PIONEER RABBI of the WEST

The Life and Times of Julius Eckman

by Rabbi Joshua Stampfer



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To my beloved wife Goldie
and my five children
and the splendid families that they create.

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Words of Appreciation

Many individuals have made this work possible, and I wish to express to them my deepest gratitude. First and foremost, to my wife Goldie, who has always been to me the helpmate that Julius Eckman never had - a source of encouragement and support in every enterprise, who raised a family that has been a constant source of pride and joy, who possesses a profound love for Judaism, and who has had a remarkable ability to transmit this love to her own students throughout the years. The book would also not have emerged into print without the splendid work of my editor, Dr. Sandra Oster. She not only provided superb linguistic skills to the project, but her sense of organization and her constant guidance and enthusiasm led to the completion of the task. I also wish to express my deepest appreciation to my loyal and capable secretary Marge Spoelstra, who typed many copies of the manuscript before its publication. My last expression of gratitude is a tribute to a young historian who grew up in Portland and was probably the foremost researcher in Western Jewish history - Robert Levinson, killed in a tragic automobile accident in the prime of his years. Robert and I planned to collaborate on this volume, and our early discussions were of immeasurable help.

Pioneer Rabbi of the West: Rabbi Julius Eckman

By Way of Introduction

A series of events, even of the most seemingly inconsequential kind, can lead to profound changes in one's life. My first acquaintance with Rabbi Julius Eckman came about through a casual glance at a kiddush cup I had seen used many times at our Friday night services at Ahavai Shalom. The cup was normally used by the Cantor, and his lectern was at the opposite side of the podium, so I usually didn't hold it. Once at a wedding when I was using it I noticed the delicate tracing on its side - "From his Pupils to Dr. Eckman 5621 (1861)." By the date it was very clear that this Dr. Eckman must have been the first rabbi of our congregation, founded in 1869.

My curiosity was aroused. I was holding in my hand the actual kiddush cup that was used a hundred years earlier by the rabbi who first occupied the pulpit I now held. My curiosity sent me on a search for information about Rabbi Eckman - information that has culminated in this biography and in many other developments.

To begin with, I knew nothing of Rabbi Eckman other than the inscription I saw on the cup. The massive 1903 Jewish Encyclopedia did not have an entry for him. The Encyclopedia Judaica was more helpful and provided some basic information about his career. I realized, however, a distinct lack in our Jewish community: a local Jewish historical society that could provide researchers with information on Western Jewry. To fill this gap, I called together a group of Portland Jews to discuss the formation of an Oregon Jewish Historical Society. About six individuals gathered in my office from diverse backgrounds and religious affiliations, all with a common interest in local Jewish history. A beginning had

already been made through the pioneering efforts of Shirley Tanzer, who established the Oregon Jewish Archives Project to record, transcribe and preserve oral histories of Oregon residents. The Oregon Jewish Historical Society cam e into being and undertook a number of significant programs in the community, including the publication of The Jews of Oregon: 1850-1950 by Steven Lowenstein.

Another organization, this time national in scope, also emerged out of my curiosity about Rabbi Eckman - the Sino-Judaic institute. My primary source of information about Rabbi Eckman was The Weekly Gleaner, the newspaper he published for six years in San Francisco. Because his style of journalism was so personal, much of his own life and work could be identified in the pages of The Weekly Gleaner. In reading his published material, I was surprised by the considerable attention he gave to the plight of the Jews of Kaifeng in China. The Encyclopedia Judaica even included a note that Rabbi Eckman actually visited China, but my later research revealed that this was impossible.

The more I read about Rabbi Eckman, the more I began to identify with him, to consider him my role model, to regard myself as his successor. I had followed him to Oregon, and I began to have a strong urge to fulfill his dreams of reviving the Jewish community of Kaifeng - or at least of visiting the remnants of the Jews there.

At that stage in American-Chinese relations, the 1970's, visiting China was no easy matter to arrange. After numerous letters and complicated arrangements, in 1983 I was allowed to visit Hunan University in Kaifeng as a representative of Portland State University, to arrange a sister-university relationship. While in Kaifeng on university business, I made contact with a few surviving Jews who still identify themselves according to their family heritage. It was thrilling to contemplate that after a thousand years of total isolation from Jewish life, these few individuals numbering now about a hundred souls still clung with tenacity to their Jewish past.

Shortly after my return to Portland, I learned from Professor Louis Schwartz that he would be teaching at Beijing University during his Sabbatical year and was interested in pursuing research on Kaifeng Jewry. He visited Kaifeng a number of times, and we carried on vigorous correspondence throughout the year that led to the suggestion that a Sino-Judaic Institute be formed as a national organization. The Institute came into being in 1985 and has already undertaken significant programs to further research, to provide information, and to strengthen evidences of Jewish life in China.

All of this and more had come about through a glance at a kiddush cup that had once been given to Rabbi Eckman.

My interest in Chinese Jewry as a striking example of the Jewish people's power of survival led me to another community - this time in the mountainous area of Northern Portugal, to the village of Belmonte, where lived the last significant number of Marranoes, or secret Jews. I have visited Belmonte several times and have had some part in returning the Judaeos (as they prefer to be called) to a fuller Jewish life. Again, I felt that this was the kind of action that Rabbi Eckman would have taken. He was willing to travel to the farthest reaches in order to strengthen Jewish life - his venture as the first rabbi to reach California and Oregon was proof enough of that.

Rabbi Eckman was a role model for me in another way - through the education of children. He viewed the education of children as his primary mission as a rabbi. In every community in which he served, his first task was to establish a school and to teach in that school. He did not see himself as an aloof administrator who dealt with curriculum planning and educational philosophy; he wanted to be with his beloved children, telling stories, leading them in prayer, igniting their imagination, stimulating their love for their heritage. He derived as much pleasure from teaching children in the kindergarten as he did those of Bar Mitzvah age and beyond. Although he presented an imposing, even formidable figure on the pulpit with his broad scholarship and

strong opinions, in the classroom he was loving and gentle. His students were the grandchildren that he never had.

I did not have the opportunity to pioneer in the field of education, but in 1954 I did establish Camp Solomon Schechter, a summer camp located in the southwest corner of Washington State, where Jewish children could discover their heritage through play in a total Jewish environment. I am certain this camp would have appealed very much to Rabbi Eckman's educational instincts.

The primary sense of kinship I feel with Rabbi Eckman stems from the fact that we both shared the same pulpit, a century apart. This pulpit might still be regarded as frontier territory. Even though one cannot speak of the wilds of the Pacific Northwest when one sees and shares the rich cultural life that pervades such cities as Portland and Seattle today, there is no doubt that unspoiled nature and magnificent vistas beckon one here as does no other part of our country.

Rabbi Eckman was deeply and profoundly attracted by the mysteries that lay beyond the horizon. The West was won by people who had a special vision, who possessed an indomitable will and had no fear of the unknown. Rabbi Eckman was an unlikely candidate for the role of a frontiersman. He was scholarly, introspective, religiously conservative - hardly the kind of personality that one could imagine in the lusty Gold Rush environment of San Francisco in the 1850's. Nevertheless, wherever he went, he plunged wholeheartedly into the community and devoted himself to its enlightenment.

He must have been a lonely man despite his almost frenetic activity. Had he married, his career as a rabbi might well have been totally different. He might have remained in the East where he could raise a family in relative peace and security. There were few trained rabbis in the United States, and with the gentle, moderating influence of a wife, a permanent position in on of the well-established communities would not have been difficult to obtain. Instead it was altogether too easy for Rabbi Eckman to pack up his

meager belongings and traipse off to a new challenge as soon as any difficulties arose. And one could be sure that difficulties would arise given his strong, uncompromising character. He apparently did not attract close personal friendships, although he won a great deal of admiration for his character and intellectual abilities. One, therefore, must picture him night after night returning to his empty quarters after a difficult day of dealing with critical lay leaders or wrestling with financial problems that were a constant concern at his newspaper, with no one to share the burden, to comfort and encourage him. Yet, he carried on his duties with unflagging energy and undiminished enthusiasm.

In the 19th century, the role of a pioneer rabbi who cherished his religious heritage was a challenging one. Communication with centers of Jewish life was slow and uncertain. Travel was equally laborious, and access to libraries and information centers was all but impossible. One had to rely completely on one's own resources. There did not exist a national association of rabbis or congregations that could exert a significant influence on such far off places as the Pacific Coast. That meant that lay leaders with little or no Judaic background could challenge a rabbi on any and every issue and could ride rough shod over any religious standard. Rabbi Eckman suffered greatly from this situation, although his powerful sense of purpose enabled him to persist despite the strong opposition that he encountered so frequently.

Shalom Aleichem, the great Jewish humorist and story teller, was fond of the phrase, "It's hard to be a Jew." How much harder it was to be a rabbi in a frontier community hundreds of miles removed from any other rabbi. Yet that was Rabbi Eckman's position throughout most of his career. Hard as it was, he had the profound satisfaction of knowing that he made a real difference in the lives of individual Jews and Jewish communities. He played a vital role as teacher and educator in launching the Jewish careers of many hundreds of individuals. He presided at the very first stage of the history of some of the most notable congregations on the West Coast. If he could today witness their impressive physical structures and their vital, dynamic membership, he would derive enormous

satisfaction. His Weekly Gleaner contributed also to this vitality as the forerunner of a host of excellent Anglo-Jewish newspapers that are now published in every major community on the West Coast.

I am pleased to share these insights into the life of a man who played such a pioneering role in the creation of the oldest Jewish communities on the West Coast.

Rabbi Joshua Stampfer
Portland, Oregon
April 15, 1988

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CHAPTER 1

EUROPEAN INFLUENCES

Rawicz, Poland

19th century Rawicz, like many other cities in the Polish region of Posen, had undergone violent changes brought about by the advance of Napoleon across the face of Europe. The city had been founded in 1632, and by 1773 only four Jews lived there. When the city came under Prussian rule in 1793, the Jewish population grew and an organized community came into being. By 1840 the number of Jews in Rawicz reached its peak of 1574 persons, 50% of the total population. During a time in Poland that witnessed no overt anti-Semitism, early 19th century Jewish communities in Poland were able to prosper. Most Jews were small manufacturers or merchants; Jewish communities maintained communal agencies characteristic of those times, such as the Hevra Kadisha (burial society) and charitable societies that cared for orphans and widows. Rabbi Julius Eckman was born into this early 19th century Jewish community, a Polish community that provided a healthy mixture of intense traditional studies and a more moderate religious attitude that encouraged secular studies as well.

Early Childhood

In the small community of Rawicz lived Wolf and Esther Eckman, prominent and active members of the Jewish community. Wolf Eckman was a forwarder who dealt in lumber and grain transactions, generally prospering in his undertakings that took him to major European cities to buy, sell, and deliver lumber. Esther Cerke was the daughter of Rabbi Michael Mendelson who officiated in Premzlaw and was widely recognized for his piety and his learning. His daughter

brought these qualities into a home dominated by the business transactions of her husband.

In 1805, the birth of their son Julius—the grandson of Rabbi Mendelson—was an event of great rejoicing not only for the parents but for the entire Jewish community. As a child, Julius displayed unusual talents for study. While other children were out playing in the city streets or in the meadows that surrounded Rawicz, Julius would sit at home reviewing his school work or reading stories of far off lands—his favorite recreation. His imagination required very little assistance from the pictures adorning his travel books, to whisk him away to such places as America or even China. His father had to travel frequently on his commercial ventures and he enjoyed taking Julius along. The lure of a trip was always enough of a temptation to make Julius shut his books and dash out of the carriage. He was always asking questions, examining the scenery, and trying to understand better the new sights that greeted him.

Like most other families in similar circumstances, young Julius' religious education was overseen by the rabbi of the community, Rabbi Joshua Baer Herzfeld. Julius was provided with tutor who taught him Judaic studies as well as general learning. He progressed quickly through the books of the Bible and into the works of the Talmud. At the same time, he began the study of language and particularly German literature. Mathematics was never an easy subject for him to master, but his father insisted that he receive a good grounding in the subject. Wolf Eckman desired that his son assume the direction of the family business in the course of time—and, as we shall see later, mistakenly thought that Julius' enthusiasm for traveling with him was an indication of his son's interest in the business.

The Religious Milieu of Rawicz

Rawicz was noted for the illustrious children it gave to the Jewish world. It was a center of Jewish scholarship, becoming

especially famous as the home of Rabbi Akiba Eger, one of the great luminaries of the rabbinic world in the 18th century. By the 19th century, although Rawicz had a relatively small Jewish community, it nevertheless generated great vitality and had a profound religious atmosphere.

Rabbi Herzfeld, the spiritual leader of the community during Eckman's young years, served from 1815-1846. He was a man of strong religious convictions and remained in firm control of the community's religious activities. Rabbi Herzfeld was to make a lasting impression on young Julius through the numerous arguments that Julius witnessed between his beloved rabbi and the shochtim (ritual slaughterers) who were under his supervision. In later years, Julius' career would parallel Rabbi Herzfeld's not only in his strong, religious convictions but in his confrontations with schochtim.

The proper slaughtering of kosher animals depended on the training and the ability of the shochet (the slaughterer). Rabbi Herzfeld not only learned all the laws that pertained to the act of slaughtering—the precisely defined technique by which the knife was to be drawn through the jugular vein—but also the numerous details concerning the examination of the carcass so that it would meet Jewish religious requirement. The source of kosher meat was of critical importance to the community which had no access in those days to frozen supplies that could be brought in from a great distance.

A slaughter not approved by the rabbi had both religious and financial consequences. The shochet was caught in the middle of two opposing forces. On the one hand was the rabbi's close scrutiny of the shochet to insure proper slaughtering; the rabbi felt the weight of responsibility for the kashrut (Jewish dietary laws) of the entire community resting upon his shoulders, and he was determined to do everything in his power to fulfill that responsibility. If a single Jew would eat treife (non-kosher) meat because he was derelict in his duty, the knowledge of that sin would burden him all his life. Consequently,

Rabbi Herzfeld demanded strict adherence to the ritual requirements. He regularly examined the slaughtering knives to make sure that not even the slightest nick marked the cutting surface. To make his examination, he purposefully permitted one of his fingernails to grow long to draw it carefully along the blade—to sense any break. He periodically reviewed the laws of shechita (slaughtering) with the schochtim to make certain that the laws were fresh in mind. Spot checks at the slaughter house were common to determine both the quality of the meat as well as the performance of the butcher.

On the other hand, the butcher had a major investment in the shochet's work, and every carcass that was pronounced treife was a significant financial loss for him. True, the meat could be sold to a non-kosher market but at a much lower price. The butcher did not demand high standards from the shochet, and he generally regarded Rabbi Herzfeld as too severe in his supervision and adherence to religious laws. The butcher constantly brought to bear a subtle pressure upon the shochet to overlook minor variations. He would even frequently encourage less knowledgeable shochtim to approve the product. This was not done in a deliberate spirit of violating the law but out of a sense of survival and reaction against the severity of Rabbi Herzfeld's supervision.

There were few subjects in community life that provided more opportunity for controversy and bitter feelings than the supervision of kashrut. The more pious treasured the protection that their zealous rabbi provided them. The more tolerant, who frequently constituted the majority of the population, questioned the necessity of such strictness and reacted against the rabbi's role. Thus, in his youth, Julius witnessed a community split in its support of adherence to religious laws; he also received a striking example from his teacher of the firmness and strictness that should guide a rabbi in dealing with community matters—a lesson that was later to have some unfortunate consequences for him.

A decision was necessary for the direction of Julius' education—religious training as the grandson of Rabbi Mendelson or a business clerkship as the son of Wolf Eckman. Julius' father chose the later avenue for his son and sent him to London to gain experience in a new territory that would one day benefit the international market of the family's lumber business.

London, England

Of the 12 million inhabitants of England in 1819, there were only 20,000 - 30,000 Jews, at least two-thirds of whom lived in London. The 19th century Jewish population was undergoing a major shift from Sephardic to Ashkenazic leadership. With the growing numbers of Jews immigrating form Germany and Poland into England, the Ashkenazim (Jews with ancestors from Northern, Eastern, and Central Europe) began to take over the reins of leadership that had been dominated by the Sephardim (Jews whose ancestors originated from the Mediterranean rim).

Wealthy Sephardic families had dominated the Jewish community since the 18th century when Oliver Cromwell allowed Jews to resettle into England. Though the Jew Bill of 1753 allowed Jews to become naturalized citizens, it was repealed the very next year, and there was continued denial of equal rights to Jews. During the period of overt anti-Semitism, many Sephardic families sought full entry into English life by adopting more Anglican ways, by abandoning the synagogue, even by raising their children as Christians. The most prominent example of this trend was the Disraeli family.

The anti-Jewish sentiments that brought about the repeal of the Jew Bill were tempered by two surprising factors. Boxing was a highly regarded sport in England, and between 1753 and 1829, a number of prominent Jewish champions appeared, such as Daniel Mendoza, who won for the entire Jewish community a grudging respect from the British. Another factor in tempering the anti-Semitic feelings was the

growth of the influential London Society for the Promotion of Christianity Among the Jews. Founded in 1807, the organization adopted a program of warmth and praise to attract Jews to its cause. The society strongly rejected signs of overt anti-Semitism that had been so prevalent.

Religious and Business Worlds

The London of 1819 provided an auspicious climate for a sensitive young Jew who had been raised in the intense Jewish environment of Rawicz. The London that Julius encountered consisted of newly arrived immigrant Jews mingling with native born Jews, of tradition melding with reform.

Long before the first reform congregation came into being in London in 1842, demands for change were heard in the more Anglicized portions of the Jewish community. In 1819, the first recorded English sermon was preached in a London synagogue, and it was also the year that the English language was introduced to keep the records of the Spanish and Portuguese synagogue. Just the year before, in 1818, the first reform Temple had opened in Hamburg, Germany.

The economic posture of the Jewish community was changing. The Ashkenazic peddlers who had lined up their pushcarts in the narrow streets of London or walked them along countryside lanes were now small shopkeepers or petty manufacturers. Like the Sephardim of the 18th century, the Ashkenazim of the 19th century exchanged their shabby, Eastern European clothes for the accepted British attire, and they shaved away their long, black beards in favor of the smooth skins of British gentlemen. Their raucous, native Yiddish now intermingled with a Cockney accent or even the King's English.

The attitude of the non-Jewish public towards this Jewish minority also underwent a considerable change. In the past the Jews' peculiar immigrant dress, language, and way of life had drawn derision

and hoot calls from their British neighbors: the foreign sounds of their language had encouraged suspicion of their integrity, and they had been regarded as shady dealers and untrustworthy businessmen. However, as this Jewish minority gradually Anglicized its ways and entered into ever wider areas of British life, Jews came to be associated more with speculations of the coming of the Messiah and were regarded with a growing sense of awe.

The British sense of fair play moved the British to give the Jew a chance to prove his worth, and the position of the Jew changed dramatically. Undoubtedly, the United States constitution of 1790 with its guarantees of religious freedom, and the Napoleonic Sanhedrin of 1807 with its promise of a Jewish revival, had great effect upon the British public.

The general improvement in the economic climate of England which resulted form its growing sea trade brought significant gains to the Jewish community that focused its activities upon the commercial realm. Great figures like the Goldsmids and the Rothschilds became dominant in the economic life of England and served as models for the lesser Jewish lights of the community. By 1820, a renewed effort to remove the civil disabilities of Jews and Roman Catholics began, and the leadership of such powerful individuals played a major role in advancing the cause of reform toward the Jew.

However, the movement into commerce met with considerable opposition from the Jewish traditionalists in England. In contrast to the Anglicized Jews, the new Jewish immigrants were a poor, hard-working element who clung together in ghetto-like neighborhoods and who were regarded by their non-Jewish compatriots as aliens. The immigrants' traditional religious practices were narrow reproductions of their Eastern European origins—practices not welcome in England. England did not offer the cultural and intellectual havens provided by European shtetl life and by Yeshivot (Orthodox Jewish schools). Their religious practices and styles of dress differentiated them sharply from

the rest of the Jewish community that had been settled longer in England. Indeed, many British Jews felt that the British refusal to grant the Jews full emancipation was due to the immigrants' archaic forms of Judaism and shtetl appearance.

Struggle in London

In 1819, at the age of fourteen, Julius arrived in London to acquire a better knowledge of the business world. Wolf Eckman had dreams of a talented, aggressive son who could expand his business along international lines, perhaps like the banking business of the Rothschilds. But it was not to be. Julius later confided to his intimates that his confinement to the life of a peddler for three years was unbearable, that these three years were among the unhappiest in his whole life. Though England offered unlimited opportunities to ambitious young men possessed of talent and energy, for Julius it was a traumatically painful experience. It was abundantly clear to Julius: The life of commerce and trade was not for him. He was by nature totally unsuited to the harsh arena of the market place.

Julius was essentially a student from Rawicz. He had always been shy in his personal relations; he would bury himself in books and escape into his dream world of far off places or in the complex intricacies of the Talmud. His personal life was guided by the all embracing body of Jewish law which was the hallmark of the pious Jew of Rawicz. Suddenly—from this sheltered environment—he was thrust into a new world of London, England. Every morning—instead of making his way to school—he followed the pushcart to hawk his wares in a foreign tongue, to face the jibes and taunts of those who mocked his accent. In the evening, instead of returning to the warm hearth of a loving family, he would repeat his day's adventures to a smiling, but largely unsympathetic host who was anxious to Anglicize this young charge.

Julius did not give up easily. Despite the agony which each day visited upon him, he bravely set out on his appointed task of selling wares, beating back his tears with the determination to succeed. His father had made a considerable financial sacrifice to give his young son the experience of British commercial training. Julius had a great sense of family loyalty and could not easily shunt aside the faith that his father had placed in him.

But Julius did not find his father's wished-for success in the London business world. After three years, Julius gave up the struggle. During his hours behind the pushcart, Julius realized that his path of life was to take him through the worlds of scholarship and religious studies. The winds of change that were sweeping over England had not yet penetrated Julius' Jewish world.

With a remorseful heart, yet filled with joy at the prospect of reunion with his family, Julius returned to Rawicz. His family received him warmly; his father forgave him for not fulfilling his ambitions. Julius felt it impossible to re-enter the mercantile world, even in Rawicz with his own father. Julius convinced his father that his only true interest in life was Jewish scholarship, and he won his father's permission to prepare for university studies in Berlin.

Julius' years in London were not altogether wasted. He did acquire a mastery of the English language which prepared him linguistically for his role as pioneer rabbi in America. Although he received his later Judaic training in Germany, his pronunciation of English always reflected his British years, and in America he was to escape the complete identification with Germany that was so characteristic of the early "imported" European rabbis. Julius' years in London also helped him to acquire a profound respect for the democratic institutions of England. A vision of the potential freedom of the Jew impinged unforgettably upon his mind, a vision that he would pursue to the end of his days.

Berlin, Germany

Germany had been crushed in 1806 by the Napoleonic invasion, and many traces of its early feudalism were erased. The subsequent Napoleonic Age saw the break down of Europe's national boundaries, the elimination of thirty-six principalities and kings that had characterized the land of Germany, and the establishment of a single German entity. With the Napoleonic Age also came a lifting of discriminatory laws, freeing the Jews from heavy political and economic burdens that they had experienced for centuries. Early 19th century Germany, with its Jewish population of 230,000, of which 32,000 lived in Berlin, witnessed an emergence of Jewish patriotism for the state. But, with the end of the Napoleonic Age, Jews in Germany witnessed the return of anti-Semitic discrimination.

Jewish Life in 19th Century Germany

Napoleon's new policies eliminated ancient barriers that had separated Jews from major areas of national life. Instrumental in removing these barriers was a new, modern version of the Sanhedrin. In 1806, Napoleon issued a call for an assembly of Jewish notables from across Europe, which he termed a Sanhedrin. Napoleon's motives for convening this assembly were undoubtedly related to winning the support of world Jewry for his regime.

The assembly of seventy-one notables consisted of two-thirds rabbis and one-third laymen, with David Sinzham of Strasborg selected as its head. At the conclusion of its deliberations, the Assembly issued a manifesto, the heart of which called for Jews to regard the country in which they lived as their homeland, their fellow citizens as their brothers.

The effect of the Sanhedrin was widespread. New impetus was given to the extension of civil rights and privileges to German Jews as well as to other minority groups. Jews entered the army and various

professions heretofore inaccessible to them. Leading Jewish figures such as Israel Jacobson of Westphalia called for the removal of legal and social barriers that separated Jews from the community at large. Although the economic level of most Jews remained low, individual families were able to acquire great wealth and became cultural leaders of the land. Many German communities that had hitherto forbidden the settlement of Jews now opened their doors. By 1812 Frederick William of Prussia extended the privileges of equality to all the Jews of Prussia. It seemed as though Germany was about to enter a new Golden Age of liberalism and humanity.

The centuries of isolation from the cultural life of Europe had severely limited the creative spirit of the Jew. While the Talmudic academies produced prodigies of Rabbinic lore, they did not produce scientists. The world of scientific inquiry was closed to the best young minds of the Jewish community. Brilliant commentaries elucidating the complexities of Rabbinic law were written but little thought was given to the techniques of historical research or to the insights of the latest philosophical systems.

When the barriers that separated the ghetto from the world at large were broken down and the Emancipation period set in, a wave of assimilation took place. Young Jews who found the university doors open to them for the first time abandoned their heritage in a head-long flight. In their view the closed, archaic system of Jewish law had little value in comparison to the exciting discoveries of the 19th century. Conversion to Christianity opened up to them the doors of the Western world—the universities, the artistic fields, the cultural salons—every exciting arena of the new life. Emancipation meant for them freedom from the shackles of a traditional faith that hampered their growth.

Other Jews responded to the Emancipation in a totally different manner. They saw that their new-found freedom from the feudal oppression of the past centuries had come about through the

emergence of the new forces of nationalism. The new national movements did not recognize the caste system of the past and made but one demand of those who wished to share of the benefits of their land—that they be loyal to the state. This consideration overrode all others—including religion, trade, or station in life. Jews became the most loyal of the nationalist forces, thus giving expression to their gratitude for their newly obtained rights.

The 1812 collapse of Napoleon on the Russian front led to a great uprising in Germany and in other conquered lands. Newly liberated German Jews joined with their fellow nationalists in the struggle for freedom against the very forces that had brought about their own release from abject tyranny. Jews demonstrated conspicuous bravery in the battles of 1813-1814 as Napoleon reeled back in defeat. Perhaps the German Jews hoped that by linking their destiny with a free Germany through courageous participation on the battle front, they would consolidate their position of equality in the new society. Perhaps they mistook the German government's extension of civil rights to Jews as a true change of heart, expressing their gratitude and confidence by giving their life-blood freely on the battlefield.

Fighting for the German homeland proved to be of no avail. As soon as the threat of Napoleon disappeared, the old restrictions and repressions against Jews reappeared. The Congress of Vienna in 1814-15 gave Germany back its thirty-six kings. The Jews were theoretically granted the rights that they had won, but popular hatred of the Jew surged to new heights. Germany seethed with frustrated patriotism. Its French master had been defeated and now everything associated with foreignness and internationalism was regarded with suspicion, if not outright antagonism.

Learned academicians led the assault against Jewish rights. Theories were concocted to place the blame for Germany's earlier weakness upon the Jewish elements. A revival of distinctive clothing to identify the Jew was urged in order to help purify the nation. Many

German states either expelled their Jewish residents or imposed upon them severe penalties and restrictions. By 1819 the medieval outcry of anti-Semitism "Hep, Hep-Hierosolyma est perdita" (Jerusalem is destroyed) resounded throughout German streets, accompanied by waves of rioting, looting, and brutal assaults.

The accumulated anti-Semitism of the centuries, fanned by ecclesiastical fires and economic competition, reappeared as soon as the initial bloom faded on the nationalistic revolution. Restrictions were reimposed in a new guise, head taxes were imposed, and old hatreds took on a democratic garb. In Frankfurt, Jews were confined to ghettos and barred from governmental service. In Russia, Hebrew books were censored, and Jewish males from age 12 were conscribed into the military.

In this atmosphere of persecution and hatred, however, Jewish spiritual forces that had been briefly emancipated could not be totally restrained. Many Jews, disenchanted with the promise of a new and better life were profoundly impressed with the power of rationalism to effect radical changes in the world. They strongly felt that what was needed to bring about a favorable change in the Jewish condition was a Jewish nationalism. They began to dream and to plan for the creation a Jewish state in the ancient homeland of Palestine where Hebrew could be freely practiced, and where the right of the Jewish people could preserved. They created societies to encourage young settlers to leave Europe in order to establish new settlements in the ancient homeland. They set about to develop a sense of pride in their ancient past and a strong desire to recreate it. They envisioned the problem of anti-Semitism vanishing from the face of the earth as the Jewish people attained a state of normalcy like all other nations—dwelling on its own soil and creating its own distinctive culture.

Still other Jews responded to the Emancipation in yet a third manner. They viewed the radical changes in European life as being incomplete and inadequate. Much had been done, to be sure, to

eradicate age-old evils that were inherent in the feudal system but so much remained to be done. A mere change of the political system was not enough. The causes of persecution and discrimination were much more deeply rooted. They derived from the economic wrongs that persisted in the capitalistic system which they felt maintained and even, at times, intensified the old abuses.

Such Jews, by the thousands, embraced the radical causes—Communism, Socialism, Nihilism, and the like. They were prepared to devote their lives to the creation of a better world, and they felt that only in such a superior state could they hope to provide a better opportunity for the Jew. This group rejected the notion of a separate Jewish state, for that would mean compounding an already intolerable situation. They were scornful of the assimilationists who, in their eyes, had given up the good fight altogether and had succumbed to the lures of the new Europe.

The Germans could reinstate repressive laws, ignorant mobs could unleash violence, but the German Jews would never entirely forget that brief shining moment as they entered the modern culture milieu of the New Europe.

The Society of Jewish Culture and Knowledge

In 1819, just three years before Eckman's arrival in Germany, a remarkable group of brilliant young men stimulated a new movement: the Verein fur Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden—the Society for Jewish Culture and Knowledge. Three university savants met together to lay the foundation for the new enterprise. The first and foremost among them, in terms of his influence on Eckman, was Leopold Zunz who became the equivalent of vice president of the society. Edward Gans, a champion of Hegel's philosophy and a scintillating activist, undertook the formal leadership of the group. The third member was Moses Moser, a devoted friend of Heinrich Heine.

These three quickly drew to their cause gifted Jewish idealists who were concerned with the fundamental problem of reconciling the ancient traditions of their faith with the philosophical and scientific insights of the modern world. Ludwig Markus, David Friedlander, and Israel Jacobson, the early leaders of the Reform movement, and Heine himself lent their names and support to the society. Close to a hundred members affiliated with the movement, half of whom lived in Berlin.

This group undertook to face the challenge of the Emancipation and Assimilation in a new and brilliant manner. The major problem, they felt, that had led to the present low state of Jewish life was that Jewish scholarship had not kept pace with the general levels of knowledge. They same logical, or sometimes it seemed, illogical principles that directed the movements of thought in the emerging Talmud were being used in the eighteenth century to reinterpret the very same text. They saw no apparent change in the approach or the technique used over these almost two millennia. The problems that were being dealt with in such detail were irrelevant to the circumstances and the concerns of the age. European scholars had learned to employ the techniques of historical research to reveal the secrets of the past, techniques that could now be used to throw new light on Jewish history.

Zunz and his followers proposed to regain and to maintain freedom through knowledge—not enlightenment from without but light from within. The Society undertook to utilize all of these new methods that represented the highest levels of European cultural achievement in order to expand the areas of Jewish knowledge. They felt that a familiarity with Jewish history and literature on such a level would result in a sense of self worth that would in turn preserve the essentials of a Jewish life. They keenly felt the everlastingly inherent value of the Jewish tradition beginning with the text of the Bible, continuing throughout the Talmudic period, and flowering during the Golden Age in Spain.

Throughout the centuries, the texts, essentially the Bible and Talmud, served as the sources of information for knowledge of things past. Now many additional sources were available from the literature of other peoples and other historical records.

Leopold Zunz

The task of undertaking such a vast and difficult undertaking would have deterred a lesser figure than Leopold Zunz. There was no financial support for this movement and for years he had to eke out a livelihood by performing a variety of non-scholarly tasks. Gans, one of his original collaborators, gave up the struggle altogether with these bitter words, "The only link which unites the Jews is fear, the only interest for which they are willing to part with some of their worldly goods is charity." But Zunz remained true to his task. Heine said of Zunz, "He worked and achieved where the others dreamed and fainted by the way."

