

When Philadelphia Was the Capital of Jewish America

Edited by
Murray Friedman

When Philadelphia Was the Capital of Jewish America

Edited by
Murray Friedman

Philadelphia
The Balch Institute Press
London and Toronto: Associated University Presses

Digitized by Project Zikaron
Touro University-NY Libraries
www.zikaron.tourolib.org
2026

© 1993 by Associated University Presses, Inc.

All rights reserved. Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use, or the internal or personal use of specific clients, is granted by the copyright owner, provided that a base fee of $10.00, plus eight cents per page, per copy is paid directly to the Copyright Clearance Center, 27 Congress Street, Salem, Massachusetts 01970.
[0-944190-13-8/93 $10.00+8¢ pp, pc.]

Associated University Presses
440 Forsgate Drive
Cranbury, NJ 08512

Associated University Presses
25 Sicilian Avenue
London WC1A 2QH, England

Associated University Presses
P.O. Box 338, Port Credit
Mississauga, Ontario
Canada L5G 4L8

The paper used in this publication meets the requirements of the American National Standard for Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

When Philadelphia was the capital of Jewish America / edited by Murray Friedman.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-944190-13-8
1. Jews—Pennsylvania—Philadelphia—Biography. 2. Jews—Pennsylvania—Philadelphia—History. 3. Judaism—Pennsylvania—Philadelphia—History. 4. Philadelphia (Pa.)—Biography.
I. Friedman, Murray, 1926– .
F158.9.J5W48 1993
974.8'11004924—dc20 92-54949
CIP

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

When Philadelphia Was the Capital of Jewish America

SARA F. YOSELOFF MEMORIAL PUBLICATIONS
In Judaism and Jewish Affairs

This volume is one in a series established in memory
of Sara F. Yoseloff,
who devoted her life to the making of books.

Contents

1. Introduction: The Philadelphia Group—A Collective Portrait
   MURRAY FRIEDMAN 9
2. Isaac Leeser and the "Philadelphia Pattern"
   LANCE J. SUSSMAN 22
3. "Souls Have No Sex": Philadelphia Jewish Women and the American Challenge
   DIANNE ASHTON 34
4. The Patriarch—The Life and Legacy of Mayer Sulzberger
   DAVID G. DALIN 58
5. Sabato Morais and the Founding of the Jewish Theological Seminary
   ROBERT E. FIERSTIEN 75
6. Cyrus Adler, The Philadelphian
   IRA ROBINSON 92
7. Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen and the Philadelphia Group
   PHILIP ROSEN 106
8. Orthodox Institution Builder: Rabbi Bernard Lewis Levinthal
   PHILIP ROSEN 126
9. The Making of an American Jewish Culture
   JONATHAN D. SARNA 145
10. The Americanization of Reform Judaism: Joseph Krauskopf—A Case Study
    MARTIN P. BEIFIELD, JR. 156
11. Jewish Leadership Then and Now
    MURRAY FRIEDMAN AND DANIEL J. ELAZAR 173

Index 189

When Philadelphia Was the Capital of Jewish America

1

Introduction: The Philadelphia Group—A Collective Portrait

MURRAY FRIEDMAN

When plans were going forward to organize the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York in 1902, Dr. Henry Pereira Mendes, minister of Shearith Israel Congregation in that city, declared them to be fine. This was because he said "Cyrus Adler and Solomon Schechter [whom Adler and his colleagues in Philadelphia were instrumental in bringing over from England to head it] were all the guarantees, we Jews of America, need ask."[1]

When one considers great American Jewish leaders today, we think of such figures as Jacob Schiff, Louis Marshall, Louis Brandeis, and Rabbi Stephen Wise, several of whom, whatever their origins, were New Yorkers. A survey of American Jewish historians of "The Greatest American Jewish Leaders" in *American Jewish History* in December 1988 found that with the exception of Isaac Leeser, chazan at Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia during the first half of the nineteenth century, not a single Philadelphian is mentioned. (Leeser and Isaac Mayer Wise, the founder of Reform Judaism in this country, got four and two votes for the nineteenth century. Louis Brandeis in the twentieth got four votes, and Wise and Mordecai Kaplan, the distinguished Jewish thinker, three each. Julius Rosenwald and Henrietta Szold got one and two votes.[2] It appears to be the "iron law" of history that if people are not written about—and there are virtually no biographies of the Philadelphians—they and their works, however important, cease to exist.

Mendes's comment highlights an extraordinary period in American Jewish history when, as Daniel J. Elazar has pointed out, Philadelphia may well lay claim to having been the "Jewish capital of the United States."[3] It says a great deal, too, about one of the leading Jewish Philadelphians, who, together with a number of other extraordinary

figures in this city, in cooperation with Jewish leaders in New York and elsewhere, played a seminal role in the creation and development of many of the central institutions on which American Jewish life came to rest. In a speech delivered at Dropsie College on Founder's Day, 9 March 1924, Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen—one of them himself—described them as the Philadelphia Group.[4]

The Philadelphians embarked upon their role at a defining moment in American Jewish life. Beginning in the 1880s and until the 1920s when new and racist immigration laws brought the flow to a virtual halt, thousands of Jews were pouring into the United States. By 1914, the tiny population in this country had swelled to two million. Most settled on the Lower East Side in New York, but considerable numbers moved on to other communities. In Philadelphia alone, one of the larger Jewish population centers, the numbers had jumped from twelve thousand in 1884 to seventy-six thousand by 1907.

The kind of Jewish life that would emerge from such a large migration was by no means certain. Some came from Orthodox backgrounds and would continue to practice and preserve traditional Judaism. Others, however, were drawn to secular and Socialist ideas that clashed with historic Judaism. Many sought to break out of the religious and economic barriers they faced in order to enjoy the greater freedom and the temptations a more open society held out to them.

In coming to a new environment, there were few ground rules to guide them. The choices, it appeared to many, were a "Protestantized" Jewish Reform movement, separatist Orthodoxy that was equally anathema to most, or disappearance into the melting pot. It was at this juncture that a group of Philadelphia Jewish leaders stepped forward to conceive and then build with other Jews the Joint Distribution Committee, Gratz and Dropsie Colleges, the Jewish Chautauqua Society, the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Historical Society, a revived Jewish Publication Society, the Conservative religious movement, and other institutions. They understood, as Jerald S. Auerbach has noted, that "the task for American Jewish leaders, then and since, was to reconcile the Jewish past with an American future, teaching immigrants how to remain Jews while becoming Americans."[5]

Who were these Philadelphians? What were the forces that led them to play such a crucial role at this special moment?

The leading figures were Judge Mayer Sulzberger (whom David Dalin in his essay calls "The Patriarch"), Cyrus Adler, Moses Aaron Dropsie, Sabato Morais, Solomon Solis-Cohen, Leon Edward Levy, and Bernard L. Levinthal. Others on the periphery but worth men-

tioning were Joseph Krauskopf, Henry Berkowitz (who proposed the idea for the Jewish Chautauqua Society), Joseph and Samuel S. Fels, A. S. W. Rosenbach, and Horace Stern.

Most of the major figures were Orthodox Jews. Their backgrounds, however, marked them off sharply from their co-religionists flooding into the country. They were members of Congregation Mikveh Israel, a sephardic synagogue founded in 1740. As one of the oldest Jewish religious institutions in the United States, it had grown up with the country and was as much an historic idea as a place of worship. They were also of German-Jewish origins and had either been born or lived in Philadelphia for a long time. Rabbi Levinthal, who helped form orthodox structures nationally as well as locally, was not of this background—he came to this country from Lithuania in 1891—but developed close ties with the other Philadelphians and worked with them in the American Jewish Committee.

In his essay here, Sarna characterizes the most important members of the group as lay people who were not especially eager to turn over leadership of the community entirely to the rabbis. In doing so, they foreshadowed, perhaps, the beginning of the dominance of lay leaders, and, one might add lawyers, in American Jewish life.[6] A number in the Philadelphia Group were in fact Jewishly informed volunteers or lay people. Sulzberger, Dropsie, and Stern were lawyers; Solis-Cohen, a physician and poet; Adler, a scholar; Levy, a chemist and inventor; Rosenbach, an art and rare book dealer; and Joseph and Samuel Fels, businessmen. Morais, Levinthal, Berkowitz, and Krauskopf, however, were rabbis. Whether lay people or clergy, they were all conscious of the special leadership role that they now played.[7]

Although deeply immersed in Jewish life, they managed nevertheless not to ignore their responsibility to the broader community. In addition to the pioneering work he did on tuberculosis and other illnesses, Rosen reports, Solis-Cohen served on the Philadelphia School Board for many years. At his death, a public school was named after him. Schools were also named after Samuel Fels and Sulzberger. The latter became the first Jewish judge to serve on Philadelphia's Court of Common Pleas. Leon Levy invented an engraving process permitting newspapers to print halftone pictures, and he published and edited several newspapers. The commanding passion of Joseph Fels was Henry George's single tax program, and he spent much of his life (and Fels Naphtha's money, to the despair of his brother), promulgating the economist's and other left-wing ideas throughout the world.

Adler has received the widest public recognition during his time and in subsequent years. He was named librarian of the Smithsonian

Institution in Washington, D.C., in 1893. Later, he moved up to become assistant secretary in 1905, the equivalent of an undersecretary of the Cabinet, according to Robinson. So highly were the Philadelphians regarded by the Protestant establishment in their hometown that at a time when social discrimination against Jews was rising all over the country, Sulzberger was a member and Morais an honorary member of Philadelphia's elite Union League club. In serving their beloved Jewish and civic communities, the Philadelphia Group established a pattern of pluralistic integration that has become the model or ideal of American Jewish life.

"Every country [and here one might add every community]—even more every era," John Lukacs suggests, "has the aristocracy it deserves," and Philadelphia's Jewish leadership took on the social and cultural patterns of the community in which they lived. That is, unlike Europe, where distinctions of birth, and New York and other parts of the country, where wealth elevated people above the rest, Philadelphia was unique. "The scene and its components were patrician rather than aristocratic; solidly bourgeois (in the best sense of that often-misused word)," Lukacs adds. Until roughly the Second World War, these upper-class families—almost an extended family—dominated the business and cultural life of the city. "The aristocratic ethos of an establishment," sociologist E. Digby Baltzell has taught, "emphasizes the upper class members' duty to lead in contrast to the snobbish ethos of caste [which] emphasizes only the right to privilege."[8]

The Philadelphia Group modeled themselves on this earlier Protestant Establishment concept of leadership. (I say earlier because by the late 1960s both the Protestant and Jewish leadership classes in the city had ceased to lead as even Baltzell was forced to concede sadly in a little noted essay, "The Protestant Establishment Revisited.") Save for Samuel and Joseph Fels, the Philadelphians were not men of wealth. They were, nevertheless, a Jewish elite in the sense that Lukacs and Baltzell have described. At its heart lay a transcending idea, which, in the case of the Philadelphia Group, was their great pride in and devotion to the preservation of Jewish life. Louis Finkelstein tells of an occasion when Adler needed to talk to President Theodore Roosevelt on a matter involving Jews and an appointment was made for him in the White House on a Saturday. Adler phoned the president's secretary to inform him this was the Jewish Sabbath. Shortly, the President himself was on the line to apologize and to rearrange the appointment to the following Monday.[9]

At a time of vast social change with the accompanying strains that change inevitably creates, one may well ask what accounted for their

surefootedness as Jews. The answer stems in large measure from their experience of living as part of an organic Jewish, as well as upper-class, Protestant community. Unlike their New York counterparts, the Philadelphians were neither strangers to one another nor the community in which they lived. "Philadelphia was a town of families, where even the arrivistes were families."[10] Sulzberger and Adler were cousins. The former read law in the office of Moses Dropsie. Krauskopf and Berkowitz were brothers-in-law. The members of the Philadelphia Group were friends as well as *mishpocha* who lived physically close to one another and went to the city's famed (and elite) Central High School.

The idea of a community of commitment and leadership had its origins in perhaps the most extraordinary Jewish Philadelphian of all, Isaac Leeser. Aided by a group of farsighted women, but mainly through his own creative genius and commitment as Lance Sussman and Dianne Ashton demonstrate in their essays, Leeser conceived and set up, albeit in an early and abortive form, virtually all the institutions his successors were able to plant more firmly later. As a staunch supporter of Orthodox Judaism, he guided it toward necessary change, even as he held out strongly against Protestantizing efforts all around him. He also stood against those elements in the dominant Reform movement who were discovering Jesus as a "representative Jewish thinker." Arthur Hertzberg puts it well when he writes that Leeser (along with several others) believed Jews "had no right to reform into American respectability."[11]

Another characteristic of these Philadelphians was that a number were not married. Leeser and the redoubtable Rebecca Gratz, as well as most of the women Ashton describes here, were single. So, too, were Mayer Sulzberger and Moses Dropsie.[12]

As Leeser neared the close of his life, he turned to his young disciple Sulzberger to carry on his work. He exacted a promise from him to take over his newspaper, the *Occident*. Sulzberger did so for a year. In passing on the baton, Leeser initiated the Philadelphia model of communal leadership that endured down to World War I and even beyond. Adler was Sulzberger's protégé. In turn, Adler served as a model for one of Philadelphia's most distinguished lawyers and Jewish communal leaders, Morris Wolf and his law partner, Horace Stern. The latter was active in the American Jewish Committee in New York and went on to serve as chief justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court from 1952 to 1957. In 1991, the death of Wolf's son Edwin, a historian and Jewish communal leader of distinction, may be said to have marked the end of the line for the Philadelphia Group.

This "cousinhood"—to use Daniel J. Elazar's term—was an inti-

mate connection that did not exist in New York whose major Jewish leaders were often newcomers to the city. The primacy of the Philadelphians was recognized in the extraordinary deference given to them by the New Yorkers and others. It was largely Adler's idea that led to the founding of the American Jewish Committee. Justice Stern, Adler's young protégé, recalled sitting around Sunday afternoons in Louis Marshall's library: "I see once more in mind's eye Oscar Straus and Irving Lehman, Abram Elkus and Cyrus Sulzberger, Julius Rosenwald and somewhat later, Cardozo, Felix Warburg and others" who "looked upon Cyrus as, together with Marshall, their natural adviser in the solution of all difficult Jewish problems."[13]

Jews all over the country deferred to them for ideas and communication skills to help them carry out their common purposes. "Will you act as a committee of one on appeal, and at your convenience in moving forward the project?" banker Jacob H. Schiff wrote to Sulzburger on the subject of funding the new Bible translation for English-speaking Jews.[14] Sulzberger, Morais, and especially Adler rose to preside over most of the institutions they helped to create—at one point Adler headed five simultaneously—including the American Jewish Committee and Jewish Theological Seminary during this "golden age" of Philadelphia Jewry.

At critical moments in history, it has often been noted, extraordinary individuals come forward to take command of their peoples' destiny even when their personal wishes might be otherwise. This was true of the Philadelphia Group. Were it not for the circumstances of the times, Maxwell Whiteman has suggested, one might imagine Morais continuing his studies of Hebrew Italian literature and Adler playing out his career at the Smithsonian. Enjoyment for Sulzberger "meant a fine imported cigar, hobnobbing with fellow members of Philadelphia's prestigious Union League and browsing the shelves of his own exquisitely fine library, then perhaps the most impressive private collection of Jewish books and manuscripts in America."[15]

Sedentary in disposition, the latter rejected President Taft's offer to become U.S. ambassador to Turkey, a plum that his contemporary Oscar S. Straus readily accepted. Adler gave up his distinguished career in scholarship, according to Louis Finkelstein, because he felt that the greatest service he could render American and world Jewry "was not personal development as a biblical scholar, but the establishment of institutions that would create many scholars."[16]

Their reluctance to move in larger circles along with the paucity of biographies and other historical writings on them is certainly part of the reason for their failure to receive greater recognition. To some degree staying close to home was a product of their fierce love of

Philadelphia. E. Digby Baltzell has suggested in *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia* that the most prominent families in Philadelphia, responsive to Quaker influences, have preferred to lead a quiet and comfortable life in their own community rather than enter the maelstrom of public affairs like Puritan-dominated Bostonians who have made a far greater mark upon the nation. Sulzberger, who Dalin argues here, was as significant a figure in American Jewish history as Louis Marshall and other more recognized Jewish leaders, hated to travel to New York. Persuaded at the age of sixty-three to become the first president of the American Jewish Committee, he did so only on the condition he could remain in his beloved city. (Fortunately, Adler was willing to become his eyes and ears.) The Jewish Theological Seminary trustees strove to get Morais, its first head, to come to live in Gotham, but, as Fierstien points out, he could not tear himself away from Philadelphia.

Although reluctant to assume the mantle of leadership, once they did so they engaged in it fully—and often courageously. When, for example, a movement developed at the Seminary to force out the prickly and controversial Mordecai Kaplan, Adler, who headed the Seminary at the time and was not even sympathetic to Kaplan's ideas, refused to go along.

The Philadelphia Group lived in a period of intense persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe. They played a central role in developing machinery for handling the new Jewish immigration to this country and helped to create the first modern Jewish defense arm to deal with the harassment that brought them here in such large numbers: the American Jewish Committee (AJC). It is no accident that Sulzberger became its first and Adler, after Marshall, its third president even though the agency had its headquarters in New York.

As presidents of the Committee, Sulzberger and Adler, along with Schiff and Marshall, led the battle for the abrogation of the commercial treaty between the United States and Russia. The czar's government insisted that visiting Jews confine themselves to the Pale of Settlement and viewed emigrant Jews when they were naturalized as its subjects, thereby making them second-class citizens. Actually, AJC's move was a protest against persecution of the Jews there.

Initially, AJC struggled against the resistance of the State Department and the White House as well as some foot dragging on the part of other Jewish leaders. Irritated with their aggressiveness, President Roosevelt complained to Adler, "Do you want me to go to war with Russia?"[17] When Congress almost unanimously approved the measure abrogating the treaty, it established a precedent that many years later would serve American Jewry well in the passage of the Jackson-Vanik

bill that withdrew favored nation trade privilege from the Soviet Union because of Soviet harassment of Jews and other groups.

It is important to remember that the Philadelphians led the organizations they helped to form when there was not the extensive Jewish "civil service" that exists today. But even as they responded creatively to threats to the safety and security of Jews, they kept their eyes firmly on the longer range and ultimately more enduring struggle to create a viable Jewish life in this country. Justice Stern put it well when he wrote, "To Marshall fell the lot of protecting the *rights* of the Jewish people; Cyrus Adler was more interested in their obligations. By his planning and organization of Jewish centers of learning he established a revival in this country of Jewish spirit and culture."[18]

The importance of this can hardly be exaggerated. The failure to develop a parallel Americanization and professionalization of Catholic scholarship in this country at the time has been lamented by Father John Tracy Ellis and other Catholic scholars. Edwin S. Gaustad has suggested that the reason for this failure was that "the Catholic community had no Cyrus Adler."[19]

The Philadelphians were men of great perception and energy but they were not supermen. They suffered from many of the limitations of their group, their class, and their times. They would never have understood today's movement for women to move into Jewish life at leadership levels. Sulzberger looked down on those who engaged in good works as "damned society ladies." He was "suspicious," Sarna writes, "of those who married them."

Nor were they able to forsee the importance of the creation of a Jewish state both to world and American Jewry. Only Solis-Cohen may be said to have been a Zionist and then only briefly. Sulzberger memorialized against the Balfour Declaration in which the British Foreign Office promised to create a Jewish national homeland in Palestine.[20] Joseph Fels, the most iconoclastic of the Philadelphia Group, was willing to accept a Jewish state if it was built on Henry George single tax principles outside of Palestine. By 1912, however, according to his biographer, he "edged away from territorialism and toward Palestinian Zionism." Following his death, his wife, Mary, turned away from his single tax crusade and worked on behalf of the creation of a Jewish homeland. (She said that her husband had appeared to her in a dream and urged her to do so.)[21]

The reluctance of the Philadelphians to line up with political Zionism stemmed in part from the secular tilt of those who controlled the movement rather than the usual fear of charges of "dual loyality." During World War I when the Allies endorsed the Balfour Declaration, Adler was impelled to speak out against a Zionism that was

"areligious and even antireligious."[22] Their views were not unlike that of Ahad Ha'am who sought a revived Jewish national culture in Palestine in which all Jews everywhere in the world would find pride and meaning. And they shared the view of Samuel Fels who sought "the upbuilding of Palestine for all the peoples and making of it what a country should be."[23] The best that can be said for the Philadelphians was that they were non-Zionists rather than anti-Zionists.

The Philadelphians, nevertheless, served as a bridge bringing other leading American Jews into a closer relationship with the Zionists with whom they differed. In 1924, Adler and Horace Stern sent a letter with Marshall and Herbert Lehman to one hundred fifty prominent American Jews. "The time has come," they declared, "when we firmly believe that the duty rests upon the Jews of this country who are not affiliated with the Zionist Organization of America to consider seriously their relations to the economic problems of Palestine and to its cultural and industrial upbuilding.[24]

Adler worked closely with Chaim Weizmann who knew, like the New Yorkers, he had to involve the Philadelphians in expanding the role of the Jewish Agency, the unofficial governing body of the future Jewish state. Adler quickly became one of its most influential architects. Following Marshall's death, Adler took over his role as the key non-Zionist in the group serving both as president of its council and chairman of its administrative committee. When Weizmann (the head of the Jewish Agency) came under attack by radicals led by Vladimir Jabotinsky, who blamed him for the adoption by the British government of a White Paper curtailing land sales and Jewish immigration, Adler went to Weizmann's defense by reminding Felix Warburg, an important financier who was thinking of resigning, of the importance of non-Zionists like them staying on.[25]

In the final analysis, it was the Philadelphia Group's view of how American Jews should relate to their brethren in Palestine that came to be the view that prevailed among American Jews. Jews would come to find Israel a source of emotional and even spiritual importance and bend extraordinary energy in supporting the Jewish state, but only a few would go there to live. American Jews would seek to find their Zion in America, as the Philadelphians well understood, making all the more important the educational, religious, and cultural institutions the Philadelphians created.

(There is a curious postscript, however, to this story. Not long after most of the Philadelphians had passed on, a number of the prominent German-Jews associated with the leading Reform congregations in the city played key roles in the creation of the bitterly anti-Zionist Ameri-

can Council for Judaism in 1942. For a while, the Council had its national headquarters in Philadelphia. Solomon Solis-Cohen, an old man about to pass from the scene, joined it. It is ironic that almost as a last gasp and about the time when the first news of the Holocaust was being received in this country, important elements of the German-Jewish leadership that had operated so creatively in institution building earlier would spawn an organization so much at variance with the needs and feelings of American and world Jewry.[26])

Nor were the members of the Philadelphia Group staunch democrats, it should be noted. Indeed, the reservations they had about Zionism were probably linked to their elitist views as well. Zionism was ultimately a movement from below, and they were, in the final analysis, *hochjuden* (upper class Jews). They sought to work on behalf of East European Jews, not necessarily with them. This found expression in their opposition to a democratically elected and Zionist-oriented American Jewish Congress to press the peacemakers for Jewish national rights after World War I. They were worried the Congress would take control of the community out of the hands of the then oligarchic American Jewish Committee.

And while a number of them were concerned about the problems of working-class Jews and modern industrial urban life that were so flagrant in the years they were most active, Joseph Fels excepted, this was clearly a secondary consideration to them.[27] In the final analysis, they were conservatives.[28]

The Philadelphians were not without their critics. Louis Lipsky, operating no doubt from a strong, Zionist ideology, was critical of Adler. "He was old when he was young . . . [h]e was a conservator, not a creator." Herbert Parzen, the historian of Conservative Judaism, argues that Adler's leadership of the Seminary and the Conservative movement was "less than beneficent and hardly adequate."[29]

Jonathan Sarna, nevertheless, has come away most recently with "new respect not just for Adler but for a whole generation of Jewish leaders, now forgotten or maligned, who whatever their foibles clearly gave far more of themselves than has been appreciated to create the communal institutions that today's American Jews take for granted."[30]

Historian Benny Kraut asks how one defines leaders of the Jewish community? "Such individuals," he suggests, "mold a communal consensus loyal to the ideas or activities they themselves espouse."[31] By this standard, the Philadelphia Group have to be seen as among the most significant figures in American Jewish history. The Philadelphians were willing to submerge their personal lives and careers to

what they felt to be the greater purpose and meaning of Jewish history. Adler summed up this philosophy at one point as follows. "I am a Hebrew," he wrote.

> I am willing to remain a link in a great chain. . . . My people have survived the pre-historic paganism, the Babylonian polytheism, the aesthetic Hellenism, the sagacious Romanism, at once the blandishments and persecutions of the Church and it will survive modern dilettantism and the current materialism, holding aloft the traditional Jewish ideals inflexibly until the world shall become capable of recognizing their worth.[32]

* * *

This book is an outgrowth of a symposium, The Philadelphia Group: The Making of an American Jewish Community sponsored by the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Jewish Committee, The Center for American Jewish History, Temple University, and Congregation Mikveh Israel which celebrated its two hundred fiftieth anniversary in 1990. Most of the essays here were given in preliminary form by the authors at this two-day conference held at Mikveh Israel. Several were commissioned later to flesh out the portrait of these Philadelphians.

I am grateful to the scholars who have contributed to this book as well as to the Morris Perlman Foundation and Mikveh Israel for grants that made possible the symposium. Labron K. Shuman chaired the congregation's celebration and was of invaluable assistance in helping to plan the symposium. The Pew Charitable Trusts underwrote the costs of publishing this book as part of its program to encourage the study of the role of religion in American life. Joel Carpenter who heads this program for Pew recognized early on that the story of the Philadelphia Group should be made more widely known. I benefited, too, from our discussions and his broad knowledge of American religious life.

It would have been impossible to complete this volume without the assistance of many people, but I do want to single out several for special recognition. Jonathan Sarna served as an invaluable guide at every stage of the project's development. David Dalin, a fellow at the Temple Center, and Ira Robinson read portions of the manuscript and kept me from making a number of silly blunders. Finally—and this may say something about the mechanization of the process of writing—I am in debt to Steve Appelbaum, my computer "maven," who rescued me on several occasions from deep despair when my

word processor did not behave. There must be a special place in heaven for this new category of God's creatures.

Murray Friedman,
The Center for American History
Temple University and
American Jewish Committee.

Notes

1. As quoted in Herbert Rosenblum, "The Shaping of an Institution, The 1902 reorganization of the Seminary," *Conservative Judaism,* vol. 27, no. 2, Winter 1973, p. 45.
2. Kraut, p. 207.
3. Proceedings, Philadelphia Group Symposium, p. 2, Temple Center.
4. *Judaism and Science with Other Addresses and Papers,* Privately Printed. Philadelphia, 1940.
5. Jerold S. Auerbach, *Rabbis and Lawyers,* The Journey from Torah to Constitution (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. xvi.
6. See Auerbach, *Rabbis and Lawyers.*
7. Although it is better known today for its interfaith work, the Chautauqua Society led by Rabbi Berkowitz was originally created to bring Judaism to the wave of immigrants who had loose ties to their religion as well as to teach established Jews about Judaism. Steve Lipman, "Building bridges to Non-Jews," *Washington Jewish Week,* 18 July 1991.
8. *Philadelphia, Patricians and Philistines 1900–1950,* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1980), p. 6; The Baltzell quotation is from Howard G. Schneiderman, "Out of the Golden Ghetto," *Society,* March/April 1992, p. 81, 83. Baltzell's theories are spelled out in *Philadelphia Gentlemen, The Protestant Establishment,* and *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia.*
9. Louis Finkelstein, Preface, in Ira Robinson, *Cyrus Adler, Selected Letters,* I, Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1945, p. xviii.
10. Lukacs, p. 6.
11. P. 129. See also George L. Berlin, *Defending the Faith: Nineteenth Century American Jewish Writing on Christianity and Jesus* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989).
12. JPS, "The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888–1988," *Jewish Publication Society* (Philadelphia, 1989), p. 7.
13. *The Spiritual Values of Life,* Occasional Addresses on Jewish Themes, Jewish Publication Society of America (Philadelphia, 1953), p. 93.
14. Maxwell Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," in Murray Friedman, *Jewish Life in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: ISHI Publications, 1983), p. 169.
15. Whiteman, pp. 163–78; "Sarna," *JPS,* p. 7.
16. As quoted in Robinson, *Selected Letters,* I, p. xix.
17. Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist, A History of the American Jewish Committee,* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1972), p. 58.
18. Pp. 104–5.
19. "Response," *American Jewish History,* March 1989, p. 396.
20. Henry L. Feingold, *A Midrash On American Jewish History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), p. 140.

21. Arthur Power Dudden, *Joseph Fels and the Single Tax Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1971), p. 191; Dale Phalen, *Samuel Fels* (Philadelphia: Samuel S. Fels Fund, 1969), p. 19.

22. Naomi W. Cohen in Robinson, I, p. xxxvi.

23. As quoted in Phalen, p. 20.

24. David G. Dalin, "Cyrus Adler, Non-Zionism, and the Zionist Movement: A Study in Contradictions," *The Journal of the Association for Jewish Studies,* vol. X, no. 1, Spring, 1985, p. 82.

25. Dalin, p. 83.

26. See Thomas A. Kolsky, *Jews Against Zionism* (The American Council For Judaism; Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1942–1948).

27. See Whiteman, "Out of the Sweatshop," in Friedman, *Jewish Life in Philadelphia,* p. 64.

28. Philip Foner notes that when a liberal journal urged Jews in 1903 to recognize the parallel experiences of American Blacks and Jews persecuted in Tzarist Russia, a Dr. Solomon Cohen of Philadelphia insisted in a letter to the publication that there were no grounds for comparing the two groups. It was ridiculous, he suggested, to compare "the advanced stage of intellectual and moral development of Jews . . . with the limited progress that the masses of Negroes in America have made." "Black-Jewish Relations in the Opening Years of the Twentieth Century," *Phylon,* Winter 1975, xxxvi, no. 4, p. 364.

29. For insightful essays on "The Role of Cyrus Adler in American Jewish History," by David G. Dalin, Ira Robinson, and Jonathan D. Sarna along with a response from Edwin S. Gaustad, see *American Jewish History,* March 1989.

30. "Sir Oracle," Review of Selected Letters of Cyrus Adler, *Commentary,* February 1986, pp. 68–71.

31. "American Jewish Leaders," p. 227.

32. As quoted by Finkelstein in Robinson, *Selected Letters,* I, pp. xxiii–xxiv.

2

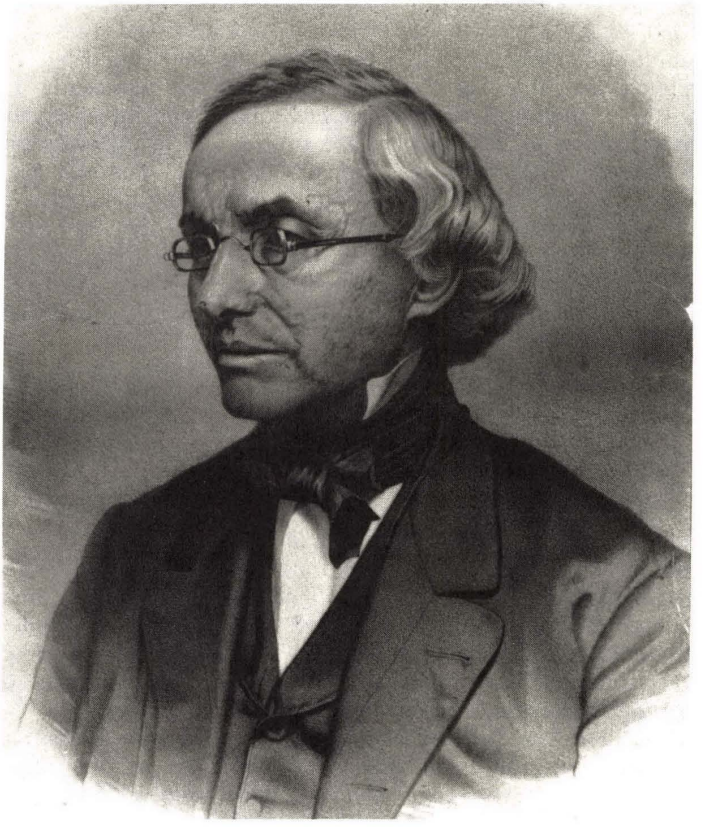
Isaac Leeser and the "Philadelphia Pattern"

LANCE J. SUSSMAN

In his introduction to *Jewish Life in Philadelphia, 1830–1940,* Murray Friedman observed that while the leadership groups of the pre–World War I New York and Philadelphia Jewish communities "were linked along class lines" they were different in other respects. "Gotham's Jews were businessmen and lawyers," he notes, "whereas the 'Philadelphia Group' was predominantly intellectuals and scholars." Moreover, he continues, "many of the Philadelphians were traditional or Orthodox Jews, members of Mikveh Israel, whereas the New Yorkers belonged to Reform congregations."[1]

What accounted for the profound differences between the two principal groups of male Jewish leaders in the United States during the most creative period of American Jewish intellectual and organizational life? Why were Cyrus Adler, Solomon Solis-Cohen, Mayer Sulzberger, and other Philadelphia Jewish elites more personally committed to the study of Jewish culture and languages than their New York counterparts? In large part, the religious and scholarly profile of the Philadelphia Group reflected the personal influence of Isaac Leeser (1806–1868), the indefatigable antebellum Hazzan of the city's Sephardic synagogue, Mikveh Israel, on several generations of Jews in the city of Brotherly Love. Almost to the man, the key leaders of the Philadelphia Group credited Leeser, in varying degrees, for guiding and inspiring their personal interests in Judaism and Hebrew literature.[2]

In contrast, the pre–Civil War New York Jewish community did not have a religious leader parallel to Isaac Leeser. During the Jacksonian period its outstanding leader was the flamboyant but capable layman, Mordecai Manuel Noah (1785–1851). Moreover, by 1860, the New York Jewish community was already so large, with a highly diverse population of forty thousand (compared to Philadelphia's more modest eight thousands), that it required a categorically different mode of



Isaac Leeser. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center.

communal leadership. While New York had its share of important religious leaders in the pre–Civil War period, particularly Samuel Isaacs, none had played as profound a role in the national Jewish community as had Philadelphia's Isaac Leeser.[3]

Unfortunately, the role of Isaac Leeser in the shaping of the Philadelphia Jewish community, and, more generally, American Judaism is not widely known. Broadly viewed by professional students of the American Jewish experience as one of the most important Jewish religious leaders in the United States during the nineteenth century, Leeser is mentioned rarely in the literature of general American religious history, he has not been the subject of a major biography, although at least one writer, Emily Solis-Cohen, pursued the topic before abandoning the project without publishing the results of her extensive research.[4] Outside of the Philadelphia area, Leeser is also virtually unknown in the larger American Jewish community. No Jewish institution or academic program currently bears his name, and none of the modern branches of American Judaism emphasizes his role in their development.[5]

In part, the great disparity between Leeser's personal accomplishments and his low visibility as a basic architect of American Judaism, is a function both of historical circumstances and bad luck. In many cases, he foresaw the needs of the American Jewish community earlier and more clearly than others but generally failed to create permanent institutions and organizational structures to carry on the work he set into motion. For example, the rabbinic school he founded in Philadelphia in 1867, Maimonides College, the first Jewish institute of higher learning in the United States which actually succeeded in preparing young men for the "Jewish ministry," only survived its founder by a few years. By contrast, Isaac M. Wise's Cincinnati based school, Hebrew Union College, was founded in 1875, merged with the Jewish Institute of Religion in 1950, and continues to thrive.[6]

Obscured from the public view by fate and design, Leeser has also been less than fully understood by the limited circle of scholars and admirers who have recognized the general historical importance of his efforts on behalf of Judaism in the United States. He needs to be understood as a Philadelphian. Neither a brilliant scholar nor a creative thinker, he was, above all, a reflection of his time and place. Over the course of his long, active career, Leeser energetically sought to create Jewish versions of a specific set of cultural interests and organizational models found principally in Philadelphia in the decades prior to the American Civil War. Leeser was also an exceedingly complicated individual. Generally unhealthy, physically unattractive, and moody, he lacked many of the personal characteristics often possessed

by great leaders. On the other hand, he was determined, above all else, to lay the groundwork for a great Jewish cultural center to develop in the United States.

In order to understand Leeser as a Philadelphian and how the Philadelphia setting shaped his worldview, it is necessary to consider briefly both the place of Philadelphia in the American urban system of the first half of the nineteenth century as well as select aspects of Pennsylvania's great eastern metropolis. According to E. Digby Baltzell and others, Philadelphia was one of the paradigmatic American cities of the nineteenth century.[7] For instance, in their book, *Urban America: From Downtown to No Town,* David R. Goldfield and Blaine A. Brownell write that

> had William Penn been resurrected and been permitted to wander the urban West, he would have felt very much at home. Cincinnati, for example, reproduced Philadelphia's [street] plan faithfully even to using the same street widths. . . . The names of the cross-streets which bore the names of trees and plants like Sycamore, Vine, Cherry, Walnut, Chestnut, and Pine in the Quaker City, were transported en masse over the mountains. . . . When one western traveller observed that "no daughter is more like her mother than St. Louis is like Philadelphia," he might also have noted Louisville, Cincinnati and Pittsburgh as legitimate offspring of the eastern metropolis.[8]

The Philadelphia pattern, however, goes deeper than the reproduction of William Penn's modified gridiron street plan on the western side of the Alleghenies. It involves a whole complex of business, cultural, and social interactions that characterized nineteenth-century American society in general as well as those of the tiny sub-community formed by American Jews. Interestingly, the Philadelphia Jewish community was the first to break with the old colonial *Kehillah* structure with the secession of Rodeph Shalom from Mikveh Israel in 1802. It was also the scene of the first serious attempt to create both new pan-communal as well as national Jewish structures to reunify Jewish America. Philadelphia, the home of one of the nation's most federalistic institutions, the national bank, was also the home of Jewish federalism in the United States.[9]

Moreover, just as Philadelphia was the home of the American Sunday School movement and the nation's publishing industry, so Philadelphia Jews took the lead in Jewish education and publishing in the decades just prior to the Civil War. It should also be noted that the Philadelphia model of American messianism provided by the Millerites during the 1840s, the local tradition of translating the Bible into the vernacular, and the dire consequences of local ethnic, racial, and

religious strife all played a role in shaping a Philadelphia pattern in American Jewish life.

From the perspective of urban history, it is thus possible to go beyond the idea of a late nineteenth-century Philadelphia group, and, instead, speak more broadly of a "Philadelphia pattern" in American Jewish history during its German Period, 1820–1880. To borrow a phrase from the late Bertram W. Korn, nineteenth-century Philadelphia became the "ideal experimental center of American Jewish creativity." At the core of the center's leadership circle was none other than Isaac Leeser.

Ironically, no one could have been more poorly suited to play the role of Jewish, religious, and national leader than Mikveh Israel's Hazzan, Isaac Leeser. A poor, foreign-born orphan with a limited Jewish education, Leeser was short and ugly. His face was badly scarred, ravaged by a near fatal encounter with smallpox. He was frequently ill and often was too weak to work. Leeser was nearly blind, wore heavy glasses, had an unpleasant voice, and an irritating personal style. He dressed in an austere fashion. He never married or enjoyed the comforts of family life. He delighted in speaking with women but was often the target of vicious rumors in Philadelphia's Jewish community's rumor mill. At one point in his life, Leeser became manic-depressive. He suffered from wild swings of emotion, was often argumentative, nearly always defensive, and perhaps even a little paranoid. On the other hand, he had real and bitter enemies who fought him relentlessly in many areas of activity.

The ever astute Rebecca Gratz described the young Leeser in a letter to her sister-in-law, Maria Gist Gratz, written on 4 November 1829 shortly after Leeser's arrival in Philadelphia:

> Our young pastor is certainly more attractive to those who are indifferent to the *outer Man*—there is a witticisim on record of a mean looking sage, who in reply to a high born damsel's remark on the freak of nature in placing so much wisdom in so ugly a creature, demanded what kind of vessel her father kept his wine in—she said a common earthern, for wine kept in precious metal became sour—he observed wisdom is safest with ugliness—which is an enemy to vanity—this anecdote is most aptly applied to Mr. Leeser—who is ugly and awkward—but so sensible and pleasant as well as pious—that all the old ladies are charmed, while the girls are obliged to persuade themselves to be pleasant.[10]

Leeser seemed to have an even more polarizing effect on men than women. As a young man, he was the target of a great deal of male enmity, especially from the officers of Mikveh Israel. In particular, Leeser's view of a professionalized rabbinate brought him into conflict

with the autocratic, class-based system of American synagogue governance.[11] On the other hand, Leeser also developed a core of disciples, both in Philadelphia and around the country, who understood their mentor's vision of the United States as a great center of Diaspora Jewish life and his profound role in the attempt to translate that vision into institutional and cultural realities.

Whatever Leeser lacked in terms of personal appearance, training, and style, he compensated with his determination and native intelligence. "Practically every form of Jewish activity which supports American Jewish life today," wrote one historian, "was established or envisaged by this one man" and "almost every kind of publication which is essential to Jewish survival was written, translated or fostered by him."[12] Included among Leeser's American Jewish "firsts" were the first volumes of sermons delivered by an American Jewish leader (1837–1868), the first complete American translation of the Sephardic prayerbook (1837), the first Hebrew primer for children published in the United States (1838), the first successful American Jewish newspaper-magazine, *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate* (1843–1869), the first American Jewish Publication Society (1845), the first complete English translation of the Ashkenazic daily and Sabbath prayerbook (1848), the first Hebrew "high school" (1849), the first English translation of the entire Hebrew Bible by an American Jew (1853), and the first American Jewish theological seminary, Philadelphia's Maimonides College (1867). He also served as a vice president of the first national Jewish defense organization, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites (1859), and he was a driving force behind the establishment of a Jewish hospital in Philadelphia during the fateful decade of the 1860s.[13]

Leeser's life can be divided into five periods. He was born in 1806 in the tiny Westaphalian hamlet of Neunkirchen, near the Dutch border. Orphaned at an early age, he was raised by his paternal grandmother in the nearby crossroads town of Dulmen. Later, he was a scholarship student at the Jesuit gymnasium at Munster, the provincial capital. There, he also continued his traditional Jewish studies with local rabbis, including a leading antireformer, Abraham Sutro. Like his teacher, Leeser remained a lifelong opponent of Reform Judaism. On the other hand, he was more willing than Sutro to modernize the externalities of Jewish religious life.[14]

In 1824, with no prospects in Germany, Leeser accepted the invitation of his maternal uncle, Zalme Rehine, to resettle in Richmond, Virginia. During the next five years, Leeser quickly Americanized, learned English rapidly and well, and Sephardized his own personal practice of Judaism. However, his plans to become a pharmacist

changed when, as a result of a controversial series of articles he wrote in the *Richmond Whig,* he was called by Mikveh Israel congregation to be its Hazzan in 1829.[15]

In 1829 the United States was on the fringe of the Jewish world. From the perspective of the great centers of European Jewish life, Jacksonian America was as remote as Australia and New Zealand. Less than ten thousand Jews lived in the vast new country. Since 1654, not one rabbi had settled in the United States, a frontier society not particularly conducive to the perpetuation of traditional Judaism. Thus, Leeser, an intelligent, energetic, but only partially trained Jewish layman, was invited to serve as the Hazzan of one of the nation's oldest and most prestigious synagogues. In many respects, Leeser quickly emerged as living proof of Turner's classic thesis that the "frontier" produced great leaders who shaped the United States, and, in our case, Jewish America as well.

Leeser's first ten years as the Hazzan of Mikveh Israel were punctuated with modest achievements and much personal pain and frustration. Prevailed upon by the women of Mikveh Israel, Leeser agreed to begin preaching. The men of congregation, however, were less interested, and an arrangement was made for the sermon to be given after *Adon Olam* so that the men could leave and the women could stay.[16] Also during this period, Leeser fully supported Rebecca Gratz, a leading member of the congregation, in her efforts to create and develop the Hebrew Sunday School.[17]

It was not until 1840 that Leeser could truly be called a national leader. During the course of that year, he helped organize an ecumenical, community-wide protest against the outrages committed against the Jews of Damascus, Syria, and the island of Rhodes.[18] Fast on the heels of this success, he tried to organize a "National Union" of American Jewish communities, patterned, in part, after the French-style Consistory of his native Westphalia. Ashkenazic-Sephardic tensions, the Reform-Orthodox debate, and the American tradition of local control combined to undermine the proposal, an idea to which Leeser returned repeatedly throughout his career.[19]

Two years later, in 1843, Leeser began publishing and editing *The Occident,* a monthly newspaper-magazine, which enjoyed a national circulation and made Leeser a household name in the American Jewish community from the slums of New York to the plantations of Dixie to the mining camps of California. Wherever American Jews went in the 1840s and 1850s, *The Occident* was sure to follow. To the old Sephardim and newly arrived Ashkenazim from Germany alike, Leeser's journalism was the connective tissue of American Jewish life and a basic link to the larger Jewish world. Although other papers

overshadowed *The Occident* in the years that followed, its role as the "mother paper" of the American Jewish press remains indisputable.[20]

The scope of *The Occident* was as wide and deep as the whole Jewish world of the 1840s, 1850s, and 1860s. For example, inspired by the revolutions of 1848 in Europe, Leeser began to explore in his editor's column the possibility of creating a modern, agricultural Jewish society in the Land of Israel. Although a traditional, theological restorationist, Leeser anticipated much of modern Zionism and actively worked to create links between American Jews and Jews then residing in *Eretz Yisrael*.[21]

In 1850, following a series of public and bitter disagreements with the leadership of Mikveh Israel, Leeser temporarily left congregational life. Hopping on a train, he embarked on a national rail tour of Jewish America, visiting his friends and supporters in nearly every town east of the Mississippi River with a Jewish community. His brief reports published in *The Occident* during this period offer a panoramic view of antebellum American Jewish life, comparable to the accounts of other great Jewish travelers of the ages.[22] Also during this interim period, he completed his work on his translation of the Hebrew Bible, his most important literary contribution to American Jewish culture.[23]

In 1857, although offered pulpit positions elsewhere, Leeser determined to make Philadelphia his final home and accepted an offer from some of his friends, mainly from Mikveh Israel, to accept a position at a new congregation, Beth El Emeth, created specifically for him. Although plagued by failing health, Leeser continued to press ahead with his vision of a vital, unified Jewish center in America. He helped in the formation of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, led in the fight for the establishment of a Jewish chaplaincy in the North during the Civil War, rose to national office in the rapidly expanding B'nai Brith organization, and served as the first Provost of Mainomides College.[24]

The four years of the Civil War were a particularly difficult time for Leeser, who, although he had lived his entire adult life in Philadelphia, never lost his affection for his first home in America—Richmond, Virginia, the Confederate capital. Typical of most American Jews of the period, Leeser generally remained silent on the great national issues of the day. Unfortunately, he viewed slavery as a biblically sanctioned institution and did not take sharp exception with the American system of chattel slavery.[25]

Isaac Leeser died in Philadelphia early on the Sabbath on 1 February 1868 after a long period of suffering. His "Lincolnesque" funeral took place the following Tuesday. It began at his late residence at 1227 Walnut Street and instantly became a symbol of the type of

Jewish unity Leeser had stood for in life. Mayer Sulzberger reported that "probably the majority of the Jewish male population of Philadelphia, and quite a number of Christians, clergymen and others, were present." Eleven friends were called upon to be pall bearers. His coffin was followed by five hundred members of B'nai Brith and sixty carriages. "So lengthy was the cortege," it was reported, "that it was impossible for the eye to reach from one end to the other."[26]

The procession moved past all the leading synagogues of Philadelphia, including Mikveh Israel, Beth Israel, and Rodef Shalom. A circuit was made around Beth El Emeth, Leeser's congregation, and then the funeral proceeded to the Jewish hospital of the city. The funeral service was led by the Reverend Sabato Morais, who was joined by several rabbis and Hazzanim from New York and Washington, D.C. Blocs of organizational representatives were also present. "During the ceremony," Sulzberger observed, "the scene was truly affecting. Strong men wept like children, when they began to realize that they were about to lose forever their trusted and tried friend."[27]

Indeed, American Judaism had few friends more loyal, more dedicated, and more energetic than Isaac Leeser. During the balance of the nineteenth century and beyond, his students and disciples, most notably Mayer Sulzberger, Moses Dropsie, and the young Cyrus Adler, continued the work of their mentor to create a thriving center of Judaism both in Philadelphia and nationally. Perhaps it was providential that the driving genius of Isaac Leeser found a home in the vital city of Philadelphia. The synthesis of Leeser's talents with the municipal traditions and urban patterns of the "city of brotherly love" resulted in the creation of a vision of a new and enduring mode of Jewish life, which, without qualification, can be called American Judaism.

Notes

1. Murray Friedman, "Introduction: The Making of a National Jewish Community," in Murray Friedman, ed., *Jewish Life in Philadelphia, 1830–1940* (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1983), p. 12.

2. The best account of Leeser's local impact is Maxwell Whiteman, "Isaac Leeser and the Jews of Philadelphia," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, vol. 48, no. 4 (June 1959), pp. 207–44. Also, see Lance J. Sussman, "The Life and Career of Isaac Leeser, 1806–1868: A Study of American Judaism in its Formative Period," (Ph.D. diss., HUC-JIR, 1987), pp. 412–13.

3. On Noah, see Jonathan D. Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew: The Two Worlds of Mordecai Manuel Noah* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981). On the early New York Jewish community, see Hyman B. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654–1860* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1945).

4. Emily Solis-Cohen, with the assistance of Solomon Grayzel and others, made at least two attempts at writing a biography of Leeser. Her incomplete but interesting manuscripts are stored with the "Leeser Papers" at the Annenberg Institute (Philadelphia).

5. For a recent assessment of the place of Isaac Leeser in American Jewish history, see "The Greatest American Jewish Leaders," a symposium in *American Jewish History* (December 1988), pp. 160–69 and, in particular, Benny Kraut, "American Jewish Leaders: The Great, Greater and Greatest," ibid., pp. 207–18. On the other hand, Leeser's absence in general historical literature in American and American religious history is striking. For instance, he is not mentioned in either Sydney E. Ahlstrom's *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975) nor listed in Frank Freidel, *Harvard Guide to American History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

6. On HUC-JIR, see Michael A. Meyer, "A Centennial History," in Samuel E. Karff, ed., *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: At One Hundred Years* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Hebrew University College Press, 1976), pp. 1–284.

7. E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1958) and *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia: Two Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Class Authority and Leadership* (New York: The Free Press, 1979). Also, see his "The Jewish Communities of Philadelphia and Boston: A Tale of Two Cities" in *Jewish Life in Philadelphia, 1830–1940* (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1983), pp. 290–313, written with Allen Glicksman and Jacquelyn Litt.

8. David R. Goldfield and Blaine A. Brownell, *Urban America: From Downtown to No Town* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 104–5.

9. Leeser published his 1840 "Plan for Union" in *The Occident* vol. 3 (1846), 175–76 and 222–27. Also, see Joseph Buchler, "The Struggle for Unity: Early Attempts at Union in American Jewish Life, 1654–1868," *American Jewish Archives* 2 (1949), pp. 21–46.

10. Rebecca Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz, Philadelphia to Lexington, Ky., 4 November 1829, quoted in *Letters of Rebecca Gratz,* edited by David Philipson (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1929), p. 108.

11. On Leeser's conflicts at Mikveh Israel, see *A Review of the Late Controversies between the Rev. Isaac Leeser and the Congregation Mikveh Israel* (Philadelphia, 1850); *A Review of "The Review" of the late Controversy between the Rev. Isaac Leeser and the Philadelphia Congregation "Mickve Israel" by an Israelite* (New York, 1850); and *Deutsch-Amerikanische Skizzen fur judische Auswanderer und Nichtauswanderer* (Leipzig, 1857), p. 74.

