THE FIRST RABBI

ORIGINS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN

ORTHODOX & REFORM:

Jewish Polemic Warfare in pre-Civil War America

Illustrated Throughout with 260 Rare Early Photographs

by Rabbi I. Harold Sharfman, D.H.L.









Foreword by Dr. Nathan M. Kaganoff

Introduction by Dr. Alfred A. Agus

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Jewish Polemic Warfare in pre-Civil War America

A BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY

by Rabbi I. Harold Sharfman, D.H.L.

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THE FIRST RABBI

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In Preparation of this history of Judaism in ante-bellum America, The First Rabbi—Abraham Joseph Rice, I am first and foremost indebted to the inspiration of my father, Rabbi Hyman (Chaim) Sharfman, of blessed memory. Like Abraham Rice of the early 19th century, Hyman Sharfman of the early 20th century fiercely fought the Reform movement as a pioneer rabbi in the western states; moreover, for his analysis of *halachik* aspects in reference to the responsa of the period.

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But above all, I am ever indebted to my Eshes Chail, Sara, for her sacrifices and devotion, which sparked my drive in researching and writing of *The First Rabbi*.

RABBI TO SPEAK



RABBI HYMAN SHARFMAN

PROHIBITION TO BE TOPIC

Rabbi Hyman Sharfman of Temple Emanu-El of Reno, who took charge of that congregation a week ago, will hold regular services this evening at the temple, and will deliver a lecture on "prohibition."

The general public is invited to hear the talk of Rabbi Sharfman, who comes to Reno from Brooklyn, and who is said to be a noted speaker on public questions.

Rabbi Sharfman is the first permanent rabbi to take charge of the Reno Jewish congregation, having held his initial services last Friday night.

DEDICATION

THIS BIOGRAPHY OF ABRAHAM JOSEPH RICE,
THE FIRST RABBI ORDAINED TO MINISTER IN THE
UNITED STATES

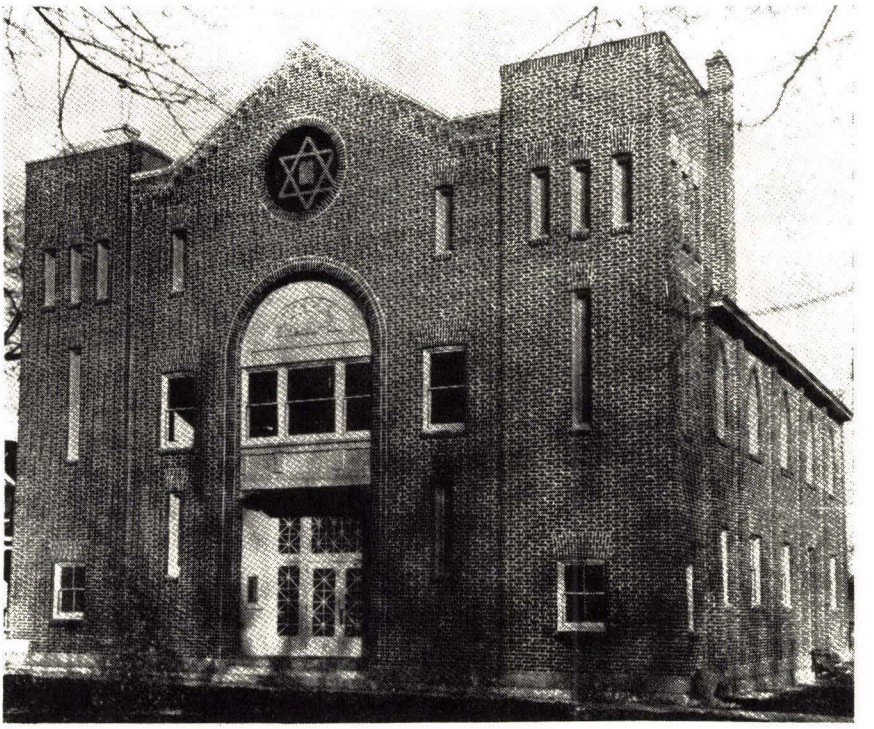
IS DEDICATED TO MY FATHER

RABBI HYMAN [CHAIM] SHARFMAN, O.D. 1890–1959

Rabbi in Williamsburg, South Brooklyn, New York
and Los Angeles, California
FIRST RABBI TO MINISTER IN ARIZONA, NEVADA, AND UTAH

Eighth Generation Descendent of Chief Rabbi Jacob Israel Emden [Yaabetz]
ben Chief Zebi Hirsch Ashkenazi [Hacham Zebi]

Like Rabbi Abraham Rice in the nineteenth century, Rabbi Hyman Sharfman in the twentieth century, pioneered Orthodox Judaism in the spiritual wilderness of America



Temple Emanu-El, Reno, first synagogue erected in Nevada, in 1926.

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Foreword

THERE IS a rabbinic statement that luck or chance ultimately enters into everything, even the decision as to which of the several Sifre Torah or Torah Scrolls is chosen to be read at the synagogue service. Obviously, all are equally suitable, but there is the factor of luck determining which is actually used. The same statement applies to American Jewish history and especially American Jewish biography.

American Jewish historiography has developed greatly during the past half century and especially in the last ten years. General studies, local community histories and biographies of individuals important in the development of the American Jewish Experience have appeared, but somehow certain individuals who played very significant roles in this history have been neglected. Many of these appear to be figures who were spokesmen for the traditional Jewish community who made serious efforts to stem the onset of Reform that was beginning to sweep the country at the middle of the 19th century.