Zunz was only eleven years older than Eckman but had an entirely different kind of childhood. His father died at a very young age, plunging th family into serious financial difficulties. He could only enter school as a scholarship pupil but justified quickly the faith placed in him by unusual performance both tin the area of mathematics and Hebrew studies. By the age of twelve, Zunz had already written a text on arithmetic and a Hebrew satire.

In 1815 Zunz arrived at the University of Berlin where he pursued a variety of interests including mathematics, philosophy, history, and philology. Just two years later he wrote an epoch making work, a short essay "On Rabbinic Literature," which argued for the value of Jewish scholarship within the framework of university research and instruction. Until then Judaica was virtually isolated from the university curriculum. It was regarded as the exclusive domain of the Yeshivot and rabbinical seminaries, but hardly worthy of serious attention by collegiate savants. Zunz pointed out that many

of the works on Judaism by non-Jewish authors were filled with errors stemming from their meager background, that Judaism had great contributions to make to general fields of knowledge, and that Judaism could benefit from the insights of the various scientific disciplines.

Zunz acted in accordance with his resolves when he founded the Society in 1819, and in 1822 he began the publication of the Zeitschrift fur die Wissenschaft des Judentums (Journal of Jewish Science). This significant journal undertook to explore the historical development of Judaism and the essence of its philosophy in fulfillment of the Society's principles. Zunz saw this publication as a primary vehicle to disseminate the new knowledge and to encourage the Jewish attitudes that he espoused.

One of his most brilliant essays was his biography of Rashi. Here he demonstrated how the application of the principles of historical and literary research could reveal in all its glory a magnificent future that had been all but buried in the folds of his own literary robes.

The promise of the journal was not fulfilled. Zunz suffered the agonies that were later to be experienced by his pupil Eckman—economic and ideological pressures that brought to an end the publication. Although his associates abandoned the scientific study of Judaism, upon the demise of the journal, Zunz maintained his pace with unabated zeal. Zunz briefly attempted to earn a livelihood by preaching in a Berlin synagogue. From 1820 to 1822 he conducted the services in the new synagogue, Beer's Temple, and delivered a series of extraordinary sermons which were far beyond the capacity of his congregants' comprehension. He was dismayed by their apathy and growing antipathy, so he resigned to take over the direction of a community elementary school. He found great joy in teaching the young and guiding their program of studies. What he could not brook was the interference of his lay directors and the strictures placed on his

educational innovation. He resigned a secure post in order to live according to his principles.

Zunz' economic plight was disastrous, but his new found freedom released him for the most productive period of his life. He began the writing of the Gottesdienstliche Vortrage der Juden (Divine Sermons of the Jews) which became the most important Jewish work of the nineteenth century. He traced the history of the sermon in the Jewish religion, showing how it was always an intrinsic part of the ritual from the earliest days to the present. He presented his material replete with dates and historical facts unlike any preceding study. He showed the Jewish religion as a living, growing entity, undergoing change in every generation, not a static crystalized structure as the traditionalists had imagined. This volume set the tone for the later emergence of the Reform and Positive-Historical movements in Jewish life which were predicated on the legitimacy of change brought forth through people and events in history, not by rabbinical council. More than any other work, this volume represented Judaism as a worthy subject for university research.

After its publication Zunz became universally recognized as the outstanding figure in scientific Jewish scholarship. Yet, despite this recognition, he still found the problem of earning a livelihood a difficult one. He was hesitant about re-entering the active rabbinate after he failed to be elected to a position in Darmstadt. He received many offers but rejected them all, including the opportunity to serve a congregation in New York.

Finally, Zunz did make the attempt to fill a rabbinical post away from Berlin when he responded to a call from the community of Prague. It, like the post in Berlin, proved to be a disastrous experience. He found the congregation totally unresponsive to his messages, and they judged him to be stubborn and eccentric. This failure of mutuality would be found typical of Eckman's later relationships with this congregations. The unhappiness of both Zunz and his Prague

ongregation came to an end after a scant fifty days, and then he eturned to his beloved Berlin. Here he rewon world-wide recognition ith a new work, Die Namen der Juden, which was a remarkable ientific study of Jewish names. his success led to his appointment in ovember of 1840 as the director of a newly created Jewish Teacher's eminary.

Finally, Zunz could enter on a vibrant, productive period ithout the constant concerns of earning a livelihood. He embarked on variety of significant projects. One of his notable interests was a eview of the geographical literature produced by Jewish figures of the ast. He was fascinated by the wide-ranging adventures of individuals ke Benjamin of Tudela who traveled along the coast of the lediterranean during the 12th century, and the insights that such ojourners provided into the nature of the world Jewish community.

Another of Zunz' interests lay in the emerging Reform lovement of Germany which was largely influenced by his early asterpiece Gottesdienstliche Vortrage der Juden. That work had uttressed the Reform arguments for change in the traditional Jewish alue system by demonstrating emphatically that such changes were herent in the very history of Jewish thought.

Despite this use of his own work by the formulators of the eform movement, Zunz remained antagonistic to its purposes. His pposition to Reform rested on several grounds. He had a poor opinion rabbis in general and suspected them of ecclesiastical pretensions and ambitions to seize control of the Jewish community. He did not gard them as sympathetic to scholarship but eager to serve only their wn private ambitions. He even went so far as to classify them with othsayers and quacks.

Another source of contention was the Reform attitude to the lmud. The Reform movement found its primary sustenance in the ble, especially in the Prophetic literature and it dismissed

categorically the value of the Talmud. Reformers regard the strictures of Jewish law as inimical to the free development of the Jewish spirit and failed to see any beneficial influences resulting form its study. This extreme antagonism violated Zunz's historical sense, for he saw the Talmud as the legitimate extension of the Bible and a profound exposition of the Jewish spirit. Zunz attached great value to every product of the Jewish mind and refused to dismiss any work to advance a theological argument of an ecclesiastical position.

Zunz harbored a profound respect for tradition. He may not have treasured the rituals and customs because he did not believe in their divine origin, but he did regard them as viable and meaningful symbols of the history of Jewish aspirations. He was essentially sympathetic to the Positive-Historical school of Zacharias Frankel which regarded the Jewish people as the repository of the Jewish spirit, and Zunz therefore valued its every expression.

In 1845, he published an important work on "History and Literature" which dealt with the essential themes of Jewish literature and showed its profound influences on the civilizations among which it flourished. This work displayed his mastery of Jewish literature and the understanding he had of its significance. Here too he developed a powerful case for including Jewish literature in the ranks of serious, significant writings that deserved the attention of leading scholars.

Zunz as a Religious Model

Zunz' exciting work attracted a host of students who were entranced by the brilliant advances in the sciences, yet drawn to their own Jewish sources in a desire to understand them better. Eckman fit comfortably within this group.

Zunz emerged as the greatest influence on the life and thought of Eckman. Eckman lived in Berlin for years, avidly absorbing every new insight of his master teacher. Under Zunz' influence, Eckman

developed strong interests in the same fields that attracted his master. Eckman sought historical and logical justification for familiar and beloved traditional practices. Like Zunz, he found pleasure in defending Jewish values against the onslaughts of arrogant Christian theologians who saw in Judaism a primitive and unfulfilled faith, or in defending his faith against cynical scientists who saw nothing in Judaism but his superstitions and naive interpretations of life. Research into the development of Judaism resulted in renewed confidence in the worthwhileness of the Jewish faith.

Such victories could only be achieved by exploring the vast body of Jewish knowledge by recognized and accepted techniques that revealed hitherto unknown facets. Polemics alone could hardly yield a lasting victory. While Eckman was sympathetic to the announced goal of Reform he was too closely attached to the large body of Jewish tradition and he knew only too well its lasting value to dismiss it.

Also having a great influence on Eckman was Zunz' sense of involvement in the major concerns of the community at large, both local and national. Zunz actually became the President of the Electoral Assembly of his district and played an active role in the political struggles of his time. His activity partly stemmed from his gratitude to a Germany that made his own emancipation possible and partly from a great inner drive to express himself on every issue of importance.

Like Zunz, Eckman's reading ranged the gamut of Jewish literature, with particular stress on the descriptive passages of Jewish life in far off corners of the globe. Eckman became the very epitome of the armchair traveller. Perhaps the memories of several years of childhood spent in far off London had already conditioned him for travel. Eckman became absorbed by tales of long lost Jewish communities such as the Khazars of Russia and Chinese Jewish groups that had followed in the foot steps of Marco Polo. He saw himself as an intrepid explorer coming upon pockets of isolated Jews whom he

would bring back into the fold, thus earning their eternal gratitude and the acclaim in the Jewish community.

The active, often fiery discussions that Zunz conducted most often found Eckman listening carefully and absorbing every argument and counter argument, but rarely did Eckman venture into the heat of the intellectual struggle.

Eckman found himself sympathizing entire with Zunz' attitude to the religious movements of his time. Like others emerging from Jewish ghettos into the broad universal world of a German university, Eckman realized that he could not live the same kind of Jewish life as his ancestors. What met the spiritual needs of Wolf Eckman, merchant of Rawicz, failed to satisfy the needs of Julius Eckman, philosophy student at the University of Berlin. Yet, Julius was unwilling to cast off his entire heritage for the sake of a rarified, intellectualized set of concepts that virtually ignored Jewish history for two thousand years.

Julius Eckman became Rabbi Eckman with double ordination from the Rabbis of Berlin and Prenzlau, two acknowledged religious authorities of Europe. Rabbi Eckman also became Dr. Eckman with a Doctorate in Philosophy from the Royal Frederick Wilhelm College in Berlin, following a five-year Curs Universitatis Berlinesis rite inscriptuso.

Rabbi Eckman, far more retiring that Zunz, would not seek public office. However, Rabbi Eckman—like Zunz—felt that he could not isolate himself in an intellectual ghetto and ignore the pressing needs of his times. His American career would find him taking strong and at times controversial positions on the issues of the day.

Immigration to America

The relative peace that Rabbi Eckman enjoyed in his tight little world, circumscribed by the Seminary of Zunz and the University

of Berlin, was shattered by the uprising of 1848. The masses of early 19th century Germans were poor and oppressed, for many actually remained as serfs until the middle of the century. The pent-up emotions of these deprived elements burst forth in a revolt in 1848 that proved to be abortive. It was harshly repressed and the growing stream of emigration to America became a tidal wave. Usually a single member of the family acted as a pioneer, paving the way for the rest of the family to follow. He would earn enough money to pay for the passage of the others, and thus, individual by individual, family by family, the tide swelled. By the middle of the century, over 50,000 Jews had emigrated, mainly from Posen, the Rhine region, and Bavaria. In desperation the Jews sought opportunities to live free lives and to earn a decent livelihood. In America both of these criteria were met.

The Ashkenazic Jews found that in America, the established congregations were of the Sephardic ritual, going back to the early days of settlement on the American shore by noble Jews of Spanish descent. Their style of Hebrew and mode of worship were quite foreign to the Ashkenazic immigrants. Some overcame their innate prejudices against a strange style of worship and adapted themselves to the accepted mode. Others were more stubborn and they created new congregations in which they could feel more secure and comfortable.

In sympathy with the poor and oppressed, unwilling to accept the severe repression of the uprising, and yearning to travel, Eckman decided to make the New World his home.

CHAPTER 2

ECKMAN IN AMERICA: THE SOUTH

Julius Eckman Arrives in Richmond

During the 1790's, the Jewish community of Richmond, Virginia boasted the third largest Jewish population in the United States—29 families, almost 100 people of both Sephardic and Ashkenazic backgrounds. The first known Jew to live in Richmond was Isaiah Isaacs, who is mentioned in real estate dockets and court proceedings as early as 1769. At that time Richmond was regarded as an outlying Jewish community since New York and Philadelphia already had established Jewish congregations.

Richmond offered Jews a liberal and welcoming environment. In 1786 Thomas Jefferson had successfully introduced a bill for religious freedom, and within two years Isaacs was elected to the City Council of Richmond. His partner, Jacob Cohen, was a leading figure in Southern Jewish life—a philanthropist and businessman who conducted business with some of the greatest American figures of his time: he employed Daniel Boone and did business with James Madison and Edmund Randolph.

Congregation Beth Shalome

Congregation Beth Shalome welcomed Rabbi Eckman to America. Founded in 1789 right after the Revolutionary War, Beth Shalome followed the Sephardic ritual, but it also had a substantial Ashkenazic membership.

The congregation won early distinction in 1790 when it joined older congregations in New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston in sending a joint letter of congratulations to George Washington on the occasion of his inaugural as the first president of the United States. President Washington's notable response was addressed to Richmond and to the other congregations:

> Gentlemen:
>
> The liberality of sentiment toward each other, which marks every political religious denomination of men in this country, stands unparalleled in the history of nations. The affection of such a people is a treasure beyond the reach of calculation, and the repeated proofs which my fellow citizens have given of their attachment to me and approbation of my doings, form the purest source of my temporal felicity. The affectionate expressions of your address again excite my gratitude and receive my warmest acknowledgement.
>
> The power and goodness of the Almighty so strongly manifested in the events of our late glorious revolution, and His kind interposition in our behalf, have been no less visible in the establishment of our present equal government. In war He directed the sword, and in peace He has ruled in our councils. My agency in both has been guided by the best intentions and a sense of duty I owe to my country.
>
> And as my exertions have hitherto been amply rewarded by the approbation of my fellow citizens, I shall endeavor to deserve a continuance of it by my future conduct.

May the same temporal and eternal blessings which you implore for me rest upon your congregations.

—G. Washington

A number of years passed before the congregation has the resources to erect its own house of worship. It purchased land in 1818 and by 1822 has built the first synagogue in Virginia. It was dedicated in an impressive ceremony on Rosh Hashana with Rev. Isaac Seixas presiding and Jacob Mordecai delivering the sermon. The first prayer book that the congregation used was the Isaac Pinto edition—the first English language Jewish prayer book printed in the United States.

The early occupants of the pulpit were the distinguished Sephardic leaders Isaac Judah, Isaac Seixas, and Israel Kurshudt, the son-in-law of the well-known Dr. Gershon Mendes Seixas of New York. The most prominent of all was Isaac Leeser who achieved national fame as translator of the Bible and the editor of The Occident, the first Jewish newspaper in the United States.

The succession of Sephardic spiritual leaders and the continuation of the Sephardic ritual finally alienated a group of the more spirited German congregants who broke away to form a new congregation, Beth Ahabah. This split in the congregation still left a majority of German members in Beth Shalome, members reluctant to leave their historic congregation but ill at ease with the Sephardic form of worship. When Beth Shalome was left without a leader in the summer of 1849 following the departure of Rev. Ellis Lyons, German members persuaded the congregation to seek a German Rabbi who could bring new life into the service. They turned to the renowned school of Leopold Zunz for a candidate. No doubt a major factor in their decision to turn to Zunz' followers was their competitive desire to progress as well as Beth Ahabah had.

Rabbi Eckman's First Pulpit

For Rabbi Eckman, the invitation was a blessing and a longed-for opportunity to satisfy his yearning for adventure since, for so many years, he had spent his time in academic pursuits, poring over texts of Hebrew lore. Now he could enter the active arena of Jewish community life. He was 44 years old, unencumbered by family responsibilities, and beckoned by the irresistible New World. It was a propitious time to leave Germany. While Eckman was not involved in the revolutionary movement, he could not escape the ripples of its aftermath. By going to America he would join a great throng of fellow Jews in seeking a new life in the West.

Farewells were quickly said. When Rabbi Eckman took permanent leave of Berlin, he had not formed the kind of intimate friendships that would wrench hearts. So much of his studies were done in the solitude of libraries that the leave-taking form his beloved books, one sided as it was, was the hardest of all. His instructors wished him well in his new enterprise. They knew him as an avid student and might have wondered how he would fare in the unknown life of an American congregation. It was a far cry from the quietude of German academia to a pioneering community in Virginia.

The first mention of Rabbi Eckman in American sources is found in The Occident of September 9, 1849:

> This congregation has been without a Hazan for the past year, one of its members having officiated, to whom much credit is due. There is, however, a gentleman (Mr. Julius Eckman) of distinguished ability (with whom arrangements have been made) expected at Richmond in a few weeks from Portsmouth, England; and there is great reason to suppose from the various

> testimonials which have been received relative to his literary and religious acquirements, that his presence will add another bright luminary to our hemisphere. It is contemplated to establish a Hebrew and English institute in this city, which Mr. Eckman will be the principal of. In this establishment will be taught every species of ordinary education, such as is imparted in similar institutions. The trustees of the institute have obtained an act of incorporation from the legislature of this state, on the 4th of April, 1848, and have been awaiting the opportunity of obtaining a qualified teacher in order to go into operation.

The challenge of directing a new school of Jewish lore in America was the real attraction that drew Rabbi Eckman from his studies in Berlin. The position in Richmond entailed rabbinic functions in the congregation which he tolerated, but education was his major interest in life.

Rabbi Eckman arrived in Richmond in September of 1849, just in time to conduct his first High Holy services in the New World. His messages were received with acclaim by a congregation unaccustomed to learned discourses laden with quotations from classical Jewish sources. The congregation was particularly pleased that just a few months after his arrival, Rabbi Eckman was invited to deliver the opening prayer at a session of the Virginia House of Delegates.

The custom of inviting clergy to open a session of the Virginian legislature with prayer dates back to 1829. A rabbi had never been invited, but public opinion finally prevailed. In January of 1850, Rabbi Eckman became the first rabbi to open a session of the Virginia State Legislature with a prayer. These were his words:

Before the commencement of the legislative proceedings of this day, I again, in the name of this honorable assembly, lift up my eyes to Thee, our Father who art in heaven, most humbly beseeching Thee to vouchsafe to be with us during the labours of this day; that Thou mayest direct our judgment, enlighten our minds, and incline our hearts, that we may think, speak, and act, according to Thy will and to our good.

May truth be our guide, justice our rule, and the welfare of mankind our only aim, so that this State, upon which Thou hast lavished so many blessings already; whose sons, by Thy grace, have rendered signal services to our Union in particular, and to the cause of liberty in general; that this State may continue to rise, to shine, and flourish.

May tranquility, order, safety, and prosperity reign therein, and no troubles, vexations, or grievances, break in from without.

May it please Thee to crown our endeavours here with success, to the contentment of our hearts; to the satisfaction of those who entrusted us with so important a charge; to the advancement of plenty and ease, of happiness and peace.

May the tree of liberty, which has been planted here so early, and which has now taken root so deeply, be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringing forth fruit in its season, whose leaves to not wither, but may its branches spread forth more and more, til all mankind may find shelter under its shadow, Amen.

The prayer was an eloquent exposition of Rabbi Eckman's mastery of the English language as well as his learned erudition in Biblical allusions and style. He was received with warm applause by the delegates, most of whom hearing a rabbi speak for the first time. They were so impressed that a motion was adopted to incorporate the prayer into the journal of the House. This reception to Rabbi Eckman's address was a particular compliment since clergy were prohibited by the Virginia constitution from being members of the Legislature up until 1867. Rabbi Eckman's success impressed his congregants and the larger Jewish community, and he subsequently received numerous invitations to speak. However, in Rabbi Eckman's own eyes, much more significant were the advances he was making during the very same week that he had addressed the legislature—advances in developing a school of Jewish children.

The Hebrew and English Institute

On January 2, 1850, the Hebrew and English Institute opened its doors.

In the 1800's, practically all the synagogues in the country maintained schools for both Jewish and general subjects. Public schools had not yet become the standard in the United States, and consequently, religious institutions saw it their duty both to educate their youth in religious and secular studies and to provide lessons on character improvement.

The Hebrew and English Institute reflected this American trend. Morning hours at the institute were usually devoted to English studies—the three R's—while afternoons were set aside for Hebraic studies. Only thirty students of varying ages were in attendance under the supervision of Rabbi Eckman and a female teaching assistant. A ready explanation can be found for the scarcity of students: children were usually enrolled in school in September, the beginning of the

school year. Parents were understandably reluctant to switch their children in the middle of the school year.

The tuition was set low to attract students and to avoid any hardships for children of poor families. The school charged an annual fee of $14; for additional courses in French, German, or Latin, a $10 annual fee was charged for each language. Every child received individualized instruction. The small number of students, the wide variety of courses, and the limited staff made this personal instruction possible.

The direction and the actual instruction in the school occupied the complete attention of Rabbi Eckman. The institute was his first opportunity to transmit a measure of his own vast accumulation of knowledge, and he devoted himself to the task wholeheartedly.

In the very midst of these labors, only seven months after his arrival in Richmond, a swift and complete turn of events occurred. His reputation had spread beyond the borders of Richmond, and he received an invitation to become the rabbi of one of the most prestigious congregations in the country, Beth Elohim of Charleston, South Carolina.

Charleston, South Carolina

South Carolina had extended Jews the right to vote by 1721, and it provided an enlightened environment in which the Jewish community could prosper. Charleston was a wealthy and sophisticated community which by 1700 already possessed a handsome public library, a concert hall, and a flourishing group of artists. Many of the homes were magnificent mansions, some of which were the homes of leading Jewish merchants. The most distinguished Jewish figure that Charleston produced was Judah P. Benjamin, a Unites States Senator from Louisiana and the Secretary of State for the Confederacy. Many other Jewish Congressmen and Senators emerged from Charleston.

The Jewish community, predominantly Sephardic, drew its early congregational leaders from London: the first Haham (the title for a rabbi among the Sephardim) was Moses Cohen, and the first hazan (religious leader) was Isaac da Costa.

Congregation Beth Elohim

Congregation Beth Elohim was founded in 1749, the fifth Jewish congregation in the United States, preceded by synagogues in New York, Newport, Savannah, and Philadelphia. Like the others, it began as an Orthodox, Sephardic congregation, modeled after the Sephardic synagogue Bevis Marks in London. For many years the congregation was supplied with Hahamin who came from the London Sephardic community. Importing Hahamin was not always successful, and if a Haham did not work well with the congregation, he was sent back to London in short order.

Beth Elohim regarded itself as co-extensive with the Jewish community at large. Its constitution of 1820 stipulated that every adult Jew of Charleston was regarded as a member of the congregation, thus responsible for paying dues. The same constitution forbade the erection of another synagogue in Charleston or the assemblage of an unauthorized minyan (a gathering of at least ten Jews for public worship). The constitution also denied privileges of membership to Jews who violated ritual laws like the Sabbath, and those who intermarried could not be buried in the synagogue's cemetery.

Reforms Introduced

A spirit of dissatisfaction began to spread among the German members. The dissatisfaction was a more fundamental protest than the opposition of German Jewish membership to the Sephardic founders and their rituals. It was a desire to create basic changes in the Orthodox character of the congregation. In 1824, forty-seven members of the congregation presented a petition asking for a weekly sermon to

properly explain problems of faith, a shortening of the service, and the introduction of English translations into the service. They referred in their petition to the reforms that were being introduced in Germany.

According to the constitution, a two-thirds majority was required to make changes in the synagogue laws. On that basis the petition was rejected as unconstitutional without any further discussion. But the protest did not end. The rejected minority proceeded to organize a "Reformed Society of Israelites" to put into practice the changes that they advocated. Now that the disenchanted congregants freed themselves from the structure of their mother congregation, they began to make fundamental changes in religious observances. They developed their own prayer book that reflected the classical Reform positions that rejected a faith in the Messiah, a belief in a return to Zion, and the sanctity of the Hebrew language. They worshipped in bare heads and introduced instrumental music. At first they met in the Masonic Hall, but the following year, in 1826, they initiated a campaign to construct a temple.

Apparently, the attempt to raise funds led to a rapid decline of interest on the part of the members of the new society. Most of the members rejoined Beth Elohim, and within five years the Society dissolved. They did not have rabbinic leadership to translate their enthusiasm into lasting, organized forms, nor did their lay leaders possess enough grounding in Judaica to fully meet the needs of the Society. Despite this apparent failure, there is no doubt that the ferment they created played a leading role in the eventual change of character of the Beth Elohim congregation.

Gustavus Poznanski

After a fire destroyed the original synagogue in 1838 and a new structure was erected, Gustavus Poznanski, a Hamburg educated Hazan, was appointed to lead the congregation. He brought with him innovations from the Reform movement that dominated the Hamburg

Temple. His first recommendation was that the congregation accept the use of an organ in the service. This suggestion led to a bitter struggle within the congregation. Opponents saw an organ in the service as a first step in the destruction not only of the synagogue's Sephardic character but of its Orthodox nature. Poznanski prevailed, and the Orthodox elements broke away in 1841 to form a new congregation, Shearith Israel.

With the congregation losing its Orthodox element, additional reforms were quickly introduced. In 1843 Poznanski urged the abandonment of the second day of festivals, but this innovation met with strong resistance even from the newly Reform congregation. However, when a resolution was introduced that the congregation "embrace all the Mosaic and Rabbinical laws" and move from Reform to more Conservative practices, that, too was defeated. Conflict continued to be the pattern of life in the congregation. The majority of the congregation was in favor of reforms, but the nature and extent of the changes was still a matter of controversy.

Poznanski offered to resign on a number of occasions, feeling that a change in leadership would ease harsh feelings. The search for a Hazan began by placing advertisements in The Occident and European journals. In 1850, a promising application was received from Isaac Mayer Wise, a fiery, brilliant figure who had served in Albany, New York, for four years and was there the center of controversy much as Poznanski had been in Charleston.

Rabbi Wise was invited to visit Beth Elohim, and he made an excellent impression upon the congregation. With Poznanski warmly supporting Rabbi Wise as a religious reformer, the congregation extended an invitation to Rabbi Wise to become its rabbi. But, after considerable reflection and upon the urging of his friends in Albany who felt that he had so much more to accomplish there, he finally declined the offer.

Rabbi Eckman at Congregation Beth Elohim

Word had spread throughout the South of the scholarly, sincere rabbi who had recently come to the United States, who was devoting himself to educational activities in Richmond. Beth Elohim had been disappointed both in their European candidates and in candidates from distant communities, so in May, 1850, they extended a two-year probationary invitation to Rabbi Eckman without ever first meeting him and without knowing his interest in the position.

Before extending the invitation, the congregation consulted with Poznanski and received from him his unqualified approval. He even congratulated the congregation on having such a good opportunity "to be benefitted morally and religiously."

In the late spring of 1850, the board of the congregation determined by a 22 to 2 vote to elect Rabbi Eckman for a two-year term. Rabbi Eckman responded to the invitation almost immediately, as recorded in the minutes of the board of trustees:

> I most respectfully acknowledge the receipt of a communication from your worthy secretary, acquainting me of the fact of my being elected as minister of your congregation for the probationary term of two years.
>
> I tender my most heartfelt thanks for the high confidence placed in me, and the honor conferred on me by this election, and being under the full impression of the importance, dignity, and sacredness of the office, I faithfully rely on a benign Providence, the dispenser of all good, for protection and aid in the faithful and zealous discharge of the sacred duties devolved on me, as also in your cooperation, and in that of every member of the congregation, in my humble efforts toward the

advancement of moral and religious knowledge, so that this election may prove a true benefit both the elector and to the elected.

I am gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

Julius Eckman

Richmond's Beth Shalome was understandably hurt by the sudden departure of its rabbi after such a short stay, but it felt complimented, as did Rabbi Eckman, that such a prestigious congregation as Beth Elohim in Charleston had invited Rabbi Eckman to become its rabbi. Without being fully aware of the situation into which he was stepping, Rabbi Eckman responded with alacrity.

Poznanski still resided in Charleston, and now he viewed with some disapproval the arrival of Rabbi Eckman. He would have preferred someone who would continue the program of radical Reform changes that he introduced. Isaac Mayer Wise would have been more to his liking—a kindred spirit of revolt. Rabbi Eckman was a much more conservative force who maintained the traditions of Leopold Zunz, treasuring Israel's past and wanting to preserve it in its finest form.

The congregation was ambivalent at this point. The majority accepted the leadership of Poznanski and would have welcomed the coming of Wise who was just as radical in his thinking. On the other hand, they had tried in vain for four years to find a replacement for their Hazan and eagerly took Rabbi Eckman on the basis of his scholarly reputation and the German training that he possessed. The fact that he had a totally different attitude to changes in synagogue

practices either escaped their notice or was deliberately overlooked in their desperation for a rabbi.

Rabbi Eckman undertook an ambitious program when he assumed the leadership of Beth Elohim in 1850. For Sabbaths and festivals, he initiated an impressive program of education for both adults and children. On Sunday afternoons he gave a series of lectures on various phases of Jewish theology, law, the Bible, and the Talmud. He particularly distinguished himself by his broad knowledge of language and philology.

One of Rabbi Eckman's admirers wrote of Rabbi Eckman's sermons in the most glowing terms in the board minutes of June, 1850:

> His mind exhibits a rare and beautiful union of strength and harmony, where virtue and intellect are melodiously blended with imagination and piety. In his lectures we were struck no less with the subtlety of his power of analysis, the force of his understanding, the critical acumen and deep research of his learning, than the dignified and elevated tone of thought that pervaded all his sentiments. Armed with the panoply of religion, truth, and learning he is ever ready and powerful in attacking, grappling, and overcoming error in whatever form it may assume, or from whatever quarter it may proceed. His style of oratory is bold, fluent, persuasive, and at times eloquent, but above all there is an honest earnestness in his manner that knows not how to spare, yet rarely blames unjustly.

Just one month after Rabbi Eckman's arrival, he undertook to open a school for his congregation's children. He wrote to the Board of Trustees:

Gentlemen,

Being under the impression and full conviction that the knowledge of the Hebrew language to a certain degree is, independently of religious considerations, as much calculated to improve the understanding and enlarge the minds of our children as any other branch of education to which we devote them, I intend to open, with the beginning of next month a Hebrew school, to which I will devote several evening hours weekly and shall feel highly obligated, if the honorable trustees of our congregation will allow the use of the Tabernacle (read synagogue) for that purpose.

Yours respectfully,

J. Eckman

Permission was granted "so long as the scholars do no mischief to the premises."

As Rabbi Eckman had done in Richmond, in Charleston he took over the direct supervision of the religious school, and under his leadership, the school prospered. The education of youth was the kind of activity he particularly enjoyed, but he found he could no longer make it the center of his ministry. Public furor over changes in synagogue ritual drew him into the arena as an active protagonist.

Strife in the Congregation

Julius Eckman was not adverse to change. In principle he could accept the use of the organ and the elimination of the second day of festivals. However, over riding these considerations was the importance he placed on the sense of unity in the congregation, and he

felt that such radical changes tended to polarize the congregation. Anticipating a position that was later adopted by the Conservative movement, he felt that such changes should be gradual and should emerge as the sense of Klal Israel (Community of Israel).

With this stand, Rabbi Eckman became the target of two camps. The Reformers saw him as a conservative force who resisted change that they regarded as logical and relevant while the Orthodox saw him as a radical force who was undertaking changes that were inimical to the survival of Judaism. Eckman reacted strongly to both of these positions, particularly on the former, and became increasingly bitter.

Poznanski's continuing public criticism of Rabbi Eckman led the rabbi to claim that Poznanski had rejected all positive religion. In retaliation, sympathizers of Poznanski, with the signature of the secretary of the congregation, directed a petition to Rabbi Eckman, calling on him to desist from these personal attacks. Public exchanges between Rabbi Eckman and Poznanski became the order of the day, and by the very nature of the situation Eckman was the principal sufferer. Poznanski could attack Rabbi Eckman from the security of a lay member of the congregation, while Rabbi Eckman could not easily respond in his role as spiritual leader of the congregation. Poznanski also had the advantage of years of acquaintance with the congregation and a host of loyal friends and supporters, while Eckman was a newcomer not only to Charleston but also to the U.S.

The situation became most tense and awkward on the High Holy days when Poznanski joined Rabbi Eckman on the pulpit. The two represented opposing views on Judaism which led to sharp personality clashes on this most sacred occasion as they jointly led the congregation. Rabbi Eckman apparently felt so strongly about the matter that he would not join in the public prayers but only delivered the sermon and read the portion of the Torah.

