# JEWS IN NEW HAVEN

## VOLUME IV

### THE HARVEY N. LADIN MEMORIAL ISSUE

EDITED BY RENEE KRA




THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW HAVEN

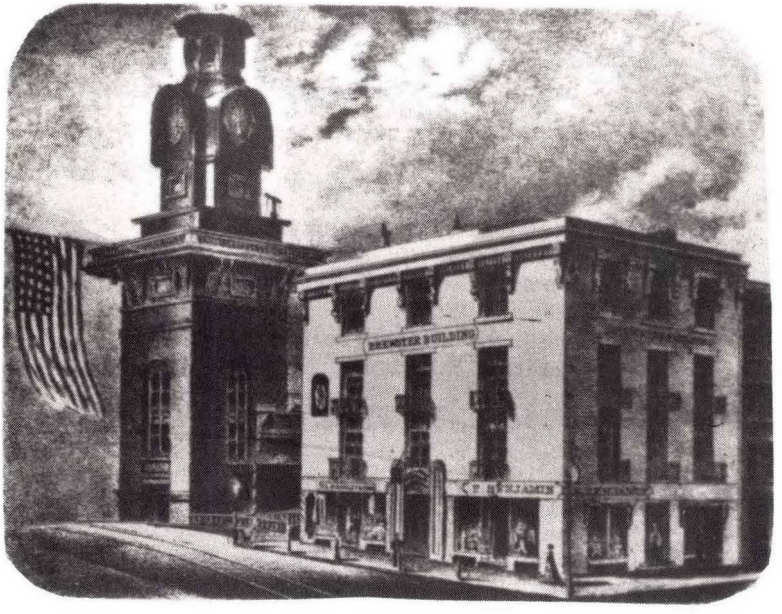
1976-1986

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Editor: RENEE KRA



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The Harvey N. Ladin Memorial Issue

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JEWS IN NEW HAVEN - VOLUME IV

The Harvey N. Ladin Memorial Issue

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## EDITOR'S MESSAGE

The present volume has had a unique and eventful history of its own. The untimely illness and death of its editor, Harvey Ladin, came when Volume IV was in its initial planning stages. During the few months that I had the privilege of working with Harvey I gained great respect and admiration for him. When he knew he would not be able to finish this book, he asked me to do it for him. I was deeply honored to have gained his respect as well. I hope that he would have been pleased with the results.

At the beginning of this project I found myself on very unfamiliar ground. But this situation did not last very long, for I was accepted and welcomed warmly to my new position. The trust and support that the Board of Directors transferred to me at this transitional period without prior knowledge of my "credentials" or qualifications was both gratifying and inspiring.

Judith Schiff and Barry Herman were consistently helpful in providing critical evaluations and source material. Upon assuming the Presidency, Joel Wasserman played an active role in producing Volume IV, with patience, practicality, and encouragement.

Our printer, Joe Abbott, was exceedingly cooperative in tolerating our long delays while providing excellent service.

Saving the best for last, I wish to thank Werner Hirsch for his invaluable help throughout every stage of this publication. His thoughtfulness, unflagging concern for and expertise in the workings of the Society, the quality of its presentations, and its members, were inspirational for me.

I hope that the product of our collective labors will prove as rewarding for our readers as it did for me.

Renee Kra

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Jewish Historical Society of New Haven would like to gratefully acknowledge the generous contributions made by the following for "Jews in New Haven - Volume IV". This book could not have been published without their help.

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Mrs. Eleanore B. Ladin

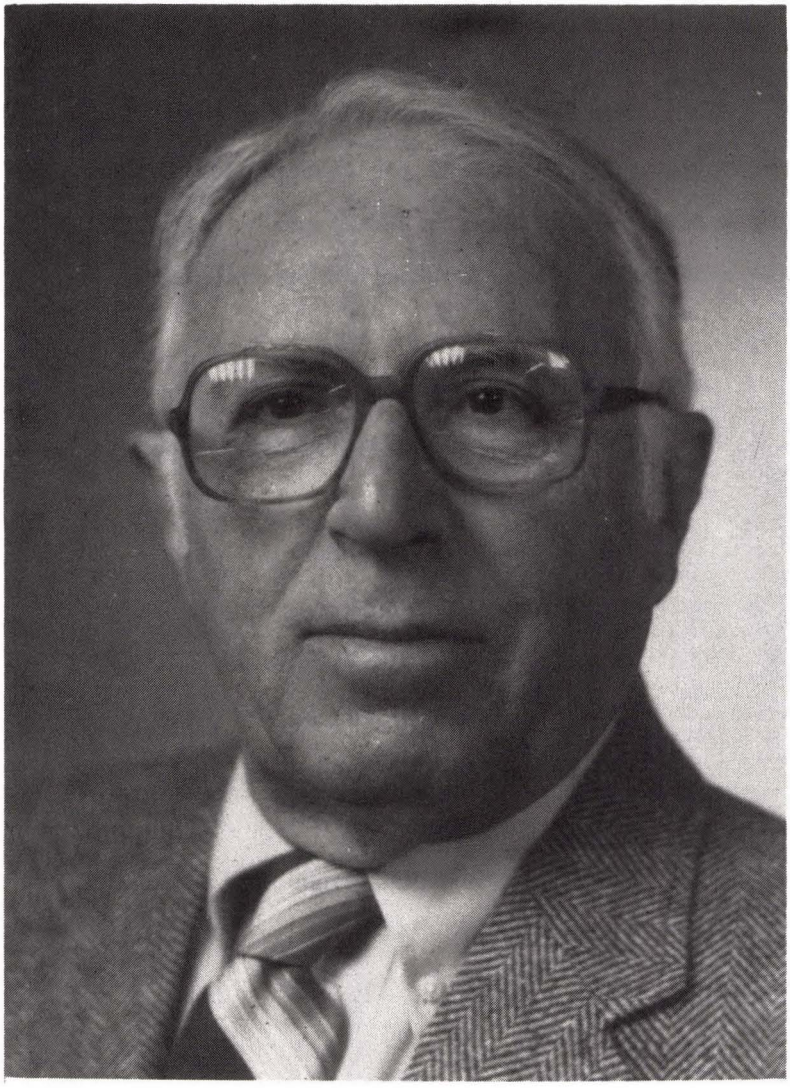
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**HARVEY N. LADIN**
(1913-1984)

## DEDICATION

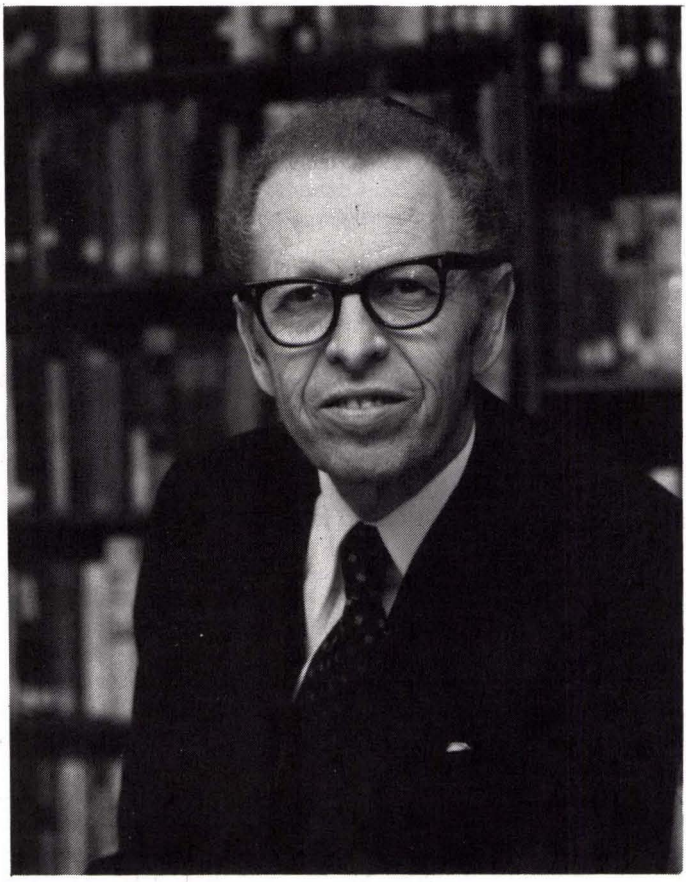
Volume IV of "JEWS IN NEW HAVEN" is dedicated to the memory of Harvey N. Ladin, the founder, first president, and Curator of the Jewish Historical Society of New Haven. Harvey Ladin was the editor of this volume and selected and edited most of the material to be published. During his final months he worked with his successor editor, Renee Kra, on the editing of the articles.

Even before the founding of the Jewish Historical Society of New Haven in 1976, Harvey Ladin's contributions were recognized by the community who honored him with the title, Jewish Archivist of New Haven. But first and foremost, Harvey Ladin was an author and historian. Beginning in 1956, with the publication of his "History of Horeb Lodge, 100th Anniversary," he established his reputation as a scholar, writer, and educator. Of special note is his history of the Jewish Home for the Aged published in 1975. Harvey Ladin's historical studies have become a permanent part of the historical literature of New Haven.

After his death in 1984, the Board of Directors of the Jewish Historical Society voted unanimously to name the archives of the society the Harvey N. Ladin Memorial Archives. Beyond their heartfelt gesture, the board wished to ensure that future generations would know that there would have been no Jewish archives of New Haven without his pioneering work to preserve the records and to educate the community in the importance of their history and the vital role of original records in its documentation.

As we prepare to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the society, I wish to express my appreciation and thank all those who worked with Harvey Ladin to build our society. Above all, I wish that we all be inspired by his love of history, dedication of purpose, and devotion to developing and increasing the contributions of the Jewish Historical Society to the scholarly world and to the educational and cultural life of our community.

Judith Ann Schiff
President, 1983-1985



**RABBI ARTHUR A. CHIEL**
(1920-1983)

# RABBI ARTHUR A. CHIEL

## (1920-1983)

It is extremely difficult to summarize the life of a man of so many accomplishments as Rabbi Arthur A. Chiel. He was a rabbi in the true sense of the word, a teacher. But he was more than a teacher; he was a scholar. It was while writing a manuscript on one of his favorite subjects, Ezra Stiles, a renowned scholar of the 18th century, that Rabbi Chiel died.

Rabbi Chiel was the son of a rabbi and followed an unrelenting path of history and religion all through his life. He attended Yeshiva University, was ordained at the Jewish Institute of Religion, and earned a doctorate at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

He began his professional career as Religious Director of the 92nd Street "Y" in New York, became an editor of the Eternal Light on NBC, and moved to Canada to direct the B'nai Brith Hillel Foundation at the University of Manitoba. Here he established a Department of Judaic Studies, a new Conservative congregation, Rosh Pina, at North Winnipeg, and published two volumes on the history of Jews in Manitoba. He served as Rabbi of Genesis Hebrew Center in Tuckahoe, New York, before filling the post of Rabbi of Congregation B'nai Jacob in Woodbridge in 1962. A beautiful new synagogue, 800 members, and proximity to Yale must have seemed like a dream come true for the Rabbi and his family.

The enormous responsibilities of leadership seemed only to stimulate the creativity, intellectual curiosity, and productivity of this energetic scholar. His writings, lectures, editing advice, and reputation extended far beyond the New Haven community. He was recognized as a distinguished scholar by the American Jewish Historical Society which elected him to their Academic Council. He was a contributing editor to Encyclopedia Judaica. His bibliography of published writings cover more than ten pages spanning an infinite variety of subjects. Local activities included ten volumes of "Looking Back," being a fellow at Ezra Stiles College, an officer, lecturer, adviser, and author for our own New Haven Jewish Historical Society, lectures, interviews, and editorials for the community, Yale, Orthodox, and Reformed groups, to mention only a few.

His sermons, based on traditional Biblical themes, were seasoned with new insights, perceptions, and ramifications. His inspirations came from everywhere - a popular song, a Yiddish expression, an advertisement, an old joke. He pondered and searched for truth, morality, and perfection in all things, yet his warm wit, compassion, and graciousness blended into a kind, generous, multi-faceted personality.

His death is a devastating loss but his life was an outstanding inspiration to all those he touched.

Renee S. Kra

# OUR B'NAI JACOB

This was our Synagogue of old,
Its memory enshrined in our hearts.

A house it was and a haven for
Our prayers and our faith and our hope.
Here, morning and evening, was prayer-time;
And each Sabbath was greeted with gladness.
Here we found solace and comfort in
Time-honored ritual and customs. In the
Sanctuary the men wrapped prayer-shawls
About them, and so began our cycle of worship.
Days of awe and days of rejoicing,
Holy days ordained by Tradition, these we
Observed in their seasons. Fondly recalled
Are the pageantry, music and symbols,
The processions of gleaming white Torahs.
How we enjoyed the service, the feeling
Of great exaltation. So did we
Worship, our congregation, in this
Venerable House of the Lord.

A "house of study" it was for men and women,
Young and old. Here, through poetry, songs
And legends, the sages, saints and prophets
Gave us the wealth of their teachings; and
Patriarchs, through parables of wisdom,
Taught us reverence and yearning for Torah.
So our Rabbis held forth at lectures,
Forums and classes. Here, our children
Were taught, as we were, the saga of
A people eternal. Their path of knowledge
Was marked by milestones, many in number;
And in time, they, too, left places for
Succeeding generations. So with instruction
Came understanding, and more cherished
And more precious was the rich heritage
Bequeathed us. In our Synagogue,
The treasured lamp of learning glowed,
Its rays of welcome enlightenment
Reaching ever farther, ever brighter.

Editor's note: This poem is from "The George Street Synagogue of Congregation B'nai Jacob," 1961, edited by Harvey N. Ladin. The present building of B'nai Jacob was dedicated in 1962, the same year that Harvey became its President and Rabbi Chiel its spiritual leader.

A "house of gathering" it was,
A place where people assembled.
Here, leaders rose among us
And together we counseled and
Planned; how to better the plight
Of our brethren, how to help in

Rebuilding of Zion, in pursuit
Of worldly culture and for all
Causes noble in nature. Here
We gathered also in a spirit of
Festive joy, linking the
Past and the future in a
Happy fellowship.

Such was our Synagogue on
George Street, ennobling, enriching,
Inspiring. It fulfilled the dreams
Of its founders, while fulfilling
Its sacred mission. In every facet
Of life we cherished, there was
Our B'nai Jacob. To us, now
And forever, its memory will be
A blessing.

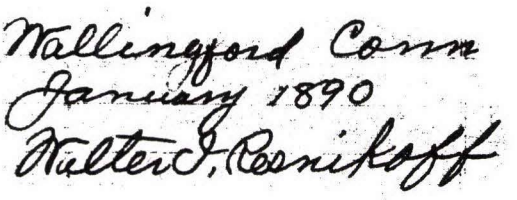
Marion Hyatt Barnett - 1961



*Congregation B'nai Jacob — the George Street building*

*Page 1 of W. I. Resnikoff's notes in Yiddish*

A FAMILY HISTORY FROM THE NOTEBOOKS OF
WALTER I. RESNIKOFF - JANUARY, 1890




Editor's note: The following is taken from the original notebooks of Walter I. Resnikoff, written in Yiddish (see facing page). It was painstakingly translated by Harvey Ladin, our late editor, a relative of the author. Because of the length of the tale, we have condensed it for publication and have summarized the events leading up to the start of this narrative:

The year is 1888 and the place is Gorodisht, near Kiev. S. Sokoloff is the bread commissar. Mr. Sokoloff is strapped financially and tells his son, Sam, that he needs money to pay his debts. The best way to do this is for Sam to marry the daughter of the rich Mr. Rabinovitz for her dowry. Sam is unreceptive to this idea because he is in love with someone else, his cousin Hannah, Uncle Shlomo Resnikoff's daughter. The Resnikoff's are leaving for America and Sam wants to go with them. Shlomo sends his son, Israel, to Elizabethgrad to say goodbye to his friend, Jacob Smirnoff, where he falls in love with Jacob's daughter, Mina. They part and vow to write each other. The Resnikoff's start their voyage to America.....

From their city they rode to Warsaw where they went directly to the agents who handle passengers to America and who also took people over the border. When the agents asked them how much money they had, the agents figured out that they were short for one passenger ticket. It was a difficult situation for the family, being in a place where they had no good friends or acquaintances. But they could do nothing. They decided that they should all go to Hamburg and there they would sell some of their belongings and then go together to America. They then negotiated with the agents to take them over the border. Naturally, the crossing of the border was made easily as for all immigrants and after two days they arrived in Hamburg, where they went to the ship counters with the hope that all would soon leave Hamburg together.

When they bought their tickets there was, of course, a shortage of money for one ticket. They decided to wait a few days until their baggage arrived, and they would sell some things, and buy the ticket. They waited four days and their baggage did not yet arrive. Every day was very costly for them for sleeping and eating. They then realized that if they remained in Hamburg a few more days they would use up all their money. So they decided that the mother and the children should leave for America and the father should wait until the baggage arrived and he would sell some things and then also come to America.

It became very difficult for the mother and children to separate from the father and also to sail on a sea which their grandparents never knew about and to go to a land that was very strange to them. But they saw that there was no better plan than this. The day came for their ship to leave. Their hearts were truly broken thinking about the difficulty they found themselves in. None of them could speak a word. They took their bundles and made their farewells, overflowing with great tears. The father, in a heart-rending voice, said, "You must not be discouraged my dear ones. The trouble will be over soon, and great good awaits us. I pray to God that he will bring us together again soon." He began to cry and fell into a trance. People took the father away and the mother and the children were led into the ship.

The passengers were very happy with the great German ship Russia which traveled between Hamburg and New York. Only the wife and the children of Schlomo Resnikoff felt in every way the most unlucky

people in the world. They were very weak from the journey up to now and they felt very miserable without their father. But everything was not as bad for them as the event which happened the second day of their trip. The three-year old child became seriously ill and had to be taken to the ship's hospital. The mother and children were very unhappy and spent a terrible night. Late at night the child began to choke and the mother saw that the child would soon suffocate from this sickness which was deep in her throat. The mother called the doctor immediately. The doctor examined the child and said, "This child is terribly sick, madam. There is only one remedy for your child now, and by tomorrow morning you will know whether your child will live and be well or be dead and lying in her watery grave." The mother fell into shock and was terribly sick the whole night. The following morning she opened her eyes and saw all her children around her crying and begging her, "Mother--don't leave us." The children were very pleased when they saw their mother sitting up. For a long time she could not speak. Then she suddenly stood up and began to shout, "My child is in the water, let me go. I want to run to my child." At the same time the doctor came in. He saw what was going on. He said, "Madam, you are the mother of children. You are sick and you must remain resting." "No, doctor, I cannot remain quiet when my child is dead in the water," she replied. "No, this is not true," the doctor said. "Your child is alive and in a short time will be entirely well. It is surely a wonder that we were able to save your child. But that wonder could only happen just this time. Therefore I beg you madam, remain resting until you feel better and I will bring your child hopefully to health." And that is what happened. A few days later when the mother felt much better and the children were around her the doctor brought in the child. They cried with great joy and thanked the doctor for his great service of saving the mother and child from an early death.