Although there are many explanations for this phenomenon, we are nonetheless sorely lacking in an understanding of a major component of 19th century American Jewry and even of a fuller knowledge of the successful Reform Movement. If we do not know the issues in conflict and how they manifested themselves, we cannot fully appreciate the full victory of the apparent winner.

Among the major 19th century American Jewish religious figures is Rabbi Abraham Rice, who is recorded in most histories as the first ordained rabbi who settled in America, but we know very little about his life and his involvement in the mid-19th century American Jewish experience.

Rabbi I. Harold Sharfman now provides us with a meticulously researched and detailed biography of Rabbi Rice, his life in Europe prior to his arrival in America and his experiences in the New World.

The question has often been asked. How could the established Jewish communities in Europe totally neglect the religious welfare of their members who were emigrating to a foreign country in a New World with no established institutions, where no social pressures or community organizations exerted any efforts to maintain Jewish religious life?

Much has been written on East European Jewry's experiments to establish a Chief Rabbinate at the turn of the century, but those attempts were quite different. Those efforts all were initiated by the immigrants themselves and at a time when America was popularly called *The Treife*

Medine [Religiously Unacceptable Country] by East European Jews. But that appelation was not used by the German Jews of the mid-19th century who witnessed thousands of their fellow citizens going to the New World for political and economic reasons. We now learn that there was a serious effort to have a Chief Rabbi in America and that Rabbi Rice was the individual who was initially designated for that purpose.

Rabbi Sharfman has not only provided us with a biography of the first ordained rabbi in America, but has in great detail described all issues confronting the American Jewish community in which Rabbi Rice played a role—not only in religious matters but for all aspects of Rabbi Rice's life—where it contibutes to our knowledge of conditions in mid-19th century America. Thus, after Rabbi Rice decided to give up the rabbinate and enter business, there is a very interesting and informative description of how the retail dry goods trade in New York City, in the 1850s, was almost exclusively in Jewish immigrant hands, and how the non-Jewish business world reacted to that phenomenon.

We, therefore, now have for the first time a very comprehensive description of all issues confronting American Jewry brought to the fore by the conflict between Reform Jewry and the Orthodox. Not only do we have a detailed record of the ideology and the polemics involved, but even of incidents that took place in various communities as the conflict spread from one area to another. Rabbi Rice was also involved, because of his recognized superior religious knowledge, in other areas as well, and as a result, there is a meticulously detailed description of the internal life of the Jew in America, his relationship with European Jewry and with that of the Holy Land.

Dr. Nathan M. Kaganoff
Librarian
American Jewish Historical Society
1988

Preface

> American Orthodoxy is a field which has been almost completely untouched. Not only has no study as yet appeared on the major Orthodox rabbinic figures . . . but we do not even possess yet a basic listing of the outstanding American Orthodox rabbis of the last hundred years. . . . [1876–1976]

THUS STATED Dr. Nathan M. Kaganoff, Executive Editor of the American Jewish Historical Society.

This volume, titled *The First Rabbi*, covers a near half-century of Orthodox rabbinic leadership preceding 1876.

In my research I read and reread the entire Anglo-Jewish press of the pre-Civil War era, which presented most of Rice's polemics. These provided the base not only for a biography of Rabbi Rice, but for the unfolding of Reform Judaism in America. I transcribed 250 pages of his sermons and letters of responsa, written in Judeo-German.

In the rediscovered lost galaxy of the earliest "major Orthodox rabbinic figures" looms Abraham Joseph Rice, the first Orthodox rabbi to settle in the United States. In his native Bavaria he became recognized as a *Talmid Chochom*, for his talmudic scholarship, ranked with the greatest rabbinic luminaries of his time: Chief Rabbis Jacob Ettlinger, Altona; Eliezer Bergmann, Jerusalem; Seligmann Baer Bamberger, Würzburg. In combating Reform in America, he was the counterpart of the European champions of Orthodoxy, Chief Rabbis Moses Schreiber, [Chasam Sofer] Isaac Bernays and Samson Raphael Hirsch.

Because of his burning desire to combat Reform, coupled with his vast rabbinic knowledge, Rabbi Rice was selected and sent in 1840 by the Chief Rabbis of Europe to hold office as "Chief Rabbi of the United States."

American congregations of varying rites and customs referred ritual questions [sh'eilos] to Rabbi Rice. Inquiries reached his residence in Baltimore from throughout the length and breadth of the land, from such diverse synagogues as New York's Portuguese *Shearith Israel*, the Russian *Beth Hamidrash*, the German *Anshe Chesed* of New York, to the then "far western" *Bene Israel* of Cincinnati, whose officers hailed from England.

Leaders of American Jewry launched a national campaign to establish for Rabbi Rice the office of "Chief Rabbi." Yet, most congregations balked at the imposition of answering to an ecclesiastical authority, which they considered a vestige of the Old World from which they had fled.

Zealously they guarded congregational autonomy in religious affairs. These recent immigrants from Germany further feared a curtailment and infringement upon their newly acquired religious liberty. Notwithstanding, Rabbi Rice, by virture of his superior learning and pious personality, became recognized *de facto*, if not *de jure*, as the Chief Rabbi of the United States.

Among the communal leaders who sought to establish Abraham Rice as Chief Rabbi, was Reverend Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia, spokesman of American Jewry. He told his readers of Rabbi Rice's standing as the foremost Talmudist in America. A score years after the coming of The First Rabbi to America, when a quorum of Orthodox rabbinic scholars had settled in America, Leeser stated:

> [Rabbi Rice] brought with him the reputation of a thorough Talmudist, which he maintained in a pre-eminent degree among all who have reached America since his arrival, being still the first among many able and learned men in his department. . . .