Finally, on May 4, 1851, two petitions were presented to the board with diametrically opposed intentions. From the board minutes we have the first, which was, presented by Isaac Cardoza and seventeen other members:

> In approaching the subject of their complaint, they would premise that they entertain no feeling of disrespect or unkindness for the Rev. Julius Eckman, our present minister. That they regard him as a gentleman of deep learning, and of capacity to discharge the sacred duties of his calling. That they had cheerfully rendered their assent to his occupying the office of Hazan, under a conviction, from his written and verbal acquiescence to the established principles of their reform, that he sanctions and would uphold it.
>
> In good faith, therefore they had a right to expect that Mr. Eckman would have sustained the reform in undiminished zeal and vigor. They hoped that in his lectures he would have confined himself to general expositions of the principles of Judaism. A fertile field was before him, to trace the history of our faith, so rich in precepts of virtue, so fruitful in acts of hallowed devotion, and so abounding in examples of sacrifices on the altar of our religion. But Mr. Eckman thought proper to deviate from this course in his lecture. He introduced irrelevant topic, he arraigned individual opinion on doctrinal points, he made sacred subjects debatable ground, and the piety and forbearance of the minster were sunk in the controversialist. Instead of being chastened by exhortations addressed to their hearts, a large number of our congregation were chastised for supposed defection from the religion of their forefathers. We do not want constantly upheld to

our view a picture of the feuds of the Church, to purify our passions, or to exalt our notions of the Divinity. Pure religion is a holy abstraction from all worldly contentions.

A minister of God has but one solemn duty to perform. His mission is from on high. He should preach no other than holy precepts and holy truths. He should mollify enmity and propitiate passion. A course contrary to this, mars the beauty of that divine harmony that should command his most fervent praise and devotion. We regret, therefore, to express our opinion that Mr. Eckman does not exercise the qualifications of such a minster as is required by our congregation.

His own friends acknowledge that the subject of some of his discourses are ill timed and improper, that he is too violent in denunciation, and that such recrimination in the pulpit but leads to its degradation.

Your petitioners regard it as essential to the welfare of a congregation, that entire unanimity of sentiment and feeling should exist between a pastor and his flock, and we have shown in the above remarks that, in our opinion, the chief province of such a man was to promote the spiritual welfare and exaltation of his flock, and not to invade the sanctity of private opinions..

From these remarks your respectable body must conclude that the signers of this petition are dissatisfied with the official conduct of the Rev. Mr. Eckman; and that they request that the Board of Trustees will convey the views here taken to the

reverend gentleman, and that, trusting to the exercise of his own self respect, he will no longer retain an office that places him in opposition to so many of his congregation and renders him an obstacle to their peace and Harmony.

An opposing petition signed by B. Mordecai and others read:

The undersigned, congregators and members of K.K.B.E. having the highest opinion of the learning, piety, integrity, and zeal of the Rev. Dr. J. Eckman, respectfully request that the Board of Trustees will request that he will not regard any petition to resign his office, as they feel assured that perseverance in the faithful discharge of his clerical duties will ultimately secure to him the approbation of a large majority of his congregation.

A further charge was made against Rabbi Eckman: before he had come to Charleston, Rabbi Eckman was made well aware of the reforms that Poznanski has introduced, and he had accepted them without reservations. Rabbi Eckman received the following statement while still in Richmond:

1st. The service of the Synagogue of this congregation is conducted with the accompaniment of an organ.
2nd. The sermon and prayers are preceded and followed by hymns and psalms, sung by a choir in Hebrew and English.
3rd. The Pentateuch is read through in the synagogue once in three years.
4th. The Haphtorah and some other Hebrew portions of the service are omitted.
5th. The second day of the holy days are not observed by this congregation.

6th. Various other improvements have been made in the mode of worship, with the view of promoting devotion and decorum.

This charge was reinforced by the inclusion of Rabbi Eckman's April 26, 1850 response:

> Your information in the circular shows me that your reforms are not only allowable, but even on Rabbinical ground highly commendable with the exception of the second holy day.

Rabbi Eckman recognized the validity of this charge against him but defended himself vigorously. He wrote in an open letter to The Occident:

> My dear Sir,
>
> I am charged by you in your last Occident with inconsistency.
>
> For myself, I am, regardless of such an accusation, being fully satisfied with the purity and rectitude of my intentions; and my position, at present, with the Congregation Beth Elohim of Charleston, among whom I have the honor to teach, would render it improper and undignified to enter into a full exposition of my principles, so long after my election.
>
> I must therefore respectfully request, that you will suspend your opinion in relation to my course, until the period shall arrive, when it may become necessary, that I should appear before my brethren under my own

name, in defence of Truth, Justice, and the Holy Word of God.

Sincerity and candor are certainly virtues which we greatly admire, but we should be careful how we pass sentence before we are fully possessed of facts and circumstances connected with the subject upon which we are about to decide.

For your satisfaction, however, I would state, that my views were fully and plainly expressed to those members of the congregation who presented themselves for that purpose, previous to my election, and, nevertheless, I was elected, contrary to my expectations, by an almost unanimous vote, I believe only one individual voting in the negative, and he has since become one of my warmest friends and supporters. While I gave my humble acquiescence to the requisitions of the circular of the Congregation Beth Elohim of Charleston, as admissible according to the letter of strict Judaism, I have never hesitated, on all occasions, after the earliest period of my arrival, to oppose anything that encroached upon the principles of ancient Judaism, or that might have the tendency to wound the feelings of the pious and conscientious Israelite, whose sincere attachments and affections claim our highest respect and attention.

That the Almighty God, blessed be He, may enable His humble servant, under the most trying circumstances, to effect some little good among his people, is his most fervent and ardent prayers.

Yours, respectfully,
Julius Eckman

The struggle between the two factions headed by Rabbi Eckman and Poznanski continued fiercely. Rabbi Eckman was charged by his opponents with inconsistency and even treachery to his avowed Reform principles, while his supporters insisted that their rabbi had never agreed to the extreme manifestations of Reform that he found in Charleston.

The conflict came to a head in June, 1851, when the following resolution was adopted by the Board of Trustees, relieving Rabbi Eckman of his rabbinic duties in the Jewish community:

> Resolved, that Mr. Eckman be respectfully informed that, in future, he cannot offer his services in private capacity at burials, marriages or births for any Israelite or Israelites of this city, or any strangers here, such being contrary to the spirit of the constitution.

Rabbi Eckman's response was brief and sharp:

> Gentlemen!
>
> I beg leave to inform you of the receipt of several papers containing petitions, resolutions and informations. After the persual of which, I feel myself morally bound, religiously, to continue in the true and faithful discharge of my sacred duties.
>
> A minister of the Word of God has but one solemn duty to perform - his Mission is from on high.

How Julius Eckman must have longed for the quiet life he had enjoyed in Richmond where he devoted all of his energies to the

development of a school and where he was relatively free of the bitter acrimony that was now the pattern of his life.

Rabbi Eckman had completed but half of his probationary period, and though he had a cadre of loyal supporters who appreciated his courageous defense of traditional Judaism against the reforms of an entrenched, intransigent opponent, he felt that he could no longer remain in Charleston. The forces in the congregation were evenly divided, the congregation itself had been seriously reduced in numbers by the constant bickering, and he could see no true resolution of the problem. He therefore voluntarily offered his resignation on December 3, 1851, and began seeking opportunities in other communities:

> To the Members of the Congregation Beth Elohim of the City
>
> Gentlemen,
>
> Called by your circular and little knowing the world and the diplomatic style of modern societies, I accepted the terms: which were "the Jewish Congregation Beth Elohim of the City resolved to elect a minister to perform clerical duties at the synagogue or elsewhere" expressed in the said circular in their plain and literal sense and allowed myself to be elected under the circular and its terms.
>
> For this I can fully appeal to your consciences, laying at the same time my religious and moral tenets and character - as far as frail and moral man can pretend to exemption from sin and error - open to the strictest scrutiny. I thus enjoy the satisfaction of having done my duty, to God and man, without fear and without guile. In return for this, I was justified in my

expectations to find affairs here such that they were held forth in the circular. But this is not the case.

The relative position of the Congregation, that of the place of worship, and my own, were quite different from what was named int he circular, as also from that of any religious body, institution, or functionary in this or any other country. this having been most ably stated and laid before the board - I need not rest upon it here.

With the full approbation of my conscience, though perhaps, not according to the desire of my friends whose moral worth, intellectual gifts, station in society, is by no means behind that of the opposition as little as their number - they forming just half of the members of the Congregation, besides almost all the seatholders, who are of my principles. I happily and contentedly look up to a just God above, before whose tribunal we shall be summoned to account - whether we will believe so or not - and leaving the whole responsibility from myself, I hereby am compelled to declare, that in honesty and honor, I cannot continue henceforth to perform clerical functions at Beth Elohim, when I was called for and elected to do religious duties.

Most conscientiously,

J. Eckman

Augusta, Georgia and Mobile, Alabama

Augusta, ninety miles from the Atlantic Ocean, saw its first Jewish settler Isaac Hendricks arrive in 1802. He remained the only

Jew there until 1825, and then around 1844, with a small influx of German Jews, the community decided to undertake a program of religious services and education. In 1849, the community established congregation B'nai Israel—Congregation Children of Israel—with a religious school of 10-15 students, and the teachers were the daughters of two founding members, Rosina Hendricks and S. A. Moise.

In 1851, the congregation elected its first spiritual leader—Rev. Marcusson, described by Rabbi Leeser and a Talmudist of profound erudition. In 1852 the congregation had grown sufficiently to rent a permanent building, a former Unitarian church. On February 2, 1852, Rabbi Isaac Leeser was invited to come from Philadelphia to deliver the dedicatory address. He was so inspiring that the congregation resolved to expand their program of religious education and invited Rabbi Eckman to deliver a series of twelve lectures on the essence of Judaism.

Augusta, Georgia

Like other Jewish immigrants who tended to remain in the same region as their first point of settlement, Julius Eckman did likewise. His first home in Richmond, Virginia and his move to Charleston, S. C. did not involve a significant geographic change. Upon the public announcement of his decision to leave Charleston, he had received the invitation from Congregation B'nai Israel. Once again, Rabbi Eckman found himself in the South, the region where he had first settled.

Rabbi Eckman welcomed these speaking engagements as a change from the arduous and bitter wrangling that filled his year at Beth Elohim. In Augusta he was not faced with hostility. On the contrary, his views coincided with the leadership of the congregation. From board minutes, we learn that at the conclusion of his series of addresses, a festive gathering was held at the synagogue where he was presented with the following resolution:

At a meeting of the Board of Managers of the Congregation 'B'nai Israel' of Augusta, Georgia on February 23, 1852, the following preamble and resolution were unanimously passed.

Whereas, the Rev. Dr. Julius Eckman has accepted the special invitation of this congregation, and delivered a series of lectures, long to be remembered with feelings of admiration, and whereas, this congregation have found in the Rev. Dr. a truly pious man, a profound scholar, and a gentleman.

Resolved, that a proper and suitable token, expressive of our feelings be purchased.

A committee being appointed for its selection, they reported at a meeting of the congregation, in the 28th of February, that Lewis Levy and Samuel Levy, Esqs. had purchased a silver goblet as directed, and that this goblet and the sum of fifty dollars be presented to the reverend gentleman; the committee further reported, that they had selected Henry Morrison, Esq. to present the same.

At the meeting Mr. Morrison addressed the following remarks to Rabbi Eckman:

Reverend and esteemed Sir:—I am deputed by the Congregation B'nai Israel to present this goblet and contents as a token of their esteem and admiration. You, sir, have been long known by reputation to the members of this congregation and they have been among the many of your fellow men and co-religionists, who

have honored and esteemed you for your zeal, piety, and ability, in maintaining the religion of Israelites, in all its truth and purity, in opposition to a man who had become faithless to his mission, and a part of your late congregation who have been misled by false doctrines. Sir, I congratulate you on your victory; for you have proved to all good men the integrity, piety, truth, and independence of your position, and every good and conscientious Israelite should be indeed gratefully proud of truth's champion.

Reverend Sir, I am pleased and proud to convey to you the unanimous sentiments of this congregation, many who, as I said before, until this period have only known you by reputation. You have deceived us, but Sir, that deception has been one of the most pleasing kind; in the Rev. Dr. Julius Eckman, we expected to find a man of piety and ability; you, Sir, have more than sustained this reputation, and be assured, that this congregation appreciates you much better than I can express, and all exclaim with one accord. This is indeed a great and good man. Esteemed Sir, I beg your acceptance of this goblet and contents, and I am most particularly instructed to say, that at all times and seasons you will find a welcome in the homes and hearts of the Augusta Congregation. Take this not, Sir, as a mere compliment, but come again soon among us, and instruct us, by your precepts and example, our duty to God, ourselves, and our fellow men, and be assured, we shall not be unmindful or ungrateful. The Congregation B'nai Israel rejoice in privileges that many of our co-religionists do not in other lands. Many of us claim the proud distinction of being American citizens, and all rejoice in living in a land famous among nations for its religious liberty. May its bright example soon be followed by

other nations, for then we all can exclaim, 'The Lord is with me and I will not fear.' I therefore beg of you come again in our midst, and should it be the approaching Passover, you will not come as the destroying angel did to the Egyptians, but as our own guardian angel, administering to us religion, consolation, and I doubt not, union in our congregation. Reverend and esteemed Sir, with the assurance of the united desire and prayers of this congregation, for your future prosperity, happiness, and a continuation of a long and useful life, I say to you in their name, 'God speed you.'

Rabbi Eckman responded to this touching address with the following words:

My worthy friends:—I tender you my heartfelt thanks for your kind and sincere address delivered in behalf of the Congregation B'nai Israel; I am too embarrassed to express my feelings. You have called me Doctor, Reverend Sir, and Esteemed Sir. I disclaim these titles. I am only desirous to appear among you as your friend, the friend of all our co-religionists; and the friend of true religion. I thank you for your kind invitation to appear among you, that enabled me to lay before you, in a number of addresses, the principles of pure Judaism, drawn from the most pure and original sources. I have finished my task with the twelfth lecture delivered this evening, and in attestation of your approbation you have presented me with this elegant silver goblet and contents. I must respectfully and gratefully accept these gifts from your hands, as an ostensible mark of respect and reverence shown to religion; you have assured me of it by the undivided attention paid to my teaching; you have fully

displayed it by your kindness and attention paid me during my stay here, in which all of you took so active a part, considerably beyond my anticipation. I cannot deny the pleasure of telling you the beneficial effect it must have on myself. It does well for a sensitive mind, after a hard struggle against the whirlpool of unprincipled irreligion and the eddy of irreligious principles, flowing in a frigid and refrigerant channel—it does well for such a soul again to land in the fertile and verdant shores of religion, and there to live and to enjoy the genial warmth and beneficent rays of brotherly love, emanating and flowing from the heart in which the voice of God is yet heard and listened to.

My dear brethren, accept my thanks and unfeigned assurance of love and respect to all of you and may the principles laid before you in my discourses deeply root in your hearts; you then will enjoy the temporal and the ethereal blessing of heaven, the approbation of your conscience and the love and esteem of all good men. Let us therefore love all that is good and live in harmony with all around us till one bond of brotherhood embrace us all and unite us in God's name. Amen

Rabbi Eckman's reception in Augusta was warm and sincere, and his discourses received with enthusiasm. However, the community of Augusta was not large enough to offer him a year round position. He returned to Charleston after his brief stay in Augusta and for a time gave public lectures in the Bet Yetomin Hall (Orphan's Home). He continued his communications with other communities, and in a short time he received two offers—one from the Portuguese Synagogue of New

Orleans and the other from Congregation Shaare Shomayin of Mobile, Alabama. He deliberated between these two offers and finally decided on Mobile.

He was impressed by his warm reception in Augusta and hoped that his reception in Mobile would be as warm. He saw that Mobile was not torn apart by internal strife and that it afforded a large field for his efforts.

Congregation Shaare Shomayim

It was a most auspicious moment when Rabbi Eckman arrived. He came to Mobile just in time to participate in the dedication of the congregation's new house of worship. The building was the first structure in the state of Alabama to be constructed and dedicated for Jewish worship. The services took place on the Sabbath Eve Services on March 11, 1853. Congregants and a host of invited guests filled the beautiful sanctuary to capacity. Guests included officials of the city government, clergy of various denominations, and leading citizens of Mobile. Rabbi Eckman began the dedication with a short prayer and then read appropriate passages from Isaiah, Ezekial, and Habakuk. The choir sang Hebrew prayers, and translations in English were provided for all present.

After a brief pause of silence, eight scrolls were brought into the synagogue and held before the open ark. Rabbi Eckman left the pulpit, turned to the scrolls, and dramatically addressed the congregation. He recalled the moment when the Torah was given to mankind, and how great was its influence and extent. Then he turned to the congregation and used as his text the passage from Isaiah, "The heavens are my throne, and the earth is my footstool: Where is the house which you will build for me, and where is the place of my rest?" He called upon the congregants to consecrate the structure through their lives.

All the scrolls except one were placed in the ark. Rabbi Eckman raised the remaining one to the view of the congregants who sang with the choir the traditional passages that accompany the taking out of the Torah. Then Rabbi Eckman, holding the scroll, proclaimed the name of the Congregation Shaare Shomayim, Gates of Heaven. Deuteronomy was read from the scroll. He expressed a blessing for the Scattered of Israel and another one for the congregation. The scroll was returned to the ark and the Sabbath eve service was read.

The Daily Register, the local newspaper, covered this event in great detail and particularly pointed out the superb furnishings and the magnificent chandelier suspended form the center fo the ceiling. The organ and choir received special recognition for their sweet tone and splendid harmony.

The entire weekend was devoted to ceremonies that accompanied the dedication. On Sabbath morning, special prayers were read and a grand ball was held in the evening which netted the handsome amount of $500 for the new building.

After this exciting beginning, Rabbi Eckman settled down to ministering to the needs of his new congregation. Once again Rabbi Eckman was able to turn his attention to the eager, inquiring minds of youthful students and to provide them with a store of Jewish knowledge and inspiration. He was never happier than when he was talking to his "children," answering their questions and exciting their minds. His sermons and lecture to the adults were received with equal enthusiasm. Mobile had never enjoyed the service of such a learned and gifted minister, and they responded warmly to his words.

He aroused special excitement by his lecture on the "China Mission." He recalled his early studies of far flung Jewish communities under Leopold Zunz and his excitement as he read about the mysterious community of Jews in China. This community was threatened with extinction as the effects of assimilation became more pronounced, and

Rabbi Eckman felt that something should be done to preserve its Jewish consciousness. His congregants were so moved by his presentation that they called a special meeting of the Board of Trustees to initiate steps to establish contact with Chinese Jews and to help them maintain their Jewish identity. They hoped that other congregations would follow suit so that a mission to China could be organized.

Yellow Fever in Mobile

The almost idyllic relation between Rabbi Eckman and his admiring congregation was rudely shattered in July of 1853 by a most unexpected catastrophe—a severe outbreak of yellow fever in Mobile that did not abate until October of the same year. This dreaded disease began to ravage the city during that first summer after his arrival. Victims fell prey in large numbers, and the Jewish community for some reason lost a high proportion of its population. As with any plague, people were terrified and frantically searched for a way to escape. Near Mobile was a suburb, Spring Hill, which seemed to afford a refuge, for, at a higher elevation than Mobile, it saw a reduced incidence of yellow fever.

The majority of the Jews of Mobile fled to Spring Hill; certainly all who could afford to make the move did so. Among the families who transferred their residence there was the family with whom Rabbi Eckman made his home. A large proportion of the congregation was now in Spring Hill, and they conducted Sabbath services there. The shochtim moved there also, so basically the religious life of the community was transferred to Spring Hill.

Rabbi Eckman's move, however, was bitterly criticized by congregants who remained in Mobile. They felt that he neglected his sacred duty by not attending to the sick and the dying, and they scolded him for suggesting that those congregants who remained behind should quit the afflicted city and seek safety as advised by the doctors. A man of God, they felt, should show faith in the Lord and His kindness by

remaining at his post and performing his proper tasks. Rabbi Eckman admitted his own fears of sickness and death, and felt that as long as he was ministering to the majority of his congregation in Spring Hill, he was meeting his obligations.

The pestilence subsided, but the hurt feelings and the anger of his congregants did not. The harmony that once prevailed in the congregation was shattered. The agony that accompanied the tragic deaths of so many victims heightened everyone's emotions. Recriminations from the families of the dead, that their loved ones did not receive proper religious attention, were hardly overcome by their rabbi's logical defensive responses. Rabbi Eckman realized with a heavy heart that he cold no longer continue as the rabbi of Congregation Shaare Shomayim, so he tendered his resignation.

For the Shavuot holidays, he served the Congregation Shaaray Chessed, but only as a temporary respite. Eckman resolved to leave the South where he had found little joy and even less security; he decided to venture into the Far West, to San Francisco..The Gold Rush of 1849 had inspired great masses of Americans to seek their fortunes in California, and among them were many Jews who had developed a significant community in San Francisco.

Eckman had always been subject to the wanderlust—that is what brought him from Germany, and now it would lead him to the shores of the Pacific and, perhaps from there, even to China.

CHAPTER 3

THE CALIFORNIA EXPERIENCE

San Francisco's Jewish Community

Rabbi Eckman's new destination, San Francisco, was an exciting, bustling community in the early 1850's. The gold rush fever had attracted many thousands of young Americans to Northern California to seek their fortune. Camping along the rivers to sift the sands for nuggets, they dug into the soil for the precious metal. Roars of jubilation often filled the air when strikes were made, and immediately hundreds more began to search feverishly in the vicinity for their share of the wealth. Word of sudden fortune spread like wild-fire all the way to the East Coast, inspiring growing numbers to go West.

The informality and directness of this frontier town brought all of its people closer together. San Francisco was even then a real melting pot of peoples—men and women of every conceivable background, appearance, race, religion joined by one common interest, love of gold. They were too busy for petty discriminations that were just based on ethnic differences. Established differences of caste were forgotten in the Far West.

Congregation Emanu El

A number of young Jews, eager to share in the extraordinary opportunities that gold afforded, joined the tide of humanity emigrating to San Francisco. They came to find their fortunes in a less direct but even more effective manner than the miners. The miners had vital needs that had to be met—food, clothing, shelter, entertainment,

etc. They were prepared to pay fantastic sums for these good because they were so scarce and because their gold exercised an almost hypnotic influence on their minds, demanding to be spent. On their backs Jewish peddlers carried packs to the miners. Others opened stores in San Francisco where they could display their wares in a more spacious setting.

These young Jews, few in number, were determined to preserve their identity and their religious way of life. Their primary motivation in banding together to form a congregation was to worship together during the Sabbaths and holidays. In 1849, ten Jews gathered together in a tent on Jackson street and held the first Jewish services in California, thus undertaking to perpetuate the Jewish way of life in the West. This first congregation—Congregation Emanu El—was led by Henry Seligman, president of the board of trustees and a leading financial figure of San Francisco.

Congregants continued to rent temporary facilities for their religious services, services that became the focal point for all Jewish newcomers who daily entered this growing metropolis. Within a couple of years, congregants realized they needed a spiritual leader who would serve as their religious mentor. On November 20, 1853, they passed a resolution, "That this congregation deems it necessary for its own prosperity, and is desirous of engaging a Minister, Hazan, and Teacher as early as possible." The resolution was approved by a vote of 37 to 1. With a financial obligation of $3500 per year, Emanu El represented a serious undertaking.

Congregants immediately embarked upon the task of selecting their rabbi. They knew that they wanted an English speaking rabbi, particularly because of the integrated nature of the community. Their choice in this regard was very limited. In the entire country the number of such rabbis was only about half a dozen, the most prominent ones being in the East—Raphall, Lilienthal and Isaacs in New York, Wise

in Albany, Isaac Leeser in Philadelphia, and James Guthheim in New Orleans.

Closest to San Francisco geographically was Rabbi Guthheim, so a resolution was adopted inviting him to be the first rabbi of Emanu El. Rabbi Guttheim declined the invitation because he had just been elected as the rabbi of the Portuguese Congregation of New Orleans, and the terms of his contract called for six months notice. He could not even recommend from personal knowledge anyone to take the post.

An offer was made to Rabbi Leeser, but he, too, declined in part due to his friends in Philadelphia who enabled him to remain there by forming Congregation Beth El Emeth where he would find lifelong security and support. Rabbi Leeser was one of the most famous and productive figures in American Jewish life. He was the hazan of the historic Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia. He founded, edited, and wrote for The Occident, the first successful Anglo-Jewish Publication Society in America. He established the Jewish Publication Society of America which remains, to this day, one of the most significant sources of Jewish literature and scholarship.

Rabbi Eckman's Arrival

Rabbi Eckman's decision to leave the South and his subsequent arrival in San Francisco on July 1, 1854, was at a most propitious time. Congregants were delighted at the unexpected arrival of Rabbi Eckman, especially after the discouraging responses from Rabbis Guthheim and Leeser, for they were preparing to lay the cornerstone for Emanu El during that very summer and were anxious to have a rabbi officiate.

Just five months earlier, the congregants had purchased a lot on Broadway, between Powell and Mason street, for $4,530. It was a choice location in the heart of town, and immediately they planned the construction of a $30,000 edifice designed by a local architect,

George J. Clark. When this plan proved to be too costly, they decided to adopt another design by Craw and England, for a structure that could be executed for less than $20,000. On July 5, 1854, the congregation took official notice of Eckman's arrival by passing this resolution, recorded in the "Chronicles of Emanu El":

> Whereas, the Board of Officers of the Congregation Emanu El have learned with sincere pleasure of the arrival in this city of the Rev. Dr. Eckman, be it
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> Resolved, that the reverend gentleman is herewith respectfully invited to visit the temporary place of worship of the Congregation, and be it further resolved, that the Board of Officers on behalf of the Congregation solicit the valuable assistance of the Rev. Dr. Eckman, and request him to perform the ceremony of laying the cornerstone of the synagogue now in course of erection.

The ceremony for laying the cornerstone to Emanu El took place on July 23, 1854, a truly historic occasion as the first Jewish house of worship on the West Coast began to rise. This day was also the occasion for the congregation to make some vital decisions for the future. The members met at 11:00 a.m. and elected Major Henry Labatt chairman of the Dedication Committee. Labatt announced that the purpose of the meeting was to consider the means of establishing a Sunday school and a week day Hebrew school under the supervision of Rabbi Eckman who had arrived just a few weeks earlier. Rabbi Eckman was then introduced to the assemblage, and he spoke at length on his most favorite topic—the value of education. His words were so inspiring that seven of the women volunteered to help him in the school.

By one in the afternoon, the procession to the new building site was formed. There, attired in a plain black gown and black velvet cap, Rabbi Eckman welcomed the guests. He spoke of the marked contrast between the conditions of life in free lands like America and England, and the oppressed lands of Europe: prosperity and happiness obtained where every man was allowed to worship God according to the dictates of his own heart. He concluded with an eloquent prayer, invoking the blessing of God upon the works of their hands. The cornerstone was then filled with appropriate documents—copies of local and Jewish newspapers, a list of members of Emanu El and its contributors, and a brief history of the Jews of California. The concluding portion of the brief history states:

> The ceremony of laying the cornerstone takes place this day, July 23, 1854, the ceremony to be performed by Rev. Dr. Julius Eckman, late of Mobile, Alabama (the first minister that has reached our shore and 'coming under the tongue of good report' for moral qualifications and religious faith and intelligence, his officiating is certainly a propitious omen). This stone is laid in presence of hundreds of our fellow citizens, after this shall have been read and deposited by Major Henry Labatt, Vice-president of the congregation.

Just a few weeks later, on August 13, 1854, Rabbi Eckman played another historic role: conducting the ceremony of the dedication of the cornerstone of Congregation Shearith Israel, the second Jewish congregation of San Francisco. As the only rabbi in the city, he served all Jewish enterprises.

Congregation Shearith Israel Dedicated

Congregation Shearith Israel was organized in April 1851, just two years after the first meeting of Emanu El. The dedication of the

Shearith Israel synagogue structure was to come first, on September 8th, one week before the dedication of Emanu El. Both congregations were anxious to complete the ceremonies before the High Holy days.

Though founded only two years after Emanu El, Shearith Israel had difficulty establishing itself as a congregation with a house of worship. Bad luck seemed to follow it. For example, when they rented temporary facilities to conduct services, fire broke out destroying all their furniture. Undaunted, they persisted and raised funds to purchase a lot and build a permanent house of worship. They bought a lot on Stockton St., between Broadway and Vallejo, and began their construction. Its structure was more to be more modest than that of Emanu El, for its membership was less affluent. Even so, it was a handsome addition to San Francisco and a splendid demonstration of the vitality of its members.

At the dedication of Shearith Israel, Rabbi Eckman captured the hearts of his audience by his eloquent, sincere words of thanksgiving unto Almighty God for having made that moment possible. The usual exercises of depositing appropriate documents in the cornerstone followed and thus a second synagogue was launched by the new rabbi of San Francisco.

The theme Rabbi Eckman selected for the Shearith Israel dedication was from Isaiah 49, "and Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my God hath forgotten me." Although the Jewish people felt that God had forsaken them because of the multitude of their troubles, this renewal of life in San Francisco gave ample evidence that God still guarded and protected them from all evil.

Congregation Emanu El Dedicated

The dedication of Emanu El was even more impressive. The building was described in a contemporary account as follows:

> The building is built of brick, with a Gothic front, and fronts about sixty-five feet on Broadway. There is a vestibule in front, and a staircase leading up to a spacious and well arranged gallery, which, as usual in Jewish synagogues, is entirely set apart for female worshippers. There is also a place set apart for the choir, whose singing, if always of the same character as that to which we listened yesterday, will add most materially to the spirit of the worship. The ground floor presents an area of 65 feet by 78 and is conveniently arranged into pews, with spacious passage ways between the different blocks. The inside of the synagogue is neatly and compactly finished, and reflects great credit upon the architect and upon the liberality of the congregation who contributed to its erection.

The ceremony began with an opening prayer and the reading of Psalm 84. Then a procession of congregation leaders brought the Scrolls to the Ark. Two little girls dressed in white accompanied each member of the procession and held in their hands pieces of ribbon, which were suspended from the scrolls. A portion of Deuteronomy was read, Rabbi Eckman delivered a stirring address appropriate to the occasion, and the ceremony closed with the reading of Psalm 150 and the Benediction. The program note included an unusual translation by Rabbi Eckman which undoubtedly stemmed form his training under Zunz. He translated Isaiah 43:10, "That is I who am Hoo." Evidently, Hoo was interpreted as an ancient form of the divine name.

Rabbi Eckman was invited to conduct the High Holy services at Emanu El, a thrilling occasion, its members worshipping for the first time in their splendid new sanctuary. On the second day Rabbi Eckman yielded to popular demand and delivered his sermon in German. The

crowds were so great that even the new building could not accommodate all who wished to enter.

Even before his election as rabbi of Emanu El, Rabbi Eckman embarked upon an enterprise in which he had always been exceptionally interested and for which he had been particularly suited: the establishment of a school for the religious training of the young. Reflecting his strong interest was the haste with which he entered this work. He arrived in San Francisco on July 1, a total stranger, without even being called to the post, and on July 26 he founded his school.

When he formally associated with Emanu El, the school was incorporated in the religious system of the congregation. With forty students, the week day school for the instruction of Hebrew met three afternoons, besides the Sunday school. Rabbi Eckman taught classes and supervised others taught by his assistants. It was a promising beginning, and this first religious school in the West aroused great enthusiasm throughout the community.

Membership in the congregation had risen from 75 in 1853 to 147 the very next year. This spectacular increase reflected the influence of the new building as well as the leadership of Rabbi Eckman. Accordingly, he was formally elected as the first Minister and Reader of Congregation Emanu El on October 21, 1854. The future looked bright, indeed, for both the congregation and for its spiritual leader.

Controversy at Emanu El

A perverse fate, however, seemed to dog Rabbi Eckman's efforts as a congregational leader. His nature was usually so quiet and withdrawn, he was so absorbed by scholarly efforts and educational activities, that he seemed to be the least likely candidate for the role of a fiery controversialist. Yet, once again shortly after his arrival, he found himself in the midst of a bitter argument.

Intellectually, he was ready for reform, dedicated to the concept of change, and responsive to modern trends. Emotionally, however, he remained the child of Rawicz, steeped in the strong tradition of Orthodoxy.

Barely two months after his induction into office, his troubles began with his board. In San Francisco the cause celebre was the authority to regulate and supervise the shochtim, or ritual slaughterers. The congregation at that time retained two official shochtim whose licenses had to be renewed annually after an examination by a committee of the congregation. Emanu El enjoyed strong lay leadership who wanted to continue their control of the congregation's religious affairs, even after a rabbi had assumed the religious leadership.

Rabbi Eckman undoubtedly remembered from his childhood days how Rabbi Herzfeld had exercised his absolute authority in the supervision of shochtim, and he too insisted that all the shochtim of San Francisco, about five or six in all, present themselves to him for examination. As the only rabbi of the city, he felt that he was the sole authority to decide on such matters that came within the area of rabbinic competence.