The 17-day trip was very long for the passengers. Finally the day came when the captain declared that today the ship would arrive in New York. A great joy came over all the people. They all began to wash up and put on their best clothes. There was an uproar, mothers yelling to their children, "You will soon see your father!" Others shouted, "Soon you will see your brother," and other childhood friends. Only Mrs. Resnikoff and her

children sat still, as sad as ever. They had nothing to feel good about and also no friends to meet in the new land. The ship finally anchored and the passengers disembarked.

The passengers were led in to Castle Garden, where they were questioned about where they came from, to whom they were coming, and how much money they had. They answered the questions truthfully, and were allowed to go to their friends who were waiting for them. Finally, the time came when the official asked Bas Sheva Resnikoff where she was going with her children. She told them her story, but they could not believe that her husband would arrive immediately to take care of his family. They decided that the woman and the children should be sent back to Hamburg. All the crying of the mother and children did no good, and after six days they were led back to the ship Germania to sail for Hamburg.

Bas Sheva Resnikoff and the children remained in tears on the ship. Their 7-year-old daughter, Fannie, who had become blind on the second day of the return trip was lying on a cot near them. All the remedies that the doctor of the ship had given her had not helped. From minute to minute the condition of the sick child worsened. "Mother," the sick child asked, "will I never again be able to see my father?" "No, my child. There is no medicine for you on this ship. But do not worry my child. You will not be the only one who will not see your father again. The fates are against us. We can no longer withstand the bitter wrath which follows us at each step. You have it much better my child. You will not see the bad end which awaits us." "Momma, do you remember, before we started out of our city, our grandfather said that we had a Great God who helped all people. Surely the same God will help you and bring you and your children back together with our father. But I will always have to shed tears from my blind eyes, with which bad fortune has struck me." "My child," said the mother tearfully, "if God can help me in this present need he can help you too, to enable you to see." "No, Momma, it seems that I cannot be helped because the doctor said that he hasn't the right medicine on this ship to help me. And by the time we get to Hamburg the entire sight of my eyes will be gone. Oh how unlucky I am. Call the doctor for me once more, Momma." The mother brought the doctor directly. "Doctor," the child said, "do you think that I will have to remain a blind creature for my

whole life?" "Yes," was the answer. "Is there already no hope?" "No," the doctor answered. The child began to cry and again said, "Doctor, I want you to answer my question truthfully. Will we meet any other ships on this trip?" The doctor answered, "Perhaps." "If so, I ask you to find out if ships may be close to our ship, and if they can hear us when we get near. I beg you, ask them to send over to you the items which are necessary to cure me from my great misfortune." The doctor thought it over and the plan pleased him very much. "I am going directly to ask the captain about this and give you an answer soon." He returned soon with a smile on his face. He said, "In an hour's time the ship Dania will be close to us. It will go very close to us and at that place I will ask for the items for you." The child was overjoyed when she heard these words. She begged her mother to take her up to the deck where she would wait for the help. Soon they saw the huge ship Dania coming opposite. The captain of the Germania gave the signal to the captain of the Dania asking that he slow down. When they were near enough to each other, the doctor shouted, "On our ship there is a mother with six children who are so unfortunate that they have been sent back from America. And one of the children has become blind. And we do not have any eye salve on this ship. Help if you can." Soon they tossed over the needed salve and the doctor promptly applied it to the little eyes. The child immediately began to see. "There--I see the ship which has saved me." She pointed and said, "and I see my father there too." Then there was a great joy on both ships because they all had the opportunity to see a miracle at sea. And the ships went on their way. "No, my child," the mother said, "it cannot be that you saw your father. You only imagined it." The child did not allow herself to be convinced. And she continued to believe that she did see her father on the ship which saved her. When their ship arrived in Hamburg, the mother and the children went directly to the same counter where they had left their father. The agents there became frightened when they recognized them. The mother related everything and asked about her husband. "Went to America" was the answer "on the ship Dania."

Then the mother cried out "Dania." That was the same ship that saved my child and separated my husband from his wife and children," and began to cry bitterly. The agents were afraid that serious trouble would befall them if the police would learn

of all that had happened and decided to send the mother and the children back to America at their own expense. So they sent the mother and the children off that same day to Yetkon, a German city at the Russian border, and gave them a loaf of bread and 50 pfennig.

It was a very dark night. The rain was pouring and a terrible wind was blowing when Schlomo Resnikoff arrived not far from Castle Garden, talking to himself.

> Oh, how unfortunate I am. There is no longer any place in this world for me. There is certainly nothing left of my family. They must have starved to death long ago. My heart told me that my child was the unlucky one who became blind on that ship. It was not for nothing that I was standing with tears in my eyes, when the captain of the Germania announced that they would rescue an unfortunate child who became blind on the Germania. But why do I still remain alive, when all my family are surely dead by now?

He said he had given up on this world and he started to jump into the sea. At that moment someone clutched him by the hand and pulled him back. It was a policeman. The policeman talked to him, but Schlomo did not understand. The policeman saw that he could do nothing with him, so he led him to the station house and kept him overnight. Schlomo fell into a deep sleep. On the following day he was taken before a judge who asked him what he was trying to do the previous night. "I wanted to take my own life." "Don't you know that taking your own life is a crime in this country?" Schlomo replied, "But there is nothing better for me in the world than death." And he explained the story, which brought tears to everyone in the court house. After a long deliberation the judge said, "I can understand how hard it is for you here now. But you should not behave in this way. You must steel yourself and do everything possible to locate your family. You will surely find good people who help folks like you. I will send you to a place where they will help you," and he instructed the policeman to take him to the Baron Hirsch Committee on 8th Street. When Schlomo explained everything to the staff they immediately questioned the officials in Castle Garden and confirmed that everything the man




*Clockwise from top — Sam Sokoloff, Bertha Resnikoff, Walter I. Resnikoff (the author), and his sister, Hannah (1892)*

had said was correct. So they agreed to help him. They sent a special telegram to Hamburg stating that if Mrs. Resnikoff and the children were located in Hamburg, they should promptly send them back to America at the expense of the Baron Hirsh Committee. They received an answer that they had left Hamburg. The people of the Committee told him he should not worry. They would not rest until they bring his family back. In the meantime, they sent him off to Wallingford to work, and gave him hope that he would see his family soon.

Bas Sheva and her children were in tears and hungry when they arrived in Yetkon. They did not know where to go and whom to ask for help. Finally, they inquired about and contacted a Jew they heard of named Feldman. He operated a hotel and arranged to take people across the border. At first Feldman thought he would earn a few marks from the woman so he treated the family well. But when he learned that they were very poor and needed help, he told them to leave. It did not help that they begged him with tears in their eyes. Finally after long deliberation, they decided to ask the German police to turn them over to the Russian police who would send them back to their own city. All together they could not think of a better plan and they reluctantly started to go to the police station. When they were not far from the station they met two young Jews who would come over from Russia every day to buy merchandise. The youths recognized from the appearance of the mother and the children that they were in great need. So they stopped and asked them where they were going. The mother told them the whole story of what happened to them, and where they were going. The two youths had true compassion for the unfortunate ones, and they tried to find a way to help. They gave them five marks and told them not to give themselves up to the Russian police, because it would take a very long time to get to their city, and that would not be good for them. Because they had no pass, they would be treated as criminals. They told them to turn around and find Yechel Berlovitz in the same city. He was a very good person who would surely help them, Bas Sheva obeyed. She thanked the youths profusely. It did not take long to locate Yechel Berlovitz. The mother told him their story. He was very sympathetic to them. He directed his wife to bring them into the house and give them something to eat, and invited them to stay and rest while he found someone who could take them over the border.

Bas Sheva and her children were ready when Yechel Berlovitz returned and told them that they would be taken over the border that day. He gave them food, hired a wagon to take them to someone he knew, Sheikevskiev, who would take them over the border. They were very happy with this information.

When they got to Sheikevskiev they delivered a sealed letter to him. When he read the letter he cried out with anger, "Why did'nt he help out the beggars himself?" He ordered them out of the house where they waited a long time. It was Friday, the sun had set long before, and a great cloud covered the sky. It seemed as if the whole world would soon pour out tears upon their bad fortune. Finally, it started to rain and they could not remain outside. They asked to be allowed into the house overnight. But it appeared that the last human feeling was wasted for them. Sheikevskiev said angrily, "I have a large house and room enough for many people. But I have no place for beggars." Finally, after much crying and begging he allowed them to sleep in the barn but they had to be careful not to disturb the horses from their rest. Tired and hungry, they collapsed on the rotten straw. The children fell asleep immediately. Israel also wanted to sleep but couldn't. But he was resting quietly so that he would not disturb the small children from their sleep. Only the mother could not rest. The thunder storm brought very frightening thoughts to her. When she saw that all the children were asleep she began to talk to herself--

> Sleep my dear children, who knows how much suffering it is our fate to suffer. It seems to me that I and my children may die of hunger and freezing. Oh how frightening it is. It seems that on my account you have been denied help, my dear children. If you have to appeal to strangers they would help you. But if I go with you they think I am a beggar, dragging strange children around with me. I can no longer live this way, to see my children finally die from hunger. This is the time that I should die.

She took out a knife which she had in one of her bundles, and with tears in her eyes she said, "Be well, my dear children," and put the knife near her breast. At that moment Israel jumped quickly and

grabbed the knife from her hand, and began to cry and said, "Is it not enough that we are separated from our father and everyone is hard on us? Do you also want us to be without our true mother? Do you call that motherly love when you can die while your children live in hunger in this unfriendly world. The mother realized that she had almost done a great wrong, so she began to cry. Soon all the children were awake and began to cry--"Mother, do not leave us alone." And they could not go to sleep any more. It was already quite light when they left the barn. They were very tired from that night and frightfully hungry. The small children began to cry and beg for bread. It was already noon when the caretaker of the house brought out a piece of dark bread and handed it to the mother and said, "Divide this among all of you." They existed on this alone that entire day. The second night was a nice night. They slept on the grass. On the following day, Sunday, they realized that they would not be taken over the border. So they decided to go back to Yechel Berlovitz. After about six hours they finally arrived half dead of hunger, to Yechel Berlovitz. He became very frightened when he recognized them. They told him everything. He directed his wife to give them food and he cried out, "He has a heart of stone--that murderer--Sheikevskiev. I hope he will pay for this sin which he did against these honorable, poor people."

And he went off to engage a man to take them over the border. That same night they were taken over the border, and he gave them two rubles to take with them. He expressed hope that they would be finished with the adverse conditions of their life very quickly.

It took three dreadful weeks for the family to travel from the border to Pinsk. It is impossible to explain everything that they lived through in these three weeks. Many days went by when they would have considered themselves lucky with a small piece of bread. Many nights they spent under an open sky or were soaked by the rain, or were burned by the sun. Here in Pinsk their hopes were high. They thought they would find good people who would help them get to their friends in Gorodisht, their former home. But hopes turned into only a sad dream. In ten days they could not find anyone to help them in their plight. "I want to drown myself," the mother said with tears in her eyes.

> It is hard for me to live this way, I no longer have the strength to wander around from city to city, and to see how you, my children, are degraded. If you will mind me, my children, we will all go over to the shore and ask one of the ship captains to bring us to Kiev. If we don't get any help there either then the only right way for all of us is to throw ourselves into the water together.

The children saw that she meant this earnestly, and they were all satisfied with this plan because they were too tired to continue with such a sad life. The mother gave out pieces of bread to the small children. At the same time Israel sent a letter to Mina in Elizabethgrad. And Hannah sent a letter to Sam with these words,

> My dear Sam, I write this letter to you in the last hour of my life. Perhaps in one hour's time we will all be part of the departed. Pardon me, my dear Sam. Perhaps it was because of you that I sinned. The present step we are about to take is because we are now in the most dreadful condition, and were driven to it. Pardon your Hannah, who is faithful to you and loves you to the last minute of her life. I wish you luck. Your faithful Hannah.

She sent the letter and they headed for the water. As soon as they came to the shore Bas Sheva approached the captains of the ships for help but she found none. She turned around to her children and with tears she told them that there was no one who would help them. "Oh, how great is our misfortune," the mother said again. "Do you see that ship standing there with the name Freedman?" she asked her children. "That ship belonged to your father's best friend Jacob Freedman." "And to whom does it belong now?" the children asked. "This I don't know, but two months ago, when we were in Kiev on the way to America, we read in the newspapers that Jacob Freedman was drowned." "Terrible," the children said. "Yes," said the mother," it was terrible, but our misfortune is more terrible than everything else." The mother got everything ready,

so that they should be close to their friends when they drowned, with no help from anybody.

> No, children, no, this is the time for everything to come to an end. Come with me my dear children. We have lived together and we will die together. In this water we will all find our rest which we have not had for a long time. Forgive me, God, for the following which I am now going to do. You are the only one who knows how much we have suffered and there is no other way before us, except to make our watery grave here. As you would do with your great troubles.

The mother cried out and gathered all her children and started off toward the water. But she had not noticed that while she was speaking someone was standing nearby and heard everything. Just as she was ready to jump into the water, two swift arms grabbed her and a voice cried out, "Live--don't despair, as long as I live I will strengthen your life." The mother, frightened, replied, "Let me and my children die. People are even jealous of our deaths." "But what drives you to kill yourself and your children?" "Because there is no more hope for us. I have no more friends in the world." "If there is no one else, then I will be your friend and will help you in your need." "Who are you, then, who will interest yourself in us." "I am one of your husband's best friends, Jacob Freedman." "But this is not who you are. Jacob Freedman is dead," said Bas Sheva. "I was not far from death," Freedman said. I remained alive only to save you and your children from certain death. He took them right into his own ship which took them directly to Kiev that same day, and he gave them enough money to take them from Kiev to Gorodisht.

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It was a summer evening. The sun was already setting. The air was very fresh near the Dnieper River in the great Russian city of Kiev. Not far from the large bridge between Kiev and Slobodka two youths were sitting. They were appointed by the city officials to be life savers. If any one fell into the water, their work was to save them. The older one, Maxim, said to Petroshkin, his mate, "You

know that today we earned our day's pay easily. But you wish," said Petroshkin, "as I understand it, to see a person in misfortune." Maxim burst into laughter, and said, "As I understand it, you have become a pious one. As you get older you cannot stand it when someone falls into the water." "This concerns me very little--it is just that I do not want to sit unoccupied." At that moment they noticed that a person jumped from the bridge into the water. With their small boat, it did not take long for them to get to the spot where the person fell. Maxim threw himself into the water. In about five minutes he swam over with the drowned body to the bridge. The victim was immediately taken to the hospital where a doctor declared that it was still possible to save him. After about a half hour the man opened his eyes and the doctor said it would not be long before he would be back to health. It was a young man of about 17 years and in his clothes two letters had been found. One letter stated, "When someone finds me in the water, I beg that my dead body and the other letter addressed to my father be sent to my father in the city of Gorodisht." The second letter said,

> My dear parents, I beg you to forgive me for the shame I have brought you by my suicide. I was also always faithful. But I could not longer live because I had always hoped to live happily with my beloved Hannah. But inasmuch as I have received a letter saying that she is dead, then I decided to also die with her. I beg you to forgive me and forget me. Your faithful son, Sam.

The doctor prescribed a great deal of rest and in two days Sam Sokoloff was in perfect health. He was sent back to his parents in Gorodisht.

Mirel Sokoloff, Sam's mother, was sitting in tears, all alone in her house.

> I cannot understand this--that my son went away four days ago and he left twenty rubles with me--his monthly support--and since then he has not come back to the house. He was very sad lately, probably from hearing nothing at all from my brother Schlomo and his family. Who knows if something very bad happened.

Just then the door opened and her husband walked in. "Why do you look so distraught, my wife," he asked. "What have I got to be happy about?"

> What do you mean--what have you--I have a very pleasant thing to tell you. Inasmuch as I had figured on being in Kiev for ten days, but I was not able to do any business at all there, so on the third day I came back home. On the trip I stopped off in Korson with my sister. She told me that the big shot Rabinovitz had gone bankrupt and did not have a cent left and his one and only daughter had run away with a commoner.

"So what kind of pleasure is that to you," Mirel asked. "What do you mean--what kind of pleasure is that to me? I am pleased with this because Sam was smarter than I and did not allow himself to be talked into something by me. It was better that he should go to America rather than fall into such mud. Overall I see that come what may we will have to go to America." "But you became aware of this too late, my husband," and she told him that Sam was already missing for four days, Sokoloff became very upset.

Just then someone knocked at the door. Mirel opened the door quickly and the Rav of the city came in. Sokoloff became very frightened over the fact that the Rav had suddenly sought them out, and he asked him what that meant. "A very worthwhile thing brought me to you." He took a letter from his pocket and showed it to Sokoloff to read. The letter read as follows,

> Because of the carelessness of the officials in Castle Garden in the city of New York, America, they sent back a woman named Bas Sheva Resnikoff with her children. We have done everything possible to bring her back, from her route, to America, but we were not able to do it. Therefore we have turned to you--the Rav of the city--you could help us out greatly to bring this family back to their father who will feel very sad without his family. You should not refrain from spending any money, and we will repay

you for your time and effort. We hope that you will help us in our undertaking, and let us know promptly as soon as you locate the woman and the children. We remain, your friends, Baron Hirsh of New York, America.