The erudite Rabbi Rice, with the weapons of Orthodoxy, Torah and Talmud, led in the battle against Reform. The religious Civil War flared in all its fury after the arrival in America of Isaac Mayer Wise, a Hebrew teacher from Bohemia. Opportunist Wise, upon his election as Reader in a synagogue styled himself "Rabbi," and after publicly espousing Reform, titled himself "Doctor"—a common practice of pulpit practioners in those days.

Wise's opening salvo against Orthodoxy began with his denial of basic beliefs of Judaism: Resurrection of the Dead [*T'Chiyas haMeisim*], and Coming of the Messiah [*Bi'as haMashiach*]. Rabbi Rice declared Wise a heretic and promptly pronounced upon him the ban of excommunication.

Instead of recanting, Wise embarked on a collision course with Orthodoxy, determined to re-form Judaism and de-form Orthodoxy. To this end, Wise hurled a three-pronged fork against what he called "Hyper-Orthodoxy."

Prong #1 struck the axiomatic divine origin of the Written Law [*Torah Sh'bichsav*]. Wise blasted away at a biblical commandment he felt to be the most vulnerable—that of *Chalitzah*—a ceremony in which a childless widow loosens a ritual shoe off the foot of her brother-in-law and expectorates before him. He found ready support amongst congregational officers, well-to-do merchants of the class of the nouveau riche. These former peddlers, many of them presidents of congregations, having climbed the social ladder, regarded themselves refined Israelites, and considered that ceremony in poor taste. Along with their "reverends," "rabbis," "doctors,"

they readily accepted Wise's abrogation of a law which he declared quaint and antiquated. Rejection of this law provided the leverage for denying hundreds of other scriptural commandments, save ten engraved in stone.

Prong #2 stabbed at talmudic authority, the oral law [*Torah Sh'beal Peh*]. Here too, Wise singled out a rabbinic enactment he considered unpopular, the observance of an added festival day, enjoined upon diaspora Jewry only. Wise argued, that the Second Day of Festivals in Exile should be dropped because we are no longer in exile; we are in America—the new Promised Land. Merchants happily assented, for this Reform afforded them sanction to conduct business on this day. Like Wise, they equated Reform with Americanism and Orthodoxy with the Old World. Renunciation of observance of this holy day as no longer binding in America and elsewhere, set the precedent to reject rabbinic legislation.

Prong #3 smashed a hitherto inviolate edifice, the synagogue. After first demolishing the central pulpit, Wise closed the ladies' gallery and opened for the first time family pews, along with the organ and mixed choir. Along with a hymnal, Wise's *Minhag America* [American-rite] prayer book pierced the core of Jewish prayer by negating Divine power to revive the departed, restore Zion, and rebuild the Holy Temple. Wise and his cohorts, influenced by the Christian worship, in imitation of the Protestant church, converted synagogues into temples.

Rabbi Rice thwarted Wise's three-pronged thrust by a tripartite blow: polemics, homilies, and responsa,* he thwarted the thrust of Wise's three-pronged fork aimed at the very heart and soul of Orthodoxy. The faithful followers of Rabbi Rice, inspired by his direction, formed Orthodox nucleii in various cities, but they were few in number.

Yet, in the face of the tidal wave of the Reform religion of convenience and permissiveness that saturated the barren spiritual sands of America, Rabbi Rice's staunch Orthodox stand inspired in his, and succeeding generations, a firmness and resolve to uphold Torah and tradition. Such was his impress, that long after his passing, mere mention of his name evoked veneration.

A list of devotees who knew and revered The First Rabbi reads like a "Who's Who" of the American leaders of Orthodoxy: Israel Baer Kursheedt, the most learned lay leader in American Jewry; Jonas Friedenwald, patriarch of Baltimorian Jewry; Samuel Bruel, spokesman of the Orthodox in Cincinnati; the Reverends Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia, editor of *The Occident*; and Samuel Myer Isaacs of New York, editor of *The Jewish Messenger*. So, too, the most prominent Orthodox rabbinic leaders who hailed from various lands other than Germany, turned to Rabbi Rice

*Responsa: Orthodox rabbi's replies to religio-legal inquiries.

for guidance; among them Morris Jacob Raphall of England, Joseph Levy of Bohemia, Abraham Joseph Ash of Russia.

Rabbi Rice's personal life further set the tone that preserved traditional Judaism throughout the era of German Jewish dominance on the American scene. True to his motto, to learn and to teach, Rabbi Rice arose during the early hours when it was still night to study until daybreak, when it was time for the morning prayers. Recognized in America as in Europe, as the leading Talmudist in America, he was even more so adored for his humble, modest and unassuming manner. Rabbi Rice's hallmark, unyielding adherence to principle, earned for him the respect of Reformers and Orthodox alike.

Christians too, admired the selfless dedication of Rabbi Rice to humanitarian causes. Thus, when Holy Land Jewry suffered starvation during the Crimean War, Rabbi Rice single-handedly led in raising funds; among the contributors was a Church Parish in Baltimore. In another instance, when the governor of Maryland listened to arguments of Rabbi Rice on behalf of saving a man from unjustly being incarcerated, he remarked that he had never met such an intellectual scholar, and concerned citizen.

Upon Rabbi Rice's passing in 1862, Rabbi Dr. Bernhard Illowy of New Orleans, who had learned much from Rabbi Rice during his previous two year's ministry in Baltimore, told his community of the unique personality of his colleague stating:

> Rabbi A. Rice cared very little for the fat, milk, and wool of his flock. . . . There was always peace in his heart, even when his enemies raged, because they had to hear from him the truth which their neighbors did not venture to tell them; there was peace in his heart even when he scourged the wicked with the rod of his mouth. . . .