Rabbi Eckman appointed the two shochtim who passed his test as the official shochtim of Emanu El. The congregational leaders demanded that the shochtim renew their licenses with the congregation. One of them refused to appear, so the congregation rescinded his license and a public notice appeared that he was not a qualified, approved shochet.

Believing that his authority was being challenged by lay leaders, Rabbi Eckman published a notice in the Dec. 20, 1854, issue of the Daily Herald, denying the congregation's right to issue or rescind licenses. He also intimated that the person whom the congregation

had retained for handling licenses did not have the proper training for his duty.

Following this notice, with the entire congregation shaken by this issue, serious questions were raised about Rabbi Eckman's judgment. Many members resigned in anger. With declining membership, financial difficulties increased, and substantial sums of money had to be borrowed at a high rate of interest. Henry Seligman, the brilliant financier who had served as president of the congregation, resigned in discouragement.

The annual meeting on September 30, 1855, was a stormy session. The major question on the agenda was the future of Rabbi Eckman with the congregation. A large number of the congregants supported their scholarly rabbi. They agreed that before the arrival of the rabbi, it was appropriate for the board of the congregation to supervise the shochtim, but now that a rabbi had come—especially one with such high qualifications—he should assume that responsibility. Rabbi Eckman's supporters could not command a majority of the members, however, and he was not re-elected. Instead, the Hazan whom he had replaced, Hazan Welhof, was appointed to his old position, and San Francisco's only rabbi was without a post.

Many of the leading members of Emanu El were shocked by this turn of events. The president-elect, Sigmund F. Meyer, refused to serve, and the secretary, Labatt, who had been chairman of the Dedication Committee just the year before, resigned his office. Other members resigned from the congregation to express their indignation, but the leadership was determined to continue on its course.

The congregation held a special meeting on October 21, 1855, to select officers to replace those who had resigned and to discuss their immediate problems. They endorsed the conclusions of the Cleveland Conference of Rabbis held on October 17th, an endorsement that would firmly establish Emanu El in the Reform ranks. They undertook a drive

to raise funds that would liquidate their present indebtedness, and they determined to begin correspondence with Eastern personalities and with Europe with the view of securing a rabbi whose authority they would accept.

While waiting for a response from the East, Emanu El engaged a young man, the Rev. Herman M. Bien, as lecturer and teacher. He did not have formal rabbinic training, but he was sufficiently familiar with Jewish learning for the congregation, and he was extremely fluent in expressing his ideas. Eckman's formal, scholarly style suffered by comparison with Rev. Bien's flamboyant, exuberant manner that particularly impressed younger congregants who were anxious for a change. Rev. Bien introduced many reforms into the service and abolished other parts which he felt to be unessential.

With Rev. Bien only a temporary replacement, the congregants continued to search actively for a rabbi. Matters did not look very promising when Henry Seligman, who had moved to New York, wrote back, explaining that it was impossible to find a rabbi capable of meeting the demands of the congregation. Indeed, it was not until 1860—five years after Rabbi Eckman was relieved of his duties at Emanu El—that the renowned Dr. Elkan Cohn was called as the rabbi of the congregation. He proved to be the kind of a leader that Emanu El needed, and he lifted the congregation to new heights.

Communal Activities

During Rabbi Eckman's tumultuous years with Emanu El and after he departed form the congregation, he devoted most of his time to the education of the young. Not only was this a fulfillment of his deepest needs, but it was also a refuge from the turmoil of synagogue politics which was difficult for him to bear.

Hepzibah

Rabbi Eckman established a school for the youth of the Congregation. He took the name of the school from Isaiah 62:4—Hepzibah, appropriately meaning "My desire is in it," for Rabbi Eckman's desire was primarily in his school. His personal magnetism and the quality of the instructors in the school attracted about 130 students, making it the largest school of its type in the West. The figure is particularly impressive when it is recalled that Hepzibah did not have the formal backing of a synagogue organization to support it.

Mary Prag, a principal of the History Department of the Girl's High School in San Francisco, was a teacher in the Emanu El Religious School for 28 years. She recorded a vivid memory of the days when she studied under the leadership of Rabbi Eckman. As she explains, when Rabbi Eckman departed as rabbi of Emanu El, the children of the congregation still attended his religious school:

> Away back in the early fifties, I see myself, a little girl, going to my first Sabbath school—a Sabbath school which was the mother of the Religious school which is held in our magnificent Temple at present. That Sabbath school did not meet in a regular synagogue, for in those days the Congregation had as yet no building of its own, but the services were held in what had been a private house on Green Street, corner of Stockton. The upper rooms had been thrown into one, and were used as a place of worship in the morning and as a Sabbath schoolroom on Saturday afternoon. So, I see myself going there with my hand tightly clasped in that of him who had just been elected Rabbi of the Congregation. One of the gentlest, truest, noblest

character it has been my fate in life to meet. One whose every deed was Charity, and every thought was Mercy. One who left his impress upon the hearts and soul of all to whom was given the blessing of knowing him—Dr. Julius Eckman, the first Rabbi of the Temple Emanu El.

The Sabbath school was under the direction and instruction of a corps of volunteer teachers, the most valued of the teachers was one dear parted friend, Leon L. Dennery, who later was for so many years the enthusiastic and earnest Chairman of the School Board of our present Religious school. In the meanwhile, the Congregation was busily engaged in the erection of its synagogue on Broadway, above Powell, and when the Synagogue was dedicated the Sabbath school had its home in the basement. As long as Dr. Eckman remained Rabbi of the Congregation the Sabbath school was held down there; on his severing his connection the greater number of the pupils (so had he endeared himself to the hearts of the children), went with him regardless of the fact that the fathers of many of them were the leading men of the congregation.

Those children followed their dearly beloved teacher to the old "Portsmouth House" northeast of Clay and Dupont streets. In this building had been located the first post office in San Francisco, but when the post office was moved to its present location, the building was given over to other tenants. There was a drug store at the corner, while the upper rooms were rented out to stray roomers. It was a ramshackle, weird old building, falling into decay, full of strange noises and haunted corners; its hall and stairways unswept, and decorated with cobwebs and dust. There we

appeared every afternoon after our daily school hours, for our Hebrew lessons, and on Saturday and Sunday mornings for religious instruction. How we waited for each other at the corner, how slowly we ascended the rickety old stairs holding on to the other, how we held our breath and shivered with fear as we heard the rats, the only occupants beside ourselves of the old building, scurrying across the rafters; how we finally made a rush for the door of the room, to be welcomed by our dear old friend; to forget all our fears and troubles in the charm of his presence and the magic of his instruction.

From the old Portsmouth House we followed our teacher to his editorial rooms. He was the editor and proprietor of the first Jewish periodical on this coast, The Weekly Gleaner. How we enjoyed our new quarters. What a sense of proprietorship we felt in every part of the establishment; how we watched the typesetters; what an interest we took in the hand printing press. What words of wisdom and of knowledge we gathered in his sanctum, which was now our school room.

Soon our numbers outgrew these rooms and the little German church on Sutter Street below Stockton having become vacant, the premises were rented for us through the generosity of some of the prominent men of the Temple Emanu El whose interest and sympathy had followed us in all our wanderings; and so, at last, we had a permanent habitatem and a name; thus was established the Hepzibah Religious School.

Oh the joy and pleasure of those dear old days. How we loved our school, how eagerly we hastened

> there every afternoon. How anxiously we looked forward to our Sabbath afternoon services which were regularly held there, and in which we officiated, where with all our souls we sang our "Shemah Yisrael" and "Enkelohenu," our dear Master seated at the organ, and then, how we enjoyed the feast of cake and fruit which was sure to follow if we had done well. No matinees for us; we had jollier times.
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> There, in that dear old school, I stepped from student to teacher, and became the voluntary assistant of our beloved Master. Gone is the old Sabbath school and at rest is the dear old Master. Sacred is his memory to us, his children, enshrined in our inmost hearts.

The formal classes in Judaism that Rabbi Eckman taught and supervised were preliminary to the supreme moment of the week, the Sabbath morning services. He created a special prayer book for his school, and it was not long before the Hepzibah service was one of the highlights of San Francisco's Jewish life. Parents came to sit in the congregation and enjoy the fluency with which their children conducted the service. Total strangers often dropped in just to witness this unusual phenomenon: young children chanting—in beautiful harmony, without any hesitation—the Hebrew service. After services the rabbi always made sure that refreshments were served to his beloved children.

For parents who so desired, the school made provision for instruction in German as well as in English. The girls received instruction in the home arts of crocheting, embroidery and music. Rabbi Eckman, in describing the goals of the day school, said,

> It is managed exactly like the public schools, with the difference that it aims at developing the moral

> faculties simultaneously with the intellectual powers, its efforts will be—as have been those of the Hepzibah School these seven years—to afford the children an education besides instruction; to supply a want very much felt in our system of education. We have so many "clever girls" and "smart boys," we should like to see obedient children and good men.

Harmonia

Hepzibah was so successful that Rabbi Eckman was encouraged to expand upon its program by adding a day and infant school which he called Harmonia, the first Jewish nursery school in the West. It was located at the corner of Sutter and Stockton, in a building that was formerly used as a city school and originally as a church. The nursery school or infant school, as it was called, was the other addition to Hepzibah that won widespread commendation. Rabbi Eckman described the principles of the school in the following manner:

> The confinement of children at too early an age, and their premature intellectual development is highly depreciable. Yet, many parents find it, as we see, acceptable to see their children guarded from street influences and (home) accidents, by placing them under the guardianship of ladies, who by a motherly treatment, will very early and especially cultivate in them the affectional and moral faculties; who will entertain them agreeably—partly by instruction, by stories, by playthings and otherwise, and that, in a locality so large and lofty, that, while it keeps the young from the dangers and influences of the street, cannot be considered confinement.

Rabbi Eckman thus created a complete educational institution consisting of three institutions—the Hepzibah Religious School for Sabbaths, the Hepzibah weekday schools, an all-day finishing school for children of upper class German-Jewish families, and Harmonia, a day care center for infants and nursery age children. To accomplish this task, he enlisted the aid of a number of female teachers who were especially drawn by his own wholehearted devotion to his children. He created the feeling of a family group with himself acting as the surrogate father surrounded by his numerous flock.

Hepzibah Synagogue

The Hepzibah School gave birth to the Hepzibah Synagogue. Rabbi Eckman had already provided for the community's educational needs through his schools, and now he went ahead with the other aspect of his program. He rented Platt's Music Hall, a well-known local facility, and announced that he would conduct public services. The sale of tickets for the services was conducted at several locations in town for "a select attendance of ladies and gentlemen."

The major income of any congregation, even in those days, came from the High Holiday services. The average Jew could well dispense with the regular week day or Sabbath services provided by the local congregations, but when it came to Rosh Hashana or Yom Kippur, he felt a compelling need to join his fellow Jews in worship. This was particularly true in a booming, boisterous city like San Francisco where an air of constant excitement prevailed. The excitement on Saturday was especially compelling, for miners came to town to spend with a lavish hand their newly found wealth. That need plus the desire to give their children a Jewish education were the primary drives of the average Jew. And it was from this population that Rabbi Eckman drew his congregants.

Rabbi Eckman's officiating at the Hepzibah Synagogue was far from officiating at a fine, well-established congregation like Emanu El

where he had received a handsome salary and—what was even more important—the recognition that derived to a community leader. By the hiring of the hall as an entrepreneur, Rabbi Eckman exposed himself to all the criticism and subtle degradation of a "rabbi for hire." It must have been particularly galling because, for him, money and material possessions meant nothing. He lived in humble quarters, his clothing was generally threadbare, and whatever meager means he did have, he shared with his pupils. Profit was surely not the motive of his High Holiday enterprise. What did lead him, then, to embark on this short-lived venture, so difficult for someone of his sensitive nature?

The shy, introspective scholar of Berlin had acquired a strong taste for the podium in his American congregational activities. Richmond, Charleston, Mobile, San Francisco—all had given him the opportunity to express himself on public issues, to utilize his rich, eloquent vocabulary on behalf of his fellow Jews everywhere, and, much as he loved his children to whom he imparted daily knowledge, he wanted to exhort, to mould public opinion, and even to fight his battles of conscience in public.

His efforts in this direction were doomed from the very start. While parents were willing to entrust their children to his religious guidance, they wanted to affiliate themselves with a regular congregation, and by 1860, there was a growing number of such congregations in San Francisco. They admired Rabbi Eckman for his many fine qualities but did not feel sufficiently drawn by his leadership qualities to leave their synagogues on the holidays just for his sake.

Whom did he attract to his services? For the most part, they were drifters who avoided the obligations of congregational life by taking the advantage of a once-a-year service to salve their consciences. Rabbi Eckman himself was so disappointed by the nature and extent of the assemblage that he abandoned the project. He

realized that he, alone, would not be able to create an independent congregation.

The Weekly Gleaner

At this juncture of his career, Rabbi Eckman decided on a bold step to give expression to his sense of commitment to Jewish life and the Jewish people. The pulpit was evidently not his forte, and directing the Hepzibah School was not sufficient to challenge his abilities, energies, and ambitions. After a great deal of consideration, he decided on the vehicle—the publication of a Jewish newspaper. There was no journal of this nature on the entire West Coast, and it could conceivably provide him with his two greatest needs—an opportunity to earn an adequate and dignified livelihood, and a means for expressing his ideas to the Jewish public and thus influencing their decisions and activities. There were in the entire land only a handful of Jewish papers, and they were all in the East.

Naming the Newspaper

A Jewish newspaper was an enterprise that would demand courage, self-sacrifice and great determination. Julius Eckman was generously endowed with all of these qualities. He rented an office at 110 Sacramento Street, and competed his arrangements with the printer. Rabbi Eckman would act as the editor and publisher. First, he had to name the paper, and he decided on The Weekly Gleaner, the English translation of Hameasseph, the name of the first Hebrew journal of the Haskalah movement in Europe. Though Rabbi Eckman explained at the outset the reason for his selecting the name The Weekly Gleaner, in a later issue he gave further clarification. In 1857, he offered this humble explanation of the title:

Our Name

If the refinement of our age forbids man to speak much of himself, if such self contemplators are generally looked upon with pity or contempt the above caption, at first sight, may mislead many a reader into the supposition that this article is intended to speak about our insignificance itself, or what would be more objectionable, of our name, and under this supposition they would either pass this article or lay the paper aside altogether. We therefore tell them at once that 'our name' refers not to ourselves, but to our publication—The Weekly Gleaner.

We have taken this name on account of the associations that it called up in our mind, and on that of the weighty import of the Hebrew word which we translate Gleaner in several classic passages of the Sacred Writ in which it occurs.

We appear under the name of "Hammeasseph," the gatherer, collector, and in a secondary sense (on the authority of texts in the Bible) the protector, cover, dependent, advocate.

We assumed the name Measseph, Gleaner, which with the definite article H makes Hammeasseph, because the first Hebrew periodical as far as we know, was called by that name. The first Hebrew periodical was called Hammeasseph, the gatherer, the collector—which we render by Gleaner, a word more euphonious, and one more appropriate to be applied to literary matter.

As we dare presume that every tyro in Hebrew literature and journalist knows the Measseph, we merely state to the few Hebrews who are ignorant of this fact, that as early a period as 1784-1791 there appeared a valuable literary periodical, intended for the improvement of Israel—as also to stop the superficial voice so loud during the times of the French Revolution. It was edited by Moses Mendelssohn, Harwig Wessely, and a number of Hebrew literati. And as we appeared in our new capacity very much against our inclination, and at our own risk, at least, to effect the same purposes as our predecessors did, we thought ourselves justified to borrow from Mendelssohn and his school by taking the name of Hammeasseph. This is one reason why we called the publication by that name.

The word Measseph being fully known among the educated portion of Israel, and even to the readers of the Israelite since we find it spoken of in a number that appeared by lately (in November) we pass on and do but mention that the literati who edited the Measseph are familiarly known in Israel by the name of Hameasphim, the gatherers, collectors.

We have chosen this name on account of its association. The editors of the Measseph, particularly the most prominent, Mendelssohn and Wessley, were treated by modern Israel as were treated their Prophets and Rabbi pastors by ancient Israel. All those who labored hard and honestly for them were neglected, abused, and persecuted, 'for righteousness sake.'

Moses Mendelssohn, during his studies, was so poor that he had to mark the loaf which he ate with chalk

to tell him how much he could afford to eat each day, that he was obliged to make it last; but after he had acquired a fund of knowledge, the author of "The Jerusalem" and of the Phaedon and the editor of Measseph was able to earn a piece of bread, being a clerk to a silk merchant in Berlin.

And as to the pious Wessely, he, at one time, had not a piece of bread to break with his family. He was poor—he could work for a whole nation—he could be the advocate of a salutary reform in the church and the school—he could labor day and night. But all his sterling virtue, his unquestionable piety, and his profound learning, could not shield him against hatred, persecution, neglect, and want. And such is the fate of the children of God! They will be neglected by the children of the father—Adam.

And they were hated, too—yes, they were hated with a bitter hate. Mendelssohn's writings were burnt in many places; and the peaceful Wessely had to write a whole volume in defense of his course.

Sad as this portion of religious experience is, we are drawing consolation and edification from their fate, and from that all of the good and pious who are not of this world. We, therefore, by association, felt induced to pass under the name of those in whose footsteps we have to tread in passing through this—'valley of Bacca (of weeping)'.

We assumed the name of Hammeasseph since the rearward of the camp of Israel, the whole tribe of Dan, is expressly called in the book of Number X:25, Measseph lo chol hammachnon—(the rearward)—and

the very term Hammeasseph with the article in Joshua VI:9 (the gathering host), until all the camps, because that tribe marched in the rear, taking up all that were left behind on account of weakness or uncleanness—as also for the purpose of protecting the army and its sanctuary. Thus Judah, the most numerous tribe formed the van, and Dan, the next in number to Judah, formed the rear. Thus the center was well protected from the front and the rear. In view of the organization we thought it our duty to assume the part of Dan to the Hebrew periodical press. We, therefore, took his Biblical name, Hammeasseph—the rearward, the gatherer, the gleaner.

Rabbi Eckman's prospectus summed up his goals in these words:

The Measseph, the Gleaner, Gatherer, Defender, for the original has all of these significations, is intended to be a religious and literary family paper, devoted to the general advocacy of whatever shall, in the opinion of its editor, be best calculated to promote our material and moral welfare as a people.

Biblical and Jewish Antiquities

As a repository of rare and varied information upon all matters relating to Jewish and biblical Antiquities, we shall endeavor to make the Gleaner peculiarly valuable to all, whether Jew or Gentile, who are interested in the study of this important branch of human knowledge.

Eastern Travels

Full and accurate descriptions of the classic localities of the land of our forefathers—localities

that have been hallowed by the pen of inspiration, and that have witnessed the acting of some of the most important and extraordinary scenes in human history will form an important feature of our paper.

Illustrations

Both the above mentioned Departments will be regularly illustrated every week with appropriate and tasteful wood cuts.

Education

Without directly encroaching upon the province of the teacher, the Press is, in this country at least, his best and most influential ally. The Gleaner will discuss all questions having a direct bearing upon the education and proper management of our children, whether in school or at home, always keeping in view the important fact that the training of the moral faculties is now in a measure neglected, should go hand in hand with that of the mental.

As the friend of the family, The Weekly Gleaner will also devote considerable space to articles calculated to promote the happiness and general welfare of every member of the household.

Juvenile Department

An important and interesting feature of our paper will be the Juvenile Department—to the proper management of which we shall devote much care and thought. Our little readers will take up The Weekly Gleaner every week with the certainty of finding two or three of its columns especially devoted to their interests. To amuse and interest them will be with us a matter of no secondary importance; and the better to

attain this two-fold end, we shall strive to convey our ideas to them in the simplest and plainest language we can employ.

Domestic Economy

To the Department of Domestic Economy and Hygiene, we shall devote as much space as is consistent with our general plan, and shall in this connection publish regularly every week, a number of important rules and receipts for the household.

General News Regarding Our People and Interests

Each number of this sheet will contain succinct and important summaries of foreign news in relation to our people and their interests, and we shall from time to time lay before our readers such interesting items of news from our brethren as may reach us from sources and countries hitherto little known to the general reader.

We shall endeavor to render The Weekly Gleaner a medium for the free interchange of thought from whatever source it may emanate—and its columns will always be open for the temperate discussion of all questions connected either with our own as with the public well being. Finally we shall spare no endeavors to render this sheet a welcome visitor at every fireside, a credit to our people and an honor to our State. We shall strive so to blend the useful with the agreeable in our columns, in that no one, Jew or Gentile, can rise from the perusal of its pages without feeling that he has been at once amused and instructed.

In the momentous crisis through which our system of theology is now passing we shall strive to pay due deference to the past, without however ignoring the

requirements of the present, or failing to provide for our existence in the future.

We thus send forth The Weekly Gleaner upon what we sincerely trust will prove a useful and blessed mission, and, however little temporary profit or advantage may accrue to us, we shall feel amply rewarded if in the end, it shall be found to have advanced, however little, the cause of piety and the best interests of mankind upon earth.

Eckman as Editor and Publisher

These brave words launched The Weekly Gleaner upon its course as the first Jewish newspaper of the West. Its subscription rates were a modest $6.00 per annum and its advertising rates were also low—$3.00 for a five-line square for one month. Rabbi Eckman designed a very elaborate figure for the first issue of January 16, 1857, to emphasize the role of the newspaper as the unifier of the Jewish people: a wreath containing the symbols of the twelve tribes of Israel. The first issue carried the woodcut that Eckman had promised, a picture of the Cave of Macpelah, the Sepulchre of the Fathers. The lead article was a fascinating description of Hebrew just as the Prospectus had declared.

In his dual role of editor and publisher, Rabbi Eckman found his life suddenly filled with constant effort. While still teaching children in his Hepzibah school, he wrote or collected all of the material which appeared in the paper, and he had to solicit the subscriptions and the advertising which would make the paper economically feasible. Time and work were part of Eckman's nature; he was restless and determined by nature, and he would not be deterred by the massiveness of the task.

He found much satisfaction in finally being able to present to his readers the fruits of his own blossoming tree of knowledge. The first issue reflected his major interests.

Distribution of The Weekly Gleaner

Copies were sent to a long mailing list that Rabbi Eckman had compiled on the basis of his California experience. With the first issue he included the following letter to introduce the newspaper:

> Gentlemen,
>
> You will gather a sufficiently precise idea of the character and general plan of the present sheet by referring to the prospectus and the table of contents embraced in this number. The want of such a paper has long been felt and acknowledged. The success of this will depend largely upon the measure of ability which we can bring to the performance of our task, but also, let me add, in a very great measure upon your efforts. If the plan of this sheet meets your approval, and if we can rely with certainty upon your kind wishes for its prosperity and your endeavors to promote its circulation, its success is certain, it will take rank at once among the most popular and influential religious journals of this State.
>
> We have taken the liberty to transmit to you several numbers of this, our first issue, and would accompany them with the earnest request, that if circumstances should prevent your accepting the agency, which we hereby tender to you, you will confide the

same to some suitable person of your acquaintance, who will be willing to accept it and that you will immediately advise us by letter of the selection you have thus made.

We shall allow our agents the usual rate of 25 per cent upon all monies received by them whether for subscriptions or advertisements. We earnestly solicit from all, whether personally known to us or not, who are friendly to the success of our enterprise, the communication of such interesting items of intelligence relative to our people, as may from time to time reach them. We shall thus, we trust, be enabled to present our readers, each week, with a summary of news that will prove peculiarly acceptable not only to the members of our creed resident in California, but also to our numerous friends and relations in the Eastern States and in Europe. We remain Gentlemen,

Very respectfully yours,

Julius Eckman
Editor of The Weekly Gleaner

The first issue of The Weekly Gleaner further reflected Rabbi Eckman's theological interests by the inclusion of a lengthy essay "Evidence of the Existence of God." Here we find the heavy, ponderous style of his writing fully displayed. One can picture him standing on a lofty pulpit proclaiming these words --

From the gloriously studded canopy above to the pendulous globe beneath, from the unwieldy monsters of the deep to the tiny worm under our feet, all bow in

reverence before Him and proclaim His existence in Glory.

Rabbi Eckman took his major argument form the observable phenomenon that all people possess a faith in God, from the most primitive and isolated tribes to the most sophisticated city dweller. Even when they had not experienced religious training and were lacking a faith, as soon as such an education was available, their faith in God developed. Rabbi Eckman put it in his typical florid terminology:

> Expose the torpid serpent to the genial influence of the vernal sun, and at once, its suspended powers will be renewed as with a spell and it will live. The benumbed swallow, occasionally found in old walls and rocks, when exposed to the same influence, will experience a similar change, will revive and dart upwards to the sun; so will the mind of the untutored child of nature, when subjected to the reviving effects of spiritual influence expand and soar into the regions of spirit, attracted by the benign influence of a divine principle inherent in us which tells us there is a God!

Another of the popular arguments of those times for the existence of God which Rabbi Eckman cited was summarized in the second issue of The Weekly Gleaner with this statement, "We find no faculty implanted in any animal without its corresponding object." Thus, the eye which sees has objects to its sight, hunger has the object of food. Man's yearning for God, his belief in a Deity must also have a corresponding object, God himself.

Many of the local newspapers of San Francisco reacted quite favorably to the appearance of The Weekly Gleaner. The San Francisco Herald wrote:

> It is a beautiful sheet, in quarto form, and makes a neat typographical appearance. It is filled with interesting original matter.

The San Francisco Daily Alto commented:

> It is especially devoted to the interests of our Hebrew population and from the great variety of original and selected articles of interest it contains, and the well known ability of the Rev. gentleman who has charge of its editorial department, it will no doubt prove a valuable acquisition to the family of literature of both Hebrew and Gentile.

The Evening Bulletin also felt that The Weekly Gleaner "will prove a valuable family companion to Christians as well as to Jews."

Rabbi Eckman made a special effort to win readers in the East, an area that already enjoyed access to excellent Jewish publications. He introduced a special reduced price of $5.00 per annum. Many prominent figures agreed to act as his agents in leading communities. Among them were Dr. David Einhorn of Baltimore, Rev. M. Isaacs of New York, Rev. Solomon Jacobs of Charleston, and Dr. Elkan Cohn of Albany.

What great hopes accompanied the launching of The Weekly Gleaner Rabbi Eckman saw in it a brilliant opportunity to display his erudition, to express his strong feelings about Jewish life, and to win the admiration of a national audience. He rarely used the paper for personal counter-attacks and never for attacks, but early in The Weekly Gleaner's run, he used his editorial privilege to lash out at the Asmonean which had sullied his career with the statement

> Dr. Eckman acted injudiciously, as the congregation thought. They, by reducing the salary, elected a temporary reader, the majority at the meeting persisting that it was only done to avoid his election, and that the reader would resign as soon as a minister was obtained.

Rabbi Eckman contemptuously rejected these crass statements as "torrents of gratuitous overflowings." Reluctant to continue such matters in The Weekly Gleaner, he reassured his readers, "Nor must the patient reader expect to see many such notices in our columns, it is with great reluctance that we allude even to that quarter." In Rabbi Eckman's eyes, The Weekly Gleaner should constantly reflect a high level of scholarship about Jewish concerns and should not become a sheet devoted to caustic criticism and angry assaults.

The Voice of Israel

Occasionally, however, Eckman's passions overcame his convictions. He did reserve some of his strongest blasts for the young man who had replaced him at Emanu El, Rev. Bien. The shock of being succeeded by one so lacking in scholarship and learning never left Rabbi Eckman. He could have gracefully accepted being replaced by another European scholar, but that Emanu El would prefer youthful vigor and an engaging personality—that was too much to bear. His hurt was compounded when Rev. Bien began to publish a rival newspaper, The Voice of Israel, almost immediately after he began the publication of The Weekly Gleaner. It was as though Rev. Bien was sounding a requiem for the rabbi, whose difficulties of starting a new paper were great enough without an instant rival upon the scene.

Fortunately for Rabbi Eckman, The Voice of Israel did not enjoy a lengthy life, but its very existence embittered him at the outset. He headed his attack with these words, "Beware of Sectarial Political

Newspapers." His thesis was that, in a free society, political matters should be the concern of general newspapers that are distributed to the entire public rather than the concern of newspapers that restrict their appeal to a particular sect or denomination. Separation of church and state was not an American principle that applied just to political or educational institutions. It had equal significance for the public media that shaped political viewpoints. No sectarian group, in Rabbi Eckman's view, had the right to control public opinion on issues that affected the community at large. Thus, Jewish publications should deal with Jewish problems, Catholic publications with their own concerns, etc. Any other course involved a danger to the Jews, as their entire history has shown.

To support this position, Rabbi Eckman quoted two other leading Jewish publishers, Rabbi Isaac M. Wise, publisher of the Israelite, and Dr. David Einhorn, editor of Sinai. While Rabbi Eckman was to take sharp issue with Rabbi Wise on many other matters, in a February 20, 1857 article he warmly approved Rabbi Wise' statement that

> Some editors take all possible pains to identify by name with party politics. I declare every statement to this effect a gross and willful slander. I have done nothing, and do nothing now, in favor of any political party, nay, I consider this profession under present circumstances when unprincipled atheists are the most noisy champions, beyond the dignity of an honest man.

Dr. Einhorn wrote directly about Rev. Bien's newspaper:

> The tendency of advocating the political rights of the Jews we must decidedly deprecate as pernicious, on the ground of the Union. As to its religious aim, that

> paper seems to be willing to occupy a neutral, or to a certain degree, waiting position. Not withstanding, we cordially cherish the hope, that the always moving and stirring editor, will very soon show solidity and soundness of mind, and not allow to be said of him, 'The Voice' is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are those of Esau.

The Interdenominational Response

Although Rabbi Eckman considered The Weekly Gleaner primarily an instrument for the enhancement of Jewish knowledge and loyalties, others viewed it as assistance to interdenominational understanding. Authentic information in the hands of intelligent Christians could be of inestimable help in promoting harmony and good will between these two communities. The Rev. Brierly, Pastor of the First Baptist Church and one of the leading clergymen of San Francisco, was so enthusiastic about The Weekly Gleaner that he wrote a letter to Rabbi Eckman that was published in the February 20, 1857 issue:

> Dear Sir,
>
> Allow me to express to you the very great pleasure I have derived form the perusal of your paper, The Weekly Gleaner. I am grateful to see such an enterprise in the hands of one whose sound judgment, literary taste, and Catholic spirit, are sure guarantees that it will deserve success. We need the instrumentality of the press to bring into close and kinder contact the Seed of Abraham and the believers in Christ. The Jew and the Christian notwithstanding their broad differences of opinion respecting the Messiah, have too many

points in common to justify alienation and strife. Bigotry has done mischief enough—may the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob cause all those to love one another, who venerate and worship Him as the only living Jehovah. May He who led Israel in the wilderness lead you, and make this work of your hands successful.

Yours fraternally,
B. Brierly

The task of initiating a newspaper was enormous and errors were inevitable. The task of preparing the text in the late hours of the night and seeking subscriptions while handling the business affairs was a devastating task. It demanded all of his energies and time leaving precious little for the children he still continued to teach in Hepzibah.

Letters of complain began to accumulate, and Rabbi Eckman felt compelled to acknowledge and to seek pardon for his inadequacies. He addressed himself to his readers in these plaintive terms:

> Impelled by a sense of duty, we, with reluctance entered the stream of public journalism of which we hitherto had but little knowledge, nor are we at all prepared to manage the business part.
>
> But from want of those supplies which the religious paper of other denominations normally enjoy, and, hitherto, perhaps, owing to these ruinous times, have not been awarded us yet, we have to compose during the night, and look to the business during the day. The heavy expense, the selecting compositions, and the

> correspondence, all weigh heavily on our hands. May God above in his mercy uphold us. All errors and neglect of all kinds ought, therefore, till a better day will dawn upon us, be looked at with an eye of charity.
>
> Friends in the city and country ought kindly to bear with us; if the paper has not been regularly received, let us know, if even it should happen, once or more.
>
> Friends to whom, from want of proper agents, we sent copies, ought kindly to receive them, and appoint agents, or take the trouble upon themselves to get subscribers, and send us down the list, and we will send copies from our office.

When he embarked upon the task of publishing the newspaper, he hardly understood the immensity of the task that confronted him. The thought of being his own boss and of escaping the harassment of a critical board of trustees was undoubtedly very appealing to him. He had suffered for many years at the hands of lay leaders who challenged his leadership, from the day he set foot in Charleston until he severed his relations with Emanu El in San Francisco. Mild tempered as he normally was, he became an outraged lion when his principles were at stake. In the newspaper he thought he found the ideal solution—the opportunity to express to the public his ideas, in the seclusion of a private office and without the necessity of facing a board of lay leaders at regular intervals.