The letter struck Sokoloff and his wife like a bullet. They remained seated and did not know what to do next. The Rav started, "Do you know that with our silence we will not accomplish anything? We must find them quickly--perhaps they will be found in some predicament." "Therefore we must look for them in every place," said Sokoloff. Sokoloff told the Rav about his son and said, "As I understand it, your son's drowning was influenced by Schlomo's misfortune. But no matter how that is, we must not be quiet. Perhaps we will now come upon a right way. And it was left that on the next day they would begin to do something about that. And the Rav left. When Sokoloff was left alone with his wife they remained paralyzed--not able to move. They became very confused. After a long time, Sokoloff called out, "No--with my sitting I will accomplish nothing. We must go to my father-in-law and tell him everything." At the door he was met with a telegram which said, "By a great miracle we have survived to wire you that we are now in Chercosse and tomorrow morning we will get to you in our old home. B. Resnikoff." He and his wife did not know what to do for joy. She immediately ran to her father and Sokoloff ran to the Rav. Soon all were at Sokoloff's house and could only pray that their son should return to them quickly. Then they would have complete joy. Soon the Rav telegraphed the Baron Hirsch Committee that the family was here and they were waiting for help.

Sokoloff and his family arose very early on the day that Bas Sheva was expected to arrive. And the whole city also knew all about it. The route from the railroad station to the city was lined with people because Schlomo Resnikoff and his family were the first people from the city of Gorodisht to go to America.

When Bas Sheva and the children got off the train, their friends were shocked when they saw the sad and thin condition of the family. Soon they brought them to Sokoloff's house. They brought a doctor who gave them medicine and prescribed rest. When all the strangers had gone, only the immediate



*The wedding picture of Annie (Hannah) Resnikoff and Sam Sokoloff*

**MR. & MRS. S. RESNIKOFF**

**request the pleasure of your company at the marriage of their daughter**

**ANNIE to SAM SOKOLOFF,**

**Sunday Dec. 30th, 1894, at 4 o'clock**

**Bride's Residence, Washington St., Wallingford, Conn.**



מר• אונד מיססעס ש• רעזניקאף

לאדען זיא אונד איהרע ווערטהע פאמיליע העפליכסט איין צור טראונג

פון וייער טאכטער

הינדע צו ישעיה סאקאלאף

וועלכע אם זאנטאג, דען 30סטען דעצעמבער, 1894 אום 4 אוהר

נאכמיטטאגס שטאטפינדען ווירד.

כלה׳ם וואהנונג, וואשינגטאן סט. וואללינגפארד, קאנ.

*The wedding invitation of Annie and Sam Sokoloff*

friends remained around the table and wished that Sam would also return. Then a police officer arrived and asked if this was the Sokoloff residence. "Yes," was the answer. "If that is so, here is a letter from your son who sent it with me. I am a police officer from Kiev." The father began to read the letter, and fainted. All who sat around the table did not know what it was all about. They began to cry, but at that moment, Sam also came in. He looked deathly. His throat choked up. His mother began to kiss him and the Rav who was near did everything possible to revive Sokoloff. When he opened his eyes he saw Sam. He did not know what was going on. After a while everyone realized what had happened and were satisfied that it all worked out for the best. Later that same day it was decided that all should rest up for two weeks and when the money was received, Bas Sheva and the children should travel to America with Sam. They immediately sent a letter to Schlomo telling all that had happened. Only Israel felt bad when he heard that Jacob Smirnoff had left because of failing business. But he could not really find out whether he had gone to America or to Brazil.

The two weeks that Bas Sheva and the children remained with her friends passed very quickly. During that time they received enough money to get new clothes and to make a fine trip. On the day of departure, all the friends gathered in Sokoloff's house to celebrate and bid farewell to their friends. The Baron Hirsch Committee did not withhold any money and the unfortunate ones had the pleasure of repaying people who helped them. Most of all they thanked Yechel Berlovitz for his idealistic character. They gave him 50 marks, which he divided that same day to the poor people of the city of Yetkon. Everything was carried out as they wished. The ship on which they sailed was a fast ship. It took only 9-1/2 days from Hamburg to New York. Finally the day came which they had long been waiting for, the time that they would meet their father. When they saw each other they opened their hearts with tears of joy. The father took them directly to Wallingford where he had a residence ready for them. They all rested a few weeks and then the father took Sam, Hannah, and Israel into the shop where he worked, and the younger children went to school to learn the English language. And soon it was determined to send for Sam's parents and all their friends.

Schlomo Resnikoff was pleased to have his family and Sam with him. In the eight months since Bas Sheva arrived they had saved up a nice few dollars. It was decided that Sam should send for his parents and Schlomo for his parents and all their friends. And as soon as they all arrived, the wedding of Sam and Hannah would take place. Only Israel kept going around constantly in meditation. He looked very bad and he became weaker every day. His father had recognized this often. More than once--either in anger or in goodness--he spoke out from his heart, that everything Israel was worried about was foolishness and only a childish dream.

Here in America there were enough girls who were more beautiful and smarter than Mina Smirnoff. But it didn't help a bit. Once when Israel was deep in thought and was alone in his room, his father came in and said, "I would like very much to ask you one thing, my son. I hope you will not deny me this." "If it is possible I will certainly not deny you," Israel answered. "Inasmuch as we have all decided that Sam and I should send for all of our friends, and here in Wallingford we cannot buy steamship tickets, and we must ride to New Haven, and inasmuch as you understand the language here better than I or Sam, therefore I want you to go to buy all the steamship tickets which we require, and to send them. You will have the opportunity to become acquainted with lots of different people, and forget some of your foolish ideas. Israel was satisfied to take the trip. He had wanted to go to New Haven many times but he had no good opportunity until then.

The next day Israel went to New Haven. He immediately attended to the business which his father had sent him for. And then he took a walk to look around New Haven. On Congress Avenue he noticed that many carriages and people were standing near a large house. He approached and saw that this was a funeral. He was told that a Jewish woman named Smirnoff from the city of Elizabethgrad had died. He was shocked when he heard the name, Smirnoff, and he immediately recognized the elder Jacob Smirnoff. He wanted to run over to him, but realized that this was not the time. He waited awhile, and they carried out the body. And soon the children came out. They all looked very sad and were crying with bitter tears. Israel recognized Mina. He didn't know what to do. He grabbed a pencil out of his pocket and wrote a few words on a piece of paper which he handed to Mina. In her

great sorrow Mina paid no attention and put the paper in her pocket. They were all seated in the carriages and drove away. The same day, Israel returned to Wallingford. His father was pleased that he had sent for his parents and friends and he also noticed that Israel seemed like a new person. From then on, Israel went to New Haven very often.

The Smirnoff family felt very saddened since the mother died. After several months went by Mina found the paper which someone had given to her, but she did not remember who or when. The message read, "Mina, I saw you at your saddest moment--that was the time when your mother was carried to her heavenly rest. Your sadness was also mine. But don't worry. From this time on I will take the place of your mother. I will do everything possible to make your life happy. Your devoted friend." Mina thought for a long time about who this friend could be, but she could not figure it out. After much thinking she thought, the place of my mother can never be filled by another. Only one person could possibly be able to make me happy, but I heard long ago that Israel and his whole family had drowned on the way back from America. Tears spilled from her eyes, and then someone knocked at her door.

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Schlomo Resnikoff was seated at the table with his family and Sam, and was thinking about why their friends were not there yet. A month had already gone by since they should have been there, and nothing at all was heard from them. "The accidents which had happened recently on the seas make us uneasy," Schlomo said. Furthermore, we must not rush to send invitations, because, until they can all come, the wedding cannot take place." "Positively," said Sam. "But what do you think we should do, Uncle?" "I think," said Schlomo, "as long as Israel is going to New Haven soon, I will ask him to go to the steamship ticket office to find out." "That is not a bad idea," Sam said. The father told Israel what he wished from him, and Israel promised to find out the correct information for him. That day, he set out for New Haven. When he got to New Haven he went directly to the steamship ticket office. He asked about his friends. The managers of the office told him that because of an illness, all the passengers were delayed one month. They were expected to arrive in New Haven the next day. "If you wish to wait until tomorrow," the office manager said to Israel, "you

will be able to take them with you to Wallingford." Israel was very pleased with this new development, and decided to wait until the next day. It was already 8 P.M. when Israel left the office. "Now is the right time," he said to himself. "I and they have already suffered enough. Now, when all the friends have arrived safely, and will all be at my sister's wedding, and I should have some pleasure too." And he let himself walk towards the Smirnoff house.

Before Israel came to Smirnoff's house, the old Mr. Smirnoff and his older daughter were sitting and talking. "God has shortchanged me--in that I have been tossed up in a strange land. My wife--your mother has died, and you have to also bring sadness. Now, when there appear such possibilities for you, you can still not remove the foolishness from your head. You know that you put a foolish idea into your head, that it is impossible, that who knows where Israel might be now. You should believe me that he doesn't have you in mind as you have him. You should remind yourself and not bring so much suffering upon me." "I have considered it all," said Mina. "I cannot sell my heart, and otherwise I don't know what I live for--" and she went to another room--very angry and took out the piece of paper which she had found in her pocket, thinking about who that could be. At the same time the doorbell rang and Mina opened the door. A young man came in. "Does Mr. Smirnoff live here?" the man asked. "Yes," said Mina. "Can I see him?" Mina led him into the room where her father was sitting. Smirnoff asked him to be seated. At the same time, he asked him how he was getting along. "Very well," said Israel. Israel pushed his chair nearer to Smirnoff, and said, "My very dear close friend, a young man well formed, from very good parents, and with good prospects has asked me to call upon you and ask if you will allow him to call upon your daughter. After I hear from you I will also see your daughter directly. He will consider himself lucky to marry your daughter."

Smirnoff answered, "Yes--there is not one young man of the good families of New Haven who hasn't asked to marry my daughter, but even so I have no luck." "I don't see how you can say you have no luck when such fine young people would consider themselves lucky to marry your daughter." "Yes, it does seem that they would be lucky and I would be lucky too, to see my daughter married to an upstanding young man. But my daughter (and he had pointed with his finger to Mina), does not want to




*An early portrait of the author, Walter I. Resnikoff*

hear about these prospects." And the old man told him all the background, about this young person who lets so many opportunities go by because of an illusion. Then Israel asked, "Do you think you can do any good with your whim?" he asked Mina. "I can't answer that either. In time we will all be shown. But I do not see why you are trying to convince me. I am sorry your efforts will be for nothing." "As long as it seems," said Israel, "that you are one of those people who cannot be talked into things, and, as it seems that I will not earn a marriage broker's fee here, I am very sorry." Mina said, "I hope you will have better luck in your other undertakings." He got up and said it pained him very much that he was not making progress in matchmaking. Mina said, "Until now I didn't even want to look at a matchmaker, but I must ask you who the young man is." Then Israel said smilingly, as he sat down again, "As I see it, I have also been approached by a matchmaker. And also, you shall know who the young man is. I can tell you that I am the very same one, and I hope that you will tell me hopefully what you think about me." At that moment the younger children came in. The father introduced them to the man and in this way asked the man his name. Before he had time to tell him who he was, the younger Smirnoff son called out first, "Father, I think this man looks just like Israel Resnikoff who stayed with us just before we took off for America." Mina heard this, and she recognized him immediately. She cried out, "Israel," and fell into a faint. It did not take long before she was brought to her senses. They were all delighted with these developments. They spent a very happy evening together. Israel told them all about what happened to them up to this time, and it was decided that the next day they would all ride to Wallingford together. The next day Israel came to the steamship ticket office. He greeted their friends who were already waiting for him. He took them all to the depot where the Smirnoff family members were waiting. In a half hour they came to Wallingford. He put the Smirnoff family in a special carriage. Schlomo, his family, and Sam were delighted to have their parents and friends. When they were all sitting around and enjoying themselves Israel brought in Mina and the whole Smirnoff family. Schlomo and the family were overcome when they recognized them. Israel explained everything--how he had found them. Finally at the table everyone told what happened to him. Finally, Schlomo called out--"Thank you, God."



*Louis Sachs (1893-1982)*

*The following article was written in 1981 for which the author was awarded the Sydney and Arthur Eder Brothers Foundation essay competition prize of the Jewish Historical Society of New Haven.*

# FROM THE GHETTO TO YALE: THE WORLD OF LOUIS SACHS

William Echikson

## INTRODUCTION

Louis Sachs is 87 years old now and often complains about his failing eyesight. Though his 5'7" body is crinkled and tussled with age, no physical infirmity has slowed his mind. He tells the chapters of his history in a vigorous voice: the creation of the New Haven Jewish ghetto along Oak Street, the rise of different ideologies and movements that staked out battle lines over the Jewish question, the economic adjustment, the rise of Socialism and Zionism--all this and more is his life. His Russian-Jewish parents were among the founding fathers of the Oak Street community, and he helped preside over the dispersal of its inhabitants into the rest of America. Louis' story, then, is how the members of the Jews' ancient piety and way of life were extinguished by the waves of liberalism, secularism, and capitalism in the New World.

At an early age Louis threw off the shackles of the New World ghetto and embraced Gentile America. He learned English. He studied American history. Because his Russian forefathers in the Pale had been legally confined as second-class citizens, Louis found real meaning in Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. With the aid of a scholarship he graduated from Yale in 1914 when there were only 14 Jews in a class of 302.1 Two years later he completed Yale Law School and started a successful legal practice. In 1939 he became the Third District's Workmen's Compensation Commissioner, serving with distinction until 1958. But even as this ultimate assimilationist moved out of the ghetto to his comfortable home near the Yale Bowl, he retained his Jewishness more than most of his peers. For example, although Yiddish was dying around him, he spoke the language of the Old World proudly alongside a scholar's English. He would also only eat Kosher food even though most of his friends gave up the strict dietary laws. "I felt and acted as if I was a member of the whole community," he says, "in spite of the fact that I was a Jew by upbringing, a Jew by tradition, and a Jew by choice." While in the larger community, the bonds of anti-Semitic exclusion kept him from the

top of the social scale at Yale and in his law practice, he became the leader of New Haven's Jews. In 1969, the B'nai Jacob Synagogue awarded him the Shem Tov Award, honoring all his good works to the Jewish community.

Yet Louis was not a Jew who lived by the Orthodox rules of his father. His childhood home was governed by the inhibiting religiosity of traditional Judaism, but God was not present in the schools of New Haven where Louis spent every day. And in his quest for learning, self-advancement, and a stable, comfortable life, Louis literally tore his old culture to shreds. By the time he was an adult, he did not even go to synagogue regularly. Yet even as Louis took on the way of life of America's middle-class, working on Sabbath and enjoying baseball more than the synagogue, he derived from the remnants of his childhood culture a peculiar mixture of idealism and practical concern for his people. His duties to his fellow Jews replaced his duties to God. While his father had not needed to decorate his house with a Star of David or hang pictures of old Jews praying on his wall in order to give Judaism a meaning in his house, Louis asserts his Jewishness by pointing to these objects. He talks warily about intermarriage, Israel's difficulties, and a possible resurgence of anti-Semitism in America today, for these 'Jewish' problems have, to a large extent, replaced his Jewish faith. Louis Sachs' life is important, then, because it illustrates how his generation, not his father's or his son's, substituted secular obligations for ancient traditions. His story illustrates how the American Jew threw off the handcuffs of the <u>shtetl</u> by the sweat of his brow and the sharpness of his mind and carved out a comfortable life in secular America.

## I

Louis Sachs was born on June 8, 1893 in a 12-room tenement at the center of New Haven's Jewish ghetto on the corner of Oak and Factory Streets. The flat was in a great, prison-like structure of brick with narrow windows, cramped passages and steep, rickety stairs. It was near three junk shops and rag shops, and in the adjacent alley, chickens were slaughtered. There was one toilet facility on each floor, no hot water, and no heat. All eight Sachs children--there were six boys and two girls--bathed in a washtub, with a single gas light providing the apartment's only illumination.

Although Louis' childhood was filled with poverty, the Sachses were a family of intellectual wealth. Pogroms had forced Louis' father, Max, to flee his shtetl home of Sukyan near Riga in Latvia in 1888 and come to America. Max Sachs was no ordinary peasant. In the old country he had been known as an illuy, a recognized scholastic prodigy. That meant he had been trained as a Talmudic scholar, instructed in the glory and separateness of the Jewish people. If he had stayed in Sukyan he would have become a rabbi, but in New Haven the need to make a living forced him to become a businessman. With his wife, Jessie, also a Russian-Jewish immigrant, he opened a Mom-and-Pop furnishing store on Oak Street. But this was no common furnishing store. Here Max Sachs also sold the paraphernalia of Jewish ritualistic life: prayer books, bibles, mezzuzahs, prayer shawls, silver kiddush cups, and a full selection of secular bibles--Yiddish newspapers. In the store the writings of Yiddish poets and journalists were judged, socialist as well as points of Talmudic law argued. Here the members of a congregation might weigh the merits of a cantor to be hired for the holidays or of candidates for office in the synagogue. Here, too, a branch of the Workman's Circle was organized and a lodge of immigrants from a city or district in Poland or the Ukraine.

Philosophical, Talmudic, English, Yiddish, and above all, religious--that was the atmosphere in which Louis Sachs grew up. Max kept a strictly Orthodox home and went to synagogue every day. Often atheists would congregate in front of his store and argue with him. He would tell them, "God is infinite. You got a little head, a little finite brain, and you want to encompass in such a small thing an infinite thing like God. You can't. You haven't the capacity. I haven't also, but I can reason logically that there has to be a God. He is infinite and I am finite."

Louis would go to the Bikur Cholim synagogue every evening to say his prayers. A Hebrew teacher was hired for the children--despite the family's meager resources this was considered a necessity, not a luxury--and he taught the Sachs children their ancient language a few times a week from 1899 until 1920. By the age of 10 Louis had read the five books of Moses and the Prophets in the original, and would sometimes converse with his father in classical Hebrew instead of their usual banter in Yiddish. Indeed, the Sachs home retained much of

the shtetl influence. Every Friday night the family would gather around the table in the kitchen at the back of the store. Since they usually could not all break from work at the same time, this was the only meal they ate together. They would say the necessary prayers, and launch into a spread of gefilte fish, chicken soup with noodles or little chicken eggs, boiled chicken and potatoes, and finally tea. After the meal there were more prayers, and then Louis was called upon to read aloud some articles from the Yiddish newspapers. Saturday morning the entire family would go to synagogue, returning in the early afternoon to a feast of cholent that simmered overnight across the street in the baker's oven. By putting the cholent in the stove before Friday sundown and cooking it overnight, the family did not violate the Sabbath prohibition against work on the day of rest. In addition, an Italian or black neighbor's boy was given two cents to come over to the Sachs' house and light the fire every Saturday, and another would take over Louis' newspaper route for the day so he could properly observe the holiday.