Another close colleague and admirer, Reverend Samuel Myer Isaacs, offered tribute in his *Jewish Messenger*, saying

> . . . There was something so sterling in his character, that we look in vain among our valued colleagues for his peer. Like a sturdy oak, he stood firm; nothing could move him from the inflexibility of his principles. Although all around him was indifference and innovation, he was unchangeable . . . He died as he lived, strong in the faith of Israel

In 1873, a decade after his passing, author George W. Howard, in his volume, *The Monumental City* [*Baltimore*], *Its Past History and Present Resources*, recorded memories he gleaned of how The First Rabbi lived and influenced his people after his lifetime:

> The growth of our Hebrew population appears when we revert to the ministry of their first rabbi, Abraham Rice. He came to Baltimore in 1840, and was an earnest, devoted man. As a pioneer, he did an important work for which he should be gratefully remembered by his own people. He labored at great sacrifice, for the Hebrews from the paucity of their numbers could not offer him a competent support; but he faithfully ministered to them, supplementing his pay from the proceeds of a moderate business in which he engaged. He was enabled in an humble way to lay the foundation of their religious prosperity and to sow seed which has produced valuable fruit.

After four decades of mass migration of hundreds of thousands of German Jews to America with an admixture of Polish Jews under German hegemony [1837–1880], followed four decades of mass migration of millions of Russian Jews. In every city the East Europeans beheld a magnificent temple, erected by German Reform congregations, ministered by "rabbis-doctors" of renown. But none of these prominent leaders, assumed the title Chief Rabbi, left for the exclusive use of Orthodox European rabbis.

In the Lower East side of New York, Russian rabbi, Jacob Joseph, elected Chief Rabbi of New York City, had served six years in that office [1888–1895] when his title was contested and fiercely opposed by unscrupulous persons. Aggravation brought on paralysis, the Chief Rabbi remained bedridden for five years until his death at age fifty-nine, in 1902.

In the early twentieth century, immigrant East European Jews accustomed to Chief Rabbis in their native cities, were, after the demise of Chief Rabbi Jacob Joseph, startled to see over doorstep of the residence of the Moscover Rabbi a shingle which read: RABBI YAACOV WIDERWITZ, RUSSIA, CHIEF RABBI OF AMERICA.

East-siders wondering at Widerwitz's taking the Chief Rabbi title asked him: "In view of the deposing of Chief Rabbi Jacob Joseph which resulted in his early demise, why would you aspire to be Chief Rabbi, moreover not limited to New York but to all of America?"

Widerwitz replied: "Had I been Chief Rabbi of New York, I would surely be deposed as had been Rabbi Jacob Joseph, but as Chief Rabbi of America, United States Jewry will never unite to reject me and I shall remain forever in my post."

As to the question, Since American Jewry will not unite, who elected you? He replied: "The sign painter."

The only sign that indicated appointment of Abraham Rice as Chief Rabbi of the United States was that signalled by the Chief Rabbis of European Jews and affirmed by lay leaders of American Jewry.

Rabbi Rice, single-handedly saved German-Jewish Orthodoxy in the United States from extinction. That pious, erudite, rabbinic scholar inspired his, and succeeding generations, to remain loyal to tradition and faith.

But in his day, Rabbi Abraham Joseph Rice had truly been the uncrowned CHIEF RABBI OF THE UNITED STATES.

Rabbi I[srael] Harold Sharfman,
D.H.L., 1955, *Yeshiva University, NYC*
Jerusalem, Israel
18 *Tishrei*, 5748
Chai in the Seventh Month of the Year
TiSMaCH *"Thou Shalt Rejoice"*
October 11, 1987

Introduction

ALTHOUGH the first Jewish settlers established themselves on the American continent almots two centuries before 1850, the pattern of Jewish life in the United States in all its characteristic nuances first emerged clearly and boldly during the two decades immediately preceding the Civil War. It was during this period that the homogeneity of the Jews of American, as to place of origin, religious costoms and attitudes, and cultural background, began to give way to the heterogeneity and heterodoxy so characteristic of modern American Jewry. The slow but continuous breaking up of the two-thousand-year-old religious attitudes and practices of European Jewry in the post-Napoleonic era caused violent reprecussions on the American continent, where the Jews were widely diffused over a vast area, were lacking a compact and intensive group life that strengthens traditional mores and enforces conformity, and were freely exposed to the divisive forces of a new environment. The non-conformity of the individual Jew since the American Revolution, the increasing intermarriages, the frequent violations of the Sabbath, and the laxity in the strict observance of the dietary laws by individuals did not affect the uniformity of official, organized, religious life before the middle of that century.

It was during the two decades before the Civil War that religious leaders began to appear who strove to condone, find theoretical approval for, and formalize as official religious conduct, the lax practices of an increasing number of non-conformists; they thus changed the religious pattern of American Jewry. It was during this formative period that Rabbi Abraham Rice of Bavaria, "The First Rabbi," settled in Baltimore and began his heroic struggle against the centrifugal forces in the Jewish life of that time. Although the efforts of Rabbi Rice were not always crowned with success, his saintly personality and self-sacrificing spirit and his constant guidance through his responsa and polemics left a firm impress upon the spiritual and cultural development of American Jewry and had a decisive effect upon Orthodoxy in America.

Dr. I. Harold Shargman has succeded in describing faithfully the milieu in which Rabbi Rice found himself upon his arrival in this country: to the surging waves of cultural and religious upheaval that were pounding on American shores, the stormy personalities that championed

reform, and the angry protests engendered. Dr. Sharfman details the personality and background of Rabbi Rice and his relentless struggle against overwhelming odds. He also traces the emergence of several new institutions that eventually grew to large proportions and deeply affected Jewish life in America.