12. Bertram W. Korn, "Isaac Leeser: Centennial Reflections," *American Jewish Archives* 19 (1967), pp. 127–41.

13. On Leeser's literary activity, see Lance J. Sussman, "Another Look at Isaac Leeser and the First Jewish Translation of the Bible in the United States," *Modern Judaism* 5 (1985), pp. 159–90. More broadly, see his "Isaac Leeser and the Protestantization of American Judaism," *American Jewish Archives* 38 (April 1986), pp. 1–21. On Leeser's original Jewish Publication Society see Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888–1988* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), pp. 1–6. On Leeser's preaching, see Robert V. Friedenberg, "Isaac Leeser: Pioneer Preacher of American Judaism," *Religious Communication Today* (September 1983), pp. 22–27.

14. On Lesser's relationship with Sutro, see Lawrence Grossman, "Isaac Leeser's Mentor: Rabbi Abraham Sutro, 1784–1869" in Leo Landman, ed., *Rabbi Joseph H.*

Lookstein Memorial Volume, (New York: KTAV, 1980), pp. 151–62 and more broadly, his "Tradition Under Fire: Isaac Leeser and Reform," *Gesher* 8 (5741/1980), pp. 73–89.

15. On Leeser's years in Richmond, see Lance J. Sussman, "The Life and Career of Isaac Leeser," pp. 33–68. Also, see Malcom Stern, "The 1820's: American Jewry Comes of Age," in Bertram W. Korn, ed., *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus* (New York: KTAV, 1976), p. 546 and Myron Berman, *Richmond's Jewry: 1769–1976* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979).

16. Isaac Leeser, *Discourses, Argumentative and Devotional on the Subject of the Jewish Religion* (Philadelphia, 1837), vol. I, pp. 1–3 and Whiteman, "Isaac Leeser and the Jews of Philadelphia," p. 213, n. 34.

17. On Gratz's Sunday School, see Joseph Rosenbloom, "Rebecca Gratz and the Jewish Sunday School Movement," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 48 (1958), p. 71 and Diane A. King, "Jewish Education in Philadelphia," in *Jewish Life in Philadelphia, 1830–1940*, ibid., pp. 239–40.

18. Isaac Leeser, *Persecution of the Jews in the East, Containing the Proceedings of a Meeting Held at the Synagogue Mickveh Israel* (Philadelphia, 1840) and Jonathan D. Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew*, pp. 123–25.

19. For example, in 1855 Leeser attended a rabbinic conference in Cleveland, Ohio convened by his rival, Isaac M. Wise, with the hope of creating a common basis for the practice of Judaism in America. Instead, the meeting demonstrated that the opposite was true and paradoxically led to a serious dispute between Wise and his radical reform critics. On the Cleveland Conference, see James G. Heller, *Isaac M. Wise: His Life, Work and Thought* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1965), pp. 286–87, 290 and 314–15.

20. *Occident* Volume 1 (1843), pp. 1–2. A comprehensive, critical study of the Jewish press in the United States before 1880 is currently lacking in the literature of American Jewish history. For a general overview, see Elinor Grumet, "The Jewish Press in These States Before 1850" (American Jewish Archives, typescript, 1973).

21. Leeser's role in the history of Zionism has been generally overlooked by European and Israeli scholars. His fully developed views are articulated in his "The Future of Palestine," *Occident* Volume 22 (1865), pp. 5–15. Also see, Maxine Seller, "Isaac Leeser's Views on the Restoration of a Jewish Palestine," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 58 (1968), pp. 118–35 and Peter Grosse, *Israel in the Mind of America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), pp. 12–13, 21–22, 29–30, and 102.

22. Highlights of Leeser's travels are reported in Jacob R. Marcus, *Memoirs of American Jews, 1775–1865*, Volume 2 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1955), pp. 58–87.

23. Lance J. Sussman, "Another Look at Isaac Leeser and the First Jewish Translation of the Bible in the United States," *supra*.

24. On the Board of Delegates, see Alan Tarshish, "The Board of Delegates of American Israelites (1859–1878)," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 49 (1959), pp. 16–32. On the development of a Jewish chaplaincy in the American armed forces, see Bertram W. Korn, "The Chaplaincy Controversy," *American Jewry and the Civil War* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1951), pp. 56–97. Leeser's expanded relationship with B'nai Brith during the 1860s is another lacuna in the historical literature on the Philadelphia Hazzan. More broadly, see Deborah Dash Moore, *B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1981).

25. On Leeser's views on slavery, see *Occident* 18 (18 January 1861), p. 1. His general sense of insecurity at the beginning of the war is made manifest in a letter

the Hazzan sent to Alexander Harvey, Mayor of Philadelphia, 3 June 1861, typescript copy, Annenberg Institute.

26. *Occident* 26 (1869), pp. 606–7.

27. *Ibid.* Also, see Moses A. Dropsie, "Panegyric on Life, Character and Services of the Rev. Isaac Leeser," (Philadelphia, 1868) and Mayer Sulzberger, "The Late Rev. Isaac Leeser," *Occident* 25 (1868), pp. 593–611, partially reprinted in *American Jewish Archives* 21 (1969), pp. 140–48.

3

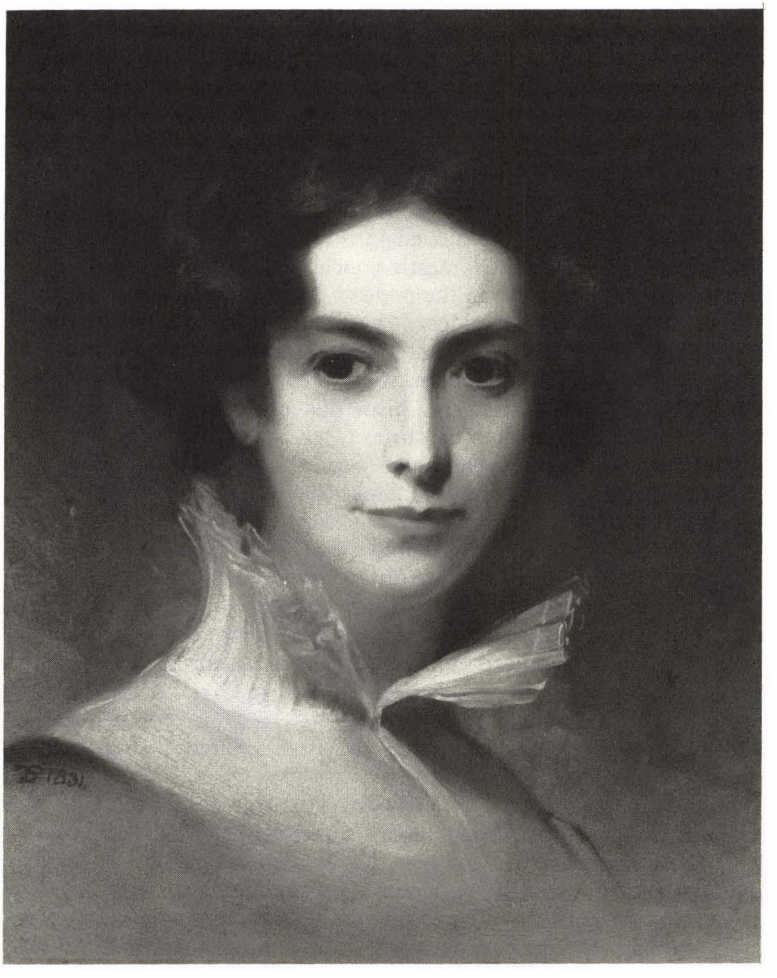
"Souls Have No Sex": Philadelphia Jewish Women and the American Challenge

DIANNE ASHTON

As historians of the era can attest, nineteenth-century rhetoric was awash in superlatives. Letters, minute books, newspaper articles, eulogies, memorials, and testimonials painted merely decent people as paragons. Americans, buoyed by Thomas Carlyle's fascination with heroes and the jingoism accompanying repeated wars, sought heroes among themselves. Perhaps it is not surprising, given the real confusions caused by immigration, dislocation, industrialization, war, epidemics, and the uncertain stability of the new country, that Americans assured themselves that they were a remarkably capable people. Real insecurities were masked and, they hoped, overcome by praise and propriety.[1]

Like others of their time, nineteenth-century American Jewish women sought heroines among their peers. One group of Philadelphia women, Rebecca Gratz, Louisa B. Hart, Ellen and Emily Phillips, Simma Peixotto, Rebekah Hyneman, Mary M. Cohen, and Emily Solis-Cohen, used the era's sentimental trend to make real and lasting changes in Jewish women's resources and roles. Unlike most women, they remained unmarried and claimed for themselves the moral authority which, Sarna reminds us, Victorians associated with male celibacy.[2] Together, they launched, managed, and effected the daily operation of the first nonsynagogal charitable society in America, the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society (1819), the first Jewish Sunday school, the Hebrew Sunday School (1838), and the first Jewish Foster Home in America (1855). They developed Jewish educational materials, spiritual literature aimed at Jewish women, and essays promoting their vision of Jewish life.

Carolyn Heilbrun has suggested that women who rewrite the standard female "plot"—marriage, followed by devotion to family—often



Rebecca Gratz (1781–1869). Portrait by Thomas Sully: oil on panel, 1831. Courtesy of the Rosenbach Museum.

support each other by sharing "the wonderful energy of working within the public sphere," and so did those Philadelphia women.[3] By establishing charitable and educational institutions for women and children, they wrote new "plots" for their own lives, allowed women to enter into what Lance Sussman identifies as the Philadelphia pattern of lay leadership, provided models for other Jewish women in other cities, and created a lasting place for Jewish women in the communal life of American Jewry.[4] Like thousands of Christian women of their era, they moved into the public sphere by forming alliances to promote the domestic concerns of women and children.[5] By idealizing themselves in the popular Jewish mind, these seat holders in Mikveh Israel, the oldest Jewish congregation in the city, lifted themselves above criticism, legitimated their control of new agencies, and freed their energies for the work they wanted to do. They laid the foundation for Jewish feminism that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[6]

In addition to shaping their own lives, these women shared a commitment to developing a viable American Jewish culture free of the Christian imagery that permeated American culture, and they exuded confidence in their ability to mold Jewish communal and domestic religious life to fit America. Although their posture mirrored that of Christian women in similar organizations who, according to Ann Douglas, were themselves engaged in a struggle for self esteem, rampant anti-Judaism required that Jewish women's claim to moral authority be buttressed with a defense of Judaism and its treatment of women.[7] By carrying out the traditional religious commandments about the importance of charity, they exemplified a Jewish moral virtue.

They encountered little opposition. This was no doubt partly due to their proximity to Philadelphia's non-Jewish ruling elites. In the antebellum era, the Philadelphia Jewish community grew from approximately 300 to 8,000 while the city's population grew from 41,000 to almost 670,000.[8] Immersed in an overwhelmingly non-Jewish world, Jewish women's municipal charitable activities argued for their right to remain Jews by displaying their civic responsibility.[9] In 1801, eight of Philadelphia's Jewish women joined fifteen non-Jewish women to form the city's first women's aid society, the Female Association for the Relief of Women and Children in Reduced Circumstances (FA). Among them was Miriam Simon Gratz, a native of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Miriam, like her daughters Rachel and Rebecca who also founded the FA, spoke no Yiddish and was apparently comfortable living with and among non-Jews. The FA women believed that poverty was more difficult for those who had known

wealth, and the Jewish women in this organization defended their status, not their religion.[10]

Prior to the second decade of the last century, when evangelical revivals increased in scope, Jews of all economic groups mingled relatively easily among non-Jews of their class. The city sustained an upper class already powerful in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Its members, whose social contact included Assembly Balls and military experience in the First City Troop, were also part of a national elite. A few Jewish families, like the Gratzes, traveled in these circles.[11] Although in 1774 the top 10 percent of Philadephia's taxpaying households owned 89 percent of the taxable property, rich and poor lived "jumbled together in a narrow compass of the town." City government was effected by committees of commissioners and a "remarkably inclusive network of business and economic relationships," supplemented daily by "trade and sociability," sustained the community.[12] Philadelphia Jewish leadership largely followed this same pattern.

When Gratz and others began establishing Jewish women's associations, the Gratz family dominated Mikveh Israel, and Rebecca Gratz (1781–1869) dominated antebellum Jewish women's activities. In 1825, Mikveh Israel's Building Committee, of which Joseph Gratz was the treasurer, received $1,000 from Simon Gratz, the oldest brother and head of the family firm, $500 each from Hyman, Rebecca, and Joseph, and $125 from Ben Gratz, the youngest sibling. All oher contributors gave far less, like Rebecca Phillips, who offered $30.[13] Gratz, whose portrait was painted at least four times by Thomas Sully, who counted Peggy Hamilton, daughter of Alexander Hamilton among her close friends, and who was known as a civic leader among the city's women, earned the admiration of Jewish women. By 1821 she was rumored to be the inspiration for the first favorable depiction of a Jew in English fiction, the character of Rebecca of York in Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*. The rumor enhanced her prestige and influence among Jewish women.[14]

After the disestablishment of religion, a diverse assortment of religious and political groups strived to Christianize the country.[15] Evangelists and missionaries often sought out poor Jews, but sometimes, as Sarna noted, evangelizing was, as in the case of Rebecca Gratz who attended Assembly Balls and whose brother Joseph was a part of the First City Troop, an invitation to an already accepted person to join the majority.

But after the 1820s, when evangelism rose, both elite and poor Jews found themselves personally called on to defend their faith and looked for successful models of defense among their coreligionists.[16]

The antebellum effort to Christianize America posed unique problems to them as women and as Jews.[17] As early as 1815, articles on the country's need for Christianity appeared in the public press, in tracts distributed by evangelists, in popular fiction, and political commentaries.[18] Philadelphia, the second largest city in the British empire at the time of the revolution and a national center for culture and commerce throughout the antebellum era, compared its own social problems to London's and fostered many religiously motivated Christian charitable and philanthropic associations.[19] From 1800 to 1825, Christian women enthusiastically distributed Bibles and tracts in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.[20] Philadelphia's Female Bible Society announced that a "zeal, kindled by the Divine Spirit, pervades the Christian world," and many of the five hundred women who contributed to the Society belonged to the city's leading families.[21] In 1829, Mathew Carey counted thirty-three female religious, charitable, and moral reform societies in Philadelphia, and separate orphanages existed for Roman Catholic, African American, and white Protestant children. Quakers, Episcopalians, and Catholic women organized distinct organizations for the welfare of their own women and children.[22]

Although nonlaboring women were not supposed to be seen on city streets, they could and did go to orphanages, poorhouses, asylums, and private homes to spread Christianity. Despite the fact that most Christian seminaries and denominational bodies were the exclusive domain of men, Christian women pointed to their own growing presence in Sunday schools, revival movements, and evangelical associations to support their claim that Christianity was the best religion for women. Benjamin Rush, family physician to the Gratzes, said that the "female breast is the natural soil of Christianity."[23]

While evangelism potentially challenged all Jews, it posed unique problems to American Jewish women. First, women evangelists were more likely to approach a Jewish woman or child than a Jewish man, and women evangelists were especially active in the early decades of the nineteenth century.[24] Second, American Victorian culture, which arose in the 1830s, asserted that the measure of domestic morality was the spiritual, pious woman who inspired and promoted religious activities at home. Because such piety was linked to Christianity, it challenged the respectability of Jewish women and their households. And third, although a growing number of poor Jewish women needed charitable aid, charity from both municipal and private sources came with exhortations about Christianity. By the 1840s, both Isaac Leeser and Isaac Mayer Wise believed the evangelical tone of American society posed a threat to American Jewish freedom.[25]

Gratz's Jewish organizations provided a way for Americanized mid-

dle- and upper-class Jewish women to demonstrate their status and to influence the lives of the Jewish poor. Although the Gratz brothers went bankrupt in 1826, Rebecca's leadership of the city's Jewish women remained. She aggressively raised funds and promoted support for her charities throughout the city and in communities around the country.[26] It was among the middle and upper classes, where women earned little and thus were more dependent on men, that Victorian sexism held the greatest sway. Whatever their compassion and ethical motivation, philanthropy offered wealthier Jewish women a way to express their own views about managing society, to display their status, and to implement their ideas for eradicating poverty.[27]

By the second decade of the last century, Jewish women recognized a need for their own communal institutions. In 1819 Gratz and other women of Mikveh Israel established the nation's first nonsynagogal Jewish charity, the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society.[28] Initially, the FHBS provided food, fuel, clothing, and other "necessaries" and hoped to promote Jewish education when funding increased. In later years it also arranged for nurses, doctors, traveler's aid, and an employment bureau.[29] To be eligible for aid, a petitioner had to undergo a home visit by an FHBS manager and to prove herself truly poor, clean, pious, and industrious.[30] Like most other benevolent societies of its era, it tried to protect the poor from want without encouraging "pauperism." The FHBS especially hoped to protect Jewish women and children from evangelists offering aid.

The records of Philadephia charitable societies and those of the FHBS give us a profile of poor Jewish women in Philadelphia. They were unmarried, sometimes immigrants, widowed, or dependent on men who could not support them.[31] Desertion was a problem for Jewish women at the end of the last century, and we have no reason to believe it was not also a problem earlier on, although organizational records were more circumspect in the antebellum era. The FHBS, for example, kept a special fund for needy women who came from formerly wealthy families holding membership in Mikveh Israel, and the details and names of these cases were never recorded in the minutes.[32] Other recipients were women peddlers who, "returning with their baskets unemptied at the end of the day," could not feed their children.[33] Although it is impossible to tell who among the women defended by the city's Guardians of the Poor in paternity suits are Jews, at least one Jew, an S. Levy, was a Guardian bringing suit.[34]

While some Americans believed that charitable societies exacerbated pauperism by encouraging idleness, others pointed out that women had unique, legitimate causes for their poverty.[35] In 1818, the

New York Committee on Pauperism admitted that women had fewer resources than men, were more exposed to sudden reversals, and were more likely to require help in finding work.[36] Eleven years later, Carey wrote that "females are obliged to earn half of what the most stupid of the other sex may earn," and plain sewers, who made clothing by hand, earned especially low wages, sometimes as little as 8.5 or 15 cents per shirt.[37]

Yet poor women were suspected of being lazy and immoral. Pauperism was especially troublesome to the religious conscience because, as one minister said, "A virtuous people may expect peculiar interpolations of providence for their defense and prosperity."[38] Because of these assumptions, Philadelphia's poorest Jewish women and children often were subject to Christian preaching. In the poorhouse, Presbyterian ministers preached on Sunday mornings and those of other Christian denominations visited on Sunday afternoons. Private charitable societies dispensed similar Christian lessons with their material aid. In 1824, Philadelphia abolished outdoor relief, welfare paid to people not confined to institutions, claiming that such funds were abused.[39] Women comprised more than half of the poorhouse population.

Perhaps because it was a woman-led organization and women were not yet counted as synagogue members, the FHBS made no stipulation regarding synagogue attendance or membership for either their members or their clients. Nor did the FHBS, unlike the non-Jewish women's aid societies of the time, require their treasurer to be an unmarried woman. Antebellum American women had no right to own property after marriage, and a treasurer legally could lose her organization's funds to her husband. Jewish law does allow married women to own property, and organizational reports indicate that Jewish women expected their husbands to support their causes. Nonetheless, Rebecca Gratz, who never married, was the FHBS secretary for its first four decades. Widow Esther Hart, granddaughter of Jacob Cohen, a former hazan at Mikveh Israel, and her unmarried daughter Louisa were among the managers, along with Ellen and Emily Phillips, both unmarried.[40]

In 1858, the FHBS listed 113 contributors, not limited to the Philadelphia area or the membership of Mikveh Israel. Donations came from Baltimore, New York, Mobile, Alabama, and Texas. Most donations were $2 or $5, although some donors offered a life subscription at $30.[41] The size of the donations contrasts sharply with those of Philadelphia's Ladies Hebrew Mission Society, most of which were of 50 cents, and suggests that the FHBS was an important national Jewish resource, especially for southern Jews who occasionally wrote

to them for aid regarding particular local cases of Jewish poverty.[42] That year, Gratz's secretary's report asked Philadelphia's Jews to join her in forming a Jews' Soup House to enable the poorest Jews to avoid forbidden foods. Like her 1855 appeal to form a Jewish Foster Home, she directed her remarks to the "Daughters of Israel" asking them to "reduce (their) own personal wants" so as to aid the many beggars who claimed "brotherhood in Israel" as well as the poor women peddlers whose children went hungry. Gratz did not get everything she asked of the community, and as far as we know, despite her efforts, no Jews' Soup House ever developed.[43]

By the 1830s, some Christian theologians suggested that religion was essentially a feeling of gratitude and dependence, and Victorian culture concluded that women were *by nature* religious and pious. Religion therefore proved a source of acceptable and admirable activities for women, and Christian women dramatically enhanced their role in religious education.[44] In 1843, Philadelphia's Ladies Hebrew Missionary Society financed a professional male missionary to instruct Philadelphia's Jews and distributed Hebrew tracts bought from the London Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews.[45] A pamphlet appeared called "The Dying Jewess," a short story in which a young but dying Jewish girl convinces her father to let her be baptized. The impression created by the pamphlet was that Jewish women wanted to become Christians but were kept from it by their fathers.[46]

As rumors of aggressive evangelizing spread among Jews, Gratz wrote to her sister-in-law about a Jewish girl who had eloped with a Christian boy. From Gratz's perspective, because the boy's parents viewed intermarriage as a sure way to bring a Jewish woman to Jesus, and because they waited for the girl in the carriage and then hosted an elaborate church wedding, it was more a kidnapping than an elopement.[47]

Gratz's religious beliefs reflected her membership in Mikveh Israel. Although largely of Germanic descent, the congregation practiced a Spanish-Portuguese ritual style and prided itself on its link to the important Sephardi role in Jewish tradition. Although Gratz, like most Jewish women, knew no Hebrew, her congregation's use of prayerbooks imported from England, with English translations on facing pages, allowed her a satisfying and devoted synagogue experience. Thrilled by the religious freedom offered under the American Constitution, Gratz hoped it signaled the dawn of a new era free of religious persecution. She expected that under freedom Jews would happily embrace their religion and bring their collective observance to

new heights.[48] Consequently, Gratz was appalled by both the nascent Reform movement in Judaism, and by vigorous evangelizing by Christians.[49]

Although most evangelists expected to be dealing with unchurched fellow Protestants, Sundays Schools conducted "sweeps" on Sunday mornings that ushered all children on the streets into their classrooms.[50] In 1825, the American Sunday School Union, which taught children to believe in Christianity and to proselytize, claimed that one third of the six- to fifteen-year-olds in Philadelphia attended their schools.[51] In defense, Roman Catholics and Jews developed alternative schools and orphanages.[52] The challenge to Jews was to Americanize new and poor Jewish immigrants and their families while encouraging them to remain Jewish, and to separate Jewish religion from forms of Jewish culture distinctive to Europe but thought unworkable in America. The Sunday School movement was adapted by Jewish women to Americanize Jewish children while educating them in Judaism in a way that would protect them against evangelists.

To thwart the effect of Protestant Sunday schools on Jewish children, in 1838, Gratz, Simma Peixotto, and Rachel Peixotto Pyke, established a citywide Jewish Sunday School. Simma and Rachel, regular seat holders in Mikveh Israel, were experienced educators who ran a school in their home.[53] Their new venture, called the Hebrew Sunday School, supplemented the meager education local synagogues provided. Most of the city's Jewish boys probably were trained for Bar Mitzvah, but Jewish girls rarely received a formal religious education. Although Mikveh Israel women shouldered most of the burden of running the school, they wanted it to serve all of Philadelphia's Jewish children. They did not house it in the synagogue's building although the congregation offered space to do so, and instead used neutral sites like the Phoenix Hose House and Touro Hall where the Hebrew Education Society later met. Because it was run by women, the school held no formal ties to any single congregation and so sidestepped conflicting syngagogue loyalties.[54]

Jewish education was no better in other parts of the country and in 1838, Gratz wrote lessons in a copybook which she sent, every week, to Sally Lopez in Charleston. Lopez, in turn, distributed them to the teachers in a new Jewish Sunday School there. Lopez's school was linked to Congregation Beth Elohim, and although after Penina Moise took over its leadership in 1842 the school soon served fifty pupils, it never achieved the citywide success attained by Philadelphia's school.[55] In fact, only in Philadelphia did women-led, citywide, English language Jewish education find lasting success. About the same time, Gratz advised her niece Miriam on running a Sunday

school in Savannah, but it remained small.[56] In 1841, Emma Mordecai, daughter of Judaica scholar and educator Jacob Mordecai, initiated a religious school attached to congregation Beth Shalome in Richmond, but the problems they faced before and especially during the Civil War thwarted the school. Mordecai herself left Richmond in 1864.[57] In New York, a Ladies Association for the General Instruction of Children of Jewish Persuasion sputtered briefly, but by the 1850s, Jewish day schools, run by men, flourished there.[58] Sarah Carvalho, a former teacher in Gratz's school, established a similar English language school in Baltimore in the 1850s, but met harsh criticism from the overwhelmingly German-speaking populace. Worse, her work was ridiculed and attacked by the brilliant Rabbi David Einhorn, who warned parents that their children would learn only "*weibliche Theologie* (women's theology)." No English language school thrived in Baltimore until after the Civil War, and after Einhorn left the city.[59] As long as these efforts by Jewish women were subject to clerical approval and leadership, their organizations faltered.

Many of those whom we now call the Philadelphia Group, who were active later in the century, were, as Friedman notes, "Jewishly informed lay people." Perhaps it is not surprising that Cyrus Adler, a key figure of the group, attended Philadelphia's Hebrew Sunday School.[60] Mathew Carey's list of antebellum religious charitable societies attests to the tradition of lay leadership in Philadelphia. The tradition dates back to the Quaker leaders, who, without clergy, sustained an intricate array of committee-led charitable, religious, and educational societies. Nor is it surprising that Jewish women, who were barred from the clergy, were among the first to apply this principle to Jewish life.

Despite the difficulties encountered outside of Philadelphia, a Sunday School, although new to Jews, suited the lives of American Jewish children in the early nineteenth century. Formal primary education was not compulsory until 1895, and poor children often worked five or six days a week.[61] Whether in school or at a job, Sunday was the only day off during which Jewish children could do school work. The school's coed classes not only enriched the slim Jewish educational resources of the city, but also emphasized the importance of educating Jewish girls. Only female graduates were encouraged to join the faculty.[62]

Like the Protestant Sunday schools, the first Hebrew Sunday School classes were small, with eight to ten students per teacher, and several such groups arranged in a single large room.[63] The school was designed to "teach the principles of the faith" and to teach Jewish

children to resist evangelists. Gratz, the Peixottos, and the women who worked with them had no textbooks. But for their purposes, revising the books used by the Protestant Sunday Schools by ripping out offensive passages and rewriting Protestant catechisms, worked well. The Christian textbooks and Bibles told the HSS women what the Christians were teaching and helped them to teach Jewish answers to religious questions evangelists might pose to the children. Simma Peixotto and Rachel Peixotto Pyke soon wrote original textbooks.[64] Isaac Leeser, minister at Mikveh Israel and strong supporter of the Hebrew Sunday School, also translated a German-Jewish catechism and wrote a textbook intended for young children, but that book was far too wordy for youngsters and the women managers used it with older children instead.[65]

The school marked a change in the religious responsibilities of Jewish women. Whether or not women chose to maintain the private rituals of **niddah** (ritual bath) ***h*allah** (separation of a portion of the ***h*allah** dough to commemorate the ancient tithe to priests), and **hadlaqat ha ner** (lighting and blessing sabbath candles), they now had another way to express their religious commitments. Unmarried women who did not attend a **mikva,** wealthy women who did not bake their own bread, and, later, Reform women who might not light Shabbat candles, could all participate in the public performance of the rituals of religious education. By 1912, the Hebrew Sunday School Society supervised twelve schools serving over four thousand children.[66]

Gratz had an enormous influence on local, younger Jewish women. Louisa B. Hart (1803–1874) attended the Hebrew Sunday school, and, while a student, wrote to her teacher, Gratz, recommending a change in the way prizes were awarded at the school's annual exams. Hart later taught in the Hebrew Sunday School and became its superintendent after Gratz.[67] Believing that the soul has no sex and that women as well as men are immortal, Hart encouraged Jewish women to take pride in being God's chosen people.[68] Like Gratz, Hart taught, delivered graduation addresses, administered women's organizations and wrote annual reports that were published in the *Occident.* In 1838, Hart added the German Hebrew Ladies Sewing Society to Philadelphia's growing list of Jewish women's associations. She also served on the Visiting Committee of the new United Hebrew Charities when it was established in 1869.

As Jewish immigration increased after 1830, and the number of poor Jews rose, the Jewish community faced a more direct challenge to family integrity. Philadelphia's city managers, like those of other American cities, worried that children raised in poor families would

breed a new generation of paupers and criminals. By mid-century, children around the country were banned from poorhouses.[69] By 1853, America's children's aid societies and asylums were sending poor children and orphans to homes in the midwest, usually to farm families who used child labor. To keep control of Jewish children in the hands of Jews, in 1855, after having spent many years marshalling support, Gratz opened the city's first Jewish Foster Home. For its first twelve years, it was the only such residence in the nation, and it received requests from around the country.[70] The residents of the JFH often were not full orphans, but children of parents too poor to keep them home. To be eligible, a family had to be sufficiently poor and had to maintain traditional Jewish observances, especially the Sabbath. The JFH accepted no child from a family whose members worked on Saturday, regardless of their poverty. This policy, combined with the Jewish education provided by the Home, influenced the poorest Jews to maintain a somewhat traditional Jewish religious life.[71]

Gratz never surrendered administrative control of her organizations to the UHC men, whose charitable societies confined women to auxiliaries or advisory boards. While some Jewish women, like their non-Jewish peers, used their presumed moral superiority to justify independent organizations for social betterment, others agreed that the Victorian ideal of separate spheres justified women's auxiliaries subject to male leadership. Gratz's legacy firmly established independent service organizations which put the abilities and needs of Jewish women and children first. More, it provided a tradition of female moral authority that later women relied on and expanded in supporting their own activities on behalf of Jewish women. By the 1890s, organizations by and for Philadelphia's Jewish women, like Ezrat Nashim, which provided medical care, parental guidance, and shelter for pregnant women and new mothers, and the Philadelphia chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women expanded the earlier tradition.

At synagogue, poet Rebekah Gumpert Hyneman (1812–1875) sat upstairs, next to Louisa Hart and the Peixotto sisters, and her literature voiced their shared concerns about the spiritual life of Jewish women.[72] A prolific writer, her poetry offered spiritual portrayals of women of the Hebrew Bible. Hyneman's work appeared in the most influential Jewish national periodicals, Isaac Leeser's *Occident and American Jewish Advocate,* based in Philadelphia, and Isaac M. Wise's *American Israelite,* based in Cincinnati, and was known by Jews around the country for two-and-one-half decades. Her poetry series, Female Scriptural Characters, portrayed the Hebrew matriarchs as

heroic and prophetic women. Her sentimental rhetoric provided Jewish women with an alternative to the burgeoning industry in women's literature which embedded spirituality in sentimental Christian imagery. Most importantly, her work refuted charges that Judaism thwarted the spiritual development of Jewish women.[73]

Another of Hyneman's favorite topics was the destruction of Jerusalem. Hyneman's own life was tragic. Her husband deserted her with two young sons after five years of marriage and both her sons died young, one in Andersonville prison. Perhaps because of her personal life, she had a real talent for tragic poetry and used Jewish sources to express her feelings about heroic women and historical disasters.[74] In her imaginative book length poem, *The Leper,* the main character detailed the brutality of Roman soldiers as they destroyed Jerusalem. Hyneman also edited the *Masonic Mirror & American Keystone* with her brother-in-law Leon Hyneman. Hyneman was among the most prolific of mid and late nineteenth-century Jewish women in Philadelphia whose work shaped the developing American Jewish literary culture. Jewish literary women voiced their own answers to the many articles and poems touting Christianity that appeared in novels, advice books, newspapers, ladies' magazines, and children's books.

What gave Mikveh Israel's women the confidence to create spiritual literature and institutions for religious education? One reason might be that from early in the last century, the congregation used prayerbooks with English translations on the facing page. These were David Levi's *Seder HaTefilot: Form of Prayer for the Fast Days According to the Custom of the Spanish-Portuguese Jews* printed in London in 1792, and later, Isaac Leeser's 1837 *Seder Sefati Tzadikim: Form of Prayers According to the Custom of the Spanish-Portuguese Jews,* printed in Philadelphia.[75] Because women were least likely to have sufficient knowledge of Hebrew to understand Hebrew prayers, the English translation may have contributed to their unusual facility with Jewish sacred literature and religious ideas. By 1830, Mikveh Israel's women convinced Isaac Leeser to preach on Judaism regularly after services.[76]

Interestingly, Gratz's legendary link to *Ivanhoe* grew when, in 1872, a filiopietistic biography portraying her as a chaste, self-sacrificing, and pious model of Victorian femininity appeared. The pamphlet was published by her own niece, Sarah Mordecai. Mordecai embellished Gratz's tie to *Ivanhoe* by asserting that, just as Rebecca of York refused to marry Ivanhoe and instead devoted herself to caring for her aged father, Gratz had refused to marry a non-Jew whom she loved, and instead devoted herself to Jewish communal service. The story

was repeated in *The New Century,* a national periodical, in 1882.[77] In 1896 it was carried in a story in *The American Jewess,* a national Jewish women's magazine, and has been repeated in Jewish children's literature into the late twentieth century.[78] American Jews hoped it would inspire later generations of Jewish women to forego intermarriage and to work for the Jewish communal welfare. For Mikveh Israel, it even gathered new members. In 1900, Judith Goepp, later a student at Dropsie College, thanked the congregation for permitting her to join the syngagogue *of Ivanhoe's* Rebecca.[79]

Near the turn of the century, essays by Mary M. Cohen and literary work by Emily Solis-Cohen, Jr. voiced a more modern commitment to Judaism and Jewish women. Mary M. Cohen (1854–1911) followed Hart as superintendent of the Hebrew Sunday School, led Mikveh Israel's own Religious School Committee, and taught English, reading, and arithmetic to women who attended classes run by the Jewish Young Women's Union. Cohen was an accomplished journalist whose essays, articles, and poems appeared in Jewish, secular, and Christian periodicals. A member of the Pennsylvania Women's Press Association and three literary societies, she was also the first corresponding secretary of the Jewish Publication Society and the only woman member of its first Executive Committee.[80] Cohen also served as president of the Mikveh Israel Association, a group comprised of nearly equal numbers of men and women, which promoted Jewish education and social life in the congregation. She was on the boards of the Hebrew Sunday School Society and the FHBS, and she organized educational activities for Philadelphia's Young Men's Hebrew Association.[81]

Cohen was part of the growing woman's movement, and, like Gratz in an earlier day, hoped to improve both regard for women among Jews and regard for Jews among Christians.[82] Although American Jewish women rarely participated formally in the nineteenth-century women's movement because of its anti-Judaism, feminist ideas were embraced by Jewish women.[83] Despite their resentment of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's attempt to exorcise patriarchy from Christianity by condemning Judaism's patriarchal legacy, Jewish women knew that their efforts were not sufficiently encouraged or appreciated in Jewish life. Cohen, in particular, who had a strong religious interest, felt the lack of her meager religious education when compared with that available to men.[84]

In 1886, hoping to change the tone of Sabbath observance among the Orthodox, Cohen argued that life in an industrial city was not envisioned by ancient rabbis and that to best serve the spiritual needs of contemporary Jewry, the Sabbath should be made a cheerful "garden for the mind."[85] Three years later, she suggested that women

ought to be allowed to become Jewish ministers because they could do no worse than the current crop of male ministers in inspiring America's Jews to worship.[86] In 1893, Cohen spoke to the Women's Congress of World Parliament of Religions at the Chicago World's Exposition about the "Influence of Jewish Religion in the Home." She asserted that Judaism enhances domestic life, just as Christians had long claimed about Christianity, and that Judaism and family life form a "bond in sanctity." Reflecting the domestic focus of spirituality traditional among Jewish women, she wrote that it is not necessary for a Jew to enter a sanctuary to worship because domestic worship can serve as well. Praising Passover's "golden balls of stewed fish," she refuted Protestants as well as Reform Jews, like Chicago's influential rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, who scoffed at ritual. Those who call Judaism a "kitchen religion," she wrote, "lose sight of the fact that the spirit and body are equally in need of nourishment, and that to closely associate the material and the religious is to dignify the one without injuring the other."[87] A well-known speaker and writer, her report on the Jewish Woman's Congress ran in the *American Hebrew*.[88] The success of the Jewish Woman's Congress led to the founding of the National Council of Jewish Women a year later. Cohen served on its first Board, and, through its national membership, the NCJW itself helped the new Jewish Publication Society to stabilize and grow by providing two volumes and a buying public for future publications.[89]

Three years later, Mikveh Israel asked Cohen to represent the congregation at a convention of the Jewish Theological Seminary, which Mikveh Israel had helped to found. In accepting the honor, Cohen wrote, "the selection of a woman delegate will bear witness to the marked liberality of our congregation."[90] Possibly at the suggestion of Mayer Sulzberger, women had been counted as full voting members in the congregation since 1884, perhaps the first congregation in Philadelphia to so count women.[91] Like Hart before her, Cohen, who never married, added to the growing hagiography surrounding her predecessors. After Louisa Hart's death, Cohen edited Hart's memoirs, and published them in serialized form in *The Jewish Record*.[92] By clothing Hart in moral purity, Cohen refuted the growing clash between immigrants and acculturated American Jews, the growing nativism, and the antifeminism and homophobia voiced by a new science: psychology. Women of the Hebrew Sunday School Society countered this trend to denigrate unmarried women by naming branches of their schools after Grace Aguilar, a British Jewish theologian who never married and whose books were used in the Sunday school, Louisa B. Hart, and Rebecca Gratz.[93] In 1904, when Philadel-

phia's Jewish women formed an agency to provide women with inexpensive housing and counseling, first for pregnant women and later for unmarried working women, they called it the Rebecca Gratz Club.[94]

Cohen left the principal of her estate to her unmarried sister Katherine, a successful artist and sculptor who illustrated a kindergarten text for Jewish children published by the Jewish Publication Society. Titled *A Jewish Child's Book*, it was one of the first books for Jewish children to be printed in color.[95] After Katherine, Mary Cohen's estate was to go to her brother, Charles, one time president of Mikveh Israel, and then to the synagogue itself. The trust was to be administered by her close friend and Mikveh Israel hazan, Rev. Leon Elmaleh, with the stipulation that if the congregation abandoned the Spanish-Portuguese rite, he was to choose another orthodox congregation to be the beneficiary. Elmaleh tutored Cohen in Hebrew and the two grew close. Elmaleh sent roses to her stateroom as she left for Italy to visit her sister in 1907, and Cohen mailed wild pansies from the Apennines in one of her many letters to him.[96] More importantly, Cohen supported him in a dispute with the synagogue in 1908 and wrote an essay about the importance of a good hazan, presumably for him to include in the congregation's newspaper. In it she instructed readers that the hazan makes the synagogue the "true home of the heart (by) fill(ing) the souls of his followers with his own simple, pure, child-like faith."[97] Through her estate, Cohen provided Mikveh Israel's Sukkah, Torah, and synagogue decorations for many years.[98] After Cohen's death, the editor of the congregation's newspaper, *The Record*, wrote, "to me, Mary M. Cohen meant the Jewess."[99]

The editor who admired Cohen was Emily Solis-Cohen, Jr. (1886–1969), who wrote, translated, and edited four books for children that were published by JPS, a set of spiritual stories for Jewish women published by the Women's League of the United Synagogue of America, and an article on how female Jewish immigrants perceived Judaism.[100] The last was based on her work with the Jewish Welfare Board and appeared in a volume titled *Jewish Experience in America* in 1930. Solis-Cohen also edited the *American Hebrew*'s Children's Column, and her sonnet, "Have We Not One Father" was included in a twentieth-century anthology of Jewish verse.[101] Interestingly, her books continued the commitment of antebellum Jewish women to educating and enriching the lives of Jewish women and children while enlarging their conception of their own Jewish community. The book she authored, *David the Giant Killer and Other Tales of Grandma Lopez*, told a familiar Bible story while reasserting the leadership of Spanish-Portuguese Jews, a community by then far surpassed in

numbers and significance by Germans and Eastern Europeans. Solis-Cohen's abridged version of *The Holy Scriptures,* designed for educating children both in religious schools and at home, drew on the same impulse as the anonymous *Thirteen Lessons, a Parents and Teachers Assistant* for Jews written in 1845. Her editorial work on a book about Hannukah, published in 1937, reflects American Jews' continuing need to find ways to enhance those aspects of Jewish life that could limit Christianity's influence on their children.[102] In 1959, on the ninetieth anniversary of Gratz's death, the Philadelphia Delegates to the Conference of Jewish Women's Organizations dedicated a plaque in her honor at Mikveh Israel cemetery.[103] Emily Solis-Cohen was among the delegates.

The women considered here, Gratz, Emily and Ellen Phillips, Simma Peixotto, Rebekah Hyneman, Esther and Louisa Hart, Mary M. Cohen, and Emily Solis-Cohen, Jr., traditionally Jewish yet highly acculturated, were deeply concerned about problems Jewish women and children faced in America. Forming a Philadelphia-style pattern of lay leadership, they worked closely with each other, with scores of Jewish women whose family obligations limited their time for communal service, and with the Jewish community's male leadership, but never lost control of their own projects. All were single women or widows, but their activities made their lives admirable by the cultural standards of their day. By improving the condition of Jewish life and defending Judaism against evangelists, they justified their personal refusal to be fruitful and multiply and to help men fulfill masculine religious duties. They created new ways for Jewish women to demonstrate their spirituality and to materially improve women's lives. While debate over orthodoxy and Reform often split Jewish communities, these women institutionalized public religious responsibilities available to all Jewish women. In religious education, religious literature, and independent Jewish charitable associations, their activities and their assertions of moral authority refuted the claim that Judaism neglected women's souls. Like the men of the Philadelphia Group, they adapted the institutional forms successful in American society to advance American Jewry.

Notes

A version of this paper was delivered at Mikveh Israel, 250th Anniversary Commemoration, 1990. I would like to thank congregation Mikveh Israel and Helen Sax for allowing me access to materials in their collections. I am also grateful to Glassboro

State College (now Rowan College of New Jersey) for providing me with the time to research and write this piece. For their fascinating questions, thanks also go to Lynn Hankinson Nelson, my colleague in the Department of Philosophy and Religion, and Colleen McDannell at the University of Utah.

1. Lewis Saum, *The Popular Mood of Pre-Civil War America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980).

2. See Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Making of an American Jewish Culture" in this volume.

3. Carolyn Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (New York: Ballantine 1988), 72, 108

4. See Lance Sussman, "Isaac Leeser (1806–1868) and the "Philadelphia Pattern" in this volume.

5. Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

6. Linda Gordon Kuzmack, *Women's Cause: The Jewish Woman's Movement in England and the United States 1881–1933* (Athens: Ohio State University Press, 1990), 7–29.

7. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Avon Books, 1977), 51.

8. Population statistics for Philadelphia are from Russel F. Weigley, *Philadelphia: A Three Hundred Year History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), 104–115. By 1870 the boundaries of Philadelphia had grown beyond those of the antebellum era. Population statistics for Jews in Philadelphia are from Maxwell Whiteman, "The Legacy of Isaac Leeser," *Jewish Life in Philadelphia: 1830–1940*, edited by Murray Friedman (Philadelphia: ISHI Publications, 1983), 27 and Edwin Wolf, II "The German-Jewish Influence in Philadelphia's Jewish Charities," in Friedman (1983), 125.

9. Linda Kerber explored the public understanding of women's political duties called "Republican Motherhood." *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). Although the idea focused on women's duty to raise sons with republican values, it was, according to Kerber, the first articulation of women's responsibility directly to the nation regardless of husband or male guardian. Soon other activities by women for social betterment were welcomed and praised.

10. Female Association for the Relief of Women and Children in Reduced Circumstances," *Constitution*, n.p., 1801, Library Company.

11. E. Digby Baltzell, *Philadelphia Gentlemen: The Making of a National Upper Class* (New York: Transaction Books, 1989), 81.

12. Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Decades of Its Growth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), 11.

13. *Mikveh Israel Minute Book and Ledger*, 1824–1856, Mikveh Israel Archives.

14. Rachel Mordecai Lazarus to Maria Edgeworth, 1821, in *The Education of the Heart: Correspondence of Rachel Mordecai Lazarus and Maria Edgeworth* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 28.

15. Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: The Christianizing of America* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1989).

16. Edwin Wolf II and Maxwell Whiteman, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial times to the Age of Jackson* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1957), 288; Rebecca Gratz to Maria Fenno Hoffman, 11 January 1807, Rebecca Gratz Papers, American Jewish Archives, Manuscript Collection # 236.

17. Jon Butler (1990, 283–84) notes that church adherence rose steadily from 10 percent in 1790 to about 34 percent in 1850 and that, "unlike Europe, Christian adherence in America was increasing rather than declining . . . congregations attracted women and . . . proselytized children."

18. Christianity appeared in Philadelphia's antebellum press in ads, proclamations, poems, and anecdotes about Christian celebrations and worship, poems and anecdotes intended to edify the reader that were based in Christian theology and values, as well as openly anti-Jewish remarks and essays. See, for example, "The Watchmen of Philadelphia to their Patrons on the Rebirth of Christmas 1818," *Poulson's Daily American Advertiser,* 1 January 1819, Library Company; "Open Letter to a Clergyman," *Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser,*" 15 March 1780, Library Company; Joseph Dennie, "Morals," *The Port Folio,* vol. 1, no. 37, 1801, p. 294, Library Company; Marion Bell, *Crusade in the City: Revivalism in Nineteenth Century Philadelphia* (Fairfax, Va.: Bucknell University Press, 1977).

19. Matthew Carey, *Essays on the Public Charities of Philadelphia,* 4th edition (Philadelphia, 1829), APS Pamphlets #992, listed thirty-three private charitable societies but his count was not exhaustive.

20. Michael Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 60. Women often used this idea to gain moral authority. Male clergy struggled against feminization in an attempt to keep men active in religion. Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Avon, 1977), 94–143. The revival movement was especially attractive to women, who had a more visible role in it than in other forms of organized Christian worship. Martha Tomhave Blauvelt and Rosemary Skinner Keller, "Women and Revivalism: The Puritan and Wesleyan Traditions," in Reuther and Keller, *Women & Religion in America* vol. 2 (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 316–69. See also Faith Rogow, "Step Right Up: The Attraction of Evangelicalism to Ante-Bellum Southern White Women" (unpublished manuscript, 1984); on the cult of true womanhood, see Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood 1820–1860," *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 21–41, and "The Feminization of American Religion," ibid., pp. 83–102.

21. *The First Report of the Female Bible Society* (Philadelphia, 1815), 9, Library Company.

22. Mathew Carey, *Essays on the Public Charities of Philadelphia* 4th edition (Philadelphia, 1829), American Philosophical Society, Pamphlets # 922; Charles Lawrence, *History of the Philadelphia Almshouses and Hospitals from the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century to the Ending of the Nineteenth Century,* (Philadelphia, 1905), 8.

23. Benjamin Rush, "Thoughts Upon Female Education, Accommodated to the Present State of Society, Manners, and Government in the United States of America" (Boston, 1787) quoted in Martha Tomhave Blauvelt, "Women and Revivalism," in *Women & Religion in America,* edited by Rosemary Radford Reuther and Rosemary Skinner Keller (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), vol. 1, p. 3.

24. Michael Katz, *Poorhouse,* p. 60.

25. Isaac Leeser, *Discourses, Argumentative and Devotional on the Subject of the Jewish Religion* (Philadelphia, 5601 [1841]), 215–33; Isaac M. Wise *Occident* 1 (1843), 113–20, 409–14; *Occident* 2 (1844), 280–81; *Occident* 4 (1846), 65; *Occident* 15 (1857), 120–25 quoted in Naomi Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984), 67.

26. Theresa Odendahl, *Charity Begins at Home: Generosity and Self Interest among the Philanthropic Elite* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 138–60.

27. Odendahl, 1990, 100–117.

28. Evelyn Bodek, "Making Do: Jewish Women and Philanthropy," in Murray Friedman, ed., *Jewish Life in Philadelphia 1830–1940* (Philadelphia: ISHI Press, 1983), 145.

29. Ibid. p. 147.

30. Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, *Constitution*, Library Company.

31. Rudolf Glanz, *The Jewish Woman in America: Two Female Immigrant Generations: 1820–1929* (New York: KTAV, 1976), vol. 2: *The German Jewish Woman;* Rebecca Gratz to Miriam Moses Cohen, 24 January 1843, American Jewish Archives, Rebecca Gratz Papers, Manuscript Collection #236.

32. Reena Sigman Friedman, "'Send Me My Husband Who is in New York City': Husband Desertion in the American Jewish Immigrant Community 1900–1926," *Jewish Social Studies* vol. 44 (Winter 1982), 1–8.

33. Rebecca Gratz, *Female Hebrew Benevolent Society*, "Secretary's Report" (1858) American Jewish Archives, Henry Joseph Collection, box x239

34. *Guardians of the Poor: Records 1822–1824*, p. 4–5. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

35. *Report of a Committee on the Subject of Pauperism* (New York: American Philosophical Society, 1818), p. 9. Although several causes for poverty were listed, charitable institutions were blamed for the "evils that flow from the expectations they necessarily excite." Matthew Carey, *Essays on the Public Charities of Philadelphia*, 4th edition (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1829). Pamphlets #992.

36. *Report of a Committee on the Subject of Pauperism* (New York: American Philosophical Society, 1818), p. 14.

37. Mathew Carey, *Essays*, 1829.

38. William Ellery Channing, *A Sermon Delivered in Boston, September 18, 1818* (Boston: American Philosophical Society, 1818), p. 8. Pamphlets #992.

39. Lawrence, *Almshouses*, p. 9.

40. *Minute Book of the Junto for Congregation Mikveh Israel*, 18 April 1824–14 February 1881. Mikveh Israel Archives.

41. Rebecca Gratz, "Female Hebrew Benevolent Society: Secretary's Report" (1858), FHBS *Charter*, p. 8. American Jewish Archives, Henry Joseph Collection, Box x239.

42. Ladies Hebrew Mission Society, *Account Book* (1843) Presbyterian Historical Society. Wolf and Whiteman note that in 1814, Charleston's Jews wrote to Mikveh Israel for help for a Mrs. Levy, who, "blind and destitute," was sent to Philadelphia the following year. *History of the Jews of Philadelphia*, 274. Later appeals were often sent directly to Rebecca Gratz. Rebecca Gratz to Miriam Moses Cohen, 16 February 1860, American Jewish Archives, Rebecca Gratz Papers, Manuscript Collections # 236.

43. Rebecca Gratz, *Female Hebrew Benevolent Society*, "Secretary's Report", (1858) American Jewish Archives, Henry Joseph Collection, Box x239; Jewish Family Service History, *Records* 1822–1973, Philadelphia Jewish Archives–Balch Institute, Jewish Family Service Collection, Mss. 8.

44. Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

45. The Ladies Hebrew Mission Society (LHMS), *Constitution and By-Laws* (Philadelphia, 1843), LHMS *Account Book*, (Presbyterian Historical Society, n.d. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the Presbyterian Foreign Missions Board, which held public lectures in the language and religion of the targeted group, stopped working with Jews. No doubt because they could find English-speaking Jews in their own cities. In 1877, the Foreign Missions Board turned the Jewish question over to

the Home Mission Board, which organized new churches by gaining converts. Arthur Judson Brown, *One Hundred Years: History of Foreign Missions,* book one, (London, 1936), pp. 176–78.