Oak Street was not Sukyan, however, and without knowing exactly what was happening, Louis was growing up an entirely different person than his father who he admired so much. In Sukyan there had been no Gentiles, but in New Haven, non-Jews lived on the same block as the Sachses. The so-called ghetto was actually a fairly cosmopolitan place. Young Louis sold dishes and house furnishings to Irish, Poles, Italians, Germans and even some blacks, and played with all their children. Though he conversed on an elementary level with them in their native tongues, English was the common denominator, and it soon became his primary language. With the Tribbles and McCartlands, after all, Yiddish would not do. Soon, in fact, young Louis developed a passion for baseball as fierce as any that possessed a Yankee child. He would run down to the Courier office which was then on Temple Street and see the returns every night at 10 P.M.

There was not much time for Louis to play, however. Every member of the family labored hard to make ends meet. Louis was precocious as a businessman; by the time he was ten he had steady customers who would come to the store and only do business with him. As he grew older, he also worked as the store's window-trimmer and display artist, bookkeeper and checkwriter. At 13 he would go to the wholesale house with his father on State Street

and help buy merchandise, and by 16, he would go alone to New York and do the buying for an entire season's merchandising. Freshman year in high school he added another job, a newspaper route of 425 customers. He continued to distribute Yiddish newspapers to one-half of the ghetto neighborhood until two weeks before he graduated from Yale Law School in 1916.

But there was always a purpose behind this hectic work schedule; it permitted him to better himself. To this end, education was the crucial link. When young Louis would come home from school, his father would take him into the back of the store, and say, "Let's hear what you learned." And he told him. If he did a good job, two pennies would drop in front of him. "Now you see," his father would say, "angels just dropped down from heaven for you because you were such a good boy." Young Louis noted that this emphasis on education was endemic among all his Jewish neighbors. "The minute a boy was born on Oak Street, which was the heart of the congested district, the father began to worry," Louis remembers. "'What college should we send him to?,' he would say." Even today, Louis can give one a census of every house on Oak Street, the tailors, carpenters, and plumbers, even, and tell one how all the sons and daughters of these ordinary folk went to college and became professionals, from top-flight cardiologists to engineers.

At school, where Louis and his friends began their rise to professional status, the children were drilled in the secular precepts of America. Louis went to Zunder School at the corner of George and College Streets which, when Louis entered in 1899, was about 80% Jewish, 5% Italian, and the rest Polish, German, and Black.[2] Nevertheless, there was an annual Christmas play in which all the Jewish children participated. Louis was Mr. Moneybags. He didn't fear being typecasted as a Shylock because everybody took part, and another Jewish boy, after all, played a saint. He was only cast as Mr. Moneybags because he had a loud voice, and Moneybags was a bad guy who had a loud voice. If participation in a Christmas play was not a sufficiently overt Americanizing ploy, then the respect demanded by the gentile teachers sealed the issue.

The Americanizing of the street and the classroom did not stop Louis from going to the synagogue every day, but it radically changed the way he approached the task. The ritual inside the

synagogue became secondary to the game of odds and evens he would play with a group of friends in front of the temple during the Torah reading. All these American-born boys had a smattering of a Jewish education, but they were lax in their observances. Max would have liked Louis to study the Talmud and the Mishnah with the rabbi and the old bearded Jews around a long table in the synagogue every night, but he refused. Louis abbreviated the rituals of Judaism. For example, the short "Shma" sufficed as his morning prayers. His early training permitted him to understand Hebrew as well as read it, but he didn't practice the skill as much as his father, and was therefore grateful when he found that the new holiday prayer books contained English translations.

Louis concentrated instead on his secular academics. He turned his back on his father's dream that he be a dentist, switching from the scientific course to an academic schedule so he could apply to Yale and become a lawyer. Max had planned careers that would raise each of his sons from the poverty of Oak Street. William, the scholarly son, was to renew the family tradition by becoming a rabbi, Louis was to be a dentist because he had mechanical ability, and Joe was to be a doctor. But each eventually rejected his father's wishes. Max was disturbed with Louis' choice of law as a profession because he believed that a lawyer sometimes had to tell a lie for his client, and he didn't want any of his children ever telling a lie. But Louis insisted; he was interested in politics and sociology and was convinced that law would best satiate his intellectual interests. But by choosing the one career his father had forbidden, he probably was also subconsciously rebelling against Max's world. Law is, above all, a secular occupation, and Louis was already showing that he was more interested in the temporal world than the spiritual.

Thus, he set his sights on Yale, the Yankee stronghold. In order to be admitted to Yale one had to pass a rigorous examination in all academic subjects at the end of the final year of high school. Because the family's small budget required that Louis live at home, not on campus, if he wanted to attend a good college, he had to pass. Louis was sure he could succeed, but there was one problem--the test was only given on a Saturday. He would have to break the rules of Sabbath to take it. The year before, his older brother, William, had flunked because when he picked up his pencil, he couldn't write anything. The hand just wouldn't

move. Louis wasn't quite as religious as his brother who had been raised to be a rabbi but he had never broken the Sabbath rules. Louis wanted to go to Yale so badly that when exam time came, all his inhibitions vanished, and his hand flew along the paper. This was, perhaps, the turning point of his life. Sabbath, once violated, led to more violations. Never before had he put a pen or pencil in his hand on Saturday. Having broken the rule, that was it. By the time he was a lawyer he would work regularly on Sabbath, never going to synagogue.

II

When Louis set foot in September, 1910 on Yale's Old Campus as a freshman, he was shocked. Everybody had to go to chapel, and attendance was mandatory. This daily chapel was required until 1926, although it was less a religious service than an opportunity to bring the college together once a day.[3] Louis managed to forestall any new major crisis to his values by getting permission to skip the daily ritual because he told officials that he put on his tfillin and tallis every morning and prayed to the Almighty. Yet the incident illustrates the fact that Yale was still a Christian institution. Although small numbers of Jewish students had been attending ever since the late 18th century, they held a precarious position on campus.*

The uncertain role Jews played at Yale is illustrated by an incident that Louis remembers. It had been necessary for him to get a scholarship of $110 to enroll. But Louis' scholarship was only provisionally granted--he had to maintain a B average and not take more than eight cuts a term. It was with that stipulation that Louis' problems arose. Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur were at the beginning of the school year, and he didn't go to school on the holidays. He thus absented himself from seven classes and only had one cut left for the rest of the term. Frightened, he told Dean Frederick Sheetz Jones what his problem was. He asked for a respite if he was forced to take another cut because of illness. Cruelly, Dean Jones responded, "Young man, this is not a Moslem institution, this is not a Hindu institution, this is not a Jewish institution. This is a Christian

*See "Jews at Yale - A View from Hillel," following this article.

institution, and you will have to take your chances."

The early 1900s had brought an influx of East European Jews to Yale, and Dean Jones noted with dismay that more than 5% of the Yale class were such Jews in 1910.[4] Most, like Sachs, came from New Haven High School. As the percentage increased to around 10% in the early 1920s, Dean Jones said that was enough. "While many of these Hebrew boys are fine students, I think the general effect on the scholastic standing is bad," he wrote. He decided to put a "very definite limit, and a rather low one, on the amount of beneficiary aid that we grant to the Jewish student" to keep more Jews from entering the college. From this pronouncement dates the 10% Jewish quota.[5]

Although the Yale student body was about 5% Jewish in 1910, there were only eight East European Jewish immigrants or sons of immigrants in Louis' class.[6] In the yearbook, for example, Louis' face jumps off the page in contrast to the majority of his classmates. In his 25th reunion yearbook, Louis is dapper with his metal horn-rimmed glasses setting off a natty moustache and thick, neatly parted hair. What is different from the other photos is a close-up portrait of himself while his classmates usually picture themselves as country gentlemen, on horses, with a large family next to a sprawling mansion, or out walking on their estates.[7]

Because the East European Jews didn't fit into this upper-class society, they were banned from secret societies, fraternities, and many campus organizations such as the Yale Daily News and the Whiffenpoof senior singing group. Even many of the athletic teams were closed to Jews. Jewish students who wanted to play basketball had to join the Atlas Club in town. But although Louis' activities at Yale were limited, he says he got along fine. Since he was still working in the store and had his daily newspaper route, he didn't have much time for anything other than his academic work at Yale. He never noticed "any spirit of antipathy to Jewish students by any of the professors." "Maybe it was because I was a good student," he hypothesizes. He got along famously with renowned anthropology professor, Albert Galloway Keller who invited Louis to his select group of a dozen men who would meet once a week for informal discussions. At the end of his junior year Keller thought enough of Louis to ask him to go to graduate school and become an anthropologist. But Louis told Keller he had made

up his mind to be a lawyer. The incident proved to him, however, that if he was competent he could do practically whatever he wanted in America. "At the end of my junior year I was elected to Phi Beta Kappa," he recalls. "So I couldn't have had too many problems, could I?"

If Louis didn't notice that he was being scorned, perhaps it is only because time has mellowed his memories. Perhaps, too, it is because the fact that he could attend Yale was recognition enough for him. He mentions a student, William Schieffelin, a descendant of the Vanderbilt family, with whom he was fairly friendly. They sat near each other in class because their last names were close alphabetically. But today Schieffelin barely remembers Louis. "I can't give you any pertinent facts about him," he says. "I just didn't take much notice of him."[8] Norman Winestine, another Jewish student in the class of '14, also contradicts Louis. He lived on campus, and remembers that he was on speaking terms with only one or two non-Jews. "The class lines were very strict, and Jews such as Louis and I were invisible," he says. "If a non-Jew was seen walking with a Jew, his friends would reprimand him, and even my best faculty friend used to tell me that it was bad that Jews were moving into his neighborhood."[9] Classmates and other friends corroborate Louis' memory of himself as truly unconcerned about whether he was accepted socially. "Poised" and "self-contained" are the words used to describe his reaction to social scorn.

Outside of class and a few hours socializing with students who also commuted to campus at Dwight Hall, Louis' only other formal connection with Yale was membership in the Society for the Study of Socialism, and the Menorah Society.* All he did for both groups was attend a spare meeting. As he says, he "couldn't afford any other aspirations," so he didn't let it bother him that his social status wasn't up to his class rank. Only for a fleeting moment does this proud front disappear. Tap Day of his senior year he went to the exercises and stood under the tree where the secret students picked students. "Underneath my head there was a thought that having done so well and having been elected Phi Beta Kappa--being in the top group of students in the school--maybe somebody would tap me. But this this was childish nonsense in retrospect." Other

*See "The Menorah Society," this volume.

than this one little twinge, he says, it would never have occurred to him to try to be a member of Skull and Bones or any of the other senior societies.

At the Law School he continued to hold this attitude. Here, again, Louis succeeded brilliantly academically, graduating second in his class, winning a couple of public speaking prizes and being elected one of the Associate Editors of the Yale Law Journal. There was only one thing he was denied--entrance to the eating club behind the Law School grounds, but this didn't bother him because he ate at home. The six years Louis spent commuting between Oak Street and Yale mark another decisive break in his life. Although he didn't talk or dress a great deal like his upper-class classmates, he assimilated their secular attitudes. Schoolwork was more important than prayer. No longer could he find time to put on his philacteries to pray every morning. And since he had classes on Saturdays, he could no longer properly observe Sabbath. He didn't even attend synagogue every Friday because he had too much schoolwork and too many obligations at the store. He did, though, continue to attend on holidays and on an occasional Friday night. He would have liked to have gone more often, but the obligations of gentile America which he was taking on, made it impossible. "Inwardly, I remained a fervent and devoted Jew," he says. "But I had to go to school on Saturday, and this probably bothered my father, though he bowed to the inevitable. He tried to have his children live by his example, but never forced it on them."

## III

After Louis was admitted to the bar in June, 1916, he could only afford a $10 desk and $7 stationery to start his law practice. He was forced to take a temporary office in another lawyer's firm. But the Jewish community also continued to provide an enjoyable social substitute from the gentile world where he was not really welcome. In 1913, Louis had begun to date his future wife, Jessie Slater. Before this time he had consciously ignored females because they would "interfere" with his work. He "didn't have time for that." Jessie was one of his newspaper customers, and though at first he tried to overlook her, he found himself talking to her at length. So he rearranged his newspaper route to make the Slaters his last customer. Soon, the two were keeping company, and on Thanksgiving Day, 1917, they were married.

By this time Louis' practice had begun to prosper. After a few slow weeks, clients began to flow in. His customers were mostly Jews from Oak Street who had met him as a salesman and newsboy and heard that he had been a good student at Yale and the Law School. A smattering of other nationalities also came to see him--Poles, Russians, Italians, and Irish--but they had also been childhood neighbors. But when his brother passed the bar the next year and came to practice with Louis, creating the firm of Sachs & Sachs, they were known as a "Jewish" law firm. This was a stigma in the larger community because some businesses such as the local banks would not let anyone handle their legal affairs except Yankee-Protestant firms. Within the Jewish community, though, the practice kept growing, and in 1925 Louis' brother, Manuel, joined, making the firm Sachs, Sachs & Sachs. The firm continued to prosper, easily weathering the storm of the Depression.

As soon as he became a successful lawyer, Louis moved away from Oak Street. During World War I the ghetto had begun to disperse. Although Jewish Oak Street businessmen would remain until well into the 1930s, the neighborhood's residents moved to the outskirts of the city. Louis Sachs led this movement to the suburbs. In early 1918 he bought a two-family house with his father on Asylum Street. It was a mixed neighborhood of Jews, Italians, and Irish, yet still fairly close to Oak Street. But this arrangement did not satisfy Louis for long. He soon had two daughters and wanted to move into a "neighborhood that befitted a successful lawyer." So he moved to the relatively spacious confines of Westville. The houses there were new, one of the best schools in the city was nearby, and a trolley car connected the neighborhood to downtown. It didn't bother Louis that there weren't too many Jews in Westville, so he bought a house for $13,500 on West Rock Avenue despite the fact that among the 40-or-so families on the street, there were only two Jewish homes. He actually liked the cosmopolitan air the street exuded; even today after many more Jews have moved to Westville, his block is a true United Nations with Greek, Italian, Czechoslovakian, Russian, Irish, and Yankee families.

If not physically, though, at least spiritually, Louis continued to live in the Jewish community. Every day he went to Oak Street to buy a Yiddish newspaper. He still bought his food there. And perhaps most importantly, his social life still

revolved around Jews who had grown up with him on Oak Street. He didn't keep in touch with any Yale friends. At work he did meet non-Jewish lawyers and even took part in a group, the Elder Statesmen, who would arrange dinners at which acts, singing, and short sketches were performed. About his fellow Irish, Italian and Yankee performers, Louis says, "We worked together, we played together, we enjoyed our company together, and whether there was any latent anti-Semitism, it never really surfaced. But what is most noteworthy about his participation in the Elder Statesmen is how exceptional this social participation in a mixed group was for Louis Sachs.

Above all, outside of the law, Louis Sachs concentrated his energies on the non-religious organizations of the Jewish community. His first venture into communal life had been at the age of 19 when he became a charter member of New Haven's Y.M.H.A. After this, he was active in almost every other Jewish community organization--the Jewish Home for the Aged, the New Haven Jewish Community Center, the Jewish Family Service, the New Haven Bureau of Jewish Education, and the United Jewish Appeal. He was valuable to these groups for two reasons. First, he was an organizer par excellence who could be counted on to raise funds for every activity in which he was involved. Secondly, he was one of the few Jews in New Haven who was equally fluent in Yiddish and English; thus, he would take notes in Yiddish and translate them into English or vice versa. He was, then, a valuable bridge between the older Yiddish-speaking Orthodox generation and the young English-speaking secular generation. His contributions were such that his contemporaries and later leaders of New Haven's Jewish community all acclaim him as one of the key architects of the structure of the modern Jewish community.10

In helping construct the modern Jewish community, Louis refused to preserve the old shtetl culture. He never became involved in any of the ethnic organizations, Landsleit, which tried to preserve old world customs and ties. Rather he worked "to both Americanize the community and yet make sure Jews did not give up their identities as Jews." He wanted to Americanize "the Jews so they could live comfortably with their neighbors and so they could adjust themselves comfortably to life in this country which was a totally different life from the medieval conditions in which they lived in Eastern Europe." To link the Jewish community with the larger community, he also worked actively on







*Oak Street scenes*

various town-wide projects such as the School Committee, the Citizen's Tax Commission, and the First New Haven Hospital. Still, Louis remained most loyal and comfortable within the Jewish community. "The Jewish organizations I worked for were all labors of love," he says. The others were merely responsibilities he felt to the community as a good citizen.

Louis' fervent support of Zionism was his biggest labor of love, and in many ways it best demonstrates how Louis had transformed his father's religious Judaism. Knowing that Jews could never entirely be safe in America or anywhere else as a minority, he felt Zionism was more important than orthodoxy in preserving their Jewish heritage. He proudly asserts that he was born a Zionist. His father had become addicted to the cause in Latvia, and he inculcated Herzl's vision to his son. Louis remembers attending a commemorative service at the Rose Street Synagogue, B'nai Israel, for Herzl's death in 1904. Also, in the store the family sold a Jewish New Year's card which had a photograph of the First Zionist Congress in Basel in Switzerland in 1897 on its cover. The card also had pictures of Herzl and another early Zionist leader, Sir Moses Montefiore. These two early contacts with Zionism made a strong impression on the young Louis, as did the reports he read about the Dreyfus case. No Jew, he learned, could totally assimilate into a gentile society.

As a result, just after he graduated from Yale Law School he began to work actively for a Jewish state that he believed was necessary for the survival of the Jewish people. In 1917 the Zionist Labor Group asked him to run for election as a delegate to the American Jewish Congress, and he agreed. Flyers were printed and distributed in the Yiddish newspapers. Louis' opponents were two anti-Zionists, the German-Jewish leaders of New Haven, businessman Colonel Isaac M. Ullman, and lawyer Jacob Kaplan. Ullman and Kaplan believed themselves Americans first, Jews second, and wanted nothing to do with a plan to create a separate Jewish state. Such separatism could promote nativism and threaten their privileged positions in America, they believed. That had happened during previous nativist outbursts when Catholics were accused of holding undue allegiance to the Pope. But Louis would have none of this logic, and apparently most of New Haven's Jews agreed with him that a Jewish state was the only salvation for the

Jew in the modern world. A week before the election Ullman and Kaplan discovered they were going to be routed, so they withdrew. Louis then attended the meeting of the American Jewish Congress in Philadelphia as a Zionist in 1918 where such luminaries as Louis Marshall spoke. "It was a rip-snorting, rip-rousing meeting because the announcement was made during one of the sessions that the British government was issuing the Balfour Declaration," he recalls.