In his work, Rabbi Sharfman went back to the original sources, searching through the archival material of our oldest synagogues. He scanned the numerous pages of early publications and concentrated especially on the responsa (rabbinic responses to queries on religious and legal problems), sermons, and polemics of the period. Although the number of responsa available is not large, each individual responsum, like the sermons and polemics, clearly reflects the strains and the stresses of powerful forces struggling for mastery in the Jewish group. The biography of Rabbi Rice is part of this serious work undertaken by Dr. Sharfman in which he endeavors to gain a deeper insight into the inner life of American Jewry during its formative years in the eighteenth and nineteenth centureies, based on the evidence garnered from a thorough study of the responsa of that period.

Dr. Irving A. Agus
Late Dean of the Graduate School and Professor of History, Graduate Division, Yeshiva University, New York City, 1955

BOOK I

TO AMERICA FROM BAVARIA



Charcoal drawing of Rabbi Rice at Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. Photographed from original at Curtis Studios, Los Angeles, California.
(Courtesy Mrs. Rose Greenberg)



Rabbi Moses Schrieber, "*Chasam Sofer*" of Pressburg, foremost nemesis of Reformers in Hungary.

(Lithograph: Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



Rabbi Solomon Tiktin, fiery foe of Reform in Breslau, Germany.
(Universal Jewish Encyclopedia)



Chief Rabbi Solomon Hirschell of London, champion of England's Orthodox Jewry.

(Lithograph, 1811*: Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)*



Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch of Frankfort, champion of Germany's Orthodox Jewry.

(Lithograph: Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger of Altona; author and authority on Jewish Law; founded first organ of Orthodox Judaism.

(Encyclopedia Judaica)



Herr Mendel Rosenbaum, founder and sponsor of the *Beth Hamidrash* of Zell.

(Yisu Harim Kolom, Jerusalem)



Rabbi Israel Deutsch, Beuthern; fought Reform in Prussia and Prussian-Poland.

(Encyclopedia Judaica)



Rabbi Solomon Judah Leib Rapoport [Rappoport; acronym SHIR] of Prague, 1840-1867, pioneer of *Haskalah*, opposed Reform.

(Encyclopedia Judaica)



Aaron Chorin, Arad, Hungary, first Reform Rabbi.

(Encyclopedia Judaica)

ספר

נוגה הצדק

כולל

שאלות ותשובות מהרבנים המאורים הגדולים הגאונים המפורסמים אנשי שם קריאי ערה, היושבים על כסאם לתורה ולתעורה, פארי הזבן וצבי ישרון, ה"ה חכמי אשכנז וספרד ה' עליהם יחיו, הנקובים בשמותם.



ש"ת דרך הקדש מהרב הגאון חכם הכולל מוה' שם טוב ס"ט אב"ד ונשיא ישואל דק"ק ליוורנו. וגלוו אליו דברים נתמדים ושהורים מהרבנים הגדולים המפורסמים חכמי ירושלים תו"נכ.

ש"ות יאיר נתיב מהרב הגדול חכם המובהק מוה' יעקב חי ריקאנטי, בע"המח ספר פסקי ריקאנטי אב"ד דק"ק ווירונא.

ש"ות קנאת האמת מהרב הגדול המפורסם החריף והבקי המושלם במעלות ומדות מוה' אהרן חאריר נ"י אב"ד דק"ק אראד במדינת אונגריא, בע"המח ספר ראש אכינה ועמק השוה, אמרי נועם ושרין קשקשים.

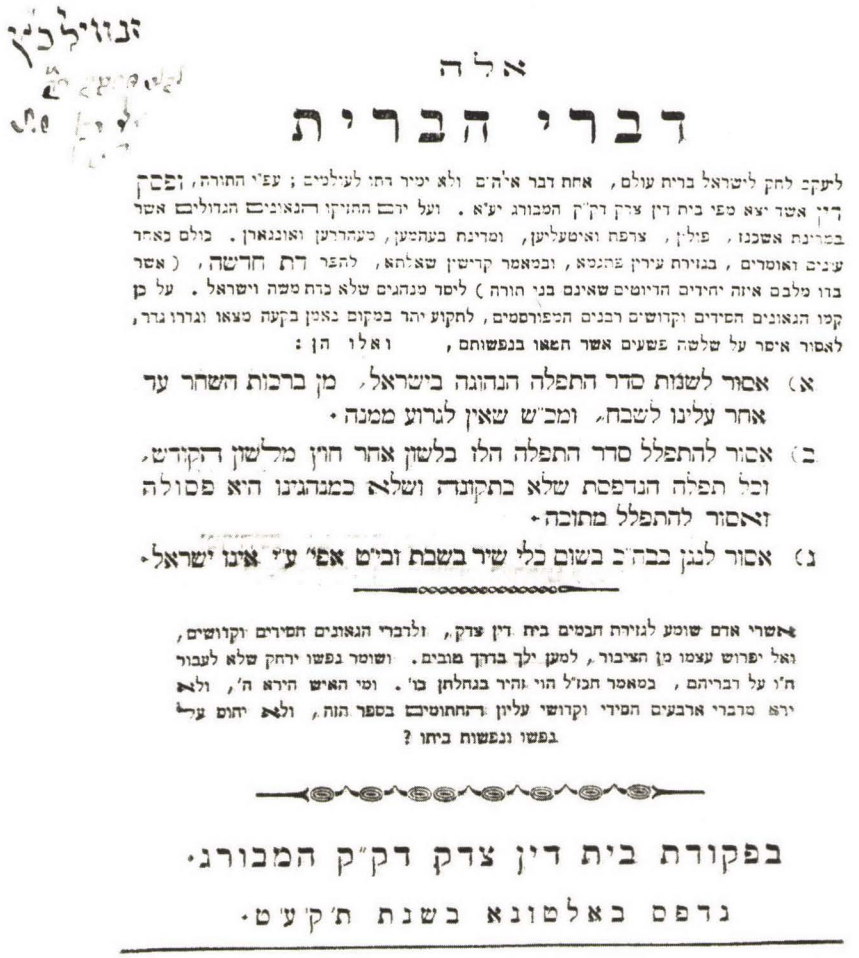
ונוסף עליהם דברים נחמדים מהרב הגדול המפורסם החריף והבקי שמו נודע בשערים לשם ולתהלה מוה' משה קונין מאובן נ"י בעה"טח ספר בן יוחאי וספר העוין וכית רבי.