46. Anonymous, *The Dying Jewess,* n.d. American Jewish Archives, Nearprint File.

47. Rebecca Gratz to Maria Fenno Hoffman, n.d., ca. 1815. American Jewish Archives, Rebecca Gratz Papers, Manuscript Collection # 236.

48. Rebecca Gratz to Miriam Moses Cohen, 13 September 1840. Manuscript Collection # 236, American Jewish Archives.

49. Rebecca Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz, 1832; Philipson (1929), 145.

50. Many thanks Professor Anne Boylan for this information.

51. Katz (1986), 63.

52. Carey, *Essays.* For more on the ASSU, see Anne Boylan's *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution: 1790–1880* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988).

53. Dianne Ashton, "Rebecca Gratz and the Domestication of American Judaism," Ph.D. diss. (Temple University, 1986), 218–90.

54. Minutes of the Hebrew Sunday School Society, 1859–1882, American Jewish Archives, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Hebrew Sunday School Society Collection [Small Collections File].

55. Charles Reznikoff and Uriah Z. Engleman, *The Jews of Charleston* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1950), 150.

56. Charles Reznikoff (1950), 150. According to Reznikoff, in 1842, Penina Moise, who later wrote the first American Jewish hymnal in English, succeeded Lopez as head of the school. Rebecca Gratz to Miriam Moses Cohen, 20 May 1838 and 4 November 1836? American Jewish Archives, Rebecca Gratz Papers, Manuscript Collection # 236.

57. Myron Berman, *Richmond's Jewry 1769–1976* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979), 56.

58. Hyman Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1947), 152, 240.

59. Emily Solis-Cohen, Jr. Archives, Folder: "Kupat Shel Sedakah: Ms Final Copy," p. 36 of manuscript. Courtesy of Helen Sax.

60. Many thanks to Professor David Dalin for this information.

61. Sam Bass Warner, Jr. *The Private City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1968), 118, 123.

62. Minutes of the Hebrew Sunday School Society, 1859–1882, American Jewish Archives, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Hebrew Sunday School Society [Small Collections File].

63. Sara Mordecai, *Recollections* (1870), p. 14; Boylan, *Sunday School* (1988), p. 57.

64. Mrs. Pyke, *Scriptural Questions for Use of Sunday Schools for the Instruction of Israelites* (1854); Simma Peixotto, *Elementary Introduction to Scriptures, I & II* (1840); Hebrew Sunday School Society Collection, Philadelphia Jewish Archives–Balch Institute.

65. Isaac Leeser, *Catechism for Younger Children* (1839); Hebrew Sunday School Society Collection, Philadelphia Jewish Archives–Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies.

66. On Niddah, Hallah, and Hadlaqah in the lives of traditional Jewish women, see Chava Weissler "Traditional Piety of Ashkenazic Women," in Arthur Green, *Jewish Spirituality* vol. 2, (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 245–83. On the Hebrew

Sunday School statistics, see Diane King, "Jewish Education in Philadelphia," in Friedman (1983), 240.

67. Louisa B. Hart, "In Memoriam," Minutes of the Hebrew Sunday School Society, 1 September 1869, reprinted in Sara Mordecai *Recollections* (1870), 26–27.

68. Mary M. Cohen, "A Memoir of Louisa B. Hart With Excerpts from Her Diary and Letters," chapter II, *The Jewish Record* # 189 (Philadelphia: n.p. 1878–1879) Courtesy of Jonathan Sarna.

69. Mimi Abramovitz, *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy from Colonial Times to the Present* (Boston: South End Press, 1988), 164.

70. Although Charleston's Hebrew Orphan Society had been operating since 1801, it did not open an orphanage until 1860. Charles Reznikoff, *The Jews of Charleston* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1950), 156; J. C. Levy, *An Address* Delivered in Charleston, South Carolina on 5 November 1834 Before the Hebrew Orphan Society. American Philosophical Society, Pamphlets #992.

71. Jewish Foster Home, *Minutes,* 1855–1856, Philadelphia Jewish Archives–Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, Association for Jewish Children Collection.

72. Mikveh Israel, *Ledger* (1824–1826), p. 7, Mikveh Israel Archives.

73. Rebekah Hyneman, "Sarah," *American Israelite,* vol. 1, no. 28 (1855) p. 222; "Female Scriptural Characters: Rebekah," *Occident and American Jewish Advocate* vol. 1 (1846), p. 241; Jacob R. Marcus, *The American Jewish Woman: A Documentary History* (Ktav: 1981), p. 183–87; McDannell (1986).

74. I. M. Wise review of Rebekah Hyneman, "The Leper and Other Poems," *American Israelite* vol. 1 no. 28 (1855), p. 222.

75. David Levi, *Seder HaTefilot: Form of Prayer for the Fast Days According to the Customs of the Spanish-Portuguese Jews* (London, 5553 [1792]); Isaac Leeser, *Seder Sefati Tzadikim: Form of Prayers According to the Custom of the Spanish-Portuguese Jews* (Philadelphia, 5598 [1837]), Mikveh Israel Archives.

76. Many thanks to Professor Lance Sussman for this information.

77. Sarah Mordecai, *Recollections of My Aunt* (Philadelphia, 1871, 1893); Gratz van Renssalaer, "The Original of Rebecca in *Ivanhoe,*" *The Century Magazine,* (New York, 1882), vol. XXIV, new series vol. II), 679–82; Bee Dee, "An American Jewess," *The American Jewess* (1896) vol. 2, no. 11, pp. 38–39.

78. See, for example, "The Good Fairy" in *The Great March* by Rose Lurie, Book II (Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1955), 131–41 and "Rebecca Gratz" in Abraham Karp, *Heroes of American Jewish History* (Ktav, 1972), 61–64.

79. Judith Goepp, to Congregation Mikveh Israel, n.d. (1900?), Mikveh Israel Archives, Correspondence Collection; Frank J. Rubenstein, *The Dropsie University: The Early Years 1908–1919* (1977), 21.

80. Jonathan Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 22.

81. Mikveh Israel Association Minutes, 24 October 1892. Mikveh Israel Archives. Twenty-four out of forty-three founders were women. The organization was to "promote the mental and moral welfare of the congregants and minister and teach Jewish knowledge and tradition."

82. Linda Gordon Kuzmack, *Woman's Cause: The Jewish Woman's Rights Movement in England and the United States 1881–1933* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990).

83. An important exception was the German Woman Suffrage Association of New York, to which Mathilde C. Weil and A. Appenheim belonged. "The German Woman Suffrage Association of New York," *Woman's Journal,* V (1874), p. 100.

84. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (1895, 1898).

85. Mary M. Cohen, "The Proper Observance of the Sabbath" *American Hebrew* vol. 26, no. 5 (12 March 1886), 6.

86. Mary M. Cohen, "A Problem for Purim," *The Jewish Exponent* no. 23, whole no. 101 (15 March 1889), n.p.

87. Mary M. Cohen, "The Influence of Jewish Religion in the Home," *Papers of the Jewish Women's Congress* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1894), 114–19. Hirsch's position on "kitchen religion" is described in Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 280.

88. Mary M. Cohen, "The Jewish Woman's Congress in Chicago," *American Hebrew,* vol. LIII, no. 21 (22 September 1893), 643.

89. These were *Papers of the 1893 Jewish Women's Congress* (1894) and *Proceedings of the First Convention of the National Council of Jewish Women* (1897). Faith Rogow, "Gone to Another Meeting: A History of the National Council of Jewish Women," (Ph.D. thesis State University of New York at Binghamton, 1988), 110; Sarna, (1989), 22, 43.

90. Mary M. Cohen to Isaac Feinberg, 25 February 1896, Mikveh Israel Archives, Mary M. Cohen Collection (MMCC).

91. Letter to the editor of the *Jewish Exponent,* 25 April 1905, unsigned, Mary M. Cohen?, Mikveh Israel Archives, MMCC.

92. Mary M. Cohen, "The Memoirs of Louisa B. Hart," *The Jewish Record,* 1878–1879. Courtesy of Jonathan Sarna.

93. "Brief History of the Hebrew Sunday School Society," Box 4, Folder 18, Mss. 6, p. 4, Philadelphia Jewish Archives–Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies; *Purim Entertainment: Grace Aguilar School* (Philadelphia: Hebrew Sunday School Society, 1911), Hebrew Sunday School Society Collection, Philadelphia Jewish Archives–Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies.

94. Rebecca Gratz Club Records, Philadelphia Jewish Archives–Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies.

95. Sarna (1989), 78.

96. Mary M. Cohen to Leon Elmaleh, Letters, 1907–1908, Mikveh Israel Archives, MMCC.

97. Mary M. Cohen, "Sign of the Times" (p4), Mary M. Cohen to Leon Elmaleh, Mikveh Israel Archives, MMCC.

98. Will of Mary M. Cohen, Mikveh Israel Archives, MMCC.

99. Emily Solis-Cohen, "A Great Tribute," *The Record* vol. 11 no. 3 (Philadelphia, 22 November 1911), p. 2, Mikveh Israel Archives, Mikveh Israel Association Collection.

100. Solis-Cohen's work for JPS included: *David the Giant Killer and Other Tales of Grandma Lopez* (JPS, 1908); *The Breakfast of the Birds and Other Stories from the Hebrew by Judah Steinberg* (JPS, 1917), translated by Emily Solis-Cohen, Jr.; *The Holy Scriptures: An Abridgement for Use in the Jewish School and Home* (JPS, 1931), edited by Emily Solis-Cohen, Jr.; and *Hanukkah: The Feast of Lights* (JPS, 1937), edited by Emily Solis-Cohen, Jr. These are listed in Jonathan Sarna's *JPS* (1989), p. 410. Her *Friday Night Stories* (New York: Women's League of the United Synagogue of America, 1949) was adapted from Shulamith Ish'Kishor's adaptation for children of Louis Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews,* translated by Henrietta Szold. Emily Solis-Cohen Jr. Archives, Biographies #2. Courtesy of Helen Sax.

101. Bruno Lasker, *Jewish Experience in America* (New York: The Inquiry, 1930)

p. 100–110, Emily Solis-Cohen, Jr. Archives, Folder: Activities, Biographies # 2. Courtesy of Helen Sax.

102. Anonymous, *Thirteen Lessons* Mikveh Israel Archives, Printed Collection, *Hanukkah* (1937).

103. "Delegates to the Conference of Jewish Women's Organizations," *The Philadelphia Jewish Times* Friday, 17 July 1959, p. 9 photo. Emily Solis-Cohen, Jr. Archives. Folder: Activities, Biographies #2. Courtesty of Helen Sax.

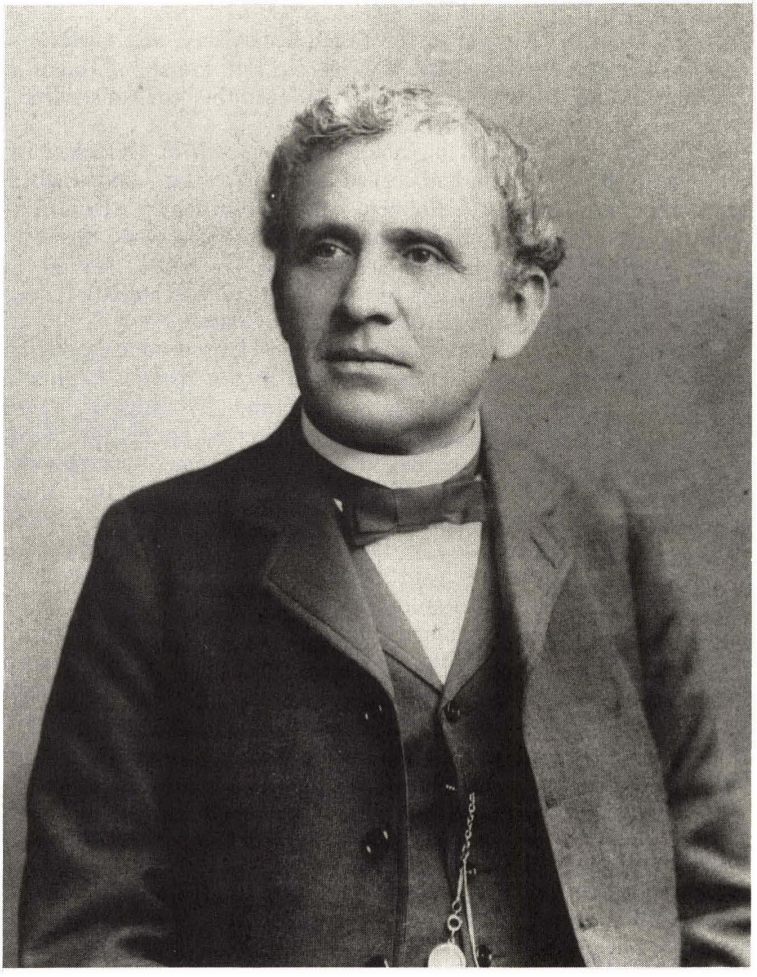
4

The Patriarch: The Life and Legacy of Mayer Sulzberger

DAVID G. DALIN

During his distinguished public career of close to sixty years, Mayer Sulzberger (1843–1923) was generally considered to have been the foremost Jewish citizen of Philadelphia. As the "patriarch" of the Philadelphia Group, during that period of American Jewish history in which Philadelphia was the "Jewish capital" of the United States,[1] and one of the preeminent Jewish public figures of his era, Sulzberger exercised a profound and far-reaching influence on the direction and reorganization of American Jewish organizational life for several decades. A founder of the Jewish Publication Society in 1888, he served as chairman of its publication committee during its first thirty-five years and did more than anyone else to shape its policies. Together with Louis Marshall, Jacob Schiff, Oscar Straus, Felix Warburg, and his cousin, Cyrus Adler, among others, Sulzberger played an instrumental role in organizing the American Jewish Committee and served as its first president. Through his role in bringing Solomon Schechter to America, helping to reorganize the Jewish Theological Seminary, and his extraordinary benefactions to the Seminary's library, it can be said without exaggeration that Mayer Sulzberger was one of the most important early leaders of Conservative Judaism in America.

Sulzberger's influence and legacy as one of the most respected Jewish communal leaders of his generation lay in his unique ability to bridge worlds that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century had little common ground. A learned and religiously observant Jew, and a patron of Jewish libraries and scholarship, he was also well-known and respected in the world of American law and government. One of the most eminent members of the Philadelphia Bar, and "the first Jew who identified himself as a Jew to ascend the Bench in Philadelphia,"[2] during his lifetime he was one of the foremost Jewish



Mayer Sulzberger. Courtesy of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati campus, Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion.

jurists in America. A pillar of the Republican party, and a personal friend of William Howard Taft, who offered him the appointment of U.S. ambassador to Turkey, Sulzberger enjoyed the "ear" of senators, governors, and presidents.

Sulzberger was born in the small German town of Heidelsheim, where his father Abraham had served as both "chazan" and teacher. His mother belonged to the Einstein family, from which Albert Einstein was also descended.[3] Following the revolution of 1848, the Sulzberger family emigrated to America, and, in 1849, settled in Philadelphia, where Abraham's brother Leopold was already living. Mayer Sulzberger completed Philadelphia's Central High School at the age of sixteen, while receiving a thorough Hebrew education from his father, as well as from Isaac Leeser and Sabato Morais, "who laid the foundation for his knowledge of Bible and post-Biblical Jewish literature in which he remained deeply interested all his life."[4] Although Leeser hoped that he would become a rabbi, Sulzberger decided on a legal career toward which his father had urged him. Since he had completed high school at such a young age, he was advised by Moses Dropsie, a friend of his father and one of the leading Jewish lawyers in Philadelphia, to gain some practical business experience before beginning his formal studies in law.

In 1862, at the age of nineteen, Sulzberger entered the law office of Moses Dropsie, under whom he apprenticed, and was introduced to the study and practice of law. He was admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar in 1865, and, after being associated with the Dropsie firm for another ten years, opened his own law office in 1876. His practice proved both eminently successful and lucrative. During the next eighteen years, prior to his elevation to the Bench, Sulzberger "accumulated a sizable fortune," and enjoyed a reputation as one of the most eloquent, learned, and respected attorneys in Philadelphia.[5]

In 1895, he was elected judge of the Court of Common Pleas on the Republican ticket, the first Philadelphia Jew to sit on this court since Moses Levy, who served on the municipal bench between 1802 and 1825, and presided over the famous Philadelphia Cordwainer's Case, the first major criminal conspiracy prosecution of a trade union in American history.[6] His popularity was so great that, in 1904, he received the nominations of both political parties, and was reelected without opposition. Sulzberger served for twenty years on the Court of Common Pleas, the last fourteen as its president judge, making him, in effect, the foremost judge in the third most populous city in America. A pillar of the Philadelphia judiciary, and a devoted Philadelphian, Sulzberger later turned down a nomination to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court "because it would have required him to

reside in Harrisburg for most of the year."[7] Following his retirement from the court, he accepted appointment as a member of the committee to revise Pennsylvania's State Constitution, on which he served with great distinction.

During his two decades on the bench, Sulzberger established a reputation as one of the most distinguished and scholarly jurists in the twentieth century. As a judge, Sulzberger's most valuable assets were "a keenly analytical mind and an unerring sense of justice."[8] He was a legal "realist," a student of things as they are, who viewed the law as "a living, growing organism, having its origin in human nature and custom."[9] As his friend Roland S. Morris, a leading Philadelphia attorney and civic leader, said of him in a memorial address delivered after Sulzberger's death in 1923: "He liked the naked fact, stripped of all clothing of the imagination or of prejudice. He was a dangerous man to us lawyers when we had to make a statement of facts before him. He demanded accuracy and care, and with penetrating intellect he dug into the facts of a situation and brought forth the reality that lay behind the phrases."[10]

Throughout his judicial career, Sulzberger was known as a bold and innovative judge, willing to risk reversal in an effort to chart new legal paths through his opinions.[11] He would ignore or set aside precedents when he thought them to be "at war with new social rights" and would not raise legal fictions so high as "to operate to the detriment of any person."[12] Caring little whether the appellate courts "would reverse or affirm his decisions," legal precedents meant less to him than reason and principle.[13] Thus, as Louis E. Levinthal, who knew Sulzberger well and was himself a judge in Philadelphia, points out in his thoughtful study of Sulzberger's judicial opinions, "Judge Sulzberger was not infrequently overruled, only to have his views subsequently adopted as the prevailing law of Pennsylvania."[14]

Far ahead of his time in his sensitivity to women's rights,"[15] he was also ahead of his time "in his refusal to stifle labor with the doctrine of freedom of contract."[16] His passionate devotion to both the rights of labor, as well as to the ideals of American democracy, are perhaps best reflected in his opinion concerning the Legislature of Pennsylvania's efforts to validate assignments of wages as security for loans by working men. "The first section of the Bill of Rights is still a living force in this Commonwealth," argued Sulzberger in declaring such legislative statutes unconstitutional.

> It is a declaration against slavery in any form, however modified or disguised. . . . It is true that the freedom of contract is a great and necessary right, but it has its limit. And this limit is reached and passed when a

> man's future labor is pledged to pay his past debts, with the consequence that he and his family are rendered liable to fall from the status of free citizenship into the degradation of pauperism.[17]

Viewed in historical perspective, his judicial opinions suggest a trial judge unique for his time—"in boldness, comprehension of social forces acting upon the law . . . sympathies for labor . . . the breadth of his scholarship and his willingness to dispense with outworn legal formulae."[18]

Sulzberger's rise to prominence as the preeminent Jewish leader of Philadelphia—as the "patriarch" of what would come to be known as the Philadelphia Group—began in 1868 when he singlehandedly published and edited the final volume 26 of Isaac Leeser's monthly—*The Occident*. And, thus, as Solomon Solis-Cohen would note, in his memorial eulogy for Sulzberger in 1923, "did Elijah cast his mantle upon Elisha."[19] Sulzberger readily accepted the mantle of Jewish communal leadership and responsibility that Leeser had bequeathed to him. First and foremost a Philadelphian, over the next fifty-five years, until his death in 1923, Sulzberger would leave his imprint on virtually every facet of Jewish organizational life of his adopted city.

A life trustee of the venerable Mikveh Israel Congregation, to which most of the members of the Philadelphia Group belonged, and a vice president of the city's Jewish Hospital, which his father had helped found, Sulzberger was the "driving force" behind the growth and development of Philadelphia's Young Men's Hebrew Association, of which he was the first president. Secretary of the Board of Maimonides College, the first Jewish seminary in the United States, during the six years of its existence, he was an influential trustee of Gratz College from its creation in 1895, and a member of the original Board of Governors of Dropsie College, whose direction and destiny he helped to shape for fifteen years. One of the few Jewish members of Philadelphia's prestigious Union League Club, one of the most exclusive of social institutions in tradition-bound Philadelphia, Sulzberger was also a trustee of the Jefferson Medical College, and one of a mere handful of Philadelphia Jews after whom a city street would be named.

Part of Sulzberger's unique and enduring legacy as a Jewish public servant derives from his extraordinary achievement as a rare book collector and as a patron of Jewish libraries and scholarship. As Maxwell Whiteman has pointed out, Sulzberger was the "maecenas" for a large number of Hebrew and Yiddish authors, the most famous of whom was the "wandering poet-mystic and author of 'Hatikvah,'" Naftali Herz Imber, who appealed to him for financial support. Nu-

merous volumes of Hebrew verse, prose, philosophy, and rabbinic literature that might not otherwise have been published thus "found their way into print through Sulzberger's charitable pursue."[20] During his lifetime, moreover, Sulzberger was also the foremost private collector of Jewish books and manuscripts in America. Sulzberger's love of Jewish books was insatiable. For several decades, much of his spare time and money was devoted to the collecting of rare Hebrew books and manuscripts.[21]

Over the years, Sulzberger cultivated a closely working relationship with the well-known Hebrew bibliophile, Ephraim Deinard, who "kept him informed of the first printing of ancient Hebrew works, plied him with choice *incunabula,* the best bibliographies and the rarest of manuscripts,"[22] and spent days at a time, at his Girard Avenue home, cataloging the Hebraica collection in his private library.[23] Moreover, as Maxwell Whiteman has noted, two governors of Pennsylvania, who were also his friends, "Edwin Stuart, a bookseller, and Samuel W. Pennypacker, a zealous collector, kept him advised of all Hebraica that came their way."[24] The shelves of his exquisitely furnished Girard Avenue library contained what was widely recognized to be the most impressive private collection of Jewish books and manuscripts in the country. As early as 1896, Ephraim Deinard compiled and published a Hebrew catalog of Sulzberger's remarkable collection,[25] all of which he would eventually donate or bequeath to the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

More than any other individual, Mayer Sulzberger can be considered the "founder" of the Seminary's incomparable Judaica library, the largest single aggregation of Jewish books in the world. Almost from its inception, he was its most generous benefactor, its patron par excellence: In 1903, Sulzberger presented the Seminary with three thousand books and four hundred manuscripts, at a time in which its entire holdings consisted of five thousand volumes and only three manuscripts.[26] Included in this collection were forty-five *incunabula*—books published before the year 1500—which were close to half of the editions of Hebrew *incunabula* then known to exist, and which became the nucleus of the Seminary's formidable rare book collection. In 1907, Sulzberger would write to the Seminary's librarian, Alexander Marx, congratulating him on his recent acquisitions, and on "their library's" having "moved ahead" of the Municipal Library of Frankfort as the world's third largest repository of Hebrew *incunabula,* only ranking behind Oxford University and the British Museum.[27]

As his extensive correspondence with Alexander Marx indicates, Sulzberger's support of the Seminary Library went far beyond just

donating books and manuscripts. As chairman of the Seminary library committee, and as an experienced collector himself, he frequently advised Alexander Marx on how best to increase the library's holdings. "Almost like a father," suggests Herman Dicker, "he taught him how to negotiate with bookdealers and derive the most from his limited budget."[28] In addition to advising Marx on what to purchase, he often provided the necessary funds to make new acquisitions possible.[29] At his death in 1923, the remainder of Sulzberger's vast Hebraica collection was given to the library of the Seminary.

It was "in pursuit of his bibliophilic interests" that Sulzberger first became acquainted with Solomon Schechter, the distinguished reader in rabbinics at Cambridge University and world-renowned discoverer of the Cairo Geniza, whom Sulzberger would subsequently be instrumental in bringing to America to serve as the first president of the reorganized Jewish Theological Seminary. As Moshe Davis and others have pointed out, the reorganization of the Seminary and the early shaping of Conservative Judaism as an emerging ideological movement was almost exclusively the work of the "Philadelphia Group"[30] under the leadership of Cyrus Adler, Solomon Solis-Cohen, and, especially, Sulzberger.

Having first met Schechter on a visit to England in the early 1890s, Sulzberger and he became quick friends and began to correspond on a regular basis.[31] Their close friendship and correspondence, nurtured by their shared love of Jewish book collecting and scholarship, would continue until Schechter's death in 1915. From the time of their first meeting, Sulzberger had hoped that Schechter might consider moving to America to join the faculty of the Seminary, a hope shared by Adler, Solis-Cohen, and other members of the Philadelphia Group as well. In 1895, Sulzberger invited Schechter to deliver a series of lectures to celebrate the opening of Gratz College, and, during his visit to Phladelphia, to be Sulzberger's guest at his house on Girard Avenue. "Of course, you are to consider my house your home during your stay," he wrote Schechter, "and you may reassure your wife on the subject of your being taken care of. Somebody will see to it that you do not forget to eat, drink or sleep; you can lounge, read, write, and if the worst comes to the worst you can even devour one of your favorite Yemen Midrash *MSS* of which I am the possessor."[32] Schechter's Gratz Lectures, which were widely quoted in the American Jewish press and "served to introduce Schechter to an ever wider audience,"[33] were a resounding success. Erudite and witty, a man of enormous energy and "unmistakable charisma," Schechter made an extraordinary impression on Sulzberger, Adler, Solis-Cohen, and other members of the Philadelphia Group who, "certain that he was

the man to give intellectual and spiritual leadership" to the "Jewish Revival" they hoped for, became even more determined to bring him permanently to America. Thus, when Sabato Morais died in 1897, Schechter was Sulzberger's choice to succeed him and to preside over the reorganization of the Seminary that the Philadelphia Group hoped to bring about.

On 9 May 1897, Schechter wrote to Sulzberger seeking his initial advice as whether or not, and under what conditions, to accept the offer of Seminary presidency.[34] Over the next three years, as negotiations between Schechter and the Seminary Board of Directors dragged on, and Schechter agonized over the decision of leaving England for the Seminary, Sulzberger was his constant "sounding board" and advisor. In letter after letter, Sulzberger counseled his friend to be patient and not to rush into an agreement until the Seminary could guarantee a sufficiently remunerative salary to provide for his and his family's financial security. Thus, for example, in July of 1899, Sulzberger would caution Schechter that only if and when the Seminary Board could guarantee him "a legal contract . . . for five years at $4000 per annum, the sum of $20,000—to be gathered and deposited as a fund to secure these payments in the event of the failure of the Seminary," should he consider accepting their offer.[35] "What concerns me much," he wrote Schechter five months later, "is that a proper contract should be executed before you irrevocably commit your self" to leaving England.[36]

When, in November 1901, Schechter finally decided to accept the Seminary presidency, he personally communicated his decision to Sulzberger, who then happily "telegraphed" notification of Schechter's acceptance to the Seminary leadership in New York.[37] In his 23 November 1901 letter to Schechter, congratulating him on his "wise" decision, which would be "for the advantage of Judaism and yourself," Sulzberger first indicated to Schechter that he might give his valuable Jewish book and manuscript collection to the Seminary Library.[38]

In 1906, in the aftermath of the Kishinev pogroms, Sulzberger helped to organize and became the first president of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the first Jewish "defense" agency in America. While Sulzberger willingly shared his leadership of the AJC with close associates on its executive committee including Cyrus Adler, Louis Marshall, Oscar Straus, Jacob Schiff, and Max Kohler, his influence was decisive in shaping AJC policies and in resolving internal organizational disputes on a variety of public issues. In almost all areas of AJC decision making, Sulzberger's was the "commanding" presence, with Marshall, Schiff, Straus, Kohler, and Adler, among

others, deferring to his judgment, "seeking his council and frequently his approval and conferring with him before acting on an important issue".[39]

As president of the American Jewish Committee, between 1906 and 1912, Sulzberger's greatest achievement was his influential role in bringing about the abrogation of the Russo-American Commercial Treaty of 1832 because of Russia's refusal to recognize U.S. passports when issued to American Jews who wished to travel freely in Czarist Russia. The history of the political campaign to abrogate the 1832 Russo-American Commercial Treaty, and ensure the religious liberty of American Jews traveling abroad, led by Sulzberger, Louis Marshall, and Jacob Schiff between 1908 and 1912, has been thoroughly and critically analyzed by Naomi W. Cohen and other recent scholars.[40] In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Czarist government had begun to utilize clauses in this Russo-American Treaty, which guaranteed freedom of navigation and commerce as well as the free entry of residents of the signatory states, to subject American Jews visiting Russia to the same restrictions under which their Russian co-religionists lived. Despite repeated objections from the American government, the Russian regime remained adamant. It even suggested that the American government consider refusing passports to Jews intending to travel to Russia, "thereby sparing itself the embarrassment of having its citizens discriminated against by a 'Friendly' foreign power."[41]

The leadership of the American Jewish Committee was especially "outraged" when it learned of a State Department circular issued on 28 May 1907, which stated that "Jews, whether they were formerly Russian subjects or not, are not admitted to Russia unless they obtain special permission in advance from the Russian Government, and this department will not issue passports to former Russian subjects or to Jews who intend going to Russian territory, unless it has the assurance that the Russian Government will consent to their admission."[42] This statement not only "established clearly the acquiescence of the United States government in Russia's policy of discriminating against Jews bearing American passports, but made it appear that the State Department would hereafter assist the Russian government in enforcing that policy."[43] To Sulzberger and other leaders of American Jewry, such U.S. acquiescence to discriminatory restrictions upon American Jews by a foreign government relegated American Jews to second-class citizenship. As Naomi W. Cohen has noted, the State Department circular of May 1907 was "the catalyst in crystallizing the change in demand from diplomatic protest to outright abrogation," of the

Commercial Treaty with Russia, as a means of defending the rights of American Jews.[44]

During the presidential campaign of 1908, the issue of Russia's refusal to recognize the rights of American Jewish passport holders led Sulzberger and his colleagues at the American Jewish Committee to put pressure on outgoing President Roosevelt and Republican presidential candidate William Howard Taft to secure Jewish electoral support by making an explicit statement on the passport question. On 8 May 1908, Sulzberger addressed a long and detailed letter to President Roosevelt, setting forth the arguments of American Jews.[45] Subsequently, on 17 July, Sulzberger wrote to Taft, who had been nominated the month before as the Republican party candidate for the presidency as follows:

> You are doubtless aware that for some decades the Russian Government has refused to permit Jewish citizens of the United States to enjoy the rights guaranteed to all citizens by the Treaty of 1832, and that all representations hitherto made by our Government have been fruitless. . . . The platforms of both parties of 1904 and 1908 contain declarations on the subject. The conduct of Russia in flouting the passport of the United States is naturally resented by the people more immediately concerned, though, when the matter is studied, the grievance to the whole nation seems equally great. The [American Jewish] Committee feels that a more specific declaration in the earnestness of our government in pressing for redress would probably effect that which mere diplomatic writing has hitherto failed.[46]

Concerned lest his Democratic rival capture the Jewish vote by promises of recognition of American Jewish passports, Taft succumbed to Sulzberger's arguments, and, in his campaign speeches, committed the new administration to solve the Russian passport problem.

Because President Taft had spoken out forcefully on the issue during the campaign and at his inaugural, a positive policy was expected. The new administration, however, to the chagrin of Sulzberger, Marshall, and their colleagues, chose a "prudent silence."[47] Determined to make one last "behind-the-scenes" effort to persuade the administration to act, on 21 May 1910, Sulzberger wrote to Taft, "in his own hand, on personal stationery," requesting a private meeting at the White House, together with Jacob Schiff and Cyrus Adler, "to lay before you our thoughts on the Russian matter."[48] At the meeting, which was held on 25 May, in the presence of Secretary of State Philander Knox and U.S. Ambassador to Russia William Rockhill,

Sulzberger learned definitely that, campaign promises notwithstanding, the Taft administration opposed abrogation. As a result, a more concerted and forceful public campaign for the abrogation of the 1832 Treaty, led more by Marshall than by Sulzberger, was launched of 19 January 1911.

Although Sulzberger "now moved to the background" while Marshall intensified the public campaign for abrogation of the Treaty, Sulzberger corresponded and met with Taft on several occasions during the following year. Together with Marshall, Schiff, and Adler, moreover, Sulzberger worked closely with Congressman William Sulzer, who, through his position as chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, was leading the congressional fight for abrogation of the Treaty. In July 1911, at Sulzer's invitation, Sulzberger delivered impassioned pleas before the House Foreign Affairs and the Senate Foreign Relations Committees for abrogation of the Treaty. Sulzberger's dramatic 2 July appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was, in many respects, the turning point in the campaign to overturn the Russo-American Treaty: Sulzberger's eloquent and forceful address had a profound impact on several members of the House and Senate, heretofore neutral in the Treaty debate, and generated widespread support for the adoption of abrogation resolutions in Congress. In response to Sulzberger's address, Senator Penrose pledged that "as soon as Congress reconvenes, I will take this question [of abrogation] up with President Taft and Secretary Knox. . . . While the President and the Secretary of State should be informed of the final steps contemplated, the action [to abrogate] will originate in the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate and as soon as I return to Washington I will take up the matter with Senator Cullom, Chairman of the Committee, and will use all my influence to remove the reproach to American traditions which has marked the discrimination of Russia against . . . some of our most loyal and brilliant citizens."[49]

It is of more than passing significance that Sulzberger, rather than Marshall, argued the AJC case for abrogation of the Russo-American Treaty before the Republican controlled Senate Foreign Relations Committee. It was more than an *ex officio* deference to Sulzberger's office of president, to which Marshall would succeed the following year. Marshall's deference to Sulzberger on this, as on other strategic aspects of the abrogation campaign, was a tribute to Sulzberger's extraordinary oratorical abilities, to his judicial eminence, and to his stature as the preeminent Jewish Republican in America. It was, moreover, a tribute to the personal esteem with which Sulzberger was held by the occupant of the White House, William Howard Taft.

More than Louis Marshall, or any other American Jewish leader of the period, Sulzberger enjoyed Taft's personal respect and political confidence. As Lloyd P. Gartner's edition of the Sulzberger-Taft correspondence so well documents,[50] Sulzberger remained a friend and political confidant of Taft throughout the years of the abrogation campaign. While relations between Marshall, Schiff, and other Jewish leaders had deteriorated by 1911 as a result of the Russian passport issue, those between Taft and Sulzberger continued to be friendly.[51] Alone among American Jewish leaders, Sulzberger's forceful case for abrogation—and his alone—would receive a fair hearing in the Taft White House and within the Republican aisles of the House and Senate as well.

Thus, as much, perhaps, as Marshall's efforts behind-the-scenes, Sulzberger's memorable Senate address proved to be the necessary catalyst for emergent White House support and effective congressional action. Inspired by Sulzberger's eloquence, the renewed efforts of Penrose in the Senate and Sulzer in the House eventually produced the desired outcome: on 13 December 1911, the House of Representatives passed a joint resolution instructing President Taft to notify Russia of America's intention to abrogate the treaty. The 300–1 congressional vote demonstrated overwhelming national support for abrogation. To Sulzberger's delight, at the instruction of Taft, when Secretary of State Knox subsequently issued a notice of termination to the Czarist government, Sulzberger promptly sent a personal letter of congratulations to the president.

In 1912, at the age of sixty-nine, Sulzberger retired from the presidency of the AJC so as to be able to devote more of his "free time" to Jewish scholarship,[52] and to the Jewish communal enterprise to which he was especially devoted, The Jewish Publication Society. Indeed, of all his many and varied Jewish communal involvements, The Jewish Publication Society was, perhaps, dearest to his heart.[53] Sulzberger's lifelong love of Jewish books and book collecting had been inspired and furthered by his revered teacher Isaac Leeser, for whom the establishment of an American Jewish publication society had long been an unfulfilled dream. Sulzberger, himself, had first publicly advocated the creation of a Jewish Publication Society in an 1868 editorial in *The Occident,* to which he contributed regularly as a young man and which, "true to a promise made to his dying teacher,"[54] he edited for one year after Leeser's death. "With the radiant optimism that would characterize his lifelong efforts on behalf of American Jewry," notes Jonathan D. Sarna, "Sulzberger's *Occident* editorial predicted a day when America would 'boast of a truly great' Jewish publication society 'whose ramifications shall extend over all

this continent, whose presses shall teem with the wealth of Jewish learning, whose activity shall foster native talent, and whose munificence shall enable all to drink draughts of wisdom at its fountain, so that in all the land it shall be said of us: Behold, Israel is a wise and understanding people.'"[55]

Twenty years later, Sulzberger had a seminal role in helping to transform his (and Leeser's) dream of a national society for publishing Jewish books into a reality. When the Jewish Publication Society of America was organized in June 1888, Sulzberger was a member of the original committee that drafted the constitution and bylaws of the new Society. From its initial formation in 1888, moreover, until his death in 1923, Sulzberger would serve as the powerful chairman of its publication committee, and, in so doing, would do more than anyone else to shape its policies, select manuscripts, and supervise both the content and format of the books it would publish. More often than not, Sulzberger's own personal literary tastes or ideological positions would be reflected in JPS policy. Thus, for example, as a staunch non-Zionist, who remained continuously distrustful of the Zionist movement, he "objected to discussions of Zionism in any JPS publications."[56]

He would personally seek out and recruit prospective authors as well. It was Sulzberger who was personally responsible for the JPS publication of *Children of the Ghetto,* and for thus "making Israel Zangwill the bright star of the Anglo-American literary scene."[57] Having "despaired of finding an American who could write a good Jewish novel," notes Sarna, Sulzberger wrote to his friend Lucien Wolf in London "in hopes of finding" a promising Anglo-Jewish novelist there.[58] Wolf recommended Zangwill, who Sulzberger met on a visit to London. He subsequently, in February 1891, invited Zangwill to write a novel for JPS. In this, as in so many of his other varied endeavors on behalf of JPS, Sulzberger's intuition and foresight paid off. Upon publication in 1892, *Children of the Ghetto* immediately became "the most talked about book of the season," and, as Sarna has pointed out, it sold well on both sides of the Atlantic, while the young Society's reputation "soared for having introduced to American readers a work of such renown."[59]

It was also Sulzberger who personally sought out, and commissioned, his friend Solomon Schechter's *Studies in Judaism,* a lucid and engaging collection of fourteen essays on Jewish history, religion, and theology that remains, close to a century after its initial publication, a work of enduring significance and "unsurpassed" literary style.[60] Over the next two decades, moreover, it was Sulzberger who, together with Cyrus Adler, did more than anyone else to plan, shape, and

oversee the publication of JPS's monumental American Jewish Bible translation which, upon completion in 1917, was recognized as a landmark in the history of American Jewish publishing and scholarship and which quickly became the Society's best selling volume.[61]

Conclusion

One of the most influential and farsighted Jewish leaders of his generation, Mayer Sulzberger played a pivotal role in the creation and development of an extraordinary number of Jewish institutions and communal enterprises, both in his beloved city of Philadelphia and on the national stage as well. So profound was the imprint that he left on virtually every cultural, religious, and political development in American Jewish life during his lifetime that he was considered by many to have been, in the words of Louis Ginzberg, "the outstanding Jew produced in America."[62]

Regrettably, however, much of his formidable legacy as an American Jewish leader has been inexplicably forgotten. As Maxwell Whiteman has pointed out, the varied dimensions and achievements of Sulzberger's multifaceted public career remain unstudied and largely unappreciated to this day.[63] Indeed, few, if any, other of the preeminent American Jewish leaders have been so neglected by American Jewish historians and biographers. In a 1988 poll of American Jewish historians asked to name the two "greatest (deceased) Jewish leaders,"[64] for example, the name of Mayer Sulzberger goes entirely unmentioned. Alone among the "great" Jewish leaders of nineteenth- and twentieth-century America, Sulzberger has never been the subject of even one comprehensive or definitive scholarly article or monograph.[65] Most of the other "great" American Jewish leaders—including, among others, Louis D. Brandeis, Oscar Straus, Stephen S. Wise, Abba Hillel Silver, Louis Marshall, Joseph Proskauer, Isaac Mayer Wise, Isaac Leeser, Henrietta Szold, and Solomon Schechter—have all been the subject of full-length biographies, scholarly monographs, and/or dissertations. Even Cyrus Adler, Sulzberger's cousin and protégé to whom he turned the mantle of Jewish leadership, and about whom a definitive biography is long overdue, has received increasing attention from American Jewish historians in recent years.[66]

So, too, a critical and definitive biography of Mayer Sulzberger, who can well lay claim to having been one of the "outstanding" Jewish leaders "produced in America," is long overdue. With the publication of such a biography, one hopes, his unique and enduring contribu-

tions to the worlds of both American Jewish scholarship and public life will be better recognized and appreciated in our era, as they were in his own. Such a biography will, moreover, contribute immeasurably to our further understanding of the collective achievement and historical legacy of the Philadelphia Group of which Sulzberger was the "patriarch" and most distinguished member.

Notes

1. Daniel J. Elazar, Proceedings, Philadelphia Group Symposium, p. 2, quoted in: Murray Friedman, "The Philadelphia Group: A Collective Portrait," p. 1.
2. Maxwell Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," in Murray Friedman, ed., *Jewish Life in Philadelphia, 1830–1940* (Philadelphia: ISHI Publications, 1983), p. 173.
3. Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1963), p. 363.
4. Alexander Marx, *Essays in Jewish Biography* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1947), p. 223.
5. Louis E. Levinthal, "Mayer Sulzberger," *The Shingle* (published monthly by the Philadelphia Bar Association), January 1939, p. 7.
6. Jeffrey B. Morris, "The American Jewish Judge: An Appraisal on the Occasion of the Bicentennial," *Jewish Social Studies* (Summer–Fall 1976), pp. 197–99.
7. Lloyd P. Gartner, "The Correspondence of Mayer Sulzberger and William Howard Taft," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research*, 1979–1980, pp. 123–24.
8. Louis E. Levinthal, "Mayer Sulzberger," op. cit., p. 7.
9. Louis E. Levinthal, *Mayer Sulzberger, P.J.* (Philadelphia, 1927), p. 107.
10. Roland S. Morris, "Memorial Address," in *Addresses in Memory of Mayer Sulzberger* (Philadelphia, 30 May 1923), p. 7.
11. Jeffrey B. Morris, "The American Jewish Judge," p. 203.
12. Ibid.
13. Louis E. Levinthal, "Mayer Sulzberger," *The Shingle*, p. 9.
14. Ibid.
15. Jeffrey B. Morris, "The American Jewish Judge," p. 204. On this subject, see, for example, Sulzberger's opinions in the following cases: *Cilibert's Applications*, 24 Pa. D.R. 1068 (1915); and *Herb v. Cigar Makers International Union of America*, 24 Pa. D.R. 930 (1915).
16. Jeffrey B. Morris, ibid. For Sulzberger's view of labor, see his opinion in the case of of *Seward v. Shields*, 9 Pa. D.R. 583 (1900).
17. Louis E. Levinthal, "Mayer Sulzberger," *The Shingle*, p. 9.
18. Jeffrey B. Morris, "The American Jewish Judge," p. 204. The best review and analysis of Sulzberger's major judicial opinions can be found in Louis E. Levinthal's *Mayer Sulzberger, P.J.*
19. Solomon Solis Cohen, "Memorial Address," in *Addresses in Memory of Mayer Sulzberger* (Philadelphia, 30 May 1923), p. 26.
20. Maxwell Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," p. 168.
21. Herman Dicker, ed., *The Mayer Sulzberger-Alexander Marx Correspondence, 1904–1923* (New York: Sephor-Hermon Press, Inc., 1990), p. v.

22. Maxwell Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," p. 168.
23. In March 1896, for example, as Sulzberger noted in a letter to Solomon Schechter, "I have Deinard here every day till Erev Pesach for ten days or so," cataloging the Hebraica in the Sulzberger library. (Sulzberger Letter to Solomon Schechter, 30 March 1896: Sulzberger-Schechter Correspondence, Jewish Theological Seminary Library.)
24. Maxwell Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," p. 168.
25. Ephraim Deinard, *Or Mayer, Catalogue of the Old Hebrew Manuscripts and printed books of the library of Hon. Mayer Sulzberger of Philadelphia, Pa.* (New York, 1896).
26. Herman Dicker, *The Sulzberger-Marx Correspondence*, p. vi.
27. Herman Dicker, *The Sulzberger-Marx Correspondence*, Sulzberger Letter to Alexander Marx, 21 October 1907, p. 32.
28. Ibid., p. vi.
29. Ibid.
30. Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, p. 250 and Maxwell Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," p. 169.
31. Sulzberger's letters to Schechter, as yet unpublished, can be found at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Much of the Schechter correspondence to Sulzberger, however, has been edited by Meir Ben-Horin and published in two issues of *Jewish Social Studies:* "Solomon Schechter to Judge Mayer Sulzberger" (October 1963), pp. 249–86, and (April 1965), pp. 75–102.
32. Sulzberger letter to Solomon Schechter, 7 December 1894: Sulzberger–Schechter Correspondence, Jewish Theological Seminary Library.
33. Abraham J. Karp, "Solomon Schechter Comes to America," in Abraham J. Karp, ed., *The Jewish Experience in America*, vol. V (New York and Waltham: KTAV Publishing House, Inc. and the American Jewish Historical Society, 1969), p. 115.
34. Solomon Schechter letter to Mayer Sulzberger, 9 May 1897, in Meir Ben-Horin, "Solomon Schechter to Judge Mayer Sulzberger: Part I, Letters from the Pre-Seminary Period (1895–1901)," *Jewish Social Studies* (October 1963), p. 262.
35. Sulzberger letter to Solomon Schechter, 21 July 1899: Sulzberger–Schechter Correspondence, Jewish Theological Seminary Library.
36. Sulzberger letter to Solomon Schechter, 18 December 1899: Sulzberger–Schechter Correspondence, Jewish Theological Seminary Library.
37. Sulzberger letter to Solomon Schechter, 23 November 1901: Sulzberger–Schechter Correspondence, Jewish Theological Seminary.
38. Ibid.
39. Maxwell Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," p. 172.
40. See, for example, Naomi W. Cohen, "The Abrogation of the Russo-American Treaty of 1832," *Jewish Social Studies* (January 1963), pp. 3–41 and Gary Dean Best, *To Free a People: American Jewish Leaders and the Jewish Problem in Eastern Europe, 1890–1914* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982), pp. 166–205.
41. Abraham J. Karp, *Haven and Home: A History of the Jews in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1985), p. 223.
42. Gary Dean Best, *To Free a People*, p. 168.
43. Ibid.
44. Naomi W. Cohen, "The Abrogation of the Russo-American Treaty of 1832," p. 6.
45. Quoted in Gary Dean Best, *To Free a People*, pp. 169–70.
46. Quoted in "The Passport Question," *American Jewish Year Book* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1911), pp. 20–21.

47. Abraham J. Karp, *Haven and Home: A History of Jews in America*, p. 224.

48. Mayer Sulzberger letter to William Howard Taft, 21 May 1910. Reprinted in Lloyd P. Gartner, "The Correspondence of Mayer Sulzberger and William Howard Taft," p. 134.

49. "Senator Penrose's Response," to "Judge Sulzberger's Address" before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Included in Mayer Sulzberger Papers on file at the American Jewish Committee Library in New York City.

50. Lloyd P. Gartner, "The Correspondence of Mayer Sulzberger and William Howard Taft,"

51. Ibid., p. 125.

52. Following his retirement from the presidency of the American Jewish Committee, Sulzberger completed the writing of three of his four published scholarly books: *The Polity of the Ancient Hebrews, The Ancient Hebrew Law of Homicide*, and *The Status of Labor in Ancient Israel.*

53. My discussion of Sulzberger's involvement with and leadership of The Jewish Publication Society is based primarily on Jonathan D. Sarna's excellent centennial history of the Society, that is, Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888–1988* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1989).

54. Alexander Marx, *Essays in Jewish Biography*, p. 226.

55. Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS*, 8.

56. Ibid., pp. 68–69.

57. Maxwell Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," p. 168.

58. Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS*, pp. 39–40.

59. Ibid., p. 42. Sulzberger's important role in inviting Zangwill to write *Children of the Ghetto* and making possible its publication by JPS is also discussed, in some detail, in Joseph H. Udelson's *Dreamer of the Ghetto: The Life and Works of Israel Zangwill* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), pp. 81–83.

60. Ibid., p. 59–60.

61. Ibid., p. 115.

62. Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, p. 362.

63. Maxwell Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," p. 172.

64. "The Greatest American Jewish Leaders," *American Jewish History* (December 1988), pp. 169–220.

65. There have, however, been a couple of brief and hagiographical biographical profiles, such as Alexander Marx's in his *Essays in Jewish Biography*, pp. 223–28 and Harry Simonhoff's profile in his *Saga of American Jewry, from 1865–1914* (New York: Arco Publishing Company, Inc., 1959), pp. 279–84. There has also been, more recently, a useful edition of Sulzberger's correspondence with Alexander Marx, ably edited and introduced by Herman Dicker. See footnote 21, above.

66. On the recent scholarship on Cyrus Adler, see, for example, David G. Dalin, "Cyrus Adler, Non-Zionism and the Zionist Movement: A Study in Contradictions," *AJS Review*, Spring 1985, pp. 55–87 and the three articles in the March 1989 issue of *American Jewish History*, dealing with "The Role of Cyrus Adler in American Jewish History"; David G. Dalin, "Cyrus Adler and the Rescue of Jewish Refugee Scholars"; Ira Robinson, "Cyrus Adler and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America: Image and Reality"; and Jonathan D. Sarna, "Cyrus Adler and the Development of American Jewish Culture: The 'Scholar-Doer' as a Jewish Communal Leader." See also Ira Robinson's excellent edition of the Adler Letters, *Cyrus Adler: Selected Letters* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1985).

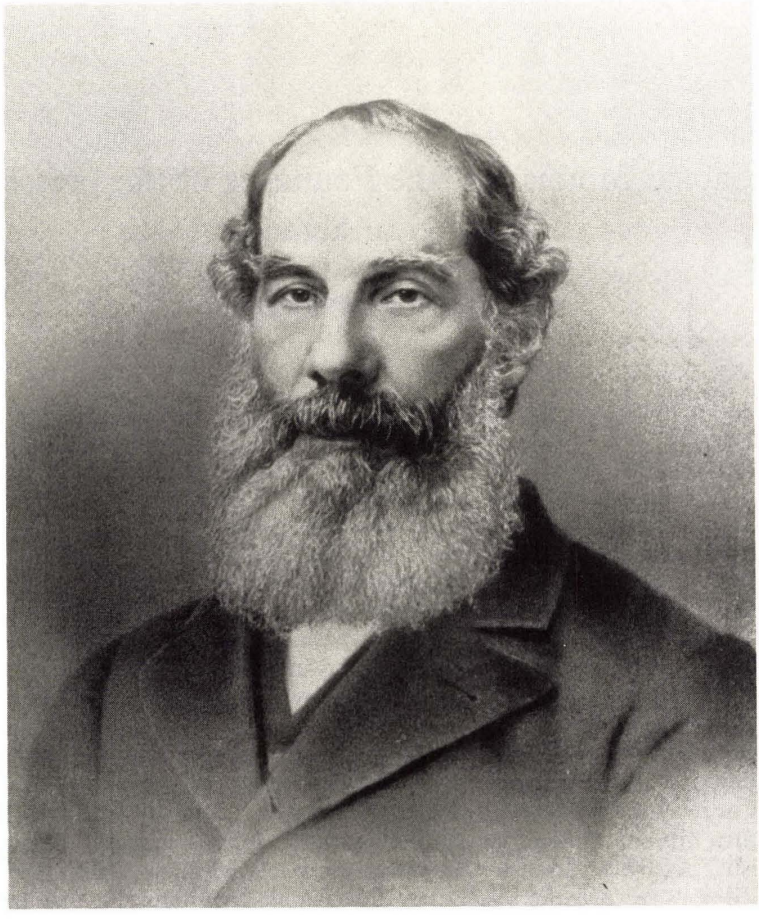
5

Sabato Morais and the Founding of the Jewish Theological Seminary

ROBERT E. FIERSTIEN

As the nucleus of the religious movement now known as Conservative Judaism, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America has trained four generations of rabbis and other Jewish scholars, while at the same time providing spiritual guidance for Conservative Jews around the world. Although the Seminary was the product of many historical forces and the creation of many individuals, it owes its existence primarily to the efforts of one man—Reverend Sabato Morais.[1] As the leading traditional rabbi in Philadelphia in the second half of the nineteenth century, Morais rose to a position of national prestige and prominence, a position that made him uniquely capable of forging the coalition of disparate rabbinic and lay leaders that gave birth to the Seminary in 1886. A passionate and eloquent spokesman for the Jewish tradition, Morais created a devoted group of supporters and disciples in Philadelphia, such as Cyrus Adler and Solomon Solis-Cohen, and it was these individuals, among others, who would help turn Morais's Seminary vision into a reality. Thus, although the Jewish Theological Seminary has always been located in New York City, we shall see that the role of the Philadelphia community in shaping the institution in its early days was very great.