Louis would always advocate a Jewish homeland in Palestine, opposing the German Jews. From 1935 to 1961 he was the chairman of New Haven's Zionist Emergency Council. He collected guns and non-combatant material for the Haganah, including shoes, nurses' coats and dresses, and, most importantly, used machines for manufacturing guns. With his friend, Hyman Botwinick, he orchestrated the purchase of the machines as scrap from the Winchester Factory, and then shipped them to Israel as "Textile Machinery" and "Can-Making Machinery." The machinery he bought for $250,000 was worth a million dollars new, and proved invaluable to the new state which could not buy arms freely in the world market. Similarly, whenever he heard of a bargain sale, he'd buy the full stock of shoes or dresses, and ship them to Israel. When he bought guns he would take them to his friend, Louis Lindemann, a loyal Zionist who had a store on Chapel Street. Lindemann would put the guns in his backroom, and when it was propitious to do so, the guns were removed and sent on to New York and then to Israel.

The vision Louis incorporated into all his activities for the Jewish community was essentially secular. He now believed that his good works superseded religious obligations. Other than on the holidays he rarely attended synagogue; work itself, and good deeds specifically to his people, constituted an adequate religion, he believed. And though he spent an inordinate time working for Jewish organizations, his status continued to rise in his professional life. In 1939, he was appointed Workmen Compensation Commissioner for the Third District of Connecticut, and with this appointment Louis joined America's governing elite. The 20 years he served as Commissioner were the happiest of his life, he says. He found the work stimulating and rewarding. In addition, the position opened the doors to status in New Haven's legal community. He became treasurer of the New Haven Bar Association.

But even as Louis was gaining status in the larger community, he found it impossible to shuck his Jewish identity. He tells one a "horse can't try to be a cow," and adds Shakespeare's famous dictim, "to thine own self be true, for thou canst not then be false with any man."13 Louis found his Judaism to be the most stabilizing force in his life; it gave him an identity. He recalls the time when, as Treasurer of the New Haven County Bar Association, he sat at the head table with Judge Hamilton King, Chief Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court and Raymond E. Baldwin, former Governor and Senator of Connecticut. Louis ate the fruit salad, but the main course was roast beef, and since it wasn't kosher he refused a most delicious-looking piece of meat. Judge King began eating his roast beef, and apparently he enjoyed it, because he turned to Louis, and said, "What's the matter, aren't you going to have any roast beef?" Louis said he didn't care for any, and Judge King said, "this is the best roast beef I ever ate in my life and you're not going to pass it up!" He called the waiter, but when he returned with the meat Louis still refused to take any. At that, Judge King turned to Governor Baldwin and said, "Ray, what do you think of this guy? He's passing up the best piece of roast beef I ever ate in my life." Governor Baldwin told the Judge that the meat wasn't kosher, and the Judge, not believing, asked, "Is that why you're not eating it?" Louis said, "Yes, that's why." To which, Judge King concluded, "I take my hat off to you for being so observant."

Louis tells this story proudly, and jumps into a big grin when mentioning Judge King's surprise. In this way his Jewishness made him feel special. Yet just as important to his sense of Jewish identity was the fact that America would not let Louis forget who he was. His voice still has the twang and inflection of an older Jewish-American, and he never took on the suave manners of an upper-class lawyer. He was not a pale child just off the boat, but he also was not a sophisticated exemplar. And although he does not emphasize the anti-Semitism he encountered, it remains a basic tension of his life. At Yale and in his law practice, Louis asserts that he got along "magnificently." He prides himself on the Yankee judges and lawyers who would constantly praise his brilliance. "I respected them and they respected me," he says. But in the same breath he says, "Look, I'm sure if something unexpected or painful happened, they'd say, 'and there's that Jew again.'"

Louis Sachs did not have much use for the old shtetl Orthodox culture of his father, and threw all but its remnants away. In its place he substituted a secular faith that stressed good works, liberal ethics, and Jewish responsibility, and in doing so, he equally balanced his American and Jewish identities. Perhaps this ambivalence, this balancing act, is best described in his attitude towards intermarriages. Few Jewish children brought up on Oak Street married non-Jews. Some girls would date Yale men, but Louis and his friends scorned them as "student chasers." That type of social-climbing and the possibility of a marriage out of faith horrified him. One can alter the precepts of various parts of one's Jewishness, but not deny it, Louis believes. None of his friends made the leap to marry a non-Jew because, as he says, "we were friendly with the Irish and Italians as kids, but when we grew up, we went out with Jewish girls."

## NOTES

1. This statistic is compiled by going through the Class of 1914 Yearbook, and asking Louis Sachs which of his classmates were Jewish.

2. Again, these statistics came from Louis Sachs' memory, but it concurs with that of all the other people I interviewed who went to Zunder School.

3. Dan Oren, "The Jewish Student at Yale: A Preliminary Examination," in Jews in New Haven: Volume 1, edited by Jonathan D. Sarna (New Haven, Jewish Historical Society of New Haven, 1978), p. 66.

4. Frederick Sheetz Jones Records, 1909-1927, Historical Manuscripts and University Archives Collection, Yale University Library, Box 5.

5. Ibid., Oren, p. 66.

6. Again, the statistic was garnered by going through the classbook with Louis Sachs and examining every one of his 302 classmates to see if they were East European Jews.

7. Twenty-Fifth Reunion of the Class of 1914: Yale University, edited by Gorden C. Aymar and Lawrence M. Marks (Rahway, N.J.: Quinn & Bordon Company, Inc., 1940), picture of Louis Sachs, p. 158.

8. Interview with William Schieffelin, March, 1981.

9. Interview with Norman Winestine, March, 1981.

10. From talks with the late Rabbi Arthur Chiel of B'nai Jacob, the late Harvey Ladin, past President of the New Haven Jewish Historical Society, and Eugene V. Rostow, formerly Dean of Yale Law School.

11. From "Hamlet," I, iii, by William Shakespeare.



*Oak Street vegetable peddler*

# JEWS AT YALE - A VIEW FROM HILLEL

Richard J. Israel

## I

As Jewish immigration became a continuing social phenomenon at the turn of the century, a pattern of resistance developed which was not unique to Yale. Jews came to be viewed as a threat. Regional quotas were invented by President Lowell of Harvard to keep too many Boston Jews from coming to Harvard. In this same spirit, Dean Jones* of Yale College, 1921-1928, wrote to his freshman dean for detailed information on the number of Jewish students who were to be found. He indicated that he was disturbed that the number of Jewish students had gone from 5 to 10% in a very few years. Jones was also troubled by a number of other issues. He claimed that Yale students from good families preferred to work for Yale athletic letters rather than for Phi Beta Kappa keys. He said they don't wish to be associated with those "Jewish grinds." He noted that the Jews who were coming to Yale were no longer exclusively Germans but were increasingly of Russian origin. He considered ways to hold the number of Jewish students down. Jones proposed administering a rigorous examination in English to prospective applicants. He also suggested limiting the scholarship funds available to Jewish students since "the money for these scholarships came from Christian families and these families would surely not have intended their benefactions used by Jewish boys." He also wondered if limiting student employment for Jewish students might serve his purposes since, "even though these students are very industrious, they would surely not be able to manage very easily if the University did not assist them finding employment." Dean Jones proposed that some pattern be devised which was consistent with those being developed at comparable institutions throughout the country.

In 1921, the number of Jewish students at Yale, according to Dean Jones' figures, was approximately 10%, a fixed proportion until 1965. After that year, the percentage of Jewish students in the freshman class doubled and since that time, held

*See "From the Ghetto to Yale," preceding this article.

fast at about a quarter of the class, give or take a few percentage points, each year until 1971, after which I have no data.

If Yale preferred to take the sons of old grads who themselves were accepted at Yale at the time that there were quotas, and if Yale preferred to take students from prep schools which often discriminated against Jews, then other people had already done the Admissions Department's work for it. The number of Jews was kept down; Yale remained innocent.

So strong, however, was the general belief that there were quotas that, when in 1965, the number of Jewish students in the freshman class jumped to 125 while the number of Catholics went to 109, the reverse of the usual order, Father O'Brien, the Director of Thomas More, came running to the Dean of Admissions in great indignation, complaining that the quotas had been switched and wondering why the University had done it to him. Though the incident suggested to me that there were no fixed and mechanical quotas, Jews at Yale had many obstacles to overcome.

First, there were the philosophic arguments; Yale is a national school. It needs diverse types of students from many different places. Somehow, that argument was never applied to non-Jewish prep school students. Paul Weiss used to say that if all the members of the philosophy department were WASPS, people would ask, is it a good philosophy department or is it a bad philosophy department? But, if all of the members of the philosophy department were Armenian Orthodox, then people would say, "Isn't that funny that there are so many Armenian Orthodox in the philosophy department at Yale?"

It was argued that Jews made poor members of the Yale community. They were, to quote one dean, "over-achievers;" they worked beyond their abilities and this kept them from being companionable and contributing to the social life of the University. The over-achiever argument was clearly spurious. If Jews were but 10% of the population, yet over 35% of the Phi Beta Kappas (as was the case), that was proof not that Jews worked too hard but rather that different standards of selection were applied to them. You had to be smarter to get in if you were a Jew. I received continuing reports from members of the Admissions Committee that good Jewish students were accepted just as any other good students; bad Jewish students were rejected just as any others, but marginal Jewish students, who, were they

non-Jews, might have gotten into the class, as Jews, never stood a chance.

If, as the administration claimed, there were no quotas, why did they not put a Jew on the Admissions Committee? The obscure answer of one Dean of Admissions in the early 1960s was, "Whenever we put liberals on the Admissions Committee, they become the most conservative members of the Committee." By the late 1950s, Jewishness was supposedly not a relevant category at the time of a student's admission, though at registration time he would be asked about his religion for his religious preference card, which would be sent to his religious group. It was only in the mid-1960s that the administration stopped copying the student's religion from the preference cards and recording it on his permanent record.

In the early 1960s, a faculty member passed on to me admissions interview materials he had found in one file which described a student as "having Mediterranean lips and nose. Though he wasn't pushy or aggressive at all, it would be hard to make a Yale man of him." Luck was with this particular fellow. He was accepted, and he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa in his junior year. Whether or not they made a Yale man of him would be hard to say.

I was told curious stories of code words used at Admission Committee meetings. It was said that if the members of the inner circle wanted to allude to a student's Jewishness without informing some of the liberal members of the Committee, they would indicate that the student "kept tropical fish." Those in the know would immediately understand.

Bill Coffin and I went to President Griswold with our rumors and our questions. The President seemed genuinely horrified at the thought that there might be discrimination at Yale. He offered us carte blanche to investigate any records of the University which could demonstrate the existence of either implicit or explicit quotas. President Griswold's invitation led me to a name-by-name analysis of the Jews in the freshman class with a Dean of Admissions. I held that the percentage of Jews at Yale was smaller than any school in the Ivy League. The Dean insisted that the percentage of Jews was an enormous one. I gave him my Jews and he gave me his. Upon cross-checking the religious preference cards with the Dean's Jewish list, I learned that he believed every German name to be Jewish. In other cases, where there had been inter-marriages and conversions to Christianity

generations ago, he counted people as Jews whom even Hitler would have rejected.

I do not believe that the sudden increase in Jews in 1965, along with the beginning of a new administration, represented a conversion to Judophilia. Instead, it represented a serious commitment that the University should once and for all eliminate those qualities which made it something of a boys' finishing school. It definitively wanted to turn itself into a first-rate University. Harvard had long since made that commitment. Princeton was yet to. If Yale wanted to be a good university rather than a good finishing school, it had to take good students irrespective of whether or not their families made the social register.

How many Jews, or for that matter members of any group, should there be at Yale? Should the mix of students be selected altogether on the basis of academic excellence, or are there other qualifications which should be relevant as well? Is character important? Social conscience? Leadership ability? Should the imminent inheritance of a large family fortune, which gives a man a good deal of social responsibility (and a fine potential as a generous alumnus) count for much? Should the University be the preserver of "the old values" and invite those who represent them? ("You can't educate those Jewish radicals anyway.")

These are hard questions but not, I think, unanswerable ones. In the 1970s, one of the most unfortunate ways some proposed to resolve some of the issues was to use scholarship money in such a way that Jews would again become the most expendable population in the University, helping pressured Whites to resolve their guilt feelings about what the white community had done to the Blacks throughout the years. If the very rich pay for themselves and the very poor get full scholarships, that leaves out the academic middle class, and we all know who they are.

## II

At the turn of the century, the Jews who came to Yale from the Russian families of New Haven usually lived at home. Students in this group never really felt very much a part of the university. In the correspondence between Dean Jones and the Dean of Admissions, Jones asked if these Jewish students were active in non-academic aspects of University

life. The freshman dean replied: "As active as they are permitted to be." The discussion went on to point out that while the Elihu Society had accepted a Jewish member shortly after the turn of the century, the other societies had not and that, by and large, the social life of the university was excluded to Jews.

At the time of the first World War, a student Zionist organization was formed at Yale. Yale Jews also organized a Menorah Society and an Achevah Society, early predecessors of the Hillel Foundation.*

Sentiment was expressed in the early 1940s that the needs of the Jewish students should be met in more organized fashion. The Office of the Jewish Chaplain was thus established primarily with the encouragement of Sid Lovett, the University Chaplain. Some resistance was expressed by Jewish students. They had just broken out of the ghetto and didn't wish to be returned to it. They were beginning to be accepted into the societies and into campus life at Yale on the grounds that they were just like everyone else. Now, here was the Jewish community trying to tell them to be different. They were not happy about that at all.

Rabbi Maurice Zigmond, who had been a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology, assumed the role of Jewish Chaplain at that time. His office began to serve as the focal point of Jewish life on campus and he became the Jewish community's spokesman. Previously, that role had been played by the President of ZBT, the Jewish fraternity which was then active on campus.

The Office of the Jewish Chaplain became the Kohut Forum, named after Alexander Kohut, a man who had given his sizeable Judaica library to Yale. For a time, the Kohut Forum was sponsored and funded by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, under the leadership of Judge Elsner of Hartford. During World War II, the Jewish population of Yale dropped radically. Rabbi Zigmund went off to the University of Connecticut where the Jewish population was larger. Different rabbinic students commuted from New York City to New Haven for a number of years in an attempt to continue to serve the Jewish student population of Yale. The Kohut Forum became the B'Nai Brith Hillel Foundation in 1942, thereby

*See "The Menorah Society" and "The Achevah," this volume.

joining what was by then a growing national institution serving college students.

III

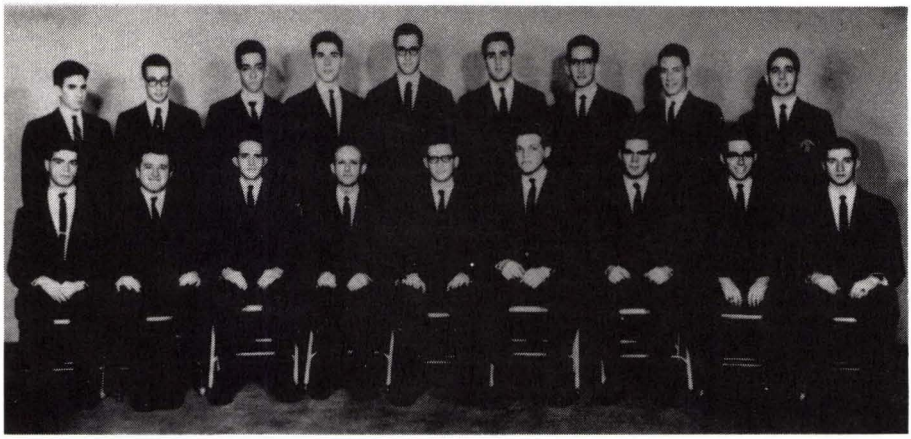
When I arrived at Yale in 1959, Jewish students at Yale felt they were strangers in a strange land. They were at Yale on sufference. Yale was not theirs. They believed they were permitted to be at Yale only on condition that they behaved very well and according to the canons of WASP society. The slogan of the Yale University Hillel Foundation was "it's shoe to be a Jew." "Shoe," of course, referred to the dirty white bucks which were worn in the early 1950s and to be "shoe" meant to be hep, cool, tough, with it (the word you use, establishes your age).

In the first place, by the time Jews got around to using the slogan, "It's shoe to be a Jew" the term "shoe" was already on its way out. Furthermore, merely saying, "It's shoe to be a Jew" made it perfectly clear that it wasn't.

At the first meeting of the student cabinet of the Yale Hillel Foundation, I found the students deeply troubled by a problem of no small importance. A lecture series dealing with great challenges to religion had been planned. There were to be discussions of figures like Marx and Freud as part of our Sabbath celebration. Before the evening began, Sabbath candles were to be lit. Since the lectures were to be open to the entire campus community, how could one justify the presence of Sabbath candles which would shine offensively and disturbingly in sensitive non-Jewish eyes? How could we get rid of the candles?

The second item of discussion concerned the Oneg Shabbat. Oneg Shabbat was the term used to designate the reception which was held following services. That Oneg Shabbat didn't sit well with some of the student leaders of that time. Once again, it was held to be rather poor taste for us to force non-Jews to participate in Jewish religious rites. There were clear sentiments that we should abandon the Oneg Shabbat after our Sabbath lectures.

One student, who was active in the John Dewey Society ( a very mild precursor to SDS), suggested that at the end of the John Dewey Society meetings, punch and cookies were frequently served and that tended to enhance the occasion by making it more informal. In a relaxed atmosphere, he said, people would continue discussing the subject of the



*Rabbi Israel with Hillel group*
*Last Row – Schwartz, Stromberg, Schwartz, Harris, Alpert, Fuchs, Marcus, Floman, Virshup.*
*Front Row – Schmeidler, Schaefer, Koplin, Rabbi Israel, Brown, Newberger, Young, Lakein, Brumberger.*



***The Hillel Foundation House at 35 High Street***

evening. I was then bold enough to ask what the distinction was between punch and cookies and an Oneg Shabbat. The earnest answer was, "At an Oneg Shabbat you serve Danish." They never even understood why I thought that was funny.