אמת מארץ תצמח לפ"ק.

Dessau,
gedruckt bei C. Schlieder.
1818.

Sefer Nogah Hatzedek, Dessau, first volume of Reform Responsa, 1818, allowing Reform worship.

(Library of the Author)



אלה

דברי הברית

ליעקב לחק לישראל ברית עולם, אחת דבר אלה"ם ולא ימיר דתו לעולמים; עפ"י התורה, ופסק דין אשר יצא מפי בית דין צדק דק"ק המבורג יע"א. ועל ידם ההזיקו הגאונים הגדולים אשר במדינת אשכנז, פולין, צרפת ואיטעליען, ומדינת בעהמען, מעהרען ואונגארן. כולם כאחד עינים ואומרים, בגזירת עירין שהגמא, ובמאמר קדישין שאלתא, להפר דת חדשה, (אשר בדו מלבם איזה יחידים הדיוטים שאינם בני תורה) ליסד מנהגים שלא כדת משה וישראל. על כן קמו הגאונים הסידים וקדושים רבנים המפורסמים, לתקוע יהד במקום נאמן בקעה מצאו וגדרו גדר, לאסור איסר על שלשה פשעים אשר חטאו בנפשותם, ואלו הן:

א) אסור לשנות סדר התפלה הנהוגה בישראל, מן ברכות השחר עד אחר עלינו לשבח, ומכ"ש שאין לגרוע ממנה.

ב) אסור להתפלל סדר התפלה הלז בלשון אחר חוץ מלשון הקודש, וכל תפלה הנדפסת שלא בתקונה ושלא כמנהגינו היא פסולה ואסור להתפלל מתוכה.

ג) אסור לנגן בבה"כ בשום כלי שיר בשבת ובי"ט אפי' ע"י אינו ישראל.

אשרי אדם שומע לגזירת חכמים בית דין צדק, ולדברי הגאונים הסידים וקדושים, ואל יפרוש עצמו מן הציבור, למען ילך בדרך טובים. ושומר נפשו ירחק שלא לעבור ח"ו על דבריהם, במאמר חכז"ל הוי זהיר בגחלתן כו'. ומי האיש הירא ה', ולא ירא מדברי ארבעים הסידי וקדושי עליון החתומים בספר הזה, ולא יחוס על נפשו ונפשות ביתו?

בפקודת בית דין צדק דק"ק המבורג.

נדפס באלטונא בשנת ת'ק'ע'ט.

על ידי האחים המשותפים כמר שמואל ויהודה בן כג"ל, קאָנוגליכע פריווילעגירטע בוכדרקקער.

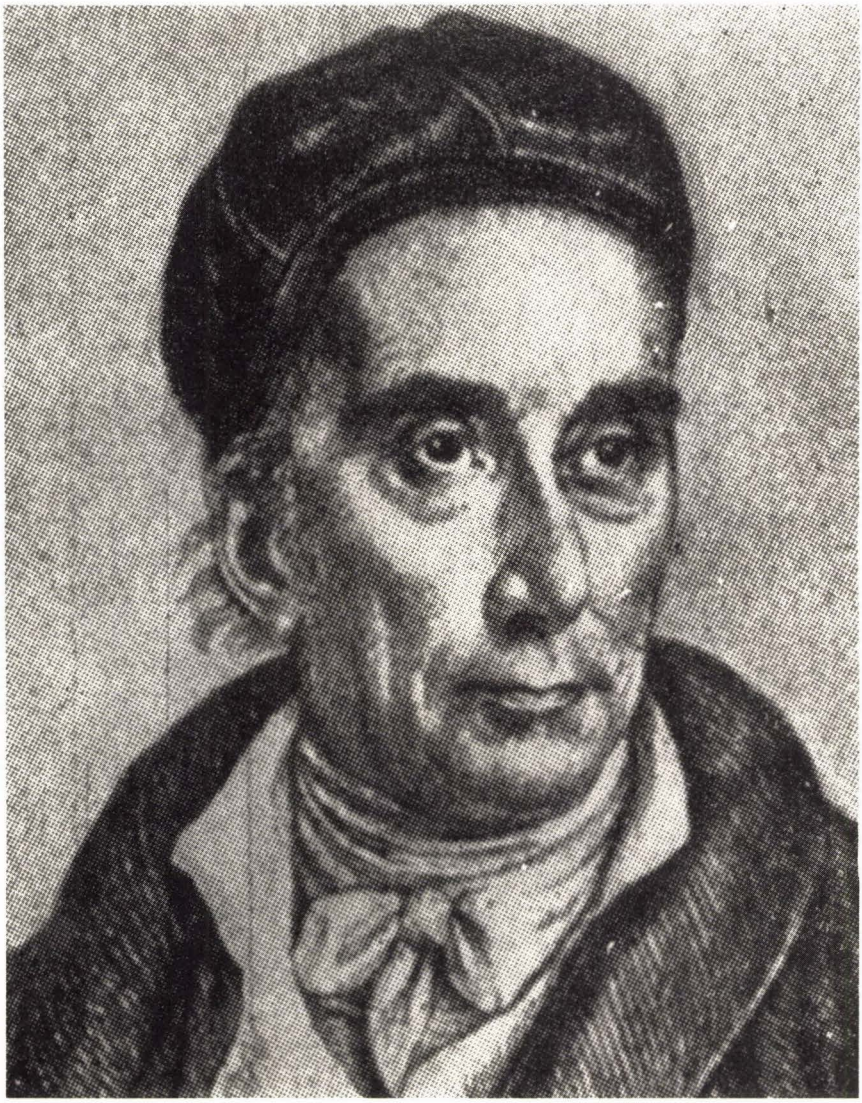
Eleh Dibre Habris, Hamburg, 1819, first volume of Anti-Reform Responsa, 1819, forbidding Reform worship.