Sabato Morais was a remarkable man—a courageous, compassionate, and scholarly rabbi who took a keen interest in the political and religious trends of his day.[2] Born in Livorno (Leghorn) Italy on 13 April 1823, to an Ashkenazic mother and a Sephardic father, Morais was educated in local *yeshivot*, and received his *semicha* certificate from Rabbi Avraham Baruch Piperno in August 1845. At the same time, he received a thorough secular education, and, like his famous patriot friend, Joseph Mazzini, he became a staunch supporter of Italian independence. In 1846, Morais went to London to serve as



Sabato Morais. Courtesy of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

the "Master of Hebrew" at the Orphans' School of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, Sha'ar Ha-Shamayim, remaining there for five years. Finally, in 1851, upon hearing of the vacancy in the pulpit of Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia, occasioned by the resignation of the Rev. Isaac Leeser,[3] Morais came to America, preached a trial sermon, and was hired as *hazzan* of the synagogue in April of that year, beginning his forty-six-year association with the congregation.

Courageous and outspoken, during the Civil War Morais was a fervent supporter of the Union cause, and, for a while, the board of his synagogue even sought to prevent him from speaking out on the issues of the day. Morais stood his ground, however, insisting on freedom of the pulpit, and ultimately he prevailed. Throughout his long career, Morais was often concerned with social action issues. Thus he took a keen interest in the Jewish farm colonies in South Jersey, and he was greatly involved in efforts to aid the immigrants from Eastern Europe, who began to pour into Philadelphia in the 1880s. In 1890, working along with Rabbis Marcus Jastrow and Joseph Krauskopf, Morais helped to settle the bitter Philadelphia Cloakmakers' Strike, and he bravely defied the manufacturers in his congregation by openly taking the side of the working man.[4]

Morais was an extraordinary learned rabbi, an expert in Italian Hebrew Literature, and a devoted student of the Bible. Indeed, in 1887, upon the occasion of his receiving an honorary doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania, the *American Hebrew* called him, "the most accomplished Hebraist in America."[5] It is very difficult to categorize Morais religiously by modern standards, for his theological outlook would be somewhere between the standpoints of traditional Conservative and Modern Orthodox Judaism. On the one hand, he was a staunch traditionalist, who opposed such innovations as mixed seating, late Friday evening services, and the playing of an organ in synagogue. On the other hand, he felt that if a synod of competent and learned rabbis were assembled, it would have the power to make vast changes in the liturgy, and he also intimated on several occasions that he was not comfortable with the concept of the restoration of the Temple sacrifices.[6]

After the passing of Isaac Leeser in 1868, Morais gradually became recognized as the leading traditional rabbi in the United States, but unlike Leeser or Isaac Mayer Wise, his national influence was limited because he never published a newspaper. Nevertheless, within his home community, Morais exerted considerable influence over many of the individuals who are identified with the Philadelphia Group. As rabbi, friend, and confidant to many prominent Philadelphians, Mor-

ais helped to shape the essentially traditional religious character of the Group. In addition, his deep devotion to Jewish scholarship and his ongoing involvement in so many facets of Jewish life must surely have provided a role model for the entire community.

Recognizing Morais's scholarly attainments, Issac Leeser had called upon him in 1867 to serve as professor of Bible at Maimonides College in Philadelphia. The first tangible attempt to create an American rabbinical school, Maimonides College featured a highly competent faculty, including Leeser, Morais, Marcus Jastrow, A. S. Bettelheim, and L. Buttenweiser, and it presented a comprehensive, modern curriculum of Jewish studies.[7] Nevertheless, the school closed in 1873, for a number of reasons. First of all, Leeser died in 1868, and although Morais and Jastrow struggled to keep the institution open, they had only limited time to devote to it. In addition, Maimonides College suffered from a chronic lack of funds, and the Philadelphia community gave it only lackluster support. Student enrollment was very low, and the school had inadequate library facilities. When it finally closed after six struggling years, Maimonides College had yet to graduate a single rabbi.

As the leading Reform rabbi in the United States, Isaac Mayer Wise of Cincinnati was keenly aware of the need for an American rabbinical school. As early as 1855, he had tried to lay the foundation for such an institution by creating Zion College, a Hebrew day school that lasted only two years. In 1875, Wise founded the Hebrew Union College, which opened under the auspices of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, with Wise as its first president. The school offered a broad yet traditional curriculum consisting of Bible, Hebrew and Aramaic Grammar, Mishnah, Gemara, Midrash, Codes, Philosophy, Theology, Jewish History, and Homiletics.[8]

It is interesting to note that Sabato Morais was originally a strong supporter of the Hebrew Union College. In 1877 and 1878, Morais went to Cincinnati to serve as a member of the board of examiners for the school. After testing the students, he proclaimed, "The College at Cincinnati may unequivocably be pronounced an object deserving of the support of all Israelites."[9]

Although it may seem unusual for Morais to have supported an institution led by Isaac Mayer Wise, he probably had very specific reasons for doing so. First, Wise and his associates gave constant assurances that the Hebrew Union College would remain nondenominational,[10] and Morais may initially have taken them at their word. In addition, H.U.C. opened just two years after the closing of Maimonides College, and Morais hoped that somehow the Union of American Hebrew Congregations would open a branch of the school

in Philadelphia to serve students on the East Coast. Indeed, Wise himself held out this possibility, telling Morais, "I believe that if the Philad. congregations come into the Union that the Maimonides College could be re-opened as Preparatory."[11] Nevertheless, within a very short time, Morais's plans were frustrated, and his support for the Hebrew Union College waned. For one thing, Wise's assurances to the contrary, H.U.C. rapidly became a Reform institution, and lost its appeal to the traditionalists. In addition, at the 1878 convention of the U.A.H.C. in Milwaukee, it was decided that the recently founded Emanu-El Seminary in New York, an advanced afternoon school under Reform auspices, would become the preparatory institution for H.U.C. Morais must surely have realized that his dreams for a seminary in Philadelphia would not come to pass.

There were three main causes that provoked Sabato Morais and the traditionalists into founding the Seminary in 1886. First was unquestionably the personality of Isaac Mayer Wise. Outspoken and sometimes tactless, Wise had a knack for creating enemies, and the resentment that he generated carried over to the Hebrew Union College. The traditionalists especially resented the fact that an avowed Reformer like Wise should be president of America's only rabbinical seminary, which was allegedly a nondenominational institution.

The second cause for the founding of the Seminary was the so-called "Treyfa Banquet" of 11 July 1883. Intended as a gala celebration of the ordination of the first four graduates of the Hebrew Union College, the Banquet featured a menu that included clams, crabs, shrimp, and frogs' legs, along with beef, ice cream, and cheese. The traditionalists stormed out in protest, and, in the ensuing months, a heated controversy raged throughout America's Jewish newspapers. Isaac Mayer Wise, who probably was not responsible for the menu of the Banquet,[12] repeatedly used the pages of his *American Israelite* to castigate the traditionalists for their devotion to the Jewish dietary laws, which he termed "kitchen Judaism": "It is about time to stop that noise over the culinary department of Judaism. The American Hebrew's religion centers not in kitchen and stomach."[13] In Philadelphia, the *Jewish Record* took the lead in condemning Wise, declaring, "What does the head of the 'Union College' expect to achieve by the above tirade of abuse—this scoffing at the dietary laws held in reverence by many congregations now in the 'Union.'" Not confining its words to mere criticism, however, the paper continued, "Is it a challenge for those who have not rejected Moses to follow Wise to sever their connection with the U.A.H.C. and withdraw their support from an institution, for the education of Jewish ministers, whose chief instructor openly reviles the Mosaic laws? It looks so."[14]

In 1884, the attacks against Wise intensified, and, once again, the Philadelphia community took the lead. The *Jewish Record* kept up its condemnation, joining New York's *American Hebrew* in calling for the establishment of a new seminary by asking, "Who will come forward and initiate the good work?"[15] From the pulpit, Rabbis Sabato Morais and Marcus Jastrow of Philadelphia's Rodeph Shalom both joined the fray. Jastrow sought to protest through the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, to which his synagogue belonged, whereas Morais, whose congregation never joined the Union, took an even stronger stand. On Chanukah 1884, Morais preached a fiery sermon, lambasting the Reformers, and declaring,

> To save the religion for which Mattathias staked his existence and of which Chanukah is a glorious exponent, a seminary of learning, where *all* the ordinances of the Pentateuch, compatible with our state of dispersion, will be taught and enforced, must be set up in obedience to the demands of an enlightened "Orthodoxy."[16]

The third and final cause for the founding of the Seminary was the so-called "Pittsburgh Platform" of November 1885. The product of a conference of nineteen Reform rabbis, chaired by Isaac Mayer Wise, the Pittsburgh Platform contained little that was new, merely summarizing the essential beliefs of Reform Judaism in eight "planks." Nevertheless, in its forthright public denial of such concepts as ceremonial law, Kashruth, the Messiah, and the return to Eretz Yisrael, the Platform was seen as an open provocation by the traditionalists, and it was in the immediate aftermath of the Pittsburgh Conference that the Seminary was founded. Typifying the reaction of the traditionalists, the Philadelphia *Jewish Record* called the conference, "sound and fury, signifying nothing." It declared that, "to maintain the integrity of Judaism there is no other course left but complete severance from the Cincinnati College and the establishment of a university devoted to the interests of conservative Judaism."[17]

Within a few weeks of the Pittsburgh Conference, Sabato Morais resolved to fulfill his dream of a new Seminary. He held an informal meeting at his home in Philadelphia,[18] and then contacted other influential lay and rabbinic leaders both in that city and in New York. In particular, he relied upon the aid of two distinguished and widely known New York rabbis—Henry Pereira Mendes and Alexander Kohut. Minister of America's oldest synagogue, Shearith Israel, Pereira Mendes was a native of England who had come to the United States in 1877 at the age of twenty-five. Although he was not exceptionally learned in a classical Jewish sense,[19] Pereira Mendes was a literate

and articulate spokesman for traditional Judaism. He was also very active in communal affairs.

Alexander Kohut was born in Hungary in 1842, and came to the United States in 1885, to serve as the rabbi of New York's Congregation Ahavath Chesed. A graduate of the famous Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau, in Germany, Kohut was a brilliant critical scholar, whose most famous work was the *Aruch Completum,* an enormous dictionary of the Talmud that took him twenty-four years to complete. Kohut had attained national prominence during the summer of 1885, when he had engaged in a heated newspaper debate with Reform Rabbi Kaufmann Kohler of New York's Temple Beth El concerning the value of Rabbinic Judaism. The controversy was reported in Jewish newspapers around the country, and it established Kohut's reputation as a leading spokesman for traditional Judaism.

In contacting Pereira Mendes and Alexander Kohut, Sabato Morais was reaching out to both the right and left wings of the movement that Moshe Davis has called the "Historical School" of American Judaism.[20] The left wing of the School consisted of rabbis who were willing to accept moderate changes in Jewish practice, but who parted with Isaac Mayer Wise and his Reform colleagues on issues such as the observance of the Sabbath and the dietary laws. Rabbis such as Marcus Jastrow of Philadelphia, Benjamin Szold of Baltimore, and Alexander Kohut of New York were all in this category, each one participating in a radical revision of the *siddur,* while at the same time retaining an essential traditionalism.

To the right of these men in the Historical School were the acknowledged traditionalists such as Morais of Philadelphia, Pereira Mendes of New York, Bernard Drachman of Newark and later New York, and Henry Schneeberger of Baltimore. Although they were willing to accept modest changes in ritual practice and liturgy—as opposed to the Eastern European orthodox rabbis who would not—the rabbis in the right wing of the Historical School saw themselves as the standard bearers of the Jewish tradition in America. Thus, by reaching out to both wings of the Historical School, Sabato Morais was hoping to forge a coalition that would give the Seminary a wide popular base.

In addition to the rabbis, Morais also sought support from prominent lay leaders. His primary ally in New York was David M. Piza, a wealthy Sephardic Jew who was very active in the affairs of Congregation Shearith Israel. Responding to a letter from Morais, Piza promised to try to enlist the support of the board of Shearith Israel for the Seminary project, and he also agreed to try to raise funds for the new institution.[21] In suggesting to both Piza and Pereira Mendes that Shearith Israel should take the lead in helping to organize the Semi-

nary, Morais was obviously abandoning his dream of creating a rabbinical school in Philadelphia. There are probably two explanations for his actions. First, Morais must have realized that, with its daily influx of Eastern European immigrants, the New York Jewish community, already the nation's largest, would soon overwhelm all other American Jewish communities in terms of sheer numbers. In addition, Morais was deeply disappointed in the closing of Maimonides College, just a dozen years before, and he probably felt that the Philadelphia community would give only lukewarm support to the new Seminary.

As the year 1886 opened, Morais's plans for the Seminary began to take concrete shape. A circular was issued, signed by seven rabbis, requesting financial support from the American Jewish community,[22] and Morais went to Shearith Israel to preach about the new institution. The *American Hebrew* and the *Jewish Record* intensified their attacks upon Isaac Mayer Wise, and both newspapers warmly endorsed Morais's plans. Finally, on Sunday, 31 January 1886, the Jewish Theological Seminary was founded. A conference was held at Shearith Israel, attended by twelve men—Revs. S. Morais and Joseph Chumaceiro of Philadelphia, Rev. A. P. Mendes of Newport, Rev. H. Schneeberger of Baltimore, Rev. B. Drachman of Newark, and Revs. A. Kohut, A. Wise, F. de Sola Mendes, and H. P. Mendes of New York, along with three laymen: "Messrs. Weil, Davidson, and Meyer."[23] The conference unanimously endorsed a resolution presented by Rev. A. P. Mendes of Newport: "Resolved that it is indispensable to the welfare and progress of Judaism in this country that there should be founded a seminary for the training of teachers of the future generation in sympathy with the spirit of Conservative Judaism, to be called, 'The Jewish Theological Seminary of New York.'"[24]

One of the most articulate supporters of the Seminary project was Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen of Philadelphia. A highly skilled physician, Solis-Cohen was a devoted student and friend of Sabato Morais, who went on to become a well-known poet and translator of medieval Hebrew poetry. Although the term "Conservative Judaism" was barely in use at this time, the essentially Conservative philosophy of Solis-Cohen—which was typical of that of many of the founders of the Seminary—is best seen in a lengthy article he wrote to the *American Hebrew* in support of the new institution:

> It is the only Jewish platform. But this platform does not oppose progress. Men change, times change. Customs must change in harmonious development. The laws are fixed but they are principles, not applications. As surroundings change, the application of fixed principles changes to

> meet its environment. . . . Obedience to law, harmonious development and in accordance with traditional rules—these are the principles to be taught in the Jewish Seminary.[25]

After the founding of the Seminary, Solis-Cohen continued to be one of the most eloquent proponents of the institution. During the summer of 1887, he engaged in a heated debate in the *American Hebrew* with Dr. Richard Gottheil, a Columbia professor who was the son of Reform Rabbi Gustav Gottheil. Solis-Cohen vigorously defended the Seminary, decrying the radicalism of the Hebrew Union College, while Gottheil took the exact opposite position.[26] Nicknamed the "War of the Doctors," the controversy soon subsided, but it served to undermine support for the Seminary among the moderate Reform elements of the Jewish community.

Another Philadelphia friend and student of Morais who actively aided the Seminary project was Cyrus Adler, who was working at the time at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Adler had received a doctorate in Semitics from Johns Hopkins University, and he frequently consulted with Morais about the latest scholarly theories. Writing to the *American Hebrew*, Adler had vehemently attacked the Pittsburgh Platform,[27] and, after the Seminary's founding, he gave it his fullest support. Years later, after the passing of Solomon Schechter, Adler would head the Seminary from 1915 to 1940.

Morais's Seminary project was not without opposition. From the Reform side, Isaac Mayer Wise severely castigated the founders of the school, decrying them as nonorthodox men who were founding an orthodox institution:

> The genuinely orthodox congregations . . . will certainly have nothing to do with men who are engaged, and under salaries, in so-called reform congregations and maintain they are building up an orthodox seminary. . . . The only orthodox man in that scheme is an Italian Hazan, who, God bless his soul, is unable to perpetrate a fraud otherwise, and appears in this connection as a deceived deceiver.[28]

From the Eastern European orthodox side, Morais's plan was also the subject of strong criticism. In an article titled "Founding of the New Seminary," which originally appeared in the *New Yorker Yidishe Zeitung*, the orthodox scholar J. D. Eisenstein strongly condemned the emerging philosophy of Conservative Judaism, using the term in precisely the same way that it is used today.[29] For Eisenstein, the only way in which the new Seminary would be of value was if it were to renounce its ties to any Reform-leaning congregations which might

wish to support it, thereby severing its association with left-wing rabbis such as Kohut and Szold.

Despite the opposition, however, Sabato Morais continued undaunted with his plans. On 7 March 1886, a second organizational meeting was held at Shearith Israel. At least twenty-two congregations were represented,[30] as well as a large number of individual lay leaders. Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen was elected chairman. The main business of the meeting was to ratify a constitution for the organization now known as the "Jewish Theological Seminary Association." Prepared in advance by Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen, the document pledged the Seminary's loyalty to "the preservation in America of the knowledge and practice of historical Judaism as ordained in the Law of Moses and expounded by the prophets and sages of Israel in Biblical and Talmudical writings."[31]

As the year 1886 progressed, Morais's plans for the Seminary became a reality. In May, trustees were elected, and Joseph Blumenthal was chosen as president, a position he was to hold until his passing in 1901. A former president of Shearith Israel, Blumenthal had served in the New York State Assembly, and had helped to bring down the infamous Tweed Ring in New York City. In June, a committee of rabbis met to plan out the curriculum for the school. As we shall see, it was modeled largely after that of the famous Breslau Seminary. In November and December, prospective students were examined, and eight young men were admitted to the school. Finally, on 2 January 1887, the Seminary opened with a gala ceremony at New York's Lyric Hall.

Addressing the large crowd that had gathered for the program, Sabato Morais stressed the importance that biblical studies would play in the curriculum of the Seminary.[32] Indeed, to Morais, Bible was the most important subject to be taught at the school for, as he had declared in a sermon delivered to Baltimore's Congregation Chizuk Amuno some months earlier, "It shall be the boast of that institute hereafter that the attendants are surpassing Scripturalists— if I may be permitted the expression—though they may not rank foremost among skilled Talmudists. The latter have, at times, degenerated into hair splitting disputants—*pilpulists*."[33]

Thus, for Morais, the Seminary from the beginning was not to be an Eastern European-style *yeshiva*, where Talmud and Codes were the almost exclusive subject of study. Instead, the curriculum of the Seminary was modeled after that of the well-known Jewish Theological Seminary of Breslau, which had been headed by Rabbi Zacharias Frankel. Frankel's concept of "positive historical Judaism" was very similar to the ideology of the Historical School, seeing the Jewish

tradition as an evolutionary process, while retaining an essential traditionalism.[34]

Like the Breslau school, the early Seminary offered a broad-based curriculum including Bible, Midrash, Hebrew language, Jewish history, philosophy, and Homiletics, as well as Talmud and Codes. As we have noted, Alexander Kohut was a graduate of the Breslau Seminary, and Bernard Drachman, who was soon to become the school's first paid teacher, had also studied there, as had Rabbi Frederick de Sola Mendes (Henry's brother) of the school's Rabbinical Advisory Board. Although Sabato Morais had written to the leaders of Jews' College in London before the opening of the Seminary,[35] there is little question that the school's curriculum was largely patterned after that of Breslau. The Seminary's program encompassed nine years, although advanced placement was often given for prior knowledge.

Until his passing in 1897, Morais remained the school's guiding light. As president of the faculty, he would not only interview all prospective students and faculty members, even in his seventies he would also make the tiring train trip from Philadelphia to teach Bible at the Seminary two or three times a week. In addition, from approximately 1892 to 1896, Morais taught two students in Philadelphia who were officially enrolled at the Seminary, Gerson Levi and Isaac Husik.[36] It was hoped that they would eventually join the Seminary's Senior Class in New York, and Gerson Levi did, indeed, graduate from the school in the time of Solomon Schechter. Isaac Husik, however, never attended the Seminary, but went on to a distinguished career as an expert in medieval Jewish philosophy.

Under the guidance of Morais, the Seminary prospered in many ways. From the original eight students of 1887, the school expanded. Thirty-two students were enrolled by 1898.[37] The first students were generally very young, in their early teens, but gradually the average age increased, and, by 1896, it was decided that a bachelor's degree was a prerequisite for graduation from the Seminary.[38] Originally, classes were taught by the local rabbis of the school's Advisory Board, but in February 1887, Rabbi Bernard Drachman was hired to teach the preparatory class. Born in the United States, Drachman had been educated at Columbia University before going on to study at Breslau, and he held a Ph.D. from the University of Heidelberg. By 1900, the Seminary had ten teachers, six of whom were paid. Henry Pereira Mendes and Alexander Kohut taught regularly at the school, and Cyrus Adler would occasionally come up from Washington to lecture on biblical archaeology.

Quickly outgrowing the Vestry Room of Shearith Israel on West 19th Street where the first classes were held, in October 1887 the

Seminary moved to the Cooper Union building on 8th Street and Fourth Avenue, and, after four years, it moved to a large apartment on East 12th Street. Finally, in May 1892, with the help of Jacob Schiff, the Seminary acquired its first permanent home, a large brownstone house on Lexington Avenue, near 59th Street.[39] The Seminary Library grew as well, and by 1900, it had approximately 6,000 volumes, 1,200 of which were given to the institution by Dr. Morais himself. Indeed, to honor Morais on his seventieth birthday in 1893, the trustees named the Seminary Library after him.

In addition to their formal academic training, the students engaged in many extracurricular activities as well. After the fashion of the day, the students formed a Literary Society, where debates were held, and students often read their own poems and "declamations." The students took a keen interest in speaking Hebrew, and in December 1897, to honor the memory of the Seminary's founder, they started the Hebrew-language Morais Literary Society. Zionism was also a topic of great interest at the Seminary, on the part of both students and faculty. Working along with students from C.C.N.Y., Seminary students helped to found the Young American Zionists in 1896, and Z.B.T. in 1899.[40] Standing for "Zion b'mishpat tipodeh," ("Zion shall be redeemed through justice" [Isaiah 1:27]), Z.B.T. was a Zionist society that eventually became a regular college fraternity.

From the beginning, one of the Seminary's most important goals was to "Americanize" the immigrants, who were rapidly pouring into the United States from Eastern Europe. Americanization had two essential motivations. The first was to modernize the immigrants, to bring them in line with American customs and values, so as to keep them from being an embarrassment to the established American Jewish community and a source of potential anti-Semitism. The second motivation, which was just as crucial in the minds of Sabato Morais and the other founders of the Seminary, was to provide a meaningful, modern, yet traditional form of Judaism, which would attract the children of the immigrants, who were often repelled by the alien, old-fashioned ways of their parents.

To reach out to the immigrants, therefore, was a high priority of the Seminary, and its students fulfilled this goal in several ways. Students would often accept High Holiday pulpits in immigrant congregations; occasionally they would remain there during the academic year as well. Several of New York's larger, established congregations ran Hebrew schools in ghetto areas to help educate Jewish children, and Seminary students took an active role in these institutions. In addition, they would often give lectures on Jewish subjects at the Educational Alliance, the East Side's most prominent private institution for

immigrant education, and, for a time, Seminary students ran a "Young People's Synagogue" at the Forsyth Street Shul. Perhaps the most ambitious attempt by Seminary students to reach out to the immigrants was the founding of the Jewish Endeavor Society around 1900.[41] Offering a broad range of educational programs and lectures to the immigrant community, the Society was a noble attempt to fulfill one of the important goals of the founders of the Seminary.

One other way in which the early Seminary sought to reach out to the Jewish community was through free public lectures and classes. In 1892, for example, the Seminary presented a lecture series entitled "The Activities of the Rabbi."[42] From Philadelphia, Morais and Jastrow came to speak, joining such luminaries as Benjamin Szold, Cyrus Adler, Henry Schneeberger, Frederick de Sola Mendes, Henry S. Jacobs (of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun), and Alexander Kohut. By presenting these programs, the Seminary leaders helped to increase the visibility of the institution, while at the same time the lectures served to dispel any "ivory tower" image that might attach to the school.

By the time that Sabato Morais died in November 1897, the Seminary was already a first-rate academic institution and a recognized presence in the Jewish community. It had already ordained four men, and thirteen more would graduate by 1902, when the school was reorganized. Among these early graduates, several would attain great prominence, especially Joseph H. Hertz, the Seminary's first graduate, who went on to become Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth, and Mordecai M. Kaplan, who later founded the Reconstructionist Movement.

Nevertheless, despite its academic success, even during Morais's tenure as president of the faculty, the institution suffered from several severe problems that intensified after his death. For one thing, the Seminary never raised sufficient funds to allow for adequate expansion. The founders of the school had hoped that the Seminary Association branches, in cities such as Philadelphia and Baltimore, would supplement the funds raised in New York City, but the branches never contributed enough money. The Philadelphia branch, for example, generally raised only about $1,500 a year; the amount declined significantly toward the turn of the century. In addition, the Seminary suffered from the fact that it did not have an adequate congregational base of support. The number of congregations joining the Seminary Association varied between only twenty and twenty-five in the 1890s, and the school never made any significant headway among the Eastern European Orthodox, who considered it an "uptown" institution. Men such as Morais, Pereira Mendes, and Drachman, although traditional, were far removed from the world of the immigrants, and the fact that

the school's language of instruction was English further served to alienate the Yiddish-speaking community. Although the leaders of the Seminary sought to alleviate this problem by helping to found the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America in 1898,[43] their efforts, although successful, soon backfired, for the Union rapidly abandoned the Seminary in favor of the Orthodox day school, Yeshivat Etz Chaim. In addition, over time, many of the congregations that did back the Seminary were drawn either to the right or to the left, further robbing it of congregational support.[44]

In 1893, an opportunity arose in Philadelphia which might have benefitted the Seminary materially, when a trust fund of almost $150,000, established many years earlier by the late Hyman Gratz, fell to Congregation Mikveh Israel. According to the terms of Mr. Gratz's will, the money was to be used to start a Jewish college in Philadelphia, and many individuals, such as Henry Pereira Mendes, hoped that somehow the funds would be transferred to the Seminary, even if that meant that the school should be moved to Philadelphia.[45] Other people felt that the Gratz funds should be used to start a Jewish University, teaching both secular and Jewish subjects. Sabato Morais, however, felt that the Gratz institution should be opened as a preparatory school for the Seminary: "Promising youths trained here systematically in the written and oral Law, could, when sufficiently advanced, complete their course in the Seminary and graduate from it."[46] Nevertheless, Gratz College opened as a completely separate institution in 1897, and although the two schools maintained a close relationship, they were never combined in any way.

The greatest problem confronting the early Seminary was a crisis of leadership, a problem that hampered it from the very beginning. Although Sabato Morais struggled mightily to build the Seminary, the school suffered from the fact that it did not employ what was called a "resident dean"—a recognized scholar and teacher who could devote all of his working time to the institution. The Seminary trustees tried repeatedly to get Dr. Morais to move to New York, and Henry Pereira Mendes even offered to let him become first minister of Shearith Israel, but all of their efforts were to no avail, as Morais declared, "I could never entertain it. To tear myself away from Philadelphia would be to tear the very fibres of my heart."[47] When Alexander Kohut died in 1894, the Seminary lost the most prestigious scholar that it would have until the arrival of Solomon Schechter in 1902. With the passing of Sabato Morais in November 1897, the Seminary was left without its guiding light, a giant whose vision had created the school and had sustained and nurtured it through its very trying first decade. Henry Pereira Mendes and David Davidson,

Kohut's successor at Ahavath Chesed, struggled bravely to keep the Seminary going, but the need for a full-time academic head, as well as for increased funds, was apparent to all.

Thus it came about that in 1902, thanks to the efforts of Cyrus Adler and Adolphus S. Solomons, the Seminary's acting president, a wealthy group of German-American Jews, led by the great philanthropist, Jacob Schiff, was able to take over the Seminary organization, reorganize it legally as the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, and bring Solomon Schechter from Cambridge to head the institution. Although the school's reorganization and the hiring of Schechter are beyond the scope of this essay,[48] it must be noted that after the arrival of Schechter, the Seminary became a very different institution. It became a graduate school with a brilliant full-time faculty, consisting of scholars such as Louis Ginzberg, Alexander Marx, Israel Friedlaender, Mordecai Kaplan, and Israel Davidson. Under Schechter, the school gradually lost its ties to the Orthodox, becoming a more "Conservative" institution, a change that was probably inevitable, given the Seminary's lack of success in the Eastern European immigrant community.

Nevertheless, despite the passing of Sabato Morais, the Seminary's ties to the Philadelphia Jewish community remained strong. Lay leaders such as Solomon Solis-Cohen and Cyrus Adler continued their active role in Seminary affairs, with Adler being named the chief "Executive Officer" of the institution after the reorganization, and the gifted Philadelphia judge, Mayer Sulzberger, became very active as well. Several early Seminary graduates came to Philadelphia, enjoying long and distinguished careers in the city. Henry M. Speaker became the founding principal of Gratz College, serving in that position for more than thirty years. Julius H. Greenstone also taught at Gratz College, and served as principal there from 1933 to 1948. Author of a number of popular expositions of Judaism, Greenstone also served as chairman of the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law. Leon H. Elmaleh succeeded Morais as *hazzan* of Mikveh Israel, and continued his association with the synagogue for more than seven decades. Menahem M. Eichler served only briefly in Philadelphia at Congregation Beth Israel, but it was at his home in June 1901 that the Seminary Alumni Association was founded, with Henry M. Speaker as its first president.[49] Although it was created to help raise funds for the Seminary, the Alumni Association grew to become the Rabbinical Assembly, the central organization for the entire Conservative rabbinate.

Over the years, the ties between the Philadelphia Jewish community and the Seminary have remained strong. Many prominent Semi-

nary leaders have come from Philadelphia, which has always been regarded as a stronghold of Conservative Judaism. Although Sabato Morais could certainly not envision that his creation would be thriving more than one hundred years later, he would surely be pleased to know that the school's commitment to Jewish learning and to the Jewish community, as well as to the broad educational program envisioned by its founders, lives on in the modern Seminary.

Notes

1. For a full account of the founding of the Seminary, please see my book, *A Different Spirit: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1886–1902* (New York, 1990).
2. For a biography of Morais, see Max Samuel Nussenbaum, *Champion of Orthodox Judaism: A Biography of the Reverend Sabato Morais, LL.D.*, D.H.L. diss., Yeshiva University, 1964.
3. Maxwell Whiteman, "The Legacy of Isaac Leeser," in Murray Friedman, ed., *Jewish Life in Philadelphia 1830–1940*, vol. I (Philadelphia, 1983), p. 39.
4. Moshe Davis, *Yahadut Amerika Be-hitpathutah (Toldot Haascola Hahistorit Bimayah Hatsha-esray)* (New York, 1951), pp. 264–65.
5. *American Hebrew (AH)*, 17 June 1887, p. 2.
6. See S. Morais, sermon, "Is the Sacrificial Rite or Prayer the Most Acceptable Service," no date, Morais Papers, Annenberg Research Institute.
7. Bertram W. Korn, *Eventful Years and Experiences: Studies in Nineteenth Century American Jewish History* (Cincinnati, 1954), p. 166.
8. David Philipson, "The History of the Hebrew Union College," in *Hebrew Union College Jubilee Volume (1875–1925)* (Cincinnati, 1925), p. 29.
9. S. Morais, Report, "To the Council of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations," 1877, Morais Papers.
10. See letter from Jacob Ezekiel (secretary of H.U.C.) to S. Morais, 8 March 1877, Morais Papers.
11. Letter from Isaac Mayer Wise to S. Morais, 15 September 1876, Morais Papers.
12. John J. Appel, "The Treyfa Banquet," *Commentary* (February 1966), p. 76.
13. *American Israelite*, 3 August 1884, p. 4.
14. *Jewish Record*, 10 August 1883, not paginated.
15. Ibid., 5 February 1884, n.p.
16. *AH*, 19 December 1884, p. 84.
17. *Jewish Record*, 27 November 1885, n.p.
18. *Proceedings*, Jewish Theological Seminary Association, 1896, p. 30.
19. Eugene Markovitz, *Henry Pereira Mendes (1877–1920)*, D.H.L. diss., Yeshiva University, 1961, p. 7.
20. See Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism: The Historical School in 19th Century America* (Philadelphia, 1965).
21. See letter from David M. Piza to S. Morais, 15 December 1885, Morais Papers.
22. The document was signed by Rev. S. Morais of Philadelphia; Revs. A. Kohut, F. de Sola Mendes, and H. P. Mendes of New York; Rev. A. P. Mendes of Newport; Rev. B. Drachman of Newark; and Rev. H. W. Schneeberger of Baltimore. See

Circular, Morais Collection, Annenberg Research Institute; also Nussenbaum, pp. 109–10.

23. *AH*, 5 February 1886, pp. 8–9.
24. *Jewish Record*, 5 February 1886, n.p.
25. *AH*, 12 February 1886, p. 4.
26. Ibid., 22 July 1887, p. 3; 29 July 1887, p. 3.
27. Ibid., 18 December 1885, p. 83.
28. *American Israelite*, 12 March 1886, p. 4.
29. Judah David Eisenstein, *Ozar Zikhronothai: Autobiography and Memoirs* (New York, 1929), p. 208.
30. *AH*, 12 March 1886, p. 10.
31. *Jewish Record*, 12 March 1886, n.p.; *AH*, 12 March 1886, p. 10.
32. *AH*, 7 January 1887, pp. 4–5.
33. Ibid., 19 February 1886, pp. 3–4.
34. See Ismar Schorsch, "Zacharias Frankel and the European Origins of Conservative Judaism," *Judaism*, vol. 30, no. 3 (Summer 1981), pp. 344–54.
35. Nussenbaum, p. 119.
36. *Proceedings*, J.T.S.A., 1892, p. 28; 1894, p. 27; 1896, p. 28.
37. *Proceedings*, J.T.S.A., 1898, p. 7.
38. *Proceedings*, J.T.S.A., 1896, p. 36.
39. *AH*, 20 May 1892, p. 84.
40. Ibid., 10 March 1899, p. 653.
41. Bernard Drachman, *The Unfailing Light; Memoirs of an American Rabbi* (New York, 1948), pp. 225–26; see also Jeffrey S. Gurock, "Resisters and Accommodators: Varieties of Orthodox Rabbis in America, 1886–1983," *American Jewish Archives*, XXXV, no. 2 (November, 1983), pp. 114–15.
42. *AH*, 26 February 1897, p. 71.
43. Ibid., 1 April 1898, p. 640.
44. Herbert Parzen, *Architects of Conservative Judaism* (New York, 1964), p. 23.
45. Maxwell Whiteman, "Isaac Leeser and the Jews of Philadelphia," in Abraham J. Karp, ed., *The Jewish Experience in America* (New York/Waltham, 1969). (Reprinted from *PAJHS*, 1959), p. 50.
46. S. Morais, untitled, undated essay on Gratz College, Morais Papers.
47. S. Morais, untitled sermon on his forty-first anniversary in the Jewish Ministry, ca. 1892, Morais Papers.
48. See Herbert Rosenblum, "The Shaping of an Institution: The 1902 Reorganization of the Seminary," *Conservative Judaism*, XXVII, no. 2 (Winter 1973), pp. 35–48; also Abraham J. Karp, "Solomon Schechter Comes to America," *AJHQ*, LII, No. 1 (September 1963), pp. 42–62.
49. *AH*, 21 June 1901, p. 137.

6

Cyrus Adler, The Philadelphian

IRA ROBINSON

Cyrus Adler (1863–1940)[1] is a man whose career is of great importance for an understanding of the history of American Jewry in that crucial era between the 1890s and the Second World War in which America became a major factor in world Jewry. It can be cogently argued that the institutions Adler helped found and lead, that is, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Historical Society, the Jewish Publication Society, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, to name only a few of the more prominent, were instrumental in the shaping of the institutional structure that helps define organized American Jewry to this day.

All this makes Cyrus Adler an important man for us to know although Adler is also a very hard man to get to know. As a public figure, Adler was reticent almost to a fault. He tended to speak of himself as little as possible in public and attempted as far as possible to discourage would-be biographers.[2] His own autobiography, written partly in the hope that others would not attempt the task, once again tends to mystify. It has, for example, been called by the same critic in the same article both "egocentric" and "polite."[3] The extensive biographical sketch by his colleague and successor as president of Dropsie College, Abraham Neuman, is too close to its subject to effectively demystify.[4] All in all, the force and dignity of Adler's public persona tends to overshadow the private person whom we have to try to understand.

Another difficulty we face in our attempt to understand Cyrus Adler are the differing images of the man that arose in the five decades since his death and that tend to obscure both the man and his mission.[5] He has been hailed as a great scholar. Indeed, in a memorable fit of hyperbole, one newspaper article on Adler called him "the greatest Jewish scholar since the time of Christ."[6] He has, as well, been dismissed by certain critics as no scholar at all. In the political life of



Cyrus Adler. Courtesy of the American Jewish Committee.

the American Jewish community, he was praised as a great leader as well as denounced as elitist and undemocratic. Though widely recognized as an able administrator, even his administrative ability has been called into question. He was accused of having a domineering personality[7] by some and called a saint by others.[8] How are we to begin making sense of all these diametrically opposed positions?

In order to properly understand Cyrus Adler, it is my conviction that one must begin with understanding him as a Philadelphian. This is despite the well-founded view that Adler's career and impact was more national than local.[9] The reason is twofold. It was Philadelphia that shaped him as a youth, and it is Philadelphia to which he returned in his maturity, eager to make his contribution to the life of the Jewish community of America.

Adler's Youth

Although born in Van Buren, Arkansas, in 1863, Philadelphia, where he moved in 1869, was truly Adler's spiritual home. It was there, at Congregation Mikveh Israel, that he received his vision of a Judaism that could be true to the rabbinic tradition as well as authentically American. It was likewise in Philadelphia that he confronted a model of public service combined with a nonrabbinic Judaic scholarship which was to characterize his own life work. If we are to begin to understand Cyrus Adler, therefore, we must begin with him as a Philadelphian and examine exactly what he took from that city and what he gave back to it.

Cyrus Adler started his education, both secular and Jewish, at the Hebrew Educational Society day school. After two years, however, the rise of the public school system, coupled with an increasing perception among American Jews that separate education was not to their advantage, created an atmosphere detrimental to the continuance of Jewish day schools. Thus Adler transferred to a public elementary school and received private tutoring in Hebrew and German. In 1874 he matriculated at Central High School, and in 1879 he entered the University of Pennsylvania.[10] Thus far, Adler's educational record contains nothing out of the ordinary for his time and place. What is remarkable about Adler, however, is his desire to continue his Judaic education intensively and the opportunity he had to do just that.

In high school, Adler was one of a small group of boys who studied with a remarkable consortium of Philadelphia rabbis, ranging in ideology from traditionalist to Reform. They included Sabato Morais, Marcus Jastrow, Samuel Hirsch, George Jacobs, and M. Elkan.[11] Among

this group, Adler's chief influence derived from the traditionalist Morais, from whom Adler imbibed not merely scholarship but also an appreciation of the Jewish tradition, and, more specifically, of the Sephardic ritual and liturgy, as practiced at Mikveh Israel, which would remain with him for the rest of his life. Adler paid tribute to Morais's teaching:

> In Philadelphia, in his own house, with his own books, and at all hours, he taught all that would come. Hardly one of these home students has entered the ministry, but all of them are to-day, in some wise, engaged in spreading Jewish learning.[12]

It is possible to speculate that the ideological diversity of the rabbinic consortium with which Adler studied bequeathed to Adler the idea that, despite ideological differences, it was possible for traditionalist and reform elements to cooperate on specific projects for which they could discern a common purpose, such as the Jewish Publication Society Bible translation.[13]

Studying eight hours per week, more in the summer, Adler and his companions received what had to be one of the most intensive Jewish educations then available to adolescents in the United States. It is significant that, of this small number, both Adler and Morris Jastrow went on to graduate studies in Semitics.

This supplementary Judaic education continued for Adler during his college years, when he taught in a Hebrew school from 6:00 to 8:00 each weekday evening, studied with the rabbinical consortium from 8:00 to 10:00 and did his homework for his University of Pennsylvania classes from 10:00 to 2:00 A.M.[14]

In these years, Adler was also engaged in informal study. He had the run of his cousin Mayer Sulzberger's excellent library which had, in 1891, over two thousand volumes of Judaica including a good selection of books on Biblical "higher criticism,"[15] as well as of the Leeser Library, deposited at the YMHA, which was apparently little used and which, in one of his first academic efforts, he cataloged.[16]

Beyond these influences, Cyrus Adler had role models from his own family. His uncle, David Sulzberger, who had taken on the role of pater familias on Samuel Adler's death, was distinguished neither by his scholarship nor by his wealth. Indeed, he was noted for doing business as little as possible so as to devote most of his energies to Jewish communal endeavors. He was, however, definitely a role model for Cyrus in his communal activism, particularly in the area of Jewish education.[17] It was David Sulzberger who imbued Adler with his ideal. As Adler expressed it:

> I was to be a good Jewish scholar, a good general scholar, a lawyer in order to support myself. I was then to give myself to the Jewish people as a sort of lay rabbi, with any additional duties that might arise.[18]

Mayer Sulzberger was Adler's cousin, older than him by two decades. He was the very exemplification of David Sulzberger's ambition for Cyrus. He was different from David Sulzberger in terms of worldly success, although he was also a bachelor.[19] In a very real sense, Mayer Sulzberger is a most important "missing link" in our understanding of Cyrus Adler. Largely because of the absence of any truly serious study of the man,[20] it is difficult to see the extent to which Cyrus Adler's career was influenced by Mayer Sulzberger's recognition and cultivation of his multifaceted talents. For the moment, suffice it to say that Mayer Sulzberger, no less than Cyrus Adler, was instrumental in the founding and the building of the majority of the Jewish institutions in which Cyrus Adler rose to leadership. As a successful lawyer and jurist, twenty years Adler's senior, he most naturally played a more prominent role than Adler in the initiation of such organizations as the Jewish Publication Society and the American Jewish Committee. It is equally clear that, recognizing Adler's many talents and capacity for hard work, Sulzberger was able to be of great assistance to Adler's advancement in these institutions. Thus, for instance, Adler records that his first contact with Louis Marshall was in the company of Mayer Sulzberger.[21]

Adler was in no way a clone of his older cousin. There is a certain ambivalence in their relationship which, until a close examination of the extant Adler-Sulzberger correspondence takes place,[22] is probably most eloquently expressed in his refusal to write a memorial essay for Sulzberger though he did it for many others and was specifically asked to do so in this case.[23] Another straw in the wind concerns Adler's refusal to follow his cousin into the law although he started reading law in his office, and the law was his family's original goal for him.[24] Then, too, he was a lifelong Democrat though Mayer Sulzberger was a Republican.[25]

Nonetheless it is eminently clear that Judge Sulzberger, who was interested in the same things and in the same organizations as Adler and who was of senior stature at the time when Adler was just starting his career, recognized Adler's talents and abilities, especially his ability to get things done. He subsequently helped Adler's career.

The Years Away from Philadelphia

During the quarter century (1883–1908) in which Adler lived in Baltimore, attempting to forge an academic career at the Johns Hop-

kins University and in Washington, where he rose in the ranks of the Smithsonian Institution to become assistant secretary, he maintained close ties with Philadelphia. In 1902, at the Jewish Publication Society Dinner, Judge Sulzberger called on his cousin Cyrus to respond to the toast "The Jewish Encyclopedia." Upon introducing Adler, Sulzberger facetiously said that he was claimed by three cities: Washington, New York, and Philadelphia. According to the report of the Philadelphia *Jewish Exponent,* Adler began his response by stating, "I wish to declare that I belong to Philadelphia."[26]

This statement was true. In a legal sense, Adler remained a citizen of Pennsylvania while residing in Washington.[27] Beyond that, his personal ties to Philadelphia were manifold. He most naturally kept up relations with his family, who remained in the city. His daily letters to his mother, whom he revered, were only part of his personal ties to Philadelphia, for his future wife, Racie Friedenwald, was also a Philadelphian.[28]

Then there was his beloved synagogue, Mikveh Israel. Adler's continuing strong ties to this congregation are amply demonstrated by the fact that he was chosen to be Parnas (president) of the synagogue almost immediately upon his return to Philadelphia.[29] While still living away from Philadelphia, Adler had kept up his connection with periodical lectures to the Mikveh Israel Association,[30] and, most importantly from his perspective, every major Jewish holiday was spent in Philadelphia, although this was at least partly because in Washington the synagogue was not really to his liking.[31]

Cyrus Adler's institutional ties to Philadelphia were of equal or even greater importance. Thus, he was appointed to the Gratz Trust and later College Board of Trustees as the only non-Philadelphian on that board.[32]

Another institution that brought him periodically to Philadelphia was the Jewish Publication Society. He was a member of that society's powerful Publications Committee, headed by his cousin Mayer. His involvement with the *American Jewish Year Book,* among his other projects, and his various other collaborations with the Society's redoubtable factotum, Henrietta Szold, helped to maintain the connection.[33]

The Adult Philadelphian

When he returned to Philadelphia in 1908 to head Dropsie College, Adler entered fully into Philadelphia's communal life—both Jewish and general. In 1915 when he was entrusted with the presidency of the Jewish Theological Seminary, his Philadelphia activities did not

diminish. Indeed, he maintained his home in Philadelphia despite pleas that he move to New York.[34] In the last decade of his life, often beset by illness, he was entrusted in addition with the presidency of the American Jewish Committee. Despite his increased need to be in New York, and despite the strains that a weekly commute must have put upon him,[35] he persisted in remaining a Philadelphian to the end.

When Adler moved back to Philadelphia after a quarter century of absence, he moved to what was then a relatively new Jewish neighborhood on North Broad Street. At this time it was mostly non-Jewish in character, with a heavy Irish admixture. Adler's house at 2041 North Broad was but a few doors away from the rectory of Our Lady of Mercy, which had been built at the corner of Broad and Susquehanna in 1893. Larger numbers of Jews came to this neighborhood only in the 1920s.[36] In his memoirs, Adler says that he moved there because it was near where his synagogue, Mikveh Israel, was going to move.[37] But it was more than that. In a certain way his choice of neighborhood could be construed as a statement that, although he was going back to Philadelphia to do Jewish work, Cyrus Adler was not at all abandoning the cosmopolitan connections of his Smithsonian years. That he was not going to be ghettoized is amply shown by his deep involvement with numerous activities in the general community.

In the period of Cyrus Adler's involvement with the community, it has been noted that Jews held relatively few appointed positions in the city of Philadelphia.[38] Adler was one of the exceptions to this observation despite the fact that, in electoral politics, Adler was a lifelong Democrat in a city run by a Republican machine. Indeed, he was prominent enough in the Democrat party to make an election speech on the radio for the democratic senatorial candidate in the 1932 election.[39] He apparently did not vote in municipal elections.[40]

Adler, as president of Dropsie College, naturally would have become known in Philadelphia educational circles. It is therefore not entirely unexpected that he was asked to become a member of the school board of Philadelphia, serving on that body in the years 1921–1925.[41] His service on the school board, which was largely populated with political appointees instead of professional educators, was a disappointment to him, and he soon withdrew from active participation in the affairs of the municipal school system.[42]

His most prominent contribution to the general community of Philadelphia was his leadership of the Free Library of Philadelphia. Already noted in library circles for his service as librarian of the Smithsonian, and having one of his friends from the University of Pennsylvania class of 1883, Thomas L. Montgomery, prominent in the library, Adler was appointed to the library's Board of Trustees in

1913. After serving for a time as vice president, he served as president of the library from 1925 to his resignation in December 1939, mere months prior to his death. Among other things, Adler presided over building of a new central library building, completed in 1927. He was called a "strong influence" on the development of the Philadelphia Free Library system.[43]

The American Philosophical Society was, like the Jewish Publication Society in its own sphere, a Philadelphia institution, intertwined with the hallowed history of Philadelphia, which had nonetheless a national constituency and mandate. For Adler, whose career at the Smithsonian institution involved the public dissemination of scientific knowledge, the American Philosophical Society was his outlet on the world of science beyond Jewish scholarship.

Adler was first elected to the society on 18 May 1900. It was only upon his return to Philadelphia, however, that he became active within the Society. He was a member of of the Society's council in the years 1927–1930 and 1932–1936. He became vice president in the years 1938–1940. He also served as chairman of the Society's Publications Committee in 1932 and was also a member of the Building Committee and the Committee on Meetings from 1936–1940. His prominence within the inner circles of the Society is attested to by the fact that he gave the central address at the Society's two hundredth anniversary banquet.[44]

Adler's active membership in the Oriental Club of Philadelphia and in the University Club,[45] as well as more informal connections with prominent Philadelphians like Judge Charles Audenreid and Thomas L. Montgomery, members of the University of Pennsylvania Class of 1883, marked Adler as a man with many connections beyond the Jewish community of Philadelphia.

It is, of course, within the Jewish community that Cyrus Adler, the Philadelphian, was to make his greatest mark. Neuman states simply that Adler's counsel was sought in every important communal endeavor.[46] This evaluation is questioned by Wolf, who sees Adler more as an *eminence grise*.[47] Let us review the record.

As previously stated, Adler served as Parnas of Mikveh Israel and was in charge of arrangements for dedication of the new synagogue building in 1909.[48] The synagogue, built as part of the complex of institutions at Broad and York Streets, which would include Dropsie College and Gratz College as well, became an expression of the institutional coherence Adler hoped to achieve in Philadelphia Jewry as a whole. This drive is perhaps best expressed in Adler's move to unite the city's Jews in an institution known as the Kehilla.