A few weeks after the Oneg Shabbat incident, I suggested that since the Festival of Sukkot was approaching, it would be a good idea for us to build a Sukkah, one of those frail booths that Jews have been building outside under the heavens for the past several thousand years. The students were at first shocked and then merely patronizing. They decided that since I was only a little antiquarian, I could perhaps be indulged without too much damage to the reputation of the Jewish community at Yale. They would permit me (not help me, but permit me) to build a Sukkah inside the Dwight Hall Common Room, a room reserved for religious activities. Since it was the best I could do, that's where I built it. I believed that a pretend Sukkah was better than no Sukkah. There it remained for several years. One year, a freshman who has since become the Dean of the graduate program of the Jewish Theological Seminary, was helping me build it (by that time, they had begun to help). He raised a very tentative question about why we were building a Sukkah inside. Didn't Jewish law say that it belongs outside? I allowed as how it did belong outside in most places in the Jewish world, but that Yale had been thought by some to be different. That year, we built a tiny little Sukkah <u>outside</u> and out of sight in a hidden space between two campus buildings, Linsley-Chittendon and Dwight Hall. Each year it came a little bit further out toward the center of the Old Campus until finally, in 1970, it was planted right squarely in the middle of the Old Campus, filled with wine, raisins, nuts and Halavah, inviting all passers-by to help themselves, but please not to finish off the whole wine bottle with a swift gulp.

Many Jewish students who were far from religious observants found that Sukkah to be an important symbol. It publicly indicated that Yale Jews were more comfortable. They were no longer part of a fortress community. They were less likely to participate in Jewish life and be active in the Hillel Foundation than they had been before but that was precisely because they no longer felt like outsiders.

# ACHEVAH - THE FIRST JEWISH CLUB AT YALE

Estelle Goldman Heil

A few years ago I contacted Rabbi Arthur A. Chiel, the late spiritual leader of Congregation B'nai Jacob, Woodbridge, and asked him if he, in his research, had come across any information about the Achevah Club at Yale.

My father, Dr. George Goldman, a 1910 graduate of the Yale Medical School, had joined the club in 1908 as a charter member and continued as an active member until the early '60s.

Rabbi Chiel told me that the name "Achevah" means friendship or love in Hebrew and that the club had been started by a group of Jewish students at Yale. He had never been able to find other information on it, he told me, but suggested that I contact attorney Louis Sachs who had been very active in the early years of the club*.

Mr. Sachs was happy to recount some of the events that he remembered. It seems there was a great need for this kind of a club for Jewish boys at Yale, since there was very little social life -- no fraternities for them as there were for other groups at the university. Some town boys who were congenial with them were also accepted as members and joined in their activities. In their undergraduate days there were many picnics and parties. Usually women were not included in these events.

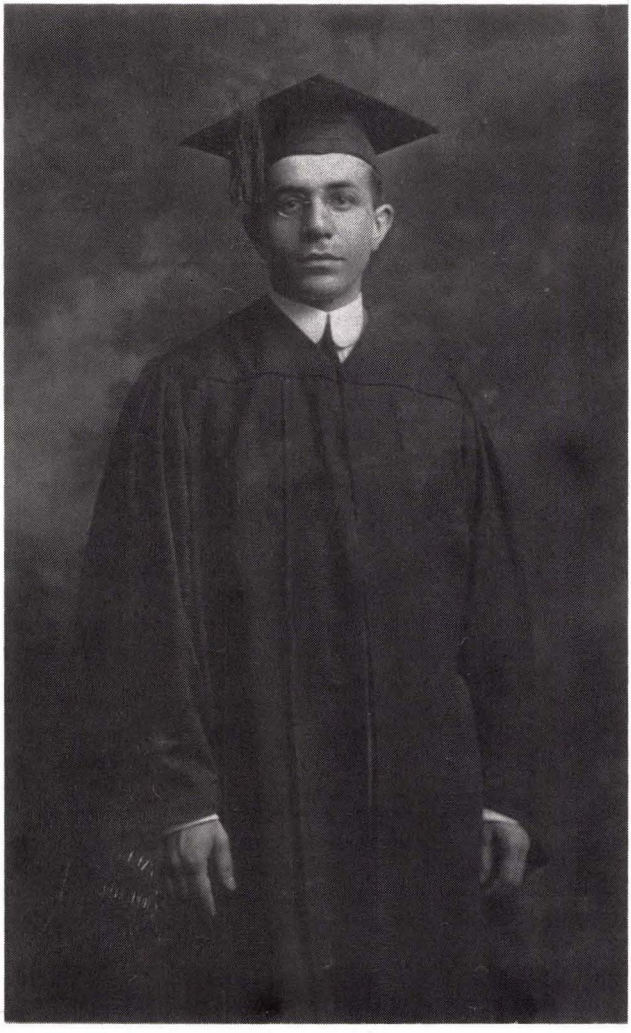
Recently, I was able to get some information from Evelyn White, the wife of Achevah member, Samuel White, who was graduated from the Yale Law School in 1910. Evelyn was told that between 1908 and 1910 Sam lived in a dormitory on campus and had a group of friends who were the cream of the intellectuals in the New Haven and Yale communities.

Sam's mother had presented him with a beautiful samovar in which he prepared tea in his room for his friends, and sometimes on hot nights, sat out on the fire escape where they held their discussions.

It was on one such evening in 1908 that Sam White and some of his friends conceived the idea of a club for Jewish students at Yale, which was to become the Achevah. Louis Sachs recalled that he always acted as toastmaster when the group got together for dinner, and that the Yiddish jokes and songs inspired many hilarious evenings.

Mrs. Louis Nahum (Stella) remembers that her first contact with Achevah was in her home when a group came to hear her brother, Reuven, play. Reuven Koskoff was a 12-year-old pianist at the time, a child prodigy who had been accepted at the Yale School of Music at the age of 10, and later was graduated from Juilliard. Paul Toft, a singer and Achevah member, heard of him

*See "From the Ghetto to Yale" this volume.



*Dr. George Goldman, 1910, at Yale Medical School*

through an uncle of Stella and arranged the recital. For the remainder of their undergraduate years and through graduate school, the Achevah group would meet at the Koskoff home on Sylvan Avenue every Sunday night and be treated to a concert as well as supper.

In addition to Reuven's performances, there would be chamber music, with Achevah members and friends of the talented Koskoffs taking part.

Another feature during the evening would be a reading in Yiddish of one of the tales of Scholem Aleichem. Israel Gottlieb, an Achevah member, Yale Law School student, and Hebrew scholar, gave the readings.

Stella's husband-to-be, Louis Nahum, came to all the music groups. He also took time off from his classes at Yale to help Stella, who was very young, with algebra and geometry. She was outstanding in music but not in these two subjects.

In 1918, Dr. and Mrs. Nahum were married. Music and Achevah continued to be an important part of their lives.

I spent a few days talking with Mrs. Robert Hyman (Rose), who had a wealth of information which she was glad to share with me. Rose said she first heard of the Achevah in 1911. The club had disbanded for some reason in 1908, but started meeting again in 1912.

"Originally the group formed to meet one another socially, as Jews at Yale," Rose said. "They loved to sing, and most of their singing was done at the Old Heidelberg restaurant, which was on Park Street near Elm in those days."

Rose remembered that they would take a melody and write original lyrics for it, and lots of laughter prevailed. She showed me a large silver loving cup with all their names inscribed on it from which they drank in a ceremonial manner.

Sometimes they would devote part of the evening to "roasting" some of the members in a humorous way. Louis Sachs told me they would sit around the dinner table talking and making wisecracks in Yiddish, or writing poetry. They had this kind of get-together once or twice a year from 1912 through the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1912, the Achevah Club rented a few rooms where they could meet, in a building on the corner of George and High Streets, which also housed the Hebrew Institute. It was a meeting place for the students and there was always someone there, as in a fraternity house.

Rose showed me a program book which celebrated the Eleventh Annual Reunion of Achevah, June 14, 1919, which was held at the Cafe Mellone. The booklet contained the dinner menu and the program, including the members' favorite songs, "Men of Achevah" and "Old Achevah," vital statistics, listing their children (male or female and number), toasts given by Toastmaster Charles Cohen, speeches given by S. Michael Cohen, "A Decade in Achevah," Isadore Shapiro, "The Achevah Ideal," Harry Kugel,

"Achevah Reunions," and Ephraim Shorr, "The Second Generation."
Also listed were the following people:

RESIDENT MEMBERS

| | |
|---|---|
| Samuel Alpert | |
| Barnett Berman | 865 Chapel St. |
| Hyman A. Bettigole | 173 Edgewood Ave. |
| Dr. Louis Blumberg | New Haven Hospital |
| Harry Caplowitz | 123 Scranton St. |
| Julius Cohen | 11 Edgar St. |
| Charles Cohen | 865 Chapel St. |
| Abe G. Cugell | 150 Bishop St. |
| Benjamin F. Goldman | 39 Church St. |
| Dr. George Goldman | 1 Howe St. |
| Barnett Hoffman | 113 Church St. |
| Robert E. Hyman | New Haven Register |
| Dr. Daniel Levy | New Haven Hospital |
| Dr. Louis Nahum | 252 York St. |
| Joseph Sachs | 185 Church St. |
| Louis Sachs | 185 Church St. |
| Ephraim Shorr | 787 Grand Ave. |
| Harry Silverstone | 978 E. Main St. Bridgeport |
| Paul Toft | |
| Jacob Weinstein | 6 Church St. |
| Samuel J. White | 865 Chapel St. |

NON-RESIDENT MEMBERS

| | |
|---|---|
| Herman Alofsin, II | Norwich, CT |
| Jack Berman | Hartford, CT |
| Jack Breslav | Hartford, CT |
| Charles Brody | Bridgeport, CT |
| Dr. Louis. Chernoff | Denver, CO |
| S. Michael Cohen | New York, NY |
| William S. Feinberg | Montreal, Canada |
| George J. Ginsberg | Alexandria, LA |
| Bennett Glazer | Bronx, NY |
| M.F. Goldstein | Atlanta, GA |
| Israel Gottlieb | |
| William Greenbaum | Philippine Islands |
| Arthur Hirshon | New York, NY |
| Harry Klein | New York, NY |
| George Kramer | New York, NY |
| Samuel Kramer | New York, NY |
| Harry Kugel | Riverdale, NY |
| Dr. Peter Sarason | Brooklyn, NY |
| Isaac Schine | Bridgeport, CT |
| Isadore Shapiro | New York, NY |

| | |
|---|---|
| Michael Slotnick | Holyoke, MA |
| Alexander Weinstein | Portland, OR |
| Norman Weinstein | New York, NY |
| Arthur Weiss | |

These 45 men comprise the complete membership of Achevah.

In the late 1920s, a group of Jewish students at Yale started a branch of Pi Lambda Phi, a Jewish fraternity, in a house on Grove Street just off Whitney Avenue. This may have taken the place of the Achevah in the lives of Jewish students at Yale. The group became less active around that time except for an occasional get-together.

Rose said her husband, Bob, always acted as coordinator for the reunions through the years, since he was based in New Haven. She remembers especially a letter Bob received from George J. Ginsberg, a Yale Law School graduate, who lived in Alexandria, Louisiana, asking Bob to arrange for a dinner to celebrate the 50th reunion of Achevah. Bob wrote to all the members, telling of their plans and encouraging them to come, as "This could be the last one."

It was a gala weekend which included a cocktail party at the Hymans' on Friday evening, the Yale-Princeton game Saturday afternoon, and finally, a dinner at the Hotel Taft, November 16, 1962, with all the camaraderie of the early meetings.

This was indeed the last reunion of the Achevah men at Yale. Within the next few years a number of the members passed away, including Bob Hyman and George Ginsberg, both of whom had been instrumental in getting the Achevah together for the last time.

The needs and yearnings of Jewish youth at Yale and in the community in 1908, led them to find their answer in this remarkable group called Achevah.

Oh, Achevah, dear Achevah,
Thy sons shall ne'er forget
The golden haze of Achevah days
Is 'round about us yet.
The days of yore may come no more,
But through our manly years
The thought of you
Oh Achevah true,
Will fill our eyes with tears.

## THE YALE MENORAH SOCIETY

Editor's note: The following is reprinted from "The Menorah Movement," 1914, Intercollegiate Menorah Association, Ann Arbor, Michigan, pp. 136-137.

The Yale Menorah Society was definitely organized at a meeting in Dwight Hall on Wednesday, November 5, 1913.

There had been several attempts at Yale to organize societies for the study of Jewish literature, history, and problems. There was four years ago an Hebraic Club, with a large membership of both Jews and Christians, which heard several lectures and established a little library, but fell away in the absence of Professor Charles F. Kent and Mr. Eugene Lehman, its leading spirits. In the spring of 1912 the Kadimah was formed as an off-campus organization for study and settlement work. It brought down one speaker, Dr. J.L. Magnes, and studied Ahad Ha'Am in a class of gradually dwindling size. In the spring of 1913 a hasty organization of a Menorah Society was effected with Mr. Eugene Lehman of the faculty as President. Mr. Lehman left the University that year.

At the meeting on November 5, the Society was made representative of all classes of Jews in the University, and received the approval of the authorities in letters from Secretary Anson Phelps Stokes of the University, Dean Jones of the College, Director Chittenden of the Sheffield Scientific School, Professor William Lyon Phelps, and Professor William Howard Taft. Addresses were delivered by Charles Cohen, the newly elected President of the Society, President Henry Hurwitz, of the Intercollegiate Menorah Association, Professor B.W. Bacon, acting pastor of the University, and Secretary Stokes. Since then several other professors have shown an active interest in the Society.

The Society's activities have been confined to the lectures procured by the aid of the Intercollegiate Association. We have listened to Dr. H.G. Enelow, who spoke on "Some Common Errors About Judaism;" to Doctor Stephen S. Wise on "What's Wrong with the Jew?" and to Professor M.M. Kaplan on "The Problem of Judaism." Rabbi Samuel Schulman, Professor Israel Friedlaender, and Rabbi Moses Hyamson are expected to speak in the near future. The one hundred and ten members of the Society are not quite ready for intensive and thorough study by themselves, but the stimulation of the lectures will certainly make groups necessary for next year.

The attitude of the University authorities is distinctly favorable, and the student body, in so far as it has any attitude, regards the Society with a great deal of respect. The mass of material, if we call the Menorah members that, has been brought together; there remains only to leaven it. The men who have attended the lectures have clearly benefited, both in self-knowledge and in self-respect. We are sure that they will soon be ready for thorough, scholarly work.

# JEWS IN NEW HAVEN: 1840-1860
# THE AMERICANIZATION OF A COMMUNITY

Matthew L. Cohen

The early history of the New Haven Jewish community is filled with great controversy. Early on, the community realized a need for change. They were forced to adapt the ritual practices and the communal organization of Europe to life in America. It was both the amount and the direction of the community's Americanization over which strife arose, for the changes thought necessary depended on the individual, on each person's upbringing, his personal values, and his goals in life. Because the community was composed of many individuals there was bound to be a conflict of ideals. Despite the small numbers in this community, its early history stands as both a foundation for the New Haven Jewish community of today and as a model for the process of cultural and social change in 19th century America.

There is very little information about any Jewish activity in New Haven until 1834. The majority of New Haven's Jewish community came from Bavaria, Germany. Bavaria was a land of mixed feelings, and many of these feelings were strongly anti-semitic.

In 1813, a body tax was placed on the Jews of Bavaria.[1] The Jewish population was no longer free to grow or to engage in trade. Practically all Jews were without a vote. They were forced to live in restricted areas, ghettos or the "Jew's Lane". There had been several anti-Jewish riots.[2] The result of these adverse conditions was the wide-scale emigration between 1830 and 1860.

The cause for the persecution was deeply imbedded in the romantic notion of the Christian state. There was little room for a different set of values and ideas. Thus, the Jewish people had no right to live in Bavaria, a Christian state.[3] According to Selma Stern-Tauebler, a Jew living in Bavaria had three possible alternatives, excluding immigration. One was assimilation, a second, compromise, and the third was a "scientific investigation" into Judaism, to determine its essence and, thus, the quality of the Jewish people. This could justify the Jews living in Bavaria if the results were positive. In this third solution, the German rabbis made great headway toward modern theological theories. Yet it was the second option, not the third, which became the central idea behind early reform in America. It was the idea of Americanization, not the isolation of important elements of religion, which was at the root of the early reform in the New Haven congregations. In addition, most of these immigrants had come to the New World for economic, not religious reasons. Their ideas on how the Jewish community should be set up reflected this motivation.

In 1840, there were approximately 18,000 Jews in Amer-


כפי מנהג אמעריקא

תפלות בני ישורון
ליום הכפורים

THE DIVINE SERVICE

OF AMERICAN ISRAELITES

FOR THE DAY OF ATONEMENT.

BY

ISAAC M. WISE.

CINCINNATI:

BLOCH & CO., PUBLISHERS AND PRINTERS.

*Title page of the "Minhag America," High Holiday prayer book*

ica.[4] Before the large-scale Russian immigration of the 1880's, the population was composed of "Western" European Jews from Germany, Spain, France, Portugal, and some from England, the Netherlands, and Italy. The Jews in America functioned as wholesalers, grocery store owners, bankers, and artisans.[5] They helped form the backbone of America's economy. Connecticut let Jews peddle, visit, even live in the state very early in its history, despite its stringent "Blue Laws," effectively a moral code turned law.

In 1830, the population of New Haven[6] was approximately 10,000. By 1860, that number had quadrupled.[7] This increase was the result of a wide-scale European immigration. A port town accessible to New York made New Haven a desirable place to live for immigrants seeking increased social and economic status.

New Haven, until 1830, had a fairly homogeneous population, mostly of English descent who were actually born in Connecticut.[8] It was a very religious community. Joseph Goldmark, a physician and a leader of the 1848 revolution in Vienna said this upon visiting the town in 1850,

> New Haven is a very friendly, quiet university town situated on Long Island Sound, inhabited by pious puritans, where theaters are banned by law as irreligious institutions and where Sunday boredom has set up headquarters.[9]

Lewis Lehman arrived in New Haven in 1834 from Bavaria and his brother, Charles followed a few years later. Both were observant Jews and Charles Lehman later became an important part of the Jewish community. They followed a pattern typical of European immigration, first sending a "scout" to the New World to find a place for the family to live, in addition to finding a job and making business and social connections. Later, the remainder of the family would emigrate. In this manner, many kinsmen of the first Jewish immigrants in New Haven arrived there over a 20-year period between 1840 and 1860.

