged alliances with many of the groups active in Los Angeles political life. Jews played an active role in the region's civil and human rights movements and figured prominently in a coalition of ethnic groups that worked successfully to elect Tom Bradley mayor in 1973. Notable elected officials early in the twenty-first century with deep roots in the Los Angeles Jewish community include congressmen Howard Berman and Henry Waxman and county supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky.

In Los Angeles, large synagogues in developing neighborhoods came to provide many of the social and informal program services performed in some localities by Jewish community centers. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Jewish community centers in Hollywood-Los Feliz, the West Side, the East Valley, the North Valley, and the West Valley struggled to define themselves, attract a constituency, and develop financial stability.

As in other communities across the United States, Jewish day schools developed on a significant scale in the fifty years after World War II. From one small, struggling day school in 1940, by the beginning of the twenty-first century Los Angeles was home to thirty-six full-day Jewish schools serving nearly 10,000 students in grades K-12. By the end of the twentieth century, more than 12,000 students were enrolled in part-time religious education programs sponsored by fifty-four congregations, while the Los Angeles Hebrew High School (Conservative) and Union Hebrew High School (Reform) provided part-time Hebrew-based instruction to hundreds of high school youth. A growing number of early childhood centers (sixty by the

turn of the century) educated 7,000 children. Paralleling national trends, Hillel facilities and programs were expanded at area colleges and universities in the 1990s, and local universities included robust programs in Jewish studies.

By the closing decades of the twentieth century, the Jewish population of Los Angeles was estimated to have reached 519,000 persons. The population had been augmented by migration, including an influx of approximately 25,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union and 17,000 from Iran (JFGLA 1998). Additional immigrant groups included Israelis and Jews from South Africa. With an estimated 1.7 total Jewish fertility rate, Los Angeles's Jewish population is aging; while in 1979 11 percent of Los Angeles Jews were over 65, in 1997 the percentage had risen to 20.4, and it is projected to be 31 percent by the year 2020 (JFGLA 1998).

Yet, there is considerable vitality in Jewish life and culture at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Among the newer institutional expressions of Jewish activity in Los Angeles were the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance, the Skirball Cultural Center, which focuses on the American Jewish experience, a number of *Kolelim*—clusters of Talmudic scholars pursuing intensive (traditional) Jewish study and, in many cases, conducting community “outreach” programs—dozens of Chabad-sponsored congregations and schools, and rabbinical ordination programs at the Los Angeles branch of Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, the Ziegler School at the University of Judaism (now independent of the Jewish Theological Seminary, though maintaining academic affiliation with the parent institution), and the Academy for Jewish Religion, California, a nondenominational institution of higher Jewish learning. Notwithstanding the proliferation of Jewish educational and religious opportunities, 1997 data reflected a synagogue affiliation rate of 34 percent, significantly below the national average (JFGLA 1998). Still, there is an ever-expanding marketplace of synagogue options, and Los Angeles is home to such “first of their kind” congregations as the Synagogue for the Performing Arts, Temple Beth Solomon of the Deaf, and Beth Chayim Chadashim (a congregation serving gays and lesbians).

The Jews of Los Angeles are well represented in the fields of medicine, law, arts and entertainment, education, business, real estate, construction, and sales. There are thriving Jewish educational and cultural centers in Los An-

geles, and more Jews are more intensively connected with Jewish life than ever before in the city's history. Yet, amid the riches of culture and considerable economic success, there remains the challenge of poverty—the Jewish community's 1997 population survey identified 13 percent of Jewish households (10 percent of the Jewish population) as living below government-defined poverty indices (JFGLA 2000)—an aging population, and weakening identification with Jewish life among many, particularly as the Jewish population becomes more widely dispersed.

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## Chicago

Until about World War II, Chicago was the third-largest Jewish city in the world. German Jews were among the earliest settlers in the city and were followed by even greater numbers of East European Jews. Through the years, Chicago Jews were very active in Jewish movements, including the founding of the first organized Zionist group in America and the establishment of the Anti-Defamation League. Arriving as poor immigrants, in time they progressed in industry and the professions and became the founders of numerous major corporations. Many became prominent in government, the arts and sciences, and culture, both in the city and nation. Eight received the Nobel Prize.

The first Jews to settle in Chicago came in 1841, shortly after it had been incorporated (1833) as a muddy little lakefront town with 350 inhabitants. These early Jewish settlers came mainly from the German states, especially Bavaria, with smaller numbers from adjacent areas such as Austria and Bohemia. One of these early settlers was Henry Horner, whose grandson and namesake became the first Jewish governor of Illinois almost a century later. Like him, the early Jewish immigrants came mainly because of discrimination and harsh treatment in their homelands and the lure of freedom and opportunity in America. Many started out as peddlers with packs on their backs and later opened small grocery, dry-goods, tailoring, and clothing stores in the downtown area, where they lived behind or above their stores.

The Jews started developing community institutions shortly after their arrival in Chicago. In 1845 the first organized Jewish religious service in the city was held for Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, above a Jewish-owned dry-goods store with a bare *minyán* (the required quorum of ten men) present. In the same year, they organized the Jewish Burial Society, and in 1846 they purchased an acre of land for forty-six dollars for use as a Jewish cemetery. In 1847, with a Jewish population of fewer than a hundred, some twenty men organized the first synagogue, Kehilath Anshe Ma'ariv (Congregation of the People of the West, or KAM). One of its founders, Abraham Kohn, had pushed for its formation so the community would have a rabbi and a *shochet* (ritual slaughterer), which would allow his mother to follow her strict kosher dietary laws.

In 1851, as the congregation grew, it built its own wood-frame building, the first synagogue building in Illinois, at a cost of \$12,000. Although initially Orthodox, KAM was not sufficiently orthodox for the increasing number of Jews arriving from the Posen area of (Polish) Prussia. In 1852 they broke away from KAM, organized and built their own Orthodox synagogue, Kehilath B'nai Sholom (Congregation Sons of Peace), and used the Polish *siddur* (prayer book). A few years later, another dissatisfied group arose within KAM, who found KAM too orthodox. Thus in 1861, twenty-six men formed the Sinai Reform Congregation and, like the other two congregations, built a synagogue in the downtown area. Its first spiritual leader was Dr. Bernard Felsenthal, who was not a rabbi but was very active in the national Jewish arena. Two of these synagogues still exist. The Jewish community also founded

other organizations. The 1862 city directory listed eleven Jewish organizations, including a B'nai B'rith lodge, a literary association, cemeteries, the Hebrew Benevolent Society, and a number of women's groups—all under the umbrella of the first central Jewish relief organization of Chicago, the United Hebrew Relief Association.

By 1860 there were an estimated 1,500 Jews, mainly from Central Europe, out of a total Chicago population of about 100,000. The Jews rapidly adapted to America. They got along well with their non-Jewish neighbors, who were primarily European immigrants, many also from Germany. By 1861, twenty years after the first permanent Jewish settlers arrived, four Jews had already served in public office, three as aldermen and one as city clerk.

By the time of the Civil War, Jews had made considerable progress in business and in professions such as law and medicine. Over the years, many of their modest early businesses grew into well-known national companies, including Florsheim; Spiegel; Aldens; Kuppenheimer (clothing); Hart, Schaffner and Marx; A. G. Becker (finance); Albert Pick (hotels); Brunswick (recreation equipment); and Inland Steel.

During the Civil War, the Jewish community rapidly organized and financed a complete company of a hundred volunteer soldiers, which fought in the Battle of Gettysburg and other important battles. Dankmar Adler, who was the son of the rabbi of KAM and who later became a renowned architect and partner of Louis Sullivan, was wounded in the war.

The Great Chicago Fire of 1871 hit the Jewish community especially hard. Downtown Chicago, where so many of the Jews lived and had businesses, was devastated. Five of the city's seven synagogues were destroyed, as were four B'nai B'rith lodges and other Jewish institutions, including Chicago's first Jewish hospital, Jewish Hospital, which had opened in 1868. After the fire, a small number of Jews moved north of the Chicago River, forming the nucleus of the city's North Side Jewish community.

The vast majority, who were still mainly German Jews, gradually moved southward, eventually concentrating in the fashionable Chicago lakefront communities of Kenwood, Hyde Park, and South Shore (the Golden Ghetto), as well as in a few nearby communities. On the South Side, they established Jewish institutions to take care of their needs, including Michael Reese Hospital, opened in 1881, the Drexel Home for the Aged, the

Chicago Home for Jewish Orphans, the social Lakeside Club, and the social and civic Standard Club. At its peak just after World War II, an estimated 35,000 Jews lived on the South Side, served by about twenty synagogues, mainly Reform and Conservative, but later including a few Orthodox synagogues as some East European Jews began to move into the area.

Living in the South Side area and known for his anti-semitic views is Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, which is headquartered in Chicago. Through the years, Jewish street peddlers in Chicago have been harassed, *yeshiva* boys have been beaten, Jewish institutional buildings have been defaced and windows broken, and there have been restrictions against Jews in housing, education, and employment. In 1978 American Nazis attempted to march in Skokie, which housed many Holocaust survivors. Today, Jews live in all the major North Shore suburbs, some of which were restricted—closed to—Jews until after World War II. Antisemitic acts are now quite rare.

As the economic status of Jews improved, especially that of the German Jewish businessmen, they became heavy contributors to museums, hospitals, universities, and other philanthropic causes. Julius Rosenwald, chairman of the board of Sears Roebuck and Company, founded the Museum of Science and Industry in 1933, and Max Adler, also with Sears, established the Adler Planetarium in 1930. Jews also contributed heavily to the University of Chicago, which had no Jewish quotas. In the late 1950s, as the racial composition of the area changed rapidly, the South Side Jewish community began to decline in size. Today only a few thousand Jews live on the South Side, mainly in Hyde Park around the University of Chicago, where they are served by two remaining synagogues.

East European Jews started arriving in Chicago after the Great Chicago fire of 1871. By 1880 they constituted only a small part of Chicago's 10,000 Jews. However, after the brutal pogroms in the Russian empire in 1881 and the repressive May Laws of 1882, Russian Polish Jews started coming to Chicago in especially large numbers, along with Jews from other areas of Eastern Europe. By 1900, when the city's Jewish population had reached almost 80,000, about 52,000 were from Eastern Europe, drawn by the numerous economic opportunities offered by the rapidly growing city. By 1930, after Jewish immigration had

peaked, Chicago's Jewish population was about 272,000, about 80 percent of whom were from Eastern Europe. The remainder were largely from Central Europe, with about 2 percent Sephardic Jews from the Middle East and the Mediterranean area. At that time, the Jews constituted about 9 percent of the city's population, and Chicago was the third-largest Jewish city in the world, surpassed only by New York and Warsaw, Poland.

The Eastern European Jews were largely poor *shtetl* (village or small town) Jews, who differed markedly from their German Jewish brethren in religious beliefs, traditions, dress, demeanor, language, and economic status. In autocratic Eastern Europe, they had had little opportunity for secular education, although the men were generally learned in Hebraic studies. The German Jews feared that the presence of hordes of immigrant Eastern European Jews might result in intensified antisemitism. The Eastern European Jews, in turn, perceived that most of the German Jews had strayed from traditional Judaism and were often trying to emulate their Christian neighbors.

On arrival, the Eastern European Jews moved into the Maxwell Street area, just southwest of downtown, an area that had been abandoned by other immigrant groups. Here, from 1880 to almost 1920, was Chicago's largest Jewish community. In the Maxwell Street area, the Eastern European Jews re-created a *shtetl* atmosphere, including a bazaar-like outdoor market renowned for its variety of new and used merchandise and for bargaining. The market attracted not only the local populace but also customers from the entire metropolitan area, making it at one time the third-largest retail area in the city. Anything could be bought or sold there. The aroma of food and the shouts of the buyers and sellers filled the air. The Maxwell Street area was lined with kosher meat markets, *matzo* bakeries, tobacco stores, groceries, fruit stores, clothing stores, tailor and seamstress shops, peddlers, horse stables, bathhouses, restaurants and snack stands, secondhand stores, a number of Yiddish theaters, and hundreds of pushcarts. Religious institutions included about forty synagogues (all but one Orthodox), numerous Hebrew schools, sacramental wine dealers, Orthodox Yiddish newspaper offices, midwives, *shadchans* (marriage arrangers), *mohels* (for circumcisions), and *shochets*.

Led mainly by Rabbi Emil Hirsch of Congregation KAM and by Julius Rosenwald, the German Jews, who were quite prosperous by this time, tried to improve the condi-

tions of their poorer Eastern European brethren crowded into the Maxwell Street ghetto. They helped build an educational institution (the Jewish Training School), a health facility (the Chicago Maternity Center), a social service and recreational facility (the Chicago Hebrew Institute), and other institutions that would speed their Americanization. The Eastern European Jews made extensive use of these facilities, although some felt they were treated in a paternalistic manner.

The dichotomy between the two groups persisted for many years. Each group had its own neighborhoods, synagogues, social clubs, hospitals, newspapers, fraternal organizations, and children's camps. They also voted differently: German Jews were mainly Republicans; although initially some East European Jews were Republican, later they were largely Democrats. The bitter 1909–1910 garment strike pitted the German Jewish factory owners, including Hart, Schaffner and Marx, against the largely East European Jewish workforce. Until recent decades, intermarriage occurred when a German Jew married an East European Jew.

A long list of prominent people once lived in the Maxwell Street neighborhood. These include Benny Goodman, Supreme Court justice Arthur Goldberg, Admiral Hyman Rickover, radio and television Columbia Broadcasting System founder William Paley, novelist Meyer Levin, Oscar-winning actor Paul Muni, social activist Saul Alinsky, movie mogul Barney Balaban, a number of political figures such as Colonel Jacob Arvey and federal judge Abraham Lincoln Marovitz, and local business entrepreneurs such as Morrie Mages (retail sporting goods), John Keeshin (trucking), and Harris Chernin (retail shoes). Being a tough neighborhood, Maxwell Street produced two world champion boxers, Jackie Fields and Barney Ross, as well as Al Capone's accomplice Jake "Greasy Thumb" Guzik.

Starting about 1910, the East European Jews could afford to leave the densely populated Maxwell Street neighborhood. They moved to better areas on the north and northwest sides—Humboldt Park, Logan Square, Albany Park, and Rogers Park. Small numbers moved into the German Jewish areas on the South Side, but the overwhelming number moved three miles west into the Lawndale area. By 1940, 125,000 Jews, about 40 percent of the metropolitan area's total Jewish population, lived in Lawndale, forming by far the largest Jewish community

Chicago ever had. At its peak, the Greater Lawndale area had sixty synagogues (fifty-eight of which were Orthodox), the Hebrew Theological College, the Jewish People's Institute (JPI), which was a major community center, numerous Hebrew schools, a number of Yiddish theaters, and many Zionist, religious, adult education, and political organizations, as well as Jewish labor unions and dozens of *vereins* or *landsmanshaftn* (organizations of immigrants from the same town in the Old Country). The main commercial street was Roosevelt Road, which for more than a mile contained almost exclusively Jewish-owned bookstores, theaters, restaurants, funeral parlors, banks, meeting halls, cabarets, and a large variety of food, clothing, and furniture stores, interspersed with a number of gambling hangouts.

*Yiddishkeit* (traditional Judaic customs and traditions) permeated the neighborhood, especially on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. On those days the synagogues and the boulevards were crowded with Jews dressed in their finest, sometimes dancing and singing, before returning home for the traditional meals. On the morning of Sukkot, men were seen heading to the synagogues carrying the traditional *lulav* (palm branch) and *etrog* (citrus fruit), and on Rosh Hashanah an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 gathered at the Douglas Park lagoon for *Tashlich*, the symbolic casting of their sins into the water. The community was also alive culturally and intellectually, with outdoor soapbox orators of various persuasions endlessly addressing the crowds on Roosevelt Road. *Yiddishkeit* also thrived in varying degrees in the other Jewish neighborhoods in the city.

After World War II, Jews began to move out of Lawndale. Buoyed by a dynamic economy and government-backed mortgages with low interest rates and small down payments, many could now afford homes of their own, and there were few single-family houses in Lawndale. By 1960, no Jews remained in Lawndale. Some Jews moved to South Shore on the South Side, but most joined their more affluent brethren on the north and northwest sides in Rogers Park along Lake Michigan, in the more diverse Humboldt Park and Logan Square communities where Jewish writers and some radicals lived, and in Albany Park, which, with some 45,000 Jews, was the city's second-largest Jewish community in the immediate post-World War II period. On a somewhat smaller scale, these communities carried on many of the activities and traditions that had been prevalent in Lawndale. Unlike Lawndale, however, which

was almost solidly Orthodox, these communities had Orthodox and Conservative synagogues and Reform temples. By the 1960s, many Jews had moved out of these communities, going farther north into West Ridge (West Rogers Park) or the northern suburbs.

In 2004, West Rogers Park, with a population of about 32,000 Jews, was the largest Jewish community left in Chicago and has numerous Jewish institutions. A majority of the Jews are Orthodox, and the rhythm of Jewish life is still visible throughout the neighborhood; indeed, a small stretch of Devon Avenue bears a resemblance to the earlier Roosevelt Road in Lawndale. Many Jewish schools serve the large number of Orthodox children in the area.

Several thousand Jews also live near or along the north lakefront. Many are young professionals, while others are retirees or empty-nesters who have returned to the city after raising their children in the suburbs. Many are especially active in the cultural and political activities of the city.

Recent decades have witnessed a major movement of Jews to the suburbs. In 1950 only about 5 percent of Jews lived in the suburbs; in 2000, the estimate was almost 70 percent. Recently, however, the number of Jews moving from the suburbs to the city has become slightly higher than the number leaving the city for the suburbs, signaling a new, though possibly temporary, trend. The city's Jewish population has also been augmented by an estimated 25,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union who began arriving in the 1970s, most of whom have continued to reside in the city. Overall, nearly 50 percent of the metropolitan area's Jewish population was born outside the Chicago metropolitan area.

The southern and western suburbs each include an estimated 20,000 Jews. To the south, the largest concentrations of Jews are in Flossmoor, Homewood, and Olympia Fields, and in Hammond and Munster, Indiana. To the west, the largest concentrations of Jews are found in Oak Park, River Forest, and Naperville, the latter a rapidly growing community with increasing numbers of Jews. Overall, however, the southern and western suburban Jewish population is not expanding; in some areas it is even declining.

By contrast, about 150,000 Jews dwell in the northern and northwestern suburbs, which continue to grow selectively, based on location, housing costs, transportation, and Jewish facilities. In the early 1900s, some wealthy Ger-

man Jews from the South Side of Chicago, led by Julius Rosenwald, established homes in Highland Park and Glencoe, two of the few northern lakefront suburbs that were not closed to Jews. After World War II, with the restrictive covenants mostly removed, large numbers of Jews left their racially changing neighborhoods for the close-in suburbs of Skokie and Lincolnwood, and soon their population was at least half Jewish. This movement continued further outward into Wilmette, Morton Grove, Niles, Des Plaines, Glenview, Evanston, Arlington Heights, Schaumburg, and Hoffman Estates, as well as Highland Park and Glencoe. More recently, Jews have moved still farther out, to Northbrook, Deerfield, Vernon Hills, Wheeling, and Buffalo Grove. Buffalo Grove has grown especially rapidly and now has about ten synagogues. The migration has been fostered, in part, by lower home prices and by parents and grandparents from the city and inner suburbs following their children and grandchildren outward.

With every move farther away from Chicago, Jewish density, political influence, and Yiddishkeit have declined. But whenever there are enough Jews in a suburban area, they have established a synagogue, often followed by Jewish educational institutions and sometimes Jewish community centers. In the outward suburban movement, the Orthodox *shuln* of Maxwell Street and Lawndale have often been succeeded by large Conservative synagogues and Reform temples. Overall, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, there are 140 synagogues, 62 of them Orthodox-Traditional; 37 Reform; 33 Conservative; 3 Reconstructionist; and 5 nondenominational. The Reform and Conservative congregations usually have larger memberships than the Orthodox; consequently, estimates indicate that 35 percent of the religiously affiliated are Reform, 35 percent are Conservative, and the remainder are largely Orthodox-Traditional, except for a small number who are Reconstructionist.

Chicago Jewry has a vast network of important Jewish organizations and movements; indeed, a number of national organizations originated in the city. The National Council of Jewish Women, founded in 1893, grew out of the World's Parliament of Religions held at the World's Columbian Exposition, which took place in the city in that year. The first Herzelian Zionist group in the country was organized in 1895 in Chicago with Bernard Horwich as president. In 1938, renowned Rabbi Solomon Goldman of Congregation Anshe Emet became the first non-easterner

to become president of the Zionist Organization of America. In 1913, due chiefly to the efforts of lawyer Sigmund Livingston, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith was founded in Chicago to fight antisemitism.

In 1923 the German and East European Jewish charitable organizations merged to form what is today the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, with Julius Rosenwald as its first president. Thousands of Jews contribute millions of dollars each year to the Federation—\$71 million in 2003. The Federation is an umbrella organization that helps fund overseas Jewry, seniors, education, youth groups, religious and cultural activities, medical facilities, Jewish community centers, and myriad other Jewish causes. Chicago also has active branches of national Jewish organizations such as Hadassah, ORT, B'nai B'rith, various Zionist groups, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the American Jewish Committee, and the American Jewish Congress. The Chicago Jewish community supports major educational institutions, including Hebrew Theological College and the Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies with its adjoining Spertus Museum. The once powerful, mainly immigrant organizations—the Workmen's Circle (*Arbeiter Ring*), which had 43 branches and 4 children's schools, the more than 600 *landmanshaftn* or *vereinen*, and the more than 30 Jewish trade unions—have all virtually disappeared, as the early immigrants have largely been replaced by their more acculturated descendants, and newer immigrants have created or joined other organizations that meet their needs. The children and grandchildren of the immigrants have neither their progenitors' ties to the Old World nor their experiences as factory workers, craftsmen, or peddlers, as most moved into business and the professions. The Eastern European Jews now generally have the same social and economic status as the German Jews. The old dichotomy has virtually disappeared.

As many Jews prospered, a number became philanthropists. Among the current major contributors to Jewish and non-Jewish causes are the Crowns (who made their wealth in industry), the Pritzkers (in hotels), and the Rubloffs (in real estate).

Chicago Jews became national leaders of labor and liberal organizations. Sidney Hillman, his wife Bessie Abramovitz, Sol Brandzel, Jacob Potofsky, Stan Smith, and Samuel Levin were prominent in the garment workers' unions. Lillian Herstein was a dynamic organizer of the

teachers' union, a founder of the American Civil Liberties Union, and the American representative to the International Labor Organization in Switzerland. U.S. congressmen Adolph J. Sabbath, Sidney Yates, and Abner Mikva were also among the noted liberals of twentieth-century Chicago.

As most Chicago Jews now live in the suburbs, Jews' political clout in the city has declined. In 1971, seven of the fifty city aldermen were Jewish; in 2005, only three. There has never been a Jewish mayor of Chicago, although Jews have held other important city offices. Two Jewish governors of Illinois came from the Chicago area, Henry Horner and Sam Shapiro. Two active liberal Democrats, Rahm Emanuel and Jan Schakowsky, currently represent Chicago in the U.S. Congress.

The city boasted a number of Jewish newspapers, mainly in Yiddish, ranging in political orientation from the Orthodox *Daily Jewish Courier* (1892–1944) to the socialist *Jewish Daily Forward* (1920–1953) to the communist *Der Morgan Freiheit* (1922–1988). And Chicago was home, at least for a time, to many prominent Jewish writers, including Ben Hecht, Edna Ferber, Meyer Levin, Saul Bellow, Albert Halper, Louis Zara, Nelson Algren (who was half Jewish), Studs Terkel, Isaac Rosenfeld, Leo Rosten, Sam Ross, and Maxwell Bodenheim. Others in literary fields are columnists Sydney J. Harris and Irv Kupcinet, playwright David Mamet, movie critic Gene Siskel, and advice columnist Ann Landers (Eppie Lederer).

Among the Jewish artists who called Chicago home were Todros Geller, whose work was imbued with Jewish tradition; sculptor Milton Horn, whose works are displayed in Chicago and elsewhere on public, organizational, and synagogue buildings; and Aaron Bohrod, an American realist painter of international renown. Prominent architects include Alfred Alschuler, Dankmar Adler, Bertrand Goldberg, and Stanley Tigerman. Arthur Rubloff and Philip Klutznick are among Chicago's major real estate developers. Klutznick, who served as a national Jewish leader and high government official, was President Jimmy Carter's secretary of commerce.

A number of talented Jewish conductors, although usually not Chicago natives, have led the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for long periods. These include Fritz Reiner, Sir George Solti, and pianist-conductor Daniel Barenboim. Notable in the field of popular music are Benny Goodman, Art Hodes, Mel Tormé, and Mandy Patinkin. Many comedians came from Chicago, including

Shelley Berman, Morey Amsterdam, Allan Sherman, Jackie Leonard, and the perennial thirty-nine-year-old from Waukegan, Jack Benny. Michael Todd, the movie impresario, came from the Wicker Park neighborhood.

Jews have also been successful in law, medicine, and business. They started many incubator businesses, ranging from Charles Lubin's Sara Lee to Gordon and Carol Segal's Crate and Barrel.

Although Chicago Jews today differ in many ways from their immigrant forebears, many continue to maintain much of their culture, liberalism, and values, albeit in modified form. Although not as dependent on Jewish institutions, they have built a new set of these facilities in the suburbs. Of the many population groups that make up Chicago, Jews are among the best educated, most prosperous, most ardent supporters of the arts and literature, and highest per capita contributors in caring for their own. Some of the old problems—poverty, discrimination, and the friction between German and East European Jews—have largely disappeared, replaced by new problems, including intermarriage and some internal religious friction, for example, between the Orthodox and other Jewish religious groups. The community continues to be concerned about the safety and welfare of Israel and growing international antisemitism, although they are sometimes divided by their approach to these problems.

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## Philadelphia

Philadelphia is a founding American community that spawned many of the institutions and organizations that define American Jewish communal life. It was the first community in America with two congregations, both formed before 1800—Mikveh Israel (1740) and Rodeph Shalom (1795), the first Ashkenazic synagogue established in the Western Hemisphere. Philadelphia is the sixth-largest city in the United States (2006). Its metropolitan Jewish population (2002) was estimated to be the fourth largest in the United States and the ninth largest in the world, amounting to 285,000 in the Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area utilized by the U.S. Census—stretching from Camden, New Jersey, to Wilmington, Delaware, and including Philadelphia proper and its four surrounding counties (Montgomery, Bucks, Chester, and Delaware). Precedent-setting innovation of national significance that defined the infrastructure of American Jewry as a whole stands as the defining characteristic of Philadelphia Jewry from the early nineteenth century until at least the 1920s.

### National Innovations

Numerous social and religious structures that came to define American Jewry owe their origins and first successful implementations to Philadelphia. Paralleling the city's role as the first capital of the United States, Jewish Philadelphia established lasting systems of religious observance, social support, publishing, and education. Philadelphia's Jews translated classical Jewish texts into lucid English and melded Jewish tradition with American democratic ideals. Although many American Jewish institutions first emerged in Philadelphia, its lasting contributions lie in the establishment of communal structures that subsequently became the standard throughout the United States.

During the nineteenth century, Philadelphia served as the incubator of Jewish communal innovations. This phenomenon was no accident. Philadelphia benefited from social and political acceptance, relative economic stability, and a consistent record of leadership by a cadre of inventive and intelligent communal leaders. First among them was undoubtedly Isaac Leeser (1806–1868), the *hazzan* (professional religious leader) of the city’s founding congregation, Mikveh Israel. Leeser’s American Jewish innovations include *The Occident*, the first successful American Jewish newspaper, which also served as a magazine and forum for debate; a Jewish publication society (1845), whose successor organization continues today; the first Hebrew high school (the Hebrew Education Society, 1849); and the first Jewish theological seminary, Maimonides College (1867). He also was a leader in the Board of Delegates of American Israelites (1859), the first American Jewish defense organization. Beyond institutional structures, Leeser lent his intellectual control of both Jewish sources and the English language to the publication of numerous translations and commentaries that made classical Jewish texts accessible to an American Jewish community that generally lacked fluency in Hebrew or familiarity with Jewish literature beyond the Bible. Addressing these challenges, Leeser produced translations of the Sephardic and Ashkenazic prayer books, the first English translation of the entire Hebrew Bible by an American Jew (1853), the first volumes of sermons delivered by an American Jewish leader (1837–1867), and the first Hebrew textbook for children published in the United States (1839).

In Philadelphia, Isaac Leeser was not alone as an innovator of American Jewish religious institutions. His local contemporaries and protégés, men and women, were creators in their own right. Indeed, after Leeser’s death in 1868, other “firsts” that Philadelphia subsequently contributed to the American Jewish community often emerged from the concepts and actions of leaders whom he had inspired. Thus, the Jewish Theological Seminary was founded in 1886 in New York by a Philadelphia rabbi, Sabato Morais, who was its first president. Gratz College, the first Jewish teachers’ college in the United States, was established through a trust provided by Hyman Gratz (1776–1857). Dropsie College (later University), the first postgraduate institution for Jewish learning in the world, was opened in 1907 and named for Moses Dropsie, with Cyrus Adler as its president. In addition, such institutions

as the American Jewish Committee, the Jewish Chautauqua Society, the American Jewish Historical Society, and many elements of the Conservative movement were first formed in whole or in part in Philadelphia.

## Women as Innovators and Leaders

Philadelphia’s Jewish community is also striking for the early, substantive roles that women played in leadership and learning. The quintessential exemplar of this trend was Rebecca Gratz (1781–1869). She was the most prominent among a number of generally middle- and upper-class Jewish women of central and western European descent who were members of Mikveh Israel and who devoted themselves to volunteer charitable work. Their efforts concentrated on social welfare and education. They were particularly innovative and successful between 1840 and 1900. Nineteenth-century American women from comfortable families often found outlets outside the home limited to charitable volunteering. Gratz and her coworkers were noteworthy for their development of communal structures that became the norm throughout the American Jewish community. In 1819, basing their new organization on the model of nonsectarian women’s welfare organizations, these women established the first American Jewish charitable organization outside a synagogue. The Female Hebrew Benevolent Society first sought to aid indigent families but developed other targeted welfare organizations, including the Female Hebrew Sewing Society (1838) and the Jewish Foster Home (1855). During the Civil War, the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society established offshoots to address the needs of soldiers and their families.

Under Rebecca Gratz’s leadership, Philadelphia Jewish women inaugurated religious educational systems that were later copied by other American communities. In 1838, inspired by Protestant models, they established the first Hebrew Sunday school in America. Philadelphia’s Hebrew Sunday School set a precedent even for its non-Jewish analogues by admitting girls on an equal basis with boys. That innovation laid the groundwork for more advanced Jewish educational institutions. When Gratz College was established in 1895, it became the first Jewish institution of higher education to accept and encourage women on an equal basis with men. Despite these progressive policies, the lives of the female leaders

often represented a choice. Rebecca Gratz—and most of the women who led with her—never married. Neither did Isaac Leeser.

### The Philadelphia Group

The successors to Leeser and Rebecca Gratz in precedent-setting Jewish leadership have been categorized as the “Philadelphia Group.” Exclusively male and primarily traditional or Orthodox in their religious orientation, they tended to be well educated in Jewish and general areas, and intellectual and scholarly by inclination and accomplishment. In this, they differed from Jewish leaders in New York, who came largely from the ranks of business and the law and possessed great wealth. At the core of the Philadelphia Group were:

Judge Mayer Sulzberger (1843–1923), a disciple of Leeser and the senior member of the Philadelphia Group, who was a founder of the Jewish Publication Society (1888) and the American Jewish Committee (AJC) (1906), and who played a key role in the Conservative movement by bringing Solomon Schechter to the Jewish Theological Seminary and providing the foundation for the Seminary’s preeminent Jewish library. Sulzberger was also the first president of the AJC.

Cyrus Adler (1863–1940), an Assyriologist who became librarian of the Smithsonian Institution; a founder of the Jewish Publication Society, the American Jewish Historical Society (1892), the AJC, and the United Synagogue of America; an editor of the *American Jewish Year Book* (1899–1905), *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901–1906), and the *Jewish Quarterly Review* (1916–1940); president of Dropsie College (1908–1940) and later, simultaneously, the Jewish Theological Seminary (acting, 1915–1924; permanent, 1924–1940).

Moses Aaron Dropsie (1821–1905), a scholar and author of legal history and Roman law; active supporter of Philadelphia’s short-lived Maimonides College; an opponent of the Jewish Theological Seminary and of Reform Judaism. Dropsie left his wealth to establish Dropsie College (later University) as an independent, nontheological, academic institution that provided graduate instruction and facilitated research in Jewish and related branches of learning.

Rabbi Sabato Morais (1823–1897), Leeser’s successor at Mikveh Israel and the leading traditional rabbi in the United States following Leeser’s death. He was the pivotal figure in the founding of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen, a physician and medical researcher as well as a Jewish scholar, poet, and Hebrew translator. He was a founder of the Jewish Publication Society and the *American Hebrew*, another organ of news and debate.

Louis Edward Levy (1846–1919), a newspaper editor who invented “Levytype,” which allowed newspapers to print halftone pictures. Levy committed himself to the needs of Jewish immigrants and became a founder and president of the Association for Relief and Protection of Jewish Immigrants (1884).

Rabbi Bernard L. Levinthal (1865–1952), who was trained and ordained by the leading lights of Lithuania and came to Philadelphia in 1891, soon thereafter becoming the rabbinic leader of its Orthodox Jewish community. A founder of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada (1902), he was its first president. He served as president of Yeshiva University’s Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, but was also a founder of the AJC and of the Mizrahi Organization of America, and an honorary vice president of the Federation of American Zionists.

On the edge of the Philadelphia Group were:

Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf (1858–1923), rabbi of the Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel and a leader of Radical Reform and its Pittsburgh Platform (1885), and later president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (1903–1905). Originally an anti-Zionist, he modified his views in later life.

Rabbi Henry Berkowitz (1857–1924), rabbi of Congregation Rodeph Shalom and founder of the Jewish Chautauqua Society; he was a key proponent in the establishment of Philadelphia’s Federation of Jewish Philanthropies (1901).

Abraham S. Rosenbach (1876–1952), a bibliophile and book dealer who served as president of the American Jewish Historical Society, he was a benefactor of Gratz College and the Jewish Division of the New York Public

Library. He was a founder and first president of the American Friends of the Hebrew University.

Horace Stern (1879–1969), justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court (1935–1957; chief justice, 1952–1957); he was director of the Philadelphia Federation of Jewish Charities, briefly president of Dropsie College, and vice president of the Jewish Publication Society of America, 1914–1965.

The Philadelphia Group did more than innovate. Its membership is characterized by unusual or productive alliances between scholarly lay leaders who possessed considerable but not generally great wealth and rabbis of national significance, between staunchly Orthodox religious leaders and those who were radically Reform, between non-Zionists and Zionists. They were linked by broad intellectual acumen and by a commitment to transform visionary ideals into practical realities by establishing effective national organizations to which they devoted their personal time, as well as often the bulk of their financial resources.

## Philadelphia and the Jewish Movements

Despite often-positive personal associations, Philadelphia's religious leaders were by no means unified theologically. Indeed, the community helped to define and separate American Jewish movements. Like Leeser and Morais, Levinthal often maintained warm ties with the broad stretch of the Philadelphia Jewish communal leadership and its associated organizations such as the AJC and the American Jewish Congress. Yet, he saw his role as establishing the communal institutions that would guide American Orthodoxy. From local *kashrut* agencies and rabbinical courts to the leading institutions of American Orthodoxy, Levinthal played a central role. Though a close associate of Dr. Cyrus Adler, he eschewed a possible merger between the Jewish Theological Seminary and Yeshiva University in 1926 when the two were in parallel positions of leadership in their respective movements and seminaries. Known as the “Dean of Orthodox Rabbis” (Philip Rosen in Friedman 1993), he did not hesitate to espouse positions that were controversial within his own community, including strong advocacy of Religious Zionism.

Philadelphia's early and defining impact on the Conservative movement is well documented in the leadership

of Cyrus Adler and Sabato Morais. Yet, Philadelphia's centrality continued throughout the twentieth century, during which the community became the bastion of Conservative Judaism. By 1970 there were 110 Jewish congregations in the Philadelphia area, approximately 50 of which were Conservative, 45 Orthodox, and 15 Reform, leading to the characterization that in Philadelphia “the dominant religious thrust of the community was Conservative” (Korn 1972). By the mid-1990s, there were 94 synagogues: 40 Conservative, 29 Orthodox or Traditional (20 Orthodox, 3 Sephardi, 6 Traditional), 19 Reform, 5 Reconstructionist, and 1 Progressive. By 2007, there were 87 synagogues: 31 Conservative (26 affiliated with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and 5 that define themselves as Conservative), 29 Orthodox or Traditional (20 Orthodox, 3 Sephardi, 6 Traditional), 8 Reconstructionist, 1 Jewish Renewal, 16 Reform (11 affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism and 5 that define themselves as Reform), 1 Humanistic, and 1 unaffiliated. Thus, while Reform and Reconstructionist congregations held their own or expanded and Orthodoxy stemmed its earlier losses, Conservative Judaism in Philadelphia saw a significant continuing decline in congregations, a phenomenon that is consistent with national trends, but is particularly dramatic in Philadelphia due to its historic centrality for the Conservative movement.

Despite the dominance of Conservative Judaism and the national leaders of Orthodoxy, Philadelphia played a central role in the advancement of the Reform movement nationally through two defining congregations, Rodeph Shalom and Keneseth Israel, and through a series of rabbis who facilitated and refined the ideals of the Reform movement. Beyond Krauskopf and Berkowitz, David Einhorn—who fled Baltimore for Keneseth Israel near the outbreak of the Civil War because of his abolitionist views—set the tone for Reform liturgy throughout the first three-quarters of the twentieth century. In the twentieth century, rabbis such as Bertram Korn and David Wice personified the rabbi as scholar and advocate on the national Reform scene.

Philadelphia's ongoing centrality to the varieties of Jewish religious experience is perhaps best demonstrated by the Reconstructionist movement, which consciously placed its seminary and the seat of its congregational movement in Philadelphia. Avoiding the vastness of the New York Jewish community, the seminary's founder,

Rabbi Ira Eisenstein, felt that to succeed, the new rabbinical school would require a vibrant Jewish community, access to universities, and economical housing. “Only Philadelphia satisfied all three requirements” (Dan Rottenberg in Friedman 2003).

Despite the challenges affecting American Jewry in the twenty-first century, Philadelphia has continued to attract leading rabbis in all four movements who both mold their congregations and participate in the continuing redefinition of their respective communities nationally. Like their predecessors, they are active in the dialogue of their movements and of Judaism generally. Their work is supplemented by major academic scholarship in Jewish studies taking place at the University of Pennsylvania, Temple University, Gratz College, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, and other academic institutions within the Greater Philadelphia area.

### Funding the Future

The effective alliance between scholar-activists and visionary philanthropists that made Philadelphia’s national contributions to American Jewish life so successful has seen modification over the last century. In 1901, six years after Boston established the first Jewish federation, Jacob Gimbel, the department-store heir, became the first president of the new Federation of Jewish Charities (FJC), a coalescence of earlier Jewish charitable societies such as the United Hebrew Charities (1869). From its inception, the FJC was led by scions of the German Jewish elite, who tended to be non- or anti-Zionists. In 1938 the Allied Jewish Appeal was formed to provide funds for the budding Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel. By 1956 the Zionist controversies had dissipated sufficiently to permit the merger of the Federation of Jewish Charities and the Allied Jewish Appeal to form the Federation of Jewish Agencies (FJA). In 1990 the FJA adopted the name Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia (JFGP). Despite these amalgamations, the JFGP witnessed a continuing decline in its annual campaign for unrestricted contributions. Many leading Philadelphia Jewish philanthropists continued to provide support to the JFGP, particularly for emergency funds for Israel. In addition, under the leadership of philanthropic activists Joseph and Connie Smukler in alliance with Natan (Anatoly) Sharansky, one of the leading Prisoners of Conscience, Philadelphia took a preeminent na-

tional role in the battle for Soviet emigration. Nevertheless, significant numbers of Federation supporters, together with other major Jewish funders without Federation involvement, contributed the bulk of their philanthropic resources to non-Jewish causes or to specific Jewish projects and agencies of their choice.

To address these trends, the JFGP established a Strategic Philanthropy Committee in 2003. Its report acknowledged that “[the] Federation (like many others) has lost its edge.” It established new priorities for support: creating “an *inspired* Jewish Community . . . [for] our under-affiliated population and by making high quality education available to children”; “building a *caring* Jewish Community by expressing important Jewish values and reducing Jewish poverty, providing safety net services and expanding social action and volunteering”; and developing “a *connected* Jewish Community that links us to each other, Israel and Jews around the world.” In a departure for an organization previously known as the Federation of Jewish Agencies, the Federation rejected a system based on allocations to constituent agencies. “Accordingly, Federation funding for those agencies and grantees whose work falls outside the scope of Federation’s stated priorities will, after a reasonable period of transition, be reallocated toward the fulfillment of those priorities and away from historical funding patterns; where agency and grantee work cannot be realigned within the priorities, funding will be greatly reduced or terminated.” The report suggested that once such priorities are met, funders will increase their giving generally (*Strategic Philanthropy Plan* 2003).

As of 2006, many constituent agencies had reordered their activities to meet the new priorities of the JFGP, and its bold change in approach had allowed the Federation to begin to redirect its limited resources. However, Philadelphia’s Jewish communal agencies generally witnessed substantial reductions in financial support from the JFGP, despite the fact that many of those agencies have long been in the forefront of their fields nationally. In addition, hoped-for increases in major gifts had not materialized for unrestricted allocable funds, though significant restricted and directed funds have been secured.

Whether Philadelphia will return to its role as America’s precedent-setting Jewish community remains unknown. The dramatic challenges affecting American Jewish life—that is, broad societal acceptance and material success on the one hand and the appeal of assimilation, aided by

ignorance of heritage and culture on the other—require creative and effective responses. The JFGP’s strategic plan represents one such effort. If it or another facilitating approach succeeds, Philadelphia Jewry could well return to its historic primacy in American Jewish leadership and innovation and may thereby again advance the future of American Jewry itself.

*Jonathan Rosenbaum*

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## Jews in the South

Since earliest colonial times, Jews have settled across the South, although their numbers were rarely significant. Jews readily acculturated, yet they remained outsiders. The Jewish experience in the South was ambivalent. Jews were white people in a biracial society, but they were neither Christian nor Anglo-Saxon.

Whether the region’s Jews created a distinctly Southern Jewish ethnic identity has been much debated. Eli Evans, in his portraits of Southern Jews, depicts a culturally unique people rooted in a region and to a history (Evans 2005). Mark Bauman argues that the narrative of Southern Jews more closely resembles that of American Jews than that of Christian Southerners (Bauman 1996). Stephen Whitfield refers to Southern Jews as having a “braided identity,” hybrids whose various ethnic strands remained distinct rather than blended (Whitfield 1988). Behind these questions lies the problematic identity of the South—whether the region is one place or many and whether it differs culturally from mainstream America. Southern Jewry includes both the Russian-born storekeeper in an Appalachian coal town, and the Old South, Sephardic aristocrat in Charleston. Jews in agrarian market towns in the Mississippi Delta or the Carolina Piedmont had different experiences from those in metropolitan centers such as Memphis, Atlanta, or Baltimore, which supported vibrant Jewish communal and institutional life.

Many attributes that commonly define Southern Jews— isolation, neighborliness, and heightened group and religious awareness—are typical of small-town Jews regardless of region. And Southern Jews, like other American Jews, arrived in multinational waves of migration. Their high rates of geographic mobility also challenge the claim that Southern Jews are a uniquely rooted people. In most communities, Jewish newcomers outnumber natives. Jews moved readily across regional borders in search of economic opportunity, and family and commercial networks linked them to Northern Jews. Like Jews generally, Southern Jews’ sense of communal responsibility extended beyond their locales to embrace global Jewry.

Prior to forming communities, small numbers of Jews settled the southern coast in patterns typical of colonial Jewry. The colonies on Roanoke Island in 1585 and at Jamestown as early as 1621 each included a Jew. Trade and family kept Southern port Jews connected to Jews in Newport, Rhode Island, the Caribbean, and London. Jews began settling in Charleston in 1695. In 1733, one year after a debtor’s colony was established in Georgia, the Bevis Marks congregation of London sent forty-two impoverished, mostly Sephardic, Jews to Savannah. A community formed in Richmond in the late 1700s. In the 1820s, the planter Moses Levy, who owned vast Florida lands, aspired to create a utopian colony there for distressed Jews.

Jews found the South in the colonial and early national periods relatively tolerant by contemporary standards. By 1800 three of America's five synagogues—Savannah (1735), Charleston (1749), and Richmond (1789)—were located in the South. In 1820 the Charleston Jewish community of seven hundred was the largest in America. In 1786 Virginia passed a Statute for Religious Freedom at a time when virtually all states had constitutional religious tests against Jews holding public office. Still, Maryland did not enact a Jew Bill until 1826, and North Carolina eliminated the disqualification only in 1868. When Francis Salvador was elected to the South Carolina Provincial Congress of 1775, he became the first American Jew elected to public office. David Emmanuel served as governor of Georgia in 1801. Philip Phillips was elected to Congress from Alabama (1853), and Henry Hyams was lieutenant governor of Louisiana (1859). The first Jewish mayor of an American city was Mordecai DeLeon of Columbia, South Carolina, elected to the first of his three terms in 1833.

From the port cities of first settlement, Jews followed the nation's expansion westward. Entrepreneurs Jacob Cohen and Isaiah Isaacs of Richmond financed Daniel Boone to survey their Kentucky land claims. The 5 Jews in Louisville of 1830 grew to 2,000 in 1860. Alsatian and Bavarian Jewish immigrants settled along the Mississippi. As the port of New Orleans expanded with the cotton trade, its Jewish population increased from 35 in 1827 to 2,000 in 1860. With the German second-wave migration, Baltimore's Jewish community grew to 8,000 in 1856. Peddlers and merchants fanned southward.

In response to abolitionism, the South defended slavery, defining itself as a region distinct in its interests and identity. Jews were neither conspicuous nor significant as slaveholders or traders. About one-quarter of Southern Jews owned slaves, a figure comparable to the general Southern population. Their practices were typical of Southerners of their class, occupation, and place of residence, which was largely urban. Very few Jews were planters. The 1820 census reveals that, in four states, the average Jewish household held four slaves, a roughly normative figure (Webb 2001). As Civil War approached, 30,600 Jews were estimated to be living in the thirteen states that would be claimed by the Confederacy, fewer than 0.5 percent of the white population. Several thousand demonstrated their loyalty by serving in Confederate armies. Two U.S. senators of Jewish origin, David Yulee (né Levy) of Florida and

Judah P. Benjamin of Louisiana, were ardent secessionists. Intermarried and assimilated into Christian society, they remained Southern patriots even as antisemites excoriated them. Benjamin, a confidant of Jefferson Davis, served the Confederacy as attorney general, secretary of war, and secretary of state. Rabbis Simon Tuska of Memphis and Maximilian Michelbacher of Richmond sermonized on "Southern rights," and Rabbi James Gutheim fled occupied New Orleans rather than swear allegiance to the Union.

After the ruin of Civil War and the end of Reconstruction, proponents of a New South called for industrial progress, racial harmony, and political reform. Welcomed for their capital and commerce, Jews created networks that helped bring the region into the national economy. Jews often began as peddlers and were highly mobile in their search for opportunity. Following a national pattern that dated from antebellum days, Jewish settlement followed channels of economic distribution. Such cities as Cincinnati, Baltimore, St. Louis, and New Orleans, linked to New York and European markets, served as credit and distribution centers for a dry-goods network that extended along rivers, roads, and railroads into the small-town South. The store was a way station for country peddlers. The storekeeper purchased agrarian produce, particularly cotton, which could be brokered in urban markets. The ties between Jewish manufacturer, wholesaler, and retailer were secured by ethnic and family bonds. A Jew in an urban center financed and supplied a son, nephew, or landsman to peddle or open a store in a new territory. An 1878 census revealed Jewish population in 290 towns in the South, and nearly a fifth of America's 250,000 Jews lived there. A newspaper, *The Jewish South* (1877–c. 1881), published by Rabbi E. B. M. Browne to advocate the "interests of Southern Judaism," reported from 177 communities in 13 states.

As was customary among Jews, the first act of communal organization was to purchase a cemetery. Burial or benevolence societies were founded on European communal models. They organized worship, cared for the poor, sheltered strangers, and ensured ritual burial. In 1784 Charleston's Jews formed the Hebra Gemilut Hasadim (Society for Deeds of Loving Kindness), and in 1801 they organized the Hebrew Orphan Society. Both these societies were the first of their kind in America. Ladies' benevolence societies formed in Savannah in 1853 and in Mobile in 1861. With increasing members and prosperity, benevolence societies typically evolved into congregations. Mem-

phis had a cemetery in 1847, a benevolence society in 1850, and a congregation in 1853. The Gemilath Chesed of Atlanta, founded in 1860, became the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, now known as The Temple, in 1867. The formation of congregations followed the national model as successive waves of immigrants—Sephardic, Bavarian, Prussian, and Russian—organized worship according to their traditional rites. All began as orthodox, but with acculturation, religious practice liberalized, and congregational lines were redrawn by religious ideology.

In 1824 Charleston hosted the first formal effort to establish Reform Judaism in America. Led by playwright Isaac Harby, twenty-four younger Jews split from K. K. Beth Elohim to organize the Reformed Society of Israelites. They aspired to bring Protestant decorum to Jewish worship. The Charlestonians were aware of European Jewish reform efforts, but more decisive were local factors, including generational conflicts, missionary activity, and a Unitarian challenge. An acculturated, American-born youth aspired to forms of worship that reflected their own enlightened, republican values. They were also responding to the Second Great Awakening, a Christian evangelical movement that appealed especially to women. The Reformers included women's voices in Jewish worship. Nine years later, they rejoined Beth Elohim, which dedicated a new temple in 1841, and liberalized their services. Worship there included organ music and liturgical hymns by local poetess Penina Moise.

Jews who settled on the Southern frontier lived apart from both rabbinic and communal authority. Orthodox Jews, such as Rabbi Bernard Illoway of New Orleans, complained of religious laxity when they settled or traveled in the South.

The South was an arena for contention between Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati, who advocated an American Reform Judaism, and Isaac Leeser, mentor of traditional Judaism, who had first settled in Richmond. Wise sympathized with the South, where he found half the subscribers to his journal the *Israelite*. In 1840, Bavarian-born Abraham Rice—the first American rabbi with a verifiable, traditional ordination—arrived at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. The presence of a scrupulously Orthodox rabbi provoked reformists in Baltimore to organize Har Sinai Congregation. Its rabbi, German-born David Einhorn, promulgated a Radical Reform that modernized ritual and excised references to a

personal messiah and restoration of temple sacrifices and Zion. Einhorn, whose newspaper *Sinai* expressed abolitionist views, fled to Philadelphia after a proslavery mob destroyed his press in 1861.

When Wise convened a Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) in 1873, nearly half the delegates were Southerners. By 1900, 73 percent of the South's Jewish communities had a Reform temple, and by 1907, 41 percent of the UAHC congregations were Southern (Weissbach 1997). The success of Reform in the South is due to several factors. In a society that was pervasively Protestant, acculturated Southern Jews wished to minimize their religious difference and adapted religious practices that emphasized decorum and social accommodation. Orthodox life was also difficult to sustain where kosher food was not readily available, and the Sabbath occurred on market day or the mill workers' payday. The Reform movement also had a geographic advantage. From its centrally located base in Cincinnati, the UAHC dispatched rabbinic circuit riders, including students from Hebrew Union College, into the Southern hinterlands.

The end of Reconstruction was marked by white racial backlash. The Jews' place in the Southern social and racial hierarchy was questioned. With the advent of Jim Crow, which coincided with the migration of East European Jews, racial antisemitism intensified in the South. In Atlanta, elite clubs, which included Jews among their founders, began excluding them. For poor whites displaced from farm to factory, Jews were symbols of urbanity, commerce, and finance. Jewish country stores, which held crop liens, were burned in Louisiana and Mississippi when markets fell in the 1890s. Populist demagogue Tom Watson exploited antisemitic sentiments against Leo Frank, the Jewish factory manager who was lynched in 1915 for allegedly murdering a working girl. Shortly thereafter, the Ku Klux Klan revived. The Southern proclivity for racist violence occasionally ensnared Jews, even in such places as Atlanta, where Jews were prosperous and well established.

The third-wave immigration of 2.5 million Jews from East and Central Europe occurred as the South was urbanizing and industrializing. Often starting as peddlers, Jews settled in growing mill and market towns across the South. The Baltimore Bargain House supplied and financed young immigrants, pointing them to new territories. Birmingham's Jewish population increased from 20 in 1878 to 1,400 in 1905. In 1880 one Russian Jew resided in Atlanta; in 1910

there were 1,283. Sephardic Jews from Rhodes established enclaves in Atlanta and Montgomery. From 1900 to 1917, the Galveston Plan, sponsored by B'nai B'rith and the Baron de Hirsch Fund, directed 10,000 immigrants to Texas.

"Jew stores" proffered groceries and dry goods at low prices to farmers and industrial workers, both black and white. In Alexandria, Louisiana, twenty-two of thirty-one East European Jews owned stores (Weissbach 1997). Jews were upwardly mobile, and peddlers became storekeepers, some achieving wealth as merchants and industrialists. Jewish department stores, such as Rich's in Atlanta, anchored downtowns. In the late 1890s, Moses and Caesar Cone of Greensboro began building textile mills in the Carolinas.

Communities were fluid as Jews pursued economic opportunity or sought metropolitan areas with larger Jewish populations. The second generation was especially mobile as college-educated youth aspired to careers beyond their parents' storekeeping. Southern state universities, although not free of discrimination, were more welcoming to Jews than Northern schools were. At the University of North Carolina in the 1930s, the percentage of Jews in the student body was twenty times greater than the percentage of Jews in the state (Rogoff 2001). UNC president Frank Graham in 1933 forced the medical school dean to resign after he admitted that he kept a Jewish quota. In absolute terms, Jewish numbers at Southern universities remained too small to be perceived as a threat. When Jewish scholars fled Nazi Europe, Southern institutions, including African American colleges, welcomed them to enhance their academic stature. World War II drew more Jews southward to military bases and to growing camp and industrial towns.

Southern Jews maintained links to national and global Jewry through local affiliates of B'nai B'rith (1843) and the National Council of Jewish Women (1893). From 1905 to 1913, federations of Jewish charities formed in Atlanta, Baltimore, Dallas, Little Rock, Memphis, and New Orleans. By the 1930s, nineteen more had organized. Although the South is often regarded as anti-Zionist because of its German and Reform legacy, two of the nation's most prominent Zionists—Louis Brandeis of Louisville and Henrietta Szold of Baltimore—had Southern roots. The anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism enlisted prominent Southern rabbis, but Southern Jewry more typically supported the Zionist cause. After 1900 Zionist societies arose in six Southern states. By 1933 the South claimed twenty-four Hadassah chapters.

In the Protestant, fundamentalist South, Jews were viewed as a biblical people, and the synagogue was respected as the Jewish church. For Southerners, church and Sunday school attendance were marks of respectability, regardless of faith. Southern folklore describes Christians who sought Jewish peddlers or storekeepers to discuss the Bible with them or to bless them or their children in Hebrew. Southern Christians often cited the Jewish origins of their savior. In many communities, Christians contributed to the building of synagogues just as Jews donated to the construction of churches. Southern Jews had higher rates of religious affiliation than national norms. Politically, they tended to be more moderate than Northern Jews but more liberal than white Southern Christians (Reed 1982). Disproportionate numbers of Southern Jews have been elected to political office. B. F. Jonas was elected to the U.S. Senate from Louisiana in 1879, as was Richard Stone from Florida in 1974. David Sholtz was elected governor of Florida in 1933, and Marvin Mandel won the first of two terms as governor of Maryland in 1969. Sol Blatt served as speaker of the South Carolina House of Representatives from 1937–1973. Large cities and small towns alike have had Jewish mayors, including E. J. Evans, who served six terms (1951–1963) in Durham.

Despite their civic integration, Jews continued to confront prejudice and isolation. Social segregation persisted at sundown. Country clubs and civic societies were often closed. The hospitality that Southerners extended to their Jewish neighbors did not preclude generic antisemitism. Senator Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi expressed friendship for his Southern Jewish friends while vilifying New York Jews. A significant strain of Protestant fundamentalism damned Jews as unsaved or as Christ-killers. The Southern Baptist Convention passed resolutions condemning antisemitism and professing love for Jews, but in 1980 its president declared that God did not hear the prayers of a Jew. The ardent Zionism of Southern fundamentalist Christians owed to a millennialism that saw the ingathering of Jews in Israel as a prelude to their conversion to Christianity.

The civil rights movement brought the varied loyalties of Southern Jews into conflict. Jewish peddlers and storekeepers often catered to the black trade and, within the limits of a segregated society, adopted liberal racial policies in service, hiring, and extending credit. They also were mindful of their white clientele, which was often agrarian

or working class. While Northern Jewish activists flocked southward and national Jewish defense agencies supported civil rights, Southern Jews, given their precarious economic position, were conflicted and more circumspect. White extremists planted dynamite at synagogues in a half-dozen cities. A few prominent Jews were avowedly segregationist; more commonly, Southern Jews expressed sympathy for black aspirations, but in “quiet voices” (Bauman and Kalin 1997). Some Southern Jews, especially rabbis, were courageously outspoken. In Little Rock, among other communities, Jewish women worked to keep open newly integrated public schools. Relative to other white Southerners, Jewish support for integration was significant (Webb 2001).

The Sun Belt, a term applied to the South and the Southwest beginning in the 1970s, reflected the transformation of the South from a diseased, ill-educated, racist backwater into an economically ascendant region with an appealing climate. With the changing economy, rural Jewish communities withered while metropolitan, academic, high-tech, and retirement centers flourished. Atlanta Jewry increased from 14,500 in 1960 to 76,000 in 1996. According to the National Jewish Population Survey (1990), about one-fourth of American Jews now live in the South. The region has seen considerable Jewish institution building—including day schools, high schools, and community centers—and the United Jewish Communities, the national organization of local Jewish federations, now counts fifty-six Southern affiliates.

Southern Jews acknowledge their difference. Writers Ed Cohen, Judith Goldman, Roy Hoffman, Steve Stern, and Stella Suberman penned novels and memoirs that evoked a rich Southern Jewish folklife. They portrayed Jews who were woven into their hometown fabric yet remain different. Dramatist Alfred Uhry, most notably in *Driving Miss Daisy*, depicted Jews who eagerly assimilated to Southern mores yet resisted a total accommodation as they confronted antisemitism and, in Miss Daisy’s case, dissented from racial codes. Eli Evans’s memoir (2005) portrayed a culturally distinct people. Local and regional Jewish societies and museums host exhibitions or publish community histories that emphasize a unique acculturation. A Southern Jewish Historical Society sponsors conventions and an academic journal; a Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience in Mississippi preserves remnants of lost communities. The museum spawned an Institute for Southern Jewish

Life. Jewish Studies programs flourish on Southern campuses, beginning with Duke in 1943.

With high rates of mobility and low rates of persistence, the question remains whether Sun Belt immigrants are Southern by culture or only by geography. The large Jewish population of southern Florida, for example, is primarily of Northern origin. Miami now holds the nation’s third-largest Jewish community, while Boca Raton–West Palm Beach ranks eighth. Moreover, with racial integration, the rise of mass media, and a national population redistribution, the regional distinctiveness of the South has been attenuating. A core of distinctly Southern Jews born and bred in the South—some with Confederate ancestors—persists, but the greater population consists of a mobile people drawn to the Sun Belt by climate, lifestyle, and opportunity.

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## Jews in the West

On the Pacific shore from Canada to Mexico, Jewish communities were integral parts of the cities and towns of the

American West. From San Diego to Seattle, Jews established businesses based on international, national, and interregional trade and the area's diverse natural resources. The Jewish experience in the West was characterized by continual migration, the presence of multiethnic neighbors, and relatively little antisemitism. Because Jews often arrived during the settlement period, they were founders of the secular, as well as the Jewish, communities and institutions. This led to their strong identification as Westerners. Their lives and their communities developed differently from those of their eastern brethren.

Especially in the nineteenth century, the Pacific West functioned as an interdependent region with San Francisco, the city with the largest Jewish population, as its hub. Transformed from a sleepy port town into a cosmopolitan city almost overnight, San Francisco became the commercial, institutional, and social center of the region for Jews and non-Jews alike. The Golden Gate welcomed Jews from all over the world who sought to play a role in the new western economy, an economy based on gold, agriculture, and, most important, commerce. Most merchants and goods traveled from Europe and the eastern United States by ship to San Francisco and from there spread throughout the region. Families became regional, often with one brother in San Francisco, another in a mining town of the mother lode, and a cousin or nephew in the new town of Portland. Goods, marketing advice, credit, and social introductions circulated freely among family members throughout the region. Some organizations were also regional: San Francisco's Hebrew Orphan Asylum and some Jewish periodicals served, and were supported by, the entire region.

### Introduction to the West

Without the California Gold Rush fueling economic development, the nineteenth-century West would have attracted few Jews. Jewish men and women from England, Germany, France, Poland, and Russia came to California in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s seeking to participate in the new western economy. Most came through a process of chain migration—a brother, cousin, or friend came first and family members followed later. Some were new immigrants, while others were acculturated to American life by the time they reached the West. Many had moved one, two, or three times before settling in the West. Levi Strauss, who was

born in Bavaria, first lived in New York with his merchant brothers, then peddled notions in Kentucky before his brother-in-law suggested in 1853 that he join him in San Francisco. With years of experience behind him, Strauss, like many Jewish migrants, was familiar with American business and social practices by the time he reached the West and therefore rose quickly in the Jewish and secular communities. It was to meet prospectors' needs for durable work clothes that Strauss first developed Levi's.

Who came west? Historian Ellen Eisenberg concluded that the West attracted many Jews who had worked with non-Jews in Europe or the United States and therefore did not feel compelled to live in Jewish enclaves. The pull of the West was also felt by many American-born Jews, including Sephardim whose families had lived in the United States for generations. Because they were Americans, not foreigners, they were more likely to assume leadership roles, defending new immigrants, speaking against Christian-oriented textbooks, and protesting laws that required all businesses to close on Sundays. The latter were damaging to Jewish businesses that chose to close on the Jewish Sabbath.

The California Gold Rush came at the right time to draw Jews who were already seeking to leave Europe. Jewish newspapers in Europe printed accounts of the Gold Rush—most significantly, articles about Jews who remained observant on the Pacific shores. Germany's *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* (*General Journal of Judaism*) reported in 1850 that many Jews had immigrated to California; London's *Jewish Chronicle* noted in 1851 that young men in San Francisco had kept a strictly kosher Passover; and Paris's *Archives Israelites* in 1855 informed its readers that Jews could be found in most California communities. All these articles stimulated immigration to the Far West. As Jewish immigrants to the United States were familiar with ocean travel, most journeyed to California by sea. Boarding ships in New York, some sailed around South America's Cape Horn to reach the Pacific; others took steamers to Nicaragua or Panama and then trekked across the isthmus to the Pacific coast, where they boarded ships to San Francisco. A few journeyed overland, where they joined wagon trains crossing the plains and the mountains to gold country.

Most early migrants were young, single men who became merchants or clerks, occupations with which they were familiar in Europe. Few migrants were professionals

except the American-born Sephardim, many of whom were lawyers. Although Jewish men outnumbered Jewish women in the West for many years, Jewish women, married and single, began to arrive in the 1850s, especially in San Francisco. Restrictive laws and failed revolutions in Central Europe had made it difficult for Jews to make a living and start families in towns that had quotas on new Jewish households. Therefore, young women as well as men left Europe. By the 1860s and 1870s, many communities were family oriented; men over thirty, established in their occupations, often married younger women. However, the ratio between men and women varied according to the size of the population and the economic stability of the community.

Jews in the West generally enjoyed a positive relationship with their multiethnic neighbors, which reinforced their identity as Westerners. As founders and as civic and business leaders, many Jews became prominent citizens not only of their Jewish communities but also of their cities. Divisions in the Far West were more often between property owners and laborers than between European American ethnic groups.

Although the western communities were interdependent, each was distinct, its differences deriving from the decade in which it was founded, its size, economy, resources, location, and ethnic composition.

## San Francisco

San Francisco sprang to life as a result of the Gold Rush. With a population of fewer than 1,000 in 1848, it grew to 20,000 by 1851. By 1860, 5,000 Jews lived there—about 8 percent of the city's population. In 1849, San Francisco's Jews formed the First Hebrew Benevolent Society; soon afterward, Jewish mutual aid societies, newspapers, fraternal organizations, social clubs, and congregations were established. After failing to find common ground, two congregations, Sherith Israel and Emanu-El, were founded in 1851. Sherith Israel, made up of Jews from England, Poland, and Posen and American-born Sephardim, followed the Polish *minhag* (prayer ritual), while Emanu-El, whose members were Bavarian, French, and American-born Sephardim, followed the German *minhag*. Both were what today would be called Orthodox congregations, with separate sections for men and women. Although there were more men than women, the women's gallery was oc-

cupied, and by 1851 weddings were held in the synagogues. The congregations provided for their members' needs by authorizing *shochets* (ritual slaughterers) to supply kosher meat and bakers to make *matzoh* for Passover. Although not every Jew was observant, by 1851 there were several kosher butchers and a number of kosher boardinghouses for young, unmarried men.

In 1854 Emanu-El hired its first rabbi, Julius Eckman, a Posen-born, German-trained rabbi. He arrived just in time to dedicate two synagogue buildings as Emanu-El and Sherith Israel moved into their first permanent structures. Emanu-El seated 800; Sherith Israel, 400. Both were architecturally similar to the churches of the city. By 1859 Sherith Israel had also hired a rabbi, London-trained Henry A. Henry, a perfect fit for his cosmopolitan congregation. He conducted services in English, was a Freemason, and became a leader in the wider Jewish community. Eckman, by contrast, did not fit with Emanu-El, whose members wanted to change traditions, for example, to allow men and women to sit together. By 1864 Emanu-El would be considered Reform; much later in the century, Sherith Israel also became Reform.

After leaving Emanu-El, Eckman in 1857 published and edited one of the first Jewish newspapers in the West—at times there were as many as four Jewish newspapers in the city. Eckman's paper, the *Gleaner*, informed Jews (and non-Jews) from Oregon to Nevada about Jewish issues and local, national, and international events. It was published in English, although words such as *kosher* were in Hebrew type. In addition to his popular Sabbath school, in 1861 Eckman established a free day school. Thus, at this early date in the city's history, Jewish boys and girls enrolled there could study German, French, and music as well as the subjects taught in public school. Exemplifying the mobility that characterized the West, Eckman later served as the rabbi for both Beth Israel and Ahavai Shalom in Portland. By 1870 there were four prominent congregations and a number of small prayer groups in San Francisco.

As founding fathers, San Francisco Jews worked with non-Jews to create the civic community. Abraham Labatt, a Sephardic Jew from Charleston, became both the first president of Congregation Emanu-El and an alderman. Solomon Heydenfeldt, also from Charleston, served on the California Supreme Court and chaired the Mortara proceeding in 1859, when 3,000 San Francisco Jews and Protestants protested the kidnapping in Italy of Edgardo

Mortara, a Jewish child who was taken from his family by agents of the pope because a Catholic nursemaid had secretly baptized him when he was a small child. A thousand more protested in San Francisco than in New York. Jews also joined with non-Jews for other causes. In 1851 and 1856, Jewish and non-Jewish businessmen formed Vigilance Committees, which took the law into their own hands to try to stabilize the often-violent city. Non-Jews also attended Jews' social activities, including weddings and other life-course events.

World Jewry recognized the West Coast, especially California, as a place with a significant Jewish community involved with national and international issues. When leaders of Jerusalem's Jewish community sent messengers to the United States seeking support for the poor of Jerusalem, they singled out the "magnificent State of California" for special attention. While the messengers were in San Francisco, local Jewish leaders founded *Ohabai Zion* (Lovers of Zion), whose sole purpose was to support Jerusalem's poor. The messengers also traveled inland, raising funds in the small mining communities and river towns.

In the interior, Jews settled in the towns that dotted the hills and waterways of gold country. In the 1850s, Jewish communities were established in Stockton, Sacramento, Jackson, Sonora, Mokelumne Hill, Nevada City, Grass Valley, and Placerville. High Holidays and Passover were celebrated in private homes, Masonic and Odd Fellows halls, and, in some communities, newly built synagogues. The larger communities hired rabbis. However, the mining economy was unstable, and many businesses failed. Fires, bankruptcies, and personal hardships often caused Jews to move on. Some returned to bustling San Francisco, while others moved up or down the coast. Small Jewish communities developed in Oakland, San Jose, Los Angeles, and San Diego. And less than a decade after the Gold Rush, Jews set out for the growing communities of Oregon.

## Portland

Merchants and dreamers who did not realize their expectations in San Francisco or the tumultuous mining towns looked to Oregon to begin again. The Oregon economy was more stable because it was based on timber and agriculture, not gold. Also, because Oregon's communities were filled with brick buildings, not the wooden tents of

California's mining towns, they were not as likely to be destroyed by fire. In mining country, stores could be destroyed in an evening, their suddenly destitute owners often forced to move on. In the 1850s, Caroline and Philip Selling operated a small store in the mining town of Sonora. When a fire swept through town one night, they were left with nothing. Miners took up a collection so that they could buy necessities. By 1862 the Sellings had resettled in Portland. Their son, Ben, who grew wealthy by purchasing goods manufactured in the Northwest and controlling the supply chain, became an important philanthropist, donating generously to the city's First Hebrew Benevolent Association, which assisted new immigrants, and working with the Industrial Removal Office in New York to reunite immigrant families in the West.

Portland's economy was small-scale compared to San Francisco's. Like all Jewish communities in the Pacific West, Portland's relied on San Francisco for merchandise and social activities, and it was there that it hired the educators, rabbis, or experts it needed. It was also to San Francisco that young Jewish men and women went to find Jewish spouses. By the 1870s, Jews composed 5 percent of Portland's population.

Jewish observance in Portland was institutionalized in 1858 with the establishment of Congregation Beth Israel. Among the congregation's founders were several former members of San Francisco's Temple Emanu-El; its first spiritual leader was Samuel Laski (an educated layman), followed by Herman Bien (he pretended rabbinical ordination), both formerly of San Francisco, followed soon by Julius Eckman, who had been San Francisco's first rabbi. The city's second congregation was organized less than ten years later, when some members left the original, predominantly German, congregation. Although both congregations followed the German style of prayer, their members were from different parts of Central Europe—Beth Israel's from traditionally Germanic territories, *Ahavai Shalom's* predominantly from the province of Posen. The newly formed congregation was named *Ahavai Shalom* (Lovers of Peace)—a typical name when members of one congregation left to form another where they felt more comfortable. By the late nineteenth century, Portland's Jews demonstrated their prominence with the construction of noteworthy synagogues. In 1887 Beth Israel built a large wooden synagogue that was architecturally similar to *Emanu-El* (1866), which dominated San Francisco's skyline.

As in cities across the West, German Jews and the “others” in Portland formed separate social circles, with the Germans establishing exclusive, elite clubs. The separation was not complete, however, and often did not extend to fraternal organizations. As the historian William Toll noted, the two groups mingled at B’nai B’rith meetings, where young men built business relationships and formed community bonds. Many of Portland’s new East European immigrants had previously lived in the East—were not “greenhorns”—and because they worked in the trade sector, they therefore had common interests with the more established Jewish merchants. As in other western cities, Portland’s Jews also belonged to non-Jewish organizations, joining their fellow merchants in Masonic and other lodges.

In Portland, as in cities across the West, Jews were founders and early settlers and played an important role in maintaining economic and political stability. As small merchants, they supplied nearby farms with the goods and services they required. Jewish women also played a significant role in late nineteenth-century Portland. As they Americanized, they, like non-Jewish women, engaged in community work. The Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society worked solely with the Jewish community, while the National Council of Jewish Women undertook projects such as Neighborhood House, where both Jewish and other immigrants could encounter the settled Jewish community.

## Seattle

The Jewish community of Seattle organized much later than that of San Francisco or Portland. The first congregation was established in 1889. Although Jews had lived in Washington Territory since at least 1853, when Congress separated it from Oregon, their numbers remained small. In the 1880s, when Seattle’s population was 3,500, only about 100 were Jews. By contrast, San Francisco’s Jews numbered 16,000 out of a total population of 233,959. In the nineteenth century, Victoria, British Columbia, was the center of Puget Sound Jewish life. With regular steamships to San Francisco, Victoria became a home for merchants seeking to supply gold miners, fishermen, and the Alaska fur trade. The Victoria Jewish community grew as an extension of San Francisco Jewry. As early as 1863, it numbered about 100, and a synagogue was built with funding

coming in part from San Francisco Jews. As Seattle grew, a strong relationship developed with other western Jewish communities. Seattle’s Jews traveled to Victoria for their weddings and burials and brought men back to Seattle to lead services. Others went to Portland and San Francisco for life-course ceremonies and to buy merchandise for personal use and resale. Some, like Abraham Schwabacher, stayed in San Francisco, purchasing goods for Schwabacher brothers’ Washington stores, and businesses often advertised “San Francisco prices.”

Because of their access to San Francisco, Portland, and Victoria, Seattle’s first Jews, many of whom were nonobservant, delayed establishing a congregation. Passover and other holidays could be celebrated at home or provided a reason to visit a larger Jewish community.

The 1880s brought considerable change: the transcontinental railroad reached Seattle, bringing reduced transportation costs, an end to relative isolation, and a larger Jewish population. In the 1890s, gold was discovered in the Yukon and Alaska, and Seattle became a supply town. Because Canada required that prospectors have \$1,000 in provisions before they were allowed to enter Canadian territory, new stores sprang up in Seattle. During these years, the community grew more observant, as East European and Sephardic Jews arrived. Soon there were kosher bakeries and meat markets. By 1909 Seattle was home to three Orthodox congregations and one Reform; the Jewish community numbered close to 4,500.

During World War I, some Jewish immigrants came directly to Seattle via Asia, as German submarines threatened Atlantic travel. Others arrived from Canada or the eastern United States. Seattle grew to be the second-largest Sephardic community in the United States. Following a pattern of chain migration, most came directly to Seattle, where Sephardim became known for selling fish, produce, and baked goods in the city’s markets. Remaining apart, they formed their own congregations, organizations, and self-help associations.

By the early twentieth century, San Francisco, Portland, and Seattle all had well-established Jewish communities. Attracted by the climate and economy, Jews of all backgrounds continued to make their way west. There were divisions between the founders and more recent arrivals. Because the influx of immigrants was relatively small, however, the newcomers did not overwhelm the Jewish or gentile communities.

As founders of multiethnic western cities with relatively little antisemitism, Jews were involved in governance. They held civic and leadership positions throughout the region. Bernard Goldsmith was elected mayor of Portland in 1869, and Bailey Gatzert, Seattle's sixth mayor, in 1875. In 1894 Adolph Sutro was elected mayor of San Francisco on the People's Party ticket. Julius Meier, heir of Portland's Meier & Frank department store, was governor of Oregon from 1931 to 1935. Westerners also elected Jews to national office. In 1899 San Franciscans sent Julius Kahn to Congress, where he served for more than twenty years. On his death in 1924, his wife Florence Prag Kahn won a special election for his seat, becoming the sixth woman in the House of Representatives and its first Jewish woman, serving until 1937.

Nationally, 1924 was a watershed year; the National Origins Immigration Act virtually cut off Jewish immigration to the United States. But in the West, communities continued to expand because the region's climate and economic growth drew migrants from other parts of the country. In 1925 the Jewish population of San Francisco was 25,000; by 1937 it was more than 40,000.

Second- and third-generation American Jews, many born in the West, extended the functions of Jewish institutions. Some synagogues became more than places of worship, adding theaters, schools, and recreational centers. In San Francisco, with a large and highly stratified Jewish population, the pioneer generation and its offspring often encountered new immigrants only in settlement work, where many assumed paternalistic roles. In smaller cities such as Portland, by contrast, the sons and daughters of founders and newer immigrants worked together in fraternal and voluntary associations. As the Progressive Era took shape, women increasingly moved from involvement with self-help organizations and charities to organizations with broader purposes, such as the National Council of Jewish Women, and temple sisterhoods. In subsequent decades, early settlement houses became community centers, with professionals hired to supervise activities. The West continued to function as a region during World War II, with professionals training in one city and moving to supervisory positions in another. Because of family, social, and business relations, Jews in the West continued to work together in organizations. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Jewish welfare agencies in Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Oakland kept track of transients who traveled between cities seeking aid.

Within the West, Jews differed on how they viewed the emerging Zionist movement. San Francisco's classical Reform leadership clung to an anti-Zionist position. As a deeply rooted community, many did not want to appear to have dual loyalties. Although some supported Zionism, San Francisco became known as an anti-Zionist city. With larger percentages of recent Sephardic and East European immigrants, Portland and Seattle were stronger supporters of Zionism.

Beginning in the years leading up to World War II, the West and western Jewish communities were forever changed. The military buildup brought hundreds of thousands of workers and large, new industries, reshaping the Jewish communities in many western states over the next fifty years.

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## New Mexico

During a time of American expansion, Jews traveled from Missouri to New Mexico down the Santa Fe Trail, which connected the eastern United States, the West, and Mexico. Although crypto-Jews may have settled in this region of New Spain in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and although during the Mexican period, individual Jews traded in the territory, the Jewish community was founded in the 1840s and 1850s by Ashkenazi Jews primarily from Germany. Some Jews peddled, but because of the long distances and the need to transport large amounts of goods, most settled down. They became clerks and merchants, building commercial relationships with the U.S. Army, Hispanics, Indians, and new immigrants alike. Santa Fe commerce was tied to the trail and lasted until 1879, when it was supplanted by the railroad, which bypassed the city, and Jewish communities expanded in the railroad towns throughout the state. The Jewish population in New Mexico was never large: 108 in 1878, 800 in 1905, and just over 1,000 by 1927, when a few Eastern European Jews had settled and the native-born population was several generations old (Marcus 1990). It remained small until World War II and the establishment of military research facilities, including the Los Alamos laboratories, which brought Jewish scientists and professionals to the state.

Unlike many places where Jews lived, New Mexico was primarily Catholic because of its Spanish heritage; Jews forged working and social relationships with the Protestant minority, the Hispanic Catholic majority, and Indian peoples. In this remote and sparsely settled region, there was

little antisemitism, and Jews were often viewed as part of the larger Anglo population.

Most Jews followed family chains to New Mexico, with brothers and cousins leading the way. Many of the families were related by marriage. These families became local royalty; the names Ilfeld, Jaffa, and Spiegelberg are still remembered today. The Spiegelberg family's history is illustrative of Jewish life in the early years of the state. Solomon Jacob Spiegelberg, eldest of five brothers, arrived in Santa Fe from Bavaria in 1844. Soon his four brothers joined him. The family brought goods from the East and supplied locals, Indians, and most lucratively, the U.S. Army. The family first sold retail groceries and dry goods; soon they grew to become large-scale wholesalers. In 1872 they established the Second National Bank of New Mexico, and their business expanded into mining and real estate. They were related by marriage to many of the Jewish mercantile families in the state.

Like Jews everywhere, New Mexicans gathered for High Holiday services, and the first *bar mitzvah* took place in Santa Fe in 1876. Santa Fe's first Yom Kippur service was at the home of Levi and Betty Spiegelberg in 1860. Some men returned to Germany or the East to marry, while others married local women. Solomon Bibo married an Acoma Pueblo woman and became governor of the pueblo. As children were born, the community became more observant, and in 1882 Flora Spiegelberg established a Sabbath school in Santa Fe. Two Reform temples were built in the late nineteenth century, Temple Montefiore in Las Vegas and Temple Albert in Albuquerque, where in 1921 a second congregation, B'nai Israel, an Orthodox (later Conservative) synagogue, was established. The birth of B'nai Israel is evidence of a small Eastern European population; when founded, it had seventeen members.

With the arrival of the railroad in 1879, Santa Fe's economic dominance declined along with its Jewish population. By the beginning of the twentieth century, some of the pioneer founders and their families had left Santa Fe. Indeed, some of the Spiegelbergs moved to eastern cities for business opportunities and to live in closer proximity to Jewish institutions. The cities of Las Cruces, Las Vegas, and Albuquerque grew, with Albuquerque sustaining the largest Jewish population, 240 by 1927 and 2,000 by 1960 (Marcus 1990).

Jews helped build the civic communities as well. The youngest Spiegelberg brother, Willi, was elected mayor of

Santa Fe in 1880, and five years later Henry N. Jaffa became the first mayor of Albuquerque. When New Mexico achieved statehood in 1912, Jews were community, civic, and political leaders, although they were never more than 0.6 percent of the total population (Marcus 1990).

Most Jews continued to be involved in commerce; however, some also were involved in ranching and agriculture. One such woman was Yetta Goldsmith Kohn, a widow with four children, who arrived in New Mexico in 1902 and became a successful rancher, store owner, and businesswoman. Kohn homesteaded along the railroad tracks west of Tucumcari. By 1927 Tucumcari was home to forty-one Jews (Marcus 1990). In Las Cruces, Louis E. Freudental, a founder's son, turned to commercial agriculture, growing vegetables and nut trees in addition to raising poultry.

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## Jews in Small Towns in America

Historians of American Jewry have focused on the adaptation of immigrants and their offspring in big cities, largely ignoring the experience of Jews in small towns. Although from the early phases of their settlement in America Jews tended to concentrate in large cities, a significant proportion—between 20 and 30 percent, depending on the period and region—lived in small towns. Jewish experience there differed from that of their coreligionists in big cities. It also differed considerably from town to town, depending on the size, socioeconomic, and civic–political characteristics of the locality, and on the number, religious orientation, and organization of resident Jews.

During the industrial period of American history, from the 1880s through World War II, the experience of Jews in small towns—defined by urban historians as containing fewer than 75,000 residents—differed from that of their big-city fellow ethnics in four main aspects. Whereas

in large cities between 40 and 60 percent of Jewish immigrants worked in light manufacturing, and the American-born second generation moved en masse into middle-class, white-collar occupations, in small towns 60 to 80 percent of the employed Jewish population—immigrants and second generation alike—worked in small, family-run or coethnic businesses. Second, the opportunities for occupational advancement were much more limited in the small towns than in the large cities. Third, because of their low numbers, Jews in small towns were unable to build extensive, institutionally diverse communities like those enjoyed by their big-city coreligionists. Fourth, small-town Jews who participated in local mainstream civil–political affairs did so as individual citizens, not as representatives of their ethnic group's interests, as Jews in big cities with large Jewish populations did at least occasionally (Morawska 1996, bibliography).

Although different from the lives of their big-city fellow ethnics, the experience of Jews in small towns also varied considerably from town to town. It reflected, in part, the divergent characteristics of the surrounding environment, including the size of the town, the nature of the local economy, the social structure, the ethnic/religious composition of the population, ethnic residential segregation, the exclusive or inclusive civic–political climate, hierarchical or competitive ethnic relations and politics, public recognition of Jews who were among the town's pioneer settlers, the social distance of dominant groups from outsiders and Jews, antisemitic incidents, and the local relevance of race. Characteristics of the local Jewish group also accounted for the variety of experience, including the size of the Jewish group, its share of the town's population, its position in the socioeconomic structure, the Jews' sense of a shared past with local high-status groups, their participation in local civic–political organizations and affairs, or in the informal social activities of the dominant groups. The Jewish experience also depended on Jews' residential concentration, their residential stability, the availability of absorbing intragroup networks and activities, the Jews' religious and/or ethnic commitment, their self-separatism, the proportion of American-born Jews, and the degree of separation between German and East European Jews.

These factors differently shaped the Jews' economic position and involvement in civil–political activities; the religious orientation, organization, and inclusiveness of local Jewish communities; and the prevalent types of col-

lective Jewish identity. Some of these diverse patterns can be seen through a comparison of the experiences of Jews in Greensboro, North Carolina; Charleston, South Carolina; Muncie, Indiana; and Johnstown, Pennsylvania. (Unfortunately, sporadic data for the first three towns preclude a comparison of the occupational pursuits and public roles of Jewish women.)

Greensboro, North Carolina, with a population of 55,000 in 1930, including about 500 Jews—1 percent of the total—had, since the turn of the twentieth century, grown into a thriving center of textile manufacturing and wholesale trade. Local Jewish merchants, both German (with larger capital) and East European (on a smaller scale), had been instrumental in this development. By 1920, representatives of both groups (although the majority were German) belonged to the town's economic elite, and the industry owned by one Jewish family employed more than one-tenth of Greensboro's working population. The rest of the Jewish families occupied solidly middle-class positions. Since the local government closely cooperated with the economic elite, Jews had access to political positions.

The longtime presence of Quakers and their influence on Greensboro public affairs sustained a tradition of tolerance, and almost no antisemitism existed. (The same tradition also made white attitudes toward, and treatment of, local blacks much more enlightened than the Southern norm.) The town's pride—the local colleges, especially the University of North Carolina branch and Guilford College—also contributed to the liberal civic climate.

Greensboro's Jews were residentially dispersed, but from the turn of the twentieth century until World War II, one Reform congregation gathered in most of them, both Germans and East Europeans. Uncommon at the time, this religious symbiosis between the two groups, which were about equal in size, can be explained by the facts that most of the East Europeans were old-time residents and in 1930 two-thirds were already second generation, and by the two groups' close economic ties and shared participation in the town's civic-political and social life. Aside from the temple, there were few Jewish organizations in town that could have reinforced the ethnic identity of members; those that existed were practical rather than social-cultural or ideological (e.g., Zionist) in character. Instead, the local rabbi and his wife organized social and cultural events to bring the gentile and Jewish communities together. As old-time established residents and pillars of the town's economic

well-being, Greensboro's Jews also belonged to local country clubs and other high-status associations. Due to these combined circumstances, except on special religious occasions, the Jews' ethnic identity was not particularly relevant as a cultural or social boundary in daily life.

Attenuated both by conditions in the local society and in the Jewish group, the "thin" ethnic identity of Greensboro's Jews, in turn, weakened their need to associate with fellow ethnics or to sustain group institutions and increased their readiness to participate in mainstream local organizations, further eroding a sense of commonality and separateness.

The old Southern city of Charleston, South Carolina, had a population of 62,000 in 1930, of which 2,300, or about 3 percent, were Jews. Unlike in Greensboro, the Jews' high social position and integration into Charleston society did not derive from their economic might. Largely unaffected by the rapid industrialization of the late nineteenth century, Charleston's economy had been rather stagnant. The town had neither a superwealthy class (the white population was distributed across the upper-to-lower-middle strata) nor the tough competition for socioeconomic success characteristic of contemporary urban centers in the Northeast. As a result, "parvenu" Jews were not perceived as a status threat. In a distinctly Southern, premodern status system, the elevated position of local Jews had its origins in the long and illustrious pedigree of the town's Jewish residents, who dated back to colonial times. Sephardic Jews who arrived in Charleston in the late 1660s were among the city's recognized founders, and they had also been patriot-heroes of the American Revolution and devoted soldiers of the Confederacy, to which both old-time Sephardi and more recent Ashkenazi German Charlestonians pledged allegiance. Jews' integration into the local society had been further facilitated by the significance of race as the main social divider (blacks constituted about one-half of Charleston's population.)

Most East Europeans had arrived later and without merits comparable to those of their predecessors. Because of the long-term honorific status of their established coreligionists, however, and, more important, the absence of resistance or social distancing from them, East European Jews were accepted as good American and Charlestonian citizens. The unproblematic integration of East Europeans was facilitated by the absence of sharp economic divisions or residential concentration by class

or origin in the already-established Jewish group. Perhaps more important was the religious orientation of Charleston's Jewry: a bizarre mix, peculiar to the place, called Orthodox Reform, wherein both components of Judaism were practiced, albeit with the laxity characteristic of Southern culture.

Beth Elohim, the oldest congregation, was Reform in name, but (lax) Orthodox in practice. Established around 1750, one century later it considered itself Reform, but the members' religious behavior indicates that it was "old wine in a new bottle." When German Jews—the majority from Polish lands—arrived in Charleston in the nineteenth century and erected a synagogue, they retained the Sephardi rite of their predecessors because of the Sephardim's local status and their own sense of decorum. The Brith Shalom, or "Polish synagogue," as it was called, did not have daily services, and its members did not observe the Sabbath, but men wore hats during services, and their wives kept kosher homes. By the interwar period, however, the elements of Orthodox practice diminished further, and Reform elements became more numerous.

Similarly, Beth Israel, the Orthodox synagogue established by East Europeans at the beginning of the twentieth century to make observance stricter than that practiced at Brith Shalom, had by the 1920s become pluralistic and tolerant of deviation. The permissiveness in religious observance of the two synagogues also reflected the high proportion (nearly 70 percent) of American-born in the local Jewish population. That a considerable number of congregants, Germans and East Europeans alike, held multiple memberships in these synagogues or circulated between them further contributed to the blurring of religious and social boundaries within the Jewish group.

Contacts between Charleston's Jews and members of the local society were frequent and cordial. Jews actively participated in civic affairs and gentile social clubs and, much more unusually, invited and received gentiles at Jewish celebrations (e.g., the annual Purim Ball was anxiously anticipated and eagerly attended by Charleston business and professional classes). "Rarely [have Jews] attained so high a degree of integration in the general life of a town," noted a contemporary observer (Sherman 1951).

Reflecting their position in the local mainstream society, the extent and intensity of Charleston Jews' ethnic identity attenuated over the period considered here. As in Greensboro, most did not consider their ethnic member-

ship relevant to their everyday lives as Charlestonians. Nevertheless, unlike Greensboro Jews, Charleston Jews—like all residents of this traditional town—considered themselves religious (however lax their observance). Historians of Jewish American life in large urban centers during the pre-World War II era have pointed to the progressive severing of the traditionally indivisible ethnic and religious components of Judaism—the ethnic sphere gaining social and cultural autonomy and, gradually, primacy over the religious dimension. (Synagogues turned into Synagogue-Centers, which then became Social Centers with synagogue attachments.) The reverse, however, seems to have occurred in prewar Charleston—an attenuation of the ethnic, and maintenance of the religious, elements of Jewishness. Shaped by circumstances in the local society and within the Jewish group, the de-ethnicized religious identity of Charleston Jews contributed to their increased participation in the local civic-political process and informal social activities, which, in turn, sustained their de-ethnicized collective identification.

Greensboro and Charleston in the Carolinas represent small towns where Jews' successful integration into local communities during the 1880–1940 period attenuated their group ethnic identity. In Muncie, Indiana, and Johnstown, Pennsylvania, by contrast, the economic and political marginality of the local Jews, along with their (albeit dissimilar) in-group characteristics, resulted in the persistence of "alert," though differently textured, collective identities.

Muncie, Indiana—the famous Middletown described by sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd (1929, 1937) as representing the typical America of the period (a claim criticized in a number of subsequent studies)—had a population of 47,000 in 1930, of which Jews constituted no more than 200, or about 0.5 percent. The first Jews arrived in Muncie from Alsatia in the middle of the nineteenth century, although they did not remain very long. German settlers in the 1870s were followed in the 1890s by East Europeans resettling from larger East Coast and Midwestern cities. From the beginning of the twentieth century, they constituted the majority of the town's small Jewish population.

Muncie's economy, primarily focused on the production of durable goods, diversified by the interwar period to include foundry products, wire, glass, automobile and machine parts, and metal household furniture. Just before the

Great Depression, about one-half of the town's gainfully employed worked in manufacturing and 15 percent in trade. Muncie's Jews concentrated in small family- and ethnic-run retail businesses in the lower strata of the local trade sector.

The town's political system, described by the Lynds (1937) as an "antiquated machine" alternating between Republican (dominant) and Democratic bureaucrats, carried on its "Byzantine politics" with little involvement of an apathetic citizenry. Reflecting the composition and prevalent orientation of the residents—more than 85 percent of whom were second- or third-generation Protestant Americans of rural midwestern origins—a mixture of evangelical Protestantism and American nativism permeated the town's civic culture and public institutions throughout the period considered here. This exclusionary ideology and political practice were exacerbated by the "loud" activities of Muncie's Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Although short-lived (1923–1925), public displays of the Klan's aggressive xenophobia had enduring consequences for the town's civic climate and for the sense of insecurity of the local groups—Catholics, blacks, and Jews—that were the objects of its chauvinism. Historical sources indicate that the KKK's hostility was directed mainly against local blacks and Catholics rather than the few, largely invisible, nonthreatening Jews. Indeed, old-time Jewish residents perceived local Klansmen as domesticated predators who patronized Jewish stores and said "hallo" on the street. However mild and subdued, the town's anti-semitism was, the Lynds observed, like "tinder ready for kindling if and as Middletown wants a bonfire to burn a scapegoat" (1937). And local Jews remained acutely aware of this ever-present possibility long after the Klan was silenced in Muncie.

Unlike in Charleston and Greensboro, in Muncie neither a pedigree as pioneer settlers, a strong economic position, nor an inclusive civic-political process facilitated Jews' participation in town politics. And Jews themselves, anxious not to alienate the customers of their small businesses by taking public stands on local issues, "tried to keep a low profile" (Rottenberg 1997) and refrained from involvement in political affairs. Until the postwar era, the Jewish presence in municipal politics was confined to one person, the uncommonly outgoing "activist" Charles Indorf, owner of the Muncie Loan Company and King's Clothing Shop.

Jewish merchants' membership in the Muncie Chamber of Commerce was nominal, and they were not welcome in the prestigious Delaware Country Club or in service clubs such as Rotary, Lions, or Kiwanis. Except for business-related contacts with customers, Jews remained outside mainstream social life. Too small to form a ghetto, they were, nevertheless, residentially concentrated in the downtown (business) section, and their attempts to move into the prestigious North Side were met with resistance from realtors and residents. The tacit rule of "the five o'clock shadow," practiced by native-born American Munsonians, routinely separated the residents along ethnoreligious lines after work hours. The Jewish small merchants, preoccupied with making a living, worked long hours in their stores, and this, along with their in-group social engagement, further contributed to the separation.

Founded in the 1870s as the Beth El Reform Congregation and renamed Emanu-El in the 1920s when the temple was built, the Jewish religious community in Muncie was officially affiliated with the Hebrew Union College (Reform), even though the majority of its East European immigrant members came from Orthodox homes. The reasons for this uncommon alliance, however, were different from those in Greensboro. Fewer Jews lived in Muncie, and their concentration in small businesses did not provide the funds necessary to support a second (Orthodox) congregation. In addition, Muncie East Europeans were lax in their religious observance, practicing a private religion, as local residents put it; many felt Jewish, but not very religious. This abandonment of Orthodox precepts may have resulted from their prior sojourns in larger American cities, where traditional practices were often undermined. This tendency was certainly furthered in Muncie, however, by the scarcity of religious services, which were provided only by part-time rabbinical students from the Hebrew Union College in nearby Cincinnati. Muncie Jews' anxious avoidance of exposing their otherness may also have contributed to this "privatization" or minimization of their religious affiliation. If not the religious center, the temple was, however, the hub of local Jews' social life, in part because of their externally imposed isolation from Muncie's mainstream society and also because, given the climate of the town, they preferred to stay among their own.

Thus, local circumstances combined with Jews' small numbers and marginal position in Muncie to sustain their ever-anxious group ethnic identity (Lynd and Lynd 1937,

Gordon 1964, Rottenberg 1997). Impossible to shed in a small town where “everybody knew each other,” this uneasy identity was, for its bearers, perhaps a joy in private life, but a persistent burden in public.

Johnstown, Pennsylvania, in 1930 had a population of 67,000, including about 1,250 Jews, fewer than 2 percent. Self-contained amid the hills of western Pennsylvania, Johnstown was dominated by one industry and one powerful employer—the Cambria Steel Company, later Bethlehem Steel—with about three-quarters of its male population in manufacturing and mining. Nonunionized, ethnically fragmented, and tightly controlled by the established Anglo-Protestant elite, until World War II Johnstown remained fundamentally an autocratic town. Mercantile activities were essentially limited to feeding and clothing employees of the Bethlehem Company and its subsidiaries, and the prosperity of local merchants varied directly with the fortunes of local steel and coal enterprises and their employees. Although less aggressive than in Muncie, the Christian-nativist orientation of Johnstown’s native-born American population and its industrial elite sustained a civic-political climate resistant to the integration of the predominantly working-class South and East European immigrants and their children—still referred to as “foreigners” in the 1930s—who constituted one-third of the town’s population.

The first Jews from Germany settled in Johnstown in the 1860s, followed in the 1880s by East European Jews, who by the beginning of the twentieth century made up about 90 percent of the local Jewish community. German as well as East European Jewish households earned their livelihoods from business. The enterprises of the German Jewish merchants, who were established earlier and had extensive trade connections with fellow ethnics in Philadelphia, were generally larger and more prosperous than those of the East Europeans, who concentrated in small retail businesses. Unlike their Muncie counterparts, whose downtown stores catered to a native-born American clientele, in a replica of the traditional pattern of Old Country economic interdependence the majority of East European Jewish businesses in Johnstown served Slavic and Hungarian peasant immigrants and their offspring—about 20 percent of the town’s population and 60 percent of its industrial workforce—in their “foreign” sections of town. Johnstown’s heavy-industrial economic structure combined with the confinement of Jewish businesses to an East

European (multi-)ethnic economic niche to marginalize the Jews even more than in Muncie.

The civic-political and social situations of the Johnstown Jews and the Muncie Jews were, however, similar. The exclusionary, autocratic political system dominated by a white Anglo-Protestant industrial elite precluded the participation of Johnstown’s Jewish residents in local politics and mainstream social life. From the 1880s until World War II, they held only a few low-level municipal political offices. Except for a couple of more affluent Germans, they were excluded from the more influential country clubs. Their attempts, during the interwar period, to move into Westmont, the most prestigious neighborhood in town, were resisted by native-born American residents (although Jews eventually managed to carve out a part of it for themselves). And, except for practical encounters, they had almost no social relations outside their own group.

A clear undercurrent of antisemitism—couched in traditional Christian symbolism rather than in the secular images of the Jew as economic predator, overbearing social arriviste, or Bolshevik common in large American cities in the interwar period—combined with the economic marginality and political and social exclusion of Johnstown’s Jews, sustained their separate ethnic identity. As in Muncie, its integral element was the perception of group vulnerability. But there was an important difference.

Throughout the interwar period, Johnstown hosted three Jewish congregations, each with an array of affiliated associations: Rodef Sholom, the largest and initially Orthodox, had by the 1930s become “Consorthodox,” with a small, strictly Orthodox offshoot, Ahavath Achim, and the “German” Reform Temple Beth Zion. A much larger Jewish community than in Muncie was, of course, the precondition for Johnstown Jews to support three congregations. Another reason, however, was that Johnstown’s synagogues—especially Rodef Sholom, with which more than 80 percent of the East European Jewish majority were affiliated—were the centers of the inseparable religious-and-social life of the community. Religious observance of East European Jews in Johnstown, both public and private, was far more extensive than that of their fellow ethnics in Muncie, and so was the importance they assigned to the religious dimension of their group membership.

At least three factors account for the enduring religious observance and strong religious identification of Johnstown Jews (Morawska 1996). Most came from traditional, semi-

rural *shtetls*; most had moved directly to Johnstown within three or four years of their first stopover in America. In the context of Johnstown's geographic isolation, general cultural parochialism, and sharp ethnic segmentation, the East European Jews' economic, civic-political, and social marginality combined with their unusually high rate of residential persistence—in contrast to the mobility of the Muncie Jews—contributed to the maintenance of their religious traditionalism. It was further enhanced by the sharp social and religious divisions (absent in Muncie) between German and East European groups that were sustained through the interwar period. Although Johnstown Jews perceived their situation as vulnerable and preferred to remain inconspicuous, they were less tormented by their Jewishness or accepted it more as a natural condition—a result of the inseparability of its ethnic and religious dimensions—than did their fellow ethnics in Muncie. This comparison suggests that, in an unfriendly or even hostile environment, a collective identity solidly anchored in communal ethnoreligious practices makes Jewish lives less stressful than group membership based solely on ethnic (social and cultural) bonds.

In the post-World War II era, the diversity of Jewish experience in American small towns did not disappear (Gordon 1964; Lavender 1977; Rose 1977; Schoenfeld 1970; Shosteck 1953), but it has progressively diminished. Three common tendencies became increasingly visible over time. After a period of growth and diversification from 1945 through the 1950s—the result of the arrival of new Jewish residents—small-town Jewish communities began to dwindle in size and vitality. By the 1990s, an estimated 2.5 percent of American Jews lived in towns with populations of fewer than 100,000 (calculated from data in Goldstein 1992; Goldstein and Goldstein 1996). Those Jews who remained became increasingly integrated—economically, civically, and socially, including intermarriage—into local mainstream societies. And the decline of Jewish communal life and the integration of resident Jews increasingly individualized or rendered optional (Waters 1990) Jewish religious and/or ethnic identities and practices.

A confluence of external and in-group circumstances led to these developments. Rapid advances in transportation and communication technologies compressed geographic distances, facilitating contacts and residential mobility. These changes were accompanied by the increasing receptivity of mainstream Americans and their institutions to different ethnic groups and traditions. At

the same time, second- and third-generation American Jews, more educated and with higher achievement aspirations and broader cultural ambitions than their parents, saw few acceptable opportunities in small towns and moved to large cities. At the other end of the age structure, a growing number of retirees—the core of old-time Jewish communities—have been leaving for Florida and, more recently, for California.

As testified in numerous memorial books published by dwindling small-town congregations across America, in which old-time residents tell their stories of “how it was,” the era of diverse and vibrant Jewish life in small towns is quickly coming to a close. Time will show whether new circumstances will revive such communities.

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## Jewish Agricultural Colonies

Between 1880 and 1910, East European Jewish immigrants established approximately seventy planned farming communities, or colonies, throughout the United States. Based on strategies developed in Russia to address the "Jewish problem," these colonies aimed to "normalize" the Jewish occupational profile through agrarian labor and to serve as models of communal or cooperative life. Established German American Jews supported the colonization movement as a way of diverting immigrants from eastern cities and promoting their Americanization. Although few colonies survived for more than a few years, they played an important role in opening new areas of the country to Jewish settlement, and former colonists provided leadership in these emerging Jewish communities.

When the hopes of Jewish intellectuals for Western-style emancipation in Russia were shattered by pogroms in 1881–1882, many turned to new strategies, including revolutionary movements, emigration, and agrarianism. The *Am Olam* (Eternal People), founded in Odessa in 1881, combined elements of these ideologies by arguing that the "Jewish problem" could be solved through the establishment of socialist, agrarian colonies in the United States. Members believed that antisemitism was based in part on the "abnormal" occupational structure of Jews in Europe, where Jews had generally been prohibited from owning and cultivating the land. They argued that farming represented a pure and productive form of labor that would "normalize" Jewish life. Like the founders of the parallel movement to establish agricultural settlements in Palestine, Am Olam members believed that their colonies would demonstrate to the world both the value of communal living and Jews' capacity for productive labor.

Am Olam members founded the initial wave of colonies in 1881–1882. Intact chapters established a few colonies, such as New Odessa in Oregon; heterogeneous groups, which also included some whose connections to the organization are unclear, founded others. Established

American Jews, eager to divert immigrants from eastern cities, provided financial support. Approximately twenty-four colonies, with populations ranging from a few dozen individuals to sixty families or more, had been established by 1884. The most significant and best documented of these were located in Louisiana, the Dakotas, Oregon, Kansas, and New Jersey, and additional colonies were founded in Colorado and Arkansas.

Several of these colonies were initially established with communal ownership. For example, all holdings of the New Odessa Colony in Oregon and the Bethlehem Judea Colony in South Dakota were owned collectively; members lived together in a single household, and all shared the community's work equally. Such organization, however, proved temporary in nearly all of the colonies: within two years, settlers at Bethlehem Judea had divided the land into individual parcels. This transition from communal ownership to private property was a response to disagreements in some colonies but was built into the design of others. Indeed, the constitution of the Sicily Island Colony in Louisiana stipulated that land would be held collectively for two years and then divided into family holdings. Some colonies—particularly those on land obtained under the Homestead Act (1862), which had no provision for collective ownership—were based on private property from their inception.

Although it has been widely assumed that the colonists had no prior agricultural experience, fragmentary evidence of the settlers' occupational backgrounds suggests that a sizable portion—about one-fifth—of colonists had experience in farming (Eisenberg 1995). Despite the widespread prohibitions on Jewish farming and land owning in Europe, these areas were open to Jews in some parts of the southern Pale, where Jewish agricultural colonies existed during the nineteenth century. In addition, there were a number of colonists who had been merchants trading in agricultural products. Others were students, scholars, and professionals. Reflecting the Jewish occupational profile in the South Pale, relatively few were industrial workers or artisans.

Colony life centered on agricultural labor. Several colonies required that all members engage in farming, and at least one banned commercial activity. Colony life also focused heavily on intellectual and cultural development. In New Odessa, for example, the strict regimen included time set aside daily for "intellectual activity," including sessions

on mathematics, English, philosophy, current events, and equal rights for women. Many of the colonies had regular lecture programs and concerts as well as social activities such as dances. Some organized choirs. Notably missing in many of these colonies was organized religious life. Many of the intellectuals attracted to the colonies had rejected traditional Judaism while still in Russia. Although accounts from several colonies indicate some degree of religious observance, such as the celebration of a Passover *seder*, in others religious law was not only ignored but flouted by such practices as raising pigs. Contemporary observer Rabbi Judah Wechsler of Minnesota wrote of the New Odessa colonists, “they do not observe the Sabbath. They desecrate the Holidays and they told me directly that they are completely disinterested definitely in Judaism” (Eisenberg 1995). Although many colonies were entirely Jewish, in some cases non-Jews also lived within the settlements, and in the case of New Odessa, a non-Jew with experience in communal living was recruited to lead the colony.

The overwhelming majority of the colonies were extremely short-lived, lasting five years or fewer. A number fell victim to harsh conditions typical of their regions: malaria in the Arkansas colony; flooding at Sicily Island; and grasshoppers, blizzards, and hailstorms in the Dakota colonies. Others were torn by internal disputes, as at New Odessa, where the community was split by a controversy over the recruited leader. In some cases, as at Cremieux, South Dakota, and Beersheba, Kansas, disputes between colonists and sponsors were critical. For example, financial sponsors in Cincinnati attempted to control Beersheba Colony through a supervisor and objected when the colonists made financial decisions without consulting them. Misunderstandings over whether aid provided by sponsors was intended as a gift or a loan plagued a number of settlements.

Exceptional among the colonies in terms of longevity were those in central New Jersey, near Vineland, which survived well into the twentieth century. Alliance Colony, founded in 1882 by a group that included several Am Olam leaders, had a brief period of communal living followed by division of holdings among the families. The proximity of this colony to New York and Philadelphia made it attractive to newcomers who, while not subscribing to the ideologies of the colony movement, were eager to leave urban areas and establish themselves in an all-Jewish settlement. In addition, proximity to the wealthy and

prominent German American sponsors enabled them to exercise considerable control. Through their loan policies, sponsors shaped the colony as one based on individual landholdings and introduced industrial enterprises, such as garment factories, to attract additional immigrants to the area. Although their support was essential to the survival of Alliance and neighboring colonies, sponsor goals were at odds with those of the early settlers. While settlers had established agrarian colonies based on cooperative (if not communal) principles, sponsors saw the colonies as an outlet for “removal” policies aimed at relocating immigrants from urban ghettos to rural areas and as an arena for “Americanizing” the immigrants through cultural programming and loan policies aimed at teaching the colonists financial responsibility. In Carmel Colony, several miles from Alliance, where the initial sponsor was more in accord with settler goals, communal tendencies continued longer, with land purchased collectively as late as 1889.

Sponsor policies led to the founding of additional colonies in southern New Jersey in the early 1890s, including the industrially based settlements of Norma and Brotmanville, which grew around factories established earlier at either end of Alliance, and Woodbine in southern Cape May County. Sponsors believed factories would draw Jewish industrial workers to the settlements, aiding the goal of removal, while creating a local market for the agricultural goods grown and providing employment for farm families during the winter. These developments contributed to the survival and growth of the South Jersey colonies, which reached their peak population in the mid-1910s, while altering them significantly. Newcomers drawn by factories did not share the distinctive regional and ideological background of the early colonists. As the settlements grew, the cooperative elements and the sense of mission that had characterized them earlier dissipated, as they evolved from colonies to communities whose distinctiveness lay primarily in their rural location rather than in their ideological orientation.

Although the most active period of colony formation occurred in the 1880s and 1890s, Clarion Colony, Utah, was founded in 1911. It mimicked the earlier Am Olam settlements in its ambition to model a new mode of Jewish life and in its plan to move from communal organization to individual holdings. While the community grew quickly to 156 people, it was devastated by floods and sold to creditors after a few years.



Woodbine, New Jersey, Jewish agricultural community. (American Jewish Historical Society)

Despite the short-lived nature of most colonies, they were critical in establishing migration streams that brought independent Jewish farmers and other Jewish immigrants into rural areas and small towns in states ranging from New Jersey to Kansas. For example, in North Dakota, new Jewish settlers replaced the colonists beginning in the late 1880s and continuing into the 1910s. These newcomers settled not as colonists but as individual farm families concentrated in the district where the colonies had been; they were followed by Jewish immigrants who settled in the towns of the same region. At Painted Woods, where the Jewish farm population had dwindled to 3 families by 1900, there were approximately 40 more families by 1906 and a total of 250 by 1912. Ultimately, approximately 800 Jewish farm families filed homestead claims in North Dakota, only about half of whom had been members of organized colonies (Eisenberg 2002).

As early settlers, colony veterans frequently became leaders of Jewish communities that emerged in these rural areas, the small market towns that served them, and the larger cities of second settlement. This pattern is clearly visible in Portland, Oregon, which attracted a number of colony veterans whose organizational experience, language skills, and relative acculturation propelled them into leadership positions in institutions ranging from synagogues and schools to B'nai B'rith lodges.

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## Jews in Suburbia

In the decades leading up to World War II, Jews experienced suburbanization as individuals, with isolated families relocating out of the urban core to the metropolitan periphery. Then, for about four decades after World War II, a period of communal suburbanization saw the whole of the Jewish communal infrastructure leave older urban neighborhoods for newer suburban ones. Since the 1980s, the Jewish community has entered a matured period in which suburbia is taken for granted.

### Individual Suburbanization

Prior to World War II, suburbia had not yet become a cultural ideal for middle-class Americans. Suburbs were generally seen as wealthy residential cloisters dominated by Protestants (Chicago's North Shore or Philadelphia's Main Line), as working-class towns dominated by ethnic immigrants (Chicago's Cicero), or sleepy, rural hamlets on the edge of the big city (Skokie, outside Chicago). For American Jews, moving to suburbia meant abandoning the dense Jewish infrastructure of the urban immigrant neighborhoods. Such places as Boston's Blue Hill Avenue, Chicago's Maxwell Street, and Toronto's Kensington held the heart and soul of the urban Jewish community. Here were the first homes of the hundreds of thousands of European immigrants. Here were the dense agglomerations of synagogues, Hebrew schools, Jewish businesses, and most other communal institutions. Leaving this core for a newer and larger home in a mostly non-Jewish suburb held little appeal for most Jews. Instead, Jews who relocated usually moved to adjacent urban neighborhoods, returning to the older neighborhood for their communal needs.

Those Jews who moved to the suburban periphery did so on an individual basis, with little expectation that the whole of the Jewish infrastructure—the synagogues, the

Hebrew schools, the kosher butcher shops—would relocate with them. There were, of course, exceptions to this trend, and before World War II one could find small Jewish communities sprouting in the suburbs of New York (Nassau County) and Boston, where as early as 1911 enough Jews had moved to Brookline to form their own *minyán*. By the late 1930s, more than 18,000 Jews called Nassau County home, but this was still a small minority compared to the 100,000 living in Queens (Vincent 2005).

### Communal Suburbanization

After World War II, vast areas of farmland on the peripheries of every major metropolitan region were transformed into new suburban neighborhoods. William Levitt, a Jewish real estate developer, was responsible for creating the modern subdivision through his innovative building methods. Using an assembly-line method of house construction, Levitt and his imitators were able to build houses rapidly and cheaply, thus opening the metropolitan frontier to millions of Americans—thousands of Jews included—who in previous decades would not have been able to afford a suburban home.

Unlike the earlier period of individual suburbanization, the years after World War II saw the entire infrastructure of the Jewish community relocate to the metropolitan periphery. In every major city, suburbanizing Jews brought their synagogues along with them, and in time Jewish schools moved with their students, and kosher butcher shops and bakeries and other Jewish institutions followed their clientele. The movement to suburbia also sparked the formation of new institutions, as many Jews wanted a fresh start in their new environment. In Nassau County, Long Island, for example, more than eighty new synagogues were founded in the eight years after World War II.

This wholesale relocation of Jewish communities to the suburban frontier was not without its problems. Suburbanizing synagogues faced questions about how to serve those members who were staying behind. Moreover, the suburban neighborhoods into which Jews moved did not always welcome the newcomers; anti-Jewish sentiments still dominated many small communities on the metropolitan fringe. Legal entanglements over the construction of synagogue buildings were frequent in the 1950s, with prominent lawsuits between synagogues and towns in Beachwood, Ohio, and Indianapolis, Indiana, for example.

Sadly, though they often faced discrimination, Jews were not entirely exempt from their own prejudices. In many cities, Jewish suburbanization coincided with the movement of African Americans into Jewish urban neighborhoods. In places such as Boston's Roxbury and Chicago's West Side, white flight equaled Jewish flight as whole neighborhoods emptied of Jews seemingly overnight. Then, when they arrived in suburbia, many Jewish families wanted no part of integration. William Levitt's salesmen were infamous for refusing to sell homes to African Americans. To Levitt, religion and business were separate. "As a Jew I have no room in my mind or heart for racial prejudice," Levitt explained, but "I have come to know that if we sell one house to a Negro family, then ninety to ninety-five percent of our white customers will not buy into the community" (Halberstam 1993). Ironically, many of the 1960s social activists who championed racial equality were Jews who had grown up in Levitt-style neighborhoods in the previous decade.

Jewish movement into postwar suburbia was a socio-economic process as well as a geographical movement, with Jews consciously making their institutions and religious practices more compatible with a "modern," upwardly mobile way of thinking. Perhaps the best example of how religion was reshaped to fit the new suburban environment was the 1950 ruling by the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards to permit riding in automobiles on the Sabbath. Recognizing that its member families were violating traditional prohibitions against Sabbath driving, the Committee allowed families to drive on the Sabbath—as long as they drove to synagogue and not to other activities such as shopping. Of course, this declaration did not cause a sudden outbreak of Sabbath driving; driving on Saturdays—to services and everywhere else—had already become a normal pattern for many suburban Jewish families.

The modernization of Jewish religious behavior extended to the roles of children and women in suburbia as well. Suburban families affiliated with synagogues "for the children's sake," with the congregational Hebrew school seen as essential to providing a basic Jewish education—at least through the *bar mitzvah* age. With the growth of synagogue "centers" that were as much social institutions as religious ones, women became more involved in communal life than they had ever been. Synagogue sisterhoods and national organizations such as Hadassah provided an

outlet for women's participation. This period also saw the increase in women's involvement within the sanctuary, with most Reform and Conservative synagogues allowing full and equal participation by women in prayer services by the 1980s.

Wrapped up as it was with social mobility and the shedding of religious traditionalism, the era of Jewish communal suburbanization was ripe for social satire. Philip Roth, in works such as *Goodbye, Columbus* (1960), mocked the conspicuous consumption of suburban Jews, who demonstrated ample ability to "keep up with the Cohens," whether in the kinds of cars they drove, the country clubs they belonged to, or the lavishness of their children's bar mitzvah parties.

Social scientists and other observers of the Jewish community saw these suburban transformations as a crucial stage in the development of American Judaism. Studies such as Albert Gordon's *Jews in Suburbia* (1959) and Marshall Sklare's *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier* (1968/1979) focused on the movement from Judaism to Jewishness, with traditionalist observance giving way to cultural identity. These works argued that suburban Jews saw themselves as different from their non-Jewish neighbors but expressed their cultural distinctiveness within the framework of a shared, modern, middle-class lifestyle. Thus, eating only kosher food was rejected because it was "too different," whereas Chanukah was deemed an appropriate Jewish equivalent to Christmas.

Though Sklare and others were generally accurate in depicting the impact of suburbanization on Jewish communities, they underestimated the continued influence of religion. They did not foresee the explosion in Orthodox Jewish suburbanization, mostly because the presence of traditionalist Jews in a consumerist environment did not fit with a model of religious declension and cultural assimilation. The reality is, however, that the blossoming of American Orthodoxy has coincided with—and has even been abetted by—the movement to suburbia. Affluence among suburban Orthodox Jews facilitated the expansion of Jewish day schools, a trend that reflected in equal parts the religious desire for an intensive Jewish education and a middle-class suburban demand for quality general education. Upward mobility also eased the burdens of maintaining a religiously observant home. With affluence, a family could afford a larger kitchen with two sinks, ovens, and even dishwashers, which separate meat and dairy accord-

ing to laws of *kashruth*. Extra disposable income could also go toward other aspects of “kosher consumerism,” such as adorning one’s home with artistic Judaica, eating out in upscale kosher restaurants, and enjoying award-winning kosher wines.

## Matured Suburbanization

Today, Jewish suburbia has matured to the point that it is entirely taken for granted. It is no longer necessary to identify Jewish communities as “suburban,” because almost every major American Jewish community is centered in suburbia. Other than New York City, no other major community in the United States has a majority of Jews living in urban neighborhoods. The Jewish communal infrastructure is fully suburban as well, with most Jewish community centers, day schools, federation offices, and kosher butchers, bakeries, and grocery stores based in suburban neighborhoods.

With suburbia so “normal,” there is now a trend in many communities back to the urban neighborhood. Yet this renaissance of urban Jewry merely emphasizes the extent to which Jewish geography has been flipped on its head—suburbia is now the stable core, and urban neighborhoods are the pioneering periphery.

Though one might think that, after several decades of settlement on the metropolitan periphery, the Jewish community would be comfortable in its suburbanization, tensions remain. Battles over the display of a *menorah* on public property have become an annual ritual in many communities, with Orthodox Jewish groups such as Chabad seeking to erect a *menorah* and liberal Jews fighting to keep such overt religious symbols from entering the public space. Many places have witnessed legal battles over the construction of an *eruv*, the enclosure within which one is permitted to carry objects on the Sabbath. Orthodox Jews, who adhere to strict Sabbath observance, will only carry things in public in neighborhoods that have an *eruv*. In most cases, an *eruv* is unobtrusive, constructed out of existing utility wires and fences. Yet even a proposal to construct an *eruv* raises eyebrows, particularly among less traditional suburban Jews who fear the ghettoization of their neighborhoods. Though many communities have constructed *eruvim* without controversy, places such as

Tenafly and Lakewood in New Jersey have witnessed lawsuits and political fighting. The irony is that, in most cases, the development of a strong Orthodox Jewish neighborhood raises property values because homes within the *eruv* and closest to the synagogue become more desirable.

Finally, an examination of suburban Jewry should note that one of suburbia’s central icons has Jewish roots as well. Specifically, the shopping mall, a hallmark of suburban consumerism, resulted from the design efforts of Victor Gruen, an Austrian Jew who fled Nazi Europe in 1938. Gruen created a consumerist sensation in 1956 by designing Southdale, the nation’s first enclosed shopping mall, in suburban Minneapolis. Gruen recognized the consumerist trends of suburban society and tailored his mall to an automobile culture. The result: a two-story, indoor shopping arcade anchored by large department stores and filled with smaller retail tenants in the middle, all surrounded by acres of free parking. This model of suburban materialism was later imitated and then perfected by other Jewish real estate developers, including Alfred Taubman, the Simon brothers (Minneapolis’s Mall of America), and the Ghermezian family (West Edmonton Mall).

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# Antisemitism in America

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## Antisemitism in American Literature before 1960

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Literary characterizations of Jews both reflect the perceptions of them in the culture and help form these perceptions. In the United States, literature and Christian theology have worked hand in hand to create a negative image of the Jew that served as the basis for actions against Jews, and for the lack of action when the European Jews were desperate for help during the Holocaust.

Even though American Jews have experienced a much greater level of toleration and freedom than their European coreligionists, even in the United States Jews have often found themselves regarded as aliens in a Christian land. As Michael Dobkowski observed, Jews, Judaism, and Jewishness “were interpreted in literature and by social commentators as being anathema to America’s Christian heritage” (1979).

The portrayal of the Jew in American literature combined the negative economic motif with that of the deicidal Jew-Devil and contrasted “anachronistic” Judaism with “triumphant” Christianity. Even when Jews were occasionally treated positively, they were seen not as real people but as stereotypes.

Some literary figures—among them the abolitionist poet Julia Ward Howe and the novelist Edward Bellamy—credited the Jews for their contributions to Christianity

and to the secular world. But the work of most major American writers of the nineteenth century contains anti-Jewish material based on traditional Christian stereotypes.

The earliest group of significant American poets were the nineteenth-century Fireside Poets. All wrote from a Christian point of view when they discussed Jews, and all but John Greenleaf Whittier employed hostile stereotypes.

A friend of the philosemitic Unitarian abolitionist Lydia Maria Child, Whittier believed that there was truth in all religions. In “The Two Rabbins” (1865), he observed, “when at last they rose to embrace / Each saw God’s pardon in his brother’s face!”

For William Cullen Bryant, however, the Jews had “an unquenchable lust for lucre” and a “lust for money”; they were like snakes “in search of prey.” Even when he on occasion praised Jews, calling them “noble” and “spiritual,” with great contributions to the world in religion, law, poetry, and music, he still saw only a bundle of stereotyped traits. As he himself indicated, his “admiration” was indeed “reluctant” (Gould 1991).

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *Hiawatha* comments on “How the Jews, the tribe accursed / Mocked him, scourged him, crucified him.” In “The Jewish Cemetery at Newport” (1852), the Jewish names in the cemetery seem un-American, “strange” and “foreign.” He concedes that the Jews arrived on these shores because of a “burst of Christian hate,” yet, like St. Paul, he pictures these Jews as

the “Ishmaels and Hagars of mankind,” refers to “the deep mark of Cain,” and observes that “dead nations never rise again.”

In “Bibliolatres” (1849), James Russell Lowell regards the Jewish Bible as useless and rigid, broken and dead, unconnected with the living God. He addresses the Jews as “blind [and] unconverted,” Judaism as merely a “dry and sapless rod,” the Torah as an “idol-volume” used “to coop the living God.”

As American ambassador to Britain, Lowell wrote and spoke of “Jewish blood.” In his address to an English audience on October 6, 1884, entitled “Democracy,” he explained,

The Jews [were] perhaps the ablest, certainly the most tenacious, race that had ever lived . . . a race in which ability seems as natural and hereditary as the curve of their noses, and whose blood, furtively mingling in the bluest bloods of Europe, has quickened them with its own indomitable impulsion. We drove them into a corner, but they had their revenge. . . . They made their corner the counter and bankinghouse of the world, and thence they rule it with the ignobler scepter of finance. (Lowell 1904)

His identification of Jews with money was evident to many. A guest at a Lowell dinner party observed that

the Jews [were] almost a monomania with him. He detected a Jew in every hiding place and under every disguise. . . . It appeared that this insidious race had penetrated and permeated the human family more universally than any other influence except original sin. [Lowell proclaimed:] ‘And when the Jews have got absolute control of finance, the army and navy, the press, diplomacy, society, titles, the government, and the earth’s surface, what do you suppose they will do with them—and with us?’ (*Atlantic Monthly* 1897)

An advocate of religious toleration, Oliver Wendell Holmes observed, “[T]here are many mansions in the Father’s earthly house as well as in the heavenly one.” Holmes noted that, as a young man, “I shared more or less the prevailing prejudices against the persecuted race,” which he traced to Christian teaching and Puritan exclusiveness. In a remarkable poem, rewritten in 1874 as “At the Pantomime” but originally entitled “A Hebrew Tale,” Holmes demonstrates how he overcame his early antisemitism. He recounts the story of attending a play and being hemmed in by Jews, whose very appearance he found distasteful:

“The beak that crowned the bistered [swarthy] face/ Betrayed the mould of Abraham’s race. . . .” He thought of their deicide, their perfidy, their usury, their murder of Christian children: “Up came their murderous deeds of old / The grisly story Chaucer told / And many an ugly tale beside / Of children caught and crucified. . . .” But when Holmes looks more closely into the faces of the Jews surrounding him, he thinks that Jesus must have looked like them. He realizes that his scorn is supercilious and misplaced. And so he concludes: “From thee the son of Mary came / With thee the Father deigned to dwell—Peace be upon thee, Israel” (Holmes 1895).

Of the American Renaissance writers, Henry Thoreau did not deal with Jews at all. Like him, Emily Dickinson probably never met any Jews, yet she fleetingly mentioned them in images of greed and wealth.

Despite rejecting many aspects of Christianity, Ralph Waldo Emerson’s early sermons reflected his belief that the Jews were responsible for murdering Jesus, the founder of a set of religious beliefs far superior to those of Judaism. In January 1827, he observed, “We [Christians] are standing on a higher stage . . . instructed in a better philosophy, whose greater principles explain to us the design. . . . We leave the ritual, the offering, & altar of Moses. We cast off the superstitions that were the swaddling clothes of Christianity.” In the spring of 1832, he wrote that “the Jewish Law answered its temporary purpose & was set aside. Christianity is completing its purpose as an aid to educate man” (Gilman 1960–1969). Elsewhere, he saw the “Jewish idea” as a stumbling block to authentic human liberation. The Jewish God was cruel; the Jewish Law was stifling. What was bad about Christianity was its Jewish substance.

Although in 1867 he called attention to the responsibility of Christianity for the Jews’ suffering, Emerson bemoaned his brother’s becoming “the vulgarest man of business who has no correspondence for any but the Jews. . . .” And he asked him whether he did “not die of the Jews to whom you pay usance?” (Rusk 1939). In his journal entry for July 3, 1839, Emerson wrote, “In the Allston gallery the Polish Jews are an offense to me; they degrade & animalize” (Gilman 1960–1969). In his essay “Fate,” he commented, “The suffrance which is the badge of the Jew, has made him, in these days, the ruler of rulers of the earth” (Emerson 1888).

Walt Whitman was an admirer of ancient Judaism and the Hebrew Bible, but looking at the scene on Broadway,

New York, in August 1856, he wrote about “dirty looking German Jews . . . with a sharp nasal twang and flat squalling enunciation to which the worst Yankee brogue is sweet music” (Whitman 1936).

*Redburn*, Herman Melville’s only novel with Jewish characters, describes a Jewish pawnbroker as “[a] curly-headed little man with a dark oily face, and a hooked nose, like the pictures of Judas Iscariot.” In *The Confidence Man*, Melville concludes a list of criminals, “a horse-thief, an assassin, a treaty-breaker, and a judicial murderer,” with “a Jew with hospitable speeches cozening some fainting stranger into ambush, there to burk him, and account it a deed grateful to Manitou [Mammon], his God.” An entry in his journal refers to the Jews in Palestine: “In the emptiness of the lifeless antiquity of Jerusalem the emigrant Jews are like flies who have taken up their abode in a skull” (Melville 1955).

Melville’s long poem *Clarel* denigrates several Jewish characters aside from Jewish women, whom he (following tradition) seemed to regard positively: Nathan was a convert from Christianity; Margoth was a self-hating apostate Jew; the Lyonesse, a “toy of Mammon,” an assimilated Jew anxious to discard his Jewish identity; Abdon was an Indian Orthodox Jew whose life was essentially over, simply waiting to die in Palestine. There was not among them a born Jew who experienced his Judaism as a living faith with a future.

Perhaps the most egregious examples of antisemitism in nineteenth-century literature occur in the work of Nathaniel Hawthorne. (His son, Julian, was a popular antisemitic novelist at the end of the century.) In *The Marble Faun*, Hawthorne refers to the Jews as “the ugliest, most evil-minded” people, “resembling . . . maggots when they over-populate a decaying cheese.” Hawthorne’s essay in his *English Notebooks* provides the clearest expression of his hatred for the Jews. The first Jewish Lord Mayor of London, Sir David Solomons, invited Hawthorne to a formal dinner in 1856. Hawthorne described the Lord Mayor’s elder brother Philip as

the very Jew of Jews; the distilled essence of all the Jews that have been born since Jacob’s time; he was Judas Iscariot; he was the Wandering Jew; he was the worst, and at the same time, the truest type of his race, and contained within himself, I have no doubt, every old prophet and every old clothesman, that ever the tribes produced; and he must have

been circumcised as much as ten times over. I never beheld anything so ugly and disagreeable, and preposterous, and laughable, as the outline of his profile; it was so hideously Jewish, and so cruel, and so keen. (Stewart 1941)

Of the four “Western” writers of the late nineteenth century, Joaquin Miller in his poem “To Russia” asked, “Who gave thee / Your Christian creed? Yea, yea / Who gave your very God to you? Your Jew! Your Jew! Your hated Jew!”

Bret Harte, himself one-quarter Jewish, wrote a satirical poem, “That Ebrew Jew,” attacking the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga Springs, New York, for refusing to rent rooms to Jews and for distinguishing between Jews and Hebrews: “For the Jew is a man who will make money through . . . / And an Ebrew’s a man that we Gentiles can ‘do.’”

Ambrose Bierce observed that he “hated Hebrews but adored Shebrews.”

Providing an insight into the origins of his anti-Jewish feelings, Mark Twain wrote, “I was raised to a prejudice against Jews. Christians always are, you know. . . .” (Smith 1962). In November 1853, the sixteen-year-old Twain wrote from Philadelphia that the Jewish presence had “desecrated” two historic homes there. And in a newspaper article of April 10, 1857, he asserted, “the blasted Jews got to adulterating the fuel.” In 1879 he observed that “the Jews are the only race who work wholly with their brains and never with their hands” (Foner 1958). He ignored the realities of impoverished Jews and exploited Jewish labor in American cities.

Twain wrote his famous essay “Concerning the Jews” in Vienna in 1898. Vienna’s mayor was Karl Lueger, a powerful and popular Christian antisemite who would be much admired by Adolf Hitler. Although Twain praised the Jews for their charity, close family life, hard work, and “genius,” he repeated the slander that the Jews had an “unpatriotic disinclination to stand by the flag as a soldier.” His solution was for regiments of Jews—and Jews only—to enlist in the army, to disprove the charge that “you feed on a country but don’t like to fight for it” (Neider 1963). In reaction to angry letters from American Jews who read the essay, Twain later retracted this statement in a postscript and noted that, despite having to endure American antisemitism, Jews fought widely and bravely in America’s wars.

In the same essay, Twain ignored historical realities to recount how the Jews had cheated, exploited, and dominated poor and ignorant Christians in the American South, czarist Russia, and medieval England, Spain, and Austria: “There was no way to successfully compete with [the Jew] in any vocation, the law had to step in and save the Christian from the poorhouse. . . . [The Jew] has made it the end and aim of his life to get [money]” (Neider 1963).

Twain opposed Theodor Herzl’s plan for a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. He argued that “if that concentration of the cunningest brains in the world was going to be made in a free country . . . , I think it would be politic to stop it. It will not be well to let that race find out its strength.” For Twain, there was evidently no place in this world for the Jews, within Palestine or outside it. At the close of his essay, he observed, “By his make and ways [the Jew] is substantially a foreigner wherever he may be, and even the angels dislike a foreigner” (Neider 1963).

Of the American Realists, Harold Frederic devoted more of his work to Jews than any other Realist. He wrote of the Jews who “have imposed the rule of their ideas and their gods upon us for fifteen hundred years.” He complained that it was the Jewish spirit that had ruined Catholicism. He differed from the racists in seeing that some Jews were good, but they had to be “of the right sort” (Harap 1974).

William Dean Howells repeatedly associated Jews with money. Although he claimed to be ridiculing this belief, the irony was lost on some. He had a character say that the Jews “have got in. . . . And when they get in, they send down the price of property. Of course, there ain’t any sense in it. . . . You tell folks that the Savior himself was one, and the twelve apostles, and all the prophets . . . and it don’t make a bit of difference. . . . Prices begin to shade when the first one gets in.” And “Oh, yes, they’ve all got the money” (Howells 1884). Some Jews complained about these gratuitous passages. Cyrus L. Sulzberger, editor of the *American Hebrew*, wrote Howells in 1885, “The introduction of the lines in question cannot even be excused on the ground that it serves a literary purpose, for no such end is accomplished. The sentiment is violently dragged in for no other ascertainable reason than to pander to a prejudice. . . .” (Liptzin 1966). Although Howells argued that he was simply reflecting what most Americans believed, he did cut the offending passages from later editions of his work.

Associated with Howells were the aristocratic writers. Whereas William James was a profoundly humanistic thinker, his brother Henry was a confirmed antisemite. With an air of disdain, Henry James seemed to regard the Jews, especially immigrants, as hardly human. To him the Jewish “denizens of the New York Ghetto” seemed like “small, strange animals . . . snakes or worms . . . who, when cut into pieces, wriggle away and live in the snippet as completely as in the whole.” At other times, James seemed to fear the Jews. They were “hard,” lived in New York “for race, and not, as it were, for reason”; and he worried about “the extent of the Hebrew conquest of New York,” about “what the genius of Israel may, or may not, really be ‘up to’” (Harap 1974).

The grandson and great-grandson of presidents, Henry Adams also responded with fear and hatred to the large influx of Orthodox Jewish immigrants entering the country from Eastern Europe. His writing reflected the conflict he saw between his traditional Christian and American values and what he regarded as the Jewish values that were contorting modern society. He feared that “[w]e are in the hands of the Jews. They can do what they please with our values” (Samuels 1958). In the economic crisis of 1892, he wrote, “I detest them and everything connected with them, and I live only and solely with the hope of seeing their demise, with all their accursed Judaism. I want to see all the lenders at interest taken out and executed. . . .” (Samuels 1958). From Vienna in 1900, he complained that economic disaster had come upon him and his friends like “the devil on a broomstick in the shape of a mob of howling Jews who upset my world” (Ford 1930). Adams believed that the Jews conspired to control the world.

Adams’s letters from Europe and the United States called architecture that he did not like (the Gothic arch) “the legitimate child of the Jews,” exploitative and grasping; of Jewish art collectors, he wrote, “anything these Jews touch is in some strange way vulgarized”; from Warsaw he wrote disgustedly that the city was “mostly Jew. [The Jew] makes me creep” (Ford 1930); and in *The Education of Henry Adams*, he described the Orthodox religious Jew “in all his weird horror.” In his view, even the Virgin Mary, though born a Jew, “disliked Jews, and rarely neglected a chance to maltreat them” (*Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*). He regarded the Spanish Inquisition as “a noble aim” (Samuels 1958).

The most significant religious author at the turn of the century was Lew Wallace, whose *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* was the most popular novel of the period. Wallace associated the Jews with deicide, for which they had to suffer, and he made Judaism appear as merely the groundwork for Christianity, a pure elaboration of Christian triumphalism in a modern novel. To Wallace, the Jewish people were responsible for the Crucifixion. They “stared at each other aghast. . . . They beat their breasts and shrieked with fear. His blood was upon them!” Wallace maintained that only the Jews “could have cried, Better a law without love than a love without law. . . . Revenge is a Jew’s of right; it is the law.” Ben-Hur and his family “saw the light” and, after having wrongly adhered to Judaism, were saved as Christians.

Several twentieth-century writers were either positive or neutral toward the Jews—O. Henry, Sinclair Lewis, Edmund Wilson, John Dos Passos, James T. Farrell, James Jones, and Lincoln Steffens. Sherwood Anderson, William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, and F. Scott Fitzgerald expressed ambivalence about Jewishness. Their early work was antisemitic, yet their later writing treated Jews realistically.

In the 1920s, Fitzgerald was disgusted with Jews, whom he associated with new money, power, and the corruption of culture. In “Echoes of the Jazz Age,” Fitzgerald compared Jews with mental defectives, animals, and marine invertebrates.

In *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald portrays Meyer Wolfsheim, a “small, flat-nosed Jew,” as diabolical, with no redeeming traits. He is “one man [who] could start to play with the faith of fifty million people.” The Wolfsheims are described as “villainous” and “rude,” and they make Gatsby’s kitchen “a pigsty.” Fitzgerald portrayed no other Jewish characters in the novel. As Milton Hindus noted, “the novel reads very much like an antisemitic document.” When Edith Wharton wrote to Fitzgerald to congratulate him on his book, she noted that in Wolfsheim, Fitzgerald had created “your *perfect Jew* . . .” (*Commentary* 1947).

Fitzgerald, however, apparently changed his attitude toward Jews, most likely because his antipathy to Nazism and his experience in Hollywood taught him that a variety of real, complicated Jews lived in the world, not just stereotypes. In his uncompleted novel, *The Last Tycoon*, Fitzgerald drew several different kinds of Jewish characters, both good and evil.

Katherine Anne Porter’s novel *Ship of Fools* contains one despicable Jewish character, Julius Lowenthal, without any counterbalancing positive Jewish figure. Aside from two Catholic priests, Lowenthal is the only character identified by his religion. His aggressive Jewishness and stereotypical Jewish looks match his intolerance of Christians. Passing by a shipboard celebration of the Mass, Lowenthal

restrained his impulse to spit until he had passed beyond the line of vision of the worshipers; then, his mouth watering with disgust, he moved to the rail and spat like a land-lubber into the wind, which blew it back in his face. At his curse being thus returned to his very teeth, his whole body was suffused with superstitious terror, it scurried like mice in his blood, it shook his nerves from head to foot. ‘God forbid,’ he said aloud, with true piety.

Phyllis Robinson, Willa Cather’s biographer, pointed out that Cather had a “deep-seated” prejudice against Jews. “She romanticized other nationalities and cultures, . . . but where Jews were concerned, she seemed to have a blind spot.” Cather’s description of the Jewish millionaire, Stein, was that “he was a vulture of the vulture race.” She may have had a few “good Jews” in her fiction, but overall she exemplified “a typical Midwestern bias against Jews” (Robinson 1983).

Hemingway’s biographer, Jeffrey Meyers, points out that he was “fashionably” antisemitic, which occasioned his hostility toward Robert Cohen in *The Sun Also Rises*. A letter from Hutchins Hapgood, a Christian defender of Jews, challenged Hemingway’s portrait of Cohen. Hapgood, who knew the man who had served as the model for Cohen, wrote, “It has never seemed to me to be fair to put into an unfavorable picture of a human being the factor of race as a causal relationship.” Hemingway’s attitude toward Bernard Berenson changed, but then, Berenson had converted to Christianity. Whereas in 1928 Hemingway had called Berenson “an empty asshole and kike patron of the arts,” by 1949 he regarded Berenson as “one of the living people that I respect the most” (Meyers 1999).

For e. e. cummings, Jews were the most utterly repulsive of creatures. “There are some specimens of humanity,” he wrote of a Jew he called the Fighting Sheeny, “in whose presence one instantly and instinctively feels a profound revulsion.” In *XAIPE* (1950), Cummings associated the Jews with money, manipulation, and corruption: “a kike is

the most dangerous/ machine as yet invented/ by even yankee ingenu/ ity (out of a jew a few/ dead dollars and some twisted laws)/ it comes both prigged and canted” (Firmage 1991).

Theodore Dreiser’s Jewish characters were “wrecks and cripples,” a molester and murderer of little girls, and a Shylock. In his play *The Hand of the Potter*, Dreiser recapitulates the medieval ritual-murder defamation in describing the murder of an eleven-year-old Catholic girl by a Jewish man.

In 1922, Dreiser wrote his friend and kindred spirit, H. L. Mencken, that New York was “a Kyke’s dream of a Ghetto.” Dreiser’s letters from the mid-1930s described the Jews as stubbornly holding onto their religion and “race,” and sharply “money-minded.” He opposed tolerance for Jews because it would allow them to “possess America by sheer numbers, their cohesion, their race tastes and, as in the case of the Negro in South Africa, really [to] overrun the land. [Once he] invades [a country,] he is still a Jew. He’s been in America all of two hundred years, and he has not faded into a pure American by any means . . .” (Elias 1959, letter of October 10, 1933).

Hutchins Hapgood accused Dreiser of ignorance, barbarity, and indecency, noting that Dreiser’s letter could have been written by a member of the Ku Klux Klan or a representative of Adolf Hitler. In his reply, Dreiser conceded that Jews are “a brilliant and gifted people.” But their “crucifixion in Germany” is due to their “mistaken [attempt] to establish themselves as Jews, with their religion, race characteristics, race solidarity and all, in the bosom . . . of almost every country the world over. . . . Being as gifted as they are, they so rapidly rise to power and affluence wherever they go” (Elias 1959, letter of December 28, 1933). He offered two solutions to the “Jewish problem”: drive them out of the United States or force every Jew to marry a Christian.

H. L. Mencken wrote, in his “Treatise on the Gods,” “The Jews could be put down very plausibly as the most unpleasant race ever heard of. . . . they lack many of the qualities that mark the civilized man: courage, dignity, incorruptibility, ease, confidence. They have vanity without pride, voluptuousness without taste, and learning without wisdom. . . .”

References to Jews frequent his diaries: “[T]here is a shrewd Jew in him at bottom,” “it appeared to me, in the rather dim light, that many of them were Jews,” “did not

enjoy being bracketed with two Jews.” In August 1942, he mused about how foreign he felt in America and how good his life in Germany could have been. A year later, he ruminated about America’s role in the war as typical American folly; he hoped that catastrophe would overtake Americans. And yet he termed the United States “this great Christian country” (Fecher 1989). In a letter of May 29, 1919, he wrote prophetically, “There is a good ground for hoping that, as a Jew, [Freud] will fall a victim to some obscure race war in Vienna” (Bode 1977).

One of the most politicized antisemites of the twentieth century was Ezra Pound. Although he later repudiated his Protestant background and often wrote against the churches, his major accusations against the Jews may have initially derived from his Christian upbringing and Sunday school education. He stated that he had “read the Bible daily in childhood,” and that as an adult he longed for the Catholic Middle Ages, when the Jew was clearly regarded as an alien in the *corpus Christi*.

Some of Pound’s ideas mirrored those of the leading antisemite Father Charles Coughlin, who celebrated Hitler’s invasion of Russia and railed against “the British–Jewish–Roosevelt war on Germany and Italy.” Pound condemned Jews in almost all of the more than 120 wartime broadcasts he made on Rome Radio. He blamed the Jews for starting the war and corrupting the world. England, France, Russia, and the United States were all “under yidd control. Lousy with kikes.” He noted, in Nazi metaphors, “You let in the Jew and the Jew rotted your empire, . . . And the big Jew has rotted EVERY nation he has wormed into. . . . It were better you were infected with typhus.” Americans “are now ruled by Jews, and by the dirtiest dirt from the bottom of the Jew’s ash can.” The Talmud “is the code of vengeance, of secret means unto vengeance. AIMED specifically at the destruction of all non-kike order. . . . OUT of it came the Bolsheviki. Out of it came the determination to ruin Europe, to break down Christianity. . . . Destroy everything that is conducive to civilization.” On April 27, 1943, he told his audience that “the sixty Kikes who started this war” got their inspiration from the Talmud (Doob 1978).

In *The Pisan Cantos*, Pound argued again that the war was caused by the Jews, who sacrificed gentile lives for profit: “the yidd is a stimulant, and the goyim are cattle/ . . . and go to saleable slaughter/ with the maximum of docility.” He called the Duke of Wellington “a jew’s pimp”

and blamed the American Civil War on the Jews (Pound 1971). Pound insisted that a few hundred American Jews and FDR should be hung for their crimes and insisted that “all the kike congressmen” should be “bumped off” without delay (Doob 1978). George Orwell recalled a wartime broadcast “in which [Pound] approved the massacre of East European Jews and ‘warned’ the American Jews that their turn was coming presently” (*Partisan Review* 1949).

Robert Michael

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## Leo Max Frank (1884–1915)

### Victim of One of the Most Infamous Antisemitic Crimes in the History of the United States

For his first twenty-nine years, Leo Frank led an ordinary though generally successful life. By his mid-twenties, he had received a college degree, married, and was the manager of a factory employing more than a hundred workers in a large southern city. Not long after his twenty-ninth birthday, a murder took place in that factory, a crime for which he was convicted and sentenced to death. For nearly two years, he and his lawyers struggled to keep the execution from taking place. He narrowly avoided judicial execution through a commutation of his death sentence to life in prison, only to be kidnapped from prison and lynched, a fate he alone among American Jews has suffered.

Leo Frank was born in Cuero, Texas, on April 17, 1884; his father, Rudolph Frank, was born in Germany, and his mother, Rachel Jacobs Frank, was born in New York of German Jewish parents. When Leo was about three months old, his family moved to Brooklyn, where he attended public schools and the Pratt Institute before entering Cornell University in the fall of 1902. He received his bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering in June 1906 and was employed in two positions before accepting an offer to manage a pencil factory in Atlanta. Frank spent nine months in Europe learning the business, then moved to Atlanta in August 1908 to become the superintendent of the National Pencil Factory. In October 1910 he married Lucille Selig, from a prominent German Jewish family in Atlanta; Frank later described his “married life” as “exceptionally happy . . . the happiest days of my life.”



*Leo Frank, wrongly accused of murder in 1913 and lynched by an antisemitic mob in 1915. (Library of Congress)*

Those happy days ended on April 26, 1913 (Confederate Memorial Day), when a thirteen-year-old worker, Mary Phagan, was murdered around noon in the factory he superintended. Her body was not found until early the next morning, and Frank did not learn about the murder until several hours later, when the police telephoned him at the home of his in-laws, with whom he and his wife lived. The police sent a car and drove Frank to the funeral home to which Phagan's body had been taken. Though he could not remember her name, Frank was able to identify her as an employee of the pencil factory, as he recalled that she had picked up her pay the previous day around noon. Thus began a nightmare for Frank and his family that would end only some twenty-eight months later with his death at the hands of a lynch mob, the identity of whose members remained secret until only a few years ago, after the death of all those involved. As for Atlanta Jewry, the Leo Frank case would linger in its collective memory for several generations.

At first the police were perplexed by the crime, and, for want of any other suspect, they took the Negro watchman, Newt Lee, who had discovered the body, into custody. On April 30 Frank hired the Pinkerton National Detective Agency on behalf of his employer to aid the police in the apprehension of the murderer, a decision that he would later regret. Rumors and speculations continually appeared in all three Atlanta daily newspapers suggesting one person or another as a possible suspect. Of more enduring consequence as clues were the two notes found near the body of the Phagan girl, which appeared to have been written by her between the time she was attacked and the time she died.

Among those under suspicion were the Negro factory sweeper (or janitor), James Conley, and Frank, both of whom had been taken into custody and not released. On May 24, 1913, Frank was indicted; no action was taken at this time against Conley, although he eventually served a year on the chain gang for being an accessory after the fact in the murder. The indictment of Frank was for murder only, though it was widely believed that Mary Phagan had been raped.

During May the prosecution worked to perfect the testimony of Jim Conley and to develop his relationship to the mysterious notes. At first Conley, who claimed that he could not read or write, was generally overlooked by investigators. When it was discovered that he was literate (ironically, it was Frank who informed the Pinkerton detectives of this) and that his handwriting matched that on the notes, the prosecution began an intense interrogation of Conley. Ultimately, Conley would make four sworn statements (five, if his testimony as a witness is included) as to his involvement in the murder of Phagan. In these statements, he claimed that Frank had dictated the murder notes and that Frank had paid him for his help in shielding Frank from the murder charge.

Frank's trial for the murder of Mary Phagan took place in Fulton County Superior Court from July 28 to August 26, 1913, before Judge Leonard Strickland Roan. Judge Roan was not well at the time of the trial; he died in March 1915, though not before he wrote the governor, John Slaton, a letter expressing his reservations about Frank's guilt. The trial record has been lost, though a fairly accurate transcript of the proceedings has been pieced together from newspaper accounts, which often quoted the trial testimony, as well as from appellate documents. More than a

million words were spoken during the trial by the dozens of witnesses.

Although Frank's lawyers—Luther Z. Rosser and Reuben R. Arnold—were considered among the most able in Georgia, their overconfidence, combined with the “native cunning” of the prosecutor Hugh M. Dorsey and his associate Frank Hooper, secured Frank's conviction for murder. The prosecution was aided greatly by the “ugly-tempered crowds” both in the courtroom and in the streets, whose applause and cheers certainly influenced the twelve male jurors and the outcome of the trial.

At first Frank's lawyers seemed to be defending him effectively. On the third day of the trial (July 30, 1913), city detective John Black, a prosecution witness who had worked with Pinkerton detective Harry Scott, turned out to be quite valuable to the defense. Under careful and insistent questioning, Rosser was able to cast doubt on almost all of Black's testimony against Frank. So thorough was Rosser's cross-examination that, near the end of testimony, Black declared, “I don't like to admit that I'm crossed up, Colonel Rosser, but you have got me in that kind of fix and I don't know where I'm at.” Unfortunately for the defense, Detective Scott, who followed Black on the witness stand, proved to be a much more difficult witness for Rosser to deal with and was the first witness to aid the prosecution's case against Frank.

The prosecution's case took a decisive turn against Frank with the testimony of the sweeper, Jim Conley. Conley testified that, several times in the past, Frank had paid him to “watch out” for him, while he “chatted” with female visitors in his office. Conley also intimated that Frank was, by the mores of the day, a sexual deviant; so graphic was Conley's testimony that Judge Roan had to clear the courtroom of women and children spectators during this part of Conley's testimony. According to Conley, on the morning of April 26, Frank again asked him to watch out for him and, when he was with a woman, Conley was to lock the front door of the factory. After Mary Phagan had been with Frank for a while, Conley was summoned to the second floor; and there, Conley testified, he saw the dead body of Phagan on the floor and a very nervous Frank, who explained to Conley that Phagan had refused his advances and that she had struck her head on a machine. Conley then described how he and Frank wrapped the body in a sack, how the body was too heavy for Conley to carry alone, how the two of them removed the body to the base-

ment by way of the elevator, and how Conley had dragged the body to another part of the basement, where it was found the following morning by Newt Lee. The two then returned to Frank's office, where Frank offered Conley money to write (with Frank dictating) the two notes that were found near Phagan's body. For the next two days (August 5 and 6), Conley was cross-examined by defense counsel Rosser, but to no avail. Even with the earlier contradictory statements by Conley, Rosser was not able (as he had done earlier with Black) to break Conley's story.

The rest of the trial was a confusing mixture of testimony: arguments about the time of Phagan's death, based on the contradictory medical opinions about how well digested were the contents of her stomach; and character witnesses for Frank, who included relatives, members of the Jewish community of Atlanta, college chums, and female employees of the pencil factory, who testified to his good character and to the propriety of his relations with them. To counter this, the prosecution called several former female workers, who, though short on specific examples of his immoral behavior, testified to their bad opinion of Frank. Other testimony involved Frank's emotional state after the murder of Phagan but before the body was discovered by Newt Lee. Prosecution witnesses described a nervous, distraught Frank, while defense witnesses pictured Frank as being his usual self.

On August 18, in something of a surprise move, Frank took the stand. Under the rules then in effect in Georgia criminal courts, Frank's testimony was not under oath, and he could not be cross-examined. He spoke for four hours. After giving a brief sketch of his life, Frank calmly but firmly explained his story: how Mary Phagan came to his office shortly after the noon hour on April 26 to collect her pay; how she returned after only a few minutes to inquire as to whether the “metal” had been delivered, as her job was to attach the metal tips to the pencils, and no “metal” meant no work. After she left, he worked on the monthly financial statement, went home for lunch, and returned to the factory to finish the financial report. Around 6:30 p.m., he left the factory for the day after checking with the watchman, Newt Lee.

Frank said that he never saw Conley on the day that Phagan was murdered and called Conley's testimony against him lies. He also accused the detectives who worked on the case, Black and Scott, of distorting his conversations with them with the intent to incriminate him.

Frank concluded his statement with the declaration, "Some newspaper men have called me 'the silent man in the Tower.' Gentlemen, this is the time and here is the place! I have told you the truth."

After a couple of anticlimactic days of testimony, the final arguments began. First was prosecutor Hooper, followed by defense attorneys Arnold and Rosser. The last to speak was the lead prosecutor, Hugh Dorsey. His summation was spread over three days, beginning on August 23 and ending at noon on August 25. With the bells of the nearby Church of the Immaculate Conception sounding the noon hour, Dorsey repeated "guilty" between each successive toll of the bell until it ceased. So rife with antisemitic sentiments were the closing statements of the prosecution that, under present judicial rules, a mistrial would have very likely been declared on that basis alone. Near the beginning of his closing statement, prosecutor Dorsey declaimed, "They [the Jews] rise to heights sublime, but they also sink to the lowest depths of degradation."

Then Judge Roan charged the jury, and deliberations began at 1:35 p.m. The jury returned to the courtroom shortly before 5 p.m. Neither Frank nor his attorneys were present; Judge Roan had asked them not to be there, as he claimed that the court could not guarantee their safety if the jury returned anything but a guilty verdict. The jury found Frank guilty of the murder of Mary Phagan. By this time, thousands had thronged the streets outside the courtroom, and when Dorsey appeared, the cheering crowd hoisted him on its shoulders and carried him to his nearby office. The next day, in a secret session, Judge Roan sentenced Frank to hang.

Appeals of Frank's death sentence began almost immediately, first to the Georgia courts and then to the federal courts, culminating on April 19, 1915, in a seven-to-two decision against Frank in the United States Supreme Court in *Frank v. Mangum*. Writing for the minority of himself and Justice Charles Evans Hughes, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. stated, "Mob rule does not become due process of law by securing the assent of a terrorized jury. We are not speaking of mere disorder, or irregularities in procedure, but of accounts where the processes of justice are actually subverted." Holmes explained, "Supposing the alleged facts to be true, it is our duty to declare lynch law as little valid when practiced by a regularly drawn jury as when administered by one elected by a mob intent on death." Notably, less than a decade later,

the minority opinion of Justices Holmes and Hughes became the majority opinion in the case *Moore v. Dempsey*, which marked the beginning of the federal courts' scrutiny of state criminal court procedures with reference to the constitutional rights of the accused.

During the almost two years in which his lawyers struggled to save their client, the Frank case became a *cause célèbre* in the national press and among American Jews. Unfortunately for Frank, the stridency of national opinion was more than matched by the defensiveness and hostility of public opinion in Georgia, where it was widely felt that the rich northern Jews were trying to protect one of their own and were prepared to "buy" Frank's freedom if necessary.

With no further appeals to the courts possible, Frank's attorneys filed a petition for clemency with the Georgia Prison Commission, which was denied on May 31, 1915, by a vote of two to one. This left only one hope for Frank: a commutation from Governor John M. Slaton. After thoroughly studying the written record of the case and visiting the National Pencil Factory to examine the scene of the crime firsthand, Governor Slaton, in an act that would ruin a very promising political career, commuted Frank's sentence to life in prison on June 20, 1915, his last full day in office. Frank had been transferred from the Fulton County jail in Atlanta to the state penitentiary in Milledgeville the night before. When news of the commutation became known, riots broke out in Atlanta, prompting a march on the governor's residence, which was broken up by the state militia. So reviled was Slaton, who was hung in effigy in at least two places in Georgia, that he and his wife took an extended vacation from Georgia, returning only months later.

Starting in December 1914, former congressman and populist leader Tom Watson, in his weekly newspaper *The Jeffersonian*, wrote scurrilous, antisemitic editorials against Frank and the Jewish community for its support of Frank. After Governor Slaton's commutation, Watson essentially called for the citizens of Georgia to carry out the death sentence of Frank. This almost happened on July 18, 1915, when William Creen, a fellow prisoner, slashed Frank's throat. Only the timely intercession of two other prisoners, both physicians, prevented Frank from bleeding to death.

The end for Frank came the next month. On the night of August 16, 1915, twenty-six men in eight automobiles traveled from Cobb County to the penitentiary in

Milledgeville. After cutting the telephone wires to the prison, they overpowered the guards and kidnapped Frank. Ample evidence exists of collusion between the lynchers and the staff at the state prison, but exactly which prison staff were involved remains a matter of conjecture. The kidnapers drove Frank to Frey's gin, on the outskirts of Marietta, Cobb County, Georgia, girlhood home of Mary Phagan, where they lynched him the next morning (August 17) just after dawn. Before Frank's body could be removed, many thousands had visited the scene of the lynching, and his corpse came perilously close to being mutilated when a member of the crowd stomped on his face. Only the intervention of Newton Morris, who has been identified as one of those who planned the lynching, prevented further mutilation and allowed Frank's body to be spirited away to an Atlanta undertaker, where the remains were viewed by thousands more after an unruly crowd demanded to see the corpse. The following day, Frank's body, accompanied by his wife, was shipped to New York, and on August 20, 1915, Frank was buried in Mount Carmel Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York.

The most immediate results of the lynching of Frank were the founding of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the first organization established in the United States specifically to combat antisemitism, by the Jewish fraternal organization B'nai B'rith, and the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, celebrated in the recently released movie *Birth of a Nation*. Hugh Dorsey capitalized politically on his prosecution of Frank; he was elected governor of Georgia twice, in 1916 and 1918, but in 1920 lost a bid to become United States senator to Tom Watson, who had supported him in his races for governor.

For the Jewish community of Atlanta, as well as for the South, the Frank lynching cast a pall that lasted for more than a generation. Some Jews left Atlanta, one of them the father of the future Librarian of Congress Daniel Boorstin. The younger Boorstin later wrote that his father thought that being Jewish in Georgia at that time would hinder his career as a young lawyer, so the family moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma. Most Jews stayed, though there was an unwritten social rule that the Frank case was not to be discussed, even among themselves, lest the demons of antisemitism be unleashed again. Occasional stories appeared in the local press, though it would be a half-century before a full-length book—Harry Golden's *A Little Girl is Dead* (1965)—appeared. This was followed a few years later by

the scholarly study *The Leo Frank Case* (1968) by Leonard Dinnerstein.

The case again made the news in the spring of 1982. Alonzo Mann, who had worked at the National Pencil Factory in 1913 as an office boy and was then in failing health, came forward to claim that, on the day of the murder, he had seen Jim Conley carrying the limp body of Mary Phagan through a trap door to the basement of the factory. Not only did this directly contradict the testimony of Conley but, if true, would certainly point to Conley as the murderer of Mary Phagan. Mann further claimed that when Conley saw him, he threatened his life, and at the urging of his mother, the then fourteen-year-old Mann did not go to the police. Mann testified at Frank's trial that he had been at the factory on the day of the murder of Mary Phagan but had left at 11:30 a.m.; unfortunately, Frank's attorneys did not know that this young boy had knowledge that could exculpate their client.

Using Mann's testimony, which was given on videotape, and a lie detector, which confirmed the veracity of Mann's statement, the ADL, the American Jewish Committee, and the Atlanta Jewish Federation applied for a posthumous pardon for Frank in 1983, but the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles denied this request. A second pardon request was granted on March 11, 1986, not to absolve Frank of the crime, but because the state failed to protect Frank while he was in its custody, thereby foreclosing all further efforts of Frank and his attorneys to prove his innocence.

Those involved in the lynching were never brought to justice, and until recently their identities remained a closely guarded secret among their relatives, friends, and descendants in Cobb County. A coroner's jury empaneled shortly after the lynching concluded that Frank had been murdered by "persons unknown." The identity of twelve of the lynchers was made public on the Internet in 2000 by Stephen Goldfarb. A longer, though not complete, list appeared three years later in the most comprehensive, but not definitive, history of the case *And the Dead Shall Rise* (2003) by Steve Oney. As had long been rumored, those involved in the lynching were among the leading citizens of Cobb County, including judges, prosecutors, state legislators, law enforcement officers, and businessmen, as well as a former governor of Georgia.

Antisemitism of a particularly vicious kind runs through the entire Frank case. Unlike the more traditional antisemitism that is associated with Christian beliefs, this

form was shaped by the New South industrialization, which uprooted families like the Phagans and sent them to the city to work in the factories. Between the time of the murder of Phagan and the lynching of Frank, there was a particularly tumultuous strike at the Fulton Bag Company in Atlanta, which pitted working-class whites, most from rural areas, against Jewish owners.

Very early in the investigation of the Phagan murder, Frank was singled out by Detectives Scott and Black, as well as the prosecutor Dorsey, over the more logical choice of Jim Conley. Conley was known to have lied to investigators and to have a criminal record that included public drunkenness and disorderly conduct as well as more serious crimes, such as armed robbery. What is certain is that the successful prosecution of Frank was a good “career move” for many of those involved. Even before Tom Watson whipped up the fires of antisemitism, both Hooper and Dorsey had fanned those flames with their closing arguments. Perhaps no better explanation for what befell Frank can be found than the statement made by Luther O. Bricker, who had been the minister of the church that Mary Phagan had attended as a child in Cobb County. More than a quarter-century after the lynching, he wrote that, at the time of the lynching, he felt, as did many others, that the execution of a Negro “would be poor atonement for the life of this innocent little girl”; however, Leo Frank, “a Jew, and a Yankee Jew at that . . . would be a victim worthy to pay for the crime.”

Stephen J. Goldfarb

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## Henry Ford and the Jews

The root causes of Henry Ford’s virulent, sustained—and disturbingly irrepressible—bias against “the Jew” (he preferred the singular form) are difficult to establish. There was no single “tipping point” that marked his transformation into the most influential antisemite in modern American history but, rather, ideological signposts along the road to the flowering of his full-blown, public animus—publication and dissemination of the pernicious forgery *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and Ford’s concomitant veneration by Adolf Hitler. Ten years before he ascended to power as chancellor, the wall behind Hitler’s desk in the Munich headquarters of the National Socialist German Workers’ (Nazi) Party was adorned with a massive photographic portrait of “Heinrich” Ford.

Henry Ford (1863–1947) was born on a prosperous farm near Dearbornville in southeastern Michigan. He was the second of eight children and the grandson of John Ford, a Protestant English tenant farmer who had come to America from Ireland during the great potato famine of 1847. Henry’s father, William, worked eighty acres of wheat and hay, tended sheep, cows, and pigs, and was a part-time carpenter. Henry’s mother, Mary Litogot, was an upstanding Christian of either Dutch or Flemish parentage. Before he entered the country school at age seven, Mary read to her son at the fireside every evening from *The Illustrated Family Christian Almanac for the United States*, wherein he learned that Jesus, the ultimate symbol of goodness, was vilified and persecuted by the Jews; and

from the popular *McGuffey Reader* about the adventures of “righteous, honest boys” who grew up to be devout, hard workers with fear of God in their hearts. Mary died when Henry was thirteen.

He labored his way through adolescence, escaping the drudgery of farm life to odd jobs in the factories and warehouses of Detroit, where he became known among his mates as an inveterate tinkerer who preferred to spend the lunch hour taking apart engines and putting them together again. By the age of twenty, from scrounged parts he built a car-locomotive with a kerosene-heated boiler. Friends described him as dogmatic and stubbornly focused. His supervisor at the Detroit Edison Company, electrical engineer Arthur Dow, said, “[Henry] would get his mind running on something and think of it to the exclusion of everything else. When Ford gets set, he is ‘set,’ and that is all there is to it.”

In 1888 he married Clara Jane Bryant, daughter of a farmer. The couple moved to Detroit, where their only child, Edsel, was born. On the rainy morning of June 4, 1896, Ford drove his four-horsepower gasoline quadricycle around the block and changed automotive history forever. He founded a small shop, the Detroit Automobile Company, followed soon thereafter by the Henry Ford Company, “Builders of High Grade Automobiles and Tourist Cars.” His friend and partner at the time, the draftsman Oliver Barthel, characterized the young “Mr. Ford” in later years as “tough and mean . . . in order to get along with him, you had to have a little mean streak in your system.”

Episcopalian by upbringing, Ford had yet to meet a Jew, but he was exposed to the medieval stereotype. In the ubiquitous *McGuffey Reader*, he had read—and memorized—Shylock’s famous “If you prick us, do we not bleed?” soliloquy from *The Merchant of Venice*. Spontaneously during social occasions, Ford would defiantly recite the speech by “the hook-nosed Jew with his bag of gold, carrying the curse of usury,” word for word. In 1901, when the death of President McKinley traumatized the nation, Ford turned for solace to Orlando J. Smith’s inspirational pamphlet, *A Short View of Great Questions*, a tract he carried in his vest pocket for years, testifying that it “changed [his] outlook on life.” The author “did not have patience with . . . the mythology of the Jews [which] discredits the immortality of the soul.” Smith drew freely upon Arthur Schopenhauer’s *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (*The World as Will and Idea*, 1859), sharing

with Schopenhauer the conviction that “the Jewish race . . . resist[ing] the consoling belief of metempsychosis,” obstructed the integration of purer, ideal values of classical antiquity into the modern world. To the impressionable Ford’s delectation, Smith also drew deeply from an earlier exponent of German race-thinking, Gotthold Lessing, invoking him as “the Luther of German literature, German drama, German art.” In Lessing’s seminal work *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (*The Upbringing of Mankind*, 1780), he stated that it was imperative for the truly religious man to choose between two starkly different paths—that of “the sensual Jew, or the spiritual Christian.”

As Ford emerged as a leading automobile manufacturer, his earliest and most enduring prejudice was reinforced, and he came to believe that a dominant, increasingly regulatory banking network instigated by Jews threatened his fortune. Defying the economic panic of 1907, the four-year-old Ford Motor Company prepared to launch the Model-T the following spring, promising nothing less than “the car for the great multitudes.” It was the car that would make Ford fabulously wealthy. In November 1907, the distinguished German Jewish banker, Paul M. Warburg, a partner in Jacob Schiff’s firm, Kuhn, Loeb & Company in New York, published a seminal article in *The New York Times Annual Financial Review* calling for a re-vamping of the nation’s banking system. It would be another six years before President Woodrow Wilson authorized Warburg’s “Plan for a Modified Central Bank” as the Federal Reserve System. Over these years, as Ford made many millions of dollars, his resentment of what he later called the “*Jewish Idea* of a central bank for America” simmered. The “private” (i.e., in Ford’s opinion, secret) nature of the Federal Reserve made it all the more insidious.

At the brink of the Great War, Henry Ford had already presided over the manufacture of more than a million motor cars. Bored with the stress of factory life, Ford delegated the hands-on management to Ernest Gustav Liebold, his personal secretary, chief financial officer, self-styled “watchdog,” corporate spokesman, and—it soon became evident—conscientious antisemite. On April 10, 1915, eight months after the guns of August thundered, Henry Ford gave an interview to the *New York Times* magazine, his first documented public dictum on the “war problem.” “Moneylenders and munitions makers cause wars,” he declared. “The warmongers urging military preparedness in America are the Wall Street bankers.” This initial diatribe

was followed by a series of bombastic outbursts extending through that anxious summer and fall, revealing Ford's dangerous inclination to blur the boundaries between international banking and profiteering. Two months later, in reponse to the sinking of the unarmed Cunard passenger ship *Lusitania*, torpedoed in Irish waters by a German U-boat, Ford made an ominous entry in one of the "jot-book" diaries he kept close at hand: "People who *profit* [*sic*] from war must go. . . . War is created by people who have no country or home except Hadies [*sic*] Hell and live in every country."

On November 17, 1915, Ford made his most emphatic statement on the preoccupying "Jewish question." A meeting was convened in the Highland Park factory with the ostensible purpose of providing an opportunity for Ford to hear a fund-raising appeal by Hungarian pacifist and women's rights advocate Rosika Schwimmer, in the midst of a lecture tour aimed at galvanizing American grassroots support for an end to the conflict in Europe. Schwimmer had barely begun her talk when Ford burst out, "I know who caused the war—the German-Jewish bankers!" He slapped his breast pocket. "I have the evidence here. Facts! The German-Jewish bankers caused the war. I can't give out the facts now, because I haven't got them all, but I'll have them soon." Ford's tone shifted, Schwimmer recalled, and his voice became "flat as a pancake as he came forth with this cheap and vulgar statement. . . . A strange shadow crept across his face as he uttered the disconnected phrase."

Ernest Liebold was not in the meeting, but more than three decades later he matter-of-factly elucidated Ford's assertion: "The international Jewish interests play behind the scenes and carry on different activities, [men] such as Mr. Ford referred to as warmongers . . . [those] who were interested in carrying on the war for profit. Mr. Ford's definition of Wall Street was the Jewish interests who operated on that type of proposition. . . . That's even happening today [1950]," he continued. "You can read *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and find out exactly what's going on. I think I have it around [my office] because I never wanted it to get out of my hands."

By the spring of 1916, Henry Ford was a household name. Despite insisting he would "never do anything [as] outlandish" as stand as a candidate for president, the Republican Party of Michigan put him on the presidential preference list, and Ford was placed in nomination at the Republican National Convention, where he received thirty-

two votes on the first ballot but did not survive a second ballot. Two years later, switching parties to run as Michigan's Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate, Ford lost by a hair's breadth. Although unsuccessful, both forays demonstrated to Ford that even in defeat he could come out ahead as an outspoken pundit when he took his case directly to "the common man." Therefore, Ford decided that his best platform would be a personal soapbox, a weekly forum for his ideas directed to "plain Americans." Thus on Armistice Day 1918 were sown the seeds for the *Dearborn Independent* newspaper, subtitled "The Ford International Weekly," with its motto, "Chronicler of the Neglected Truth."

The journal was intended to be "a private apparatus for molding public opinion" and would be guided by an intimate group of editors in addition to "The Boss," since he did not intend to write any of the articles himself. He preferred to depend upon a few men handpicked to set his rambling thoughts into cogent type. Aside from Liebold, this team consisted of Edwin G. Pipp, hired away from the editorship of the *Detroit News*, and William J. Cameron, the *News* chief editorial writer. An unordained preacher and a member of the British Israelite sect who believed that the "Modern Hebrews . . . the tribe of treacherous Judah" stole their "chosen people" status from the rightful Aryan claimants, Cameron later co-founded the Anglo-Saxon Federation of America.

By the spring of 1919, the fledgling newspaper had begun to veer away from its soft news, local gossip, and features-driven mission. Boris Brasol, former member of the antisemitic "Black Hundred" organization that instigated the blood-libel ritual murder trial of Mendel Beilis in Kiev in 1913, and now a disaffected czarist emigré and vice chairman of the Russian Officers' Union in America, submitted an essay to the *Independent*, "The Bolshevik [Communist] Menace in Russia." Brasol warned that "this country, too, will have to decide whether it would be prepared to see American homes looted [and] the American flag trodden down. . . . Why should humanity submit its will to a tyranny, which is worse than Oriental autocracies which ruled over mankind at the dawn of its history?" As the Red Scare caught fire in the Midwest, Ford's "Own Page," directly facing the editorial page, began to assume a similarly feverish, paranoid, and reductive pitch, lashing out against the "Dark Forces—whether political, military or capitalistic. . . . What *about* those aliens who have given



Henry Ford's newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent*, which widely circulated *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. (*American Jewish Historical Society*)

us so much trouble, those Bolsheviki messing up our industries and disturbing our civil life.”

Brasol had been working for more than a year, in collaboration with physician and avowed nativist Dr. Harris Ayres Houghton, on the first translation on American soil from the original Russian into English of the fourth edition of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (*Protocols*). This twenty-four-part “spurious document” purported to be the proceedings of a Jewish conclave led by the Grand Rabbi during the time of the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. The purpose of this secret convention of the “innermost circle” of worldwide Jewish leadership was to structure a subversive “blueprint” for world economic and political domination—a “Super-Government” reducing all non-Jews to slavery—and then to set a schedule for subsequent gatherings every one hundred years by an unbroken succession of “autocrats of the House of David. . . . The mark of the serpent’s evil will be

stamped on every man’s brow,” the *Protocols* warned, “and none will be able to make the sign of the cross.”

In the issue of May 22, 1920, *The Dearborn Independent* published the first of ninety-one consecutive weekly articles devoted to examining “The International Jew: The World’s Problem.” Liebold claimed credit for the overall rubric of the series, but he credited the inspiration of “Mr. Ford [who] intimated to me that he was going to show up this group. . . . He said, ‘We are going to print their names. We are going to show who they are.’” The inaugural article was called “The Jew in Character and Business,” and everyone who came to the factory to meet with Henry Ford for the next several years was required first to spend fifteen minutes reading an offprint in the waiting room.

In mid-June 1920, a typescript of the English translation of the *Protocols* arrived at Liebold’s office. On June 26, the *Protocols* began to appear in Ford’s newspaper, starting with the “Seventh Protocol,” a manifesto about the compulsion of “the secret Jewish Sanhedrin,” a “newspaper militia,” to unleash the “Great Power” of the press, “already entirely in our hands . . . [to keep] the governments of the *goyim* in Europe in check. . . . Let them amuse themselves until the hour strikes.” Liebold insisted, “If the *Protocols* had not been authentic, we never would have published them. . . . We took the *Protocols* at their face value.” For the ensuing three months, the document was serialized in the *Independent*. Two years later—by which time he had resigned the editorship in disgust—E. G. Pipp asserted that “Henry Ford had the files of the correspondence . . . [showing] just how [Liebold] worked to give the man with Brasol’s Russian record a standing in the newspaper.” It is impossible now to determine the extent to which Brasol, Liebold, and Ford had already been in contact, or who first approached whom about the *Protocols*, because the corporate files were destroyed in the 1960s (Jacobs and Weitzman 2003).

By the fall of 1920, “the International Jew” had escalated to become “the world’s *Foremost* problem,” featured in the first of four paperbound anthologies published over the next eighteen months, in which were gathered all of the pertinent *Dearborn Independent* articles. Much of each printing of 200,000–500,000 copies was mailed *gratis* by Ford’s Dearborn Publishing Company to “influential citizens, especially clergymen, bankers and stockbrokers.” Never copyrighted, within five years the booklets were translated into sixteen languages. As the historian Norman

Cohn pointed out in his definitive 1967 study, *Warrant for Genocide*, “*The International Jew* probably did more than any other work to make the *Protocols* famous.” Twenty-one printings of *Der internationale Jude: ein Weltproblem* (*The International Jew: A World Problem*) appeared in Germany during 1921 and 1922. The publisher was Hammer Verlag of Leipzig, under the direction of Theodor Fritsch (1852–1933), known for decades as the tireless *Altmeister* (Grand Master) of antisemites. Fritsch’s preface lauded Henry Ford for the “great service” he had provided to America and the world by attacking the Jews. “The younger generation looked with envy to the symbols of success and prosperity like Henry Ford,” recalled the Reich Leader of the Nazi Students’ Federation and eventual Hitler Youth leader, Baldur von Schirach. “And if Henry Ford believed that the Jews were to blame, why, naturally we believed him” (Cohn 1967).

Arriving for their appointment with Hitler, visitors could peruse copies of *Der internationale Jude* arrayed on a coffee table in the anteroom of his Munich office. Hitler’s documented approval of Ford’s behavior can be found as early as the fall of 1923 when, in a dialogue (*zweigensprach*) with his mentor Dietrich Eckart, his attention veered toward America, “where [the Jews] have had the country by the throat for quite awhile . . . as Ford well knew.” In his blueprint for the future, *Mein Kampf*, Hitler paid tribute in volume II to “only a single great man, Ford, [who], to [the Jews’] fury, still maintains full independence [from] the controlling masters of the producers in a nation of one hundred and twenty millions.” Hitler eagerly devoured the German edition of Ford’s memoirs when it was given to him as a birthday gift in 1925. Twenty years later, during the American occupation of Munich, a small collection of the Fuehrer’s books and papers was salvaged from his workroom in Nazi Party headquarters. Only one of the literary artifacts showed evidence of thumbing and marginalia—the well-worn copy of *My Life and Work* (*Mein Leben und Werk*) by Heinrich Ford.

On the home front, the factionalized Jewish community in America was faced with a complex dilemma: how to counter the dissemination of Ford’s antisemitic views without exacerbating the problem. Rabbi Henry Pereira Mendes, Sephardic spiritual leader of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City, poignantly summed up the quandary in a letter on October 1, 1920, to Louis Marshall, president of the American Jewish Committee: “To

answer [Ford] feeds the vehemence of the attacks,” Mendes wrote. “Not to answer seems unmanly, and gives the enemies a chance to say our silence acknowledges our guilt.” The *Independent* also cast aspersions upon the leaders of the Zionist movement, especially calling into question the scruples of Rabbi Judah Magnes. Founder of the American Zionist Federation, Magnes believed that cosmopolitans and *Yiddishists* must work together under his New York *Kehillah*. The *Independent* castigated this banner for communal Jewish life as “the Judaized Tammany Hall,” a “whispering gallery” on the corrupt East Coast that kept Jewish organizations “interlaced and dovetailed.”

The response of the Jewish press ranged from that of the *Forward*, which continued to accept Ford’s advertising dollars for the Model-T, to the left-wing *Der Veg*, which pushed for a consumer boycott of Ford products. Not only were “downtown” *yidden* pitted against “uptown” German elitists over the Ford matter, there was also disagreement within the ranks of “Our Crowd.” Philanthropist Jacob Schiff of Kuhn, Loeb took a restrained stance, cautioning Louis Marshall and Cyrus Adler, his colleagues on the American Jewish Committee (AJC), to “take no notice” of the articles in the *Independent*. Adler, in turn, urged Marshall, a fellow attorney, to “denounce [the newspaper] for the fraud that it is.” In desperation, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the National Council of Jewish Women, and B’nai B’rith turned to the Anti-Defamation League in Chicago, beseeching that organization—founded in 1913—to speak out against Ford. The League published a pamphlet by Sigmund Livingston, *The Poison Pen*, “Being an exposure of the hoax which is being foisted upon the American public by Henry Ford.” Toward the end of 1920, in response to another petition for united action issued by the Zionist Organization of America, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, the CCAR, and half a dozen other groups, the AJC published *The Protocols, Bolshevism, and the Jews: An Address to their Fellow-Citizens by American Jewish Organizations*, funded by the Sears Roebuck magnate Julius Rosenwald. It was followed by *The Jew and American Ideals* by John Spargo, a Fabian social reformer who had joined the settlement house movement and taken up residence on the Lower East Side. In the new year, Spargo raised funds from “more than one hundred citizens of Gentile extraction and Christian faith” for a lengthy petition-advertisement against Ford,

*The Perils of Racial Prejudice*, signed and published in newspapers across the country under the banner headline, “President Wilson Heads Protest against Anti-Semitism.”

Ford’s wife Clara and son Edsel, frustrated by their fruitless attempts to convince him to cease the relentless attacks, resigned in protest from the board of the Dearborn Publishing Company. Not even this dramatic action by his own family slowed Ford’s momentum. He asserted again that his “educational campaign” would result in an “investigation . . . of the facts of the Jewish question, then everyone can operate for the general good.” As historian Leo P. Ribuffo has shown, the years 1922–1925 marked a “second wave” of damaging essays in the *Independent*, for example, praising admissions quotas for Jews at Harvard; naming the “wire-pullers” in the federal government with the temerity to oppose Calvin Coolidge; and criticizing Julius Rosenwald for encouraging Negro migration to Chicago, thereby bringing about “a tide of white dispossession” (Ribuffo 1980).

However, in Ford’s eyes the most abhorrent transgression of all was the “Jewish Exploitation of Farmers’ Organizations—Monopoly Traps Operat[ing] under the Guise of ‘Marketing Associations.’” When Aaron Sapiro (1885–1959), a labor attorney trained for the rabbinate, set out to organize agricultural cooperatives in rural southern California, Ford became incensed, ordering up a series of “exposés” accusing “Oriental financiers” of infiltrating the most cherished outpost of Jeffersonian democracy—the farm. In the spring of 1925, Sapiro—hailed in the press as a latter-day David with the courage to step up against the “Tin Lizzie-plated Goliath of Detroit”—retaliated by filing a \$1 million libel suit against Henry Ford and the Dearborn Publishing Company for defamation of character, “to vindicate myself and my race.”

Depositions took a year, and Ford’s attorney moved for further continuances so that the matter did not come to trial until March 15, 1927. First Cameron, then Liebold, then other staff members took the stand, trying to take the fall for “Mr. Ford,” but Sapiro’s lawyers pressed forward and made a motion to call “The Boss” himself to testify. As the noose tightened, Ford, in seclusion, summoned a young aide, Fred Black, to his mansion. Ford expressed concern that the negative publicity generated by the trial—complete transcripts were running daily in the Hearst newspapers—would hinder company plans to release a brand-new car in time for Christmas. “I want to stop this

*Dearborn Independent!*” Ford ordered Black, and continued without pause: “Of course, you know about us bringing out this new car?” The Model-A was intended to be the successor to the eighteen-year reign of the Model-T and a challenge to the up-and-coming General Motors. The future of the Ford Motor Company was on a collision course with the antisemitic path of its founder, who seemed to have arrived at the expedient realization that in the end the company must survive. There was no way Henry Ford could successfully bring a new generation of motor cars to market with the stigma of Jew-hatred and its (real or imagined) economic implications hanging over his head.

In mid-June 1927, much to his surprise, Louis Marshall received word via two emissaries of Henry Ford that he was now ready to do “whatever [Marshall] thought was right.” Marshall stipulated that, if Ford wanted a clean slate, he must make “a complete retraction . . . see to it that such attacks are not made in the future . . . and make amends for the wrongs.” Ford responded that Marshall should write the statement for him. “I don’t care how bad it is,” he said, “you just settle up.” Ford did not read the final draft and authorized close aide Harry Bennett to forge his signature. The apology was released to the press on July 8, a day on which Louis Marshall told Cyrus Adler he felt “a great *Nachas Ruach* (spiritual satisfaction)” passing through him.

In the eight-paragraph text, Ford expressed mortification that the *Independent* articles, *International Jew* pamphlets, and *Protocols* had been brought out over the past seven years “delegated to men whom I placed in charge.” He professed never to have seen the antisemitic materials prior to publication and expressed “shock” at their content. He asked forgiveness for “the mental anguish . . . [and] harm that I have unintentionally committed,” and promised that “the pamphlets which have been distributed throughout the country and in foreign lands will be withdrawn from circulation.” He said that he was “fully aware of the virtues of the Jewish people as a whole.”

Ford’s settlement was quickly negotiated, and Aaron Sapiro received the Richard Gottheil Medal from B’nai B’rith for the most distinguished service to the cause of Judaism in 1927. However, Henry Ford continued with his chronic “antilocution.” Gordon Allport, in the classic work *The Nature of Prejudice*, defines this syndrome as the compulsion to talk openly about one’s personal biases. Indeed, soon after the *Dearborn Independent* shut



Henry Ford accepts the Grand Cross of the German Eagle from the Nazi government, July 30, 1938. (Corbis)

down, Ford reflected with like-minded friends at the Dearborn Country Club that “by taking a club to [the Jews] I thought I might be able to change some of their obnoxious habits. . . .” (Allport 1979).

Ford took no steps to withdraw *The International Jew* from circulation. He did not hesitate to attribute trade union agitation to “certain bankers.” Into the Depression years, Ford made notes in his jot-books such as “The Jew is out to enslave you.” On his seventy-fifth birthday, July 30, 1938, Ford was honored to be the first American recipient of the Grand Service Cross of the Supreme Order of the German Eagle (*Verdienstkreuz Deutscher Adler*), created by Hitler in 1937 as “the highest honor given by Germany to distinguished foreigners.” Three months later, Ford’s friend Charles Lindbergh received the same medal from the founder of the Gestapo, Hermann Wilhelm Goering, in

gratitude for the world-famous pilot’s assistance with the development of the Luftwaffe’s newest airplanes. Into the late 1930s, Fritz Kuhn of the German-American Bund and the “Radio Priest” Father Charles Coughlin and his National Union for Social Justice/Christian Front picked up Ford’s banner. In the early 1940s, Ford provided funding for white supremacist and “America First” activist Gerald L. K. Smith to broadcast weekly radio speeches over WJR, the largest radio station in Detroit. Thirteen years after his “apology,” Ford “show[ed] no regret” and told Smith that he “hope[d] to publish *The International Jew* again some time.”

Neil Baldwin

Unless otherwise noted in the text, citations in this essay are derived from *Henry Ford and the Jews: The Mass-Production of Hate* by Neil Baldwin (New York: Public Affairs, 2001).

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## Antisemitic Violence in Boston and New York during World War II

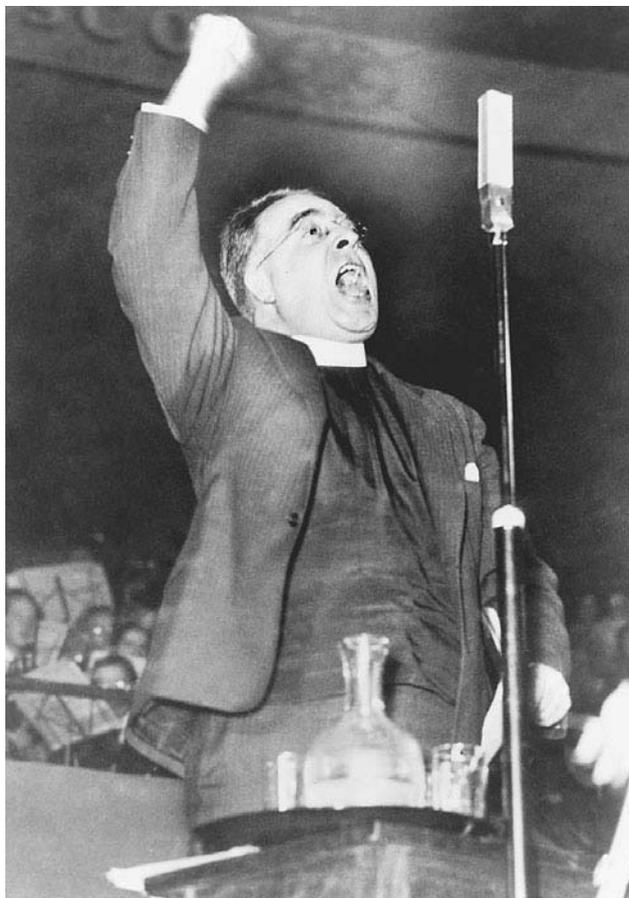
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During World War II, marauding bands composed largely of Irish-American youth terrorized Jewish communities in Boston and New York, repeatedly assaulting Jews in the streets and parks, desecrating synagogues and Jewish cemeteries, and damaging Jewish stores. Yiddish journalist and Zionist leader Dr. Samuel Margoshes referred to the violence in Boston as a "series of small pogroms" (Norwood 2003). The attacks peaked in 1943 and 1944, as marauders left Irish-American districts contiguous to Jewish neighborhoods to go "Jew hunting." They challenged individuals they encountered by demanding to know whether

they were Jewish. If the answer was affirmative, they beat, stabbed, or even mutilated the victim. They sometimes tore the clothes off Jewish girls. In late 1943, state senator Maurice Goldman, who represented the Dorchester-Mattapan-Roxbury district, where most of Boston's Jews resided, informed Massachusetts governor Leverett Saltonstall that his constituents lived in "mortal fear" of antisemitic assault (Norwood 2003). Jewish spokespersons in both cities, joined by concerned non-Jews, declared that the violence was part of an organized antisemitic campaign inspired by the Coughlinite Christian Front. The savage wartime beatings of Jews in Boston and New York constituted the most sustained wave of overt antisemitic violence in American history.

Both Boston and New York were Coughlinite strongholds. Michigan-based priest Charles Coughlin was one of the nation's most influential antisemites, who spoke every week to millions of Americans across the nation over the radio. In 1938 he reprinted the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a long-discredited forgery purporting to demonstrate a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world, in his newspaper *Social Justice*, sold in front of churches and at street corners throughout both cities. Coughlin organized the Christian Front in 1938 to propagate his antisemitic views. It recruited many members from the Boston and New York police forces. The Christian Front urged shoppers not to patronize Jewish-owned stores. Both the Christian Front and an offshoot called the Christian Mobilizers, whose rhetoric was explicitly violent, regularly staged street-corner meetings denouncing Jews.

From the late 1930s through World War II, the Christian Front advanced an antisemitic isolationism. Prior to U.S. entry into the war, Boston Christian Front leader Francis Moran charged that Jews schemed to draw the country into the European conflict in order to advance their economic interests. Labeling Jewish interventionists "bloodsuckers," Moran deliberately invoked the medieval charge that Jews murdered Christian children to obtain blood to mix with Passover matzoh. Although the federal government banned *Social Justice* as seditious in 1942, and Coughlin's archbishop, under U.S. Justice Department pressure, ordered him to withdraw from political activity, the Christian Front continued its antisemitic, isolationist campaign behind newly created front groups. It circulated massive quantities of antisemitic literature, including some that falsely accused Jews of avoiding military service. The



Charles Coughlin, Michigan-based Roman Catholic priest and leader of the virulently antisemitic Christian Front. (Library of Congress)

antisemitic priest Edward Lodge Curran, the “Father Coughlin of the East,” visited Irish-American South Boston during the war to denounce America’s ally Britain at heavily attended, city-financed celebrations of Evacuation Day (which commemorated British withdrawal from Boston during the American Revolution). John Roy Carlson, one of America’s leading authorities on hate movements, described wartime Boston as “seething with anti-Semitism and defeatism” (Norwood 2003).

In October 1943, antisemitic violence in Boston and New York was suddenly brought to national attention when Arnold Beichman wrote several articles about it in the New York daily *PM*. The mainstream press in the two cities had failed to report the antisemitic assaults and vandalism. Boston Irish-American anti-fascist Frances Sweeney, who for several years had investigated and documented the beatings and vandalism, had contacted Beichman and provided data on the Boston antisemitic outbreaks. Beichman also

drew on affidavits that the American Jewish (AJ) Congress and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) had collected from victims. Scores of Jews testified that the police repeatedly ignored their complaints of antisemitic assault and harassment and sometimes joined in it. Shortly after Beichman’s articles appeared, the AJ Congress announced that beatings of Jews and synagogue desecrations had reached epidemic proportions in New York. New York’s ADL assembled a detailed record of them.

Beichman’s initial report in *PM*, headlined “Christian Front Hoodlums Terrorize Boston Jews,” provided specifics on numerous cases of antisemitic assault, intimidation, and vandalism, and accused Governor Saltonstall, Boston mayor Maurice Tobin, the police, and the press of ignoring a massive outbreak of violent antisemitism. Members of the state legislature from the Dorchester-Mattapan-Roxbury district, joined by some local rabbis, backed Beichman’s charges. Frances Sweeney, along with several journalists writing in leading mass circulation magazines, sharply criticized the Catholic Church hierarchy for remaining indifferent to the beatings of Jews and for its unwillingness to use its influence to discourage them.

In both Boston and New York, Jews at the neighborhood level reacted by organizing volunteer patrols to combat the antisemitic marauders. Their objectives included protecting elderly Jews, who were unable to attend synagogue services because they feared leaving their homes, and Jewish children, many of whom the marauders had injured. In Boston, Jewish Girl Scout troops had called off meetings because members were frightened of street attacks. The New York Yiddish newspaper *Tog* (*The Day*) compared the patrols to the ghetto defense groups that Jews in czarist Russia had organized to combat pogromists. The formation of neighborhood defense units was probably also inspired by the Warsaw ghetto fighters’ heroic resistance against the Nazi army earlier in 1943.

In January 1944, the Jewish-owned New York *Post*, among the few newspapers that refused to accept advertising from hotels and resorts that excluded Jews, urged its readers to provide it with detailed reports of antisemitic beatings, synagogue desecration, and antisemitic graffiti on stores and apartment buildings and in subways. The *Post* used the evidence it gathered from readers to pressure police to take action against the antisemitic outbreaks.

Violence against Jews in Boston and New York declined after World War II, although it remained alarming

into the early 1950s, especially in Boston. The annihilation of six million Jews in the Holocaust heightened some Americans' awareness of the danger of antisemitism. Liberal groups joined with Jewish organizations in sponsoring educational efforts to promote tolerance in schools and among policemen and the public. In Boston, a new cardinal, Richard Cushing, whose brother-in-law was Jewish, also made an effort to foster intergroup understanding, in sharp contrast to his predecessor, William O'Connell, who died in 1944. O'Connell had remained silent during the wartime antisemitic outbreaks. Postwar migration of Jews out of urban neighborhoods contiguous to Irish Catholic districts also reduced the possibility of marauding antisemitic youth encountering Jews.

*Stephen H. Norwood*

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## Antisemitism and Right-Wing Extremist Groups after 1960

American antisemitism has continued to exist as a social problem since 1960, but its magnitude has been much less than during the previous four decades, the 1920s through the 1950s. Although numerous very small extreme-right organizations featuring anti-Jewish ideology have been extant since 1960, only three have had more than ten thousand members—the Liberty Lobby, the Nation of Islam, and the United Klans of America. In addition, a few small groups have garnered publicity far out of proportion to their size: the American Nazi Party, The Order, the Church of the Creator, and the National Alliance. The leader of this last group, Dr. William Pierce, wrote a novel, *The Turner Diaries*, which may have influenced others to commit terrorist acts, including Timothy McVeigh and Robert Matthews, founder of The Order. A spin-off from Aryan Nations, The Order believes in Christian Identity, a strange theology positing that the true Israelites are Nordic Caucasians ("Aryans") and that Jews are descendants of Cain, who was conceived in a sexual liaison between Eve and the

Serpent. There is also the John Birch Society, which had antisemites in its ranks but never included anti-Jewish beliefs in its ideology.

Religious antisemitism existed for hundreds of years before political antisemitism first appeared in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Typical of the earlier form of antisemitism was the assertion by Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) that Jews actually knew Jesus was the Messiah but rejected him because their hearts were corrupt (Johnson 1987). Political antisemitism, which posits a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world, did not hit full stride, however, until the early twentieth century, when the infamous fabricated document *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* appeared. Concocted in Russia around 1903, principally by Sergus Nilus, a czarist attorney, the *Protocols* provided excuses for actions Jew-haters would have taken anyway but also helped to push fence-sitters over to the antisemitic side.

Supposedly a master plan for Jewish world conquest, the *Protocols* were in part plagiarized from an 1864 work, *Dialogue in Hell between Machiavelli and Montesquieu* by Maurice Joly, that had nothing to do with Jews but was a satire on the despotism of Napoleon III. Almost half of it was incorporated into the *Protocols*, as Nilus and his collaborators attributed words Joly had put into Machiavelli's mouth to leading (but anonymous) Jews.

In the United States, it was Henry Ford who widely disseminated the *Protocols* during the 1920s in his *Dearborn Independent*, although he later disavowed the document as spurious. That in 1921 the *London Times* exposed the *Protocols* as fraudulent had little or no effect on its use by antisemitic groups in the United States or elsewhere. Today, most Americans have never heard of this mendacious document.

The first important twentieth-century group harboring a strong antipathy toward Jews was the second Ku Klux Klan, formed in 1915 principally by W. J. Simmons. Although he called himself "Colonel," the title had nothing to do with the military but was his rank in the fraternal group Woodmen of the World. The reborn Klan was not only the largest twentieth-century extremist group (about 2 million members by the mid-1920s, when the U.S. population was less than 110 million) but also the most violent. It may accurately be described as "terrorist," with Jews, recent immigrants, blacks, Catholics, and violators of prohibition as its primary targets. Clergy and law enforcement personnel were prominent members.

During the Depression of the 1930s, other antisemitic extremist groups gained notoriety and influence: the Black Legion, the Silver Shirts, the German-American Bund, the Christian Nationalist Crusade, and Defenders of the Christian Faith, whose leader, Gerald B. Winrod, a Kansan, was known as the “Jayhawk Nazi.” The Christian Front, headed by the antisemitic radio priest Charles Coughlin, was also influential. Members of these and similar smaller groups believed in the existence of an all-encompassing, worldwide, Jewish conspiracy as delineated in the *Protocols*, and a significant number were sympathetic toward the sociopolitical systems and leaders of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

These organizations began to lose influence and, in effect, went into a tailspin after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. In 1944, a number of well-known antisemitic rightists were tried for sedition (*U.S. v. McWilliams*), an action decried by a majority of, but far from all, civil libertarians. (Although this trial was aimed at extreme rightists, it helped to justify later prosecutions of extreme leftists—who had earlier strenuously supported the trial!) The prosecution of the rightists resulted in a mistrial, and the effort to prosecute was later abandoned.

During World War II and its aftermath, the Jew-hating right was dealt a blow from which it never recovered. By the 1960s, very few right-wing extremist groups that were ideologically antisemitic had memberships exceeding 10,000; the great majority had fewer than 1,000. Among the exceptions were the Liberty Lobby, the Nation of Islam, and the United Klans of America.

The most influential post-1960 anti-Jewish organization was a group originally called Liberty and Property, formed by California businessman Willis Carto. This was essentially a paper organization for Carto’s publication *Right*, which summarized information from numerous far right sources. In August 1957 *Right* announced the formation of what would become probably the best financed antisemitic extremist group of the last half of the twentieth century, Liberty Lobby. One of the first endorsers of the new group was the well-known novelist and active John Birch Society member, Janet Taylor Caldwell.

*Right* became defunct in 1960 and was superseded by *Liberty Letter*, which attained a circulation of about 200,000. In 1975, however, *Liberty Letter* was discontinued and replaced by *National Spotlight*, later renamed simply *Spotlight*, which continued until July 2001. With a paid cir-

ulation close to 90,000, it was quite possibly read by three times that number. As with most extremist groups, membership figures for Liberty Lobby are difficult to determine, since all these groups, as well as those who detest them, exaggerate. Around 1990, Liberty Lobby claimed 25,000 members—but this writer and two others were counted as members for subscribing and sending stamps when requesting information. One was even listed on Liberty Lobby’s Board of Policy for a few years.

Willis Carto’s clandestine anti-Jewish activities first received wide exposure in a 1966 column by Drew Pearson, the most widely read American columnist at that time. Jeremy Horne, a Liberty Lobby employee, discovered letters from Carto to various right extremists, including two black nationalists. One letter mentioned shipping blacks “back to Africa,” while another revealed pro-Nazi views: “Hitler’s defeat was the defeat of Europe and America. . . . The blame . . . must be laid at the door of the International Jews. . . . If Satan himself . . . had tried to create a . . . force for destruction of all nations, he could have done no better than to invent the Jews.” Disturbed, the “mainstream conservative” Horne informed the FBI (although no lawbreaking was involved) and Drew Pearson, who published excerpts from the letters. Liberty Lobby took Pearson to court twice, even appealing to the U.S. Supreme Court, and lost. Carto also asserted that Horne was a spy whom Pearson had planted in his organization. Horne told this writer that he had never had previous contact with Pearson and had acquired the job with Liberty Lobby by replying to a newspaper ad seeking an individual who wanted to work for a “conservative” organization.

The factor most responsible for cementing Willis Carto’s sympathy for Nazism and belief in a worldwide Jewish conspiracy was probably his brief connection with the enigmatic Francis Parker Yockey. This unstable intellectual, a 1941 honors graduate of Notre Dame and a minor assistant to Nuremberg prosecutors, authored a sort of “neo-*Mein Kampf* for neo-Nazis” entitled *Imperium*. The 619-page effort was supposedly written in six months. It was published in 1948 using the pseudonym Ulick Varange and dedicated “To the hero of the Second World War.” The “hero” was, of course, Adolf Hitler. *Imperium* is a most difficult book to read, and few in the world of the anti-Jewish right have actually perused much of it.

In the late 1940s, Yockey’s requests to renew his passport were denied, and from 1949 to 1960 he traveled in

both the United States and Europe using fabricated documents. During this time, he did not have an occupation, and a number of far rightists have maintained that sympathizers gave him money. Yockey related grandiose tales of his organization, the European Liberation Front (ELF), which was supposedly doing much to counter “the nefarious machinations of the International Jews.” There is no evidence that the ELF was much more than a paper organization—and thus a scheme to support the mentally disturbed Yockey, who may well have believed his own outlandish tales.

In 1960 Yockey flew to San Francisco but left a suitcase in Fort Worth. Airline employees opened it to determine the owner and found seven birth certificates, German press credentials, and three passports (U.S., Canadian, and U.K.) displaying Yockey’s photo. He was arrested on a passport violation and placed in the San Francisco jail, where Willis Carto visited him. After a week and a half, Yockey committed suicide with a cyanide capsule. With the exception of his attorney, the last to see him was Carto, who thereafter made Yockey a cause célèbre. In the July 1960 issue of *Right*, Carto asserted that Yockey was a “great creative genius” who had been “persecuted” to the point that he took his own life. Despite this, Carto averred, his “great” work, *Imperium*, would “live a thousand years.” This prediction proved inaccurate; only forty years later, few had read it, and fewer, if any, have understood much of it.

The most surprising characteristic of Carto’s hero, Yockey, is that he was probably a paid Soviet agent. This writer’s 1970 interview with a self-described fascist who knew Yockey rather well included the following exchange:

George: Why was the FBI after him so much? They had him under surveillance for about eleven years. Did he really have . . . Nazi connections in Europe or not?

X: He had Soviet connections.

George: Oh, he did?

X: Yes. The current bunch who exploit him don’t want to hear about that angle.

George: What was he doing with the Soviets?

X: I think he was a coordinator of some sort. I think the Russians, particularly in Germany, were encouraging some of those radical rightist groups and parties for their own purposes.

This statement about Yockey’s Soviet connections is supported by other evidence that also suggests that he

was quite anti-American and considered the West a greater threat to European culture than the Soviet Union. With the collapse of the Soviet bloc, East German intelligence documents revealed that its version of the KGB, the Stasi, had agents posing as neo-Nazis and even formed neo-Nazi groups in West Germany. Yockey may have been just the sort of fellow the Soviets wanted. He, conversely, probably believed that he was using them (George and Wilcox 1996).

Other Willis Carto actions included the 1966 takeover of the *American Mercury* (cofounded by H. L. Mencken) and the creation of the National Youth Alliance (NYA) in 1969. The NYA, which was actually a takeover and makeover of Youth for Wallace (supporters of the 1968 American Independent Party candidate for president, George Wallace of Alabama), attracted a number of stalwarts of the anti-Jewish right as sponsors, including these:

Dr. William Pierce, formerly of the American Nazi Party, whose fictional account of a white racial nationalist seizure of the United States, *The Turner Diaries*, so impressed Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh. Pierce, a physics professor, died in 2002.

Louis Byers, who left the John Birch Society mainly because of its stated opposition to antisemitism.

Admiral John Crommelin, longtime Jew-hater, who in the 1960s ran for both the U.S. Senate and the office of vice president under the auspices of the neo-Nazi group the National States Rights Party.

The NYA did not last very long, principally because of the far right’s “prima donna factor”—namely, that having numerous unstable, idiosyncratic, megalomaniacal personalities in an organization is not conducive to group cohesion.

The part of the “Carto Complex” that attracted the most attention was the Institute for Historical Review (IHR), founded in 1978. It became the most widely known “Holocaust revisionist” or “Holocaust denial” organization. The group asserted that probably no more than 200,000 Jews died at the hands of the Nazis during World War II and that most died fighting Hitler’s minions or perished from disease in concentration camps. They insist that there was no plan to exterminate Jews, gypsies, or others, but only to deport them “to the East.” The Institute’s main publication, the *Journal of Historical Review*, has provided

a forum for British pseudohistorian David Irving, who lost a libel suit he filed against Penguin Books and American historian Deborah Lipstadt. (Irving objected to Lipstadt's branding him a Holocaust denier.) Also featured have been antisemites Michael Hoffman and David McCalden (who claimed to have founded the IHR under the name Lewis Brandon), and posthumous articles by Yockey. It was McCalden who in 1981 goaded the IHR into offering a \$50,000 prize for proof that gas chambers existed in Nazi concentration camps. An Auschwitz survivor, Mel Mermelstein, laid claim to the reward, which the IHR rejected. Mermelstein sued in Los Angeles County Superior Court and was awarded the \$50,000, the judge taking "judicial notice" that people were gassed at Auschwitz. The IHR appealed, then decided the judicial battle would be expensive, and settled with Mermelstein for \$90,000.

Fratricidal battles within the IHR resulted in the ouster of Carto, and the group severed all ties with Liberty Lobby in 1993. Carto also lost control of the umbrella corporation, Legion for the Survival of Freedom, which sued him and won in 2000. Due to Carto's financial shenanigans, he eventually owed more than \$2 million. By mid-2001 the final issue of *Spotlight* was published, and the Liberty Lobby was defunct. Little has been heard from Willis Carto since.

Another antisemitic and even anti-Caucasian group is the Nation of Islam (NOI), which from the early 1960s to the present has probably had more than 10,000 but fewer than 20,000 members. The NOI has been inaccurately labeled extreme left by some commentators, usually people on the right. From its inception, however, the organization has been ethnically exclusive ("racist"), quite religious (a variation of Islam), separatist, capitalist, and intensely racial nationalist—hardly leftist traits. Founded in the early 1930s by W. D. Fard, who called himself W. Farad Muhammad, the NOI was quickly taken over by Elijah Muhammad (né Poole) after Fard simply disappeared in 1934. Elijah headed the group until his death in the mid-1970s. Not long after Elijah's demise, his son, Warith Deen Muhammad, disbanded the NOI and instructed his followers to join mainstream Islamic groups. Into the void stepped Louis Farrakhan (né Wolcott) who appropriated the name Nation of Islam and revived the antiwhite, anti-Jewish rhetoric that had been abandoned by Warith Muhammad.

Farrakhan always had charisma, although not nearly as much as Malcolm X (né Little) who was murdered in

February 1965 by two NOI members and a third assassin in front of hundreds of witnesses in Harlem's Audubon Ballroom. Malcolm had been the major catalyst for the growth of the NOI during the early 1960s, and Farrakhan had always been jealous of him and his reputation, going so far as to justify his murder—"and, if we dealt with him like a nation deals with a traitor, what the hell business is it of yours?" (*Brother Minister* 1993). And as is typical of antisemitic agitators, Farrakhan has blamed Jews for virtually every bad action taken against blacks. Indeed, he has gone so far as to insist that Jews were predominantly responsible for the slave trade. This absurd charge was answered quite adequately by Harold Brackman in his concise work, *Farrakhan's Reign of Historical Error: The Truth Behind "The Secret Relationship between Blacks and Jews."*

In the early 1960s, there were also about a dozen Klan groups, whose total membership, according to the Anti-Defamation League, exceeded 50,000—only a shadow of the single Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s. Largest among them was Robert Shelton's United Klans of America, with more than 40,000 members. By the mid-1970s, membership in all the groups combined had declined to about 5,000. One of the main KKK claims was that Jews instigated and controlled the black civil rights movement of the sixties.

Klan groups received what they regarded as a "treasonous" blow when the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) investigated them in 1965 and 1966. The various Klans had consistently and strongly supported all actions of HUAC, and they considered it a "stab in the back" to be called before it to answer hostile questions. Observers of the extremist scene found this situation ironic, even darkly humorous, and some believed the Klansmen got what they deserved. Consistent civil libertarians, however, took the position that any illegal actions committed by them should be the business of law enforcement rather than a controversial committee of the U.S. House of Representatives.

The magnitude of the infighting and backstabbing within and among Klans from the mid-1960s into the 1990s was difficult to exaggerate. The phenomenon was exacerbated by the growing presence of informants for law enforcement and for organizations that monitored Klan groups. The infiltration was such that, from the late 1960s through the mid-1970s, nearly all officers of the Indiana Klan were paid informants for law enforcement. Bill Wilkinson, chief of the Invisible Empire, Knight of the Ku

Klux Klan, was a paid FBI informant for a number of years. Not only did Wilkinson incite dissension and rivalry among KKK groups, but he also gave Klan records and membership lists to the FBI (George and Wilcox 1996).

By the end of the twentieth century, membership in all Klans amounted to no more than 5,000 in a U.S. population approaching 290 million—an enormous decline from an estimated 2 million Klansmen in the 1920s. Moreover, instead of an overrepresentation of law enforcement officers and Christian clergy as was the case in the earlier period, the recent Klans contained hardly any police and sheriffs and a considerably smaller percentage of preachers than the Klan of the 1920s.

The John Birch Society (JBS) is another right extremist group of more than 10,000 that found notoriety during the 1960s and 1970s. Although accused of being antisemitic, and it did have some antisemitic members, the JBS was never ideologically antisemitic; it made pronouncements against such beliefs and claimed about 500 Jewish members. Indeed, the exposure of a Bircher as a Jew-hater, followed by expulsion from the Society, was a fairly common occurrence during the 1960s and 1970s. Robert H. W. Welch Jr., Birch founder and leader until his death in 1985, even warned his flock that antisemitism was bad and could do considerable damage both to the group's internal functioning and to its public image. The most striking expulsion occurred during a hot July in 1966 at the Birch-sponsored New England Rally for God, Family, and Country in Boston. Dr. Revilo P. Oliver, professor of Classics at the University of Illinois (Urbana), gave a talk to the faithful that can accurately be described as anti-Jewish. This writer and a friend attended and were quite surprised that Oliver said such things publicly. Shortly thereafter, leading Society members insisted that he had to go. It seems a bit strange that these Birchers were evidently unaware (or weren't bothered) that Dr. Oliver, in a 1959 talk before the Illinois Daughters of the American Revolution, had referred to Cuba as "an island largely populated by mongrels" (George and Wilcox 1996).

Throughout the 1960s, a number of antisemites informed this writer that they considered the John Birch Society a fertile recruiting ground (although one called it "kid stuff") but that most Birchers were uninformed and quite naive about the "International Jewish Conspiracy." And while Robert Welch did believe in the Illuminati Conspiracy, according to these antisemites, he "just couldn't see

that it was simply a tool of the International Jews." This illustrates the differences between the outlook of typical antisemites and that of Welch and the great majority of his followers, who did not accept the idea of a long-lasting, overarching Jewish conspiracy. Still, Welch held other conspiratorial beliefs—for example, that President Eisenhower, his brother Milton, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, his brother, CIA director Allen Dulles, General George Marshall, and many others were all Communist agents and part of a greater conspiracy that uses Communism. Birchers referred to these conspirators as the "Insiders." To Welch, the Insiders were a continuation of the Illuminati "conspiracy" founded in 1776 by Adam Weishaupt in Bavaria. Although the group was abolished in 1785, belief in an Illuminati conspiracy has occupied the imaginations of conspiracy-minded extremists for well over two hundred years.

Numerous very small anti-Jewish organizations have appeared and disappeared during the past half-century. Largely because of their outrageous pronouncements, a few achieved the notoriety so cherished by the leaders and their followers. The best known was the American Nazi Party (ANP). Organized in 1959 by former U.S. Navy commander George Lincoln Rockwell, the American Nazi Party (later renamed the National Socialist White Peoples Party) attracted more attention than other neo-Nazi groups. Although the National Renaissance Party had been formed ten years earlier, its leader, James Madole, had neither the intelligence nor the public relations ability of the clever but rather unbalanced Rockwell. While the ANP's swastikas, Sam Browne belts, and little "fascist" hats upset many people, at no time did this group have even two hundred actual members, and some of them were informants. Rockwell was assassinated in 1967 by John Patler, a disgruntled party member who felt that the "American Fuehrer" was not paying enough attention to him. Patler was sentenced to twenty-two years in prison for his crime.

Another small neo-Nazi group that garnered much more than its rightful share of publicity was the National Alliance. Formed in 1974 by Dr. William Pierce, the National Alliance probably never had as many as five hundred members. Pierce got his neo-Nazi start with Rockwell's American Nazi Party but was expelled from the organization in 1970 by Rockwell's successor, Matt Koehl. In the late 1970s, Pierce used a religious front group, the Cosmotheist Community Church, to gain tax-exempt status.

In 1983 a federal court of appeals revoked this status. The following year, Pierce achieved greater notoriety when it became publicly known that he was the author of the highly controversial novel *The Turner Diaries*. This book, which Pierce wrote under the name Andrew McDonald, details a violent racial-nationalist takeover of the United States by antisemitic whites. His description of the overthrow includes the killing of blacks, “race traitors,” and, of course, Jews. Among those highly impressed with the novel, which Pierce intended to be prophetic, was Timothy McVeigh, who in 1995 murdered 168 people in Oklahoma City with a bomb. He was executed in 2002.

Another who drew inspiration from Pierce’s hate book was Robert Matthews, who belonged to the small neo-Nazi group Aryan Nations led by the Reverend Richard Butler and headquartered in Hayden Lake, Idaho. In 1983 Matthews formed a spin-off grouplet he dubbed The Silent Brotherhood, better known as The Order. Purposely keeping his creation highly secretive and limited to a small number (fewer than thirty), Matthews led his minions into actions shunned by the overwhelming majority of American political extremists, even those with intense anti-Jewish proclivities. These actions included counterfeiting, robbery, and murder. Thus, unlike its parent organization Aryan Nations, The Order became a terrorist group. Emulating the most extreme American Marxist–Leninist fringe by robbing armored cars and banks, these racial-nationalists also committed at least two murders: Denver radio talk show host Alan Berg was gunned down in his driveway, and Order compatriot Walter West was killed deep in the woods because Matthews came to believe that he was an informant for law enforcement. (The odds are that West was not an informant. Groups such as the Silent Brotherhood know they have infiltrators, but they are seldom able to determine who they are.) All Order members were eventually arrested and sentenced to prison, with the exception of Matthews, who was killed in a December 1984 gun battle with FBI agents.

The World Church of the Creator is another very small organization. Founded in 1973 by Ben Klassen, who committed suicide in 1993, the World Church of the Creator was taken over in 1996 by Matt Hale, who continued the group’s hostility toward Jews, blacks, Asians, Latinos, and even Christians. The credo of the organization has been “To Serve The One Living God Who Has Placed A Trust In Us.” After losing the right to use the

name World Church of the Creator, Hale settled for the name Creativity. It has been described as a “racial religion whose goal is the survival, expansion, and advancement of the white race.”

During 1999 some exceedingly bad publicity descended on Hale and his Creativity movement when a member named Benjamin Smith shot eleven people (Jews, Asians, and blacks), two of whom died. Hale immediately claimed only casual contact with Smith, but this assertion rang hollow, since he had given Smith the “Creator of the Year” award not many months prior to the shootings. Hale also discovered that plotting to have a federal judge killed would result in time behind bars. Hale’s plot was exposed because an FBI informant had successfully infiltrated Creativity and won his confidence. At its zenith, Creativity probably did not have one thousand members.

Thus, the great majority of post-1960 anti-Jewish groups have been not only quite small but also populated by loud, cruel, generally maladjusted, self-destructive people who have been more of a danger to themselves than to Americans in general or Jews in particular. The only group with any real influence in the twenty-first century is the Nation of Islam. Most black political figures have been reluctant to criticize Louis Farrakhan strongly, and most blacks know nothing of his hatred for Malcolm X, much less his 1993 justification of Malcolm’s murder.

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## African American Antisemitism in the 1990s

In recent decades, the college campus has become a major venue for antisemitic rants. In the 1990s, before Israel and Zionism became the central focus of the attacks, campuses echoed with charges that Jews dominated the Atlantic slave trade. In truth, as David Brion Davis, Sterling Professor of History at Yale University and a leading historian of slavery, and other scholars have shown, Jews had only a “very marginal place” in the history of the slave trade. The absurd claims that rocked the campuses were drawn from a tract anonymously authored by the Historical Research Department of the Nation of Islam (NOI), *The Secret Relationship between Blacks and Jews* (SR). Notably, Davis would characterize the volume as “the extreme example of anti-Semitic accusations masquerading as a documented history of Jewish involvement in the slave trade” (1994). Several scholars have exposed the methods used in *The Secret Relationship* as consistently fraudulent. The tract commonly cited and misquoted scholars in support of the very positions they had refuted. It identified notorious antisemites as “respected historical authorities” and presented as fact long-discredited myths that had been used to justify pogroms. It drew inferences that flouted all rules of logic and routinely made wild extrapolations, often from preposterous “evidence.” Indeed, one commentator wrote of the “sense of authorial derangement” one gets from reading the last ninety-nine pages, “a historical man-hunt for a Jewish Simon Legree” (Conlon 1995). Despite the SR’s gross violation of the historical record, however, the media gave wide circulation to its allegations, promul-

gated on college campuses, while failing to dismiss them as spurious.

Even before *The Secret Relationship* exploded on college campuses, a number of universities, mainly on the east and west coasts, were roiled by conflicts over the issue of black antisemitism. In February 1991, *Nommo*, the magazine of UCLA’s Black Student Organization (BSO), published an article that embraced the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, with its revelations of the Jews’ secret plans for world domination, as historical “truth.” “The fact remains,” the student wrote, “that the *Protocols* have never been refuted,” adding that hatred of Jews had been “good for Hitler . . . good for Stalin and . . . [was] good for *Nommo*.” Unlike the confusion or ambivalence that later greeted *The Secret Relationship*, the response of a number of faculty was immediate and unequivocal. Historians Gary Nash, Robert Dallek, Regina Morantz-Sanchez, et al., wrote an open letter denouncing the article as libelous. Although, later, professors of Judaic studies would be largely absent from the affray, Steve Zipperstein even wrote a long, well-argued article on the history of the *Protocols* in the school paper. Emboldened in part by faculty support, Jewish students condemned the *Nommo* piece as malicious and uninformed. Thrown on the defensive, the BSO refused to meet with the Jewish student organization, accusing the Jewish students of “disrespect.” Upon the arrival of *The Secret Relationship*, however, black students resumed the offensive with a vengeance. Accusing Jewish students of ignorance of their dominant role in slavery, they challenged Hillel, the campus Jewish organization, to a debate.

Elsewhere, for the two years before *The Secret Relationship* began to circulate, BSOs invited numerous bigoted speakers to campus. Provided platforms in elite colleges, they leveled their antisemitic charges to packed houses that resounded with cries of “Teach!” At Columbia, the rapper “Professor Griff” taught that Jews “have a history of killing black men,” and explained that Jews were responsible for “the majority of the wickedness that goes on across the globe” (*Spectator* 1991). Khalid Muhammad enlightened students about the iniquities of “Columbia Jewniversity,” the “*Jew York Times*,” and “*Jew York City*,” although he also peddled his videotape, “The White Woman Is a Bitch and a Two-Legged Dog” (*Spectator* 1991; *Independent* 1993). Leonard Jeffries, keynoter of Race Relations Week, electrified the house with his charges of Jews’ responsibility for the slave trade even before he had *The Secret Relationship* in

hand. A few days after he spoke, sixty mezuzahs were torn from the doors of Jewish students' rooms. Jewish students wrote a stream of letters to the school paper protesting the antisemitic bile, but, for the most part, they wrote alone. In a time of identity politics, other students chose not to speak out on what they considered a Jewish issue. Only because Jeffries had called Henry Louis Gates Jr., head of African-American studies at Harvard, a "faggot" did the Lesbian Bisexual Gay Coalition join the Jews' protest. Jeffries had told the Harvard *Crimson* that "whites had introduced homosexuality to blacks," remarking that Europeans often "offered their wives to me in exchange for a blow job" (*Spectator* 1991). Nor did faculty, who spoke at rallies against rape and sexism and at forums lionizing Malcolm X, openly question the choice of speakers or condemn their outrageous charges. Later, when Abraham Foxman, executive director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), came to the campus, he spoke pointedly of the "new tolerance for intolerance" (*Spectator* 1991). Black campus activists, increasingly members or fellow travelers of the NOI, had brought overt antisemitism back to the university, and many professors and students hesitated to speak out lest they be accused of racism.

Released late in 1991, *The Secret Relationship* landed on college campuses a year later, and for the next four years the reverberations were felt everywhere, even at schools heretofore isolated or obscure. For many blacks, *The SR* became the little red [really, blue] book of the 1990s. They frequently consulted it, cited it, and soon were writing articles, quoting chapter and verse. NOI spokesmen and sympathizers now made their charges while insisting, "It's right here in the book!" Students were impressed. The editor of the Kean College newspaper boasted, "Unlike the musicians who sang of protest to the youth of the sixties, the modern cultural icons have titles such as Dr. and scholar. They support their views with quotable sources and teach the youth heterodoxy" (*Independent* 1993–1994). The scholars to whom he was referring were Khalid Muhammad and Louis Farrakhan, whom students addressed as Dr., although neither had finished college, and Leonard Jeffries, whom they lauded, incorrectly, as a distinguished historian. Waving *The Secret Relationship*, students now challenged all comers to a debate on the iniquity of Jews. When Richard Cohen, the *Washington Post* columnist, wrote of the Howard University audience who wildly cheered Muhammad and Malik Shabazz, the student

leader who had invited him, as "brimming with ignorance, led by Pied Pipers of racism . . . down the sucker's road to nowhere," Shabazz demanded a debate. With *The Secret Relationship* as his guide, he promised to "destroy Richard Cohen . . . using primarily Jewish scholars" and the "Jewish Talmud" as his sources (*Washington Post*, March 1, 1994; Hilltop 1994).

Others, drawing heavily from *The Secret Relationship*, penned articles in which the major role in the genocide of both Native Americans and African Americans was ascribed to Jews. Writing in the magazine of the Black United Students at Kent State, a student explained that, after the Jews had completed the "slaughter" of the Indians, which they had accomplished with "no remorse, no scruples," they moved on to effect "the greatest human tragedy history knows," the African slave trade. "According to their own scholars," he wrote, "Caucasian Jews were right there at the top, financing, trafficking, slaughtering, trapping and hauling millions of defenseless Africans like a herd of sheep." "The immense wealth of the Jews," he instructed, "was acquired only by the brutal subjugation of Black Africans. . . ." Indeed, in the American South, he informed his readers, "Caucasian Jews outnumbered their Caucasian Christian brethren in the number of slaves owned by almost two to one." He concluded with the warning that "Caucasian Jewry . . . should not expect anyone to respect or protect their humanity or even shed a tear when something catastrophic happens to them" (Shropshire 1995).

This student had learned the prattle of *The Secret Relationship* well. But until students could take over the task, Khalid and other NOI supporters crisscrossed the country, hawking the tract and preaching its message, Khalid sometimes stopping at three different colleges on a single day. On the anniversary of *Kristallnacht* in 1992, he returned to Columbia, where, to "continued applause," he charged Jews with culpability for "the Black Holocaust." When a Jewish student in the audience protested the false claims, he was silenced by NOI goons and accused by black students of "disrespecting" their religious leader. When Jewish students expressed horror at the timing of the event, blacks rejoined that every night was a *Kristallnacht* for them. When Jack Greenberg, dean of the college, wrote a letter to the school newspaper "condemning" BSO's invitation to the bigot to speak, Columbia's student council censured the dean. A sponsor of the resolution explained that, by his

action, the dean was impeding the free “flow of ideas” (*Spectator* 1992).

At many schools, students and not a few faculty welcomed the falsifiers of history as a positive good, their anti-semitic rant recast only as a controversial view. Students claimed that college was “exactly the place where these ideas [‘of the gentleman from the NOI’] need to be expressed.” One student insisted that “[a]nytime your views are challenged, it’s a positive thing” but could not indicate which of his beliefs Farrakhan or Muhammad had caused him to question. Some African-American students complained that they were not “given credit for being . . . critical and analytical thinker[s] who could determine what to take from the speech.” But although they wrote countless op-ed pieces, few ever indicated any historical allegation with which they found fault. When pressed, one countered only that critical thinking had led her to reject Muhammad’s call to “kill all the white babies” in South Africa (*Independent* 1993–1994). Notably, students knew so little of the history of the Jews that when Khalid Muhammad told a Howard audience that Jews were never “stripped of their names, culture, religion, land, and family, like black people were,” no one dissented (*Hilltop* 1994). It seemed credible to them.

Some students, such as the editors of Howard University’s paper, endorsed the right of the hatemongers to speak, since “it is through public discourse [and ‘debate’] . . . that truth will emerge” (*Hilltop* 1994). The “debate,” however, was always kept within very narrow bounds. Howard canceled a lecture by Yale professor David Brion Davis, former president of the Organization of American Historians, who had written on slavery for twenty-five years, because he was a Jew. The columnist Nat Hentoff, a supporter of unrestricted free speech, advised that these talks, “full of egregious distortions of history,” required “immediate rebuttal,” that they must “be discussed and analyzed when students met in classes the next day. All kinds of classes” (Hentoff 1994). But when he surveyed students, he found this was never done. At Kean College, where Muhammad appeared at the end of November 1993, Rabbi Avi Weiss was brought in at the beginning of the next semester to challenge his views. But although Weiss came prepared with much evidence and careful argument, he was not a scholar, and many black students dismissed his case as merely the biased opinions of a Jew. Some were outraged that he had

been allowed to speak in February, the month that belonged to them.

Yet even if Weiss were a historian—and had come in a different month—it is unlikely that he would have led many students to modify their views. Many had come to accept that the idea of the scholar’s disinterested pursuit of proximate truth was a Euro-American ideology that obscured the scholar’s racist point of view. There were only different biases and agendas. Many administrators and some professors had spoken repeatedly of diverse perspectives, usually privileging the minority worldview. An editorial in the Kean College paper heralded “Dr. Khalid” as a hero, a savior bringing “unorthodox viewpoints” to a campus that had only given lip service to “multiculturalism” (*Independent* 1994). Indeed, for some, Khalid had become the public face of this new curriculum and *The Secret Relationship*, one of its texts. Faculty and administrators had expected and even encouraged blacks to rewrite their own history, but few had anticipated that it would embody an antisemitic worldview.

*The Secret Relationship* both reflected and augmented historical black antisemitism. The many who persist in referring to its alleged antisemitism appear not to have perused it or listened to its hawkers. Indeed, its impact was so powerful because it drew so heavily on classical as well as traditional black, anti-Jewish myths. In March 1995, the *Donahue Show* featured Tony Martin, professor of Africana Studies, who assigned *The Secret Relationship* to his students at Wellesley College. (Indeed, in 1994 Martin wrote *The Jewish Onslaught*, issued by his own publishing company, which detailed what he called the “escalating Jewish onslaught against Black people.” According to Martin, *Onslaught* “spent several months in 1994 at the top of the Black book industry’s bestseller list,” and “was named ‘Best Book of the Year 1994’ at the annual Black Literary Awards held in Hampton, Virginia” [*Blacks & Jews at Wellesley News*, March 1995].) The trailer for the *Donahue Show*, played again and again, pictured only an African American woman declaiming that, when she heard about Jews and the slave trade, she knew it was true because wherever there is money, there are Jews. When Khalid Muhammad explained to his rapt audience that “Swindler’s List,” directed by “Steven Spielberg,” was just another attempt “to divert attention from Jews’ complicity in the African slave trade,” it resonated with the belief in the greedy and duplicitous Jew. Indeed,

*The Secret Relationship* itself presented the acquisition of wealth “not just [as] the ambition of the Jews, but the [very] purpose of Judaism”: “Europe’s experience with Mosaic Law was that it very closely resembled business law, and that money, not worship, was the main objective” (*In These Times* 1994; Conlon 1995).

Those who preached the message of *The Secret Relationship* linked it closely to traditional antisemitism. Across the flyer advertising Khalid Muhammad’s appearance at Kean College was a nativity scene, and immediately below it, the title of his sermon, “The Secret Relationship between Blacks and Jews.” The reference was unmistakable: those who killed Christ killed the blacks. Indeed, Muhammad reminded his listeners that Jesus was black, so the Jews had been murdering blacks for a very long time. When he came to Howard to preside over what Richard Cohen tagged a “Nuremberg Rally,” classical antisemitism was further blackened. When law student Malik Shabazz in his introduction conducted a deafening call-and-response, he asked not only who killed Nat Turner, who killed Martin Luther King, but who had killed Jesus. In each case, the answer was the same. Indeed, Shabazz made the message explicit: those responsible for the death of Jesus had killed blacks’ more recent saviors as well. Other proponents of this new black bible warned blacks that Jews only posed as their friends; in the end, they will sell you out; they will betray you; they will, in effect, crucify you. This is what *The Secret Relationship*, with its message of Jewish perfidy, had wrought. Shabazz would tell a reporter, “If we [blacks] were violent, they [the Jews] would have been dead a long time ago” (*Hilltop* 1994; *Emerge*, February 1994).

Even Farrakhan’s motives in commissioning *The Secret Relationship* appear explicitly anti-Jewish. In 1984, Farrakhan became furious when Jesse Jackson’s antisemitic slur became public, and Jews’ demand that he apologize for “the Hymie remark” threatened to derail his presidential campaign. It was the Jews, Farrakhan railed, who should apologize to blacks, for their role “in the slave trade that caused 100 million black lives to be lost.” Seven years later, with the publication of *The Secret Relationship*, he would have his revenge. Farrakhan was also outraged, he explained at the time, that Jews “put it all on the Arabs,” writing of the Arab slave trade (*Emerge* July/August 1994). (The Arab slave trade had, in fact, lasted far longer, was likely more lethal, and transported more blacks across the Sahara and the Red Sea than were shipped across the At-

lantic.) As a Muslim, Farrakhan was close to the Arabs—the next year, the Libyan dictator Colonel Muammar Gadhafi would offer him a \$5 million, interest-free “loan”—and the NOI had not even commented when Saudi Arabia finally outlawed slavery in 1962. Strongly anti-Israel, he was distressed that it was the Arabs, not the Jews, who were maligned for their role in slavery.

*The Secret Relationship* is also a product of Farrakhan’s move away from the preoccupation with white devils and white supremacy favored by his mentor Elijah Muhammad to an obsession with Jew-devils and Jewish domination of the world. At Kean College, a black in the audience rejected Rabbi Weiss’s portrayal of Jews’ extremely marginal role in the slave trade as merely the teachings of the “devil.” Indeed, those who disseminate the teachings of *The Secret Relationship* routinely refer to Jews as sons of Satan. In a 1995 article written in the Columbia University paper by an NOI supporter, Satan is a synonym for Jew: “You [Jews] hate me because I understand that Satan can never want or yearn to support a march that will uplift blacks”; “Farrakhan and Chavis are only two of our spiritual leaders who are choosing not to stand with Satan,” unlike King, who stood with the Jews (*Spectator* 1995). Indeed, some of Farrakhan’s followers believe that Jews are literally the descendants of the devil, offspring of an illicit copulation of Satan and Eve. Thus, contrary to all evidence, they stress that it was the Jews who were responsible for the slave trade. Only those doing the work of the devil could have perpetrated “the Black Holocaust,” the world’s most heinous deed.

Alternatively, those who proclaim the gospel of *The Secret Relationship* refer to the “imposter Jews,” “so-called Jews,” or, for the media-savvy, “European Jews.” Here they embrace the view that, if Jews are not the progeny of Satan, they are descended from Khazars, a tribe of amoral warriors who, in the eighth century CE, enslaved and killed the Jews, then converted en masse to Judaism themselves. Who but they could have been capable of the world’s most pernicious deed, the African slave trade? Thus on the anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, Khalid Muhammad explained that when Farrakhan spoke of Judaism as a “gutter religion” [dirty religion], he was “only referring to the Judaism practiced by whites,” that is, by the imposter Jews; he would never impugn the religion of the “black Hebrews,” the true Jews, who flourished while the white Jews became Khazar barbarians, “roaming around Europe in caves” (*Spectator*

1992; *In These Times* 1994–1995). Thus Farrakhan and his acolytes can accuse Jews of much of the evil in the world while insisting they are not antisemitic, since today's (white) Jews, and the Jewish slave-traders, were never "Semites" at all.

If Jews once dominated the slave trade, the Jews, according to Farrakhan, now controlled the world. On Savior's Day 1995, one of the holiest days of the NOI year, he preached that Jews were now "at the root of the control of the banking system of the Federal Reserve." The faithful learned that Jews are also at the root of world conflict, which they provoke so they might profit even more. But, he warned his fellow victims, the ADL will destroy "anybody who would expose" these modern nefarious Jews (*In These Times* 1995). What could one expect from those who had financed the slave trade and then tried to cover it up?

Although the national media gave the NOI's allegations wide coverage, the discussion was framed largely around questions of free speech, around whether the campus speakers were antisemitic, and if their harangues inflamed ethnic hatred. For the most part, however, the media did not address the absurdity of the claims. Because the charges were so egregious and dangerous—and remained unanswered—two historians, Eunice G. Pollack and Stephen H. Norwood, asked the American Historical Association (AHA) to take a stand. In January 1995, in an action virtually unprecedented in its 111-year history, the AHA issued a policy resolution (applauded in and by the press and even in the U.S. Senate) that "condemns as false any statement alleging that Jews played a disproportionate role in the Atlantic slave trade." A statement published along with the resolution, written by David Brion Davis and Seymour Drescher, professor at the University of Pittsburgh, noted experts on the history of slavery and the slave trade, along with Eunice G. Pollack, concluded that these "claims so misrepresent the historical record . . . that we believe them only to be part of a long anti-Semitic tradition that presents Jews as negative central actors in human history."

On October 16, 1995, Farrakhan held what he promoted as a Million Man March on the Mall in Washington, D.C. On the day before the rally, large numbers of antisemitic tracts were made available to those in attendance. In his keynote address, Farrakhan treated the crowd to his strange facts and stranger reasoning, as he taught that the first slaves landed in Jamestown in 1555, which was a "1"

placed in front of the height of the Washington Monument. (Jamestown was not founded until 1607, and the first blacks arrived in 1619.) The *Washington Post* reported that 87 percent of those in attendance had "a favorable impression" of Farrakhan (October 17, 1995). Apparently, they were able to overlook, or were indifferent to, the obsessive antisemitism that was central to his stature and renown.

After 1999, prostate cancer somewhat curtailed Farrakhan's ability to disseminate his message, as did the death of his disciple Khalid Muhammad in February 2001. Still, when Farrakhan appeared before his followers on subsequent Savior's Days, his antisemitic invective remained undiminished: "Listen, Jewish people don't have no hands that are free of the blood of us," he railed (February 27, 2005) ([www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org)).

Eunice G. Pollack

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## The Crown Heights Riot

The Crown Heights riot of August 19–22, 1991, in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn in New York City was the most serious antisemitic incident in American history. The riot has been the topic of movies, television shows, and plays. For nearly three days, the city police seemed powerless to prevent attacks on Jews and their property by black rioters. One Jew was murdered, another committed suicide, six stores were looted, and property damage was in the millions of dollars. Although the loss of life and property was minuscule when compared to other American riots, its impact on Jews was traumatic. The riot also affected the politics of New York City by bringing into question the widely held assumption that blacks and Jews were natural political allies. The riot took place on the watch of David N. Dinkins, a Democrat and the city's first black mayor. Dinkins lost his bid for reelection to Republican Rudy Giuliani in November 1993, and Dinkins's response to the riot was one of the most important issues during the bitter campaign.

Crown Heights was an upscale neighborhood of spacious homes and apartments in which upwardly mobile Jews had settled after World War I. By the late 1940s, there were some two hundred thousand Jews living in Crown Heights, including prominent physicians, lawyers, and politicians, and the area contained dozens of synagogues and other Jewish institutions. During the 1950s and 1960s, however, there was an influx of poorer blacks into Crown Heights, and most Jews left the area. Many of the blacks who settled in Crown Heights came from the West Indies, and by the 1970s the neighborhood had become the center of West Indian culture in America.

There was also a smaller migration of Jews into Crown Heights during the 1950s and 1960s. These were members of the Lubavitch Hasidic sect, which had its headquarters

on Eastern Parkway. They settled in Crown Heights to be close to their spiritual leader, to other Lubavitchers, and to Lubavitch institutions. Crown Heights, in fact, was the only primarily black area in the city that attracted a sizable number of Jews. These three migrations help explain the sociological dynamics that led to the riot. The neighborhood had a large number of alienated West Indian youth torn between the values they absorbed in the street and the values they learned in their conservative families. The Lubavitch Hasidim, who constituted about 15 percent of the population of Crown Heights, wanted little cultural or social interaction with the other residents living in the area. This insularity, which was necessary if the Lubavitchers were to maintain their religious traditions unsullied by outside influences, was resented by their black neighbors. They believed it reflected contempt for anyone who was not part of the Lubavitch community.

The poverty of Crown Heights' residents, Jews and blacks alike, worsened the situation. Per capita income in Crown Heights was lower than in most Brooklyn neighborhoods. Many younger Lubavitchers were involved in religious study and not gainfully employed, and many blacks found it difficult to find employment because of poor educational backgrounds and unfamiliarity with the job market. A struggle within Crown Heights for antipoverty dollars and other emoluments of the welfare state exacerbated the tensions within the neighborhood, as did attacks on Jews by blacks, including several that resulted in murder. In addition, there was a fierce competition for housing caused by the flow of West Indians and Lubavitchers into Crown Heights and by the large size of Lubavitch families, which required larger living quarters. This tension also reflected a general worsening relationship between blacks and Jews in New York City during the 1970s and 1980s manifested in quarrels over affirmative action, mandatory school busing, and the placing of public housing projects in the Jewish neighborhood of Forest Hills in the borough of Queens, and the antisemitic and anti-Israel rhetoric of a small group of black nationalists.

The Crown Heights riot began a little after 8 p.m. on Monday, August 19, when a car struck Angelina Cato and her cousin Gavin Cato, members of a Guyanese family, who were playing outside their apartment house near the northwest corner of President Street and Utica Avenue. Gavin Cato was killed, and Angelina Cato was injured. The car was driven by Josef Lifsh and was part of a three-car

procession bringing Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the head of the Lubavitch Hasidic sect, back from one of his frequent visits to the Lubavitch cemetery in the borough of Queens. The first automobile in the procession was a police car, the second contained Schneerson, and Lifsh's car brought up the rear. The first two cars in the procession, which was traveling west along President Street, crossed Utica Avenue. By the time Lifsh's car reached the intersection, the light had changed to either yellow or, most likely, to red. Lifsh was eager to remain close behind Schneerson's car, and he hurried to cross the street. His automobile was struck by a car traveling north along Utica Avenue; he lost control, and the automobile plowed into the Cato children.

Ambulances and police cars arrived at the scene a few minutes after the accident. The Cato children were taken to a local hospital, and Lifsh and the other occupants of his automobile were escorted from the area. By then a crowd had gathered and was being stirred up by agitators. They accused Lifsh of having intentionally run into the Cato children, charged that a Jewish ambulance service had refused to aid the Cato children, and demanded revenge. By coincidence, a concert attended by hundreds of young blacks had just ended, and they learned what had happened. The conditions became combustible, and soon gangs of young blacks were rampaging through the neighborhood, throwing rocks at Jewish-owned homes and attacking Jews. This rioting continued until the morning of August 22.

One of these gangs encountered Yankel Rosenbaum a little after 11 p.m. on August 19. Rosenbaum, an aspiring Australian academician, was living in Brooklyn while doing research in New York libraries for his doctoral dissertation in European Jewish history. Although not a Lubavitch Hasid, Rosenbaum was easily identified by his beard and his clothing as an Orthodox Jew. About a dozen young blacks surrounded him and began beating him. According to witnesses, the attack was preceded by shouts of "Let's get the Jew." One of Rosenbaum's attackers was Lemrick Nelson, who stabbed Rosenbaum several times with a knife. The police soon arrived, arrested Nelson, and saw to it that Rosenbaum was transported to a hospital.

Mayor Dinkins had been immediately informed of the riot and Rosenbaum's stabbing. The mayor proceeded to Brooklyn, where he visited Rosenbaum in the hospital shortly after midnight. Doctors assured Dinkins that

Rosenbaum was well on the way to recovery. Less than two hours later, the Australian was dead, a victim, seemingly, of gross incompetence. The staff in the emergency room had treated Rosenbaum for the wounds on the front of his body, but, inexplicably, they never turned his body over to treat the wounds on his back. Governmental investigations of Rosenbaum's death severely criticized the quality of medical care he received.

The second fatality arising from the rioting was also puzzling. On August 26, sixty-eight-year-old Brokha Estrin, who lived on President Street across from the scene of the accident, jumped out of a window in her apartment to her death. Estrin's family could not explain her action. She was, however, a Holocaust survivor, and some observers speculated that the continuous incitement of the crowd across the street from her home brought to the surface painful memories of World War II that she had tried to suppress. There were also questions regarding another fatality that was perhaps related to the riot. On September 5, 1991, sixty-seven-year-old Anthony Graziosi, a hardware salesman, was murdered by a group of young blacks. Graziosi had a beard and was wearing a dark suit, and his family and Jews in Crown Heights believed that he had been mistaken for a Jew. But Graziosi was parked in his car, and it was close to midnight at the time of the attack. It is thus problematic whether his assailants identified him as a Jew. The police did not think Graziosi's murder was a bias crime, and no one was prosecuted for it.

Lemrick Nelson did stand trial in state court for Rosenbaum's murder. Nelson had admitted his guilt to the police a few hours after being arrested. A bloody knife was found in his pants pocket, and his pants were stained with blood of the same type as that of Rosenbaum. A guilty verdict seemed inevitable. The Brooklyn District Office was astonished when a predominantly black jury came in with a "not guilty" decision in late October 1992. (Nelson would later be found guilty of violating Rosenbaum's civil rights and sentenced to twenty years in prison.) Although the verdict seemed outrageous and an example of jury nullification, it was not unreasonable in view of the serious mistakes made by the police and the prosecution. In the wake of the Nelson verdict, Governor Mario Cuomo of New York ordered an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the Crown Heights riot and the subsequent trial. The investigation produced a two-volume report in July 1993 that emphasized the failings of the police and the

prosecution. By this time, the mayoralty election campaign was well on its way.

Giuliani, who had made his reputation as a federal prosecutor, claimed that Dinkins and Lee Brown, his black police commissioner, had been selective in enforcing the law during the riot and had left the Jews of Crown Heights to their own resources. Giuliani's charges resonated within the city's white population. There was a widespread feeling among the city's Jews, and particularly among the twenty thousand Jews of Crown Heights, that Dinkins was at best incompetent and at worst an antisemite, and this had seemingly been confirmed by the state's report.

The soft-spoken Dinkins was certainly not a bigot, but he had been unable to reassure the city's whites that he would move with equal vigor against blacks as well as whites who broke the law. On this issue, the mayor had to be as innocent as Caesar's wife, and Dinkins's justification of his actions during August 1991 failed to convince. Dinkins's margin of victory over Giuliani in 1989 had been a little over 2 percent, or 46,000 votes out of approximately 1.75 million votes cast. He lost by the same margin in 1993. There were too many issues in the campaign to say that the Crown Heights riot was "the" factor responsible for Dinkins's defeat. But the riot was certainly important in strengthening doubts about the mayor's managerial abilities.

Apart from politics, the riot did not have any lasting effects. Relations between the Lubavitcher Hasidim and their neighbors have not fundamentally changed since August 1991. Although the Lubavitchers use the word *pogrom* to describe the riot, they did not leave Crown Heights, in contrast to the Jewish family in the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, who were forced to leave the mythical Anatevka after a pogrom. In fact, the Lubavitch population of Crown Heights has grown, and the price of housing in the neighborhood has escalated. Lubavitch families are now living

north of Eastern Parkway, for years the northernmost boundary of their community. Much to their surprise, many Lubavitch families with modest incomes have become wealthy because of the increased value of their houses. The riot did not change the religious outlook of the Lubavitchers or the image they have of their community. They felt beleaguered prior to 1991, and the riot merely confirmed this. The riot reinforced their distrust of the Jewish establishment, which, they believed, had not spoken up forcefully enough during the riot and its aftermath. The riot also did not weaken the Lubavitch commitment to spread Torah throughout the world. If there was a watershed event in the recent history of the Lubavitch community of Crown Heights, it was not the riot but the death of Schneerson in June 1994.

Edward S. Shapiro

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# Zionism in America

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## American Zionism to the Founding of the State of Israel

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Zionism, or the movement to reestablish a Jewish homeland in the area that was ancient Palestine, grew out of a confluence of nineteenth-century European nationalism and the ages-old messianic belief that Jews would eventually be restored—by God—to their ancestral home. Zionism had great appeal in Eastern Europe, home to millions of Jews who still, at the beginning of the twentieth century, lived under the economic, social, and political burdens of official antisemitism. But it had little appeal to Jews in Western Europe, who had been emancipated beginning in the Napoleonic era, or to Jews who had emigrated to the United States, which had never had any official policies aimed against the Jews. Even recent immigrants from Eastern Europe, although scarred by their experiences there, wanted to make their home in America, not Palestine. For Zionism to take hold in the United States, it would need a cause and a leader who would be able to “Americanize” the movement and give it a meaning that would appeal to those Jews who had no interest in relocating to Palestine.

Modern Zionism actually begins in the 1880s with a group known as *Hibbat Zion* (Love of Zion), a response to the bloody pogroms that shook the Russian empire at the time. The *Hovevei Zion* (Lovers of Zion), however, were not Zionists. They wanted to establish colonies in Pal-

estine, so that some Jews could go there and escape persecution. They did not consider themselves a movement, nor did they seek to bring all Jews to *Eretz Yisrael* (the land of Israel), nor did they have a consistent philosophy. But they did succeed in launching the first *aliyah*, and between 1882 and 1903 some 25,000 men and women went to live and work in the Holy Land. The initial group landed in Jaffa in 1882 and established the first modern Jewish settlement in Palestine, Rishon L'Tzyon.

Although they received support from some wealthy western Jews, such as the Baron de Rothschild, who helped establish viniculture in Palestine, the movement's greatest accomplishment, aside from the settlements it founded, was to make known to Jewish groups around the world that an opportunity existed. In the United States messengers (*shluchim*) who came asking for money found interested audiences—although not much cash—among recent immigrants from Eastern Europe. But they, and millions like them, had already made their *aliyah*—to the United States, where they lived free from the persecution they had known in the Old World and where opportunity awaited those with talent and the willingness to work hard.

True Zionism begins with Theodore Herzl, the publication of *The Jewish State* in 1896, and the convening of the First Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland, the following year. Herzl reflected the belief among many Jews that the Emancipation had failed to solve the Jewish problem.

He himself had been a reporter at the trial and degradation of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, the most notorious case of anti-semitism in Western Europe in the late nineteenth century and in supposedly the most “enlightened” country in Europe. There the delegates adopted what came to be known as the Basle Program, calling for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, the colonization of that country by Jews, and the eventual establishment of an independent Jewish state. The Zionist Congresses have met ever since, interrupted occasionally by war, and, until the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, served as the main forum for debating Jewish problems and for guiding the growth of the *yishuv*, the Jewish settlements in Palestine. After that first Congress, Herzl wrote in his diary, “At Basle I founded the Jewish State. If I were to say this today, I would be met by universal laughter. In five years, perhaps, and certainly in fifty, every one will see it.”

In the United States, a few small chapters of Hibbat Zion had managed to establish themselves in large centers of immigrant Jewish population such as New York and Philadelphia. Following the publication of *The Jewish State*

and news of the Zionist Congress, small groups of men friendly to the idea created Zionist chapters, primarily to debate Jewish issues and to raise small sums of money to send to the *yishuv*. A few Americans even attended the early Zionist Congresses, but the movement did not catch fire among the nearly three million Jews who lived in the United States, a great majority of them immigrants or the children of immigrants.

First of all, leadership of the American Jewish community at that time resided with the German American Jews, who had begun to come over to the United States in the 1840s. By the turn of the new century, they dominated all the communal institutions, which they had founded, and assumed to speak for the entire community through the American Jewish Committee, which they had established to safeguard Jewish interests in 1906. Known as *yahudim* (as opposed to the *yidden*, the downtown Jews who had come from Eastern Europe), they opposed Zionism because they believed it conflicted with their allegiance to the United States. Zionism, as they saw it, called for all Jews to be loyal to this Jewish state-in-the-making, and this meant they could not be loyal to the United States. This idea of divided loyalty carried a great deal of weight not only with the *yahudim* but also with the *yidden*. They had chosen to come to the United States, they wanted to become *Amerikaners*, and they took seriously the warning that they were jeopardizing not only their own future in the *goldine medine*, the “golden country,” but the fortunes of all American Jews already there as well as those who might come in the future.

How strongly this argument played and how little Zionism managed to attract American Jews can be seen in the fact that the Federation of American Zionists (FAZ), a loose coalition of various Zionist and Hibbat Zion groups, had a combined membership of only twelve thousand on the eve of World War I, out of three million Jews in the United States.

While the American Jewish Committee (and its offshoot, the Joint Distribution Committee) raised funds to help Jewish communities in eastern and central Europe devastated by the war, it had little interest in aiding the Palestine colonies. The FAZ, therefore, called a meeting at the Hotel Marseilles in New York at the end of August 1914 to raise money for the *yishuv*. It invited the noted Boston attorney, Louis D. Brandeis, to chair the meeting. The organizers assumed that he would make a speech



Theodor Herzl, founder of modern Zionism. Herzl organized the First Zionist Congress, held in Basle, Switzerland, in 1897. (Library of Congress)



Louis D. Brandeis, who became chairman of the Federation of American Zionists in 1914. (Library of Congress)

asking for money (he did), that he would give a generous contribution himself (he did), and that he would then retire. But Brandeis, who had joined the movement only a year earlier and had not been active, took over the chairmanship of the FAZ and, over the next four years, energized the movement.

First, he brought to the task skills he had learned both as a successful attorney and as a Progressive reformer. His motto—“Men! Money! Discipline!”—called upon the Zionists to stop debating abstract questions of theory and to do real work: bring in new members, raise money for the yishuv, and work together to influence public opinion regarding the movement. By the end of the war in November 1918, the FAZ counted 186,000 members and had chapters in every major Jewish community in the country. Affiliated with the FAZ was Hadassah, the women’s Zionist organization founded by Henrietta Szold, which ran health programs in Palestine. In addition, American branches of the Socialist Zionist movement (*Poalei Zion*) as well as the religious Zionists (*Mizrachi*) worked with the FAZ.

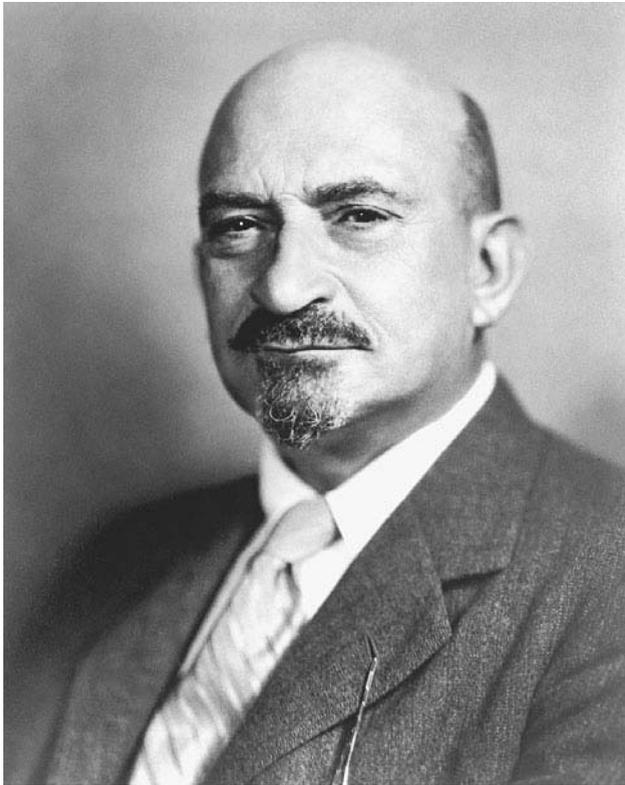
Brandeis’s greatest contribution, however, was to create a philosophy that negated the fears of dual loyalty raised by the yahudim and in fact made it patriotic and

American to be a Zionist. Brandeis saw Palestine as a great opportunity, one in which an egalitarian society modeled along Jeffersonian ideas of democracy could be established. He paid practically no attention to the neomesianic aspects of Zionism but concentrated on the practical aspects. American Jews need not go on aliyah; their job would be to help those persecuted Jews of Europe build a new and free life in Palestine. Dual loyalties, he argued, were only a problem if they conflicted; but in America everyone had dual loyalties—to home, to community, to lodge, and to country. In his merger of Zionist and American ideals, he created what has become known as the Brandeisian synthesis: “To be good Americans, we must be better Jews, and to be better Jews, we must become Zionists.”

Brandeis, by removing the feared stigma of dual loyalties and placing Zionist idealism squarely in the tradition of Jeffersonian democracy, made Zionism respectable in the United States. The ultimate proof that one could be a Zionist and a good American came in January 1916, when President Wilson named Brandeis to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Brandeis dominated American Zionism until 1921 and, even after his appointment to the Court, worked through trusted lieutenants such as Stephen Wise, Julian Mack, and Felix Frankfurter to guide the movement. Over the objections of the State Department, they secured Wilson’s approval of the Balfour Declaration, in which Great Britain promised the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine after the war. At the Paris Peace Conference, they helped secure the trusteeship of Palestine for Great Britain. What had once been a weak and ignored fringe group had become the most powerful voice within the American Jewish community.

But the ideas that made Zionism acceptable to Americanizing Jews, the emphasis on the practical and the dismissal of the religious, antagonized not only European Zionists but many of the recent Eastern European immigrants as well. In emphasizing the practical, the material, and the financial work to be done, Brandeis totally ignored the religious, spiritual, and messianic aspects of Zionism, a mistake that Herzl almost made but did not. To religious Jews, and not just the Orthodox, a Jewish state had to be a Jewish entity as well as a political one. It is not clear that the secular-minded Brandeis ever understood this. Brandeis and Chaim Weizmann, the leader of



*Chaim Weizmann, an accomplished scientist who worked tirelessly to advance the Zionist movement. (Library of Congress)*

European Zionism, clashed at the two Zionist meetings in London in 1919 and 1920; then, in 1921, Weizmann-led forces voted against the Brandeis group at the Pittsburgh meeting of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), the successor to the FAZ. Brandeis and his lieutenants immediately resigned. Weizmann's support came from Eastern European Jews, for whom he was the embodiment of *Yiddishkeit*. He stood for all those aspects of Zionism Brandeis had ignored.

The 1920s, which should have been a golden time for American Zionists, proved a disaster. Under the leadership of Louis Lipsky, Weizmann's handpicked spokesman, the ZOA lost membership every year. Hadassah, which remained loyal to Brandeis and his ideas, withdrew from the ZOA and successfully expanded its medical program in the yishuv. Despite the prosperity of the era, monetary contributions declined along with membership. About the only positive note was the reconciliation of the American Jewish Committee to the Zionist idea—a reconciliation based on Brandeis's ideas and in which he played a behind-the-scenes role—and the creation of the Jewish Agency in 1927. The agency became the official body, under the man-

date, to represent Jewish interests in Palestine, a role it would play until 1948. But despite the air of triumph following the establishment of the Agency, Zionism continued to founder in the United States.

The World Zionist Organization kept creating unrealistic budgets and expecting the ZOA to pay 75 percent of it. It treated the leaders of the ZOA, even Lipsky, as low-level employees who could not do the one thing they were supposed to do—raise money. The ZOA could not even bring in enough funds to cover its own expenses, and, beginning in 1922, it operated with a growing annual deficit. Then came the Depression in 1929. Donations disappeared, and membership, with the exception of Hadassah, shrank back to the prewar levels. By 1931 rank-and-file Zionists were demanding Lipsky's resignation and the return of the Brandeis group.

Brandeis himself, now seventy-five, informed emissaries from the ZOA that he personally could not head the organization but would give his support and advice to leaders who believed in and carried out the ideas he had articulated during the war years. So, during the 1930s, the ZOA would be headed by Brandeis's lieutenants, including Wise and Mack, but the decade proved to be one of the darkest in Zionist and Jewish history.

The Depression, which continued until 1941, adversely affected any fund-raising that the new ZOA leadership attempted. The simple fact was that most American Jews, who were either small retailers or laborers, did not have any money in the 1930s, and what little they had went to provide food and shelter for their families. While membership increased slightly, the amount brought in by dues did not cover the basic overhead of the ZOA.

Whereas in 1919 American Zionism had been a strong voice in international affairs, it was impotent in the 1930s to stop two great tragedies. One was the British perfidy of renegeing on the Balfour promise and the mandate and, in order to appease the Arabs, closing the gates of Palestine to further Jewish immigration. This came at the same time as Hitler's rise to power in Germany and the persecution of German Jews. Then war broke out in 1939, causing hundreds of thousands of Jews to try to flee the Nazis but to no avail, and most of them perished in the death camps established by the Third Reich to eliminate Jews from Europe.

The war and returning prosperity galvanized American Zionism. Members flooded back into ZOA ranks, and

somehow or other money was transferred to assist the yishuv during the war. Most important, a new and more militant leadership arose to take over the reins of the movement. Where Weizmann, Brandeis, Stephen Wise, and the older leaders had placed their faith in Great Britain and as a result felt cruelly betrayed, people such as David Ben-Gurion, the leader of the yishuv, and Abba Hillel Silver, the new head of the ZOA, had no faith in the English at all. (Brandeis died in 1941; Wise and Weizmann would live to see Israel established.)

The turning point came at the Biltmore Conference in May 1942. Whereas previously Zionism had adhered to the Basle Program with its indefinite idea of a future homeland, and then after 1919 had relied on the British mandate, Zionists now demanded that an independent Jewish state be created immediately after the war. Despite a show of unity in which Wise and Weizmann played prominent roles, it was clear that their time was over. While each would continue to make important contributions to the cause, Zionism would now be headed by two militant communities, one in Palestine and the other in America. The Holocaust destroyed European Zionism as well as the communities that had nourished it.

During the war, American Jews could do little about the Holocaust, although Wise, Silver, and others tried in vain to influence the Roosevelt administration. Silver himself recognized that little would be done, and he urged American Zionists to focus on what would happen after the war. He wanted them to be strong and well organized so that, when the peace conference came, Zionists could demand the creation of a Jewish state.

But while Zionists seemed to be more unified, they found themselves besieged by opponents both within the movement and from outside. The Revisionist Zionists, a group founded by Vladimir Jabotinsky, demanded that work on Palestine should be tied to demands for the salvation of European Jewry, and their leaders denounced the ZOA for its alleged failure to act. While the ZOA, led by Wise and then Silver, recognized that they had to work within the confines of American politics during wartime, the Revisionists felt no such constraints. Unlike the bulk of American Zionists, whose prime concern as Americans was winning the war, the Revisionists had as their prime concern European Jewry. The Revisionists put on a number of showy demonstrations, but in the end their loud demands had no effect on the administration. For Roosevelt

and for Churchill, the best way—the only way—to save European Jewry was to defeat the Third Reich.

The renewed vigor of Zionism also triggered a new wave of Jewish anti-Zionism. Classical Reform Judaism had always opposed the idea of a return to Zion, but in the light of European Jewry's plight in the 1930s, the Reform movement had adopted a pro-Zionist stance. This led ninety Reform rabbis to form the American Council for Judaism in 1942, but within a short time most of them had resigned. They explained they had formed the Council for religious reasons but found it "hijacked" by lay leaders who vehemently opposed Jewish nationalism. They claimed that they did not believe Jewish nationalism was compatible with the universalistic interpretation of Jewry put forth by classic Reform. They discovered that the laypeople had no interest in religious ideas but only in countering the idea of a Jewish state so they would not be accused of disloyalty to the United States. The rabbis resigned because the laypeople ran the Council in such a way that it had become a war of one set of Jews against another. The rabbis saw this more as an argument within the family, in which they themselves were calling Reform Jews back to their roots. They refused to be part of a vitriolic campaign against other Jews. The American Jewish Committee, which supposedly had made peace with Zionism in the 1920s, now had a rigid anti-Zionist, Joseph Proskauer, as its head. At the American Jewish Conference in 1943, both the Council and the Committee were routed. As one of the Zionist leaders put it, American Jews, thanks to Hitler, were becoming "Zionized."

After the war, the ZOA, led by Rabbi Silver, provided the greatest ally the yishuv had in its fight for independence. Along with Ben-Gurion, Silver testified at numerous hearings held by both the United Nations and the U.S. Congress; Zionists worked tirelessly to recruit Christian support for establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine; and Zionists took the lead in raising millions of dollars to help the nascent Israeli army purchase arms, some of it done clandestinely and occasionally illegally, although sympathetic American officials, including J. Edgar Hoover, often looked the other way. When Israel declared its independence in 1948, American Zionists helped persuade President Harry S Truman, over the objections of the State Department, to recognize the new state.

The establishment of Israel in May 1948 marked both the triumph of American Zionism and the beginning of its

decline. Whereas prior to 1948 the Jewish Agency had spoken for the yishuv—and in many instances that meant Silver or another American alongside Ben-Gurion—now the independent nation would speak for itself. Israel needed people, not just the refugees from Europe, and looked to American Jews to make aliyah. Aside from a few idealists who had fought in the Israeli army during its war for independence, American Jews had no interest in leaving the United States. They would give generously of their time and money and would visit Israel, but they would remain in America.

The Brandeisian synthesis, which made the success of Zionism in America possible, also carried within itself the seeds of its downfall. By concentrating on organization, fund-raising, and political lobbying, American Zionism proved a powerful ally to the Jewish settlers of Palestine. But by ignoring the religious aspect of Zionism, the neomessianic call for return, American Zionists neither understood nor shared the fervor that motivated aliyah and the sacrifices made by the yishuv. Brandeis never intended American Zionism to become merely philanthropic, but the success of the movement in Zionizing American Jewry made political and monetary support for Israel the least common denominator that tied all American Jews together.

Another important element in American Zionism was Labor Zionism, closely allied with the *Histadrut* (trade union organization) and Poalei Zion in Palestine. Like them, Labor Zionism wanted a Jewish state founded on socialist as well as democratic principles. Although Labor Zionism attracted a significant number of first-generation Eastern European Zionists, it had no lasting impact on the movement after that generation died out.

American Zionism left a rich legacy in making Israel the tie that binds together much of the contemporary American Jewish community. Organizationally, however, with the exception of Hadassah, Zionist groups have withered away. Hadassah has made medical work its *raison d'être*, a mission that it easily carried over from the yishuv to the state. The other Zionist groups had little to offer American Jews that they could not get from the United Jewish Appeal and other general fund-raising groups.

*Melvin I. Urofsky*

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## Revisionist Zionism in America

Revisionist Zionism was founded by Russian Zionist leader Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky in 1925 as a faction within the world Zionist movement dedicated to revising the political approach of the Zionist leadership, which he regarded as excessively cautious. The following year, a small U.S. branch was established in New York. Revisionist themes such as the need for Jews to undergo military training and mass immigration to Palestine resonated in East European regions rife with antisemitism but attracted few followers in America in the Roaring Twenties, as Jewish immigrants focused on climbing the socioeconomic ladder. The American Zionist movement as a whole dwindled during this period, and the tiny Revisionist group struggled to take root.

After the 1929 Arab massacres of Jews in Palestine, however, U.S. Revisionists could point to the violence and the weak British response as vindication of their warnings that the English were backtracking on their pledge to help establish a Jewish national home. The rise of Hitler to power in Germany in 1933 seemed to confirm the Revisionists' expectation that severe antisemitism in the Diaspora was inevitable and that mass Jewish emigration to Palestine was the only answer. By the early 1930s, the U.S. Revisionists had perhaps a thousand members, a monthly magazine, an American wing of Jabotinsky's Betar youth movement, a summer camp, and their first national conference. Revisionism was still tiny compared to the rest of the American Zionist movement, but it was finally on the map.

Still, the U.S. Revisionists faced many obstacles in trying to win support during the 1930s. While sympathy for



Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky, founder of Revisionist Zionism.  
(American Jewish Archives)

labor unions was strong among American Jews, the Revisionists opposed strikes on principle and criticized the hegemony of the socialist *Histadrut* trade union in Palestine. The arrest of Revisionists in Palestine in connection with the 1933 assassination of Labor Zionist leader Haim Arlosoroff further tarnished the image of the Jabotinsky movement, although the suspects were eventually cleared. Some opponents went so far as to allege a resemblance between the Revisionists' brand of Jewish nationalism and the rising ultranationalist movements in Europe. The secession of the Revisionists from the World Zionist Organization in 1935 intensified accusations that the Jabotinskyites were fomenting divisions at a time when the Jewish world needed more unity. Ongoing conflicts between Revisionists and Labor Zionists in Palestine did not serve the Jabotinsky movement well among American Jews, who perceived the Laborites as admirable pioneers rebuilding the Land of Israel in the face of adversity.

The fortunes of American Zionism typically rose and fell in relation to events in Palestine and Europe, and Revisionist Zionism in America was similarly affected. With the renewal of mass Palestinian Arab violence in the late 1930s

and the increasing persecution of Jews in Germany and Austria, the U.S. Revisionists—now known as the New Zionist Organization of America (NZOA)—gained more adherents and more attention for their arguments. In addition, the support of a prominent Reform rabbi, Louis I. Newman of New York City's Temple Rodeph Shalom, who served as NZOA president from 1937–1939, gave the movement a measure of respectability it previously lacked.

Beginning in 1937, the Revisionist movement in Europe initiated a program known as *aliyah bet*, or unauthorized immigration to Palestine in defiance of British restrictions. The U.S. Revisionists raised funds to help sponsor this effort and made it one of the features of their public information campaigns. Although this, too, became a point of conflict with Labor Zionists—who accused the Revisionists of endangering Zionist relations with the British and bringing in individuals physically unsuited to life in Palestine—the American Revisionists found in *aliyah bet* an issue that resonated in the U.S. Jewish community. The Revisionists appeared to be at the forefront of action to rescue Jews from the rising dangers of European antisemitism.

With the eruption of World War II, Jabotinsky shifted his focus from London to Washington, convinced that England's need for U.S. assistance would give the Americans a potentially decisive voice in determining the future of Palestine. In the spring of 1940, the Revisionist leader traveled to the United States to seek support for Zionist goals from the administration, Congress, and the public, beginning with the establishment of a Jewish army that would fight alongside the Allies against Nazi Germany. He believed that a military Jewish contribution to the war effort would facilitate attaining Jewish statehood after the war and that a Jewish armed force could be the nucleus of the future Jewish state's army.

Jabotinsky's stature and the public controversies he engendered pumped new life into the NZOA. The campaign for a Jewish army in the spring and summer of 1940 brought publicity and new members to the movement. At the same time, the army campaign stirred opposition among some mainstream Jewish leaders, who feared it would provoke antisemites to accuse American Jews of trying to drag the U.S. into overseas conflicts.

Significantly, Jabotinsky dispatched to America a number of talented young Revisionist leaders from Europe and Palestine, among them Hillel Kook, Benzion Netanyahu,

and Eliahu Ben-Horin. Other key Jabotinsky followers, including Yitshaq Ben-Ami, Alexander Rafaeli, and Joseph Schechtmann, also arrived shortly before or after the war broke out. They provided dynamic new leadership for the U.S. Revisionists. During their first months in the United States, these activists focused on the Jewish army issue and attracted the support of numerous intellectuals and political figures, including some officials of the Roosevelt administration. Their efforts also helped revive the previously dormant American wing of the Revisionist movement.

Jabotinsky's sudden death in August 1940 threw the movement into disarray. A faction led by Kook, Ben-Ami, and Rafaeli left the NZOA and created an independent political action committee focusing on the Jewish army issue. Netanyahu worked with the Kook group for some months but left in 1941 in a dispute over tactics. Kook believed that public criticism of the British might backfire, while Netanyahu was convinced that openly challenging London was the most effective way to influence British policy.

In early 1942, Netanyahu became executive director of the U.S. Revisionist Zionists. Under his leadership, the Revisionists undertook high-profile public information campaigns aimed at pressuring the British to open Palestine to Jewish immigration. Formerly the editor of the Revisionist newspaper *Ha-Yarden*, in Palestine, Netanyahu believed that "words are the most effective means of political warfare," and he put that approach into action by publishing a militant Zionist magazine, *Zionews*, by organizing public rallies, and by authoring large newspaper advertisements sharply critical of British policy toward Palestine.

Kook's Committee for a Jewish Army of Stateless and Palestinian Jews employed similar tactics but enjoyed greater success because the idea of a Jewish army both fired the imagination of some American Jews and impressed many non-Jews as a potential asset to the war effort. Kook's newspaper ads featured long lists of endorsements from prominent American political figures, intellectuals, and Hollywood celebrities. Mainstream Jewish organizations later took up the army proposal and lobbied British government officials behind the scenes. Kook's public pressure and the establishment's private efforts combined to eventually convince London to establish the Jewish Brigade, which saw action on the European battlefield during the final months of the war. Many Brigade veterans subsequently took part in smuggling Holocaust survivors to

Palestine and served in the Israeli Army during the 1948 War of Independence.

Kook called himself Peter H. Bergson in the United States in order to shield his family, which included some of the most prominent rabbis in Palestine, from public controversy. The political action committees he established were popularly known as the Bergson group. The Bergsonites had no official connection to the U.S. Revisionist movement, the NZOA, although leaders of the two factions maintained friendly relations and, in the public eye, the Bergson group was often referred to, by sympathizers as well as critics, as Revisionists or Jabotinskyites.

When confirmed information about the Nazi genocide reached the United States in 1942–1943, Kook refocused his attention on a campaign for U.S. intervention to rescue Jewish refugees and created a new group, the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe. To alert the American public to the Nazi genocide, Bergson's committee sponsored a dramatic pageant called *We Will Never Die*, authored by his close ally, the Academy Award-winning screenwriter Ben Hecht. During the spring and summer of 1943, the pageant was performed at Madison Square Garden in New York City and then in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and Boston, and at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles. More than 100,000 Americans attended the performances. The Bergson group placed more than 200 full-page advertisements in newspapers around the country, with eye-grabbing headlines such as "How Well Are You Sleeping? Is There Something You Could Have Done to Save Millions of Innocent People from Torture and Death?" and "Time Races Death: What Are We Waiting For?" The committee also organized protest rallies, including a march of 400 rabbis to Capitol Hill and the White House to plead for rescue.

Both the Bergson group and the NZOA also actively lobbied Congress. While the established Jewish leaders had built few relationships on Capitol Hill beyond congressional supporters of the administration, the Jabotinskyites found considerable success in wooing Republicans and disaffected Democrats who, for political or personal reasons, found common cause with militant Zionism.