Adler, soon after his return to Philadelphia, came to the realization

that his services would be in demand as liaison with the general community, just as in Washington he had utilized his contacts within the government for furthering Jewish rights.[49] He wrote a letter to Lyman Abbott, who had charged that tainted meat was being widely sold in the Jewish quarter of Philadelphia, asserting his position on the health and purity of kosher meat. It was an exchange that was made public by the *Jewish Exponent*.[50] The situation Adler dealt with in his exchange with Abbott was similar, in a sense, to the public charges of criminality against the immigrant Jews of New York, which effectively launched the Kehilla movement in that city in 1908.[51]

The incident clearly brought home to Adler the need to deal with the issue of the burgeoning Eastern European community of Philadelphia. Characteristically, Adler felt challenged to work to bring the Eastern European Jews into the framework of the organized Jewish community. Thus, as early as 1910, Adler urged the Philadelphia Jewish Federation to include Eastern European organizations within its purview.[52] This move ultimately led to the formation of the Philadelphia Kehilla in 1911.[53]

The Philadelphia Kehilla, by far less well known than the Kehilla experiment in New York City, has been called by Wolf "almost invisible."[54] It was founded by Mayer Sulzberger, Adler, and Solomon Solis-Cohen, representing the Americanized Jewish elite of Philadelphia, as their way of reaching out to the Eastern European Jewish community of the city—though, of course, on their terms.[55] It eventually encompassed nearly all Jewish organizations in the city. However, the delegates of these organizations possessed little power of their own since the organization was tightly controlled by the American Jewish Committee with Adler having drafted its constitution and served as its president.[56]

What did the Kehilla mean to Adler? He stated in his autobiography that the Kehilla was "proper kind of organization for a community."[57] He meant it on the one hand to be an opportunity for American Jews to organize themselves on a basis other than philanthropy, and, on the other hand, to strengthen traditionalist power within the American Jewish community, represented by the Eastern Europeans, so as to offset the power of Reform elements that tended to dominate the more established Jewish philanthropic federations.[58]

Adler's statement of purpose for the Philadelphia Kehilla deserves quotation:

> We are engaged in an attempt to bring to the minds of the Jews of Philadelphia the fact that they are one people and have interests in common. We endeavor to regulate Jewish affairs neither through an oligarchy nor a

> mob but by the American representative method. Our organization is an extension of the principle of federation which has been used with good effect in a portion of our philanthropic work but has been wanting in nearly every other direction though we see hopeful signs of co-ordination even outside of the ranks of the official Federation.[59]

It is ironic that the Kehilla, founded on "the American representative method," was effectively destroyed during the First World War by the controversy that raged within American Jewry on the issue of the American Jewish Congress, pitting Adler and the American Jewish Committee against Louis Brandeis and the Zionists over the very issue of "representation."[60] Adler resigned his presidency of the Kehilla in 1916 because of these controversial political issues. Although the Kehilla limped along for another few years, its effectiveness had ceased.[61]

In summing up this chapter in Philadelphia Jewish history, Adler stated that it was a shame the Kehilla experiment did not continue because in its absence American Jews remained organized only for purposes of philanthropy. On that plane, however, Adler made certain that the Eastern Europeans were not forgotten, and in 1919, the Philadelphia Jewish Federation expanded to include the Eastern European organizations.[62]

While he was attempting to organize the Philadelphia Jewish community in a Kehilla, Adler did not neglect the organization of the city's Jewish philanthropies. From the outbreak of World War I to the Armistice and beyond, Adler lead the Jewish War Relief Campaign in Philadelphia.[63] In the postwar period, he was one of the more prominent leaders of the Federation of Jewish Charities in Philadelphia.[64] In the 1930s, he was a supporter of the United Jewish Appeal. His standing in the U.J.A. is attested by the fact that in 1935 his picture and his appeal to Philadelphia Jews for support of the U.J.A. were published in a full-page advertisement in the *Jewish Exponent*.[65]

Adler attempted to maintain good personal relations with all sectors of the Jewish community. His well-known friendship with the Orthodox chief rabbi of Philadelphia, Bernard Levinthal, is attested not least by the fact that Levinthal named one of his sons Cyrus.[66] The regard in which he was held by the Jewish labor movement in Philadelphia can be seen in the fact that in both 1914 and 1921 he was called upon to mediate disputes between labor and management in the local garment industry.[67]

Cyrus Adler considered himself first and foremost an educator. Thus it is no surprise that he served on bodies supervising elementary Jewish education in Philadelphia.[68] His influence on Gratz College

was fundamental. Not only was he one of the original trustees of the Gratz Foundation, Neuman states that the very idea of the Gratz foundation being used to make a Jewish teachers' training institute was Adler's.[69] In his Philadelphia years, Adler served as chairman of Gratz's College Committee, saw to it that the Gratz building adjoined that of Dropsie College, and was frequently consulted by the Gratz leadership.[70]

Dropsie College was, of course, the major reason for Adler's return to Philadelphia in the first place, and, of all his causes, Dropsie was probably the truest expression of his personality.

The institution was an unprecedented educational experiment.[71] People who had heard that Moses Aaron Dropsie had left his fortune to found an institution for the propagation of Hebraic and cognate learning to all, without regard to race or creed, could not fathom what it all meant. Thus the *American Hebrew* editorialized: "It is difficult to see what function it is intended to play in the Judaism of America or where its students are to come from."[72] After considerable heated discussion within the confines of Dropsie's Board of Trustees, the die was cast. Apparently it was Adler's idea that Dropsie College was to be purely a postgraduate research institute, offering the doctorate as its only degree. Nonetheless it was no less characteristic of Adler that the institution had to have a practical aspect as well.[73]

As a communal institution, Dropsie was used as a meeting place for a variety of communal organizations, including Zionist. More importantly, however, Adler, while in no way looking at Dropsie as merely a Philadelphia institution, nonetheless took pains to emphasize that it was not exclusively of benefit to the constitutency of Judaic studies. Thus in his speech on Founder's Day at Dropsie College in 1923, he stated:

> This college has gradually and most effectively taken its place in the Jewish religious educational work of the community. Most of the members of the faculty are, aside from their obligations here, engaged in one form or other in communal work. Our existence has added to Philadelphia a group of experts who could never have been obtained in any other way and are a real asset to the community. Thousands of people who never enter our walls will be greatly and directly benefitted nevertheless by the existence of this college.[74]

Conclusion

Neuman notes that the relative absence of social intercourse among the Jews of New York more than once astounded and baffled Adler.[75]

This observation speaks volumes about Cyrus Adler the Philadelphian. He was clearly less comfortable in New York and just as clearly most in his own element within his Philadelphia circle. He obviously felt most at home at such gatherings as Dropsie College board meetings, whose membership may be taken as representative of the social and intellectual harmony of the "Philadelphia Group." At these meetings, according to the report of A.S.W. Rosenbach's biographer, Adler and Rosenbach together accounted for a bottle of whiskey.[76]

The social and intellectual atmosphere achieved in this group is perhaps best captured in an obituary of Simon Miller, for many years the president of the Jewish Publication Society, who described Adler, his classmate, as his "closest lifelong friend."[77] For Miller, it was said that he was at his best "when supper had been disposed of, cigars lighted, and the good talk had begun."[78]

It was in the context of such a Philadelphia Jewish elite in which, perhaps, Cyrus Adler functioned at his best, that he can be best understood. To cite John Lukacs, writing about the elite of Philadelphia society circa 1900, is very much to capture the essence of Philadelphia's Jewish elite as well. Lukacs spoke of "the society extant in Philadelphia where—strange and wonderful condition within the mobile and restless American democracy—in a certain sense everybody knew everybody."[79]

Notes

1. On Adler, see his autobiography, *I Have Considered the Days* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1941) and Ira Robinson, ed., *Cyrus Adler: Selected Letters*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia and New York: Jewish Publication Society and Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1985).

2. Robinson, *Adler Letters*, vol. 2, p. 374. Sara Adler Wolfinsohn, Cyrus Adler's daughter, reiterated this point to me in a private communication. Cf. Jonathan Sarna's review of Robinson, *Adler Letters* in *Commentary*, February 1986, pp. 68–71.

3. Cf. Maxwell Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," in Murray Friedman, ed. *Jewish Life in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, ISHI, 1983), pp. 172, 178.

4. Abraham Neuman, "Cyrus Adler: A Biographical Sketch," *American Jewish Year Book* 42 (1940–41), pp. 23–144.

5. Cf. Ira Robinson, "Cyrus Adler and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America: Image and Reality," *American Jewish History* 78 (1989), pp. 363–64.

6. This headline appeared in the Van Buren, Arkansas, *Press-Argus* of 3 August 1967. From the article it appears that, since Adler was the first Jewish scholar and historian the author had heard of since first-century Josephus, he felt justified in hailing native son Cyrus Adler in that particular way.

7. Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," p. 164.

8. Louis Finkelstein, "Preface" in Robinson, *Adler Letters*, pp. xvii–xxiv.

9. Edwin Wolf, II, "The German-Jewish Influence in Philadelphia's Jewish Charities", in Friedman, ed. *Jewish Life in Philadelphia*, p. 130.

10. Adler, *I Have Considered the Days,* p. 155ff.
11. Ibid., pp. 38–39.
12. Adler, "Sabato Morais," *Jewish Theological Seminary Association, Biennial Convention Proceedings* 6 (1898), pp. 105–6.
13. On Adler's role in the delicate diplomacy necessary for the consummation of the translation, cf. Jonathan Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888–1898* (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication society, 1989), p. 95ff.
14. Adler, *I Have Considered the Days,* p. 41.
15. *American Hebrew,* 4 December 1891, p. 86.
16. Adler, *Catalog of the Leeser Library* (Philadelphia, 1883).
17. Adler, *I Have Considered the Days,* pp. 10–12.
18. Ibid., p. 12.
19. Cf. Sarna, *JPS,* p. 298, n. 30.
20. Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," p. 172.
21. Adler, *Lectures, Selected Papers, Addresses* (Philadelphia, 1933), p. 125.
22. Cf. Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," p. 332, n. 29.
23. Henry Hurwitz to Cyrus Adler, 15 May 1923; Adler to Hurwitz, 16 May 1923. Henry Hurwitz Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.
24. Adler, *I Have Considered the Days,* p. 46.
25. Personal communication from Sarah Adler Wolfinsohn.
26. *Jewish Exponent,* 23 May 1902, p. 9.
27. *American Hebrew,* 12 April 1907. Adler was cited as a citizen of Pennsylvania in the application for a charter for Dropsie College.
28. Neuman, "Cyrus Adler," p. 77.
29. Adler, *I Have Considered the Days,* pp. 278–79.
30. *American Hebrew,* 27 January 1893. Cf. the 6 January 1893 issue that records his lecture at the Philadelphia YMHA.
31. Personal communication from Sarah Adler Wolfinsohn.
32. *American Hebrew* 54 (1894), p. 84. Cf. *Jewish Exponent,* 6 September 1895.
33. Cf. Sarna, *JPS,* pp. 71–73.
34. Personal communication from Dr. Louis Finkelstein.
35. Sarah Adler Wolfinsohn, in a personal communication, asserted that Adler enjoyed the commute since on the train he had uninterrupted time to read proofs, etc.
36. Dennis Clark, "Irish-Jewish Relations in Philadelphia" in Friedman, ed., *Jewish Life in Philadelphia,* p. 257.
37. Adler, *I Have Considered the Days,* p. 276.
38. Sandra Featherman, "Jewish Politics in Philadelphia, 1920–1940," in Friedman, ed., *Jewish Life in Philadelphia,* p. 284.
39. The typescript of this radio speech is housed in the Adler Papers, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York. A microfilm copy is housed in the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.
40. Personal communication from Sarah Adler Wolfinsohn.
41. Neuman, "Cyrus Adler," p. 88.
42. Personal communication from Sarah Adler Wolfinsohn. She asserts that Adler remarked that he was the only one on the school board who was not an undertaker. Cf. Adler, *I Have Considered the Days,* pp. 358–59.
43. *Free Library of Philadelphia, Annual Report, 1939.*
44. Neuman, "Cyrus Adler," *Year Book of the American Philosophical Society,* 1940, p. 412. Cf. Adler, *Lectures, Selected Papers, Addresses,* pp. 183–188.
45. Neuman, "Cyrus Adler," p. 88.
46. Ibid., p. 86.

47. Edwin Wolf, II, "The German-Jewish Influence in Philadelphia's Jewish Charities," in Friedman, ed., *Jewish Life in Philadelphia*, p. 131.
48. Adler, *I Have Considered the Days*, pp. 278–79.
49. Cf. Naomi Cohen, "Introduction" to Robinson, ed., *Adler Letters*, p. xxvii.
50. *Jewish Exponent*, 25 December 1908.
51. Philip Rosen, "German Jews vs. Russian Jews in Philadelphia Philanthropy," in Friedman, ed., *Jewish Life in Philadelphia*, p. 198.
52. Rosen, "German Jews vs. Russian Jews," p. 201.
53. Ibid., pp. 201–4.
54. Wolf, "German Jewish Influence," p. 131. On the Kehilla of New York, see Arthur A. Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehilla Experiment, 1908–1922* (New York: Columbia, 1970).
55. Rosen, "German Jews vs. Russian Jews," p. 201.
56. Neuman, "Cyrus Adler," p. 86.
57. Adler, *I Have Considered The Days*, p. 292.
58. Robinson, *Adler Letters*, vol. 1, p. 153.
59. *Jewish Community of Philadelphia, Annual Report* (Philadelphia, 1913), p. 7.
60. On this issue, cf. Naomi Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: A History of the American Jewish Committee, 1906–1966* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1972), p. 91ff.
61. Adler, *I Have Considered the Days*, pp. 292–93.
62. Rosen, "German Jews vs. Russian Jews," p. 204.
63. Adler, *I Have Considered the Days*, pp. 303–4.
64. Ibid., p. 329.
65. *Jewish Exponent*, 10 May 1935.
66. Robert Tabak, "Orthodox Judaism in Transition", in Friedman, ed., *Jewish Life in Philadelphia*, p. 62.
67. Jewish Exponent, 4 and 11 September 1914; Robinson, *Adler Letters*, vol. 2, p. 44.
68. Neuman, "Cyrus Adler," p. 86.
69. Neuman, "Cyrus Adler," p. 88.
70. Frank Rubenstein, *The Dropsie University: The Early Years, 1908–1919* (Philadelphia: Dropsie, 1977), p. 15.
71. Neuman, "Cyrus Adler," p. 78.
72. *American Hebrew*, 17 April 1907. Cf. the issue of 27 March 1908, pp. 82–83.
73. On the early history of Dropsie College, cf. Herbert Parzen, "New Data on the Formation of Dropsie College," *Jewish Social Studies* (1966), pp. 131–47 and Meir Ben-Horin, "Scholars' 'Opinions': Documents in the History of the Dropsie University," in *Salo Wittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1974), vol. 1, pp. 167–208.
74. *Jewish Exponent*, 16 March 1923.
75. Wolf, "German Jewish Influence," p. 136.
76. Wolf and John F. Fleming, *Rosenbach: A Biography* (Cleveland: World, 1960), p. 305.
77. Edwin H. Schloss, "Simon Miller," *American Jewish Year Book 5706* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1945), pp. 201–8.
78. Ibid., p. 204.
79. John Lukacs, *Philadelphia Patricians and Philistines, 1900–1950* (New York, 1981), p. 6.

7

Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen and the Philadelphia Group

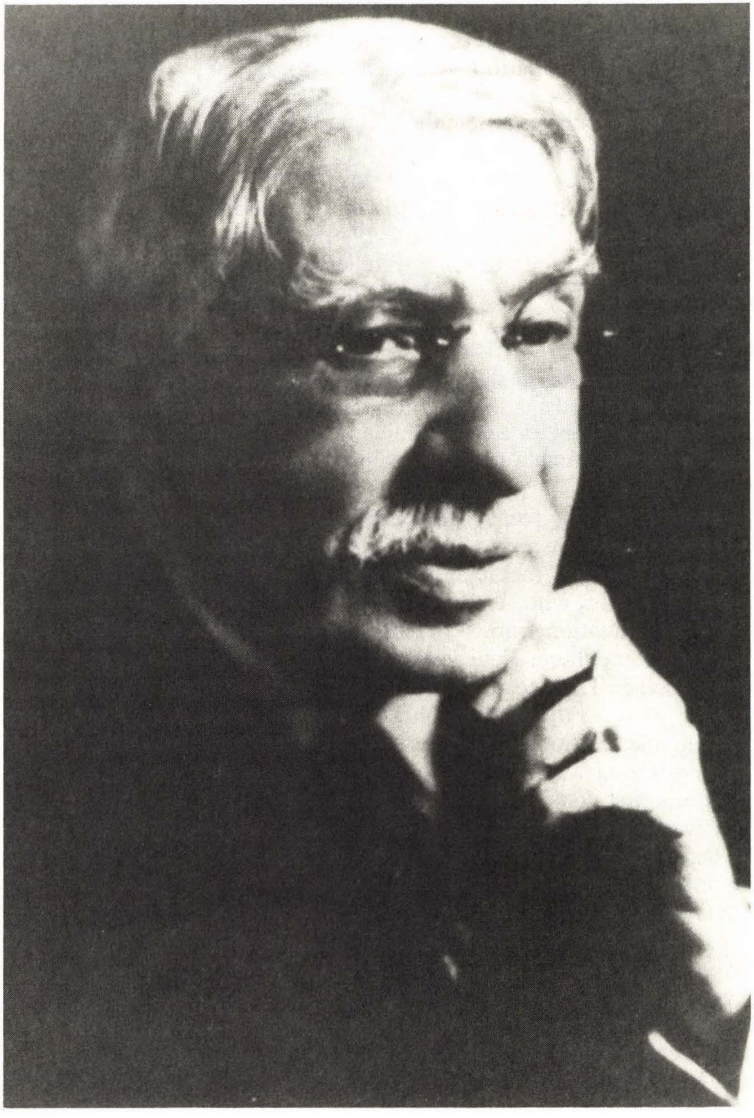
PHILIP ROSEN

At a Founders Day address on the campus of Dropsie College, 9 March 1924, Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen, speaking of his closest friend, Cyrus Adler, stated, "He was one of a remarkable succession of leaders in Jerusalem whom I am accustomed to think of as the 'Philadelphia Group.'" The physician went on to describe this group as concerned with "'saving souls,' directing their endeavors in two lines—schools and publications." He included in this "dynasty of light—Isaac Leeser, Sabato Morais, Mayer Sulzberger and Cyrus Adler."[1] However, the modest doctor neglected to add his own name to the list, for he, too, was a vital member of the Philadelphia Group.

Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen (1857–1948) must be included within the Philadelphia Group because of his passionate interest and efforts to expound and promote Judaism—"saving souls"—particularly among those masses of Eastern European Jews who immigrated to the United States between 1882 and 1924. He founded several national Jewish journals, was a major figure in establishing the Jewish Publication Society, and most notably the Jewish Theological Seminary, the training school for Conservative rabbis.

The physician, scholar, poet, and organization builder could trace his lineage back to before the American Revolution. His ancestors on his maternal side fought in the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. His mother, Judith da Silva Solis, boasted of this lineage. However, Solomon's father, Mayer Cohen, was born in Bromberg, Germany, and immigrated to America as a young man.

Judith, anticipating today's liberated woman, insisted when she married Mayer that her name was too important to disappear. Hence, the couple agreed to hyphenate their names to Solis-Cohen. Solomon ignored his father's background and stressed his maternal Sephardic



Solomon Solis-Cohen. Courtesy of Maxwell Whiteman.

and American Revolutionary heritage.[2] Nevertheless an examination of his lifelong pursuit and contributions to the American Jewish community show a compatibility of ideas and philosophy with American Jews of German extraction.

Solomon was the eighth child of nine, born 1 September 1857. His interest in Judaism started early for he learned Hebrew from his sister, Charity.[3] Later, he was privately tutored by his beloved rabbi, Sabato Morais (1823–1897) of Mikveh Israel. His fellow student and lifelong friend, Cyrus Adler (1864–1940), described in his autobiography how a small group of eager, intellectual boys received instruction in sacred texts from a few rabbis of both the Reform and the Orthodox persuasions:

> These men offered to give gratuitous instruction to any boy who wanted to seek it earnestly. . . . With this group, Dr. Morais read the Bible, the Code of Maimonides and the Guide to the Perplexed. Dr. Solis-Cohen took only Dr. Morais' courses; the other boys scattered about.[4]

After graduating from high school he became a bookkeeper. Later he decided to change his career: "I decided that I would get along better if I studied medicine," he said. "My brother Jacob, twenty years my senior, who served in the Civil War, helped me."[5]

Upon graduation from Jefferson Medical School in 1883, he practiced medicine there. Four years later, he became a professor of clinical medicine. This led to a distinguished lifelong career in medicine. Unlike many in the Philadelphia Group, two years after graduating from medical school, Dr. Solis-Cohen married. He had a long and happy marriage. Dr. Solis-Cohen and Emily Grace Nathan Da Silva Solis, his first cousin, reared four children.[6]

It was in the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YHMA) in the 1870s that Solis-Cohen first made fast friends with those who would share his intellectual ideals and organizational commitments. After a YMHA was organized in New York City, Mayer Sulzberger (1843–1923) helped organize one in Philadelphia one year later in 1875. The YMHA sought to attract and involve "better families" of Philadelphia Jewry in its social and cultural activities. For the city's fifteen thousand Jews, mainly of German extraction, it served as incubator for both local and national leaders.[7]

When formed in the late of spring of 1875, the age for YMHA membership was twenty-one. Solis-Cohen demonstrated his innovative and organizational talent early. Solomon (only eighteen) and a group of young men in a society called "Hillel" persuaded leaders of the YMHA to form a teenage auxiliary that was called "The Associ-

ates." William Langfeld, a chronicler of the YMHA wrote, "Solis-Cohen was the prominent and effective factor in the Associate Organization."[8] As was to be his custom, Solis-Cohen deferred the highest office to others, content to serve as the secretary of the Association. Yet, in this position, he proposed several needed and creative programs.

Soon after its formation, the YMHA began to lose members and money. To offset this loss, Solis-Cohen proposed that girls be admitted into the Associates. After a year of persuasion, the YMHA officers agreed to enroll fifty girls. Both the membership and the treasury increased.[9] Later, Solomon and Cyrus Sulzberger (1858–1932), a cousin of Mayer Sulzberger, president of the Philadelphia YMHA, proposed another innovative venture. They sought a union of the city's YMHA with the New York City YMHA. Solis-Cohen drew up a charter for this proposed union. The two started a newsletter-journal called the *Association Bulletin* to service the two cities. However, the merger faded out as did the monthly. After a lackluster year as president of the adult YMHA, Solis-Cohen and others started another periodical, the *Association Review.* This monthly lasted many decades.[10]

Dr. Solis-Cohen's friends at the Philadelphia YMHA became national Jewish leaders, a veritable *Who's Who* of American Jewry—Mayer Sulzberger, Cyrus Sulzberger, Cyrus Adler, Joseph and Samuel Fels, J. David Stern, Hyman Rosenbach, and Daniel Guggenheim. He collaborated with these people on many different projects.[11]

The Philadelphia Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association remained a lifelong interest for Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen. He devoted many hours lecturing there, gave courses, and wrote articles for its publications. In all these activities, he emphasized the Jewish spiritual element for he did not want members of the YM and YWHA to lose their Jewish identity.

Solomon Solis-Cohen's efforts on behalf of the union of YMHAs in New York and Philadelphia led to his role as a founder of the journal, the *American Hebrew.* He wrote:

> It began with Cyrus Sulzberger's going to New York and some of the rest of us in Philadelphia had had a little newspaper experience in the running of the *Association Review,* a monthly sheet devoted to the doings of the YMHA in general and our own city in particular. If we knew nothing else, we knew how to make such a paper lively and talked about.[12]

In 1879, at age twenty-two, Solomon met with Cyrus Sulzberger, Philip Cowen, a printer, Rabbi Pereira Mendes of Shearith Israel, and

his brother, Frederick de Sola Mendes, and a few others to establish the *American Hebrew*. Its purpose was "to disseminate the truth and morality inspired by Israel to spread knowledge of Judaic principles and Hebrew literature and to champion the brethren of our faith."[13]

The *American Hebrew* was a not-for-profit, twenty-six page weekly that opposed Reform Judaism. It began with the 21 November issue in 1879 and it sold to subscribers for $3.00 per year. Its Board of Editors met at a New York coffee shop on Thursday nights. They were a like-minded group of "liberal" Orthodox Jews, who were outraged at what they considered the excesses of the Reform Movement. At the same time, they were not fundamentalists in the strictly Orthodox tradition. Solis-Cohen wrote a column entitled "Friday Night," which contained news about Philadelphia events. His friend, Cyrus Adler, only sixteen years old, also wrote news about the Quaker City's Jewish matters. Solomon wrote editorials explaining the Jewish holidays to instill Jewish spiritual values into his readers. He also contributed learned articles on the Bible and Talmud. Furthermore, he had his original poetry and translations of medieval Hebrew poets published. The poems emphasized Jewish values and the meanings of prayers.[14]

For Solis-Cohen, the *American Hebrew* served as a vehicle for his review of Jewish literature and as an outlet for his humanitarian ideas. These included his advocacy of economist Henry George's single tax and land policies and his opposition to the Spanish American War and subsequent annexation of the Philippines. By 1910, his contributions to the *American Hebrew* declined as the Philadelphia *Jewish Exponent* increasingly served as a vehicle for his thoughts and addresses.[15]

The *American Hebrew* is noteworthy because it introduced some important thinkers and ideas to its pages. Israel Zangwill, famous British writer and playwright, wrote for the journal as did the American Jewish poet, Emma Lazarus.[16] In 1906, Cyrus Adler suggested in a letter to the paper that "an organization of Jews form to speak as an authoritative body on national and international affairs." The thought ultimately materialized into the American Jewish Committee.[17]

As a result of the post-1882 immigration, the American Jewish community became very heterogeneous, reflecting the influx of Jews from the Hapsburg and Romanov Empires. These new immigrants (called Russian Jews) published many newspapers and journals that mirrored their Zionist, anti-Zionist, socialist, radical, religious, and atheistic views. Many members of the Americanized and affluent Ger-

man Jewish community disagreed strongly with many of these opinions. They used the *American Hebrew* as a forum for their ideas.[18]

By 1906, Philip Cowen was the chief editor, and Solis-Cohen had left the editorial board.[19] The journal, like its German Jewish readers, took a moderate stance on most Jewish issues. It favored quiet diplomacy and a nonconfrontational approach to rising American anti-Semitism. As early as 1897, with the emergence of Theodore Herzl (1860–1904), it took an anti-Zionist position. Nevertheless, following a policy insisted upon by Solis-Cohen from its inception, it permitted the publication of dissenting views. In 1898, Rabbi Stephen Wise (1874–1949) authored a column of Zionist news. In addition, Solis-Cohen wrote his ideas about a religious Zionism rather than an ethnic-political movement.[20]

Probably the most important "publication" founded by Solomon Solis-Cohen, along with the others in the Philadelphia Group, was the Jewish Publication Society (JPS). He was thinking about the creation of an enterprise to publish Jewish books in English during his YMHA days. He feared too many Jews were exposed to Christian interpretations of Jewish sacred works. At the same time, Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel called a meeting of representatives of Jewish congregations in the city to start a Jewish Publications society. Dr. Solis-Cohen, and a delegate from his synagogue, Mikveh Israel, insisted that such a society should be national in scope, while Rabbi Krauskopf favored a local one. A vote took place among the delegates in March 1888. The Solis-Cohen motion for a national organization triumphed by only one vote. The deciding vote ironically, was cast by the president of Rabbi Krauskopf's own congregation, Philip Lewin. Solis-Cohen drew up a memorandum of understanding, and Krauskopf agreed with the draft. Thus, the physician-scholar set the Society on a national course.[21]

In June 1888, a few months later, one hundred intellectually gifted delegates crowded Touro Hall at Seventh and Callowhill Streets in Philadelphia to elect officers and trustees (managers). Solis-Cohen, along with Mayer Sulzberger, Cyrus Adler, and others, were chosen to draft a constitution and by-laws for the new Society. The officers were also elected. Solis-Cohen was appointed to the Board of Managers and the most vital committee of the JPS, the Publications Committee, which was chaired by Mayer Sulzberger. The head of Kuhn-Loeb banking house, Jacob Schiff, sent in the first major donation of $5,000.[22]

The physician-scholar served on the Publications Committee until

his death sixty years later.[23] He became close friends with Henrietta Szold (1860–1945), voluntary secretary to the committee, and later the famous founder of Hadassah, the largest women's Zionist organization. The two had much in common. Henrietta, only two years younger than Solis-Cohen, shared his dream of an enlightened and cultivated Jewry in this country. Both saw the need for the American Jews to read Jewish sources in English to arrest rapid assimilation and Jewish indifference to their spiritual and cultural heritage. A voluminous correspondence developed between the two. The exchange of letters reflected their mutual desire to maintain the high standards the JPS desired for their publications: Jewish content that was educational, noncontroversial, dignified, and patriotic.[24]

Later in 1925, Dr. Solis-Cohen chaired a subcommittee: the Committee for Jewish Classics. One classic dear to the chairman was the JPS volume *Guide to the Perplexed* by Moses Maimonides, the twelfth-century scholar. As a young man, Solomon had studied the *Guide* under the tutelage of Rabbi Sabato Morais. This work was helpful to the doctor in developing an understanding of the congruity of Judaism with logic and science. These ideas of compatibility would be reflected in his many letters, speeches, and articles.[25]

Throughout his life, Solomon Solis-Cohen maintained a scholarly interest in medieval Hebrew poetry. His love of Ibn Gabriol, Judah Halevi, and his delight in the poetry of other medieval bards grew out of a spiritual kinship for they, also, were physicians, scientists, and humanists. In 1934, at age seventy-seven, the physician poet published a volume of his translations, *The Selected Poems of Ibn Ezra*. This English version of the twelfth-century Sephardic poet, part of the JPS Schiff Classics Series, included a long introduction and forty pages of notes and commentary.[26] As a result of his deep involvement in the publishing efforts of the Society and of his own scholarly output, Solis-Cohen was well respected by the national Jewish intellectual community.

As has been noted earlier in his 1924 Founders Day Address, Dr. Solis-Cohen specified that members of the Philadelphia Group had established several schools. He himself had a major part in the founding of the Jewish Theological Seminary. This national institution became the trainer of Conservative rabbis and the impetus for the Conservative Movement in the United States. The initiator was Solis-Cohen's Rabbi, Dr. Sabato Morais, leader of Mikveh Israel.

Dr. Morais, a traditional Jew, was repelled by what seemed to him the extreme excesses of the Reform Movement. Morais's hope for a Jewry united by the training of rabbis through the Hebrew Union College, the Reform Movement's seminary, was dashed when it held

a trafe (unkosher) banquet, including shrimp, on commencement day. Insult was added to injury when, two years later in 1885, the Reform Pittsburgh Platform emerged. This statement of principle rejected the dietary laws, strict Sabbath observance, prayers in Hebrew, and the concept of Jewish restoration in Palestine. Morais and the Philadelphia Group sought a movement, a traditional, even an Orthodox one, which would appeal to the incoming masses of East European Jewry, yet would be adaptable to the American milieu.[27]

Essentially, Morais was Orthodox, as were his principal lay leaders, Moses Aaron Dropsie, Mayer Sulzberger, Cyrus Adler, and Solomon Solis-Cohen. However, their Orthodoxy can be described as accommodationist for it accepted American culture, including the use of English in services and sermons, as well as historical approaches to the interpretations of sacred texts.[28]

In 1886, Dr. Morais organized a few congregations in Philadelphia and New York and started the Jewish Theological Association that aspired to form a rabbinical seminary. Solis-Cohen played a prominent role in this enterprise for he drafted the Association's constitution. The Mikveh Israel group worked with both Morais's and Solis-Cohen's old friend in New York, Rabbi H. Pereira Mendes, of the Spanish-Portugese Shearith Israel. Morais wanted the Seminary located in New York. He remembered a failed effort for a seminary in Philadelphia fifteen years before. He believed that New York had sufficient wealthy Jews and potential students to make this enterprise a success. One year later in the vestry of Shearith Israel, delegates from four large American cities founded the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). Thirty-year-old Dr. Solis-Cohen presided over this meeting, since Rabbi Morais deferred to the physician's organizational and parliamentary abilities. True to his custom of declining high office, the doctor merely accepted election to the Board of Trustees.[29]

The newly founded JTS had many problems. They included the lack of financial support, the failure to attract rabbinical students, and the failure to hold the original sponsoring synagogues. The wealthy "uptown" German-Jewish Americans of New York (often called Yahudim) failed to support the Seminary. Of the eleven original sponsoring congregations, six were won over by the Reform Movement. Between 1887 and 1901, only seventeen students were ordained. In the tenth year of JTS's existence, its president, Rabbi Dr. Sabato Morais, died, and the institution verged on bankruptcy.[30] An attempt was made to unite with Orthodox congregations. In June 1898, in the same vestry of Shearith Israel, a meeting resulted in the creation of the Union of Orthodox congregations. Dr. Solis-Cohen, Moses Drop-

sie, and Cyrus Adler were present. They sought to persuade the Orthodox delegates to have the Jewish Theological Seminary as the training institutions for both groups, Conservative and Orthodox. Members of the Philadelphia Group had a concept of K'lal Yisroel, the unity and oneness of all Jews regardless of observance. The Orthodox delegates refused because they could not see uniting with those who maintained synagogues with organs and the mixed seating of men and women.[31] To achieve an accommodation between the two groups, Dr. Solis-Cohen turned to his old friend and patient, Rabbi Bernard Levinthal, who some considered the unofficial "Chief Orthodox Rabbi of Philadelphia." He was an important figure, noted for his major roles in creating the Religious Zionists (Mizrachi), the Orthodox Union, and Yeshiva Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spector (RIETS). Solis-Cohen sought to unite Yeshiva University, the rabbinical institution for the Orthodox, with JTS. Rabbi Levinthal refused to merge, even though RIETS also was in dire financial condition. He considered the Yeshiva to be the truly Orthodox institution. For him JTS had teachers who were not learned enough, nor did he think that the seminary trained its students in a rigorous enough manner. Finally, the rabbi had a strong institutional loyalty to Yeshiva.[32]

Since a merger with Yeshiva University was now not possible, Dr. Solis-Cohen continued an effort he had started ten years before to revitalize and rejuvenate the Jewish Seminary. He intensified his efforts to recruit for the Seminary the world-renowned scholar, Dr. Solomon Schechter, professor of Bible and Rabbinics at Cambridge College in England.

The members of the Philadelphia Group and the trustees of the newly formed Gratz College of Philadelphia urged Solis-Cohen to invite Schechter to deliver a course of lectures under Gratz's sponsorship. Schechter came and impressed Sabato Morais, Cyrus Adler, Mayer Sulzberger and Solis-Cohen with his addresses entitled "Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology."[33]

Schechter was to move from a professor of renown to one of the world's greatest authorities on the Bible with his discoveries and interpretation of documents and works stored in a disposal place of an ancient Cairo synagogue. With the death of Dr. Morais in 1897, there was an even greater need to install Professor Schechter as president of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Solis-Cohen was to personally deliver the message:

> I shall count it ever as the most precious recollections of my life, that before this installation of Schechter as president of JTS came about, it again became my privilege to carry personal messages to Schechter. In

1899, I met him by appointment in Amsterdam and received there his final and definite promise to come to America.[34]

Once Solomon Schechter agreed to head the Seminary, the image of the JTS as a struggling institution changed dramatically. Cyrus Adler and Mayer Sulzberger persuaded Jacob Schiff (1847–1920) to open his purse and the Wall Street banker contributed $50,000. In addition, Schiff was able to encourage his friends, Daniel and Simon Guggenheim, Louis Marshall, Leonard Lewisohn, and other "uptown" philanthropists to raise one-half million dollars for support of the Seminary.[35] In this manner, the Philadelphia Group persuaded the Yahudim, whom they knew and mingled with socially, to save this Conservative institution of learning. The "uptown" philanthropists were for the most part Reform Jews. Some, like Schiff, were, however, more observant of the traditions. The Philadelphia Group convinced the "uptowners" that the Eastern European Jews were abandoning their religion at an alarming pace. Specifically, Cyrus Adler and Mayer Sulzberger argued that Russian Jews would never attend Reform services; they considered them Protestantized and German-Jewish ethnic enclaves. Nor were immigrants attending Orthodox *shules* for they considered them too non-American and old worldly. They argued that JTS would preserve the traditional forms of worship (such as Hebrew prayers, the skull cap, and prayer shawl) and respect Jewish law. At the same time, the Seminary "would turn East European Jews into modern English-speaking Rabbis for the East European masses."[36] The JTS would be able to accommodate Jews to American life while still preserving Judaism.

With money the "uptowns" raised, Dr. Solomon Schechter was installed as president in 1902. The seminary served as the impetus for the creation of Rabbinical Assembly of America, the umbrella organization for its seminary graduates. In 1913, twenty-two Conservative synagogues formed the United Synagogue of America, the central organization for Conservative congregations. As a member of their Committee of Organization, Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen drafted their constitution.[37]

In Philadelphia, Dr. Solis-Cohen remained on the local board of the JTS branch and maintained a loose affiliation with the New York City institution throughout his life.[38] In addition, he helped to organize Philadelphia's Gratz College, the first school for training of Hebrew teachers in America. (It was as a member of the Gratz Board of Trustees that Solis-Cohen invited Professor Schechter to come to Philadelphia to give his series of lectures.) In 1926, as chairman of the Board of Overseers, Solis-Cohen, along with Cyrus Adler and

Mayer Sulzberger, designed the courses at Gratz to enable graduates to meet the entrance requirements of Jewish Theological Seminary.[39]

One of the most controversial aspects of Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen's life was his position on Zionism. Both members of the Philadelphia Group, Mayer Sulzberger and Cyrus Adler, espoused the idea of a homeland place of refuge for Jews, particularly those persecuted in the Russian Empire. Palestine, they believed, could be restored as an important settlement. While neither of them ever became a Zionist, Solis-Cohen was a charter member as was his patient, Rabbi Bernard Levinthal.[40]

In 1892, Solis-Cohen started the Mikveh Israel Association, a social and intellectual group at the synagogue in the city. Solis-Cohen invited Cyrus Adler, Rabbi Pereira Mendes, and Dr. Aaron Freidenwald, a leader of the Baltimore Jewish community, to speak about the restoration of Palestine. Dr. Friedenwald spoke about Lovers of Zion societies. After that, Solis-Cohen sought to stimulate the interest of Philadelphians in the Holy Land. In 1897, months before Theodore Herzl called for the First Zionist Congress at Basle, Switzerland to launch the Zionist movement, Dr. Solis-Cohen had joined the Philadelphia Branch of Lovers of Zion. Among the 367 names on the membership list, his appeared to be the only non-East European. The physician was to remain in this organization (which changed its name to the Philadelphia Zion Society) until 1919.[41]

At that time, there was no unanimity as to the meaning of the term "Zionism." For the East European Jews, the Jews were a distinct ethnic national group living as a sometimes but often not tolerated guest in host countries. For Solis-Cohen, the respected scion of a preRevolutionary family living in democratic America, Jews were merely a religious group, not an ethnic group. Nor did he consider Eretz Yisroel, the Land of Israel, as the homeland or the headquarters of the Jews. For him, the restoration of Zion had religious meaning. Writing in 1901, he revealed this meaning: "For Zionism means not alone the return to physical Palestine—for that many of us need it not—but chiefly it means a return to a moral Palestine, to the lofty mountains, to the unfailing wells of the spirit of the prophets of Israel."[42]

For the doctor, Jews were a religious brotherhood dedicated "to exemplifying and propagating the Divine order for mankind." The state he envisioned was not particularly a Jewish state. Solis-Cohen, thoroughly Americanized, was imbued with the idea that the American constitutional practice of church-state separation was advantageous for all religions. The Palestine settlement would have "no religious or racial test for citizenship, no nomenclature such as Israel,

Judea, Ivres, etc."[43] In a letter to Rabbi Henry Berkowitz of Philadelphia's Rodeph Shalom, he explained the Zionist mission was to create a place for Jews to be Jews.

> You may perhaps remember I think that Jews are entitled to one state in the world where the legal day of rest may be the Sabbath, and their holy days recognized as public holidays . . . where the social and economic environment may favor rather than oppose the observance of their faith. However, I oppose the erection of a church-state everywhere.[44]

Solis-Cohen became more deeply involved in Zionist activity. He represented the Philadelphia Zion Society in the newly formed Federation of American Zionists (FAZ). This loose, all inclusive organization was made up of autonomous societies, fraternal lodges, and synagogues pledged "to work for the colonization of Palestine, promotion of the Hebrew language and literature to foster the Jewish spirit."[45] In 1899, the physician attended the Third Zionist Congress in Basle as a delegate for FAZ.[46] In 1905, with the recommendation of Henrietta Szold, he became a member of the FAZ's Executive Board and later a vice president. He stayed on the Board until 1917.[47]

In 1906, Dr. Solis-Cohen became a territorialist, a term given to one who accepted a Jewish homeland outside Palestine.[48] In the face of mounting Russian persecution and pogroms against Jews, in 1903 the British government proposed a grant of land in Uganda, British East Africa, for Jewish settlement. Led by East European Jews who were sentimentally attached to Palestine, the Seventh Zionist Congress in 1904 rejected the plan. However, the German Jews favored it, seeing the Uganda proposal as a way of deflecting the Jewish nationalism that was permeating the Zionist movement. Solis-Cohen's friends from Philadelphia, Mayer Sulzberger, Cyrus Adler, and Joseph Fels rallied to the territorialist cause.[49]

Solis-Cohen wrote a number of articles extolling territorialism. He believed that Uganda would provide an immediate sanctuary for Jews that would not rule out Palestine for future settlement. He wrote in the January 1906 issue of the *Associated Review:*

> Its [Uganda] general organization will be such as to relieve Jews of the disabilities under which they now labor in most countries of Christendom. *It would slow the greater number of Jews now forced to seek betterment by immigration.* (Italics mine.)[50]

In the same issue, J. David Stern (later publisher of the *Philadelphia Record* and *Camden Courier Post*) suggested to readers desiring to join a territorialist chapter that they should contact Dr. Solis-Cohen.[51]

However, the whole idea came to naught. The German Jews, while much more wealthy and influential than the East Europeans in America, lacked any following among the rank and file Zionists. More importantly, Great Britain reneged on the Uganda proposal, so the territorialists faded out.[52]

Furthermore, Solis-Cohen broke with mainstream Zionists over the question of support for an American Jewish Congress.[53] During World War I, East European Jews in America sought a mass democratic organization embracing all components of the American Jewish community. This new organization would seek to ameliorate the plight of Jews in war-torn Europe. To this end, in March 1916, 367 representatives of various organizations from all over the United States met in Philadelphia and created the American Jewish Congress.[54] By 1917, the Congress had two chief goals. First, to ensure Jewish minority religious and cultural rights in post-war Europe and Turkey. In addition, it supported the Balfour Declaration which pledged Great Britain to secure a Jewish homeland in Palestine. As the "Russian" Jews came to dominate the Federation of American Zionists, they wanted to use its resources to back the Congress movement in achieving both of its goals.

The American Jewish Committee and the Yahudim opposed the American Jewish Congress. This elite group feared domination by Russian Jews should AJC join the Congress. They did not want a broad-based membership organization that they could not manipulate and which would compete with the American Jewish Committee. This elite sought to use quiet, closed-door diplomacy to resolve issues important to the Jewish community. They rejected public Jewish political meetings and open lobbying to achieve solutions to Jewish questions. They feared such openness would engender anti-Semitism. The Committee opposed the Congress endorsement of the treaties that specified Jewish minority rights. They feared consideration of Jews as a distinct ethnic-national minority would endanger the acceptance of Jews as full patriotic citizens of the lands in which they lived.[55]

In July 1916, the FAZ met in Philadelphia to decide whether to formally support the American Jewish Congress or not. Dr. Solis-Cohen chaired the Convention Committee and in that office delivered the welcome address. He knew the American Jews of Eastern European descent sitting before him were hostile to the American Jewish Committee so he sought to disassociate himself from that organization. "I am not and have never been a member of the American Jewish Committee. I hold no brief for that body."[56]

The next day the physician spoke on behalf of the minority report that sought to separate the FAZ from the Congress. The audience was very hostile. They wanted the majority report that placed FAZ in the Congress. The *Philadelphia Jewish Exponent* noted the opposition to the speaker:

> There was shouting and noise in different parts of the hall. While Dr. Cohen was allowed the regular five minutes allotted to every speaker, it probably took four times that long before he could conclude what he had to say.[57]

Solis-Cohen's central objection to the Congress movement was its support of Jewish national rights. He opposed the use of such a term and objected to the incorporation of the phrase in the proposed treaties that would follow the Great War. The physician-scholar argued:

> There is distinct objection to the use of the words "national rights" in America, because here we can be only one nation—the United States of America. . . . If the idea is to assert the existence in this country of a politically separate Jewish nation then the idea itself is foreign and un-American.[58]

However, Solis-Cohn did have an alternate proposal for the American-Jewish Congress and the Zionists:

> The obvious remedy is to do away with the necessity for the exercise of so-called persons dwelling in a given territory, whether majority or minority by assuring full and equal human and political rights, individually to all and each. The Poles, Ruthenians and Jews would merge in Polishmen and Polanders—a unified state.[59]

The Philadelphian agreed with the American Jewish Committee and the leaders of the Conservative Movement concerning the lack of religious orientation of those who led the Zionist Movement. Dr. Solomon Schechter, shortly before his death in 1915, attacked the Zionist leadership as secularist Jews who ignore the religious aspects of Judaism. He, along with Solis-Cohen, Mayer Sulzberger, and Cyrus Adler, saw *Zionism initially as a religious-cultural movement that would enhance Jewish identity.* It would inhibit complete assimilation of Jews into American life. Furthermore, they were appalled by the atheistic and socialist Jews who assumed leadership in the Zionist Movement.[60] At a 1913 session of the United Synagogue Convention in New York, Solis-Cohen complained bitterly, "The Zionist Movement as it exists in America is corrupt, atheistic and anti-Jewish."[61]

In a letter to Young Judea in 1917, he warned the Zionist youth affiliate, "the Zionist organization at present is being perverted from its true purpose. . . . The organization has been substituted for Judaism and the Jewish people."[62] In light of the direction that the Zionist Movement was taking, it is no surprise that Solis-Cohen quit the FAZ Executive Board in 1917; two years later, he left the Zionists completely.[63]

It appeared at the time that the rift between the German Jews and the Russian Jews in America would go on indefinitely. However, events were to change things. In 1924, the United States Congress enacted restrictive immigration laws. These laws, partly motivated by anti-Semitism, dramatically reduced East European Jewish immigration. Moreover, the protective minority clauses urged so strongly by the American Jewish Congress and inserted in the postwar treaties of central and East European states failed to work. Anti-Semitic leaders ignored them, and the League of Nations did not enforce them. The closing of America's gates and the failure of the minority treaties awakened the Yahudim to the realization that Palestine, after all, was the best place to settle persecuted Jews. In 1924, Louis Marshall, Cyrus Adler, Herbert Lehman, and Horace Stern—American Jewish Committee members and pillars of the German Jewish community in America—sent out a circular letter to prominent Jews not affiliated with the Zionist Movement. The letter stated, "The time has come to seriously consider anti-Zionist member relations to the economic problems of Palestine and to its cultural and industrial upbuilding."[64]

Emphasis on the upbuilding of the settlement in Palestine *(yishuv)* by particular projects, while de-emphasizing Zionist political, theological, and nationalistic ideology, was known as Palestinianism. Palestinianism espoused clearing the land, draining the swamps, building schools, and capitalistic enterprises. This concept was approved by Chaim Weizmann (1874–1952), president of the World Zionist Organization. The entire Zionist Movement suffered from a lack of funds for itself, let alone funds for economic investment in the *yishuv*. Chaim Weizmann, a Jewish nationalist, looked to America's wealthy German Jewish philanthropists to provide the funds. These philanthropists feared being accused of dual loyalty if they spoke of an independent, separate Jewish state. In a directive to Zionists, Weizmann de-emphasized Palestinian Jewish statehood and stressed the development of Palestinianism. At the same time, he set in motion plans to create a Jewish agency for Palestine. The agency would welcome Zionists and non-Zionists in equal numbers from all over the world. It would serve as an administrative arm to aid the British mandate authorities in the governance of the *yishuv*.[65]

As was often the case, Dr. Solis-Cohen agreed with the German Jewish philanthropists. He was eager to support Palestinianism. In a 1929 *Jewish Exponent* interview, the former Zionist stated his support for the United Palestine Appeal, a fund-raising organization for projects in the *yishuv*.[66] As part of his devotion to building up Palestine, the physician became active with the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, with Hadassah and the Council for the Jewish Agency for Palestine. He served on the boards of these organizations along with several of his colleagues from the Philadelphia Group.[67]

In 1929, Dr. Solis-Cohen accepted a seat on the council for the Jewish Agency. There he joined his Philadelphia friends, Cyrus Adler, Judge Horace Stern, Jewish Charities Executive Jacob Billikopf, and philanthropist Albert Lieberman.[68]

All of these men were considered non-Zionists because they had no affiliation with any Zionist organization. They opposed a Jewish state because they feared such a state would foster anti-Semitism and charges of dual loyalty, however, they favored Palestinianism. They saw the colony, protected by Great Britain as a haven for persecuted Jews. The Philadelphia physician attended the first meeting of the Jewish Agency Council in Zurich, Switzerland. After that meeting, he did not travel abroad for another session. Solis-Cohen and the forty other non-Zionist American representatives were never active in the Jewish Agency because they were not willing to make frequent trips to Palestine.[69]

In 1943, American Zionists declared again for a Jewish state. The Holocaust convinced most Jews of the need for a sovereign country that could admit Jews without red tape in unlimited numbers. Great Britain, the mandated ruling power in Palestine, since 1939 had closed the Yishuv to Jewish refugees. Angered by the Zionist abandonment of Palestinianism, Solis-Cohen joined the American Council for Judaism. This was an organization made up largely of Reform Jews of German extraction designed to combat the Jewish state movement. The doctor's son, David Hays Solis-Cohen, was vice president. The octogenarian wrote his old friend (who lived in the Philadelphia suburbs), Lessing Rosenwald, president of the American Council, "I have at last decided to join with you because you put forth principles and methods which I can accept with slight modification."[70]

Despite this reversal to anti-Zionism at the twilight of his life, credit must be given to this member of the Philadelphia group for his charter membership in the Zionist movement, his support for building Palestine, and his correct view that the Jewish settlement in Palestine would strengthen Jewish identity in America.

Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen died in 1948 at age ninety.[71] During his

lifetime he held a firm place as a member of the Philadelphia Group. He was one of the elite who made Philadelphia the source of Jewish enlightenment in the United States. Along with his learned colleagues, he feared the radical departure from tradition by the Reform movement and the nonreligious assimilationist tendencies of the incoming masses of East European Jews. He founded journals and institutions to "save souls" so that American Jewry would embrace its heritage. He ventured with the Philadelphia Group to reestablish the Jewish Publication Society and the Jewish Theological Seminary when they had previously failed in Philadelphia. Although a physician, it was his legal mind that drew up the constitutions that were to set the Jewish Publication Society, Gratz College, the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the United Synagogue of America on stable courses. The Conservative Movement did, indeed, attract the Jewish masses and Americanized them. His efforts contributed much to provide American Jews, both native born and immigrants, with institutions that were "arsenals of Jewish spirit."

Notes

1. Solomon Solis-Cohen (SS-C), "The Philadelphia Group," in *Judaism and Science* with other addresses and papers of Dr. Solis-Cohen (Philadelphia: 1940). Isaac Leeser died in 1869 when Solomon was only twelve years old. The others in the Philadelphia Group were his close friends and fellow worshippers at Mikveh Israel.

2. SS-C, Note Concerning David Hays," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, 2 (1894), pp. 63–65; SS-C letter to Bentley Brown 8 April 1930) in the Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen papers at the archives of the Museum of National American Jewish History in Philadelphia. Access to the papers were through the courtesy of Helen Solis-Cohen Sax, the granddaughter of the physician. These documents will be referred to hereafter as the SS-C papers; *Today, Inquirer Magazine* (12 September 1976); SS-C letter to Abraham Neuman (26 December 1920), SS-C papers.