CHAPTER 4

THE JEWS OF CHINA

The Weekly Gleaner on Chinese Jews

Even before Eckman's decision to come to San Francisco, while in Mobile, he undertook a campaign to raise funds to send a mission to China to seek out the Chinese Jews. In San Francisco he spoke frequently on this theme and sought out anyone who had authentic information about China and especially about its Jewish population. Through informative articles he wrote for The Weekly Gleaner, he aroused speculation about Chinese Jews' life and religious practices, especially about the Chinese Jews of Central China on the Yellow River, in the city of Kaifeng, the former capital of the province Honan.

The Weekly Gleaner became the most important channel for information about Chinese Jews in the United States.

Reports from Christian Missionaries

Rabbi Eckman harbored an unusual dream all of his life—to re-establish relations between the Jews of the Western world and of China. He found this interest in Chinese Jewry mounting as reports grew of a community of Jews in Kaifeng.

Rabbi Eckman came across references of Jewish merchants' travels in the Far East and of Jewish adventurers who had settled in the Far East, established communities, and sustained the practices and beliefs of their religion. These communities continued to maintain their identity although their contacts with Western Jews became increasingly rare. Their very existence aroused in Rabbi Eckman an

excitement, a yearning to seek them out and to discover new knowledge concerning their past.

Rabbi Eckman derived most of his information about the Jews of Kaifeng from the reports of Christian missionaries who visited the city. They had established contact with Kaifeng Jews for conversion purposes and to obtain their scrolls. A typical description of the Kaifeng Jews is found in an April, 1857 article from The Weekly Gleaner:

> "There is a quaintness in the notion of a Jewish colony surrounded by Chinese, the fixed among the fixed. The fact that such a colony exists, or has existed when found, ought to be especially remarked, for to ethnologists and others it may prove a valuable opportunity for speculation. Jews in China, what will they be like? Will the Jew stand out from the surrounding uniformity of Chinese life, like the one tree of the desert or will he become a non-entity, like among like, adding nothing to the idea—silence in a calm? In the Jewish synagogue of Kai-foung-fou (the old name for modern Kaifeng—Fou meaning capital), concerning which we have presently to speak, there are Chinese inscriptions. The first placed there in 1444 by a literate Jew, is intended to prove the close analogy between Jewish and Chinese points of doctrine .... The doctrine which is therein contained is much like that of the Kings (which are sacred volumes of the Chinese). The author of the inscription repeats many passages to prove that in their worship to heaven, their ceremonies, their behavior to the old and young, their patriarchal character, their prayers, and their mode of honoring dead ancestors, the Jews resemble the Chinese.

"The author of the second inscription, a grand mandarin in his own time, speaks to the same purpose, 'From the time of Han,' says the gentleman whose name is Foo Fang, 'the Jews fixed themselves in China, and in the twentieth year of the cycle 65 (which is by interpretation 1163) they offered to the Emperor Hiso Tsong a tribute of cloth from India. He received them well, and permitted them to live in Kai-found-fou. They formed then sixty-six families. They built a synagogue where they placed their Kings or Divine Scriptures.

"Affliction on the part of the Chinese, at any rate, they certainly did not hear; they were more than tolerated, they were understood, ceremony men to ceremony men were ceremoniously polite to one another. The Jews and Chinese even intermarried. On their first introduction by way of Persia to the Chinese Empire, they had settled here and there in sundry Chinese cities, but by the marriage of Chinese disciples of Confucius of Mahomet, the Jewish colonies were melted down into the pure Chinese metal; and when their history begins, nothing is known of any synagogue in China save the synagogue at Kai-foung-fou, which is a city in the heart of the Flowery Land, the capital of the central province of Honan.'"

The first inkling of the existence of the Jewish community in China came through the publication of a letter sent by Father Matteo Ricci, the first Jesuit missionary in China, to the General of the Society of Jesus, Claudio Aquaviva on July 26, 1605. In the letter, Ricci told of his first meeting with a Kaifeng Jew, Ai Tien, in his church in Peking.

Ricci had just arrived in Peking a few years before to establish the first Christian mission in China. He had prepared himself

assiduously for this important new enterprise of Christendom. He spoke Chinese fluently, had familiarized himself thoroughly with the Chinese way of life, and had developed special skills in science and crafts to make himself more acceptable as an authentic scholar among the Chinese. Despite all of his training, dedication and effort, Ricci discovered that affecting a real religious change among the Chinese was going to be a formidable task. They were deeply attached to their Confucian traditions, possessing a high level of ethical understanding and generally disinclined to accept a Western conceptual import.

At this time, Ai Tien—an honorable member of the Jewish community of Kaifeng—had come to Peking to seek a position as an official in the Imperial civil service. Tien approached Ricci's mission, expecting to embrace the first Western Jew to penetrate China. Tien had heard of the establishment of a new religious center, an unusual one because it was based on faith in one God. Tien had immediately jumped to the conclusion that this must be a Jewish house of worship, and he took great delight at the prospect of re-establishing contact with the Jewish world, a treasured goal of the Kaifeng Jewish community for many centuries.

Ricci had learned that a Chinese co-religionist from Kaifeng had arrived and was awaiting him in the outer courtyard. Ricci was aware that centuries before a Nestorian sect had settled in the Yellow River basin, and he believed that this visitor was a Christian descendant of that sect. His heart leaped at the prospect of establishing such a connection with an ancient Chinese Christian community. Not only would this be a valuable contact in itself, but it could also make his task immeasurably easier. Tien and Ricci were both filled with the joy of discovering a fellow religionist in this most unexpected manner.

That day happened to be a saint's day, the Feast of St. John. A portrait of the Holy Family adorned the wall in the main meeting

room. Tien, upon examining the portrait, assumed that this was a depiction of the patriarch Abraham, his wife Sarah, and their son, Isaac. Ricci suggested to Tien that they both join in a worshipful obeisance, especially as an expression of thanksgiving for their union. Tien was not familiar with such a religious practice, but then he knew nothing of European Jewish ways. He joined Ricci in this ritual, observing him carefully to make sure that he did it correctly. Ricci was buoyed by their first religious experience together, so he suggested that they enter the adjacent room where a picture of the twelve apostles hung. Tien assumed that they were the twelve sons of Jacob, the forebears of the twelve tribes, and again he willingly joined Ricci.

As they sat down to discuss faith, they soon discovered that they were not at all of the same religion, and although they were disappointed, they still had gained a great deal from this initial contact. Ricci had surprised Tien by his knowledge of Hebrew and of the Bible, because by now very few of the Kaifeng Jews possessed such a background.

When Tien returned home and related to the community leaders of his fascinating encounter, they were very impressed. The rabbi of Kaifeng was at this time aged and infirmed, and there were grave concerns about a successor. It was decided to invite Ricci to come to Kaifeng to become their new rabbi on the condition that he would give up the practice of eating swine. Although Ricci did not accept this invitation, nor did he visit Kaifeng, he did send emissaries there to observe and record their practices, as well as to attempt to obtain some Torah scrolls for examination.

Conversion Efforts

Eckman explained that in December of 1607, Ricci sent to Kaifeng two Chinese emissaries whom he had converted to Christianity, to investigate the situation. They delivered a letter to the rabbi from Ricci, in which he offered to the community a copy of

the New Testament which would bring the Jews up to date with the new redemption that had come to them. The Jewish community in Kaifeng rejected the offer on the grounds that it was well known that the Messiah was not due for another 10,000 years and could not have already come.

After the death of Ricci in 1610, his successor, Nicolo Longobardi, sent a request to Aquaviva to send missionaries knowledgeable in Hebrew to undertake conversion efforts in Kaifeng. He was confident that the number of Jews and their susceptibility would justify such efforts.

In 1613 a Jesuit missionary, Guilio Aleni, who came to be known as the Christian Confucius, came to Kaifeng. He was warmly received because of his expert knowledge of Hebrew, which even the rabbi was now sorely lacking. That warmth quickly cooled when Aleni wanted to examine the Torah scrolls and apparently even made efforts to obtain one of them. He may also have been overzealous in his conversion efforts. At any rate, he was coldly rebuffed and was not allowed even to look into the Holy Ark.

Longobardi finally visited Kaifeng in 1620 and had virtually the same experience—a warm reception when the community leaders assumed he was Jewish and a sharp rejection when they learned he was Christian. Eckman described Longobardi's visit:

> "Everyone was delighted, believing that their guest was one of their own nation. And when they learned the Father was there, they wanted to invite him immediately. They fixed the day, the following Sabbath. And when the Father entered the synagogue, they treated him with great honor, being certain that he was of the same stock and of the same faith as themselves.

> "So long as they thought that the Father was one of their faith, they gave him a magnificent welcome and listened with great joy to the stories of the Old testament patriarchs; but once they noticed the pictures in his Bible, abominable in their eyes, they understood that he was a Christian of the Cross who worshipped Jesus, whom they called Isai, a name taken from the Moors, and they immediately changed about, urging the Father to leave the synagogue, which they thought had been profaned by his presence. He would have liked to discuss the Bible with them, but it was of no use. They had suddenly grown distrustful, and conversation no longer suited them."

Eckman reports that for a long period of time thereafter, little was heard about Kaifeng. Indication are that visitors continued to come to Kaifeng but no written records of their reports have survived—if indeed they were made.

The Kaifeng Jewish Community

The silence was broken in 1704 when Father Jean Paul Gozani was delegated by his superior Father Suarez to visit Kaifeng to examine the Kaifeng Jews' Torah scrolls. Gozani was received warmly. He visited with the entire community and the synagogue, and was even allowed to enter the most secret recess where only the Chang Chiao (ruler of the synagogue) could enter. In Gozani's account to Suarez, reported in The Weekly Gleaner, Gozani conveyed a mass of information that was hitherto unknown about the way of life of Kaifeng's Jews.

In the synagogue Gozani saw thirteen small arks, each of which contained a Torah scroll with the text of the Pentateuch. He was able to identify the surviving scroll of the flood and the twelve that were copied from it. When he saw the quantity of Bible lessons

and prayer books, he was moved to say, "All these books are preserved with greater care than if they had been of gold and silver."

Gozani described the center of the synagogue with its magnificent pulpit—the Moses pulpit—on which the Torah was read on Sabbath morning and on holidays. The synagogue faced West, in the direction of Jerusalem. A tablet bearing the name of the emperor was placed in the synagogue, but there were no statues or figures. The Jews told Gozani that they called God by many names that were borrowed form Chinese sources.

The synagogue was divided into three naves. The middle one was used for the Table of Incense, Moses' Pulpit, and the Emperor's Tablet. The two side naves were used by the congregation for prayer. Outside the synagogue was a great hall in which were placed many incense bowls. This was the place where they honored their Sheng-jen, the Great Men of the Law. The bowls were dedicated to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the heads of the Twelve Tribes, Moses, Aaron, and others. Gozani met with the community leaders in the Hall of Guests to discuss the Holy Writings. Gozani reported that the Jews, called in Chinese, Tiao-chin Chiao, still observed the Old Testament ceremonies such as circumcision, the Feat of the Unleavened Bread, the Sabbath, and other Biblical festivals. According to Gozani, the first Jews arrived in China in the second century during the Han dynasty.

Upon being questioned, the Jews said that, like all Chinese, they honored Confucius, and they also honored their ancestors in the hall adjoining the synagogue, in a ceremony with offerings of flesh other than swine and Chinese dishes filled with sweets. In the Hall of Ancestors they placed tablets in memory of ancestors who attained the rank of mandarin, a high-ranking civil officer.

In his report Gozani described a number of Jewish observances. They prepared all the food for the Sabbath of Friday because on Saturday they did not kindle any fires. When they read the Bible at

Sabbath services, they covered their faces with a transparent veil in memory of Moses who was veiled when he descended from Mt. Sinai. They wore blue caps in the synagogue during prayers, distinguishing them from the Mohammedans who wore white caps. On Yom Kippur they spent the entire day in the synagogue weeping and moaning.

Gozani claimed that they received no converts nor did they marry gentiles. They printed one very small black book on the subject of their religion in Chinese which they presented to the mandarin when they were faced with persecution.

When Gozani asked the Jews if they had heard of Jesus, they responded with an immediate affirmative. He was delighted until further discussions clarified that the Jesus they were talking about was Jesus, son of Serach, the author of the book Ecclesiasticus. That, of course, indicated that they were familiar with the work which had been written in 180 BCE in Jerusalem. No trace of it was ever found in Kaifeng.

Eckman reported that in a 1712 report, Gozani said he thought a scroll of the Bible could be obtained through a great deal of money and discreet negotiations.

Eckman chronicles the next important visitors to Kaifeng as two missionaries, Father Dominge and Father Gauleil, who came in 1723. They were both very knowledgeable in Hebrew and were readily accepted into the community. Dominge made the most valuable contribution to our knowledge of Kaifeng Jewish history because his drawings of the schema of the synagogue are the only existing representations. Though crude, they provided the only visual image that we possess of that structure.

Dominge also made an attempt to purchase a Torah scroll, but the Kaifeng Jews adamantly refused. A guard was posted to make sure that no book left without authorization. One Jew, Kao Ting, had owned

a Torah scroll and had deposited it in the synagogue. It was the Kaifeng Jews' custom that if a Jew did this, he was exempt from attending religious services. When he wanted to retrieve it to sell to Dominge, Kao Ting was told that this was the equivalent of selling God himself and was flatly denied.

Dominge offered to lend the community a Hebrew Bible in return for the loan of a scroll and again was flatly rejected. None of his efforts, which were numerous, were successful in obtaining a scroll which the community guarded with dogged determination. He could read them for as long as he wished in the synagogue, but under no circumstances was he allowed to remove them. Eckman reports that Dominge examined the scrolls carefully and found no significant differences between them and the Torah texts that were known in Europe.

Another visitor of Kaifeng that same year was Father Antoine Gaubil, who came for a short, two-day stay. Gozani served as his interpreter in Chinese and conducted the interview with the rabbi and two of his congregants. After the interview Gaubil dismissed them all as "absolute ignoramuses." Gaubil was critical of their Hebrew pronunciation. He commented, "If I had not had the Hebrew text in front of my eyes, I would never have recognized that it was Hebrew they were reading."

From his conversation with the Jews, Gaubil concluded that the first entry of the Jews into China was as early as 300 BCE, a date that could not be substantiated in any way. When Gaubil was also unable to persuade them to sell him a Torah scroll, he commissioned them to transcribe one, thus indicating that, in 1723, the Chinese Jewish community had individuals possessing this necessary skill.

After Gaubil returned to Peking, he wanted to revisit Kaifeng for a longer period of time, but travel restrictions on foreigners made that impossible. For a long period of time, no further information on

Kaifeng Jews could be obtained, even though interest in their community was running high.

China in Isolation

In The Weekly Gleaner Eckman presented a history of aborted attempts of foreign missionaries to establish contact with China and its Kaifeng Jews. From the time of Gaubil's contact with the Kaifeng Jewish community until 1858 when the Treaty of Tiensin was concluded, foreigners could not travel about China.

During these isolationary years, efforts were made to establish contact through the exchange of letters, since personal visits were out of the question. In 1760 Isaac Nieto of London sent a letter with a long list of inquiries about the Kaifeng Jews' religious practices and their history. He also included a cover letter to the agent of the East India company requesting his assistance in forwarding the letter to Kaifeng. There are no reliable records of any response to this letter or to many subsequent letters by other would-be correspondents.

In 1769 the famous Bible scholar Benjamin Kennicott of England embarked on a massive project to collect all available Bible texts, to produce one that would be as free as possible from errors. He went a request to Kaifeng for one of their Torah scrolls through the intervention of the bishop of Honan Province, but again, there was no recorded response.

A Danish scholar, Olav Gerhard Tychsen, wrote several letters to Kaifeng in 1777 and again in 1779, but there was no indication that they were received, let alone answered. Two Jews from New York, Solomon Joseph Simson and Alexander Hirsch, stimulated by reports they had read about Jews in China, sent off a letter in Hebrew in 1795, asking many questions about the Jewish way of life in Kaifeng. In this instance we have specific information about the fate of the letter. They sent it with a sailing captain on his way to the Orient, and it was

returned unopened with the statement, "Captain Howell could not discover them."

Another letter was sent by the Jews of London in 1815 through Robert Morrison, a Protestant missionary who forwarded it to Kaifeng through an itinerant Chinese bookseller. Although the bookseller later claimed that he delivered the letter and that the recipient was able to read its Hebrew, it is highly unlikely since by this time all the evidence seems to indicate that no one in Kaifeng could read Hebrew.

Contact Re-established

The only letter that bore fruit and broke the barrier of silence between Kaifeng and the West was sent in 1844 from London by a well-known British author and diplomat, James Finn.

Finn was born in England in 1806, and very early in his life was attracted to the missionary efforts of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews. He became the son-in-law of one of its leaders, Rev. Alexander McCaul. To further his work, Finn became fluent in Hebrew and devoted much effort to the study of Judaism. His research in the British Museum led him to the Jesuit missionaries' accounts of their observations in Kaifeng. Fascinated by Chinese Jews, in 1843, Finn wrote The Jews in China. Hyman Kublin, a twentieth century Sinologist, wrote about Finn's book in his Jews of Old China:

> "It is not simply that the Englishman combed patiently and methodically through all the available literature on the subject. He also possessed what many earlier writers had not enjoyed, namely, a fine grasp of Jewish history and Judaism. Careful in his evaluation of his sources, he was circumspect in the formulation of his conclusions. It is therefore not surprising that for many years, even in our own time, students of the

history of the Chinese Jews have leaned heavily upon Finn's book."

In his book, Finn recounted the available information that he had gleaned from the missionary visitors to Kaifeng. He drew the conclusion that they must have observed all of the festivals, although only the feast of Tabernacles, Rejoicing of the Law, and the Day of Atonement are actually mentioned. Finn made the point that the Kaifeng Jews did not proselytize; they possessed no code of authoritative tradition such as the Talmud; they took no oaths in an idol-temple and never pronounced God's name, substituting as did Jews everywhere the name Adonai or, as they pronounced it, Etonoi.

In an article from The Hebrew Observer, Eckman quoted Finn's description of community life of the Chinese Jews:

> "The Chinese Jews are remarkable not only for the arrangements already indicated, but for many of the religious forms or customs which they observed. The putting off the shoes on entering the house of prayer, and wearing a blue head dress while there (a circumstance by which the heathen distinguish them from the Mohammedans who wear white). In reading the law, the minister covers his face with a transparent veil of gauze in imitation of Moses, who brought the law to the people with his face covered, and wears a red silk scarf depending from the right shoulder, and tied under the left arm. By his side stands a monitor, to correct his readings, if necessary, who is likewise attended by a monitor. The prayers are chanted but without musical instruments. The congregation wears no talit, or garment of fringes, during the service. They observe circumcision, Passover, Tabernacles, the Rejoicing of the Law, and perhaps the Day of Atonement; for it is said that on one

> day of the year they fast and weep together in the synagogue. They keep the Sabbath quite as strictly as do the Jews in Europe. They make no proselytes and never marry with Gentiles. They use their sacred books in casting lots; and their literary men pay the same homage to the memory of Confucius as their neighbors do. They never pronounce the ineffable name of God, but say Etuane (Adonai); and in writing Chinese they render that name by "Teen" (Heaven) just as the Chinese do, instead of Shang-te (the Lord Above), or any ancient appellation of the Deity. They have no formularity of belief, but hold to the unity of god, and to the doctrines of heaven, hell, a sort of purgatory, the resurrection of the dead, the day of judgment, and the hierarchies of angels."

Finn acknowledged the crucial role of Jesuit missionaries who not only provided knowledge about Chinese Jews but also made a Christian presence felt in China in terms of a great missionary movement.

To achieve his missionary purposes, Finn saw the Jews as the most logical entry into China. First, Finn asked his friend Bishop Alexander in Jerusalem to write a letter in Hebrew to the Kaifeng Jews, thinking that a message from the Holy City would be received with special veneration, but apparently that request was never fulfilled. Then a French Jew, Henri Hirsch, prepared to convey a letter to Kaifeng, but he fell ill and could not embark on such a trip.

Finally, in February, 1844, Finn arranged for copies of his book and letters written in Hebrew to be sent to the Jewish community by way of Temple H. Layton, the newly appointed British vice consul for Ningpo. Finn consulted with a number of scholars in the composition of his letter, and finally sent it off in triplicate in "as simple and distinct a style of Hebrew as possible" along with an English translation to

Consul Layton. The letters were addressed in Chinese characters for Kaifeng.

Just three weeks after sending off these letters, Finn was appointed Consul for Jerusalem and Palestine, and left England in February, 1846. He arranged that if a reply should come from China, it would be forwarded to Jerusalem. Years passed while Finn was occupied with his duties in Jerusalem until 1849, when two letters arrived from Layton who had meanwhile been transferred to Amoy. The report was of extraordinary importance since it was the first word from Kaifeng in 125 years.

Layton expressed his grave disappointment at not receiving a reply from Kaifeng or even being sure that they had received the letter. He himself had been ill for almost two years and could not pursue the matter. He suggested that it might be possible to send a learned Jew disguised as a Chinese to Kaifeng, a Hebrew scholar would be too much to hope for, or to send a courier from Amoy to Kaifeng to bring back the response. He assured Finn, "Money alone will obtain information, and perhaps Sir Moses Montefiore or some wealthy Hebrew will pay for it."

Layton reported that he met with a Chinese Mohammedan soldier, a native of Kaifeng who was well informed about the Jews' faith and practices. Tich Ting-an lived within half a mile from the synagogue and was last there five years previously. He was well acquainted with the Jews whom, he estimated, numbered a thousand persons in eight families. He said that the Jews gave their daughters to Chinese Mohammedans, but Mohammedans did not give their daughters to Jews.

Layton, quoted in Finn's Orphan Country, wrote:

> "The Jews do not know whence they come, or the period of their coming to China. The Jews are quite

Chinese in their appearance. The women exactly resemble the Kaifeng women. They all have straight features like the people in the center of China. In the Ming dynasty the Jews were rich and their customs were as of old."

Layton provided a careful description of the synagogue.

"The synagogue has eight corners. I do not know the name of the Emperor who gave the Jews the synagogue. Strangers and carrier of pork cannot pass near the synagogue. On the right hand of the synagogue is an inscribed stone stele. There are two very large trees in front of the synagogue. All persons enter the synagogue by the two side doors. The large door is only opened on the last day of the old Chinese year; it is then thrown open from New Year's Eve until the evening of Chinese New Year's day. There is one large room in the synagogue no one dares to enter. There is a high stone tablet with the names of all the leaders; another tabled put up 250 years since, with the names of all the leaders, and the name of the reigning Emperor.

"The synagogue is walled all around. There is no 'Hall of Ancestors.' The inscription over the synagogue is Ching Chen Su (Purity and Truth Temple). No one can enter the large doors. From the end of the street to the end of the enclosure is 125 feet; from the lane to the synagogue is 80 feet. In the synagogue is a yellow bundle, tied up in satin, which contains all the books of the Jews. The length of these rolls is the length of this table, 2 feet.

"I have not seen what you describe to me, the Jews' dwelling, or affecting to dwell, under towers of trees

and flowers at an annual festival. I have not seen any of their ceremonies. There are no priests; there is not any form of worship. One rich man only takes charge of the synagogue. No one Jew can read or write Hebrew at Kaifeng. The Jews would never allow a book to be taken away.

"Some of the Jews say they ought to worship with both hands raised even with their ears. Some say with their hands extended before them, and pointing to the earth. Others with their hands joined in front of their breasts.

"If new books and writings were given to the Jews they would be most gladly received. No one Jew can read or write Hebrew. I recognize that a Hebrew inscription shown to be their writing. Some of the Jews say the sixth, and some that the eighth day is their Sabbath."

Layton continued his efforts to send a courier to Kaifeng to elicit a response to Finn's original letter to them. It was a very difficult enterprise, as Layton wrote to Finn,

"The great difference of local dialects throughout the various provinces of the empire, the jealous and eager watchfulness of the mandarins over all travellers in the interior, the frequent questionings and searchings which a traveller is liable to, and the danger which he might incur should the real object of his journey be discovered, all combine that it would be many years before such a person could be found among the Chinese natives of Amoy, who would successfully undertake the task of a special visit to Kaifeng. I assure you that I do not magnify the difficulty, and were you a resident in

> China, and a Consul, you would find your every movement watched most narrowly."

He also added, "The Chinese writer of this Consulate who is an intelligent and respectable old man, is decidedly of the opinion that the Jews would be afraid to receive a letter if it was known to be written by foreigners, as it might be the cause of accusations against them." That was the last letter that Finn received from Layton.

A Community in Decay

A year later, in June of 1851, Finn received a letter from Mrs. Layton in London informing him that her husband had died in Amoy. From his Orphan Colony, we learn that she explained that the Kaifeng Jewish community was in a state of decay:

> "You have waited long and patiently for news of real import from Honan, and I have now the pleasure to tell you that, at last, an answer has arrived at Amoy, brought by the fur merchant to whom the last of your letter was entrusted; and I will await your instructions respecting its transmission to you by post, for it seems something to me so precious that I shall hardly like to risk it when once safe in my hands. The letter has been opened, and a copy made, for the purpose of being sent to the Bishop of Victoria. The expected Chinese letter, I hear, is directed to Mr. Layton, and does not say very much more than we have already been told, viz. that the community of Jews has arrived at nearly the last stage of decay, though less than forty years ago they must have been able to keep up the forms and ceremonies of their religion, perhaps but imperfectly, but they did keep them up someway."

Finn had every reason to believe that before long he would hold in his hand the long awaited letter from Kaifeng, the first authentic word concerning the condition of the community for over a century. Twenty years were to pass before the letter reached him, long after his return from his tour of duty in Jerusalem to London. Finn wrote in his Orphan Colony:

> "Most strange to say, not withstanding all our impatience for receiving it in Jerusalem, the letter did not come into my hands for nearly twenty years afterwards, namely, in London, in April 1870. The chain of occurrences which produced this delay surprises one to look back upon it. The principal circumstance being, besides most uncertainty as to my own movements and a long succeeding illness, the utter inability after a certain period to discover the existence or whereabouts of my amiable correspondent, Mrs. Layton. I have it now before me, a writing on most delicate paper, with the address upon a slip of bright red, gummed over the exterior.
>
> "The translation was made by Mr. M. Morrison who was engaged in Her Majesty's Consular Service in China until 1867. At the time of the receipt of the letter, he was employed under Mr. Layton at Amoy."

The letter Finn referred to was written by the Kaifeng Jew Chao Nien-Tsu who conveyed a sense of tragic despair at the imminent obliteration of the ancient community. It was the only letter that ever reached Europe from the Kaifeng Jews. Although the letter was addressed to the British Consul in Amoy, Mr. Layton, he was instructed to transmit it to "the chief teacher of the Jewish religion."

Chao expressed profound sorrow at the present state of Judaism in Kaifeng but was uplifted by the hope that this renewed contact with the West would bring about a restoration of the faith:

> "In reply to the inquiries which you make, we have to state, that during the past forty or fifty years, our religion has been but imperfectly transmitted, and although its canonical writings are still extant, there is none who understands so much as one word of them. It happened only that there yet survives an aged female of more than seventy years who retains in her recollection the principal tenets of the faith.
>
> "Morning and night, with tears in our eyes, and with offerings of incense, do we implore that our religion may again flourish. We have everywhere sought about, but could find none who understood the letters of the Great country, and this has occasioned us great sorrow. But now the unexpected arrival of your letter fills us with happiness. We heard that a letter had last year been received by one Tieh, from a country of the West, but this to our regret we never got a sight of. However, the receipt of your present letter assures us that the holy religion contains still a germ of vitality, and that in the great English nation the history of its origin has not been lost. If it shall be possible again to erect our temple, it will give joy not only to our own community, but likewise the holy men of Tien-chu (Judah or India) will rejoice exceedingly. It will be needful, meanwhile that the proceeding with a view to this be conducted prudently and with caution.
>
> "Our synagogue in this place has long been without minister; the four walls of its principal hall are greatly dilapidated, and the compartments of the hall

of the holy men are in ruins. The ablution chamber and the repository (for the Scriptures) are in ruins likewise. Through the whole day have tears been in our eyes, and grief in our hearts, at the sight of such things. It has been our desire to repair the synagogue, and again to procure ministers to serve in it, but poverty prevented us, and our desire was vain. Daily with tears have we called on the Holy Name. If we could again procure ministers, and could put in order our synagogue, our religion would have a firm support for the future, and its sacred documents would have a secure repository. Thus it needs no divination to be assured of.

"Day after day and year after year, have we maintained ourselves in the belief of the vitality of our religion, and the certainty that it would again flourish. How could any other than such a desire be entertained? And our sole hope was that after death our souls would return to the Western region and be blessed."

In the letter Chao vigorously condemned whose who were engaged in selling the building materials of the synagogue. Evidently the structure had deteriorated so much that individuals were tearing off chunks of wood or single bricks and selling them, to earn some money for their pressing needs. He named those who were engaged in this practice and urged, "If any person be deputed hither, measures should be taken to put a stop to the scandalous proceedings of these people."

Religious Observances

Among the most important features of Chao's letter was the brief description of the holidays the Kaifeng Jews were still observing. It mentioned the Feast of Unleavened Bread which they observed on the fourteenth day of the second moon, although the Bible refers to

Passover as occurring during the first month. The Chinese Jews celebrated the holiday by distributing oil-fragrance cakes to their friends.

They also observed on the tenth day of the sixth moon a fast day, the Fast of the Judge's Gate, a day on which no fires were lit. This is clearly the day of Tisha B'Av, observed in the Jewish world as the anniversary of the destruction of both temples in Jerusalem, one in 586 BCE by the Babylonians and the other in 70 CE by the Romans. Again, however, there is a discrepancy between the Chinese date and that universally observed by Jews—the ninth day of the fifth month.

Chao next mentions a holiday described in these festive terms: "The Scriptures are preached in the synagogue, the doors being closed, the scroll is opened out, and the Scriptures read—money colored red is distributed." This clear reference to Simchat Torah (The Rejoicing of the Law) marks the completion of the annual cycle of the reading of the Torah scroll in the synagogue. Again, the Chinese date—the twenty-fourth day of the eighth month—does not correspond to that observed in the Jewish world today—the twenty-third day of the seventh month. The closing of the doors and the distribution of red money must have been a local custom.

The next holiday Chao mentions is on the first day of the eighth moon, "Festival of the Greater Patriarchs or Prophets." There is no clear parallel in the Jewish calendar to this holiday unless it is New Year's Day, occurring on the first day of the seventh month, before Simchat Torah. The next two holidays are equally obscure—the second day of the ninth moon or the Festival of the Minor Patriarchs or Prophets, and the first day of the sixth moon which he calls, "The Festival of Deliverance from the Sword."

Chao's letter did not refer to other major Jewish holidays, some of which were known from other sources to be observed in China. Chao's list did not include Rosh Hashana (New Year's Day), he may

have called it the Festival of the Greater Patriarchs or Prophets. Nor did Chao refer to Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), Pentecost, Tabernacles, or Purim.

Chao listed the holy figures of the Jewish religion—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the Twelve Patriarchs, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Ezra. He went on to say,

> "The Greater Scripture (Ta Ching) forms a scroll upward of twenty feet long. The lesser Scriptures are in single volumes (by the latter he meant weekly portions). In the synagogue are worn a blue cap and shoes with soft soles. Our religion came to China from Tien-chu, introduced by persons who brought tribute of cotton and cotton cloths. We have now in the synagogue a map of the temple in Tien-chu: at the end of its nine gates are planted colored standards; in the center is a white jade stone, and in front are cotton trees. There is also a stream encircling the walls, near which are two larger trees whose branches overhang the water. Daily and noon and midnight men climb the trees and cross the stream, in this way entering the temple for worship.
>
> "This picture is preserved in our synagogue with great care; we should have wished to present our books and picture to the English, but we are unable to do this because of our poverty. Should we be supplied with money, we would ourselves visit you, carrying with us these documents, and we should thus manifest our desire to recover the lost traces of our faith."

The profound concern of Chao is reflected in his plea,

> "It is to be desired that some person be early deputed here, for if much longer delay occur, not only

> will the synagogue have fallen into ruins, but we fear that the holy books may likewise be injured by decay."

A total of twenty five years had elapsed since Finn had first penned his letter to the Jews of Kaifeng and his receipt of their reply. During these years the process of decay which Chao graphically described continued apace as we learn from other sources, including the Chinese delegates who visited in 1850.