The Bergson group was uniquely successful in recruiting cultural and political figures to support its campaigns. The group's letterhead and newspaper ads overflowed with the names of liberal as well as conservative intellectuals, Democratic as well as Republican politi-

cians, and an array of colorful Hollywood celebrities. Their participation attracted public attention and lent credibility to Bergson's cause.

In the autumn of 1943, Bergson persuaded prominent U.S. senators and representatives from both parties to introduce a resolution calling for the creation of a government agency to rescue Jewish refugees. The well-publicized congressional hearings on the resolution, combined with behind-the-scenes lobbying for rescue by Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau Jr. and his aides, convinced President Roosevelt to establish the agency the resolution had demanded—the War Refugee Board. The board played a major role in the rescue of more than 200,000 Jews from Hitler.

Bergson's activities aroused opposition from many mainstream Jewish leaders. Some feared that the Bergson group's vociferous protests would provoke antisemitism. Others were concerned that Bergson's criticism of Allied policy would embarrass President Roosevelt, whom they strongly supported. There were also concerns among Jewish leaders that the Bergson group was usurping them by appearing to the public as the only organization actively seeking to rescue refugees. Several Jewish leaders privately urged the administration to draft or deport Bergson in order to curtail his political activity, but Bergson's allies in Congress helped shield him.

While Bergson focused on rescue, the NZOA concentrated on Palestine. Netanyahu cultivated relations with leading Republicans, which facilitated efforts to include a strongly pro-Zionist plank in the GOP's 1944 platform. This helped enshrine support for Zionism as a principle of both major political parties and facilitated the ability of future Jewish lobbyists to influence American foreign policy.

In 1943–1944, Bergson established two additional organizations: the American League for a Free Palestine, to rally American public support for Jewish statehood, and the Hebrew Committee of National Liberation, to serve as a government-in-exile for the future Jewish state. Zionist leaders denounced the creation of the Hebrew Committee as an attempt to usurp the authority of the world Zionist movement and the Palestine Jewish leadership. The NZOA also criticized the Hebrew Committee initiative.

Using newspaper advertisements, lobbying Congress, soliciting the support of celebrities, and staging dramatic theatrical productions, the League and the Hebrew Committee helped build up public and political pressure on the

British to withdraw from Palestine. A particularly effective tactic was the League's staging, in 1946–1947, of Ben Hecht's explosive play, *A Flag Is Born*. After ten weeks on Broadway, *Flag* was performed in major cities around the country, providing tens of thousands of Americans with a gripping introduction to the plight of Holocaust survivors and the harsh policies of the British regime in Palestine. Funds raised by the play were used by Bergson to purchase a ship, renamed the *S.S. Ben Hecht*, to bring Jewish refugees from Europe to Palestine.

Both the Bergson group and the NZOA labored to rally American public support for Jewish national independence in Palestine, with an emphasis on explaining and defending the armed Jewish revolt against the British authorities. This was a struggle particularly close to the hearts of the Jabotinskyites in America, some of whom had been previously affiliated with the *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, the underground Jewish militia spearheading the battle. A handful of activists from both the Bergson group and the NZOA took part in clandestine efforts to smuggle weapons from the United States to the Irgun.

In their torrent of newspaper ads, rallies, publications, and speeches, the militant Zionists frequently drew analogies between the Jewish fight against the British in Palestine and America's own struggle for independence from British rule. Bergson adopted the slogan "It's 1776 in Palestine" as the theme of his campaign. This approach helped many Americans make sense of an otherwise bewildering fight between Jews, Arabs, and Englishmen thousands of miles away. A groundswell of humanitarian sympathy for the Jews in the wake of the Holocaust also played a major role in winning over the American public.

The aggressive public campaigns by the NZOA and the Bergson group undoubtedly contributed to the psychological pressure on Britain to leave Palestine. Anxious to maintain U.S. support, especially in order to secure economic aid for postwar reconstruction, London monitored the militant Zionist agitation and grew increasingly worried that American public and congressional opinion were being turned against them.

The postwar period saw a gradual rapprochement between the mainstream Jewish leadership and the Revisionists. Grassroots Jewish anger over the Nazi massacres and the British closure of Palestine fueled the rise of the activist-minded Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver to the leadership of the American Zionist movement. Privately sympathetic to the

Irgun's fight against the British, Silver generally refrained from his predecessors' attacks on Bergson and actively sought close relations with Netanyahu and the NZOA. In 1946 the Revisionist movement rejoined the World Zionist Organization, and the U.S. Revisionists became an official part of Silver's American Zionist Emergency Council, the coalition of all major American Zionist groups.

Any hopes the Jabotinskyites may have entertained about becoming a numerically significant movement in America were dashed, however, as Silver mounted a nationwide campaign of rallies and aggressive political lobbying. Hundreds of thousands of American Jews, energized by the Palestine struggle and the plight of Holocaust survivors in Displaced Persons camps in Europe, sought an activist response. But most found it in the mainstream, respectable, yet increasingly militant campaigns led by Silver, not in the ranks of the tiny Revisionist group, whose platform now hardly differed from that of the establishment. Silver even hired three of the Revisionists' foremost intellectuals, Eliahu Ben-Horin, Benjamin Akzin, and Joseph Schechtmann, to assume leading roles in his lobbying and public information efforts. At their peak, the Revisionists never numbered more than 5,000 in the United States, as compared to the estimated 250,000 members of the Silver-led Zionist Organization of America in 1948.

The late 1940s marked the zenith of Revisionist Zionism in America. After the creation of Israel, the Bergson group disbanded, key activists such as Kook and Netanyahu moved to the new Jewish state, and the U.S. Revisionist movement lapsed into a long period of sharply reduced activity, its main goal having been accomplished. The Revisionist youth movement Betar, however, continued its efforts to promote immigration to Israel and to train young Zionists according to the teachings of Jabotinsky. The United Zionists-Revisionists of America, as it was known (later it became Herut USA and then Likud USA), enjoyed a brief revival after the election of former Irgun commander Menachem Begin as prime minister of Israel in 1977. Unable to sustain that momentum for long, the U.S. wing of the Jabotinsky movement soon returned to its status as a minor force among the numerous American Zionist factions, several of which adopted nationalist agendas that effectively usurped the Revisionists' traditional role as standard-bearer of maximalist Zionism.

Rafael Medoff

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## Golda Meir (1898–1978)

### Zionist Leader and Prime Minister of Israel

Golda Meir was prime minister of Israel from 1969 to 1974. Born in the Ukraine and raised in America, she was a lifelong Zionist and a member of the upper echelon of Israeli politics for fifty years. She is best remembered for her foreign policy and for her handling of the Yom Kippur War of 1973.

Goldie Mabovitch was born in Kiev, Russia, in 1898 and later moved to Pinsk. She claimed that her earliest memory was of a pogrom that did not materialize. "I remember how scared I was and how angry that all my father could do to protect me was to nail a few planks together while we waited for the hooligans to come," she said. "And, above all, I remember being aware that this was happening to me because I was Jewish" (Meir 1975).

Her household was traditional and celebrated all the Jewish holidays, but talk of religion or God was rare in her home. By contrast, Zionism was a frequent topic of discussion, and Mabovitch's older sister, Sheyna, at fourteen was already a dedicated member of the socialist-Zionist movement in Europe. Sheyna allegedly wore black for two years following the death of Theodore Herzl until the family arrived in Milwaukee in 1906. Goldie Mabovitch's father, Moshe, did odd jobs, while her mother, Blume, ran a grocery store in which Sheyna refused to work due to her socialist principles. Her father also participated regularly in Labor Day celebrations. In short, Goldie Mabovitch had been born into a politically idealistic family.

After an adolescent dispute with her family, Mabovitch ran away to Denver in February 1913 to join her sister Sheyna, who was staying temporarily at the Jewish Hospital for Consumptives. Despite the physical frailty of its patients, the hospital was a hotbed of anarchism, socialism, and socialist-Zionism. Meir later remembered, "They talked about the anarchist philosophy of Emma Goldman and



Golda Meir, Zionist leader and prime minister of Israel from 1969 to 1974. (Library of Congress)

Peter Kropotkin, about President Wilson and the European situation, about pacifism, the role of women in society, the future of the Jewish people . . . but when they talked about people like Aaron David Gordon, for instance, who had gone to Palestine in 1905 and helped found Degania (the kibbutz established three years later on the deserted tip of the Sea of Galilee), I was absolutely fascinated and found myself dreaming about joining with pioneers in Palestine” (Meir 1975).

It was through American leftist and Jewish nationalist politics that Meir learned about the Zionist ideal, an ideal deeply influenced by the religion of labor espoused by A. D. Gordon. As she later recalled, “No modern hippie, in my opinion, has ever revolted as effectively against the Establishment of the day as those pioneers did at the beginning of the century. Many of them came from homes of merchants and scholars; many even from prosperous assimilated families. . . . But they were radicals at heart and deeply believed that only self-labor could truly liberate the Jews from the ghetto and its mentality and make it possible for them to reclaim the land and earn a moral right to it, in

addition to the historic right. . . . [W]hat they all had in common was a fervor to experiment, to build a . . . society in Palestine . . . that would be better than what had been known in most parts of the world” (Meir 1975).

Due to another spat, this time with her sister, Goldie Mabovitch returned to Milwaukee in 1914, where she soon became involved in the nascent *Poalei-Zion* (Labor Zionist) movement. After high school, she attended Wisconsin State Normal School in Milwaukee to train as a teacher, but she spent most of her time organizing for Poalei-Zion and rose quickly in its Milwaukee ranks.

Moshe (now Morris) Mabovitch also became increasingly involved in Labor Zionism and B’nai B’rith. Meir remembered, “Most of the people who slept on our famous couch during those years were socialists (Labor Zionists) from the East. . . . Of the many people whom I first met or first heard speak in public then, some were to become major influences not only on my life, but . . . on the Zionist movement, particularly on Labor Zionism. And some of them were . . . among the founding fathers of the Jewish state” (Meir 1975).

Goldie Mabovitch was quickly recruited by Poalei-Zion’s larger Chicago organization, and she moved there with her new husband, Morris Meyerson. Goldie Meyerson tried to join the Jewish Legion to fight with the British in World War I but discovered that it did not accept women (Meir 1975). In 1921 the Meyersons emigrated to Palestine and joined Kibbutz Merhavia, where they worked for three years. They then moved to Tel Aviv, where she became secretary of the *Moetzet Hapoalot*, the Working Women’s Council of Palestine’s primary labor organization, the *Histadrut*. From this position, in 1930 Meyerson became one of the founders of *Mapai*, the Labor Party of the Land of Israel.

In 1932 Mapai leaders asked her to become secretary of Pioneer Women, a U.S.-based, worldwide Labor Zionist women’s organization founded in 1925 to provide welfare services for women, children, and recent immigrants in Palestine. The organization was a mix of American Zionism, *Yiddishkeit*, and feminism, which suited Meyerson’s background well. Her main task was to raise money by speaking at Pioneer Women engagements across America. Meyerson became known as a very effective fund-raiser and speaker (in both English and Yiddish), and she toured America periodically throughout her entire career.

In 1940 Meyerson was appointed head of the political department of the Histadrut and, in 1946, to the same

position in the Jewish Agency, the de facto government of the Jewish people in Palestine. In 1949 she became minister of labor of the new Israeli state. In June 1956, just before the Sinai Campaign, she became Israel's foreign minister and, at the request of David Ben Gurion, changed her name to Golda Meir. In 1966 she became secretary general of the Mapai party. According to an acquaintance, she was known as an ideologue, "a person of monolithic mind who took her cue from what the Labor Party said. She . . . helped to formulate what the party said, but once it was said, she followed it blindly" (Martin 1988).

On March 17, 1969, at age seventy, Meir became Israel's fourth prime minister. She enjoyed very high approval ratings until the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War (1973), when some Israelis faulted her for allegedly acquiescing to demands of the American government not to launch a preemptive strike against Egyptian and Syrian military buildups. No record of such a request is known to exist, and Meir always took sole responsibility for the decision not to preempt. However, it is reasonable to believe that in light of Israel's preemption during both the Sinai Campaign (1956) and the Six Day War (1967), the American government warned of the difficulty of providing political support and munitions were Israel to act preemptively once more. On June 4, 1974, shortly after reaching cease-fire agreements with both Egypt and Syria, Meir retired from government work and gave up the seat in the Knesset she had held for twenty-five years. She died on December 8, 1978.

*Michael Alexander*

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## Marie Syrkin (1899–1989)

Zionist Intellectual-Activist, Social Critic,  
Educator, Poet

Marie Syrkin's strong advocacy of the Labor Zionist movement had a far-reaching impact on Jewish American intel-



*Marie Syrkin, Labor Zionist, educator, and poet. (American Jewish Archives)*

lectual life and communal priorities. Unlike other American Zionists such as Horace Kallen and Louis Brandeis, whose ideology was often confused and contradictory, Syrkin had arrived at her Zionism almost organically, as the daughter of Bassya Osnos Syrkin (1878–1915), a feminist revolutionary activist and Zionist, and Nachman Syrkin (1867–1924), the founder and theoretician of Labor Zionism, whose ideas inspired the kibbutz movement. By the time he came to the United States in 1908, Nachman Syrkin had an international reputation as a scholar-intellectual and a Zionist theorist. Horace Kallen later adopted his socialist ideas, though in a less doctrinaire form.

Born in Berne, Switzerland, Marie Syrkin came to the United States after having lived in Germany, France, and Russia during the years when her father was active on behalf of socialist Zionism there. Her friend and biographer, Carole S. Kessner, remembered her remarking that "Papa was always getting exiled—so we traveled a lot" (Kessner

1994). In childhood, Syrkin encountered village children in Vilna who warned her to paint a cross on her house if the killing began. Later she recalled that, when she repeated this advice to her father, he had offered a different remedy: “The answer I was taught and grew up believing lay in a socialist society and a socialist Jewish state” (Syrkin 1980). But after fleeing the czarist authorities, Nachman Syrkin took his family not to Palestine but to America, where he had been invited to edit *Das Volk (The People)*, the Zionist journal of the Socialist-Territorial movement.

Working closely with public intellectuals such as Hayim Greenberg, Horace Kallen, and Maurice Samuel, Syrkin initially used her father’s intellectual legacy, and later her own widely respected rhetorical gifts, to shore up support for the Jewish state-in-the-making. She remained a staunch defender of Israel even years after Labor Zionism’s influence had greatly diminished in this country subsequent to the ascent of Menahem Begin and the Likud Party in the late 1970s. Situated in the social context of the period between the world wars and during World War II, her life and writings provide important perspectives on Jewish American ideology during a time of material and existential crisis. Syrkin was devoted to both collective destiny and group identity. For Syrkin—since the Jewish people in *Galut* (Exile) were inevitably linked to political institutions and policies that betray them—the most logical hope for the Jews’ continuity was through a state of their own.

Syrkin was nine years old when she reached the United States, and her family settled in the Bronx. While attending Cornell University, she met and married a biochemist named Aaron Bodansky. She had two sons (the older died in 1924, after the couple separated) and lived in New York City, where she taught high school English in the public schools for twenty-five years. Syrkin’s first book, *Your School, Your Children* (1944), was a highly praised critique of the city’s high school system based on her own teaching experience. Shorter works of social criticism on subjects such as her advocacy of a meritocratic system appeared in venues such as the *New York Times Magazine*. In 1930, she married the Objectivist poet Charles Reznikoff and remained married to him until his death in 1976.

In spite of being excluded from most (predominantly male-authored) official histories of Zionism, Syrkin warrants consideration as one of the most influential Jewish American women writer–activists of the twentieth century,

a figure whose public reputation surpassed that of her husband, the poet Reznikoff. Her early years in czarist Russia, her interviews with survivors in the displaced persons camps of postwar Europe, and her frequent sojourns to Israel as a public figure in the Zionist movement culminated in numerous essays on the modern Jewish condition, particularly in the years following the Holocaust. Besides contributing to the *Menorah Journal*, she wrote for *Commentary*, *Midstream*, and *The New Republic* during a career that lasted more than fifty years. Respected by American intellectuals for her withering critique of Hannah Arendt’s response to Zionism and the Holocaust (*Jewish Frontier*, 1963), she had already achieved a reputation for her intelligent coverage of the Moscow Trials (*Jewish Frontier*, 1937). Her anthology of often-acerbic essays, *The State of the Jews*, testifies to her lifelong concern with the enigma of the twentieth-century Jewish experience, offering candid reflections on such topics as the Holocaust, Israel and its relations with the Palestinian Arabs, and especially Jewish culture in America. After her first trip to Palestine in 1933, she joined the staff of the *Jewish Frontier*. Eventually she would write Zionist speeches for Chaim Weizmann and Golda Meir. Among her books is a famous oral biography of Meir (*A Land of Our Own, An Oral Autobiography by Golda Meir*, 1973). Syrkin and Meir became such intimates that she was a guest in Meir’s home while she researched her biography of her father (*Syrkin* 1961).

Syrkin’s inherited variant of Eastern European Zionism, unlike the American brand espoused by Kallen and Brandeis, was not sanguine about the consequences of the Jews’ emancipation from European ghettos and their transformation by the culture of individualism. The disillusionment that shaped Syrkin’s perspective on Christian Europe eventually diminished her confidence in the Jews’ position in America as well. Marked by a complete loss of trust in the host society, this ideology led to a fundamental lack of confidence in the possibilities of Jewish participation in Western culture. This sense of loss culminated in a series of irrefutable principles: “that the Jewish people is viewed as alien everywhere in the diaspora; that the Jewish bourgeoisie invented the deception of assimilation to promote its power of exploitation; that a profound moral contradiction exists between the bourgeois lie of assimilation and the revolutionary truth of socialism; that the Jewish socialist is duty bound to aid the Jewish people and to accept Zionism as the instrument for the emancipation of

the Jewish people and the spiritual redemption of the individual Jew” (Syrkin 1961).

In October 1934, Syrkin, together with Hayim Fine-man, chaired a committee to discuss plans for a new publication that would bring the message of Labor Zionism and the reality of Jewish settlement in Palestine directly to the Jewish American public on a greater scale than ever before. In December the *Jewish Frontier’s* premier issue appeared. Besides presenting translations of the Hebrew nationalist poetry of Haim Nachman Bialik and Nathan Alterman and Hebrew articles by Palestinian leaders such as David Ben-Gurion and Berl Katznelson that were otherwise unavailable to English readers, the journal attracted such writers as Maurice Samuel, Mordecai Kaplan, Will Herberg, Hannah Arendt, and Ludwig Lewisohn. The founders readily acknowledged the contemporary tension between Jewish socialists and those who had wholeheartedly embraced the American Dream. Moreover, they foresaw the unifying role that Zionism would eventually play in Jewish American culture after the Holocaust.

Syrkin and the other writers of the *Jewish Frontier* often took editorial stands on the politics of Palestine. Over the course of nearly a decade, the *Frontier* waged an impassioned, often bitterly ideological campaign in its pages against what it considered the hate-mongering right-wing Revisionist Zionist press, implicitly linking Labor Zionism with American liberalism, and Revisionism with American xenophobia and nativism. Syrkin’s own essay, “The Essence of Revisionism: An Analysis of a Fascist Tendency in Jewry” (1940), was representative of this editorial trend toward the left.

From the beginning, similar confrontations with Jewish and non-Jewish adversaries of Jewish culture and Zionism marked Syrkin’s public life, gradually leading her to conclude that only the latter could promise a safe haven for the former. Syrkin’s defensive responses to American anti-semitism underscore the success with which hostile forces drove home the Jews’ irreconcilable otherness in these years. Following World War II, Syrkin went to Germany as a representative of B’nai B’rith Hillel Foundations to find suitable applicants for Hillel scholarships to American universities among survivors of the Holocaust. She traveled to displaced person camps and interviewed numerous survivors. Her book, *Blessed Is the Match: The Story of Jewish Resistance* (1957), grew out of these experiences and is believed to be the first work in English about Jewish resis-

tance under the Nazis. Syrkin joined the faculty of Brandeis University in 1950, teaching humanities and literature, a post she held until retiring in 1966 as professor emerita. As Brandeis’s first female professor, she developed the first courses on the literature of the Holocaust ever taught on a college campus. In the 1960s, she served on the World Zionist Executive and as honorary president of the Labor Zionist movement in the United States. A lifelong friend of Israel’s Prime Minister Golda Meir, Syrkin wrote her biography, *Golda Meir: Israel’s Leader* (1969).

By the time of her death, on February 2, 1989, Syrkin had earned a reputation as a gifted thinker and educator who consistently engaged and experienced the political world as a Jew. Facing the historical forces of political anti-semitism, her response was to produce prose and poetry intended to counter fascism and defenselessness. The Holocaust—and the decaying remnant of a rootless Diaspora—confirmed her belief that Jewish survival in the modern world, including the United States, required the aggressive politics of Zionism. Whereas Syrkin’s most influential and widely read essays appear in *The State of the Jews, Gleanings: A Diary in Verse* (1979) is the poetic record of Syrkin’s activities. Its title is apt, for the work represents the great themes of her life: her great loves, losses, resentments, and political battles, and above all, her devotion to realizing the dreams of Zionism. Her mission-oriented poetry and polemics alike are angrily invigorated by a coherent and unified vision of a meaningful Jewish destiny.

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# The Holocaust and America

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## America's Response to Nazism and the Holocaust

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The response of the United States to the Holocaust fell far short of measuring up to the nation's underlying human and democratic values. In the pre-extermination years (1933–1940), many hundreds of thousands of European Jews could have reached safe haven if the United States and other countries had been willing to open their doors. The United States could have set the example by a temporary widening of its immigration quotas. Instead, even the small quotas that were legally available were not allowed to be filled, except from mid-1938 to mid-1940. Then, in the extermination years (1941–1945), immigration was made even more difficult. Not until January 1944, fourteen months after it had incontrovertible evidence that genocide was occurring, did the U.S. government begin to take even limited steps toward rescue.

The three main factors that lay behind America's failed response were the Great Depression, nativism, and anti-semitism. In 1933, at the worst point in the Depression, unemployment in the United States reached 25 percent. Even by 1938, it was still above 15 percent. The decade of the 1930s was one of insecurity, fear, and anxiety. Many Americans worried that foreigners would enter the country and take their jobs. During World War II, when war production eliminated unemployment, there was still

widespread apprehension that the Depression would return with the end of hostilities.

Nativist attitudes, which were particularly widespread in the 1920s, remained prevalent in the 1930s and 1940s. A great many Americans disliked foreigners of any kind and wanted to end or significantly reduce the small flow of immigration that still existed. The issue was partly one of job competition, but many Americans also harbored fears of the cultural impact of foreigners on the United States.

Antisemitism, already on the rise in the 1920s, increased dramatically in the 1930s and reached its peak in American history in the late 1930s and the World War II years. The view that Jews constituted an "undesirable race" was widely accepted. Another strong force in those years was a political antisemitism that argued that there was a world Jewish conspiracy that secretly wielded vast international economic and political power. Jews supposedly manipulated the capitalist system through their stranglehold on international finance and simultaneously controlled the Soviet Union as well as the international Communist movement. Their alleged objective was to increase their power to the point where they could rule the world. While the theory as a whole was too extreme for very wide acceptance, parts of this mythology spread through American society: for instance, that the Jews were Communists and that they were at the same time capitalist manipulators intentionally imposing the Depression on the country.

Antisemitic mass movements and demagogues spread fear and hatred throughout the United States. By 1940, more than a hundred antisemitic organizations had appeared, led by the Silver Shirts, the German-American Bund (American Nazis), and the Defenders of the Christian Faith. By far the most influential among the antisemitic demagogues was the Catholic priest Charles Coughlin, whose weekly radio broadcasts reached several million Americans. Opinion polls from 1940 through 1945 indicated that about 33 percent of the American public was antisemitic. (This figure does not include individuals who harbored antisemitic sentiments but were reluctant to reveal them to those taking the polls.) Of those polled, 12 percent were prepared to support an antisemitic campaign, and an additional 20 percent expressed sympathy for such a movement. During the war years, the rhetoric of hate turned into violence in several northeastern cities, where a number of incidents occurred in which teenage gangs assaulted Jewish schoolchildren.

Troubling though the antisemitism of the 1930s and 1940s was to American Jews, those who were hurt most by it were the Jews of Europe. Antisemitism in the 1920s had helped to bring about the Immigration Act of 1924, which all but closed America's doors. But the antisemitism of the 1930s and 1940s was crucial in keeping them closed. However, despite the strength of the antisemites, their victory in the struggle concerning American refugee policy was not a foregone conclusion. The opinion polls of 1940 to 1945 also showed that, if a campaign had been launched against Jews, almost one-third of Americans would have actively opposed it. Clearly, a reservoir of sympathy for endangered Jews existed in American society. But almost no leadership emerged to try to convert this concern into political pressure. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and most of the rest of the political leadership made no effort to mobilize it. Very few Christian church leaders called for action to help the European Jews. Almost none of the mass media offered such leadership; in fact, most of the media failed even to bring the Holocaust to the public's attention. Jewish leaders called on non-Jewish America for help, but few listened and even fewer acted.

Still, criticism of U.S. refugee policy from individual newspaper columnists such as Dorothy Thompson and a small but vocal number of congressmen worried the administration, especially in the wake of the extreme persecution of Jews and anti-Nazis following on the heels of

Germany's annexation of Austria in March 1938. Fearing that such criticism would now become "exceedingly strong and prolonged," State Department officials decided that the best way to elude the pressure for refugee action would be "to get out in front and attempt to guide it," by inviting thirty-two countries to send representatives to a conference in Evian, France, in July 1938 (Wyman 1968). To assure both Americans and foreigners that no country would be called upon for major sacrifices, the administration's invitation and other pronouncements regarding the conference stressed that "no country would be expected or asked to receive a greater number of immigrants than is permitted by its existing legislation" (Wyman 1968). To make matters worse, the U.S. acquiesced in the British position that there should be no discussion of Jewish refugee immigration to Mandatory Palestine, which England intended to restrict in order to appease Palestinian Arab rioters. As a result, the Evian Conference failed almost completely in its main task, that of finding places to which refugees could go.

In the autumn of that year, Hitler's persecution of German Jewry took a new and violent turn with a series of government-sponsored pogroms on the night of November 9 and 10, known as *Kristallnacht*, a reference to the vast amount of glass from the shattered windows of Jewish homes and businesses. Some one hundred Jews were murdered, tens of thousands were incarcerated in concentration camps, thousands of Jewish-owned businesses were demolished, and most of Germany's synagogues burned while firemen acted only to protect nearby non-Jewish property. In a sharp statement of denunciation, President Roosevelt said, "I myself could scarcely believe that such things could occur in a twentieth-century civilization" (Wyman 1968). He temporarily recalled the American ambassador from Germany and announced that the government would allow the 12,000–15,000 German refugees already in the United States on visitor's visas to remain by means of extensions of their permits. As for the possibility of relaxing the immigration laws, however, Roosevelt said that was "not in contemplation" (Wyman 1968).

Nevertheless, some members of Congress did contemplate bringing more refugees to the United States. The Wagner-Rogers Bill, introduced in early 1939, proposed to admit 20,000 refugee children from Germany outside the quota system. Although a number of prominent Americans backed the bill, their support could not overcome vig-

orous lobbying by nativists and isolationists and the tide of public opinion, which still ran strongly against the idea of increasing immigration despite the German pogroms. The president's cousin, Laura Delano Houghteling, who was the wife of the U.S. commissioner of immigration, articulated the acerbic sentiment of many opponents of the bill when she remarked that "20,000 charming children would all too soon grow into 20,000 ugly adults" (Breitman and Kraut 1987). While the Wagner-Rogers Bill was being squelched in Congress, the refugee issue again came into the limelight as the German cruise ship *St. Louis*, carrying more than nine hundred Jewish refugees, was denied permission to land its passengers at Havana. The ship hovered for days off the coast of Florida, its passengers hoping to be granted haven in the United States. Instead, the refugees were sent back to Europe.

During the spring of 1940, as the German war machine moved rapidly across Western Europe, a near-hysteria swept America concerning the threat of Nazi spies and saboteurs infiltrating the United States. It was fueled by rumors that Germany's shockingly swift defeat of France had been significantly abetted by such internal subversion. The American media burst with stories of "Trojan Horses," "enemies within our gates," and "Hitler's slave spies in America" (Wyman 1968).

The threat of subversion was a legitimate concern. Care had to be taken to keep Nazi agents and collaborators out. But instead of adding reasonable screening precautions to the immigration procedures, the State Department greatly exaggerated the problem and used it as a device to cut in half the use of the already small quotas. In view of anti-immigration, anti-alien, and antisemitic attitudes then current in the State Department, it is evident that the subversion issue was far from the only factor behind the new policy. Since his appointment as an assistant secretary of state in early 1940, Breckinridge Long had been in charge of refugee policy. Long was virulently anti-alien as well as antisemitic. He kept President Roosevelt posted on his policies, and the president approved, or at least accepted, the steps that Long took. In an internal State Department memorandum in June 1940, Long outlined the methods used to implement the drastic reduction of immigration:

We can delay and effectively stop for a temporary period of indefinite length the number of immigrants into the United

States. We could do this by simply advising our consuls to put every obstacle in the way and to require additional evidence and to resort to various administrative advices which would postpone and postpone and postpone the granting of the visas. (Wyman 1968)

The policy change was kept secret, but within weeks refugee aid organizations in the United States realized what had happened. They protested to President Roosevelt to no avail.

The 50 percent cut in immigration in mid-1940 was not the last of Long's changes. In the months that followed, he and the State Department concluded that there was increasing danger of foreign agents entering the United States disguised as refugees. In July 1941, Long further tightened visa procedures. Use of the quotas dropped to 25 percent (for a total of about 15,000 immigrants per year). This time, the State Department made the new procedures public. There were many protests. A small group of distinguished Americans met with President Roosevelt and requested changes. But the new policy remained in place.

American Jewish leaders were deeply troubled by the plight of their brethren in Nazi-occupied Europe and by America's restrictive immigration policy but refrained from urging liberalization of the quota system. The anti-immigrant mood and the prevalence of antisemitism intimidated many of them. They feared that a public effort to bring more refugees to the United States would stimulate even more antisemitism and possibly provoke nativist congressmen to push for more severe restrictions.

There was a second group of American Jews who were potentially in a position to influence U.S. refugee policy. These were Jews who served in senior government positions or were part of Roosevelt's inner circle of advisors, such as speechwriter Samuel Rosenman, Supreme Court justice Felix Frankfurter, and Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. But the Jews closest to the president tended to be highly assimilated, self-conscious about their Jewish identity, and therefore unwilling to be seen as engaging in "special pleading" on behalf of specifically Jewish concerns, such as the plight of refugees from Hitler (Wyman 1984).

The nature and extent of the Jewish refugee problem worsened drastically in the summer of 1941. As the new, tighter American visa policy was taking effect, the earlier German policy of forced emigration of the Jews was

changing to one of physical extermination. With the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, special mobile killing units (*Einsatzgruppen*) operating directly behind the front lines began systematically to destroy the hundreds of thousands of Jews in the newly conquered areas. For the most part, the method was mass gunfire, carried out at the sides of ditches. By the end of 1942, the *Einsatzgruppen* had killed more than 1.3 million Jews in eastern Poland, the Baltic states, and the western Soviet Union. The decision to extend the genocide policy to all the European Jews was probably reached during the summer of 1941, certainly by October 1941. To kill the Jews outside the Eastern European regions where the *Einsatzgruppen* operated, six killing centers with large gas chambers were brought into operation by spring 1942. In the next three years, about three million Jews from across Europe were deported, mostly via freight train, to the killing centers to be put to death in the gas chambers.

For many months, only scattered information about the mass killings arrived in the West. By mid-August 1942, however, strong evidence of systematic annihilation had reached the State Department. But only in late November 1942 did the State Department decide that it had obtained adequate confirmation. It then authorized Rabbi Stephen Wise, president of the American Jewish (AJ) Congress, to make the dreadful truth public. The extermination news, now amply documented and confirmed by the U.S. government, received only minor attention in the American mass media. This pattern continued throughout the war, making it difficult for those who advocated government rescue action to build public support for it.

On December 17, 1942, Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and eight other nations issued the Allied War Crimes Declaration. The declaration condemned Germany's policy of extermination of the Jews and pledged that the perpetrators would be brought to justice. But despite their condemnation, neither the British Foreign Office nor the American State Department was willing to attempt to rescue Jews. The British recognized that any significant flow of Jews out of Axis Europe would place great pressure on them to reverse their policy of tightly restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine. They had established the policy in the White Paper of 1939 in response to Arab pressures and were unwilling to modify it in the years that followed. The State Department feared a large-scale exodus of Jews from Nazi Europe because it

would put pressure on the United States to open its doors, at least to some extent. For both governments, the real policy, albeit unannounced, was the avoidance of rescue.

Despite limited coverage by the news media, information about the mass killing of the Jews circulated in the United States and Great Britain from November 1942 on. In Britain, Christian church leaders and many members of Parliament joined Jews in calling for rescue action. Some pressures for governmental rescue steps also arose in the United States. For several months, an effort to bring about American government action was carried on by the Joint Emergency Committee on European Jewish Affairs (JEC), a coalition of prominent mainstream Jewish organizations, including the AJCommittee, the AJCongress, B'nai B'rith, the Jewish Labor Committee, Agudath Israel of America, and the American Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs. The JEC developed an eleven-point list of specific rescue proposals and sought to publicize them through a series of forty mass meetings held in twenty states during the spring of 1943. The committee also sought help from sympathetic members of Congress and tried but failed to persuade the State Department to give serious attention to its rescue program.

In early December 1942, a campaign for U.S. government rescue action was also initiated by a handful of maverick Jewish activists from Palestine. Known as the Bergson group after their leader, Peter Bergson, most of these young men had been connected to the Irgun Zvai Leumi, a Jewish underground militia based in Palestine. They originally came to the United States during 1939–1940 to promote the idea of establishing a Jewish army to fight alongside the Allies against the Nazis; they soon built their Committee for a Jewish Army into an effective political action organization through the use of newspaper advertisements, public rallies, and celebrity endorsements. Once aware of the systematic annihilation of the Jews in Europe, they worked to publicize the terrible news and to build popular and political support for U.S. government rescue action, centering their efforts on the call for creation of a special rescue agency. The Bergson group pressed its cause with full-page newspaper advertisements, intensive lobbying in Washington, and a striking pageant called *We Will Never Die*, which played to large audiences at Madison Square Garden, the Hollywood Bowl, and elsewhere. The Bergson activists sought to join their efforts with those of the Joint Emergency Committee but were turned down.



*"Boycott Nazi Germany" demonstration in New York, 1937. (Library of Congress)*

Confronted with increasing calls for action in both Great Britain and the United States, the British Foreign Office and the State Department devised a stratagem for undermining the pressures for rescue. Representatives of the two governments met for twelve days in Bermuda in April 1943. The ostensible purpose of the conference was to look into ways to rescue the Jews who could still be saved. The findings of the Bermuda Conference were kept secret, but the diplomats announced that several recommendations for action had been sent on to the two governments.

In reality, the Bermuda Conference recommended almost nothing in the way of rescue proposals. Nevertheless, its real objective was accomplished: it undermined the pressures for action by giving the appearance of planning steps to rescue Jews. Neither the American nor the British government wanted any significant number of Jews to get out of Hitler's Europe, because they saw no places to put

tens of thousands of Jews if they did come out. They knew no other nations were willing to let the Jews in, which meant that, if the Jews came out, especially if the Allies took the initiative to get them out, the responsibility to take them would fall upon Britain and the United States. But Great Britain was not willing to take Jews into the country, and the British were adamant that the doors of Palestine would be kept almost completely closed to Jewish immigration. The State Department was equally unwilling to consider any substantial influx of Jewish refugees into the United States (not more than 6,000 per year).

For both Britain and the United States, the policy was not rescue but avoidance of rescue. For example, consider the March 1943 meeting at the White House between British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden, President Roosevelt, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and a few others. Hull raised the issue of perhaps helping the 60,000 Jews in

Bulgaria. Eden replied “that the whole problem of the Jews in Europe is very difficult and that we should move very cautiously about offering to take all Jews out of a country like Bulgaria. If we do that, then the Jews of the world will be wanting us to make similar offers in Poland and Germany” (Wyman 1984). No one there questioned Eden’s position. In a similar vein, a State Department official, some months later, put the problem this way:

There was always the danger that the German Government might agree to turn over to the United States and to Great Britain a large number of Jewish refugees. . . . In the event of our admission of inability to take care of these people, the onus for their continued persecution would have been largely transferred from the German Government to the Allied nations (Wyman 1984).

The failure of the Bermuda Conference to produce meaningful rescue action stimulated opposition to the administration’s policy toward refugees. Members of Congress such as Senator William Langer (R-ND) and Representative Emanuel Celler (D-NY) increased their criticism of U.S. policy, the Bergson group sponsored large newspaper advertisements denouncing Bermuda as a “cruel mockery,” and mainstream Jewish leaders were unusually forthright in their criticism (Wyman and Medoff 2002). The failure of the conference also provoked a widening split within the JEC. Pessimists such as Wise and Joseph Proskauer, president of the politically cautious AJ-Committee, now believed there was nothing more they could get out of the administration and opposed calls for more action. Activists, including some from Wise’s own AJCongress, began pressing for bolder protests. The minutes of JEC meetings from the summer and fall of 1943 chronicle an increasingly vigorous struggle between the two camps. By November, Wise engineered a 5-to-4 vote by the JEC to dissolve itself and turn over its functions to the Rescue Commission of the American Jewish Conference, an agency over which he exercised tighter control.

Despite the impact of the Bermuda Conference, the struggle for American government action persisted. By summer 1943, the main effort had shifted to the Bergson group. In July 1943, it sponsored a special Emergency Conference in New York City where, working with many important American leaders, it developed rescue proposals and discussed ways to persuade the American government

to take the lead in carrying them out. Bergson and his colleagues formed a new organization, the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe, to supersede their Committee for a Jewish Army. The Emergency Committee used full-page advertisements, mass meetings, editorial support by newspapers, and lobbying in Washington. In October 1943, it organized a march in Washington by four hundred Orthodox rabbis, which gained additional publicity for the rescue issue and galvanized Bergson’s congressional supporters.

Months of lobbying on Capitol Hill resulted, in November, in the introduction in Congress of a rescue resolution calling on President Roosevelt to establish a government rescue agency independent of the State Department. By the end of 1943, substantial support for the legislation was building in Congress. Meanwhile, in an unrelated set of developments, Treasury Department officials had discovered that the State Department not only had failed to pursue rescue opportunities but had even obstructed rescue efforts that American Jewish organizations had attempted on their own. Treasury officials also learned that Breckinridge Long and the State Department had secretly cut immigration to less than 10 percent of the quotas and had taken steps in early 1943 to stop the transmission of information from Europe about the Nazi genocide. The Treasury officials revealed these and other findings to Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau Jr. in a thoroughly documented report entitled “Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of the Jews.”

Morgenthau brought the information to President Roosevelt in January 1944. Roosevelt, recognizing that an explosive scandal was imminent and realizing that the State Department’s record would be debated within days when the rescue resolution reached the Senate floor, decided to avoid the impending crisis by accepting Morgenthau’s recommendation that he establish a government rescue agency by executive order. The new agency was named the War Refugee Board (WRB).

The WRB received little support from President Roosevelt and his administration. It became largely a Treasury Department operation in collaboration with private Jewish organizations. In planning its rescue programs, the board worked closely with American Jewish groups, and most of its overseas projects were implemented by Jewish organizations in Europe. In addition, government funding for the WRB was very small; consequently, 91

percent of the board's work was paid for by American Jewish organizations.

Some of the board's efforts produced only meager results. Its months-long campaign to persuade President Roosevelt to offer temporary shelter to large numbers of refugees ultimately yielded just one such shelter, for 982 refugees, in upstate New York in 1944. The board's repeated requests to the War Department to order the bombing of either the rail lines leading to Auschwitz or the gas chambers and crematoria themselves were consistently rejected. War Department officials claimed they had undertaken a study of the bombing proposal and found it was militarily unfeasible because it would divert resources essential to the war effort. In fact, no such study had been conducted, and the refusal to bomb Auschwitz was rooted in the War Department's secret decision, back in January 1944, not to use military resources "for the purpose of rescuing victims of enemy oppression." In the months during which these bombing requests were being rejected, more than 2,800 U.S. heavy bombers struck industrial targets within forty-five miles of Auschwitz. Among them were 127 Flying Fortresses that, on August 20, 1944, bombed the Auschwitz industrial complex, *not five miles from the gas chambers*. On September 13, Liberator bombers hit the same industrial complex. On December 18 and also on December 26, American bombers again pounded the Auschwitz industries. The railways or the gas chambers themselves could readily have been bombed had the Allied leadership wanted to do so.

Yet the WRB also had to its credit numerous significant lifesaving achievements. In its sixteen months of action, the board played a crucial role in saving the lives of about 200,000 Jews. About 15,000 were evacuated from Axis territory (as were more than 20,000 non-Jews). At least 10,000, and probably thousands more, were protected within Axis Europe by WRB-financed underground activities, including the safeguarding of holders of Latin American passports. WRB diplomatic pressures, backed by psychological warfare such as radio broadcasts and dropping leaflets warning of Allied retribution for war crimes, were instrumental in bringing about the removal of 48,000 Jews from imminent danger in the Transnistria region of Romania to safe areas in that country. Similar pressures helped end the German deportations from Hungary to Auschwitz, saving 120,000 Jews in Budapest. Nonetheless, as the WRB's director concluded years later,

"What we did was little enough. . . . Late and little, I would say" (Wyman 1984).

America's response to the Holocaust was the result of action and inaction on the part of many people, but in the forefront was Franklin D. Roosevelt. He could have aroused substantial public backing for a significant rescue effort by speaking out on the issue. Even a few forceful statements by the president would have brought the extermination news out of obscurity and into the headlines. But he said little about the problem and gave no priority to rescue. After one brief meeting with Jewish leaders in December 1942 about the recently confirmed news of extermination, he refused Jewish requests to discuss the crisis and even left the White House to avoid the rabbis who marched in Washington in October 1943. He gave the State Department free reign with regard to immigration. He established the WRB only when he was forced to do so by the pressure on Capitol Hill and by the danger that a major scandal would erupt over the State Department's persistent obstruction of rescue.

Roosevelt's response to the Holocaust was deeply affected by political expediency. Because there was considerable opposition to immigration, much of it rooted in antisemitism, a prorefugee stance could have lost him votes. In addition, the overwhelming majority of Jewish voters were strongly attached to the Democratic Party and were virtually certain to support FDR as they had in previous elections. Thus, an active rescue policy appeared to offer Roosevelt little political advantage. Still, the United States has a long and noble tradition of concern for the oppressed, and Roosevelt in particular portrayed himself as the champion of people in need. In the end, however, the era's most prominent symbol of humanitarianism turned away from one of history's most compelling moral challenges.

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## Holocaust Survivors and Their Children in America

The fourth wave of Jewish immigration to America, namely, that of the *she'erit hapletah*, the surviving remnant of the destruction of European Jewry, is part of the collective memory of American history, for America is a land of immigrants (Wieseltier 1993). From liberation until the early 1950s, approximately 150,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors were given refuge in the United States. This figure does not include German Jews who escaped the Third Reich in the 1930s or those who miraculously fled German-occupied countries and arrived in the United States before 1945. In subsequent decades, the Holocaust survivor population was augmented by thousands of others who fled to the United States from Poland, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and other countries, and more recently from former republics of the Soviet Union. Although initially silenced, at the beginning of the twenty-first century the Holocaust survivors are encouraged and applauded for being vocal and visible. As a result, the contributions of Holocaust survivors and their heirs to America and American Jewish life have been immeasurable.

At the end of World War II, the U.S. government was not eager to be flooded with Europe's refugees. In December 1945 Josef (Yosel) Rosensaft, former inmate of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen and leader of the survivors in the Belsen displaced persons (DP) camp and in the British Zone of Germany, was the first survivor invited to address the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) in Atlantic City, New Jersey. His impassioned speech galvanized the Ameri-

can Jewish community to allocate funds and manpower to aid the remnants of European Jewry.

While each wave of Jewish immigrants was discriminated against to some extent by the previous wave, Holocaust survivors were shunned and told to forget about the past. The presence of Holocaust survivors in the late 1940s made some American Jews uneasy because they were a reminder of what could happen in America if the current already high level of antisemitism were to intensify. American Jews were reminded of the complacency or silence of many in their community when millions of Jews were being killed. Survivors felt so ostracized that, in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh, they felt compelled to form their own synagogue and community center.

In the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, artistic expressions of the persecution of Jews in German-occupied Europe were not embraced by the Jewish community or by American audiences. *Long Is the Road*, a feature film made in the DP camps in 1948, was considered too graphic for American audiences. Most of the film shows life after the liberation. It was shortened and used by the UJA as a fund-raising tool to raise money for Israel for a very brief period. *The Juggler*, with Kirk Douglas (1953), also did not have much of an audience. This film focuses on the aftermath of the Holocaust and portrays the survivor with all his emotional wounds, including post-traumatic stress disorder, the symptoms of which were not understood at the time. *The Diary of Anne Frank* was published in 1957, but its Jewish component was minimized. John Hersey's *The Wall* (1950) and Leon Uris's *Mila 18* (1961) had wider audiences because of their heroic narratives.

In 1961 the Eichmann trial had a major impact in Israel, but this was not the case in the United States, where Jewish leaders were concerned that all the gruesome details would exacerbate antisemitism. To preempt this backlash, Jewish defense agencies worked to present the Eichmann trial in a universalistic language of hatred and totalitarianism.

In 1973, when the Warsaw Ghetto Resistance Organization (WAGRO) attempted to organize a community-wide Holocaust commemoration, major synagogues that were approached in New York City refused it space. The organized community retained the earlier frame of mind of not emphasizing the destruction. Religious institutions were also concerned that if one dwelt on the *Hurban* (Destruction), God's existence would be questioned and other

theological issues raised that would detract from faith and practice. The handful of organizers eventually held the event in Carnegie Hall with well-known actors and dignitaries. In 1975, however, New York's prestigious Temple Emanu-El volunteered its sanctuary for the annual commemoration because of the success of the previous star-studded events.

For the most part, survivors healed themselves by joining *landsmanshaftn* or establishing groups that derived from their experiences during the Nazi years—for example, various partisans groups and the survivors of the Lodz ghetto. The World Federation of Bergen-Belsen Associations (WFBBA) was the first of this genre; it was established by Josef Rosensaft, Norbert Wollheim, and Sam Bloch after the survivors of that concentration and DP camp had resettled in Israel, the United States, Canada, and elsewhere. Rosensaft's foresight helped instill a sense of hope and created a new extended family for most survivors, who had lost everything.

The American Jewish community remained in denial about the destruction of European Jewry until the late 1970s. When Elie Wiesel's novel *Night* was published (in France in 1958) in the United States in 1960, only his close friends took note. The WFBBA honored him with its Remembrance Award in 1965. But when he spoke at one of the first Holocaust commemorations, at a synagogue in Riverdale, New York, in the late 1960s, only a handful of people—mainly survivors—came. In 1972 Elie Wiesel taught his first Holocaust course at City College in New York. It was not until President Jimmy Carter appointed Elie Wiesel chair of the President's Commission on the Holocaust in 1978 and, later, chair of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council that his voice began to have moral power. The survivor community was at last becoming visible in America. The council also included other prominent survivors, seated next to members of the House of Representatives—including Tom Lantos (D-CA), a survivor from Hungary—policymakers, academics, business executives—such as Miles Lerman, Sigmund Strochlitz, and Benjamin Meed, who chairs the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors (AGJHS)—and Abraham Foxman, head of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).

With the televising of Gerald Green's docudrama *Holocaust* in 1978, the survivors' pain, suffering, and losses were validated. This validation gave survivors permission to start talking about their ordeals. In 1979 Yaffa Eliach, a

historian and child survivor, started the first oral history project at a Center for Holocaust Studies, Documentation and Research in Brooklyn, currently housed at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York. Her students at Brooklyn College interviewed local survivors, liberators, and rescuers. In 1981 Judith and Milton Kestenberg started an International Study of Organized Persecution of Children under the auspices of Child Development Research. Holocaust child survivors were interviewed worldwide. In 1994, the Eliach interviews and the Kestenberg interviews (currently housed at Florida Atlantic University) became models for the Steven Spielberg Survivors of the Shoah Foundation's interviews (housed at the University of Southern California).

To give Holocaust survivors a greater voice, some 5,000 survivors and their children gathered in Jerusalem in 1981. The World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors was conceived of in Auschwitz by Ernest Michel, the head of the New York United Jewish Appeal-Federation, and his fellow Auschwitz survivor, Pise, who had emigrated to a kibbutz in Israel. This gathering captured the world's attention, with coverage by television crews, filmmakers, and newspaper reporters. Participants and observers reported that the event restored the dignity survivors had lost during the years of persecution and genocide. The World Gathering was the catalyst for the establishment of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors (AGJHS), led by Benjamin Meed, Sam Bloch, Norbert Wollheim, and Roman Kent. In 1983, the AGJHS organized a gathering of more than 10,000 survivors and their children in Washington, D.C. Many described this gathering as giving the survivors a feeling of belonging to the United States. To be personally thanked for their contributions to American society by President Ronald Reagan was a healing experience of the highest order.

In the mid-1980s, Dr. Judith Kestenberg, Milton Kestenberg, and Eva Fogelman started meetings for child survivors of the Holocaust in New York; these meetings developed into the National Association of Jewish Child Holocaust Survivors, Inc. (NAHOS). Meetings also mushroomed in Los Angeles, Chicago, Baltimore–Washington, and Miami. National conferences are now held annually.

Myriam Abramowicz, director of the film *As If It Was Yesterday* (on the rescue of children in Belgium), sought to unite all those who were hidden as children during the German occupation. With seed money from the Kestenburgs'

Child Development Research, hidden-child survivors were found worldwide. In 1991 a historic gathering took place in New York City under the auspices of the newly formed Hidden Child Foundation of the ADL.

With growing international and national recognition of the survivors' resilience and achievements, the organized Jewish community started embracing survivors as spokespersons for communal causes and charities. Survivors helped raise funds for institutions in Israel, working with the American Friends of Yad Vashem and the American Friends of Beth Hatefutsoth, the Museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv.

The academic rabbinical colleges have benefited from the wisdom of a few surviving scholars. Alfred Gottschalk made a mark as chancellor of Hebrew Union College (HUC); Abraham Joshua Heschel of HUC and later the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), author of such classics as *The Sabbath*, was also a prominent civil rights activist. Heschel accompanied the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. on the march from Selma to Montgomery (1965). Columbia University Professor David Weiss Halivni founded the Academy for Traditional Judaism and recorded his war experiences in *The Book and the Sword*.

Holocaust survivors are represented in all areas of American life. Louis Begley, a prominent New York attorney, also succeeded as a novelist and became president of PEN. Jerzy Kosinski was a social psychologist who became a world-class novelist. Gerda Weissmann Klein, who married her liberator, an American Jewish soldier, won an Academy Award for a film based on her life story. Among the survivor artists are Joshua Neustein, Ephraim Peleg, Ruth Rintel, Samuel Bak, and Irene Lieblich, who illustrated Isaac Bashevis Singer's *A Tale of Three Wishes* and *The Power of Light: Eight Stories for Hanukkah*. Andrew Grove, a child survivor from Hungary, was head of the Fortune 500 company Intel. Dr. Henry Krystal, an Auschwitz survivor, became a prominent psychoanalyst. In academia, Randolph Braham, a distinguished professor at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, has written definitive works on Hungarian Jewry. Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel pioneered Holocaust studies at the City College of New York in 1972.

The major contribution of the survivor generation in the United States was in Jewish education. Survivors built and supported Jewish schools in order to reestablish the link to the European Jewish community that was de-

stroyed. Without the driving force of the remnants of European Jewry, *yeshivot* and other Jewish day schools would not have flourished in the twenty-first century.

Continuity, for Holocaust survivors, also meant ensuring biological continuity. Indeed, in the mid- to late 1970s, young adults in America whose parents had survived Nazi persecution realized a collective identity of their own. Despite their heterogeneity, they share the bond of a shattered family heritage. Those born after liberation have diverse religious backgrounds, political attitudes, and socioeconomic and educational levels. Although the circumstances of their parents' survival varied, they all suffered immeasurable loss of community, family, and identity. Whether survivors talked about their dehumanization and grief or remained silent, their losses were nonetheless reflected in the socialization of their children.

The emergence of a second-generation consciousness and the development of an identifiable group had its origin in the larger "roots" movement in the United States in the mid-1970s, in the increasingly manifest antisemitism in Europe in the early and mid-1980s, and in the restored dignity of Holocaust survivors in Israel.

It was during the social, religious, and political activism of the late 1960s and early 1970s that a number of Jewish graduate students began exploring what it meant to be children of Holocaust survivors. They shared the dynamics of the relationships with their parents, a worldview as children of survivors, and different perceptions from those of their Jewish American peers. These early discussions appeared in the *Bergen-Belsen Youth Magazine* (1965), edited by Menachem Rosensaft, and in *Response* (1975), a forum for alternative Jewish views, edited by William Novak. These discussions inspired psychiatric social worker Bella Savran and psychologist Eva Fogelman to develop awareness groups for children of Holocaust survivors. Independently, WAGRO persuaded its children to meet and form the Second Generation Organization in New York City. Psychoanalysts in New York formed the Group for the Psychoanalytic Study of the Effects of Second Generation, and after much resistance, the American Psychoanalytic Association agreed to have a study group for this population. These heretofore small and invisible group efforts achieved national visibility in Helen Epstein's watershed *New York Times Magazine* article, "Heirs to the Holocaust" (June 19, 1977). In the spring of 1979, Epstein's *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and*

*Daughters of Survivors* continued to galvanize these young adults to talk to each other.

Several grassroots efforts facilitated the meetings of children of survivors, which reduced their sense of isolation and increased their ability to reach political, educational, psychological, commemorative, and creative goals. In 1979 the first major event was the First Conference on Children of Holocaust Survivors, held under the auspices of Zachor, a unit of the National Jewish Resource Center, CLAL. More than 600 children of survivors attended, and the conference resulted in the formation of groups and organizations throughout the United States. More than 1,000 children of survivors joined their parents in Jerusalem in 1981 at the World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors and took a pledge at the Western Wall to commemorate, educate, work toward preventing future genocides, and ensure Jewish continuity. Following this gathering, the children of the survivors established their own umbrella organization, the International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, under the leadership of Menachem Rosensaft, a New York attorney born in the Bergen-Belsen DP camp.

Among many Second Generation members, there is a sense of moral authority that comes from confronting the injustice of the Holocaust and the silence or complicity of the peoples of the world. Through the International Network, children of survivors as a group became a moral voice in the American Jewish community and in the international political arena. Menachem Rosensaft wanted to make sure that the Second Generation would not be introverted but would also recognize human and social issues affecting the community as a whole. Thus, the International Network was the first group to organize a rally in New York City (1982) on behalf of Ethiopian Jewry. Rosensaft also led the opposition to President Reagan's decision to visit the German military cemetery at Bitburg in 1985. The International Network consistently and vocally opposed the president's laying of a wreath at the graves of members of the Waffen-SS in Bitburg. On May 5, 1985, Rosensaft led a demonstration of Second Generation members at Bergen-Belsen against what he called Reagan's "obscene package deal" of Bitburg and the mass graves of Bergen-Belsen. The International Network was also instrumental in ensuring the deportation of Nazi war criminal Karl Linnas to the Soviet Union in 1987. Beginning in 2000, Rosensaft has spearheaded the Holocaust Survivors Memoirs Project, an initiative of Elie Wiesel, which collects

and publishes the memoirs of Holocaust survivors jointly with Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Other children of survivors lend their voices on behalf of a range of causes. The social and literary critic Leon Wieseltier of *The New Republic* has spoken on behalf of the memory of the Holocaust dead. When the issue of the Carmelite convent and crosses at Auschwitz was raised in 1988, Wieseltier wrote, "It appears that Auschwitz has lost none of its power to derange. Nobody dies there anymore; but decency still does" (*New York Times*, September 3, 1989).

Social science research directly or indirectly related to the destruction of European Jewry reflects the commitment of Second Generation scholars to remember the past and its consequences. More than 150 children of survivors have written doctoral dissertations on the psychological results of growing up with Holocaust survivor parents. Others have written about the Holocaust and its aftermath in fiction, plays, screenplays, poetry, and nonfiction. Actors, singers, directors, filmmakers, media stars, and visual artists have drawn on their Holocaust family backgrounds to sensitize audiences to what happened to the Jewish people and others who were persecuted during the German occupation. They include Aviva Kempner, producer and cowriter of *Partisans of Vilna*; Annette Insdorf, author of *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust*; television news correspondent Wolf Blitzer; author and performance artist Lisa Lipkin; actor and writer Mark Ethan; singer and songwriter Billy Joel; singer and actress Rosalie Gerut; filmmaker Menachem Daum; director Steve Brandt; and author, psychologist, and filmmaker Eva Fogelman.

Other Second Generation adults find meaning by educating the next generation about inhumanity. As a result of the efforts of Rositta Kenigsberg of Miami's Documentation and Education Center, Holocaust education is mandatory in Florida. In the United States, Holocaust centers, whose main mission is education, are flourishing because of Second Generation adults.

Because Holocaust survivors now receive the public recognition they deserve, the Second Generation has been empowered to identify with their parents not only as victims but as human beings who had lives before the destruction of European Jewry. This identification is now channeled into socially constructive programs that perpetuate Jewish continuity and make a difference in the world for all.

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## The Making of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

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April 22, 1993, witnessed the highly publicized opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum adjacent to the nation's ceremonial center, the Washington Mall. The opening of the museum brought to fruition a fifteen-year struggle begun during the administration of President Jimmy Carter.

The idea for a federally sanctioned Holocaust memorial in the United States came about because of political realities and popular interest. Politically, the Carter administration was deeply concerned about increasingly frayed relations with the American Jewish community, and understood commitment to some kind of Holocaust memorial as a part of a larger attempt to heal the rift as well as an appropriate act of remembrance for aging Holocaust survivors and American liberators.

Culturally, by the late 1970s, the Holocaust had become a benchmark of evil. Holocaust survivors—notably Elie Wiesel, who would receive the Nobel Peace Prize and



President Clinton, flanked by Bud Meyerhoff (left), chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, and Elie Wiesel (right), founding chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, light an eternal flame during the dedication ceremony for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C., April 22, 1993. (AP/Wide World Photos)

would become chairman of both the President's Commission on the Holocaust and the United States Holocaust Memorial Council—had become popular witnesses, offering testimony about their experiences that held "lessons" for a society fascinated and frightened by the specter of genocide. Increasing attention to the Holocaust in American popular culture converged with the Carter administration's concerns. On May 1, 1978, President Carter announced the formation of the President's Commission on the Holocaust, tasked with recommending an appropriate national Holocaust memorial.

From the beginning, almost everything was a "razor's edge" issue. There was bitter contestation over representation on the commission: How many Jews? What about representatives of Eastern European nations that had both been victims of Nazi terror *and* killed Jews? Should the working definition of the Holocaust focus on the sacred number "six million" Jews, or the more universalist "eleven million" (Jews and "other" victims)?

After a commission trip to Holocaust sites in Eastern Europe and to Israel, on September 27, 1979, Elie Wiesel

presented the group's report to President Carter in the Rose Garden of the White House. The report made four major recommendations: the creation of a "living memorial," including a museum, educational outreach, and a committee on conscience to warn about ongoing acts of genocide; the creation of an annual civic ritual of Holocaust remembrance, "Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust"; the ratification of the Genocide Treaty; and, largely because of their experiences in Eastern Europe, the commission asked that the State Department urge foreign governments to care for the oft-neglected ruins of Jewish cemeteries.

On May 2, 1980, the United States Holocaust Memorial Council—the commission's successor body—began its work. Throughout the history of this project, there have been two major challenges: issues of location of Holocaust memory in the United States and issues of representation of Holocaust memory. The first issue regarding location was whether or not the Holocaust was in any way an American memory and whether or not it was appropriate for there to be a federally sponsored and supported memorial. Some argued that the Holocaust should certainly be remembered at sites throughout Europe and in Israel but that it was a memory "out of place" in the United States. Further, they argued, there was a troublesome fascination among many who were interested only in how Jews were murdered. Rather than a memorial to the Holocaust, they argued, what about an institution that celebrated the rich history of Judaism in the United States, an institution that focused on life rather than death?

Supporters of a Holocaust memorial responded that thousands of survivors came to the United States, that several thousand American soldiers encountered and liberated the western camps and brought these memories home with them, that many perpetrators had also fled to the United States, and that the nation had a complex relationship—complicit bystander as well as liberator—to reflect upon. A Holocaust memorial, they argued, could be not only a site of mourning but also a site from which the transformative power of Holocaust education would spread and a site that would remind visitors what can happen when democracies fail.

Once it was decided that there would be a federal Holocaust memorial, the Council faced the challenge of deciding where, in what city, and what *kind* of memorial. Some survivors thought New York City was the most ap-

propriate location, given its large Jewish population. Others argued for Washington, D.C., the nation's capital. Once it was selected, a number of different sites in the city were considered, among them the Auditor's Complex adjacent to the Washington Mall, next to the Bureau of Printing and Engraving, which would become the site of the museum.

For many survivors, locating the institution at the ceremonial core, alongside the narratives of war and politics expressed on the mall, meant that the Holocaust would take its place as a central American narrative, and federal sponsorship and support offered them solace, in the face of Holocaust denial, that the United States government would remember the reality of the Holocaust. For survivors, of utmost importance were both this guarantee of remembrance and the sentiment that the museum was a symbolic burial site for Holocaust victims.

Yet another issue of location was the physical shape of the institution. In 1984, the Council received permission to tear down old annex buildings on the site and then struggled with several architectural designs that did not evoke enthusiasm. Finally, in 1986, the distinguished New York City architect James Ingo Freed was hired to design the museum. Moved by his own trip to Auschwitz, Freed believed that the building itself had to be, in his words, "expressive of the event." There was pressure from some members of the Commission of Fine Arts for Freed to "soften" his building; nevertheless, the highly praised design located and housed Holocaust memory in an eloquent, brooding design that brings visitors to the nation's center and then displaces them from that center as they ride elevators to the fourth floor to begin their descent through three floors of an intense Holocaust exhibition.

Throughout the planning of the permanent exhibition, those tasked with its creation struggled with the challenge of Holocaust representation. With what photographs does one begin? If they are too horrifying, will it dissuade visitors from continuing? If they do not adequately express the horror of the Holocaust, will they be untrue to the event? Does the display of genitalia victimize the dead yet again? If Nazi music, flags, and speeches are seen and heard, will they perhaps move some visitors to a dangerous identification with the perpetrators and not the victims? How should the exhibition represent perpetrators? Do Nazi ghetto photographs allow visitors to view the dying and dead in the ghetto only through the eye of the perpetrator? Should the exhibition fully and frankly talk about

Christian complicity in the Holocaust, or would this upset too many visitors, who bring with them an understanding that religion is, by definition, a force for good, not evil? What kinds of material artifacts should be used? Does the inclusion of a Polish railcar of the type used to transport Jews to Treblinka, part of a women's barrack from Auschwitz, prisoner's uniforms, a huge pile of shoes from Majdanek, a canister of Zyklon-B gas, a mass of eyeglasses, for example, help American visitors touch the reality of the Holocaust, or are these volatile artifacts that should never have been allowed to defile American shores? Should the exhibition display women's hair brought to the museum from Auschwitz, or was this too personal, too sensitive? (Eventually, the museum's director, Shaike Weinberg, honored the commemorative sensibilities of several female survivors who deeply objected to plans for this display, and the hair is not included in the permanent exhibition.)

Another issue of representation revealed an enduring tension in the museum project: the relationship between Jews and "other" victims. Was the Hall of Remembrance, the hexagonal memorial space, a place for ritual remembrance of all Holocaust victims, or just Jews? Should the permanent exhibition inform visitors about the Armenian genocide as a precursor to the Holocaust, or would this dilute the museum's commitment to being specifically a Holocaust museum and lead inexorably to a transformation of the museum into one of comparative genocide? How should the exhibition represent various groups of victims: homosexuals, the mentally retarded, non-Jewish Poles, and Gypsies, for example?

Since this was a United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and not a private Jewish museum, commitment to the pluralistic imperative was not in doubt. Nevertheless, the tensions not only over who received attention in the exhibition but who owned the "right" to the means of production, who got to tell the story, were revealing.

The museum is, in Shaike Weinberg's words, a "story-telling" museum, and the intense narrative, shaped by film and video, text, photographs, and artifacts, is designed to bring about civic transformation: ideally, visitors will experience this intense story and emerge "born again," sensitized to the evils of antisemitism, racism, and other ills of the time. The museum is a model of an activist memorial environment, and subsequent institutions, notably the Oklahoma City National Memorial, are modeled after it.

Since opening in 1993, the museum has offered a rich variety of public programs and educational outreach programs and resources. The Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies offers fellowships and seminars. Several exhibitions, including "Remember the Children: Daniel's Story," "Varian Fry, Assignment: Rescue 1940–1941," and "The Nazi Olympics Berlin 1936," have toured the nation. Public programs have focused not only on a variety of Holocaust-related subjects but on issues of contemporary genocide as well. Programs have included, for example, such topics as "Homophobia and Sexual Politics in Nazi Germany," "The Churches and the Holocaust," "Second-Generation Holocaust Literature," "The Nazi Persecution of Deaf People," "Crisis in Sudan," "The Modernity of Genocide: Race, War and Revolution in the Twentieth Century," and "Freedom on Fire: Human Rights Wars and America's Response." There continue to be presentations by authors and a chamber music series focusing, the museum's website informs, not only on pieces that "convey themes related to Holocaust history," but also featuring "works by composers who suffered under the Nazi regime, or whose works were banned during the Nazi era."

The museum continues active collections programs of artifacts, documents, photographs, oral histories, and film footage. Also, the President's Commission's original vision of a Committee on Conscience, envisioned as a body to warn policymakers and the public about ongoing or possible acts of genocide, was realized only in 1995.

Policymakers were not keen on an independent institution injecting itself into foreign policy, nor were some—who were convinced that the Holocaust was a "unique" event—eager to blur the boundaries between the Holocaust and contemporary genocides. In 1995, however, the committee was created. In 2001, Rabbi Irving Greenberg, chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, declared that the committee was "intended to be the expression of a memory that is committed to improving the world. Its function is to reassert the witness of those who were killed and of those who went before us that life is meaningful and that the world will yet be redeemed" (Greenberg 2001). Whether—and how—the museum can influence foreign policy, whether it can transform what has been enduring policy indifference to genocide, remains an open question.

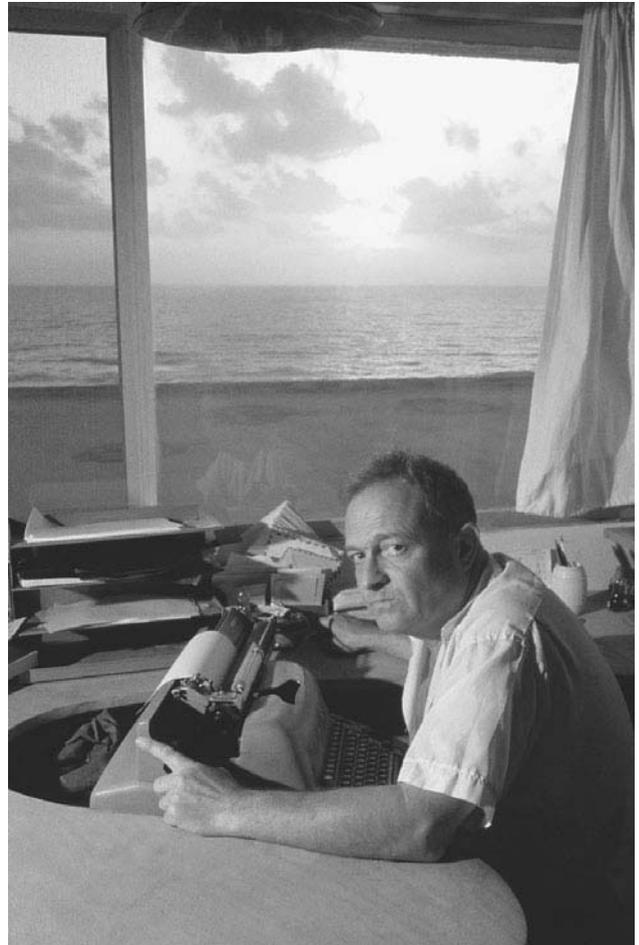
The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, like similar institutions around the world—Holocaust muse-

ums and education centers, the Gulag Museum in Russia, the District Six Museum in South Africa, for example—has become part of an ever-expanding civic landscape of conscience, an institution that is much more than just a museum, a forum as well as a shrine. It freezes a shattering moment in recent history as a warning. Its existence is an enduring and compelling protest against the anonymity of mass death in the twentieth century.

Edward T. Linenthal

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Meyer Levin was responsible for bringing Anne Frank's diary to the attention of the English-speaking public. (Corbis)

## Meyer Levin (1905–1981)

Reporter, Novelist, Filmmaker

Meyer Levin spent a lifetime trying to understand what it meant to be a Jew in secular America, to live in the shadow of the Holocaust, and at the time of the establishment of Israel, the first Jewish nation in over two and a half millennia. He viewed his life as embedded in this pivotal historical moment, and Levin not only wrote about the events that were reshaping world Jewry but experienced some of them firsthand. Most known for bringing Anne Frank's diary to the attention of the English-speaking public, Levin also wrote numerous novels, plays, and film scripts. In his

memoir *In Search* (1950), he explicitly stated the themes on which his work focused, the themes that shaped his life. He sought to examine and "follow . . . out the sometimes conflicting elements of the Jewish question within myself," as well as to explore "my relationship to America" and "to the world."

Levin was born to East European immigrant parents in Chicago on October 8, 1905. His father managed to lift the family out of poverty only for brief moments. Levin later wrote of his youth and that of his friends, all first-generation American Jews, in his thinly fictionalized novel set in Chicago, *The Old Bunch* (1937). In some one thousand pages, he traced how the Bunch made their way from penury and embarrassment over their parents' foreign ways to tentative positions in middle-class America—only to see their hard-won places lost in the Depression. Having abandoned their cultural heritage and youthful ideals for a

place at the American table, they were now also left spiritually afloat. It had been too great a sacrifice. Though he, too, had been briefly tempted, in the end Levin had refused to follow their course.

Entering the University of Chicago at fifteen, Levin became a reporter for the Chicago *Daily News* while still a student and remained there for a year after graduation. After experimenting with puppetry (including script, set design, and performance) as a new means of expression, in 1925 he moved to Paris to study painting. There he met Marek Swarcz, a Hasidic Jew turned sculptor and the soon-to-be-outcast member of the Jewish Artists' Circle of Montparnasse. Swarcz sought the fulfillment of traditional messianic promises in a strain of Catholic mysticism then gaining influence among a small coterie of Parisian artists and intellectuals. Levin was drawn to the Hasidic tales his mentor related to him, a side of Judaism and Jewish life he had never known, but dismissed his Christological interpretations. With the publication of *The Golden Mountain* (1932), Levin brought these tales to the attention of the larger world, Jew and gentile alike.

Having experienced 1920s Paris and found some of the spiritual meaning for which he was searching, he returned to Chicago and his job at the *News*. But just as his first novel, *Reporter* (1929), was about to appear, he sailed for Palestine to seek out another part of the puzzle. A second, less distinguished work of fiction, the love story *Frankie and Johnnie* (1930), was published while he was living on a collective farm there. Out of this experience came *Yehuda* (1931), the first fictional account of life in the *yishuv* by an American Jew. It signaled Levin's lifelong concern for the Zionist enterprise, which culminated in 1959 in his partial resettlement in Israel.

The move was partial because he could never fully leave America or disengage from the larger Western struggle for social, political, and economic justice. Returning to Chicago, Levin not only continued to address Jewish issues of assimilation, cultural survival, Zionism, and increasing antisemitism, but also became involved in the general social activism of his time. As a writer and reporter for *The Nation*, *Esquire*, and *Saturday Evening Post*, he joined a number of protests, culminating in his active role in the bloody Republic Steel strike in Chicago in 1937. He expressed his outrage at the murder of several strikers by the authorities in what some consider his finest novel, *Citizens* (1940).

In 1934, Levin married Mabel Scamp Foy, who shared his socialist ideas as well as his love of puppetry as a medium of protest. They went to Spain during that country's civil war, although she returned to the United States in the late stage of her pregnancy. Now on his own, he found journalistic camaraderie on the battlefield with Martha Gellhorn and her husband, Ernest Hemingway. But as a Jew, Levin (more clearly than many of his colleagues) recognized the broader implications of the struggle against fascism being waged in Spain.

When the United States entered the war against the Axis powers in 1941, Levin joined the Office of War Information as a filmmaker. Later he worked as a war correspondent, first for the Overseas News Agency, then for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. In this latter capacity, he participated in the liberation of a number of concentration camps, including Dachau and Buchenwald, often riding in the lead jeep ahead of the troops. Overwhelmed by what he found, he went from camp to camp accompanied by a survivor photographer, filing countless dispatches based on interviews with survivors and compiling lists of their names in an effort to reunite families and friends as he crisscrossed the area, moving from one location to another.

Levin never recovered. His exposure to the horrors of the Holocaust shaped, distorted, and clouded his life until his death nearly four decades later. Unwilling merely to record events, he was fully engaged in the struggle to ensure that such a catastrophe would never again befall his people. It was in the wake of these efforts that *In Search* (1950) emerged, detailing his smuggling of survivors through the British blockade and into Palestine. He drew on this experience in his semidocumentary film, *The Illlegals* (1948), and his Zionist novel, *My Father's House* (1947), which chronicled a survivor's life in the camps and subsequent journey to recovery in Palestine. Levin produced Israel's first feature film, based on this novel, for which he wrote the screenplay.

Levin's most life-altering experience occurred when he was introduced to the diary written by a young Jewish victim from Holland, Anne Frank. Her stirring voice communicated the tragedy of the Holocaust more powerfully and poignantly than the works of those who had not experienced it directly. Levin succeeded in bringing the diary to the English-speaking world, but his subsequent struggle to stage her story failed, despite the promise of Anne's father,

Otto, that he could dramatize it. *Obsession* (1973) is Levin's account of his efforts. Mostly accurate in its basic outline of how he had been prevented from presenting the play, Levin's book revived the controversy that had surrounded the production two decades earlier and opened him once again to accusations of mental instability and Red baiting. It was, in fact, the misuse of the diary that had driven Levin to distraction and depression during these years, forever upsetting his four children—the son from his first marriage, the stepdaughter from his second (to Tereska Torres, Marek Swarcz's daughter, whom he had first met when he was an art student in Paris and she a small child), and the two sons he and Torres had together. Much to Levin's distress, Lillian Hellman, a Stalinist, in keeping with Soviet antisemitic policies, engineered the cutting of nearly all the Jewish content from the diary by feeding her handpicked playwrights a long series of changes throughout the dramatization process. Theatrical profit-seekers among her circle of friends further Americanized the characters and story line by overly emphasizing domestic tensions. The Holocaust now played so insignificant a role that critics commented that the Pulitzer Prize-winning play hardly differed from any dramatization of adolescent-parent conflict. Levin successfully sued Otto Frank, the playwrights, and the play's producer for plagiarizing portions of his original playscript, but he never received the acknowledgment he deserved. Nor was Anne Frank recognized for the subtlety and complexity of her thoughts as a consciously Jewish victim questioning God's justice and the world's inhumanity.

Levin obsessively sought allies in his fight to produce his dramatization of the diary, although, as part of a settlement reached during the endless series of appeals by the deep-pocketed defense, in frustration he had signed away his rights. Nonetheless, he continued to be a highly productive writer. He wrote his most popular work, *Compulsion* (1956), a fictionalized account of the Leopold and

Loeb Chicago murder case of 1924, which was adapted for the stage and then made into a film. With the exception of his final book, only *Compulsion* was not centered on the themes he had set out in *In Search*. Everything else was about Zionism and Israel, the Holocaust, or Jewish history and culture both religious and secular. Even when well written, the more than a dozen works that followed—among them *Eva* (1959), *The Fanatic* (1964), *The Stronghold* (1965), *The Story of Israel* (1967), *Gore and Igor* (1968), *The Haggadah, Retold* (1968), *The Settlers* (1972), *The Spell of Time* (1974), and *The Harvest* (1978)—were received at best tepidly by critics. Levin became convinced that the same literary crowd that had undermined his efforts with the diary was now blacklisting him. Increasingly, he spent his time at his home in Israel, though each year he made extended trips to New York and Paris.

Still, Levin returned to Chicago for his final authorial effort, on a completely non-Jewish subject, a novelistic account of a figure based on Frank Lloyd Wright entitled *The Architect*. Published a few weeks after his death on July 9, 1981, by the time he wrote the book, Levin had come full circle. Although a curious choice of subject, it was perhaps his final attempt to reach out to the wider world and call for its reconstruction. It was, he seemed to say, not enough for the Jews alone to rebuild their community. All the world had this need, and the Jews' self-restoration could serve as encouragement toward this larger end. As he had earlier written in *In Search*, “[t]he example of Jewish history in the past few years can give courage to all of humanity.”

Ralph Melnick

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# Jewish Organizations

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## The Workmen's Circle

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In its heyday, the Workmen's Circle, founded in New York in 1892, was a major fraternal order. It was established by East European Jewish immigrants and initially attempted to woo potential members not only by offering mutual aid benefits but also by sponsoring educational activities.

Though the organization proclaimed early on that German would be the language in which meetings were conducted and in which publications would appear, Yiddish rapidly became the language in which the Workmen's Circle conducted most of its activities. Many of the early members were sympathetic to socialism. The Workmen's Circle was not, however, formally affiliated with a political party, and in its early years it attracted anarchists and other critics of the existing order as well as socialists.

In 1900 the Workmen's Circle—with a total of 300 members in three branches—reorganized as a nationwide order and entered a period of rapid growth. By 1910 membership stood close to 39,000; five years later, at almost 50,000.

Particularly visible among those who became members in the post-1905 era were a number of onetime adherents of the Jewish Workers' Bund. The Bund, established in the Russian Empire in 1897, had a Marxist, anti-Zionist, and anti-clerical orientation and played a significant role in the Russian Revolution of 1905. The crushing of that

revolution led some Bundists to flee Russia for the United States; many eventually became activists in the Workmen's Circle.

The earliest leaders of the Workmen's Circle tended to be cosmopolitan and generally thought of Yiddish as at best a tool through which to reach rank-and-file members. The Bundists, however, had a somewhat stronger Jewish consciousness and supported the development of secular Yiddish culture. While the Workmen's Circle had non-Bundist members (and some Labor Zionist and other anti-Bundist members), by the 1920s a number of the major national offices within the Workmen's Circle were filled by former members of the Bund.

Members of the Workmen's Circle were intimately involved in the development of the trade union movement, including the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (organized in 1900) and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (created in 1914). The Workmen's Circle, which supported strikes and organizing efforts by these and other unions, became known as “the Red Cross of the labor movement”—and was proud of this nickname. The Declaration of Principles adopted by the order in 1922 underscored that “every member of the Workmen's Circle should belong to the union of his trade” (Hurwitz 1936).

During a crucial period in its history, the Workmen's Circle was highly supportive not only of the unions but

also of the Socialist Party. Membership in the Jewish Socialist Federation—the Socialist Party’s Yiddish-language section from 1912 to 1921—overlapped with that of the Workmen’s Circle. This helps to explain why the Workmen’s Circle played a pivotal role in the election campaigns of Meyer London, the Workmen’s Circle’s attorney, who repeatedly ran for Congress on the Socialist ticket. In 1915, when the Socialist Party took an uncompromising stand against World War I, the Workmen’s Circle followed suit.

One did not have to be a Socialist to be a member of the Workmen’s Circle, but support of bourgeois parties put one beyond the pale. In 1901 a member was expelled from the order for supporting the Republican Party.

Determined to express solidarity with all like-minded people, the Workmen’s Circle never restricted its membership to Jews. Norman Thomas, the non-Jewish, long-term leader of the Socialist Party, for example, was a member at one point. During the Nazi era, the Solidaritaet Branch of the Workmen’s Circle—Branch 424E—included non-Jewish social democratic refugees and exiles from the German-speaking lands.

In an attempt to combat tuberculosis, a scourge among working-class immigrants at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Workmen’s Circle opened a sanatorium, which operated from 1910 to 1955. The Workmen’s Circle also created a medical department and offered numerous other services to members.

In 1918, the Workmen’s Circle opened the first of what eventually became a network of Jewish secular schools for children. The schools, which were supplementary rather than day schools, initially stressed study of the Yiddish language, Jewish history, “the life of the workers,” and “the struggle for freedom in world history” (Trunk 1976). In 1939 there were 125 elementary schools, 5 high schools, and 17 additional entities offering high school classes in the Workmen’s Circle school network, with an enrollment of approximately 8,000. The Workmen’s Circle established summer camps, a mandolin orchestra, choruses, and a dramatic society; it also sponsored lectures and supported concert tours.

Though the Workmen’s Circle had been formed in part because its founders perceived that existing *landsmanshaftn* (mutual aid organizations made up of immigrants from the same town, city, or region) did not meet the needs of politically aware workers, many branches of the Workmen’s Circle were organized along the same lines as

the *landsmanshaftn*. Many branches consisted of individuals from the same part of Eastern Europe.

Membership in the Workmen’s Circle peaked at approximately 85,000 in 1920–1926. Changes in American immigration law, however, cut off the supply of immigrants from Eastern Europe, impeding the continued growth of the order. The organization was also hurt by sharp differences of opinion within its ranks over the policies of the Communist Party.

The Workmen’s Circle was initially sympathetic to the Soviet regime, as reflected in its organ, *Der fraynd* (*The Friend*). Though the Workmen’s Circle was critical of the Soviet government’s repression of non-Bolshevik socialists, in December 1922 the order expressed “greetings and brotherly wishes to the Russian soviet regime on its fifth anniversary” (Hertz 1950). Support for the American Communist Party and for the pro-Bolshevik Workers’ Party of the United States (founded in December 1921) was far more controversial. A large majority of the leading figures in the Workmen’s Circle’s New York schools and in Camp Kinderland (established by Workmen’s Circle school activists in 1923) was sympathetic to the Communist Party (or to the Workers’ Party). Many other Workmen’s Circle activists were bitterly opposed. Throughout much of the 1920s, the Workmen’s Circle’s national leadership attempted to avoid a definitive rift between the order’s right- and left-wing members. In 1929, however, thousands of the pro-Communist members left the Workmen’s Circle. Shortly thereafter, these men and women helped to create a rival group—the International Workers’ Order.

By then, the Workmen’s Circle’s membership had declined to just over 70,000. The Great Depression also made it difficult to attract new members or to retain existing members. By 1939 the average age of Workmen’s Circle members was over forty.

The Workmen’s Circle was exceptionally active in antifascist and anti-Nazi activities in the years leading up to and during World War II. In 1934, representatives of the Workmen’s Circle participated in the founding meeting of the Jewish Labor Committee (which went on to aid numerous anti-Nazi and antifascist refugees) and continued to play a significant role in that group in the following years. In 1937 the Workmen’s Circle also provided direct material support to the anti-Nazi underground and became involved with the Joint Anti-Nazi Boycott Council. It purchased a considerable quantity of war bonds during

World War II and was recognized for this by having bombers stenciled "Spirit of the Workmen's Circle."

The antiwar position taken by the Socialist Party in the period preceding Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor ultimately led the order to distance itself from the party. The Workmen's Circle declined to endorse Norman Thomas, the party's candidate for president in 1940. A year later, the order formally refused to permit a Socialist Party representative to greet the Workmen's Circle's convention.

When they entered the armed forces during World War II, many young Jews who had been educated in Workmen's Circle schools or who had attended Workmen's Circle summer camps left the inner-city immigrant neighborhoods of their youth and never returned. Those who did return were estranged, in a number of instances, not only from the Socialist Party but also from socialist ideals. While the Workmen's Circle continued to make room in its ranks for social democrats and democratic socialists and formally echoed its earlier commitments to socialism in the latter half of the 1940s, the positions it adopted in the post-World War II decades were generally liberal, not radical—closer to those of the Democratic Party than the Socialist Party.

Bundist (anti-Zionist) sentiment also became weaker within the order, particularly after the founding of the State of Israel. The Workmen's Circle has been consistently supportive of Israel—it has repeatedly encouraged members to purchase Israel bonds and has arranged tours of Israel for its members. At the same time, it has remained officially non-Zionist in its orientation, because it did not—and does not—agree with what it perceived as the derogation of Yiddish by the Zionist mainstream, and because it did not—and does not—endorse the Zionist goal of immigration by all Jews to the Jewish state.

The leadership of the Workmen's Circle attempted to adapt to new circumstances—to the geographic dispersion of the Jewish population and its linguistic acculturation. While the order continued to disseminate *Der fraynd*, in 1933 it also began to issue an English-language organ, the *Call*. In the years after World War II, branches and supplementary schools were created in suburban areas. However, a variety of factors, especially the diminution in the size of the American Jewish working class, made the Workmen's Circle less attractive to post-World War II youth than it had been to previous generations of American Jews. The average age of the order's members was 55 in 1969, and total membership did not exceed 60,000 in the 1970s.

In recent years, the Workmen's Circle has completed its transition from an immigrant-based group to a group of primarily American-born Jews. Though the school system of the Workmen's Circle is no more than a shadow of the system that existed decades ago, a handful of supplementary schools maintain their affiliation with the order. The Workmen's Circle currently operates one summer camp for children (Camp Kinder Ring), a summer resort for adults, and several homes for the elderly. It agitates on behalf of liberal or left-of-center political positions and fosters ties with like-minded organizations, including the Forward Association, the Jewish Labor Committee, the Congress for Jewish Culture, and the Folksbiene Yiddish Theater. Recently, the Workmen's Circle has stripped itself of some of its traditional functions, such as selling insurance policies, putting somewhat greater emphasis on cultural and political programming and less on mutual aid benefits. Though originally the Workmen's Circle did not have explicitly Jewish goals, it now underscores its Jewish identity and highlights that it is "dedicated to Jewish community." It is a major bastion of those committed to sustaining and developing secular Yiddish culture.

Membership in the organization has declined steadily and is now fewer than 20,000. Nevertheless, the Workmen's Circle currently has branches in a number of major American Jewish communities and has modest pockets of strength in New York, Boston, and elsewhere.

Jack Jacobs

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## The Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America

The Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America (JWV), established under that name in 1929, grew out of earlier Jewish veterans' organizations, the first of which, the Hebrew Union Veterans Association (HUVA), was formed in 1896 by Jews who had served in the Union army during the Civil War. The JWV, like its predecessors, focused not merely on veterans' concerns but on distinctively Jewish issues. The HUVA protested against antisemitism before the founding of the major Jewish defense organizations—the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the Anti-Defamation League, and the American Jewish (AJ) Congress. Almost immediately after Hitler assumed power in Germany, the JWV called for aggressive mass demonstrations against Nazism and a boycott of German goods. Its combative approach led to confrontations in which its members exchanged blows in the streets with domestic fascists. The JWV formally backed the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine in 1942 and strongly supported Israel after it became a nation in 1948. After World War II, the JWV criticized West Germany's leniency toward Nazi war criminals. During the 1960s, it opposed the mainstream Jewish organizations' quarantine policy of avoiding public clashes with the American Nazi Party, which was intended to deny it publicity. The JWV was the only veterans' organization to openly align itself with the African American civil rights movement. Of the major Jewish organizations, it offered the steadiest support for the Vietnam War, shifting to a critical stance only in 1971.

The JWV's earliest predecessor, the HUVA, was established at a meeting of Jewish Union army veterans in New York in 1896 at a time of rising antisemitism. In the Christian and Islamic worlds, Jews were frequently depicted as cowardly, were denied officers' commissions in some national armies, and were sometimes even prohibited from bearing arms. Extensive American press coverage, which began in 1894, of the arrest and trials in France of Captain Alfred Dreyfus, who was falsely accused of selling military secrets to Germany, focused attention on antisemites' long-



Logo for the Jewish War Veterans of the United States. (*Jewish War Veterans of the United States*)

standing efforts to impugn Jews' patriotism. The HUVA was determined to publicize and honor the significant participation of Jews in all of America's wars.

In 1904–1905 the HUVA erected a monument in Brooklyn to Jewish soldiers who died fighting for the Union during the Civil War; this monument became the nation's preeminent Jewish military memorial. At the unveiling, legendary General Nelson Miles, of Indian Wars fame, commanding general of the U.S. Army during the Spanish-American War, praised Jewish soldiers' bravery and Jews' unparalleled contribution to world civilization.

The outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898 sparked intense patriotic display among American Jews, a significant proportion of whom had recently immigrated from Eastern Europe. Many Jews considered the conflict a war of revenge against Spain for its expulsion of Europe's largest Jewish population several centuries before and for the Inquisition's torture of conversos and Jews. The press described a "wonderful war excitement" in such cities as New York and Chicago among Russian Jews, who clamored to go to Cuba "rifles in hand" (*New York Times*, May 1, 1898). In New York, prominent philanthropist Nathan Straus chaired a meeting called to organize two Jewish regiments to fight the Spaniards. When the battleship *Maine* exploded in Havana harbor, 15 Jews died; and more than

4,000 served in the armed forces during the Spanish-American War, many of them participating in combat in Cuba and the Philippines. Several of Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders were Jews.

Jewish Spanish-American War veterans established their own organization immediately after the war, which soon took the name Hebrew Veterans of the War with Spain (HVWS). The HVWS and the HUVA joined to express public outrage over the Kishinev pogrom in Bessarabia in 1903 and urged President Theodore Roosevelt, an honorary HVWS member, to issue a strong official protest to Russia's czarist government. HVWS head Maurice Simmons, also briefly national commander of the United Spanish War Veterans (USWV), damaged his chances of being reelected to the latter office by pressing for the desegregation of USWV posts. In the period immediately preceding U.S. intervention in World War I, Simmons protested the refusal of several New York National Guard units to accept Jews.

After World War I, in which Jews served in numbers higher than their proportion in the American population, recently demobilized Jewish veterans joined with those of the Civil War and the Spanish-American War in a new Hebrew Veterans of the Wars of the Republic (HVWR). This organization included Jewish veterans of the Boxer Rebellion, the Philippines campaigns, and General Pershing's 1916 incursion into Mexico, as well as Americans who had joined the Jewish Legion of the British army, which had fought the Turks in Palestine during World War I. In such cities as New York and Boston, large numbers of Jewish veterans participated in mass protest parades and assemblies against the postwar pogroms in Poland, Galicia, Rumania, and the Ukraine. The HVWR was also concerned with ensuring that Jewish soldiers killed in action in World War I who had been buried in France had a Star of David marking their graves rather than a cross. The HVWR renamed itself Jewish Veterans of the Wars of the Republic (JVWR) in 1924 and began issuing a newsletter, *The Jewish Veteran*, in 1925, which is still published today as a magazine. *The Jewish Veteran* has devoted much attention to publicizing Jews' significant combat role in America's wars and to condemning antisemitism in Europe and the Middle East.

The JVWR, renamed the Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America in 1929, focused on mobilizing American opposition to the Nazis almost immediately

after they assumed power in Germany in January 1933. The JWV was the first Jewish organization to call for a boycott of German goods, in March 1933. It participated in picketing stores and assembled information on where to find products that could be substituted for those from Germany. In April 1933, the JWV strongly criticized both the AJC and the AJCongress, which initially opposed the boycott, alleging they were overly cautious, even timid. The JWV claimed that the AJC's strategy for combating Nazism involved "cringing, begging, and praying," while the AJCongress's leadership had become too "old [and] . . . conservative" to speak effectively for Jews (Delman 1933). In March 1933, the JWV led the first mass street demonstration against Nazism, in New York. After the march, JWV leaders appeared at the British consulate, calling for that government to waive immigration quotas to Palestine so that Jews could escape from Germany. The JWV spoke out against the decision of many American universities to send delegates to Nazi Germany in 1936 to help celebrate the University of Heidelberg's 550th anniversary, and against American participation in the Olympic Games in Berlin that year. It also protested the 1939 New York World's Fair's invitation to Nazi Germany to set up a pavilion.

After World War II, in which the rate of American Jews' armed forces participation again surpassed that of the nation's population as a whole, the JWV engaged in efforts to combat racial and ethnic discrimination. It lobbied for a postwar fair employment commission, supported armed forces desegregation, and, alone among national veterans' groups, joined in the civil rights March on Washington in 1963.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the JWV strongly opposed U.S. government support for paroling Nazi war criminals, including Waffen SS general Sepp Dietrich, commander of Hitler's bodyguard. Known as the "Butcher of Malmédy," Dietrich was responsible for the execution of several hundred American prisoners of war during the Battle of the Bulge. In 1964–1965, the JWV protested West Germany's plan to impose a statute of limitations that would prevent prosecution of Nazi war criminals still at large. It drew attention to Egypt's harboring of Nazi war criminals, who, as scientists and technicians, worked to develop advanced weaponry for use in the Arab nations' war against Israel. In 1985 the JWV denounced President Reagan's laying of a wreath in a German military cemetery at Bitburg where Waffen SS soldiers were buried. In the same

year, it sharply criticized members of an American World War II infantry division who staged a reunion with German Waffen SS veterans.

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## The American Jewish Committee

The American Jewish Committee (AJC) is the oldest Jewish defense organization in the United States, established in 1906 "to prevent the infraction of the civil and religious rights of Jews, in any part of the world." Growing directly out of concerns about conditions in czarist Russia, especially the 1903 Kishinev pogrom, the AJC was one response to the search for a central representative organization of American Jews.

The Committee initially consisted of a small group drawn from the established German Jewish community, who had migrated in large numbers to the United States beginning in the 1830s. As German Jews became well established, they wanted to be able to respond to matters of concern on behalf of American Jews. Its founders included Jacob Schiff, Mayer Sulzberger, Louis Marshall, Oscar Straus, and Cyrus Adler, men prominent within the German stratum of the Jewish community, and who, out of a sense of *noblesse oblige*, combined philanthropic activities and *hofjude* ("court Jew") diplomacy on behalf of their fellow Jews. Oligarchic in design, the Committee—literally, a "committee"—limited its membership to 60 American cit-

izens (expanded by 1931 to 350), with offices in New York, and remained a small group for many years. The AJC was self-selected and had a sense of the "elitism" of the German Jewish community.

Two ideas have characterized the work of the AJC throughout its history. First, the notion of stewardship, the idea that a Diaspora-based group of Jewish stewards—a "committee"—could enhance the collective welfare of the Jewish people; second, in recent decades, the notion that no "defense" agency is effective unless it promotes as well the internal vitality of the Jewish people. In this second objective, the AJC carved out a path that was different from its fellow defense groups.

The AJC's agenda shifted in response to changing developments, from a focus early in the twentieth century almost exclusively on the condition of Russia's Jews to antisemitism and immigration policy in the United States, to the destruction of European Jewry, to (1950s and 1960s) civil rights and the concerns of pluralism and ethnic identity, and finally to Israel and international affairs.

Public affairs informed the agenda of the AJC from its beginnings. The plight of Russian Jewry before World War I prompted the AJC's strong defense of a liberal American immigration policy. In 1911 the Committee conducted a successful campaign for the abrogation of the Russo-American treaty of 1832. Not only did the AJC object to the Russian discrimination against the entry of American Jews into Russia, which it considered a violation of the treaty, but it hoped that by its abrogation Russia would inevitably be compelled to free its own Jews. At the outbreak of World War I, the AJC sparked the organization of the American Jewish Relief Committee, which set up a central relief fund for Jewish war victims.

Opposed to the idea of a democratic and nationalist American Jewish movement presenting the Jewish demands to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, under public pressure the Committee nonetheless joined the first American Jewish Congress (AJCongress) there. However, the minority rights secured for Jewry in the new successor states of Europe were largely the result of the work of Julian Mack, Louis Marshall (who served as AJC president from 1906–1929), and Cyrus Adler, who operated as individual intercessors in Paris. The Committee welcomed the 1917 Balfour Declaration, but—consistent with its anti-Zionist stance, which prevailed almost until the creation of the State of Israel in 1948—underscored the provision that

the Declaration would in no way prejudice the liberties of Jews who were citizens of other countries.

During the 1920s, the Committee centered its attention on domestic matters in the United States. It fought the popular “Jew-Communist” charge circulated in the infamous *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* and further propagated in Henry Ford’s *Dearborn Independent*. Marshall, as president of the Committee, formulated the terms for Ford’s retraction of his antisemitic campaign in 1927. The approach of the AJC, both strategically and tactically, differed sharply from that of the AJCongress, which was more confrontational and which relied—especially after 1945—on litigation as a primary vehicle for social action. The AJC’s approach reflected Louis Marshall’s idea that discreet lobbying best served the interests of American Jews. This nonconfrontational strategy reflected the fear that the AJC would be perceived as a “Jewish lobby” with interests at odds with those of other Americans.

The rise of Nazism led to intensified activities on two fronts. In an effort to ameliorate the situation of German Jewry, the AJC applied pressure upon the Roosevelt administration, the Vatican, the League of Nations, and even individual German officials. The objective of halting the Nazis through aroused public opinion failed, and the AJC turned increasingly to plans of rescue and emigration for German Jews. The outbreak of the war halted independent operations, leaving the fate of Jewry contingent upon the Allied war effort. Upon learning of the mass murders, the Committee, along with other American organizations, staged protests and appealed for concrete assistance from the Bermuda Conference on Refugees (1943). The Committee also cooperated in the efforts of the War Refugee Board. Simultaneously, the AJC fought the alarming rise in organized antisemitism in America, emphasizing education and “prejudice-reduction” programs. In developing new techniques both to measure and to influence general and Jewish opinion, the Committee discarded the traditionally apologetic Jewish reaction to antisemitism and demonstrated that antisemitism is used to undermine the foundations of democratic society. The AJC also investigated the operations of virulent hate groups and disclosed their connections to the Nazi regime. The AJC pioneered an approach to combating antisemitism in the communities, promoting the idea that every Jewish community needed to have a “volunteer fire brigade” to counter antisemitism.

While the AJC joined the Zionists in protesting Britain’s curtailment of immigration into Palestine as a result of the White Paper, the AJC denounced the concept of “Diaspora nationalism” inherent in the programs of the AJCongress and the World Jewish Congress. Any Jewish nationalist position, especially Zionism, was abhorrent to the avowedly anti-Zionist, German Jewish leadership of the Committee. The AJC hoped that the future of Jewry would be secured by universal recognition of human rights to be protected by the United Nations (UN), and it lobbied for an international commitment to that principle in 1945 at the San Francisco Conference at which the UN charter was prepared. By 1946 the Committee realized that the problem of the displaced persons could be solved only by the creation of a Jewish state, and, modifying its traditional anti-Zionist stance, it cooperated with Zionist groups in advocating the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states.

After 1948 the Committee worked consistently to ensure American sympathy and diplomatic aid to the State of Israel, and by agreement with Israeli statesmen, it officially kept Israel’s interests distinct from those of Diaspora Jewry. This dynamic was exemplified in the 1950 “entente” between Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion and AJC president Jacob Blaustein following reports that Ben-Gurion had called for large-scale immigration to Israel by American Jewish youth. Ben-Gurion acknowledged that American Jews “have only one political attachment, to America,” and in effect admitted that the “ingathering of exiles” as a central Zionist principle did not apply to American Jewry.

The AJC also assumed a role in several extended projects relating to the Holocaust: prosecution of Nazi war criminals, material restitution by Germany to the Jewish community, and rehabilitation of Jewish cultural life within Europe. In the postwar period the Committee concentrated on combating the persecution of Jews within the Soviet orbit and documented Kremlin-inspired antisemitism. The eruption of antisemitism in the Muslim countries and South America involved the Committee in tasks of relief and emigration with respect to the former and tasks of self-defense in the latter.

After World War II, the AJC expanded markedly in size and function. A chapter plan adopted in 1944 slowly changed the oligarchic cast and elitist control of the organization. The AJC’s approaches to litigation as a vehicle for

achieving its goals changed as well. The Committee had long believed that litigation was confrontational and would damage the interfaith relationships that Jews had formed. Louis Marshall's view was that individuals, not groups, were constitutionally protected from prejudicial action. (The ADL, by contrast, maintained that Jews had every right to oppose group defamation.)

A turning point came in 1943 when John Slawson became AJC executive. He believed that, consistent with the AJC tradition of viewing rights for Jews as part of the larger struggle for rights for all minorities, the AJC needed to be transformed into a vibrant civil rights agency. From 1947 on, the AJC participated, through litigation, educational campaigns, and community projects, in the black struggle for equal rights. Work to break down the barriers in education, housing, employment, and public accommodations led to pioneering efforts against anti-Jewish discrimination in clubs, fraternities, and the "executive suite."

The AJC's focus on human relations resulted in new approaches to intergroup cooperation and intercultural education. It labored successfully for the revision of prejudiced teachings about Jews in Christian textbooks and for the historic papal declaration on the Jews—*Nostra Aetate*—approved by the Second Vatican Council in 1965. The Committee consistently emphasized the need for research in the behavioral sciences to guide its action program. It sponsored the "Studies in Prejudice" series. The watershed volume *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) emphasized the psychological, rather than the socioeconomic, forces at work in group prejudice. The annual *Survey of American Jewish Public Opinion*, conducted by the Market Facts agency, provides valuable data for social scientists and policymakers.

The Six Day War (1967) convinced the AJC that it should not be on the sidelines during a fateful period of Jewish history. Thus began the "mainstreaming" of the AJC.

In terms of institutional dynamics, during the 1960s and 1970s, under the stewardship of executive directors John Slawson and especially Bertram Gold, the AJC resembled not a single agency but a collection of related fiefdoms, each directed by a leader in his respective field. Collectively they contributed to the shaping of the contemporary community-relations agenda: Marc Tanenbaum in interreligious relationships; Yehuda Rosenman in Jewish communal affairs; and Hyman Bookbinder, the highly visible director of the AJC's Washington office, in

contouring the agency's public-affairs agenda. Milton Himmelfarb shaped the AJC's research agenda and edited the *American Jewish Year Book*.

Since the early 1980s, the AJC has redefined its mission and function. Following a period of institutional and financial instability, in 1990, with David Harris as the new executive director, the AJC turned aggressively toward the international arena, positioning itself, in effect, as an international diplomatic corps for the Jewish people. By joining the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (the designated voice of the organized American Jewish community on Israel and other international matters) in 1991, the AJC signaled that international affairs now had primacy on its agenda. The AJC's leadership had long avoided formal affiliation with the Presidents' Conference, in early years because the conference adhered to a Zionist and Israel-based agenda to which the AJC did not subscribe; more recently, because the Committee's agenda was focused on domestic issues.

In recent years, with the decline of antisemitism in the United States and full acceptance of Jews into American society, the AJC's agenda has expanded beyond matters of defense to include questions of Jewish continuity.

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## The Anti-Defamation League

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) was founded in 1913 in response to rampant antisemitism and discrimination against Jews in the United States. Although antisemitism

was pervasive in mid-nineteenth-century America, as waves of Jewish immigrants arrived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, private prejudice and social ostracism escalated into public ridicule, stereotyping, discrimination, and contempt. Sigmund Livingston, a lawyer, believed that such bigotry, if left unchallenged, would lead to more virulent and violent forms of Jew-hatred. Believing that equality must apply to all Americans, ADL's founders—the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith—outlined a mission in its charter: “to stop the defamation of the Jewish people . . . to secure justice and fair treatment to all citizens alike . . . to put an end forever to unjust and unfair discrimination against and ridicule of any sect or body of citizens.”

In 1881, at age nine, Livingston emigrated from Germany with his parents, settling in Bloomington, Illinois. After receiving a law degree from Illinois Wesleyan University, he practiced law from 1894 to 1926. Offended by the portrayal of Jews in the arts and the press, in 1908 he suggested to B'nai B'rith, the Jewish fraternal organization, that a group be formed for the purpose of “eliminating the caricaturing and ridiculing of the Jew in literature, art, drama, and the press.”

The ADL began in 1913 in Livingston's law office in Chicago with a \$200 budget. The same year a Jew, Leo Frank, was unjustly convicted in an Atlanta court of the murder of a young girl in the pencil factory he managed. Though, in 1915, Governor John Slaton commuted Frank's death sentence to life imprisonment after conducting a thorough investigation into the evidence, which convinced him of Frank's innocence, a mob broke into the jail, dragged Frank from his cell, and lynched him. The Frank case dramatically underscored the threat of antisemitism in America and the need for an organization to combat it, providing an impetus for the ADL's growth. In the 1980s, an eyewitness to aspects of the crime came forward, revealing the murderer to be factory janitor Jim Conley, and the ADL succeeded in obtaining a posthumous pardon for Frank.

Early on, the ADL took several steps to combat the negative images of Jews in print and the stereotyping of Jews on stage and in film. The League was still in its infancy when Adolph S. Ochs, publisher of the *New York Times*, joined the ADL in writing a memo to newspaper editors nationwide discouraging the use of “objectionable and vulgar” references to Jews.

With the coming of World War I, antisemites targeted Jews as cowards, “slackers,” and “war-profiteers,” responsible for many of the country's ills. A U.S. Army manual read, “Foreign born, especially Jews, are more apt to malingering than the native born” (Dinnerstein 1994). The ADL protested to President Woodrow Wilson, who ordered the entire edition destroyed. The ADL also provided Americans with the facts about Jews' military and civilian contributions to the war effort.

During the 1920s, the ADL began using the weapon of exposure to battle the bigotry of the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan boycotted Jewish merchants, vandalized their stores, and burned crosses outside synagogues and other Jewish institutions. In 1923, the KKK Imperial Wizard condemned Jews as an “absolutely unblendable element” (*Time*, November 5, 1923).

The League protested Henry Ford's circulation of the antisemitic forgery, *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, which he reprinted in his newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent*. The ADL countered with *The Protocols—A Spurious Document* and *The Poison Pen*, pamphlets by Sigmund Livingston targeting *The Dearborn Independent*. The League called on Woodrow Wilson and William Howard Taft to denounce Ford's antisemitism. After years of calumny, Ford publicly apologized to the Jewish people. In a letter to the ADL's Livingston, he expressed hope that “hatred of the Jews, commonly known as anti-Semitism, and hatred against any other racial or religious groups, shall cease for all time” (Baldwin 2002). Despite his apology, Ford continued to promote antisemitism during the pre-World War II period, maintaining close ties with Nazi Germany and claiming that “international financiers”—a euphemism for Jews—wanted war.

Antisemitism was also expressed in classified ads that openly discriminated against Jews in employment and housing. Colleges, universities, and medical, professional, and graduate schools imposed quotas limiting the admission of Jews. The ADL educated the public about discrimination and the quotas and sought legal remedies not just for Jews but for all minorities.

A major strain of antisemitism emanated from the Christian community through propagation of the charge that Jews killed Jesus. This was reinforced by Cecil B. DeMille's 1928 film, *The King of Kings*. The portrayal of Jews as responsible for the death of Jesus led to an immediate outcry from Jewish organizations, some Catholics, and

others. The ADL met with representatives of the producers, who eventually agreed to some revisions. In addition to making the suggested changes to titles and scenes, DeMille inserted a foreword in which he exculpated the Jews for the death of Jesus.

During the Great Depression, an array of anti-Jewish forces emerged in Europe, and Hitler's rise to power provided the impetus and often the money for a variety of American fascist groups. The German-American Bund, led by Fritz Kuhn, paraded in swastikas, waved Nazi flags, and ardently peddled its antisemitic message. In February 1939, it held a mass rally in New York's Madison Square Garden. The Catholic priest Charles E. Coughlin, leader of the pro-fascist Christian Front, reached a mass audience through his antisemitic radio broadcasts and his publication *Social Justice*, which was filled with anti-Jewish screeds, including *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Throughout the decade, the ADL, laboring under a small budget, tried to awaken Americans to the danger represented by the groups whose antisemitism masked a virulent hatred of democracy.

The ADL joined a coalition to produce a monograph that analyzed Coughlin's propaganda. The monograph thoroughly refuted Coughlin's antisemitic charges and showed that one of his articles was lifted verbatim from an earlier speech by Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels. This evidence of Coughlin's sympathy for Nazism helped discredit him in the eyes of many Americans.

During the 1930s, the ADL began a fact-finding operation to monitor and investigate the rapidly multiplying fascist groups in the United States, amassing a vast storehouse of credible information on extremist individuals and organizations. It exposed the links of several of them to Nazi Germany.

In the post-World War II period, the ADL sought the enactment of civil rights laws. The League fought against discrimination in housing, employment, and education, waging a successful "crack the quota" campaign against anti-Jewish discrimination in college and university admissions. The ADL filed its first amicus curiae brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in 1947 in *Shelley v. Kramer*, in which the Court held that restrictive covenants in housing were unenforceable. The ADL also began its effort to reform the harsh immigration quotas that had prevented the rescue of many European Jews during the Holocaust.

Exploring new frontiers in social and judicial reform, the League filed its first church/state-related amicus brief in 1948 in *McCullum v. Board of Education*, in which the ADL questioned the constitutionality of released time for religious instruction held in public school classrooms. Since then, the ADL has been amicus in practically every major church/state case, consistently arguing for the separation of church and state. At the same time, the League has championed every American's right to the free exercise of religion.

On May 14, 1948, as a result of the decision of the United Nations to partition Palestine, the State of Israel was born, bringing hope to a people shattered by the Holocaust. Holocaust survivors began rebuilding their lives in the fledgling Jewish state. Yet the Jewish homeland became the target of a new movement—anti-Zionism. Arab anti-Jewish sentiment intensified as a result of the existence of the new state; others who had previously scorned Jews for being stateless now excoriated Jews for having a state.

Citing Israel as their enemy, leaders of Arab states stepped up their antisemitic activity. Egypt's leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, distributed *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* to foreign journalists; Syria's longtime minister of defense, Mustafa Tlas, wrote *The Matzoh of Zion*, which claimed that Jews were engaged in ritual murder, a charge embraced by Saudi Arabia's King Faisal. Many also became Holocaust deniers, insisting that the Jews fabricated the Holocaust to take land from Arabs. To counter these charges, the ADL embarked on an educational campaign aimed at government officials, media, and the American people.

At home, the ADL continued its drive to stamp out prejudice and bigotry. When the League learned that the Georgia Ku Klux Klan was planning a revival of its anti-black terror, it joined forces with a sympathetic southern journalist who infiltrated the Klan. For two years, the journalist, using a fictitious name, supplied information to the League, which made it available to law enforcement authorities and the press. This exposure assisted the ADL in securing the passage in southern states of its model statute to unmask the Klan.

In the early 1950s, antisemitism intensified, as Jews were accused of being Communist subversives. President Dwight D. Eisenhower used the ADL's fortieth anniversary dinner in 1953 to make his first public condemnation of McCarthyism, although he refrained from mentioning

Senator McCarthy by name. Subsequently, the ADL embarked on a campaign against McCarthyism.

During this decade, President Eisenhower signed the first civil rights bill to be passed by Congress since Reconstruction. The ADL joined the struggle for civil rights and filed an amicus brief in the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, which ended the legality of “separate but equal” schools. The ADL also embarked on a campaign to expose widespread discrimination by resorts and hotels. The League employed the dual-letter test—sending identical letters, one with a Jewish name and one with a non-Jewish name—as well as other methods to prove that many resorts were closed to Jews. In the 1960s the ADL worked hard for the passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 as well as for open housing legislation.

Feeding on fears of Communism, a powerful Radical Right movement emerged that used divisive tactics and hurled baseless accusations. Widely read ADL reports and publications revealed the dangerous ideas spread by groups such as the John Birch Society and the Liberty Lobby. When anti-Catholicism emerged as a factor in the 1960 presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy, the ADL countered that bias as well. In 1964 the publication of *Danger on the Right* by ADL general counsel Arnold Forster and ADL national director Benjamin Epstein exposed the Radical Right extremist movement as a threat to American democracy.

In 1964 the ADL commissioned a team of researchers at the University of California to investigate all aspects of antisemitism and prejudice in American life. The study ultimately yielded nine books and numerous other publications and critiques. Documenting prejudice in children, and analyzing political extremism, the impact of the 1961 Eichmann trial on the American public, and other topics, the research underscored the link between religious teachings and antisemitism. Subsequent to the first report, later published as a book, *Christian Beliefs and Anti-Semitism*, the Vatican Council adopted *Nostra Aetate* (1965), a papal encyclical that repudiated collective Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus and denounced “hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time by anyone.”

Countering a flood of anti-Zionist Arab propaganda in the aftermath of the Arab-Israeli Six Day War of 1967, the ADL informed the public that the United States and Is-

rael, the sole bastion of democracy in the Middle East, shared common values. Following the Yom Kippur War of 1973, the League intensified its Middle East education program. The ADL condemned the United Nations’ notorious resolution equating Zionism with racism (1975) and battled the Arab boycott of U.S. firms doing business with Israel, playing a key role in the passage of the 1977 Anti-Boycott Bill prohibiting American participation in the Arab blacklist.

By the end of the 1970s, the ADL had become an international agency. In addition to regional offices from coast to coast, the League opened offices in Israel and Europe. In the United States, the ADL initiated its *Annual Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents* in 1979, documenting personal attacks, vandalism, and harassment.

The plight of the millions of Soviet Jews took priority in the 1970s and 1980s. Conducting a media campaign, the ADL created and disseminated materials decrying Soviet violations of human rights and urging the USSR to allow Jews to emigrate to Israel. The League worked with congressional leaders and administration officials on behalf of Soviet Jewish Prisoners of Conscience and tens of thousands of “refuseniks,” Jews who had been denied permission to emigrate. In October 1986, at the summit meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland, the American government presented the ADL’s publication, *A Uniquely Jewish List: The Refuseniks of Russia*, to Soviet leaders in an appeal for their right to move to Israel.

Countering not just antisemitic acts but all hate crimes, the ADL developed the penalty-enhancement approach for bias-related crimes, which levies an additional penalty for crimes motivated by bias. Continuing its mission to unmask and condemn bigotry, the League exposed the antisemitism of former KKK leader David Duke and Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.

A growing religious Right movement prompted the ADL to release reports warning that the traditional wall of separation between church and state was becoming “transparent.” The ADL filed amicus briefs in cases dealing with Christmas observances in public schools, publicly sponsored sectarian displays, and federal aid to parochial schools.

In December 1987, the Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza, the “*intifada*,” erupted, prompting a rise in anti-Israel sentiment, especially on college campuses across the United States. The ADL publicized antisemitic incidents

on campuses and provided guidelines for students, faculty, and administrators in confronting extremist speakers spreading anti-Israel and anti-Jewish propaganda. When Holocaust deniers flooded campus newspapers with advertisements claiming that the Nazis had not exterminated six million Jews, the ADL exposed the deniers and counseled student editors on the line between upholding free speech and spreading messages of hate.

As the Internet expanded, the ADL recognized that bigots and hate groups utilized it for their ends. Hundreds of hate sites exploded on the Web, many camouflaged to recruit new members, some specifically targeting children. The ADL created an Internet Monitoring Unit to track, document, and expose the bigots while also working with Internet providers to keep hate off their sites. In 1996 the ADL launched its own website—[www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org)—and in 1998 developed HateFilter® as a tool for parents.

In the 1990s, ADL activities resulted in the enactment by forty-six states and the District of Columbia of hate crimes legislation based on the model statute of penalty enhancement, which the U.S. Supreme Court upheld in 1993. The organization also played a central role in the first White House Conference on Hate Crimes, held at George Washington University in November 1997.

As terrorism escalated in the 1990s, the ADL provided expert testimony to Congress and urged states to enact anti-paramilitary training laws. Six months before the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, an ADL report, *Armed and Dangerous: Militias Take Aim at the Federal Government*, alerted the nation to the growing menace of antigovernment extremist groups.

Religious intrusion into public life increased significantly in the late 1990s with attempts to pass a so-called Religious Freedom Amendment, which the ADL argued violated the First Amendment. The proposed amendment would have allowed teachers to organize and supervise religious activities during school hours, would have permitted tax dollars to flow to parochial schools, and would have promoted the display of religious objects, such as crosses, in courtrooms.

The ADL introduced “Confronting Anti-Semitism: A Family Awareness Project,” an interactive workshop on how to respond to antisemitism. The ADL also launched its Annual Youth Leadership Mission to Washington, D.C., bringing youths to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum to teach them about the depths to which hatred can sink

and the responsibility each person bears for others. The ADL’s “Bearing Witness,” a joint project with the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, teaches Catholic educators about the Holocaust and how to convey its lessons to their students.

Responding to the 1996 epidemic of arson against black churches in the South, the ADL launched a campaign to provide funds to help rebuild the churches. In 1999, troubled by Kosovo’s “ethnic cleansing,” the ADL formed the Fund for the Refugees of Kosovo, eventually donating more than \$800,000 for direct assistance to victims.

The twenty-first century began with an increase in terrorism and the resurgence of antisemitism. The UN World Conference against Racism, held in Durban, South Africa, August 31–September 7, 2001, was hijacked into a forum to attack Jews, Jewish nationalism, and Israel’s right to exist. Zionism was declared racism, delegitimizing the national self-determination of the Jewish people, and Israel was branded an apartheid state. Equally troubling was the failure of countries (except the United States) and long-term nongovernmental organizations to protest the display of antisemitism.

The ADL recognizes that Americans today must be concerned with antisemitism as a global phenomenon. In response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the ADL shared its information on terrorist and extremist groups with law enforcement agencies, government, and media, and promoted counterterrorism legislation, along with the protection of minorities. While Americans understood that the attacks were aimed at their democratic way of life, many in the rest of the world blamed Jews. A big lie spread that Jews and Israel were behind the attacks and that Jews had been forewarned about them. This big lie originated on Al-Manar, the television station of the terrorist group Hezbollah, based in Lebanon; it was spread throughout the world on the Internet and satellite TV. While the big lie gained credence across the Arab and Muslim worlds, it was embraced by antisemites and Israel bashers everywhere. After Amira Baraka, New Jersey’s poet laureate, recited a poem he wrote incorporating the big lie, the state eliminated the position. A constant drumbeat of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish incitement emanated from the Arab/Muslim world—equating Zionism with Nazism, the blood libel, the deicide charge, Holocaust denial, classic stereotypes, quoting the infamous *Protocols of the Learned Elders of*



*The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) civil rights counsel Michael Sheetz holds up the ADL's annual "Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents" at a news conference in Boston on March 24, 1999. (AFP/Getty Images)*

Zion—which contributed to an explosion of antisemitism in Europe.

Jews and Jewish institutions were attacked in France, Belgium, and England. France suffered the majority of attacks and the most violent, including an assault by Muslim youths on a Jewish teenager at an ice-skating rink, an attack on a rabbi and his young son after Sabbath services, the stabbing of a Jewish youth by a man shouting “*Allah Aqbar!*” (“God is Great” in Arabic), the desecration of Jewish cemeteries, and arson attacks on synagogues. Norway’s largest labor union called for a boycott of Israeli products. Portugal’s Nobel laureate in literature, after visiting Jenin, the site of a so-called “massacre” that never happened, called it Auschwitz. An Israeli-owned hotel in Mombasa, Kenya, was attacked by a suicide car bomber on November

28, 2002; on the same day, two surface-to-air missiles narrowly missed an El Al jetliner as it lifted off from Moi International Airport in Kenya. Two synagogues were bombed in Istanbul on November 15, 2003.

The ADL’s Conference on Global Anti-Semitism in New York, October 31–November 1, 2002, brought together Jewish community representatives, government officials, and diplomats from European and other countries. Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel gave the keynote address, and Germany’s foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, said his nation would fight against rising antisemitism.

Surveys revealed that antisemitism in the United States had increased for the first time in ten years. The ADL’s 2002 *Survey of Anti-Semitism in America* found that 17 percent, or 35 million adults, harbor antisemitic views

and that anti-Israel sentiments fuel—and rationalize—antisemitism. ADL surveys conducted in Europe in 2002 and 2004 showed that large numbers still accept a wide range of traditional antisemitic stereotypes. Unlike Americans, Europeans are often indifferent to antisemitism, deny that it exists in their countries, or blame it on the politics of the Middle East.

The ADL recognizes that antisemitism has a unique resilience. By exposing antisemitism and educating people about it, the ADL hopes to keep this hatred unacceptable and at bay.

*Abraham H. Foxman*

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## The American Jewish Congress

The American Jewish Congress is one of a number of “defense” organizations that serve the American Jewish polity and that perform a range of community-relations

functions. The genesis, early development, and growth of the American Jewish Congress (“AJCongress” or “the Congress”) are classic examples of American pluralism and associationalism.

The American Jewish Congress was established by a group that was dissatisfied with the American Jewish Committee (AJC or “the Committee”). This group, largely of Eastern European origin, felt that the “aristocratic” German Jewish leadership of the Committee was a self-appointed, self-perpetuating body with no mandate from American Jewry and that AJC was paternalistic in its dealings with Eastern Europeans. The debate played out the larger one between East European and German Jews and between Zionists and anti-Zionists, and was primarily over the establishment of a congress that would represent American Jewish interests at the peace conference following World War I. The result was an ad hoc “congress” that would act as an umbrella for Jewish groups and represent Jewish interests.

Institutionally, the present AJCongress was an outgrowth of the first American Jewish Congress, which assembled in Philadelphia in December 1918. A written agreement entered into by a number of organizations stipulated that the Congress was to dissolve as soon as it fulfilled its task of formulating a postwar program for the Jewish people, named a delegation to the peace conference in Versailles, and received the delegation’s report. This agreement was implemented at the second and last session of the Congress in Philadelphia in 1920. However, some delegates from religious, Zionist, and fraternal organizations and from *landsmanshaftn* reassembled the next day under the chairmanship of Stephen S. Wise and laid the foundation for the present AJCongress, which was fully organized in 1928. Although the initial constituency of the American Jewish Congress was mainly Zionist, additional positions were voiced following the 1928 reorganization. In sum, while the American Jewish Committee and other organizations wanted the Congress to go out of business—and it did formally dissolve itself in 1920—the pressure for a permanent representative organization resulted in the formation of the present Congress, which came into being in 1922, originally as a council of agencies. AJCongress evolved into a membership organization in the 1930s.

The initial twin goals of AJCongress, which together molded the agency’s subsequent ideology, were to provide humanitarian relief for European Jews in the aftermath of



*Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, Zionist and leader of the American Jewish Congress. (American Jewish Historical Society)*

World War I and to restore a political Jewish presence in Palestine. The AJCongress is the only community-relations agency that has been pro-Zionist throughout its history and that on a number of issues (for example, a boycott of German goods in the 1930s) was arguably more representative of the views of grassroots American Jewry than the other “defense” and community relations agencies. The early AJCongress leaders, Louis Brandeis and Stephen S. Wise, believed that only a democratic structure would allow maximum participation in Jewish affairs by Jews and not just by German Jews. Moreover, they fervently rejected the views that Jews should not organize along ethnic lines, that Jews should restrict their lobbying efforts to “behind the scenes,” and that Jews should not engage in vigorous advocacy. Wise, a key American Zionist leader as well as a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), was a driving force in the AJCongress from its provisional organization until his death in 1949. The AJCongress’s view of pluralism was different from that of the American Jewish Committee or the Anti-Defama-

tion League (ADL): AJCongress articulated the view that group, and not individual, interests needed to be advanced through appropriate organizational channels and not merely through a few well-connected individuals. Wise especially offered a vision of American Jewry as both religious and ethnic and maintained that, as a people possessing a distinct cultural history, American Jews should openly advocate their interests.

The AJCongress set goals related to American and world Jewish affairs, including Palestine. In the 1930s, the AJCongress emerged as a leading force in the anti-Nazi movement and in efforts to aid the victims of fascism. It sought to arouse American public opinion and to combat manifestations of antisemitism in America. With the Jewish Labor Committee, AJCongress organized the Joint Boycott Council directed against German goods and services.

In the mid-1930s, AJCongress led in the formation of the World Jewish Congress (WJC) and shortly thereafter changed itself from a body representing organized groups into one based on individual membership. National Jewish organizations found that group affiliation alongside individual membership was untenable and therefore withdrew to form the American Section of the World Jewish Congress, which was designed to give a voice to the WJC in the United States. The AJCongress is also an affiliate of the WJC.

The AJCongress pioneered in the use of law and social action as tools in combating prejudice and discrimination. This strategy—opposed by other Jewish communal groups, especially the AJC and the ADL, who believed in quiet diplomacy and social relations—led to the creation in the 1930s of a number of “commissions” within the agency to examine the utility of litigative action to secure constitutional protection of equal rights. While the image of AJCongress was one of a creative and aggressive advocate for Jewish interests, there was, in fact, little substantive difference between AJCongress and the ADL and AJC until after World War II.

In 1945 the AJCongress embarked on a program based on proposals submitted by Alexander H. Pekelis that broadened the focus of the agency. Proceeding from the premise that the well-being of Jews depended on a liberal political and social climate, the AJCongress became increasingly involved in the promotion of social legislation and in activities designed to strengthen American democracy, eliminate racial and religious bigotry, and advance

civil liberties. AJCongress in 1945 created its Commission on Law and Social Action (CLSA, a merger of two commissions, on discrimination and law and legislation) to implement this goal. The CLSA was created for the purpose of formulating and implementing direct action strategies that would promote legislative and judicial measures to redress constitutional grievances of American Jews.

The program of advocacy implemented by the CLSA had been fermenting within the AJCongress for some years. Underpinning CLSA advocacy was the view that AJCongress should not limit its work to attacking governmental infringements on the rights of Jews, but should fight discriminatory practices by large private institutions such as universities and corporations, and in doing so should enter into coalition with like-minded groups such as the NAACP and the ACLU. Moreover, the direct action method—law and litigation—would concentrate on fighting legal discrimination and not prejudicial attitudes. This approach was a major departure from that of the ADL and the AJC, both of which were committed to educational programs and goodwill campaigns to educate Americans about Jewish interests, and to “quiet diplomacy” to redress grievances. Indeed, the creation of the CLSA created shock waves that reverberated throughout these American Jewish organizations.

Contributing to the widening gap between AJCongress’s commitment to legal reform and the ADL’s and AJC’s preference for the “social relations” model was the towering figure of Leo Pfeffer, for many years the director of CLSA. Pfeffer’s uncontested emergence as the Jewish community’s chief strategist on church–state matters was accompanied by his exercise of almost complete authority over the Jewish community’s litigation agenda.

CLSA activity over the years led AJCongress to view itself as the “lawyer” for the American Jewish community. Indeed, the AJCongress took a pioneering stand and a leading role in Jewish–community involvement in landmark Supreme Court cases on First Amendment (especially church–state separation) and civil rights issues. Major advocates, such as Alexander Pekelis, David Petegorsky, Will Maslow (executive director, 1960–1972), and above all Leo Pfeffer, put their stamp on AJCongress’s agenda and, beyond the agency, on American Jewish communal activities in these arenas. Notably, the first woman to serve as professional head of a major national Jewish or-

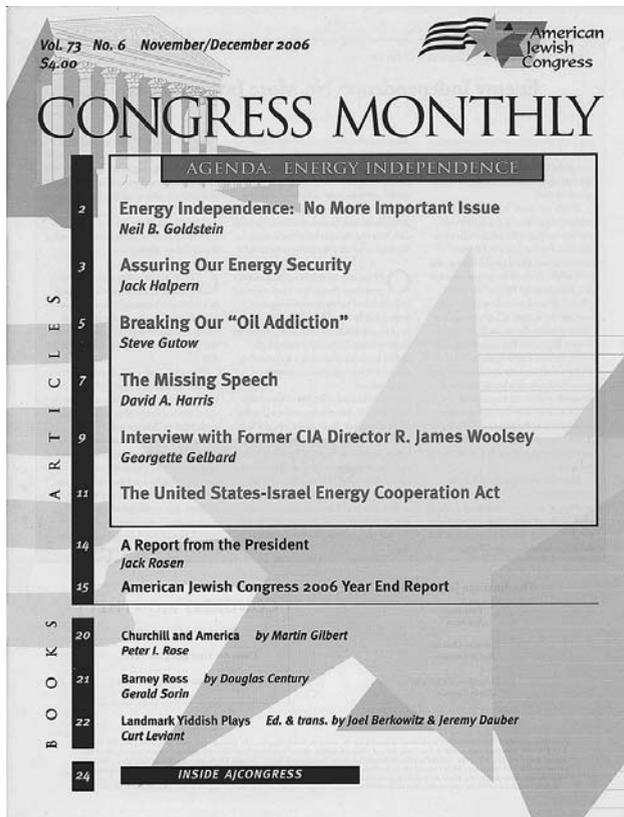
ganization, Naomi Levine, was executive director of AJCongress from 1972–1978.

In Zionist affairs, the Congress has adopted a pro-Israel position and indeed is the only American Jewish group (aside from Zionist organizations) to be pro-Zionist from its beginnings. It organized annual “dialogues” in Israel between U.S. and Israeli intellectuals and sponsored regular tours of its members to Israel. Changes with respect to Israel emerged under the professional leadership of Henry Siegman in the 1980s and 1990s, and AJCongress veered sharply to the “left” on Israel-related issues, departing in some cases radically from consensus positions of the Jewish community on the Jewish settlements and the peace process.

The recent history of the AJCongress can be divided into three periods. In the first, with Henry Siegman as executive director (1978–1994), the Congress, adopting a sharply “leftist” stance, aggressively took issue with the policies of the State of Israel. An AJCongress mission to Saudi Arabia in 1992—a singular event for American Jewish communal agencies—was one example of the Congress’s ideological independence in these years. Siegman’s approach was nonetheless entirely consistent with the long tradition of the AJCongress as the “idiosyncratic” agency.

In the second period, from 1994 to 2002, Phil Baum, *contra* Siegman, made an effort, for the first time in AJCongress’s history, to position the Congress as a mainstream Jewish organization, in effect reinventing the Congress as a “mirror” of the American Jewish Committee. During the years of Baum’s tenure, AJCongress expressed increased support for Israeli policies and generally developed positions and programs on a range of issues that were more consistent with consensus positions of other defense agencies. During these years, however, there was a measure of internal conflict in AJCongress, with the geographically important Southwest region pulling out of the agency (1996) to form an independent activist group. The Southwest region wanted to play a significantly more activist role in economic justice matters than the Congress’s national office was interested in doing.

In the third period, since 2002, Neil Goldstein has been the AJCongress executive, and the agency has enjoyed a new financial lease on life, in large measure as the result of the sale of the Stephen S. Wise Congress House in 2004. The agenda of the AJCongress has shifted to reflect chang-



Cover of *Congress Monthly*, published by the American Jewish Congress. (American Jewish Congress)

ing realities of the twenty-first century. Israel again absorbs more agency resources, and American domestic changes have resulted in the Congress often adopting a reactive and defensive, rather than aggressive, posture on issues of concern. AJCongress is currently reexamining a number of its stances, including its strong "separationist" position in church-state affairs.

The AJCongress has approximately 40,000 members. In 2005 the Congress operated out of fifteen chapters, with offices in Jerusalem and Paris, and a presence in Moscow and Brussels. Its budget in 2005 was \$6.5 million, raised from membership dues, independent campaigns, allocations from Jewish federations (\$300,000 annually), and other sources. The small budget—relative to the ADL and the AJC—is deceptive. During the 1990s many predicted the demise of AJCongress, particularly after merger talks with the AJC broke down—analysts suggest that the Congress leadership was unhappy about the prospect that their "movement-based" agency would be submerged into the AJC, and thereby lose its highly distinctive history and identity. However, while it is clearly in the "second tier" of

defense agencies, AJCongress in the first decade of the twenty-first century is hardly moribund. The core of its operation, CLSA, is active, and AJCongress has added a Jewish Life office. AJCongress holds national conventions annually. The publications *Congress Monthly* and the scholarly *Judaism*, which for many years was one of the premier intellectual journals in American Jewish life, are produced under AJCongress auspices.

Jerome A. Chanes

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## The Jewish Labor Committee

Founded in the mid-1930s, the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC) began as an umbrella group of Jewish (and Jewish-led) trade unions and fraternal organizations with the aim of organizing aid for victims of Nazism and fascism in Europe and enlisting the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in the struggle against Hitler. In the post-World War II years, the organization's primary focus shifted to antidiscrimination and civil rights work in the U.S. labor movement, but the Committee's increasingly professional staff also became engaged in educational, lobbying, publicity, and advisory work on a wide variety of issues from the defense of Soviet Jewry to Holocaust education. In the face of profound shifts in the class makeup of the American Jewish population and in the ethnic composition of U.S. trade unions, the JLC continues to act as a Jewish presence in the



*Delegate Assembly for Civil Rights. Roy Reuther (left) of United Automobile Workers, AFL-CIO; Clarence Mitchell (center), director of NAACP Washington bureau; and Charles Zimmerman (right) of the Jewish Labor Committee. (Library of Congress)*

councils of American labor and a labor voice in the organized Jewish community.

The founding meeting of the JLC, held at the Central Plaza on New York's Lower East Side on February 25, 1934—just a year after Hitler's rise to power in Germany—brought together more than a thousand delegates. They represented the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, a number of smaller unions, the United Hebrew Trades, the Workmen's Circle, the Jewish Daily Forward Association, and the Left Labor Zionists. Baruch Charney Vladeck, general manager of the *Forward* and the prime mover behind the gathering, was elected president; David Dubinsky of the ILGWU was chosen as treasurer; Joseph Baskin of the Workmen's Circle, secretary; and Benjamin

Gebiner, also of the Workmen's Circle, executive secretary. There was considerable overlap in membership between the constituent groups, but potentially they represented a base of several hundred thousand Jewish workers, workers' family members, and middle-class sympathizers. In the face of developing anti-Nazi efforts by Rabbi Stephen Wise and his American Jewish (AJ) Congress, by Communist-led groups, by the Jewish War Veterans of the United States, and by non-Jewish liberals, Vladeck and Dubinsky wanted to create their own powerful political force that could respond effectively to the looming catastrophe in Europe.

Holding that only a broad-based workers' movement could overthrow Hitlerism, the JLC emphasized its labor orientation and nonsectarian philosophy. Its immediate

aims were to support Jewish civil and human rights everywhere, to support progressive and democratic antifascist groups, to aid refugees, and to educate the American labor movement (and the general public) about the Nazi threat.

By 1934, B. C. Vladeck (1886–1938), a Russian-born socialist known for the elegance of his Yiddish oratory, was experienced in New York City politics. He had served as a Socialist Party member of the New York Board of Aldermen and was soon to be elected to the City Council on the American Labor Party ticket. Like many of the early generation of Jewish American labor and socialist leaders, he had served his political apprenticeship in the famous General Jewish Workers' Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, the Jewish Labor Bund. In many respects, the founders of the JLC were translating and adapting lessons learned in the ranks of the Bund for use in the very different social milieu of America. The Bund's central tenets—support for democratic socialism, bitter opposition to Communism, anti-Zionism, secularism, and the nurturing of Yiddish-based Jewish culture—were central tenets of JLC ideology through its first decade. In later years, these core beliefs developed unevenly: some faded, some hardened, and some were reshaped in response to changing times.

David Dubinsky had cultivated the friendship of AFL president William Green and sat as the only Jewish member of the AFL's Executive Council. Vladeck and Dubinsky arranged for Vladeck and Walter Citrine, secretary of the Trades Union Congress of Great Britain and a staunch anti-Nazi, to address the September 1934 AFL convention in San Francisco. In response to their pleas, the AFL leadership created a Labor Chest to aid the victims of fascism. Participation was entirely voluntary, but the project gave the AFL imprimatur to an endeavor that Jewish trade unionists embraced with passion, recruiting allies where they could. The Labor Chest funded a number of JLC-inspired educational and aid projects. The JLC handled much of the editorial work for the Labor Chest News Service, organized mass meetings, and produced Labor Chest pamphlets in several languages, aimed at non-Jewish immigrant workers.

In an era when American Jewish organizations were deeply divided on matters of ideology and tactics, the JLC was relatively open to collaboration with other national and local Jewish groups engaged in anti-Nazi work. One of its early concerns was to build support for a boycott of Nazi goods both in the labor movement and among the

general public. Putting aside its disagreement over Zionism, the JLC joined with the AJCongress to form the Joint Boycott Council, which operated from 1938 to 1941. When the United States Olympics Committee ignored widespread protests against U.S. participation in the Berlin Olympics of 1936, the JLC, with the Workmen's Circle and the ILGWU, staged a World Labor Athletic Carnival, also known as the Counter-Olympics, in New York City in August 1936. The event drew top college athletes as well as teams organized by unions, and it proved so successful as a publicity venture that a second "carnival" was held in the summer of 1937.

The premature death of B. C. Vladeck, struck down by a heart attack in October 1938, was a heavy blow to the Committee. But its work continued, now under the presidency of Adolph Held of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and executive secretary Isaiah Minkoff.

Another urgent concern was the fate of refugees. Neither the U.S. government nor the AFL was open to proposals for relaxing immigration controls, so the JLC had to press for special ad hoc measures. In 1939–1940, after the Nazi invasion of Poland and the fall of France, immediate action was needed to save European socialist and labor leaders, who would be prime targets of the Gestapo. The JLC compiled a list that included Jewish and non-Jewish labor leaders and socialists, as well as Yiddish writers and other activists deemed to be in immediate danger. Securing more than 800 emergency visitors' visas from the U.S. Department of State, the JLC was able to bring some 1,500 individuals to safety. Through a network of courageous underground couriers, money was smuggled into Nazi-occupied territory to sustain the scattered remnants of East European Jewry in hiding.

The JLC also supported exiled representatives of European unions and socialist parties who took refuge in New York, where they met under JLC auspices to plan for the political future of their respective countries. During these years, the Committee became a conduit for U.S. government financial support of some of these groups as well; these contacts and practices laid the groundwork for a more shadowy role for the JLC in abetting the labor component of Cold War diplomacy, under the direction of such figures as George Meany, Jay Lovestone, and Irving Brown in the late 1940s and 1950s.

The prewar atmosphere of cordial cooperation between the JLC and other national Jewish organizations

suffered a temporary setback in August 1943, when an American Jewish Conference was called to meet in Pittsburgh. The conference was organized by Zionists, and the JLC was apprehensive that the issue of a Jewish homeland in Palestine would overshadow the urgent need for coordination on the rescue of Holocaust victims. Soon, both the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the JLC withdrew from the conference, citing the domination of a Zionist agenda and, in the case of the JLC, the admission of representatives of Communist groups.

As the war drew to a close, the immediate needs of Holocaust survivors became the JLC's prime concern. By 1944 it was spending close to \$1 million a year, mostly on European relief. But the rescue and relief work of the JLC was not measured in dollars alone. Intangibles were just as important: knowledge of conditions in Europe; links to the underground; the ability to find jobs, homes, and care for emigrés; the mobilizing of union locals to solicit large quantities of free clothing, toys, and other goods from employers; and the thousands of hours of labor donated to anti-Nazi efforts by JLC supporters.

In the spring of 1945, the JLC presented an exhibition entitled "Heroes and Martyrs of the Ghettos" at the Vanderbilt Gallery in New York. It opened on April 19, the second anniversary of the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto, and was the first exhibit dealing with the Holocaust and Jewish Resistance to be seen in New York—perhaps the first in America. Beginning in 1945, JLC officers and trade union leaders, among them Nathan Chanin, David Dubinsky, Charles Zimmerman, Jacob Pat, and Paul Goldman, visited European communities and displaced persons (DP) camps and sent back searing accounts of the condition of Jewish survivors and the destruction of Jewish life. By 1947 there were still an estimated 850,000 people living in DP camps, and it was obvious that few Jewish survivors would return to their former homes. Bella Meiksin and Nathan Gierowitz were assigned as full-time JLC representatives working in the camps of the U.S. Zone of Germany. JLC offices in Brussels and Stockholm served thousands of refugees waiting to be permanently resettled. Across Europe soup kitchens, cooperative workshops, Yiddish schools and libraries, day nurseries, and clinics were supported by JLC funds.

In New York the JLC helped prepare lists of those who perished and those who survived and established elaborately cross-referenced card files on people seeking loved

ones. Making ample use of the columns of the *Forward* and of the Forward Association's Yiddish-language radio station WEVD, the JLC tried to reunite families and publicized the needs of victims of Nazism and anti-Jewish persecution around the world. The JLC also organized a so-called Child Adoption Program. Its aim was not adoption in the usual sense but rather to provide a mechanism by which Americans could contribute to the care of destitute children (mostly Jewish and non-Jewish Italians) living in Europe or Mandatory Palestine. At a cost of \$300 per year, a union shop or local, fraternal society, Workmen's Circle branch, women's club, or any other group or individual could "adopt" a child. The money was used to supply clothes, school supplies, toys and gifts, and special food parcels. Donors received a photo of their "adoptee(s)," a biography, progress reports, and sometimes letters from the children.

By the late 1940s, the JLC began to feel a need to redirect its efforts toward a domestic agenda and to carve out a distinct role for itself, both within the postwar labor movement and in the newly configured world of U.S. Jewish organizations. It determined to make itself the center for antidiscrimination work in the labor movement, and the link between organized labor and community relations activity in the Jewish community.

In the immediate postwar years, the JLC created its own Anti-Discrimination Division, under the leadership of Charles Zimmerman of the ILGWU and national field director Emanuel Muravchik, who joined the staff in 1947. Muravchik, who later served for many years as JLC executive director, was the first top official of the JLC who was American-born and whose first language was English. JLC civil rights work was led by Muravchik, who worked closely with field staff such as Julius Bernstein in Boston, Max Mont and William Becker in Los Angeles, Lillian Herstein and Aaron Aronin in Chicago, Alex Wolod in Philadelphia, and others. Setting up field offices in most major cities, the JLC developed local labor coalitions; ran seminars and summer schools for trade unionists; published pamphlets, newsletters, and reports; conducted research; and testified before legislative and judicial bodies on behalf of Fair Employment Practices laws, equal opportunity in education, and proposals for integrated housing. Its *Labor Reports* news service distributed antidiscrimination material to the labor press throughout the United States and Canada. JLC staff monitored right-wing hate

groups, especially those targeting union members, and compiled voluminous annual clipping files on anti-semitism and racism within the labor movement.

On the international scene, the JLC found its position on the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine evolving rapidly. In the shadow of the Holocaust, and in consideration of increasing Zionist sentiment among Jewish labor leaders, the JLC became actively involved in lobbying at the United Nations for the establishment of the State of Israel. For many years, the Committee sent direct aid to Holocaust survivors in Israel and funded labor cooperatives, Yiddish libraries and schools, and a number of other projects in the new nation. Pro-Israel educational efforts have become more and more prominent on the JLC's agenda, and in recent years it has regularly sponsored specialized tours of Israel for American trade unionists.

In the early 1950s, JLC president Adolph Held served on the Claims Commission, which negotiated reparations agreements on behalf of Holocaust survivors with the German and Austrian governments. In this effort, Held made effective use of the long-standing ties between the JLC and the German and Austrian Socialist parties. The Committee was also prominent in early efforts to make the American public (and political leaders) aware of discrimination against Jews in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

In 1955 Charles Zimmerman was tapped to become the first head of the Civil Rights Department of the newly merged AFL-CIO, and he, in turn, brought in Donald Slaiman of the JLC's Detroit office as assistant director. Both Zimmerman and Slaiman eventually returned to serve as JLC national presidents. Over the years, the JLC gave direct aid to rural black schools and sharecropper organizing projects in the South, developed the Labor Advisory Committee on Puerto Rican Affairs and the National Trade Union Council on Human Rights, picketed discriminatory employers, mobilized Jewish community support for the farm workers' grape boycott, and built close working relationships with civil rights leaders A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, and James Farmer of CORE. Under the direction of longtime JLC ally Bayard Rustin, JLC staff worked behind the scenes to coordinate the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

By the early 1960s, with Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) legislation on the books in many states, *Brown v. Board of Education* in place, and a strong federal Civil Rights Act in the offing, it appeared that the

JLC could take considerable satisfaction in the progress of its agenda. But there were ominous signs of strain within the fragile alliance the JLC had tried to forge between labor, the civil rights movement, and the organized Jewish community. In 1959 A. Philip Randolph lashed out bitterly at the AFL leadership for its sluggishness in dealing with Jim Crow practices in affiliated unions. A rancorous exchange between Charles Zimmerman and NAACP labor secretary Herbert Hill on alleged discrimination in the garment unions led to Zimmerman's resignation from the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund in 1962.

The stubborn refusal of the AFL-CIO Council to endorse the March on Washington, in contrast to the enthusiastic participation of many individual unions such as the United Auto Workers and the Hospital Workers, Local 1199, revealed deep political fissures within the ranks of labor, which the Vietnam War exacerbated. Although it took no official position on the war and worked hard behind the scenes to shift the "old guard" of labor on civil rights issues, the JLC was perceived by a new generation of militants as being on the wrong side of many New Left debates. The emergence of such new-style civil rights organizations as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and strong nationalist tendencies in African American communities brought intergenerational and political confrontation, both within the civil rights movement and between the movement and many of its Jewish supporters. Worsening relations between African Americans and Jews came to an explosive head in the 1968 Ocean Hill–Brownsville dispute over community control versus union rights in the New York City school system.

For the JLC, the 1970s ushered in another period of revising organizational goals and reevaluating long-standing relationships. A series of new JLC initiatives developed in the 1980s and 1990s were designed to expand the JLC's traditional field of action and reconnect younger generations of American Jews with a fast-receding past of immigrant struggle and labor solidarity. Liberal-minded rabbis and Jewish college students have been recruited to fight sweatshops, oppose anti-labor legislation, and support striking workers. Hundreds of non-Jewish teachers have studied the history of the Holocaust and Jewish resistance through JLC-sponsored summer seminars in Poland and Israel. And the JLC's popular nationwide program of Labor Seders offers opportunities for labor activists of every ethnicity to meet with Jewish communal leaders in a setting

that balances ancient tradition and shared ideals of social justice.

Gail Malmgreen

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## The Simon Wiesenthal Center

A not-for-profit educational and research institution dedicated to the exploration of the Holocaust and other genocides, the Simon Wiesenthal Center was the first institution established in North America to link Holocaust remembrance to the defense of human rights. It was founded by

Rabbi Marvin Hier in 1977, a third of a century after the full extent of the Nazi annihilation of 6 million Jews and millions of others became known. Headquartered in Los Angeles, with regional offices in New York, Chicago, Florida, Toronto, Paris, and Jerusalem, the Center is supported by more than 500,000 member families.

The Center was named for Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal, who, having survived four concentration camps, emerged from Mauthausen in 1945 committed to tracking down the tens of thousands of mass murderers who escaped judgment at Nuremberg. Rather than return to his prewar profession of architect, he built the Jewish Documentation Center, first in Linz, Austria, and then in Vienna, to collect information that would help in this effort. In the early 1960s, Wiesenthal earned international renown for his contribution to Israel's capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann, the bureaucratic architect of "The Final Solution." The Center was committed to educating the public about the Holocaust and to helping track down Nazi war criminals still at large.

According to best estimates, 10,000 war criminals from Germany and its numerous puppet states escaped postwar justice to the United States, 3,000 to Canada, and thousands more to Latin America, Australia, New Zealand, and Arab states. Lesser functionaries, including death camp guards, achieved entry under false papers as displaced persons. Fascist underground networks such as ODESSA assisted elite personnel, including high-ranking officers and rocket scientists, to escape from Europe. The Pentagon's Operation Paperclip even recruited some Nazi war criminals, giving them free entry, citizenship, and lucrative jobs. Hence, Simon Wiesenthal's sardonic verdict that fugitive Nazis were "the real winners of the Cold War."

In 1978 the Wiesenthal Center initiated its first international campaign to persuade the Federal Republic of Germany not to end prosecutions. Had West Germany invoked its statute of limitations, there could have been no justice for fugitive war criminals. The petition drive to abolish the German statute of limitations on war crime prosecutions deluged President Jimmy Carter with 200,000 letters and postcards and Chancellor Helmut Schmidt with 1 million signed appeals. In March 1979, the Center's first mission to Germany brought Chancellor Schmidt and other German parliamentarians the message "Justice has no time limit!" The lobbying campaign influenced the Bundestag's 255 to 222 vote in July 1979 to abolish the

statute of limitations. In 1981, a German court sentenced Hermine Braunsteiner Ryan to life imprisonment, the first person extradited from the United States to face war crimes charges. She was known as “the Mare” for trampling Majdanek prisoners to death with her jackboots.

The campaign to end West Germany’s statute of limitations on war crimes crystallized the Center’s role as a link between grassroots and governmental efforts in the United States to bring the unpunished to justice. The Center’s first director, Holocaust scholar and Nazi-hunter Ephraim Zuroff, launched a Survivor Registry to elicit the recollections of victims of the Shoah. Ultimately, it evolved into *Testimony to the Truth*, an ongoing video history project to preserve survivor testimonies for future generations. The Registry also provided testimony about the identity of war criminals for the Office of Special Investigations (OSI). Since its inception in 1979, the OSI has stripped more than 60 Nazi collaborators of their U.S. citizenship and is still investigating almost 300 others.

Rabbi Hier’s oft-repeated observation—that hatred was not buried at Auschwitz—reflected the Center’s realization that a new breed of neo-Nazis, Klansmen, and skinheads was revitalizing the antisemitic right in the 1980s. The Center closely monitored such groups as Tom Metzger’s White Aryan Resistance (WAR), organized in 1978, and the Order, responsible for the murder in Denver of Jewish radio talk show host Alan Berg. It also worked with Morris Dees and the Southern Poverty Law Center, which used the innovative tactic of civil litigation on behalf of hate victims to bankrupt the United Klans of America in 1987 and WAR in 1990.

Following Louis Farrakhan’s rise to prominence during Jesse Jackson’s 1984 presidential campaign, when the Nation of Islam (NOI) leader called Hitler “a great man” and Judaism “a gutter religion,” the Center commissioned the first national poll gauging Farrakhan’s impact on African-Americans. As Farrakhan’s influence mounted, culminating in the 1995 “Million Man March,” Center consultant Dr. Harold Brackman exposed the NOI’s outrageous antisemitic allegations that the AIDS virus was invented by Jewish doctors to infect black children and that Jewish merchants had dominated the Atlantic slave trade.

As dangerous as extremist threats against people and property was the violence against history and memory propagated by Holocaust deniers. The Institute for Historical Review (IHR), organized in 1978 and bankrolled by

Willis Carto, a notorious antisemite and racist, the next year held its first “Revisionist Conference,” where crackpots posing as scholars argued that the Nazi gas chambers were a Jewish–Zionist myth designed to victimize Germans and Palestinians. The Center combated the tactics of Holocaust deniers such as Bradley Smith, which included placing Holocaust-denying ads in college newspapers and disrupting Simon Wiesenthal’s speaking engagements. Polls from the 1980s showed that as many as 30 percent of Americans and perhaps an even higher percentage of young adults were not sure that the Holocaust had occurred. The Center developed Holocaust curricula for colleges and secondary schools at a time when Holocaust education was virtually unknown on the West Coast. It also supported Holocaust survivor Mel Mermelstein, who in 1981 successfully sued the IHR to honor its promise of \$50,000 to anyone who could prove that Jews had been gassed at Auschwitz.

The Center developed media projects to educate the public about the Holocaust. It produced the film *Genocide*, narrated by Elizabeth Taylor and Orson Welles, that told the story of the Holocaust largely in the words of the victims. It won the 1981 Academy Award for best documentary feature. A second award followed in 1998 for *The Long Way Home*, a chronicle of the experience of Holocaust survivors between 1945 and 1948.

The Center held its first International Conference on Antisemitism in Paris in 1983. In the wake of an attack on the historic Rue Copernic Synagogue, the Center’s delegation discussed the connection between the French government’s pro-Arab tilt in the Middle East and the rising tide of antisemitic incidents in France with Larent Rapin, director of the French Foreign Ministry’s Middle East Desk, and Justice Minister Robert Badinter. The Center was accorded official observer status at the war crimes trial of Lyons SS chief Klaus Barbie (1987).

The Center also combated bigotry in rap and other forms of music popular among youth. In the late 1980s, Guns N’ Roses and Public Enemy—one group militantly “white,” the other militantly “black”—brought songs promoting race hate into the musical mainstream. The Center placed open letters in *Daily Variety* and the *Hollywood Reporter* decrying the trend. Public Enemy’s album *Welcome to the Terrordome*, for example, was crudely antisemitic: “Crucifixion ain’t no fiction, so-called chosen, frozen . . . they got me like a Jesus” (Harrington 1989).

As the Cold War wound down, a new threat—state-sponsored terrorism by Middle Eastern countries—took center stage in late 1985 and early 1986. The Palestinian terrorist group led by Mohammed Abbas seized the liner *Achille Lauro* and murdered wheelchair-bound Jewish American Leon Klinghoffer. Abu Nidal masterminded murderous attacks on the El Al counters at the Vienna and Rome airports. A Berlin discotheque bombing resulted in the deaths of two American servicemen and the injury of many more. At an Arab League meeting attended by UN Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, PLO representative Farouk Kaddoumi suggested that Klinghoffer's wife may have pushed him "into the sea to have his insurance," while the Italian government gave Mohammed Abbas safe passage (*New York Times*, December 5, 1985).

The Center's contribution to the fight against terrorism included convening the International Conference on Terrorism in Los Angeles in 1986 with experts from the United States, Europe, and Israel. Subsequently, the Center was among the first to publicize the threat of weapons of mass destruction from states like Iraq that used poison gas against both Iran and its own Kurdish minority. It was the moving force behind the historic 1989 Conference on Jewish Solidarity with Israel, where 1,300 Jewish leaders from 42 countries came to Jerusalem to show support for the beleaguered Jewish state.

The new state-sponsored terrorism of the 1980s invariably combined antisemitism and anti-Americanism. As early as 1986, the Center spotlighted the increasing Jew hatred in the Arab world by exposing Syrian defense minister Mustafa Tlas's book, *The Matzah of Zion*, which revived the old blood libel. In 1988 the Center revealed the stunning popularity of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the antisemitic document forged by czarist agents, in Cairo, the capital of Israel's ostensible "peace partner" Egypt. That same year, the Center translated into English the charter of the then-little-known Muslim fundamentalist group Hamas, whose antisemitic mindset inspired future suicide bombers.

The new global antisemitism extended beyond the Middle East and Europe. As early as 1987, the Center became concerned about the phenomenon of "Jew hatred with almost no Jews" in Japan. After a fact-finding mission to Tokyo in 1988, Center associate director Rabbi Abraham Cooper reported, "Virtually every one of the two dozen bookstands I visited featured popularly priced books which

blamed international Jewry for every conceivable problem, from the overvaluation of the yen to a purported cover-up of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster" (Cooper 1988).

In 1993 the Center acted to counter the rising tide of antisemitism in Central Europe. Yaron Svoray, an Israeli citizen and child of Holocaust survivors, volunteered on behalf of the Center to pose as right-wing Australian journalist "Ron Furey" in order to penetrate the leadership of German hate groups. In addition to such venerated icons as Hitler's bodyguard and the children of Himmler and Goering, Svoray/Furey won the confidence of contemporary celebrities such as Frank Rennicke, the "Elvis" of the German radical right, and of shadowy, sinister figures such as Nationalistic Front leader Meinolf Schoenborn and FAP leader Friedhelm Busse. His investigation revealed a neo-Nazi movement larger and more organized than previously believed, benefiting from the tacit support of some local police and with worldwide links. These disturbing findings—recounted in the book *Hitler's Shadow* and dramatized in the television film *The Infiltrator*—were aired in hearings before the U.S. House Subcommittee on International Security, International Organizations and Human Rights.

In the wake of the Gulf War, Kenneth R. Timmerman's Wiesenthal Center-commissioned study, *The Poison Gas Connection*, confirmed what the Center had suspected for years: that Western, mostly German, firms were exporting chemical weapons precursors to Libya and Iraq. I. G. Farben—a manufacturer of Zyklon B during the Holocaust—also supplied Saddam Hussein. "You Germans have assembled so much information about the gassing of Jews—that interests us. We would like to know how this knowledge can be put to use in the destruction of Israel," an Iraqi general told Karl Heinz Lohs, director of the Institute for Poisonous Chemicals, Leipzig (*London Guardian*, October 26, 1990).

The Center urged world governments to stop transferring to dictatorships technology relevant to building weapons of mass destruction, especially to those in the volatile Middle East. It also helped pressure Illinois-based Baxter International, the world's largest hospital supply firm, to cancel a deal to build a "pharmaceutical" plant in Syria that the Assad regime could have converted into a weapon against Israel.

During the 1990s, the Center became involved in several initiatives involving Africa. In the wake of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, which claimed the lives of 500,000

people and resulted in 2.5 million refugees, the Rwandan ambassador to Israel requested the aid of the Center's Israel director Zuroff in documenting the atrocities and prosecuting perpetrators. Zuroff helped make Rwanda's case for expedited trials before the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The UN Tribunal's difficulties in arraigning suspects, including priests and nuns accused of participation in genocide, echoed Simon Wiesenthal's struggles in bringing Nazi war criminals to justice. In 1999 the Center's Museum of Tolerance (MOT) in Los Angeles also hosted an international conference on slavery and the slave trade today in Mauritania and Sudan.

The information superhighway permits hatemongers to reach a vast audience. Over 1,000 websites promote their racist and antisemitic agendas. Currently, the Center devotes 80 percent of its research manpower to monitoring online hate groups. The effort began in 1994, when the Center asked supporters to alert it to propaganda postings on electronic bulletin boards so that an "early warning system" could be established.

The carnage at the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City in April 1995 dramatized the threat. Timothy McVeigh was a cyberspace junkie code-named "Mad Bomber." The apocalyptic novel—*The Turner Diaries* by William Pierce of the neo-Nazi National Alliance—that was McVeigh's inspiration and blueprint for the bomb plot was readily available for Internet download, as was that perennial favorite, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The Cyberspace Minutemen, Stormfront, the Aryan Resistance Center, and White Resurgence were just a handful of the more than 250 American, Canadian, and European hate groups that the Center discovered were recruiting in cyberspace. Resistance, Inc., the corporate front for racist rock groups, was creating a multimedia empire including independent music and video production, desktop publishing, shortwave radio, satellite hookups, citizen access television, and fax networks, as well as computer billboards on the Internet. The Net was awash in lethal recipes, including how-to manuals for making ammonium nitrate bombs, chlorine bombs, car bombs, pipe bombs, hand grenades, C-4 plastic explosives, and even sarin nerve gas. Extremists also used the Internet to identify enemies on their "hit lists" by name and address.

The Center issued a manual, *The New Lexicon of Hate*, to better inform law enforcement and community leaders

about the changing language and tactics of America's extremist movements. When fourteen neo-Nazi skinheads were convicted of plotting to bomb synagogues and black churches in Los Angeles in 1992, a federal court ordered them to undergo tolerance education at the Center's MOT as part of their sentence. After the 1995 murder by skinhead soldiers of an African American couple in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, the Pentagon requested the aid of the Center's National Task Force against Hate. The Center sent Tom Leyden, a former neo-Nazi recruiter who had undergone a change of heart, to help the military promote tolerance in the ranks. These efforts did not go unnoticed by the haters. In 1998 the FBI foiled a national plot by members of the neo-Nazi "New Order" to bomb the Center's Los Angeles headquarters as well as offices of the Anti-Defamation League and Southern Poverty Law Center.

The Center's MOT opened in 1993 and has hosted more than 2 million visitors. It utilizes hands-on computer stations, interactive displays, graphics, films, and videos to explore the history of the Holocaust and intolerance in America. The MOT not only exposes visitors to historical issues but challenges them to confront the problems of contemporary bigotry and racism. The Center is linking the MOT by fiber-optic network to the 50,000 videotaped survivor testimonies compiled by Steven Spielberg's Shoah Foundation. The result will be an exhaustive, eyewitness "instant history" of the Holocaust available to every computer user who seeks to know what happened and why it must never be allowed to happen again.

In the twenty-first century, a heightened focus is the growing linkage of anti-Americanism with antisemitism and hatred of Israel, which the Center highlighted even before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

*Harold Brackman*

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# Jews and the Press

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## The Early Yiddish Press in the United States

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The Yiddish press was arguably the most important institution in immigrant Jewish life. Although characterized by repeated failures during the 1870s and 1880s, the American Yiddish press came into its own during the 1890s, as the quantity, diversity, and popularity of Yiddish newspapers and journals increased dramatically. The development of a ramified Yiddish press occurred alongside the emergence of a mass Yiddish readership at the end of the nineteenth century. By 1900, the majority of immigrant Jews, especially in New York City, the capital of the American Yiddish press, either read Yiddish newspapers or regularly listened to them being read by friends, relatives, or coworkers. “All you have to do is go down to the Jewish quarter,” a correspondent for the Russian journal *Voskhod* (*Dawn*) reported in 1894, “and you will hear sellers hawking Jewish newspapers; you will see the newspapers being bought up; wherever you go [Jewish immigrants] are reading and they discuss what is read” (Michels 2005).

Ten years later, a correspondent for *Der fraynd* (*The Friend*), Russia’s first Yiddish daily, similarly observed, “It has become a necessity to have a newspaper at home. . . . Newspapers have become the main intellectual food of the Jewish immigrant in America” (Michels 2005). Correspondents for Russian publications expressed amazement at the

huge readership of Yiddish newspapers (the combined circulation of Yiddish dailies reached 66,000 in 1900 and 120,000 two years later) because a commercial Yiddish newspaper market did not yet exist in the Russian empire, where most European Jews lived. Although several Yiddish newspapers had appeared in Russia since the 1860s, the Russian government largely suppressed Yiddish publications until the establishment of *Der fraynd* in 1902. Not until the outbreak of the 1905 revolution did a popular Yiddish press come into existence in the Russian empire. (A number of short-lived Yiddish publications had also appeared in Austria-Hungary and Rumania in the second half of the nineteenth century.) The Yiddish press was, to a great extent, an American invention.

Yiddish newspapers did not simply report daily events, but rather fulfilled several functions at once. They provided education to those who could not read English or attend school. Articles on subjects such as biology, hygiene, civics, and history filled the pages of the American Yiddish press. The press also provided the main venue for Yiddish fiction, poetry, and criticism. Yiddish writers, from the best to the worst, published most of their work in the newspapers. Finally, Yiddish newspapers functioned as “agents of acculturation,” introducing and interpreting American society, politics, and culture for their readers. Commentators agreed that the Yiddish press played the major social, cultural, and political role in immigrant Jewish life. “In the

Yiddish press,” the sociologist Robert Park wrote in his classic study, “the foreign-language newspaper may be said to have achieved form. . . . No other foreign language press has succeeded in reflecting so much of the intimate life of the people which it represents, or reacted so powerfully upon the opinion, thought, and aspiration of the public for which it exists” (Park 1922). According to Irving Howe, the Yiddish press functioned as both “kindergarten and university” (Howe 1976).

The rise of the Yiddish press entailed at least two basic changes in Jewish cultural practices and social organization. It consolidated both a popular Yiddish readership and a Yiddish-writing (though often Russian- or English-speaking) intelligentsia. These twin phenomena were distinctly American inasmuch as they were not transplanted from Eastern Europe, but they defy “Americanization” in any conventional sense. Most writers for Yiddish newspapers in the late nineteenth century did not, prior to immigration, write in Yiddish; a significant number did not even know the language well enough to be able to do so. Not until settling in the United States did most writers become “Yiddishized.” By the same token, few immigrants (regardless of their literacy skills) were accustomed to reading Yiddish newspapers; indeed, they had never seen one before coming to the United States. Reading a newspaper, for nearly all immigrants arriving before the early 1900s, was a habit developed in the United States, and with considerable effort.

Newspapers encouraged new, often secular, identities; transformed the Yiddish vernacular into the primary language of intellectual discourse and literary creativity (thereby overturning the traditional language hierarchy of Ashkenazic Jews that placed Hebrew above Yiddish); and established new types of leaders: editors and writers, including secular and politically radical intellectuals. Similar developments were already under way in the Russian empire by the late nineteenth century. But in American cities they were greatly accelerated and extended due to freedoms of speech and assembly, the absence of entrenched communal structures, an exceptionally large and concentrated Jewish population in New York, and the city’s prevailing secular atmosphere.

In terms of circulation, the American Yiddish press would reach its peak in the 1920s, the decade in which Congress implemented highly restrictive quotas on immigration. Yet the foundation of the Yiddish press was set in place by the end of the nineteenth century.

The history of the Yiddish press in the United States began on March 1, 1870, when a businessman and communal activist in New York City, Y. K. Bukhner, published the first issue of *Di yidishe tsaytung* (*The Jewish Newspaper*), a lithographed weekly “paper of politics, religion, history, science and art.” Although the newspaper appeared irregularly and its meager contents belied its lofty subtitle, *Di yidishe tsaytung* paved the way for future efforts. Five months after its debut, a Hebrew writer, Tsvi Hirsh Bernshiteyn, decided to start a second Yiddish newspaper, *Di post* (*The Post*). In April 1871, an aspiring politician, Yankev Cohen, founded the *Hebrew News*, an English-German-Hebrew-Yiddish newspaper. By the end of the decade, no less than seven Yiddish newspapers had appeared in New York and one in Chicago.

Several factors contributed to the birth of the Yiddish press in the 1870s. First, the Yiddish-speaking population in New York grew significantly during that decade, reaching perhaps as many as 15,000 on the Lower East Side by 1880. Enterprising individuals perceived a potential readership within New York’s rapidly increasing Yiddish-speaking population and therefore a potentially lucrative market. Events overseas, especially wars, further stimulated interest in Yiddish newspapers. *Di post*, for example, was started in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War, and the *New Yorker Izraelit* (*New York Israelite*) was founded in 1877 after the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War. Local politics provided a third stimulus. The Tammany Hall Democratic Party, for example, understood that Yiddish language newspapers could be an effective means to reach Jewish voters and funded newspapers, such as the *Hebrew News*, whose editor ran for municipal office in 1871.

Nonetheless, the story of the Yiddish press in the 1870s was primarily one of failure. Most of the early Yiddish newspapers appeared irregularly and were short-lived. Only twelve issues of *Di yidishe tsaytung*, for example, appeared between March 1870 and October 1873. Very few immigrant Jews were accustomed to reading newspapers in Yiddish or any language. Most immigrants saw little need for a paper: they got along without one in the old country, why bother in the new? Immigrant Jews typically viewed reading Yiddish newspapers as a luxury. Furthermore, most immigrants found reading Yiddish newspapers exceedingly difficult. Few individuals could simply pick one up and read it. Most had to learn how to read. It is true that a relatively high rate of literacy characterized immigrant

Jewry, particularly in comparison with non-Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. Russia's 1897 census reported that 64–66 percent of male Jews and 32–37 percent of female Jews over the age of ten could read in some language. But most immigrants, male and female, possessed only rudimentary reading and writing skills.

The principal educational institution in Jewish society was the *kheyder*, which taught little more than the Hebrew alphabet, prayers, and the Bible to boys under the age of thirteen. Girls sometimes attended *kheyder* with their brothers for the first two years, and, in scattered instances, they attended special *khedorim* for girls, but generally girls received instruction at home in reading and writing Yiddish. The privileged minority of Jewish boys and girls who attended a government school in Russia were taught to read and write in Russian, not Yiddish. Consequently, immigrant Jews found it difficult to read Yiddish newspapers in the 1870s, and indeed immigrants would continue to find reading a challenge well into the twentieth century. In short, a readership did not exist; this had to be created.

Apart from their limited education, the peculiar language of Yiddish newspapers confronted readers with a major problem. In the 1870s, most journalists wrote in a highly Germanized Yiddish that came to be known as *daytshmerish*, characterized by a semi-German syntax, a preponderance of German vocabulary, and German-influenced orthography. (A single sentence in an 1873 article in *Di yidishe tsaytung*, for example, contained no less than eighteen German words adapted to the Yiddish alphabet's Hebrew characters.) Even words native to Yiddish were usually spelled in such a way as to make them sound more like German: *shprakhe* rather than *sphrakh* (language) or *haben* rather than *hoben* (to have). Readers thus had to learn a kind of newspaper language that was very different from the Yiddish they spoke. Referring to *Di yidishe gazetn* (*The Jewish Gazette*), one of the leading Yiddish newspapers in the 1870s and 1880s, a commentator wrote, "It would be much easier and less time-consuming for you to make sense of Egyptian hieroglyphics than to understand this journal of 'literature'" (Michels 2005).

Yiddish newspapers employed *daytshmerish* for at least four reasons. First, a number of early editors and writers came from a region of Poland near the Prussian border where the German influence was strongly felt. They spoke a blend of German and Yiddish called *Kalvalier daytsh* and transferred it to the pages of American Yiddish

newspapers. A second factor had to do with negative perceptions of Yiddish. Many pioneer Yiddish journalists were, ironically, frustrated Hebraists who had taken up Yiddish because the Hebrew-reading public was too small. Many of them regarded Yiddish as a corrupted version of German and incorporated as much German as possible with the goal of "purifying" and "elevating" the Jewish vernacular. Third, owing to the fact that Yiddish journalism was such a recent invention, the Yiddish language did not yet possess a vocabulary to describe events, ideas, and institutions specific to the United States. Nor did Yiddish newspapermen (few women wrote for the Yiddish press during the early years) possess generally agreed-upon rules of spelling and grammar. In the absence of a standardized, literary Yiddish (this would not come into existence until the twentieth century), early Yiddish journalists relied on German American newspapers for vocabulary and as a source of articles. A host of factors thus gave rise to *daytshmerish* during the Yiddish press's formative period.

Of the early Yiddish newspaper publishers, Kasriel Tsvi Sarasohn (1834–1905) was far and away the most successful. A rabbi and conservative *maskil* (proponent of the *Haskalah* or Jewish Enlightenment) from Lithuania, Sarasohn immigrated to the United States in 1869 and tried his hand at newspaper publishing in 1872. His first Yiddish newspaper, *Di nyu-yorker yidishe tsaytung* (*The New York Jewish Newspaper*), went out of business after only four or five months, but in 1874 Sarasohn made a second, successful attempt with the weekly *Di yidishe gazetn* (*The Jewish Gazette*). This time, he raised enough money from investors (a wealthy relative chief among them) to keep the new paper alive. *Di yidishe gazetn* was, in fact, the only Yiddish newspaper to survive the 1870s. In 1881, following the outbreak of pogroms in the Russian empire and the subsequent jump in Jewish immigration, Sarasohn tried to turn *Di yidishe gazetn* into a daily.

The Yiddish readership, however, was not yet large or mature enough to support a Yiddish daily, forcing *Di yidishe gazetn* to return to a weekly schedule after a matter of months. Not until early 1885 did Sarasohn, with his son and business partner Yehezkil, succeed in publishing what is considered the first viable Yiddish daily, *Dos yidishes tageblat* (*The Jewish Daily*). The *Tageblat* actually appeared only four or five times per week until 1894, when it began coming out every day except *shabes*. Nonetheless, during its first nine years, the *Tageblat* published more frequently

than any other Yiddish newspaper. (*Di yidishe gazetn* continued as a weekly all along.)

In addition to launching the first successful Yiddish daily, the Sarasohns changed the way Yiddish newspapers were distributed. Prior to 1885 Yiddish newspapers were sold mostly in grocery stores and kosher butcher shops. The Sarasohns, however, hired newsboys to sell their papers in the streets in the custom of English-language newspapers. Although initially Jewish newsboys, seeing Yiddish as a marker of foreignness, felt too embarrassed to hawk Yiddish newspapers in public (thereby compelling the Sarasohns to hire non-Jews), Yiddish newspaper vendors soon became fixtures in immigrant Jewish neighborhoods.

Kasriel and Yehezkl Sarasohn dominated the American Yiddish newspaper market during the 1880s and 1890s. By the turn of the century, the *Tageblatt's* circulation climbed to almost 40,000, surpassing all competitors. Furthermore, the Sarasohns purchased competing Yiddish newspapers in Boston, Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia. (They also published several unsuccessful Hebrew-language publications.) Sarasohn can be considered, in the words of one historian, the first Yiddish press “magnate” (Marmor 1944).

Yet the Sarasohns faced growing competition during the late 1880s and 1890s. A precipitous rise in Jewish immigration (caused by the 1881–1883 pogroms in Russia, tightened legal restrictions on Russian Jews, and, above all, the generally deteriorating economic fortunes of Eastern European Jews) greatly increased the number of potential Yiddish newspaper readers. A parallel increase in the number of businesses catering to Yiddish speakers supplied newspapers with needed advertising revenue. Technological innovations (such as the Linotype machine) enabled publishers to print more copies and reduce prices from six cents in the 1870s to a penny in the 1890s. And, above all, people increasingly wanted to read Yiddish newspapers. Immigrants recognized that the Yiddish press could help them both adapt to their new country and stay informed about *der alter heym* (the old country). Local events (such as strikes and elections) and events abroad (such as wars and pogroms) played an especially important role in stimulating demand. A slow move from daytshmerish toward colloquial Yiddish, starting in the late 1880s, made Yiddish newspapers somewhat more accessible to average immigrants.

Of the Sarasohns' competitors, the Jewish labor movement's socialist leaders were the fiercest and ultimately most successful. Socialists rejected the very premise behind the *Tageblatt* and the Sarasohns' other publications. The Sarasohns defined the *Tageblatt* as a *kol yisroel* (all Jews) newspaper that represented the interests of the Jewish people as a whole rather than a particular segment of it. The *Tageblatt*, Yehezkl Sarasohn explained in 1894, “is not a newspaper of a class against a class, it is a newspaper for all Jews [kol yisroel]” (Michels 2005). With the rise of the Jewish labor movement in 1885–1886, the *Tageblatt* often denounced socialists for dividing the Jewish people. The newspaper showed sympathy for the plight of “honest” workers, but the Sarasohns wanted to contain class conflict as much as possible and sometimes even sided with employers during labor conflicts. (During a bakers' strike in 1899–1900, an angry mob rallied outside the *Tageblatt's* offices and smashed its windows in protest against the newspaper's antilabor position.) As part of the Sarasohns' attempt to cast the *Tageblatt* as a proponent of Jewish unity standing above destructive partisan divisions, they defended Jewish religious Orthodoxy against its socialist critics and the general drift away from strict observance. Yet, at the same time, the *Tageblatt* encouraged readers to adapt to their new country. The Sarasohns thus attempted an uneasy balance between tradition and change, Jewish unity and justice for Jewish workers.

Jewish socialists, by contrast, objected outright to the idea of *kol yisroel*. In a society divided by irreconcilably hostile classes, they argued, Jewish unity was a chimera that served the interests of bosses. Socialists viewed the press as a means to provide secular education (“enlightenment”), to agitate for a particular ideology (such as Marxian social democracy or anarchism), and to mobilize public opinion behind the labor movement. While the Sarasohns appealed to tradition for legitimacy (but deviated from it when considered necessary), socialists advocated radical change to solve current problems.

Socialists entered the Yiddish newspaper market in the middle of the massive, nationwide strike wave known as the Great Upheaval. They began inauspiciously in June 1886 when Abraham Cahan (who eventually became the dominant figure of the Yiddish press) and his friend Charles Raevsky founded *Di naye tsayt* (*The New Era*), an inconsequential weekly that survived just a few weeks. The socialist Yiddish press really began with *Di nyu-*

*yorker yidische folkstsaytung* (*The New York Jewish People's Newspaper*, named after the German-language daily *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, but with the appropriate modification), which appeared shortly after *Di naye tsayt*. The newspaper's editors, Abba Braslavsky and Moyshe Mints, were both leading members of the Yidisher Arbeter Fareyn (the Jewish Workers' Association), which was the first Yiddish-speaking socialist organization in the United States, founded in 1885. The *Folkstsaytung's* editors promised to "show the Jewish worker its correct place in the family of workers of the entire world, his duty to his suffering brothers, to open his eyes to his economic situation, to enlighten and show him what kind of world he lives in, why he suffers, and how he can overcome it" (Michels 2005).

In addition to bringing radical political ideas to the Yiddish reading public, Braslavsky and Mints introduced a new level of professionalism in Yiddish journalism. They kept the *Folkstsaytung* free of the outdated news items and sensationalistic stories that were typical of the *Tageblatt* and other Yiddish newspapers. Furthermore, Braslavsky and Mints used a more colloquial form of Yiddish than was considered appropriate at the time. The *Folkstsaytung's* circulation reached about 4,500 and was read in cities as far away as Burlington, Vermont, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Although considered moderately successful during its own time, the *Folkstsaytung* survived only three and a half years because of growing ideological divisions between anarchists and social democrats in the Jewish labor movement. Its final issue appeared in December 1889. By that time, no less than five radical Yiddish newspapers had come and gone due to lack of money, inexperience, or political infighting.

Despite its shaky beginning, the Yiddish socialist press grew into a powerful force during the 1890s. The founding of *Di arbeter tsaytung* (*The Workers Newspaper*) in March 1890 marked the turning point. A group of prominent socialist intellectuals and activists—Abraham Cahan, Morris Hillquit (then still known by his family name Hilkovits), Louis Miller, and Bernard Vaynshteyn among them—launched *Di arbeter tsaytung* after rejecting a proposal by anarchists to start a joint, bipartisan newspaper. The new weekly, unlike the defunct *Folkstsaytung*, defined itself as a strict Marxian newspaper allied with the Socialist Labor Party (SLP) (the major socialist party in the United States at the time, dominated by German immigrants).

*Di arbeter tsaytung* also differed from the *Folkstsaytung* in that it was owned collectively by a "publishing association" (like the German-language *Volkszeitung*) rather than by private individuals. Only members of the SLP, the United Hebrew Trades, or an affiliated union could join the Arbeter Tsaytung Publishing Association (ATPA). Members were responsible for raising money (most of which came from German American trade unionists), selecting *Di arbeter tsaytung's* editor, and overseeing the newspaper's affairs. The ATPA imported Philip Krants from England to serve as the first editor. A veteran of the Russian revolutionary movement, Krants had coedited London's *Arbeter fraynd* (*The Workers' Friend*) between 1885 and 1889 and was widely respected among New York's Jewish socialists.

As its name implied, *Di arbeter tsaytung* viewed itself not as a Jewish newspaper but as a workers' newspaper in the Yiddish language. As such, it put forward no specifically Jewish goals, but rather pledged "to help the workers in their political and economic struggles against the capitalists at every step; to awaken in them a spirit of freedom, independence, and class-consciousness" (Michels 2005). A typical issue of *Di arbeter tsaytung* included news about labor and socialist movements in the United States and Europe; an essay on contemporary events, socialist thought, or an aspect of revolutionary history; and fiction and poetry by Yiddish authors on both sides of the Atlantic (such as Morris Rosenfeld, Sh. Y. Abramovitch, Y. L. Perets, and Dovid Pinsky). European literature regularly appeared in translation. From a literary standpoint, *Di arbeter tsaytung* was the best Yiddish newspaper in the United States.

It was also important as the newspaper in which Abraham Cahan honed his talents as a Yiddish journalist. Cahan replaced Krants in the summer of 1891 and remained editor of *Di arbeter tsaytung* until it ceased publication in 1897. Cahan lent the newspaper a folksy, popular flair. He possessed a superior command of Yiddish and a knack for presenting socialist ideas in an accessible style. Thus Cahan used to explain to readers that a union card was like a *mezuzeh* that could protect workers from harm. Rather than resort to *daytshmerish*, Cahan mined the Yiddish lexicon for appropriate terms or coined new ones (such as *pasirung*, or event) that had an authentic Yiddish flavor. He insisted that his colleagues write in simple, understandable language or what he called *yidische yidish*. If they did not know Yiddish well enough (as held true for

many socialist intellectuals), then Cahan tutored his writers in plain *mame-loshn*, the immigrants' mother tongue. Cahan's most distinctive contribution to *Di arbeter tsaytung*, starting in 1890, was the *Sedre* or commentary on the weekly Torah portion, in which Cahan (under the guise of The Proletarian Preacher) commented on current events in the style of an Old World *magid* (preacher). In later decades, as editor of the *Forverts* (*Forward*), Cahan achieved enormous success by combining his folksy socialism with American yellow journalism.

*Di arbeter tsaytung*, established during the second major strike wave since the Great Upheaval of 1886, won immediate approval from the immigrant Jewish public. The premier issue sold out and, a month later, the newspaper expanded from four to eight pages. Estimates of its circulation range between 6,000 and 8,000 copies, an impressive figure for that time. The actual number of readers was certainly larger since single copies typically passed from hand to hand and were read collectively in small groups. Moreover, *Di arbeter tsaytung* paved the way for *Dos abend blat* (*The Evening Sheet*), the world's first socialist Yiddish daily, in the fall of 1894. Started during yet another huge strike wave, *Dos abend blat* struck a chord with the public. Philip Krants, the paper's editor, boasted in February 1895 that the daily had 36,000 "worker-readers."

In truth, not all of *Dos abend blat's* readers were workers or even socialists. The Yiddish readership did not divide neatly into rigid ideological or political camps. Some readers might read both *Dos abend blat* and the *Tageblatt*, regardless of whether they agreed fully with the contents of either. People read a given newspaper for any number of reasons: for its literary offerings, practical information, entertaining feuds between writers, whatever. Nonetheless, it was remarkable that tens of thousands of people (most without prior exposure to radical ideas or without experience reading newspapers in Eastern Europe) showed a willingness to read an avowedly Marxian newspaper every day, regardless of whether or not they agreed with its editorial line or the entirety of its content. *Dos abend blat* still trailed behind the *Tageblatt*, but its considerable popularity can be understood as a barometer of rapid cultural change occurring among immigrant Jews and, indeed, as a contributor to it.

A factional struggle within the ATPA led to the demise of *Di arbeter tsaytung* in 1897 and *Dos abend blat* in 1902. They would be replaced by the *Forverts*, founded in April

1897, which would grow into the most successful Yiddish daily of all time under Cahan's editorship. Anarchists met with less success in the Yiddish newspaper market. The anarchist group, Pioneers of Liberty, founded *Di fraye arbeter shtime* (*Free Voice of Labor*) in July 1890 but struggled to keep it afloat during much of the decade. Lacking a strong base of support in the trade union movement, anarchists faced chronic problems in raising sufficient funds. The paper was forced to cease publication in 1892 and again in 1893. Not until 1899 would anarchists manage to publish *Di fraye arbeter shtime* (refashioned by its editor Shoel Yanovsky into a paper of high literary merit) on a regular weekly basis, which they did until 1977.

Beyond the left-wing Yiddish press, the quantity and diversity of Yiddish publications increased across the country during the 1890s. In addition to the *Tageblatt*, *Dos abend blat*, and *Forverts*, five other dailies representing different ideological perspectives appeared between 1894 and 1899: *Der teglekher herold* (*The Daily Herald*, 1894), *Der teglekher telegraf* (*The Daily Telegraph*, 1895), *Di teglekhe prese* (*The Daily Press*, 1898), *Di teglekhe folksaytung* (*The Daily People's Newspaper*, 1899), and the *Nyu-yorker yidische abendpost* (*The New York Jewish Evening Post*, 1899). In 1892, the Sarasohns bought out Chicago's *Der yidisher kurier* (*The Jewish Courier*), founded in 1887, and turned it into the city's first Yiddish daily. (While New York newspapers dominated the national market, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Newark, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco were home to Yiddish newspapers of their own.)

A variety of specialized newspapers and journals (albeit mostly short-lived) also appeared during the late 1880s and 1890s. There was a newspaper for women (*Di vayberishe tsaytung* [*The Women's Newspaper*]), satirical journals (*Der yidisher puck* [*The Jewish Puck*], *Der litvaki* [*The Little Lithuanian Jew*], *Di groysse baytsh* [*The Big Whip*]), a theater newspaper (*Di fraye yidische folksbine* [*The Free Jewish People's Theater*]), Zionist newspapers (*Di tsayt* [*The Times*], *Der tsionist* [*The Zionist*]), a science journal (*Natur un lebn* [*Nature and Life*]), a publication for matchmakers (*Der shadkhen* [*The Matchmaker*]), and others. A number of left-wing educational/political/literary journals also came out during the decade, such as the Pioneers of Liberty's *Di fraye gezelschaft* (*The Free Society*), Alexander Harkavy's *Der nayer gayst* (*The New Spirit*), and, most important, the monthly *Di tsukunft* (*The Future*).

Founded by the SLP's Yiddish-speaking branches in 1892 for the purpose of educating ("enlightening") Jewish workers, *Di tsukunft* aimed to popularize secular knowledge for readers who knew no other language than Yiddish and who had no formal secular education. The journal (edited first by Krants and then by Cahan) published articles on political economy, philosophy, biology, zoology, anthropology, astronomy, pedagogy, physics, psychology, religion, and literature. Nowhere else could immigrants learn about a wide array of scientific subjects written in a relatively good Yiddish. By 1897, *Di tsukunft's* circulation reached about 3,500 with an actual readership of about 10,000, according to one contemporary estimate.

*Di tsukunft* and similar, less successful journals reflected a maturation of the Yiddish reading public. These journals helped to cultivate a relatively small, but growing stratum of readers who wanted to expand their intellectual horizons beyond the newspaper page. This "advanced" segment of the Yiddish readership assumed organizational form in the numerous self-education societies that sprung up in immigrant Jewish centers during the 1890s. Members of self-education societies (mostly young men and women active in the Jewish labor movement) formed reading groups, organized lectures, built informal libraries, and raised money for journals (such as *Di tsukunft*) and for the publication of Yiddish pamphlets. Some groups even trained their members to become public speakers. Many such societies eventually merged into the Arbeter Ring, established as a national fraternal order in 1900, which combined mutual aid with self-education. The Jewish labor movement's first, stable mass-membership organization, the Arbeter Ring gained almost 40,000 members in 1910 and more than twice that in the 1920s.

As the Yiddish readership matured, so too did Yiddish journalism as a profession. In the 1870s, the number of people who made a living from the Yiddish press could be counted on one hand. Typically, a single editor wrote or translated most of his newspaper's copy and often served as the typesetter as well. (This also held true for the early English-language press in the United States.) The few people who could be labeled Yiddish journalists usually had to supplement their income with other occupations, such as teaching in Jewish religious schools (itself a low-paying occupation). By the mid-1880s, however, there were signs that Yiddish writers had started to think of themselves as a distinct group or profession. In October 1885, a meeting

was called to create the Nyu-yorker zhargoner prese klub (New York Yiddish Press Club) for the purpose of "mutual assistance, both material and moral, between Yiddish writers" (Khaykin 1946). However, no such organization came into existence. The number of professional Yiddish journalists (people who supported themselves by writing full-time for Yiddish newspapers) was still quite small in the late 1880s. The total number of professional or semiprofessional Yiddish journalists, as of 1889, probably totaled no more than ten.

But, with the expansion of the Yiddish press in the 1890s, the number of professional writers grew steadily. The Yiddish press drew writers from other languages, such as Hebrew and Russian, which failed to sustain viable newspapers in the late nineteenth century. A few writers, such as the Stanford University-educated William Edlin, even chose Yiddish over English. A growing number of journalists and creative writers immigrated to the United States—either by invitation from a specific newspaper or on their own initiative—to take advantage of the burgeoning audience and financial possibilities afforded by the Yiddish press. The list included Philip Krants, Dovid Pinsky, and Morris Vintshevsky, all of whom played a pioneering role in the development of Yiddish letters on both sides of the Atlantic. (A poet in both Hebrew and Yiddish, Vintshevsky was known as the grandfather of Jewish socialism.) For the first time, writers and editors could earn a decent living from Yiddish journalism in the 1890s. On the high end, the *Tageblat's* editor, Johann Paley, earned \$30 per week and its staff writers, about \$10 per week. The highest-paid writer in the Yiddish press was Getsl Zelikovitch, who made \$18 per week. A number of fiction writers, such as Shomer and Moyshe Zeyfert, earned as much as \$8 to \$12 per week writing for the *Tageblat*. Socialist Yiddish newspapers paid substantially less than the Sarasohns because of lower profits. Krants's official salary from the ATPA was \$12 per week in 1890 and Cahan's was \$10. Rarely, however, was either person paid regularly or in full, at least not in the early years of the publishing association. (Socialist writers could earn extra money giving lectures to Jewish socialist or labor organizations.)

Professional self-consciousness among Yiddish writers also took the form of strikes. Starting in the 1890s, Yiddish writers occasionally went on strike against their employers, leading to attempts at unionization. In 1915,

Yiddish writers formed the Y. L. Perets Fareyn, the first successful union of Yiddish writers.

Thus, in the late nineteenth century, a full-fledged commercial Yiddish press had come into existence in the United States, years before one developed in Europe.

Tony Michels

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## Abraham Cahan (1860–1951)

Editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*  
and Novelist

A radical labor organizer, brilliant orator, novelist, translator, and journalist, Abraham Cahan is best known as the indefatigable editor of the Yiddish-language, socialist newspaper, *The Jewish Daily Forward* (*Forverts*). Over the course of nearly half a century, from 1903, when he assumed the helm at the *Forward*, to his death in 1951, Cahan turned a drab, virtually unreadable Yiddish daily into a landmark of American journalism. Instead of emphasizing theoretical pieces in his socialist paper, Cahan presented the class struggle in the form of stories and news from the marketplace, home, and factory. With his keen eye for the intrinsically interesting in the many complex and intersecting worlds of urban life, and with his commitment to social justice and to the "whole truth in life and literature," Cahan constructed a *Forward* that remained attractive to nonsocialist as well as socialist Jews and

reached a circulation of more than a quarter million. The paper was the world's greatest immigrant, Jewish, and socialist daily, and it helped make Cahan possibly the single most influential figure in the cultural life of millions of Jewish immigrants and their families during his lifetime.

Born July 7, 1860 in the *shtetl* of Podberezya, Byelorussia, Cahan was the only child of Shachne and Sarah Goldarbeiter Cahan. When he was five, his family moved to nearby Vilna, the capital of rabbinic learning and the seat of a growing modernization movement. Here the elder Cahan, a relatively poor shopkeeper and Hebrew teacher, and the son of an itinerant rabbi, was torn between his desire to prepare his own son for a career through secular education or through religious school (*heder*).

Cahan went to religious school and studied the tractates of the Talmud, but he also voraciously read secular works in the Vilna Public Library. Through intense self-study, he learned Russian and gained admission to the Vilna State Teachers Training College in 1878. The school was a center for student radicalism, and by 1880 Cahan had had significant contact with revolutionary students and was converted to socialism. He was taken with radical literature, which he described as "a forbidden object."

Its publishers are those people . . . who live together like brothers and are ready to go to the gallows for freedom and justice. . . . I took the pamphlet in hand as one touches a holy thing I will never forget it. . . . All of this became part of my new religion, and had a great effect on my feelings. After my conversion to Socialism, I withdrew from all foolishness. I was definitely a better, more serious and philosophical man.

In 1881, Cahan, now a certified schoolmaster in Velizhi, Lithuania, and a member of an underground revolutionary cell, had to flee the police, whose suspicions had been aroused by the young teacher's radical associations. He thought of emigrating to Switzerland and even to Palestine, but Cahan finally joined an Am Olam group, which in the wake of nearly 200 pogroms in Ukraine was going to the United States to experiment with Jewish agricultural communalism.

Cahan arrived in Philadelphia on June 6, 1882, but settled in New York the very next day. He worked for a while in a cigar factory and then for an even shorter time



Abraham Cahan, editor of the Yiddish-language socialist newspaper *The Jewish Daily Forward*. (Library of Congress)

in a tin shop. He found the labor exhausting and monotonous. His joy came from teaching English to groups of his East Side neighbors at night. To learn the language better himself, the twenty-two-year-old Cahan worked with English newspapers and a rudimentary grammar, and sat among twelve- and thirteen-year-olds (mostly non-Jews) in an elementary school on Chrystie Street.

Aspiring to a career as a writer and anxious to escape the oppression of the shops, Cahan sent his first article, a critique of czarism, to the *New York World*. Though unsolicited, the piece was published on the front page. Cahan continued to teach English classes to immigrants for ten more years, all the while encouraging acculturation, but his main contribution came in labor activism and journalism, particularly the pioneering of popular Yiddish journalism. As early as the summer of 1882, Cahan had

discovered a growing immigrant audience responsive to Yiddish. Unlike many of his colleagues among the radical Jewish intelligentsia, who were addressing Yiddish-speaking immigrants in Russian, Cahan began to deliver popular political harangues in the so-called folk vernacular. Relatively quickly, others saw the practicality of this, and Yiddish became the primary medium of communication among Jewish radicals. Lecturing in Yiddish and English in 1884 and 1885, Cahan helped organize a Jewish tailors union and a Jewish cloakmakers union. This was the beginning of Cahan's lifelong association with the militant labor movement.

For some time the consensus continued to be that Yiddish was strictly an expedient in the conducting of Socialist labor activity and not a value in itself. Many radicals, however, came to love the "despised jargon," and Cahan would

champion Yiddish to journalistic and literary heights, even as he tried to transcend the Yiddish-speaking community with articles and stories in the English press and with several English-language novels. Among the most important of these is *Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto* (1896), a classic exploration of the urban experience, which focuses on the conflicts and tensions inherent in the American immigrant struggle for new identity. And *The Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), considered by critics to be Cahan's greatest work, is a first-person retrospective assessment of a poor immigrant who became a successful garment manufacturer—rich, but filled with both pride and regret.

Abraham Cahan's early politics resembled an eclectic stew of European ideas strongly flavored with the ethical and moral ingredients of his Jewish religious background. After his association with Am Olam, which he ultimately rejected as "utopian," Cahan described himself as an anarchist *and* a socialist. For a while he preached the violent "propaganda of the deed" and advised the poor to "march with iron bars and axes on Fifth Avenue and . . . seize the palaces of the rich." But after the Haymarket affair in 1886–1887, when seven radical agitators were sentenced to death and four were executed for the murder of seven policemen killed in the course of a violent melee at an anarchist meeting, Cahan became convinced that the anarchists were "adventurers," and he committed himself more firmly and exclusively to socialism.

To make the appeal to socialism effective, Cahan and other journalists, organizers, and activists believed recruits would have to see social strain and discontent and the need for collective economic and political action in terms of their own cultural heritage. Cahan constantly wove biblical references and Talmudic aphorisms into his calls to labor unionism and socialism. In 1886, in the first issue of *Neie Tseit* (*New Times*), which he coedited, Cahan used the theme of Shevuot (the festival of weeks, associated with the receiving of the Law) to illustrate socialist principles, and he remained interested throughout most of his career in using Jewish tradition and folk-religious forms in this way. He understood and applauded the fact that the rigid mores of Jewish Orthodoxy had already undergone a loosening in Eastern Europe and that in the United States, the *trefene medina* (unkosher land), there was further erosion. But Cahan knew how thoroughly Jewish values and traditions were embedded in the Jewish imagination, even in that of a professed atheist like himself. Ethnic attachments, in the

richest sense of that term, operated even on those who thought they had discarded them as "backward," and they were certainly meaningful to the average Jewish worker who read Cahan's journalism.

In 1890, Abe Cahan began a weekly column in the *Arbeiter Tseitung* (*Workers Newspaper*) known as the *Sedre*, the portion of the Pentateuch read each week in Sabbath services. He always began with a formal element in the liturgy, but soon took off into a discussion of socialist matters. Cahan's pieces proved so popular that even the anarchists tried to imitate them in the *Freie Arbeiter Shtimme* (*Free Voice of Labor*). *The Jewish Daily Forward*, which Cahan edited at its founding in 1897 and to which he returned permanently in 1903, became under his leadership the educator of the Jewish immigrant masses, a critical component of the Jewish labor movement and Jewish socialism, and a defender and patron of Yiddish literature and modern culture. Among the authors sustained by the *Forward* were Sholem Asch and Isaac Bashevis Singer.

One of the *Forward's* best-read innovations was the *Bintel Brief* (bundle of letters), started in 1906. Letters from readers about poverty and sickness, love and divorce, unemployment, intermarriage, socialism, generational conflicts, and declining religious observance were printed daily. The responses, written by Cahan in the early years and increasingly by his staff as well, tried to suggest that the immigrants should not make excessive demands on themselves, that they should even enjoy life a little. Cahan did not advise immigrants to give up their religious or ideological preconceptions entirely, but he did encourage the newcomers to make the needs of everyday life in America primary.

As part of the Americanization process, Cahan also tried to acquaint *Forward* readers with English. Opening himself to the charge of corrupting the Yiddish language, Cahan encouraged his writers to follow the general custom of incorporating English words into their Yiddish articles. And in 1923 he went so far as to introduce a multipage English language insert. At its height in 1920, the *Forward* published twelve metropolitan editions from Boston to Los Angeles, and its circulation was close to 300,000. A large part of the profits went to social causes.

A moderate socialist, Cahan's anticapitalist views were tempered by American conditions and by the increasing tyrannies of militant Bolshevism. At the outset of the Russian revolution in 1917, Cahan had proclaimed, "Russia is free." But the *Forward* became increasingly anti-Communist.

nist as the excesses of Soviet authoritarianism became apparent. In addition, Cahan continued to be interested in the particular oppression of Jews. As early as 1891, when Cahan was a delegate of the United Hebrew Trades at the Brussels congress of the Second International, he explained that the federation of unions he represented had “nothing to do with religion or nationality” and that the word *Hebrew* was adopted “only because of the language spoken by all its members.” At the same time, however, he introduced a resolution condemning antisemitism.

In April 1903, when the news of the Kishinev pogrom reached Cahan in Connecticut, he was bird-watching, a hobby he had developed as a break from writing. Field glasses and bird manual in hand, he immediately rushed for a New York train. “I felt an urge to be among Jews,” he explained in his autobiography. Partially in response to Kishinev, Cahan wrote his little-known novel *The White Terror and the Red*, which was published in 1905. The story, set in the early 1880s, explores the conflicts of young Jewish revolutionaries and deals with their unfortunate attitudes toward the Jewish people and the pogroms that victimized them.

In 1925, after attending the Socialist Congress at Marseilles, Cahan visited Palestine for the first time and wept at the Western Wall. Jewish “crises” continued to agitate him. After the 1929 anti-Jewish riots in Palestine, which a handful of radicals applauded as the beginning of “revolution,” Cahan made certain his paper did a thorough and sensitive job covering the impact of the events on the Jewish community there. Although he did not consider himself a Zionist, he paid tribute to the courage and idealism of Zionist pioneers. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s Cahan continued to be productive and creative. Only after suffering a stroke in 1946 at the age of eighty-six did he stop appearing at the *Forward* office on a daily basis.

In a series of letters written between 1883 and 1884, Abraham Cahan had complained of a lack of “orientation” and a “firm foundation.” He was tormented over his “divided mood.” Despite his marriage to Anna Bronstein in 1886, an educated and cultured woman from Kiev who brought sensibilities to the relationship that helped sustain Cahan for sixty years of a turbulent career, he never completely transcended the divided mood. He was, after all, a refugee from Russia observing revolutionary sacrifice from afar and an assertive promoter of Americanization wedded to Yiddish journalism.

Cahan as a Socialist could integrate his Old World and New World selves. But Cahan the exile—hailed along with Stephen Crane and Hamlin Garland as the harbinger of a new literature, and whose *Forward* was described as “America’s most interesting daily”—never fully came to terms with his becoming something of the “successful American.” The ambivalence he continued to experience showed clearly in his semiautobiographical novel, *The Rise of David Levinsky*. David is also a “success,” but reflects: “I cannot escape from my old self. David, the poor lad swinging over a Talmud volume at the Preacher’s Synagogue, seems to have more in common with my inner identity than David Levinsky, the well-known cloak manufacturer.” By the time Cahan died of heart failure at the age of ninety-one, however, this complex, often troubled man was recognized as a great journalist, a legendary teacher to a people in the process of acculturation, and a persistent defender of the cause of labor and socialism.

Gerald Sorin

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## The American Jewish Press

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise referred to U.S. Jewish newspapers as “weaklies,” and Brandeis professor Jonathan Sarna noted

that the history of American Jewish journalism showed, “at least until recently, a story of marked decay” (Sarna 2004). Despite these justifiably critical comments, the American Jewish press has had a rich and complex history. In the more than 160 years of American Jewish journalism, an estimated 2,500 newspapers and magazines have appeared, with at least one publication in most states. Although these American Jewish publications have appeared in German, Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, and Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), the English publications constitute the oldest segment of American Jewish journalism. In 1880, although about two-thirds of the 250,000 American Jews had German ancestry, the English-language Jewish publications “outnumbered those in German and survived longer” (Goren 1987). According to Arthur Goren, the influx of Yiddish-speaking East European Jews at the end of the nineteenth century contributed to the further expansion of the Anglo-Jewish press, as the “established Jews” sought to secure their status as English speakers. In the decades after immigration restriction (1924), as the number of Jews able to read Yiddish declined precipitously, the English-language Jewish press once again became the most widely read.

The difficulties of defining an American Jewish publication are akin to those of defining a Jew. The earliest publication with a Jewish name is *Cohen’s Gazette and Lottery Register*. Yet this Baltimore journal, which began publication in 1814, was Jewish in name only: “[I]t was, in essence, a gambling sheet” (Sarna 2004). A New York journal, *The Jew*, was published in 1823 to counter Christian missionary efforts, but contained little substantive news. It lasted only two years. From 1817 through most of the 1830s, Mordecai Manuel Noah, a leading American Jewish editor, playwright, lawyer, and politician, wrote about many issues of Jewish concern, but these articles appeared in the New York-based *National Advocate*, *New York Evening Star*, and other non-Jewish publications.

The first identifiably Jewish publication was the *Occident and American Jewish Advocate*. Founded in April 1843 by Isaac Leeser, the *hazzan* of Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia, this journal soon emerged as the place where American Jews found “answers to questions regarding Jewish behavior and identity in this new world” (Libo 1987). The journal published news from Jewish communities throughout the country and reprinted articles from European Jewish periodicals. The *Occident* also published book reviews, editorials, fiction, poetry, political and reli-

gious philosophy, documents, and historical essays. Stating its aim as the “diffusion of knowledge on Jewish literature and religion,” it was “one of the finest journals that the American Jewish community has ever produced” (Sarna 2004). Nevertheless, Sarna suggests that the *Occident* foreshadowed a persistent problem in American Jewish journalism: “a tension between the Jewish journalist as a reporter of news and . . . a shaper of community.” In the years preceding the Civil War, Leeser would not publish diverse Jewish views about slavery, fearing this might have bad effects on the welfare of the entire Jewish community. The refusal to publish vigorous debate about a controversial issue is not unique to this era. A century and a half later, some community activists and Jewish journalists denounced American Jewish newspapers and magazines for not printing articles critical of the policies and actions of Israeli right-wing governments.

Although New York did not emerge as the preeminent American city for Jews until the late nineteenth century, America’s largest metropolis became the home of the first important Jewish periodical in 1849. Edited by a businessman, Robert Lyon, *The Asmonean* published articles on a wide variety of Jewish and secular topics, but lasted less than a decade.

In 1854, the growth of Reform Judaism spawned the *Israelite*, later renamed the *American Israelite*, now the oldest continuously published Jewish newspaper in the United States. Founded by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati, this was the first American Jewish publication propounding the ideology of a Jewish religious denomination. Rabbi Wise wrote articles critical of anti-Jewish discriminatory practices and hailed the legal and religious freedom accorded Jews in this country (Libo 1987). The *American Hebrew*, founded in 1879, published Israel Zangwill, Emma Lazarus, and Henrietta Szold, among other literary and intellectual figures, and emerged as a significant journal fostering both Jewish and American values.

By the end of the nineteenth century, almost every American city with a sizable Jewish population had a weekly English publication covering Jewish news in the United States and abroad. Although the rapid growth of American Jewish publications was impressive, it never matched—even to this day—the circulation and influence of the Yiddish-language American press, which in the 1920s sold an estimated 600,000 daily copies in New York City alone (Libo 1987). Occasionally, the English-language

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The Occident was devoted to the diffusion of knowledge on Jewish literature and religion. (*American Jewish Historical Society*)

Jewish press voiced the hostility of some American-born Jews to their East European coreligionists and their language. The *Jewish Times* characterized *Di Yiddishe Zeitung* as "just as ridiculous as its language," and the *American Israelite* objected to *Di Post* because Judaism "is degraded by being clothed in such a language" (Silverman 1963).

The professionalization of Jewish journalism began in the twentieth century with the creation of two organizations. In 1917, Viennese Jewish journalist Jacob Landau founded the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA, originally the Jewish Correspondence Association) to provide news that was not covered by the major wire services—for example, the impact of World War I on Jewish communities throughout the world. The JTA covered the anti-Jewish riots in Palestine in the 1920s and the rise of Nazism in the 1930s. It also launched an Overseas News Agency to get news from Nazi-held areas, where Jewish correspondents were forbidden (Libo 1987). Many distinguished American Jewish journalists worked at the JTA, including Daniel Schorr, Theodore White, David Schoenbrun, Elie Abel, and

Meyer Levin. Formerly disseminating much of its news by the print *JTA Daily Bulletin*, the agency now features a website covering news about Jews in the United States, Israel, and throughout the world. The second organization, the American Jewish Press Association (AJPA), founded in April 1944, is composed of Jewish Federation-affiliated and independent newspapers, magazines, and, recently, electronic media.

Reflecting the religious, political, cultural, intellectual, and social interests of the community, the American Jewish press now boasts a remarkably eclectic range of newspapers, newsletters, magazines, journals, and websites. Each denomination has at least one publication—*Tradition* (Orthodox), *Conservative Judaism*, *Reform Judaism*, *The Reconstructionist*, and *Humanistic Judaism*. Political, religious, and cultural Zionism are propagated and discussed in many periodicals and newsletters, including *Hadassah Magazine* (1921), one of the largest circulating American Jewish journals, and *Midstream* (1955), a political and cultural magazine issued by the Theodor Herzl Institute. Almost every Zionist organization publishes a journal or newsletter, ranging from the left-wing *Israel Horizons*, issued by the American branch of the Israeli political party Meretz, to the right-wing *Outpost*, published by Americans for a Safe Israel.

The *American Jewish Year Book* includes an extensive list of publications, but even this authoritative source omits some specialized periodicals. If, for every Jew, there are two opinions, nowadays there are—at least—two periodicals. American Jewish stamp collectors, for example, could subscribe to two publications: the *Judaica Philatelic Journal* and *Judaica Post*. Jews who observe religious dietary laws have savored the contents of several journals over the years, including *Kosher Outlook*, *Kosher Home*, *Kashrus Magazine*, *Kosher Spirit*, and *Kosher Gourmet Magazine*.

More than thirty-five years before Daniel Glickman was appointed the first Jewish secretary of agriculture, Jewish grangers subscribed to the *Jewish Farmer*, published by the Jewish Agricultural Society for almost fifty years. The *Paper Pomegranate*, the quarterly journal of the national Pomegranate Guild of Judaic Needlework, features articles on needlework techniques, Jewish holiday projects, and other material related to the fiber arts. Since 1996, the National Yiddish Book Center, based in Amherst, Massachusetts, has published the beautifully designed *Pakn Treger*

(*Book Peddler*). Unique among U.S. publications, it is aimed at a general Jewish audience interested in the multi-lingual facets of Jewish literature and culture.

While readers with an appetite for intellectual issues were never offered a wide fare, a few major journals have greatly stimulated religious, literary, cultural, and philosophical discussions on the nature of American Judaism. Once described as “one of the most exciting episodes in the history of the American-Jewish intellectual community,” the *Menorah Journal* featured the writings of prominent intellectuals and literary figures, including Cecil Roth, Salo Baron, Harry Austryn Wolfson, Lionel Trilling, Louis Untermeyer, and Rabbi David de Sola Pool (Alter 1965). Founded by Harvard College students, this widely quoted journal with a small circulation was published from 1915 to 1962. A managing editor, Elliot Cohen, later became the editor of the premier U.S. Jewish intellectual journal *Commentary*, published by the American Jewish Committee. After the writer Norman Podhoretz assumed the editorship in 1960, *Commentary* gradually emerged as a voice for neoconservatism, publishing essays that greatly influenced Jewish communal life and even American government policies. Jeane Kirkpatrick’s November 1979 essay reportedly so impressed President Ronald Reagan that he appointed her U.S. ambassador to the United Nations.

As a lonely journalistic voice challenging the veracity of the most powerful government on earth, *I. F. Stone’s Weekly* may have been unique, but it has counterparts among some Jewish journals that attempted to do battle with major Jewish leaders and organizations. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, founder of the New York-based School for Jewish Women, published the *Jewish Spectator*, which for more than a half century offered iconoclastic views on many issues of Jewish interest. Begun in 1936, the *Jewish Spectator* was originally billed as a “typical family magazine, with a special appeal to the woman” (Moore 1994). Yet Weiss-Rosmarin, an early Jewish feminist, published a variety of pathbreaking articles, from attacks on American complicity with Nazi Germany to debates on the nature of Zionism. Although it was a secular and cultural publication, almost a thousand rabbis subscribed in the 1950s. Weiss-Rosmarin died in 1989, and the publication folded in 2002.

Starting in 1970, a small collective of dissident rabbis, communal leaders, and activists contributed to Rabbi Eugene Borowitz’s *Sh’ma, A Newsletter of Jewish Renewal*. Articles addressed a wide range of topics, from Jewish

feminism to Jewish attitudes toward affirmative action. One issue was devoted to Jewish intramarriage, for example, Sephardi–Ashkenazi and secular–religious. Contributors ranged from Rabbi Meir Kahane, who claimed that Judaism and liberal democracy were incompatible, to attorney Henry Schwarzschild, who resigned from all Jewish organizations to protest the Israeli incursion into Lebanon. In the 1980s the newsletter had 6,000 subscribers.

Author and journalist Leonard Fein offered his perspective on American Jewish and Israeli issues in *Moment*, a glossy magazine with a much larger circulation than the newsletter. Named in honor of *Der Moment*, one of the leading pre–World War I Yiddish dailies in Warsaw, the magazine is noted for its interviews with major Jewish personalities, including Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer, Israeli diplomat Abba Eban, and the preeminent American Jewish historian Jacob Rader Marcus.

Started in 1986 by Michael Lerner as the “liberal alternative to *Commentary* and the voices of Jewish conservatism,” the San Francisco area-based *Tikkun* magazine has published essays critical of both American and Israeli foreign policy and the rightward drift of many American Jews.

Anglo-Jewish newspapers, weeklies, or biweeklies, mostly funded by the local Jewish federations, have frequently been attacked for offering mainly wire reports from the JTA, instead of original local coverage. These publications have also been criticized for avoiding controversial issues affecting their communities. Announcements of births, bar and bat mitzvahs, engagements, marriages, and deaths, originally confined to synagogue bulletins, have become the mainstay of these newspapers. Former Boston *Jewish Advocate* editor Joseph Weisberg mocked the community leader who rushes “to get into print news and pictures dealing with family *simchas*—and even his election to the lodge—but then refuses to subscribe to the paper because there is too much social news” (Altschiller 1980).

Recently, however, there has been a noticeable change in some publications. Founded in 1990, the English-language *Forward*, which currently has about 28,000 subscribers, has enlivened American Jewish journalism with its brash and investigative style. (The Yiddish-language *Forverts*, started in 1897 under the legendary author Abraham Cahan, is still published, but it is read by only a few thousand elderly native speakers.) Ironically, this venerable

socialist newspaper was reconstituted in English by Seth Lipsky, a neoconservative *Wall Street Journal* editor who sought to “analyze local politics, the Middle East, the economy, immigration and a range of other ‘secular’ topics from a sophisticated and uniquely Jewish perspective” (Beckerman 2004). But his politics turned out to be too conservative for the publishers, and in May 2000 the Forward Association forced Lipsky to resign. He was replaced by J. J. Goldberg, a liberal and left-wing Zionist.

The *Forward* is not unique in printing dissenting articles about the Jewish community. In 1973, the now defunct *Present Tense* magazine published pieces critical of the rightward drift of American and Israeli Jews. Edited by Murray Polner, a writer and former teacher, *Present Tense* published several controversial articles, including a condemnation of some Jewish nursing home operators, who were convicted of crimes against their patients.

At about the same time, an emerging Jewish student movement also criticized established Jewish leaders. Although inspired by the 1960s radical movements, these Jewish activists, unlike some of their comrades on the Left, refused to shed their ethnic and religious background. They published newspapers that protested U.S. foreign policy, but also criticized Jewish organizations’ meager allocations for Jewish education and mocked Jewish *machers’* (big shots) deference to the American WASP establishment by presenting “Uncle Jake” awards. Often produced on a shoestring budget, these newspapers—numbering around forty—included *genesis 2* (Boston), *Chutzpah* (Chicago), *Exodus* (San Francisco Soviet Jewry activists), *Jewish Liberation Journal* (New York), and *Jewish Radical* (Berkeley). The student journalists also started their own wire service, the Jewish Student Press Service (JSPS). While most of these papers lasted only through the 1970s, *genesis 2* was published until 1989. *Response: A Contemporary Jewish Review*, however, has appeared almost continuously since 1967. The only other current Jewish student publication is the bimonthly *New Voices*, first appearing in 1991 and published by the JSPS.

In 1976, Jewish feminists founded the still published *Lilith* magazine, to protest and help redefine the often subordinate role of Jewish women in religious and communal life. Although many of these ideological publications accurately reflected the social, political, and cultural ferment of their times, they were read mainly by committed activists and seldom by the broader Jewish community.

In recent years some mainstream papers have addressed controversial issues. Probably the most controversial and consequential recent article was “Stolen Innocence” in *Jewish Week* (June 23, 2000). Written by editor and publisher Gary Rosenblatt, this 4,000-word article is about a prominent New Jersey rabbi accused of sexually abusing and harassing teenagers in his charge over a period of two decades. Rosenblatt documented how some Jewish clergy and organizations attempted to cover up the crimes. His investigative article sparked a bitter debate in the Jewish community about airing “dirty laundry” in public. The *New York Times* and other media picked up the story, and some claim this coverage led to the prosecution and imprisonment of the perpetrator. This case demonstrates the quandary facing the American Jewish press and journalists. Rosenblatt summarized it nicely: “The First Commandment of the journalist is to probe, uncover, explore. The first commandment in the Jewish organizational world is pretty much the opposite: to present the united front: ‘We are one.’ That crystallizes the dilemma” (Barringer 2000).

For many years, debate has simmered about Jewish Federations’ funding of their community newspapers. Critics have charged that this support not only compromises their editorial independence, but also creates unfair competition for independent papers, which constitute a small minority of the Jewish press.

Since more than a hundred ethnic groups in the United States publish newspapers, magazines, and journals, it is difficult to compare the American Jewish press to such a wide range of publications. There are, however, some similarities. The debate about diaspora–homeland relations—e.g., whether the American Jewish press should criticize Israel—finds echoes elsewhere. Chinese-American newspapers have long battled over whether they have the right to openly support Taiwan or the People’s Republic of China, and the Armenian diaspora press has argued over the idea of a “greater” Armenia. The concerns of the Jewish and Armenian presses are probably the most similar of all American ethnic groups because of the parallels in their national histories—genocide and their ambiguous and occasionally conflicted relations with their homelands.

Nevertheless, the American Jewish press may be unique in some ways. Jews constitute both an ethnic and religious group, and this is reflected in the huge number of religious, ecumenical, fraternal, social, cultural, political, academic, Zionist, anti-Zionist, and non-Zionist publications. In his

classic study of the immigrant press, the sociologist Robert Park, who was not Jewish, commented, “The Jew brings with him a civilization” (Park 1922). The number of Jewish journals and magazines that have published anthologies of their articles may also be unique. To paraphrase the classic Jewish joke: Jewish publications are like other ethnic publications. Only more so.

*Research Note:* Singerman’s extensive bibliography of Jewish serials includes invaluable material for further research. The *Index to Jewish Periodicals* provides access to Jewish publications that had never before been listed in standard library indexes.

Donald Altschiller

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# American Jews in Political and Social Movements

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## American Jews in Politics in the Twentieth Century

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Jews constitute barely 2 percent of the U.S. population. But because of their education, organization, and affluence, they are able to wield considerable political influence. While there is no single political doctrine to which all Jews subscribe, generally speaking, Jews have used their political influence to promote a liberal social agenda, to combat discrimination, and to further such communal interests as American support for the State of Israel. For the most part, Jews support the Democratic Party in national politics, and the Jewish community constitutes an important force within the Democratic political coalition.

## How Jews Acquired Political Influence in America

The political influence of America's Jewish community dates from the 1930s and Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Before the Roosevelt presidency, American Jews were politically weak and the victims of considerable discrimination. During the New Deal era, however, the government's needs and the capacity of the Jewish community to serve them provided the starting point for the Jews' climb toward political influence and social acceptance. When Roosevelt came to power in 1933, he was opposed by much

of the nation's established Protestant elite. As a result, the administration turned to Jewish intellectuals and professionals to develop and administer its ambitious agenda of domestic programs.

One of Roosevelt's key Jewish advisors was Harvard law professor and later Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, who played a key role in formulating New Deal programs and in recruiting large numbers of Jewish professionals, known as Frankfurter's happy hot dogs, to staff New Deal agencies. Among Frankfurter's protégés was Benjamin Cohen, who wrote many important pieces of New Deal legislation. These included the 1933 Securities Act, the Federal Communications Act, the Wagner Act, and the Minimum Wage Act, all of which remain cornerstones of American public policy. Other Jews who were prominent in the Roosevelt administration include Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, who advised the administration on ways of securing the Court's approval for its legislative enactments; Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau; and Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Jerome Frank. The term *New Deal* itself was coined by one of Roosevelt's Jewish aides, Samuel Rosenman. Such was the importance of Jews in FDR's camp that his opponents sometimes denounced the New Deal as the *Jew Deal* and claimed—falsely—that Roosevelt, himself, must be of Jewish descent. Service with New Deal agencies gave Jewish professionals a considerable

measure of political influence and also provided them with expertise and contacts that were invaluable in the private sector. Corporations and firms that had engaged in discriminatory hiring practices before the New Deal began to open their doors, albeit slowly, to Jewish attorneys and other professionals, thus beginning the fuller integration of Jews into American society.

The relationship between Jews and the Roosevelt administration also led the Jewish community to give FDR and his political party their allegiance, and, to this day, most Jews remain firmly in the Democratic political camp. Before Roosevelt, much of the American Jewish community and such communal leaders as Louis Marshall and Felix Warburg had identified with the Republican Party. This identification dated from the Civil War as well as from the linkage between the Democrats and Populism, a movement associated with nativism and antisemitism. Since Roosevelt, Jews have been pillars of the Democratic coalition. In recent years, Democratic presidential, senatorial, and congressional candidates have typically received 80 percent of the Jewish vote as well as a great deal of Jewish money and energy. This is especially remarkable given the growing affluence of the Jewish community, which should lead it to join other wealthy American groups in the Republican Party. One Republican president, Ronald Reagan, made a concerted effort to attract Jewish support, and a small but influential group of Jewish intellectuals, the so-called Neoconservatives, has become prominent in Republican ranks. For most Jews, however, identification with the Democratic Party not only has a strong historic basis in the New Deal, but has also been reinforced by subsequent events. Since the Roosevelt presidency, Jews have assumed an increasing number of leadership positions and an ever-growing stake in the success of the Democrats.

The New Deal represented a political beginning for American Jews. Yet Jews did not fully enter the American political mainstream until the 1960s when they assumed a prominent role in the so-called New Politics, or public interest movement. Between the 1930s and the 1960s, Jews had served mainly as advisers, staffers, operatives, "idea men," and powers behind the throne. Indeed, Roosevelt had told many of his Jewish staffers to maintain a low profile to avoid provoking an antisemitic backlash against his administration. Tragically, Jews had not been sufficiently influential to induce the American government to open the nation's doors to refugees from Nazi Germany before or

even during World War II. During the 1960s, however, Jews assumed visible positions of leadership in the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements. In the 1970s, Jews led or were influential in virtually all of the political reform, feminist, consumer rights, gay rights, environmental, and other public interest groups, as well as in the related foundations and think tanks that arose during this period. Jews continue to play important roles in a diverse group of liberal political and public interest organizations such as Common Cause, People for the American Way, the Children's Defense Fund, the Women's Legal Defense Fund, and hundreds of others.

The importance of liberal activist groups within the Democratic coalition waxed as the strength of other Democratic entities waned. Economic change undermined the power of organized labor, for decades an important force in the party. By the 1970s, moreover, old-fashioned political party "machines" had all but disappeared in the United States. Candidates for office now relied on ad hoc regiments of volunteers rather than the old-time phalanxes of party workers to staff their campaigns. Increasingly, the public interest movement became the spearhead of the Democratic Party's political army, providing the activists and workers needed for campaign efforts. As the most active of liberal activists and a key element in the leadership cadre of the public interest movement, Jews became increasingly important in Democratic Party politics.

The political weight of these activist groups was further enhanced by the various political reforms that they, themselves, helped to bring about during the 1970s. Changes in the presidential nominating process, starting with the so-called McGovern-Fraser reforms of 1972, gave issue-oriented activists an important voice in the presidential selection process. Citizen-suit provisions included in hundreds of federal regulatory statutes enacted since the 1970s allowed activist groups to use the courts to press their agendas in such areas as environmental protection, consumer affairs, and civil rights.

Perhaps most important, a series of changes in campaign finance rules made activist groups important conduits for campaign funds, particularly for Democratic Party candidates who are not as able as their Republican rivals to depend on the largesse of America's business corporations. The most recent reform of campaign finance laws, the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), outlawed the so-called soft money contributions to political

parties that had been a major vehicle for funneling corporate money into political campaigns. But while soft money contributions were prohibited by BCRA, the law allows nonprofit groups to form what are known as “527 committees,” named for the section of the tax code that grants them tax-exempt status, and to use such committees to raise money for political drives. This proved quite advantageous to liberal activist groups, which quickly formed 527 committees that soon directed tens of millions of dollars into Democratic political efforts. Wealthy Jewish liberals have long been among the most important contributors to the Democratic Party’s efforts, and Jewish political activists quickly assumed leadership roles in many of the new fundraising groups, including America Coming Together, MoveOn.Org, and The Media Fund, which together raised and spent more than \$50 million in support of Democratic candidates in 2004.

As Jews became more and more important in the Democratic Party, they increasingly sought and won both elections and appointments to high national offices under Democratic auspices. Before the New Deal, only six Jews had ever served in the U.S. Senate, and only one, Theodore Roosevelt’s Commerce Secretary Oscar Straus, had ever been a member of a presidential cabinet. Today Jews commonly hold high national office, almost always as Democrats. In 2004, for example, ten Jews served in the U.S. Senate. Nine of the ten were Democrats. One of these Democratic senators, Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, was the party’s vice presidential candidate in 2000. During the same year, twenty-seven Jews held seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. Only two were Republicans. Also in 2004, two Jews sat on the Supreme Court, both appointed by a Democratic president. In a similar vein, no Jews served as cabinet secretaries in the Republican administrations of George W. Bush, George H. W. Bush, or Ronald Reagan. Indeed, since America’s founding, only four Jews have ever been members of Republican cabinets. In addition to Oscar Straus, these were Eisenhower’s Commerce Secretary Lewis Strauss, Nixon’s Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, and Edward Levi, attorney general under Gerald Ford.

By contrast, Democrat Jimmy Carter, alone, appointed four Jewish cabinet secretaries and Bill Clinton appointed five. The Carter appointees were Treasury Secretary W. Michael Blumenthal, Defense Secretary Harold Brown, Transportation Secretary Neil Goldschmidt, and Com-

merce Secretary Philip Klutznick. Clinton named Labor Secretary Robert Reich, Treasury secretaries Robert Rubin and Lawrence Summers, Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, and Commerce Secretary Mickey Kantor. This pattern of presidential appointments reflects the importance of Jews in the Democratic coalition more than the several presidents’ personal feelings about them. Thus Carter, who was not especially friendly to the State of Israel and did not have good relations with the American Jewish community, appointed many Jews to his cabinet, while Ronald Reagan, a staunch supporter of Israel and friend of the American Jewish community, appointed none.

Thus, since the New Deal launched the Jewish community on the path of political influence, Jews have risen to positions of considerable political prominence. That they have done so under Democratic Party auspices helps to explain the continuing loyalty of the Jewish community to the Democrats. To abandon the Democratic Party would be to abandon the institution that continues to provide American Jews with access to political power and position.

### **Jewish Policy Priorities**

While there are many areas of disagreement within the Jewish community, Jews have generally made use of their positions of influence to promote policies to end racial and ethnic discrimination, strengthen the separation of church and state, expand domestic social programs, and maintain American support for the State of Israel. During the 1930s and 1940s, when Jews first won access to policy-making institutions, the chief goal of Jewish political leaders was to bring an end to the discriminatory practices to which Jews had long been subjected. To this end, in 1944, several major Jewish organizations, including the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, and the Anti-Defamation League, joined together to form the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (CRC) to combat discrimination against Jews in employment, education, and housing. The CRC succeeded in persuading a number of state legislatures to enact laws prohibiting housing and employment discrimination and in 1965 convinced President Lyndon B. Johnson to issue an executive order prohibiting firms holding federal contracts from discriminating on the basis of religion or race. Johnson later expanded the scope of his order to include banks holding

federal funds and insurance companies serving as Medicare carriers.

Jews were also in the forefront of the effort to reinforce America's constitutional separation of church and state. As a religious minority, Jews felt threatened by government-sponsored prayer in the public schools and the display of religious symbols in public places. Accordingly, Jewish organizations backed a campaign of litigation aimed at ending both practices. Often Jewish groups worked from behind the scenes for fear of provoking anti-semitism. For example, the heavily Jewish American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) found non-Jewish plaintiffs and attorneys for its eventually successful effort in the case of *Zorach v. Clausen* to have the courts strike down a New York state law providing for released time from school for religious instruction.

Jewish organizations made an especially concerted effort to ban ethnic discrimination in the realm of education. After World War I, major American colleges and universities had imposed strict quotas on the admission of Jews to their undergraduate and professional programs. As a result, the proportion of Jewish students at such prestigious institutions as the Harvard Medical School and Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons fell from more than one-third of the class to barely 5 percent of each school's student body. Similarly, major institutions refused to hire Jewish faculty and administrators. Jewish organizations used their growing influence to launch two federal investigations of discriminatory practices by universities. These investigations, coupled with a series of lawsuits, forced colleges and universities to dismantle their quota systems in the early 1960s.

In their battles against discrimination, Jews made common cause with African Americans. Throughout the 1960s, Jewish organizations and individuals played an important role in the civil rights movement. For example, Stanley Levison, a Jewish attorney, was one of Dr. Martin Luther King's chief advisers and Kivie Kaplan, a retired Jewish businessman, was one of his chief financial backers. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund, which won many important victories in the courts, was led by Jews, and Jews also constituted a majority of the white participants in civil rights sit-ins and protest marches. Jews were especially visible among the Southern whites who publicly supported the cause of civil rights and, as a result, were sometimes attacked by racist thugs. To this day, most Southern Jews re-

main Democrats even though many other Southern whites shifted their political allegiance to the GOP when Republicans opposed the Democratic Party's liberal stance on matters of race. From the Jewish perspective, support for the civil rights movement was both a matter of moral principle and communal interest. The principle was clear. Racial discrimination was morally reprehensible. The interest was also clear. The elimination of discrimination against African-Americans would also do away with discrimination against other minorities, including Jews.

Jews' political alliances also help to explain another major focus of their political efforts, the expansion of domestic social programs. During the 1930s, many Jews were poor and supported the New Deal agenda of social programs as a matter of necessity. As Jews have become increasingly affluent, they have nevertheless continued to back government-sponsored housing, employment, pension, and health care programs. Part of the reason that one of the nation's most affluent communities supports programs designed to help the poor is that the Democratic political coalition, in which the Jews play such a prominent role, includes large numbers of minority and poor Americans. For the Jews, maintaining the organizational coherence and power of the Democratic Party is an important end, and domestic social programs are an important means to that end.

Finally, Jews have used their influence in American politics to sustain American support for the security of the State of Israel. In the post-World War II period, the Jewish community was able to induce President Harry S Truman to sanction the creation of a Jewish state despite the opposition of the State Department and America's most important ally, Great Britain. Over the ensuing decades, the efforts of such Jewish groups as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) have helped to maintain a steady flow of American military and economic aid for Israel, even as reluctance to offend Arab oil producers impelled other Western nations to distance themselves from the Jewish state.

## Change and Continuity

For most American Jews, political participation and Democratic politics have been synonymous since the New Deal. In recent years, however, some cracks have developed in this bedrock of Jewish political involvement. One source

of stress has been a fraying of the once close relationship between Jews and another loyal Democratic constituency, African Americans. Jews have been offended by antisemitic remarks attributed to a number of prominent African American politicians, including Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton. Blacks, for their part, have expressed resentment at what they regard as Jewish efforts to intrude in the affairs of the African American community. In 2002, for example, Jewish organizations worked against black Democratic congresswoman Cynthia McKinney of Georgia, whom they viewed as antisemitic, by supporting another African American woman, Denise Majette. After McKinney's defeat, a number of other black politicians complained that she had been unfairly singled out by a "special interest group."

Jewish allegiance to the Democratic Party has also been shaken by the increasingly anti-Israel stances of some liberal Democrats. On a number of college campuses, including Harvard and Columbia, liberal students and faculty have mounted petition drives urging these schools to divest their stock holdings in companies doing business with Israel. In a 2002 speech, Harvard president Lawrence Summers lamented the fact that "profoundly anti-Israel views are increasingly finding support in progressive intellectual communities" (Singer and Grossman 2003). At the same time, moreover, that some liberal Democrats have turned against Israel, some of the most conservative groups in the Republican coalition have emerged as unswerving supporters of the Jewish state and its policies. Evangelical Protestants, long viewed with suspicion by most American Jews, strongly back Israel against its Arab enemies and have helped to ensure that Republican administrations continue America's pro-Israel policies.

Despite these strains, however, the American Jewish community remains firmly, if not always happily, within the Democratic camp. Membership in the Democratic coalition continues to allow Jews to exercise considerable political influence and has provided them with access to important political and social institutions. Three-quarters of a century ago, Franklin D. Roosevelt gave America's Jews a political home they are not yet ready to leave.

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## American Jewish Involvement in Public Affairs

American Jews, individually or as a polity, have engaged in public affairs—in issues of concern to the larger society—in an effort to enhance Jewish security. The question, however, is what makes any given issue a priority to American Jewish groups?

Organized public affairs activity by American Jews dates back to the 1858 Mortara episode when, at the Vatican's behest, police in Bologna seized a Jewish child, removing him from his family, because a Catholic servant girl claimed that, unbeknownst to his parents, she had personally baptized him when he was an infant; Pius IX subsequently refused to return him to his family. In response, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites was formed (1859), modeled on the Board of Deputies of British Jews, which had been established (1840) as a response to the Damascus blood libel accusation. The agency was short-lived, however, and in 1873 it was incorporated into the newly formed Union of American Hebrew Congregations (now the Union for Reform Judaism), the Reform congregational body.

The twentieth-century history of American Jewish involvement in public affairs can be divided into five periods.

From the early twentieth century to the mid-1950s, the primary focus of the American Jewish community was on combating antisemitism, both in the United States and, after the rise of Nazism, in Europe. Combating the corollary of antisemitism—anti-Jewish discrimination, which was pervasive—was also a priority on the Jewish communal agenda. Although discrimination was severe both in employment and higher education, the Jewish “defense” agencies disagreed on how to attack it. The American Jewish Committee (AJC) favored its leader Louis Marshall’s view that discreet lobbying would best serve the interests of American Jews. This nonconfrontational strategy reflected the fear that AJC would be perceived as a Jewish lobby, having interests at odds with those of other Americans. The American Jewish Congress (AJCongress), on the other hand, preferred more aggressive tactics, involving the use of social action and the courts. Nonetheless, there was unanimity among Jewish groups that antisemitism was salient.

From the early 1950s to the mid-1960s, the struggle for civil rights became the priority issue on the Jewish communal agenda. Although the civil rights initiative developed into a movement spearheaded by a coalition of blacks and Jews, along with a third important actor, the trade union movement, the struggle for civil rights for blacks did not at first blush appear to be a struggle for Jewish interests. Why, therefore, was it a priority issue for Jewish groups? Indeed, early on Jewish groups did not express unanimous support for making common cause with blacks, and the wisdom of coalition building stirred debate. It was Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, an AJCongress and NAACP leader, who made the case for involvement based not on the principles of liberalism (to which the Jewish community was in large measure committed), but on Jewish self-interest. The Wise rationale—that combating and ending prejudice in any sector of society strengthened the fiber of society and thereby benefited Jews—became the basis for American Jewish involvement in spearheading the movement.

Local Jewish community relations councils and chapters of the NAACP embraced coalition building. Both communities relied on the relatively new strategy, pioneered by the AJCongress, of using the law and social action. The approach was not aimed at converting individual bigots, but at using the U.S. Congress and the federal courts to radically change the central institutions of soci-

ety, especially in education, employment, and housing, as well as the electoral process.

While civil rights was the priority issue during the 1950s, the separation of church and state and immigration reform were of significant concern as well. From 1948 through the early 1960s the landmark cases decided by the U.S. Supreme Court—often spearheaded by Jewish groups, especially the AJCongress—gradually broadened church–state protections. Repeal of the National Origins Quota System (1965) was also an important issue for Jewish groups in these years.

Two events in the mid-1960s radically changed American Jewish priorities: the emergence of the Soviet Jewry movement in the United States in 1963 and the Six Day War in 1967. American Jews became preoccupied with Israel and Soviet Jewry, and moved away from the broad range of domestic advocacy issues—from social and economic justice—as priorities on the Jewish agenda. Almost overnight, the Jewish advocacy agenda became more particularistic, more “Jewish.” Also noteworthy in terms of changing priorities for American Jews was the rise of a black nationalist movement—with its significant expression of antisemitism—in which erstwhile allies were viewed as enemies.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the Jewish community started moving back to the broader agenda. The first Reagan administration led many in the Jewish community to fear a potential crisis with respect to constitutional protections and that the administration’s restrictive policies would undermine economic justice. Additionally, with the organizing of the Moral Majority in 1979 and the rise of an aggressive religious Right, the Jewish community began to fear a “Christianization” of America. The Jewish community therefore again reordered its priorities and began returning to a larger agenda. A new round of church–state cases and federal legislation threatening the separation of church and state captured the attention of Jewish groups.

One issue early in the Reagan administration suggested that the Jewish community was one to be reckoned with, both on the Hill and in the administration. It was the struggle over the \$8.5-billion sale of airborne warning and control system surveillance aircraft (AWACS) to Saudi Arabia, which, it was feared, could use them in a war against Israel. This was a highly significant instance of pro-Israel advocacy, because the organized Jewish community realized that it could mobilize a national advocacy

effort. While the Jewish groups failed to stop the sale, their ability to act in a coordinated manner to develop a grassroots and national advocacy effort left a deep impression on the Hill, and was a watershed event in Jewish public affairs advocacy.

Beginning in 1990—and fueled in some measure by the findings of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, which highlighted high rates of intermarriage and low rates of cultural literacy—American Jewry once again reevaluated its communal agenda. Levels of both behavioral and attitudinal antisemitism were on the decline, despite dramatic individual manifestations of antisemitism during the decade. In any case, antisemitism posed no threat to the ability of Jews to participate fully in American society. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the Soviet Jewry issue no longer constituted an agenda for political and international advocacy, but for social services.

The Israel agenda, long the most critical for Jewish advocacy groups, underwent changes. Whatever the pitfalls of the peace process, the issues that commanded the most attention during the 1990s were related more to the relationship between Israel and American Jews than to the physical security of Israel, which no longer had the salience for many American Jews that it had in the previous decade, and in the 2000s the issue of disengagement became significant. At the same time, concerns about Jewish identity suggested to many that the true threat to Jewish security was the endogenous issue of Jewish continuity rather than the exogenous issue of physical security. The concern of many American Jews has turned increasingly inward, to American Jewry's own values and indeed to its own continuity.

In the 2000s, with the administration of George W. Bush, a new set of challenges to constitutional protections—especially church–state separation—and to social and economic justice once again nudged many in the increasingly polarized Jewish community back to the national affairs agenda.

Over the decades, a central organizing principle for issues on the Jewish public affairs agenda emerged. Issues selected as priorities are those for which there is a consensus in the community that they affect Jewish security. Over the years, and intensifying in the 2000s, there has been debate within the Jewish community over the parameters of the “Jewish security” rubric. The public affairs agenda can be

viewed as a series of concentric circles. At the center are issues immediately and directly related to Jewish security: antisemitism, Israel, and the security of Jewish communities abroad. These issues lie at the core of Jewish public affairs advocacy.

One concentric circle out, in the penumbra of Jewish concerns, are First Amendment and other Bill of Rights and political freedom protections—especially the separation of church and state, which is a central guarantor of Jewish security in the United States. The construct for this category is what government cannot do to an individual and what one individual cannot do to another.

The next level of concentric circles includes issues that are important to the health of the society and therefore to enhancing American Jewish society. The questions are not of restraint but of positive beneficence: what government can and should do for the individual. Social and economic justice, the environment, and other such issues fall into this category. As the agenda expands—as it has over the past fifty years—the question of priorities continues to be salient for American Jews.

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## American Jews in the Socialist and Communist Movements

Jews have been overrepresented in most radical movements in America, including Socialism and Communism, since at least the 1890s. The vast majority of Jewish Americans have *not* been radicals, but a significant minority in the modern

period actively helped shape the American Left. Jews, although only 3 percent of the population of the United States, provided about 15 percent of the membership of the Socialist Party (SP) through the 1920s and about 40 percent of the Communist Party (CPUSA) rank and file in the 1930s.

The leadership of the SP was also disproportionately Jewish. Morris Hillquit and Victor Berger, each of whom served as national party chair after World War I, were Jews. The two men exercised great influence over party operations, mainly because the party's recurrent presidential candidate, Eugene V. Debs, avoided organizational issues. In addition, the only Socialists ever elected to Congress were Jews: Berger from Milwaukee and Meyer London from New York.

The SP's most successful institutions were also often Jewish. There was, first and foremost, *The Jewish Daily Forward*, which had a circulation of nearly 300,000, making it the largest socialist paper in America. *The Forward* was, in addition, a major financial contributor to SP causes and election campaigns. Also closely tied to the Socialist Party was the *Arbeiter Ring*, or Workmen's Circle, a mutual aid organization of Jewish laborers that grew to more than 80,000 members by 1924. The United Hebrew Trades, a confederation of largely Jewish labor unions, was also saturated in socialism. This was especially true for the needleworkers' unions, like the International Ladies' Garment Workers' (ILGWU) and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, whose leaders, including David Dubinsky and Sidney Hillman, were affiliated with the SP.

The CPUSA was also often led by Jews, including Benjamin Gitlow and Jay Lovestone (born Jacob Liebshtein), both of whom served as the party's general secretaries in the late 1920s. And throughout the 1930s and 1940s, more than 33 percent of the Central Committee of the CPUSA were of Jewish background. Moreover, the *Freiheit*, the party's Yiddish-language paper, was not only the first Communist daily published in the United States; it had, for some time, an even larger circulation than the English-language *Daily Worker*. The Jewish People's Fraternal Order was the largest ethnic bloc in the CPUSA's umbrella organization, the International Workers' Order. And several unions with huge Jewish memberships were strongly influenced by communism, including the American Federation of Teachers and the Fur and Leather Workers' Union, whose president, Ben Gold, was a Jew and an avowed Communist.

Jewish radical movements in America were in large part products of two or three generations of East European Jewish immigration. The great mass of gainfully employed Jews in Eastern Europe had been small businessmen and independent craftsmen for generations. The development of working-class consciousness among them began in earnest only in the late nineteenth century when large numbers of petit bourgeois Jews suffered precipitous economic displacement and were forced to work for wages. The making of the Jewish working class continued, and intensified, with immigration to the larger American cities, where most Jewish newcomers confronted an even more highly industrialized environment than they had begun to experience in Eastern Europe. Subjected to intense economic pressures, living in poverty, and uprooted from a traditional way of life, the immigrants were also exposed, especially in New York and several other large cities, to a growing left-wing culture. Here the implications of Jewish proletarianization were articulated and reinforced by the activities of a remarkable group of radical intellectuals and organizers—Jewish young men and women, mostly former students—who provided leadership and a persuasive and attractive socialist critique of capitalism.

Socialism, then, was a vigorous and vital theme in Jewish immigrant life almost from the beginning, and thousands of Jewish workers made their first entry into American political life in association with the movement. In 1886 the Jewish Workingmen's Association formally affiliated with the Socialist Labor Party (SLP), which was led by a Sephardic Jew, Daniel DeLeon. In the same year the Association joined a coalition of liberals and socialists to support the New York mayoral candidacy of Henry George. In 1887, two "Jewish" foreign-language federations were formed in the Socialist Labor Party: section 8 for Yiddish speakers, and section 17 for the Russians. Fourteen more Jewish sections were added in the 1890s, and as early as 1889 the party press celebrated the rapid development of socialist influence among Jewish workers.

Later, in 1901, Morris Hillquit, Eugene V. Debs, labor lawyer Meyer London, and Milwaukee's Victor Berger, "evolutionary socialists" who demurred at the "intransigent revolutionary determinism" of DeLeon, became "founding fathers" of the Socialist Party of America. One of the factors that sparked the withdrawal from the SLP and the creation of the new party was DeLeon's emphasis on dual unionism. The brilliant but unbending class war-

rior demanded that several unions in the coalition of United Hebrew Trades detach themselves from the American Federation of Labor to join the Knights of Labor, an organization DeLeon hoped to control and use as a revolutionary base. Dissidents from the Socialist Labor Party who moved into the Socialist Party maintained that socialism was dependent on the support of *existing* trade unions. They also believed, in contrast to the followers of DeLeon, that working to ameliorate the conditions of the working class through reforms of capitalism was not counterrevolutionary.

Jews came to support the candidates of the new party in increasing and disproportionate numbers. In 1908, Jews, who made up about 39 percent of SP membership in Manhattan and the Bronx, organized enormous campaign meetings on the East Side for Eugene V. Debs, the Socialist candidate for president. This is not as impressive as what Jewish votes would do later for the SP, but it was possible for an American journalist to believe in 1909 that “most Jews of the East Side, though not all acknowledged socialists, are strongly inclined toward socialism.”

At the same time that the SP was attracting increasing numbers of Jews, the socialist-led Workmen’s Circle (WC) was doing the same. A nationwide fraternal order, the WC, organized in 1892, had only 872 members in 1901. But in 1905, after the society received a charter from New York State, and could offer safer and more attractive medical and insurance benefits, its membership grew to nearly 7,000. The worker members, most of whom were not socialists, accepted the long-range socialist goals of the radical leaders, as well as the fact that the WC helped finance the socialist movement. In turn the leadership gave first priority to meeting the immediate needs of workers. By 1908, the WC boasted 10,000 members, the vast majority of whom were sympathetic to the socialist movement.

Even more important to the socialist movement was the *Jewish Daily Forward*, which Abraham Cahan edited at its founding in 1897 and to which he returned permanently in 1903. In Cahan’s hands the *Forward* became, along with the United Hebrew Trades (UHT) and the Workmen’s Circle, a critical component of the Jewish labor movement and of Jewish socialism. Cahan quickly changed the somewhat formal language of the paper to the Yiddish of the streets and shops. If “you want the public to read this paper and assimilate Socialism,” he told his staff, “you’ve

got to write of things of everyday life, in terms of what they see and feel.”

The editor tersely summed up the essentials of the new socialism, to be elucidated in the daily paper as “justice, humanity, fraternity—in brief, honest common sense and horse sense.” Karl Marx’s postulates were tapered to fit. In principle, labor was still the source of all value, and rent was still seen as robbery. But in practice, the *Forward* insisted that, so long as capitalism endured, it was better to deal with “honest landlords” and “honest bosses.”

Despite their cosmopolitanism and class-war vocabulary, the “liberated” radical leaders and Jewish labor militants did not secede from the ethnic community. Union organizers, intellectuals, journalists, and political activists, in their efforts to mobilize the Jewish proletariat, tried to synthesize the essential values of Jewish culture with the modern goals and values of the socialist movement. They consistently wove biblical references, Talmudic aphorisms, and prophetic injunctions into their socialist appeals. They wrote and spoke particularly about the concept of *tsedaka* (righteousness and social justice), and implicitly drew on the obligation of *tikkun olam*, the commandment to repair or improve the world. In all they emphasized communal responsibility and secular messianism. And they helped Jewish workers in their struggle to create new identities out of traditional materials in a modern context. This struggle was not always conscious or simple. But it was made a good deal easier between 1905 and 1910 when large numbers of Bundist socialists reached New York after the collapse of the 1905 revolution in Russia.

The Bundists, like the radicals who preceded them to American shores, also celebrated the breakup of religious hegemony, but they strongly resisted further assimilation. They desired to remain Jews—atheists and socialists—but Jews. They brought with them to America sophisticated ideological defenses for this position, and they articulated them with spirit and dedication. They were effective. By 1906 there were 3,000 members in Bund branches in America, more even than the enrollment in the Jewish branches of the SP.

The newspapers, union activists, socialists, and even more so the Bundists furnished the language and the terms of a powerful discourse. They helped immigrant workers, on their way to becoming Americans, keep their balance between the revitalized values of an ancient past and a nearer past falling to pieces. They were effective because in

addition to confronting the objective conditions of American life and avoiding abstraction, the Bundists tapped into and refurbished something that was still alive in Jewish workers—Jewish ethical practice derived from Judaic precepts.

Visions of proletarian solidarity would dim over time, to be overshadowed by the remarkable upward mobility of Jewish immigrants and their children. In the meantime the socialists furnished the Jewish labor movement with important vehicles of worker education and mobilization—the United Hebrew Trades, the Workmen’s Circle, and the *Jewish Daily Forward*. With these institutions, the East European immigrants built the first consciously Jewish power base in America. With that base, the socialist movement set out through strikes and union-building to solve some of the more practical problems of the workers.

The years from 1909 to 1914 saw increased activity among working-class people throughout America, but the militancy of Jewish workers was particularly intense. In several major cities tens of thousands of Jewish workers struck for higher wages, better conditions, and union recognition. The United Hebrew Trades experienced a phenomenal growth. In 1910 there were fewer than ninety constituent unions with approximately 100,000 members; by 1914 there were more than a hundred unions in the federation with 250,000 members. The American labor movement was growing, but the Jewish trade unions grew faster. The Jewish garment unions alone increased membership by 68 percent between 1910 and 1913, a rate of growth greater than that of any other labor union in the country.

In the same period Jewish socialists broadened their influence in several Jewish communities, especially New York. In addition to actively building and strengthening unions, many Jewish socialists worked for the Socialist Party, recruiting membership and garnering votes for socialist candidates. Socialists rarely received more than 3 percent of the votes in New York, but, between 1910 and 1914, Jewish assembly districts in the city delivered 10 to 15 percent of their votes to SP office seekers, and after 1914 the figure climbed past 35 percent. Socialism never captured the entire community, but with its explicit appeal to moralism and justice, it was an important force on the Lower East Side. Indeed, the rise of the SP vote in the United States from 16,000 in 1903 to more than 118,000 in 1912 was partly the consequence of increasing Jewish support.

Socialist candidates were especially attractive to Jews when they represented a combination of ideological and ethnic interests. In this regard a comparison of the congressional campaigns of Morris Hillquit and Meyer London is instructive. Socialist Morris Hillquit, who was defeated in the 1908 congressional race, though Jewish, had not openly identified with specific Jewish interests. This, at a time when East Side residents were upset by the police commissioner’s report implying that Jews generated 50 percent of the crime in New York City; when the “special interest” issue of immigration restriction was being hotly debated in the U.S. Congress; and when the relatively restrictionist position of the SP on that issue was not attractive to East Side Jews who still had relatives desperate to escape from pogrom-ridden Russia. Like the English conservative Edmund Burke who, over a century earlier, had run as a representative not of his constituents but of the “realm,” the radical Morris Hillquit was roundly defeated.

Meyer London, who replaced Hillquit as the SP’s candidate, openly identified himself as a Jew and a Socialist and allied himself with the vital interests of the Lower East Side. Though London lost a bid for a congressional seat in 1910, he outran the rest of the SP ticket two to one. By 1914 London had developed enough support in the district to win. It was rare, even from the Lower East Side, for Socialists to be sent to Congress, yet London was reelected twice, in 1916 and 1920.

Combining socialist ideology and class interest with ethnic interest played a vital role in these victories. London told a crowd of 15,000 after his first election: “We shall not rest until every power of capitalism has been destroyed and the workers emancipated from wage slavery.” But in the same speech, London, proud to work for specifically Jewish interests, also said, “I hope that my presence will represent an entirely different type of Jew from the kind that Congress is accustomed to see.”

Socialist pacifism after America’s entrance into World War I dampened enthusiasm for Socialist candidates generally, and the national party garnered fewer than 80,000 votes in 1917. But the Socialists in Jewish New York were still strong, electing in that year ten state assemblymen, eleven aldermen, and a municipal judge. Once again, however, the strength of the SP in the Jewish community should not be overstated. Socialists certainly received disproportionate support from the Jewish electorate, but still

most Jews were not Socialists. Moreover, in 1914 of eleven Jews elected to the New York State Senate, two were Republicans and nine were Democrats. In the same year seven Jews sat in the Assembly; only two were Socialists, the rest Republicans.

One of the more remarkable dimensions of American political culture from 1917 to about 1924 was Jewish attraction to the Soviet revolution. The Communist regime in Moscow seemed eager to recruit Jewish talent, and the hope of progress and modernity inherent in Communist ideology found resonance in Jewish political life in America. It was estimated that in the 1920s, Jews in the United States gave 4–5 percent of their votes to Communist candidates, at the same time that they were giving approximately 12–15 percent to Socialists, both figures substantially higher than the national average.

About 15 percent of the members of the CPUSA in the 1920s were Jewish (Finns were at that time about 50 percent of the CPUSA). And in 1924 a small but determined Communist group, with the help of numerous sympathizers, had gained control of three locals of the heavily Jewish ILGWU. They were also strong in Waistmakers Local 25, which had a predominantly Jewish membership and a long history of radicalism. And during the 1930s the radical student movement, with its Communists and Socialists of varying stripes, was strongest on campuses with large numbers of Jewish students—City College of New York, Columbia University, New York University—and a significant percentage of the leaders were Jewish.

Abetted by the “united front” policy of making alliances with other left-leaning and liberal groups (which in New York were also disproportionately Jewish) and a strategy of infiltrating Jewish organizations, the Communist Party increased its Jewish membership to an estimated 40 percent during the Depression. Also, 5,000 of 13,000 members of the Young Communist League were Jewish. Jews were clearly overrepresented in the Communist movement, but only a very small percentage of Jews were Communists. This, however, did not stop antisemites from speaking of “Judeo-bolshevism,” which became a buzzword of the Right in the interwar period.

By the mid-1920s, much of the enthusiasm among Jews for Communism was already dissipating. Lenin had earlier ordered an end to antisemitic movements in Russia and the Ukraine that had left 75,000 Jews dead between 1918 and 1920. But this did not exempt the Jewish bour-

geoisie from being considered “class enemies” of the revolution, and the general antibourgeois, antireligious policies of the Soviets under Stalin continued to create desperate conditions for Russian Jewry, including the wanton destruction of Jewish cultural and religious institutions and the imprisonment of thousands of Jewish leaders.

By 1928 Jewish leaders of liberal or socialist persuasion in America, like Lillian Wald, Horace Kallen, and David Dubinsky, realized there were antisemites among the Stalinist heirs of Lenin’s mantle. Socialists like Baruch Vladek, managing editor of the *Forward*, and Morris Hillquit, head of the National Committee of the Socialist Party, became so disaffected that they refused even to support extending diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union.

The ravages against Jews in the Soviet Union, coupled with the drive of Communists in the United States to co-opt Jewish unions and cultural institutions, continued to diminish Communism’s mystique. Many Jewish union members supported the Communist factions in their organizations, because elements of the established leadership were corrupt and the Communists promised “democratization.” But Communist behavior diluted goodwill. In a general strike in the cloak trade in 1926, for example, the workers had elicited a favorable offer from management. The Communist Party, however, forced a continuation of the strike, which ended in a disaster. After twenty-six weeks of unemployment for the workers and an expenditure of \$3.5 million by the unions, the ILGWU was compelled to settle for virtually the original terms. The ILGWU was temporarily broken, but so was the Communist faction.

The Jewish unions distanced themselves from the more radical left-wingers. So did the vast majority of ordinary Jews. Communist support of Arab riots in Palestine in 1929, the purge trials of the 1930s in Moscow, and the Non-Aggression Pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939 also cut into Jewish support of the Communists. CPUSA membership dropped by more than a third in 1939, and most of those who departed were Jews, virtually all of whom had been attracted to the party in the thirties because they believed it to be the only effective enemy of fascism. Of an estimated 800,000 Jewish votes cast in New York State in the 1930s, only 50,000 went to Communist candidates. This was very meager considering that the Jewish population had been intensely targeted by the party.

With the Communist group out of the way, the needle trades unions, after 1928, could get on with improving conditions for workers rather than fighting for the remote realization of a classless society. The unions also paid more attention in the 1930s to progressive issues that were also particularly Jewish. For example, the Jewish Labor Committee was formed in 1933 to counteract antisemitism in the United States and the Nazi threat in Europe. There was a small irony in this new “Jewish orientation” in the fact that Jewish membership in the garment industry unions in the 1930s had dropped below 50 percent. But the leaders were Jewish and still considered themselves part of the progressive non-Communist left.

Many Jewish writers also had leftist leanings in this era. Yiddish-speaking secularists such as Chaim Zhitlovsky, a champion of Jewish cultural nationalism, Nachman Syrkin, the foremost spokesman for labor Zionism, Shmuel Niger, the literary critic, and Hayim Greenberg, essayist and editor, constituted a small cadre of Yiddish intellectuals who manifested a strong interest in Jewish national resurgence. But most expected that resurgence to come associated with, or through a synthesis with, socialism. Sidney Hook, Horace Kallen, Harry Wolfson, Lewis Mumford, and others associated with Elliot Cohen’s *Menorah Journal* were also inclined to support a “humanistic social order.” And a third group of Jewish writers on the left, the New York Intellectuals, included Philip Rahv, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Meyer Schapiro, Harold Rosenberg, and Irving Howe. They expressed themselves mainly through the *Partisan Review* and later *Dissent* magazine, and were held together by their utter revulsion against the Soviet experiment under Stalin, with which some of them had initially flirted; but they clearly maintained their socialist sensibilities, especially in the face of the strident antisemitism of the Right in the 1930s. If this last group of cosmopolitan intellectuals were on their way to losing varying degrees of their Jewish identity, there was still something familiarly Jewish in their penchant for a kind of Talmudic argumentation, in their assumption of the inherent worth of intellectual pursuits, and in their left-leaning proclivities.

A good number of Jewish writers of fiction were also on the left in the 1930s, several radicalized by the Depression and its attack on the American Dream. Henry Roth joined the Communist Party in 1933. Mike Gold, who had joined some ten years earlier, became even more enthusiastic in the 1930s, especially about enlisting writers and

artists for the revolutionary struggle. And Daniel Fuchs, Samuel Ornitz, and Edward Dahlberg, under the influence of the socialist realism school, were harshly judgmental of the low level of class consciousness, and the high level of materialism and exploitation they perceived in American and Jewish society.

The preceding account hints at the temporary character of Jewish radicalism. Indeed, by the middle of the twentieth century, with the decline of antisemitism, the intensification of Jewish economic and social mobility, increasing acculturation, and even assimilation, and given the excesses of the Communists in the United States and abroad, Jewish political values changed. Starting as early as 1912 there was a gradual shift of Jewish votes at the presidential level from Republican and Socialist to the Democratic Party. The shift was reinforced by the liberal, progressive role played by Louis Brandeis as President Woodrow Wilson’s advisor, especially after Brandeis became head of the American Zionist Movement in 1914. Wilson was also advised by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise and Henry Morgenthau, Sr., the real estate tycoon, who served the president in a variety of positions including ambassador to Turkey. Later Wilson’s crusade for the League of Nations appealed to the universalism and internationalism in modern Jewish political culture, and his initial support for the Balfour Declaration, promising a Jewish homeland in Palestine, further strengthened Jewish links to the Democratic Party.

In 1924 Jews voted 51 percent for John Davis, the Democratic candidate, and 22 percent for Robert La Follette, the Progressive candidate, who received 16 percent nationwide; and in 1928 they gave 72 percent to Democrat Al Smith. Smith had recognized what he called “Jewish brains,” he spoke a little Yiddish, he was one of the few Democratic leaders with courage to advocate an anti-KKK plank in the campaign of 1924, and he had helped engineer the appointment of Benjamin Cardozo, a Jew, as chief justice of the New York State Court of Appeals. Above all he was an intelligent legislator and a reformer. What else could a Jew ask? Not surprisingly, during the election of 1924, Smith, who had won the affection of the Jewish voters, was reelected governor of New York State and ran ahead of presidential candidates Calvin Coolidge and John Davis in several Jewish election districts.

The Jewish community was proud of the growing number of high government officials who were Jewish, such

as Eugene Meyer, a member of the Federal Farm and Loan Board, on whom Coolidge depended for advice, and the Jewish advisors around Al Smith such as Belle Moskowitz. But the parochial aspect of ethnicity—the narrow group interest or group pride dimension—was more often blunted by the strong universalist strain in Jewish political culture. The Jewish community had an uncommonly broad interpretation of its group interest, and Jews repeatedly crossed ethnic lines and even party lines to support candidates they felt best upheld the liberal values they cherished. Fiorello La Guardia in 1920 and Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1928 both defeated more conservative Jewish opponents with the help of a very sizable Jewish vote.

Consistent loyalty to the Democratic Party manifested itself most powerfully in the 1930s during the Depression and New Deal (sometimes called by its enemies the Jew Deal). The Socialist Party lost virtually its entire Jewish mass base in 1936 when socialist union leaders like David Dubinsky and Sidney Hillman took the lead in forming the American Labor Party (ALP) in New York and gave their backing to Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Continued support for Roosevelt's programs led many onetime Jewish Socialists and even Communists to become liberal Democrats. And Jews, whether former socialists or not, gave Roosevelt an extraordinary proportion of their votes, always hovering around 90 percent; they were the only ethnic group in the United States to increase its support for him over the four elections through 1944.

Jews proved to be a unique force in American politics, exhibiting the capacity to vote and act beyond both their class interest and the narrow interests of their group. A survey of Jews in Chicago in the 1950s indicated that 67 percent of the respondents answered the question, "What is a good Jew?" with statements like someone who "supports all humanitarian causes" or someone who is "liberal on political and economic issues." The consistency of Jewish liberalism was simply unmatched by other groups. One highly reputable study on religion and politics in Detroit, also in the 1950s, showed black Protestants to be liberal on questions of the welfare state and civil rights, but less so in regard to international affairs and civil liberties. White Protestants were relatively hostile to racial integration and to government intervention in the economy. Catholics also opposed civil rights and were moderate, but not liberal, on questions of freedom of speech, foreign aid, and government regulation of the economy. Only the Jews could be

classified as liberal in all categories, especially when civil rights for blacks were at stake.

In the early 1960s, a substantial percentage of the New Left was Jewish. And Jewish presence, and indeed leadership, in the movements for civil rights and women's equality, as well as against the Vietnam War, was manifestly obvious. Later, emerging tensions between blacks and Jews, partly generated by different economic and social mobility rates and by the politics of ethnic identity, increasingly challenged what had actually been a relatively uneasy and unequal alliance from the start. And the New Left's increasing hostility toward Israel discouraged a revival of radicalism in the Jewish American community. Nonetheless, the political vision of Jews, even into the fourth generation, remained focused on social justice, urban welfare, civil rights, civil liberties, and internationalism. These values reflected a distinctive American faith that was equated with the left wing of the Democratic Party. But it was a faith held so tenaciously by Jews, a substantial majority of whom were still connected to the traditions of communal responsibility, mutual aid, *tsedakah*, and *tikkun olam*, that liberalism could be seen as the political ideology of Jewish American ethnicity.

Gerald Sorin

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## The Rosenberg Case

An espionage case that became a cause, and then engendered a bitter controversy that endured for decades, the trial, conviction, and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg as Soviet spies constituted one of the most dramatic legal proceedings of the early Cold War era. The trial of a Communist Jewish couple for allegedly "stealing the secret of the atomic bomb" for the benefit of the Soviet Union—what FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover labeled the "crime of the century"—aroused considerable anxiety in the American Jewish community, fearful that the images of Jew and Communist and traitor would merge in the public mind. Although that dire consequence did not ensue, the prominence accorded the Rosenbergs' Jewishness in the campaign to save their lives ensured that their religious affiliation would play a major part in the ongoing debate about their case.

The Rosenberg Case began in the summer of 1950 when Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union. The couple (Julius was thirty-two years old, Ethel was three years older) had married in 1939, had two young sons, and were living in modest circumstances in a housing project on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The Rosenbergs had Communist Party ties dating back to Julius's days as an engineering student at City College during the Depression, when he had been active in the Young Communist League. Julius joined the Communist Party in



*Ethel and Julius Rosenberg ride to separate jails on March 29, 1951, after being convicted of espionage. (AP/Wide World Photos)*

1939 and served as a civilian employee of the Army Signal Corps during World War II, until he was discharged in 1945 for having concealed his Party membership. In the winter of 1943–1944, Julius began organizing an espionage network to collect military-related scientific intelligence on behalf of the Soviet Union.

The arrest of the Rosenbergs in the summer of 1950 followed that of David Greenglass, Ethel's younger brother and a recent partner of Julius's in an unsuccessful electronics business venture. Greenglass had served in the army as a machinist at the highly classified Los Alamos weapons laboratory that had been charged with the development of an atomic bomb—the Manhattan Project—during World War II, and had recently been identified by Soviet courier Harry Gold as one of his espionage contacts. Greenglass admitted his guilt and told investigators that he had been recruited as a spy by his sister Ethel and brother-in-law Julius in November 1943. He confessed that, at their direction, he had passed along top secret information about atomic bomb design that he had learned while working at Los Alamos, using his wife Ruth as a con-

duit, and that Julius had continued to engage in espionage in the postwar years. Atomic Energy Agency officials who later reviewed his testimony were impressed by the range and accuracy of the information he had been able to obtain, despite his lack of technical knowledge and relatively low-level position. Greenglass secured immunity for his wife and a promise of leniency for himself, but the Rosenbergs refused to cooperate.

In January 1951 the Rosenbergs were indicted for conspiracy to commit espionage, along with Morton Sobell, who was alleged to be a member of the spy ring operated by Julius but who was not implicated in the atomic espionage directed at Los Alamos. The indictment listed ten overt acts in furtherance of the conspiracy, including the receipt by Julius Rosenberg from Ruth Greenglass of a paper containing written information after a trip by Ruth to New Mexico, and the additional receipt by Julius from David Greenglass of a paper containing sketches of experiments conducted at the Los Alamos Project.

The Rosenbergs' trial opened on March 6, 1951, in federal court in lower Manhattan. The trial judge was Irving Kaufman. The prosecution was led by Irving Saypol, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York, assisted by future Joseph McCarthy aide Roy Cohn, among others. The Rosenbergs were represented by Emanuel Bloch and his father, Alexander. The younger Bloch was an experienced trial attorney with a solid track record as an advocate for left-wing causes, but the defense team proved to be badly overmatched in the face of the relentlessly aggressive Saypol and the generally unsympathetic trial judge.

As was often noted, all of the trial's principals, including not only the defendants and the principal witnesses against them, but also the judge and both lead prosecuting and defense attorneys, were Jewish. The one exception was the jury—something that has often looked suspicious, given that New York was the world's largest Jewish city. In response to the claim that only antisemitism in the trial process could account for this disparity, it has been pointed out that a number of potential jurors who may have been Jewish were excused from service, so that the impanelment of a non-Jewish jury reflected nothing more than the normal working of the selection process. One commentator calculated that, of 156 persons sworn for potential jury service, "fifteen names were *obviously* Jewish; . . . of these, ten were excused by the court for personal

reasons, four were challenged by the defense, and one was challenged by the government" (Dawidowicz 1952a). However, the argument that has also been advanced that the lack of Jews on the jury is not surprising because the federal court's district did not encompass the entire city, but included only Manhattan and the Bronx, and extended northward into the largely non-Jewish counties of the lower Hudson Valley, is not convincing. Given the large Jewish populations of Manhattan, and especially of the Bronx, and the much smaller overall populations of the constituent counties outside the city, the percentage of Jews in the federal court's district was about the same as in New York City as a whole.

In any event, it is not clear whether the lack of Jews on the jury helped or hurt the defendants. Rosenberg supporters have frequently accused trial judge Kaufman of being unduly harsh precisely because he was Jewish and wanted to avoid any appearance of favoritism or sympathy toward Jewish defendants, whom he regarded as traitors. The one disturbing, but inconclusive, bit of evidence that the non-Jewish jury may have harbored antisemitic attitudes came from a piece of paper with the word "Jude" written on it that was found on the table in the jury room after the trial. But the significance of that scribbled note or what it referred to is unknown (Radosh and Milton 1997).

The jury was quickly impaneled and the trial proceeded with remarkable rapidity, concluding with a verdict of guilty on March 28. The prosecution presented a case that was much more streamlined than its lengthy witness list had promised. The crucial testimony was provided by David and Ruth Greenglass. They testified to David's recruitment by the Rosenbergs, the information David acquired at Los Alamos (including a description of the implosion process that was critical to the design of the atomic bomb), the delivery of that material via both Ruth and Harry Gold, and, in a last-minute addition to their prior version of events, Ethel's direct involvement in the espionage effort by typing up some of that information before it was passed along to the Soviets. David also produced replicas of the sketches of the bomb design that he said he had delivered during the war. The Greenglasses' testimony was corroborated by Soviet courier Harry Gold. A Manhattan Project scientist testified to the classified nature of the information obtained and transmitted by Greenglass, vouching for the "reasonable" accuracy of Greenglass's sketch and the potential usefulness of

that information to outside scientific experts, although the prosecution did not call the top Manhattan Project officials (including J. Robert Oppenheimer and General Leslie Groves) who had been identified as potential witnesses.

Elizabeth Bentley, the tabloids' Red Spy Queen, testified to her own Soviet spymaster's relationship to a certain "Julius," who could be identified as Rosenberg, but she also appeared as an expert witness on the loyalty of American Communists to the Soviet Union. This testimony was central to the prosecution's theory of the motive for the Rosenbergs' activities, and Communism all but eclipsed the formal charge of espionage as the dominant theme of the trial. Prosecutor Sappol was relentless in driving this point home. As he told the jury:

the allegiance of the Rosenbergs and Sobell were not to our country, but that it was to Communism, Communism in this country and Communism throughout the world. . . . The evidence will show their loyalty to and worship of the Soviet Union and by their rank disloyalty to our country these defendants joined with their co-conspirators in a deliberate, carefully planned conspiracy to deliver to the Soviet Union, the information and the weapons.

It was an exceedingly difficult time for a defendant to be on trial as an accused spy for the Soviet Union. The Korean War was raging. United Nations forces had only recently recovered from the intervention by Chinese Communist forces that had threatened to drive UN troops off the peninsula entirely, and had yet to recapture Seoul. Joe McCarthy's charges of widespread Communist infiltration of the government were generating headlines daily. Alger Hiss was in prison, having been convicted on perjury charges the year before in the same federal courthouse in which the Rosenbergs were on trial. The Soviet Union's initial testing of an atomic bomb in the summer of 1949, several years before American intelligence had predicted it, made the plight of defendants accused of facilitating that breakthrough—and the fears of nuclear confrontation that it triggered—all the more desperate.

But even considering these unfavorable circumstances, the Rosenbergs' defense was a debacle. The Rosenbergs offered no plausible alternative to the detailed testimony of David and Ruth Greenglass, and their credibility was shattered by unconvincing denials of Communist Party affiliations or the even more damaging refusal to

answer such questions on fifth amendment grounds. The challenge to Greenglass's testimony as falsely motivated by bad blood arising from a business dispute with Julius was unconvincing, given the enormity of the stakes for Greenglass's own sister. By deciding not to cross-examine Harry Gold, the defense passed up an opportunity to probe that important witness's psychological peculiarities. Perhaps most damaging of all, Emanuel Bloch's motion—that palpably astonished both the judge and the prosecutor—to impound Greenglass's sketches may have been a desperate bid to score patriotic points with the jury, but it dramatically underlined the argument that the information at issue was just what the prosecution claimed it to be: highly secret even years after the fact and still vital to the security of the nation.

It was true that the prosecution's case lacked one prominent feature of other espionage cases of the time: the actual, hard evidence of what the defendants were accused of turning over to the Soviets. In the Alger Hiss and Judith Coplon cases, the prosecution presented the actual documents that the defendants had passed; in the Rosenberg case, the bomb design sketches entered into evidence were David Greenglass's reconstructions (while in custody) of what he said he had turned over to the Rosenbergs.

Moreover, the case against the Rosenbergs was built on claims and tactics that have not withstood the test of time. Prosecutor Sappol's contention that the Rosenbergs had been able to "steal through David Greenglass this one weapon [the atomic bomb]" grossly exaggerated the actual trial testimony about the value and extent of the classified information provided by Greenglass. As the government knew, the German émigré and Communist physicist Klaus Fuchs had provided the Soviets with the detailed technical data that constituted the true "atomic secret." Although Greenglass's sketches "may not have been extremely helpful in themselves . . . they confirmed that Fuchs was telling the truth when he claimed the United States had now settled on the plutonium, implosion-type bomb, abandoning the uranium model as a dead end. This information . . . could well have enabled the Russians to avoid the highly expensive and elaborate duplicate efforts undertaken by the United States" (Radosh and Milton 1997).

On cross-examination of Ethel Rosenberg, the prosecution repeatedly used her invocation of the fifth amendment in grand jury testimony to impeach her denials at trial. Although this practice was allowed under the then

current rules of evidence (and not challenged by the defendants on appeal), it was held improper by the U.S. Supreme Court in an unrelated case a few years later. However, given the plausibility of the prosecution's case, founded as it was on the apparently sincere testimony of the defendants' own close relatives, whose credibility was buttressed by the fact that their testimony might send the defendants to their death, along with the weaknesses, verging on incompetence, of the defense, it is hard not to conclude that guilty verdicts were fully justified by the evidence and inevitable. On April 5, 1951, Judge Kaufman sentenced the Rosenbergs to death and Sobell (who had not been implicated in atomic espionage) to thirty years in prison.