3. Biography of Solis-Cohen on his birthday, *Philadelphia Public Ledger* (1 September 1939).

4. Cyrus Adler, *I Have Considered the Days* (Jewish Publication Society, 1941), pp. 41–43; Mrs. C. Adler letter to D. Hays Solis-Cohen family (22 July 1948), SS-C papers.

5. *Ledger* (1 September 1939).

6. Ibid.

7. William Langfeld, *Fifty Year Chronicle of The YMHA* (Philadelphia: 1928), pp. 1–3.

8. Langfeld, *Fifty Year*, p. 3; Interview with SS-C, "Old Days at The YMHA," (Philadelphia) *Jewish Exponent (JE)* (7 October 1921).

9. "Old Days," *JE*.

10. Ibid.; SS-C, "Union of YMHAs," *American Hebrew (AH)* (8 September 1880).

11. "Old Days," *JE*.

12. SS-C *et al.*, "The Early Days of the *American Hebrew*," *AH* (27 November 1912).

13. Ibid.

14. Philip Cowen, *Memories of an American Jew* (New York: 1932), pp. 41–52; Edward Coleman, *Bibliography of the Writings and Addresses of Solomon Solis-Cohen* (Philadelphia: 1940). This is an appendix to *Judaism and Science*.

15. SS-C *et al.*, "The Early Days."

16. Ibid.; Cowen, *Memories*, pp. 45–47.

17. Murray Friedman, editor, *Jewish Life in Philadelphia 1830–1940* (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1986), p. 14.

18. Melvin Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust* (New York: 1976) pp. 71, 79, 84.

19. Cowen, *Memories of an American Jew*, pp. 52, 54, 56, 60.

20. Urofsky, *American Zionism*, p. 84.

21. "From Philip to Philip," *AH* (24 June, 1915), p. 15.

22. "Start of the Jewish Publications Society," *AH* (8 June, 1898); Jonathan Sarna, *The Jewish Publications Society* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society (JPS) 1989), pp. 19–21.

23. *New York Times (NYT)* Obituary, (13 July, 1948).

24. Sarna, *The Jewish Publications Society*, pp. 88–91; SS-C papers.

25. SS-C to Alexander Marx (29 January, 1941), SS-C papers.

26. Sarna, *The Jewish Publications Society*, pp. 129, 157; Coleman, *Bibliography of Addresses of Solomon Solis-Cohen*, passim.

27. Henry Feingold, *Zion in America* (New York: 1974), pp. 182–87.

28. Feingold, *Zion in America*, p. 184; Maxwell Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," in Friedman *Jewish Life*, p. 175, p. 177.

29. "Evolution of the Idea of the Jewish Theological Seminary," *AH* (21 June, 1918), pp. 150–51.

30. Diane King, "Jewish Education in Philadelphia," in Friedman, *Jewish Life*, pp. 242–44. Dropsie College, located on the same site as Mikveh Israel at Broad and York streets in Philadelphia, was a doctors' degree granting institution in the areas of Hebrew, rabbinics, and cognate learning: SS-C address, "The Jewish Theological Seminary, Past and Future," (2 June 1918), SS-C papers.

31. Feingold, *Zion in America*, pp. 38, 186; *AH* (14 June, 1915); Gilbert Klaperman, *The Story of Yeshiva University* (London: 1969), pp. 70, 88, 90, 113.

32. SS-C, "Solomon Schechter," in *Judaism and Science*, pp. 161–63; Friedman, *Jewish Life*, pp. 15–16; Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy* (New York: Morrow, 1991), pp. 395–96; Digby Baltzell, "The Jewish Communities of Philadelphia and Boston," in Friedman, *Jewish Life*, p. 297.

33. SS-C in *Judaism and Science*, pp. 161–63.

34. Ibid.

35. Klaperman, *The Story of Yeshiva University*, p. 90; Finegold, *Zion in America* p. 187.

36. "Symposium," *AH* (25 May, 1900), p. 38; Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism* (Philadelphia: 1963), pp. 231–41.

37. SS-C to Rabbi Kops, (18 March 1913, SS-C papers; "Evolution of the Idea of the Jewish Theological Seminary," *AH* (21 June 1918); SS-C letter to Bernard Frankel (8 February 1941).

38. The Jewish Theological Seminary gave him two awards. In 1929 it awarded him a degree in Hebrew letters, recognizing his translation of medieval poets and his

original 138 pieces, *Philadelphia Bulletin* (1 September, 1937). An invitation requesting him to receive the JTS Maimonides Award for his work in medicine is found in the SS-C papers, 1943.

39. SS-C letter to Bernard Frankel (8 February, 1941) SS-C papers; Testimonial by D. Hays Solis-Cohen for his father (17 June 1947), SS-C papers, 1947; JE (12 June 1947).

40. Maxwell Whiteman, "Zionism Comes to Philadelphia," in Isadore Meyer, ed., *Early History of Zionism* (New York: 1971), p. 209.

41. Whiteman, "Zionism," p. 209; Urofsky, *American Zionism*, p. 77.

42. "What Zionism May Mean," JE (11 October 1901), p. 7; Urofsky, *American Zionism*, p. 82; *Jewish Comment* (Baltimore, 14 June 1901), p. 5.

43. "A Sound Basis for Palestinian Rehabilitation," *JE* (28 June 1918).

44. SS-C letter to Rabbi Henry Berkowitz (17 January 1919), SS-C papers.

45. "A Sound Basis," *JE* (28 June 1918).

46. "Solis-Cohen," *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 12 (1927), p. 69; *NYT* (13 July 1948).

47. SS-C an open letter to the FAZ Executive (7 August 1917), SS-C papers; *Jewish Comment* (14 September, 1917).

48. Yonathan Shapiro, *Leadership of the American Zionist Organization: 1897–1930* (Chicago: 1971), pp. 37–40; Urofsky, *American Zionism*, pp. 104–6.

49. "What Is ITO?" *Association Review* (10 January 1906); Shapiro, *Leadership*, pp. 37–40; Urofsky, *American Zionism*, pp. 104–6.

50. "What Is ITO?" *Association Review*.

51. Editorial, David Stern, *Association Review*.

52. Urofsky, *American Zionism*, pp. 105–6; Arthur Hertzberg, *Zionism* (Jerusalem: 1973), pp. 85–87.

53. SS-C to United Synagogue (28 August, 1918), SS-C papers. To note how closely Dr. Solis-Cohen's view parallels that of the American Jewish Committee, see Urofsky, *American Zionism*, p. 161. Members of the Committee and Solis-Cohen saw themselves as highly acculturated Americans, civilly and economically integrated into American life. They feared that Jewish nationalism would accentuate Jewish differences and would exacerbate anti-Semitism.

54. Urofsky, *American Zionism*, pp. 163, 174.

55. Uroksky, *American Zionism*, pp. 152–81, passim.

56. SS-C address to the FAZ Convention, *JE* (7 July 1916).

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid. This writer appreciates the suggestion of the term "physician-scholar" as applied to Dr. Solis-Cohen by colleague Umberto LaPalia. Oher suggestions he made for this article are appreciated.

59. *JE* (4 July 1917); *JE* (10 January 1919).

60. Shapiro, *Leadership*, pp. 42–44; Urofsky, *American Zionism*, pp. 61, 64.

61. SS-C letter to D. Scheerberg (February 1917); SS-C letter to Henry Berkowitz (17 January 1919), SS-C papers.

62. SS-C letter to Sarah Pelowsky (2 December 1919), SS-C papers; *JE* (10 January, 1919).

63. *JE* (10 January 1919).

64. Urofsky, *American Zionism*, pp. 299–303; Shapiro, *Leadership*, pp. 252–59; John Higham, *Strangers in The Land* (New York: 1967) pp. 305–10.

65. Shapiro, *Leadership*, pp. 195–205; Urofsky, *American Zionism*, pp. 299–301.

66. *JE* (19 April 1929).

67. David Galter letter to SS-C (9 April 1935); SS-C letter to Louis Harns (23 February 1923); SS-C letter to Mrs. Samuel Halprein (22 April 1930), SS-C papers.

68. *JE* (2 September 1932).

69. Adler, *I Have Considered,* pp. 391–93; Urofsky, *American Zionism,* pp. 310–311.

70. For an excellent background on the American Council for Judaism, see Thomas Kolsky, *Jews Against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism: 1942–48* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991). Lessing Rosenwald, head of the American Council, wrote "A Reply to Zionism" in *Life* magazine (28 June 1943). Rosenwald disliked the concept of a *Jewish* state, a state with close church-state ties. Dr. Solis-Cohen wrote a letter complementing him, SS-C to Lessing Rosenwald (2 July, 1943), SS-C papers. In 1944, the physician-scholar, still maintaining he was a Zionist, joined the American Council for Judaism, SS-C letter to Lessing Rosenwald (3 April, 1944), SS-C papers.

71. *NYT* Obituary (13 July 1948).

8

Orthodox Institution Builder: Rabbi Bernard Lewis Levinthal

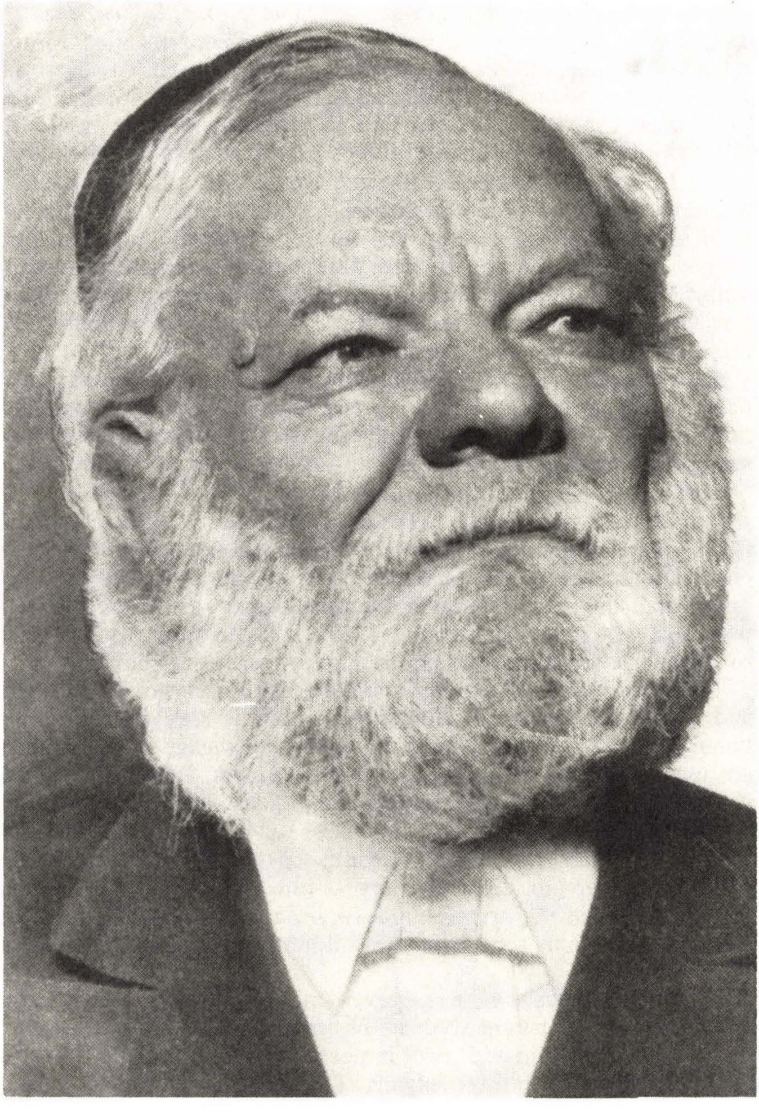
PHILIP ROSEN

> For over a half-a-century, he has been a great power, not only in the City of Philadelphia where he has made his seat, but throughout the entire country where he has vastly influenced the development of the Rabbinical Association, of which he has been president and is still honorary president. One can hardly picture what might have happened to the great multitude of East European Jews who came over if they had not had his guiding influence.[1]

This was the entry of Dr. Cyrus Adler in the *Jubilee Book* honoring the seventieth birthday of Rabbi Bernard Dov Ha Cohen Levinthal. The rabbi must be included as a member of the "Philadelphia Group" because, like his contemporaries and friends from Philadelphia, Mayer Sulzberger, Sabato Morais, Cyrus Adler, and Solomon Solis-Cohen, he was a builder of educational and religious institutions which were crucial on the Jewish national scene. While his friends were building America's Conservative Movement, Levinthal was building the Orthodox Movement.[2]

The rabbi played a major role in the creation of the modern orthodox seminary, Yeshiva University, and in the establishment of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada (UOR) called in Hebrew, the Agudath HaRabbanim. He was an important person in developing Mizrachi, the religious Zionist organization. He was pivotal in keeping Orthodox institutions and membership within the Zionist movement through his support of the Religious Zionists and the American Jewish Congress.

Levinthal was born near Kovno, Lithuania on Lag B'Omer, the Jewish Scholar's Holiday, 14 May 1865. He was descended from eleven generations of rabbis, from both his mother's and his father's families. As a youth, he received his training and ordination from two world-



Bernard Levinthal.

renowned rabbis—Chief Rabbi of Lithuania Isaac Elchanan Spector and Samuel Mohilever. At age nineteen, Bernard married Minna Kleinberg, a daughter of a family who could count back twenty-one generations of rabbis. Rabbi Elezar Kleinberg, Minna's father, headed the principal Jewish Court (Bet Din) in Lithuania for thirty years. In 1889, in the twilight of his life, Rabbi Kleinberg assumed the pulpit of B'nai Abraham Anshe Russa, the Russian-Jewish Congregation located at Fifth and Lombard Streets in Philadelphia. Unfortunately, he died two years afterward. The leaders of the congregation then begged Bernard Levinthal to leave Lithuania and assume the vacant pulpit.[3] Louis Levinthal, Rabbi Levinthal's son, recalled that his father was told not to come to America. "The land is trafe (unkosher); the people are trafe; even the stones in America are trafe."[4]

Soon after arriving in Philadelphia in 1891, Levinthal readily appreciated this warning. The city was a wasteland for orthodox communal life. The twenty-six-year-old rabbi had to minister to five other synagogues besides B'nai Abraham—Poale Zedek, B'nai Reuben, Shaare Zedek, Tefereth Israel, and Orei Chayim.[5] Levinthal envisioned himself, not merely as the spiritual leader of these congregations, but as a communal rabbi, one to enlighten the laity of the entire city. "I found virgin territory here," reminisced Levinthal in 1934, "plain and simple, and undone. Even the ground, as it were, was not prepared, not ready for sowing. I had to begin from scratch. The road was strewn with mountains to hurdle. I was not to be deterred."[6]

The Lithuanian-born rabbi soon demonstrated his great leadership and organizing ability. He founded a talmudic study group in his home at 716 Pine Street. As their Judaic knowledge increased, the advanced students of this group became teachers, leaders of *Chevras* (fellowship study groups) in other synagogues. If a synagogue was unable to pay for such a service, Rabbi Levinthal provided the instruction himself. In this way Levinthal developed an educated lay orthodox leadership. Less than a year into his ministry, the young rabbi established the first Talmud Torah, a free or very inexpensive communal religious school for the children in primary grades. Soon there were three.[7]

The Talmud Torahs were an improvement over the traveling teachers or rabbis who taught students in cellars or store fronts. In addition, the rabbi initiated two important innovations. Girls were permitted to study in these schools. This was necessary since at that time girls in Orthodox circles were not given formal training. The curriculum and pronunciation of Hebrew was also standardized. Itinerant teachers from various parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire pronounced Hebrew with regional differences.[8]

Using his home as a school, Levinthal taught high school students, ages thirteen and up, who had graduated from the Talmud Torahs. He saw the need for and established the city's first Hebrew High School for Orthodox children. By 1904, Mishkan Israel, located at Third and Catherine Streets, boasted sixty students. Levinthal was its principal and teacher of advanced talmudic subjects. The institution was not, however, a seminary and did not graduate rabbis.[9]

It is not the focus of this essay to dwell upon Levinthal's local achievements—that has already been done in two other books on Jewish Philadelphia. However, like his friends in the Philadelphia Group, the rabbi established important institutions in his home city of Philadelphia. These institutions were designed to service the masses of East European Jews flooding into the city. In 1900, there were 55,000, and by 1920, 130,000 "Russian Jews" (as those from Eastern Europe were called) who resided in Philadelphia. In the first few years of his ministry, Rabbi Levinthal started the first free burial society, the first Kosher supervising society, the first Jewish communal court, the first Council of Jewish Clubs, and the first lodge of the Independent Order of Brith Sholom.[10]

Rabbi Levinthal's role as creator of key Jewish institutions was facilitated by his association with the members of the Philadelphia Group. How did a strictly Orthodox Jew from the "Jerusalem of Europe," as Lithuania was known, become friendly with Dr. Cyrus Adler, Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen, and Judge Mayer Sulzberger, highly Americanized German Jews? When Levinthal heard that the first Jewish judge in Pennsylvania identified himself as a Jew and was a Sabbath observer, he brought his religious friends to Common Pleas Court Number Two to meet Mayer Sulzberger. The two became fast friends, sharing a common interest in Judaica and Hebraics. Both scholars hosted a number of writers, poets, and literary pretenders in their homes. When Sulzberger was planning Dropsie College, a Hebrew and cognate institution in Philadelphia, he sought Levinthal's advice as to the curriculum.[11]

Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen was also a bibliophile and a translator of Sephardic poets of the Golden Age in Spain. Solis-Cohen and Levinthal were among the first to join the Zionist movement in Philadelphia, predating Herzl's First Zionist Congress. Solis-Cohen became Levinthal's personal physician, for the rabbi felt comfortable with an Orthodox doctor. Both shared a great concern for the state of Jewish education in the city and the chaotic conditions regarding Kashrut (kosher certification) and observance.[12]

Cyrus Adler sat near both Solis-Cohen and his cousin, Mayer Sulzberger, at Sabbath services in Mikveh Israel. When the rabbi and the

brilliant Orientalist, Adler, were introduced, they shared a concern for the lack of Sabbath observance in the city and the need for a seminary to train rabbis to accommodate the American milieu. The common interest of these men to educate and organize the Russian Jews religiously brought them together often and developed their friendship, a friendship that never wavered despite sharp differences in philosophy, opinion, and organizational affiliation.[13]

Just as his friends in the Philadelphia Group established national institutions, so did Levinthal. While Mayer Sulzberger, Cyrus Adler, and Solomon Solis-Cohen were forming the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, Bernard Levinthal was organizing what was to become Yeshiva University. In 1896, he was instrumental in creating Yeshiva Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spector (RIETS), the name in memory of the religious leader who ordained Levinthal. This Yeshiva served adults, particularly young rabbis or rabbinic students fresh from Europe.

Rabbi Levinthal was the prime mover in the creation of the Yeshiva Committee of Agudath set up soon after the creation of the rabbinical assembly in 1902. The Committee's task was to systematize the Jewish curriculum and provide for the teaching of the English language and sciences for RIETS. Levinthal proved to be a dominant member of the Subcommittee on Secular and Sacred Studies. His efforts made the Yeshiva the first institution to use the Hebrew language as a language of instruction. When a break occurred between RIETS and Agudath in 1947, Levinthal stayed with the Studies Committee and continued lecturing at the school on Talmud.[14]

Moved by Levinthal, Agudath recognized RIETS as the "only legitimate Yeshiva" in the early years of the century. The rabbinic body supported the seminary with its own funds and raised money all over the country for RIETS had very few wealthy backers.[15]

The Philadelphia Rav almost became the permanent president of RIETS. In 1907–1908 Yeshiva's students were unhappy with the seminary, its administrators, its teachers, its secular program, and the lack of English courses and the use of English. The students went on strike and even flirted with joining JTS. Rabbi Levinthal was brought in as president, for he was well respected by the student body for his command of English, his broad Jewish scholarship, and his statesmanship. After a short tenure in 1908, the new president satisfied the demands and was prepared to assume the top post permanently. However, the rabbi's Philadelphia constituents were demonstrating for his return from New York. Bernard Levinthal, like Solomon Solis-Cohen, Cyrus Adler, and Mayer Sulzberger, resolved to stay as a Phila-

delphia resident and commute to New York. The RIETS presidency went to another.[16]

RIETS became a major national institution with a parochial high school, a liberal arts college, and a seminary when Rabbi Dr. Bernard Revel became president in 1915. Dr. Revel was Rabbi Levinthal's protégé, carefully nurtured by the older man into the realities of American Orthodox life.

At the turn of the century, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spector Theological Seminary was merely a stopover for arriving European scholars and a place of continuing rabbinic education. Revel and Levinthal saw the institution not as a yeshiva of the old European world, but as one which would train scholars versed in English and present-day humanities as well as Jewish subjects to become rabbis. They noted that RIETS students had struck in 1908 for a more modern institution. In 1915, the year that the elementary Jewish school, Etz Chaim, merged with Yeshiva, Dr. Bernard Revel, with the backing and on the motion of Rabbi Levinthal, became president of the enlarged school. Rabbi Levinthal served for many years as chief examiner of the rabbinical department and was a lifelong member of the board of directors. In the 1920s Yeshiva expanded into a parochial school for high school youth, a Hebrew teacher's training institute, a college of liberal arts and sciences, and a graduate school which offered courses leading to a degree of Doctor of Hebrew Literature. No other Jewish seminary combined regular college courses with Jewish studies.[17]

Dr. Bernard Revel died in 1940, and Rabbi Levinthal became a king maker again. The wife of the Philadelphia Rabbi died in 1929, so his daughter, Lena, and her husband, moved into the Rabbi's house. Tragically, Lena died, leaving her daughter, Selma Ehrich, the granddaughter, in charge of the home. As he had done with Bernard Revel, Levinthal invited a young European rabbi and scholar to live with him. Young Samuel Belkin (1911–1975) became the Rabbi's assistant. He courted and married Selma in 1939. Levinthal encouraged the younger man in his secular and rabbinic studies. Belkin was employed at Yeshiva University teaching Greek and Oriental studies. He rose to become dean, and with the demise of Revel, Belkin became Yeshiva University's second president.[18]

The Philadelphia Rabbi's activities with New York's Yeshiva University were not without criticism. To this day some members of the orthodox community in the Quaker City still question the location of the seminary in New York and the lack of such an institution in the greater Philadelphia region. In the 1920s *The American Hebrew,* a newspaper that often reflected the view of German Jews and the Con-

servative Movement, opposed the creation of a parochial, all-day school within Yeshiva University. "American Jews should integrate into American life through the public schools."[19] Another complaint was by American born and trained rabbinic students within the university. They believed that Levinthal, in charge of rabbinic ordination, favored European educated students, readily placing them in pulpits. Within the executive committee of the Agudath HaRabbanim a protest was made that Yeshiva College diluted its efforts by the numerous secular studies it offered. In 1940 the Agudath severed its relationship with Yeshiva University. Not only did Levinthal continue to support the university but he supported Samuel Belkin for the presidency and the innovations Belkin instituted as well.[20]

Later there was another attempt to merge Yeshiva University with the Jewish Theological Seminary. In 1926, with the urging of Felix Warburg, prominent New York philanthropist and director of the JTS, and Louis Marshall, former president of the American Jewish Committee, Dr. Cyrus Adler, head of JTS, met with Rabbi Bernard Levinthal to discuss a merger. After the February meeting in Philadelphia, Adler summed up Levinthal's views: "To the rabbi, it was not important if the student eventually becomes a lawyer or physician, rather he shall be imbued with the knowledge of Torah, always with the hope he will thus become a center for its observance and propaganda. . . . There should be an institution for the study of Torah for its own sake without reference to a future profession."[21]

Rabbi Levinthal's most intense and longest efforts on the national Jewish scene were devoted to the formation and guidance of the Agudath HaRabbanim, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis. He was instrumental in calling a convention of fifty-seven rabbis who met at the Malizika Talmud Torah, 227 East Broadway, New York, on 30 August 1902. The issue was the weeding out of rabbinical pretenders. These were European immigrants who possessed a smattering of rabbinical knowledge and would, upon their arrival in the United States, pass themselves off as regular Orthodox rabbis. The convention established itself as the United Orthodox Rabbis (the name changed later to Union). It also created a credentials committee. This committee, of which Levinthal was a member, would pass on the rabbinical diplomas of prospective rabbis and determine who was eligible for membership, thus receiving approval for pulpits. The convention considered Rabbi Levinthal, then only thirty years old, to succeed Rabbi Jacob Joseph (1848–1902), Chief Rabbi of New York, who had recently died. Levinthal never sought that title. The Union postponed that decision and felt later that the American environment did not lend itself to the establishment of an office of chief rabbi. However

Rabbi Levinthal, called "Rav" because of his great learning and expertise in Halacha (Jewish Law), was often referred to by the press and others as the "Dean of Orthodox Rabbis" although no official office as such existed in this country.[22]

Rabbi Levinthal was particularly concerned about the religious instruction within orthodoxy. He made speeches about the need to develop a standard curriculum from Aleph class through advanced rabbinics. He was upset that Jewish communal schools were bar mitzvah factories. He wanted such schools to engender a love for Judaism. He also urged teaching the Hebrew language through Hebrew rather than the more commonly used Yiddish or English. The Rav sought also to promote Jewish all-day schools including those for girls. Levinthal served many years on Agudath's Talmud Torah committees and tried to implement his ideas in Philadelphia where he chaired the executive committee controlling these schools.[23]

The Dean of Orthodox Rabbis was also very concerned about the state of Sabbath observance among American Jews. Early in his Philadelphia ministry, he stopped construction work on a synagogue by Gentile workers from taking place. He convinced an angry synagogue board authorizing the work that Jewish law prohibits such activity, even by Gentiles.

Levinthal shared his distress over the ignorance of Jewish law and lack of Sabbath observance with his learned friend, Cyrus Adler. While Adler was a central figure in the creation of the Conservative Movement, he was friendly with the Orthodox Agudath HaRabbanim. Supported by Rabbi Levinthal, Dr. Adler addressed the Agudath on the sorry state of Sabbath observance when the rabbinic organization met in Philadelphia in 1909. He wanted unions, government, and employers to excuse Sabbath observers from work on Saturdays. Adler particularly wanted Jewish employers to make alternative arrangements for their Jewish employees. Echoing Levinthal's views stated earlier to the Union of Rabbis, he urged that rabbis withhold their seal of approval (*Hecksher*) from dealers of kosher products who violated the Sabbath at their place of business.[24]

With Dr. Adler, Dean Levinthal sought some sort of loose union between the Conservative and Orthodox Movements. In the first three decades this might have been possible in the Conservative Movement as there were no changes made by the movement in Jewish practice. Orthodox professors felt comfortable teaching at the Jewish Theological Seminary. The Philadelphia rabbi expounded the need "for an international union of all Jews who adhere to tradition. A special committee consisting of . . . Dr. Adler, Dr. Revel and myself has been formed."[25]

While there were differences between RIETS and JTS, there were important similarities. The move toward a union due to the poor economic health of both institutions would have not been possible had they not seen themselves as anti-Reform and as an antidote to the apostasy of the masses of East European American Jews. The officers of both institutions saw themselves as Orthodox. Dr. Solomon Schechter, the world famous president of the Jewish Theological Seminary, said in 1902, soon after he assumed his office: "It is not necessary to emphasize that this is an Orthodox seminary; it is also a Jewish seminary. Of course it is Orthodox!"[26] However, for Rabbi Bernard Levinthal, the JTS teachers and students did not know enough. As a leader in the UOA he urged the adoption of a resolution to deny JTS recognition as an Orthodox institution. In 1907 he requested that Yiddish newspapers call graduates of JTS "Reverend or Doctor" in order that the public should know the difference between a "rav" (Orthodox rabbi) and a conservative rabbi.[27]

Thus the union between the two schools never came about. The social characteristics of the leaders and the motives for their leadership were too dissimilar. The leaders of orthodoxy were foreign-born, East European Jews who feared too rapid Americanization would mean, in practice, the erosion of Jewish observance. The founders of the Conservative Movement were highly Americanized German Jews bent on acculturating their poor cousins. Yet the two groups did want the newcomers to return to traditional practices to offset Reform Judaism and the assimilation that was rampant.[28] Two years later, under the aegis of the American Jewish Committee, a kehilla, an umbrella organization of many Jewish groups, was formed in New York and Philadelphia. The kehilla was conceived by Cyrus Adler and aided by Bernard Levinthal.[29]

Unlike his colleague in the Philadelphia Group, Solomon Solis-Cohen, the Rav from Philadelphia never refused leadership in the institution he helped to create, Agudath HaRabbanim. He was the central figure in its formation in 1902, became vice president in 1903, and went on to become president from 1906 to 1909 and honorary president from 1910 to 1911. He became president again from 1922 through 1925, then honorary president for the rest of his life. He was the *eminence gris* behind the projects, policies, and activities of the Union. The Rabbi believed in intense Jewish education for both boys and girls. The Agudath founded almost all of the early Jewish day schools. The organization also followed Levinthal's lead in those causes that attracted the rabbi, namely, the Zionist movement, the American Jewish Congress, and rescue efforts of Jews under the Nazi heel during World War II.[30]

The "Dean of the Orthodox Rabbinate" was a lifelong Zionist. By

Zionist, he meant the Herzlian mode that called for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine as a haven for persecuted Jews and all Jews who wished to live in a land where they were the majority. Rabbi Levinthal's son, Louis, remembered how his father was devastated when Theodore Herzl died in 1904. "B'nai Abraham was draped in black; candles were lit, and special mourning services were held."[31] For Rav Levinthal to espouse Zionism at the turn of the century was most unusual since the mainstream orthodox considered the Zionist movement trafe (Jewishly unclean). It was led by assimilated, nonbelieving Jews, including many socialist-atheists. For Orthodox leaders, the redemption of the Jews and the restoration of Israel as a kingdom was to be brought about by G-d through the coming of the Messiah, not by politics.

One may explain Levinthal's Zionism as an inheritance from his two Lithuanian mentors, Rabbis Samuel Mohilever and Elchanan Spector. When Bernard came to Philadelphia at age twenty-six, he started a Return to Zion Society, which operated out of his own home. On 25 September 1897, an Ohave Zion (Love of Zion) Society got under way in Philadelphia with a membership of ten, the rabbi among the charter members. By the end of October the society had one hundred members, which boasted its only non-European born member, Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen.[32]

Also in 1897, twelve Zionist organizations in New York and Philadelphia joined in a unifying conference. This embryonic organization later developed into the Federation of American Zionists. Levinthal stuck with Herzl and FAZ despite the failure of Orthodox members to steer the movement to Jewish spiritual values.

Zionism was not popular among the city's largely German Jews, nor was it among the highly assimilated. The strictly Orthodox cast a jaundiced eye at Zionist secularist leaders. Levinthal's position as the leader of the Orthodox community in the city reduced this Orthodox resentment. From 1880 to 1924, thousands of Eastern European Jews migrated from the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires to Philadelphia. Nominally Orthodox, they were rather inattentive to Jewish observance.[33] Yet their negative experiences with Gentiles and anti-Semitism in their motherland inclined them to favor Jewish nationalism and a homeland-refuge in Palestine. Levinthal spoke at almost every Zionist mass meeting in the city, usually in Yiddish but often in Hebrew. Just as he showed remarkable organizational ability in creating Philadelphia's religious institutions, he demonstrated great skill in organizing Zionist ones.

Rabbi Levinthal founded Ezras Zion in nearby Camden and a Zionist chapter in the Richmond section of the city. Levinthal's sons,

Israel and Louis, created a youth chapter, Aids of Zion. Back in Europe, when Levinthal studied under Rabbi Elchanan Spector, the elder ruled that *etrogim* (a citrus fruit) and *lulavim* (palm branches) used during the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, were kosher from Palestine, even though the Jewish settlers did not observe the commandment to let the land rest one year in seven. In Philadelphia, Levinthal sought to support the Yishuv (term used for Jewish settlement in Palestine) by advertising Palestinian *etrogim* and *lulavim*.[34]

When the Federation of American Zionists (FAZ) was formed in 1898, the Rabbi brought the city's Zionist societies into it. While his friend, Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen, became a vice president of FAZ, Levinthal became an honorary one. Levinthal, unlike Solis-Cohen, never wavered from the Zionist cause. The Rabbi's other friend in the Philadelphia Group, Cyrus Adler, was offended by Theodore Herzl and Max Nordau (co-founders of Zionism) for their agnosticism. "I am repelled by a theory of Jewish salvation based on the stark realism of anti-Semitism rather than on the mystic dream of messianism."[35] Rabbi Levinthal, a product of Eastern European Jewry, could not dismiss the pain of anti-Semitism as might the Arkansas-born Cyrus Adler. Levinthal knew raw Jew hatred directly. Later, three members of the Philadelphia Group, Solis-Cohen, Adler, and Sulzberger, embraced territorialism, the establishment of a Jewish homeland outside of Palestine, but Levinthal remained loyal to a Jewish homeland only in Palestine. Dr Solis-Cohen left FAZ in 1917. He, Adler, and Sulzberger were hostile to Jewish statehood; they favored only a settlement. While all four men differed politically, they remained, nevertheless, cordial and friendly to one another.[36]

When Mizrachi came into existence, Rabbi Levinthal joined it and helped to build the religious Zionist organization. The word, "Mizrachi," means Eastern; it is also a contraction of the Hebrew words *Mercaz Ruchani*, spiritual center. The idea and the term came from Levinthal's Vilna mentor, Rabbi Samuel Mohilever. In 1897 Mohilever organized a spiritual center within the Zionist movement to convince Orthodox Jews of the legitimacy of Zionism. Its view was that while G-d brings about redemption and the return to Israel, Jews can begin G-d's work through the Zionist movement.[37]

Mizrachi societies in the United States were not formally organized at first. They belonged to and worked under the Federation of American Zionists in a loosely organized structure. In 1914, Mizrachi severed ties with FAZ and established a closer relationship with the parent organization in Europe. Rabbi Levinthal never did sever ties with the FAZ. He saw himself working with both organizations to influence them.

However, the Philadelphia Rav was most active in Mizrachi. When

the Agudath met in Philadelphia in 1902, Israel Levinthal, the rabbi's sixteen-year-old son, president of the Aids of Zion, proposed that the rabbinical organization adopt Zionism and they did.[38]

Bernard Levinthal served on the Mizrachi executive committee from 1918 to 1920 and became vice president in 1926.[39] He sponsored drives to finance Mizrachi schools and other institutions in Palestine. During the depression of the 1930s, he sought help from the Philadelphia Federation of Jewish Charities to support the Mizrachi Palestine campaign with the help of Cyrus Adler.[40]

This work brought him into contact with the chief rabbi of Palestine, Rabbi Abraham Kook (1865–1935). The two men had much in common. Both cooperated with and were admired by non-Orthodox Jews and were heroes of religious Zionists. Both became passionate Zionists at a time when most orthodox leaders denounced the nationalist movement as "Satan's trick to wean Jews away from the Torah."[41] Through their efforts, Orthodox Jews supported Zionism. They saw themselves, although surrounded by secularists, socialists, atheists, and nonbelievers, as the Jewish conscience of the Zionist movement.[42]

Chief Rabbi Kook established his own yeshiva in Jerusalem in 1922 along lines similar to Yeshiva University in New York with a broad curriculum: instruction based in Hebrew and on Zionist philosophy. Rabbi Levinthal supported Rav Kook's Universal Yeshiva of Jerusalem, Merkazeth Alamuth. He formed a fund-raising organization centered in New York titled, "The American Committee for the Universal Yeshiva," later serving as its president.[43] The Agudath HaRabbanim supported Zionist yeshivoth and financed visits of yeshiva heads to America. Rabbi Kook visited America. His host, travel guide, and fund raiser was Rabbi Levinthal.[44]

Chief Rabbi Kook died 1 September 1935 on the eve of his seventieth birthday. Bernard Levinthal, also seventy years old, married his second wife, Mrs. Sarah Samson of Brooklyn on 4 September 1935. The union was six years after the death of the Rav's first wife, Minna. The ceremony was performed by Levinthal's eldest son, Rabbi Israel Herbert Levinthal, an important figure in the Conservative Movement.[45]

In 1936, while making a tour with his wife of one year of religious institutions in Palestine, Rabbi Levinthal was almost killed when an Arab insurrectionist threw a bomb on his bus. Fortunately the explosive did not go off. Despite the Arab rebellion, the passionate Zionist Levinthal wanted to make a point of unflinching support of the Yishuv.[46]

Rabbi Bernard Levinthal's activity in the Zionist movement led to his involvement in the American Jewish Congress. With the onset of

World War I in Europe, Eastern European Jews suffered terribly from its ravages and dislocations. Of the three million Jews in the United States in 1914, two thirds were of Eastern European extraction; many were recent immigrants concerned about their relatives and friends in the old country. The American Zionists saw in this situation an opportunity to bypass the leadership that the American Jewish Committee (AJC) had in international affairs. To Rabbi Stephen Wise and the leadership of FAZ, AJC was elitist and undemocratic, a stronghold of wealthy Reform Jews who sought to work for Jews, but not with them. Most important, the committee was at best non-Zionist, if not anti-Zionist. The Zionist leadership of the Federation believed that a congress of all Jewish organizations, democratically elected, would give the American "Russian" masses a voice. That voice would not only seek the relief and protection of Europe's Jews, but favor Palestine as a homeland and a Jewish state.[47]

Both Mizrachi and the Union of Orthodox Rabbis favored the congress idea. Nevertheless, the Philadelphia rabbi remained a member of the American Jewish Committee. Levinthal's close friendship with Mayer Sulzberger and Cyrus Adler brought him to the committee. He accepted his friend's invitation to be a charter member in 1906, thus becoming one of the three founders from Philadelphia and among the fifty fathers of the organization. Mayer Sulzberger and Cyrus Adler conceived of the organization as a response to the notorious Kishinev pogrom in 1903 and the scores of pogroms that followed in Tsarist Russia. Rabbi Levinthal had a lifelong concern about his overseas brethren, so an American Jewish lobby to exert pressure on the American government to ameliorate Russian Jewish distress appealed to him.[48]

It was characteristic of the builder of American Orthodoxy to cooperate with and even join Jewish groups which were philosophical and political rivals if he felt the organizations were beneficial to Judaism and the Jewish people. Thus Levinthal was part of the preliminary meetings forming the American Jewish Congress in 1915 and 1916. At the final organization meeting in 1918, the Rav was given the honor of being one of the ten delegates selected to plead the Jewish cause before the Allies at the Paris Peace Conference. He was the only rabbi among all the Jewish representatives at Versailles.[49]

The American Jewish Committee eventually did join the American Jewish Congress, only when the latter promised that Congress would be a temporary body that would dissolve itself after the Paris Peace Treaty talks. The ten Jewish delegates were pledged to support civil rights guarantees, overseen by the League of Nations, in the form of bills of rights to be written into the constitutions of the nonwestern

reorganized states of Europe. The Jewish delegation lobbied successfully for group or ethnic rights, "national rights for all citizens and autonomy in the management by members of various national and religious bodies." At first, "Jewish Commonwealth" was used in relation to Palestine, but that term was toned down to "recognition of the historic claim of the Jewish people to Palestine."[50] Also, the delegation pushed for the League's recognition of the Balfour Declaration and a British mandate over Palestine. These policies were adopted by the Versailles Conference.[51]

In the spring of 1920 the American Jewish Congress met in Philadelphia to dissolve itself as promised. At that Philadelphia meeting, a rump group, Bernard Levinthal and Stephen Wise among them, saw a need for the democratically elected body to continue. They believed that the American Jewish Congress should oversee the League of Nations' supervision of minority rights in Europe and the British management of the mandate for the Jewish homeland in Palestine. They pledged to generate a new election for a congress.[52] In May 1922 in Philadelphia, after an address by delegate Levinthal, the newly elected American Jewish Congress declared itself a permanent organization.[53] A few years later, three of the Levinthal family were on the Congress' executive board—Bernard, Louis, and Isaac. The American Jewish Congress' main activity was to lend maximum support to the Zionist movement in the rebuilding of Palestine. That suited the Levinthal family just fine.[54]

Rabbi Levinthal's concern for his brethren in Eastern Europe moved him to engage in international action. During World War I, he was among those who persuaded the Union of Orthodox Rabbis to establish the Ezrath Torah fund.[55] Despite the orthodox cooperation with the American Jewish Committee in establishing the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), which had the principal mission of relieving overseas Jewish distress, the Orthodox believed there was a special imperative to save rabbis, scholars, their families, and yeshivas. In their minds, these people and institutions had saved and preserved Judaism. Without them, the Jewish people would perish. Thus there needed to be a special effort made to save them, an effort many Orthodox Jews believed was not fully appreciated by the JDC.[56]

Rabbi Levinthal was to play a role in rescuing European Jews as World War II ominously approached over Europe. In September 1939, rabbis and yeshiva students fled Nazi and Soviet occupied Poland for Vilna, located in the then independent state of Lithuania. The penniless leaders wrote to Levinthal for financial aid. One pathetic letter pointed out Jewish law to the Philadelphia Rav. "It is your holy duty to help us."[57]

The Executive Committee of the Union called an emergency meeting, which Rabbi Levinthal attended, to establish a special organization that would launch a nationwide campaign to aid rabbinic refugees. A new organization formed, called Vaad Ha Hatzala (Council of Rescue). Rabbi Levinthal headed fund raising for the Vaad in Philadelphia.[58] Representing the Vaad, Rabbi Levinthal met twice with Secretary of State Cordell Hull on refugee issues. This was the orthodox equivalent of the American Jewish Committee's intervention during the pre-First World War period on behalf of Russian Jews.

The Vaad sent religious materials and supplies to Polish Jews interned in Russia. It also supported religious activities inside the Jewish ghetto set up by the Japanese in Shanghai.[59]

In late August 1943, the American Jewish Conference met "to consider action on problems relating to the rights and status of Jews in the post-war world and upon all matters of the Jewish people in respect to Palestine." This conference was a replay by the American Zionists of what they did during World War I, uniting all Jewish groups to aid Jews of Europe, but with the true purpose of promoting a Jewish state in Palestine. Rabbi Levinthal, now seventy-nine years old, was chosen to deliver the invocation.[60] His daughter-in-law, Mrs. Louis Levinthal, was elected to be one of 501 delegates at the conference.[61] Despite an understanding with Judge Joseph Proskauer, head of the American Jewish Committee, not to move for a resolution advocating a Jewish state in Palestine, the conference delegates, after an inspiring speech by Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, did draft a pro-Jewish commonwealth platform. Soon afterward, the American Jewish Committee withdrew from the American Jewish Conference, which was an informal federation made up of sixty-five Jewish organizations. Rabbi Levinthal took this occasion to resign from the committee. In an open letter to Judge Proskauer, published in the Jewish *Exponent*, he expressed his reason for doing so:

> As an Orthodox rabbi, perhaps the only one in the entire membership of the American Jewish Committee, I feel it would be particularly improper of me to continue my association, however minimal, with the Committee. For without a doubt, virtually all Orthodox Jews are vigorously opposed to the stand taken by you and the Executive Committee.[62]

For the first time, Rabbi Levinthal left an organization because he differed from a policy position. The orthodox group left the Conference also because they had not received their allotment of delegates as promised. Behind Levinthal's action was the realization that his friends in Committee, the power brokers, over whom he had some influence—such as Mayer Sulzberger and Cyrus Adler—were dead.[63]

Rabbi Bernard Louis Dov Aryeh HaCohen Levinthal died at age

eighty-eight on Tuesday evening, 22 September 1952, in his Atlantic City home after a prolonged illness. In accordance with Jewish law, the funeral took place quickly afterward, on Wednesday afternoon, from the B'nai Abraham synagogue. This was the institution where the rabbi had served for sixty-one years. Before his death, he wrote an ethical will directed at his four sons: Louis, Israel, Abraham, and Cyrus.

> "Be careful not to participate in and waste your efforts on movements which are not to the advantage of traditional Torah or in activities which go counter to (my) achievements for the strengthening of Torah and observance."[64]

Rabbi Levinthal's sons followed their father's advice concerning the promotion of Jewish life in America. All four, Abraham, Cyrus, Herbert, and Louis became avid Zionists and leaders in the Conservative Movement. Israel Herbert became a rabbi of national renown, while Louis, a judge, became president of the Zionist Organization of America during the war years.[65]

Rabbi Bernard Levinthal's legacy was the preservation of orthodoxy and the new vitality of modern orthodoxy.[66] He invigorated orthodoxy by his efforts with Yeshiva University, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis, and by his programs for Jewish education and day schools. His activities in the American Jewish Congress and Mizrachi brought thousands of East European Jews and their descendants into the Zionist movement. These masses lent their political and financial support to the movement for a Jewish state and are bound to Israel's protection to the present day.

Notes

1. *Kavod Hachachamim* (Honoring the Wise) was a jubilee book in honor of Rabbi Bernard Levinthal's seventieth birthday. It was published privately by his friends in 1934, and it was made up of entries of prominent people who worked with the rabbi. Eight pages (73–81) contain a concise biography by Rabbi Moses Shapiro, whom Levinthal placed in a synagogue in Atlantic City. Except where noted, the word *Kavod* will be used for material is taken from this biography. This writer must acknowledge the efforts of Mr. Manfried Mauskopf of Philadelphia for his translation from Hebrew into English of *Kavod*, Hebrew letters sent to Levinthal xeroxed from the Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center (PJAC) located at the Balch Institute, and *Talpioth*, a rabbinic scholars' magazine of Yeshiva University, which, in January 1946, dedicated the issue and first essay to Rabbi Levinthal. The writer is also indebted to Lily Schwartz, archivist of PJAC, for her aid in obtaining the Levinthal Papers. The Adler quote is on page 5 of *Kavod*.

2. Charles A. Liebman argues in "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life," *American Jewish Yearbook* (AJYB) 66 (1965), that Morais, Sulzberger, Adler, and Solis-Cohen did not intend to create a Conservative Movement, but merely to establish an Orthodox theological seminary. In the early years theirs was not an ideological difference with Orthodox Yeshiva, merely institutional loyalty. All members of the Philadelphia Group mentioned in this paper were Orthodox for (with the exception of Levinthal) they attended Mikvah Israel, and accepted Halacha, Jewish law, developed through the Bible and Talmud. The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) founded by Morais, Sulzberger, Adler, and Solis-Cohen never challenged Halacha in its first three decades.

3. Alex Goldman, *Giants of Faith* (New York, 1964), pp. 164–65; Rabbi Samuel Mirsky in *Talpioth*, pp. 287–88.

4. Interview with Louis Levinthal, the Rabbi's son, in Philadelphia, 18 July 1971.

5. *Kavod*, Charles Bernheimer, *The Russian Jew in America* (Philadelphia, 1905), pp. 84–86, 163–67. These synagogues were close to each other in center city, Philadelphia. Charles Bernheim, *The Russian Jew in America* (Philadelphia, 1905), pp. 84–86, 162–67. The synagogues did not have enough money to hire Levinthal or their own so they shared expenses. Levinthal became a communal rabbi, one who sponsored institutions and answered questions concerning Jewish law. The synagogues did not need the rabbi's daily presence since Orthodox congregants can lead and follow services very well on their own. Soon afterward, the rabbi started a Jewish Community Center in Woodbine, New Jersey, for Jewish farmers who were part of the Baron de Hirsh agricultural settlement program.

6. Goldman, *Giants of Faith*, pp. 165–66.

7. *Kavod*.

8. Robert Tabak, "Orthodox Judaism in Transition," in Murray Friedman, ed., *Jewish Life in Philadelphia: 1830–1940* (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1983), pp. 53–54; *Kavod;* Goldman, *Giants of Faith*, p. 167.

9. Goldman, *Giants of Faith*, p. 168; *Jewish Exponent* (JE), 19 January 1919 and 4 February 1921.

10. JE, 24 April 1964; Bernheimer; Goldman.

11. Letter from B. L. Levinthal to Mayer Sulzberger, 28 March 1906, (PJAC); *Kavod;* Maxwell Whiteman. "The Philadelphia Group," in Friedman, pp. 168, 172–78; Jonathan Sarna, *The Jewish Publication Society* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), pp. 129, 157; biography of Levinthal by Rabbi Matt in JE, 17 May 1935.

12. Letter from Solomon Solis-Cohen to B. L. Levinthal, 8 January 1924, Solomon Solis-Cohen papers at Museum of American Jewish History Archives in Philadelphia. Dr. Solis-Cohen wrote, "How can I keep you well if you do not visit and I do not examine you?"

13. Samuel Mirsky in *Talpioth*, pp. 287–89; interview with Helen Solis-Cohen Sax, Philadelphia, 24 January 1991.

14. Gilbert Klaperman, *The Story of Yeshiva University* (London: Macmillan Co., 1969), p. 70, 88, 113.

15. Klaperman, 70, 88, 90. Jacob Schiff gave an annual gift of $1,000.

16. Klaperman, pp. 85–90, 102, 108–9.

17. Aaron Rothkoff, *Bernard Revel, Builder of American Orthodoxy* (Philadelphia, 1972), pp. 32–36.

18. Max Dimont, *The Jew in America* (New York, 1978), p. 184; Rothkoff, pp. 43, 47; Goldman, pp. 220–23; Ira Robinson, "Cyrus Adler, Bernard Revel and the Prehistory of Organized Scholarship in the United States," *American Jewish History* (June 1980), p. 498; Klaperman, p. 139.

19. Dimont, p. 180; JE, 15 September 1939; *The Light,* December 1943, p. 8 (PJAC); Letter by B. L. Levinthal to Samuel Levy, 2 March 1941.

20. Rothkoff, p. 43; L. Bernstein, *Challenge and Mission* (New York, 1982), p. 185.

21. Dimont, p. 180; Bernstein.

22. Rothkoff, pp. 104–5.

23. Abraham Karp, "New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi," *Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society* (March 1955), pp. 129–38; *Jewish Times (JT)* 19 September 1930; *Kavod; New York Times (NYT),* 6 August 1902; JE, 8 August 1904.

24. *Kavod,* JE, 3 December 1919; JE, 19 June 1935; JE, 6 June 1934, JT, 13 January 1928.

25. JE, 9 November 1909; 10 April 1910; JE, 1 November 1924.

26. Letter from B. L. Levinthal to Cyrus Adler, 7 December 1909 (PAJC).

27. Klaperman, pp. 39, 40, 70, 207.

28. Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1965), pp. 231–41, passim.

29. Philip Rosen, "German Jews vs. Russian Jews in Philanthropy," in Friedman, pp. 201–6; Tabak, p. 53.

30. By the 1920s, the Agudath HaRabbanim decided not to have one president, but an executive body sharing power called a presidium. Marc Lee Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), pp. 149–50; AJYB, 1906–1910, 1922–1925. The earlier name of the Union was "United Rabbis of the United States and Canada." Charles Liebman in his paper, "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life", AJYB (1966) p. 3288, places the Agudath as the oldest organization of Orthodox rabbis and day school pioneers. Rabbi Levinthal believed in "Hebrew Thru Hebrew" and pioneering in curriculum modification.

31. Interview with Louis Levinthal, the rabbi's son in Philadelphia, 18 July 1971.

32. *Kavod;* Whiteman, p. 211.

33. Shubert Spero, "Orthodox Judaism," in Bernard Martin, ed., *Movements and Issues in American Judaism* (Westport, Conn., 1978), pp. 84–86. The writer points to the immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires as having a folk orthodox judaism characterized by partial practice, irregular attendance at synagogue, and irregular observance. However, they considered orthodoxy as the authentic Judaism.

34. Tabak, pp. 50, 56, 58; Whiteman, p. 212.

35. Spero, p. 85.

36. Melvin Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust* (Garden City N.Y., 1976), pp. 104–6; Yonathan Shapiro, *Leadership of the American Zionist Organization: 1897–1930* (Chicago, 1971), pp. 37–40; JE, 10 January 1919; Samuel Halpern, *The Political World of American Zionism* (Detroit, 1961), p. 66.

37. Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea* (New York, 1984), pp. 400–401.