Western Delegates

In 1850 the Jewish Society of London selected two Chinese delegates to establish contact with the Kaifeng Jewish community since foreigners were not allowed into China during its period of isolation. The elder was a bachelor; the younger was a student from the Missionaries' College at Bavaria but was named to head the enterprise because he had previously displayed zeal and ability, could write English fluently, and could journalize in English. In The Weekly Gleaner, Eckman followed their contact with the Kaifeng Jews, their report of the synagogue in ruins, and the Jewish manuscripts found.

> "The two adventurers, set out from Shanghai on the 15th of last November, by boat to Loing-Kiang-ton. In a cart, drawn by mules, they then jolted along, following the track of the Hoang-ho River, rising at three o'clock on winter mornings, to save time—a proceeding which involved almost supererogatory self-denial. Population near the Yellow River they found rare and unhealthy. Localities which figure in the geographical charts of the empire as principal places, or as towns of the second class, are but huge piles of rubbish, surrounded by crumbling walls. Here and there

a gate, with its inscription half-effaced, informs the traveller that he is entering a mighty town.

"Perseverance, and a mule cart, brought the travellers to Kai-foung-fou. They found there many Mahametans, openly exercising right of conscience, and flying their religion on a flag over their gates. These Mohametans are, for the most part hotel keepers, and with one of them our heroes lodged. Of him they began asking about Cut-Nerves (Jews observing the laws of Kashrut). Mine host of the Crescent said there were still some Jews in Kai-foung-fou and offered himself as a guide to their synagogue. Thither they went. They found its outer wall in ruins, briers and dirt filled the grand entrance, the pillars of the building, the inscribed marbles, the stone balustrade, before the peristyle of the temple, the ornamental sculpture—all were cracked, broken, and overturned. Under the wings of the synagogue, in chapels built in honor of the patriarchs, settled together, cold and naked, sleeping on the bare stones, were those objects of our European interest, the Jews of China. Poor and miserable as they are, they had begun to sell the stone of their temple for bread, and a portion of land within their sacred inclosure had been already sold to an adjacent temple of the Buddhists.

"Still, there were the cylinders inclosing the sacred rolls of the Old Testament, which luckily had not proved salable. In number these rolls were about a dozen, each thirty feet long by three feet wide. They are of white sheepskin, inscribed with very small Hebrew characters.

> "For fifty years these poor Jews had been without the guidance of a rabbi and there is not one left who can read a word of Hebrew. The travellers gave money to the mournful congregation in the synagogue, and received leave to copy the inscriptions, about which the Jesuits had previously informed us. Moreover they obtained, and have brought home eight Hebrew manuscripts, six contain portions of the Old Testament. . . . The other two manuscripts are of the Jewish liturgy. The leaves of these manuscripts are of a species of cardboard on which the words, as it were, are engraved with a point; the binding is in silk, and bear evident marks of being of foreign origin. Two Israelitish merchants to whom these books were shown at Shanghai, spoke of having seen similar ones at Aken, and the presence here and there upon the margins of Persian words, interspersed with Hebrew annotations, seemed to indicate that the books came originally from some western country of Asia, perhaps Persia, or some of the high provinces of India where Farsie has from time immemorial been the language used among people of education. Although the annotation mentioned are numerous, and apparently referring to different epochs, no trace of any Chinese character is to be discovered, nor any of those marks or signs which the age can be determined."

A famous 19th century American Jewish traveller I. J. Benjamin visited China after an extensive journey along the West Coast. He did not visit Kae Fung Foo, but he heard of that community from the Jews of Canton. According to their accounts, there were about 10,000 Jews in Kai-foung-foo. That account seems wildly exaggerated since other contemporary accounts place the number at about 200.

In 1863 Eckman presented an account of the condition of Chinese Jews in the form of a letter written by M. Simon, a gentleman sent out to China on a scientific expedition by the French government. Simon wrote,

> "The Israelites in China are much more numerous than you fancy; they are spread through many provinces, and especially in those of the north. I had in my service, during my stay in the north last year, an Israelite with whom I was well satisfied, and who, I would have taken with me had he been willing to follow me, but he did not want to leave his family. He was rather well informed in Chinese literature, but he appeared to me to possess only defective notions of his religion. He was acquainted with several incidents but this was more in a legendary form.
>
> "There are from 250 to 300 at Tien Thien. There is in that city a small oratory and a rabbi. There prayers are written and recited in Chinese. I saw this rabbi, who assured me that at Kae Fung Foo there were several Israelites who had preserved a knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. They have also a certain number of Hebrew manuscripts. The writer goes on to say that they are timid and often seek to be confounded with Mohammedans, who are more numerous and feared. They were also persecuted formerly and this is a reason why they now keep themselves secret."

China did not open up to Americans until the middle of the 1860's. The first one to visit Kaifeng since the days of Gozani and Gaubil was an American Protestant missionary, W. A. P. Martin. From his book The Chinese, we learn he undertook the long and arduous trip from Peking to Kaifeng, arriving on February 17, 1866. He inquired from the innkeeper about the local synagogue but could get no information

from him. He then inquired about local Mahmamedan mosques and was told that there were six in Kaifeng. He proceeded to one of them and engaged in conversation with the mufti. From the mufti Martin learned that the synagogue was completely demolished and that the Jews were impoverished and scattered about. Martin then said, "I will go and see the spot on which it stood," and proceeded through the streets crowded with curious spectators to an open square in the center of which stood a solitary stone—the synagogue stele dated 1489/1512. This was all that remained standing since the synagogue was last described by the Chinese delegates in 1851. Martin rested his right hand on the top of the stele and turned to the curious crowd that had gathered around him.

"Are there any among you of the family of Israel?" Martin inquired. "I am one," responded a young man. Then another one stepped forward, then another one, until representatives of six of the seven Jewish families of Kaifeng had identified themselves. They confessed with shame and grief that their holy and beautiful synagogue had been demolished by their own hands. They said that it had been in a ruinous condition for a long time. They had no money to make repairs; they had lost all knowledge of Hebrew, their sacred tongue; the traditions of the fathers were no longer being handed down; their ritual worship had ceased to be observed. Under the pressure of their own poverty and the sad state of their religious affairs, they had yielded to the pressure of necessity, and disposed of the timber and stones of that venerable edifice to obtain relief for their bodily wants.

Martin told him that he knew Hebrew, so they brought him a Torah scroll that evening to read. He was accustomed to reading Hebrew from a printed text with the vowel symbols indicated, so he was not able to decipher the text. In The Chinese, Martin described this visit and the disintegration of the Jewish community:

> "Two of them appeared in official costume, one wearing a gilt and the other a crystal button; but, far

form sustaining the character of this people for thrift and worldly prosperity, they number among them none of the rich, and but few who are honorable. Some, indeed, true to their hereditary instincts, are employed in a small way in banking establishments (the first man I met was a money changer), others keep fruit stores and cake shops, drive a business in old clothes, or pursue various handicrafts, while a few find employment in military service. The prevalence of rebellion in the central provinces for the last thirteen years has told sadly on the prosperity of Kaifeng, and the Jews have, not unlikely owing to the nature of their occupations, been the greatest sufferers.

"Their number, they estimated, though not very exactly, at from three to four hundred. They were unable to trace their tribal pedigree, keep no register, and never on any occasion assemble together as one congregation. Until recently they had a common center in their synagogue, though their liturgical service had long been discontinued. But the congregation seems to be following the fate of its building. No bond of union remains, and they are in danger of being speedily absorbed by Mohammedanism or heathenism. One of them has recently become a priest of Buddha, taking for his title Pen Tau which signifies, 'One who is rooted in the knowledge of the Truth.' The large tablet that once adorned the entrance of the synagogue, bearing in gilded characters the name Israel, has been appropriated by one of the Mohammedan mosques, and some efforts have been made to draw over the people, who differ from their Moslems so little that their heathen neighbors have never been able to distinguish them by any circumstances than that of their picking

> the sinews out of the flesh they eat—a custom commemorative of Jacob's conflict with the angel."

Martin was deeply affected and saddened by the recital of their total decline from what was once a vital and throbbing Jewish community. He made a very poetic and touching observation on their present condition.

> "Near the margin of the Poyang Lake there stands a lofty rock, so peculiar and solitary that it is known by the name of the 'little orphan.' The adjacent shore is low and level, and its kindred rocks are all on the opposite side of the lake, whence it seems to have been torn away by some violent convulsion and planted immovably in the bosom of the waters. Such to me appeared that fragment of the Israelitish nation. A rock rent from the sides of Zion by some great national catastrophe and projected into the central plain of China, it has stood there, while the creatures rolled by, sublime in its antiquity and solitude. It is now on the verge of being swallowed up by the flood of paganism, and the spectacle is a mournful one. The Jews themselves are deeply conscious of their sad situation, and the shadow of an inevitable destiny seems to be resting upon them."

Martin summed up their sense of desperation by recording that the Kaifeng Jews seriously considered exposing their parchments in the market place, in hopes that they might attract the attention of some wandering Jew who would be able to restore to them the language of their fathers. Whether this was actually attempted is not recorded. Circumcision was no longer practiced, and intermarriage was widespread. They remembered a few festivals but did not observe any. Martin came to the lugubrious conclusions that the next half century would likely see the end of their existence as a distinct people.

In London, Rabbi Nathan Marcus Adler, the chief rabbi of the British Empire, wrote to the Sasson banking family in Shanghai, soliciting information from them and encouraging them to send a rabbi or a teacher to Kaifeng. They responded that little could be done unless the rabbi could speak Chinese fluently and was prepared to spend a considerable amount of time in the community, both of which being unlikely.

In the United States, several rabbis took up with vigor the cause of Kaifeng Jewry. In April of 1852, Rabbi Isaac Leeser, the editor of the Occident, an important early American Jewish journal, pleaded for financial support to help restore the community. He was particularly concerned about the possible inroads that could be made by Christian missionaries who continued their work in China. He wrote, "We appeal again to our leading men and our minsters, and indeed to all who may see these few lines, to endeavor to do something to wipe away the disgrace which would forever attach to our name should we, one and all, leave our castoff brothers to the cruel mercy of those who endeavor to ensnare them."

Leeser did receive a surprising response to his article from Samuel Hyman Cohen who lived in Auburn, California, about a hundred miles away from San Francisco. Cohen had lived four years in Shanghai where he met a Jew from Kaifeng. He was told that there were about 2,000 Jews in his district and that they understood Hebrew. (These statements are at variance with all the other reports.) Cohen made several efforts to obtain permission to visit Kaifeng but was turned down. He himself admitted that if a Westerner should attempt the trip to Kaifeng, he would do well to disguise himself as a Chinese, so great was the antagonism to foreigners. Cohen painted a dire picture about the great effectiveness of the Jesuit missionaries, and Leeser responded by redoubling his call for help in overcoming this danger.

Eckman reports on the limited response to Rabbi Leeser's call. The Jews in New Orleans were the first to provide help. With the

financial backing of the great philanthropist Judah Touro, Rabbi James Gutheim organized the first Hebrew Foreign Mission of New Orleans, the purpose of which was to support Jews in other lands. Kaifeng was the first on their list. Funds were collected from Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Richmond. They sent L100 to Rabbi Adler for the purpose of educating Chinese young men.

Eckman in China?

One of the most fascinating areas of conjecture regarding Eckman is the question whether he himself actually travelled to China. That he had a great fascination with Chinese Jewry is beyond question. He frequently wrote and spoke on this subject, reporting what travellers found out about the Chinese Jewish community.

There was one period in his life when such a trip would have been possible, when he did not have a congregation. In 1865 Eckman responded to a call to serve as the first rabbi of a congregation in Portland, Oregon, a position he held for 17 months. About two years later, in 1869, he returned to Portland to serve another congregation. During the two-year interim, on March 27, 1868, there appeared in The Hebrew Observer a personal, unsigned account of an adventurer's trip to China in search of information concerning the Kai Fung Foo Jewish community. Unlike every other article which Eckman published on Chinese Jewry, this one made no reference to any other source, nor did it quote any other traveller. The tone of the article could easily be interpreted as a personal trip by Eckman himself to China.

Given Eckman's demonstrated inclination to expound on issues and events which he personally experienced and about which he felt strongly, had Eckman taken such a momentous trip to China, one would expect many more such personal articles to appear in The Weekly Gleaner rather than just the one in the 1868 issue. In addition, the article also refers to a trading activity in China, a way of life not in keeping with the character of Eckman. The article also suggests a

rather lengthy stay in China which may not coincide with the two years that Eckman had available for such a trip.

These arguments underlie the extent of the mystery surrounding Eckman's possible trip to China. The reader himself may judge from the following article whether it is the product of Eckman's pen or the work of an unnamed correspondent. In any event, it is difficult to imagine a greater interest in the fate of Chinese Jewry than Eckman had already displayed through his article in the Hebrew Observer:

> "At Nankin I made inquiries about the Jews, and I was told that there had been some there, but it was not known what had become of them. I then visited places on the banks of the Yangtsee and other rivers, but I was not able to penetrate into the interior of the country; because it was then in possession of the rebels.
>
> "I took up my residence in the city of Hankoh, where I traded, and also continued my study of the Chinese language. When a little quiet was restored I assumed the Chinese costume, and wandering from city to city, village to village, and in the year 5624 on the 24th day of Tamuz I arrived in the city of Kai Fong Foo, in the province of Chuhuan, six hours journey from the river Chuan Cova. There I found children of Israel of the Ten Tribes—vis. of the tribe of Asher. They are called here 'Tyan tabin Bob' which means 'the law according to such people take out the veins from the flesh.'
>
> "There are also there many Mohammedans and Christians. While travelling through the province and making inquiries about the Jews, I was dressed like a Chinese, and I even wore on my head the long hair tress like the natives. But on arriving at Kai Fong Foo I

assumed the European costume, and this because the rebels had overrun the whole country. I therefore was afraid the native costume might imperil my life; and although I was in possession of an English passport—having become an English subject—I yet would not depend on this for protection in time of war, and therefore dressed again in European fashion. But this change of garb was attended with a great drawback, insomuch that it prevented me from obtaining fully the desired information concerning my co-religionists, or forming any intimacy with the natives, as was my wont . . .

"The Israelites further related to me that they had had a fine synagogue, which existed over 400 years; that there was a place therein where they burnt incense, and another place which they called Bethel, which no layman was allowed to enter, but only the priests on Sabbaths and festivals; that the first day of every month was kept as a festival, and on these days they made offerings and burned incense; that the synagogue had been in ruins for the last twenty years, and as it was not repaired, it gradually crumbled away. They did not repair it because in the first place most of them were very poor; and secondly, because the synagogue was useless to them, since they had entirely forgotten the Law and every commandment.

"They further told me that after the death of the last among them who knew anything of the law, they, by the consent of all, placed the scrolls of the Law in the public streets, with a statement in Chinese by their side promising to any passerby that could read the scrolls that they would reward him handsomely and appoint him their religious chief. This they did for

> many days. The same they did in other places, but without success, and seeing all their endeavors to become acquainted with the contents of the scrolls were useless, they became discouraged and therefore did not repair the synagogue. . .
>
> "I visited the site of the synagogue, but all I noticed were four large stones and two pillars, which had formed the chief entrance; the threshold, however, could not be seen, being covered over with filth. On the lintel there were engraved certain Chinese words meaning, 'Holy synagogue of the religionists who take out the veins of the flesh.' This was the outer door of the court.
>
> "On the site formerly occupied by the synagogue, there is now a kind of pond, about two feet deep, and in the middle stands a large stone rising about 5 feet above the level of the water, which seems to be exceedingly ancient. On it are engraved, on both sides, from top to bottom, Chinese characters; but I could not prevail upon anyone to go into the water in order to read the inscription for me. There were also in the water many other large stones, which do not rise above the surface."

In view of the number of discrepancies in this account, such as the British passport, with facts known about Eckman's life, it seems quite unlikely that Rabbi Eckman was the author of this unsigned piece. Rabbi Eckman did, however, maintain an awareness of the Kaifeng community for Americans, an awareness that was to bear fruit more than a century after his death.

In the course of the twentieth century, the condition of the Jews in Kaifeng continued to decline. Hardly a trace of them was left in China that underwent a Communist revolution and a subsequent cultural

revolution that repressed every expression of religion. The surviving stelae of the synagogue were barely saved by Bishop White from the ravaging hands of the youthful Red Guards of the Community party.

That storm abated in 1976, and China began slowly and carefully to open its doors and windows to the Western world. The historic visit of President Nixon to China in 1976 provided opportunity for Americans to visit China for tourist as well as business reasons. America forged diplomatic ties with China, and the growing interest in China surpassed all expectations. Chinese studies burgeoned at American universities, sister cities and sister universities sprang up everywhere in both countries.

Many Jews began to recall the accounts of Jewish life in China that Rabbi Eckman has preserved a hundred years earlier. Visitors came to Kaifeng and discovered to their amazement that to this day, about 150 residents still identify themselves as officially Jewish. One of their number, Qu Yi Nan, came to the United States to study Judaism in order to write on it authoritatively in Chinese.

Even if Rabbi Eckman did not set foot in China, he kindled a light of interest in Kaifeng Jewry that has never been extinguished.

CHAPTER 5

RABBI ECKMAN AS JOURNALIST

The Weekly Gleaner and The Observer

Of Rabbi Eckman's contributions to American Jewish life, perhaps the one for which he will be remembered the most is in his journalistic legacy. From 1857 to 1862, Rabbi Eckman published six volumes of his weekly newspaper The Weekly Gleaner as a means of disseminating news and information about current events and past history, such as his articles on the Jews of China. The constant financial burden of meeting his bills, maintaining and collecting subscriptions, and taking care of his very modest level of existence finally proved to be too much for him, and his pleas for support and assistance were of no avail. After The Weekly Gleaner ceased publication in 1862, he devoted himself entirely to his Hepzibah school. He then accepted a pulpit in Portland, Oregon, before returning again to San Francisco to become editor of another newspaper.

From 1865 to 1869, Rabbi Eckman held the position of Editor of the Theological and Religious Department of The Hebrew Observer, a San Francisco Anglo-Jewish newspaper published by William Salburg. He continued write editorials and articles that he felt would contribute to the intellectual and spiritual development of the Jewish community for which he wrote.

Through The Weekly Gleaner and The Hebrew Observer, Rabbi Eckman had a substantial audience to whom he could express his thoughts on various developments in Jewish life, including the Reform movement in Judaism, Jewish rituals, fund raising for needy Jews, prayers in the public schools, women and men's roles in Judaism, and

slavery. Especially noteworthy were Rabbi Eckman's contributions to raising his readers' consciousness of two cases of bigotry: one in Italy—the Mortara abduction—and the other in the U. S.—General Order No. 11.

The Mortara Abduction

Few events stirred the 19th century Jewish world as profoundly as the Mortara abduction. The facts of the case were starkly simple. In 1858, in Bologna, Italy, lived a Jewish family by the name of Mortara. The family consisted of the parents and a six-year-old son, Edgar. Edgar had become ill, which has the cause of grave concern not only to the parents but also to a household maid who hovered over the sick child. A pious Catholic, she became convinced that Edgar would die unbaptized, which, in her eyes, was a mortal sin. She therefore secretly baptized the boy without informing the parents. Word gradually spread to the authorities that a baptized Catholic child was being raised by his Jewish parents without a Christian upbringing.

Police were promptly dispatched to the Mortara home to wrest the child from his unsuspecting parents, to deliver him to a Catholic children's home to be raised in the church. The parents could do nothing to prevent the abduction. Their screams fell on deaf ears, their blows deflected by the powerful, practiced arms of the police.

Rabbi Eckman, deeply moved by the tragedy, reported details of the Mortara abduction in The Weekly Gleaner, including this description of the abduction:

> Little Edgar, who is six years and ten months old, was taken forcibly from his parents by some of the Pope's gendarmes. They lifted him up from the ground and carried him in their arms out of the house, down the steps, and put him into a carriage, without heeding

the distress of the child's parents or the astonishment of the bystanders.

All the way from Bologna to Rome he did nothing but cry, and beg them to take him back to his papa and mama. The brigadier who was with him, tried to put a chaplet and cross around his neck, but the boy opposed it with all his little strength, refused to kiss it, and begged them to give him instead a mezuza . . .

In one of the visits which M. Mortara, the father, was permitted to make to his son, he told him he expected to obtain the Pope's permission to take him back to Bologna, and the poor child, overjoyed at hearing this, said he hoped it would not be long before, and that he should not mind sleeping in the carriage for the three days it would take to get home again.

The father, who was a dealer in gold lace and brocades, and who had no other means of supporting his family, was of course compelled to leave Rome and return to Bologna, where his business required his presence. He told his son and the rector of his intention and of his speedy return. At his departure, the rector, in violation of his promise, refused to admit any Jew whatever into the College, and it was precisely at that time that the journals devoted to ultra Catholicism proclaimed the length and breadth of Europe how the child was filled with the fervor of the call to such a degree as to wish to devote himself to the conversion of the Jews. Zeal like this age the age of six years and a half is edifying indeed!

In the meantime the afflicted father, having arranged his affairs in Bologna, started once more for

Rome, and his poor wife, whose distress of mind since the child's abduction had been intense, decided on accompanying her husband. But when they had reached Rome, they were told that their son had been removed to Alatri—a place rather more than fifty miles off—and there they resolved to go, though the mother was exhausted with anxiety and fatigue.

As soon as they arrived at Alatri they obtained the services of a woman to guide them to the house of the rector. This worthy was absent at mass with their son. The father left his wife at the rector's and went to meet the rector on his return with the boy. The rector was accompanied by a brother of his, and when the father approached the gate of the church, this churchman slammed the door in his face. The father then went and stationed himself in the street waiting for their coming out of the church; and, in fact, after some little time, the rector, his brother, and young Mortara did come out. Instead, however, of advancing to meet him, they turned off by the opposite street, dragging the child along who, from time to time, turned around to look at his father and struggled to get away that he might come to him.

Protests and Resolutions Against the Abduction

The abduction aroused a storm of protests throughout the world, especially in the United States. American Jews treasured their religious freedom, particularly since most of them had fled from a Europe that had crushed and oppressed their own religious expressions. Like Rabbi Eckman, their own experience of anti-Semitic outrages emboldened them to take vigorous action upon hearing about the

abduction and to speak out forthrightly against this new manifestation of anti-Semitism in Europe.

Protest meetings were called in every major city and messages were sent to Washington calling for government intervention in this case. Christian clergymen of many denominations, including representatives of the Catholic church, expressed their sense of outrage at the abduction.

In San Francisco a meeting was called at the Music Hall on January 15, 1859, in response to the Mortara abduction. At an early hour the extensive hall was filled to capacity and hundreds more sought admittance in vain. It was the largest assemblage of Jews in the history of San Francisco. The call for the meeting was published in the San Francisco daily newspapers, including this notice from The Weekly Gleaner:

> We, the undersigned, feeling deeply incensed at the injury recently perpetrated upon Mr. Mortara of Bologna, Italy, in the abduction of his son, and recognizing the peril which attaches to the social and religious condition of all those antagonistic to the Catholic faith involved in such a precedent, make this call upon the Israelites of San Francisco, and others of our fellow citizens whose sentiments and sympathies are kindled to our own to unite with us in Mass Meeting, on Saturday Evening, the 15th instant at 7 o'clock, for the purpose of publicly expressing their feelings upon this grievous wrong.

The meeting was called to order by Henry Seligman, president of Congregation Emanu El. The tone of the meeting was set by Hon. Solomon Heydenfeldt who was elected President of the meeting. He declared,

> The question does not appeal alone to the sect to which the child belongs. It is a direct attack upon the principles of humanity and civilization . . . Our government may not have, according to the law of nations, the material power to stretch forth its hands with sufficient potency—rescue the child and restore him to the arms of his parents—but we have another power, which is irresistible—the power of public opinion, which, if excited properly in this instance, the Mortara case will be the last of the kind that the world will ever see.

A committee was appointed to draft resolutions that would express the sense of the meeting. Rabbi Eckman was invited to address the assemblage while the resolutions were being drafted. Rabbi Eckman explained his view that Christianity was not amenable to such un-Christian laws as displayed in the Mortara abduction:

> Jesus invited but did not compel men to follow him. Jesus could never allow the sword to be wielded in the enforcement of belief, or religion . . .
>
> Nor must the last deed of the Roman Executive be instrumental in raising any ill feelings against Roman Catholics. We must not identify Catholics with Catholicism.

Rabbi Eckman directed his attack against Roman Canon Law, which he considered antiquated and inconsistent with religious and intellectual worlds. He claimed that the Roman Canon Law was not only dangerous to Jews but to all mankind.

During Rabbi Eckman's address, the committee returned to present its resolutions to the assemblage, resolutions that they were to

send to the office of the President of the United States in Washington, D. C.

> Resolved that the Israelites and other citizens of San Francisco, in mass meeting assembled, denounce this act of the papal authorities at Bologna, as being sacrificial of the dearest rights of humanity—social, political, and religious.
>
> Resolved that we regard with apprehension and regret this revival of a power whose intolerance and oppression history and experience teach as prejudicial to mankind and to a just enjoyment of their natural rights.
>
> Resolved that we appeal to the recognized intelligence, virtue, and humanity of the head of the Roman Catholic Church, to discourage the enforcement of a canon which is opposed to the enlightenment of the present century, and which must lead to consequences fraught with discord, evil, and danger.
>
> Resolved that we deeply sympathize with Mr. Mortara in his severe affliction, and we are ready to contribute every means at our command necessary to effect the restoration of his child, and to secure the household of others from a similar visitation.
>
> Resolved that we fully appreciate the spirit of liberality and tolerance manifested by a large and enlightened portion of the Christian world in the expression of their disapproval of this act of tyranny.
>
> Resolved that a copy of the proceedings of this meeting be transmitted to our Senators in Congress, with

> the request that they urge upon that body the moral power of our Federal Government, to cooperate with the several European powers in their endeavors to suppress religious intolerance and persecution, such as exhibits itself in the Mortara case.
>
> Resolved that a copy of these proceedings be transmitted to Sir Moses Montefiore, President of the London Committee of Deputies, as a response to the address made to the Israelites of America, dated October 25, 1858.
>
> Resolved that the cordial thanks of this meeting be, and are hereby, tendered to the press for its liberal and kind cooperation in the cause of civil and religious liberty.

Rabbi Eckman had been invited to speak only to fill in the time while the resolutions committee worked out the text of the resolutions. As soon as the committee returned to the hall, they expected him to conclude his remarks, even though he was in the middle of his presentation. Rabbi Eckman's pique at the interruption was revealed by his publishing a lengthy letter addressed to him, pointing out the audience's disappointment that he was not allowed to finish:

> My object, dear Doctor, in writing is to express to you my disappointment (which was felt by hundreds) at your remarks being cut short just when your hearers began to comprehend the true state of the Mortara case. The gentlemen that addressed the meeting committed one great error. They supposed that the people fully understood the true position of the case. Not one out of ten knew the particulars, and scarcely any the position of the canon law has placed the Catholic Church in. No one but yourself touched upon the subject. It is a

> matter of regret that you did not speak later in the evening, as then the business portion of the meeting would not have been checked by a long and interesting speech at the opening.
>
> Many of the audience were surprised at the remarks made by Dr. Henry, as to your preliminary and striking illustration about the Custom House. It was, to say the least, bad taste in the reverend gentleman to attempt reflecting on one of the 'same cloth' at a public meeting, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, and it argues but little for his judgment and the 'charity' of his order, if the Rev. Doctor may be taken as a specimen.

The Department of State

Following receipt of the San Francisco resolutions and those from other communities, President James Buchanan turned them over to the Department of State, which met them with a cool, reserved response. The Department of State decided that the Mortara case was an internal matter of a foreign government, for no American citizens were involved. While the Department of State deplored the tragedy, it did not feel that it could intervene. This response outraged leaders of the American Jewish community who argued that attempts at persuasion, recommendations, or expressions of sympathy should not be considered contrary to established American practices.

Lewis Cass, the Secretary of State, responded to these criticisms by restating the position of the government. The Weekly Gleaner reported Cass' argument:

> There are cruelties and outrages of such a revolting nature, that it is natural, laudable indeed, that when they occur they should meet with general

> condemnation. But this duty to 'outraged humanity' should be left to the action of individuals, and the expression of public opinion, for it is manifest that if one government assumes the power to judge and censure the proceedings of another, or the laws it recognizes in cases which do not affect their own interests, or the rights of their citizens, the intercourse of nations will soon become a system of crimination and recrimination, hostile to friendly communication. For, the principle of interference being once admitted, its application may be indefinitely extended, depending for its exercise on the opinion which each country may form of the civil policy of another, and of the practical operation. There is no people who would rebuke with more asperity, such intermeddling with their affairs, than would the people of the United States, and it becomes us to maintain the same reserve toward other countries which we expect them to observe toward us. Human governments are necessarily imperfect, and neither the United States nor any other nation can claim exception from the common attribute.

The storm of public reaction in the United States reached such a pitch that President Buchanan had to reply directly to defend the government's policy of non-intervention.

> It is perhaps fortunate that the assertion of the principle of non-intervention on the part of the United States between foreign sovereigns and their own subject has arisen in a case so well calculated to enlist our sympathies as that of the Mortara family. For this reason the precedent will be so much the stronger and be entitled to the more binding force.

> It is enough for us to defend the rights of our own citizens under treaties of the law of nations whenever and wherever these may be assailed by the government of any foreign country. Had Mamola Mortara been a citizen of the United States, the case would have been very different. The Israelitish citizens of the United States have had occasion to know that I have not been regardless of their just rights in foreign countries, and they may rest assured that they shall receive the same protection when domiciled abroad during my administration, which is extended to all other citizens of our common country. They would ask no more and shall receive nothing less.

The Mortara case strengthened the hands of those who advocated the utmost measure of separation of Church and State. The pages of The Weekly Gleaner carried this fervent plea:

> The Mortara abduction case, which is exciting the whole Christian world right now, is but another illustration of the inevitable consequences resulting from a union of Church and State.
>
> Civil despotism and ecclesiastical corruption always follow such a union, whether in papal or Protestant countries. Catholic Italy and Spain and France, and Protestant England and America have in their turn furnished illustrations. Heretics were burnt in Madrid, butchered in Paris, and imprisoned and tortured in a thousand ways in Italy. Catholic estates have been confiscated in England; Quaker's hats have been nailed to their heads in New England; Baptists have been fined and imprisoned in colonial Virginia, and even now Catholic Irishmen are plundered to enrich English prelates.

> The tyranny and corruption of church establishments are usually in the exact ratio of the extent to which they can use secular power to enforce obedience to their dogmas and decrees. The State religion is almost a universally corrupt religion.

The French Response

Efforts of Jewish communities of other lands—communities that also addressed petitions to their governments to intervene—were reported in The Weekly Gleaner.

> One petition was sent to Napoleon III from the Central Consistory of the Israelites of France. Napoleon III was not only a reigning Catholic monarch, but his troops were actually stationed near Rome to protect it from the advancing revolutionary troops under Garibaldi. Thus, the Papal State was under a special obligation to France. This tender point was pressed by the Jewish community which said to Napoleon,
>
> "You cannot be indifferent that, at the gates of Rome, while our troops display there their immortal eagles, men shall tread under foot the most sacred rights of the family and conscience, and that an act which seems impossible in the midst of the nineteenth century should be perpetuated in an irreparable manner."
>
> It was all in vain. The Church would not return the young Mortara to his family.

The Catholic Perspective

In fairness to his reading public, Rabbi Eckman reprinted the official Catholic versions of the event as they appeared in various organs. A completely different description emerges on those pages. The age of the child is almost doubled; Edgar now appears as an eleven year old. Rather than being distraught at the separation from his parents, Edgar is portrayed as immediately happy in his new situation, and his father is depicted as easily reconciled to his son's new life. According to an article in the Catholic periodical New York Tablet:

> The father was received by his Holiness Pious IX, and has consented to the arrangements proposed; that the boy who is now eleven years of age should be educated in a Pontifical College under the special protection, and at the expense, of His Holiness and is to be allowed to see his parents whenever they desire. What will be the next pretext for an outpouring of pretended liberalism and anti-Catholic gall!

Another Catholic journal, the Armenia, made an even more farfetched explanation of the event:

> It was with great joy that this child entered the Institution of the Catechumens. When he arrived he perceived above the gate a statue of Our Lady of Tears.
>
> 'Why does she cry?' he asked. 'She is weeping,' they answered him, 'because the Jews do not become converted and are not willing to acknowledge her divine Son.'