Given the gravity of the charges, the overwhelming strength of the evidence of guilt, and the wartime atmosphere, the imposition of the maximum penalty on the Rosenbergs occasioned little surprise or protest, although it exceeded the government's own position at the time (supported by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover) that Julius, but not Ethel, be executed. Ultimately the decision to invoke the death penalty was that of Irving Kaufman alone. The judge's sentencing statement rested on his conclusion that, by stealing "the secret of the atomic bomb," the Rosenbergs had committed a crime "that was worse than murder" and thereby triggered the Korean War. This claim rested on no evidence presented at trial, but—apart from its single-minded focus on the Rosenbergs—has been more or less sustained by recent disclosures. These have confirmed the Soviet Union's crucial role in unleashing North Korea's invasion of the South and Stalin's reversal of an earlier veto of that attack plan after the Soviets' first atomic bomb test. John Haynes concludes, "It is unlikely that [Stalin] would have approved North Korea's invasion of South Korea in 1950 had the American atomic monopoly still existed" (Haynes 1996). Judge Kaufman, while acknowledging Ethel's subsidiary role in the conspiracy, noted that she was older than Julius and labeled her the decisive influence on her younger brother, David Greenglass, without whom the Rosenbergs' atomic espionage activities would not have been possible.

Other suggested motivations remain speculative. Critics have suggested that the judge was bidding to win governmental favor and advance his career, but, as noted, sentencing Ethel to death exceeded what the government desired. It has also been charged that Judge Kaufman was

driven by the need to prove that Jews, such as himself, were reliable patriots who could be counted on to repudiate the defendants' treasonous activities, a need that some have attributed to the fact that his wife's maiden name was Rosenberg. A more prosaic explanation for the sentences may be found in the context of a time when the death penalty was inflicted far more often and routinely than would be the case thereafter. In 1951, there were one hundred executions in the United States; in New York State alone in the first months of that year, while the Rosenberg trial and sentencing unfolded, eight people were executed, including one woman. Within a few years the infliction of the death penalty would drop so sharply that the execution of the Rosenbergs could readily appear excessive in retrospect, although it was fully consistent with sentencing practices at the time. Whatever the reasoning behind the imposition of death sentences on both Julius and Ethel, it was the specter of the electric chair, and the consequent orphaning of their young sons, that provided the emotional energy to transform their legal case into a passionately embraced—and passionately rejected—cause over the two years that ensued before their execution in June 1953.

The Rosenbergs were both Jews and Communists. If their Communist affiliations and beliefs took center stage at their trial, it was their Jewish identity, virtually unmentioned in the courtroom, that dominated the campaign to overturn their convictions or, at the least, avert their executions. Immediately after the Rosenbergs were sentenced, the anti-Communist Yiddish press raised questions about the imposition of the death penalty. On April 6, 1951, the *Forward*, while acknowledging the Rosenbergs' guilt and the severity of their crime, pronounced the sentence as "too horrible," adding that "every Jew felt the same way." The *Day* concurred in criticizing the death sentences and faulted Judge Kaufman's handling of the case. The criticisms of these anti-Communist Jewish papers were then quoted by the Communist Party-allied monthly *Jewish Life*, which also charged in its May issue that "the Jewish community felt that the judgment had the odor of the pogrom." According to *Jewish Life*, "The shock [at the death sentences] was particularly deep on New York's East Side where the Rosenbergs were born and brought up . . . and where they lived up to the time of their arrest." These protests escalated into Communist charges that the Rosenbergs had been targeted as Jews and that the death sentences were motivated by antisemitism.

In the summer of 1951, the *National Guardian* published a series of articles challenging the Rosenbergs' conviction and first broached the possibility of antisemitism in the court proceedings by highlighting the lack of any Jews on a jury despite their large numbers in New York City. A National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case, with a largely Jewish membership, was organized in response to the *National Guardian* articles, and Jews were exhorted: "The Rosenbergs shall not die. . . . Raise your voices, all you Jews, rich and poor!" (Dawidowicz 1952a). The January 1952 issue of *Jewish Life* featured editor Louis Harap's article, "Anti-Semitism and the Rosenbergs," arguing that "a lowering cloud of anti-Semitism hangs over the death sentence of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg":

The country had had trials of a number of confessed traitors like Axis Sally and others; a number of alleged atomic spies were deemed more important than the Rosenbergs.

*Yet no one received the death sentence until two East Side Jews were tried. Why?*

Two months later, the executive secretary of the Communist-dominated Civil Rights Congress warned, "The lynching of these two innocent American Jews . . . will serve as a signal for a wave of Hitler-like genocidal attacks against the Jewish people throughout the United States" (Dawidowicz 1952a). The Rosenbergs' "Death House Letters," initially published in the spring of 1953 to rally support for their last-minute clemency campaign, portrayed them as an average Jewish couple on New York's Lower East Side and were studded with references to their Jewish religious practices, faith, and holiday observances even while imprisoned and awaiting execution.

While the Rosenbergs' supporters and Communist-allied publications were attempting to garner sympathy by claiming that the couple were victims of an antisemitic frame-up, the Communist Party itself (which had been silent during the Rosenbergs' trial) gave little organized support to the Rosenberg defense campaign. That changed in November 1952. That month, deposed Czechoslovak Party Secretary Rudolf Slansky and other Czech Communist leaders were put on trial in Prague on trumped-up charges of orchestrating a capitalist-Zionist conspiracy with U.S. President Harry S. Truman and Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion to overthrow the communist

regime. Eleven of the fourteen defendants (including Slansky) were Jewish; the indictment formally identified them as of "Jewish origin."

The flagrantly antisemitic thrust of the purge provided a grim harbinger of intensifying antisemitism, culminating in the fabricated Doctors' Plot charges against mostly Jewish Kremlin physicians, that would mark the months before Stalin's death in March 1953. With American public opinion, led by President Truman and President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower, denouncing the Prague trial as (in Eisenhower's words) "a political act designed to unloose a campaign of rabid anti-Semitism through Soviet Russia and the satellite nations of Eastern Europe" (*New York Times*, December 22, 1952), American and European Communist parties seized upon the Rosenberg case to redirect accusations of antisemitism away from the Soviet Union and toward the United States.

It was then that the Communist Party threw its full weight behind the Rosenberg defense. New members flooded into the defense committee. A worldwide campaign was quickly mobilized. The charge of antisemitism found a particularly receptive audience in Europe. The Rosenbergs did indeed prove a handy lightning rod to deflect concerns about the events in Prague. Prominent Communist historian Herbert Aptheker argued that Slansky was guilty, but that the Rosenbergs were the innocent victims of an antisemitic frame-up. Writing in the French Communist newspaper, *L'Humanité*, in November 1952, American Communist novelist Howard Fast claimed that "the Jewish masses of our country" had detected "the stale smell of fascism" in the case. Alleging that the Rosenbergs "have been judged by Jews" and "sent to death by other Jews," Fast charged that it was "exactly the old technique of the Jewish Tribunal employed by Hitler" (Radosh and Milton 1997).

The perception that the Rosenberg defense effort was being orchestrated to serve as an instrument of Soviet and Communist propaganda elicited an increasingly vehement response from Jewish organizations and intellectuals anxious to dispel any Communist taint from the American Jewish community. There was reason for such concern. Not only were all the alleged and admitted Soviet spies involved in the Rosenberg trial Jewish, but the common perception that the American Communist Party contained a disproportionately high number of Jews was well-founded (Glazer 1961). And the one increase in the overall down-

ward trend in antisemitic attitudes since World War II occurred between 1951 and 1953, the years when the Rosenberg case unfolded (Dinnerstein 1994).

The anti-Communist Jewish community mobilized to counteract Rosenberg defense efforts, perceiving that the campaign was facilitating the equation of Jews with Communism. As Lucy Dawidowicz wrote, “because a spy or a Communist is a Jew, the Communists proclaim that all Jews are collectively involved” (Dawidowicz 1952a). In March 1952 the *Anti-Defamation League Bulletin* published an article “Anti-Semitism and the Atom Spy Trial” by Oliver Pilat asserting that antisemitism was encouraged by Communist emphasis on the fact that the Rosenbergs were Jews. In May, the National Community Relations Advisory Council, acting on behalf of the American Jewish (AJ) Committee, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the AJCongress, the Jewish War Veterans, the Jewish Labor Committee, and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, issued a statement that labeled the Rosenberg defense committee a “Communist inspired group” that was wrongly injecting “the false issue of anti-Semitism into the Rosenberg case” (Marker 1972). The AJ Committee deputized staff member Rabbi S. Andhil Fineberg to monitor pro-Rosenberg activities. Rabbi Fineberg wrote *The Rosenberg Case: Fact and Fiction* to affirm the justness of the convictions and executions and to expose “the hurtful impact of one of the most sensational propaganda campaigns ever conducted.” He concluded, “the Rosenbergs’ case is ended but the evil they did is endless” (Fineberg 1953).

Writing in the *New Leader*, a social democratic publication with a large Jewish readership, Lucy Dawidowicz argued that the Rosenberg defense campaign “serves only one purpose—to intensify the ‘hate America’ campaign throughout the world” and that commutation of the death sentences would hand the Communists an unwarranted propaganda victory (Dawidowicz 1952b). She faulted even anti-Communist critics of the death sentences for providing a cloak of legitimacy for Communist agitation on the issue (1952a). In his perceptive but pitiless dissection of the Rosenbergs’ “Death House Letters,” social critic Robert Warshow characterized the couples’ repeated references to Jewish tradition and identity as “patently disingenuous.” “Since the propaganda built up around the case emphasized the fact that the Rosenbergs were Jewish, they simply adopted the role that was demanded of them” (Warshow 1953).

In the end, the organized campaign to “save the Rosenbergs” did not rally significant support beyond the diminishing ranks of the Communist Party and its remaining sympathizers and auxiliaries. Independent leftist journalist I. F. Stone pointedly explained the failure: “[T]he constant effort of the defense to equate the United States with Nazi Germany; to picture the Rosenbergs as the victims of a racist murder and anti-Semitic plot fit neatly with Soviet propaganda but it hurt the Rosenbergs more than it helped them; it antagonized the American Jewish community; it was poisonous folly” (Stone 1953).

While the Rosenbergs’ supporters pressed their claims in the streets, meeting halls, and the press, their lawyers pursued post-trial and appellate remedies in the courts, but without success. The federal court of appeals affirmed their conviction in February 1952, and the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the case. Newly inaugurated President Eisenhower denied a petition for clemency. Never a strong possibility for Julius, clemency for Ethel was doomed by the president’s belief that the older Ethel was the dominant personality, and that a commutation of her sentence to the term (thirty years) of imprisonment authorized by law as the alternative to death would allow her release in half that time, a sentence he considered unduly lenient. Until the last minute, however, a commutation of the sentences was possible had the Rosenbergs agreed to confess and disclose details of their espionage activities to the government. This they refused to do. “Love for their cause dominated their lives—it was even greater than their love for their children,” Judge Kaufman had said in his sentencing statement.

In a final legal twist, just days before the rescheduled June 19, 1953, execution date, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas granted a stay to consider a last-minute argument by new counsel, who contended that the Rosenbergs had been wrongly tried and sentenced under a law that had been superseded by the Atomic Energy Act. The more recent statute, it was argued, did not authorize the death penalty unless the jury recommended it; at the Rosenbergs’ trial, the death sentence had been imposed by the judge alone. But with the Eisenhower administration now determined to bring the legal proceedings to an immediate close, the U.S. Supreme Court was summoned from its summer recess into special session to review the stay. By a six-to-three vote, the Court overturned the stay at noon on Friday June 19. After a two-year battle in the courts, the execution was cleared to proceed that night.

The Rosenbergs' Jewishness gave their last hours a final twist. While the Supreme Court was deliberating, counsel and Judge Kaufman had agreed that it would be inappropriate to execute the couple as scheduled on the Sabbath (Friday, June 19), at 11 p.m. When the Supreme Court vacated the stay on Friday, the Rosenberg camp assumed that the execution would be delayed for at least a day. Instead, the time for the execution was accelerated to beat the Sabbath deadline. As several thousand supporters gathered in Union Square to await the fatal announcement, Julius, followed by Ethel, went to the electric chair in Sing Sing prison's death house just before sunset. They are the only civilians executed for espionage in the history of the United States. Two days later, the Rosenbergs were buried, in accordance with Jewish ritual, in Wellwood Cemetery on Long Island.

In the aftermath of the executions, the vast bulk of public opinion, including opinion in the Jewish community, considered the case closed and the Rosenbergs guilty as charged. The ferment of the Sixties and the reemergence of the radical Left, however, provided a broader and more receptive audience for critics of the trial. In 1965, Walter and Miriam Schneir's *Invitation to an Inquest* persuaded a wide readership that the charge of atomic espionage had been fabricated by an unscrupulous government. E. L. Doctorow's highly praised novel, *The Book of Daniel*, rendered this theme in fictional terms a few years later. When the Rosenbergs' children, under their adoptive names of Robert and Michael Meeropol, went public with their identities and their protestations of faith in their parents' innocence, an emotional current was added to the growing conviction that the Rosenbergs had been unjustly convicted. The 1975 documentary *The Unquiet Death of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg* argued the case for the Rosenbergs in theaters and on public television. In post-Watergate America, claims of government misconduct and persecution of the innocent on the left resonated with renewed plausibility. However, now it was their status as leftists and not as Jews that was identified as the source of their vulnerability.

The debate on the case was once again transformed by the publication in 1983 of *The Rosenberg File: A Search for Truth* by Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton. Drawing on a vast array of documentary and oral evidence, including newly available internal FBI documents, Radosh and Milton affirmed the Rosenbergs' guilt and provided a detailed account of the extensive espionage network that Julius had

directed. They argued that Ethel had been prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced to death primarily to pressure Julius into cooperating with the authorities, and questioned the propriety of the death sentence imposed on her. Although questioning the exaggerated claim that the Rosenbergs had stolen "the secret of the atomic bomb," Radosh and Milton showed that the classified material the Rosenbergs had obtained from David Greenglass was of significant value to the Soviet Union's weapons development effort. The weight of informed opinion—liberal and conservative—concluded that the case against the Rosenbergs had now been conclusively established.

Almost from the onset of the case, allusions had frequently been made to conclusively incriminating evidence against the Rosenbergs that could not be presented in court because of national security concerns. Hoover had referred to such evidence in his *Reader's Digest* article on the FBI's investigation of atomic espionage. President Eisenhower's attorney general told him about the existence of the evidence during their discussions about clemency. Beginning in the 1980s, however, a number of accounts, based on highly placed sources, revealed that American intelligence had broken Soviet codes in the 1940s and that these decrypts had provided crucial leads in building the case against the Rosenbergs. In 1995, the U.S. government officially confirmed the existence of that code breaking effort, known as the Venona Project, and released the texts of hundreds of Soviet intelligence messages that had been decoded decades earlier. The leading historian of cryptoanalysis, David Kahn, announced, "the Venona intercepts show one thing beyond doubt, that the Rosenbergs spied for the Soviet Union against the United States" (Radosh and Milton 1997).

The Venona revelations brought any debate about the Rosenbergs' guilt more or less to an end. Even the Schneirs retreated from their prior protestations of innocence and acknowledged that the "Venona messages reveal that during World War II Julius ran a spy ring composed of young fellow Communists" and that they corroborated Julius's involvement in atomic espionage, but insisted it was only "minor" (Schneir and Schneir 1995).

But however dispositive the Venona decrypts were on the issue of guilt, that evidence rekindled doubts about the propriety of the death sentences. Venona, together with other revelations of Soviet atomic espionage activities, demonstrated that Soviet infiltration of Los Alamos was

more extensive than had heretofore been publicly acknowledged and involved highly placed scientists who were never prosecuted because evidence that could be used in court was not available. That the Rosenbergs were put to death while other critically important Soviet agents, whose spying activities were arguably even more beneficial to the Soviets, went free raised newly troubling questions about their execution. Venona confirmed that the American investigative agencies had managed to identify the members of the Rosenberg spy ring that the Rosenbergs had refused to implicate. To the extent that the death sentences were intended as leverage to gain the Rosenbergs' cooperation in exchange for clemency, that effort was apparently directed at obtaining admissible evidence for use in further prosecutions, not the identities of the agents themselves.

More than half a century after their deaths, the passions the Rosenberg case once roused have been eclipsed by the end of the Cold War and the demise of the political conflicts that it once encapsulated. From the vantage point of an American Jewish community that is now overwhelmingly affluent and suburban, the human side of their story, that of a young Jewish couple raised in poverty on the Lower East Side and scrambling to maintain a modest livelihood, seems increasingly remote. The fear that the case would trigger a resurgence of antisemitism has proved unfounded. That the case belongs to a world that has irretrievably passed does not, however, mean that it will be forgotten. As Justice Felix Frankfurter wrote, in explaining his decision to issue a lengthy written dissent from the Supreme Court's June 19, 1953, decision although the Rosenbergs had been executed by the time his opinion was completed, "History also has its claims."

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## Jewish Anarchism in America

Anarchism as a significant movement among Jews in the United States began in 1886. Before then, there were a few Jewish anarchists, the most well known being Isidore Stein from New Haven, Connecticut. During the first years of its existence (1886–1890), the anarchist movement was probably the largest among Jewish radicals in the United States, and it remained relatively strong between 1900 and World War I. The less radical socialist movement, however, was always more appealing to the masses. The anarchist movement concentrated mainly in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, New York, but also bloomed in the ghettos of cities in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New England. It started in the sweatshops, where its adherents took part in the first garment strikes and helped organize some of the first Jewish trade unions, including the New York cloak makers and knee-pants workers. They imparted revolutionary content to popular activities, sponsoring picnics and lectures, organizing clubs, cooperatives, and mutual-aid societies. Anarchism's impact on Jews in the United States was limited to the immigrant generation.

Anarchism among Jews started mainly in Russia, where some Jews adhered to Peter Kropotkin's anarcho-communist

doctrine and actively participated in its propaganda by attending meetings, distributing pamphlets, recruiting members, and organizing strikes. Many anarchists joined the vast stream of Jews who left Russia for America following the anti-Jewish riots of 1881 and subsequent years. Few fled specifically because of political persecution. Upon their arrival, these radicals were estranged from the mainstream of American political life. They did not speak English and maintained the Russian radical tradition. They organized themselves as the Russian Progressive Labor Association, not attaching themselves to any specific ideological group. As they learned English and came to understand American political and social issues, they affiliated with the labor movement while staying within the Yiddish-speaking milieu. Soon they formed Jewish political groups, such as the *Rusish-yidisher arbeter fareyn* (Russian-Jewish Workers' Union) on February 7, 1885, and the *Yidisher arbayer fareyn* (Jewish Workers' Union) on April 19, 1885—the first to include immigrants from countries other than Russia and Germany.

The turning point, however, came with the Haymarket Affair (May 4, 1886). That evening a demonstration of labor unions was held at Haymarket Square in Chicago. A bomb exploded, killing one policeman and wounding many. Eight anarchist leaders were arrested, some of whom had not been present. Seven of the accused anarchist leaders were sentenced to death, and one to fifteen years in prison. (On the eve of the execution, the sentences of two of the condemned men were commuted to life in prison.) Although the bomb thrower was never identified, the defendants were charged as accessories to murder: their oral and written statements against the state and the police had allegedly inspired his crime. May 4 caused some radicals to define themselves as anarchists rather than socialists. On October 9, 1886, the day the anarchist leaders were sentenced, the first Jewish anarchist group in the United States, *Pionire der frayhayt* (Pioneers of Liberty), was formed on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. Among its renowned members were Hillel Solotaroff, Moshe Katz, Roman Lewis, Emma Goldman, and the poet David Edelshtat.

Jewish anarchists were drawn almost entirely from the growing ranks of organized Jewish workers, who were concentrated in the needle trades. By 1886, there were fourteen Jewish unions, most of which represented workers in the garment industry. In October 1888, *Fareynikte yidishe ge-*

*verkschaftn* (United Hebrew Trades) was founded as an umbrella organization to create and strengthen the existing Jewish unions. Another significant Jewish group, founded in 1889 in Philadelphia, was *Riter der frayhayt* (Knights of Liberty). Among its members were the powerful speakers Max Staller, Chaim Weinberg, and Isidore Prenner.

These anarchists leaned toward atheism, believing that religion was an ally of the state and that both were used as instruments to subjugate humanity spiritually, politically, and economically. They therefore rejected traditional Judaism. Their activities included publishing antireligious journals on Yom Kippur (Pioneers of Liberty) and staging Yom Kippur balls, starting in 1889, which featured merry-making and atheistic harangues.

Jewish anarchist groups, like their other American anarchist counterparts, affiliated with the International Working People's Association, an anarchist labor organization. Its American branch was founded in 1883 mainly by Johann Most (b. Germany, 1846–d. United States, 1906), but with the aid of Albert Parsons and other anarchist leaders. Jews in the 1880s began to play a significant role in the movement, which had been dominated by German immigrants and native-born Americans. Johann Most embraced the American Jewish groups, forging close ties between them and the German branch.

Since many Jews immigrated to the United States through England, strong ties developed between the anarchist groups in both countries. London's Yiddish newspaper, *Arbeter fraynd*, also served as a voice for the American Jewish anarchists. Anarchist newspapers published in Boston (*Liberty*) and New York (*The Alarm*) did not address specific issues concerning the Yiddish-speaking group. As a result, in February 1889, the Pioneers of Liberty published *Di Varhayt* (*The Truth*), the first Yiddish periodical in the United States. Among the prominent contributors were Most and Kropotkin. However, after only five months and twenty issues, it ceased to appear, probably due to insufficient funds.

By 1890 disagreements on fundamental issues arose between Jewish anarchists and socialists. The anarchists insisted on a nonparty paper that exposed the readers to all streams of radical ideas to enable them to form their own political opinions, while the socialists argued for a consistent stand on social, political, and economic issues. On December 25, 1889, the first conference of Jewish radicals was convened to discuss the possibility of publishing a newspa-

per to serve both anarchists and socialists. Arguments over format were put to a vote, resulting in the anarchists' defeat by one vote. The gathering broke up, and the breach between the two camps became irreparable.

On July 4, 1890, the *Fraye arbayter shtime* (*FAS*, *Free Voice of Labor*) appeared, surviving with few interruptions until December 1977. This Yiddish newspaper played a vital role in the Jewish labor movement. It had high literary standards, featuring the finest Yiddish writers. Its first editor was Roman Lewis (1864–1918), who became one of the leaders of the Jewish anarchist movement in the United States. Later he turned his back on radicalism and became an active member of the Democratic Party. Several months later, on January 9, 1891, the poet David Edelshtat assumed the position, first as co-editor with the Social Democrat Aronovitsh (Dr. Ayzik Hurwitz). When Aronovitsh resigned several weeks later, Edelshtat became the sole editor, turning the paper into an anarchist weekly.

In 1892, during the Homestead strike, Alexander Berkman (b. Vilna, 1870–d. Nice, 1936) attempted to murder Henry Clay Frick, the manager of Carnegie Steel Works in Pittsburgh. This caused friction in the movement; while some were inspired by the act, others repudiated terrorism. Upon his release from prison in 1906, Berkman became, together with Emma Goldman (b. Lithuania, 1869–d. Toronto, 1940), the foremost anarchist in America.

In 1894, the *FAS* suspended publication due to lack of funds and organizational problems, ending the first phase of Jewish anarchism. Nevertheless, a year later the monthly *Di fraye gezelschaft* (*The Free Society*) appeared, printing articles in Yiddish by leading Jewish and gentile anarchists until 1914. The *FAS* was revived in October 1899 under the editorship of the prominent agitator and journalist Saul Yanovsky (b. Pinsk, Russia, 1864–d. United States, 1939) and lasted until 1919. This was a period of rejuvenation for both the paper and for the movement throughout America. The paper's circulation grew steadily, exceeding 20,000 on the eve of World War I, while the movement gained new life, even as the Pioneers of Liberty, Knights of Liberty, and other groups faded away. Jewish anarchists from northeastern cities sent delegates to New York once a year for meetings.

During these two decades, a dozen Yiddish anarchist periodicals were published, although only *FAS* persisted for a long time. Many Jewish groups were formed, like the *Federirte anarkhistishe grupe in Amerike* (Federated Anar-

chist Groups in America), organized in Philadelphia in December 1910. These groups helped organize unions in all trades that had Jewish workers.

At the same time, during these two decades, Jewish anarchism became less militant. This was in part because anarchists participated in the organization of unions in all trades in which Jews were employed and focused on specific improvements in workers' economic and social conditions. In addition, the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901 shocked anarchists, including Yanovsky, who claimed that violence does not serve anarchism, which calls for harmony and peace. Antireligious agitation was also reduced because it turned away many, who, although no longer religious, were still sentimentally connected to tradition. Those who had previously condemned reformism now adopted a conciliatory attitude. As a result, the movement lost its revolutionary identity. Anarchists even took part in *Arbeter ring* (Workmen's Circle), the socialist-oriented Jewish fraternal order in North America, which emphasized educational and cultural programs, life insurance, and sickness and accident benefits.

When World War I began, the anarchist movement entered a critical period, splitting over whether to support the war or not. Kropotkin backed the Entente, while Yanovsky, in *FAS*, at first opposed the war and signed an International Manifesto denouncing it, together with other prominent anarchists, such as Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. Later, however, he shifted his stand to favor an Allied victory, while other anarchists, including Michael Cohn, were pro-German.

This controversy was followed by the repression and deportation of many anarchists, among them leaders of the movement, in the Palmer Raids staged in the winter of 1919–1920. In addition, the immigration of Eastern Europeans declined and then was severely restricted in 1924, reducing potential Yiddish-speaking recruits. The younger generation of Jews, born in the United States, was assimilating and entering the mainstream of American culture. The movement had fallen on hard times from which it never recovered.

The collaboration between the anarchists and socialists between 1923 and 1927 against the communists proved successful when they were able to block the communists from taking over the garment unions. They remained on good terms and shared many concerns. Jewish anarchists organized libraries, reading rooms, and literary clubs.

After World War II, anarchist groups and federations reemerged, but wielded little influence among Jews compared to the earlier movement. This is not surprising because anarchists never stressed the need for organizational continuity.

In the 1960s and 1970s, a new radicalism took root among students and the Left in general in the United States, Europe, and Japan, embracing criticism of elitist power structures and the materialist values of modern industrial societies—both capitalist and communist. This resulted in a renewed interest in anarchism, but only among some students, not workers, who in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had constituted the movement's major source of recruits. The *FAS*'s circulation steadily declined, and it became a biweekly. As the Yiddish readership aged and the number of Jews who read Yiddish sharply declined, the paper's circulation by the 1970s had decreased to less than 2,000. Although switching to English could have increased the paper's circulation, its editors refused to do so for ideological reasons. The closing of the *FAS* in 1977 signaled the end of the Jewish anarchist movement in the United States.

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## **Commentary and the Origins of Neoconservatism**

A New York City-based monthly magazine founded by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in 1945, *Commentary* has reflected and shaped the changing currents of American intellectual and political discourse, as its perspective moved from liberal to radical to conservative over the years. The magazine made its most notable mark by serving, along with the more policy-oriented *The Public Interest* (edited by onetime *Commentary* associate editor, Irving Kristol), as a flagship publication expressing the disillusionment with the radical turbulence of the 1960s that came to be labeled—initially by its opponents—neocon-

servatism. *Commentary*'s anti-Communist liberalism in the 1950s and radicalism in the early 1960s made it a leading voice of mainstream American Jewish opinion. The magazine's shift to the right thereafter "broke ranks" (in the words of its longtime editor, Norman Podhoretz) with a community that has largely retained its traditional left-of-center allegiances. Ironically, however, *Commentary*'s own political rethinking was animated by specifically Jewish concerns.

Although in the first years of the twenty-first century the public associated neoconservatism almost exclusively with advocacy of the war in Iraq and an assertive program of nation-building in the Middle East, very different issues provided its initial impetus. In a 2003 response to the increasingly prevalent claim that neoconservative views on Iraq are linked to earlier support for the Vietnam War, Nathan Glazer, one of the movement's original spokesmen, pointed out that he opposed the earlier war and wrote that "the 'neoconservatism' of that era had almost nothing to do with the war. It arose out of skepticism over some social policies of the 1960s, from community action to affirmative action, and out of skepticism over the tactics and objectives of the student movement at Berkeley and Columbia" (Glazer 2003). Indeed, in a summation of the tenets of neoconservatism, written in 1979, Irving Kristol, the movement's "godfather," made no mention of foreign policy (Kristol 1983). Examination of *Commentary*'s rightward turn in the aftermath of the 1960s sustains Glazer's contention about the origins of neoconservatism and underlines how marginal foreign policy concerns were to its genesis.

*Commentary* was established as a successor to the *Contemporary Jewish Record* that the AJC had published since 1938. In the "Statement of Aims" that has appeared in each issue since July 1952, the Committee averred that "in sponsoring *Commentary*," the AJC "aims to meet the need for a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues. . . . The sponsorship of *Commentary* is in line with its general program to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern, to fight bigotry and protect human rights, and to promote Jewish cultural interest and creative achievement in America." Less officially, the AJC's sponsorship has been ascribed to a wish to demonstrate that "American Jewish writers and intellectuals had something important to say to the rest of the nation and that the time had finally come

for the American Jewish community to contribute to the nation's intellectual life" (Shapiro 1992).

The selection of Elliot E. Cohen as editor proved crucial to the new publication's success. Cohen grew up in Mobile, Alabama, and, after graduating from Yale at the age of eighteen, had edited the *Menorah Journal* in the 1920s. During the 1930s he worked as the public relations director of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of Greater New York while maintaining ties to the mostly Jewish, anti-Stalinist radical intellectuals identified with *Partisan Review*. Cohen "had always maintained a great curiosity about Jewish affairs and spoke with pride of his Litvak father, an ordained rabbi, Hebrew scholar, and . . . businessman, at a time when young American Jewish intellectuals generally did not boast of such parochial, genteel origins" (Teller 1968). Although Cohen and the AJC (which described itself as non-Zionist) shared an initial coolness toward the establishment of Israel in 1948, and an enduring hostility toward communism, Cohen enjoyed editorial independence to fulfill his own vision of the journal's role in post-Holocaust American Jewish intellectual life. Cohen hoped "to prove that Jewish identification could be intellectually respectable enough to win over not only educated Jews . . . but specifically the lapsed Marxists of the 1930s" (Sachar 1992).

Cohen assembled a roster of mostly Jewish editors and contributors, which included scholars concerned with Jewish issues (historians Salo Baron and Jacob Marcus) as well as a cadre of formerly Marxist social and literary critics (Clement Greenberg, Robert Warshow, Nathan Glazer, Philip Rahv, Alfred Kazin, Daniel Bell, Irving Howe, Diana Trilling, and Irving Kristol), who were becoming more self-consciously Jewish in their personal identities and increasingly celebrated the virtues of American society. The new magazine "functioned as an invaluable halfway house in which a former 'lost generation' of talented Jews could negotiate their return to Jewish identity and creativity" (Sachar 1992). "The main difference between *Commentary* and *Partisan Review*," Cohen declared, "is that we admit to being a Jewish magazine and they don't" (Shapiro 1992).

Under Cohen's editorship, *Commentary* published the work of writers beginning to make their mark on American letters—Jewish novelists Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, and Saul Bellow, as well as African-American author James Baldwin—and preeminent Jewish religious philosophers—Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, and Gershom

Scholem. It devoted more attention to the Holocaust than was then customary in intellectual or public discourse, and it presented a series of sociological studies exploring "how the Jew has changed yet retained his heritage in communities from West Bronx to San Francisco" (Mitgang 1953). It featured articles on developments in the Soviet bloc, the Hiss and Rosenberg cases, Cold War defense and foreign policy, and civil liberties and McCarthyism, the last of which provoked Irving Kristol's controversial observation that "there is one thing that the American people know about Senator McCarthy; he, like them, is unequivocally anti-Communist. About the spokesmen for American liberalism, they feel no such thing. And with some justification" (March 1952). By the late 1950s the magazine had a circulation of about 20,000 and "kept open communications," as literary critic and *Commentary* contributor Leslie Fiedler later wrote, "between a group of dissident intellectuals and an audience they had seldom reached. Surely no voice was more effective in making the Gentile American aware that the American Jews had become, momentarily, his spokesman at home and abroad. Beginning as a parochial journal of the Jewish community, *Commentary* became more and admired even by those with no stake in Jewish survival or Jewish thought" (Fiedler 1962). Cohen's own verdict was less sanguine, telling a colleague "sadly that *Commentary* is a fine magazine, but it had in no way changed American Jewish habit" (Teller 1968). Cohen struggled with depression for several years before committing suicide in May 1959.

In 1960, thirty-year-old Norman Podhoretz succeeded to the editorship of *Commentary* following Cohen's death, and he served as editor for thirty-five years. Podhoretz grew up in the impoverished, mostly Jewish Brownsville section of Brooklyn and was educated at Columbia University and Jewish Theological Seminary before attending Cambridge. After military service in Germany in the post-Korean War peacetime army, he served an editorial apprenticeship under Cohen at *Commentary* and made his mark as a stylish and combative literary critic, writing for *Partisan Review* and *Commentary*, as well as *The New Yorker* and *Harper's*. "One of the longest journeys in the world," he later wrote, "is the journey from Brooklyn to Manhattan—or at least from certain neighborhoods in Brooklyn to certain parts of Manhattan," and at a notably young age he had "made that journey" (Podhoretz 1967).

Podhoretz assumed the editorship determined to steer the magazine away from what he had come to fault as the “hard anti-Communism” promulgated by Cohen as well as the “disposition . . . to place everything American in a favorable light” (Podhoretz 1967). Podhoretz “immediately pressed the ‘new *Commentary*’ into articulating and developing the ideas that simultaneously encouraged the emergence of a new radicalism and gave it legitimacy and intellectual respectability” (Podhoretz 1985). Podhoretz launched his new regime by giving extended play to three articles by social critic Paul Goodman, which Podhoretz announced “constitute the first analysis that solidly relates delinquency to the prevailing patterns of respectability, showing how the juvenile criminal and the Organization Man, the rebel and the conformist, are equally symptomatic of the same deep disturbance in American culture” (February 1960). In subsequent issues, the magazine pursued Podhoretz’s mandate for change in matters both domestic and foreign, providing a forum for claims that the United States, not the Soviets, was mostly responsible for initiating the Cold War, that the strategy of nuclear deterrence was dangerously misguided, that Kennedy’s New Frontier was too conservative to meet the economic and social problems of the 1960s, and that the incipient American military involvement in Vietnam was ill-conceived. Most remarkably, the April 1961 issue featured a “Challenge to the Negro Leadership” that advocated a strategy of armed struggle for civil rights in the South. “Material of special Jewish concern” appeared less frequently (Podhoretz 1967).

As the radicalism of the 1960s gathered strength, Podhoretz and *Commentary* continued to stake out a “left of liberal” position on the issues of the day. Communism was credited “with the ability and will to revolutionize stagnant societies that do not yield readily to conventional liberal treatment.” President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society was described as “social welfare on the cheap,” falling far short of “the program of social action that is desperately needed” for “the restoration of the cities, integration of minorities into the labor force, relief of youth unemployment [and] elimination of the culture of poverty”; *Commentary* assailed American military intervention in the Dominican Republic and Vietnam, and in a final bow to the “spirit” of the Sixties, Podhoretz provided a forum for Norman Mailer’s celebratory account of the October 1967 March on the Pentagon. The magazine’s provocative content at-

tracted a wider readership, with circulation rising to more than 50,000 by 1966 and peaking at 60,000 at the end of the decade.

There were, however, limits to *Commentary*’s embrace of the new radicalism, and these determined the journal’s ultimate political trajectory. Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky had once belittled American Socialism as the “socialism of dentists,” and a New Leftist might have said the same about Podhoretz’s revamped *Commentary*. The magazine might review Herbert Marcuse’s *One Dimensional Man* favorably, but it was consistently wary of the youthful protestors who claimed to be inspired by Marcuse’s portrayal of a repressive contemporary American society. Two early dissents from the escalating militancy of the radical Movement of the Sixties proved especially notable in light of the magazine’s later move rightward. In response to the Berkeley Free Speech Movement and the accompanying shutdown of the University of California in the winter of 1964–1965, *Commentary* ran a critical account by Nathan Glazer (then a Berkeley professor) that faulted the direct action tactics of the protesting students as an illegitimate threat to university governance. By contrast, the recently founded *New York Review of Books* had rejected Glazer’s piece and published instead an account by two other Berkeley professors who enthusiastically endorsed the protests. As student militancy, community activism, inflammatory rhetoric, and an anti-anti-Communism that morphed into the cult of Fidel Castro, Ho Chi Minh, and Mao Zedong became the defining characteristics of the decade’s radical movement, that initial split marked a growing wedge between the two publications. By 1966, *Commentary* was pronouncing the New Left part of the problem of whatever ailed the nation, not the solution. And while the *New York Review* was referred to as “the New York Review of Vietnam” for its relentless, morally impassioned opposition to the war, *Commentary* devoted little space to the conflict. It advocated a negotiated political solution, not unilateral American withdrawal, as a means of ending the war, further distancing it from opinion on the Left.

A second source of *Commentary*’s disenchantment with the radical impulse, and a long-standing concern of the magazine, was tensions in black–Jewish relations. Indeed, *Commentary*’s fourth issue included sociologist Kenneth Clark’s unvarnished portrayal of the bitterness felt by

blacks in northern cities toward Jews (February 1946), and two years later James Baldwin drew an even starker picture of two groups locked in such “perpetual hostility” that “it seems unlikely that any real and systematic cooperation can be achieved between Negroes and Jews” (February 1948). Even as the magazine turned toward radicalism in the early 1960s, labor journalist Tom Brooks identified the “growing antagonism between the Jewish and Negro labor camps” as a potential “precursor of strained relations between the larger Jewish and Negro defense agencies and ultimately between the two minority communities in general” (September 1961).

In “My Negro Problem—and Ours,” Podhoretz positioned himself outside the liberal consensus, describing his “own twisted feelings about Negroes . . . and of how they conflict with the moral convictions I have since developed” (February 1963). Podhoretz acknowledged “the hatred I still feel for Negroes” as a legacy of a childhood of “fearing and envying and hating Negroes,” and argued that blacks could not, as a group, emulate the Jewish ability to succeed in American society. He concluded that “Jews . . . were tied to a memory of past glory and a dream of imminent redemption,” but that, for American blacks, “his past is a stigma, and his vision of the future is the hope of erasing the stigma by making color irrelevant, by making it disappear as a fact of consciousness.” Podhoretz “share[d] this hope,” but wrote, “I cannot see how it will ever be realized unless color does in fact disappear: and that means not integration, it means—let the brutal word come out—miscegenation.”

Responding to the passage of the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act, Nathan Glazer anticipated an increase in intergroup tension precisely as a consequence of the dismantling of formal discrimination because “the system of formal equality” that had worked so well for Jewish social advancement “produces so little” for blacks. This was the “crux of Negro anger and the Jewish discomfort. . . . As the Negro masses have become more active and more militant,” Glazer explained, “Jewish leaders—of unions, of defense and civil rights organizations—as well as businessmen, housewives, and homeowners, have been confronted for the first time with demands from Negro organizations that, they find, cannot be the basis of a common effort” (December 1964).

*Commentary*’s disquiet with the political direction of the late 1960s Left and the rising tide of black militancy

reached critical mass with the confrontation between the Ocean Hill–Brownsville (Brooklyn) School District and the United Federation of Teachers in the fall of 1968. If “a neoconservative is a liberal who has been mugged by reality,” it was the New York City teachers’ strike that mugged *Commentary*.

What in calmer times might have been a negotiable contractual dispute between the teachers’ union and school district officials (newly empowered by a community control pilot program sponsored by the Ford Foundation) over the discharge of nineteen teachers and administrators exploded into a series of strikes that shut down all of the city’s schools for months. All but one of the nineteen were Jewish, and, with the heavily Jewish teachers’ union aligned against the minority administrators of the largely black and Puerto Rican school district, the conflict generated an upsurge in antisemitic rhetoric and interracial tension. Jewish teachers found themselves accused of the “mental genocide” of black children, and the Anti-Defamation League reported that antisemitism had reached crisis levels “unchecked by public authorities” (Ravitch 1974). In supporting the teachers, *Commentary* found itself virtually alone in a New York intellectual community that ardently embraced the cause of community control, disdained the teachers as instruments of a repressive white power structure, and often minimized or excused inflammatory anti-Jewish rhetoric by black activists.

Education historian and *Commentary* contributor Diane Ravitch noted, “to those who lived through it, the teacher’s strike of 1968 will always be remembered as a seismic event” (Rosenberg and Goldstein 1982). It certainly was for *Commentary*—ironically, given the mistrust many neoconservatives eventually came to hold for teachers’ unions as opponents of educational reform. “The ultimate legacy of events in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville experimental district was a lingering distrust between two historically sensitive minority groups who had previously been allies: blacks and Jews,” observed a chronicler of John Lindsay’s mayoralty (Cannato 2001). For *Commentary*, the strike immediately intensified concern about the conflict between blacks and Jews. In March 1969, Milton Himmelfarb, *Commentary*’s longtime observer of Jewish political behavior, limned what would become a recurring motif: the community control experiment funded by the Ford Foundation and initiated by the Lindsay administration heralded an alliance between privileged elites and dispossessed minorities

directed against a newly vulnerable Jewish middle class. Norman Podhoretz struck the same note when he later cited the teachers' strike (along with the rise of "anti-Zionism" in the aftermath of the Six Day War) as "one of the two traumatic events which actually led those who are now worried about the position of the Jews in America to feel the way we do." "The strike," Podhoretz wrote in 1971, "brought black anti-Semitism into widespread public view; and . . . exposed in certain elements of what blacks themselves like to call the white power structure an apparent readiness to purchase civil peace in the United States . . . at the direct expense of the Jews."

The moment for "breaking ranks" had arrived. "With the June 1970 issue," Podhoretz wrote, *Commentary* launched "a campaign against the Movement that . . . continued with great intensity for about three years" (Podhoretz 1979). At the same time, *The Public Interest*, edited by sociologist Daniel Bell and onetime *Commentary* editor Irving Kristol, was subjecting liberal social welfare policies to increasingly critical scrutiny. Unlike the traditional free-market, small-government conservatism typified by William F. Buckley, Jr. and the *National Review*, *The Public Interest* accepted the broad outlines of the post-New Deal order but increasingly questioned whether large-scale governmental intervention in economic and social affairs was solving the problems it was intended to alleviate. In response, socialist leader Michael Harrington (a regular contributor to *Commentary* until February 1970) coined the pejorative term "neoconservative" for what he regarded as backsliding by his erstwhile allies (Isserman 2000). By 1973, the label had found its way into common political discourse. That September, Martin Kilson, a black sociologist, challenged the magazine's opposition to affirmative action policies designed to ensure greater minority (and especially black) representation, often through the imposition of quotas, in universities, labor unions, and the professions. According to Kilson, "on the quota issue—and others too—the American Jewish Committee and *Commentary* ought to come out of the neoconservative closet" (*New York Times Magazine*, September 30, 1973).

A dozen years after "neoconservative" had entered the political lexicon, Podhoretz offered his own definition (Podhoretz 1985). From the vantage point of 1985, Podhoretz concluded that neoconservatism "represented in many essential respects a return to the revisionist or cold-war liberalism of the first post-war decade," but that neo-

conservatives had staked out distinctive ground on two key issues: the economy and foreign policy. First, "Neo-conservatives . . . are not socialists, disguised or otherwise. We believe in capitalism. . . . We have come to recognize that economic freedom is not only good in itself but is also an indispensable protection against totalitarianism. We have also come to recognize that only through economic freedom can wealth be created." Second, "the neo-conservatives do not for the most part share [Cold War liberalism's] faith in containment. Most of us want to see the United States adopt a strategy aimed at encouraging the forces of disintegration already independently at work within the Soviet empire." It is striking how little Podhoretz drew on the concerns that sparked the magazine's original turn toward neoconservatism.

*Commentary* devoted minimal attention to foreign policy in the early 1970s. When it did, the outlook hardly conformed to neoconservatism's subsequent challenge to Soviet power or advocacy of nation-building overseas. To the contrary, Podhoretz lamented the "wanton American involvement in Vietnam" and the tens of thousands who had been "killed in a war for which even the President of their country now refuses to make any noble or transcendent claim" (July 1970). In May 1971 Podhoretz and Nathan Glazer advocated an immediate withdrawal from Vietnam. As the war wound down, the magazine disclaimed any role for "American power and prestige [in] the maintenance of a desirable world order" (March 1970); and Walter Laqueur, perhaps its most respected commentator on Soviet and Middle Eastern affairs, sympathetically described Henry Kissinger's task as having "to preside over America's decommitment, . . . a long overdue withdrawal from an exposed position, a realistic adjustment to a new world position" (December 1973).

Nor were free-market economics a key theme in *Commentary*'s initial turn to the right. Indeed almost no attention was paid to economics during those years, and there was certainly no celebration of the market as the preferred mechanism for ordering economic life. Instead, the labor movement, with its big-government, high-tax and free-spending agenda, was endorsed as an essential counterweight to the influence of the "new politics" in the Democratic Party.

*Commentary*'s neoconservative turn was, in fact, driven not by foreign policy and economics, but a disenchantment with radical, as well as prevailing liberal, opin-

ion on social and cultural issues. Looking back on the magazine's political odyssey, Podhoretz concluded that "from a political and ideological point of view, the post-1970 *Commentary* in many respects represents a return to the pre-1960 *Commentary* that was created and edited for the most part by Elliot Cohen" (Podhoretz 1985). But the tone of the magazine was quite different. The *Commentary* of the 1950s had been confident, sometimes complacent, about the consensual virtues of American society that had rendered earlier radical critiques irrelevant. In the 1970s, the magazine was an embattled, lonely voice in what was perceived as an uphill struggle to reverse the ascendancy of radical thinking in cultural, social, and political life. The "Rebelling Young Scholar" whom Andrew Hacker admired in November 1960 for embracing the emerging New Left had become Dorothy Rabinowitz's scathing portrait of "The Radicalized Professor" in July 1970.

The initial impetus for *Commentary's* neoconservative turn was best expressed in the monthly column "Issues" that Podhoretz wrote for three years beginning in June 1970 and that served as the sharp end of *Commentary's* assault on the radicalism of the 1960s. Podhoretz looked skeptically at Earth Day (identifying "the environment [as] the issue on which the WASP patriciate hopes to regain its primacy" (June 1970); exposed "the new hypocrisies" of the counterculture, writing that its supposed idealism "consists entirely of self-interested action" (December 1970); criticized the media's "disposition to seek out and play up stories that feed the belief that the country is breaking down" (March 1971); lamented the decline of a common culture in the face of the rising tide of ethnic particularism (June 1972); expressed dismay over "bigoted attitudes towards the general American populace that have become so widespread within the intellectual community" (March 1973); and targeted the "new inquisitors" who were stifling the exchange of ideas in the university (April 1973).

That specifically Jewish concerns were inextricably intertwined in this ideological counteroffensive was apparent from Podhoretz's writing and from the contents of the magazine generally. The potential impact on Jews of quota-driven affirmative action policies provoked his longest column. This revived a concern about discrimination against Jews in university admissions that had been expressed in the magazine's first years. The return of quotas, albeit as an instrument of liberal social policy and not of traditional prejudices, provoked renewed concerns

about discrimination against Jews, who were, in proportion to the population, "over-represented" in elite schools and the professions.

The critics of affirmative action quotas, writing in *Commentary* or elsewhere, were by no means exclusively Jewish, but the issue resonated especially sharply in a community that had achieved much of its recent success through more open access to higher education and that had come to believe that such discriminatory practices had been overcome once and for all. The Ford Foundation's Ocean Hill–Brownsville community control initiative cast a persistent shadow, with Jews and blacks seen as pitted against one another by a WASP establishment bidding to preserve its own power. "What emerged from the '68 teachers' strike," Podhoretz's wife, social critic Midge Decter recalled, "was a message sent to the Jews. Up to that point, we had really come to believe that anti-Semitism was more or less finished. . . . [T]he teachers' strike was a reminder that there was a specifically Jewish interest, that anti-Semitism did exist, that it had been suppressed because for a time it had been deemed no longer respectable. The blacks had once more made it respectable" (Rosenberg and Goldstein 1982). A generation earlier, Carey McWilliams had written in *Commentary* (November 1947) that "Jews constitute a marginal class in America," victimized by "social discrimination" in education, business, and professional life. By the late 1960s, that perception of Jewish vulnerability had returned.

In April 1973, Podhoretz stopped writing his column, apparently satisfied that the ideological reorientation of the magazine had been effected. The topics that he had written about, and that *Commentary* had focused on, during those years had been overwhelmingly cultural and social. Not until the Soviet Union's open intervention in support of the Arab states that attacked Israel in the 1973 Yom Kippur War did the magazine turn sustained attention to the Soviet Union and the necessity of combating its power and influence in world affairs. These foreign and defense policy issues would come to redefine neoconservatism.

As *Commentary* tacked right in the early 1970s, circulation held steady at about 60,000, but thereafter began a long decline. It dropped to 45,000 in 1980 and to 35,000 by 1988, even as neoconservatism was achieving a putative intellectual influence within the Reagan administration. In 2004, Podhoretz would be awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

The overwhelming majority of Jewish intellectuals and academics, however—as well as the rank and file of Jewish voters—remained staunchly liberal. Indeed, as Glazer pointed out at the time (“Blacks, Jews & the Intellectuals,” April 1969), a large number of the writers and activists who stoked the flames of the black militancy that did so much to crystallize neoconservatism were Jewish. Nor did the Ocean Hill–Brownsville school district lack for Jewish supporters in its cataclysmic confrontation with the teachers’ union. But the constellation of concerns that initially shaped the “neoconservative persuasion” had a particular resonance with the Jewish intellectuals associated with *Commentary*, who maintained a religious, or at least an ethnic, identity. Perceptions of increasing antisemitism and hostility to Israel touched a sensitive nerve for those whose own commitment to the Jewish state had acquired a newfound emotional dimension during and after the Six Day War. Quota-driven affirmative action programs threatened the meritocratic policies that had only recently opened elite educational institutions to large-scale Jewish enrollments. The emergence of an apparent coalition of the WASP elite and militant blacks in opposition to middle-class Jewish interests, typified by the racial politics of Mayor Lindsay’s New York, rekindled traditional fears of Jewish powerlessness and marginality.

This heightened sensitivity to the precariousness of the Jewish condition, at home and abroad, echoed Elliot Cohen’s editorial statement of purpose in *Commentary*’s inaugural issue, where he warned that, while the Jews of Europe were being murdered, “There was a strange passivity the world over in the face of this colossal latter-day massacre. . . . And . . . the kind of thinking and feeling that set loose this nightmare phenomenon still burns high in many countries, and lies latent in all” (November 1945).

In a *Commentary* symposium on “Jewishness and the Younger Intellectuals” (April 1961), *New York Review* founder Jason Epstein had said, “That I am also a Jew seems relatively unimportant. . . . I have the impression that the traditional human groupings are on the way out. . . . Perhaps it would be good to feel oneself engaged in a highly auspicious tradition. But I happen not to and don’t feel at one with those who do.” Epstein’s perspective on Jewish identity was reminiscent of the outlook of Rosa Luxemburg who had once written “Why do you come with your special Jewish sorrows?” It was radically different from that which played such a significant part in turning

the Jewish intellectuals grouped around *Commentary* toward neoconservatism. Although all neoconservatives were not Jewish, as the examples of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, James Q. Wilson, and Jeane Kirkpatrick show, polemics against neoconservatism, from the right or left, have frequently been imbued with an antisemitic tinge. As *New York Times* columnist David Brooks noted, decoding some critiques of the “neocons” requires understanding that “neo” is short for “Jewish.” And, contrary to such critics, to the extent there is a Jewish component to neoconservatism, the values thereby expressed have been anything but alien to American traditions.

Henry D. Fetter

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## Jewish Women in the American Feminist Movement

Feminism has a long and a short history. From ancient times, philosophers, poets, and writers have questioned the inferior status assigned to women. Perceptive and prophetic men and women wondered why women were consigned to limited roles in society with little chance to be educated and to play roles in the public arena. But it is only in the late eighteenth, and more important, in the nineteenth century that an organized feminist movement developed in the Western world, particularly in England and the United States. While a few men participated, women, largely from the middle class, led the movement and comprised most of its following. Middle-class status meant that they had adequate educations, leisure time to think about their fate, and sometimes supportive fathers and/or husbands who encouraged them to attend meetings and to consider ways of improving women's status in society. If they were temperamentally and philosophically inclined, they acted on the opportunity.

Through most of the nineteenth century, the American Jewish population was small, so when Jewish women organized activities outside the home, they were usually associated with their synagogue, temple, or benevolent organization. (The same situation applied to Christian women, but, because they were so much more numerous, a small segment of them moved beyond the church-based social activities toward women's and social reform issues.) As long as religious doctrine determined social roles, both Christian and Jewish women were discouraged from speaking in public or questioning their roles as wives and mothers. Moreover, for Jewish women, the desire to maintain a low profile in this new country shaped many of their responses. The fear of antisemitism always played a part for the first two generations of Jewish Americans.

The major exceptions were the Jewish women who embraced Socialism, rejected Orthodox Judaism, and/or came out of the working classes. Secular Jewish women, or those with a liberal Jewish background, participated earlier and more easily in secular reform movements such as fem-



*Ernestine Rose, American Jewish advocate for women's rights. (Library of Congress)*

inism. Ernestine Rose (1810–1892) is the most prominent example of a nineteenth-century Jewish woman who shared all of these characteristics. Born in Eastern Europe, she came to the United States in the 1840s as a married woman and spoke publicly to women's groups for women's rights. She advocated women's right to vote, to own property after marriage, and to retain custody of children in case of a divorce. Though she never denied her Jewish ethnicity, her philosophy was universalistic, not particularistic. Rose viewed the practice of religion as restrictive and out of step with the modern world.

Rose believed that her Jewish heritage made her sensitive to the plight of other oppressed peoples, and she addressed all of them—women, African Americans, and other minorities. At the third national Woman's Rights

Convention in Syracuse, New York, in 1852, Rose declared, “Yes, I am an example of the universality of our claims; for not American women only, but a daughter of poor, crushed Poland, and the downtrodden and persecuted people called the Jews, ‘a child of Israel,’ pleads for the equal rights of her sex.” From her perspective, being born a Jew classified her as one of the world’s oppressed peoples. She eventually moved to England where she died in 1892.

In twentieth-century America, many immigrant Jewish women supported woman’s suffrage and the most radical identified as Socialists, attending meetings where the speakers acknowledged their background by addressing them in Yiddish. The major migration of Eastern European Jews from 1880 to 1914 (over 2 million came to the United States) included many women who had become secularized before arriving here, while others became committed suffragists and feminists while working in the garment factories of New York. Indeed, even anarchist Emma Goldman (1869–1940) spoke to her Jewish audiences in Yiddish, using examples from the Jewish prophets to make her case for anarchism. Trade unionist Rose Schneiderman (1882–1972) tied her advocacy of workers’ rights to Jewish principles of social justice. Goldman and Schneiderman represent two different outlooks of Jewish women activists in the secular world of the first thirty years of the twentieth century, with Schneiderman’s position having many more supporters than Goldman’s.

Anarchism embraced the most optimistic view of humankind, arguing that all laws were unnecessary because people would behave humanely without strictures. Emma Goldman became the most famous spokesperson for this view. Born in Russia, she emigrated to the United States in 1882, determined to leave Orthodox Judaism, a tyrannical father, and Russian antisemitism behind. Having a curious mind combined with an intense personality, she drew on her work experience in a factory and Johann Most’s anarchist thought to create a comprehensive critique of industrial capitalism, religion, and marriage. The Haymarket Square disaster in Chicago (1886), where workers were killed by the police, and the 1893 Depression convinced her that the entire system was corrupt and needed reforming. Though Goldman later tempered her views, disavowing violence as the way to achieve the humane society, she found her voice as a lecturer, writer, and editor. In her publication *Mother Earth*, she translated Yiddish stories and reported on her extensive lecture tours around America. Starting in

1906, she spent six months a year traveling and speaking about anarchism, Ibsen, birth control, and “Art and Revolution.” She also lectured on feminism, presenting the oppression of women as a key feature of capitalist societies.

Goldman found her Jewish audiences most responsive to her message. As she told her readers, the Jewish meeting was always the best and “. . . makes the Trail less difficult” (Goldman 1911). A favorite subject was the horrible treatment of African-Americans. “The persecution, suffering and injustice to which this much-hated race is being constantly subjected can be compared only to the brutal treatment of the Jews in Russia” (Goldman 1907). Known as Red Emma to the police in every city she visited, she remained undeterred until America entered World War I. Goldman was deported in 1919 after being imprisoned and never again lived in her beloved America.

Rose Schneiderman, another Russian immigrant, worked in a cap factory and embraced socialism as the most viable philosophy for working people. In 1910, she became an organizer for the Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL). She believed that union membership would lead to the sharing of power with the employers, making industrial capitalism more humane. Schneiderman worked with upper- and middle-class Protestant women who funded the WTUL, as well as with Jewish women unionists such as Pauline Newman (1890?–1986), the first woman organizer for the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU). Young Jewish women were among the largest group of workers in the new garment factories of New York, and a few joined Jewish men to become leaders in the unions. In Chicago, Bessie Abramowitz (1889–1971) helped to organize the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union (ACWU), along with her future husband, Sidney Hillman. In 1909 in New York and in 1910 in Chicago, major strikes in the clothing industry—most sparked and staged primarily by women—led to the first successful unions in the industry. Jewish owners and Jewish workers negotiated labor contracts that became models for every industry.

While union women spoke publicly for workers’ rights, some of the Jewish women followed Ernestine Rose’s path and became advocates for women’s right to vote and to hold office. Rosa Sonneschein (1847–1932) applied the message of feminism to Jewish women’s roles in the temple. She advocated the full participation of women, including single women, in all aspects of temple worship. Living in Chicago during the 1890s, she edited *The Ameri-*

*can Jewess* (1895–1899), in which she applied feminist principles to Jewish practices. Sonneschein asked why Christian social worker Jane Addams could speak at Sinai Temple, Chicago’s most prominent Reform temple, but no Jewish woman could. Initially a supporter of the newly created National Council of Jewish Women, she became a critic after she observed that it had no central purpose. Sonneschein was an early advocate of Zionism and argued that women were particularly suited to work for a Jewish national home because they have “the time, the inclination and the faculty to pursue great objects” (Sonneschein 1896). She attended the First Zionist Congress in Basel in 1897. Her outspoken views alienated many of the organization women who would have been her supporters, and as a result, her magazine lost funding. In 1899, it ceased publishing and her public life ended.

The middle generations of Jewish American women, those born in America in the first forty years of the twentieth century, devoted their individual and collective energies to adjusting to middle-class life and to coping with the Depression and the World Wars. The organized woman’s suffrage movement had splintered after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, and the more radical Woman’s Party, which was devoted to passage of an equal rights amendment, found little popular support in the prosperous twenties and the hard thirties. The next time a discernible feminist movement appeared on the horizon was in the late 1960s, and it included many Jewish women who became speakers and writers for feminism. Betty Friedan (1921–2006), Phyllis Chesler (b. 1940), and Shulamith Firestone (b. 1945) are prominent examples.

Friedan, a generation older than Chesler and Firestone, had been a journalist for a left-wing labor union newspaper after college and was very interested in social issues. During the 1950s, she contributed articles to women’s magazines as a freelance writer while raising her three children. Surveying her Smith College class ten years after graduation (1959) led her to write the book that became a founding text for the women’s liberation movement. *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) describes the “problem with no name”—a problem that seemed to be spreading among dissatisfied, college-educated, middle-class women. On the surface, these women had everything that 1950s America had to offer and yet they were unhappy, trapped, as Friedan put it, in a “comfortable concentration camp.” Friedan’s study is the first of the modern era to try to explain why.

Friedan joined other professional women—many of them of her generation—who had worked quietly behind the scenes for years to improve women’s status in the workplace. In some striking ways, however, all three of these Jewish feminists resemble the first generation of Jewish women activists. Friedan and Chesler, like Rose Schneiderman and the other union women, represent a liberal agenda for women’s rights, while Shulamith Firestone, like Emma Goldman, takes a radical position, one far removed from mainstream opinion. It is a testament to the dynamism of Jewish feminism and to its growing popularity that a wide range of views emerges within the larger feminist movement. While the majority of reformers (who themselves are a minority of Jewish women) seek gradual change by democratic means, a small number of feminists reject the methods and goals of the moderates and embrace revolutionary means and aims.

Shulamith Firestone, born to an Orthodox family in Ottawa, Ontario, grew up in St. Louis, Missouri, and attended Yavneh of Telshe Yeshiva near Cleveland. She then went to Washington University in St. Louis and the Art Institute in Chicago. Settling in New York in the late sixties, she became active in the civil rights and antiwar movements. She experienced firsthand the shocking discovery that radical men were traditional when dealing with women. Firestone became a founding member of a number of radical feminist groups in New York City and in 1970 published *The Dialectic of Sex*, her major contribution to feminist discourse. In stark contrast to Friedan’s work, which offers tame suggestions for women to find part-time jobs to alleviate their boredom, Firestone argues that women are oppressed in every way in bourgeois society—economically, socially, and sexually. The only way to end male domination is to separate sex from childbearing.

Prophetically, she anticipated the major scientific advances of the last thirty years of the twentieth century, such as in vitro fertilization. In her scenario, the next generation could be produced in the laboratory, and women could design their adult lives as they wished. Most feminists did not embrace Firestone’s extreme critique of society or her drastic remedy, but her ideas generated extensive discussion. Marx and Freud had replaced Orthodox Judaism as the primary influence on Firestone. By the mid-1970s, without explanation, she had dropped out of public life. Betty Friedan, by contrast, became world famous after the publication of her book and the founding of the National

Organization for Women (NOW). She is considered the founding mother of the contemporary women's movement and continued to lecture and write on women's topics until her death in 2006. Friedan's goal was a humane society, one in which people of all ages have good health care, affordable housing, and opportunities for professional development.

Phyllis Chesler credits her Jewish upbringing with inspiring her to become a feminist. Raised in an Orthodox family in Brooklyn, she found Orthodoxy too confining for her ambitions. Trained as a psychologist, her first book, *Women and Madness* (1972), became another popular document for the women's movement, selling millions of copies. Chesler called attention to the mental illnesses that plagued women—illnesses, she argued, that arose from the cultural restraints on women's development. Unlike Friedan and Firestone, Chesler's Jewish identity remained intact. She identified as a Jewish feminist, with her commitment to Zionism a major priority. In recent years, she has been concerned with the rise in antisemitism among feminists, particularly in developing countries. At the United Nations Conferences on Women in 1975, 1980, and 1985, she was disturbed by the anti-Zionist resolutions and the verbal attacks on Jewish feminists (*The New Anti-Semitism*, 2003). U.S. congresswoman Bella Abzug (1920–1998) (D-NY) also spoke out on feminist issues, and at the 1975 United Nations conference publicly denounced the antisemitism expressed there.

Jewish institutional life was also affected by the American feminist movement. Jewish women asked to be members of temple boards and to participate in worship services. Though Reform Judaism accepted the idea of women rabbis as early as the 1920s, it was not until Sally Priesand (b. 1946) received ordination in 1972 that the practice gained respectability. Other branches of Judaism—Reconstructionism and Conservative most notably—began to reexamine their practices, with both branches admitting women to their rabbinic seminaries. In 1983, women joined men in the rabbinic training program at the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary. Orthodox Judaism, though not willing to allow women rabbis, has undergone change as well, primarily because of the initiative of Orthodox women who defined themselves as feminists. These women have created separate prayer *minyanim* and separate study groups to expand their knowledge while abiding by Orthodox law.

Perhaps because Jewish women intellectuals of all denominations appreciated their double minority status in America—as women and as Jews—they were more likely to become leaders and followers of feminism. While some left their Judaism behind, many of them created a new synthesis of their religious commitments and their secular pursuits. The fact that by the 1960s many Jewish American women were well educated and comfortably ensconced in the middle class also enabled them to become active in the women's liberation movement. Granddaughters of immigrants, they were sufficiently removed from the experience of newcomers to feel both part of, and apart from, America. They could criticize the failings of the culture of which they were an integral part and shape a new definition of Jewish women, one that allowed them individuality while preserving communal ties.

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## Emma Goldman (1869–1940)

### Jewish Spokeswoman for Freedom

Emma Goldman dedicated her life to the creation of a radically new social order rooted in absolute freedom. She was a passionate advocate of free speech, women's indepen-



Emma Goldman, anarchist and feminist. (Library of Congress)

dence, birth control, and workers' rights. Although her fiery oratory and writings eventually led to imprisonment, deportation, and exile, Goldman never compromised her unwavering commitment to her anarchist ideals and to what she called "everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things" (from "Jewish Women of Valor" poster, a collaborative effort of the Emma Goldman Papers and the Jewish Women's Archive).

She came to America in a wave of migration in 1885, fleeing both the antisemitism of czarist Russia and the constraints on women in the traditional Jewish family of the Old World. Having experienced the stirrings of a budding revolution, she felt at home in a country that took pride in its egalitarian ethos and celebration of individual freedom. The clash between her exalted vision and the harsh realities she confronted in late nineteenth-century industrial America catapulted her into a life of action. She devoted herself to the cause of anarchism—to propagate a concept of freedom that knew no bounds, which extended beyond national borders, and attempted to break away from the

restricting categories of race, gender, ethnicity, or religious belief. Yet she, like most who were attracted to an array of universal values, and who believed they could clear the slate of their past, was inevitably influenced by the traditions, including religious affiliation, from which she emerged. A lifelong creative tension between Goldman's self-identification with cosmopolitan-universal ideals and her rejection of the Jewish religious and sectarian community practices of her upbringing deepened her political stance, shaped her life, and underscores the question of whether one can ever escape the defining influences of one's past.

To her "dear friend Rabbi Harry Stern" she inscribed a copy of her autobiography:

As a heathen my faith in those who speak for religion has not been very strong. You have shown me that one may serve his god and yet be true to man.

If my work will show you that one can serve humanity without a god I shall feel that we have exchanged true compliments—not merely in words (Handwritten inscription in *Living My Life*, Montreal, March 1935).

Goldman believed in "no gods, no masters"—and even joined those among her ranks who dared to posit the challenging idea that Jesus was an anarchist. In her early years in America, she felt closest to militant German and Yiddish anarchists who scorned religion and those who practiced it, who believed that traditional values enslaved the mind and the spirit, and considered the notion of a chosen community an expression of narrowness and insularity. She criticized the practice of *tzedakah*, or charity, among Jews as a form of amelioration rather than a solution to the pervasiveness of poverty.

But she, like most radical Jewish immigrants who rejected the religion of their past, also created and clung to the familiarity of a community of their own in a New World that was often hostile and exploitive to "outsiders." It was not uncommon, for example, for anarchist Jews to gather together on Yom Kippur, the sacred solemn Day of Atonement traditionally marked by fasting, for an afternoon picnic of ham and cheese sandwiches or for a festive evening ball. Goldman was reported to have dressed as a nun dancing "the anarchist slide" into the small hours of the night at one such Yom Kippur Ball. Those acts of sacrilege were whimsical theatrical shows of defiance, in

comparison to some of her more intensely antireligious comrades who routinely stood on the steps of the synagogue spitting on the congregants as they left after a day of the reverie of prayer. Yet they all reinforced their connection to their Jewish community by marking rather than ignoring this sacred day and by taking a strong stand against the puritanism of the dominant Christian culture around them.

In Goldman's time there was a flurry of interest in the "Jewish Question" among activists and political theorists. Although her first instinct was to argue against it, in favor of "universal questions," her rigid rejection of Jewish "exceptionalism" softened as her awareness of antisemitism in Russia and of growing Nazi persecution of the Jews in Germany came into full focus. Reluctantly, she took a public stand to defend the special needs of her own people, who were increasingly vulnerable to race-hatred and to violent threats of extermination.

And, although she expanded the definition of "her people" to include the oppressed, wherever and whoever they might be, and pronounced herself an anarchist who did not believe in the state—she was "neither a Zionist nor a Nationalist"—she always "worked for the rights of Jews and against every attempt to hinder their life and development" (1937). In 1938, she defended the right of asylum for Jews "cruelly persecuted in nearly every European country," observing that antisemitism, formerly fostered from the top, had since infested every layer of social life. She entered the debate about the issue of Arabs and Jews in the Middle East. While she believed that "the land should belong to those who till the soil" and lauded the "tens and thousands of [Jews], young and deeply devout idealists [who] reclaimed wastelands and have turned them into fertile fields and blooming gardens," she insisted that "I do not say therefore the Jews are entitled to more rights than Arabs." With some humility as an outsider, she acknowledged that "one cannot decide whether the demand of natives for the monopoly of their country is any more just than the desperate need of millions of people who are slowly being exterminated."

This commitment and determination "to repair the world" might very well have been incubated within the particular traditions of her childhood and the high cultural value Jews placed on the messianic concept and practice of *tikkun olam*.

Goldman emerged from a Jewish culture that valued justice. Her anarchist belief in the potential for creating

social harmony unencumbered by government was completely consistent with the pre-Holocaust reality of the Jewish people united by their shared beliefs outside the boundaries of a state. Her experience as a Diaspora Jew who felt part of a community whose cohesiveness came from a common history grounded in religious-cultural traditions, rather than by national identity, confirmed her belief that anarchism was not merely an ideal but a vision of the possible. Her conviction about the benefits of such a world was evident in an article she published in the very first issue of Goldman's magazine, *Mother Earth* (1906–1917), attributing the cosmopolitan open-mindedness of many Jews to the lack of a country of their own—a situation that compelled the formation of voluntary associations.

Even the practice of "questioning authority"—the motto of any good anarchist and certainly Emma's—seemed natural to one whose tradition encouraged lively debate on the myriad of meanings in its most sacred text, always searching for the higher meaning. Weekly readings of the Talmud can also be interpreted as ingrained training for developing arguments, for critical thinking, and for questioning the authority of what came before with yet another new and valued interpretation.

That Goldman ultimately considered herself less an agitator than an educator followed the vein of a tradition that places a high value on learning. Talmudic devotion to scholarship was evident in Goldman's definition of a full life—a belief in rationality also was a prevalent assumption of the Enlightenment. The concept and practice of free expression—a cause to which she devoted herself in America and in Bolshevik Russia—were necessary for the advancement of truth, and integral to the anarchist quest for justice, which included the unhindered right to speak one's mind. This was, perhaps, in part because teaching and learning were basics of the Jewish culture from which she emerged. Goldman's role as a public intellectual and political educator, as one who asserted that "the most violent element in society is ignorance," was rooted in her very being (Falk 2003–2009).

To counter centuries of antisemitism, a host of survival strategies were embedded in the Jewish traditions and teachings. Maintaining one's faith in a hostile environment often necessitated performing ritual observances in secrecy. One example was the dreydel game played at Chanukah, signifying the playful and clever reenactment of

how Jewish soldiers affirmed their outlawed faith under the watchful eye of authorities. These early, seemingly benign ways to inculcate and normalize clandestine practices in the name of a higher ideal may have functioned as an early contributing factor to Goldman's ease with and attraction to the sub-rosa elements of anarchist politics. That she could espouse both a vision of complete harmony and the inevitability of violence, and that she could praise the heroism of political militants while concealing the depth of her ties to them also can be traced, in part, to her Russian-Jewish background. In her youth, she was steeped in the larger-than-life stories of the Russian women revolutionists who plotted against the czar, and she was imprinted with an early fascination with Judith, the Jewish heroine who cut off the head of Holofernes to avenge the wrongs of her people. This violent undertow that streamed through her life and ideas was not at all foreign to her, and, in fact, was a source of celebration of a culture that prided itself on resilience and survival.

Between the years 1936 and 1938, she chose to devote herself to the Spanish anarchists of the civil war rather than to the growing antisemitism in the world. But when Spain fell, and as the clouds of World War II billowed ominously on the horizon in 1938, Goldman began to take a bolder stand on the link between Nazism, Fascism, and Stalinism—as forms of State domination wreaking havoc in Europe, which, she predicted, were destined to fail. During this period, she spoke primarily about the economic causes of war and portrayed the rampant racial xenophobia in Germany as a smokescreen of prejudice powerful enough to obscure the real causes of desperation and fear. But Goldman did not fully foresee the horrific attempts at ethnic cleansing that would sweep through Germany and Eastern Europe that might have tipped the balance and direction of her efforts against injustice.

In spite of her desire for self-definition and control over how she was perceived, Emma Goldman, who strove to identify first and foremost with all of humanity, who was a woman revered as one of the most eloquent spokespeople for freedom, could not escape antisemitic and sexist descriptions, alternatively as a short, stocky Jewish woman or as “surprisingly attractive.” In 1919, when she was cast out of America, deported in a wave of anti-radical hysteria, it was clear that the patriotic fervor accompanying World War I eclipsed any semblance of political

tolerance or multi-ethnic welcome that attracted her to its shores. Yet, in the silence of her absence, and long after her death, she has become a positive symbol of feminism and anarchism, one who danced in the revolution. Emma Goldman's words and actions are a reminder that great American patriots are often “outsiders,” like this Russian Jewish anarchist who had the chutzpah and vision to take on the world.

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## Meyer London (1871–1926)

### Socialist Congressman

Meyer London, lawyer, labor leader, and Socialist congressman, worked tirelessly in New York City for striking immigrants and Lower East Side trade unions like the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, the International Fur Workers, and the United Hebrew Trades. In Congress, he sponsored numerous bills that later became part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, including minimum wage laws, unemployment insurance, and increased taxes on the wealthy. London fought hard, too, for a liberal immigration policy and for antilynching legislation. Known, and indeed loved, mostly as a progressive politician, London was also widely admired for his general and literary erudition.

Born in 1871 in Russia in the province of Sulvakie, Meyer was the eldest son of Rebecca Berson and Ephraim London. His mother was a devout daughter of a rabbi, but



Meyer London speaking at a labor rally, ca. 1914. (Library of Congress)

his father, although a lifelong student of the Talmud, was an agnostic and a radical in his politics. This rich mix of the traditional religious and the modern secular appears often in the social backgrounds of East European Jews like Meyer London who went on to become socialists. Meyer had himself attended *heder* (religious school), studied Hebrew, biblical interpretation, and Talmud, and then went on to Russian school, where he received a secular education and became proficient in six languages.

Economic instability in Meyer's background was also a factor in shaping his political radicalism. His father occasionally wrote for Hebrew periodicals but had no regular source of income. Without much success, he also tried his hand as a grain merchant in Zenkov, Poltava, before he left for what he thought would be better opportunity in America in 1888. Here Ephraim London ran an unprofitable anarchist print shop and published a small Yiddish paper. Meyer had been left behind in Russia and was expected to go on with his education. Later he described his challenging years in the Old Country:

I was poor, of course. We were all poor together. I was able to keep up my studies by teaching boys who did not know as much as I did. I belonged to a crowd of young fellows who talked a lot about revolution and had not the least idea what revolution really meant. My father in America heard of my inclination and wrote me that under no condition whatever . . . was I to commit myself on revolutionary matters. I must study, think, observe, and wait until I knew very much more about conditions in the world.

When Meyer London came to New York in 1891 at age twenty to join his father on Suffolk Street in the heart of Manhattan's Lower East Side, he was immediately drawn into radical politics. Immigrant Jews were already giving disproportionate support to the Left, and the elder London, who maintained a close and abiding relationship with his son, was deeply involved with socialist and anarchist groups. But Meyer's developing activism and commitment did not prevent him from continuing his voracious reading or his formal education. He tutored youngsters and

worked in a library to put himself through high school. In 1896 he became a U.S. citizen, entered New York University Law School at night, and was nominated by the Socialist Labor Party (SLP) for the New York State Assembly. Running as a neophyte reformer, London, predictably, lost to the candidate of the Tammany machine, which employed bribery, fraud, and pressure tactics to win elections.

By 1897, London, finding himself at odds with the SLP leadership of Daniel DeLeon, went over to the newly organized Social Democratic Party. Ultimately, working with Eugene V. Debs, Victor Berger, and Morris Hillquit, Meyer London became one of the founders of the Socialist Party of America in 1901.

London was a Socialist who acknowledged the legitimacy of ethnic demands as well as class needs, and local interests as well as the interest of the generalized proletariat. He recognized the reality of Jewish oppression within the broader context of economic exploitation. London spent much of his time and energy providing legal services to workers. He accepted only clients and cases that would not conflict with his socialist principles. And he preferred to work pro bono. On one occasion, appreciative striking union members threatened to dismiss him as their counsel if he continued to refuse any recompense.

In 1899 Meyer London married Anna Rosenson. They had one daughter, who remembered a home with little material embellishment, but filled with love and support and many books. London was a modest man who lived his whole adult life on the East Side and who, despite his reading habits, shared the values of his plebian constituency. He served them as adviser, advocate, and sometimes banker. In his law office, amid his own unpaid bills, London handed over the entire \$35 balance in his bankbook to strikers in 1912. It was neither the first nor the last time he did this sort of thing. He made little contribution to Socialist theory, but he was loved and respected by the residents of the East Side as the finest example of Socialist man.

London's commitment to the alleviation of particular grievances and his loyalty to the Jewish constituency of the Lower East Side were surely among the reasons that he was eventually successful in his bid for a congressional seat. In 1910 he replaced Morris Hillquit as the congressional candidate of the Socialist Party. Hillquit had lost the election in 1908, and his defeat had been unexpectedly heavy. At the first rally of his campaign, Hillquit had said that if elected

he would "not consider [himself] the special representative of the . . . special interests of this district, but the representative of the Socialist Party . . . and . . . the working class of the country."

This was put forward at a time when East Side residents were upset by a police commissioner's report that implied that Jews were responsible for 50 percent of the crime in New York City, when the "special interest" issue of immigration restriction was being hotly debated in Congress, and when the position of the Socialist Party on that issue, favoring some restriction, was not favored by East Side Jews who still had relatives desiring to escape from pogrom-ridden Russia.

Meyer London, unlike Hillquit, openly identified as a Jewish Socialist and allied himself with the interests and vital movements of the East Side. "I deem it a duty of the Jew everywhere," he said, "to remain a Jew as long as in any corner of the world the Jew is being discriminated against." Though failing to be elected in 1910, London garnered 33 percent of the vote and outran his own Socialist Party ticket two to one. By 1914 he won 47 percent of the vote and was victorious. He went on to be elected twice more, in 1916 despite a fusion of the Republicans and Democrats, and in 1920.

London did not substitute ethnic interests for class interests. He combined them. He was not elected *despite* his socialism, but because to the Jewish immigrant masses he was very much *their* Socialist. London told a crowd of 15,000 after his initial election: "I do not expect to work wonders in Congress. I shall, however, say a new word and I shall accomplish the thing that is not in the platform of the Socialist Party. I hope that my presence will represent an entirely different type of Jew from the kind that Congress is accustomed to see." In the same speech, which was met with much enthusiasm, London also said, "We shall not rest until every power of capitalism has been destroyed and the workers emancipated from wage slavery."

London went on in the House of Representatives to introduce bills described as "wild socialist schemes" by his congressional colleagues. "When I made my first speech," London remembered, "one of the most extreme of the Republicans made his way across the House and peered into my face as if to discover what kind of a weird creature from some other world had found its way to this planet." During his three terms, London advocated measures against child labor and against the use of injunctions in labor disputes.

He supported nationalization of the coal industry, improved salaries for government workers, and old-age pensions. He opposed immigration restriction, protectionism, and property qualifications for voting in Puerto Rico. One bill that he introduced, protecting employees of bankrupt firms, became law.

London continued to render service to the Bund, the most important organization of Russian-Jewish Socialists. He favored the March Revolution of 1917 in Russia and criticized the general Allied failure to encourage and support the provisional government there. After the Bolshevik takeover, he spoke on moral and political grounds against the policy of intervention and blockade. In the same years, Meyer London was sharply critical of the “bread and butter” unionism of the American Federation of Labor, and he continued to serve the Socialist needle-trades unions as legal counsel, advisor in matters of union policy, and spokesman in negotiations.

Although all this made London a “moderate” leftist, he was nonetheless the target of virulent anti-Socialist attacks. He also endured critical blasts from his own party, particularly in 1917–1918, for refusing to resist *all* wartime activity. London was clearly antiwar. He had earlier opposed intervention in Mexico and budget increases for the Army and Navy. He strongly resisted U.S. entry into World War I and voted against the conscription and espionage laws, and he vigorously fought efforts to curb civil liberties during the national crisis. He was convinced, however, that the Socialists’ St. Louis Declaration, insisting that all workers refuse to heed the calls for help from their respective governments, was too extreme, and once the United States was at war he voted “present”—a way of abstaining, but not impeding the nation’s military measures. “I owe a duty,” London explained, “to every man who has been called to the service of his country, to provide him with everything he needs [and] to get this fight over as soon as possible.” For this the Socialist Left never forgave him, but he was also severely attacked by non-Socialists for his lack of “war patriotism.”

London also ran afoul of the Labor Zionists. Although he ultimately supported the Balfour Declaration and looked forward to the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine that the declaration promised, he had evaded a request to *introduce* a resolution supporting the Balfour Declaration, and he had warned against “forcible annexation” of Arab land. No longer the representative of a solidly coherent constituency, London failed to be reelected in

1918. He did run and win again for the last time in 1920. But in 1922 the Republicans and Democrats once more united against him and the Socialist Party, and his district was gerrymandered in such a way that his defeat was assured. He never ran again.

In 1926, while crossing Second Avenue, Meyer London, at age fifty-five, was struck by a taxi and fatally injured. In the ambulance, London, characteristically expressing concern for wage earners, made his wife promise not to sue the troubled cab driver. When he died shortly thereafter, his body lay in state at the building of the *Jewish Daily Forward* on East Broadway. Half a million New Yorkers attended his funeral. “For six hours,” the *New York Times* reported, “the East Side put aside its duties, pressing or trivial, to do honor to its dead prophet.” Although beloved for his political leadership, London was respected almost as much for his learning. In the pocket of the jacket he was wearing when he was killed was a well-worn anthology of Chekhov’s short stories. London was buried in the Writer’s Lane section of the Mount Carmel Cemetery, near the grave of Sholom Aleichem and other Jewish cultural heroes.

Gerald Sorin

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## Henry Kissinger (b. 1923)

### Diplomat

Henry Alfred Kissinger fled Nazi Germany at age fifteen and eventually became the American secretary of state in



Secretary of State Henry Kissinger conversing with President Gerald Ford on the grounds of the White House in 1974. (Library of Congress)

both the Richard M. Nixon and Gerald Ford administrations. He is credited with implementing a strategy of *détente* with the USSR, helping to open relations with China and, through shuttle diplomacy, laying the groundwork for the peace agreements between Egypt and Israel after the Yom Kippur War.

Born in Fürth, Germany, Kissinger emigrated to New York in 1938 with his family where he enrolled in George Washington High School. His parents attended K'hal Adath Jeshurun, an Orthodox synagogue, while he participated in the Beth Hillel youth group. He attended City College of New York but in 1943 was drafted into the Army, where he worked for Division Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence. He helped to administer the defeated German town of Krefeld and fulfilled other tasks of the occupying American Army. His letters indicate an intimate knowledge of the death camps and their victims.

Kissinger's childhood under the Nazis and his experience in war-torn Germany sparked his interest in political science. After his service, he enrolled at Harvard with the

goal of becoming a political historian. His undergraduate thesis reflected the mood that would come to dominate his political thought: "The generation of Buchenwald and the Siberian labor camps cannot talk with the same optimism as its fathers," he wrote. "Life is suffering, birth involves death. Transitoriness is the fate of existence" (Isaacson 1992).

In his graduate thesis for Harvard's government department, Kissinger adopted the perspective of *realpolitik* from which he would come to understand world politics. Published as *A World Restored* (1957), the thesis showed how two diplomats, Austrian Prince Klemens von Metternich and British Foreign Secretary Viscount Castlereagh, restored peace to Europe after the defeat of Napoleon and his revolutionary forces at Waterloo. Because of their efforts, Europe knew only limited international conflicts from 1815 to the outbreak of World War I.

To Kissinger, the century-long stability was a result of the complex of international relationships created by Metternich and Castlereagh in which the fates of the major European powers were tied together by pacts of mutual

support and deterrence. Kissinger held that this system of realpolitik—the continuous balancing of power among nations based on shared political interests—inhibited aggression because no state would be willing to risk its position by threatening its neighbors, thereby unleashing mutual defense treaties against itself. By making the fate of European states so interdependent, the system of alliances would deter any state from reaching beyond its own borders.

Kissinger's view was conservative in that it sought to maintain the established international order against any revolutionary power that contested it. The moral foundation of his view was simply that disorder brings violence, while order inhibits violence. He argued that political revolution is necessarily violent, since political authority is rarely established by moral or intellectual authority, but rather by the violent demonstration of power. The most significant corollary of this view is that the appeasement of revolutionary forces by established states (e.g., the Western democracies' acquiescence in Hitler's annexation of Austria) is viewed as weakness and therefore breeds further assaults against order. As Kissinger wrote on the first page of his graduate thesis, "Whenever peace—conceived as the avoidance of war—has been the primary objective of a power or a group of powers, the international system has been at the mercy of the most ruthless member of the international community."

Rather than peace, Kissinger held that "stability based on an equilibrium of forces" should be the goal of diplomacy. That equilibrium could only be based on ever-fluctuating real political interests. The success of revolutionary states, such as those of Napoleon and Hitler, was possible only when the defense relationships between neighbors were not based on alliances of realpolitik (e.g., defensible borders, shared waterways), but rather on amorphous connections such as shared ideologies or morals (e.g., democracy, communism). In Kissinger's view, the mores of a state do not determine real mutual interests. Ideologies alone could not trigger the massive military response necessary to protect a troubled ally the way a shared real interest would. Therefore alliances based on real mutual interests, however temporary the confluence of interest might be, were the only alliances that states could be trusted to defend.

Kissinger's study of early nineteenth-century diplomacy was meant as a model for a twentieth-century diplomacy that had failed to prevent two World Wars, both started by revolutionary desires, and that was slow to control the buildup of nuclear arms and the Cold War. In his book,

*Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (1957), Kissinger argued against the current U.S. policy of massive nuclear retaliation in the face of Soviet attack and suggested instead that the objectives of realpolitik, including mutual dependencies, could be achieved with nuclear weapons, if those weapons could be reconceived as having smaller tactical applications.

Kissinger became a lecturer in the government department at Harvard in 1957, where he ran the International Seminar and was a recognized expert on nuclear policy. He was promoted to full professor in 1962. Frequent articles in *Foreign Affairs* and *The Reporter* brought Kissinger to the attention of presidential hopeful Nelson Rockefeller, for whom Kissinger acted as a foreign policy consultant before President-elect Nixon in 1968 appointed Kissinger his national security advisor.

In 1972, Kissinger became the first Jewish secretary of state, which Senator Jacob Javits called "a miracle of American history." Gallup polls in 1972 and 1973 ranked Kissinger as one of the "most admired" Americans, while Representative Jonathan Bingham proposed a constitutional amendment to allow foreign-born citizens to run for president. Kissinger's acceptance speech for secretary of state indicated how influential his experience under Hitler had been: "Mr. President, you referred to my background and it is true there is no country in the world where it is conceivable that a man of my origin could be standing here. . . . If my origin can contribute anything to the formulation of policy, it is that at an early age I have seen what can happen to a society that is based on hatred and strength and distrust" (Isaacson 1992).

Kissinger's immediate task was to help Nixon withdraw 550,000 soldiers under combat conditions in Vietnam and still maintain credibility with America's other client states. Kissinger's broader goal was to thaw the Cold War conditions that had created Vietnam in the first place. He was fortunate to be in the service of Richard Nixon, who had a similar worldview. To achieve détente with the Soviet Union, Nixon and Kissinger introduced the balance of power of nineteenth-century Europe to the global arena by initiating an American relationship with China. China did not share America's ideals of freedom and democracy, but both Kissinger and Nixon realized that America and China had a common interest: controlling Soviet expansion. By befriending China, Kissinger and Nixon shifted the global balance from two superpowers to three. In a word, they attempted triangulation. While America estab-

lished relations with China, the Soviet Union was kept in check, reducing the likelihood of an international incident between the superpowers.

The Nixon administration's active policy concerning Asia meant a certain neglect of policy for the Middle East, so it is remarkable that some of Kissinger's most lasting work was in this area of the world. His first achievement was the introduction of a relationship, based on *realpolitik*, between Israel and Jordan in the autumn of 1970. In September, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine hijacked four Western planes and brought them to an airfield near Amman, thereby inciting a Palestinian revolt against King Hussein. Fearing Syrian and Iraqi support for the Palestinians, Hussein asked the United States for military protection of Jordan's borders. Instead of promising American protection, Kissinger arranged for Israel to provide air support in the event of Syrian mobilization. In doing so, Kissinger hoped to demonstrate to both Jordan and Israel their mutual political interests. It is plausible (though also debatable) that Kissinger's maneuver helped to reconstitute the relationship between the two countries.

Kissinger's greater achievement was in unhinging Egypt from Soviet client status during the Yom Kippur War, thereby laying the foundation for what would become the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel under American auspices during the Carter administration. Like much of the world, the Middle East had been divided between American and Soviet influence since the 1950s, with the Soviets generally supporting Arab interests while America supported Israel—with significant dissent from those who believed that America was backing the wrong side. Indeed, many State Department officials were in this camp. Though the relationship between America and Israel was surely one of shared ideologies and cultures, it was fundamentally an alliance of *realpolitik*, in the sense that American military support of Israel continued a general policy to aid any country threatened by the Soviet Union or by a Soviet client. It was American policy that no country should be allowed to succeed in reaching its goals with Soviet support. Kissinger took this general Cold War strategy a step further when he confided to Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger his specific thinking concerning the Arab–Israel conflict: “Our strategy has to be that when the Soviet Union, the British, and the French press [for Israeli concessions], we stall—so all of them know only we can deliver.” Kissinger's objective was to demonstrate that alliances with any state except America were unhelpful to re-

alizing Arab goals, and that America, unlike the Soviet Union, had enough influence in the region to return lands Israel had occupied during the Six Day War of 1967. Kissinger underscored the seriousness of America's position against Soviet gains in the region by favoring a worldwide nuclear alert when the Soviet Union threatened direct intervention on behalf of ailing Egyptian forces at the end of the war. The Soviets did not intervene, and America thereby demonstrated the ineffectiveness of Soviet support compared to American assistance. Shortly thereafter Kissinger was able to comment, “All the Arabs are coming to us.” Indeed, through Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy, Egypt effectively became an American client, and America eventually did fulfill its promise to have Israel return seized territory to Egypt. Israel restored the Sinai to Egypt in 1978 as part of the Camp David Agreement negotiated by Israel, Egypt, and the United States. Israel and Egypt have since enjoyed a peaceful border and full diplomatic relations (Isaacson 1992).

Kissinger has been accused by some of having favored Israel too strongly on account of his heritage. Others claim he often requested too much of Israel and hindered it unfairly. He had rocky relationships with prime ministers Golda Meir and Yitzhak Rabin in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, when neither felt able to cooperate fully with American peace designs. Despite both hopes and fears that Kissinger treated Israel specially, he always maintained that he advocated only American interests. “I was born Jewish, but the truth is that has no significance for me,” he declared. “America has given me everything. A home, a chance to study and achieve a high position. I don't know what other Jews expect of me, but I consider myself an American first” (Isaacson 1992). During the Cold War, his policies benefited both America and Israel, as the Cold War polarized alliances and Israel became an important square for America on the world chessboard.

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# Jews in Wars and the Military

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## Jews and the Civil War

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Jews clearly did their part in the American Civil War: thousands of Jewish men served in both armies, and countless other Jews aided the war effort at home. Yet they also encountered an outbreak of antisemitism that, though it subsided after the fighting ended in 1865, indicates how close to the surface of American culture this form of prejudice lay.

An estimated 150,000 to 200,000 Jews lived in the United States on the eve of the Civil War (Marcus 1990). There was no official Jewish position on slavery and secession, and the views of individual Jews were influenced more by their region than by ethnicity or religion.

Approximately 15 percent of American Jews lived in the states that became the Confederacy (Marcus 1990). Slaveholding was as common among Jews as among gentiles—about one-fourth of Jewish households owned slaves (Korn 1973)—but Jews were rarely the owners of large plantations and gangs of slaves. Most southern Jews lived in cities and towns, where they were merchants, brokers, artisans, or peddlers. The relatively small number of slaves they owned were domestic servants, laborers in the owner's trade, or workers for hire. Jews also took part in the slave trade, but in negligible numbers: Jews made up only 6 percent of slave dealers and auctioneers in three southern cities (Korn 1973). Jews' involvement in slavery was inci-

dental to their participation in the southern economy, and all evidence points to the conclusion that "slavery would not have differed one whit from historic reality if no single Jew had been resident in the South" (Korn 1973).

Whether they owned slaves or not, Jews lived in a region that did not tolerate dissent on this issue. They thus shared in the South's "pervasive racist sentiment," and southern Jews and their rabbis seldom criticized slavery as an institution (Feingold 1974). When the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 appeared to threaten slavery's survival, prominent Jewish elected officials, most notably Senator Judah P. Benjamin of Louisiana, supported secession. According to a rabbi in New Orleans, Benjamin's stand reflected the opinions of his fellow Jews: nearly all Jews in the city were "ardently in favor of secession, and many among them are intense fanatics" (quoted in Al-lardice 2002). During the Civil War, the majority of southern Jews remained loyal to the Confederacy.

Northern Jews expressed the same wide range of views on slavery as did their gentile neighbors. Antislavery organizations expected Jews to join them because, in the words of one group, Jews had been "the object of so much mean prejudice and unrighteous oppression . . . for ages" (quoted in Feingold 1974); the groups' leaders were distressed that many Jews failed to support the cause. Yet Jews had compelling reasons to keep their distance from the antislavery movement: as onetime victims of European

mobs, some Jews were wary of public protests, whereas others were antagonized by antislavery groups' exclusionistic Christian rhetoric. Nonetheless, a number of Jews became prominent in the antislavery effort. Several rabbis denounced slavery to their congregations, other Jews joined John Brown in his antislavery crusade of the 1850s, and Ernestine Rose, daughter of a rabbi, was a leading antislavery lecturer.

An undercurrent of antisemitism circulated through American culture prior to the Civil War, especially in the North. A geography textbook informed students that Jews were "industrious but crafty," a California newspaper described a candidate for office as a "swindling sheeny," and a credit report warned that "prudence in large transactions with all Jews should be used" (quoted in Rockaway and Gutfeld 2001; quoted in Gerber 1982). Jews were caught up among the targets of the nativist frenzy of the early 1850s: in 1850, for example, a mob plundered a synagogue in New York on Yom Kippur. Such incidents inspired the formation of a new group, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, in 1859. Among its other functions, the Board investigated and protested discrimination against Jews.

Yet the nativist furor subsided, and antisemitism remained more a reflex than a preoccupation of antebellum gentiles. Moreover, antisemitism was considerably milder in the South. One indicator of acceptance of southern Jews is their success in politics—a disproportionate number of Jews, particularly in Louisiana, were elected to political office.

The coming of the Civil War transformed the lives of individual Jews and the scale of antisemitism. Regional loyalties led thousands of Jews to serve in the opposing armies. The precise number of Jewish soldiers is unknown, because neither army collected information on recruits' religion. Estimates suggest that 7,000 to 10,000 Jews served in the two armies (Marcus 1995; Feingold 1974). The Union–Confederate breakdown within these numbers is similarly imprecise, with estimates for Jewish Confederates varying from 1,500 to more than 2,500 (Rosen 2000). There is no firm basis for choosing among these figures; the most that can be said is that Jews achieved a significant mobilization among a relatively small population and that Jews who fought for the Union considerably outnumbered Jewish Confederates.

Because of Jews' small numbers, there were no all-Jewish regiments in either army; there were, however, a few

predominantly Jewish companies (a company was approximately a hundred soldiers, with ten companies per regiment). Nonetheless, according to two studies, Jews in both armies preferred to blend in with their friends and neighbors and avoid the image of clannishness (Allardice 2002; Korn 1951).

The typical Jewish Confederate soldier was a volunteer who was born in Germany, Poland, Russia, or Hungary; who owned no slaves; and who had worked as a clerk, peddler, tailor, or small shopkeeper (Rosen 2000). Like most Confederates, he served in the infantry. It is likely that Jewish soldiers in the Union army had similar characteristics, and we can gain an additional detail from military records. Regimental rosters report the ages of recruits in a largely Jewish company of the 149th New York Volunteers, a regiment formed in Syracuse in the summer of 1862. Since most Jewish recruits were recent immigrants, they were likely to be older than native-born soldiers: one-third of enlisted men were over age thirty when they joined the Syracuse company, compared to one-fourth of recruits in the Union army as a whole. Being unusually old for military service did not deter Jews from volunteering.

Like their gentile peers, Jewish soldiers fought for liberty and in defense of their homes and families, out of honor, patriotism, and a sense of duty, but seldom out of any convictions on the slavery issue. Other motives common to most soldiers included loyalty to comrades in arms, the adventure and excitement of war, escape from unappealing jobs, social and peer pressure to enlist, and the desire for praise or fear of censure. One study suggests that there was a "special burden" on Jews to prove their patriotism and courage by joining the army (Rosen 2000).

As the war dragged on, more soldiers on both sides became motivated by hatred for the enemy and a desire to avenge fallen comrades. Among Union fighting men, the opinion on emancipation became more positive, reflected in the changing views of Marcus Spiegel, a Jewish officer from Ohio. Early in 1863, soon after the Emancipation Proclamation took effect, Spiegel was unwilling "to fight for Lincoln's Negro proclamation one day longer"; a year later, he wrote that "I am [in] favor of doing away with the . . . accursed institution. . . . I am [now] a strong abolitionist" (Byrne and Solomon 1985).

Jews participated in every aspect of the war, as foot soldiers and artillerymen, cooks and color-bearers, pickets

and teamsters. Few Jewish soldiers served in the cavalry, but Jews' experience in commerce and the professions won them prominent roles in both armies' support services. Abraham Myers attempted the thankless task of supplying clothing and equipment for the Confederacy, and David De Leon served as surgeon general. Phineas Horwitz was surgeon general for the Union army, and numerous other Jewish officers served on both armies' supply and administrative staffs.

A number of Jewish soldiers were recognized for exemplary service. Sergeant Leopold Karpeles received the Congressional Medal of Honor for rallying his comrades at the Battle of the Wilderness, and a superior saluted Confederate colonel Leon Marks's "great gallantry" in repelling a Union attack at Vicksburg (Allardice 2002). Other Jews endured capture and imprisonment, and some proved to be shirkers or deserters. As with all Civil War soldiers, more Jews succumbed to accidents, disease, and exposure than were killed by the enemy.

Both armies commissioned numerous Jewish officers. Like other Confederate officers, the Jews among them were educated and affluent men with important family connections. But in the South, with its smaller number of Jewish soldiers, no Jews rose to become generals, and only a few became colonels. The Union army, on the other hand, appointed eight Jewish generals. One, Frederick Knefler, earned his first star for leadership at the Battle of Chickamauga, and Edward Salomon, who enlisted as a lieutenant, rose to brigadier general after distinguished service at Gettysburg.

The rigors of military service hindered but did not prevent the practice of religion. There are reported instances of Jewish soldiers joining together for Sabbath worship, requesting leave for observing Jewish holidays, conducting camp meetings to discuss mutual problems, visiting wounded Jewish soldiers, and organizing traditional burials for dead comrades.

Jews held responsible government positions on both sides of the conflict. Judah P. Benjamin served the Confederacy as attorney general, secretary of war, and secretary of state; recognizing that the South was running short of fighting men, he became an early proponent of arming slaves to fight for the Confederacy in return for their freedom. Isachar Zacharie, a close friend and confidant of Abraham Lincoln, was sent to Richmond in 1863, apparently in an attempt to negotiate peace.

Jewish civilians served in home relief and humanitarian activities, and they raised money for the war effort. Synagogues engaged in the same kinds of patriotic activities as churches, offering prayers for the success of the cause and for an end to the hostilities, as well as inspirational sermons. Jews contributed to the efforts of the U.S. Sanitary Commission to provide supplies and medical care to soldiers, and they worked with other aid societies that furnished food, fuel, clothing, and money to support soldiers' families. Jewish women nursed the wounded and sewed clothing and other supplies for the troops; the flag of the 149th New York Volunteers bore the inscription of "the Jewish ladies of Syracuse."

In spite of Jews' vital participation, the Civil War set the stage for an eruption of antisemitism in both the North and the South. Jews were especially visible targets for prejudice due to their vulnerability as recent immigrants, the unfamiliar culture and languages of the Central Europeans among them, and their concentration in cities. They became the primary scapegoats for the economic distress, political tensions, and social disruption that plagued societies at war.

In the North, newspaper editors exploited the stereotype of the avaricious Jew to help explain the slow progress of the war. Editors declared that "hooked nose wretches" took pleasure in military defeat, because "it puts money in their purse" (quoted in Dinnerstein 1994). Such suspicions also transformed "shoddy" into an ethnic slur. The term originally referred to inferior material made from scrap wool, but it became associated with Jewish merchants and manufacturers in a remarkable evolution of prejudicial thinking. Nineteenth-century Jews were particularly visible in the needle trades; the Union army contracted for vast quantities of mass-produced goods, including uniforms; the goods, especially the uniforms, were often overpriced and of poor quality; therefore, Jewish avarice must have been at fault. This reasoning was so persuasive that "shoddy" came to include all sorts of alleged Jewish profiteering: in 1864, a serialized poem caricatured the "Shoddy family," whose patriarch boasts of "bleeding the country, but not bleeding for it!" (quoted in Bunker and Appel 1994). Gentiles such as Lincoln's first secretary of war and his cronies also engaged in wholesale profiteering, but "'shoddy' came to represent the quintessential stereotype of the unpatriotic Jew" (Bunker and Appel 1994).

The federal government's wartime treatment of Jews ranged from bumbling to calculated bigotry. In 1862, federal authorities ordered the arrest of Simon Wolf, an attorney affiliated with B'nai B'rith; until the secretary of war obtained Wolf's release, officials insisted that Wolf and his organization were pro-Confederate subversives. A bill passed by Congress in 1861 contained a provision allowing only Christian ministers to serve as chaplains in the military; in one historian's view, this was "the first instance of outright discrimination and legal inequity in a Congressional enactment" in American history (Korn 1951). In 1862, General Ulysses S. Grant issued General Order No. 11 in response to a persistent trade through the lines in cotton and other goods, whose profits could benefit the Confederacy. Although there were few Jewish merchants conducting this commerce, the order applied solely to Jews. It called for the immediate forced removal of *all* Jews from areas in the Mississippi Valley under Grant's jurisdiction, without trial and regardless of actual participation in the alleged wrongdoing. Most subordinates hesitated to carry out the order, but a number of Jews were arrested in northern Mississippi, and a particularly zealous officer forced nearly all the Jewish families of Paducah, Kentucky, to leave the city.

In the South, many of the charges leveled against Jewish civilians were similar to those in the North: politicians and editors accused "Jewish Shylocks" of speculation, profiteering, passing counterfeit money, unfair competition, and "fatten[ing] upon the calamities of the very people who are giving them a home" (quoted in Greenberg 1993; quoted in Rosen 2000). But conditions on the southern home front made antisemitism, which had been relatively benign before the war, worse than in the North. These conditions included a general antipathy toward foreign immigrants, based in part on the belief that the Union forces were made up of foreigners; an agrarian society's suspicion of merchants and storekeepers; a deeper commitment to evangelical Christianity than in the North; and the morale problems attendant on a prolonged war with diminishing chances of victory. Jews were suspect because many of them spoke with an accent, kept to themselves, lived frugally, declined to intermarry, and allegedly engaged in immoral business practices.

In Thomasville, Georgia, citizens met in 1862 to denounce Jewish merchants and peddlers, accusing them of speculation, counterfeiting, and disloyalty to the Confed-

eracy; the meeting concluded with a call to expel local Jews. In Union-occupied areas such as New Orleans under General Benjamin Butler, southern Jews were subjected to worse treatment than other southerners by both the Union army and the northern press. Nor could Judah P. Benjamin's stature as Confederate cabinet member and confidant of Jefferson Davis protect him from ethnic slurs: Congressman Henry S. Foote of Tennessee ceaselessly denounced him as "Judas Iscariot Benjamin," calling him the Confederacy's "Jewish puppeteer," and a Richmond newspaper complained that "the people do not like to be made to choose between Jesus Christ and Judah P. Benjamin" (quoted in Evans 1988; *Richmond Enquirer*, Feb. 9, 1865).

On the other hand, there is little evidence of bigotry against Jewish soldiers in the Confederate army. To be sure, prejudice was not entirely absent: one officer in an Alabama regiment blamed antisemitism for his delayed promotion, and another Jewish officer was harassed by his men. Confederates were notoriously disrespectful to officers, however, and descriptions of the latter officer's treatment contain no explicit slurs. Moreover, the Confederate Congress set no religious barriers to the appointment of chaplains (though there is no record of Jews being appointed), and no Jewish soldiers were court-martialed during the war.

Jews themselves did not remain passive in the face of the rising tide of prejudice, and they were quick to assert their right to equal treatment. Editors of Jewish periodicals, aided by the secular press, reacted immediately to the chaplaincy controversy in the Union military. Jews and Christians alike sent petitions to Congress, and an envoy traveled to Washington to argue against the exclusion of Jewish chaplains. Lawmakers responded by changing the chaplaincy act in 1862: now, chaplains could be appointed from any religious denomination.

Angered by the *group* punishment of Jews, without a trial, for the actions of the mostly non-Jewish *individuals* who inspired Grant's General Order No. 11, Jews wrote letters and editorials demanding fair trials for the persons accused of illegal trading, regardless of their background, and insisting on penalties for the guilty. Protest meetings occurred in major cities, and accusers of Jews were challenged to present their evidence in a public forum. Jewish protests reached the White House, and Lincoln rescinded the order in early 1863.

This action helped to inspire Jewish admiration for Lincoln. A rabbi, visiting the president to convey gratitude for the order's demise, came away "fully convinced . . . that [Lincoln] feels no prejudice against any nationality and especially against the Israelites" (quoted in Markens 1909). Citing such traits and Lincoln's Jewish friends, encomiums "claimed for Lincoln personal qualities that made him almost a Jew" (Diner 1992). Contemporary feelings of affinity may have gone too far—for example, Lincoln justified a Sunday observation order by citing "the best sentiment of a Christian people" (*War of the Rebellion* 1899, ser 3, vol. 2)—but his behavior nonetheless demonstrated, as a Jewish acquaintance concluded, that Lincoln was "a man of very broad views" (quoted in Markens 1909).

In the South, Jews in Georgia vigorously protested the antisemitic actions that had occurred in Thomasville. Jewish soldiers in a Georgia regiment wrote a letter in defense of Thomasville's Jews, and a protest meeting in Savannah condemned Thomasville's "slander, persecution and denunciation of a people" (quoted in Diner 1992).

Wartime antisemitism itself had limits. Despite repeated antisemitic harangues by Foote, the Confederate Congress produced no legislation against Jews. The diary of Clara Solomon, who lived in New Orleans during the Civil War, makes no mention of antisemitism against her or her family from schoolmates or others. Marcus Spiegel did not suffer from antisemitism in the Union army; he admired Grant, and he never mentioned General Order No. 11 in his numerous letters.

Jews also had their defenders against the aforementioned invective in the South. The editor of the *Richmond Sentinel* criticized "intolerant and illiberal views and prejudices" against Jews, and an editor in Georgia denied "the charges which we have frequently heard made by our street-corner gossipers and windy patriots" about Jews' wartime conduct (quoted in Korn 1951). In Thomasville, despite the ominous tone of the anti-Jewish rally and its formation of a vigilance committee, the town's Jewish families remained throughout the war without molestation; a study of the incident concludes that "with the exception of this single anti-Semitic outburst, the townspeople lived in harmony" (Greenberg 1993). The vital role that Jewish merchants and tradespeople played in economic life tempered antisemitism and maintained cordial relationships, especially in small towns like Thomasville. One historian

has concluded that, even during the Civil War, "acts of public tolerance offset almost every act of antisemitism" (Diner 1992).

With the war's end in 1865, antisemitism diminished. For Jews, successfully countering the war's challenges to equal rights set a precedent that had far-reaching effects: they learned that public officials could be responsive to efforts to safeguard the rights of minorities and victims of discrimination. Jewish leaders reminded voters of General Order No. 11 when Grant ran for president in 1868, urging them not to "lick the feet that kick them about" (quoted in Diner 1992). Other Jews, however, supported Grant, and after his election they suggested ways in which he could demonstrate positive feelings, which he did by appointing Jews to public office, attending synagogue events, and making other public expressions of goodwill.

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## American Jews and World War I

As a result of World War I (1914–1918), American Jews redefined their relationships with each other, with their former homelands, and with American society. America's diverse Jewish communities forged unprecedented levels of unity as they confronted questions over which side to support in the conflict and how to help millions of Jewish refugees suffering abroad. The war also brought the debate about a Jewish homeland in Palestine into the mainstream of American Jewish life. As they wrestled with these issues, the nation's 3 million Jews distanced themselves from their European pasts, tied their aspirations to the United States, and established a more visible presence than in earlier periods.

At the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914, the country's Jewish population was more diverse than it had ever been, and attitudes toward the war were divided. Most Jews of Central European descent, who were well established in the United States, followed the general course of American opinion, moving from neutrality to open support for the Allies. East European immigrants, however, deeply loathed Imperial Russia because of its history of antisemitic brutality. For the first three years of the war they did not desire a German victory so much as the downfall of the czarist regime. With the czar's overthrow in February 1917, most American Jews believed that a democratic society would emerge in Russia. Therefore they supported the new government's decision to continue to fight and the growing American desire to enter the war as an Ally.

Still, when the Wilson administration joined the conflict in April 1917, a large minority of American Jewry remained opposed to U.S. participation. Dissent was strongest in New York, where East European Jews provided much of the support for the country's most significant antiwar organization, the People's Council for Democracy and Peace. Anarchist Emma Goldman was deported for protesting the draft, while Jewish-led unions and the *Daily Forward* heavily backed the Socialist Party's antiwar campaign in the 1917 elections.

A series of landmark events ended this opposition and created a united Jewish position on the war. Most important was the catastrophic outcome of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the peace settlement between Germany and the new Bolshevik government in Russia that had seized power in the October Revolution. Under the agreement, most of the Jewish Pale of Settlement was placed under German military control in early 1918. This harsh treatment contrasted sharply with the Allied diplomatic initiatives, which carefully addressed American Jewish concerns over the welfare and future of Jews in Europe and the Middle East. In November 1917, Britain's Balfour Declaration had expressed support for a future Jewish state in Palestine. Soon after, Woodrow Wilson had proclaimed national self-determination to be a key American war aim. By spring 1918, nearly all on the Jewish left had reversed their positions and endorsed the Allied cause.

While unity on the war issue took years to develop, early in the conflict American Jewry came together to provide relief for Jewish war refugees. Its major constituencies—the Central Europeans, the Orthodox, and labor—created their own organizations and raised \$63 million between 1914 and 1924. A single agency, the Joint Distribution Committee, administered the funds; by war's end it sponsored soup kitchens, medical treatment, and schools for 750,000 Jews on the Eastern Front.

Jewish participation in the American war effort was also impressive. Over 200,000 Jews served in the U.S. armed forces, a higher proportion than that of Jews in the American population. In an extraordinary demonstration of Jewish unity, fourteen religious bodies created the Jewish Welfare Board to assist these men and women in uniform. It provided rabbis, social workers, and recreational facilities at training camps nationwide and overseas. In the federal government, financier Bernard Baruch directed the powerful War Industries Board, Congressman Julius Kahn

steered the passage of the Selective Service Act, and labor leader Samuel Gompers served on the Council of National Defense. American Jews provided tens of millions of dollars for the country's Liberty Loan, Red Cross, and other mobilization drives, while thousands also worked on draft boards and fund-raising committees.

Even more remarkable was the convergence of American Jewish opinion on establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Before 1914, the Zionist movement in the United States was very limited. But the war's devastating impact on European Jews and the collapse of the empires that governed them made the Zionist objective both a dire necessity and a realistic possibility. This sense of urgency continued in the immediate postwar years, as a wave of pogroms, unleashed by the chaos and civil wars in East Europe, brought death and destruction to hundreds of Jewish communities in Poland, Galicia, Rumania, and the Ukraine. By late 1918, membership in American Zionist organizations had skyrocketed to over 200,000. Even more audaciously, 335,000 Jews across the country had voted to establish the American Jewish (AJ) Congress, which demanded a homeland and legal protection for Jews worldwide at the postwar peace negotiations. Though the Versailles treaty and its guarantees of Jewish rights would soon disintegrate in the interwar years, the efforts of the AJCongress delegation set a dramatic precedent for American Jewish advocacy in international affairs.

Together, these events and actions strengthened the American Jewish community. For the first time since the mass emigration from East Europe, Jews from a wide range of religious, political, and national backgrounds cooperated on a series of critical projects. Their efforts to assist refugees reflected the relative material success and security they enjoyed in the United States; few ever considered returning to their home countries or emigrating to Palestine after the war. Their political activity, whether supporting or opposing the American war effort, or advocating a Jewish homeland, also underscored the relative openness of American society, even during wartime. This political assertiveness and the greater unity American Jews forged during World War I continued to develop even as nativism and antisemitism mounted during the interwar period.

*Christopher M. Sterba*

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## American Jews in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939)

The Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) gave Jews from around the world the first opportunity for organized armed resistance against fascism and Nazi antisemitism. Most U.S. Jews who volunteered to fight in Spain were not religious: their decision to enlist in the fight against fascism was the result of identification with internationalist, class-based labor and political organizations. Nevertheless, ethnic and cultural identity constituted an important element of their radical politics and fueled their opposition.

At the end of November 1937, while recovering from wounds received in battle, Hyman Katz wrote to his mother in New York in an attempt to mollify her disapproval of his decision to volunteer to fight fascism in Spain:

Yes, Ma, this is the case where sons must go against their mothers' wishes for the sake of their mothers themselves.

So I took up arms against the persecutors of my people—the Jews—and my class—the Oppressed. I am fighting against those who establish an inquisition like that of their ideological ancestors several centuries ago, in Spain. Are these traits which you admire so much in a Prophet Jeremiah or a Judas Maccabbeus, bad when your son exhibits them? Of course, I am not a Jeremiah or a Judas; but I'm trying with my own meager capabilities, to do what they did with their great capabilities, in the struggle for Liberty, Well-being and Peace (Nelson 1996).

His mother's response to this letter has been lost. The next year, Hyman Katz was killed in action in Spain. Hy Katz's explanation of his motivations, rooted in a Jewish

history of exploitation as well as in religious and racial persecution, resonates in the words of other volunteers. In 1939, as part of his testimony before the Dies Committee set up by the U.S. Congress to investigate so-called un-American organizations, Milton Wolff said, in explaining why he enlisted in support of the Spanish Republic: "I am Jewish, and knowing that as a Jew we are the first to suffer when fascism does come, I went to Spain to fight against it." Spain became the battlefield where Jews could confront this raging enemy. "Here, finally," said Gene Wolman, "the oppressed of the Earth are united, here finally we have weapons, here we can fight back. Here, even if we lose, . . . in the weakening of Fascism, we will have won" (Carroll 1994).

During the 1930s, fascist and Nazi expansionism affected the basic context of European politics and diplomacy. Thus, when the Spanish military, backed by Hitler and Mussolini, rebelled against the legally elected republican government, for many around the world the Spanish Civil War came to embody the global struggle against exploitation, oppression, and racism. The clearest example of this connection was the decision by over 35,000 men and women from fifty-two countries to join what became known as the International Brigades to fight in defense of the Spanish Republican government.

According to some recent estimates, Jews comprised from 25 to 30 percent of international volunteers. This high percentage prompted the leadership of the International Brigades to support the publication of the Yiddish language *Botwin* (named for the Polish Jewish Communist martyr, Naftali Botwin) and to consider forming an all-Jewish brigade. The purpose of this unit was to demonstrate the direct participation of Jews alongside other national groups in the fight against fascism. High casualties made this impossible, but a Jewish company was formed within the Polish brigade. Embroidered on the company's flag in Spanish, Polish, and Yiddish was its motto "For your liberty and ours."

While the main contingent of Jewish volunteers came from Poland, the second largest group was from the United States. Of the approximately 3,000 U.S. volunteers who formed the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, some estimates suggest that one-third were Jewish. Many were children of European immigrants, who had arrived in the United States during the early years of the century. They had received an "Americanized" education in school, but still felt family

ties to Europe. Most volunteers came from large cities, where the immigrants had settled.

In October 1938, after two years of fighting, the Spanish government ordered the withdrawal of the surviving members of the International Brigades, hoping that the gesture would press Germany and Italy to remove their troops. But the fascist countries ignored the withdrawal. In March 1939, Francisco Franco's forces captured Madrid and brought the war to an end. For many Jewish volunteers, defeat in the Spanish Civil War meant a continuation of the antifascist struggle on different battlefields. With the onset of World War II scores of former European Jewish brigadiers, among them Connecticut-born nurse Irene Goldin, who after the fall of Spain had remained in France, joined the Resistance against Nazi occupiers and their puppet regimes. Following the U.S. entry into the war, over four hundred Lincoln brigade veterans enlisted in the armed services, while many others served in the merchant marine. As members of the U.S. Army, Jewish Lincoln veterans fought around the world. Several participated in action inside Germany. Some, including veterans Al Tanz, Lou Gordon, Morris Cohen, and Jack Lucid, helped to liberate Nazi concentration camps in 1945.

With the defeat of Hitler and Mussolini, members of the Lincoln Brigade felt vindicated in their struggles against Fascism and Nazism. However, during the Cold War era, both the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade (VALB) organization and individual Lincoln vets faced government investigations as well as private harassment by employers. Since about 70 percent of the members of the brigade had been affiliated with the Communist Party (or a related group), all were treated as potential subversives. In the 1960s, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the VALB's protest against being listed as a subversive organization. Meanwhile, as individuals and as a group, veterans of the Lincoln Brigade remained political activists, taking public stands in favor of the civil rights movement, against the war in Vietnam, protesting the anti-semitic campaigns of the Polish government that followed the Arab-Israeli Six Day War, opposing the Pinochet regime in Chile, providing humanitarian aid for Cuba and countries in Central America, and finally demonstrating against the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

As they aged, Lincoln veterans paid more attention to their personal heritage both as radicals and, in many cases, as Jews. Some, like the composer Lan Adomian, focused

primarily on Jewish themes in their work. Another veteran, Albert Prago, presented historical research that questioned whether Communists who were Jews should not also be considered Jews who were Communists. His essay “Jews in the International Brigades” emphasized the role of a Jewish consciousness in inspiring individuals to volunteer in the fight against fascism. Many other surviving veterans acknowledge the importance of Prago’s research. “Let us herald the fact,” he wrote, “that more Jews, proportionately, fought in Spain . . . than any other minority or any other nationality in Europe!” (Prago 1987).

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## American Jewish Soldiers in World War II

Over half a million Jews, more than 10 percent of the American Jewish population, served in all branches of the armed forces of the United States in World War II. Over 10,000 Jews lost their lives in the service, 80 percent of them in battle (Kaufman 1947). Many thousands were wounded. Scarcely a Jewish family did not have a son or brother, father or uncle, in the service. No experience more dramatically reshaped American Jewish identity for men born in the 1920s than U.S. military service. The war transformed this generation. It made them fighters. Military service produced a new American Jew. It took young men

who had grown up in working- and middle-class ethnic neighborhoods of large cities, men who recognized themselves as Jewish by virtue of their family and environment, and turned them into self-conscious Jews, aware of their equal rights as American citizens. These new American Jews learned as soldiers to defend their country. In the process, the armed forces also taught them how to defend themselves and their people. Donning an American uniform made Jews both more American and more Jewish.

Few Jewish men set out to transform themselves. Most accepted military service as their duty to their nation. They were eager to defend the United States and to defeat its enemies, especially Nazi Germany. Military service made extraordinary demands on all civilians that often contradicted the values they had cherished in a democratic society. Jews responded in ways that allowed them to retain their Jewishness, internalizing it as a private aspect of their personalities rather than displaying it as a public dimension of their culture. Military life encouraged Jews to revise their understanding of gender roles and hastened Jewish assimilation to American masculine norms. Jews become less visible in the service. They looked just like other American soldiers. Even circumcision did not mark Jews as different since the procedure had become popular among middle-class Americans. In important ways Jews were just like their comrades



*Snapshots of American Jewish soldiers during World War II.  
(American Jewish Historical Society)*

in arms, but beneath the common uniforms Jews struggled with a different reality, a Jewish reality.

World War II began on September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland, but the United States did not enter the war until after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. However, in 1940 the United States instituted a peacetime draft that required one year of military service for young men selected by lottery. Most American Jews, like most Americans, entered the armed forces in the months and years after Pearl Harbor. Many spent three years in uniform, others only two, and some spent four or five years in the service. The war in Europe ended on May 8, 1945, with the unconditional surrender of Germany. The war in the Pacific theater ended on August 15, 1945, with the unconditional surrender of Japan. Fighting on two fronts, the United States focused its manpower first on the European and North African theaters of war and then on the Pacific and Asian theaters. Defeating Nazi Germany, which targeted Jews for persecution and extermination, took primacy in the eyes of most American Jews, unlike other Americans who thought it was more important to avenge the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Jews were not segregated like African Americans. Historians have argued that military service in World War II integrated white ethnics, including Jews, into an American national identity. Because Jews constituted such a small fraction of the American population—less than 5 percent—they represented a similar percentage in the armed forces. This meant that usually there was only a handful of Jews in a unit, and it was not uncommon for a man to find himself the only Jew in his unit. Feelings of isolation became particularly acute in the Pacific theater where units were dispersed. At other times, especially in the European theater, Jews constituted as much as 10 percent of a unit.

The military officially recognized that Jews differed only in their religion. Differences among Jews on political, ethnic, or religious grounds were ignored. The Army allowed soldiers to choose a religious designation to be stamped on their dog tags: P for Protestant, C for Catholic, and H for Hebrew. Informal observation by Jewish chaplains suggests that officers may have been more reluctant to have an H on their dog tags than enlisted men. Jewish fliers based in England often discussed whether they should fly with their dog tags over Germany. Once Jewish soldiers reached the European theater, they worried about the H and whether, if they were captured by German troops, they

would be treated as prisoners of war or as Jews and sent to concentration camps. There was no official policy developed by the American military, and most American Jewish soldiers were treated as prisoners of war. Some, however, were persecuted by German troops.

Through its chaplaincy services the armed forces aimed to provide equal recognition to Judaism alongside Protestantism and Catholicism as one of the three fighting faiths of democracy. In the process it created what would come to be called the “Judeo-Christian tradition” after the war. The Judeo-Christian tradition championed belief in God the Father, the Brotherhood of Man, and the individual dignity of men. World War II provided an arena not only for implementing in pragmatic terms the Judeo-Christian tradition as America’s faith, but also for translating that religious vision into a commitment of many American military leaders. Worshipping together in uniform gradually came to be accepted by soldiers and sailors as standard operating procedure, the American military norm. The armed forces initiated the performance of ecumenism on the battlefield, in hospitals and camps, and at thousands of memorial services honoring the dead. The military’s standard operating procedure for memorial services included three chaplains, one each to represent Protestants, Catholics, and Jews.

In its efforts to integrate Jews and Christians as equal partners in uniform, the armed forces encouraged chaplains to move from cooperative behavior to a common belief in a religious worldview that sustained American democracy. All chaplains were required to report on what they did to minister to men of other faiths as well as their own. Military chapels did not have any distinguishing religious symbols so that anyone could use them. Lifeboats held pocket-sized Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish Testaments, packaged together in a waterproof container. The monthlong chaplaincy training course mixed men of different religions, even aiming to make routine the placement of a Jew, a Catholic, a liturgical Protestant, and an evangelical Protestant as roommates.

The sinking of the *USAT Dorchester* in the North Atlantic in 1943, with the deaths of Protestant chaplains George Fox and Clark Poling, Catholic chaplain John Washington, and Jewish chaplain Alexander Goode, symbolized for many Americans their nation’s distinctiveness. The four chaplains came to represent American ideals guiding the country’s wartime mission. Similarities out-

weighed religious differences. Whether one prayed in Hebrew, Latin, or English, the same God heard the prayers. After the war, the postal service issued a stamp commemorating the sacrifice of the four chaplains who gave their lives so that other men might live.

The Army established a quota for Jewish chaplains initially at 2 percent based on a 1928 census of Jewish participation in the military. The Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) convinced the Chief of Chaplains that more Jews were serving than reflected in the census. So the Army raised the quota to 3 percent. In 1944 the Committee on Army and Navy Religious Activities (CANRA) requested an increase to 3.7 percent to reflect the percentage of Jews in the United States population. In May 1945 the War Department agreed and raised the quota to accommodate the large numbers of Jews in the armed forces. Judaism ranked fifth in the Army's quota system for chaplains, after Catholic, Methodist, "Baptist, South," and "Baptist, Colored" (Bernstein 1971). In actual numbers, however, most white Protestant denominations exceeded their quotas of chaplains, while Catholic, Jewish, and African American chaplains were underrepresented.

The military delegated the recruitment of chaplains to each religious group. Jews reorganized the CANRA under the auspices of the JWB to oversee the recruitment and supervision of Jewish chaplains, and to provide assistance to them. Under Rabbi Philip Bernstein's guidance, CANRA established a formula of tripartite representation on all of its committees as well as among its officers. CANRA strove for harmony, seeking unanimity for important decisions.

At a time when boundaries between Orthodoxy and Conservatism were fluid, CANRA institutionalized both Jewish denominationalism and cooperation among rabbis. A special responsa committee of three rabbis—Solomon B. Freehof, Leo Jung, and Milton Steinberg, representing Reform, Orthodoxy, and Conservatism—answered religious questions posed by chaplains. The tripartite division of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform soon became standardized. It allowed the JWB to develop consensus on a wide range of religious matters, including a joint prayer book for military use. The spirit of interdenominational cooperation among Jews, nourished by the exigencies of wartime, was extended into the postwar era, as reflected in the activities of the Synagogue Council of America. CANRA also built on precedents established during World

War I, such as the choice of a *magen david* (Star of David) to mark Jewish graves instead of a cross.

Over half of all rabbis in the United States volunteered for military service, an impressive record. However, only 311 of them actually received commissions as chaplains due to the need to be certified first by CANRA and then by the military. CANRA encouraged each of the rabbinical associations to recruit chaplains. Almost half (147) came from the Reform movement, not quite a third (96) from Conservatism, and a fifth (68) from modern Orthodoxy (Slomovitz 1999). Their distribution reflected the guidelines and recruitment process, including standards imposed by CANRA, which were more stringent than the military's. CANRA required both ordination and a college degree. CANRA wanted chaplains who were culturally American as well as Jewish. It also screened prospective candidates for their appearance, speech, religious integrity and flexibility, and psychological approach. CANRA rejected men with accents and those who would be unable to serve diverse types of Jews. They wanted chaplains who were educated in the United States and would not seem foreign to American GIs. Just being a rabbi in uniform would make Jewish chaplains unusual.

The armed forces distributed Jews as it did other soldiers, but stereotypes about Jews and their skills influenced where they served. For example, in the Army Air Corps, Jews were more often classified and trained as navigators and bombardiers than as pilots because Army personnel thought that Jews lacked the leadership skills required of pilots and, conversely, that Jews were good with numbers. Unlike many rural recruits, almost all Jews in military service had graduated from high school and so possessed literacy and typing skills that were valuable for service corps work. Nevertheless, Jews served in all branches of the military and in all theaters of war. Antisemitic canards to the contrary, their distribution largely paralleled military norms. The U.S. Army committed 2.28 million men, or 30 percent, to its combat forces. Approximately 23 percent of Jewish GIs served in the Marines and Army ground forces that saw most of the combat and suffered the highest casualties. Of the 80 percent of Jews who served in the Army, 36 percent served in the vast Army Service Corps, another 23 percent entered the Army Air Forces, and 21 percent served in the ground forces, including 13 percent in the infantry. Sixteen percent served in the Navy (Dublin 1947).

Antisemitism existed within the ranks and among the officer corps. Military service brought millions of Americans together from all parts of the country and all walks of life. Since over 75 percent of American Jews lived in five large cities—with over 40 percent in New York City alone—most Americans had never met a Jew before entering the military. Jews encountered religious stereotypes (e.g., men asked to see their horns) and ethnic stereotypes (e.g., they were considered cowardly). Army lingo included ethnic slurs like “jewboy” and “kike” in male conversation. Antisemitic ditties and songs traveled through the barracks. Jews were also accused of fomenting war to help their fellow Jews in Europe. Top-ranking generals subscribed to notions of a Jewish conspiracy to control the world and to undermine the United States.

Surveys done at the time found that antisemitic feelings peaked during the war years in the United States. Antisemitic sentiments were expressed openly in Congress, in the press, and on city streets. Discrimination against Jews in employment, higher education, housing, and hotels was widely accepted as routine and unremarkable. But in the military, Jews encountered antisemitism as personal, not abstract or institutional. Each Jewish soldier had to decide how to handle the slurs and stereotypes. Many responded by challenging their fellow GIs and fighting for their honor and manhood.

Once overseas, Jewish soldiers, sailors, and marines learned that, despite the common foe, their comrades in arms often retained their antisemitic attitudes. Jews fought to prove their valor to their fellow soldiers and to themselves. Thus they battled on three fronts simultaneously: against enemy troops, stereotypes, and their internalization of negative views of Jews. Many managed to achieve recognition for their bravery under fire. Three Jews received the Medal of Honor: Isadore S. Jachman, staff sergeant, 513th Parachute Infantry Regiment, in Belgium on January 4, 1945; Benjamin Solomon, a dentist/surgeon with the 105th Infantry, in Saipan on July 6, 1944; and Raymond Zussmann, second lieutenant, 756th tank battalion, in France on September 12, 1944. However, bias existed in according Jews recognition for their bravery. Ben Solomon only received his medal on May 1, 2002. Other Jews also sought recognition many years after the war ended when attitudes toward Jewish bravery had changed.

Invidious charges about Jews’ unwillingness to fight provoked the urge to document their involvement. After



*Isadore Jachman, American Jewish soldier and recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor during World War II. (National Museum of American Jewish Military History)*

the war the JWB collected documentation about Jewish military service. Twenty-four Jews reached the upper echelons of military rank. There were six major generals, thirteen brigadier generals, two admirals, two rear admirals, and one commodore (Dublin 1947). Military service reached all types of American Jews. Uncle Sam recruited fourth-generation, native-born Jews whose grandparents were born in the United States and recent refugees from Nazism who arrived only a few years before they enlisted. Some refugee soldiers worked in counterpropaganda units and in interrogation teams, using their linguistic skills. Their return to their native land wearing an American uniform brought them some sense of justice.

Jewish women volunteered for military service in record numbers. They shared similar motivations with Jewish men who volunteered: a desire to fight Nazism and to contribute to the war effort to defend their country. Some also sought adventure and a chance to escape homes that they considered constricting. Few went overseas, but those who did fulfilled their duties honorably. Some strug-



*Raymond Zussman, American Jewish soldier and recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor during World War II. (National Museum of American Jewish Military History)*

gled against anti-Jewish bias or ignorance of Jews among their fellow women in uniform.

No American soldier was prepared for encountering the concentration camps, and no Jewish soldier could anticipate the horror, even though he knew about Nazi anti-semitism. The rapid conquest of Germany in the spring of 1945 left little time to dismantle the camps. Allied armies rushing to defeat remnants of the German army did not particularly target them. Few were military objectives. As a result, American soldiers liberated the camps almost by accident. Contemporary accounts reveal shock and horror. The camps stunned these experienced soldiers. Often, infantry and armored units rolled through and spent only a couple of hours. They left the camps' manifold problems for rear echelon troops, who determined what to do with the barely living and recently dead.

The discovery of the death camps changed everything. The sight and smell of a death camp exploded in soldiers'

faces. Like burning phosphorus, the fact of the horror stuck to their brains and guts. The experience of liberating the camps, no matter how brief, would endure a lifetime. And the process of liberation would be repeated, often over the course of weeks, as new troops arrived and discovered the horror for themselves. Those who came later often saw more because they entered barracks farther from the entry gates of the camps.

Jewish soldiers responded to the death camps in diverse ways. For some the experience turned them into Zionists, convinced that Jews needed a state of their own because there was no future in Europe. Others were so repulsed by what they saw that they lost their faith in God. Still others sought revenge. They recognized that had they or their parents or grandparents not immigrated to the United States, they might have been suffering and dying in the camps. Meeting survivors strengthened Jewish bonds of solidarity even as it led Jewish soldiers to realize the difference their uniform made. It also forced them to realize the ghastly price paid by Jews. Far more Jews died in World War II than American or British troops.

For the vast majority of American servicemen, the war came to an end on August 15, 1945, when the Japanese surrendered. For 292,000 dead, however, the war had ended before peace arrived. They would never see home, and many remained behind buried in vast military cemeteries on foreign soil. In the American military cemeteries of World War II, endless rows of white crosses stand at attention. Scanning this sea of uniformity, eyes every so often catch an irregularity: an angular, six-pointed white star shatters the symmetry, marking the grave of an American Jewish soldier. His difference and similarity appear in the symbolism used to signify his death. Jewish sacrifice in the United States' armed forces during World War II both erased and memorialized Jewish differences from their comrades.

Beyond their shared commitment with other Americans to defend their nation and to win the war, Jews hoped to prove their loyalties and earn through their heroism a measure of respect. American Jews had much at stake in World War II. The commitment of the United States to the four freedoms—freedom from want and fear, freedom of speech and worship—promised them a future of dignity, as individuals and as a community. It was a future worth fighting for.

*Deborah Dash Moore*

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# American Jews and the Law

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## The Jewish Justices of the Supreme Court

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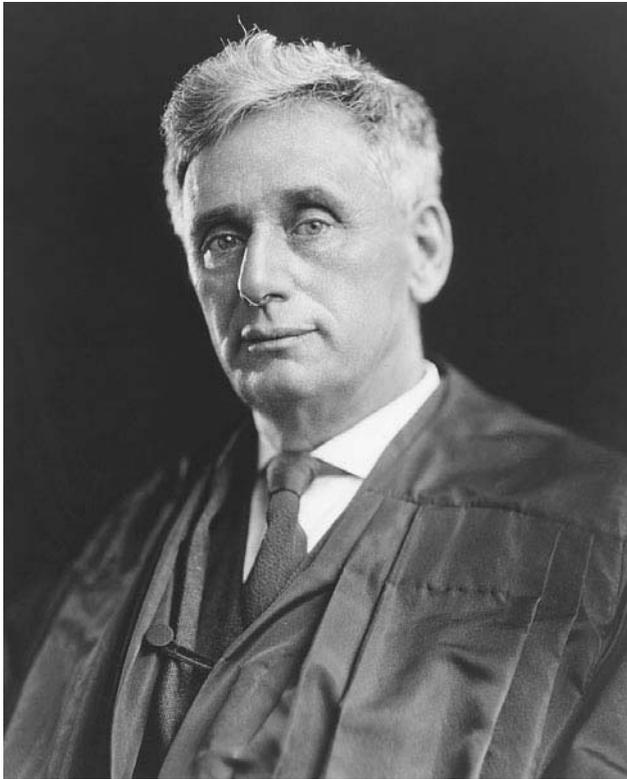
Seven Jews have served on the United States Supreme Court: Louis Dembitz Brandeis (1916–1939), Benjamin Cardozo (1932–1938), Felix Frankfurter (1939–1962), Arthur Goldberg (1962–1965), Abe Fortas (1965–1969), Ruth Bader Ginsburg (1993–), and Stephen G. Breyer (1994–). The Jewish presence on the Supreme Court has far exceeded the Jews' proportion of the population or of the U.S. Congress. Beginning with Louis Brandeis's nomination in 1916, seven of the thirty-eight (18 percent) judges appointed to the Court have been Jews, during a time when the Jewish percentage of the U.S. population peaked at 3.7 percent in the late 1930s and fell to less than 2 percent by the beginning of the current century. By comparison, although Roman Catholics comprised 20–25 percent of the population throughout that period, the number of Jews who served on the high court since 1916 nearly equals the number of Catholics. Twice during these years, two Jewish justices have served simultaneously, Justices Brandeis and Cardozo from 1932 to 1938 and Justices Ginsburg and Breyer since 1994.

The quality of the work the Jewish justices performed on the Court has been no less impressive than their number. Brandeis and Cardozo hold firm places on any "all-star" team of the nine greatest justices, and Frankfurter

would be ranked as a "great" judge on more comprehensive lists. Fortas and Goldberg authored significant opinions in their brief tenures on the Court, as have current justices Ginsburg and Breyer, whose careers are still unfolding. All have been highly regarded for their intellect and their contributions to the development of American law.

### Louis Dembitz Brandeis (1856–1941)

Brandeis, the first Jew appointed to the United States Supreme Court, was born in Louisville, Kentucky, on November 13, 1856, to a prosperous merchant family who had emigrated from Prague. After graduating from Harvard Law School, where he excelled, he opened a law practice in Boston. After accumulating substantial wealth as a successful corporate lawyer, Brandeis embarked on an innovative career as a "public interest lawyer," waging battles in courtrooms and legislatures on issues ranging from insurance reform to protective labor legislation. Acclaimed the "people's attorney," he became a leading figure in the Progressive movement, defending social legislation from conservative attack in a number of notable cases by preparing what came to be known as Brandeis briefs, which justified the challenged reforms by supplementing formal legal arguments with sociological and economic data. He also coauthored what was probably the most influential law review article ever written, an explication of a



*Louis Brandeis, associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (1916–1939). (Library of Congress)*

novel “right to privacy” that appeared in the *Harvard Law Review* in 1890.

Brandeis was a close adviser to President Woodrow Wilson and helped shape Wilson’s New Freedom program, which sought to preserve the competitive environment of small-scale business and agriculture, in contrast to Theodore Roosevelt’s New Nationalism, which accepted industrial concentration and looked to the regulation of the trusts to protect the public interest. In January 1916, Wilson nominated Brandeis for a Supreme Court seat, sparking one of the most bitter and protracted confirmation battles of American history. Brandeis’s opponents comprised a good part of the American legal and corporate establishment, including seven former presidents of the American Bar Association as well as a committee of Boston Brahmins led by Harvard president A. Lawrence Lowell. They harshly assailed the nominee’s ethics, professionalism, and liberal political and social views. The leading historian of the judicial confirmation process concludes that, although “the opposition was directed largely at Brandeis’s social and economic record and at his ‘sociological ju-

risprudence’ . . . there is no question that much of the anti-Brandeis campaign was anti-Semitic in origin” (Abraham 1985). Writing to William Howard Taft, who was orchestrating the opposition to confirmation, George Wickersham (the attorney general in the ex-president’s cabinet) railed against the “Hebrew uplifters” who were supporting Brandeis and claimed that “it is a disgusting fact that while many Jews privately criticize the nomination as unfit, none of them will put pen to paper to say so” (Todd 1964). Brandeis himself believed that “the dominant reasons for the opposition . . . are that he is considered a radical and is a Jew” (Mason 1946). Strongly backed by President Wilson, Brandeis was finally confirmed by the Senate in June.

Once on the Court, Brandeis forged a close personal and working relationship with the patrician Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., who recognized in his younger colleague, despite their divergent backgrounds, a fellow aristocrat of the intellect. Their frequent votes against the Court’s conservative, laissez-faire-oriented majority made “Holmes and Brandeis dissenting” a catch phrase of the era. He also maintained cordial relations with former president William Howard Taft, who was appointed Chief Justice in 1921, notwithstanding their differences in judicial philosophy and Taft’s active opposition to Brandeis’s appointment to the Court. By contrast, President Wilson’s prior high court judicial appointee, the far less accomplished James Clark McReynolds, exhibited an unconcealed antisemitism that included a refusal to extend even minimum social amenities to the Court’s first Jewish justice.

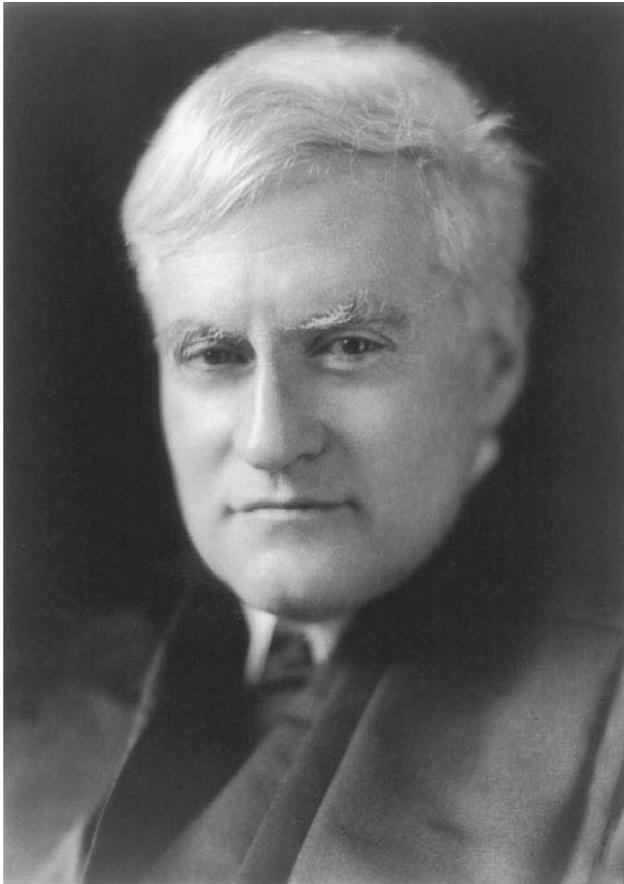
During his twenty-three years on the Court, Brandeis compiled a record of extraordinary distinction. He broke new ground in expanding protection of the freedom of speech, celebrated the rights of states to engage in social experimentation as the “laboratories of democracy,” upheld a right of privacy against government intrusion, and defended the constitutionality of most New Deal efforts to combat the Depression and regulate the economy. Brandeis remained on the Court long enough to see his views on that hotly contested subject prevail by the time he retired from the Court in February 1939.

### **Benjamin Cardozo (1870–1938)**

Cardozo was born in New York City to a distinguished Sephardic family; he was related to the poet Emma

Lazarus. Cardozo received his undergraduate and legal education at Columbia University. An otherwise secure childhood was shadowed by his father's resignation from a judgeship on the New York Supreme Court (the state's trial court) to avoid impeachment on corruption charges, a disgrace that weighed on Cardozo's mind throughout his life and that may have inspired him to become a lawyer to redeem the family name. Cardozo quickly established a reputation as a "lawyer's lawyer," handling especially difficult cases that other attorneys referred to him. He was elected to the New York Supreme Court in 1913 and elevated to the state's highest court, the Court of Appeals, the next year. There he served as chief judge from 1926 until his appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1932.

On the New York Court of Appeals, Cardozo proved to be one of the preeminent judges in all of American legal history, writing opinions that transformed legal doctrine on issues ranging from causation in tort law, products liability, the scope of contractual obligation, and fiduciary



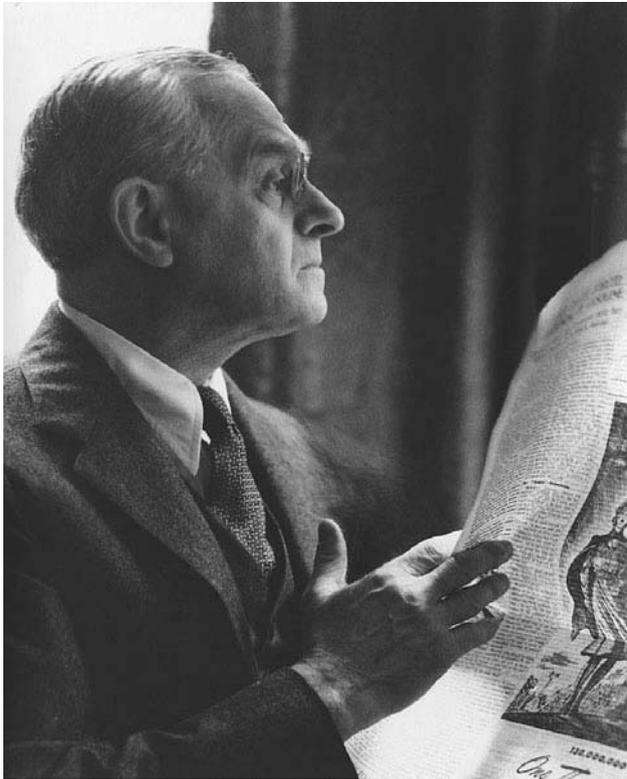
Benjamin Cardozo, United States Supreme Court Justice (1932–1938). (Library of Congress)

duty. His extrajudicial speeches and writings, most notably *The Nature of the Judicial Process*, exerted a similar influence on the development of American jurisprudence. In 1932 President Herbert Hoover nominated Cardozo to replace Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. on the Supreme Court. To date, he is the only Jewish justice to have been appointed by a Republican president. Cardozo's appointment marked "one of the few times in our history that the most qualified candidate to fill a vacancy on the Supreme Court was the one actually picked for the vacancy" (Posner 1990). Cardozo was a pillar of the legal establishment, who was held in the highest regard by both academics and the corporate bar, and his appointment to the Court did not engender the antisemitic reaction that attended that of Brandeis fifteen years earlier. Perhaps Brandeis's earlier suspicion that a Jewish Wall Street lawyer would not have faced the same intensity of opposition was thereby confirmed.

Cardozo served on the Supreme Court during an especially contentious period, as key provisions of the New Deal were held unconstitutional by the court's conservative majority. Cardozo was troubled by the delegation of power to administrative agencies and concurred in the court's invalidation of the National Recovery Act. However, he generally voted to uphold governmental economic and social regulations, believing that courts should defer to congressional and state action in those areas, first in dissent as the majority of the Court struck down such measures, and then as part of the majority that coalesced in 1937 to validate New Deal initiatives on labor relations, Social Security, and interstate commerce. Cardozo also shaped the future development of the then nascent legal issue of the scope of federal constitutional protection for individual rights, contending that the Bill of Rights extended to rights that are "the essence of a scheme of ordered liberty" (*Palko v. Connecticut*). His opinions remain oft-cited models of legal prose, admired for their literary style as well as for their analytical power.

### **Felix Frankfurter (1882–1965)**

Frankfurter was born in Vienna and immigrated to the United States at age twelve. He graduated first in his class from Harvard Law School and embarked on a career as a nationally known—and to many, notorious—teacher, activist, and publicist, comparable only to that of his idol, Louis Brandeis. Beginning his professional career with a



United States Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter (1939–1962). (Bettmann/Corbis)

New York law firm, he left after a few years to serve as an assistant to U.S. Attorney Henry Stimson, moving to a position in the War Department after President William Howard Taft appointed Stimson secretary of war. Frankfurter joined the Harvard Law School faculty in 1913, but returned to Washington during World War I, where he served as counsel to the War Labor Policies Board and on the President's Mediation Commission. Here he established a working relationship with assistant secretary of the navy and future president Franklin D. Roosevelt.

After the war, Frankfurter resumed teaching at Harvard and thrust himself into a wide range of liberal causes. He opposed the deportation of radicals arrested in the Palmer Raids, argued on behalf of reform legislation in the Supreme Court, and wrote a stream of articles on current legal and constitutional issues. Most notably, he emerged as a vigorous defender of the anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti in the impassioned, but unsuccessful, campaign to block their executions.

At Harvard Law School, Frankfurter taught innovative classes on utilities regulation and administrative law, attracting a coterie of admiring, talented students. Cement-

ing his ties to Franklin Roosevelt, during the 1930s Frankfurter was a noteworthy "talent spotter" for the New Deal and placed a number of his protégés on the administration's proliferating "alphabet agencies" and the White House staff. Two of the most notable, Benjamin Cohen and Thomas Corcoran, were known as the Happy Hot Dogs in homage to their mentor. Frankfurter himself became a valued counselor to the president, proving his loyalty by working behind the scenes to support the "court packing" plan, despite his private misgivings. When Justice Cardozo died, Roosevelt appointed Frankfurter as his replacement.

With the passing of the Court's existing personnel, President Roosevelt began to shape a New Deal Court—and both those who feared the prospect and those who welcomed it expected Frankfurter to be its intellectual leader. However, as Frankfurter biographer H. N. Hirsch has written, "something went wrong. For the first time in his life, and much to his surprise, Frankfurter was faced with a situation in which he could not triumph, in which he could not overcome opposition to his policies and goals" (Hirsch 1981). To many, Frankfurter "was not as fine a judge as his pre-judicial career promised," falling short of the widely held expectation that he would be another Holmes or Brandeis—a failure that has attracted an amount of psychoanalytic conjecture unique in the annals of judicial biography (Posner 1990).

Formed in an era when courts regularly struck down social and economic reform legislation as unconstitutional extensions of the commerce power or as undue restrictions on the freedom to contract, Frankfurter's philosophy of judicial restraint left him at odds with a developing trend in liberal legal thought that looked to the courts to curb executive and legislative power when governmental action limited individual rights. Frankfurter generally upheld governmental efforts to combat domestic communism, although he did write a strong dissent to the court's opinion sanctioning the execution of the Rosenbergs. He opposed the application of the exclusionary rule in criminal prosecutions, thereby upholding the use at trial of evidence obtained by the police through searches and seizures that violated constitutional safeguards, and deferred to Congress and legislatures on reapportionment questions.

Frankfurter did, however, play a prominent role in what was perhaps the most important case decided during his time on the Court, *Brown v. Board of Education*. Although he did not write the Court's opinion, the decision

may count as his most significant accomplishment as a justice. Frankfurter labored persistently behind the scenes to forge what turned out to be the Court's unanimous 1954 decision declaring segregated educational facilities unconstitutional. Indeed, when Chief Justice Fred Vinson, who had been reluctant to depart from the "separate but equal" doctrine, suddenly died at a critical moment in the court's deliberations, the agnostic Frankfurter was moved to say that it was "the first solid piece of evidence I've ever had that there really is a God" (Elman 1987). The often criticized judicial craftsmanship of new Chief Justice Earl Warren's opinion may not have met the exacting standards of Professor Frankfurter, but Justice Frankfurter had largely orchestrated the result.

After suffering a disabling stroke in 1962, Frankfurter resigned from the Court. He died three years later.

### **Arthur J. Goldberg (1908–1990)**

Goldberg was born in Chicago on August 8. Earning a law degree from Northwestern University at twenty-one, Goldberg began his career at a corporate law firm but gravitated to the representation of labor unions in the new field of labor law. After service in the Office of Strategic Services in World War II, he became counsel to the United Steelworkers of America and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1948, playing a key role in the merger of the CIO and the American Federation of Labor in 1955. He served as secretary of labor under President John F. Kennedy, who appointed him to fill the "Jewish seat" on the Supreme Court vacated by Felix Frankfurter in 1962.

Breaking sharply with Frankfurter's philosophy of judicial restraint, Goldberg provided the crucial fifth vote to empower and expand the Warren Court's legal revolution, on issues ranging from legislative reapportionment to criminal procedure to privacy rights. But his tenure on the court was brief. Seeking to place his trusted confidant Abe Fortas on the Court, President Lyndon B. Johnson induced Goldberg to leave the Court and succeed Adlai Stevenson as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations in the summer of 1965. The president led Goldberg to believe that he could play a key role in negotiating an end to the escalating war in Vietnam. Johnson may have also held out the prospect that he could become the first Jewish vice presidential candidate or could return to the Court in the future.



*Arthur Goldberg, associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (1962–1965). (Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States)*

None of this came to pass. The Vietnam War continued to escalate; Goldberg's recommendations to the contrary were brushed aside, their only effect being the removal of any chance for a return to the Court under the angry president's auspices. He resigned as UN ambassador in 1968. Nominated as the Democratic candidate for governor of New York in 1970, he was defeated by Nelson Rockefeller. Goldberg spent the balance of his professional career in the private practice of law; in the late 1970s he also served as a roving ambassador in the Carter administration. He died in Washington, D.C., on January 19, 1990.

### **Abe Fortas (1910–1982)**

Born in Memphis, Tennessee, on June 19, 1910, Fortas was educated at that city's Southwestern College and at Yale Law School. In the 1930s, Fortas held legal positions at the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), forging a reputation as one of the most brilliant of the New Deal lawyers. He joined the Department of the Interior in 1939



Abe Fortas, associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (1965–1969). (Library of Congress)

and was named undersecretary in 1942. He entered private practice in Washington after World War II.

While in government service, Fortas became a friend and highly valued counselor to the ambitious Texas congressman Lyndon B. Johnson. Fortas successfully represented him in the court battle over the disputed outcome of the 1948 election that brought Johnson into the Senate. Fortas's law firm (Arnold, Fortas & Porter) combined corporate practice with the representation of targets of congressional investigations and security inquiries during the McCarthy era. The firm's pro bono litigation included Fortas's argument before the Supreme Court of the case (*Gideon v. Wainwright*) that established the defendant's right to counsel in state felony cases.

Intent on rewarding Fortas with an appointment to the Supreme Court, President Johnson maneuvered around Fortas's protestations of disinterest, as well as the more pointed objections of Fortas's wife (Carolyn Agger, a noted tax lawyer), to induce Arthur Goldberg to leave the Court, naming Fortas to replace him in the summer of 1965. Fortas followed in Goldberg's path as a key vote for the Warren Court's activist, individual rights-oriented ju-

risprudence and quickly established himself as a highly competent justice in his own right. Despite a tenure of less than four years on the Court, he has been rated a "near great" justice in surveys of scholarly opinion.

However, Fortas's work on the Court did not quell his restless interest in politics and policy—or dissuade Johnson from seeking his private counsel, and this proved to be a grievous misstep. Justice Fortas continued to advise Johnson on a wide range of extrajudicial matters, overstepping generally accepted bounds of proper judicial conduct. President Johnson nominated Fortas to succeed Earl Warren as Chief Justice in 1968. Conservative critics of the Warren Court filibustered the nomination. In a last-ditch effort to overcome the opposition, the justice's supporters highlighted his religious affiliation, attempting to brand Republican opponents as abettors of antisemitism who would face a backlash from Jewish voters. The "anti-antisemitism card" was defused by Jewish Republican senator Jacob Javits's statement that antisemitism was not an issue in the controversy, but after a motion to force an up-or-down vote failed, the nomination was withdrawn.

In spring 1969, charges of an improper financial relationship with a former client led to Fortas's resignation from the Supreme Court. The former justice returned to the private practice of law, but not at the firm he had founded, which refused to take him back. In March 1982 Fortas once again appeared in the Supreme Court, this time as a lawyer arguing a case. He won—but the unanimous decision in his client's favor was not announced until after his death on April 5, 1982.

### Ruth Bader Ginsburg (b. 1933)

Ginsburg was born in Brooklyn, New York, on March 15. She attended Cornell University and Harvard and Columbia Law Schools. After clerking for a New York federal judge, she was associated with the Columbia Law School Project on International Procedure and then taught at Rutgers and Columbia Law Schools. In the 1970s, she helped launch the Women's Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union and from 1973 to 1980 served as the ACLU's general counsel. In a series of precedent-setting gender equity lawsuits, she pursued an innovative legal strategy that successfully challenged the disparate treatment of men and women under various statutes by suing on behalf of men who claimed that they were being dis-



*Ruth Bader Ginsburg, associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (1993–). (Corbis)*

criminated against on account of *their* sex. In 1980 she was appointed to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. In 1993 President Bill Clinton nominated her to the Supreme Court. The second female justice in the Court's history, she was the Court's first Jewish justice since 1969.

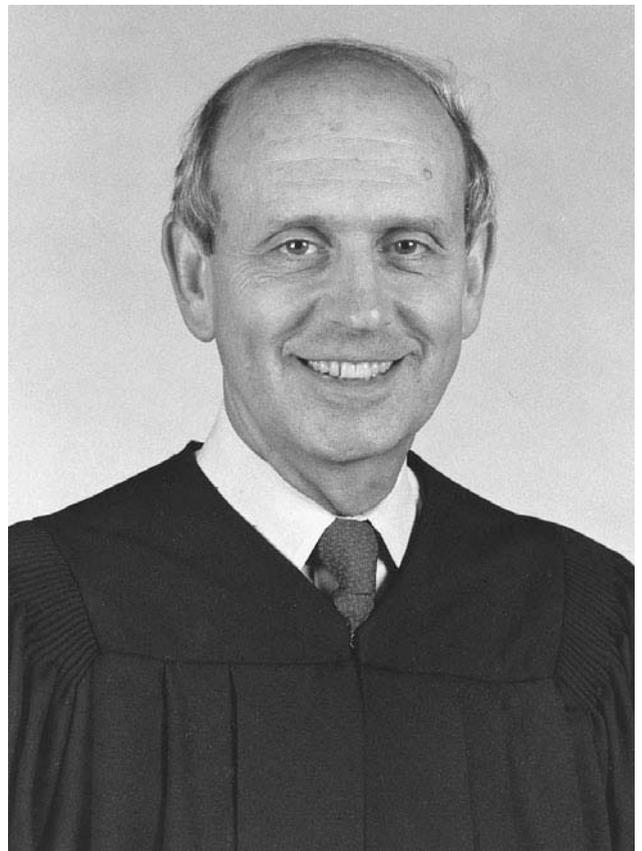
On a Court that was often sharply divided, Ginsburg established herself as one of the more liberal justices. Although she had earlier expressed doubts about the legal reasoning of the *Roe v. Wade* abortion rights decision, as a Justice she was stalwart in her defense of a woman's right to choose and staked out liberal positions on civil rights, women's rights (writing the opinion that ordered that women be admitted to Virginia Military Institute), the

scope of sexual harassment law, and the separation of church and state.

### **Stephen G. Breyer (b. 1938)**

Breyer was born to a prominent Jewish family in San Francisco on August 15, 1938. Educated at Stanford University and Harvard Law School, he was a law clerk to Supreme Court Justice Goldberg. His subsequent career included a position in the antitrust division of the Justice Department, teaching and writing at Harvard Law School, especially on governmental regulation, and service as a congressional committee counsel, all of which enhanced his reputation as a leading figure in administrative law. He was appointed to the First Circuit Court of Appeals in 1990, where he served as chief judge until his appointment to the Supreme Court in 1994.

President Clinton considered Judge Breyer for his first appointment to the Court in 1993, but passed him over after an unsuccessful interview. When another Court



*Stephen Breyer, associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (1994–). (Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States)*

vacancy occurred the next year, Breyer was selected, after Clinton abandoned his initial impulse to appoint a political figure with “real-world” experience. With a judicial record that combined a market-based analysis of economic issues with liberal views on social policy, and with service on the United States Sentencing Commission that had established tough guidelines for criminal sentences, Breyer’s nomination was calculated to provide the Court with a justice with impeccable academic and professional credentials who could be a “consensus builder,” in Clinton’s description.

True to expectations, Breyer has compiled a moderately liberal record on the Court. Frequently aligned with fellow Clinton appointee (and fellow former academic) Justice Ginsburg, he resisted the Rehnquist Court’s attempt to delimit the reach of federal governmental powers in favor of the states. Justice Breyer has, however, parted company with her on other occasions, most notably in the 2000 presidential election case, in which he, unlike Justice Ginsburg, voted with the majority in finding that the Florida recount process violated the Constitution’s equal protection clause, but then (along with Ginsburg and two other justices) dissented from the Court’s decision to terminate the recount process entirely.

## Jewish Lives

Louis Brandeis, the first Jew on the Supreme Court, came from the least observant background of any of the Jewish justices; yet he is the only one who played a leading role in the American—indeed, the world—Jewish community. If Brandeis’s quality and influence as a judge remain unmatched by his Jewish successors on the Court, the same is true of his contributions as a Jewish leader.

Brandeis’s parents emigrated to the United States from Prague in 1849 and settled in Louisville, Kentucky, a few years before Louis was born in 1856. Brandeis’s mother was a descendant of Jacob Frank, the eighteenth-century follower of the “false messiah” Sabbatai Zvi. She imparted to her son her rationalist worldview that eschewed the ritual aspects of traditional Judaism, while acknowledging that it had, in her words, “a lofty conception of morality” (Gal 1980). The Brandeis family was nonobservant. Brandeis received no religious instruction, did not have a bar mitzvah, and never practiced Jewish rituals. He first set foot inside a synagogue when he appeared at a Zionist con-

vention at the age of sixty. He exchanged Christmas presents with his relatives and did not observe the Jewish holidays. He first publicly affiliated with a Jewish organization in 1905, when he addressed a Jewish group in support of a progressive candidate in a local political campaign.

Thereafter, Brandeis’s ties to the Jewish community and to a network of Jewish social and legal reformers increased, drawing him toward the one great Jewish cause of his life: Zionism. His efforts to settle the New York garment workers’ strike in 1910 brought him into contact with East European Jewish immigrants, whom he had never before encountered, eliciting in him a newfound sense of kinship with his fellow Jews. In their commitment to collective action in pursuit of a better life, he recognized his own secular vision of a good society. He wrote, “I now saw the true democracy of my people, their idealistic inclinations and their love of liberty and freedom” (Urofsky 1981). Although not a religious nationalist, he found in Zionism the vehicle for creating in Palestine the egalitarian, democratic, cooperative society that could avoid the “curse of bigness” that he was battling in the United States.

In 1912, Brandeis formally joined the Federation of American Zionists. Two years later, he was elected chairman of the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs and assumed the leadership of the American Zionist movement, becoming its most prominent spokesman. After World War I, however, he clashed with world Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann over the stance Zionist organizations should assume toward Great Britain’s Palestine mandate. Brandeis argued that the time had come for the movement’s “propagandists” to yield to the “builders,” who would develop the infrastructure of Palestine in cooperation with the mandatory authority. Weizmann and his allies insisted that the realization of Zionism’s goals required continued political and organizational activity among Jews in the Diaspora. Brandeis and his American followers “were not in favour of diaspora nationalism and refused to pay for Zionist activities outside Palestine.” Weizmann and the European Zionists scorned Brandeis’s approach as “Zionism without Zionists” and claimed that the “American Zionists lacked a Jewish heart” (Laqueur 1972). Weizmann prevailed and Brandeis was ousted from the Zionist leadership.

Nevertheless, Brandeis remained an active elder statesman of American Zionism. He saw his allies recapture the leadership of the American Zionist movement in the 1930s

and assisted in the practical efforts required to build a Jewish homeland in Palestine. His last years “were spent reading, writing letters, motoring, talking with friends, and promoting Zionism” (Mason 1946).

The religious background of the Court’s second Jewish justice, Benjamin Cardozo, differed radically from that of Brandeis and sets him apart from the Jewish justices who followed him onto the Court as well. The only justice from a Sephardic family, Cardozo’s ancestors—allegedly, Portuguese *conversos* (converts) who fled the Inquisition—arrived in the American colonies from London a quarter century before the Revolution. Cardozo’s father was a synagogue officer, and Benjamin’s upbringing was Orthodox. Shortly after his bar mitzvah, however, Benjamin stopped attending synagogue services and later alluded to “the devastating years” that “obliterated youthful faiths” (Polenberg 1997).

Although he did not attend services, Cardozo remained a member of Shearith Israel—the synagogue of his grandparents—throughout his life (even speaking in favor of maintaining separate seating for men and women in a congregational debate on the issue), and he continued to maintain a kosher home. Indeed, Cardozo’s ties to Shearith Israel proved crucial in launching his judicial career. In 1913, the Fusion Party ticket makers nominated Cardozo for a judgeship on the New York Supreme Court. Seeking a religiously balanced slate, they chose Cardozo, a supporter explained, because his rival “is a Felix Adler [the founder of Ethical Culture] Jew, a Modernist. The man you want is a *real* Jew. I’ll tell you the man, Cardozo. He is [in] the Portuguese Synagogue” (Kaufman 1998).

Apart from his ties to his family’s synagogue, until he became a judge Cardozo had eschewed involvement in Jewish community affairs. In the 1920s, however, he joined the American Jewish Committee (AJCommittee), serving on its executive committee, the board of the American Friends of Hebrew University, and the Jewish Welfare Board, although his participation was limited. Cardozo was not a community leader. Although privately appreciative of the efforts of Jews in the forefront of the struggle against antisemitism, he avoided public comment on antisemitic incidents and joined the Century Club, despite the antisemitism of many of its members. Determined to avoid any appearance of judicial impropriety, he was especially concerned that the actions of a Jewish judge not be construed as placing religious loyalty over legal standards,

and privately he criticized a Jewish magistrate who inserted anti-Nazi political beliefs in an opinion.

Cardozo was notably wary about Zionism, viewing it as a cause with primary appeal to recently arrived East European Jews. In 1916, he rebuffed a plea for support from an American Zionist leader, saying he did not “see how it would help me walking up Fifth Avenue in New York if there were a Jewish state in Palestine” (Kaufman 1998). Within a few years, under the importuning of Justice Brandeis and the prominent rabbi Stephen Wise, Cardozo agreed to affiliate with the Zionist Organization of America, albeit halfheartedly, writing, “I am not yet an enthusiast. But to-day, the line seems to be forming between those who are for the cause and those who are against, with little room for a third camp. I am not willing to join those who are against, so I go over to the others” (Kaufman 1998). But even Cardozo’s limited involvement in Jewish communal affairs ended with his appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1932.

Unlike Cardozo, whose family had lived in New York since the eighteenth century, Felix Frankfurter, his successor on the Court, was an immigrant, who arrived in New York at age twelve. Although he “never had heard a word of English spoken,” Frankfurter assimilated rapidly. Raised as a practicing Jew, he abandoned religious ritual while a junior at City College, leaving the Yom Kippur service “in the middle of it, never to return” (Burt 1988). Awed at first by the august atmosphere of Harvard Law School—where, the diminutive Frankfurter recalled, “everyone was taller”—he compiled an outstanding academic record and ingratiated himself with leading figures of the legal establishment. Despite this, he found it difficult to gain employment with New York’s major law firms, since they generally excluded Jews. Of the firm that finally hired him, he said, “I’d heard that they had never taken a Jew and wouldn’t take a Jew. I decided that was the office I wanted to get into,” although he rejected the hiring partner’s advice that he change his name (Lash 1975).

Frankfurter never denied his Jewishness but associated Jewishness with the immigrant milieu of his childhood. Thus, it was something to move beyond. “To become a full-fledged American,” one biographer has argued, “Frankfurter had to separate himself from his immigrant past” (Burt 1988). The once poor boy from the Lower East Side was strongly attracted to the Boston Brahmin lifestyle of a Harvard faculty member. He married the daughter of a

Congregational minister and was proud of her “old Yankee stock” (Burt 1988). His engagement in Jewish causes was rare. Although he did challenge Harvard president A. Lawrence Lowell’s imposition of a quota on Jewish enrollment, it was more as an affront to meritocratic values than an expression of religious prejudice. His favorite protégés at Harvard Law School were generally non-Jews. He became involved in Zionist activities in support of Brandeis’s efforts, but his interest waned after Brandeis’s death, although he did press the Zionist cause in private conversations with British officials during World War II.

Throughout his adult life, Frankfurter did not practice the Jewish faith and was unaffiliated with the Jewish community, but in planning his funeral he took care to include as a speaker a colleague whom he described as “my only close friend who is also a practicing, orthodox Jew. He . . . will know exactly what to say. I came into the world a Jew and although I did not live my life entirely as a Jew, I think it fitting that I should leave as a Jew” (Lash 1975).

The backgrounds of Brandeis, Cardozo, and Frankfurter were, albeit in different ways, unrepresentative of the broader American Jewish community as it coalesced in the first decades of the twentieth century; by contrast, those of Abe Fortas and Arthur Goldberg were entirely characteristic. Unlike their Jewish predecessors, their parents had come to the United States in the great wave of post-1881 immigration from East Europe. Both grew away from the traditional religious practices that characterized their upbringing; both saw their professional choices constrained by antisemitism, and both came to terms with Judaism as adults in representative ways.

Abe Fortas studied Hebrew and was bar mitzvahed, but, although his mother kept a kosher home, the family was not very religious and attended synagogue only on the High Holidays. One biographer concluded that “he always identified himself as a Jew, but he viewed his religion as a handicap to disclose rather than a heritage to claim”; he complained that he had “suffered disadvantages and discrimination” because he was a Jew (Kalman 1990). Conscious of being an outsider as a youth in Memphis, Fortas encountered at Yale Law School an environment where, despite their academic successes, Jews were excluded from social organizations and even a tolerant faculty member assured prospective employers that a Jewish student “had no traces of those characteristics which one associates with Hebrews” (Kalman 1990).

In adult life, Judaism as a religion held little appeal to him, but he became more sensitive to Jewish community concerns after he was appointed to the Court. He stayed home on Yom Kippur, spoke to Jewish groups more frequently, and served as an intermediary between American Jewish organizations and the White House. During the Six Day War, Fortas provided an important “back channel” between the Israeli Embassy and President Johnson, evidencing a concern for the Jewish state that was, arguably, inconsistent with proper standards of judicial behavior.

Arthur Goldberg, the son of a struggling produce peddler who died when Arthur was eight, grew up in the impoverished immigrant milieu of Chicago’s Maxwell Street neighborhood, “schooled from childhood in rock-throwing self-defense against Jew-hating Poles and Irish who waylaid him en route to school” (Stebenne 1996). Education was Goldberg’s route to a better life. He graduated from Northwestern Law School with the best record in its history and was admitted to practice at the age of twenty-one. Despite his accomplishments, his employment opportunities were limited. Jews were barred from Chicago’s most prominent law firms, and Goldberg accepted a job at a less prestigious firm that had been founded by German Jews. Within a few years, he left corporate practice altogether for labor law, where he established the reputation that would carry him to the cabinet and the Supreme Court.

Goldberg made a point of saying, “I’m proud of my Jewish heritage, I don’t like any American who’s not proud of his heritage” (Lowe 1994). He compiled a strong record of Jewish organizational leadership, including service as president of the AJCommittee, chairman of the board of overseers of Jewish Theological Seminary, and president of the International Association of Jewish Lawyers. As head of the American delegation to the first Helsinki Accords review conference in 1977–1978, he pressed the Soviet Union on the issue of Jewish immigration. A less successful venture was his chairmanship in the early 1980s of the American Jewish Commission on the Holocaust, which, “despite its grandiose title, had no mandate from any responsible institution” and dissolved in an acrimonious controversy over what critics regarded as its draft report’s “undocumented charges against the Jewish community” for allegedly failing to assist European Jewry (Kozodoy 1992).

The current Jewish justices exemplify the variegated threads of the contemporary American Jewish experi-

ence. If Fortas and Goldberg were the children of the great wave of Jewish immigration to the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer are its grandchildren. Growing up in more assimilated, although still Jewish, milieus, neither endured the economic hardships or religious discrimination that Fortas and Goldberg overcame in their paths to the bench. Both were educated at elite universities and law schools, and antisemitic prejudices never impeded their careers, inside or outside academia. “Jews in the United States,” Justice Ginsburg has said, “face few closed doors and do not fear letting the world know who we are” (Ginsburg 2002). After finishing law school, Breyer served as a law clerk to Arthur Goldberg, but Ginsburg found her clerkship aspirations frustrated by Felix Frankfurter’s unwillingness to hire a female law clerk, despite her outstanding law school record—an experience that prefigured her life’s work as a pioneering women’s rights attorney. Each found inspiration in the example set by the Court’s first Jewish justice, but each expressed the sentiment differently. When honored with the University of Louisville’s Brandeis Medal, Justice Ginsburg devoted her address to a highly personal appraisal of the status of Jews in the law from the time of Judah Benjamin to the present; Breyer, to an academic exposition of the enduring relevance of Brandeis’s mode of jurisprudence (Ginsburg 2002; Breyer 2004).

Justices Ginsburg and Breyer have both lived lives that testify to American Jewry’s newly found sense of acceptance. Ginsburg is the most conspicuously Jewish of any justice since Brandeis. She speaks regularly to Jewish audiences and has affixed a mezuzah to the doorpost of her court office, which is adorned with plaques and mementos bearing the biblical quotation “*Tzedek, tzedek tirdof*” (“Justice, justice shall you pursue”). Charting the progress of American Jewry in personal terms, Justice Ginsburg wrote, “what is the difference between a New York City garment district bookkeeper and a Supreme Court Justice? One generation, my life bears witness: the opportunities open to my mother, a bookkeeper, and those open to me” (Ginsburg 2003).

Justice Breyer’s life provides an equally telling index of American Jewish adaptation. Breyer married into the British aristocracy, attended the Episcopal Church with his family (a daughter studied for the ministry and became an Episcopal priest), and was unaffiliated with the organized

Jewish community, but began holding seders on Passover and attending High Holiday services later in his life.

### Jewish Seat, Jewish Justice?

According to a venerable, although perhaps apocryphal, tradition, the first Jew considered for appointment to the Supreme Court was Judah Benjamin of Louisiana, who declined an offer from either President Millard Fillmore or Franklin Pierce in early 1853, and instead entered the U.S. Senate. If an offer was made (there is apparently no contemporary documentation confirming it), it certainly was not made to fill a “Jewish seat” on the court. Nor was Woodrow Wilson filling a Jewish seat when Louis Brandeis became the first Jewish justice six decades later. Brandeis’s appointment was due to his standing as the country’s most renowned progressive lawyer and the valuable services he had rendered Wilson’s administration. That Brandeis was Jewish did not figure significantly in the decision. Similarly, Benjamin Cardozo owed his nomination to his reputation as the country’s outstanding jurist, not to his religious affiliation. It was only when Cardozo’s tenure ended with his sudden death in 1938 that the concept of a Jewish seat took hold in the high court appointment process.

By then, Jews had become a key constituent of Roosevelt’s emerging New Deal coalition, particularly in eastern and midwestern states, where Jewish votes could decide closely contested elections. Jewish lawyers played important roles in the administrative agencies established to combat the Depression. Abe Fortas served his legal apprenticeship in the AAA and SEC; Arthur Goldberg made his mark as counsel to labor unions contending with the new legal structure for labor relations introduced by the Wagner Act. Elite law schools produced a stream of Jewish graduates with impeccable academic credentials, who were beginning to find prestigious places on law school faculties. At a time when a “black seat” or “woman’s seat” lay beyond the political imagination, the idea of a Jewish seat took hold, with a supply of highly qualified candidates at hand. It was a way of recognizing the “Jewish” contribution to the New Deal, both as voters and lawyers, and it marked the Depression-era Democratic Party’s openness to immigrant communities previously excluded from the councils of state.

Although Cardozo served on the Court while Brandeis was still on the bench, with the subsequent appointments

of Frankfurter, Goldberg, and Fortas, one Jewish justice filled a seat vacated by another. When Frankfurter stepped down in 1962, President Kennedy and Attorney General Robert Kennedy expressly discussed the “necessity of replacing Frankfurter with a Jew,” and noted that “the various Jewish organizations would be upset if this appointment did not go to a person of the Jewish faith” (Schlesinger 1978). These appointments reflected both the rise of Jews in the larger legal community and the major role they played as legal crafters of the New Deal, at a time when government service provided opportunities not available in the large law firms, which still generally excluded Jews. The bond between Jewish lawyers and the Democratic Party was therefore particularly close, and during the era of the Jewish seat all Jewish court appointees were named by Democratic presidents. That tradition ended in 1969 when Republican president Richard M. Nixon attempted to fill Fortas’s seat with a justice from the southern states, which he hoped to meld into an “emerging Republican majority” coalition. After his initial two southern nominees were not confirmed, he named Harry Blackmun to the seat, leaving the Court without a Jewish justice for the first time in over half a century.

In the subsequent two decades, there was one prospective Jewish justice. Federal appeals court judge Douglas Ginsburg was nominated by President Reagan in 1987, but Judge Ginsburg withdrew from consideration after his marijuana use while a law professor was reported. By then, the tradition of a Jewish seat had been eclipsed by new concerns that women and African Americans should be represented on the court. Nor was the tradition restored when President Bill Clinton appointed Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer to fill the two vacancies that arose during his term. Neither was viewed as a representative of the Jewish community. Their religion apparently did not enter into the nomination decision, nor did the media give it much attention, although it marked the first time that a president had appointed two Jews to the Court. “No one saw us as filling a Jewish seat,” Justice Ginsburg has said, contending that “our religion simply was not relevant to President Clinton’s appointments” (Ginsburg 2002).

By the time Justices Ginsburg and Breyer were appointed, there had been a shift in the background of lawyers considered for the Court, a transformation reflected in the contrast between their career paths and those of their Jewish predecessors. The time when presidents

looked to Congress (Alabama senator Hugo Black), the statehouse (California governor Earl Warren), or the cabinet (Secretary of State John Marshall) for nominees with independent political standing and prestige had passed. To date, Arthur Goldberg is the last cabinet member named to the high court. With one exception, each justice nominated by all presidents since Nixon has been a sitting judge on a federal appeals court or, in O’Connor’s case, a state supreme court. There was no repetition of Lyndon Johnson’s selection of his confidant and counselor, Abe Fortas, until Harriet Miers’s nomination in 2005.

In the two decades since Fortas left the bench under fire, the Court appointment pool has been professionalized, consisting almost entirely of candidates with proven judicial track records, but without constituencies of their own outside the legal profession. Even as the demographic composition of the Court has become more inclusive, the recruitment path for prospective justices has narrowed. Justices Ginsburg and Breyer fit comfortably within this trend. Both were federal appeals court judges when nominated. Both had compiled distinguished academic records at an elite law school, but neither was a public personality of note. Highly respected legal professionals, neither was the kind of political player who had regularly sat on the Court from its creation through the 1960s. Neither claimed the stature that Brandeis or Frankfurter attained through years of highly publicized legal and political activism before appointment to the high court bench, nor the singular distinction of being the nation’s preeminent jurist that had impelled Cardozo’s selection. The nomination of a sitting judge, even one as distinguished as Cardozo, was relatively uncommon in his time. Now it is the norm. Justices Ginsburg and Breyer earned their way to the Court as skilled professionals in an age of professionalism.

Given the prominent place that Jews hold in a legal profession shorn of the prejudices that once restricted their opportunities, the demise of the Jewish seat as a political set-aside may actually enhance the prospects for future Jewish appointments to the Court. Reserving *one* seat for a Jewish justice imposed an implicit ceiling on the number of such appointments. President Johnson evidently believed that the appointment of his longtime confidant Abe Fortas to the Court would be more acceptable if Justice Goldberg could be induced to resign. The concurrent service of Justices Ginsburg and Breyer, by contrast, reflects the readiness of a president to make such appointments un-

constrained by an implicit quota. In addition, the emergence of a cadre of conservative Jewish lawyers and judges increases the likelihood that future appointments will be by Republican, as well as Democratic, presidents, as President Ronald Reagan's nomination of Douglas Ginsburg suggested.

In assessing the significance of the Jewish presence on the Supreme Court to American Jewish history, it is notable that, unlike Thurgood Marshall, whose route to the Court reflected his status as the leading legal strategist of the civil rights revolution, none of the Jewish justices was appointed as a result of his or her involvement in Jewish causes. Brandeis's recent embrace of Zionism did not play a role in his appointment. Although Ruth Bader Ginsburg is known as the "Thurgood Marshall of gender-equity law," she gained this reputation through her efforts on behalf of women's causes, not Jewish ones. Indeed, apart from Brandeis, who played an important role in the Zionist movement, none of the Jewish justices would merit a place in a history of American Jewry were it not for their service on the Court.

Many have suggested that the Jewish justices brought a particular perspective to the Court, derived from their common heritage and reflected in their commitment to individual rights and the eradication of injustice. Arthur Goldberg explained, "my concern for justice, for peace, for enlightenment, all stem from my heritage" (Lowe 1994). Justice Ginsburg described the "law as protector of the oppressed, the poor, the minority, the loner," a view she found "evident in the life body of work of Justice Brandeis, as it is in the legacies of Justices Cardozo, Frankfurter, Goldberg, and Fortas, the remaining four of the first five Jewish Justices" (Ginsburg 2002). She explained, "I am a judge, born, raised and proud of being a Jew. The demand for justice runs through the entirety of the Jewish history and Jewish tradition. I hope . . . to remain steadfast in the service of that demand" (Ginsburg 2002).

For Goldberg and Ginsburg, these impulses found primary expression in the labor movement (Goldberg) and the women's movement (Ginsburg), not in Jewish causes. Moreover, a sense of Jewish identity and heritage has been reflected in judicial decision-making in more varied and complex ways than these views allow. This can be seen in the best-known, and most passionate, evocation of Jewish heritage by a justice, Frankfurter's dissent in the 1943 flag salute case, *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Bar-*

*nette*. Here the Court reversed a 1940 decision (written by Frankfurter) that had upheld the mandatory pledge of allegiance and flag salute in public schools. In an extraordinarily emotional preface to his argument in support of the constitutionality of the mandatory pledge, Frankfurter took pains to say that "one who belongs to the most vilified and persecuted minority in history is not likely to be insensible to the freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution." If, as a familiar legal maxim holds, general principles do not decide specific cases, neither does the Jewishness of the judge.

Clearly, the Jewish justices have derived different life lessons from their common Jewish heritage. Robert A. Burt argues that, although Brandeis and Frankfurter shared a perception that as Jews they were "outcasts in a promised land," they "drew diametrically opposed lessons" from that experience. Brandeis "acknowledged a basic identity with outcasts" that he carried into his work on the Court, and "embraced homelessness as his heritage and drew strength from it." By contrast, "to become a full-fledged American . . . Frankfurter had to separate himself from his immigrant past," becoming an "overeager apologist for the existing order." He "struggled against acknowledging his outcast status . . . and he always remained homeless in spite of himself" (Burt 1988).

Still, one must be wary in ascribing too much weight to a Jewish component in the judicial philosophies of the Jewish justices. Justice Brandeis, the embodiment of the judge as prophet—referred to as "Isaiah" by Franklin Roosevelt—and the author of notable free speech opinions, was also a notable exponent of the virtues of judicial "abstention." "The most important thing we do," he wrote, "is not doing." Similarly, he was the architect of the doctrine—reversing a century of practice—that federal courts were bound by state court rulings in cases arising under state law and were not free to fashion "general federal common law" in such cases. And the doctrine of judicial restraint became a hallmark of Frankfurter's increasingly conservative tenure on the court. But his replacements in the "Jewish seat," Goldberg and then Fortas, fully embraced and helped shape the work of the Warren Court toward a more activist role for the courts. Such contrasting views invite caution in drawing sweeping conclusions about the influence of a Jewish heritage on the judicial philosophy of the Jewish justices or on what "the demand for justice" may mean in any particular case.

The extent to which a common religious or ethnic identity influenced the judicial philosophies of the Supreme Court's Jewish justices may be debatable, but the intellectual distinction of their work on the Court is not. Perhaps no one has recognized this more plainly than Nebraska senator Roman Hruska. In a memorable defense of Richard Nixon's unsuccessful nomination of G. Harrold Carswell to the Supreme Court, Senator Hruska pleaded that "there are a lot of mediocre people who deserve some representation. . . . They can't all be Brandeises and Cardozos and that stuff." Whatever else might be said of them, none of the Jewish justices of the Supreme Court have been mediocre.

Henry D. Fetter

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# American Jews and Crime

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## American Jewish Gangsters

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Crime and gangsterism form part of the Jewish experience in the United States, and ignoring it presents a distorted and incomplete picture of the American Jewish experience. From their earliest settlement in America, Jews enjoyed the reputation of being among the nation's most law-abiding and least violent citizens. "If we enter a penitentiary or prison of any description," observed one nineteenth-century newspaper editor, "the marked face of an Israelite is rarely to be seen within its walls" (Joselit 1983). By the end of the nineteenth century the situation had changed, and Jewish names increasingly appeared on police blotters in the large urban centers. For the most part, these Jewish criminals worked as confidence men, pickpockets, and thieves, rarely engaging in crimes of violence and murder.

By World War I this, too, had changed. During the period 1881–1914, over 2 million Jews from Eastern Europe entered the United States, most of them crowding into the ethnic enclaves of the great cities of the East Coast and Midwest. Boston's North End, Chicago's West Side, Philadelphia's South Side, and especially New York's Lower East Side were among the better-known. Densely populated, filthy, and disease-ridden, these districts proved to be breeding grounds for Jewish gangs whose members were more vicious and violent than their nineteenth-century predecessors. While Jewish gangs had existed before 1914,

the Prohibition Era (1919–1933) spawned large, powerful crime syndicates, led by Jewish criminals such as Louis "Lepke" Buchalter, Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, Meyer "The Little Man" Lansky, Max "Boo Boo" Hoff, Charley "King" Solomon, Moe Dalitz, and Abner "Longy" Zwillman. Between the World Wars, these men, together with their Italian-American associates, organized American crime, making it large, powerful, and deadly. Yet these men had no successors. When they left the scene, the heyday of the Jewish gangster ended.

In 1908, New York police commissioner Theodore Bingham created a sensation when he publicly declared that Jews constituted half of the New York underworld. Until then, Jewish criminality rarely made the newspapers. Jewish criminals may not have been as numerous as Bingham claimed, but Jewish and non-Jewish observers reported that the Jewish neighborhoods of Manhattan's Lower East Side contained hundreds of brothels, saloons, gambling parlors, and gang hangouts.

At the time, the Lower East Side was the most notorious breeding ground for Jewish gangs and gangsters. Over 550,000 Jews lived within its 1.5 square miles, making it one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Immigrant poverty, the trauma of transition from the Old World to the New, and the loss of family and religious structure created conditions that produced men like Joseph "Yoski Nigger" Toblinsky, Dopey Benny Fein, Monk

Eastman, Big Jack Zelig, and hundreds of ruffians, arsonists, thieves, and killers like them. In those days, the major part of the gangsters' incomes came from providing muscle for pimps and gamblers, from their ability to deliver votes to political bosses during elections, and through assorted protection rackets.

Yoski Nigger led a gang that specialized in stealing and poisoning horses. The gang modeled itself on the Italian Black Hand, a loosely run extortion racket practiced in the Little Italy sections of many American cities. Calling themselves the Yiddish Black Hand, Yoski's outfit wrote letters to stablemen or businessmen whose companies used horses. They demanded a certain sum of money to insure the horses from unforeseen "accidents." If the victim refused to comply, his horse would disappear or be poisoned. If he complained to the authorities, he risked bodily harm. Yoski boasted of personally poisoning over two hundred horses.

Benjamin Fein acquired the nickname Dopey because adenoidal and nasal troubles from infancy gave him a sleepy appearance. At the age of sixteen, he commanded one of the toughest gangs of strong-arm men on the Lower East Side. Benny was the first Jewish gangster to make labor racketeering a full-time and profitable business. He institutionalized the practice of supplying gangs of hoodlums to unions in their wars against employers. Using bats, clubs, and blackjacks, but not guns, Dopey Benny's gang protected striking workers from being attacked by management's hired thugs. Throughout his criminal career, Benny remained loyal to the unions and refused to work for the bosses. "My heart," he once explained, "lay with the workers" (Rockaway 2000).

As tough as Yoski and Benny may have been, the most dominant Jewish gangsters of the pre-1914 era were Monk Eastman (born Edward Osterman) and Big Jack Zelig. Monk stood only five feet five inches tall, but he made a ferocious appearance with a bullet-shaped head, broken nose, bull neck, cauliflower ears, heavily veined, sagging jowls, and a face pockmarked with battle scars. Bossing a gang that included as many as a thousand gangsters, Eastman controlled most of the crime on the Lower East Side, engaging in robberies, burglaries, assaults, muggings, and murder for pay. Eastman's supremacy led to his being branded as the first major Jewish gangster in American history.

In 1904 Eastman received a jail sentence of ten years for robbery and assault. In his absence his gang disinte-

grated and other mobsters stepped in to take his place. The most successful of these was William Albert, better known as Big Jack Zelig, a master pickpocket turned gunman. He revived the Eastman gang, expanded its operations, and offered clients a fixed rate for services performed. A Zelig associate once gave the police Big Jack's price list:

Slash on cheek with knife	\$1 to \$10
Shot in leg	\$1 to \$25
Shot in arm	\$5 to \$25
Throwing a bomb	\$5 to \$50
Murder	\$10 to \$100

New York remained the largest preserve of Jewish criminals and criminal gangs, but Jewish criminality and gang activity also existed in the teeming Jewish quarters of Boston, Philadelphia, Newark, Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago. In all these places, Jewish criminals engaged in burglary, prostitution, dealing in stolen goods, labor racketeering, and extortion. Jewish criminals also perpetrated rapes, assaults, and murder. However, crimes of violence accounted for a small portion of Jewish criminal activity before World War I. Throughout this period, Jewish criminals remained part of the Jewish community, with their primary victims being Jews.

The Yiddish press, especially in New York, regularly published lurid stories of Jewish criminal activity, while the country's English-Jewish press kept silent. Non-Jews may not have known Yiddish, but they could read English. The editors of the English-language Jewish newspapers worried that publicizing the problem of Jewish criminality would provide ammunition for Jew-haters and lead to increased antisemitism. Consequently they maintained a code of silence. Years later, Philip Slo-movitz, a prominent Jewish publisher and editor, regretted their doing so. "We panicked," he admitted. "We worried about what the gentiles would say and submitted to our fears" (Rockaway 2000).

As first- and second-generation Americans who grew up in a Jewish environment, members of the Jewish underworld spoke Yiddish among themselves. Their numbers and prominence in the criminal underworld led to slang criminal expressions in Yiddish entering the lexicon of underworld slang: *schmeer* (bribe), *schmek* (narcotics), *shmeikel* (to swindle), *kosher* (reliable), and *yentzer* (swindler).

Notwithstanding the notoriety of the era's Jewish mobsters, the heyday of the Jewish gangster occurred after World War I. In 1919 three-fourths of the states ratified the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which forbade the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors for drinking purposes. Congress then passed the Volstead Act to enforce the amendment, making the federal government responsible for keeping the nation dry. The ban on alcohol went into effect in 1920, and from then on it seemed that every American over the age of twelve had to have a drink. In response to this great national thirst, 200,000 unlicensed saloons, euphemistically called speakeasies and blind pigs, sprung up across the United States. Large bootlegging organizations, led by tough, ruthless, lawbreaking sons of Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants, sprang up to service them and made huge amounts of money. Income from the illegal liquor industry ran into the hundreds of millions of dollars annually. In Detroit, the smuggling, manufacturing, and distributing of illegal liquor became the city's second-largest industry, exceeded only by automobile production.

Although Jews made up less than 4 percent of the nation's population, during Prohibition, 50 percent of the nation's leading bootleggers were Jews, and Jews and Jewish gangs bossed the rackets in some of America's largest cities. New York, with some 1.7 million Jews (more than 40 percent of the nation's Jewish population), contained the greatest number of Jewish gangsters. However, the most famous Jewish underworld figure of the 1920s was not a gangster but a professional gambler and New York man about town named Arnold Rothstein. Referred to by the press as "The Czar of the Underworld" and "The Brain," Rothstein achieved nationwide and everlasting notoriety for allegedly fixing the 1919 baseball World Series between the Chicago White Sox and Cincinnati Reds. Rothstein's fame was such that F. Scott Fitzgerald modeled the character Meyer Wolfsheim in *The Great Gatsby* after him.

Historians credit Rothstein with transforming American crime from a poorly organized activity into big business. Rothstein laid the foundation for the enormous profits of Prohibition by creating an organization to buy high-quality liquor by the shipload in England and distribute it to buyers in the United States. To assist him in this enterprise, Rothstein assembled a group of tough young Jewish and Italian hoodlums, including Meyer Lansky, Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, Arthur "Dutch Schultz" Flegen-

heimer, Abner "Longy" Zwillman, Louis "Lepke" Buchalter, Charley "Lucky" Luciano, Vito Genovese, and Carlo Gambino. These men would later have a historic impact on organized crime in the United States. Rothstein next turned his attention to narcotics smuggling, which, until he became involved, had been unorganized. Rothstein converted the racket into a businesslike machine by sending buyers to Europe and the Far East and by controlling the purchasing operation in the United States. By 1926, Rothstein was allegedly the financial overlord of the foreign narcotics traffic in America.

Rothstein's career in crime came to an inglorious end in 1928, when he was shot and killed in a card game. After his death, Rothstein's Jewish protégés took control of a number of his criminal enterprises. Bootlegging became the province of Waxey Gordon, Dutch Schultz, and the Bugsy Siegel and Meyer Lansky combine, known as the Bugs-Meyer Mob, while the labor racketeer Lepke Buchalter continued the narcotics traffic.

Rothstein's legacy persevered in the sense that he had taught his charges that the dollar had one nationality and one religion: profit. His heirs retained the good business sense of forming alliances, regardless of ethnic considerations, not only with underworld accomplices but also with those who could handle the political fix. Consequently, Jewish mobsters cooperated with their Italian counterparts, including Charley "Lucky" Luciano and Frank Costello. Later these same men would create what came to be called the National Crime Syndicate.

Outside of New York, Jewish mobsters and Jewish gangs also dominated the rackets in a number of the nation's largest cities well into the 1930s. Across the river from New York, Abner "Longy" Zwillman, often referred to as the Al Capone of New Jersey, dominated criminal activity in Newark and its suburbs and influenced the city's police, judges, and politicians. Max Hoff and his Jewish syndicate controlled bootlegging, crime, and vice in Philadelphia, and they allegedly bought more machine guns than the city's police force. Charles "King" Solomon, alias Boston Charley, controlled bootlegging in Boston and headed one of the largest liquor, vice, and narcotics smuggling syndicates in New England. The Cleveland Four—Morris "Moe" Dalitz, Morris Kleinman, Sam Tucker, and Louis Rothkopf—bossed bootlegging and gambling in Cleveland. This syndicate coexisted with the Cleveland Mafia, led by Big Al Polizzi and his Mayfield Road gang.

Relations between the Jewish and Italian group remained cordial for many years. Detroit's all-Jewish Purple Gang, reputed to be more violent than Chicago's Capone gang, ruled the Motor City's bootlegging, gambling, prostitution, and extortion rackets. In Minneapolis, Isidore "Kid Cann" Bloomenfeld, identified by the FBI as the overlord of Minnesota, together with his brothers Harry and Yiddy Bloom, managed most of that city's illicit business. Across the river in St. Paul, Leon Gleckman and his syndicate controlled bootlegging and sundry other rackets.

A portrait of the era's Jewish mobster would show that he was descended from immigrant Eastern European Jews, primarily Polish or Russian, who had come to the United States in the great immigration wave of 1881–1914. He was born in the United States or came as a small child. For all intents and purposes, gangsters were second-generation Americans. While some grew up very poor, most of them came from working-class homes where parents provided the basic necessities to their children. A few of the men, such as Monk Eastman, Arnold Rothstein, and Charley Solomon, came from upper-middle-class and even wealthy homes. Most of the boys grew up in traditional rather than strictly Orthodox Jewish homes. That is, the parents observed some religious customs, such as lighting the Sabbath candles, keeping a kosher home, and attending High Holiday services.

Whether out of superstition, to honor their parents, or from habit, a number of the gangsters maintained some attachment to Jewish traditions. They practiced a kind of folk Judaism—going to their parents' home for the Friday evening Sabbath meal or attending synagogue services on the Jewish New Year and Day of Atonement. In one rare case, a gangster was a practicing Orthodox Jew. His name was Sam "Red" Levine, and he had been born in Toledo, Ohio. Red was an accomplished professional killer, a man Lucky Luciano called "the best driver and hit-man I had" (Rockaway 2000). As an Orthodox Jew, Red conscientiously observed the biblical commandment of not working on the Sabbath. He always refused to murder anyone from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. But if he had no choice and could not avoid doing the job on Saturday, Red would first put a prayer shawl over his shoulders, say his prayers, and then carry out the killing.

Most of the gangsters did not finish high school, and they were generally the only son in the family to pursue a

life of crime. Nonetheless, there were exceptions, such as the Amberg and Shapiro brothers in New York, the Bernstein and Fleisher brothers in Detroit, the Bloom brothers in Minneapolis, and the Miller brothers in Chicago.

The activities of these men included bootlegging, extortion, narcotics, prostitution, and murder, especially contract killing. The most famous group of contract killers was a Brooklyn-based gang of Jewish hoodlums led by Abe "Kid Twist" Reles and his friends Harry "Pittsburgh Phil" Strauss, Abraham "Pretty" Levine, Martin "Bugsy" Goldstein, and Irving "Knadles" Nitzberg. These men worked together with an Italian mob led by Harry "Happy" Maione and Frank "Dasher" Abbando. The New York press dubbed this outfit of killers for hire Murder, Inc. The Jewish members of this gang used as their "office" a candy store located under the elevated tracks at the corner of Saratoga and Livonia Avenues in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn. Owned by a woman named Rose, who kept the place open twenty-four hours a day, the store became known as Midnight Rose's. Local wits claimed that more individual murders were planned in the store than at any other spot on earth.

Lepke Buchalter and other national crime bosses allegedly created this troop of killers during the 1930s as an enforcement arm to maintain order in their ranks and to carry out homicides on assignment. Using ice picks, bludgeons, cleavers, garrotes, knives, and guns, and earning from \$125 to \$250 per week, these men worked primarily as hired assassins for their initiators. New York police estimated that Murder, Inc. committed from four hundred to five hundred murders at the behest of the bosses. According to the rules, Murder, Inc. killed only for "business" reasons and was never to be used against political figures, prosecutors, or newspaper reporters. The feeling was that killing these "civilians" would create a public stir and a demand for governmental action that would be bad for business.

What motivated these men and other Jewish mobsters to engage in criminal and even murderous activities? Meyer Lansky and Longy Zwillman said they did what they did because they grew up poor and never wanted to endure poverty again. Yet some criminals were raised in comfortable circumstances, and these gangsters were no more deprived than their peers, who grew up in the same crowded slum or overcrowded immigrant quarters and pursued legitimate careers.



Mugshot of gangster Louis "Lepke" Buchalter in 1939. (Library of Congress)

Antisemitism may have been a motive for some, because the United States of the 1920s was not always a pleasant place for Jews. From 1920 to 1927 Henry Ford vilified Jews in the pages of his *Dearborn Independent* newspaper and in pamphlets entitled *The International Jew*. Ford required his automobile dealers to give a pamphlet to everyone who purchased one of his cars, and millions of Americans bought Fords. In the South, the Ku Klux Klan instigated boycotts of Jewish merchants, vandalized Jewish-owned stores, burned crosses outside synagogues, and terrorized prominent Jews. Colleges and professional schools, including Harvard, Dartmouth, Rutgers, Princeton, Penn State, and others, imposed quotas on Jewish enrollment. And Jews encountered economic discrimination in commercial banks, industrial corporations, public utilities, and insurance companies, in addition to widespread social discrimination. Blocked from respectable avenues to success and status, numbers of Jews selected alternate routes to fame and fortune, such as sports and the entertainment industry. And some tough young Jews may have been angry enough at American society to choose crime as a way to strike back.

For the most part, however, Jewish gangsters engaged in crime out of choice. These tough young men selected crime as their vocation because they wanted money, power, recognition, and status, and they wanted it at an early age. Crime attracted them because it offered them the quickest way to realize their dreams. Most of them were uneducated men who rarely finished high school, thus limiting their options for success. Many of them saw hard, legitimate work as something "suckers" did, and they never saw themselves as suckers. They saw crime as more exciting and glamorous than the tedium of studying or the drudgery of working long hours in a shop or factory. In the United States crime has historically served as a ladder of mobility for those who are uneducated, who do not want to work at a legitimate job, and who are willing to use violence to achieve their goal.

West Coast mobster Mickey Cohen exemplifies this. Cohen served as one of Bugsy Siegel's bodyguards and had been involved in numerous rackets. Throughout his career, Cohen displayed a nonchalant attitude toward the use of force and violence in his work. He saw weapons as the tools of his trade and never expressed any remorse or guilt over using them. He claimed that he never killed anyone who did not deserve to be killed, by the standards of his way of life. Cohen also believed that crime provided him with a status and deference he could never have achieved in any other way. Never having finished high school, Cohen asked how an uneducated person like him could have achieved the prominence (or notoriety) he enjoyed and have met the celebrities he had met in his life if he had not been a gangster. As if to validate his analysis, toward the end of his life, Cohen could be found seated on the dais at United Jewish Appeal and Israel Bond rallies in Los Angeles.

As with so many other Jewish men of their generation, the Jewish mobster loved his family and followed a code of never involving his children or close relatives in his criminal activities. Bootlegger Waxey Gordon sent his son to medical school. One of Meyer Lansky's sons graduated from West Point. Lepke Buchalter always set aside money for his stepson's college education. Longy Zwillman kept his family totally separated and uninvolved in his work. And Charley Workman, a Murder, Inc. killer, prevented his brother from entering the criminal world.

In this the Jewish gangsters were different from their Italian counterparts, who frequently brought their offspring and relations into the business. Like the Jews, Italian

syndicate leaders were proud and devoted fathers who wanted their children to marry well, to attain success, and to be accepted in the legitimate world. So they sent them to the best schools and paid for their studies in law, medicine, or some other prestigious profession. But they also wanted to keep the control of their criminal enterprise within their biological family. If this was not possible, they made an effort to keep it within their extended family of nephews, cousins, and other relatives. If necessary, they brought in outsiders through marriage and godparentage. Thus, Italian-American criminal syndicates are referred to as “families,” because they are tied together by marriage and kinship.

This tradition was totally absent among Jewish gangsters. None of their children married the offspring of other Jewish gangsters, and none of their relatives “inherited” the business. Jewish gangsters knew that what they did was not an honorable occupation, and they did not want to pass it on to their loved ones. That is why the activities of the Zwillmans, Lansky, Buchalters, and Siegels lasted only a single generation. It lived and died with them.

Jewish gangsters displayed adroitness at compartmentalizing their lives. They could separate what they did to earn a living—their business lives—from how they behaved in their personal lives, even if the result was blatantly inconsistent behavior. Lepke Buchalter’s life illustrates this. Lepke commanded an army of gangsters who terrorized the garment industry in New York. His gang’s weapons consisted of destructive acids, bludgeons, blackjacks, knives, fire, ice picks, and guns. At his peak, Lepke controlled a wide assortment of businesses and unions in New York, including the bakery and pastry drivers, the fur truckers, the milliners, the garment workers, the shoe trade, the poultry market, the taxicab business, and the motion picture operators. Despite Lepke’s murderous brutality in his business affairs, he was a considerate son and a doting husband and father. He described himself as a Jew, contributed to his mother’s synagogue, and, according to the FBI, led a quiet home life and was genuinely devoted to his wife and adopted son.

Abe “Kid Twist” Reles, one of Murder, Inc.’s most accomplished killers, exhibited a similar temperament. Reles loved his mother, wife, and child, and he respected certain Jewish traditions, but he felt no compunction about having to kill in his line of work. Reles later turned state’s evidence against his associates in Murder, Inc. and against

other underworld figures, including Lepke Buchalter. This led to Reles’s being killed to stop him from talking.

In an interrogation, Brooklyn district attorney Burton Turkus asked Reles how he could take a human life so casually. “Did your conscience ever bother you? Didn’t you feel anything?” queried Turkus. Reles countered by asking Turkus how he felt when he prosecuted his first case. “I was rather nervous,” Turkus admitted. “And how about your second case?” asked Reles. “It wasn’t so bad, but I was still a little nervous,” said Turkus. “And after that?” asked Reles. “Oh, after that I was alright. I was used to it,” replied Turkus. “You answered your own question,” said Reles. “It’s the same with murder. I got used to it” (Turkus and Feder 1951).

Although they kept their families away from their criminal activities, the Jewish mobsters could not always conceal what they did for a living. Once the families discovered that a relative was a gangster, they experienced shame and humiliation. Fathers especially felt betrayed by their son’s activities and reacted accordingly. Arnold Rothstein’s father, Abraham, cut off all contact with his son and refused to see him. When the father of New York labor racketeer Jacob “Little Augie” Orgen discovered that his son headed a gang of strong-arm men and killers, he declared him dead and sat *shiva* (the seven-day mourning period) for him.

The children of Jewish mobsters often suffered the most because of who their fathers were and what they did. They were often ostracized at school and had difficulties socially. This led them to harbor feelings of anger and resentment toward their fathers. Many of them changed their names, concealed who they were from their acquaintances, and in some instances severed relations with their father. This did not always apply to the third generation. Many grandchildren recalled their gangster grandfather with affection, viewing him as something of a folk hero. Meyer Lansky’s granddaughter remembered her grandfather as having compassion for the average man. Jake “Gurrah” Shapiro’s granddaughter justified what her grandfather did by saying he only killed people who bothered him.

For its part, the Jewish community was ambivalent to the gangsters in their midst. On the one hand, they evinced shame and horror at the activities and notoriety of these men, because the gangster epitomized the “bad Jew” who would bring onus and hatred down on the entire commu-

nity. Reacting to a 1928 grand jury investigation exposing the role of Max Hoff and other Jews in the Philadelphia underworld, Rabbi Mortimer J. Cohen of Congregation Beth Shalom bemoaned the shame that these men inflicted on the city's Jewish community. These men, he said, had dragged the Jewish name in the mud and filth of murder, bribery, and corruption. He worried that the whole Jewish community would be blamed and suffer the consequences for the deeds of these men.

This same fear permeated other Jewish communities as well. In Detroit, communal leader Leonard Simon conceded that the community's leaders knew about the Jewish gangsters but were afraid to admit it. Chicago Jewish leader S. M. Melamed warned his coreligionists that the Jewish gangsters brought shame to the community and posed a danger to their position and status in America. Jewish communal leaders in Minneapolis reacted in a similar fashion when the local *Saturday Press* accused Jewish gangsters of committing most of the crimes against the citizens of Minneapolis.

Jewish anxieties increased during the 1930s. The Depression, fears of Communist subversion, and the rise of Hitler exacerbated existing prejudices and fueled a precipitous growth in antisemitic fervor. The era saw the rise of Catholic and Protestant demagogues, such as Father Charles E. Coughlin, the Reverend Gerald Winrod, and William Dudley Pelley, as well as over a hundred antisemitic organizations, including the German-American Bund, the Silver Shirts, the Defenders of the Christian Faith, and the Christian Front. Jewish communal leaders viewed these trends with mounting concern and feared that the activities of the Jewish mobsters would only worsen an already dangerous situation.

Despite their abhorrence of the Jewish gangster, communal leaders utilized his services when it suited their purposes, especially when threats to Jews loomed large. During the late 1930s, Nazi Bund rallies in New York created a terrible dilemma for the city's Jewish establishment. They wanted to stop the meetings but could not do so legally. Nathan Perlman, a New York judge and former Republican congressman, believed that Jews should demonstrate more militancy toward the Nazis. To this end, he surreptitiously contacted Meyer Lansky and asked him to help. Perlman stipulated that the Nazis could be beaten up but not killed. Lansky reluctantly agreed: no killing.

Lansky's crew went around New York disrupting Bund meetings and beating up the participants. They worked very professionally. They broke Nazi arms, legs, and ribs and cracked skulls, but no one died. The attacks continued for more than a year and forced the Bundists to demand police protection. Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, whose mother was Jewish and who spoke Yiddish, complied. He confined the Bundist parades and rallies to Yorkville, and he forbade the Nazis to wear their uniforms or sing their songs. He then sent black and Jewish policemen to guard their meetings.

Nazi sympathizers also demonstrated in Newark, New Jersey. Longy Zwillman, the city's crime boss, had battled antisemites as a youth, and he would not allow the Nazis to congregate with impunity. In 1933 he formed an anti-Nazi group called the Minutemen, made up of former Jewish prizefighters and Jewish gangsters, and he gave the group financial and political support. Beginning in 1933, this group used physical force—iron pipes, clubs, baseball bats, and fists—to beat up the Nazis and break up their rallies. Later, Zwillman allied the Minutemen with the Newark division of the Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League (NSANL), made up of young middle-class Jewish men. The Minutemen fought the Nazis in the streets while the Anti-Nazi League boycotted all imports from Germany. The alliance between these two groups lasted from 1934 to 1941, when America entered the war. In Minneapolis, a city with a long history of antisemitism, Davie Berman, a former bootlegger and bank robber, and the city's gambling czar, used his gang to break up local Nazi rallies. Berman and Isidore Blumenfeld paid off the police, and there were never any arrests connected with the raids. Jewish gangsters conducted similar raids in Chicago and Los Angeles.

Jewish mobsters assisted as well in the creation of the State of Israel by providing aid in its war against the Arabs. After the Holocaust, Zionist leaders viewed the establishment of a Jewish state as a matter of life or death. This led them to solicit and accept aid from every quarter, including the Jewish underworld. In 1946 the Haganah, the predecessor of the Israel Defense Forces, sent an emissary, Reuven Dafni, to the United States on a fund-raising mission. One day, when he was in Los Angeles, he received a phone call from a man who identified himself as Smiley and requested a meeting. When they met, Smiley asked Reuven to explain what he was doing in Los Angeles because his boss was interested. The boss turned out to be

Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel, and Smiley was Allen Smiley, Siegel’s right-hand man.

Smiley arranged a meeting between Siegel and Dafni at the LaRue restaurant on LaCienega Boulevard. At the appointed time, Smiley and Reuven went into an empty room at the rear of the restaurant. After a few moments Smiley left, leaving Reuven alone. Soon two tough-looking men entered and searched the premises. When they found it safe, they left. Shortly thereafter, Siegel came in. He sat across the table from Dafni and asked what he was doing in Los Angeles. Reuven explained that he was in the city to raise money for the Haganah and to buy weapons with which to fight. Siegel interrupted him to ask, “You mean to tell me the Jews are fighting?” “Yes,” replied Dafni. Siegel then leaned forward until their noses almost touched. “You mean fighting as in killing?” asked Siegel. “Yes,” answered Reuven. Siegel looked at him for a moment and said, “I’m with you.” “From then on,” recalled Dafni, “every week I received a suitcase filled with \$5 and \$10 bills. The payments continued till I left Los Angeles.” Reuven estimates that Siegel gave him a total of \$50,000 (Rockaway 2000).

Jewish gangsters also contributed large sums to Jewish charities and were active in raising funds for Jewish causes. Longy Zwillman donated money to the United Jewish Appeal and to Newark’s Congregation Beth Torah and Sinai Congregation. Meyer Lansky donated money to the United Jewish Appeal, to Israel-related charities, and to his synagogue, Temple Sinai, in Hollywood, Florida. Moe Dalitz contributed to institutions in Israel and to a variety of Jewish charities. In 1970 he received the City of Peace Award of the State of Israel in recognition of his distinguished service on behalf of the people and the State of Israel. In 1985 the Anti-Defamation League of the B’nai B’rith awarded Dalitz its Torch of Liberty award in appreciation of his financial contributions over the years. Moe Sedway, an associate and close friend of Bugsy Siegel and later an active partner in several Las Vegas casinos, revealed to the Kefauver Committee investigating organized crime that in 1947 he was chairman of the Las Vegas United Jewish Appeal. Jake Guzik, who served as Al Capone’s treasurer and who, after Capone’s death, continued in this capacity for Capone’s successors Tony Accardo and Sam Giancana, contributed substantial sums to Jewish charities and to his synagogue. Lepke Buchalter donated money to his mother’s synagogue. Ironically, this was money he earned

from beating Jews in New York’s garment industry and extorting money from them.

Perhaps these gangsters assisted the Jewish community because, despite their depravity and violent lives, in each of them there burned a *pintele Yid*, a spark of Jewishness. Some may have helped the Jewish community as a way of compensating for the other, less heroic part of their lives. In their later years, some gangsters sought the respect and legitimacy withheld from them in their youth. One way to acquire communal recognition and approbation was through Jewish philanthropy and devotion to Jewish causes. Other mobsters may have sought respectability because of a desire not to embarrass their children and grandchildren and thus jeopardize their chances for success in the legitimate world.

Nevertheless, not every Jewish mobster was altruistic toward the Jewish community or Jewish interests. In 1951 two Detroit Jewish underworld figures, Arthur Leebove and Sam Stein, were convicted in a conspiracy to smuggle twenty-one American warplanes from Newark, New Jersey, to Egypt during the Arab–Israel hostilities in 1948. They schemed to buy surplus military aircraft, load them with British crews in Newark, and fly them to England. Once there, an Egyptian crew would be brought on board, and they would fly the planes to Egypt. The smuggling syndicate purchased twenty AT-6 aircraft and one B-25 bomber. The plot unraveled when bad weather forced the bomber to return to Newark Airport. FBI agents then seized the planes before they could be delivered. For men like these, making money superseded Jewish loyalty.

Bugsy Siegel is reputed to have remarked to Del Webb, the contractor who built the Flamingo Hotel, that people in his profession only kill each other. In a sense he told the truth, because many prominent Jewish mobsters died at the hands of their associates. Thirty-three-year-old Little Augie Orgen was shot and killed by Jacob “Gurrah” Shapiro, Lepke Buchalter’s partner. Buchalter then took over Orgen’s enterprises. Dutch Schultz was killed at age thirty-three by two Murder, Inc. hit men, Charley “The Bug” Workman and Mendy Weiss, to prevent him from killing Thomas E. Dewey, special district attorney for New York in the 1930s. The forty-two-year-old Bugsy Siegel was slain because his associates suspected he was stealing money from them. Arnold Rothstein was shot and killed in a card game at age forty-six.

The government executed some Jewish mobsters. Forty-seven-year-old Lepke Buchalter died in the electric chair, as did Murder, Inc. killers Harry Strauss and Bugsy Goldstein. Others died in prison. Gurrah Shapiro, Lepke's longtime partner, died in prison at the age of forty-eight. Bootlegger Waxey Gordon died in prison at the age of fifty-four.

A few died by their own hand. Once Prohibition ended, Max Hoff, once "King of Philadelphia's Bootleggers," tried a number of business ventures, each of which ended in failure. He committed suicide in a New York City flophouse at the age of forty-six. Longy Zwillman ostensibly killed himself, but under circumstances that strongly suggest he may have been murdered.

Jewish gangsterism declined after World War II. The urban ghettos that produced these men no longer contained Jews. Jews moved to the suburbs and became part of America's economic, educational, and occupational elite. Third- and fourth-generation American Jews no longer needed crime to "make it." The activities of these men were one-generational. They had no successors.

Robert A. Rockaway

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# American Jews and Labor

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## Jews and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union

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The story of Jewish workers in the women's apparel industry and in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) that represented them is that of a people steeped in a tradition of communality engaged in a "class struggle" within their cherished "tribe." The resultant history is the unusual narrative of labor and management engaged in their customary conflict but often conducted in ways that reflected the ancient ties of tradition that bound Jews together.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, on June 3, 1900, eleven men met in New York City to establish the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. They represented seven local organizations from New York, Newark, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Brownsville, a subdivision of Brooklyn. They were all Jewish, conducting their sessions in Yiddish.

It may well be that the number of men who gathered at this founding meeting was no accident. In the Jewish tradition, at least ten persons are required to form a *minyan*, a recognized congregation. Although their desire to form an international organization to embrace workers in Canada as well as the United States was a new idea, the men who gathered at the founding convention were battle-tested veterans of historic struggles in the women's gar-

ment industry. The battleground was the East Coast cities, where sweatshops, inhabited overwhelmingly by Jewish immigrants, had spawned local unions.

The great waves of Jewish immigration, mainly from czarist Russia and its vassals, started in the 1880s on the heels of the assassination of Czar Alexander II. The killing was the result of vast peasant unrest. The czarist regime turned to an old ploy to divert peasant anger: "If the peasants are hungry, feed them Jews." A wave of pogroms descended upon the Jews—tolerated and even instigated by the Russian constabulary. The Jews fled to America.

In 1881, the year of Alexander's assassination, Jewish immigration into the United States was less than 6,000. In 1882, that number had risen to about 18,000. In the six years from 1881 to 1886, Jewish immigrants totaled 77,105. From 1887 to 1892, the number increased to close to a quarter million. To millions of Jews, the United States was "the promised land." They came, as might be expected, to the port cities on the East Coast. And they brought their trades with them—among which the manufacture of clothing was prominent.

That many of the Jewish immigrants were skilled in garment production was a by-product of the limited opportunities that Jews had in the small towns (*shtetlach*) in many parts of Eastern Europe as a result of restrictions on their role in the economy. Often, they were not permitted to own land. They were barred from getting the

higher education needed for the professions. To make a living, they turned to trade as peddlers, to baking, or to occupations that required no major capital investment. To produce garments, all a person needed was a needle, thread, and a pair of scissors.

The mass migration of Jews in the decades around the turn of the century also came at a time when America was producing ready-to-wear clothing. In an earlier period, households, usually the women, produced their own clothing. The well-to-do had their fancy clothes produced by professional tailors who fashioned “made-to-order” apparel. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, with the construction of railroads and the rise of a national market, the apparel industry turned to the mass production of clothing to be sold to an ever-expanding market.

Among the first employers in the manufacture of women’s ready-to-wear apparel were German Jews who had come to the United States in the middle of the nineteenth century. Since German and Yiddish are kindred tongues, these employers and their managers could converse with the immigrant Jews.

The immigrant Jews who attended the initial meeting of the eleven were, however, not just sweated workers groping for relief. They generally were members of the Workmen’s Circle, a mutual aid society with a socialist orientation and members of *landsmanshaften* (organizations of men who came from the same towns in Europe). They were proletarian ideologues who, to quote a slogan of the Workmen’s Circle, wanted a *besere und shenere velt* (a better and more beautiful world).

One of the most powerful informative, ideological, and organizational institutions affecting the members of the ILGWU was a daily Yiddish newspaper, *Der Yidish Forverts* (*The Jewish Daily Forward*). Its orientation was toward the Socialist Party, but it was not the only Jewish daily. There were also *Der Tog* (*The Day*) that leaned toward the Democratic Party, *Der Morgn Zhurnal* (*The Morning Journal*) that leaned toward the Republican Party, and *Der Freier Arbayer Shtimme* (*The Free Workers Voice*) that was anarchist.

New York’s Jewish community was politically and ideologically heterogeneous. But the socialist-minded *Forverts* was dominant, with hundreds of thousands of readers. Its relationship with the ILGWU was more than that between a newspaper and its readers. The *Forverts* supplied much of the leadership for the union for many years. For instance,

the ILGWU’s second president, Benjamin Schlesinger, elected in 1904, was business manager of the *Forverts*. He was succeeded by a non-Jew, James McCauley, head of the pivotally powerful cutters’ local. In 1907, Herman Grossman, the union’s first president, was elected for a second time. But in 1914 Schlesinger won another term, and after several others had held the office, he was elected a third time in 1928. When he was not serving as the union’s president, he was back at the *Forverts*.

The *Forverts* influence reached beyond its readers and the presence of men like Schlesinger. Abraham Cahan, editor of the *Forverts* and a legendary leader of American Jewry, graced many a mass meeting of the union with his masterful oratory. Although Cahan was not particularly religious, he was keenly aware of how deeply Jewish workers were steeped in biblical tradition. And so he used this circumstance to make his points.

On one occasion when he was urging workers at a union meeting to fight for a five-day workweek, he informed his listeners that God himself had paved the way. The Lord proclaimed that six days shalt thou labor and on the seventh day thou shalt rest. “That,” thundered Cahan, “was what God intended as a beginning. It was now up to the workers to carry on the Lord’s good intentions and fight for a five-day work week” (Tyler 1995). By evoking Jewish tradition, Cahan converted the struggle for the five-day work week into a holy mission.

Early in the union’s history, in 1909, a strike of unprecedented character once more illustrated the profound relationship between the ILGWU and Jewish tradition. It was the Shirtwaist Makers Strike—a militant walkout of some 20,000 workers, almost all young women and girls of immigrant origin. The strike was more than just another walkout. It made history in both the labor and feminist movements in the United States.

The high point of the strike was a meeting held in the Great Hall of Cooper Union, where Lincoln had made one of his memorable addresses. Present was Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor. He came because this was no ordinary strike. This was a strike of young women—20,000 of them. It may be also that Gompers was drawn to them because he too was a Jew.

Chairing the meeting was Benjamin Feigenbaum, a Socialist subsequently elected to the New York Assembly and also a Jew. At a climactic moment during a speech by Jacob Panken, a Jewish lawyer and famous Socialist activist

later elected to a judgeship, Clara Lemlich, a wisp of a girl, raised her hand and shouted, "I want to say something" (Tyler 1995).

The chair was embarrassed. The esteemed Panken was speaking. The chair wanted to go on. But then came an uproar of enraged voices. "Let her speak." She spoke. Her speech was reported as a philippic in Yiddish. Her words ignited the combustible workers, and a strike was declared.

From the chair, Feigenbaum intoned, "Do you mean faith? Will you take the old Jewish oath?" As they raised their hands, he asked them to repeat after him: "If I turn traitor to the cause I now pledge, may this hand wither from the arm I now raise" (Tyler 1995).

The strike was a landmark. It was the first time that the country had witnessed such a massive strike of women. The uprising inspired the growing feminist movement to embrace the strikers and to let the world know that if women had the right to vote they would not be so maltreated.

In the minds of some of the strikers, the uprising of the women in 1909 was responsible for the revolt of 60,000 almost entirely male cloakmakers (coat and suit workers) in 1910. One of the 1909 women strikers poetized:

Hail the waist makers of 1909  
 When we fought and bled on the picket line  
 We showed the world that women could fight  
 And we rose and won with the women's might  
 And we gave new courage to the men  
 Who carried on in Nineteen Ten.

Unlike the shirtwaist-makers' strike, which was largely spontaneous, the strike of the cloakmakers was well organized. The union wanted official recognition of their organization as the industry's collective bargaining instrument. That was primary. But precisely for that reason, they found themselves facing a real although invisible obstacle. The employers were predominantly German Jews who looked down on their East European workers as lesser beings. In the past, the employer might grant the workers a little something after a strike and then would try to take it back later in the slow season. But formal recognition embodied in a contract was unthinkable. The strike dragged on.

Then one day, the chief executive of the employers' association received a message from the Filene brothers, who ran a huge retail outlet headquartered in Boston. Their

message advised the employers' association that, unless it settled with the union, Filene would go elsewhere to get women's coats and suits. The association knew it had to do something. It responded that it was prepared to settle with the union but did not really know how to go about it.

The Filenes informed the employers' association that they would send them a bright young lawyer, Louis Brandeis, to guide them. Brandeis mediated an agreement that made labor history, called the Protocol of Peace. It called for a written contract between the employers' association and the union. During the life of the contract there were to be no strikes and no lockouts. If a dispute arose, it would be submitted to the impartial chairman in the industry.

Out of that contract and the spirit behind it emerged many joint ventures between the employers and the union. They set up a Joint Board of Sanitary Control to battle tuberculosis and other industrial diseases that plagued the workers. Unions and employers in other industries copied the model. Ultimately, Brandeis became the first Jewish U.S. Supreme Court justice.

None of this would have happened without the intervention of the Filenes. The Filenes' original family name was Katz. To fit into the American scene, they decided to translate Katz into another language, French. If they decided that the family name would now be Feline, it would give away the real name. So they put a twist on Feline and made it Filene.

After the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917, there was a tremendous burst of enthusiasm among immigrant Jews who had suffered under the czars. Many enrolled in the Communist Party. In New York, Communists managed to get control of the two largest joint boards: cloaks and dresses. In 1926, they conducted a strike and, in their revolutionary zeal, made unrealistic and impossible demands. The strike dragged on and on. The union went millions of dollars into debt. After the International Office managed to unseat the Communists, the top leadership—President Schlesinger and Secretary Treasurer David Dubinsky—found the ILGWU in a state of near bankruptcy.

What Schlesinger and Dubinsky did is probably without parallel in American or world labor history. They went for a loan to three big Jewish capitalists: bankers Herbert Lehman and Felix Warburg, and the head of Sears Roebuck, Julius Rosenwald. Rosenwald contributed \$50,000, and Lehman and Warburg \$25,000 each. At that time, that

was big money. Once more tradition raised its hoary head to let brotherhood prevail, amid the “class struggle.”

As other ethnic groups entered the women’s apparel industry labor force in significant numbers in the decades after World War I, the proportion of Jews in the ILGWU diminished. After World War I, there was an influx of Italians. As agricultural mechanization after World War II displaced farm workers in the South, many blacks migrated to the North and entered the garment factories. Then came the Hispanics and the Chinese. In 1995 the ILGWU merged with the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union to form the Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees (UNITE). Today UNITE’s ethnic composition is strikingly different from that of the ILGWU in the early twentieth century.

An even greater revolution has taken place in the structure of the apparel trade. Increasingly, the great chain stores are their own producers, creating their own styles, promoting their own labels, bypassing American apparel firms, and getting their work done overseas.

What remains constant, however, is the UNITE leadership’s deep belief in what was once called social unionism. It holds that a union is and should be far more than just a collective bargaining agency. It should be a socioeconomic-political force in society to achieve a world of freedom and justice for all. That’s part of a great and old tradition.

Gus Tyler

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## Jews and the International Fur Workers’ Union

“To understand what the fur trade was about,” said a retired furrier, “is to know about the people that were in it” (Spingarn 1995). By 1910, Eastern European Jews had replaced Germans as the dominant ethnic group in the fur manufacturing industry in New York City. The fact that both the employers and workers were Jewish, and shared a common culture, shaped labor relations and the develop-

ment of trade unionism in the industry. Many of the Jews entering the garment industry by 1913 were exposed to radicalism in Eastern Europe; some had even been leaders in the radical movement. Others saw the fight for social justice that trade unionism represented as a practical matter; they wanted to improve their working conditions and wages, possibly becoming manufacturers themselves. The struggle between capital and labor in the fur industry was fought within a Jewish milieu, given a Jewish expression, and Jewish culture influenced the outcome.

The prosperity of the fur industry was affected by the weather, politics, and economics. The industry was generally undercapitalized and its financial structure precarious. The labor force was divided into cutters (the most skilled), operators, nailers, and finishers. Wages in the highly skilled fur trade were the highest in the needle trades, but after the short busy season from August to December, the manufacturers laid off more than 30 percent of the workforce. Most shops were small and sanitary conditions poor. In 1911, very few of the hundred largest shops, employing more than twenty workers, adhered to the sanitary code. Workers inhaled hair from the pelts, causing respiratory problems, and the dyes used on the pelts poisoned their fingers.

Despite these maladies, the furriers were slow to form a stable union. It was a story of desperate struggle punctuated by frequent failure. In 1912, the furriers tried to organize. Many of the leaders of the small furriers’ union, such as Isadore Cohen, the organizer supported by the United Hebrew Trades, had been organizers for the Bund in Eastern Europe. They agitated for improved sanitary conditions in the shops, a shorter workday, increased wages, and union recognition. As a result, union membership increased from 400 in 1911 to 3,500 by June 1912.

When the manufacturers’ associations rejected its demands, the union called a general strike. It was the beginning of the slow season; in 1911 the manufacturers had taken advantage of the low wage-scale to make most of their inventory and were planning the same for 1912. The strike began on June 20, and within two days practically the entire market was at a standstill. The manufacturers’ associations generally believed that the strike was good for the industry, since it would allow manufacturers to sell their surpluses.

The furriers took their struggle to the larger immigrant Jewish community, where the conflict between employers and workers, who sometimes belonged to the

same organizations, became a community problem. The Jewish labor community supported the furriers. Its financial and moral support were crucial to the success of the strike, which became known as the "people's struggle." The Yiddish daily, *Forverts*, mobilized its resources on behalf of the furriers, collecting over \$38,000 in donations for the strikers. The United Hebrew Trades, Socialist Party (SP), Workmen's Circle, Women's Trade Union League, and *landsmanshaftn* all supported the strikers. The Yiddish poet Morris Rosenfeld wrote a poem that was sung with great emotion at mass meetings. The luxurious furs, he wrote, that the furriers toiled over did not keep them warm: "The strong will no longer sleep/Over the damned fur."

Women made up about one-third of the workforce. Some were operators but the majority was concentrated in the finishing branch of the fur industry. Women furriers played a vital role in the success of the strike. They were able picketers, worked hard on committees, and were tenacious fund-raisers. When the strike turned violent, women were also able fighters. Thirty-one percent of strikers arrested were women, and over sixty women were seriously injured. Some heroines, such as Esther Polansky, went on to long and active careers in the furriers' union.

After three months, desperate to open their shops for the busy season, the manufacturers settled the strike. The 1912 agreement provided the possibility of creating an enduring union and establishing stable labor relations. It set up a Conference Committee, with five representatives each from capital and labor and an impartial chairman (a position held by Judah Magnes of the New York Kehillah until 1922), which established a modus operandi for the industry that lasted for many years. The furriers, together with the cloakmakers, pioneered modern industrial relations.

The International Fur Workers' Union of the United States and Canada was born at a convention in Washington, D.C., on June 13, 1913, eight months after the general strike. The new constitution delineated the responsibilities and structure of the union, but the delegates overlooked an inherent weakness that later almost destroyed the union. The problem lay in the relationship of the New York Joint Board, comprising Locals 1, 5, 10, and 15 of the fur manufacturing industry, and the International. The Joint Board included the majority of the workers in the industry and enjoyed considerable autonomy. The International depended on the Joint Board to finance its work elsewhere.

The strength of the International was therefore affected by the strength of the New York locals and their willingness to cooperate with the parent body.

The Conference Committee maintained peace in the industry for the next two years and facilitated a new agreement in 1914. Most important, in the new contract the manufacturers agreed not to discriminate against union members. The agreement endorsed the Conference Committee system of arbitration and created a smaller Committee on Immediate Action to expedite the settlement of disputes within forty-eight hours.

Despite its gains at the bargaining table, the union had difficulty maintaining its membership. The union was born during a time of economic downturn and severe unemployment in the industry. In addition, Jewish workers had a reputation for being tenacious strikers, but poor trade unionists. Many workers refused to pay dues or left the union altogether so that by 1914 less than 10 percent of the workforce belonged to the union. The union generated resentment by insisting that those who had been unemployed become current with their dues and by hiring "gorillas" to "encourage" workers to pay up. The nonpayment of dues was a constant concern, and the union asked the manufacturers to help enforce the agreement. Some manufacturers became so fed up with the problem that they refused to grant the privileges of the agreement to those who refused to bear its burden (by not paying dues).

The fur industry benefited from the general prosperity that accompanied World War I. A labor shortage led to increased wages, and by 1918 two-thirds of the workers were unionized. But the union found it difficult to control workers who acted independently to increase wages. Despite the International's initial denunciation of the war, the manufacturers and workers in New York mobilized behind the war effort. They donated manpower and raised money to support Jewish war relief efforts.

The 1917 contract brought significant gains for the furriers, including a union shop and a minimum wage scale. Tangible benefits and better enforcement of the agreement generated greater confidence in the union, and the Joint Board gained almost 2,000 new members. Yet the negotiations surrounding the 1917 contract saw a new development: the rise of a distinct "left-wing" element in the Joint Board that forced the resignation of manager Isadore Cohen. In 1919, Albert Miller was forced to resign as president of the International. Morris Kaufman, who

had succeeded Cohen as manager of the Joint Board, replaced him. During Kaufman's seven-year tenure, the industry experienced a period of rapid growth, which ultimately gave way to an unprecedented level of depression and unemployment.

The union grew and declined, in part due to trade conditions, but also because of the policies of its leadership. The bitter strife following the split in the Socialist Party and formation of the Communist Party (CP) in 1919 also affected the historically radical and socialist furriers' union. This struggle helped to crystallize the dissension within the union and resulted in a bitter struggle for control. Contemporaries characterized the left-right struggle as simply a fight for power or a personality conflict between Morris Kaufman and Ben Gold. It was much more than that. The militants, or left-wingers, objected to the "business" or practical unionism of the old guard, the corruption of business agents and union leaders, and the attempt by the International to gain direct control of the Joint Board.

Born in Bessarabia in 1898, Ben Gold immigrated to America in 1908. He joined the union in 1912 and was active in the strike that year. Socialist friends and the radical political atmosphere at home influenced Gold, and in 1916 he joined the Socialist Party, where he affiliated with the left wing. The furriers were impressed with Gold's dedication to trade union democracy, his championing of workers' rights, his acute mind, his persuasive abilities, and his exceptional oratorical skills. Gold quickly emerged as the leader of the left-wing group.

Despite several attempts at conciliation, the union could not restore harmony between the factions. In 1922, the situation deteriorated further when the Communist-affiliated Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) created a furriers' section. This provided an ideological center, as well as a support group for the left-wing opposition, but it also divided the left-wingers between those who belonged to or sympathized with the CP and those who did not. The TUEL's connection to the CP and the party's alleged subservience to Moscow allowed the right wing to warn against "outside" influences should the left wing gain control of the union. The bitter struggle between the left and right wings was fought in the Jewish press and emotions ran high. In the union, the right wing took steps to prevent the left from gaining control. In 1923, the Joint Board barred left-wing candidates from office and ceased calling

local meetings. At the 1924 convention, the International even amended its constitution to allow the General Executive Board to expel any member who participated in protest meetings against the union or who slandered union officers, and it banned Gold from attending sessions of the convention.

The left wing fought back with a huge propaganda campaign among the workers, and its support grew. The left made alliances with other discontented groups, and in 1925 its candidates were elected to office, including Gold as manager of the Joint Board. In a short time, the new manager solved a problem that had long plagued the union: the unorganized Greek workers. Gold used his connections with Greek furrier members of the CP to organize the Greek furriers and then led them in a successful strike. At the acrimonious special convention that year, the right again tried to demolish the left. In an impassioned two-hour speech, Gold countered the accusations against the left. Other New York delegates told of the brutal physical attacks on Gold and other left-wingers. Strengthened, the left ousted Kaufman as president of the International and furthered its agenda through union resolutions.

At the convention, the right produced a telegram containing orders from the Central Executive Committee of the Workers' (Communist) Party to the left-wing delegates. Although Gold denied the telegram's authenticity, the relationship between the CP and the furriers' union was complex. Ben Gold and Aaron Gross, Gold's influential second in command, were party members. Objecting to Stalin's predominance in the party, Gross resigned in 1929, but Gold remained a member until the 1950s. When McCarthyism ravaged the country, Gold was brought before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), and finally, in the interest of the union, he resigned from the party. The furriers did confer with the party and the party issued directives, but it also criticized the furriers' left wing—and Gold—for placing the practical needs of the union above ideological concerns.

Gold won his reputation through hard work in building the union and fighting tenaciously to improve working conditions. Furriers also supported him because they believed in his personal integrity. One representative of Local 115 who attended conferences with him told of how Gold stood up to the bosses: "He was fearless. He had the guts to talk to them and we always had a good wage. . . . [Gold] was honest. You couldn't buy this man. When he walked

down Seventh Avenue everybody wanted to greet him. It was something” (Spingarn 1995).

In 1926, a general strike brought the New York fur manufacturing industry to a standstill. It was part of the continued struggle of the immigrant Jewish furriers for improved material conditions as well as *mentchleke ba-handlung* (dignity in the workplace). Violence marked the strike, with each side guilty of attacks. The police were censured for their brutality toward the strikers. The strike had widespread support in the Jewish and labor communities, and after seventeen weeks the furriers won a qualified victory. Most notably, they won a forty-hour week.

Yet it was a hollow victory, for the internecine battle, fought by the left wing under the rubric of “democratic unionism” and by the right wing under the banner of anti-Communism, threatened the very existence of trade unionism in the fur manufacturing industry. The American Federation of Labor joined the attack against the left, using anti-Communism as its rallying cry. Spurious charges against the Joint Board leadership led to their expulsion from the union and the creation of the new Needle Workers’ Industrial Union. By 1928 gangsters operated freely in the fur district. The manufacturers took advantage of the chaos to avoid implementing union conditions. In addition, the industry suffered a prolonged depression. By 1930, trade unionism in the fur industry was in retreat, only to be further weakened by the onset of the Great Depression.

At Gold’s initiative, the two unions reunited in 1934, and the Needle Workers’ Industrial Union disbanded. Two thousand furriers joined the International within three days, and by 1936, the union had 15,000 members. Gold was elected manager of the New York Joint Council in 1935 and president of the International in 1937.

During Gold’s tenure, the union became strongly organized and achieved significant improvements in working conditions. In 1936, the fur workers were among the first to join the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO). In 1939, the furriers led an organizational campaign in the leather industry, and the hitherto unsuccessful leather workers’ union joined with the furriers, forming the International Fur and Leather Workers’ Union. With the implementation of the Taft-Hartley Act (1947), the union and its leadership became subject to ongoing attacks because of their alleged Communist sympathies. At a time when liberal voices fell silent and anti-Communist hysteria

gripped the nation, Gold intensified the union’s struggle against reaction. But ultimately he resigned as president in 1954 to protect the union. Today the fur industry in the United States is but a shadow of what it once was, and most of the production is done overseas.

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## David Dubinsky (1892–1982)

### Labor Leader

President of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU) and a founder of the Committee for Industrial Organization, as well as of the American Labor and Liberal parties, David Dubinsky was a major figure in both labor and politics. A staunch supporter of liberalism, he opposed totalitarianism from the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution to the Cold War.

On New Year’s Day 1911, the SS *Lapland* brought the young Dubinsky, a fugitive from justice, to New York. He had departed from Lodz, Poland, after escaping from Siberia where czarist justice had sent him for leading a bakers’ strike. In Lodz, Dubinsky had belonged to the bakers’ union, under the control of the socialist, culturally nationalist Jewish Labor Bund. In New York he became a garment cutter and joined the Socialist Party and the Amalgamated Garment Cutters’ Union, Local 10 of the ILGWU, which had been founded in 1900.

Dubinsky entered Local 10 politics, where he rose to prominence by opposing the union’s conservative leadership. In 1921 the union elected him general manager, followed the next year by election to an ILGWU vice presidency. There he became embroiled in a civil war that broke out between the International’s socialist leaders and



*David Dubinsky, president of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and a founder of the American Labor and Liberal parties. (Library of Congress)*

Communist-led critics. In 1926 that conflict led to a disastrous strike, during which Dubinsky emerged as a leader of the anti-Communist faction. In 1929 he was elected general secretary-treasurer and served as acting president. The general executive board of the ILGWU elected him president after President Benjamin Schlesinger died in 1932.

Dubinsky projected himself and the ILGWU into the mainstream of American labor and politics. By managing frugally and exploiting the National Industrial Relations Act, which encouraged organized labor, he moved the ILGWU out of debt and dramatically boosted its membership. "Dubinsky's union," as the International was known, would substitute a thirty-five-hour workweek for the sweatshop; enhance security through health, old age, and death benefits; and improve the quality of life through affordable housing and paid vacations. The ILGWU sponsored two housing developments in New York and others in Puerto Rico and Israel. In 1937 the union produced a smash musical revue, *Pins and Needles*, featuring garment

worker performers, and for summer relaxation there was Unity House, an ILGWU-owned "workers' paradise" in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains.

In 1934 Dubinsky became a vice president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Recognizing that most industrial workers were unorganized, Dubinsky helped found a Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) within the AFL. As the CIO was unacceptable to the executive council of the AFL, its member unions, including the ILGWU, were suspended. Dubinsky resigned from the executive council. In 1938, when the CIO became a separate Congress of Industrial Organizations, Dubinsky declined to remain with it. He regarded it as a rival federation, which made it guilty of dual unionism. Two years later he led the ILGWU back into the AFL. In 1945 he was reelected to an AFL vice presidency and in that position welcomed the creation of a merged AFL-CIO in 1955.

In 1936 Dubinsky helped found the American Labor Party (ALP), which aided President Franklin D. Roosevelt's reelection by giving him an additional ballot line in New York State. Though the party was an initial success, Dubinsky became increasingly disenchanted with it as it came under leftist influence. Finally, in 1944 he left the ALP and formed the new, more moderate Liberal Party. Along with Alex Rose of the United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union, Dubinsky led the Liberals and was a power broker in New York State into the 1970s. The Liberal Party helped elect W. Averell Harriman governor of New York (1954), John F. Kennedy president of the United States (1960), and John V. Lindsay mayor of New York City (1965).

A product of Bundist socialism, Dubinsky fought left- and right-wing totalitarianism within the ILGWU, the American labor movement, and overseas. In 1934 he was a founder of the Jewish Labor Committee (JLC), the anti-Nazi arm of the Jewish labor movement. The JLC supported a boycott of German goods and created a fund to fight Nazism in Germany and fascism in Italy. The next year Dubinsky helped persuade the AFL to organize a central agency to raise funds to combat those evils. In 1936, civil war erupted in Spain and he secured money for anti-fascists there.

Dubinsky faced new challenges in 1939 when Germany invaded Poland and began World War II. He organized efforts to rescue Jewish labor leaders from Nazi-occupied Europe. When Stalin executed two Polish

socialists, Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter, he vehemently protested. Anticipating Soviet designs on postwar Europe, in 1944 Dubinsky helped create and served on the Free Trade Union Committee of the AFL, which gave financial support to anti-Communist labor organizations in Western Europe. In 1949 he joined in founding the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

At midcentury Dubinsky was America's best-known and most influential leader of a needle-trades union, as well as a prominent, liberal anti-Communist. With other liberals who opposed Soviet policies, in 1947 he helped found Americans for Democratic Action and backed Harry S Truman in the next year's presidential election. Firm but moderate in his anti-Communism, Dubinsky afterward opposed the excesses of Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin.

Despite his Bundist background, which was anti-Zionist, Dubinsky maintained close ties with the Jewish labor movement in Palestine. After the Holocaust and the Second World War, he had deep concern for the fate of Jewish refugees. In 1948 he became a strong supporter of the new Jewish State of Israel.

In 1957 he achieved success within the AFL–CIO. After nearly two decades of campaigning for action to eliminate racketeering, Dubinsky saw the recently merged labor federation adopt a code of ethics, and he became a member of its Ethical Practices Committee.

A highly visible trade unionist, Dubinsky was vulnerable to criticism. Racketeering was a chronic problem within the ILGWU and the garment industry, one that received much public exposure during hearings conducted by Senator John McClellan of Arkansas. In addition, though the ILGWU had long supported civil rights, complaints arose that the union itself was guilty of racial discrimination, and Dubinsky came under fire. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People held the ILGWU accountable for the concentration of black and Puerto Rican workers mainly in low-paid, unskilled garment industry trades and accused Dubinsky's own Cutters' Union, Local 10, of denying membership to a black worker on the basis of race. After a bitter dispute, differences were resolved. Traditionally, staff members of the International had been low-paid. In an attempt to improve their working conditions, several formed a union, the Federation of Union Representatives (FOUR), but Dubinsky took personal offense and defeated them after a

lengthy battle. As a leader of the Liberal Party, Dubinsky usually went unchallenged. However, in 1965 some senior ILGWU vice presidents questioned his endorsement of Republican John Lindsay as the party's candidate for mayor of New York City. Dubinsky prevailed, but, unaccustomed to such criticism, advancing in age, and failing in health, he retired in 1966. Afterward, the ILGWU made him honorary president and created a Retiree Service Department for him to administer.

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## Samuel Gompers (1850–1924)

Founder and Longtime President of the American Federation of Labor (AFL)

Samuel Gompers was the nation's leading trade unionist and labor advocate in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As president of the AFL, the first successful national alliance of trade unions, Gompers championed shorter hours, higher wages, safe and sanitary working conditions, and labor's right to organize, strike, and bargain collectively with employers. Although socialist critics deplored his "pure and simple" strategies, his aversion to independent labor politics, and his willingness to participate in joint labor–management organizations like the National Civic Federation, trade union supporters valued him as a tireless organizer and practical politician who could be trusted to protect their interests in trade negotiations and legislative councils.

As AFL president from 1886 through 1894, and then from 1896 to the end of his life, Gompers successfully campaigned to restrict child, convict, and alien contract labor, to enforce eight-hour laws on government work,



Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, casts his vote, ca. 1920. (Library of Congress)

and to establish the U.S. Department of Labor. He was the leading proponent of the Pan-American Federation of Labor (an international forum for Latin American trade unionists) and, until the outbreak of World War I, actively supported the International Federation of Trade Unions (which sought to establish uniform labor laws and to prevent the movement of strikebreakers from country to country).

An avowed pacifist until the United States was on the verge of declaring war against Germany, Gompers was appointed in 1916 to the Advisory Commission of the Council of National Defense, the federal agency established to organize the nation's preparedness program. As chairman of its Committee on Labor, he was instrumental in mobilizing the wartime workforce and shoring up labor's support—both at home and abroad—for the war effort, and he helped develop government labor policies to increase production, reduce industrial conflict, and advance labor's wage and hour standards. At the height of his public popularity early in 1919, Gompers represented the United States on the Commission on International Labor Legislation that met in Paris as part of the peace conference and

helped draft a charter of basic labor rights, including the right to organize, work an eight-hour day and a six-day week, and earn living wages and equal pay for equal work. In the process, Gompers also helped organize the International Labor Organization, a permanent board that promised to bring together representatives of governments, employers, and workers to promote and protect those rights. Although his efforts to maintain labor's wartime gains were thwarted in the 1920s, Gompers was nevertheless honored as a patriot and labor statesman when he died in 1924.

The oldest son of Dutch Jewish immigrants, Gompers grew up in poverty in the Spitalfields district of East London. He was a good student at the Jews' Free School, where he learned to read, write, and do arithmetic, but by age ten he had left school to make a living, apprenticing first as a shoemaker and then taking up his father's trade, cigarmaking. After the family immigrated to the United States, settling in New York City's Lower East Side in 1863, he proved to be a skilled cigar roller who was willing and able to defend his shopmates' rights. A member of various fraternal organizations and the Jewish mutual aid association, the Hand-in-Hand Society, Gompers also joined the Cigar Makers' National Union in 1864.

Gompers took no interest in labor reform until 1873, when he went to work at a cigar factory owned by a German socialist, David Hirsch. There he met Ferdinand Laurrell, a Swedish socialist, who persuaded him that trade unions offered wage earners their best hope for change. With Laurrell's help, Gompers began reading socialist tracts, like Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* and Carl Hillmann's *Practical Suggestions for Emancipation*, that linked trade unionism and the pursuit of immediate gains to the eventual abolition of the wage system. He also began attending meetings of the International Workingmen's Association (IWA), a Marxist organization, where he joined a group of trade-union socialists who called themselves *Die Zehn Philosophen* (The Ten Philosophers).

Coming of age in an era of ten- and twelve-hour workdays, cyclical economic depressions, and cutthroat wage competition, these workers agreed that strong, well-organized, "pure and simple" unions—with no ties to political parties of any kind—had the best chance of achieving labor solidarity, humanizing industry, and creating opportunities for workers to learn how to think and act for themselves. Although critics would later caricature his

trade-union philosophy as a cry for “more, more, more,” Gompers believed there was a direct connection between organizing to achieve immediate gains and fundamentally transforming society.

An immigrant surrounded by immigrants, Gompers identified as an American from the start: he spoke English, was used to city living, and feared that “foreigners” who would not, or could not, assimilate—particularly the Chinese—threatened to undermine American standards of living. In his own trade, unskilled Bohemian immigrants were already flooding the industry, thanks to the introduction of a mechanical press, called the mold, that broke down skilled work into component parts. Willing to work for subsistence wages, these “new” immigrants rented tenement apartments from employers and then put the entire family to work at home, a practice that led to long hours, overcrowded and unsanitary conditions, and uneducated children.

Although the Cigar Makers’ International Union (CMIU) refused to recognize this branch of the trade, Gompers followed the lead of Adolph Strasser, a Hungarian immigrant he met through the IWA, who had organized an independent cigar makers’ union open to skilled and unskilled workers, male and female alike. By 1873 the new union counted almost 2,000 members, and Gompers’s hopes were high for “Americanizing” unskilled immigrants and unionizing the entire trade. However, a national economic depression (the Panic of 1873), coupled with an unsuccessful strike, decimated the union.

The experience strengthened his conviction that trade unions had to be financially secure to withstand hard times and employer hostility. So in 1875 Gompers and Strasser organized CMIU Local 144, incorporating a system of high dues, out-of-work and strike benefits, and centralized administration that came to be known as “business unionism.” Although critics condemned these policies as elitist, Gompers and Strasser intended to elevate the lowest-paid worker to the standard of the highest, as they put it, in order to secure the means of a satisfying life for every person in the trade.

Other early experiences also shaped his trade union philosophy. After police brutally attacked a crowd of unemployed workers demonstrating in Tompkins Square in 1874, and newspapers applauded the action, Gompers concluded that radical slogans and professions of militancy only invited repression. He would also conclude,

over the next few years, that the state could not be counted on to improve workers’ lives. The CMIU’s political campaign to outlaw tenement production in the early 1880s, for instance, had resulted in two remedial laws, but both were declared unconstitutional. Yet when union members decided to strike until manufacturers abandoned the tenement system, they got results, a powerful economic lesson that was further confirmed by Gompers’s experience with the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions (FOTLU), an annual congress organized in 1881 to prepare and promote labor legislation. Because the FOTLU had neither the funds nor the authority to do more than talk about issues like the eight-hour day or the regulation of child labor, Gompers supported a call, in 1886, to organize the AFL, a voluntary alliance of national trade unions and state and local trade assemblies with the goal of thoroughly organizing the industrial work force.

As the AFL’s full-time president (and CMIU vice president since 1886), Gompers was frequently on the road in the 1890s, a practice that would mark his entire career. Whether he was testifying before Congress or state legislatures on the value of organized labor, rallying workers at mass meetings, or negotiating strike settlements, Gompers proved to be a capable, dependable, and unflappable spokesman for the trade union movement, well-known and respected for his integrity, his generosity, and his willingness to speak truth to power. Well aware that wage-earners easily divided along lines of ethnicity, skill, race, gender, and politics, Gompers focused on achieving higher wages and shorter hours as a practical method of raising working-class consciousness. When workers organized and won tangible improvements, they began to expect more out of life than constant drudgery, he believed, and they became more willing to stand together and fight for social justice.

Determined from the start to avoid the factional fights that had destroyed previous national labor organizations, Gompers brooked no interference from outsiders, whether they were middle-class social reformers, radical intellectuals, party politicians, or well-meaning lawyers. As AFL president, he opposed the Knights of Labor, a broad social reform group, when it organized trade assemblies that competed with unions, and he denigrated socialists of all stripes as utopian “rainbow chasers” unless they were willing to put trade union organization first. But, if he spurned the socialist call for industrial unionism, independent labor politics, and cross-class alliances, he did not discount

the importance of political action. Instead, Gompers developed a nonpartisan policy of supporting labor's friends in local, state, and federal elections, and defeating labor's enemies, regardless of party. He adhered to this policy throughout his career, save for the 1924 presidential campaign, when the AFL voted to endorse Farmer-Labor candidate Robert La Follette. Supporters of more radical organizations, like the Industrial Workers of the World, regularly complained that Gompers's approach was far too narrow and conservative to serve the needs of the new industrial workforce, especially unskilled black, female, and recent immigrant workers. But under his stewardship, the AFL grew from a "rope of sand" in the 1890s to a permanent organization representing some 4 million members in 1920, far more than any other labor organization could boast at the time (Taft 1957).

Although Gompers was instrumental in helping Jewish immigrants organize the needle trades, and he spoke out against the brutal persecution of Jews during World War I, he never associated his activities with any religious denomination or faith. When David Lubin, an agricultural reformer, attempted to appeal to him on the basis of their shared religion, the AFL president's reply was frank: "You say that your chief glory is that you are a Jew. Mine is that I have a heart, a mind and a conscience, that I have struggled with my fellowmen . . . for a better day when the ridiculous divisions, questions that make man an enemy to man instead of his brother, shall be eliminated" (Kaufman, Albert, and Palladino 1986, 3).

If he took great pride in his family heritage, Gompers had no taste for orthodoxy of any kind, an attitude he attributed to his early experience with the Ethical Culture Society, a group more interested in human behavior and values than ancient religious rites. In the same vein, he firmly believed that Jewish immigrants, like any other immigrant group, had an obligation to become citizens of their new homeland and identify with their future, not their past. Although he eventually agreed that Yiddish-speaking immigrants were most easily organized through the United Hebrew Trades, a New York City central labor organization, he opposed the idea that the Jews should remain a people apart. When the question of supporting the Zionist movement was raised in 1916, for instance, he made it clear that he heartily supported any movement for equality and justice for the Jews, but that he opposed any policy that would perpetuate their isolation.

Although Gompers and his first wife, Sophia Julian Gompers, were both descended from religious families, there is no indication that Gompers was religiously observant or that their children were raised in a religious household. In fact his second wife, Gertrude Gleaves Neuscheler Gompers, whom he married in 1921 after Sophie's death, was Christian. And while Rabbi Stephen S. Wise gave the eulogy at his funeral, it was Gompers's wish that the service be "absolutely non-sectarian" and that it be held under the direction of the local labor movement (President Gompers's File, frame 30).

Grace Palladino

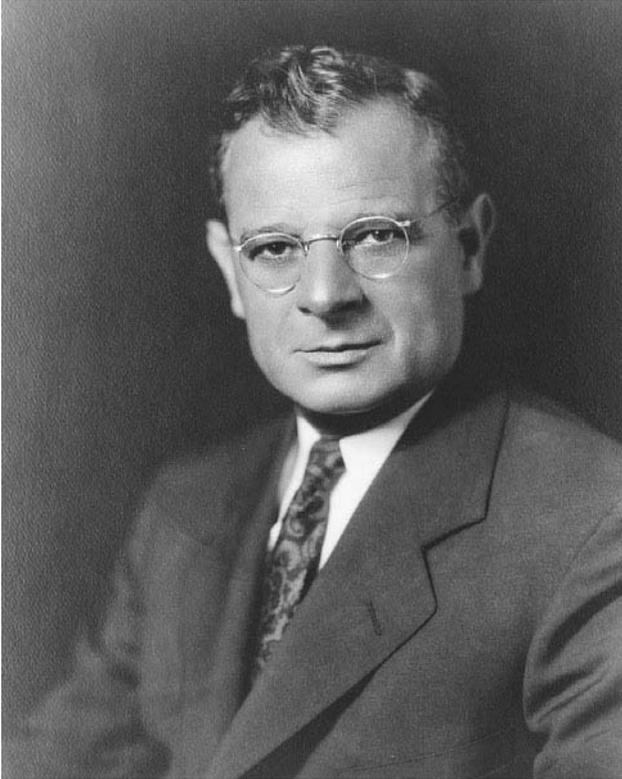
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## Sidney Hillman (1887–1946)

President of Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America and Leader of Congress of Industrial Organizations

As a young man, Sidney (Simcha) Hillman started on his road to fame by dramatically changing his ideological outlook. While in his teens in Russian Lithuania, he turned quickly from a rigorous Yeshiva student into a Bundist, then into a Menshevik. A few years later, in the United States, he settled into being a practically minded American industrial unionist. Early on, he was well schooled by reform-minded labor leaders and urban progressives. He remained, however, a social democrat who initially served his fellow immigrant workers in the men's clothing industry,



*Sidney Hillman, president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America from 1914 to 1946 and a leader of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. (Library of Congress)*

and, later, as a leader in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), served black and white ethnic employees in America's mass-production centers. In the towns and cities of the Northeast, these men and women were mostly first- and second-generation migrants who anchored their collective identities in memories of the American South or East Central and Southern Europe.

Growing numbers of them were mobilizing to promote working-class agendas of political change; some did so with a consciousness of race, ethnicity, and peoplehood. Most, with their industrial unions, wanted the help of the federal government to improve their standard of living and the conditions in their workplace. Within this complex mix of backgrounds and aspirations, Hillman helped to modernize their industrial relations and discipline the capitalist society in which they worked. His accomplishments were remarkable—a testimony, in part, to the comradeship in a large segment of the American labor union movement. His successes occurred in a period riven with ideological conflicts, at home and abroad, and with ever more serious expressions of antisemitism and antiradicalism.

These peaked in the 1930s and 1940s during the years of the New Deal and World War II with its Jewish Catastrophe. But throughout, Hillman remained the union leader searching for ways to widen the scope of organized labor's influence in the American body politic.

Born on March 23, 1887, into a rabbinic family and orthodox household near Kovno, in Zagare, Lithuania, Simcha Hillman rebelled against the ways of his family by joining secular sectarian collectives seeking profound change in the body politic of the czarist empire. In 1904–1905, in Kovno he was jailed twice for short terms, first as a Jewish socialist agitating for the Bund and a second time as an anti-Bundist Menshevik organizer in the Russian Social Democratic Party. In 1906, with his movement forced underground by czarist police, he too went into hiding, and then, as did other endangered revolutionaries, the young Hillman emigrated. Along with large numbers of other Lithuanian Jews, he went westward, first to an uncle and two brothers in Manchester, England, and then, with his brother Harry, via New York to Chicago.

In 1909–1910, during a major strike at Hart Schaffner & Marx, a well-known modern firm manufacturing men's clothing, where Hillman had been hired as an apprentice cutter a few months earlier, both opponents and supporters recognized in him a different kind of union man—one who could lead militant workers toward a new kind of industrial order. Like the militants in the strike, the Yiddish-speaking assistant cutter in Local 39 of the United Garment Workers (UGW) wanted more than union recognition and collective bargaining. He was also eager to become fluent in English and rise above the cacophony of parochial enthusiasms. He wanted to work with shop owners, statistically oriented technical experts, and promoters of arbitration procedures. Together they would be able to reduce wasteful conflict between capital and labor to the benefit of both.

It was the start of a remarkable labor union career, as he and his fellow workers from Yiddish-speaking neighborhoods and workplaces simultaneously fought antisemitic and nativist officers of the UGW, who felt threatened by the immigrants and socialists in the metropolitan centers of the needle trades. In 1914 his Chicago friends asked twenty-seven-year-old Simcha to become president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACW), a new industrial union in the men's clothing industry. He had just been hired as chief clerk of the Joint Board of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) in New

York to administer its new contract. Hillman became the youngest president of any American national union, and he remained president until his death in 1946.

Hillman's organization was born in sin, a dual union competing with the UGW, a craft union that was formally chartered by the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Although freed from the constraints and financial obligations that came with traditional trade union legitimacy, until 1933 Hillman had to cope with institutional opposition from the AFL and its Socialist Party supporters in the Jewish labor movement. He had to focus on the men's clothing industry's cutthroat competitors, on hooligans and Jewish crime gangs—often used in the 1920s in the industrial relations of the needle trades of New York City—on his union's bread-and-butter issues, and on its social welfare reforms. He also had to confront the religious-like fervor of all sorts of ideologues: anarchists and syndicalists, Lenin-inspired Bolsheviks, Zionists, Central European and English-oriented socialists, and the followers of home-grown socialist Eugene V. Debs.

While sympathetic to some of these class-based enthusiasms—in the early years of the Bolshevik Revolution he visited Lenin and some Soviet economic enterprises—Hillman was a practical labor leader. He also followed the trend among national unions that centralized authority in the hands of a strong president whose reelection was never in doubt. He dedicated himself to eliminating market competition harmful to the needle trades and their workers, and established union criteria for applying scientific management to standards of production. During World War I, in his relations with senior administrators of the federal Board of Control of Labor Standards, he learned how to use administrative agencies for his union's needs. These choices put him at odds with fellow unionists whose inclination was for ever more union democracy, spontaneous action, and shop floor control.

Simcha Hillman, after 1917 a naturalized American citizen renamed Sidney, was always the talented foreign-born Jewish labor leader of working men and women, never the leader of their ethnic institutions or politics. In 1920, the ACW—at 177,000 members, most of whom were women—was one of the largest industrial unions in the nation. During World War I and the 1920s, his union's collective bargaining agreements with employers brought a forty-four-hour workweek and such alternatives to disruptive conflict as workshop efficiency, contract discipline, so-

cial welfare benefits, and arbitration procedures. Steven Fraser, his finest biographer, has characterized Hillman as the “true industrial modern: A pioneer of worker participation as a vital component of managerial strategy, he was an architect of a new moral order of work, one based neither on coercion nor on monetary incentives, but on those intangibles of the psyche and the social then being explored by industrial psychology and sociology.” Shrewdly, he steered his internally contentious members through competing passions of communism, socialism, and nationalism. By the midtwenties, under Hillman's oversight, including highly controversial tactical arrangements with Communists, the union had avoided the kind of internal sectarian combat that almost destroyed the ILG, the other leading union of the needle trades.

During the Great Depression and World War II, Hillman played major roles in the CIO, the new labor organization formed in 1935, and in three of Franklin Roosevelt's presidential elections; in 1940 and 1941 he was also influential in handling complex labor problems for the administration. One of the founders and leaders of the CIO, he was in many ways as important to the organization as its president, John L. Lewis, the famous leader of the United Mine Workers. In this role, Hillman became a leader in the campaign to organize industrial workers outside of the needle trades. In 1936, in the period of the Soviet-inspired Popular Front, which lasted from 1935 to 1939, he helped to mobilize the antifascist coalition that viewed Roosevelt's Democratic Party as the main bulwark against fascism, at home and abroad. As vice president of the CIO, Hillman, always fighting for FDR and his program, was active in the Labor Non-Partisan League and, beginning in 1936 at its founding, in New York's American Labor Party.

Starting in 1933 he accepted minor appointments in New Deal efforts, and in 1940 Roosevelt appointed him co-director of the Office of Production Management. This was a difficult position for a labor leader such as Hillman, for now, in the days of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, pockets of strong isolationist and Communist sentiment in the workplace opposed Roosevelt's support of the United Kingdom. Hillman also faced aggressive businessmen and contentious unions slowly emerging from the Depression. After Pearl Harbor he lost his position in the war effort, but remained loyal to Roosevelt. In 1943 and 1944 he campaigned for Roosevelt's reelection and helped mobilize organized workers as a liberal force in the Democratic Party.

During the Holocaust years, near the end of the war, he helped the Zionist campaign establish a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine. After Roosevelt's death Hillman spent his last years working for a World Federation of Labor (WFL) on behalf of a new world order under American–Soviet leadership. That project ended in failure, but the Zionist campaign did not. In 1944–1945, at the founding meetings of the WFL, he worked on a resolution supporting a Jewish Commonwealth. Contrary to his past practices, Hillman, the famous American labor leader and statesman, now publicly identified himself with the Histadruth, the Socialist Zionist labor organization in Palestine, and was instrumental in having its Commonwealth resolution adopted by the WFL.

Hillman had always had a private Jewish life, and in public he had remained engaged with Jewish affairs. He and Bessie Abramowitz, an important ACW leader in her own right, whom he had met in Chicago in the summer of 1909, were married in a synagogue and marked their children's confirmation with religious ceremonies. Together they retained Jewish family connections in Europe and in Palestine.

In his public affairs Hillman was in continuous contact with many Jews and Jewish organizations. Besides his union members, these included businessmen, lawyers, Reform rabbis, settlement house workers, progressive reformers, and all sorts of fellow socialists. Even in union budget matters the Jewish connection made itself felt: there were reports from locals that income had fallen during the months of Passover and the High Holy days.

And always there was the public antisemitism. It came in the form of attacks, and not only from opposing employers and politicians. As did other Jews, so too did Hillman encounter antisemitic outbursts from fellow unionists and from the larger progressive and socialist community. Often expressed during moments of combat, one of the most dramatic outbursts came from John L. Lewis, at a CIO podium in 1940, when he bitterly opposed Hillman and the reelection of Roosevelt. That background of antisemitism was one of the important reasons why, in the 1944 campaign, Republicans and many of their media supporters used the political innuendo "Clear it with Sidney" to mark Hillman as the Jewish immigrant labor leader who, while friendly to Communists and Soviet Russia, controlled the Democratic Party.

Hillman made important decisions that had reverberated in some of the special interest groups in the Jewish

world. In the euphoric days of Zionism and the Bolshevik Revolution, the English government's Balfour Declaration, calling for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, did not persuade Hillman to become a socialist Zionist or, for that matter, tolerant of other socialist theories of nationalism. He continued in his socialist assimilationist ways. For a number of years he supported Lenin's economic programs in Russia. Hundreds of thousands of ACW dollars went to the American Industrial Corporation, a product of cooperation between the Soviets and the ACW, though Hillman did not authorize "outside donations" of comparable amounts to Jewish worker groups in Palestine. As late as 1939 the Histadruth was still excluded from the non-American public causes supported directly by Hillman and the Executive Board. To the Labor Zionist Joseph Schlossberg, then on the ACW's board, those were contentious decisions. Still, ten years earlier Hillman had officially declared himself a member of the non-Zionist support group of the Jewish Agency in Palestine. Hillman did not block ACW locals from aiding Jewish causes, including those in Palestine, and he had approved contributions to the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's work, designed to help Jews in the Soviet Union. And as early as 1933 he had supported efforts of the American Jewish Congress to battle Hitler's antisemitic campaign.

The events of the war years led Hillman to change his mind about the Histadruth. Until jolted by the news of European Jewry's catastrophe, Hillman was locked into his prewar mentality. Influenced by his own history and that of the ACW and the needle trades, he read the future by his strong flickers of socialist enlightenment. He saw Jews as a one-generation proletariat, moving upward and out. Since 1924 restrictive immigration laws had all but ended Jewish migration from Europe to the United States, and the proportion of Jews in the union and in the industry's work force had dramatically declined. In 1940 only about 15 percent of ACW members were Jews. It was clear to him that the Jewish labor movement in the United States was ending. But between 1942 and 1946 he recognized that there would also be no Jewish labor movement in Europe, and that cast the Histadruth in a different light. (Indeed, perhaps he now comprehended that Jewish continuity and survival were at stake.) Now he would work with Socialist Zionists and the Histadruth, because he could do so within an anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist campaign, which corresponded with American foreign policy ideals and with Soviet interests in the Middle East.

What mattered most to Hillman was the wartime alliance between Americans and Russians and the vision of a postwar world under the hegemony of the United States and the Soviet Union. That is why in 1943, when news arrived that the Red Army had murdered two senior leaders of the Bund, he did not join in the public outrage, infuriating anti-Communist Jewish socialists, especially former Bundists like himself. A year earlier, however, Hillman had started to work closely with the representative of the Histadruth in New York. Although no longer part of Roosevelt's inner circle, as always, he moved toward real power on the ground. After November 1942, following the defeat of the German Afrika Corps outside Cairo in Egypt, he believed that the Histadruth would gain increasing power in Palestine. Convinced that the Jewish Labor Movement would exist only there, with Israel Mereminsky, the Histadruth's representative in New York during World War II, he now planned for a physical link between the ACW and the Histadruth. Under its auspices in Palestine, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers would support an Amal vocational school network. "Amal" not only stood for Amalgamated, but also for *amal* (*Ayin, Mem, Lamed*), the Hebrew word used by socialist Zionists to refer to the ideals of pioneering manual labor in the land of Israel.

Following a heart attack in 1942, Hillman lived four more active and influential years. He participated in political election campaigns, was engaged with issues affecting occupied Germany, and was involved in the effort to find a home for 100,000 of the Jewish survivors in Palestine. In May 1946 he publicly linked that campaign to what we now call the Holocaust. In his last address to an ACW convention he said: "[T]here is one group that they decided to destroy completely, so as not even to leave any representatives of this people even to carry water for them. They almost succeeded. They destroyed six million Jews. Those Jews are gone, but there are others in Germany today . . . [who] are required to live in camps with all their memories of the horrors of the past. . . . These people want to get out of Germany and there is only one place they want to go to, and that is Palestine, and I say to you that no one has the moral right to stop them from going there. . . ." Hillman did not live to see the establishment of Israel and the full rapprochement between the leaders of Jewish-led needle trade unions and the socialist Zionists who founded it. But old colleagues and friends on the ACW's Executive Board did, and so did his wife, Bessie.

Sidney Hillman died on July 10, 1946. He had become a different Jew from the Simcha of Zagare. But his Yiddish-speaking comrades remembered his journey into post-Talmudic secular Jewry. At the memorial service in Carnegie Hall, in the presence of thousands of dignitaries, and with tens of thousands of workers milling in the street outside, Jacob Potofsky, Hillman's successor as president of the union, spoke of his old friend as a "great American and a God-fearing man." And when Bessie and the children buried him at the Westchester Hills Cemetery in Mount Hope, New York, another old friend, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, a major figure in the Zionist wing of the Reform Movement, said Kaddish.

*Gerd Korman*

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## Pauline M. Newman (1890–1986)

### Labor Activist

Pauline Newman was a labor pioneer whose career spanned almost the entire history of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU). Associated

with that union for more than seventy-five years, Newman nevertheless became, by the end of her long life, a symbol of something much bigger—the militance of early twentieth-century women workers. In 1909, while still in her teens, Newman was appointed general organizer by the ILGWU. She was the first woman to hold such a post. Though she would battle with the men who ran that union over their condescension toward women organizers and their failure to recognize the vital contributions of women workers, Newman stayed on the job for the ILGWU for most of the twentieth century—first as a grassroots organizer, later as a labor journalist and health educator. Newman’s other political home was the New York Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL), where she served during the 1920s, thirties, and forties as vice president, general organizer, and liaison between labor leaders, captains of industry, and agency chiefs in state and federal government.

Newman referred to the garment unions as “the Jewish movement,” because they were so heavily influenced by Jewish immigrant socialists. She was proud of that Jewish movement, which she saw as the primary means through which Jewish progressive thought influenced United States policy during the first half of the twentieth century. She was equally proud of the “women’s movement” galvanized by the WTUL. Pauline Newman’s influence on labor politics, the emerging welfare state, and the ongoing struggle for women’s rights was far greater than any official resume suggests.