38. AJYB, 1903–1904, p. 74.

39. AJYB, 1918–1919, p. 316; AJYB, 1926–1927, p. 316; AJYB, 1926–1927, p. 317; AJYB, 1921–1922, p. 256.

40. Letter from B. L. Levinthal to Cyrus Adler, 11 May 1921 (PJAC).

41. Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), pp. 403–4.

42. Telushkin, pp. 26–27.

43. AJYB, 1940–1941, p. 501.

44. JE, 20 May 1924, *NYT,* 3 April 1924 *NYT* (Obituary) 2 September 1935; letter from B. L. Levinthal to Cyrus Adler asking the latter to serve on Rabbi Kook's reception committee (circa March 1924, PJAC).

45. *NYT* (Obituary) 2 September 1935; *NYT* 5 September 1935; JE, 17 May 1935.
46. Letter from Cyrus Adler to B. L. Levinthal, 6 August 1936 (PJAC).
47. Hertzberg, *The Jews in America*, p. 233; Urofsky, pp. 158–60.
48. Telushkin, p. 248; Urofsky, pp. 70–72; JE, 17 May 1935.
49. JE, 17 December 1918, *NYT*, 25 July 1919; Hertzberg, *Jews in America*, p. 234.
50. Hertzberg, p. 279. Adler feared a revival of anti-Semitism with the Gentiles saying, "Get out and go to Palestine!"
51. *NYT*, 18 December 1918; 19 December 1918; 2 March 1919; 25 July 1919; *Congress Weekly* (1 December 1952), p. 15.
52. *NYT*, 31 May and 1 June 1920.
53. JE, 8 May, 24 May, and 26 May 1922.
54. AJYB, 1924–1925, p. 473. Rabbi Levinthal had a warm friendship with American Jewish Congress President Rabbi Stephen Wise. Rabbi Stephen Wise spoke and wrote glowingly of his friend, Bernard Levinthal. Upon the orthodox rabbi's twenty-fifth anniversary of his Philadelphia ministry (1916), the Reform leader was overwhelmed. He claimed, "I never spoke at an Orthodox pulpit before . . . Rabbi Levinthal is the true liberal." JE, 21 October 1916. In Wise's *Kavod HaRabbanim* entry, he wrote, "I wish to G-d that Orthodox Judaism had a Rabbi Levinthal in every city in the land." Levinthal worked with Wise from the beginnings of the Federation of American Zionists (FAZ) in 1887. (Wise was secretary.) Levinthal brought in other orthodox rabbis to FAZ. He and these rabbis conceived of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis (Agudath HaRabbanim) while attending a FAZ meeting in Boston.
55. JE, 24 April 1964.
56. Efraim Zuroff, "Rescue Priorities and Fund Raising During the Holocaust," *American Jewish History*, 68, no. 3, (1979): pp. 306–8, 325.
57. Letters from Rabbi A. Bowich of Lithuania to Rabbi B. L. Levinthal (circa) November–December 1939–40, 1941 (PJAC); letter from B. L. Levinthal to U.S. Senator Joseph Guffey (PA), 20 May 1941 (PJAC).
58. Radiogram from Vaad to B. L. Levinthal, 13 August 1940 (PJAC); letter from Nathan Perilstein to B. L. Levinthal, 7 March 1940 (PJAC); Zuroff, pp. 306–8.
59. Israel Gutman, ed., "Vaad Ha Halzala," *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, vol. 3 (New York: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 1557–1558.
60. *JT*, 20 August 1943; *NYT*, 29 August and 30 August 1943.
61. *JT*, 25 June, 20 August 1943.
62. JE, 26 November 1943; Rosen, p. 48.
63. David Kranzler, *Thy Brother's Blood: The Orthodox Jewish Response during the Holocaust* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Mesorah, 1987), pp. 96–99. Judge Mayer Sulzberger died in 1923 and Cyrus Adler died in 1940. Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen died in 1948, after a five-year illness. He was never a member of the American Jewish Committee, but he took a strong position against Jewish statehood or independent Jewish sovereignty in Palestine, so much so, he joined the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism.
64. JE, 26 September 1952.
65. *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* vol. VI (1942): pp. 637–638; phone interview with Marvin Levinthal, grandson of Rabbi Levinthal, 11 November 1991. This writer wishes to acknowledge his debt to Mr. Levinthal for lending him *Kavod* and *Talpioth*.
66. Reuvan Bulka, entry in "Symposium on the State of Orthodoxy," *Tradition*, vol. 20, no. 1 (Spring 1982).

9

The Making of an American Jewish Culture

JONATHAN D. SARNA

Culture, Vytautas Kavolis reminds us, is not randomly and evenly distributed. Historically, "in each nation or international civilization, periods of increasing or declining creativity . . . may be identified." There have been golden ages in the history of culture, and there have been dark ages, eras of cultural renewal and eras of cultural stagnation.[1]

Jewish cultural life in Philadelphia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries falls somewhere between these two extremes. It does not compare to Viennese culture during the same period, but one can, nevertheless, identify a period of extraordinary cultural ferment and institutional reorganization within the community that had considerable implications for Jewish cultural life throughout the United States. To borrow a phrase from Frederic Morton, the Jewish cultural leaders of Philadelphia, members of the Philadelphia Group, were men who created "not industries, but climates; men who brewed the very weather of our minds today."[2] Working in their home city or in neighboring cities (New York, Baltimore, Washington, D.C.), sometimes laboring alone and sometimes in conjunction with non-Philadelphians, they created the basic institutions, characteristics, and standards of twentieth-century American Jewish cultural life reaching almost to contemporary times.

Philadelphia's role in American Jewish cultural life dates far back into the nineteenth century. Individuals like Isaac Leeser and Rebecca Gratz, along with institutions like the Hebrew Sunday School Society, the first Jewish Publication Society, and the Hebrew Education Society, amply illustrate the community's early commitment to Jewish education, at least of a rudimentary sort. According to Bertram W. Korn, during this period Philadelphia served as "the ideal experimental center



Dinner tendered to Solomon Schecter, 29 May 1910. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center.

of American Jewish creativity."[3] The Jewish community was, to a surprising degree, involved in reading, writing, and learning.

Philadelphia as a whole is not generally known as a center of culture. "Proper Philadelphians," according to E. Digby Baltzell, "have made almost no serious contributions to the history of the American mind." While Boston Brahmins were "a reading and writing people," their opposite numbers in Philadelphia, according to Baltzell, "were neither"—at least not in any comparable way. Indeed, John Lukacs describes the city as "almost indifferent to intellectual achievement."[4] This may explain why local Jews came to fill this void, for in the absence of an entrenched Protestant cultural elite, they had the opportunity to rise and gain recognition. Over time, culture became one more vehicle for distinguishing Philadelphia Jews from their non-Jewish counterparts.

Yet for a brief period following the death of Isaac Leeser, in 1868, the cultural level of Philadelphia's Jewish community sharply declined. Leeser's periodical, the *Occident*, was maintained for a year by Mayer Sulzberger and then ended; thereafter, the city was without a local Jewish newspaper for six years. Maimonides College, founded in 1867 to train American rabbis and to wage what Leeser called "the great fight against ignorance," lost its last students and disappeared at the end of 1872 or the beginning of 1873.[5] The Hebrew Education Society's parochial school similarly declined, and then watched as many of its pupils, including young Cyrus Adler, moved over to the city's improved public schools. In 1878, the society was forced to close its school altogether and to focus exclusively on supplementary Hebrew education of a more elementary kind.[6]

The only bright spot in this otherwise bleak picture was the formation of the Young Men's Hebrew Association in 1875. This was the work of a younger generation of Philadelphia Jews: the first president was Mayer Sulzberger, age thirty-one; the president of the junior branch (ages 16–21) was Solomon Solis-Cohen, age eighteen. The new organization sought "to promote a higher culture among the young men, and to unite them in a liberal organization which shall tend to their moral, intellectual, and social improvement."[7] Working closely with the New York YMHA, founded slightly earlier, the organization underscored the importance of *Jewish* cultural activities: it established lectures, literary discussions, and formal classes, opened up free Jewish libraries, and even laid plans to issue a series of Jewish books. One of the organization's most notable achievements, in the late 1870s, was the "Grand Revival of the Jewish National Holiday of Chanucka," complete with appropriate pageants and publicity. This was an effort to "rescue this national festival from the oblivion

into which it seemed rapidly falling" and, presumably, to counteract the evident allure of Christmas. The triumphant success of the 1879 celebration overwhelmed even the organizers. "Every worker in the cause of a revived Judaism," one of them wrote, "must have felt the inspiration exuded from the enthusiastic interest evinced by such a mass of Israel's people."[8]

The reference here to "the cause of a revised Judaism" is the key, I think, to what transpired during the ensuing decades, a period of dramatic cultural awakening. In the late 1870s, a group of young people in Philadelphia and New York, the Philadelphians being particularly influential, came to believe, with all the audacity, enthusiasm, and fervor of their youth, that they, through their own efforts, could spark an American Jewish cultural revolution. Max Cohen, one of the New Yorkers in this group and later librarian of New York's Maimonides Library, wrote an impassioned letter on this subject to Solomon Solis-Cohen in Philadelphia in which he declared that "the great question for contemporary Judaism is whether it will continue God's work or cease to be." His own conclusion was unambiguous: "Israel must ever be whatever its children make it. . . . They who wish to give Israel her true position in the world's autonomy must set a high ideal before them and abide thereby." (Incidentally, Cohen, when he wrote this lofty letter, was all of twenty-six, and the last line of his letter reads "mother is calling that it is time to blow out my lamp."[9])

The "high ideal" that that these young people set for themselves, talked about, and worked toward was Jewish religious and cultural renewal. In the *American Hebrew,* the influential New York Jewish newspaper that they founded in 1879 (with Solomon Solis-Cohen and former Philadelphian Cyrus Sulzberger on the editorial board, later joined by Cyrus Adler), they spoke of "untiring endeavors to stir up our brethren to pride in our time-honored faith, to incite them by all the means in our power to shed lustre on our ancestral fame." Privately, they used phrases like "the perpetuation and elevation of Judaism." Several had bound themselves to a solemn covenant "for God and Judaism" which they called *Keyam Dishmaya,* pledging to do all in their power to bring Jews back "to the ancient faith." In their opening *American Hebrew* editorial, they even expressed the triumphalistic hope that in the future America would be the field where the "daughter-religions" would make their way back to Judaism, "and a purified Judaism extend the maternal greeting of love and forgetfulness of ill, to the disintegrating sects of Christendom."[10]

What is fascinating is that many of those connected as young adults with the YMHA and the *American Hebrew,* particularly Philadel-

phians like Mayer Sulzberger, Cyrus Adler, and Solomon Solis-Cohen, maintained their heady enthusiasm, and continued throughout their lives to labor on behalf of these self-same goals. In the space of a few decades they helped to establish a whole series of new Jewish cultural institutions in Philadelphia and New York: notably, the Jewish Theological Seminary (1886), Jewish Publication Society (1888), American Jewish Historical Society (1892), Gratz College (1893), Jewish Chautauqua Society (1893), and Dropsie College (1907). They were associated with the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901–1906), the movement to bring Solomon Schechter to America (he arrived in 1902), the transfer to America's shores of the *Jewish Quarterly Review* (1910), and the establishment of American Jewry's first high-quality Hebrew Press (1921). They were also involved in the Jewish Bible translation project (1893–1917) and the Schiff Library of Jewish Classics (1914–1936), both specially funded projects of the Jewish Publication Society.

These highly ambitious and for the most part successful undertakings were all geared to different audiences: some to scholars, some to rabbis and teachers, and some to the Jewish community at large and to non-Jews. In the case of Cyrus Adler, Naomi W. Cohen describes this multitiered cultural agenda as a conscious creation:

> On one level, Adler envisioned the modern training of Jewish scholars, abetted by appropriate library and publication resources. On a second, he aimed for the education of American rabbis and teachers who would inculcate a loyalty to historical Judaism in consonance with acculturation to American surroundings. On still a third, he worked for a community knowledgeable about its heritage, that would appreciate the value of reading books of Jewish interest, of collecting Jewish artifacts, and of keeping alert to contemporary events that involved Jewry.[11]

What these levels all had in common was the fact that they were dedicated to the same general ends. All sought to promote religious renewal, improved Jewish education, cultural revitalization, the professionalization of Jewish scholarship, the promotion of a positive Jewish image to the Gentiles, and the elevation of American Jewry to a position of greater prominence, if not preeminence among the Jews of the world.

Admittedly, the challenge posed by massive East European Jewish immigration led, for a time, to a greater rhetorical emphasis upon Americanization as a goal, but this should not be exaggerated. Promoters of Jewish culture understood better than other Jewish leaders did that the real concern was not so much how to assimilate the East Europeans, as how to ensure that all American Jews would not

assimilate completely. It was this critical insight coupled with a prescient sense that American Jewry needed to prepare itself to play a central role in the affairs of world Jewry that prompted Philadelphia Jews to participate in the creation of these great institutions and projects that shaped American Jewish cultural life into the late twentieth century.[12]

Two characteristics of this turn-of-the-century cultural "revolution" are particularly important, for they serve to distinguish the cultural activities of the Philadelphia Group and their allies from the earlier work of what might be termed the Cincinnati Group: Isaac Mayer Wise, Max Lilienthal, and their associates. These characteristics, with some exaggeration, may be summed up in two negatives: the Philadelphians were not Reform, and they were not rabbis.

Broadly speaking, the Cincinnatians, led by Isaac Mayer Wise, believed that some variety of Reform Judaism would inevitably become *Minhag Amerika*, the universal custom of American Jews. As a result, the pathbreaking cultural activities that they undertook—the *American Israelite*, the establishment of Hebrew Union College, the books published by Bloch Publishing Company, the short-lived *Hebrew Review*, and others, all reflected the Reform Jewish perspective. The Cincinnatians may have believed that they were promoting the "union of all Israel," but in fact, and not necessarily consciously, they were advocating union on their own terms: terms that most members of the Philadelphia Group could not abide.[13]

By contrast, the Philadelphians—at least those caught up in the spirit of religious revival described earlier—saw Reform as part of the problem, not part of the solution. They were, as one of their numbers recalled years later, "young American Jews who, although not inordinately addicted to Orthodoxy as a rigid standardization of thought and conduct, were yet opposed to the wholesale and reckless discarding of everything that was Jewish simply because it was inconvenient, oriental, or was not in conformity with Episcopalian customs."[14] They thought that Reform had carried its program of change much too far and believed that what American Jewry needed was a more conservative approach, a return to tradition. As a result, all of their cultural projects, although formally undertaken in the spirit of Jewish consensus and often with notable Reform Jews participating, nevertheless carried with them an undertone (and sometimes more) of anti-Reform animus. This comes through most clearly, of course, in the anti-Reform polemic of Moses Dropsie, entitled *On Deform in Judaism* (1895), but it may also be seen in the personal correspondence of people like Mayer Sulzberger and Cyrus Adler. It was pronounced within the portals of the Jewish Theological Seminary and only thinly

veiled at Dropsie College. It was even discernible in the outwardly more pluralistic world of the Jewish Publication Society. Indeed, on at least one occasion, Cyrus Adler and Solomon Schechter actively conspired to keep the Reform Movement down, rigging the board of the Schiff Library of Jewish Classics to ensure that the "Reform element" would not have a "preponderating vote."[15]

The other cultural characteristic mentioned above, Philadelphia Jewry's pronounced anticlericalism, may come as somewhat more of a surprise, particularly given Jerold Auerbach's recent claim that until late in the nieteenth century, "the voice of American Judaism was the voice of its rabbis."[16] Nevertheless, it seems to me that, in contradistinction to Cincinnati, the key individuals behind Jewish culture developments in Philadelphia were, with a few exceptions, well-educated lay leaders, not rabbis.[17] Indeed, at the founding of the Jewish Publication Society in 1888, and four years later when the American Jewish Historical Society was founded in New York, rabbis were initially excluded from leadership roles.[18] Rabbi Marcus Jastrow of Philadelphia, one of those excluded, discerned what he thought to be an almost "instinctive" American Jewish fear of "clerical rule."[19] Moreover, local rabbis were forever being faulted by lay leaders, publicly and privately, for their alleged foreignness, ignorance, pomposity, and most of all for their inability to work together for the sake of the Jewish community.[20] Whereas in Cincinnati, rabbis like Isaac Mayer Wise, Max Lilienthal, and later David Philipson were the symbolic leaders of the Jewish community, in Philadelphia, according to Aaron Friedenwald writing in 1888, "there seemed to be but one opinion prevailing about the rabbis and it was not a very flattering one."[21] Not surprisingly, then, Dropsie College, chartered in 1907, was nonprofessional and nonsectarian; it was a school for training Jewish scholars rather than rabbis. This reflected the Philadelphia view that learned laymen and professional scholars, rather than rabbis, should stand at the center of Jewish communal and cultural life.

Admittedly, there are some exceptions to these generalizations, notably Sabato Morais, Joseph Krauskopf, and Henry Berkowitz. But it is interesting that Morais, minister of Mikveh Israel, eschewed the title rabbi and consciously set himself apart from his colleagues; his first love was known to be scholarship.[22] As for Krauskopf and Berkowitz, Reform rabbis and also brothers-in-law, they stood outside of the mainstream and both ended up creating their own organizations, the Farm School and Chautauqua, where they could be insiders, and more highly respected.[23]

The Jewish leaders of the "Philadelphia Group," in concert with others, helped to shape the cultural standards of twentieth-century

American Jews. Through the institutions they created, particularly the Jewish Publication Society, they functioned as cultural gatekeepers, requiring that works of culture conform to certain unwritten guidelines in order to receive approval. Four of these guidelines proved particularly significant and shed light on American Jewish cultural life as a whole.[24]

First and foremost, these leaders believed that works of Jewish culture should be broadly educational. Heirs to nineteenth-century liberal Jewish thought, to the educational ideas of European Jewish scholarship, and to Victorian didacticism, they extolled education, here somewhat akin to the German *bildung*,[25] as a kind of panacea, a cure for everything from anti-Semitism to assimilation. They therefore sought, through cultural activities, to combat "ignorance from within and prejudice from without."[26] The idea that culture should be provocative or subversive would have been utterly foreign to their minds.

Second, they attempted, through works of culture, to promote a sense of Jewish unity. However much they argued among themselves over religious and other issues, they nevertheless championed the idea of a unified Jewish cultural tradition, rooted in history, ideas, values, and sacred texts, that linked American Jews one to another, as well as backward through time. This article of faith—the belief that a shared cultural tradition underlay American Jewish life—reflected a noble ideal that still inspires American Jews today. But the cost was high, for it necessarily entailed a stifling of dissent and a willful disregard for the day-to-day reality of Jewish divisiveness.

Third, they insisted that all works of American Jewish culture conform to the highest standards of dignity and propriety. Culture, they thought, needed to be pure and elevating; it should demonstrate how refined Jews had become, and thus project a positive Jewish image to the world. The *American Hebrew*, for example, refused any illustrations that were "in the least degree indelicate," and banned any social advertisements, cards of matrimonial brokers and, in the early years, even jokes.[27] The Jewish Publication Society held to equally strict standards and periodically asked authors to rewrite (or "wash") their works in order to make them acceptable for publication.[28] Again, the underlying sense here was that culture should reflect high-minded ideals rather than sordid reality. The result, unsurprisingly, was that Jewish culture often seemed woefully out of touch with the times.

Fourth, and last, promoters of American Jewish culture demanded that everything they supported be fervently patriotic, particularly in wartime. This evident and sometimes exaggerated emphasis on America is easy to understand. American Jews, like Jews in other

Western countries and like many other American immigrant groups, felt compelled to go to great lengths to prove their loyalty and patriotism, particularly when these were so frequently being called into question by nativists and anti-Semites alike. American Jews also had the additional problem of having to earn the respect of their European cousins who viewed them as cultural barbarians. The perennial emphasis on America and its virtues thus made sense on two grounds: It evidenced allegiance, and it publicized American Jewish achievements. But if culture played an important apologetic function by promoting loyalty and helping to beat down negative stereotypes, it did so at a price. American Jewish culture was, as a result, more sterile and conformist than might otherwise have been the case.

This, then, is the mixed legacy of the Philadelphia Group: it simultaneously promoted American Jewish culture and restrained it from developing freely. On balance, it seems to me that the positive cultural achievements that were attained largely outweigh the negatives. Certainly, American Jewish cultural life as we know it—the great cultural institutions of Philadelphia and New York, the remarkable libraries, the hundreds of thousands of Jewishly learned books and periodicals, and at least two generations of American Jewish scholars—all owe an incalculable debt to the young visionary Jews of a century past who, whatever their shortcomings, took it upon themselves to revitalize Jewish culture in America and, after a lifetime of effort, succeeded.

Notes

1. Vytautas Kavolis, *History on Art's Side: Social Dynamics in Artistic Efflorescences* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. 1.

2. Frederic Morton, *A Nervous Splendor: Vienna 1888/1889* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979), p. viii.

3. As quoted in Murray Friedman, ed., *Jewish Life in Philadelphia 1830–1940* (Philadelphia: ISHI Publications, 1983), p. 5.

4. E. Digby Baltzell, *Puritan Boston and Quaker Philadelphia* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), pp. 285, 291; idem, *Philadelphia Gentlemen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979 [orig. ed., 1958]), pp. 152–57; John Lukacs, *Philadelphia: Patricians and Philistines 1900–1950* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981), p. 39.

5. Bertram W. Korn, *Eventful Years and Experiences* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1954), pp. 151–214, esp. 165, 177. A Jewish newspaper named *The Index* appeared in 1872, but it quickly expired. The *Jewish Record* commenced publication in April 1875.

6. Menahem G. Glenn, "Rabbi Sabato Morais' Report on the Hebrew Education Society of Philadelphia," *Essays in American Jewish History* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1978), pp. 407–24; Henry S. Morais, *The Jews of Philadelphia*

(Philadelphia, 1894), pp. 154–56; Diane A. King, "Jewish Education in Philadelphia," in Friedman (ed.) *Jewish Life in Philadelphia*, p. 242; cf. Cyrus Adler, *I Have Considered the Days* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1941) pp. 14–15.

7. Morais, *Jews of Philadelphia*, p. 164.

8. For full documentation, see Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888–1988* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), p. 15, from where this paragraph is drawn. See also Jonathan D. Sarna, "Is Judaism Compatible with American Civil Religion? The Problem of Christmas and the 'National Faith,'" in Rowland A. Sherrill, ed., *Religion and the Life of the Nation: American Recoveries* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), esp. p. 162.

9. Max Cohen to Solomon Solis-Cohen, 14 October 1879, Solomon Solis-Cohen Archives, Collection of Helen S-C Sax and Hayes Solis Cohen, Jr., Philadelphia, Penn.

10. *American Hebrew*, 21 November 1879, p. 3 reprinted in Philip Cowen, *Memories of an American Jew* (New York, 1932), p. 55; Max Cohen to Solomon Solis-Cohen (10 November 1879), Solomon Solis-Cohen Archives; Sarna, *JPS*, p. 15; Yehezkel Wyszkowski, "The American Hebrew: An Exercise in Ambivalence," *American Jewish History* 76:3 (March 1987), pp. 340–53.

11. Naomi W. Cohen, "Introduction," in Ira Robinson, ed., *Cyrus Adler: Selected Letters* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985), I, p. xxx.

12. Cf. Sarna, *JPS*, pp. 13–20.

13. On the centrality of Reform Judaism in Cincinnati, see Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy H. Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Center for the Study of the American Jewish Experience, 1989), esp. pp. 12–14, 86, 88. Joseph Krauskopf, "Half a Century of Judaism in the United States," *American Jews Annual* (Cincinnati, 1888), pp. 65ff reflects the Cincinnatians' pro-Reform view; for Mayer Sulzberger's response, see Sarna, *JPS*, pp. 18 and 302, n. 47.

14. Max Cohen, "Introduction," to Alexander Kohut, *The Ethics of the Fathers* (New York, 1920), p. 7.

15. Moses A. Dropsie, *On Deform in Judaism and on the Study of Hebrew* (Philadelphia, 1895); Robert E. Fierstien, *A Different Spirit: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1886–1902* (New York, 1990); Abraham A. Neuman, "Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning," *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* 3 (1941), pp. 600–602; Sarna, *JPS*, p. 55.

16. Jerold S. Auerbach, *Rabbis and Lawyers: The Journey from Torah to Constitution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 93.

17. A surprising number of them were also lifelong bachelors, including Moses Dropsie, Samuel Elkin, Simon Gratz, Isaac Leeser, Simon Muhr, and Mayer Sulzberger. Charles Rosenberg notes that male celibacy was a Victorian ideal, see his *No Other Gods* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 71–88.

18. Sarna, *JPS*, pp. 20–21; "Organization of the American Jewish Historical Society . . . On Monday the Seventh Day of June 1892" (typescript, American Jewish Historical Society), esp. pp. 58, 61; Nathan M. Kaganoff, "AJHS at 90: Reflections on the History of the Oldest Ethnic Historical Society in America," *AJH* 71 (June 1982), pp. 473–74.

19. "Organization of the American Jewish Historical Society . . .," p. 64.

20. Sarna, *JPS*, p. 22 and works cited on p. 302, n. 37.

21. Quoted in Alexandra Lee Levin, "The Beginnings of the Jewish Publication Society" (typescript, 1964), in box 14, Edwin Wolf 2nd Papers, Philadelphia Jewish Archives, p. 4.

22. Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1965), p. 355; Sarna, *JPS*, p. 21.

23. Malcolm H. Stern, "National Leaders of Their Time: Philadelphia's Reform Rabbis," in Friedman, ed., *Jewish Life in Philadelphia*, pp. 185–94.

24. What follows is adapted from Sarna, *JPS*, pp. 88–91, where other primary sources are cited.

25. See George L. Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism* (Bloomington and Cincinnati: Indiana University Press and Hebrew Union College Press, 1985).

26. Simon Miller, "President's Address," *American Jewish Year Book* 25 (1923–24), p. 440.

27. Cowen, *Memories of an American Jew*, pp. 46–47.

28. Sarna, *JPS*, pp. 90, 212–14.

10

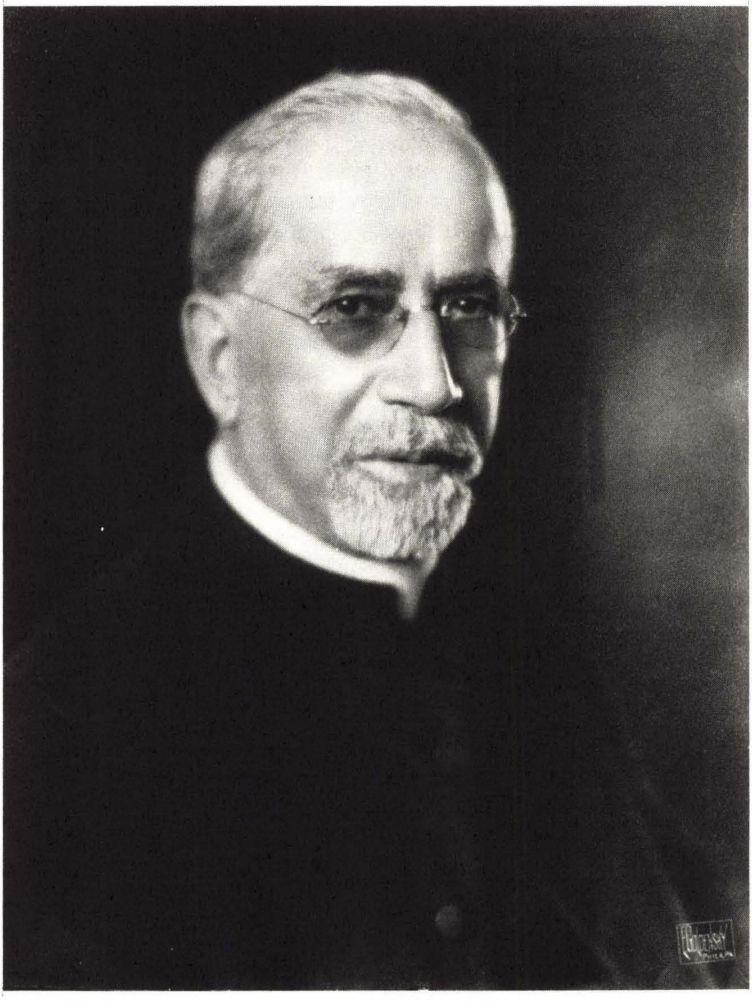
The Americanization of Reform Judaism: Joseph Krauskopf—A Case Study

MARTIN P. BEIFIELD, JR.

The period from the early 1880s to the middle of the 1920s was a time of great ferment among the Jews of the United States. It was a period in which some two million Jewish immigrants came to America from Eastern Europe, a migration which both taxed existing communal institutions and caused the creation of others, many of which continue to exist today. There are many individuals who made significant contributions to the emerging modern Jewish community. One of the more interesting of them, though not so well-known as many, was Joseph Krauskopf, the rabbi at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in Philadelphia from 1887 to 1923.

Krauskopf is an interesting figure for several reasons. His being rabbi at Keneseth Israel naturally led to his involvement in local Jewish affairs which were dominated, as they had been for decades, by members of Mikveh Israel, an old, prestigious orthodox synagogue whose influence had long extended beyond Philadelphia. Both his ideology and fiery personality brought him into conflict with these men. The conflict was not purely personal. There were few examples of cooperation among the leaders of the different branches of Judaism in Philadelphia and, despite his popularity and stature in the community, Krauskopf was never accepted into the inner circle of local leadership. In fact, these might have had the effect of reinforcing the long-standing, anti-Reform tone of Philadelphia's Jewish leadership.

Krauskopf's major importance in American Jewish history lies in his role as the preeminent spokesperson in Philadelphia of Reform Judaism, which experienced nationally perhaps its greatest appeal and success during the years of Krauskopf's career in Philadelphia. The most distinguishing characteristic of turn-of-the-century Reform Judaism—and of Krauskopf's entire career—was a deep concern with



Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf. Courtesy of Keneseth Israel Reform Congregation of Elkins Park, Pennsylvania.

community involvement and social justice, characteristics that constitute Reform's uniqueness to this day. An analysis of Krauskopf's career helps us to a more complete understanding of how this particular orientation of Reform Judaism evolved. It was not merely the natural development of a German movement transplanted onto American soil where it was molded and nourished by immigrant German rabbis for immigrant German Jews. It was, instead, the first fully mature expression of Judaism to grow out of, and respond directly to, the American experience. It is simply not possible to appreciate the importance of turn-of-the-century Reform Judaism without placing it into its American context.

Joseph Krauskopf was born in Germany and came to the United States as a teenager. He received some education in Fall River, Massachusetts where he came under the influence of Mary Bridges Canady Slade, a prominent, gentile woman in town. Many years later, he acknowledged her influence in his decision to enter the rabbinate.[1] In 1875, Krauskopf enrolled in the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati as a member of its first class. During the ensuing years, he graduated high school, college, and, in 1883, received ordination.

In October of the same year, Krauskopf married Rose Berkowitz, the sister of one of his classmates, Henry Berkowitz. The ceremony, performed by Isaac Mayer Wise, was a double wedding in which Berkowitz married also. (Krauskopf and Berkowitz, who, in 1892, became the rabbi at Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia, remained lifelong friends.) Krauskopf's first wife, with whom he had three children, died in 1893. Three years later, he married Sybil Feineman, the daughter of a prominent Kansas City Jewish family whom he had known well when he was the rabbi there and with whom he had maintained contact. Sybil Feineman was quite a bit younger than Krauskopf and had been in one of Krauskopf's confirmation classes at B'nai Yehuda! Krauskopf's correspondence, photographs, and personal dealings reflect a stiff, almost austere formality which was typical of the age. Nevertheless, he appears to have had two happy marriages and left children with positive memories of their childhoods.

Krauskopf's first position was at B'nai Yehuda in Kansas City where he quickly earned a reputation as an excellent speaker and social activist. Krauskopf, however, was an ambitious man and looked for more prestigious horizons. Through the labyrinth of Gilded Age communications, in which a "no" was often a "yes" and a "yes" often a "no" and in which matters of personal honor were always close to

the surface, Krauskopf pursued the job of assistant rabbi to Gustav Gottheil at Temple Emanu-El in New York, then, as now, the most prominent synagogue in the United States. Simultaneously, Keneseth Israel in Philadelphia, looking first for an assistant to Samuel Hirsch, then later for a replacement to him, expressed an interest in Krauskopf, whose "no's" remained "no's" only until it was clear that he could not win a place at Emanu-El at which point his "no's" were intended to be "yes's." The final negotiations between Keneseth Israel and Krauskopf were further complicated by Krauskopf's desire, or need, it is difficult to distinguish which, to be appropriately pursued.[2] Obstacles finally overcome, Krauskopf came to Philadelphia and Keneseth Israel in 1887 where he remained until his death in 1923.

As the rabbi of one of Philadelphia's largest synagogues,[3] Krauskopf received a certain degree of immediate and automatic prestige to which, Krauskopf believed, he was more than entitled. However, he had to confront two important issues from the very beginning. The first, which he had no role in creating but which nevertheless affected him enormously, was that the Philadelphia Jewish communal leadership was dominated by Orthodox Jews. The second, which was more of his own making, was the effect of his personality, especially on those with whom he disagreed.

It was inevitable that the growth of Reform Judaism, fueled by the mid-century immigration of Jews from Germanic lands, would precipitate a clash with the more established and more traditional Jews. The conflicts were often played out within an existing synagogue and led, sometimes, as they did at Keneseth Israel, to a change in ritual, or, at other times, to the formation of another reform-oriented congregation. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Isaac Leeser, Mikveh Israel's hazzan led abortive efforts to forge a national congregational movement and establish a rabbinical college. The early Reform leaders, most notably Isaac M. Wise, shared Leeser's hope that there be a unified, cohesive American Judaism. Wise's organizational efforts, later in the century, succeeded where Leeser's had failed. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations was founded in 1873 and the Hebrew Union College in 1875. Wise continued to believe that there should only be one kind of Judaism in America, and that the Hebrew Union College should be the seminary to produce the modern, American trained rabbis capable of leading the American Jewish community. Despite Wise's expressed intentions, both the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College were institutions for the advancement of Reform Judaism. The illusion of unity was shattered early, and the more traditional

supporters went their own way. While Krauskopf spoke, throughout his career, about the inevitability of one American Judaism, he clearly expected it to be Reform.

Mikveh Israel was Philadelphia's premier synagogue, one of the oldest in the United States, and like all of the synagogues from colonial times, staunchly in the traditional mode. Over the years, many of the congregation's leaders played important roles in the developing Philadelphia Jewish community as well as in the larger American Jewish community. It is literally impossible to read Philadelphia or American Jewish history without encountering Mikveh Israel.

In Philadelphia, the orthodox leadership continued strong through the mid and latter part of the nineteenth century. Keneseth Israel became Reform soon after its founding in 1848, but its existence did not challenge Mikveh Israel. During the Civil War, Rabbi David Einhorn was forced to leave Har Sinai in Baltimore and became Keneseth Israel's rabbi. It was indicative of Keneseth Israel's stature, that, after only a few years, he left for a larger and more prestigious congregation in New York City. However, under Samuel Hirsch, Einhorn's successor, Keneseth Israel prospered and grew. By the mid-1880s, however, Hirsch's inability to preach in English was perceived as a problem to overcome, and, at his retirement, the congregation turned to the younger, more dynamic, and American-trained Krauskopf.

Krauskopf had not been involved in creating the power structure of the community with which he had to deal. He did, however, have control over the way he responded to the open and expected hostility. In some respects, his activism enabled him to avoid or ignore some of the hostility. He often pursued projects, for example, the National Farm School, which did not bring him into direct conflict with the organized leadership. In fact, much of Krauskopf's social activism, really the hallmark of his career and the enduring legacy of this period's Reform Judaism, took him into areas that the established Philadelphia Jewish community had not tended to be involved in. Certainly there were exceptions in the orthodox community to this, but as a rule, Krauskopf's and Reform Judaism's greatest success was in broadening the vision of American Judaism to include more active involvement in the issues of the day.

In other respects, however, Krauskopf's activities brought him into direct contact, and often into open conflict, with the established Jewish communal leadership in Philadelphia. While some of the conflicts can be traced to the ideological differences between Reform and orthodox Judaism, some were related, apparently, to Krauskopf's personality. There is little dispute that Krauskopf had an extremely strong ego and deeply resented what he took to be slights and insults.

It is difficult to determine whether personal differences caused the conflicts or were used to justify them. It is clear, however, that Krauskopf did often take differences personally and allowed them to govern his judgement. Thus, regardless of how others responded to or manipulated this trait, Krauskopf, himself, must bear some responsibility for the personal quarrels in which he was often embroiled.

The dispute between orthodox and Reform in Philadelphia was often carried out in the pages of the *Jewish Exponent*, the city's Jewish newspaper, which regularly reported on congregational activities and the content of the rabbis' sermons. The *Exponent*, through the tone of its reporting and the content of its editorials, was opposed to Reform Judaism and sometimes critical of Krauskopf personally. The paper also permitted itself to be the vehicle through which Krauskopf's opponents attacked him. In one case, Rabbi Marcus Jastrow, Henry Berkowitz's predecessor at Rodeph Shalom, and considerably more traditional than either Berkowitz or Krauskopf, published a highly critical rebuttal to one of Krauskopf's Sunday Lectures.[4] In another case, the *Exponent* reported severely negative comments about Krauskopf by Rabbi Sabato Morais, the leading orthodox rabbi in the city.[5] Even though Krauskopf's feelings for Morais were reciprocated,[6] he twice invited Morais, who refused both times, to speak at public occasions at Keneseth Israel.[7]

An even more vivid case of the difficult and usually poor relations between Krauskopf and the orthodox community surrounded the formation and the early years of the Jewish Publication Society.[8] Shortly after arriving in Philadelphia in 1887, Krauskopf lectured on the need for a national publication society to disseminate information about Judaism to both Jews and non-Jews.[9] He used a congregational literary society, "The Knowledge Seekers," as a vehicle to start raising money and broaden support among other local Jews for the project. These activities, which were covered and supported by the *Jewish Exponent*, culminated in a call for a national meeting. The invitation was signed by Krauskopf and Solomon Solis-Cohen, a prominent Philadelphian and member of Mikveh Israel.

The *Exponent* reported[10] that the meeting, on 3 June 1888, was very chaotic. Besides establishing a Jewish Publication Society, the meeting appointed, apparently with some controversy, one committee to write a constitution and another, an executive committee, to oversee the society. Krauskopf was elected secretary of the executive committee. The *Exponent* supported the society but, reflecting the views of the Orthodox participants in the meeting, expressed displeasure at the inclusion of too many Reform Jews in leadership positions. It was a sign of things to come.

Krauskopf participated actively in the work of the Society, raising money and helping with matters relating to publication details, the latter supervised by the publication committee chaired by Judge Mayer Sulzberger, who was, according to a scholar of the Philadelphia Jewish community, the "leading Jewish layman in Philadelphia of his generation" and, a member of Mikveh Israel.[11] Krauskopf and Sulzberger frequently disagreed, and the two had a major falling out on the afternoon of the Society's tenth anniversary dinner. The argument resulted in Krauskopf's resignation from both the publication and executive committees. While the specific subject of the disagreement is not known, it is not difficult to imagine the two men clashing.[12]

The story of turn-of-the-century Reform Judaism is generally related through the lives of Isaac Mayer Wise, David Einhorn, Kaufmann Kohler, and Emil Hirsch all known for significant achievement and remembered for lasting contributions.[13] All of the early students at Hebrew Union College were heavily influenced particularly by Isaac Mayer Wise, the school's founder and the Reform movement's guiding force. What we today call Classical Reform Judaism evolved out of the careers and thinking of these earliest Reform rabbis. Many of them, Krauskopf included, referred to their type of Reform Judaism as Radical Reform.[14] In many ways it was similar to Reform's more moderate center which emphasized the universal over the particular, stressing proper ethical living over ritual and ceremony. Indeed, all ceremony was suspect as a holdover from the superstitious premodern period.[15] Rationalism was the test to determine what was acceptable in an evolving, modern Judaism and what was not. Reformers opposed what they referred to as rabbinism, the layers and layers of traditional customs that obscured prophetic ideals regarding social progress and messianic visions. The radical branch, however, went beyond removing yarmulkes, abolishing the dietary laws, and abrogating the binding nature of Halacha. In some synagogues, bar mitzvah was abolished entirely, all but one or two lines of Hebrew were removed from the service, the Sabbath was observed on Sundays, and the Torah was even left unread in the Ark.[16]

Ideologically, the movement was relatively cohesive. The purpose of Reform Judaism was to bring about the messianic kingdom by emphasizing the prophetic ideals of justice and brotherhood. One did this by addressing society's problems, especially the city's problems, which was where most of the Jews in the United States lived. America's political and cultural institutions were uniquely qualified for achieving this goal, and Reform Judaism uniquely qualified for

being the vehicle through which the transformation might occur. Some rabbis, including Krauskopf, thought that the Messianic time was close at hand.

Typically, this late nineteenth-century Reform Judaism is described primarily as having evolved from the German Enlightenment, and, indeed, written testimony of its antecedents lies in the accounts of rabbinical conferences and descriptions of congregational changes which occurred in Europe. The early Reform rabbis spoke German and were imbued with a love of German culture. There can really be no question that early (i.e., mid-century) Reform in the United States (with the possible exception of the experience of Beth Elohim in Charleston, South Carolina[17]) was dependent upon and an extension of German Reform. As late as the beginning of World War I, one can still find expressions of cultural affinity with Germany which led some Reform rabbis to express, along with other non-Jews of German background, hopes for American neutrality in the War.

It is possible to place Krauskopf and his better known colleagues in this evolutionary movement, which originated in Germany, prospered in the United States far more than in its country of origin, but continued to look back over the ocean for example, inspiration, and leadership. From this perspective, the Americanization of Reform was an internal movement within Judaism and occurred primarily after the War when more and more of the Eastern European immigrants found their way into the Reform movement changing its content and tone and making possible the kinds of differences with the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 which were expressed in the Columbus Platform of 1937.

This analysis, however, does not tell the entire story for it misses a crucial element in Reform Judaism of which Krauskopf is an excellent example. By the time Krauskopf became rabbi at Keneseth Israel, there had already been among German American Jews and their first generation American children a lessening of that sense of affinity with German life and culture.[18] In fact, one of the reasons why the leaders of Keneseth Israel chose Krauskopf, who was himself German born and knew German, was because Krauskopf could preach in English, something which his predecessor, Samuel Hirsch, could not comfortably do. Krauskopf was attractive because he was educated and ordained in the United States and could more easily appeal to the generation of Jews whose ties to Germany were receding. Thus, Krauskopf stood in sharp contrast not only with Hirsch but with Hirsch's predecessor, the brilliant David Einhorn, whose ideological influence on Reform Judaism persisted throughout Krauskopf's lifetime but whose cultural orientation was decidedly German.[19]

Not only was Krauskopf's cultural orientation less German, it was decidedly more American. If one wants to appreciate Krauskopf's place in American Judaism, one must also place his perspective of Reform Judaism in the American context which influenced and helped shape it.[20] American society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was undergoing accelerated urbanization, industrialization, and modernization. The changes which these terms refer to both produced and reflected the existence of concentrated masses of people in and around America's cities. Because the vast number of American Jews were urban, they naturally would tend to be aware of those problems in their own communities and neighborhoods. Some of the urban problems created by urbanization, industrialization, and modernization were a shortage of adequate housing, crowded living conditions, poor sanitation conditions, unfair labor practices, unsafe, crowded factory conditions, crowded classrooms, overtaxed social service agencies, social unrest and tension, feelings of impersonality, soaring population via massive immigration from Eastern Europe, and additional population pressures created by domestic migration from rural areas into the cities.

The Progressive Movement was the political reform movement which arose to address and solve these problems. Some reforms were aimed at improving the truly dreadful conditions in parts of America's cities and the lives of those most negatively affected by the cities' problems. Other reforms were designed to control the masses of people and mold them into an image of the proper American. Perhaps the unifying factor of the disparate elements under the Progressive banner was the notion that coordinated government planning, based upon the latest trends in social theory and practice, could use and control economic, political, and social institutions to improve and change the lives of citizens. The Progressive Movement tended to be optimistic in tone. With poverty widespread and corruption rampant, the Progressive Movement offered hope not only to the downtrodden but also to the civic minded who looked for ways to make government work more effectively on behalf of society. Krauskopf's career roughly coincided with the years of the Progressive Movement.

In Christianity, the religious expression of the ideas which formed the basis of the Progressive Movement is known as the Social Gospel.[21] It was primarily a Protestant phenomenon and its vision of a better society was derived from the social teachings of Jesus and Gospel writers. The Social Gospel was a "crusade for justice and righteousness" rather than a concern for personal faith, sin, and salvation. Both the Progressive and Social Gospel Movements reflected a sense that America was basically good but needed to be cleaned up.[22]

Krauskopf and other Reform rabbis of his time considered these same issues and reflected similar goals but within the context of Jewish life, language, and symbols. While they did engage in substantial internal, i.e., ritual and ideological, change, their uniqueness lay elsewhere. They were the first rabbis to immerse themselves and their congregants in American life and issues rather than remain on the periphery looking towards Europe for inspiration and religious ballast. Without entirely obliterating his own and his congregants' German heritage, Krauskopf believed, with a Progressive's characteristic optimism, that America was the Promised Land and Europe a symbol of a decayed past. Never was there a place like America, and Judaism was perfectly attuned to its ideals. Krauskopf and his Reform Jewish colleagues based their arguments on the social teachings of the ancient Hebrew prophets. But in their subject matter and their tone they were very similar to the ministers of the Social Gospel movement. While not himself claiming the mantle of the Social Gospel, much of Krauskopf's work reflects, within a totally Jewish orientation, the concerns of that movement.[23] Krauskopf and his colleagues were not so much imitating their Christian counterparts as they were responding within Judaism to the same forces that ministers were responding to within Protestant Christianity.

Within their respective traditions, both the Christian and Jewish activists claimed authenticity. That is to say, the ministers claimed to be the authentic interpreters of Jesus' true teachings, and the Reform rabbis claimed that their interpretation was the authentic, true Judaism. They tended not to perceive themselves as advocates of a "branch" or type of religion. Theirs was THE correct tradition and the one to which all of their co-religionists would eventually subscribe.[24] The Reform notion that traditional Judaism obscured the pure Judaism of the ancient prophets paralleled the Social Gospel view that the church had obscured Jesus' true teachings which were simple truths about the betterment of society. Krauskopf and other Reform rabbis even picked up on this theme that Jesus needed to be removed from the shackles of a superstitious church. Krauskopf taught that Jesus was a humanitarian, loving, ethical, servant of humanity who advocated the same prophetic hopes for society as did the ancient Hebrew prophets. He believed earnestly, like the Social Gospelers, that the church had obscured the essential teachings of the Jewish Jesus. If one would remove the claims of divinity from Jesus and focus solely on his ethical teachings, one would be left, according to Krauskopf, with a prophet similar to the biblical prophets. He traced Christian intolerance of the Jews to the church's failure to understand the true Jesus.[25] In the works of the Social Gospelers, one

finds similar references to the human, loving, ethical, and socially aware side of Jesus (including also claims of his divinity) as well as a focus on the church as a problem in Christianity.[26] Both Krauskopf and the Social Gospel reflected back-to-the-Bible movements in which subsequent traditions were stripped away so that one might rediscover the truth.

Krauskopf, then, is an excellent example of this fascinating, but neglected intersection in which the Progressive Movement, the Social Gospel, and Reform Judaism touch. By the end of World War I, with the decline of the Progressive Movement, the weakening of the Social Gospel, and the changes in Reform Judaism brought about by the Eastern European migration, this intersection largely disappeared.[27]

Krauskopf and his more extreme colleagues were about as far removed from "tradition" as Reform Judaism ever became. They articulated a program of social values and community involvement that replaced ritual and captured the acculturated and acculturating German Jews of the 1880s and 1890s.[28] Krauskopf's ability to appeal to this population was what brought him to Keneseth Israel in Philadelphia.

Ironically, the Eastern European Jews sealed the temporary victory of the Reform radicals over the Reform moderates. Those immigrants who were religious tended to be more traditional and gravitated toward orthodoxy or the new Conservative movement. Those who were secular were often socialist and antiestablishment. In either event, they clashed with the Reform-minded German Jews.[29]

Thus, religiously and culturally, the immigrants set the Germans apart and helped them define Reform as the religion of the American Jewish establishment. They also sowed the seeds for the demise of the radicals because some of the more traditionally minded immigrants themselves, and later more of their children, gradually made their way into Reform congregations precipitating major practical and ideological clashes in Reform synagogues which sought, on the one hand, to maintain their distinctiveness, but, on the other, to grow by accommodating the new members.

It is not difficult to see this Americanized Reform Judaism operating in Krauskopf's career. An overview of his activities and lectures reveals a primarily social agenda, not unlike his Christian counterparts in the Social Gospel movement. This agenda reflected what had become the unique Reform Jewish perspective which is also its most lasting legacy. Krauskopf believed

> that Jewish survival was intimately related to the stability of the society in which Jews lived. . . . A healthy society in which the fundamental worth of the individual was respected was protection against the discrimination, persecution, and stagnation which plagued the Jews throughout history. Requisite to a meaningful Jewish identity . . . was a willingness to contribute to the growth of such a society and to the preservation of institutions and principles already working towards that end. A stable and prosperous society was thus a means to an end. It was the utopian existence for which Judaism yearned, the goal at which energies had been directed for centuries; it was also the environment in which Jews were guaranteed security and survival. . . . The Jewish community had to be cognizant of issues in the secular society which affected not only Jewish security specifically but also the well being of society generally. It was his duty, Krauskopf believed, to keep [his congregants] so informed.[30]

Krauskopf used his Sunday lectures to dwell at length on particulars. He spoke about war and peace especially during the Spanish-American War and World War I. He supported improved public education, a fairly rigid separation between church and state, and opportunities for racial equality. He opposed Prohibition and capital punishment.

Most often, however, Krauskopf spoke about the economic and social problems of urban life. Krauskopf reflected the same ambivalence found in both the Progressive Movement and the Social Gospel[31] toward the city. On the one hand, he perceived the city as a place of positive possibility and as a place to be fixed. On the other hand, he saw the city as dangerous and wicked, a threat to "traditional" values. So while he advocated ameliorating urban conditions, he also believed that the ultimate solution lay not in creating new urban structures for the poor but in returning them to nonurban settings, namely farms, where they could be infused with traditional values.

Almost immediately after his move to Philadelphia, Krauskopf voiced concern over the deplorable living conditions of the Jewish immigrants in the Philadelphia slums. He criticized the insufficient amount of public money going into housing and observed that most city governments operated with a Social Darwinist philosophy: the strongest, fittest people would survive the poor conditions and interfering too much with these conditions would upset the natural forces at work in society and prevent nature from weeding out the undesirable. Krauskopf believed that many, though not all, problems of the poor were traceable to a lack of low cost, decent housing, rather than to character defects. He suggested using a model previously tried with some success in Europe and New York: housing built by private

enterprise. In 1893, he was instrumental in forming an interfaith Model Dwelling Association whose goals were to raise funds for and build a model tenement. His hope was to show that there was private money available for such a project and that it could be profitable. The project, however, failed for several reasons. One of the active Christians was exposed as a fraud during the early stages of the fund-raising drive. It was also hard to overcome the local Christian press which criticized the social activism of the participants. Further there is some evidence that the coalition collapsed because of anti-Semitism: some ministers would not work with Jews. Finally, the Panic of 1893 made it next to impossible to raise the necessary funds.[32]

Krauskopf addressed the enormous influx of Jewish immigrants to American cities in another way by focusing on the surplus of labor which it created. He decided to appeal to Russian authorities to improve conditions for the Jews in Russia and thus cut off the large-scale immigration at its source. He traveled to Russia with a leading Protestant minister from Philadelphia and the American Ambassador to Russia. Krauskopf's plan involved recolonizing Jews in agricultural centers in the Russian interior. He was armed with letters of introduction to Russian officials who either listened and ignored him or just ignored him altogether. The pivotal event of the trip, however, was not the rejection by Tsarist officials, but an audience with Leo Tolstoy who convinced Krauskopf that Jews had no future in Russia. Krauskopf returned home with a renewed suspicion of the Russian government and a new plan for the immigrant Jews. It was to throw open America's gates to them, train them to be farmers, and resettle them on farms in the Midwest and West. To many, including Krauskopf, the Jewish back-to-the-soil movement was a noble experiment for solving the overcrowded conditions in the urban slums and two problems often associated with them: insufficient job opportunities and moral laxity.