(Library of the Author)



Orthodox Rabbi Isaac Bernays of Hamburg; combatant of the first Organ Temple of Germany.

(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)

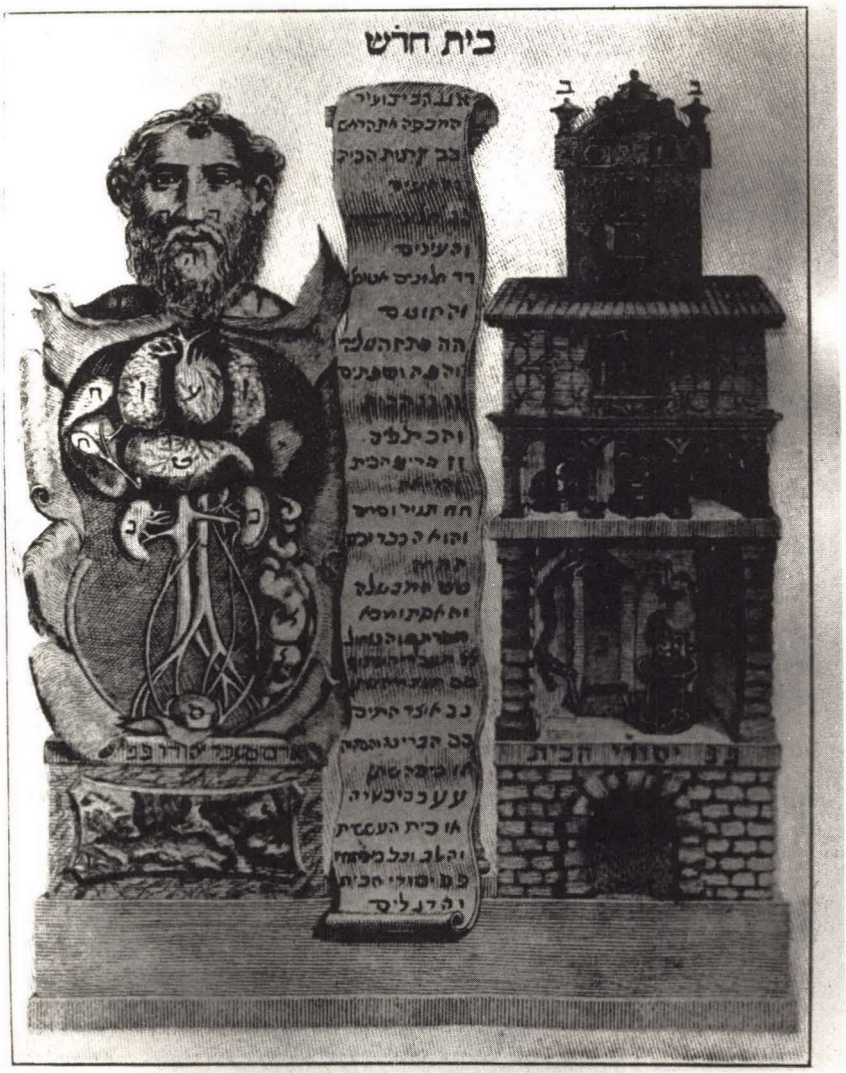


David Friedlander, admirer of Mendelssohn, translated Prayer Book into German.

(Universal Jewish Encyclopedia)