A Jewish immigrant from Lithuania, Pauline Newman was an iconoclast even among the Socialist bohemians of the Jewish labor movement. She had a penchant for tweeds, wore her hair slicked back, and was so tough in labor negotiations that she was described admiringly by one male colleague as “one of the boys in many ways. She could smoke a cigar with the best of them” (Orleck 1995). In an era when the idea of unionism was synonymous with notions of brotherhood and masculine bonding, Pauline Newman pushed accepted gender norms in the trade union movement. She was as happy to challenge hard-boiled male union leaders as she was to take on recalcitrant employers. She took pride that union men seemed to accept her as one of their own, even as she longed for the social companionship of women. Newman was one of the key players in the woman-centered trade union network that crystallized around the New York and National Women’s Trade Union Leagues because women trade

union activists, like her best friend Rose Schneiderman, sustained her emotionally and intellectually. Throughout her years in the labor movement, Newman was caught between worlds. She pursued a difficult balancing act—negotiating with male unionists, middle- and upper-class women reformers, and government officials for the one goal that mattered most to her—improving the lives of women workers.

Pauline Newman was born into a world that was exploding with change even as she grew up. The exact date of her birth was lost with the family Bible sometime during the family’s passage to America. The best estimate is that she was born around 1890. The circumstances of her birth are better known—she was born into a deeply poor and equally religious Jewish family in Kovno, Lithuania, the youngest of four children—three girls and a boy. Newman would later write to her grandchildren that her activist career began when she was still a very small girl—and was told she could not attend *kheydr* (religious day school) with the boys in her village. She demanded to know where in the Torah it said that girls should not receive the same religious education as boys. Her father, a Talmud teacher, couldn’t argue with her logic. So he personally taught her to read Hebrew and Yiddish. Years later, Newman claimed that her childhood resentment of the privileges accorded males in Jewish education and worship sparked her lifelong commitment to fight sex discrimination along with injustices of class, race, and religion.

Newman, her sisters, and her mother left Kovno for New York after her father died suddenly in 1901. The family was at first put up by Newman’s brother, who had emigrated a few years earlier. Now eleven years old, Newman began work at a hairbrush factory, but soon moved to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in Greenwich Village. Already a confirmed rebel, Newman felt powerfully drawn to the labor socialism she heard from older workers in her shop. Like so many Jewish immigrants of her generation, Newman also learned the fundamentals of socialism by reading Abraham Cahan’s Yiddish language daily, the *Jewish Daily Forward*. Still, Newman knew that reading Russian (which she had taught herself), Yiddish, and Hebrew was not enough. To get by, to thrive in America, she and her fellow workers would need to know English. And so Newman organized reading groups for the teenage girls among whom she worked. By candlelight in the coal-dusty, dimly lit garment shops of Lower Manhattan, Newman and her

coworkers taught themselves English by reading literary exposés of nineteenth-century English industry. Newman recalled that the readings only intensified the girls' desire to rise up against the long hours, low pay, and miserable conditions in which they lived and worked. Between 1905 and 1907 Newman and other immigrant Jewish girls engaged in a number of wildcat strikes and walkouts. During the summer of 1907, as a depression and housing shortage hit Lower Manhattan, Newman led 400 girls in building a tent village on the Palisades above the Hudson River. There they lived for the summer and organized a rent strike among Lower East Side Jewish families that became the largest rent strike New York had seen. Involving 10,000 families in all, this strike began decades of tenant activism in New York that ultimately led to the city's first rent control laws.

New York newspapers hailed Newman as the "Lower East Side Joan of Arc." The Socialist Party (SP) nominated the seventeen-year-old activist for New York secretary of state. Campaigning with Eugene Victor Debs, the SP leader, she took the opportunity to promote woman suffrage. Meanwhile, she built support among young women garment workers for a general strike that exploded in the fall of 1909 involving 30,000–40,000 mostly Jewish shirtwaist makers. Besides organizing in advance, Newman helped to sustain the strike in two key ways. Through the long, cold winter, through week after week of intense police brutality, she kept strikers' spirits up with inspiring speeches at union halls and on the picket lines. She also kept strikers fed and housed by raising funds among New York's wealthiest women, quoting liberally from English literary figures to win these educated women's sympathy for the ragged strikers. Newman was even able to persuade some of these women to join picket lines, hoping that their presence would diminish police brutality against the strikers. These "mink brigades" brought the strike its first positive coverage in the city's mainstream newspapers. And the presence of society women on the picket lines made police more cautious about whom they clubbed.

Impressed by her spirit, her bravery, as well as her oratorical and fund-raising skills, the leadership of the ILGWU appointed the eighteen-year-old Newman as the first woman general organizer in the garment trades. The next four years were exhilarating, frustrating, and lonely as Newman traveled the country, living out of suitcases, sleeping in depressingly grim working-class hotels, and organizing gar-

ment strikes in Philadelphia, Cleveland, Boston, and Kalamazoo, Michigan. By decade's end, these strikes had resulted in the unionization of more than 40 percent of all women garment workers, a remarkable percentage for workers in any trade and a clear refutation of union leaders' oft-repeated assertions that women could not be organized.

Still, the years on the road were extremely difficult for Newman. She was one of the only women in a male world of labor organizers, still a child in many ways, and vulnerable both to their harassment and their condescension. She felt that the male union leadership undermined and undervalued her work, and wondered if she could somehow find more supportive colleagues. She campaigned for the Socialist Party in the coal-mining camps of southern Illinois and also agitated for women's right to vote, which she considered crucial to the success of the working-class struggle.

Newman was paralyzed by grief when the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory burned on March 25, 1911. One hundred forty-six young workers died, most of them Jewish and Italian women, and many of them cherished friends from Newman's years as a Triangle worker. Newman won a post on the Factory Investigating Commission, which was established by New York State in the aftermath of the fire to improve factory safety. Through this work she met Frances Perkins, eyewitness to the fire and an activist for the Consumers League, later to become Franklin Roosevelt's secretary of labor. Newman also met future New York governor Al Smith and future U.S. senator Robert Wagner, all of whom worked with her in inspecting New York factories to ensure that hazardous conditions were corrected. This experience led Newman to conclude that securing the future of working women required not only organization but also government legislation. For the next thirty years, Newman worked as a lobbyist for the New York WTUL, pushing for passage of wage, hour, and safety legislation for women workers. She never gave up union work, but for the remainder of her career, she divided her energies between organizing, education, and lobbying.

In 1917, Newman left New York again, this time to travel to Philadelphia at the request of the WTUL to organize a new branch of the league in that city. There she met Frieda Miller, a young Bryn Mawr economics instructor. The two hit it off quickly, and the professor jumped at the chance to leave academia to work for "the movement."

Miller fell ill; Newman moved in to nurse her. The two lived together for the next half century. Theirs was a turbulent relationship from beginning to end, but they stayed together until Miller's death in 1974.

In 1923, Newman and Miller returned to New York where Newman had accepted a position as education director for the ILGWU Union Health Center, the first comprehensive medical insurance program created by a union for its members. The couple moved to Greenwich Village where, as part of a community of politically active women couples including Democratic Party activists Molly Dewson and Polly Porter, the two women raised Miller's daughter Elisabeth. This early two-mother family was apparently quite well accepted in the offbeat world of the Village. As Elisabeth Burger later recalled of her childhood in the Village, "conventional ways of living were not stressed." Newman was happy to take a job that would allow her to stay close to New York after more than a decade of traveling. For the next six decades she would use this position to improve the health and education of women workers and to inform the public of their needs and concerns.

Still not content to retreat into education only, Newman continued to organize through the 1930s. Along with her closest friend and WTUL colleague Rose Schneiderman, Newman organized African American and Afro-Caribbean women laundry and hotel workers into unions. She worked with Miller and WTUL activist Maud Swartz, both now officials of New York State, to create employment bureaus for African American domestic workers that would end what were known as "slave markets"—street corners on which southern black migrants bargained with white (often Jewish) housewives for a day's labor. Newman also served as a consultant for New York State on minimum wage and safety issues. As a member of the United Nations Subcommittee on the Status of Women and the International Labor Organization Subcommittee on the Status of Domestic Workers, she worked to improve conditions for labor abroad.

During Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt's dozen years in Washington, D.C., Newman was invited to the White House with some regularity. She was among several women labor activists whom Eleanor Roosevelt entertained frequently at Val-Kill, the home her husband built for her near the family mansion at Hyde Park. In 1936, when the National WTUL convention was held in Washington, D.C., Newman accompanied a delegation of young

garment and textile workers to sleep in the White House and breakfast with the First Lady during a weeklong stay. It was typical showmanship for the charming president and his equally charismatic wife, but it made front-page headlines in the *New York Times*. "Imagine me," one Jewish garment worker enthused, "Fannia Shapiro sleeping in Lincoln's bed." It was as close as working-class immigrant Jews had yet come to the seat of national power, and it was media moments such as those that cemented the passionate love affair that so many immigrant Jews of that generation had with Franklin Roosevelt.

During World War II, Frieda Miller was appointed director of the U.S. Women's Bureau, a division of the Department of Labor established in 1919. After the war Newman and Miller were asked by President Harry S. Truman to investigate workers' conditions in Europe. Newman was invited by Truman to address the White House Conference on the Child, and the U.S. Public Health Service consulted her regularly on labor safety issues. During the early decades of the twentieth century, Newman and her WTUL circle had played a vital role in sparking and sustaining women's labor uprisings. During the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, they shaped new government agencies and labor laws that guaranteed a minimum wage and minimum standards of safety for all American workers.

Into the 1980s, Newman lectured, wrote, and advised women trade unionists. Panamanian-born Maida Springer, who became the first black labor unionist appointed to a senior position in the American Federation of Labor, cited Newman as her mentor and called her "one of the giants, determined, articulate, volatile about workers' dignity." Knowing Newman, along with Rose Schneiderman and Fania Cohn, Springer said, "gave you greater strength and support as an activist" (Orleck 1995).

Newman always insisted that male union leaders organize women as well as men, black workers as well as whites, immigrants, and native born. In the 1970s, the Coalition of Labor Union Women recognized her as a foremother of the women's liberation movement. Never comfortable in a role that she felt eclipsed the contributions of thousands who had worked alongside her, Newman still felt it important to serve as a living witness to the sweatshop conditions of the early twentieth century that the union movement had helped to eradicate. (It was a bitter irony for her that, by the end of her life, New York's garment unions were once again fighting the same battle.)

Newman spoke regularly through the 1970s and 1980s to historians, reporters, and groups of young women workers, her heavily wrinkled face, watery eyes, and gravelly voice telling as much as her words about her decades of struggle on behalf of American labor. For eight decades, dancing delicately between worlds, Newman—through her sheer force of will, energy, and heart—made herself into one of the most important women in the history of American labor.

*Annelise Orleck*

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## Selig Perlman (1888–1959)

### Labor Economist

Selig Perlman was a renowned Jewish professor of economics at a leading American university when the species scarcely existed. He specialized in comparative labor history, labor problems, the analytics of Marxian "statics and dynamics," and the evolution of modern capitalism. He published only four books, but his interpretations, based on the Lockean foundation of collective property rights and the experience of worker self-government rather than Marxian class-consciousness, have stood well the test of time. He was famous as a lecturer, even though he spoke with a heavy Yiddish accent and had a considerable stammer. But his command of language, particularly original metaphors, was famous, and he held audiences spellbound.

Perlman was born to Pesha (Blankstein) and Mordecai Perlman in Bialystock, Russia, a center of textile produc-

tion. His father earned a living as a jobber, buying yarn that he distributed to peasant women to weave in their cottages and then immediately selling the title to the woven cloth at a discount to recover his capital—and a bit of profit. He was moderately successful until about 1890 when the mill products seriously undersold the cottage products.

Selig was educated at a Talmud Torah until at about eleven he won a scholarship to the local *Realgymnasium*, an elite state high school specializing in modern languages and science. He graduated in 1905, a day of disappointments, since not only did he fail to get the Gold Medal (the top academic honor), but he had to race home to avoid a pogrom then in progress.

Absent the Gold Medal, treaties rendered Perlman, as a Russian Jew, ineligible to attend universities in Russia, Germany, or Austria-Hungary. Thus he went to study medicine in Italy. There he spent several afternoons explaining Marxian "statics and dynamics" to the American Socialist writer William English Walling and his bride, Anna Strunsky (a quondam co-author with Jack London), whose knowledge of German and thus of Marxism was flawed. The Wallings had contacted Perlman at the urging of Anna Blankstein, Perlman's mother's half-sister, who had made Strunsky's clothes for the couple's European trip and had advised her to look up her "genius nephew, Selig." After their discussions Walling mentioned in passing that were Perlman ever to come to America, he would hire him to produce a competent English translation of Marx.

After Selig returned to his home in Bialystock in 1907, his father told him that Walling had just been imprisoned by the czarist police, charged with sedition. The next day they read that President Theodore Roosevelt had telegraphed the czar, "Send Walling home." As a result of these events Perlman decided to emigrate to America immediately. Anna Walling met him at the pier. Although Walling honored his promise to employ Selig as a translator, he paid little attention to the product, and Perlman felt that his salary was a form of charity. Walling then suggested that he go to the University of Wisconsin and provided him with letters of introduction to Richard T. Ely, John R. Commons, Edward Alsworth Ross, and possibly Frederick Jackson Turner.

He received his baccalaureate degree in 1910, having written a thesis on the history of socialism in Milwaukee. After being offered a research assistantship by Turner, Commons matched the offer, and Perlman remained a

Commons student. His dissertation formed the last part of the two-volume *History of Labour in the United States* (Perlman 1918). While a graduate student, Selig was briefly employed by the United States Commission on Industrial Relations for which he conducted fieldwork. One of his assignments was to interview the Industrial Workers of the World shoe workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, about their intentions regarding industrial sabotage.

He was told to identify himself as a correspondent of a minor Yiddish newspaper in New York. The workers he contacted agreed to talk, but only if he came to the sixth-floor tenement of one of them. There, accusing him of being a company “fink,” they suddenly grabbed him. Going through his pockets they found a personal letter from Walling, which, he reported to Basil Manley, the Commission’s Director of Research, literally saved him from defenestration. For the most part, however, his writings were based on reading and analyzing labor union periodicals and similar materials. He was awarded his doctorate in 1915. In the following years he worked on revising Richard T. Ely’s earlier work, *The Labor Movement in America* (Ely 1886), an interpretation offering a Christian Socialist theme. Perlman’s completed manuscript substituted his own views based on Lockean collective ownership of job opportunity. Thoroughly displeased, Ely told him that his assistantship would not be renewed.

Perlman was then recommended for an appointment at Cornell. Its department of economics chose him, but President Jacob Gould Schurman refused to take a Jewish name to Cornell’s trustees. A second effort at employment at the University of Arkansas also failed. Commons’s wife, Nell, who had become his partisan, then proposed a “solution.” Both Commons and Ross, who had been Ely’s students at Johns Hopkins, and whom Ely had chosen as colleagues at Wisconsin, had come to resent his paternalistic attitudes toward them. Mrs. Commons’s solution was that Ely retire as chairman of the economics department, that Ross be given his own department of sociology, and that Selig take over Commons’s undergraduate teaching.

Although her solution had considerable support, the plan was almost derailed when Commons learned that Perlman planned to vote in the 1920 presidential election for Eugene Debs, the Socialist candidate then serving time in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary for sedition. After much hesitation, but with a timely reassurance from the Wisconsin Catholic chaplain, the Reverend Francis Kuchera (who

had much influence on the legislature), that a good man could choose Debs, Commons overcame his doubts. One of Perlman’s graduate students, Father Aloysius Muench, had taken the initiative to approach Kuchera. Perlman was then appointed assistant professor, became associate professor in 1925, and full professor by 1927. In the early 1920s he took the lead in establishing on the Wisconsin campus a Summer School for Workers. In short courses, union members were taught Robert’s Rules of Order (for conducting union meetings), how to negotiate time and motion studies and the pay increases associated with improvements in productivity, union history, and current events of significance to unions.

The volume that Ely rejected was published in 1922 as *A History of Trade Unionism in the United States*. Perlman considered this his most original work, although *A Theory of the Labor Movement* (1928) is usually cited as his chef d’oeuvre. In 1935 he published, with his assistant Philip Taft, the fourth volume of the original Commons & Associates’ *History of Labor in the United States*.

He spent the greater part of the academic year 1938–1939 in Cardiff, Wales, where he traded teaching posts and homes with Hilary Marquand, later postmaster-general in the first Clement Atlee government. Although Perlman was the leading critic of Beatrice and Sidney Webb’s work on trade unionism, they invited him to spend a day at their home, where Beatrice, in particular, treated him as their academic equal. He was invited to Oxford as the honored guest of G.D.H. Cole and to Cambridge as the honored guest of Maynard Keynes. His year in Britain was cut short by rumors of imminent war, a consequence of the von Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact (1939).

The high tide of union sentiment was in 1936, and, over the following decade, the popularity of unionism in Wisconsin declined, particularly with the regents of the university. In the summer of 1946 Perlman was summoned to appear before the Board of Regents to answer questions about the future of the School for Workers. Perlman wrote of these developments to Father Muench, by now not only bishop of South Dakota but the papal nuncio in postwar Germany. In his reply, Muench stated that his own views had been shaped by two papal encyclicals, *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), and by Perlman’s classroom lectures. The letter was signed “Yours in Christ” with the latter two words struck out (in deference to Perlman’s Judaism) and replaced by “ever” and signed Aloysius

Muench. Perlman started his presentation by passing the letter to the chairman of the regents, who read it carefully, showed it to one of his confreres, and suggested that Perlman must have better use for his morning than spending it with them.

Perlman married Eva Shaber (1894–1930) in 1918; they had two sons. She died after a very brief illness in 1930. Later that year he married one of her sisters, Fannie (1897–1981), with whom he had two daughters. His older son, David (1920–1980), a biochemist and the holder of a large number of patents, returned to the University of Wisconsin as dean of the School of Pharmacy. The second son, Mark, is a professor of economics and a pioneering editor of economic journals.

Selig Perlman's Conservative Jewish household was *shomar kosher* (kosher observant), although he and his sons were not *shomar shabbos* (Sabbath observant). He was a quondam corresponding friend of Chaim Weizmann and a Zionist. In the 1950s he was offered a professorship at the Hebrew University, but was forced to decline it for reasons of health.

Perlman retired from the University of Wisconsin in June 1959 after reaching the mandatory retirement age of seventy. He accepted an endowed chair at the University of Pennsylvania for the following academic year (1959–1960). His health had been deteriorating since 1945, and shortly after arriving in Philadelphia in August 1959 he suffered a stroke and died.

Perlman left a great intellectual legacy. As a boy, he had been taught the Jewish theory of historical events, a nonteleological interpretation. At the *Realgymnasium* he learned the Russian Orthodox teleological approach to history, ending with a vivid Day of Judgment. This religious approach was subtly undermined by his teachers, who steered the students to Plekhanov and the Menshevik interpretation of Marxism. By 1905 Perlman was a Marxian, a student member of the Jewish Bund, and an expert on Marx's German writings (and in that sense a teleologist).

At the University of Wisconsin he became aware of Commons's empirical (legal and episodic) approach to the study of worker revolt, an approach conflicting with his previous Marxian interpretation. Thus he was led to form his own interpretation of worker–employer conflict. His doctoral dissertation stressed the differences in approach of the emerging trade unions, each concerned with its own problems of wages and working conditions, and

the more all-for-one/one-for-all approach both of the Knights of Labor and the usual Marxian understanding of labor–class solidarity. The teleological emphasis waned. Commons' earlier work had stressed that pressures on prices led to pressures on wages, with the result that workers often struck to keep prices up so that wages could be maintained. Perlman thought that what the workers more likely had in mind was a kind of collective control of job opportunity—his term was *job-consciousness*. The implication was that wage rates might have to retreat if prices were falling, but the workers' collective Lockean-derived property right was built into the foundations of their working rules.

His *A History of Trade Unionism in the United States* (Perlman 1922) expanded this thesis. Here he also took up the question of why socialism had made so little headway in American unions. His general point was that the American constitutional process, built on tripartite government with specified limited powers, on a large degree of federalism as well as the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, and on the political overrepresentation of American farmers in both federal and state upper houses, precluded what the Webbs had preferred, namely statutory reform rather than collective bargaining. Any empirical approach to the history of the American labor movement, he concluded, made the likelihood of socialism and governmentally set standards for wages and working conditions problematic.

*A Theory of the Labor Movement* (Perlman 1928) can be most easily understood if one recognizes that the title he proposed was *Labor Movements and the Intellectuals*. Examining the British, German, Russian, and American labor movements, he opined that, when workers enjoyed the right to self-organization, they opted for devising their own working rules rather than the more comprehensive social reform blueprints offered by the intelligentsia. In *Labor Union Theories in America* (Perlman 1958), Mark Perlman described Perlman's perception of unionism as part of the democratic process—an interpretation in contrast to socialist paradigms, to the Veblenian-Hoxian theory of factory culture, and to the Webbian approach that saw labor unionism as essentially a political optimization process.

There were many critics of Perlman's 1928 book. Advocates of the various forms of socialism (from Christian Socialism to Leninism) thought his tying of worker interest to an idea of the job as a property right was urging

labor to link arms with the devil. Perlman's view that workers suffered individually from a psychological fear of job scarcity contrasted with the Veblen-Hoxie view that the psychological problem was tied to the machine-paced nature of the capitalist system. The overall criticism was that he attributed to workers little or no sense of class solidarity. Indeed, for Perlman the very concept of a working class was a socialist abstraction, and its purported rightful demand for control of industry was but a belief in an abstract mass (labor) in the grip of an abstract force (history).

Mark Perlman

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Rose Pesotta, Jewish garment worker, anarchist, labor organizer, and a vice president of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. (Library of Congress)

## Rose Pesotta (1896–1965)

### Labor Organizer and Anarchist

Nationally known for her firebrand form of organizing, Rose Pesotta (born Rachelle Peisoty) was the third woman vice president of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) and a noted anarchist and author. Pesotta was close friends with Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, Emma Goldman, and other anarchist activists in the early twentieth century. She organized women garment workers in New York City, Los Angeles, and Puerto Rico, to name just a few locations, and also organized autoworkers for the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO). Pesotta was the author of *Bread upon the Waters* and *Days of Our Lives*.

Rose Pesotta was born in Derazhnya, Russia, and attended a private girls' school. Early in her life she learned

to speak five languages, which served well in her later work as an organizer. Raised as an Orthodox Jew, when her father was about to arrange a marriage for her, she negotiated immigration to the United States, arriving in New York City on November 24, 1913. She lived with her sister and her family while learning English and becoming a seamstress. After joining the ILGWU as a member of the activist Local 25, she quickly came to the attention of the administration as a firebrand and speaker. She was sponsored to attend the Bryn Mawr Summer School for Women Workers in Industry (1922), Brookwood Labor College (1924–1926), and the Wisconsin School for Workers (1930), where she studied English, public speaking, and other liberal arts subjects.

Pesotta's performance in these schools, as well as her flamboyant personality, led to her nomination as an officer of her local, and in 1933 the ILGWU sent her to Los Angeles to organize seamstresses. In May 1934 she was elected

the only woman vice president of the ILGWU, the third woman in the union's history to serve in that capacity. Her charisma, gift of speech, and love and sympathy for the workers won her many ardent followers (Tyler 1965). When she became a vice president, she was not sure this job was right for her. She was afraid that joining the union bureaucracy would compromise her values and that "the voice of a solitary woman among the twenty-four vice presidents would be a voice lost in the wilderness" (Pesotta 1944). Nonetheless, she accepted the challenge.

Soon Pesotta was sent to Puerto Rico to organize seamstresses there. Shocked by their poverty, she dedicated herself to helping low-paid seamstresses change their conditions. Pesotta's colorful organizing style took shape: in later organizing she used seamstresses as models, wearing the garments they sewed as they marched on the picket lines; she had the children of striking workers walk the lines, carrying signs in support of their parents. Anti-union thugs attacked Pesotta in Cleveland in 1937, slashing and beating her. She was known for her leadership style, in which she set up union headquarters, provided food and help for striking workers, as well as parties and musical events. She often brought music to the picket lines, leading songs and chants. She took countless films of union activities, recording action shots of strikes that were useful in gaining union publicity. Over the years she organized workers in Seattle, San Francisco, Milwaukee, Buffalo, Boston, and Montreal.

Pesotta was so effective that in 1936 the ILG lent her to the CIO to organize rubber workers in Akron, Ohio. She also worked with the autoworkers' unions (UAW) in South Bend, Indiana, and then in Flint, Michigan. Often the only woman organizer, she handled herself well in the CIO organizing efforts, becoming one of the "four musketeers," along with organizers from the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the United Mine Workers. When Pesotta was a CIO organizer in Flint, she was involved in an altercation that left her deaf in one ear. This event did not stop her, and she could be found late into the night running from one picket line to the next, aiding workers in any way possible. Sometimes she worked with the UAW Women's Emergency Brigade, and other times she entered the buildings the autoworkers had seized to offer them advice.

Early in her life in the United States, while working as a seamstress, Pesotta became active in anarchist circles in

New York City. She wrote for the anarchist journal *Road to Freedom*, attended meetings, and spoke on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti in an effort to have their conviction overturned. She considered them close personal friends and mourned their loss. Vanzetti presented her with a hand-carved ivory penholder, with a clenched fist at the tip of the shaft. She traveled around the country speaking in their defense, particularly to union activists. As an anarchist Pesotta believed in decentralization and self-government of workers. She wrote of her ideals and tried to abide by them in her work. It was, however, often difficult for her to be a bureaucrat in the union. Indeed, anarchists often marginalized her because she was in the bureaucracy, while the men on the board of the union marginalized her as a woman.

Nonetheless, Pesotta was practical and knew how to speak to the workers in their own language. She was willing to compromise her principles to reach attainable goals. She learned conciliation, use of careful language, and demure behavior in order to be an effective organizer. Her idea of union leadership was to be egalitarian and to lay the groundwork so that the rank and file would assume positions of authority as they learned how to negotiate and organize themselves.

Pesotta's relationship with Emma Goldman, the anarchist writer, thinker, and activist who served as her role model, was a complex but inspirational one. In 1919 Goldman had been deported along with Pesotta's first American boyfriend, Theodore Kushnarev. The women's relationship resumed when they met again while Pesotta was writing for *Road to Freedom*. Goldman helped Pesotta use anarchist ideology as guiding principles in her organizing work; Goldman led Rose to "believe in anarchism like a rabbi believes in God" (Leibowitz 1984).

The two developed a mentor-student relationship, with Goldman sometimes cheering Rose on for her union activities, while also chastising her for her comfortable lifestyle, as compared to Emma's hardships while she was hounded in the United States and after her deportation. Rose visited Emma in Europe in 1938, and again in Canada in 1939, and, when a stroke incapacitated Goldman, Rose raised money for her upkeep. When Goldman died in May 1940, Pesotta flew to Chicago for the funeral and spoke at a memorial meeting in New York later that month. Allegedly one of Goldman's closest friends at the end of her life, Rose found inspiration from the friendship, which sustained her

in the face of hard challenges. Goldman's death left a huge void in Pesotta's personal life.

Pesotta's position as a woman vice president was always problematic for her. At first her relationship with David Dubinsky (the president of the ILG) was that of a father–daughter. However, Dubinsky disapproved of Pesotta's style of leadership, including her spending what he considered vast amounts of money to entertain the workers. Her style was not unlike that of most other women organizers in other fields; she asserted herself and the needs of the workers in a forceful manner. She was also outspoken, often telling the men on the board how she felt about matters, which did not earn her many supporters on the General Executive Board (GEB).

Pesotta's final run-in occurred in Los Angeles, where she was sent in 1942 to cover for an ill vice president. When the vice president returned, he alleged that she had undermined his work and insisted that Dubinsky recall her to New York. He did so, to the ire of the workers who had mobilized around Pesotta. After the recall, Pesotta returned to the sewing machine, an extraordinary act for a vice president. After further misunderstandings with the GEB, she resigned from the board because of her continued marginalization. As a woman and as an anarchist, Pesotta did not fit. Although workers loved her, she had made enemies of those in positions of power, who forced her out.

After leaving the union as a vice president and organizer, Pesotta wrote two books about her experiences. *Bread upon the Waters* (1944), which covered her career as a labor activist, was well received. *Days of Our Lives* (1958), with less glowing reviews, focused mainly on her early life. Pesotta also worked for the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of the B'nai B'rith, for which she visited labor unions, labor schools, and fraternal organizations to educate them about prejudice and discrimination. Under the auspices of the ADL, she went to Europe in 1945, where she saw the effects of the war and the Holocaust in visits to bombed-out cities and death camps. Upon her return, she spoke widely on what she had seen. The job with the ADL did not last long, however, and Pesotta returned to the sewing machine. She also worked for a short time with the American Trade Union Council of the Histadrut, but once again found her way back to the sewing machine, where she remained until her death.

Pesotta was involved in a number of significant personal relationships. She was married only once, in 1953, to

Albert Martin (Frank Lopez), whom she had met much earlier, during the Sacco and Vanzetti case. Before that, she had been deeply in love with Powers Hapgood. Hapgood was a labor organizer for the United Mine Workers, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the Textile Workers of Kentucky, the Socialist Party of Massachusetts, and the Southern Tenant Farmers Union in Arkansas. They met while they were organizing for the CIO in the 1930s.

As an anarchist, woman, and organizer, Pesotta has been called a “gentle general” (Tyler 1965), and her legacy has influenced other organizers and women. Many of the sites she organized remain union-affiliated to this day, and, although many of her goals have not been achieved, she served as an inspiration and role model for many.

Elaine Leeder

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## Rose Schneiderman (1882–1972)

### Labor Activist

Described as a pint-sized stick of dynamite—just four feet nine inches tall, with flaming red hair—Polish Jewish immigrant Rose Schneiderman changed the course of American labor history, helping to bring shorter hours, higher wages, and safer conditions to millions of U.S. workers. Schneiderman was a brilliant organizer, lobbyist, and legislative strategist. But she was also a visionary. “The woman worker wants bread,” Schneiderman famously said in 1911. “But she wants roses too” (Orleck 1995). The phrase Bread



*Rose Schneiderman, president of the National Women's Trade Union League, sits between Eleanor Roosevelt and David Dubinsky in 1938. (Library of Congress)*

and Roses encapsulated the desire of American working women both for the essentials that sustained life—better wages and job conditions—and for the soul-nourishing extras that made life worth living, among them exposure to literature and drama, and recreational opportunities. Rose Schneiderman insisted that workers should not settle for a grim subsistence. They were entitled to pleasure as well as productivity.

First entering the labor movement as an officer of the United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers' Union in 1904, Schneiderman would serve for decades as president of both the New York and National Women's Trade Union Leagues (WTUL). She became the only woman member of Franklin Roosevelt's National Labor Advisory Board, and one of the few working-class activists to be appointed to

statewide office in New York, where she served as secretary of labor in the late 1930s and early 1940s. In all of those positions, Rose Schneiderman worked tirelessly to improve the lives of working people. She left a lasting imprint on both the labor movement and the welfare state. Pushing both to move beyond simply ensuring worker survival, Rose Schneiderman brought to the labor movement and to government a broader vision of human rights and improved quality of life for all.

Schneiderman made her name as a devastatingly effective orator. Tiny in stature, she could rivet the attention of huge crowds. Beginning in 1904 and continuing through the 1950s, the militant trade unionist and women's rights advocate spoke powerfully from street corner platforms, to union halls, and finally, over the radio,

persuading even skeptics of the justice of her positions. In an age when political oratory was a leading form of entertainment, many described her as the most powerful speaker they had ever heard. Some found that power threatening. It's easy to see why. Schneiderman did not mince words. Most famous among her speeches was one made just days after the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, on March 25, 1911, killed 146 young workers—most of them immigrant Jewish and Italian women. “We have tried you good people and found you wanting,” she told an audience that included some of New York's richest and most powerful society matrons. “I can't talk fellowship to you who are gathered here. Too much blood has been spilled. I know from experience it is up to the working people to save themselves” (Orleck 1995). Given such rhetoric, it is perhaps not surprising that Schneiderman was deemed a danger to national security after World War I, when the Bolshevik Revolution sparked a nationwide backlash against foreign-born radicals in the United States. The chair of New York State's investigation of subversive activity dubbed her “the Red Rose of Anarchy.”

Still, Schneiderman's warmth and ability to persuade listeners would ultimately provide her entree into the highest circles of political power. One witness to the Triangle Fire, social activist Frances Perkins, introduced her to Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. Schneiderman taught them most of what they came to know about working people. Later Roosevelt's labor secretary, Perkins recalled in her memoirs that it was as a result of FDR's long conversations during the 1920s with Rose Schneiderman that he was able to plausibly present himself as someone who understood the dire condition of America's industrial laborers. A trusted FDR advisor, Schneiderman played a key role in shaping the landmark legislation of the New Deal: the National Labor Relations Act, the Social Security Act, and the Fair Labor Standards Act. As president of the New York WTUL from 1917 to 1949, and as New York State secretary of labor from 1937 to 1943, Schneiderman also helped make New York State a laboratory for progressive labor and social welfare legislation.

Schneiderman was active in Jewish organizations and causes throughout her career. In the years before, during, and after World War II she worked tirelessly to help Jews escape from Europe. She made speeches, wrote letters, and solicited the involvement of both labor leaders and such famous refugees from Nazism as Albert Einstein to raise

awareness of the persecution and slaughter of European Jewry. Convinced by these events of the importance of establishing a Jewish homeland, Schneiderman also marshaled her considerable rhetorical power and persuasive skills to raise funds to establish the Leon Blum Colony, a Labor-Zionist settlement in Palestine.

Born on April 16, 1882, into an observant Jewish family in Saven, Poland, Rose Schneiderman was the daughter of a tailor (Samuel) and a *jane-of-all-trades*, her mother Deborah. At a time when one census taker estimated that the vast majority of East European Jews were without obvious means of making a living, Deborah Schneiderman, like many intrepid East European Jewish housewives, did whatever she could to put food on her family table. Rose adored her mother and would later cite her example as modeling strong, independent womanhood. Samuel and Deborah both were unusual among their peers in believing that girls as well as boys deserved an education. They enrolled four-year-old Rose in a previously all-male *kheydr* (religious school). Samuel and Deborah moved the family to the city of Chelm when Rose was six so she could attend public school.

Three years later, in 1890, the family migrated to the United States, settling like so many other East European Jews in New York City. But the family fell on dismal times when Samuel died of meningitis two years later, leaving Deborah pregnant and with three children to support. The bereft mother took in boarders, sewed and washed for neighbors, and did repairs in the building in exchange for a free apartment. In spite of it all, however, she could not earn enough to adequately feed and clothe her children. And so, for a time, Rose and her siblings were forced to live in a home for poor children. Deborah Schneiderman worked round the clock to save enough to bring her children home. And when she did, she insisted that they attend school during the day rather than finding jobs themselves. Still it was not enough, and at thirteen, after Deborah lost her night job, Rose was forced to leave school permanently to help support the family.

Though she was now a single mother, often reduced to feeding her children on charity food baskets, Deborah Schneiderman wanted Rose to find a “respectable” job in a department store, where she could work in clean clothing and hopefully meet a middle-class man to marry. Rose Schneiderman would share her mother's obsession with respectability. Indeed, that preoccupation persisted for the

rest of her life, ultimately drawing her away from the socialism of her youth to working with the Democratic Party.

After three years as a salesgirl, Schneiderman asked a friend to train her for a better-paying job as a capmaker. The young girl's wages greatly improved, but she was horrified by the stark inequalities she found among garment workers. Women were consigned to the lowest-paying work, while the best-paying, highest-skill jobs were reserved for men. Schneiderman simply could not remain quiet in the face of such obvious unfairness. When she complained, older women in the shop began to teach her the fundamentals of socialist trade unionism—interpreted through a decidedly feminist lens.

Rose Schneiderman learned fast and, at the tender age of twenty-one, convinced enough of the women in her shop to join the fledgling United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers' Union that the union was able to charter a new local. The East European Jewish immigrant men who made up the bulk of the union leadership were openly skeptical of the ability of young women to organize. Still, they were impressed by Schneiderman. Within a year, they and the shop floor capmakers Schneiderman had organized voted for her to become a union officer. She was the first woman elected to national office in an American labor union.

Schneiderman organized a general strike of New York's capmakers in 1905. The middle-class leaders of the New York WTUL—an organization Progressive-era women reformers established to provide support to women workers attempting to unionize—took notice. The WTUL was still new and had little credibility at that time among the women workers it sought to help. Schneiderman gave the League something essential—a sense of legitimacy among the immigrant working class. The reformers, college students, and settlement house workers who had created the League gave Schneiderman her introduction to organized feminism. They introduced her to the woman suffrage movement. Before long, she had become one of the movement's most electrifying speakers, helping to draw working-class women to a cause they had long viewed with suspicion.

Grateful for her tireless work on behalf of women workers, the members of the New York WTUL elected Schneiderman vice president in 1906. Recognizing the young immigrant's talent, German Jewish philanthropist Irene Lewisohn offered to pay for Schneiderman to attend college. Reluctantly, Schneiderman declined, saying that she could not accept a privilege afforded to so few working

women. She wished, as Socialist Eugene V. Debs put it, to rise with her class, not above it. In 1908, however, Schneiderman did accept Lewisohn's offer to pay her salary when she became chief organizer for the NYWTUL. During the next eleven years, Schneiderman would play a key role in organizing, inspiring, and sustaining a wave of unrest and strikes among women workers that, by 1919, had brought 40 percent of all women garment workers into trade unions. It was a remarkable feat for any industry, especially one dominated by women—still seen by most labor leaders as unorganizable.

Schneiderman's role in sparking the women's labor rebellion of the 1910s began with a furious burst of organizing in Manhattan garment shops that laid the groundwork for the 1909 general strike of New York shirtwaist makers. That strike, the largest by women in the United States to that time, brought 30,000–40,000 young women workers (mostly East European Jews) into the streets of Lower Manhattan and breathed life into the tiny International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILWGU). It also brought the NYWTUL to the attention of the national media. Still, the strike generated tensions between working-class Jews like Schneiderman and her fellow-organizer Pauline Newman, and the middle-class Protestant women who dominated the League. League secretary Helen Marot described Jewish women as too fervent and militant, and urged the League board to devote its resources to "American" girls. Angered by this not-so-subtle stereotyping, Schneiderman resigned from the League. Over the next few years, she would resign and rejoin the League numerous times.

During one of those periods away from the League, from 1914 to 1916, Schneiderman took a job as general organizer for the ILGWU—a position previously held by her close friend, Lithuanian Jewish immigrant Pauline Newman. She encountered many of the same frustrations that Newman had described. The union was run by fellow East European Jews, men who distrusted women organizers and had little taste for organizing women workers. Feeling that the union leadership had time and again undermined her efforts, Schneiderman resigned from that job in 1917 to become chair of the Industrial Section of the New York Woman Suffrage Party.

Schneiderman was an early convert to woman suffrage, at least by the standards of the Jewish working-class in New York. She had begun speaking at suffrage rallies for the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women in 1907.

The members of the Equality League were largely professional women, and Schneiderman hoped to draw industrial workers into the movement. Toward that end, in 1911, she cofounded the Wage Earners League for Woman Suffrage—the first suffrage organization made up primarily of industrial workers. Speaking on behalf of that group, she set out on a tour through the Midwest in 1912, to convince union men to vote for state-based suffrage referenda. In 1917, her whirlwind of speaking engagements and the network of union women she mobilized on behalf of the Industrial Section of the Woman Suffrage Party contributed greatly to the passage of woman suffrage in New York three years before it became federal law.

After that successful campaign, Schneiderman returned to the New York League, whose members elected her their president. It was a post she would hold for thirty-two years. By the time the United States entered World War I, Schneiderman was nationally known in labor, feminist, and socialist politics. In 1920, the Labor Party ran her for the U.S. Senate from New York. The party, which sought to increase the power of the U.S. trade union movement by electing labor leaders to political office, had branches in most industrial states. Though she did not win, nor did she expect to, Schneiderman used the campaign to articulate what WTUL colleague Mildred Moore called an “industrial feminist” agenda. Schneiderman called for the full representation of women in politics and labor, for nonprofit housing for workers, better schools, publicly owned power utilities and staple food markets, and publicly funded health and unemployment insurance for all Americans. Conservative politicians considered her a subversive, and, in the early 1920s, she was investigated by both New York State and federal agencies. But she was viewed much more positively by a pair of rising stars in New York Democratic politics, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt.

Newly engaged in urban reform politics, Eleanor Roosevelt joined the New York WTUL in 1922. She took an immediate liking to Schneiderman, and the two launched a friendship that deepened over many years, lasting until Mrs. Roosevelt’s death in 1963. Throughout the 1920s, Schneiderman was a regular guest both at Eleanor Roosevelt’s New York apartment and at Franklin’s Hyde Park estate. Eleanor Roosevelt was there to celebrate in 1926 when Schneiderman was elected president of the National WTUL—a position she held until her retirement in 1950. When Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected governor of New

York in 1928, the immigrant labor activist became a close advisor.

In 1933, President Roosevelt brought Schneiderman to Washington to work for the National Recovery Administration. She became secretary of labor for New York State in 1937. These were heady experiences for a Polish Jewish immigrant whose formal schooling had ended at age thirteen. In both posts, Schneiderman fought to gain for blacks the same minimum wages as whites, and to extend Social Security benefits to domestic workers. She also sought to erase the gap in pay between men and women by lobbying for comparable worth and equal pay legislation.

Schneiderman distinguished herself in the 1930s for another reason as well—she was nearly alone both in Washington and among prominent white labor officials in her efforts to reach out to and organize African American women workers. Remaining active in the WTUL, Schneiderman tried to use state legislation to aid union organizing drives among hotel maids, beauty parlor workers, and waitresses. Her long campaign on behalf of New York’s laundry workers—almost all of whom were African American—ultimately resulted in mass unionization and dramatically improved wages, hours, and working conditions for one of the most exploited groups of urban workers. Schneiderman also sought to bring domestic workers under the protection of the state and tried to extend New Deal regulations to include exploited women workers in the territory of Puerto Rico.

During those same years, Schneiderman was frenzied in her efforts to rescue European Jews and to resettle them in the United States or Palestine. Albert Einstein wrote, in a letter that became one of her prize possessions, “It must be a source of deep gratification to you to be making so important a contribution to rescuing our persecuted fellow Jews from their calamitous peril and leading them toward a better future” (Orleck 1995). Instead, Schneiderman tormented herself, only able to see how few she was ultimately able to rescue.

Schneiderman retired from public life in 1950. She never married, but she did have a twenty-year relationship with Irish immigrant labor activist Maud Swartz, who died suddenly in 1937. Schneiderman never had another long-term relationship. However, she remained on extremely close terms with her lifelong friend and fellow garment organizer Pauline Newman, with Eleanor Roosevelt, and with other League stalwarts, including National League

secretary Elisabeth Christman. Schneiderman died on August 11, 1972, at the age of ninety.

Rose Schneiderman passed away at the dawn of the 1970s women's movement, but she was quickly adopted as one of its heroines. Her call for Bread and Roses was taken up by a new generation of women labor activists, and her insistence that workers deserved safety, subsistence, and respect is still being debated in courts, legislatures, and schools. Schneiderman deserves a great share of the credit for the government protections that millions of American workers have enjoyed since the mid-1930s. And just as important, she deserves to be remembered for her vision of Bread and Roses. Every time those words are uttered in contemporary labor struggles—by Central American janitors, Asian garment workers, and African American public service employees—the spirit of Rose Schneiderman lives on.

*Annelise Orleck*

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## Toni Sender (1888–1964)

### Vocal Hitler Opponent

Toni Sender, a Jewish anti-fascist and Reichstag deputy who was forced to flee Germany in 1933 when the Nazis assumed power, became after her arrival in the United States one of the earliest and most prominent public spokespersons against the Hitler regime in this country. After World War II, as representative of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the International Confedera-

tion of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) before the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council, Sender repeatedly directed the world's attention to the violation of workers' rights in Communist and fascist dictatorships. In Weimar Germany, Sender was editor of major Social Democratic Party (SPD) and trade union periodicals, as well as a leading women's rights activist. Nazi propaganda minister Josef Goebbels nicknamed her "The Little Woman with the Big Mouth," and the Nazis marked her for death. Sender escaped in disguise to Czechoslovakia and became a permanent resident of the United States in 1936.

Born in the Rhineland town of Biebrich, Germany, to affluent Orthodox Jewish parents, Sender rebelled as a child against their demand for "absolute obedience" (Sender 1939). Although not observant, Sender identified strongly as a Jew throughout her life. As a child and adolescent in Biebrich, she studied Hebrew and Jewish history for eight years. After completing commercial high school in Frankfurt, Sender began work at fifteen in a real estate office, and at eighteen joined the SPD. In 1910, she moved to Paris, where she founded a socialist women's group.

The outbreak of World War I forced Sender to return to Germany, where she immediately adopted an antiwar position. She briefly nursed wounded soldiers, but quit because she did not wish to make men fit for battle again. With other antiwar activists, Sender participated in the formation of the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD) in 1917. She helped lead the November 1918 revolution in Frankfurt. Heading the USPD's national ticket, Sender was elected to the first postwar Reichstag in 1920, the youngest of forty women chosen. She served in the Reichstag until the Nazis came to power in 1933. Erika and Klaus Mann, Thomas Mann's daughter and son, identified Sender as "one of the few women who have ever played a political part in Germany" (Mann and Mann 1939).

Sender opposed USPD affiliation with the Communist International and rejoined the SPD in 1922, assuming a very active role in both the women's and labor movements. She edited the SPD's women's magazine, *Frauenwelt* (*Women's World*), from 1928 until the Nazis suppressed it in 1933, as well as the shop councils' magazine of the metal workers' union from 1920 to 1933.

When the Nazis first attained significant strength in the Reichstag in 1930, constituting a 107-member bloc, they made Sender—a Jew, a woman, and a Social Democrat—a prime target for abuse. Sender responded to the

brownshirted deputies' attempt to disrupt her speaking by "bitterly denounc[ing] them" from the floor, looking "only in their direction" (Sender 1939). During the 1932 election campaign, the Nazis informed her constituents that she was a prostitute. In Dresden the Nazis dropped stench bombs from the balconies around the platform on which Sender was to speak, causing many in the audience to faint. But although the stench bombs badly affected her throat, Sender was determined to thwart the Nazis' efforts and delivered her speech. In early 1933 the Nazis in Dresden plastered Sender's picture over the entire front page of their newspaper *Judenspiegel* (*Jews' Mirror*), which suggested that she should be killed. Sender recalled that during this time the Nazis created a "pogrom atmosphere . . . around [her] name" (Sender 1939).

Driven into exile in Antwerp, Belgium, Sender made extended lecture tours in the United States during 1934 and 1935, providing Americans with one of the first eyewitness descriptions of Germany under Nazi rule. The Nazi government revoked her German citizenship in March 1934. Sender edited a Flemish socialist daily in Antwerp until 1935.

Becoming a permanent resident of the United States in 1936, Sender continued her agitation against Nazi Germany, which she tirelessly warned posed a critical danger to the West. In 1935 she had condemned Nazi oppression of women in the American socialist publication *New Leader* and in an address on New York's Yiddish radio station WEVD. Sender declared that the Nazi regime was forcing women out of the professions and replacing women factory workers with men on a massive scale. She emphasized that the Nazis conceived of only one role for women—to marry and have as many children as they could. From May 1936 until the German invasion of Belgium and France in May 1940, Sender reported on American political developments for publications in Brussels and Paris. In May 1941, Sender formed a picket line with two other exiled SPD Reichstag deputies to protest the screening of the Nazi propaganda film *Sieg im Westen* (*Victory in the West*) at a theater in New York's heavily German American Yorkville section. The film celebrated the German armed forces' conquest of France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg in 1940.

During the early 1940s, Sender held workers' education classes in New York for European anti-fascist refugees, which were designed to prepare them for participation in

the American labor movement. She placed many of the exiles, who had extensive experience as labor officials, with union locals across the country, where they assisted in research and organizing work. During World War II, Sender worked for the Office of Strategic Services, and she became a U.S. citizen in 1943.

As AFL (1947–1950) and ICFTU (1950–1956) representative at the UN, Sender demanded an investigation of slave labor in the Soviet Union, which she charged constituted an essential part of the Soviet economy. Testifying before the UN Economic and Social Council in 1949, and again in 1950 and 1951, she provided documentation to support her claim that Soviet labor camp inmates were brutally mistreated. Drawing in part on information supplied by survivors of the camps, Sender demonstrated that scurvy was widespread among inmates because of their meager diet, that prisoners were forced to work in extreme cold in threadbare clothing, that Soviet authorities sent children to toil in the camps and sexually abused female inmates, and that they sometimes tortured prisoners to death. Sender noted that the Soviet government had designated Zionists and members of the Jewish Bund as among the so-called criminals to be deported for forced labor in the camps. In 1955 Sender also called on the UN to take action against Spain's fascist government for abolishing free trade unions and carrying out mass arrests of labor leaders.

During the 1950s, Sender lobbied on behalf of women's issues in international forums. As ICFTU representative at sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, she denounced the denial in many countries of equal access for girls to secondary education and vocational training. She advocated equal pay for equal work as a matter of social justice—not only because without it, women constituted low-wage competition that undermined men's earning power. Sender was also a principal lecturer at an ICFTU workers' education project in France, instructing women trade unionists from twenty-four countries how to organize women workers and on the special problems they confronted in the workplace.

After her retirement as ICFTU representative at the UN, Sender applied for a research fellowship that the Conference on Jewish National Claims against Germany offered to victims of the Nazis. Sender proposed to study the relationship of Jews to the UN, including how that organization addressed the issues of antisemitism, genocide, and

displaced persons. During the 1950s, Sender served on the Advisory Committee of the World Jewish Congress.

Sender remained single throughout her life, rejecting one marriage proposal in 1914 because it would be “too severe a strain” upon her “strong sense of independence” (Sender 1939). When she died in 1964, AFL–CIO president George Meany praised her as a “warrior for justice and human dignity all her life” (*AFL–CIO News*, July 4, 1964).

*Stephen H. Norwood*

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## Albert Shanker (1928–1997)

### Educator, Trade Unionist, and Human Rights Advocate

Albert Shanker helped create the modern American teacher union movement in New York City, defended it against attacks from left-wing antisemites and right-wing ideologues, and promoted innovative public school reform as president of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) in New York and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) nationally. His combative style, willingness to engage in illegal teacher strikes, and philosophy of “tough liberalism” put him at odds with both traditional liberals and conservatives, prompting Woody Allen to spoof him in the 1973 movie, *Sleeper*. Allen’s character awakens two hundred years in the future to learn that civilization was destroyed when “a man by the name of Albert Shanker got hold of a nuclear warhead” (Berger 1997). Over time, however, he became known as a thoughtful statesman on education issues, and he championed a number of leading reforms that

help shape public education today, including education standards, testing, and accountability; teacher professionalism; and public school choice and charter schools.

Albert Shanker was born on September 14, 1928, to Russian Jewish immigrants, Mamie (Burko) Shanker, a seamstress, and Morris Shanker, a newspaper deliverer. One of the only Jewish families in a rough Irish and Italian neighborhood in Queens, the Shankers faced intense anti-semitism. An outcast because of his religion, the eight-year-old Al was delighted when a group of neighborhood boys asked him if he wanted to join their club. He was blindfolded for what they said was a club initiation—and then had a noose placed around his neck and was hoisted in a tree. The attempted lynching was only stopped by the intervention of a neighbor.

Public education provided a way out for Shanker, who began school knowing only Yiddish, but soon excelled and was admitted to the selective Stuyvesant High School, where he participated in debate. Shanker attended the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, where he encountered additional discrimination. When he looked for housing, he was faced with signs reading, “No Jews or Negroes wanted.” Shanker became a member of the Socialist Club, was active in the Congress of Racial Equality, and participated in sit-ins to integrate the local theaters and restaurants. In 1949, he returned to New York and began study for a doctorate in philosophy at Columbia University in a department that was filled with acolytes of John Dewey. By 1952, however, having completed all the requirements save for his dissertation, Shanker ran out of money, and he took a job as a substitute math teacher in the New York City public schools.

Struck by the low pay and the autocratic powers of the school principal, Shanker soon joined the Teachers Guild, a socialist but anti-Communist teacher trade union affiliated with the AFL–CIO. The Guild was one of 106 teacher unions and social clubs in New York City, divided by teaching level, race, ethnicity, religion, and region. Shanker worked with other Guild members to bring together various factions and create the UFT, affiliated with the AFT and the AFL–CIO. In the early 1960s, the UFT won the first collective bargaining agreement for teachers in the country, defeating forces like the nation’s largest teacher organization, the National Education Association (NEA), which held that it was “unprofessional” for teachers to be in unions, to engage in collective bargaining, and to strike.



*Albert Shanker, president of the United Federation of Teachers, presents a check to Martin Luther King Jr. for the Alabama voter registration drive. (Library of Congress)*

Shanker's talents as a debater, public speaker, and organizer were recognized by his colleagues in 1964, when he was elected president of the UFT. Shanker and the UFT were leading progressive forces in trade unionism and supported the August 1963 March on Washington, despite the AFL-CIO's refusal to do so. Shanker participated in a march for voting rights in Selma, Alabama, and the UFT helped set up Freedom Schools for black children in Mississippi. In 1967, Shanker led a successful fourteen-day walkout of teachers striking for better wages, smaller class sizes, stricter school discipline policies, and a special program for teaching in ghetto schools. He was jailed for fifteen days for violating New York's anti-strike law for public employees. Martin Luther King Jr. sent Shanker a symbolic \$10 check for bail.

In 1968, however, Shanker was at the center of a highly controversial teachers strike that split the traditional coalition of blacks, Jews, and labor in New York. Frustrated with

the pace of racial integration, and with the level of black student achievement, some African Americans sought to establish greater "community control" over education. With the help of the Ford Foundation, New York City established three demonstration projects to provide greater community input in schooling, including one experiment in the predominantly minority Brooklyn neighborhood of Ocean Hill-Brownsville. In May 1968, the local governing board, which was predominantly black, attempted to dismiss eighteen white educators (and one black mistakenly included), most of whom were Jewish. When the community board failed to provide an adequate rationale for the dismissals, Shanker engaged in a series of three strikes, lasting a total of fifty-five days, leaving more than 1 million New York City public school students out of school through November 1968.

While Shanker was attacked as a racist for opposing members of the black community on the issue, in fact the

controversy revealed a virulent strain of racism and anti-semitism among some extremists in the black community. Crowds of community control activists sought to block white teachers from teaching in ghetto schools, some of them yelling antisemitic epithets. At one point, a black teacher appeared on a radio program and read a poem from a student that was dedicated to Shanker: “Hey, Jew boy, with the yarmulke on your head / You pale faced Jew boy—I wish you were dead” (Podair 2002).

At a time when New York’s Mayor John Lindsay was willing to go along with virtually any demand in order to prevent a riot, Shanker stood firm against the notion that teachers could be fired without due process, and against a racial determinism that said black children needed black teachers. In the coming years, Shanker opposed efforts by liberals to provide preferences to minority candidates in education and employment. In doing so, he differed from many conservatives, who offered no alternative to quotas. Shanker championed, among other things, a program of career ladders to help teachers’ aides (most of them black and Latino) go back to school and get the training required to become full-fledged teachers.

In December 1970, hoping to improve the public’s view of teacher unionism, Shanker decided to purchase advertisement space in the Week in Review Section of the Sunday *New York Times*. He called the column “Where We Stand,” and for more than a quarter of a century, until his death, Shanker produced some 1,300 articles on topics involving education, trade unionism, foreign policy, human rights, and politics. The column was widely read among educators and policymakers and was indexed by the *Times* like regular news stories.

In 1974, Shanker was elected president of the national American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and also remained as president of the New York UFT for another decade. In 1975, he played a key role during New York City’s fiscal crisis. With the city on the edge of bankruptcy, it was Shanker’s decision to purchase city bonds with the UFT’s pension funds that kept the city from defaulting.

Shanker was also active in the AFL–CIO, serving on the executive council and, eventually, as chairman of the international affairs committee. A strong anti-Communist, Shanker took a hard line during the 1970s and 1980s, when many liberals were more open to relations with the Soviet Union and China. He joined the board of the National Endowment for Democracy, which was established during

Ronald Reagan’s presidency, to help build democratic institutions (including trade unions) abroad. During this period, Shanker hired at the UFT and AFT many members of the Social Democrats, USA, a small organization that took a hard-line anti-Communist approach on foreign policy, was skeptical of racial quotas, and favored pro-union economic policies. In a departure from the predictable story line, in which a former Jewish socialist turns neoconservative, Shanker sided with neoconservatives only on foreign policy and certain social policies, but never yielded on his support of trade unionism, progressive health care policy, the minimum wage, and the like. Shanker angered conservatives, for example, in the 1980 Democratic presidential primaries, when his union endorsed Ted Kennedy as its candidate.

During an era when union membership sank nationally, Shanker saw the number of AFT members rise from 71,000 in 1960 to nearly 1 million at the time of his death in 1997, making the AFT one of the largest unions in the AFL–CIO. But as teacher power grew, it provoked a rising chorus of complaints that teacher unions were concerned primarily with parochial interests as opposed to the education of children. Teacher unions were chided for opposing education choice for parents, efforts to fire inadequate teachers, and systems of rewarding high-quality teachers with extra pay.

In the 1980s, Shanker grew concerned that, if teacher unions did not respond to these arguments, public education itself might not ultimately survive, and he began an effort to fashion a new, broader brand of teacher unionism. This new approach stood in sharp contrast to the strategy of the larger teacher union, the NEA, which followed the AFT’s lead on collective bargaining in the late 1960s, but which now denied that there were problems in education and resisted reforms.

The pivotal moment came in 1983, when the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued its report, *A Nation at Risk*. The NEA and most of the education establishment blasted the report, which warned of a “rising tide of mediocrity” in American public schools. But Shanker chose to embrace the document, arguing that its critique of public education was basically right, and that reforms were necessary to save public schooling.

In a series of speeches in 1985, Shanker advocated a host of education reforms that were previously unthinkable for the head of a union to embrace. In response to the demand for private school vouchers, Shanker proposed in-

stead that choice be provided to parents within the public school system and through the creation of charter schools, publicly funded schools that are given greater educational flexibility than traditional public schools are allowed. To counter the idea that unions protected bad teachers, Shanker endorsed the practice of “peer review,” in which teams of high-quality teachers would evaluate their colleagues, provide counseling and support for struggling teachers, and terminate contracts with those who did not improve. To those who called for “merit pay” for teachers, Shanker proposed the creation of the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, which set out a system for recognizing outstanding teachers, whom local districts could reward with greater pay. Most important, Shanker pushed hard for the creation of a system of education standards, testing, and accountability, a version of which is now part of federal law.

These reforms were all meant to save a system of public schooling that Shanker believed was absolutely essential in a democracy. He wrote, “Whenever the problems of school reform seem especially tough, I think about this. I think about what public education gave me—a kid who couldn’t even speak English when I entered first grade. I think about what it has given me and can give to countless numbers of other kids like me. And I know that keeping public education together is worth whatever it takes” (Shanker 1997).

When he died in 1997, Shanker was eulogized by then-president Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore as a giant in the fields of labor, education, and civil rights. He was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Journalist Sara Mosle called Shanker “our Dewey, the most important American educator in half a century” (Mosle 1997).

*Richard D. Kahlenberg*

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# American Jews in Business and Philanthropy

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## Jewish Department Store Magnates

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By 1880 for shoppers across America, the department store, the fullest realization of the nation's retailing prowess, offered under one roof a panoply of goods, ranging from ordinary clothing and household goods to party dresses and luxury items. Legions of such stores were established by German Jewish entrepreneurs who immigrated to America in the mid-nineteenth century and started out invariably as peddlers. Such were the origins of a long and venerable procession of recognizable names including Bloomingdale's, Abraham & Straus, Macy's, Gimbel's, Altman's, Stern's, and Bergdorf Goodman in New York alone.

While some future department store magnates settled in New York, others settled elsewhere, like the Filenes of Boston, the Kaufmanns of Pittsburgh, the Lazaruses of Columbus, the Garfinkels of Washington, D.C., the Riches of Atlanta, the Goldsmiths of Memphis, the Neimans and Marcuses of Dallas, the Goldwaters of Arizona, the Gumps and Magnins of California, the Maiers and Franks of Oregon, and many others. Fundamentally altering the fabric of the nation's urban and suburban landscape, collectively they transformed the very scope and definition of shopping. By the early part of the twentieth century, department stores run by German Jewish entrepreneurs existed

in practically every city and town of any significance in America.

Though Jews cannot say they invented the department store—Lord & Taylor, A. T. Stewart, Jordan Marsh, and other Yankee entrepreneurs deserve credit for that—they can lay claim to its development from an oasis for the well-heeled into a far more democratic institution where, in tasteful surroundings, a wide variety of commodities reflecting taste, style, and practicality were made accessible to rich and poor alike. Their success arose in no small measure due to well-conceived advertising and marketing campaigns that eventually became the industrial norm. Excelling not only as businessmen who perfected competitive, one-stop shopping, but also as philanthropists and civic leaders who cultivated social responsibility, the German Jewish entrepreneurial elite and their descendants occupied positions of honor and trust, both in the Jewish community and in society at large.

The immigrant “founding fathers” were part of a mass migration of German Jews to America that began in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars and continued into the late nineteenth century. The migration was precipitated by the defeat of Napoleon, whose progressive policies toward Jews were replaced in Germany by harsh reactionary laws, such as barring Jews from holding land or confining them to specific crafts and trades. In addition, Jews were subject to capricious taxation designed to keep them poor and harsh

legislation that prevented younger sons from marrying. All this was a throwback to pre-Napoleonic times. To survive, Jews were willing to make a greater effort, to put up with more, to take chances, whether this meant accepting a lower rate of profit, entering territories eschewed by others as too dangerous, or taking risks with new methods and ideas. Although the future magnate did not come to America with much ready capital, “unlike the peasant, he appreciated the significance of income as a potential source of further income” (Supple 1997).

As Europe grew increasingly inhospitable to Jewish life, a rapidly expanding United States encouraged the migration of European settlers, regardless of their religious backgrounds. “We hold out to the people of other countries an invitation to come and settle among us as members of our rapidly expanding family,” President John Tyler declared to Jews and Gentiles alike in an 1841 message to Congress, “and for the blessings which we offer them we require of them to look upon our country as their country, and to unite with us in the great task of preserving our institutions, and thereby perpetuating our liberties.” These words and others like them signaled a new chapter in the history of the Jewish people. Here was a place where no official distinctions were made between Jews and Christians. Tyler’s thoughts were in the air and word traveled fast to Germany. By the Civil War, the population of German Jews in America, fewer than ten thousand in 1830, had mushroomed to over a hundred thousand.

Future department-store magnates were part of a migration of tens of thousands of German Jews who came to America in the middle of the nineteenth century and fanned out across the nation as peddlers. Often Jewish wholesalers who had arrived earlier got them started by providing them, on credit, with dry goods, notions, clothing, tinware, toys—whatever they could carry—to find new markets for their merchandise. Adam Gimbel, Lazarus Straus, Isaac Sanger, Isaac Magnin, and other immigrant budding entrepreneurs discovered in their peddlers’ packs the ingredients for future department stores. By 1860, a majority of America’s peddlers were of German Jewish origin. Accompanying other settlers by covered wagon, on riverboats, or on foot, Jews ventured where none had gone before. Wherever business proved profitable, a Jewish wife and family were likely to follow. In a matter of a few years a Jewish community would form out of a cluster of downtown enterprises, one or more of which would develop into

a full-fledged department store. So it was in countless cities up and down the Atlantic seaboard, along the Great Lakes, and on the major tributaries of the South, the Southwest, and the far West. Wherever a distribution point of any consequence existed from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon, a German Jewish department store was sure to follow.

As it was for Lazarus Straus, peddling was invariably the first step. Leaving behind a wife (who was also his first cousin) and four children, Lazarus departed his native Bavaria for the United States in 1852 to become a pack peddler in rural Georgia. In less than two years Lazarus owned his own store in the town of Talbotton, where his family joined him in August 1854. Everyone contributed to the family’s survival. “The children made candles, helped in the vegetable garden, and at the store, which was open until 9:30 every night” (Harris 1994).

Lazarus and his sons prospered by exchanging agricultural products for manufactured items such as clothing, household wares, and tools, as their forefathers had done in Germany for generations. During the Civil War Lazarus’s eighteen-year-old son Isidor served as a Civil War agent in Europe, where he labored at selling Confederate bonds while arranging for ships to break through the increasingly effective Yankee blockade. Returning after the war with \$10,000 in gold, Isidor encouraged his parents to move to New York by buying them a townhouse on West 49th Street, where they lived comfortably while pursuing economic prospects. On Chambers Street one day Lazarus noticed a sign reading “Cauldwell’s Crockery.” Recognizing the name of a former supplier, Lazarus went in, introduced himself, and established a rapport with Cauldwell that led to Lazarus’s buying the business and taking a three-year lease on the building at \$3,000 a year.

In 1866, with the help of Isidor, the crockery firm of L. Straus and Son came into being. It soon expanded to include wholesale and retail operations in crockery as well as pottery, glass, and bric-a-brac. In 1874, the Strauses leased a 25-by-100-foot space in the basement of the store of one of their customers, Captain Rowland Hussey Macy, founder in 1857 of R. H. Macy & Co. By 1874 Macy’s had become indistinguishable from other multifloor retail stores specializing in “fancy” and imported dry goods. Before the year was out, the Strauses had introduced Christmas displays and a bearded Santa. In less than a decade the Strauses were partners in the business. In 1888 Isidor and his brother Nathan took over the store.



*F. & R. Lazarus & Co., Columbus, Ohio. (American Jewish Historical Society)*

Captain Macy's business rested on two principles: "one price only" and "only cash." The Strauses continued these policies but added others of their own that were considered quite radical in their day. These included depositor accounts (DAs), a precursor of American Express, for customers who did not want to carry cash; competitive pricing; and money-back guarantees. (Macy's reputation for cheaper prices became so prevalent that it led its chief competitor to protest for years that "Nobody but nobody undersells Gimbel's.") The success of the Strauses after they took over Macy's was remarkable. In 1893 they joined forces with Abraham of Abraham & Straus. In 1902, four years after Lazarus's death, they opened what was billed as the largest department store in the world on Herald Square, where it has remained for over a century. Isidor

and his wife Ida went down on the *Titanic*, after which Nathan sold his half share in Macy's to Isidor's children, Jesse, Percy, and Herbert, who are credited with adding Macy's Window and Macy's Basement to a litany of Macy's innovations.

While Isidor's role was that of storekeeper, Nathan established the family's reputation for philanthropy. For years his chief concern was public health. Whether by campaigning for the compulsory pasteurization of milk as president of the New York Board of Health, by establishing almost three hundred milk stations throughout America, by financing Hadassah-run child welfare stations and health centers in Palestine, or by giving away almost two-thirds of his fortune during his lifetime, Nathan Straus set a high example of civic responsibility for Jewish Americans

throughout the country. "He's a great Jew," declared President William Howard Taft, "and the greatest Christian of them all."

Like Macy's, Sears, Roebuck was not founded by Jews. Rather, it was founded as a small Midwestern mail-order firm by Richard Sears, who sold half the business to Aaron Nusbaum who, in turn, sold half of his half interest to Julius Rosenwald. The son of German Jewish immigrants, Rosenwald was born in Springfield, Illinois, when Lincoln was president. After purchasing the remaining half of Nusbaum's share, Rosenwald, in collaboration with his boyhood friend Henry Goldman of the investment firm Goldman, Sachs & Co., turned Sears into a public corporation, which he headed.

By now Jewish department store families were consolidating their impressive prewar role in mass merchandising. "By the post-[World War I] era, Macy's, Gimbel's, Abraham & Straus, . . . Ohrbach's, Bergdorf Goodman, Franklin Simon, and Bloomingdale's dominated the New York market. By then, too, Macy's had become the largest department store in the world; Rich's in Atlanta, the largest department store in the South; . . . Neiman-Marcus the largest and most prestigious . . . in the Southwest" (Sachar 1992). Moving vigorously to open scores of retail outlets, by 1931 Rosenwald had advanced Sears into first place among the nation's mass-merchandising operations and among the most respected in American retail business. Like Nathan Straus, Julius Rosenwald was also a major American philanthropist, having provided more money than any other individual for the education of blacks in America, for establishing Jewish farm colonies in the Soviet Union, for interest-free loans to the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, and for the antecedents of Blue Cross.

Isaac Sanger was one of hundreds of German Jews who came to New York in the early 1850s and then went on to Texas to cash in on the cattle boom. In no time Sanger was operating a general merchandise store in McKinney, a tiny settlement four weeks by wagon from Houston. After a younger brother, Lehman, arrived to take charge of the McKinney operation, Isaac opened another store at Weatherford. After receiving a few antisemitic threats, Isaac responded generously to the fund-raising efforts of various churches in the area. After Isaac (along with his brothers Lehman and Philip) served in the Confederate Army, he and Lehman opened a store in Millican.

At the time, the economy of Texas rested largely on barter, as did the German economy of Sanger's youth. Thus, women would come to Sanger Brothers with eggs, butter, or whatever else they had to trade, while men would bring in hides, wool, or vegetables. After making a fair exchange in manufactured items for whatever was brought in, the Sanger brothers transported what they had bartered for to New Orleans to sell to a wholesaler for cash, thus making a double sale. Using their savings, the Sangers established a chain of stores, with another Sanger brother taking charge of each new venture. This was typical among emerging department-store magnates with large families.

When Dallas showed signs of becoming a major center of commerce and trade, the Sangers consolidated their operations there. Except for a store in Waco, all other establishments were closed. The Sangers had no reason to regret this move, for as Dallas prospered, so did Sanger Brothers.

Neiman-Marcus, a Dallas department store with a reputation for class, was established by two Sanger Brothers' employees. Herbert Marcus began his career as a shoe clerk at Sanger Brothers. Born in Louisville of recently arrived immigrants in 1878, at fifteen he followed his brother to Texas. At Sanger's, Herbert got to know another budding entrepreneur, Abraham Lincoln Neiman, known as Al, who promoted sales for local merchants with banners promising unbelievable bargains, brass bands, fire department parades—anything to attract attention. After marrying Herbert's sister Carrie, Al opened Neiman-Marcus in 1907 with his brother-in-law. Unlike their competitors, they opened a frankly expensive store in a cattle town well before an oil boom enriched the city. In effect, they brought a level of affluence to Texas that it had not known before. Even riskier was their insistence that their ready-made apparel would be even finer than tailor-made clothing. That they succeeded in convincing their wealthier customers of this, at the same time "attracting and keeping a large trade of middle class and working women without whom [Neiman-Marcus] could not have survived and grown" (Harris 1994), is all to their credit. They did this by buying only the most fashionable and best-quality clothing and then explaining to customers, sometimes in great detail, what made it more fashionable and better made and therefore worth every penny.

I. Magnin was a precursor of Neiman-Marcus. The store was named after Isaac Magnin, a Dutch Jew who

came to San Francisco in the 1870s with his wife Mary Ann and six children. Mary Ann, the power behind the throne, excelled at making lace-trimmed lingerie for brides. Attracting a procession of ladies, as well as some women who were not, to their humble home, Mary Ann planned, skimped, and scraped until she and her husband opened I. Magnin & Co. on Market Street, which became the carriage trade store of the city.

Economic success brought respect but not inclusion in WASP social circles. This encouraged the magnates all the more to take the lead, along with successful German Jewish financiers, in forming a German Jewish elite differentiated in background, culture, religious observance, social outlook, and activities from both middle- and working-class Jews and socially conscious gentiles. Together with their families, which were often quite large, Jewish magnates were instrumental in establishing and supporting Reform temples and ornate social clubs, philanthropic organizations, such as United Hebrew Charities and the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, and fraternal and protective societies, such as B'nai B'rith, the American Jewish Committee, and the Anti-Defamation League. All of these organizations benefited greatly from the largesse of the local department-store magnate.

Pioneer magnates as a rule occupied honored positions in the local Reform Temple, which conformed to their needs, wants, and values. The founder of American Reform Judaism, Isaac Mayer Wise, saw eye to eye with them. If the service is too long, he counseled, shorten it. If it is too foreign, change it to conform more to Protestant norms. For a people who had left Germany as pariahs to become Americans, Wise's appeal was enormous. By the end of the Civil War practically every city in the country that was blessed with a department store also boasted a Reform temple.

Being a good husband and father and raising a large family in a commodious house constituted an important part of a magnate's life. An extension of this life was the German Jewish social club. Whether it was the Harmonie in New York, the Standard in Chicago, or the Concordia in San Francisco, the social club was the place to go to smoke a good cigar and arrange everything from marriages to musicales, perhaps with a budding Richard Rodgers or Oscar Hammerstein at the piano. Every social club had a hall, and the Standard Club of Denver was no exception: "The hall provides the best appointed stage in Denver out-

side of the Tabor Opera House, and will be used for private theatricals. The reading room will be provided with all the leading papers of the country. A library fund has already been started and a large amount raised" (*Rocky Mountain News*, October 31, 1881). That by now there were scores of cities throughout America with German Jewish social clubs of this caliber or better is a testimony to the relatively high quality of life enjoyed by the magnate and his family wherever he happened to settle.

Just as the magnate's lifestyle often set a standard for his gentile peers, so did his department store set civilized standards of style and taste for his customers. In 1880 Charles Ilfeld of Santa Fe opened a western version of Wanamaker's "at a point on San Francisco Street which makes it the most prominent house on the street. Its front is handsome and imposing. Pendant from the ceiling are four elegant chandeliers supplied with handsome lamps until gas can be secured. . . . Messrs. Ilfeld & Co. have just received large quantities of dry goods, clothing, gents furnishing goods, hats, caps, boots, shoes, native wines, tobacco, cigars, staple and fancy groceries, wool and hides, country produce, hardware, plated ware, glass and chinaware, saddlery and leather, musical instruments, patent medicines, drugs, miners supplies, etc. etc." (*The Daily New Mexican*, October 18, 1880). By now there was not a single urban center of any significance in America that did not have a German Jewish-owned department store adding a touch of class, a bit of style, to an otherwise raw and colorless urban landscape. So the stores would last until the late twentieth century, by which time most of them had closed or had been bought out at a handsome profit by a local competitor or by a department store chain with a New York Stock Exchange listing, such as Associated, Federated, Allied, or Independent.

The Jewish magnates exhibited a degree of civic-mindedness unique in business circles. No one, however, outdid Rich's of Atlanta. Year after year Rich's supplied uniforms for the baseball team, musical instruments for the marching band, floats, bunting, flags, and Japanese lanterns for the parades, not to mention special equipment for "the Masonic picnic, the firemen's ball, the pig, sheep, cattle, horse, or flower show, . . . the gift of door prizes and the purchase of raffle tickets or baked goods, . . . and at least one printed program advertisement from every church, grade school, high school, ladies' book club, poetry reading society, barbershop quartet, debating league, sewing circle, and china-painting club in Atlanta" (Harris 1994).

Why did the Riches and a legion of German Jewish department store magnates do so much for their respective communities? In large part, these immigrants who had made good possessed an ancestral tradition that underscored social conscience and moral imperative. Performing acts of civic goodwill was good business and an effective way of eroding social and political barriers, as well as blurring class lines. It was also a way for the descendants of a much oppressed people to express their gratitude for the opportunity to leave their mark in the annals of American economic and social history by forever transforming the definition of shopping and by altering the very fabric of the nation's landscape.

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## Southern Jewish Retailers (1840–2000)

As Jewish merchants opened shops in small Southern towns and built elegant department stores in growing

Southern cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they encountered the racialized Southern culture. Their diverse clientele consisted of rural and urban folk from all social classes, black and white farmers, as well as city dwellers. Though eager to buy, many native-born Southern whites, steeped in Southern Protestantism, considered Jews an alien people, at once living examples of "Old Testament" figures and "Christ killers." Most rural Southerners had never met a Jew, until an immigrant Jewish peddler traveled along the back roads where their farms were located or a Jewish family arrived in town to open a store. Successful Southern Jewish retailers negotiated a place for themselves in their business communities, yet they were aware of their social marginality.

Even the wealthiest Jews experienced social exclusion and recurring antisemitism. During the 1950s and 1960s, as civil rights activism spread through the Deep South, high-profile downtown Jewish store owners who had welcomed black customers while adhering to common segregation practices, were among those targeted by economic boycotts. Rabid segregationists labeled the movement a "Jewish–Communist conspiracy," creating a significant dilemma for Jewish Southerners. White Citizens Councils mobilized resistance and even attracted a few Jewish members. By contrast, several Southern rabbis passionately advocated racial justice, marched, and negotiated for social change, while some groups of Jewish women worked for school desegregation. Yet most Southern Jews remained silent during the struggle—retailers were among those most vulnerable. Some of their businesses never recovered.

Jewish retailing took several forms in the segregated South: small general stores located in rural areas stocked with farmers' supplies (furnishing merchants); expanded dry goods, hardware, and supply stores in small towns; specialized, moderately priced stores in the working-class neighborhoods of Southern cities; and the elegant multi-floor department stores, rivaling New York's Macy's or Philadelphia's Wanamaker's. Both German and Eastern European Jews became proprietors of these family-owned businesses; many of their stores withstood the economic challenges of the Great Depression and the World Wars, lasting as independent institutions until the late twentieth century when many full-service department stores were systematically sold to national retailing conglomerates, such as Federated Department Stores. Smaller businesses often just closed.

Until then, the Jewish retailer had long remained a familiar figure in the Southern history narrative. A journalist recently interviewed Maurice Krawcheck, owner of Max's Clothing Shop in Charleston, South Carolina, as he held his Going Out of Business Sale. He had expected his sons to take over the business that his immigrant father had opened seventy years earlier, but neither was interested. Historian Stuart Rockhoff explained, "The story of Jews in the South is a story of parents who built businesses for children who did not want them. . . . the decline of the Southern Jewish retailer is part of the larger story of the decline of rural America" (Glanton 2005).

At the turn of the twentieth century, Southern retailing prospects looked promising to acculturated German Jews and to more recent immigrants from Eastern Europe, as they participated in revitalizing the Southern economy after the Civil War. Historian Lee Shai Weissbach discovered evidence of Jewish-owned department stores in small towns across the South in this era, such as S. Waxelbaum and Son in Macon, Georgia, J. Weisman and Company in Marshall, Texas, Weil Brothers and Bauer in Alexandria, Louisiana, Heinemann's Department Store in Jonesboro, Arkansas, M. Ullman and Company in Natchez, Mississippi, Simon Switzer's The Valley in Vicksburg, Mississippi, and Winner and Klein in Meridian, Mississippi. These stores prospered in towns with populations fewer than 50,000 and with Jewish populations less than 1,000, but large enough to support Jewish communal life. In her fictionalized family memoir, *The Jew Store*, Stella Suberman recalls her childhood in a small town in northwestern Tennessee where her immigrant father opened Bronson's Low-Priced Store in 1920 with credit extended by St. Louis wholesalers. As the only Jewish family in town, their success depended on the Klan's approval, though farmers and workers, black and white, enthusiastically awaited its opening.

In *The Peddler's Grandson: Growing Up Jewish in Mississippi* (1999), Edward Cohen explains how his grandfather and his brother, Rumanian immigrants, opened Cohen Brothers in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1898. They employed an aunt as the bookkeeper, and his father and two uncles worked in Cohen Brothers for the rest of their lives. Family lore claimed that during tense, antisemitic years, the elder Cohens told neighbors and customers only that they were from New York. With a vivid sense of being an outsider as a Jew, Mississippi-born Cohen relates a story repeated in several accounts of Southern Jewish merchant

families: when the Klan marched down Main Street of their towns in full regalia, Jewish merchants could often identify the members by the shoes they had sold them. In the days before shopping centers and black-owned stores, Cohen Brothers became a gathering spot for white working-class and black families, he explained, because its merchandise was moderately priced. Most customers purchased goods on credit negotiated with Cohen's father, based on carefully recorded credit histories.

Although neither Cohen's nor Suberman's mother regularly worked in the store, many wives and daughters shared the hard work of storekeeping. "Jewish women could . . . be found behind the counter far more often than on the pedestal," observed James Hagy, historian of early Charleston's Jewish community (Rosengarten 2002). David Polikoff opened a dry goods store in Abbeville, South Carolina, in 1900. As the store expanded, it became a full-fledged department store with saleswomen trained by Polikoff women. Polikoff's served generations of farmers in rural South Carolina and Georgia. When David Polikoff's son and business heir, Myer, died in 1986, his wife Rosa managed their store until her death in 2000. When Richmond's store magnate William Thalheimer opened his first store in 1842, his wife Mary became the buyer. Eli Evans recounted that he worked in Evans' United Dollar Store in Durham, North Carolina, during busy times from age nine on and that his parents shared the responsibilities for managing the store. Durham historian Leonard Rogoff discovered records of several other multigenerational family stores and evidence of women's employment in retailing in the early twentieth century. The local newspaper described Carry Levy, a widow, who owned a notions store as a "woman of fine taste and an expert buyer." Carrie Kronheimer and Birdie Lehman worked as buyers and managers at their brother's department store.

According to Durham city directories, in 1902 approximately 70 percent of Durham's Jews were employed in retail trades, although by 1938 the number had dropped to 54 percent, as Jews branched out into manufacturing and the professions (Rogoff 2001). By the 1960s Durham's new suburban malls undercut the Main Street Jewish merchants. Some reestablished themselves in the new malls, while others sold their stores and found new ways to earn a living or moved away.

As they built grand department stores in larger Southern cities, Jewish merchants utilized the most innovative

technology, selling strategies, and techniques for maintaining a loyal sales force. They advertised widely in local newspapers, including black community newspapers. Birmingham department store owner Louis Pizitz, for example, introduced a one-price policy in his grand store, so that salespeople and customers were not required to bargain. At his Grand Opening in 1900, newspaper ads proclaimed "Our Ready-Made Department is one of the handsomest in the city and comprises everything that is nobby and stylish." By 1937, Pizitz had seventy-four departments and 750 employees (Elowitz 1974).

Sanger Brothers in Dallas opened in 1872 with a doorman who greeted customers and with gaslights blazing. They installed electricity in 1883 as soon as electrical power came to Dallas. They provided free home delivery, an economy basement, and an escalator by 1912. As one of the first stores in Dallas to hire women as salesclerks, they introduced a sales training program, a night school for employees, and an employee savings and loan program. Because the Sanger Brothers were sensitive to employment discrimination against Jews, they never turned away a Jewish applicant for a job. Goldsmith Brothers Department Store in Memphis, which opened in the 1870s, was also known for boldness in merchandising, careful supervision of employees in manners and skillful selling, basement sales, and the Spirit of Christmas parade, a local tradition that lasted until the 1960s.

Rich's of Atlanta, founded in 1867, part of the rebuilding of the city, consciously cultivated a reputation as a "Southern Institution." In addition to its elaborate variety of merchandise, its distinctive trademark was its special treatment of customers, making sure that they were satisfied, no matter how outrageous a customer's demand. Store policy dictated that credit be extended liberally, that refunds be given at full price, or that exchanges be made for all merchandise, even for items not purchased at Rich's. They offered free classes in knitting, embroidery, crocheting, sewing, cooking, canning, and contract bridge. They also employed a registered nurse for employees and customers.

Nurturing Rich's Southern identity, their newspaper ads and store windows displayed appropriate attire for Atlanta's yearly horse show and debutante balls. Although the Jewish Rich family members were never invited to these exclusive affairs, they indicated their interest in and connection to Atlanta's elite society's celebrations through

these imaginative advertising strategies. They also initiated the ceremonial lighting of a fully decorated sixty-foot Christmas tree set atop the store on Thanksgiving evening, complete with local choirs singing Christmas carols.

Opening its doors in Dallas in 1907, Neiman-Marcus remains a national institution today, although it is no longer family owned. Originally the store defined itself as a high fashion specialty store with wide variety and the most exclusive lines in women's clothing, but Herbert Marcus, his sister Carrie Marcus, and her husband Al Neiman gradually added accessories, children's clothing, and menswear. The Neiman-Marcus family built unique personal relationships with customers. Each salesperson was required to keep a clientele book. As the main buyer, Carrie Marcus had an unusual sense of style and wanted the store to attract trade from middle-class and working-class women as well as the wealthy. Carrie, Herbert, and Al trained salespeople in proper language and manners to work with a variety of customers. They organized parades, introduced a nationally distributed catalogue and mail-order business, and advertised in *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*. They introduced fashion shows and art exhibits, and raised money for charity at gala events open to the public.

Many Jewish merchants across the South were keenly aware that antisemitic sentiment often lay just beneath the surface of their non-Jewish friends and colleagues. To demonstrate their respectability and commitment to their home communities, Jewish merchants frequently assumed leadership in civic affairs and joined multifaith fraternal organizations such as the Masonic lodges. "To ensure the success of both Dallas and his store," Alex Sanger, for example, was elected as an alderman, became president of the fire department, donated money to help construct a public library, and joined other prominent businessmen in organizing a state fair and exposition (Biderman 2002). Store owners also responded to public crises generously. Birmingham merchant Louis Pizitz sent truckloads of food and clothing to miners on strike in 1908. During the Depression, he turned the store into a restaurant and served Thanksgiving dinner to anyone in need.

In Atlanta, Rich's made a substantial effort to sustain Atlanta's economy in hard times. When the price of cotton dropped significantly in 1914 and 1920, the store bought bales of cotton above market prices. After World War I, they redeemed Liberty Bonds at face value, so that consumers could buy. In 1930, when the city had no money to

pay its schoolteachers, store president Walter Rich called the mayor and suggested that the city issue scrip that could be used as cash, with no obligation to the store. Rich's paid \$645,000 for the scrip and held the debt until the city raised enough money to repay it.

Leo Frank's lynching in Atlanta in 1915 haunted Southern Jews for many years. Representing the outsider, the Northern capitalist who had the power to monopolize the new South's wealth and women, the Frank case captured press attention for two years. During his trial, crowds gathered on rooftops near the courtroom and shouted, "Hang the Jew." When Frank was lynched in 1915, a photo of his lynched body became a popular souvenir postcard. Consequently, many twentieth-century Southern Jews encouraged their children to "blend" into Southern white society, to be silent on controversial issues, and to accept the values of Southern culture, including the racial status quo. They were to be Jewish, but not "too Jewish." When Rabbi Jacob Rothschild at Atlanta's famous temple, the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, urged his congregants to support desegregation of Atlanta's schools, one of his young congregants, much too young to remember the case, asked, "What, and start the Frank Case all over again?" (Rothschild 1967).

Within the segregated South, Jews had a reputation among some black leaders for treating black employees better than other Southern whites did. Jewish merchants extended credit to black people, addressed them as Mr. and Mrs., and often paid them somewhat higher wages than other whites did. Yet when the Supreme Court handed down the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (1954) desegregating public schools, it precipitated a significant crisis for many Southern Jews, especially for Jewish merchants. Black civil rights leaders expected support from local Jewish communities, but most Southern Jews refused to speak out against racial injustice, despite considerable Jewish support for the movement in other regions of the country. Black leaders expressed frustration. As Aaron Henry, NAACP president in Clarksdale, Mississippi, remarked, "In the fight for human dignity, we have never underestimated our opposition, but we have overestimated our support. We thought that naturally we would have the Jews on our side, because the enemies of the Jews were usually found in the same group that opposes us. But we don't have the Jews supporting us" (Webb 2001). A rash of synagogue bombings in the late 1950s exacerbated Jewish

fears of growing antisemitism, associated with racial unrest. Unexploded bombs were found near Reform temples in Charlotte, North Carolina, Gastonia, North Carolina, and Birmingham, Alabama. Bombs damaged an Orthodox synagogue in Miami, the Jewish community centers in Nashville, Tennessee, and Jacksonville, Florida, and the Reform Temple on Peachtree Street in Atlanta. In addition, some segregationists explicitly accused Jews of instigating and financing the black freedom struggle.

As sit-ins at segregated public facilities spread across Southern towns and cities in 1960, Atlanta University students staged a sit-in at a drugstore near the university. Despite efforts of Mayor William Hartsfield, demonstrations continued into the summer, targeting Rich's department store. Richard Rich, the store's owner, had responded quickly to requests from black customers to install more restroom facilities for them in the 1950s and had been personally generous to black institutions. Consequently, activists believed that, because Rich was Jewish, he would be most amenable to change, yet he refused to yield to demonstrators' demands. Rich admitted to civil rights leader Julian Bond that he feared that a "large cadre of anti-Semites and racists would descend upon him" (Webb 2001). As boycotts continued, Rich's black clientele returned their credit cards, and Rich's profits plummeted. Finally, after several months Rich's agreed to desegregate, and Atlanta's downtown began to flourish again.

Jewish storeowners across the South faced similar conflicts. Edward Cohen explained that his father's successful Jackson store, despite its policy of serving blacks, was on Capitol Street, the street identified by the NAACP as the street to boycott. Though his family pleaded with the NAACP not to boycott their store, it refused. After two years of boycotting, the store never regained its former profits. Cohen characterized his feelings about the civil rights movement as "tortured ambivalence," as he listened to his rabbi, Perry Nussbaum, chastise his congregants for their complacency and unwillingness to champion the black freedom struggle. Cohen's congregation sensed their own vulnerability, while his family worried about a race war in the streets of Jackson (Cohen 1999). Most Southern Jews who were at all sympathetic to the movement were "moderates" or "gradualists," according to the terminology of the era. The young northern Jews who traveled south for Freedom Summer in 1964 could not understand Southern Jews' dilemma at all, perceiving them as racists

and cowards. Cohen's sensibilities, echoed by other Southern Jewish writers, reveal the evolving historical complexity of Southern Jewish identity, politics, and lived experience that deserves further study.

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## American Jews and the Diamond Business

In the twentieth century, European Jews extended the ancient and worldwide diamond business to New York City, where they made it flourish as the largest diamond market in the world. Although some Jews who knew the diamond trade came to New York early in the twentieth century,

other Western European Jews who were able to flee persecution during and after World War II came to America to begin again. Equipped with their knowledge of the industry, they established small manufacturing shops in Manhattan, where the trade is still centered today. While diamond activity expanded to numerous centers in the United States, New York's 47th Street has persisted as the hub of the trade in this country.

Diamonds were important to Jewish rituals and beliefs long before Jews became involved in diamond trading in the first millennium. Like people everywhere, Jews were enthralled with the hard and glittery stones. Since the biblical era, wisdom and sacred texts such as the Torah were compared to diamonds and precious stones, gems were used to adorn the texts, and halachic (legal) writings documented the procedures to resolve disputes over diamonds.

Although European Jews since the Middle Ages were excluded from large numbers of occupations, many found work in the jewelry and diamond trade. While the church forbade Christians to lend money, this remained a role open to Jews, as were positions as merchants, traders, and jewelers, and other professions associated with money. Jewish jewelers and precious gem traders could use their connections with the wealthy to be successful. Although they benefited from being brokers between foreign groups, as traders in an ethnically distinct minority, their position always remained precarious (Zenner 1991).

When the first diamonds mined in the riverbeds of India in the seventeenth century reached Europe, they were so rare that they were reserved for royalty. When Jews were expelled from Spain in the Inquisition of 1492 and from Portugal in 1497, Jewish traders took their expertise to Amsterdam and helped increase the trade between India and Europe. Jews polished and traded diamonds in England, the Netherlands, and Belgium. By the nineteenth century, when Antwerp became a prime diamond center, a number of Eastern European Jews, eager to leave the *shtetl* and carve out a better life, migrated there to launch fledgling businesses. For generations, Jewish sons followed fathers into these small family firms. The predominantly Jewish trade was devastated by World War II. With the help of diamonds and other jewels to buy safe passage, Jews who were able to escape the genocide fled mainly to the United States, Palestine, South America, South Africa, Cuba, and Puerto Rico. The immigrants' commercial experience, their contacts with diamond merchants in other



*American Jews sorting diamonds. (Renée Rose Shield, Ph.D.)*

countries, and the aid of family members already settled in the United States proved invaluable in helping them establish their businesses.

Diamond trading is organized through the umbrella organization of the World Federation of Diamond Bourses (WFDB), which shares information about members, ensures uniformity of trading rules, and facilitates trading. In the United States and elsewhere, disputes are settled by elected, highly respected arbitrators who base their decisions on Talmudic principles of fairness. Each diamond bourse functions like a marketplace bazaar in which traders haggle about price and quality and come to an agreement through a handshake and the words, *mazal und brucha* (luck and blessing). Trust and personal reputation—rather than contracts—remain hallmarks of the trade.

The United States is the largest diamond market in the world, and most of the supply enters the country through New York. While India and Israel dominate the manufacture of the smallest diamonds and Antwerp is the major

distribution center, New York reigns supreme for its skilled manufacture of the finest and largest stones.

Although the New York diamond trade is more than 95 percent Jewish, it is a boisterous ethnic mix. The 47th Street diamond district includes European- and American-born Jews, as well as Jews from Iran, Israel, India, and elsewhere. They are also diverse in their degrees of religiosity, individual histories, and personalities. Though many children of the original generations of American Jewish traders chose not to enter the business, in the last few generations large numbers of younger Hasidic Jews have flocked to the trade, where they enjoy the insular work setting that respects and protects their religious beliefs. The “club” closes before sundown on Fridays, is closed on Saturdays and Jewish holidays, and contains a *shul* and a kosher restaurant. Although to outsiders, the traditionally garbed and religiously fundamentalist Hasidim—which include both Satmars and Lubavitchers—appear to dominate the trade, they do not constitute a majority. Indeed, the last few decades have also seen the introduction of

non-Jewish traders from East Asia. With the significant increase in diamond purchases by Asian consumers, larger numbers of traders are from China, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, and Thailand. Still, despite the cultural mix and the cacophony of languages, Yiddish persists as an important language of the trade. The primary guarantors of success—with those of one's own or another culture—are to be shrewd, to be considered honest, and to have the right goods at the right price.

Although a minority, women have made impressive inroads into the American trade in recent years, sometimes serving as arbitrators and frequently enjoying commercial success. The New York trade remains dominated by small family firms that often persist for generations. Older diamond traders in these families typically work into advanced old age, in part because they are cushioned by the supportive, albeit competitive, social milieu. They trade every day with people they have known intimately for many decades.

*Renée Rose Shield*

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## Julius Rosenwald (1862–1932)

### Business Leader and Philanthropist

Julius Rosenwald was one of the most prominent business leaders and philanthropists of early twentieth-century America. He was president of Sears, Roebuck from 1908 to 1924 and before the Depression amassed a fortune estimated at \$200 million. He gave away \$63 million during his lifetime and through the foundation he established in 1917 (an amount close to \$1 billion in 2006 dollars).

Rosenwald bought one-quarter of Sears, Roebuck for \$37,500 in 1895 and began work there as a vice president



*Julius Rosenwald took the mail-order business founded by Richard Sears, modernized it, and with the fortune he made engaged in extensive philanthropy. (Library of Congress)*

in 1896. He brought system and order to the mail-order company, which, when he arrived, was in a chaotic state. He oversaw the construction of a large and state-of-the-art facility west of Chicago's Loop, and, with others, developed a system whereby an order was shipped out within twenty-four hours of its receipt. In 1908, when Richard Sears resigned from the business he had founded, Rosenwald became the president of the largest retail company in the world. His management style was marked by an unusual form of governance by committee. Rosenwald and a few trusted associates, including Albert Loeb and Max Adler, made the key decisions that kept Sears at the forefront of the mail-order world. Rosenwald also showed great concern for the welfare of his workers, and in 1917 he instituted the generous profit-sharing plan that benefited millions of Sears employees throughout the twentieth century. After World War I, Rosenwald rescued Sears, Roebuck

from financial ruin by donating \$5 million of his own money to the company and by buying the land on which the Sears plant stood.

Julius Rosenwald was introduced to philanthropy by his rabbi, the noted Emil G. Hirsch, whose vision of social justice strongly appealed to him. Starting in 1904, Rosenwald began contributing to primarily local Jewish causes. In 1908, he became president of the Associated Jewish Charities, the German Jewish umbrella organization that doled out funds to a variety of organizations. One of Rosenwald's most notable achievements in Chicago was to bring about the union of the Associated Charities with a similar organization founded by Eastern European Jewish immigrants. The Jewish Charities of Chicago, founded in 1922, united these two sometimes antagonistic strands of Jewish immigration, and Rosenwald was instrumental in its creation and served as the organization's first president.

A founder of the American Jewish Committee, Rosenwald galvanized the Jewish community by a challenge grant in 1917 to aid the Jewish victims of World War I in Europe. Asked to make a lead gift to such a campaign, he pledged to donate \$1 million if an additional \$10 million could be raised. The resulting campaign, which lasted nine months, electrified not only Jews but also other groups and individuals across the nation. On an international level, Rosenwald was not a Zionist, though he once declared, quoting Jacob Schiff, that he was not an anti-Zionist but a non-Zionist. Rosenwald contributed to organizations in Israel, including an Agricultural Experiment Station near Haifa and the Technion, but he was not in favor of sending large numbers of Eastern European Jews to Palestine. He was, however, strongly attracted by a Joint Distribution Committee program to resettle Russian Jews in agricultural colonies similar to kibbutzim in the Crimea and Ukraine, and in 1926 Rosenwald pledged \$6 million toward this effort.

In addition to funding Jewish causes, Rosenwald was a notable funder of African American projects and was a major part of the movement to better relations between blacks and Jews in the early twentieth century. Through his friendship with Booker T. Washington, he assisted in funding the construction of 5,357 schools, shops, and teachers' homes throughout the rural South from 1913 to 1932. Designed as primary schools for black children, these "Rosenwald" schools lasted until integration in the 1960s. Rosenwald was inspired to assist African Americans be-

cause of what he perceived as similarities in the prejudicial treatment accorded both blacks and Jews. He came to believe that blacks were the equal of whites and should be treated as equals, a radical concept in the Jim Crow era.

The Julius Rosenwald Fund, established in 1917, was the first major American foundation to go out of existence voluntarily in accordance with the belief of its founder that each generation should give away its own money. He was opposed to what he called perpetuities—foundations that exist forever, and in 1912, with a great show of publicity, he gave away \$687,500 to a variety of causes with the slogan "Give While You Live."

*Peter M. Ascoli*

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## Jacob H. Schiff (1847–1920)

### Wealthy Investment Banker and Philanthropist

Jacob Henry Schiff was recognized internationally as the foremost leader of the American Jewish community. He owed his position to a confluence of factors: a Midas-like touch in the financing of railroads, a hypersensitivity to the Jewish image and Jewish cultural interests, and a fearless and aggressive nature that drove him to attack a host of problems, from the medical needs of new immigrants to the struggle for Jewish emancipation in Russia. Fast becoming the linchpin of the small elite who constituted the American Jewish establishment, he earned the respect and admiration of fellow Jews, Christians, and American and foreign government officials.

Born to an upper-middle-class and highly respected family in Frankfurt-am-Main, Jacob Schiff attended the modern Orthodox school of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch until age fourteen. Grounded in secular and Jewish studies, he supplemented his education by reading extensively throughout his life. Although he later broke with the



Investment banker and philanthropist Jacob Schiff walks with his wife. (Library of Congress)

Orthodox discipline of his home and school, his boyhood instilled in him an abiding love of Judaism and of things German, and an ingrained sense of *noblesse oblige*.

Against his father's better judgment, Schiff came to the United States when he turned eighteen. He settled in New York City and immediately sought a place in the expanding post-Civil War banking circles. Like all immigrants who relied on ties of kinship and friendship to ease their adjustment, he looked for and received aid from German Jews who had preceded him to the country. In 1875 he married Therese Loeb, daughter of Solomon Loeb, and became a partner in Kuhn, Loeb, her father's small banking firm, which had evolved from a successful clothing business in the Midwest.

The Schiffs readily found their place in the Jewish socioeconomic elite of the city, a group anxious for acceptance in the larger society, who patterned their manners and institutions on those of the Protestant upper-middle

and upper classes. A close-knit circle, the members spoke German at home and to each other, they worshiped at the same synagogues, they sent their children to the same schools, and they supported the same Jewish institutions. They acculturated rapidly but stopped short of converting to Christianity.

Schiff's financial acumen and his aggressive approach turned Kuhn, Loeb into a major investment firm that specialized in the financing of railroads and industrial corporations. Cooperating with European Jewish bankers—principally Ernest Cassel and the Rothschilds of London and the Warburgs of Hamburg—Schiff was a notable success during America's age of industrialization. A major player in the Union Pacific affair that pitted railroad giants Edward Harriman (and Schiff) against James Hill (and J. P. Morgan), respect for Kuhn, Loeb soared. By then, it ranked publicly as equal to, or at least second only to, the Morgan firm, and on Wall Street the names of "Schiff," "Kuhn, Loeb," and "52 William Street" (the home of the firm from 1903 on) were interchangeable. Schiff's prestige and fortune remained virtually unscathed by the Equitable Life Assurance scandal and by the antibusiness mood of the Progressive Era. The firm's international interests continued to expand, particularly in the Far East, and in 1904–1905 Kuhn, Loeb successfully financed Japan's war against Russia. Not only did his financial coups enrich Schiff personally, but they underlay his influence in American society and his clout in the Jewish community.

At the same time that Schiff was building an international banking empire, he established his position as the foremost leader of American Jewry. He entered Jewish communal affairs by way of philanthropy. Although he contributed sizable funds to civic and nondenominational causes as well, he was most concerned with his fellow Jews. At a time when charity was mainly in the hands of the private sector, his principles for giving were very much like those of Andrew Carnegie. He believed in the unfettered right to accumulate wealth, but the wealthy, who had proved their ability by their economic achievements, were stewards for the needy. Upon them lay the responsibility to disburse their excess wealth during their lifetimes and to relieve the deserving poor by providing them with opportunities to pursue productive lives.

Virtually no bona fide Jewish relief or educational institution was denied Schiff's help. Help according to Schiff

meant more than signing checks; it involved regular visits to the institution, frequent meetings, and even time spent with those served by the institution. He especially enjoyed the chance to shape policy and exert control over his pet philanthropies. The Montefiore Home and Hospital for Chronic Diseases was his favorite, and, as both its president and financial angel from 1885 until his resignation in 1920, Schiff ruled it—directors, staff, and patients—like a virtual fiefdom. His successor at Montefiore paid tribute to the banker's years of service when he called the period of 1880–1920 the “Schiff era in Jewish philanthropy.”

Philanthropy, like all social affairs, was shaped by Schiff's views of Jewish–Christian relations. A staunch defender of Jews and Judaism against any form of discrimination, he demanded equality for Jews from the government in matters of political appointments and services as well as from private agencies in matters of benefits and privileges. The private agencies understood that noncompliance meant the forfeiture of contributions from Schiff, and the government recognized the banker's influence on Jewish voters. Schiff repaid the favors he incurred, while he simultaneously insisted that the Jewish institutions he supported be open to members of all faiths. Proper Jewish behavior, he believed, enhanced the Jewish image, which in turn would further the goal of full acceptance by the gentile society.

A proud Jew, he actively sought ways to disseminate public knowledge of the Jewish cultural heritage that had so importantly enriched Western civilization. For example, toward that end he generously endowed the Semitics Museum at Harvard University and its acquisition of ancient Hebrew artifacts. That, like his gifts of books about Judaism to libraries and Christian clergymen, would lead, he hoped, to greater acceptance of the Jew. Charles Eliot, Harvard's president and personal friend, agreed that the museum would serve as a counterweight to Christian antisemitism.

From the turn of the century until the outbreak of World War I, Schiff focused primarily on the plight of the 5–6 million Jews in czarist Russia. Pogroms, expulsions, and economic privation were hardly new, but they persisted with greater intensity. The problem for American Jewish communal leaders was multifaceted. The immediate need, to ameliorate the plight of the victims, gave rise to new relief agencies, and Schiff, because of his wealth and his ties to Jewish leaders in Western Europe, was at the hub of the activity.

For those who made their way to America—some 2 million by 1914 (Cohen 1999)—the tasks involved in easing their adjustment required even more planning. For example, the Baron de Hirsch Fund, of which Schiff was one of the nine original trustees, provided the new arrivals with classes in English and civics, training in manual arts, and practical aid for agricultural settlement. To solve some health problems on New York's Lower East Side, the Schiff family sponsored Lillian Wald's visiting nurses service and her settlement house on Henry Street. Schiff especially favored schemes to disperse the immigrants; he supported the Industrial Removal Office of the Hirsch Fund, and he toyed with similar ideas for moving immigrants to outlying areas and to other countries. Most original of all was his short-lived Galveston plan that landed the new arrivals in Texas and settled them in the Midwest. It thereby avoided the social problems of the crowded ghettos on the Atlantic coast. On another level entirely, the banker and his associates dreaded the spread of socialism and atheism—“un-American” doctrines—among the immigrants. Schiff and most of his associates were Reform Jews, but for rabbis and teachers to reach and properly train the new arrivals, they supported a Conservative institution, the Jewish Theological Seminary. By such means they sought to change the prevalent image of the undesirable Russian Jew and, even more important to Schiff, to preserve the country's tradition of unrestricted immigration.

No matter how well intentioned the institutions and plans for the new immigrants, the stewards frequently evoked the resentment of their intended beneficiaries. They neither consulted the new arrivals for *their* opinions, nor did they successfully mask their own dislike of the less-cultured newcomers. The stewards knew that their control of the community would ultimately be challenged by the far more numerous Russians, so it behooved them to train the latter appropriately, setting them on the proper path of acculturation and acceptance by Americans. Schiff, who sought the approval of the immigrants and who favored the empowerment of the acculturated Eastern Europeans under the direction of the stewards, was less high-handed than the others. Only when the new arrivals mounted a serious campaign for a democratically elected American Jewish Congress that would wrest control from the established stewards did he rant against the so-called agitators.

The long-range aim of the elitist communal leaders was to end persecution by securing equal rights for the

Jews in the czarist domain. As a group they operated through their newly organized defense agency, the American Jewish Committee (1906), which generally deferred to Schiff. But, short of obtaining intervention by the American government or building up the public's sympathy, there was little they could do. Schiff, however, was in a unique position. Government officials, including the secretary of state and the president, could not ignore the powerful banker. The stewards of the American Jewish Committee, led by Schiff and his lieutenant, Louis Marshall, forced the abrogation of a Russo-American treaty despite President William Howard Taft's opposition, but their underlying objective remained elusive. St. Petersburg was far more impressed, however, with Schiff alone. He had financed Japan's defeat of Russia, and he persisted in using his influence with American and European banking houses to block Russia's access to loans. When Schiff was invited several times to St. Petersburg as a guest of the government—he never went—he let it be known that he would trade loans for Jewish rights. His hatred of Russian discrimination figured importantly in keeping him pro-Germany and anti-Allies until the Russian Revolution of March 1917.

The fortunes of Kuhn, Loeb suffered during the war. Its international activity was perforce curtailed, and Schiff's refusal to participate in a major loan to the Allies as long as it could benefit Russia—an issue that divided his usually compliant partners—triggered an outburst of suspicion and antisemitism against Schiff and Kuhn, Loeb on the part of the Anglophile bankers headed by Morgan. According to conclusions of a Justice Department probe, neither Schiff nor Kuhn, Loeb was found guilty of unpatriotic behavior; the firm did not advance the sums of money that German agents in the country expected, nor did it propagandize on Germany's behalf. Although Schiff's name was blackened in the *German* press, the stigma of being a German sympathizer dogged him in *America* throughout the war.

Wartime sentiment and a resurgence of popular antisemitism increased Schiff's activities in the Jewish community. Even as they coped with the relief needs of Jews abroad, Schiff and his associates were called upon to rebut the charges against the un-American draft-dodging Jews. Simultaneously, they defended their fellow Jews against slurs by the military, government agencies, and private institutions. (Schiff himself took on discrimination by the powerful American Red Cross.) They preached incessantly to their fellow Jews against Socialist pacifism and against ideas like Jewish military units or all-Jewish liberty loans. A dread of Jewish separatism also underlay their bitter opposition to the Zionist-controlled American Jewish Congress. To be sure, Schiff modified his Reform anti-Zionist stand during the war. Acknowledging now that Jews were a people as well as a religious group, he explained that the reservoir of Jewish culture in Eastern Europe had evaporated with the Russian revolutions of 1917 and that he therefore supported the idea of a Jewish cultural and religious center in Palestine. But he continued to oppose political Zionism, which, he charged, separated the Jews from the Western societies in which they lived.

Schiff's style of leadership did not long survive the war. Few could match his wealth or philanthropic gifts, and the postwar managerial revolution largely depersonalized the governance of Jewish communal institutions. Nevertheless, he left a permanent stamp on the history of American Jewry.

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# Intergroup Relations

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## Jews and the Slave Trade

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The Atlantic slave trade has been the object of enormous scholarly and public attention for more than a generation. Its significance for the history of Jewry has been muted by modern liberal Jewish sensibilities and distorted by modern antisemitic exaggeration. One of the unfortunate results of the bitter debates over black–Jewish relations at the close of the twentieth century was to concentrate scholarly attention on the need to refute allegations by the Nation of Islam and others concerning the supposed Jewish domination of the transatlantic slave trade. A truly scholarly consideration of Jewish history in relation to the African slave trade must be based on an accurate assessment of the dimensions of Jewish participation within the context of the Atlantic slave trade history.

During three and a half centuries after 1500, more than 11 million Africans were loaded and transported in dreadful conditions to the tropical and subtropical zones of the Americas. This massive coerced transoceanic transportation system was only one element of a still broader process of migration. The coerced movement of Africans long exceeded the combined voluntary and involuntary migrations of Europeans. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, up to three Africans had been landed in the Americas for every European who crossed the Atlantic. Six percent of these Africans were landed in continental North

America, compared with 49 percent delivered to the Caribbean and 45 percent to mainland Latin America.

The slave trade is usually presented in terms of a triangular trade: Europeans provided the capital, organization, trade goods and the means of transportation; Africans provided the initial captives and the means of intracontinental movement; and Europeans in the Americas provided the means for redistributing transported captives to productive occupations in various regions of the New World. Viewing the role of religious or ethno-religious groups in the African slave trade within this more familiar framework presents unusual methodological difficulties. The trade involved tens of thousands of perpetrators. Among them were pagans, Muslims, Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. Those who participated may be further divided into scores of groups by ethnic designation. The trade in humans flowed easily from one religious and commercial entity to another. Culturally defined identities had some impact on individual or group practices, but over the whole period of its existence the transatlantic slave trade appears to have been an activity rigorously driven by cost-benefit calculations.

Analyzing the specific relation of Jews to the Atlantic slave trade is warranted by a peculiar historiographical tradition. “Scarcely were the doors of the New World opened to Europeans,” declared the economist and sociologist Werner Sombart a century ago, “than crowds of Jews came

swarming in. . . . European Jewry was like an ant-heap into which a stick [expulsion from Spain] had been thrust. Little wonder, therefore, that a great part of this heap betook itself to the New World. . . . The first traders in America were Jews," as well as "the first plantation owners" in African São Tomé, and the first transplanters of sugar and slaves across the Atlantic. Jews were the "dominant social class [*die herrschende Kaste*]" of Brazil. Along with Portuguese criminals, they constituted almost the entire population of that colony, which reached its peak of prosperity only with "the influx of rich Jews from Holland" (Sombart 1951). In support of his interpretation, Sombart drew heavily on accounts by Jewish historians and encyclopedists. As Jewish migration to the Americas swelled at the end of the nineteenth century, writers sought to establish the earliest possible Jewish presence of their ancestors in the New World and to magnify their role in the grand narrative of European westward expansion. The search for a Jewish foundational presence in Atlantic development continues to find supporters among authors with dramatically contrasting motives.

Sombart grossly exaggerated in two respects. Jews were not legally permitted to live anywhere in the Iberian Americas for more than three centuries after Columbus's voyages of exploration. The "influx" of Jews to Brazil during the period of Dutch occupancy amounted to fewer than 1,500 settlers and lasted for less than a single generation. But Sombart's hyperbolic account was correct in one respect. Three centuries of cumulative expulsions of Jews from the Atlantic maritime states reached their climax as Europe's great westward expansion began in the late fifteenth century. The simultaneous departure of both the Columbian expedition and of Jewry from Spain in 1492 was emblematic of a broader movement in European history. By 1500, Jews had been expelled from the kingdoms of England, France, Spain, and Portugal. Within two more generations they had been excluded from most of the Habsburg Netherlands, from the Baltic seacoast, and from large parts of Italy. Except for areas directly under the authority of the Holy Roman emperors (the Habsburgs), the collapse of Jewish life in both Catholic and Protestant Europe was virtually complete by 1570. Open allegiance to Judaism was entirely extinguished in Spain, Portugal, Italy south of Rome, the Netherlands, England, France, and most of the Germanies. In isolated areas where Jews were not physically ex-

pelled, the Jewish presence in Western and Central Europe had become altogether marginal.

The age of European exploration was therefore also initially the age of "the most fundamental restructuring of Jewish life in Europe" (Israel 1989), between the Roman destruction of the Jewish nation and the later German annihilation of the twentieth century. By the time Africans began to be exported to the Americas in significant numbers (ca. 1570), Europe's rulers had forced the overwhelming mass of European Jewry eastward to Poland, Lithuania, and the Ottoman empire or southward to North Africa. Neither the rulers nor the merchants (including the Jewish merchants) of those new regions of settlement were involved in the Atlantic slave trade. Jews could not live securely anywhere along the European Atlantic seaboard during the century after the Columbian expedition, the century in which the Euro-African coastal supply systems and the Iberian American slave systems were created in the New World. Jews were consequently prohibited from openly participating in cofounding the institutions of the slave trade at any African terminus of the triangular trade or in the transoceanic Middle Passage. Success in such long-distance voyages, Europeans discovered, was initially enhanced by access to politically privileged monopolies in Europe, to trade enclaves on the African coast, and to colonial settlements in the Americas.

Until the end of the seventeenth century, governmental agencies or quasi-public trading companies were primarily monopolistic enterprises. In a confessionally intolerant Europe and its overseas extensions, it was virtually impossible for Jews to hold the principal managerial positions in these official slave-trading companies. For three centuries after 1500, Spanish slave trade licenses and *asientos* (monopoly contracts for the delivery of slaves to the Spanish colonies) were never awarded to Jews. This was equally true for the Portuguese, Dutch, English, and French trades. Jews could at most exercise influence at the margins of these enterprises as negotiators and consular intermediaries. Even subcontracting to Jewish merchants for the delivery of slaves contributed to the Spanish government's refusal to renew the *asiento* to the Portuguese Royal Guinea Company at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

If Jews could play no role in the initial political and legal foundations of the European transatlantic slave trade, the elimination of Jewry from the Iberian peninsula did

create a major economic niche for some descendants of the forcibly converted Jews in Iberia. In 1497, the forced mass conversion of 100,000 Iberian Jews residing in Portugal created a novel situation. As “New Christians,” descendants of ex-Jews were free to take advantage of the expanding Portuguese seaborne empire. During the sixteenth century the Portuguese trading network dramatically expanded along the coasts of Africa, the Indian Ocean basin, and on the east coast of South America. For more than a century after the 1490s, the Portuguese held a virtual monopoly in the trades flowing from these areas.

At the same time Portugal’s stigmatization of New Christians as members of a legally tainted and inherited status group also subjected them to genealogical scrutiny, humiliation, confiscation, and violence from generation to generation. The volatile situation of the New Christians was symbolized by the first, and only, mass deportation of European children to the tropics. Following the flight of Jews from Spain to Portugal after the expulsion of 1492, the Portuguese monarch had 2,000 children abducted from their Jewish families. They were forcibly baptized and deported to São Tomé, an uninhabited island off the coast of Africa. The survivors of this first cohort of New Christians in Africa were mated at maturity with imported Africans. Their descendants, joined by further voluntary and involuntary migrations of New and Old Christians from Portugal, became São Tomé’s principal inhabitants and traders.

In comparative terms the Early Modern Iberian empires allowed New Christians to play a role in the Atlantic slave trade that was never to be matched by Jews in any part of the world. The slave trade opened up transoceanic niches of entree and refuge that gave New Christians an initial advantage in human capital over other merchants. If their quasi-pariah religious status kept them at least once removed from institutional power, that same status tended to make them most effective in a world where opportunities for long-term credit were dependent on kinship and trust. Rulers considered slaving so valuable an activity that its New Christian practitioners might hope to be exempted from periodic group expulsions. In one purge, New Christians were allowed to remain in Angola only if they were merchants. As commodities, slaves opened doors into the American empires at times when other types of goods were restricted or excluded. Slaving was long a privileged means of gaining a foothold in Spanish as well as in Portuguese America.

New Christians were, of course, legally denied the opportunity to openly transmit Jewish culture and rituals. The Inquisition’s premise of “impure blood,” as well as an alleged collective propensity of such Christians to heresy and “Judaization,” made kinship linkages perilous. Most of those who remained within the Iberian orbit in fact attempted to assimilate as rapidly as possible. Historians of Portuguese and overseas New Christians have concluded that consecutive generations became culturally and religiously indistinguishable from, and intermarried with, “Old Christians.”

One must therefore be extremely cautious about conflating New Christians and Jews, or “Crypto-Jews.” Neither in their social aspirations nor in their approach to economic activity can one differentiate significantly between New and Old Christians in the slave trade. In discussing economic activity in the early modern Iberian empire, nothing is to be gained by linking New Christians more closely with Jewish merchants, with whom they traded at long distance, than with Old Christian merchants, with whom they traded and lived. Denied full legitimacy in the community of the faithful, however, New Christian merchants might develop trading networks that were based on trusted family connections and might restrict their loyalties to kinsmen or to other familiar New Christians. Given this balance of negative institutional, social, and legal coercion, along with these familial advantages, New Christian merchants managed to gain control of a sizable share of all segments of the Portuguese Atlantic slave trade during the Iberian-dominated phase of the Atlantic system (1450–1630).

During the formation of the “second Atlantic system” (ca. 1640–1700), the Iberian slaving monopoly was definitively broken. The locus of the slave trade shifted northward from Portuguese Brazil to the Caribbean. Most Northwestern European and Baltic states attempted to enter the transatlantic commercial system: the Netherlands, England, France, Denmark, Sweden, Brandenburg, and Courland. In the second half of the seventeenth century the number of separate state-sponsored companies engaged in the transportation of African laborers reached its peak. For the first time, Jews openly participated in this more competitive environment and played their most tangible role in the Atlantic slave trade.

The first reappearance of a Jewish merchant community in Europe’s Atlantic states occurred in Amsterdam,

just a century after the Spanish expulsion. During the following century, the Dutch transatlantic trade was conducted from Europe primarily by means of a chartered monopoly given to the West India Company. Jewish merchants could enter the Dutch slave trade in only two ways: as passive investors in the company or as illegal private traders. With regard to the first, Jewish investment in the West India Company was remarkably small. It amounted to only a 1.3-percent share of the founding capital. Jews represented a minuscule segment of the Dutch slaving compared with the New Christians' role in the Portuguese trade. The Netherlands was also far better endowed with capital, commercial skills, and entrepreneurs than the Portuguese had been a century before. In the transportation of slaves from Africa, Jews were scarcely involved during the century of the West India Company's slave trade monopoly (1630–1735). Only one Jewish merchant is recorded as obtaining permission to sail directly to the African coast and to complete the Middle Passage. The expansion of the Dutch seaborne empire along the African coast also seems to have contributed little to the establishment of any Jewish presence there. The Dutch seizure of many important Portuguese African trading centers in the 1630s and 1640s resulted neither in a great influx of European Jews nor in the reconversion of resident Portuguese New Christians.

The main Jewish link with the Dutch slave trade came at its New World terminus. The Dutch were fully launched as a slaving power after their conquests in Brazil and Africa during the 1630s and early 1640s. However, they lacked a metropolitan Dutch population eager or desperate enough to relocate to the Americas. The West India Company welcomed Jews as colonizers and as onshore middlemen in newly conquered Brazil. It was at this western margin of the early Dutch transatlantic venture that Jews played their largest role. In the 1640s, the Dutch briefly became Europe's principal slave traders. During the eight years between 1637 and 1644, Jewish merchants accounted for between 8 and 63 percent of annual onshore purchasers of the total of 25,000 slaves landed in Brazil by the West India Company. Upward of a third of these African captives (8,000) may have reached planters through Jewish traders.

The gradual loss of Dutch Brazil to the Portuguese between 1645 and 1654 brought the Jewish presence to an end. Jews then took up a similar activity at another margin of the Dutch empire, its new Caribbean colonies. Refugees from Brazil and Europe were resettled in Dutch-controlled

islands and in Suriname on the coast of South America. By the end of the seventeenth century, the island of Curaçao contained the largest Jewish settlement in the Americas. They engaged extensively in a transit trade from Curaçao to the British and French islands and, more significantly, with the Spanish mainland. Over the course of the century between its establishment as a Dutch colony in 1630 and the virtual end of its transit slave trade in the 1760s, Curaçao Jews therefore handled a large proportion of the 85,000 arrivals, about one-sixth of the total Dutch slave trade. The Emmanuels (1970, I) affirm that Jewish participation in the slave trade was largest in the twenty-five years between 1686 and 1710, a period when Postma records 26,364 slaves landed in Curaçao (1990). Comparing the Emmanuels' figures for 1700–1705 (1,108 slaves purchased by Jews) with Postma's total of 6,348 slaves delivered to Curaçao in the same period, Jews accounted for 17 percent of the large-batch purchases of slaves landed. The Emmanuels listed only purchases of obvious "trade" slaves (ten or more) in their individualized list. However, "almost every Jew bought from one to nine slaves for his personal use" (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970, I). Non-Jews did likewise. Since Jews were "the second most important element" of Curaçao's population after the Protestants, accounting for 40 percent of the population of Punda around 1715 (Emmanuel and Emmanuel 1970, I), Jewish merchants may have accounted for nearly half of the slaves purchased from the West India Company in Curaçao in the twenty-five years between 1686 and 1710. By 1765, however, Jews owned only 867 (or 16 percent) of the 5,534 slaves on Curaçao.

Less needs to be said about Jewish merchants in the seventeenth-century colonies of other European powers in the Caribbean. Jewish mercantile activity in the English colonies was a modest replication of the pattern set in the Dutch Antilles. In the English case, metropolitan Jews played a minor role as passive investors in the chartered Royal companies. Jewish merchants did not invest in the Royal Adventurers Trading into Africa, or its successor, the Royal African Company, until the 1690s. Eli Faber's carefully researched study of Jewish participation in the British slave system shows that the peak of mercantile investment in the Royal African Company lasted from the mid-1690s to the second decade of the eighteenth century. He calculates that Jews purchased about 7 percent of the Royal African Company slaves landed in Ja-

maica between 1674 and 1700. A corroborating study, by Trevor Burnard (1996), calculates the Jewish share at 6.5 percent for the slightly longer period 1674–1708. As in the Dutch case, Jews were most prominent at the Caribbean end of the slave trade. However, the Jewish mercantile role in the English islands never approached that of the merchants of Curaçao.

The Jewish share in the French slave trade was even more evanescent. In the French Caribbean colonies, an early Jewish presence, established in the 1660s and 1670s, was virtually eliminated by royal expulsions in the 1680s. As in the English case, Jews in the French colonies never approached the significance of their Dutch counterparts. Jews also played marginal roles in the efforts of Northern Europe's smaller maritime powers to become players in the Atlantic economy. Even in this second phase of the Atlantic slave trade, Jewish mercantile influence remained quite modest. The greatest significance of the Jewish presence in Brazil was that it gave some of them the technological expertise for their successful movement into the Caribbean. In the rest of the Atlantic system, in Europe, along the African Coast, and on the Middle Passage, Jewish participation never approached the significance attained by New Christians in the Iberian Americas.

Although the long eighteenth century (1700–1807) witnessed the absolute peak of the Atlantic slave trade (6.7 million shipped to the Americas), the Jewish mercantile share of the Atlantic slave trade declined. Even on the New World end of the trade, colonies were divided into separate national spheres dominated by non-Jewish settlers and traders. Special investment funds and partnerships allowed metropolitans to invest their capital, including slaving ventures, in the rapidly expanding plantation systems. Intensive research into each of the national trades has failed to turn up more than a handful of Jewish individuals or families in any of these trading circuits. In the Netherlands, well-established families seem to have withdrawn from the transit trade to the New World. In Bordeaux, the center of Jewish mercantile activity in the French colonial trade, Jews accounted for 4.3 percent of the slaves exported by the city's merchants. Only one family, the Gradis, ranked among the major slavers. In England, Jewish investment in the African trade also declined. Jewish wealth accounted for less than 1.6 percent of the original capital of the South Sea Company, launched in 1714. As independent entrepreneurs and ship owners, the metropolitan Jews never ac-

counted for more than 1 percent of ventures during the last fifty years of the British slave trade (1760–1807).

For most of the eighteenth century, Jews remained marginal receivers of consignments of slaves in the colonies. They continued to appear in their initial niche as purchasers of "refuse slaves" for resale. According to British Naval Office records, 6 percent of the 24,000 slaves reexported from Jamaica to other colonies between 1742 and 1769 were carried on Jewish-owned vessels. In British North America, Newport was the leading African slaving port during the eighteenth century and the only port in which Jewish merchants played a significant part. At the peak period of their participation in slaving expeditions (the generation before the American Revolution), Newport's Jewish merchants handled up to 10 percent of the Rhode Island slave trade. Incomplete records for other eighteenth-century ports in which Jews participated in the slave trade in any way show that for a few years they held at least partial shares in up to 8 percent of New York's small number of slaving voyages, usually from African to Caribbean ports. There is no evidence that they played any role in the internal colonial transit trade in a way comparable to that of merchants in Jamaica.

After the United States outlawed the Atlantic slave trade in 1808, an internal, or domestic, slave trade continued to fuel the expansion of slavery to the West. Although the degree of participation of Jewish merchants in slave dealing throughout the South is not fully known, they seem to have been visible as substantial participants in only a few cities. A table of the commissions of fourteen "Prosperous Slave Brokers" of Charleston, South Carolina, shows that the one substantial Jewish brokerage accounted for 4 percent of the commissions (Friedman 1998). According to Bertram Korn, Jews accounted for four of the forty-four slave brokers in Charleston, three of seventy in Richmond, and one of twelve in Memphis (1973). Elsewhere, the anecdotal evidence points to Jews as petty traders, who dealt incidentally in an activity overwhelmingly dominated by non-Jews. Inference from the available records led Korn to estimate that all of the Southern Jewish slave traders probably did not buy and sell as many slaves as did the largest single slave trading firm in the South (1973).

The economic, social, legal, and racial pattern of the Atlantic slave trade was set before Jews made their way back to Northwestern Europe, to the coasts and islands of

Africa, or to European colonies in the Americas. They remained marginal actors in most places and in most periods during the Atlantic slave system: in its political and legal foundations; in its capital formation; in its maritime organization; and in its distribution of coerced migrants from Africa. Jewish slave traders were active only at the western end of the Atlantic, briefly in Brazil, more durably in the Caribbean. At no point during the slave trade were Jews numerous enough, rich enough, or powerful enough to significantly affect the structure and flow of the trade.

The same conclusion does not hold for the New Christian descendants of Jews during the period of Iberian domination (1450–1640). Their importance in the development of the slave trade to the Americas must be given its due. When Portuguese merchants became the first global trading diaspora, New Christians were prominent in its growth. Although distrusted by Old Christian political-religious elites, New Christians found a precarious niche in the Atlantic system. As a loose network of trading families, they pioneered in the formation of the European–Asian–African–American complex that contributed to the New World’s first African-based slave economies.

During the next phase of the Atlantic slave trade, when observant Jews entered the system, they found that the comparative advantage of New Christians was sharply reduced. They played insignificant roles in the European, African, and transoceanic components of Northern European slaving. Jewish mercantile communities were far smaller in proportion to Christian networks in Northern Europe than were Iberian New Christians in relation to the Old. Jewish working capital was correspondingly less significant. The advantages of Jewish family networks over their Dutch, English, or French Christian competitors clearly did not match that of “New Christian” merchants over the “Old” in sixteenth-century Iberia.

Only in the Dutch case did Jews play a distinctive, if marginal, part. Their brief prominence after 1640 depended as much on their availability as refugee “risk takers” in tropical frontier colonies as on their talents as entrepreneurs in Europe. They were, as the English essayist Joseph Addison correctly noted, “pegs and nails” in the international capitalist system. During the peak phase of the Atlantic slave trade, from 1700 to 1840, the relative significance of Jews declined still further. By the time the Afro-American slave trade reached its absolute peak near the end of the eighteenth century, both Jews and New Chris-

tians had nearly disappeared from the accounts of the transatlantic slave trade.

A still more intriguing historical question has begun to emerge in scholarly discourse on the role of Jews in the African slave trade. The empirical record makes it relatively easy for historians to demonstrate that Jewish merchants did not dominate this segment of the Atlantic economy. Historians of Jewry might, however, ask why Jews were not involved to a greater degree. The answer clearly cannot be attributed to the distinctive religious or moral traditions of Jewry in early modern Europe. Despite generations of historiographical inference that Jewish tradition encouraged more benign treatment of slaves by Jewish masters, nothing in Jewish law or customs prohibited the purchase or ownership of slaves. The Jewish involvement in Atlantic slavery produced no *responsa* condemning New World slaveholding or slave trading. Jews in the Dutch and English colonies participated in the slave economy without religious condemnation.

If there was no special inhibition against buying and selling human beings by Jews, why didn’t merchants turn to better account their presumed diasporic heritage, their transoceanic ethnic network, and their facility with the trading languages of the Atlantic world? From the perspective of the history of the slave trade, these were probably not significant advantages for success in the transatlantic slaving business. In ethnoreligious terms, there certainly was never a Jewish network on the coasts of Africa. Nor did Jewish multilingualism extend to any special competence in the languages of that continent. Success in the African trade depended far more on up-to-date intelligence about the changing tastes of Africans, translatable into rapid business decisions about the optimum assortment of goods for slaving voyages.

Throughout most of the Americas, the available evidence indicates that the Jewish network probably counted for little in Atlantic slaving. The few cases of long-term Jewish participation in the eighteenth-century slave trades offer evidence of cross-religious networks as keys to their success. In case after case, Jews who participated in multiple slaving voyages activities linked themselves to Christian agents or partners. It was not as Jews, but as merchants, that traders ventured into one of the great enterprises of the early modern world.

By the end of the revolutions for independence in the Americas (1770s–1820s), Jewish communities in most

slave trading ports had long been in decline. By 1830 the Atlantic slave trade to the British, Dutch, and French colonies and to mainland Spanish America had been abolished. Well before that “Age of Revolution,” New Christians had disappeared from the records of the Portuguese–Brazilian slave trade. They were not succeeded by Jews when the Inquisition ceased to function. Jewish merchants played no measurable role in the transportation of well over 2 million Africans to Latin America (mainly Brazil and the Spanish Caribbean) during the nineteenth century before the termination of that traffic in 1867. Nor do Jews appear in the literature on the large-scale internal transit trade of slaves in Brazil before their emancipation in 1888.

Having assayed the modest role played by Jewish merchants in the coerced migration of Africans to the New World, one must also note the impact of that coerced migration on broader Jewish sensibilities. Since early modern Jewry was embedded in the mechanisms of European expansion, trade, migration, and communication, Jews absorbed the racialized perspectives of their Christian and Muslim counterparts in the Old and New Worlds. In the Atlantic world, while few Jews owned slaves and fewer still were engaged in the slave trade, they adopted the prevailing negative images of blacks. This was true even in the Ashkenazic area of Europe least impacted by the economics and institutions of Atlantic slavery. Even in this respect, however, one should be cautious about assigning any special importance to Jewish slavers or slave owners in the formation of Eastern European cultural attitudes. Very few Jews captained slaving voyages from Africa to the Americas, and Jewish discourse in general showed little sustained interest in blacks. Everywhere in the Americas, where Jews were embedded in the institution of slavery, the law of the land, not *halacha* (Jewish law), became their law. The customs of Western Europe, of its colonies, and of the new nations of America became their customs. With the significant exception of the Sabbath, *halacha* and Jewish traditions on slavery were “quietly and conveniently stowed away” (Schorsch 2004). Marginalized themselves, Jewish merchants, like those of every other religious and ethnic group in Western Europe, Africa, and the Americas, availed themselves of the opportunities afforded by the hierarchies of the new Atlantic economy.

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## Black–Jewish Relations in the Nineteenth Century

The encounter between African Americans and Jews occupies a significant place in American Jewish history. Although

most studies focus on their interaction in the twentieth-century urban North, black–Jewish relations had a pre-1900 prologue that significantly shaped attitudes and experience.

Overall, Jewish merchants were “accountable for considerably less than 2 percent of the slave imports into the West Indies and North America,” according to Jacob Rader Marcus (1970, 2). The Atlantic slave trade was a minor facet of the careers of such prominent eighteenth-century Jewish merchants as Aaron Lopez of Newport, Rhode Island. Over a twenty-year span, Lopez commissioned two hundred international voyages of which fourteen were slave-trading ventures that resulted in the importation of 1,165 slaves, that is, 1 percent of all the slaves imported into Newport during the eighteenth century.

During the early decades of the nineteenth century, as slavery ended in the North but expanded in the South, black–Jewish relations bifurcated along sectional lines. The regional distributions of black and Jewish populations in 1860 were reverse images: 92 percent of all African Americans were Southern, and 80 percent of all American Jews were Northern. The small Southern Jewish community numbered around 30,000, a majority consisting of recent German Jewish immigrants. Its members participated, unevenly, in every facet of Southern life, including the slave system.

After U.S. involvement in the Atlantic slave trade was outlawed in 1808, slave trading persisted in the South. One study found that 8 of 125 professional slave traders—but none of the major traders—were Jews. Bertram W. Korn concluded that all of the Southern Jewish firms specializing in the slave trade combined probably “did not buy and sell as many slaves as did the [non-Jewish] firm of Franklin and Armfield, the largest Negro traders in the South” (1961).

Recent studies of slaveholding by Southern Jews have shown a seeming paradox. An analysis of the 1830 Census found only sixteen Jews among 57,000 Southerners owning twenty or more slaves, and only two Jews among 11,000 owners of fifty or more. Yet in the overall sample, 75 percent of 322 Jewish families were slaveholders, compared to 36 percent of all Southern families. Thus, Jews were negligible in the ranks of the planter class who owned three-fourths of all slaves; yet Jews were about twice as likely to be slave owners as the average white Southerner.

This is because the Southern Jews were concentrated, not in the rural districts where six in seven slaves were

held, but in the cities where the norm was diffuse ownership of small numbers of domestic slaves or artisans. In Charleston in 1830, 87 percent of all heads of families owned at least one slave, compared to 83 percent of Jewish family heads; on average, the Jewish householders also owned fewer slaves. The typical Jewish slave owner was an urban smallholder, far removed from the power center of the South’s “peculiar institution.”

In some Southern cities on the Gulf Coast, patterns in slavery and race relations were carried over from the Caribbean. The institution of *placage*—long-term cohabitation between white men and women of color (both slave and free)—thived in New Orleans. Daniel Warburg established a lifelong relationship with Marie Rose, a Cuban-born slave whom he freed and maintained in a manner that allowed her to buy slaves of her own. She bore him six children (who were also emancipated), including two who achieved artistic distinction. Eugene Warburg, educated abroad with his father’s help, became a renowned sculptor in Europe.

In the 1830s, a French observer visiting Savannah discerned a tendency for Jews to serve as patrons and agents of free people of color. About the same time in New Orleans, philanthropist Judah Touro became known for his benefactions to members of the creole community. Often dependent on Jewish and other white patronage, the antebellum free black elite developed into the leaders of the postbellum African American community.

In the countryside, an enslaved African American’s most likely contact with a Jew was not with a slave master but with a peddler or itinerant merchant. In the 1840s and 1850s, German Jewish immigrant peddlers began selling clothes and trinkets to slaves, but they often had to contend with hostile whites who accused them of violating Sunday closing laws, encouraging drunkenness and petty theft among slaves, and generally undermining plantation discipline.

Immediately after the Civil War, freedmen were typically quite friendly toward Jewish peddlers, who treated them courteously and enabled them to become consumers. Earlier, the slaves may have been even more favorably disposed toward these peddlers because subsequent causes of friction—creditor–debtor relations in the context of rural sharecropping and urban merchandising—had not yet developed. It was not until the late nineteenth century that a body of African American folklore emerged reflecting ten-

sions between black customers and Jewish peddlers or storekeepers. W.E.B. DuBois exaggerated the prevalence of economically based black–Jewish tensions in the South in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

Another source of antisemitism among African Americans—religious antipathy to Jews as “Christ killers”—has also been traced to slavery times. White missionaries reputedly used catechisms “especially prepared for colored people” to indoctrinate slaves: “Question: The wicked Jews grew angry with our Savior and what did they do with him? Answer: They crucified him” (Weinberg 1974). White Southerners told stories about how their slaves had absorbed the stereotype of Jews as deicides. In one version, a servant runs away rather than be sold to a Jew because “if the Jews killed the Lord and Master, what won’t they do to a poor little nigger like me!” (Glanz 1961).

Some of the slaves’ songs also voiced the deicide accusation: “Cruel Jews, jes look at Jesus./ Dey nail Him to de Cross./ Dey rivet His feet./ Dey hanged Him high./ An’ dey stretched Him wide./ O de cruel Jews dun took ma Jesus” (McIlhenny 1933). There are a few sermons (including one in Gullah dialect) and folk rhymes and tales expressing the same theme. Most of the evidence of black religious antisemitism, however, such as the reminiscences of James Baldwin and Richard Wright, derives from a period several generations removed from slavery times. Still, African American Christianity—with deep roots in Southern Methodism and Baptism—shared the explosive ambivalence toward Jews that was characteristic of the evangelical Protestant denominations that were strong throughout the nineteenth-century United States but dominant in the white South. Pictured respectfully as “the people of the Book” destined to return to the Holy Land, Jews were alternatively reviled for their continuing refusal to accept Christ.

Yet the religion of the slaves did not fully replicate their masters’. In the 1790s—a generation before the concerted white campaign to evangelize the slaves—plantation hands were already singing “Let My People Go.” Enslaved African Americans developed so intense an identification with the Hebrew children led out of Egyptian bondage that white philosemitism paled in comparison.

Conversely, the crucifixion theme (less prominent in the spirituals than in modern gospel music) was muted. In the classic slave songs, Jesus figured prominently, but on a similar footing with Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Daniel, and Jonah. Moreover, his appearance was often—not as “the

suffering servant” on the cross—but in the garb of an Old Testament “man of war.” The Old Testament became a crucible for forging a religion of resistance emphasizing this worldly, collective deliverance. Slave religion affirmed the superiority of Paul’s “new covenant” to that of Moses, but it retained a strongly Hebraic cast that inspired generations of slave rebels, culminating in Nat Turner.

There was no consensus among American Jews regarding slavery, and—even if there had been—there were no Jewish national organizations (other than B’nai B’rith) or centralized bodies to express it in a polarizing era when the Catholic Church remained silent and the national Protestant denominations split along sectional lines over the slavery issue. Jews were as deeply divided by geography and conviction as other white Americans.

In the South, where proslavery thinking became required orthodoxy after 1830, one study found “a pattern of almost complete conformity” among Jews (Korn 1961). The two most prominent proslavery politicians of Jewish antecedents—Florida senator David L. Yulee and Louisiana senator and Confederate cabinet member Judah P. Benjamin—married and raised their children outside the faith and displayed no interest in Jews or Judaism. But their political views were widely shared by the small number of Southern rabbis, none of whom south of Maryland spoke out against slavery. The native-born Jewish community of the South produced a handful of dissenters who, typically, left the region for the more ideologically congenial North.

German Jewish immigrants to the South were often horrified by their first sight of a slavemaster’s whip. Some maintained a lifelong aversion and refused ever to own slaves, but others adapted quickly and became slave masters. In the border states, Rabbi David Einhorn of Baltimore and journalists Isidore Busch and Moritz Pinner of St. Louis applied the liberal principles of the European Revolution of 1848 to the American slavery issue. But elsewhere in Dixie, German Jewish peddlers and merchants learned to be circumspect, though their friendly treatment of black customers could be read as implicit criticism of white supremacist mores. Two Jewish brothers named Friedman, immigrant storekeepers in rural Georgia, did figure in the annals of the Underground Railroad. They conspired with the slave, Peter Still, to buy his freedom and return him to the North, from which he had been kidnapped decades earlier.

Critics attribute Southern Jews' general acquiescence in "the peculiar institution" to their pervasive desire to succeed in a slave society where white skin conferred superior status. Yet underlying this status drive were well-founded fears that dissent would produce an antisemitic backlash. In fact, during the Civil War, Southern Jews—despite their Confederate loyalties—were specifically scapegoated for the losing war effort.

In the North, Jewish attitudes toward slavery and sectional conflict were much more diverse. Strong antislavery bastions like Philadelphia and Chicago contrasted with New York, with close economic ties to the Cotton Kingdom, and Cincinnati, bordering the upper South, where Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise harshly criticized abolitionists. Although slavery was legal in Missouri, the St. Louis Jewish community shared the antislavery views of the city's outspoken German American community.

Throughout the North, two factors shaped Jewish opinion. First, minority group insecurities fueled a hunger for political invisibility. The Jewish minority, less than 1 percent of the Northern population, was doubly marginal as a minority made up overwhelmingly of recent immigrants. German Jews drew a cautionary lesson from the contemporary Know-Nothing Movement, which targeted the Irish Catholic immigrants as undesirable. Jewish antislavery activists had to contend with a real concern among their fellow Jews that it would be dangerous to get ahead of public opinion and become identified with a controversial crusade.

The second major factor affecting Jewish attitudes was the antislavery movement's new turn in the 1830s. The earlier freedom societies—led mainly by Quakers, Deists, and Unitarians—had proposed a gradual, compensated approach to ending slavery. Demanding immediate emancipation, the new abolitionist movement was an evangelical crusade. The Jewish merchant community around 1800 had shown an affinity for the elite manumission societies. Antipathy was their more typical reaction a generation later to the evangelical abolitionist crusade.

Ernestine Rose, a rabbi's daughter born in Poland who became a fiery antislavery orator in the United States, was both an atheist and an abolitionist. Yet even she criticized the movement for being tinged with antisemitism. Lewis Tappan, who lamented that more Jews did not rally behind the abolitionist banner, ignored the alienating effects of his fellow leaders in the movement. His brother Arthur, for ex-

ample, wanted to make abolitionism into "a Christian party in politics" and addressed his appeals exclusively to "antislavery Christians," spurning the support of free-thinkers and non-Christians.

The abolitionist press tended to ignore the contributions of antislavery Jews while condemning as "Israelites with Egyptian principles" proslavery politicians with "Jewish names," whether or not they were practicing Jews. In the 1840s, when a Jewish child in Italy was kidnapped and forcibly baptized, an abolitionist newspaper published a vicious satire by a fictitious African American named Sambo criticizing American Jews for protesting such "far-off evils" (Korn 1957).

As the sectional crisis of the 1850s propelled the country toward Civil War, more Jews were drawn into the orbit of abolitionism and antislavery politics. The process was facilitated by the changing ideology of the Garrisonian abolitionists, who repudiated narrow church loyalties and evangelical dogma in favor of universalist religious doctrines that encouraged outreach beyond the Protestant fold. Equally important, antislavery radicals and mainstream Republican politicians embraced the pragmatic view that "side issues" like nativist attacks on non-Protestant immigrants should not be allowed to distract attention from building a coalition against slavery.

Religious prejudices against Jews did not disappear from the antislavery movement, but were muted. Jews became active in Republican politics, and—in the case of three German Jewish immigrants—entered abolitionist legend by fighting alongside antislavery martyr John Brown to keep Kansas free territory. In 1860, when New York rabbi Morris J. Raphall delivered a notorious sermon justifying Old Testament slavery (though not the cruelties of the Slave South), he was quickly isolated on the national scene and, eventually, even in his own city where the Jewish community became strongly pro-Union in 1861. During the Civil War 6,000 Jewish soldiers fought for the Union cause, despite antisemitic incidents on the Northern home front.

Not all Jewish Republican voters and Union soldiers were abolitionists, nor were all Jewish abolitionists free of racial prejudice. Still, the Jewish community moved en masse into the ranks of antislavery Republicanism at the same time as the American Irish, who competed with free blacks for low-end jobs, were becoming ever more staunch antiabolition Democrats.



Abolitionist August Bondi, one of three German Jewish immigrants who fought beside John Brown in Kansas. (American Jewish Historical Society)

German Jews, like other German immigrants, were concentrated in commercial occupations and skilled crafts in which there was less economic friction with African American workers. Free blacks limited their nativist criticisms mostly to the Irish. The African American press occasionally expressed unease about “The German Invasion,” yet typically praised German Americans as “our active allies in the struggle against oppression and prejudice” (Smith 1859). German Jews were never singled out for criticism.

Jews also enjoyed some immunity from African American criticism because of their positive religious identification with the Jews as living witnesses to Old Testament truths about deliverance from persecution and bondage. The first manifesto by a black abolitionist, David Walker’s *Appeal*, contrasted the religion of resistance of “the Jews, that ancient people of the Lord,” with the counsels of passivity and submission taught the slaves by “preachers of the religion of Jesus Christ” (Walker 1829).

While proslavery apologists invoked the (misconstrued) “Noah’s Cursing Ham” in the Book of Genesis as

proof of white superiority, black abolitionists attached preeminent importance to the Old Testament prophecy that “Great men will come from Egypt, and Ethiopia will stretch out her hands to God” (Psalms 68:32). Combined with the Exodus story, this image provided a biblical frame of reference within which African Americans began to speculate that their dispersion to the New World might be part of a divine plan that would end with them helping to redeem or liberate Africa. Thus African American Old Testament bibliolatry nurtured black nationalism.

In response to heightened racism in the North as well as proslavery militancy in the South, African American leaders in the 1840s and 1850s increasingly embraced a nationalist paradigm, emphasizing collective self-help as well as back-to-Africa ventures. Pioneering black nationalists like Martin R. Delany shifted their search for models for African American political action from the biblical Israelites to the modern-day Jews, “scattered throughout . . . almost the habitable globe, [but] maintaining their national characteristics, and looking forward . . . [to] seeing the day when they may return to the former national position of self-government and independence” (Delany 1852).

A frequent visitor to the United States, West Indies-born Edward Wilmot Blyden also drew an analogy between his African improvement program and what he later referred to as “that marvelous movement called Zionism” (Lynch 1967). As early as 1859 black nationalist James T. Holly pointed to continuing political discrimination against Jews in Great Britain to warn African Americans that individual economic success—even by the Rothschilds—was no guarantee of group empowerment. Frederick Douglass and other delegates to the National Negro Convention (1853) adopted a resolution that expressed a widespread sentiment among African Americans: “With the exception of the Jews, under the whole heavens, there is not found a people pursued with a more relentless prejudice and persecution than are the free colored people of the United States” (Moses 1978).

After the Civil War, identification with the Jews as a model for aspiration remained a foundation of African American thought. “Ever since I can remember I have had a special and peculiar interest in the history and progress of the Jewish race,” Booker T. Washington wrote in an autobiographical passage that has numerous parallels in the speeches and writings of other late nineteenth-century African American leaders (Washington 1912).

The symbolism of the Exodus from Egypt—slavery followed by forty years in the wilderness—gave the Old Testament story new resonance to freedmen barred from entering “the promised land” by sharecropping and segregation. Constrained by economic and political discrimination, the former slaves shaped a more independent religious life through the new black churches that replaced the underground congregations of slavery.

Ironically, the new institutional autonomy enjoyed by these churches went hand in hand with increasing pressures to conform to the orthodoxies of the white Protestant denominations from the North, whose missionaries trained the first postslavery generation of Southern black ministers and teachers. The missionaries sought to “de-Judaize” the faith of the freedmen, who allegedly did not understand the New Testament. According to one Northern army chaplain, “There is no part of the Bible with which they are so familiar as the story of the deliverance of the children of Israel. Moses is their ideal of all that is high, and noble, and perfect, in man. [They] have been accustomed to regard Christ not so much in the light of a spiritual Deliverer, as that of a second Moses” (Kolchin 1972).

Desiring acceptance from white mentors, African Americans educated in postwar normal schools and colleges often censored their own religious heritage in response to such criticism. Eventually, the Old Testament-oriented spirituals gave way to the new gospel music in which the redemptive Jesus is the overwhelming presence. This was also the period when Protestant Fundamentalism became synonymous with African American Christianity and when theological black antisemitism first crystallized.

In the North, in the years after the Civil War, the increasingly self-confident and socially conscious German Jewish elite became involved in racial betterment efforts even before they took up the cause of Russian Jewish immigrants. The institutional links that Jewish philanthropies and civil rights organizations established with African American counterparts in the early twentieth century built on the initiatives taken a generation earlier by lawyer-politician Simon Wolf, a close political ally of black Republicans Frederick Douglass and John Mercer Langston, and investment banker Jacob Schiff, who spearheaded the movement to end racially separate schools in New York City.

In the South, Jewish politicians were less likely to reach out to the African American community than rabbis

such as Aaron S. Bettelheim in Richmond, Benjamin Szold in Baltimore (vilified as the rabbi of Timbuctoo), and later David Marx in Atlanta. But particularly during Reconstruction, Jewish peddlers and merchants put themselves at risk by their willingness to cultivate the freedmen as customers. In 1868 in Franklin, Tennessee—not far from where the Ku Klux Klan was founded two years before—a Jewish storekeeper accused of selling ammunition to freedmen was murdered alongside his African American employee.

The sharecropping and crop lien systems became the Southern norm at the same time that many antebellum Jewish peddlers made the transition to small-town supply merchant. Hostile white observers singled out German Jewish immigrants as the taskmaster, arbiter, and guardian of the depressed rural economy of the postwar South.

In actuality, Jews never dominated the Southern merchant class, though they were a highly visible minority. Before 1880, when the typical Jewish merchant was still a German immigrant, estimates of the foreign-born among the entire merchant class range from 11 to 23 percent. These percentages can serve only as a very rough approximation of the proportion who were Jewish, since all foreign-born merchants were not Jews, nor were all Jewish merchants foreign-born.

More important than numbers was limited economic power. Jonathan M. Wiener has demonstrated that the planters never lost their grip on Southern agriculture, maintaining it by assuming the commercial role themselves or becoming the dominant partner of merchants. In the Alabama Black Belt of the 1870s, merchants often functioned as agents of plantation owners. When Russian Jewish immigrants began arriving in the rural South after 1880, they did business with black tenant farmers under a system that placed ultimate control over credit as well as land tenure in the hands of white planters, almost none of whom were Jews.

Jewish merchants were vulnerable to scapegoating because of their foreign accents and identification with the Shylock stereotype. No matter the actual ethnicity of the owner, “Jew store” became popular shorthand for both country emporiums and urban retailers. Blacks often oscillated between admiration for Jewish merchants and antagonism, emulation, and envy.

African American newspapers in the South regularly carried accounts of the cheating of customers or the evic-

tion of tenants, but “stories about Jews mistreating blacks were infrequent” (Shankman 1982). Wild accusations about “Jewish moneylenders” who held “the purse strings of the world” and were “fast getting control of Southern merchandising, farming, and banking interests” were more often found in Northern black newspapers, the voice of the black elite. Booker T. Washington, whose early speeches contained derogatory references to Jewish merchants, ceased the practice after he began soliciting philanthropists like Julius Rosenwald for contributions to Tuskegee Institute. However, Washington clearly understood the limits of Jewish influence in the South. He supported a Jewish candidate for county sheriff and patronized a Jewish merchant who was a longtime friend of the school, but instructed his business manager not to get “our trade too much centered in the hands of a few Jews” because the real wielders of public opinion were “native Southern white men” (Harlan 1972–1989).

Blacks expressed solidarity with Jews in Mississippi and Louisiana in the early 1890s when white farmers—accusing Jewish merchants of displacing them with black tenants—launched an antisemitic vigilante movement. Over four hundred black Mississippians signed petitions in support of the Jews.

Steven Hertzberg found a “usually amicable” relationship in Atlanta between black customers and Jewish merchants who hired black employees and stayed in the racially mixed neighborhoods in which they did business, living over their stores (Hertzberg 1978). In Atlanta, the more established German Jewish merchants—some emerging as department-store owners—became less dependent on nonwhite trade, but their place at the bottom of the commercial hierarchy was taken by Russian Jewish newcomers who courted an African American clientele.

However, certain trends in Southern cities pointed to a troubled future. Some African American ministers criticized “the cheap Jew” for operating dance halls, movie theaters, and saloons, and for “desecrating the Sabbath,” particularly by selling liquor on Sundays. The nascent black business class also began to display competitive resentment toward Jewish merchants.

African Americans who migrated North brought with them a complex and distinctive image of Jews. By 1900 it had crystallized into a motif—Colored Man, Jew, and White Man—that pictured Jews as closer to African Americans than non-Jewish whites, yet prone to get the better of

blacks in competitive dealings. Black folklore explained how to distinguish “a cracker from a Jew”: “If one of dem is more stingy than he is mean, he’s a Jew; and if he’s more mean than stingy, he’s a cracker” (Dinnerstein 1994).

Yet blacks combined an older religious identification with Jews as the chosen and a newer secular identification with them as a kindred minority. They viewed Jews as a third force, not quite white. Seen as a model worthy of emulation, Jews were distinguished from other immigrant groups, such as the Irish or Italians, who were more likely to be the target of black nativist hostility. The view of the Jews as a special category was sometimes used by African American critics to hold Jews to a higher standard, criticizing them for failings that they tolerated in other groups.

*Harold Brackman*

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## Jews and Black Rights (1900–1950)

Jews became significantly involved in promoting African American rights during the Progressive period and provided far more support than any other nonblack group in the next several decades. Jews helped organize and finance the leading civil rights organization of the first half of the twentieth century, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and comprised a sizable portion of its legal staff. Two Jews, Joel Spingarn and then Arthur Spingarn, served as NAACP president for most of the organization's first forty years. Jews were also prominent financial supporters of the National Urban League, formed to assist Southern black migrants to Northern cities, and served on its executive board. Jewish philanthropists contributed heavily to black education at all levels. Julius Rosenwald alone, by giving any Southern community half the funds to build an African American school if it provided the rest, helped establish over 5,000 of them. Jewish attorneys volunteered their services to the Scottsboro Boys, nine impoverished black youths arrested in 1931 for rapes they did not commit and put on trial for their lives in the most important civil rights case of the early twentieth century. The Jewish-led needle trades unions were critical of labor organizations that remained racially exclusive, and encouraged blacks to join. Jews and blacks forged a coalition to lobby for fair employment and open housing legislation, which persisted into the 1960s.

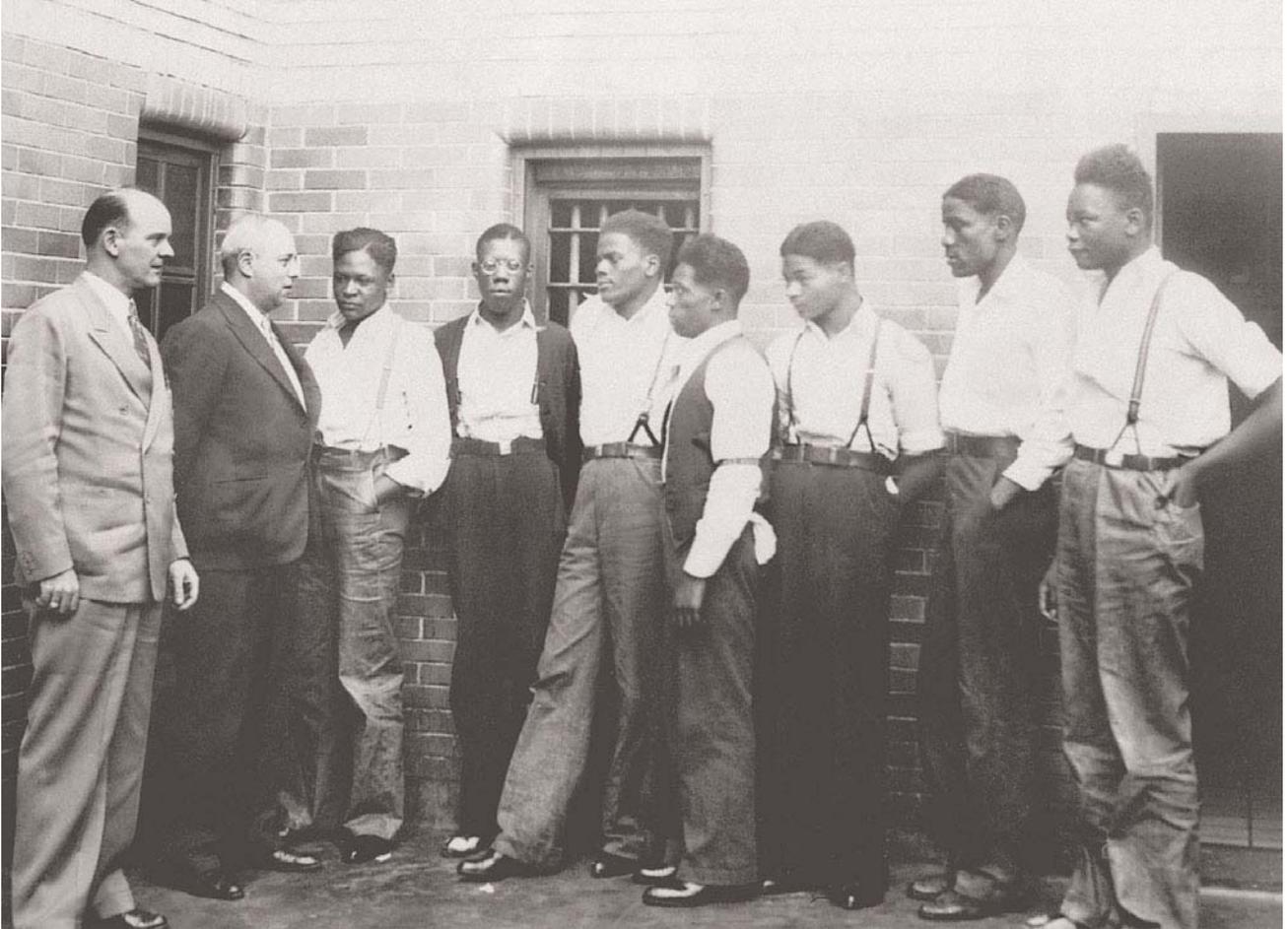
Both the Jewish and African American press often drew parallels between East European pogroms and American race riots. The Yiddish press equated Southern lynchings of blacks with the Spanish Inquisition's burning Jews at the stake. The *Forverts* (*Forward*) considered the 1917 antiblack riot in East St. Louis, Illinois, similar to the 1903 Kishinev pogrom in Bessarabia. The *Voice of the Negro* in 1906 noted that "in almost every respect the American white man's attitude toward the Negro is that of the Slav toward the Jew" ("The Russian Jew and the American

Negro" 1906). It also warned blacks that the Jews' hard work and upward mobility had not rendered them less vulnerable to prejudice.

American Jews supported African American rights because of similarities in the Jewish and black experiences, and because of idealism and moral conviction rooted in Jewish values, which emphasized the importance of seeking social justice in this world. Every year at Passover, Jews remembered that they were descended from people who had been slaves and who had struggled for freedom. Anti-semitism is the world's longest hatred, and, although it was not as virulent in the United States as antiblack prejudice, it intensified and spread during the interwar period, peaking during World War II. Like African Americans, Jews suffered discrimination in jobs and housing, and in access to higher education and facilities like hotels and resorts. Jews were the only white ethnic group in America to suffer frequent physical beatings because they were members of a despised minority.

Jews also shared with African Americans some of their experience of being subjected to police brutality. In many Northeastern cities, police forces were dominated by Irish Americans, many of them strongly prejudiced against both blacks and Jews. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, many police officers in these cities belonged to the virulently antisemitic Christian Front, established by the demagogic radio priest Charles Coughlin. During World War II, when antisemitic violence in America reached its peak, Jews in New York and Boston repeatedly complained that the police did not respond to calls for help when Jews were physically attacked in the streets. In 1943, Boston police refused to pursue or arrest members of a largely Irish American crowd, estimated to number between sixty and three hundred, who had assaulted four Jewish youths, and then arrested the Jews when they protested. While in custody, the police beat them, shouting antisemitic epithets. African American leaders, like New York City councilman Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and Boston NAACP director Julian Steele, noted the similarities between the wartime antisemitic outbreaks in Boston and antiblack riots.

Jews rallied behind the Scottsboro Boys after their arrest in Alabama on a false accusation of raping two white women and helped save their lives. Jews in the International Labor Defense (ILD), the Communist Party (CP) legal front group, were instrumental in providing the defendants their first effective legal support. James Allen (the



Seven of the Scottsboro Boys at the jail in Scottsboro, Alabama, on May 1, 1935. (AP/Wide World Photos)

CP name of Sol Auerbach) had moved from New York to Chattanooga to start up and edit a newspaper called the *Southern Worker*. Allen quickly learned of the defendants' arrest and wired the ILD in New York, which immediately determined to defend the nine black youths. In the *Southern Worker*, Allen denounced the Scottsboro case as a "frame-up from start to finish" (Goodman 1994).

The ILD's chief lawyer, Joseph Brodsky, a Russian Jewish immigrant born in Kiev, visited the defendants, who had been represented by incompetent counsel and quickly found guilty, and promised them that the ILD would vigorously appeal their convictions. Eight of the defendants had received death sentences and one life imprisonment. Brodsky's passionate commitment deeply impressed the youths and their families. Joined by a mostly Jewish staff from New York, Brodsky worked tirelessly investigating the case and preparing appeals, and succeeded in winning new trials from the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1933, Samuel Leibowitz (1893–1978), a liberal Democrat and one of the nation's leading criminal attorneys, assumed the role of chief defense counsel, without pay. Like Brodsky and his assistants, Leibowitz knew he was risking his life by going to Alabama to represent the black defendants. A Rumanian-born Jew, Leibowitz declared that he had been inspired to join the Scottsboro defense in part by the memory of Leo Frank, a Jew convicted in Georgia twenty years before for a murder he had not committed, in an atmosphere of antisemitic hysteria, and then lynched after the governor had commuted his sentence from death to life imprisonment.

Leibowitz invested enormous energy on behalf of the convicted youths, challenging Alabama's systematic exclusion of African Americans from juries and angering the prosecution by asking that it address black witnesses as "Mister." In his summation at the end of a retrial, prosecutor Wade Wright denounced Leibowitz, Brodsky, and Jews



*Samuel Leibowitz (center), defense attorney for the Scottsboro Boys, is flanked by court-appointed bodyguards in 1933. (Library of Congress)*

across the nation who clamored for the defendants' exoneration by shouting to the jury, "Show them that Alabama justice cannot be bought and sold with Jew money from New York" (Carter 1979). Throughout the appeals, the Yiddish- and English-language Jewish press strongly supported the accused black youths. Although the intense racism in Alabama made it impossible for Leibowitz to obtain acquittals, his legal skill and passion for racial justice prevented any defendant from being executed and eventually resulted in freedom for all nine.

During the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), American Jews fought alongside African Americans in the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, a volunteer unit organized in the United States to take part in the first military resistance to fascism in Europe. Like blacks who sought to demonstrate their hatred of racial oppression by clamoring for combat assignments in the Union army during the Civil War, a sizable number of American Jews volunteered to fight fascism in a country that had expelled its entire Jewish population, then Europe's largest, in 1492. The Lincoln Brigade, one-

third Jewish, was the first American military unit to integrate blacks and whites.

Tensions between African Americans and Jews developed in some Northern urban ghettos during the 1930s, most notably New York's Harlem, where some black nationalists used antisemitic rhetoric in mobilizing against allegedly exploitative neighborhood shopkeepers. The most well-known was the virulently antisemitic Sufi Abdul Hamid, known as Black Hitler, whose followers picketed Harlem Jewish merchants who, they claimed, refused to hire African Americans to work in their stores. The accused shopkeepers often insisted they preferred to employ family members. The picketing peaked in the winter of 1934–1935 and helped precipitate the March 1935 Harlem race riot, marked by widespread looting, a few deaths, and over a hundred injured. There were other contributing factors besides antisemitism, including the district's high unemployment, exacerbated by the Depression and racist hiring barriers in many occupations, and resentment of landlords regardless of background. Rioters also targeted many Italian-owned stores because of Mussolini's designs on Ethiopia.

In 1939, the Negro Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks, which had made Samuel Leibowitz a life member in recognition of his heroic defense of the Scottsboro Boys, invited him to Harlem to address 2,000 convention delegates on black–Jewish friction. Concerned that antisemitism was increasing in Harlem, Leibowitz urged black–Jewish dialogue and equated animosity toward Jews with Ku Klux Klanism.

During World War II, both African Americans and Jews complained that defense industries would not hire them and proposed granting the Fair Employment Practices Committee (1941) more power to combat discriminatory hiring practices. Both groups also lobbied for "race libel" bills banning the mailing of literature that defamed an ethnic or racial group.

A Jewish soldier, Sergeant Alton Levy, drew national attention to racism in the U.S. military when in 1943 the army court-martialed, demoted, and imprisoned him for protesting the segregation of black troops at his Nebraska base, including their confinement to separate barracks, mess areas, and recreation centers. Levy, a former labor organizer, also denounced white officers' frequent verbal abuse of black soldiers.

The impact of the Holocaust, Jewish organizations' experience combating intense wartime domestic anti-

semitism, and expectations that a renewed postwar depression would intensify bigotry all caused the American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, and Anti-Defamation League to step up efforts to combat prejudice after World War II. During the late 1940s, they invested considerable effort in educational work to promote tolerance, emphasizing that defamation of any minority group harmed all of them. Jews and African Americans were alarmed by the rapid postwar growth of the Ku Klux Klan and the emergence of the neo-Nazi Columbians, hate movements that preached violence against both peoples.

Jews provided important support for Jackie Robinson's breaking of baseball's color line, one of the most important civil rights advances of the first half of the twentieth century. Brooklyn's population, where Robinson played, was about 40 percent Jewish, providing a more hospitable environment than probably any other city for the pioneering African American player, who received death threats and vicious taunts from opposing fans. In April 1945, Jewish city councilman Isadore Muchnick, a passionate supporter of civil rights, persuaded the Boston Red Sox to grant a tryout to three black players, including Robinson. Although the Red Sox did not show serious interest in the three, the tryout probably attracted Brooklyn general manager Branch Rickey's attention, influencing his decision to sign Robinson to a minor league contract later that year.

Although most sportswriters remained indifferent to baseball's color bar, or supported it, Jews like Shirley Povich of the *Washington Post*, Roger Kahn of the *New York Herald Tribune*, and broadcaster Walter Winchell denounced it. This had a significant impact, because the African American press did not reach a white mainstream readership, while Povich and Kahn wrote for large-circulation newspapers, and Winchell's Sunday evening radio audience was among the nation's largest. Millions more across the nation read Winchell's syndicated newspaper column. Jewish sportswriters, themselves sometimes barred from hotels as Jews, made a point of bringing to public attention the fact that Robinson was often forced to seek separate accommodations on the road.

The first opposing player to offer Robinson encouragement during his trying rookie year of 1947 was Jewish superstar Hank Greenberg, long harassed by antisemitic fans and opponents. During a game early in the season, Greenberg told Robinson: "Don't pay any attention to

these guys who are trying to make it hard for you. Stick in there. . . . I hope you and I can get together for a talk. There are a few things I've learned down through the years that might help you and make it easier." Robinson was deeply moved by this support and told a reporter: "Class tells. It sticks out all over Mr. Greenberg." He noted that the Jewish slugger had also experienced "racial trouble" (Norwood and Brackman 1999).

Jewish scholars did pioneering work in African American history, a field that the established historical profession ignored during the first half of the twentieth century. Recasting African American history was important to the development and reception of the demand that blacks be granted full civil rights. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, historians Harvey Wish and Herbert Aptheker were among the first to conduct significant research on African American slave revolts, and Philip Foner published a sympathetic biography of black abolitionist and civil rights leader Frederick Douglass. All were of East European Jewish, lower-middle-class or working-class backgrounds. James Allen challenged the then-prevailing racist assumptions underlying mainstream scholarship on Reconstruction. Anthropologist Melville Herskovits's *The Myth of the Negro Past* (1941) caused many scholars to take more seriously the notion that African culture had significantly shaped African American identity. Frank Tannenbaum, a Jewish immigrant from Austria-Hungary, published one of the earliest and most influential books on comparative slavery and race relations, *Slave & Citizen* (1946). Branch Rickey, who had worried that public opposition to desegregating major league baseball might render it unfeasible, became persuaded to attempt it by Tannenbaum's argument that increased contacts between blacks and whites would undermine racial prejudice. Rickey credited Tannenbaum with having strongly influenced him to bring Jackie Robinson to the major leagues. In subsequent decades, a very large proportion of scholars of African American history was Jewish.

Stephen H. Norwood

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## Black–Jewish Relations since 1950

The warm relationship that has existed between blacks and Jews for well over a century has little parallel among the various religious and ethnic groups that make up American society. During the period of slavery, African Americans identified with Jews of the Old Testament, and their hymns and folk music often reflected this attachment. Blacks hoped to emulate the Jewish experience in crossing the river Jordan and entering the promised land of equal citizenship.

In turn, Jews at all social and economic levels viewed harassment and discrimination against blacks as similar to their own experience and reached out to help them. Upper-class German Jewish leaders like Jacob and Mortimer Schiff, James Loeb, and Felix Warburg worked closely with Booker T. Washington at the turn of the twentieth century in the development of his Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Chicago's Sears, Roebuck department-store tycoon Julius Rosenwald single-handedly established a system of public schools for blacks in the South when Southern states provided few such facilities. Joel Spingarn played a key role in the creation and development of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) early in the century. And Louis Marshall, the second national president of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), served as its voluntary general counsel at a time when it did not have a professional legal staff. Rebuffed in his effort to win from the Supreme Court a ban on judicial enforcement of restrictive covenants, his posi-

tion was later upheld by the court in the landmark decision of *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948).

Even poor, immigrant Jews struggling to make a place for themselves in American life at the turn of the twentieth century felt a strong connection to African Americans. At one point, the *Forverts* (*Forward*), the most frequently read newspaper of the new immigrants, compared the East St. Louis race riot of 1917 with the Kishinev pogrom against Jews in 1903.

The black–Jewish alliance continued well into the 1930s and 1940s. Beneath the surface, however, tensions were developing that would fester in subsequent years. Jews often resided in neighborhoods like Harlem, the Bronx, and North Philadelphia, and in other major cities that blacks began to move into after World War I. The latter found, if not a warm welcome, at least little or no violent opposition, as they often experienced elsewhere. Following World War II, Jews, like other Americans, began to move out of these older neighborhoods into tree-lined, outer-city or suburban areas in their upward climb, leaving behind a network of grocery stores and other retail establishments along with rental property.

Economic arrangements between the two groups lent themselves to conflict even as cooperation existed in many areas. The newcomers often needed credit to pay their bills, and this sometimes resulted in misunderstandings or worse. Some landlords were accused of charging exorbitant rents. And even as Jewish civil rights bodies like the American Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League, and AJC continued to work closely with the Urban League, NAACP, and other liberal groups after the war, in helping to create a significant body of legislation at city and state levels banning religious and racial discrimination, some African Americans resented what they considered Jewish leaders' patronizing attitude and self-serving role. In fact, far from acting out of self-interest, by aligning with African Americans, Jews hurt their own standing.

The black–Jewish alliance reached a high point with the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act the following year. Passage of the legislation was aided in no small measure by the disproportionate number of Jews who went into the South in voter registration drives. Their efforts resulted in one of the most memorable events of the civil rights struggle: the murder of two Jews and a black in Philadelphia, Mississippi.

These civil rights gains did not, however, reach deeply enough into the smoldering black ghettos of America.

While some middle-class African Americans were able to take advantage of the new opportunities, many remained mired in poverty, which in some respects grew worse, as an increasingly high-tech economy demanded special training and skills. Many jobs also disappeared overseas where wages were often lower than in the United States.

The situation came to a head in the summer of 1964 when racial rioting broke out in Harlem and Philadelphia following incidents involving the police, and in subsequent summers in the Watts section of Los Angeles, Newark, Detroit, and other cities, reaching an orgy of violence in 1968 after the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. Large numbers of the businesses in the ghettos, many of them owned or run by Jews, were wiped out. Jews directly affected by the rioting tended to be older, more vulnerable, with life savings tied up in their businesses, and unable to move them elsewhere.

In subsequent years, major urban centers witnessed the growth of crime and other disorders, reminding Jews of earlier experiences in Europe when they were victims of pogroms and other forms of mob violence. To be sure, the issue here was less antisemitism than that Jews, like other urban whites, found themselves in the path of the urban storm.

Complicating the situation further, a new class of black leaders arose. They challenged the integration tactics of King, who stood at the center of the black–Jewish alliance in the late 1950s and 1960s. They included militants like Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown in the 1960s, and Louis Farrakhan after 1975. The new leaders defined themselves as black nationalists. They considered the civil rights revolution a failure. They argued that blacks must take greater control of their lives and destiny and abandon any reliance on white supporters, who were frequently viewed as simply part of the white power structure that was oppressing African Americans. Carmichael, now known as Kwame Touré, along with political scientist Charles Hamilton, coined the slogan “Black Power,” which called for African Americans to take control of schools, the police, and other local institutions that served them directly.

While Black Power seemed threatening to some whites, many Jews who worked with African Americans recognized that, to become part of the society as full and equal partners, African Americans needed to strengthen their communal institutions. What was more worrisome, however, was that some of the new breed of black national-

ists and community activists embraced antisemitism and exhibited hostility to the State of Israel. Malcolm X minimized and even justified the Holocaust. Some black nationalists utilized the notorious forgery *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in their attacks on Jews. Farrakhan, in a widely disseminated publication, *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews*, which was prepared by the “Historical Research Department” of the Nation of Islam but listed no authors, charged that Jews had played a dominant role in the slave trade, a claim that has no basis in fact. In the hands of several black academics and intellectuals, including Tony Martin, Franz Fanon, and Harold Cruse, the black struggle in this country was linked to the struggles of darker-skinned peoples all over the world to free themselves from colonial oppression. In this paradigm, Israel came to be seen as an outpost of Western imperialism in the Middle East, the counterpart of alleged Jewish exploitation of blacks in the ghetto.

For the most part Jewish writers during this time clung to the older, universalistic view that had served Jews so well in their own upward rise. They saw their counterparts as following essentially the same path toward fuller integration into American life.

The rise of black nationalism also coincided with the Six Day War in the Middle East in 1967 and the Yom Kippur War six years later. As surrounding Arab nations threatened to drive the Jews of Israel into the Mediterranean Sea, American Jews came to experience a sense of heightened ethnic or group identity. The threat to Israel’s safety and security reopened for many the fear that a new Holocaust was impending for their brethren. The successes achieved by the Jewish state in these wars also filled Jews with pride and led to the “Zionization” of American Jewish life. Jews vowed “never again” to react passively to any threat at home or abroad.

Several episodes now caused the rift between blacks and Jews to widen. In 1968, operating under a concept of community control sought by black nationalists, and with the support of the liberal administration of New York mayor John Lindsay and the Ford Foundation, a movement was launched to empower blacks by giving them greater control of public schools in their neighborhoods. Underlying this move was the idea that white teachers could not identify with their student charges and were destructive because they allegedly held low expectations of them.

The situation reached crisis proportions in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville section of Brooklyn in 1968, where a disciple of Malcolm X, Rhody McCoy, was installed as school superintendent. McCoy encouraged, or remained indifferent to, “community activists” who began to use race-based violence and intimidation against both whites and blacks in the area. The new superintendent and local board took the unprecedented step of dismissing nineteen supervisors and teachers, almost all white and Jewish. As the controversy heated up, many teachers walked off the job. Citing antisemitic appeals, Albert Shanker, head of the Jewish-dominated United Federation of Teachers, a union long seen as in the forefront of efforts to improve race relations and an early supporter of community control, launched several city-wide strikes. The strikes disrupted the intricate balance of group relations in New York City. In *The Strike That Changed New York*, historian Jerald Podair suggests that over the years Jews had created “a cosmopolitan influence that helped to blunt the force of more primal passions.” Ocean Hill–Brownsville, he writes, ruptured the black–Jewish alliance. It marked the “passage [of Jews] from racial ambivalence to unmistakable ‘white’ identity,” which resulted in greater identification with their white ethnic and largely Roman Catholic fellow citizens (Podair 2002).

Simultaneously, another issue further increased black–Jewish tensions. This was the effort to improve the black condition through affirmative action programs that utilized racial preferences in admissions to universities and professional schools, and in other areas of economic and community life. Jews found themselves divided on the two Supreme Court cases—*DeFunis* in 1974 and *Bakke* in 1978—which ruled certain forms of special treatment of African Americans constitutional and others not. Racial quotas, as Jews and many others came to call such measures, were advanced as a means of dealing with the long history of discrimination and disadvantage experienced by African Americans, but some Jewish agencies felt that their effect was to lock Jews and other whites out of opportunities that should be made available on the principle of merit alone. This, however, ignored the fact that many whites enjoyed preferences in admissions as children of alumni, as did white—and black—athletes. For many Jews, affirmative action programs brought back memories of quotas, a tactic utilized by an older Protestant leadership class in the 1920s and later to keep Jews out of col-

leges and universities, as well as medical and other professional schools. To most African Americans, the resistance they encountered from Jews was only further evidence of the effort to deny them their rightful place in American life. That some Jews and some Jewish groups were among the opponents of affirmative action programs was frequently seen as hypocritical and an effort to disengage from the civil rights struggle.

A series of incidents and the statements of some black and Jewish leaders further exacerbated the situation. In 1979, it became known that Andrew Young, earlier one of King’s chief lieutenants and now U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, had met secretly with an official of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in New York. This was contrary to the pledge of two presidents of the United States, who took the position that U.S. officials should not meet with the PLO until it recognized the Jewish state. The meeting aroused concern among Jews who saw the PLO as a terrorist organization. Young resigned, to the consternation of many African Americans, who took great pride in one of their numbers reaching so high a position. He was, however, replaced by another African American.

In the early 1980s, Jesse Jackson, another of King’s aides, sided with the Palestinians in the struggle in the Middle East and made a number of insensitive remarks. In one highly publicized episode, Jackson, thinking he was speaking off the record to a *Washington Post* reporter who happened to be African American, characterized New York as “Hymietown.” When the *Post* reported the remark, Jews and Jewish organizations were outraged and denounced him. Jackson has also refused to distance himself from Louis Farrakhan, who has made antisemitic remarks. This was especially troubling to Jews because the leader of the Nation of Islam proved capable of attracting large numbers of African Americans to his rallies, including a number of black political leaders. More recently, Jackson has reached out to Jews and avoided controversy, but the episode still rankles in the minds of many.

In 1991, a major incident occurred that raised the conflict between the two groups in New York to a fever pitch. After an accident in which a car in a motorcade following the leading Hasidic rabbi in Crown Heights, an ultra-Orthodox area of Brooklyn, took the life of a seven-year-old black youth, blacks from inside and outside the area roamed the streets for several days and nights, shout-

ing antisemitic epithets and smashing windows. The incident culminated in the murder of an Australian Jewish scholar. Many Jews blamed Mayor David Dinkins, an African American, for allegedly failing to respond more aggressively to the violence. The man directly involved in the murder was initially not convicted. Later, following intervention by the federal government, he was tried and convicted, but only on a lesser charge of civil rights violation.

The series of unhappy incidents beginning in the late 1960s has pushed some Jews in more conservative directions and away from their earlier partners. This has occurred primarily at city and state levels. A majority of Jews, for example, voted against liberal John Lindsay when he sought reelection in 1969, following the Ocean Hill–Brownsville strikes, although several issues not pertaining to race were also involved. Ed Koch, a Democrat who over time developed more conservative views, especially on crime, and who publicly denounced “poverty pimps” living off welfare, was subsequently elected mayor of New York City for three terms with strong support from Jews. In 1971, an estimated 50 percent of the Jewish vote was cast for hard-line former police commissioner Frank Rizzo in his successful race for mayor in Philadelphia against a liberal Republican candidate. (Blacks opposed him by a margin of three to one.) Despite this, Jews continue to vote for African American candidates in higher proportions than other whites. On a national level, Jews and blacks remain united in their strong support of the Democratic Party.

This pattern of Jews and blacks diverging politically at local levels has grown in recent years. Following the Crown Heights riot, Rudolph Giuliani won two-thirds of the Jewish vote in his successful race against Dinkins. In his subsequent run against a liberal, but weak, Jewish candidate in 1997, Giuliani received three-quarters of the Jewish vote, an extraordinary development for this prototypical liberal group.

The confrontation of Palestinians and Jews in the Middle East has persisted as a continuing source of friction between blacks and Jews. A majority of the Congressional Black Caucus remains supportive of Israel, but when the U.S. House of Representatives voted 352 to 21, with twenty-nine members voting “present,” to back a pro-Israel resolution in May 2002, many of those voting against or “present” were black. Representatives Cynthia McKinney (Georgia) and Earl Hilliard (Alabama) have drawn the most fire from Jews. McKinney charged that a conspiracy

of Zionist Jews is responsible for America’s pro-Israel foreign policy. In 2002, pro-Israel groups around the country strongly supported challenges to McKinney and Hilliard, who were defeated in Democratic primaries by African American opponents, who went on to triumph in the general elections. In turn, this effort brought out-of-state support for McKinney and Hilliard, primarily from Muslims, Arabs, and others who backed the Palestinian cause. In 2004, after the incumbent gave up the House seat to run for the Senate, McKinney entered the Democratic primary and won easily, going on to regain her seat in the election.

Since the Crown Heights crisis in 1991, a degree of calmness and cooling of the rhetoric has prevailed in black–Jewish relations. Both groups have increasingly turned inward, focusing on issues of more immediate concern to their communities. For Jews, this has meant the continued threat to the safety and security of Israel, along with issues, like assimilation and intermarriage, that threaten the future of Jewry. African Americans, in turn, are living in a post–civil rights era and are struggling more with what the economist Glen Loury has called the “struggle within”—the high percentage of black males in prison, the breakdown of wide segments of the black family, and the high rate of AIDS. In response to these problems, black leaders are strengthening communal institutions, as black militants had urged. These are matters on which Jews can have little impact. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the issue of black–Jewish relations has therefore drifted to the rear as African Americans confront realities less amenable to civil rights solutions and protest marches. For some in both groups, perhaps especially for Jews, the memories of having marched and fought together in a great cause still retain a degree of saliency that continues to spark efforts at cooperation and support in some communities.

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## Jews and Affirmative Action/ Preferences

Affirmative action has been at the center of numerous debates within and between Jewish groups since the 1960s. The term “affirmative action” covers a wide range of concepts; indeed, its lack of concreteness has led to numerous policy struggles in the history of affirmative action programs. The narrow definition of affirmative action includes any measure or program whose purpose is to correct or compensate for past or present discrimination or to prevent any future discrimination. The elusive term “goals and timetables,” often accompanying affirmative action plans, has meant “quotas” to some, and legitimate, benign targets to others. In its strictest sense, the phrase refers to targets set for employing minorities and women, along with time frames for achieving these goals.

Affirmative action was a product not of the 1960s, when it became a national issue, but of an awareness in the early 1940s that eliminating employment discrimination would not be sufficient to overcome the effects of decades in which opportunities had been denied to minority groups, especially blacks. The involvement of the Jewish community in civil rights led to the varied Jewish communal stances on affirmative action. In 1941, to avert a march on Washington threatened by union leader and civil rights activist A. Philip Randolph, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order (EO) 8802, which outlawed discrimination in defense industries (later expanded to include all federal contractors) and created the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to oversee enforcement.

Plagued with serious employment discrimination in their own community, Jewish leaders took the opportunity to form the Coordinating Committee of Jewish Organizations Concerned with Discrimination in the War Industries, which was incorporated in 1944 into the newly formed National Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC; later the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, NJCRAC; now the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, JCPA). Toward the end of World War II, to

counter efforts to abolish the FEPC—the one agency that gave teeth to EO 8802—Jewish groups became involved with the National Council for a Permanent FEPC, started by Randolph in 1943. This coalition marked the beginning of what became known as the civil rights movement, which resulted in landmark judicial decisions and legislative initiatives, notably the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Civil rights legislation, in declaring racial neutrality as its goal, could not do the job, given the history of deeply entrenched racial and gender discrimination.

In 1961 President John F. Kennedy issued EO 10925, which outlawed discrimination by federal contractors and mandated: “The contractor shall take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed . . . without regard to their race, color, creed, or national origin.” EO 10925 is noteworthy in that it defined affirmative action as the obligation of the employer. By the mid-1960s it became increasingly clear that EO 10925 had had little impact on the hiring record of government contractors. In September 1965 President Lyndon B. Johnson issued EO 11246, which added several compliance requirements—including goals and timetables—and enforcement authorities to EO 10925. EO 11246 is generally considered to mark the beginning of what is known as affirmative action. The two Executive Orders mandated affirmative action, but failed to define it. Definition came from the courts, with public-affairs groups—including Jewish communal organizations—weighing in on the issue.

The uncertainty over defining affirmative action led to a zone of ambiguity with respect to stances within the organized Jewish community. The range of positions on affirmative action adopted by the various Jewish communal organizations suggests the nuanced complexity of the issue of goals and timetables. The question is: are goals and timetables the same as quotas, abhorred—with good historical reason—by the Jewish community, or are they legitimate vehicles for addressing entrenched discrimination?

In 1969 the umbrella body for Jewish community relations and public affairs in the United States, NJCRAC, noting the traditional Jewish opposition to quotas, adopted a policy that asserted that “equality of opportunity should be based on individual qualification alone” (NJCRAC 1969). In 1971 the first major national debate among Jewish organizations over affirmative action took place under NJCRAC auspices, and the issue came to a head at the 1972

NJCRCAC Plenum. The NJCRCAC consensus position, adopted after intense debate, is expressed in “Affirmative Action, Preferential Treatment, and Quotas.” “We oppose all quotas,” it asserted, but this was immediately followed by “but we do not oppose . . . setting specific target goals and time tables . . . so long as such goals and time tables are used to evaluate good faith efforts and not as rigid requirements” (NJCRCAC 1981). This nuanced distinction reverberated in subsequent debates among and within Jewish groups.

The NJCRCAC position in fact masked several areas of disagreement—some clear, some murky—that were articulated in the 1970s and 1980s. The three “defense” agencies differed in their approaches. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL), an early critic of many forms of affirmative action, viewed affirmative action as a “gateway” and opposed goals and timetables as tantamount to quotas. The ADL objected to all departures from merit selection. The American Jewish Committee (AJC) also opposed quotas, but supported flexible goals and timetables. The American Jewish Congress (AJCongress) opposed quotas, but supported goals and timetables if ordered by a court or administrative agency following a proof or finding of discrimination. Among the religious bodies, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, representing the mainstream, centrist, traditionally observant religious community, opposed anything that suggested group privileges, including goals and timetables. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC, now the Union of Reform Judaism) expressed a blanket support of goals and timetables. Two women’s groups with considerable membership—the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) and Women’s American ORT—likewise expressed support for goals and timetables, the latter even supporting quotas in certain circumstances.

The varied positions were played out in cases that reached the U.S. Supreme Court during the 1980s and 1990s and again in 2003. Early cases had the effect of expanding the rubric of acceptable affirmative action practices. The first Supreme Court test of affirmative action was *DeFunis v. Odegaard* (1974), a law school admissions case. DeFunis, a Jewish applicant, challenged the University of Washington Law School’s refusal to admit him, while it accepted less qualified minorities under an affirmative action program. Although the school denied having

a quota, it did acknowledge that its goal was to achieve a reasonable representation of minorities. The three Jewish defense agencies—the ADL, AJCongress, and AJC—all filed *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) briefs in favor of the student who claimed that he was victimized by the school’s affirmative action program. Two Jewish groups—NCJW and the UAHC—supported the program. The case did not reach a decision, but soon thereafter (1978) an almost identical case, *Bakke v. Regents, University of California*, was decided. In *Bakke*, the University of California (Davis) Medical School had reserved a fixed number of places for specified racial minorities, and a number of minority applicants with lower scores than Bakke were admitted, whereas he was not.

*Bakke* was the first affirmative action case decided by the Supreme Court, and had ramifications for black–Jewish relations. Jewish organizations were split on the case, with the AJC and the AJCongress, together with several white ethnic groups, filing a brief urging that race not be a factor. The ADL filed its own brief along the same lines. The UAHC and NCJW, unlike in *DeFunis*, sat out the case. The Jewish community generally hailed the decision because, although it did say that race could be taken into account, it outlawed rigid racial quotas.

While *Bakke* acknowledged the validity of some race-conscious programs, it also recognized for the first time the validity of reverse discrimination claims, a precedent that concerned blacks. But the main source of black–Jewish tension grew out of the fact that Jewish groups had actually gone into the case. The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), a coalition begun in 1950 by black and Jewish leaders, ducked any number of affirmative action cases—including *Bakke*. The LCCR realized that, without Jewish support, a consensus was impossible, and this exacerbated black–Jewish tensions as well.

Other Supreme Court cases illustrated both Jewish and intergroup sensitivities toward affirmative action. *United Steelworkers v. Weber* (1979) involved not a university but a blue-collar reverse discrimination situation. Most Jewish groups sat out *Weber* (ADL was an exception, filing in opposition to the program) for varying reasons: Jews did not have as clear a stake in the blue-collar world as they did in the university; there was a history of discrimination that needed to be redressed; and, probably, not supporting *Weber* was at least partly intended to improve black–Jewish relations. Nonetheless, affirmative

action remained a subject of sharp dispute between blacks—who viewed quotas as a floor, a vehicle to let people in—and Jews—who viewed quotas as a ceiling, a way of keeping people out.

Also expanding the affirmative action rubric was *Fullilove v. Klutznick*, which approved a set-aside for federal expenditures with minority business interests. Only the ADL filed a brief in *Fullilove*, arguing that the set-aside was counter to the principles of color blindness. Other cases in the 1980s (*Firefighters Local Union #1784 v. Stotts* and *Wygant v. Jackson Board of Education*), testing seniority rights, restricted affirmative action. Affirmative action bounced back in two cases—*Local 28, Sheet Metal Workers v. EEOC* (1986) and *U.S. v. Paradise* (1987)—that tested court-ordered quotas where there were judicial findings of prior discrimination. The court allowed the quotas. These cases were significant in terms of Jewish communal involvement. Four major Jewish groups—AJC, AJCongress, the UAHC, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform)—now joined with blacks (the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc.) in an “Inc. Fund” brief in support of quotas in those circumstances.

Following *Fullilove*, NJCRAC in 1981 revised its position and equated gender discrimination with racial discrimination. In 1995, in a pointed message to hard-liners in the Jewish community, it claimed that the misuse and abuse of affirmative action had been rare and reaffirmed its policy of support of non-quota-driven programs. In an important modification of its policy, the ADL in 1987 said that race could be considered as the determining factor if a history of “egregious discrimination” existed in an industry or workplace.

After *Paradise*, the affirmative action arena was generally quiet, and national Jewish communal involvement in litigation was almost nonexistent in the 1990s. One exception was *Adarand v. Peña* (1995), which established strict scrutiny for federal programs. Jewish groups, whatever their views on goals and timetables, reaffirmed support for these programs. In *Adarand*, a construction company, bidding for a Small Business Administration contract, was denied the contract, even though it had the lowest bid. The contract went instead to a minority contractor. Adarand claimed that race-based presumptions in the bidding process violated the equal protection component of the Fifth Amendment’s due process clause. The Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed a ruling on behalf of the gov-

ernment not requiring strict scrutiny. The U.S. Supreme Court overruled the Tenth Circuit and said in effect that any governmental action based on race needs to be subjected to detailed judicial inquiry—“strict scrutiny”—to ensure that the personal right to equal protection was not infringed. Strict scrutiny became therefore the proper standard for analysis of race-based programs.

On the legislative front, there was Jewish involvement in the embattled Civil Rights Act of 1991, which achieved passage in the 102nd Congress. The bill became a flash-point in the relationship between President George H. W. Bush and blacks, as well as within the Jewish community. The Civil Rights Act was Congress’s first successful effort to reverse the effects of the Rehnquist Supreme Court, which had itself reversed the tide of previous Court decisions that were favorable to affirmative action. Six cases handed down during the 1988–1989 term (and four other rulings since 1985) had restricted the reach of federal laws involving gender, racial, religious, and ethnic discrimination in hiring, promotion, and termination. Passage of the legislation, which would make it easier for a plaintiff to prove the discriminatory effect of employment practices and require employers to defend the legitimacy of such practices—and not the other way around, as the high court decisions would have it—had been frustrated since first introduced in 1989, during the 101st Congress.

The debate over support of the bill exposed numerous fault lines in the Jewish community, again over the question of quotas. At the end of the day Jewish groups, except for two organizations representing Orthodox Jews, Agudath Israel of America and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (OU), supported the measure, acknowledging a consensus position that the bill was not about quotas.

The calm in litigation was ended in 2003 by two cases, *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger*, which tested law school and undergraduate admissions policies at the University of Michigan. The Supreme Court, in a 6-to-3 decision, rejected the undergraduate program, which assigned a specific number of points based on an applicant’s race. In a narrow 5-to-4 decision, however, it upheld the law school’s program, stating that consideration of race within an individualized assessment of candidates is constitutional. Jewish groups were divided on the Michigan cases. The ADL’s position in *Grutter* and *Gratz* was that diversity is a laudable goal and that race could be a factor in a plan; the undergraduate

program, therefore, which was purely numbers-driven, was flawed, while the law school's individualized approach merited support. Hadassah, the UAHC, and the NCJW joined an AJC brief supporting both Michigan plans. AJCongress and the OU did not file briefs in the cases. The narrowness of the law school decision suggested that divisions over the case were not limited to the Jewish community. Nonetheless, the Michigan cases represented a sea change in the approach to affirmative action, namely that the rationale and justification for affirmative action had moved from a practical means to redress discrimination in the core institutions of society to a recognition that diversity is a societal good.

Overall, the record on affirmative action over thirty years is mixed—who has benefited and who has not? Some data indicate that the main beneficiaries of affirmative action programs over the years have been white women; that, in the black community, blacks who would have been in the education and employment pool in any case (e.g., affluent and other upper-strata blacks) have benefited from affirmative action, but that the overwhelming majority of blacks remain outside the population that apply for these education and employment programs. Data also suggest that white working-class males have not benefited from affirmative action. However, a number of black and Hispanic immigrants, who themselves did not experience discrimination in the United States, have immediately benefited from affirmative action programs.

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## Jewish-Christian Relations in the United States in the Twentieth Century

The development of increasingly close Jewish-Christian relationships has been a striking feature of twentieth-century American history. In important ways, American Jews and Christians forged interreligious bonds more successfully than their coreligionists overseas. Indeed, the strengths of Jewish-Christian relations in the United States contributed greatly to the transformation of Jewish-Christian relations worldwide. Historians disagree on why Jewish-Christian relations have taken more positive forms. Some say the change reflects increasing acceptance by American theologians, and within broad social circles, of ideologies of religious pluralism, reflecting the belief that Americans are united by their multicultural and multid denominational heritage (Feldman 1990). Others claim it was a response to perceived threats to common middle-class interests (Cohen 1990).

This divergence reflects differences about the nature of Jewish-Christian relations. While supporters of dialogue—whether historians or practitioners—focus on the universalist and humanitarian ideals that promote neighborly relations, critics argue the rhetoric of Jewish-Christian reconciliation is often a cover for narrow social and political agendas, or for extending the power of mainline churches over the much smaller Jewish population. Scholars explaining the breakthroughs have often focused on changing Christian outlooks, though other accounts stress the changing attitudes of American Jews. These perspectives are further complicated by different interpretations of American antisemitism: while some have emphasized its importance in shaping Jewish-Christian collaboration, others believe antisemitism has long been a marginal phenomenon in American society.

Late nineteenth-century efforts at Jewish-Christian dialogue generally focused on the promotion of a new liberal religion in which the historic divisions between Jew

and Christian would no longer matter. The mainly Protestant participants in such dialogue circles—often Unitarian—were confident that Christianity was the most important bridge toward further progress to a unified, universalistic, rational, and scientific religion. Their Jewish interlocutors were predominantly devotees of Isaac Mayer Wise's Reform Judaism (now known as Classic Reform) and were often privately convinced that Judaism, not Christianity, was the more rational religion that would inspire America's future. At the turn of the twentieth century, dialogue groups organized Unity Thanksgiving Services across the country. The ties built up by Reform Jews in the liberal establishment of the Northeast were not the only spurs to this development: from Fort Worth to Chicago, Jewish communities established close ties with Christian congregations by playing a valued role in the building of frontier societies. While this was a time of renewed political and social antisemitism, communities shared choirs, ministers began to exchange pulpits, and many attended sermons in both church and synagogue.

In addition, leading Conservative Jews and Christians formed small scholarly circles to examine the history of Jewish-Christian relations. Protestant interest in the conversion of the Jews had been widespread in the United States since the eighteenth century, and this led individual missionaries to establish relations with American Jews, particularly once the growth of poor urban East European Jewish communities gave them a focus after 1880. Outrage at the Russian pogroms (1880–1921) also moved American Evangelicals to support Jewish causes, including the nascent Zionist movement. Horrified by the pogroms, 413 leading Protestants, Catholics, and Jews across America signed the first Blackstone Memorial (1891), a letter written to the president by William Blackstone, an Evangelical Fundamentalist, which increased public interest in U.S. support for Jewish emigration to the Holy Land. During World War I, the issue was again pressed on the government.

While Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish communities quietly learned much from each other on a secular level, and Catholics and Jews in particular began to draw closer in cities where they represented significant parts of the working-class community, until 1910 there was little dialogue about what was distinctive in Christian and Jewish theologies. For many leaders of the mainline churches, from Roman Catholic to Baptist, Jews were still largely dis-

tant figures, sometimes romanticized, often subjects of vilification, and damned, according to both Protestants and Catholics, unless they converted to the one true faith.

From 1910, a second round of pogroms in Eastern Europe prompted a more deliberate Jewish engagement with Christian thought on both sides of the Atlantic. For Jews to talk of the positive and negative contributions of Christian faith was controversial, and the discussion drew attacks in both Jewish and Christian circles. In the United States, the Reform Rabbi Stephen S. Wise spearheaded attempts to show that there was little in liberal Protestant Christianity that Jews could not accept. Though little he said about Christianity had not also been asserted by other Reform rabbis, his suggestion that it was Christians, or Christendom, not Christianity itself, that failed to live up to the ideals of the prophets provoked repeated controversies within American Jewry.

At this time, a number of leading liberal Protestants, especially Episcopalians and Unitarians, had made concerted efforts to acknowledge the significance of commonalities between the religion of Christians and that of Reform Jews. Wise's position became a feature of the dialogue movements that developed across America in the years between the World Wars. However, Conservative and Orthodox Jews suggested that Christianity and Christians fell short of Jewish ideals—particularly as they refused to affirm the national basis of Israel's calling—and Wise was charged with promoting religious assimilation to Christianity. While many more traditionalist Jews continued to see Christianity as idolatrous, communal leaders bore in mind that popular Christian accusations of ritual murder abroad (the last in the United States was spurred by a young Polish immigrant in 1942) were paralleled by physical and theological attacks on Jews across the United States into the 1940s. Occasionally immigrant Catholic mobs attacked Jews as Christ-killers, while fundamentalist Protestant groups also believed Jews to be in league with the Devil.

From 1900, the dissemination of a new social gospel, or social theology, inspired cooperation among clergy and lay leaders in cities across the United States. From Atlanta to Denver, Christian-Jewish relationships were central to the creation of social welfare organizations such as the Red Cross. Social concerns remained decisive in the development of the first organized national Jewish-Protestant-Catholic cooperation from 1919, with Stephen Wise leading

the call for the coordinated defense of workers' rights. The participating church and synagogue organizations soon turned their attention to education against prejudice, particularly in light of the renewed rise of the Ku Klux Klan and its campaign against the Catholic Democratic presidential candidate, Alfred E. Smith, in 1924.

In 1928, Protestants, Catholics, and Jews across the United States established branches of what became known as the National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ). The NCCJ sponsored thousands of radio dialogues among a rabbi, a minister, and a priest, and established Brotherhood Week (in February of each year) in 1942. The Holocaust and World War II underlined the need for this work, and many scholars see patriotic wartime campaigns against prejudice as the catalyst for the decline of American antisemitism. Christian support for the creation of the State of Israel had, however, to be solicited outside NCCJ forums, which still encompassed many anti-Zionists among both liberal Protestants and leading Reform Jewish participants.

Until 1949, Catholics were faced with Church criticism of the NCCJ as indifferentist—in contravention of the teaching that all religions were not of equal value—and had to belong to the organization as individuals rather than as communal representatives, though the NCCJ did have influential supporters in the episcopacy. In 1949, the NCCJ affirmed that members were free to believe that their own religion was superior and agreed that NCCJ would not engage in pulpit exchanges or joint worship exercises. NCCJ constructed itself as a civic organization, unlike the more theologically inclined councils of Christians and Jews on other continents. Its activities soon focused on intergroup dialogue, leaving church and synagogue bodies to create their own programs focused on theological understanding. In the 1950s, leading Conservative Jewish critics argued that this approach did not respect the positive role that religion had to play in public life and, more important, that an alliance of liberal Protestants and Jews in NCCJ meant religious Judaism and Jewish peoplehood were not respected as a separate tradition from the teachings of Jesus and of liberal Protestantism.

With the introduction of a "Jewish document" at the Catholic Church's Second Vatican Council in 1962, thanks to American Jewish and Catholic pressure, representatives of all American Jewish branches urged that the integrity of Judaism be respected. While the document was being

drafted, the three main rabbinical movements criticized a proposed reference to the Church's hope for eventual unity (implicitly through acknowledging Christ). None put this more forcefully than the Conservative thinker Abraham Joshua Heschel, widely known among Christians for his *No Religion Is an Island* and *The Sabbath*. However, Modern Orthodox leader Joseph Soloveitchik became more identified with this critique, blaming progressive and secular Jewish leaders for welcoming the Catholic Church's move too eagerly, and warning Jews to focus on common secular interests rather than on theological doctrine. The reference was removed, but Jewish leaders remained unhappy with the resulting declaration, *Nostra Aetate* (1965), until Catholic leaders clarified its implied respect for Jewish peoplehood and theology in 1974 and 1985. Soloveitchik's reported support for a respectful theological dialogue of equals has still to be clarified to the satisfaction of the Modern Orthodox community, many of whom treated his critique as an effective ban on all dialogue.

*Nostra Aetate* has also been heralded as the beginning of a revolution in Jewish-Christian relations. The document clarified that the Church did not hold subsequent generations of Jews responsible for Christ's crucifixion, or indeed all Jews at the time, and deplored the existence of racist antisemitism. From this time, regular official dialogues among Catholic, Protestant, and Reform, Conservative, and Modern Orthodox Jewish organizations have been accompanied by programs designed to educate Christians about the links between Christian anti-Judaism and antisemitism. American Jews of all stripes greeted Pope John Paul II's consistent enthusiasm for reconciliation as confirmation of the change in Catholic attitudes, though Catholic attempts finally to face the Holocaust gave Jewish leaders repeated cause for concern.

Despite the expectations of many Jews, the 1998 document *We Remember* fell short of the acknowledgment that the Church bore partial responsibility for the Holocaust. The legacy of the wartime pope, Pius XII, continued to provoke vociferous disagreements: *We Remember* provided a brief defense of his responses to the Holocaust, and leading figures in the Vatican and in the American Church regretted that the Jewish community's distress was used by critics who sought to prevent his canonization. A similar tension developed over steps to canonize Pius IX, a pope whose anti-Jewish attitudes marked Catholic-Jewish relations in the middle of the nineteenth century. From the

1980s, cooperation over social concerns returned to the fore of Jewish–Christian dialogue, though divergence between liberal and conservative positions on birth control and homosexuality, for instance, have made for very public differences.

Repeated tensions over the State of Israel have arisen between the churches and American Jewish organizations, which became increasingly concerned with the relationship between anti-Israeli sentiment and antisemitic bias. The sweeping nature of the Presbyterian Church's 2004 endorsement of divestment from Israel, for instance, has been interpreted in this light, and observers believe other churches may follow its example. While some Jewish leaders claimed the Vatican was theologically unable to formally recognize the State of Israel, it finally did, in 1994, when the pace of the Middle East peace process caused it to fear that not to do so risked a loss of influence in the region.

The missionary dimension of church life has also been the subject of ongoing tensions. Fundamentalist Christian missions targeting Jews increased in magnitude following the Holocaust, and a new wave was prompted by the born again movement of the 1960s and 1970s, from which the "Jews for Jesus" movement emerged. Mainline churches began to disown or disarm missionary bodies targeted at Jews, though the extent to which churches have been able to address the effects of triumphalist anti-Jewish theologies (notably supersessionism) remains under debate. From the 1970s, some leading evangelists, including Billy Graham, have welcomed the notion that a partnership with Jews could replace the old missionizing approach, though even Graham appeared privately to share President Richard M. Nixon's hostility to what they believed to be the influence of American Jewish liberals, particularly through the media. The Southern Baptist Church, by contrast, influenced by a growing apocalyptic premillennialism, has recently embraced the conversion of Jews as a central mission, which virtually all Jews view as a spiritual attack. Periodically, fundamentalist Evangelicals and Pentecostal leaders have cast Jews publicly as beyond God's salvific grace, or as agents of the Devil, incurring condemnation from more moderate Evangelicals, particularly Baptists, who remain a significant body in the American Christian community.

American scholarship, religious and secular, has provided a level of guidance to churches not available any-

where else, and this has allowed Americans to give constant impetus to the renewal of Jewish–Christian relations around the world. High-level conferences on the role of churches in the Holocaust and on Jewish–Christian dialogue that were established in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the new Jewish–Christian dialogue of the 1980s on the relationship between Jesus and the plural Judaisms of his day, remain major influences on international opinion. The welcome given to new Church attitudes by U.S. Jewish theologians in 2000, *Dabru Emet*, was similarly greeted around the world as a long-awaited validation of the steps made by the churches, though it also underlined where divisions within American Jewry now lay. Dominated by Reform Jews, the document's sponsors were criticized by many Conservatives, not for stating what was theologically valid in contemporary Christianity, but for doing it in a form that undervalued what is distinctive in both traditions and what remains difficult in the history of Jewish–Christian relations.

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### Joseph Dov Soloveitchik (1903–1993)

Major Shaper of Modern Orthodox Judaism

Joseph Dov Soloveitchik (also known as Joseph Baer) was a pivotal figure in the development of American Modern

Orthodox Judaism. Respected as a challenging thinker even within non-Orthodox and Christian intellectual circles in America and overseas, his influence in the Orthodox world was multiplied through the 2,000 Modern Orthodox rabbis who trained and were ordained during his forty years as head of the rabbinical school at Yeshiva University (YU) in New York. As chair of the Halakhah Committee of the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) in the 1950s, Soloveitchik also promoted a series of decisions on divorce law and mixed seating in synagogues, rulings that underlined the distinctive nature of Orthodox marriage and synagogue practices, and thereby gave renewed confidence to Modern Orthodox Jews, while ultimately widening the divide between the Modern Orthodox and Conservative movements. His halakhic (Jewish legal) rulings retain unquestioned authority across the Modern Orthodox community in America, and his philosophical output has spread to new audiences following his death.

Born in Pruzhan, Poland, Soloveitchik was tutored at home in Warsaw by his father, Moshe, whose own father and grandfather, as successive heads of the Volozhin Yeshiva (then in Russia, now Belarus), had inspired previous generations of Orthodox scholars to take on new rigorous scholarly approaches to talmudic study. Joseph's mother came from a Hasidic background and opened him up to traditions that construed biblical and talmudic texts as sources of inspiration for a creative approach to religious experience. Soloveitchik's teaching and publications continued to engage with these distinct traditions throughout his life. Traditionalists maintain that his thought was a straightforward, faithful translation of these East European spiritual resources into contemporary language. Soloveitchik's engagement with modernist thought was nevertheless extensive.

Following World War I, Soloveitchik spent a decade studying religious philosophy at the University of Berlin, completing a doctorate on the philosophy of the Jewish neo-Kantian Hermann Cohen. Soloveitchik's first published work, *Halakhic Man* (1944), clarified the relationship between Jewish tradition and ideas of religious experience and knowledge taught in Berlin by contemporaries such as Wilhelm Dilthey. At the same time, Soloveitchik continued his talmudic studies at Berlin's renowned Rabbinic Seminary of Orthodox Judaism. It was here that Soloveitchik first engaged with an Orthodoxy that was deliberately Modern in its marriage of religious

and secular studies and resources. Modern Orthodoxy was not a narrow or settled ideology, and did not become so in the United States, where many liberal Orthodox Jews whose views dovetailed with Soloveitchik's have preferred to call themselves Centrist. In Israel, their counterparts identified themselves as National Religious (*dati leumi*), and a positive engagement with Zionism has become a marker of Modern Orthodoxy outside Israel as well.

In the early 1930s, Soloveitchik joined his father in the United States and, in 1936, founded one of the first Orthodox day schools, teaching both secular and religious subjects: the Maimonides School in Boston. In 1941, he took over his father's position as *rosh yeshiva* of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of YU, an institution that he headed until 1984. As Leib Merkin Professor of Talmud, Soloveitchik inspired YU students with a highly personal and philosophical version of the Volozhin method of talmudic exegesis, already renowned as one of the most analytical approaches to talmudic argument in Europe. In the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, the Seminary produced a new generation of Modern Orthodox rabbis, committed to Soloveitchik's engagement with American society, contributing to the revival and dissemination of Orthodoxy across the country.

The Holocaust underlined for Soloveitchik the virtues of life in America, a commitment he honored in urging that American Orthodox Jews celebrate Thanksgiving as a secular holiday. The destruction of Jewish life in Europe also persuaded him to break with the Soloveitchik family's affiliation with the non-Zionist Agudath Israel—the main Orthodox political party in Eastern Europe—in favor of the Religious Zionist Mizrahi Party, a shift he made in the 1940s while membership in the Mizrahi was equated by the Orthodox mainstream with heresy. Soloveitchik saw that their unique sense of religious ethics separated Orthodox Jews from their Christian and non-Orthodox compatriots in America and Israel. In a series of essays, he described religious Jews as sojourning, like Abraham, among the peoples with whom they are connected by fate, by desire for fellowship, and by common beliefs or identity (“*Kol Dodi Dofek*,” 1956; “Confrontation,” 1964; “Lonely Man of Faith,” 1965). To the dismay of some of his closest disciples, interpreters of Soloveitchik's thought have often ignored the tensions between these elements, stressing instead the barriers between the Modern Orthodox and other Jews.

A key factor shaping the reception of Soloveitchik's legacy was the great caution he exercised in promulgating legal judgments. Where professional expertise was needed, he argued against rabbinic interference altogether; he refused to rule against ceding Israeli territory in exchange for peace because the question involved a military competence rabbis did not have. Moreover, his sense of the existential divide between Orthodox Jews, the non-Orthodox, and their Christian neighbors was translated into halakhic rulings only after sustained attempts to reach understanding across communities. In the 1950s, controversies over divorce law and over mixed seating in Orthodox and Conservative synagogues led to a series of ultimately unsuccessful discussions with leading Conservative rabbis, before Soloveitchik was convinced the RCA Halakhah Committee had to issue restrictive rulings. The Modern Orthodox rabbinate's refusal to accept Conservative marriage licenses and divorces signaled a major breach between the movements. This was minor in comparison with the declaration that Orthodox Jews were absolutely forbidden to attend synagogues that sat men and women together, a practice increasingly followed in synagogues affiliated with the Conservative movement, and even found in some American Orthodox synagogues at the time. Soloveitchik insisted that it was better not to go to synagogue at all, even during the holiest festivals, than to attend a service in such a synagogue.

While colleagues in American yeshivot sought then to ban their alumni from joining professional organizations that included the non-Orthodox, Soloveitchik insisted (as leading Modern Orthodox rabbis had since early in the twentieth century) that cooperation with other Jews was needed in the face of secular threats and interests. In 1960, he sought to respond positively, in close coordination with Reform and Conservative rabbis, to the prospect of a document on Jewish–Catholic relations being promulgated at the Second Vatican Council. Disillusioned by 1963 with the direction the Council seemed to be taking, particularly its expression of evangelical hope, he rounded on those Christians and Jews he deemed too impatient to await the conditions for a more equal dialogue between Jews and Christians. The result is reflected in his article “Confrontation,” often read as a ban on theological dialogue, though colleagues have long insisted it was a plea for more serious, careful dialogue, not a halakhic ruling. After the document had finally been promulgated as *Nostra Aetate* (1965),

Soloveitchik encouraged Modern Orthodox representatives to join the Liaison Committee established by Vatican and Jewish representatives and gave guidance on Orthodox contributions to this official dialogue for the decade that followed.

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## Leon Kronish (1917–1996)

### Zionist Leader

Leon Kronish, Reform rabbi, Zionist leader, and American Jewish institution builder, was the voice of Jewish Miami Beach during the second half of the twentieth century. Born in New York to East European immigrant parents (Max and Lena Seligman) the same year as the Balfour Declaration, Leon (Asher) never strayed far from its message. Mentored by the great luminaries of the first half of the twentieth century, Rabbis Mordecai Kaplan and Stephen S. Wise, Kronish internalized the principles of Liberal Judaism, cultural pluralism, and Zionism. Migrating to Miami Beach in 1944, he founded Temple Beth Shalom. Under his leadership the congregation became the premier Reform synagogue in South Florida. During his four-decade tenure, Rabbi Kronish played a critical role in bringing an Israeli presence to South Florida and changing the direction of Reform Judaism and Diaspora Jewry.

Brought up in an Orthodox home with parents who spoke Yiddish, Leon attended public school and an after-school Talmud Torah, and he participated in a socialist Zionist youth movement, *Hashomer Hatzair*. Graduating from Brooklyn College in 1936, he attended the Jewish

Theological Seminary, where one of his teachers was Mordecai Kaplan (1937–1938), the founder of Reconstructionism. Kronish received his ordination in 1942 from the Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR) under the mentorship of the Institute's founder, Stephen Wise. Before moving to Florida, Rabbi Kronish married Lillian Austin (1940) and served at the Huntington Center in Long Beach, New York (1941–1944).

Arriving in Miami Beach (1944), a segregated and antisemitic island, Rabbi Kronish viewed his mission as bringing a Zionist and Jewish presence to “the American Negev.” The storefront Conservative congregation, the Beth Sholom Center, catered to forty members and World War II servicemen.

Understanding the tensions between cultural pluralism and religio-ethnic parochialism, Zionism and American patriotism, Kronish realigned the congregation with Reform Judaism and renamed it Temple Beth Sholom (1945). He instituted the principles of Liberal Judaism (social justice, cultural Zionism, and religious traditions such as wearing a tallit and kippa) and wrote liturgical innovations for the Jewish holidays. By the mid-1960s, membership exceeded 1,200 households. Kronish's direction for the temple complemented the values of hundreds of thousands of Jews migrating to South Florida and seeking a prophetic guide.

In the 1950s, Kronish joined with members of his congregation to weaken discriminatory practices and change laws throughout South Florida that were antisemitic. He campaigned for nuclear disarmament and for the removal of religion from Miami's public schools. In the 1960s, he challenged Miami Beach residents, nearly three-quarters Jewish, to adopt the policy of one-way busing, that is, busing children from black neighborhoods to their own Miami Beach schools. In addition, he encouraged Judy Drucker, a member, to develop a musical arts program at the temple. The program blossomed and became the foremost musical arts program in South Florida, seeding Miami's musical renaissance.

The Six Day War in 1967 was a watershed for Rabbi Kronish, as it was for Diaspora Jewry. The mission of Liberal Judaism receded, and Israel became his primary focus. Working closely with the leadership of Reform Judaism and American Jewry, in the following years Kronish helped reshape the Israel–Jewish landscape in South Florida, North America, and Israel.

Rabbi Kronish expounded on his ideas in two articles: “*Yisrael Goralenu*” (“Israel Is Our Destiny”) in 1968 and “The Zionist *Mitzvot*” (“Zionist Commandments”) in 1977. He called on Jews to visit Israel and on youth to immigrate (*aliya*); he called for Jews to absorb Israeli culture and study modern Hebrew, to link with Israeli families and respond politically when Israel is in need. Congregations needed to establish Israel committees and uphold the moral right of Israel's rebirth. His motto was “Bring Israel to America and America to Israel.”

Within Reform Judaism, Kronish was instrumental in creating permanent committees on Israel for the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) and for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), in endorsing a policy that required entering rabbinical students to spend their first year in Israel, and in approving a resolution that the CCAR would host conventions in Israel, the first in 1970. Kronish was a founding member of the Association of Reform Zionists of America (ARZA), Reform Judaism's response to the growing political power of Orthodoxy in Israel, and supported the launching of Reform kibbutzim.

In South Florida, Kronish led the effort for El Al to fly to Miami and for the Israeli government to open an Israeli Consulate. He helped to establish the Miami–Israel Chamber of Commerce and initiated the Alexander Muss High School in Israel Program, first in Miami and then nationally, for students to study in Israel for a semester and receive American credits.

Nationally, Rabbi Kronish worked closely with Labor Zionists, assisting in the founding of the Histadrut Foundation, an American support group for the Labor Federation in Israel (1965). An avid advocate for Israel Bonds since their introduction in 1951, he served as the national chairman in the early 1980s. Golda Meir, Abba Eban, and Yitzhak Rabin were among his many Israeli friends.

Although Kronish believed firmly in linking American Jewry to Israelis and establishing a foothold for Reform Judaism (Progressive Judaism) in Israel, he never strayed from his principles of Liberal Judaism and prophetic mission. Female rabbis were acceptable; patrilineal descent was not. Kronish's commitment was to “Israelization,” the transformation of Zionism into a more effective process for American Jewry to bond with Israelis as part of *Klal Yisrael* (Jewish community). Today, programs such as The March of the Living and Birthright are outgrowths of this

Israelization dimension. Kronish Plaza in Miami Beach and the Leon Kronish Memorial Lecture hosted by HUC-JIR in Jerusalem honor his contributions.

Henry A. Green

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## Jewish–Muslim Relations

The effort to establish a relationship between the representatives of the Jewish and Muslim communities in the United States only started in the early 1990s. These contacts began as part of the Jewish community's long-term policy of building alliances with other ethnic and religious minorities. Traditionally, these alliances have been based on common interests in civil rights, religious freedom, and the separation of church and state. The Jewish community's attempt to reach out to Muslims also derived, however, from an empathy that recalls the early struggles of Jews to acclimate themselves to the American way of life while preserving their traditions. American Jews recognized some parallels between the efforts of Muslims to make their way in American society and those of their own immigrant ancestors. Jews had, however, generally fled from hostile societies, and most came before the State of Israel was founded, while Muslims have emigrated voluntarily, often from Muslim countries or societies with Muslim majorities. The Israeli–Palestinian peace process of the early 1990s and the growth of the Muslim population in the United States provided an additional impetus for these contacts.

The reform in U.S. immigration laws between 1965 and 1996 resulted in an influx of Muslim immigrants. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the majority of them arrived after 1990. Approximately one-third of the Muslim

American population was born in the United States. The largest group of Muslim Americans is of South Asian origin (Bangladesh, Pakistan, India). Others are from Arab lands, Turkey, Iran, the Balkans, West Africa, Indonesia, and other parts of Southeast Asia.

African Americans became interested in Islam during the 1960s and 1970s, and an estimated 700,000 converted to mainstream Islam. Some became followers of Warith Deen Muhammad; others frequented immigrant mosques or smaller African American ones. A minority became supporters of the pseudo-Islamic antisemitic Nation of Islam (NOI)—followers of a demonology based on a grossly distorted version of Islam—and others became adherents of Middle Eastern Islamic extremist movements.

The American Jewish community's perception of Muslims has been strongly influenced by Muslim attitudes toward Jews and Israel. Both before and after the State of Israel was established in 1948, the majority of Arab and Muslim leaders worldwide rejected the Jewish state.

Underlying this rejection of Israel is an intense and pervasive, popular and official, Arab and Muslim antisemitism. As the historian Robert Wistrich observed, "Behind this Arab rejection lies a barrage of derogatory and repulsive images of Jews and Judaism to be found both in the government-backed and opposition media, in popular and academic publications, in television images, caricatures, and in the cassette recordings of clerics who long ago blurred any remaining boundary between anti-Zionism and antisemitism. The stream of vitriolic visual and verbal imagery extends from Morocco to the Gulf States and Iran; it is as strong in supposedly 'moderate' Egypt as it is in openly hostile Arab nations such as Iraq, Libya, and Syria" (Wistrich 2002).

Similarly, radical African American converts to Islam expressed virulent hatred of Jews during the 1977 terror attack and siege of the B'nai Brith building in Washington, D.C., by extremist Hanafi Muslims. Armed with guns, swords, and knives, the terrorists took over the building and held the organization's employees hostage for thirty-nine hours. Throughout the siege, the terrorists' leader, Hamaas Abdul Khaalis, a former Nation of Islam leader, threatened to "blow the heads off" the Jewish hostages and referred to them derogatorily in Arabic as *yahudi*. The siege, which led many Jews to conflate Muslim and Arab attitudes toward Jews, had a chilling effect on the potential for dialogue between American Muslims and Jews.

Muslim extremist expressions of antisemitism from the Middle East have circulated in the Muslim American community for many years. A report by the Center for Religious Freedom states: “The Saudi textbooks and documents spread throughout American mosques preach a Nazi-like hatred for Jews, treat the forged *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as historical fact, and avow that the Muslim’s duty is to eliminate the state of Israel” (Freedom House 2005).

Press reports have revealed that some Muslim schools in the United States have been using textbooks that promote antisemitism, and Saudi-sponsored schools, such as the Islamic Saudi Academy in Virginia, have been teaching antisemitism to their students. Another school in the Washington, D.C., area, the Islamic Educational Center, was reported to be teaching the ideology of Iranian ayatollah Khomeini along with antisemitism. In recent years, Muslim students on American college campuses have also employed antisemitic language and images and disseminated discredited information in their campaigns against Israel.

The growth of the Muslim population in the United States during the 1990s led American Jews to explore the possibility of political coalitions with Muslims. However, prominent Muslim American organizations not only opposed American Jewish support for Israel, but promoted antisemitic characterizations of Jews drawn from the ideology of Middle Eastern terror organizations. The radical agenda of the majority of Muslim organizations made the creation of such coalitions short-lived. As the historian Daniel Pipes observed, “Since leading Islamic groups in the United States are in regular touch with Middle Eastern organizations such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hizballah, it may not be surprising that the rhetoric of the latter, infused with talk of killing Jews and celebrating acts of violence, should have found a home here as well” (Pipes 1999).

The Jewish community remains greatly concerned about the efforts of a significant number of Muslim American advocacy organizations to compete with it for political influence. These organizations promote themselves as the fastest growing non-Christian community in the United States and assert that Muslims already outnumber Jews. Their declared political goal is to neutralize the political power of the American Jewish community and its support for Israel.

## Muslim Population

Reports of the numbers of Muslims in the United States vary greatly. Precise data are lacking because the law bars the U.S. Census Bureau from collecting information on religion. The Bureau does, however, collect information on ethnic identification. The first time it collected information on Americans of Arab ancestry was in 1980. It reported 610,000 Americans of Arab ancestry. In 1990, that number grew to 860,000, an increase of over 40 percent. The 2000 Census indicated that there are 1.2 million Arab Americans, an increase of another 40 percent. The Arab American Institute, an Arab advocacy organization, claimed the census underreported their numbers, asserting that there are 3 million Arab Americans.

A 2000 Zogby International survey indicated that, of the 1.2 million Arab Americans counted by the census, the majority is Christian: 42 percent are Catholic, 23 percent are Orthodox Christian, and 12 percent are Protestant, with the remaining 23 percent Muslim. This translates into 276,000 Arab Muslims. This number does not include non-Arab Muslims, such as Iranians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Indians, and Central Asians. The 2000 Census reported 209,273 Pakistanis and 283,225 Iranians.

According to *We the People of Arab Ancestry* (2005), a U.S. Census Bureau report based on the 2000 Census, the largest segment of the Arab American population in the United States has Lebanese ancestry. The report also noted that 46 percent of the foreign-born Arab population arrived between 1990 and 2000, and only 9.6 percent prior to 1970.

Initially, studies of the Muslim population in the United States were carried out by Muslim advocacy organizations and only later by independent demographers. A study by Fareed Nu'man of the American Muslim Council (AMC) in 1992 estimated the population at 5 to 8 million American Muslims. In 2000, Nu'man retracted that figure, revealing that the leadership of the AMC pressured him to arrive at a figure of 6 million to demonstrate parity with the Jewish community. He later told the *Los Angeles Times* that his research pointed to a figure of 3 million.

Nine years later, the Islamic advocacy group, the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), presented a new study that reported between 6 and 7 million Muslim Americans. CAIR’s *Mosque Study Project* of 2001 (MSP) was sponsored by four Muslim advocacy organizations: CAIR, the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the

Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), and the Ministry of Imam Warith Deen Mohammed, the Muslim American Society.

Demographers took issue with the methodology of these studies and the data they produced. Statistical Assessment Services (STATS) was highly critical of the MSP as suffering from “serious methodological problems.” STATS concluded, based on two studies done by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) and the American Religious Identification Survey, that the Muslim American population is 2 million, “give or take a few hundred thousand.” In a study commissioned by the American Jewish Committee, Tom Smith of NORC reported a possibly slightly higher figure—1.9 to 2.8 million Muslim Americans (Smith 2001).

### Motivation for Dialogue

Two overarching developments provide the historical backdrop to the Jewish community’s efforts to initiate dialogue with Muslims in the United States. Reports of mass murders of the Muslim population by Serbs and Croats in Bosnia in 1992–1995 led to the creation, for the first time, of a Jewish, Christian, and Muslim interfaith coalition. At the same time, the Oslo Accords (1993), which many at the time assumed would begin the Israeli–Palestinian peace process, served as a major impetus to fostering interfaith dialogues. Still, many in the Jewish community, concerned that some Muslims espouse radical ideologies and support terrorism, remained ambivalent about forming relationships with Muslims.

Since 1992 the debate in the Jewish community over the Jewish–Muslim dialogue has focused on setting aside the difficult issue of Israel and concentrating on local communal issues unrelated to the Middle East conflict. In doing this, the Jewish community faces the painful choice of engaging in dialogue with, and thereby legitimizing, Muslim organizations that may support extremist causes, including terrorism against Israel.

The organized community divided on the terms of the dialogue. The policy of three of the national organizations—the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the American Jewish Congress (AJCongress), and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL)—is to oppose legitimizing Muslim organizations and individuals that support terrorism against Israel, even though the organizations may

condemn terrorist acts against the United States. Other organizations, such as the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and regional Jewish Community Relations Councils, approach the matter from a local perspective and seek dialogue with Muslims to improve communal relations, focusing on individual religious rights and church–state issues.

Muslim American organizations—such as ISNA, ICNA, CAIR, the now defunct American Muslim Council, and the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)—follow the lead of Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi, the Muslim Brotherhood ideologue who condemned the 9/11 terror attacks against the United States but would not condemn suicide bombings against Israel. In 1998 Al-Qaradhawi issued a *fatwa*—an Islamic legal ruling—that maintained that such attacks against Israel are legitimate and should be considered acts of “martyrdom.” The *fatwa* had the effect of encouraging and legitimizing suicide bombings against Israel throughout the Muslim world, including among Muslims in the United States. In many instances Muslim organizations’ motivation for dialogue is simply to promote their position on Israel as mainstream.

### Relations with African American Muslims

The result of Jews’ dialogues with African American Muslims has been mixed. The pseudo-Islamic NOI, founded by W. D. Fard in the 1930s, is the oldest African American Muslim organization. After Fard disappeared, Elijah Muhammad became its head. Since its establishment, the NOI has promoted antisemitism along with a black supremacist ideology.

In 1975, Imam Warith Deen Muhammad, the son of Elijah Muhammad, succeeded him as the leader of the NOI. He rejected his father’s ideology, began to adopt mainstream Sunni Muslim practices, and renamed the organization the American Muslim Mission. He changed the name of the organization several times—in 2002 from the Muslim American Society (MAS) to the American Society of Muslims (ASM). It is estimated to have 200,000 members and a larger number of followers.

In reaction to Muhammad’s theological changes, Minister Louis Farrakhan led a breakaway faction of the group, reestablishing the pseudo-Islamic NOI with himself as its leader. In 2005 the NOI has an estimated 50,000 to 100,000

members with a larger number of followers. As a result of its continued promotion of antisemitic views, the organized Jewish community has not formed a relationship with the NOI.

In the 1990s Jewish communal leaders in major cities throughout the United States established and maintained ties to local leaders of the MAS. The violence in the Middle East has, however, affected relations between the Jewish community and Muhammad's organization. In 1999, for example, Muhammad's MAS, together with extremist Muslim American groups, sponsored the formation of American Muslims for Jerusalem, an anti-Israel organization that promotes what it defines as Muslim rights to the city of Jerusalem.

In February 2000, Imam Muhammad publicly embraced Minister Farrakhan in a symbolic reunification of their movements. At the reconciliation ceremony, Farrakhan pledged to reconcile his extremist theology with mainstream Islam. Nevertheless, he and his followers have continued to promote antisemitic stereotypes of Jews.

## Dialogue Efforts

The first efforts to engage in Jewish-Muslim dialogue were initiated in the early 1990s by Rabbi James Rudin, director of the AJC's Department of Interreligious Affairs. In 1992, this outreach resulted in the formation of a coalition with American Muslim organizations to lobby the U.S. government on behalf of Muslims who were being subjected to mass murder in Bosnia. From 1992 to 1995, American Jewish organizations, working with the American Task Force on Bosnia, established in 1992, urged NATO intervention to end the mass killing of Bosnian Muslims. In 1993, the AJC initiated a dialogue with MPAC, one of the American Muslim organizations that had been involved with the Bosnia effort, as well as with Muhammad's MAS.

As a result of those contacts, the first national Jewish-Muslim interreligious conferences were held in the United States. The first conference, "Muslims and Jews in North America: Past, Present and Future," held October 24–26, 1993, was cosponsored by the AJC and the Institute for Islamic and Judaic Studies at the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Denver. In September 1993, the Union for Reform Judaism published its first guidebook for interfaith dialogue with Muslims, *Shalom/Salaam: A Resource for Jewish Muslim Dialogue*.

The second national conference organized by the AJC and the University of Denver, "Women, Families and Children in Islamic and Judaic Tradition: History and Contemporary Concerns," met on October 23–25, 1994. The AJC and MPAC were scheduled to hold a third national conference in Los Angeles in 1995, but it was canceled after the emergence of irreconcilable differences between the Muslim and Jewish organizers over the suicide bombing attacks initiated by Hamas and Islamic Jihad against Israeli civilians in 1994. Muslim organizations' stance on suicide bombings has remained a central issue of Jewish-Muslim relations ever since.

In August 1999, a group of local rabbis, including representatives of the Reform and Conservative movements, and Jewish representatives in Los Angeles established a new dialogue group with Salam Al-Marayati, the director of MPAC, and Maher Hathout of the Islamic Center of Southern California (ICSC). On December 6, they released their jointly produced "Code of Ethics in Muslim-Jewish Dialogue," and twenty Jewish and Muslim representatives signed the document at City Hall.

Rabbi Gary Greenebaum, Los Angeles regional director of the AJC, criticized the signing. He stated, "I have worked to bring about the day when documents of this sort could be signed in good faith, and I am disappointed that it's being signed as it is today, by co-signers who have not lived up to the statement as it exists." In a separate statement, he elaborated, "They have not proven trustworthiness. Time and again they have stepped away from categorically condemning terrorism. They keep rationalizing terrorism and I have a problem with that, as should all Jews." Other critics included Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL, who noted that Israel and the Palestinians "have moved a lot farther" toward understanding than the Arab community in the United States. "I am not convinced that they are willing to be real partners, and we shouldn't give them a status they haven't earned" (*Los Angeles Times*, December 6, 1999; Jewish Telegraphic Agency, December 10, 1999).

In July 1999, Representative Richard A. Gephardt, the House minority leader, nominated MPAC's Al-Marayati to serve as the Muslim community's representative on the National Commission on Terrorism. After his office received letters of protest from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (CPMAJO), the AJC, the AJCongress, the ADL, and the

Zionist Organization of America indicating that Al-Marayati had made statements condoning terrorism, Representative Gephardt withdrew the nomination. The withdrawal caused a national controversy as well as criticism of the Jewish organizations from within the Jewish community.

Nine Muslim organizations, including Al-Marayati's MPAC, released a statement accusing the American Jewish organizations of engaging in "a campaign to silence Americans critical of Israel and to exclude Muslim voices from the public arena. The American Muslim Council, which welcomed the initial nomination of Mr. Al-Marayati, is shocked that Rep. Gephardt (D-MO) bowed to McCarthyist pressure of this sort" (AMC, July 12, 1999).

In 1999, the AJC began a relationship with the Islamic Supreme Council of America (ISCA), a moderate American Muslim organization led by Sheikh Muhammad Hisham Kabbani. ISCA was the first American Muslim organization to condemn publicly and unequivocally Al-Qa'ida's 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The relationship is still maintained, as well as with a newer organization, the Center for Islamic Pluralism.

Two years later, the AJC initiated a project designed to advance understanding between Muslims and Jews by publishing two books by scholars of Islam: *Children of Abraham: An Introduction to Judaism for Muslims* by Professor Reuven Firestone of Hebrew Union College-Los Angeles and *Children of Abraham: An Introduction to Islam for Jews* by Professor Khalid Duran. One month prior to the books' publication, CAIR, an extremist organization, denounced the book on Islam as an attack on Islam and launched a campaign of vilification against Duran. The campaign led Abd Al-Munim Abu Zant, the leader of the radical Islamic Action Front in Jordan, to declare Duran an apostate and to issue a call for Muslims throughout the world to kill him. Both books were nevertheless released at the AJC's national convention in May 2001.

### Post-September 11 Atmosphere

Immediately following the September 11, 2001, Al-Qa'ida attacks against the United States, Jews made common cause with Muslims on the issue of civil liberties, especially after some Muslims became targets of acts of discrimination and violence. In a case that followed the

passage of the 2001 counterterrorism measures enacted by the USA Patriot Act, a Jewish attorney in a Muslim-Jewish dialogue group in Portland, Oregon, assisted in providing twenty-five Jewish lawyers to do pro bono work for Muslims being questioned by the FBI in terrorism investigations.

This sense of commonality lasted only a short time, however. As a result of the position that the Muslim organizations participating in the dialogue groups adopted, justifying suicide bombings against Israel while condemning terrorist attacks against the United States, many rabbis and Jewish communal leaders halted their participation in the dialogue groups. Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the CPMAJO, stated: "We are starting to see many organizations that purport to be in a leadership position in the Muslim community that are associated with supporting terrorist organizations, or that refuse to denounce the suicide bombings, and even now hedge their words carefully in that regard" (*New York Times*, October 22, 2001).

On September 11, 2001, MPAC's Al-Marayati told KCRW radio that Israel should be considered a suspect in the attacks. According to the program transcript, Al-Marayati stated, "If we're going to look at suspects, we should look to the groups that benefit the most from these kinds of incidents, and I think we should put the State of Israel on the suspect list because I think this diverts attention from what's happening in the Palestinian territories so that they can go on with their aggression and occupation and apartheid policies" (*Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 2001).

The statement caused great disillusionment among the Jewish members of the Muslim-Jewish dialogue, and their participation dwindled. Rabbi John Rosove told the *New York Times*, "That was the last straw. I can't sit with a man like this. I'm a moderate liberal, and I assumed that they were, too. But now I'm convinced that the Muslims in our dialogue are very much anti-Israel, and were just using our dialogue to make themselves appear more moderate" (*New York Times*, October 22, 2001).

Although Jewish-Muslim dialogues still take place, considerable ambivalence toward the effort remains in both the Jewish and Muslim communities. As a result of some Muslim organizations' stance on terrorism, many Jewish organizations on the national and local levels have avoided efforts to cooperate and legitimize them as dia-

logue partners. From the perspective of Islamic extremists in the Muslim world and the United States, the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate only that Americans and Jews are their adversaries. Dialogue with Muslim groups that hold such a view remains tenuous.

*Yehudit Barsky*

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# American Jews in Entertainment and Popular Culture

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## Yiddish Theater in America

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The theater played a vital role in the rich Yiddish subculture generated by the East European immigrant Jewish community in America. A much beloved institution, it catered to and influenced the aesthetic and moral values of its mostly working-class patrons who, while rapidly adjusting to their new homeland, yearned for the home and kin they had left behind. They frequented the Yiddish playhouses to bask in their own language and culture, to watch their American experience reflected and negotiated through a decidedly Jewish lens, and to savor the theatrical representation of familiar types, sentiments, concerns, and dilemmas. In the playhouses they learned a smattering of Jewish history and grappled with Jewish nationalism, labor relations, women's rights, religious observance, acculturation, and Americanization. Nobel laureate Isaac Bashevis Singer noted that the Yiddish theater provided "a remarkable mixture of university and place of amusement" (Singer 1966).

The balance was a delicate one, for though the stage served as an important forum, it never sacrificed pleasure to didacticism. It was mostly a commercial enterprise that tailored its offerings to the tastes of its patrons. These ran the gamut from tear-jerking melodramas, historical plays, and lavish musicals, to sophisticated productions in line with the best of European and American theater. The

boundaries between genres were often lax, with productions offering a *mélange* of tragedy, domestic melodrama, and low comedy, peppered with music and dance numbers, folkloristic embellishments, and ever-popular replications of religious rituals and prayer. Critic Irving Howe likened the Yiddish theater to Italian opera for its predictability of plots and penchant for spectacle, declamation, and high gesture; its intensely emotional acting style; and its fondness for bravura performance. Enormously popular with all sectors of the community, the Yiddish theater served also as an important locus for social communion where people went to see and to be seen, to meet and socialize with friends and neighbors.

The first Yiddish theatrical production in America took place in New York City in 1882, shortly after mass immigration had begun. Six years earlier the modern Yiddish theater had come into being in Jassy, Romania, when writer Abraham Goldfaden (1840–1908) joined forces with two folk singers, then performing at a local tavern, and provided a skimpy story line that offered narrative continuity to their musical numbers. The public was thrilled, and soon the multitalented Goldfaden was heading his own traveling theatrical company, where he functioned as producer, playwright, director, composer, and librettist. His early offerings resembled *commedia dell'arte* in their combination of a simple, fixed scenario with improvised dialogue and stage business, but soon grew into

lavish operettas, some of which—*The Witch* (1879), *The Two Kuni-Lemls* (1880), and *Shulamith* (1880)—became beloved classics of the Jewish stage.

The tales were simple, adopted from a variety of Jewish and European sources, with a musical hodgepodge of Goldfaden originals, cantorial tunes, German and French marches and waltzes, East European folk songs, and melodies lifted from Mozart, Bizet, Handel, Wagner, Meyerbeer, and Verdi. Yet there was genius in the fresh and often fantastic concoctions of the Yiddish bard. The folk loved his tales and hummed his songs, and the names of some of his characters—Schmendrik, Bobbe Yachne, and Kuni Leml—were integrated into the Yiddish thesaurus. Goldfaden's success encouraged the formation of competing itinerant troupes, and in a world with little regard for copyright, his work was soon copied and plagiarized throughout the Yiddish-speaking world.

In August 1882, a minor troupe, headed by brothers Leon and Myron Golubok, introduced Yiddish theater to America. They had been stranded in London when another brother, Abe, working in a New York cigar factory, convinced Frank Wolf, the proprietor of a local saloon, to finance a journey to New York and invest in the production of a Yiddish show. When the troupe, six men and two women, arrived in the city, its ranks were augmented by local talent, including Israel Barsky, a tailor with theatrical aspirations, and the boy soprano Boris Tomashefsky (1866/8?–1939), who became the matinee idol of the Yiddish stage. The company opened in August 1882 at Turn Hall, on East Fourth Street in the Bowery, an area soon to become New York's first Yiddish theater district. The initial offering was Goldfaden's *The Witch*. Although its success was modest at best, the endeavor was timely, as the influx of Jewish immigrants was increasing steadily, and many of the newcomers were young, single, and eager to spend their little extra cash on entertainment.

By year's end the company expanded and moved to the Bowery Garden, a narrow beer hall, though with a proper stage, where it performed Goldfaden operettas and musical melodramas: Barsky's *The Madwoman*, *Yankele*, *Young Scamp*, Paysach Tomashefsky's *Rothschild's Biography*, and his son Boris's *The Pogrom in Russia*. In 1883, plagued by financial and personal feuds, the company split in two. Neither troupe fared well, and the 1883 arrival of a more professional troupe from Europe, headed by Maurice Heine, propelled the Goluboks to settle in Chicago and the

Tomashefskys to spend the next three years in Philadelphia. The newcomers, calling themselves the Russian Yiddish Opera Company, leased the Oriental Theater (formerly the Bowery Garden). Their principal playwright was Joseph Lateiner, their resident prompter. At first they produced plays on biblical themes, such as *Esther and Haman* and *Joseph and His Brothers*, then more current titles, such as the highly successful *Immigration to America*.

The rapid rise in Jewish immigration, combined with the 1883 czarist ban on Yiddish-language performances, increased the number of Jewish thespians in New York. The summer of 1886 marked the arrival of a seasoned troupe that included the enormously gifted singer/comedian Sigmund Mogulesco (1858–1914) and dramatic actor David Kessler (1860–1920). Though originally contracted to work in Chicago, they settled in New York, where they rented the National Theater, another Bowery house, renamed it the Roumanian Opera House, and soon enjoyed a major success with Moshe Horowitz's *Tisza Eszlar*, based on the notorious blood libel. A fierce competition developed between the two companies; each used the stage and printed pamphlets to denigrate the other, and each enticed actors from the rival management. At times their plays bore nearly identical titles: when the Roumanian Opera House produced Horowitz's opera *King Solomon*, the Oriental immediately responded with Lateiner's *Solomon's Trial*.

Actors Jacob P. Adler (1855–1926) and Keni Liptzin (1856–1918) came to New York in 1887, as did Abraham Goldfaden, all hoping to partake of the burgeoning theatrical scene. Adler and Goldfaden were not successful and sailed back to Europe. Adler returned in 1890 to become the most revered actor of the Yiddish stage. Goldfaden returned in 1892 but remained a marginalized founding father, often dependent on Adler and Tomashefsky for financial support. He was vindicated shortly before his death when his play *Ben-Ami* proved a major success. His unique role was acknowledged at his funeral, where 75,000 people took part in the procession, the largest such event to date on the Lower East Side.

At first, Yiddish performances were given only on weekends and Jewish holidays. There was no objection to the timing, but the stage respectfully reflected the audience's religious sensibilities. On Friday night and Saturday matinees there was no representation of activities prohibited on the Sabbath. Lights were turned on in advance,

matches and cigarettes were not lit, and letters arrived conveniently unsealed. As the theaters assumed a full-week schedule, the company's newest production was usually reserved for the weekend, with Friday considered the gala occasion of the week. During the week, seats were filled through a benefit system whereby social and labor organizations bought out a performance for fund-raising purposes, paying the theater a reduced rate, then selling tickets to their members at full price. Plays for benefit performances were drawn from the company's older repertoire.

At the turn of the century the three major Yiddish theaters, all in the Bowery, were the People's, the Thalia, and the Windsor, houses with seating capacities between 2,500 and 3,500. It was estimated that they were offering more than a thousand performances annually to about 2 million patrons, although the Jewish population in New York in 1900 totaled 580,000. A folksy ambience typified the Yiddish auditorium. Families brought young children, emotional responses to the events on stage filled the air, as did the smell of food. Merchandise was advertised on the stage curtain during intermission, vendors sold sweets and drinks between acts, and the merits of the production were unabashedly discussed in the lobby. Some social critics censured this homeyness as uncouth, suitable to a circus, not a temple of culture. Accordingly, the People's Theater prided itself on not permitting children in the auditorium.

Playscripts were not regarded as literary texts, and actors improvised lines and interjected songs or vaudeville *shtricks* that had no bearing on the story line. Boris Tomashefsky brought the house down by inserting his popular song "A Letter to Mother" whenever the pace of the performance slackened. To some extent, ad-libbing resulted from the demands of show business. Appearing in different plays during the week, Yiddish actors often worked with unfinished scripts and had to learn a new role every couple of weeks. Consequently, they improvised, slipped in lines from other plays, and relied heavily on the prompter, a permanent fixture in the Yiddish theater. Moreover, most of the first generation of actors who had begun their careers in the 1880s were reared in the culture of popular entertainment, where scripts served largely as vehicles for the display of performative skills. At the heart of their world stood the actor, not the playwright, and acting was considered most commendable when it raised primal emotions to fever pitch. The emotional atmosphere

was enhanced by the strong bond between audiences and actors, a special feature of the Yiddish theater. Stars were beloved as both family and royalty, with their love lives, personal disputes, weddings, and funerals followed by loyal and at times near fanatical fans.

The theater's popularity and the dearth of a Jewish dramatic corpus created an insatiable demand for new scripts. The best-known and most prolific of the early Yiddish playwrights were "professor" Moshe Horowitz (1864–1910) and Joseph Lateiner (1853–1937). They had arrived in New York in 1882 and 1884 respectively, and between them generated some three hundred playscripts, the vast majority translations and adaptations. Horowitz, it was said, could complete a play in two days, and on occasion he handed in two acts, finishing the final act backstage. Lateiner and Horowitz specialized in quasi-historical extravaganzas, heart-wrenching melodramas, and *tsay-bilder*—sentimentalized docudramas depicting recent disasters and sensational events. Though most of these plays were crude, filled with plagiarized scenes and historical inaccuracies, they transported unsophisticated spectators from the dreariness of the tenements and sweatshops to a fantasy world of glamour and amplified emotion.

Young intellectuals were contemptuous of this theatrical fare, labeling it *shund* (trash). Their dream of a Yiddish Ibsen was realized in Jacob Gordin (1853–1909), who introduced literary melodramas into the Yiddish repertoire. A respected writer in Russian, he came to America in 1891 with the utopian *Am Olam* movement. Though he had no theatrical experience, Jacob Adler, who was impressed by his intellect and command of Russian culture, commissioned him to write a play. The play was *Siberia* (1892), followed by the enormously successful *The Jewish King Lear* (1892), both starring Adler. Gordin went on to write more than thirty original dramas, mostly domestic "problem plays," written in the realistic mode. The best known are *God, Man, and the Devil*, with a Faustian theme; *Mirele Efros*, an intergenerational melodrama; *The Wild Man*, the tragic story of an older man married to a young woman; *Dementia Americana*, a satire of Jewish real estate mania; *Homelessness*, which tackled social conditions in a large city; *The Kreutzer Sonata*, on the "New Woman"; and *The Truth*, on mixed marriage. Gordin also translated and adapted more than forty plays, introducing Jewish audiences to the work of Ibsen, Sudermann, Hauptmann, Tolstoy, and Gorky.

Before literary and cultural reformers began to change Yiddish theatrical culture, actors generally delivered their lines in *Daytshmerish*, an artificially Germanized Yiddish deemed more appropriate for higher-class characters. Gordin was important in instituting a more natural stage language. He demanded a faithful rendition of the author's text and terminated ad-libbing and interpolation of unrelated musical and comic numbers. Writing on commission, Gordin provided actors with strong parts, and the reputation of actors associated with his work—Jacob Adler and his wife Sarah, David Kessler, Sigmund Mogulesco, Keni Lipzin, and Bertha Kalich—rested largely on their reputation as the originators and interpreters of specific Gordin roles.

Gordin's success encouraged more Yiddish writers to contribute to the stage. Leon Kobrin (1872–1946) offered realistic portrayals of Jewish life in America, and David Pinsky's *The Treasure* and *The Final Balance* were translated into English and produced respectively by the Theater Guild in 1920 and by the Provincetown Players in 1928. In later years the list of dramatists included major writers: Sholem Asch, H. Leivick, Peretz Hirschbein, and Osip Dymov. Yet even culturally oriented managers could not afford to devote themselves entirely to literary plays. The masses who supported the Yiddish stage demanded escapist entertainment. Thus, the biggest hit of the pre–World War I era was the 1909 musical *Dos Pintele Yid* (*The Quintessential Jew*), produced, directed, coauthored, and starring the sweet-voiced Boris Tomashefsky, which packed the People's Theater for the entire thirty-eight-week season.

The prosperity of the Yiddish theater and the belief in its longevity were manifested in the dedication of the Grand Theater (1903), the first house built specifically for Yiddish shows. Located in the Bowery, it opened to much fanfare, with local politicians in attendance. The English-language press noted that it was the first theater in the city's history to be constructed for non-English performances. The Grand, seating 1,700, reflected the social mobility and aesthetic aspirations of its patrons. Its elegant interior, done in red and gold, included an orchestra floor and three balconies, each with its own lobby, cloakroom, and smoking room. Its inaugural performance was *Zion, or On the Rivers of Babylon* by Lateiner, a historical melodrama that alternated between dark moments and burlesque, framed by the destruction of the first Temple in



Poster for performances of David Pinsky's *The Treasure* in Los Angeles. (Library of Congress)

Jerusalem and the Jews' return to their homeland by permission of King Cyrus.

Originally, Yiddish theaters were run as stock companies, where the actors shared the profits in accordance with their position, that is, hero, juvenile, comedian. This arrangement was soon replaced by one with the star-manager in charge of a salaried company, a system that was already obsolete in the American theater. The division into management and labor resulted in early unionization efforts. The Hebrew Actors Union, established in December 1900, twenty years before Actors' Equity, held a tight reign on every Yiddish production for years to come. It enforced a salary scale and often required managers to engage actors regardless of ability or choice. It was also reluctant to admit new members. Indeed, until the 1950s, gaining membership was a humbling experience, with applicants

forced to audition before the union rank and file. Some accomplished actors, including Stella Adler and Maurice Schwartz, failed their first auditions.

In addition to the actors' union, there were separate unions representing costumers, prompters, chorus people, ushers, stage carpenters, scene shifters, and musicians. Though some of them were tiny—the prompters' union peaked at a membership of twelve—their strength lay in their affiliation with the United Hebrew Trades. If one union had a grievance against a manager, the whole Yiddish theatrical situation was affected. In the ongoing struggle between managers and unions, the latter usually held the upper hand.

Though union wages were fixed, major stars commanded skyrocketing amounts. In 1912 Rudolph Schildkraut, a leading actor in the German theater who came to New York with Max Reinhardt's company, received less than \$300 a week on the English-language stage. He was engaged at the People's Theater, where he acted as his own manager, and his weekly income, including his share of the profits, averaged \$2,000 a week. Such sums reflect the enormous drawing power of stars on the Yiddish stage.

The prosperity enjoyed during World War I, combined with the decline of the Bowery district and the migration of Jews to Brooklyn and the Bronx, prompted the construction of new theaters. A new Yiddish theater district was established on Second Avenue in Manhattan. This address became synonymous with flagship Yiddish theaters and related businesses, including cafes and restaurants. The most famous was the Cafe Royal, on Twelfth Street and Second Avenue, *the* meeting place of the theatrical crowd, immortalized in Hy Craft's popular Broadway play, *Cafe Crown* (1942). The first theaters to open on this new rialto were the Second Avenue Theater (1911), a 2,000-seat house built for actor-manager David Kessler, and the National, built for Boris Tomashefsky and Jacob Adler, which boasted a covered roof garden and a seating capacity of 1,600. Each house cost about a million dollars. The last two Yiddish theaters on the avenue, opening in 1926, were Maurice Schwartz's Yiddish Art Theater, seating over 1,200, and the Public, with over 1,700 seats.

A new cadre of stars became associated with these theaters during the 1920s and 1930s. The greatest musical comedy star was American-born Molly Picon, the gamine darling of Second Avenue. Other stars included Menasha

Skulnik, Herman Yablokoff, Aaron Lebedeff, Ludwig Satz, Mikhel Mikhalesco, Jennie Goldstein, and Zvi Scooler.

However, the interwar era was primarily associated with the art theater movement. Its roots lay with post-1905 immigrants, who generally had a higher level of education than their predecessors, were more politically involved, and had a deep appreciation for literature and drama. Many had become familiar in their native Russia with amateur theatrical clubs that sought to create a Yiddish theater of high artistic merit. In America, quite a few of these young workers joined the newly formed dramatic clubs. One club was the New York-based Hebrew Dramatic League. In 1915 it was adopted as the drama section of the Workmen's Circle, a left-wing fraternal organization. It assumed the name *Fraye Idische Folksbiene* (The Free Yiddish People's Stage), retaining its amateur status.

The Folksbiene's first production, Henrik Ibsen's *The Enemy of the People*, reflected its highbrow artistic mission. In 1918 they presented *Green Fields*, a low-key tale of Jewish rural life written by Peretz Hirshbein, an early proponent of a Yiddish art theater. The overwhelming reception of this modest literary play, the antithesis of Yiddish theater's traditional glitz, marked the beginning of a more refined Yiddish theater. It also convinced actor-manager Maurice Schwartz of the existence of a younger, intellectually inclined audience. Shortly thereafter Schwartz showcased Hirshbein's *The Forsaken Nook*, a modest production that was enthusiastically embraced by the younger, more sophisticated crowd, launching a golden epoch of meritorious Yiddish drama in America.

Maurice Schwartz (1890–1960), a man of extraordinary talent and energy, founded the Yiddish Art Theater and managed it until its demise in 1950. More than any other individual, Schwartz charted the course of the high-end Yiddish stage. He was an excellent character actor, an occasional playwright, a bold director, a resourceful stage designer, and an astute manager who created a repertory theater with an ensemble of some of the best actors of the time. They included Jacob Ben-Ami, Ludwig Satz, Celia Adler, Bina Abramowitz, Anna Appel, Hyman Mysell, Joseph Sheingold, Joseph Buloff, and Muni Weisenfreund, later known as Paul Muni. Schwartz's taste reflected that of educated Jewish audiences, and in the 1920s he experimented with various theatrical forms, including a constructivist rendition of Goldfaden's *The Tenth Commandment* (1926), designed by Boris Aronson.

Schwartz's most successful productions were *The Brothers Ashkenazi* (1937) and *Yoshe Kalb* (1932) by I. J. Singer. However, Schwartz's extended national and international tours resulted in long absences from New York, which adversely affected the continuity of his Yiddish Art Theater.

The only art theater to sustain activity through the 1930s was the Communist-affiliated Artef Theater, which began as an amateur dramatic studio in 1927 and gradually shifted to professional status in the mid-1930s. Directed by former Habima member Benno Schneider, the Artef was greatly influenced by the Russian avant-garde. Though committed to represent the lives of American Jewish workers, its repertoire consisted mainly of Russian Jewish materials and modern adaptations of folk dramas, notably *Recruits* (1934), *200,000* (1936), and *The Outlaw* (1937). The fortunes of the Artef reflected the position of Jewish communism in America. The company disbanded in the aftermath of the shock waves of the Hitler–Stalin nonaggression pact of 1939.

It was a great tragedy that, while reaching its artistic pinnacle and engaging some of the community's finest artists and writers, the Yiddish theater was losing its audiences. As immigration came to a virtual halt in the mid-1920s, Yiddish culture was swiftly eroded. In 1925 the future still seemed bright—the number of theaters serving the outer boroughs was increasing to four in Brooklyn and four in upper Manhattan and the Bronx, with plans for three additional houses in new Jewish neighborhoods, which would have brought the total of New York Yiddish theaters to twenty. Theater managers regarded the Yiddish stage as a stable American institution, claiming that it attracted some 300,000 New York area families to Yiddish shows. In 1930, the scene had changed. The theatrical season, which traditionally ended by Passover, was brought to a halt in early spring. It was only partly the result of the national financial crisis, of personnel costs proportionately higher than on Broadway, and of the inroads of the talkies. The primary reason was the cessation of immigration and the decline in the number of native Yiddish speakers. Always reflecting the element of the population on whose patronage it depended, the Yiddish theater tried to appeal to the younger, native-born generation by peppering plays with English, with the popular Jennie Goldstein singing, for example, “When I pretend I'm gay, *Es iz mir och un vey.*” However, bilingualism hardly proved to be a panacea.

The dwindling of the Yiddish rialto was a gradual process. In 1927 there were still twenty-five theaters that offered Yiddish productions across America: eleven in New York, four in Chicago, three in Philadelphia, and one each in Baltimore, Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Newark, and St. Louis. In 1936, seven Yiddish theaters opened their seasons in New York; in 1945 the number shrank to four, three opening their season with musicals entitled “They All Want to Get Married,” “Good News,” and “Pleasure Girls.” Though efforts to sustain quality Yiddish productions did not cease, they were modest and short-lived.

In the 1950s and 1960s the great names of the golden era were disappearing: actress Sarah Adler, widow of the great Jacob Adler and mother of five performers, of which the best known was actor and coach Stella Adler, died in 1953 at age ninety-five; Joseph Rumshinsky, for fifty years the Yiddish stage's primary musician and the composer of more than a hundred operettas, died in 1956; the queen of tears, Jennie Goldstein, who had made her stage debut at age six, died in 1960. Perhaps most symbolic was the passing of Maurice Schwartz that same year. He was sixty-nine and died in Israel, where he was working on a Yiddish production of Sholem Asch's *Kiddush Hashem*.

By the end of the twentieth century the baton of Yiddish literary drama passed to the Folksbiene, whose enthusiastic members, all amateurs, persist in producing one Yiddish play a year, recently with English over-titles. While the era of Yiddish theater has ended, some of its tales and traditions can be gleaned from the Yiddish talkies of the 1930s and 1940s. Its story continues to excite the imagination of theater and film professionals who produce modern versions of the old plays and documentaries based on its stories, such as playwright Donald Margulies's adaptation of Sholem Asch's *God of Vengeance* and Arnon Goldfinger's film *The Komediant* (1999), an exuberant chronicle of the life and career of actors Pesach Burstein and Lilian Lux and their theatrical family.

Edna Nahshon

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## Jews and Broadway

For most of the twentieth century, American Jews selected Broadway as the epicenter of their subculture. Not only a street, Broadway—the New York stage—has been the ebullient showcase for the talents of Fanny Brice, Al Jolson, Eddie Cantor, Bert Lahr, and Barbra Streisand. For over half a century, such performers electrified audiences (and more easily exulted in their ethnicity than they could on screen). Broadway also spawned some of Hollywood's stars, rivaled it in glamour, and incubated the Tin Pan Alley tunes that a nation sang in unison for at least the first half of the twentieth century. The pulse of a common culture could be taken on Broadway.

But the emergence of both rock 'n' roll and television in the 1950s had the effect of weakening the American musical. The center could not hold (or simply shifted to the small screen), which, in retrospect, made the Broadway genre look classier and more estimable. The Broadway musical deserves to be appreciated for having found a European-derived operetta and created an indigenous art form. In particular it flourished from the 1920s, when *Show Boat* (1927) established the groove, until the 1960s, when the social tensions generated by the Vietnam War shattered the

consensus that had crystallized around the nation's culture. The vitality of the Broadway musical was evident, however, before and after those dates as well, as the box-office power of *A Chorus Line* (1975) and *The Producers* (2001) suggests. The city that harbored the largest Jewish population in the history of the Diaspora inflected the musical as completely as Vienna marked the waltz and Paris the cancan. Yet this form managed to project a national style as well. Its elements included a compulsive optimism, an electrifying energy, and an immunity to tragedy.

Broadway represented showmanship at its most flamboyant because the goal was to sell tickets. This demotic spectacle was driven by commercialism, not a bid for artistic immortality. Or as lyricist E. Y. (Yip) Harburg wrote: "Mozart died a pauper,/ Heine lived in dread,/ Foster died in Bellevue,/ Homer begged for bread./ Genius pays off handsomely—/ After you are dead" (Lahr 1996). A cantor's son from Dessau, Germany, composer Kurt Weill absorbed the atmosphere upon immigration. Aching badly for success on Broadway, Weill told an interviewer that he was writing "for today" and claimed not to "give a damn about writing for posterity" (Block 1997). Broadway typified the yearning to transform citizens into customers, and yet managed to convert commercial instincts into an art form that has proven itself indelibly enchanting.

Virtually all of the composers and lyricists who heard America singing the songs emanating from Broadway were Jews, and most of them were New Yorkers. Without them it is hard to imagine the history of musical comedy in the United States. There certainly would have been theater, and music, and comedy. But the combination was virtually a franchise enjoyed by one minority group. Two features of the history of Broadway justify its claim to be considered the epicenter of American Jewish culture.

One index is the audience. In 1968 the scenarist and novelist William Goldman speculated that Jews filled half the seats in Broadway theaters, and no scholar has disputed his conjecture. These theaters benefited financially from the parties that stemmed from a tradition of the Yiddish stage. In Abraham Cahan's canonical *Rise of David Levinsky* (1917), the immigrant protagonist recalls his own "considerable passion for the Jewish theater" (Cahan 1960) and participates in the fund-raising activity in which blocks of seats—and sometimes even entire houses—are sold by charitable or fraternal groups. The Broadway audience was more geographically limited—and therefore



Mel Brooks poses before the set of his Broadway show *The Producers* in 2001. (AP/Wide World Photos)

more Jewish—than, for example, the crowds who watched movies. The cinema was obviously far more of a mass art form than Broadway ever aspired to be and had a national (and indeed international) audience that the Broadway stage lacked.

The second factor is talent. When Oscar Hammerstein II was working with composer Jerome Kern on adapting Donn Byrne's biography of Marco Polo, the lyricist inquired: "Here is a story laid in China about an Italian and told by an Irishman. What kind of music are you going to write?" Kern's answer was reassuring: "It'll be good Jewish music" (Fordin 1977). That was the lullaby of Broadway, so that even those who did not satisfy *halachic* (Jewish legal) standards adapted to the prevailing ethnic sensibility.

That was true of Hammerstein himself, whose mother, a Presbyterian, had him baptized as an even more upscale Episcopalian. When he became an adult, however,

Hammerstein practiced no religion (except perhaps for the faith that his next show had to be a hit). But his social and professional circle was so inescapably Jewish that, if any American can be said to have shaped the Broadway musical without actually being Jewish, Hammerstein is the obvious candidate. His first marriage was to Myra Finn, a cousin of his second famous collaborator, Richard Rodgers (who considered himself a Jew on ethnic rather than religious grounds). Hammerstein's career was not unique in demonstrating the liaison's entwining talents. Lyricist Ira Gershwin was a high school classmate of E. Y. Harburg (who wrote the lyrics for the 1939 Hollywood musical *The Wizard of Oz*) and would soon introduce him to composer Burton Lane (*Finian's Rainbow* [1947]), who wrote his first show at the age of fifteen and served as a rehearsal pianist for Ira's younger brother George. Rodgers had served as Kern's rehearsal pianist and was sixteen

when he met the twenty-three-year-old Lorenz Hart, who played songs for him that afternoon on his Victrola. Hart had attended the same Catskills summer camp for the German Jewish upper crust as had Rodgers. A fellow camper was Herbert Sondheim, whose son Stephen would meet Hammerstein during the launching of *Oklahoma!* (1943). Sondheim would repay his debts to the lyricist and librettist for his mentoring by dedicating the score for *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1962) to Hammerstein, and would also amplify and enhance (as well as upend) the whole musical tradition that Hammerstein and Kern had invented with *Show Boat*. Indeed Hammerstein's death forced Rodgers to work with other lyricists, including Sondheim—so that the intricate mesh of collaborations and personal relationships (and rivalries) stretches from the Americanization of the operetta all the way down to the lingering postmodern death of the Broadway musical.

Because lines of apprenticeship and collegiality were so taut, outsiders had to learn what the indigenes were apparently doing naturally. The most celebrated mimic was a Yale-educated Episcopalian from Indiana, Cole Porter, who allegedly asked George Gershwin for the secret of Broadway success and was told, "Write Jewish." Such a mandate Porter interpreted as a synonym for writing "Middle Eastern." The result was "Just One of Those Things" and "I've Got You Under My Skin"—songs that were noteworthy for their tropical rhythms, their extended melody lines, their moody and exotic aura of romance. Rodgers recalled Porter telling him that Broadway required a talent for writing "Jewish tunes," a claim that Rodgers decoded as the use of strongly chromatic, sensuous "minor-key melodies" that would sound "unmistakably eastern Mediterranean." With "Night and Day" and "Begin the Beguine," Rodgers saw what Porter meant. What Porter thereafter called his "magic formula" was evidenced in "I Love Paris," which one music historian quipped should have been entitled "I Love Russia" (Wilder 1972). In fact most of the Jews who had emigrated from Russia *hated* it. Porter's good friend, Irving Berlin, claimed that his earliest childhood memory of Russia was of a pogrom.

Perhaps some "Jewish tunes" could be traced, in a vague way, to the synagogue. Berlin's father had been a part-time cantor, a job at which the father of composer Harold Arlen had worked full-time. Perhaps there is a resemblance between, say, the folk tune "Havenu Shalom

Alechem" and the spiritual "It Take a Long Pull to Get There" from *Porgy and Bess* (1935). But in general the direct musical influences on the plangent notes projected from the orchestra pit were unlikely to be liturgical; the Jewish accent on Broadway was not obvious. Nor is there much direct evidence of the impact of the Yiddish theater, which broke attendance records in 1927, the year that *Show Boat* opened. Harburg regularly attended with his father after synagogue on Saturdays. But this lyricist's explicit indebtedness to the Yiddish theater was exceptional. For others, ethnicity was an accident of birth, not a heritage to be cultivated.

Because their shows were often set in New York, its lingo could sometimes be injected into the lyrics. Consider the cinematic (and hence more "universalistic") *West Side Story* (1961), in which the leader of the Jets addresses, "Dear kindly social worker,/ They tell me: get a job,/ Like be a soda jerker,/ Which means like be a slob." But expected to work at a soda fountain as a way to "earn a buck," Riff sneers in the less sanitized version on Broadway—"which means like be a *shmuck*." Or take *Guys and Dolls* (1950), songs by Frank Loesser, who has Nathan Detroit declare his love to Adelaide in a daisy-chain of internal rhymes: "All right already, I'm just a no-goodnik./ All right already, it's true. So *nu?*/ So sue me, sue me, what can you do me?/ I love you." Such sassy, brassy lyrics propelled the momentum of musical comedy far from the ambience of, say, *The Merry Widow* and into the mainstream of American vernacular music.

Though Broadway was popular, its matrix was not populist. Hart had attended Columbia, as had Rodgers and Hammerstein. The latter had also earned a law degree from Columbia; the former was the son of a highly successful physician who took his family to operas as well as to musicals. Kern studied music at the University of Heidelberg. The father of Alan Jay Lerner (*My Fair Lady* [1956]) had founded Lerner Shops and sent his son to Harvard, where a classmate was Leonard Bernstein (*West Side Story*). Sondheim studied advanced composition at Princeton after graduating from Williams College. Of course, not everyone who succeeded on Broadway could brandish such pedigrees. Berlin quit school at the age of fourteen, George Gershwin at sixteen. Frank Loesser's father was a piano teacher and his mother a translator and a lecturer on modern literature. But the future songwriter somehow contrived to get expelled from both high school and college.

That several of Broadway's most prominent creative figures were nevertheless born into comfort may have reinforced a national and generic addiction (to quote from *South Pacific*) to "happy talk." The most glowing dream of the Great White Way was to see your name in lights (even if that name happened to have been anglicized), and thus success was both celebrated and certified. Unlike European operas, musicals encouraged the pursuit of happiness and promised that the goal was within reach. Broadway reinforced the national faith in good fortune; such an ethos could not flourish in the gloom. Thus the operative word is *electricity*, because the dazzling technology of neon lighting reached Broadway in 1924—exactly when the Gershwin brothers did. The raucous exuberance of such musicals, with their jaunty lyrics and their rousing scores, reflected an insouciant spirit that began to vanish only in the era of the Vietnam War.

Broadway itself was a symbol of hope, promising liberation from the shadows of the past. When a cowboy named Curly first strutted onto a stage to exult "what a beautiful mornin'" was glorifying the new state of Oklahoma and to predict that "ever'thin's goin' my way," the contrast with Europe could not have been sharper. The genocidal machinery of the Nazi death camps was operating around the clock; the battle of Stalingrad had ended only a month earlier; and the following month, at Mila 18 in the Warsaw ghetto, a suicidal revolt would erupt. It would end only with the utter destruction of what had once been the largest Jewish community outside of New York City itself. Only in America could Curly's optimism have seemed remotely credible. Musical committed all sorts of crimes against complexity, which is why it is easy to condescend to the reductiveness that the genre has exhibited. But a cockeyed, optimistic innocence is more deeply implanted in the national sensibility than can be blamed on Broadway alone.

But unlike rock 'n' roll, Broadway was not pitched primarily at adolescents, and its lyricists and composers could therefore prize irony and sophistication. Lorenz Hart had grown up in a German-speaking home and remained fluent in the language, which may account for his absorption in the sheer quiddity of words; he could look at English from the outside. Other Broadway lyricists also reached heights of literacy that were unequalled before or after. They belonged, however indifferently, to a people who entangled piety fully in the interpretation of texts. Who else

could put so polished a spin on language itself, as Hart did in "Bewitched": "I'm wild again, beguiled again, a simpering, whimpering child again"? Who, after the rise of rock 'n' roll, writes that way anymore? Only Stephen Sondheim, who claims to have learned that Broadway is about mind as well as heart while studying mathematics at Williams College, where a music professor robbed art of its romanticism. Music, Sondheim recalled learning, was "a matter of craft and technique. . . . Art is work and not inspiration" (Secrest 1998).

Broadway was not expected to convey verisimilitude, since not even lovers or actors off-stage normally burst into song to communicate their feelings. The aim instead is to provide aesthetic delight—and to impose the bliss of order amid chaos. That task required painstaking creative effort, and to do so with flair entailed genius. The pointless agony of false starts and the desolation of utter failure afflicted even the most gifted. Rodgers and Hammerstein had tried for over a year to solve the problems of adapting George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* and gave up. Refusing to heed Hammerstein's warning that such an adaptation was impossible, Lerner thereupon did it. Indeed *My Fair Lady* proved so triumphant that Nobel laureate T. S. Eliot told Rex Harrison, who starred as Henry Higgins, that the work of another Nobel laureate, "Shaw[,] is greatly improved by music" (Lees 1990). The ordeal of writing musicals nevertheless made Lerner himself a wreck, a chain-smoker who became dependent on amphetamines, a compulsive nail-biter who had to wear gloves to save his cuticles. The result was that he fitted his lyrics and book for *My Fair Lady* so seamlessly to Frederick Loewe's score that it was hard to imagine such sublimity as *constructed*. Shortly before dying, in and out of consciousness, Lerner revealed to a night-shift nurse that he had written *My Fair Lady*. No wonder she thought her patient was delirious.