By 1840, there were between 15 and 20 Jewish families living in New Haven.[10] The most important members of the community at this time were the Lehmans, Jonas Ullman, Jacob Heller, Louis Mandelbaum, Michael Milander, Louis Rothschild, Sigmund Adler, Israel Bretzfelder, J.C. Katzenberg, Isaac Williams, and William Myers.[11] With this many men, it was possible to form a minyan. Initially, the group met for services infrequently, probably in a room above the store of Heller and Mandelbaum. They called themselves Shaar Shalom, the Gate of Peace.[12] Michael Milander was probably lay-reader, the man assigned the job of conducting the service, even at this early time.[13] The fact that the group had named themselves implied the possession of a Torah scroll, for the readings on Monday, Thursday, and Saturday.

The Jews, once in New Haven, took on jobs very differ-

ent from what they had held in oppressive but sheltered Bavaria. "Most of them opened small stores, becoming dry goods merchants, proprietors of tailoring establishments, druggists and restaurateurs, with one or two large wholesalers."[13] By 1860 there were three major Jewish industrialists, Bernard Shoninger, who manufactured melodeons and later organs and pianos, Isaac Strouse, whose business was corset-manufacturing, and Sigmund Adler, who manufactured umbrellas. To have been in any of these positions on the Bavarian "Jew's Lane" would have been very difficult. Of course, in assuming the important roles of shopkeepers, wholesalers, and industrialists, Jews came in contact with Christians of the city much more frequently than they had in Europe. And they no longer lived in one tight area, reserved for Jews. They began to learn about Christianity and many saw its orderliness and striking beauty as desirable. Aesthetics became a major issue in the reform of synagogue service.

In 1843, the community bought 1.5 acres of land in Westville for $50.00 for a cemetery,[14] establishing itself as a permanent part of the New Haven community.

Early in 1843, the statutes of the state of Connecticut were ammended to allow Jews to form religious societies:

> Jews who may desire to unite and form religious societies, shall have the same right, powers and privileges, as are given to Christians of every denomination by the Laws of the State.[15]

This motion was a follow-up of the constitutional convention of 1818 where freedom of worship was extended to all.[16] So in May, 1843, led by Jonas Ullman, "New Haven's Jewish families emerged from private worship to dedicate the first synagogue of Mishkan Israel",[17] the Tabernacle of Israel. Though the members still worshipped in the same location, above Heller and Mandelbaum's store, and the number of families hadn't increased by more than five and Michael Milander still functioned as layreader, this step cemented the members of the community to New Haven. They now had an organization of their own. But public reaction to the founding of Mishkan Israel was negative. The New Haven Register decried this action in very anti-semitic tones:

> Whilst we have been busy converting the Jews in other lands, they have outflanked us here, and effected a footing in the very centre of our own fortress. Strange as it may sound, it is nevertheless true that a Jewish synagogue has been established in this city - and their place of worship (in Grand Street, over the store of Heller and Mandelbaum) was dedicated on Friday afternoon. Yale College divinity deserves a Court-martial for bad generalship.[18]

A new "reform" congregation, Mishkan Sholom, the Tabernacle of Peace left Mishkan Israel in the summer of 1846 and worshipped in the Brewster Building at the corner of State and Chapel. The orthodox remnant, which continued to call itself Mishkan Israel, was composed largely of the officers of the synagogue and the original settlers in New Haven.[19] The reform group was led by newcomer, Leopold Waterman, who arrived in New Haven in 1844. His brother, Sigmund, preceded him in 1841. The brothers were from a well-to-do Bavarian family and had both firm Jewish as well as extraordinary secular educations. Leopold was noted for his prose and speeches while Sigmund was famous for romantic poetry. Sigmund taught German at Yale between 1844 and 1847, the first Jew to teach in the institution, and became the first Jewish graduate from the Medical School in 1848. After finishing his studies, Sigmund moved to New York to become a highly respected professor of medicine.[20]

Leopold became a successful businessman. He was also credited with being Mishkan Israel's and Mishkan Sholom's spiritual and intellectual leader. He worked toward changes in the Jewish community - competent teachers and regular attendance of congregation members, hymns during the service, and discontinued "disturbing usages".[21] These disturbing usages probably included auctioning aliyahs and talking, arguing, and shouting during services. It was only Leopold Waterman's early death, in 1854, which prevented him from becoming a great spokesman for reform Judaism.

Isaac M. Wise, who was the great leader of early reform Judaism in America, visited both Mishkan Sholom and Mishkan Israel. Recently arrived from Bohemia, Wise spoke of reform and progress to Mishkan Sholom. He also encouraged the reform group's schism. Wise thought very highly of Leopold Waterman. This very early experience in Wise's career helped form his ideas on what Jewish life in America should be.

> My experiences in New Haven, Albany, and Syracuse were of the most signal importance. These German Jewish immigrants, mused I, have not lost their love for Judaism under the influence of their new political and social conditions. Hence their desire for organization. They form congregations, building synagogues, and feel a longing for the physical world.[22]

In July 1849, the smaller, orthodox group of Mishkan Israel rejoined the larger Mishkan Sholom, which had but ten adult male members. If only one was absent the group would not have a minyan. The new group, once again called itself Mishkan Israel. A committee was then appointed to look into buying a lot for a new synagogue.

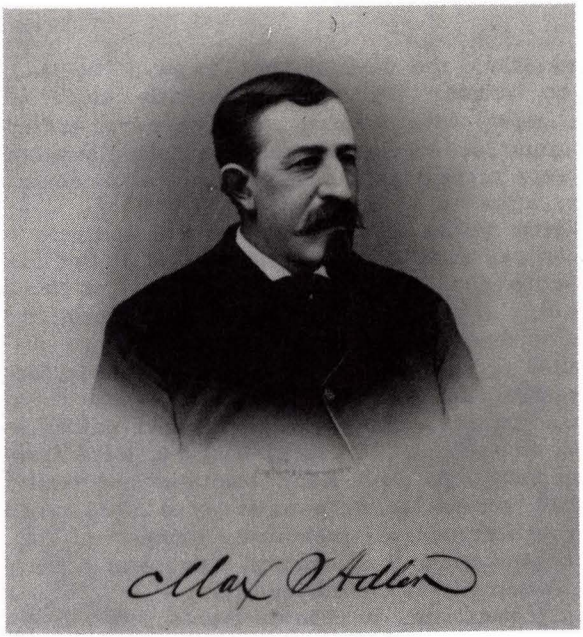
In the years between 1846 and 1856, the Jewish commun-

ity became active. After becoming firmly established in the city, both politically and economically, the congregation worked towards a new synagogue and charitable causes. They formed an Education Society and a debating club. Both Ahavas Achos and Horeb Lodge were founded during this period. Isaac Strouse, teacher and secretary of Mishkan Israel in 1849 and later a lay-reader, compiled a phrase book, "The Polygut Pocket," in 1851. Isaac Leeser, editor of The Occident, after visiting New Haven in 1852, called the community "numerous and well organized."[23] But this decade also brought radical changes in the service - the addition of hymns, English readings, and later, a choir accompanied by a melodeon.

The congregation received $5000 from the will of Judah Touro, a Jewish philanthropist, upon his death on January 6, 1854.[24] In August 1854, the congregation purchased the Third Congregational Church on Court Street for $12,000. A great deal of money was also spent on refitting the building's interior. It was Jacob Heller who led the campaign for a new synagogue. He, along with Jonas Ullman and L. Nadler, attended Touro's funeral and collected the $5000. But the new synagogue probably became a major issue in the continuous debate between the orthodox and reform elements of the congregation. Thus, in 1856, "the leaders of Mishkan Israel were resolved to follow the ritual of extreme Reform, and the dissatisfied champions of Orthodoxy withdrew to organize the B'Nai Sholom Synagogue."[25]

B'nai Sholom never became reunited with Mishkan Israel. It existed from 1856 until 1936 as a small synagogue, reaching a maximum of 70 adult male members. B'nai Sholom first worshipped at the Brewster Building (after Mishkan Sholom left for the Court Street Synagogue), then at 40 Williams St. (1873-1895), and later at 98 Olive St. (1895-1936). Louis Yasgour was probably the first lay-reader and Jacob Thaimau, the first president. At one time there was a B'nai Sholom Ladies Society, Hebrew School, and Society for watching the dead. B'nai Sholom had its own cemetery almost from the start. The land was sold on July 21, 1856, by Jacob Murriss. The congregation never attained much political importance but neither did they deviate greatly from the orthodox tradition.[26]

The dedication of the Court St. Temple on Friday, July 11, 1856, show both the striking beauty of the service and the degree of the congregation's Americanization. M.J. Raphall and Rev. H.A. Henry both spoke of modest topics, moral obligation and the importance of the synagogue.[27] The service itself was brief and was chanted entirely in Hebrew. It consisted of seven "circuits." Seven times the minister, the trustees and the officers, carrying torahs, walked around the synagogue, as on the holiday, Simchas Torah. Each time a psalm was chanted to the accompaniment of a melodeon and a choir. Boys and girls, carrying flowers and bells, marched around in a procession. Non-vocal music accompanying Sabbath prayers had been forbidden, by







*Max Adler and Bernard Shoninger, New Haven Industrialists, ca. 1885*

Jewish law, since the days of the Temple. The congregation's outlook on Judaism had changed greatly since 1840. The service's closing prayer blessed the city's mayor and the common council before Judah Touro, the congregation's benefactor. Many gentiles were present at the service and made contributions to the congregation (see Appendix).[28]

Shortly before the dedication of the Court St. Synagogue, B.E. Jacobs was installed as the first Rabbi of the congregation. It was Jacobs who "made the arrangements" for this service.[29] But as Rabbi, he had little more power over the direction of the congregation than did the lay-readers of old. Until 1940, Mishkan Israel "relied on the strength of its lay leadership for direction, power, prestige and financial support.[30]

Between 1853 and 1863 a number of Jewish sacral organizations, independent of the synagogues, were formed within the commuynity. As with many American communities fo this period, these groups became a major focus of community awareness. Through them, individuals found expression. The formation of these organizations is among the last steps of the process of Americanization within the community.

The constitution of Ahavas Achos, literally love of the sisters, was written on May 29, 1853, and adopted in 1854. Marianna Ullman, one of the very first Bavarian immigrants, was the founder. Originally, this organization had but two functions, the fulfillment of two important Mitzvot, attendance for the sick and the watching of the dead. They held regular meetings, had stringent rules and regulations and collected monthly dues.[31] For both of their functions, they were well paid. From 16 original members the society grew quickly. In 1862 they gave $500 towards building a new mikveh and were saving money for various charities in New Haven. By 1863, members of the society no longer watched the dead. Instead, they hired professional watchers.[32]

Their constitution was clearly a product of their male-dominated society, perhaps a carry-over from Bavaria. Although the principle qualification in becoming a member was being a woman, "only men, whose wives are members (could) be appointed as officers by the members." It was not until 1871, a full 18 years after the constitution was written, that a woman became an officer. This was the first sign of independence. In 1873 the first woman, Henrietta Bretzfelder, was elected president. By this time, not only had the group far outgrown its original purpose, it was actually the "outreach aspect" that was stressed.

On January 20, 1856, Horeb Lodge (25th in the nation) was instituted in New Haven. Its founder, Maier Zunder, selected the charter members. Zunder had been in New Haven for only four years, but he was already the head of a growing wholesale grocery business. M. Zunder and Sons (founded in 1852) which he had taken over from his deceased brother, Samuel. Before the Bavarian immigrant had come to New Haven he had spent four

years in New York, where he had been Vice-President of Zion Lodge Number Two. Thus, his desire to form a community outreach program was guite logical.

The actual goals of Horeb Lodge are complex. Maier Zunder divided them into three categories: community (including care of the sick, the aged, orphans, the poor, widows, and all victims of persecution), the uniting of all people of the Jewish faith, and the improvement of moral character.[33] The organization became instrumental in both the overall Americanization of the community and the uniting of conflicting personalities. "Horeb Lodge immediately became the center of social and educational life in New Haven."[34] By 1877 it had a circulating library of 1100 volumes. Their meetings were full of organ music and great show.

Another important form of social contact occurred within the synagogue itself. In 1856 there were approximately five officers in Mishkan Israel: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Tithingman, the representative to the town meetings.[35] The posts of Minister (the Americanized name for Rabbi), Kosher meat inspector, and teacher were in existence. Milander, though this is never specifically mentioned, probably took on the role of "shammas" in addition to his jobs of teacher, meat inspector, and formerly, lay-reader. He was paid little for his efforts.[36] The important members of Mishkan Israel met regularly to plan social events, make decisions regarding the synagogue and the service, and schedule future meetings. Yearly elections were held.

Hebrew and Jewish education were not among the primary goals of either Mishkan Israel or B'nai Sholom. Both congregations had an appointed teacher, but what these teachers actually taught the children is not known. Most of the basic Jewish knowledge was probably learned at home. By 1860, there was a religious school for boys and girls with a confirmation class at Mishkan Israel. The first children confirmed were Charlotte Ullman and Jennie Heller in 1861.

The period between 1840 and 1860 was very transitional for New Haven schools. But the resourcefulness of the New Haven Jews enabled them to send at least one child, Max Adler, to the local schools.

> He first attended the Washington Street School, studying English in the forenoon and devoting the afternoon to the German and Hebrew Languages. Later he was a student at John E. Lovell's Lancasterian School, concluding his studies at the Webster School on George Street...[37]

In addition to his studies, Adler also was an errand boy for Smith Merwin in 1850, at the age of ten, and a cash boy for Julius Waterman during his elementary and high school years. His Hebrew and German studies certainly were not very time-consuming. Maier Zunder, of course, served on the City's Board of Education from 1868-1892.[38]

The changes in Mishkan Israel's service between 1856 and 1863 became very important to the congregation's later history. It was during these years that the synagogue assumed a sense of direction. It is true that this movement was motivated by few underlying theories, other than those dealing with aesthetic improvement. But they are significant steps in the Americanization of the ritual. Most of these changes can and have been justified by later members of the synagogue.

The glory of the dedication ceremony, with its melodeon accompaniment, became standard in 1860. The melodeon was then introduced and was used until 1862 when it was replaced with an organ. In 1864, a choir was added to the service. A. Lazar was Reverend of the congregation at that time. The very appearance of the Court St. Synagogue, with "ten commandments written in gilt on white tabvlets and supported by two golden eagles,"[39] is indicative of the congregation's idea of the glorious worship of God. At the dedication ceremony, members of the community were invited to visit the congregation on any Friday night or Saturday morning, presumably the only days they now held service. It is also known that in 1860 "various changes were made."[40] This probably included readings in either English or German. In 1864, during Jonas Gabriel's stay as minister, separate seating was dropped and family pews were introduced.

These steps were prompted by the absorption of Christian views of worship. The members of the congregation wished to be more like their neighbors, even in religion. While in the larger cities of New York and Philadelphia, great debates waged concerning American Judaism and synagogue worship, New Haven remained relatively sheltered. Though individuals in the congregation were aware of the ideas presented in these arguments, this information had very little effect on the nature of reform in Mishkan Israel. But the culmination of the reform debates, Isaac Wise's "Minhag America," was adopted by Mishkan Israel in 1873,[41] shortly after it was published. By this time, with a great deal of experience in synagogue reform, the New Haven Jewish community could recognize a good thing.

The changes in the community of New Haven between 1840 and 1864, both in communal structure and synagogue practice, show a group of individuals, with similar economic goals, struggling with the problem of transplanting a culture. These people, once removed from the oppression of Bavaria came to terms with themselves and formed a free-standing society. The adaptation of their religious practices and the changes in the community's structure were influenced by American culture.

*While the above hymn is recited the procession with the Scrolls of the Law moves to the Reader's desk, and the first Scroll is unrolled.*

MINISTER:

Brothers and Sisters! give glory to the Most High, who has intrusted the Word of Salvation to Israel's care;—render praise and adoration to Him, the Everlasting Source of light and truth, who has promised us:—Israel is saved in the Lord an everlasting salvation:"

ח׳ בָּרְכוּ אֶת־יְיָ הַמְבֹרָךְ׃

ק׳ בָּרוּךְ יְיָ הַמְבֹרָךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד׃

ש״ץ בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים וְנָתַן לָנוּ אֶת־
תּוֹרָתוֹ. בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ נוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה׃

ויקרא ט״ז א׳.

וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אַחֲרֵי מוֹת שְׁנֵי בְּנֵי
אַהֲרֹן בְּקָרְבָתָם לִפְנֵי־יְהוָה וַיָּמֻתוּ׃ וַיֹּאמֶר
יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה דַּבֵּר אֶל־אַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ וְאַל־
יָבֹא בְּכָל־עֵת אֶל־הַקֹּדֶשׁ מִבֵּית לַפָּרֹכֶת אֶל־
פְּנֵי הַכַּפֹּרֶת אֲשֶׁר עַל־הָאָרֹן וְלֹא יָמוּת כִּי



Dein, o Gott! ist die Herrschergewalt
Die erhabenste Herrschergewalt
Ueber alles Bestehen und Sein.

Preiset den Herrn
Der himmlischen Sphär'n,
Betet ihn an
Auf heiliger Bahn.

Preiset laut unsern Gott in Gesang,
Betet an in dem heiligsten Drang
Auf den Bergen des Herrn rufet laut:
Er ist heilig, der Herr, unser Hort,
Er ist heilig, und ewig sein Wort.
Heil Israel! das Gott nur vertraut.

Während die obige Hymne abgesungen wird, werden die Thorarollen in Prozession zu des Vorbeters Kanzel getragen, und die erste Thorarolle wird entfaltet.

Vorbeter.

Brüder und Schwestern! gebet Ruhm und Preis dem Allerhöchsten, der Israel betraut hat mit dem Worte der Erlösung; Preis und Anbetung ihm, der da ist die ewige Quelle des Lichtes und der Wahrheit, der uns verheißen: „Israel ist erlöst in dem Ewigen, eine ewige Erlösung."

Vorb. Preiset den Ewigen, den höchstgepriesenen!

Gem. Gepriesen sei der Ewige, der immer und ewig hochgepriesene.