Many people believed that living in the slums caused immorality. Others believed that immorality caused the poor conditions. In either event, a popular solution was to change the environment of the slum dwellers. Many believed in the salutary effects of the countryside, and the uplifting effects of agriculture in particular. Krauskopf often referred to the ancient Hebrews' agricultural life as proof that farming was a natural Jewish occupation.

Krauskopf turned to the plans with an extraordinary energy and created the National Farm School in Doylestown, Pennsylvania to achieve his objective. After Keneseth Israel, the National Farm School was Krauskopf's greatest love. He toured the country raising

money and spent countless hours on the administrative details of the school, its farms, its student body, and its physical development. While the school is still in existence (as the Delaware Valley College), the back-to-the-soil movement never met with the success its supporters hoped for. In this regard, Krauskopf's plan was no more or less a failure than others' schemes. The fact is few Jews became farmers. Even when they could be convinced, coerced, or deceived into venturing into America's interior, they tended to settle in cities. The practical effort of trying to get Jews either to leave the cities of the East or not come to them in the first place just did not work. Nor did Jews find the agricultural ideal appealing or even convincing. The movement, in the terms that it set out for itself, was a failure.[33]

Complementing his devotion to the Farm School, Krauskopf remained deeply concerned with the city's economic welfare and how the influx of immigrants affected it. Krauskopf approached economic issues that affected problems in the cities from several perspectives. One was to express support for capitalism as a system; another was to freely criticize its excesses, particularly the pursuit of greed. One would suspect that more of Keneseth Israel's members were in management rather than labor. Krauskopf's position, then, was to support the system that provided the livelihood for his members but to make them aware that the excesses of that same system can have terrible consequences for workers and them. Krauskopf also wanted to engage his members in projects aimed at alleviating those problems.[34]

In his weekly lectures over the years, Krauskopf frequently voiced concern about slum housing in the ghettos, advocated more and regularly scheduled leisure time for workers and their families, and urged improved working conditions in factories especially through the elimination of sweatshops. Krauskopf also supported the establishment of a secretary of labor in the cabinet, one of the important steps which would signal the national government's acceptance of responsibility for the problems of workers.

Other urban reforms that Krauskopf advocated were compulsory education to improve work skills and to keep children off the streets; a change in prison policies to effect meaningful rehabilitation of prisoners; and creation of public works projects, rather than increased charity, to reduce unemployment and poverty. Krauskopf also supported a basket of public health improvements, viz., instruction in personal hygiene and improved food inspection, street maintenance, and more public health officials.

Krauskopf believed that reforms in public policy could address

and correct many of the social problems caused by poverty and the conditions of slum life. He also believed that some problems were caused by character traits like greed, on the part of some industrial leaders, and laziness, on the part of some workers, which only the individuals themselves could address and improve. Krauskopf suggested that individual-to-individual contact could improve the characters of many of the poor. He organized a Personal Aid Society in his congregation in which members would visit the homes of slum residents to teach them personal hygiene, the importance of education, and practical matters like sewing. He believed that his members would serve as role models.[35]

The idea that the poor would be molded into better citizens by contact with more successful people was a popular notion not confined to Jews. It was not only an attempt at social control of the immigrants but a reflection of the wish by many immigrants to become Americanized. Many of the more established Jews were embarrassed by the immigrants who were so socially, economically, religiously, and politically different from the "up-town" Jews. They reacted negatively, for example, to differences in dress, eating habits, and language, and believed that the contrast reflected poorly on them.

The list of issues which Krauskopf addressed and the perspective he brought to them were consistent with the Progressive agenda and similar to those of other religious reformers both in and, as in the case of the Social Gospelers, out of Judaism. There were other Reform rabbis who urged their congregants to address these issues and to do so in the context of Reform Judaism. Occasionally, they participated in interfaith coalitions with like-minded Christian clergy to address matters of common concern. Time and again, Krauskopf and his colleagues expressed the position that one, and perhaps the most important, of the purposes of Reform Judaism was to address the problems of the day using as guidelines the prophetic imperatives of justice and mercy.

The decline of Progressivism, the Social Gospel movement, and the "classical" period of Reform Judaism occurred together starting in the years just before World War I. The radical branch of Reform Judaism, which had moved farthest away from the more moderate center, began to disappear entirely. One can understand the movement back toward the center as primarily an internal matter, reflecting changes and developments within the American Jewish community, or in a more complicated, but more meaningful context of changes and developments in American life as a whole. The latter offers insights into the growth and evolution of Judaism in the United States

which are all too often overlooked but which provide for a richer, fuller understanding of Jewish life in America.

Notes

1. Joseph Krauskopf, *Sunday Lectures*, I:10, 19 February 1888 and IX:7, 24 November 1895. As soon as Krauskopf came to Keneseth Israel, he instituted Sunday services that consisted of a short worship service and a memorized forty-five minute lecture. The lectures were printed and distributed the following Sunday and later collected in annual volumes. Sunday services, all with a similar format, were quite common among Reform synagogues of the day and in most places, including Keneseth Israel, enormously successful.

2. The extensive correspondence surrounding both positions are part of the Krauskopf Collection in the Urban Archives at Temple University Library in Philadelphia.

3. By the turn of the century, Krauskopf would claim in a letter to Rev. Clinton Baltell Adams, 3 December 1903, *Krauskopf Collection*, that Keneseth Israel was the largest synagogue in the United States.

4. The article appeared in the *Exponent* on p. 9, 6 January 1888.

5. See, for example, the *Exponent*'s coverage, on 11 October 1889, of Morais's Kol Nidre attack on Krauskopf and Reform Judaism.

6. See Krauskopf's letter to David Philipson on 24 October 1890, *Krauskopf Collection*, in which he calls Morais a failure.

7. Both of Morais's refusals, one undated, the other from 16 October 1892, are in the *Krauskopf Collection*.

8. For a fuller discussion of Krauskopf and the early years of the Jewish Publication Society, see my *Joseph Krauskopf, 1887–1903* (Cincinnati, unpublished rabbinic dissertation, 1975) chapter IV and Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888–1988* (Philadelphia, 1989).

9. Joseph Krauskopf, *Sunday Lectures*, I:1, 11 December 1887.

10. *Jewish Exponent*, 8 June 1888.

11. Maxwell Whiteman, "'The Philadelphia Group,'" in Murray Friedman, ed. *Jewish Life in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1983), p. 167.

12. Beifield, *Joseph Krauskopf*, pp. 37–38. Krauskopf carried on personal feuds with several people. One with Jacob Schiff, over Krauskopf's unauthorized use of Schiff's name in trying to raise money for the National Farm School, deprived Krauskopf of Schiff's support for the school.

13. The best, most recent, and most thorough history of Reform Judaism is Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity* (New York, 1988).

14. When used to modify Reform Judaism, the terms "classical" and "radical" are somewhat ambiguous. Einhorn referred to himself as "radical" to distinguish himself from Wise, who referred to himself and was referred to by others, as "moderate." Krauskopf, also referred to himself as "radical" though his radicalism, as this entire paper suggests, was, while not altogether unrelated to Einhorn's, significantly different from it. Krauskopf's use of the term was not meant to distinguish himself from Wise at all. The term "classical" is a later term used to describe the entire Reform movement of the late nineteenth century. Many of its characteristics, practical, and ideological, are still found in Reform synagogues today, although the term itself is generally now used as an opprobrium.

15. Krauskopf often referred to Orthodoxy as superstitious. See, for example, Beifield, *Joseph Krauskopf,* pp. 163–64.

16. There is considerable speculation about whether certain rabbis read the Torah. Malcolm Stern in "National Leaders of Their Time: Philadelphia's Reform Rabbis," in Murray Friedman ed., *Jewish Life in Philadelphia 1830–1940* (Philadelphia, 1983), asserts that Krauskopf eliminated the reading of the Torah. This is not entirely certain. Interestingly, Krauskopf accused Emil Hirsch of removing the Torah from the Ark at Temple Sinai in Chicago.

17. In *Response to Modernity,* p. 235, Meyer finds German elements in the Charleston experience.

18. Meyer, *Response to Modernity,* p. 253.

19. Meyer, *Response to Modernity,* p. 248, attributes Einhorn's ideological orientation to his German background and Wise's practical orientation to American influences.

20. See *Response to Modernity,* pp. 226–27, for several particularly American factors which Meyer recognizes as contributing, generally, to Reform's success in the United States.

21. This connection is one of the premises of Ronald C. White, Jr. and C. Howard Hopkins, eds., *The Social Gospel* (Philadelphia, 1976).

22. Hopkins, *The Social Gospel,* pp. xviii–xix.

23. In *Response to Modernity,* p. 287, Meyer briefly suggests a parallel between the Social Gospel in Protestant Christianity and Reform Judaism.

24. Meyer, *Response to Modernity,* p. 295.

25. Beifield, *Joseph Krauskopf,* pp. 124, 126, and 127.

26. White and Hopkins, *The Social Gospel,* pp. 254–58.

27. The connection between the simultaneous decline of the Progressive and Social Gospel movements is made in *The Social Gospel,* p. 243. I also trace a parallel decline in Krauskopf's wing of Reform Judaism in *Joseph Krauskopf,* chapter XVIII.

28. Meyer, *Response to Modernity,* pp. 264 and 287.

29. For another, though related, view why the Eastern European Jews were not attracted to Reform Judaism, see Murray Friedman's essay, "Introduction: The Making of a National Jewish Community," in Murray Friedman ed., *Jewish Life in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1983).

30. Beifield, *Joseph Krauskopf,* pp. 134–35.

31. Hopkins, *The Social Gospel,* pp. xv–xvi and 51.

32. For a fuller discussion of the Model Dwelling Association, see Beifield, *Joseph Krauskopf,* chapter V.

33. For a fuller discussion of the National Farm School, see Beifield, *Joseph Krauskopf,* chapter VI. For another perspective on the success or failure of the endeavor, see Maxwell Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," in Friedman, *Jewish Life in Philadelphia,* p. 177.

34. In *The Social Gospel,* p. 101, Hopkins and White make the point that the Social Gospel movement was also concerned primarily with the "city and the factory" (p. 101).

35. For a fuller discussion of Krauskopf's views on these subjects, see Beifield, *Joseph Krauskopf,* pp. 137–45.

11

Jewish Leadership Then and Now

MURRAY FRIEDMAN AND DANIEL J. ELAZAR

Edwin Wolf II (1911–1991) was the last of the Philadelphia Group. Of German Jewish background and a member of Rodeph Sholem, he was the son of Morris Wolf, who along with Horace Stern, later a chief justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, had created the leading "Jewish" law firm in the city: Wolf, Block, Shorr, and Solis-Cohen. The two men continued the familial role of Jewish leadership in this city and nationally pioneered by Isaac Leeser, Mayer Sulzberger, and the other members of the Philadelphia Group.[1]

Edwin followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. He served as president of the Jewish Publication Society and the Federation of Jewish agencies which his grandfather had helped to establish. A rare book expert and respected writer of many books, he was author with Maxwell Whiteman of *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia* in 1956. In the tradition of service beyond the Jewish community, in 1952 he became librarian in this city of the prestigous Library Company of Philadelphia founded by Benjamin Franklin.[2]

In an essay written in 1964, Wolf described turn-of-the-century Philadelphia and New York leaders who had established so many of the institutions on which American Jewish life came to rest. "It is probably true that retrospection magnifies stature, and that no generation sees its great men in the same perspective as it sees its heroes of the past," he wrote. "Yet it would seem," he went on, "that the leaders of yesterday were bigger, bolder, more individualist and more imaginative than their successors today." It was easier, he went on, "to be a big frog in a little pond in those days. Nevertheless, there was an acceptance then of the leadership of the individual which does not exist today."[3]

A transitional figure who came to maturity after the Philadelphia Group had passed from the scene, Wolf was looking back nostalgically to an era that he had learned about at the feet of his elders from the



Street scene. Courtesy of the Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center.

vantage point of the extraordinary changes that had occurred in the life of American and world Jewry. In the intervening years, a war had been fought to destroy Nazism which threatened to engulf the world. At its end, Jews and others were horrified to learn in the most graphic terms of the millions of Jews who had been murdered in the Holocaust. The centers of Jewish life in Europe had been wiped out forever. In the wake of the war, the State of Israel was created and would come to absorb the energy and emotions of American Jewry in a way his predecessors would hardy have recognized let alone understood. At his death, thousands of Soviet Jews were pouring into the Jewish state which, along with rising rates of intermarriage and assimilation in this country, caused many to predict that Jews in Israel would outnumber American Jews by the turn of the century.[4]

American Jewish life had been transformed. At the turn of the century, most Jews lived along the Eastern, metropolitan corridor and in the industrial Midwest. By the time of Wolf's death, the shift of Jews from east to west had made the Jewish population of Los Angeles greater than those of Philadelphia and Chicago combined. More Jews live today in the San Francisco area than in greater Washington or Baltimore. Virtually all the barriers and restrictions on Jews that caused the Philadelphians and their New York allies to found and then lead the American Jewish Committee earlier in the century had come down. Indeed, in the year of Wolf's passing, a shock wave went through the organized Jewish community as it learned from a trail-blazing National Jewish Population Survey prepared for the Council of Jewish Federations that the integration of Jews in this country had reached so far as a result of intermarriage and other assimilation trends that the greatest threat to the Jewish community was coming not from without but from within.

The sheer size and diversity of Jewish communal organization as it has evolved since the days of the Philadelphia Jewish Founding Fathers did not lend itself to being manipulated by a tight little and, yes, oligarchic group. As the complexity of Jewish life increased, the handful of Jewish lay leaders that led it initially had given way to corporate, organizational structures presided over by a vast Jewish "civil service."

Viewing these changes, Wolf had no difficulty in explaining the reasons. "[The] . . . masses no longer needed leaders with new ideas," he wrote in 1964. "All they wanted were mechanisms through which they could give expression to their feelings and into which they could pour their dollars." The force of circumstances—"Hitler, Israel, wealth, a sense of guilt and the creative possibilities of Jewishness

without prejudice—molded the masses into a dynamic movement, a movement whose own momentum carried it forward," he concluded.[5]

The initial movement away from the dominance of a relatively small, highly integrated, traditional intellectual and business elite that provided governance of the relatively small Jewish community in the first decade of the century occurred with the rise of a more anarchic system of Jewish "defense agencies"—the Anti-Defamation League and the American Jewish Congress joining the American Jewish Committee as a sort of "big three." Simultaneously, the focus of the action shifted inevitably from Philadelphia as New York, which at its peak included nearly half of all American Jews, rapidly became the undisputed address of American Jewry. The dominance of defense (later called community relations) agencies was in turn challenged following World War II and in subsequent years by the federation movement, a more institutionalized and structured system of leadership of American Jewry.

After World War II, the lay leadership was challenged by a new class of Jewish professionals who emerged to replace the older *shtadlanim*. They differed sharply from them. The latter were men of means and standing in the broader community. By contrast, the newcomers were born in Eastern Europe or children of that immigrant stream. They were often professional social workers and (in the case of the Jewish defense agency) leaders, what would be called today "public interest attorneys." Whereas the earlier leaders were usually conservatives and Republicans, many of the new men (and there were few women) came from Socialist-Labor backgrounds. Having grown up poor and on the left, they gave to Jewish organizational life, or at least reflected, a liberal-left character that has continued, albeit in a somewhat paler form to the present.[6]

Despite the more populist and ideological background of these professionals, there were no barriers to the growing bureaucratization of Jewish life. As the more numerous Eastern European Jews and their children sought to gain an economic foothold and then move up, they did not possess—at least in the first phase of their rise—the leisure and confidence of their more cultivated German Jewish predecessors to seek voluntary leadership roles in Jewish communal life. Nor were the rabbis, historically among the authoratative leaders of the Jewish community in Europe, able to exert the authority they once did. Even at the turn of the century, as Jonathan Sarna has pointed out here, they were already being eclipsed to some degree by members of the talented and knowledgable Philadelphia group and other lay leaders. Men like Stephen S. Wise and Abba Hillel Silver would continue to remain central figures in the interwar and early post-World War II

years but an increasingly highly educated (not necessarily Jewishly) Jewish professional leadership tended to confine them mainly to congregational and more localized roles.[7]

The new class of Jewish professionals dominated Jewish communal life almost unchallenged for a generation until the 1980s. Then a new group of voluntary leaders, having attained sufficient wealth and leisure to devote themselves more fully to Jewish activities on a voluntary basis, and having achieved an educational status very similar to that of the professionals, reasserted themselves in many organizations, leading to a period of conflict between volunteers and professionals that is presently at its height.

The postwar period of Jewish organizational life and leadership was characterized by membership development and fund raising. Local federations and their central body, the Council of Jewish Federations took over the role of obtaining, planning, and allocating money. Philanthropy was now expanded through a vast network of health, welfare, and community relations agencies, Israel assistance groups, educational institutions, and other agencies.[8] "The leader," Wolf wrote in 1964, "gave way to the executive committee; committee action and community action supplanted the initiative of an individual."[9]

As the cost of running this network of causes and services grew during a period of inflationary pressures, we have witnessed the rise of the "big giver." It was of no small importance that these donors came forward to assume these burdens. What had happened in the process, however, was that the federations had replaced the "cousinship" that had set out earlier to provide direction for Jewish life. The most symbolic expression of Jewish communal life today is the annual meeting of the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations where between four and five thousand lay and professional leaders from around the country gather to discuss the business of the Jewish community.

Amid the clear advantages the new system of leadership created, something was inevitably lost. In the welter and competitiveness of Jewish life that has evolved, as Edwin Wolf pointed out in his prescient essay, the role of the individual was diminished despite "the generosity, dedication and idealism of the hundreds and indeed thousands" who came to serve "selflessly at all levels of organizational structures in Jewish life."

When Sulzberger, Morais, and Adler sat down with Schiff, Marshall, and the others to create and reorganize the institutional structure of Jewish life, each group knew their place, so to speak. While the New Yorkers were by no means bereft of ideas, they usually

looked to the Philadelphians for special guidance. The Philadelphia Group and their New York allies had managed to forge a more disinterested form of leadership than exists today. They were each prepared to submerge their owns values and ego needs for the sake of a larger Jewish good.

Such was the case, for example, in the founding and development of the Jewish Theological Seminary. The Philadelphians were Orthodox Jews (of the Sephardic rite) while the New Yorkers were Reform Jews. But together they created what would become a new movement—conservative Judaism. True, they did not set out to do so in that sense, expecting only to bolster traditional Judaism in a modern setting. They understood, however, that most of the Jewish immigrants pouring into the country could not relate to the existing forms of Jewish religious life. In deference to the Philadelphians, the New Yorkers were willing initially to place the Seminary in Philadelphia. But Morais who became the first head of the JTS and the others understood that New York was rapidly becoming the heartland of American Jewry and recognizing the failure of earlier efforts, it made more sense to locate the Seminary there.[10]

Nor does it seem likely, given the current state of tension between right-wing religious orthodoxy and more mainstream Jewish religious bodies, that the present Jewish communal structure would be as willing to meld a figure like the patriarch of Jewish orthodoxy, Rabbi Bernard Levinthal into its formal leadership, or, for that matter, some present-day counterpart becoming an officer or member of its Board of Directors. Rabbi Levinthal, as Philip Rosen shows in his essay here, was very much a part of the Philadelphia Group and took part in the activities of the American Jewish Committee in New York at its highest levels. To be sure, Levinthal was acceptable precisely because of the moderate nature of his Orthodoxy.

Of course, it was a smaller and somewhat more homogeneous Jewish community that the Philadelphia Group was dealing with in the first decades of the century. Still, viewed from our own day, one can feel a certain degree of nostalgia for the mild system of oligarchy that ruled Jewish life at the turn and in the first decades of the century.

There is no mistaking Edwin Wolf's patrician disdain as he reviewed the changes that had taken place in his lifetime. Wolf described them in his essay from the perspective of a member of the aristocratic class out of which he had come but which had now been displaced and all but disappeared. Given the changing needs of and heavy costs of managing the emerging Jewish community, however, it is hard to see how it could have been otherwise. There has been little study of this but an abundance of anecdotal information indicates

that the German Jews have virtually disappeared as a leadership force in American Jewish life. One reason for this is that they have intermarried so heavily. Where they remain Jews, few and certainly even fewer of their children have continued to be involved in Jewish communal life. Following the death of a cousin, Edwin Wolf's half-brother, Robert, who is nearing eighty, told one of the authors sadly, "I have no family left."

But even the federations, powerful as they have become, have found it difficult to keep up with the growing and newer needs of the Jewish community and the changes in—some would call it the organizational chaos of—American Jewish life. Federated giving, a product of the Progressive era effort to gain greater efficiency through better organization, has lost some of its attractiveness in an age of radical individualism. More and more individual contributors in the 1980s wanted to be involved in "hands on" giving, that is to say, to support programs and projects of their own choosing and even involvement. The crises that have plagued Israel and reduced its luster in the eyes of the world—including diaspora Jews—further weakened the federations.[11] Single issue and "do it yourself" agencies like the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a no-holds-barred fighter against anti-Semitism, the American Israel Political Action Committee (AIPAC), a grass roots organization lobbying aggressively in Washington on behalf of Israel and the Coalition for Advancement of Jewish Education (CAJE), are among the important new groups that have assumed leadership roles at this time.

There seems to be an internal gyroscope, nevertheless, within the Jewish community that imposes a degree of order amid the seeming chaos. The multiplication of organizations and need for greater unity in dealing with Jewish problems has, in fact, resulted in the creation of coordinating bodies like the National Jewish Community Relations Council earlier and more recently the Conference of Presidents of Major Organizations. Daniel J. Elazar has called these "framing institutions" and the newer bodies a "functional specialization" alongside the endemic institutional rivalries and overlapping.[12] (Viewing this trend, however, as organizational jockeying, Milton Himmelfarb has suggested tongue-in-cheek presumably that the next stage would be the formation of a body of vice presidents of minor Jewish organizations!) At present, an effort is underway to work out a modus vivendi between the federation movement, which has recently gotten a new lease on life in Operation Exodus, the effort to bring large numbers of Soviet Jews to Israel, and the new, more personalized "hands on" structures that have arisen.

The fact remains that the American Jewish Committee, the lead

group formed by the Philadelphia Group and its New York allies to deal with a variety of Jewish needs at the turn of the century (of which "defense" was the most important) that had served as the unofficial "State Department" of the American Jewish community, was now but one, albeit a leading one, of a number of groups that seek to undertake actions on behalf of the overseas needs of the Jewish community. Indeed by the early 1990s, the committee, along with the conservative religious movement created by the Philadelphia–New York axis, were cited by Professor Jacob Neusner in a widely noted Op-Ed article as being in organizational decline in contrast to some of the newer organizations that had come into existence. Neusner exaggerated these weaknesses and the adaptability of these groups, but there was no denying the significant changes taking place in Jewish leadership.[13]

Newer Jewish needs have also brought forward different ways of interceding with political authority than the earlier leadership although this hardly guaranteed success in pleading Jewish causes. Here the Jewish community was only emulating a number of "single-issue" groups that have come to the fore recently. Since the costs of running in and winning elections have skyrocketed, financial support gave Jewish leaders greater access to politicos. By 1985, the *Wall Street Journal* reported, some seventy pro-Israel Jewish Political Action Committees (PACs) were helping to fund election campaigns of candidates in both political parties.[14]

Where once Mayer Sulzberger, Louis Marshall, and Cyrus Adler stood at the pinnacle of Jewish leadership and authority and interceded in Washington and elsewhere with moral arguments on behalf of persecuted Jews, perhaps the most influential figure in recent years has been Max M. Fisher, the Detroit industrialist active in the Republican party. In part his influence, along with that of the National Jewish Coalition, another new group made up of Jewish Republicans, resulted from their ability to tap resources in the Jewish community on behalf of the GOP.

In all fairness and unlike interwar leaders like Judge Joseph Proskauer of the American Jewish Committee (who once declared he bore his Jewishness as a torment), this new class of Jewish leaders are far more comfortable in their Jewish roles. It is a mark of their greater surefootedness as Jews that they have not hesitated to challenge Republican presidents in the sale of advanced air warning systems (AWACS) to Saudia Arabia, a presidential visit to lay a wreath at a military cemetery in Bitburg in West Germany containing the graves of Waffen SS troops, and more recently on loan guarantees to Israel for resettlement of Soviet emigres in Israel.[15]

The Philadelphia Group, it has been suggested, excelled in their scholarly and intellectual contributions to American Jewish life. After years of decline and indifference, there are indications recently of a more vigorous Jewish intellectual life emerging. Jewish studies programs have mushroomed on nonsectarian college campuses since the end of World War II. The results of this perhaps are just beginning to be felt. A number of "cosmopolitan" bodies also like the federations, the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress have begun to involve Jewish scholars more directly in their work.[16] Few would argue, however, that this new Jewish professoriate is as influential as the Philadelphia Group once were.

Jewish intellectuals who have provided a degree of leadership in recent years are higher profile figures like Norman Podhoretz, Irving Kristol, Nathan Glazer, Milton Himmelfarb, Martin Peretz, among others. Podhoretz, particularly, as Steven J. Rubin has recently noted, "was one of the first of his generation to understand that the Jewish intellectual could achieve secular success without losing his connection to the Jewish past."[17]

But while the latter feel deeply and have written extensively about aspects of Jewish life, especially the safety and security of Israel, their energies have been devoted mainly to broader public policy issues. Many are neoconservatives, although several like Leonard Fine, Harold Schulweis, and Irving Greenberg, are moderates or close to the political left. They are hardly Jewish leaders in the sense that Isaac Leeser and Isaac Mayer Wise were in the nineteenth century or Sulzberger, Adler, and Morais were in the twentieth. Moreover, with perhaps Greenberg excepted, they play no direct role in Jewish organizational life.[18]

What are some of the more recent developments to round out our picture of Jewish leadership? Ironically, many of the functions that earlier leadership developed are now carried on by other, frequently non-Jewish, bodies. In recent years, for example, state and national governments have assumed important roles in Jewish affairs. The creation of the State of Israel and assuring its safety, security, and well-being has depended on the backing of the U.S. government. A considerable amount, if not the main energy of Jewish leadership, has gone into seeking essential economic, diplomatic, and military support from Washington for the embattled Jewish state.

True enough, Philadelphians like Mayer Sulzberger and Cyrus Adler along with Louis Marshall lobbied successfully in getting the U.S. government to abrogate the Russo-U.S. trade agreement in 1911. But that was more or less a one-shot affair. Regular intervention on behalf of threatened Jews abroad did not assume the place it did in American

Jewish life until the second half of this century. (See the discussion of the 1911 affair in the Introduction on pp. 15–16.)

Government has also become a major vehicle for the delivery of Jewish social services. Jewish hospitals, nursing homes, and vocational services increasingly look to the state houses and Washington for financial support to carry out their day-to-day functions. And while the Jewish Publication Society pioneered in what Jonathan Sarna has called here the making of an American Jewish culture, today commercial publishing houses and university presses, recognizing that Jews constitute an important part of the reading public and non-Jews are interested, publish by far the greatest number of books on Jewish life and thought.

The broader integration of Jews in American life has had other unexpected effects on the role of Jewish leadership. Opportunities have opened up for Jews to serve in policy making roles on nonsectarian boards of museums, orchestras, and other institutions once closed to them. Were they alive today, Louis Marshall might have ended up on the Supreme Court, and Jacob Schiff would have become a patron of the Philharmonic. This is all to the good, of course but, by the nineties broader status conferring institutions were to some degree in competition with Jewish organizations for the energies and funds of Jewish leaders. The latter often have to make a choice between going on a college board of trustees or endowing a university chair and engaging in what are sometimes seen as more "parochial," Jewish activities. The decision is not always in favor of the latter. Still, as threats to Israel's safety and security continue and new pressures emerge such as resettling large numbers of Soviet Jews in Israel, Jewish philanthropy has managed, so far, to be generous to Jewish as well as broader public causes.

The establishment of the Jewish state has profoundly affected and, in some respects, eclipsed, American Jewish leadership. From the debate earlier on whether there should be a Jewish state and what its relationship to Jews in this country should be, Israel has become an all consuming presence in American Jewish life. To a large degree its problems of defense, its economy and role in absorbing newcomers have determined the agenda of American Jewish leadership.

It would not have turned out that way were it up to the older Jewish elite according to Menahem Kaufman in *The American Jewish Committee and Jewish Statehood, 1947–1948*. Despite its unwillingness to be identified with a Jewish state prior to the 1940s, the committee sought to "mold its character" following its creation as it had attempted to do with American Jewry earlier. Judge Proskauer, in par-

ticular, wanted to run it from afar. The president of AJC proposed "fundamental principles for its constitution and relationship with the Arab world." These called for the new state to be grounded on moral principles and full equality for all its citizens including political equality and equal opportunity for Arabs.[19] During the 1950s, under Proskauer's successor, Jacob Blaustein, the famous "Blaustein-Ben-Gurion accord" was reached. In it, the latter agreed that American Jews were not in exile and that the in gathering of exiles did not apply to them.[20]

While this agreement has pretty much stood, little else has worked out quite the way the Americans would have it insofar as the leadership of world Jewry is concerned. Israel's needs have become so pressing and American Jewry's identification with it so strong, American Jewish leadership for the most part has had to respond to events that occur in the Middle East rather than impose its own will on the situation. Delegations of Jews from this country visit Israel regularly to urge it to do this or that, but the Jewish state pretty much goes its own way. Israel has defined the issues not only for itself but for Jews throughout the world. In the debate that lasted roughly from 1950 to 1960, Ben-Gurion, in effect, had the last word. And when Blaustein in 1963 reminded Ben Gurion's successor, Levi Eshkol, of the importance of living up to the earlier agreement and received assurances this would be done, Ben-Gurion added a friendly but no less pointed note. "Dear Yaacov—don't be afraid of dual loyalty. Every human being must have many loyalties."[21]

One of the most significant developments in the evolution of Jewish leadership in recent years has been the changing role of women. In her essay here, Dianne Ashton calls attention to how Jewish women in Philadelphia in the nineteenth century made important contributions in the field of Jewish education and in creating structures to combat Christian missionary activities. Despite this, women volunteers for most of American Jewish history have been confined or limited themselves to doing what has been seen as "women's work"—mainly the education of children—and to subordinate places in male-led institutions.

Somewhere in the 1980s this began to change.[22] Women have emerged as important figures in federation fund-raising campaigns and as presidents of local federations in major cities like Los Angeles, Philadephia, and New York as well as in smaller communities.[23] Shoshana Cardin headed the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. Cardin met with President Bush and Prime Minister Yitzak Shamir as a regular part of her duties. And while orthodoxy remains committed to its version of halacha, the Reform, Reconstruc-

tionist, and more recently Conservative movements have ordained women as rabbis and cantors and elect them as presidents of congregations.

Jewish women have yet to penetrate the "executive suite" of national and local Jewish communal life. Few are paid executives of major Jewish organizations nationally or locally although some are involved at secondary and tertiary levels. The reasons for this go beyond simple male chauvinism which undoubtly still exists. They have to do, also, with the historic role of women as the primary nurturers of the family rather than communal policy makers and implementers. One thing, however, is certain: like other American women, Jewish women have become better trained and are more assertive. There is little reason to doubt they will refuse to remain content with the present situation.

If the evolution of Jewish leadership has seen the movement from what Melvin Urofsky called titans to managers, the primacy of the managers has also begun to be challenged most recently by a new class of lay leaders. The latter are better educated and strongly identified Jewishly a recent study by the American Jewish Committee reports.[24] In addition, as a result of the growth in the number of Jewish organizations, more people are serving the Jewish community thereby further democratizing Jewish leadership structures. The special place accorded older family origins at the time of the Philadelphia Group, pace Edwin Wolf, is by now a dead issue.

This new leadership, however, while capable of rising to heroic efforts as in the case of dealing with the large-scale exodus of Soviet Jews to Israel, is not necessarily attuned to larger issues, one longtime Jewish professional suggests. The men and women involved tend to be bottom-line people, more interested in efficiency in operations. They are often caught up in the excitement of the moment—rushing off to meet with the Israeli prime minister at one level or in Operation Exodus on another. They are not as easily mobilized to grapple with the quiet but no less serious crisis identified in the National Jewish Population survey in 1990—problems of the startling growth in the rate of intermarriage, the sharp decline in the two-parent Jewish family, low fertility rates, and increased movement of Jews to other parts of the country, which has further weakened a sense of Jewish rootedness. Jewish leadership has not yet risen to counter the threats to Jewish survival that come from within as they have done with threats from without. Whatever the limitations of the Philadephia Group—and they possessed their share—they never lost sight of the Jewish "big picture"—creating a viable Jewish life in America—even as they

went about the business of defending Jewish interests at home and abroad.

There are a few signs, however, that large Jewish donors recently are beginning to look up from their preoccupation with "defense" and support for Israel to embrace such issues as Jewish education as a means of countering assimilation pressures. At the close of the eighties, for example, the Leslie Wexner Foundation, established by a leading Jewish department store tycoon, was expending considerable funds for the training of young Jewish lay leaders in their Jewish heritage. Other Jewish foundations that may be recasting the concept of Jewish philanthropy include the Charles H. Revson Foundation in New York.

Another development worth noting is that new and younger men and women born after the Holocaust and at a time when anti-Semitism in this country has been at a low ebb are moving into positions of communal leadership. They have inherited from their elders an affection for Israel and willingness to serve it in many ways but they are less accepting of the politics and policies of its present-day political leadership there. This has been demonstrated in the restlessness of many with Prime Minister Yitzak Shamir's seeming unwillingness to trade land for peace in negotiations with Arab countries and in the "Who is a Jew?" controversy. In the latter instance and for the first time, they and other American Jewish leaders were openly condemnatory and were able to get the Israeli government to back away from the position enunciated by the Orthodox rabbinate in that country. What this may presage in the coming years is an American Jewish leadership that may not be quite as willing as their elders to place Israel at the center of their sense of Jewish meaning in the United States.

These changes in leadership and leadership roles seem to suggest a greater challenge to the authority and control of the professionals who manage the Jewish enterprise in this country. It is perhaps symptomatic of this that we have seen in recent years a high turnover of top level staff at such major national organizations as the Council of Jewish Federations, American Jewish Committee, the B'nai B'rith, and in local federations. This has occurred, curiously enough, at a time when the level of Jewish professional leadership has improved significantly as a result of programs encouraged by the CJF and local federations, the establishment of schools of Jewish communal service, and a heightened concern among the professionals in strengthening Jewish identity.[25]

The question is often asked, "Where are the giants in Jewish life

today?" Explanations vary among historians. Evyatar Friesel and Melvin Urofsky say they are there, but the historical conditions—presumably a period of deep and widely recognized crisis—are lacking to call them forth. And, thank goodness, the highly traumatic events that did so do not exist today despite the existence of serious problems. "The fact is," Benny Kraut writes, "that in our prosperous, pluralist American Jewish society, largely but not entirely homogeneous, religiously diverse, organizationally fractionalized but relatively crisis free, no one leader [and here one might add or small group of leaders] can legitimately speak for the whole community."[26]

That there is such debate among historians and more perceptive Jewish leaders today highlights the importance of looking back and examining the role played by a prior group of leaders. Each phase of American Jewish life has brought forward its own style of leadership. Earlier in this century we had what we have called the Philadelphia Group which played an extraordinary role in the creation of the institutional structures of American Jewish life. They were succeeded by a group of charismatic individual leaders who had less connection with one another. In the third stage, we have seen the rise of organization men and in the fourth and current period, a broader base of leadership with a wider variety of styles.

The measure of our present and future leaders rests upon their recognition that the crisis highlighted by the release of the National Jewish Population Study is every bit as critical and in some respects more so than those that existed in the past. It is no exaggeration to suggest that how they meet this challenge will determine not only the direction of but whether or not there will exist a significant Jewish life in the United States. If they are able to engage these problems with the vigor and creativity demonstrated by the Philadelphia Group, giants or not, future generations of American Jews will be in their debt.

Notes

The authors wish to express appreciation to Steven Bayme, director of the National Jewish Communal Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee for his close reading and helpful suggestions for this essay.

1. Dan Rottenberg, *Wolf, Block, Schorr and Solis-Cohen,* An Informal History, 1903–1988. Privately printed.

2. See Wolf's obituary in the Philadelphia *Inquirer,* 21 February 1991. An autobiographical sketch was written by Wolf in 1987 and published by the Library Company in 1991.

3. "Leadership in the American Jewish Community," in Oscar I. Janowsky, *The American Jew, A Reappraisal,* The Jewish Publication Society of America (Philadelphia, 1965), p. 364.

4. See, for example, Herbert A. Friedman, "UJA—Exploring New Paths," *Moment* (December 1991): pp. 24–29.

5. P. 366.

6. Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America, Four Centuries of an Uneasy Encounter: A History,* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), p. 219.

7. Daniel J. Elazar, *Community and Polity, The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry,* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976), p. 271.

8. Wolf in Janowsky, p. 367.

9. Wolf in Janowsky, p. 366. The changing character of the Jewish community suggests that educational background and training that once produced effectiveness in Jewish professional leadership requires review. Many in the past like Albert Chernin, former head of the National Jewish Community Relations Council, were social workers, but there is some reason to think that a political activist like Tom Dine of the American Israel Politrical Action Committee is perhaps more the wave of the future.

10. Robert E. Fierstien, *A Different Spirit,* The Jewish *Theological Seminary of America, 1886–1902,* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1990), p. 41.

11. Daniel J. Elazar, *Jerusalem Letter,* "Is Momentum Enough? The State Of The American Jewish Community Today, September 15, 1991, p. 2.

12. Elazar, *Jerusalem Letter,* p. 2.

13. "The Decline and Rise of Jewish Institutions." *Baltimore Jewish Times,* 28 September 1990. The AJC argued in the same publication on 26 October 1990 that his argument was both unfair and unbalanced.

14. On Jewish PACs, see *Wall Street Journal,* 26 February 1985 and 24 June 1987.

15. On pre-World War II leaders, see Henry Feingold, "'Courage First and Intelligence Second,' The American Jewish Secular Elite, Roosevelt and the Failure to Rescue," *American Jewish History,* June 1983, p. 431 and 435; Peter Grose, *Israel in The Mind of America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), p. 127. On Bitberg, see Lou Cannon, *President Reagan, The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), p. 579. See also the *New York Times,* 28 March 1992, on the exchange of letters between President Bush and George Klein on the former's "anguish" over Israeli-American tensions.

16. Elazar, *Community and Polity,* p. 279.

17. Writing Our Lives, *Autobiographies of American Jews, 1890–1990,* (Philadelphia: 1991), The Jewish Publication Society, p. xxii.

18. See Irving Kristol, *Reflections of a Neoconservative, Looking Back, Looking Ahead,* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); Kristol, "The Future of American Jewry, *Commentary,* August 1991, pp. 21–26; Milton Himmelfarb, *The Jews of Modernity,* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1973); Podhoretz, *Making It* (New York: Random House, 1967) and *Breaking Ranks, A Political Memoir,* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979).

19. Kaufman, p. 261.

20. Cohen, p. 312.

21. Cohen, p. 315. So far has the process of Israel's primacy and desire to act on its own progressed that even the influential, pro-Israel lobby AIPAC was pushed aside as a prime mediator unceremoniously in 1992 on the matter of the projected sale of 72 F-15 fighter planes to Saudi Arabia by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. In an unprecedented and almost public act, the latter appeared before the leadership of the group earlier on a visit to Washington and upbraided it for confrontational and ineffective tactics. Washington *Jewish Week,* September 17, 1992.

22. Rela Geffen Monson, *Bringing Women In: An Update, A Survey of a decade of*

the evolving role of women in Jewish organizational life in Philadelphia, Women's Issues Committee of the Philadelphia Chapter American Jewish Committee, February 1986.

23. Herbert A. Friedman, "UJA—Exploring New Paths," p. 29.

24. Jacob Ukeles, *American Jewish Leadership,* The American Jewish Committee, January 1991.

25. Washington *Jewish Week,* January 10, 1991.

26. "American Jewish Leaders: The Great, Greater and Greatest," *American Jewish History,* December 1988, vol. LXXVIII, no. 2, pp. 235–36.

Index

Adler, Cyrus: and the Jewish Theological Seminary, 9, 83, 85, 89, 97, 114–15, 132; as national Jewish leader, 9–10, 12, 14–17, 65–68, 92, 134, 148–49, 177–78, 181; personal life of, 13, 43, 92–99, 106; within the Philadelphia Group, 10, 13, 103, 106; as Philadelphia Jewish leader, 97–103, 110, 148–49; professional career of, 11–12, 14, 83, 96–99, 101; religious beliefs of, 19, 94–95, 129–30, 133, 150–51; and Zionism, 16–18, 116–17, 119, 121, 136–38

American Hebrew, 109–11, 131–32, 148–49, 152

American Jewish Committee: early political activities of, 66–69; founding of, 10, 15, 65, 110, 176; in opposition to the American Jewish Congress, 18, 100–101, 118–19, 138–39; recent activities of, 175, 179–83, 185; and Zionism, 138, 140

American Jewish Congress, 18, 101, 118–20, 126, 134, 138–41, 176, 181

American Jewish Publication Society. *See* Jewish Publication Society

Ashton, Dianne, 13, 183

Baltzell, E. Digby, 12, 15, 25, 147

Berkowitz, Rabbi Henry, 11, 13, 117, 151, 158, 161

Brandeis, Louis, 9, 71, 101

Central High School (Philadelphia), 13, 60, 94

Cohen, Katherine, 49

Cohen, Mary M., 34, 47–49, 50

Cohen, Naomi W., 66–67, 149

Conservative Judaism: beliefs and practices of, 77, 80–84, 114, 119, 184; ethnic factors in, 86–87, 115, 122, 134, 178; leadership of the Philadelphia Group in, 10, 18, 64, 75, 90, 122; and Orthodox Judaism, 114, 133. *See also* Jewish Theological Seminary

Dalin, David G., 10, 15, 19

Deinard, Ephraim, 63

Dropsie, Moses Aaron, 10, 13, 30, 60, 102, 113–14, 150

Dropsie College, 10, 62, 97–99, 101–3, 129, 150–51

Eastern Europe, Jewish Americans from: long-term impact of, 163, 166, 176; outreach of other Jews toward, 77, 86–88, 100–101, 134, 168–70; religious beliefs of, 86–88, 115, 122, 128, 130, 166; and Zionism, 117–18, 135, 138, 141. *See also* Levinthal, Rabbi Bernard Lewis

Elazar, Daniel J., 9, 13, 179

Elmaleh, Rev. Leon, 49, 89

Fels, Joseph, 11, 12, 16, 18, 109, 117

Fels, Mary, 16

Fels, Samuel S., 11, 12, 17, 109

Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, 34, 39–40, 47

Fierstien, Robert E., 15

Friedman, Murray, 22

George, Henry, 11, 16, 110

German-American Jews: and Eastern European immigrants, 110, 115, 134, 166; as leaders of the Jewish community, 11, 26, 108, 113, 176, 179; religious beliefs of, 158, 163, 165; and Zionism, 17–18, 110–11, 117–18, 120–21, 135

Gratz, Rebecca, 13, 26, 28, 34–42, 44–47, 48–49, 50, 145

Gratz College, 10, 62, 88, 99, 101–2, 114–16, 122

Gratz family, 36–37, 39, 88

Hart, Esther, 40, 50
Hart, Louisa B., 34, 40, 44, 45, 48, 50
Hebrew Sunday School Society, 28, 34, 42–44, 47, 48, 145
Holocaust, 18, 121, 134, 139–40, 175
Hyneman, Rebecca Gumpert, 34, 45–46, 50

Imber, Naftali Herz, 62–63
Israel, State of, 17, 175, 179–85. *See also* Zionism

Jastrow, Rabbi Marcus, 78, 80, 81, 87, 94–95, 151, 161
Jewish Chautauqua, 10, 11, 149, 151
Jewish Foster Home, 34, 45
Jewish Publication Society: founding of, 69–70, 111, 122, 151, 161; publications of, 49, 70–71, 112, 149, 151–52; role of the Philadelphia Group in, 58, 97, 111–12, 151–52, 173; role of women in, 47, 48, 49, 112
Jewish Sunday School Movement, 28, 34, 42–44, 47, 48, 145
Jewish Theological Seminary: founding of, 9, 79–87, 149–50; reorganization of, 88–90, 114–16, 132–34; role of the Philadelphia Group in, 9, 18, 63–65, 83, 88–89, 115

Kaplan, Mordecai, 9, 15, 87, 89
Kehilla (Philadelphia), 99–101
Kohut, Rabbi Alexander, 80–82, 84–85, 87–89
Krauskopf, Rabbi Joseph: personal life of, 13, 157–61; within the Philadelphia Group, 10–11, 151, 156, 160–62; as Philadelphia Jewish leader, 77, 111, 156, 160–62, 167–70; professional career of, 11, 156, 158–66; religious beliefs of, 162–67, 170

Ladies Hebrew Mission Society (Philadelphia), 40, 41
Leeser, Rev. Isaac: as national Jewish leader, 9, 24, 27–29, 159; personal life of, 13, 22–29; and the Philadelphia Group, 22, 26, 30, 69–70, 106; as Philadelphia Jewish leader, 13, 24–26, 147; professional career of, 27–29, 46, 60, 77–78; religious beliefs of, 13, 27
Lehman, Herbert, 17, 120
Levinthal, Rabbi Bernard Lewis: as national Jewish leader, 126, 130, 132, 134, 138, 178; personal life of, 126–28, 131, 137, 140–41; within the Philadelphia Group, 10–11, 101, 114, 126, 129–30, 136; as Philadelphia Jewish leader, 128–29; professional career of, 114, 126, 128, 132–33; religious beliefs of, 133–34, 141, 178; and Yeshiva University (RIETS), 114, 126, 130–32, 134; and Zionism, 116, 126, 134–40
Levy, Leon Edward, 10, 11
Lukacs, John, 12, 103, 147

Maimonides College, 24, 29, 62, 79, 82, 147
Marshall, Louis, 9, 14–17, 65–69, 96, 115, 132, 180–82
Marx, Alexander, 63–64, 89
Mikveh Israel: membership of the Philadelphia Group in, 11, 22, 62, 99, 112, 129; Orthodoxy of, 160–61; role of women in, 36–42, 46–49; Sephardic influence on, 41, 95
Morais, Rev. Sabato: and the Jewish Theological Seminary, 75, 79–88, 113, 178; as national Jewish leader, 75, 77, 177–78; personal life of, 65, 75–77, 87; within the Philadelphia Group, 10, 12, 77–78, 95, 108; as Philadelphia Jewish leader, 15, 77, 88; professional career of, 75, 77–78, 151; religious beliefs of, 77, 80–81, 84–85, 113
Mordecai, Sarah, 46

New York, contrasted with Philadelphia, 12–15, 22, 24, 82, 102–3

Occident and American Jewish Advocate, 27, 28–29, 44, 45, 62, 69
Orthodox Judaism, 22, 83, 87–88, 113–14, 133–34, 159–61. *See also* Levinthal, Rabbi Bernard Lewis

Peixotto, Simma, 34, 42, 44, 45, 50
Pereira Mendes, Rabbi Henry, 9, 80–82, 85, 87–89, 109, 113, 116
Philadelphia Group: as local leaders, 12, 15, 103; membership of, 10–11, 13–14, 62, 106, 129–30, 173; as na-

tional Jewish leaders, 10, 14–15, 26, 64–65, 130, 145, 180, 186; religious beliefs of, 11, 22, 77–78, 112–15, 150–52, 178; and Zionism, 16–18, 116, 121, 136
Phillips, Ellen, 34, 40, 50
Phillips, Emily, 34, 40, 50
Phillips, Rebecca, 37
Pyke, Rachel Peixotto, 42, 44, 45

Reform Judaism: beliefs and practices of, 79–80, 158, 162, 165–67, 170; national leaders of, 78–80, 83, 150, 159, 162; opposition to, 13, 27, 42, 79–81, 110, 150–51, 156, 160–61; in Philadelphia, 80, 94, 151, 156, 160–61; role of German-American Jews in, 115, 158, 163–64. *See also* Krauskopf, Rabbi Joseph
Robinson, Ira, 12, 19
Roosevelt, Theodore, 12, 15, 67
Rosen, Philip, 11, 178
Rosenbach, A. S. W., 11, 103
Rosenwald, Julius, 9, 14
Russia, Jews in, 15, 66–69, 116–17, 138, 168

Sarna, Jonathan D., 11, 16, 18, 19, 34, 37, 69–70, 176, 182
Schechter, Solomon, 64–65, 88–89, 114–15, 119, 134, 151
Schiff, Jacob, 9, 14, 65–69, 86, 89, 111, 115, 182
Sephardic Judaism, 22, 27, 41, 49, 95, 178
Solis-Cohen, Emily, 108
Solis-Cohen, Emily, Jr., 24, 34, 47, 49–50
Solis-Cohen, Dr. Solomon: and the Jewish Theological Seminary, 64, 82–84, 89, 113–16; as national Jewish leader, 106, 109–11, 122, 148–49; personal life of, 106–8, 111–12, 121; within the Philadelphia Group, 10, 62, 106, 129; as Philadelphia Jewish leader, 11, 100, 108–9, 115, 130–31, 147; professional career of, 11, 108; religious beliefs of, 82–83, 110, 113; and Zionism, 16, 18, 111, 116–21, 135–36
Stern, Horace, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 173
Straus, Oscar S., 14, 58, 65
Sulzberger, Cyrus, 14, 108–10, 148
Sulzberger, Mayer: and the Jewish Theological Seminary, 63–65, 70, 89, 115–16; as national Jewish leader, 14, 15, 58, 65–71, 111, 148–49; personal life of, 13, 14, 59–60, 95, 96; within the Philadelphia Group, 10, 13, 58, 62, 96, 129; as Philadelphia Jewish leader, 15, 62, 100, 108, 147, 161; professional career of, 58, 60–62, 96; religious beliefs of, 58, 113, 150; and Zionism, 16, 116–17, 119, 136
Sussman, Lance J., 13, 36
Szold, Henrietta, 9, 97, 112, 117

Taft, William Howard, 14, 67–69

Union League, 12, 14, 62
United Hebrew Charities, 44, 45

Warburg, Felix, 14, 17, 58, 132
Whiteman, Maxwell, 14, 62–63, 71, 173
Wise, Rabbi Isaac Mayer, 38, 77–80, 82–83, 158, 159, 162
Wise, Rabbi Stephen S., 9, 71, 111, 138–39, 176
Wolf, Edwin, II, 13, 99–100, 173, 177–79, 184
Wolf, Morris, 13, 173

Yeshiva Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spector (RIETS), 114, 130–32, 134, 141
Young Men's Hebrew Association, 47, 62, 95, 108–9, 147–49

Zangwill, Israel, 70, 110
Zionism: before the end of World War I, 86, 116–19, 134–36, 138; and the Holocaust, 121, 139–40; opposition to, 16–18, 111, 118–21, 138, 140; members of the Philadelphia Group and, 16–18, 29, 116–21, 129, 134–40; between the world wars, 120, 137, 139