Broadway offered lyricists a chance to become poets, to show off their virtuosity and wit, and even on occasion to suggest a wider world of literacy and learning. Even to achieve simplicity, arduous work was entailed—at least for Hammerstein, who sometimes needed weeks to lock a particular lyric in place. The work habits of Rodgers, by contrast, gave the impression of inspiration rather than perspiration, of an awesome fluency. Rodgers managed to match melodies to Hammerstein's words while the dinner guests were still sipping their coffee. Preparing for *South Pacific* (1949), Hammerstein gave his collaborator the

typed lyric for “Bali Ha’i.” Rodgers briefly examined the page before turning it over, went into another room, and five minutes later returned with the finished melody—surely among the most haunting of the thousand songs that he composed in his lifetime.

Such musicals defied snobbery—in the name of gusto, brio, force, robustness. To stir the crowd, those responsible for such shows needed dynamism, and even something daemonic and lunatic, a wild excess of energy, an anarchic superhuman force. The best performers had to project a vividness of personality that could sweep across the footlights and up into the balcony. The stars of these shows did not so much sing as roar, and were not satisfied with wooing the audience; they wanted to knock it out. From such base metals, the golden age of an art form was created, and a little vulgarity proved to be the correct aesthetic choice. The Pulitzer Prize committees formed to honor American drama didn’t quite know what to do with Broadway. In 1931, when *Of Thee I Sing* became the first musical comedy awarded the prize, the winners were librettists George S. Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind and lyricist Ira Gershwin, whose brother’s score was mysteriously ignored. But George Gershwin enhanced a heritage that is both accessible and blissful, and what endures of it is good music.

But is it, as Kern assured Hammerstein, good Jewish music? A popular answer in the affirmative came only in 1964, when *Fiddler on the Roof* opened. It won nine Tony Awards and ran for 3,242 performances; by 1972, when it closed, *Fiddler* set the record as the longest running musical in the history of Broadway. (That record has since been surpassed.) The musical that Jerome Robbins directed and choreographed even topped the longest run of a non-musical ever produced on Broadway, *Life with Father* (1939)—which would have been an apt title for the adaptation of the Sholem Aleichem tales as well. Any theatrical troupe in the United States that wishes to stage *Fiddler on the Roof* must be licensed to do so—and Music Theatre International has reported that over five hundred different productions are presented annually, elevating this musical consistently into the ranks of the top five nationally.

One New York producer had spurned the chance to mount *Fiddler on the Roof* because he could not envision an audience larger than the constituency for Hadassah benefits. But a musical that exposes the pressures of modernization on a Jewish family in czarist Russia nevertheless became a national and international smash hit as

well. In virtually every country where the show was scheduled to open, backers expressed the fear of a flop. But success was recorded in every country—for example, in Holland, France, Austria, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Rhodesia, South Africa, Greece, Turkey, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Australia. In London, the show ran four and a half years. In the first three decades after *Fiddler* had first opened on Broadway, about a hundred different productions were mounted in West Germany, and within five years after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, twenty-three versions were staged in the former German Democratic Republic. Audiences in Tel Aviv loved the show so much that eventually three Tevyes were needed. (One of them was Chaim Topol, who played the lead in the 1971 Hollywood adaptation.) Even a Yiddish version was introduced in Israel. *Fiddler on the Roof* became the longest running musical in the history of Japan. In Tokyo its producer was introduced to Joseph Stein, the librettist who had brought Sholem Aleichem to Broadway, and asked him: “Tell me, do they understand this show in America?” Stein answered in a characteristically Jewish way—with another question: “What do you mean?” The producer replied, “It’s so Japanese!” (Whitfield 2003).

The impact of *Fiddler on the Roof* not only vindicated faith in the extraordinary mass appeal of the American musical, but, paradoxically, Broadway became even more Jewish—even more the cultural expression of one minority—as a result. That particular success reinforces the need to treat Broadway with the seriousness of study that is lavished on other forms and genres stemming from a Jewish sensibility. If the fiction of Franz Kafka can be designated Jewish, or if psychoanalysis can be better fathomed by examining rather than ignoring its Jewish origins, or if the sciences (or professions like law and medicine) can also be considered in the light of Jewish attraction to such fields, why not the musical theater? To neglect it would leave too many works unrecognized and unappreciated. Kern’s guarantee to Hammerstein not only promised special pleasures to their audience, but enlarged the boundaries of an American Jewish culture as well.

Stephen J. Whitfield

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## Jews and Hollywood

In the rise of the American motion picture industry from modest beginnings around 1900 to become, a century later, a global multimedia entertainment enterprise, Jews played a predominant role as owners and managers of movie companies, and contributed significantly as creative artists. Although Jews had previously been active in arts and communication media such as music, theater, and the press, the emergence of a new, popular medium with unprecedented national influence, apparently dominated by recent Jewish immigrants, fostered opposition

and frequent demands for political and cultural control. In the wake of continuing controversies over the consequences of Jewish leadership, scholars have debated the impact of Jewish experience and values on the movies, and the transformations of American Jewish culture and the broader American society that the medium may have wrought.

The first historical question concerns what led Jewish businessmen to recognize the potential in a medium that began as silent, flickering, black-and-white images, telling brief stories or showing newsreel-style actual events, projected as part of vaudeville programs or viewed in penny arcade peep-show machines. The answer generally agreed on is that these men, immigrants from Eastern Europe who had started from the ground up in the clothing trade or in luxury goods such as furs and jewelry, were accustomed to dealing with the public and had a sense of changing tastes. They were familiar with both the working-class and immigrant ghettos rapidly expanding in large Eastern cities, as well as the consumption desires of the native-born middle class. They began in movies primarily as exhibitors, as investors or operators in vaudeville, penny arcades, or the new storefront nickelodeon theaters that began to proliferate around 1905, at a time when most film producers came from Anglo-Saxon backgrounds and were largely technicians.

A decisive moment of change came several years later when the inventor Thomas A. Edison created a consortium of film companies with the intention of consolidating patents, controlling production, and limiting entry into the motion picture business. Although several Jewish manufacturers and importers, such as Sigmund Lubin of Philadelphia, were included in this group, informally known as the patents trust, the new Jewish entrepreneurs, some of whom had moved into film distribution, were shut out. These excluded figures fought back, expanded their operations as "independents" to include production as well as distribution and exhibition, and outclassed the conservative trust group by developing the feature-length film and promoting individual performers as popular stars. By 1915, when a federal court ruled that the patents trust was an illegal conspiracy to restrain trade, the independents had swept the field and had relocated much of their operations to the Los Angeles suburb of Hollywood, which was soon to become the motion picture "colony" famous throughout the world.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspects of the careers of these Jewish independents are their longevity and the long-term success of the companies they founded in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Paramount, Universal, Twentieth Century Fox, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Columbia, and Warner Bros.: all these familiar names of Hollywood studios stem from their endeavors (even though many of these are now subsidiaries of even larger media conglomerates). Adolph Zukor's Famous Players Film Company (1912) evolved into Paramount. Carl Laemmle, who gave the independents their name with his Independent Motion Picture Corp. in 1909, formed Universal in 1912. William Fox, a distributor since 1904, began the Fox Film Corp. in 1915. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer developed as a subsidiary of Loew's Inc., a theater circuit started by Marcus Loew in 1919. It combined production companies previously headed by Louis B. Mayer and Samuel Goldwyn; Mayer presided over M-G-M, reporting to Nicholas Schenck at Loew's, while Goldwyn continued as an independent producer. Harry and Jack Cohn, along with Jack Brandt, started a company in 1922 and two years later retitled it Columbia. The four Warner brothers, in the film business since 1907, named their firm after themselves in 1923. All of these men continued for at least several decades as company heads, and several stayed on top into the 1950s or beyond.

Who were they? Zukor (1873–1976), born in Risce, Hungary, had been a furrier. Laemmle (1867–1939), from Laupheim, Germany, ran a clothing business in Wisconsin and Chicago. Fox (1879–1952), born in Tulchva, Hungary, built up a garment industry firm. Loew (1870–1927), born on New York's Lower East Side, was also a furrier. Mayer (1885–1957), from Russia, was in the junk business. Goldwyn (1882–1974), born in Warsaw, was in the glove trade. Schenck (1881–1969), from Russia, operated pharmacies. Harry Warner (1881–1958), the eldest of four brothers, was the only one born overseas, in Kraznashiltz, Poland; they held odd jobs before becoming film exhibitors. Harry Cohn (1891–1958), like Loew from the Lower East Side, was a vaudeville performer before getting an office job at Universal. To this group could be added several additional names, such as Jesse L. Lasky (1880–1958), born in San Francisco, whose pioneering production company merged with Zukor's Famous Players, and Joseph Schenck (1877–1971), older brother of Nicholas, associated with the United Artists company and

later a cofounder of Twentieth Century, which took over the Fox studio.

However uncouth and unlettered, as they were sometimes caricatured, these figures clearly comprised a remarkable generation of entrepreneurs. Secular, ambitious, eager to throw off what some saw as the hobbles of Old World Jewish life—scholars have noted how many of these men regarded their fathers as weak and unsuccessful—they were part of an immigrant vanguard who sought to enter, and in the process transformed, mainstream American culture. Working with new technologies and creating novel products, they faced fewer barriers than similar strivers in more traditional fields, and their own enterprises thrived on hyperbole and fantasy, as did few others. As early as 1915 the term *movie mogul* came into use to describe them, and it was not entirely complimentary. Deriving from the name of a sixteenth-century Mongol conqueror, it acknowledged their importance and power, but just as plainly suggested the notion of foreign barbarian invaders. Then, and later, commentators have exclaimed about how they built an empire in Hollywood, one predicated on, and demonstrating, emerging twentieth-century American values of consumption, leisure, and entertainment. But to many influential Americans, this empire was as threatening as it was wondrous.

Any reckoning of the achievements and failures of these business leaders must take into account the impact of antisemitism on their tactics and behavior. It's true that, in the very first years of the movies, before Jews became prominent, many elements in American society saw the new medium as a social danger that needed to be curtailed and controlled. The industry's struggles during later decades over such issues as censorship, monopoly power, and political propaganda might have occurred had no Jews been involved at all, but it was certainly the case that, in critical moments of controversy up through and even after World War II, antisemitism publicly or covertly was brought into play.

Given the political and cultural pressures that the industry steadily faced, for many years no one other than its enemies could afford to discuss what otherwise might seem obvious and intriguing questions: How Jewish were the movies? How were the movies Jewish? In response to facile and ominous answers, it was always intellectually respectable, and factually reasonable, for Hollywood's defenders to say that the industry attracted about as

heterogeneous and polyglot a workforce as any community or business in the United States. And that it took its stories from every type of source, perhaps most especially from conservative mainstream periodicals like *The Saturday Evening Post*. And that its popular genres, such as Westerns, melodramas, horror films, crime stories and many others, had their roots in a previous era's dime novels, stage plays, and popular fiction. If Hollywood's fundamental theme was the American Dream, as some commentators have argued, then that cultural construct clearly predated the movies, in the very conception of a nation of immigrants, in the westward movement of the nineteenth century, in the tales of Horatio Alger, and in innumerable rags-to-riches stories. In this perspective, not only were Hollywood's Jewish entrepreneurs assimilatory to the core, so too did their products absorb and recycle the basic narratives that had formed and sustained the national culture.

Still, the questions remained, and long after the pioneers had passed from the scene, along with the traditional forms of antisemitism that had previously pervaded American social and business life, scholars began to feel comfortable in exploring them. The premise stemmed from the incontrovertible facts that these men were the bosses who had the power to tell production supervisors, writers, directors, and actors what to do; that they were Jews; and that most of them were immigrants. Under the circumstances, how could their Jewish experience not find its way onto the nation's movie screens? Nevertheless, the viewpoints that have been put forward so far appear to be conjectural. The most extravagant assertions have come not in scholarly studies but in a documentary film, *Hollywoodism: Jews, Movies, and the American Dream*, which is based on the book *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood*, by Neal Gabler, but which ranges in speculation far beyond it. The film argues that the "nightmare" of nineteenth-century Jewish life in Eastern Europe is reflected in American movies and also gave rise to a counterfantasy, a "mythical America . . . of boundless optimism, happy endings, and homespun truths." The Hollywood studios, it asserts, became "golden shtetls."

There was more to Old World Jewish life than the shtetl, to be sure, and perhaps one should take into account that, of the Jewish entrepreneurs who built the movie industry, only one, Adolph Zukor, can be said to have had actual experience of shtetl living. A more productive way to understand the role and influence of Jews in the making of

Hollywood and its movies would be to link them much more broadly to transformations in Jewish culture, both in Europe and the United States. Eastern European sites to investigate would be, not only agricultural villages, but cosmopolitan cities like Budapest, Prague, Vienna, and Berlin, where Jews played a role in theater, publishing, music, and, indeed, cinema, simultaneously with the growth of Hollywood. This expansion of Jewish intellectual and artistic endeavors spread to Paris, London, and New York, among other places, en route to Hollywood. On both continents, such steps into the mainstream inevitably involved collaborations that crossed ethnic and religious lines. The assimilatory impulse in such cases concerned more than flight or masquerade; it was an aesthetic necessity. More to the point than trying to find a direct cause-and-effect between Old World trauma and New World fantasy would be an effort to make clear the Jewish traces in hybrid modern popular culture.

The process of Jewish integration relates to larger cultural convergence and conflict in the twentieth century's first half, but is itself illuminated by specific examples. Here are two. Emanuel Goldenberg, born in Bucharest, Romania, emigrated with his family to the Lower East Side at the age of nine, attended public schools and the City College of New York, and, with theatrical ambitions, was admitted to the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. There they told him that he would never succeed with such a name, so he became Edward G. Robinson (1893–1973). After years of working in Yiddish theater and on Broadway, he went to Hollywood with the advent of talking pictures and became a star playing an Italian gangster in *Little Caesar* (1930). Julius Henry Marx (1890–1977), born uptown on New York's East Side, formed a vaudeville troupe with his brothers Leonard, Adolph, and Milton, and soon they became Groucho, Chico, Harpo, and Gummo; Groucho later remarked that the public thought they were Italian. For years they toured the country, and everywhere they stopped they honed their jokes, trying out dozens of variations to see which got the biggest laugh. Later, in their Broadway and movie careers, the Marx Brothers became legendary for bringing Jewish wit and repartee into mainstream culture, yet their verbal play had been shaped and tested in a form of dialogue with countless heartland audiences. In the case of both Robinson and the Marxes, it should be noted, their names, personas, and performance styles had been developed before they set foot on a movie soundstage.

Like the United States, Hollywood was a great absorbent. The American film industry's rise to world dominance was aided by the suspension or curtailment of film production in European countries during World War I, but it was also abetted by the necessity to serve thousands of small-town theaters in the domestic market. The studios became factories of sorts, together producing and distributing well over three hundred films per year between the two world wars. If the upper levels of management tended to be, as far as could be accomplished, closed circles of families and associates, the talent ranks were open and regularly recruited from afar. In comparison to producers, who were by a large majority Jewish in this interwar period, Jews never made up more than a significant minority among directors and writers, and a much smaller percentage among performers (even taking into account masking name changes).

Jewish directors who rose up out of the pool of extras, assistants, and technicians sometimes put on airs, like adding an aristocratic German "von" to their names, as did the major figures Erich von Stroheim (1885–1957), born in Gleiwitz, Silesia, and Josef von Sternberg (1894–1969), born in Vienna. (Stroheim maintained the fiction that he came from a Prussian military heritage, which served him well in his acting roles.) In the 1920s directors who had already built significant careers in European cinemas were lured to Hollywood, such as Ernst Lubitsch (1892–1947) from Berlin and Michael Curtiz (Miháli Kertész, 1888–1962) from Budapest, via Vienna. The coming of sound in the late 1920s led the studios to turn to the New York stage primarily for actors and writers, and also brought Broadway directors such as George Cukor (1899–1983). After Hitler's seizure of power in 1933, Jewish emigrés who managed to become Hollywood directors included Anatole Litvak (1902–1974), Robert Siodmak (1900–1973), and Billy Wilder (1906–2002).

The roster of writers is a long one. A striking number were born on the Lower East Side and had worked as journalists, playwrights, and novelists before becoming screenwriters. A poll of writers in the late 1930s, asking them to list colleagues they most admired, listed among the top ten Robert Riskin (1897–1955), Ben Hecht (1894–1964), Lillian Hellman (1905–1984), and Jo Swerling (1893–1964). The latter, perhaps the least widely known among this quartet, was the only one born overseas, in Bardichov, Russia. Among many others from this interwar period might

also be mentioned Sonya Levien (1888–1960), Samson Raphaelson (1896–1983), Morrie Ryskind (1895–1985), and the twin Epstein brothers, Julius J. (1909–2000) and Philip G. (1909–1952). Sound films also attracted composers, lyricists, and singer-performers from the world of Broadway musicals and variety reviews, including Irving Berlin (1888–1989) and the Gershwin brothers, George (1898–1937) and Ira (1896–1983), among the former and Eddie Cantor (Edward Israel Iskowitz, 1892–1964) and Al Jolson (Asa Yoelson, 1886–1950) among the latter. These names are only a sampling, but they may make a case that Hollywood, along with its business leadership, was also a center for Jewish creative artists rivaling New York and the European capitals before, of course, becoming for some a refuge from the latter.

The arrival of new creative workers from the late 1920s onward coincided with the world crises engendered by the Great Depression and the rise of Nazism, and Jewish figures among them played a central role as Hollywood became increasingly politicized during the 1930s decade. Three issues in particular occupied the film community. In the chronological order of their development, first came the effort to organize talent guilds among, respectively, writers, actors, and directors, with the formation of the Screen Writers Guild (later known as Writers Guild of America) in the forefront. In part out of the writers' struggle, the Communist Party began to recruit members for purposes of fund-raising and, perhaps, influencing the ideologies and values that went into motion picture stories. A leader in the movement for a writers' guild was the playwright and screenwriter John Howard Lawson (1894–1977; his family had previously changed its name from Levy), who was unanimously elected the Guild's first president. Considered a moderate at that time, Lawson joined the Communist Party in 1936 and also took a prominent role there, becoming known as the Commissar of Hollywood communists. Later in the decade, prominent figures in the formerly isolated movie colony established the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League to agitate against the German fascist regime. Although many of its members were Jews, and stars like Eddie Cantor performed at its fund-raising events, the League's founders were not Jewish, and they aimed at developing a Popular Front-style group, in which even some studio executives and producers participated.

The historical judgment on the Jewish movie moguls is that they failed to respond to the danger that Nazism

posed for German and European Jews. As a group generally, so it has been argued, they were politically conservative, had attenuated their ties to Judaism, and valued their German revenues. To these considerations must be added the political constraints they were under from hostile legislators, which culminated in 1941 with U.S. Senate hearings on "Propaganda in Motion Pictures," in which isolationist senators attacked the Jewish studio heads as foreigners who put their religious and business interests above those of the United States. They cited more than two dozen Hollywood films, among them several tentative screen efforts to deal with Nazism and the persecution of Jews, including *Escape* and *The Man I Married* (both 1940). In addition, as with Jewish leaders in other walks of life, they were given the "friendly" advice by others that to speak out would adversely affect the situation of Jews in America. Nevertheless, at least one industry leader, Harry Warner, has been credited as an unremitting opponent of Nazism, and Warner Bros. produced Hollywood's first anti-Nazi film, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939).

Even during World War II, when Hollywood's values and goals meshed as never before with those of the U.S. government, the old hostility was never more than in abeyance. In 1943 a senator was critical of allowing "recent citizens" to make U.S. Army information films; in question, among others, was director Anatole Litvak, who worked in the Signal Corps unit making the *Why We Fight* series. As the war came to an end, conservative groups both within and outside the film industry began lobbying for a purge of Hollywood Communists. The U.S. House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) took up the call, although the vocal anti-semitism of one of its members, a congressman from Mississippi, proved more embarrassing than effective: the committee wanted the support of Jewish moguls against their left-wing Jewish employees. HUAC got the studio heads to testify at its Hearings Regarding the Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry and then called the so-called unfriendly witnesses. Ten men were cited for contempt of Congress for refusing to answer whether they were members of the Screen Writers Guild or the Communist Party, and they went to prison when their First Amendment defense was denied. Of the Hollywood Ten, six were Jews, including Lawson, Albert Maltz (1908–1985), Alvah Bessie (1904–1985), Samuel Ornitz (1890–1957), Herbert Biberman (1900–1971), and Lester Cole (1904–1985). Shortly after the hearings, the motion picture industry en-

acted a "blacklist" against the Ten and all other "alleged subversives." Over the next decade, as HUAC continued its hearings, several hundred studio creative workers were blacklisted, a substantial number of whom were Jews.

The motion picture industry changed fundamentally after World War II with the blacklist; with a Supreme Court decision breaking up the studio system's vertically integrated structure that had controlled production, distribution, and exhibition; and with a rapid defection of the audience to television. After a difficult transition lasting several decades, however, the industry stabilized during the 1970s with new marketing strategies for theatrical movies and greater emphasis on producing shows for television; in subsequent years it thrived with additional revenues from video and DVD sales and film rentals. Throughout this period and beyond, with the gradual postwar decline of overt antisemitism, the prominent role of Jews in all facets of the movies and the wider entertainment industry generally became a taken-for-granted aspect of American cultural life, even though periodic attacks on Hollywood for its alleged excesses and deleterious effects on values and behavior have never entirely gone away.

In the second half of the twentieth century and beyond, the focus of inquiry might shift to another historical question, one concerning the representation of Jews on screen. In the short silent films of the earliest period, before the Jewish moguls gained control of the industry, anti-semitic images were not uncommon, along with prejudiced stereotypes of many other nationalities and peoples. Such images did not entirely abate when Jews took responsibility for screen stories depicting Jewish experience: stereotypes have always been a staple of popular entertainment, and they continued to appear in films produced during the 1910s and 1920s about immigrants and life in urban ghettos. Perhaps the most pertinent generalization is that a substantial number of films dealt with assimilation and intermarriage, such as the popular works *Abie's Irish Rose* (1929) and a multifilm series that was launched in 1926 with *The Cohens and the Kellys*. Before ascribing this emphasis to the moguls' own desire for assimilation and intermarriage, however, it should be pointed out that these films began as Broadway plays, as did the most famous Jewish-themed film of the era, the pioneering part-talkie, *The Jazz Singer* (1927).

Jewish images on screen declined during the 1930s, in part, of course, because of trepidation on the part of prod-

ucers, but also because of the industry's more general self-imposed limitations on depicting nationalities and types in ways that might cause offense. (Such limitations were not applied to African Americans, however, and some later writers have utilized Hollywood's demeaning portrait of blacks to place responsibility on the Jewish moguls for provoking racial prejudice.) Mention should also be made of Yiddish-language films made outside Hollywood, on the East Coast, including five between 1937 and 1940 from Vienna-born Edgar G. Ulmer (1904–1972), formerly and later a Hollywood director. During World War II the most ubiquitous Jewish character in Hollywood films was a GI from Brooklyn who was part of an inevitably multiethnic Army platoon. As news of Nazi concentration camps emerged after the war ended, the studios produced several lauded movies with antisemitism as a theme, including the Academy Award best picture *Gentleman's Agreement* and another Oscar nominee, *Crossfire* (both 1947); neither film, it might be noted, had a Jewish director.

After a period of caution brought on by the blacklist and Cold War anti-communism, interest in Jewish subjects reawakened in the late 1950s, often impelled by successful novels and stage plays dealing with such themes as the expansion of a Jewish American middle class, the tragedy of the Holocaust, and the establishment of Israel—reflected, respectively, in works like *Marjorie Morningstar* (1958), *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1959), and *Exodus* (1960). At the same time a new generation of writers and directors entered the field, children or grandchildren of immigrants, who were unafraid of previous taboos and, as artists, often viewed Jewish lifestyles (frequently personified in the screen characters they played) with an irreverent, comic approach. This group included versatile writer-performer-directors such as Carl Reiner (b. 1922), Mel Brooks (b. 1926), and Woody Allen (b. 1935), whose *Annie Hall* (1977) won him Academy Awards for best picture, direction, and original screenplay (with Marshall Brickman), as well as a nomination for best actor. Filmmakers Sidney Lumet (b. 1924), who had performed on Yiddish-language stage and radio as a child actor, and Paul Mazursky (b. 1930) were prominent among others who consistently treated Jewish themes. Lumet's works included *The Pawnbroker* (1965) and *Bye Bye Braverman* (1968), based, respectively, on novels by Edward Lewis Wallant and Wallace Markfield. Mazursky's titles included *Blume in Love* (1973) and *Next Stop, Greenwich Village* (1976).

In an era when American cultural interest in ethnicity was beginning to revive, after decades in which assimilation had been the standard, Jewish performers found that “ethnic” appearance and speech patterns could enhance their careers rather than requiring cosmetic alteration or vocal training. (Most name changes had been taken care of by earlier generations.) Singer Barbra Streisand (b. 1942), whose unreconstructed “Jewish” features often drew critics' comments, led the way, bringing her stage role as Fanny Brice (1891–1951), a Jewish stage star of the 1920s, to the screen in *Funny Girl* (1968). Other Jewish women screen notables included Bette Midler (b. 1945), Goldie Hawn (b. 1945), and Gilda Radner (1946–1989). Among emerging male stars of the same period were Dustin Hoffman (b. 1937), Elliott Gould (Goldstein, b. 1938), Richard Benjamin (b. 1938), George Segal (b. 1934), Gene Wilder (Jerome Silberman, b. 1933), and Richard Dreyfuss (b. 1947).

Transformations in American culture and in the film industry after the 1960s were of particular significance to Jewish women creative workers in film. Opportunities for women to direct films in Hollywood had been virtually nonexistent, but, along with the rise of a new feminist movement, the industry's boundaries were becoming more porous, and novel approaches to filmmaking developed among independents outside the old studio system. Elaine May (birth name Berlin, b. 1932), also a performer, directed three films in the 1970s distributed by major companies—*A New Leaf* (1971), *The Heartbreak Kid* (1972), and *Mikey and Nicky* (1976)—with some reference to Jewish themes. Claudia Weill (b. 1947) emerged from the independent documentary movement to direct *Girlfriends* (1978) and *It's My Turn* (1980), both also major studio releases. Joan Micklin Silver (b. 1935) independently directed and produced *Hester Street* (1975), based on an 1896 novel by Abraham Cahan, and went on to make a popular romantic comedy for major studio distribution, *Crossing Delancey* (1988), which linked contemporary Jewish life with old-fashioned Lower East Side traditions. Streisand turned to directing in 1983 with *Yentl*, adapted from an Isaac Bashevis Singer story, which she produced and cowrote, in addition to taking on the title role.

The Jewish filmmaker who has made more top box-office hits than any other in Hollywood history is Steven Spielberg (b. 1947). Even though his career began in the 1970s, amid the upsurge in films featuring Jewish characters and themes, his popular blockbusters over several decades



Director Steven Spielberg and actor Liam Neeson on the set of *Schindler's List*. (Universal/The Kobal Collection)

rarely displayed direct concern with Jewish subjects. This situation changed, however, with *Schindler's List* (1993), hailed on its release as Hollywood's most important film concerning the Holocaust, winning an Academy Award for best picture, and earning for Spielberg his first Oscar as best director. Based on actual events and on a fictional version by Thomas Keneally, the film recounted the successful efforts of a German businessman, Oskar Schindler, to rescue over 1,100 Jews from the Nazi death camps in Poland and Czechoslovakia during World War II. In debates about the film, some critics argued that it drew attention away from the Holocaust as a Jewish calamity—the death of six million—in favor of the uncanny efforts of a gentile father figure.

Following *Schindler's List*, Spielberg took part in founding the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, an organization dedicated to creating a visual record of Holocaust survivors and disseminating their accounts through film and television documentaries. *The Last Days* (1998), presenting first-person interviews with Hungarian Jewish survivors, was distributed widely in the-

aters, and *Voices from the List* (2004) appeared as a documentary on the DVD release of *Schindler's List*. In addition to Spielberg's efforts, other Hollywood-based and independent filmmakers were actively engaged in producing nonfiction films concerning the Holocaust and the testimonies of those who came through it. *Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport* (2000), a documentary recounting efforts to bring Jewish children from Germany and elsewhere in Europe to Britain before the outbreak of World War II, received a major studio release. At the beginning of a new century, fewer fiction films concerning Jewish life were being made in Hollywood, but interest in building a factual record on film of Jewish tragedy and survival remained strong.

Robert Sklar

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twentieth century, providing the first major resort experience for most Jews. Starting with farms in the last years of the nineteenth century, boardinghouses, bungalow colonies, and hotels spread rapidly, and by the 1950s Jewish-owned resorts offered hundreds of thousands each year the opportunity to work and vacation in a safe milieu of Jewish culture, food, communal living, and entertainment.

Ulster, Sullivan, southern Greene, and a small part of southeastern Delaware counties were the location for this resort culture from the turn of the twentieth century up to its current remnants. Its history largely started on the farms. Along with synagogues and social/cultural institutions such as the Jewish Agricultural Society and the Workmen's Circle, the farms provided the base for a year-round Jewish population. The farms were primarily dairy and chicken farms because not much else grew well. But farms were not a profitable proposition for most, so the farmers took in boarders, and many made that their main business. Some boardinghouses became *kuchalayns* ("cook for yourself" in Yiddish), where people rented a room and shared cooking and eating privileges in the kitchen and dining room; these facilities accommodated from ten to forty guests. *Kuchalayns* frequently developed into bungalow colonies, where people rented a small building, typically two rooms. These colonies consisted of 5 to 120 bungalows, each housing four or five people, and they were often built in a large circle or oval around a central area with a swimming pool, handball court, and other facilities. Some *kuchalayns* later turned into hotels. For other farmers, the expansion of the boardinghouse led directly to hotels. And many hotels were started from scratch, often built with lumber cut and milled on the premises.

These origins made the Catskills experience a very familial one. In *kuchalayns* and bungalow colonies, people were together the entire summer, forming very close connections in a mini-society. By the 1950s few *kuchalayns* remained. But the small (50–250 guests) and medium-sized (250–500 guests) hotels retained the intimacy. The owners, often in-laws, were very hands-on, working in various capacities. They mingled with guests, many of whom were relatives and friends. Even in the large hotels, with 500 to 900 guests, the owners, guests, and staff often knew each other, especially after years of returning to vacation and work in the same resorts.

Over the course of the twentieth century, there were 703 bungalow colonies and 1,133 hotels. At any given time

## American Jews and the Catskills

The Catskill Mountains, around a hundred miles from New York City, were a major component of Jewish culture in the

in the 1950s and 1960s, about 500 of the colonies and 550 hotels were operating.

The Catskills had a very strong community orientation. Smaller hotels frequently employed “solicitors” to recruit guests from their neighborhoods. Guests returned year after year, often from generation to generation: a child in the day camp might later be a junior counselor, later still a busboy or waiter in the dining room, and then a guest with a spouse and children. Hotel workers developed close ties with each other, with the owners, and with long-standing guests. Staff–guest romances also contributed to the continuing connections.

People experienced the larger community through frequent visits to delis and shops in nearby towns, in the routine walks past other resorts that were so closely

bunched, and in visiting friends and relatives in other hotels and bungalow colonies. Bungalow dwellers were always sneaking into the hotel casinos (night clubs, not gambling casinos) for the shows, guests at the small hotels were doing the same in the larger hotels, and staff visited other hotels for romance.

Catskills hotel owners developed the all-inclusive vacation, with three meals plus a nighttime tearoom, nightly entertainment, many sports and activities, and eventually day camps for children. Nighttime shows included comics and singers on weekend nights, a champagne night (with a guest dancing contest plus dance team exhibitions), a movie night, a bingo night, and a talent show. Sports were common, especially handball, softball, basketball, and tennis; some grander places featured



*Entertainment at Grossinger's in the Catskills, 1960. The resort was run by Jennie Grossinger until her death in 1972. (Bettmann/Corbis)*

horseback riding and indoor ice skating rinks. Medium-sized and large hotels offered lectures, dance lessons, portrait artists, and other activities. After World War II, the large hotels, operating year-round, added winter sports. A few large hotels had their own golf courses, but most shared the expenses of two municipal courses. During the many decades when gentile hotels kept Jews out, Jews could have a vacation with kosher food, engage in Yiddish conversation, and be entertained by Jewish comedy and song. In the Catskills they could become Americanized while preserving much of their Jewishness. American Jewish humor grew up in the Catskills, where any Jewish comedian worth his laughs got his or her start. The term *Catskills comic* is still widely used.

The range of costs among the resorts led to class stratification, but Jews of all classes came to the resorts. Even the more expensive places were accessible to those with lower incomes, if only for a weekend. People in their teens and twenties worked their way through college and professional or graduate school at these hotels, making the Catskills an important feature of Jewish upward mobility.

Today, the Catskills appear quite different from even two or three decades ago. Hundreds of hotels have ceased to exist since the 1960s, and only a handful remain. Many bungalow colonies remain, most of them Orthodox and Hasidic, though some are secular. Yoga ashrams, Zen meditation centers, drug rehab programs, and mental health and developmental disabilities facilities have taken over many of the old hotels. The town streets, once crowded with guests, workers, and locals who serviced the resorts, are much quieter, and there are many vacant storefronts and high unemployment.

There will not likely be a resurgence of resort building, but the Catskills remain a powerful memory and a draw for people. Many have bought summer homes, including condos developed out of old bungalow colonies and even some hotels. Orthodox Jews of many types continue to make the Catskills a distinctively Jewish location through their widespread network of bungalow colonies, camps, and yeshivas.

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## American Jews and the Comics

Jewish artists, writers, and publishers have played an important role in the development of the American comics, as Jews have in Hollywood, in popular and classical music, and in musical theater from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day. Jews have been involved with the American comics from their very beginning as a mass medium in the 1890s in New York City. Joseph Pulitzer (who was Jewish) and William Randolph Hearst were engaged in a competition to win readers, many of them immigrants who could not read English well, for their newspapers. In the 1890s, Pulitzer began running R. F. Outcault's *Hogan's Alley* and *The Yellow Kid* in *The New York World*. Outcault himself was not Jewish, but he appealed to immigrants, many of them Jews, with these comic strips about life in the tenements. Hearst, understanding that the combined visual and verbal appeal of the comics was especially suited to new speakers of English, soon began a bidding war for Outcault's services, and the race to develop more and more comics was on.

Because, like film, the comic strip was a new and rapidly expanding art form, any talented artist or writer could get into the field at the beginning of the twentieth century. There was no need for an academic education or a pedigree, and an artist did not have to know an exclusively American tradition or style to succeed, since there was none at the time. Moreover, the Jews, like other immigrants from Europe, had the advantage of having seen some of the European comics by the eighteenth-century Swiss Rudolph Topfer (widely credited with creating modern comics) and the nineteenth-century German Wilhelm Busch that had preceded American comics. In addition, Yiddish culture brought its own potential contributions to the comics' affinity for fantasy: the Golem and other Jewish legends.

The story of the Jewish contribution to the comics parallels the larger story of Jews moving from Yiddish and the Lower East Side to English and the mainstream of society. Three main periods in this parallel movement can be discerned. First, from approximately 1900 to 1930, Jews writing comics either avoided their ethnicity by never mentioning it or explored, via ethnic humor, their place as recent immigrants in American society. During the second period, approximately from 1930 to 1960, some Jews produced comics in what might be called a masked style, in which their ethnicity was present, but not obvious. Finally, in the period from 1960 to the present, Jews openly wrote and illustrated comics as Jews about Jewish issues.

In the first period, 1900 to 1930, the dynamic is between the poles of assimilation and ethnic humor, both of which can be seen as attempted Jewish adaptations to America. Rube Goldberg, the first nationally successful Jewish comics artist, never discussed any aspect of Jewish identification in his works. As Martin Sheridan notes, Goldberg's father was a staunch Republican, a land speculator, and at one point the police chief of San Francisco. He wanted his son to take a degree in engineering, which, as a dutiful son, Rube did, while drawing cartoons for the University of California–Berkeley newspaper. But Rube never worked as an engineer. His comics career lasted from the moment he graduated until around the time he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1948, after which he became a sculptor. Goldberg was one of the most successful cartoonists of his time. He made good use of his engineering knowledge in his famous renditions of complicated, nonsensical machines. But there was no Jewish element whatsoever in his work—as in the case of poet Gertrude Stein, who came from the same assimilatory, postimmigrant generation in California.

During this early period, another form of assimilation came in the form of socialism, which replaced Judaism for many Jews. There were political cartoons in the Yiddish press. In 1909, Russian immigrant poet Jacob Marinov started the *Groysser Kibitzer* (Big Joker), which was renamed the *Groysser Kundes* (Big Stick), after Teddy Roosevelt's aphorism—speak softly and carry a big stick (Buhle 1992). This magazine was based on the British journal *Punch* and the German *Simplissimus* and featured the best Yiddish cartoon artists and storytellers, most of whom were committed to socialist themes and a mockery of the rich and the Republicans. In a typical political cartoon, the

Jewish American working class was shown toiling in Pharaoh's land, from which they would supposedly be led out by Karl Marx, who looked like and replaced Moses. This magazine, which lasted until 1927, was in Yiddish, but it had little traditionally Jewish content.

Other Jews, like members of many minority groups, used ethnic humor to comment on their status as immigrants in America. Like assimilation and socialist universalism, this too was an attempt to adapt to America, in this case by mocking, albeit gently, pronounced Jewish ethnicity. In 1914, Harry Hershfield, who was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and studied in Chicago, began *Abie the Agent*. This was the first comic strip for adults, featuring a lovably stereotypical Jewish salesman, Abie, a companion for other ethnic comics characters like the Irishmen Mutt and Jeff or George Herriman's half-white, half-black Krazy Kat. The other characters in *Abie the Agent* were named Reba, Little Sidney, Minsk, and Sparkbaum. Abie faces many problems, but usually manages to find some solace in his situation. Hershfield became the star of radio shows, including one entitled *Meyer the Buyer*, and was in great demand as a comedian. He published a book with 500 of the best jokes he had heard. As Martin Sheridan notes, *Abie the Agent* was one of the longest running comics strips in history, and at its height brought Hershfield about \$125,000 a year, a fabulous sum for the 1920s and 1930s.

Another Jewish cartoonist of the 1920s and 1930s who managed to get into the mainstream by working the vein of ethnic humor was Milt Gross. His comic strip for the *New York World*, wittily entitled *Gross Exaggerations* and republished under the title *Nize Baby*, featured English-Yiddish dialect, as did his other strips, *Dave's Delicatessen* and *That's My Pop*. His *Hiawatta* brilliantly and hilariously renders Longfellow's poem in Yiddish dialect. When reading Gross, we are always in the wisecracking, street-smart New York Jewish immigrant world, and his is an entirely authentic rendering of the linguistic patterns of that rough-and-tumble world. As Martin Sheridan points out, gangster Dutch Schultz was one of Gross's classmates in school in New York, and Gross, a "natural" who never attended art school, perfected his drawing technique with pool chalk between shots. At the age of twelve he went to work in the art department of the *New York Journal*, and, even at that early age, he would ghost work for artists who were late with their drawings. Both Oliver Wendell Holmes and President Calvin Coolidge declared Gross their favor-



*Abie the Agent, 1930 (Library of Congress)*

ite cartoonist. The very versatile Gross was also a movie writer, talented enough to be chosen to work with Charlie Chaplin on *The Circus*. He was capable of juggling three movie scripts and a bunch of cartoons at the same time. Among his other achievements is a full-length novel without words, perhaps the first American graphic novel—it had thousands of pictures—and was entitled *She Done Him Wrong*.

In the midcentury period, from approximately 1930 to 1960, Jews moved into the mainstream of the comics by expressing their ethnicity in a masked way, somewhat akin to Franz Kafka's masked obsession with antisemitic themes, such as the absurd but deadly ritual murder accusation that is never mentioned but ever-present in his novel *The Trial*. Using stereotypes, if benign ones, Gross and Hershfield had depicted Jews as immigrants undergoing Americanization and had made a commercial success of it. Rube Goldberg became a phenomenally successful cartoonist without mentioning his Jewish identity. But, as successful as these artists were in terms of sales, Jewish creators had not yet produced a mainstream American mythological character. This was soon to happen, in the form of a masked hero.

Superman was created in the 1930s by two young Jewish men from Cleveland, Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel. The character Superman has been interpreted as the wish fulfillment of two intellectual high school students who, in the transformation from bespectacled Clark Kent to Superman, may have seen themselves imaginatively transformed into athletic musclemen. This transformation might have been particularly appealing to Jewish student intellectuals wishing to fit in with their surroundings during the antisemitic thirties. It is also clearly a Jewish wish-fulfilling response to Hitler, in that only a Superman

perhaps could have succeeded in turning back Hitler and restoring Jewish honor.

If we look at the clues in the comic strip itself, Superman's Jewish identity becomes haunting. He has no home planet; it was destroyed—as Judaea was by the Romans. He is an alien in his society, however well he seems to blend into it and share its values as Clark Kent—a typical, if intellectual, American. His father's name was Jor-El, and *El* means God in Hebrew. Superman's own name is Kal-El, or God "lite," because in Hebrew *kal* means lightweight or simple. Superman is in love with Lois Lane, an all-American, obviously Christian girl, but he cannot reveal his true identity to her or to anyone else. And he could have been circumcised with kryptonite. (Al Weisner's "Shaloman," 1997, an Orthodox imitation of a Superman who has come out of the closet as it were, wears a kippa, sports a Hebrew letter *Shin* on his chest, and fights the villains Dr. Traif and H. Porkney Chops.)

Jews seem to have had a special affinity for masked or disguised characters. Bob Kane (Bob Kahn) and Bill Finger, the primary creators of *Batman*, were Jewish, as were Stan Lee (Stanley Martin Lieber), the creator of *Spider-Man*, and Jack Kirby (Jack Kurtzberg), creator of the Fourth World sci-fi series. Arie Kaplan has pointed to many Jewish ideas embedded in their works. Will Eisner created the masked Spirit detective character, while publishers Harry Donenfeld, Jack Liebowitz, and Max Gaines created All-American Comics, featuring many masked characters.

Max Gaines (born Max Ginzberg) was the father of the modern comic book and much more. A salesman, he was out of work and living with his family in his mother-in-law's house when in 1933 he began looking at some Sunday newspaper supplements in her attic. He decided that they could be produced in book form and developed

the idea with his friend Harry L. Wildenberg, who worked at a printing plant. In 1934 the first issue of *Famous Funnies* appeared and became a great success. It was Gaines who, now working for the McClure newspaper syndicate, listened when his assistant Sheldon Mayer told him about *Superman*, which had not found a publisher for five years after having been created by Siegel and Shuster. Soon Gaines had turned the strip into a comic book that would be published by the new firm DC Comics, run by Donenfeld and Leibowitz. Within two years of *Superman's* first publication in 1938, it was appearing in 300 newspapers around the world, and the Superman fan club had 200,000 members. Gaines also founded EC Comics, which meant Educational Comics, and published moralistic children's titles, the Bible, and self-help works, including *Psychoanalysis Comics*, in comic book form.

His son William went on to change EC Comics, whose didacticism was selling poorly, into Entertaining Comics, which published *Tales from the Crypt*, *The Vault of Horror*, and *Two-Fisted Tales*, among other very popular series. These were the brainchildren of Gaines and his most gifted editors, Harvey Kurtzman and Al Feldstein, all three of whom are legendary in comics. Always a comics devotee, Kurtzman attended the Manhattan High School of Music and Art and started work with Stan Lee of Marvel comics. Feldstein, also a product of the High School of Music and Art, began as a painter, but was soon drawn to the comics.

Unable to sleep because of diet pills prescribed by his doctor, Gaines would think up horror tale "springboards," or basic conceptions, that he would bring in for Kurtzman or Feldstein to elaborate on. Feldstein and Kurtzman, along with Gaines, created the horror, war, and "weird science" series that were secretly read in the 1950s against all parental advice; Feldstein would later say that he felt the success of these series was due to the fact that the EC creators were "writing up" to their youthful readers. Kurtzman was the son of an International Workers Order family, and Gaines and Feldstein, like many other Jews growing up in the thirties and forties, were as left wing as Kurtzman. It is not surprising, therefore, to see in the EC horror comics a leftist tilt, according to which rich, extortionate people always seem to get their comeuppance in a witty but grisly way. A greedy director of a disabled people's home, who has shortchanged the residents' food, is forced to run from a starving dog through dark corridors lined with razor blades. In a story entitled "Dying to Lose Weight," an un-

scrupulous diet doctor named Perdo (from the French *perdu* for "lost") prescribes weight-loss pills containing tapeworms to rich, fat patients, and is himself consumed by a giant tapeworm issuing from the coffin of one of his patient/victims. No less than the future *Mad* magazine, which EC would produce, these stories satirize American society from a "progressive" perspective.

In 1954, psychiatrist Fredric Wertham published *The Seduction of the Innocent*, which called for comic book censorship. After the resulting congressional hearings, the comic book industry imposed a censorship code on itself, and the EC titles were forced out of business. But Gaines placed his hope in a Kurtzman brainchild: *Mad Magazine*. Because it was a magazine rather than a comic book, and therefore presumably for adults, it was not subject to the censorship applied to children's comic books. As Maria Reidelbach notes, this wacky publication, much like the EC comics, employed many Jews, including political refugees and Holocaust survivors. One was Max Brandel, who had escaped death in concentration camps by amusing the Kapos and Gestapo with his caricatures of them. The cover of the very first issue prominently features the Yiddish word *Ganefs* or thieves, and many subsequent issues included Yiddishisms. The favorite *Mad* word *furshluginner* is, according to Philologos, the Yiddish linguist of the New York *Forward*, a concentration camp word composed of Yiddish and German, meaning "stinking." *Mad's* mascot, a schlemiel named Alfred E. Neuman, has a likeness that has been traced as far back as 1895 by Maria Reidelbach, but whose name is now Jewish. From a left-wing viewpoint akin to that driving the old EC horror titles, *Mad* satirized greed, advertising hype, Senator Joseph McCarthy, and the monolithic Disney organization for imposing white gloves on its characters. With its use of Yiddishisms and other expressions of ethnic identity, *Mad* helped bring about the third period of the comics: the time from the 1960s on, when Jews began to discuss Jewish issues as Jews, openly and confidently, partly no doubt as a result of America's emphasis on identity politics during these years.

Bill Gaines' stand against censorship and *Mad's* free-wheeling social criticism served as the inspiration for the underground comics of the 1960s, which deliberately broke all sexual and other taboos. One of those broken taboos was the masked, hidden tradition of ethnic expression. Now expressions of ethnicity could be open. After he left *Mad*, Kurtzman ran a similar magazine called *Help!*

(1960–1965). *Help!* published many of those who would later become the most famous underground comics creators, including Robert Crumb, who was not Jewish, but was married to a Jewish comics artist. Both of them were attracted to Jewish themes. One of Crumb's most notorious works, published long after he left Kurtzman, "What if the Jews Took Over America," is a fantasy revealing what antisemites think about Jews: wealthy Jews enjoy the fat of the land while non-Jews go begging. Crumb, as the illustrator of David Mairowitz's *Introducing Kafka*, has also produced an empathetic vision of Kafka as a Jewish writer in antisemitic Prague. Gloria Steinem, the feminist writer, also got her start at *Help!* Other women creators of the underground period include Robert Crumb's wife, Aline Kominsky-Crumb, who treats many Jewish themes in the couple's *Self-Loathing Comics*, often from a self-critical perspective, and Sharon Rudahl, whose autobiographical works include scenes of pogroms and other episodes of Jewish history. As Arie Kaplan points out, Trina Robbins, the feminist daughter of a Yiddish journalist, has created a comic book memorial to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. More traditional artists also began using the comics format to explore Jewish themes. For instance, Morris Epstein in 1963 produced *A Picture Parade of Jewish History*, which used the comics to depict the biographies of great Jewish figures.

The satirical tradition of *Mad* and the underground comics' treatment of serious subjects finally fused with the artistry of Will Eisner to create the graphic or comic book novel, which is the serious and adult form of the comics, freed from all restraints and able to tackle important and complex issues. In 1940, while still in his twenties and drawing and writing the newspaper comic strip *The Spirit*, Eisner prophesied that the comics would one day become a serious art form. He realized this prediction only in 1978, by publishing *A Contract with God*, widely acknowledged as the first American graphic novel (a term that he invented). Set in a 1930s tenement, with a Jewish protagonist, this work has a melodramatic sense of plot, design, and characterization obviously influenced by Eisner's father's work as a set painter in the Yiddish theater. Similarly, Eisner's *A Life Force* (1983) is set in the Depression-era Bronx. Jacob Shtarkah, a carpenter who has built the study hall for a synagogue, has finished his job and is being let go. The novel describes the difficulty of survival among Jewish and Italian immigrants and déclassé native-born

Americans during the Depression. Besides being a pioneer of the graphic novel, Eisner is one of the finest teachers of comic art, as he demonstrates in his textbook, *Comics and Sequential Art*.

The most important Jewish writer/artist working in the new art form that Eisner developed is Art Spiegelman, who has said that he was influenced by the holy Jewish writings of Franz Kafka and Harvey Kurtzman. Spiegelman was the creator of the Topps Garbage Pail kids and, with his wife Françoise, of the avant-garde comics journal *Raw*. He also did the unforgettable 9/11 *New Yorker* cover showing the Twin Towers in a black ink that makes them disappear as the cover is shifted in the light. But his most famous work is the brilliant autobiographical graphic novel *Maus*, which tells the story of his parents' survival during the Holocaust and of his own problems as the son of survivors growing up in Rego Park, Queens. This work, which won the Pulitzer Prize in 1992 in a unique category, and which is comparable in depth and power to some of the creations of Kafka and Dante, is the only work of genius to date in the new genre.

Using mice for Jews, cats for Nazis, and dogs for Americans, *Maus* brings new understanding to the Holocaust and its human costs. On one hand, the animals mask the full horror of what transpired, but on the other, they illustrate the fact that under the Nazis people became animals. As Joseph Witek notes, Spiegelman's most important technique in this work is his juxtaposition of past and present. He shows how the present is always under the shadow of the past, be it in the form of the concentration camp watchtower glimpsed from his studio window, the photos of dead family members that cover up the living, girls seemingly hanging in a forest in the Catskills as his father recounts the outcome of a concentration camp rebellion, or the UPC bar code juxtaposed on the bars of Spiegelman's father's concentration camp uniform on the back cover of volume 2. The word *Catskill* itself becomes a pun on the animals (cats-kill), and Liberty, New York, represents exactly what it says: liberty for Spiegelman's parents. The most harrowing part of this moving autobiographical work, however, occurs when he takes his mouse mask off and speaks as a person about his mother's suicide. This episode, entitled "Prisoner on the Hell Planet," reveals his feelings with brutal honesty, rendered in a surrealistic and dark woodcut style. Yet *Maus* offers hope, too, in the form of several supernatural incidents that offered his parents hope during their struggle,

and that seem to indicate divine intervention in human affairs.

Another important and overtly Jewish comics artist of today is Harvey Pekar. His works bring us back to the origin of American Jewish comics in the Socialist tradition. *American Splendor* is realistically set in a Cleveland of telephone poles, garbage cans, and the VA hospital in which he works as a file clerk. He specializes in slices of life that, as Robert Crumb has remarked, are so mundane that they become unusual. A “Big Divorce Issue” and *Our Cancer Year* by him and his wife, artist Joyce Brabner, address the tragedies of everyday life. Pekar’s sympathy for the average worker and acknowledgment of his own roots can be seen, for instance, in his nostalgic memorialization of the Jewish ragpickers of an earlier generation in Cleveland. This is proletarian realism with a modern face.

Many other names would have to be added to make this list complete and completely up-to-date. Helena Schlamm enumerates and describes the work of dozens of Jewish comics creators at work today. Among contemporary creators, Leah Finkelshteyn especially points to Archie Rand, with his *Amidah* series; Jordan Gorfinkel and his *Promised Land* comic strip; Ben Katchor with *The Jew of New York* and *Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer*; and James Strum, creator of *The Golem’s Mighty Swing*, the story of a Jewish baseball team. The combination of Jews and the comics is—and will continue to be—as American as apple pie.

Stephen E. Tabachnick

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## American Jews and Television

Jews invented the American television business to an even greater extent than Neal Gabler claims they invented the Hollywood film industry. The movies had been around for twenty years before Jewish moguls took over the major West Coast studios in the mid-1910s. With TV, Jewish owners, executives, and creative personnel dominated the medium from its inception in the late 1940s. Commercial television in the United States evolved from radio. The major radio networks—NBC, CBS, and ABC—became the major TV networks, and they were all run by Jews: David Sarnoff at NBC, William Paley at CBS, and, by the early 1950s, Leonard Goldenson at ABC. (Allen DuMont of the short-lived DuMont network was the sole non-Jewish exception.)

As with motion pictures, however, what could be perceived (and was perceived by antisemites) as Jewish “overrepresentation” *behind* the scenes translated, for the most part, into just the opposite *on* the screen—until quite recently. Since the late 1980s, an unprecedented surge in episodic series, mainly comedies, featuring Jewish main characters has taken place. Around forty such shows have aired in the past fifteen years, compared with no more than seven in the previous forty years (Brook 2003, 2006). Why has this “Jewish” TV trend occurred at this historical moment? And what does the trend say about Jewish identity in postmodern American culture?

### The Early Years: We’ve Come a Long Way . . . Except on TV

Early television was not a wasteland for Jewish images. Indeed, the first successful sitcom was a Jewish show, *The*



Gertrude Berg, as Molly Goldberg in *The Goldbergs*.  
(Bettmann/Corbis)

*Goldbergs*. An adaptation of a long-running hit radio show, *The Goldbergs* (1949–1956) was created and written by Gertrude Berg, who also starred as Molly Goldberg, the cuddly, Yiddish-accented matriarch of an upwardly striving Jewish family living in a tenement apartment in the Bronx. When Molly and family moved in 1955 to a spacious house in the fictive suburb of Haverville, the show's narrative premise seemed to have been fulfilled. This apparent nod to the *Goldbergs*' good fortunes, however, was largely a reaction to the show's sagging ratings and the changing TV times (e.g., lowest common denominator programming and the shift to the white, middle-class, suburban sitcom), factors that would lead to the show's cancellation a year later.

An additional, ethnically specific ground for the show's demise was the Jewish-dominated entertainment business's time-honored aversion to being "too Jewish." According to *Goldbergs* co-producer Cherney Berg, son of Gertrude, it was network executives, not his mother, who dictated the show's suburban diaspora. Ashamed of their own Jewishness, these men, Berg averred, "had a fit about

the show being Jewish. They wanted the *Goldbergs* to be the O'Malleys and it just couldn't be done" (Brook 2003). Indeed, Molly's Yiddishisms, neighborly chats, and gefilte fish seemed out of place in the WASPish enclave, and, with a family who now flocked *Father Knows Best*-style around Papa Jake on his return home from work, the thoroughly domesticated Molly was no longer even the center of the *Goldberg* universe.

No sitcom or other episodic series with explicitly identified Jewish protagonists aired on any of the major networks from the end of *The Goldbergs* until the early 1970s. The implicitly Jewish comedy series *The Jack Benny Program* (1950–1965) made it into the 1960s, but Benny's Jewishness, like George Burns's of *The Burns and Allen Show* (1950–1958), remained closeted and undisclosed. Gone also by the late 1950s were the Jewish-hosted, Yiddish-spiced variety shows that, together with live anthology dramas, had dominated early TV, most notably Milton Berle's *Texaco Star Theater* (1949–1953) and Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows* (1950–1954, reprised until 1958). Berle's vaudeville format and Borscht Belt shtick went over particularly well with the East Coast urban audience who made up the bulk of early TV viewership, turning the show into the highest-rated prime-time series and its star into Mr. Television. Caesar's show is Exhibit A for Jewish influence on the creative side of the business. Quantitative studies have confirmed the disproportionate number of Jewish writers and producers, especially in comedy, throughout TV history. The Jewish writers on *Your Show of Shows* are a Who's Who of the genre: Carl Reiner, Woody Allen, Mel Brooks, Larry Gelbart, Mel Tolkin, Neil and Danny Simon. *The Dick Van Dyke Show* (1961–1965), about the behind-the-scenes shenanigans of a TV comedy show, was created by Reiner as a self-reflexive homage to *Your Show of Shows*. The show had to be heavily de-Judaized to get the network's green light (Van Dyke's writer character was "converted" to Christianity, as was Reiner's own show-within-the-show star), a fact that epitomizes TV's wholesale retreat from Jewish imagery in the post-*Goldbergs*/pre-*Bridget Loves Bernie* era.

The latter show, an intermarriage sitcom about a Jewish young man and an Irish Catholic young woman, was a curious way to attempt a re-Judaization of prime time. The theme was neither unfamiliar, nor historically unpopular, to Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. *Bridget Loves Bernie* (1972–1973) was essentially an updating of the 1924 Anne Nichols play *Abie's Irish Rose*, which had spawned a host of

imitators and had been adapted for the big screen in 1928 and again in 1946. TV itself had dealt with Jewish outmarriage as early as 1948, the first year of network television, and on occasional episodes and anthology dramas thereafter. *Bridget Loves Bernie* came on the heels of a major survivalist crisis, however, triggered by population surveys showing unprecedentedly high intermarriage rates. In this context, it is not surprising that the reaction to the show, from virtually the entire spectrum of American religious Judaism, was instant and virulently negative. Due to the controversy and despite high ratings, the show was cancelled after one season.

Just as the attempt at a Jewish sitcom revival was part of the overall TV industrial turn in the 1970s to more “relevant” and ethnically specific programming (*Sanford and Son*, *All in the Family*, *Good Times*, *Chico and the Man*), the reaction of Jewish advocacy groups to *Bridget Loves Bernie* was part of a larger trend related to the civil rights and identity politics movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The rise of image monitoring in general, and the harsh reaction to *Bridget Loves Bernie* in particular, makes *Rhoda*’s prime-time existence, much less its survival for five comparatively controversy-free years (1974–1979), all the more perplexing. Spun off from the hugely popular *Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *Rhoda* starred Valerie Harper (a non-Jew, as was Bernie portrayer David Birney) as a dark-complexioned, nasal-inflected Jewish Woman in Search of Marriage. This was the stereotypical role she had played for four years on *Mary Tyler Moore*: the New York Jewish “wry” to her best buddy Mary Richards’s white bread Minnesota WASP. Just two months into her own series, however, Rhoda Morgenstern of the Bronx was exchanging vows with an Italian Catholic construction company owner, Joe Girard (played by the Jewish David Groh).

A common explanation for why Jewish media monitors let the intermarriage issue slide on *Rhoda* but not on *Bridget Loves Bernie* is that, while the latter show was premised on intermarriage, the former show was not: Rhoda herself—a much beloved character from her *Mary Tyler Moore* days—was the crux of her sitcom. *Rhoda*’s writers did strive for a certain Jewish “sensibility”—a strong sense of family, Rhoda’s self-deprecating humor, her warmth and sensuality—but the show’s overall Jewishness, as Executive Producer Charlotte Brown related, “was just ‘set dressing’—[mother] Ida’s brisket, her plastic on the furniture” (Brook 2003).

Another explanation for the disparate reactions to Rhoda’s and Bernie’s intermarriage has precisely to do with Jewishness, combined with gender. According to the Jewish tradition of matrilineal descent—since revised by the Reform movement but the normative position of organized Jewry in the 1970s—the children of an intermarried Jewish woman are considered Jewish, while those of an intermarried Jewish man are not. The Jewish Population Survey of 1970 further suggested that an intermarried Jewish mother, rather than a Jewish father, was a greater guarantor of Jewish continuity because she was more likely to raise her offspring Jewish. Narratively speaking, therefore, whatever remained of Rhoda’s Jewishness had a much better chance of being passed on than Bernie’s, making her, if not exactly a positive role model for Jewish survivalism, at least less of a threat. Nonetheless, the critical assessment of *Rhoda*’s media effect on and for Jewish women, and Jews as a whole, was and remains decidedly mixed, with negative stereotyping and assimilation as the main bugaboos. Rhoda’s mother Ida (also played by a non-Jew, Nancy Walker) exemplifies the post-*Goldbergs* downshift from the nurturing *Yiddische Momme* to the overbearing Jewish Mother, while Rhoda herself is, for many, the very embodiment of assimilation.

Jewish representation on television in the 1970s was also affected by what Howard Suber (1975) terms the platoon trend. Likening TV’s then current “obsession with minorities” to Hollywood’s rash of pluralist platoon-combat movies during World War II, Suber found “that it didn’t really matter which ethnic groups were represented. . . . Characters ‘happened’ to be Jewish, or ‘happened’ to be Polish, or ‘happened’ to be black . . . as if by accident.” *Barney Miller* (1975–1982), *Welcome Back, Kotter* (1975–1979), and *Taxi* (1978–1983) offer classic examples of the platoon-type show with a nominally Jewish lead (Hal Linden’s Barney Miller, Gabriel Kaplan’s Gabe Kotter, and Judd Hirsch’s Alex Rieger, respectively). All in all, by the end of the 1970s, one could usefully reverse Edith Bunker’s famous quip in an episode of *All in the Family* about the social progress of African Americans—“They’ve come a long way . . . on TV!”—and conclude about America’s Jews: “They’ve come a long way . . . except on TV!”

### 1980s Onward: Here Comes the Trend

The situation changed dramatically—literally and figuratively—in the 1980s, largely due to the smash hit 1978

miniseries *Holocaust*. Piggybacking on the phenomenally successful 1977 African American saga *Roots*, *Holocaust*, despite ethical and aesthetic qualms, has been hailed as an epochal event from a Jewish representational standpoint. An onslaught of Jewish-themed made-for-TV movies and miniseries followed, with one or more per year airing throughout the 1980s. Yet this indisputable trend in Jewish TV movies must be contrasted, and reconciled, with a comparative dearth of—indeed a decline in—Jewish episodic programming over the same period, certainly with regard to the situation comedy.

As for dramatic series, the number of recurring Jewish characters increased slightly, if significantly: Mick Belker and Henry Goldblume on *Hill Street Blues* (1981–1987); Stuart Markowitz and Dr. Rebecca Meyer on *L.A. Law* (1986–1994) and *Buck James* (1987–1988), respectively; Joe Kaplan on *Our House* (1986–1988); and Paul Pfeiffer on *The Wonder Years* (1988–1993). Drs. Daniel Auschlander and Wayne Fiscus were arguably the first Jewish protagonists (albeit in a large ensemble cast) in a dramatic series, on *St. Elsewhere* (1982–1988), and they were followed by the yuppie adman Michael Steadman (and his insecure sister Melanie) on *thirtysomething* (1987–1991). But between the 1979 finale of *Rhoda* and the debut in July 1989 of *The Seinfeld Chronicles* (later *Seinfeld*), Jewish sitcoms consisted only of the quasi-Jewish *Taxi* (1978–1983) and the extremely short-lived *Harry* (March 4–25, 1987), starring Alan Arkin as the Jewish purchasing agent at a New York City hospital. For the generic bulwark of Jewish representation on U.S. television, at least, it appeared that the more things changed, the more they stayed the same.

As did the reasons for the representational stasis: Jews' numerical dominance of the management and creative end of the business, along with anxiety over antisemitic reaction to this perceived imbalance. The long-standing aversion among Jewish executives to drawing attention to themselves had been exacerbated by the *Bridget Loves Bernie* affair. "They don't want to be bothered," opined Eric Goldman, director of the Jewish Media Office, by the sort of controversy that befell the ill-starred intermarriage-comedy. As for the paradoxical rise in Jewish-themed TV movies, Goldman suggested that the occasional rather than regular treatment of Jewish characters and issues was permissible for Jewish executives, because it allowed for a "uniqueness" of presentation but was comparatively "safe" (Elkin 1985).

Even *Seinfeld*, the show that would help launch the Jewish sitcom trend, was initially rejected by (Jewish) NBC head Brandon Tartikoff for its alleged "too Jewishness": the eponymous star's Jewish name and features, his stand-up comic occupation, and the show's "Jew York City" location amounted to ethnic overkill for the network brass. *Seinfeld*, of course, not only survived NBC's self-imposed antisemitism but would go on to become one of the supernovas of the 1990s and arguably the decade's defining series. Moreover, *Seinfeld* was far from a one-hit Jewish wonder. The period from 1989 through the mid-2000s has seen an explosion of sitcoms, and even a few dramatic series, featuring explicitly Jewish protagonists, many of them major critical and/or ratings triumphs: for example, *Brooklyn Bridge* (1991–1993), *Mad About You* (1992–1999), *The Larry Sanders Show* (1992–1998), *The Nanny* (1993–1999), *Friends* (1994–2003), *Dharma and Greg* (1997–2002), *Will and Grace* (1998–2006), *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (2000–2005), *Arrested Development* (2003–2005), and *The O.C.* (2003–).

Several reasons can be offered for this Jewish image efflorescence: a more self-confident generation of Jewish television personnel; the go-ahead from Jewish advocacy groups; narrowcasting and niche programming strategies spurred by the cable/satellite/VCR revolution; the *Cosby Show's* encouragement of ethnically oriented fare in general; the comparative popularity of the Jewish shows. Another key factor, which contributed to the trend but also problematizes it, is the heightened conflict experienced during this period by Jews, individually and collectively, between assimilation and multiculturalism.

Jews' widespread acceptance in mainstream white America in the 1980s and 1990s came at a moment when a revitalized identity politics was putting a heightened premium on difference. These opposing integrationist and separationist tendencies not only reinforced but also threatened Jews' historically unique insider/outsider status in American society. The commercial and cultural constraints of American television necessarily muted the particularist aspects of the Jewish TV revival, but it is this very mutedness that reveals the contradictions inherent in Jews' double investment in assimilation and multiculturalism. For, ultimately, Jews' socioeconomic and cultural success was achieved not through the flaunting but rather the shedding of cultural specificity, a process that not only contradicts identity politics but is also, perhaps,



Cast of the popular television show, *Seinfeld*. (Corbis)

irreversible. The de-Judaized Jews of early television—George Burns, Jack Benny, Carl Reiner—though they may have rejected religious Judaism and the immigrant experience, bore its distinctive traces nonetheless—the inflections, the Yiddishisms, the bodily mannerisms and manifestations. By contrast, the open, even proud Jews of the Jewish sitcom trend, though they may have had less to hide—on TV as in U.S. society—also have had less to show.

One of the few overtly and sympathetically Jewish of the trend shows is, not coincidentally, the one situated in the past, *Brooklyn Bridge*. Betraying its generic roots in the seminal *Goldbergs*, *Brooklyn Bridge* was creator Gary David Goldberg's serio-comic homage to his mid-1950s New York childhood. While set among an extended Jewish family living in a heavily Jewish neighborhood, the show refrains from ghettoizing the environment as exclusively Jewish. Irish, Italian, and other ethnic families are not only prominently displayed, but a kind of *Bridget Loves Bernie* romance between the teenaged Jewish protagonist, Alan

Silver (Danny Girard), and his Irish Catholic neighbor and sweetheart, Katie Monahan (Jenny Lewis), forms the throughline of the series. *Brooklyn Bridge* is set in the same years (1955/1956) that *The Goldbergs* was leaving the air. Thus an intertextual throughline of assimilation is also established, with *Brooklyn Bridge* extending the Americanizing notion developed in *The Goldbergs* by reflecting it back onto the inner-city environment from which the suburban-bound Goldberg family was ostensibly "movin' on up." By "bringing it all back home," *Brooklyn Bridge* thus functions as a nostalgic bridge between assimilationist and multiculturalist agendas. Assimilation need not mean homogenization, *Brooklyn Bridge* proclaims; through ritualistic remembrance, ethnic identity can be maintained.

A less sanguine assimilationist/multiculturalist inflection informs the 1990s-defining *Seinfeld*. In this series, the "particularist" Jewishness, mocked at a distance in interfaith romance shows like the contemporaneous *Anything But Love* (1991–1993), is transformed into a "universalist" Jewishness that can be derided more openly, not because

Jewishness has been absorbed into the mainstream but because the mainstream has become Jewish. As Carla Johnson (1994) observes in regard to *Seinfeld's* quartet of *schlemiel-schlimazls* (Jerry, George, Elaine, and Kramer), the same ethno-racial sensitivity that has allowed Jews to withstand adverse social conditions over the millennia has turned them into a sociocultural barometer of these conditions. *Seinfeld's* ascension in the ratings coincided with a steep downturn in the U.S. business cycle, culminating in the recession of 1992. As for the much touted economic boom beginning in 1993 and lasting through the 1990s, this financial upswing primarily benefited the already wealthy while leaving the average American ever further behind. In other words, the country's reduced expectations and socioeconomic "malaise," proclaimed and disavowed since the 1970s, came home to roost in the show "about nothing." On the TV-industrial front, the multicultural incursions into *Seinfeld* and company's once privileged white middle-class space are also uncannily reflective of the networks' shrinking audience share in the face of the cable, satellite, and videocassette revolutions. The show's ethno-spatial implosion can thus be taken as a metaphor not only for the overall middle-class economic contraction but for the breakdown of the network hegemony as well.

Besides its commercial encouragement to pursue explicitly Jewish projects, *Seinfeld* offered itself in other ways as a model for emulation—or rejection. The darkly satirical sitcom had broken a cardinal rule of the business, what Jane Feuer (1984) calls the "likeability factor": not only *Seinfeld's* eponymous protagonist but all four of the show's main characters are insults to humankind. But *Seinfeld's* breach of characterological etiquette is precisely where the two shows regarded as *Seinfeld* clones—*Mad About You* and *Friends*—diverge most strikingly from their alleged model. While the main characters of *Mad About You* and *Friends* may collectively share some of *Seinfeld's* hedonism and social irresponsibility, they differ in their pointed rejection of the latter's "no hugging, no learning" premise. *Mad About You's* lovers and *Friends's* friends are precisely that, indeed both of these things, to one another—just the opposite of *Seinfeld's* foursome, for whom sex and friendship are mutually exclusive and love a four-letter word. Yet while *Mad About You* and *Friends's* multiple protagonists certainly trump *Seinfeld's* in regard to "likeability," how they compare in terms of Jewishness is another matter.

*Mad About You's* discursive claims to Jewishness rest mainly on the presumed Jewishness of Paul Buchman, whose character is patterned after his portrayer, the show's co-creator, Paul Reiser—"he of the way overdone Jewish accent and mannerisms" (Kaplan 1996). Joyce Antler (1998) finds a rare "positive image" of Jewishness in Paul's sister Debbie (Robin Bartlett), although "her proud lesbianism is more openly flaunted than her Jewishness." The tendency to erase female, as opposed to male, markers of Jewishness is also at work in *Friends's* high school chums, Monica Geller and Rachel Green (the non-Jewish Courteney Cox and Jennifer Aniston). What ultimately renders Monica and Rachel most Jewish (or half-Jewish, on their fathers' side) is an emergent form of Jewish representation termed "conceptual Jewishness" (Brook 2003). Partly an extension of Herbert Gans's (1956) notion of "symbolic Judaism," "conceptual Jewishness" refers sociologically to recent Jews' ever more abstract and attenuated links to identifiable ethnic and cultural, never mind religious, expression. Televisually, the term derives from the fact that in shows like *Friends*, "Jewish" characters are literally *conceived* (by their sitcom creators), more than they are *represented* (in the narrative), as Jews.

While conceptual Jewishness may be *Friends's* unique contribution—for better or worse—to Jewish representation, the show's propensity for "perceptual Jewishness" (Brook 2003) clearly relates, once again, to *Seinfeld*. Perceptual Jewishness occurs when characters are perceived as Jewish—by Jews or non-Jews—despite their *not* having been conceived as such by the show's creators. George Costanza's (Jason Alexander) pansemitic *schlemiel* provides the prima facie case in this regard. Is George now or has he ever been Jewish? Textually and extratextually, nobody knows for sure. Jerry Stiller, portrayer of papa Costanza, perfectly captured the paradox of the Jewish Question in regard to George when he joked in an interview, "I think we're a Jewish family living under the Witness Protection Program under the name Costanza" (Fretts 1988).

The Jewish sitcom protagonist most conspicuously conceived, perceived, and *performed* as Jewish is *The Nanny's* Fran Fine—with surprisingly successful results. Despite what was for many a demeaning portrait of a Jewish American princess by the show's co-creator and star Fran Drescher, *The Nanny* also proved a major breakthrough in female Jewish representation. Notwithstanding the nanny's loud dress, gold-digging aim, and "accent that

could etch glass” (Jarvis 1993)—not to mention her even more outrageous and opportunistic mother (played by Renee Taylor)—*The Nanny* not only proved popular with many Jews, including Jewish critics, but it sailed through the media-monitoring shoals largely unscathed. The key to the paradox, as with *Rhoda*, relates to gender. Where Drescher’s nanny crucially parts company from the stereotypical Jewess is in regard to sexuality. Hyper- rather than de-sexualized, Drescher’s character constructs a variation on the Jewish American Princess whose body is possessed of more than oral appetites and whose persona is—nasal whine and all—romantically desirable. By no means ideal as a revisionist Jewish-feminist text, *The Nanny* nonetheless must be credited with challenging the postwar myth of Jewish female passivity and frigidity embodied in the Jewish princess stereotype.

Although the (non-Jewish) sitcom *Ellen* (1994–1998) was the first regular prime-time series to openly disclose its protagonist’s (and actor Ellen DeGeneres’s) gayness, this epochal outing occurred near the end of the series’ original run. The Jewish sitcom *Will and Grace* (1998–2006) was the first network series to *originate* with an openly gay protagonist, the gentile Will Truman (played by Eric McCormick). Through its leading lady Grace Adler (Debra Messing), the show introduced another unique sitcom character: the Jewish fag-hag. Unlike the tendency of some real-life female homophiles, however, Grace’s affinity for gays and queer culture does not come at the expense of or as partial compensation for Jewish particularism. Her Jewishness is more than parenthetical, and the Jewish–gay connection is to a considerable extent reciprocal. Overt references to Grace’s ethnicity outnumber those of all Jewish-trend protagonists with the possible exception of *The Nanny*’s Fran Fine. As for reciprocity, Will is in many ways as romantically, and carnally, obsessed with Grace as she with him. Jewish–gay bonding is, from a historical and institutional standpoint at least, a “natural” fit. That the Jewish male already “resembles the homosexual” through physical imputations of effeminacy is well documented (Seidman 1998). Just as evident, and increasingly acknowledged, are the historical “affinity with the closet” that the Jewish and gay (sub)cultures have shared and the degree to which Jews and gays, often in the same person, have dominated the entertainment industry (Seidman 1998).

Four of the eight Jewish sitcoms that premiered in the late 1990s—*Dharma and Greg* (1997–2003), *Alright Al-*

*ready* (1997–1998), *Rude Awakening* (1998–2001), and *Will and Grace* (1998–2006)—featured Jewish female protagonists. Given that all four women—Dharma Finkelstein (Jenna Elfman), Carol Lerner (Carol Leifer), Billie Frank (Sherilyn Fenn), and Grace Adler (Debra Messing)—were attractive and sexually confident indicates that post-*Seinfeld* era Jewish sitcoms were, at least initially, taking their ethnocultural cues less from the decade-defining show than from *The Nanny*. *Seinfeld*’s influence was far from spent, however. Besides its own perpetuation in endless reruns and its imprint on gentler, kinder “clones” like *Mad About You* and *Friends*, *Seinfeld*’s unlikeability factor has been resurrected, and then some, in two of the most recent Jewishcoms, *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (2000–2005) and *Arrested Development* (2003–2005)—shows that carry individual and family dysfunctionality to comedic extremes.

Created and starring *Seinfeld* co-creator Larry David, *Curb Your Enthusiasm* confirms whence the earlier show’s darkly absurdist thrust derived. Working without observational comic Jerry Seinfeld’s ameliorative influence and with the greater creative license cable affords (the show aired on HBO), David has given his Kafkaesque proclivities full rein and allowed a postmodern fudging of fact and fiction—he plays himself as the famous and wealthy producer of the earlier show—to predominate. The result is one of the gems of television comedy—Jewish or otherwise—in which an accretion of existential calamities comment simultaneously on the perils of *schlemiel*dom, the contradictions of U.S. society, and the absurdities of the human condition. *Arrested Development*’s ambitions may approach *Curb*’s, but its attainments—critical encomiums notwithstanding—are more measured. A meaner, nastier, upscale *Married with Children* (1987–1997), *Arrested* is noteworthy not as a barometer of social or human conditions but rather of how far Jews have—or have not—come in twenty-first-century America. If they can present themselves in as scathing a fashion as the filthy rich and just plain filthy Bluth family are on *Arrested*, and if they can not only get away with it but be universally lauded—the show even received a Jewish Image award!—then U.S. Jews, as a people, have surely “arrived.”

Vincent Brook

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*The Marx Brothers. Pictured from top to bottom: Chico, Harpo, Groucho, and Zeppo. (Library of Congress)*

(“Chico”), Adolf (later Arthur, “Harpo”), Julius (“Groucho”), Milton (“Gummo”), and Herbert (“Zeppo”)—carried their legendary zany comedic antics from vaudeville to stage to screen, and in Groucho’s case to radio and television. Though they never played stock Jewish characters during their mature careers, the Marx brothers’ comedy had roots in the irreverent medieval Jewish tradition of the Purim *shpil*, and captured both the assimilation-minded exuberance and the alienated impatience of Jewish (and other) immigrants and their children. They were also fierce opponents of antisemitism.

Simon Marris (changed to Marx), an Alsatian Jew who spoke *Plattdeutsch* (low-country German) and French and learned the tailor’s trade, was married in 1884 on the Lower East Side to Minna (later Minnie) Schoenberg, born near Hanover, Germany, the daughter of a traveling magician. They had six sons; the eldest, Manfred, died in infancy. The other five—Chico (1887–1961), Harpo (1888–1964), Groucho (1890–1977), Gummo (1897–1977), and Zeppo (1901–1979)—grew up to become a collective icon of twentieth-century American popular culture.

## The Marx Brothers

Born on the Lower East Side to immigrant Jewish parents from Alsace and Germany, the five Marx Brothers—Leonard

The Jewishness of the Marx brothers' origins is incontestable, but not so the extent of their Jewish identification and the Jewish character of their comedy. Groucho himself summed up the poles of the debate when he reacted to one reviewer's praise of the act as "the symbolic embodiment of all persecuted Jews for 2,000 years" with, "What sort of goddamned review is that?" (Erens 1984). When the musical biography, *Minnie's Boys* (1970), was in preparation, Groucho angrily vetoed "that Jew broad" Totie Fields from playing his curvaceous, blonde mother Minnie. When asked, "Wasn't your mother Jewish?" he replied, "But the world thinks we're Italian" (Kanfer 2000). (Jewish and plump but blonde Shelley Winters got the role.)

The ambiguous facts are these. The family lived in Yorkville, still a German (and German Jewish) bastion on New York's East Side in the late nineteenth century. They did not so much resist as ignore the *Yiddishkeit*, cultural and political, that the *Ostjuden* brought with them as proud baggage. The attempt to maintain traditional observance died with the children's maternal grandmother. Her widower, the boys' maternal grandfather, was able to maintain only a semblance of it, seeing to it that the boys attended synagogue occasionally and received bar mitzvah preparation, which was even more perfunctory than their regular schooling (only Chico finished high school).

The mind of Minnie, the family's dynamo, was on other things. Credited in Alexander Woolcott's obituary of her in the *New Yorker* with "inventing" the Marx brothers, she was the archetypal stage mother who formed the boys as a singing act (Groucho was the falsetto crooner), the Nightingales, which was their launching pad into vaudeville. Though Gummo at one point was billed as "a Hebrew Boy," none of the mature Marx brothers played explicitly Jewish characters either on the stage or screen. Modeling himself on his maternal uncle, Al Shean (later of the Gallagher and Shean vaudeville team), Groucho played a German or "Dutch comic" until the anti-German backlash in the wake of the *Lusitania* debacle in 1915 sunk that role. This was when Harpo also changed his name from Adolf to Arthur. Chico won his enduring fame by assuming an Italian immigrant persona. Blackface was never the Marx brothers' forte, though they do blacken up in one scene in *A Day at the Races* to escape the sheriff.

In his autobiography, Harpo remarks that the boys, when appearing with Jewish boxer Benny Leonard on the Iowa vaudeville circuit during World War I, were criticized

for a parody of "The Spirit of '76." He added that, to avoid any more criticism, they "never worked dirty" (used off-color language) or "used any Jewish expressions on stage" (Marx 1961). In the stage version of *The Cocoanuts*, Groucho introduced Spanish dancers as "Span yids." This and similar allusions were dropped from the movie version, though Groucho, playing African explorer Captain Spaulding in *Animal Crackers*, does ask, "Did someone call me *schnorrer*?"

When the brothers returned to New York in the 1920s, two events symbolized their ambivalent relation with their Jewish roots: Groucho took the first of his three gentile wives (a small-town midwestern girl) at a ceremony where no rabbi or minister was willing to preside. (A Jewish justice of the peace who was a retired vaudevilian did the honors.) And when the brothers' act opened before a predominantly Jewish audience at the Royal Theater, preparatory to playing the Palace Theater, the audience sat on its hands because it did not hear the comic Yiddishisms it expected.

Groucho never abandoned his disdain for ethnic comedians who played what he called "the professional Jew." It should also be remembered that Groucho's most famous quip—"I wouldn't want to be a member of any club that would have me"—was a slap at the *Jewish Hillcrest Country Club* in Los Angeles (Kanfer 2000).

On the other hand, the Marx Brothers were Jewish—and proud of it—if the measure was sensitivity to, and defiance of, the scourge of antisemitism. All the brothers sharply responded to "No Jews need apply" discrimination in hotel accommodations. When his son, Arthur, was denied swimming privileges at a country club, Groucho countered with a telegram asking, "Since my son is only half-Jewish, would it be all right if he goes in up to his waist?"

On the way to touring Russia in 1933, Harpo stopped over in Hitler's new Reich. He remarked, "I hadn't been so wholly conscious of being a Jew since my Bar Mitzvah. It was the first time since I had the measles that I was too sick to eat. I got across Germany as fast as I could" (Marx 1961). In Moscow, where he was feted and shepherded by the fellow-traveling *New York Times* reporter Walter Duranty, Harpo's eyes were drawn to an old stage hand in a yarmulke whom he asked if it were true that there were "no shuls in Moscow." The stage hand's reply: "No shuls—but there are no pogroms, either."

A notorious agnostic, Groucho humored his first wife's family by allowing his son, Arthur, to attend Christian Sunday school. Yet when the boy returned home, his father would grill him in order to debunk Christological teachings. The octogenarian Groucho sometimes attended synagogue, perhaps at the insistence of Erin Fleming, his final companion and keeper, who converted to Judaism.

A disappointed romantic in matters of the heart, Groucho was never a patsy politically. He liked Winston Churchill's history of World War II, but had doubts about his Cold War politics as a prescription for the United States. His views were progressive enough in the Hollywood of the 1940s to win the McCarthyite designation "poolside pinko," but he never trusted Stalin and had no use for the American Communist Party, as he told his daughter Miriam after she resigned membership.

Marx's refusal to be pigeonholed continued in later years when, in 1964, he followed a visit to Israel with a London stopover to meet "his celebrated pen pal" anti-semitic T. S. Eliot, who (rather unconvincingly) also expressed admiration for the Jewish state (Kanfer 2000). Groucho lived long enough to become the sort of honorary cranky grandpa of the New Left, whose hearts he won by blurting out to a *Berkeley Barb* reporter in 1972 that it might not be a bad idea if President Richard Nixon were assassinated. It was no coincidence that French radical Daniel Cohn-Bendit called himself a "Marxist à la Groucho."

Yet Groucho never shared the post-1967 War anti-Israel stirrings on the left and was so upset by the murder of the eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics that the news may have precipitated a stroke, which delayed his opening in a Los Angeles theatrical revue. Harpo symbolically bequeathed his harp to Israel. Ambivalent to the end, Groucho in his will coupled instructions that he be buried in a nonsectarian cemetery with a large bequest to the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles.

To return to the question of the Jewishness of the Marx brothers' inspired screen anarchy: with roots in the irreverent medieval Jewish tradition of the Purim *shpil* of annually authorized irreverence, it captured both the assimilation-minded exuberance and the alienated impatience of Jewish immigrants (and not only Jewish immigrants) and their children. When Groucho mocked Margaret Dumont—his perfect foil in *The Cocoanuts*, *Ani-*

*mal Crackers*, *Duck Soup*, *A Night at the Opera*, and *A Day at the Races*, who was the personification of inanely respectable WASPishness—the urban ethnic audience howled with laughter at a common enemy. This was "coalition building" between Jews and other American newcomers at a deeper level than mere politics.

Harold Brackman

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## American Jewish Comedians

For most of the twentieth century, Americans identified comedy with Jewish performers. Indeed, in 1979 *Time* magazine observed that, while Jews made up about 3 percent of the population, they accounted for 80 percent of working comedians. From vaudeville through radio, nightclubs, motion pictures, and television, Jewish comedians have been major comedic entertainers. A list of just a few of them reveals their centrality to American culture: George Burns, Fanny Brice, Jack Benny, Milton Berle, Gertrude Berg, the Marx Brothers, Sid Caesar, Woody Allen, Mel Brooks, Joan Rivers, Lenny Bruce, Don Rickles, Jerry Lewis, Rodney Dangerfield, the Three Stooges, Jerry Seinfeld, among hundreds of others.

Although Jewish comedians varied widely, some generalizations can be made. Almost all drew their sensibilities from a particular East European Jewish culture. Most of the Jewish immigrants who came to America after 1881 had lived in a small town (*shtetl*) or city in Poland or Russia. Shunned by their gentile neighbors, they had developed tightly knit communities and a clear cultural identity.

Jewish life in Eastern Europe was characterized by intermittent persecution and economic deprivation. These conditions led to feelings of both depression and fear. Jews were outsiders, marginalized from mainstream society. The insecurity of being a despised minority group profoundly shaped Jews' psychological outlook. Faced with overwhelming power, Jews were generally unable to defend themselves forcefully.

These conditions produced a deep need to escape. Physically, they fled to America where, far from Cossacks and czars, they would more openly express their anxieties and beliefs. The anxieties often surfaced as humor. The humor that emerged on American shores was also a nervous reaction to having survived and escaped the constraints and terrors of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. Indeed, humor provided Jews with their means of coping with unfairness and cruelty, of handling the tensions between what Jews thought life should offer and what it actually allowed. Throughout the twentieth century, the smile from Jewish humor remained haunted by an awareness that the humor served as a vital escape from horror.

Jews had responded to the rigors of their lives in part by developing strong family bonds, which not only continued to sustain them in America, but also provided a trove of material for Jewish comedians. The Jewish immigrants also brought with them a deep distrust of external authority, which in America led them to question arrangements that old-stock Americans often could not recognize, or were reluctant to challenge. Moreover, although many Jews remained skeptical that they would really be accepted in America, they soon became both outsiders and insiders, providing a crucial vantage point they had not known before. Had they just been insiders, they would not have had the perspective necessary to see the humor in American life, and had they just been outsiders, American audiences may not have listened to them.

Another attribute that Jews had developed in response to extreme adversity was to use language as a substitute for weapons—now transformed into an important comedic skill. Armed with selected, pungent Yiddish words and phrases, which frequently combined humorous sounds and deeper emotional expressiveness than their English counterparts, the emerging Jewish comedians had a resource not immediately available to other performers. Yiddish offered acute observations of human foibles and characteristics. And to the ear attuned to English, some of

the words sounded funny. Comedians seized on those words, which eventually became part of the common American vernacular. Indeed, these words allowed Jewish comedians to create characters. A *schlemiel* is a pitiful, unlucky, maladjusted loser. Jerry Lewis forged his character largely from the *schlemiel*. Yiddish was filled with acute, tiny observations of the sort that Jerry Seinfeld later made famous.

Upon arriving in America, a number of Jews were attracted by the opportunities afforded by the dynamic, new urban entertainment form of vaudeville. And because vaudeville was still marginal and opposed by the Victorian elites, there were no entrenched interests barring their entry. However, the Jewish children who entered vaudeville—and they did enter as children—violated every Jewish stereotype. Although Jews had long had a powerful commitment to education, these children hated school. Buddy Hackett used to say, “Ah, school. What fun I had that day.” George Burns lost the battle with mathematics and quit early. Harpo Marx was tossed out of school in the second grade—not by the authorities, but by rough classmates. Harpo went back, was thrown out the window again, and decided that school was not for him. Instead of learning, these young children of Jewish immigrants wanted money and fame. They were also young thieves. Phil Silvers stole from pushcarts. Fanny Brice shoplifted. When Eddie Cantor was thirteen, he stole a purse. Bert Lahr stole a pumpkin—from a police officer. They turned out to be better comedians than thieves. As youths, they had rejected education and small business, the means by which most Jews advanced. Instead, as the leisure industry began to take shape, they became its pioneers, achieving success by using their wits to entertain the new urban masses.

Still, like many other American Jews, they were driven by a deep need to succeed, to take advantage of the new opportunity offered them, and they did whatever they could to get a job. George Burns (born Nathan Birnbaum) kept changing his stage name when he found that managers would not hire him. He called them and claimed to have every expertise they wanted. He worked with a trained seal. He tried, with minimal success, to tell jokes. Only when he met Gracie Allen did he succeed. Burns changed the traditional Dumb Dora acts of vaudeville, making the woman partner not stupid, but sympathetic, having what he called an “illogical logic”:

*George:* Gracie, let me ask you something. Did the nurse ever happen to drop you on your head when you were a baby?

*Gracie:* Oh, no. We couldn't afford a nurse. My mother had to do it.

*George:* You had a smart mother.

*Gracie:* Smartness runs in my family. When I went to school, I was so smart my teacher was in my class for five years.

*George:* Gracie, what school did you go to?

*Gracie:* I'm not allowed to tell.

*George:* Why not?

*Gracie:* The school pays me twenty-five dollars a month not to tell (Epstein 2001).

Injecting American humor with Jewish soul, Burns also used his strong affection for his mother, as well as the high regard in which Jews held their mothers, to alter American entertainment. Eddie Cantor was so popular with audiences because they loved his energy and sensed that he was one of them. It was not unusual for him to interrupt his act to make an announcement from an anxious parent to have her child, who was in the audience, come home.

Born Benjamin Kubelsky, Jack Benny fashioned a persona far from his real self. "Jack Benny" was cheap. He would not buy his girlfriend flowers, but seeds. Once, Benny was invited to throw out the first pitch at a baseball game. He held the baseball, put it in his pocket, and sat down, delighting the crowd. Although the character drew on antisemitic stereotypes about Jews and money, this did not reinforce the negative image because Benny was not widely recognized as a Jew.

Benny was also famous for being eternally thirty-nine and being a bad violin player. Indeed, during President Lyndon B. Johnson's administration, Benny approached the White House gates. A marine guard stopped him and said, "Excuse me, Mr. Benny, what's in the case?" Benny responded, "It's a machine gun." The guard said, "Okay, then, you can go in. For a minute I thought it was your violin" (Epstein 2001).

Benny achieved enormous popularity with his radio appearances, beginning in 1932. Trying to create laughs after the Great Depression began in 1929, Benny used his cheap persona to give emotional permission to his audiences to be cheap themselves. Often unable to earn an adequate living, guilty that they could not provide for their families, radio listeners found in Benny a character even



*Jack Benny. (Library of Congress)*

cheaper than they. And if he could laugh about his situation, so could they.

Huge numbers of non-Jewish Americans responded so positively to Burns, Benny, and other Jewish comedians in these years because they recognized a certain shared experience in their humor. The Jews were part of a vast movement of people who had left Eastern and Southern Europe, as well as the farms and small towns across America, to come to the rapidly industrializing cities in search of work. These external and internal immigrants often felt uprooted, alienated, and out of place, anxious about their skills and future. It is therefore not entirely surprising that they turned to comedians emerging from a people who, throughout their history, had frequently been forced to move to a new place and to adapt quickly, and who had found ways to survive with their families and pride intact. That is, the Jewish comedians brought with them a past that resonated with the emotional needs of a wide American audience.

Similarly, during the Depression audiences could learn much from those who had endured centuries of economic

adversity, turning to the Jewish comedians for amusing lessons on survival. Whether consciously or not, the comedians drew on a great Jewish tradition of using humor to survive.

Yet for all their success in vaudeville and radio, Jews did not succeed as well in film—before the era of sound. Jewish humor was driven primarily by language, not pantomime or visual antics. Although many audiences incorrectly believed Charlie Chaplin to be Jewish because of his immigrant tramp character, silent film comedies were, in fact, dominated by non-Jews such as Chaplin, Buster Keaton, and Harold Lloyd.

With the arrival of sound in 1927, however, Jewish comedians quickly appeared on the screen. The most prominent were the Marx Brothers. Driven by an indomitable mother, the brothers started in vaudeville, went to Broadway, and achieved lasting fame in a series of brilliant films mocking all forms of authority. The Marx Brothers elaborated a clever comedic technique. In vaudeville, each brother represented a different ethnic type: Chico was the Italian, Harpo originally played an Irish lad, and Groucho was a German until the sinking of the *Lusitania* led him to switch to a Jewish character. In films, they broadened this approach, with each representing a different level of linguistic comedy. Groucho became the wisecracking verbal comic, Harpo the pantomimist, and Chico in-between, able to speak but having to do so in a thick accent. In *Duck Soup*, for example, Groucho's verbal assault on Margaret Dumont exemplifies his approach:

*Dumont:* I've sponsored your appointment because I feel you are the most able statesman in all Freedonia.

*Groucho:* Well, that covers a lot of ground. Say, you cover a lot of ground yourself. You'd better beat it. I hear they're going to tear you down and put up an office building where you're standing. You can leave in a taxi. If you can't leave in a taxi you can leave in a huff. If that's too soon, you can leave in a minute and a huff (Epstein 2001).

Although Jews found a greater degree of acceptance in America than in Europe, considerable suspicion and distrust persisted, and Jews were barred from, or their access was severely restricted to, elite colleges, private clubs, hotels, many businesses, and other areas of American life. As a result, many performers found it necessary to hide or disguise their Jewishness. Indeed, when performers like

George Jessel retained a Jewish persona on radio, they were less successful than those like Jack Benny, who did not. Jessel spoke rapidly in a recognizably Jewish accent and talked about urban subjects. Despite his stable marriage to a Jew and his ongoing relationship with the Jewish community, Benny managed to avoid being widely perceived as Jewish by carefully eschewing Jewish accents or jokes and by sticking to wider American subjects.

The 1930s witnessed the spread of Nazism in Europe, and the intensification of antisemitism in America. Fearful of losing European, and particularly German, distribution rights, American film companies chose not to make movies that challenged the rise of Hitler. Indeed, even stereotyped Jewish characters disappeared from film. The Yiddishisms in the Marx Brothers and Eddie Cantor movies vanished.

There were some attempts to pierce the silence about the Nazis. In comedy, the most famous case was that of Charlie Chaplin, who was repeatedly warned not to make *The Great Dictator* (1940). Chaplin was not, however, the first actor to portray Hitler on film. That honor belongs to Moe Howard of the Three Stooges. The three Jewish comedians who made up the Stooges starred in three anti-Nazi films, beginning with *You Nazty Spy* in 1940. The Stooges smuggled Yiddish into their films. They kept the immigrant sensibility of fighting to survive. They borrowed their physical humor from earlier Jewish vaudeville acts, especially Joe Weber and Lew Fields.

Stung by rejection in society and on screen, the Jews developed their own institutions. The most important of these were the private resorts in the Catskill area, northwest of New York City. The resort colonies began a century ago, and by the 1950s some nine hundred hotels brought in more than a million guests a year. The Borscht Belt (also called the Jewish Alps) was the training ground for a generation of Jewish comedians. Starting as teenagers, the young men and women who went to the Catskill resorts became *tumblers*, social directors of entertainment. Their job was to amuse customers constantly, and it became a Catskill tradition to do anything for a laugh. The audiences were tough, and young, would-be comedians—like Sid Caesar, Jackie Mason, Danny Kaye, Joan Rivers, Alan King, Red Buttons, and Jerry Lewis—quickly learned that they needed a ready wit and especially nerves of steel. Joan Rivers, who only landed a job because she could drive male comedians around in her car, once played to an audience



*The Three Stooges, Moe Howard (left), Curly Howard (center), and Larry Fine (right), performing a comedy routine. (Library of Congress)*

that only understood Yiddish. She quickly found a translator. She would tell a joke in English, and the uncomprehending audience did not laugh. The translator told the joke again, and they still did not laugh. As she later recalled, it was the only time in her life that she bombed twice with every line. Jerry Lewis used his Borscht Belt training to great effect in developing his act with Dean Martin, an act in which the wild Lewis character knew no bounds in seeking laughs.

When television arrived, Jewish comedians were among the first to explore the new art form. Many radio performers did not like or trust television. The new medium ate up material quickly—Ed Wynn called it the glass furnace—and required physical dimensions, which radio depended on a listener’s imagination to provide.

Milton Berle was among the first of the Jewish comedians to recognize television’s possibilities. Berle had

worked in vaudeville but had been less successful on radio. He, unlike some other comedians, was therefore willing to experiment with the new medium. In 1948, Berle received funding for a test show that would determine his career. He bravely hired Pearl Bailey, an African American singer, and Señor Wences, a foreign-sounding ventriloquist, whose father was, in fact, a Sephardic Jew. Berle was an enormous success and is often credited with creating the market for televisions. There were even jokes about it. Joe E. Lewis observed, “Berle is responsible for more television sets being sold than anyone else. I sold mine. My father sold his” (Epstein 2001). But Berle’s early success was deceptive. Televisions were originally in more affluent, urban areas that understood Berle’s fast talk, city ways, wild costumes, and manic behavior. That is, Berle had not changed his approach for television, keeping his urban, Jewish performance intact. As the show came to be broadcast far beyond

the cities, however, audiences did not find Berle as appealing. His original, groundbreaking shows lasted from 1948 until 1956.

Sid Caesar suffered a similar fate. A brilliant mimic who got his start by imitating customers in his father's restaurant, Caesar's major shows were *Your Show of Shows* (1950–1954) and *Caesar's Hour* (1954–1958). The latter was eventually canceled when Lawrence Welk was aired opposite him. Still, Caesar had gathered the most brilliant comedy writers in television history. At various times, Woody Allen, Mel Brooks, Larry Gelbart, Carl Reiner, and Neil Simon wrote for him.

Other Jewish comedians appeared on television as well. Like Berle, Phil Silvers depended on the joke, but, unlike the variety shows Berle and Caesar explored, Silvers focused on a new kind of show, the situation comedy. Here Silvers developed the character of Sergeant Bilko to perfection. Bilko was the fast-talking guy using his wits to struggle against a more powerful institution. He was a perfect metaphor for American Jews. Soupy Sales created what seemed like a show for children, complete with old films, silly puns and gags, and puppets. But Sales was extremely clever and quick, and made the old art of taking a pie in the face fresh again.

Berle and Silvers were joke-a-minute comedians, while Caesar relied less on the joke than on humor emerging from character. Other Jewish comedians expressed a clear nostalgia for a warm, Jewish past. Gertrude Berg was America's Jewish mother, who, on radio and television, used food, common sense, and a lilting accent to solve problems. Sam Levenson and Myron Cohen became storytellers, providing insights into life and the travails of marriage. Cohen told about a time when he was on a plane and saw a woman wearing a beautiful diamond. "Excuse me," he said, "I don't mean to be forward, but that's a beautiful diamond. The woman nodded, "Thank you. It's called the Klopman Diamond. It's like the Hope Diamond. It comes with a curse." "What's the curse?" Cohen asked. "Klopman," she sighed (Epstein 2001). Cohen invited audience members to tell the story substituting a name from their own lives.

Alan King also avoided the rapid-fire joke telling, but his stories, told at first in nightclubs and later on television, were especially well received by a new Jewish generation that had moved to suburbia. King went after the institutions that bothered people. "If banks are so friendly," he

would say, "why do they chain down their pens?" Suburban Jews had become American, but they still retained a healthy distrust of the powerful, and of institutions in general. King's anger gave voice not only to Jewish suburbanites, but also to everyone's frustrations with what was supposed to be paradise.

The storyteller's humor was one of reconciliation. These storytellers made the present more palatable, either by recalling a warm past, thereby letting the present slip away for a few minutes, or by expressing anger at institutions, enabling people to handle their anxieties through humor. This strategy explicitly relied on the heritage of Jewish comedy from Eastern Europe, where Jewish audiences, bereft of power, had used humor, along with religion, to learn to accept what they could not change.

Unlike these storytellers, there arose a group of Jewish comedians in the late 1950s and early 1960s who did not want their audiences to reconcile themselves with social or political reality. They were the exemplars of the Jewish tradition of challenging those in power, norms (of language in the case of Lenny Bruce), and even views of what is sane. Mort Sahl wanted audiences to understand the political strings that operated the country. Always sharp and timely, his humor was that of a prophet seeking to alert the masses to a hidden reality, beyond their vision until he reveals it. Sahl's prophecy was not about the sacred, but about secular power. Lenny Bruce, angry about hypocrisy wherever he saw it, used obscenity as a weapon to puncture the illusions audiences held about society. Shelley Berman provided psychological insights about relationships and the fragile relationship of the self confronted with an uncaring society. He was among the first who talked openly about personal psychological issues.

It was also an era of improvisational comedy, a perfect metaphor for a society that felt that the old, pre-World War II rules no longer applied in these years of economic expansion, of supposed suburban paradises, that masked a stifling conformity, and of the threat of nuclear destruction. Certainly, Jews were attracted to the very idea of improvisation, of having to rely on quick mental agility and having to make up their lives as they went along. Such an idea precisely matched the Jewish condition, especially in East Europe for centuries. Improvisational comedy also matched America's uncertainty about where the society was heading, while easing the journey with laughter. Mike Nichols and Elaine May did scathing improvisational bits

about family relationships, charting the increasingly complex battle of the sexes and the widening chasm between parents and children. Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara presented a softer version of Nichols and May. They developed characters, based on their real relationship, about a Jewish man and a woman born Irish Catholic.

Audiences were hungry for direct talk, and these new comedians gave it to them. Their comedic heirs continued this tradition. Woody Allen began writing jokes in high school, became a shy stand-up comedian, and eventually found his voice in films that made it unmistakably clear to the audience that he was Jewish. In *Annie Hall*, for example, there is a scene at the Hall family table at which everyone is praising grandma's ham. Woody's character appears in Hasidic garb as he imagines how Annie Hall's gentile family sees the New York *schlemiel* that he plays. Allen was among the first to make sure everyone knew that they were laughing because someone Jewish had made the jokes. Allen did this even though he had a difficult relationship with his own Jewishness.

Mel Brooks was the other great Jewish filmmaker of this era. After leaving Sid Caesar's employ, Brooks teamed up with Carl Reiner to make a series of records about a 2,000-Year-Old Man, who spoke with a Yiddish accent and clearly had Borscht Belt training. Brooks went on to make a series of movies. His first film, *The Producers*, was a wild tale of producers who try their best to create a failure on Broadway by putting on a musical about the Nazis. In a series of later films, he gently mocked various film genres, starting with the Western in *Blazing Saddles*. He was the film insider and Jewish outsider, whose vantage point let him look at the conventions of film—that is, the conventions of American culture—and both see and expose their premises, which were simply accepted by Americans who were only insiders.

There were only a few other Jewish filmmakers. Albert Brooks made movies, but any Jewish themes were hidden under the broader American concerns of his characters.

In the sixties, Jews and Jewish culture became widely accepted by the larger society, and Jewish stand-up comedians became very successful. Shecky Greene had to battle in Las Vegas to talk about being Jewish on stage, but, once he did, audiences loved it. Rodney Dangerfield created a character with bulging eyes, sweat, and endless movements, who "didn't get no respect." Buddy Hackett used his body, face, and voice to perfection. Don Rickles

made insult comedy an art. It was a difficult art that almost no one else managed to get right. Norm Crosby developed a unique comedic style, built on malapropisms: "The Etruscans vanquished the Trojans and pushed them out of Trojia down the Agamemnon Valley which led to the Connecticut Valley" (Epstein 2001).

Almost all Jewish comedians were men. The failure of large numbers of Jewish women to enter the ranks of comedians is not simply an ethnic example of the broader exclusion of women from the field. The situation for Jewish women was particularly difficult because of the nature of the material on which many male Jewish comedians depended for their laughs. The standard material of the successful Jewish comedian Henny Youngman relied on lines like: "I went on a pleasure trip. I took my mother-in-law to the airport." Or, "My wife asked me to take her someplace she'd never been before, so I took her to the kitchen." Or his signature line, "Take my wife, please." The humor was based on a particular view of Jewish women. Had Jewish women become successful comedians in the 1960s and 1970s and talked humorously about Jewish women, they would have seriously undermined the images of them that were central to many Jewish male comedians' routines. Thus Jewish male comedians opposed the hiring of Jewish women comedians, not only because of the unwanted competition, but also because their material would have rapidly become dated.

Some Jewish women, however, entered comedy in the 1950s and 1960s. Some, like Rusty Warren and Pearl Williams, chose to create sexually suggestive material, performing in clubs and on "party" records. Gertrude Berg was still around, although the ratings for her television show steadily declined, the victim of the iconoclasm of the new era. Some Jewish women tried to enter mainstream comedy. Totie Fields had to rely on self-mockery, making fun of her own weight, and when she lost a leg, even about her disability.

It was Joan Rivers who made the breakthrough for Jewish women comedians. At first, in the early 1960s, she used the self-mocking humor that women were forced to employ. She was not so influenced by feminism as she was by other comedians, especially Woody Allen and Lenny Bruce. Bruce's honesty and directness on stage deeply affected her, so that by the late 1960s she began to develop lines that mocked men's traditional views of women. In the 1970s and later, she made fun of the women whom men

considered beautiful, such as Elizabeth Taylor or Bo Derek. Rivers thereby undermined the very image of women that men brought with them to a comedy act. She paved the way for women to explore new subjects and to do so from a position of authority. Her comedic heirs, such as Gilda Radner, Elaine Bosler, Roseanne, Fran Drescher, and Rita Rudner, thus had the freedom to develop fuller characters.

Several members of the next generation of male Jewish comedians became major stars. Billy Crystal went from television to movie stardom, appearing in one of the most insightful films about performers, *Mr. Saturday Night* (1992). Andy Kaufman was less a comedian than a performance artist, someone who deliberately annoyed or confused audiences to force them to see entertainment or comedy through new eyes. He did not tell jokes. He simply acted strange. From his signature role on the television show *Taxi* to his odd experiments with wrestling, Kaufman pushed the borders of what was comedic. Not all audiences wanted to escape the traditional way of experiencing comedy—by laughing at one joke and then another. He wanted them to see the absurdities of life and learn to laugh at them. Other comedians loved him.

Jerry Seinfeld became one of the most popular entertainers in American history. The last episode of *Seinfeld* in 1998 attracted 76 million viewers. Seinfeld's early efforts, however, were not auspicious. On the day he graduated from college, he appeared in a comedy club and froze. Instead of telling jokes, he recited the subjects of the jokes. Unwilling to quit, Seinfeld began to make observations about the minutia of daily life, providing characters with whom his audiences readily identified and situations that made them laugh. "I grew up in Massapequa," he might say. "It's an old Indian word meaning 'by the mall.'"

Other Jewish comedians also explored the smaller, more personal universe that became important to the inward-turning American audiences after the 1970s. Richard Lewis perfected the manic comic, always moving, always neurotic. Garry Shandling created the brilliant *The Larry Sanders Show* about a late-night comedy program. *Sanders* was a dead-on satire about late-night television, comedians, and the entertainment industry. Shandling was unafraid to make himself look manipulative and less than perfect.

More Jewish comedians achieved renown in the 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century. Jerry Stiller's

son, Ben, became a major movie star. So did Adam Sandler, who first worked on *Saturday Night Live*. Sandler perfected the loser who uses his anger to achieve success, a character who apparently matched the psychological profile of many in his audience. Jeffrey Ross became famous for his work at the Friars Club. On television, Jon Stewart developed a wide following for his political satire and comedy. Larry David was crucial in creating *Seinfeld*. His sensibility and experiences allowed him to write scripts that deeply probed the American psyche. After leaving *Seinfeld*, he later developed *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, a mostly improvised comedy for HBO about a man who seems to have it all but keeps getting into trouble.

Jewish comedy's past was glorious, the present strong, but its future appears uncertain. Traditional Jewish comedy had mined the inheritance of *shtetl* culture, Yiddish, and the immigrants' feelings of dislocation. As later generations of American Jews acculturated and assimilated into American life, memories of that Eastern European past increasingly dissipated, and may soon be consigned only to the nostalgic. It remains unclear, however, if future generations of American Jews will assimilate so completely that the crucial status of being simultaneously inside and outside the society will disappear. Moreover, the earliest comedians entered the marginal world of vaudeville because many economic routes were closed to Jews. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, by contrast, almost no jobs remain off-limits. As Jews have become more accepted by the larger society, the old hunger for approval, so evident in the first generations of Jewish immigrants, is no longer as strong. Still, remnants of the linguistic constructions, the distrust of authority, the laser-sharp observations, and the ability to create a variety of characters remain strong. Generations of Jewish comedians have left an extraordinary legacy for anyone interested in becoming a comedian.

There is another reason to suspect that Jewish comedy may persist. One definition of comedy is that it is tragedy plus time. After enough time has elapsed since the events of September 11, 2001, Americans may, as they have in the past, turn to Jews and the Jewish experience to understand how a people absorbs and copes with great tragedy. Just as Jewish comedians helped provide emotional resilience for the many Americans dislocated by immigration and later by the Great Depression, young Jewish comedians may once again draw on the Jews' long experience with un-

bearable tragedy, with countless innocents killed and terrorized, to help cure an ailing America.

In this way, tomorrow's Jewish comedians could carry on a noble tradition that brought Americans endless laughs and, perhaps as importantly, the strength to accept pain and difficulties and to go on, buoyed by humor. Jewish comedians have given America a great gift, and Americans have been grateful.

Lawrence J. Epstein

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## Woody Allen (b. 1935)

### Filmmaker

Woody Allen, the Academy Award-winning filmmaker, is in the Jewish comic tradition of the *shlemiel*. The chronic outsider, he has exploited his ambivalence toward both American and Jewish culture to win insider celebrity and mainstream success.

Born Allen Stewart Konigsberg in the Bronx, New York, in 1935, Woody Allen was the son of Martin Konigsberg and Netty Cherrie, the American-born children, respectively, of Austrian Jewish and Russian Jewish immigrants. His Orthodox family spoke German as well as Yiddish at home, and while growing up in Brooklyn he lived at times with relatives who were refugees from Hitler's Germany. Allen prayed each morning with phylacteries, attended synagogue every Saturday with his paternal grandfather, and went to Hebrew school in the afternoons

for eight years until his bar mitzvah, at which he showed his true vocation by appearing in a blackface imitation of Al Jolson.

Three-time Academy Award-winner, including as director of best picture *Annie Hall* (1977), Allen started as a teenage joke writer for comedian Sid Caesar and *The Tonight Show*, and evolved into a stand-up comic. He wrote plays as well as movie scripts, shaped from behind the scenes the television success of *Saturday Night Live*, and graduated from slapstick comedy to films that explored the meaning of life. He is celebrated in France as a great *auteur*. What is the relation of Allen's Jewish roots to his serio-comic gift?

According to Michael Abbott, "Allen's didacticism, his tortuous self-questioning, his familiar use of a question in reply to a question, his mosaic storytelling style—all are rooted deeply in Talmudic thought and tradition" (Abbott 1996). Allen views matters differently: "I was unmoved by the synagogue, I was not interested in the *Seder*, I was not interested in the Hebrew school, I was not interested in being Jewish. It just didn't mean a thing to me. I was not ashamed of it nor was I proud of it. It was a nonfactor to me. I didn't care about it. It just wasn't my field of interest. I cared about baseball, I cared about movies. To be a Jew was not something that I felt 'Oh, God, I'm so lucky.' Or 'Gee, I wish I were something else.' I certainly had no interest in being Catholic or in any of the other Gentile religions" (Lax 2000).

Allen also attributed little of value to his secular education. He attended Public School 99—where Irish teachers were reputed to let little Christian pupils out early, while keeping the Jewish kids after class, so they would be late for Hebrew school—and then Midwood High School. He mainly excelled as an amateur magician and dreidel hustler, who spun the little lead top with a Hebrew letter on each of its four sides until the smoothed-down edges ensured that he knew which side would come up more often than not. As a college student, he dropped out of New York University before briefly attending the City College of New York. He explains the reasons for his college failures, alternatively, as being caught cheating in "a delicate situation with the Dean's wife" or misbehavior during a metaphysics final ("I looked into the soul of the boy sitting next to me"). Despite his love affair with New York, he also did not absorb much of the city's high culture: "I didn't go to a play until I was about eighteen years old, almost

never went to a museum, and never read at all” (Whitfield 1986).

Yet despite, or because of, the limitations of his education, Allen developed a persona very much in the tradition of Jewish humor. First, in his comedy monologues and early films like *Take the Money and Run* (1969), he was the *nebbish*—a comic nonentity. But then he graduated to the role of shlemiel—the failure with a brain and a sense of humor—playing an Americanized version of Menashe Skulnik of the Yiddish theater. His great achievement, in the words of Andrew Heinze, “was to take the heroic little man of American comedy (Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin) and make him a verbally heroic little man, unafraid of publicizing the angst within” (Heinz 2004).

Allen’s breakthrough film, *Annie Hall*, infused Jewish content into the very non-Jewish tradition of great film romantic comedies going back to the 1930s. Perhaps for the first time in American popular culture, Allen’s alter ego, Alvy Singer, broke with the history of Jewish comedians, who never played Jews, in order to recast the traditionally suspect male Jewish fascination with the *shiksa*, or blonde goddess, into an eccentric yet popular love story. Through Allen, Philip Roth’s Portnoy thereby entered the American mainstream as a romantic hero rather than just a comic foil—with his love interest, a proper midwestern middle-class WASP, replacing Portnoy’s nymphomaniac “monkey.” Alvy gives his rueful experience a Jewish frame of reference from the first—when he invokes Sigmund Freud and Groucho Marx (applying Groucho’s crack that “I wouldn’t want to be a member of any club that would have me” to his own “relationships with women”)—to the last, when he ends the film with another Jewish joke (Whitfield 1999). In a flashback, Alvy rejects the plea of his first wife, Allison Portchnik, to come to bed because he prefers to read the Warren Commission Report on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. When she protests that he is rejecting her, Alvy responds: “She’s right! . . . She was beautiful. . . . She was real intelligent.” Alvy is once again spurning in the person of the Jewish feminine “any club” that would want him as a member.

The film’s dramatic centerpiece is the contrast of Thanksgivings at the two homes: the WASPiness of Annie’s ham-consuming family, including Grammy Hall’s hostile gaze at the visiting “real Jew” Alvy, who for a moment is transformed into a Hasidic rabbi, in contrast to the

Singers’ frenetic, noisy digestion of the family brisket. Yet underlying the Halls’ blandness is the craziness of Annie’s clean-cut brother Duane, who brags over dinner of 4H-Club activities, yet later tells Alvy that he contemplates suicide by car crash. The Singers, on the other hand, are redeemed by their honesty and vitality. Annie’s triumph is that—mentored by Alvy—she proves capable of outgrowing her own background, symbolized by her going on her own to see the film *The Sorrow and the Pity*. Alvy’s tragedy is that—the victim of his insecurity and inability to combine sex with love in the same object—he is not capable of outgrowing his. His is a twinned Freudian and Jewish-American tragicomedy.

Allen began exploring the love-and-death theme with his film *Love and Death* (1975), his comic take on a Jewish peasant in czarist Russia. In the 1980s, he continued the exploration in the melodramatic mode with *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986) and *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989). In *Hannah*, Allen plays a secondary character, Mickey Sachs, who shocks his parents by converting to Catholicism—buying a crucifix, icons, white bread, and mayonnaise—yet ultimately rejects it as a “die now, pay later” religion. In *Crimes*, the centerpiece is a flashback to a *seder* meal at which the characters passionately debate what is evil and whether God punishes it.

*Crimes and Misdemeanors* tells the parallel stories of Judah Rosenthal, a successful ophthalmologist who pays to have his mistress killed to prevent her from revealing their affair, and Cliff Stern, a filmmaker who ultimately refuses to complete a documentary film glorifying the egomaniacal television personality Lester. Cliff along the way falls in love with the film’s producer, Halley, who rejects him because he is married. When Cliff divorces, Halley again rejects him and marries Lester. Cliff’s hero and mentor is the philosophy professor Louis Levy, who lost his whole family in the Holocaust, yet who still believes that “it is only we with our capacity to love that give meaning to the indifferent universe.” In the film’s finale at a Jewish wedding, Cliff meets Judah, who relates the plot of a film script in which an adulterer kills his mistress and gets away with it. Judah, at least in his own mind, had eluded God’s judgment without suffering the ravages of guilt. Cliff, on the other hand, refuses to abandon his Jewish ethical moorings.

Woody Allen’s paradox is that he is the chronic “outsider”—and critic of both American and Jewish cul-

ture—who yet has found ways to win “insider” celebrity and acclaim despite his complaints that he has never been adequately appreciated by greedy Hollywood studios and banal American audiences. Has Allen mellowed over the years, particularly in relation to his own American and Jewish roots? For the first time, he appeared in 2002, in the wake of 9/11, at the Academy Awards ceremony, urging that films be made in New York City. Yet his expatriate alienation seems to have reasserted itself, to judge from his observation in 2005 to *Der Spiegel*: “The history of the world is like, he kills me, I kill him—only with different cosmetics and different castings: so in 2001 some fanatics killed some Americans, and now some Americans are killing some Iraqis. And in my childhood, some Nazis killed Jews. And now, some Jewish people and some Palestinians are killing each other” (*Der Spiegel*, June 20, 2005).

Specifically regarding his Jewish roots, Allen initially made a living from jokes negatively stereotyping Jews, explaining how his parents, when he was kidnapped, “rented out my room,” and how “my grandfather, on his death bed, sold me his watch” (Telushkin 1992). In *Deconstructing Harry* (1997), he juxtaposed a tale of a Jewish retiree to Florida who admits that he literally cannibalized his first family with an encounter between Harry and his Zionist brother-in-law, in which Harry accepts the fact that Hitler killed six million Jews because he knows that “records are made to be broken.” Yet more recently, Allen waxed more philosophical about his own Jewishness: “I’m not a religious person, but in the Jewish families that I’ve known and grew up in there were certain social values that were common to them—appreciation of theater, of classical music, of education, certain professions like medicine, law. When that appears in your comedy, it has the patina of Jewish humor” (Fox 2001).

Yet here also he regressed from mellow to mawkish in his rationalization—regarding the scandal over his romance with the teenage adopted daughter of his longtime companion Mia Farrow—that he learned from “all the reading I’d done through my life on the Holocaust. . . . Those who focused on what was actually happening to them—the daily horror . . . the reality of it—they survived” (Atzmon and Greenstein 2005). Then he mused to a *Washington Post* reporter, comparing his own declining virility and prospective mortality to the experience of the Holocaust: “You do the best you can within the concentra-

tion camp. If you face reality too much, it kills you. . . . It’s just an awful thing, and in that context you’ve got to find an answer to the question: why go on?” Leon Wieseltier offered this diagnosis: “So that’s it: nobody is coming upstairs to see his kvetchings. He isn’t getting laid and it’s Auschwitz. This is not what Primo Levi had in mind” (Wieseltier 2006).

Like the antihero of his pseudo-documentary *Zelig* (1983)—about the son of a Jewish actor who becomes a shape-changing chameleon, turning himself into a Hasid, a Christian, a black, and even a Nazi—Allen can neither reconcile himself to his Jewishness nor completely reject it, as he reverts to ambivalent form. Allen’s shape-shifting Jewish antihero personifies the Jews’ “long historical apprenticeship in cultural mimicry” (Stam and Showat 1985). *Zelig* in Yiddish means “blessed”—an ironic name in this context and a condition that Allen, to his credit, is honest enough not to claim for himself: “I’ve often said that the only thing standing between me and greatness is me” (Agence France Press 2005).

Harold Brackman

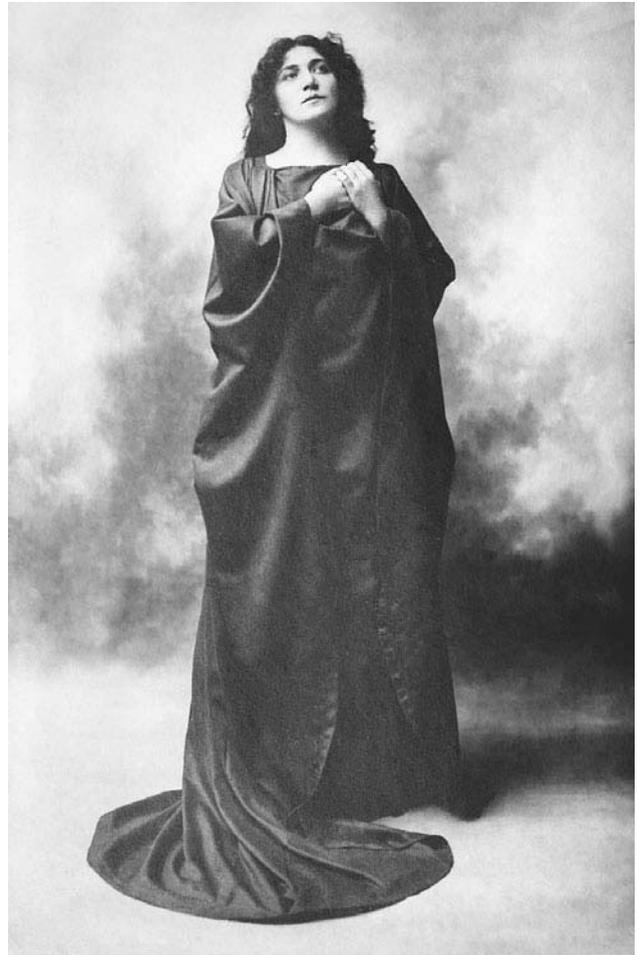
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## American Jewish Women Entertainers

Twentieth-century America offered women, including Jewish women, opportunities to perform in a public venue. The commercialization of entertainment, which turned home- and church-based music and theatrical productions into a for-profit business in the new cities, enabled women to sing, dance, and act for diverse audiences. Talented Jewish women displayed their skills on the Yiddish stage, many coming to New York's Lower East Side from Eastern Europe. Some had been veteran actresses in Warsaw, Lublin, or the many other cities with large Jewish populations. Stars such as Bertha Kalich and Bessie Thomashefsky performed throughout Eastern Europe and came to New York as established stars. Others, such as Molly Picon, born on the Lower East Side, won acclaim in the Yiddish theater in America. For many actresses, the Yiddish stage was their only outlet, and they worked happily on it for decades. Others were lured to the English-speaking entertainment world, and they measured their success by the acceptance they received from American audiences, of Jews and non-Jews alike.

Jewish entertainers in early twentieth-century America were also attracted to vaudeville and burlesque houses, the epitomes of secular mass culture, which arose just when the Jewish migration was in full swing. Like their Christian counterparts, Jewish women played stereotypical roles in the variety shows, serving as the butt of humor in comedy duos, as well as the singers and dancers in musical numbers. For comic purposes, all women were treated as simpleminded, guilty of malapropisms, naïve comments, and general silliness. As females and members of a minority group, Jewish women entertainers were doubly handicapped. But in private enterprise a Jewish woman with a large and loyal following was as valuable a commodity as a popular WASP entertainer. Generally, it was the daughters and granddaughters of the immigrants who played in vaudeville. As women, they had to subscribe to the gender role expectations of American culture: their physical appearance determined the role they played. Those with delicate features and slim bodies were favored as dancers and heroines. When amply built Sophie Tucker appeared on stage in her early years of performing, she had to don blackface to be seen comically, the only role open to a large woman. Her girth prevented her from being the appealing



*American Jewish entertainer Bertha Kalich performed in German, Yiddish, Romanian, and English. (Library of Congress)*

ingénue. Immigrant Jewish women with thick accents were rarely allowed on the American stage. When Bertha Kalich, an exception, made the transition to English in New York, critics noted that her accent was slight and therefore acceptable to American audiences.

Jewish women who ventured onto the vaudeville or musical theater stage had already left their traditional religious Jewish culture. They had moved into the larger world of New York City or Chicago or Philadelphia, shedding their Jewish identities, and sometimes changing their names to become acceptable to Gentile audiences. The closer they were to their immigrant past, the greater was the likelihood that they masked their origins. By the third generation, that is, by the post-World War II period, ethnicity was no longer a major stumbling block—as long as it was not highlighted. Still, there were some important exceptions. Sophie Tucker sang some Yiddish songs (usually

off-color ones) before her largely Jewish audience in the intimate setting of the new nightclubs in 1910s and 1920s New York and Chicago. Fanny Brice, who did not know Yiddish, learned to sing a song with a Yiddish accent, even performing it successfully in the Ziegfeld Follies, a very American, but Jewish-owned, venue. Ethnic humor, a regular feature of Fanny Brice's repertory, was acceptable to diverse audiences in the early decades of the twentieth century, when they consisted of people who were themselves within a generation of their European pasts.

Many considered appearing in public before mixed audiences, sometimes wearing flimsy costumes, inappropriate behavior for modest, observant Jewish women. Indeed, respectable society in the early twentieth century looked down upon women entertainers of all religions as having questionable morals. Performing removed women from the home, their traditional domain, and exposed them to the corrupt world. Like all entertainers, Jewish women entertainers strove for public recognition and success. Even those who spent their entire career in Yiddish theater sought fame and fortune, albeit in an environment that preserved their connection to secular Jewish culture. All women entertainers were pioneers, creating distinct, individual identities in an era when women had few public roles. The Jewish community, like most other ethnic communities, took pride in the successes of their talented singers and actors, though rabbis lamented the fact that more of their congregants went to the theater on Friday night than to the synagogue.

As the years passed, the Jewishness of Jewish American women entertainers became less and less evident—and less and less relevant to their work. While the Jewish press kept close watch on their favorite Jewish stars, the stars no longer played identifiably Jewish roles or starred in dramas about antisemitism or events in Jewish history. Many of the Jewish stars married Christian men and did not practice Judaism. Their connections to Judaism were tenuous at best. Thus this essay will focus on those who retained their identification with Judaism and/or Jewish American culture in their careers.

Bertha Kalich (1874–1939), born in Lemberg, Poland (then part of Austria-Hungary), displayed musical and dramatic talent at an early age. Encouraged by her mother, an ardent opera fan, she studied privately and at thirteen joined the chorus of the local Polish theater. Adept at languages, she eventually performed in German, Yiddish, Ro-

manian, and English. In 1890, she married Leopold Spachner, with whom she had two children. Four years later, they came to New York, where she performed at the Thalia Theater in a number of Yiddish plays. Beautiful and stately, she quickly developed a following, with women imitating her dignified mannerisms and elegant dress. Her growing fame attracted the attention of English producers, and in 1905 she appeared at the Manhattan Theater and other venues in English dramas. Her facility with languages probably enabled her to erase her accent easily. Ten years later, she returned to the Yiddish stage, where she continued to appear until the late 1920s, when poor health forced her to retire. While the actors in Yiddish theater were known for exaggerated gestures and over-the-top acting styles, Kalich was restrained and understated.

The dramas of the Yiddish theater were usually sentimental, romantic pieces, not known for their high art. The women were generally long-suffering and the men absent-minded or ineffectual. Indeed, Yiddish playwrights shared the same cultural role definitions as their Christian counterparts; men were patriarchs, and women were expected to be subservient and obedient. Comedy and musicals were more often found in Yiddish vaudeville houses, where a variety of acts closely resembled those in the English-language vaudeville shows. Molly Picon (1898–1992) won an amateur acting contest at age five and went on from there. Her natural athleticism and small stature contributed to her ease on the stage as a dancer, singer, and actress. Her sunny personality made her a favorite with audiences for many years. In the 1920s, she played at the Second Avenue Theater in New York, the most famous venue of all. With her husband Jacob Kalich, who wrote and directed many plays, over the years she developed a huge repertory of material that she performed repeatedly. In 1938, she starred in the last Yiddish movie made in Poland—*Mamele*—in which she played a twelve-year-old. She remained active, playing in a one-woman show, until just a few years before her death at ninety-four.

Sophie Tucker (1884–1966) was born in Russia but came to America when only three months old. Her family settled in Hartford, Connecticut, where they ran a kosher diner and rooming house. From an early age, despite her mother's disapproval, Sophie sang for the customers. Though she married at nineteen and had a son three years later, she yearned for the lights of New York and a career in show business. She fulfilled her dream by divorcing her

husband Louis Tuck and leaving her son with her mother. With neither conventional beauty nor a lovely voice, Tucker (she added the “er” to her married name), a large woman with a gravelly voice, used her considerable personality to deliver a song, often a bawdy one, to the delight of audiences in supper clubs, like Reisenweber’s in New York City. “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” and “I’m the Last of the Red-Hot Mammás” became staples in her repertory. Modeling herself after the popular African American blues singers, whose material was usually off-color, and capitalizing on audiences’ (including Jewish audiences’) love of the naughty, Tucker became a successful performer for decades. In 1925, Jack Yellen wrote “My Yiddishe Mamma” for her, a song that became part of all her performances. Tucker continued to perform in big city nightclubs until she died in 1966 at the age of eighty-two.

The new popular cultural media of the twentieth century offered opportunities for actresses to reach larger audiences. But the silent, and then sound, movies, as well as the radio, had new requirements that often led women to hide or erase their ethnicity. Being a Jewish woman was not a helpful or even a relevant attribute, except in some situations. *The Jazz Singer* (1927), for example, featured a Jewish family, who could be played by Jewish actors, although this was not essential. Indeed, directors wanted actors who could play any role. The performer’s ethnicity was not an asset in popular culture. Moreover, antisemitism remained widespread in 1920s and 1930s America, and the movie moguls, most of whom were assimilated Jews, were not interested in promoting their kinswomen. They counseled discretion and name changes. Accordingly, Theodosia Goodman, a nice Jewish girl from Philadelphia, became Theda Bara in silent film. Depicting her as exotic, Hollywood presented her in ornate costumes and striking makeup.

One of the most successful woman entertainers whose Jewish persona was at the core of her success was Gertrude Berg (1899–1966). Born in New York City, she was an only child, whose family ran a resort hotel in the Catskill Mountains. Gertrude spent every summer there and at an early age began to write and produce skits for the amusement of the guests. After graduating from high school, she took playwrighting courses at Columbia University. In 1919, she married Lewis Berg, with whom she had a son and a daughter. By the late 1920s, she was trying to get her story ideas accepted by radio executives. Finally, in 1929, she

convinced the NBC Blue Network to air the first Goldberg family show. Berg starred in “The Rise of the Goldbergs,” which remained on the air for five years. In 1934, she went on tour with the show, and in 1938 persuaded CBS to broadcast it. The program lasted seven years. With television making its debut after the war, Berg sought to move her well-known show to the new medium. In 1949, it became one of the first radio comedies to make a successful transition to television, where it lasted for five seasons.

The character Gertrude Berg created, Molly Goldberg, was a warm, maternal figure who used common sense and chicken soup to solve the various domestic crises that arose in a normal family. With her husband Jake, children Rosalie and Sammy, and boarder Uncle David, she negotiated the everyday struggles of an urban family who only happened to be Jewish. Although she cultivated a Yiddish accent, using Yiddish-inflected rhythms and expressions such as “oy” and “nu,” Molly’s basic approach was pragmatic American. References were made to Jewish holidays, and her Jewish neighbors in the Bronx apartment building where the family lived listened when she called “Yoo-hoo, Mrs. Bloom,” but her Jewishness served mainly as comic relief. Berg’s long popularity, however, testified to the public’s willingness to watch a second-generation Jewish American family adjusting to American life, confronting problems common to all Americans.

Fanny Brice (1891–1951) had a successful career on the musical stage as well as on the radio. Doing ethnic skits in the Ziegfeld Follies such as “I’m An Indian” endeared her to large audiences. Born in New York City to the Borach family, she changed her name to Brice to avoid the ethnic label. Her smooth, silky voice quickly brought her success, first in amateur contests as a child, then in musicals as a teenager, and eventually in the Ziegfeld Follies, where she was the headliner throughout the 1910s and 1920s. She learned an Irving Berlin song satirizing Salome of the many veils, and Berlin taught her to sing it with a Yiddish accent. It was a big hit, and as a result Brice developed many musical numbers and comic skits based on Jewish family culture. “Mrs. Cohen at the Beach” featured an anxious and possessive Jewish mother. In the “I’m An Indian” number, she is Rosie Rosenstein, a nice Jewish girl who had been captured by the Indians. In the 1930s, she developed the radio persona of a mischievous child, Baby Snooks, a character she had created many years earlier. In this guise, she remained a beloved figure until her death in 1951.

Perhaps the most spectacularly successful Jewish woman entertainer of the twentieth century is Barbra Streisand (b. 1942). A singer and actress who also became a film director, she has won awards for her performances on stage, for her recordings, and her roles in film. Beginning on Broadway as Miss Marmelstein in *I Can Get It for You Wholesale* in 1961, Streisand's extraordinary voice, her fine articulation, and her comic talents distinguished her from other aspiring performers. Her portrayal of Fanny Brice in the stage version of *Funny Girl* two years later enlarged her audience; five years later the film version won her an Oscar. Playing a Jewish singing star was the first of her many filmic portrayals of Jewish American women. Though Streisand did not only play Jewish heroines, she was one in her most memorable films, such as *The Way We Were* (1973), where she is a radical student activist in the 1930s and an advocate of social justice in the 1940s and 1950s; in *Yentl* (1983), where she plays a Jewish girl in Poland who masquerades as a boy so she can study Torah; in *The Prince of Tides* (1991), where she is a Jewish psychiatrist (who falls for a Gentile man and laments the fact); and in the 1996 *The Mirror Has Two Faces*, in which she is a college professor.

Jewishness is a factor in all of these movies, not merely an accident of birth and upbringing. The Streisand character in *The Way We Were* falls in love with the symbol of WASP power and beauty (played by Robert Redford), and the clash of cultures is a major cause of their ultimate divorce. In *The Prince of Tides*, the Nick Nolte character is the object of her affection, and she asks herself why she falls in love with inappropriate Gentile fellows. *Yentl* focuses on the clash within Judaism between the male-dominated Orthodox system of gender roles and the modern one. Thus, while Streisand's music does not deal with her Jewish American identity, many of her cinematic roles do. Streisand always insisted that her prominent nose, a stereotypical Jewish feature, was a part of her and not to be changed. Identified openly as a liberal Democrat, who has become more and more of a political activist, recently Streisand has studied the mystical tradition in Judaism.

Bette Midler (b. 1945) is another very popular concert singer and film star who has identified as a Jew in many of her public pronouncements, as well as in her use of old Sophie Tucker songs. It is primarily on talk shows and in concerts that she refers to herself as Jewish. Midler has written in her comic autobiography *A View from a Broad* (1980)

that being white and Jewish in Hawaii, where she grew up, was anomalous, and, she quipped, no one knew what it meant except that it had to do with liking boys. Beginning her career in 1965 by playing a small part in the stage production of *Fiddler on the Roof*, and then playing Tsaytl, Tevye's oldest daughter, on Broadway for several years, Midler went on to play at gay nightclubs, such as the Continental Baths in New York City, in the late sixties and early seventies. She developed her Divine Miss M persona, which included bawdy Tucker songs. In the 1980s, she made successful comedies, such as *Ruthless People* and *Down and Out in Beverly Hills*. In the 1990s she returned to the concert stage and toured the country with an updated version of her 1970s show. Her movie career ran into obstacles when she tried to star in melodramas, and her brief effort at television was unsuccessful. In the twenty-first century Midler has returned to the concert stage, leaving her movie career behind.

Although there have been other Jewish female characters on television, none has enjoyed the enduring popularity of Molly Goldberg. Valerie Harper as Rhoda Morgenstern was a Jewish woman yearning for marriage on "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," but there has not been a family comedy or melodrama openly featuring Jewish Americans since the Goldbergs. Perhaps that show represented the last time Jewish Americans qualified as an ethnic group on television. Since the 1970s, they have been displaced by African American families in situation comedies. Jewish Americans have been largely absorbed, for good or ill, into the American mainstream, and are no longer represented in popular culture as a distinct ethnic group. Consequently, Jewish American entertainers make little or no note of their religious or cultural background in presenting themselves to the American public.

June Sochen

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## Harry Houdini (1874–1926)

### Magician

Born Ehrich Weiss in Budapest, Hungary, Harry Houdini came to America when he was four. His father led a Reform Jewish congregation in Appleton, Wisconsin. But the Weisses were not spared the immigrant experience, moving to Milwaukee's slums when the rabbi lost his job, and on to New York tenements, where he resorted to selling his books to feed his six children. At eight Houdini was peddling newspapers and shining shoes; at twelve, he hopped a freight car, hoping to send money home. From then on he worked to support the family.

At his father's death in 1892, Houdini quit his job and set out to make his name. It was a bad time for breaking into show business—civic unrest, economic depression—but Houdini had an instinct for right choices. One was his marriage at twenty to Wilhelmina “Bess” Rahner (over her Catholic mother's strenuous objections). As a duo they performed magic tricks, mind-reading acts, song and dance and comedy routines wherever they could: beer gardens, dime museums, medicine shows, variety troupes, traveling circuses, carnival midways. It was a long and thorough apprenticeship; with the Escape Act Houdini discovered his calling. Beginning with handcuff releases, adding padlocks, leg irons, and chains (photographs show him trussed up with such devices like ornaments on a Christmas tree), he hit upon the Challenge Act: daring audiences to challenge *him*. He'd found his key—himself. Short, muscle-bound, with stubborn stocky bowlegs and kinky high-voltage hair, Houdini was compacted of energy, fueled by a fierce sense of competition and conquest. The stage was his arena and all else his adversary. When he combined locks with boxes, the Escape became a mini-melodrama and the Magician a Hero: “Nothing Can Hold Houdini.”



Magician Harry Houdini. (Library of Congress)

Rising to top billing as a variety act on the vaudeville circuit, Houdini set his sights higher. At the turn of the century he sailed for England and the Continent, accepting his own dare. The bet paid off. His Escape was an act of self-expression and an expression of his times. He was “The American self-liberator,” the Little Guy, the Challenger, the personification for the Old World of the chutzpah of the New. Who better than an immigrant—and a Jew—to advertise the label, “Made in America”? The tour would last five years.

Houdini returned home a celebrity in the age of celebrity. From 1906 to 1914 he toured his two worlds, escaping from contraptions ever-more elaborate (and bizarre)—submerged in coffins underwater; stuffed and sewn inside the carcass of a smelly “sea monster” or a giant football strung with padlocks; immersed in vessels filled to overflowing—and performing publicity stunts

ever-more daring—wriggling out of straitjackets suspended upside down from the tops of skyscrapers; leaping in anchors and manacles into cold murky rivers. Upping the ante is the imperative of show business. Houdini was returning to his circus roots: strong man, contortionist, acrobat, high-wire act, and all-around daredevil. “It was the easiest way to draw a crowd,” he wrote (Silverman 1996). The risk was the act.

World War I cut him off from half his audience. But it offered a respite from the Escape—for all the tricks and gimmicks, the secret compartments and trapdoors, it was physically grueling for a man now in his forties. Ascetic, abstemious, constantly in training, wasting little time in sleep, Houdini concentrated his relentless energies on the war effort: entertaining the troops with patriotic extravaganzas, raising money—more than a million—at Liberty Bond rallies; founding new fraternal and philanthropic organizations; funding Jewish causes; and helping down-and-out magicians. He was depleting his own funds. A novelty act himself, Houdini was fascinated by the new, whether adventure or invention (he holds the record for the first solo plane flight in Australia), and Hollywood had made the fortune of many a rabbi’s son. Starting out in serials, Houdini was soon producing, writing, and acting in his own feature films while keeping a cottage industry of ghostwriters going with his ideas for film scripts, magazine articles, short stories, and books: *The Right Way to Do Wrong*, *The Unmasking of Robert-Houdin*, *A Magician among the Spirits*. But the enterprise was his only failure; the movies competed with the magic.

Houdini was still “the greatest showman of them all,” the highest-paid performer in vaudeville, a household word. With an immigrant’s desire for legitimation and a serious interest in the history of magic, he amassed a vast collection of artifacts and memorabilia, now in museums and the hands of hosts of Houdini buffs. And, as often as he could, he bought back the books in his father’s library.

Times were changing. Audiences were changing. Vaudeville’s days were numbered. The Great War and the 1918 flu pandemic had left political turmoil, disillusion, and loss. Grief was a lucrative business for psychic mediums purporting to call up the spirits of the dead. Houdini’s lengthy campaign exposing the fraud was motivated in part by his sense of competition—he had never pretended to be more than “an actor playing the role of magician”—and in part by his own inconsolable grief for his

mother. But he was also battling the isolationism, nativism, and superstition of a reactionary postwar America. Astonished at the antisemitism of the Old World, he was encountering it in the New: death threats, hate mail, attacks as a Communist, an agent of the pope, a “Judas,” a Jew (Silverman 1996).

He died at fifty-two, on Halloween, after giving a final performance in a high fever, with a broken ankle and a burst appendix. The crowds that had mobbed the streets to watch his escapes thronged to their hero’s funeral. Houdini had aspired to nothing less than legend. His secret was not what he did but what he was—the force of his personality. Not captured on film, never more to be recorded, it must have been magic. To this day his name still stands for the thing.

Bette Howland

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## Al Jolson (1886–1950)

### Performer

In the 1910s and 1920s, Al Jolson was one of the most popular performers of the American stage. His minstrel character was as recognizable to audiences as Charlie Chaplin’s Little Tramp. Scholars consider his debut film, *The Jazz Singer* (1927), to be the birth of the talking motion picture. Jolson’s career bridged nineteenth-century minstrelsy and vaudeville and the twentieth-century media of sound and screen, and his career signals the advent of Jews as major participants in the American entertainment industry.

In 1886, Asa Yoelson was born to Rabbi Moshe Reuben and Naomi Yoelson in Serezzius, Lithuania. In 1890, in the wake of a plummeting East European economy and increased antisemitism, Rabbi Yoelson came to the United States in search of work. Four years later he sent for the rest of his family to join him in Washington D.C., where he had found a position as the rabbi of the Orthodox Talmud Torah Congregation. Even after Rabbi Yoelson



*Al Jolson entertains U.S. troops at Pusan Stadium, Korea in 1950. (National Archives)*

found a congregation, he had to supplement his income with rabbinical odd jobs. Shortly after her migration to America, Naomi died.

In 1899, Asa performed for the first time as a street urchin in the stage production of Israel Zangwill's *The Children of the Ghetto*. He earned 25 cents per show for three shows before Rabbi Yoelson discovered his son's clandestine stage career and stopped it. Perhaps Asa's older brother, Hirsh, who had recently run away to New York to try his luck in the theater, had turned the rabbi against show business. But nothing could keep Asa from performing. He and Hirsh began to serenade the customers of the Hotel Raleigh with the latest popular tunes. "We knew all the popular songs," Hirsh remembered thirty years later: "Sweet Marie, The Sidewalks of New York, Maggie Murphy's Home, Daisy Bell, Say Au Revoir but Not Good-By—

but we found that some of the songs which the gray-haired statesmen and jurists liked best were old ones that carried them dreaming back into the past—Suwanee River, Old Kentucky Home, and When You and I Were Young, Maggie" (Alexander 2001). At age eleven, Asa ran away from home with a tiny carnival called Rich & Hoppe's Big Company of Fun Makers.

Asa moved from carnival show to burlesque house to dime museum, up and down the Eastern seaboard. Usually his job was to "plug" songs from the audience to induce a sing-along for established acts. Occasionally he took the stage himself. At fourteen he was established enough in show business for his face to grace the cover of a piece of sheet music, and he was billed as Al Joelson. Still, Al often turned up at his father's home penniless and unwashed.

In the fall of 1904, Asa settled into the medium of minstrelsy. While still billing themselves as Joelson & Joelson, Al and his brother appeared in a skit, “A Little of Everything,” which included the part of a hospital orderly. The part was probably written specifically for blackface, since service positions were typical minstrel roles. Al found himself particularly adept at playing in blackface. It was for this act that Joelson changed his stage name to Jolson (Goldman 1988).

Jolson worked exclusively in blackface for the next five years. He traveled from carnival gig to burlesque house, sometimes with his older brother Harry, sometimes without, while he developed his minstrel performance and honed his comic timing. In 1908 Jolson played Portland, Oregon, where Lew Dockstader and his Minstrels were also playing. Upon seeing Jolson perform, Dockstader offered Jolson a position in his troupe. Lew Dockstader’s Minstrel show of 1908–1909, in which Jolson participated, parodied the current fad of the rich to make expeditions to the North Pole. Its second act began in “Boo Hoo Land,” a black jungle paradise into which stumbled the provincial explorers Professor Hightower (Lew Dockstader) and his scrawny assistant Acie (Al Jolson). These explorers—inexplicably both in blackface—soon find themselves in the tribal soup pot. By February 1909, after Dockstader’s Minstrels played a week at Springer’s Grand Opera House in New York, Jolson was blessed by *Variety*, already the premier magazine of the theater: “As it stands now, Jolson’s offering is capable of holding down a place in any vaudeville show” (Goldman 1988).

Critics and fans soon learned Jolson’s name. When Dockstader’s show closed in 1909 for the summer, Jolson began to tour on the vaudeville circuit. The step from minstrel troupe to vaudeville was immense, for even vaudeville was considered highbrow compared to troupe minstrelsy. Jolson’s crowning vaudeville appearance took place at Hammerstein’s Victoria for a Monday matinee on December 27, 1909. Long famous as the premier vaudeville theater, the Victoria on Monday afternoons housed mainly a show business audience. Fellow performers, producers, and managers went there to scout the best vaudeville talent. To have arrived on Oscar Hammerstein’s stage for a Monday show after only a few months on the vaudeville circuit was a testament to both Jolson’s comic gift and his ambition.

The producers Jake and Lee Shubert eventually gave Jolson his breakthrough Broadway role in their musical

comedy *La Belle Patee*. Jolson took the stage as Erastus Sparkler, described as “a colored aristocrat from San Juan Hill, cutting a wide swath in Paris.” This made Jolson the first to perform minstrel comedy in what was then called the legitimate theater. The show was written by Frank Tours and Jerome Kern (the latter would go on to write *Showboat*, the groundbreaking musical about miscegenation), and starred such top talent as Melville Ellis and Stella Mayhew as the mulatto maid, who performed a duet with Jolson:

*Jolson:* Never going back again to Yankee land.

*Mayhew:* Got a lot of customs there that I can’t stand.

*Jolson:* Like hanging a coon.

*Mayhew:* Working in June.

*Both:* Hunting chicken thieves night and noon.

*Jolson:* Don’t know how to treat us colored gentlemen.

*Mayhew:* Call us colored ladies “wenches” now and then.

*Both:* There’s one place for the race.

This song, “Paris Is a Paradise for Coons,” announced Jolson’s presence on Broadway, although the *New York World* introduced him erroneously as Al Johnson (Goldman 1988).

Though the Mayhew-Jolson duet received praise from critics, the show was generally panned. It was four hours long, and its plot was loose even by vaudeville standards, let alone for fancy Broadway. Audiences expected more from a Shubert production. Even with extensive revisions, the second night was no better. On the third night Jolson took extraordinary measures. He addressed the audience directly and without a script, in vaudeville fashion:

Lot of brave folks out there. Either that, or you can’t read. Come to think of it, after the reviews we got, there’s a lot of brave folks up here on the stage. Hey, I know you. You was in the audience the last time I played Brighton Beach. You used to like my act. What’s the matter, you come into this classy joint you think you shouldn’t have a good time? C’mon, this place ain’t so much. I remember when it was the Horse Exchange. That’s better—now I got a few songs to sing, if you’ll listen (Sieben 1962).

According to all reports and biographies, the third night made Jolson’s career. He went on to two full decades in theater without a single flop. According to Jolson’s best biographer, Herbert G. Goldman, in the next decade Jolson would perfect his stage character Gus in various Broadway

roles, including “a gondolier, Robinson Crusoe’s Man Friday, Inbad the Porter in the age of Sinbad, and Bombo, Christopher Columbus’ black navigator” (Goldman 1988).

Jolson became so successful that, at the height of his stage career, he took out an ad in the 1919 New Year’s issue of *Variety*: “Everybody likes me. Those who don’t are jealous! Anyhow, here’s wishing those that do and those that don’t a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year—Al Jolson” (Sieben 1962). Detractors often cite such conduct as evidence of Jolson’s egomania. In fact, no mania is evident. In the same year that Jolson took out his ad there were two big musical comedy productions in America, Ziegfeld’s *Follies* and the Shuberts’ *Sinbad*. For the *Follies* of 1919, its classic year, Florenz Ziegfeld had enlisted a legion of talent including Eddie Cantor, Will Rogers, Bert Williams, Fanny Brice, Van and Schenck, Marilyn Miller, Anne Pennington, and the mordantly brilliant W. C. Fields. The Shuberts had only one star—Al Jolson. Alone, Jolson stood fast and favorably against the entire cast of the *Follies*, as he had for each year in the preceding decade in every musical comedy in which he appeared. Much of Jolson’s appeal can be traced to his stage presence and comic timing, which by all accounts were flawless. Yet it was also Jolson’s ability to deliver a song that made him a star. Among the numbers Jolson introduced in *Sinbad* were “Swanee,” “Rock-a-Bye Your Baby with a Dixie Melody,” and the melody by which he has been known since, “My Mammy.”

Samson Raphaelson, an undergraduate at the University of Illinois, went to see Al Jolson star in “Robinson Crusoe, Jr.” Sometime in the course of the show, Raphaelson claimed he had an epiphany: “My God, this isn’t a jazz singer,” he realized. “This is a cantor!” (Alexander 2001). The image of the blackfaced cantor remained in Raphaelson’s mind until he wrote a short story, “The Day of Atonement,” a fictionalized account of Al Jolson’s life. Shortly after its publication, Jolson read the short story and decided that a comedic version of it, starring himself, would look good on the screen. D. W. Griffith, director of *Birth of a Nation*, agreed that the stage’s most celebrated talent should work in film, and Griffith considered directing the picture himself. Ultimately he dropped that idea because even he considered the story “too racial,” by which he meant its subject was too Jewish. As Jolson looked for a studio and director to film his biography, he found that most of Hollywood agreed with Griffith. For modern

movie audiences “The Day of Atonement” was too Jewish. Raphaelson turned his short story into a dramatic play, which he called *The Jazz Singer*, and brought it to Broadway on September 15, 1925. For the next two years it performed successfully to mostly Jewish audiences.

Meanwhile, four Jewish brothers, Sam, Harry, Albert, and Jack Warner, had successfully premiered Vitaphone technology to an audience of industry elites in 1926 with a film short, *Don Juan*. But the new technology was not yet proven before paying audiences. Because the Warners made two Vitaphone feature films that flopped after the premier of *Don Juan*, they knew that the new and expensive technology required a perfect vehicle. Yet, for many reasons, *The Jazz Singer* was not a sure hit. For one, Warner Brothers originally signed George Jessel, the virtually unknown lead of the Broadway production, to star. Even Sam Warner’s later hiring of Jolson did not assure the film’s success. Jolson’s experience was entirely in stage comedy, and *The Jazz Singer* was a drama. Jolson’s name had never sold a single movie ticket.

Moreover, D. W. Griffith was right. The subject matter of *The Jazz Singer* was indeed “racial.” Some film companies enjoyed moderate success with ethnic themes targeted at ethnic audiences, although this practice was less popular in the 1920s than it had been earlier. Warner Brothers, however, achieved most of its previous successes by producing movies with universal appeal; *Rin Tin Tin* was by far its largest grossing picture before 1927. The explicit theme of the film is the conflict of competing ethnic musics. Specifically, *The Jazz Singer* compares the liturgical music of Jews and the imagined music of African Americans. Prayer and jazz become metaphors for Jews and blacks.

The movie was an enormous success with gentile and Jewish audiences alike. In its review of *The Jazz Singer*, the *Morgen Zhurnal* (*Morning Journal*) spoke characteristically for all the Jewish papers. “Is there any incongruity in this Jewish boy with his face painted like a Southern Negro singing in the Negro dialect?” a critic asked. “No, there is not. Indeed, I detected again and again the minor key of Jewish music, the wail of the Chazan, the cry of anguish of a people who had suffered. The son of a line of rabbis well knows how to sing the songs of the most cruelly wronged people in the world’s history” (Diner 1977). African American music, according to another article, “was born on the plantations of the South and in [it] one can hear the cracks

of slave-drivers’ whips and the clanging of chains and the pain of expression” (Diner 1977).

East European Jews, many of whom had come from the bleak Russian Pale, believed they were uniquely qualified to interpret that music. Al Jolson himself made the comparison of Jewish and African American exiles in his film *Big Boy*. On the lawn of a plantation, in overalls, burnt cork, a wig of wool, and a broken hat of straw, Jolson leads a group of recently freed slaves, played by African American actors, through verses of the classic slave spiritual “Go Down Moses.” Exile was the shared sacred history to which the *Kalifornia Yidishe Shtime* (*California Jewish Voice*) referred in its praise of Jolson’s blackface performance: “In every fluctuation of Jolson’s voice, and in the smallest movement of his body, there is such religious tragedy that a shiver courses through the bones” (Alexander 2001).

That same newspaper posited a larger meaning to Jolson’s minstrelsy: “When one hears Jolson’s jazz songs, one realizes that jazz is the new prayer of the American masses, and Al Jolson is their cantor. The Negro makeup in which he expresses his misery is the appropriate *talis* for such a communal leader” (Alexander 2001).

*The Jazz Singer* made film a legitimate subject for review to some Jewish papers. Many motion pictures and reviews followed. Jolson did well in some, not so well in others. His last starring role was in *The Singing Kid* (1936); American perceptions of minstrelsy had changed during the Depression and thus ended Jolson’s career.

Jolson sang for troops in World War II, and, due to his resurging popularity, a movie was made about his life, *The Jolson Story* (1946), in which Jolson himself dubbed the songs for star Larry Parks. The film’s success resulted in a sequel, *Jolson Sings Again* (1949). Jolson also entertained troops in Korea, after which he died of a heart attack in San Francisco, on October 23, 1950.

Michael Alexander

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## Samuel “Roxy” Rothafel (1882–1936)

### Co-creator of the Movie Palace Experience

Radio broadcasting pioneer, showman, filmmaker, author, and co-creator of the movie palace experience, Roxy Rothafel transformed moviegoing into grand entertainment. Theaters around the world are named for him.

Samuel Lionel “Roxy” Rothafel was born in Germany in 1882 and immigrated to the United States in 1886. He grew up in the lumber town of Stillwater, Minnesota, the son of a poor Jewish cobbler. By the turn of the century, Roxy had joined the hordes of immigrants in New York City searching for something that a man with dreams, but little education or training, could accomplish. He enlisted in the Marines (1901–1905), where he found the discipline and skills he would use to build his empire.

After his service ended, he became a traveling bookseller and a semipro baseball player in northeastern Pennsylvania. It was on the baseball diamond that his famous nickname was coined.

He opened his first movie house, the Family Theatre, in 1908 in a large room behind a Forest City, Pennsylvania, tavern. Although his clientele were mostly coal miners and their families, Roxy insisted on bringing high-class films, vaudeville, and musical acts to the Family Theatre that were often in stark contrast to the offerings at many contemporary nickelodeons.

By 1910, Benjamin F. Keith hired Roxy to add motion pictures to his vaudeville theaters and to enhance their presentation, from interior decoration to the ushers’ appearance. The following year, he converted the 3,000-seat Alhambra Theatre in Milwaukee, formerly used for “legitimate” productions, into the largest venue in the country dedicated solely to motion pictures. Roxy next made over the 1,700-seat Lyric Theatre in Minneapolis, thereby attracting the middle class to both theaters. By the time he left the Lyric in mid-1913, patrons included prominent members of the city’s academic, legislative, business, religious, and cultural elite (including the state’s governor), all now supporters of this once shunned medium.

Roxy left each theater more elegant and yet more accessible to the lower and middle classes than it had been. A Roxy theater offered carefully selected motion pictures with classical musical accompaniment, professionally



Samuel "Roxy" Rothafel, a creator of the modern movie palace, seated in Capitol Theater in New York, ca. 1923. (Library of Congress)

managed and dressed ushers, a meticulous staff, and magnificent theater—all with the goal of providing as fine a performance as at the symphony, at a price everyone could afford.

His marriage of fine music, better films, and a staff that treated even its poorest patron the same way it did the governor sitting only a few rows away enabled Roxy to democratize culture, wresting it from the hands of the elite and making it available to all. Roxy, and the contemporaries he influenced like Marcus Loew, William Fox, and Balaban & Katz, spent the next two decades hiring conductors, musicians, opera singers, dancers, and choreographers who were every bit as talented, if not more so, than those who worked in posh society venues.

He was not the only showman working to elevate motion pictures and motion picture theaters, but by 1913 he

was certainly the best known within the industry. He moved to New York City's Regent Theatre in November 1913, to the city's Strand in 1914, to the Knickerbocker in 1915, to the Rialto in 1916, and managed both the Rivoli and Rialto from 1917 to 1919, always guided by an unrelenting desire to elevate the lives and cultural education of people with backgrounds similar to his own. "I have little interest in the exclusive few," he told the journal *Etude*, in 1927. "My work must reach all or none."

Roxy increased the size of his orchestra at each successive venue he managed, and soon pioneered, along with his West Coast counterpart, Sidney Patrick Grauman, the prologue, a short stage performance, usually with a thematic and/or stylistic connection to the feature film presented. Prologues later grew in size and scale to become full-blown stage shows, a cornerstone of the movie palace experience.

*The Hollywood Reporter's* W. R. Wilkerson noted in 1936, "He created the presentation house, the picture stage show; he brought into movie theaters the big concert orchestras, the ballets, the concert and opera singers. Every important feature of motion picture presentation in the theater today was the inspiration of Roxy."

With America's entry into World War I, Roxy devoted much of his time to encouraging enlistment and patriotic vigor, stationing Marines at the entrances of his theaters and even incorporating them into his stage shows. He reenlisted in the Marine Corps Reserves and directed and/or edited several war films for the Committee on Public Information.

After leaving the Rialto and Rivoli in January 1919 for an ill-fated attempt at producing motion pictures, Roxy returned to exhibition, managing the Park Theatre in Manhattan and, for Samuel Goldwyn, the California Theatre in Los Angeles. By June 1920, Roxy was back in Manhattan to revive the 5,300-seat Capitol Theatre where, to boost its sagging box office, he lowered the theater's ticket prices, expanded its orchestra and stage shows, and added foreign films and documentaries to its repertoire, making it the country's highest-grossing movie theater.

During specific holidays Roxy would incorporate religious hymns, like "Kol Nidre," into the Capitol's live entertainment. Jewishness, however, remained a secular component of his life, and he viewed religious services and songs as just another element of entertainment. Roxy, like Fox, Loew, and other Jewish moguls, would become increasingly active in Jewish charities and organizations.

His position as the industry's most prolific motion picture exhibitor was further solidified when he began broadcasting the Capitol's live performances over radio station WEAJ in November 1922. In February 1923, he constructed a special recording studio inside the theater for his cadre of performers, now known as *Roxy and His Gang* (one of the first variety shows on radio), which was soon picked up by stations across North America. Thanks in part to "Roxy and His Gang's" instant popularity, the variety show format became a mainstay on radio for decades, and later on television. With millions of adoring fans from Cuba to Canada, "Roxy and His Gang" frequently toured North America to raise money for charity and were greeted by parades and an invitation to the White House.

Roxy co-wrote *Broadcasting: Its New Day*, began a nationally syndicated newspaper column, and was named

president of the Radio Announcers of America—all in 1925. He soon became a pitchman as well, appearing in ads for grape juice, cigarettes, radios, and other products.

Given his influence and fame (his broadcasts reached an estimated 10 million listeners at their peak), he was offered the management of a new movie palace that was to be named for him, the 5,920-seat Roxy Theatre, whose opening on March 11, 1927, marked the pinnacle of the movie palace era. With its cavernous auditorium and rotunda, its battalion of well-drilled ushers, its ever-expanding stage shows, and its 110-piece orchestra and 110-member chorus, the Roxy Theatre exemplified the excess emblematic of the era. Less than two weeks after its debut, the theater was purchased by William Fox for \$15 million.

Roxy was lured away in 1931 to manage two new theaters at Rockefeller Center: the 5,960-seat vaudeville-only Radio City Music Hall and a 3,500-seat movie house, the RKO Roxy Theatre. A new troupe of Roxyettes was commissioned for the Music Hall by the group's founder, Russell Markert, who had initially brought them to the original Roxy Theatre. (These precision dancers live on as the Rockettes.)

Radio City's opening night on December 27, 1932, was a critical disaster, and Roxy, gravely ill at the time, left the theater on a stretcher. He returned two days later to oversee the opening of the RKO Roxy Theatre before reentering the hospital for surgery. He rejoined Radio City in April 1933, but with his responsibilities and salary cut in half, he resigned in January 1934.

A subsequent unprofitable tour of "Roxy and His Gang" at Paramount's deluxe movie houses was followed by yet another failure when he reopened the 4,300-seat Mastbaum Theatre in Philadelphia that December, only to have it close ten weeks later. Sound motion pictures, coupled with the Depression, had made Roxy's brand of stage show and orchestral extravagance passé and often fiscally untenable. (Roxy blamed the failure on a local cardinal who forbade parishioners to attend any movie theater in Philadelphia.)

His radio efforts were now the lone bright spot in his life, with "Roxy and His Gang" appearing on the CBS radio network for a one-year engagement that began in September 1934, each week adding to the seven million fan letters he had collected during his thirteen years on the radio.

In January 1936, NBC and CBS began vying to bring Roxy back on the air for a new radio show, while Paramount

was negotiating to reinstall him as managing director of the original Roxy Theatre. Days away from returning to the institutions he loved most, he fell asleep on January 12 and never awoke. He was fifty-three.

Today, his famous nickname still adorns the marquees of hundreds of unaffiliated theaters and nightclubs throughout the world, extending the brand name that has come to embody the very word *entertainment*.

Ross Melnick

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## Sammy Davis Jr. (1925–1990)

Singer, Dancer, Entertainer

Sammy Davis Jr. was one of America's most beloved entertainers in the second half of the twentieth century. He was a singer, dancer, and comedian, a star of vaudeville, Las Vegas nightclubs, Broadway, and Hollywood. His conversion to Judaism, his many relationships with white women, and his strained rapport with the American black community made him controversial in his time.

Sammy Davis Jr. was born into an entertainment family in Harlem, New York. His parents soon separated, and at age eleven Davis joined his father and Will Mastin to form the Will Mastin Trio, the vaudeville team with which Davis worked for the next quarter of a century. All three performers played in blackface occasionally, which was normal for black performers of the time, but Davis was particularly adept at the practice since he enjoyed mimicking the act of Al Jolson, one of his heroes.

As a teenager, Davis became an expert dancer and comedian. By all accounts he had tremendous energy and did not want to leave the stage at evening's end. His shows were characterized by manic and impromptu dance numbers interspersed with songs and comic impressions of Hollywood actors. These became the mainstay of his long career.

After service in the U.S. Army during World War II, Davis returned to the Will Mastin Trio and became its lead. Davis found his first national recognition as the opening act for a tour by Mickey Rooney. In 1952, the Will Mastin Trio became regulars on television's *The Colgate Comedy Hour*, hosted by Eddie Cantor. During this time Davis became lifelong friends with many Jewish performers, including Jerry Lewis and Tony Curtis.

The reasons for Davis's conversion to Judaism in 1954 remain obscure. During the summer of that year, Davis read a history of the Jews and found himself moved by their story. Soon after, in a car accident near San Bernardino, California, Davis badly damaged his eye. According to Davis's account of his conversion experience, after the accident he realized that he had not been carrying a mezuzah given to him by Eddie Cantor. Then, just before surgery to remove his eye, actress Janet Leigh pressed a Star of David into his hand. All of this prompted Davis to seek out Rabbi Max Nussbaum of Temple Israel, Los Angeles, for conversion procedures. For the next several years he was often seen around Los Angeles reading *Everyman's Talmud*. Jewish friends did not encourage the conversion or believe its sincerity. Tony Curtis thought the conversion "a bit gratuitous," while Jerry Lewis commented, "You don't have enough problems already?" (Haygood 2003). Nevertheless, Davis became a lifelong observer of the High Holidays and other Jewish practices. Indeed, it was as a Jew that Davis reproved a friend who had read a history of the Jews but remained unimpressed:

Baby, you'd better read it again. These are a swinging bunch of people. I mean I've heard of persecution, but what they went through is ridiculous. . . . They'd get kicked out of one place, so they'd just go on to the next one and keep swinging . . . , believing in themselves and in their rights to have rights, asking nothing but for people to leave 'em alone and get off their backs, and having the guts to fight to get themselves a little peace (Haygood 2003).

In 1960 Davis married Swedish actress May Britt in a home ceremony performed by Reform Rabbi William M. Kramer of Temple Israel, Hollywood. Britt had converted to Judaism several months before. This was only the latest relationship between Davis and a white woman in a series that had also included actress Kim Novak. Racists protested the marriage, while American Nazis picketed

Davis's shows with placards reading "Sammy Davis Jew-nior." In celebration of Lincoln's birthday the following year, Davis and his wife, along with other prominent blacks, were officially invited to a White House event. However, when President John F. Kennedy realized at the last minute that the mixed race couple had been invited, he refused to see them and had them escorted from the room before photographers arrived. Davis never forgot the slight and eventually cultivated a relationship with Richard M. Nixon, which further estranged Davis from the black community (Haygood 2003).

On Broadway, Davis is known principally for two shows. In *Mr. Wonderful* he played a nightclub entertainer. The play climaxed with Davis impersonating Al Jolson in blackface, which critics considered the show's highlight (Haygood 2003). *Golden Boy* also achieved longevity and much acclaim. In film he is best remembered for his portrayal of Sportin' Life in *Porgy and Bess*, and for his appearance with Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Peter Lawford, and Joey Bishop in *Ocean's 11*. In song Davis was known for his renditions of "I've Gotta Be Me," "The Birth of the Blues," and "Mr. Bojangles," the latter about the minstrel life. He considered "Mr. Bojangles" somewhat autobiographical and pursued the rights to record it for some time before he was finally permitted to do so.

Davis published two autobiographies and one essay about Hollywood. He died of throat cancer in Los Angeles. He received a Jewish funeral from Rabbi Allen Freehling.

Michael Alexander

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## American Jews and Science Fiction

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Jewish science fiction is a subcategory of the science fiction genre that explores the universe and humanity's place in it by using Jewish concepts, beliefs, and traditions. Although

science fiction is commonly seen as a literature of the future, it is in fact a literature of ideas and thus lends itself to the intellectual and inquiring tradition of Judaism.

Science fiction as a distinct literary genre can be dated to the creation by Hugo Gernsback of the magazine *Amazing* in 1928, although stories recognizable as science fiction predate Gernsback's magazine. Jewish characters and ideas have appeared in that literature since before Gernsback, although many of the stories contained little, if any, Jewish content beyond the inclusion of Jewish characters or artifacts drawn from Jewish folklore.

From the earliest days of science fiction as a defined literary genre, authors tackled Jewish themes and included Jewish characters in their works, although it would still be many years before those themes, whether based on *halacha* (Jewish law) or Jewish history, became integral to the story rather than added on for flavor. Similarly, Jews have written science fiction from the very beginning, although there was a large influx of contributors in the late 1930s and 1940s with the publication of works by Isaac Asimov, Lester del Rey, H. L. Gold, C. M. Kornbluth, Judith Merril, and Sam Moskowitz, among others.

For many people, Jack Dann's 1974 anthology *Wandering Stars* is the *aleph* and *tauf* of Jewish science fiction. However, science fiction acknowledged Jews and Jewish themes long before this.

Given the number of practitioners of science fiction who can be considered Jewish, from the nonpracticing Isaac Asimov to the orthodox Avram Davidson, it is not surprising that Jewish themes and Jewish humor have long pervaded the genre. Asimov, Judith Merril, and Harlan Ellison are among the more famous Jewish practitioners of science fiction, but a complete list of Jewish writers in the field would go on for pages. However, that a science fiction story is written by a Jew does not automatically make it Jewish, and a story written by a non-Jew may contain Jewish themes.

Jewish science fiction can be separated into four categories. The first, science fiction and fantasy that use Jewish characters or situations, is Jewish in name alone. The second, like the fiction and fantasy of the Borscht Belt, uses Jewish themes, characters, and tropes to create humor. The third category is that of wish fulfillment, wherein Jews, after centuries of oppression, have gained the ability to strike back. Finally, there is the serious Jewish science fiction and fantasy that use the tropes of the genre to study

questions of importance to Jews and possibly to other ethnic groups. Several works fall into more than one category.

### Type I: In Name Only

A story that includes nominally Jewish characters is not necessarily a Jewish story, just as the appearance of Jewish characters in television sitcoms does not mean the characters have a Jewish outlook on life (and frequently only appear Jewish when necessary). The early science fiction stories that added a Jewish character or artifact did not explore how its Jewishness affected the story. A cinematic example is *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. While the Ark is Jewish, nothing else about the film draws on Jewish tradition.

In his “Guardians of the Flame” novels, particularly the early ones, Joel Rosenberg introduces a Jewish character, Doria Perlstein. Although there are some vague references to her upbringing, the religious and cultural identity of the character is intrinsic neither to Doria’s actions nor to the plot. In his later works, such as the “Metzada” sequence or “The Keepers of the Hidden Way” series, the characters’ Jewishness becomes more important.

This type of Jewish presence occurs frequently in science fiction that is set in a historical period. Jews are added for a feeling of authenticity, but their religion and their associated outlook on life do not add anything to the story. As far as the story is concerned, these Jews could just as easily be Christians, Hindus, or aliens, depending on the scenario. In Orson Scott Card’s *Enchantment* (1999), a retelling of the story of Sleeping Beauty, the protagonist is a Jewish boy from New York who gets involved in an ancient curse. While his Jewishness adds an extra layer of intrigue, it is not essential to the plot or character. Jane Yolen’s retelling of the same fairy tale in *Briar Rose* (1992), on the other hand, uses Jewish themes in a much more integral manner, as her characters must contemplate how their Judaism defines them in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

### Type II: For Comic Effect

Often the Jewish content of a story is no more than a hook on which to hang Borscht Belt-style humor, as in Harry Turtledove’s “A Different Vein” (2000) or Adam-Troy Castro’s “The Curse of the Phlegmpire” (1996). Harlan Ellison’s “I’m Looking for Kadak” (1974) is based on *gilgul*

(reincarnation), but it is most notable for its inclusion of numerous Yiddish terms (and a glossary) used for comedic effect. Other Ellison stories, including “Mom” (1981) and “Go Towards the Light” (1997), also rely heavily on humor.

The story can be considered Jewish in the same way a Jackie Mason or Henny Youngman joke is labeled Jewish. It has grown out of the Jewish tradition, which can be traced back to the tales of Sholom Aleichem and Jewish oral usage. It is a style of telling a story that goes deeper than just the speech patterns associated with Brooklyn or Eastern European Jews. An instance of this is Avram Davidson’s “The Golem” (1955), which refers to Jewish folklore, but could just as easily refer to Frankenstein’s monster. Still, the speech patterns and the world-weary attitude of the Gumbainers clearly indicate the culture from which they came, as does their low-key method of dealing with the animated menace that appears before them.

Because of the obvious link of the golem to the Frankenstein story (although the moral of Rabbi Lowe’s tale is different from Shelley’s), it is not surprising that the golem recurs throughout science fiction and fantasy. Harry Turtledove’s “In This Season” (1992) tells the story of a Jewish family rescued by a golem during the Holocaust. In both the Davidson and Turtledove tales, the Jews are able to succeed because of their knowledge of Jewish folklore, whether in destroying or creating the clay guardian.

Another practitioner of the Jewish comedic tale is Mike Resnick. While his novel *The Branch* (1984) is a more serious book about the Jewish messiah, his short stories rely on Jewish humor to make their point. “The Kemosabee” (1994) mixes Jewish culture, American folk heroes, and the legend that the Native American tribes are descended from the lost tribes of Israel to deliver a punchline. “Mrs. Hood Unloads” (1991) uses the stereotypical Jewish mother of comedy routines to provide a humorous take on the Robin Hood story.

Woody Allen’s “The Scrolls” (1974), reprinted in *More Wandering Stars* (1981), relies on a rudimentary knowledge of the Bible and Jewish history, as well as recent archaeology, to parody the traditional interpretations of Biblical stories. Christopher Moore uses a similar technique in the novel *Lamb* (2002). Although *Lamb* focuses on the life of Jesus, it places the character (and his companion) in a well-researched Jewish milieu and shows their Jewish perceptions in just about everything they do.

### Type III: Wish Fulfillment

The greatest wish fulfillment stories are Joel Rosenberg's two-volume "Metzada" sequence, *Not For Glory* (1988) and *Hero* (1990). In these novels, Jewish mercenaries, who have long since left Israel, have developed a military culture that places them in high demand across the galaxy. They need never fear a reprise of the Holocaust, not only because they can defend themselves, but, for the right price or cause, they can go on the offensive. Just as science fiction in general is an extrapolation from modern theories, the Jews in these books are an extrapolation from the feats of the Mossad and the Israeli army in the sixties and seventies against overwhelming odds.

Susan Shwartz and S. M. Stirling both used Judaism as the basis for their stories in Jerry Pournelle's "War World" series. Like Rosenberg's volumes, these stories are set in a far future among Jews of an interstellar Diaspora. While they face overwhelming forces, in a race of genetically modified supermen, their HaBandari are pastoral peoples who prove themselves capable warriors when the need arises.

In contrast to Rosenberg's tales is Turtledove's "Next Year in Jerusalem" (2003), which posits a world in which the Jews have been driven from Israel and an Arab state has displaced the Jewish state. In this unsettling story, Jewish fighters return to the Holy Land in an attempt to reclaim it. While their ability may fall into the wish-fulfillment mode, most Jews, and certainly those who support Israel, will find the portrayal of the Jewish invaders appalling.

More than anything else, the Holocaust is the defining event of modern Jewish history. Without the Holocaust, it is quite possible that the quest for a Jewish state would be no further along than it was when Theodor Herzl espoused the idea in the late nineteenth century. Many of the science fiction and fantasy stories that focus on Jews do so in the context of alternative histories in which the Nazis won. This is the case in Martin Gidron's *The Severed Wing* (2000) and in time travel stories, such as J. R. Dunn's *Days of Cain* (1997) and Stephen Fry's *Making History* (1996), in which an attempt is made (with varying results) to change Hitler's success.

Rather than realizing desires for the Holocaust never to happen again, these tales are a wish fulfillment that the Holocaust had never occurred or that it could have been made less horrific. P. D. Cacek's short story "A Book by Its Cover" (2002) presents a method of ameliorating the ef-

fects of the Holocaust by enabling the salvation of individual Jews through fantastic means, while hewing closely to the view of Judaism as a religion of the Book.

### Type IV: Serious Issues

The science fiction stories that most strongly emphasize Jewishness are those examining what it means to be Jewish. Jack Dann's "Jumping the Road" (1992) explores a race of Jews on a distant planet removed from the rest of their coreligionists, calling to mind the Jews of Ethiopia or India. Similarly, "Kaddish for the Last Survivor" (2000), Michael Burstein's tale of a Holocaust survivor's granddaughter who is struggling with issues of assimilation, reflects on what it means to be Jewish, perhaps as no other story since William Tenn's "On Venus, Have We Got a Rabbi" (1974).

While the Holocaust is often at the core of stories of wish fulfillment, it has also been used to highlight questions of Jewish identity. Burstein's "Kaddish for the Last Survivor" indicates that the Holocaust has created a new urgency in the maintenance of a Jewish identity, for, if Jews forget who they are, the Nazis will have won. Philip Roth's *The Plot against America* (2004) places an antisemitic president in the White House during the rise of the Nazis; it considers what it means to be Jewish and what it means to be American, and which takes precedence in an increasingly hostile environment.

Burstein's "Kaddish for the Last Survivor" and Carol Carr's "Look, You Think You've Got Troubles" (1974) both take a serious look at intermarriage, one of the major issues of American Jewish identity. Both address the issue of a Jewish woman marrying a non-Jewish man, and, although they come to very different conclusions, both reaffirm a sense of Jewish identity.

Judaism, which existed long before Christianity, is much more than a rejection of Jesus. As Mike Resnick has frequently said, his novel *The Branch* was an attempt to show what a messiah based on the Old Testament would be like. By returning to the G-d of the Old Testament, and exploring how Judaism differs from Christianity, Resnick presents a messiah who is anything but the Christian prince of love.

Some authors explore serious issues other than identity and religion. In Israel several authors, who may be responding to recent events there and the radicalization of

Islam, warn of a takeover of Judaism and the country by the religious right. Such works include Yitzhak ben Ner's *HaMalachim Baim* (1987) and Amos Kenan's *HaDerech L'Ein Harod* (1984), dystopian novels similar to George Orwell's *1984* or Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, that sound the alarm of the consequences if events continue along their current path.

Non-Jewish authors Barry B. Longyear and Robert Zubrin have also looked at the Arab–Israeli conflict and have offered their own solutions in a science fiction setting. Longyear's *The Last Enemy* (1998), a sequel to his “Enemy Mine,” presents two races, humans and Drac, exploring how they resolve their differences. Longyear's novel provides an analog for the Jewish Bible and Talmud. Zubrin's more political satire addresses not only the conflict in Israel, but also the perceptions of Israeli actions.

W. R. Yates's novel *Diasporah* (1985) looks at the Jewish community after Israel has been destroyed. While Turtledove postulated an attempt to reclaim Israel in “Next Year in Jerusalem,” Yates sees a future in which even after the destruction of the Jewish state, the Jewish people are still being attacked, not just by Arabs, but by governments elsewhere in the world. The response is to turn to an Orthodox form of Judaism as they attempt to leave the solar system.

Other stories that focus on Jewish themes do so in a more lighthearted manner, partly because they are retellings of Jewish legends. Although these stories often feature golems, Jewish folklore is not only the province of golems, as seen in Lisa Goldstein's novel *Red Magician* (1993) or in the series of short stories by James Morrow, a non-Jew, “Bible Stories for Adults.”

Steven H. Silver

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## Isaac Asimov (1920–1992)

### Science Fiction Writer

The author, editor, or co-editor of nearly five hundred volumes of science fiction (SF) and popular science, Isaac Asimov also published books on literature, the Bible, history, and other topics. He was one of the three most influential science fiction writers in the world between 1940 and 1980 (the others were Robert A. Heinlein and Arthur C. Clarke). In 1977, his enormous popularity led to his name being used in the title of the new *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, which quickly became the field's leading market for short stories. Though his influence on other writers waned in his final years, several of Asimov's late novels achieved best-seller status.

Asimov was born in Russia, in the *shtetl* of Petrovichi, probably on January 2, 1920. His father was a relatively successful merchant who had a traditional Jewish education. The family immigrated to the United States in 1923, eventually settling into the American middle class. Asimov's father bought a candy store, and it was in the store's magazine racks that the writer-to-be discovered science fiction for the first time. Even though he had been bar mitzvahed, Asimov's father was not particularly religious, and the family did not keep kosher once they came to the United States. Asimov received little if any religious education and has variously described himself as a “freethinker” and a “second-generation atheist.”

Although he wrote many memorable short stories early in his career, including “Nightfall” (1941), “The Martian Way” (1952), and “The Ugly Little Boy” (1958), Asimov is best remembered for two series: his Foundation trilogy and its later sequels, and his many robot stories.

*Foundation*, *Foundation and Empire*, and *Second Foundation* first appeared between 1942 and 1953 as a series of magazine stories and truncated paperback volumes before being restructured in 1963 into a trilogy, as they are known today. They tell the story, heavily influenced by Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, of the latter years of a far-future galactic empire and of Hari Seldon, creator of the science of psychohistory, which can predict large-scale historical trends. Seldon envisions a plan, not to save the empire, but to limit the dark age that will follow its fall, and he sets up two organizations, the public Foundation and a secret Second Foundation, to carry out his work long after he is gone. Although static and talky by modern standards, the books addressed a variety of serious political, philosophical, and sociological issues on a level rarely seen in the genre at the time. They have never been out of print and in 1965 earned a Hugo Award, voted by hard-core science fiction fans as the best SF series of all time.

The robot series began with “Robbie” (1940). Then, in “Reason” (1941) and “Liar!” (1941), Asimov introduced one of the most influential concepts in the history of science fiction, the Three Laws of Robotics: (1) a robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm; (2) a robot must obey the orders given by human beings, except when such orders conflict with the First Law; (3) a robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law. These stories and others were reprinted in book form in *I, Robot* (1950) and in later collections, and there were also two early robot novels, both featuring a robot detective, R. Daneel Olivaw: *The Caves of Steel* (1954) and *The Naked Sun* (1957).

In both the Foundation and the robot stories Asimov explored the theme of reason versus irrationality, always coming down firmly on the side of the former. Politically, he was essentially a liberal technocrat. His fiction rarely, if ever, contained explicitly religious material, beyond the occasional use of a biblical quote for a title, as in “That Thou Art Mindful of Him” (1974), but the robot stories frequently served as vehicles for the implicit exploration and condemnation of both racial and religious prejudice. “The Bicentennial Man” (1976), in which a robot tries to overcome society's and its owners' irrational refusal to recognize it as a full-fledged person, develops this theme particularly well. Over a period of many years, as the technology becomes available, the story's robot protagonist lit-

erally has its machine parts replaced by organic ones, finally sacrificing its “positronic” computer brain for human gray matter, in effect giving up virtual immortality to gain full equality.

During the years between 1960 and 1980, Asimov published very little science fiction, concentrating almost exclusively on nonfiction. His one novel from this period, however, *The Gods Themselves* (1972), is widely recognized as the author's finest full-length work. Winner of both the Hugo and the Nebula Awards (the latter given by fellow SF writers), it focuses on a misguided, near-future attempt to end the energy crisis by pulling energy out of a parallel universe, in the process nearly destroying the fascinating alien species that lives there and humanity itself. The well-developed aliens are especially noteworthy because the author had previously studiously avoided writing about such beings in either of his major series.

In the 1980s Asimov returned to science fiction, writing such best-selling novels as *Foundation's Edge* (1982), *The Robots of Dawn* (1983), *Robots and Empire* (1985), and *Prelude to Foundation* (1988), in which he extended his two major series and tried, with mixed success, to tie them together. Although *Foundation's Edge* received another Hugo Award, the later novels are generally considered inferior to their predecessors. Asimov's prodigious output of fiction also included mysteries and children's novels, collaborating on many of the latter with his second wife, Janet. *The Complete Stories*, published in two volumes (1990–1992), is his definitive short story collection. He also edited or co-edited many dozens of short story anthologies, although in later years his less well-known collaborators, most notably Martin H. Greenberg, tended to do most of the work.

Although Asimov is best remembered as a science fiction writer, it is estimated that less than 15 percent of his published work was actually SF. An incredible polymath with a doctorate in chemistry who taught for a number of years at the Boston University School of Medicine, Asimov took the entire universe as his subject matter. His major publications include his first nonfiction book, *Biochemistry and Human Metabolism* (1952), co-authored with Burnham Walker and William C. Boyd. *Fact and Fancy* (1962) was the first of many volumes collecting the popular science essays he published in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Among his other notable science books are *Inside the Atom* (1956); *The Intelligent Man's Guide to*

*Science* (1960), with several revised editions; *Asimov's Biographical Encyclopedia of Science and Technology* (1964); *The Collapsing Universe: The Story of Black Holes* (1977); and *In the Beginning: Science Faces God in the Book of Genesis* (1981), which presents his take on Creationism.

Although he was not religious, Asimov published a number of works on the Bible, including the two-volume *Asimov's Guide to the Bible* (1968–1969), a respectful, but resolutely secular, attempt to explicate virtually every potentially obscure bit of historical, theological, liturgical, scientific, or geographical information in the Old and the New Testaments. His forays into literature produced,

among other books, *Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare* (1970), also in two volumes.

Michael Levy

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# American Jews in Sports

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## American Jewish Men in Sports

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Although for centuries gentiles derided Jews as weak and craven, lacking the masculine attributes necessary for athletic success, Jewish men in the United States became prominent in several sports during the early twentieth century and were overrepresented in boxing and basketball, as well as in sportswriting. Sports helped American Jewish men forge a tougher, more combative image, undermining pernicious stereotypes in a period of dramatically intensifying antisemitism in both Europe and America. After World War II, Jewish men's participation in top-level sports competition declined. The weakening of barriers against Jews in employment and education significantly expanded their opportunities, reducing the importance of sports as a means of achieving upward mobility for the third generation. Postwar suburbanization removed many Jews from dangerous urban neighborhoods, where the development of athletic skills had afforded protection against antisemitic assault. The establishment of Israel, with its proficient armed forces, surrounded by enemies that threatened its destruction, provided a new model of Jewish strength and determination to withstand attack.

Jewish underrepresentation in athletics prior to the twentieth century is attributable in part to gentiles' determination to exclude Jews from competition, but also to manliness not being as problematic for Jews as for Chris-

tians. For centuries, Christian males appear to have been more insecure in their manhood than Jewish men. Jews traditionally defined manliness very differently from Christians, not conflating it with physicality. In the United States, Jewish boys were less likely to grow up in a father-absent household than boys of most other ethnic groups, because Jews tended to emigrate as intact families, and fewer fathers deserted. Jewish boys also interacted with other adult males as they prepared for their *bar mitzvah*. A Jewish wife often ran a small business, enabling her husband to study, and he did not believe that his wife's working undermined his manhood. Men dominated the *shul*, which was not the case in many American churches since the nineteenth century. In prayer, the Jewish male assumed a more manly posture than the Christian, standing rather than kneeling. Unlike the Catholic priest, the rabbi married, and his beard accentuated his masculinity. Insecurity about manliness among Protestants during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries resulted in a Muscular Christianity movement designed to overturn the feminine orientation of churches, which had no counterpart in Judaism (Norwood 1993).

Influenced by the need for self-defense against antisemitic assault, a significant danger in many American neighborhoods at least through World War II, Jewish men became a major presence in boxing from 1900 to 1940. Surrounded for centuries by a large, hostile, and much

better armed gentile population, Jews had generally refrained from violent response to antisemitic provocations because they understood it to be counterproductive. However, the waves of pogroms in Eastern Europe, beginning in 1881–1882, had made Jews more receptive to using physical force to protect themselves. Many of those who emigrated to the United States had participated in defense units organized by Zionist and Bundist groups. The attack by Christian pogromists on the Jews of Gomel in Russia, which followed the slaughter at Kishinev in 1903, resembled a battle because of the Jewish defense units' fierce combativeness. Many second-generation Jewish men in America were inspired to defend themselves with their fists against antisemitic violence by what Jewish immigrants had taught them about their struggle against pogromists in Eastern Europe. By 1928 Jews had more contenders in the various weight divisions than any other ethnic group. Moreover, many Jewish prizefighters placed the Star of David on their trunks to express pride in their Jewishness and, during the 1930s, their opposition to Nazism.

The first prominent American Jewish boxer was Joe Choynski (1868–1943) of San Francisco, who as a schoolboy had been frequently harassed as a Jew. Although only about 165 pounds, Choynski fought most of the top heavyweights of his time. In 1897 he battled future heavyweight champion Jim Jeffries, who outweighed him by sixty pounds, to a twenty-round draw. In 1901, Choynski knocked out Jack Johnson, an African American who became one of the greatest heavyweight champions ever, in three rounds in Galveston. For violating an anti-prizefighting law, Choynski and Johnson were jailed for nearly a month. During their imprisonment, Choynski helped Johnson improve his boxing technique, preparing him to become a heavyweight contender.

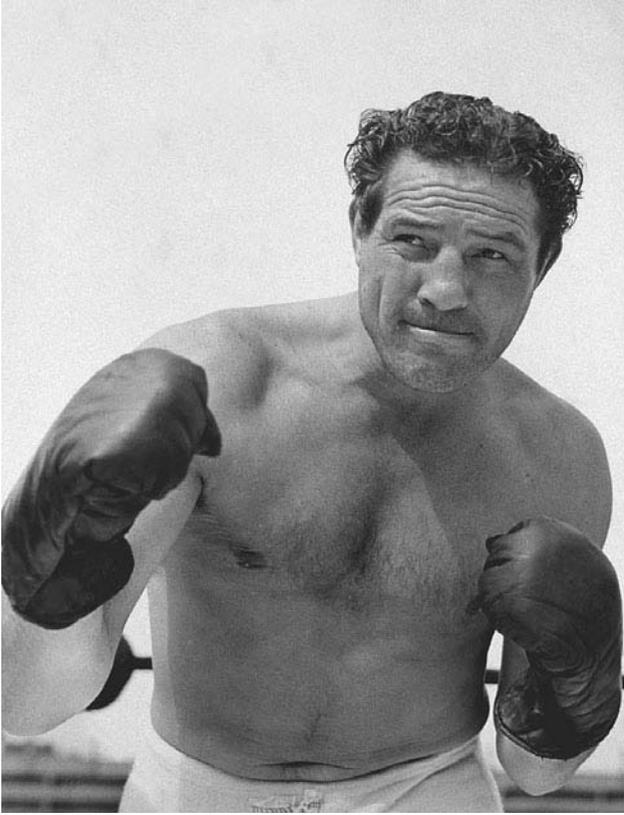
During the first quarter of the twentieth century, American Jews won two world boxing titles: Abe "The Little Hebrew" Attell was featherweight champion from 1901 to 1912, and Benny "The Ghetto Wizard" Leonard (born Benjamin Leiner) was lightweight champion from 1917 until he retired undefeated in 1925, arguably the best ever in his division. Growing up in an Irish American neighborhood in San Francisco, Attell learned to fight to protect himself. Leonard (1896–1947), the son of Russian Jewish immigrants, was raised on New York's Lower East Side. Considered the most skilled of all American Jewish boxers,

Leonard would not fight on Jewish holidays. His model was the great Jewish lightweight Leach Cross (1886–1957) (born Louis Wallach), a dentist "who repaired teeth in the daytime and knocked them out at night" (Blady 1988). Cross, who also grew up on the Lower East Side, the son of Austrian Jewish immigrants, was the first boxer to become wildly popular among New York's Jewish population.

In 1935 Max Baer (1909–1959), who strongly identified as Jewish and anti-Nazi, won the world heavyweight title, greatly prized in America as a symbol of both manliness and national prestige. Baer's father, an Omaha cattle dealer, was Jewish, but his mother was not. Baer referred to himself as the first Jewish heavyweight champion and noted that the Nazis considered him a Jew. Physically, Baer defied press stereotypes of the Jew, but not temperamentally. Sportswriters described him as a powerfully built Adonis, very attractive to women, but also as somewhat of a buffoon. The press tended to assume that Jewish fighters, like African Americans, were handicapped by a lack of self-discipline and an inability to concentrate. In the 1930s, reporters referred to Baer, to Jewish light heavyweight champion "Slapsie Maxie" Rosenbloom, and to Jewish heavyweight contender Kingfish Levinsky (born Hershel Krakow) as clowns.

In June 1933, shortly after the Nazis came to power in Germany, Max Baer faced German heavyweight Max Schmeling, former world champion, whom ring announcers now introduced as the Fighting Son of the Fatherland, emphasizing that he represented the Third Reich. Schmeling proclaimed before the bout that he had never seen Germany more peaceful than under Nazi rule. Openly proclaiming his hatred of Nazism, Baer wore the Star of David on his trunks for the first time in his career. Between rounds he deliberately grabbed the embroidered Star of David and displayed it to Schmeling. Baer scored a stunning upset victory over the German, knocking him out with pile-driving right hand blows in the tenth round. To soften the humiliation of Schmeling's loss to a Jew, the Nazi press referred to Baer only as a German American. But in March 1935, the Nazi propaganda ministry banned the film "The Prizefighter and the Lady," in which Baer starred, because he was Jewish.

Baer's victory positioned him for a shot at the heavyweight title, which he won a year later from Primo Carnera. Expressing outrage at Nazism, Baer clamored for another fight against Schmeling, even offering to fight him



*Max Baer placed a large Star of David on his trunks for his bout against German heavyweight Max Schmeling in 1933 as an anti-Nazi statement and always wore it in the ring after that. Although his mother was not a Jew, fight fans considered Baer, world heavyweight champion (1934-1935), to be Jewish. American Jews were proud that Baer forcefully denounced Adolf Hitler. The Nazis banned from Germany the film *The Prizefighter and the Lady*, in which Baer starred, because they considered him Jewish. (Library of Congress)*

in Germany. Moreover, he publicly wished that he could work Hitler over with his fists. But Hitler would never again permit Schmeling to face a Jew in the ring. Baer held the heavyweight title for a year, before losing it to Jimmy Braddock.

The last American Jewish boxing great, Barney Ross (born Barnet [Beryl] Rosofsky), who held the lightweight and welterweight titles during the 1930s, was also an important symbol of Jewish pride. Ross (1909–1967) was born on New York's Lower East Side, but his father, a Talmudic scholar, moved the family to a rough neighborhood on Chicago's West Side, where he ran a small grocery store. After his father was killed in a holdup, Barney became a boxer to enable his family to survive. During a nine-year professional career, Ross was never knocked down. After the Nazis assumed power in Germany, he

knew that his rabbi was counting on him to challenge in the ring “the horrible lies Hitler is telling” (Levine 1992). When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, Ross enlisted in the Marine Corps, determined to fight the Axis. He was decorated for heroism in combat on Guadalcanal, where he was wounded. A passionate Zionist, Ross ran guns to Israel in 1948.

Jews were also prominent in boxing as promoters and trainers. “Uncle Mike” Jacobs was the world's leading boxing promoter from 1937 to 1946, staging Joe Louis's title defenses and three-million-dollar gates. He offered to donate 10 percent of the profits from the 1938 Louis–Schmeling bout to assist refugees from Nazi Germany. Ray Arcel (1899–1994) and Charley Goldman (1888–1968) were among the leading trainers in twentieth-century boxing. Arcel recalled that, as a Jew growing up in overwhelmingly non-Jewish East Harlem, he had to fight to protect himself every day. He trained and worked the corner for over twenty champions. His favorite was Benny Leonard, whom he preferred because of his great ring savvy. Goldman, born in Warsaw, Poland, and once a bantamweight contender, was credited with developing Rocky Marciano into one of the greatest heavyweights of all time. He also trained four other champions. The leading boxing gym, Stillman's in New York, and the leading manufacturer of boxing gloves and equipment, Everlast, were run by Jews.

Jews became heavily involved in the new sport of basketball in the early twentieth century and assumed a dominant role during the 1930s. The sport was particularly accessible to Jews because of its relatively low prestige, marginality on most college campuses, and recent origin, having been invented only in 1891. Poor earning potential in professional basketball, resulting from a small fan base, rendered basketball unattractive to mainstream athletes. The sport was concentrated in northeastern cities, where most of the Jewish population resided. Moreover, basketball required little space or equipment, making it easy for urban institutions that sponsored leisure activities in Jewish neighborhoods, like settlement houses and Young Men's Hebrew Association chapters, to sponsor teams.

By the 1920s, Jewish players had achieved great prominence in professional basketball. Barney Sedran, raised on New York's Lower East Side, although only 5 feet 4 inches tall, became one of basketball's earliest professional stars, a standout on both offense and defense. Nat Holman (1896–1995), also from the Lower East Side, won fame

with the barnstorming Original Celtics, the decade's dominant team, with whom he played from 1921 to 1927. The Celtics touted Holman as the greatest basketball player in the world. He significantly influenced basketball as a highly successful coach at City College of New York (CCNY) for almost forty years until he retired in 1960, and as the author of several manuals on how to play basketball. Holman, whom sportswriters nicknamed Mr. Basketball, helped shape the game by promoting the Northeast style of play that kept the offense in motion and emphasized ball control and patient teamwork, carefully setting up shots near the basket.

Several identifiably Jewish professional teams in eastern cities established reputations as basketball powerhouses during the 1920s. The SPHAs in Philadelphia, named after the South Philadelphia Hebrew Association, sported the Star of David on their jerseys and played successively in the Philadelphia, Eastern, and American (ABL) Basketball Leagues. Team founder Eddie Gottlieb, who had emigrated as a child from the Ukraine, later became one of the nation's leading sports promoters, as well as owner of the National Basketball Association's (NBA) Philadelphia Warriors.

During the 1930s, the SPHAs and the Brooklyn Jewels, another largely Jewish outfit, whose coach was Barney Sedran, were the premier teams in the ABL, the East's leading professional basketball circuit. Nearly half the ABL's players during the 1937–1938 season were Jews, as were the eight leading scorers in 1940–1941 (Levine 1992).

The significant Jewish presence in basketball was reflected in the NBA's having a Jewish commissioner, Maurice Podoloff, when it was established in 1949, as well as a Jewish public relations man, Haskell Cohen, along with prominent Jewish players. Podoloff, who served as commissioner until 1963, and Cohen, also a sportswriter for Jewish newspapers, were elected to the Basketball Hall of Fame. The two men had together constituted the NBA's original front office. Several Jews starred in the NBA during the 1950s, although the number playing in the league dropped off markedly. Dolph Schayes of the Syracuse Nationals, son of Rumanian Jewish immigrants who settled in the Bronx, was the NBA's leading scorer when he retired in 1964. Max Zaslofsky, raised in an Orthodox Jewish household in Brooklyn's Brownsville section by Russian Jewish immigrant parents, was the NBA's third-highest scorer ever when he stopped playing in 1956. Red Auerbach, whose fa-

ther was a Russian Jewish immigrant, coached the Boston Celtics to nine NBA championships in the decade 1956–1966 and later assumed the general managership and presidency of the club. As general manager, he appointed the NBA's first African American head coach, Bill Russell. In 1984 David Stern, son of New York delicatessen owners, became the NBA's fourth commissioner and the second Jew to assume that post.

Jews excelled in college basketball as well from the 1920s through the 1940s, often constituting a majority of starters on the best eastern college basketball teams, such as Nat Holman's CCNY, New York University (NYU), Long Island University (LIU), and even from 1928 to 1931, St. John's University. Jewish collegians' strong interest in the sport was apparent as early as 1923, when the Syracuse University student government denounced Jewish undergraduates for their alleged lack of involvement in campus athletics, except for basketball. In 1950 Holman's CCNY squad, with three Jewish starters, became the first team to win both major college basketball titles, the National Invitation Tournament and the National Collegiate Athletic Association, achieving a Grand Slam, never again duplicated.

Jewish players often encountered antisemitic harassment from opposing college fans during this period. Students at Manhattan College, a Catholic school, taunted NYU's players by yelling "NY Jew," and in 1936 the student newspaper of NYU's downtown campus demanded that the school break athletic relations with Georgetown. An editorial declared that Georgetown students had threatened to physically harm NYU's Jewish players and had constantly yelled antisemitic epithets.

Nat Holman's reputation was tarnished and the basketball programs at the New York-area college powerhouses were damaged by the 1951 point-shaving disclosures, among the most serious sports gambling scandals in history. Thirty-two players—about a quarter of them Jewish—at seven colleges and universities, including CCNY, LIU, and NYU, were charged with taking bribes from gamblers to shave points in games, and several received prison sentences. But in part because large numbers of non-Jewish players at midwestern and southern universities also accepted bribes and shaved points, the resulting public outcry was not tinged with any significant degree of antisemitism. The New York Board of Education suspended Nat Holman from coaching despite his insistence that he

was unaware of his players' contacts with gamblers, but he was reinstated in 1953.

The founder and owner of the most successful and long-lasting barnstorming basketball team, and probably the most well-known sports franchise in the world, the Harlem Globetrotters, was a Jew, Abe Saperstein. Saperstein organized the team, always composed of African American players, in 1927. During the 1930s, the Globetrotters began to mix comedy routines with a flashy but highly skillful style of play, featuring dazzling displays of dribbling and ball handling. Saperstein explained that, although he had formed the team in Chicago, he named it for Harlem because that district meant to African Americans what Jerusalem did to Jews. Saperstein experienced serious financial difficulties in the team's early years, often personally chauffeuring his squad in rundown cars from one small-town arena to another and sometimes even serving as a substitute player. By the 1950s, however, the franchise had become very profitable. The Globetrotters have been accused of perpetuating racist stereotypes through clowning on the court, but they also typified athletic excellence and often made their white opponents, whom they invariably defeated, appear laughingly inept. Saperstein also established the American Basketball League as a rival to the NBA in 1961 and served as commissioner, but it folded after a year and a half.

Unlike basketball, Jews have always been underrepresented in baseball, although one of the game's greatest all-time pitchers, Sandy Koufax, and a leading long-ball hitter, Hank Greenberg, were Jewish. Lipman "Lip" Pike, a left-handed infielder, played for several of the nation's premier professional teams, including the Brooklyn Atlantics beginning in 1869, but there were very few Jews in the major leagues prior to the 1930s. Baseball's prestige as the national pastime, which was far greater than basketball's, along with its existence for decades before many Jews arrived in the United States, made it difficult for Jews to gain acceptance as participants. It also required more space to play than basketball, and space was not available to first- and second-generation Jews in congested urban neighborhoods. Jewish youth resorted instead to stickball and stoop ball, games partially resembling baseball but designed to be played in cramped city streets. Many Jewish parents accepted boxing as practical training in self-defense, necessary if their sons were to survive in an antisemitic environment. Basketball at least brought their sons into

contact with other Jews. Because Jewish boys were disproportionately raised in two-parent households, and thus less influenced by their peers, they were more easily discouraged from engaging in activity their fathers and mothers considered frivolous.

The first Jewish baseball player to attract significant attention was New York Giants second baseman Andy Cohen, whom manager John J. McGraw recruited in 1928 in an effort to draw Jewish fans to the Polo Grounds. Some "greenhorns," lacking familiarity with baseball but thrilled that the Giants had acquired a Jewish player and anxious to see him, asked at the stadium ticket window for seats right behind second base. McGraw released Cohen after he hit .294 in 1929, suggesting that Jewish players probably had to perform above the average to survive in the big leagues.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Jewish players compiled solid records in the major leagues, including Buddy Myer (whose father was Jewish), a lifetime .303 hitter who won the American League batting title in 1935; New York Giants all-star catcher Harry Danning, a lifetime .285 hitter; and outfielders Goody Rosen and Morrie Arnovich. The Jewish press praised Phil Weintraub of the Philadelphia Phillies for eating only kosher meals. Moe Berg, a catcher who played in the majors for fifteen years, was considered one of the most intelligent men in baseball, but a weak hitter: it was said that he spoke ten languages but couldn't hit in any of them.

Besides Koufax and Greenberg, a few Jews made their mark in the majors after World War II, including relief pitcher Larry Sherry, slugging first baseman Mike Epstein, all-star pitchers Ken Holtzman and Steve Stone, and most recently outfielder Shawn Green. Sherry dramatized the importance of relief pitching when he won or saved each of the Los Angeles Dodgers victories in their 1959 World Series triumph. His brother Norm, a catcher, helped Sandy Koufax conquer his early wildness, enabling him to become one of the greatest pitchers of all time. Today there are about a dozen Jews playing in the major leagues.

Players and fans routinely subjected Jewish major leaguers to antisemitic insults through the 1950s. Hank Greenberg was constantly taunted during his career, which extended from 1933 to 1947: "Every day . . . some son of a bitch call[ed] you a Jew bastard and a kike and a sheenie. . . . If the ballplayers weren't doing it, the fans were" (Greenberg 1989). During the 1934 World Series, the St. Louis Cardinals subjected Greenberg, the Detroit Tigers

first baseman, to a barrage of antisemitic epithets. The Chicago Cubs did the same in the Fall Classic the next year, voicing antisemitic insults so frequently that the umpire ordered them to stop. But because the umpire used profanity in doing so, baseball commissioner Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis fined him. In 1949, National League bench jockeys' relentless harassment of Giants outfielder Sid Gordon caused the Anti-Defamation League to contact every major league club to determine whether there were regulations prohibiting such conduct. During the 1950s, Cleveland Indians slugger Al Rosen, who as a youth in Miami had taken boxing lessons to protect himself against antisemitic assault, on several occasions physically confronted opponents on the diamond who taunted him for being Jewish, much like Hank Greenberg had done earlier.

Such antisemitic harassment in baseball persisted even into the 1970s. African American slugger Reggie Jackson recalled his disgust when, shortly after he joined the New York Yankees, he witnessed his manager Billy Martin and several Yankees, including stars Thurman Munson, Graig Nettles, and Sparky Lyle, hurling vicious antisemitic insults at Jewish teammate Ken Holtzman. Antisemitism may have been a factor in Martin's unwillingness to use Holtzman, a former all-star who had hurled two no-hit games, after the Yankees acquired him in 1976.

Antisemitism was also expressed in more subtle ways. The African American players on the Los Angeles Dodgers in the 1960s were disturbed that club management gave blond, blue-eyed gentile pitcher Don Drysdale a higher profile in its press guides and yearbooks than the Jewish Sandy Koufax, although the latter was then unquestionably the best pitcher in baseball.

The first Jewish umpire, Albert "Dolly" Stark, was hired by the National League in 1928. In a period when most umpires remained fairly stationary, Stark introduced a more mobile approach, moving rapidly around the infield and down the foul lines, as a result missing far fewer calls. League officials considered Stark highly proficient, but players were often abusive because he was a Jew, and he retired without explanation in 1940. Stark gave young Tigers first baseman Hank Greenberg important emotional support during the 1934 World Series when the Cardinals repeatedly shouted antisemitic insults at him. During the World Series the next year, the Cubs taunted both men as "Christ Killers."

Until recently, Jews were greatly underrepresented as club owners in baseball as well. During the early twentieth century, Andrew Freedman had owned the New York Giants, Barney Dreyfuss the Pittsburgh Pirates, and Judge Emil Fuchs, who was exposed to baseball as a youth at the University Settlement on New York's Lower East Side, the Boston Braves. Nate Dolin, part of a Jewish group that purchased the Cleveland Indians in 1949, recalled that the other owners isolated him and his colleagues, barring them from their private clubs where important business was transacted. In 1998, however, Bud Selig, Jewish owner of the Milwaukee Brewers, became commissioner of major league baseball, after having served as acting commissioner since 1992.

Jews were even less represented in football than in baseball. Nevertheless, Jews contributed some of the sport's greatest performers, like Hall of Fame quarterbacks Benny Friedman and Sid Luckman, each of whom profoundly transformed offensive play, and Hall of Fame offensive tackle Ron Mix. Jews' relatively low rate of participation was partly due to the absence of a significant presence at the colleges that developed major football programs. Quotas sharply restricted Jewish admission to the elite northeastern colleges where football first emerged and later at many of the large state universities that emphasized football, which were also geographically distant from the principal areas of Jewish settlement. The metropolitan commuter colleges that Jews disproportionately attended in the pre-World War II era generally lacked the space and facilities for football, and they sponsored basketball instead. Professional football originated in mining and steel mill towns, where few Jews resided, and until the 1950s had a relatively small fan base.

Phil King (1872–1938) of Princeton, acclaimed as the best all-around player in the country, was the first Jew to gain prominence in football. Walter Camp, who elaborated the rules that made football a distinct sport in the early 1880s, selected King, a quarterback and halfback, to his all-American team all four years that he attended Princeton, from 1890 to 1893. Like Paul Robeson, King combined gridiron prowess with excellent academic performance, graduating as class salutatorian. He was the first Princetonian elected captain of both the football and the baseball teams. Woodrow Wilson, a football enthusiast, as well as student, professor, and president at Princeton, rated King the best player he had ever watched.

A Jewish tailback and Jewish quarterback played central roles in developing football's modern pass offense. Benny Friedman (1905–1982), son of Russian Jewish immigrants to Cleveland, starred at both the University of Michigan, where he won All-American honors, and in the National Football League (NFL) from 1927 to 1934. He belonged to a Jewish fraternity at Michigan. The New York Giants acquired Friedman from the Detroit Wolverines in 1929, in part to attract Jewish fans. That year, as a single wing tailback, he set a new NFL record for most touchdown passes in a season, more than triple the previous total. Friedman's aerial exploits influenced NFL authorities to alter the shape of the football so that it was easier for passers to grip. Red Grange, one of football's all-time greats, pointed to the Jewish phenom as the embodiment of masculinity: "Benny Friedman can, and does, take a terrific pounding without crying about it. That . . . is my conception of a man!" (Grange 1932). After retiring, Friedman coached football at the overwhelmingly Jewish CCNY and at Jewish-founded Brandeis University, where he was also athletic director.

Sid Luckman (b. 1916), who was with the Chicago Bears from 1939 to 1950, was the first in the NFL to play quarterback in the modern T-formation, a new alignment that opened up the offense and resulted in a significant increase in passing. Luckman grew up in Brooklyn and played football at Columbia University, which he selected for its academic program. Like Friedman, adept at deciphering defenses, Luckman won coaches' praise for mental acuity. He led the Bears to four NFL championships, including a 73-0 win over the Washington Redskins in 1940. In 1943, he set an NFL record that has never been surpassed, hurling seven touchdown passes in a game. Both Luckman and Friedman were inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Two other Jews, Harry Newman and Marshall Goldberg, achieved prominence in college and pro football prior to World War II. Starring at Michigan from 1930 to 1932, Newman succeeded Benny Friedman as the NFL's best passer, playing with the New York Giants from 1933 to 1935, and then in the rival American Football League in 1936 and 1937. Head counselor Friedman took Newman under his wing at a summer camp he attended after finishing high school and taught him to pass. Goldberg, originally from West Virginia and therefore nicknamed the Hebrew Hillbilly, excelled as a running back at the Univer-

sity of Pittsburgh from 1936 to 1938, helping the Panthers win the 1937 Rose Bowl, and then for several years in the NFL with the Chicago Cardinals.

Several Jews had highly successful careers as head coaches in pro football, the most complex of all sports, where formulating strategy and mental insight are especially important. Sid Gillman, a coach inducted into both the Professional and College Football Halls of Fame, directed the Los Angeles Rams from 1955 to 1959 and then the San Diego Chargers from 1960 to 1969 and 1971, where he was credited with developing the team's renowned wide-open pass offense. He won an American Football League (AFL) championship with the Chargers in 1963. Marv Levy coached the NFL's Buffalo Bills to four consecutive Super Bowls, 1991–1994. Allie Sherman, who had played quarterback with the Philadelphia Eagles, was the New York Giants head coach from 1961 until 1969, winning division championships his first three seasons.

That NFL and college football teams today often gather together for Christian prayer prior to games suggests that Jews have little presence in the sport. Ron Mix was the best of a small handful of Jewish players in the NFL and AFL of the post-1960 era. Considered the AFL's best offensive tackle of the 1960s, referees flagged him for holding only twice in his ten years with the San Diego Chargers, an incredible feat that helped earn him the nickname the Intellectual Assassin. In 2000, Jay Fiedler, a Dartmouth graduate, became the NFL's first Jewish starting quarterback since Sid Luckman.

Jewish athletes and coaches engaged in a movement to boycott the 1936 Olympic games in Berlin to protest Nazi government antisemitism and repression. Although the boycott movement ultimately failed, CCNY basketball coach Nat Holman publicly spoke out for the boycott, as did Jewish sportswriter Shirley Povich (1905–1998) in his *Washington Post* column. The players on the predominantly Jewish LIU and NYU basketball teams even voted not to play in the elimination tournament to select a squad to represent the United States in Berlin.

An incident at the Olympics involving the U.S. 400-meter relay team precipitated charges of antisemitism on the part of American athletic authorities. On the morning of the race, American track coach Dean Cromwell replaced the team's two Jews, Marty Glickman and Sam Stoller, with other runners. Glickman, later a prominent sports announcer, and many others believed that

Cromwell had removed the Jewish runners to placate his Nazi hosts. Both Cromwell and Avery Brundage, head of the U.S. Olympic Committee, were purportedly Nazi sympathizers and later members of the America First Committee, a group organized to prevent U.S. assistance to Britain in the European conflict.

Until the post–World War II period, Jews were only marginally involved in golf and tennis. These sports were primarily confined to the affluent, and often played at country clubs and resorts that barred Jews. Few facilities offering golf and tennis were available to the urban, working- and lower-middle classes, in which Jews remained concentrated. Jewish participation increased during the 1950s and 1960s as a result of upward mobility and suburbanization, along with some decline in discrimination. Still, because many facilities continued to exclude Jews, as they became more affluent in the postwar period, Jews established their own country clubs and resorts, which featured golf courses and tennis courts.

By contrast, Jews dominated ping pong during the 1930s, a sport related to tennis, but much less prestigious, popular in cities because it required far less space and was played indoors. The equipment and facilities required for play were much less expensive than those used in tennis or golf. Jews were instrumental in transforming ping pong from a slow parlor game into a highly skilled competition, renamed table tennis and characterized by rapid-fire shots, powerful serves, and dramatic backhands, with players positioned much farther from the table. By 1938 at least eleven Jews had held the U.S. table tennis men's title. These included Abe Berenbaum, Sol Schiff, Marcus Schussheim, and Sidney Heitner.

Before World War II, Jewish men were not very involved in competitive swimming, largely due to the lack of access to facilities. Public swimming pools in urban Jewish neighborhoods and city beaches were usually very crowded and not suitable environments for developing the skills necessary to attain the highest level of proficiency. After 1945, upward mobility and suburbanization exposed Jews to better facilities, promoting greater interest in swimming. The first Jewish man to become a prominent competitive swimmer was Mark Spitz (b. 1950) of Indiana University, who grew up in California and Hawaii. Spitz accomplished the most spectacular feat in the sport's history by winning seven gold medals in the 1972 Olympic games in Munich, a record no other swimmer has equaled.

Spitz experienced a significant amount of antisemitic harassment from other American swimmers at the Olympic trials. After Palestinian terrorists murdered eleven Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics, security officials had Spitz leave Germany immediately under heavy guard. In 1985, Spitz paid tribute to the slain Israeli athletes by lighting the torch to begin Israel's Maccabiah games, in which he had participated in 1965 and 1969. The daughters of three of the murdered Israeli athletes escorted him into the stadium with the torch.

By the middle of the twentieth century, Jews were extensively involved in sportswriting, a field they transformed. Journalists had consigned sportswriting to a low status, thereby facilitating Jewish entry. Nonetheless, some Jewish sportswriters found it necessary to anglicize their names to obtain employment or to win acceptance from editors. The *New York Herald* did not permit the first prominent Jewish sportswriter, Dan Margowitz (1890–1981), to use his identifiably Jewish surname, so he introduced the byline Dan Daniel not long after he began writing for the paper in 1909. Dan Daniel worked for several New York dailies and the *Sporting News* and was an associate editor of *Ring* magazine, the leading boxing periodical. In the 1940s, Al Horwitz of the Philadelphia *Evening Ledger* became the first Jew elected president of the Baseball Writers Association. Jesse Abramson (1904–1979) of the *New York Herald Tribune* was considered America's leading track and field journalist, nicknamed the Book because of his encyclopedic knowledge of the sport. He also covered boxing and college football. Al Hirshberg covered sports for Boston newspapers from 1930 to 1968 and wrote numerous books about sports. Most notably, he collaborated with Jimmy Piersall on *Fear Strikes Out*, which chronicled the ballplayer's recovery from a serious mental breakdown.

Although most sportswriters were indifferent to, or supportive of, baseball's color bar, many Jews in the profession clamored for an end to it. Jewish sportswriters tended to be more sensitive to the suffering of African American athletes than other white journalists. As Jews, they were sometimes barred from hotels that accommodated their gentile colleagues, an experience shared with African American athletes, although not on as large a scale. Before U.S. entry into World War II, *Washington Post* sports columnist Shirley Povich, raised as an Orthodox Jew, called for baseball to desegregate. In 1953, Povich published a fifteen-part series in the *Post* on desegregation and the

African American contribution to baseball, and he denounced the Washington Redskins' unwillingness to sign black players. Roger Kahn of the *New York Herald Tribune* repeatedly denounced baseball's rampant racism and gave significant attention to how Jackie Robinson was mistreated during his career. Kahn's editor refused to publish Kahn's denunciation of major league baseball's lodging their white players at a St. Louis hotel that excluded blacks. Kahn became a close friend of Jackie Robinson and joined with him in criticizing the major leagues during the 1950s for their lackluster effort to desegregate. Like Kahn, Milton Gross, who became a frequent columnist for the Jewish-owned *New York Post* in 1949, displayed particular empathy for the plight of African American athletes. Gross too developed a friendship with Jackie Robinson and joined with him in challenging baseball club owners' unwillingness to hire blacks as managers, a barrier that lasted a generation after Robinson made the breakthrough into the majors. Povich, Kahn, and Gross all had long and distinguished careers as sportswriters.

Many African American athletes expressed appreciation to Jewish sportswriters for their support, and several—including Roy Campanella, Floyd Patterson, Satchel Paige, Rod Carew, Willie Mays, and Walt Frazier—collaborated with Jewish sportswriters in preparing books about their experiences. When the Baseball Hall of Fame established a committee to determine which players from the Negro Leagues should be inducted, its chairman Monte Irvin, who had starred in both the Negro and major leagues, selected Jewish sportswriter Dick Young and promoter Eddie Gottlieb to be on it.

A new cohort of sportswriters, nearly all of Jewish background, dramatically transformed the craft during the 1960s, introducing a more iconoclastic approach to sports coverage. Known as the Chipmunks, they examined the impact of larger social and cultural issues on sports, and viewed athletes more critically than their senior colleagues did. Their interviews with players and team officials were often contentious. Chipmunks included Leonard Shecter (1926–1974), Maury Allen, and Larry Merchant, all of the *New York Post*, and Stan Isaacs of *Newsday*. Shecter collaborated with former major league pitcher Jim Bouton on the 1970 best-seller *Ball Four*, whose portrayal of puerile ballplayers acting unkindly to fans, unscrupulous team management, and racism in the majors angered baseball's establishment.

Nat Fleischer (1887–1972), raised on the Lower East Side, and A. J. Liebling (1904–1963), the most important writers on boxing for American periodicals, were of Jewish background. In 1922, Fleischer founded *Ring* magazine, which became the nation's premier boxing publication. Fleischer set up rankings for each weight category and carefully checked fight data, making it difficult for boxers to distort their records, a practice that had long plagued the sport. Fight promoters, managers, and journalists considered his rankings definitive. Fleischer was also committed to documenting the African American contribution to boxing, writing a five-volume history of the subject.

Liebling, son of a New York furrier, was a longtime contributor to the *New Yorker*, which he joined in 1935. Dartmouth College expelled him for refusing to attend chapel. Liebling also served as a war correspondent during World War II, and wrote about politics and gastronomy as well as boxing. He developed keen insight into the sport by talking with veteran cornermen in New York fight gyms. Red Smith, one of the nation's most respected sports columnists, maintained that no one wrote about the "sweet science" as gracefully as Liebling.

In broadcasting, Mel Allen (1913–1996) and Howard Cosell (1918–1995), arguably the most well-known baseball play-by-play announcer and football and boxing commentator respectively, were also Jewish. Both men anglicized their surnames. Allen was born Mel Israel to Orthodox Russian Jewish parents who settled in Alabama. CBS executives prevailed on him to change his name so that it would not be recognizably Jewish. Allen served as head broadcaster for the New York Yankees from 1939 to 1942 and from 1946 to 1964, with time out for World War II military service. Not only New Yorkers but fans across the country who heard him call twenty World Series and twenty-four All-Star games were enchanted by his voluble and excitable style. Allen and Red Barber, who announced Yankees games with him from 1954 to 1964, were the first to enter Baseball's Hall of Fame as broadcasters.

Cosell was best known as the longtime analyst on Monday Night Football from 1970 to 1983, which he helped make enormously popular. Born Howard Cohen, the son of an accountant for a clothing store chain, he changed his name while attending NYU, but never concealed his Jewish identity. Selected as editor of the law review at NYU Law School, Cosell briefly practiced law, an unusual, if not unique background among sports broadcasters. He joined

the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) full-time in 1956 and came to national attention as a result of his boxing coverage on that network's televised Wide World of Sports.

Cosell adopted a more critical stance toward athletes and sports than was common in radio and television during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and he displayed concern for the racist harassment and discrimination that African American athletes encountered. As a result, until his retirement he received much racist hate mail, usually antisemitic as well. Cosell conducted numerous interviews with Jackie Robinson and criticized major league baseball for not offering him a managerial position. He also developed a friendly relationship with Muhammad Ali during the 1960s, when Ali was widely disliked, and he backed African American outfielder Curt Flood's court challenge to baseball's reserve clause. Cosell was horrified by the Palestinian terrorists' murder of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics and declared that it had strengthened his Jewish identity.

Marty Glickman became the first to make the transition from athlete to long-term sports broadcaster. He was a highly popular radio announcer for both the New York Knickerbockers basketball and the New York Giants football teams for over twenty years, beginning in 1946 and 1948 respectively, and the New York Jets football team for eleven years. Glickman's excitability entranced even the Beats of the 1950s, who found listening to him provided the intense emotional experience they craved. In *On the Road*, Jack Kerouac has Dean Moriarty ask Sal Paradise: "Man, have you dug that mad Marty Glickman announcing basketball games—up-to-midcourt-bounce-fake-set-shot, swish, two points. Absolutely the greatest announcer I ever heard" (Kerouac 1957).

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## American Jewish Women in Sports

American Jewish women have long participated in sport as athletes, administrators, and advocates. They have achieved national or even international success in basketball, swimming, track and field, tennis, and golf. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, first at Jewish settlement houses and then at Young Men's–Young Women's Hebrew Associations, middle- and upper-class reformers promoted immigrant Jewish women's physical exercise and sport as part of their Americanization process—albeit within Jewish institutions. Although some Jewish women and girls engaged in sport for their physical health, others

displayed their athletic skill in competitions with Jews as well as gentiles.

Some of these Jewish women challenged traditional gender and ethnic boundaries to secure sporting opportunities in Jewish institutions and mainstream American sites. Charlotte Epstein in competitive swimming and the Olympic games, Lillian Copeland as an Olympic track and field star, Elaine Rosenthal in competitive golf, and Jewish women basketball players all opened sporting opportunities for other women. Their activities belied the early twentieth-century stereotype of the American Jewish woman as lacking in physical energy and sporting ability. Yet the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant perception that, unlike other immigrants, Jews were “people of the book, rather than men and women of the bat” persisted (Riess 1998). Several American Jewish women demonstrated exceptional leadership abilities, shaping women’s sports in their com-

munities, in Jewish organizations, and even in the Olympics.

Jewish immigrant women were first exposed to American sports in settlement houses and immigrant aid associations in the late nineteenth century. German Jews, who by the 1880s had become oriented to American culture and institutions, sought to Americanize the newest Jewish immigrants. They wanted to promote the spiritual and bodily well-being of Jewish females. Sport and physical activities became increasingly important for the East European newcomers, as in the larger American society. The emphasis in the Progressive Era on physical health and on athletics was related to middle-class fears that immigrants were bringing disease to America, to the determination to strengthen the Anglo-Saxon Protestant population, and to the promotion of nationalism through military and athletic events. Reformers stressed the need for women to engage in health-



*U.S. women's 1924 Olympic swimming team as they sail for France. The team included American Jewish athlete Charlotte Epstein, top row, fourth from left. (Underwood & Underwood/Corbis)*

building exercises and athletics to increase their stamina and better fulfill their domestic roles. Jewish women's physical well-being and participation in sports demonstrated that they could be fit for American life and could be assimilated.

In 1885 Jewish women founded the Young Women's Union in Philadelphia, the oldest Jewish settlement house in the United States. It offered domestic instruction, classes in English and reading, and opportunities for recreation and sports. Jewish women taught calisthenics and gymnastics to Jewish women and girls. Philanthropists who founded the Irene Kaufmann Settlement House in Pittsburgh in 1895 incorporated sport and physical education in their program, offering women volleyball, gymnastics, track, and other sports. New York's Educational Alliance and Hebrew Technical Institute for Girls, Boston's Hebrew Industrial School, Detroit's Hannah Schloss Memorial Building, St. Louis's Jewish Educational Alliance, and other immigrant aid organizations integrated sport into educational programs for Jewish women and girls. Many immigrant Jewish girls first learned about sport at settlements, preparing them for participation in these American activities at the public high schools that offered sports.

At other Jewish institutions that provided athletic facilities for men, females wanted to participate in more vigorous and competitive sporting activities. The Chicago Hebrew Institute (CHI), the forerunner of today's Jewish Community Centers (JCC), was organized in 1903 by a group of young men who sought to promote the moral, physical, religious, and civic welfare of Jewish immigrants and residents. From its earliest years, the Hebrew Institute emphasized the importance of physical fitness for males and females. The opening of a new gymnasium and swimming pool at the CHI in 1915, with separate facilities for men and women, promoted women's athletic participation. Girls now had their own gym in which to develop their basketball ability and competitive spirit. The 1921 team went undefeated in twenty-six games. They played teams from the Hull House settlement, the Illinois Athletic Club, church teams, and working-class girls' teams. The Institute girls won the Central Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Girls' Basketball Championship against other mid-western teams. In volleyball, too, these Jewish girls earned victories. At the Jewish People's Institute (the CHI changed its name in 1922), girls demonstrated prowess in swimming and won events in Chicago's city-wide competitions.

The New York City Young Women's Hebrew Association (YWHA) served as one of the most important organizations for Jewish women desiring to participate in sports at the turn of the century. The oldest YWHA in the United States, it was founded in 1902 under the leadership of a small group of philanthropic Jewish women. It was developed to strengthen the ethnic and religious identity of young Jewish women and to counter the Young Women's Christian Associations and church-related athletic programs. Unlike the many YWHA ladies auxiliaries that were formed when women could not gain membership in Young Men's Hebrew Associations (YMHA), this YWHA was independent of the YMHA. The number of women using the facilities led to new, larger quarters. In 1914 the new YWHA opened, offering a comprehensive program in sports and physical culture training. It featured a swimming pool, a gymnasium, and a roof garden with tennis courts. Jewish women and girls participated in the Young Women's Hebrew Athletic League and competed against other YWHAs and YWCAs. Schedules had to be carefully arranged because the YWHA often closed on the Sabbath until later in the afternoon, and YWCAs kept their Sabbath as well.

Most YWHAs, however, had neither their own funding nor female staff trained in physical education and sports. During the early twentieth century, most YWHAs were affiliated with YMHAs, and YMHA athletic spaces usually remained male domains. Over time, with the aid of National Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) staff and funding, YMHA-YWHAs in various communities made athletic spaces more available to women. The JWB, organized in 1921, became the national governing body for YMHAs and YWHAs and the National Council of Young Men's Hebrew and Kindred Associations. The JWB promoted the merger of YMHAs and YWHAs and by the mid-twentieth century sought to develop them into JCCs. Today JCCs across the country serve Jews of both sexes.

So many Jewish women and girls engaged in sporting activities that they quickly outgrew YMHA rooms. Although founded in 1915, the Hartford, Connecticut, YWHA needed new quarters by 1919. Hartford YWHA members participated in swimming, tennis, basketball, volleyball, baseball, track and field, and bowling. The American Jewish press, such as the *Connecticut Hebrew Record* and Boston's *Jewish Advocate*, covered these girls' basketball games. The YWHA basketball team played in

the Hartford County Basketball Girls League against teams of the Travelers Insurance Company, Aetna Fire, YWCA, and others, but the Jewish girls preferred playing YWHA organizations. A game between Hartford and New Haven YWHAs in 1920 held special significance for charity work undertaken by Jewish women. Proceeds went to the Jewish Home for Orphans and the Home for the Aged. The number of spectators who watched New Haven defeat the Hartford YWHA equaled those at men's basketball games. In 1930 and 1931, the Hartford YWHA team won the Connecticut State Championship, playing against Jewish and non-Jewish teams.

Basketball held wide appeal for women and girls at YWHAs. Women's basketball differed from the men's game to accommodate the concerns of women's physical educators, male athletic directors, and doctors that basketball was too rough on a woman's body. Some medical commentators worried that too much physical exertion harmed women's reproductive ability and that strenuous athletics promoted competition rather than cooperation, which was deemed appropriate for females. Jewish immigrant Senda Berenson became a leading physical educator of women and was known as the Mother of Women's Basketball. After attending the Boston Normal School for Gymnastics, she became interested in women's physical education. In 1892 Berenson was appointed the director of physical training at Smith College, the elite women's school in Northampton, Massachusetts. After observing Dr. James Naismith's new basketball game at Springfield College, Berenson organized the first women's basketball game at Smith College in 1892. She adapted the rules for women, dividing the court into zones, prohibiting snatching the ball from another player, allowing five to ten players on a team, and emphasizing teamwork. Women's basketball gained popularity for Jews and gentiles at colleges and schools, in YWHAs and YWCAs, and in working-class leagues. In honor of her vital role in the sport, Berenson was the first woman inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame.

American Jewish women—as well as gentiles—wanting to pursue competitive swimming benefited from the leadership of Charlotte Epstein, known as the Mother of Women's Swimming in America. Born in 1884 in New York, Epstein swam in competitions and won some of the diving events. In 1911, she joined the recently formed National Women's Life-Saving League and in 1913 served as

chair of its Athletic Branch, responsible for directing all competition. As an athlete, as an administrator promoting competitive aquatic sports for women in the Women's Swimming Association (WSA), and through her major involvement in the Olympic games, the Maccabiah games (the Jewish Olympics, begun in 1932), and YWHAs, Epstein changed the sporting culture for women. During the early twentieth century, male officials governing amateur athletics prohibited women swimmers from participating in sanctioned swim races, national championships, and the Olympic games. They expressed concern about young women and girls engaging in vigorous competitions and being observed by spectators. Epstein led the way in overcoming gender restrictions for Jewish and non-Jewish swimmers alike. Gertrude Ederle, Olympian, and the first woman to swim the English Channel (1926), learned to swim at Epstein's swimming club and credited "Eppie" and the WSA for launching the careers of many early American champions.

Epstein and fellow lifesaving teammates, several of whom were Jews, campaigned to reform gender constraints in aquatic sports. In January 1915, the *American Hebrew* reported on Epstein's Jewish swimmers: Lucy Freeman (440-yard champion), Rita Greenfield, Sophie Freitag, and Frances Ricker. Epstein's effort to have the AAU recognize women's swimming held promise for women to compete in the Olympics. In October 1917 Epstein founded the renowned New York City WSA, a nonprofit club, to advance the sport of women's swimming. She became team manager of WSA, chairman of the Sports Committee, and, in 1929, president. From these positions, she promoted the national and international success of WSA swimmers, including the Olympians and national champions Aileen Riggan, Helen Meaney, Gertrude Ederle, Alice Lord, and Eleanor Holm.

Epstein battled the U.S. Olympic Committee for the right of American female swimmers and divers to go to the 1920 Olympics in Antwerp, Belgium. Once she succeeded and females competed in the sport in the Olympics for the first time, Epstein provided exemplary leadership as the manager-chaperon of the U.S. Women's Olympic Swimming Team. Under her direction at the WSA and as Olympic manager from 1920 to 1936, WSA members won Olympic championships and set numerous world records. Epstein became the official team manager of the U.S. Women's Swimming Team in the 1920, 1924, and 1932

Olympic games. She served as chair of the Swimming Committee in the 1935 Maccabiah games held in Palestine. Jewish athletes from thirty countries competed in this second Maccabiah. Eppie's swimmers included Doris Beshunsky and Janice Lifson, a WSA teammate, who triumphed in the Maccabiah games. In 1936, Epstein refused to attend the Berlin Olympic games. As a Jew, she boycotted American participation in the Nazi Olympics and withdrew from the American Olympic Committee (AOC) in protest of Nazi policies. Epstein's swimming career continued until her death in 1938. In 1939, the AOC issued a resolution to honor her. She was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame and the International Jewish Sport Hall of Fame.

American Jewish women also competed at YWHAs and the Olympics in track and field. In the 1920s Lillian Copeland became an outstanding track and field athlete at the University of Southern California. She won nine national titles and set world records in the javelin throw and the discus toss. In the summer 1928 Olympics she earned a silver medal in the discus. At the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games, Copeland won the gold medal in the discus throw, setting a world record. Both the *American Hebrew* and the *Los Angeles Times* highlighted her achievement. Sybil "Syd" Koff Cooper of New York was another track and field star in national competitions. At nineteen, she was a star at the first Maccabiah in 1932. She again excelled in the 1935 Maccabiah, winning seven gold medals in these first two Maccabiads. Although qualifying for the American track team, in 1936 both Koff and Copeland boycotted the Nazi Olympics.

Golf drew the interest of middle- and upper-class Jewish women at Jewish country clubs. Elaine Rosenthal Reinhardt became one of the most prominent golfers in the early twentieth century, playing at Ravisloe Country Club, a Jewish Club in Homewood, Illinois, outside Chicago. In 1914, at age eighteen, Rosenthal reached the finals in the U.S. women's national golf championship in New York. In 1917, 1918, and 1925, she won the prestigious Western Women's Golf Championship, becoming the first woman to do it three times. When she won for the third time, both the *American Hebrew* and the *Chicago Tribune* reported on her success. At times antisemitic behavior occurred in the Western Women's Golf Association. In 1923, for example, Jewish women golfers from six Jewish clubs in or near Chicago were barred from competing in the champi-

onship. During World War I, golf matches were halted, but Rosenthal was among the elite golfers invited to participate in American Red Cross golf exhibitions, where she raised funds with stars like Bobby Jones.

Champion tennis player Julie Heldman of Houston, Texas, won gold, bronze, and silver medals in singles and doubles events at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, where tennis was an exhibition sport. She also excelled in the 1969 Maccabiah games, winning three gold medals. Heldman was ranked as high as Number 2 in the United States in 1968–1969 and Number 5 in the world in 1969. Her mother, Gladys Heldman, born in 1922, had been the top amateur player in Texas and had competed in the U.S. Open and Wimbledon. In 1953 Heldman founded *World Tennis* magazine, selling it in the 1970s. She championed women's tennis and pioneered the formation of women's professional tennis. In 1970 Heldman spearheaded the movement of the best women's players, like Billie Jean King and Rosie Casals, to form their own pro tour to protest sex discrimination and the lack of prize money for women. They, as well as Julie Heldman, played in the first Virginia Slims Circuit tournament, held in Houston in 1970. The Virginia Slims Circuit gained popularity and later merged with the U.S. Tennis Association. In recognition of her achievements, Gladys Heldman, who died in 2003, was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1979 and the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame in 1989. Julie Heldman was inducted into the latter in 2001.

Contemporary Jewish women honored in 2003 at the Jewish Sports Hall of Fame include professional golf champion Amy Alcott, ESPN sportscaster Linda Cohn, Olympic world record swimmer and Maccabiah champion Marilyn Romanesky, and Olympic gold medal figure skater Sarah Hughes.

Linda J. Borish

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## Senda Berenson (1868–1954)

### Creator of Women's Basketball

In March of 1892, Senda Berenson, a diminutive young woman with thickly accented speech, introduced the students of Smith College to her adaptation of James Naismith's new game of basketball. From the Lithuanian village of Butry-Mantsy, Senda Berenson (b. March 17, 1868) had been brought to Boston in 1875 by her mother a year after her father had come to America. A lumber merchant who had been suspiciously burnt out of home and business, he had saved enough money as a peddler to send for his wife and five children. Never advancing beyond this meager financial position, his family remained impoverished until the eldest child, Bernard, began to make his fortune as an art broker for the wealthy. It was under his tutelage that Senda came to aspire to an artistic life. But Senda's development as a pianist, dancer, and painter became seriously limited by worsening physical problems. In the fall of 1890, hoping to strengthen her back before returning to more treasured pursuits, she enrolled in the Boston Normal School for Gymnastics (later absorbed by Wellesley College).

The changing social and cultural climate of these last years of the Gilded Age had encouraged her dreaming. Suffragist activism and women's labor unionism promised a new order for women. Senda, seeking to play a role

in the world beyond her impoverished Jewish immigrant North End neighborhood, imagined herself a part of this Boston Bohemia. Through her brother, she had found a place in the avant-garde world of George Santayana and Ralph Adams Cram, into which she hoped permanently to escape.

Each of these elements—a Jewish immigrant beginning, the search for a place in the larger American society, artistic aspirations, and the desire for a changing order—found their voice on a March afternoon in 1892 when Senda stepped beyond her assigned role as a substitute for the college's ailing athletic director and daringly introduced the game of women's basketball. Midway through her course of study at the normal school, she had caught the eye of its director, who had been captivated by Senda's budding zeal for athletics. Still a student, she was only to be a one-semester replacement at Smith. Thus, whatever reluctance the college, an avowedly Christian school, may have had about hiring a Jew as a permanent faculty member, it did not interfere with the appointment. Once Berenson proved so overwhelmingly successful in her work with the students, the college apparently overlooked her religion and ethnicity. (There were a handful of Jewish students on campus, mostly from wealthy families, and in time a second low-profile Jewish faculty member, who became one of Senda's closest friends.)

Not long after arriving on campus, Senda traveled to the YMCA in Springfield, Massachusetts, to see the new game of basket ball, which James Naismith had presented to his reluctant students. She had read about this new team activity in the Y's journal and thought that it might be adaptable for her women. She changed the freewheeling men's game into a more genteel affair, with zones established to restrict movement and passing substituted for dribbling. It was to be a more civilized and ladylike pursuit. Players merely passed the ball forward until it was close enough to be tossed into the closed-bottom basket. A ladder was then brought forth, and the ball was retrieved and brought to center court for another toss-up. Repeatedly modified under Senda's guidance for the next quarter century, beginning in 1899 the Spalding Company published an annual edition of her rulebook. Berenson's insistence on maintaining the more genteel side of the game continued to shape athletic life at Smith College until the early 1970s, when it at last departed from her vision and played its first interscholastic games.

Until Senda's innovations at Smith and their rapid spread nationwide, little in the way of athletics was available to women beyond gymnastics and exercise regimens. The occasional baseball game, played in full dress, represented one of the rare exceptions to this situation. Surrounded by her students, dressed in far briefer garments than they, on that March day in 1892, Senda stood in disbelief before a full house as she tossed up the ball for the first time. She did not at first understand the larger forces at work on that small campus that would carry her game to schools, colleges, and settlement houses across the country within a few years—and in 1967 force the male-dominated Basketball Hall of Fame to admit her as its first female honoree. Women were attempting to break free of the old roles imposed by a patriarchal social order, and basketball was quickly perceived as a means to this end, first by Senda and soon after by many others.

Senda came to recognize that the “remarkable success” of her “dubious experiment” owed to its being introduced at “*the psychological moment in the development of the American girl,*” as she later explained (all quotes from Senda Berenson Papers, n.d.). Unlike those “anxious mothers who . . . feared their daughters would become tomboys if they wore loose clothing and played games,” she had provided a “natural outlet of the play instinct” through which young women could develop the “endurance and physical courage” needed in their search for equal standing in society. It was the “simultaneous quickness of thought and action,” developed through basketball, that would serve this goal of equality, she felt certain.

It was as a social activist that Senda first came to the attention of other progressive American women, Jane Adams and Margaret Sanger among them. As she later recalled, “Something had to be done to counteract all those evils . . . of a civilization which does anything it can to undo what nature strives to do for us—making us crowd into large cities where there is little opportunity for natural exercise—where occupations tend to make us narrow chested [and] stoop shouldered,” physically and in spirit.

Nowhere were these conditions more prevalent than among poor women, whose lives were “apt to be so monotonous. They work (and it is something that is generally not stimulating intellectually) all day long,” she noted in her effort to bring a sense of liberation to those confined and overworked women, about whom she spoke tirelessly in her many public talks throughout these years. “They come

back home where they generally have to help in the housework—where the mother is apt to be sad and tired and often complaining, where often someone is ill. Such a person soon gets into a deadening round of monotonous depression.” Unlike most of her students and colleagues at Smith, Senda had known this world intimately in her youth and felt the need to offer a stimulant for change. She claimed, “a person can perhaps be saved more quickly through exercise and games than in any other way.” They alone “absorb the whole person, the physical, the mental, and if well-guided, the moral,” enabling them to “mix in the affairs of the world.”

From the start, Senda had stressed the moral as well as the practical value of basketball. There seemed little point in forming New Women if they could not also transform the world in which they lived. Thus, in an atmosphere where “group games of any kind were unheard of” for college women, “we made a point from the beginning to develop good sportsmanship.”

This spirit was missing from the growing world of American athletics, Senda repeatedly observed. The unpleasant consequences of this were already evident. “The great evil in athletics today is that we lose sight of all things except the desire to win—to win by fair means or foul. . . . Hence . . . the joy in the playing—is entirely lost. . . . [W]e spend enormous amounts of money to see a few over-trained men play football or baseball while thousands, who were not prepared to take any exercise themselves, look on and shout themselves into a frenzy.” “To win always has a great element of seeing the other person lose—not a noble thing,” she complained.

Rather, Berenson urged the young to “study appreciation of the arts, read as much as possible, go abroad the first opportunity you have,” and engage with the political and social issues of their time. This was the path she followed in her own life from early adolescence through her days as a student and teacher in America and Europe, where she had gone in 1897 to study at the Royal Central Institute of Gymnastics, and in the following years when she often accompanied her brother through the cultural capitals of the Continent. Even when slowed by deteriorating health in her last years, she locally aided those suffering through the Great Depression and in the 1940s worked with the Red Cross in the war effort.

She retired from Smith College in 1911 upon her marriage to English professor Herbert Abbott. Though Senda

had not abandoned Judaism, she was a confirmed atheist, and her famed father-in-law, the Reverend Lyman Abbott, performed the ceremony. In 1917 she resigned from chairing the national Basketball Committee for Women, only to experience the loss of her husband in 1925. For the rest of her life, Berenson remained deeply concerned about the human condition. After World War II, she was especially concerned with what she considered the march toward nuclear madness. She always hoped to set things right by sharing her vision of what life could be. She died in Santa Barbara, California, on February 16, 1954.

*Ralph Melnick*

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## Hank Greenberg (1911–1986)

### Star Baseball Slugger

Henry “Hank” Greenberg, one of baseball’s greatest sluggers, provided a much idolized symbol of Jewish prowess in a time of Depression, world war, and intensified anti-semitism at home and abroad. As a Jew in the overwhelmingly gentile environment of professional baseball, Greenberg’s life exemplified the challenges that would confront the American Jewish community at large in an increasingly assimilated milieu.

Born in Greenwich Village (in New York City) to religiously observant parents who had immigrated from Romania, Greenberg grew up in the Bronx. A star athlete at James Monroe High School, the powerfully built six-foot-three-inch first baseman attracted the interest of the nearby New York Yankees. The Yankees’ interest in the box office potential of a homegrown Jewish star was nullified, however, by Greenberg’s astute recognition that the formidable Lou Gehrig stood between him and a first base starting slot on the Bronx Bombers. Instead, Greenberg signed a contract with the Detroit Tigers, and, after one semester

at New York University, joined the Tiger organization in the spring of 1930.

After several years in the minor leagues, Greenberg became the Tigers’ starting first baseman in 1933, hitting .301 in his rookie season. The next season, Greenberg raised his batting average to .339 while leading the American League in doubles and hitting twenty-six home runs, as the Tigers won their first pennant in a quarter century. Late that season, with Tiger games scheduled on the Jewish High Holidays, Greenberg’s religious identity became the subject of widespread attention and debate. The year before, Greenberg had sat out those games, without comment being made. In early September 1934, however, the Tigers were battling for the pennant in a tight race with the Yankees. Greenberg, pressured by the press and his teammates and not wanting to let his team down, decided to play on Rosh Hashanah—to his father’s chagrin. His two home runs won the game for Detroit. The next week, with the Tigers now holding an all but insurmountable seven-and-a-half game lead (with only eleven games left to play), Greenberg did not play on Yom Kippur. He attended services at a Detroit synagogue, where he was applauded by the congregation and attracted favorable, albeit somewhat condescending, notice in the press for fidelity to his religious beliefs.

The next year, Greenberg led the American League in home runs and runs batted in as the Tigers repeated as American League pennant winners and won their first world championship. Greenberg continued his robust hitting throughout the decade. In 1937 he drove in 183 runs (third-best on the all-time list), and the following year he challenged Babe Ruth’s 60-home-run record, falling just short with 58 (still the top single-season American League mark for a right-handed batter). After leading the league in home runs, runs batted in, doubles, and slugging percentage, and after playing in his third World Series in 1940, Greenberg was drafted into the army in the spring of 1941. Discharged in early December, he reenlisted immediately after Pearl Harbor. His wartime service included overseas duty with the Army Air Forces in the China-Burma-India theater and several bombing missions over Japan.

Having lost the equivalent of four full seasons at the peak of his career, Greenberg returned to the Tigers in July 1945. He hit a home run in his first game back and finished his abbreviated season with a batting average of .311, as the Tigers won their fourth league pennant with Greenberg in the lineup and then defeated the Chicago



Baseball slugger Hank Greenberg. (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)

Cubs in the World Series. After a 1946 season in which he again led the American League in home runs and runs batted in, the thirty-six-year-old Greenberg was released by the Tigers. In 1947, he concluded his career with the Pittsburgh Pirates, hitting 25 home runs and offering much appreciated encouragement to Jackie Robinson in his difficult rookie season with the Dodgers.

Greenberg compiled a lifetime batting average of .313 with 331 home runs and 1,276 runs. He led the American League four times in both home runs and runs batted in, and his career slugging average and home run percentage still rank among the sport's all-time best. Voted the American League's Most Valuable Player in 1935 and 1940, Greenberg was named to four All-Star teams and appeared in four World Series—a notable feat for a non-Yankee in that era—hitting .318 with five home runs. After his retirement, Greenberg enjoyed a successful career as a baseball executive with pennant-winning teams in Cleveland and

Chicago, proving as tough a bargainer from management's side of the negotiating table as he earlier had on his own behalf as the sport's highest-paid player. He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1956.

Playing at a time of widespread discrimination against Jews in business, society, and education, and in the Detroit of Father Coughlin, Greenberg had to contend with antisemitic attitudes and utterances among both fans and players. Greenberg was fully prepared to confront his tormenters, physically if necessary, but was generally uncomfortable in situations that called attention to his religious identity. Early in his career, he was embarrassed when his father signed baseballs in Hebrew for fans outside Yankee Stadium. Greenberg felt himself to be very much the unwilling man-in-the-middle in the controversy over whether he should play on the High Holidays in 1934. Apparently, his discomfort colored his recollection of that event. He later remembered that 1934 was the only time

that he faced the issue of playing on Yom Kippur, although Yom Kippur actually conflicted with his team's schedule in several other years, and Greenberg never played on any of those days. The children of his first marriage, to the daughter of department store magnate Bernard Gimbel, were raised without any religious training and minimal Jewish self-awareness. His daughter recalled that he felt that "I had to go through this stuff and I hated it, and I thought I'd spare my kids." One son found himself so bereft of religious identity that he listed himself as a Congregationalist on a college enrollment form. Yet Greenberg's posthumously published autobiography quoted him as saying that "I came to feel that if I, as a Jew, hit a home run, I was hitting one against Hitler," and that "I find myself wanting to be remembered not only as a great ballplayer, but even more as a great *Jewish* ballplayer" (Greenberg 1989).

Henry D. Fetter

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## Sandy Koufax (b. 1935)

### Baseball Pitching Star

Sanford "Sandy" Koufax, generally recognized as baseball's best pitcher in a period of outstanding pitching, is arguably the greatest left-handed pitcher of all time, despite a career cut short by injury in his prime. Like Hank Greenberg in an earlier time, Koufax inspired a generation of Jewish baseball fans by demonstrating that a Jew could star in the national pastime while respecting religious tradition.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, to parents who divorced a few years later, he took the last name of Irving Koufax, whom his mother married when Sandy was nine years old. At Lafayette High School in Brooklyn, his primary sport was basketball, which he played, along with baseball, at the University of Cincinnati when he enrolled in the fall of 1953. In December 1954, he was signed by



Hall of Fame pitcher Sandy Koufax. (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY)

the Brooklyn Dodgers, for a \$14,000 bonus and a first-year salary of \$6,000.

For decades, New York baseball owners and managers had dreamed of fielding a star Jewish player, who could attract the city's baseball-mad Jewish fans to the ballpark. This dream was frustrated, however, as Koufax struggled through his first years with the Dodgers, his raw pitching power and enormous potential outweighed by persistent control problems and the difficulty of gaining a regular place in the rotation of the pennant-winning team's well-established pitching staff. More importantly, the Dodgers moved to California after the 1957 season. Koufax would only achieve greatness in Los Angeles, a continent away from his Brooklyn home.

In the spring of 1961, Koufax finally began to heed the advice he had been receiving for years—to concentrate on getting the ball over the plate, not on throwing as hard as he could—after it was proffered by a Jewish teammate, reserve catcher Norm Sherry. It was the turning point in his career. After winning 36 games and losing 40 in his first 6 seasons with the Dodgers, in 1961 Koufax won 18 games and broke the National League season record for strikeouts

with 269. His 1962 season was cut short by injury, but everything came together in 1963. With a blazing fastball, sharply breaking curve, and pinpoint control, that year he led the league in wins (25), strikeouts (306), and earned run average (1.88), and won two games in the Dodgers' four-game World Series sweep over the New York Yankees. He was named the National League's Most Valuable Player and won the first of his three Cy Young Awards as the best pitcher in the major leagues. Dodger teammate Don Drysdale, a Hall of Fame pitcher in his own right, commented, with only slight hyperbole, "He's the only pitcher who wouldn't surprise me a bit if he pitched a no-hitter every time he went out there" (*New York Post*, September 30, 1963).

Although Koufax's 1964 season was curtailed by injury, he still won 19 games and again posted the National League's lowest earned run average. In 1965, he won a league-leading 26 games, struck out a record 382 batters, and pitched a perfect game (his fourth no-hitter in as many seasons), as the Dodgers again won the National League pennant.

The first game of that year's World Series, which Koufax was due to start, fell on Yom Kippur. In keeping with his customary practice, he did not pitch that day, a decision that did not arouse the controversy sparked three decades earlier when Hank Greenberg faced a similar situation. This may have reflected a greater tolerance and understanding of Jewish religious observance in the post-Holocaust era. Drysdale took Koufax's place on the mound for the Series opener, was hit hard, and, when taken out of the game, reportedly remarked to the Dodger manager, "Skip, I bet you wish I was Jewish too" (Leavy 2002). Although Koufax lost the Series' second game, he won his next two starts, hurling a three-hit shutout in game seven, as the Dodgers came from behind to win the world championship.

In 1966, Koufax pitched the Dodgers to their third pennant in four years, winning a career-high 27 games, striking out 317 batters, and again compiling the league's lowest earned run average. This would be his last season. Suffering from an arthritic elbow, Koufax announced his retirement after the Dodgers lost that year's World Series to the Baltimore Orioles. He was thirty years old.

In twelve seasons with the Dodgers, Koufax won 165 games and lost 87, a winning percentage of .655. His career earned run average was 2.76, and he struck out 2,396 batters, more than one per inning. Koufax led the National

League in games won three times, in strikeouts four times, and in earned run average for five consecutive years. He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1972, his first year of eligibility.

Pitching in the pastoral setting of Los Angeles' Chavez Ravine Stadium, Koufax symbolized the demographic shift in American Jewry—in the decades since Hank Greenberg had starred for the Detroit Tigers—away from the industrial inner cities of the Northeast and Midwest, to a suburban environment. Similarly, his two marriages (which each ended in divorce) to non-Jewish women anticipated another trend in American Jewish life. Although he rarely encountered severe antisemitism, stereotypical attitudes surfaced in a gratuitous magazine report that the Dodgers set aside a platter of bagels, lox, and chopped liver for him in the team clubhouse or in the offensive taunt of a Minnesota sportswriter during the 1965 World Series that the "Twins love matzoh balls." A predisposition to resort to ethnic clichés may have motivated the press to portray this well-muscled six-foot-two-inch power pitcher who happened to be Jewish as an aloof highbrow who listened to classical music and read books by Aldous Huxley, did not socialize with his teammates, had become a ballplayer by chance, and did not even like baseball—a characterization that, Koufax repeatedly insisted, was inaccurate.

Once his playing days ended, Koufax's laconic manner and reserve doomed his brief foray at broadcasting. A minor league pitching instructor for the Dodgers in the 1980s, he thereafter made periodic spring training appearances as a coach at Dodgertown, but for the most part Koufax has lived quietly, almost entirely out of the public eye, in the decades since he retired at the peak of his game. The ranks of comparably preeminent Jewish athletes have been thin since Koufax's time; only swimmer Mark Spitz comes to mind. Perhaps increasing affluence has sapped the all-consuming competitive hunger that great athletes must have. And, as ongoing assimilation has vitiated traditional definitions of who is a Jew, the determination of religious identity has become ambiguous in many cases. But if another Jewish "Koufax" has yet to appear, neither has a gentile one.

*Henry D. Fetter*

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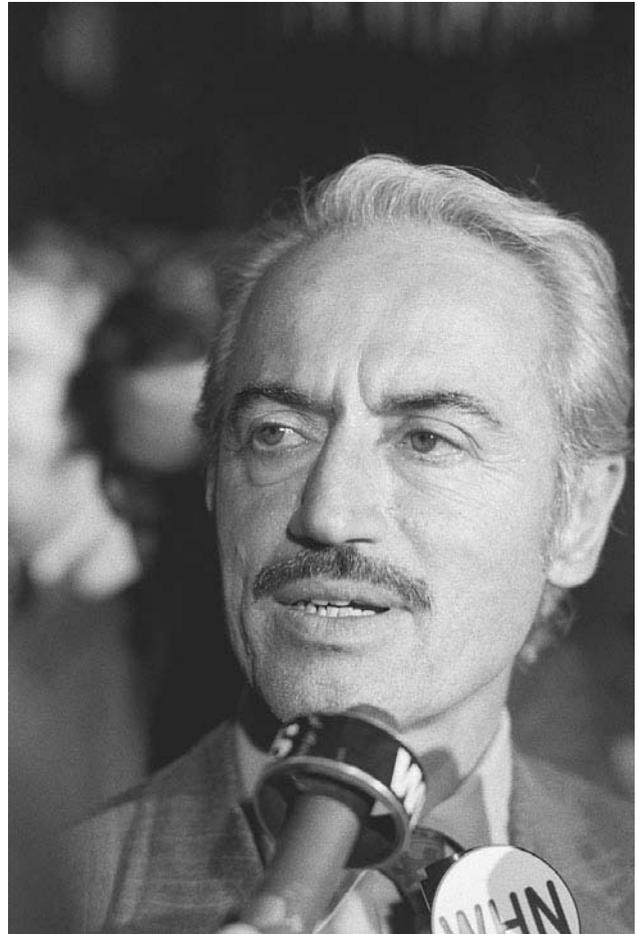
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**Marvin Miller (b. 1917)****Labor Leader**

Marvin Miller created the most powerful American professional trade union in the twentieth century, the Major League Baseball Players Association. Starting with his election to head the union in 1966, during his sixteen-year tenure Miller changed the labor landscape of modern professional team sports and, in the process, goaded club and league management into meeting the challenges of the global entertainment market. Reviled by owners and many fans as the epitome of greed, Miller triumphed repeatedly with the backing of a unified union membership.

An economist by training and practice, Miller accepted the challenge of transmuting a fraternity of baseball players ruled by feudal management into a trade union. United, the Players Association effectively secured improved terms and conditions of employment through the use of the strike. When baseball management locked out the ballplayers, no one on the union side broke ranks. As a result, through collective bargaining the Players Association achieved significant improvements in pension rights and benefits, licensing revenues, scheduling, and even padded outfield walls. At the same time, the multibillion-dollar business of baseball enjoyed record attendance and enhanced franchise values.

Miller understood that the integrity of contract promises depended on a readily available means of enforcement. Schooled in traditional labor relations, in 1970 Miller sought and obtained a provision at the bargaining table for labor arbitration of disputed contract issues before an impartial party. In 1975, before noted arbitrator Peter Seitz, who was jointly selected by baseball management and the union, General Counsel Richard Moss presented evidence to support the Players Association's claim that, under the terms of the uniform player contract, a club may only re-



*Marvin Miller, executive director of the Major League Baseball Players Association (1966–1982). (Bettman/Corbis)*

serve a player's services for a single option year. Seitz ruled in favor of the union. Miller had won a player's right to free agency, ending the century-old baseball practice of the strict lifelong reserve system that bound a player to one club for his entire career. After negotiations, the club owners and the union agreed to the current system that allows a player to declare free agency after six years of major league service and market his services to any baseball club.

Miller's greatest talent was his ability to listen to his members and seek their input. He established a representative structure that offered genuine participation for rank-and-file ballplayers in the development of union policies. When asked early on by one of his members whether they were really a union, Miller responded that national law protected the right of any group of people who worked together to advance their collective interests. The Players Association was a genuine union, and Miller would make it a very powerful one.

When Miller took over as executive director, the union owned a file cabinet and had \$5,400 in its bank account. He immediately negotiated a deal with Coca-Cola to put players' pictures under bottle caps, raising \$66,000, the modest beginning of a licensing program that subsequently produced millions in revenue for all major league baseball players.

Born in 1917 in the Bronx, Marvin Julian Miller was raised in Brooklyn. A Dodgers fan, young Miller would sit in the bleachers and root for his favorite pitcher, Dazzy Vance. Miller knew the statistics, batting stances, and pitching motions of every player. He entered high school just as the Great Depression began, and his parents joined unions to protect their jobs. Miller's father sold women's coats on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, working seven days a week. Miller walked the picket line with his father. His mother was a public school teacher and one of the early organizers of the teachers' union. Miller learned from them the lesson that in the union there is strength.

Miller graduated from New York University in 1938 with a degree in economics. He worked for the War Labor Board during World War II and then joined the staff of the International Association of Machinists. In 1950, Miller became research director and chief economist for the United Steelworkers of America. Working for various union presidents and Steelworkers general counsel Arthur Goldberg, Miller became an expert in collective bargaining. He was considered a quiet and industrious "technician."

George Taylor, the nation's leading academic labor economist, recommended Miller to the baseball players for the position of executive director of their Players Association. A dapper New Yorker with a pencil-thin moustache, Miller was not a natural choice for the job. (In fact, two others had already rejected the position before Taylor suggested Miller.) Miller would have to win the respect of the membership and withstand the onslaught of attacks by the owners who were used to dominating the compliant players. His membership had almost no work experience outside of baseball and knew nothing about unions. He patiently explained to the players their rights under national law as he traveled from city to city, and he encouraged their questions and comments. Miller won the support of his membership, and his organizational skills proved legendary. When management refused to supply salary information in violation of federal law, Miller simply accumulated the data from the players themselves. He

would need all his negotiating skills if he were to prevail at the bargaining table.

Miller's greatest challenge was convincing the owners to take a union of pampered professional athletes seriously. Miller achieved immediate success in negotiations, however, raising the minimum salary from \$7,000 to \$10,000 and improving pension rights in 1968. Then the owners vowed to stand fast, perhaps in a futile effort to break the union. Miller understood that success at the bargaining table depended on economic strength. Although the Players Association bargained hard as each contract expired, club owners had difficulty believing the players would jeopardize their status by striking or withstanding an owner-directed lockout—an incorrect, but long-lived, assumption that would prove disastrous to baseball management for decades. The sports media were strongly and incessantly anti-union in tone and content. Miller kept his troops together, however, unlike the experience in other professional sports unions, such as the National Football League Players Association. And he, along with his devoted membership, triumphed. During his tenure, the average salary of a major league baseball player increased from \$19,000 to \$240,000. More importantly, he had established a market-based salary system that would increase the average player salary to over \$2 million a year by the turn of the century.

The ultimate challenge to Miller's success came in 1981 when the owners provoked the union to strike to defend the significant gains it had achieved. Claiming that twenty-one of its twenty-six clubs were losing money, the owners sought to limit free agency salaries. Under their plan, a club signing a free agent would have to assign one of its current players to the free agent's former club. This "forced trade," similar to football's Rozelle Rule, would have gutted the union's previous victories and effectively ended free agency. Management had prepared for the battle by taking out strike insurance from Lloyds of London. Miller and his troops stood fast through a fifty-day walk-out from June until the end of July. When their insurance ran out, the owners backed down. As was his custom, Miller gave the players full credit for prevailing.

During Miller's tenure as executive director from 1966 to 1982, the owners and the Players Association negotiated five basic collective bargaining agreements that included greater improvements in employee working conditions than in any American industry in a comparable period.

They included the introduction of salary arbitration to resolve pay disputes without player holdouts and the introduction of a player's right to veto trades. In that same period, five pension and insurance agreements were negotiated, vastly improving all the benefits and adding many new ones. All of this was accomplished with a minimum of lost work time.

Miller retired in 1982, but he continued to informally advise his successor, Donald Fehr, and to comment publicly on baseball labor relations issues. His 1991 memoir, *A Whole Different Ballgame: The Sports and Business of Baseball*, recounts Miller's version of events on the business side of baseball. He donated his papers to New York University's Tamiment Library for future generations of scholars. His wife of over sixty years, Terry Miller, earned her doctorate in psychology in 1961 and, after working in clin-

ical and experimental psychology, retired as an associate professor at the City University of New York.

Although he never fielded a ground ball or stroked a hanging curve, Miller pounded the opposition with genius and tenacity. Miller was the most effective union leader of his time. Beloved by many of his members and detested by many on management's side and among the public, Marvin Miller lived a Hall of Fame career that should eventually result in his induction into the shrine of the national pastime at Cooperstown, New York.

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# American Jewish Novelists, Essayists, Poets, and Playwrights

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## Early Jewish Writers in America

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The opening chapters of Jewish American literary history span the first two and a half centuries of Jewish settlement in North America, from the mid-seventeenth to the late nineteenth century, when the mass immigration from Eastern Europe significantly altered the dynamic of Jewish life and literature in America. To begin with, these chapters chronicle the imaginative responses expressed in a range of documents, from petitions and letters to sermons and liturgy, of the earliest Sephardic and Ashkenazic immigrants and their descendants to the unprecedented opportunities and challenges of the New World: their protests and prayers, their translations and transformations, their affirmations and renunciations. These chapters narrate as well the earliest attempts of Jewish writers to join in the literary and intellectual life of the United States—the first poems, plays, novels, and criticism they wrote as Americans for American audiences—the development of Jewish intracommunal literary culture, and the gradual emergence of a self-confident, integrated, mainstream mode of Jewish American ethnic expression.

## The Seventeenth Century

Although a number of literary figures lived in several of the Dutch Jewish communities in South America and in

the Caribbean, none were among the twenty-three Jews who fled Recife, Brazil, after the Portuguese reconquest and landed in New Amsterdam in 1654, and none were among those who followed for the next half century. The literary remains of these earliest Jewish settlers consist mainly of petitions addressed to the Dutch West India Company protesting the exclusionary policies of Governor Peter Stuyvesant and demanding economic and political rights. While hardly literature in the strict sense, these defiant Dutch petitions are the first examples of Jewish self-expression to emerge out of the immediate experience of Jews in North America.

## The Eighteenth Century

The resistance of the early Dutch Jewish settlers to anti-Jewish practices, their insistence on participating in the political life of the colony while remaining practicing Jews, stands nobly, if somewhat deceptively, at the threshold of the history of Jewish American letters, for the course of that history takes a different turn when the first Jewish-authored literary texts are published in the eighteenth century. By then, much of the overt bigotry encountered by the early settlers had been rebuffed and reversed, and the vicissitudes of life in the various British colonies exerted their influence on the Jewish imagination in more subtle and complex ways.

A case in point occurred around 1720, when an Italian Jew, probably of Portuguese descent, named Judah Monis (1683–1764) arrived in Puritan Boston. While steeped in Christian anti-Judaism, the Puritan attitude toward Jews, epitomized by Increase Mather’s *The Mystery of Israel’s Salvation, Explained and Applied* (1669), proved to be more nuanced than the aggressive antipathy of Stuyvesant. While later claims of “Jewish” influence on Puritan New England and, hence, on American culture in general are grossly overstated, the typological mind-set of the Puritans did keep the Old Testament and the biblical Hebrews in the forefront of their imaginations. Moreover, like other Protestant millennialists, the Puritans believed that the survival of the Jews as a distinct people despite their dispersion among the nations was an indication that the Jews still had a special role to play in Christian history. They looked forward to the conversion of a remnant of the Jews, their redemption from obstinacy and error, as a sign that the end of times was near.

When Monis appeared in Boston, he was welcomed warmly by Mather and his colleagues as a learned scholar and religious figure with an insider’s knowledge of Hebrew and the Bible. When he converted to Christianity, his apostasy was seen as an affirmation of the Puritans’ conception of sacred history. As a converted Jew, Monis never renounced his Jewish identity—he is said to have continued to observe his Sabbath on Saturdays—but parlayed it into a respected position in Puritan society, becoming instructor of Hebrew at Harvard College and, hence, its first Jewish faculty member. The volume of conversionist discourses that appears under his name (*The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth*, published soon after his conversion in 1722) makes him the first Jewish author in America. The volume is remarkable for its coupling of classical Jewish erudition with a direct and frank address to “my Brethren *According to the Flesh*.” Monis admits: “I do expect the News of my Embracing the Christian Religion that came to your Ears some time ago, has been somewhat surprizing to you all; and I am afraid you did not think it to be the best you ever have heard.” Still, he prayed that God would “in due time take the Vail [sic] from before the eyes of your Understanding, that so you may see the veracity of his Christ.”

Not all scholars accept without skepticism Monis’s authorship of these discourses, but his place as the first Jewish American author is nevertheless secured by *A Grammar*

*of the Hebrew Tongue*, published in 1735 and used for decades by his students at Harvard. (He also composed a Hebrew lexicon that was never published.) The irony of the apostate’s position in Jewish American literary history is compounded by the fact that, while Monis labored to spread the knowledge of Hebrew among the Puritans, American Jews, loyal to Judaism but far from centers of Jewish learning, were evidently losing their facility in the Holy tongue.

More ironic still is the fact that this Jewish linguistic erosion engendered Jewish literary creativity, for the next significant Jewish-authored publications in America were translations. Noting that Hebrew was “imperfectly understood by many, by some, not at all,” a New York Jew named Isaac Pinto (1720–1791) took it upon himself “to translate our Prayers, in the Language of the Country wherein it hath pleased the divine Providence to appoint our Lot.” His *Prayers for Shabbath, Rosh-Hashanah, and Kippur* appeared in 1766. (An earlier, anonymous volume, *Evening Service of Rosh Hashanah and Kippur*, appeared in 1761 and has also been attributed to Pinto.) While he makes clear in his preface that prayer in Hebrew was greatly preferred, as a sign both of “veneration for the Language . . . in which it pleased Almighty God to reveal himself to our Ancestors” and of the conviction “that it will again be re-established in Israel,” Pinto bowed to the exigencies of Jewish life in America, hoping that his reluctant literary effort would “tend to the Improvement of many of my Brethren in their Devotion.”

Another sign of the undeveloped literary state of the Jewish community in eighteenth-century America is the fact that the first Jewish sermon printed in the British colonies was composed by a visitor from Hebron, Rabbi Raphael Hayyim Isaac Carigal (1729–1777). Carigal arrived in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1773, just before Purim, and preached a sermon in Ladino in the synagogue there three months later, on the holiday of Shavuoth. (It was soon translated by Abraham Lopez into English and published later that year as *The Salvation of Israel*.) Woven with strands of the Bible, Talmud, and ancient history, the sermon took as its theme the dangers of religious innovation and the arrogance of human reason, warning his audience in those turbulent times that “public commotions & revolutions are effects proceeding from the council of the divine creator, who establishes and destroys kingdoms and empires for reasons reserved only to his infinite wisdom.”

By the time Carigal preached in Newport, however, the American-born Gershom Mendes Seixas (1745–1816) had been the *hazzan* (cantor) of Shearith Israel for five years, and, in the decades following the Revolution, Seixas became a significant representative of the fledgling Jewish American community. Shaped by the Revolutionary years, Seixas's homiletics—as seen in his two published sermons, *A Religious Discourse* (1789) and *A Discourse Delivered* (1798)—are characterized by a tension between traditional religio-ethnic conservatism and the headiness of Revolutionary promise, between a Jewish narrative of exile and a new, secular Jewish *American* narrative of liberation. The most well-known version of this new narrative was articulated by the *hazzan*'s brother, Moses Seixas (1744–1809) of Newport, in a letter written in 1790 to newly elected President George Washington: “Deprived as we have hitherto been of the invaluable rights of free citizens, we now . . . behold a government, erected by the majesty of the people, a government which to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance, but generously offering to all liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship, deeming every one, of whatever nation, tongue, or language, equal parts of the great governmental machine.” Gershom's congregants had to be reminded that this new American narrative did not supersede the older, Jewish one. Recalling the history of the Jews from God's promise to Abraham to the destruction of the Temple, Seixas concludes in *A Religious Discourse*: “From that period even until now, our predecessors have been, and *we are still at this time* in captivity among the different nations of the earth; and though we are . . . made equal partners of the benefits of government by the constitution of these states . . . still we cannot but view ourselves as captives in comparison to what we were formerly, and what we expect to be hereafter, when the outcasts of Israel shall be gathered together” and “we shall be established under our own king—the Messiah the son of David.”