'Then,' replied the child, 'she is weeping over my father and mother.'

When they announced to him his father's visit he was delighted at it, for the Catholic religion, very far from extinguishing filial love, strengthens it by sanctifying it. Besides, he imagined he should be able to convert his father and render him a Christian like himself. This was his hope and he showed it artlessly. But when he saw his father and found him deaf to all his prayers, he began to weep bitterly.

His father begged him to go back with him to Bologna, saying to him, 'Why don't you come with me? Have you forgotten God's commandment, Honor thy father and thy mother?'

The child remained pensive for a moment and then replied, 'The Pope knows the commandments better than you or I. I shall do what the Pope says.'

He knows the catechism admirably, and makes the profession of faith in the most complete and exact manner. He insists on this point that the Jews have neither an altar, a Holy Virgin, nor a Pope. He say she should like to convert them and by his tone you perceive that it is grace which is speaking to him.

And they want a child of such quick faith to be delivered up to the Jews! That would be a cruelty without a name, and the most open violation of that principle of liberty of conscience which the Liberals have ever in their mouths.

A rare Catholic voice was raised in strong opposition to the abduction of the Mortara child. The Abbe Delacourte, a distinguished French Catholic dignitary, disassociated himself from the abduction. Delacourte addressed his opinions in a letter to the public press:

> Though some canonists and theologians have alleged that children who had been baptized unknown to their parents or in spite of them can be taken from them, what conclusions can be drawn from it. Must the clergy be rendered responsible for all the opinions more or less eccentric advanced by the casuists and canonists of the middle ages. It is false that such a custom as is pretended has been observed in Catholic countries for all time and particularly in ours; and it is incredible that any one now should dare to say that it requires singular ignorance of the principles of religion to suppose that Christians would be astonished at it.
>
> According to Benedict XIV, who in a bull on this subject, says that 'Children who have not the use of their free will (that is to say, who are in the state of dependence) and who cannot take care of themselves, are, according to natural law, under the law and guardianship of their parents.'
>
> But on such a question it is useless to waste words. If an outrage be approved or tolerated, it will be dangerous for any but Catholic families to visit Rome. Their children may be 'baptized' as they pass through the streets by the first comer, and be torn from their parents on the same pretext as is alleged in the case of the Mortara family.

A Postscript

The Mortara storm blew over, yet in a sense, it never really lost all of its fury. The immediate battle was lost. None of the outcries of Rabbi Eckman and his contemporaries could save the child from his captors and return him to his parents. But the impact of that event remained. Many years later, in 1872, Rabbi Eckman published the last postscript of that affair in the form of an anonymous letter:

> Sir—among the ecclesiastical personages made conspicuous by their absence this year from the Feasts and Fasts of the Church in Rome is 'the young Mortara' who formerly divided with the Pope the attention of foreign visitors on the occasion of a grand procession at St. Peters.
>
> Perhaps it is not generally known that he was sent out of Italy soon after the occupation of Rome by the Italian troops, and, after remaining a short time in Belgium, left Europe for Australia, via the United States. He is now a man and a priest, and obedient to the long course of training which he has received at the hands of Jesuit teachers, he voluntarily refuses all communication with his Jewish parents.
>
> Immediately on the establishment of Victor Emanuel as ruler of Rome, the father of the young Mortara hastened hither, and endeavored to obtain an interview with his son, but his request was denied, the youth himself sending him word that henceforth he acknowledged neither father nor mother, nor any earthly tie. Still, the old man lingered, and watched in hopes to see his child, and at last he met him in the street in a procession of young priests, and spoke to him.

The son vouchsafed to return his greeting, and they parted, probably never to meet again.

In Bologna, where the Mortara family were living, the distracted father could not obtain any rights as a citizen, when he protested before the authorities against the forcible entry of his house by the police, and demanded assistance to enable him to keep his child.

Nor did his troubles cease with that cruel crime. The church seems to have cherished a spite against him because of his very sorrows (as men often hate those whom they have injured), and still more, perhaps, because these have secured for him to constant sympathy of the whole civilized world. During the last winter he was arrested and tried in Florence, on the charge of having murdered his servant girl, by throwing her out of an upper story window, the burden of the testimony resting upon two priests living in the same house, who swore they saw him do the deed. But the reputation of Mortara as a peaceful and merciful man, together with the fact of his severe illness at the time of the girl's suicide, convinced his judges of his innocence. He was defended free of cost by Marcini, one of the first advocates of Florence and honorably acquitted, to the discomfiture of his ecclesiastical enemies and the joy of thousands of his fellow citizens.

On the other hand, the church appeared anxious to smooth over the particulars of the story, and to excuse the doing of evil that good might come. Only a few months ago a Catholic writer in an American journal, answered an allusion to young Mortara by the assertion that the father had visited his son repeatedly in

> Rome, and that the son (so the writer believed) had visited his father in Bologna. There is not a word of truth in this story. Edgar Mortara has never visited his family, nor, with the exception of that recent momentary interview in the street, has the father seen his son in Rome since he, with the mother, followed him here on his abduction, and was warned by pitying strangers, to leave the city.
>
> There is no doubt that this strange occurrence has done much to break down the barriers of prejudice between Christians and Jews, and to bring about the gradual installation of the latter people in their just rights as human beings and as citizens. The parents of Edger Mortara must, we fear, find their only consolation in this remote compensation for their affliction. For their private wrong there is no recompense, and can be none.

Rabbi Eckman chronicled the Mortara case in the utmost detail from the beginning to the end. He helped to crystalize public opinion in this matter, and though the immediate battle was lost, ultimately the world wide reaction was to prove a decisive factor in advancing the cause of religious freedom.

General Order No. 11

Another public issue into which Rabbi Eckman entered with the utmost vigor was the infamous General Order No. 11 of General U.S.S. Grant. European anti-Semitism of the type displayed by the Mortara case was an all too familiar story to the Eckmans of America who had sought a home in the New World precisely to escape such evils. As painful as it must have been for Rabbi Eckman, so devoted to children and their needs, it did not surprise him that such things could occur in Catholic Italy. But the clear evidence of anti-Semitism in a

highly placed American military figure, a man who would later become the President of the United States, that was indeed a shock.

When General Grant ran for the office of President, a charge was levelled against him that he had evinced violent anti-Semitism in his infamous General Order, No. 11, which reads;

> Headquarters 13 Army Corps
> Dept. of the Tennessee, Oxford, Miss.
> December 17, 1862
> General Order, No. 11
>
> The Jews as a class, violating every regulation of trade established by the Treasure Department, also department orders, are hereby expelled from the department within twenty four hours from the receipt of this order by post commanders.
>
> They will see that this class of people are furnished with passes and required to leave; and any one returning after such notification will be arrested and held in confinement until an opportunity occurs of sending them out as prisoners, unless furnished with permits from these headquarters.
>
> No passes will be given these people to visit headquarters for the purpose of making personal application for trade permits. By Order of Major General Grant.

The American Jewish community was outraged by this blatantly hostile order. Jews did not hesitate in transmitting their anger to their elected representatives in Congress.

Representative Pendleton of Ohio introduced a strongly denunciatory resolution which concluded in this manner:

> Whereas, The said Order in its sweeping condemnation of a whole class of citizens, without discriminating between the guilty and the innocent, is illegal and unjust, and in in its execution is tyrannical and cruel; therefore
>
> Resolved, That the said order deserves the earnest condemnation of this House and of the President as Commander-in-Chief.

Despite the great popularity of Grant as a victorious general, the resolution was passed by the narrowest of margins, 56 to 53.

The problem had arisen when General Grant began to prepare for the attack on Vicksburg in 1862. His policy was to apply every possible pressure against the enemy—not only militarily but also economically. To achieve this purpose, he undertook to put a halt to all commercial trade with the Confederacy. The temptations of enormous profits proved to be irresistible for the many speculators who crowded into the region for the cotton trade, in particular. Regulations by the Secretary of the Treasury to control the illegal traffic by forbidding the transportation of goods or gold across the border proved of no avail.

It was no secret that some of these speculators were Jewish, but by no means all of them or even a majority of them.

Apparently, the reports that reached General Grant exaggerated the role of Jews in this illegal commerce and he made a special point of instructing his officers to prevent Israelites from travelling south of Jackson, Tenn. When this measure proved to be

ineffective, he issued General Order No. 11 which brought upon him not only the wrath of the American Jewish community, but also widespread criticism in the general press.

A committee of Jewish citizens, led by Mr. C. F. Haskel of Paduca, Kentucky, lodged a formal protest against this action with President Abraham Lincoln. As soon as the President became convinced of the correctness of this charge, he immediately revoked the order and expressed his indignation that it had ever been issued.

The anger against Grant did not readily subside. In The Gleaner, Rabbi Eckman highlighted an editorial from the Cincinnati Israelite which expressed the widespread Jewish feeling on this issue:

> We have this to say, as a Jew, we cannot, and will not vote for a man who has done us a more shameless injustice than any man in power, in this century, has done us in any civilized country. Therefore, we hope and expect that the entire Jewish press will come out boldly and justly against General Grant as President of the United States. Again, as a citizen who loves his country and her free institutions, who considers it his solemn duty to protect justice and freedom as much as it may be in his power, we cannot, and must not entrust the banner of justice and freedom to the hands of a man who, when possessing the brief power of a commander of a volunteer army (and among them thousands of Jews) abused it so outrageously, and trampled upon his fellow citizens because they were too weak to resist.
>
> That man, in our estimation, is unfit to be the chief of a republic whose citizens claim equal justice and equal freedom. As a man we feel an aversion to every person who disrespects the just claims of humanity and

justice, and General Grant by his Order, No. 11, 1862, is guilty of that disrespect.

As might be expected, Grant sought to remove the sting of these charges in his campaign for the presidency. It would do him little good to be labeled as a religious bigot not only in Jewish eyes but also in the view of the liberal elements of the land. He pleaded that he was unaware of the order which was issued by an adjutant over his signature as part of an overall effort to withhold support from the confederates.

This argument did little to assuage the harsh feelings against him. Rabbi Eckman reacted with considerable vehemence to Grant's explanation:

> The pleas that it (General Order No. 11) was issued under the influence of spirits, or that is was issued not by himself and with his knowledge, but, unknown to him, by one of his adjutants, they are insults to the morality and reason of the public. Is the man under such influences to be entrusted with the reins of the government, or what management can that be where an adjutant can issue with such infractious orders at all, or with impunity?
>
> Had the order affected the Presbyterians or the Roman Catholics, we would have expected the members of all other denominations, not as members of the different churches, but as citizens, to oppose the election of such a man. No doubt General Grant has some redeeming traits; he probably is a soldier; but it is not those traits, nor the soldier who solves the Gordian knot, not by reason, but by one stroke of the sword, that the country wants now.

The efforts of Rabbi Eckman and his compatriots were unavailing; General Grant was elected President of the United States. He never ceased to deny the validity of the charges of anti-Semitism leveled against him. In 1870, he appointed a Jew, Benjamin Franklin Peixotto, as the American Representative to Rumania, and pointedly made the following declaration at the time:

> The United States, knowing no difference between her citizens on account of religion or nativity, naturally believes in a civilization the world over which will secure the same universal views.

Reform Judaism

Rabbi Eckman used the pages of The Hebrew Observer to criticize the more extreme innovations of the Reform movement in Judaism. One of the events that deeply disturbed the rabbi was the Philadelphia Convention of Reform Rabbis which he harshly characterized as the Great Abolisher of Judaism. Rabbi Eckman's editorials, such as this one from The Hebrew Observer, portrayed the Reform movement as a precursor to the eventual union of Christianity and Judaism:

> The German philosophers, the Hyacinthes, the liberal Protestants, and the progressive Rabbis may yet found a religion whose influence for good will far exceed those of Moses, of the Cross and of Mahomet, combined.

Rabbi Eckman addressed the changes in religious practices that the Philadelphia Convention advocated, including the elimination of

Hebrew from the prayer book, the modification of religious services, and the name change of synagogue to temple.

Hebrew in the Prayer Books

The decision of the Philadelphia Conference that aroused Rabbi Eckman's greatest concern was the motion to eliminate Hebrew from public worship. He understood full well that the basic texts of Jewish law—the Mishna, the Gemara, and the Poskim—all taught that worshippers should use the language which they understood in the formulation of their prayers. Otherwise, the words would be nonsense symbols, utterly devoid of meaning. Yet, Rabbi Eckman maintained that it was feasible to teach a sufficient knowledge of Hebrew and that a parent's duty was to make certain that this minimum amount be taught. Furthermore, he insisted that the real strength of Judaism lay in the continual practice of religious observances rather than in the intellectual attainments of Jewish scholarship. Public worship, even when universally practiced by Jews, was insignificant as a survival value of the Jewish people unless accompanied by a whole body of rituals that pervaded every aspect of private Jewish life. Individuals may not understand the words they recite in their prayers, but their souls are moved by a spirit of inner devotion and by the sounds of the Hebrew tongue; then their prayers have truly been effective.

Translations of the Hebrew, Rabbi Eckman explained, did serve an important function. The translation of the Bible, for example, has been invaluable in disseminating the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures to the Jewish people as well as to others. Yet, when the Hebrew Bible as translated into the Greek Septuagint, Talmudic scholars were dismayed and filled with foreboding. Rabbi Eckman quoted from the tractate Soferim, a book of the Talmud:

> Seventy wise men translated the law into Greek for King Ptolemy; and the day when this was done was as unlucky a one for Israel as was that on which the golden calf was made, because it did not turn out as perfect as it ought to have done.

Even though the rabbis recognized the vast benefit to the world at large that the Septuagint brought, they lamented that the spiritual, original Hebrew should be shallowed by a cold, unspiritual translation.

Rabbi Eckman used The Hebrew Observer to educate his readers on other translations of the Bible that met with a kinder fate. The Aramaic translation was not only universally accepted but was printed alongside the Hebrew text in the standard editions. These translations were acceptable with some of the most important prayers in the Jewish liturgy that are recited in the original Aramaic tongue, including the Kaddish (the mourner's prayer), the Yekum Purkan (a prayer for scholars), and portions of the Passover Haggadah (order of service). Both marriage and divorce documents appear in the Aramaic language.

Women generally prayed in the vernacular tongue with which they were familiar, and as a result, special prayer books for women were printed in the vernacular. Rabbi Eckman believed that Kavanah—a sense of devotion, one of the major principles in the art of prayer—could not be achieved unless the words were recited in a language that the people could understand.

Even though these uses of the secular tongue were sanctioned by traditional Jewish sources, the rabbi pointed out they were contingent upon the piety and devotion that prevailed in the synagogues of the past. Within a worshipful community, the language of prayer is not the critical factor. When the sense of devotion is lost, clinging to Hebrew is not sufficient. Rabbi Eckman was fond of using Chinese Jewry as an example of this point. The Chinese Jews were obstinate in their

adherence to Hebrew, but their loss of spirit led to their decay and total cessation as believers. Rabbi Eckman put it, "Reform of supposed abuses without reformation of the human heart must prove suicidal."

Rabbi Eckman considered the relationship between oral and written traditions, using the development of the Talmud as a valuable case in point. During the time of the canonization of the Bible, between 500 and 200 B.C.E., there was great resistance to the notion of writing down the comments of the rabbis on Jewish law. Their judgments were made orally, for in the Jewish view, only the revelations of God merited the sense of finality that accompanied the act of writing. This system of an oral tradition was sufficient as long as the schools and the scholars were numerous, and there was no apprehension of the religion falling into oblivion. However, as oppression increased and the threat to Jewish survival grew, in 250 C.E., Rabbi Judah and the Prince undertook the innovation of committing the oral laws to writing and to editing the Mishnah. He and his colleagues reluctantly acted against the letter of the law in order to meet the needs of the time. They acted in the spirit of the passage in Psalms 119:126 which translated states, "There is a time when for heaven's sake we have to destroy the law."

Rabbi Eckman did not object to the fact that in modern Reform congregations, the Hebrew language was being replaced by secular tongues. That kind of change was perfectly in keeping with Jewish history. What he violently objected to was the vast diminution of Jewish spirit, of a sense of piety for which a change in the language of prayer was no cure.

Religious Services and Traditions

Rabbi Eckman saw one of the primary goals of Reform to be the modification of services so that a Gentile visitor would feel fairly comfortable. While he strongly opposed the replacement of Hebrew by English in the religious services, he did favor the use of the organ during the Sabbath services, particularly if it were played by a Jewish

organist. The Talmudic prohibition stemmed from the fear that the instrument might break during a performance, and the player might undertake to repair it during the Sabbath. Rabbi Eckman pointed out that music at this time occupied quite a different position than in the days of the Talmud. It had become a more noble occupation and produced a "sanctifying, soulful disposition." The rabbi believed that it added joy to the Sabbath which was increasingly become the only time Jews spent at religious services.

Rabbi Eckman took a stricter view of the problem of riding on the Sabbath, though he conceded the difficulty of his position. The motivation of the rabbis in relaxing the restriction on riding on the Sabbath was high minded. They were concerned about the growing number of Jews who lived too far from synagogues to walk on a Sabbath and yet who needed the spiritual nourishment of the religious services. A long walk to the synagogue for the aged and feeble, especially in inclement weather, was hardly consistent with the idea of Sabbath rest.

The practice in modern times of erecting a major, ornate sanctuary in a community meant that all the resources had to be concentrated in one place and, by the same token, prevented the emergence of many small sanctuaries in various parts of town, thus mitigating any necessity for driving. In the past, Rabbi Eckman explained, wherever several men assembled constituted a place of prayer—in the open air as in marble temples. The rabbi steadfastly refused to accede to the demands of the times for a relaxation of the laws in regard to riding on the Sabbath. His position must be regarded as somewhat unusual when it is observed that many of the high points of his career were precisely involved with the dedication of centralized, elaborate synagogues in practically every community that he served.

Another controversial item of Jewish ritual which aroused Rabbi Eckman's pen was the matter of uncovering one's head during

worship. This popular innovation of Reform Judaism aroused his wrath. He saw it primarily as a mimicking of the Gentiles who followed the edict of Paul, "Every man praying of prophesizing, singing, or preaching, having his head covered, dishonors his head, namely God." Moses, on the other hand, enjoined the priests to cover their heads with caps, considered the appropriate attire for the divine worship.

Rabbi Eckman was not so much concerned with whether the head should be covered or uncovered—the real question was whether a distinctive Jewish mode of living could be retained in the face of the vast assimilationist forces that surrounded the Jewish people. The custom itself was merely a symbol, a visual representation of a set of values and attitudes. Rabbi Eckman could not argue with this statement made in the Pacific Observer,

> We do not know that covering or uncovering the head, makes a man the more or the less acceptable to God. The broken and contrite spirit is acceptable to God in any situation, the head covered or uncovered.

But his response to that comment was to point out how significant a symbol can be:

> How little it would have mattered at the breaking out of the late civil war in the United States whether the piece of bunting hoisted on Fort Sumter was colored one way or the other; the piece of bunting was of no consequence, of no value . . . Still, as a sign, a symbol, it matters very much what flag was hoisted.

The skull cap served as the symbol of the Jews' ancient faith. It may not in any way affect the sincerity of his words, but it

demonstrates a sense of loyalty that speaks louder than any words. That was why Rabbi Eckman urged its continued use in the synagogue.

Rabbi Eckman's attention was also turned to the ritual observance of the Yahrzeit, the anniversary of the death of an immediate member of the family, a parent, a spouse, or a child. Jews generally observe it at home and at the synagogue: at home by lighting a Yahrzeit candle which burns for a full 24 hours and at the synagogue by reciting the Kaddish, the mourner's prayer expressing faith in the divine at a time when faith is sorely tried. It is also customary to visit the grave of the deceased at this time and to recite appropriate memorial prayers. Children will often travel great distances to perform this act of filial piety.

All of these traditions met with Rabbi Eckman's approval, but he expressed grave disappointment that this usual observance of the Yahrzeit stopped with the Reform, and he strongly advocated the fulfillment of an additional tradition: the distribution of charity among the poor and needy to memorialize the departed. He recalled that such days of sadness for well-to-do families were usually days of gladness among poor families. The poor knew that on the occasion of a Yahrzeit, they would be remembered with money, clothing, wood, and other necessities.

Another custom was for the poor to recite prayers and engage in religious studies to honor the departed on that day. Rabbi Eckman urged a return to these practices so that the Yahrzeit would not just be a day of devotions and prayers but a day of sustenance and aid for the poor.

Naming the House of Worship

The name change of the Jewish house of worship from synagogue to temple particularly troubled the rabbi. He related the use of the term temple to the popular fashion of the time of referring to

Jews as Israelites. Apparently the Jewish members of high society felt that the term Israelite was more acceptable to their non-Jewish neighbors than the word Jew. In actual fact, the history of Judah was far more illustrious than that of the northern kingdom of Israel. As Rabbi Eckman explained in The Hebrew Observer, the northern kingdom hardly produced figures comparable to the great prophets of the South, and the Davidic dynasty was regarded as the progenitor of the Messiah.

Rabbi Eckman found some rationale for the use of the term Israelite if it served to ease the entry of Jews into a Gentile society or to alleviate the intense expression of anti-Semitism, but he could not apply this excuse to the abandonment of the term synagogue in favor of temple. The synagogue distinguished itself throughout its history for learning, for piety, and for every virtue which adorns man. Rabbi Eckman waxed eloquent when he spoke of the glories of the synagogue:

> Even as a place of worship, the name synagogue cannot be replaced for any other appellation for houses of worship that tells of so much honor and of so few stains; so many true and honest worshippers as the synagogue had! Has the synagogue ever been disgraced by hypocrisy? Has it ever, say ever, had sham worshippers; that is, men and women who respired to it merely for show and display? Has it ever, say ever, given occasion, to any of our worst enemies to reproach it as a place resort of the sexes to encourage love intrigues, and the like, have there ever, say ever, any love intrigues been carried on, ever, say ever, any elopement taken place from a synagogue!
>
> Has ever any age or nation, any sect or religion been able to show forth an establishment of two thousand years or more where the purity of the sexes has so holily been kept up! Have our bitterest enemies ever

> attempted to whisper the least reproach against the synagogue in this respect! And what other religious establishment can boast of such an immunity! And to this day is the purity of manners carried so far by the synagogue and in the synagogue, that not only do the different sexes occupy different portions of the building; but, in truly Jewish countries, the men and women do not even walk together to the synagogue. From the house already custom has so far already prepared the worshipper, that there was never any opportunity given for polite attentions on the ladies in going and coming from the ancient, venerable, sainted, martyr-famed honest synagogue.

In defense of the word synagogue, Rabbi Eckman made a virtue out of the various criticisms leveled against it. He acknowledged that the most serious charge was that decorum was lacking there, and that it was often disorderly and noisy during the service. To this he replied vigorously, "I prefer the noisy live child to the neatly, nicely boxed, orderly lying dead child."

As Rabbi Eckman saw it, the Philadelphia Convention was eliminating features of the entire structure of traditional Judaism without offering any significant substitutions:

> What avail can be to the men who long ago turned their backs against specially Jewish observances—except one or two days in the year—at births, marriages, and deaths—men who really are in no religious communion with their people, according to the flesh, nor in sympathy with any religious body; what avail is it to tell such men in what language and how much they have to pray. And about the public reading of the Law; of what avail is it to discuss the how much

> and how little is to be read to him, who neither understands what is read to him, and if he does understand the words, looks at whole contents of that law as superannuated, and at the book as mythic.

The very survival of Judaism he ascribed to the ceremonies in which the religious truths were clothed.

Rabbi Eckman insisted that religious principles had to be expressed in symbolic language and ceremonies to reach the human heart, for rare is the individual who is capable of living by pure reason and spirit. Ideally, of course, man should be able to express himself in purely spiritual terms, but his nature is such as to require something more physical. As Eckman put it,

> Pure spiritual diet for the soul answers no better than if bakers would sell the pure spirit of bread without bulk, and butchers the spirit extract of meat without the meat. Man's bodies in their bodily food must have bulk to preserve life—so does food fo the soul, the dietetics of the soul require bulk.

Rabbi Eckman admitted that change is necessary. Just as a change of age, of health, of climate require a change of diet, so the cultural advances of mankind demand a change in the rituals of a religious faith. To modify forms and to adapt them to meet the religious consciousness of a new age is the province of legitimate reform. When the change is not a matter of adaptation but a rejection of th essential spirit of the faith, then it has lost its meaning and purpose.

Rituals in Judaism

Rabbi Eckman did not limit his journalistic activities to diatribes against the Reform movement in Jewish life. He continued to see his primary function as educator, and his regular columns in The

Hebrew Observer, in particular, were filled with background on various aspects of Judaism.

In addition to traditional discussions of Jewish ritual, Rabbi Eckman offered psychologically acceptable explanations for the rituals. He dealt at length with "Shiva" and "Shloshim," the seven and thirty day periods of mourning. He felt that they should be observed, for he believed it is psychologically unsound for an individual to go directly from the burial of a loved one to the workplace without allowing time for reflection. Eckman explained that the seven day Shiva period also provided ample opportunity for sympathy and kindness to be expressed by friends and the community at large.

Rabbi Eckman described a little known but remarkably sensitive practice that was adopted in religious communities to relieve the plight of the mourners.

> In religious communities the benevolent society sent to every house of mourning two boxes—one open, containing money, put into it for the occasion; another locked, also containing money. Every mourning family, rich and poor, have these two boxes sent to their houses, and have to empty the contents of the open box. The poor keep the mondy to relieve the family from possible want during the week, when they can earn nothing; but the rich are expected to empty the contents from the open box into the slot (like in children's saving boxes) of the locked box. The latter is not opened until it is full, or at a certain stated time, but by no means after each case of mourning.
>
> An opportunity is thus furnished to poor and needy families to relieve their wants in a most delicate way, without any possibility of exposure, for the box is not

> opened till it has passed a number of houses of mourning,so that it cannot be found out what mourning family had kept the money taken from the open box, and which emptied it into the locked box. And while the poor and needy receive, the rich generally put largely into the locked box, of their own, in addition to what they take out from the open box.

Rabbi Eckman also explained to his reading public the logic of the recitation of the Kaddish, a prayer recited by mourners during the year following the loss. Through this prayer, the mourner demonstrates that the relationship that the departed enjoyed with God and his people would be continued to the child. The Kaddish, an open declaration of membership in the Jewish people, serves to remind people of their mortality and the necessity of a religious education. The sight of a mourner reciting the Kaddish arouses the sympathies fo those neighbors seeing the recitation, which is important not only for the mourner but also for the neighbors.

Fund Raising

Before the existence of ongoing relief organizations, when a crisis arose anywhere in the Jewish world, emergency action was undertaken, and alert, sympathetic publishers like Rabbi Eckman were usually at the forefront of the effort. During his career with The Gleaner and The Hebrew Observer, Rabbi Eckman led a number of emotional and effective public appeals for funds on behalf of his suffering fellow Jews. His efforts were not limited to the public press. He helped to organize ad hoc organizations to deal more effectively with the various problems, and he spoke fervently at gatherings of co-religionists, urging their generosity.

Relief for Jews in Palestine

One of Rabbi Eckman's major concerns centered on the condition of the Jews of Palestine. There had been an increase in the number of Jews who settled in Jerusalem to fulfill the religious obligation of living in the Holy Land. Their economic plight was miserable. Most of them had expended their resources just in getting to Palestine—a ten-day journey from Vienna to Jerusalem. Once in Jerusalem, they were dependent on charity to maintain themselves and their large families. Sephardic Jews owed 100,000 silver florins on their landed property and also could not pay the lawful interest of 12 per cent. They stood ready to lose their land, the only publicly-owned Jewish land in Palestine.

Accordingly, Rabbi Eckman joined with other leading members of the Jewish community in calling for the formation of a Chovavi Zion "Friends of Zion," and he used the pages of The Weekly Gleaner to promote the cause. The society undertook to arouse the sympathies of all the Jews in California to the living conditions of Jews in Palestine and to raise funds to help them. The term Chovavi Zion was originally used by members of the European movement to encourage Jewish settlement in Palestine, but Rabbi Eckman and his compatriots in California organized their group for purely humanitarian reasons, not necessarily to stimulate emigration to Palestine. Rabbi Eckman took the position of vice-president of Chovavi Zion; the presidency was occupied by Dr. Elkan Cohn of Temple Emanu El.

This same humanitarian spirit led Rabbi Eckman to use The Gleaner and The Hebrew Observer to organize relief funds for oppressed Jews in various parts of the world. For months he collected monies for the Jews of Morocco; at another time Prussian Jews were the beneficiaries of his concern.

Jews in East Prussia

In June of 1868 the news of the famine which imperiled the lives of thousands of his co-religionists in Europe stirred him into action. In The Hebrew Observer, he published this moving appeal from East Prussia,

> Beloved brethren, We well know that you have much to do in the way of charity for which you have acquired a widespread reputation. But take it to heart that this most fearful trouble which now visits millions of your brethren in Russia and Poland has scarce its like on earth. Therefore rouse yourselves, come in succor of your perishing brethren who never asked any relief from you in a similar exigency. But now this trouble is sore, the aid slender! We know that you are able to do much for this cause; provided your hearts be softened by the cry of thousands of your brethren which ascends on high. Pray, found committees in your midst for this object, and the goodly work will succeed. The will works wonders in matters of charity; particularly among us, among whom well doing is our glory since the days of yore.

This work was a top priority on Rabbi Eckman's agenda, and he was uniquely fitted for this task. He thoroughly understood the plight of the East Prussian Jewish community from which he had stemmed and fled. And he knew the Jewish community of San Francisco as few others did. His deep sympathies and boundless energies united to bring about a widespread and generous response. The Hebrew Observer carried long lists of contributors whom he contacted personally, always in conjunction with a fellow solicitor, as was traditional in Jewish practice. He and a partner would trudge from door to door soliciting

funds for this cause. Sometimes he did not even get the name of the contributor that he listed in the newspaper:

"Crockery store near Market St. $1.50"

Rabbi Eckman himself was one of the largest individual contributors to the campaign, making a donation of $20 while most individual gifts ranged from $1-$5. Small Jewish communities all over the West conducted local campaigns and raised varying sums of money. Helena, Montana raised $283 and forwarded it to Rabbi Eckman with this note:

> Your appeal for charity in behalf of the sufferers in Europe reached us this day and we hasten to answer your call. We enclose you, herein, a draft for amount collected. Our anxiety to come to immediate relief, and hasty collections has been the cause of so limited an amount, we shall send more in a few days.

The amount raised in Los Angeles, California was much smaller, accompanied by the following explanatory letter,

> Gentlemen—your circular of the 8th inst. came to hand, and in reading it carefully, we sympathized very much with our co-religionists in Russia and Poland who are thus perishing for the want of bread. I showed the letter, or circular, to several of our brethren, and Mr. M. Morris, late of San Francisco, who is always ready to take an active part in a cause of that kind, voluntarily offered to assist me in soliciting contributions. We collected from the few Israelites living in this city, the sum of $80.50 for which you will please find enclosed a

> check. We thank you heartily for your laudable undertaking, and hope that you will meet with success.
>
> Very respectfully yours,
> A. W. Edelman

In a matter of days, well over $2,000 was realized from the campaign. Rabbi Eckman's success in influencing his fellow Jews to assume these responsibilities encouraged him to feel that he still possessed leadership qualities that should be put to the service of the Jewish community.

Prayers in the Public Schools

Rabbi Eckman used the press not only to support relief programs but also to do battle for righteous causes. A major concern was the presence of religious influences in the public schools. He utterly opposed making the public school system subservient to the religious sentiments of any sectarian body. He made his position exceedingly clear in The Weekly Gleaner:

> The Bible even has no proper place in the public school under this aspect, and no prayer, except a mere acknowledgment of a superintending Providence, and an invocation of His name in the most general terms, should be enforced, nor should the scholars be even compelled to listen to any which has in its origin in the principles of any sect or class.

Rabbi Eckman's position does not seem radical nor particularly liberal today, for the principle of separation of church and state has become a major element in American life. However, in the nineteenth century, it was not questioned whether or not a prayer could be recited; rather, the issue was which prayer would be selected. This

unquestioned practice led Rabbi Eckman to write in The Weekly Gleaner:

> The moment sectarians step in and demand, that any portion of Scripture shall be read from any particular translation, or that prayers shall be recited which belong to any particular church, they at once require a submission on the part of others to their dictation, and ask the state to give its authoritative sanction to their dogmas, however limited this may be, and they thus place the government in the unfortunate position to settle by a legislative, executive, or judicial decision as to who is right or wrong in purely religious questions.