Vorb. und Gemeinde. Preis Dir, Ewiger, unser Gott, Herr aller Welt, der Du uns erwählt hast aus allen Nationen, und uns gegeben Deine Lehre. Gepriesen seiest Du, Ewiger, Geber der Lehre.



*Pages from the morning service, "Minhag America" —*
*In English, Hebrew, and German*

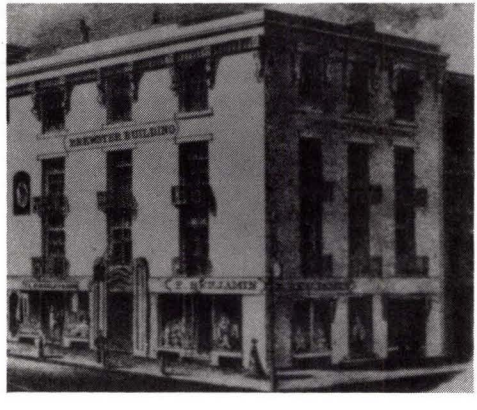
That was inevitable. But these people stood on their own ideologically, as a unique community, separate from any other community of Jews or Gentiles. By 1864, within the context of the United States, the New Haven Jewish community had become an establishment.

## APPENDIX

The following quotation is from: Chiel, Arthur A. Looking Back. Volume 1. New Haven; Arthur Chiel, 1972. July 13, 1972. It was reprinted from the original account in the Daily Register, July 12, 1856.

A voluntary was played upon a melodeon for the space of fifteen minutes after the doors were closed, when a procession of the officers of the Synagogue, bearing the Rolls of the Law, entered, marching beneath a scarlet canopy, and proceeded up the central aisle, chanting as they went. Behind them came a procession of boys and girls, bearing wreaths and bouquets of flowers - the girls dressed in white, and the boys wearing sashes of blue ribbon. Arriving at the ark, the procession made seven cirucuits, during each of which a psalm was chanted by the minister and the choir; bells tinkled, and at times, short interludes were played upon the melodeon. The music was very fine and impressive, and two tenor solos struck us as being quite as sweet and artistic as almost any ever heard in Opera. When the seventh circuit was completed, the Rolls were deposited in the ark, the chanting being still continued. After this, short but excellent sermons were preached by Drs. Raphall and Henry, of New York, and prayers read by Rev. Mr. Jacobs, the minister - which concluded the exercises. A contribution was also taken up, which was liberally responded to by both Gentiles and Hebrews.

The whole Consecration ceremony was imposing, and unusually interesting from its novelty.




*Brewster building, S. E. corner of State and Chapel Sts., ca. 1880 — original home of Mishkan Sholom and B'nai Sholom.*

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***Shoninger Co. advertisement, ca. 1890***

# BROKEN CRACKERS AND CRACKED EGGS

Joseph D. Horowitz

Editor's note: The following three "vignettes" are taken from the author's larger memoir, "Broken Crackers and Cracked Eggs - Recollections of My Boyhood on Grand Avenue, New Haven, Connecticut," written in 1984 and selected for this edition by Harvey N. Ladin.

In addition to working for Mr. Fisher there were errands I ran for my mother. Two stand out in my memory. One was to the Goetz Cracker Company, then located on lower State Street in the area of the wholesale meat companies.

Goetz's was a large factory, turning out a variety of crackers which were popular throughout the East. My purpose in going there was to take advantage of a bargain - a big bagful of broken crackers for just a nickel. I did not know exactly what kind of crackers I would find in my bag but I kept hoping there would be some Zanzibars, my favorite. Zanzibars were a good-sized cracker with alternating vanilla and chocolate stripes. Others I might find were fluted vanillas, Goetz Ginger Snaps, and plain sugar cookies.

To set the record straight, these crackers were not broken into little pieces but perhaps only in half; some of them only had chipped corners. My mother liked to remind me that despite their appearance, the quality of the crackers had not been impaired. Since I had that long walk back from the factory to my home, I felt I was entitled to help myself to my purchase, which I did. I made certain, however, to leave enough in the bag to make my mother feel that she had indeed got a bargain. Some years later the Goetz Cracker Company suffered a disastrous fire and never went back into business.

The other errand I ran was also in the nature of a money-saver. This was to the corner of State and Court Streets where Douglass Brothers was located. They sold eggs, butter and cheese. My purpose in going there was to buy their cracked eggs, which sold at a fraction of the cost of perfect eggs. I would take a pail with me into which they placed my purchase. As with the crackers, the purchaser took his chances; some eggs were only slightly cracked while others were so badly cracked they were oozing their contents. In any event, one got a "good buy" there and I kept returning.

Douglass Brothers had a unique way of effecting a sale. When my egg purchase had been completed by the clerk he would hand me a sales slip indicating the amount owed. I would take exactly five steps to a cage where a female clerk sat behind a window with an opening large enough only to accept my money and my sales slip. This she would stamp and I would take five steps back to the counter to give it to the clerk. He then

handed me my package. I could never understand this procedure. To me the clerk looked very honest.

## I LEARN TO OPEN A CHICKEN

Because of her loss of an arm, my mother taught me how to open a chicken as soon as I was old enough. I guess she did not trust anyone to open it, not even Manning "Manny" Bailey whose meat market she patronized. (Another Manny Bailey, a cousin, was located on Oak Street.)

My mother knew her meats and poultry well because on her arrival in this country as a young girl she went to work for and lived with an elderly couple named Cole who operated a kosher restaurant in New York. Any chicken my mother selected would have had to survive a rigid test. I can see her blowing on the feathers on the underside of the chicken and generally "topping" (feeling) in all the right places. After a final selection was made she handed the chicken to the shochet (slaughterer) who then passed it on to the chicken-flicker, Mrs. Sara Fox. Mrs. Fox was a short, roly-poly woman invariably covered with chicken feathers from head to toe. Her greatest delight occurred on the high holidays when she strutted around shul in all her finery hoping she would be recognized by her customers.

I must have been seven, possibly eight years old, when I was instructed by my mother how to open a chicken. My first move was to split the chicken down its back and part the two halves. I would then reach in to bring out all the innards in one piece. I was careful to see if there were any eggs; it was unthinkable to break any one of them. Many times I would find an egg -- hard shell and all -- ready to have been laid any moment, or so I thought. I always thought that a chicken that had many eggs was a tribute to my mother's selective process; I now knew what all the "topping" was about.

With the eggs safely removed I next gave my undivided attention to the gall. God forbid if this was broken. I carefully looked for the little green pocket and gently removed it. From this moment on it was clear sailing; none of the other parts posed any problem. I started with the craw, cutting into it and removing its inner sac. All the things I was now removing would ultimately wind up in my mother's chicken soup pot. Next came the heart which I prepared by cutting it in half -- that was easy. Now came the chicken fat. While much of it could be removed with ease my mother was concerned about the fat that was attached to the entrails. That could not be wasted, she told me. And so I was instructed to remove all such fat without cutting into these entrails. You must remember that in those days chicken fat was the main source of cooking aid -- Wesson oil would not appear for some time yet. My reward for the job I did in removing all the fat was first choice of the "gribbines" --

those hard pieces of chicken skin that remained after the rendering process. Sometimes gribbines left a lump in your stomach. We had no Alka Seltzer then but every good home had a box of Seidlitz powders handy. To take a Seidlitz powder you had to pour the contents of two packets -- one white and one blue -- into a glass of water, stir and drink. Ooh, that feels good!

The removal of the neck skin was next; this provided my mother with the means of making a "helzel." As much of the neck skin as possible was removed and one end sewed tight. Into the pocket went a delicious preparation akin to today's kishka. The greater the neck skin removed, the bigger the helzel and so my best efforts went into removing as much of it as I could. Next came the chicken's feet. First my mother boiled them in hot water to enable me to remove the tough outer skin. Then I chopped off the nails and now the feet were ready for the pot. Finally a piece of cartilage on "the last part to go over the fence" was removed as well as similar cartilage under each wing and now the carcass was ready for the pot. On some occasions even the chicken's head made the trip. I can still taste the excellent chicken soup my mother was able to serve up from all of the above.

## FISH

Vendors selling all kinds of products from pushcarts and horse and wagons were a regular sight on the avenue. Some made appearances on a daily or weekly basis; others showed up suddenly and unexpectedly when they had a special bargain to offer such as grapes, bananas and the like.

One in particular was the fishman. There were several of them, but my mother always dealt with a short, friendly Italian man who heralded his appearance yelling "Wa-Baish," which we assumed was Italian for fish. He sold all kinds of fish, but my mother seemed to favor flatfish. I remember it seemed to me that we ate more of that kind than any other. His scale was mounted to an upright metal bar attached to his wagon and onto this he would heap fish until my mother cried "Enough." He had always put onto the scale more than my mother wanted but she took all of it because he always said you can have it for such and such a price. He then proceeded to open the fish to clean it and to remove its scales -- all at no extra cost. Finally, the fish were wrapped in newspapers, and my mother departed with her purchase.

At the times of Jewish holidays the fish peddlers did a land office business. Somehow they all knew when the holidays came -- and prices shot up. At Passover they were well stocked with carp, pike, buffalo, and white fish, the choicest ingredients for making gefilte fish. All Jewish women in those days made their own gefilte fish; they had little choice because finding the

product in jars in those days was unheard of.

Much work went into the preparation of gefilte fish, and this is where I again helped my mother; she had only one arm. First I would make certain all scales had been removed. Somehow, plenty remained because at the completion of the process scales were to be found in my hair and all over the sink area. We were now ready to cut the fish into slices measuring about one and one-half inches to two inches in thickness. I allowed my mother to make the divisions. With a sharp knife I cut into each section until I hit the center bone. I would then take a wooden mallet and hammer away through the bone until the slice was neatly severed. The head and tail of the fish was set aside to be put into the cooking pot later.

Now each section of fish had to have its meat carved out. With a sharp knife I carefully cut out the meat, being careful not to cut through the skin. The skin was later to receive and hold securely the succulent mixture my mother was to prepare. After disposing of the center bone of each piece of fish, the fishmeat was placed in a wooden bowl to be chopped up. To this my mother added onion, a potato, and seasonings of all kinds. I kept chopping away until my mother was satisfied she had a good mixture which I was now prepared to stuff back into each separate piece of fish skin. As each piece was completed it was gently laid in a large cooking pot. I would guess she prepared twenty or more pieces at holiday time. The excess stuffing, that for which no more skins remained, was formed into a sort of patty and placed into the pot. These patties were the forerunner of the gefilte fish available today in jars.

As the gefilte fish began to cook, a delicious aroma permeated our kitchen and out into the halls. At Passover the aroma from out kitchen blended with that emanating from the kitchens of the Duklers and Goldbergs until the entire tenement was taken over by the smell of gefilte fish. If the Butlers and McKeons wondered what the odor was, they neither asked nor complained. Oddly enough, as a youngster I did not take too kindly to my mother's gefilte fish even though I played a minor role in its making. It took me a year or so to discover that it was a highly delectable dish and then I sought to make up for lost time. And not too soon at that because now, for the first time, something that was passed off as gefilte fish made its first appearance in the market place.

Oddly enough, in the entire length of Grand Avenue between Olive and East Streets, some six or seven blocks, there was but one fish store. This was William Lickteig's Fish Market, just a few doors away from where I lived. I remember it well. The interior of the store was painted a stark white with black trim. All the tables which held different species of fish nicely displayed on blocks of ice were lined with metal, and in one corner of each table was a hole where melting ice water fell into a trough dug into the floor. Mr. Lickteig was both a whole-

saler and retailer selling all kinds of fish, lobsters, crabs, clams, oysters and the like.

It was the market's window that fascinated me. I could stand for long periods of time looking at all the different kinds of fish that lay in front of me. Sometimes some of the fish seemed as if they were looking back at me. I found myself imagining how each different kind of fish swam around and if they were friendly to each other. I could not figure out how the flatfish swam -- whether horizontally or upright. I don't know to this very day. I could look for hours at the live lobsters Mr. Lickteig always had in his window. Their claws fascinated me, and their slow movement as well. I could not understand the wood wedges in place in their claws and wondered why they were there. I could not understand, too, why some of Mr. Lickteig's lobsters were black and others were red. But I was too young and too timid to go in and ask the only one I knew of who could tell me -- Mr. Lickteig himself. Some years later it came to me why my mother and other Jewish women on the avenue did not trade at Lickteig's. It was the lobsters and all those other crawly things from the bottom of the sea.




*Grand Avenue, near the author's childhood home*

THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW HAVEN, INC.

SUMMARY OF MEETINGS & PROGRAMS 1981-1984

DR. BARRY E. HERMAN

1981-1982

Date: September 24, 1981 (Book Meeting)
Topic: Publication of Jews in New Haven, Vol. III, Edited by Dr. Barry E. Herman and Werner S. Hirsch. Meet the author contributors.
Speaker: Mayor Biagio Dilieto (Who also discussed his trip to Israel)
Location: The Westville Synagogue

Date: December 2, 1981
Topic: The Good Old Days of Growing Up in New Haven
Speaker: Herbert Setlow
Location: Tower One

Date: February 25, 1982
Topic: Picture Viewing (Identify People in Old Photos Through Slides)
Speaker: Harvey Ladin and Werner Hirsch
Location: The Jewish Home for the Aged

Date: March 22, 1982
Topic: The Valley Jews of Derby & Ansonia
Speaker: Rabbi Arthur A. Chiel
Location: Cong. B'nai Jacob

Date: May 5, 1982
Topic: The Way We Were - The 100th Anniversary of Cong. B'nai Jacob
Speaker: Harvey Ladin
Location: Cong. B'nai Jacob

Date: June 6, 1982 (Annual Meeting - Brunch)
Topic: Views and Topics of Interest and Concern
Speaker: Rabbi Robert E. Goldburg
Location: Cong. Mishkan Israel

Dates: August 18 and 25, 1982

Topic: Judaica Exhibit at Yale University (Guided Tours)
Tour Leaders: Edward Jajko and Judith A. Schiff
Location: Yale University Sterling Library

1982-1983

Date: September 12, 1982
Topic: Panel on Jewish History of Yale and New Haven
Final Viewing of Judaica Exhibit
Dinner of Israeli Gourmet Dishes - Yale Dining Hall
Panel: Werner Hirsch, Judith Schiff, William Horowitz, Harvey Ladin and Dr. Dan Oren
Location: Yale University Sterling Library

Date: December 6, 1982
Topic: The Archives of the Jewish Historical Society of New Haven
Speaker: Edith Hurwitz
Location: The Jewish Home for the Aged

Date: April 20, 1983
Topic: New Haven's First German-Jewish Families
Speaker: Charles Grannick
Location: Temple Beth Sholom in Hamden

Date: May 15, 1983
Bus Trip: Exotic Jewish New York
Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation of Harlem
92nd St. YM-YWHA
Satmar Chassidic Community of Williamsburg
World Headquarters of Lubavitch Organization
Mikveh in Crown Heights
Yemenite Synagogue
Lunch in Borough Park
Bus Tour Director: Dr. Barry E. Herman

Date: June 26, 1983 (Annual Meeting-Brunch)
Topic: Jewish Landmarks of New Haven, Past & Present (Slides)
Speakers: Dr. Barry E. Herman and Werner S. Hirsch
Location: The Westville Synagogue

Topic: Automobile Tours of Jewish New Haven (ongoing)
Project Patron: Budget Rent-A-Car of New Haven
Coordinator: Harvey Ladin

1983-1984

Date: September 26, 1983
Topic: Oak Street (Panel)
Panel: Seth Ward, Abraham Silverman, Fred Ticotsky and Dr. Barry E. Herman
Location: The Jewish Home for the Aged

Date: November 20, 1983
Topic: The American Jewish Experience - Ethnic Fair Sponsored by Dr. Barry E. Herman - Sponsored by the Jewish Historical Society of New Haven
Location: Cong. B'nai Jacob

Date: December 13, 1983
Topic: Memories of the Atlas Club
Speaker: Isadore Wexler
Location: The Jewish Home for the Aged

Date: March 25, 1984 (Brunch)
Topic: 100th Anniversary of Cong. Bikur Cholim Sheveth Achim
Speaker: Harvey Ladin and Others
Location: Cong. Bikur Cholim Sheveth Achim

Date: June 24, 1984 (Annual Meeting - Brunch)
Topic: The Early History of the New Haven Hebrew Day School
Speaker: Rabbi Maurice Hecht
Location: The New Haven Hebrew Day School

## 1984-1985

Date: October 25, 1984
Topic: Jewish Landmarks of New Haven, Past and Present - Part I (Prepared by Dr. Barry E. Herman and Werner Hirsch) Slides and Comments
Presenter: Dr. Barry E. Herman
Location: Cong. Beth El-Keser Israel

Date: December 13, 1984
Topic: First Rabbi Arthur A. Chiel Memorial Program
From New Haven Jewish History to American Jewish History
Speaker: Dr. Johnathan D. Sarna
Location: The Westville Synagogue

Date: April 1, 1985
Topic: "Observations of a Jewish Professional: A Fifteen-Year Overview"
Speaker: Arthur Spiegel
Location: Cong. B'nai Jacob

Date: June 9, 1985
Topic: "Israel-in-the-Park," a community-wide celebration in Edgewood Park. The Jewish Historical Society had an exhibit of 25 panels showing scenes of Old Jewish New Haven, assembled by Dr. Barry E. Herman and a slide presentation of Jewish Landmarks of New Haven.

Date: June 30, 1985
Topic: Bus trip to Hartford to see:
1. The Precious Legacy exhibit at the Wadsworth Atheneum
2. Jewish Children's Art from Terezin Concentration Camp at the University of Hartford
3. The Charter Oak Temple, built in 1876 and considered the first synagogue to be built in Connecticut.

Date: July 21, 1985
Topic: Annual Meeting and Brunch
The 25-Year History of Beth El-Keser Israel, through slides and comments and a film of the Beth El Ground-Breaking Ceremony
Presenter: Dr. Alan H. Gelbert
Location: Cong. Beth El-Keser Israel

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JOSEPH D. HOROWITZ - Presently works in the Fund Development Office of the Jewish Home for the Aged in New Haven. Before that he had been Training Manager at the Southern New England Telephone Company. "Broken Crackers and Cracked Eggs" evolved when his family urged him to put in writing the stories he would tell them of his childhood on Grand Avenue.

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