## The Early Nineteenth Century

In the early decades of the new republic, patriotic American writers turned their energies to producing what they believed could and should be a distinctly American literature. On this note, American Jews proudly entered into the cultural life of the new nation as well, striving to write as Americans and succeeding, authoring plays, poems, and

romances that broadly resembled those of their non-Jewish compatriots.

Among these Jewish American aspirants was New York's Samuel B. H. Judah (1799–1876), who authored a number of melodramas, including *The Mountain Torrent* (1820) and *The Rose of Aragon* (1822), along with a patriotic comedy called *A Tale of Lexington* (1823), a long Romantic dramatic poem *Odofriede, the Outcast* (1822), and a novel *The Buccaneers: A Romance of Our Own Country* (1827). Plainly an ambitious young writer, Judah also produced a scurrilous account of the political and literary life of New York City called *Gotham and the Gothamites* (1823), in which he suggests that his fellow playwright Mordecai Noah was “descended from Mordecai of old, that hanged Haman, for his desires, like that worthy's, are entirely bent toward the gallows.” Although published under the pseudonym Terentius Phlogobombus, Judah's authorship was nevertheless revealed and he was jailed for his efforts. (A number of freethinking biblical dramas published in the 1830s have also been ascribed to Judah, but his authorship of these is doubtful.)

More successful in his literary endeavors was Philadelphia-born Jonas B. Phillips (1805–1869). After publishing a collection of gothic stories, *Tales for Leisure Hours* (1827), he authored a number of popular melodramas, including *The Evil Eye* (1833), based on a story by Mary Shelley, and *Jack Sheppard, or The Life of a Robber* (1839), based on a novel by Henry Ainsworth, notable as the first dramatic work to include, albeit briefly and inconsequentially, a Jewish character. Phillips also penned a tragedy, *Camillus; or, The Self-Exiled Patriot* (1833), and a collection of verse, *Zamira: A Dramatic Sketch, and Other Poems* (1835). A number of his lyrics were set to music by popular composer Henry Russell.

Like Judah and Phillips, Isaac Harby of Charleston (1788–1828) enters American literary history through the stage: Harby's early gothic melodrama *The Gordian Knot* (1807, produced in 1810) is credited with being the first Jewish-authored literary work published in the United States, and his later *Alberti* (1819), a play about the Medici, was honored by the presence of President James Monroe at its premiere. (Harby is also said to have authored, at seventeen, a tragedy about Roman emperor Alexander Severus.) A noted newspaper editor, Harby also produced a considerable and respectable body of general political, literary, and dramatic criticism. (*Selections from the Miscellaneous*

*Writings of Isaac Harby*, containing *Alberti* and a generous sampling of his critical writing, was published posthumously in 1829.) These literary works are for the most part, like the works of Judah and Phillips, indistinguishable in style and theme from those of his non-Jewish American contemporaries.

Yet Harby figures more prominently and significantly in the history of Jewish American letters. What distinguishes him, first and foremost, is his critique of anti-Jewish bigotry, whether in his 1816 letter to President James Monroe protesting the removal of Mordecai Noah as United States consul in Tunis, or, more publicly, in an essay on Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. "When we observe in a drama, an Irishman represented as a *rogue*, an Englishman a *sot*, a Frenchman a *monkey*, and a Jew a *usurer*," he writes, "we evidently are aware, that the author's sole object is to gratify the malignant passions of mankind," accusing the otherwise irreproachable bard of "bow[ing] his great genius to the prejudices of an ignorant age" (*Miscellaneous Writings*). Still, glimpses of Jewish sentiment are rare indeed in Harby's literary writing, and it is worth noting that his critique of antisemitism draws sustenance from his Jeffersonian liberalism as much as it is fueled by his Jewishness.

More than on his plays or criticism, Harby's Jewish reputation rests on his literary activity within the Jewish community of Charleston. As a founding member of the Reformed Society of Israelites for Promoting True Principles of Judaism According to Its Purity and Spirit, the first proto-Reform congregation in America, Harby contributed to its revisionary prayer book and penned a discourse (1825) that articulated its beliefs and goals. Here Harby speaks unequivocally *as a Jew*—and, more precisely, as an American Jew. Not only did he configure progressive American values as Jewish values, he also envisioned America as the culmination of *Jewish* history. "Thus appreciating, thus enjoying the natural and political blessings of our country," he wrote, "we are willing to repose in the belief that America truly is the land of promise spoken of in our ancient scriptures, that this is the region to which the children of Israel, if they are wise, will hasten to come." Such beliefs would find their full articulation decades later in the writings of German reformers Isaac Mayer Wise and Kaufmann Kohler.

Ridiculed by Judah and defended by Harby, Mordecai Manuel Noah (1785–1851) of New York was unarguably

the most prominent Jew in antebellum America, as well as the most flamboyant—and the most maligned. Consul to Tunis, grand sagem of Tammany Hall, and editor of the *National Advocate*, he was also a prolific essayist, publishing two collections of essays: *Essays of Howard on Domestic Economy* (1820) and *Gleanings from a Gathered Harvest* (1845). More important, he was a popular and successful American playwright. His plays include *The Fortress of Sorrento* (1809), *Paul and Alexis* (1812; later known as *The Wandering Boys*), *She Would be a Soldier* (1819), *The Siege of Tripoli* (1820), *Marion; or, The Hero of Lake George* (1822), and *The Grecian Captive* (1822). Some of these plays used American materials, others more elliptically addressed American themes, but all were deliberate attempts to create a national literature. It bears mentioning, though, that Noah's most notable and notorious contribution to the American drama may very well be his unconventional theatrics: an inveterate showman, Noah experimented with the use of live animals on stage, including a camel and an elephant, with embarrassing results.

Still, Noah is remarkable in Jewish American literary history primarily for his willingness, indeed his insistence, on appearing before the public not simply as an American writer but also as a *Jewish* American writer. In his *Travels in England, France, Spain, and the Barbary States* (1819), an account of his diplomatic travels, he presents himself both as an American writer contributing to "the stock of American literature" and, in his fascinating account of the Jews of North Africa, as a Jew "professing the same religion, and representing a Christian nation."

Noah was also a self-appointed, outspoken champion of Jewish causes and wrote frequently on Jewish themes, often marked by his penchant for the unusual and the flamboyant. Noah's most notable and most notorious scheme and his most characteristic bit of Jewish American writing, however, came earlier in his life. In 1820, just as his career as an American dramatist was taking off, Noah petitioned the New York State Assembly for permission to buy Grand Island in the Niagara River, near Buffalo, to build a colony for immigrant Jews—not as a home in their new promised land, as Harby suggested, but as a preparatory stage to their restoration to Palestine. With a self-promoting nod to the biblical Noah, he called it Ararat. On Thursday, September 15, 1825, Noah organized a grandiose, theatrical procession of musicians, soldiers, politicians, clergymen, and masons, with Noah himself, dressed osten-

tatiously as the Judge of Israel. When the procession ended, he delivered an elaborate address, a pastiche of American and biblical rhetoric, a traditionalist vision of a return to Zion in which America also played a central, catalytic role. It was a plea to help persecuted Jews that combined well with the histrionic American patriotism of his plays and even more so with the millennialist fervor that was overtaking America, in particular upstate New York, in the 1820s. Over the next two decades, Noah would return in more detail to the themes he touched upon in his Ararat address. In 1837 he wrote a quasi-learned discourse reviving the old claim that the American Indians were the descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel. In 1840 he wrote an introduction to and published an English translation of the seventeenth-century pseudo-midrash, *The Book of Jasher*. In 1845 he delivered the proto-Zionist *Discourse on the Restoration of the Jews* and in 1849 an *Address to Aid in the Erection of the Temple at Jerusalem*. Although the Ararat project failed miserably, it did succeed in firing the imaginations of a number of Jewish writers since then, including British man of letters Israel Zangwill, American graphic novelist Ben Katchor, and, most recently, Israeli novelist Nava Semel.

Brief mention should be given to two unique figures, who, for very different reasons, remain on the margins of the history of Jewish American literature: Alexander Bryan Johnson (1786–1867) of Utica, New York, and Rebecca Gratz (1781–1869) of Philadelphia. Born to a Jewish family in England, Johnson immigrated to America with his parents when he was eighteen. A banker by profession, Johnson was also a noted philosopher, whose works enjoyed a brief revival in the 1960s. Among his many writings are *A Treatise on Language* (1836); *The Philosophical Emperor* (1841), a political satire; and *The Meaning of Words* (1854). However, Johnson was raised as an Episcopalian, joining the Presbyterian Church upon marrying a granddaughter of John Adams. And unlike Judah Monis, Johnson did not make anything of his Jewish origins.

Fully integrated into Philadelphia society, acquainted with such distinguished literary figures as Washington Irving and James Kirke Paulding, Rebecca Gratz was probably the most cultured and literate Jew of her time. (Legend has it that she was the original for Walter Scott's Rebecca in *Ivanhoe*.) But she never published a word. Still, she was one of the most significant Jewish American literary figures of her time. Most notably, she was a prolific letter writer,

maintaining correspondences with such figures as Grace Aguilar, Maria Edgeworth, Fanny Kemble, and Catherine Sedgwick, as well as with various members of her family. Collected and published in 1929, her letters show her to be impressively informed on both contemporary Jewish and secular matters: she could reflect as comfortably on Noah's edition of *The Book of Jasher* or a new translation of Mendelsohn's *Jerusalem* as on the latest novel. Johnson and Gratz comprise an invaluable example of the hybrid nature of Jewish cultural identity in early America.

## The Later Nineteenth Century

The Jewish literary scene changed substantively with the German migration of the second quarter of the nineteenth century. When Isaac Mayer Wise (1819–1900) arrived in New York from Bohemia in 1846, he later recalled, he was appalled by the low level of Jewish literacy and the paucity of Jewish literary activity. He did acknowledge the accomplishments of Mordecai Noah and Charleston poet Penina Moise, but seemed to feel that the list began and ended with them. As the new wave of immigration continued, however, the audience for Jewish-themed literature grew, and in the decades that followed, the amount of literature produced and read by American Jews grew considerably, and its character and range changed significantly, in large part due to Wise himself and to others such as Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia (1806–1868) who were pioneers of the Jewish press in America. (Leeser founded *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* in 1843, and Wise's *American Israelite* first appeared in Cincinnati in 1854.) Described on its cover as “devoted to the Diffusion of Knowledge on Jewish Literature and Religion,” *The Occident* understood “literature” broadly to include scholarly essays and sermons: indeed, no poetry or fiction at all appeared in *The Occident's* first issue. But soon its pages, like those of Wise's *Israelite* and other early Jewish periodicals such as *The Asmonean*, *The Jewish Messenger*, and *The American Hebrew*, became the central venue for Jewish belletristic writing in America.

From the outset, this literature was meant to be intracommunal, to foster religious and communal feelings and allegiances, and to provide a bulwark against Christian missionaries. At the same time, it also served the purposes of acculturation, as it prepared the immigrants and their children to be Americans. Similarly, while the prose and

poetry of this period were written by Jews for Jews, they also display a variety of strategies for reaching a broader audience.

In the beginning, to be sure, American-authored works were not easy to come by. Often, the editors turned to English authors such as Grace Aguilar and sisters Celia Moss and Marion Hartog. Sometimes they published translations from the French and German. In his quest for Jewish American literature, however, Wise often turned to his most reliable resource: himself. Along with the news, sermons, and history, Wise also authored a number of fictions in English, published serially in the *Israelite* under the byline, “The American Jewish Novelist.” He authored a number of fictions in German as well, published in the *Israelite’s* German supplement, *Die Deborah*.

Two of Wise’s novels were later published in book form: *The Combat of the People, or Hillel and Herod* (1859) and *The First of the Maccabees* (1860), both historical romances of the Second Temple period. As in many of his writings, one of Wise’s goals in these novels was to recast Jewish history in American terms, blurring the differences between the two. In *Maccabees*, for instance, Wise has Matathia, father of Judah Maccabee, sound much like Thomas Jefferson: “The despotic will of Antiochus will shatter into atoms on the rock of Israel’s fortitude. The blood of our saints impregnates the tree of liberty with new strength.” (This sort of rhetoric would find its culmination in Kaufmann Kohler’s sermon series, *Backwards or Forwards?* [1885].) Among Wise’s many other works of history and theology are *The History of the Israelitish Nation from Abraham to the Present Time* (1854), *The Essence of Judaism* (1861), *The Cosmic God* (1876), and *History of the Hebrews’ Second Commonwealth* (1880). His *Reminiscences* were translated from the German by David Philipson and published in 1901.

As in so many other areas of Jewish American culture, Wise’s influence on the development of Jewish American literature was considerable, though not always as he may have imagined or approved. For instance, the first Hebrew book wholly written and published in America—Elijah M. Holzman’s *Emek Refaim* (1865)—was an Orthodox polemic satirizing Wise and other American Reform rabbis.

Wise would have seen his influence more approvingly in the work of several writers who produced serial fiction for *The Israelite*. One such writer, Herman M. Moos

(1836–1894), also served as literary editor for the paper. Moos’s gothic romance, *Hannah; or, A Glimpse of Paradise*, was published serially in 1865 and in book form in 1868. The romance follows the trials and tribulations of the Armholds, a German Jewish family who immigrate to Cincinnati, and, in particular, their two sons, Edgar and Reuben, one of whom becomes a novelist, the other a drunk. Moos obviously desired to reach an audience broader than the readers of the *Israelite*, as his stated goal was “to dispel some prejudices that, like an impenetrable mist, have kept Jew and Gentile from understanding one another better” and to raise “the claims of Israel to a partial acknowledgment of its desserts.” *Carrie Harrington*, the sequel to *Hannah*, is a tale of seduction and betrayal in which a virtuous but naïve Jewish heroine is abducted by a handsome but callous Christian. The volume is notable for a long and vigorous defense of such novels as those of George Sand, Eugene Sue, and Monk Lewis, delivered by a progressive Jew named Mr. Aaron against the charges of a prissy Christian critic, Mrs. Flintweasel. Moos was also the author of a long narrative poem on the Mortara case of 1858, published along with other verse in *Mortara: or, The Pope and His Inquisitors* (1860).

Another disciple of Wise, businessman Moritz Loth, offered a didactic novel about the dangers of wealth in *Our Prospects: A Tale of Real Life* (1870), though his narrative strategy differed markedly from those of Wise and Moos. Rather than people his novel with virtuous or Americanizing Jewish characters, Loth approached the question of Jewishness indirectly, choosing rather to portray two Christian Cincinnati families, the Huntings and the de la Mottes, while infusing the novel with a morality that is suspiciously similar to that of Reform Judaism, inserting here and there a poem by Wise, and assigning frankly philosemitic attitudes to the most praiseworthy characters. One upstanding young and handsome Christian man, for instance, refuses to go to church, preferring rather to be tutored in Hebrew at home and to read the Bible in the original. Another moral tale, *The Forgiving Kiss: or, Our Destiny*, followed in 1874, and *On a Higher Plane* in 1899. He also published *Pearls from the Bible* in 1894.

Nathan Mayer (1838–1912) has been called the most accomplished of the early Jewish American novelists. A physician by profession who served with distinction with Union forces during the Civil War, he also wrote music and drama criticism (for the *Hartford Times*) and verse, includ-

ing a poem read at the dedication of a monument to those who fought at Antietam, published as a pamphlet in 1894. Following Wise's lead, he published a number of historical romances in *The Israelite*, including *Plots and Counterplots*, which was published in book form in 1858, and *The Count and the Jewess* (1865). In 1867, however, he published the first fictional account of contemporary Jewish life in America, *Differences*, a novel of the Civil War and its aftermath, whose central character is Louis Welland, a young German Jewish immigrant caught in the web of interfaith and intersectional tensions. As in the other early novels—though uniquely in a realistic, contemporary setting—the Judaism promoted through its virtuous characters is that of Wise and the Reformers. Commenting on intermarriage, for instance, Welland remarks assuredly that many “ancient customs have been disregarded of late, and the heavens have not fallen.” The novel interweaves romantic alliances with the North–South conflict, moving resolutely toward a conciliatory ending where the lovers declare themselves “United in love . . . notwithstanding former differences.” And, with a nod toward a broader reading public still suffering from the wounds of war, the novel closes with the words, “United forever.”

Although the development of Jewish American poetry over the course of the nineteenth century was also significantly facilitated by the Jewish press, the influence of Wise and the Reform movement was far less dominant than it was in fiction. The imaginative range and intellectual sophistication of the poetry is evident in the work of the four most significant poets of the period.

Penina Moise (1797–1880) of Charleston was the first Jewish poet of note in America. A student of Isaac Harby, Moise published widely in the newspapers of her day, both secular and Jewish, and in 1833 she published *Fancy's Sketch Book*, the first book of original poetry published by a Jew in America. Written in neoclassical style, the volume displays the range of interests of a cultured American woman. Poems on Greek myths are followed by others on biblical characters; poems on world politics (Greek independence, Napoleon) are joined by poetic eulogies for Isaac Harby and Felicia Hemans. One patriotic poem, “To Persecuted Foreigners,” stands out for its rhetorical address to Jews, encouraging them to immigrate to America: “If thou art one of that oppressed race,/ Whose pilgrimage from Palestine we trace,/ Brave the Atlantic—Hope's broad anchor weigh,/ A Western Sun will

gild your future day.” The poem was originally published in *The Southern Patriot*.

Throughout her long and often difficult life, Moise continued to write poetry, including occasional poems on Jewish political themes such as the Damascus blood libel of 1840. Far more popular than her secular poetry, however, was her spiritual verse: *Hymns Written for the Use of Hebrew Congregations* (1856) went through several editions. Her collected poetry was published as *Secular and Religious Works of Penina Moise* in 1911.

Born in Philadelphia to a Jewish father and a Christian mother, Rebecca Gumpert Hyneman (1812–1875) formally converted to Judaism after marrying Benjamin Hyneman in 1845, and soon after her verse began appearing in Leeser's *Occident*. Hyneman also wrote a number of sensationalist fictions after the disappearance and presumed death of her husband in 1850, including *The Fatal Cosmetic* (1853), a gothic tale about a female vampire who preys on young girls in Philadelphia, and *The Doctor* (1860), a dark romance no doubt inspired by the Brontës. But it is with her verse that she makes her mark on Jewish American literary history. In 1853 she published *The Leper and Other Poems*, the first volume of verse on primarily Jewish themes published in America. Quoting from the introduction to *The Scarlet Letter* in her preface to *The Leper*, Hyneman takes on Hawthorne's studied self-effacing persona in presenting her poetry, previously addressed to the narrow circle of Jewish readers, to the wider American public, thus making her volume the first self-consciously Jewish literary work in America since Noah's *Travels*. Particularly noteworthy are her two series of poems on “Women of the Bible.” Unlike Moise's verse, Hyneman's poetry is heavily Romantic, her Jewishness colored by the exoticism of the East and a history of suffering and martyrdom. In a poem on the biblical Rebekah, for instance, Hyneman writes: “Deep in each earnest Jewish heart/ Are shrined those memories of the past,/ Memories that time can ne'er efface,/ Nor sorrow's blighting wing o'ercast.”

Of all the midcentury “Jewish” poets, Adah Isaacs Menken (1835–1868) was the most well-known in her day, though not for her poetry. A stage actress who played male roles (most famously Mazeppa) and titillated audiences with her risqué costumes and scandalous off-stage behavior, Menken also maintained an active literary life, publishing dozens of poems and essays, and counting among her acquaintances Whitman, Dickens, Swinburne, and Dumas.

Her early life and ethnicity are obscure—it is unlikely that she was born Jewish, as she once claimed, or that she ever formally converted to Judaism—but after she married Alexander Isaac Menken, a musician from an affluent Cincinnati Jewish family, in 1856, she took his name and claimed his religious identification. Part of their married life was spent in Cincinnati, where she published over a dozen poems and essays of palpable Jewish content, mostly in Wise’s *Israelite*, including a poem to novelist Nathan Mayer and an essay on Shakespeare’s Shylock. The marriage lasted only three years, but she retained Menken’s name and a Jewish identity throughout her life and travels—which took her to New York, San Francisco, London, and finally Paris, where she died—and despite subsequent marriages and liaisons. Her later poetry—including a violently dramatic poem on the apocryphal Judith and another, supposedly from the Hebrew, called “Hear, O Israel”—was published posthumously in *Infelicia* (1873), the volume bearing a dedication to Dickens, an epigraph from Swinburne, and the unmistakable prosodic influence of Whitman. The strident, histrionic Jewishness she depicts in these late poems departs markedly from the conventional self-definitions of the era.

Plainly the most talented and literate of all these poets and novelists was Emma Lazarus (1849–1887). She was certainly the most accomplished, the most centrally situated in the literary scene of the period, and the most successful in addressing both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. In little more than two decades, Lazarus published five volumes of verse while also trying her hand at fiction—publishing a novel, *Alide: An Episode of Goethe’s Life* (1874), and a melodramatic short story about an immigrant artist, “The Eleventh Hour” (1878)—and penning numerous, often powerful essays on a variety of literary and political themes, from “American Literature” to “The Jewish Problem.” A two-volume collection, *The Poems of Emma Lazarus*, was published by her sisters in 1888, the year following her death.

Born into a wealthy Jewish family that could trace its history in America to the Revolution, Lazarus was raised in the elite cultural circles of New York and given a private, classical education. She began writing poetry seriously as an adolescent, and her first book, *Poems and Translations* (1866), was privately published by her father and sent to Ralph Waldo Emerson, who responded with warm praise. Her second volume of poetry, *Admetus and Other Poems*

(1871), was dedicated to Emerson, and she sent him her next volume of verse in manuscript, a poetic tragedy called *The Spagnoletto*, which was eventually published in 1876. Their mentor–disciple relationship continued for the rest of Emerson’s life, surviving Lazarus’s severe disappointment at not being included in Emerson’s anthology, *Parnassus* (1874). After his death, Lazarus published a eulogistic essay, “Emerson’s Personality,” in 1882, and a poem, “To R.W.E.,” in 1884.

Despite her embeddedness in American literary culture, Lazarus would doubtless have remained little more than a footnote in literary history had she not turned to Jewish themes and concerns in the early 1880s. Although she had written “In the Jewish Synagogue in Newport” (1867) as a more optative response to Longfellow’s elegiac “The Jewish Cemetery at Newport,” Lazarus did not present herself as a Jewish writer until the first reports of the pogroms in Russia reached America and the first East European immigrants began to arrive at Ward’s Island. Then, encouraged by Edmund Clarence Stedman and inspired by George Eliot, she began to publish poetry and prose in the Jewish press, especially in the *American Hebrew*, which also brought out her boldly titled *Songs of a Semite* in 1882 and carried a controversial fifteen-part series of proto-Zionist essays called *An Epistle to the Hebrews* (1882–1883), which she dedicated to George Eliot. (*Epistle* was posthumously published in book form in 1900.) Lazarus carried her cause to the general press as well: spurred by the publication in *The Century* of “Russian Jews and Gentiles,” a wildly anti-semitic essay by Mme. Z. Ragozin, Lazarus responded by contributing two essays to the journal, “Russian Christianity vs. Modern Judaism” (1882) and “The Jewish Problem” (1883), in which she turns the tables on Ragozin, attacking Christian antisemitism, offering a compassionate view of Jewish history, and promoting the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

Lazarus read voraciously, and her literary Jewishness displays something other than the exoticism of Hyneman and the histrionics of Menken: an audacious and intensive intellectual engagement with Jewish texts and history. She did not follow the beaten path, combining the theological progressivism of Wise and his followers with a fervent Jewish nationalism unheard of in Reform circles or among American Jews in general since Mordecai Noah. Nor did her ethnic awakening lead her to give up on America or on Western culture, though she sometimes understood her

dual allegiances in oppositional terms. Her model in this was clearly Heinrich Heine. (Her *Poems and Ballads of Heinrich Heine* was published in 1881.) “A fatal and irrec- oncilable dualism formed the basis of Heine’s nature,” she wrote in *The Century* in 1884. “He was a Jew, with the mind and eyes of a Greek.”

Nowhere is the complexity of Lazarus’s cultural alle- giances more at play than in her most famous poem, “The New Colossus.” Written in 1883 to help raise funds to erect a pedestal for Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi’s “Liberty En- lightening the World,” the sculptor’s monumental statue of the goddess *Libertas* modeled on the Colossus of Rhodes, Lazarus’s sonnet daringly wrenches the statue from its clas- sical foundations and places it firmly within the context of immigration and myth of American asylum, changing its name to “Mother of Exiles” and placing into its “silent lips” welcoming words that echo the Hebrew prophets: “Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, / I lift my lamp be- side the golden door!” Embossed on a bronze plaque in the base of the Statue of Liberty, looking toward the arrival of the East European immigrants, the sonnet establishes Lazarus as the writer whose work is the culmination of early Jewish American literary history.

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## New Jewish Immigrant Writing

According to most critics of Jewish American literature, we are currently in the midst of a surprising literary revival, a creative surge of literary energy expressive of a rising generation of authors, many of whom are not native-born, in- deed some writing from positions within religious orthodoxy itself. What is surprising about the current liter- ary scene is its implicit challenge to a famous prediction by the powerful literary critic Irving Howe, who imagined the end of Jewish American literature with the passing of the immigrant-saturated memories of its earlier practitioners. In light of the startling achievement of a host of new im- migrant writers, Howe’s bleak forecast seems to have been premature.

A year after his elegiac chronicle of the migration of East European Jews to America, *World of Our Fathers* (1976), Irving Howe announced the apparent exhaustion of a once flourishing genre: Jewish American fiction. As a result of the absorptive power of *Americanization*—the term invoked by early twentieth-century critics to describe the eventual embrace of New World ideals by arriving im- migrants—Howe argued that later writers were unlikely to bridge the chasm separating their assimilated lives from the shaping crucible of the immigrant generation, the cre- ative source of much Jewish American writing.

For Howe, the emotionally charged landscape of im- migrant family life produced a range of complex responses that he associated with growing up Jewish in the New World. “Nostalgia, return, hatred, nausea, affection, guilt— all these are among the familiar, urgent feelings which

memories of immigrant streets, tenements and (most of all) families can stir up in the American Jewish writers.” In the wake of inevitable memory loss (“America makes one forget everything,” cautioned the advice columnist for the Yiddish *Daily Forward* in 1908), will there remain, Howe asked, “a thick enough sediment of felt life to enable a new outburst of writing about American Jews?” (Howe 1977a) as in the 1930s, with Henry Roth’s harrowing immigrant novel, *Call It Sleep*, and again in the 1950s, with the arrival of Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, and the young Philip Roth.

Howe was not optimistic. In the contemporary literary scene there was relatively little in what he termed the “post-immigrant Jewish experience” for the imagination to draw on. A generation later, however, his prediction—now dubbed the Howe Doctrine by students of Jewish American literature—seems to have been dead wrong. Rather than chanting *kaddish* over the demise of Jewish American fiction, the years at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first have witnessed a Jewish literary revival, a flowering by a rising generation of writers who have made, in Morris Dickstein’s description, “their Jewish fantasies, feelings, and experiences absolutely central to their work” (1997).

Dickstein has in mind authors as various as Allegra Goodman, Ehud Havazelet, Steve Stern, Nathan Englander, and Jonathan Safran Foer. In addition, there now exists a serious body of literature (and scholarship) by children of the Holocaust, second-generation “survivors” who continue to grapple with embers of *postmemory*, the term Marianne Hirsch applies to the traumas of family history visited upon the victims’ surviving sons and daughters. These writers include Melvin Jules Bukiet, Thane Rosenbaum, Eva Hoffmann, and most brilliantly Art Spiegelman. A thriving creative realm also explores the bounded world of Jewish orthodoxy by writers and filmmakers now estranged, but at one time either inside the fold (like Pearl Abraham and Pearl Gluck), or straddling the margins of that world, curious (from a secular perspective) about the claims of religious faith, fascinated by the clarifying power of undoubting belief. These writers include Areyeh Lev Stollman, Dara Horn, and Tova Mirvis, especially her novel, *The Outside World* (2004).

Unswerving in his convictions about the inevitable trajectory of Jewish assimilation (subsequently borne out, statistically at least, by sociological data on rates of inter-

marriage and religious affiliation and observance), Howe did not anticipate the array of returns to the marrow of Jewishness that have come to mark the beginning of a new century: the return to memory (as in Foer’s critically acclaimed 2003 novel *Everything Is Illuminated*); to orthodoxy; to earlier, often comic, traditions of Yiddish writing; above all, to a host of engagements with the labyrinth of Jewish identity itself. “I am in-between and unsettled,” remarks Nathan Englander, among the more heralded members of the Revival (Englander 2002). His fluid sense of Jewish identity captures perfectly the exhilarating moment of contemporary self-consciousness.

Howe also assumed, incorrectly, that the historic twentieth-century story of migration was virtually completed, at least in its Jewish incarnation. What Howe could not have predicted (he died in 1992) is a postcolonial world shaped by constant movement and upheaval, of orbiting families (to borrow the title of a Bharati Mukherjee story), unsettling their host nations’ fixed identity. Howe was also skeptical about the debates over multiculturalism and identity politics in the academy; above all, he was irritated by the collective “fever” of ethnicity and mania over “roots” in American society, which his own best-selling study of Jewish life on the Lower East Side helped, ironically, to legitimate (Howe 1977b, 1986).

Yet in identifying immigrant experience as *the* energizing source for the literary imagination, the Howe Doctrine appears ironically to have anticipated the emergence of a remarkable cohort of new immigrant writers from the former Soviet Union who are in creative dialogue with the traditions of Jewish immigrant literature. Still in their early thirties, Gary Shteyngart, Lara Vapnyar, and David Bezmozgis transcribe in startling new ways the narrative of immigrant families’ ordeal of transition, the familiar struggle to decode an often bewildering, disorienting new world. Confirming the sociological-aesthetic assumptions of the Howe Doctrine, they represent a new chapter in a long tradition of Jewish immigrant writing.

“To rehash the old immigrant narrative,” groans Gary Shteyngart, regarding his vexed relation to literary history. “What a job, eh? Who would want it?” (Shteyngart 2003). Rather than feeling weighed down by literary giants like Bellow and Malamud, in his award-winning *The Russian Debutante’s Handbook* (2002) Shteyngart mischievously liberates the American immigrant story, *reversing* the canonical narrative’s Old-World-to-New-World journey

of rebirth and transformation (as in the fiction of Anzia Yeziarska or memoirs by Mary Antin). Instead, he sends his alienated alter ego hero, Vladimir Girshkin, back to Eastern Europe, to Prava (Prague), the new playground of a spoiled expatriate generation seeking the pleasures of easy nostalgia and quick fixes, both monetary and sexual. “The whole point of coming to the Old World,” explains a would-be poet, who knows no poetry, “is to chuck the baggage of the new.”

Vladimir would also like to chuck the cultural burdens packed into *his* New World baggage, would like, above all, to overcome the mythic expectations of American success (“the old immigrant narrative”), but his endlessly ironic sensibility prevents any easy deliverance. In their rebuking example, Girshkin’s Russian émigré parents project the boundless energy of the “alpha” immigrant; as explained by Girshkin’s weary (alpha-drained) father, “emigrating to this country, leaving one’s hut, one’s yurt, one’s Soviet-era high-rise requires an ambition, a madness, a stubbornness, a stamina.” In dissent, Vladimir chooses the role of an inertia-ridden “beta” immigrant son, a *failurchka* (his alpha mother’s endearing nickname). Seeking redemption, a new life in the *Old World*, Girshkin arrives in Prava as a self-styled “Vladimir the Repatriate, in this case signifying a homecoming, a foreknowledge, a making amends with history. . . . Back to the part of the world where the Girshkins were first called Girshkins!”

In the end Vladimir remains unsettled, like his creator, neither at home in the Old nor at ease in the New. In various interviews Shteyngart speaks of the empowering disjunctions that come with the territory of new-world displacement, his “Zelig-like” condition, relishing “a constant state of movement, of migration” (National Public Radio, June 6, 2003). The allusion to Woody Allen’s chameleon man of the fluid 1920s seems apt; indeed, reading Shteyngart’s work the novelist Chang-rae Lee (whose canonical *Native Speaker* also plays with the traditions and tropes of the immigrant novel) recognized that Shteyngart’s antic mode of comedy and wicked satire, channeled through the anti-hero Girshkin, seemed “as if Woody Allen had been an immigrant” (Zalewski 2002).

Yet Shteyngart remains deeply conscious of his multiple positions as “ex-Soviet, Russo-Judeo-American immigrant writer,” a situation, he confesses, which “is not all borscht and laughter for me” (Shteyngart 2003). Along with his haunted alter ego, he remains attuned to those

“wispy force fields of desire and history that enfold Manhattan, a simple result of the number of foreigners that inhabit the island and cannot express themselves in their true language at any given moment” (Shteyngart 2003). Despite feeling adrift in the new world, Shteyngart ultimately celebrates his marginal relation to the shape-shifting potential of the American landscape. *The Russian Debutante’s Handbook* speaks on behalf of those who (like his literary forebear, Bellow’s Tommy Wilhelm, schlemiel anti-hero of *Seize the Day*, drowning in the material 1950s) continue to resist the alpha immigrant success narrative; at the same time, its soulful hero imagines becoming the father of a New World son “free of the fear and madness of Vladimir’s Eastern lands. . . . An American in America.”

In sharp contrast to Shteyngart’s extravagant comic imagination, the stories collected in Lara Vapnyar’s *There Are Jews in My House* (2003) and David Bezmozgis’s *Natasha and Other Stories* (2004) are more subdued, modest in their rich evocation of the emotional strains that afflict immigrant families in the wake of migration. Unlike Shteyngart and Bezmozgis, who emigrated as children, Vapnyar arrived in New York as a young woman in 1994, with virtually no English; she learned to speak and write by watching soap operas and reading Jane Austen. As a result, her stories, told mostly from the perspective of an attentive child, achieve a certain power through intimation, by what remains unspoken. In the process they also convey the excitement of discovery, the enchanting power of linguistic newness. In this respect she could be a sister to the early twentieth-century immigrant writer Anzia Yeziarska, marveling at her own New World linguistic condition: “And every new word made me see new American things with American eyes. I felt like a Columbus, finding new worlds through every new word” (Yeziarska 1923).

While most of the quiet, delicate stories in *There Are Jews in My House* are set in a drab post-Soviet society haunted by the Chernobyl disaster and feelings of unspeakable loss and uncompleted mourning, one story conveys the palpable excitement of linguistic and, it appears, romantic discovery. In “Mistress,” the only story set in America, in the Russian Jewish immigrant enclave of Brooklyn, Vapnyar distills a family drama reminiscent of the “sweatshop romances” of immigrant writers like Abraham Cahan and Yeziarska. “Mistress” narrates the poignant relationship between a grandfather and grandson, each strangely speechless in the New World, each yearning to

find a New World voice. Back in the old country, Misha communicated instinctually with his beloved grandfather. In their cramped existence in Little Odessa, however, the grandfather remains “immobile.” Only after he starts taking English lessons does the grandfather begin to recover his old world energy and his voice. As Misha discovers, indirectly, the agent of his grandfather’s newfound loquacity is a woman, a fellow immigrant he has met in English-language school, “with a gray braid and an amber brooch . . . his and the grandfather’s secret.”

At the end of “Mistress” is a scene of powerful verbal release, a flood of New World emotion no longer under repression. Misha “talked nonstop, breathlessly, sputtering, chuckling in excitement, interrupting one story to tell the next.” The grandfather, now “focused on Misha,” now alive to the world, keeps repeating “Imagine!” in response to the grandson’s chatter. In Vapnyar’s adopted lexicon, the word registers as both exclamation and injunction. Old and new generations bond through mutual discovery, sharing the untold revelations available in the new world.

An even more evocative rendering of the closed world of immigrant family life may be found in David Bezmozgis’s *Natasha and Other Stories*, a series of linked stories about a fiercely protective and loving Jewish family who fled Latvia for a new life in the émigré Russian Jewish enclaves of Toronto. (Bezmozgis left Riga with his family in 1980 and settled in Canada.) Narrated chronologically by young Mark Berman, the stories capture the intimate accents of immigrant experience voiced from the inside, from within a nation less burdened by the mythic promise of America, in contrast to Shteyngart’s playful troping of the cosmic *American* immigrant narrative. The family Berman (would-be “Baltic aristocrats,” in their son’s knowing eyes) huddles together, in anxiety and hope, desperately grasping at any promise of social-material connection in its dream of moving up in the world, “one respectable block from the Russian swarm.”

Like so many immigrant sons, from the very beginning Bezmozgis’s Mark is conscious of his default status as the family’s cultural translator, the necessary mediator between baffled family and alien linguistic territory. In the daily ritual of going off to first grade (“with our house key hanging from a brown shoelace around my neck”) and coming home “bearing the germs of a new vocabulary,” Mark feels the weight of family need and expectation. And as he grows older, Mark also gains an intimation of the

menacing totalitarian world the family left behind, in Soviet-controlled Riga, along with an altered sense of his relation to another repressed past, the meaning of Jewish memory and history, now slowly dislodged in the freer atmosphere of Canada.

In apparent dialogue with the traditions of Jewish American literature, Bezmozgis follows Mark’s journey into a complicated consciousness of filiality. But unlike Henry Roth’s *Call It Sleep* (1934), about a tormented immigrant father bent by paranoia and humiliation, who takes out his rage by savagely beating his son, Bezmozgis’s fictional father, Roman Berman, manages to survive his New World indignities through strength of character and unconditional love. In the wrenching story “Roman Berman, Massage Therapist,” the father seeks “to improve his chances” by bringing Mark along to meet a local rabbi, hoping that the presence of his bright Canadian son, able to speak rudimentary Hebrew and sing “Jerusalem of Gold,” will somehow help the father realize his dreams. “Seated across the table from the rabbi,” Mark observes, “my father wrestled language and dignity to express need. . . . I was sufficiently aware of our predicament to feel the various permutations of shame: shame for my father, shame for my shame, and even shame for the rabbi, who seemed to be a decent guy.”

Of course, scenes of filial shame may be found throughout immigrant expression, Jewish and non-Jewish. Rather than flight or separation (the memorable response to filial shame in Yezierska, Isaac Rosenfeld, and, in his memoir *A Margin of Hope*, Irving Howe himself), what distinguishes Bezmozgis’s Mark is his profound empathy, his desire to see past the father’s humiliation. As the comic quest for connections unfolds, the Bermans find themselves hosted by an orthopedist’s family, parvenus who have invited the greenhorns in bad faith, in order to hear tear-jerking testimony from (they presume) “refuseniks” about the execrable fate of Jews living in the oppressive Soviet Union. “If it wasn’t too personal,” Dr. Kornblum “wanted to know how bad it really was.” Grasping at any opportunity, “My mother . . . admitted that. . . . She knew some refuseniks, and we were almost refuseniks, but we were not refuseniks.”

Such comic moments, born of desperation, fill this story about a family’s doomed effort to impress the hypocritical Jewish bourgeoisie, living in “fully detached” material splendor. In the end, the son is witness to another

scene of humiliating exposure, another kind of self-indulgent *use* by the shady Kornblums. Caught massaging Mrs. Kornblum's neck in the master bathroom ("She said it was wonderful, my father was a magician, if only she could bottle his hands and sell them"), the father sits helplessly on the bed, beneath "a large family portrait taken for Kornblum's daughter's bat mitzvah," struggling to explain: "He said, Tell me, what am I supposed to do? Then he got up, took my hand, and we went back downstairs."

For Bezmozgis, there are no easy responses to the father's embarrassment. What *are* helpless fathers supposed to do to achieve a life, a livelihood, in an unforgiving new world? In *Natasha*, achieving dignity involves an altered way of perceiving, really of *feeling* the world, of approaching what might be called a secular version of *rachmones*, the Yiddish term for compassion.

Compassion takes many forms in Bezmozgis's stories. The reader glimpses it at the end of the title story, "Natasha," when the older narrator—living out a fantasy of adolescent rebellion in his parents' dark basement, reading Kafka, selling drugs and getting stoned, brooding about his torrid affair and humiliating rejection by his Lolita-like émigré cousin Natasha—begins to see his chaotic world through her eyes: "standing in our backyard, drawn by a strange impulse, I crouched and peered through the window of my basement. I had never seen it from this perspective, the opposite perspective. . . . In the full light of summer, I looked into darkness. It was the end of my subterranean life." And the beginning of Mark's self-dignity.

Above all, the reader is moved, with the narrator, by the application of *rachmones* in Bezmozgis's powerful final story, "Minyan." If the unsavory Kornblums offer only false compassion, spilling liberal tears over the indignities of Soviet Jews, in "Minyan" an older Mark Berman gains a lesson in Jewish mercy through the example of the older generation, now retired in rent-controlled, high-rise comfort. "Minyan" chronicles the subterranean intrigue involved in maintaining a *minyan* (quorum required for Jewish communal worship) for the building's basement synagogue. Potential renters have to go through the elderly Zalman, who has the ear of the building's manager, and convince him of their spiritual commitment. Charged with gathering ten Jews for services on Friday nights and Saturday mornings, Zalman alone has the power to decide someone's residential fate.

In relating this story, Mark confesses a powerful connection to the world of his widowed grandfather, who already lives in the building: "Most of the old Jews came because they were drawn by the nostalgia for ancient cadences, I came because I was drawn by the nostalgia for old Jews. In each case, the motivation was not tradition but history."

How would Irving Howe have responded to this confession of a grandson's nostalgia for his grandfather's nostalgia? At the height of the ethnic revival in the late 1970s and 1980s, Howe remained "a little irritated [by] the upsurge of nostalgia I detect among a good many young people for the immigrant world to which I was already a latecomer, and of which they barely know" (Howe 1986). Yet in Bezmozgis's imagination the voice of Jewish compassion feels earned, transforming a potentially breezy emotion ("unearned nostalgia" in Howe's dismissive phrase) into an act of generational rededication. What does it mean to be a Jewish son (or grandson) in the fiercely loving world of the Bermans, unsettled in their exile? For Bezmozgis the answer seems to be in performing acts of memory and compassion as a way of salving the pain of new world indignity.

In this respect, Bezmozgis's debut offers a powerful answer to Howe's pointed questions, asked of an emerging cohort of Jewish American writers decades earlier: "Does it [Jewish American experience] form the very marrow of their being? Does it provide images of conflict, memories of exaltation and suffering, such as enable the creating of stories?" (Howe 1977a). To judge from the stunning achievement of the "new" immigrant writers, the answer appears to be a resounding yes. Their unanticipated presence both fulfills *and* confounds the strictures of the Howe Doctrine. If Howe could not see beyond his own biography, he nevertheless understood the profound literary potential of the immigrant experience: upheaval, transition, adjustment, the nostalgic impulse of looking back, the forward dream of imagining a future. In the end, the immigrant narrative may well provide the most enabling, creative source for those writers seeking to engage the new world—any new world.

Donald Weber

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## Jewish American Women Fiction Writers

Although there were Jewish women writers in nineteenth-century America, in the twentieth century their numbers increased significantly, and they found a new voice. The Jewish woman writer became recognized as an important addition to both the Jewish and American literary scenes. Immigrant Jewish women joined the American-born to write imaginative stories about their experiences, doubts, and self-discovery in the new land. The United States offered particularly fertile ground for Jewish women to realize their literary ambitions. Early in the twentieth century, the woman suffrage movement gave young girls ideas about freedom and independence; public education enabled Jewish daughters to study a wide variety of subjects; and the rhetoric of individualism applied to women for the first time, sparking the flame for talented and energetic women to write creatively. As the magazine and book publishing world grew in the 1920s and 1930s, outlets for women's writing also increased, and some of the new Jewish women writers earned a handsome living from their work.

Not all Jewish women who became writers addressed Jewish subjects, but many who did found an audience for their writings. Newcomer Anzia Yeziarska (1880–1970) and American-born Fannie Hurst (1889–1968) became

successful writers in America during the first third of the century. While the traditional religious culture dominated Yeziarska's fiction, Hurst's early stories focused on the immigrant Jewish experience and adjusting to the new world. Hurst became one of America's most popular writers, with many of her stories dramatized in the movies. Sensitive to the struggles of minorities in a majority Protestant culture, she enlarged her subject matter to include sympathetic portrayals of African Americans, as well as the challenges facing women alone. Hurst's later writings contain no specific references to Jewish culture, while Yeziarska remained concerned with Jews'—particularly Jewish women's—adjustments to American life. Yeziarska's celebrity rose dramatically in the 1920s only to decline rapidly by decade's end.

Raised in St. Louis in a German Jewish family, Hurst moved to New York as an adult and observed the thriving Jewish culture on the Lower East Side much like an anthropologist viewing an exotic culture. "The Gold in Fish," a 1927 story, describes the conflicts between the generations, with Morris announcing to his immigrant parents that he has changed the family name to Fish. "You hear that, papa," says the mother, "the name that was good enough for you to get born into, and for me to marry into, is something to be ashamed of" (Hurst 1927). Hurst sympathizes with the older generation but resignedly documents its failure to prevail against the younger generation and its Americanizing ways. Anzia Yeziarska, a fiercely ambitious daughter of an autocratic father, came to the United States from Eastern Europe and wrote frequently about the clashes between a daughter who insisted on carving out her own adult path while rejecting the traditional road prescribed by *shtetl* culture and her parents.

Yeziarska, like so many Jewish American women writers of all generations, looked at Jewish life vertically—at the interaction of at least two generations—elaborating on the tensions experienced by the protagonist, usually a member of the younger generation. A family-centered story allows the writer to offer contrasting patterns of behavior—how they change over time, and how tradition and modernity coexist or clash. For Jewish writers whose subject matter remains Jewish, this genre is indispensable. The dynamic of parents and children, of inheritances and rejections, becomes the fabric of the fiction. In *Bread Givers* (1925), one of Yeziarska's most popular novels, heroine Sara Smolinsky defied her father, refused to marry

as her sisters had done before her, and separated from the family. She studies and becomes a teacher, but in the end reconciles with her father and marries a Hebrew teacher. In this story, Yeziarska finds a middle ground between the traditional Jewish and modern American cultures, suggesting that it is possible to retain aspects of religion and Jewish culture while participating in the secular American world. How to negotiate both sides of this duality remains a major theme for the writers, from the first generation to the contemporary one.

The second generation of Jewish American women writers, born 1910–1930 in this country, continued the motifs of the first generation. While comfortable as Americans, some writers consciously chose to define themselves as Jewish, struggling to balance their Jewishness with the larger secular culture. Hortense Calisher (b. 1911), who began writing stories in the 1930s, published her fifteenth novel in 2002, at the age of ninety-one. In *Sunday Jews* (2002), Calisher returned to a subject she had explored early in her career but had left for many years. In a group of early stories about the Elkins, an assimilated German Jewish family (perhaps like her own family), Calisher showed sympathy toward the Jews who acknowledged their religio-cultural identity. In her latest work, she favors the fully assimilated Jews, arguing that they are enriched by the larger culture, even as the Jewish culture has enriched it. Her longevity has enabled her to witness the absorption of Jews into American society, and, in her judgment, the partnership has been fruitful for both sides. In Calisher's world, Jews who remain staunchly observant are parochial and limited.

Two additional writers from the second generation, Tillie Olsen (1913–2007) and Grace Paley (b. 1922), were philosophically left-of-center and tried to free themselves from what they perceived to be the segregated world of religion. They were secular humanists and socialists, two minorities who rejected the capitalist, materialist, and religious cultures surrounding them in America. Olsen's *Tell Me a Riddle* (1976) presents three generations of a family, with the grandmother Eva instructing her children to write on her tombstone: "Race, human; Religion, none" (89). Unlike in most writings by second-generation Jewish women, Eva, the old woman, is the emotional center of the novel, and her frustrations with a life that denied her expressive opportunities demonstrate Olsen's feminist sensibilities. Indeed, in the 1970s the women's movement

rediscovered Olsen, and contemporary critics laud her feminism, not her exploration of Jewish themes. Yet, in this story, her characters are demonstrably Jewish.

Grace Paley, a short story writer, has published many stories about a fictional family called Darwin, the irony probably intended. It is a three-generation family, with the grandparents, cultural Jews, living in the Children of Judea retirement home. The middle generation, Faith, Hope, and Charles, particularly Faith, are wracked with self-doubt and constant anxiety. Faith's husband, Ricardo, abandoned her, and she was left to raise her sons, Anthony and Richard, alone. While Hope's and Charles's voices are heard in some of the stories, Faith is the central character. What she has faith in is unclear. In one story, "Faith in a Tree," she wonders why her mother sent her on an airplane trip alone when she was a child. She speculates that her mother was probably trying to make her independent, "That in a sensible, socialist, Zionist world of the future she wouldn't cry at my wedding? You're an American child. Free. Independent" (Paley 1975). If that was the Mother's intention, she failed. In story after story, Faith never answers her many questions. She does not share her parents' vision of a socialist-Zionist utopia, she has no knowledge of the Jewish religion, and her contemporary American culture only reinforces her doubting nature.

The youngest member of this second generation, Cynthia Ozick (b. 1928) differs considerably from the three older members of her cohort. Her stories, novellas, and novels are all about Jewish subjects. She is also a formidable essayist whose nonfiction focuses on Jewish themes. Indeed, while Judaism is central to all of Ozick's writing, the depictions of characters in her stories range from the realistic to the magical. In *The Pagan Rabbi* (1971), Ozick grapples with a learned Mishnah expert whose intense studies lead him into mysticism and a preoccupation with nature that smacks of paganism. Ozick is intrigued by the creative process and how the writer's work competes with the work of God. Judaism prohibits the worship of idols and the creation of graven images. Ozick wonders in her writings whether Jewish writers are not violating this sacred principle, yet she cannot stop from imagining and creating new stories.

In *The Puttermesser Papers* (1997), a collection of five stories about Ruth Puttermesser, a single civil servant, Ozick continues to grapple with the creation of Jewish fiction. Puttermesser is always searching for truth, understanding, and

ultimately paradise (in Hebrew, *gan edyn*, the Garden of Eden), to no avail. Ozick states in her essays that she considers Judaism a lifelong process in which Jews engage and, in the very process, demonstrate their Judaism. Ruth Puttermessenger, the first significant female character in Ozick's fiction, participates in this process until she dreams, when she is dying, of Paradise as a place where chocolate can be eaten forever. Though a seemingly trivial ultimate wish, Puttermessenger remains Jewish in her constant behavior of questioning, analyzing, and seeking knowledge.

Born in the 1930s and 1940s, the third generation of Jewish women writers was comfortably settled in American culture. As the children or grandchildren of immigrants, they never experienced personal conflicts between leading a religiously oriented life and secular American patterns of living. They grew up as American children, too young to remember the Holocaust. Rona Jaffe (1932–2005) and Gail Parent (b. 1940) shared the family genre with their predecessors, but they viewed the family with derision and sarcasm. Thanks to psychoanalysis and women's liberation, they looked at their family background clinically and critically. Still, though they were assimilated in many ways, they identified themselves and their fiction as Jewish.

Jaffe's *Family Secrets* (1974) presents a three-generation Jewish family, with the patriarch Adam Saffron, a self-made immigrant millionaire, bequeathing to his children and grandchildren a love of materialism, a shallow connection to Jewish ritual, and no moral framework. One grandson, Richie, who was studying to be a rabbi, quits three months before ordination because he is no longer eligible for the draft. Among Saffron's other grandchildren, one becomes a flower child in the sixties, another is devoted to running, and the others become all-American achievers. The Jewish calendar, religious observances, and the Jewish perspective on learning, self-analysis, and social justice are all forgotten. Gail Parent's two comic novels, *Sheila Levine Is Dead and Living in New York* (1972) and *David Meyer Is a Mother* (1977), use humor to dissect the modern Jewish American family. Sheila is an overweight, unmarried woman whose parents worry about her not finding a mate. David is a Jewish "prince," spoiled and unsure of himself. His parents, like Sheila's, think about the most superficial things and never impart a Jewish value system to their offspring. Both books portray unattractive and unsympathetic Jews, whose connection to their religion and their

heritage is tenuous at best. Jewish American adjustment has become maladjustment to Judaism and neurotic adaptation to America.

Fourth-generation Jewish women writers, born in the 1950s and 1960s, offer a lively return to themes of the first generation. Rebecca Goldstein (b. 1950), Pearl Abraham (b. 1960), and Allegra Goodman (b. 1967) all write fresh new treatments of the perennial subject: being a Jew in free America. Many of the youngest generation were raised in Orthodox Jewish families, providing them with the religious education and tradition common to immigrant Jews but rejected by later generations. Raised within a Jewish calendar year, they knew firsthand how tradition can blend, or clash, with the lures of American culture. Though they received above-average secular educations (Goldstein and Goodman both have doctorates), they were also learned in Jewish tradition. Their themes offer a new twist on the first two generations' concerns about assimilation, acculturation, or rejection: their challenge is how to retain their religious Judaic culture in the open environment of America.

For these writers, their immersion in religious Judaism is all encompassing. Getting out while staying in becomes the struggle. In Goldstein's first autobiographical novel, *The Mind-Body Problem* (1983), the protagonist, blonde and beautiful Renee Feuer, was raised in a traditional home. Her father was a cantor. At seventeen, she rebels against Orthodoxy while still attending the Baas Yaakov Girls High School. She goes on to study philosophy at Barnard and to graduate school at Princeton (all of which Goldstein did). Though Renee rejects religious culture for the secular, intellectual world of philosophy, she observes her new world through traditional Jewish eyes. She refers to *treyf* (unkosher) food, describes herself as a lapsed Jew, but still notes the holidays. At the end of the book, it is autumn, the time of Rosh Hoshanah and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, and she remembers her father chanting the somber words as to who shall live and who shall die and the congregation responding: "But repentance, prayer, and charity cancel the stern decree." She comments that, though she doesn't believe those words any longer, she still gets a tingle in her spine and teary eyes "... as there is often a lag between one's rationality and emotive responses" (Goldstein 1983).

In *Mazel* (1995), Goldstein's fourth novel, three generations of Jewish women are portrayed. The grandmother Sasha is a famous Yiddish actress, while her daughter

Chloe is a professor of classics at Columbia, and the granddaughter Phoebe is a physicist and expert on the mathematics of soap bubbles. Though Sasha and Chloe have a hard time communicating with each other, Phoebe brings them together and they live with the tensions. The youngest member of the family has returned to traditional Judaism, and she brings her mother and grandmother, however reluctantly, back into the orbit. In an afterword for the paperback edition, Goldstein asks: "How does one reconcile the pull of one's membership in a particular people's existence with one's pull to partake in the whole wide world?" (Goldstein 2002).

Pearl Abraham grew up in both New York and Israel, learning Yiddish before English in a Hasidic home. For years, she could read English more proficiently than Yiddish though she wrote more comfortably in Yiddish. She has described her first novel, *The Romance Reader* (1995), as an English translation of a Yiddish novel (Abraham 1996). Her protagonist, Rachel, is the oldest daughter of a Hasidic rabbi. She reads forbidden books and yearns for experience and knowledge beyond the limited confines of her strict religious environment. In a conversation about the sixteen girls who graduated with her from high school, and who was getting married when, everyone said: "God willing, she (Rachel) will be next." Rachel thinks: "Should I say, Not ever, God willing? That would cause a scandal, and then it might be never. I don't know what I want" (Abraham 1996). Eventually, she marries and divorces, returns home temporarily, but is uncertain about her future.

In her second novel, *Giving Up America* (1998), Deena, her main character, is raised in the Hasidic tradition and marries a modern Orthodox Jew. What she discovers is that her husband Daniel represents a culture as alien as that of assimilated Jews or even non-Jews. The difficulties that all marriages encounter, including renovating an old house and facing the prospect of an unfaithful husband, force Deena to consider the clash of cultures even within Judaism. Drawing on autobiographical material, Abraham explores topics that have resonance beyond Hasidism. What is the nature of compatibility between two people? How can unique individuals form partnerships with other unique individuals, particularly in a new world where women's wishes are given new respect and consideration? Finally, how can Jewish women preserve their connections to religious observance while expanding their intellectual horizons?

These same questions appear in the fiction of the youngest member of the contemporary generation, Allegra Goodman. Born in Hawaii to Orthodox parents, and with an undergraduate degree from Harvard and a doctorate in literature from Stanford, Goodman has been publishing fiction since she was a freshman at Harvard. Her first short story collection, *Total Immersion*, was published when she was twenty-one years old. *The Family Markowitz* (1996), a series of interrelated stories, features characters whose Jewishness is culturally, not religiously, based. Sara, the subject of one chapter, is a mother, writer, and teacher of creative *midrash* at the Jewish Community Center in Greater Washington. Her problems can be shared with all working women. Goodman's first novel, *Kaaterskill Falls* (1998), focuses on an Orthodox community in a small town in upstate New York where the followers of Rav Elijah Kirshner gather in the summer. The protagonist is a restless young mother of five daughters who wants to run a business, a wish she eventually fulfills.

*Paradise Park* (2001) takes the prolific Goodman onto new territory: her heroine (or anti-heroine), Sharon Spiegelman, at the beginning of the novel is a twenty-year-old searcher for truth, alone in Hawaii, having been abandoned by her boyfriend. The reader follows Sharon's next twenty years of traveling, wandering, and searching for herself. She tries Christianity, Buddhism, marijuana, whale watching, folk dancing, and eventually Hasidism in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. The novel is both comic and serious in tone, with the reader both sympathetic to, and exasperated with, the self-indulgent Sharon. Her return to tradition after her open-ended search can be viewed as rejecting the secular world and its temptations for the predictable and certain truths of a closed religious community.

Goodman, Goldstein, and Abraham use their own experiences as the basis for their fiction, but, while they have chosen to dwell in the larger American culture, their fictional heroines often return to the religious fold. Their fiction demonstrates the struggles within Orthodoxy by women with feminist sensibilities. Perhaps this cohort may offer us the most vibrant fictional experience of the tensions experienced by modern religious Jewish women and, by extension, all American Jews who try to identify with some aspects of religious and cultural Judaism while living in the secular world of twenty-first-century America.

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**Sholem Asch (1880–1957)**

## Yiddish Playwright and Novelist

One of the most prominent modern Yiddish playwrights and novelists, Sholem Asch was one of very few writers in that language to succeed widely in English translation and garner attention from broader American, non-Jewish audiences. However, his controversial writings, most notably his trilogy of “Christian” novels written late in his career, alienated some of his most ardent Yiddish supporters while becoming English-language best-sellers.

Asch was born into a large Hasidic family in Kutno, a small Polish market town; his father, Moyshe Gombiner Asch, was a well-off livestock trader. Not particularly learned himself, Moyshe recognized Sholem’s intelligence and hoped he would enter the rabbinate. Asch’s own interests, however, ran to questioning Jewish orthodoxy, not perpetuating it; while still at religious school, he began reading secular material at a classmate’s home, leaving home when discovered.

By the late 1890s, Asch was teaching Hebrew and earning money writing letters for illiterate inhabitants of Włocławek; while there, he also began writing fiction. In the summer of 1899, Asch visited Warsaw and met the noted Yiddish writer I. L. Peretz. Asch began regularly visiting Peretz’s literary salon; thanks to Peretz’s support, Asch’s



Sholem Asch, novelist and playwright. (American Jewish Archives)

Hebrew and Yiddish stories began appearing in Eastern European periodicals. He soon moved to Warsaw and in December 1901 married Madzhe Spiro, the daughter of a well-known Warsaw Jewish educator.

Asch’s first book of stories appeared a year later, and his 1904 novella *A shtetl*, with its idyllic portrait of traditional Polish Jewish life, helped to establish the fledgling writer’s reputation. But Asch’s dramatic work elevated him to international celebrity. His first play, best known as *Mitn Shtrom* (*With the Current*), written as early as 1905, was performed in Krakow’s National Theater, and in 1906 Asch met noted actor/director Jacob Adler to discuss producing his play *Meshiekhs tsaytn* (*The Messianic Era*) in New York, where the demand for Yiddish theater was exploding along with the city’s immigrant Eastern European Jewish population. But his next play would cause the true explosion.

*Got fun nekome* (*God of Vengeance*), set in a Jewish brothel, focuses on the traditionally observant brothel owner’s attempts to maintain his daughter’s purity—and

his own conscience—while operating his business. His failure to do so, accompanied by scenes of prostitution, lesbian seduction, and the blasphemous use of a Torah scroll, created a work so controversial it was bound to become famous. Asch first offered the play to Max Reinhardt and Rudolph Schildkraut, the leading director and actor of German Jewish theater; opening at the Deutsches Theater on March 19, 1907, the play ran for six months. It opened at New York's Thalia Theater, with noted Yiddish actor David Kessler in the starring role, on October 13, 1907. Translated and performed in a dozen European languages, it came to Broadway in English in 1923.

Some Yiddish critics claimed Asch was trying to curry favor with non-Jews by presenting Jewish life as immoral; others, including Peretz, felt his crime was misrepresenting details of Jewish life. But the sexual elements remained the most controversial: the 1923 Broadway production led to prosecutions against its star and producer for “obscenity and immorality,” with figures no less prominent than Konstantin Stanislavsky and Eugene O'Neill speaking in the play's defense.

In 1909 and 1910, Asch traveled through the United States and Canada. Though worried about America's materialism, his greater concerns about Jews' long-term prospects in Russia would lead to his emigration from Eastern Europe. After spending several years in France, he moved to New York following the outbreak of World War I. After living briefly in Greenwich Village, the Bronx, and Brooklyn, Asch and his family moved to Staten Island in 1920, the year he became a citizen. The war—particularly the savage treatment of Jews by combatants on both sides—pushed the cosmopolitan, pan-European Asch to think more about questions of Jewish national identity and to participate more actively in Jewish public life, particularly on behalf of Jewish war victims; Asch became a founding member of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (1914).

After arriving in America, Asch increasingly earned his living by writing for the *Forverts*, America's largest Yiddish newspaper, edited by one of Asch's strongest supporters, the powerful and opinionated Abraham Cahan. Asch's first novel written in America, *Onkl Mozes* (*Uncle Moses*), was first serialized in the *Forverts* in 1917. *Onkl Mozes*, the story of an immigrant who achieves financial success on others' backs but whose catastrophic marriage to a younger American-born woman proves his undoing, illustrates the

fraught nature of the unrestrained pursuit of “the American dream.”

The next fifteen years marked the height of Asch's celebrity and success: though another novel on American themes, *Di muter* (*The Mother*), appeared in the *Forverts* in 1923, he returned to Europe that same year, staying mostly in Warsaw for two years before settling in the Bellevue suburb of Paris. Though continuing to write for American and European Yiddish newspapers, Asch spent much of the late twenties and early thirties writing the massive trilogy known as “Three Cities”: *Petersburg* (1929), *Warsaw* (1930), and *Moscow* (1931). The trilogy, originally titled *Farn mabl* (*Before the Deluge*), focuses on the Russian revolution's impact on the eponymous cities' Jewish communities. This second European period's apotheosis came in 1930, with months-long international celebrations marking Asch's fiftieth birthday and his thirtieth anniversary as a writer.

Asch spent much of the early thirties in and around Nice, where he wrote his next major novel, *Der tilim-yid* (1934; published in English as *Salvation*), and worriedly watched fascism's rise. In 1933, he was a major speaker at a Nice anti-Nazi rally and in 1934 wrote *The War Goes On*, about the roots of fascism in Weimar Germany. In 1936, Asch visited Palestine; the trip would result not only in *Dos gezang fun tol* (*Song of the Valley*), a picture of the Jewish pioneers working in the Jezreel Valley, but also the beginnings of a novel about the life of Jesus planned since his first 1907 visit to Palestine. Right before World War II began in 1939, Asch returned to America, moving first to Stamford and then to Miami Beach; that same year, his novel *The Nazarene* was published in English. The book received excellent reviews in the English press and became a best-seller (ninth in national sales in 1939 and fifth in 1940).

The novel's catalyst is a contemporary Polish researcher's discovery of a fifth gospel, ostensibly written by Judas Iscariot. The researcher, though an antisemite, seeks a young Jewish scholar's assistance in translating the manuscript; it emerges that the Pole is (or believes himself to be) the reincarnation of a Roman military governor, Pontius Pilate's assistant, and the scholar a “wandering Jew” figure who had actually been a Pharisaic rabbi during Jesus' lifetime. These developments allow Asch the opportunity to write a lively re-creation of Jesus' milieu and his personal history.

Asch's non-Jewish critics praised the prodigious research that went into the book's composition and the rich, detailed portrait of historical Palestine that resulted, a worthy fictional entry in the numerous volumes dedicated to the "quest for the historical Jesus." Asch himself, however, claimed motives beyond the purely historical or simply aesthetic for the novel's composition. Highly mindful of the contemporary situation in Europe, Asch believed anti-semitism resulted from Christian and Jewish misunderstanding of the two religions' common origins and, further, from the religions' subsequent divergence from each other. In *The Nazarene*, Asch's attempt to rectify this situation consisted of portraying Jesus as a Jewish leader, a prophetic or almost Hasidic preacher, reminding readers of deep continuities between the religions even millennia later. Characters in the novel refer to Jesus as divine or the son of God, but the book itself makes no such claims, allowing for liberal constructions of the book's ecumenical intent.

Throughout the 1940s, however, Asch's sympathetic attitude toward Christianity grows significantly: in nonfiction works of philosophy and theology like *What I Believe* (1941) and *One Destiny: An Epistle to the Christians* (1945), and especially in the remaining two volumes of the trilogy, *The Apostle* (1943) and *Mary* (1949), Asch increasingly presents a view of Jesus and the Christian religion at odds with any normative expression of Judaism. Though still claiming his motives were simply those of rapprochement and ecumenical understanding, he referred to Jesus in a 1944 interview as the son of God and the son of Man, claimed him as the continuation of Judaism, and presented Jesus as a divine figure throughout the novel *Mary*. Even other contemporary figures like Marc Chagall, who had used Jesus as a Jewish figure or symbol in their work, never made such sweeping claims.

In the Yiddish-speaking world, however, the controversy over Asch's Christological intentions had begun as early as the 1939 publication of *The Nazarene*. For Asch's Yiddish readers, though, the controversy was necessarily secondhand: Asch's usual publishers, especially his former champion Cahan, refused to serialize or publish the Yiddish version of the novel, arguing that this sympathetic account of Christianity's founder, perhaps offensive to traditional Jewish audiences at any time, was singularly inappropriate at this historical moment, possibly even constituting national betrayal. Cahan also accused Asch of

attempting to gain popularity with non-Jews by actively proselytizing for Christianity. Though Asch attempted to respond to his critics throughout the forties, the opposition to his work remained unchecked, with the result that the Yiddish version of *The Nazarene* (*Der man fun natseres*) would not be published until 1943, and the trilogy's second and third volumes never appeared in Yiddish, though *Mary* would reach third place on the English best-seller lists.

Asch would continue to write and publish prolifically: in October 1943, no longer able to write for the *Forverts*, he joined the Communist paper the *Morgn Frayheynt*. Though the paper boasted of having one of Yiddish literature's most important writers in its pages, Asch himself was no Communist; his essays on current events and his short fiction (including excerpts of *The Apostle* and *Mary*) appeared there solely as a matter of financial necessity. Though his attitude toward the Soviet Union briefly changed during World War II, as the Soviets saved large numbers of Jews from the Nazis, he would eventually break with the Communist Party in the late forties over Stalinist repression of Soviet Yiddish writers and Yiddish literary culture. Despite his generally staunch anti-Communism, his writing and wartime activities would lead to his questioning by the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1952.

Despite his continued literary activity in the forties, he became increasingly alienated from his original readers; mock trials of Asch were staged internationally, and, in April 1944, he was asked to leave when he attended a memorial service in New York for Warsaw Ghetto victims. Many of his later novels—even one of his masterpieces, *East River* (1946), a novel of immigrant Jewish life around World War I—were largely ignored or dismissed in Yiddish circles even as his star continued to rise in the English-speaking world: in 1943, he became the first Yiddish writer nominated for the Nobel Prize. *East River* is itself a testament to Asch's shift in perspective: though set in the heyday of Eastern European Jewish immigration, between 1910 and 1916, the novel takes place not on the Lower East Side, but in the multi-ethnic neighborhood of the East Forties, not only among first-generation immigrants, but their children. The novel soberly discusses acculturation and the loss of identity, and poses the impossible question of the relationship between intermarriage and full participation in the Americanization process. These complexities and Asch's continued growth as a writer, however, went

largely unrecognized by an increasingly hostile and uncaring audience.

The animus against Asch reached its height in the early fifties; a 1950 book by *Forverts* staffer Khayim Liberman, *Sholem Asch un kristentum* (*Sholem Asch and Christianity*), was so vitriolic it both provoked some sympathetic backlash and contributed to Asch's decision to leave America for good in 1953. In his remaining years, he divided his time between Europe, especially London, and the Israeli city of Bat Yam, where he had built a house at the request of the city's mayor. Asch had paid his first visit to the State of Israel in 1952; though some there, especially more traditional Jews, were still angry with him, his warm reception from many others, most notably a group of former inhabitants of his birthplace, encouraged Asch to settle there. Asch died on a visit to London on July 10, 1957, and was buried there.

Jeremy Dauber

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## Saul Bellow (1915–2005)

Novelist, Winner of Nobel Prize for Literature

Few novelists dominated American fiction in the second half of the twentieth century as did Saul Bellow. He had perhaps the most distinguished literary career of any contemporary novelist in the United States. His numerous

honors and awards included National Book Awards in 1954, 1965, and 1971. In 1968 the Republic of France awarded him the Croix de Chevalier des Arts et Lettres, the highest literary distinction that France awards to non-citizens. In March 1968, he received the B'nai B'rith Jewish Heritage Award for "excellence in Jewish Literature," and in November 1976 the Anti-Defamation League awarded him its America's Democratic Legacy Award—the first time this award had been given to a literary figure. In 1976, Bellow became the seventh American writer to win the Nobel Prize. His fiction was published in *Partisan Review*, *Playboy*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, and various literary quarterlies. His essays and reviews appeared in *The New York Times Book Review*, *Horizon*, *Encounter*, *The New Republic*, and *The New Leader*, among other publications. During the 1967 Arab–Israeli conflict, he served as a war correspondent for *Newsday*.

Bellow remained a literary force to the end of his life, continuing to produce fiction that commands attention and respect. Even critics not favorably disposed toward his work acknowledge his intellectual brilliance, his eye for detail, his wry humor and comic gifts, and his masterful control of his prose—not to mention his refusal to bend to shifting cultural winds.

For six decades Saul Bellow wrote fiction and nonfiction that rejected the negative intellectual and cultural forces that have shaped the literature of the twentieth—and now the twenty-first—century. He showed little patience for existential nihilism and wasteland pessimism. As an undergraduate at the University of Chicago and then at Northwestern, Bellow was an active Trotskyist. He clung to his leftist views until World War II, when the machinations of Hitler and Stalin opened his eyes to the extremes of both right and left. Some critics today refer to him as a neoconservative, but Bellow preferred to think of himself as a liberal who had been abandoned by a liberalism that shifted decidedly to the left. He can more precisely be described as an old-style humanist whose values, derived primarily from the University of Chicago's Great Books program, coincided closely with traditional Judaic principles. In novel after novel, as well as in stories and essays, he emphasized the basic integrity of the private life, the value of familial ties, and man's inherent awareness of his social contract. He did so while proclaiming the individual's need to adhere to humanity's behavioral principles of order, logic, decency, and self-control.



Portrait of twentieth-century novelist Saul Bellow (UPI-Bettmann/Corbis)

He was born Solomon Bellow, on July 10, 1915, in Lachine, a small suburb of Montreal, in Quebec, Canada. (In Europe, the family name was spelled Belo—from *byelo*, white, in Russian.) His parents, Abraham and Liza (Gordin) Bellow, were deeply religious Jewish immigrants from Russia. Two years earlier they had brought their family to Canada from St. Petersburg, where Abraham had been an importer of Egyptian onions. There were three older children: two sons and a daughter. When Solly—as he was called—was three, his family moved from Lachine to Montreal. The once successful and proud Abraham Bellow now found himself an abject failure. In an early version of *Herzog*, Bellow catalogued his father's failures: "The bakery, the sacks, peddling, jobbing, buying the produce in the country and selling it door to door, the dry goods store was a failure; matchmaking, insurance schemes, selling cemetery lots—all failed." For the next six years the Bellows lived in an old, rundown section of Montreal. It was a mul-

tilingual neighborhood, and Solly absorbed four languages as he grew up—English, French, Yiddish, and Hebrew. This last tongue he used at *cheder* (Hebrew school), where he was taught to read in the Old Testament.

Bellow had occasion to look back at this early awareness of his Jewishness. "We observed Jewish customs, reciting prayers and blessings all day long. Because we read Genesis again and again, my first consciousness was that of a cosmos, and in that cosmos I was a Jew." To deny this past strikes Bellow as treasonous. "It would be a treason to my first consciousness to 'un-Jew' myself" (Bellow 1994). Despite this early sense of communal togetherness, Bellow was not a joiner and never belonged to an orthodox congregation. The last truly orthodox thing he did, he admitted, was to have his bar mitzvah. But if he did not embrace orthodoxy, the adult Bellow was hardly irreligious. "I could never describe myself as an atheist or agnostic. I always thought those were terms for a pathological state and that people who don't believe in God have something wrong with them. Just say I am a religious man in a retarded condition and the only way I can square myself is to write" (Bruckner 1984).

In 1924, when Solly was nine, the family moved to Chicago. There Abraham Bellow, after a series of business failures and dead-end jobs, went into the business of peddling wood chips for bakers' ovens. The demand for these chips was great, and the Bellow family, for the first time in the New World, enjoyed a newfound prosperity. But Solly's initiation into Chicago street life was not easy. The neighborhood kids at first proved hostile. They made him "feel like a foreigner, an outsider," he later recalled, by poking fun at his accent and calling him a Canuck (Weinstein 1985). He remembered vividly his sense of being both a participant in and a marginal observer of the new life. But before long he was at home in both that city's streets and libraries. At Tuley High, he made friends with such other budding writers and intellectuals as Isaac Rosenfeld, Sidney J. Harris, Oscar Tarcov, Sam Freifeld, and Sam Wanamaker—all of whom would figure in both his life and fiction.

In 1933, Bellow entered the University of Chicago, where Robert M. Hutchins had recently introduced his "return to the classics" program. Later claiming to have been oppressed by that campus's "dense atmosphere of learning, of cultural effort," Bellow transferred to Northwestern in 1935 to study sociology and anthropology. A favorite

teacher there was the noted anthropologist Melville Herskovits, whom Bellow mentioned often. Graduating with honors from Northwestern in 1937, Bellow considered doing graduate work in English there, but he was rebuffed by the chairman of that department, who told him that the son of Russian Jewish immigrants could never have a proper feeling for the English language. Angered and frustrated, but armed with a scholarship, Bellow began work on an advanced degree in anthropology at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. But he quickly found himself unsuited for graduate study. “Every time I worked on my thesis, it turned out to be a story,” he explained to an interviewer. “I disappeared for the Christmas holidays and I never came back” (Breit 1953). In fact, he had made at that moment two significant changes in his life. One was that on New Year’s Eve he married Anita Goshkin, a social worker. The second was that he returned to Chicago, where he had decided to live while devoting himself to writing fiction. He was employed briefly by the Depression-spawned Works Progress Administration (WPA) Writers Project, writing short biographies of midwestern novelists and poets. He then taught for approximately four years at Pestalozzi-Froebel Teachers College in Chicago. He also served briefly in the Merchant Marine during World War II and worked on the editorial staff of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, helping to assemble the *Synopticon*, or index, to Mortimer Adler’s Great Books series.

In 1941 Bellow published his first stories. “Two Morning Monologues” reveal the internal agonizings of an unemployed young man waiting and indeed wishing to be called up for military service, and the inner musings of a compulsive horseplayer driven to assert his freedom and identity through gambling. Bellow developed this initial idea of the waiting draftee into the story “Notes for a Dangling Man” (1943) and then into his first novel, *Dangling Man* (1944). Turning here to the familiar literary form of a journal, Bellow relates the tribulations of a young pacifist awaiting his draft call during World War II. The critics were encouraging. The tough-minded Edmund Wilson described the novel “as one of the most honest pieces of testimony on the psychology of a whole generation who have grown up during the depression and the war” (Wilson 1944). In its differing forms, this short novel introduces some of the key characters and themes to be found in Bellow’s later work. His hero Joseph repeatedly asks, “How should a good man live, what ought he to do?” Either re-

phrased or implied, these moral questions echo throughout Bellow’s fiction.

Three years later, Bellow finally decided to assert his Jewishness in his fiction. He chose to do so by means of an intellectually challenging, tightly structured, full-length narrative that confronted head-on antisemitism’s moral, social, and intellectual complexities. At first glance *The Victim* (1947), Bellow’s second novel, suggests merely one more retelling of the story rendered painfully familiar by Jewish novelists in the 1930s and 1940s—that of an innocent Jew beset by a fanatical antisemite. But Bellow alone had the chutzpah to portray the eternal patsy as both victimizer and victim. In somber, slow-paced prose, he delineates the postwar Jew’s growing self-awareness of his collective character and place. He does so through the endurance and violence, good intentions and guilty uncertainties of Asa Leventhal, a moderately successful journalist who is confronted by the reappearance of a strange apparition from his troubled past named Kirby Allbee. Only a few discerning critics grasped the depth of Bellow’s psychological probings of antisemitism in *The Victim*, and most readers were not overly enthusiastic. Later, critics would come to see in these early works another recurrent motif of Bellow’s fiction. For instance, Marcus Klein, in *After Alienation* (1964), his study of midcentury American novelists, pointed to the basic tensions even in Bellow’s early fiction between the individual who inevitably desires self-preservation and his society that insists on self-sacrifice.

Throughout his career Bellow would divide his time between writing and teaching, and for a number of years he held a series of short-term university appointments. He taught at the University of Minnesota (1946–1948, 1957–1959); New York University (1950–1951); Princeton University (1952–1953), where he became close friends with the poet John Berryman; and Bard College (1953–1954). Between 1948 and 1950 Bellow lived in Paris and traveled in Europe, and afterward he spent over ten years in New York City and Dutchess County, New York. His first long-term university tenure began in 1963, when he returned to the University of Chicago as a professor in a new department called the Committee on Social Thought. Beginning in 1993 he taught at Boston University.

Like most fiction writers, Bellow draws from his own life for the general outlines of his plots. Although he had until the last years of his life played down the autobiographical elements in his fiction, his novels reveal his keen

awareness of his Jewish family background and his cultural roots in both Eastern Europe and North America. Ironically, Bellow, during most of his career, resisted the label of “Jewish writer.” Yet it was Bellow, notes Ruth Wisse, “who demonstrated how a Jewish voice could speak for an integrated America. With Bellow, Jewishness moved in from the immigrant margins to become a new form of American regionalism.” Wisse perceptively points out that Bellow “did not have to write about Jews in order to write as a Jew.” For his “curious mingling of laughter and trembling” is to be found throughout his fiction. This is especially true in a novel like *Henderson the Rain King*, where the narrative “follows an archetypal Protestant American into mythic Africa” (Wisse 2003).

Bellow did not merely influence and prepare the way for other American Jewish writers like Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth, Herbert Gold and Grace Paley and Cynthia Ozick, but, Wisse adds, he also “naturalized the immigrant voice.” In his hands, the American novel seemed “freshly authentic when it spoke in the voice of one of its discernible minorities” (Wisse 2003). His every narrative centered on a sensitive, thinking social adventurer keenly aware of the personal cost of modern existence. Other writers (Jewish and non-Jewish) then emerging found in his work a means of confronting the day’s social and human dilemmas. No other novelist depicted as effectively the postwar confusions. Bellow transformed America’s urban complexities into a sort of principle, “a mixture of health and sickness,” that exemplified the modern condition. Here his Jewishness proved significant. “Would it be excessive to say,” asked Irving Howe, “that this principle draws some of its energies from the Jewish tradition, the immigrant past?” (Howe 1976).

In 1948 Bellow received a Guggenheim Fellowship and headed for Europe. Dividing his time between cities like Paris and Rome, he wrote a long picaresque novel about Chicago and a young man’s determination to live his life on his own terms. Few American novels have evoked as much interest and excitement upon publication as did *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953). It proved Bellow’s major breakthrough work and won him his first National Book Award for fiction (1954). In it and later works, Bellow also “brought to completion” what critic Irving Howe would hail as “the first major new style in American prose fiction since those of Hemingway and Faulkner: a mingling of high-flown intellectual bravado with racy-tough street

Jewishness, all in a comic rhetoric that keeps turning its head back toward Yiddish even as it keeps racing away from it” (Howe 1976). The novel represented then a literary as well as a personal leap forward, as in it Bellow fuses a number of literary traditions. A contemporary coming-of-age novel, *Augie March* also embodies elements of the picaresque and comic traditions, as well as of the American, Jewish, and Yiddish ones.

Saul Bellow was now a presence on the American literary scene. He quickly followed up his previous successes with *Seize the Day* (1956), which consisted of a short novella bearing the volume’s title, three short stories, and a one-act play. The stories—“A Father-to-Be,” “Looking for Mr. Green,” and “The Gonzaga Manuscripts”—have been much anthologized. Achieving even stronger recognition has been the novella, *Seize the Day*, which Alfred Kazin declared to be the “most moving single piece of fiction” that Bellow had written to that point (Kazin 1956). Many academic readers have agreed with Kazin, for this short novel has remained a staple on reading lists in American contemporary fiction classes. In it, Bellow focuses on Tommy Wilhelm, an unemployed salesman who insists that his reluctant, tightfisted father be a father to him. Rejected and vulnerable, Tommy is easy prey for Dr. Tamkin, a fast-talking charlatan who separates him from his last few dollars. In effect, Bellow felt he had to come to terms—as a writer and a Jew—with a highly advanced, modern world that had produced the Nazi death camps. But he found he had to do so in American, not European, terms. Three years later Bellow published another major novel, indeed one unusual even for him, *Henderson the Rain King* (1959). Drawing on his middle-aged American’s fantastic quest for ultimate truth and his own identity among primitive African tribesman, with wry humor, Bellow makes clear that these so-called primitives at times reveal more insight and integrity than are evident in the supposedly civilized society his hero has left behind.

Five years later Bellow brought out what many critics consider his best and most personal novel, *Herzog* (1964). He is reputed to have written fifteen revisions, but this richly detailed account of the troubled love life of a quirky, distracted Jewish scholar quickly proved an international best-seller and won Bellow, among other awards, a second National Book Award and the \$10,000 Prix International de Littérature. Moses Herzog is the quintessential Bellow hero. An urban intellectual, well-meaning but ineffectual,

Jewish professor of history, Herzog, like Bellow, can recall a poverty-stricken boyhood in Montreal. Now he struggles valiantly but comically to relate his humanistic values and traditional Jewish desires for intellectual and spiritual clarity to an increasingly dehumanized and uncaring modern world. A specialist in the Romantic period, he is forced to cope with the painful contradictions between his inner life of romantic aspirations and his external life's harsh realities. Among the most painful of these realities is his discovery of his wife's lengthy affair with his best friend. Shaken to the core, Herzog struggles to regain his emotional stability and shattered self-confidence. His efforts toward self-analysis cause him to write numerous letters, to friends and strangers, to world and mythic figures, both living and dead—none of which he mails. Departing from the always popular mode of the “victim” novel, Bellow ends *Herzog* on an upbeat note. His hero accepts his human condition and rejects any further attempts at self-justification. Nearly every Bellow narrative reveals a strong sense of his own Jewishness, but no story of his, short or long, does so as clearly and poignantly as *Herzog*.

In 1964, *Herzog* became a Literary Guild selection and a best-seller, and Bellow's first produced full-length play, *The Last Analysis*, opened in New York. Bellow had initially titled it *Bummidge*, and he clearly had in mind a different or unconventional play—both a good-natured farce and a spoof of Freudianism. His central figure was Philip Bummidge, an aging Jewish comedian who planned to send the results of his self-analysis electronically to a group of psychiatrists gathered for the purpose. Some critics appreciated Bellow's introduction of ideas to the Broadway stage, but most found the play too “talky” and Bellow more the novelist than playwright. The production closed after twenty-eight performances. (Bellow later rewrote the play, and it had a more successful off-Broadway run in 1971.) Four years after *Herzog*, Bellow published his first short-story collection, *Mosby's Memoirs and Other Stories* (1968). Here he brought together five stories carefully crafted over the preceding decade (“Leaving the Yellow House,” “The Old System,” “Looking for Mr. Green,” “The Gonzaga Manuscripts,” “A Father-to-Be,” and “Mosby's Memoirs”). Not surprisingly, these stories either prefigure or look back at the thematic concerns of his novels, as his troubled protagonists struggle with their inner uncertainties and outer realities while striving to determine their self-worth and social place.

Bellow topped off the turbulent sixties with *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970), a novel many critics have ranked with his finest work, which won him his third National Book Award. He presents the poignant figure of Artur Sammler, an unlikely survivor of the Holocaust, who finds himself in New York in the chaotic 1960s. A lifelong humanist and believer in the societal values of order, discipline, and reason, the elderly Sammler is caught up in what appears to him to be a general breakdown of Western civilization. Neither prude nor Puritan, he recognizes better than most the soul's individuality. What he deplors is not the need to be unique, but the current mass obsession with an originality that rejects tested cultural models for the grotesque and bizarre. For if he is past passion, he is hardly dispassionate as he muses on the connections between human madness and death. The Holocaust and his own escape from the grave are the experiences by which Sammler measures all events. These have strengthened his belief in limits, dignity, tradition. Family members and friends, as well as acquaintances and strangers, force him to be a reluctant witness to their sordid sexual escapades, hare-brained money schemes, or public misdeeds. Each seeks not Uncle Sammler's advice but his moral approval. For his part, Sammler, who now considers himself less a survivor than a marginal figure, wants only to spend undisturbed afternoons in the New York Public Library reading Meister Eckhardt and other medieval mystics. But life, he finds, is not yet ready to release him from its grip.

Five years later Bellow published *Humboldt's Gift* (1975), another novel that retraces his ongoing effort to understand his own literary success, as well as the success of other Jewish writers during the two decades following World War II. Through the characters of Charlie Citrine and Von Humboldt Fleisher, Bellow examines the complex relationship of the serious writer to American society in the heady postwar years. Bellow does so by means of the tumultuous emotional bonds he himself shared with the brilliant but self-destructive poet/writer/critic Delmore Schwartz, his New York literary mentor, who died alone and in poverty in 1966. Bellow makes it clear that talent and ambition are too often not enough to sustain success or to ensure a satisfying life.

In addition to talent and ambition, then, what other qualities help explain Bellow's literary success? Certainly he had inherited a relatively brief but rich tradition of Jewish writing in America, one stretching from Abraham

Cahan through Ben Hecht and Ludwig Lewisohn to his own postwar generation. He emerged when Jews were entering America's cultural flow. Single-minded and gifted, Bellow alone so grasped the American imagination that—in fictionalizing this Jewish entrance into American life—he penetrated to the nation's cultural core. He did so without compromising his standards, and while avoiding the tempting but often insipid values of comfortable middle-class life. Bellow's literary themes may have resembled those of middlebrow Jewish novelists like Herman Wouk or Irwin Shaw—in step with whom he established his reputation—but he somehow transformed the most familiar material into art. Other Jewish novelists like Bernard Malamud, Herbert Gold, and Philip Roth were quick to follow his lead.

Bellow was now a well-known novelist receiving invitations from many quarters. In late 1975 he chose to spend several months in Israel, where he had earlier covered the 1967 Six Day War for *Newsday*. This time he went to tour that country's historic sites and current trouble spots, to talk to spokesmen from every political faction, and to familiarize himself with the nation's political, cultural, and social conditions, as well as the people's hopes and anxieties. He wanted to make sense of the many tragic and complex issues facing the embattled nation. Returning home, he published his first nonfiction book, *To Jerusalem and Back: A Personal Account* (1976), which proved to be not only a personal memoir, but also his perceptive ruminations on his stay. Ironically, Bellow had through the years repeatedly rejected the label of "Jewish writer" for himself as too parochial or limiting. But here he defended with passion and eloquence, as an engaged Jew, Israel's right not only to exist but also to take her rightful place among the world's nations. He vents most of his anger against France, accusing its government, newspapers, and intellectuals of moral and political hypocrisy for the positions they have taken against Israel in recent decades. Shortly thereafter, in 1977, Bellow was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, only the eighth American—and the first Jewish one—to be so honored.

Seven years after *Humboldt's Gift*, Bellow brought out his next significant novel, *The Dean's December* (1982). Not only a tale of two cities, Chicago and Bucharest, it is also a scathing portrait of the bitter internal battles of university life. Albert Corde, a onetime highly successful journalist, is now dean of students at a

Chicago college. But he is spending a cold, bleak month in Rumania with his wife, a noted astronomer, who has returned to her native city to be with her dying mother. There, despotic Communist officials control all lives—and deaths. Trying to help his wife through the mechanics and bureaucratic red tape of a last bedside vigil, cremation, and burial, the dean experiences both the privations and humiliations of life under Communism. These are not his only problems. Before leaving Chicago, Corde had stirred up a commotion by publishing, in *Harper's*, a harsh two-part study of that city's judicial system. To make matters worse, he had also demanded an investigation into the "accidental" death of one of his white students at the hands of a black prostitute and her pimp. Therefore, upon returning home, Corde does not find life much pleasanter in Chicago's harsh streets than it had been in Bucharest's lockstep bureaucracy.

Two years later, in 1984, Bellow published his second short story collection, *Him with His Foot in His Mouth and Other Stories*. Strongly reminiscent of his earlier *Mosby's Memoirs and Other Stories* (1968), these five stories ("Him with His Foot in His Mouth," "What Kind of Day Did You Have?" "Zetland: By a Character Witness," "A Silver Dish," and "Cousins") recall his familiar emotional terrain and traditional humanistic values. With wry, ironic humor, Bellow offers variations on his quintessential antihero. Each central figure is an aging urban intellectual, from an immigrant Jewish family, who still thinks big or transcendent thoughts about man, art, and the soul, yet feels he has outlasted his brief significant moment. None seems able to deal with life as he finds it. Collectively, their quirky personalities render them perpetual outsiders—whether Jews among gentiles, immigrants among "real Americans," or, most painfully, near-strangers in their own families.

Despite his now more than seventy years, Bellow seemed to be working without pause. In 1987, he published *More Die of Heartbreak*, a big novel with a cast of naïve academics, scheming social opportunists, and corrupt city hall wheeler-dealers whose lives are interconnected by botanical research, family ties, and the inevitable desires for the big payoff. His narrator is Kenneth Trachtenberg, a thirty-five-year-old assistant professor of Russian literature. Born and educated in Paris, Kenneth has moved to America and its Midwest rustbelt to be near his uncle, Benn Crader, a world-renowned botanist teaching at the same institution. Here the nation's wiliest con artists (usu-

ally in the guise of politicians, lawyers, and doctors) exhibit their amoral energy and cunning. Once more, Bellow's concern is for the sensitive individual caught up in the turbulence that is modern life and his need to focus on his own inner life—the self—and its metaphysical emanation, the soul.

Moving through his midseventies into his early eighties, Bellow published three novellas—*The Theft* (1989), *The Bellarosa Connection* (1989), and *The Actual* (1997)—as well as two notable short stories, “Something to Remember Me By” (1990) and “By the St. Lawrence” (1995). These narratives not only explore the commingling of sex and death, the therapeutic powers of memory, the nature of family bonds, and the harrowing long-range effects of the Holocaust, but they also evoke details from Bellow's own childhood and in different ways the biographical details of his major fictional protagonists. With the twentieth century winding to a close, Bellow seemed determined not to leave unfinished or unpublished any salvageable story element or fragment remaining in notebooks or files. In a move calculated to extend his “clearing-out” process and to emphasize the autobiographical nature of his writing, Bellow published, in 1994, the first collection of his essays, lectures, journalistic articles, eulogies of close friends, travel pieces, and several interviews. In effect, *It All Adds Up: From the Dim Past to the Uncertain Future* is a repository of Saul Bellow's central thoughts and mental processes through the years. Collectively, these pieces embody nearly a half century of hard thinking by a perceptive and sensitive observer of the human comedy, especially in its American forms. They essentially comprise Saul Bellow's intellectual autobiography.

A late example of Bellow's “cleaning-out” process was the appearance of his thirteenth novel, *Ravelstein*, at the start of the new century. The title character, Abe Ravelstein, is clearly based on the brilliant philosopher and historian of ideas Allan Bloom, Bellow's longtime friend and colleague at the University of Chicago, who in 1987 published the best-selling *The Closing of the American Mind*. In his mideighties, Bellow showed that he could still write vigorous prose and that friendship and intimacy were for him the very stuff of fiction. The most directly autobiographical of his novels, and therefore the most Jewish-and-death-oriented, this late narrative also provided a reminder that any friend or enemy, colleague or acquaintance, might well end up a character in one of his fictions. (He also proved

that he could do more than merely write vigorous prose. In 1999, at age eighty-four, Bellow fathered a daughter with his fifth wife, Janis Freedman Bellow, after having three sons with his first three wives.)

Ben Siegel

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## Joseph Bovshover (1873–1915)

### Yiddish Poet and Anarchist

Joseph Bovshover, a Russian immigrant, was one of the principal Jewish proletarian, or sweatshop, poets in the United States. He became identified with anarchism soon after arriving in this country.

Bovshover was born in Libavich, Russia, to an Orthodox family of six boys and a girl. His father was a Gemarah *melamed* (instructor of the Talmud, especially the part that comments on the Mishnah—Jewish Law). Bovshover,

however, did not do well in school and worked for a merchant, later moving to Riga to work as a clerk for a grain merchant. At eighteen, he immigrated to New York, joining two of his older brothers. There he worked in a sweatshop and as a salesperson, but in both cases was laid off. One of his affluent brothers opened a grocery store for him, but it soon went out of business due to poor management.

On July 8, 1892, Bovshover's first published poem, "*Kapitals a korbn*" ("A Victim of Capital"), later retitled "*Oyf'n shterbe-bet*" ("On Death-Bed"), appeared in the socialist *Arbayter zaytung* (*Worker's Newspaper*), published in New York, under the pseudonym M. Turbov. In September, he published his first short story, "*Kapital's korbones*" ("Capital's Victims"), heavily influenced by the style of David Edelshtat, a leading radical Yiddish poet. He became a contributor to the London anarchist publication *Arbayter fraynd* (*Worker's Friend*). His first poem there was "*Tsum vint*" ("To the Wind"). His poems opposed urbanization and called for a return to nature. He also composed lyrical poems.

After Edelshtat's death (October 1892), Bovshover stopped publishing in *Arbayter zaytung* for almost a year, during which time the anarchist movement was in crisis. The socialists gained influence among the workers, while the anarchist movement lost influence. Bovshover sided with the anarchists. When the anarchist *Fraye arbayter shtime* (*FAS, Free Voice of Labor*) started appearing again on March 17, 1893, Bovshover published a poem there—"*Oyfruf*" ("A Call") against the socialists. The satirical poem addressed the current difficult times in the United States: banks failed and people lost their life savings, factories and workshops closed, and millions were jobless. The Jewish socialists joined the trade unions in opening a relief station to help the needy workers and the entrepreneurs who had lost their businesses. In the poem, Bovshover calls the socialists "sycophants" and accuses them of being "exploiters of the situation" by helping businessmen in order to "buy" votes. This, however, did not stop him from continuing to publish in the *Arbayter zaytung*.

In the summer of 1895, Bovshover moved to New Haven, Connecticut, for about a year to work in a clothing business owned by an anarchist. To make ends meet, he also distributed newspapers. It is believed he enrolled in an English literature course at Yale University. In his writings he now began to display an acquaintance with the American essayist Emerson and the poets Whitman, Poe, and Markham.

In March 1896, Bovshover looked for a job at the office of the individualistic-anarchist journal *Liberty*. Although he needed work, Bovshover refused to do translations because the material did not reflect his anarcho-communist views. He did, however, submit poems to be published. Benjamin Tucker, founder and editor of *Liberty*, thought highly of his poems, later writing that his work "was indicative of genius." Bovshover published in *Liberty* two original English poems—the first being "To the Toilers" (on March 7, 1896), an English translation of his Yiddish work *Tsum folk*—under the pseudonym Basil Dahl. He published eleven poems in English under this pen name.

In 1898, Bovshover, as Basil Dahl, translated Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* into Yiddish. He also wrote a critical article about poetry, "*Vegn poezye*" ("About Poetry"). On October 6, 1899, *FAS* began publishing again, after an absence of almost five years. But about three months later Bovshover's last poem "*Frayhayt vanderer*" ("Freedom Wanderer") appeared. Because his mental health was deteriorating, he was placed in a mental hospital in Poughkeepsie, New York, where he spent the rest of his life. According to Michael Cohn, a physician and a central figure in the Jewish anarchist movement, who knew Bovshover personally, he suffered from dementia praecox paranoia. His death went unnoticed, and even his family was unsure of the exact date.

Despite his short creative period, Bovshover's work became popular among Jewish and non-Jewish workers in the United States and Europe. His early writing was influenced by the other three "proletariat poets": Morris Rosenfeld, Morris Winchevsky, and David Edelshtat. He began searching for his own style after learning English and reading American poetry by Walt Whitman and others. Although he saw himself as a poet, he was unable to detach himself from the proletarian theme and remained, like Edelshtat, an agitator. His work appeared in book form only after his hospitalization. He was soon forgotten, only to be revived by the Communists, who used his poetry in their agitation.

Ori Kritz

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## David Edelshtat (1866–1892)

### Anarchist and Proletarian Poet

David Edelshtat, who became an anarchist after immigrating to the United States, was a pioneer of proletarian, or sweatshop, poetry in this country. The poetry for which he is known is in Yiddish.

Edelshtat was born on May 21, 1866, in Kaluga, about 115 miles from Moscow, outside the Pale of Settlement. Most of the six hundred local Jewish inhabitants earned the right to reside there because they were retired soldiers or artisans. Edelshtat's father had been kidnapped for military service as a child and had served twenty-five years in the czar's army. After retiring, he became a policeman and later worked in a sawmill. David was the sixth of eight children. They all received private lessons in reading and writing Russian because there were no public schools in Kaluga. At fifteen he joined three of his brothers in Kiev, where he learned both about *Yiddishkeit* (Jewishness) and revolutionary ideas.

After the pogroms of May 1881, Edelshtat, like many other Jewish radicals, concluded that he would not be able to fulfill his egalitarian dreams in Russia. Therefore, he emigrated to the United States with a group of *Am Olam* (Eternal People), whose aim was to establish Jewish agricultural colonies there. When, upon arriving in Philadelphia in May 1882, they realized their plans would not be actualized, the group dispersed, and Edelshtat joined a brother already living in Cincinnati. He learned the trade of buttonhole making along with other Russian immigrants. As he mastered English and familiarized himself with local politics, in 1885 Edelshtat affiliated with the labor movement.

The Haymarket Affair led him to anarchism. On May 4, 1886, labor unions held a demonstration at Haymarket Square in Chicago. When a bomb exploded, a policeman

was killed, and many were wounded. Several anarchist leaders were arrested, some of whom had not been present. Edelshtat and his friends were shocked by the outcome of the Haymarket trial: two of the accused anarchist leaders were sentenced to life imprisonment, one to fifteen years in prison, and five were sentenced to death (one of them, Louis Lingg, committed suicide in his cell by exploding dynamite in his mouth the day before their execution on November 11, 1887). Although the bomb thrower was never identified, the defendants were charged as accessories to murder, their oral and written statements against the state and the police alleged to have inspired his crime. The dreams of the radical immigrants about the United States, ostensibly the land of freedom of speech, were shattered.

Edelshtat, who until then considered himself an unaffiliated socialist, became an anarchist. Upon his relocation to New York in 1888, he joined the Yiddish-speaking branch of the movement, *Pionere der frayhayt* (Pioneers of Liberty), established there two years earlier. On January 5, 1889, he published his first poem in Russian, "*Pesnia proletaria*" ("A Poem by a Proletarian"), in the first issue of the Russian social democratic weekly, *Znamia* (*The Banner*). On February 15, "*Tsuruf der varhayt*" ("A Call for the Truth"), his first Yiddish poem, appeared in the inaugural issue of the first Yiddish anarchist weekly in the United States, *Di varhayt* (*The Truth*). From then on, Edelshtat ceased publishing in Russian. By then, the Yiddish he had learned from the Russian Jewish immigrants was good enough to write poetry; all his subsequent poems, short stories, and essays were in Yiddish. To achieve his goals of explaining and spreading the anarchist ideology to the Jewish masses and making them aware of their oppression, he realized that he had to write in their mother tongue, because as recent immigrants they did not understand English, and most did not know Russian. By summer 1889, Edelshtat had become a well-known poet of the proletariat, writing on social injustice and the "enslaved" workers.

Having moved back and forth from New York to Cincinnati from 1887 to 1890, he settled in New York in January 1891, where he assumed the editorship of the weekly *Fraye arbayter shtime* (*The Free Voice of Labor*), established several months earlier. Edelshtat turned the unaffiliated socialist publication into an anarchist newspaper. He held this position until the summer, when he was hospitalized in a sanatorium in Denver, Colorado, where he

died of pulmonary tuberculosis on October 17, 1892, at the age of twenty-six. Before his death he saw his first book of poetry, *Folks gedikhte* (*The People's Poems*), published by *Fraye arbaiter shtime*.

Despite his short literary career (1889–1892), Edelshtat became a central poet during his lifetime and a romantic legend among revolutionaries and Yiddish poets of subsequent generations. Embraced first by socialists and anarchists, after the 1920s he was also claimed by Communists for espousing revolutionary ideals. Edelshtat created powerful international revolutionary images in his poetry, effectively using subjects like the Haymarket Affair in the poem “*Der 11-ter November*” (“November Eleventh”), the Paris Commune in the poem “*Louise Michel*,” or the Russian revolutionary organization *Narodnaia volia* (The Will of the People) in the poem “*Sofia Perovskaia*,” which inspired the adherents of several radical movements.

Ori Kritz

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## Daniel Fuchs (1909–1993)

### Novelist and Screenwriter

A Depression-era novelist who put a promising literary career on hold to become a Hollywood screenwriter, but never abandoned those aspirations entirely, Daniel Fuchs inhabited and wrote about two disproportionately Jewish worlds: the immigrant neighborhoods of New York and the golden ghettos of Hollywood.

Fuchs's greatest achievement as a writer is the trilogy of novels, set in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Williamsburg, which he published during the Depression: *Summer in Williamsburg* (1934), *Homage to Blenholt* (1936), and *Low Company* (1937). Daniel's parents, Jacob and Sarah

Malkah (Cohen) Fuchs, had immigrated separately while they were still teenagers, Jacob from Russia and Sarah from Poland, and met in New York. They were living on Manhattan's Lower East Side when Daniel was born, but moved across the East River to Williamsburg in 1914, settling initially in a small Jewish section of that ethnically diverse but divided neighborhood. His father sold newspapers and eventually owned a newsstand, and Daniel's earliest literary influences were probably journalism and magazine fiction, his father's leftover wares. He majored in philosophy at City College of New York, graduating in 1930. Almost immediately, Fuchs felt trapped in his job as a substitute public school teacher and sought escape through writing, submitting a long memoir about coming of age in Williamsburg to the *New Republic*. Its editor, Malcolm Cowley, published part of the memoir in the magazine as “Where Al Capone Grew Up” (1931), but advised Fuchs to widen his scope and pursue the topic in fiction. Married in 1932 to Susan Hessen and writing furiously during his summer vacations, Fuchs produced the first two Williamsburg novels in two years.

The autobiographical origins of the Williamsburg novels are not hard to detect. In the first, *Summer in Williamsburg*, Philip Heyman, a frustrated City College student with literary ambitions, is the most prominent player in the large ensemble cast of an ambitiously literate novel. As Irving Howe noticed, “each of the characters . . . is a point of reference by which to define Philip's situation” (1948). When a neighbor commits suicide, Philip turns, in his quest for truth, to Old Miller, whose “oily side curls” and “shiny black garments” give him the appearance of Jewish Orthodoxy. But the image is all Fuchs is interested in, to establish Miller as the novel's prophet: it is neither an attack on nor an endorsement of the haredi community. Hasidim were (and still are) a prominent component of Williamsburg, and Fuchs's use of such a character as a guide for the author's fictionalized alter-ego seems neither satiric nor ironic, even if Miller's pronouncements are devoid of traditional Jewish learning and range instead from one sort of materialism to another—from “there was one truth, one meaning in life, and this was money,” to “men are the sum of a million infinitesimal phenomena and experiences. [ . . . ] The ultimate product, man, therefore moves mysteriously, but he is a scientific outcome of cause and effect.” And Miller's naturalistic philosophy gives shape to Philip's quest, when the old man tells him, “you must pick Williamsburg to pieces

until you have them all spread out on your table before you, a dictionary of Williamsburg.”

The problem for Philip, however, is not the truth of Miller’s observation, but its artistic utility; having dissected Williamsburg and its inhabitants, at the novel’s end Philip realizes he has nothing to write about. The people of Williamsburg, he ironically concludes, went “through the stale operations of living, they were real, but a novelist did not write a book about them.” The Williamsburg trilogy is, of course, proof that such books do get written, and that Philip Heyman is not, finally, Daniel Fuchs; but Philip’s conclusion also reveals his author’s own ambivalence about the impoverished horizons of Williamsburg’s teeming streets. Recalling the writing of *Summer in Williamsburg* nearly thirty years later, Fuchs explained his character’s dilemma as his own: “I was trying to find a similar direction and plan to the life I had witnessed in Williamsburg. I was struggling with form. I was struggling with mystery.”

In his second novel, *Homage to Blenholt*, Fuchs relied on a similar relationship for the central story, but gained much needed perspective by distancing the work from its autobiographical origins, by limiting the main characters mostly to a single family and their friends, and by elevating avarice from a piece of the puzzle to the main theme. In *Summer in Williamsburg*, Philip may be disappointed at the end to discover that his poverty frustrates his ambitions, but a grittier materialism is played out in supporting stories of how the honest and hardworking fail while ruthless gangsters succeed. In *Homage to Blenholt*, the young protagonist, Max Balkan, is obsessed with financial rather than intellectual or artistic achievement, and his mentor, his role model, is the recently deceased Blenholt of the title. Max calls him a “hero in this flat age. [ . . . ] A racketeer, a gangster, a grafter, a politician, anything you want to say, but a hero!” For all Max’s enthusiasm, however, the essence of Blenholt’s moral corruption is perfectly and succinctly captured by Fuchs, who makes him “Commissioner of Sewers.” Meanwhile, Blenholt’s physical corruption is the novel’s main plot device: anticipating Wallace Markfield’s *To an Early Grave* (1961), the author has Max spend half the novel trying to get people to accompany him to Blenholt’s funeral, where the service turns into a riot and Max ends up feeling “as miserable as a man ever felt.” Gabriel Miller has called *Homage to Blenholt* a “Williamsburg comedy of manners,” but the end of the novel turns darker, as Max unsurprisingly fails to find happiness in material success.

Fuchs’s next novel takes up where *Homage to Blenholt* leaves off—in cynicism and low spirits—making *Low Company* the most pessimistic of the trilogy, as well as the least autobiographical. And, despite the novel’s epigraph from the liturgy of Kol Nidre, it is also the least concerned with Jewish characters, though a few, like Herbert Lurie and Mr. Spitzbergen, are certainly intended to be seen as Jews. Marcelline Krafchick has argued that the “epigraph prayer serves the novel thematically in at least two ways” (1988): directly, as a menu of human failings from which the author can choose ingredients for his characterizations, and indirectly, as a suggestion of the moral wasteland that they inhabit. If true, this purely secular application of a traditional Jewish prayer is consistent with Fuchs’s strategy throughout the trilogy, in which Jewish themes, metaphorical or otherwise, are largely employed for psychological and artistic purposes. Indeed, Gabriel Miller has suggested that *Low Company* “can, in fact, be read as a prose ‘Waste Land,’” with numerous parallels to T. S. Eliot’s modern epic, including its four-part structure, with Spitzbergen as “a kind of debased fertility-god figure” (1979). The novel takes place over a three-day period, the time it takes to journey to the underworld. But this underworld is the tawdry environment of Neptune Beach (Fuchs’s version of Brighton Beach, though perhaps Pluto would have been a more suitable name), where organized crime is threatening the established dishonesty of petty criminals and predatory small businessmen. When one of the latter, Spitzbergen, is murdered near the end in a botched attempt at robbery by Karty, a gambler desperate to repay money he has embezzled from his wife’s violent brothers, two of Fuchs’s favorite themes are sounded once again: the price to be paid for making money into one’s god and the complicated calculus of human causes and effects.

As one might expect when Philip Heyman, in *Summer in Williamsburg*, receives his assignment from Old Miller “to pick Williamsburg to pieces,” Daniel Fuchs’s interest in things Jewish was primarily sociological. Though his characters are mostly poor, immigrant Jews and their children, their struggles are almost entirely those of class, not religion. Though Allen Guttman argues that “Fuchs was the first to take apart the world of Sholem Aleichem’s *Kasrilevka* and to reconstruct it on the sidewalks of New York” (1971), he certainly does not mean this in a spiritual sense. Despite his odd phrasing, Morris Dickstein is closer to the truth when he suggests that Fuchs is “notably ham-handed

in portraying the religious life of the Jews” (1974). Indeed, the Williamsburg trilogy lacks even the sort of scenes involving Jewish education and ritual observance that can be found even in the works of Fuchs’s more ideological contemporaries, including Henry Roth’s *Call It Sleep* and Mike Gold’s *Jews without Money*.

In a preface written for a 1961 reprinting of the trilogy, Fuchs recalled his disappointment at the novels’ reception: “The books were failures. Nobody seemed to care for them when they came out. [ . . . ] The books didn’t sell—400 copies, 400 copies, 1,200 copies. The reviews were scanty, immaterial. The books became odious to me.” In fact, the novels received very good reviews, especially in the *New York Times*, but, like his characters, Fuchs was weighted with financial concerns, and he eventually opted for the greater monetary rewards of screenwriting in Hollywood while occasionally publishing short fiction and essays in magazines. Among his successful screenplays, Fuchs turned *Low Company* into the 1947 film *The Gangster* and won an Academy Award for best original story for the 1955 film *Love Me or Leave Me*.

About Fuchs’s career choice, Irving Howe, for whom no answer but a socialist one would do, claimed, “It would be absurd to speak of his having ‘sold out’ to Hollywood, for Fuchs was defeated in himself before he went to Hollywood and had he not been so defeated he would most probably not have gone there.” Despite such sophism, however, Howe made a telling comparison of Fuchs’s two worlds, asking, “For what is Hollywood but Williamsburg in Technicolor?” (1948). And, in fact, some of the best fiction of Fuchs’s later career, including the story “Twilight in California,” seems to be little more than Williamsburg pessimism recast in the glitz and sunshine of Los Angeles.

Though less than laudatory, Howe’s interest helped to bring Fuchs back to fiction. He published a number of stories in 1953 and 1954, after a decade of mostly silence and screenplays, and three of these were collected in *Stories* (1956), a volume of short fiction by Fuchs, Jean Stafford, John Cheever, and William Maxwell. A one-volume reissue of the Williamsburg trilogy as *Three Novels* in 1961 introduced Fuchs to a new generation of readers and won him the sort of praise and attention he had found lacking in the 1930s. A slim novel, *West of the Rockies*, followed in 1971. Though set in Palm Springs, *West of the Rockies* is a story in which the unreality of the film industry and its stars is matched by Fuchs’s uncharacteristically thin narrative—

and the resulting fiction is clearly not the result of picking Hollywood to pieces and spreading them out for study.

Fuchs’s final book was the 1979 collection of two dozen essays and short fiction, *The Apathetic Bookie Joint*. The title story tells the tale of a bookie so depressed by reality—and by the apparent impossibility of luck or happiness—that he takes bets only reluctantly, and who, like Blenholt before him, is called a hero, this time by the cop who releases him without arrest at the story’s end. The collection also contains “Triplicate,” a previously unpublished autobiographical novella about a Hollywood screenwriter, and “Twilight in California,” in which Alexander Honti, like Max Balkan in *Homage to Blenholt*, dreams of making the deal that will set him up for life. For Max, the dream involves onion juice; twenty years later in Los Angeles, Mr. Honti is in the novelty business, but only the background is new in the way he ends up, toothless, on foot, and out of luck, on Mulholland Drive. Fuchs’s own story concluded in more comfortable circumstances, but to the end his characters rue having opted for the sort of materialistic choices their author himself made.

David Mesher

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## Michael Gold (1894–1967)

### Journalist and Fiction Writer

Michael Gold is internationally known as the author of *Jews without Money* (1930), an acclaimed fictionalized au-

tobiography. He was also a prolific journalist for the United States Communist movement for nearly four decades, an innovative if quirky playwright, a passionate and colorful poet, an uneven but occasionally dazzling essayist on cultural affairs, and an unforgettable literary personality of the 1920s and Great Depression eras. Among the canon of Jewish American writers, Gold's legacy is unsettled due to his Stalinist politics, his association with "proletarian literature," and his failure to produce a second major work.

Gold was born Itzok Granich on the Lower East Side of New York, although he became known as Irving Granich in public school and elected Irwin Granich for his initial publications. From his parents, Jewish immigrants from Romania and Hungary, Gold inherited an ardor for the Yiddish language and literature, especially songs and theater. His father was a failed businessman who descended into poverty, illness, and suicidal despair, before dying mysteriously when Gold was eighteen. The family's impecunious circumstances impelled Gold to leave school for factory work at age twelve. At fifteen he was publishing in settlement house newspapers, and poverty was already a theme.

Both of Gold's brothers became radical activists around the time of World War I, and in 1914 Gold himself published a poem celebrating martyred anarchists in the revolutionary *Masses* magazine. Around the same time Gold pursued courses in night school to complete his high school education, studied journalism at New York University for a year, and worked for the *New York Globe* as well as suburban newspapers. In the fall of 1916 Gold matriculated at Harvard as a provisional student. Unfortunately, Gold soon suffered a mental breakdown and became morbidly obsessed with guilt over his father's death. While he struggled with his illness he continued to circulate in the anarchist movement in Boston, living in a commune and editing a journal called *The Flame*.

In 1917 Gold departed Boston to launch a career as a playwright. That year two of his plays, *Down the Airshaft* and *Homecoming*, were performed by the Provincetown Players. The former treats the kinship between a Jewish American ghetto youth and his mother, and the second is an antiwar drama about the Russian front in World War I. Under the name Irwin Granich, an early version of an episode from *Jews without Money* appeared in *The Masses*. A year later, facing the draft, Gold escaped to Mexico

where he worked as a translator and laborer, caroused, and promoted the Bolshevik revolution from an anarchist perspective.

After returning to Provincetown, Massachusetts, in 1920 for the production of his play *Money*, Gold joined the editorial board of the *Liberator* (successor to the *Masses*) under the name Michael Gold. The pseudonym was borrowed from a Civil War veteran who was a friend of Gold's father. Gold most likely joined the Communist movement at this time, although his membership may have been inconstant until the 1930s. By 1922 he was living in Oakland, California, publishing in the *San Francisco World* and working on a life of John Brown that surfaced as a pamphlet two years afterward. In 1924 a collection of his fiction appeared as *A Damned Agitator and Other Stories*, under the imprint of the Communist Party newspaper, *Daily Worker*.

Gold passed part of the mid-1920s in the Soviet Union, where he fell under the spell of the constructivist German Jewish playwright Vsevolod Meyerhold, who experimented with body movements and physical structures. Relocating to the United States, Gold helped to initiate the *New Masses* magazine in 1926 and the *Liberator*, progressively leading them in the direction of unofficial affiliation with the Communist movement. Concurrently, Gold tried to launch a United States version of the Soviet constructivist theater movement. The enterprise became the New Playwrights Theater, in which Gold was allied with Jewish American playwright John Howard Lawson and novelist John Dos Passos.

For this drama group Gold drafted his most bizarre play, *Hoboken Blues*, intended to be performed by an African American cast who would don masks to play the white characters. The text was published in 1927 in *American Caravan*, a prestigious annual of avant-garde literature, but its 1928 production was a failure. A second long play, *Fiesta*, derived from Gold's Mexican sojourn, netted a more favorable reaction when performed in 1929, but the New Playwrights company collapsed soon after. Gold's only subsequent efforts at playwriting were *Battlehymn* (1936), a drama about John Brown coauthored with Jewish American novelist Michael Blankfort, and selections from a 1948 play about the life of New York Communist city councilman Pete Cacchione.

As a poet, Gold is most admired for "Strange Funeral in Braddock" (1924). It was read publicly, performed to

music, and widely known in the 1930s. His literary method here involves a refunctioning of motifs from folk tales and ballads. In dirge-like rhythms, Gold narrates the story of a martyred worker named Jan Clepak. The initials suggest Jesus Christ, and the poem has the aura of a proletarian version of the crucifixion.

Gold began working on *Jews without Money* as early as 1917 in the sense of using autobiographical experiences on which to build fictional episodes. Versions cropped up in *American Mercury*, *Menorah Journal*, and the *New Masses*. The appearance of a heavily revised *Jews without Money* thirteen years later coincided with the onset of the Great Depression, as well as a swing to the Left among the intelligentsia. Moreover, when the book version was published, Gold was winning notoriety for his sensational October 22, 1930, attack on the writings of Thornton Wilder in the *New Republic*. Gold's strategy in this review essay was to assume the voice of the rebel opposing the genteel hegemony that he associates with Wilder's work. In particular, Gold singles out Ivy League patrician writers for vitriolic criticism. Gold's view is that everything about Wilder's artistic vision is false in regard to expressing the social reality of the United States. Gold's position is one of rejecting fanciful or introspective literature; he believes the writer of the 1930s has a mandatory commitment to address the harsh and concrete realities of working-class life. Gold is particularly irked by Wilder's style of writing; he finds an offensive contradiction between the paltriness of Wilder's themes and the solemnity with which he treats them.

At the identical moment that Gold contested Wilder, a controversy about the rise of "proletarian literature" was gaining momentum in the Left and liberal press. Although Gold's personal work record was more bohemian than proletarian, and the characters in *Jews without Money* were mostly unemployed or part of the *lumpenproletariat*, Gold was perceived as a national spokesman for the movement. In fact, Gold began to develop both a proletarian theory of art as well as his approach to literary criticism with a 1921 essay called "Toward Proletarian Art," an account of the cultural possibilities of the working class.

In an extravagant and lyrical narrative, Gold proclaims the death of the old culture as part of the apocalyptic paroxysms of the capitalist system. He then prophesizes that, out of the ashes, will ascend a new working class culture. Depicting himself as a voice for the masses, Gold asserts that art should express the experience of workers,

giving form to their daily lives and labor. Proletarian art should also trace the political development of the working class and point the way forward. By the time Gold published a follow-up essay in 1930 on "Proletarian Realism," he was persuaded that proletarian literature was a fact—a spreading worldwide phenomenon that was destined to be the art of the future. All of these contingencies in 1930—the appearance of *Jews without Money*, the radicalization of the intelligentsia, Gold's notorious critique of Wilder, and his association with proletarian literature—combined to transform Gold into one of the most notable literary figures of the early Depression. He was praised that year by novelist Sinclair Lewis in his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize.

*Jews without Money* has a complex relation to Gold's life, rendering its genre ambiguous. The earlier published chapters of the previous decade were closer to Gold's factual life, yet he insisted that these excerpts were only fiction. Upon his return from the Soviet Union, Gold undertook substantial revisions of the manuscript. The result was a work with a heightened apportionment of imaginary features, but, at that point, Gold began to contend that the work was mostly nonfiction memoirs. One conspicuous change in the book version is that Gold creates a myth that his father had been a house painter injured in a fall and afflicted with lead poisoning from paint fumes. Another invention concerns a sister, Esther, supposedly one year younger than the protagonist, Mikey; she is killed by a truck while out seeking firewood on a stormy night. A third change is that Gold's earlier versions reveal an attitude toward ghetto culture as stifling and oppressive, while *Jews without Money* celebrates the glories of *Yiddishkeit*, even as Gold acknowledges its insufficiency in dealing with capitalist America. *Jews without Money*, however, is scrupulous in the depiction of Gold's mother, and in capturing Gold's own religious quest for a savior that he ultimately locates in the dream of a working-class revolution.

Gold's title, *Jews without Money*, functions as a kind of answer to the antisemitic epithets, "rich Jews" and "Jewish bankers." These appellations were part of standard right-wing ideology of his time, but the Nazi movement was promoting them most aggressively. Gold was making an ideological intervention by trying to get into circulation a different perspective on Jews. Beyond that, Gold's title affirms a legitimate terrain for proletarian literature because "Jews without money" refers to proletarian Jews—laborers,

the unemployed, or insecure middle-class Jews. As a consequence, Gold is very class-conscious throughout the book, regularly counterpoising two types of Jews—a Jew without money, in contrast to a Jew who has money, or is devoted to money, or is bought out by money.

Gold's proletarian outlook is also inscribed in his class view of what constitutes culture. A great proportion of the book is devoted to excavating and re-creating Yiddish or Yiddish American folk culture as justifiable material for artistic representation. Although that culture may be characterized as *shtetl* in its European origins, the rubric "Jews without money" enables Gold to fuse transplanted rural, village Jews and dwellers of the urban ghetto. Moreover, the culture valorized by Gold is an oral culture, and the site of its expression in his book is usually the family gathering or a large group of people sitting around the table listening to Gold's father, who is the storyteller.

Gold planned several book-length projects in the aftermath of this initial success, including a volume of portraits of Jewish life in Palestine and the ghettos of Europe. Yet he was incapable of sustaining his focus, in part because of the instability of his personal life, but also due to the onset of undiagnosed diabetes. Writing regular columns for the Communist press provided Gold with a small but regular income that he supplemented with speaking engagements, but his creative energies were drained from larger projects. In 1936 he married a young French woman, Elizabeth Boussus, and later that year they started a family. In 1940 he underwent hospitalization and his diabetes was diagnosed as severe.

Although a loyal Communist, Gold was initially traumatized by news of the 1939 Non-Aggression Pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Nevertheless, he soon began publishing denunciations of writers alienated from the Communist Party by the Pact. These comprised *The Hollow Men* (1940), one of his weakest creations. In 1947, the Gold family relocated to Europe, in part motivated by the Cold War atmosphere but also to allow their children to grow familiar with his wife's side of the family in France. The Golds returned in the spring of 1950, but the Communist Party was so depleted that the *Daily Worker* could no longer afford financial support for his column. Nearing sixty, Gold tried sundry odd jobs while his literary output dwindled. Ultimately, in 1956 Gold, his wife, and their youngest son followed their older son to San Francisco. Gold spent his closing years writing columns for the West

Coast Communist paper, the *People's World*, and the Yiddish Communist paper, *Freiheit*.

Alan M. Wald

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## Emma Lazarus (1849–1887)

Poet, Essayist, Proto-Zionist

Emma Lazarus was born in 1849 to a distinguished Jewish family (German on her mother's side and Sephardic on her father's side) in New York City. Her mother's and father's families could both trace their presence in the city to the years before the American Revolution. By the late 1870s and 1880s it seemed that Lazarus, now viewed by many as the most important early figure in the Jewish American literary canon, might gain entrance into the elite realm of America's Protestant literary culture. Robert Browning, Walt Whitman, Henry James, and Ralph Waldo Emerson (the latter two among her many ardent correspondents) had all praised her translations of Heine as well as her own verse that appeared in *Lippincott's* and the *Century*. She published her first volume of poetry in 1866 at the age of seventeen. But she was fated to be memorialized exclusively for "The New Colossus," her great paean to (or plea for) American largesse, and by Jewish Americans for the few years of poetry, essay, and political activity dedicated to their cause. Representative of this trend, Henrietta Szold, founder of Hadassah, hailed her as the most distinguished literary figure produced by American Jewry, and possibly the most eminent poet among Jews since Heine—although Heine converted to Catholicism. In the mid-twentieth century a highly regarded Jewish scholar, Solomon Liptzin, helped secure her reputation, claiming that in the crucial years of the late nineteenth century "only a single Jewish



American Jewish poet, essayist, and proto-Zionist Emma Lazarus. (Library of Congress)

writer, the Sephardic poetess Emma Lazarus, succeeded in groping her way during solitary and tragic years from early ignorance and indifference to profound insight and prophetic vision. Phoenix-like, the tired heiress of Colonial Jewry arose resplendent in fresh vigor and heralded a heroic resurgence of her ancient people” (Liptzin 1958).

Certainly Lazarus demonstrated previously unimagined ways for a Jewish woman to participate in American public culture. Nevertheless, her achievements have been largely forgotten; late twentieth-century scholars have noted Lazarus’s contribution to Jewish American history condescendingly, at best. Though Lazarus played a significant proto-Zionist role, even major studies of American Zionism ignore her. By far the most influential Jewish American literary figure of the nineteenth century, Lazarus’s reflections on the status of the Jew in gentile society and on the question of the Jews’ return to Palestine offer a rich literary and historical context for examining later imaginative responses to Zionism in America.

Yet Lazarus was also ambivalent about her Jewishness. Her 1871 volume, *Admetus and Other Poems*, contains no

mention of Judaism and sits firmly within traditional Western culture, but a volume issued a few years before her death, *Songs of a Semite* (1882), is generally acclaimed as the birth volume of Jewish American poetry. In marked contrast to the poet’s earlier silence, it deals exclusively with Jewish identity, albeit as a dormant phenomenon situated in the past, awaiting political redemption. Ironically, Lazarus often drew her discursive authority from a religious tradition from which she felt radically estranged.

Above all, Lazarus succeeded in claiming a privileged cultural position as the re-animator of a tradition and a people in decline. Her eloquent representations of ancient “Hebrews” and the suggestion that the “Holy Land” might be resurrected as a contemporary homeland paved the way for later generations of American Zionists. Although she repudiated both Reform Judaism and the old religious rituals of the persecuted Jews arriving from Eastern Europe, Lazarus seems to embrace a notion of Jewishness as thoroughly secular, enlightened, and emancipated, suggesting that ancient myths might be recast to serve as a vital well-spring for the aesthetics and politics of the Jewish present. Reading Lazarus as the harbinger of the modern American ethnic Jew, one recognizes the competing claims of an insider and outsider sensibility; her lyrics convey much about the imagination required for the journey from the humiliation of dispersal to the sense of belonging provided by Jewish and American identities.

Anticipating the cultural strategies of Horace Kallen in a later generation, Lazarus embraced ethnicity, not religion, as the key to Jewish survival. Since her time, this has proven to be the most congenial way for translating the “Jew” into terms that are palatable in the American milieu. Jewish ethnicity, if it were to have any tangible substance, would have to be linked to a discourse about distinct origins and homeland. Hence, Lazarus’s prose and lyrics must be understood in relation to the commitment of nineteenth-century nationalist movements to physical boundaries as well as to linking the notion of “race” with organicity and authenticity. Lazarus’s identification of contemporary Jews with popular images of a distant past was also influenced by a Christian discourse that associated Judaism not with living Jews, but with a distant time and place—the Holy Land of “Bible days.”

Lazarus’s poetry and prose reflected Christian America’s increasing interest in Palestine in the late nineteenth century. Her works exhibit a canny awareness of (and con-

tributed to) her age's dichotomizing tendencies, particularly in contrasting the martial Jew of antiquity to the hopelessly decadent and passive Jew of European culture. This ethos, combined with an awareness of the widely held Christian millennial dreams of a reborn Jewish nation, enabled Lazarus to create a bridge between Protestant America and the visionary politics of twentieth-century American Zionism. Lazarus's experience anticipates writers of later decades who were still beleaguered by the challenge to articulate a hyphenated identity as Americans and ambivalent about what lies on either side of the hyphen.

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## Ludwig Lewisohn (1882–1955)

### Novelist and Literary Critic

As novelist, social analyst, literary critic, political polemicist, and Zionist leader, Ludwig Lewisohn's role in America and in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century proved immeasurable. Lewisohn was unrelenting in seeking to breathe new life into an American society suffocated by its puritanical ethos and ethnic prejudices, to deter the Western world from its march toward tyranny, both fascist and Stalinist, and to restore to the Jewish community a sense of identity and spiritual purpose.

The product of a highly assimilated Berlin Jewish family, Lewisohn was brought to a tiny South Carolina village in 1890, following the failure of his father's inherited cloth-

ing manufacturing business. His mother's brother had preceded them to the tiny backwater of St. Matthews, where a small Jewish community had resided since just before the Civil War. Two years later, following his father's second failure at running a small general store, he and his parents moved to Charleston, where Lewisohn would achieve fame as the high school valedictorian. At nineteen, he was graduated from the College of Charleston, earning both BA and MA degrees in English literature. During these years, he had lived as a Methodist, teaching Sunday school and participating in the church's youth activities. Yet, upon graduation, he failed to win a teaching position in a local private academy because of his Jewish background.

Attendance in graduate school, planned for the following year, now seemed hopeless, but after a bitter and solitary year, financial assistance from family and a few local backers enabled him to enroll in the doctoral program in English literature at Columbia University in 1902. New York's electrifying cultural mix, together with new friendships and his first sexual encounters, male and female, heightened his inner conflict over being Jewish in an unaccepting and restrictive America into which he had so desperately sought full and unambiguous admission. Repeatedly warned by his Columbia professors that, no matter how hard he tried to move past it, his identification by others in academia as a Jew offered him little chance, for "racial" reasons, of an appointment as an English instructor at an American university, Lewisohn abandoned graduate education before completing his dissertation. Lewisohn considered this determination to preserve English and American literature for the carriers of Anglo-Saxon "blood" emblematic of the closed society that needed to be changed.

Further literary disappointments and his being fired from an editorial position at Doubleday, Page for labor organizing brought him home to Charleston. Within weeks of his arrival, Mary Arnold Crocker, an occasional playwright twenty years his senior, whom he had met while his life was unraveling, followed him south and soon married the lost young Lewisohn. Their age difference, and his growing Jewish consciousness in the years ahead, ultimately doomed his relationship with his non-Jewish wife. But in the early days of their marriage, he struggled to support them both, living with his parents and teaching adult education classes at the college (which in 1914 granted him an honorary D.Litt.), all the while still trying his hand at writing plays and short stories.

Failure to achieve financial independence forced them back to New York in the fall of 1907. He had, however, recently completed a novel, *The Broken Snare*. Brought to the attention of Theodore Dreiser, it was published the following year. The story of a young woman's intellectual and emotional development, it marked for Lewisohn a declaration of war against the forbidding, still very Victorian, society whose puritanical sexual and social mores, institutionalized in its marital laws, were throttling him.

With his book harshly criticized back home as scandalous, he felt even more determined to pursue his plan to create literary works that would tear down this restrictive structure. Yet the next two years brought only poverty, despair, and frequent, albeit momentary, thoughts of suicide. Only an unexpected appointment to the German Department at the University of Wisconsin (1910), arranged by a friend, broke this cycle. Lewisohn's reputation as a writer grew when, a year after his first novel appeared, he published a one-act dramatic poem, *A Night in Alexandria*, that also received critical acclaim. By then, his list of credits included numerous (often pseudonymous) short stories in such journals as *Cavalier*, *All-Story*, and *Town Topics*; articles on literary topics in *Sewanee Review*, *Current Literature*, and *Forum*; and a third book, *German Style, An Introduction to the Study of German Prose* (1910), which brought him to the attention of the scholarly world.

After only one year at Wisconsin, Lewisohn accepted a similar post at Ohio State University. The lure of a slightly higher salary and the promise of a change that might ease the tensions that had developed between him and Mary, often exacerbated by the presence of her children, did not, however, meet his expectations. His mother's untimely death from cancer in 1914 and his father's subsequent mental breakdown, with Lewisohn now caring for him, only deepened his domestic chaos. Still, he enjoyed both teaching and writing, and he was earning a reputation as a compelling thinker and orator that would outlast his death.

In the first of the eleven volumes of the *Dramatic Works of Gerhart Hauptmann* (1912–1919), which he edited, several of which he translated, he promoted his own views on literary realism. He was determined to expose the true nature of the individual's daily struggle for sustenance and for joy in a difficult world, a subject he felt had been largely ignored by many prominent authors. In his study of the *Modern Drama* (1915), he developed his ideas

more fully, condemning the dominant puritanical morality of America even more strongly than before. He extended this critique in *The Spirit of Modern German Literature* (1916) and praised the literary realism emerging in the land of his birth.

As Lewisohn began to examine his German roots, he began to find a positive element in his Jewish past as well. Though largely cut off from it by his father's total rejection of Jewish tradition, he had learned some rudimentary practices from his mother, the daughter of an itinerant Reform rabbi. In violation of her husband's demands that she cease all such activities, each Friday evening she and her son would go to a corner of their tiny apartment to light the Sabbath candles—even though it was she who had placed him in the Methodist church as a way to Americanize him. By college, he had internalized Methodism's religious and social teachings; yet memories of these earlier days survived. Social and professional ostracism dredged them up from the depths into which he had buried them. There are already hints of this in his writings while still at college. *The Broken Snare* can be read as a Jewish-based critique of what Lewisohn identified as the Puritan ethos of America. The frontispiece, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken, and we are escaped"—is a quote from Psalm 124, which begins, "Let Israel now sing."

The death of Lewisohn's mother brought this inner conflict to a head as his emotions, beginning in 1912, swung from liberation to confusion and back again. It took three years to get past this state, but, in 1915, he had sufficiently settled the matter of living in two worlds—one secular, centered largely in European literature, and the other focused increasingly on the Jewishness that was becoming an ever-deepening part of his identity. He soon found himself lecturing to Ohio State's nascent Menorah Society and choosing to translate David Pinski's Yiddish work, *The Treasure*, for publication.

With America's entry into the Great War in 1917, Lewisohn's academic career came suddenly to an end when he became one of many of German background who were dismissed from their posts in a surge of hyperpatriotism and war fever. Less than neutral because of his affinity for German culture, for some years he had been fighting against the forces that he feared would reject all things German and, with them, the literary realism that was central to the cultural struggle he had joined. More the inter-

nationalist than a Germanophile, he had openly opposed the chauvinism that had now overtaken America, and he paid a severe price for his opposition.

Returning to New York, he was pleased, at least, with his release from teaching responsibilities and excited to have left the Midwest with its extreme isolationism, its overly zealous patriotism, and its intolerance of difference. Still, he could not ignore the current atmosphere, and so, under intense pressure from his publisher, the study of German and French poetry on which he had been working became the *Poets of Modern France* (1918). The remainder, with additions, would appear years later as *Modern German Poetry* (1925).

Lewisohn survived by writing articles for the *Internationalist*, *Forum*, *Bookman*, *Smart Set*, and *The Nation*, along with translations from German and a brief stint as a Latin instructor, until Oswald Villard, publisher of *The Nation*, asked him to become its drama critic and fiction editor. Before he left *The Nation* in 1924, he had become associate editor. Among his closest associates during these years were Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Horace Liveright, Edgar Lee Masters, H. L. Mencken, Upton Sinclair, and Carl and Mark Van Doren. As a perceptive critic, he championed the Yiddish, black, and avant-garde theater, and he promoted European authors, some of whose works of literary naturalism he helped to bring out in translation. *The Drama and the Stage* (1922) attested to Lewisohn's significant role as a critical voice in the theater of his age.

That same year Lewisohn published the work for which he is best known, *Up Stream*, which was both greatly praised and condemned for its grating honesty as an account of American society, as seen by an outsider. While Brander Matthews, Lewisohn's former teacher at Columbia, denounced him in the *New York Times* as one of "a militant group of un-Americanized aliens, loudly proclaiming that they and they alone are Americans," the Jewish novelist and short story writer of the Lower East Side, Anzia Yezierska, found his work to be for "us newer Americans . . . not merely a book. It is a vision, revelation. It is our struggles, our hopes, our aspirations and our failures made articulate. It is the cry of young America to old America . . . a dynamic protest against the sanctification of a priestcraft in education, a revolt against the existence of an Anglo-Saxon intellectual aristocracy in a country that is the gathering together of peoples from every corner of the earth" (Yezierska 1922). As Lewisohn himself had

written, "Among the masses of our countrymen I see no stirring, no desire to penetrate beyond fixed names to living things, no awakening from the spectral delusions among which they pursue their aimless business and their sapless pleasures. But the critical spirit that is also the creative spirit has risen among us, and it has arisen, naturally and inevitably, in the form of a protest and rebellion. Life among us is ugly and mean and, above all things, false in its assumptions and measures. Somehow we must break these shackles and flee and emerge into some beyond of sanity, of a closer contact with reality, of nature and of truth" (*Up Stream* 1922).

Lewisohn's troubled marriage into which he had been locked for nearly two decades was proof enough for him of these unnatural "Puritan" constraints. Somehow, he had to break with it. *Don Juan* (1923), a novel he had worked on for some time, announced his intent to end this arrangement. In the struggle between a tyrannical legal system and personal freedom, there could be no compromise. Lewisohn's growing affection for a young woman twenty years his junior was sufficient proof of this. An aspiring opera singer, Thelma Spear had sought him out, hoping his support would help her career. He, desperate for change, infused their friendship with the unreasonable hope of renewal. Endorsing the artist's right to absolute freedom in a collection of his essays the following spring (1924), he fled with her to Europe, where they remained for a decade.

In 1922, Lewisohn began to speak openly of his Jewish identity, calling upon others to affirm their similar deepest sense of self. It was a short leap to becoming a committed Zionist, and when Chaim Weizmann, the head of the World Zionist Organization (WZO), asked him in late 1923 to conduct a secret fact-finding mission in Eastern Europe and Palestine, his hoped-for departure from Mary and the state's grip became a reality. He and Thelma left for Europe the following year. After completing his work for the WZO, Lewisohn returned to Paris, only to learn that their passports had been revoked because they had falsified their visa applications by claiming to be married. It would be ten years before he would be allowed to return to the United States, and fifteen years before Mary consented to a divorce.

The fruitful decade in Europe began soon after his return to Paris with a book entitled *Israel*. More than a summary of his findings, it was also a cry for Jewish renewal.

Still, the spiritual return for which he called was not necessarily to traditional Jewish thought and practice. Everywhere Lewisohn traveled, he had encountered looming threats to the Jewish people—whether through pogrom or assimilation. Lewisohn knew there could be no spiritual life for Jews without the existence of a Jewish community—the solitary seeker was not the paradigm of Jewish life. Thus Lewisohn included a plea for Zionism in his call for renewal.

This two-sided struggle remained the chief focus of most of Lewisohn's energy in the decades ahead. In book after book, and in article after article, he emphasized and refined these points, as time proved his fears well founded. At the center of his vision remained his critique of the Christian ethos, so unlike the more natural and healthier approach to life he found in the Jewish tradition. It was the core message of his most influential novel, *The Island Within* (1928), an attack on the urge to assimilate, which could only be counteracted by the embrace of Jewish identity and one's people.

Lewisohn again addressed contemporary threats by challenging the most negative characterization of the Jew in English literature, that of the inhuman, self-serving, greedy moneylender. Imagining the *Last Days of Shylock* (1931), he transformed Shakespeare's stereotype into a heroic figure. In *This People* (1933), a collection of short stories and essays, he provided a historical backdrop to the physical and spiritual threats facing contemporary Jews.

Throughout this period, the question of marriage remained an additional core concern for Lewisohn. Having left his Christian wife for one whose father was Jewish, and having consecrated this union in a religious ceremony in Poland (though not yet civilly divorced from Mary), he felt liberated from the strictures that had bound him. In *Stephen Escott* (1930), he contrasted Jewish with gentile marriage, finding the latter wanting in its denial of the sexual as natural. He elaborated further on this theme in *An Altar in the Fields* (1934), where a Jewish psychiatrist aids a failing Christian marriage by exposing the couple to a life of naturalism as he leads them through Africa.

Despite Lewisohn's growing disillusionment with Western civilization and his deepening commitment to Jewish life, he kept one foot in each. He participated fully in the intellectual life of 1920s and 1930s Paris, with his home becoming one of the primary salons during his decade of residence there. When he traveled to Vienna that

first year, his interest in psychoanalysis led to several sessions with Sigmund Freud, although he later embraced Otto Rank's ideas over those of the master and wrote the introduction to his new friend's *Art and the Artist* (1932). Sharing a love of German culture, he and Thomas Mann established a lifelong friendship based on artistic affinities and a mutual hatred for the growing Nazi threat. Lewisohn also became involved with James Joyce, each sharing his published work with the other. Lewisohn "wrote the initial draft of the 'International Protest,' that argued against the banning . . . of Joyce's *Ulysses* in America." "[A]fter Archibald MacLeish added a more legalistic tone," it appeared on February 2, 1927 (Melnick 1998, I).

Lewisohn's relationship with Edward Titus, the Jewish owner of the Black Manikin Book Shop in Paris and its publishing house, and the husband of Helena Rubenstein who helped finance it, proved to be the most significant of his new friendships. Titus published Lewisohn's most controversial novel, the autobiographical *Case of Mr. Crump* (1926), a retelling of his marital bondage to Mary, which Freud called "an incomparable masterpiece" and which Mann praised as "in the forefront of modern epic narrative" (Melnick 1998, I). It sold over a million copies in a host of languages.

Although long out of the academy, with his energies turned largely to social and political issues, Lewisohn had retained his scholarly interests. Thus in 1932 he published *Expression in America*, a Freudian interpretation of American culture as expressed through its literature from the colonial period to the present, which was praised by reviewers. (He had written it prior to meeting Rank.) In it Lewisohn once again detailed his critique of the unhealthy nature of American life. *Creative America*, an anthology of the works he had analyzed, appeared the next year.

Despite Lewisohn's best efforts, Thelma never succeeded in her career, and she blamed him for her failure. He chronicled the deterioration of their relationship fictionally in *Roman Summer* (1927) and *Golden Vase* (1931). But Lewisohn had long hoped for a son. So, despite the unraveling of their relationship, he and Thelma had a child in 1933, though this only deepened her ambivalence about their marriage.

Their return to the United States a year later, aided by the intercession of influential Jewish leaders, particularly that of Stephen Wise with his friend Franklin Roosevelt, eventually brought an end to the couple's relationship.

While lecturing in upstate New York in 1939, Lewisohn met Edna Manley, a journalist familiar with his work. Lewisohn left Thelma and married within the year—once Mary consented to a divorce and a cash settlement. But this marriage ended after four eventful years that included a protracted custody battle for his son (described in *Haven* [1940]), living in a small colony of writers and artists in Tucson, and working against Nazi Germany and for a Jewish refuge in Palestine, on which he wrote several books and gave innumerable lectures. While still in Europe, he had begun to send warnings home of the growing dangers in Germany. In a prophetic article in *The Nation* (1933), he had written of “Germany’s Lowest Depths,” only to see Germany fall deeper into its chasm of horror. And when the British continued to keep Palestine closed to Hitler’s victims, he gave a full account of the disastrous voyage of the refugee ship *Struma* in a novel, *Breathe Upon These* (1944).

Although his relationship with the Zionists had cooled because of the fear that his marital problems would reflect badly on their efforts, the growing need for his eloquent and passionate voice saw his return to the ranks of their leadership, culminating in his position as the editor of the Zionist Organization of America’s journal, *New Palestine*, in 1944. His four years in that role were the most crucial in twentieth-century Jewish history, and his voice a key part of the fight for Jewish survival.

In 1948, Brandeis University invited Lewisohn to become its first full professor. At age sixty-six, with an appointment in comparative literature (and later as university librarian), he found himself, for the first time, teaching the courses he had hoped to present more than forty years earlier. It was Lewisohn who helped to bring other distinguished but similarly barred Jewish faculty to the campus as well as much financial support to the fledgling Jewish university. Still, he argued for a greater emphasis on Jewishness at the school and was in constant conflict with its administration.

Never content to play a limited role in the world, Lewisohn continued his tireless schedule of nationwide lecture tours and writing, now mostly on Jewish issues. With the decimation of European Jewry, he looked to America for a rebirth of Jewish life, stressing the need for an end to assimilation through the education of the coming generations. Still the European, however, he gave what energy remained to the translation and promotion of

refugee Jewish writers into English, both to help them and to bring this lost world to those who knew so little of what had been destroyed. In the midst of all this activity, he died suddenly on December 31, 1955.

Ralph Melnick

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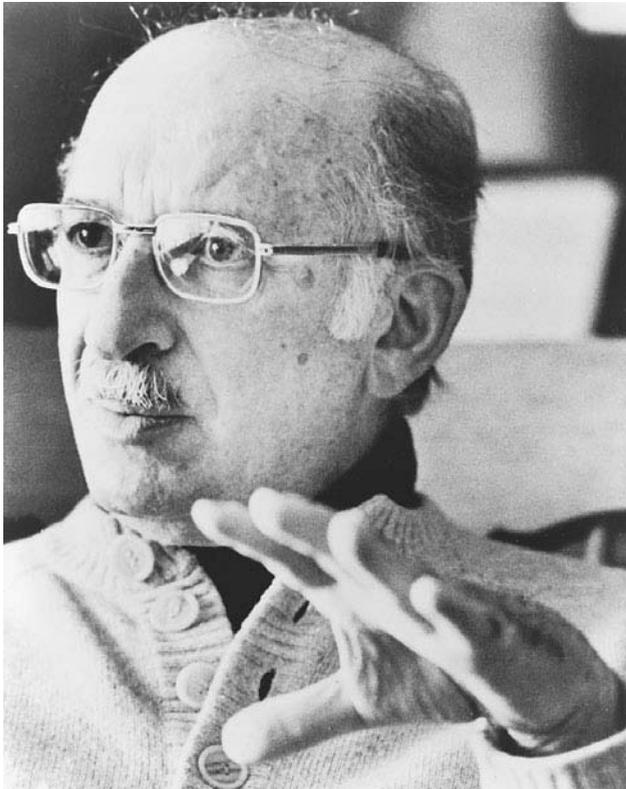
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## Bernard Malamud (1914–1986)

### Novelist

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize and two National Book Awards, Bernard Malamud was one of the most important American Jewish writers. He disliked the “Jewish” appellation, as he felt it reductive: “I’m an American, I’m a Jew, and I write for all men” (Lasher 1991). However, his best writing focuses on Jews. When he writes of other groups—Italians, African Americans, WASPs—a certain edge is missing: consciousness of a long history, frequently laden with suffering, and the bittersweet humor and folklore that accompanied it. His Jews and Jewishness are metaphors for humanity, and he has said that the Jew is a symbol “of the tragic experience of man existentially. I try to see the Jew as universal man. Every man is a Jew though he may not know it” (Lasher 1991). Transforming selfishness into altruism and love is his central concern in what are essentially tests of morality. If a character learns correctly from suffering, what may ensue is acceptance of responsibility for others and a moral obligation to humanity. For Malamud, this is a type of secular redemption.

*The Natural* (1952), his first novel, provides only a limited sense of these concerns. There are no Jewish characters, and the protagonist Roy Hobbs does not possess the necessary vision to develop morally. A baseball novel, Malamud overloads the game and characters with biblical, Arthurian, fertility, Grail, hero, and kingship myths, the weight of which they are ill fitted to bear. However, his basic theme of suffering is very much present, and we can



Bernard Malamud, novelist and short story writer. (Library of Congress)

see an early version of what will develop into a process of salvation for the protagonist.

*The Assistant* (1957) is Malamud's best novel and sets the pattern of *bildungsroman* (novels of formation and development) that would become his basic form. Morris Bober, the protagonist, has learned from suffering and is able to teach Frank Alpine the value of selflessness in life. Frank moves from petty criminality to absorbing Morris's definition of Jewish Law, which is to be honest and decent to others. However, Malamud has secularized and universalized the Jewish moral code so that being a Jew means being a moral man. That Frank, a Roman Catholic, is circumcised and becomes a Jew at the end of the novel is no surprise: in Malamud's sense he is already a Jew. The failing grocery store in which the tale is set becomes a training ground, almost a monastery, for moral development.

The novel is only partly realistic, as there are elements of fable and fantasy in the characters and the setting, a timeless poverty-stricken area. It is populated by characters distinguished by their speech patterns. Like Mark Twain's use of dialects in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, this use of

largely Jewish and ethnic speech is part of the American literary tradition. There is an underlying irony that pervades the novel, heightening the sense of an unsure, perhaps treacherous, world where the obvious may not be the best, and achievement and success are not what is of most worth.

*A New Life* (1961) reflects Malamud's twelve years teaching at what was then Oregon State College. His first politically aware novel, the fearful effects of 1950s McCarthyism and the Cold War are seen in relation to the mythology of the American West as paradise. The protagonist, a Jew whose Jewishness is seen only in terms of his outsideness and liberalism, learns that the beauty of the region's nature is not shared by its people, who are small-minded and suspicious of change. While Levin does not succeed in instigating major changes in the college, he does develop through love and selflessness a new life of responsibility and commitment, though in an ironically self-sacrificial form. As in *The Assistant*, Malamud presents his secular salvation as somewhat masochistic; that is, success in life is not to be seen in terms of personal comfort or even happiness, but in moral responsibility.

*The Fixer* (1966) was awarded both a Pulitzer Prize and Malamud's second National Book Award (the first was for his 1958 short story collection, *The Magic Barrel*). Using historical accounts of the imprisonment and trial of Mendel Beilis, a poor Jew in czarist Russia, Malamud dramatizes the slow growth in altruism, morality, and self-understanding due to the suffering of his character Yakov Bok (Bok means goat), until Bok can feel at one not only with the Jewish people but with suffering humanity. Creating Bok's thoughts in his cell, something not part of the historical record, we find that freedom here, as in the previous three novels, consists of choosing selflessness over self-centeredness and escaping from metaphorical, personal prisons more than literal ones. Bok's growth develops through his suffering, which permits him to understand the tragedies in the human condition.

*Pictures of Fidelman: An Exhibition* (1969), Malamud's first long comic work, is a collection comprising a short story cycle, six stories that can both stand on their own and serve as chapters of a novel. The protagonist Arthur Fidelman is a picaro, a character who must create his identity from a plethora of experiences. He learns to love and give of himself through comic experiences, largely farce and slapstick. Incompetent as an artist, Fidelman tries different forms and methods, but his lack of genuine ability con-

demns him to failure. For Malamud, this artistic failure is less important than Fidelman's growth in love and success as a caring human being, realizing that his real worth should not be defined in terms of artistic ability.

*The Tenants* (1971) treats a specific social issue, the conflict between Jews and African Americans in the late 1960s, and draws conclusions from it for the future. Each protagonist holds the stereotype that each group has of the other, with writing—art—being presented as a possible but ultimately failed way to bridge the gulf between them. Harry and Willy are tested for their ability to develop selflessness and compassion; in the end both fail the test as neither is able to move beyond his own self-interest. Both writers hope that, if they can complete their novels, they can complete themselves; however, personal knowledge must come first, and their works, like themselves, remain incomplete. Both use art as a substitute for genuine human feeling: Harry to find love, Willy to justify himself as a black man and create an identity he can live with.

As in previous novels, the prison motif is very important here. Malamud's characters have been imprisoned by their pasts, goals, mistakes, or personality flaws. In some works there is a literal structure that has symbolized this imprisonment: the store in *The Assistant*, the cell in *The Fixer*, and the tenement in *The Tenants*, which keeps out much of the real world. For Malamud, a character must grow to understand the nature of his prison, which is the first step in breaking the bars.

The novel mixes realism with fantasy and contains three endings, Malamud having stated that one would not do, as the result of the unpredictability of black–white relations in America. It could end in reconciliation, in violence, or in each just having understanding and “mercy” for the other. The thrust of the novel is, however, toward the violent ending, Malamud's optimism being hardly visible here.

Malamud stated that, as he was approaching sixty when he began *Dubin's Lives* (1979), he asked himself what he had learned by this point; what had his life's experiences taught him? William Dubin is Jewish, but Jewishness is not important in the novel. In thematic terms, there is a continuity of theme and characterization with his previous work: the protagonist must move from self-containment to an expansion of the heart that encompasses others. He only partially succeeds in this, but does develop further than Harry Lesser in *The Tenants*.

Like Lesser, Dubin, a biographer, believes that he can learn about life by writing, in his case about other people's lives. He hopes that by writing biographies of Thoreau and D. H. Lawrence he will complete incomplete parts of himself: learn about nature, the physical and instinctual, about living life to the full and seizing the day. Again, like Lesser, Dubin is continually startled by actual life, preferring the control over life that writing gives him.

Because of what he is, Dubin's controlling mind does not permit him to benefit fully from what he learns of Lawrence's ideas, as awareness of the force of passion, spontaneity, and blood energies, largely engendered through his adultery with Fanny Bick, becomes burdened by the weight of morality. In the end, Dubin learns little and is certainly not redeemed in Malamud's secular sense.

The novel is about a failed marriage and all that flows from that. The marriage has not permitted either Kitty or Dubin to grow, and the marriages in the other novels are not presented as creating or likely to create happiness. Like the men, women in Malamud's novels frequently have personality flaws and, like Pauline's in *A New Life*, Kitty Dubin's are presented through the eyes of her husband. Fanny Bick, Dubin's mistress, does develop and provide a touchstone for judging his limitations, which include difficulty in conveying emotion. Like some characters from Malamud's previous novels, Fanny takes on the role of assistant to the protagonist, being the first female to do so, and providing a basis for Malamud's most sexually explicit novel, where sexuality is essential to full human development.

Stylistically, *Dubin's Lives* is a throwback to *A New Life* in its conventional structure, which eschews fantasy and relies on realism. One comes to it with some surprise after jungle-like apartments in *The Tenants*, Fidelman's sometimes surrealistic world, and Bok's dreams and visions in *The Fixer*. What is consistent in style is Malamud's use of a concealed third-person omniscient narrator who, while standing outside and above the action, merges with Dubin's thoughts so subtly that the transition from one voice to the other is almost seamless. In his next novel, Malamud will move firmly back into the fabulous.

In *God's Grace* (1982) Malamud returns to fantasy, in this instance to a beast fable, where monkeys speak English and face “human” issues. Previously, he used this form in two short stories, “The Jewbird” and “Talking Horse.” As in the stories, the negative aspects of humanity

are stressed as much as the nature of the animals. God is a character who states that He had not foreseen how evil humankind would be, so allowed humanity to destroy itself through nuclear war.

Calvin Cohn, the protagonist and last man on earth, argues with God like Job, wondering why He had to give humans such destructive traits. Free will was a great gift, but humanity is limited by its God-given constitution. Thus, Malamud discusses the theme of good and evil, with the essential nature of humanity a central issue. Will it be possible, Cohn wonders, to educate the chimpanzees in ethics so that they may create a better society than the now extinguished *homo sapiens* did? This proves illusory, as Cohn's attempts to develop in the chimps the best human qualities ignore their nature. This novel shows the level of pessimism that Malamud has reached, despite George the Gorilla, who says *kaddish* for Cohn and will carry on a Jewish code of morality. In the end, human beings are just a variety of primate, whose bestial qualities remain stubbornly resistant to change. Cohn should have listened more closely to the chimps, who at least did not destroy their own species.

Malamud wrote over fifty short stories during his lifetime, stating that he used them as laboratories for characters and ideas that would be more fully developed in novels. The short story did, however, provide a form for some of his most effective writing. Before *The Assistant*, Malamud wrote nine stories set in small, prison-like stores, in each of which it is not the goods sold that are important but the need to provide understanding and compassion for suffering human beings. The protagonists frequently grow in the course of the tales to illustrate the altruism of which humanity is capable. Those protagonists who do not develop are not "redeemed" by love.

He wrote eleven "Italian" stories, five of which appeared in the short story cycle novel, *Pictures of Fidelman*. Although the setting is not claustrophobic New York stores, the characters still suffer, need to be understood, and many must learn to "give credit" to others for their humanity. Again, these are themes that would be further developed in novels.

Some of Malamud's best short stories rely on a mixture of realism and fantasy including "The Magic Barrel," "Angel Levine," "Take Pity," "The Jewbird," "Idiots First," "The Silver Crown," and "Talking Horse." The tensions created between the commonplace and the fantastic, with the

former creating an air of believability for the latter and blurring the distinctions between them, are particularly effective in elucidating Malamud's central themes of the real but almost transcendent nature of compassion, love, and selflessness.

He also wrote a few impressive realistic stories that stress sociopolitical themes: "The German Refugee" and "Man in the Drawer." Later tales written in the 1980s, toward the end of his life, they are not as effective as his earlier ones, despite his attempts at finding a new form, which he called fictive biography. This can be seen in "In Kew Gardens," about Virginia Woolf, and "Alma Redeemed," about Alma Mahler.

Considering the stories he wrote over forty-five years, one can perceive a continuity of concerns: the importance of responsibility and commitment; suffering that may spur a character to acts of selflessness; a strong moralistic tone; imprisonment of characters in past limitations; and problems of communicating deeply felt needs. Malamud was an accomplished short story writer.

His final work was published in 1989, three years after his death. He was working on chapter seventeen of a novel entitled *The People*, modeled on the history of the Nez Percé Indian tribe and Chief Joseph's failed attempts to save their lands and his people from annihilation by the rapacious white man. The Jewish protagonist Yozip, later Jozip, is kidnapped by the People and eventually becomes their chief. There are parallels with the implied destruction of the Jewish people in the Holocaust in *The Fixer*. For reasons of self-interest, the majority in both texts consider the powerless group inferior, with both Yakov Bok and Jozip having been chosen as unwilling spokesmen for the oppressed.

Because Malamud considered revision essential, this incomplete, unrevised portion of a novel cannot provide a basis for judging his artistry, although evidence of his craftsmanship is visible even here. To Malamud, since the U.S. government lacks all conscience in its relations with the Indians, only desirous of stealing their land and taking no account of them as human beings, communication between the two is impossible. This is another statement of Malamud's belief in the importance of understanding and compassion between people.

In notes Malamud left for the unwritten four chapters, we see that he planned for Jozip to go to night school, become a lawyer, and try to help the Indians, now his people,

through other means. One can see possible redemption for Jozip but only catastrophe for the People. This ending reminds one of those of *The Tenants* and *God's Grace*, both of which present hope if one searches for it, but perhaps the search is too difficult and the results not entirely satisfactory.

Malamud was not in favor of suffering; however, since it exists, he felt it should be used as an aid to moral growth. His optimism lay in the belief that suffering could lead to the realization of the best that is in a character. Although his work became more pessimistic as time passed, it retained the possibility of affirmation of life for those who were able to see altruism, compassion, and love as the bases of existence.

Edward A. Abramson

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## David Mamet (b. 1947)

Playwright, Screenwriter, Film Director

The Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, screenwriter, and film director David Mamet has claimed, "I have always felt like an outsider," and it is this that his provocative work—with its focus on small-time crooks and disenfranchised

men and women—has long emphasized. His art, however, has been a search for ways to overcome this condition, which originated in "not feeling sufficiently Jewish or American, . . . a problem of reconciliation and self-worth" (Brewer 1993). But, in spite of a renewed commitment to Judaism over the last fifteen years, Mamet's aesthetic (and political) view is still one of danger and betrayal for Jews everywhere.

In a career that now spans more than thirty years, Mamet has played many roles: dramatist, screenwriter, essayist, novelist, teacher, poet, children's author, director, and *artiste provocateur* challenging the status quo. But from the beginning, his work engaged questions of Jewish identity and action. His early play *Marranos* (1975), for example, dramatizes Jewish family life in fourteenth-century Portugal as a family, unmasked as Jews, prepares to flee to Holland. Survival in a non-Jewish world is its concern: "to cope" as a Jew, the grandfather explains to his grandson in the play, "you're going to have to learn to be an actor, and you don't get a rehearsal." It is a lesson Mamet himself has followed, sidestepping persecution through an aggressive persona and often blunt language. In *Marranos* and in later works, like his play *The Old Neighborhood* and his film *Homicide*, Mamet confronts the challenges of antisemitism and anxiety over assimilation. In his prose, however, he never doubts his Jewishness—his newest work, *Five Cities of Refuge* (2003), weekly exchanges on passages from the Torah with a rabbi, reaffirming his commitment to Jewish study and life.

A good part of Mamet's career seemed accidental: "I became a playwright because I was an actor and I started directing because I wasn't a very good actor and I started writing because I was working with very young actors and there was nothing for them to do" (Schvey 2001). But in works like *On Directing Film* (1991) and *True and False: Heresy and Common Sense for the Actor* (1997), his ideas on acting, directing, and writing are vividly clear. And in his promotion of a theater practice he calls practical aesthetics, represented in *A Practical Handbook for Actors* (1986), he builds confidence in "living truthfully under the imaginary circumstances of the play," a method that has shaped the careers of William H. Macy, Joe Mantegna, and Rebecca Pidgeon, among others (Bruder 1986).

A set of dramatic tensions defined Mamet's early life, beginning with the Russian/Polish Jewish heritage of his parents that they were determined to forget, an intense

family life shattered by a bitter divorce, a deep love for his mother despite her volatile temper, and admiration for his father despite his relentless criticism. Further supporting his disrupted family life was “a six-thousand-year-old Jewish tradition of a love of argument,” he once declared (Gross 2001). Artistically, there were similar tensions: a desire to act but failure at acting, a need to direct forcing him to write, remarkable success with works that shock, an astonishing body of work based on obscenities and insults, an established theater career curtailed by a desire to make films.

Throughout his life, however, Mamet has found strategies for overcoming these contradictions, located in his use of language and poetic realism, which he shares with the late work of Eugene O’Neill and the plays of Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. His confident, if at times strident, authorial voice establishes identities that are never contested in his plays, reinforced by his characters’ ceaseless reliance on indecent language. But maintaining the author’s voice comes at the cost of the actor’s ability to invent. This, however, is a Mamet principle, the result of his training with Sanford Meisner at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York, where words on the page, not the actor, are important. The rhythm of dramatic speech, and nothing else, *is* the action.

Mamet’s strongest feature is his unflinching indictment of cultural hypocrisy—in his dramas concerning greed (*American Buffalo*), materialism (*Glengarry Glenn Ross*), political correctness (*Oleanna*), or sexual exploitation (*Speed-the-Plow*). This is reflected with equal clarity in his films. *Homicide*, for example, condemns antisemitism through the hero/detective Robert Gold’s self-discovery of his suppressed Judaism and his determination to solve a hate crime and destroy a neo-Nazi cell. In *Lansky*, a 1999 HBO film starring Richard Dreyfuss, Mamet again explores the ambiguity of Jewish identity, now linked to graft in America, which his latest film, *Spartan* (2004), exploits at the highest and lowest levels of government.

His novel *The Old Religion* (1997) treats similar themes as he challenges the bigotry and antisemitism of the Leo Frank case. Frank, falsely accused in 1913 of the rape and murder of a factory girl in Atlanta, became the focus of American antisemitism. Falsely convicted, he was condemned to death. However, after the governor of Georgia commuted his sentence to life in prison, a mob broke into the prison and lynched him. Presented as an interior

monologue, the novel explores the nature of justice and the effort of Frank to comprehend his distorted world. Mamet told an interviewer that, as a Jew, the subject intensely attracted him, just as racial hatred intensely repelled him. A visit to Israel in 2002 reinforced his belief that Jews should never be ashamed of their history or their identity. In Israel, he pridefully witnessed “*actual Jews*, fighting for their country, against both terror and mis-thought public opinion” (Mamet 2002).

With his fierce language and uncompromising vision of modern life, Mamet has never stopped battling American complacency, presenting social questions as ethical choices, while indicting the moral bankruptcy of his nation. He is a moralist committed, like Ralph Waldo Emerson or Arthur Miller, to shine a laser through the corruption and deceit that have riven America. Judaism is the source of this indignant attitude through its ethical ideals and reliance on advocacy.

Mamet spent his early life in the South Chicago suburb of Flossmoor; at the age of eleven, however, his parents divorced. He continued to live with his mother and sister in the South Shore Highlands area, but when she remarried they moved to the suburb of Olympia Fields. From 1963 to 1965, he lived with his father, a labor lawyer, in the Lincoln Park area of the city. There he attended private school and worked as a busboy at “Second City,” where he had his first exposure to professional theater, although as a child he and his sister played Jewish children on television and radio for a series produced by his uncle for the Chicago Board of Rabbis. He later worked at backstage jobs at Hull House Theatre, which produced plays by Pinter, Brecht, and Albee.

From 1965 to 1969, Mamet attended Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont, a small, experimental liberal arts college that gave no grades and had no requirements. For his senior project, he wrote the “Camel Document,” thirty-four “Second-City”-style blackouts and his first attempt at playwriting. While at Goddard, he also wrote first drafts of *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*, *The Duck Variations*, and *Reunion*. He spent his junior year in New York studying acting at Sanford Meisner’s Neighborhood Playhouse, a formative experience because of Meisner’s belief that acting should be direct and free of emotional memory, which may corrupt a part. “Acting is doing” was a frequent mantra, which Mamet has applied to his own writing and directing.

After graduating from Goddard, Mamet joined a professional theater company based at McGill University in Montreal and performed in Pinter's *The Homecoming*. A variety of theater jobs followed, including stage-managing the off-Broadway hit, *The Fantastiks*. In the summer of 1970, Mamet worked in a real estate office on the North Side of Chicago, an experience that would affect his presentation of salesmen in *Glengarry Glenn Ross*. In September that year, he became an acting instructor at Marlboro College, Vermont, and directed students in an early version of his play *Lakeboat*, about his experiences as a steward on a cargo boat on Lake Michigan. In 1971, he spent a year as Artist-in-Residence at Goddard College, where he taught acting. While there, he formed the St. Nicholas Theatre company with two students, William H. Macy and Steven Schachter, who would perform the first versions of *Duck Variations* and *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*.

Mamet returned to Chicago in 1972 where *Duck Variations* and a monologue, *Litko*, were performed at the newly formed experimental Body Politic Theatre. Chicago would be his home for the next three years. There he expanded his theater company, which soon began to give acting classes to fund productions. *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*, a satire on male behavior, opened in Chicago in 1974 and won the award for Best New Chicago Play. The company then expanded with the return of Macy and Schachter. In 1975, Mamet met Gregory Mosher, a young theater director from the Juilliard School, who would direct fifteen Mamet plays, including the premiere of *American Buffalo*, the first U.S. production of *Glengarry Glen Ross*, and *Speed-the-Plow*.

By 1976, Mamet had moved to New York, resigning his artistic directorship of the St. Nicholas Company. *American Buffalo* went with him, opening first off-Broadway, winning an Obie Award, and then going on to Broadway, where it won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award. While teaching part-time at the Yale School of Drama, he met and then married the actor Lindsay Crouse.

By this time Mamet's plays were attracting international attention. He continued to produce shows in Chicago, becoming associate artistic director and writer-in-residence of the Goodman Theatre in 1978. Mosher had by then become its artistic director. Within three years, Mamet would complete his first screenplay, an adaptation of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* by James M. Cain. The following year, his screenplay for *The Verdict*, starring Paul

Newman, would be nominated for an Academy Award. But he continued his dramatic writing, and in 1983 his startling work on American business, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, had its world premiere at the Royal National Theatre, London. The play would open in New York the following year and run for nearly four hundred performances, winning a Pulitzer Prize. A series of other major plays followed, beginning with his adaptation of *The Cherry Orchard* (1985), *The Shawl* (1985), *Speed-the-Plow* (1988), *Oleanna* (1992), *The Cryptogram* (1994), *The Old Neighborhood* (1997), and *Boston Marriage* (1999).

Mamet was equally active at this time with films, writing screenplays and then writing and directing his own work. Among his most successful were *The Untouchables* (1987), *House of Games* (1987), *Homicide* (1991), *Wag the Dog* (1997), *The Spanish Prisoner* (1997), *The Winslow Boy* (1998), *State and Main* (1999), *The Heist* (2001), and *Spartan* (2004). Multifaceted and driven, Mamet has also published three novels, the most recent being the experimental *Wilson* (2000), a combination of science fiction and history.

Mamet's essays clearly state his ideas on writing and directing. His approach is essentially to cut, and cut again: "I'm always trying to keep it spare," he told a film critic, and this is true of his playwriting and fiction as well (Corliss 1998). Samuel Beckett—and the streets of Chicago—are the likely origins of this attitude. In a short essay, Beckett wrote, "it is not a question of saying what has not been said, but of repeating, as often as possible in the most reduced space, what has already been said" (Beckett 1984). Adhering to this practice, Mamet continues to fascinate audiences, whether in theaters or movie houses, as he forcefully grapples with the contradictions of moral life. Without exaggeration, he once remarked, "if I hadn't found the theatre, it's very likely I would have become a criminal—another profession that subsumes the outsider . . . and rewards the ability to improvise" (Lahr 1997).

Ira Nadel

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## Donald Margulies (b. 1954)

### Playwright

The Pulitzer Prize–winning playwright Donald Margulies's core subject is the richly comic yet profoundly heartaching experience of growing up Jewish in America. "I am a second-generation American Jew," Margulies has declared; "I grew up among immigrant Jews, and I think that really has informed my world view . . . the notion of identity and questions of assimilation and where one fits in the world" (Margulies 2002). In his major plays Margulies revisits the themes that have absorbed him from the beginning, above all the troubled psyche of uprooted, unsettled Jewish artist/sons longing for some connection with the past, confronted by the ache of memory, soothing its pain with the salve of nostalgia.

Significantly, in many of Margulies's plays the "Jewish" Brooklyn of his youth looms as a sacred site of indelible memory and hazy nostalgia. "I was nostalgic for my parents' and Herb Gardner's Brooklyn ever since I was born," he confesses (Margulies 2004). Indeed, for Margulies, to be "from Brooklyn" confers an enabling identity as outsider, an empowering marginality that can seize the potential of the imagined new world *beyond* Brooklyn, beckoning over the bridge, into the city. "The Brooklynite lives on the periphery," Margulies has explained, "tantalizingly within reach of

Something Else, Something Greater, lying just across the river. It is precisely that condition that shapes personalities, fuels ambitions, and creates in some an overwhelming sense of restlessness and yearning" (Margulies 2004).

But beneath the Brooklyn boy's baby-boom nostalgia lurks the looming shadow of bent Jewish fathers—above all Margulies's own father, a Willy Loman–like figure who sold wallpaper for forty years in Pinchik's on Flatbush Avenue. Bob Margulies and his vanished world of unfulfilled dreams loom in the playwright's imagination. In this respect Margulies's play *Brooklyn Boy* (2004) represents the artist/son's way of chanting *kaddish*, a prayer (in the form of a play) offered in memory of a richly remembered world that continues to pull at the author's filial-ethnic allegiances, despite the inevitable chasms wrought by time and self-consciousness. Still *attached* to "Brooklyn," yet driven by an overwhelming desire to escape and a guilty anxiety about leaving, the artist struggles with and against the pull of parochial Jewish identity, haunted, like the famous novelist Eric Weiss in *Brooklyn Boy*, by the embittered Willy Loman–like self he might have been, indeed might have become.

Of course, Margulies is not alone in seizing the explosive potential of Jewish filiality, its fertile (if raw) mix of contradiction, ambivalence, comedy, and rage. Think of Henry Roth's harrowing *Call It Sleep* (1934), or Philip Roth's "memoirs," *The Facts* (1988) and *Patrimony* (1991), or his various "Zuckerman" novels. Margulies has acknowledged the crucial influence of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949) in shaping his own often wickedly satirical imagination of middle-class Jewish life. "We aren't fancy people," the dream-obsessed mother in *The Loman Family Picnic* (1989) explains to her two sons. "We are middle-middle class, smack in the middle." In this respect Margulies's career amounts to an ongoing *midrash* (commentary) on *Death of a Salesman*, one of the foundational texts of American dreaming.

In Margulies's theater, characters are consumed with a Willy Loman–like restlessness and yearning—some even *after* they're dead, like Shirley in *What's Wrong with This Picture?* (1985; revived on Broadway in 1994), an irrepressible Jewish mother who returns, via the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, from the grave at the end of *shiva* to reclaim her domestic identity. She immediately resumes vacuuming in Flatbush, much to the bewildered delight of her grieving family.

Perhaps most brilliantly, Willy's archetypal shadow hovers fantastically over *The Loman Family Picnic*, haunting the family in their newly built "high-rise ghetto" in an alrightnik Brooklyn neighborhood ("this is modern luxury," declares Doris, the mother, without irony). Above all, Willy's troubled spirit inhabits the internally raging soul of the exhausted paint-salesman father worried about the emotional and financial costs of throwing a fancy bar mitzvah party for his son. "I go through every day with my eyes shut tight and holding my breath, till the day is over and I can come home. To what?" laments the hapless, unappreciated father, desperate that *some* attention be paid. As a creative way of coping (really dreaming), the younger "Loman" son Mitchell (the "Happy" role in *Salesman?*) conjures an inspired musical version of the dysfunctional Lomans imagined on a picnic, with the bar mitzvah boy Stewie singing a lyric while performing a soft shoe, "Dad's a little weird,/ He's in a daze./ Could it be he's going nuts?/ Or is it just a phase?"

In his later drama Margulies continues to assign "Brooklyn" even more explanatory power. In perhaps his most important play, *Sight Unseen* (1991), the globe-trotting celebrity artist Jonathan Waxman, a long way from Flatbush, seeks to fathom his current loss of creative energy (is his spiritual-aesthetic inertia also a phase, or does its source lay deeper, in his Brooklyn past?) by reconnecting with his original muse, a *shiksa* goddess/model Patricia, whose "dangerous" presence inspired him years ago, as an unknown painter still in art school. Jonathan has also just lost his father and is expecting his first child with his gentile wife; his pilgrimage to Patricia, living an ascetic life in the bleak English countryside, appears like an act of mourning, a way of sitting shiva for his own dying, spiritually lost soul.

In *Sight Unseen's* poignant last vignette—in effect the narrative *beginning* of their fateful relationship—we witness the comic-erotic fumbblings of a still innocent Jonathan, Margulies's gently satirical portrait of the provincial artist as young man (a self-portrait? Margulies studied art before he turned to playwriting). Startled by her unsettling sexual invitation, Jonathan deploys "Brooklyn" as a defense against the *shiksa* threat, the implied transgression *embodied* by Patricia. In a voice that shifts from honest confession to the "spritz" of an increasingly inspired comic's stand-up routine, Jonathan explains how, at least in *his* psychic universe (Jewish) geography determines character:

Look, this is hard for me. It's a major thing, you know, where I come from. . . . You got to remember I come from Brooklyn. People where I come from, they don't travel very far, let alone intermarry. They've still got this ghetto mentality: safety in numbers and stay put, no matter what. It's always, "How'm I gonna get there?" No, really. "How'm I gonna get there? and How'm I gonna get home?" "It'll be late, it'll be dark, it'll get cold, I'll get sick, why bother? I'm staying home." This is the attitude about the world I grew up with. It's a miracle I ever left the house!

At the "end" of *Sight Unseen* we witness the birth of Jonathan Waxman, the driven, self-consciously provocative artist he will later become: *from* middle-class Brooklyn by birth, but no longer (we presume) *of* middlebrow Brooklyn in imagination. But has he ever truly escaped that provincial nest? *Sight Unseen* ultimately refuses to resolve Waxman's ethnic-filial dilemma. He remains blind to his own (eventual) failures of insight and empathy, immobilized by unresolved—because uncompleted—mourning. Patricia's authentic gesture of love, deep into their relationship, despite its inappropriate timing (appearing uninvited at the end of the son's sitting shiva for his mother, she offers Jonathan sexual gratification in his childhood bedroom, an act that shocks him and results in his brutal rejection), ultimately remains "unseen," unfelt. The costs of Waxman's artistic success, Margulies seems to feel, are measured in longing and bereavement.

If in Margulies's view *Sight Unseen* "was a play about leaving Brooklyn," then *Brooklyn Boy* "would be a play about looking back" (Margulies 2004). And indeed in this play Margulies's mode is retrospective, its mood elegiac. It follows Eric Weiss (the ethnic shape-shifter/escape artist Harry Houdini's real name was Ehrich Weiss), a relatively unknown forty-something writer who has finally achieved national recognition by writing an autobiographically inflected novel titled (what else?) *Brooklyn Boy*, through a series of complicated encounters with his deep past: a dying father still biting critical of virtually everything the son has accomplished; a childhood friend, now religiously observant, who feels both trapped, yet identified, by the old neighborhood; a bitter, soon-to-be ex-wife who needs to banish him from sight.

In presenting such intimate conversations, *Brooklyn Boy* feels like Margulies's most personal play by far; we overhear the flow of resentment, the release of buried hurt

that Eric's presence tends to dislodge in others. At the same time, with each emotionally draining ordeal by dialogue, we witness the unearthing of Eric's archaic Jewish self: the inside narrative of Rickie, the would-be nice Jewish boy who sensed the need to break away, to flee the ethnic nest to realize his literary-intellectual ambitions. Keeping faith with *Death of a Salesman*, Margulies allows Ira Zimmer, Rickie's dissatisfied, now observant boyhood friend to voice the cosmic Willy Loman question in "Brooklyn Boy:" "I had potential," Ira laments to his celebrity friend. "How did you do it?"

If Margulies casts Jonathan Waxman as a young Jewish artist who *molds* himself in unsavory ways to suit fashionable critical taste in a quest for wealth and notoriety, Eric Weiss mines memories of 1960s Brooklyn, drawing on the old neighborhood. In apparent response to his audience's needy nostalgia, the novel reaches number eleven on the *New York Times* best-seller list. Characteristically, Eric's emotionally stingy father Manny belittles the son's achievement, remarking that his son is lucky the "list" goes beyond ten. Who knew? Whatever archaic grievances have come between them, watching Eric peel an orange and feed its sections to his very sick father, we observe their unspoken but palpable love. Thus, despite all the words (explanations, recriminations, renunciations), *Brooklyn Boy* conveys its depth of affect through silent but evocative gesture.

As for Brooklyn as embracing locale, it can only nourish the seething Jewish soul so much; ultimately, as Philip Roth's alter ego Jewish son Nathan Zuckerman well knows, the self-conscious Jewish artist, in flight from smothering middle-class enclaves, needs to locate his imagination in the creatively enabling (if ethnically rootless) space of filial alienation.

In this respect Margulies's alter ego is clearly a Brooklyn cousin to Roth's Newark-born and -raised Zuckerman who, in *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983), mourns the loss of his only subject, the angst-ridden, but now exhausted story of Jewish fathers and sons: "No new Newark was going to spring up again for Zuckerman, not like the first one: no fathers like those pioneering Jewish fathers bursting with taboos, no sons like their sons boiling with temptations, no loyal ties, no ambitions, no rebellions, no capitulations, no clashes quite so convulsive again. . . . Everything that galvanized him had been extinguished, leaving nothing unmistakably his and nobody else's to claim, exploit, enlarge, and reconstruct" (Roth 1985).

In the mode of Philip Roth, *Brooklyn Boy* maps in deeply personal ways the complex emotional landscape of contemporary Jewish American experience, exploring our own mournful nostalgia for the old neighborhoods, our need to settle with the fathers. In the end, Eric achieves a spiritual breakthrough. Having fled "Brooklyn," he is now able to mourn: for his father, perhaps for himself. In *Brooklyn Boy* Margulies enacts a process of uncompleted mourning, chanting, with unfeigned love and empathy, *kaddish* for a lost soul and for an almost forgotten, now mythic territory.

Donald Weber

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## Arthur Miller (1915–2005)

### Playwright

Born to a Jewish family in New York City in 1915, Arthur Asher Miller is one of the greatest American playwrights and a preeminent dramatist worldwide. When his father's clothing business declined during the Depression, the family moved to Brooklyn, where he spent his youth before making his way to the University of Michigan in 1934, after being rejected the year before. His first undergraduate play, a social drama entitled *No Villain*, won the Avery Hopwood Award at Michigan in 1936, as did his second play, *Honors at Dawn*, in 1937. After graduating in 1938, he moved to New York and wrote scripts for the Federal Theatre Project and radio plays for CBS and NBC. In 1941 he married Mary Grace Slattery, and subsequently they had two children: Jane (1944) and Robert (1947). Before begin-



Arthur Miller, major American playwright. (Hulton/Getty Images)

ning his career on the New York stage, he wrote a never-staged play, *The Golden Years*, ostensibly about the historic encounter between Montezuma and Cortez, but essentially a commentary on the failure of the West to challenge the rise of Hitler. He continued to write radio plays, authored a screenplay, *The Story of GI Joe*, and a book about army life, *Situation Normal*.

When his first Broadway production, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, closed after four performances in 1944, he contemplated not writing again for the stage and authored a novel about antisemitism, *Focus*. When he decided to try the stage one more time, *All My Sons* (1947) won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award and established Miller's place as a major American dramatist. In it, as in the whole body of his works, Miller addresses moral and ethical issues and examines the nature of American culture. Influenced by Greek tragedy and the dramas of Henrik Ibsen, the play explores the tragic consequences suffered by a parts manufacturer, Joe Keller, who has shipped faulty airplane parts to be used by the Army in the Pacific. Not only does he endanger the lives of American pilots, but, driven by an unrelenting guilt, he destroys his

own family, causing the suicide of his son, a pilot who blames his father for his comrades' deaths.

In this and in the major plays to follow in his long career, Miller explores the consequences of moral choices, both in the public and private arenas. Often speaking in the voice of an Old Testament prophet, he has been a voice of conscience on the American stage for some sixty years. He insists that there are inevitably consequences to choices, that only confrontation with the past can forge the hope for a meaningful future, that one must assume personal responsibility in a world seemingly bereft of a moral center.

Generally considered his greatest play, *Death of a Salesman* was produced in 1949 and won the Pulitzer Prize and Miller's second New York Drama Critics' Circle Award. Often called the quintessential American tragedy, the play from its opening has generated a lively debate about the nature of modern tragedy and, in particular, the suitability of its protagonist, Willy Loman, "the common man," as tragic hero. Compromised by counterclaims on him as a "salesman," the personification of the American dream of success, and as a father and family man, Willy ironically dies trying to sell himself by committing suicide to assure his elder son Biff's success. The part of Willy Loman has been interpreted variously in highly successful performances from Lee J. Cobb's initial touchstone depiction of a monumentally self-deluded character lost in a world of harsh reality, to Dustin Hoffman's feisty shrimp of a figure, a near adolescent drained of mythic dimension but yet a fierce fighter against an ever-widening doom, to Brian Dennehy's 1999 Tony Award-winning depiction of a towering figure casting a huge shadow across the stage, and yet a vulnerable child cowering with hands defensively folded over his head.

Miller's next major work, *The Crucible*, reflected his ever-growing involvement in social and political concerns. A direct attack on an expanding McCarthyism on the American political front, the play is set during the Salem witch trials and recounts the tragic death of an unwilling hero, John Proctor, who ultimately chooses to sacrifice his life rather than violate his integrity. The play is set in a world, the author declared, "I felt strangely at home with" because it reflects "the same fierce idealism, devotion to God, tendency to legislate reductiveness . . . [and] longings for the pure and intellectually elegant argument" Miller found in his Jewish upbringing (*Timebends: A Life* 1987).

Just three years after it appeared on Broadway, Miller refused to name names when he himself was forced to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). His most performed play, *The Crucible*, has been frequently staged in the United States and across the globe.

In the same year he appeared before HUAC (1956), Miller's *A View from the Bridge* opened successfully in London, after receiving mixed reviews as a one-act play (produced along with *A Memory of Two Mondays*) at its opening in New York the year before. Originally a verse drama, the more prosaic two-act revised text intensifies quintessential Miller themes: the quest for identity, the conflict between self and society, the loss of innocence, betrayal. Set in the Red Hook district of Brooklyn where Miller grew up, the play depicts the longshoreman Eddie Carbone's violation of community values when his unacknowledged incestuous love for his niece Catherine leads him to betray her illegal immigrant lover to the authorities. Like the other early plays, *View* has generated critical debates on the nature of tragedy, but it has remained among Miller's most durable works.

After his divorce from Mary Slattery and subsequent marriage to screen goddess Marilyn Monroe in 1956, Miller did not stage a new play until *After the Fall* opened in 1964. Before that, he wrote the screenplay *The Misfits* for Marilyn Monroe in a futile effort to save their marriage. After Miller's divorce from Monroe, he married the well-known Austrian photographer Inge Morath in 1962. Their daughter Rebecca was born later in the same year. When *After the Fall* opened two years later, it generated vociferous attacks by some critics who considered it an attempt by Miller to exonerate himself from guilt in the failed relationship with Monroe, and an untoward depiction of her in the guise of the protagonist Quentin's suicidal second wife Maggie. Other critics have come to Miller's defense, but the play has remained under the shadow of the Monroe legend. Some of Miller's critics have particularly objected to his use of the Holocaust as a stage background in the play in relation to what they consider a sordid private affair, but others have argued that the play successfully integrates the enormity of the historical tragedy and the theme of self-betrayal. The play remains his most controversial work.

Miller also explored the plight of Jews in World War II in a play produced the same year, *Incident at Vichy*, which examines the destiny of nine men and a boy held by Nazi

authorities in Vichy as suspected Jews. Miller had visited the Mauthausen death camp in 1964 and later the same year covered the Nazi trials in Frankfurt for the *New York Herald Tribune*. Based on a true story, the tautly constructed one-act play moves to its dramatic conclusion when the Catholic nobleman Von Berg gives up his papers to save his fellow detainee Leduc, a Jew. As in many of Miller's texts, the dialogue examines the universality of guilt and difficult moral and ethical issues in the near context of a trial.

*Incident* was followed by *The Price* in 1968, which includes one of Miller's best drawn characters, the Jewish Russian furniture dealer, Gregory Solomon. The play puts two brothers meeting to dispose of their deceased father's goods in a claustrophobic attic crammed with ten rooms' worth of furniture, a symbol of lives lived and lost, of choices made and suffered. A remarkable survivor of ninety years, Solomon provides the moral perspective in the play. Miller has said of him that he "has to be Jewish, for one thing because of the theme of survival, of a kind of acceptance of life" that "seemed to me to point directly to the Jewish experience through centuries of oppression" (Roudané 1987).

Miller's dramas of the 1970s and 1980s include a wide range of experimental texts that continue to treat his major themes and reflect his constant involvement in political and social causes. After failing in an attempt to write a fable, *Creation of the World and Other Business* (1972), which was later turned unsuccessfully into a musical entitled *Up from Paradise*, Miller wrote *The Archbishop's Ceiling* (1977), in part a reflection of his service as president of PEN, the international writers' association, from 1965 to 1969, when he directly supported dissident writers worldwide. Set in an East European country, it takes place under a likely bugged ceiling at the former archbishop's palace and probes the concept of causality and moral certainty as a visiting American writer returns after a four-year absence for an ostensibly friendly visit with former colleagues. The drama signals Miller's growing postmodernism, despite his continued commitment to the concept of moral choice and responsibility.

This was followed by the largely autobiographical *The American Clock* (1980), a panoramic work involving a wide range of characters, but mainly tracing the fate of a Jewish family during the Depression. It portrays the personal and public consequences of the economic collapse in tragic and

comic form, which Miller saw as not unlike the tradition of Yiddish vaudeville, a juxtaposition of the epic and the private, the comic and the tragic.

In the same year Miller adapted for television Fania Fenelon's autobiography *Playing for Time*. It dramatizes Fenelon's experiences as a singer with the women's orchestra at the infamous Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. Once again confronting the moral complexities of guilt and innocence, the teleplay depicts the human capacity for brutishness and murder as well as for moral restoration.

Miller's plays written during the 1980s consisted of four one-acts published as pairs of plays in two collections: *Two-Way Mirror* and *Danger: Memory!* In these often subtle works, he wrestles with the complexities, paradoxes, and ironies commonly expressed in postmodern literature without betraying his long-held optimism about the human condition. They partly signal Miller's growing sense of looking back over a long career and assessing the validity of his own canon. Like the plays of the 1990s, they are a kind of summing up of his own work.

*The Ride Down Mount Morgan* (1991), *The Last Yankee* (1992), and *Mr. Peters' Connections* (2000) each expresses Miller's long-stated themes, but also reveals a growing moral uncertainty, a thin line between truth and illusion, and a sustained ambiguity. *Ride*, Miller said, reflects the ethos of the Reagan years as its protagonist, Lyman Felt, embodies an unabashed self-gratification even as he undergoes a kind of self-trial on his hospital bed after crashing his car on Mount Morgan. The play embodies the dialectical forces in his life, embodied by his two wives' meeting for the first time at his bed. His bigamy exposed, he struggles with the demanding forces of memory. Trying to evade guilt, he denies closure, self-absorbed in the prison of his own psyche.

*The Last Yankee* similarly balances humor and the poignantly tragic, as Leroy Hamilton faces his past relationship with his wife as he visits her at a mental hospital in New England. A carpenter and descendant of Alexander Hamilton, he meets an older businessman in the waiting room as they visit their hospitalized wives. Pitting American materialism against the need for human and spiritual values, the play exposes characters caught up in the same specious mythology that entraps Willy Loman and Joe Keller in Miller's early plays. Having faced his own culpability, Leroy, like Quentin in *After the Fall*, comes to em-

brace a world "after the fall" and moves to a hopeful but uncertain world.

The first Miller play in the new millennium, *Mr. Peters' Connections*, is in some ways similar to *The Last Yankee* and *The Ride Down Mount Morgan*, though it is more postmodern in its exploration of the fine line between truth and illusion and its dream-like nature. It, too, addresses the essential Miller themes—the persistence of memory, the collapse of the American dream, betrayal and guilt, the nexus of the social and the personal. The elderly Mr. Peters tries to discover some residue of meaning in the borderland between dreaming and waking, life and death. Yet even in this most absurdist of his plays, Miller retains a residue of hope as Mr. Peters ends the play seeking some "connection," some union with another person as he tells his daughter Rose, "I love you, darling. I wonder . . . could that be the subject!"

In his other major 1990s play, *Broken Glass* (1994), Miller returns to the Holocaust as theme and once again juxtaposes private and corporate evil. In it Phillip Gellburg must confront his denial of his own Jewishness when his wife Sylvia experiences an unexplained paralysis upon hearing the news of Nazi atrocities during *Kristallnacht*. The paralysis symbolizes the spiritual and moral impotency that arrests all the characters and exposes the web of deceit and guilt that has bound the Gellburgs in a long and painful marriage. The drama won the Olivier award as best new play in London, even though, like all Miller's later works, it generated a mixed critical response, especially among New York critics. As Christopher Bigsby has reminded us, Miller "addressed the Holocaust to an extent that no other American dramatist would do" (Bigsby 2005).

Even in his last performed play, *Resurrection Blues* (2002), a stinging political satire set in a South American country, and *Finishing the Picture* (2004), Miller continued his penetrating analysis of the materialistic and exploitive nature of Western culture. Though his later texts appear more ambivalent in their resolve at times and suggest that an existential awareness may be the best we can hope for, Miller never wavers in his conviction that the best hope for redemption resides in the acceptance of responsibility for choice, a capacity that depends in large measure on the acceptance of guilt as the basis for moral regeneration. Often deeply rooted in the Jewish experience, his plays, like his political and theater essays, his

short stories, his novel *Focus*, his wide-ranging interviews—as well as his involvement in political causes and defense of victims of political and legal abuse for all of his career—give testimony to his strong and abiding moral consciousness and assure his place as one of the truly major American writers of the twentieth century.

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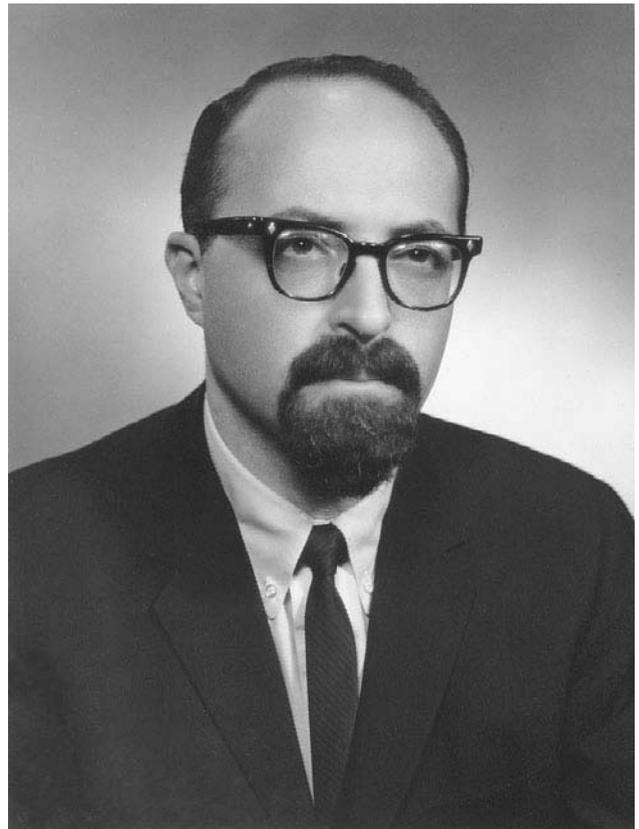
## Chaim Potok (1929–2002)

Novelist, Essayist, Author of Historical Works

Chaim Potok's reputation as an American Jewish writer is firmly established. In fiction and nonfiction he presents the importance of Judaism and religious belief in the modern world while also depicting the difficulties suffered by inquisitive protagonists attached to Jewish Orthodoxy. A Conservative rabbi who, unlike many American Jewish authors, has a deep understanding of Judaism and Jewish culture, he is best known for novels that present con-

frontations between Jewish and non-Jewish worlds. He referred to these as “core-to-core confrontations” between the Jewish subculture and the attractive “umbrella culture” of the wider secular society. These confrontations created characters who had insights into more than one culture but felt completely at home in no single one, a “between person” in Potok's term. In addition, many of his protagonists suffer confrontations within Judaism itself between differing interpretations of the faith. Desirous of taking account of the latest discoveries and insights of anthropologists, linguists, and biblical scholars, he desired a faith that was inclusive enough to permit new ideas. The difficulty of reconciling religious orthodoxy to the modern world is a central problem for many of his protagonists.

In *The Chosen* (1967), his first novel, two extremely intelligent adolescents, one having a photographic memory, set a pattern for many of his fictional child prodigies. The ideologies of Hasidic and Orthodox Judaism provide the bases for the novel's conflicts. Reb Saunders, Danny's father, leader of a Hasidic (ultra-Orthodox) group, and



Chaim Potok, novelist. (American Jewish Archives)

David Malter, Reuven's father, an Orthodox, highly moral, but non-Hasidic teacher of Judaism, represent the poles of opinion that test their sons' friendship. It is the quality of the characterizations that makes the novel so effective, with Potok managing to make interesting, decent people involved in important yet often parochial issues, without a stress on physical violence or sexuality.

Danny and Reuven's friendship across a sectarian divide humanizes the more esoteric aspects of the conflict between their fathers: a repressive or more liberal interpretation of Jewish law; religious, or political and emotional Zionism; reading only the Talmud or valuing secular books as well. The friendship is threatened by Reb Saunders's rigidity and insularity, and by Danny's being trapped in the seemingly non-negotiable position of his father's heir as communal leader. David Malter feels it his duty to suggest secular books to Danny that will feed his intense desire to learn about more than Talmud, although Danny finds that he can use talmudic methods to decipher Freud's writings. Danny must cope with being raised in silence, a device his father believes will give him a suffering soul to balance his intellect. These differences provide important conflicts in the novel, which, despite its highly Jewish content, was on the best-seller list for thirty-eight weeks. In the end Potok's optimism gives both boys a limitless future and supports the ideal of the American Dream that hard work will lead to success.

The novel captures the Jewish love of education, in that both boys and their fathers are involved in learning, but with moral and spiritual overtones. The fathers use different methods of teaching, and their sons move in different directions, but all remain deeply attached to Judaism, which they believe to be relevant and give meaning to their world. Unlike Hasidism, the Malter's form of Orthodoxy finds more joy and emotion in the faith—ironic, given Hasidism's beginnings. Although both boys are interested in aspects of the world beyond their narrow group, neither seems to have any of the “normal” interests of American male teenagers: sports, popular music, girls. They are studious and moral, with Danny's rebellion pivoting around his desire to become a psychologist rather than a *tzaddik* (inspired religious leader) like his father, hardly a form of juvenile delinquency. In addition to adults, the novel has been popular with both Jewish and non-Jewish teenagers, perhaps tapping into a vein of adolescent idealism or a desire for se-

curity in the presentation of worlds that, although restrictive, provide stability and surety.

*The Promise* (1969) continues the lives of Danny and Reuven, dramatizing the results of decisions made in *The Chosen*, though stylistically this sequel is not as effective. With Danny studying for his doctorate in psychology and Reuven for rabbinical ordination, the novel is rich in learning and teachers, and contains themes similar to those in *The Chosen*: characters committed to different interpretations of Judaism and issues of tolerance and fanaticism. Potok seems to provide some justification for Danny's having been raised in silence, as using this questionable method is effective in treating his patient, Michael Gordon. Potok shows how the lives of the three boys have been shaped by religious issues, and through this he humanizes what might be rather dry, intellectual matters.

The battles between very liberal (Abraham Gordon) and archconservative (Rav Kalman) interpretations of the tradition provide the basis for character development with, as in *The Chosen*, the latter approach being seen to harm decent people due to its rigidity. However, the conservatives are not presented as villains, but as holding their views for deeply felt reasons. David Malter, a minor character here, again takes the humanistic position, a bastion of rather hard-to-believe tolerance, given the attacks on him for his liberal approach to understanding the Talmud and his being driven from his school by ultra-Orthodox newcomers. The tensions in the novel revolve around the religious ideas of the teachers and their level of tolerance for the ideas of others, Potok stressing the need for forbearance and sufferance.

The protagonist of Potok's third novel, Asher Lev, appears in two novels almost twenty years apart. *My Name Is Asher Lev* (1972) is Potok's most accomplished novel, particularly in relation to style. Asher is another prodigy, and Potok depicts a conflict with his Hasidic world, which interprets the second commandment's restriction on worship of graven images as precluding any artistic creation. Asher's characterization stresses his inability to cease drawing and painting despite his father's and community's disapproval. This irreconcilability of art and Jewish Orthodoxy is a central theme of the novel, as Asher is forced into the world of Christian art, nudes, and secular values on account of the lack of a Jewish artistic tradition.

Asher's obsession with painting also has the effect of his putting his own needs before those of the Jewish

community, while Judaism places greater stress on the survival of the Jewish people, with whom God made a covenant, than on the individual, valued as individuals are. Asher resists pressures from his father, who travels the world to create yeshivas (schools of Jewish higher learning), and from the rebbe (the communal spiritual leader), who tries to harness his gift for the service of the community, and refuses to sacrifice his painting for his people. Thus, his father is not completely incorrect when he tells Asher that adhering to the demands of his artistic gift will lead him to selfishness. However, as in the previous novels, Potok cannot bring himself to cut off his protagonist from his religious roots, and so transports him to a more sympathetic Jewish community in Paris. There, it is implied, he will be able to paint and remain a practicing Jew and a member of the Ladover Hasidic community.

Potok returned to his exiled artist in *The Gift of Asher Lev* (1990). Still living in France, Asher is now a famous artist but in an arid period when his creativity has deserted him. Moreover, he is not at ease with himself, and the novel traces his meditations on his spiritual needs and the nature of artistic creativity. With the death of his uncle, he returns to visit the Brooklyn world that he had to leave when an adolescent and is confronted by his legacy. Potok is adept at showing the slow process of the renewal of creativity in Asher, who is made whole through “giving” his son Avrumel to the rebbe, his father, and the Ladover community to become the Hasid he could not. It is as though Potok needed to “tie up loose ends,” having originally allowed Asher to escape that world. As in the earlier novel, there is an impressive use of the language of art, as Asher views the world through color, shape, and texture.

The protagonist of *In the Beginning* (1975) is another very bright child and adolescent, who becomes a biblical scholar to defend the Jewish people from the denigrations of what came to be called “the higher biblical criticism,” largely developed by non-Jews. Set in the 1930s and 1940s during a rise in antisemitism in Europe and America, the novel depicts David Lurie’s attempts to overcome attacks by a local antisemite, while providing a historical backdrop through his father’s battles against Jew-hatred in Poland during World War I and his hatred of most gentiles. Potok again describes intra-Jewish hostilities, as David is ostracized by his fellow yeshiva students and by his parents because, in order to analyze the Bible using the new largely

German scientific criticism, he will have to study with non-Jews and Jews who do not observe the commandments. He decides to fight antisemitism in his own way. Potok has frequently presented battles with authority figures seen through literal and symbolic father–son motifs. David’s parallel those of Danny in *The Chosen*, Reuven in *The Promise*, and Asher, each of whom had to fight to believe in ideas other than those held by the majority of their communities. Whereas Reuven had his father’s support, David, like Danny and Asher, is almost completely on his own. While David has wrestled with his conscience and loves the Torah, his brother Alex has quietly given up Orthodox belief but continues its practice while still living at home. Thus Potok sets forth the need for a modern appeal of the Bible for a new generation who may see it as only a “bunch of Sunday school stories.”

Potok wrote two novels based on his experiences as an Army chaplain during the Korean War. *The Book of Lights* (1981) is impressive in its writing and scope, which ranges from kabbalah (Jewish mysticism), to cultural issues concerning Korea (a country that has never heard of Judaism), to moral issues surrounding the atom bomb. The “lights” refer to those of the *En-Sof* and *Sefiroth* of kabbalistic lore, and to those of the atom bomb. The two adult protagonists are rabbis, one a budding kabbalist, the other a physicist who has rejected science for religion because of the “death light” science has created. Important moral conflicts revolve about the poles of Judaism/paganism and religion/science. His protagonists are still teachers and students, but they engage in adult sexual thoughts and activities befitting grown men, a first for Potok. *I Am the Clay* (1992) is Potok’s first and only novel in which Jews barely appear at all, Potok seemingly wishing to try to write a novel without his main ethnic group. The stress is on the fortitude of an old Korean couple fleeing the ravages of war. Their compassion is brought forth by a wounded boy discovered in a ditch, and Potok shows marked ability to create empathy in readers. While it is not as effective as his “Jewish” novels, largely because he cannot present his depth of knowledge concerning Judaism, he does manage to elicit the power of compassion within a commendable portrayal of the horror of war.

In *Davita’s Harp* (1985), Potok presents his first female protagonist, who recalls the events and impressions of her life between the ages of roughly eight and fourteen, along with her attempts to achieve selfhood and to cope with life’s disasters. Ilana Davita’s mother is Jewish, her father

Christian, both being nonbelievers whose faith lies in communism. Potok sensitively dramatizes Davita, who is extremely intelligent and sensitive, much like Potok's previous young protagonists. Set between 1936 and 1942, he depicts her coping with her parents' ostracism and evictions due to communist activities; her awareness of fascism; the Spanish Civil War, in which her father dies; the beginnings of World War II; and the Nazi–Soviet Pact, which destroys her mother's idealism. In addition to world events, always present in Potok's novels, she must cope with being a very bright girl in an Orthodox Jewish school, who is denied the Akiva Award for the highest scholastic achievement because she is not a boy. Potok is highly critical of Orthodox Judaism, which, as previously, is presented as narrow and unquestioning, and he uses the widest range of beliefs thus far in his novels: Orthodox Judaism, Christianity, communism, and a type of humanism. One feels that Davita will move even further away from Orthodoxy than did Asher Lev, perhaps opting for the spiritual truths of literature.

In *Old Men at Midnight* (2001), Davita reappears as Davita Dinn in a trilogy of novellas. In "The Ark Builder" we find her seventeen, an English tutor for a sixteen-year-old Auschwitz survivor. Through his drawings, she brings out the repressed Noah Stremim, who relates the story of his inspiration, a builder of synagogue arks in his Polish village who commits suicide when the Nazis invade. "The War Doctor" sees Ilana Davita, now a teaching assistant in Russian studies at Columbia University, convincing a former Jewish KGB (Russian Secret Police) officer to relate his experiences during the revolution and Stalinist years. Leon Shertov is humanized by his inability to save the life of a Jewish doctor who had saved him. In "The Trope Teacher" we find Ilana, now a famous novelist, forcing out the stories of an old and famous military historian. She teaches him how to accept and so recall the important elements of his life, and he comes to realize the central importance of the man who taught him how to chant the Torah. In all three novellas, we see how the lives of individuals have been deeply changed by exposure to one person, and how Davita has become sensitized to human problems.

Best known as a novelist, Potok has also written short stories, plays, children's books, essays, and other nonfiction. Noteworthy are two historical works: *Wanderings: Chaim Potok's History of the Jews* (1978) and *The Gates of November: Chronicles of the Slepak Family* (1999). In *Wan-*

*derings* he is successful in using a storyteller's skill to dramatize the history of the Jews through scholarly and popular styles, a difficult balance to achieve. He depicts the effect on Judaism of the different cultures to which Jews have been exposed and shows how Judaism has affected them. He takes a nonfundamentalist approach to the development of the Hebrew Bible and treats pagan and other non-Jewish cultures with great understanding. His treatment of historical figures has a novelist's touch that humanizes them so that, for example, Moses and Jesus are seen as real people, with Potok speculating what they may have felt or thought in particular situations. Like his fictional characters—Danny Saunders, Reuven Malter, and David Lurie—Potok sees the religious sages interpreting and editing the Talmud to meet changing circumstances or make sense of a passage. Thus, attitudes that were first expressed in the novels appear again in a historical context in *Wanderings*—fiction and nonfiction supporting each other. In *The Gates of November* Potok effectively presents the true story of the Jewish Slepak family, whose members included a high-ranking communist officer and a son who was a "refusenik," disagreeing with everything his father believed. As in *Wanderings*, real people dramatize historical events. In its variety and insights, Potok's body of work provides a unique chronicle of American Jewish life.

Edward A. Abramson

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## Morris Rosenfeld (1862–1923)

### Yiddish Proletarian Poet

Morris Rosenfeld (Moyshe-Yankev Alter) was born on December 28, 1862, in Buksha, Poland, about a hundred miles southwest of Vilna, to a family of fishermen. His parents relocated to Warsaw, where Rosenfeld was sent to a *cheder* (a traditional Jewish school). In 1880 he married Rebecca Bessie Yavorosky and moved to Amsterdam, where he was a diamond grinder. After six months they returned home but soon immigrated to London. The couple lived there several years in great poverty, while Rosenfeld was a tailor. He joined the Yiddish anarchist Brenner Street Club and wrote proletarian poems in Yiddish. However, the London anarchist Yiddish weekly *Arbayter fraynd* (*Worker's Friend*) did not publish them.

In 1886 Rosenfeld moved to New York where he continued to work in sweatshops, first as a baster and later a presser. He became active in the labor movement and on December 17, 1886, published his first Yiddish poem, "Dos yor 1886" ("The Year 1886"), about the Haymarket anarchists, in the *Yidishe folksaytung* (*Yiddish People's Newspaper*). He started publishing regularly in *Arbayter fraynd* as well. When the socialist weekly *Arbayter tsaytung* (*Worker's Newspaper*) began in 1890, Rosenfeld became its official poet. He published poems there almost every week, describing the harsh working conditions and oppression of the sweatshop.

In 1888, Rosenfeld published his first collection of proletarian poems, *Di gloke* (*The Bell*). Later, however, feeling the work did not meet his own poetic standards, he bought and destroyed all obtainable copies of the book. His second book, *Di blumen kete* (*The Flower Wreath*, 1890), contains better poetry. The quality of the language,

and images in his work continued to improve, as demonstrated in his third collection of poems, *Das lider bukh* (*The Book of Songs*, 1897). His reputation spread to non-Yiddish readers after Leo Wiener, a Harvard University professor of Slavic languages, translated this book—in prose form—into English as *Songs from the Ghetto* (1898). Wiener thought highly of Rosenfeld's poetry, comparing it to Dante's *Inferno*. In 1898, Rosenfeld started giving readings of his poems in English in universities, first at Harvard, then at the University of Chicago (1890), and at Wellesley and Radcliffe Colleges (1902). He also recited or even sang his poems in gatherings, since he had a pleasant tenor voice. In 1890 he wrote theater reviews and several plays for the *Folks advokat* (*The People's Advocate*). His historic drama *Der letster kohen godl* (*The Last High Priest*) was performed in New York, but with little success. He always hoped to make enough money from his tours and writing to quit working in sweatshops, but that was never possible.

In the 1890s Rosenfeld began an editing career. In 1892 he co-edited *Di zun* (*The Sun*), though it only lasted through June and July. In 1894, he co-edited the satirical weekly *Der ashmeday* (*Asmodeus*, the king of demons). In 1900 he co-published *Der pinkes* (*The Book of Records*), a magazine on literature, history, and current issues. By then Rosenfeld had become an enthusiastic Zionist, and in 1900 was a delegate to the fourth Zionist Congress in London.

During the next decade he published in various Yiddish papers, among them the anarchist weekly *Di varhayt* (*The Truth*), *Der morgenshtern* (*The Morningstar*), and the daily *Di idishe velt* (*The Jewish World*). His popularity grew, his poems impressing Yiddish-speaking workers, who sang those that were put to music, in factories, sweatshops, and mass meetings. Yet Rosenfeld barely made a living as a writer or a presser.

In 1905, he moved on to edit the daily *New Yorker Morgenblat* (*Morning Paper*), a job that again lasted only several months. That year Rosenfeld's son Joseph, for whom he wrote one of his most beloved poems, "Mayn yingele" ("My Little Son"), died at fifteen. It was believed at the time that Rosenfeld's paralytic stroke and near-blindness in 1907 resulted partly from poor health due to poverty, but mostly from grief over losing Joseph. After recovering, he published biographies of Heinrich Heine (1906) and Yehudah Halevi (1907), two poets who influenced him. He became a staff writer on the *Forverts* (*Forward*), where he

published not only poetry but also prose and feuilletons (generally articles on social issues) twice a week.

In 1908 Rosenfeld traveled to Galicia and Western Europe, where he was enthusiastically received. At home, however, things were not going well for Rosenfeld. He did not get along with his colleagues, and in 1913 was dismissed from his position at the *Forverts*. Wanting to continue his journalistic career, he moved on, unenthusiastically, to write for the Orthodox *Yidishes tageblat* (*The Jewish Daily Paper*). His bitterness, resulting in part from disagreements with other writers and editors, increasingly led him to write less. The quality of his writing also deteriorated, until in 1921 he was dismissed from this paper as well. Poor, sick, and lonely, he became ever more embittered. Although removed from the literary scene, he continued publishing sporadically in *Morgen jurnal* (*Morning Journal*) and *Amerikaner* (*The American*). Rosenfeld died on June 22, 1923.

Of his twenty published volumes, the most widely read were the six-volume *Shriftn* (*Writings*, 1908–1910), the three-volume *Gevelte shriftn* (*Selected Writings*, 1912), and the two-volume *Dos bukh fun libe* (*The Book of Love*, 1914).

Rosenfeld was, for a time, the leading Yiddish poet, especially in the United States. But a younger generation of Yiddish poets in the United States started new trends, in which Rosenfeld did not fit. Writing didactic, moralizing, and sentimental proletarian poetry and using poetry to propagate socialism, anarchism, and Jewish nationalism were no longer in fashion. The most dominant literary movement among Yiddish writers and critics in the United States since 1907 was *Di yunge* (*The Young*), which believed in art for art's sake. During his lifetime the quality of Yiddish poetry developed far beyond Rosenfeld's capabilities.

Rosenfeld was celebrated for his proletarian poems that depicted his sweatshop experiences and stirred the Jewish masses. They were translated into German, Romanian, Polish, Hungarian, Czech, Russian, and English. The English translations were done first by Rose Pastor Stokes and Helena Frank, *Songs of Labor and Other Poems* (1914); later by Aaron Kramer, *The Teardrop Millionaire and Other Poems of Morris Rosenfeld* (1955); by Itche Goldberg and Max Rosenfeld, *Morris Rosenfeld: Selections from his Poetry and Prose* (1964); and by M. T. Cohen, *Poems of Morris Rosenfeld* (1979).

Ori Kritz

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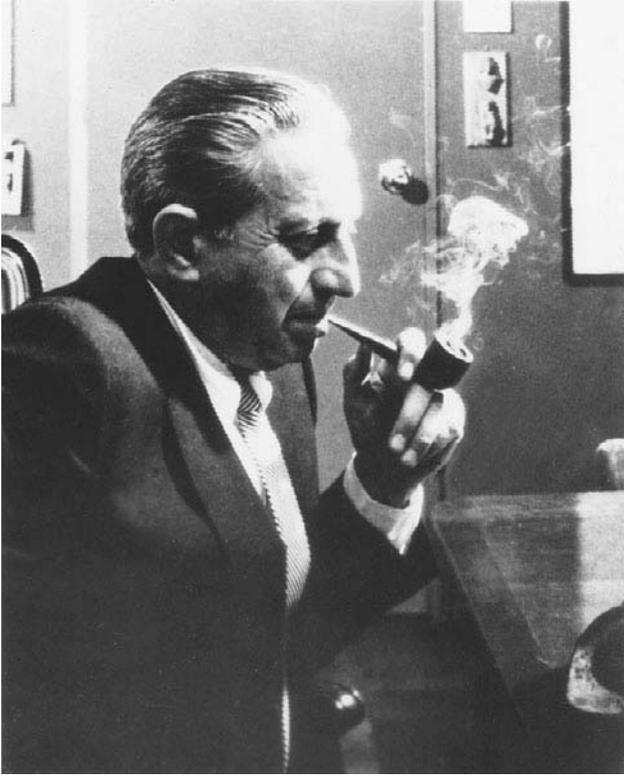
## Leo Calvin Rosten (1908–1997)

Novelist, Social Scientist, and  
Lexicographer

Though he achieved success as a social scientist, a screenwriter, a wartime government official, and a journalist, Leo Rosten is best remembered as a writer who celebrated the transitional culture of Jewish immigrants in the United States and who helped bring ethnic Jewish humor into the American literary mainstream.

Many read Rosten as a conservator of Yiddishkeit and Jewish traditions; yet, in many ways, they misunderstood him. Leo Rosten was, instead, an advocate of the melting pot who strove for objectivity in his writings, and who wrote about Yiddish and those who spoke it primarily as a vocabulary and a population that had been or could be assimilated into American English and society, to the betterment of all.

Perhaps because of his predilection for objectivity (which he liked to call omniscience, making it sound even more impersonal), descriptions of Rosten's upbringing and family life, both as a child and as an adult, are rare in his writing. Born in the Polish city of Lodz, Rosten was raised in a Yiddish-speaking family and arrived in the United States when he was three years old, settling with his mother and father, Ida and Samuel Rosten, in Chicago. Leo grew up in Chicago's Greater Lawndale section, which, in the decade before World War II, was home to almost half of the city's Jews. One of the few descriptions of his childhood comes in "My Father," at the beginning of his *People I Have Loved, Known or Admired* (1970), where Rosten makes a political point in recalling that his parents were "ardent trade unionists" and "loyal members" of the Workmen's Circle, even though they were shop owners. There is one tantalizing glimpse of the role that background played in Rosten's writing, when he admits to using a story about



Leo Rosten, writer. (American Jewish Archives)

his father in his first novel. Otherwise, this short memoir contains little of Rosten's father and less of Rosten himself growing up in an immigrant household.

Rather than personal or emotional tales of boyhood, Rosten preferred to describe his own coming-of-age through books, a sanitized and purely intellectual process. In "A Letter to My Reader," which serves as a foreword to *The Many Worlds of L\*E\*O R\*O\*S\*T\*E\*N* (1964), he claims, "I was addicted to reading from the time I was six." In that essay, Rosten distinguishes between his early years reading and writing fiction ("the province of those engrossed in make-believe") and his graduate school days in the social sciences at the University of Chicago, when, for "ten to fifteen hours a day [. . .] I guzzled theories of human behavior and social process; I feasted on political philosophies and sopped up economic systems." Rosten excelled at the guzzling, feasting, and sopping up, serving as both a research assistant for the prominent political psychologist Harold Lasswell, as well as a lecturer in political science in his own right. He studied briefly at the London School of Economics, before joining the Social Science Research Council in Washington, D.C., to conduct research

for a doctoral thesis on the Washington press corps, from 1935 to 1936. Also in 1935, Rosten married Priscilla Ann Mead though, as with his parents, his relationship with her and their three children receives almost no mention in Rosten's published writings.

The apparent split in Rosten's personality—the social scientist pursuing truth through methodology and the fiction writer seeking "admission to the holy order of Authors"—is nowhere more striking than with the publication of Rosten's first two books, both in 1937. One was the culmination of his research, for which he received a PhD from Chicago that same year. Entitled *The Washington Correspondents*, and widely praised by both academic and general reviewers, Rosten's study was a profile, based on the statistical evidence he had gathered, of the typical journalist covering the nation's capital at a time when such correspondents were having an increasing impact on American politics and policies.

The other book was also "omniscient," but in a literary sense: a linked collection of stories that had originally appeared in the *New Yorker* magazine, with a third-person narrator, entitled *The Education of H\*Y\*M\*A\*N K\*A\*P\*L\*A\*N*. The stories are set in Mr. Parkhill's adult night-school English class—a class such as Samuel Rosten had attended as a new immigrant, and as his son Leo had taught in the early 1930s before enrolling in graduate school. And, like the stories before it, the book was published under the name Leonard Q. Ross, a pseudonym that Rosten later claimed he adopted because he was "afraid of what his professors might do if they discovered that whilst he was living in Washington on an honorific fellowship, he was spending his weekends in his secret vice—the writing of fiction" (*The Return of H\*Y\*M\*A\*N K\*A\*P\*L\*A\*N*). Though Rosten never admitted it, the name may also have been designed to give an ethnically neutral quality to the persona of the supposed author, fitting into a pattern of ways in which Rosten distanced himself from his Jewish origins, even while exploiting them in his writings, early in his career.

With *The Education of H\*Y\*M\*A\*N K\*A\*P\*L\*A\*N*, Rosten achieved both critical and popular success. It is full of broadly drawn humor, making fun of its title character's equally mangled English and perceptions of American life. But it also satirizes Mr. Parkhill's uninspired blandness in the face of Hyman Kaplan's irrepressible originality—one sign of which, of course, is the way Kaplan writes his name

with stars between the letters. These were familiar stereotypes at the time: the dependable, sophisticated, but emotionally unresponsive Anglo-Saxon native, and the unpredictable, ill-mannered, and excitable immigrant. Rosten's humorous insights remain within the bounds of such stereotypical (but never mean-spirited) characterizations.

Significantly, in a class filled with Kaplans, Mitnicks, Blooms, Moskowitzes, and one Caravello, missing from *The Education of H\*Y\*M\*A\*N K\*A\*P\*L\*A\*N* is anything Jewish beyond the Yiddish-inflected accents. Parkhill sometimes talks to himself in Latin, his lessons are filled with references to American and European history and literature (including, according to Kaplan, “Judge Washington,” “Mocktwain,” and “Jakesbeer”), and, in the curiously entitled “Mr. K\*A\*P\*L\*A\*N and the Magi,” the class observes Christmas by presenting Mr. Parkhill with a gift. But the Jewishness of his students is only tongue-deep: there is no reciprocal use of specifically Jewish traditions, languages, or culture anywhere in the volume, as if for Rosten the secular values many Jewish immigrants held in common—including education, financial success, and liberal political views—were the most important part of their heritage.

Following the success of *The Education of H\*Y\*M\*A\*N K\*A\*P\*L\*A\*N*, Rosten published *The Strangest Places* (1939), another book of *New Yorker* pieces, this time non-fiction, and two novels with journalists as the protagonists: *Dateline: Europe* (1939) and *Adventure in Washington* (1940), all three published under the pseudonym Leonard Ross or Leonard Q. Ross. Rosten also began working as a screenwriter in Los Angeles, but returned to his roots as a social scientist to produce a study of the film industry entitled *Hollywood: The Movie Colony, The Movie Makers* (1941). When World War II began in Europe, Rosten parlayed his inside knowledge of Washington and Hollywood into a series of increasingly important government jobs, often related to filmmaking for propaganda and informational purposes. After the war, he continued to write popular fiction and screenplays, while working for the Rand Corporation in Los Angeles, and then, beginning in 1950, for *Look* magazine in New York.

By the end of the 1950s, Rosten's career as a writer seemed moribund. The only books he had published for more than a decade were a pamphlet entitled *How the Politburo Thinks*, which was published by the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union in 1951, and *A Guide to*

*the Religions of America* (1955), edited by Rosten and based on a series of articles that had originally appeared in *Look*. Not long afterward, Rosten published an article entitled “The Intellectual and the Mass Media: Some Rigorously Random Remarks,” which appeared in a special number of the academic journal *Daedalus* (along with contributions by Hannah Arendt, Randall Jarrell, James Baldwin, T. S. Eliot, and others), and was later reprinted in *The Many Worlds of L\*E\*O R\*O\*S\*T\*E\*N*. In it, the author defended the rise of mass media in the United States (and, by implication, his own work for *Look*) against the charges of artists and intellectuals who saw it as a sign of the debasement of American culture—or, as Rosten put it, “our latter-day intellectuals seem to blame the mass media for the lamentable failure of more people to attain the bliss of intellectual grace” (1960). This position—predictable enough from a man who seemed to celebrate all things American throughout his career—garnered Rosten notoriety in the continuing debate of that period on “masscult and midcult,” to use the terms, popularized by Dwight Macdonald, in which it was usually framed.

Rosten soon returned to a more familiar kind of popular culture, with the publication of *The Return of H\*Y\*M\*A\*N K\*A\*P\*L\*A\*N* (1959), the first of several successes over the next ten years that resuscitated and reshaped his career. Some of the stories in the sequel had appeared in the *New Yorker* the year after the first Kaplan collection was published, most were of a more recent vintage, but all employ the same formula of fractured language compounded by contorted logic to produce comedy and, on occasion, understanding. There are, however, some important changes: Kaplan returns with much greater diversity in his cast of supporting characters—the better to represent America's immigrant community at the end of the Eisenhower years; and Rosten's self-imposed restrictions on acceptable language and culture are relaxed enough, especially in the final story, “H\*Y\*M\*A\*N K\*A\*P\*L\*A\*N, Ever Eumourous,” to allow a class discussion of English borrowings from ancient Greek to Yiddish. Remarkably, however, even here Rosten cannot bring himself to use words such as “Jew” or “Yiddish”: while Greek, Latin, Russian, and even Chinese etymological roots are openly identified, the class's examples from Yiddish are described only as bearing “Israel's proud *imprimatur*.”

Rosten quickly followed up *The Return of H\*Y\*M\*A\*N K\*A\*P\*L\*A\*N* with a series of successes during the 1960s.

*Captain Newman, M.D.* (1961), the story of an American Army psychiatrist during World War II, is Rosten's best and best-selling novel, and was made into a feature film, though it suffers both from the author's penchant for stereotyped characters and from comparisons with Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, which appeared in the same year and explores the same theme: war is crazy. *The Many Worlds of L\*E\*O R\*O\*S\*T\*E\*N* (1964) is mostly a recycling of published material, from selected Kaplan stories to Rosten's columns for *Look*, and *A Most Private Intrigue* (1967) is perhaps his best thriller.

Then, in 1968, Rosten published *The Joys of Yiddish*, a work that probably derives from the same impetus as the lesson on English borrowings in "H\*Y\*M\*A\*N K\*A\*P\*L\*A\*N, Ever Eumorous." *The Joys of Yiddish* mixes etymologies and vaudeville jokes with cultural observations and scholarly research. It was accepted enthusiastically by an entire generation of the children of Jewish immigrants, whose postwar lives, affluent and increasingly assimilated, were among the most upwardly mobile in America. What *The Joys of Yiddish* seemed to celebrate was their differences, their unassimilability. Although Rosten had begun as an advocate of assimilation, his post-Holocaust work reflects a revised appreciation for Yiddish and the vanished Jewish community that spoke it. Such moderation of prewar antipathy toward the perceived exceptionalism of Jews and Jewishness can, of course, be seen in the work of other writers of the time—most notably, Irving Howe—and understandably so, considering the upheavals that produced the destruction of European Jewry and the reestablishment of the State of Israel.

Nonetheless, *The Joys of Yiddish* is really less about Yiddish than about how that language has been assimilated into American English—a point suggested in the book's own description, which says it is, in part, "a relaxed lexicon of Yiddish, Hebrew and Yinglish words often encountered in English," and that is made even clearer in the subtitle of a companion volume, *Hooray for Yiddish! A Book about English* (1982). Rosten's biases can also be seen in the contents, which avoid divisiveness and controversy. For example, he gives the meaning of the Hebrew word *goy* (gentile in Yiddish) as "nation," which does not sound especially insulting, but avoids mentioning that *shaygets* and *shiksa* (Yiddish for "gentile young man/woman") are the male and female forms of the Hebrew word for serpent. Accuracy aside, Rosten's compilation of illustrative jokes and

anecdotes makes this (often by their corny predictability or sheer inappropriateness) one of the few lexicons worth reading cover to cover.

After the death of his first wife, Rosten married Gertrude Zimmerman in 1970, and continued to work on books for publication up until his death in 1997. There were further lexicographical explorations in *Hooray for Yiddish!* (1982) and *The Joys of Yinglish* (1989); several collections of his journalism; a new Kaplan book comprised mostly of stories from the earlier two; edited volumes of selections from Jewish sources, general literature, and *Look*; two books of jokes; and several potboilers, including two installments in a Jewish detective series. With his remarkable successes in a variety of fields, his unquestioned devotion to the American ideal, and his gradual appreciation of a Jewishness from which he at first sought to distance himself, Leo Rosten's story is the comic but cautionary tale of a twentieth-century American Jewish prodigal.

David Mesher

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## Henry Roth (1906–1995)

### Novelist

Henry Roth is one of the greatest Jewish American writers, most well-known for his novel *Call It Sleep* (1934), the story of an immigrant family's encounter with urban America from the perspective of a young boy. Roth powerfully articulates the experience of Americanization in its



Novelist Henry Roth with his wife. (American Jewish Historical Society)

historical, social, psychological, and linguistic aspects. Roth's brilliant first novel, the history of its reception, his long literary silence, his comeback in 1994 with the first of a four-volume autobiographical fiction *Mercy of a Rude Stream*, and the extremities in his own life have made him a captivating figure on the American and Jewish American literary scenes.

Born Hershel Roth in 1906 in Tysmenitz, a small town in Austro-Hungarian Galicia, he immigrated to the United States in 1909 when his mother Leah joined Roth's father Herman, who had arrived in New York the previous year. *Call It Sleep* draws on his own early years in Brownsville and the Lower East Side, and then in Harlem, a move he portrayed as leaving behind a homogeneous Jewish neighborhood for a heterogeneous and threatening American environment. Filtered through the consciousness of the child of Eastern European Jewish immigrants, *Call It Sleep*

gives expression to the rupture with tradition and the ensuing loss of cultural, religious, and communal life often exacted by assimilation. Through David Shearl's quest for the source of power and holiness in his menacing New York neighborhood, Roth also chronicles the severing of the child from his parents and the inner struggle to stake out his new world through the English language and American culture. In this depiction of the curious child's fertile mind at work, *Call It Sleep* has often been read as a Jewish American portrait of the artist as a young boy, representative of a generation shaped by Yiddish and dedicated to English, who made great contributions to American culture.

*Call It Sleep* has been hailed as a great proletariat novel portraying the gritty life of immigrants in what they mistakenly assumed would be a Golden Land. It has also been read as one of the great modernist novels of the century,

inspired by Joyce's *Ulysses*, a work that Roth admitted had taught him that great art could be wrought from urban squalor. The originality of Henry Roth's writing style lies in its combination of naturalism and experimental modernism, as well as its extraordinary multilingual word play, as Yiddish and Hebrew intersect with American English. Although it met with favorable reviews when it first appeared in 1934, its legendary status in American literary history dates from its record-breaking paperback edition three decades later, when the college-educated children of immigrants constituted a new and eager readership for a work in which they recognized their own childhood and when interest in ethnicity in American culture was already on the rise. Shortly after the 1964 edition appeared, it sold over one million copies in thirty printings, attaining the status of both best-seller and classic, and has assumed a place at the center of Jewish American writing as an American, Jewish, and modernist work.

Just as the reception of *Call It Sleep* illustrates the dramatic shift in linguistic and cultural identity from immigrant to ethnic Americans, the drama of Roth's literary life and career represents one of the overarching themes of his generation, severing bonds with Jewish life (the child in *Call It Sleep* is named Shearl, which means scissors in Yiddish) in order to emphatically embrace America. In *Call It Sleep*, this period in American Jewish history is portrayed as an Oedipal drama where the loving harmony with a Yiddish-speaking mother gives way to symbolic patricide and a violent yet redemptive initiation into the New World. Although his emotional attachment to Yiddish lingered throughout his life, Roth aimed for universality, which he, along with many others of his generation, believed could be attained in Communism. His attempts to write a proletariat novel divorced from Jewish content, his advocacy of Jewish assimilation into American society, and his political activism on behalf of a communist vision, were dramatically repudiated by Roth when he feared for Israel's survival in the days leading up to the Six Day War in 1967. A watershed event for Roth, the war signified a regeneration of the Jewish people that inspired him to renew his own writing efforts as he redefined himself as a Jew and a Zionist.

After many years of silence, Roth published several other works: *Shifting Landscape* (1987), a collection of his short writings (edited by Mario Materassi), and a four-volume autobiographical fiction, *Mercy of a Rude Stream*. The first two volumes appeared in his lifetime, *Mercy of a Rude*

*Stream: A Star Shines over Mt. Morris Park* (1994) and *A Diving Rock on the Hudson* (1995); the final two were published posthumously: *From Bondage* (1996) and *Requiem for Harlem* (1998). The first volume picks up where *Call It Sleep* leaves off, in that the protagonist, renamed Ira Stigman, has already moved from the Lower East Side to Harlem, where he encounters both the vulgarity of the street and the joy of wordplay in his efforts to describe all of the nuances of his world.

His renewed Jewish identity is most evident as the author interjects his own comments, fueled by his anxieties about the Jewish people in a post-Holocaust world, concerning his character's actions and the historical events that frame the story. Addressing his computer, named Ecclesias, Roth professes views about Middle Eastern politics and history and laments his earlier abandonment of Judaism. The hindsight of the struggling elderly writer berating his younger self marks the entire *Mercy of a Rude Stream* series, along with a more liberal use of Yiddish, so extensive as to require glossaries at the end of each volume. The effect of these literary devices is to draw attention to forgetting and remembering, past and present, and autobiography as it is transformed into art.

The rebellions of David Shearl and Ira Stigman are cast as crossing boundaries that are both liberating and transgressive. In *Call It Sleep*, David's flight out of his parental home toward the city is depicted as symbolic death and rebirth, a crossing-over into the world of gentile America. In *A Diving Rock on the Hudson*, Ira's rejection of his father's tyranny is compounded by incest with his sister. The choices that are posed to his characters are exogamy and endogamy in their extremes, either abandoning home entirely or remaining at home in its most debilitating form, Jewish identity as incest. Marked by self-loathing and guilt, *Mercy of a Rude Stream* is also a nuanced document of the interwar period in New York City and a painstaking record of soul-searching, humility, and creativity as redemption. It is also a return to "the little he knew, the essential plug he had retained of his Jewishness, of Jewish tradition. . . . And when he tried to pluck it out . . . creative inanition followed" (Roth 1994).

Hana Wirth-Nesher

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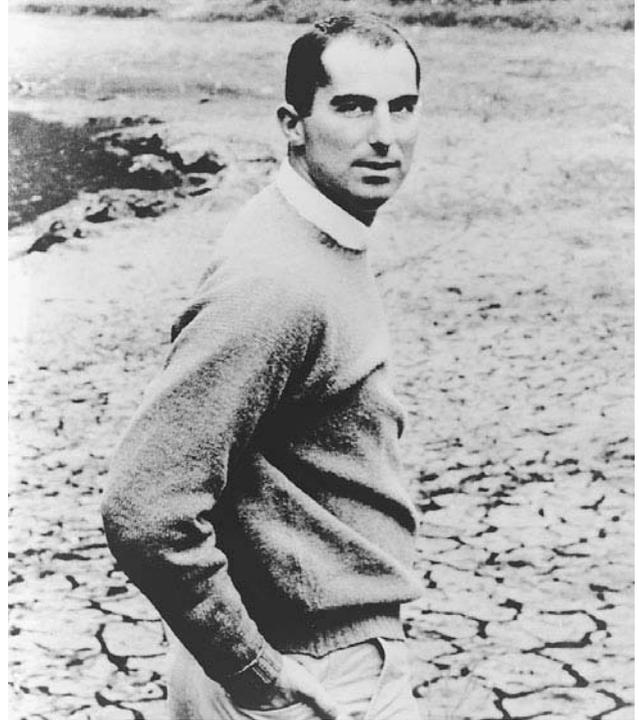
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## Philip Roth (b. 1933)

### Novelist and Short Story Writer

One of the most prominent American writers of his generation, Philip Roth repeatedly inquires in his novels, short stories, and essays into the meaning of being a Jew in the United States in the late twentieth century. A second-generation Jewish American born into a largely Jewish neighborhood of Depression-era Newark, New Jersey, Roth often portrays the ambivalence felt by Jews toward assimilation into American culture. Roth's work recognizes that assimilation promises the rewards of freedom, privilege, and prosperity even as it threatens the loss of a distinctive Jewish identity and sense of community. His extravagant comic imagination and inclination to challenge proprieties have won Roth a controversial place in American letters, ever since the publication in 1959 of his first book. From *Goodbye, Columbus, and Five Short Stories* onward, he has dramatized the challenges faced by the modern Jew in maintaining an authentic selfhood in the American diaspora. Roth presents Jewish individuals who pursue their erotic and artistic desires as a means to an autonomous self only to find themselves in conflict with social constraints. Roth's Jews feel caught between loyalty to a Jewish ethos and family life and the temptations—both fleshly and material—of non-Jewish American culture.

Roth's career can be divided roughly into three phases. The early work, through the novels of the mid-1970s, generally offers realistic psychological portraits of protagonists subject to instinctual repression, for whom the question of identity hinges on the individual's tormented negotiations with a restrictive social code. Roth's midcareer fiction and



Philip Roth, novelist and short story writer. (Library of Congress)

nonfiction, into the early 1990s, shift toward a more liberated sense of the possibilities for identity, as they also shift toward a self-conscious, postmodern narrative mode. The protagonists in these works often engage in the process of inventing themselves, both within and outside conventional Jewish models, as they come to see selfhood as a construction analogous to storytelling. The narratives of Roth's later phase return his assimilated characters to a realistic canvas, there to face the consequences of a broadly conceived historical determinism; these individuals inevitably come to experience their identities, for good or ill, as the products of American culture.

In a 1974 essay about *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969), Roth identifies the tension governing much of his early work when he distinguishes between "the 'Jewboy' (with all that word signifies to Jew and Gentile alike about aggression, appetite, and marginality)" and "the 'nice Jewish boy' (and what that epithet implies about repression, respectability, and social acceptance)" (Roth 1985b). At stake is the postimmigrant American Jew's desire both to improve his lot and to earn a respectable position in non-Jewish American culture. Roth expresses the attendant anxiety succinctly in the 1963 essay "Writing about Jews": "What will the goyim [non-Jews] think?" (Roth 1985b).

In the novella “Goodbye, Columbus,” Neil Klugman pursues a summer romance with Brenda Patimkin, whose family’s suburban affluence signifies the 1950s American promise of plenitude. The Patimkin “aggression” and “appetite” are visible in the “heapings, spillings, and gorgings” of the family table (Roth 1959). The abstract temptations of Patimkin prosperity are made concrete in Neil’s desire for a sexual relationship with Brenda. The virtual Garden of Eden housed in her family’s refrigerator, stocked with a cornucopia of fresh fruits, tempts Neil, symbolizing both his desires and their prohibition. Neil later prays to God in the confused terms the Patimkin world has defined for him: “If we meet You at all, God, it’s that we’re carnal, and acquisitive, and thereby partake of You.” That Neil prays in a *cathedral* suggests that, as a Jew, he has lost his spiritual compass, leading him to conceive of humans as carnal and acquisitive. The postimmigrant Jewish success story thus probes Neil’s sense of who he is—and what Jews are—in this New World. When Neil attends the wedding of Brenda’s brother, he witnesses the corruption inherent in the Patimkin ethic of consumption, the extravagant food “gone sticky with the hours.” Neil finally bids farewell to Brenda and to his passion for her, repudiating an assimilation driven by pleasure.

The tension between New World gifts and Old World sacrifices, between sensuality and regulation by a communal order, between transgression and obedience, is played out in the other stories in *Goodbye, Columbus*. In “The Conversion of the Jews,” a child challenges his rabbi over Jewish dogma. Rejecting religious authoritarianism in favor of American ideology, Ozzie Freedman subdues an awed assemblage of authority figures as, arguing for absolute freedom, he leaps from the roof of his synagogue. The middle-aged hero of “Epstein,” however, is defeated in his pursuit of pleasure and self-liberation. His affair with a neighbor is exposed when he suffers a heart attack while with her; the judgment upon him is indicated by the rash that has developed on his penis, like the visible mark of Jewish circumcision requiring his return to the fold. “Eli, the Fanatic” turns a comfortably assimilated, secular American Jew’s confrontation with the sorrows of the Holocaust into a search for an old world identity that culminates in his assuming the blackness of suffering that is his cultural heritage. “Defender of the Faith” exhibits a Jew exploiting his Jewishness. When Army trainee Grossbart manipulates another Jew, Sergeant Marx, for unorthodox

favours, he reinforces antisemitic stereotypes. Marx, who has won through his military service a sense of power and belonging as an American, thereafter suffers from self-loathing; shamed by their shared Jewishness, he paradoxically also feels shame for the repugnance his fellow Jew inspires in him.

Roth was excoriated by many in the Jewish establishment for exposing Jews to criticism—for depicting Jews in all their humanity as lustful, neurotic, and self-absorbed. Having overturned the image of the Jew in postwar American fiction as a figure of “righteousness and restraint” in favor of narratives of “libidinous and aggressive activities” (Roth 1985b), Roth seems for a period to have drawn away from the controversy of representing Jews *as Jews*. *Letting Go* (1962) and *When She Was Good* (1967) both return bleakly to examining how the social contract demands instinctual repression. In *Letting Go*, Roth’s first novel, the characters’ joyless marital and erotic relationships consign their Jewishness to the background. The psychological realism, muted tonalities, and grim compulsion toward responsibility of *Letting Go* reveal Roth’s debt to Henry James. *When She Was Good* witnesses the destruction wrought in a gentile family by one member’s thirst for respectability.

With the controversial best-seller *Portnoy’s Complaint* (1969), however, Roth breaks through to the voice of a Jewboy in high-decibel crisis, simultaneously revolutionizing the depiction of sex in American fiction. Alexander Portnoy tells his psychoanalyst of outrageous sexual transgression motivated by severe repression and punished by impotence. Hysterical in both senses of the word, Portnoy traces his dysfunction to stereotypes of Jewish family life—the man-eating mother, the father so bound up by his role as provider that he spends his home life in a struggle with constipation—and to the wider proscriptions of the code of Jewish assimilation. Portnoy lives in a “Jewish joke,” repressing his desires in homage to “Jewish suffering.” Desperate to “put the id back in Yid,” Portnoy breaks sexual taboos against masturbation, extramarital sex, and, especially, sex with *shiksas* (non-Jewish women). He hopes through sexual activity to “discover America. Conquer America.” Failing to establish a wholly American identity, Portnoy seeks coherence in the fantasy of Israel, where everyone and everything is Jewish, only to be humiliated by a young woman from a kibbutz who diagnoses in him “what was most shameful in ‘the culture of the Diaspora’”:

a man “frightened, defensive, self-deprecating, unmanned and corrupted by life in the gentile world,” the very complaint that constitutes his book-long lament.

Portnoy’s bedevilment by *shiks*es and Jewish women alike brings into focus the question of whether, as he has at times been accused, Roth offers misogynistic representations of women. He has indeed relied on comic stereotypes—the Jewish American Princess Brenda Patimkin, for example, or the castrating Jewish mother Sophie Portnoy, or even the sexually insatiable Drenka Balich of the many malapropisms, in *Sabbath’s Theater* (1995)—and with rare exception (notably *When She Was Good*), the fiction almost universally details a male, Jewish perspective. Insofar as Roth is concerned with women’s power over men, however, he not only at times exposes male objectification of women, but also largely portrays such a concern as the product of his male characters’ culturally determined anxiety over their own symbolic masculine power. Such is the case of Portnoy, whose sexual and psychological impotence derives from the way he has come to view Jewish women as signifying the demanding Jewish ethical standards from which his guilt at his repressed desires emanates.

The primal scream that literally concludes *Portnoy’s Complaint* sets the tone for the next two novels: *Our Gang* (1971), an enraged satire of the Nixon presidency, and *The Breast* (1972), a Kafkaesque parable of metamorphosis. In the latter novella, David Kepesh, who reappears in subsequent novels, wakes up one morning to find himself absurdly transformed into a six-foot mammary gland. Kepesh’s agonized confrontation with his alien flesh serves as an existential metaphor for the uncertainty of selfhood driven and defined by desires. Roth next digresses into profligate comic allegory in *The Great American Novel* (1973), a book exploring the mythic status of baseball as the icon of twentieth-century American culture. Roth experiments boldly with the kind of exaggerated invention that was appearing among his contemporaries in American fiction-making, such as Thomas Pynchon, Robert Coover, and Donald Barthelme.

Roth returns to the wages of desire in *My Life as a Man* (1974), a transitional work. The writer Peter Tarnopol finds himself in psychotherapy—with Portnoy’s analyst, Dr. Spielvogel—for a crisis precipitated by a disastrous marriage. Tarnopol attempts to write himself out of his trauma in two short stories. When the displacements of his biography into “Useful Fictions” prove unsuccessful, he

composes “My True Story,” an undisguised attempt to make sense of his sexual and romantic history. In Tarnopol’s wife, Maureen, Roth returns to the deadly attractions of the *shikse* for the Jewish man. Tarnopol is torn over how to *be a man*. For him, the phrase means finding a stable self and modest satisfaction of his desires; for Maureen, who has tricked him into marriage and then damaged him with her deeply neurotic needs, it means sacrificing himself to her and to an emasculating ideal of responsibility.

In keeping with shifts in American writing at large, *My Life as a Man* looks forward to the second phase of Roth’s career. First, though Roth retains his interest in psychological determinism, he places the act of writing at center stage as a means to order fragmentary experience and construct an identity. Roth draws attention to the self-conscious artifice of fiction and fiction-making, stripping the illusion of reality away to remind readers that, just as Tarnopol’s “Useful Fictions” are simply inventions, so, too, is Roth’s invention of Tarnopol’s story. Second, *My Life as a Man* insists on the indeterminacy of identity, implicit in Tarnopol’s anxious attempt to write a self; the novel thus prepares for the freer experiments in narrative self-invention that follow. Third, the novel emphasizes autobiography as the source of fiction. Having been perhaps unfairly accused of writing directly from his life in his early stories, Roth defiantly proposes to make the transformation of life into art his subject, even more so in that the tragedy of Tarnopol’s marriage is drawn largely from Roth’s history with his first wife, as he reveals in his autobiography, *The Facts* (1988).

*The Facts* quotes as its epigraph a line from *The Counterlife* that expresses a key issue in the novels of the late 1970s and 1980s: “And as he spoke I was thinking, *the kind of stories that people turn life into, the kind of lives that people turn stories into*” (Roth 1986). The interrelation of stories and lives as well as the possibility for the self to create a life story autonomously become central to Roth’s concerns. *The Professor of Desire* (1977) returns to David Kepesh from *The Breast*, filling in the tale before his metamorphosis. The dilemma of second-generation Jewish assimilation is now an unspoken grounding for Kepesh’s anxiety, which nevertheless takes on the inflections and conflicts of such works as “Goodbye, Columbus” and *Portnoy’s Complaint*. Drawn at once to sensual excess and conscientious restraint, Kepesh feels victimized by his dual

nature, represented by the sexual partners he chooses and influenced by the literature he teaches as a professor of comparative literature. The bittersweet ending of the novel, in which Kepesh seeks solace from a woman who nevertheless fails to arouse his passion, forecasts his failure to rewrite his life coherently.

For Kepesh, the notion of rewriting one's life story remains at the level of metaphor. The metaphor becomes concrete in the next series of novels, in which a Jewish writer/character, whose biography coincides in many ways with Roth's own, stands in for Roth himself. Nathan Zuckerman first appears as Tarnopol's alter ego in his "Useful Fictions." The tetralogy collected as *Zuckerman Bound* (1985)—including *The Ghost Writer* (1979), *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981), *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983), and *The Prague Orgy* (1985)—features Zuckerman centrally, as does *The Counterlife*. Zuckerman reappears as Roth's epistolary critic in *The Facts* and as the narrator in three subsequent novels: *American Pastoral* (1997), *I Married a Communist* (1998), and *The Human Stain* (2000).

*Zuckerman Bound* traces the story of an artist. Zuckerman finds a voice, confronts celebrity, suffers recriminations over the offenses in his work against Jews in general and his father in particular, and eventually finds his voice silenced. Having rebelled against familial and communal authority, betokened by his biological and surrogate fathers, Zuckerman travels toward remorse. He begins writing his own story in youthful confidence. In blithe disregard of historical reality, Zuckerman fantasizes grandiosely that he can be redeemed for his sins against the Jewish fathers by imaginatively reinventing an iconic Jewish figure. In his middle age, however, he is hemmed in by the recognition that a moral reality irrevocably holds sway over his inventive capacity.

*The Ghost Writer* presents Zuckerman as a young writer awed by his literary forefathers and in a pilgrimage to the Jewish master, E. I. Lonoff. Antagonized by his father, who deems his writing offensive to the Jews, Zuckerman has been attacked by an authority figure in his home community, Judge Wapter, in much the same language that had been leveled at Roth during a panel discussion at Yeshiva University in 1962. Wapter's list of questions for Zuckerman—concluding with "Can you honestly say that there is anything in your short story that would not warm the heart of a Julius Streicher or a Joseph Goebbels?"—encapsulates the harsh criticism many Jewish readers directed

at Roth for exposing Jewish lusts and yearnings in *Good-bye, Columbus* and elsewhere (Roth 1985c). To shake off the accusations of antisemitism, Zuckerman turns to the austere Lonoff for aesthetic encouragement, only to propose himself as Lonoff's rival for the mysterious young woman at Lonoff's rural retreat. Zuckerman fantasizes an elaborate alternative life for Amy Bellette as Anne Frank, miraculously survived, living incognito, and ripe for romance with Zuckerman himself. Since no potential mate has more impeccable Jewish credentials than Anne Frank, Zuckerman's fantasy clearly recasts his own identity to reconcile with the Jews he has affronted, even as he competes with his surrogate artistic father.

The metafictional experiment in *The Ghost Writer*—in which the narrative offers indeterminate levels of "reality" with respect to the characters' histories—is replaced by the realism of *Zuckerman Unbound*. Zuckerman's sense of his identity is unmoored by the notoriety and loss of privacy that attend the success of his novel *Carnovsky* (an undisguised reference to *Portnoy's Complaint*) and by his estrangement from his family, especially his dying father, for his repudiation of the Jews. Roth develops that estrangement into self-alienation in *The Anatomy Lesson*. Unable to write because of a mysterious back pain that he interprets as punishment for his offenses, Zuckerman embarks on an absurd switch of career that concludes with him, jaw broken, effectively silenced. *The Prague Orgy* finds Zuckerman on a quixotic quest in Eastern Europe for the lost manuscripts of a Yiddish writer, victim of the Holocaust. Here, he seems to renounce his own writing career, and the self defined through it, in order to enact the nice Jewish boy, recovering his cultural past as an offering to the Jewish fathers.

Zuckerman's efforts toward self-invention are tentative and compromised in *Zuckerman Bound*. In *The Counterlife's* exuberant exercise in storytelling, however, Roth offers a Zuckerman so freed from the constraints of family, community, and fictional conventions that he audaciously composes a series of counterlives for himself. Five chapters present five alternative but linked fates for Zuckerman in a sequence of irreconcilably contradictory stories, all convincing but none finally definitive. As a result not only does Zuckerman's "self" appear the pure product of narrative, but also Roth playfully undermines the capacity of narrative to represent a determinate "reality." By implication, he undermines the determinacy of reality itself. Roth also returns explicitly to the problem of constructing an authentic Jewish identity in the

Diaspora. Zuckerman examines the meaning of an American Jew's *aliyah* to Israel, the effects of Zionism on Jewish selfhood, and the implications of assimilation taken to the extreme of intermarriage. The latter, an idealized condition of cultural unity, he ultimately rejects as a "pastoral," defined in terms of the literary genre that celebrates innocence, in which "everything [is] cozy and strifeless, and desire simply fulfilled" (Roth 1986). No longer fighting his fathers but preparing for fatherhood himself, Zuckerman embraces conflict to assume the place of the Jewish patriarch, insisting on circumcision as the "quintessentially Jewish" mark that "you're mine and not theirs" (1986).

Roth's work of the late 1980s and early 1990s, like *The Counterlife* itself, bridges psychological realism and post-modern self-consciousness about fictional artifice as it moves toward the third phase of his career. *The Facts* presents Roth's autobiography through his mid-thirties, when he was on the brink of commercial success. The book offers a straightforward life story, rich in its account of a Jewish American upbringing and young manhood. It is framed, however, by a correspondence between the writer and his character Zuckerman, reminding the reader that autobiography as a form relies on the conscious crafting of selfhood into narrative. More consistent in its realistic mode is *Patrimony* (1991), Roth's moving memoir of his father, focusing especially on the year of his father's dying and filling in the details of his father's post-immigrant generation for whom "the real work . . . was making themselves American" (Roth 1991). Sandwiched between the two nonfiction narratives is *Deception* (1990), an experiment in the novel as intimate dialogue, in which Roth tantalizes the reader with a central character named Philip, who bears an irrefutable resemblance to Roth himself. Like *The Counterlife* and *The Facts*, the novel works to obscure the line between fiction and reality, especially with respect to a reader's tendency to see an author's identity in the fiction he or she writes.

Roth reinforces that temptation in *Operation Shylock* (1993). The narrating central character "Philip Roth" confronts his double in Jerusalem in a story that spins into antic implausibility, engaging a devastating shikse and an Israeli spy plot along the way. The identity crisis with which "Roth" struggles, figured in his double and in his journey to Israel, centers largely on his self-conception as a Jew in the American diaspora. Going beyond *The Counterlife*, *Operation Shylock* proposes that Jewish identity is inescapably a historical product. "Roth's" capacity for self-invention and

even fiction-making itself is finally circumscribed by his debt to his Jewish past.

The conclusion of *Operation Shylock* returns Roth not just to Jewish obligation but also to realism as a fictional mode and desire as a subject. *Sabbath's Theater* recasts the Jewboy of *Portnoy's Complaint* as an aging puppeteer—a hedonist, nihilist, and master of erotic transgression. Embracing the American individualistic ethos, Mickey Sabbath defies social convention to gain special access to the life force, most recently with his married lover. His identity is tested by his confrontation with death and disappearance—his lover's, his first wife's, his brother's—and by implication with his own mortality. *The Dying Animal* (2001) resurrects an elderly David Kepesh to face the same challenge, but in specifically erotic terms: in the disfiguring breast cancer of his former, youthful lover he meets with his own decaying flesh and failing sexual powers.

Roth replaces the determinism of mortal flesh with historical determinism in the trilogy of novels about America that follows *Sabbath's Theater*, all narrated by Nathan Zuckerman. *American Pastoral* (1997) recounts the tragic story of a Jewish golden boy. Swede Levov's successful life is destroyed by the chaos of 1960s America, largely because he is blind to the hollowness of his pastoral dream of harmonious Jewish assimilation. In Levov's futile fantasy of being a new Johnny Appleseed, Roth returns to the Edenic metaphors of *Goodbye, Columbus*: the American Jew's assimilation, signified by the real and figurative fruits of his labors, portends both his material success and his spiritual fall. Swede Levov's innocence is countered by the secret crime of Ira Ringold in *I Married a Communist* (1998), committed in response to antisemitism. Ira reinvents himself as the classic midcentury Jewish liberal, masking his violence under a politics of social conscience, only to be exposed and abandoned by the radically violent American ideology of the McCarthy era. A secret life story is likewise at the core of *The Human Stain* (2000), in which the African American Coleman Silk has passed for years as a white Jew. He becomes a victim—figuratively, of the discriminatory racial ideology he has internalized, and literally, of vengeance for his attempts to satisfy his sexual desires. In each case, a man's efforts to invent himself are doomed by the constraints American culture imposes upon its ethnically marginal citizens.

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## Isaac Bashevis Singer (1904–1991)

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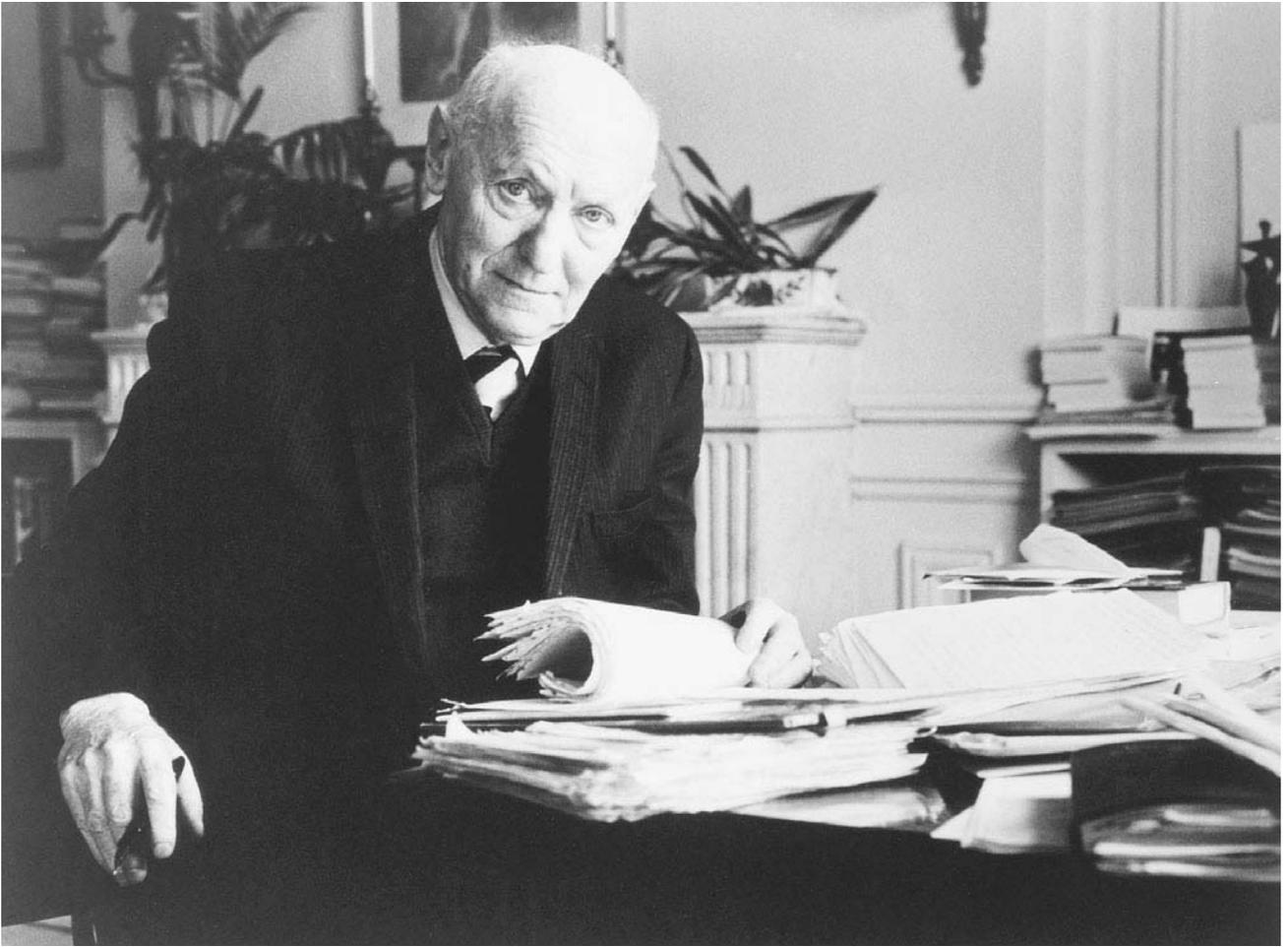
Last of the Great Writers of Yiddish Fiction and Winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature

Isaac Bashevis Singer is the only Yiddish writer whose work (in translation) caught the imagination of the American public. Born in Radzymin, a town fifteen miles northeast of Warsaw, in 1904, he emigrated to America in 1935, continued to write in his native Yiddish, and produced a long succession of stories, novels, memoirs, and children's books about life in his native Poland and about his experiences as an immigrant in America. This massive body of work earned him the Nobel Prize for

Literature in 1978. Singer died in Surfside, Florida, on July 24, 1991.

The tale of Singer's remarkable career is one of the most improbable in all literature. How did it come to pass that this storyteller (as Singer liked to call himself), writing in a dying language (Yiddish) about a vanished world (the Jews of Eastern Europe), not only fashioned the most successful career in modern Yiddish letters but also became a celebrated *American* writer, so much so that in September 1980 he was invited to review the troops—2,000 massed cadets—at West Point, and after his death his papers found a home in the University of Texas? "How had he begun?" asks a resentful fellow-writer of Yiddish in Cynthia Ozick's short story "Envy; or, Yiddish in America": "A columnist for one of the Yiddish dailies, a humorist, a cheap fast article-writer, a squeezer-out of real-life tales. . . . From this, how did he come to the *New Yorker*, to *Playboy*, to big lecture fees, invitations to Yale and M.I.T. and Vassar, to the Midwest, to Buenos Aires, to a literary agent, to a publisher on Madison Avenue?" Or, one might add, to the Nobel Prize for Literature, the National Book Award in 1970 and 1974, and the Gold Medal of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in 1989?

Singer's beginnings do not, at first glance, seem well-suited to a literary career at all. He was born (as Isaac Singer) into a world of almost medieval Polish Jewish Orthodoxy. His father, an impoverished rabbi and Hasid (pietist), held rigidly to the conviction that the world itself was *treyf* (unclean). It was a function of his father's unworldliness to condemn theater, the visual arts, and literature as idolatrous. Literature might be supposed less offensive than painting or the stage because it was, like the Jewish religion itself, oriented toward the word rather than the graven image. But Singer's father saw in literature, especially Yiddish literature, the most potent threat of all to a way of life in which every human activity—including cooking, eating, washing, praying, and lovemaking—was regulated by religious law. "My father," Singer recalled, "used to say that secular writers like [I. L.] Peretz were leading the Jews to heresy. He said everything they wrote was against God. Even though Peretz wrote in a religious vein, my father called his writing 'sweetened poison,' but poison nevertheless. And from his point of view he was right. Everybody who read such books sooner or later became a worldly man and forsook the traditions" (Blocker 1963).



Isaac Bashevis Singer, Yiddish author and winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1978. (Library of Congress)

Singer too would forsake the traditions as they are commonly understood, for he was not a religiously observant Jew, and he took up a calling that to his father made him as bad as a *meshumad* (apostate), but the father despaired prematurely. For Singer instinctively understood the literary possibilities of the intensely traditional life to which he had immediate access of a kind denied even to writers older than himself. He also understood that writers can be sustained by what they deny, and that religious faith rejected usually exercises a more powerful hold over a writer than new, “secular” faiths adopted. (Singer believed that the dream of a secular Jewish culture—with the accent on *secular*—had already played itself out by the time he arrived in America.) Most Yiddish writers, his predecessors as well as his contemporaries, could only revisit the rich social and spiritual texture of the covenant-determined religious world nostalgically or through the collection of folk materials.

No more than I. L. Peretz or Sholom Aleichem or Mendele Mocher Seforim, the classical Yiddish writers who preceded him, was Singer an unsophisticated folk artist. He recognized, as they did, that folklore is the soil in which literature grows best, and his rootedness in the old Jewish life would make his books a bridge between the assimilated Jews of America and the destroyed world of their East European ancestors. But when critics like Ozick and Irving Howe spoke of the unique recklessness with which Singer surrendered himself to the claims of the imagination, they meant something more than his ability to write about the destroyed world of European Jewry (as he did) as if it were brilliantly alive. They were also paying tribute to him as a magnificent inventor of an imagined world, not simply the curator of the artifacts of a vanished one.

It is the justified boast of Yiddish literature that it was based on a peculiarly intimate relationship between authors

and readers for whom storytelling was a communal activity. When Peretz died in 1915, 75,000 people came to his funeral in Warsaw, and Sholom Aleichem's funeral the following year was attended by an even greater number in New York. Such demonstrations of popular affection were unmatched for any other modern writers. Singer never achieved the status of these classical Yiddish masters within the community of Yiddish readers, and was even looked upon with some degree of reserve and suspicion by them because of his "modernism," his keen interest in matters sexual, above all (after 1950) his writing in one language (Yiddish) with the intention of being read in English translation. Yet he too had begun by writing only, as he put it, "for people who know everything I know—not for the stranger" (Blocker 1963). He sternly resisted the uniquely Jewish form of parochialism named "universalism," that siren call that lured so many Jewish writers to the self-destructive waste of their talent in pale imitations of Western literature and endless returns to moribund Bolshevik politics.

Singer arrived in the United States in May 1935 with the help of his older brother Israel Joshua, who had become a successful Yiddish writer in New York. He got a position as a freelance writer with *Forverts* (*Forward*), thus forming an association that endured for decades. He began to learn English, but this hardly compensated for his dim view of American Jewry and the prospects of Yiddish in America. "Here in New York," he wrote to a friend a few months after arrival, "I see even more clearly than in Poland that there is no Yiddish literature, that there is no one to work for. There is a crazy Jewish people here which keeps slightly kosher and peddles . . . and awaits Marxism for the people of the world. But it doesn't need Yiddish literature" (Hadda 1997). In 1937 he published, under his favored pseudonym Bashevis (i.e., Bathsheba's son), two short stories and two literary sketches, but then he went into hiding as a fiction writer even as he continued to produce journalistic work under the pen name of Yitzhak Varshavsky (Isaac, the man from Warsaw).

A main reason why his creative work languished was what America revealed to him about the future of Yiddish:

When I came to this country I lived through a terrible disappointment. I felt more than I believe now—that Yiddish had no future in this country. In Poland, Yiddish was still very much alive when I left. When I came here it seemed to

me that Yiddish was finished: it was very depressing. The result was that for five or six or maybe seven years I couldn't write a word. Not only didn't I publish anything in those years, but writing became so difficult a chore that my grammar was affected. I couldn't write a single worthwhile sentence. I became like a man who was a great lover and is suddenly impotent, knowing at the same time that ultimately he will regain his power (Blocker 1963).

Singer, it should be recalled, had indeed (in literary terms) been "a great lover" in Poland. He was a prizewinning author by age twenty-one, and his first novel, *Satan in Goray*, was hailed as a masterpiece when published serially in 1934 and then in book form by the Yiddish PEN Club in 1935.

Singer overcame his (creative) writer's block in 1943 with a pair of short stories and two weighty articles about the state of Yiddish in Poland and in the United States. "Problems of Yiddish Prose in America" (published in *Swive [Surroundings]*, the March–April issue) asserts that the better Yiddish prose writers wisely avoid writing about American Jewish life because they do not want to falsify dialogue and find little interest in describing again and again "a narrow circle of old people or coarse immigrants." Singer believed that words, like people, become disoriented when they emigrate, and that the Yiddish writer who bypasses Broadway to seek his subjects in Warsaw, Vilna, Lodz, is not escaping reality, but returning to a world where people truly lived within Yiddish and not the "vulgarized" gibberish "which no self-respecting Yiddish writer could use in good conscience." This means, to be sure, that the conscientious Yiddish writer dines only on "leftovers" because "only food prepared in the old world can nourish him in the new." Of course Singer exaggerated the impulse he felt to remove Yiddish from the modern world: he would later write a great deal about America (for example, in the novel *Enemies, A Love Story*) and also about the effects of the Holocaust, which goes unmentioned in this essay.

By the time this essay appeared, Singer's creative vein had once again begun to flow. *Satan in Goray* was reissued along with five new stories, among them the powerful tales "The Destruction of Kreshev" and "Zeidlus the First." In 1945, continuing a genre in which his recently deceased brother Israel Joshua had excelled, Singer commenced the long family/historical saga *The Family Moskat*, published serially in the *Forward* through 1948 and then in book

form in 1950. This great novel traces the decline of Polish Jewry and ends with the German bombardment of Warsaw on September 1, 1939, and a character observing “Death is the Messiah. That’s the real truth.” The novel was translated into English, with the active involvement (as would be the case in all subsequent translations of his work) of the author himself, who now had a third persona: Isaac Bashevis Singer. In 1953, Saul Bellow’s publication of his English translation of “Gimpel the Fool” in *Partisan Review* gave Singer’s work the imprimatur of the high priests of literary modernism, including Irving Howe, and helped to gain for it an acclaim beyond what any Yiddish writer had ever received in non-Yiddish literary circles.

From that time forward, Singer went from triumph to triumph, “set aloft,” as Ruth Wisse has written, “on the wave of fame that nowhere swells so high and fast as in America” (Wisse 1979). His productivity was enormous—novel after novel, story after story—an abundance equaled among American writers of the first rank perhaps only by William Faulkner. After two decades of abject poverty, he became prosperous as well as famous, not only one of the rare Yiddish writers to make his living by writing, but (so it was reported) earning over \$100,000 a year from advances, royalties, lecture fees, and motion picture and television options on his work. Yet the adulation and rewards of the world did not cause Singer to swerve from his stubborn integrity as a professional literary man determined to go his own (Jewish) way. When Singer died in 1991, the loss was more than personal. He was the last of the great writers of Yiddish fiction, so that with his death, as the critic Hillel Halkin observed, the narrative prose of a whole language had come to an end.

Singer believed that an artist must have an “address,” must be “rooted in his milieu,” and “not deny his parents and grandparents” (Burgin 1985). He viewed himself as an old-fashioned storyteller addressing an audience that values stories for their own sake and also as a unifying agent of shared memories. But, precisely because he was content to speak as a Jew, Singer made himself heard not only among Jews but everywhere. His writing reached a large international public and was translated into many languages. The Nobel Prize citation praised his “impassioned narratives, which, with roots in a Polish-Jewish cultural tradition, bring universal human conditions to life.”

Singer often insisted that he was a writer in the Jewish rather than the Yiddish tradition, even though he always

wrote in Yiddish. What he meant was that he eschewed the sentimentalism and the espousal of “social justice” that characterized much Yiddish writing. “The storyteller,” he declared in his Nobel acceptance speech, “must be an entertainer of the spirit in the full sense of the word, not just a preacher of social and political ideals.” In pursuit of this aim, he opened himself to older sources of inspiration in Jewish lore and thought, especially mysticism. He resisted the role of cultural spokesman for his people; instead he created a body of work that encompasses the Old World, the New World, and the next world, in both its upper and lower reaches. The supernatural pervades his writing and expresses his belief in the power of the spirit over the body. “The Higher Powers, I am convinced, are always with us, at every moment, everywhere, except, perhaps, at the meetings of Marxists and other left-wingers. There is no God there; they have passed a motion to that effect” (Blocker 1963).

Singer’s boundless curiosity about the “higher powers” expresses itself in three kinds of stories: supernatural, apocalyptic, and moral. In the first group, he uses Satan or some lesser demon as a symbol, a kind of spiritual stenography. “Every serious writer,” said Singer, “is possessed by certain ideas or symbols, and I am possessed by demons” (Blocker 1963). Singer’s receptivity to the supernatural appears in stories (like “Jachid and Jechida” in the collection *Short Friday*) that play with the idea that we die into life, trailing clouds of glory from our divine home. Such tales suggest the tenuousness of our accepted standards and values, and the strong possibility that what we hold to be the goods of this world are really its evils and what we suppose to be its ultimate calamity, death, a release into the only true life. In Singer’s symbolic geography, darkness often has positive connotations—as if he meant to suggest that virtue, like any other plant, will not grow unless its root is hidden. In his own way, he could be as anti-Enlightenment and “old-fashioned” as his Hasidic father.

Clearly related to the supernatural tales are stories of apocalypse that express Singer’s guilty fascination with the messianic impulse in Jewish life and his disapproval of the modern form of that impulse: political utopianism. Here more than anywhere else Singer saw himself returning to Jewish sources that preceded the rise of secular Yiddish literature in the nineteenth century. *Satan in Goray*, set in 1648, explores the messianic longing of Polish Jews reeling from the Ukrainian Bogdan Chmielnicki’s massacres, the

worst that had been perpetrated against the Jewish people prior to the twentieth century. In desperation, these Jews seek explanation of their ordeal through the agency of a false messiah named Sabbatai Zevi, who encourages abomination and blasphemy as the means to redemption. Singer was both fascinated and repelled by Jewish messianism, which, by stressing the inevitability of cataclysm in the transition from historical present to messianic future, encourages fanaticism, hysteria, and disintegration. These events of the seventeenth century were to become an enduring paradigm for Singer: “To me, Sabbatai Zevi was the symbol of the man who tries to do good and comes out bad. . . . Sabbatai Zevi is in a way Stalin and all these people who tried so hard to create a better world and who ended up by creating the greatest misery” (Howe 1973). And so this novel, published in 1935 about events that took place in 1648, actually epitomizes Singer’s oblique way of dealing with modern politics and the poison of totalitarian ideologies.