He displayed his real love for children and his burning desire to protect them from the oppressive instinct of the state by his dramatic closing statement:

> Our children are confessedly the minority. Still, the minority has right, inalienable privileges, of which no majority can deprive them without a violation of the simplest principles of liberty and equality. And it is against such a state of things that we should protest with all our might.

Years after these words appeared in The Weekly Gleaner, Rabbi Eckman became perturbed by a controversy over the recitation of the Lord's Prayer in the public schools in San Francisco, a recitation that a school board member had identified as objectionable to the Jews.

Rabbi Eckman made a careful analysis of the contents of the Lord's Prayer, and reported on this analysis in The Hebrew Observer.

He concluded that although the prayer was recited for centuries as the typical prayer of Christianity, it was strictly a Jewish prayer, it was not intended for any Christian "Orthodox" body, and Christians should not use it. His objection to the Lord's Prayer in the schools did not stem from the words or the spirit of the prayer itself, but rather from the circumstances of use: it had become the distinctive expression of the church. While it would be religiously lawful for the Jew to recite those words, it nevertheless implies the acceptance of the teachings of the Christian faith—a contradiction to the principle of religious freedom. Rabbi Eckman made clear the conclusions that he reached:

> It would be better to remove from the schools supported by taxpayers of all creeds and no creeds, all such material as could serve as a wedge and a stepping stone from adoring the universal, unique God to the extension of that worship to the sectarian tribune God, and ultimately to the introduction of the Roman Catholic Mother of God into our schools, whose only object is to teach our children the rudiments of general knowledge, which have no connection at all with our religious tenets.
>
> So far it is plain that Jewish pupils cannot admit a mediator and the Christian pupil cannot approach God except by a mediator; let (for the sake of equal justice to all taxpayers, and of harmony among citizens) no man seek his own; but every man seek anothers. I Corinthians X:23.
>
> However, if every art in life is to be commenced with prayer, let the commencement fo the recitals of the lessons be preceded by a short pause for mental prayer; so that every pupil can worship in his own way.

Roles of Women and Men

During the nineteenth century, America saw considerable activity on the part of the Emancipation of Women Party, an early precursor of the Women's Liberation Movement. Such activity caught the attention of Californians, including Rabbi Eckman, who were concerned with the shaping of the new Western society.

Eckman's attitude toward the emancipation of women was predictably conservative both because of his European upbringing as well as his religious tendencies. He devoted many pages of The Hebrew Observer to the issue of women and men's roles in religion and in society. He viewed the position of women and men as permanently fixed by the Biblical tradition.

Eckman explained that the creation of woman as "bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh" stresses her essential equality with man. The matriarchs Sarah, Rebekah, Leah and Rachel played important and sometimes even dominant roles in the live of their families. In later times women were found as prophetesses, judges, teachers—roles as prominent as their male counterparts.

Marriage was not regarded in any sense as a bride purchase or barter but as a Divine Covenant of Kiddushin, Sanctification. Even the payment of the dowry—as common in California in Eckman's time as it was in Biblical days—did not suggest a vulgar purchase as much as it demonstrated the high and valuable state in which women were regarded. Eckman argued that the origin of the word marry, containing the Hebrew word mohar which is variously related to the word for price, exchange, or sell, does not in any sense determine the final significance of the act of marriage.

Rabbi Eckman did not object to the role of the woman as being subservient to man's because he felt that the roles stemmed out of the physical and mental differences between men and women:

With all the equality in kind of the husband and the wife as human beings, there exists bodily and mentally a considerable difference between them. In shape, form, structure of bones and muscles, the very first look shows a difference. The man is more powerful for work and creation; the woman more enduring to bear; he more able to toil; she, for pain. So are they mentally differently constituted. While the man reaches a higher development of reason, in woman it is the understanding that predominates. In the man the faculties of perception are higher and deeper; in the woman they are more excitable; the imaginative faculties in the man are more creative; in the woman more lively. Hence is the view of the man more directed upon the general; that of the woman more upon the special; the man conceives everything from the total; the woman from the partial; he connects the past and the future; she clings more to the present, the instantaneous.

Hence the woman is endowed with a finer tact and taste; the man with an insight into the circumstances and development of things; the woman lays more weight upon external appearances and their pleasantness; the man upon their dignity and impression. From this bodily and mental diversity arises their different position. It is the sphere of man to act, toil and struggle more without; that of woman, to manage gently and passively within the house . . . The individualities of both parties, by their prominence, will exert themselves under the influences sketched above in their diverse directions. But it lies in the general nature of things that the husband should take the principal lead in representing the family without;

> the wife in those within the house; that in the main, to the husband belongs a preference of fights; to the wife, the arrangement.

After these observations on the Biblical and the physical views of the relations between the sexes, Rabbi Eckman reached the following conclusion:

> From these views the so-called Emancipation of Woman is a ridiculous foolery, and the Holy Writ sketches with a firm pen the eternal laws of nature. God, the Creator has, as well for the man as for the woman, bodily and mentally, assigned different spheres in which they both are enabled to aim at the fulfillment of the highest destinies of their being which completely, in duties and actions, supplement each other, and reach their highest union in love.

Slavery

Although Rabbi Eckman began his ministry in America in Southern communities, he did not absorb the strong pro-slavery attitudes that characterized the South. His own experience of leaving an anti-Semitic Europe for a free America strengthened his advocacy of the cause of freedom for all people.

Rabbi Eckman displayed a remarkable naivete in his evaluation of that bitter struggle which threatened to tear America asunder. The roots of the Civil War went deep into the substructure of American life, with sociological cleavages and historic precedents that still challenge students of the war. Rabbi Eckman treated the entire

matter in a simplistic manner, reducing the Civil War to the level of a marital spat:

> Is this the way that sisters are trying to settle differences? Shall the ladies go a fighting, and try which side is the strongest, and try to settle matters by either whipping another into or from a Union. These states are joined together by treaty; as is husband and wife they have sacred interests and property in common; but somehow they begin to have words, quarrel, and either the wife or the husband, for real or imaginary wrongs—wants to run away, is the couple thus joined by the sacred bonds of union, thus to disgrace themselves in the eyes of the world to try who is the strongest to whip the other party, from or to a loving match.

When Rabbi Eckman moved to San Francisco, he completely escaped the environment of intense racial antagonism that characterized the Eastern states of the North and the South. In the West, a new world was coming into being, a new world too involved with the genesis of life to be involved with ancient problems of white masters and black slaves.

Through the medium of the printed word, Rabbi Eckman was able to affect the attitudes and feelings of the early Jewish settlers of the West far more effectively than had he been the rabbi of any single congregation. He filled voluminous columns with great quantities of information on a wide variety of subjects—information that was not available to his readers from any other sources.

He commented on contemporary issues with customary forthrightness and held forth views that reflected his unusual blend of conservatism and liberalism. With a profound commitment to Jewish

survival, he protested with all his vigor against anti-Semitism in any form and against changes from within the United States that he felt were threatening to Israel's future.

His words reached not only the dwellers of metropolitan areas who had other Judaic resources, but those who lived isolated lives Jewishly, in far off settlements and farms, to whom he supplied their only Jewish nourishment. This ability to bring Jewish insights to urban and to isolated Jews brought Rabbi Eckman a great sense of fulfillment and joy.

CHAPTER 6

TO OREGON AND BACK

Rabbi Eckman's last years were occupied by the major interests of his life: Journalism, the education of children, and the rabbinate. Between his completion of the sixth volume of The Weekly Gleaner in 1862 and his editorship with The Hebrew Observer beginning in 1863, he devoted himself to the Hepzibah school which he had founded years earlier. Very often he was invited to give guest lectures and sermons in the major congregations of San Francisco and other nearby communities. Then, in the summer of 1863, he received and accepted an invitation to conduct the High Holy Day services for the synagogue Temple Beth Israel in Portland, Oregon, and to become its rabbi. Following this pulpit, he returned to San Francisco to his editorial duties on The Hebrew Observer, only to return to Oregon in 1869 to become the rabbi of Ahavai Sholom in Portland. His final years he spent in San Francisco.

The Oregon Period

The steamship "Brother Jonathan" brought Rabbi Eckman to Oregon in late July of 1863. The trip itself lasted a week, and on more than one occasion rough seas made it uncomfortable for him. He finally arrived in Portland and was warmly greeted by a delegation from Congregation Beth Israel, including some of the most prominent Jews of Oregon.

The Portland of 1863 was a frontier environment quite unlike that of California. Portland, a city of 5,000 inhabitants, was advancing just beyond the stage of being a frontier village. It was a wild, boisterous riverfront city that reflected the boom spirit of San

Francisco. The most frequently-encountered business was the saloon with almost one for every hundred people. Most of its buildings were either clumsy wooden structures or pieced together of canvas or batten. Only a few brick buildings were in the downtown business district that was situated along the Willamette River.

Portland, like San Francisco, had been stimulated by the gold rush fever. The West Coast was desperate for food products, and the wharfs of Portland were busy loading agricultural products that came down by barge from the Columbia River basin destined for the markets of northern California. Prices had skyrocketed, spurred by the demand. For example, local apples were selling for up to two dollars apiece in California.

Lumberjacks filled the numerous saloons as they came to town to spend their savings after weeks of felling immense trees that filled the region. Fishing vessels lined the wharfs, bearing their rich haul of salmon from the Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean. Steam from the numerous saw mills shot up into the sky on every side.

There was little time or enthusiasm for cultural activities during this time, but churches were springing up ostensibly to save souls threatened by the rough life of the frontier.

The Hebrew Observer provides information on the Jewish community and cultural milieu of mid-nineteenth century Oregon:

> Portland contained an early Jewish settlement. In the earlier days, business there made good returns; although they can by no means be compared with those which the fluctuations of prices in those days produced among the San Francisco merchants. Hence such fortunes as took your San Francisco merchants by surprize, did not overwhelm our people here, to turn their heads and absorb their whole being. We are here

country people, our husbands are domestic, our wives, thrifty and active housewives, our daughters, more truly womanly, more simple, hence happier and healthier than the wire puppets in the larger cities.

In former years this city was the medium of the San Francisco trade and that of the whole northern interior provinces. The ocean steamer brought about three times a month heavy cargoes to our port, besides what other vessels brought, and took our heavy, agricultural provisions, fur and hide products back to San Francisco. Of late years, by the construction of different routes in the different interior regions, and on the Atlantic side, has drawn off considerably that trade. So that our wholesale merchants do not make such returns as they made several years ago. However, there exists here a respectable number of wholesale merchants of our profession, and a still greater number of the latter who carry on a retail business with just such a degree of success to them that dizziness which turns many a head in San Francisco and leads them to lavish follies and reckless speculations . . .

The number of our people here cannot be even approximately stated with any certainty; it may amount from about three to five hundred souls. The social position is like that in most cities; the masses are given to trade (and we know of no instance of parent having had the ambition to make him devote his son to any of the professions, nor the solid sense to devote him to the less precarious vocation of the mechanic); we have some mechanics, and a few dairymen. The latter do not succeed so well as in other parts. If official governmental positions in the United States can be mentioned as indicative of any credit at all, we had

> two years ago, a co-religionist as City Marshal; so have we now Mr. Benjamin Norden as County Clerk, and Mr. N. Goldsmith, Mayor of Portland. . .

Temple Beth Israel

The first Jewish congregation, Beth Israel, was conceived on May 2, 1858. Announcements had been placed in local newspapers that any Israelite who was interested in the creation of a Jewish congregation should come to the National Hotel on that Sunday. Eight men responded to the call and were sufficiently encouraged to plan a formal meeting the following week for the establishment of the congregation.

At this May 9th meeting, Leopold Mayer, a leading merchant of Portland, was elected president. The group rented Burke's Hall as their first place of worship. Like all new congregations, the members conduced their own services, relying on their memories of childhood religious experiences. Their numbers grew with the general population of Portland, and, in October, 1859, they purchased a lot to construct their first house of worship. The building itself was constructed the following summer, and a Rev. Bories was selected as their first religious leader. Though without rabbinical training, he was knowledgeable in Hebrew and could conduct services. Members of the congregation were cognizant of the important role the Christian ministers were playing in the life of the community, and they were anxious that the sole Jewish congregation would receive proper acceptance by them. That would be possible if they had a fully ordained rabbi to serve them. They therefore turned to San Francisco, and in July of 1863, Rabbi Eckman arrived.

The enthusiasm with which the congregation received Rabbi Eckman increased as the congregants experienced their first holiday services in Portland conducted by a distinguished Rabbi. His lofty, eloquent sermons aroused their admiration for his erudition and classic

phraseology. Undoubtedly, his background as rabbi of such prestigious Jewish congregations as those in San Francisco, Charleston, Richmond, and Mobile added to the excitement with which the congregants received the rabbi.

Rabbi Eckman was thrilled by the enthusiastic reception to his presentations, for it had been years since he had occupied the spotlight. When the congregation leaders offered his the position as the first rabbi of Temple Beth Israel, he promptly accepted.

There was no need to return to San Francisco. The Weekly Gleaner was already part of his past, and the remaining students of his Hepzibah school could readily be absorbed in the existing San Francisco schools. His personal arrangements were so simple that they did not require his presence to readjust them.

His new life in Oregon pleased the rabbi greatly—at the outset. He was once again the unquestioned Jewish religious authority of the community. Jews were integrated well into the community at large, and he was looked upon with great respect and was sought out by many non-Jewish institutions and organizations to give lectures about the Jewish religion.

Temple Beth Israel's school was well organized and enjoyed an excellent reputation. Rabbi Eckman was once again delighted to be involved in the operation of a congregational school.

A Visit to San Francisco

As time passed, both his enthusiasm and that of the congregation diminished. He greatly missed the stimulation of the large Jewish community of San Francisco with its rabbis, its numerous Jewish organizations, and even the controversies which he had begun to relish. He particularly missed the opportunity to express himself in

print, but he could see no opportunity for launching a publication like The Weekly Gleaner in Portland.

The congregation had also lost its initial awe and excitement at his coming. His scholarly sermons achieved limited appreciation, and the rigidity of his interpretation of Jewish law ran counter to the congregation's spirit of Reform. Rabbi Eckman favored and accepted changes that added to the dignity and beauty of the service, but he fiercely defended points of Jewish law that he regarded as vital to the preservation of the faith. Disagreements between the rabbi and the congregation became so bitter that before a full year had passed, he decided to return to his beloved San Francisco and to re-establish his career there.

It was upon his return that he became an editor of The Hebrew Observer, devoting many articles to the points of dissatisfaction with the Reform movement—articles based on his experiences with the Reform congregation in Portland.

Rabbi Eckman enjoyed his writing and the numerous opportunities he had for public service, but by his temperament, he could not resist a congregation's call to return to the pulpit. A new conservative congregation had been formed as a reaction to the extreme reforms that Temple Beth Israel had introduced, and in 1869 Congregation Ahavai Shalom (which Eckman sometimes spelled Ohavi Shulom) invited Rabbi Eckman to become the first rabbi of the synagogue.

Rabbi Eckman's official departure from San Francisco did not go unnoticed, for he had become perhaps the best known Jewish personality in San Francisco because of his activities as rabbi, educator, journalist, and fund raiser. He was moved to tears at the adieu he received from the Jewish community. His close friend and associate on the Famine Appeal, Mr. L. Citron, hosted a large gathering of admirers to pay a parting tribute, and the Rev. Dr. Mr. Seixas Solomon presented

to Rabbi Eckman a beautiful letter inscribed on parchment and neatly framed, offered to him in appreciation for all that he had accomplished in San Francisco. The letter was accompanied by a gift purse filled with a large amount of gold. In his characteristic manner, Rabbi Eckman promptly donated the purse to the Relief Fund, saying that he accepted it only as a trust for the sufferers who were deprived of the necessities of life. He implored his friends to stand by the poor children of the city and to see that their religious education should not be neglected. This kind of rare selflessness had always been the hallmark of his life, and rarely was it more explicitly displayed than in this act of kindness.

The newspapers of San Francisco and others throughout the United States took note of his new venture in a manner far more expressive than noted his first move from San Francisco. The San Francisco Call carried the following story:

> Rev. Dr. Julius Eckman, the pioneer rabbi of the Pacific Coast, having received an invitation to take charge of an Israelite congregation in Portland, Oregon, will take his departure for that city on Saturday next. Dr. Eckman is one of the best men that ever lived in San Francisco. He came here nearly twenty years ago, and although he possessed the ability to have amassed a large fortune, he chose to devote himself to the education of youth. Hundreds of poor children were not only taught free of expense, but were furnished with textbooks from the Doctor's scanty purse. The result is that in his old age, he is poor and has still to continue the battle of life, under the disadvantages that always attend upon those who are verging upon three score years. While the Doctor's many friends will regret to learn that he intends to leave them, they will be pleased to learn that his future pathway promises to be strewn with more roses than heretofore. In common

> with thousands of others, we wish him good success in the new field of his labors.

The Examiner headlines its account of Rabbi Eckman's departure by noting his selfless generosity in giving his going away gift of a purse filled with gold to a fund for the poor with an exclamation, "That's the man for us!"

Even the New York Hebrew Leader had the most laudatory comments to make regarding this event:

> The Rev. Julius Eckman, who is well conversant with the Jewish sciences and literature, and conducted hitherto the religious department of the San Francisco Hebrew Observer, has accepted a call to go to Portland, Oregon, and regulate the affairs of the congregation there. The choice made by the congregation is a very happy one, as Rev. Eckman possesses all the qualities required to act in a conciliating spirit, and especially to reconcile in love and peace the different views entertained by the members of the congregation. He has, moreover, constantly shown his zeal in behalf of, and his interest in the cause of true Judaism.

Another Pulpit in Portland

Rabbi Eckman arrived in Portland in time to conduct the first High Holy Day services for the new congregation Ahavai Shalom. The Hebrew Observer provided a rare account of the Portland Jewish community and the birth of the synagogue.

> The religious state of our people here is like that everywhere else in the United States: it is business

that absorbs the thoughts and the civilities of them men. Among women still linger reminiscences from earlier days at home; particularly among that portion which were brought up in smaller communities, where the spirit of the age has not exercised its destructive powers. The religious education of children is that so general in families of indifferent parents; the religious instruction was, with the exception of a short interval, almost totally neglected.

In the earlier years, when our people here still bore the type of traditional Judaism, our co-religionists joined into a congregation. About nine years ago, they procured in the usual way, an official who represented the Chazen, Shocket, mohel, and teacher of Hebrew reading. With the progress of prosperity, ideas changed, and religion was to assume a more fashionable shape; to the Chazen was to be added a rabbi and lecturer. And in the provisions made on the part of the latter to mend it, it showed that his religious views did not square with those of the movers of the synagogal machinery. . . .

It was just three years ago that there arrived a young man direct from Germany, the choice of Mr. Waterman from this city, lately deceased in San Francisco, and of some other merchants who were both in Germany about three years ago on business—Dr. Schwab came here three years ago. At that time we formed but one body apparently, but as everywhere, we were composed of the different shades of religious and irreligious opinion, early implanted piety and early prejudices. The young man became the butt end of the party. His opponents maintained that since morally and socially the young man does not evince any

symptoms of difference between himself and any other man of the masses, he could not serve them as a guide and model; and since as far as Jewish biblical and rabbinical regulations are concerned, it is his avowed purpose as far as he hitherto has proved it, to level them to the ground of gentilism without, their principles or early impressions do not allow them to support an institution whose aim it is to revert the promise of Scriptures, and convert the Jews unto the Gentiles.

The latter party hoped that with the expiration of the three years, the term of office of the young man, the moral influence of a great portion of the congregation, should they even prove a minority, would weight sufficiently with the friends of the young man to make concessions. But it was not so, already half a year before the expiration of the term, when a portion of the opponents could not be present at the meeting, it was seized to re-elect him for the term of two more years.

The result was the formation of a new congregation, chartered under the not sufficiently expressive name Ohabai Sholom, which formed about four months ago with the stern purpose to see Judaism ennobled, its forms more idealized, but not abolished.

The new congregation will dedicate its new synagogue, a tasty building, measuring 30′ x 50′, with a school building 20′ x 30′, adjoining, about Hoshana Rabbah. So has it purchased five acres of land, of which one is already fenced in for a burial ground. It has invited Dr. Eckman to resume the sacred functions among them, which he, as you reported in your valuable paper a few weeks ago, accepted.

> It is generally thought that the zeal of the new congregation, particularly in the erection of a new synagogue, though laudable, was overhasty. Were their object to worship as their fathers did, and not have Gentiles recite the Shma, the Kedousah, and perform the most solemn portion of the temple service, the Avodah on Yom Kippur (by Gentile men and women) they could have rented a hall for a time. Was it the religious instruction of the children, for whom and for which occupation Dr. Schwab has no affinities, they could have engaged a religious teacher, and he could have taught in the hired hall. Apparently in this matter, as it usual in differences, the fault lies on both sides. Excuse the length of this epistle.
>
> Your most obedient,
> Judaeus

Upon Rabbi Eckman's arrival, there was a great sense of excitement that filled the hearts of the worshippers. Most of them remembered Rabbi Eckman well from his leadership of their sister synagogue Temple Beth Israel, and they supported the strong position he had taken on behalf of traditional Judaism. Just a few months before, on June 8, 1869, the new congregation had been incorporated as Chebra Ohavi Sholum. Its stated purpose was:

> the promulgation of the doctrines of the Jewish faith, the teaching of children in such faith and in literature, and the burying of the dead who during life were of the Jewish Religion.

Led by Newman Goodman, their president, they had embarked upon the construction of a beautiful little synagogue which was well on

its way to completion. Although their numbers were small, their enthusiasm and hopes for the future were high indeed.

One of Rabbi Eckman's first acts upon assuming the leadership of the congregation was the establishment of a school for the children. For all the pleasure he had in preaching and writing, his greatest joy came when he was surrounded by small children into whose eager ears he poured the distillation of his own wisdom and experience.

On December 5, 1869, the formal dedication of the new synagogue was held. Once again, this time in the twilight of his career, the rabbi was engaging in the same exciting activity. The service was held on that Sunday afternoon with close to three hundred people—Jew and non-Jew alike—in attendance. Among the honored guests who participated were Maj. Gen. George Crook, Henry Failing, W. S. Ladd, Gov. Gibbs, Rev. E. C. Anderson.

While the choir was singing "How Goodly Are Thy Tents, O Jacob," Rabbi Eckman entered the sanctuary holding a Torah scroll and ascended the pulpit. He explained to all present, especially for the Gentiles present, that the Torah was the focal point of Jewish life throughout the years of the Diaspora. He then marched about the synagogue seven times, followed by the officers, explaining that by this ancient custom they were making the synagogue the center of their life. He pointed out that the number seven in its Hebrew root was related to the words for plenty, vows, and worship. The scrolls were then placed in the ark, and the dedication service continued. The invited dignitaries, the congregational officers, and Rabbi Eckman all contributed their share to heart-moving exercises. Everyone was particularly impressed that such a small and young congregation could have built such a handsome structure.

Each pew was furnished with a book shelf and a footstool. There were several pendant chandeliers, each with double rows of gas burners. There were thirty-four gas jets, enough to light the room

brilliantly. The altar and pulpit were made of handsome walnut. The altar was draped with purple and gold silk. The general aspect of the room was exceedingly cheerful.

Over the entrance was a small semi-circular gallery for the choir, capable of seating about eight people. Over the ark was placed a wood carving of the Ten Commandments in Hebrew.

The school room at the rear of the synagogue measured 20′ x 30′ and was capable of accommodating sixty to seventy students. With the average attendance of the Sabbath school at about a hundred, the main sanctuary was also used for the school.

Relations between the two congregations Ahavai Shalom and Temple Beth Israel were quite cool. Rabbi Eckman's return to Portland to lead a dissident traditional congregation created a sense of resentment among the leadership of the temple, and at the same time it stimulated Ahavai Shalom to challenge the accomplishments of the temple, the pioneer congregation in Portland.

Rabbi Eckman's sermons drew respectable attendance not only from his own congregation but also from curious Gentiles in the community at large. He especially labored to improve the quality of the school, and at the same time he continued to comment on the Jewish world through the pages of The Hebrew Observer.

As in the past, Rabbi Eckman undertook the special tasks involved in a fledgling congregation—membership, organization, and the inevitable invitation from community groups to be a spokesman for Judaism. However, by now Rabbi Eckman was 66 years old, and three years of such activities were quickly draining him of energy. He yearned to return to San Francisco, to spend his last years among the close friends who had shared so much with him over the years.

His leave taking from Ahavai Shalom was a touching one. The congregants had grown to love this kindly old man who gave so generously of himself and who had taken their children to his heart. The children gave him a beautiful Kiddush cup, inscribed "From your children."

Final Return to San Francisco

Upon Rabbi Eckman's return to San Francisco, he settled into a modest dwelling and spent his days visiting with friends and occasionally teaching children in the neighborhood.

His friend A.P. Fitzgerald visited him during this period and recorded this vivid impression, one of the few personal accounts of Rabbi Eckman by a friend:

> Seated in his library, enveloped in a faded, figured gown, a black velvet cap on his massive head, there was an Oriental look about him that arrested your attention at once. Power and gentleness, child-like simplicity, and scholarliness, were curiously mingled in this man.
>
> His library was a reflex of its owner. In it were books that the great public libraries of the world could not match—black-leather folios that were almost as old as the printing art, illuminated volumes that were once the pride and joy of men who had been in their graves many generations, rabbinical lore, theology, magic, and great volumes of Hebrew literature that looked, when placed beside a modern book, like an old ducal palace along-side a ginger-bread cottage of today.

I do not think he ever felt at home amid the hurry and rush of San Francisco. He could not adjust himself to the people. He was devout, and they were intensely worldly. He thundered this sentence from the teacher's desk in the synagogue one morning: 'O ye Jews of San Francisco, you have so fully given yourselves up to material things that you are losing the very instinct of immortality. Your only idea of religion is to acquire the Hebrew language, and you don't know that!'

His port and voice were like those of one of the old Hebrew prophets. Elijah himself was not more fearless. Yet, how deep was his love for his race! Jeremiah was not more tender when he wept for the slain of the daughter of his people. His reproofs were resented and he had a taste of persecution; but the Jews of San Francisco understood him at last. The poor and the little children knew him from the start. He lived mostly among his books, and in his school for poor children, whom he taught without charge. His habits were so simple and his bodily wants so few that it cost him but a trifle to live. When the synagogue frowned on him, he was as independent as Elijah at the brook Cherit. It is hard to starve a man to whom crackers and water are a royal feast.

His belief in God and in the supernatural was startlingly vivid. The Voice that spoke from Sinai was still audible to him, and the Arm that delivered Israel he saw still stretched out over the nations. The miracles of the Old Testament were as real to him as the premiership of Disraeli, or the financiering of the Rothschilds. There was, at the same time, a vein of rationalism that ran through his thought and speech.

We were speaking one day on the subject of miracles, and, with his usual energy of manner, he said:

'There was no need of any literal angel to shut the mouths of the lion to save Daniel; the awful holiness of the prophet was enough. There was so much of God in him that the savage creatures submitted to him as they did to unsinning Adam. Man's dominion over nature was broken by sin, but in the golden age to come it will be restored. A man in full communion with God wields a divine power in every sphere that he touches.'

His face glowed as he spoke, and his voice was subdued into a solemnity of tone that told how his reverent and adoring soul was thrilled with this vision of the coming glory of redeemed humanity.

He knew the New Testament by heart, as well as the Old. The sayings of Jesus were often on his lips.

One day, in a musing, half-soliloquizing way, I heard him say,

'It is wonderful, wonderful! O Hebrew peasant from the hills of Galilee, without learning, noble birth, or power, subverts all the philosophies of the world, and makes himself the central figure of all history. It is wonderful!'

He half whispered the words, and his eyes had the introspective look of a man who is thinking deeply.

He came to see me at our cottage on Post Street on morning before breakfast. In grading a street, a house in which I had lived and had the ill luck to own, on Pine

Street, had been undermined, and toppled over into the street below, falling on the slate roof and breaking all to pieces. He came to tell me of it, and to extend his sympathy

'I thought I would come first, so you might get the bad news from a friend rather than a stranger. You have lost a house; but it is a small matter. Your little boy there might have put out his eye with a pair of scissors, or he might have swallowed a pin and lost his life. There are many things constantly taking place that are harder to bear than the loss of a house.'

Many other worse words did the Rabbi speak, and before he left I felt that a house was indeed a small thing to grieve over.

He spoke with charming freedom and candor of all sorts of people.

'Of Christians, the Unitarians have the best heads, and the Methodists the best hearts. The Roman Catholics hold the masses because they give their people plenty of form. the masses will never receive truth in its simple essence; they must have it in a way that will make it digestible and assimilable, just as their stomaches demand bread, and meats, and fruits, not their extracts or distilled essences, for daily food. As to Judaism, it is on the eve of great changes. What these changes will be I know not, except that I am sure the God of our fathers will probably see great things.'

'Do you mean the literal restoration of the Jews to Palestine?'

He looked at me with an intense gaze, and hastened not to answer. At last he spoke slowly,

'When the perturbed elements of religious thought crystallize in to clearness and enduring forms, the chosen people will be one of the chief factors in reaching that final solution of the problems which convulse this age.'

He was one of the speakers at the great Mortara indignation meeting in San Francisco. The speech of the occasion was that of Colonel Baker, the orator who went to Oregon, and in a single campaign magnetized the Oregonians so completely by his splendid eloquence that, passing by all their old party leaders, they sent him to the United States Senate. No one who heard Baker's peroration that night will ever forget it. His dark eyes blazed, his form dilated, and his voice was like a bugle in battle.

The Rabbi made a speech, and it was the speech of a man who had come from his books and prayers. He made a tender appeal for the mother and father of the abducted Jewish boy, and argued the question as calmly, and in as sweet a spirit, as if he had been talking over an abstract question in his study. The vast crowd looked upon that strange figure with a sort of pleased wonder, and the Rabbi seemed almost unconscious of their presence. He was as free form self-consciousness as a little child, and many a Gentile heart warmed that night to the simple-hearted sage who stood before them pleading for the rights of human nature.

> The old man was often very sad. In such moods he would come round to our cottage on Post Street and sit with us until late at night, unburdening his aching heart, and relaxing by degrees into a playfulness that was charming from its very awkwardness. He would bring little picture-books for the children, pat them on the heads, and praise them. They were always glad to see him, and would nestle round him lovingly We all loved him and felt glad in the thought that he left our little circle lighter at heart. He lived alone. Once, when I playfully spoke to him of matrimony, he laughed quietly, and said,
>
> 'No, no—my books, and my poor school children are enough for me.'"

Rabbi Eckman died in San Francisco on July 5, 1874, at the age of 69 in his home after suffering a stroke earlier in the day. One local newspaper, the San Francisco Alta, wrote of him,

> Dr. Eckman was highly educated in Hebrew lore, a good linguist, an able writer on theological subjects, mild in his manners, charitable and unassuming. His great delight was to instruct the young, and for years he maintained, chiefly at his own expense, a school for the religious instruction of the young.

Although Julius Eckman never married and, consequently, had no children of his own, his funeral was a remarkable demonstration of the love borne for him by a vast host of children—his students whom he had nurtured in his school, who returned his love and affection. An

eyewitness described the funeral at the cemetery of Congregation Sheareth Israel:

> Young and old, Jew and Christian assembled in great numbers to follow the remains, a philanthropist, a distinguished scholar, and a good man in the word's true sense.

Dr. Elkan Cohn of Temple Emanu El delivered an eloquent eulogy over his grave at the Hills of Eternity Cemetery, extolling his remarkable virtues and his eternal position as the pioneer rabbi of the West.

> Rabbi Eckman was, indeed, a pioneering spirit who ventured forth, creating avenues for generations of American Jews to follow. His accomplishments were numerous, not only serving as the first rabbi of a number of congregations—Emanu El and Sheareth Israel in San Francisco, Beth Israel and Ahavai Shalom in Portland—but also publishing and largely writing the first Anglo-Jewish newspaper in the West—The Weekly Gleaner from 1857 to 1862. His love of children was realized in his Hepziba, the first religious school on the West Coast. He engaged vigorously in all the major issues of the day—the reform of Judaism, the Civil War, the suffering of European Jewry, the reconstruction of Israel. And, at the same time, he constantly researched in ancient history, theology, and sociology.

Rabbi Eckman epitomized the spirit of the West with his vigor, his curiosity, his creativity. He reflected the task that lay ahead for generations of American Jews—to embrace change while maintaining a firm grasp on the Jewish heritage.

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