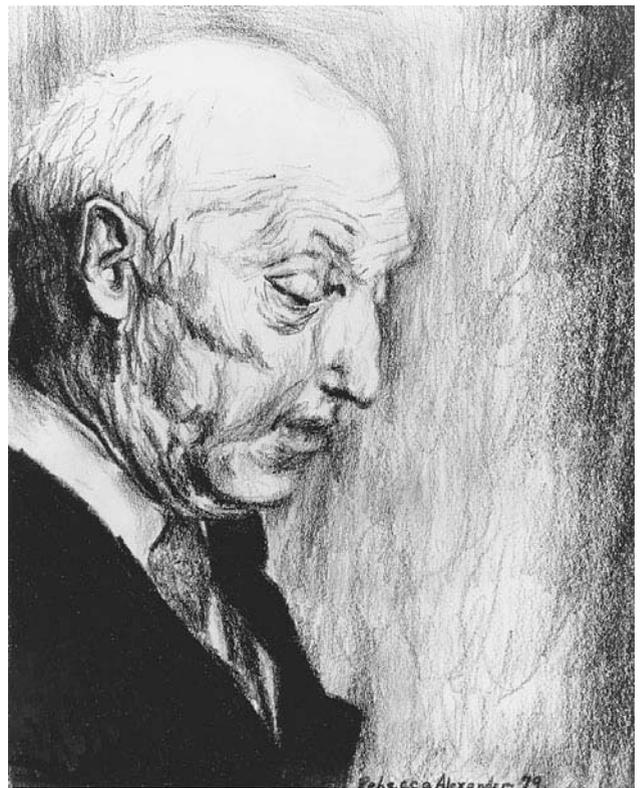
In Singer’s moral tales the assumptions of a religious way of life he had rejected remain an imperious presence. Although Singer often declared (with feigned modesty) that “literature will never replace religion” (Burgin 1985) and that his stories are not intended to “say” something, he has just as frequently recalled that he was “brought up in the categories of good and evil. Almost nothing was neutral. Either you did a *mitzvah* (good deed) or you did an *averah* (sin)” (Burgin 1985). In the best of Singer’s ethical parables, we see the lingering influence of the Hasidic ethos, which stressed deeds above good intentions and intellectual grasp. In such stories as “A Piece of Advice” (in the collection *The Spinoza of Market Street* [1961]), Singer sings the praises of Hasidism for its joy, its openness to the Jewish masses, and its moral efficacy, but ultimately there is one thing Singer cannot say of the traditional faith: that it is true.

Although Singer’s tales about the conflict between faith and doubt generally imply (as in the famous love story “Gimpel the Fool”) that belief of any kind, even to the point of foolish credulity, is a good in itself, it is clear that he had cast off the yoke of Rabbinic Judaism and the observance and self-discipline it entails. Yet he remains a distinctively Jewish writer, mainly because he gives uniquely powerful expression to the Jewish sense of memory. He used to say that amnesia is the only sickness from which Jews do not suffer. By this he meant not only that

Jews remember what happened in their own lifetime but that their memory stretches back through the collective experience of their people, even to its origins at Sinai. A recurrent scene in his fiction, for example, is the eve of Tisha b’Av (Ninth day of Av), when Jews mourn the destruction of the First Temple and all subsequent major catastrophes up through (at least) the expulsion from Spain in 1492.

Singer is the poet laureate of a Jewish sense of the past that is archetypal and circular rather than historical and linear. His narratives touching on the Holocaust, for example, view the Nazis as only the latest in the long succession of murderous outsiders who have obtruded themselves upon Jewish history. “Yes,” sighs the narrator of *The Family Moskat* (1950), “every generation had its Pharaohs and Hamans and Chmielnickis. Now it was Hitler.”

The stunning paradox of Singer’s work is that, by treating all these destroyers as indistinct repetitions of one another, he is able to suggest that a nation that has been dying for thousands of years is a living nation. His most beautiful story, “The Little Shoemakers,” which recounts Jewish catastrophes from the seventeenth century through the Holocaust, is at once a mourning over what has been



Drawing of Isaac Bashevis Singer by Rebecca Alexander. (Rebecca Alexander)

and a celebration of what has survived. Such hymns to the Jewish power of survival gain their special force from being built into elegies over a destroyed civilization. Singer's work continually reminds readers that the very first ancient non-Jewish document to mention Israel is the gloating report of Merneptah, king of Egypt, in 1215 BCE that "Israel is desolated; its seed is no more." Singer's fiction, written in a "dead" language about an apparently dead civilization, is, like the modern state of Israel, an expression of the Jewish capacity to make a new beginning.

Edward Alexander

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## Leon Uris (1924–2003)

### Historical Novelist

Leon Marcus Uris was a popular historical novelist, who was famous for his stories of the Holocaust and the

founding of Israel. The protagonists of Leon Uris's novels *QB VII* and *Mitla Pass* offer significant insight into the life of their creator. Having dropped out of college, *QB VII*'s Abe Cady declares, "YOU CAN'T LEARN TO WRITE FROM COLLEGE PROFESSORS." In *Mitla Pass* Gideon Zadok, lying wounded from battle, recalls a turbulent childhood held hostage to a father's bitterness and ideology and a mother's emotional instability. Uris himself felt the sting of the English teacher's judgment; he failed high school English three times. And he too grew up in a home run by "a father who was terribly embittered" and a mother who "was a little wacko" (Christy 1988). The United States entry into World War II provided the seventeen-year-old Leon with an opportunity to escape: lying about his age, he joined the Marine Corps, eventually serving for three years in the South Pacific and fighting in the brutal battle for Tarawa. Not only did his military experience provide him with a tight-knit, stable surrogate family and a sense of adventure, but it also gave him the material for his first book, *Battle Cry* (1953). During the next fifty years, a dozen more novels followed, many of them exploring the Holocaust and its aftermath, including the founding of Israel. The first of these explorations, *Exodus* (1958), became the biggest best-seller in the United States since Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* and was made into a major motion picture. At the time of his death in 2003, Uris was one of the most successful American historical novelists of the twentieth century.

Leon Uris's father, Wolf, was a Communist Party organizer who also worked as a paperhanger and a shopkeeper in Baltimore, Maryland, and Norfolk, Virginia. Having emigrated from Poland by way of Palestine, Wolf took the name Uris from Yerushalmi, which means "man of Jerusalem." He quickly became disillusioned with his new country, suffering both economic hardship and religious and ethnic discrimination. His son's alienation can be attributed not only to this relative poverty and anti-semitism, but to the turbulence of his family life as well. Uris's intense patriotism and lifelong loathing for Communism also reflected his utter rejection of what he saw as his father's misguided revolutionary values.

The patriotism that characterizes much of Uris's work was born and nourished during his time in the Marines. As he recounts in *Battle Cry*, the Marines embodied camaraderie, mutual support, and respect for diversity among fellow soldiers. For him, the Marines

supplanted the dysfunctional family and the antisemitic culture that plagued his youth. If Leon Uris can be said to have had a tribe, it would be the United States Marine Corps; it was during his years of service that he forged his identity as a man and an American. The profound sense of Jewish identity characteristic of much of his later work is absent in *Battle Cry*; indeed, the two characters with whom the author identifies most closely are both gentile. Danny Forrester, the teenager who enlists after Pearl Harbor, is the quintessential all-American boy, marrying his high school sweetheart while on leave and returning to establish a life with her after the war is over. Marion "Sister Mary" Hodgkiss, the aspiring writer, faithfully records the life of the platoon and offers philosophical sustenance to his comrades. Nonetheless, Uris does address antisemitism in the characters of Brooklynite Jake Levin and the iconoclast Max Shapiro, both of whom discover that the prejudice and discrimination of civilian life have carried over into military life. Both characters are portrayed as heroes who give up their lives for a squad and a country that refused to accord them equal status.

Uris's second novel, *The Angry Hills* (1955), is another mainstream American novel, this time an espionage thriller. Loosely based on the adventures of his uncle, who served in a Palestinian (Jewish) unit of the British Army during World War II, the novel focuses extensively on the horrors of Nazism as evidenced by the invasion and occupation of Greece. None of the major characters is Jewish, but readers are introduced to a sympathetic Jewish couple from Palestine who fall prey to their Nazi captors after an ill-fated escape attempt. More importantly, the author's interest in exploring his Jewish heritage and identity was born during the writing of this novel. After a brief hiatus in Hollywood, where he wrote the screenplay for *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), Uris turned his attention to the quest for a Jewish state in Palestine. In his research for the novel that would become *Exodus* (1958), he covered 12,000 miles, interviewed more than a thousand people, and read close to three hundred books. Both the research and the dedication are evident in the resulting best-seller, a sprawling, intricate account of the establishment of Israel.

The significance of the publication of *Exodus* to American Jews simply cannot be overestimated. The numbing images of the Holocaust, while creating sympathy for its victims, did little to eliminate the subtle but per-

vasive antisemitism that characterized the postwar United States. Uris's epic tale, based loosely on the historical account of an overloaded cargo ship destined for postwar Palestine, transformed America's image of European Jews from victims to heroes. Perhaps more importantly, the novel's biblical undertones resonated with a population newly enamored of religion in the face of the Communist threat. The novel's primary theme, "nothing less than another chapter in the long history of Jewish fulfillment of God's promise" (Cain 1998), placed the horror of the previous decades within a powerful context. As American nurse Kitty Fremont says of the young Palmach soldiers in the novel, "These were the ancient Hebrews. These were the forces of Dan and Reuben and Judah and Ephraim!"

One of the most tormented characters in *Exodus* is the teenaged Dov Landau, who has come of age in the Warsaw Ghetto and Auschwitz, only to be "liberated" into a refugee camp in Cyprus. Dov's bitterness and hatred have been fueled by the horrors he has witnessed, horrors that Uris explored in depth in his next novel, *Mila 18* (1961). Named for the address of the actual resistance headquarters in the Warsaw Ghetto, this novel puts a human face on the Nazi outrages and the Jewish heroism that characterized the uprising. The brutality with which the Nazis torture, imprison, starve, humiliate, and murder the Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw is graphically depicted, as are the bravery and determination of the resistance fighters who hold off squadrons of the world's greatest army for forty-two days (in reality, the uprising lasted twenty-seven days). Almost as significant as Uris's depiction of life and death in the ghetto is his condemnation of the world's willful indifference to what was going on in the ghettos and the camps. When Italian-American journalist Chris de Monti smuggles firsthand accounts of death camps to the Allied governments, the news is met with deafening silence. When the Polish Catholic Gabriela Rak attempts to recruit Church leaders to save Jewish children, the result is the same. The Nazis may be the perpetrators of the Holocaust, but, as the industrialist collaborator Horst von Epp declares as German tanks prepare to demolish the ghetto, "I'm no more guilty than . . . all the moralists in the world who have condoned genocide by the conspiracy of silence."

While Uris's next two novels, *Armageddon: A Novel of Berlin* (1963) and *Topaz* (1967), dealt primarily with the Cold War, he returned to the subject of the Holocaust in

the 1970 semi-autobiographical novel *QB VII* (a reference to the British courtroom Queen's Bench 7). Uris and his British publisher had been sued for libel in 1964 by Dr. Wladislaw Dering; Uris had depicted Dering in *Exodus* as a collaborator who performed medical experiments on Jewish prisoners at Auschwitz. Dering won the suit, but the court awarded only a halfpenny in damages and ordered him to pay all legal costs. In fictionalizing the trial, Uris creates the character of Abe Cady, a prizewinning American novelist whose life closely parallels Uris's own. Perhaps more interesting, however, is Dr. Adam Kelno (a character very loosely based on Dering), whose life before, during, and after the Holocaust is recounted in great detail. Dedicating himself to underprivileged people after his release from the fictional Jadwiga camp, Kelno spends years ministering to natives in Borneo before settling in London to provide medical services in a working-class neighborhood. It becomes clear during the course of the trial that Kelno is indeed guilty of the atrocities of which he is accused, but a more complex question remains both unanswered and unanswerable. When Kelno describes conditions of concentration camp life, including backbreaking slave labor, malnutrition, and torture, even Cady is left pondering the question, "What the hell would I have done?" Indeed, writers such as Primo Levi and Tadeusz Borowski, themselves camp survivors, often explored the ways in which the camps so degraded prisoners that all sense of compassion or morality was lost.

Nonetheless, in *QB VII* Uris also presents testimony from a host of survivors, none of whom succumbed to the dehumanizing existence of the camps. The testimony is as credible as it is horrifying; the passages in which survivors recount their experiences in Jadwiga mirror those found in historical accounts. Thus Uris's audience comes away from this book, as it does from his other books, with a degree of hope for the indomitability of the human spirit.

Readers find less hope in two subsequent novels dealing with Israel: *The Haj* (1984) and *Mitla Pass* (1988). Although told from the point of view of Arabs, *The Haj* was rightly characterized by critics as a lengthy denigration of an entire people. The novel's Arab characters are consistently portrayed as lazy, gluttonous, sadistic, and sexually depraved. *Mitla Pass*, on the other hand, focuses on a devastating battle pursued by a fanatical Israeli colonel for control of land with no military value. It is conceivable that the seemingly insoluble enmity between Israelis and

Arabs as characterized by the violence of the 1970s and 1980s had soured the author, leaving him with little of the hope that redeemed *Exodus* and *Mitla Pass*. After *Mitla Pass* Uris turned again to the story of Ireland's struggle for freedom, continuing the tale begun in *Trinity* (1976) with *Redemption* (1995). In 1999 he published *A God in Ruins*, the story of a presidential candidate who discovers on the eve of the election that his heritage is Jewish, and in 2003, his final novel, the Civil War tale *O'Hara's Choice*, was published posthumously.

Although all of Uris's novels published before 1995 enjoyed a wide readership, his popularity waned after *Redemption*. Neither *A God in Ruins* nor *O'Hara's Choice* received much attention, either critical or popular. Of course, critics had often been the bane of the author's existence. Gideon Zak's railing against critics in *Mitla Pass* probably reflects quite accurately his creator's attitude: Uris was consistently frustrated by the critical reception of his work. He was accused of grammatical blunders, plot-level sloppiness, wooden characterizations, and questionable treatment of historical fact. His work was often labeled melodramatic. Despite a reputation as a "critic's nightmare," however, Uris enjoyed the adulation of readers for over forty years and introduced two generations to the Diaspora. Popular American interest in the Holocaust and support for Israel can be attributed in part to the influence of his novels.

Kathleen Shine Cain

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## Morris Winchevsky (1856–1932)

Poet, Hebrew and Yiddish Socialist Writer

Morris Winchevsky (Lipe Ben-Tsien Novachovitch), pioneer of socialist poetry, was born in Yanove, Lithuania, on August 9, 1856, and grew up in Kovne. Many consider Winchevsky the grandfather of the Hebrew and Yiddish socialist press in the United States. After attending *cheder*, a traditional Jewish school, his father taught him at home, and at eleven he attended a Russian public school. In 1870 he studied at the non-Orthodox rabbinical school in Vilna, where he learned German and read Russian literature. In 1873 he moved to Oriol, Russia, to work as a bookkeeper. There he became interested in revolutionary ideologies.

Winchevsky published his first literary work in Hebrew, a social satire titled “*Tahapukhot ha’itim*” (“The Turmoil of the Times”) in *Hamagid* (*The Herald*) on September 8, 1874. In August 1875 he returned to Kovne, where he worked as a bookkeeper and regularly published poems, feuilletons (articles on social issues), and satires in *Hamagid*.

At twenty-one, he relocated to Königsberg, Germany, for employment and continued to publish. That year (1877) he became the editor of the Hebrew socialist monthly *Aseyfat hakhamim* (*Assembly of the Wise*), which lasted only eight issues, until October 1878. There he published under various pen names in several genres, including book reviews and a novel in sequels, *Panim hadashot* (*New Face*). The most famous series of feuilletons, “*Hezyonot ish haruah*” (“Prophetic Visions of an Intellectual”), was signed Yagli ish haruach (Yagli the Intellectual), although his most widely known pseudonym was Ben-Netz—the name by which he is still called when referring to his Hebrew writings.

In 1877 he also published his first Yiddish feuilleton, “*Der grende firer*” (“The Grand Leader”), in *Kol La’am* (*Voice to the People*), the Yiddish addition to the Hebrew *Hakol*. Once he started writing in Yiddish, his publications in Hebrew became rare; between 1886 and 1910 he did not publish in Hebrew at all. In 1877 Winchevsky had become anti-religion and antinationalism, believing the revival of Hebrew would not succeed and was not as efficient in propagating socialism as Yiddish. Concurrently, he contributed to several German publications, such as *Königsberger freier presse* (*Königsberg Free Press*).

Between February 1878 and February 1879, he was arrested three times for his socialist activities. Yet he was able to publish an eighteen-part article in *Hakol* (1878), “*Beit nivharei ha’am be’ashkenaz*” (“The Reichstag in Germany”), explaining the German constitution and German social democracy and describing the various political parties. His aim was to teach the Hebrew reader about Western Europe.

After his last release on March 16, 1879, he was expelled from Germany. He settled in London, where he remained until 1894. In 1880, he adopted the literary pseudonym Morris Winchevsky as a political expedient. While earning his living as a bookkeeper, he became active in various socialist unions, propagated socialism among Jewish workers, and helped establish the Jewish Worker Benefit and Education Union (1880).

On July 25, 1884, he started editing the first Yiddish socialist paper in England, *Der poylisher idl* (*The Little Polish Man*). After sixteen issues its name changed to *Di tsukunft* (*The Future*) because of the controversial nature of its title. In August 1885 Winchevsky resigned because of political disagreements with the owner of the paper, Eliyahu Wolf Rabinowitz, who assumed a more nationalistic stance and accepted an advertisement from the local Jewish Liberal candidate, Samuel Montagu. Winchevsky, a committed socialist, opposed it, claiming the paper ceased to represent the proletarian cause and had surrendered to the “bourgeois.”

In 1885 Winchevsky married Rebecca Harris. The couple had a boy and a girl. That year he also published his first book of poetry, *Ben-Netz’s folk gedikhte* (*Ben-Netz’s Folk Poems*) and helped found the socialist *Der arbayer fraynd* (*The Worker’s Friend*). In this weekly he published his most famous series of feuilletons: “*Tseshlogene gedanken fun a meshugener filozof*” (“Confused Thoughts of a Crazy Philosopher”). The philosopher argues with his grandson over issues from a socialist point of view and about the upcoming social revolution. The writing style and themes popularized this character, who was nicknamed *Der zeyde* (the grandfather) by enthusiastic readers. This nickname was transferred to Winchevsky himself, and, before reaching age thirty-five, he was already considered the grandfather of the Jewish workers’ movement. In September 1886, Winchevsky published his first play, a comedy, *Der mirer iluy* (*The Young Genius of Mir*).

In 1891, when *Der arbayer fraynd* became anarchist, he withdrew from the editorial board and in May founded

the monthly *Di fraye velt* (*The Free World*), which lasted until November 1892, and then the socialist weekly *Der veker* (*The Waker*, 1892), which lasted for eleven issues. All the while Winchevsky published in English journals, such as the weekly *Justice*. In 1894, already a prominent figure, he immigrated to the United States, where he edited the Boston Yiddish socialist weekly *Der emes* (*The Truth*) from May 1895 until it closed in August 1896.

On April 22, 1897, the first issue of the Yiddish daily *Forverts* (*Forward*) appeared. Winchevsky was one of the founders and a regular contributor. Several months later, however, he resigned because of political disagreements with the editor, Abraham Cahan; Winchevsky was unable to freely express his views opposing Daniel DeLeon in his articles without the editor's restrictions. He propagated socialism and led the opposition to DeLeon and the Socialist Labor Party. Nonetheless, in 1916, he returned to write for the daily. Winchevsky continuously contributed to Yiddish papers and was also involved in reviving the monthly *Di tzukunft* (*The Future*) and editing it during 1902–1903 and 1907–1909.

During these years Winchevsky also translated into Yiddish works by prominent writers, including Henrik Ibsen and Thomas Hood. In 1910 he directed a successful campaign by the Cloakmakers' Union to raise funds for a general strike. That year Winchevsky also published his famous article "Ani Maamin" ("Creed") in the Jerusalem weekly *Haahdut* (*Unity*). The article made an immense impression on the pioneers in *Eretz Israel* because, although it described Winchevsky's vision of a united humanity, it also envisioned a separate land for each nation to develop according to its own history and culture. He also wrote against assimilation and saw Hebrew becoming the universal Jewish language—a radical change of views after he had ceased writing in Hebrew, believing the ancient language would not be revived.

From 1918 until January 1919, he edited *Glaykhhayt* (*Equality*), the organ of the blouse and garment makers' union. Influenced by the Balfour Declaration (1917), Winchevsky's nationalism strengthened, and in 1920 he was a delegate to the American Jewish Congress in Philadelphia.

In 1922 he shifted to communism, began to write for the communist *Frayhayt* (*Freedom*) published in New York, and broke ties with many of his socialist friends. In 1924 he was invited to the Soviet Union because of his pio-

neering communist activities among Jews in the United States and was granted a pension. He returned to New York several months later. In 1927 he became paralyzed, remaining in poor health until his death on March 18, 1932.

To his radical socialism in the 1870s Winchevsky added nationalism in the 1880s and became a communist in the 1920s. He wrote during the transition from *Haskala* (the Jewish Enlightenment movement) to modern literature. All the while he propagated socialism in various prose genres and in poetry written in Hebrew or Yiddish, but mostly in Yiddish. His popularity lies in his simple, captivating style. Although he did not experience hard labor in sweatshops like other proletarian poets, he addressed almost all aspects of contemporary socialism.

Ori Kritz

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## Herman Wouk (b. 1915)

### Novelist

Herman Wouk (born May 27, 1915) was the most popular Jewish novelist in American history. His books, beginning with *Aurora Dawn* in 1947 and continuing through *The Caine Mutiny: A Novel of World War II* (1951), *Marjorie Morningstar* (1955), *Youngblood Hawke* (1962), *Don't Stop the Carnival* (1965), *The Winds of War* (1971), *War and Remembrance* (1978), *Inside/Outside: A Novel* (1985), *The Hope* (1993), and *The Glory* (1994), sold tens of millions of copies. He also published *This Is My God* in 1959, a book of reflections on Judaism, and he wrote an introduction to a volume of letters of Jonathan Netanyahu, which appeared in 1980. *The Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance* were made into two very popular television series in the 1980s,

and several of his books, including *The Caine Mutiny* and *Marjorie Morningstar*, were made into feature films.

Although Wouk won the Pulitzer Prize for *The Caine Mutiny*, literary critics derided his novels. Norman Podhoretz's review of *Marjorie Morningstar* stressed its banality, "imaginative helplessness," and the "ugliness" of its prose. Wouk, Podhoretz said, was "utterly incapable of rendering the feel of an emotion or a mood or a conversation," and his imagination pointed "vaguely into space like a blind man trying to locate an object in an unfamiliar room" (Podhoretz 1956). Pearl K. Bell described *War and Remembrance* as a "good-bad book," lacking "any daunting complexities of thought, craft, or human behavior" and suffused with a cloying sentimentality. The novel's major characters are "preposterous and irritating," and the novel "never rises above the sentimental level of best-selling romance." *War and Remembrance*, Bell concluded, is part of a subliterate genre that serious readers could ignore (Bell 1978). Paul Fussell called *The Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance* a good popular history of World War II in "the guise of a very bad novel." The "skillful historiography" is marred by "embarrassing" characters and the "vulgarity" of the plot (Fussell 1978).

One reason for this hostile reception was Wouk's acceptance of traditional middle-class morality, his conservative temperament, and his rejection of the stance of alienation popular among intellectuals. This was particularly evident in *Marjorie Morningstar*. The seduction of Marjorie by Noel Airman was accompanied by "shocks, ugly uncoverings, pain, incredible humiliation." At its conclusion, Marjorie accidentally breaks a glass, a sign of Jewish mourning. Marjorie's effort to be a "morningstar" is rather fatuous, and she ends up living in Mamaroneck, New York, with her children and husband. "You couldn't write a play about her that would run a week, or a novel that would sell a thousand copies," a former beau says of this now conventional suburban Jewish matron.

Wouk's novels are replete with undesirable deracinated intellectuals. In *Marjorie Morningstar* it is Noel Airman (né Saul Ehrmann). Airman's first name, which evokes Christmas, reflects his contempt for the Jewish religious traditions of his family, and his surname symbolizes the emptiness of his life. In *Youngblood Hawke* it is Hawke; in *Don't Stop the Carnival* it is Sheldon King; in *War and Remembrance* it is Leonard Spreregen; and in *Inside/Outside* it is Peter Quat. Wouk's most famous attack on the in-

tellectual is in *The Caine Mutiny*. A group of naval officers have just been found not guilty of mutiny against the demoted captain Queeg during World War II. They hold a party to celebrate their victory and invite their Navy-appointed lawyer, Lieutenant Barney Greenwald. They are amazed when the half-drunk Greenwald attacks them for deserting their captain during his and the Navy's hour of need. Greenwald is particularly disdainful of Lieutenant Keefer, an intellectual who is writing a novel of the war. Greenwald is convinced that Keefer is "the villain of the foul-up," and he is eager to read Keefer's half-finished novel. "I'm sure that it exposes this war in all its grim futility and waste, and shows up the military men for the stupid, Fascist-minded sadists they are," he sarcastically comments. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. called *The Caine Mutiny* America's "great anti-intellectual novel" (Schlesinger 1956), and William H. Whyte's famous pop sociology book *The Organization Man* (1956) argued that the novel exemplified the shift in American values from the Protestant ethic of individualism and self-reliance to the social ethic of organizational life. *The Caine Mutiny*, Whyte said, "rationalized the impulse to belong and to accept what is as what should be" (Whyte 1956).

It was not by accident that in *The Caine Mutiny* it was a Jew, Barney Greenwald, who defends the Navy and the military virtues of honor, duty, and obedience. For students of American Jewish culture, the great theme of Wouk's fiction is this symbiosis of American and Jewish identities. Critics noted that *Marjorie Morningstar*, which Susanne Klingenstein called "the first truly popular American Jewish novel" (Klingenstein 1998), applauded the post-war detente of American Jewry and middle-class America. The novel, Podhoretz said, was a protest against those who have "an appetite for diverse areas of experience, an unwillingness to settle into the common routines, a refusal to surrender one's demands on the world without a fight." Wouk wrote as if Jewishness would disintegrate "if it ventures beyond the moral and spiritual confines of a Judaic bourgeois style" (Podhoretz 1956).

Wouk's desire to end any estrangement between America and Jewishness, his belief that to be a good American one must be a good Jew and to be a good Jew one must be a good American, accounts for the surprising denouement of *The Caine Mutiny* when Greenwald attacks Keefer. Greenwald declares that any novel he would write of the Navy during the war would portray Queeg as a hero.

Greenwald explains to his amazed listeners that, while they were enjoying civilian life and looking down on the military, Queeg and the other “stuffy, stupid Prussians in the Navy and the Army” were preparing to defend America from the Nazis. “Yes, even Queeg, poor sad guy, yes, and most of them not sad at all, fellows, a lot of them sharper boys than any of us, don’t kid yourself, best men I’ve ever seen. . . . though maybe not up on Proust ’n’ *Finnegan’s Wake* and all.”

Greenwald also has a specifically Jewish reason for defending the military. “The Germans aren’t kidding about the Jews,” he tells the mutineers. “They’re cooking us down to soap over there. . . . I just can’t cotton to the idea of my mother melted down into a bar of soap.” Queeg deserved his thanks, and Greenwald feels guilt for having ruined the captain during the trial. “He stopped Hermann Goering from washing his fat behind with my mother.” Greenwald then throws a glass of wine in Keefer’s face and leaves the party. The mutineers realize he is right. They should have covered Queeg’s mistakes, upheld military authority, and concentrated on fulfilling their ship’s mission. The person who had opened their eyes, one of them says, was “an amazing Jew named Greenwald.”

Three and a half decades after *The Caine Mutiny*, Wouk published the semi-autobiographical *Inside/Outside*, in which a Jew defends another seemingly disreputable character. The novel’s protagonist is Israel David Goodkind (a “good kind”). Goodkind, a graduate of Yeshiva University and Columbia University, is a traditional Jew on the inside and a fervent American patriot on the outside. Yeshiva and Columbia symbolize his inner and outer identities. Wouk emphasizes the merging of these two sides of Goodkind by having him begin the seven days of mourning for his deceased father on December 7, 1941. Yet Goodkind prefers not to use his first name until the end of the book, when returning to America from Israel, he tells the El Al stewardess to “Call me Israel,” an allusion to Herman Melville’s line “Call me Ishmael” in *Moby Dick*, the greatest of all American novels. Goodkind now feels perfectly comfortable in being a traditional Jew in America, and any dissonance between his Jewish and American identities has disappeared.

At the beginning of *Inside/Outside*, Goodkind, a lifelong Democrat, has taken a leave of absence in 1973 from his successful New York corporate tax legal practice to become a Special Assistant to President Richard Nixon. This

occurs just before the Yom Kippur War of 1973 and the Watergate scandal. Before taking the job, Goodkind tells Nixon that he will not work on the Sabbath. The president responds that Goodkind is his first Jewish associate who ever made that stipulation. “I’m impressed. Very impressed.” In contrast to his family and friends, Goodkind is not a visceral opponent of Nixon, and he comes to admire the president for his commitment to peace, his struggle to preserve the authority of the presidency during the Watergate affair, and especially for his support of Israel during the 1973 war. He tells the president that the Jewish people will revere him forever if he sends arms to Israel, an American ally, to balance the arms that the Arabs are receiving from the Soviet Union. “It will honor the man who showed greatness, by rising above his own desperate political predicament and coming to the rescue of the Jewish State.” Nixon, in turn, praises Goodkind for not deserting his captain during the Watergate crisis. “You’ve stayed aboard while some others were jumping ship. It’s been appreciated.” Just as in *The Caine Mutiny*, the hero is a Jew who defends the values of duty and loyalty and the stability of American institutions. Wouk’s critics, by contrast, argued that Goodkind’s faith in Nixon was misplaced since the president’s actions undermined the presidency and caused a constitutional crisis.

This reconciliation of American and Jewish identities came naturally to Wouk. The two most important intellectual influences on him were his maternal grandfather, Rabbi Mendel Leib Levine, and Irwin Edman, a Columbia University philosopher. These two were the opposing poles of Wouk’s life, “a man without a trace of Western culture and a man who is its embodiment” (Wouk quoted in Beichman 1984). Levine, an Orthodox rabbi, spent all his time immersed in the study of the Talmud. He never spoke English (although he understood it), never saw a play or movie, never went to an art gallery or heard a symphony, and never read a secular book. Levine instilled in his grandson a love of Torah, and Wouk put aside a part of every day for the study of Jewish texts. Edman, a religious skeptic and disciple of John Dewey, taught a course on comparative religion that Wouk took while a sophomore, and its effect on him was electrifying. Edman opened up for Wouk the corpus of Western learning.

The other formative influence on Wouk was his service in the Navy from 1943 to 1945 aboard two destroyer minesweepers, the *Zane* and the *Southard*. He took part in

eight Pacific invasions and won four campaign stars and a unit citation. He described these years as “the greatest experience of my life. . . . In the Navy, I found out more than I ever had about people and about the United States,” and the more he found out, the more he admired the Navy and his country (Wouk quoted in Beichman 1984). Since World War II, he has had a lifelong love affair with the Navy. In *This Is My God* he compared the Jew with the sailor. “I have always thought that the Jewish place among mankind somewhat resembles the position of navy men among other Americans,” he wrote. “Are the sailors and officers less American because they are in the Navy? They have special commitments and disciplines, odd ways of dress, sharp limits on their freedom. They have, at least in their own minds, compensations of glory, or of vital services performed.” In his introduction to *Self-Portrait of a Hero: The Letters of Jonathan Netanyahu*, Wouk paid Netanyahu the highest compliment by comparing him to Admiral Raymond Spruance, the architect of American victories in the battles of Midway and the Philippine Sea. Both men “embody—by the cast of destiny—the virtue of their whole people in a great hour.”

Wouk’s belief that the fate of Jews and America is intertwined is a major theme of his two volumes on the history of Israel, *The Hope* and *The Glory*. These novels span the story of Israel from its founding through the early 1980s. For Wouk, war has been the greatest phenomenon of the twentieth century, and this has certainly been true for Jews. *The Hope* chronicles the Israeli wars of 1948, 1956, and 1967, and *The Glory* discusses the Yom Kippur War of 1973 and ends with the attack by Israeli planes on an Iraqi nuclear reactor.

Wouk’s account of Israel’s war for independence in *The Hope* emphasizes similarities between the histories of America and Israel. A gentile woman explains to her Israeli lover why Americans are so supportive of Israel. “It’s the resonance with American history,” she says. “You’ve landed on a hostile shore, trying to bring forth a new nation conceived in liberty, haven’t you? You and we both started as colonies that threw out the British. Both had early years of dangerous adversity, only yours are still going on. Almost a mirror image.” Her Israeli lover agrees. “The more I come to understand things,” he tells her, “the more I perceive how our miracle of the return is linked to your older miracle of America.” One chapter of *The Hope* is titled “The Alamo,” and it discusses the attempt to link Israeli forces to

the besieged Jews of Jerusalem. Another chapter, titled “Midway,” examines the Israeli air strikes that launched the Six Day War. In *The Glory*, Anwar Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem is likened to Lee’s surrender at Appomattox. *The Glory* concludes with the Israeli pondering the future of Israel and the United States. “The old countries, Japan, England, Russia, worse off or better off, they just *are*. We’re both trying to *be*, you the giant of the world and we the crazy little nobody in the Middle East.”

A key figure in the early pages of *The Hope* is Mickey Marcus. Marcus had graduated from West Point, was a veteran of World War II, and had served as New York’s commissioner of corrections. The founders of Israel believed that war with their Arab neighbors was inevitable because the Arabs would never peacefully accept a Jewish state in their midst. The Israelis asked Marcus to help train their army, and he reluctantly agreed. At one point in *The Hope*, Marcus calls David ben Gurion the George Washington of Israel, and ben Gurion responds, “And you’re our Lafayette.” Marcus was killed in 1948 by accident. *The Hope* has a long description of his coffin’s arrival in New York and its interment in the cemetery at West Point. When the coffin is handed over to American army officers at the airport, the Israeli flag that had draped the coffin is replaced by the American flag. The Star of David is then handed reverentially to the Israeli military officer who had accompanied Marcus’s body to America. The officer “could see on the tarmac, under large American and Israeli flags flapping in the brisk wind, a long line of black limousines.” At the funeral at West Point, the Israeli tells Marcus’s widow how her husband had once quoted to him a line by the English poet Rupert Brooke: “There is a corner of some foreign field that is forever England.” Now, he says, “there’s a corner of West Point that is forever Israel.”

Wouk emphasizes in *The Hope* and *The Glory* the common enmity of the United States and Israel toward Communism and the Soviet Union. Israel’s triumph in 1967 is portrayed also as an American victory. The most important pages in *The Glory* concern the Yom Kippur War of 1973. Wouk has Golda Meir, the Israeli prime minister, telling Henry Kissinger, the American secretary of state, that the Israelis “have been fighting America’s battle in the Middle East. You and I both know it. Were it not for the Soviet encouragement of their intransigence, the Arabs would long ago have come to terms with reality and made peace with Israel.” Kissinger explains to an Israeli why

Nixon so strongly supports Israel. “The President knows that if you’re defeated the Russians will dominate the Middle East, the Arabs will be impossible to deal with, and the world balance will tilt against the United States.”

On July 4, 1976, Israeli commandos made their dramatic rescue of Jewish hostages at the Entebbe airport in Uganda. In *The Glory*, diplomats accredited to Washington are attending a celebration of America’s bicentennial on board the aircraft carrier *Forrestal* when they learn of the rescue. This comes just before the United States Marine Band begins to play “The Star-Spangled Banner.” The diplomats admire Israel’s boldness and believe that “America should be more like Israel in dealing with its enemies and with terrorism.”

World War II was influential in the American Jews’ view of themselves as Jews and as Americans. The fact that hundreds of thousands of them served in the American military forces during the war, that over ten thousand paid the ultimate price, and that Germany was the greatest enemy of both Jewry and the United States erased any lingering sense they might have had that being Jewish and being American were not fully compatible. After 1945, antisemitism appeared to Jews (and to gentiles) as not only anti-Jewish but anti-American as well. The fear that Zionism and the establishment of a Jewish state in the Middle East would call into question the loyalty of America’s Jews was proven to be unfounded. As American Jews rapidly fled their psychological and geographical ghettos after 1945, they could look to Wouk’s novels for reassurance. The historian Jerold Auerbach has argued that the synthe-

sis of Judaism and Americanness was “a historical fiction” (Auerbach 1990). If so, then the historical fiction of Wouk is partially responsible.

Edward S. Shapiro

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# American Jewish Literary Critics

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## Irving Howe (1920–1993)

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Literary Critic, Yiddishist, Socialist Activist, and Editor

Irving Howe's career was the story of three loves: socialism, literature, and Jewishness. He began as a passionate believer in the capacity of socialism to end war and injustice but eventually was forced to acknowledge its universal failure as a political movement. Nevertheless, he transformed socialism into a myth of considerable power as an ethical instrument of social and political criticism. He was stirred belatedly into Jewishness by the Holocaust and undertook a heroic effort to save the language and literature of Yiddish, which had been consigned to destruction, along with the Jews themselves, by Nazism. Although he endowed the idea of secular Jewishness with a special twilight beauty, he could not rescue it from its inevitable demise and ceased to believe in its future long before he died. Literature proved to be the most powerful and compelling of his three loves; he defended its autonomy against Stalinists (and Trotskyists) in the forties; against "guerrillas with tenure" in the sixties; against theorists in the eighties. Among American men of letters in the twentieth century, he was the exemplar of intellectual heroism and tenacious idealism.

Howe was the son of David Horenstein, at various times a grocer, peddler, and dress factory presser, and of

Nettie Goldman Horenstein, a dress trade operator. In 1934, still a student in De Witt Clinton High School in the Bronx, Howe became active in left-wing but strongly anti-Stalinist politics. In 1936 he entered City College of New York, where, though a dilatory student, he took a serious interest in literary criticism, especially that of Edmund Wilson. Although he was still Horenstein in class, he began to use the (Trotskyist) party name of Hugh Ivan and, for speeches and articles, Irving Howe. Although an English major, his degree was a Bachelor of Social Sciences.

By late 1941, married to Anna Bader and living in Greenwich Village, Howe became managing editor of *Labor Action*, the weekly paper of the Workers Party. Under Howe's leadership the paper consistently opposed American entry into and prosecution of the war against the Axis powers. But in mid-1942 Howe was himself drafted into the Army, where he did a stint of three and a half years, reaching the rank of sergeant before being discharged early in 1946. He then legally changed his surname to Howe, divorced Anna, and moved back to the Bronx. Although he resumed writing for *Labor Action* as well as for the Trotskyists' "theoretical" journal, *New International*, he began, also in 1946, to write on Jewish topics for *Commentary* and on literary ones for *Partisan Review*, whose paradoxical devotion to both Trotsky and T. S. Eliot Howe shared.

In 1947 Howe married Thalia Filias, an archaeologist, who later bore him two children. He worked for a time as

assistant to Hannah Arendt at Schocken Books and to Dwight Macdonald at *Politics* magazine, where he wrote under the pseudonym Theodore Dryden. For four years, starting in 1948, he reviewed nonpolitical books for *Time*, a publication universally scorned by people of Howe's political persuasion. Moving to Princeton when his wife got a job teaching at a girls' school there in 1948, Howe became acquainted with Princeton's numerous literary inhabitants, including Delmore Schwartz and Saul Bellow.

In his first public involvement in "Jewish" issues, in 1949, Howe entered the controversy over the award of the Bollingen Prize for poetry to Ezra Pound, who had speechified on behalf of fascism and against Jews during the war. At the same time Howe was publishing (with B. J. Widick) a book entitled *The UAW and Walter Reuther* (1949). His career as literary critic burgeoned with two books on American writers well outside of his New York milieu, *Sherwood Anderson* (1951) and the pioneering *William Faulkner* (1952). Largely for financial reasons, Howe (who had no graduate degrees although he had taken some courses at Brooklyn College after the war) took up a teaching post in English at the newly formed Brandeis University (where his job interview was conducted in Yiddish). During his tenure at Brandeis (1954–1961), Howe established a reputation as a superbly gifted teacher.

Although he had abandoned Trotskyism by 1948 (and resigned from the Independent Socialist League in 1952), Howe was still a committed socialist who did not give up on Marxism until 1960. In 1954 he founded *Dissent* magazine as an instrument to promote "democratic" socialism, although more as an animating ethic than as a political program, and for the next forty years he spent two days a week (without remuneration) editing the magazine. In the very same year, he published (with the Yiddish poet Eliezer Greenberg) the first of a series of groundbreaking anthologies, adorned with scintillating introductions, that were designed as acts of critical salvage of the destroyed culture of Eastern European Jewry. *A Treasury of Yiddish Stories* (1954) was dedicated "To the Six Million." Howe had turned to Yiddish literature in belated response to the shock following the war years.

Now writing on all his three tracks—socialist, literary, Jewish—with the abundance of a major industry, Howe published in 1957 his first major collection of literary essays, *Politics and the Novel*, as well as *The American Communist Party: A Critical History* (with Lewis Coser). But his

personal life was less happy: 1959 brought divorce and the breakup of his family. In 1961 he moved to California to teach at Stanford University, a place he soon intensely disliked (partly, so it was reported, because nobody there could understand his Jewish jokes). When a job offer came from Hunter College in the City University of New York, he accepted it with alacrity and in 1963 returned to what he called his natural habitat. In 1964 Arien Hausknecht, a widow and a member of the New School (New York) faculty in psychology, became Howe's third wife.

The sixties was for Howe a decade of controversy. In 1963 he organized a tumultuous public forum to debate Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, the book that blamed European Jews for having significantly and willingly participated in their own destruction. He became active in opposition to the Vietnam War but also to its anti-democratic New Left opponents. His critiques of the "authoritarians of the left" were collected in a volume of essays on the politics of democratic radicalism entitled *Steady Work* (1966). By now a famous, respected, and honored literary critic, Howe published in 1967 his only book-length study of an English novelist, *Thomas Hardy*.

In the seventies Howe became a sharp critic of the new generation of militant feminists and also of the professors who, in universities and professional organizations, exploited literature for partisan political purposes. At the same time, he continued his collaboration with Greenberg in establishing a canon of the essential works of secular Jewishness. *A Treasury of Yiddish Poetry* appeared in 1969 and *Voices from the Yiddish*, a collection of nonfictional writing, in 1972. In 1970 he was named Distinguished Professor at the City University of New York and in 1971 awarded both the Bollingen and Guggenheim Fellowships. Then, in 1972, with indefatigable energy and in defiance of the expectations of friends, Howe plunged into work on a massive history of the immigrant Jewish world of New York. For four years he pored over memoir literature in English and Yiddish, studies of immigrant experience, the Yiddish and American press, historical studies, personal interviews, and works of fiction, to produce a work of social and cultural history that could "lay claim to being an accurate record." *World of Our Fathers*, a masterwork of historical writing, was timed to appear in 1976 to coincide with the bicentennial celebration of American independence. Howe was proclaiming that the history of the 2 million East European Jews who came to America starting in

the 1880s was a distinctly American story, a part of American history.

Noting that “cultures are slow to die,” Howe asked in his book to what extent the culture of East European Jewish immigrants was still active in second- and third-generation Jews. He claims that although “a great many” suburban Jews no longer spoke Yiddish, and a growing number did not understand it, or even know what, as Jews, they did not know, nevertheless their deepest inclinations of conduct showed signs of immigrant shaping. The kinds of vocation toward which they urged their children, their sense of appropriate family conduct, their idea of respectability and its opposite—all of it, according to Howe, “showed the strains of immigrant Yiddish culture, usually blurred, sometimes buried, but still at work.” Jewish socialism as such nearly vanished, but it took on a second, less vigorous life in the standard liberalism of suburban Jews. But the uglier impulses of Jewish radicalism, going back to the 1880s, also survived in the children of the Jewish suburbanites who filled the ranks of the New Left in the sixties: “A few of these young people . . . became enemies of Israel . . . ; they collected funds for Al Fatah, the Palestinian terrorist movement” (Howe 1976). This too, Howe acknowledges, had its precedent in the immigrant world, in postures of self-hatred and contempt for one’s fathers that were already present in the anarchists of the 1880s.

Although the popularity of *World of Our Fathers* (which won the National Book Award for history and enabled its author to be elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1979) threatened to make Howe into an institution, he was determined to make a full and honest reckoning with his past. This he did in *Leon Trotsky* (1978), *A Margin of Hope* (1982), and *Socialism and America* (1985). In all three, Howe tried to tell the truth about his radical socialist past. The second was an autobiography, telling little of life and loves, but much about his career as a public intellectual. Still, its dedication told of yet another change in Howe’s private life: whereas *World of Our Fathers* was dedicated to his third wife, the book of 1982 was dedicated to Ilana Wiener, an Israeli expatriate who had become his fourth.

Howe retired from the City University of New York in 1986, but he continued to write voluminously (and was named a MacArthur Fellow in 1987). For the third time in his career he went into combat against literary radicals, now called theorists, who saw little intrinsic value in litera-

ture and used it mainly as an instrument of their political ambitions. Slowed by illness in his last years, he died of a ruptured aorta in New York City in 1993.

What is Howe’s legacy? He viewed his three loves as lost causes. Two of them, socialism and secular Jewishness, really were; the third, humane literary study, may yet prove to be so. But to chronicle a devotion to lost causes, forsaken beliefs, and impossible loyalties is also to chronicle a kind of heroism. Howe liked to say that “one of the arts of life is to know how to end” (Howe 1982). Taken out of context, this might seem a counsel of stoical resignation; in fact, it was the opposite. He said it when writing about the American Yiddish poets who refused, out of a sense of honor and a strength of will, to admit the bleakness of their future. However desperate, they would confront the world with firmness—and that quixotic utopianism is what Howe meant by knowing how to end.

Edward Alexander

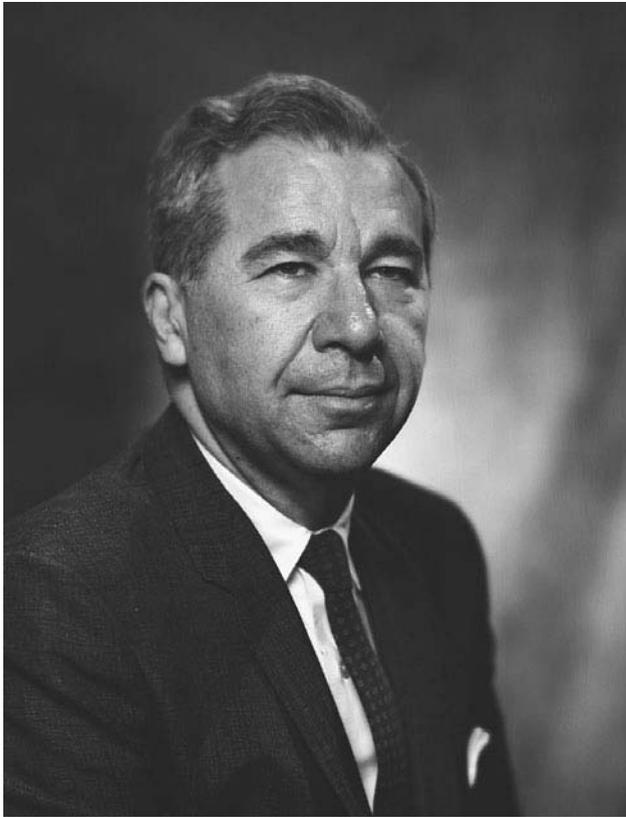
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## Alfred Kazin (1915–1998)

### Literary Critic

In the fall of 1942, Alfred Kazin, literary critic, historian, autobiographer, and all-around man of letters, burst onto the American literary scene at the age of twenty-seven with the publication of his classic study of modern American prose, *On Native Grounds*. He had already acquired the



Alfred Kazin, literary critic. (Corbis)

title of the wunderkind of American criticism as a prolific young reviewer for *The New York Herald Tribune: Books*, *The New York Times Book Review*, and *The New Republic*. The appearance of *On Native Grounds*, an authoritative study of the realist tradition in American literature, confirmed that a resounding new voice had entered the American literary arena. That he was educated at City College and came from the Brownsville district of Brooklyn, the son of working-class immigrant Jews, was also of interest. At a time when Jews were being slaughtered across Europe, the fact that the son of a house painter and an illiterate seamstress from the Minsk area of Russia had just published a 500-page history celebrating the democratic traditions in American letters was regarded by more than one reviewer as not just a literary, but a moral event.

*On Native Grounds* was an extraordinary act of *possession*, to use a favorite Kazin word. American literature was not there for the asking; it needed to be earned, as only an “outsider” felt that need. In a steady stream of essays and books—*The Inmost Leaf* (1955), *Contemporaries*

(1962), *Bright Book of Life* (1973), *An American Procession* (1984), *God and the American Writer* (1996)—Kazin would spend much of the next five decades making American literature his own. Some writers he possessed more completely than others. An “enthusiast,” he needed to feel close to writers. He wrote unconvincingly about figures beyond his range of sympathy: Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, Edith Wharton, Edgar Allan Poe. When he felt an intuitive kinship, however, he could be incandescent. His essays on Ralph Waldo Emerson, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Theodore Dreiser, and Saul Bellow are among the finest that have been written on these writers.

But *possession* need not mean assimilation. Kazin’s next major work, *A Walker in the City* (1951), is a memoir of his life growing up in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn. It describes a world of loneliness, yearning, fear, and belonging, where he often felt torn between his loyalties to his working-class Jewish parents and his desire for the world beyond the ghetto. What made his situation particularly difficult (and the book moving) is that his passion to escape Brownsville owed much of its intensity to his parents’ desire for him to leave—“anything just out of Brownsville”—an event that would release them from the “shame” of their lowly, outsider status (Kazin 1951). “I was to be the monument of their liberation from the shame—of being what they were” (Kazin 1951). He could redeem them only by leaving them. Having established his reputation as an international authority on American literature, Kazin made it again in *A Walker in the City*, a recognized canonical text in Jewish American literature.

*A Walker in the City* would be followed by two more autobiographies: *Starting Out in the Thirties* (1965) and *New York Jew* (1978). Their setting is Manhattan, where the child’s contradictory feelings about life in Brownsville return as a conflict between the rewards and the cost of “making it” in the world “beyond.” These too are intensely personal works, but Kazin also sees himself representing a historical phenomenon—the movement of Jewish American writers (and Jews generally) into the American mainstream. He calls the autobiographies “personal histories”—telling his own story, he was also writing history (Kazin 1982).

In the thirties, radical politics was one route for Jewish writers into American life. Kazin’s credentials as a literate socialist were important qualities for editors looking

for youthful talent. But if he possessed the political and intellectual credentials, he did not share the social background of those with whom he worked. Much of the drama of *Starting Out in the Thirties* derives from its hero's struggle to find his way socially in a largely WASP world very different from his own. The rest comes from history itself, as dreams of revolution turn into the nightmare of Hitler's war.

In *New York Jew*, Kazin is no longer the outsider. He is now at the center of New York's (and America's) intellectual and cultural life. Instead of struggling with a WASP literary establishment, he finds himself wrestling with the implications of his own success and that of other Jews who, like him, had started out in the thirties. The recurring question raised in the book is how to keep faith with his sense of himself as a Jew when Jews were no longer in the working class, no longer outsiders. One way was satire directed at those Jews, arrivistes, who, having "made it" in American life, had shed their early political commitments to the poor and dispossessed and joined in the strident anti-Communist crusade cheering on "America as an ideology" (Kazin 1978). An episodic, emotionally jagged account of life in postwar America, *New York Jew* is most impressive for its vivid, sometimes loving, sometimes acerbic portraits of Kazin's contemporaries: Saul Bellow, Lionel Trilling, Hannah Arendt, Edmund Wilson, among many others.

Kazin will be remembered primarily for *On Native Grounds* and his three autobiographies. It is important to note, however, that from the mid-thirties until his death on June 5, 1998, he was one of the country's most influential reviewer-critics, with a range of interests that included modern European and American literature and history, Jewish literature, and contemporary politics and culture. He was also a notable educator and cultural ambassador, who taught and lectured at universities around the world and held sustained professorial positions at Amherst, State University of New York–Stony Brook, Hunter College, and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. One of his favorite quotes was Issac Babel's "You must know everything." Kazin spent a lifetime in pursuit of that goal—reading, writing, teaching. On his death, the novelist Philip Roth called him "America's best reader of American literature in this century" (Hampton 1998).

Richard M. Cook

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## William Phillips (1907–2002)

Editor of *Partisan Review*

William Phillips was chiefly known as an editor of *Partisan Review* magazine for sixty-eight years. Commencing in an era when the literary establishment and universities placed a premium on the Anglo-Saxon heritage of literary critics and scholars, the journal was conceivably the most conspicuous venue by which several generations of Jewish American intellectuals won admittance to the centers of intellectual, cultural, and academic life in the United States. Its pages were electrified by worldly and novel ideas about modern literature, socialist doctrine, abstract art, and the role of the intelligentsia, sometimes published in the form of symposia. The publication was founded under a secular and cosmopolitan ethos that was never abandoned, even as the editors' original Marxist political militancy waned. Phillips rarely wrote on explicitly Jewish topics, although late in the history of the magazine he commented briefly on the trial of Adolph Eichmann and on the Israeli state.

Phillips's 1983 autobiography, *A Partisan View*, reveals a personal background of rootlessness and insecurity. He was born in Manhattan on November 14, 1907, to Jewish parents from Russia, Marie Berman and Edward Litvinsky. Phillips's father, trained as a lawyer but unsuccessful in his career, replaced the name Litvinsky with Phillips. During a period of marital separation, young William accompanied his mother to Kiev, where they lived for three years in the Berman household. When they returned with Phillips's maternal grandmother, the family moved to the Bronx.

Phillips's father sought escape from his occupational failures through sundry forms of spiritualism. Phillips's

mother suffered from hypochondriacism, and the grandmother was querulous too. Phillips attended the City College of New York and escaped his unpleasant home environment. There his friends introduced him to literary modernism, most notably a 1920 collection of essays by T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*. After graduating in 1928, Phillips became a graduate student at New York University, receiving an MA degree in 1930. While working as an instructor in the English department from 1929 to 1931, he read journals such as the *New Republic* and *Nation*, which moved him to the Left. He also met his first wife, Edna Greenblatt, who was an undergraduate studying literature and philosophy.

The Phillipses rapidly gravitated toward Bohemian and Communist circles in Greenwich Village. While Edna, who would become a public school teacher, joined the Communist Party, William became an activist in party cultural affairs as early as 1932. The theoretical journal of the party, *The Communist*, carried an essay of his on the philosopher Ortega y Gasset in January 1933, for which Phillips used the pseudonym Wallace Phelps. Reflecting the ultrarevolutionary party orientation of the time, Phillips characterized the Spaniard as a defamer of the Soviet Union, tool of Wall Street, and a concealed fascist. Nevertheless, in the January 1933 issue of the literary journal *Symposium*, writing under his own name, he announced himself a specialist in the technical aspects of criticism with an impressive essay, "Categories for Criticism."

By 1934, Phillips was a leader of the New York City chapter of the John Reed Club, a cultural affiliate of the Communist Party. In this capacity he made the acquaintance of a Communist Party member named Ivan Greenberg, who had been publishing criticism and poetry under the name Philip Rahv. Together they worked with party members and supporters to launch a new journal for the Club, which they called *Partisan Review*. The first issue, described as "A Bi-Monthly of Revolutionary Literature Published by the John Reed Club of New York," was dated February–March 1934 and included a review essay by Phillips. Writing as Wallace Phelps, his "The Anatomy of Liberalism" was a Marxist assessment of British literary critic Henry Hazlett.

Yet by 1936, Phillips and Rahv had become disenchanted with the Communist Party. They were disturbed by the 1935 turn of the Communist International toward the Popular Front alliance with liberal democracies, which

had produced a sea change in the party's cultural orientation, and also by the commencement in 1936 of the Moscow Purge Trials. Still adhering to a form of revolutionary Marxism, Rahv and Phillips were increasingly swayed by writings of the exiled Bolshevik Leon Trotsky, who repudiated Stalin's regime from Bolshevik principles. They stopped publishing *Partisan Review* for a year; it reappeared in December 1937 with a new editorial board of non-party members and a distinct orientation toward the modernist avant-garde in literature and art.

However, by the early 1940s Rahv and Phillips were feeling frustration with all components of the organized Left. Consequently Phillips sought to establish a surrogate foundation for *Partisan Review's* project, one that would justify their commitment to avant-garde modernism as well as to a radical outlook. His 1941 essay "The Intellectuals' Tradition" was a substantial effort to define that alternative. In this discussion of the nature of alienated avant-garde culture, he tries creatively to walk a middle ground between cultural criticism that focuses on the individual artist and a Marxist/historical criticism that tends to emphasize historical circumstance. While Phillips still saw Marxism as an advance over earlier approaches, he was vexed by an unresolved contradiction for the Marxist critic who insists that literature has autonomous values at the same time that he or she believes the values are actually produced by social context. Phillips theorizes that modern art actually springs from the intellectual stratum of society, sections of which are often in rebellion against the reigning ideas. Thus he regards the intellectuals themselves as the foundation of a tradition that can sustain the individual artist, making him or her a more representative figure.

In Phillips's view, intellectuals have set the tone for the European creative imagination since the rise of capitalism in countries that were adequately wealthy to maintain the growth of this stratum. United States literature, however, exhibits singular problems because the native intelligentsia has not paralleled Europe in becoming a detached and self-sufficient group. This tardiness is a consequence of the modern history of the United States occurring too swiftly and expansively, with the city starting to displace the countryside only after the Civil War.

For Phillips, the whole of United States culture might be typified by Henry Adams, a New Englander desperately in search of some pivotal tradition, some feeling of synthesis. Adams thought he discovered this in a dynamic law of

history, yet he ultimately came to suspect theory as inevitably misrepresenting facts. The result of this cultural heritage that strives for wholeness and then reverts to a new start is an ambivalent psyche; United States intellectuals are torn between the drive for self-rule and a tendency toward self-obliteration that produces a propensity to melt into the popular mind. The twentieth century has witnessed a regional nostalgia that was repudiated by naturalism, followed by the proletarian literary movement's aspiration to erase the bourgeois past. The disastrous pattern of the United States intellectuals perseveres—opposition followed by reconciliation, but never autonomy.

Phillips's views retained their same locus of values throughout the World War II years. In 1956 he furnished a retrospective called "American Writing Today." Here Phillips depicts the 1950s as a time when the literary intelligentsia was concentrating more on their own writing than on capacious literary and political questions. This was to some extent a backlash against the overpoliticized years of the 1930s and 1940s, but it was also a consequence of an enlarging affluence with a greater and more literate readership for books. Both imaginative authors and literary critics have narrowed, while sociologists and historians have provided much of the political thinking.

Phillips was also doubtful about recent shifts in publishing and on university campuses. Mass-market literature might simply create passive consumers, and college teaching tends to housebreak creative writers. He laments that the recent attacks on conformity in cultural spirit have mainly been against political repression from the Right. What has been ignored are intellectual conservatism and the tendency of literature to adapt to the marketplace.

Phillips published a small number of short stories after the late 1940s. Characteristic is his 1949 "Sleep No More," which features a Phillips-like protagonist named David Miller. Miller, a writer who travels in Bohemian circles, is awakened from an afternoon nap by a large man who identifies himself as being from Army Intelligence. The man is in search of a neighbor, Miss Caruso, who has moved out of the apartment complex. Miller allows himself to be questioned, although he knows little about Caruso. He recalls that she had literary pretensions, although he is unaware of her employment. Miller is desperate to know the reasons for the investigation, but the man from Army Intelligence evasively insists that his questions are routine. In the series of self-rationalizations that domi-

nate the first-person narrative, Miller tells himself that he will have no part in any political witch-hunting. Yet he also acknowledges that he would assist government authorities in helping to identify a possible spy. Although the Army Intelligence man never suggests that this is the case with Caruso, the overly loquacious Miller finds himself persisting in volunteering evidence, including the rumor that Miss Caruso is a lesbian and part Jewish.

Toward the end of the interview, Miller urges that the man from Army Intelligence confer with another tenant, Miss Johnson, as well as with the building superintendent. However, a few days later, Miller learns that neither person had been interrogated, and he becomes quite agitated. Attempting to contact Army Intelligence, Miller discovers that no such agency exists. Ultimately, Miller arranges a discussion with a military colonel who informs him that no person named Caruso has been under investigation, that the credentials that the alleged Army Intelligence man showed Miller appear to be phony, and that there have been additional reports of an imposter making the rounds. Miller is left unable to sleep and wondering what Miss Caruso would have said about Miller, had she been the one interviewed by the man claiming to be from Army Intelligence.

The story recalls the fiction of Franz Kafka in the hyperconscious self-reflexivity of the narrator and the sense of free-floating guilt hanging over him. At the same time the story blends this neurotic response to an investigator with what was probably an accurate reflection of the conflicted reaction of Phillips and his colleagues to the antiradical witch-hunt that would become known as McCarthyism. The *Partisan Review* editors wanted to do nothing to intensify the persecution of people who were simply nonconformists and heretics, yet they held that Communists were potentially dangerous to society in various ways.

Phillips's chief role on *Partisan Review* was to supervise fund-raising and the general functioning of the magazine. In 1963 he moved the magazine to Rutgers University for fifteen years, and Phillips became a faculty member in the English department. Rahv, however, grew increasingly distant from the journal, and also evolved a political and cultural perspective that Phillips did not share. Strangely, Rahv was moving back to the Marxism of his youth, while taking a much harsher view than Phillips of the cultural trends among younger writers and artists in the 1960s. In 1969 Rahv resigned, and Phillips's own public stature

became elevated as he chaired the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines (funded by the government) from 1967 to 1975. He also wrote more editorials for *Partisan Review* and participated in a greater number of the journal's symposia. In 1967 he published an essay collection called *A Sense of the Present*. However, a change in the administration at Rutgers in 1978 forced Phillips to move the journal to Boston University, where he continued editing it until he died of pneumonia in New York City at age ninety-four. Edna Phillips died in 1985, and in 1995 Phillips married Edith Kurzweil, a literary critic who briefly succeeded Phillips as editor of *Partisan Review* until Boston University closed the magazine in 2003.

Alan M. Wald

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## Philip Rahv (1908–1973)

### Literary Critic

Philip Rahv was among the principal Jewish American literary critics of the generation coming of age during the Great Depression. Author of a series of brilliant essays, some of which were collected in *Image and Idea* (1949), *The Myth and the Powerhouse* (1965), and *Literature and the Sixth Sense* (1969), Rahv provided influential cultural leadership for the circle of writers known as the New York Intellectuals. From 1934 until 1969, he was, with William Phillips, a co-editor of *Partisan Review*, the chief literary organ for this group, many of whom were Jewish American.

Rahv was born Ivan Greenberg at Kupin in the Russian Ukraine, arriving in Rhode Island at age fourteen to live with an older brother. Prior to the Depression, Rahv worked in advertising on the West Coast, then moved to New York City where he joined the Communist Party in 1932. Soon he was publishing poetry and criticism in Communist Party journals as Philip Rahv, chosen because the last name means rabbi in Hebrew. In 1934 he united with Phillips and other members of the John Reed Club, a Communist-led cultural organization, to launch *Partisan Review* as its New York City publication. Two years later, however, Rahv began to reconsider his relation to the party in light of the party's turn to the Popular Front and onset of the Moscow Purge Trials.

In December 1937 *Partisan Review* reappeared, this time as a rival to the party's cultural movement and with a special focus on literary modernism. The magazine was partially identified with the ideas of the exiled leader of the Russian Revolution, Leon Trotsky, until the start of World War II. At that time Rahv fell into a dispute with two of the more left-wing editors, Dwight Macdonald and Clement Greenberg, who resigned in 1943. Thereafter the politics of the magazine became steadfastly tempered, although the literary alignment remained fixed on the high modernism associated with T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, Franz Kafka, and other Europeans.

In accordance with many Marxist-oriented Jewish intellectuals of his era, Rahv regarded his Jewish identity as a constituent of his internationalism and cosmopolitanism. However, his consistent emphasis on the need to Europeanize United States culture, and his fusing literature with a program of radical social change to overcome provincialism and insularity, may be expressions of his Jewish background. Beginning as an outsider to the cultural establishment of the United States, Rahv's upward mobility into a position of considerable influence in the 1950s more or less parallels the movement of Jewish American literature as a whole.

Among Rahv's most prominent essays is "Proletarian Literature: A Political Autopsy," a landmark renunciation of the Communist-led cultural movement of the 1930s. Rahv's mission was to debunk the literary movement of writers allied with the Communist Party. While the newness of the proletarian literary phenomenon resided in the attention that writers and critics drew to connections between art and society, Rahv reasoned that the novel move-

ment could not be fathomed apart from the Communist Party's particular version of those connections. It was not Marxist doctrine that the critics promoting proletarian literature applied to culture, only the Communist Party's questionable redaction.

Rahv explained that objective conditions set the stage for the development of the proletarian movement. These included the catastrophe of the Depression that drew compassion for the working man; the inability of literary models of the 1920s to acknowledge the new situation in the 1930s; and the actuality of a Communist Party that gladly received a literary program that might correspond to its political aims. Moreover, the Communist Party afforded an audience and foundation, and it even offered the illustration of the Soviet Union as the quintessence of the socialist utopia. Writers were bewitched by the formula that they should confederate with the working class and admit the class struggle as the overriding fact of modern life. However, this formula said nothing about aesthetics, mixed the borders between art and politics, fell short of concretizing what the political commitment actually meant in the circumstances of the 1930s, and hid the fact that the welfare of the working class was identified with the politics of a particular party. Under these conditions, discernments of literary critics became political judgments of the apparent or veiled ideas of the literature vis-à-vis the Communist Party. The result was not revolutionary writing, but "an internationally uniform literature . . . whose main service was the carrying out of party assignments" (Rahv 1978).

The implications of Rahv's critique were not restricted to the Communist Party. After all, any literature allied with a political movement is curbed by utilitarian objectives, and the authentic literature associated with a gigantic social class expresses a variety of levels, groupings, and interests. Moreover, in the instance of industrial capitalism, it was not the proletariat but the ruling class that had the assets to command the culture, leaving the subaltern group only minor resources such as urban folklore. Rahv thus observes that even the writers formally certified as proletarian by the Communist Party are affiliated with bourgeois creative styles and techniques; their writings are unique only on a doctrinal political foundation. Further confirmation that proletarian literature was Communist Party literature can be found in its swift rise and collapse in connection with the fate and political requirement of the Party. In the second part of the 1930s,

with the appearance of the Popular Front and the Communist Party's attempt to ally with the forces of liberal capitalism, the party shifted its alignment in culture. The central question was no longer the pro-Communist ideological implications of the literary text, but the anti-fascist political stance of the artist, whose writing need not even be radical to gain approval.

Rahv's polemic embodied many substantial truths, eminently in regard to the Communist Party's identification of Marxism and the interests of the working class with its own policies. On the other hand, Rahv blundered in curtailing complex works of art to their political component; he failed to concede the central part played in the creative process by individual psychology as well as each artist's reservoir of skills. Seventy years later, many books associated with the proletarian school have been reprinted and are valued for formal and dramatic features that Rahv was either unaware of or failed to esteem.

In the summer of 1939, Rahv concurrently published in *Kenyon Review* an influential statement about the past, present, and future of United States literature, "Paleface and Redskin." His thesis was that United States writers gravitate toward two categories, usually antagonistic, resulting in overall literary careers that were asymmetrical and fractional. Some writers Rahv assessed as tragically lonely, such as Herman Melville, or as sometimes writing drawing room fiction, such as Henry James. Others were obstreperous and open-air, such as Mark Twain and Walt Whitman. In other words, one school tended toward sensibility, discipline, and theory; the other toward energy, action, and opportunity. One side is genteel and sees ambiguity in the culture; the other is rough-hewn and rejoices in it. The palefaces are regarded by Rahv as high-brow, but not to be assessed as an intelligentsia in the European sense. The rival redskins are educated, but actually lowbrow in being impulsive and passionate. James and Whitman are the farthest apart. In a memorable phrase he characterized them as "fatal antipodes," between whom one appears compelled to take sides (Rahv 1978). They occasion a cleft in literary tradition unmatched in Europe.

Rahv's 1940 "The Cult of Experience in American Writing" is an embellishment of the same proposition. James again exemplifies the paleface tradition, but this time Rahv adds that James's fiction sporadically discloses an awareness that the individual can mature only through interplay with experience. In contrast, there is once again

the outstanding literary trend celebrating experience, associated with Whitman, Sherwood Anderson, and Thomas Wolfe. Yet their writings are largely denuded of ideas. In fact, even James is limited intellectually in that he searches for a means of enhancing life; this approach is distinguished from European masters—such as Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Flaubert, Proust, Joyce, Mann, Lawrence, and Kafka—who are characterized as focusing on life's essential quality and fate. Rahv believes that here lies the explanation for the absence of a genuine intelligentsia as characters in the American novel; there are artists, teachers, and scientists, but “not a person thinking with their entire being . . . who transforms ideas into actual dramatic motives instead of using them as ideological conventions or as theories so externally applied that they can be dispensed with at will” (Rahv 1978).

Rahv differentiates the twentieth-century novel as exhibiting a positive advance toward the acquisition of experience, whereas classic, early United States writing is more a chronicle of inexperience; that latter is mostly genteel and local, with romance as a preferred genre. Only in the writings of James did the new realist methods of Europe make an impression. The 1920s featured a drive for an even greater experience, and the 1930s witnessed an attempt to appropriate political ideas. However, when U.S. Left writers of the Great Depression are compared to European contemporaries such as André Malraux and Ignazio Silone, Rahv feels as if the former are only providing a slice of life, not depicting personalities cognizant of historical necessity. At the end of the 1930s, Rahv felt the creative capacity of the “cult of experience” to be well-nigh depleted, at the same time that a new shift was under way from national to international forces of cultural determination.

By the time of the Cold War, Rahv, despite a short blast against Senator Joseph McCarthy, appears to have become de-radicalized. After 1957 he was ensconced as professor of English and Comparative Literature at Brandeis University. Yet, in 1967, when the New Left was well under way, Rahv began to aggressively differentiate himself from the liberal anticommunists with whom he had been closely associated for nearly two decades. Declaring firmly that he was never a liberal, Rahv avowed that his views were still considerably the same as they were in the late 1930s. His ensuing exertions to persuade militant activists of the 1960s that what they required for victory was a truly revolutionary political party indicates that his reconversion in

the realm of ideology was earnest. At the same time, however, Rahv was repelled by the cultural ethos of the New Left, and he began to suspect that his co-editor of *Partisan Review*, Phillips, was capitulating to the revolution of drugs, rock music, and cult figures such as Marshall McLuhan. Thus Rahv parted from the journal and launched his own short-lived publication in 1971 called *Modern Occasions*. His personal life fared no better as he failed in a third marriage, succumbed to rages and vendettas against one-time literary allies, and drank excessively. In 1973 Rahv took a leave of absence from Brandeis to complete books on Leon Trotsky and Fyodor Dostoevsky, but died halfway through the year at age sixty-five. To the amazement of some of his radical friends, Rahv willed his fortune to the State of Israel.

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## Lionel Trilling (1905–1975)

### Literary Critic

When Lionel Trilling died in 1975 it was generally conceded that literature had lost the most influential critic of the post–World War II era and that, in effect, a literary office had fallen vacant. Trilling was by then something more than just a critic; he was a *figure* and almost that rarest of creatures, an academic celebrity. His words carried weight: they had gravitas. He even came, in time, to be something of a standard source, a coiner of commonplaces: variousness and possibility, the tragic sense of life, the opposing self, the liberal imagination, ideas in modulation.



Lionel Trilling, literary critic and Columbia professor. (Getty Images)

Trilling enjoyed standing in both the academy and the cockpit of literary politics and polemic: New York City. He was a pivotal figure among the New York intellectuals, and a crude silhouette of his career would look like a shadow of what they all had experienced. Like others of his generation, Trilling had survived a youthful brush with Marxism, touching down briefly in the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners, a radical group of intellectuals, artists, and writers associated with the Communist Party. That experience made lifelong anti-Communists of both him and his wife, Diana. Trilling shifted course in the 1930s by immersing himself in the writing of Matthew Arnold (about whom he wrote his PhD dissertation) and E. M. Forster. Indeed, Trilling's first book of essays, *The Liberal Imagination* in 1950, was a testament of conversion, and it would become the signature book by which the intellectual world would ever after judge him.

Unlike other New York intellectuals, who fancied themselves modernists, Trilling distrusted the avant-garde

and was more at ease in the nineteenth century, with its broad vistas and thick textures, its social novels with their manners, morals, and cool-eyed acceptance of fatality. He shared with the others the view of literature as the expression of history, politics, class, and the *Zeitgeist*, and he made a practice of keeping watch over the currents and eddies of what his circle called "the culture," which consisted largely of the opinions and social habits of the eastern, liberal intelligentsia. But he was also a scholar and a teacher, a historian of modern social thought whose early books on Matthew Arnold (1939) and E. M. Forster (1943) and later studies of Freud—"Freud and Literature" (1947), "Art and Neurosis" (1945)—gave him credentials in the Modern Language Association and International Psychoanalytic Association. In addition, as an editor of the Readers' Subscription, Trilling enjoyed a rare and successful venture into the commercial side of letters.

It was a matter of vital importance that he was the first Jew to gain a full-time appointment (in 1939) and to gain tenure in English (1945) at Columbia University, where for years he was looked upon as an experiment. However, as the age demanded, his Jewishness could appear abstract and occluded. Seldom did his imagination come to rest on Jewish themes—most notably in his magisterial introduction to the stories of Isaac Babel in 1955—and nothing in his personal elegance or his lucid, supple, periodic prose suggested the restlessness, vividness, and combative postures that otherwise marked the entry of Eastern European Jews into the precincts of American thought. Maybe the word that best describes Trilling ethnically is *cosmopolitan*, suggesting the internationalism and worldliness of those whom historian Isaac Deutscher famously referred to as non-Jewish Jews. And it was a regional cosmopolitanism at that. Trilling was born in New York City, taught at Columbia University on Morningside Heights, and died in New York. But then New York was an international city, and never more so than during the 1940s and 1950s when it became home to the emigré artists, writers, and intellectuals who had fled from Stalin and Hitler and who had brought the intellectual vitality of Paris, Berlin, and Leningrad to Manhattan.

Trilling began publishing in 1925 in Elliot Cohen's and Henry Hurwitz's *Menorah Journal*, the monthly publication of the Menorah Society, whose broad purpose was the formation of a nonsectarian, humanist, and progressive Jewish consciousness in America. But he deserted that

magazine and its efforts at “cultivated” Jewishness in 1930 for the swifter tides of the intellectual mainstream in *The Nation* and *The New Republic*, as well as, for a brief moment, in V. F. Calverton’s leftish *Modern Quarterly/Modern Monthly*. In 1944, reflecting on the depth and import of his Jewishness, he declined to waste any nostalgia on his youthful torments over his Jewish identity or to claim any influence on him of organized Jewish life. “As the Jewish community now exists,” he harshly observed, “it can give no sustenance to the American artist or intellectual who is born a Jew. And so far as I am aware, it has not done so in the past. I know of writers who have used their Jewish experience as the subject of excellent work; I know of no writer in English who has added a micromillimetre to his stature by ‘realizing his Jewishness,’ although I know of some who have curtailed their promise by trying to heighten their Jewish consciousness” (Trilling 1944).

The cosmopolitanism that Trilling adopted in place of the discarded Jewishness included a proclivity for the literature and thought of England’s Victorian age. Though unique in its devotion, Trilling’s Anglophilia followed certain lines of cultural force that were bound to affect a Jewish literary intellectual whose education had put him in touch with the expressive powers of the English language and the vitality of English literature, and, yes, with those gargoyles of the Anglo-Saxon imagination: the Fagins, Shylocks, Bleisteins, and Jews of Malta who haunted its dreams.

As a Victorianist, Trilling made character his touchstone; he was a Hebraist, as Arnold used the term—one who placed strictness of conscience before the sweetness and light of Hellenism. He could have been speaking for himself in claiming for George Orwell that, unlike Yeats or Eliot or Forster, he “takes his place . . . as a figure. In one degree or another they are geniuses, and he is not; if we ask what it is he stands for, what he is the figure of, the answer is: the virtue of not being a genius, of fronting the world with nothing more than one’s simple, direct, undeceived intelligence, and a respect for the powers one does have, and the work one undertakes to do” (Trilling 1944). It is a claim for the undeceived intelligence that Trilling will stand on for all his literary heroes as well as for himself.

Trilling these days is best known for his resistances—his antagonism to the articles of progressive faith held dear by his own literary culture: revolutionism, social justice, the injuries of capitalism, and in later decades the fetish of

“authenticity” in the 1960s counterculture. Trilling’s brand of cosmopolitanism was parochial after its own fashion, not only in its exaggerated regard for Bloomsbury mannerisms but in Trilling’s general preference for defining himself against the grain of whatever garde was currently avant. His was a cosmopolitanism with a stringent sense of limits and a practice of being old-fashioned. As a writer, too, he could be studiously retro in prizing the human figure, the moral exemplum, above all else. Thus his most memorable essays from the essay collections, *The Liberal Imagination* (1950), *The Opposing Self* (1953), and *Beyond Culture* (1965), were his portraits: “Kipling,” “The Poet as Hero: Keats in his Letters,” “George Orwell and the Politics of Truth,” “Isaac Babel,” “James Joyce in his Letters,” “Why We Read Jane Austen.”

The actual gratifications in reading Trilling, however, are not those of coming upon insights indelibly phrased, as they are in reading, say, Edmund Wilson. Trilling was a soft stylist. His sentences generally lack a high gloss; they are plainspoken tending toward the fussy, sometimes indeed overripe with the “yet” and “but” clauses of the dialogist who happens to be conducting his most animated dialogues with himself. No, the pleasures of reading Trilling are those of watching an argument unfold, as he appears to make decisions on the fly, turning this corner or that as if weighing each implication as he writes.

But style with Trilling sometimes had a way of turning into matter. In his later books, Trilling showed a weakness for personified abstractions, like *mind*, *thought*, *the self*, and *the modern will*, which were often aliases for himself, and his continuing efforts to transcend culture, while recommending those novels in which it was most urgently recorded, exfoliated into aviaries of thought in which his positions became elusive, the dialectics hermetic, and the abstractions vaporous. *Beyond Culture* (1965) and *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1972) are troubled and troubling books whose difficulties reflect the perplexities of Trilling’s own thought and the ambiguities of his own system of metaphysics and masks. The very title of his last publication in book form, the monograph *Mind in the Modern World* (1972), suggests the mental embattlement that in later years would dominate his self-conception. These later books did not exert influence comparable to that of *The Liberal Imagination*, though their prestige may grow in time when their exquisite ironies and superb balances can be better appreciated.

Ironic though it may seem, it is likely that what will keep Trilling's name and example alive into the twenty-first century is precisely the literary academy that has done all it can to erase him. Indeed, a Balkanized literary culture in which anything can be text, any text can be "theorized," and even the soundest idea can be tortured into barbarous, Latinized syntax may be the condition for recalling the lucidity and rationality for which Trilling stood. In death as in life Trilling remains the opposing self, the counter-example, the antidote to those intellectual excesses that dominate our present culture of literary study.

*Mark Shechner*

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# American Jews and Art

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## Jewish American Artists and Their Themes in the Twentieth Century

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The underlying question for Jewish American artists in the twentieth century is where their art fits into Western art, which has been essentially Christian during most of the past seventeen centuries. Interwoven with this question is an array of social, religious, and aesthetic issues reflecting on the matter of being Jewish and American.

The theme of art as a commentary on the ills of the world—which helps to correct these ills by causing the viewer to consider them—has engaged many Jewish American artists. Ben Shahn (1898–1969) traced the sociopolitical concerns of his Social Realism to his Jewishness and to the heritage derived from the biblical prophets. Raphael Soyer and Jack Levine followed a similar Social Realist course. Soyer's brooding, lonely dark-eyed figures—whether his immigrant parents, struggling to adjust to the New World, or children on a New York City street—are steeped in existential isolation. Levine's imagery is often politically charged. *Feast of Pure Reason* (1937) shimmers with a gauze-like light that illuminates the well-fed look of officials who have grown fat leeching the People.

Joyce Ellen Weinstein taught for years in a mostly African American high school, where a number of her pupils did not make it through school alive. In 1988 she

began a series that memorialized *The Bold Dead Boys*, working on it through the mid-1990s (Soltes 1996). Sixteen portraits and eight smaller details were done with charcoal on paper and dripping red oil paint. The colors of purgatory—but leading to no salvation—the colors of death and blood, depict Malcolm, Kevin, Robert, and other young men. Their birth and death dates—none older than twenty-one—require no further words. Their blood cries out, but society is deaf to those cries.

Within this context of social concern, one of the most frequent reference points for Jewish artists, especially in the last quarter of the twentieth century, has been the Holocaust. From Ben-Zion's series *De Profundis* (1943) and Leon Golub's *Charnel House* (1946) to Marty Kalb's *They No Longer Cry* series (1993), scores of Jewish artists have responded in a manner representational enough for there to be no question as to the horror that inspired them. The work of others, like survivor Kitty Klaidman, falls on the border between the representational and the abstract. The titles and/or the viewer's awareness of this period in her life clarify the subject. In her 1992 *Abstracting Memory* series, she reduced the joists and beams of an attic space to a Chromaticist exploration of verticals, horizontals, and diagonals filled in with flattened pigment. The attic was the place in which she, then three, together with her brother and parents, was hidden by a Slovakian family. She began to wrestle that subject onto the canvas

only after a forty-four-year hiatus that ended with a trip to Slovakia and the farmhouse where her memories were hidden (Soltes 2003).

Some American Jewish artists have developed their own vocabulary for reflecting on the Holocaust. For RB Kitaj, the crematorium chimney became a recurrent motif in the 1980s: for him it is *the* Jewish symbol. Others have found resonance in other images. Railroad tracks lead, ladder-like upward—to nowhere except the oblivion beyond the canvas, as in work by Alice Lok Cahana, Hungarian survivor—or converge to a vanishing point deep within the picture plane. Suitcases, particularly piled up alongside attenuated figures, are a Holocaust symbol in the hands of artists like Michael Katz. They connote the Jewish experience of *aloneness*—waiting, suitcase in hand, on the railroad platform, on the way to the concentration camp—joined to the universal idea of the loneliness experienced by *any* traveler in an alien setting (Soltes 1995).

In the last two decades, Jewish American artists' focus on the Holocaust has expanded exponentially, in terms of both the symbols and the range of media and style. In Judy Herzl's *Forest of Witnesses* and *I Question* (1990), leaves, the trees from which they have been stripped, and the forest are multiply evocative of the Holocaust. They call out for those marched into the woods and executed without human witnesses. But the trees themselves *were* the witnesses, standing silently, passively—as silent and passive as so many humans beyond those forests were. Forests were also redemptive witnesses, hiding those fleeing from or fighting against the Nazis.

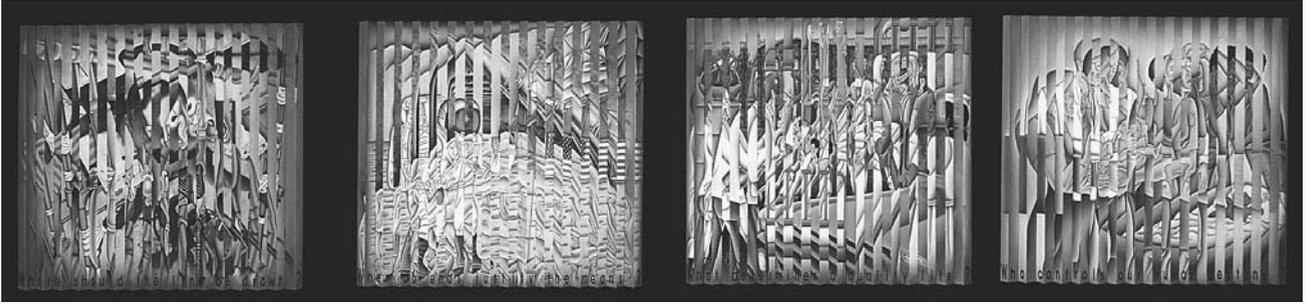
Parts of Judy Chicago's *Holocaust Project* deconstruct the world and put it back together in a geometrically skewed fashion. Combining photography by her husband Donald Woodman with her painting and drawing, together with an eighteen-foot tapestry and stained-glass work, her team produced a 3,000-square-foot compendium of darkness and hope. An array of details connects the Holocaust to larger Jewish—and human—issues, including the other twentieth-century genocides and the threat of nuclear annihilation. In manipulating combined media to produce its imagery, the *Project* plays on the power of manipulation. The conceptually seminal image in the series is *Four Questions*, in which each triangularly—triunely—faceted edge thrusts out at the viewer, asking unanswerable questions regarding God's presence or absence and the human role, active and passive, in the Cata-

strophe. *Four Questions* traditionally alludes to the questions asked at the Passover table, the answers to which form the narrative that shapes the seder. If the theme of the seder is God's redemptive power, turning the Four Questions toward the Holocaust induces the viewer to wonder where that redemptive right arm and outstretched hand were half a century ago (Chicago 1993).

Dorit Cypis's photographs offer analogous visual questions, directed at humans, not God. Her *Aesthetic Lessons* series is a group of abstract plays with line and form, and dark/light contrasts. Slowly the viewer realizes that these are piles of hair and eyeglasses, suffused with a familiar horror. They can only be piles gathered and stored in the Nazi extermination camps and displayed half a century later. Cypis's *Hybrid Eyes* series is an eerie play on revisiting familiar elements in unfamiliar combinations (one blue, one brown, for instance) that have as their visual purpose to make us look and look again, to question whether our first vision was true or false. In the context of the experiments with eyes, as with other body parts, in the Nazi camps, these enormous off-eyes are *disturbing*.

Contrary to general critical assumption, the Chromaticist Abstract Expressionists who dominated the New York art scene in the 1950s—Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, and Adolph Gottlieb—were not merely focused on aesthetics. They engaged in long discussions, asking what, if anything, their art had to do with their Jewishness, and how their art might be an instrument of response to the Holocaust (Soltes 2003). Their large, unframed canvases became part of the answer. One's eye is drawn toward the *center* of a Rothko or a Newman; chaotic forms are framed in a unifying white in Gottlieb's canonical works. Newman wrote about their discussions, including references to the sixteenth-century kabbalist Isaac Luria; Newman also often offered titles suggesting his beyond-mere-aesthetics agenda. They suggest the Lurianic goal of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world).

In Newman's "zip" paintings, a central element emerges from behind the larger fields of color that flank it, which are being driven apart by it (as in *Genesis*, when the ordering process leads from light to the separation of the waters above from those below by a firmament). But the central element also draws the viewer's eye *toward* it, symbolically restoring order by reunifying the world blown apart by the events of midcentury. The title of the *Covenant* series specifically alludes to the agreement be-



The Four Questions by Judy Chicago, from her series *The Holocaust Project*. (© 2005 Judy Chicago/Artist Rights Society [ARS]/New York)

tween God and the Israelites at Sinai. The Covenant carried with it promise and responsibility for those who practice the moral behavior set forth by the Covenantal text (the Torah). Works such as this express the hope for the restoration of moral order in a moral covenant of humans with humans.

It is not only the work of the Chromaticist Abstract Expressionists that combined aesthetic and other concerns. Some claim that Morris Louis's first group of canonical paintings, the *Veils II* series (1958–1959) of rich yet delicate overlapping pigments, offers a mystical quality (Preston 1959). Frequently traveling to New York from Baltimore, Louis sat in on the kabbalistic discussions of Newman and the other Chromaticists. Some of the issues they raised must have influenced Louis. The veils are not merely veils of color, but reflections on the Jewish mystical notion that veils, however infinitesimally thin, remain between God and the mystic.

Louis's second canonical series, the *Unfurleds* (1960–1961), offers a translucence analogous to the *Veils*, but the pigment flows along the *sides* of the canvas, leaving a vast, open space as the center. That center is not merely unpainted, it is also unprimed, as empty as a stretch of canvas could possibly be. In art historical terms, the area that is traditionally positive is negative; the outer edge that would frame the subject is all that is painted, which one might call a subject. In traditional and certainly in Christian art, that central area might be expected to depict and/or address divinity and its concomitants. In Louis's *Unfurleds*, that space—devoid of color, yet in being white, actually filled with the totality of color—may depict the subject that it appears not to depict and that it cannot depict, in Jewish terms.

Louis's canvases reorder the universe in microcosmic terms, and they comment on the absence of the Supreme

Orderer when humans were so overwhelmingly destructive of one another in the generation preceding these works. The end of that era initiated a period of nuclear experimentation and terror in the context of the Cold War. The downward drip of the side pigments pushes to the canvas edge, as if contouring a mushroom-shaped flash of blinding light. The nuclear reality of the Kennedy-Krushchev-Cuban missile crisis is analogous to the chaos in the era of Noah and the Flood. Is it mere coincidence that those colorful *Unfurleds* side elements bear a strong resemblance to rainbows (Soltes 2003)?

Jewish American artists have focused variously on “Jewish” subject matter. Tobi Kahn's paintings—landscape-like abstractions, which in their luminous spiritual quality evoke Mark Rothko and in their biomorphic contours recall Arthur Dove and Georgia O'Keeffe—are richly sculptural. Whole groups of his sculptures—the “shrines,” in which carved pieces of wood, cast in bronze, are placed in architectural settings—suggest liturgical art without being liturgical art. He has been creating these for years in all sizes; they simultaneously evoke Greco-Roman *aedicula*, Christian reliquaries, and—not least—the *mishkan* (tabernacle) itself in the Jewish tradition. He creates Jewish ceremonial objects with a newness of style and method that recalls his paintings and sculptures. His Judaism and his art are subtly interwoven strands in one tapestry.

Archie Rand's work, though more obviously Jewish, will not fit into a particular box of Jewishness. Rand's painting consistently expresses the conviction that art can be contemporary—even abstract—and bear overtly Jewish content. A frequent feature of his work is text—the ultimate Jewish tradition—but invariably superimposed over visual elements that invoke Chromaticist Abstract Expressionism. From his overrunning the walls of the B'nai Yosef synagogue in Brooklyn (1974–1977) with murals that recall the

mid-third-century synagogue at Dura Europus, to his 1994 series of paintings, *The Eighteen: Blessings at the Heart of Jewish Worship*, Rand synthesizes traditional Jewish visual imagery with features—like Abstract Expressionist features—customarily thought to eschew a religious connection.

In *The Eighteen* one can observe four distinct elements that, in each of the panels, offer a synthesis of visual thinking. The general tenor is that of a Chromaticist painting, but within it symbols significant to Jewish visual history, such as the seven-branched candelabrum or the ancient synagogue's Syrian gable, share the foreground with multi-cultural elements that range from Ionic/Aeolic column capitals to infinitizing Islamic patterning. The center offers the sweep of the Hebrew benediction; text and image thus interplay in eighteen particular forms that not only refer to those benedictions, but are a pun on the number eighteen as representing life. (Eighteen is the numerical value of the two letters that comprise the Hebrew word for life.) Rand's work is about making "an art that was not *about being Jewish* but that *was Jewish*" (Rand 2003).

The matter of textuality—*how* are Jews the People of the Book—has also flourished in late twentieth-century art by Jewish Americans, particularly as letters and deconstructed words relate to Jewish mysticism. Jane Logemann's work is layered with text: rows of letters and words over which subtle pigments are washed. They may be viewed as abstractions and, at the same time, read literally in terms of their content and message. The word has become the image: the repetition of a word, run together so that its beginning and end points are not apparent, implies that it is the letters, not the words, that are repeated endlessly. This suggests the patterns of sound-and-syllable repetition prescribed for the Jewish mystic in some kabbalistic systems. The *sense* of the words is lost in the patterns that carry the mystic toward union with the realm of *non-sense*. But the ongoing rhythmic patterns also recall contemporary music (Philip Glass, for instance), ancient Byzantine mosaics, and Islamic art—thereby embedding Jewish foci within universal ones.

This screw is twisted backward in the work of Diane Samuels. *Letter Liturgy (for Leon)* (1995), an installation centered on a "book" written with both real and imagined alphabets, reflects on an old Hasidic story regarding what God accepts as piety: not book-learned knowledge of the prayer book or the Torah, but the purity of the heart's intention, symbolized by the illiterate Jewish peasant who

cannot read the prayers but keeps reciting the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which God combines into words. Samuels plays on the arbitrariness of letters as symbols that, in combination, represent words and ideas. Do prayers require well wrought words or, for a textual people like Jews, well shaped letters? With what instruments—words? melodies? gestures? images?—does one most effectively address God? Is God listening and looking—and interested—any more?

Mel Alexenberg's work insists that God *is*. He repeatedly draws from the Jewish tradition and/or his thinking about it. Even the method of much of his work, computer generation, is inherently Jewish. The circular structure characteristic of computers and their chips is analogous to the circularity that is at the heart of Jewish thinking, as opposed to linear, Greek-based Western thinking. The Torah is a double scroll; it is read from beginning to end again and again *ad infinitum*, so there is no end to its study; the *midrash* (its primary forum of study and discussion) is circular in its thought patterns. Alexenberg often uses the images of angels (which he computer-generates), based on those in Rembrandt's version of *Jacob's Dream*, superimposed over, or in conjunction with, banal advertisements for food. He intends to suggest art as a connector between heaven (angels) and earth (food), by way of wordplays in Hebrew (for the root of all three words—*food*, *art*, and *angel*—is the same in Hebrew).

Susan Schwalb's *Creation* series of the early 1990s is a series of triptychs. But the artist has redefined that most Christian form of visual expression, with its triune symbolism, as many Jewish artists have, in Jewish terms. Her technique revives the Renaissance penchant for silver and copper point and weds it to the medieval use of gold leaf—but in abstract compositions inspired by the opening images in the *Sarajevo Haggadah*. In most of the works in Schwalb's series, six small circles and a significantly larger seventh circle swirl in silverpoint against an earth-brown and/or a dark or light (night or day) sky-blue background, the whole edged by a white gold leaf frame. *Creation* has been revised in the abstract geometry of the circle. "When I first came across the *Sarajevo Haggadah* I was powerfully stirred to find images of arc and circle. . . . Unlike familiar Christian portrayals of the creation, the image of God is not represented," she wrote (Soltes 1993).

Many works in Schwalb's *Creation* series add to the arc-circle configuration a downward-pointing triangle

with vertical line from midbase to apex—a symbol of femaleness traceable back to Neolithic art. The issue of long suppressed female artistic creativity is interwoven with that of Jewish visual creativity in the very textures of the silverpoint surface she works. Thousands of fine lines engender an active energy—flesh-like, water-like, sky-like—within the static confines of the framing forms. The watery, wave-like lines of the silverpoint surface in the tumescent frame suggest the amniotic fluid of the womb that connects the birth of humans to the birth of art and Jewish art and the birth of the universe.

Susan Ressler has synthesized the triptych form to the visual investigation of a particular Jewish holiday and to specific questions regarding the role of women in her *Vashti's Tale: A Modern-day Bestiary*. Vashti is the queen disposed of by Persian King Ahasuerus when she refuses to entertain him and his pals in the midst of a monthlong drinking party; her demise clears the way for the heroine, Esther, to appear on the stage. The artist is transfixed by how to understand both Vashti (as a feminist heroine) and Esther (as the first diasporatic crypto-Jew)—and the interweave of politics and spirituality in the text of the Book of Esther.

Devorah Neumark's work focuses on the two edges of Jewish married life—wedding and divorce—with irony and wit. “*Harrei At Mutteret . . .*” (“Behold you are released . . .”) are words of divorce, echoing the words spoken by the groom, as he places a ring around the bride's finger. Neumark's installation follows women through the passage between marriage and nonmarriage, a metaphor for the passage between entitlement and nonentitlement. Framed transparencies of historic illustrations by unknown and well-known artists (not Jewish, like Rembrandt, and Jewish, like Moritz Oppenheim) depict the joy of the Jewish wedding. There are ten of these photo boxes, as if we are observing a women's *minyan*; each is surmounted by a wine goblet—wine being a traditional Jewish symbol of joy. Seven of the goblets (the number of blessings recited at the wedding and the number of times the bride walks around the groom) are inscribed with the Hebrew words of release. Scores of goblets complete the installation, stacked and pulling from the wall in a semicircle. The shattered forms (“to remember the destroyed Temple”) of some recall the relative ease of divorce in Judaism (compared to the Christian tradition), and yet its difficulty, indeed impossibility, should the husband not desire it.

Also rich with paradox is Helene Aylon's *The Book That Would Not Close*, whose five open volumes revision the beginnings of Judaism through revisioning Judaism's textual foundation, the Torah. In *her* texts she has singled out and deleted or highlighted passages that reflect negativity toward women. In this the artist highlights her own struggle (she comes from an Orthodox background) to reconcile her religious and gender identities as she reshapes what is traditionally understood to be the word of God into a more female-inclusive form. Can God have uttered the words that she has excised, or do they derive from God's male conduits and interpreters?

Israel has also been a focus of Jewish American artists. Photographer Judy Moore-Kraichnan blends images taken at different times as “a way of bringing time into an otherwise static medium” (Soltes 2005). Both *Hebron Road* and *Western Wall and Tunnel* merge the past and the present—continuity and change—in the context of Jerusalem, as seen between 1849 and 1917 and again between 1993 and 1998. In the first image, an 1895 photograph with a caravan of camels is implanted within the 1994 photograph by Moore-Kraichnan: automobiles seep from the newer image into the older. In the second, the double-exposure effect yields a play on the idea of perspective: our eyes move into the picture toward the vanishing point, and thus the notions of reality and illusion—central to the very air of Jerusalem, thick with the claims of diverse religious groups and crawling with both tourists and would-be prophets—overwhelm the viewer's eye and mind.

Jews reaching out from America and Jews flowing into America are part of an enduring theme. In a series of collage-paintings—*Where Did They Go When They Came to America?* (1989–1994)—Marilyn Cohen presents the stories of one immigrant Jewish family in each of the fifty states. Based on oral histories and old photographs, these reflect more than a century of everyday life. *Aloha Gothic* depicts Nachman ben Joseph Usheroﬀ, who migrated from czarist Russia to Harbin, China, in 1905 and eventually to Hawaii in 1928, where his wife and daughter joined him two years later—as part of the *Chinese* immigrant quota. We see the couple—in a pose echoing Grant Wood's famous *American Gothic*—among the flowering trees and the red-and-white-American-flag-striped awning of their Oahu home. There, on that edge of America, the strapping blacksmith made ironworks for the Dole Pineapple Company, for the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, for the

Oahu prison—and for the *mikvah* (ritual bath) in his backyard.

At the end of the twentieth century, once again a substantial number of Jews poured onto American shores. Among these are Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid. While still in the Soviet Union, they were known for their 1972 creation of *SotsArt*, an allusion to American Pop Art and a satire of socialist (*Sots*) propaganda and its art. Since their arrival in America six years later, they have captured the interest of the art public with their clever visual commentaries on the icons of Soviet and Euro-American history and art history. Ironically, Komar and Melamid were invited to represent Russia at the 1999 Venice Biennale. During this same recent period, they have also redefined themselves—not as Russians or Soviets or Americans. “We realized that we are, when all is said and done, Jews, as we migrate from one place to another and take root in one culture after another” (Conversation with Soltes, 1999). Their most recent large project is an exploration of the relationship between the Star of David and other visual forms, ranging from the Ouroboros to the broken cross (the swastika). Called *Symbols of the Big Bang*, the vast series of drawings and paintings wrestles with the origins and changing meanings of familiar symbols and the synthesis of visual ideas. But its centering point is the artists’ reflection on their identity through imagery that forms an edge between the national/ethnic and the universal. It is the sort of reflection that repeats itself in myriad variations among Jewish American artists in the twentieth century.

Ori Z. Soltes

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## Jewish American Artists and the Holocaust

Because very few visual resources were available during World War II that depicted the roundups, life in the ghettos, or the concentration and death camp conditions, artists either imagined such scenes or found alternate subject matter to express their horror at the events as they unfolded. These included the use of Christian subjects such as the Crucifixion and imagery based on ancient mythology. For a few years after the war’s end in 1945, a bare handful of artists employed Holocaust themes or alluded to it in their work. By 1950, such imagery largely disappeared, the immediate revulsion to the Holocaust having apparently subsided, and perhaps memories of it had become too unpleasant to contemplate. But beginning in the 1970s, such themes became popular again and retain their popularity today. Artists often based their work on documentary photographs of the camps and on biblical scenes that had Holocaust resonances. In the early twenty-first century, its hold on artists’ imaginations constant, the Holocaust remains one of the most popular subjects among Jewish American artists of all ages.

By the late 1930s, artists were well aware of the horrific and soon to be catastrophic plight of Europe’s Jews. Within weeks of Hitler’s ascent to the chancellorship of Germany in 1933, American art magazines began to record his economic and physical assaults on Jewish artists and art dealers. By the middle 1930s, refugees from Germany made their presence felt in larger cities, especially New York. At the end of the 1930s, artists such as Marc Chagall and Jacques Lipchitz, as well as American expatriates, including Abraham Rattner and Man Ray, fled German-occupied France, most settling in New York, with some, like Chagall and Lipchitz, invited to exhibit immediately.

By 1937, in response to the events taking place in Europe, artists, including the Soyer brothers (Moses and Isaac), William Gropper, and Max Weber, began to create two distinctive types of images, the first illustrating German

militarism and brutality, the other portraying refugees. From their clothing, we know that the refugees could be victims either of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) or Eastern European Jews (especially in paintings made after 1938), presumably escaping from the Germans.

By 1940, New York was the artistic center of the free world and the gathering place for more Jewish artists than any other city in the world. By late 1941, probably all knew through conversations, listening to radio reports, reading Yiddish- and English-language Jewish magazines, as well as the daily American press, that most European Jews were living in squalid conditions in ghettos and camps and that the Germans intended to kill every Jew in the world. But because of the period from Hitler's takeover of Germany in 1933 to the commencement eight years later of the so-called Final Solution in 1941, and the blackout of visual documentation of the subsequent murders of six million Jews between 1941 and 1945, artists could not develop a coherent set of styles or images with which to depict the ongoing tragedy, and they had no readily available precedents to rely on. They were largely alone physically and emotionally in their studios, and each responded in his or her own way.

Some, especially those born in Eastern Europe and who had orthodox religious training, painted traditional, easy-to-read images. Interviewed years later, Max Weber (1881–1961) remembered certain works he had created just after *Kristallnacht* (Night of the Broken Glass) in November 1938, when Germans destroyed synagogues, Jewish business establishments, and attacked and bloodied numerous Jews. "When I heard of Hitler . . . and when I heard he was beginning to break the Jewish shops in Berlin and all that, I walked around in this studio quite hurt, disturbed. I could see what an anti-Semite could do when he's bloodthirsty and fanatic and crazy . . . Oh, where are the people going to go now? What are these Jewish people in Germany going to do . . . ? And I painted a large canvas of two Jews called *Whither Now?* [1938]" (Baigell 2002). The painting shows two men standing in a synagogue or study hall dressed in old-fashioned East European clothing. Their faces and long coats appear through transparent washes of color as if they and what they represent had already become disembodied and had begun to disappear before our eyes.

Other works Weber created at that time record ceremonial and religious activities of generations of pious

Jews, including *Hassidic Dance* (1940) and *Adoration of the Moon* (1944). Based on memories of his childhood in Biaylystok, Russia, these works reveal Weber's deep concern for the continued presence of traditional Jewish culture as it was being physically destroyed in Europe and assimilated into mainstream American life.

Hyman Bloom (b. 1913), from Latvia, created in 1940 a multi-figured scene of a Yom Kippur service entitled *The Synagogue*. In the center of the painting, the cantor, chanting from the liturgy, is surrounded by youngsters (the future), elders holding Torah scrolls (tradition), and the congregational community (the present). It is as if, given the year in which the work was created, Bloom was welcoming all those who no longer had a place to worship to join him. Although painted on the American side of the Atlantic Ocean, *The Synagogue* can be read as an act of defiance against all those who wanted to put an end to the worshippers and their worship.

Ben-Zion (1897–1987) from Ukraine must have felt the same way as Bloom. He made several paintings during the 1940s of cantors holding up Torah scrolls to the viewer, recording that moment in the service when the entire congregation chants or says that this is the Torah God gave to Moses. The last lines chanted, "Renew our days as in the past," must have had great resonance at the time, especially for Ben-Zion who, of all the artists, remained closest to his Eastern European roots.

Ben-Zion also created one of the first series of works based directly on the Holocaust. Entitled *De Profundis* (1944–1946), each of the fourteen works shows the torsos of old men piled one on top of the other, their heads covered by prayer shawls, confined within circles of barbed wire. He chose these figures because, as he said, "The patriarchic type of Jews dominated my conceptions . . . because they were the backbone of the nation and its cultural source" (Baigell 2002).

William Gropper (1897–1977) also used the title, *De Profundis*, for one of his paintings. Created in 1943 to commemorate the failed Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, it reveals an ancient man, wearing phylacteries and his head and upper body covered by a prayer shawl, looking up with blinded eyes presumably to God, intoning similar lines from either Psalm 130 or Lamentations 3:55, in which the supplicant calls to God from the depths of his or her own being. Gropper is probably better known, however, for the many anti-German cartoons he made during the 1930s and

1940s, many of which illustrated directly the murder of Jews. In fact, during the first half of 1940, he, more than any other artist, provided a means by which viewers could conjure up images of events then taking place. These included grisly scenes of piles of bodies, random murders, looting, executions by firing squads, and hangings.

Not all artists limited themselves to scenes of everyday life such as Weber, Bloom, and Ben-Zion, or to imaginative works portraying the ongoing destruction such as Grop- per. Several American artists also painted Crucifixion scenes, perhaps in emulation of Marc Chagall, who, while in New York, painted several scenes of Jesus as a Jew on the Cross—Jesus not as the redeemer of humankind but as a Jew who was murdered. In Chagall's paintings, Jesus wears a prayer shawl as a loincloth, and around him are images of ghettos burning, people fleeing, and open Torah scrolls with no words, signifying the absence of God. One artist, Abraham Rattner (1895–1978), concentrated just on images of Jesus on the cross and often wrote that he identified both himself and the Jewish people with Jesus because of all the suffering both he and they had endured as a result of antisemitism. Although some objected to the use of the Crucifixion to convey Jewish tragedy, others held that Christians might better understand and be more sympathetic to the Jewish plight with such a familiar image. Furthermore, it was virtually impossible to find appropriate images in the Hebrew Bible to convey the full force of the Holocaust. The story of Abraham and Isaac was about sustaining, not destroying, life. Job was ultimately redeemed, something that did not take place in the ghettos and camps, and neither Joshua's victory at Jericho nor Elijah's prophecy of the resurrection of the dry bones and the return of the Israelites to Israel had much currency in much of the 1940s.

But one artist, Mark Rothko (1903–1970), did find in Christian iconography, the lamentation over the dead body of Jesus, an image that perhaps better than any other caught the horror of and subsequent grief caused by the Holocaust. Rothko's style, modified by Surrealism, was not as realistic as those of Chagall and the others. But, as in Chagall's works, Jewish elements appear. In a group of works painted in the middle 1940s, one sees a horizontal form (the body) lying on the laps of vertical figures (the mourners). In probably the last version, *Entombment*, painted in 1946, after Rothko would have seen documentary photographs of the piles of bodies in the just liberated

concentration camps, there appears for the first time a transparent, horizontal form that hovers in front of the heads of the vertical figures. The significant Jewish elements in this work are these. The lower horizontal figure, lying on the laps of the vertical figures, also lies either on straw, an old Jewish custom as part of the burial procedure, or on a shroud in which Jewish men were and still are buried. Since Rothko had religious training as a youth in his native Latvia and taught art in New York from 1929 to 1946 in a building that housed a conservative congregation, he probably was aware of the belief that a Jewish person's soul would never find rest or entirely leave the body if improperly buried or desecrated in any way. Certainly, proper burials did not take place in the camps or in communities where Jews by the hundreds and thousands were murdered. The transparent, hovering form in Rothko's painting, then, might symbolize the collective soul of the six million who were not buried properly in the Holocaust and who would never be remembered in annual ritual observances because their families, too, had been murdered. Thus, he too transformed a Christian theme into a Jewish subject.

Among the artists born around 1900, Barnett Newman (1905–1970) made the most radical visual statement that can be associated with the Holocaust. Beginning in 1948, he made the first of many paintings consisting of a single stripe or a few stripes running vertically from the top of a canvas to its bottom. Based on the teachings of the kabbalist, Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534–1572) of Safed, now in Israel, who was concerned with the creation of the world, the single stripe was, as Newman explained, the artist acting as the Creator marking the stripe as the first act of creating a new world out of chaos (Hess 1971). The first of these paintings was probably made between the time the United Nations began discussing the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states and the declaration of Israel as an independent country. Thus Newman's stripe paintings can be read as a rejection of God and Western society that had done very little to aid Jews, and as Newman's raw assertion of the self against that society and of a new beginning for Jews in their own newly created country.

The sculptor Seymour Lipton (1903–1986), in the middle and late 1940s, also found veiled ways to refer to the Holocaust. Pre-Columbian sculpture provided him with a source to create works with jagged and menacing

abstract forms that suggested the predatory and destructive. Lipton thought that such forms revealed the tragic condition of humankind and, as he said, “the dark inside, the evil of things” (Elsen 1974). To make his point clear, he gave the name *Moloch*, the biblical figure to whom children were sacrificed, to a group of works in the middle 1940s. Like other artists of his generation, with the exception of Gropper, he did not refer to the Holocaust directly in his art or, if it was mentioned in a statement or interview, it was done in veiled and guarded language. Rather, Lipton and others hid their anger in religious imagery, in scenes of Jewish life, or in works derived from the art of other cultures. Perhaps they were overwhelmed and could find no adequate visual language to express their feelings, or they felt too vulnerable and embarrassed by their helplessness to address the event directly, or perhaps they thought that such work would not be marketable. Whatever the reasons, their responses were very tempered and allusive rather than direct and angry (Baigell 1997).

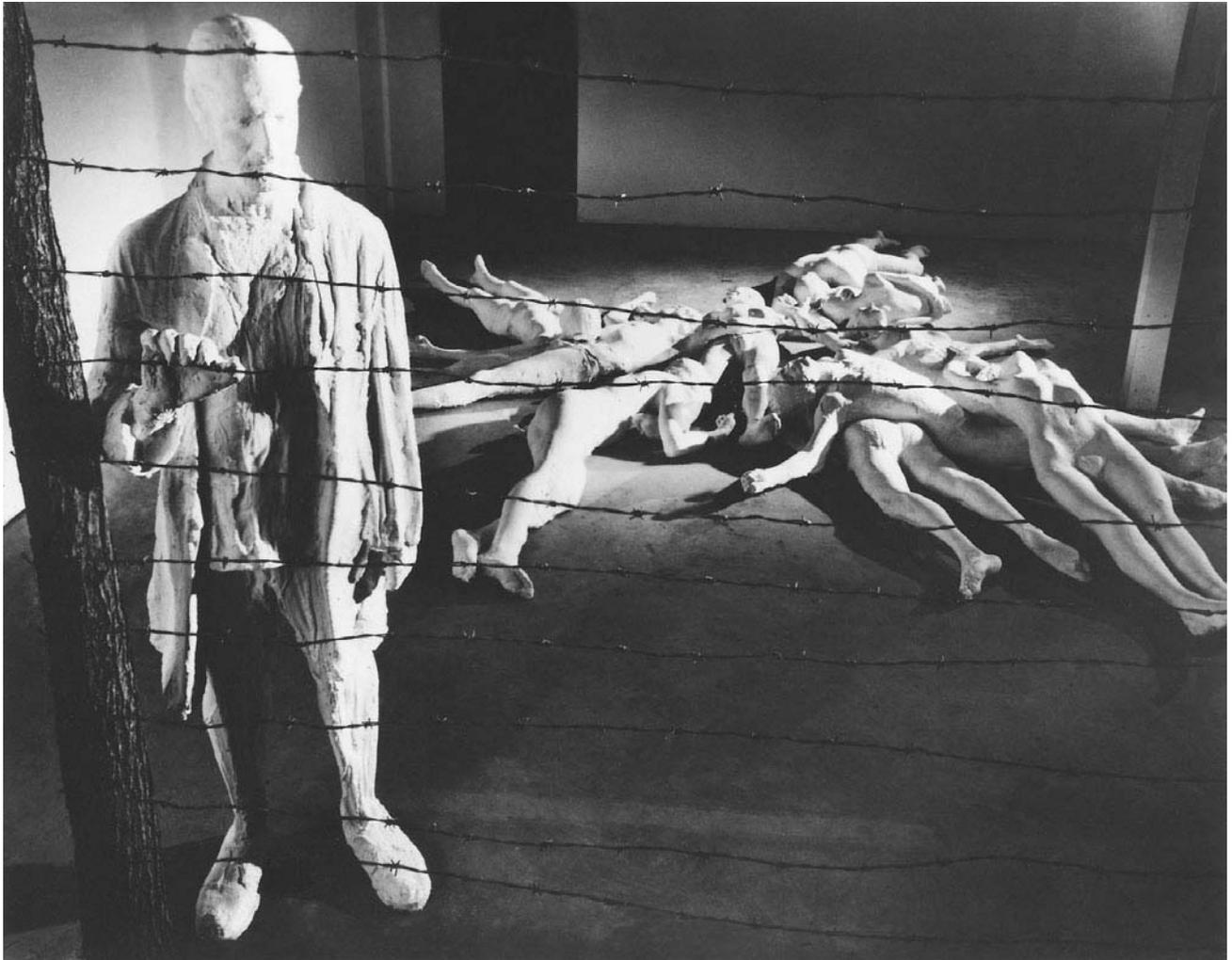
But at least two artists of the next generation, Leon Golub (1922–2004) and Harold Paris (1925–1979), expressed their rage quite openly. Both had served in the military, and the latter had seen the Buchenwald concentration camp shortly after its liberation. Of works such as *Charnel House* (1948), composed of writhing figures vaporizing in flames, Golub said that they were concentration camp scenes as well as works about individual identity and lack of power (Baigell 1997). But in the *Burnt Man* series of the early 1950s, composed of figures with flayed skin and mangled limbs, Golub, like other artists, often conflated the effects of atomic warfare with those of the Holocaust, thus compromising the latter’s singular and unique significance, perhaps, like artists of the previous generation, revealing a fear of being considered too Jewish or Jewish at all.

Not so Harold Paris, whose anger culminated in 1972 in his *Koddesh-Koddashim*, a sealed room based on the small interior space called the Holy of Holies in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem, a space that the high priest could enter only once a year on Yom Kippur. When asked what his interior looked like, Paris answered, “Like the inside of my soul.” And when asked what is inside, he answered, “All my dreams of the outside.” In short, Paris could find no visual or verbal language to articulate his feelings that were figuratively and literally locked up in that sealed room (Selz 1969).

Very few artists seem to have been attracted to Holocaust-derived images through the 1960s, but works by Ruth Weisberg (b. 1942) and Audrey Flack (b. 1931) in the 1970s signaled the revival of interest in this subject matter. One of Weisberg’s first works on this theme, a set of nine prints entitled *The Shtetl: A Journey and a Memorial* (1971), portrayed with great empathy the apprehensions that inhabitants felt in the weeks before the destruction of their community and the loss of their own lives. Weisberg said, “I am a branch, a resting place for their souls. This book is my life’s journey in place of theirs” (Baigell 1997). Flack derived her *World War II (Vanitas)* (1976–1977) from Margaret Bourke-White’s famous photograph of prisoners just liberated from Buchenwald who posed for her behind a barbed wire fence.

Their work also signaled three trends: first, the emergence of women artists who in increasing numbers portrayed such scenes; second, the lessening of interest in religious imagery as a means to comment on the Holocaust; and, third, the growing popularity of documentary photographs as source material. Several factors probably account for the revival of interest in Holocaust-related themes: Israeli successes in the wars of 1967 and 1973, a newfound pride in one’s own Jewishness encouraged by contemporary feminist and black power movements, and the realization that survivors were beginning to age and die. Some artists also hoped that calling attention to the Holocaust would prevent such an event from ever happening again, thus contributing to a sense of *tikkun olam* (the kabbalistic notion of repair of the world). By 1980, the “silence” had ended, and artists all over the country began to create and exhibit Holocaust-related works. A few began to devote their entire careers to this subject; others turned to it occasionally. Some artists were victims of antisemitic acts in Europe in the 1930s or survivors of the camps, some were children of survivors, and some, born after World War II, had no personal connection to the events of the 1940s. What they all shared, however, was the desire to record, memorialize, and act as witnesses to the Holocaust.

Perhaps the most famous work to emerge since 1980 is the multifigured sculpture, *The Holocaust* (1983), by George Segal (1924–2000), composed of a pile of bodies lying on the ground and one figure standing behind barbed wire. Although Segal arranged some bodies to form a six-pointed Jewish star as well as a female figure with an apple (representing Eve) and a father protecting his son



The Holocaust by artist George Segal, 1983. (Segal, George [1924-2000] © VAGA, NY)

(recalling the story of Abraham and Isaac), his sources obviously lie in the many documentary photographs published when the camps were liberated.

Like much Holocaust-related art, Segal's work reveals more sorrow than anger in its commemoration of the dead. Yet many artists responded with anger and rage. They also felt that mythic and religious images were not adequate to confront the Holocaust directly. For example, Murray Zimiles (b. 1941) created a series, *The Fire Paintings* and *The Book of Fire* in 1986, depicting the burning of Polish synagogues, which symbolized the destruction of the Jewish past. Marty Kalb (b. 1941) and Howard Oransky (b. 1955) have painted portraits of those murdered in the camps as a way to reestablish their individuality and identity. Jerome Witkin (b. 1939), in his paintings of the 1980s and 1990s of murdered and butchered victims, has, as he

has said, "a need to open heavy, dark doors" (Baigell 1997). And Gerda Meyer-Bernstein, who witnessed *Kristallnacht* in 1938, began around 1980 to make works that force confrontation with the experiences of the victims. One such work, *Block 11* (1989), an installation containing hundreds of pieces of luggage on which she has painted names, birthdates, and concentration camp numbers of those incarcerated, is always exhibited in small, narrow spaces so that the viewer is forced to walk around the luggage and to think about who has been murdered, about the generations lost, and about what they might have contributed to humanity.

All hope that their work—because it witnesses and calls attention to the Holocaust—will also contribute to lasting peace. To that end, Edith Altman (b. 1931), born in Germany, has created an installation that is part of her

search for and contribution to universal healing, or *tikkun olam*. Her *Reclaiming the Image/The Art of Memory* (1988–1992) might very well lay claim to being the late twentieth-century talismanic image of Holocaust art by an American artist. In this installation, she creates forms based on Jewish mysticism and the Nazi swastika, also invoking her own experiences. The work includes a golden swastika placed on a wall in its pre-Nazi configuration, symbolizing growth and the triumph of good over evil. Its black reflection on the floor, symbolizing the lower physical world, is configured in the Nazi way. Several objects based on kabbalistic references to base matter transformed into spiritual presences are placed on the floor and on the other walls. Altman said that she wanted to face the hated symbol directly and subdue the residual fears it still evokes in her and others so that it can be invested once again with mythic meanings (Baigell 1999). In effect, then, *Reclaiming the Image* lends itself to religious-mystical interpretation, to direct confrontation with the most obvious symbol of the Holocaust, and to personal memory.

Several artists born in the 1940s and after have described the Holocaust as the major historical event of their lifetime and have stated the impossibility of avoiding it in their art. All, by admitting its importance to their art, reject those aspects of post-modernism that are characterized by irony, the denial of authorial responsibility, and the willful manipulation of subject matter and materials. Natan Nuchi (b. 1951), who through the 1980s and 1990s created a series of emaciated nude forms floating in space as if suspended between life and death, found that much postmodern art exhibited a kind of mental fatigue (Baigell 1997). Instead, he and others carefully choose their subject matter, certainly accept responsibility for it, give it moral resonance, do not revel in ambiguity, and see their art as fulfilling an important purpose.

With earlier artists such as Weber and Bloom, Nuchi and all the others were or are engaged in honoring the victims of the Holocaust and of identifying as Jews and with other Jews, in the hope that their images will become part of the heritage that is passed on to future generations.

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## Jewish and Christian Symbols in the Work of Jewish American Artists

Prior to emancipation, it was inconceivable that Jewish artists or craftspeople might refer to Christian symbols—images of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and the like—both because Jews were outside mainstream art and because such images represented oppression and persecution. But by the late nineteenth century, American Jewish artists in particular began to examine Christian symbols and to transform them, both overtly and subtly. At the same time, a new vocabulary of Jewish visual symbols was emerging. In concert, newly shaped Christian and Jewish symbols address layered questions of how Jewish artists fit into the world of Western art.

With the reconfiguration of the Western Christian world by the end of the eighteenth century, emancipated Jews found it possible to enter the cultural mainstream. And by the late nineteenth century, American Jewish sculptor Moses Jacob Ezekiel (1844–1917) was exploring surprising new possibilities in self-expression in his depictions of Jesus. One is a torso with just the beginnings of the extended arms of the crucified Christ, the crown of thorns jammed onto his head. A second depicts Jesus laid in the tomb as if in peaceful sleep. A Jewish prayer shawl, a *tallit*, is wrapped around his head. Ezekiel's contemporaries were stunned both that a Jew would depict Jesus and that the image was so sensitive and sympathetic. For Ezekiel, Jesus

is no longer a symbol of Christianity and its antagonistic relationship with Judaism. Nor is the image similar to the thousands of Christian portrayals of the long-suffering, self-sacrificing Savior. He is simply a quiet symbol of noble, peaceful possibilities. Christians can view him through religious eyes, but both Jews and Christians can see him through secular humanist eyes.

Through Ezekiel, the legacy of emancipation arrived in the twentieth century, with its question of where Jewish artists fit within Western art, which had been so obviously Christian during most of the past seventeen centuries. Ezekiel's implicit response was to engage a traditional Christian subject from a new perspective. By the 1920s and 1930s, subtler angles were visible in the Social Realism of Ben Shahn (1898-1969), who traced his sociopolitical concerns to the Biblical prophets. Hence his interest in the miscarriage of justice that led to the deaths of the Italian-American immigrants Sacco and Vanzetti. He viewed the event as a contemporary equivalent of the Crucifixion and used Christian symbols in his paintings of them (Pohl 1993). In *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti* (1932-1933), white lilies held by two members of the Lowell Committee refer in traditional visual terms to the purity of the Virgin Mary. They become a sarcastic comment on the impurity of those holding the lilies, underscoring the moral bankruptcy of the Committee's bluebloods, whose claim was to save America from the satanic evils of unwashed, unlettered immigrant anarchists—but actually martyring two Christ-like innocents.

Shahn's work was produced on the eve of Hitler's rise to power. Respondents to that era of horrors include the Jewish Chromaticist Abstract Expressionists who dominated the New York art scene in the 1950s (Soltes 2003). Barnett Newman wrote of gathering in each other's studios to discuss art. Among the discussion topics was *tikkun olam*—repairing the world—by putting it back together on the canvas. Newman's painting titles often offer explicit evidence of his beyond-mere-aesthetics agenda—of the intention of symbolic *tikkun olam*.

In *The Name II* (1950), Newman joins the issue of unifying the canvas as a symbolic statement of fixing the world to both a Jewish art historical question and a post-Holocaust theological question. The all-white canvas offers both the absence and the totality of color: white, symbol of light, contains all the colors within it, while it appears to be devoid of color. This is an image of nothing

and everything in the coloristic terms of traditional painting. Moreover, the canvas is divided into three parts by a pair of vertical lines. So it is a sort of triptych, that most traditional of Western—Christian—forms of visual self-expression. In Christian terms, triptychs symbolize the Trinity, and the center is typically occupied by a crucified Christ or the Virgin and Child—images of God as Christianity understands It. But the Jewish view of God is that It is invisible. Then how might a Jew represent God through the visual medium so essential to most religions from time immemorial: where *does* a Jewish artist fit into Western, Christian art?

Newman responded by appropriating the Christian form and radically transforming it. His triptych is filled with the image of the imageless God, Who is both absent and present, like the invisible yet present colors on the canvas. The name of the painting confirms this as part of the artist's intention, for traditional Judaism never uses the word "God" other than in prayer; the circumlocution customarily used is *HaShem*—Hebrew for the Name. Verbal circumlocution is expressed by visual circumlocution.

The painting also offers a response to a theological question raised by the Holocaust. Where was the all-powerful, all-loving God during those horrors? The answer, like the image, is paradoxical: God was both present and absent, as human action was both moral and immoral. The question of how to be a Jewish artist in a world of Christian art is wedded to the question of how both Jews and Christians can understand God. The notion of restoring—reordering—the post-Holocaust world is embedded in the whiteness as a cognate to light. For light is the element called into existence by God at the outset of the world—the beginning of ordering empty, chaotic preorder.

Samuel Bak uses a rich vocabulary of Jewish symbols to address the matter of the Holocaust. Born in 1933, he was six when World War II began and not much older when it arrived in Lithuania, his childhood left buried in the ashes of Vilna. In Bak's *Otiyot* (*Letters*), the Ten Commandments disintegrate in midair, as they float in their stony weight. The letters, symbols of the commandments, peel off the crumbling surfaces and float upward—reminiscent of the Hasidic story of the righteous illiterate, who simply recited the letters of the alphabet that, floating toward heaven, were gathered by God and formed into words of prayer. But we wonder if the Gatherer is still there—or if what is absent is our memory of how to adhere to the

Commandments. The sixth letter, *vav*, is the only one not fully visible. Its prominence is found both in its absence and its accentuation by means of its replacement with the number six—which is also the number of points on the Star of David, and the number of Jewish millions killed in the conflagration beginning by the time the artist was six years old, and the number of the disintegrating commandment “Thou shall not murder.”

The Star of David also rises repeatedly from rough-hewn, barren, and empty landscapes, or floats like numberless paper kites in skies crowded with purple and gold light—or, in *Alone III*, appears as a cracked and ruined island surrounded by a vast night-lit sea. The symbol that, in the twentieth century, has become universally recognized as representing Judaism reaches out in the six directions—east, west, north, south, up and down—for help, for humanity, for contact, for Covenant. And the spaces around it respond with an infinite silence, recalling Balaam’s prophecy (Numbers 23:9) that the Israelites would dwell alone. It turns on its ear John Donne’s claim that “no man is an island,” for in the vast, stormy seas of history and of the Holocaust, Jews have often been precisely that.

Judy Chicago’s enormous *Holocaust Project* (1987–1992) includes a search for new *methodological* ground, combining photography by her husband Donald Woodman with her painting and drawing, together with an eighteen-foot tapestry and stained-glass work. (Ironically, the material that could most effectively sustain this combination, photolinen, was available only from Germany at the time of her project.) The 3,000-square-foot result is a compendium of darkness and hope, culminating in a triptych, *Rainbow Shabbat*. This is a light-and-color-filled stained-glass composition, drawing as a medium—not only in its structure—from the medieval Christian heritage. The precision of geometric lineation contrasts with the gentle irregularities of human form. Those gathered around the table to celebrate God’s completion of the physical ordering of the world—leaving to us the task of completing its moral and ethical order—have arrived from around that world: diverse faiths, races, ethnicities, nationalities, and both genders are included among the twelve figures seated, arm on shoulder, at the Sabbath Eve Table marked by a postdeluge rainbow. This is the number of Israelite tribes who subscribed to the Covenant at Sinai and the number of Apostles who carried the word of Jesus into the world. The culmination of a dark project asks for heal-

ing between Christians and Jews—and all religions and races—and a journey into light.

Sy Gresser’s *Tribal Faces (Menorah)* seeks that journey by means of the most consistent of Jewish symbols in art: the seven-branched candelabrum. His 1996 steatite sculpture is a not-quite-complete circle, in which faces extend from the stylized menorah form. The faces represent different races and ethnic types, held together by that symbol. With one eye open, the other closed, they have both outer and inner vision. The unfinished circle suggests an unfinished world that needs fixing; the work symbolizes *tikkun olam* in process.

Like Newman and Chicago, Susan Ressler has revisited the triptych form in her *Missed Representations* series. In *Expulsion*, the middle panel is a detail from the early fifteenth-century Florentine Masaccio’s *Expulsion*. Adam and Eve leave the Garden of Eden in an anguish conveyed in part by the dark, pained eyes of Eve, who is perceived as the primary perpetrator of the expulsion-inducing crime most emphatically by the Christian branch of the Abrahamic tradition. Ressler has flanked this with two images of contemporary models in bathing suits (whose body language echoes that of Masaccio’s Eve), one with a design offering a snake (Satan personified) slithering around her torso. The models are all but unidentifiable as people: they are advertising armatures for the bathing suits and/or enticing sexual objects. So an icon from the Western and the (Judaean)-Christian theological tradition (Masaccio’s painting) is synthesized to an icon from the modern visual world (bathing suit advertisements) and the art historical pattern of objectifying women.

The issue of the woman in the Jewish tradition—not permitted to read from the Torah, to be part of a *minyán*, to lay *tefillin* (phylacteries)—is embedded in many works by Jewish American artists toward the end of the twentieth century. Not only women, but occasionally men have addressed this. Geoff Laurence’s triptych, *T’fillah* (1999), intertwines Christian and Jewish symbols. Like Ressler’s, it offers pieces and parts of a woman’s body, in this case broken into three discontinuous segments, around each of which is wrapped a leather phylactery thong. Pious Jewish males wrap the phylactery around their arm and forehead for morning prayers, fulfilling the Torah injunction to “bind it for a sign upon thy hand and place it as a frontlet between thine eyes.” Those prayers include words thanking God “that He did not make me a woman.” The issues of

women as commodities (body parts) and the exclusion of women or negativity toward them are interwoven with the suggestion of contemporary sexual mores: a nipple ring suggests that the leather thongs play a role in sexual bondage, which then becomes a pun regarding gender bondage and “binding it . . . upon thy hand” in traditional Jewish settings: bind versus bound (Soltes 2003, 2006). The Christian triptych form has been turned literally on its side—and the three pieces together assume a cruciform, since the middle one is wider than the upper and lower ones—to address an internal, not an external Jewish question.

Marilyn Cohen transforms icon imagery in her 1995–1997 collage series, *Teach Me the Songs My Mothers Sang*. The artist depicts an array of women who have defined aspects of the American past. There are eighteen women, each in her own frame. (The Hebrew-language symbolism of the number eighteen, meaning life, suggests these women as expositors as well as givers of life.) Among the women is Annette Retablo: Our Lady of the Convoy. Annette volunteered for a humanitarian mission to Central America in 1989. That put the seventy-two-year-old Jewish grandmother behind the wheel of a fourteen-year-old Mercedes bus carrying supplies into the unpredictable landscapes of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, to women and children in refugee camps and union halls, in orphanages and cornfields. We see her as the sort of saint whose image would be venerated by Catholic populations in those countries: a *santera*, Central American Gothic. For she is rendered as an icon clothed in the blood red of self-sacrificing involvement, surrounded by the attributes of the worlds whose borders she has traversed, surmounted by the sort of angel-held banner that would affirm her actions as a *santera*.

The allusions to Christian art can be more oblique. Shirley Klinghoffer’s untitled slumped glass installation (1999) is a tribute to women who have survived breast cancer. Each piece is molded on and from the torso of one of these women. The work is in part inspired by the small images of breasts offered to Saint Agatha by Christian women who have survived breast-related maladies. But these are life-sized actual molds, not miniature symbols. And there are precisely eighteen of them, symbolizing *life*. So the Christian allusion interweaves Jewish symbolic numerology to offer a statement of the triumph of life over death.



Annette Retablo: Our Lady of the Convoy by Marilyn Cohen, part of her series *Teach Me the Songs My Mothers Sang* (Marilyn Cohen)

At the end of the twentieth century, a substantial number of Jews poured onto American shores from the crumbling Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Among the arrivals were artists Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid. They first went to Israel where, in 1978, the stage setting they erected in Jerusalem as the *Temple for the Third Exodus*—in which they performed the “sacrifice of the Russian suitcase”—ended up as burnt fragments. They composed a narrative of their journey with a series of illuminations in which they turned the Russian icon on its ear. In each of the “icons” the artists appear, attired and adorned with halos, like saints. Their pairing evokes Cyril and Methodius, bringers of Christianity to the Slavs. But Komar’s glasses and the expressions on both their faces suggest the wryness that was shaping their own journey.

*The Remains of the Temple* is a crushed compendium of the identity that they took—or did not take—with them from Russia to Israel to the United States. What *is* (or *was*) that identity? In the USSR they were viewed as Jews, not Rus-

sians; here they are viewed as Russians. What identity should they embrace once they are here, but not yet *American*—and how long does it take to *become* American? The pieces of their identity cannot be contained in a burnt suitcase. Their most recent joint project (2002) was an exploration of the relationship between the Star of David and other visual forms, from the Ouroboros to the broken cross (the swastika). The extensive series wrestles with the origins and changing meanings of familiar symbols and the synthesis of visual ideas. What have become Jewish or Christian—or Nazi—symbols did not necessarily begin that way (Soltes 2002–2003).

Thus as intensely as anywhere and anytime in the history of art, symbols in the hands of American Jewish artists from Ezekiel to Komar and Melamid—particularly symbols that allude to the Christian and Jewish religious traditions—have repeatedly articulated the unanswerable question of how to define one’s self in a world that prefers the simple definitional boxes into which the Jewish experience will not readily fit.

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## Clement Greenberg (1909–1994)

### Art Critic

Clement Greenberg was probably the most important art critic in American history. His two basic theses were that avant-garde art represented the best and most forward-looking aspect of modern culture and that each art medium

should be concerned only with its own particular possibilities. A painting, for example, should be abstract and concern itself with the flatness of the canvas surface, texture, color, and form, but not with depth, the third dimension, or with narrative content. Put forth in a series of articles beginning with “Avant-Garde and Kitch” in 1939 and developed definitively by 1960 in “Modernist Painting,” Greenberg’s theories dominated American art making and art writing during the last half of the twentieth century (O’Brian 1986).

In “Avant-Garde and Kitch,” his first important essay, Greenberg pitted avant-garde culture against popular and commercial art, which he called kitch. The former, he held, could keep high culture moving forward; the latter, whose products were debased forms of high culture, could destroy it. Kitch was the culture of the masses, which Greenberg associated with the culture of fascist countries such as Germany and Italy. In effect, Greenberg sought to maintain culture as an elite function, impregnable to compromise and adulteration. As a result, he contributed to the important shift in thinking in the 1940s whereby avant-garde activity, the development of new styles based on the possibilities within a particular medium, replaced art with political subject matter as the most advanced form of art making. Greenberg held that modernism was the vehicle to preserve high culture and that abstract art was the most important art of our time. In effect, he explained how artists could now involve themselves with art problems to the exclusion of all else, the overriding importance of aesthetic matters replacing political ones. This attitude helped create a climate of opinion receptive to the development of the Abstract Expressionist art movement of the mid-1940s. In fact, Greenberg, who had an uncanny eye for identifying the most important young artists, was instrumental in calling attention to such ultimately major figures as Jackson Pollock, the artist famous for his so-called drip paintings. As a result, Greenberg was among those who helped popularize the notion that American rather than European artists were now in the forefront of avant-garde developments, building on the pictorial inventions of the Impressionists and of figures such as Paul Cézanne and the Cubists.

But his commitment to a concept of avant-garde art that was removed from interaction with contemporary life insulated it from further development. Only Color-Field painting in the 1950s, a style characterized by surfaces awash in loosely defined areas of colored pigment that contained little depth and no apparent content, appeared

to him. His favored painters became, within the Abstract Expressionist generation, the color- rather than expressionistically oriented Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, and Clyfford Still, and in the subsequent generation, Jules Olitski. By the mid-1950s, his once forward-looking theories, which he asserted with practiced authority and assurance, had grown conservative and maintained value only as theories against which to react. In the late 1930s, Greenberg emerged from left-wing Jewish (but not exclusively Jewish) intellectual circles in New York that included figures such as Irving Howe, Harold Rosenberg, and Meyer Schapiro, in which ideas about art and politics mixed easily. Among the various positions he held, Greenberg served as managing editor of *Contemporary Jewish Record* from 1944 to 1945 when it was incorporated into *Commentary*, for which he was associate editor until 1957. Despite his search for universal truths and unchanging criteria, his art and literary criticism, therefore, has often been considered and explained within a Jewish context.

For example, since there is little place for individual personality or idiosyncrasy in his theories, it has been suggested that this reflected his desire, like others of his generation, to escape his parochial Jewish background and reinvent himself (and modern art) with a selective pedigree of his own invention. But several of his critical observations indicate the impossibility of this task and the inner conflicts it created. He wanted to feel integrated in society, but, realizing his sense of alienation, blamed it more on the effects of modern capitalism than on his outsider status as a Jew. On one occasion, he said that he had hardly any awareness of his Jewish heritage, yet “a quality of Jewishness is present in every word I write” (O’Brian 1986, I). That quality, which characterizes much of his criticism, he identified as a bias for the abstract rather than for the immediate experience of everyday life.

He was also upset by the helplessness and powerlessness of East European Jews, who, by confining themselves to their religious culture, refused to confront the reality of anti-Semitism until it was too late. At the same time he was disturbed by those who, in joining the gentile world, lost a certain sense of self that had been sustained by traditional Jewish culture (O’Brian 1986, II). Greenberg found in the Czech author, Franz Kafka, a unique Jewish vision of reality that reflected what it meant to be a Jew in the early and mid-twentieth century. Kafka understood the dilemma of searching for security and of not being able to find it, of

understanding the gentile threat to Jews. He therefore, according to Greenberg, established a zone of safety for emancipated Jews, a secular version of the Jewish rules of conduct known as *halacha*, that provided a sense of orderliness and middle-class routine as well as explanations for inexplicable activities. But in the end this did not alleviate personal anxiety because Kafka’s stories and novels had no resolution or closure (O’Brian 1986, II, III; Greenberg 1961).

Greenberg acknowledged his own Jewish self-hatred and wanted a new Jewish consciousness that liberated rather than organized Jews into new configurations. In desiring Judaism to become a non-issue, he found the extremes of overassimilation and Jewish nationalism to be equally egregious. He wanted to accept “my Jewishness more implicitly, so implicitly that I can use it to realize myself as a human being in my own right, and *as a Jew in my own right*.” In connection with the Jewish community, he held that Jews will persist “as long as Jewishness remains essential to our sense of our individual selves, as long as it is the truth about our individual selves” (O’Brian 1986, III). By holding to this position, Greenberg defined and dated himself as a child of the immigrant generation whose sense of Judaism came, as he said, “through mother’s milk and the habits and talk of the family” (O’Brian 1986, I). Of course, future generations would lose their sense of Jewishness unless efforts were made to sustain it. Likewise, his criticism can be dated to the outlook of his generation who knew where they came from, but did not want to remain there.

Matthew Baigell

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## Harold Rosenberg (1906–1978)

### Art Critic

One of the most important American art critics to emerge in the late 1940s, Harold Rosenberg stressed the impor-

tance of the creative act itself in the art-making process. Thus he helped to popularize such action-oriented artists as Jackson Pollock and Willem DeKooning, as well as subsequent art movements such as Process Art, in which the subject of the artwork is the record of its own creation. In his most famous essay, “The American Action Painters” (1952), Rosenberg emphasized the idea that a canvas surface was “an arena in which to act—rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze or ‘express’ an object real or imagined.” The image produced was “the result of this encounter.” To a greater or lesser degree, each work, even each brushstroke, marked a new beginning, a type of creativity that grew directly from the artist’s inner being, free from external restraint, politics, European art traditions, morals, and values. In effect, each brushstroke, mark, or drip was made in response to the previous one and to nothing else (Rosenberg 1961).

Before developing this aesthetic philosophy, Rosenberg was active in left-wing political circles in New York during the 1930s as a poet and a writer. By the early 1940s, disenchanted by leftist dogma, he absorbed the Surrealist interest in the importance of creative processes. In addition, like others at the time, he accepted the idea that artists were alienated from society. Cut off from any grounding in tradition and community, artists could therefore develop their personal essence in isolation. Rosenberg found this beneficial in that, by annihilating the past, artists could, in effect, create new worlds. Art became a form of self-discovery. This attitude, according to Rosenberg, prompted artists of his generation, many of whom were born abroad or were the children of immigrants, to create a new American art free from inherited attitudes and different from older art-making traditions that emphasized design, craft, and technique. This attitude also provided a way for artists to replace ethnic and political issues with an aesthetics of the self, which became so important in the 1940s. It encouraged artists to develop their art as singular individuals, whatever their particular backgrounds.

But in the years during and after World War II, Rosenberg also wrote several articles attentive to Jewish issues, ranging from an explanation of how modern, nonreligious Jews substituted secular leftist politics for old-fashioned religious messianism (Marx replaced the Messiah) to a brilliant critical analysis of French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre’s book, *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1948), in which Rosenberg pointed out Sartre’s own misguided antisemitism

(Rosenberg 1973). Rosenberg also addressed the issue of Jewish identity and freedom in the postwar world. Because Jewish origins no longer established commonalities among Jews, each Jew could reinvent or redefine him- or herself in different ways, based on whatever or however much of the Jewish past the individual invoked. Like contemporary artists, individuals could also begin their own voyage of self-discovery, each person hopefully secure in his or her own worth. As in Existential philosophy, each person, Rosenberg hoped, could become somebody “through the acts by which he projects himself into the future.” That is, each person had the potentiality to choose the self he or she could become (Rosenberg 1973).

Rosenberg believed that the issue of identity was a modern problem, not just a Jewish one. But since Jews were often alienated from other Jews as well as from mainstream society, it was a particularly Jewish problem. To surmount this problem, Jewish artists, Rosenberg held, had begun “to assert their individual relation to art in an independent and personal way.” By so doing, they were involved in two activities at the same time—creating a genuine American art and indulging in a profound Jewish expression of self-identification (Rosenberg 1973). In truth, this is the reasoning of a person who wants to escape his or her background without necessarily denying it entirely, for Rosenberg turned the modern search for self-identity in an alienated world into a Jewish quest for identity, but one without Judaism. Those who wanted to identify as Jewish had to look elsewhere.

Is there, then, a Jewish art? Rosenberg answered this question in the negative. He surmised that without common experiences there could be no unifying style. Lacking a singular style, there was no identifiable Jewish art, although there were obviously Jewish artists who employed Jewish subject matter. Like others of his generation who asked this question, he looked for an all-embracing definition that could encompass male and female, rich and poor, rural and urban, religious and secular, as well as European- and African-descended Jewish artists. Of course, the answer had to be in the negative. But the interesting point is that, even as Rosenberg encouraged artists to find their own individual identities, he still thought of Jews as a near monolithic group, or else why ask about the nature of Jewish art (Rosenberg 1973, 1985)?

Rosenberg acknowledged the necessity of possessing the moral courage and inner stability to engage in the

adventure of self-discovery because it might involve a kind of existential agony. On the one hand, there was no firm starting point, and, on the other, a separation from one's own past. The problem was to bridge the distances between one's Jewish self, the self as Other (as others viewed the individual), and the self that wanted to emerge. This was no easy task, but one Rosenberg thought to be well worth the effort as one came to terms with the modern world.

Matthew Baigell

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## Meyer Schapiro (1904–1996)

### Art Historian

Meyer (originally Meir) Schapiro, distinguished art historian, was born in Siauliai, Lithuania (near Vilna) in 1904, immigrated with his family to the United States in 1907, and died in New York City in 1996. A descendant of Talmudic scholars, his father, Nathan Menachem Schapiro, abandoned Orthodox Judaism early in life and, influenced by Haskala, an East European derivative of the West European Enlightenment, became a secular Jew. Nathan was also involved with the Jewish Socialist Bund, which influenced Meyer's leftist activism, evident in his writing for *Marxist Quarterly*, *New Masses*, *Nation*, and *Partisan Review*, and more generally, in his humanist concerns. Yiddish was Schapiro's first language, and it was at the Hebrew Settlement House in Brownsville, Brooklyn, where he first seriously engaged art, as a student in an evening studio class with John Sloane, the leader of the so-called Ashcan School. While gaining prominence as an art historian, Schapiro made art throughout his career and influenced numerous contemporary artists, among them Jacques Lifschitz and Robert Motherwell.

Schapiro applied for graduate study at Princeton University, which turned him down—he believed in part be-

cause he was a Jew—but went on to receive his doctorate in art history from Columbia University (1929), where he taught for almost a half century (1928–1973). His dissertation on Romanesque sculpture remains the basic work in the field. He continued to do major work in the area of early Christian and medieval art. In a breathtaking essay, “On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art” (1947), Schapiro argued that “a new sphere of artistic creation without religious content [had emerged] in Western Europe within church art,” and that its “values of spontaneity, individual fantasy, delight in color and movement, and the expression of feeling . . . anticipate modern art” (Schapiro 1977). In a sense, Schapiro spent the rest of his career demonstrating this. He moved effortlessly between Romanesque and modern art (ca. 1000–1150 and ca. 1838–1973, respectively), writing about the sculptures of Moissac, Silos, and Souillac as well as the paintings of Van Gogh, Cézanne, Mondrian, and Picasso, among other artifacts and artists. He was one of the earliest defenders of Abstract Expressionism, suggesting that it was the climactic realization of the values of Romanesque art.

Writing on the “Nature of Abstract Art” (1937), he argued that it was a mistake to think that it was simply “an art of pure form without content” and thus “independent of historical conditions” and “subjective conditions” (Schapiro 1978). Again and again he proceeded to show how those conditions influenced artistic innovation in the Romanesque and modern periods, perhaps most famously in his analysis of the effect of the industrial revolution on the development of nineteenth-century French painting. Schapiro's humanistic perspective is at its clearest in his essays on “Chagall's Illustrations for the Bible” (1956) and “The Humanity of Abstract Painting” (1960). The artists who most captured Schapiro's intellectual imagination were those who went against the grain of established opinion (like Schapiro himself), and Chagall was among the most daring of them, for he went against established avant-garde opinion. As Schapiro writes, modern painters “prefer the spontaneous, the immediately felt, and often discovered their subjects on the canvas while at work,” but Chagall took as his subject the “set theme[s]” of the Old Testament, “a living book because of our open interest in the moral, the social, and the historical, whatever our beliefs. . . . A striving toward right in purity of spirit, a feeling of commitment and fulfillment, pervade the book” (Schapiro 1978). To Schapiro, Chagall is the morally exem-

plary modern artist, for his work successfully integrates modernist and humanistic concerns, that is, presents Old Testament scenes in a spontaneous, immediately felt way, as though they were freshly experienced.

From his essay “On Geometrical Schematism in Romanesque Art” (1932) through his essay on “Style” (1953) to his essay “On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs” (1969), Schapiro remained concerned with aesthetic structure as such, indicating that he was not the one-sided humanist he has sometimes been understood to be. He also wrote tellingly about Jewish matters, perhaps most notoriously in his critique of “Mr. [Bernard] Berenson’s Values” (1961). In a sense, the essay is an examination of the path not chosen and, as such, subliminal self-analysis, all the more so because Berenson was also born in Vilna. Unlike Schapiro, who never changed his name and religion, Berenson changed his name and became Protestant and then Catholic. But Schapiro admired his survival skills in an alien world—fascist Italy as well as Brahmin Boston—and his power over the wealthy Christians who sought him out for his expertise about Renaissance art. He became as wealthy as many of them.

Berenson and Schapiro were prominent, innovative art historians and thinkers who dealt, in radically different ways, with the problem of being Jewish in a world that was prejudiced against Jews, although they had their uses. Schapiro never forgot his Jewishness, although he rarely made a point of it, while Berenson tried to forget it, and in fact made remarks that have been interpreted as antisemitic, or at least suggestive of his indifference to Jewishness. But Berenson never did forget his Jewishness, as Schapiro convincingly argues, suggesting that, however dissimilar, he and Berenson shared a sense of Jewish identity and destiny. Both were at once assimilated and alienated, as indicated by the fact that Schapiro was drawn to art that, at the time, was considered marginal and non-canonical, and Berenson significantly revised the understanding and canon of Renaissance art, once considered the apogee of Western art.

Schapiro wrote a great deal about Christian religious art but not much about Jewish religious art. Is this because the latter, unlike the former, was not mainstream and did not have much influence on the history of art, and in fact seems derivative of Christian religious art in its form if not content? No, there is likely a deeper reason. Modern times

are not religious times—not dominated by religious thinking as medieval times were. Chagall was religious, but he was a rarity. Nonetheless, Schapiro thought it was possible to make convincing religious art in modern times. His belief that Romanesque art and modern art share the same spiritual values suggests as much. “On the Aesthetic Attitude in Romanesque Art” makes his position clear. Schapiro writes: “Hegel said very justly that in an age of piety one does not have to be religious in order to create a truly religious work of art, whereas today the most deeply pious artist is incapable of producing it. This discrepancy between the personal religious aim and the present condition of art was expressed in another way by Van Gogh, a man of passionate Christian insight, when he wrote that one could not paint the old religious subjects in an Impressionist style.” If Van Gogh’s art is implicitly religious if not explicitly Christian, then Schapiro believed that modern art could convey religious values through its style and atmosphere. As he wrote, Gorky’s “beautifully made . . . delicate style” and “primitive, visceral and grotesque . . . atmosphere” conveyed “feelings of love and fragility and despair,” the contradictory substance of religious feeling (Schapiro 1977). As Schapiro argues, dogmatic religion, whether Christian or Jewish, is beside the point of human feeling at its most intense and deep, which is what the best art, be it officially Christian, Jewish, or secular, conveys, often through the same stylistic features. For Schapiro, it seems, Jewish art, with a few rare exceptions, such as Chagall’s, stood apart from the new sphere of art, with its spontaneity and fantasy, which began with Romanesque art and climaxed in modern art. Perhaps this is because he thought that Jewish art had more to do with religious conformity than with the “inner freedom,” as he called it, of art at its most authentic, and thus was too creatively inhibited to be aesthetically innovative.

Schapiro was the Charles Eliot Norton Professor at Harvard in 1966–1967 and the Slade Professor for Art History at Oxford University in 1968. In 1975 he received the Alexander Hamilton Medal (awarded to distinguished alumni) from Columbia, and in 1976 he was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Four volumes of his *Selected Papers* have been published, spanning the history of art, except, surprisingly—was there no spontaneity, individual fantasy, delight in color and movement, and expression of feeling in it?—the art of the High Renaissance. (But Berenson dealt with that.) The volume on Modern

Art won the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1978 and the Mitchell Prize for Art History in 1979. The Brooklyn Museum has a large exhibition space dedicated to Schapiro and his brother Morris, and Columbia has inaugurated the Meyer Schapiro Professorship.

Donald Kuspit

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## Jack Levine (b. 1915)

### Artist

Jack Levine is an American artist known for his social realist commentary, and his paintings and prints of biblical figures and Jewish sages. A painter and printmaker of Jewish figures in an abstract art world, he has defied the conventions of mid- to late twentieth-century American art. He aims, in his words, “to develop some kind of iconography about my Jewish identity” (Levine 1989).

Born January 3, 1915, in Boston’s South End, Levine was the youngest of Lithuanian immigrants Mary and Samuel Levine’s eight children. A poor shoemaker and Hebrew scholar, Samuel enrolled his son in children’s art classes at a Jewish Community Center, and later at a settlement house in Roxbury. There Levine met Harold Zimmerman, who became his first mentor, and Hyman Bloom, who also went on to become a painter of Jewish subjects.

At fourteen, Levine became acquainted with Denman Waldo Ross, an art professor at Harvard University. Ross provided financial assistance for Zimmerman, Levine, and Bloom, and arranged Levine’s first public exhibition, a small showing of his drawings at Harvard’s Fogg Art Museum in 1932 when Levine was only seventeen.

While as a child Levine created a chalk drawing titled *Jewish Cantors in the Synagogue* (1930, Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University), he first explored Jewish subjects in

earnest, specifically biblical subjects, in 1941 when he painted *Planning Solomon’s Temple*, a small, 10-by-8-inch homage to his recently deceased father (Israel Museum, Jerusalem).

Hundreds more biblical kings and Jewish sages followed, from well-known figures such as *King David* (1941) to the lesser-known *King Josiah* (1941). In 1942, Levine’s work was interrupted by three and a half years in the Army. In 1946 he married the Ukrainian-born artist Ruth Gikow. During his time in the service, in 1943, the Metropolitan Museum of Art purchased *String Quartette* (1936–1937), a boldly colored tempera and oil image of four musicians.

Returning to New York in 1946, Levine continued the social realist work for which he had been known. Levine’s unique, expressionistic style complemented his satirical eye, which recorded corrupt politicians, crooked cops, and social and political injustices on canvas and paper. Among his best-known works in this genre is *The Feast of Pure Reason* (1937, Museum of Modern Art, New York)—the title derived from James Joyce’s novel *Ulysses*—a painting completed while Levine was employed by the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Art Project.

In the fifties, Levine once again became engaged with Jewish kings and learned men, painting, among others, *King Saul* (1952), *King Asa* (1953), and the sages *Maimonides* (1952) and *Hillel* (1955).

In 1969 Levine created a lithograph, *Cain and Abel II*. While in an earlier print (1964) Levine used the theme “to capture the male mood in action” (Prescott 1984), the second version employed the Cain and Abel story as an allegory for the Holocaust (an oil painting of this subject is in the Vatican Museum’s Gallery of Modern Religious Art). The lithograph was published by the Anti-Defamation League, to whom Levine donated the print to assist with fund-raising. Here Levine explores the symbolism of the Holocaust by showing the brothers’ legs intertwined to form a swastika.

Levine has shown his work in numerous venues, including his first retrospective exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston (1952–1953), a show that traveled to five other museums, including the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. (1953), and the Whitney Museum of American Art (1955). Another retrospective was organized by the Jewish Museum in New York, which subsequently traveled to five other U.S. cities (1978–1980). He



Feast of Pure Reason by Jack Levine, 1937 (©The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by Scala/Art Resource, NY)

has works in the permanent collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

*Samantha Baskind*

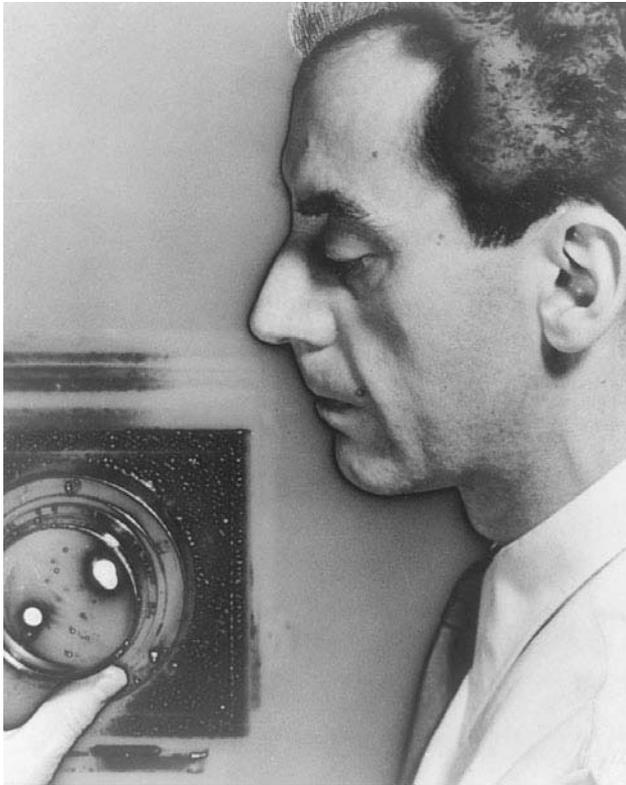
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## Man Ray (1890–1976)

### Dadaist Artist

Man Ray (born in Philadelphia 1890, died in Paris in 1976) was a major avant-garde Dadaist artist, one of the founders of New York Dada. Man Ray was an ingenious inventor and all-around artist: painter, photographer, filmmaker, and a Dadaist creator advocating the use of the “ready-made” (found objects) in unexpected combinations. His artistic language questioned the relationship between the verbal and the visual by means of his unique blend of irony, puns, subterfuge, and uncanny images. As a photographer, he was



Man Ray, *avante-garde Dadaist*. (Library of Congress)

known for his innovative technique of camera-less direct contact photography—named rayograph (after its inventor)—made by placing objects of various opacities on light-sensitive paper and exposing them to light. In many of these rayographs, the effect is the de-materialization of the objects.

Throughout modernism, Man Ray's art was read exclusively in universal terms. Viewed from a postmodern perspective, however, which credits minorities for their contributions to culture, the hidden Jewish American background of Man Ray's avant-garde universal persona emerges.

In the beginning of his artistic career in New York, Man Ray attended night classes at the Art School of the Francisco Ferrer Social Center (1910–1911), where *Tapestry* (1912) was shown—a patchwork of fabric scraps, whose center might be read as an abstract shape of a human figure (Man) with raised hands. His early exposure to photography and modern art took place in Alfred Stieglitz's "Gallery of the Photo-Secession, 291." Influenced by the Armory Show exhibition (1913) that served as an introduction to modernism, Man Ray joined the Ridge-

field community, where he met his first wife, Adon Lacroix, and two years later, his artistic soul mate, Marcel Duchamp. Whereas Duchamp went to New York to free himself from the confinement of old Europe and exhibited his famous *Fountain*/urinal in the Armory Show (later returning to Paris), Man Ray sought freedom in Paris. There he developed his artistic persona. Paris became his adopted city from 1921 to 1940, returning there in 1951 after spending the World War II years in Los Angeles, where he met his second wife, Juliet Browner.

In Paris, Man Ray also became a photographer of haute couture (high fashion), as in the photo of Coco Chanel in a little black dress, smoking a cigarette, the prototype of the *New Woman* (1935). Artistically, in the sophisticated use of the ready-made as well as in the subversive artistic language he used, this brilliant avant-garde artist-provocateur was close to Duchamp, whom he photographed in his female persona as *Rose Sélavy* (*Rose c'est la vie*, phonetically), appearing in a woman's attire. Man Ray's relationships with women were a source of artistic inspiration and express the white male's dominant gaze. Women's nude bodies are turned into objects of merchandise as in his sculpture of Venus's nude torso, tied up with a string (1937/1971). Women were photographed as nudes, as torsos, or in full body length, focusing on the heads in unique combinations, as in his 1926 *Noire et blanche* (*Black and white*). Here, the oval white head of his lover and model Kiki de Montparnasse is juxtaposed to an African mask, also printed in a negative version. The elongated neck and classic beauty of Lee Miller was captured in her elegant profile (1930). However, Man Ray commemorated the termination of their relationship with a Dadaist ready-made, *Object to Be Destroyed* (1922–1923), later called *Indestructible Object*, in which a photograph of her beautiful blue eye was clipped to a pendulum. Here, irony and humor are used to overcome their separation, the change of title signifying the failure of the attempt. The eye, both the artist's and the spectator's gaze, is emphasized in the portrait of *La Marchesa Casti* (1922), in which two pairs of eyes appear one above the other, causing movement and a mesmerizing effect.

Man Ray's photographs of pivotal modernist artists have become classics. These include Tristan Tsara (who was the first to appreciate Ray's rayographs), the Surrealist group (André Breton, Max Ernst, Salvador Dali, Alberto

Giacometti), and many others. Man Ray himself was the subject of many photographs. In a series of photographed self-portraits done in the 1920s, he presents himself as different personae: a Far Eastern fakir, an intellectual with a beard and spectacles, a Parisian with a black beret, the latter being his most desired persona. In his *Self-Portrait* (1924), a self-photograph in  $\frac{3}{4}$ , the artist in suit and tie is seen on the background of the blurred image (achieved by long exposure) of the tools of his métier. The intense expression of his enlarged widely open eyes is that of a magician, hypnotizing and being hypnotized. This modern alchemist also mystifies the process of photography, undermining its factual, naturalistic function. But he mystified more than the function of his art. Throughout his mature life, he was engaged in creating a mystery of his own family background. His 1924 *Self-Portrait*, signed and dated by the artist, attributes to his profession the ability to create his own chosen world.

Man Ray, an acronym for Emmanuel Radnitzky, was born to Manya Louria (or Lourie), who grew up in Minsk (Russia), and Melech (Hebrew for “king”) Radnitzky, who emigrated to the United States to avoid the draft. The family settled in Philadelphia and later in Brooklyn, New York (1897), earning their living as tailors. In this respect they resembled many other Jewish Eastern European immigrants (and artists, such as William Gropper, Hugo Gellert, and Max Weber), who shared the memories of the sweatshop experience. As a young child, Emmanuel took part in the family enterprise as a delivery boy. However, in Man Ray’s autobiography, *Self Portrait* (1963), there is neither mention of his family’s occupation nor of the fact that he was born a Jew. He chose rather to ignore his socioeconomic and ethnic background, wishing to detach himself from his Jewish origins through a change of name and place, inventing his own biography.

Apparently, Man Ray was unable to rid himself of that background, as can be seen in various images in his art that are related to the sweatshops. Needle and threads, pins, coat hangers, photographs of shirts next to zebras (the only animals “wearing” clothes), as well as sewing machines and flatirons populate his art. In a compulsion to repeat, many of these images reappear in his art, becoming leitmotifs. Man Ray’s struggle with his identity is exemplified by a recurrent image of major importance in the avant-garde art, *The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse*, done in New York in 1920 before leaving for Paris.

The assemblage pays tribute to Comte de Lautréamont’s (alias Isidore Ducasse) famous statement, “Beautiful as the chance meeting of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table.” In this work, one of the most radical Dadaist pieces, Man Ray achieves an eerie integration of visual and verbal effects. The viewer sees a mystifying, sinister image of a coarse opaque blanket, covering a vaguely anthropomorphic form and tied with a rope. In the relationship between the verbal and the visual, the artist engages the viewer in a sophisticated game of hide-and-seek. The enigma is the enigma of Man Ray, or of Emmanuel Radnitsky. For Man Ray, sharing with Lautréamont the need to conceal his identity, sends us through the hidden sewing machine to the world he wished to leave behind.

Soon after his arrival in Paris (1921) Man Ray produced a more overtly aggressive “assisted” ready-made, *Cadeau* (gift), a flatiron bristling with nails, obviously suggesting the tearing up of cloth rather than ironing it smoothly. Although this was what he would have wished to do, his art reveals how agonizing this “tearing” of (or tearing himself away from) the past proved to be. His reiteration of specific themes provides evidence of his compulsive confrontation with the milieu from which he had fled. The iron—with or without nails—is one such recurrent motif. In *Lingerie* (1931), a rayograph, the iron is manipulated through the process of dematerialization. And in *The Red Iron* (1966), the red hot iron continues to convey a sense of danger. The *Enigma* also became a leitmotif: in one version the sewing machine is uncovered (1933); however, two years later, the bundle of objects was put into a paper bag, tied with a string, with the suggestion that in case of need, it is already wrapped up, as indeed happened when Man Ray had to flee Paris during World War II. The *Enigma* and the *Cadeau* are related and bring new insight into the artist’s world—existentially as well as artistically—and call for an awareness of the hidden “Jewish problem” underlying Man Ray’s avant-garde art.

In his Dadaist films there were also instances in which he explored his highly ambivalent relation to the past, as in the film *Emak Bakia* (*Leave Me Alone* in Basque), produced in 1926. Here, the artist presents the metamorphosis of a dozen stiff white collars by ripping them apart and shooting their dance-like passage through revolving and deforming mirrors. Following this exhilarating pirouette to freedom, the sequence is rewound, so that at the end the torn collars become whole again.

His seemingly naive playful art objects, such as the mobile *Obstruction* (1920/1947), also convey Man Ray's grappling with the past. This graceful aerial sculpture is made of coat hangers. The artist's idea was to add more and more hangers, eventually obstructing the whole universe. In the early version he reached the total of 117, obstructing the whole space of the studio. The form itself is associated with a family tree—but one in which the branches (the hangers) are getting in each other's way (that is, obstructing one another). In fact, he is "hanging" them with their own working tools. Thus, by means of black humor and double entendre, Man Ray strove to cast off the burden of the past, ironically continuing to cull his images from the very world he wished to obliterate.

Although Man Ray distanced himself from his family, never attending his mother's or his father's funeral, the slender image of his mother, based on an 1895 cropped photograph, appears in a witty drawing, *Needle and Thread* (1937). The thread delineates the mother's silhouette, while the needle pierces the center of her spine. Here is an attempt to exorcise the magic spell she had on him through the combination of both his and her professions. From another perspective, Man Ray himself has become a tailor.

Man Ray, who was also a painter, known for the lovers' fragmented red lips hovering in the sky, symbolizing two bodies joined together, as in the 1934 *Les amoureux* (*The Lovers*), claimed that he painted what cannot be photographed and vice versa. It is therefore significant that the last version of the bundle of tied-up objects resembling the original *Enigma*, done after World War II, was a painting rather than an assemblage or photograph. Its title, *Rue Férou* (1952), was the name of the street of the artist's studio in Paris. This work also differs from the ironic stance and emotional aloofness typical of many of his Dadaist works. Here we see a shadowlike, dwarfish man with a cap, seen from behind as he pulls a loaded cart containing the tied-up bundle. He is moving down a narrow, empty cul-de-sac. The lonely figure comes to impersonate the Jewish peddler destined to roam forever from place to place—a modern version of the age-old theme of the Wandering Jew. It is a rare moment of Man Ray's coming to terms with his past and with the fate of the Jewish people, which seems to be a consequence of the war. Yet, on the manifest level, Man Ray refrained from referring to the Holocaust and continued to claim that "race, or class become irrelevant."

The collector and art critic Arturo Schwarz donated his Dada and Surrealism Collection of art objects as well as documentation to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. Many of Man Ray's photographs and Dadaist objects, the *Enigma* and flatiron included, are housed there.

Milly Heyd

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## Larry Rivers (1923–2002)

### Artist and Musician

An artist and musician, at times Larry Rivers made Jewish concerns the subject of his work, including a monumental triptych, *History of Matzah* (*The Story of the Jews*). Although sometimes these images were created tongue-in-cheek, as was typical of his art, he also reserved rare serious moments for his Jewish imagery.

Born Yitzroch Loiza Grossberg in the Bronx to Jewish immigrants from the Ukraine, Rivers initially made his reputation as a jazz saxophonist. After a brief stint in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II (1942–1943), he studied music theory and composition at the Juilliard School of Music (1944–1945). During this time he discovered the fine arts and in 1945 he began painting. Although working in an art world dominated by abstraction, Rivers retained the figure and explored historical and personal subjects. He was among the first to use popular imagery in his paintings, making him a forerunner of the Pop Art movement.

In the early fifties, when he might have made a transition to abstraction, Rivers began to paint autobiographical themes in works such as *The Burial* (1951, Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Indiana), a canvas inspired by the memory of his grandmother's funeral, and *Europe I* (1956, Minneapo-

lis Institute of Arts) and *Europe II* (1956, private collection, New York), the latter based on a formal portrait of Polish relatives.

*Bar Mitzvah Photograph Painting* (1961, private collection, New York) more specifically addresses Jewish identity issues. Here two minimally rendered children, Rivers' first cousins, are flanked by their mother and father in this family portrait. Based on a studio photograph, Rivers retains the essence of the photograph as a proof: stenciled diagonally across the canvas are letters spelling "rejected." Avram Kampf argues that Rivers parodies the diluted Bar Mitzvah ceremony, a social rather than a spiritual ritual as practiced in America (Kampf 1990).

Indeed, parody is an important facet of Rivers' work. In *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, for example, a canvas mocking the grand heroics of nineteenth-century American history painting, Rivers appropriates the imagery of Emanuel Leutze's iconic painting of the same name. In 1951, Rivers' version was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, his first painting to enter a major public collection.

Parody also pervades *History of Matzah* (*The Story of the Jews*), an ambitious project that attempts to tell the nearly four-millennia story of the Jews. Painted by commission from Rivers' frequent patron, the art dealer Jeffrey Loria, *History of Matzah* was completed over a two-year period (1982–1984). Created in a collage-like form—superimposed on a painted rendering of flat, dry matzah, the unleavened bread that resulted from the Jews' haste when fleeing Egypt—images and stories overlap on three 9-by-14-foot canvases in Part I, titled *Before the Diaspora*; Part II, *European Jewry*; and Part III, *Immigration to America*.

*History of Matzah* sustains Rivers' plays on the masters, as he manipulates biblical history through the appropriation of common imagery, including Leonardo's *Last Supper* and Michelangelo's *David*. In each appropriation, Rivers returns the iconic figures to their Jewish origins. For instance, *David* appears with a Semitic nose and circumcised. Each commentary is an attempt by Rivers to express his Judaism, an identity that he previously suppressed; *History of Matzah* stands as a recuperative painting in which Larry Rivers/Yitzroch Grossberg affirms his presence as a Jew and a Jewish artist (Baskind 1999).

Other works influenced by Rivers' Jewish identity include a large mural, *Fall in the Forest at Birkenau* (1990), hanging in the United States Holocaust Memorial Mu-

seum, three posthumous portraits of the Holocaust memoirist Primo Levi (1987–1988, Collection La Stampa, Turin, Italy), and the illustrations for a Limited Editions Club publication of Isaac Bashevis Singer's short story "The Magician of Lublin" (1984).

The multi-talented Rivers also designed sets for the play *Try! Try!* (1951), written by Frank O'Hara, as well as plays by LeRoi Jones (1964) and Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* (1966). In 1954 Rivers wrote a play, *Kenneth Koch: A Tragedy*, with O'Hara; in 1957 he began making welded metal sculpture. He also wrote poetry and performed in plays, including Koch's *The Election* (1960).

Rivers' art hangs in many venues, including the National Gallery of Art, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and the Tate Gallery in London. He has had several retrospective exhibitions, including a show at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo in Caracas, Venezuela (1980) and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. (2002).

Samantha Baskind

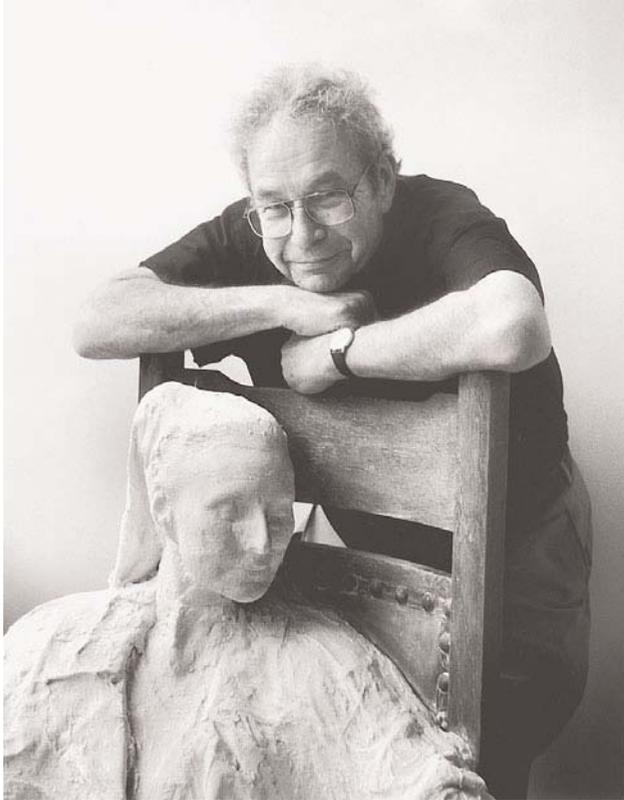
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## George Segal (1924–2000)

### Sculptor

George Segal, a major Jewish American sculptor, was one of the most innovative sculptors of the second half of the twentieth century. Known as the mythologizer of urban existence, Segal was associated in the initial stages of his career with Pop Art (1960s). Originally a second-generation Abstract Expressionist painter, Segal turned to sculpting by casting plaster bandages directly on the human body. Since casting does not end with the protagonist's physical boundaries, this kind of art captures the human being's



George Segal, sculptor. (Hulton/Getty Images)

spiritual essence. The sculptures that bring inner reality to the surface embody that which is quintessentially human. Psychological relations between people and modern urban life are explored. Most of the bandaged figures are white, but Segal occasionally used black as well as primary colors monochromatically.

Plaster is juxtaposed to objects from daily life. Although the human figures, usually people to whom the artist was close (his wife and friends), are individualized, the white color neutralizes their personal features, endowing them with an apparition-like, decontextualized appearance. Daily objects, such as a red refrigerator (in *The Gas Station*, 1964), a green table (in *Alice Listening to Her Poetry and Music*, 1970), a bench (in *Gay Liberation*), street signs (in *Times Square at Night*, 1970), a bath (in *Woman Shaving Her Leg*, 1963), add a contrasting color and texture and contribute to the dissonance.

In Segal's sculptural world, introverted participants are enclosed within their inner worlds, making no eye contact or any other form of rapport with one another. The white figures are associated with alienation in the modern city, hence resemble Edward Hopper's cityscapes, portray-

ing people as loners. Anonymity, the magic of street signs, and the tension within the body are explored in *Walk—Don't Walk* (1976), focusing on three people trying to cross the street. The protagonists' position and body language can be read as posing an existential question of "being" and "nonbeing."

However, there is also a political dimension. Segal's *The Bus Riders* (1962) carries more than a one-to-one relationship to the politics of the civil rights movement. His sculptural environments are imbued with ambiguities: between figure and environment and between the actual identity of the protagonists and their unnatural white casting. The political dimension adds another layer to the intricate staging of Segal's environment. In *The Bus Riders* three white cast figures occupy the bus seats, while a fourth seat remains vacant, although a man is standing behind it, raising the question, Why is he standing? Segal's sculpture is his tribute to the background of the Montgomery bus boycott that began in December 1955, after Rosa Parks's refusal to move to the back of the bus. It was his way of opposing racism and segregation. In this respect, his work is compatible with other Jewish American artists who were engaged in the black cause before and during the civil rights movement. (The long list includes Jack Levine, Raphael Soyer, Ben Shahn, Chaim Gross, and many others.)

Segal's universality does not exclude involvement with the fate of Jews, as in his *Holocaust Memorial* (1983) at the Jewish Museum, New York, where a pile of white emaciated bodies is seen in juxtaposition to a contemplative survivor fenced by a barbed wire. Martin Weil, the director of the Israel Museum, himself a survivor, was the model for this image. In addition, Jewish biblical texts were a source of inspiration, as can be seen in installations dedicated to biblical themes such as *Lot and his Daughters* (1958), *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (1973 and 1978), as well as *Abraham's Farewell to Ishmael* (1987). Rather than depict the world of classic mythology to stage archetypal moral dilemmas, Segal found himself closer to dramatic situations in the Hebrew scriptures.

Some sociohistorical background on Segal's family in general and on George Segal in particular provides a means for contextualizing his work from a Jewish American perspective. George was born to Jacob Segal and Sophie Gerstenfeld. The artist's father emigrated to America in 1922 from a village near Kiev, Ukraine. Having survived

World War I, Jacob left to avoid being drafted into the army. He settled in the Bronx, New York, where he owned a kosher butcher shop. In 1940 the family moved to South Brunswick, New Jersey, where the father embarked on chicken farming. There George met his future wife, Helen Steinberg, the daughter of a neighboring farmer. In 1949, after graduating from Cooper Union and Rutgers University, George Segal bought a chicken farm across the road from his family. The chickens were sold in 1958, and the coop was converted into an artist's studio.

The family's transition from the city to a rural area was part of a larger movement of some Eastern European Jewish immigrants from the big cities to rural America. This transition had to do with revolutionary and socialist ideology. The new way of making a living had its ups and downs. Whereas between 1940 and 1955 there was a vast increase in the demand and supply of poultry, after that the industry collapsed, and the farm was turned into a place where Segal's sculptures were made.

A process of three stages in the Segal family's history of acculturation in America has its resonance in George Segal's art. It involves a transition from urbanization (Bronx), through agriculture, to sublimation into art. The installation *The Butcher Shop* (1965) commemorates the first stage, and it relates to the family shop on 174th Street in the Bronx. Done six months after the father's death, the installation is inscribed "Kosher Butcher." A number of white casts of chickens are lying there next to hooks behind a glass window. On an authentic butcher's table, the white cast of the artist's mother, a knife in her hand and in a ritualistic pose, is in the process of chopping off a chicken's head. The chicken played a role in one of Segal's early paintings representing the farm period, *A Man with a Dead Chicken* (1957). Here the dead fowl is closely attached to a nude man's chest, becoming part of him, its whiteness contrasting with his bleeding red color. Segal draws an analogy between himself and the dead animal, as if he himself has been sacrificed. The artist was aware of the eve of the Day of Atonement ritual, in which a fowl is encircled around the head as a scapegoat (substituting for the sacrificial goat in the biblical Temple). Indeed, as a child Segal was in charge of cleaning the blood in his father's shop before the Sabbath. The place itself was maintained according to the Jewish dietary laws, which forbid eating blood, which has to be drained from the meat before cooking.

Hence it is significant that George Segal (unlike Chaim Soutine, who preferred to be drenched in blood) opted for white in many of his sculptures, as if whiteness is all. Moreover, for his conception of *The Butcher Shop*, blood is conspicuously absent. In his white sculptures Segal is continuously exorcising the blood that was part of his childhood experience, as if he were washing that blood away. In this respect, a pure white sculpture can be seen as a disembodied spirit.

In later assemblages, such as *Still Life with Shoe and Rooster* (1986), the rooster stands for the third stage of acculturation. Here it is part of a Cubist assemblage rather than placed on the body, as in *A Man with a Dead Chicken* or in *The Butcher Shop*. In other words, the concrete context has been eliminated, removing the rooster from the original experience. The use of Cubism as a universal language shows the change that has taken place since the days in the Bronx, immortalized in *The Butcher Shop*. The assemblage symbolizes the process of sublimating the past into art. In terms of the history of the Jewish immigration to America, Segal's family history can represent some aspects of the Jewish experience: the city, the farm, and art.

George Segal created two versions of *The Sacrifice of Isaac*. The early one was done in Israel in 1973 when the place itself triggered the artist's sense of identification with the biblical drama in the period following the Yom Kippur War. Under the impact of his reading of Søren Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, Segal speculated on the moral options Abraham had to face on the way to killing his son. In his white plaster image an intergenerational struggle takes place with neither God nor ram (deviating from the biblical story and artistic prototypes, such as Rembrandt's). The conflict had to be resolved between father and son, between youth and old age. Indeed, the scene is very charged erotically. The older man, whose bust is bare, is standing above a beautiful young boy, lying exposed on a rock. Although Abraham is holding a real knife (found in Jaffa's Arab market), he is not pointing it toward his son but rather in a reverse direction. The plaster was cast on the Israeli artist Menachem Kadishman and his son Ben (meaning son in Hebrew). Kadishman, a big, heavy, bearded man, was a shepherd, and he is conceived as a patriarchal figure. Segal is constantly engaged in the theme of Isaac's sacrifice in the context of Israeli wars, which has become a leitmotif in Israeli art and literature in general.

In producing two versions of the *Sacrifice of Isaac*, as well as *Abraham's Farewell to Ishmael* (1987) (in Hebrew, God will hear), George Segal deployed two parallel narratives of sacrifice. If in the first case Segal identified with the fallen Israelis, in the second he also identified with the position of the rejected son. In the two stories Segal saw the correspondence between Moslems and Jews. Four figures take part in the moral dilemma of sending Hagar and Ishmael away. There is a close embrace between father and son (Abraham and Ishmael), while the two women, the young beautiful Hagar and the old Sarah, are excluded from the intimacy. Hagar hugs herself, while Sarah, who stands behind, austere clad like a monk, stares harshly on her rival. Whereas in the Bible there is neither a description of facial features nor a clue to internal emotions, Segal's biblical drama centers on feeling, depicting physical gestures in expressive body language. Hence the biblical narrative is psychologized and applied to modern situations of relatedness and separation.

The second version of the sacrifice was done in bronze in memory of May 4, 1970: *Kent State University* (1978). Segal was commissioned to do a monument. Because he would not do a soldier with a rifle, Kent State rejected the sculpture. His sculpture was eventually installed on the Princeton campus. It commemorates the killing of four university students by the National Guard during the Vietnam War demonstrations. Two adults confront one another: the young one, Isaac, on his knees with his hands tied. Abraham towers in front of him, yet it is clear that, if Isaac rose, he would be taller than his father. The notion of Isaac's adulthood is obviously in accordance with the Kent State situation, but it also emphasizes his accountability and the threat he poses as a rising power. There are, in fact, versions in rabbinical chronologies conceiving of Isaac as an adult. The sculpture itself is a concentrated moment of love and hate, depending on the spectator's position. It can be seen with or without a knife, portraying an intense stabbing or an intense longing. Moreover, one is not sure whether the knife will stab the youth or cut his bonds and free him.

George Segal, a proud Jew, well read in Jewish matters, emphasized that the luckiest stroke in his life was that he was born in the United States. It is therefore very appropriate that he was chosen to be one of the artists commemorating the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial in Washington, D.C. The cycle of three works—which sum-

marized Roosevelt's presidency: *Fireside Chat*, *The Breadline* (referring to the Depression years), and *The Rural Couple*—was done out of empathy and social consciousness, befitting the great humanist that Segal was.

George Segal was represented by the Sidney Janis Gallery, New York City, where he had solo exhibitions from 1965 through 1993.

Milly Heyd

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## Raphael Soyer (1899–1987)

### Realist Artist of the American Scene

Raphael Soyer has sometimes been considered the quintessential painter of the Jewish American experience.

Soyer, active throughout a great part of the twentieth century, retained the human figure even if the American art world was concerned with more abstract ideals. His body of work includes several images that employ overt Jewish iconography, as well as art that was influenced by his Jewish identity even while not engaging obvious Jewish subjects (Baskind 2004).

Soyer was born on December 25, 1899, in Borisoglebsk, Russia. The first of six children, Raphael was one of four sons, three of whom—Raphael, his twin brother Moses, and Isaac—became artists. In 1912, when the family was forced to leave Russia because their Right to Live permit was revoked, they embarked for the United States, settling in the Bronx.

After taking drawing classes at the Cooper Union Art School from 1914 to 1917, Soyer spent four years at the National Academy of Design beginning in fall 1918, and



Raphael Soyer painting in his studio in 1940. (*Time Life Pictures/Getty Images*)

completed his artistic schooling at the Art Students League intermittently from 1920 to 1926. Soyer held his first one-man show at New York City's Daniel Gallery in 1929. It was there that his 1926 painting *Dancing Lesson* (Collection Renee and Chaim Gross, New York), often understood as the exemplar of Jewish American art, was first exhibited publicly. The painting is reproduced in almost all Jewish art books. It adorned the cover of *Painting a Place in America*, a catalog compiled in celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the Educational Alliance, even though it was Moses, not Raphael, who took classes at the Alliance. The image is also reproduced on the cover of a volume of Jewish American poetry and employed as a visual example of "Jewish acculturation in the New World" in a book on modern Jewish politics.

*Dancing Lesson* depicts the artist's sister Rebecca teaching Moses to dance. The crowded canvas, which measures only twenty-four by twenty inches, also shows three figures packed on a couch watching the dance scene. Raphael's youngest brother, Israel, plays the harmonica on the right side of the sofa, his father and grandmother survey the scene from the couch, and his mother sits on an armchair

holding a copy of the Yiddish daily newspaper *Der Tog*, inscribed with Hebrew lettering. A portrait of family ancestors in traditional attire hangs on the wall above the sofa.

Throughout his career, Soyer was interested in Social Realist themes, which he both painted and made into prints. During the Great Depression he often created compassionate renderings of the down-and-out. Samantha Baskind argues that it may be because of the influence of Judaism's teachings about the importance of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) that Soyer rendered the homeless in such detail (2004). Soyer's work was also shaped by his affiliation with Communist organizations in the thirties, including the John Reed Club.

Overwhelmed by increased traffic after the construction of the East and West Side Highways, Soyer retreated into his studio. Indeed, self-portraits at his easel and studio scenes of female nudes comprise Soyer's artistic interests through the forties. At this time Soyer also began a series of portraits of his artist friends as well as artists he admired. In a 1941 one-man show at the Associated American Artists Gallery, twenty-three of Soyer's artist portraits were exhibited in a section entitled "My Contemporaries and Elders." Among the paintings displayed were portraits of Philip Evergood and Abraham Walkowitz. In the late 1950s Soyer started to paint outdoor scenes again, most of which were large canvases, such as *Farewell to Lincoln Square* (1959, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.). Inspired by Soyer's eviction from the Lincoln Arcade Building, where he kept a studio for fourteen years, torn down because of the construction of Lincoln Center, the painting measures sixty by fifty-five inches.

Soyer remained a representational artist in an abstract art scene, proudly declaring his desire to paint "man and his world" on many occasions, including in *Reality: A Journal of Artists' Opinions*, a periodical Soyer founded to declare the importance of representational art (published annually from 1953 to 1955). The large-scale canvases of the fifties may have been a reaction to the ascension of Abstract Expressionism, whose artists favored large canvases (Baskind 2004).

After meeting the Yiddish writer Isaac Bashevis Singer in the elevator of his New York apartment building, Soyer began several projects with him late in life. Soyer illustrated a Limited Editions Club publication of two Singer stories, "The Gentleman from Cracow" and "The Mirror" (1979), and the second and third volumes of Singer's

memoirs, *A Young Man in Search of Love* (1978) and *Lost in America* (1981).

Soyer chronicled aspects of his life in four autobiographies and many interviews. Among other venues, his works reside in the permanent collections of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden.

*Samantha Baskind*

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# American Jews and Music

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## The Cantorate in America

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The cantor (*hazzan* in Hebrew) musically leads prayers and other ritual activities in the synagogue and presides at Jewish life-cycle events. The cantorate emerged around 800 CE and became a part of synagogue life in the Medieval period. During the Enlightenment, the cantorate became a profession that sought parity with the rabbinate. In both the Ashkenazic and the various Sephardic traditions, cantorial music adapted the melodies and musical aesthetic of the surrounding cultures. The Ashkenazim and Sephardim who immigrated to America transplanted the musical styles of their countries of origin, which varied widely. The synagogue was initially a place to hold onto premigratory traditions. Over time, however, American popular music, Broadway, folk, and rock styles significantly influenced the cantorate. The current challenge is to fashion a role that adheres to the cantorial tradition with its European roots while singing in a liturgical style that appeals to American Jews. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, no style predominates; the diversity is vast.

During the first centuries after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE, prayer in the Jewish tradition was not systematized. In this period, however, Rabbinic Judaism established a tradition of prayer, with the first prayer book created in the Geonic period (eighth–tenth centuries CE). Prior to this time the text of

prayer was not mandated. A member of the congregation—called the *shaliach tzibur*—led prayers expressing personal and communal requests. As this role developed and became standardized, the term *hazzan* was applied to the leader. The term likely derives from Aramaic, because it is not found in the Bible. The *hazzan* musically recited the prayers.

In the second millennium the role of the cantor became established in Jewish ritual and was much discussed by rabbis. In the Medieval period the *hazzan* often traveled to different communities, bringing a supply of new melodies. Written descriptions and iconographic sources show the *meshorerim* practice (assistant singers) consisting of a *hazzan* with two assistants: a male bass and a boy soprano. As a trio they sang with lengthy melodic elaborations in synagogue services, much to the scorn of some observers and rabbis. In the Enlightenment, cantors sought to change the nature of prayer and melodies.

The most significant development in Central European cantorial and synagogue music resulted from the liturgical and aesthetic changes introduced by the Reform movement. Although changes began in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it was in the mid-nineteenth century that they assumed an established form. Israel Jacobson (1768–1828), a merchant by profession, introduced various reforms in the synagogue service. These included the elimination of the *hazzan*, the use of

Protestant hymns with Hebrew words, sermons in German, confirmation for boys and girls, and the reading, not cantillation, of the Bible. With the exception of the elimination of the hazzan, most of his changes were incorporated into the Reform service later in the nineteenth century and thereafter. Many congregations replaced traditional Jewish music with hymnal singing in the Protestant style, and in some cases they literally translated German Protestant hymns into Hebrew. Jacobson introduced the first organ into services in Seesen in 1810. Although it was short-lived there, the practice was continued in Hamburg in 1818, which became an important city for the advancement of reforms. At the time many Jews considered the musical changes radical and extreme.

Salomon Sulzer (1804–1890) introduced musical innovations that had a lasting impact. From 1826 he officiated at the New Synagogue in Vienna. He elevated the office of cantor with his fine musicianship. Indeed Franz Schubert and Franz Liszt admired his singing. Sulzer's lasting contribution is his two-volume *Shir Zion* (vol. 1, 1840; vol. 2, 1866), a collection of his compositions and those of others that he commissioned. Sulzer preferred a straightforward lyrical melodic setting of a text and the refinement of traditional melodies. In addition, Sulzer sought to harmonize melodies within the prevailing rules of musical art of his time. Sulzer wrote out the music for the cantor and choir, with no improvisation or congregational singing allowed. He gained wide respect throughout Central Europe, and many cantors came to study with him. His impact on synagogue music was unprecedented and long lasting. He was the first to take the title *cantor*—the German title introduced in the eighteenth century by J. S. Bach—which replaced the word *hazzan*.

Louis Lewandowski (1821–1894) refined Sulzer's efforts. A choral director and composer, he served as the music director in Berlin at the Old Synagogue in the Heideruebergasse and after 1866 at the New Synagogue. His musical compositions appear in two well-known publications: *Kol Rinah U'T'fillah* (1871) for one and two voices; *Todah W'simrah* (1876–1882) for four voices and soli, with optional organ accompaniment. Lewandowski arranged traditional melodies and also wrote unique compositions both with and without *nusach* (musical modes of traditional Jewish prayer). His music had a major impact on both Reform and traditional synagogues throughout Cen-

tral Europe and America from the nineteenth century well into the twentieth century.

The East European cantorial style, however, remained traditional. Few East European synagogues incorporated the reforms commonly found in Central Europe. Traditional melodies and *nusach* remained pervasive in the region. Still, some cantors came to Vienna to study with Sulzer and incorporated his musical innovations in a style appropriate for the East European region. Nissan Blumenthal (1805–1903) was born in the Ukraine and introduced German-style music at the Brody synagogue in Odessa. He founded a choir school in 1841 and developed choral singing in four voices. Eliezer Gerovich (1844–1913), a student of Blumenthal, began as a hazzan at the Choral Synagogue in Berdichev. Students of these cantors and others immigrated to America in the early twentieth century.

The hallmark of the East European style is the use of recurring melodic fragments intent on conveying a deep emotional feeling to the congregation. Ornate musical embellishments were used to transport the listener into a spiritual realm. Word repetition was not uncommon. The nicely patterned Central European phrases came to be known as *hazzanut ha-seder*—orderly hazzanut—whereas the free and ornate East European style was known as *hazzanut ha-regesh*—emotional hazzanut. This latter style became the foundation for the Golden Age of the cantorate, which took hold in America during the first few decades of the twentieth century. Although distinct styles, hazzanut ha-seder and hazzanut ha-regesh were also intermingled.

By the mid-nineteenth century, Reform synagogues in America used the music that was current in Europe, predominantly that of Sulzer and Lewandowski, as well as the music of American composers. The new music by nineteenth-century American synagogue composers included that of Sigmund Schlesinger (1835–1906) and Edward Stark (1856–1918), whose music was devoid of traditional prayer modes. Schlesinger was an organist at a synagogue in Mobile, Alabama, who used operatic excerpts from Bellini, Donizetti, and Rossini in synagogue services, although he changed the words. Stark, a cantor at Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco, used some traditional melodies but his compositions were unsophisticated. Hungarian-born Alois Kaiser (1840–1908), an apprentice to Sulzer, after serving communities in Vienna (1859–1863) and Prague (1863–1866), immigrated to America in 1866 and became the cantor for Congregation Ohab Shalom in



*The opening of the Hebrew Union School of Sacred Music in New York, 1948. (American Jewish Archives)*

Baltimore. His collections of synagogue music include hymnal compositions, melodies with four-part chorale settings, following the Lutheran model of J. S. Bach.

Isaac Mayer Wise (1819–1900), the progenitor of American Reform Judaism, coined the term *Minhag Amerika* to refer to the American modification of Jewish traditions. Originally the title of a prayer book published in 1857, the term now refers more generally to the Americanization of European Jewish traditions. Wise and other rabbis of his era believed that communal hymn singing was the quintessential religious experience. In 1892 the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) resolved to adopt Wise's hymnbook as the official one of American Jewish Reform Congregations. In discussing the resolution, rabbis commented that they sing a good deal of non-Jewish music out of necessity because few Jewish composers value

hymns. Rabbi Adolph Guttman (1854–1927), of Syracuse, New York, recognized the power of Christian worship to be the communal singing of hymns. By 1912 the first edition of the Wise hymnal had been deemed a failure, since the hymns did not contain traditional Jewish melodies, and rabbis encouraged cantors to create a more effective one. Although hymn singing remained a part of many Reform congregations through the 1950s, it fell out of fashion as worship styles changed to include cantorial and choral singing.

Resettlement and the rising tide of secularism posed strong challenges to the religious life of Jewish immigrants. The period between the World Wars was a time of reorientation, as rabbis sought to craft a role for the synagogue that would be relevant to American Jewish life. Similarly, composers sought to make the music in American synagogues a

viable religious experience. They gave much attention to preparing new compositions for the synagogue, as well as to teaching and writing about Jewish music. The Jewish Music Forum (1939–1962) addressed many musical and liturgical issues and encouraged a range of musical activity, from the gathering of composers for discussion to conferences, concerts, and compositions. This organization fueled the development of American cantorial schools in each of the major denominations: Reform, School of Sacred Music at Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion in 1948; Conservative, the Cantor’s Institute at the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1950; Orthodox, Yeshiva University’s program in 1954. Graduates of these training programs formed professional cantorial societies: Reform, American Conference of Cantors; Conservative, Cantor’s Assembly; Orthodox, Cantorial Conference of America. The goal of each movement was to create a new form of Jewish liturgical music that was distinct from that of the previous century.

The period 1880 to 1930 is considered the Golden Age of the cantorate. The cantors associated with the Golden Age were born and trained in Eastern Europe, and came to America after the turn of the century. Some had regular pulpits for the entire year and others were engaged only for the High Holidays, when they commanded large fees. This musical liturgical artistry proliferated through radio broadcasts, 78-rpm recordings, and concerts. Great cantors include Yossele Rosenblatt (1882–1933), Leib Glantz (1898–1964), Mordecai Hershman (1888–1940), Leibele Waldman (1907–1969), Pierre Pinchik (1900–1971), and Moshe Koussevitzky (1899–1966) and his brother David. So admired were these cantors that people came from long distances to hear them sing at concerts and services. The Golden Age of the cantorate uniquely fused vocal artistry and impassioned prayer in a distinctive style that, for many, has become the definitive form of *hazzanut*.

By the early 1960s the growth of Jewish institutions had a direct effect on contemporary Jewish music and on the role of the cantor. Paradoxically, up to the 1950s, and even more so since, the role of the cantor increased in status, but the musical artistry of *hazzanut* decreased. The cantor became prayer leader, musical expert, music teacher, facilitator, educator, pastoral counselor, and administrator. The *hazzan* as star performer came to an end. The cantor who just sang artistic renditions of liturgical music became increasingly less common. The changed musical role of a cantor reflected the needs of American

Judaism for a more accessible music that engenders participation in a familiar—and less European—aesthetic. As cantors assumed pastoral responsibilities as counselors and chaplains, they gained recognition in the Reform and Conservative movements as co-clergy, even officiating at life-cycle events.

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, women entered the cantorate. Women now led services and were accepted as clergy. In the mid-1970s the Reform movement invested the first female cantor, and in the mid-1980s the Conservative movement did the same. The Orthodox movement does not allow women to be cantors or clergy. By 2005, women comprised 52 percent of the membership of the Reform movement’s American Conference of Cantors. Women now serve in leadership positions and hold half the senior cantorial positions in large congregations. Women comprise 30 percent of the members of the Conservative movement’s Cantor’s Assembly. Participating for two decades, they occupy mostly midsized and small congregations, and have limited leadership positions.

During the second quarter of the twentieth century, composers sought to make the music of the synagogue more compatible with contemporary musical styles. Composers such as Abraham Binder (1895–1966), Isadore Freed (1900–1960), and Lazare Weiner (1897–1982) sought to adapt traditional cantorial melodies, melodic style, and harmonies to a more modern musical framework. In 1933 Ernest Bloch (1880–1959), a well-known American composer, premiered his *Avodath Hakodesh* (Sacred Service) for cantor, choir, orchestra, and narrator to much acclaim, elevating this work of Jewish liturgy to the status of an oratorio. Toward the middle of the twentieth century, Max Helfman (1901–1963) and Max Janowski (1912–1991) wrote compositions that are commonly sung in American Reform and Conservative congregations for the High Holidays: Helfman’s “*Sh’ma Koleinu*” and Janowski’s “*Avinu Malkeinu*.”

During the second half of the twentieth century, composers such as Michael Isaacson drew from a variety of musical styles, both classical and contemporary, for their synagogue compositions. They are also influenced by folk, popular, and Israeli-style songs. Debbie Friedman, whose popularity increased in the 1980s and 1990s, is representative, drawing her music from folk and soft rock styles. Today cantors in Reform synagogues use all these diverse musical styles.

The approach to music in Conservative synagogues is similar. Traditional melodies may be more common in Conservative synagogues, but these melodies are, in fact, less than a hundred years old. Abraham Goldfarb (1879–1956) arrived in the United States in 1893 from Poland and studied at the Jewish Theological Seminary. He produced many books and pamphlets of synagogue melodies that are regularly sung in synagogues and home rituals at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The *havurah* movement began in the 1970s, seeking to empower the laity to participate in services and further their knowledge and education about Judaism. The result has been an increase in congregational involvement throughout the service. The cantor often functions as an educator and facilitator for congregational participation. But, particularly on the High Holidays and for special events, liturgical music can be heard that combines the artistry of cantorial recitatives, taken from or inspired by the Golden Age of the cantorate, compositions based on the traditional use of prayer modes, and liturgical chants. Volunteer and professional choirs are also used.

In Orthodox synagogues, music serves a more functional purpose. Although a paid professional cantor is common in Reform and Conservative synagogues, it is rare in these synagogues. The prayer leader in an Orthodox synagogue keeps vocal embellishments to a minimum. Congregational involvement is interspersed throughout the service. As in the other branches of Judaism, traditional melodies are more commonly heard on the High Holidays. In many Orthodox synagogues a hazzan may only be employed during the holidays; on the other days a congregant serves in this role. Orthodox congregations also differ in their use of nusach. Some prefer Israeli melodies or tunes from songs popular in the Orthodox community for the highlighted portions of the prayer, such as the *kedusha* in the Sabbath morning service. Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach (1925–1994) combined the participatory ease of folk music, the energy of the new music from Israel, and the religious fervor of the Hasidic *niggun* (melody), and succeeded in moving liturgical music out of the synagogue into a wide range of other settings. The “Carlebach Synagogue” in New York, where he served as rabbi from his father’s death in the 1970s to 1994, is known for lengthy services with much singing. Since Shlomo Carlebach’s death, services deriving from this style have spread throughout America and to Jewish communities across the world.

The three major denominations of American Judaism all have similar concerns with respect to new music in the synagogue. At issue is both the role of the cantor as prayer facilitator and the participation of the congregation. The rhythmically precise Central European and the rhythmically free East European traditions have been combined in varying ways in American congregations. Whereas Reform synagogues were once the source of artistic innovation, this trend has diminished in favor of participatory services. Trained cantors and some congregants desire to utilize music that draws on the rich musical history of the Jewish tradition. Other congregants choose a more accessible musical service that facilitates their participation in an idiom they prefer. Although the Jewish musical tradition from which they draw includes Hasidic and Israeli melodies, folk and popular styles predominate.

While some decry the lack of artistry in the continual popular influence on liturgical music, others have embraced it as a way to encourage synagogue attendance. The popular trends reflect the influences of, and the gradual adaptation to, American culture. The process of adapting musical influences to the surrounding culture has long been a part of synagogue music’s history.

The non-Ashkenazic communities in America, though few in number, provide a contrast with the Ashkenazim. Sephardic Jews, commonly defined as the Jews from Spain and their descendants in various areas of relocation, differ in their traditions because they have been influenced by many distinct cultures. Although the Sephardim who arrived in America in the seventeenth century were originally from Spain or Portugal, those who immigrated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came from Morocco, Turkey, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Bukhara, and Yemen. In general, their synagogues followed the prayer style of their country of origin. In the years after migration, however, the communities varied in their degree of adherence to premigratory customs. The traditional liturgical melodies of early immigrants were regularly maintained in these communities. Recently, some Sephardic congregations—for example, Syrian synagogues in Brooklyn and Turkish synagogues in Seattle—have employed a professional, paid cantor. Most congregations, however, are led by a lay cantor. Sephardic communities, like American Ashkenazic congregations, struggle to hold onto the past, even as they innovate in the present.

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## Jews in Rock 'n' Roll

At first glance, Jews in rock 'n' roll seems to be only a slightly more promising subject than Jewish sumo wrestlers. Derived—or stolen—from rhythm and blues (R&B) and country music, rock 'n' roll attracted African Americans and Southern whites as its greatest performers throughout the 1950s. The music of Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Elvis Presley, and Jerry Lee Lewis was not designed by (or for) the stereotypical Jewish sensibility. Rock 'n' roll, E. Anthony Rotundo has suggested, appeals more to feelings than to ideas, more to the beat than to the lyrics; it is more passionate than ironic, more spontaneous than studious, more libidinal than sublimating. Consequently, Rotundo asserts, Jews have had less influence on rock 'n' roll than on any other form of popular entertainment (1982). And yet, the impact of Jews on rock 'n' roll from the 1950s into the twenty-first century has been significant. In the 1950s Jews provided the capital to produce and distribute the music and played a pivotal role in injecting rock 'n' roll into the white mainstream. In the 1960s and 1970s, as rock became more socially and politi-

cally conscious, Jewish musicians and singers proliferated while Jewish producers and promoters remained active off stage. Since then, as Jews in the United States have challenged some of the characteristics attributed to them, Jewish performers have strummed, strutted, screamed, and smashed their way to stardom in heavy metal, punk, grunge, rap, hip hop, and virtually every other incarnation of rock music.

Although country and rhythm and blues had found a niche in some theaters, jukeboxes, and radio stations by the early 1950s, the major record companies—Capitol, Columbia, Decca, Mercury, MGM, and RCA—stuck with the romantic ballads of established stars such as Frank Sinatra, Perry Como, Bing Crosby, and Nat King Cole. As they had in many other businesses, Jewish entrepreneurs seized an opportunity that others thought marginal and, given the "smutty" lyrics sung by African Americans, rather tawdry as well. They aimed initially at Southerners and the substantial number of blacks who had migrated to cities in the North after World War II. Between 1948 and 1954, a thousand independent record labels were established, many of them specializing in R&B. "I looked for an area neglected by the majors," acknowledged Art Rupe (born Arthur Goldberg), the founder of Specialty Records in Los Angeles, "and in essence took the crumbs off the table in the record industry" (Altschuler 2003). Not every owner of an important "indie" was Jewish. Vee Jay in Chicago, and Peacock and Duke Records in Houston, for example, had black owners. But the vast majority were. In addition to Rupe, Jewish producers included Phil and Leonard Chess, whose name is known to all blues fans; Syd Nathan, a pawnbroker, amusement park concessionaire, and wrestling impresario in Cincinnati whose King and Federal labels featured country and R&B; Leo, Edward, and Ida Messner, whose Aladdin Records had a brief run of R&B hits; and Herb Abramson and Jerry Wexler, partners of Ahmet Ertegun (the son of a Turkish ambassador) at the soon-to-be-legendary Atlantic Records.

Bottom-line businessmen, indie owners ruthlessly cut costs to stay afloat. In the 1950s high-quality recording equipment was relatively inexpensive, and they discovered that they could pay composers and performers as little as \$10 and a case of whisky per song while assigning copyright to themselves. "The way an 'indie' survives," claimed Herman Lubinsky, the owner of Savoy Records, "you don't pay anybody" (Lisher 1997). Little wonder, then, that

breakeven for a record could be reached with a sale of 1,500 units. Little wonder, too, that Jewish owners acquired a reputation for exploiting rock 'n' roll artists. The owners subsequently insisted that they were using practices common in the industry and were no more exploitative than non-Jewish indie producers or, for that matter, the major record companies. "People forget these Jewish fellows in the business were entrepreneurs who spent their money to make hit records," said Art Sheridan, who ran Chance Records in Chicago. "There wasn't any altruism at the time any more than there is today in the music business. The singers wanted to be heard. They wanted to sell records. There were just as many artists who ran out on their contracts or who borrowed against their appearance fees as there were record executives who took advantage of the artists" (Lisher 1997).

These disclaimers notwithstanding, many producers justified Bo Diddley's charge that R&B really meant "Ripoffs & Bullshit." Nonetheless, the Jewish owners should not be dismissed simply as parasites. With a few exceptions, they exhibited a genuine, if paternalistic, affection for the African Americans with whom they worked and a commitment to toleration and equal opportunity born of their own experience with bigotry. Rupe recalled that the neighborhood he grew up in near Pittsburgh had so many blacks he looked "like a sugar cube in a coal bin" in his class picture: "What bonded us was to a culture shaped by our similar status, not our ethnicity." In 1950, Rupe recorded Percy Mayfield's R&B hit, "Please Send Me Someone to Love," a plea for an end to prejudice, "this damnable sin" (Lisher 1997). So tyrannical that singer James Brown called him Little Caesar, Syd Nathan always insisted, "We pay for ability and ability has no color, no race, no religion" (Lisher 1997). Nathan made sure that King Records was integrated, from the factory floor up to the offices of middle managers. Leonard Chess, according to his son, saw blacks as fellow immigrants who wanted what he wanted: freedom and money. He could be stingy with royalties, but also assisted performers when they were on dope or down on their luck. The relationship between Jewish producer and African American performer, then, was complicated. The owners often deprived performers of the financial rewards to which they were entitled, but in a racist society where economic options for blacks were limited, they helped talented artists find their audiences and advance their careers.

Many of the owners had little affinity for the music they produced. When Syd Nathan heard James Brown's "Please, Please, Please," he thought the singer was stuttering. Expecting a "big band sound expressed in a churchy way," Art Rupe hesitated to distribute Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti" (Altschuler 2003). But one of the Jewish producers, Jerry Wexler, made a significant and lasting impression on the aesthetics of rock 'n' roll, combining the soul of Southern gospel with the sounds of Southern country music. Born and raised in Manhattan, Wexler was the son of a Polish immigrant, who eked out a living as a window washer. Saddled with a bearded Hebrew teacher, who smelled from garlic and used his ruler to discipline wayward students, he rejected the Orthodox Judaism of his parents. Wexler discovered rhythm and blues, and he journeyed to Harlem where he would "sit and drink and watch the smoothest, most spectacular dancers pulsate to the smoking beat" (Lisher 1997). After a stint in the Army and a degree in journalism at Kansas State, he landed a job with *Billboard* magazine, making a name for himself by changing the title of the publication's "Race Music" charts to "Rhythm & Blues." The latter phrase, he argued, was "more appropriate to more enlightened times" (Lisher 1997). In 1951, Wexler left *Billboard* for MGM; he moved to Atlantic in 1953 and built a reputation for discovering new talent and coaxing superior performances out of veterans. He encouraged Ray Charles to sing the blues as he would in church, providing him with a female choir to respond to "Hallelujah I Love Her So." He produced four classics by the Dominoes, who in other hands would pretty-up and water down their sublime gospel harmonies. And he helped breathe new life into the career of Big Joe Turner, an R&B shouter from Kansas City, who recorded "Shake, Rattle, and Roll" and "Corrine, Corrina" for Atlantic.

Wexler's greatest contribution to rock 'n' roll came in the 1960s. Working with Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett, and Sam and Dave, he helped make possible the rise of soul music. With these artists, as with Ray Charles, Wexler encouraged a return to blues and gospel roots, producing Aretha's "Do Right Woman" and "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman." In presenting him with a lifetime achievement award for the Blues Foundation in 1995, Al Bell of Stax/Volt Records, the legendary Memphis label, called Wexler "the mother and father of what became known as R&B and then soul music. He heard it, he loved

it, he respected it and he taught America and then the world to love and respect it” (Lisher 1997). In the last third of the twentieth century, Wexler remained active and influential, working with, among many others, the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Willie Nelson, and Dire Straits.

In the early 1950s, the Jewish producers helped introduce rhythm and blues to new audiences, especially white teenagers who listened to it late at night on local radio stations and journeyed to neighborhoods whose theaters presented a multicultural musical fare. But the indies had neither the capital nor the clout to make the music a mass culture phenomenon. In 1953 R&B records still accounted for a small fraction of total record sales. Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and Bill Haley changed all that. Wildly popular in live concerts, they made radio, television, and the major record companies sit up and take notice.

Integral to this process as well was a Jewish disc jockey, Alan Freed, the man who gave rock ’n’ roll its name. Born near Johnstown, Pennsylvania, in 1921, Freed commenced his love affair with broadcasting while a student at Ohio State. He spun platters in Akron, moving on to WJW radio in Cleveland in 1950. When Leo Mintz, the Jewish owner of Record Rendezvous, located near Cleveland’s black ghetto, told him that white kids were flocking to his store in search of R&B records, Freed began to feature the music on his show. Although some adults complained he was a “nigger lover,” Freed had made a shrewd choice. Since few stations hired African American disc jockeys, Freed had few on-air R&B rivals. Billing himself as the King of the Moondoggers, Freed rang a cowbell, slammed his hand on a telephone directory in time with the beat, and imitated a black patter. Black and white teenagers, in the city and the suburbs, tuned in, making the Moondog House the hottest show in town. The first white DJ in Cleveland to play “Crying in the Chapel” by the Orioles, Freed got the credit when 30,000 fans bought records of the song the next day.

In 1954, Freed moved to New York City, with a show in prime time on WINS radio. Callers bombarded the station, eager to know whether he was black or white. The advertising revenues of WINS skyrocketed. But in November, trouble found Freed, in the person of Thomas Louis Hardin, a blind street musician and composer, who often stationed himself near Carnegie Hall, with triangular drums he called trimbas, dressed like a Viking, asking

passersby for their loose change. Hardin had used the name Moondog for years and sued Freed for infringement. That Freed had, in fact, played Hardin’s composition, “Moondog Symphony,” on his show clinched the case. Judge Carroll Walter barred the disc jockey from using the name on his show.

Freed made a virtue of necessity. “Moondog House” became “Rock ’n’ Roll Party.” A black euphemism for sexual intercourse and for hot, danceable music, the term *rock ’n’ roll* had been used in R&B songs for decades. Thus, Freed’s claim that the phrase came to him in an inspirational flash is as dubious as his assertion that he used it to get rid of the racial stigma of rhythm and blues. Whatever his intentions, Freed hit the jackpot. Freed and WINS scrambled to copyright it, but the very ubiquity of the phrase made a copyright unenforceable. As if by magic, the new name enabled producers and promoters to market the music to a much broader audience. African American performers made a compelling case that rock ’n’ roll was nothing more than a white adaptation of rhythm and blues. But by giving rock ’n’ roll its name, Alan Freed invited millions of whites to believe in an immaculate conception of a distinctive, not a derivative, musical form.

Freed’s career came crashing down at the end of the decade. Accused of taking “payola” in exchange for radio play, Freed lost his job. He stumbled on, often in an alcoholic haze, until his death in 1965. By then, rock ’n’ roll disc jockeys, many of them Jewish, were filling the airwaves in New York. WINS replaced Freed in 1959 with Murray “The K” Kaufman, who was soon acclaimed as the best rock DJ in the city. Kaufman and “Cousin Bruce” Morrow, a Jewish DJ born in Brooklyn, were early promoters of the Beatles, helping extend the reach of rock ’n’ roll into a new decade.

As a mass culture phenomenon, rock ’n’ roll attracted many white performers. Their backgrounds varied, ranging from Pat Boone, a Southerner, to “schlock rocker” Fabian Forte, an Italian heartthrob from Philadelphia. Still, few Jews applied. Entrenched in Tin Pan Alley, which continued to churn out melodic, romantic ballads, Eddie Fisher, Steve Lawrence, and Edie Gormé had no incentive to experiment with a genre as controversial—and, they thought, faddish—as rock ’n’ roll. In the decades to come, Neil Diamond, Barbra Streisand, Barry Manilow, Billy Joel, and Michael Bolton also took the path more traveled by. On occasion, as with Neil Sedaka, who

reached the charts with “Oh! Carol,” “Happy Birthday Sweet Sixteen,” and “Breaking Up Is Hard to Do,” a Jewish singer recorded a song best characterized as “rock light.” Baby-faced, with a high-pitched voice, Sedaka had been selected by Arthur Rubinstein as one of the best pianists among high school students in New York City. A likely rock 'n' roll icon he was not.

Significantly, Sedaka was a songwriter as well. For better or worse, Jewish songwriters helped bring rock 'n' roll into the mainstream by turning out softer, more harmonic compositions, sometimes backed by lush orchestration, with lyrics exploring teenage love and angst. In the 1950s, “Doc” Pomus and the team of Leiber and Stoller parlayed their knowledge of R&B into songs with crossover appeal. Born Jerome Solon Felder in Brooklyn in 1925, Pomus found his calling as he listened to Big Joe Turner. Changing his name to hide his profession from his parents, who wanted him to become a doctor or an accountant, Pomus wrote songs for Turner and Ray Charles and, with Mort Shuman, more than twenty singles for Elvis. Pomus’s biggest hits, sung by the Drifters, were the love songs “This Magic Moment,” “Sweets for My Sweet,” and the poignant “Save the Last Dance for Me.” Explaining his shift to a more frothy fare, Pomus said, “Sometimes the superego has to take a holiday” (Billig 2001). Before he died in 1991, Pomus had written over a hundred Top Ten singles, for the likes of the Beatles, Bob Marley, Dolly Parton, Bruce Springsteen, Elvis Costello, and Andy Williams.

Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller were both born in 1933, Leiber in Baltimore, Stoller in Belle Harbor, New York. Before they reached their teens, Leiber and Stoller were African American wannabes. Leiber’s Irish and Polish friends fought with him, but the blacks remained loyal, each recognizing in the other an underdog. Stoller’s life changed when at a camp in Hacketstown, New Jersey, he heard a black youngster play boogie-woogie piano. Stoller invited a black girl from Brooklyn to his prom at Forest Hills High School. “Blacks were warmer. They were sharper,” he recalled. “Everything about them was somewhat heightened” (Lisher 1997). Leiber and Stoller met after their families moved to Los Angeles and they decided to write “black songs” together. Unlike Pomus, they did not adopt less Jewish-sounding names. On the credits for “Dance with Me,” in fact, they identified themselves as Louis Lebish and Irv Nathan. Leiber and Stoller hit paydirt with “Kansas City” for Wilbert Harrison, “Saved” for La-

Verne Baker, and, of course, “Hound Dog,” for Willie Mae “Big Mama” Thornton (later covered by Elvis Presley). They were acclaimed for an uncanny ability to write in a black idiom and for writing about the street life of African Americans when few other songwriters dared to. But Leiber and Stoller also capitalized on—and reinforced—a more mainstream sound. “Yakety Yak” and “Charlie Brown” were novelty songs with mass appeal, and the team wrote or cowrote the ballads “There Goes My Baby,” “On Broadway,” and “Stand by Me.”

In the late 1950s, Leiber and Stoller relocated to the Brill Building, 1619 Broadway in Manhattan, which housed a stable of songwriters, most of them Jewish. Although, for a time, as Michael Billig argues, rock 'n' roll “was coming from elsewhere” (Billig 2001), the move put an exclamation point on the convergence of Tin Pan Alley, pop, and rock 'n' roll in New York City. Working at the Brill Building (or at a branch office in Los Angeles), at one time or another, often for Jewish rock impresario Don Kirshner, were Sedaka, Al Kooper, Lou Adler, Barry Mann, Cynthia Weil, Carol King, Gerry Goffin, Herb Alpert, Hal David, and Burt Bacharach. Their output of soft rock 'n' roll hits was phenomenal. King and Goffin, for example, combined rhythm and blues with a classical sound to produce “Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?” for the Shirelles, “Up on the Roof” for the Drifters, and the dance record, “Loco-Motion.”

Another Brill alumnus was Phil Spector. Born in the Bronx in 1940, Spector wrote a million seller—the hummable, singable “To Know Him Is to Love Him”—when he was eighteen. The title phrase came from the inscription on his father’s headstone in Beth David cemetery on Long Island. A brilliant and bizarre man, as well as an obsessive and controlling producer, Spector created the legendary “wall of sound” in the early 1960s for the Crystals, the Ronettes, and the Righteous Brothers. In what Spector grandiloquently called a “Wagnerian approach to rock and roll” (Billig 2001), the lyrics did not matter much. Through dubbing and mixing, horns, strings, and percussion were layered and blended, track on track, instrument on instrument. Spector is generally credited with revolutionizing the techniques of rock 'n' roll recording. In 1963, he added to the assimilation of rock 'n' roll into the musical mainstream (and, by implication, declared himself an assimilated Jew) by producing the rock album, *A Christmas Gift to You*.

With Elvis in the Army, Chuck Berry in jail, Little Richard in the ministry, Jerry Lee Lewis in disgrace, and Buddy Holly, the Big Bopper, and Ritchie Valens dead, rock 'n' roll languished between 1958 and 1963. The Beatles, the advance guard of the British Invasion, sparked American rock 'n' rollers to reinvent themselves. Jewish promoters helped bring the Fab Four to the United States. Brian Epstein stumbled across the group in a Liverpool club in 1962. Although he had no experience in the business, Epstein became the Beatles' manager. A year later, Sid Bernstein, an executive with General Artists Corporation, who had been reading British newspapers to stay abreast of musical trends, tracked down Epstein and hammered out a deal to bring the Beatles to the United States.

Opening for the Beatles in their first concert held in Washington, D.C., was Jay and the Americans, a "rock light" band composed of five Jewish vocalists. As a teenager in Brooklyn, Jay Black (born David Blatt) was inspired by African American "do-wop" groups "in a way that made me crazy, in an emotional way" (Benarde 2003). The band's hits included "Come a Little Bit Closer." Although they adopted a Broadway sound by 1964, with "Only in America" and a recording of "Some Enchanted Evening" from the musical *South Pacific*, Jay and the Americans were on the bill with the Rolling Stones during their tour of the United States in 1965.

Spurred by the civil rights movement and anti-Vietnam War protest, rock 'n' roll became more political in the 1960s and 1970s. As lyrics relevant to the issues of the day became *de rigueur*, Jews found their way to the stage. Given the traditional commitment of Jews to civil rights and social justice, this may have been inevitable, but, as Jakob Dylan, leader of the alternative rock group, the Wallflowers, has observed, "maybe it took the guts of one Jewish kid from Minnesota to stick the smug face of Brando to the ferocious danger of the faraway south" (Oseary 2001). He was referring, of course, to his father, Bob Dylan.

Robert Zimmerman was an outcast as a kid, who took Elvis as his model. His first incarnation as Bob Dylan, however, was as a folk singer, militant in his opposition to racial injustice and the Vietnam War. Famous for the exquisite "Blowin' in the Wind," Dylan stunned his fans in 1965 when he appeared in a black leather jacket and sang "Like a Rolling Stone," backed by an electric band. Initially booed for betraying folk music with a harsh and unnatural sound, Dylan soon gained an even larger following, placing

several albums in the Top Ten. In subsequent years, he transformed himself musically several more times, and in the late 1970s he declared himself a fundamentalist Christian. But he left in his wake a musical legacy: "folk rock," consisting of gentle harmonies, sometimes attached to cultural and political messages, amplified by electric strings and drums in a rock backbeat.

Folk rock flourished in the mid-1960s, with Jews among its most accomplished performers. Behind singers Cass Elliot (born Ellen Naomi Cohen) and Michelle Phillips (born Holly Michelle Gilliam), for example, the Mamas and the Papas, dressed in tie-dyed outfits, produced a breezy, West Coast sound, climbing the charts with "Monday, Monday," "Dedicated to the One I Love," and "California Dreamin'." Zal Yanofsky, a Canadian Jew who was fluent in Hebrew and Yiddish, was the cofounder, guitarist, singer, and songwriter for the Lovin' Spoonful. The group blended folk, blues, and rock in what was dubbed "good time" music. Their hits included "Do You Believe in Magic?" "Did You Ever Have to Make Up Your Mind?" and "Summer in the City."

Next to Dylan, the most important Jewish folk rockers were Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel. Raised in Queens, New York, they teamed up as Tom and Jerry (two cartoon characters), scored a modest hit in high school, went their separate ways, then reunited as folk singers in Greenwich Village. Mindful of Bob Dylan's success, producer Tom Wilson took "The Sound of Silence," written by Simon and recorded in 1964, overdubbed an electric guitar, bass, and drums, and re-released it a year later as a single. Number one on the charts, the song made Simon and Garfunkel famous. Although his music lacked an insistent beat, Simon's themes of alienation and missed communication resonated with fans of rock as well as folk. Before Dylan, folk music had a middle-American Protestant provenance, identified with the likes of Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Burl Ives. Simon and Garfunkel opened the genre to a suburban, Jewish sensibility. With Garfunkel's crystalline countertenor voice and Simon's tunes, lyrics, and arrangements, the pair recorded hit after hit over the next five years, winning five Grammy awards. "Homeward Bound," "I Am a Rock," "America," "Scarborough Fair," "Mrs. Robinson," and "Bridge over Troubled Waters" became pop classics.

In 1970, Simon and Garfunkel split up. While Garfunkel had modest success as an actor and singer, Simon

became one of the premier singer/songwriters in the United States, with eclectic and shifting interests in reggae, gospel, jazz, and the music of South Africa and Brazil. His solo albums drew on the musical structures of rock 'n' roll more than his work with Garfunkel had in the 1960s.

Jews were visible in "acid rock" bands of the 1960s and 1970s as well. All five of the original members of Country Joe and the Fish were Jewish. Formed in San Francisco in 1965, the band had one of the most overtly political, anti-war acts of the era. "The Jewish experience is unique," said band member Barry Melton only half facetiously, "in that you're able to engage in social commentary because you don't have a country. You're always ready to move. I wouldn't be here if some people had not been smart enough to move" (Benarde 2003). In most of their concerts, the Fish led the audience in chanting a famous four-letter word. Arrested for inciting audience lewdness in Worcester, Massachusetts, Country Joe McDonald asked a half million people in Woodstock, New York, to join him in the very same chant less than a year later. Other standout Jewish rockers of this era are singer/songwriter Laura Nyro (born Laura Nigro), Donald Fagen and Walter Becker of Steely Dan, Peter Green (born Peter Greenbaum) of Fleetwood Mac, Robbie Krieger of the Doors, Steve Katz and Al Kooper of the Blues Project and Blood, Sweat, and Tears, Peter Wolf and Seth Justman of the J. Geils Band, and Mickey Hart, drummer for the legendary Grateful Dead.

The Dead's preferred concert promoter was the almost equally legendary Bill Graham (born Wolfgang Grajonca). He was born in Berlin, Germany, in 1931, two days before his father died in a construction accident, and was placed in an orphanage so that his mother could work. When war broke out in 1939, Wolfgang was in Paris on an exchange program. After two harrowing years, the Red Cross brought the youngster, who weighed forty-four pounds and did not speak a word of English, to New York City. His mother died in a Nazi concentration camp. He became an American citizen in 1949 and changed his name to Graham. Not surprisingly, of all the Jews in rock 'n' roll, Graham was the most publicly committed to Judaism (he founded the Bill Graham Menorah Project to recognize Hanukkah in San Francisco) and one of the most politically engaged.

Winner of a bronze star and a purple heart during the Korean War, Graham returned to New York, completed his degree in business administration at City College, worked

as an aspiring actor, then drifted to California where he became a business manager and concert organizer. By 1965, his knack for dealing with square politicians and decidedly less symmetrical rock musicians (despite a famously bad temper) made him the impresario of Fillmore Auditorium in San Francisco—and, a short while later, of Fillmore East in New York City. Every important rock act, it seemed, wanted to work with him, including Jefferson Airplane, the Doors, the Who, and the Dead. Graham provided superior lighting and sound equipment, treated creative artists with respect, and insisted that audiences get their money's worth.

In 1971, citing the escalating fees of performers, agents who forced promoters to take inferior acts to get a headliner, and the deteriorating taste of audiences, Graham closed Fillmore East and Fillmore West. He continued to book shows, often at Winterland in San Francisco, organized concert tours (taking Bob Dylan across America in 1974 and putting on "The Last Waltz" of the Band two years later), started record labels, founded an advertising company called Chutzpah, and built a rock merchandising company that grossed more than \$100 million dollars a year.

Graham continued to enlist rock in progressive political causes. He organized a peace concert in the Soviet Union and two Amnesty International tours, enlisted marquee rockers to perform for Live Aid, and raised money for AIDS research and the Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic. "What the fuck are you doing for human rights?" he would scream at performers, friends, and reporters. Graham died in a helicopter crash in 1991. After he played "I Love You Much Too Much," a 1940s tune Graham loved, for the 2,000 mourners packed into Temple Emanu-El in San Francisco for the funeral, guitarist Carlos Santana recalled Graham as "a true lion of Judah. He walked like a lion, and he lived like a lion" (Goldberg 1991).

In 1982, E. Anthony Rotundo speculated that as the baby boomers aged, acid rock might give way to a softer, smoother sound, with increasing emphasis on lyrics. With their traditions of study, storytelling, and social commitment, Jews would then gravitate toward rock in much larger numbers, as performers as well as producers. With lyrics "more prominent and contemplative," Jewish songwriters would flourish in rock, too (Rotundo 1982).

Jews have, indeed, remained influential as producers of rock 'n' roll. David Geffen is the paradigmatic example.

Born in Brooklyn, the son of a corset maker and a Western Union telegraph operator, Geffen was a college dropout who worked his way up from the mail room of the William Morris agency in Los Angeles to booking agent to multimedia mogul. In his twenties, Geffen helped catapult Laura Nyro and Jackson Browne to stardom, and encouraged Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young to join forces. His Asylum Records, established in 1970, released hits by Joni Mitchell and Linda Ronstadt. Following the sale of Asylum and a misdiagnosis of cancer, Geffen started Geffen Records in 1980. Guns N' Roses, Aerosmith, Whitesnake, and Nirvana helped make it one of the premier labels in the music industry. As the 1980s ended, he sold out to MCA for more than \$500 million.

Although a softer, "California" sound did not dominate rock in the 1980s, and lyrics were neither more prominent nor more contemplative, a substantial number of Jewish rockers did emerge. With the sexual revolution, mounting pride among "unmeltable ethnics," the victory of Israel in the Yom Kippur War, and the airing of the TV miniseries *Holocaust* in 1978, the sense of self among many young American Jews was changing. Jews were more willing to call attention to themselves as Jews, to be more physical, more libidinal, more assertive in public. While a relatively small number joined Meir Kahane's Jewish Defense League, many more American Jews resolved that "never again" would they fail to resist anyone who sought to harm the Jewish people. "Americans," said Pete Brown, Jewish songwriter for the rock group Cream, "are much less afraid of being Jewish; they hide it less" (Benarde 2003). Truer in the 1960s, when rock singer and guitarist Michael Bloomfield recorded "I'm Glad I'm Jewish," than in the 1950s, Brown's observation is particularly apposite for the contemporary United States.

Jews, then, were ready to strut their stuff in "heavy metal music," the dominant rock genre of the 1980s. Also known as "cock rock," heavy metal is masculine, aggressive, boastful, physical: bodies are on display, mikes and guitars are explicitly phallic, females are degraded in the lyrics and the videos, and the music is loud, amplified and distorted, and rhythmically insistent, suggesting arousal and release. Several Jews played important roles in creating heavy metal. As manager and songwriter for Blue Öyster Cult in the 1970s, Sandy Pearlman used laser lights on stage, soon to be a staple in concerts, and created a stage persona, Buck Dharma, for guitarist David Raeser that was not unlike

David Bowie's character Ziggy Stardust. With his heavy makeup, tattered clothing, leather pants, and rainbow-colored mop of curly hair, Dee Snider, the Long Island-born lead singer of Twisted Sister, inspired the terms *Hair Band* and *Hair Metal*. Interestingly, the group's biggest hit was entitled "We're Not Gonna Take It." Scott Ian (born Scott Rosenfeld) of Anthrax, whose song "I'm the Man" went platinum, Slash (Saul Hudson), guitarist for Guns N' Roses, Marty Friedman, guitarist for Megadeth, and the Cavallera brothers, Max and Igor, of the Brazilian band Sepultura were other Jewish heavy metal "bad boys."

Jewish performers could also have it both ways, mocking the over-the-top masculinity they were displaying. Gene Simmons (born Chaim Witz) and Paul Stanley (born Stanley Harvey Eisen) have flourished for decades as KISS, the heavy metal band "without a face," whose performers cavorted on stage in sequined black and silver outfits and sparkling makeup, presiding over an elaborate pyrotechnic show. With an action comic book by Marvel and an animated TV special to their credit, KISS has sold more than 70 million albums. With the band Van Halen, and then as a solo performer, David Lee Roth has also winked at and capitalized on a heavy metal sound. With a long mane of blond hair, skintight spandex pants, and a reputation as a party animal, Roth was the master of the music video. In "Jump," for example, during his acrobatic leaps, the camera lingered on the generative component of his anatomy. Fans variously thought Roth a stud, androgynous, or a put-on.

Well represented in heavy metal, Jews have also had a substantial impact on punk rock, a strident, sometimes discordant music, driven by disturbing, despairing, and violent lyrics. Malcolm McLaren, a Jew, was punk's founding father. Born in London, England, in 1946, McLaren attended art school in the 1960s, where he encountered the work of Internationale Situationist, a Marxist/Dadaist group that advocated staging events that would help persuade working men and women to "demand the impossible." Proprietor of Let It Rock, a shop in London that sold modish clothing, McClaren became manager of the band the New York Dolls, organizing their Better Dead Than Red Tour before returning to England as the owner of Sex, a store featuring S&M paraphernalia. From his young, urban customers, he selected members of the Sex Pistols. With lead singer Johnny Rotten, who swore, spat, scratched his face with needles, butted out cigarettes on his arm, and screamed "I hate you" at the audience, the Sex Pistols were

a sensation on both sides of the Atlantic in the mid-1970s. Following the all-too-real-violence of band member Sid Vicious, the Sex Pistols disintegrated, but McClaren stayed active, with a film, *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*, a new group (Bow Wow Wow), a mercifully brief career as a singer, a stint as adviser to singers Adam Ant and Boy George, and as a promoter of hip hop.

But before the Sex Pistols burst on the scene, Lou Reed was acquiring a reputation that would make him the Godfather of Punk in the United States. A native of Freeport, Long Island, Reed was the son of a stay-at-home mom and an accountant, who changed the family name from Rabinowitz. At Syracuse University, he became friends with the poet Delmore Schwartz, who encouraged him to bring a literary sensibility to rock 'n' roll. As his song "I Wanna Be Black" indicates, Reed used rock music to break with the middle-class Jewish culture of his parents. With John Cale, he founded the Velvet Underground, serving as singer, songwriter, and instrumentalist. At a time when folk rock and the "California sound" were popular, the Underground played a loud, electronic, dissonant music, behind narratives about the seamy, menacing side of urban life. "I'm Waiting for the Man" and "Heroin," for example, explored the drug underworld. A bit ahead of its time, the Velvet Underground did not have great commercial success and disbanded in 1970. Reed then launched a solo career. He continued to explore street life, prostitution, and sexual transgression in "Walk on the Wild Side," which has become a rock classic, and held fifteen-minute "fuzz sessions," reminiscent of his days with the Underground. He has had many other musical incarnations as well, some of them parodic, ranging from hillbilly to pop metallist, replete with bleached hair and painted fingernails.

The non-Jewish Sex Pistols, Patti Smith, Iggy Pop, and David Bowie established punk as the edgy, arty, and trendy music of the mid-1970s. But Jews added fuel to the fire. In 1976 Jeffrey Hyman, a Jew from Forest Hills, New York, drummer, singer, and songwriter, became Joey Ramone, forming a group that assumed his new surname. Featuring fast, loud songs, invariably less than three minutes long with no solos, the Ramones became an underground phenomenon in the United States and the United Kingdom. In the late 1970s, with Jewish guitarist Mick Jones, the Clash emerged as the most politically conscious band of their era, exploring race relations, unemployment, police violence, and Arab-Israeli relations in "White

Riot," "Career Opportunities," "Know Your Rights," and "Rock the Casbah."

One of the most successful groups to come out of punk rock is Beastie Boys. All three Beastie Boys—Mike D (born Michael Diamond), MCA (born Adam Yauch), and Ad-Rock (born Adam Horovitz)—are Jews, raised in middle-class families in New York City. Immersed in the punk culture of the city as teenagers, Diamond and Yauch formed a band in 1981. Two years later, Horovitz, a former member of the Young and the Useless, became the third Beastie Boy. Almost immediately the trio began experimenting with a rock-inflected style of rap. The result in 1983 was "Cookie Puss," a rap record based on a prank phone call they had made to a Carvel Ice Cream store. The single was a hit among rap connoisseurs in New York. Ever the punk bad boys, they showered audiences with obscenities as the opening act for the Virgin Tour of Madonna.

With the release of *License to Ill* in 1986, Beastie Boys became an attraction in their own right, their single, "Fight for Your Right (to Party)," a crossover blockbuster. Making use of street beats and metal riffs, *Licensed to Ill* sold 750,000 copies in six weeks, the fastest selling album in the history of Columbia Records and, eventually, the most popular rap album of the 1980s. With fame came controversy. Although the Animal House antics Beastie Boys manifested and sang about were partly parodic, the lyrics, critics claimed, incited crime, violence, and sexism, all the more when accompanied in concerts by a massive inflatable penis and female members of the audience dancing in go-go cages. More than once during their national tour in 1987, conservative groups sued Beastie Boys or had them arrested. As the first white rappers with mass appeal, they were accused of another crime as well, cultural piracy, the theft of the music of African Americans.

As the parody wore thin, Beastie Boys tried to change their image. Using their own record label, Grand Royal, Diamond, Yauch, and Horovitz mixed musical genres, including hip hop, retro-funk, and punk, and produced songs soaked with references to contemporary popular culture. After their second album flopped, a re-release of their early punk recordings and two albums, with the singles "Jimmy James," "Pass the Mic," "Sabotage," and "Sure Shot," were popular on college campuses and alternative and rap radio stations. The band was back, close to the top of the charts. In the late 1990s, Beastie Boys devoted their time and resources to political causes as well, helping

sponsor, for example, a two-day festival devoted to ending the persecution against Tibetans by the government of China.

As a new millennium began, many Jewish performers exhibited this same audacity and cut-and-paste musical eclecticism. In their version of multiculturalism, artists could—and should—rejoice in their Jewishness while appreciating, adapting, and appropriating the musical treasures of any and every ethnic group. One did not have to be an African American to play rock, rap, or hip hop any more than one had to be Jewish to love Levy's rye bread. Nor did a rock performer have to abandon a Jewish-sounding name. "A previous member wanted us to change the band name," recalled David Fagin, leader of the Rosenbergs, "so we changed him" (Benarde 2003). The choices made by four contemporary groups underscore the distance Jewish performers have traveled fifty years after rock 'n' roll got its name.

Peretz Bernstein, a native of Queens, New York, worked with his father in the diamond district of Manhattan before migrating to California. Employed as an exotic dancer, he used the stage name Perry Farrell (playing on the word *peripheral*). In 1985, with bassist Eric Avery and guitarist Dave Navarro, Farrell founded Jane's Addiction, a band whose blend of hard rock, punk, and pop became the paradigm for the powerful but ambiguous force dubbed "Alternative Rock." In 1991 Farrell helped launch Lollapalooza, a traveling carnival of rock, which became a rock 'n' roll institution for the rest of the decade. After Jane's Addiction broke up, Farrell achieved some success fronting for a new group, Porno for Pyros. A heroin user, occasionally paranoid and violent, who was nude during the final concert of Jane's Addiction, Farrell found his Jewish roots in the late 1990s, with the help of friend and collaborator Aaron Cohen. And his faith informed his art. His album, *Song Yet to Be Sung*, was rich with Jewish themes and sounds. It included the songs "Happy Birthday Jubilee," an examination of the Israelites' annual celebration of debt forgiveness and liberation from Egypt, and "Shekina," an exploration of Jewish notions of God's female presence. In 2002, along with U2's Bono and Live Aid founder Bob Geldof, he called for forgiveness of the debt of developing countries as part of the Jubilee. Reunited with Jane's Addiction, the tattooed singer now uses his Hebrew name, Peretz. According to journalist Dan Pulcrano, he may be the first self-consciously Jewish rock superstar (Pulcrano 2003).

For more than a decade Beck (born Beck David Campbell) has been one of the most prolific and critically acclaimed rock stars. Born in Los Angeles in 1970, the son of David Campbell, a conductor and string arranger, and Bibbe Hansen, who appeared in Andy Warhol's film *Prison*, Beck dropped out of school in the tenth grade, playing acoustic blues and folk music on the streets. In 1993, Beck blended rap lyrics, a drum-machine track, and a bluesy slide guitar on the single, "Loser." The song became a catchphrase and a manifesto for the 1990s "slacker generation." Thanks to a deal worked out by David Geffen, Beck continued to make low-budget indie recordings while reaching the Top Twenty with three albums, *Mellow Gold*, *Odelay*, and *Mutations*, produced for major labels. Beck, too, was a musical synthesist, drawing on pop, folk, hip hop, country, blues, R&B, rock, jazz, and Brazilian music. Unlike Perry Farrell, Beck reveals no hint of his Jewish heritage in his songs, except, perhaps, when he implies that no one should take his lyrics all that seriously.

In choosing the name for his band, poet, songwriter, singer, and guitarist David Berman made a public proclamation of his Jewishness. Born in Virginia in 1967, Berman was raised in Dallas, Texas. In both places, he felt like an outsider. When he moved to New York, with Steven Malkmus and Bob Nastanovich, two non-Jewish friends from the University of Virginia, Berman rode on the subway, across from a passenger wearing a yamulke and decided to call the group the Silver Jews. Jew "should be a beautiful word," he said, "but Jews themselves have wondered how you can say the word. If you use the wrong tone of voice, it's a slur. . . . I'm interested in cutting off the associative baggage around it" (Sohn 1998). Silver Jews are blond-haired Jews, outsiders among the outsiders. Convinced that "rock 'n' roll started when the lessons were ripped up and burned," Berman has experimented with new musical concepts. Recording with Malkmus and Nastanovich and on his own, he mixed angular pop and acoustic ballads, anchored in a sardonic worldview. He is credited with helping to create an "alternative country" musical subgenre. Pavement, a band that grew out of the Silver Jews, was one of the most influential indie bands of the 1990s.

While scarcely a force in the music industry, Hebrew hip hop is enough of a phenomenon to attract the attention of radio and television commentators. Jewish hip hop groups tackle serious subjects, like the Holocaust, and use humor to deconstruct ethnic stereotypes. Hip Hop Hood-

ios, Josh Norek's band, sing in three languages: English, Spanish, and Hebrew. Claiming an openness to multiculturalism as the band's goal, Norek, who also uses the pseudonym Josue Noriega, defends the song "Kike on the Mic" and the band's references to large noses. Only a few listeners, usually Orthodox Jews, he asserts, fail to note the irreverent tone. "Havana Nagila" announces that Jews are for Allah and Jesus, as well as Adonai, Norek adds, "to bring people together, not to divide them." Hebrew hip hop, concludes Rabbi Jack Gabriel, music editor for the Jewish magazine *Tikkun*, "reflects the integration of Jews in America over the last fifty years." Jewish performers can use their own culture, much of it now "part of the American consciousness," to examine the familiar and exotic. And they add to the mix cultural and musical traditions not their own, with reasons to be confident that they can reach mainstream audiences (Osgood 2004).

Glenn C. Altschuler

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## Contemporary Jewish Music in America

The growth of American Jewish music over the last several decades of the twentieth century has been staggering. At the beginning of the twenty-first century over 2,000 recordings of Jewish music are available, and close to 250 more are released each year. The new Jewish music encompasses a wide range of artistic and popular styles, and it has been created and performed by groups throughout the Jewish community: secular Jews, Yiddishists, and Jews in religious communities—Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and Renewal. There has also been a revival of *klezmer*, the music of Eastern European Jews that was part of life-cycle events, such as weddings. All this musical ferment reflects the development of a new American Jewish sensibility

New forms of American Jewish music began as vehicles for a new generation to distinguish itself from the

immigrant cohorts. The Golden Age of the cantorate, Yiddish theater, and Yiddish cinema (1880–1940) had been a fertile period of music for resettling Jews. As American Jews acculturated, however, the music of the immigrants waned. New generations of American Jews, who came of age after World War II, and especially after the Arab–Israeli Six Day War (1967), created their own Jewish music, distinct from the past.

With the general turn to ethnic pride in the 1960s, fueled by the civil rights movement, public, cultural, and artistic expressions of Jewishness increased considerably. However, the Borschtbelt music of the 1950s and 1960s, the Yiddish shtick of Mickey Katz, and the Yiddish, Israeli folk songs of Theodore Bikel did not resonate with many Jewish baby boomers. Neither the Yiddish language nor the subjects or sentimentality of the songs appealed to English-speaking American Jews. They created a new Jewish music that would take hold in synagogues, summer camps, community centers, concert halls, and nightclubs. Today Jewish music can be found in many additional contexts. For decades Jewish musicians performed largely at local synagogues, schools, and community centers. In New York, their venues now range from college campus auditoriums to concert halls, including Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. Since the 1960s recordings of Jewish music have been widely available on LP, cassette, and recently CD. Since the mid-1990s, the recordings display a more sophisticated production quality, with higher fidelity standards and artistic cover designs.

New Jewish music developed in religious contexts—Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative—and simultaneously, as a cultural expression, is manifest both in the revitalization of klezmer music and Yiddish singing. It could be heard in the concert hall—art music—and in nightclubs. Musical styles include folk, pop, rock, middle-of-the-road, soft rock ballad, blues, and jazz. Reflecting the larger trend of American popular music, in the 1990s styles blended into various hybrids. Although no one style defines contemporary Jewish music, some trends can be identified: East European, or “traditional,” Jewish influences are minimal, Israeli and Middle Eastern styles are common, American popular musical styles are an ongoing influence, and the texts of the songs are in English or from recognizable passages of the *siddur* (prayer book) and the Bible.

Music in the Orthodox community is by far the most prolific. The Orthodox community is generally divided

into two larger communities: Modern and Ultra (*Haredi*) Orthodox. Hasidic Jews are considered part of the Ultra Orthodox community. While many Modern Orthodox Jews are college-educated professionals and are involved in the contemporary, secular world, Ultra Orthodox Jews keep their distance from it. Paradoxically, the newly created Jewish music, incorporating a variety of popular music styles, is mainly found in the Ultra Orthodox, not the Modern Orthodox, world. This is because secular entertainment—television, movies, recordings—is forbidden for Ultra Orthodox Jews. For the Ultra Orthodox, Jewish music is the only acceptable music. Modern Orthodox Jews also create and consume a new form of Jewish music, but they are not bound exclusively to it. Their musical world includes popular as well as classical and other musical styles. In the densely populated Orthodox neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Queens, New York, bookshops and electronics stores mainly feature the music of the Ultra Orthodox Jews.

The new music of the Orthodox community emerged in the 1960s, but entered a new era in the 1970s. Shlomo Carlebach (1925–1994), often labeled the father of the new Jewish music, combined participatory folk music with the energy of new music from Israel and the religious fervor of the Hasidic *niggun* (melody). The Rabbi’s Sons, Mark III, Ruach, Simchatone, and, later, D’veykus followed in his style. Since the 1970s, Mordechai Ben David has had the most significant impact on music in the Orthodox community. His repertoire consists of songs in Yiddish, Hebrew, and English. His English songs, which are among his most popular, convey a strong religious message, such as “Just One Shabbes,” “I’d Rather Pray and Sing,” and “Someday We Will All Be Together.” Along with Ben David, Avraham Fried is a superstar in the Ultra Orthodox community, and both perform before large audiences throughout the United States, in Israel, and around the world. Another prominent group, the Miami Boys Choir, with Yerachmiel Begun, has recorded and performed for over two decades. Journeys, Dedi, and Shwecky are also well-known. Only since the 1990s have groups in the Modern Orthodox community created music geared specifically for it. The messages of the English songs of groups like Soul Farm and Blue Fringe reflect their experiences and incorporate more eclectic musical styles. The ballad “Flippin’ Out” by Blue Fringe (2003) expresses the experience of spending a post–high school year in Israel.

Beginning in the 1960s, music for Reform Jews, centered in the temple, changed significantly. The mainstay of Reform synagogue music consisted of the cantor accompanied by an organ, with a choral in a formal, classical musical style. But during the 1960s a younger generation found this music too formal and turned instead to folk and popular styles. The impetus for change was the summer camp, an increasingly common experience for youth in these years. In this isolated setting, young Reform Jews embarked on creating a joyful form of worship, reflective of their experience and aesthetic. They brought their camp music back to the temple with them. This led to folk/rock services such as Ray Smolover's *Edge of Freedom* (1967) and *Gates of Freedom* (1970), and Michael Isaacson's *Songs NIFTY Sings* (1972). Debbie Friedman, a well-known songwriter and performer, and the duo Daniel Frelander and Jeffrey Klepper (who together form the group Kol B'Seder) are prolific creators of new Reform music in a folk style. Folk singers Pete Seeger; Bob Dylan; Tom Paxton; James Taylor; Peter, Paul and Mary; Joan Baez; Judy Collins; and Melissa Manchester were their musical models. The guitar playing and folk singing facilitate participatory worship. With over a dozen recordings and three concerts at Carnegie Hall, Debbie Friedman exemplifies the success of the new music in Reform Judaism. Many of her songs are mainstays in Reform congregations: "Not by Might," "L'chi Lakh," "Mi Shebeirach," "Miriam's Song," and "Devorah's Song."

During the 1960s congregations expressed a growing desire for the participatory mode of worship, which clashed with the earlier formal, traditional style. The tension remains largely unresolved. Some services blend lyrically composed synagogue songs with singable refrains. In recent decades composers of synagogue music, including Michael Isaacson, Ben Steinberg, Simon Sargon, Benjie-Ellen Schiller, and Rochelle Nelson, have incorporated a myriad of musical styles, drawing from art music and popular songs with acoustic accompaniment.

In the Conservative movement, as in Reform Judaism, a younger generation wanted to carry on their camp experiences with new Jewish music, but the synagogue has not committed itself to change. As with the Orthodox, new music is heard on recordings and in concerts in Conservative settings, where it serves as entertainment. The group Safam and individual performers Paul Zim, Sol Zim, and Craig Taubman have contributed significantly to this

music. Safam, an all-male group, has performed since 1974, producing ten albums. Their songs synthesize Jewish elements, such as cantorial and Hasidic music, with rock, pop, or Latin and reggae rhythms. "Leaving Mother Russia" became an anthem at rallies for Soviet Jewry in the 1980s; other songs, like "Yismechu," are heard in synagogues. Craig Taubman has released fifteen albums of Jewish music, with *Friday Night Live* (1999) and *One Shabbat Morning* (2002)—both from services he created for Los Angeles congregations—having a significant impact. Many congregations create monthly services based on his music. Each recording of Taubman's *Celebrate* Jewish music series is a collection of songs for a particular holiday or of a particular genre of Jewish music. Several cantors, such as Sol Zim, cater to Conservative settings. Over thirty years, Zim has released more than twenty recordings, in a variety of Jewish styles: cantorial, Hasidic, and Yiddish. His most recent efforts are devoted to music for children, including holiday recordings. Still, the new music is not as established in Conservative settings as in Reform.

Adherents of the music of the Renewal movement seek a renewed encounter with G-d through the prayer experience, with body movements, dance, and repetitive chants. Rabbi Shefa Gold, one of the most influential contributors, synthesizes a variety of Jewish and non-Jewish spiritual experiences in her worship, which is reflected in her music. *Chants Encounters* (1994) and *Chanscendence* (1997) are her most well-known recordings. Other renewal artists are Linda Hirschorn, Aryeh Hirschfield, and Michael Shapiro. The music of the Renewal movement has had a more local or regional impact than that of other movements.

For Jews who want to be connected to Judaism through the cultural dimension of Jewish life, without religious obligations, secular Yiddish and Israeli culture became viable alternatives. For others, art music in a concert hall and music performed at a nightclub are venues for the expression of their Jewishness. Music in the concert hall and nightclubs varies from a cappella choral music to orchestral and synthesized renditions of popular and folk styles. The rise in popularity of klezmer music, Yiddish songs, and the Hebrew songs of Israel reflected the increasing desire of those who wanted to be connected to Judaism, but not through religion. From the 1950s through the 1970s, Israeli music was integrated into the liturgy in American worship, and it became an important staple of

the repertoire of day schools and summer camps. Israeli musical influence is limited, however, because most American Jews do not know Hebrew well enough to understand the lyrics. Since the 1990s, the influence of Israeli music has declined.

Although new Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative music began in the late 1960s, and in earnest in the 1970s, klezmer music experienced a revitalization only in the late 1970s. The klezmer style is similar to that of Romanian, Moldavian, and other Eastern European folk music. Immigrant Jews brought this music with them to America, and it was recorded on 78-rpm disks in the 1920s. By the 1950s interest in klezmer was declining, while the popularity of Israeli and American music rose. The klezmer revival began with the re-creation of the music from the 78-rpm recordings, and it spread quickly in the 1980s. The four revival bands of the 1970s were the Klezmorim, Kapelye, the Klezmer Conservatory Band, and Andy Statman Klezmer Orchestra. These new klezmer performers, unlike performers in the religious community, have approached Jewish music as a challenge to sharpen their virtuosic skills and deepen their understanding of another musical system.

In the late 1980s klezmer music changed as groups moved away from the traditional repertoire, creating new music and combining it with pop, jazz, and other styles. The four most prominent klezmer bands at the beginning of the twenty-first century are the Klezmer Conservatory Band, Andy Statman, Brave Old World, and the Klezmatics. Adrienne Cooper and Zalman Mlotek have popularized Yiddish songs. The Klezmatics are eclectic, weaving popular and world music styles, with new lyrics on many social issues. They have branched out into a variety of ventures including *Possessed* (1997), a score for Tony Kushner's adaptation of Anski's *A Dybbuk; The Well* (1998), new Yiddish songs in which they are joined by Israeli singer Chava Alberstein; and Woody Guthrie's *Happy Joyous Hanuka: A Hanuka Feast* (2003). The Klezmatics frequently perform at nightclubs and reach a broad audience. They seek to move beyond the playing of nostalgic melodies.

The new Jewish music also includes the music of non-Ashkenazic Jews. Traditional Judeo-Spanish/Ladino songs have a devoted audience. Performers and groups include Judy Frankel, Judith Cohen, Voice of the Turtle, and Alhambra. Like the klezmer revival bands, the Sephardic artists have incorporated a variety of European and Middle

Eastern styles in their music. The Zamir Chorale of Boston has been the impetus for a renewed interest in choral music. The North American Jewish Choral Festival is held for one week during the summer in the Catskills, and many colleges now have a cappella choirs. Another smaller musical community is the Jewish music corner of New York Avant-Garde Jazz. Klezmatics trumpeter Frank London, with saxophonist Greg Wall, released several albums with the group Hasidic New Wave: *Jews and the Abstract Truth* (1997), *Psycho-Semitic* (1998), *Kabalogy* (1999), and *From the Belly of Abraham* (2001). John Zorn has also moved into this arena with his Masada project.

Many other groups serve a variety of interests. In the concert hall, composers of Jewish heritage have drawn on traditional sources for inspiration. David Diamond (1915–2005) wrote vocal works based on Jewish texts and synagogue services since the 1930s, including *Mizmor L'-David*, *Sacred Service* (1951). With just over a dozen works expressing his Jewishness, his recent *Kaddish for Violoncello and Orchestra* (1987–1989), written for and premiered by Yo-Yo Ma, draws on his own conception of Jewish music. Another example is Steve Reich, born in 1936, long associated with the minimalist movement. His *Tehillim* (1981) is based on Psalm texts and cantillation, the result of several years of exploration of Judaism. Recordings of Jewish art music appear on the Naxos label, part of its American Classics series sponsored by the Milken Archive of American Jewish Music, an ambitious project consisting of dozens of recordings. Well-known American recording artists have also explored aspects of Jewish music: Itzhak Perlman's *In the Fiddler's House* (1995), selling over 200,000 copies; Mandy Patinkin's *Mamaloshen* (1997); Barbra Streisand's recording of Max Janowski's "Avinu Malkeinu" on *Higher Ground* (1997); and Kenny G's *Jazz Service* (1986).

Contemporary Jewish music in America reflects the diversity of American Judaism, not only as a religion but a culture. Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, as younger generations desired to express their American Jewish heritage, folk and soft rock were the primary musical approaches. By the 1980s, artists gained prominence, and concerts and performances became more common. In the 1990s, production, promotion, and distribution were increasingly institutionalized and often formulaic. Many critics complain that the music is increasingly shaped by a desire for commercial success rather than a commitment to explore the

essence of Jewish music (Sears 1997), and they protest the lack of imagination in new synagogue music (Adler 1992). As the baby boomer creators of the new Jewish music age, a younger generation is ready to make its mark in American Jewish music.

Mark Kligman

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## Irving Berlin (1888–1989)

### Songwriter

Irving Berlin was Tin Pan Alley's most successful songwriter during the first half of the twentieth century. In the context of American Jewish history, Irving Berlin's career epitomized two paradigmatic aspects of the American Jewish experience: one, a rags-to-riches story of financial success; the other, the central importance of the entertainment industry within the larger saga of cultural assimilation and social transformation.

Berlin, the son of Moses Baline, a cantor, was born Israel Baline, on May 11, 1888, probably in the town of Tyumen, in western Siberia. The uncertainty about his birthplace arises from the fact that the family's home in



Irving Berlin does a rendition of "Oh! How I Hate To Get Up in the Morning." (Library of Congress)

Mohilev (now in Belarus) was destroyed in a pogrom, probably in 1892. According to Berlin's daughter Mary Ellin Barrett, who has written a memoir of her father, the family subsequently managed to return to Mohilev, in the Russian Pale of Settlement, before emigrating to America in 1893. Because the history of Russian Jewish communities outside the Pale is difficult to document, some biographers have concluded that Mohilev, which Berlin listed as his birthplace on his application for American citizenship, is indeed where he was born (Bergreen 1990). But regardless of his place of birth, Izzy (as he was called as a child) grew up in New York City, on the streets of the Lower East Side and the Bowery, and his early years were spent in grinding poverty.

From the age of five until shortly before his fourteenth birthday, Izzy lived with his family in a Cherry Street tenement. However, after his father's death in 1901, Berlin left home, "went on the bum," and began supporting himself as a busker, singing for tips and handouts in the saloons of

the Bowery (Woolcott 1925). By the time he turned seventeen he had found full-time employment as a singing waiter at the Pelham Café, located on Pell Street in New York's Chinatown. The proprietor of the Pelham Café was himself a Russian Jewish immigrant, Mike Salter. When Salter died in 1922, the *New York Herald* reported that "of the legion of notables who once found it pleasant to boast of Mike's friendship and familiarity with his notorious dive," only Berlin appeared at the funeral. As recounted a few years later by Berlin's first biographer, Alexander Woolcott, the story had already become emblematic of Berlin's essential honesty about who he was and where he came from (Woolcott 1925).

Berlin's first published song, "Marie from Sunny Italy" (1907), for which he wrote only the lyrics, was cowritten with Mike "Nick" Nicholson, the piano player at the Pelham Café, who composed the music. It was for this publication that Berlin selected his pen name, which appears as "I. Berlin" on the sheet-music cover. It was published by Joseph W. Stern & Co., a leading Tin Pan Alley firm.

The Tin Pan Alley era of the American popular music industry began in the 1880s, when several music publishers were clustered in the entertainment district around 14th Street in New York City. In the 1890s, the center of music publishing moved uptown to West 28th Street, dubbed Tin Pan Alley by Monroe Rosenfeld (1862–1918), a journalist and songwriter in his own right. As Charles Hamm has emphasized, the history of popular music in America neither begins nor ends with Tin Pan Alley. Rather the term refers to the popular music industry at a particular time—the 1890s through the 1940s—and in a particular place—New York City. As Hamm states, this era "was dominated by Jewish Americans, and represents one of the first great contributions to American culture by the New York Jewish community" (Hamm 1979).

The fact that Berlin's first published title had an ethnic slant was not coincidental. Ethnic stereotyping was a staple of the vaudeville stage as well as a fact of life in urban New York. "Marie from Sunny Italy" belongs to a genre of popular song known as the ethnic novelty song. Although published in sheet music form for home consumption, such songs were composed with vaudeville in mind, and with an implicit suggestion of comic action. Berlin's ethnic novelty songs include stereotyped depictions of Italians, Germans, Irish Americans, and rural American "rubes," not to mention Jews and African Americans (Hamm 1997).

As the original copyrights on Berlin's earlier songs have begun to lapse (his later songs are still under copyright), many of these ethnic songs are now back in print. Berlin's first Jewish novelty song was "Sadie Salome (Go Home)" (1909), which capitalized on the topical notoriety of the "Dance of the Seven Veils" in Richard Strauss's opera *Salome*: "Don't do that dance, I tell you Sadie,/ That's not a bus'ness for a lady!/ 'Most everybody knows/ That I'm your loving Mose,/ Oy, oy oy, oy,/ Where is your clothes?" (Berlin n.d.). "Yiddle, On Your Fiddle, Play Some Ragtime" (1909) begins with the opening musical phrase of *Hatikvah*, to which the following words are set: "Ev'ry one was singing, dancing, springing,/ At a wedding yesterday,/ Yiddle, on his fiddle played some ragtime . . ." (Berlin n.d.). In *World of Our Fathers*, Irving Howe situates these dialect songs in the broader context of Jewish humor. On the one hand, Howe recognizes the significance of Berlin's songs and other Jewish humor in furthering the immigrant generation's "journeys outward" into the mainstream of American life. On the other hand, Howe quotes a letter from Berlin to Groucho Marx, written in the 1950s: "Frankly, there are songs that I would be tempted to pay you not to do. For instance, 'Cohen Owes Me \$97' [1915] would not be taken in the same spirit as it was when I wrote it for Belle Baker when she opened at the Palace many, many years ago" (Howe 1976).

Berlin's black dialect songs are especially problematic. Perhaps a dozen of them can be classified as "coon" songs. These belong to the most notorious subgenre of the ethnic novelty song, in which not only the lyrics, but also the sheet music covers, often portrayed African Americans in grotesque and offensive caricature. Others are "about" black musicians (in the sense that "Yiddle" is "about" a Jewish klezmer); still others simply appropriate or capitalize on the ragtime idiom that was created by, and associated with, African American musicians (Hamm 1997). "Alexander's Ragtime Band" (1911), which sold over 2 million sheet music copies and earned Berlin \$30,000 in royalties, belongs to the latter category. A useful starting point for unraveling this musical and cultural nexus is Jeffrey Melnick's essay, "Tin Pan Alley and the Black-Jewish Nation"; Melnick writes: "The musical work of Tin Pan Alley . . . resulted in some fascinating contradictions. . . . [I]t situated African American music at the heart of American popular song even though the rewards went almost completely to white composers" (Melnick 2001).

In November 1911, Berlin legally changed his name to Irving Berlin, and in December, he was made a partner in Waterson, Berlin & Snyder, the company that had published “Alexander.” In February 1912, already financially secure, Berlin fell in love with and married Dorothy Goetz, an aspiring singer and the younger sister of E. Ray Goetz, a (non-Jewish) songwriter with whom Berlin collaborated on several songs. The couple honeymooned in Cuba, but their time together was tragically brief. Within a few months, Dorothy had contracted typhoid fever, and she died of pneumonia in July.

In 1913, Berlin took another symbolic step in his journey outward from the Lower East Side, when he bought a house in the Bronx for his mother. Two years later, in September 1915, he filed his Declaration of Intention to apply for American citizenship. On February 6, 1918, he swore his oath of allegiance to the United States, and that spring he was drafted into the United States Army. While stationed at Camp Upton, in Yaphank, Long Island, he wrote “Oh! How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning.” A short time later, he was promoted to the rank of sergeant and began work on *Yip! Yip! Yaphank*, a vaudeville-style review featuring the troops at Camp Upton. As World War I was drawing to an end, the show had a short but successful Broadway run as an Army benefit.

In 1921, Berlin established a permanent presence on Broadway in his own right, as co-owner of the new Music Box Theater. He wrote and produced four successive *Music Box Revues* for this venue. Two deaths framed the second *Music Box Review*, which opened in October 1922: Berlin’s mother Lena (born Leah) died in July at the age of seventy-two, and his first employer, Mike Salter, died in December, at the age of fifty-four. The third *Music Box Revue* opened in September 1923. In February 1924, at a fashionable society dinner party, Berlin met the woman who would become his second wife, Ellin Mackay.

Ellin Mackay can be characterized objectively as the love of Irving Berlin’s life, but her place in history is very much her own. By birth, she was heiress to the fortune of her grandfather, John William Mackay, an Irish immigrant who had made a fortune in silver mining from the legendary Comstock Lode. Ellin herself was brought up in New York City by her father, Clarence Mackay, the billionaire owner of the Postal Telegraph Company and pillar of New York society. At the age of twenty-one, by virtue of her own talents and insights, she became a published contribu-

tor to the *The New Yorker* magazine as the author of a piece much admired by its editor, Harold Ross: “Why We Go to Cabarets: A Post-Debutante Explains.”

Ellin’s father Clarence was virulently antisemitic, and he did everything in his power to prevent the marriage. In September 1924, he made arrangements for Ellin to take an extended tour of Europe and the Middle East, accompanied at first by Clarence himself and later by appropriate chaperones. The trip lasted a full year, but it did not weaken Ellin’s resolve. In December she began appearing in public with Berlin, and on January 4, 1926, she married him in New York’s City Hall.

Mary Ellin Barrett, Berlin’s oldest daughter, although a child of intermarriage, quotes a letter that she wrote to him when he turned seventy, in 1958: “In an age and in a world where broken families were the rule, you gave us a sense of the family unit and the continuity of family life” (Barrett 1994).

Through the 1930s and 1940s, Berlin’s creative powers remained undiminished. Since the hits are literally too numerous to list, one is forced to speak in generalities. Nevertheless, two songs from these decades, “God Bless America” (1938) and “White Christmas” (1942), require individual discussion.

Berlin had sketched out the lyrics and melody for “God Bless America” back in 1918, in his Camp Upton days, but felt at the time that it was too serious in tone for *Yip! Yip! Yaphank*. In 1938, with the Great Depression dragging on and with the Anglo-German Munich Pact offering the illusory hope that another world war could be avoided, Berlin felt the time was right to release the song for performance and publication. As is the case with most Tin Pan Alley standards, the familiar chorus of “God Bless America” is preceded by a verse, which establishes a context for what follows: “While the storm clouds gather far across the sea,/ Let us swear allegiance to a land that’s free./ Let us all be grateful for a land so fair,/ As we raise our voices in a solemn prayer.” As sung by Kate Smith (1907–1986) in a legendary Armistice Day radio broadcast on November 11, 1938, the song evoked a tremendous response. While some went so far as to propose that it officially replace “The Star Spangled Banner” as America’s national anthem, others attacked it as the work of a foreign-born Jew (Furia 1998). Remarkably, its status as an *unofficial* national anthem was ratified following the terrorist attacks of September 11,

2001, when a group of senators sang it on the steps of the United States Capitol.

Berlin sketched out some ideas for a “White Christmas” song while he was working in Hollywood in December 1937, thus explaining the dreamlike appeal of “sleigh bells in the snow.” The song was first presented to the public in a Kraft Radio Broadcast by Bing Crosby in December 1941, and its official release came in the movie *Holiday Inn*, starring Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire, which premiered in New York City in August 1942. By the end of October, Crosby’s 78-rpm single had reached number one on the pop charts. The record has sold an estimated thirty million copies and remained the largest-selling single record ever for over fifty years. (It has been surpassed only by Elton John’s 1997 tribute to Princess Diana, “Candle in the Wind.”)

Musical and sociological analysis can go only so far in accounting for this kind of appeal. Jody Rosen, who has devoted an entire book to the subject of “White Christmas,” argues persuasively that it was this very song that, as Christmas 1942 approached, made Christmas not just a religious holiday, but *the* American national holiday (Rosen 2002). Working within a fictional context, Philip Roth suggests that, in excising the religious significance from Christmas—and from Easter, in “Easter Parade” (1933)—Berlin not only secularized these holidays, but epitomized the strategy of assimilation at its logical extreme: “Easter turns into a fashion show and Christmas into a holiday about snow” (Roth 1993). But Mary Ellin Barret, who was sixteen when “White Christmas” became a hit, remembers it simply as “a song boys and girls on the home front danced to, fell in love to, adopted as ‘their’ song. However seasonal the words, we didn’t hear it as a Christmas carol, we heard it as a ballad that Bing Crosby had sung to a blonde in a movie” (Barrett 1994).

As the 1940s drew to a close, it was not yet clear that the golden age of Tin Pan Alley was also coming to an end. In fact the 1950s began auspiciously for Berlin, with the successful Broadway run of *Call Me Madam*, starring Ethel Merman. Nevertheless, as the era of rock ’n’ roll began in the mid-1950s, the Tin Pan Alley culture that had allowed Irving Berlin to speak so directly to American “boys and girls” became a part of history.

Over time, Berlin became increasingly withdrawn, and, by most biographical accounts, he was clinically depressed in his late years. Since he lived to such extreme old

age, this is not surprising. Indeed, both the individual and paradigmatic aspects of Irving Berlin’s extraordinary life seem to persist all the way to his hundredth birthday and beyond. As he approached the end of his life, his daughter described him: “In his liquid-eyed youth, he looked Italian; now he was a very Jewish looking, very old man, reunited with his forebears” (Barrett 1994). Another stereotype, to be sure, but a convincing one. In his songs and in his family, the Berlin legacy remains very much alive.

David M. Schiller

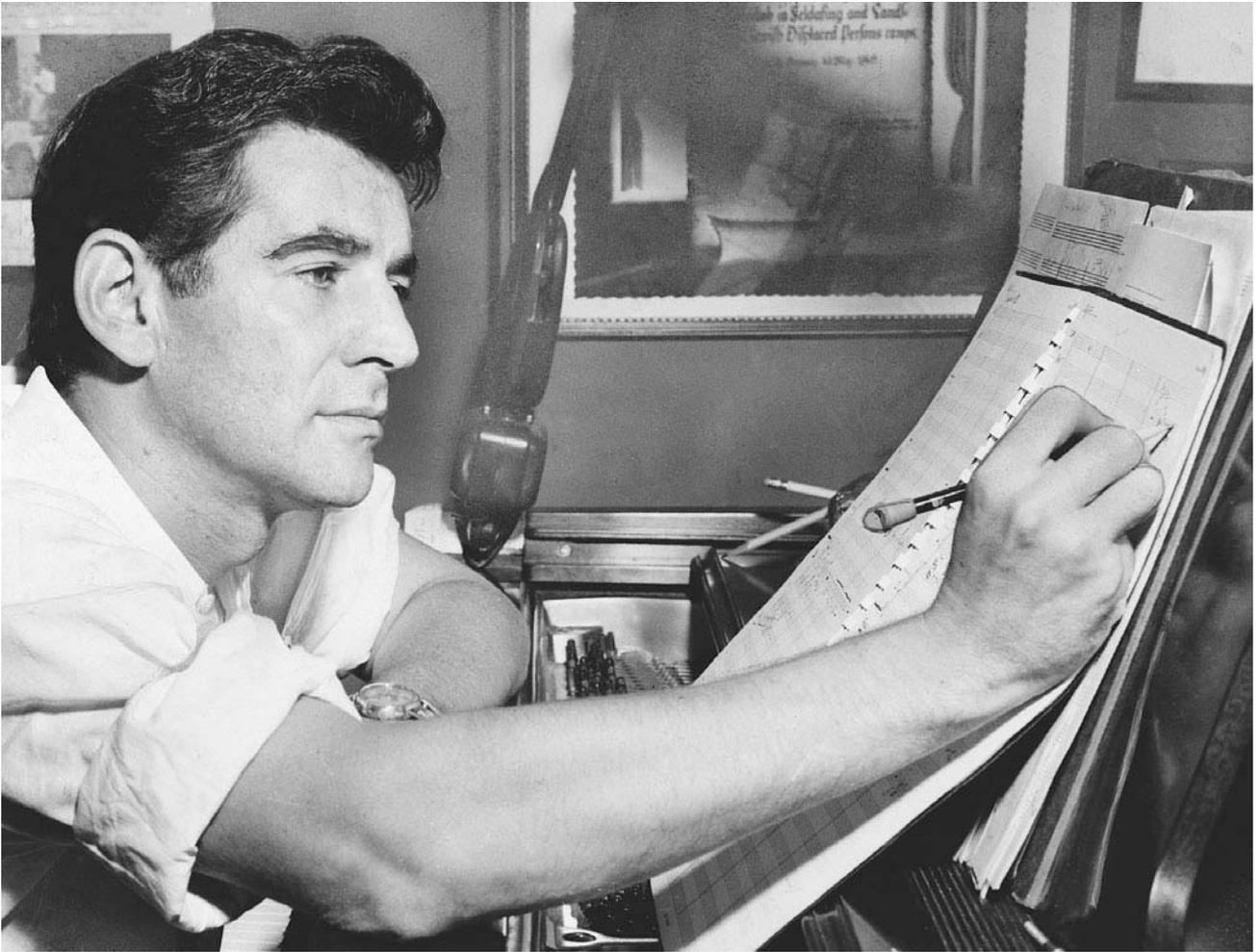
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## Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990)

### Renowned Composer and Conductor

Leonard Bernstein was the composer of the musical score of *West Side Story* (1957) and the principal conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra from 1958 to 1969. These two signal achievements epitomize his remarkable double career as a conductor and as a composer. In both



Leonard Bernstein, composer and conductor. (Library of Congress)

arenas, as composer and conductor alike, he actively sought—and frequently found—opportunities to affirm a strong sense of Jewish identity. Over the course of half a century, from the 1940s through the 1980s, Bernstein became the world’s best-known classical musician, and the gap between his public and private lives shrank accordingly. His Jewishness was both a basic element of his ethos and a highly visible aspect of his public persona.

Bernstein was the child of immigrant parents whose roots were in the Russian Pale of Settlement. His father, Samuel (originally Shmuel Yosef), was born in Beresdov in 1892 and emigrated to America in 1908, finding his first employment in New York City’s Fulton Fish Market. His mother, Jennie (originally Charna), was born in Shepetovka in 1898 and came to America in 1905. The couple met in Lawrence, Massachusetts, where Jennie was employed as a mill worker. They were married in 1917, and

their first home was in the then-Jewish Mattapan section of Boston. Leonard was born in 1918, followed by Shirley (b. 1923) and Burton (b. 1932).

Bernstein’s childhood reflects the fulfillment of the immigrant dream: for Samuel, financial success in the beauty-supply business and membership in Boston’s historic Conservative synagogue Mishkan Tefila; for Leonard, the best possible education, first at Boston Latin School and then at Harvard. *Family Matters*, a short but richly textured memoir by Leonard’s brother Burton, vividly describes the dynamics of their family life. As second-generation Americans, the children were often uncomfortable with their parents’ Old World ways; nevertheless, Burton writes, “To our credit, we never denied or apologized.” Recounting his own adolescent rebellion against the practice of Judaism, Burton records that “even rebellious Lenny had been faultless in that department” (B. Bernstein 1982).

Leonard Bernstein's "rebellion" had two aspects. Its public aspect was his uncompromising insistence on a career as a professional musician, his father's disapproval notwithstanding. The private but by now equally well-documented aspect was his bisexuality. But even the word *bisexual* is inadequate to describe the realities of Bernstein's life, for he was both openly gay and, at the same time, deeply in love with and committed to his wife Felicia Montealegre (1922–1978), whom he met in 1946 and married in 1951.

Bernstein's musical career began in earnest in 1939, when he enrolled as a student at the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. At Harvard he had already performed Ravel's Piano Concerto in G with a professional orchestra, composed and conducted the music for a modern adaptation of Aristophanes' *The Birds*, and directed a fully staged production of Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock*. He had also gotten to know the conductor Dimitri Mitropoulos and the composer Aaron Copland, both of whom recognized and encouraged his talent. At Curtis, he embarked on a rigorous course of training for a professional career in music. There he continued his piano studies and honed his conducting skills under the tutelage of Fritz Reiner. In the summer of 1940 and again in the summer of 1941, he studied with Serge Koussevitzky, conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood, Massachusetts. Nevertheless, the 1941–1942 concert season found Bernstein again living at home, severely underemployed and still financially dependent on his father. In the late summer of 1942, he moved to New York and began supporting himself as a commercial music arranger. In December, he completed his first symphony, *Jeremiah*.

*Jeremiah* is in three movements, respectively entitled Prophecy, Profanation, and Lamentation. The last movement, for mezzo soprano soloist and orchestra, sets a text from the book of Lamentations, beginning with the opening verse, "How lonely sits the city that was full of people." Bernstein had a good command of Hebrew and was familiar with the traditional chant associated with the Tisha B'Av liturgy, which commemorates the destruction of the Temple. Without resorting to literal quotation, he incorporated into his symphonic setting the characteristic cadence formulas and declamatory rhythms of Jewish worship. By the time it premiered in January 1944, the symphony had begun to acquire the

status of a response to the tragedy of the Jews in Europe, both in Bernstein's mind and in the press. In an interview published shortly before the premiere, he stated, "How can I be blind to the problems of my own People? I'd give everything I have to be able to strike a death blow at Fascism" (Burton 1994).

In the meantime, in the summer of 1943, Bernstein had also gotten the conducting opportunity he had been preparing for, when Artur Rodzinski, music director of the New York Philharmonic, hired him as his assistant. On November 14, substituting for Bruno Walter, who was sick with the flu, Bernstein conducted the New York Philharmonic in concert for the first time. The concert, which was broadcast live, has acquired legendary status in the annals of American classical music. The *New York Times* reported, "Mr. Bernstein had to have something approaching genius to make full use of his opportunity. The warm friendly triumph of it filled Carnegie Hall and spread over the airwaves" (Burton 1994).

With his credentials as a conductor and as a classical composer established, Bernstein turned his attention to Broadway. In 1943 he had accepted a commission to compose the score *Fancy Free*, a ballet about three sailors on shore leave in New York City. Choreographed by Jerome Robbins, the ballet premiered in April 1944, and its success inspired plans for a Broadway musical, entitled *On the Town*. To complete the creative team, Betty Comden and Adolph Green, who were still in the very early stages of their own careers, were hired to write the book and lyrics. The show opened on Broadway in December 1944, and it too was both a critical and financial hit.

Paradoxically, it was the success of *On the Town* that led Bernstein to rededicate himself to his conducting career. Koussevitzky had come to believe in Bernstein's true greatness as a conductor, and he hoped that Bernstein might even succeed him as conductor of the Boston Symphony. More importantly, Bernstein had come to believe in himself. In January 1946, he wrote to Koussevitzky, "Every time I lift my arms to conduct I am filled with a sense of wonder at the great insight that has flowed from you to me. It is the realization of an old and beautiful power, as if fashioned in heaven" (Burton 1994). As this commitment assumed the dimensions of a religious vocation, it required the subordination of Bernstein's work as a classical composer and, for a time, something approaching total renunciation of his Broadway ambitions.

For three concert seasons, from 1945 through 1947, Bernstein served as the principal conductor of the recently established New York City Symphony (unrelated to the New York Philharmonic) and made numerous guest appearances with major orchestras in Europe and the United States. In April 1947, he accepted an invitation to conduct the Palestine Symphony Orchestra.

Bernstein traveled to Palestine with his father and his sister, Shirley. He conducted concerts in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa, and at the Ein Harod kibbutz, including his own *Jeremiah* symphony in the programs. A letter Bernstein wrote to his personal assistant, Helen Coates, attests to the impact of the experience: “Palestine opened on us like a fresh sky after the storm. We were met, taken care of, calmed. Daddy is in Paradise—he loves every minute. . . . The situation is tense and unpredictable, the orchestra fine and screaming with enthusiasm (first rehearsal this morning). I gave one downbeat today to the accompaniment of a shattering explosion outside the hall. We calmly resumed our work. That’s the method here” (Burton 1994).

In October 1948 Bernstein returned to the now independent but war-torn nation of Israel to conduct the re-named Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. While there he completed and performed the slow movement of *The Age of Anxiety*, his second symphony. The concert, in Tel Aviv, marked the first anniversary of the United Nations resolution that had ended the British mandate and called for the establishment of independent Jewish and Arab states. Bernstein’s symphony was inspired by a long poem of the same title by W. H. Auden. In his prefatory program note for the symphony, completed in 1949, Bernstein wrote, “The essential line of the poem (and of the music) is the record of our difficult and problematical search for faith” (Gottlieb 1980). In the poem, the character who most clearly enunciates her faith is a Jewish woman, Rosetta, who recites the Shema Yisroel. The composer, Jack Gottlieb, who served as Bernstein’s musical assistant and who is an authority on his music, has identified a four-note trumpet motive as Bernstein’s programmatic representation of the affirmation of faith.

Following the death of Serge Koussevitzky in June 1951, Bernstein again found himself drawn to composing for the Broadway stage. *Candide*, which exists in both Broadway and operatic versions, opened on Broadway in December 1956. The universally acknowledged masterpiece, *West Side Story*, opened on September 26, 1957.

According to Bernstein himself, *West Side Story* had been many years in the making. His principal collaborators on the project were choreographer Jerome Robbins, playwright Arthur Laurents, and fellow composer Stephen Sondheim, who actually wrote the song lyrics. Bernstein dates his own first involvement in the project to January 1949 and credits Jerome Robbins with the original idea: “Jerry R. called today with a noble idea: a modern version of Romeo and Juliet set in the slums at the coincidence of Easter-Passover celebrations. Feelings run high between Jews and Catholics. Former: Capulets; latter: Montagues. Juliet is Jewish. Friar Lawrence is a neighborhood druggist. Street Brawls, double death—it all fits” (Bernstein 1982). Although the setting was eventually moved from the East Side to the West Side, and the religious conflict reimaged as ethnic tension between white ethnic and Puerto Rican street gangs, the tragedy remained timeless, universal, and profound.

Bernstein’s appointment as music director and principal conductor of the New York Philharmonic in 1958 was a milestone in American Jewish history not because of his religion, but because of his American nationality. Since the beginnings of political emancipation in Europe, many European Jews had achieved distinguished careers in classical music. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many emigrated to the United States, where they were well represented in American musical life. A glance at the other orchestras that, together with the New York Philharmonic, comprise the traditional “big five” reveals that all of Bernstein’s peers at the time of his appointment—Eugene Ormandy in Philadelphia, Fritz Reiner in Chicago, George Szell in Cleveland, and Charles Munch in Boston—were European-born, and all except Munch were Jewish. The cultural distinction is that, for the European generation, a career in classical music, historically associated with emancipation, was also a sign of assimilation. For Bernstein, as an American Jew, affirming his Jewish identity was part of his artistic agenda.

Bernstein’s Symphony No. 3, *Kaddish*, is the most significant work he composed during the Philharmonic years. He worked on it intermittently from the summer of 1961 to November 1963. The period of its composition thus encompassed the trial and execution of Adolf Eichmann, the Cuban missile crisis, and the assassination of John F. Kennedy, to whose memory it is dedicated. The spoken English text of *Kaddish*, which

Bernstein authored, provides a dramatic framework for the traditional prayer. Bernstein's text refers to the imminent threat of "total and ultimate death" by man's "new found fire." The metaphor can be interpreted topically as a reference to the nuclear threat during the Cold War period, or retrospectively as a reference to the Holocaust, especially as it was assimilated in American Jewish consciousness during the Eichmann trial. Although the symphony reflects the broad social trends of its time, it is also a highly personal statement. Kaddish's speaker, originally gendered female (as is the people *Israel* in traditional Jewish hermeneutics), mourns for an abandoned patriarchal deity and also for herself, a private, feminine self that Bernstein could best express publicly through his art.

Two more major works, *Chichester Psalms* (1965) and *Mass: A Theatre Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers* (1971), are religiously inspired. *Chichester Psalms* was commissioned by the dean of Chichester Cathedral for an annual choral festival that brings together the choirs of Chichester, Winchester, and Salisbury Cathedrals. It is a joyous and affirmative work in three movements. The first movement joins the second verse of Psalm 108 ("Awake, psaltery and harp") with Psalm 100 ("Make a joyful noise unto the Lord"); the second movement contrasts a simple, folklike setting of Psalm 23 ("The Lord is my shepherd") with the urgent question of Psalm 2 ("Why do the nations rage?"). The final movement progresses from Psalm 131 ("Lord, my heart is not haughty") to Psalm 133 ("Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity"). Employing choral textures inspired by the great English cathedral choirs, syncopated rhythms inspired by American jazz, and texts sung entirely in the original Hebrew, Bernstein weaves three cultures into a unified aesthetic.

*Mass: A Theatre Piece for Singers, Players and Dancers* (1971) is a more complex work. Its contents range from the relatively straightforward settings of Catholic liturgical texts to angry dramatizations of the loss of faith. Because the roots of the Western classical music tradition are historically embedded in Gregorian chant, and because works like Bach's *B Minor Mass* and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* have acquired canonical status, musical settings of the mass may aspire to a universality beyond their explicit religious content. In Bernstein's *Mass*, the Jewish perspective makes itself felt especially in the *Sanctus*

movement, into which Bernstein interpolates its Hebrew antecedent, the *Kadosh*.

In what has been publicized as Bernstein's last interview for publication, he pointedly recalled the association of the Hebrew word *Kadosh*, not only with the Catholic *Sanctus*, but also with his own *Kaddish* symphony. Discussing his long and fruitful association with the Vienna Philharmonic, which he brought to Israel in 1988, he describes it as "an all-Catholic orchestra." Bernstein comments:

Once when the players were rehearsing my work "Kaddish" for the first time, they stopped the rehearsal of their own accord to ask me what 'kaddish' meant. I said that it was related to the word "Sanctus," "kadosh." . . . People ask me how I can go to Vienna and conduct the Philharmonic. Simply, it's because I love the way they love music. And love does a lot of things (Cott 1990).

By birth a child of Eastern European Jewry and by talent and cultural choice an heir to the rich musical tradition of Central Europe, Bernstein became the quintessential American musician; yet he remained acutely aware of his European and Jewish heritage. As he traveled back and forth between Europe, Israel, and the United States, he traced and retraced the trajectories of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Jewish immigrants, emigrés, and refugees. His legacy is a strikingly original solution to the "problem" of Jewish identity in the twentieth century.

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## Marc Blitzstein (1905–1964)

### Composer

Marc Blitzstein, an ardent searcher for a uniquely American voice in music, composed in diverse styles, but achieved public renown for his socially conscious works. In the 1930s, his musical style changed from abstract, neo-classical to agit-prop—agitation-propaganda—and his skill in American vernacular speech became its crowning glory. His best-known works, such as *The Cradle Will Rock*, bring together blues, pop, speech patter, parody, and satire.

Born in Philadelphia on March 2, 1905, Marc Blitzstein lived in the Society Hill district. Descended from assimilated Russian Jews, he went to the Ethical Culture Sunday School and programs sponsored by the Socialist Literary Society. At age seven he gave his first public performance, a reading of Mozart's "*Coronation*" *Concerto*, K.537, with his teacher Constantine von Sternberg at the second piano. By nine, he had skipped two grades, his academic precocity paralleling his remarkable musical talent. After his parents separated, he moved with his mother and sister to Venice, California. There he continued his piano studies with Katherine Montreville Cocke and Julian Pascal. Performing at charitable concerts, he basked in the attention of society writers. When his mother returned to Philadelphia in 1917, he entered West Philadelphia High School for Boys. At thirteen, he reestablished a warm relationship with his philandering father, with whom he attended theatrical productions and concerts. It was perhaps a recital by Vladimir Horowitz that turned him to composition.

In 1920, Blitzstein's parents divorced and his mother remarried. After her husband's death two years later, she returned to relatives in California, but Blitzstein and his sister entered the University of Pennsylvania. When his scholarship was rescinded because of frequent absences from physical education classes, he began a three-year period of study with the Russian pianist Alexander Siloti, commuting to New York for his lessons. In 1924 he went on a two-week European trip with the conductor Alexander Smallens, eighteen years his senior. After their brief affair, his homosexual orientation solidified.

Upon returning to Philadelphia, he entered the newly formed Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied composition with Rosario Scalero, whose other pupils included

Menotti, Barber, and Foss. He composed salon-styled piano pieces and songs to texts by Housman and Whitman. He performed Liszt's *Concerto in E-flat major* with the Philadelphia Orchestra (July 13, 1926) for \$300. In October he went to Europe to round out his musical education and find more direction as a composer. Following a long line of predecessors, beginning with Aaron Copland, he studied for a few months with Nadia Boulanger. Smitten with Walt Whitman's imagery, he completed "O Hymen! O Hymenee!" and "Gods." The former employs bitonal relationships, while the latter is a tonal piece with frequent changes in meter, key, and rhythm. In February, he went to Berlin, where he studied with Arnold Schönberg at the Akademie der Kunst. As he immersed himself in the principles of twelve-tone composition, he grew increasingly antipathetic toward this approach to musical creation. He also disliked his mentor's German chauvinism. His own creations centered on more settings of Whitman texts, which he later called "Songs for a Coon Shouter" because of their theatrical style. Their themes, however, were universal, and there were the by-now familiar homosexual overtones.

By fall 1927, he was back in Philadelphia, seeking ways to develop a career. He spent June 15–August 1, 1928, at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire, where he met Eva Goldbeck, a novelist, translator, and book reviewer. Although she recognized his sexual orientation, they formed a relationship and married in 1933. He continued to set Whitman texts, "I Am He" and "Ages and Ages," both of which focus on homoeroticism, Blitzstein's recurring leitmotif. With their blues-oriented harmonies, the songs suggest the commonality of jazz and primal sexuality. Together with "O Hymen! O Hymenee!" and "As Adam," they were premiered on December 30, 1928, at a Copland-Sessions concert in New York. The African American baritone Benjohn Ragsdale was the vocalist, chosen both to render the "coon shout" flavor and to make a political statement. Blitzstein had always championed equality for minorities, and this theme, along with homosexuality, led to the public's often negative response to him. The *Piano Sonata* was heard several times in 1929, the same year his *Percussion Music for the Piano* was introduced at a League of Composers' concert. Inclusion in the latter of *sempre forte* markings for the slapping, shutting, and opening of the piano lid brought more notoriety. The one-act opera *Triple-Sec* premiered in Philadelphia on May 6, 1929;

its chief character, Lord Silver-side, played at Blitzstein's suggestion by black singer Albert Mahler, has a love scene with a white woman. Challenging public sensibilities reinforced Blitzstein's association with advanced musical circles and leftist political ideology.

For the next several years, Blitzstein traveled in Europe and America, composing in diverse styles. *Parabola and Circula*, although set in a cubist world of forms and with a story line replete with symbolic abstraction, contains music that is melodious and conservatively written. The ballet *Cain* is mildly dissonant, occasionally polytonal, but largely modal; its biblical subject fostered a directness of expression. Songs set to texts by e.e. cummings, such as "Jimmie's got a goil," amused audiences in a conventional manner. *The Harpies*, with its Thracian setting and satirization of Gluck-style mythologizing, Wagnerian Valkyries, and Mozartian genies à la *Zauberflöte*, mixed with Broadway musical gimmicks, suggests a neoclassical tilt toward Stravinsky via the Boulangerie. *The Condemned*, an opera based on the Sacco and Vanzetti trial, broke new ground in that each of its four roles is assigned to a chorus.

In the early 1930s, Blitzstein tried to come to grips with the personal demons and sociopolitical issues that consumed him and his wife. Their marriage survived in part because of their shared support of the Communist movement. Eva suffered from cancer, but her death on May 26, 1936, resulted from a mental illness that led her to starve herself. After her death, Blitzstein no longer disguised his sexual proclivities.

Influenced by Hanns Eisler's 1935 lectures at New York's New School for Social Research, Blitzstein entered the camp agitating for music that addressed social concerns, attacked society's enemies, and conveyed its message in an accessible, vernacular musical language. The "new" Blitzstein turned to a tonal approach to the musical art, characterized by a popular song style, sardonic references to earlier styles, and parodies of art music. He wrote for "red" journals such as *New Masses* and served leftist groups such as the Composers Collective of New York.

Finding the anti-establishment, pro-union theme of *The Cradle Will Rock* too controversial, the Federal Theater Project canceled its premiere. It was then produced independently by John Houseman and Orson Welles at the Mercury Theater in New York (1936). It became the most celebrated composition of its genre in America. With

satiric quotations from music by Bach and Beethoven joined with patter, jazz, and musical revue styles, it symbolizes the musical incarnation of Bertolt Brecht's "epic theater." *I've Got the Tune* (1937), a radio song-play that picked up where *Cradle* left off, and in which Lotte Lenya made her American radio debut, made Blitzstein the favored composer of the Communist movement. *No for an Answer* (1937–1940) focuses on the hardships faced by unemployed and nonunionized Greek immigrants. Guggenheim fellowships (1940–1942) helped support Blitzstein's efforts. Scores for the films *Valley Town* and *Native Land*, concerned with unemployment and fascistic elements in capitalistic society respectively, increased Blitzstein's notoriety. J. Edgar Hoover's FBI began an investigation of his ties to the American Communist Party.

Although Blitzstein derided Army training in *The Cradle Will Rock*, in August 1942 he became Private (later Corporal) Blitzstein, attached to the Eighth Air Force in London. In 1941, after Germany invaded the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Russia became an ally, Blitzstein concluded that the war was just. He now composed music that pleased the military and his social conscience. He wrote *Freedom Morning* for orchestra and a chorus of black enlistees, the *Airborne Symphony* (commissioned by the Eighth Air Force), and a score for Garsin Kanin's documentary film, *The True Glory*, now lost.

After the war, he resumed writing for the stage. He created *Regina* (1950), a three-act opera with spoken dialogue, based on Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes* and *Another Part of the Forest*, a study of Southern mores near the end of the nineteenth century, which melded the styles of the spiritual, ragtime, blues, and traditional operatic conventions. Once again, the Negro is elevated to near-equality. *Reuben, Reuben* (1955) concerns a war veteran who suffers from aphonia, an inability to speak. The earthy New York Italian setting highlights an array of social misfits.

Blitzstein also translated and adapted *Die Dreigroschenoper* by Brecht and Kurt Weill. Its production in 1952 and subsequent revisions (a 1954 production starred Weill's fifty-five-year old widow, Lotte Lenya) brought him the fame he sought, and the seven-year run brought a financial bounty. Through Weill's inspiration, which Blitzstein once discounted, his own vision of a populist art form was realized. In 1959, Blitzstein was honored with membership in the National Institute of Arts and Letters.

Despite his reputation as an advocate for leftist causes, the Ford Foundation commissioned him to write an opera. Returning to the subject of his early choral opera, *The Condemned*, he incurred the wrath of right-wing journalist George E. Sokolsky, who excoriated the Foundation and the composer. While working on his new treatment of the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, in 1962 he served as John Golden Professor of Playwriting at Bennington College (Vermont). There he formed a friendship with Bernard Malamud and began to set his short stories “The Magic Barrel” and “Idiots First.” On November 1, 1963, he went to Martinique for work and rest. On January 22, 1964, he died there, the result of a beating by three sailors he met in a waterfront bar.

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## Ernest Bloch (1880–1959)

### Composer and Conductor

Ernest Bloch was widely known in America for his works based on Jewish subjects, notably those that comprise the “Jewish Cycle” (1912–1916). He also delved into nationalism with such creations as *Helvetia*, a homage to his native land, and *America: An Epic Rhapsody*, whose thematic content is drawn from tunes related to the history and cultures of his adopted country. It was, however, his concept of a Judaism that could attain universalism via his *Avodath Hakodesh* that enlarged his reputation and brought him a diverse audience. Although he did not found any school of composition, he molded a plethora of musical ingredients into a distinctive style. For his many contributions, he was

honored with some of music’s most distinguished awards. His artistic integrity was such that he attracted many notable students, among them Roger Sessions, Douglas Moore, Bernard Rogers, Theodore Chanler, Frederick Jacobi, Quincy Porter, Herbert Elwell, and Leon Kirchner.

Ernest Bloch was born in Geneva, Switzerland on July 24, 1880, to Maurice Bloch, a purveyor of tourist goods, and Sophie Braunschweig Bloch. He was reared in an Orthodox Jewish environment. His early musical studies were with Albert Goss and Louis-Étienne-Reyer (violin) and Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (solfège and composition). The violinist Martin Marsick suggested that he broaden his musical training by moving to Brussels. There he studied violin with Eugène Ysaÿe, composition with François Rasse, and violin and chamber music with Franz Schörg, living in Schörg’s home from 1896–1899. Seeking a change from the Franco-Belgian musical climate, he moved to Frankfurt, studying with Ivan Knorr (1899–1901), and then to Munich, where he worked with Ludwig Thuille (1901–1903). A year in Paris completed his training. During these years, his efforts reflected the tastes of his mentors and the milieu in which he lived. The effusively romantic *Vivre–Aimer* and the extravagantly orchestrated *Symphony in C-sharp minor* are products of German culture. The *Symphony*, a four-movement formally constructed work, reveals the influence of Richard Strauss. The fugue that opens the fourth movement reflects the academic formalism of his composition teachers. However, *Hiver-Printemps*, with its impressionistically tinged orchestral color, reveals the shift in France from the Franck school to the understated style of Claude Debussy, with whom Bloch established a relationship.

Returning to Geneva, Bloch married Margarethe Augusta Schneider, a pianist, in 1904 and entered his father’s business. He composed sporadically, conducted orchestral concerts in Neuchâtel and Lausanne (1909–1910), and lectured on aesthetics at the Geneva Conservatory (1911–1915). He composed *Macbeth*, his only complete opera, which established his credentials as a dramatic composer. Premiering on November 30, 1910, at the Opéra-Comique in Paris, it drew together elements from such disparate sources as the Wagnerian music drama, Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and Mussorgsky’s *Boris Godunov*. He added characteristics that came to be associated with his style: frequent changes in meter, tempo, and tonality/modality; melodic use of the perfect fourth and augmented second at

critical moments; a darkly hued instrumentation; repeated note patterns; ostinati; pedal points; and cyclical formal procedures.

In 1916 Bloch came to the United States to be the conductor for the Maud Allan dance company. When the tour failed, he taught theory and composition at the newly formed music school of David Mannes in New York (1917–1920). He brought his family, which included three children, to the United States. The successful premiere of his *String Quartet No. 1* by the Flonzaley Quartet in New York on December 31, 1916, established Bloch as a composer of consequence.

His quest to establish his own musical personality found fulfillment in a series of biblically inspired epics, known collectively as the “Jewish Cycle.” They include settings of *Psalm 137* and *Psalm 114* for soprano and orchestra (1912–1914) and *Psalm 22* for baritone and orchestra (1914), the symphony *Israel*, with five solo voices (1912–1916), and *Schelomo*, a Hebraic rhapsody for cello and orchestra (1915–1916), in which the quarter tone makes its debut in his oeuvre. In these emotive utterances, he painted sweeping musical canvases with a richly colored orchestral palette. The quasi-Hebraic character of this music is intensified by the augmented intervals, melismatic treatment of melody, loosely metric repeated-note patterns, and coloristic orchestration. The Scotch-snap rhythm and its variants are so pervasive that it is called the “Bloch rhythm.” Authentic Hebraic material occurs only occasionally, for example, in the quotations from the *Song of Songs* in *Israel* and the *gemora nigun* in *Schelomo*. The many repeated notes and the perfect and augmented fourth intervals in the *Psalms* and *Schelomo* evoke the call of the *shofar* on the High Holy Days, while the unfettered rhythmic flow suggests the melismas of Hebrew chant. The frequent accents on the final or penultimate beat of a bar have analogies in the Hebrew language.

At the invitation of Karl Muck, Bloch conducted the premiere of his *Trois poèmes juifs* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra on March 17, 1917. On May 3, 1917, he conducted the premieres of *Israel* and *Schelomo*, the latter with Hans Kindler as soloist, in New York. He conducted a program of his Jewish works with the Philadelphia Orchestra on January 25 and 26, 1918. G. Schirmer, Inc. signed him to a contract and published the “Jewish Cycle” with the logo that became his trademark, the Star of David with the initials EB in the center. This imprimatur

firmly established Bloch as *the* Jewish composer in the public’s mind.

Comfortable with nonprofessionals, in 1919 Bloch conducted a People’s Chorus of untrained singers at the Manhattan Trade School. The repertory was mainly Renaissance choral music. The same year he taught music fundamentals to youths in Joanne Bird Shaw’s experimental summer school in Peterboro, New Hampshire. He produced the *Suite for viola and piano*, also in an orchestral version, which won the Coolidge Prize and quickly earned a place in the viola repertory.

From 1920 to 1925, Bloch was founding director of the Cleveland Institute of Music. He conducted the student orchestra, taught composition, established master classes and courses for the public, and proposed reforms such as abandoning traditional examinations and textbooks in favor of direct musical experience, that is, studying the scores of master composers of different eras. The trustees had reservations about this innovation and, along with other disagreements concerning Bloch’s administrative decisions and priorities, created an environment that led to the composer’s resignation. The compositions of this period represent a wide assortment of styles, genres, and performance media. A broadly neoclassical bent is exemplified in his *Quintet No. 1* for piano and strings, and in the four-movement *Concerto Grosso No. 1* for string orchestra with piano obbligato. Referential materials, however, are revealed even in these abstract works. In the *Sonata No. 2* for violin and piano, also known as *Poème mystique*, there is reference to the Gregorian mass, *Kyrie fons bonitatis*. A residue of overt Jewish expression is evident in *Baal Shem*, or *Three Pictures of Chassidic Life*, for violin and piano (orchestrated in 1939), and *From Jewish Life* for cello and piano, among others. But in these comparatively small-scaled works, the Jew of the Eastern European ghetto replaces the towering majesty of biblical heroes, monarchs, or prophets. His eclecticism is evident in *Poems of the Sea*, a piano cycle in three movements (*Waves*, *Chanty*, *At Sea*) inspired by Walt Whitman verses, which includes a mixture of impressionism, modality, and Hebrew *shtaygers*.

Following the upheaval in Cleveland, Bloch was appointed director of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, remaining for five years. Now a U.S. citizen, Bloch’s major work from the San Francisco years is *America: An Epic Rhapsody*, a three-movement program symphony with a closing choral anthem, intended for the audience to

sing. Dedicated to the memory of Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman, the work is replete with quotations from American Indian melodies, English chanteys, Civil War tunes, African American spirituals, and references to the mechanization of America in the form of automobile horns and the suggestion of factory noises. *America* received first prize in a contest sponsored by Musical America, whose judges were Walter Damrosch, Leopold Stokowski, Frederick Stock, Serge Koussevitzky, and Alfred Hertz. Apart from the \$3,000 prize, the work premiered under Damrosch's direction of the New York Philharmonic on December 20, 1928.

During the 1930s Bloch was again in Europe, based initially in Roveredo-Capriasco, Ticino, where he created his monumental *Avodath Hakodesh*, or *Sacred Service*, based on texts in the Reform Jewish prayer book. He taught himself Hebrew for this project, assisted in this and in the layout of the text by Cantor Reuben Rinder of San Francisco's Temple Emanu-El. The world premiere, which he conducted, was in New York on April 11, 1934. Upon returning to Europe, an all-Bloch concert held at Milan's La Scala proved disappointing due to public resentment that a foreigner was accorded the honor of opening La Scala's symphonic season, along with the unfortunate scheduling of the concert on Friday evening, the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath.

Between 1934 and 1938, Bloch created many important works in diverse styles, including his only *Piano Sonata*; *Voice in the Wilderness*, a six-movement meditative musing for cello and orchestra; *Evocations*, an atmospheric and exotic orchestral work (the second movement is titled *Houang Ti, God of War*), with pentatonic scales and coloristic orchestration; and the *Violin Concerto*, with its American Indian motto. Major festivals of his work were held in London in 1934 and 1937, the latter in conjunction with the founding of an Ernest Bloch Society, with Albert Einstein as honorary president and Alex Cohen as secretary. On March 5, 1938, *Macbeth* was revived in Naples in an Italian translation by Bloch's first biographer, Mary Tibaldi Chiesa, but Hitler's impending visit to Italy caused it to be canceled after three performances. Because of anti-semitism and because he wished to retain his American citizenship, Bloch returned to the United States.

In 1940, Bloch became a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, where he taught summer classes until his retirement in 1952. Because his son Ivan lived in Port-

land, Bloch purchased a home at Agate Beach on the Oregon coast and commuted to Berkeley. Bloch offered courses on *The Fugues of the Well-Tempered Clavier*, *The Third Symphony of Beethoven*, *Toward an Understanding of Music*, and *The Musical Language*.

The compositions of the Oregon years represent an amalgam of Bloch's best creative impulses. The *Concerto Grosso No. 2* for string quartet and string orchestra and the *String Quartets Nos. 2–5*, with their formal design and abstract quality, are neoclassical. Similarly, the passacaglias and fugues of the *Suite symphonique* for orchestra and the *String Quartet No. 2* reflect a return to the techniques and formal procedures of the early masters whose technical polish Bloch so admired. However, the *Concerto symphonique* is a large-scaled piano concerto endowed with the sweeping gestures and virtuosity associated with the Romantics. Jewish associations reappear in the *Symphony for Trombone and Orchestra* and the *Suite hébraïque* for violin or viola and orchestra. Pictorialism and referential practices are largely eschewed. The kaleidoscopic and rhetorical gestures of the "Jewish Cycle" have been supplanted by a new objectivity, serenity, and control.

The musical world did not forget Bloch during his reclusive years at Agate Beach. In 1947, the Juilliard School and the League of Composers presented three concerts featuring his work. The American Academy of Arts and Letters bestowed on him its first Gold Medal in Music, for *String Quartet No. 2*. A six-day Blochfest was held in Chicago in 1950 with Bloch and Rafael Kubelik sharing the conductorial duties. The New York Music Critics' Circle Award in 1953 stands out because Bloch received this honor in both chamber music, for the *String Quartet No. 3*, and symphonic music, for the *Concerto Grosso No. 2*. Although Bloch was widely honored in his lifetime, only recently have many works from his final years received the recognition they deserve. Even during his final struggle with cancer, Bloch continued to create vigorously. His *Two Last Poems* for flute and orchestra (1958) are inscribed, respectively, "Maybe . . ." and "Life Again?" He died in Portland, Oregon on July 15, 1959.

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## George Gershwin (1898–1937)

### Composer and Musician

In his songs, Broadway shows, and film scores, in *Rhapsody in Blue*, and in the opera *Porgy and Bess*, George Gershwin achieved an unprecedented (and as yet unequaled) synthesis of jazz, classical, and popular music styles. His place in the history of American music can be located most accurately by situating him among three of his closest contemporaries: Duke Ellington (1899–1974), Louis Armstrong (1901–1971), and Aaron Copland (1900–1990). Among this remarkable quartet, comprised of two Jews and two African Americans, Gershwin was both an innovator and a synthesizer. His location at this historical nexus also informs his significance in American Jewish history, for it places him at the center of what Jeffrey Melnick has called the “Black–Jewish Nation.” A blend of myth and fact, “of real and imagined meetings of African Americans and Jews in the modern city,” the Black–Jewish nation shaped American music in the first half of the twentieth century (Melnick 2001).

George Gershwin was the second of four children born to Rose (Rosa) Bruskin and Morris (Moishe) Gershowitz (later Gershvin). Before emigrating, Morris and Rose lived in St. Petersburg, Russia; they arrived separately in New York in the early 1890s, and married in 1895. Ira



George Gershwin. (Library of Congress)

(Israel, or Izzy) Gershwin, George’s older brother and musical collaborator, was born on December 6, 1896, and George (Jacob) on September 26, 1898.

Morris Gershwin was entrepreneurial by temperament and reasonably successful as a leather worker, foreman in a shoe factory, owner of a Turkish bath, and restaurant owner. George’s relative lack of formal education (he completed two years of high school) can be attributed not to a lack of opportunity (Ira attended City College), but to his personality and temperament. As Irving Howe put it, “Between Jewish immigrant parents and the world of the streets, there was a state of battle,” and George was drawn to the streets (Howe 1976).

At the age of ten, Gershwin heard the eight-year-old violin prodigy Max Rosenzweig (professional name Max Rosen, 1900–1956) play Dvořák’s *Humoresque* at a school assembly. Gershwin, who had been playing hooky, heard the concert from outside the auditorium, but nevertheless experienced the music “as a flashing revelation of beauty” (Wyatt and Johnson 2004). By the time his family bought a piano in 1910, Gershwin could already play popular songs by ear or, as he claimed, by following the motion of

the keys on a player piano. He took lessons with local teachers for two years, and in 1912 began piano studies with Charles Hambitzer (1878–1918), a distinguished and gifted teacher. From about 1919 to 1923, Gershwin studied theory and harmony with the composer and violinist Edward Kilenyi (1884–1968), who had a PhD from Columbia University. In the early 1930s, Gershwin studied composition with the influential composition teacher Joseph Schillinger (b. Kharkov, Ukraine, 1895; d. New York, 1943). As these influences suggest, Gershwin actively sought out and obtained a substantial grounding in classical music studies, notwithstanding his lack of formal conservatory training.

Gershwin's professional musical career, however, was firmly rooted in Tin Pan Alley. In 1914, at the age of fifteen, he dropped out of school and was hired as a "piano pounder" by the J. H. Remick Company. He played their new sheet music releases for potential customers during the business day and earned additional income on the vaudeville circuit at night. The following year he got into the business of recording piano rolls for the popular player-piano market. While these recordings were originally made for purely commercial purposes, they have proven to be of great historical worth. Included among Gershwin's 1916 piano roll releases were two popular songs of Yiddish theater origins: "*Das Pintele Yud*" ("The Jewish Spark"), the title song of a play by Boris Thomashefsky, with words by Louis Gilrod, and music by Arnold Perlmutter and Herman Wohl; and "*Gott un Sein Mishpet Is Gerecht*" ("God and His Judgment [Are] Just") by David Meyerowitz. A recent biography of George Gershwin notes that both George and Ira must have understood "some Yiddish. Their parents often played cards with Boris Thomashefsky, the founder of the Yiddish theater on Second Avenue" (Hyland 2003).

Gershwin's first published composition was the novelty song "When You Want 'Em, You Can't Get 'Em, When You've Got 'Em You Don't Want 'Em" (1916), with lyrics by Murray Roth. By March 1917, he had enough confidence in his own talents to quit his job with Remick to pursue more creative opportunities as a pianist and songwriter.

At this point, a well-documented relationship between Gershwin and an African American musician, Will Vodery (1885–1951), assumes real significance in Gershwin's artistic development. Like Gershwin himself, but a generation

earlier, Vodery had acquired a solid classical training outside the standard conservatory route. By 1913 he was one of the most respected musical theater professionals in New York and had begun a long-term association with Florenz Ziegfeld's *Follies*; as Duke Ellington put it, Vodery was "Ziegfeld's Number One orchestrator" (Tucker 1996). When Gershwin left Remick, he sought Vodery's help in finding new employment. Five years later, when Gershwin completed *Blue Monday* (1922, later retitled *135th Street*), a one-act music drama set in a Harlem bar, he turned to his friend Will Vodery for its orchestration.

In 1919 Gershwin composed the music for the song "Swanee," with lyrics by Irving Caesar. Performed in blackface by Al Jolson in the show *Sinbad*, "Swanee" became the first Gershwin hit and has retained its status as a standard. Although the lyrics are not overtly racist, the song does draw on minstrel-show stereotypes in its melody as well as in its lyrics, which at one point quote directly from Stephen Foster's "Old Folks at Home" (1851).

Charles Hamm has argued persuasively that the renewed vogue for such "Back-to-Dixie" songs in the nineteen-teens reflected white anxieties about the ongoing migration of African Americans from the rural South to the cities of the North (1997). These imaginary projections of blackness remained in circulation as stereotypes, even as new possibilities for real inspiration and collaboration were beginning to emerge. As the migration of African Americans from the rural South to the cities of the North continued, Harlem became "home to black jazz musicians, many of them Gershwin's friends. 'Uptown' was where he could hear Bessie Smith or Louis Armstrong at Connie's Inn, or Duke Ellington at the Cotton Club" (Hyland 2003).

Both the commercially successful "Swanee" and the ambitious but relatively obscure experiment of *Blue Monday/135th Street* helped to set the stage for *Rhapsody in Blue*. On February 12, 1924, Paul Whiteman (1890–1967), leader of the most successful commercial dance orchestra of the era, presented the legendary concert that he publicized as an Experiment in Modern Music. As David Schiff summarizes, "All the elements of new music were there; jazz rhythms and colors, pop tunes, modern harmonies, virtuosic instrumental playing, lowdown fun and high-toned uplift. But only Gershwin produced a synthesis which placed these elements in a new relation" (1997). Perhaps the most telling recognition of *Rhapsody in Blue's* jazziness came from Louis Armstrong, who

brilliantly interpolated one its memorable themes into his classic 1929 recording of Fats Waller's "Ain't Misbehavin'" (Melnick 2001).

Among George Gershwin's Tin Pan Alley songs, those written in collaboration with his brother Ira retain a special resonance. In *The American Popular Ballad of the Golden Era* (1995), Allen Forte, an influential theorist of modern classical music, lists Gershwin, along with Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers, and Harold Arlen, as the Big Six of Tin Pan Alley composers. Of the Gershwin songs that Forte selects for analysis on the basis of musical merit—"Somebody Loves Me" (1924), "Someone to Watch Over Me" (1926), "How Long Has This Been Going On" (1927), "Embraceable You" (1930), "A Foggy Day" (1937), and "Nice Work If You Can Get It" (1937)—only the first (with lyrics by Buddy DeSylva and Ballard Macdonald) does not have lyrics by Ira Gershwin. Edward Jablonski, whose 1987 biography of Gershwin remains standard, states succinctly that "George needed Ira" (Jablonski 1987).

"Embraceable You" comes from the Broadway show *Girl Crazy* (1930), which provides a useful reference point on the road to *Porgy and Bess*. Its most memorable song was "I Got Rhythm." Sung by Ethel Merman in her Broadway debut, it became an instant hit and made her a star. The song's afterlife, however, is equally remarkable. "I Got Rhythm" is in standard Tin Pan Alley song form: a repeated musical phrase (AA) is followed by a contrasting phrase (B), and then by a return of (A), the whole lasting a predictable thirty-two measures. Together with twelve-bar blues form, AABA song form provides one of the classic structures for jazz improvisation. In the case of "I Got Rhythm," the chord changes that Gershwin composed took on a life of their own as "Rhythm Changes," a harmonic structure that continues to provide the basis for countless jazz improvisations and compositions, including classics by Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Thelonious Monk.

The opera *Porgy and Bess* (1935) is Gershwin's masterpiece. It is based on the novel *Porgy* (1925) by DuBose Heyward (1885–1940), a white South Carolinian. Heyward's ancestry was aristocratic, but he had nevertheless experienced a poverty-stricken childhood. He was no stranger to the black community of Charleston that he depicted in *Porgy*, and he was a talented writer. Still, he wrote from the perspective of a white observer, albeit a sympa-

thetic one, and even the novel's positive characters are essentialized black stereotypes. The novel was adapted for the Broadway stage by DuBose's wife Dorothy Heyward, and it was successfully mounted, with an all-black cast, in 1927. The high quality of the acting worked to temper the stereotypes, and the show's success expanded the range of opportunities available to black actors and actresses. The opera, too, was performed by an all-black cast, including Todd Duncan (1903–1998), a Howard University music professor, as Porgy and Anne Wiggins Brown (b. 1912), a Juilliard student, as Bess. Wrestling with doubts about the integrity of a "Negro" opera composed by a white composer, the distinguished black composer Hall Johnson (1888–1970) saw the show four times before concluding, "I am now certain that I do like it," and he credited the cast with giving the show a degree of verisimilitude it might otherwise have lacked (Alpert 1990).

In fact, no opera can live without great performances, and the tradition of all-black casting of the lead roles of *Porgy and Bess* continues to be honored. For many opera aficionados, the production of 1952 starring Leontyne Price (b. 1927) as Bess and William Warfield (1920–2002) as Porgy remains the gold standard, but, as *Porgy and Bess* has entered its eighth decade in the repertory of the world's great operas, it continues to inspire new interpretations and to take on new layers of meaning and resonance.

In 1936, George and Ira relocated to Los Angeles to pursue opportunities in the movie industry. The movie *Shall We Dance*, starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, which included the songs "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" and "They Can't Take That Away from Me," was released in May 1937. But Gershwin's health was failing. His symptoms—mood swings, severe headaches, weakness, and fatigue—resisted diagnosis. Abruptly, in July, he was found to have a brain tumor, and he died on July 11 after an unsuccessful surgery. In November, *A Damsel in Distress*, starring Fred Astaire and Joan Fontaine, was released; it includes two of the late classics cited by Forte: "A Foggy Day" and "Nice Work If You Can Get It."

George Gershwin's posthumous reputation has been debated for almost seventy years. At this point a consensus has been reached as to his distinguished place in the Black–Jewish nation of popular music. Paradoxically, his place among "classical" composers (of Jewish origin or not) is harder to define. His contemporary Aaron Copland, who followed a different musical path, did not consider

Gershwin a classical composer (Hyland 2003), and Leonard Bernstein, a younger contemporary, shared Copland's view. On the other hand, Arnold Schoenberg, whose life trajectory intersected Gershwin's when they met in Los Angeles in 1936, wrote (on the occasion of his own seventieth birthday) that "here [in America], I am universally esteemed as one of the most important composers: alongside Stravinsky, Tansman, Sessions, Sibelius, Gershwin, Copland, etc." (Schoenberg 1964). Respected as a fellow composer by Schoenberg and as a fellow musician by Armstrong and Ellington, Gershwin occupies a unique place in American Jewish history.

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## Benny Goodman (1909–1986)

### Jazz Clarinetist and Band Leader

Benny Goodman, a superb jazz clarinetist and innovative band leader, was—and remains—the King of Swing. His place in American Jewish history can be understood in

terms of two intersecting narratives: the story of Chicago in the early history of jazz, and the story of swing in the history of popular music in America. While encounters between black and Jewish musicians in New York were mediated through the worlds of Tin Pan Alley and musical theater, Chicago in the early 1920s was the center of the jazz world, and Goodman grew up with jazz. He began hearing it "as an impressionable youngster, . . . and very quickly he decided that this was the music that he wanted to play" (Collier 1989). *Swing* refers to the rhythmic feel of jazz itself, but also to a particular style of jazz that was just beginning to catch on in the mid- to late-1920s. Played by bands that were larger than the traditional Dixieland ensembles of earlier New Orleans and Chicago jazz, swing was jazz adapted for dancing. It was this convergence of jazz and popular music in the swing dance craze of the 1930s that made it possible for a jazz artist like Goodman also to become an entertainment idol to thousands of adoring fans.

Benny's father, David Goodman, had emigrated from Warsaw and his mother, Dora Rezinsky Goodman, from Kovno. They met and were married in Baltimore in 1894. In 1903 the family moved to Chicago, where Benny (Benjamin David) was born on May 30, 1909, in the old Maxwell Street area; he was the ninth of twelve children. When Benny was nine years old, the family moved to the Lawndale area, which was already becoming the center of the Jewish community. Goodman remembered it as "a pretty hopeless neighborhood, the Ghetto of Chicago that corresponded to the East Side in New York except that there were a few trees in the streets and we were a half-block from Garfield Park" (Goodman 1939). His lack of sentimentality grew out of his experience of poverty.

When Benny was ten, his father enrolled him and two of his older brothers in a program at the Kahelah Jacob Synagogue, in which children could take music lessons and play in a band. When that program ended, the three Goodman brothers joined the Boys' Band at Hull House, the famous Chicago settlement house founded by Jane Addams. There Benny continued to play under the direction of James Sylvester, a dedicated and talented music educator. Around the same time he began private lessons with a distinguished teacher, Franz Schoepp. By thirteen, he had a solid foundation in classical technique and the ability to play by ear whatever traditional jazz he heard on records, and to improvise in the then-current Dixieland style.



Musicians Benny Goodman (left) and Gene Krupa (right) in the studio in 1938. (Library of Congress)

While still attending school, he joined the musicians' union and began playing professionally.

In 1923, at fourteen, Goodman quit school and became a full-time, professional musician. At the same time, the finest black musicians from New Orleans, the creators of jazz, were playing the clubs on Chicago's South Side. In his memoir, *The Kingdom of Swing*, Goodman recalls one occasion when the band he was playing in appeared on a double bill that also included Lillian Hardin-Armstrong (1898–1971) on piano, George Mitchell (1899–1972) on trumpet, Warren "Baby" Dodds (1898–1959) on drums, and Johnny Dodds (1892–1940) on clarinet: "One set and they had played us kids right off the band stand. As I recall, it was the first time I had heard Johnny and I was satisfied to stand around and listen" (Goodman 1939). This musical environment, where the first generation of New Orleans jazz musicians was a constant source of both inspiration and competition, was Goodman's milieu.

Benny Goodman's career spanned seven decades, and during this time he was constantly in motion, performing all over the world with big bands and small ensembles. In

the first edition of a meticulously documented bio-discography of Goodman, D. Russell Connor developed a nine-chapter chronology, reliably based on the evidence of Goodman's recordings (Connor and Hicks 1969). By the time Connor revised his discography for the definitive 1988 edition, two more chapters had been added (Connor 1988). For a brief summary, however, one must fall back on a tripartite scheme of early Goodman (1923–1933), middle Goodman (1934–1945), and late Goodman (1945–1986), with the understanding that middle Goodman is synonymous with the swing era itself, while the long late-Goodman era includes work ranging from bop, to classical, to historic legacy concerts.

In the early era, Goodman developed his skills as a sideman and soloist, first in other leaders' bands, and then with his own band. From 1925 to 1929, he worked primarily with Ben Pollack. Goodman recalls one of their engagements at the Southmoor Hotel in Chicago, in 1926. "The Victor people were . . . interested in having us make records, and sent around an agent to hear the band. Unfortunately we didn't know what night he was coming, and it was particularly bad since he pieced out Yom Kippur, when all the Jewish Boys in the band—Gil [Rodin, sax], Green [Harry Greenberg, trumpet], Harry [Goodman—Benny's brother, tuba], myself and one or two others were away" (Goodman 1939). Fortunately, the agent returned, and a recording session with Ben Pollack and His Californians later that year resulted in Goodman's first appearance on a commercially released record.

The repeal of Prohibition in 1933 provides the most visible point of demarcation between the early jazz and the swing eras. As the speakeasies gave way to spacious music halls, with proportionately large dance floors, musicians began the process of transforming the intimate jazz ensembles of the 1920s into jazz "bands" and dance "orchestras." For Goodman, this transition was facilitated by his relationship with the visionary jazz impresario and producer John Hammond (1910–1987). An independently wealthy heir of the Vanderbilt fortune, Hammond was devoted to jazz as an art form, and he understood the music's African American roots. Although bands were still rigidly segregated in their public appearances, Hammond encouraged Goodman to begin making studio recordings with African American jazz artists. Goodman writes: "Nobody had to convince me, with my background in Chicago, about their ability. It just happened that in working along

as I had during those seven or eight years, I had gotten out of touch with them, except for hearing some band in a night club or on records” (Goodman 1939).

Hammond, on the other hand, excelled in keeping in touch with established stars and discovering new ones. In Teddy Wilson (1912–1986), Hammond was sure that he had discovered the perfect talent to complement Goodman’s: “I saw in Teddy Wilson the only piano player I could conceive of with the same technical facility Benny had—and who thought and was cool in the same way” (Firestone 1993). With Hammond’s backing, Goodman began working with Wilson, first in the recording studio, and, in a historic concert of April 12, 1936 (Easter Sunday), in front of an enthusiastic audience at the Congress Hotel in New York City. In September 1937, now joined by Lionel Hampton on vibraphone as well, the Benny Goodman Orchestra presented the first integrated jazz concert in the South, at the Pan American Casino in Dallas, Texas.

For his big band arrangements, Goodman turned to another consummate African American musician (and another John Hammond contact), Fletcher Henderson (1897–1952). The title of a recent book by Jeffrey Magee names Henderson “the Uncrowned King of Swing,” but Henderson and Goodman were not rivals; they were two faces of the same reign. As Benny Goodman and His Orchestra continued to turn out one hit after another, many arranged by Henderson, Goodman came to think of Henderson’s arrangements as an essential element of his own musical identity and legacy. Magee writes: “No musician carried the torch for Henderson more than Benny Goodman, who continued to perform his arrangements for the rest of his life” (Magee 2005).

At the same time that Goodman was involved in these innovative musical collaborations, swing was reaching the apex of its appeal as popular entertainment. The initial series of “Let’s Dance” radio broadcasts, which aired weekly on NBC from December 1934 through May 1935, created “a virtual ballroom where all listeners heard the same music, as in a real ballroom, but danced in their homes. It became the ideal format for listening and dancing to music during the Depression” (Magee 2005). In August 1935, the Goodman Orchestra appeared live at the Palomar Ballroom in Los Angeles. As Goodman recalled that night, the band started with some “sweeter tunes” and “softer arrangements,” but the crowd did not seem to be respond-

ing very enthusiastically. Then, Goodman writes: “I called out some of our big Fletcher [Henderson] arrangements for the next set, and the boys seemed to get the idea. From the moment I kicked them off, they dug in with some of the best playing I’d heard since we left New York. To our complete amazement, half of the crowd stopped dancing and came surging around the stand. It was the first experience we had with that kind of attention, and it certainly was a kick” (Goodman 1939). In March 1937, at the Paramount Theater in New York, the sellout, mostly teenaged crowd responded with roars of approval and dancing in the aisles. At the time, from the perspective of the entertainment trade journal *Variety*, the response was “tradition-shattering in its spontaneity” and “in the child-like violence of its manifestations” (Firestone 1993).

In retrospect, the Paramount Theater concert remains a milestone in the history of American youth culture, anticipating the Sinatra phenomenon of the 1940s or that of Elvis in the 1950s. In one way, however, swing’s appeal was even broader, since it was embraced by sophisticated adults and teenaged fans alike; it was even accepted in venues traditionally associated with classical music. On January 16, 1938, the Benny Goodman Orchestra scored another historic triumph in a sold-out concert at Carnegie Hall. Much as the Paramount Theater show has come to epitomize swing’s triumph in the popular arena, the Carnegie Hall concert symbolized its acceptance as art. In the preface to his study of Goodman and the swing era, James Lincoln Collier states bluntly: “This was my generation. I am therefore perhaps biased when I say that the popular music of that time, swing, was better—more sophisticated, more genuinely musical—than virtually any popular music before or since” (Collier 1989).

A dramatic convergence of personal factors and historical trends marked the transition to the post-swing—or late-Goodman—era. In March 1942, Goodman married Alice Hammond Duckworth, the older sister of John Hammond. Paradoxically, Goodman’s relationship with John Hammond had run its course; according to Jimmy Maxwell, “Benny in many ways was indebted to John, and he resented it. John also rode on Benny’s coattails a great deal, and *he* [John] resented that” (Firestone 1993). When Benny Goodman and His Orchestra again played the Paramount in December 1942, he shared the bill with Frank Sinatra, the new teen idol and future of popular music. In addition, the new language of jazz, bebop, was

being created at Minton's, a Harlem night club. In short, the swing era was in decline.

The bebop style, with its offbeat rhythms, asymmetrical phrases, and adventurous harmonic innovations, was *not* designed for dancing or, for that matter, for mass appeal. It was jazz created by black musicians for whom creative control and artistic independence were of paramount importance, and it was geared toward an in-group of musically sophisticated listeners. Goodman made no sustained attempt to master the bebop idiom, but he did make appearances and cut records with tenor saxophone player Wardell Gray (1921–1955) and other bebop innovators. In 1949, Goodman took a renewed interest in classical clarinet technique and music, studying with the English virtuoso Reginald Kell. Among Goodman's memorable classical performances is a 1956 recording of the Mozart *Clarinet Concerto* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. It was re-released on CD in 1997 and remains available.

By the mid-1950s, Benny Goodman's legacy was secure. A Hollywood biopic, *The Benny Goodman Story*, with Steve Allen in the title role, was released in 1956. An embarrassing amalgam of stereotyped characters and clichéd dialogue, it includes Berta Gersten as “a grossly caricatured Jewish mother” (Firestone 1993). By far, Goodman's most important contribution to the cultural history of this period was his visit to the Soviet Union during the short-lived and tentative thaw of 1962. Khrushchev, though no fan of jazz, showed up on opening night in Moscow and later met with Goodman and the band at the American embassy.

Goodman continued to practice and perform until the day he died, June 13, 1986. Just three days before, he had visited Yale University, along with his friend William F. Hyland, a co-executor of his musical estate, to review the arrangements for the Benny Goodman archives that were to be established there after his death. On June 12, he called Hyland “to report with great satisfaction that the August ‘Mostly Mozart’ concert [at Lincoln Center] was sold out and that he had been asked to play another concert in that series in July” (Connor 1996). He was practicing for that concert when he died of a heart attack.

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## Steve Reich (b. 1936)

### Musical Creator

One of the central musical creators of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Steve Reich's work is informed by diverse musical traditions: Western and non-Western, classical and popular, acoustic and electro-acoustic, taped and videotaped. Although Jewish themes are the subject or inspiration for some of his most well-known compositions, the cultural diversity of his work has earned him an unusually large following among both the public and cognoscenti.

Steve Reich was born in New York City on October 3, 1936. Although he was taught piano as a child, in early adolescence he began to study drumming with Roland Kohloff, a timpanist. However, Reich's intellectual interests extended far beyond music. At Cornell University he studied philosophy, but he also worked with musicologist William Austin. After graduating in 1957, he returned to New York City, where he studied composition with Hall Overton, Vincent Persichetti, and William Bergsma, the latter two at the Juilliard School of Music. He received a master's degree in composition from Mills College in Oakland, California, where, in contrast to the conservative approach of his three previous instructors, he studied under the avant-garde master Luciano Berio.

After his graduate studies, Reich settled for a time in San Francisco, where he composed the first work that brought him fame and acclaim, *It's Gonna Rain* (1965). In

it, he espoused a musical philosophy centered on phasing, a technical feature in which the same musical materials move in and out of synchronization with each other by slightly altering their speed. Reich was also particularly interested in process—the way in which the music gradually unfolds. He often mixed taped speech and sounds with instruments and voices in unique combinations.

Believing the roles of composer and performer should merge, while in San Francisco Reich formed a quintet, of which he was a member, and spent several months in improvisatory jam sessions. In 1965, he returned to New York, forming a trio a year later—Art Murphy, piano; Jon Gibson, woodwinds; and Reich, piano. This group remained more or less intact until the composition in 1970 of *Phase Patterns* for four electric organs and *Four Organs* for four electric organs and maracas, and the creation of *Drumming* in 1971. Reich had studied African drumming at the University of Ghana in 1970. As a result of numerous repetitive patterns, *Drumming*, which takes about eighty minutes to perform, brought its composer under the canopy of minimalism, a major movement of the late twentieth century. In *Drumming*, a work for eight small-pitched drums, three maracas, three glockenspiels, piccolo, and voices, the expanded core of artists called itself *Steve Reich and Musicians*. As the performers changed—often depending on the venue of the performance—new patterns emerged in a composition. This allowed performers a role in the ongoing re-creation of the work.

Reich's world of sound was always eclectic, as evidenced in his *Clapping Music* for two pairs of hands (1972), *Six Pianos* (rearranged as *Six Marimbas*), and *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ* (1973). In Seattle, Reich had worked with musicians from Bali, and the exotic effects in the latter, as well as many subsequent, compositions, reflect their influence.

In the mid-1970s, Reich moved from “exotic” musical traditions to his own Hebrew culture. He saturated himself in Hebrew language, Torah, and chant, with special attention to Sephardic singing, the latter in Israel. *Tehillim* (*Psalms*) sets verses from various psalms. To conjure up associations with biblical times and practices, he used tambourines bereft of the jingles, an instrument somewhat akin to the *tof*, a small drum mentioned in *Psalms* 150, and hand clapping, rattles, and small cymbals. Because the oral tradition for psalm singing has been lost,

Reich created his own melodies, without preconceived notions of the original sounds. Canons and variations, rather than the brief repetitions found in his earlier works, make *Tehillim* somewhat closer to Western practices. However, the rhythm, which derives from the rhythmic accents of the Hebrew words, is in constant flux. It also includes word painting, another Western tradition, so that in verses 13–15 from *Psalms* 34 the words “turn from evil, and do good” feature a descending melodic line (evil) followed by a clearly rising line (good).

*Different Trains* (1988), scored for string quartet and tape, is autobiographical. Its impetus came from the years in Reich's childhood, 1939–1942, when he frequently traveled with his governess between New York and Los Angeles, the result of his parents' separation, with his father living on the East Coast and his mother on the West Coast. He was prompted to create this work when he reflected on the vast differences between his train journeys and those of the European Jews in the Holocaust at the same time. For this work he taped the voices of his governess, Virginia; a retired Pullman porter, Lawrence Davis, who worked on the New York–Los Angeles run; and three Holocaust survivors. He added the taped sounds of American and European trains of the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century. Small speech segments were provided with specific pitches and rhythms, and these were imitated by the strings. The three movements (*America—Before the War*, *Europe—During the War*, and *After the War*) suggest a musical documentary.

Building on the docudrama concept, Reich and his wife, Beryl Korot, joined forces for *The Cave*, which brings the biblical past to contemporary Israel and Palestine. The cave is the Cave of Machpelah, which is now in Hebron. It is where Abraham and his family are said to be buried, and where oral tradition suggests that Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden were located. In three acts, the work asks contemporary Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans who they think Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac are. Voices are taped speaking in Hebrew, Arabic, and English, and chanting from the *Torah* and the *Koran*. The biblical cave is the point of convergence for the two ancient peoples. As a stage production, the visual aids flashed on a screen help the audience understand the narrative; however, even when someone is just listening to the work, the mesmerizing music enhances the story line.

In addition to his Jewish-themed creations, Reich moved in a variety of other directions. He wrote works for solo instrument and tape for specific artists, such as Ransom Wilson, flutist (*Vermont Counterpoint*, 1982), Richard Stoltzman, clarinetist (*New York Counterpoint*, 1985), and Pat Metheny, electric guitarist (*Electric Counterpoint*, 1987). In these works the soloist performs with pre-recorded tapes he has made, thereby exploring the varied timbres, textures, and sonorities that each instrument is capable of producing. Reich's other innovative ventures include *City Life* (1994), an effort to portray his home and environs through taped spoken phrases, hissing steam emitted from the street, a fog horn, and the like. In the neo-medieval *Proverbs* (1995), drones and repetitive contrapuntal patterns exploit a single melodic idea. *Triple Quartet* (1999) contains aspects of *Different Trains*, and the *Counterpoint* pieces reveal the influence of Bartók's string quartets and include the modal flavoring associated with Jewish sources. The documentary digital video opera, *Three Tales* (1998–2002), another Reich-Korot creation, concerns three significant events of the early, middle, and late twentieth century, reflected in the movement titles: *Hindenburg*, *Bikini*, and *Dolly*. The work is an advanced form of musical theater in which the raw materials are created on a computer, videotaped, and projected onto a thirty-two-foot screen. The musicians—sixteen instrumentalists and singers—perform on a stage below the screen. The fusion and diffusion of multiple styles suggest that Reich's oeuvre is best described as eclecticism.

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## Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951)

### Composer

Arguably the most influential composer of the first half of the twentieth century, Arnold Schoenberg (originally Schönberg) was born in Vienna. His original approach to composition, which he called the “method of composing with twelve tones,” is a cornerstone of the modernist aesthetic in twentieth-century art music. In the 1920s, Schoenberg achieved considerable prominence and success in Europe, and in 1925 he was appointed professor of composition at the Prussian Academy of the Arts in Berlin. In 1933, the Nazi authorities demanded that the Academy be cleansed of Jewish influence, and Schoenberg chose to resign immediately. He left Berlin with his family in May and in October arrived in the United States, where he lived the rest of his life.

Schoenberg's significance for American Jewish history is thus inextricably bound to the rise of Nazism. As with his musical thinking, however, Schoenberg's understanding of Judaism and Jewish history underwent several transformations.

Schoenberg's musical oeuvre can be divided into three style periods. His early works, exemplified by the programmatic string sextet *Verklärte Nacht* (*Transfigured Night*), are in a lush, post-Wagnerian idiom. In 1908, he began to compose in a much more dissonant style, known as free, or atonal, expressionism. *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912), a cycle of songs for soprano and chamber ensemble, is a celebrated example of this style. Schoenberg developed his mature style, the method of composing with twelve tones, from 1915 to 1923.

In the twelve-tone method, the composer uses all twelve pitches of the chromatic scale in a predetermined order, or row, which is maintained, subject to various transformations, throughout the piece. As developed by Schoenberg himself and subsequently by his students and followers, the twelve-tone method evolved into the influential school of composition known as serialism. Schoenberg's twelve-tone works include the *Variations for Orchestra* (1927–1928), the opera *Moses und Aron* (1930–1932; third act unfinished), and the cantata *A Survivor from Warsaw* (1947).

With respect to his religious development, Schoenberg, whose parents were both Jewish, had converted to

Protestantism in 1898. Nevertheless, in the summer of 1921, when he arrived on vacation with his family at the resort town of Mattsee, Austria, Schoenberg was confronted with an organized and officially sanctioned antisemitic campaign that forced them to depart abruptly. This event precipitated a strong sense of re-identification with his Jewishness in both its religious and Zionist dimensions. Furthermore, the fact that this incident occurred at a critical juncture in Schoenberg's musical evolution had a direct influence on his subsequent compositions.

Schoenberg's formal return to Judaism took place in July 1933. Having fled Berlin some weeks before, Schoenberg met with Rabbi Louis-Germain Lévy of the Union Libérale Israélite in Paris "to express his formal desire to re-enter the community of Israel" (Ringer 1990). In the presence of two additional witnesses, one of whom was Marc Chagall, Lévy wrote out the declaration, and Schoenberg signed it. It must be emphasized, however, that Schoenberg regarded this formal procedure only as ratifying a decision made much earlier. In a letter to his friend and former student, Alban Berg, he wrote:

[M]y return to the Jewish religion took place long ago and is indeed demonstrated in some of my published work ("Thou shalt not . . . Thou shalt") and in "Moses and Aaron," of which you have known since 1928, but which dates from at least five years earlier; but especially in my drama "Der biblische Weg" which was also conceived in 1922 or '23 at the latest, though finished only in '26–27 (Schoenberg 1964).

"Thou shalt not . . . Thou shalt" ("*Du sollst nicht, du musst*") is the second of Schoenberg's *Four Pieces for Mixed Choir*, op. 27 (1926). Its text, written by the composer himself, begins with a paraphrase of the second commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image," and concludes with a command to believe in a limitless God. *Der biblische Weg* (*The Biblical Way*) is a spoken drama about the establishment of a Jewish state, not in Palestine, but in a fictional setting modeled on Theodor Herzl's Uganda proposal, which had been debated in the Zionist congress of 1903 and rejected in the seventh Zionist Congress of 1905.

In his most comprehensive statement on the Jewish situation, "A Four-Point Program for Jewry" (1938), Schoenberg explained his decision to settle in the United

States as follows: "It was my desire to come to America and start here that movement which in my belief offers the only way out of our problems" (Ringer 1990). The movement of which Schoenberg conceived was that of a unified Jewish party committed to the rescue of the Jews of Europe as a first priority, and as a corollary, to the earliest possible creation of a Jewish state, not necessarily in Palestine. As these priorities diverged from the Zionist movement's primary objective of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, Schoenberg's political hopes were doomed to failure.

Schoenberg's most lasting contribution to American Jewish culture can be found in several late works that epitomize his mature understanding of Judaism and Jewish history. *Kol Nidre* (1938) takes the form of a twelve-minute cantata for narrator, mixed chorus, and orchestra. In this work, Schoenberg adhered neither to the traditional melody nor the traditional text of the Yom Kippur petition. Rather, he took from its musical motives, its language, and its historical associations a framework on which to construct his own creative response to the themes of transgression and return: "In the name of God: We solemnly proclaim that every transgressor, be it that he was unfaithful to our people because of fear, or misled by false doctrines of any kind, out of weakness or greed: We give him leave to be One with us in prayer tonight" (Schiller 2003). *A Survivor from Warsaw* (1947), a cantata for narrator, male chorus, and chamber orchestra, depicts the deportation of the Jews of Warsaw to the death camp of Treblinka in the summer of 1942, through the eyes of a "survivor" who witnesses their singing of the *Shema Yisroel*. The piece ends with the powerful setting of the *Shema*.

Three final choral works, which Schoenberg grouped together as his fiftieth opus, bring together his understanding of the Jewish experience and his individual spirituality. Opus 50a, *Dreimal Tausend Jahr* (*Thrice a Thousand Years*), acknowledges the establishment of Israel in a setting of a poem by a fellow emigré, the Rumanian-born and Viennese-educated writer and publisher Dagobert Rune. In 1951, Schoenberg was asked to serve as honorary president of the Israel Academy of Music, and his letter of acceptance, written less than three months before his death, leaves no doubt that Israel had indeed come to represent the fulfillment of his own "most ardent wish" (Ringer 1990). Opus 50b, written in response to an invitation by

Chelmo Vinaver, is a setting of the Hebrew text of Psalm 130. Opus 50c, which Schoenberg entitled *Moderne Psalm*, sets his own text and remains incomplete.

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# American Jews and the Social Sciences

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## American Jews and Psychology

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Jews have made substantial contributions to many areas of psychology since the field emerged as an academic discipline late in the nineteenth century. By 1900, Hugo Münsterberg and Joseph Jastrow had become prominent publicizers of the new science and served as presidents of the American Psychological Association (APA). After 1900, Jews trained in academic psychology increased in number and diversity. As the first sizable sociocultural minority group who sought careers in the field, Jewish psychologists faced increasing barriers to employment during the early decades of the twentieth century, with discriminatory practices in many academic disciplines reaching a high point in the 1920s and 1930s.

During this period, many Jewish psychologists who could not secure academic appointments sought additional training in medicine or worked in applied positions in clinical or industrial settings, social work agencies, or businesses. Among psychologists who continued to conduct research, several questioned the nativist claims of “race psychology” and made important contributions to the study of prejudice and other social problems. After World War II, the decline of antisemitism and increasing needs for faculty in colleges and universities resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of academic appointments for Jews in psychology, as in many other disciplines.

At the same time, the rapid postwar expansion of clinical psychology created new academic positions for Jewish psychologists who had begun their professional careers in applied settings.

By 1969, Jews were highly represented among faculty in clinical, experimental, and social psychology; today, many Jewish psychologists are known as eminent contributors to all areas of the discipline. The work of many Jewish psychologists has reflected their concerns with promoting intergroup tolerance. However, the professional activities of Jewish psychologists have varied along with several dimensions of diversity among Jews—their generation, their national origins, their orientations to Jewish ethnicity and to Judaism, and their degree of assimilation or resistance to assimilation.

## Before 1900

Two psychologists of Jewish background, Hugo Münsterberg (1863–1916) and Joseph Jastrow (1863–1944), held academic positions in the United States before 1900. A third, Boris Sidis (1867–1923), who immigrated to the United States from Russia in 1887 and earned a PhD in psychology at Harvard in 1897, sought further training in medicine and opened a psychiatric institute in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Münsterberg and Jastrow became well-known both as academic psychologists and as

popularizers of psychology. Münsterberg, born in Germany, came to the United States in 1892 at the invitation of William James to head the Psychological Laboratory at Harvard University. Münsterberg had converted to Christianity while still in Germany, most likely to enhance his job prospects. He identified as a German and rarely mentioned Jewish issues in his work. Münsterberg contributed to the development of applied psychology, writing on such topics as psychotherapy, industrial psychology, eyewitness testimony, and film.

Joseph Jastrow, son of a prominent Prussian rabbi, was raised in Philadelphia after immigrating to the United States in 1866. At Johns Hopkins University in 1886, he earned the first PhD from the first formally organized American doctoral program in psychology, under G. Stanley Hall. Jastrow joined the faculty at the University of Wisconsin in 1888 and founded a psychology department with a laboratory. In addition to his research on psychophysics (the study of functional relationships between physical stimuli and sensory processes) and hypnosis, Jastrow published popular books based on his newspaper column, "Keeping Mentally Fit." Münsterberg and Jastrow organized the psychology pavilion at the Chicago World's Fair (the Columbian Exposition) in 1893. Both men were charter members of the APA, founded in 1892, and both served as presidents of the association, Münsterberg in 1898 and Jastrow in 1900.

## 1900–World War II

Between 1900 and 1940, Jewish psychologists as a group grew both in number and in internal diversity, as recent immigrants from Eastern Europe joined American-born Jews in pursuing graduate study. As in many other academic disciplines, faculty positions were generally limited to a small number of Jews from "acceptable" backgrounds—those from established American families who were relatively assimilated or those who were strongly recommended by sponsors as "courteous" and as "not insisting on [their] Jewishness" (Feuer 1982). For example, Samuel Fernberger (1887–1956), a Son of the American Revolution born into a prosperous Philadelphia family, earned a PhD at the University of Pennsylvania in 1912. After teaching at Clark University for several years, he joined the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania in 1920. Fernberger edited several major psychological jour-

nals and served as secretary and as treasurer of the APA. His research focused on problems of psychophysics and did not address minority issues.

Even American-born Jewish psychologists from "acceptable" backgrounds faced discrimination, and many who did not find faculty positions shifted to other fields. After earning a PhD in psychology at Harvard in 1910, Edmund Jacobson (1888–1983), a native of Chicago, sought training in medicine and became a psychiatrist well known for developing the technique of progressive relaxation. Samuel Kohs (1890–1984), who earned his doctorate at Stanford in 1919, worked in Jewish social welfare agencies; his nonverbal Block Design Tests of intelligence are still widely used. Some Jewish psychologists who did secure academic appointments did not identify as Jewish or mentioned their Jewishness only in private. Some changed their names to enhance their job prospects, and some found positions only with help from a mentor. When Josiah Morse (1879–1946), formerly Josiah Moses, accepted a position at the University of South Carolina in 1911, university president Samuel Mitchell, his former professor, had to quash a faculty protest. Morse changed his name in 1907, during a period of unemployment that inspired him to publish apparently the first article on prejudice by an American psychologist, some twenty years before the topic became popular in the psychological literature. Jewish immigrants generally had more difficulty finding academic positions than Jews born in the United States; many shifted to other fields, such as journalism or secondary education, or sought applied positions in industry or business.

Heightened xenophobia and antisemitism, coupled with a shortage of academic positions around World War I, exacerbated the difficulties of Jewish psychologists. Several of those who did not find faculty appointments managed to contribute to the field despite their marginal positions. For example, Gustave Feingold (1883–1948), who worked in a public high school, published research comparing intelligence test scores of children of immigrants and American-born parents to contest the nativist claims of immigration restrictionists. A. A. Roback (1890–1965) wrote popular and scholarly works on character and personality and published the first history of modern American psychology. Barriers to employment reached a peak in the 1920s and 1930s. As in many other academic disciplines, letters of recommendation routinely described Jew-

ish candidates either as showing “objectionable” characteristics identified with Jews or as exceptions to these stereotypes (Winston 1996). Some Jewish psychologists found positions at new or less prestigious institutions or at historically black colleges; others held a series of temporary positions as instructors or researchers until the demand for faculty increased in the mid- to late-1940s.

Like Feingold, many researchers from Jewish and other ethnic minority backgrounds contributed to a thematic shift between 1920 and 1940 from “race psychology” to “studies in prejudice” (Samelson 1978). These researchers challenged claims of inherited racial and ethnic differences in intelligence and conducted studies on prejudice as a social problem. Jewish psychologists who contributed to the shift included Morris Viteles (1898–1996), who also became a pioneer in industrial psychology; Otto Klineberg (1899–1992), a former student of anthropologist Franz Boas (1858–1942); Daniel Katz (1903–1998); and Eugene Horowitz (1912–2002) and Ruth Horowitz (1910–1998), who became Eugene and Ruth Hartley during World War II. Several of these researchers focused primarily on the origins and effects of prejudice toward African Americans. Others, like Max Meenes (1901–1974) at Howard University, also studied antisemitism, as did Kurt Lewin (1890–1947) and Else Frenkel-Brunswik (1908–1958), who emigrated to the United States from Europe in the 1930s.

Of the large group of Jewish emigré psychologists who arrived in the United States before World War II, several of those who found faculty appointments played important roles in shaping American psychology. For example, Max Wertheimer (1880–1943) and Kurt Koffka (1886–1941) brought the influence of Gestalt psychology to the study of topics as diverse as perception, learning, development, memory, emotion, and personality. Heinz Werner (1890–1964) made important contributions to developmental psychology. Kurt Lewin’s pioneering efforts in group dynamics and action research have had an enduring impact on social psychology.

During the 1920s and 1930s, many Jewish psychologists found employment in clinical settings where they developed training techniques, designed tests, and conducted experimental research in psychopathology (Winston 1998). David Wechsler (1896–1981), who began his career in the applied areas of guidance and testing in the early 1920s, became well known as the developer of the Wechsler Intelligence Scales; he joined the faculty of the New York

University College of Medicine in 1942. Like many other Jews who made substantial contributions to clinical psychology, David Shakow (1901–1981) and Saul Rosenzweig (1907–2004) conducted research in hospital settings in the 1930s before moving into faculty positions during the postwar expansion of clinical psychology.

## The Postwar Period

After World War II, the reduction of antisemitism in academia, the demand for faculty to educate the returning soldiers, and the rapid expansion of clinical psychology resulted in an increase in faculty positions for Jewish psychologists, many of whom became prominent contributors in clinical, experimental, social, and other areas of the field. Many Jewish psychologists worked to combat antisemitism and racial prejudice and to promote civil rights. Responses to the Holocaust included the classic study of the authoritarian personality (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford 1950) and research by Stanley Milgram (1933–1984) on obedience to authority. In the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*, Isidor Chein (1912–1981) coauthored the *amicus curiae* statement on the psychological effects of segregation; signatories included Jerome Bruner (b. 1915), Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel Katz, Otto Klineberg, and David Krech (1909–1977; formerly Isadore Krechevsky).

By 1969, Jews were highly represented among psychology faculty in universities and colleges in the United States (Steinberg 1974), especially in clinical, experimental, and social psychology. During the postwar period, many Jewish psychologists have been among the most eminent contributors not only to these areas, but to all areas of the discipline. Examples include Abraham Maslow (humanistic psychology); Jerome Bruner, Herbert Simon, and Elizabeth Loftus (cognitive psychology); Erik Erikson and Lawrence Kohlberg (developmental psychology); and Michael Posner (neuropsychology). Throughout their history, Jewish psychologists in the United States have represented a diversity of generations, national origins, orientations to Jewish ethnicity and to Judaism, and degrees of assimilation or resistance to assimilation. Their professional activities, research interests, and theoretical preferences have reflected this diversity.

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## Jews in the Development of American Psychoanalysis: The First Fifty Years

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Though psychoanalysis was born in Vienna in the final years of the nineteenth century, during the first decades of the next century its center of gravity shifted to the United States. In the 1930s events in Europe accelerated the spread of Freud's ideas in America and led to the establishment of New York as the new center of the psychoanalytic movement. The culture of Europe at the turn of the century was also decisive in fostering and consolidating the Jewish identity of the psychoanalytic movement. The antisemitic climate in Central Europe discouraged the absorption of psychoanalysis into the mainstream of intellectual and social life, and had the effect of concentrating, to Freud's dismay, the new field's ethnic associations.

The forced emigration of numerous Jewish analysts from Europe in the first half of the twentieth century brought many to the United States, which ensured that the development of psychoanalysis here would continue to be

influenced by Jewish thinkers. Furthermore, some of the forces that had made psychoanalysis in Europe attractive to Jews were also found in the United States. Few university appointments were open to Jews; so a profession that shared much of the social and financial prestige of medicine but could be practiced independently of unwelcoming institutions, had great appeal. Given all of these circumstances, it is not surprising that most of the great contributors to the establishment of psychoanalysis in America (1908–1958) were Jews, and that the Jewish influence on psychoanalysis remains very strong even today.

Psychoanalysis came to America out of a Jewish milieu. Founded by Freud, a Viennese Jew, it was subsequently nurtured and developed by Freud with his mostly Jewish students and followers and their mostly Jewish patients. The Jewish pedigree of psychoanalysis was a sensitive issue for Freud, who feared that the new field would never be given its due if it were seen only as a "Jewish" science. "Rest assured," he wrote to his early disciple Karl Abraham, also a Viennese Jew, "if my name was Uberhuber, in spite of everything my innovations would have met with far less resistance" (Abraham and Freud 1965). He made an effort to enlist Christian followers such as Oskar Pfister, a Protestant minister, and C. G. Jung, both of whom were early converts to psychoanalysis. Nonetheless, Andrew Heinze, an American historian and Judaic scholar, places Freud in the tradition of rabbinic moralists like Israel Salanter and Schneur Zalman, in the way that they looked to the family for universal laws of psychological conduct and morality. So the Jewishness of psychoanalysis—and of psychoanalysts—was from the beginning a complicated issue.

Abraham Arden Brill was the first practicing American psychoanalyst. Born in 1875 in Kanczuga, a small village in Eastern Galicia not far from the birthplace of Freud's father, he came to the United States alone at fourteen with two dollars in his pocket, determined to make a place for himself in society. Brill shared Freud's wish to keep psychoanalysis from being seen as Jewish, but for different reasons. He intentionally distanced himself from his provincial Orthodox roots in his efforts to integrate himself fully into what he saw as American culture. He achieved the foothold he needed by putting himself through medical school at Columbia University and training as a psychiatrist at New York's Central Islip State Hospital. Brill learned about psychoanalysis at Eugen Bleuler

and C. G. Jung's Burgholzli Clinic in Zurich, and visited Freud in Vienna. As soon as he returned to the United States in 1908, after he had traveled to Vienna and had a brief analysis with Freud, he established a psychoanalytic practice.

Brill was Freud's first English translator, and the founder in 1911 of the first American psychoanalytic society, the New York Psychoanalytic Society. "Psychoanalysis was unknown in this country until I introduced it in 1908," he wrote in 1938. "[Psychoanalytic] terminology, some of which I was the first to coin into English, can now be found in all standard English dictionaries. Words like *abreaction*, *transference*, *repression*, *displacement* and *unconscious*, which I introduced as Freudian concepts, have been adopted and used to give new meaning, new values to our knowledge of normal and abnormal behavior" (Brill 1938).

Brill strove throughout his life to bind psychoanalysis with psychiatry and establish it as a medical specialty. As a financially and socially ambitious Jew in America, he wanted to consolidate his own access to medical prestige; he also believed that the new field would be more likely to survive as a medical specialty. Therefore he stubbornly opposed Freud's acceptance of lay analysis, the practice of psychoanalysis by nonphysicians, and he succeeded in building his own preference for medical exclusivity into the young American psychoanalytic institutions, where it was to leave a bitter and haunting legacy.

However Brill tried to assimilate himself into American gentile society, his Jewish identity permeated his work. He saw a parallel between Judaism, which preached control of the emotions, and psychoanalysis, in which superego and ego (roughly conscience and reason) were set up in opposition to the biological passions: Brill in a public lecture in 1937 said, "The old rabbis preached, 'He who conquers his primitive feelings is as strong as one who can conquer a city'" (Heinze 2004). Politically, Brill would likely have been less forceful in his campaign to restrict the practice of psychoanalysis to physicians if he had been more confident of his own place in society. His New World struggle with his Old World Jewishness left an indelible mark on American psychoanalysis.

Freud recognized Brill's contribution to psychoanalysis in America. He wrote in the preface of the 1932 edition of the *Interpretation of Dreams*: "If psychoanalysis now plays a role in American intellectual life, or if it does so in

the future a large part of this result will have to be attributed to this and other activities of Dr. Brill's." Ever fearful, however, lest psychoanalysis be marginalized as a "Jewish science," Freud supported James Jackson Putnam, a Boston gentile, as first president of the American Psychoanalytic Association over Brill, and Horace Frink, another non-Jew, as president of the New York Psychoanalytic Society, which Brill himself had founded.

But Freud's hope that gentiles would lead American psychoanalysis was never realized. Putnam founded the Boston Psychoanalytic Society, the second American society and a very influential one, in 1914, but his cofounder, Isidor Coriat (1875–1943), was a Sephardic Jew, a member of the American Jewish Historical Society, and married to a rabbi's daughter. The Boston society became home to many refugee analysts after the war, notably two influential couples (Helena and Felix Deutsch, and Edward and Grete Bibring) and Hans Sachs, the first training analyst at the Berlin Institute and the editor of *Imago*.

Meanwhile, Brill's New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute (NYPI) maintained its preeminence and its Jewish leadership. In 1937–1938 Bertram Lewin, born in Texas but trained in Berlin, was president. During his term Walter Langer, a gentile analyst training in Vienna, came back to New York seeking help in getting the remaining Jewish psychoanalysts out of Europe. Lewin refused this help on the grounds that there were already too many psychoanalysts in the country, and certainly too many in New York (Langer and Gifford 1978).

In 1938, however, Lawrence Kubie succeeded Lewin as president. Kubie was a German Jew, and, with another psychoanalyst from a wealthy German Jewish New York family, Bettina Warburg, he organized the Rescue Committee of the NYPI, which provided passports, money, and jobs for almost all of the Jewish psychoanalysts in Europe who were at risk.

On September 23, 1939—Yom Kippur—Freud died, after having asked his doctor, Max Shur, to administer the lethal dose of morphine that would release him from his losing battle with cancer. After his death, centrifugal tendencies in the analytic movement became more apparent. The organizational harmony, such as it was, of the 1930s was followed by the schisms of the forties, also initiated mostly by Jewish analysts. Sandor Rado, a Hungarian Jew who had been director of training at the Berlin Institute, came to New York to take the same position at the New

York Psychoanalytic. In 1942 Rado, who shared with Brill the wish for a close connection with the medical establishment, left the NYPI to start a new institute affiliated with the medical school of Columbia University. There he promoted a modification of classical Freudian theory and practice that he called Adaptational Psychoanalysis. The second schism began almost at the same time, when Karen Horney, whose book *The Neurotic Personality of Our Time* had views on sexuality and women that departed from Freud, lost her faculty position at the NYPI. When she resigned in protest against no longer being permitted to teach beginning candidates, but only advanced students, Erich Fromm and William Silverberg (Jews), and Clara Thompson (a gentile) went with her, and together they founded the Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis. This group also subsequently split over the question of lay analysis; Fromm and Thompson started the William Alanson White Institute, which trained non-physicians, and William Silverberg founded the Institute of the Flower Fifth Avenue Hospital, associated with New York Medical College, which trained only physicians.

Theodore Reik came to study at the New York Psychoanalytic in 1938. He was a student of Freud's, a nonphysician, and in fact had been the subject of Freud's paper "The Problem of Lay Analysis," with which nonmedical psychoanalysts had unsuccessfully argued for their legitimacy against Brill. But Brill had prevailed in the United States, and Reik left the NYPI because his lack of a medical degree meant that he could never be a training analyst there. He founded the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis in 1948, a prestigious institute for the training of lay analysts. Reik clashed with Brill also on account of his unapologetic pride in his Jewish heritage and its spiritual and ethical values; he felt that Ernest Jones, Freud's biographer, did not adequately understand the place of Freud's Jewishness in his personality and his work.

New York in the late forties became home to a group of prominent Jewish women, refugee analysts. Edith Jacobson made an outstanding contribution to what has come to be known as Object Relations theory in her monograph *The Self and the Object World*. She was imprisoned in Berlin by the Nazis for two and a half years for shielding a patient who was a Jewish Communist. Annie Reich and Elizabeth Gero Heyman convinced the Gestapo to release Jacobson, who had diabetes, because she was ill. This group also included the noted child analyst Berta Bornstein; Mar-

garet Mahler, who formulated a seminal theory of separation and individuation in early childhood; and Annie Reich, who was an early student of narcissism and related phenomena.

Jews figured prominently in West Coast psychoanalysis also. Ernst Simmel organized the first psychoanalytic study group in Los Angeles in 1934. In Europe he and Otto Fenichel had belonged to the group of Jewish analysts who came to be known as the Freudian Left (Jacoby 1983). Other members of the group, which included Jacobson, eventually emigrated to New York. But Simmel went to California. Fenichel joined him there later, arriving in 1938 in Los Angeles, where he published his great 1945 work, *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis*.

In 1944 Ernst Simmel organized a conference on anti-semitism in San Francisco, in which Otto Fenichel participated. The proceedings were published as *Anti-Semitism: A Social Disease* (1946) and offered a psychoanalytic critique of prejudice. Fenichel proposed that the Jew occupies a special place in the mind of the antisemite; the Jew is the authority that oppresses him and the "primal instincts that he harbors within himself." The conference was an attempt to use psychoanalysis to account for the malignancy of anti-semitism, a subject that continues to concern psychoanalysts. In 1951, Rudolph Loewenstein published *Christians and Jews: A Psychoanalytic Study* on the subject.

Elsewhere in the country, other Jewish analysts were directing the course of events. The key figure in San Francisco was Siegfried Bernfeld. Bernfeld was not a physician. He was an outspoken advocate for lay analysis and for less rigid and constricting techniques of psychoanalytic training. In Chicago, Bruno Bettelheim established the Orthogenic School at the University of Chicago, a therapeutic school based on psychoanalytic principles. He wrote about his concentration camp experiences and published several other psychoanalytically related volumes of broad popular and professional appeal.

Roy Grinker Sr. from Chicago was one of Freud's last analysts. Before the war Grinker psychoanalyzed Rabbi Joshua Liebman, who subsequently wrote *Peace of Mind* (1946), a great work that popularized Freudian depth psychology. Two Jewish women also did a great deal to popularize psychoanalysis after World War II; one was Lucy Freeman with her book *Fight against Fears* (1951), and the other was Joanne Greenberg, author of *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (1964).

By the end of World War II, the center of psychoanalysis had shifted from Vienna to New York and Boston. This was the heyday of psychoanalysis in the United States, partly thanks to a vogue for the psychoanalytic treatment of “shell shock,” which brought analysis into the public eye. Grinker contributed to this awareness, having done notable work treating soldiers who returned emotionally ill from combat.

A new generation of American-born Jewish analysts came to prominence during this Golden Age. In New York, this included Charles Brenner, who came from Boston; Martin Wang, who emigrated from Germany via Italy; and native New Yorkers Jacob Arlow and David Beres. These four founded an influential postgraduate study group and, in combination and as individuals, made important contributions to the classical psychoanalytic literature. One of these, Brenner’s *Elementary Textbook of Psychoanalysis*, is perhaps the most widely read introduction to psychoanalysis ever published.

In Los Angeles this later generation included Ralph Greenson, the model for Leo Rosten’s novel *Captain Newman, M.D.*, and the movie that was made from it with Gregory Peck. Greenson wrote extensively about psychoanalytic technique. Another was Leo Rangell, who wrote extensively on psychoanalytic theory, and who has the distinction of having been president of both the American and International Psychoanalytic Associations. Rangell, in his nineties, remains an important voice in American psychoanalysis.

Although no data are available about the actual numbers of Jewish versus gentile psychoanalysts, during its developing years in this country the Jewish influence has been enormous. How things will develop remains to be seen as the lay analysis issue is resolved and as sociopolitical questions about psychoanalytic theory come into dispute. Why were American Jews so interested in becoming psychoanalysts? During the first part of the twentieth century there were two American industries with a preponderance of Jews: movies and psychoanalysis (Gabler 1990). These were new enterprises that offered opportunities for advancement, recognition, and financial success to the cohort of first- and second-generation American Jews. Psychoanalysis probably has an appeal also based on its emphasis on interpretation and exegesis that were central to Jewish tradition and scholarship. But in the final analysis the main determinant might have been the identifica-

tion of these Americans with the charismatic Jew and first psychoanalyst—Sigmund Freud.

Arnold Richards

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## Jewish Emigrés of the Frankfurt School

Critical theory may have been an outgrowth of German philosophy, but it was actually born in the United States. The Institute for Social Research was founded in 1923 in Frankfurt, and under its first director, Carl Grünberg, many of its early members—Henryk Grossman, Fritz Sternberg, Felix Weill, and others—contributed to the study of political economy, imperialism, and the history of the labor movement. Max Horkheimer, who became the new director in 1930, changed this orientation. Three years later, however, he was forced to flee Nazi Germany for Switzerland and, in 1934, he moved the Institute to Columbia University. It was therefore in the United States that Horkheimer’s inner circle—all of whom were Jewish or, in the case of Theodor W. Adorno, part Jewish—produced the major works of “critical theory” usually associated with the “Frankfurt School.” Among the most important were Leo Lowenthal, who joined the Institute in 1926; Adorno, who began to participate in 1928, but only became an official member ten years later; Erich Fromm, who started his

nine-year collaboration in 1930; Herbert Marcuse, who joined in 1933; and Walter Benjamin, who never officially became a member.

Walter Benjamin had the most remarkable career of any thinker associated with the Institute. He was completely unknown in the United States until the preeminent political theorist Hannah Arendt edited a collection of his essays, *Illuminations* (1969). He thereafter became celebrated as an iconoclastic thinker involved with investigating and meshing traditions as diverse as Jewish messianism, the Baroque, Modernism, and Marxism. With the new popularity of the radically subjective postmodern movement during the 1980s, however, his fame reached extraordinary proportions: a library of secondary works has appeared and almost every volume of Benjamin's *Selected Writings* has become an academic best-seller. His critique of progress and optimistic illusions, his attempt to reconstruct theory through the assimilation of seemingly mutually exclusive traditions, his skepticism concerning traditional foundations and universal claims, and his preoccupation with subjectivity produced a transformation of the entire critical project. Benjamin's work spoke directly to many on the Left who, following the collapse of the social and cultural movements associated with the 1960s, felt they were living in an age of "ruins." Above all, however, his inability to decide whether to emigrate to Israel or the United States and his subsequent tragic death in 1940, while attempting to flee the Nazi invasion of France, put a particularly dramatic stamp on the experience of exile.

Exile marked the work of the Institute. Horkheimer, in fact, only coined the term *critical theory* in 1937, after having fled to the United States. His seminal essay on the subject, "Traditional and Critical Theory," treated it as an approach qualitatively different from "vulgar" materialism—i.e., positivism or behaviorism—and metaphysical idealism. Critical theory should be equated with neither a system nor a fixed set of proscriptions. It should instead be understood as a method of liberation, a cluster of themes or concerns, that would express an explicit interest in the abolition of social injustice and the psychological, cultural, and political reasons why the proletarian revolution failed following the events of 1917 in Russia. With the publication of "Authority and the Family" (1934), for example, Horkheimer sought to analyze how a patriarchal familial structure inhibited the development of revolutionary con-

sciousness among workers. "The Jews and Europe" (1938) insisted that confronting bigotry called for confronting economic exploitation, or, as Horkheimer put it, "he who wishes to speak of anti-Semitism must also speak of capitalism." Works like these set the stage for a new mode of "dialectical" thinking that went beyond the economic interests of classes and elites as well as the institutional dynamics of the state.

Reactionary sexual mores, mass culture, the division of labor, and the need to grasp the universal through the particular would prove essential themes for the Institute. Deeper issues mired in the anthropology of human existence became issues for critical theory. Indeed, the need for a response to them turned critical theory into an ongoing threat to the stultifying dogma and collectivism of "actually existing socialism." Critical theory leveled an attack on all ideological and institutional forms of oppression. Its general objective was to foster critical reflection, a capacity for fantasy, and new forms of political action in an increasingly bureaucratized world.

Most members of the Institute remained suspicious of the different ways in which supposedly neutral formulations of science veiled repressive social interests. That is why they employed a methodological approach indebted to both the critique of ideology (*Ideologiekritik*) that emerged with German idealism and the sociology of knowledge that derived from Karl Marx. Ideals of freedom and liberation provided the basis for their critique of the existing order. In the United States, however, the character of this engagement changed dramatically from that of the early days. The most compelling reasons were connected with the failure of the proletarian revolution and the increasingly stark reality of totalitarianism.

Major scholars associated with the Institute—albeit often at the fringes—added much to an understanding of the ideological forces behind the new totalitarian phenomenon and its structure. Its emergence in Germany was analyzed in works as diverse as the enormously popular study of the psychological appeal underlying totalitarianism, *Escape from Freedom* (1941) by Erich Fromm, and the classic examination of German film in the Weimar Republic by Siegfried Kracauer—who was close to Adorno and Benjamin—*From Caligari to Hitler* (1947). In a more social scientific vein, Otto Kirchheimer contributed *Political Justice* (1961), and Franz Neumann *Behemoth* (1942), the first significant work that analyzed the structure of the Nazi

state. Horkheimer edited a five-volume work, *Studies in Prejudice* (1949), for the American Jewish Committee, while Adorno led a team of researchers in producing the classic *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950). In the context of the United States, both looking backward to the 1930s and forward to McCarthyism, it is also useful to consider *Prophets of Deceit: A Study of the Techniques of the American Agitator* (1948) by Leo Lowenthal and Norbert Guterman, as well as Lowenthal's work on American antisemitism, *Images of Prejudice* (1945).

Following the Hitler–Stalin pact, which unleashed World War II, the proletarian revolution ceased to serve as the ultimate aim of the critical enterprise. As a consequence, the working class lost its standing as the revolutionary subject of history, and many no longer saw its interests as sufficient for generating a critique of the status quo. A new phase in the development of critical theory began with the completion of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), including a sensational last chapter “Elements of Anti-Semitism,” in 1947. Horkheimer and Adorno, its authors, called into question the old belief in progress, science, and the benefits of modernity. They insisted that, by privileging mathematical reason, the Enlightenment assaulted not only reactionary forms of religious dogma, but also, whether intentionally or unintentionally, the more progressive normative ways of thinking. Scientific rationality divorced from ethical concerns was indeed seen as culminating in the number tattooed on the arm of the concentration camp inmate.

*Dialectic of Enlightenment* offers less the vision of a better world emerging from the Enlightenment than one increasingly defined by the “commodity form” and bureaucratic rationality, in which the individual is stripped of conscience and spontaneity. Stalinism on the left, Nazism on the right, and an increasingly bureaucratic and robotic mass society emerging in the United States: mass society, the horror of war, and—perhaps above all—the concentration camp universe inspired this book. The new reality demanded a significant revision in the more traditional understandings of critical and radical theory.

Socialism had proved a nightmare, Nazism was even worse, and liberalism had seemingly become anachronistic. For Horkheimer and Adorno, the possibility of revolutionary transformation faded in the face of an apparently seamless bureaucratic order buttressed by a culture industry intent on eliminating subjectivity and any genuinely

critical opposition to the status quo. This development is what required a rethinking of the usually positive view regarding the Enlightenment. It was therefore the bohemian intellectual, who challenged society in its entirety, rather than the political revolutionary who held out whatever emancipatory hope still existed. Thus, for the proponents of critical theory, it had become necessary to supplement the dialectical framework of Hegel and Marx with the more individualist tenets of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in combating the collectivist strains in advanced industrial society.

To put it another way, it was now incumbent on a genuinely critical theory to recognize the ways in which civilization in general, and modernity in particular, were flawed from the beginning. The critical theory of society would require a more directly anthropological form of inquiry. It had become necessary to highlight not the needs of some class-bound and collectivist revolutionary subject, but the ways in which individual subjectivity might resist the conformity generated by an increasingly administered and culturally barbaric universe. Political resistance made way for a philosophico-aesthetic assertion of subjectivity in the two great works by Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (1966) and *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), and the philosophico-religious concerns of Max Horkheimer in his *Longing for the Totally Other* (1970).

Theodor Adorno was probably the most talented proponent of this new turn in critical theory. His interests extended from musicology and literary analysis to sociology, metapsychology, and philosophy. The only real disciple of Benjamin, the inventor of “negative dialectics,” Adorno's works evidence a rare standard of intellectual brilliance. They include extraordinary studies on modern music, a masterpiece that transformed aesthetic theory, and *Minima Moralia: Reflections of a Damaged Life* (1947).

Adorno's work exemplifies the abstruse style employed by so many critical theorists. The heritage of dialectical philosophy surely had an impact; the complex use of complex concepts often demanded a complex style. Especially in the ideologically charged context of the war and its aftermath, however, members of the Institute also self-consciously employed an Aesopian form of writing. As exiles living in the United States, it only made sense for them to hide their indebtedness to Marx by substituting the highly abstract language of Hegel. But there is also a theoretical justification for their abstruse style. The famous analysis of

the culture industry developed in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, written while its authors were living in Los Angeles, implied that popularity would necessarily neutralize whatever critical or emancipatory messages a work might retain. Nevertheless, there was nothing ambivalent about the willingness of Erich Fromm—or Herbert Marcuse—to engage the public in a radical fashion.

Fromm was surely the most lucid stylist to emerge from the Institute. He was also the most popular and arguably the most loyal to its original purpose insofar as he always sought to link theory with the practical demands of social change and individual transformation. Fromm grew up Orthodox, and he studied with leading rabbis: his dissertation dealt with the Jewish Diaspora and another of his early works with the Sabbath. The psychoanalytic institute he founded in Berlin with his first wife, Frieda Reichmann, soon became known as the *Torah-peutikum*. His interest in the psychological appeal and ethical impulse provided by religion, in any event, never fully disappeared.

Erich Fromm was initially one of the most influential members of the Institute and a close friend of Horkheimer. His concern was with how psychological attitudes mediated the relation between the individual and society. Even during the 1920s, he was intent on linking Freud with Marx. For this reason, when Adorno first insisted on developing an anthropological critique of civilization from the standpoint of Freud's instinct theory, he clashed with Fromm. The dazzling newcomer won the battle. Fromm divorced himself from the Institute by 1940, and he proceeded to write a number of best-sellers, including *Escape from Freedom*. Quickly enough, his former colleagues condemned him for the "superficial" quality of his writings, even while his influence soared among left-wing intellectuals and a broader public from the 1950s to the 1970s.

Herbert Marcuse, while in the United States, not only worked with the Office of Strategic Services as an expert on West European politics, but also wrote papers on totalitarianism and in 1958 published a highly respected study entitled *Soviet Marxism*. In spite of his penchant for utopian thought, so prominent in *Eros and Civilization* (1955), Marcuse also remained faithful to the original practical impulse of critical theory. His most influential work, *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), actually anticipated the seminal role of the new social movements and a radical cultural politics in responding to the bureaucracy, commodification, and conformism of advanced industrial so-

ciety. Pessimism concerning the future of a society in which all radical alternatives were being absorbed, and in which all ideological contradictions were being flattened out, combined with a utopian vision built on the radical humanism of the young Marx, on the play principle of Schiller, and on the metapsychology of Freud. This tension, indeed, permeated all of Marcuse's writings.

The popularity of Fromm and Marcuse in the United States contrasted strikingly with a virtually total ignorance of the work produced by the rest of the Frankfurt School. The legend that critical theory inspired the movement of the 1960s is, certainly in America, misleading; its major works were translated only in the 1970s. During that decade, journals like *Telos* and *New German Critique* helped in publicizing its ideas and the works of its most important representatives. The emphasis on alienation, the domination of nature, the regressive components of progress, the mutability of human nature, and the stultifying effects of the culture industry and advanced industrial society made the enterprise relevant for young intellectuals who had come of age through "the movement" of the 1960s.

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, however, were appalled by what they had helped inspire. Following their return to Germany, the former became rector and the latter, somewhat later, a dean at the University of Frankfurt. Neither showed much of an inclination for Zionism, and Horkheimer in particular was critical of the Eichmann trial and various policies undertaken by Israel. Still, it is ironic that these new stalwarts of the establishment should have anticipated the movement's concern with a "cultural revolution" and the transformation of everyday life demanded by so many of their students. These themes were as real for many activists of the 1960s, both in Europe and the United States, as the quest for racial justice and the anti-imperialist opposition to the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, they lost their salience in the general malaise that followed the collapse of the movement and the emergence of a neoconservative assault on what has been called the adversary culture.

A new set of academic radicals embraced instead the "deconstructive" and radically subjectivist elements in the thinking of Adorno and Benjamin: their emphasis on the fragmentary character of reality, the illusion of progress, the substitution of experimental culture for political resistance. All this fit the time in which radicalism

retreated from the streets into the university. Critical theory of this new deconstructive, or poststructuralist, sort invaded the most prestigious journals and disciplines ranging from anthropology and film to religion, linguistics, and political science. Elements of it have, indeed, become features of the very society that the Frankfurt School ostensibly wished to challenge.

But that time, too, is passing. If it is to remain relevant, especially in the United States, critical theory must begin taming its metaphysical excesses, mitigating its subjectivism, and affirming its repressed political character. These concerns inform much of the work undertaken by Jürgen Habermas, the brilliant student of Horkheimer and Adorno, who came to maturity in the aftermath of World War II. Of particular interest, in this vein, is his *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (1985). Habermas was never in exile: he experienced the impact of totalitarianism directly in his youth, and it left him with a profound respect for the liberal political legacy, the “public sphere,” and the repressed possibilities of “communicative action.” Habermas has also gained a large academic following in the United States. Nevertheless, his work provides an important beginning for resurrecting the critical undertaking.

Economic globalization and political reaction, in any event, are creating a new set of issues for a new generation of critical theorists. It is becoming increasingly necessary for a new generation of thinkers to reconstruct the practical impulse of the critical project, its repressed political purpose, and its speculative legacy for the present. Critical theory is “Jewish” insofar as it is an expression of the modern diaspora and part of that secular Jewish tradition—concerned with social justice, toleration, and the abolition of suffering—that extends over Mendelssohn and Heine to Marx, Kafka, and Einstein. Such a tradition cannot remain immune from criticism. Remaining honest to the tradition of critical theory thus calls for confronting it from the critical standpoint. In the need to support this claim, whatever the other differences between them, all of its major representatives would assuredly—today—find themselves in agreement.

*Stephen Eric Bronner*

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## American Jews in Economics

Many of the most prominent American economists, past and present, are Jewish. Indeed, more than half of all American Nobel Prize winners in economics have been Jewish (that is, at least one parent was Jewish). The Nobel Prize in economics was initiated in 1969, and the first American recipient was Paul Samuelson, in 1970. Various aspects of the profession attracted Jews. Some were motivated by the wish to improve the economy, and therefore social well-being, by focusing on economic policy. Some found the rigor of economic theory intellectually appealing. Those with mathematical skills derived additional intellectual satisfaction from studying economics. But no particular theory or school of economics is more associated with Jewish economists than with others. Their interests, their views on theory and on the application of theory to policies, have all been diverse.

There is no specific element of Jewish culture or religion that drew so many Jews to economics. Indeed, many prominent economists are non-Jews. The foremost economist of the twentieth century was the Englishman John Maynard Keynes, who was not Jewish. Among American economists, however, many would agree that Paul Samuelson has been the outstanding member of their profession in the past century. He and Milton Friedman are the two most influential American Jewish economists of recent decades.

**Paul A. Samuelson (b. 1915)**

Paul Samuelson received his BA at the University of Chicago in 1935 and his PhD at Harvard in 1941, after being elected to the distinguished Society of Fellows there (1937–1940). Since 1940 he has been a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). It is his presence there that has attracted so many notable scholars to MIT's department of economics.

Samuelson's enormous influence on economic thinking and economic policy is attributable to his many papers and books written for fellow economists; to his role as an economic adviser and consultant; and to the impact of his textbook, *Economics*, on millions of students. First published in 1948, and translated into many languages, it is now co-authored with Professor William Nordhaus of Yale University and is in its eighteenth edition.

In presenting the Nobel Prize, Assar Lindbeck, the Swedish economist, stated, "more than any other contemporary economist, [Samuelson] has contributed to raising the general analytical and methodological level in economic science" (Bank of Sweden n.d.).

His work has influenced thinking in numerous fields of economics. Unlike many other economists, Samuelson has not specialized. He has written on consumer behavior, international trade, price theory, growth theory and various other aspects of macroeconomics, financial analysis, and the history of economic thought. As a macroeconomist, he can be characterized as a neo-Keynesian. That his early book *Foundations of Economic Analysis* (1947), though highly mathematical, was reissued as a paperback in 1965 testifies to the value of his professional work.

Samuelson's most prestigious advisory role was to John F. Kennedy, as U.S. senator, presidential candidate, and president-elect, for whom he wrote a report on the state of the American economy. He was also a consultant to the U.S. Treasury Department, the Bureau of the Budget, and the Council of Economic Advisers. Lawrence Summers, Harvard president until 2006 and former secretary of the treasury, is his nephew, and Kenneth Arrow, a Nobel Laureate in economics, is his sister-in-law's brother.

**Milton Friedman (1912–2006)**

Milton Friedman was awarded a scholarship to Rutgers University, where he earned his BA in 1932. There he was introduced to economics by Arthur Burns. Friedman did

graduate work at the University of Chicago and Columbia University, where he received his PhD in 1946, after spending two years at the Treasury Department in Washington. He joined the economics faculty at the University of Chicago in 1946 and also became associated with the National Bureau of Economic Research, where Burns was Director of Research.

Like Samuelson, Milton Friedman has had a significant impact on both economic theory and policy. He was the leading monetarist in the United States, focusing on monetary policy and the quantity of money as an influence on economic activity and a tool for maintaining economic growth and stability. In 1959, he published *A Program for Monetary Stability*, calling for constant growth of the money supply and rejecting countercyclical monetary policy. He has also argued that the Federal Reserve's countercyclical policies have often caused instability, and that "the Fed" should be subject to a rule regarding money supply growth. In general, Friedman opposed the popular Keynesian view that favored discretionary monetary and fiscal policy. Among his many books is the widely circulated *A Monetary History of the United States* (1963), written with Anna J. Schwartz.

The Monetarist school is, however, less influential in the early twenty-first century than it was twenty to thirty years earlier. The Federal Reserve no longer targets the money supply in conducting its monetary policy, although the European Central Bank does.

Friedman was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1976 "for his achievements in the fields of consumption analysis, monetary history and theory, and for his demonstration of the complexity of stabilization policy" (Bank of Sweden n.d.).

**Other Economists of Recent Decades*****Arthur F. Burns (1904–1987)***

Arthur Burns was born in Austria and emigrated to the United States in 1914. He received his PhD at Columbia University in 1944, after teaching at Rutgers University from 1927 to 1944. Then he was a professor at Columbia for twenty years. He was chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers from 1953 to 1956. Upon his return to Columbia, he was appointed president of the National Bureau of Economic Research, a position he held for ten years.

In 1969, Burns became economic counselor to newly elected President Richard M. Nixon, and in 1970, when William McChesney Martin's term as chairman of the Federal Reserve Board ended, Nixon appointed Burns to succeed him. Burns held that position until 1978.

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan appointed him ambassador to Germany, a position he held for three years. He then joined the American Enterprise Institute. Burns was better known for the prominent offices he held, both private and public, than for his academic work. He did, however, publish several books. The best known is *Measuring Business Cycles* (1946), co-authored with Wesley Clair Mitchell.

### **Wassily Leontief (1906–1999)**

Wassily Leontief was born in St. Petersburg, the son of a professor of economics. He studied at the University of Leningrad and, after receiving a degree in learned economics (1925), went to the University of Berlin, where he earned his PhD. After three years at the Institute for World Economics at the University of Kiel and a year in China as advisor to the Ministry of Railroads, he moved to New York City and joined the National Bureau of Economic Research in 1931. Leontief became an instructor in the economics department at Harvard University in 1932, assistant professor in 1933, and finally, professor in 1946. From 1953 to 1975, he held the Henry Lee Chair of Political Economy. Although Leontief was very much an empirical economist, he was also an esteemed professor of economic theory. He spent his final years at New York University.

Leontief is best known for initiating and developing input–output analysis, which he began while at the Kiel Institute, if not earlier. It is concerned with the interdependence in production among industries. As Assar Lindbeck put it when Leontief was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1973, “in order to produce steel we need not only labor but also coal and thousands of other intermediary products, or ‘inputs,’ in the production process. But to produce the necessary coal and other inputs we require, in turn, steel and other intermediary products in addition to labor” (Bank of Sweden n.d.). Leontief worked on this both theoretically and empirically. It has had practical applications, for example, in judging the effects of disarmament in the United States after World War II and in estimating the effects of changes in oil prices. He began to construct an input–out-

put table for the U.S. economy in the midthirties and published the first edition of *The Structure of the American Economy, 1919–1939* in 1941. Over time, technological advances in computing made the calculations easier.

### **Franco Modigliani (1918–2003)**

Franco Modigliani was born in Rome and studied at the University of Rome. In 1938, after the Italian racial laws came into effect, he left for Paris. In 1939, just before the outbreak of World War II, he moved to New York. The New School for Social Research in New York, the American university most willing to hire Jewish refugees fleeing from Nazism, awarded him a fellowship. Later he was associated with a number of colleges and universities until, in 1960, he went to MIT as a visiting professor. After a short break, he returned to MIT, remaining for the rest of his career.

Modigliani's research focused on the process of saving, monetary policy, and financial markets. Over the years he worked and published on household saving and its relation to overall economic activity: the life-cycle hypothesis. It was these contributions and his theorems on the value of a firm (done in collaboration with Merton Miller, another Jewish Nobel Laureate) that earned him his Nobel Prize in 1985.

### **Robert Solow (b. 1924)**

Robert Solow was awarded a scholarship to Harvard University in 1940, but left in early 1943 to join the U.S. Army, serving in North Africa and Italy. In 1945 he returned to Harvard, where he took Leontief's class in theory. He became Leontief's research assistant, working on empirical aspects of input–output. After a year at Columbia, he joined the MIT economics department, with an office next to that of Paul Samuelson, with whom he had daily conversations. His work, which involves growth theory and many other aspects of macroeconomics, has appeared not only in books and professional journals, but also in popular periodicals such as *The New York Review of Books*. In 1987 he was awarded the Nobel Prize mainly for his theoretical and empirical contributions on economic growth.

## **Early Economists**

### **Frank W. Taussig (1859–1940)**

Frank W. Taussig received his BA and PhD at Harvard, where he became a professor. He was strongly influenced

by the writings of English economists John Stuart Mill and Alfred Marshall. His two-volume *Principles of Economics* (1911) was widely used. He edited the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* from 1896 to 1936. A classical economist, Tausig contributed to the field of international trade. President Woodrow Wilson appointed him chairman of the newly created Tariff Commission, and he helped formulate the commercial policy clauses of the Versailles Treaty.

#### **Edwin R. A. Seligman (1861–1939)**

After receiving his PhD from Columbia University, Edwin Seligman was appointed to its faculty, where he remained until he retired in 1931. His field was public finance and he was an expert on taxation. An advocate of progressive taxation, he served as an advisor in a number of countries, as an expert on a League of Nations Committee, and as a special adviser to the Ways and Means Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives. He was one of the founders of the American Economic Association and editor in chief of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (1930–1935).

#### **Simon Kuznets (1901–1985)**

Simon Kuznets was born in Russia and came to the United States in 1922. Having started his university studies in Russia, he completed his BSc, MA, and PhD at Columbia University. There he met Wesley C. Mitchell, founder of the National Bureau of Economic Research, with which Kuznets was associated for many years. He was at the same time a professor at the University of Pennsylvania (1931–1954), Johns Hopkins University (1954–1960), and Harvard University (1960–1971).

Kuznets was an empiricist who worked on collecting and organizing the national income accounts of the United States and analyzing business cycles. In his later years he also published on development economics. His work in developing measures of consumption, saving, and investment—components of national income—dating back to 1869, supported the revolution in economic thinking that followed the publication of Keynes's *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936).

Kuznets was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics in 1971. In presenting it, Swedish economist Bertil Ohlin—who later also received the Nobel Prize—observed, “To put it briefly, his empirically-based scholarly work has led to a new and more profound insight into the economic and so-

cial structure and the process of change and development” (Bank of Sweden n.d.).

#### **Jacob Viner (1892–1970)**

Jacob Viner was born in Montreal, Canada, and earned his BA at McGill University in 1914. He did his graduate work at Harvard University, writing his dissertation on international trade under Taussig. Viner began his teaching career at the University of Chicago, but during World War I left for government service in Washington. Returning in 1919, he became a full professor in 1925. Along with Frank Knight, he founded the so-called Chicago School, which stresses reliance on free markets and opposes government intervention in the economy.

Viner edited the *Journal of Political Economy* for eighteen years and published two books in the international field in 1923–1924. His magnum opus, *Studies in the Theory of International Trade*, appeared in 1937. He also wrote on the history of economic thought, including the relationships between theology and economics in the period before Adam Smith. During the Great Depression, Viner returned to Washington as an assistant secretary of the treasury, where he advocated government spending and budget deficits as means to restore the economy.

Ironically, he was a critic of John Maynard Keynes on analytical grounds, although they agreed on policy prescriptions. His November 1936 article, “Mr. Keynes and the Causes of Unemployment” (*Quarterly Journal of Economics*), characterized Keynes's *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* as “an outstanding intellectual achievement” but also contained some criticisms. Keynes's well-known response in the same journal in February 1937 accepted Viner's objection to his “definition and treatment” of the concept of involuntary unemployment. But he was “prepared to debate” Viner about hoarding and liquidity preference and their effects on interest rates.

In 1946, Viner moved to Princeton University. He published several books and numerous articles both before and after his retirement in 1960. A number of these articles were on the history of economic thought, including, in 1963, “The Economist in History” (*American Economic Review*).

#### **Fritz Machlup (1902–1983)**

Fritz Machlup was born in Wiener Neustadt, Austria, and studied at the University of Vienna under Ludwig von

Mises and Friedrich Hayek. His dissertation on the gold-exchange standard was published in 1925 in Austria. He worked in his father's cardboard manufacturing company from 1922 to 1932, but maintained contacts with economists and wrote two books during that period.

Machlup came to the United States as a Rockefeller Fellow in 1933 and visited Columbia, Harvard, Chicago, and Stanford universities, meeting many American economists. He taught at several American universities from 1935 to 1941. During World War II, while teaching at American University, Machlup was a consultant to the U.S. Department of Labor on postwar problems and wrote numerous papers on international economic issues.

In 1947 he became a professor of political economy at Johns Hopkins University. Over the next few years, he was a visiting professor at the University of California at Los Angeles and two universities in Japan. In those years Machlup published on balance of payments problems but also began to study the concept of knowledge. That led to several articles, including *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States* (1962), *Education and Economic Growth* (1970), and the three-volume *Information through the Printed Word: The Dissemination of Scholarly, Scientific, and Intellectual Knowledge* (1978). In the early 1980s he published three volumes of a projected ten-volume study entitled *Knowledge: Its Creation, Distribution, and Economic Significance*.

In 1960 Machlup was appointed Walker Professor of International Finance and director of the International Finance Section at Princeton University, where he remained until 1971. He continued to spend time at other universities in New York City, Osaka, and Melbourne. Beginning in 1963, Machlup formed and chaired a group of economists specializing in international monetary problems that met periodically at various locations, including Bellagio, from which the group took its name. It was concerned with current and potential policy problems in the international monetary system. In 1977 and 1978, he published *A History of Thought on Economic Integration* and *Methodology of Economics and Other Social Sciences*.

#### **Abba P. Lerner (1903–1982)**

Abba Lerner was born in Russia, grew up in London, and engaged in various other activities before enrolling at the London School of Economics in 1929. There he performed brilliantly, began publishing articles in economic journals

in 1932, and, with others, established a new journal, *Review of Economic Studies*. He spent some time at Cambridge University, where he became acquainted with Keynes. He is said to be one of the first economists to fully grasp the significance of Keynes's *General Theory* and to promulgate the "Keynesian Revolution." Before that, he published a number of journal articles on international trade theory.

Lerner emigrated to the United States in 1937, moving from one university to another over his career. He published on socialist economics, though his views were not doctrinaire. Later he developed the concept of functional finance, which was concerned with government policies aimed at full employment and price stability. In 1944 he published the widely read *The Economics of Control*.

There have been many other prominent American Jewish economists: Alan Greenspan, Alan Blinder, Otto Eckstein, Jacob Frenkel, Albert Hirschman, Leon Keyserling, Paul Krugman, Arthur Okun, Herbert Stein, Robert R. Nathan, and Nobel Laureates Leonid Kantorovich, Herbert Simon, Lawrence Klein, Harry Markowitz, Merton Miller, Gary Becker, Robert Fogel, John Harsanyi, Reinhard Selten, Robert Merton, Myron Scholes, George Akerlof, Joseph Stiglitz, and Daniel Kahneman. Among these, Greenspan has been chairman of both the Council of Economic Advisers and the Federal Reserve; Okun and Stein also chaired the Council of Economic Advisers; Albert Hirschman, a professor at Princeton, has written several outstanding books; Jacob Frenkel has been both a professor and governor of the Bank of Israel.

## **Discrimination**

In the decades before World War II, there was widespread discrimination against Jews at universities, corporations, banks, and in some parts of the federal government. There were very few Jewish professors at Ivy League universities. Notably, none of the economists discussed above was at Yale University. There were also few Jewish faculty members at the large state universities. Even the University of Chicago, at which there were some Jewish professors, practiced antisemitism. Harvard also had a quota on the admission of Jewish students (Samuelson 2002).

It is uncertain if Harvard's failure to offer Paul Samuelson tenure when he was considering the offer from MIT was due to antisemitism—or, solely to antisemitism. According to Joseph Schumpeter's biographer, Richard

Swedberg, the Harvard economics faculty let Samuelson go because “he was just too brilliant for them!” (Swedberg 1991). Stanley Fischer—former professor at MIT, former deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund, and now governor of the Bank of Israel—has written: “It is hard to believe that even the Harvard faculty of 1940 would have been unable to find room for an economist of Samuelson’s already recognized stature unless a non-academic reason or reasons stood in the way. Among those reasons were anti-Semitism, his then brashness, and his brilliance” (Eatwell 1987).

Some prominent economists were also known to be antisemitic. John Maynard Keynes made a few remarks critical of Jews. In 1926, after returning from Berlin, Keynes described Germany “as under the ‘ugly thumbs’ of its ‘impure Jews,’ who had ‘sublimated immortality into compound interest’”—“his most prejudiced utterance on the subject.” Keynes’s biographer Robert Skidelsky notes that “[s]tereotyping of Jews was common in Keynes’s circle, and the stereotypes were usually unfavorable,” adding that “Keynes’s letters are mercifully free from personal abuse” (Skidelsky 1994).

The big change came after World War II. In recent decades, Jewish economists have not only been admitted to institutions that earlier practiced discrimination, but many of them have reached pinnacles at Harvard, Princeton, and other universities, as well as at the Federal Reserve System, the Treasury Department, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, major commercial banks, and brokerage houses.

*Robert Solomon*

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## Hannah Arendt (1906–1975)

### Political Theorist

The most influential political theorist in the history of American Jewry, Hannah Arendt focused contemporary thought—particularly in scholarly circles—on the experience of exile. Her most important book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, tapped her talent for grand historical generalization in confronting the worst horrors of twentieth-century tyranny. Her magnum opus was published in 1951, the year she secured American citizenship; thereafter she devoted herself, while teaching at Princeton, Chicago, the New School for Social Research, and elsewhere, to applying classical thought and German philosophy to a post-totalitarian age.

Arendt was born in Hanover, Germany; her parents were secular, middle-class, and assimilated Jews. She studied theology and philosophy at the universities of Marburg, Heidelberg, and Freiburg; in 1929, the year that she briefly married a Jewish psychologist named Günther Stern, Arendt also completed and published a doctoral dissertation on St. Augustine. In the waning moments of the Weimar Republic, she became a political activist and, beginning in 1933, helped German Zionists publicize the plight of the victims of National Socialism. Arrested by the Gestapo in that year, Arendt managed to escape to Paris, and from there helped relocate German Jewish children to Palestine. In 1940 she married an ex-Communist and a gentile, Heinrich Blücher, but both were interned in southern France, along with other stateless Germans later that year. From the camp at Gurs, Arendt again succeeded in escaping. She joined her husband, and the pair arrived in the United States in May 1941. She broke out of emigré circles, however, and affiliated with the New York intelligentsia



Hannah Arendt, political theorist. (Library of Congress)

(nearly all of whom were also Jewish). Drawing on her own experience with Nazism, Arendt published *The Origins of Totalitarianism* in 1951 and immediately became an intellectual celebrity.

No book resonated more powerfully in tracking the historical shocks registered by the unprecedented despoticisms of Hitler and Stalin or in measuring how grievously damaged the membranes of Western civilization had become. Arendt calculated the depths of racism in the politics of Central and Western Europe by the end of the nineteenth century. By then imperialist governments had also experimented chillingly with the possibilities of cruelty and mass murder. The third section of her book exposed the operations of “radical evil.” She argued that the extermination camps of the Nazi SS (*Schutzstaffel*) were designed to make life itself superfluous, to make discontinuous the very idea of what it has meant to be human. *The*

*Origins of Totalitarianism* constituted a cartography of nihilism, tracing how Nazism in particular had realized what medieval artists had only imagined as hell.

Written in the immediate aftermath of World War II, Arendt’s masterpiece adumbrated a pessimism that almost anticipated a third world war. *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was widely interpreted as an icicle of the Cold War, since she insisted on the parallels between Nazi Germany and Stalin’s Russia—despite their obvious ideological conflicts and the eruption of the barbaric warfare between the two powers from 1941 to 1945. This isomorphism was especially criticized, in part because the primary sources on Soviet totalitarianism were very scarce; nor could Arendt read Russian. When documentation on Stalin’s rule became much more available after 1991, however, Arendt’s astringent portrayal of his autocracy was largely confirmed. Her own experience as a refugee endowed with

special poignancy the emphasis in her book on the plight of the Jews, who suffered the most from the collapse of the Enlightenment ideals of universal human rights that nation-states were pledged to protect. Arendt's pivotal insight that the Third Reich had been conducting two wars—one against its military foes, the other against the Jewish people itself—has since become a staple of the history of the Holocaust. More than any other scholar, Arendt made compelling the notion of totalitarianism as a distinctive exercise of power that sought to achieve lethal fantasies of domination and revenge.

In behalf of the Zionist movement in the Weimar era, Arendt had studied the antisemitic ideology. She had welcomed the birth of the Jewish state but broke with Zionism shortly thereafter, and generally regarded any sort of nationalism with distaste. Her criticism of Israel had hardened by 1961, when the *New Yorker* sent her to Jerusalem to cover the trial of the SS lieutenant-colonel who had organized the transportation of Jews to the camps. The resulting articles ignited a storm of controversy that never quite subsided. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963) offered a political and psychological portrait that emphasized genocide as the consequence of duty—not fanaticism. Arendt acknowledged that in 1962 Israel was right to have hanged Adolf Eichmann. But she doubted that he was only the latest in the line of antisemitic murderers. He was hateful, but he was not a hater. Eichmann had perpetrated crimes against humanity and against Jewry, she argued, not because he was a sadist, or a bigot, or a madman, but because he handled his bureaucratic responsibilities with an eerie thoughtlessness: Eichmann had failed to think through what he was doing. Such a conclusion was widely disputed, and at least in tone the phrase *banality of evil* repudiated her earlier *radical evil*.

But the short-circuiting of thought that she attributed to Eichmann inspired Arendt to return, in the final phase of her career, to the love of philosophical reasoning that had punctuated her earliest writings. *On Revolution* (1963) and *Crises of the Republic* (1972) especially sought to connect theory and action and to show historical possibilities latent in revolutionary upheavals. Especially fruitful for political thought and practice was her striking claim that revolutions often generated popular councils, which privilege participation and freedom and downplay efforts to solve “the social question” of material necessity. Yet the later books lacked the impact of the studies that

the challenge of Nazism had generated. Unaffiliated with the feminist movement that had emerged in intellectual and academic life by the 1970s, uninterested in the category of gender as an instrument to expose the operations of power, Arendt had become by the end of her life even more singular as a thinker; she was a representative only of herself.

Blücher died in 1970; and five years later, a life ennobled by speculative audacity and enriched by love ended with a heart attack in New York City.

Stephen J. Whitfield

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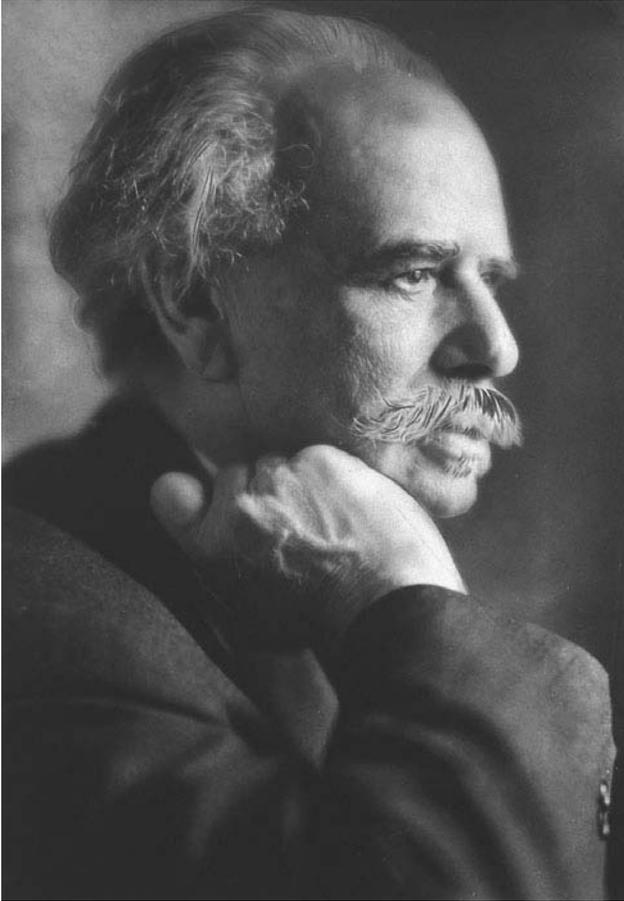
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## Franz Boas (1858–1942)

### Founder of Modern American Anthropology

Franz Boas was among the leading scientists and public intellectuals on the issues of race, language, and culture in the early twentieth century. In a long and productive career, he undertook pioneering research in Baffinland and on the Northwest Coast, published tirelessly on the crucial questions of the day, and trained the seminal generation of American anthropologists. His work was indebted to German and German Jewish intellectual traditions.

Franz Boas was born and raised in Westphalia, Germany, the son of assimilated middle-class Jewish parents who prized the memory of the 1848 revolution and adhered to the Enlightenment values of German Jewish culture. Drawn at an early age to the natural sciences, Boas initially studied physics, completing a dissertation on the color of seawater in 1881. His fascination with knowledge and perception of the physical world soon drew him to geography and an extended expedition to Baffinland (1883–1884), where he hoped to study the relationship



Franz Boas, the “Father of American Anthropology.” (Library of Congress)

between people and their surroundings. Upon his return to Germany, he grew dissatisfied with geography’s environmental determinism. An apprenticeship under Adolf Bastian, Germany’s leading ethnologist and the founding director of Berlin’s Royal Ethnographic Museum, led Boas to anthropology. In 1886, Boas completed a habilitation, qualifying him for a German university position. But prospects for an academic career were dim, not least because of increasing antisemitism. In 1887, he decided to emigrate to the United States.

Settling in New York, Boas worked for a time as an editor for the journal *Science* before securing his first academic position, a lecturership at Clark University, where he trained the first American PhD in anthropology. After being fired in the infamous faculty revolt of 1892, Boas worked on ethnographic exhibits for the Chicago World’s Fair. A period of professional instability ensued, ending in 1895 with his appointment as curator at the American Mu-

seum of Natural History in New York. In the interim he had received several grants to undertake fieldwork on the Northwest Coast. In 1896, he was also hired as lecturer in anthropology at Columbia University, where he was promoted to full professor in 1899. Boas held the position until his retirement in 1936.

During his decades at Columbia, Boas shaped American anthropology in his intellectual image, bestowing on it the classic four-field approach comprised of ethnology, linguistics, archaeology, and physical anthropology. For much of his tenure, he was the discipline’s undisputed leader, centrally involved in all professional matters, from the editing of key journals to organizational governance. Most importantly, Boas trained the seminal generation of American anthropologists. Early in his tenure, his PhD students included Alfred Kroeber, Robert Lowie, and Edward Sapir. After World War I, Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict, and Melville Herskovits studied under him. As Boas’s students went out to found influential departments of anthropology, they transmitted his vision to the rest of the country. By the 1930s, the Boasian approach not only dominated the discipline, but was also reshaping American thought on race and cultural difference.

Boas’s specific intellectual contributions are difficult to pin down. A product of the dominant currents of late nineteenth-century German scholarship, he was a staunch empiricist, wary of the facile generalizations and premature classifications he associated with the reigning ideas of sociocultural evolutionism. As a consequence, he has long been viewed as more of a critic of previous models than as a theory-builder. Central to this stance was his disaggregation of race, language, and culture in the classification of human groups. In contrast to the dominant classifications of the late nineteenth century, which conflated racial, linguistic, and cultural groupings, as in the latter-day deployment of the category “Aryan” for example, Boas insisted on their independence. Organizing ethnographic maps based on linguistic features thus produced different groupings than those organized by ethnological artifacts. Underlying this position was Boas’s constant emphasis on diffusion, the process by which human features, be they material or intellectual, traveled from one group to another, complicating any attempt at isolated descriptions. The history of any group, along with its interactions with other groups, thus was central to understanding any phenomenon the anthropologist might observe in the field.

Indeed, the reconstruction of such histories was anthropology's principal object.

This stance yielded massive empirical projects, and they were often mobilized to debunk such classifications as those organized by a category like race. In this respect, Boas's famous study of immigrants was seminal. He demonstrated that the core assumption of racial stability was not borne out by immigrants to the United States and their American-born children, who, he concluded, showed significant variance from their parents, particularly in regard to weight and height. This essentially negative finding—which privileged an amorphous set of environmental factors over the supposed continuity of racial types—was in line with Boas's other critical strategies in regard to the question of race. He continuously emphasized that groups' supposed differences in the averages of particular features (cranial size, for example) were negligible in light of the enormous variation found within groups. Along with his stress on the constant diffusion of racial traits, which made the clear demarcation of racial groups inherently impossible, Boas thus presented an effective deconstruction of the very concept of race. Minimally, he always insisted that race played an utterly insignificant role in determining human behavior.

This was in contrast to his assessment of the roles of language and culture in human existence. In particular, Boas privileged language, which he regarded not only as the defining human characteristic, but also as the most promising variable in the reconstruction of historical relationships. Boas contributed extensively to the study of indigenous languages, particularly those of the Northwest Coast. But his greatest achievement was the multi-volume *Handbook of American Indian Languages*, which enlisted numerous collaborators (many of them Boas's students) in the creation of the most comprehensive description of indigenous languages produced prior to World War II.

In regard to culture, too, Boas was a tireless empiricist, collecting—with the help of key informants—myths, stories, recipes, and anything else that might be used by present and future anthropologists to reconstruct the histories of Native American groups. Boas, who was moved by a strong sense of the impending disappearance of many indigenous traits, initially conceived of culture in a traditional humanistic sense. Myths, in this context, were the Native American equivalents of

European literature and needed to be treated with analogous philological care. By the 1930s, Boas expanded that purview, influenced in large part by the pioneering work of Sapir, Mead, and Benedict. For them, cultures were more than assemblages of texts and artifacts; they were patterns that organized humanity's collective experiences. The result was the modern anthropological concept of culture, the most enduring legacy of Boasian anthropology. Defined by “historicity, plurality, behavioral determinism, integration, and relativism” (Stocking 1968), it allowed an alternative interpretation to the classic anthropological question: Why do human groups do what they do? Prior to the codification of the modern culture concept, the standard answer was because of their race. After its anthropological generation and gradual dissemination into America's public sphere, it became because of their culture.

How relevant was Boas's Jewish background to his thought? According to his students and early biographical treatments, not very much. Instead, they followed mid-twentieth-century conventions in painting him as a wholly impartial scientist, committed to nothing but the truth. Boas might well have agreed with this assessment. While he never denied his Jewishness, he was a resolutely secular man who, in a complicated stance vis-à-vis his chosen profession, regarded tribal affiliations as essentially primitive obstacles to a truly universalist future.

More recent assessments essentially agree with this characterization. But they no longer see Boas's stance as evidence for the irrelevance of his background. Writing in a general mode, a number of scholars have pointed to the crucial presence of secular Jews among American anthropology's pioneering generation (Lowie, Sapir, Herskovits, Alexander Goldenweiser, Alexander Lesser, Leslie Spier, Paul Radin, Ruth Bunzel, and Ruth Landes, among others). More focused scholarship, meanwhile, has gone beyond arguments linking Jewish difference to anthropology's commitments to social justice and the rights of marginalized populations.

In Boas's case, the legacy of German Jewish emancipation is now widely seen as particularly relevant. This goes far beyond his liberal cosmopolitanism and social democratic leanings. It also includes the scholarly tradition of *Völkerpsychologie* (psychology of peoples), a discipline pioneered in mid-nineteenth-century Germany by Jewish scholars Moritz Lazarus and Heymann Steinthal. Seminal

public figures in the German Reform movement, they had a direct influence on Boas, who adapted their emphasis on the empirical study of the *Volksgeist* (the genius of a people) and made it the building block of his philologically oriented anthropology. Lazarus and Steinthal mobilized the concept to defend the accomplishments of German Jewish emancipation, stressing, especially in the face of growing antisemitism, that while Jews' biological heritage might render them racial outsiders, the plasticity of their *Geist* gave them the mental capabilities to fully integrate into German society.

This ascendancy of mind over matter, along with the assimilationist agenda of Jewish integration that it safeguarded, fully characterized Boas's work as well. It underwrote all his published remarks on Jews, which, while not systematic, could be found throughout his career and particularly toward the end of his life in his impassioned struggle against National Socialism. In these remarks, he continuously pointed to Jews' ability and desire to adapt to their respective cultural environments. This vision also organized his much more voluminous writings on Native Americans and African Americans. These groups possessed all the intellectual agility that Jews had mobilized in their move from the ghetto to the German salon. Ultimately, that trajectory was Boas's model for the future of American minorities. What held them back were the racist walls that encircled them. To break those down was the goal of Boas's transplanted German Jewish project.

Matti Bunzl

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## Horace Kallen (1882–1974)

### Social Thinker

Horace Meyer Kallen introduced the idea of "cultural pluralism" to the American public as part of his endeavor to reconceive the national culture. Since his day, various notions of cultural pluralism have been recurrent and contentious issues in American political, social, and intellectual life. Kallen was born in Berenstadt, Silesia, Germany, son of an Orthodox rabbi who brought Horace to this country when he was five years old. Although Kallen broke from his father's religious beliefs, he retained a deep attachment to what he termed Hebraism, a secular version of Judaism. Kallen was redefining Hebraism throughout his life. His intellectual and emotional relationship with his father resembled his relationship with the other major figures who shaped his outlook—William James, George Santayana, and Barrett Wendell, three professors at Harvard, where he received his PhD in philosophy in 1908. With these men he developed a deep emotional and intellectual connection, at the same time finding the need to



Horace Kallen, social scientist. (American Jewish Archives)

strongly assert his personal independence. This was much like his broader social disposition, impelled by both the wish to belong and the urge to be different.

From James, he took his fundamental philosophic orientation of Pragmatism and ontological pluralism. However, Kallen did not share James's receptiveness to religious experience, whose intellectual mischief and social detriment, as Kallen saw it, outweighed any benefit it might provide. Kallen relished Santayana's critique of the liberal Protestantism that pervaded Harvard of his day, but he could not sympathize with Santayana's more radical alienation from American life. Kallen greatly admired Barrett Wendell's attempt to conceptualize American culture; however, Kallen could not accept Wendell's notion that the life-spring of the nation had been American Protestantism.

Kallen's struggle with his father's and his mentors' ideas found its way into the most influential work of his career, his two-part essay "Democracy versus the Melting Pot" (Kallen 1915). This essay was widely discussed at the time, and some of the repercussions of that discussion are still with us. Kallen highlighted the ethnic substructure of the American nation and urged that all ethnic groups be placed on a par with the Anglo-Saxon white Protestant component, which at the time was clearly predominant. This, he argued, would liberate previously repressed forces of cultural creativity and enrichment. He rejected the prevailing metaphor of the melting pot, which was used to describe the favored program for the absorption of immigrants. The pragmatic meaning of that metaphor, Kallen argued, was the complete assimilation of the immigrant into a uniform society. As an alternative, he offered the metaphor of the orchestra, which allowed for both diversity and harmony. Overarching and uniting the diverse cultural forces were to be the ideals of the American Enlightenment, the political structure of the Constitution, and (somewhat inconsistently) a shared English language.

While earlier Kallen had taken up the rigid forms of racial science, as of 1915, Kallen's notions of ethnicity rested on racial thinking that was flexible, compassionate, and even fraternal. It involved no ranking of the races, no inevitable conflict between them, and no unequivocal fixity of racial traits. Kallen was a Lamarckian. He believed that acquired characteristics could be inherited, and for him that meant that history (and Jewish history in particular) could be carried into the present by biology. He thought that this was the most advanced, enlightened, and rigorous science

of his day. Later critics who attacked him as an "essentialist" did not read him closely or extensively enough. Kallen did not see ethnicity and assimilation as polar opposites, but rather as processes dependent on each other. In later years, under the influence of Boasian anthropology, he gave up the racial supports for ethnicity, but then sought various other underpinnings for the ethnic bond. In Kallen's scheme, Enlightenment ideals and the ethnic bond provided two kinds of belonging, and at the same time ethnicity granted the basis of a right to be different.

Kallen's proposal quickly became entangled in the cultural conflicts of the pre-World War I era and the debates surrounding America's entry into the war. Among the leading proponents of intervention were upper-class people of Anglo-Saxon background and members of "our First Families," while some of the strongest supporters of neutrality could be found among more recent immigrants. Kallen's notions were denounced by Theodore Roosevelt and championed by some midwestern opponents of American entry, as well as some of the young literary intellectuals rebelling against what Santayana had dubbed the Genteel Tradition. Kallen was an assistant professor of philosophy at the University of Wisconsin on a one-year renewable contract when he published this essay. It made him many friends but also powerful enemies. Although before America's entry into World War I, Kallen had advocated a neutrality policy, when the country joined the conflict, he supported the war effort.

At the end of the war, Kallen's contract at Wisconsin was not renewed, but with the financial support of Jewish philanthropists he found a place in the recently established New School for Social Research. It became his academic base for the rest of his career. During the early days of the school, its eminent faculty divided between those who believed that it must become a research center (something akin to what would now be called a think tank) and those who saw it as an innovative school of adult education. Kallen, a talented lecturer and a fiery speaker, sided with the second group, and they ultimately prevailed.

Beyond the walls of the school, he was usually less successful. In the prewar era, Kallen was seen as an up-and-coming intellectual riding the crest of various waves of the future. In the postwar era, Kallen found himself pushed to the sidelines of the endeavors that had been his primary concerns. He had been an active Zionist since his student days, for Zionism had been a central component of his sec-

ular Judaism. It is not surprising that Kallen, as a pluralist, was for a while attracted to various kinds of Zionist binationalism that proposed programs of Jewish–Arab parity and rapprochement. However, in light of Arab unresponsiveness and rejection of the proposals at that time, he set aside binationalism as a form of utopianism. During the early 1920s, in the conflict between Louis Brandeis and Chaim Weizmann for control of the American Zionist movement, Kallen sided with Brandeis’s losing faction. Nonetheless, Kallen remained a Zionist for the rest of his life, but was kept far from the circle of leadership.

In 1924, Kallen gathered most of his previously printed essays on what he now called cultural pluralism and published them in a book, *Culture and Democracy in the United States*. The essays that had aroused a flurry of excitement in 1915 were now met with indifference and even disdain. The great onrush of immigration, which had buoyed up Kallen’s notions of ethnicity, had been stemmed. Moreover, prewar German American culture, which had appeared as a model for many other ethnic groups, had been deemed treasonous during the war and was forcefully suppressed. It was not until after World War II that Kallen would find a renewed public interest in his notions of cultural pluralism.

Kallen continued to write on public issues, but now, much to his regret, he did so primarily from the sidelines. He took little interest in academic philosophy. As he saw it, philosophy must work in the midst of things and with the pressing issues of the day. This approach encouraged a scattering of intellectual focus, and much of Kallen’s writing came to resemble a kind of philosophical journalism. Early in his career, Kallen had developed a meta-Freudian perspective, which suggested that the clash of the Pleasure Principle with the Reality Principle was a central juncture of human experience. Most people and most thinkers, Kallen believed, adopted compensatory devices (this was Adler’s version) to cope with such existential frustration. (For Kallen, Jewish messianism was a compensatory device to deal with historic defeat and oppression.) Such illusionary paths might be avoided, Kallen believed, by sticking closely to the methods of science. However, he never explained exactly what that meant.

One of the issues that concerned Kallen throughout his career was finding an effectual Jewish education that could carry the abundance and profundity of Hebraism to the new generations of American Jews. He despaired of the

various proposals advanced by educators and ultimately placed his hopes in a program of secular Jewish day schools. In the 1920s, Kallen chose to take on the great shibboleth of the era, individualism, and give it philosophical bearing. It was his bad luck that, when this work was finally published, the Great Depression had struck and the advantages Kallen had attributed to individualism seemed particularly irrelevant.

Throughout the social upheavals of the 1930s, Kallen advocated social programs that would maintain a realm for individual initiative and individuality amid the calls for various kinds of collectivism. He championed the cause of consumer cooperation, although his critics argued that such palliatives were unsuited to the great social dislocations of the era. Yet, for Kallen, consumer cooperatives provided something like an economic analogue of the relationship he envisaged between the individual and the collective in his idealized ethnic groups. One belonged but maintained one’s difference.

After World War II, with the growth of the civil rights movement and African American self-assertiveness, and with a renewal of large-scale immigration (this time primarily from Asia and Latin America), many rediscovered Kallen’s notions of cultural pluralism. However, the scholars and activists who reexamined Kallen’s earliest statements found them laced with what seemed to be a repugnant racialism. The new advocates of cultural pluralism went about reinventing it without Kallen.

Kallen continued to write into his nineties. Although he never regained the acclaim of his early career, his energy and personal optimism did not falter to the very end. Yet perhaps there was something too willed in his cheerfulness. It seemed as if he intended to prove, *ad hominem*, that a robust secularity could yield a happy ending. Though he scorned Hegel and hegelisms (“word magic”), it would not be unfair to say that Kallen ultimately proposed a dialectical resolution of the conflict of the Pleasure Principle and the Reality Principle in something like a *L’Chaim* Principle.

Samuel Haber

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## Paul Lazarsfeld (1901–1976)

### Social Scientist

Paul Lazarsfeld changed the social sciences. Born in Vienna in 1901, he studied mathematics and social science at the University of Vienna. Going to America in 1933, he worked in several applied settings and was professor at Columbia University until his death in 1976. He worked with many talented persons, which makes his unique contribution harder to specify, but his collaborators consistently acknowledge his importance.

He wrote little about Jewish foundations of his work, but many elements can be identified. His mother was personally close to the leading Socialists in Vienna, influencing his early socialist-related research, which was conducted outside a university because the Austrian universities were antisemitic. Migrating to the United States when Hitler came to power, Lazarsfeld's wartime work sought to assess propaganda, the media, and their effects, all embedded in a cultural context that he would discuss as all encompassing, yet still joke about ironically. (For instance, he would adapt slogans, such as "In the USSR, the revolution succeeded, so they need engineers, but in America, it failed so we need sociologists.") Lazarsfeld illustrated the itinerant Jew qua marginal man who had the confidence and talent to link with many competing subgroups and subcultures, to draw upon and combine the best of each—and to seek to pass this on to others. For instance, in the 1930s he sought to collaborate with T. W. Adorno and

other quasi-Marxist cultural critics of the mass media while he simultaneously conducted research with Frank Stanton of the Columbia Broadcasting System. Lazarsfeld sought to draw out the best of each of these and create a new amalgam. And he did, brilliantly and repeatedly. His impact was in four areas: in personal research, on research institutes, in refocusing social science, and in encouraging the interpretation of postindustrial society.

In his personal research and related consulting work, Lazarsfeld helped launch new fields and approaches. Market research, before him, was anecdotal and casual. He showed how to do large empirical surveys of consumers, which today define market research. Voting behavior before Lazarsfeld was studied with "ecological" methods; he developed surveys of individual voters to measure their policy views and personal friendships, and to chart other processes that influenced them, but that had not previously been assessed. His books *The People's Choice* (1944) and *Voting* (1954) are the foundations of contemporary political behavior studies.

Lazarsfeld refined survey methods for mass communications. Before him many believed that radio and newspapers had huge impacts and manipulated individuals directly. These "mass society" arguments held sway with most intellectuals and commercial firms. He demonstrated instead how media effects were generally more limited and operated differently. In politics, marketing products, and mass communication, he showed that direct messages were seldom accepted; the key impacts were indirect, often via "opinion leaders" who would talk with their friends, thus selectively accepting, or rejecting, news, advertisements, and political messages. Such processes constituted a "two-step flow of communication"—first through the media, second through the personal contact—which he documented with detailed analyses of neighbors discussing politics, women choosing new fashions, and doctors prescribing new drugs (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955).

Lazarsfeld considerably strengthened social science methodology by developing new techniques and writing about how to use older methods more self-consciously. Although his PhD was in mathematics, most of his methodological work was written in very clear, simple language, and aimed to change the ways that social scientists thought and did research. He succeeded. For instance, to sort out distinct effects of media content, personal discussions, and other factors, he developed the panel study, in which a

panel of persons was re-interviewed several times to monitor change, such as during a political or advertising campaign. To analyze the effects of several variables, he showed how multicausal analysis was necessary. But he continually sought to transcend the simple, linear models (such as in ordinary least-squares regression) by showing how to study and measure interaction effects (of a third variable shifting the effect of  $X$  on  $Y$ ) or contextual effects (like Marx's analysis of low salaries causing more worker discontent in larger than in smaller factories). His methodological treatise *The Language of Social Research* became popular in America as a practitioner's guide and was transformed into a more theoretical-philosophical work with Raymond Boudon (Boudon 1965, 1993). Unhappy that most history of social science was written in a narrowly theoretical way, he helped develop the history of empirical social research as a subfield, which could strengthen more general histories of social science.

These rich intellectual contributions did not come from an isolated scholar, but were by-products of a vigorously active series of projects. He created the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia, and lectured and wrote about the importance of such research institutes as settings for conducting social research. They could collect data, house staff to interpret and analyze data, and, by joining practical policy concerns with basic university research, foster a climate for joining empirical and theoretical work in a practical context.

The third contribution is the hardest to specify but perhaps the most important: he transformed social science. Sociology, economics, and political science in the 1930s had theoretical traditions and empirical traditions, but they seldom joined. The grand theories of social science were European. Public opinion, basic values, political support, confidence in government, even the Gross National Product, were unmeasured concepts in 1930. In America, Pitirim Sorokin and Talcott Parsons continued this European tradition at Harvard. Distinctly American work was problem-oriented and empirical. The main traditional center of social science was the University of Chicago, ranked number one in many surveys in the 1920s and 1930s. Its leaders in sociology, Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, barely joined their empirical work with European theories. Sociology changed at Columbia in the 1940s and 1950s, when Paul Lazarsfeld, through his collaboration with Robert Merton and talented students, set a new tone

in their work and many publications. They seriously joined ideas from the European theories with empirical work to create a new amalgam: "middle-range theories" were codified and tested in fourfold contingency tables. Previously disparate activities were joined that give far more analytical power to the result.

Students from Columbia became professors at other leading universities, and in the 1960s the social sciences changed, irrevocably. In economics, econometric work increasingly joined abstract theory, encouraged by the National Bureau of Economic Research, which brought many academics to its New York headquarters. Political science went through an analogous revolution, led by the behaviorism of Robert Dahl and Gabriel Almond at Yale, the political behavior work of V. O. Key at Harvard, and the Michigan voting tradition of Philip Converse and others.

Lazarsfeld was a leading consultant to the Ford Foundation, which substantially funded such developments in the 1950s and 1960s in the United States and internationally. Lazarsfeld and Merton proposed to Ford a new center, which became the Center for the Advanced Study of the Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto, fostering such approaches. In Europe, the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) was launched by Stein Rokkan, who collaborated with Columbia-trained Seymour Martin Lipset. The ECPR included a few young Turks in the 1960s; by the 1980s, it was the establishment. International professional groups like the International Sociological Association and its Research Committees, the International Political Science Association, and others brought social scientists the world over in contact with analogous developments. The tone and focus of the social sciences obviously shifted.

Columbia sociologists, led by Lazarsfeld and Merton, helped create modern sociology through a continuous dialogue, albeit often latent, with Marxist themes and concepts. This holds in many areas, if we examine their shifts from past topics chosen for study (dress shoppers in Decatur, Illinois, rather than unemployed workers), or the shift from a top-down focus in organizations to bottom-up cooptation. Core concepts were invented or redefined (e.g., from the proletariat to student activist, from politics as part of production to part of consumption).

Lazarsfeld's contribution may be framed with the concept of postindustrial society, first by identifying sources for the concept in subfields of Columbia sociologists after

the 1930s. The gradually resulting framework generated a paradigm shift away from Marxist-inspired thinking, but this shift was largely “unannounced,” as elements of Marx continued even in many Columbia studies. The big bang built on smaller “revolutions” in subparadigms, like organization theory and mass media; together they generated a deeper overall change.

More generally, Lazarsfeld and the Columbia armory of ideas have an elective affinity with postindustrial society in ways that were not recognized or scarcely mentioned in earlier years. This is in good part because the concept of Post-Industrial Society itself crystalized only *after* the most vibrant years of Lazarsfeld and Merton. The label Post-Industrial Society is from Daniel Bell. Overlapping ideas were elaborated by Lipset, Ronald Inglehart, and Terry Nichols Clark’s writings on the New Political Culture.

The Columbia synthesis built on elements of American society that distinctly differed from Europe with its peasantry, class, work, and party-defined patriarchal, authoritarian social structure. Instead the new was driven by consumption, not production; by the household, not the job; by leisure, not work. Thus voting was not seen as explained by men and fathers working on an assembly line, but by women, mothers chatting with neighbors about whom to vote for while listening to soap operas. They made decisions for political candidates following rules like those for buying Campbell’s soup and, later, Mary Kay cosmetics.

Terry Nichols Clark

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## Max Lerner (1902–1992)

### Newspaper Columnist and Intellectual

A prominent newspaper columnist and academic, Max Lerner was a leading American Jewish intellectual, a champion of liberal causes who became more conservative in his later years. The author of numerous widely read essays and books, his magnum opus was *America as a Civilization* (1957).

“Few men have the gift you possess to think profoundly and speak softly,” wrote Justice Hugo Black in 1943 after hearing a radio talk by Max Lerner (Lakoff 1998). Idolized by liberals like Black who followed his writings, speeches, and broadcasts, and feared by conservatives—he delighted in crossing swords with them and was proud to have made President Richard Nixon’s enemies list—he had an especially devoted following among Jews. For many of them he was a preeminent champion and guide on the issues of the time. Although a self-described secular Jew and very much an assimilationist, twice married to non-Jewish women and preoccupied with themes of general American interest, he never sought to deny or marginalize his ethnic identity to ingratiate himself. One of the organizers of a 1942 rally in Madison Square Garden called to draw attention to the Nazi persecution of Jews, he was an outspoken critic of antisemitism and all other forms of racism at a time when other prominent figures of Jewish origin, notably Walter Lippmann, thought silence on such matters the better part of valor. When the State of Israel came into

being and became embroiled with neighboring enemies, Lerner was one of its most passionate public defenders, though he urged Israelis to make territorial compromises for the sake of peace.

Lerner was the last of four children born in a *shtetl* near Minsk, then in Byelorussia. The family name was adopted, originally having been Raner. His parents, like many other Jews trapped in the pogrom-plagued Pale of Settlement, decided to emigrate to America—the “promised land” to most East European Jews at the time, Lerner would later remark. His father, Benyumin, went first, in 1902, leaving the first three children in the care of his wife Basha, then pregnant with Max. By 1907, when his father had earned enough money to pay for their passage, the rest of the family was brought over. They went first to Bayonne, New Jersey, and, after failing at running a boardinghouse in the Catskills, settled in New Haven, Connecticut, where they owned a small dairy business. Young Max rose early to drive a horse-drawn cart through the city streets and deliver the milk.

A precocious student, he earned a scholarship to Yale awarded to the boy with the best record in the Hillhouse High School graduating class. In college he compiled an impressive academic record, majoring in English literature. It was at Yale too that he first felt the sting of antisemitism. Warned at graduation by a sympathetic professor that because he was a Jew he could not hope to acquire a prominent teaching appointment in that field, Lerner decided reluctantly to go to Yale Law School instead. Within a year he left to do graduate work in economics and politics at the newly founded Brookings Graduate School in Washington, D.C.

After earning his doctorate at Brookings, Lerner was appointed managing editor of the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*. When that project was completed, he embarked on a career as a college teacher. His first posts were at Sarah Lawrence, Williams, and Harvard. In 1949, a year after Brandeis University was founded, he was appointed to hold its first endowed chair, later serving as dean of the social sciences. He also offered a popular adult class at the New School in New York and went on to teach, after retiring from Brandeis, at United States International University in California and Notre Dame. An inspiring teacher, he had many devoted students, including, at Williams, the future Pulitzer Prize winner James MacGregor Burns, and, at Brandeis, Martin Peretz, who followed in his footsteps by

becoming both a university lecturer and editor in chief of *The New Republic*.

As early as the mid-1930s, when he began to write for *The New Republic* and then became political editor of *The Nation*, Lerner was drawn to political journalism. For the rest of his life, he was torn between the active life of a media commentator and the reflective life of a scholar and teacher, managing to pursue both vocations more successfully than anyone else of his generation. In 1943, after a brief stint in a wartime agency in Washington, he left Williams to become chief editorial writer for the new and experimental New York daily *PM* (which at first disdained all advertising so as to be free from corporate influence). When *PM* folded in 1948, he moved briefly to its short-lived successor *The Star*, and then became the leading political columnist of the liberal *New York Post*, a niche he filled for the remaining four decades of his life.

In the 1950s and 1960s he was a centrist liberal, defending John F. Kennedy’s New Frontier and Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society and containment in foreign policy and attacking the New Left and the counterculture as expressions of an “infantile leftism.” By the late 1970s, he had become more conservative, blaming the McGovern wing of the Democratic Party for highjacking traditional liberalism and turning it into an amalgam of anti-Americanism and naïve adulation of Third World revolutionaries and terrorists, coupled with advocacy of preferential quotas and political correctness in the universities. He agreed with neoconservatives that America should adopt a “tough-minded” foreign policy in defense of liberty, and domestic reforms to end welfare dependency and free the economy from overregulation, and that it should experiment with tax cuts to stimulate economic growth. In November 1980, to the shock of many of his readers, he announced he had voted for Ronald Reagan. He continued to write his column, but as its old readership died off or turned away, he became a much less prominent commentator than previously.

While some of Lerner’s voluminous literary output, especially his compilations of newspaper columns, soon became dated, much of it remains worth reading both for style and substance. His essays comparing American presidents, collected by Robert Schmuhs as *Wounded Titans*, remain of considerable historical interest. His kaleidoscopic *America as a Civilization* (1957; reissued 1987) was among the first major efforts to recognize the American impact on

the world as a civilization in its own right rather than merely an offshoot of Euro-British civilization. Legal scholars continue to study his edition of *The Mind and Faith of Justice Holmes*, his seminal 1933 *Yale Law Journal* essay on “The Supreme Court and American Capitalism,” and his other essays on jurisprudence, collected by Robert Cummings in *Nine Scorpions in a Bottle*. Students of the history of political thought are fortunate to have his sparkling introductory essays to editions of the writings of Thorstein Veblen and Machiavelli (collected with others by Schmuhl in *The Magisterial Imagination*). And his final book, *Wrestling with the Angel*, an account of his struggle with aging and cancer, is a poignant testament to human tenacity and to his own love of life and thought.

Lerner was married first to Anita Marburg, a Brookings classmate with whom he had three daughters, and then, following their divorce in 1940, to Edna Albers, a former student he had taught at Sarah Lawrence, with whom he had three sons.

*Sanford Lakoff*

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## Robert Merton (1910–2003)

### Sociologist

Robert King Merton was an eminent professor at Columbia University and founder of the discipline of the sociology of science. He was born to a poor Jewish immigrant family in South Philadelphia and showed intellectual promise at an early age. Winning a scholarship to Temple, he quickly became the protégé of leading faculty members there, who groomed him for an academic career. At the age of nineteen, he legally changed his name from Meyer Schkolnick to Robert King Merton, which doubtlessly eased his way into academic life. At that time, quotas limiting entry of Jews into colleges and universities as students and as faculty were a fact of life of American higher education. Merton clearly aspired to the intellectual life that academia made possible. Taking up this new name suggests

the strength of his academic aspirations and something of his lack of attachment to his Jewish origins. It also proved advantageous later when he joined the battle against racial thinking in American scholarship. An Anglo-Saxon name made it less likely that his arguments would be discounted as personal pleading. A review blasting the work of an influential Harvard scholar that had been based on racial categories would probably have had a different impact if its authors, Robert King Merton and M. F. Ashley Montagu, had signed it with their birth names, Meyer Schkolnick and Israel Ehrenberg.

Merton won a graduate fellowship to the sociology department at Harvard in 1931 and at first worked closely with its chairman, Pitirim A. Sorokin. But his intellectual allegiance soon shifted to a younger man, Talcott Parsons, who was bringing intellectual excitement to the department by introducing into a somewhat parochial American setting the provocative and largely unfamiliar work of the leading European sociologists. At the same time, Parsons was challenging the chairman as to the direction that the department should take. In this precarious situation, Merton adroitly chose an outsider, George Sarton, to be his dissertation director. Sarton was a historian of science, who was a member of no department and drew no regular salary, but who nonetheless occupied a position of prestige on the Harvard campus. Merton remained on relatively good terms with all three.

He wrote his dissertation on the growth of science in seventeenth-century England. This work became the source of what later was famously called the Merton Thesis. It underscored the importance of Protestantism for the development of science. This seemed to be a transference, in a modified form, of Max Weber’s *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (which Parsons had recently translated) into the realm of science. However, if the dissertation drew from Weber and Parsons, it also drew from Marx. Merton later recalled that he was “a dedicated socialist” in the early years of the Great Depression. Many young people who came of age in that era readily concluded that the existing economic system could not work. A Marxist perspective, taken with various levels of attachment and different kinds of qualifications, seemed to make sense to many intellectuals. In his dissertation, Merton argued that, while some of the impetus for the growth of science in seventeenth-century England arose from Protestant belief, the

direction that science and technology took was in great measure influenced by economic developments.

Merton received his doctorate in 1936 and served as instructor and tutor in the Harvard sociology department for the next three years. He then took up his first permanent position at Tulane, where he rose rapidly to the rank of full professor and became chairman of the department. In 1941 he moved to Columbia, where he spent the rest of his scholarly life as a much honored teacher and scholar. However, even before he established himself at Columbia, he had made his colleagues take notice with an outburst of scholarly energy that gave rise to a series of auspicious scholarly papers on a diversity of sociological topics, some of them still read and reprinted today. Yet beneath this diversity is a subtext that unifies most of them. This subtext is an implicit argument for an open and accepting society, and at the same time the assumption by the author of an identity of opposition to things as they are. (Lionel Trilling, Merton's colleague and friend, would call such an identity "the opposing self" [Trilling 1955].)

This dual subtext is evident in the two papers on the ethos of science that presaged much of Merton's later work. In these articles (Merton 1938a, 1942) he outlines four principles that inform the ethos of working scientists. He later called these norms because, he claimed, they were enforced by the scientists themselves. Nonetheless, they clearly reflected Merton's ideals as well. The first two norms, universalism and disinterestedness, signified the absence of local and ethnic prejudice as well as the avoidance of selfish bias. Merton translated these further into a demand for "careers open to talent." The second two norms, organized skepticism and communism (he later called this communalism), suggested a type of contrarianism, the taking up of a position contrary to prevailing opinions. His unblushing use of the term *communism* pointed to the cooperative and synergistic aspects of scientific endeavors, but it also indicated a view, only briefly held, that existing property relations placed fetters on scientific productivity. Undoubtedly, the ethos that Merton found in science, acceptance based on merit and a disposition antithetical to the status quo, were sentiments that he actively embraced at this time.

While at Columbia, Merton published a textbook (revised and enlarged twice) that was widely used in sociology departments across the country. This text not only pro-

vided students with the rudiments of the discipline, but also advanced a program for bringing sociology closer to the physical sciences. The purpose of this program was to give the findings of sociology something like the validity and effectiveness that were generally accorded to the discoveries of science. The growing subdiscipline of the sociology of knowledge, which interpreted knowledge as a social construction, threatened to undermine the cogency of sociology itself. The physical sciences, however, seemed impervious to the acids of this kind of relativism, and to the extent that sociology could be made scientific it might develop a similar autonomy and invulnerability.

The most likely methodology for bringing sociology closer to the physical sciences, Merton believed, was functional and structural analysis. However, behind functional analysis, as it was commonly employed, stood the metaphor of the organism. Merton wished to free his functional analysis from direct dependence on any such metaphor by sublimating it through abstraction. Merton's functional analysis became an orientation that focused on the complex interrelation of events, "the practice of interpreting data by establishing their consequences for larger structures in which they are implicated" (Merton 1949). While most forms of functionalism were accused of containing an inherent conservative proclivity, Merton insisted that his functional analysis would avoid any tacit bias in favor of the status quo. It would emphasize social dysfunctions as well as functions, functional substitutes and equivalents as well as functional needs; most important, it would not overlook the significance of sheer power in society.

If Merton's functional analysis was an enhanced version of Parsons's, his structural analysis was a discriminating and enriched version of Marx's class analysis. Class, Merton believed, was too loose and ambiguous a category to be useful in illuminating the workings of society. It must be resolved, amplified, and made pluralist by such notions as status, group, and role. Nonetheless, as Merton himself explained, he owed to Marx the basic notion that social position in large part influenced social vision and behavior, and upon that principle most structural analysis rests.

At this stage in the development of sociological theory, Merton urged, practitioners should avoid any attempts to create grand theories or total systems. It would be more

effective to develop small sets of empirically verified theorems, “theories of the middle range” (Merton 1957). Using functional and structural analysis, this kind of theory and its verifying research might be consolidated and codified to yield broad and reliable theoretic gains. Merton also urged only a restricted use of the great founding social theorists of the discipline. Their works might be sifted for suggestions that could be empirically tested, but one must not be distracted by their imposing imaginative visions, which eluded adequate evidence and proof. At the head of all three editions of his textbook, Merton placed the superscript, “A science which hesitates to forget its founders is lost.” Such unmindfulness of precursors may have had a personal dimension as well. Surely Merton did not want to be bound by the past, but rather to bind the past to the present and future.

Merton’s long teaching career at Columbia helped shape his outlook and style. Unlike Harvard, where Parsons at one point had tried to bring Merton onto the faculty, Columbia had a diverse graduate student enrollment, drawing some of its scholars from the lower reaches of society. Many of these students supported their studies with part-time work as cabbies, hotel workers, and temporary teachers. There were also many Jewish students. New York had the largest population of Jews of any city in the world. After World War II, when restrictive Jewish quotas were gradually eliminated at Columbia, Jewish students rushed to its gates. All this made for an exciting, strenuous, and somewhat contentious graduate student body. The secular Jewish intellectual life of New York was dominated by many varieties of socialism. Merton’s textbooks often seemed to be addressing students with socialist backgrounds. In each edition, Merton presented a long discussion of the points of agreement of functional analysis with dialectical materialism in order to demonstrate that, like the physical sciences, functional analysis is ideologically neutral. Merton’s sociology may have had the latent function of providing a way station for young socialists on their way to a broader and more acceptable American social vision.

Merton’s later work indicates an important shift in emphasis. From an earlier determination to make sociology more scientific, he turned toward an effort to understand the work of the physical sciences in sociological terms. Perhaps he believed that, once one understood how science worked, the uses of that knowledge would become

readily available for sociology. However, his notions of the norms of science also shifted. In his later work, Merton began to explore the notion of intellectual “property rights” as an integral part of the institution and ethics of science. Moreover, instead of the somewhat instrumentalist approach to the late nineteenth-century founders of the discipline, he began to write about his sense of affinity with them. In addition, Merton’s public remarks about his own forebears became more explicit. Previously, in a 1961 *New Yorker* profile, he was described as resembling a stereotypical minister and his father as an Eastern European, with a “ripe Slavic accent.” However, in a 1994 address to the American Council of Learned Societies, Merton announced that he was born Meyer Schkolnick, that his mother and father were Jewish immigrants, and that he grew up in the South Philadelphia immigrant ghetto, described somewhat nostalgically.

Perhaps the most striking expression of the continuity and change in Merton’s outlook over the course of his career can be seen in his response to the radicalism of the 1960s and 1970s. Within the discipline of sociology, this radicalism took the form of a relatively short-lived neo-Marxism. Merton had long considered Marxism, as a system, to be a defunct form of utopianism and seemed surprised at its sudden recrudescence. He responded, for the most part, by casting his debate with the younger sociologists in terms of an argument about epistemology and the sociology of knowledge. To the accusation that his form of sociology was “a social construction” reflecting the bias of privileged scholars, Merton replied that sociologists had created a neutral body of autonomous knowledge with radical possibilities. The profession of sociology, like the profession of science, still provided a basis for organized skepticism and for a form of oppositional identity. But to the radical accusation, which he himself had made a quarter of a century earlier, that the prevailing academic sociologist overlooked the role of sheer power in society, he gave no reply.

*Samuel Haber*

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# American Jews in Science

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## American Jews in the Physical Sciences

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To pose the question of Jews' role in, or impact on, any creative occupation—science, art, or literature—is, in itself a controversial issue. If science were an objective and impersonal reflection of physical reality, this article would have no *raison d'être*. In fact, many Jewish scientists, Albert Einstein the best known among them, have been averse to any association between their Jewishness and their scientific pursuit. Some scientists consider the topic of “Jews in science” prejudicial; others deem it as nonsensical as that of green-eyed men in science. In their view, there cannot be anything specifically Jewish in scientific endeavor. Science is viewed as an activity devoid of cultural traits traceable to any country, religion, or ethnicity. This remains a strong belief both among the public and among practicing natural scientists in spite of the findings of historians of science, who, since the 1960s, have discerned social, cultural, religious, and other “external” influences on science.

The effect of Jews on science has a long history of conflicting claims. Antisemites have blamed Jews for contaminating what would otherwise have been “pure science” with Jewish ideas. In some countries, this claim has led to discrimination against Jews, the dismissal of Jews, and their emigration. Conversely, others have expressed pride in “Jewish geniuses” like Einstein and looked for the roots

of their success in Jewish cultural and educational values. Some have asserted that Jewish marital practices tend to breed geniuses, in contradistinction to the Catholic custom of celibacy for the clergy, who for many centuries were the most important contingent among the intellectuals. A recent work surveys the current issues and opinions in the literature on Jews in world science (Deichmann and Charpa 2004).

## Science as an Instrument of Secularization

Until recent decades, American Jews chose science, where meritocracy was expected to reign supreme, as a refuge from discrimination. As early as the 1940s, Robert Merton's codification of the scientific ethos (“a complex of values and norms which is held to be binding on the man of science”) reassured them of an even playing field. The young Jewish sociologist, who had changed his name, Meyer Schkolnick, to the English-sounding Robert Merton, attributed to science four norms: universalism, disinterestedness, communism, and organized skepticism. (By communism, Merton meant the “belief in the ‘common ownership’ of the results of science” [Hollinger 1996].) Universalism was particularly appealing to American Jews, many of whom had foreign names and spoke with “strange” accents. Prodded by Georges Gurwitsch, a Jewish

refugee from Nazi-occupied France, Merton also linked democracy and science, largely in reaction to the Nazification of science in Germany and, to a lesser degree, to the growing use of political arguments in science in the Soviet Union in the 1930s (Hollinger 1996).

Some Jews saw science as a tool to reshape American society to become more open and more secular. They wanted the meritocratic norm to transcend science, to be applied throughout American society. Thus science offered not only a meritocratic refuge from prejudice, as had formerly been the case in other countries, but was now construed as a politically progressive activity, appealing to the largely left-leaning American Jewish population in the middle of the twentieth century. Science also exhibited a particular ideological pull on Jews, a group then abandoning religious practice faster and more radically than most other denominations in the United States. The entry of Jews into the universities and, more specifically, into the scientific profession triggered a trend that some scholars would later call de-Christianization, and that was accompanied by rapid de-Judaization of the Jews themselves.

In Europe, Jewish identity underwent major metamorphoses in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that were important in making science, particularly the physical sciences, a strong magnet for Jews. The massive immigration of Jews from the Russian Empire and its successor states in the early twentieth century brought these metamorphoses to American shores, where part of the new Americans' intellectual heritage became the concept of the secular Jew. This concept, which had gained popularity in Eastern Europe, and particularly in the Russian Empire, eliminated the religious—and thus normative—dimension of Judaism and retained only the components of lineage and culture. The secular Jewish identity thus took on a sociocultural coloration: it could be applied only to those who had consciously rejected Judaism while preserving linguistic (Yiddish and, later, Hebrew) and cultural traits. The identity that took shape was channeled into a diversity of political options, often inspired by nationalism and socialism. The concept of the secular Jew, which overtly negated the traditional Jewish perspective, would become the cornerstone of Zionism and of the Bund, as well as of the Soviet definition of Jewish nationality. Jewish secularism as an expression of ethnicity found no long-term support in American society and has experienced a decline since the 1950s.

A striking example of the vacuum left by Judaism was the plea that young Jews in Riga, Latvia, made to Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880–1940), a Russian author and Zionist leader, in 1923: “Our life is dull and our hearts are empty, for there is no God in our midst; give us a God, sir, worthy of dedication and sacrifice, and you will see what we can do” (Schechtman 1961). Zionism offered one such God; Bolshevism offered another. Prior to the 1960s, the physical sciences also figured prominently as a substitute for Judaism and an alternative to it.

The idea of progress, particularly the positivist idea of progress from the theological to the scientific level of consciousness, found enthusiastic response among Eastern European Jews. The deterministic image of science, grounded in Newtonian physics, survived remarkably well the ascendance of the concepts of relativity and uncertainty, introduced in the course of the scientific revolution associated with the names of Albert Einstein and Werner Heisenberg in the early twentieth century. The deterministic image of science could be conveniently held up as a challenge to religion. Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century, science as the antipode of religion had a strong impact on the public around the world. American Jews were in the forefront of the struggle for this kind of scientific progress.

### Scientific Training

There were practically no scientists, or even university graduates, among the Jewish immigrants to the United States until the 1930s. The severe restrictions on university admission that the czarist authorities had imposed on the country's Jews made it highly improbable to find scientists among those who fled the Russian Empire. It was only among those escaping from National Socialism later in the century that significant numbers of scientists could be found.

Young American Jews began to enter universities in significant numbers at about the same time as new scientific careers were opening in academia and, to a lesser degree, in the private sector. While in Europe, emancipation of the Jews roughly coincided with the emergence of science as a profession in the late nineteenth century; in the United States it was the mass immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe that coincided with the somewhat later beginnings of professional science in America. In other

words, the professionalization of science was taking place at the same time as Jews were entering general society in their respective countries (Rabkin and Robinson 1994).

American Jews embraced the physical sciences with particular enthusiasm and success. Mertonian universalism held the promise of full acceptance, and the vanguard physical sciences appeared more transnational than the traditional botany or zoology. Several European Jews were, by the beginning of World War I, well known as proponents of the New Physics. Pushed to the margins of mainstream traditional physics, they found themselves on the forefront of a scientific revolution that was reshaping their discipline. Young Jews entering American universities were aware of the prominence achieved by Jewish scientists in Europe, mostly in Germany. Their example showed how the physical sciences could help Jews transcend parochialism and discrimination, and make universally recognized contributions to science. It would appear that the hope of universalism, rather than ethnic pride, was in play.

### Orthodox Jewish Scientists

Paradoxically, it was during the rebellious sixties that Orthodox Jewish scientists began to make a mark in America's physical sciences. Several factors account for the growing presence of observant Jews in physics. One is the implantation of a new kind of Jewish Orthodoxy on American soil. Developed since the 1850s, this trend, associated with its founder, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, stressed the integration of Judaism with modern culture, including science. This emphasis distinguished it from the Orthodoxy of Eastern and Central Europe that shunned modernity altogether. The new trends of Orthodoxy migrated to America both before and after World War II. The German Orthodox in exile took over a decade to produce a first crop of Orthodox scientists, many of them forming the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists in New York in 1947. It has tackled both the theological aspects of research results as well as the applications of science to the elucidation of Jewish law (Carmell and Domb 1976).

Another factor that facilitated the entry of Jews into the physical sciences was the increasing tolerance on America's campuses. The opening of kosher cafeterias and accommodation to Sabbath observance were signs of growing cultural diversity rather than measures taken

specifically for American Jews. Although before the 1960s, most Jews tried to downplay their Jewishness, to change their names, and to appear paragons of universalism, it became increasingly acceptable for observant, and otherwise conspicuous, Jews to join the faculties of major American universities.

The sixties were also a period of unprecedented expansion of American physics and its consolidation as the center of the world scientific community. The nuclear arms race, the increased emphasis on American science education in reaction to the launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union in 1957, the superpower competition in space exploration, and other elements of the Cold War boosted the physical sciences, creating many openings for qualified researchers in the United States. During this particularly propitious time to embark on a career in the physical sciences, Jews, including many Orthodox Jews, were among the new recruits. They were joining the center of world science that was undergoing rapid growth, a situation that resembled the entry of Jews in the scientific profession in the latter third of the nineteenth and the first third of the twentieth century in Germany.

While the universalistic ethos had drawn German Jews to science, the physical sciences offered an additional refuge to observant Jews in the United States. They needed relatively little familiarity with the ambient culture, which was indispensable for those interested in becoming historians, philosophers, or anthropologists. Indeed, Judaic scholars often distrusted the humanities and the social sciences and discouraged Orthodox Jews from studying them seriously (Levi 1983). By contrast, they held physical science to be an objective search for truth, devoid of cultural influences, which could thus be reconciled with the scientist's personal practice of Judaism.

### Current Situation

Since the 1960s prominent Jewish physicists have also become outspoken about the impact of Jewish culture on their scientific work. Judaism and Talmudic study came to be praised in the acceptance speeches of Jewish Nobel laureates. Indeed, the Jews are clearly overrepresented among America's religious groups in terms of the ratio between their share among the Nobel Prize winners and their percentage in faculties. This disproportion is particularly pronounced in the physical sciences (more than three to one),

and the first American to earn a Nobel Prize in physics was a Jew, Albert A. Michelson.

In the early twenty-first century American Jews perceive themselves mostly as part of the country's mainstream. They are no longer "outsiders" as defined by sociologist Thorstein Veblen, who ascribed Jews' success in the sciences to their socially marginal status. Today science is no longer seen as an avenue to social mobility. While Jewish scientists in the sixties came from poor and lower-middle-class backgrounds, becoming a scientist today entails an economic sacrifice for many American Jews. This may explain the apparent decline in the percentage of Jews in the physical sciences. Another factor is the change of emphasis from the physical sciences to the life sciences that accompanied the end of the Cold War.

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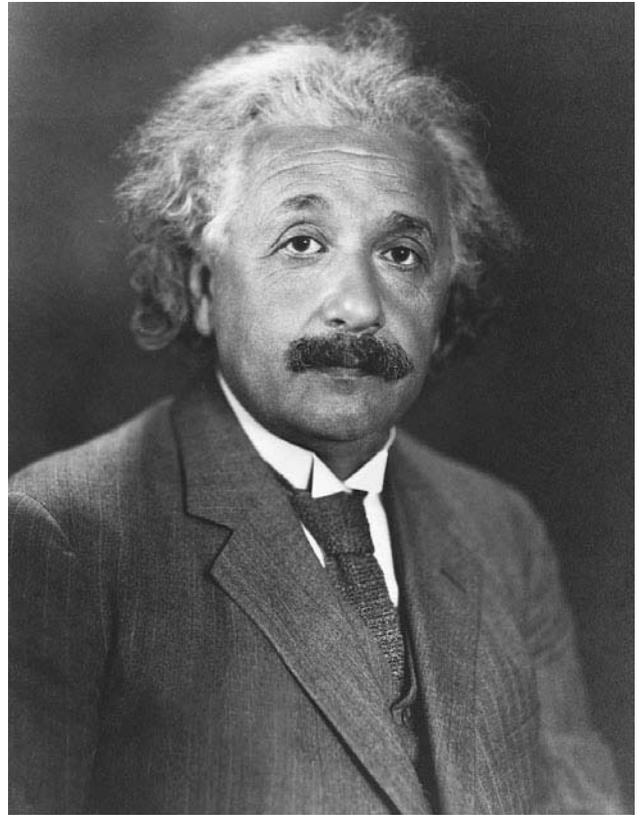
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## Albert Einstein (1879–1955)

### Renowned Theoretical Physicist

Albert Einstein is known for the development of the special and general theories of relativity and for numerous contributions to quantum theory. He utilized his fame to work for such causes as pacifism, Zionism, antifascism, civil liberties, socialism, world government, and banning nuclear weapons.

Born to south German Jewish parents who moved to Munich when he was one, Einstein was brought up in a well-to-do, secular home. He nevertheless developed



*Albert Einstein, physicist, one of the greatest scientists of all time. (Library of Congress)*

strong religious feelings as a child, fostered by private Jewish religious instruction and Catholic instruction at his primary school. His exposure to antisemitism and his resistance to rote learning contributed to an early sense of social isolation. Except for his sister Maja and other relatives, he rarely played with other children, developing his visual and motor skills through slow, methodical play with construction sets and other toys. His mother Pauline fostered an interest in music that led to a lifelong involvement with the violin and later the piano. Introduced at about age ten to popular scientific literature by a much older student, he abruptly dropped his attachment to religion, but kept his sense of wonder at the cosmos and his desire to understand its structure. In a private secondary school he did well in mathematics and developed a love of classical, German, and later, world literature that endured for the rest of his life.

The family electro-technical business was managed financially by his father Hermann and technically by his uncle Jakob, an engineer who fostered Einstein's interest in mathematics and later challenged him with technical prob-

lems. While initially prospering, the medium-sized firm's business dwindled in the face of competition from Germany's major electrical enterprises, and in 1894 the two brothers moved the firm from Munich to northern Italy where prospects seemed better. But within a couple of years the firm collapsed, and, although Hermann continued on a smaller scale, he was still in debt when he died in 1902.

Young Albert combined a lifelong fascination with technology and an equally strong abhorrence of its commercial exploitation. Originally destined to take over the business, it became clear to him that such a course was incompatible with his nature. Left behind in Munich to finish his secondary education, he abruptly left school in 1895 to join his parents in Italy. Fearing military service, he renounced German citizenship in 1896, remaining stateless until granted Swiss citizenship in 1901. He also declared himself "without religious affiliation," a practice he continued throughout his life. He completed secondary school in Switzerland, where the educational philosophy was markedly more sympathetic to him than that of his German schools, and he retained a lifelong affection for Swiss democracy.

In 1896 Einstein entered the Swiss Federal Polytechnic (ETH) in Zurich, studying physics and mathematics for four years in preparation for a teaching career. There he met several lifelong friends and his future first wife, fellow physics student Mileva Marić. His independent if not arrogant attitude earned him the dislike of some of his teachers, notably his initially well-disposed physics professor, in whose laboratory Einstein spent most of his time. Upon graduation in 1900, he was the only one of his small cohort of fellow students not to receive an assistantship at the ETH. Efforts to find a physics position elsewhere proved fruitless, and Einstein felt that antisemitism played a role.

He lived from hand to mouth for two years, unable to marry his pregnant fiancée. In 1902, a school friend's father persuaded the head of the Swiss Patent Office to give Einstein a job, and he married Marić in 1903, but no trace of their first child, born the previous year, has been found. The couple later had two sons: Hans Albert became a hydraulic engineer and moved to the United States. Eduard developed schizophrenia during adolescence and ended up in a Swiss mental institution. Einstein began an affair with his cousin Elsa in 1912, and his wife left him in 1914 soon after his move to Berlin, where Elsa lived. He married her in 1919 shortly after his first wife agreed to a divorce.

Einstein published his first paper in 1901. While at the Patent Office (1902–1909) he produced a steady stream of papers, culminating in 1905, his *annus mirabilis* (year of wonders), during which he produced five papers that heralded the birth of modern physics: two provided strong evidence for the kinetic-molecular theory of matter at a time when it was still being questioned and developed the first quantitative theory of a stochastic (random) process. Two others developed what is now called the special theory of relativity, the result of a ten-year-long attempt to resolve the conflict between Newtonian mechanics and Maxwell's electrodynamics, especially as applied to the optics of moving bodies. To do so, he had to replace Newton's kinematics (theory of space, time, and motion), based on the concept of absolute time, with a new kinematics based on the relativity of simultaneity. One of the most important consequences is the possibility of interconverting quantities of mass and quantities of energy, now expressed in one of the most famous formulas in physics:  $E = mc^2$ .

But the developments of 1905 proved to be only a way station in his search for a deeper understanding of the structure of the cosmos. Attempting in 1907 to fit gravitation into the framework of the special theory, Einstein soon convinced himself that this could not be done. Because of what he came to regard as the most essential feature of gravitation—the equality of gravitational and inertial mass—his theory of relativity would have to be further generalized. He embarked on the quest for this generalization, which culminated in 1915 when he formulated the final version of the general theory of relativity. All previous physical theories were based on the existence of fixed, given space–time structures, providing the kinematic stage on which the dynamic dramas of matter and radiation were enacted. The special theory drastically renovated the stage, but left it fixed and given. In the general theory, the stage becomes part of the play and itself changes in the course of the drama. To revert from the metaphor, in general relativity there is no fixed kinematic background—no kinematics independent of dynamics. Einstein considered this insight to be his greatest contribution to physics.

The fifth 1905 paper was the only one that Einstein characterized as revolutionary. It argued for the first time that the existence of the quantum of action  $h$ , which Max Planck had introduced in 1900, required the replacement of both classical (prequantum) mechanics and electromagnetism (including light) by new, quantum theories. He

introduced the idea of the light quantum in 1905 and developed the idea in the face of the skepticism and opposition of most physicists until it won general acceptance two decades later. Over the course of these two decades, Einstein contributed mightily to the development of quantum theory in many other ways. But he was never satisfied that the new quantum mechanics developed in the 1920s—or the new quantum field theory developed in the 1930s–1950s—provided a complete explanation of the quantum phenomena that he had first brought to light.

He hoped that some further generalization of the general theory of relativity would be found that would include the electromagnetic field—the only other fundamental field known when he started his search for a unified field theory—and would also explain the quantum phenomena without recourse to the paradoxical features he saw in quantum mechanics. Although his quest for a satisfactory unified field theory started in the 1920s, and he developed and rejected many unsatisfactory ones, it remained uncompleted at his death in 1955.

By 1909 the renown of Einstein's work brought him his first academic job, an assistant professorship at a Swiss university. Thereafter he rose rapidly to a full professorship in 1911, and in 1914 he became a member of the Prussian Academy of Sciences, moving to Berlin, where he remained until the Nazis took power in 1933. He began to manifest an interest in politics during World War I, which broke out soon after his move to Berlin. He was horrified to find himself at the center of German militarism as a wave of patriotism and jingoism swept over Europe, including most of its intellectuals. Most of his German colleagues proclaimed their allegiance to the fatherland as it invaded Belgium in the name of German culture, and he became active in efforts to counter their jingoism and end the war.

After the war, he actively advocated the pacifist cause, both in Germany and abroad, until the Nazis' takeover. He then advocated armed resistance to fascist aggression, especially during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), arguing the impracticality of preaching pacifism while Hitler was waging war in Spain and preparing for another world war. In 1932, before the Nazis took power, Einstein had agreed to spend a half year at the new Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, and he left Germany for the United States. The Nazis would confiscate his bank account and his property, which they could "legally" do because he was a German citizen—his citizenship hav-

ing been automatically granted during the Weimar years. Einstein became an American citizen in 1940, and during World War II (1939–1945) he vigorously supported the Allied cause. His famous letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt warned against the dangers of German development of an atomic bomb, but otherwise he took no part in the atomic bomb project. With the onset of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, he refused to support either side, vigorously warning against the dangers of growing American militarism, with its attendant threats of preventive wars abroad and the abrogation of civil liberties at home. He felt that only universal disarmament and the ceding of all military power to a world government could end the threat to civilization posed by the growing destructive power—particularly the H-bomb—being developed in the arms race.

The treatment of East European Jews who came to Germany after World War I in search of higher education, as well as his contacts with the Jewish masses during his 1921 tour of the United States with Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann, made him a staunch advocate of the Zionist project as a means of giving a sense of cohesion and self-worth to Jewish people everywhere. As Arab resistance developed to the Jewish colonization project in Palestine (then under British mandate), he advocated the creation of a binational state. After settling in Princeton, New Jersey in 1933, he spoke out vigorously against Nazi persecution of the Jewish people and warned Americans of the dangers of German aggression. The head of the new Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, of which Einstein was the major luminary, tried to silence him, but Einstein threatened to resign and continued to speak out on issues of the day.

The failure of the Allied powers to help Jewish victims of persecution before World War II, to halt the horrors of the Holocaust during the war, or to allow its survivors to emigrate to Palestine after the war led him to endorse the creation of the State of Israel. However, he remained a critical supporter, urging neutrality in the Cold War and making its treatment of its Arab minority a key test of its democratic bona fides. After the death of Weizmann in 1952, Einstein was offered the presidency of Israel in a gesture that both sides knew to be symbolic.

During the Red Scare in 1950s Cold-War America, Einstein stood like a bulwark in defense of civil liberties, urging intellectuals to resist any assault on constitutionally

guaranteed freedoms of speech and action, protesting against many encroachments on these rights, and defending those who exercised them in the face of governmental pressures. He chose this moment to publicly advocate a socialist solution to the economic difficulties he felt to be inextricably bound to the capitalist system of production for profit, which fostered excessive individualism and greed. But, with the example of the Soviet Union before him, he warned of the dangers of a collective economy that did not provide strict guarantees of individual freedom.

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## American Jews and the Ideology of Modern Science

Over the course of two centuries, American Jews have embraced science in various ways, associating ideas such as universalism, objectivity, and freedom of thought with a scientific ethos and tying that ethos to their religious views. Many Reform Jews in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries found the ideology of science to be entirely consonant with their Jewish faith. By contrast, secular Jews in the twentieth century have often used science to bludgeon traditional religion. Some of the latter have been among the most influential popularizers of science, and their works have been prominent in American popular culture.

Science plays a key role in the modern world far beyond its practical efficacy; people of widely different backgrounds have embraced science as an ideology or an ethos to guide their thinking or bolster their beliefs. At least since

the Enlightenment, thinkers from various traditions have used science to support liberalism, democracy, freedom of thought, cosmopolitanism, and objectivity. Jewish intellectuals have often drawn on science to promote or reinforce a universalistic perspective associated with broader cultural agendas they have adopted.

Although the American Jewish population was never higher than 3.9 percent, 40 percent of Nobel Prizes awarded U.S. citizens in the physical and biological sciences have gone to someone of Jewish or half-Jewish ancestry (Hollinger 2002). As early as 1919, the sociologist Thorstein Veblen noticed the disproportionate involvement of Jews in science and sought to explain it as intrinsic to the Jewish intellectual experience. He claimed that Jewish intellectuals, having abandoned their religious beliefs and having adopted a wholly skeptical frame of mind, were alienated from the dominant culture and thus exhibited a liberated and detached mode of thinking strongly conducive to theoretical scientific work.

The historian David Hollinger has disagreed, pointing out that Jews have been prominent in all aspects of American culture and society, from business to entertainment to law. Indeed, the high percentage of Jewish Nobel Laureates and Jewish faculty in elite universities is comparable to Jews' elite rankings in other professions. Hollinger's thesis, in which class and family professional background help explain the differentials in accomplishments, suggests that other ideological commitments that have been associated with science—such as cosmopolitanism and universalism—may have played a role in Jews' interest in scientific fields.

Jews' engagement with modern science began during the Enlightenment, when physicians and philosophers left the ghettos and the relatively insular world of Talmudic thought and encountered the intellectual world of eighteenth-century Europe. Science and scientific ideas proved a safe arena in which Jewish intellectuals could engage with gentile philosophy, without threatening their Jewish identity. Moses Mendelssohn, renowned as an Enlightenment philosopher as much as a Jewish scholar, asserted that Judaism was both a natural religion—with rationally deducible and universally applicable doctrines—and a particular religion—derived from the Laws given to the Jews on Mt. Sinai. Judaism, in other words, was a particular manifestation of religion, which promoted a universal ethical doctrine that was rationally accessible to anyone.

Reform Judaism grew out of these ideas. The three foundational principles of Reform were all closely allied to the sciences and to classical Enlightenment ideology: reason, progress, and universalism. In America, Reform flourished in German Jewish communities during the second half of the nineteenth century and was codified in the 1885 Pittsburgh platform, which announced Judaism's complete consonance with science and biblical criticism.

Reform Jews embraced science in much the same way that liberal Protestants did; they found ways to utilize scientific ideas in their theology. Evolution is a good example. Although there was great skepticism about evolution in the first decade and a half after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), both liberal Jews and liberal Christians eventually found ways to tame it. Both groups initially found it problematic because of its materialistic implications, but gradually both came to accept it in a teleological form, in which a divine hand guided evolutionary change. Liberal religious thinkers, however, often went further, embracing evolution as a central framework for describing change not only in the biological world, but in all human history. Religion became imbued with a progressive evolutionary vision.

The overall Jewish response to evolution, however, suggests that there were significant differences with the Christian tradition taken as a whole. Reform and traditional Jews both seemed less concerned about the implications of modern science than did the spectrum of conservative-to-liberal Christians. Even many traditional Jews accepted it and found ways of using evolution as an ideological support in religious arguments. Since questions about the role of ritual and law were of great import to traditionalists, it should not be surprising that evolutionary arguments were put into the service of orthodoxy. Some Conservatives marshaled evidence showing that Jewish rituals were scientifically and medically efficacious and increased the fitness of the group in medically demonstrable ways. Hence, in the hands of some Jews the evolutionary doctrine of survival of the fittest ended up as a pillar for conservative Jewish thought.

Science played an even more important role among secular Jews. In the twentieth century, a great number of Jews became proponents of a starkly secular social order, one in which traditional religious forms were discarded for a universalistic and nontheistic humanism. Although many, perhaps most, secular Jews remained unaffiliated,

some came to be involved with specific humanist organizations. Ethical Culture, one of these groups, spawned by Felix Adler, the son of a prominent Reform rabbi at Temple Emanu-El in New York, welcomed both Jews and gentiles into a faith focused on ethical concerns. Other secularists found their way to the humanist movement in the Unitarian church. Still others, toward the end of the century, declared themselves secular humanists and adopted often aggressively antireligious rhetoric. Rabbi Sherwin Wine drew inspiration from the broader humanist movement when he founded the Society for Humanistic Judaism (1969) for people who identified with the Jewish historical and cultural experience but who were no longer able to accept a theistic metaphysic.

It was not until the coming of age of a generation of secular Jews in the middle of the twentieth century that the ideology of science came to be integrated with the promotion of secularism. In contrast to the nineteenth-century Reform view that saw Judaism itself as a framework within which Enlightenment values could flourish, the ideals of these twentieth-century Jews were starkly secular. To these thinkers, Judaism was particularistic and narrow, whereas science was broad and universal. This twin promotion of science and secularism was especially strong among the children and grandchildren of East European immigrants. These humanists argued that the ideology of science should be an essential part of the modern worldview, in part because it provided knowledge and control, but also because it promoted critical thinking, ethical conduct, and liberal democratic values.

Four late twentieth-century figures stand out as cultural spokesmen for the scientific humanist position: Paul Kurtz, Isaac Asimov, Carl Sagan, and Stephen Jay Gould. All were of Jewish descent, and all espoused a deep and abiding love of the ethos of science and felt passionately about its importance to the modern world. Though they had slightly different ideas about the proper place of religion, their ideas about science and its role in the world were very similar.

Paul Kurtz played a singular role in the American humanist movement, transforming it from a small movement of liberal ministers and academics into an important media force by promoting the humanist agenda aggressively and widely in print, on television, and with publicity events. He built a successful publishing house, Prometheus Press, and edited three popular journals—*The Humanist*,

*Skeptical Inquirer*, and *Free Inquiry*—that defended science against superstition and attacked dogmatic religion, especially Christian fundamentalism.

Asimov, Sagan, and Gould were among the most well-known popularizers of science in the late twentieth century. Asimov and Sagan wrote extensively on science, its ethical dimensions, and its importance for the modern world. Sagan's television series *Cosmos* (1980) was translated into many languages and was viewed around the world, and his science fiction novel *Contact* (1985) was posthumously released as a major motion picture. Through both fiction and nonfiction, Sagan and Asimov argued that citizens of a democratic and technically sophisticated society should know and embrace science and the scientific worldview. They prophesied great dangers to a culture that ignored the skeptical frame of mind and the universal perspective of science and that failed to reject dogma.

The paleontologist Stephen Jay Gould wrote extensively during his lifetime about the proper uses of science. His sensitivity to history and his ability to turn episodes in the history of science into moral stories appealed to readers of *Natural History Magazine* for over twenty-five years. Taking a softer line on religion than many humanists, Gould argued that religion and science were *both* important magisteria of knowledge, but they had to be kept separate. He termed this idea Non-Overlapping Magisteria (NOMA) and discussed it in his popular book *Rocks of Ages* (1999). The strict limits he placed on acceptable religious belief made it clear, however, that in many realms, science was the greater authority.

Historian Naomi Cohen noted that the secularizing influence of the law in the United States is much indebted both to Jewish lawyers and to lawsuits initiated by Jewish

plaintiffs. The American Civil Liberties Union, with its strong Jewish presence, was one of the primary conduits of this secularist interpretation, and helped to promote the principle of separation of church and state as a pillar of American constitutional law. Similarly, Jews who found themselves in a position to promote the connection between science and secularism did so. The historical experience of religious discrimination against Jews goes far to explain why so many Jews have strongly embraced the ideology of secularism. It also helps to explain the importance that so many Jews have placed on depicting science as a neutral territory, where objectivity and rational reasoning can prevail over prejudice. Although scholars of science now debate how accurate this picture of scientific neutrality is, in many cases—and clearly in Jewish intellectual history—the ideology of scientific universalism has played a dominant role.

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# American Jews and Education

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## Jewish Education in America

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The story of Jewish education in the United States is about the triumph of American-style models over European imports. From the outset, American Jews took their cues about how to educate their children from their Protestant neighbors. Although between 1840 and 1924 immigrants transplanted educational institutions from Europe, these generally lasted one generation, evolving into, or giving way to, unmistakably American alternatives.

In the colonial and early federal periods, general education was often tied to religious instruction. The pervasive religious content of both public and private schools dissuaded Jews from enrolling their children. Following the general custom, some well-to-do families engaged private tutors for their children. Most, however, relied on the *kehillah* (the synagogue community) to provide education for their young. In New York, K. K. Shearith Israel dedicated its Minhat Areb School in 1731, but it probably did not open until the *hazzan* (cantor-reader), David Mendez Machado, arrived in 1737. Machado's duties included operating the school and teaching Hebrew. Families with means were expected to pay for the *hazzan's* services, while children of the poor were taught gratis. A similar arrangement likely prevailed in the decades prior to the Revolutionary War in Newport, Rhode Island.

By 1755, Shearith Israel's school had expanded to include general studies. But the *kehillah's* ability to sustain a full education program was dependent on parental interest as well as on the *hazzan's* expertise. At times, a separate schoolmaster was hired, although qualified teachers were not easy to find. The Polonies Talmud Torah, a Hebrew school established in 1803 by Shearith Israel, was plagued by low attendance and operated only intermittently before the 1840s, when it was converted into a supplementary school. An attempt in 1808 to transform the school into a tuition-driven community school with a limited number of scholarship students won state funding, but it failed after its popular schoolmaster Emanuel Nuñez Carvalho (1771–1817) left.

By the early nineteenth century, many Christian congregations had opened free schools for the children of their impoverished members. After 1801 the Charleston *kehillah*, influenced by this approach, offered education for the needy through its Society for the Relief of Orphans and Indigent Children. For the Southern well-to-do, private academies and home tutoring were the norm. Among the private academies that catered to Jewish children was Carvalho's school in Charleston (1811–1814), where Hebrew, as well as Latin, French, English, and Spanish were taught. Carvalho wrote what is believed to be the first Hebrew textbook authored by a Jew in the United States, *Mafteah*

*Leshon Ivriith* (*Key to the Hebrew Language*, 1815). It was intended for secondary schools and universities.

By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, public education was making rapid gains, despite resistance from working-class parents who feared the loss of income from their school-age children, and from Catholics who objected to the Protestant cast of the public schools. The Central European Jewish immigrants shared many of the Catholics' concerns. Readings from the King James Bible, the recitation of prayers, the singing of Christian hymns, and instruction from textbooks reflecting a triumphalist Protestant perspective rendered the schools unacceptable.

As a result, in the 1840s and 1850s tuition-supported coeducational Jewish day schools, often associated with synagogues, proliferated. Among the most successful were Cincinnati's Talmud Yeladim Institute, associated with K. K. B'nai Yeshurun synagogue (today the Isaac M. Wise Temple), and Dr. Max Lilienthal's private day school in New York City. Typically, Hebrew instruction in these schools was limited to one or two hours per day. Younger students were taught to read Hebrew mechanically from the *siddur* (prayer book), while older ones mastered simple Bible translations. Catechisms were employed for instruction in religion and biblical history. Boys were also prepared for their bar mitzvahs. The general studies curriculum approximated that in other private schools.

By the 1860s and 1870s, however, the vast majority of day schools had closed or become supplementary schools. As Jews and others fought successfully to remove overt Christian content from the public schools in many cities, public education became a more palatable option. Even as Catholics established an extensive network of parochial schools, Jews were loath to separate themselves from other Americans. Jewish immigrants saw in the public schools the most promising avenue for upward mobility.

With few exceptions, religious education became supplementary to the public schools. In this, Jews were heavily influenced by the Protestant Sunday school movement. Indeed, the earliest Jewish Sunday school was established in 1838 by Rebecca Gratz (1781–1869) and the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society in Philadelphia, the birthplace of the American Sunday School Union (ASSU). Although she borrowed liberally from the Protestant Union, even bowdlerizing their textbooks, Gratz received encouragement and assistance from Mikveh Israel's rabbi, Isaac Leeser (1806–1868). Although the school was open to all, Gratz

was especially interested in attracting the children of poor Central European immigrants. Parents who could afford tuition paid two dollars, but no student was turned away for lack of funds.

The growth of the Sunday school revolutionized the role of women in Jewish education. Unlike previous Jewish school models, most Jewish Sunday schools were operated almost entirely by women, frequently as volunteers. Two female teachers at the Hebrew Sunday School in Philadelphia, Simha Peixotto and Rachel Peixotto Pyke, wrote two of the earliest Jewish Sunday school primers. As in the ASSU schools, catechisms, hymns, and Bible reading anchored the curriculum. Over the next quarter century, Jewish Sunday and Sabbath schools spread quickly, and they were opened even in many traditional congregations. In 1886 a Hebrew Sabbath School Union (HSSU) was formed. The HSSU published a unified curriculum and educational pamphlets, but its reach was limited because many of the larger schools, fearing a loss of autonomy, refused to join. The Union was eventually incorporated into the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC).

In opening her Sunday school, Gratz was motivated in part by fears that immigrant Jewish children would fall prey to evangelical Christian missionaries at Philadelphia's Central High School. Indeed, Jews' resolve to counter extensive missionary activities fueled other educational initiatives in the mid-nineteenth century, including the Hebrew Free School movement in New York. The first Free School, an all-day school, was opened in 1866 with three hundred students and six teachers. Subsequently, five supplementary afternoon schools were opened. At their height, New York's Jewish Free Schools enrolled over a thousand students. However, attrition rates were high, with the average pupil remaining one year.

As Eastern European Jews began to arrive in greater numbers in the 1860s and 1870s, two European-style educational models also gained ground: the *heder* and the Talmud Torah. The *heder*—typically a one-room school conducted out of a storefront synagogue, private apartment, attic, or cellar—was operated by a single teacher who was compensated by the parents. Many offered little more than bar mitzvah training. The Talmud Torah, which served the children of the poor, provided a somewhat higher quality of education because its activities were at least nominally supervised by a lay board representing the funders. Typically, it operated on weekday afternoons after

public school hours and on Sundays. Among the best was the Machazikai Talmud Torah, on the Lower East Side of New York, founded in 1857 by Pesach Rosenthal. Not only were children able to attend gratis, but they were also provided with free clothing and a pair of shoes.

In the late nineteenth century, influenced by the Russian *haskalah* (Enlightenment), a new model of Jewish education developed in Eastern Europe: the *heder metukkan* (improved Jewish school). These schools taught Hebrew as a spoken language and imbued students with a sense of Jewish nationalism. Although the traditional curriculum was retained, the *heder metukkan* added Hebrew literature and secular subjects, which were taught in Russian. By the turn of the century, a few American Talmud Torahs began to reflect the impact of the *heder metukkan*. Under the influence of educators like Hillel Malachowsky (1860–1943), Abraham Friedland (1891–1939), and Louis Hurwich (1886–1967), a handful of schools in New York, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis, and Minneapolis introduced the Hebraic, nationalistic curriculum.

Among the greatest innovators was Dr. Samson Benderly (1876–1944). A native of Safed, Palestine, he arrived in Baltimore in 1898 to study medicine, eventually abandoning that career for Jewish education. As superintendent of the Hebrew Free School in Baltimore, Benderly pioneered an American-style Talmud Torah that incorporated both the Hebrew language emphasis of the *heder metukkan* and concern for students' hygiene and stamina. Recognizing that his pupils arrived after a full day at public school, Benderly added recreational activities to his school program and honed students' language skills through games, songs, and conversation. Many of the teachers he employed were women, whom he prepared through a "college department" that combined evening classes with on-the-job training in the afternoons. Benderly's school won many admirers, but also had detractors, especially among the parent body, who objected to Modern Hebrew instruction because it was the Holy Tongue. Others were simply interested in having their children learn rudimentary synagogue skills and prepare for bar mitzvah.

As Benderly and others experimented with a Hebraic model of Jewish education, Yiddish benevolent and political organizations created Yiddish-speaking schools. The Poale Zion in 1910 pioneered the Yiddish folk schools, the oldest network of Yiddishist schools. Unlike the Talmud Torahs, religious instruction was not included in the school



*Dr. Samson Benderly, superintendent of the Hebrew Free School in Baltimore. (American Jewish Archives)*

program. The emphasis was on Jewish culture—Yiddish and Hebrew language, literature, folk music, Zionism, Jewish history—and socialist ideology. Later in the decade, other ideological groups—the Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute and the Workmen's Circle—founded Yiddish socialist school networks. Although the Workmen's Circle was originally staunchly anti-Zionist, over time it became reconciled to teaching Jewish culture and Hebrew language alongside Yiddish. As all of these schools became more Jewish and less radical, they also became more Americanized.

In 1910, Dr. Judah Magnes, chairman of the New York Kehillah, invited Benderly to organize and direct the first Bureau of Jewish Education (BJE). Funded through a \$50,000 gift from philanthropist Jacob Schiff and \$25,000 from Professor Morris Loeb's New York Foundation, the BJE was charged with organizing and improving standards in the city's Jewish schools. Recognizing that the funds were insufficient for a complete overhaul of the Jewish educational system, Benderly resolved to use the money "as a lever for the study and improvement of primary Jewish education in New York City" (Winter 1966). Benderly worked

with the eight largest Talmud Torahs to standardize curricula, improve pedagogical methods, and professionalize Jewish teaching through an established salary scale and a board of license. Scholarship money was provided to defray the tuition of indigent children. The BJE also operated laboratory schools for girls, where Benderly experimented with new techniques and curricula. New textbooks and teachers' guides were published, as well as a magazine for parents.

Another priority was enlisting talented young people to make their careers in Jewish education. In this effort Benderly collaborated with Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan (1881–1983), head of the Jewish Theological Seminary's (JTS) newly inaugurated Teachers Institute (TI). Both men viewed the Jewish school as an agent of American acculturation as well as of Jewish cultural renewal. Both were dedicated progressives and admirers of the educational philosophy of John Dewey and the behaviorist educational psychology of Edward Thorndike. Among those trained for careers in teaching, an elite group of young men and a few women, nicknamed the Benderly Boys, was selected for future leadership positions. The brightest were encouraged to do doctoral work at the Teachers College of Columbia University, where they were exposed to Dewey, Thorndike, and educational philosopher William Heard Kilpatrick. Many of these Benderly protégés went on to direct bureaus, Talmud Torah associations, Hebrew teacher colleges, and other Jewish educational organizations, spreading Benderly's vision across the country.

After the Kehillah fell apart during World War I, the BJE became an independent organization supported by New York's Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. The resulting cut in its budget severely curtailed its activities, and the BJE never realized Benderly's dream of a communal system of Jewish education. It was Benderly Boy Alexander Dushkin (1890–1976) who created the first truly bipartisan, central educational agency. As director of the BJE of Chicago from 1923 to 1934, Dushkin was the first to bring congregational schools under the bureau's aegis. In 1939, Dushkin was appointed executive director of the newly formed Jewish Education Committee of New York, successor to the BJE, which provided educational services and grants for educational experimentation to a wide range of schools, including Jewish community center schools, Yiddish schools, Jewish day schools, and congregational schools while continuing to subsidize larger communal Talmud Torahs.

In the postwar era, many bureaus adopted the New York model. By the 1960s there were thirty-four central Jewish education agencies across North America. These bureaus were coordinated and supported on a national level by the American Association of Jewish Education (AAJE, 1939), known today as the Jewish Education Service of North America. Originally, the AAJE membership consisted of individual laypeople and professionals, but in 1965 it was reorganized as an umbrella body for educational organizations, congregational bodies, and denominational commissions.

One reason for the bureau's shift was the decline of community Talmud Torahs and the concurrent ascendancy of congregational schools. By the 1930s, the population in weekday congregational schools outnumbered that in the Talmud Torahs. The decline of the Talmud Torahs accelerated in the aftermath of World War II. The immediate factor that favored the congregational school was the demographic shift of Jews away from urban enclaves to more upscale, less dense neighborhoods and suburbs. Outside of work, the public school, and local civic activities, social segregation along religious lines was mostly taken for granted by Jew and gentile alike. Many of these Jews eagerly built synagogue centers, housing social, recreational, educational, as well as religious facilities. Taking a cue from the habits of their Protestant neighbors, they embraced the synagogue as a socially acceptable form of Jewish fellowship, a token of middle-class status, and accepted congregationally based religious education as normative. Thus, congregational education became dominant because of Protestantization. Outwardly, Jews were adopting religiously based forms of Jewish identity, even as the content of American Jewish culture was essentially ethnic.

Benderly, Kaplan, and their students favored community models of Jewish education, seeing them as laboratories where an Americanized Jewish culture could emerge. Because their conception of Judaism was largely ethnic and national, they viewed denominationalism as divisive. They failed to appreciate that America was more hospitable to religious pluralism than to cultural pluralism and that, in the absence of a state church, denominationalism was a hallmark of American religious life. Benderly and Kaplan also feared that congregational schools would reduce the intensity of Jewish education. These fears were well-founded. In the immediate postwar era, over half of all congregational schools were Sunday schools. Under the

leadership of another Benderly disciple, Director of Religious Education Emanuel Gamoran (1895–1962), the UAHC's Commission on Jewish Education (CJE) encouraged Reform temples to intensify their educational programs. Although some introduced voluntary weekday Hebrew programs, most resisted the change. The Conservative movement's Commission on Jewish Education launched a similar effort in the middle to late 1940s with better results. By 1950, seventy-five Conservative congregations had converted their Sunday schools into two- or three-day-a-week schools. Nevertheless, congregational schools averaged one-third fewer teaching hours per week than the community Talmud Torahs, which were typically five-day-a-week schools.

Theoretically, the curriculum of the Conservative weekday congregational school and the community Talmud Torah was similar. In practice, however, the reduction in teaching hours in the congregational school rendered Hebrew fluency an unrealistic goal. Gamoran's religious school curriculum encouraged Reform schools to move away from the direct teaching of morals and ethics and to focus instead on Biblical stories, history, Hebrew, holidays and ceremonies, and music.

Gamoran's CJE had a great impact on textbook publishing. During his tenure (1923–1958), Gamoran edited a graded series of textbooks, many of which circulated well beyond Reform educational settings. In the postwar era, the textbook industry expanded. The Conservative movement's commission published its own line of textbooks, and trade publishers like Behrman House, Ktav Publishing House and, more recently, Tora Aura captured an increasingly large share of the market.

The 1940s and 1950s also witnessed the phenomenal expansion of day schools. Earlier in the twentieth century, day schools and *yeshivot* attracted a minuscule percentage of the student population, especially outside New York City. In 1935 there were only seventeen schools with a combined enrollment of about 4,500 students (Schiff 1966). In the late 1930s, the day school movement began to gain momentum. Alongside the traditional *yeshivot*, which were characterized by gender segregation, Yiddish or English language instruction of Judaic studies, Talmud-centered education for boys, and the relegation of general studies to the middle or late afternoon, other day school models gained in popularity. These included the coeducational Modern Orthodox day schools, where gen-

eral and Judaic studies were placed on an equal footing and the primary language of Judaic instruction was Hebrew, and the progressive Jewish academy, where the general studies program was designed to rival the best private schools and the integration of Jewish and American culture became a primary goal. By the mid-1950s day school enrollment topped 40,000 and climbed higher in subsequent decades (Schiff 1966). Many schools were organized with the assistance of Torah U'Mesorah, the Orthodox day school network.

Scholars have offered various explanations for the growth of the day school movement. Initially, the impact of the Holocaust was decisive. In the 1940s and 1950s, many day school students were children of immigrants who had fled Nazi Europe or who were Holocaust survivors. In addition, the shock of the Holocaust may have strengthened the resolve of some American-born Orthodox Jews to preserve their religious and cultural heritage, even at the price of abandoning the public school. After 1960, the replacement of the melting pot ethos with cultural pluralism, and later with multiculturalism, along with the disenchantment of many Americans with public education made day schools more palatable to a wider swath of Jews. Some were also persuaded by the gloomy assessments of the effectiveness of supplementary school education in the 1970s and 1980s. As concerns about Jewish continuity became more pronounced, many hoped day schools would stem the rising rate of intermarriage. Notably, the growth of day schools has its analogue in the growth of Christian all-day academies, many of which are affiliated with evangelical denominations.

By 2000, almost 200,000 children, 40 percent of the entire Jewish school population, were receiving a day school education. The vast majority of these schools were affiliated with various streams within Orthodoxy; Orthodox and Hasidic schools accounted for 80 percent of day school enrollment. However, the percentage of non-Orthodox schools was rising steadily. The Conservative movement officially embraced day school education in the 1950s, with the first Solomon Schechter day school established in 1956 in Queens, New York. In 2000, there were sixty-three Conservative-affiliated schools. The Reform movement, which was most reticent about embracing day schools, reevaluated its position in the 1960s. By 2000, the Progressive Association of Reform Day Schools had twenty day school affiliates in the United States and Canada

(Schick 2000). In recent years community day schools have also been on the rise. In 2004, Ravsak, the Jewish Community Day School Network, boasted ninety member schools serving 25,000 students.

Another educational innovation that grew markedly in the 1940s and 1950s was educational camping. The Jewish camping movement began in the 1890s and was connected to the fresh air movement, which was designed to improve the health of poor, urban children. In subsequent decades, overnight camps catering to a wealthier population also opened, some with (nominal) religious or cultural content. In 1919 Benderly disciple Albert Schoolman (1894–1980), director of the Central Jewish Institute (CJI), a progressive Manhattan Talmud Torah, established the first truly educational Jewish summer camp. Concerned that over the summer break his students forgot much of what they had learned, Schoolman decided to open a summer version of the CJI, where vacation would be combined with study. A permanent facility was eventually built in Port Jervis, New York. The nonprofit camp was an early and successful experiment in Jewish experiential education. Jewish cultural content was embedded in the camp's regular activities. Campers experienced Jewish life through religious services, festive Shabbat observances, Keren Ami activities, arts and crafts, and the performance arts. Schoolman, with two couples, opened a similar camp for more affluent children, Camp Modin, in 1922. The Yiddishists and the Zionists also established educational camps in the 1920s and 1930s. Among the most well-known were Camp Boiberik (Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute, 1922), Camp Yehupets (Workmen's Circle, 1923), Camp Kinderwelt (Jewish National Workers Alliance, 1925), Camp Kvutza (Young Poale Zion–Habonim, 1933), Camp Moshava (Bnei Akiva, 1937), Camp Young Judaea (Hadassah, 1938), and Camp Betar (B'rith Joseph Trumpeldor, 1940).

The Hebrew-speaking camp marked an important development in overnight camping. Samson Benderly first introduced this at Camp Achvah in 1926. The financial pressures of the Great Depression forced Benderly to reconceive Achvah as a Jewish culture camp in 1932. However, his experiment inspired the Hanoar Haivri Organization to found Camp Massad, a religious Zionist Hebrew-speaking camp, in 1941. Speaking Hebrew also became important in the Conservative movement's Ramah camps, which were founded by JTS's TI for leadership

training. The first Ramah Camp, in Conover, Wisconsin, opened in 1947. Unlike Massad, Ramah incorporated formal classes into its program. Leadership training was also the primary motivation for the founding of the Brandeis Camp Institute, in Amherst, New Hampshire (1941), and the first UAHC camp in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin (1951).

By the 1960s many acknowledged that educational camping was one of the most effective forms of Jewish education. And the camps proved to be an important breeding ground for a younger generation of educators. Today, tuition costs can be prohibitive (Sales and Saxe 2004), and affluent youth have other summertime options, including overseas travel, sports clinics, and college preparatory programs. Currently, only 4 percent of Jewish youth attend Jewish summer camps.

By the early 1970s, Jewish education was in crisis. Supplementary school enrollments were plummeting, largely as a result of declining birthrates. More disturbing, recent studies suggested that supplementary education had little positive impact on Jewish identity formation. Guided by their own positive camp experiences and the countercultural spirit of the times, the younger generation of educators counseled that supplementary schools emphasize affective learning and enculturation rather than academic subjects. The Coalition for Alternatives in Jewish Education (CAJE), established 1973, grew out of this movement. CAJE was transdenominational, reflecting many younger educators' antiestablishment bent. CAJE members sought to eliminate sexist educational materials and encourage family education.

Since the 1980s, informal educational travel options have mushroomed. A number of organizations offer teen educational summer travel packages to Israel and Europe. In 1988, the annual March of the Living pilgrimage was organized to promote Holocaust awareness, Zionism, and Jewish identity. Each year, thousands of students tour the remnants of the Nazi death camps and Israel, in a trip that coincides with Yom Ha-Shoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) and Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israel Independence Day). In the late 1990s, philanthropists Michael Steinhardt and Edgar Bronfman started the Birthright Israel program, which offers a ten-day, all-expenses-paid trip to Israel to any Jewish college student who has not previously participated in a peer educational trip.

In the 1980s and 1990s, as the organized community's fears about Jewish continuity increased, there were new ef-

forts to revitalize conventional Jewish education. Community leaders and educators made their peace with the inherent limitations of supplementary education, even as they embraced day schools. One of the most important changes of the past few decades has been the increasing involvement of local Jewish Federations and private donors in promoting Jewish education. Although historically, Federations avoided allocations to Jewish day schools, they have changed their policies. Foundations like Avi Chai and the Jewish Education Fund have poured money into day school initiatives, while funders like the Mandel Associated Foundation and the Nathan Cummings Foundation have supported new experiments in congregational education. The Wexner Foundation, Boston Hebrew College, and philanthropist Florence Melton have undertaken initiatives in adult education. The importance of foundations and Federations in conceptualizing and funding educational initiatives has weakened the central educational agencies. Some have disbanded, while others have become service agencies of local federations.

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## Brandeis University

The founding of Brandeis University in 1948 by members of the American Jewish community followed the American tradition of colleges and universities established by various denominational groups. Harvard and Yale began as Congregationalist schools; Brown was Baptist; Swarthmore, Quaker; and Princeton, Presbyterian. Named for Associate Supreme Court Justice Louis Dembitz Brandeis (1856–1941) and established in part to provide educational opportunities for Jews who suffered discrimination due to the anti-Jewish quotas widespread in academe at the time of its founding, Brandeis has become one of the preeminent small, liberal arts research universities in America. It is a member of the Association of American Universities, which represents the leading research universities in the United States and Canada.

Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, Jewish leaders put forward various proposals "for the establishment of Jewish institutions of higher learning where Jewish studies would predominate" (Goldstein 1951), anticipating the establishment of Hebrew Union College in 1875, the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1886, and Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in 1897. Brandeis University's founders, however, had a different vision, one that reflected an increasingly prevalent assimilationist view. The establishment of Brandeis signified American Jewry's growing affluence, confidence, and acculturation after World War II, along with its attendant ethnic assertiveness and expanded philanthropic objectives. Brandeis was not only a new institution in the roster of Jewish philanthropies, but a new kind of institution. Though possessing a clear character based on Jewish values, Brandeis was not to be a Jewish university, focused on the study of religious texts, existing exclusively for the benefit of Jews, or representing any one movement within Judaism. Brandeis

would be established on broad foundations, representing the increasingly secular American Jewish community as a whole. At a time when most Ivy League schools were male only, and many colleges and universities had admission quotas for Jews and other minority groups, Brandeis would be nonsectarian and open to men and women on the basis of merit alone, without reference to race, religion, ethnicity, or national origin (Goldstein 1951).

Early in 1946, C. Ruggles Smith, general counsel of Middlesex University in Waltham, Massachusetts, approached Rabbi Israel Goldstein with a proposal to turn Middlesex University over to a new board of trustees. Rabbi Goldstein was past president of the Synagogue Council of America, founded in 1926 to provide congregationally affiliated Jews with a common voice in interfaith activities, and a representative of the Albert Einstein Foundation for Higher Learning, the organizational and fund-raising arm for the entity that became Brandeis University. Middlesex University, the former Middlesex College of Medicine and Surgery—before that, the Worcester Medical Institution, founded in 1849, and revived in 1914—operated on the principles of freedom and equality, maintaining a racially, religiously, and ethnically diverse student body. However, lack of accreditation by the American Medical Association and declining enrollments during World War II doomed the university.

In February 1946, Rabbi Goldstein was elected president of the board of trustees of Middlesex University; he was succeeded by George Alpert, a railroad executive, who served from 1947 to 1954 as the first board chair of the newly renamed Brandeis University. In May 1948, Dr. Abram Sachar, one of the organizers of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation, whose many writings include the popular one-volume *History of the Jews*, became the first president of Brandeis University. In October, classes began with 107 students and 13 faculty members.

Since then, Brandeis University has grown to become an institution of some 450 faculty members serving approximately 3,100 undergraduate and 1,200 graduate students. It has had seven presidents: Abram L. Sachar, who served until 1968 and subsequently as chancellor and then chancellor emeritus until his death in 1993; noted attorney and former ambassador Morris B. Abram, who stepped down in 1970 to run for the U.S. Senate from New York; Charles I. Schottland, commissioner of Social Security in

the Eisenhower administration and the first dean of the Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis, who served as interim president from 1970 to 1972; Marver H. Bernstein, former dean of the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton, who served from 1972 to 1983; biologist and former president of the University of New Hampshire Evelyn E. Handler, who served from 1983 to 1991; Samuel O. Thier, a physician and former president of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, who served from 1991 to 1994, when he became president of the Massachusetts General Hospital; and Jehuda Reinharz, the Richard Koret Professor of Modern Jewish History, an alumnus, and former Brandeis provost, appointed in 1994.

Brandeis has undergone great physical change, maturing from a campus with one brick building, a stable, and a castle, to one of the finest repositories of the International style of architecture in the country *and* a castle. From its first master plan by internationally renowned architect Eero Saarinen (1910-1961), through subsequent plans by other practitioners of modernism, “the Brandeis campus can be seen as a microcosm of the history of the Modern Movement in architecture” (Bernstein 1998).

### Nonsectarianism

Although Brandeis has always been nonsectarian in its admission of students and the employment of faculty and staff, its historic description as a “Jewish-sponsored, nonsectarian” university masked a complex self-image. Members of the extended Brandeis community of alumni and friends have often asked how Jewish this non-Jewish university should be.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, when virtually all members of the entering classes were Jews, Brandeis worried about the public’s perception of the institution’s commitment to nonsectarianism and a quota-free admissions policy. President Sachar struggled, as did his successors, to dispel the notion that an educational institution founded *by* Jews must be meant exclusively or even primarily *for* Jews. He made a determined effort to emphasize Brandeis’s ethnic and religious diversity. The lineup of the university’s football team made it clear, he said, that Brandeis was not a parochial school. “There were Goldfaders and Steins and Shapiros, but there were also Baldaccis and Hemingways and Napolis” (Sachar 1976).

In 1953, when the trustees debated the establishment of a single interfaith chapel on campus, board chair George Alpert argued that Brandeis was intended to be nonsectarian “not only in the classroom, the laboratory, and the athletic field, but in the chapel as well.” The proposed interfaith chapel would symbolize the institution’s nonsectarian spirit of equality and parity (Minutes 1953). In the end, and partly in response to religious sensitivities, separate Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant chapels were constructed. Nearly fifty years later in 1998, space was set aside on campus for a prayer room to accommodate the needs of Brandeis’s growing Muslim student population, the latest indication of the university’s diverse and nonsectarian nature. Today, slightly over half of Brandeis undergraduates identify themselves as Jews.

Brandeis is determined to be nonsectarian and simultaneously Jewish, not in a sectarian sense, but by virtue of its service to the Jewish community and by having a character based on Jewish values of education, tolerance, social justice, and the life of the mind. Thus, while Brandeis admits students without regard to religion and offers no religious instruction, its academic calendar is tied to the Jewish religious calendar, and it has a number of programs designed specifically to serve the broader Jewish community. Occasionally, differing perceptions of what it means to be both Jewish and nonsectarian have created misunderstandings, if not tension. In the late 1980s, a report by the board of trustees called for the introduction of pork and shellfish dishes in the one dining hall that had always been nonkosher. This produced a furor, eliciting a flood of letters, almost equally divided for and against the change, from alumni and individual members of the campus and Jewish communities. The reaction was a measure of both the campus and the larger Jewish community’s expectations for Brandeis, expectations that have always been as diverse as the American Jewish community itself. Those approving of the change applauded Brandeis’s commitment to nonsectarianism, while those opposed argued that, as an institution, Brandeis should respect Jewish religious tradition.

Today, Brandeis students are drawn from more than a hundred countries and represent more than a dozen different faiths. As a nonsectarian university that takes pride in its Jewish identity and is open to students, teachers, and staff of every nationality, religion, and political orientation, Brandeis affirms America’s heritage of cultural, eth-

nic, and religious diversity, equal access to opportunity, and freedom of expression.

## Social Justice

Perhaps more than any other academic institution in America, Brandeis honors a commitment to social justice, marked by a tradition of social activism by its members. Founded in the aftermath of World War II, the university took form as an institution in which human values and social concerns were of vital importance. The original faculty, some of whom, such as Alexander Altmann and Nahum Glatzer, were refugees from Nazi Germany, did much to shape this character.

At a time when the costly lessons of complicity through silence were all too apparent, many Brandeis professors worked to make a difference both in the classroom and in society at large. Former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt served on the board of trustees from 1953 until her death in 1962 and, beginning in 1959, also taught a seminar on nongovernmental agencies of the United Nations. Other members of the early faculty included Irving Howe, socialist literary critic and editor of *Dissent*; Philip Rahv, founder of *Partisan Review*; political scientist Lawrence Fuchs, first head of the Peace Corps in the Philippines and executive director of the U.S. Select Commission on Immigration; sociologist Irving Zola, who founded a self-help center in Boston for individuals with disabilities; and anthropologist and political activist Robert Manners.

In 1968, Brandeis faculty members donated their own funds to establish the Transitional Year Program (TYP), a one-year program of classroom instruction designed to prepare educationally disadvantaged students for college. The program, an outgrowth of the civil rights movement of the 1960s and long since supported by university funds, has enabled an ethnically diverse group of hundreds of young people to earn a college degree. Nearly two hundred TYP graduates have received a Brandeis degree, while others have pursued their educations at other American colleges and universities. Although the program has had its detractors in the administration—presidents Abram and Bernstein were firm critics of the program—more recent president Handler and current president Reinharz have given it their full support. TYP remains the longest running program of its kind in America.

Thirty years after the launch of TYP, Brandeis began its participation in the Posse Foundation program, the brainchild of Deborah Bial, a Brandeis alumna. The nationwide program, which annually recruits ten student leaders from inner city public high schools to form multi-ethnic teams, is rooted in the belief that a small group of students, a “posse,” can serve as a catalyst to help ensure the personal and academic achievement of all members of the group. The Posse students at Brandeis are fully supported by the university and graduate at or above the 90-percent graduation rate of participants in the program nationwide.

The university’s spirit of *tikkun olam* (putting the world aright) has inspired generations of Brandeis students to social activism. Chapters of the student division of Americans for Democratic Action, the nation’s oldest liberal lobbying group (founded in 1947), and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (founded in 1909) were formed on campus in the 1950s. In the 1960s, individual Brandeis students, faculty, and alumni worked in the South to register black voters and to demonstrate against segregation.

In January 1969, a tumultuous period at many universities following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., members of the Brandeis Afro-American Organization occupied a campus building and presented a list of ten, nonnegotiable demands, including the creation of an autonomous black studies department, in which members would have control over the hiring and firing of faculty and the appointment of a chairman selected by a committee of students. Eighty-five Brandeis faculty members signed a letter published in the *New York Times*, denouncing the demands, which they called “a specific program for racial segregation and discrimination” (January 19, 1969). Yet, while the administration and some faculty members denounced the takeover strategy as antithetical to the practice of open discourse that must characterize a university, as well as a clear threat to faculty control over academic affairs, many faculty members supported the students’ demands. With the campus deeply divided on the issue, and lacking any agreements except amnesty for the sit-in, the building occupation ended after eleven days; however, in subsequent negotiations involving faculty, students, and administrators, the university acknowledged the “deeply felt and unfulfilled needs” of many black students. This resulted in the establishment, under faculty resolution, of the Department of African and Afro-American Studies, an ac-

tion that was already being implemented before the takeover; the appointment of two black professors in the departments of English and American civilization; the hiring of a black assistant director of admissions; and the creation of Martin Luther King scholarships, originally for disadvantaged black students, but later opened to all students who demonstrate financial need, academic achievement, and a record of community service. Then president Morris Abram regarded the outcome as a triumph for the university in that the dispute had been resolved without relinquishing faculty control over academic affairs or establishing an exclusionary precedent.

Protests against the war in Vietnam took place at Brandeis as early as 1965. For two weeks in December 1968, Brandeis students joined the growing sanctuary movement by giving refuge in a campus building to an AWOL soldier until his peaceful surrender to authorities. In 1970, following President Richard M. Nixon’s decision to attack enemy sanctuaries on the Cambodian–Vietnam border, there were calls on campuses across the country for nationwide demonstrations. Some Brandeis students established themselves as the National Strike Information Center, collecting news of strike activities and publishing frequent newsletters to inform participating schools, the media, and the public of strike activities throughout the country.

The 1960s also witnessed student activism of another kind at Brandeis with the establishment of the student-run Waltham Group, a volunteer service organization through which hundreds of students participate in noncredit social and educational outreach programs, responding to the needs of children, the elderly, and others in greater Boston.

In the 1980s, Brandeis students and faculty were active in the antiapartheid movement, urging the university to divest from South Africa. A student–faculty advisory committee on shareholder responsibility worked to educate the campus community about the complexities of the divestment issue while attempting to persuade the board of trustees to remove from the university’s endowment portfolio holdings in companies doing business in South Africa, a position ultimately adopted in May 1987 and rescinded following apartheid’s demise.

The commitment to social justice was institutionalized at Brandeis as early as 1959 with the establishment of the university’s first professional school, the Florence Heller Graduate School for Advanced Studies in Social

Welfare, renamed the Heller School for Social Policy and Management in 2001. Its mission is to promote public health and social justice for vulnerable populations, especially those lacking the capacity or resources to secure their own well-being.

The university's commitment to social justice is also found in the International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life. Established in 1998, the Center develops responses to conflict and injustice by offering innovative approaches to coexistence, strengthening the work of international courts, and encouraging ethical practices in civic and professional life.

### Service to the Jewish Community

From the beginning, Brandeis accepted a special mission in the area of Judaic studies. For its founders, Brandeis, though not a Jewish university, would bring to American higher education a cultural perspective reflecting Jewish traditions of scholarship and community service, along with a commitment to social justice personified by the university's namesake, Louis Dembitz Brandeis. Throughout its history, Brandeis has enjoyed a relationship with the American Jewish community marked by particularism, but not parochialism. In many ways, Brandeis is a microcosm of American Jewry, defining its mission of service to the American Jewish community broadly and without reference to the different streams of Jewish religious expression or communal interest. At the same time, Brandeis views its overall mission as that of a nonsectarian research university dedicated to the advancement of the humanities, arts, and sciences and the transmission of new knowledge.

Some of the special programs, centers, and institutes created at Brandeis that benefit the Jewish community are new and innovative; others, like the Philip W. Lown School, are decades old. The Lown School's Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, established at a time when Judaic studies were largely ignored in American higher education, has educated more Judaic studies scholars and is more comprehensive than any other department or program of Judaic studies outside Israel. The Association for Jewish Studies was established at Brandeis in 1970 and was housed on the campus until 2003. Its first president was Leon Jick, a Judaica scholar who had come to Brandeis in 1966 to direct the newly established Lown Center for Contemporary Jewish Studies. The Hornstein

Program in Jewish Communal Service, founded in 1969, offers an interdisciplinary graduate program that combines organizational behavior, modern and classical Judaic studies, and studies in contemporary Jewish life. It has placed hundreds of its graduates in leadership positions in Jewish organizations around the world. The Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, established in 1980, conducts research on topics of special relevance to the Jewish community, such as Jewish family life, intermarriage and assimilation, Jewish education and identity, adolescent development, and relations between Israel and the world's Jewish communities.

Among the newer programs and centers are the Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry, established in 1980; the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, founded in 1997 by Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, Inc.; the Fisher-Bernstein Institute for Leadership Development in Jewish Philanthropy, established in 1997, and the Institute for Informal Jewish Education, founded in 1999. These programs are designed to help shape and fulfill the national agenda of the American Jewish community, educate and inform communal professionals and lay leaders, and bring research to bear on some of the thorniest issues facing the Jewish community, such as Jewish identity, intermarriage, and Israel–Diaspora relations. One of the newest initiatives is the Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education, founded in 2004, which conducts studies of teaching and learning in Jewish education and develops model programs for Jewish educators.

Brandeis is also a major site for research on and interdisciplinary study of Israel and the modern Middle East. The Crown Center for Middle East Studies, officially opened in 2005, is committed to balanced and nonideological treatment of the full range of issues confronting the states of the greater, modern Middle East. Brandeis has ties with institutions and scholars in Israel, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iran, and Morocco.

### Academic Excellence

From the first, Brandeis set out to build a small, excellent, liberal arts college within a major research university, with a commitment to both undergraduate and graduate education and with close personal attention from senior faculty. Brandeis has also consistently sought to make a difference in the ideals and values it imparts to its students.

To compete with far larger and older institutions, Brandeis has tried to set itself apart by developing academic programs designed to fill a particular niche.

The scholars who composed the early faculty at Brandeis were obtained by “aggressive recruitment of younger men [and women] whose scholarship has been indicated but not fully demonstrated” (Sachar 1976). Others, like Ludwig Lewisohn, *Nation* magazine editor and professor of literature, had reached the age of retirement and were forced out of other universities despite their continued desire to teach. Still others, like Saul Cohen, who became a professor of chemistry and the first dean of faculty, “had sought out Brandeis after encountering anti-Semitic hiring discrimination at other universities” (Gliedman 1988).

The early result was a faculty that contained an astonishing number of distinguished scholars: Max Lerner in American civilization; Abraham Maslow in psychology; Frank Manuel in European history; Irving Howe, the editor of *Dissent*, and Albert Guérard in the humanities; Nahum Glatzer and Alexander Altmann in Jewish studies; Lewis Coser in sociology; and Erwin Bodky, a student of Richard Strauss, in music. Even the athletics department had its celebrity: professional football star Benny Friedman became Brandeis University’s first athletic director.

The early core of influential scholars soon recruited and attracted others: Simon Rawidowicz, Nahum Sarna, and Benjamin Halpern joined the faculty in Near Eastern and Judaic studies (NEJS); today, MacArthur Award winner Bernadette Brooten is a member of the NEJS faculty. In the other humanities and social sciences, outstanding scholars—such as Herbert Marcuse, Robert Preyer, Philip Rieff, J. V. Cunningham, Walter Laqueur, John Roche, Lawrence Fuchs, I. Milton Sacks, Claude Vigee, Marie Syrkin, and Maurice Stein—joined the faculty; today’s history faculty includes Jacqueline Jones, another MacArthur Award winner. Saul Cohen was joined in the sciences by Sidney Golden and Orrie Friedman in chemistry, Albert Kelner in biology, Herman Epstein in biophysics, and Ricardo Morant and Richard Held in experimental psychology, and then by biochemists Robert Abeles, William Jencks, Nathan Kaplan, and Martin Kamen, by physicists David Falkoff, Eugene Gross, Silvan Schweber, Max Chretien, and Jack Goldstein, and by mathematicians Oscar Goldman, Arnold Shapiro, Maurice Auslander, and Edgar Brown. Today four Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigators, six members of the National Academy of Sci-

ences, and seven fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science are counted among the science faculty, and the Department of Biology includes Gina Turrigiano, another MacArthur Award winner.

From the beginning, Brandeis regarded the creative arts as part of its academic curriculum, which was unusual among universities at the time (Sachar 1976). It attracted Irving Fine and Leonard Bernstein in music, and painter Mitchell Siporin, sculptor Peter Grippe, and art historian Leo Bronstein in fine arts. In theater arts, it attracted set designer Howard Bay, playwright John Matthews, and, later, scholar Martin Halpern and acting teacher Charles Werner Moore. At its inaugural commencement in 1952, Brandeis staged its first Festival of the Creative Arts, a four-day event that saw the world premiere of Bernstein’s one-act opera, *Trouble in Tahiti*; the first American staging of Brecht’s *Threepenny Opera*, adapted by Mark Blitzstein; a performance of a Stravinsky ballet by Merce Cunningham’s dance troupe; and appearances by Lotte Lenya, Aaron Copland, and jazz critic Nat Hentoff. Today, the Festival of the Arts continues as an annual event, and the university’s office of the arts coordinates activities among the academic departments in creative arts, as well as the Spingold Theater Center, Slossberg Music Center, and the Rose Art Museum. The Rose, built in 1961, began acquiring its collection under the directorship of Sam Hunter and today houses one of the finest collections of modern and contemporary American art in New England (Hauptman 1999).

In 1951, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts authorized Brandeis to confer graduate and professional degrees. Established in 1953, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences was formally inaugurated on January 14, 1954. Initially, the university created one graduate program in each of its four schools: sciences, creative arts, social sciences, and humanities. Chemistry offered a master of science degree; music, a master of fine arts degree; psychology, a doctoral degree; and Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, a master of arts and a doctoral degree. Brandeis awarded the first master’s degrees in 1954, the first doctorate in 1957. Today more than thirty departments offer postbaccalaureate degrees.

Only thirteen years after its establishment in 1948 and in the shortest time in Phi Beta Kappa history, Brandeis received authorization to establish a Phi Beta Kappa chapter. Following three years of scrutiny, the committee on quali-

fications of the united chapters of Phi Beta Kappa reported on “the university’s remarkable achievement in creating in ten years’ time—only three student generations—a full-fledged institution capable of providing undergraduate instruction comparable to that offered by other American universities of the first rank” (Pasternack 1988).

Excellence in the sciences has long been a hallmark of Brandeis. Today, approximately one hundred faculty members teach and do research in the sciences, and between two hundred fifty and three hundred graduate students take part in nine graduate programs. A gift in 1972 permitted the establishment of the Rosenstiel Basic Medical Sciences Research Center, “a research center unlike any other in the United States . . . [whose mission is] to bring together in one facility world-class scientists from a wide range of disciplines but with a common focus, the application of the tools of structural biology, genetics, and immunology to basic research questions with immediate and long-term impact on human health” (Brandeis University n.d.). Structural biology was virtually invented at the center by such researchers as Donald Caspar, Carolyn Cohen, Susan Lowey, and David DeRosier, most of whom had worked in the famous Cavendish Laboratory at England’s Cambridge University, studying with James Watson and Francis Crick, who, along with Rosalind Franklin, cracked the DNA code. In 1975, another interdisciplinary center, the Henry and Lois Foster Biomedical Research Laboratories, was built to provide additional facilities for basic research in biology, biochemistry, and other biomedical areas.

The year 1994 saw the completion of the Benjamin and Mae Volen National Center for Complex Systems, formed to study the brain and human intelligence. The center, composed of faculty members who specialize in artificial intelligence, cognitive science, linguistics, and a wide range of topics in neuroscience, houses an interdisciplinary group with the ability to perform scientific analysis of the brain from the cellular and molecular to the cognitive and computational levels.

A number of other innovations have contributed to Brandeis’s reputation for academic excellence. In 1958, Lawrence and Mae Wien established the Wien International Scholarship Program to further international understanding among nations, to provide foreign students with an opportunity to study in the United States, and to enrich the intellectual and cultural life of the Brandeis campus.

What sets the Wien program apart is that its scholars must demonstrate a commitment to their community, their country, and the world at large *before* applying to Brandeis. In 1996, the Slifka scholarship program, open to Arab and Jewish Israelis with a demonstrated commitment to coexistence, was launched.

In 1986, Brandeis inaugurated a program for students planning careers in international business. To fill a niche between disciplines and the curricula of business schools and schools of international relations, the Lemberg Program offered a two-year master’s program and a five-year combined BA/MA option for qualified Brandeis undergraduates. This program grew to become the Graduate School of International Economics and Finance, renamed the International Business School in 2003.

A short list of Brandeis’s most prominent alumni includes Thomas L. Friedman, foreign affairs columnist for the *New York Times*; Roderick MacKinnon, 2003 Nobel Laureate in chemistry; Judith Shapiro, president of Barnard College; novelist Ha Jin, National Book Award recipient and author of *Waiting*, *The Craved*, and *War Trash*; Otis Johnson, mayor of Savannah, Georgia; Robert Gallucci, dean of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service; CBS correspondent Robert Simon; CNN analyst Bill Schneider; Thomas Glynn, deputy secretary of labor under former secretary of labor, and now Brandeis professor, Robert Reich; Gary Tinterow, curator of the department of nineteenth-century, modern, and contemporary art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Adam Weinberg, director of the Whitney Museum of Modern Art; Shen Tong, leader at the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square, Beijing; Eli Segal, former Americorps head; Ellen Goodman, president of Tootsie Roll Industries; and Jehuda Reinharz, president of Brandeis University and a leading scholar of modern Jewish history.

*Clifford D. Hauptman and John R. Hose*

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# Jewish History and American Jewish Historians

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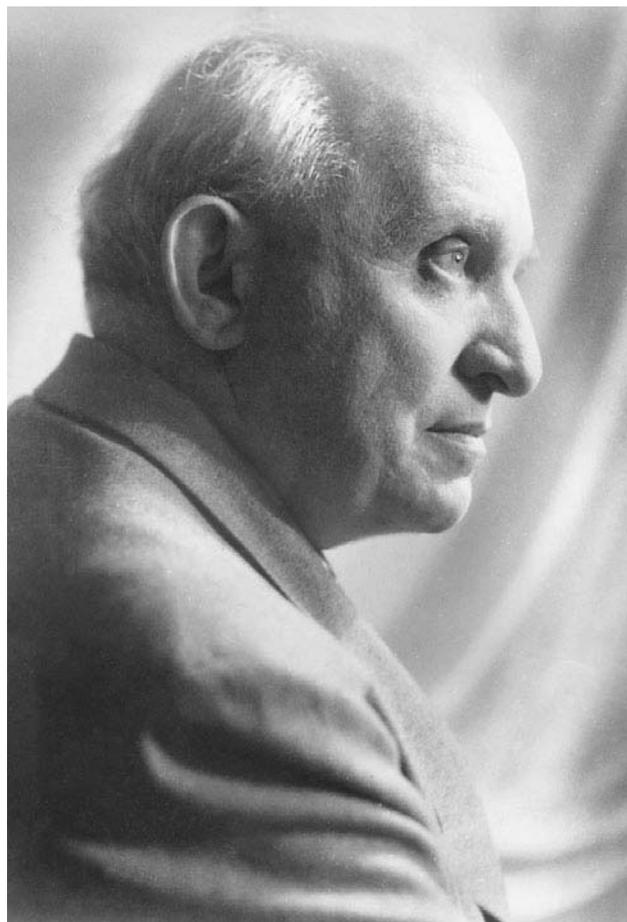
## **Salo Baron (1895–1989)**

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### Dean of Jewish Historians

Salo (Shalom) Wittmayer Baron was one of the dominant figures in Jewish historiography for much of the twentieth century. Called the dean of Jewish historians, he was the first witness at the 1961 trial of Adolph Eichmann in Jerusalem, where he provided historical context for the prosecution. Baron's career was emblematic of the early migration of Jewish studies from Europe to the United States, a process accelerated by World War I and the post-war dislocations. When Baron emigrated to America, Jewish history was not part of the curriculum of the secular universities, and the field was dominated by theologians and philologists. Baron did not believe that mastery of Talmudic literature was a prerequisite for all historical scholarship. Instead he argued that Jewish history had to be separated from apologetics, filiopietism, or providential design. Students needed to master modern historiography, not rabbinic literature.

Born in Tarnow (Galicia), Baron earned three doctorates from the University of Vienna—philosophy (1917), political science (1922), and law (1923)—and received rabbinic ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary of Vienna in 1920. He taught at the Jewish Teachers College of Vienna until 1926, when he joined the faculty of



*Jewish historian Salo Baron. Baron was the first witness in the 1961 trial of Adolph Eichmann in Jerusalem, where he provided historical context for the prosecution. (American Jewish Archives)*

Stephen S. Wise's Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR) in New York City.

During his tenure at the JIR, Baron began to develop his critique of contemporary Jewish historiography. In "Ghetto and Emancipation" (1928), he used the term *lachrymose conception* of Jewish history for the first time and challenged scholars to reassess the impact of modernization on Jewish life. In other publications, Baron called for integrating Jewish history into general world historiography, arguing that this would make it possible to see the Jewish experience as something more than centuries of persecution. This anti-lachrymose crusade characterized much of his professional writing.

In 1930, Baron was appointed to the Miller Chair at Columbia University, only the second university chair in Jewish studies in the United States and the first devoted to Jewish history. Baron argued that the Miller Chair should be located in Columbia's history department, where the faculty were devotees of the "new" history (already two decades old), which accorded social, economic, and religious factors equal stature to politics. This emphasis, which Baron also embraced, enabled him to help shape the academic study of Jewish history in the United States for a generation.

By the 1930s Baron's historical methodology followed three basic principles: a rejection of the lachrymose conception of Jewish history; an emphasis on the relationship between social, political, and religious forces in Jewish history; and his belief that the evolution of Jewish history was the product of the interaction of Jewish and gentile societies.

In 1937, Columbia University Press published his three-volume *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, which covered all of Jewish history from biblical origins until the modern age. Baron's study was among the earliest academic works to give religion equal credence with social forces, while at the same time divorcing the evolution of Jewish history from providential design. It was also one of the earliest works in Jewish studies to be published by a secular university press.

Although it was not his passion, Baron published a number of essays on American Jewish history. During World War II he came to understand that the war had placed American Jews at the forefront of world Jewry, with "all the challenges and responsibilities which it entails." Over the next decade he wrote several articles demonstrat-

ing his appreciation of the significance of American Jewish history, which, when compared to Europe, seemed the proof-text of his anti-lachrymose vision. Baron served as president of the American Jewish Historical Society in 1952 and again in 1954, during the American Jewish Tercentenary. *Steeled by Adversity*, his collected essays on American Jewish history, was published in 1971.

After his retirement from Columbia in 1963, he dedicated himself to expanding his *Social and Religious History*. He completed eighteen volumes, bringing the story to the end of the Middle Ages. His wife, Jeannette, was instrumental in his work, and after her death in 1985 Baron ceased to publish. Although a monumental achievement, *Social and Religious History of the Jews* was criticized for lacking a focus and for making sweeping generalizations.

Frederic Krome

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## Jacob Rader Marcus (1896–1995)

### Founding Director of the American Jewish Archives

Jacob Rader Marcus was the first academically trained historian of the Jewish people born in the United States and the first to devote his scholarly energies full-time to American Jewish history. Marcus published hundreds of books, journals, and essays on the history of the American Jew. As a faculty member at Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati for seventy-five years, Marcus's ideas influenced generations of rabbis. He enlisted his students' help in building the American Jewish Archives (AJA) into one of the world's largest research centers dedicated solely to the study of American Jewish history. His scholarly contribu-



Jacob Rader Marcus, Jewish historian, professor, and founding director of the American Jewish Archives. (American Jewish Archives)

tions, coupled with his influential role as a mentor, earned him the honorific title dean of American Jewish historians.

Born in New Haven, Pennsylvania, on March 5, 1896, Marcus's interest in Jewish scholarship emerged while attending religious school at Wheeling, West Virginia's Eoff Street Reform Congregation, whose rabbi, Harry Levi, was an ordinee of HUC in Cincinnati. Levi was impressed by the young Marcus's intellect and encouraged him to study for the rabbinate. In 1911, Marcus began his rabbinical training at HUC. With the exception of two years of military service during World War I and his years of graduate study in Europe, Marcus spent the remainder of his long life at HUC in Cincinnati.

Upon his ordination in 1920, Marcus was appointed to the HUC faculty by its president, the distinguished Jewish theologian Kaufmann Kohler. Initially, Marcus taught courses in biblical history and general Jewish history. Recognizing that his academic training was not adequate for

his professorial role at HUC, Marcus traveled to Berlin in 1922 to pursue doctoral studies with the noted Jewish historian, Ismar Elbogen. The University of Berlin awarded Marcus a PhD in 1925, and in 1926 he resumed his faculty duties at HUC.

Prior to the Holocaust, the great centers of Jewish life were located in Europe. Consequently, scant attention had been paid to the history of American Jewry. Marcus was among the first to recognize the growing importance of American Jewish history. In the early 1940s, Marcus began to apply modern critical methodology to the writing of American Jewish history. In 1941, he began teaching at HUC what was probably the first required university-level course in American Jewish history.

In 1946, Marcus recommended to Reform Judaism's rabbinical association, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), that American synagogues begin a systematic effort to preserve congregational records and documents relating to Jewish communal life. Recognizing the scholarly value in having a centralized institution to preserve and catalogue these documents, Marcus advocated the establishment of an American Jewish Archives. In 1947, Marcus—with the support of his friend and classmate, Nelson Glueck, the newly elected president of HUC—convinced HUC's board of governors to establish the AJA, a semi-autonomous national institution with its own building and staff, on the school's Cincinnati campus. Marcus became the AJA's founding director and led the institution until his death in 1995. Under his leadership, the AJA grew into one of the world's largest and most significant catalogued collections of archival material documenting the history of Jewish life in North America.

Marcus launched the AJA's semiannual periodical in 1948, wherein he promised to provide "at least one article of scientific calibre" in each issue, as well as a listing of the important documents that the AJA was acquiring (Zola 2004). For nearly forty-seven years he edited this bulletin, which quickly evolved into a major academic publication. Today, the *American Jewish Archives Journal*, with a circulation of more than 4,000, is one of only two scholarly journals devoted exclusively to publication of articles on the entire scope of American Jewish history. In 1956, Marcus founded a central repository for the preservation of American Jewish journals and bulletins: the American Jewish Periodical Center.

From the 1940s on, Marcus devoted practically all of his energy to retrieving and reconstructing the American Jewish past. He authored or edited nearly three hundred articles and books. Marcus was particularly interested in publishing documentary histories. “The fact scrubbed clean,” Marcus insisted, “is more eternal than perfumed and rouged words” (Zafren and Peck 1978). This perspective not only fueled Marcus’s interest in establishing an American Jewish Archives but inspired him to publish volumes of documents and to make the source material widely available. Convinced that historical interpretations were inevitably transitory, Marcus maintained that the documents he published would never become dated. In fact, many of his best-known works are documentary histories: *The Jew in the Medieval World* (1938), *Memoirs of American Jews* (1955), *The American Jewish Woman: A Documentary History* (1981), and *The Jew in the American World* (1996).

Marcus also published important reference works aimed at facilitating historical research: *To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585–1984* (1990) and *The Concise Dictionary of American Jewish Biography* (1994). His multivolume historical narratives—like *The Colonial American Jew, 1492–1776* (1970) and his four-volume magnum opus, *United States Jewry, 1776–1985* (1989–1993)—were encyclopedic outgrowths of Marcus’s mastery of the vast reservoir of primary source material he had assembled. Critics repeatedly stressed that Marcus’s historical writings were characterized by a “faithful adherence to the facts, a critical evaluation of the data, and a complete avoidance of apologetics” (Falk 1994).

Although deeply devoted to his scholarly pursuits, Marcus never lost touch with the active rabbinate. He advised hundreds of rabbis on a wide range of issues. He was intensely involved in the affairs of the CCAR and, from 1949 to 1951, served as its president, the first HUC faculty member elected to that office since Isaac Mayer Wise founded the rabbinical organization in 1889. In 1978, the CCAR named Marcus its honorary president. The title, Marcus acknowledged, was “the greatest honor that a rabbi can receive in the [Reform] movement” (Zola 2004).

Marcus’s role in the CCAR provided him with a valuable platform to enlist rabbinic support for the field of American Jewish history and the AJA. Each year, he wrote to his students asking them to contribute monies from their discretionary funds to support his work and, equally

important, to be on the lookout for primary source materials that deserved to be preserved in the AJA. His love for his subject was infectious; he inspired many rabbinic students to complete important research projects in American Jewish history. A select group of his students went on to earn doctorates and become major scholars in the field. The growth of scholarly research in American Jewish history, as well as the AJA’s burgeoning collection, owes much to Marcus’s role as a beau ideal for a large number of HUC rabbinic alumni.

Marcus’s professional career was an alloy of two elements: Marcus the rabbi and Marcus the scholar. A religious perspective informed his concept of history; a secular critical historian would not have written about the past in the way he did. Toward the end of his life, Marcus embraced this tension; he made no apologies for it. The historian, he noted, could not “jump out of his skin.” He insisted that he was “devoted to the critical method” of scholarship, but simultaneously declared himself a loyal partisan: “I like Jews,” he wrote. “I am convinced that they are an unusually gifted lot” (Zola 2004). Marcus consciously sought to maintain a balance between what he called a “pardonable filiopietism” and “the desire to create a new American historiography which will more truly reflect the growth of the American people” (Zola 2004).

Marcus occupied a number of leadership positions. For many years, he served on the board of directors of the Jewish Publication Society of America, where he chaired the influential Publications Committee (1949–1954). This post provided him with the opportunity to influence the direction of Jewish book publishing in the United States. Marcus also played a prominent role in the American Jewish Historical Society, serving as president from 1955 to 1958.

Marcus frequently asserted that the annihilation of European Jewry beckoned the American Jewish community to become a great spiritual center for the Jewish people. To fulfill their destiny, Marcus emphasized, American Jews needed to create a vibrant and autochthonous culture. He asserted that the moral lessons of its religious heritage were the source of Jewish survival—what the historian Simon Dubnow called Judaism’s “living soul” (Zola 2004). Like many of the European Jewish historians he admired, Marcus believed that civilizations and nations may rise and fall, but as long as Jews clung to their ethical legacy they would never be completely obliterated. Again

following Dubnow, Marcus insisted that the Jewish experience transcended territorial boundaries and the history of the land of Israel. The Jewish people's presence in all parts of the world—a phenomenon that Marcus called omniteritoriality—was a key factor in its indestructibility.

Marcus married Antoinette Brody on December 31, 1925. They had one daughter, Merle, who perished in a fire in 1965. Marcus died on November 15, 1995, in Cincinnati, four months shy of his one hundredth birthday.

Gary P. Zola

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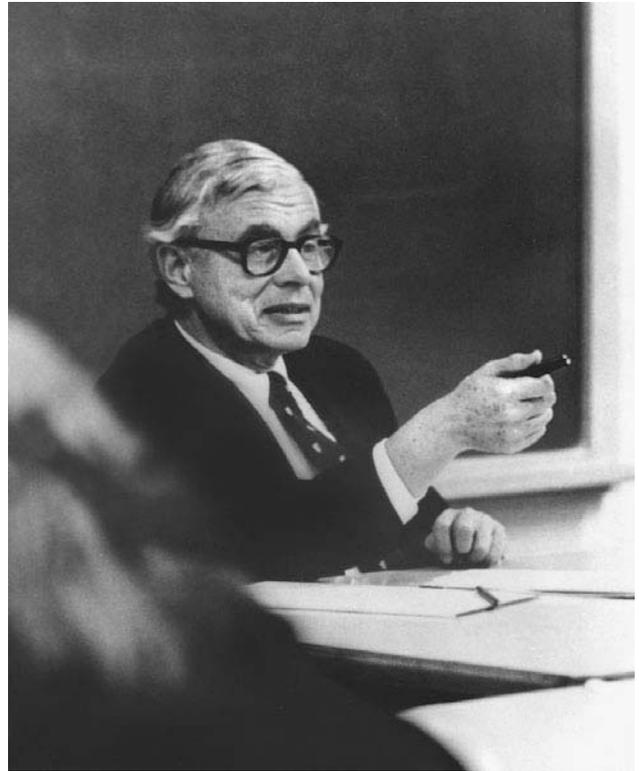
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## Bertram W. Korn (1918–1979)

### Historian of American Jewry

Bertram Wallace Korn was one of the first American-born scholars to use a modern critical methodology in studying the history of American Jewry. Korn's research focused primarily on Jewish life in the South during the antebellum and Civil War periods. Through his prodigious scholarship, his work as the rabbi of a large and historic metropolitan congregation, and his distinguished career as a military chaplain, Korn emerged as one of the most prominent Reform rabbis and highly regarded American Jewish historians during the post–World War II years.

Korn was born in Philadelphia on October 6, 1918, to Manuel and Blanche (Bergman) Korn. Korn reminisced about the fact that his American-born parents were nonob-



Bertram Korn, rabbi, military chaplain, and historian of American Jewry. (American Jewish Archives)

servant Jews whose identification with Jewish life was cultural, not religious. They never fully understood their son's childhood ambition to become a rabbi. Not until matriculating at the Hebrew Union College (HUC) in 1936 did Korn find a community of like-minded individuals who shared his interests in a liberal Jewish approach to religious life. He received his baccalaureate degree from the University of Cincinnati in 1939 and his rabbinic ordination from HUC–Cincinnati in 1943. To meet chaplaincy needs for the U.S. military during World War II, HUC ordained Korn and his fellow graduates five months ahead of schedule. The newly ordained rabbi moved to Mobile, Alabama, where he served Congregation Shaari Shomayim (1943–1944), until he received a commission as captain in the U.S. Navy. After his discharge in 1946, Korn transferred to the Naval Reserves and began graduate studies at HUC under the tutelage of the distinguished American Jewish historian, Jacob Rader Marcus.

Upon receiving his Doctor of Hebrew Letters degree (1949), Korn became the rabbi of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in Philadelphia, a pulpit he occupied for the remainder of his life. While ministering to this large

congregation, Korn continued to pursue his interest in the history of American Jewry. Influenced by Marcus's approach, Korn's historical analyses were built on a bounty of data harvested from his prodigious research. Like Marcus, Korn believed that historical interpretations continually evolve, but the documentary infrastructure on which the historian constructs an analysis will remain a useful tool for future generations of scholars. All of Korn's historical writings reflect a deep commitment to this ideology.

His first volume, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (1951), based on his doctoral dissertation, sought to provide a group biography of American Jews on both sides of the war. Korn argued that "[p]ersonal background and environment, rather than Jewish teachings, determined their views; their version of Judaism was cut to fit the pattern of the conclusions which they reached independently."

During the year he spent as rabbi in Mobile, Korn conducted comprehensive research on the history of the Jews in the South, particularly during the antebellum period. He later published *The Early Jews of New Orleans* (1969) and *The Jews of Mobile, Alabama* (1970).

Korn produced an impressive number of carefully researched, groundbreaking studies. In *The American Reaction to the Mortara Case: 1858–1859* (1957), Korn demonstrated that Jews and non-Jews throughout the United States joined in vigorously condemning the Vatican's actions in the affair, which, from an American perspective, were viewed as the embodiment of religious intolerance. His monograph *Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789–1865* (1961) was a pioneering analysis of the different attitudes American Jews held toward slavery. Korn's extensive documentation makes it a valuable tool for researchers to the present day.

Korn served as an adjunct faculty member for several institutions, including the HUC–Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, Gratz College, and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia. From 1959 to 1961, Korn was president of the American Jewish Historical Society. Founded in 1892, it is the oldest national ethnic historical organization in the United States. Numerous colleges and universities conferred honorary doctorates on Korn in recognition of his seminal contributions to the field of American Jewish history.

In addition to his rabbinical and scholarly activities, Korn had a distinguished career in the Naval Reserve. In 1975, Korn was promoted to the rank of rear admiral—the

first rabbi in American history to achieve flag rank. He received the Legion of Merit, the Navy's highest award, upon his retirement from the Chaplaincy Corps in 1978.

Korn married Rita Rosenfeld in 1951. Their son, Benyamin, was the longtime editor of the *Jewish Exponent* (Philadelphia). A second marriage to Rita Packman Dogole, in 1971, also ended in divorce. Korn died on December 11, 1979. In accordance with his instructions, he was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Gary P. Zola

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## YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in the United States

YIVO is the acronym for *Yidisher visnshaftlekher institut* (Yiddish Scientific Institute), the leading institution for scholarship on the history and culture of Yiddish-speaking Jews and their descendants in Eastern Europe and the United States. From its founding in 1925 until 1940, when its headquarters were in Vilna (then Wilno, Poland, and now Vilnius, Lithuania), YIVO's American Section was its largest and most significant branch. From 1940 to the present, YIVO has been located in New York, where it houses one of the world's largest collections on East European and American Jewish history.

YIVO was founded in 1925 as the first center for scholarship in and about the Yiddish language, then spoken by approximately 11 million East European Jews and their emigrant communities throughout the world. It sought to coordinate research, collect relevant materials, train young scholars, and standardize Yiddish, which was often denigrated as inferior to Hebrew or other European languages. In the late nineteenth century, concerns over the erosion of traditional Jewish society led to efforts to document the Jewish past, while in the wake of World War I Yiddish-speaking Jews sought to show that they consti-

tuted a distinct group with its own language and culture, which was thereby deserving of national rights. YIVO's founders hoped to foster the development of Yiddish and raise its status in order to make it a suitable vehicle for modern Jewish culture—and to bolster their fight for Jewish rights in the Diaspora.

In February 1925 Nokhem Shtif, a Russian Jewish linguist then living in Berlin, sought support for such an institute from leading American Yiddish cultural figures, including Chaim Zhitlowsky as well as activists in Berlin and Vilna. In October 1925, when the institute opened, supporters in New York led by the historian Jacob Shatzky established the *Amopteyl* (short for *Amerikaner opteyl* [American Section]). Although Vilna became YIVO's headquarters, the American Section was the most important of its numerous branches throughout the world.

During the period between the World Wars, several of YIVO's leading scholars resided in New York, including Shatzky, folklorist Y. L. Cahan, and Leibush Lehrer, who became head of one of the institute's four research divisions, the Psychological-Pedagogical Section. The *Amopteyl* published important scholarly works as well as the journals *Der pinkes* (*The Record Book*, 1927–1929) and *Yorbukh fun amopteyl* (*American Section Yearbook*, 1938–1939). Moreover, the section became crucial to YIVO's fund-raising efforts, with American sources contributing as much as two-thirds of the institute's total budget. YIVO founded support groups in American cities with significant Yiddish-speaking populations, sent representatives on fund-raising campaigns throughout the United States, and solicited donations from organizations such as the American Joint Distribution Committee.

In January 1940 YIVO's New York branch, then located on Lafayette Street, was designated its headquarters for the duration of World War II. In 1942 YIVO moved to its own building at 531–535 West 123rd Street. With the capture of Vilna by the Nazis in 1941, German troops forced YIVO workers to select the institute's most valuable objects to be sent to Frankfurt, and the rest was to be destroyed. At the war's end New York became the permanent headquarters under the leadership of Max Weinreich, one of YIVO's founders, who escaped from Vilna and led the institute until his death in 1969. In July 1947 part of YIVO's collections were recovered near Frankfurt and brought to New York, along with materials rescued by workers in Vilna. In 1955 YIVO moved to a former Vander-

bilt mansion at 1048 Fifth Avenue and changed its English name from the Yiddish Scientific Institute to the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

During World War II, YIVO became one of the first American organizations to document the fate of European Jewry, publishing a brochure on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1944. It published Weinreich's study, *Hitler's Professors*, immediately after the war (1946). YIVO also turned its attention to American themes, sponsoring an autobiography contest for American Jewish immigrants (1942) and the two-volume *Geshikhte fun der yidisher arbeter bavegung in di fareynikte shtatn* (*History of the Jewish Labor Movement in the United States*, 1943–1945). While continuing the institute's Yiddish-language journal *YIVO bleter* (*YIVO Pages*) (established 1931) and creating *Yidishe shprakh* (*Yiddish Language*, 1941–1986), it reached an Anglophone audience with the *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* (1946–1996). In the 1950s, the acquisition of records from the American Jewish Committee and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) made the YIVO Archives a major center for the study of American Jewish history.

As the number of native Yiddish speakers declined in the United States, YIVO aided students of Yiddish by publishing standard reference works such as the textbook *College Yiddish* (1949) and the *Modern English–Yiddish Yiddish–English Dictionary* (1968) by Uriel Weinreich, the son of Max; Nokhem Stutchkoff's *Oytser fun der yidisher shprakh* (*Thesaurus of the Yiddish Language*, 1950); and Max Weinreich's *Geshikhte fun der yidisher shprakh* (*The History of the Yiddish Language*, 1973). In 1959 Uriel Weinreich began work on the *Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry*, but the first volumes were not published until 1992. In 1968 YIVO founded the Uriel Weinreich Program in Yiddish Language, Literature, and Culture, an intensive language course, and the Max Weinreich Center for Advanced Jewish Studies, a graduate teaching component. The institute played an important role in the revival of *klezmer* (East European Jewish folk) music by creating the Max and Frieda Weinstein Archive of Recorded Sound (1982) and the Yiddish Folk Arts Program, popularly known as KlezKamp (1984).

In the late 1980s YIVO learned that much of its prewar collection that had survived the Nazis and that was believed to have been destroyed during the Stalin era had instead been hidden in Vilna. In 1995–1996, the archival portion of these materials was brought to New York for

processing and duplication. In 1991 Project Judaica, a joint venture of YIVO, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and the Russian State University of the Humanities in Moscow, became the first academic program in Jewish studies in the former Soviet Union.

YIVO's collections continued to expand, most notably with the acquisition of the Bund Archives of the Jewish Labor Movement in 1992. By this time, space constraints in YIVO's Fifth Avenue headquarters led to the creation of the Center for Jewish History, a facility jointly housing several Jewish research organizations. In 1999 YIVO relocated to the center's new building at 15 West Sixteenth Street. There it continues to hold public programs and to support scholarly work in Yiddish studies, today conducted primarily in English. YIVO's collections of over 350,000 volumes and 10,000 linear feet of archival material, the largest extant on the Yiddish language and its speakers, continue to attract researchers from around the globe.

*Cecile Esther Kuznitz*

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## The American Jewish Archives

The American Jewish Archives (AJA), an internationally known research center for the study of American Jewish history, was founded in 1947 by historian Jacob Rader Marcus (1896–1995) on the Cincinnati campus of the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC–JIR). Marcus established the AJA in the aftermath of the Holocaust, when American Jews inherited the primary responsibility of preserving the continuity of Jewish

life and learning for future generations. The AJA functions as a semi-autonomous organization to collect, preserve, and make available for research materials on the history of Jews and Jewish communities in the Western hemisphere, primarily in the United States. The AJA construes the term *history* in its broadest aspect to embrace data of a political, economic, social, cultural, and religious nature.

In its collections, the AJA assembles data describing the American Jew, both as a Jew and as an American. The AJA possesses one of the largest and most diverse collections of source materials found anywhere documenting the history of the Jewish community of a country. Important accessions to the collection are listed annually in *The American Jewish Archives Journal* and in the *National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections*.

The AJA began with a small assortment of congregational and societal minute books and a few collections of private papers. By the dawn of the twenty-first century, it contained more than 12,000 linear feet of manuscripts and archival records. The collection includes the papers of famous Reform rabbis such as Isaac Mayer Wise, David Philipson, and Max Heller; scholars and authors Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, Horace M. Kallen, Annie Nathan Meyer, and Maurice Samuel; scientists and physicians Selman A. Waksman and Robert C. Rothenberg; lawyers and civil servants Anna M. Kross, Samuel Dickstein, and Fanny E. Holtzmann; philanthropists and Jewish communal leaders Louis Marshall, Jacob Schiff, Felix Warburg, among many others.

The holdings also include documents and letters of prominent colonial and Civil War–era Jews such as Aaron Lopez, Raphael J. Moses, Judah P. Benjamin, and the Gratz and Franks families. In its collections are the records of B'nai B'rith lodges, women's synagogue auxiliaries, and organizations such as the American Jewish Alternatives to Zionism, the Intercollegiate Menorah Association, the World Union for Progressive Judaism, and the Association of Hillel and Jewish Campus Professionals. The records of the New York office of the World Jewish Congress form one of the AJA's largest archival holdings.

In 1998, the AJA was designated as the official repository of the historical records of the Union for Reform Judaism (formerly the Union of American Hebrew Congregations). These materials complement the records of the HUC, the JIR, the combined HUC–JIR, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR).

The AJA's collection holds many different types and formats of material: manuscripts and typescripts, photographs, film and video recordings, indices, publications, and programs. It also holds nearprint items—all the ephemeral material in the vast zone between letters and books: throwaways, news releases, broadsides, mimeographed announcements and advertisements, newspaper and magazine clippings, and brochures. The audiotape holdings consist of over 6,500 cassettes of oral histories, lectures, religious services, and music. A photograph collection of over 20,000 images is used by scholars, publishers, and filmmakers to illustrate books, articles, movies, and television programs. A nearly thousand-item film and video collection contains broadcast and private footage from numerous organizations and individuals. Indices have been made of nineteenth-century magazines like *Sinai*, *American Hebrew*, *Israel's Herold*, *Occident*, *Deborah*, and *Menorah Monthly*. One of the AJA's most important publications is the *American Jewish Archives Journal* (established 1948), which appears semiannually. The institution has also published monographs, including Malcolm H. Stern's *Americans of Jewish Descent* (1960), a milestone in the study of American Jewish genealogy, updated and revised in 1991 as

*First American Jewish Families: 600 Genealogies, 1654–1988*. An online version of Stern's classic text, as well as a roster of the AJA's manuscript holdings, is available on the institution's website, [www.AmericanJewishArchives.org](http://www.AmericanJewishArchives.org).

Closely associated with the American Jewish Archives is the American Jewish Periodical Center, founded by Marcus in 1956, which microfilms all American Jewish serials to 1925 and selected periodicals after that date.

Marcus directed the AJA from its founding in 1947 until his death in 1995, when the institution was renamed the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. Gary P. Zola became the second director of the AJA in 1998.

Gary P. Zola

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