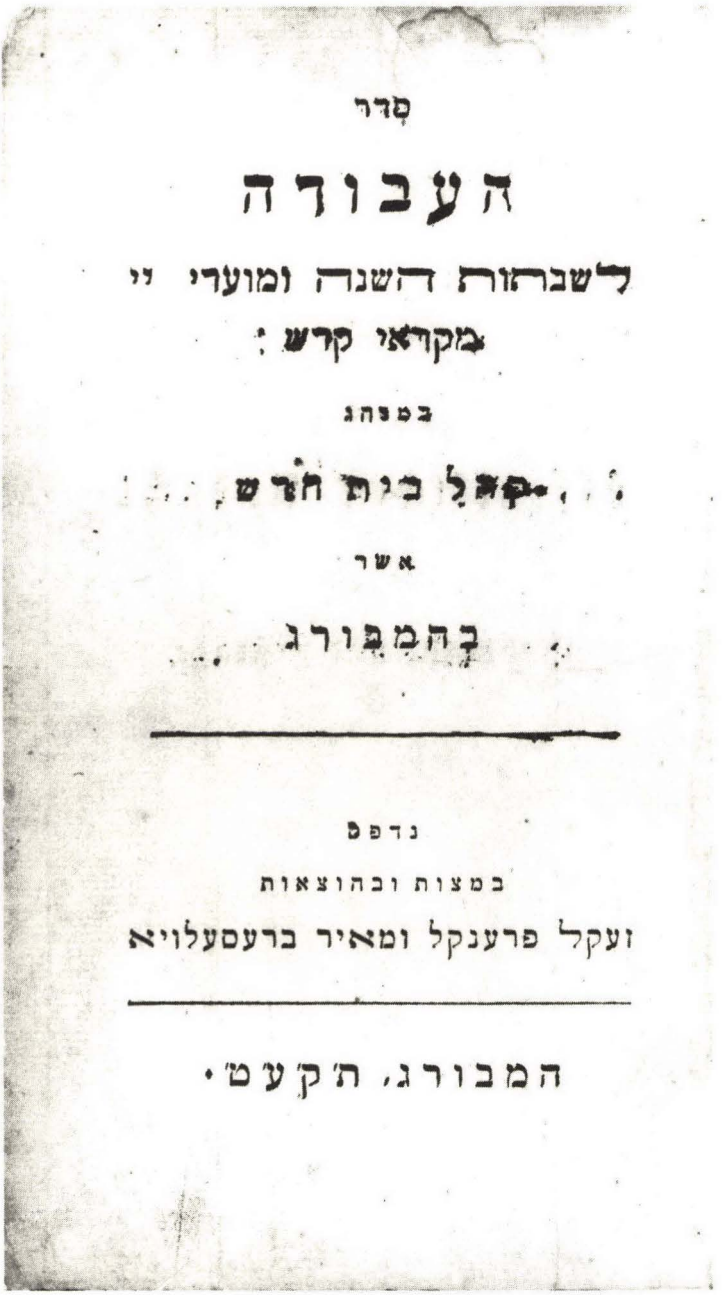


Israel Jacobson, founder of first Reform Congregation in Westphalia, 1810.
(Encyclopedia Judaica)



New Edifice by Tobias Cohn, M.D.—An allegorical design comparing the organs of the body to the divisions of a house; possible source for the name of the new house of Reform worship, *Bayit Chadash*, Hamburg.

(Jewish Encyclopedia)


סדר

העבודה

לשבתות השנה ומועדי יי

מקראי קדש:

בטיהג

קהל בית חדש

אשר

בהמבורג

נדפס

בטצות ובהוצאות

ועקל פרענקל ומאיר ברעסלויא

המבורג, תקעט.

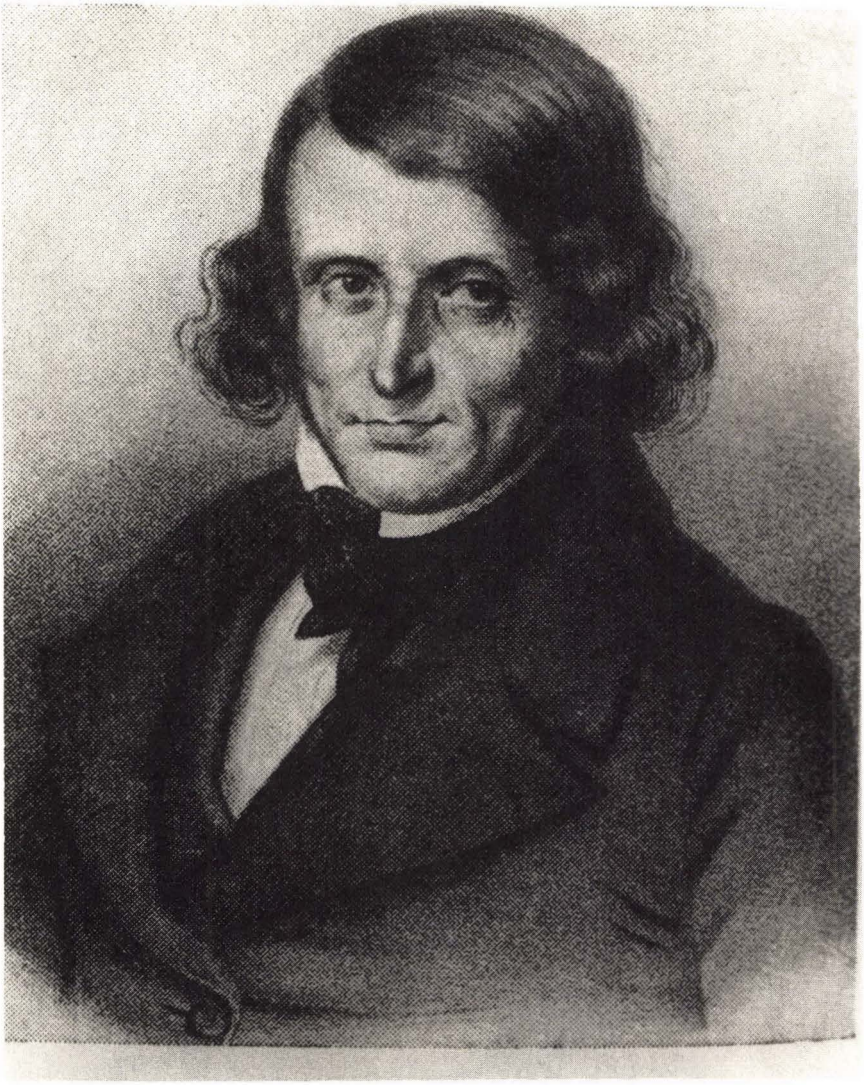
Title page, first Reform Prayer Book, *Bayit Chadash*, Hamburg, 1819.
(Courtesy, Hebrew Union College Library, Cincinnati)



Dr. Ludwig Philippson of Magdeburg, founder of Reform Press.
(*Gallery of Hebrew Poets* by London Greenberg & Co.)

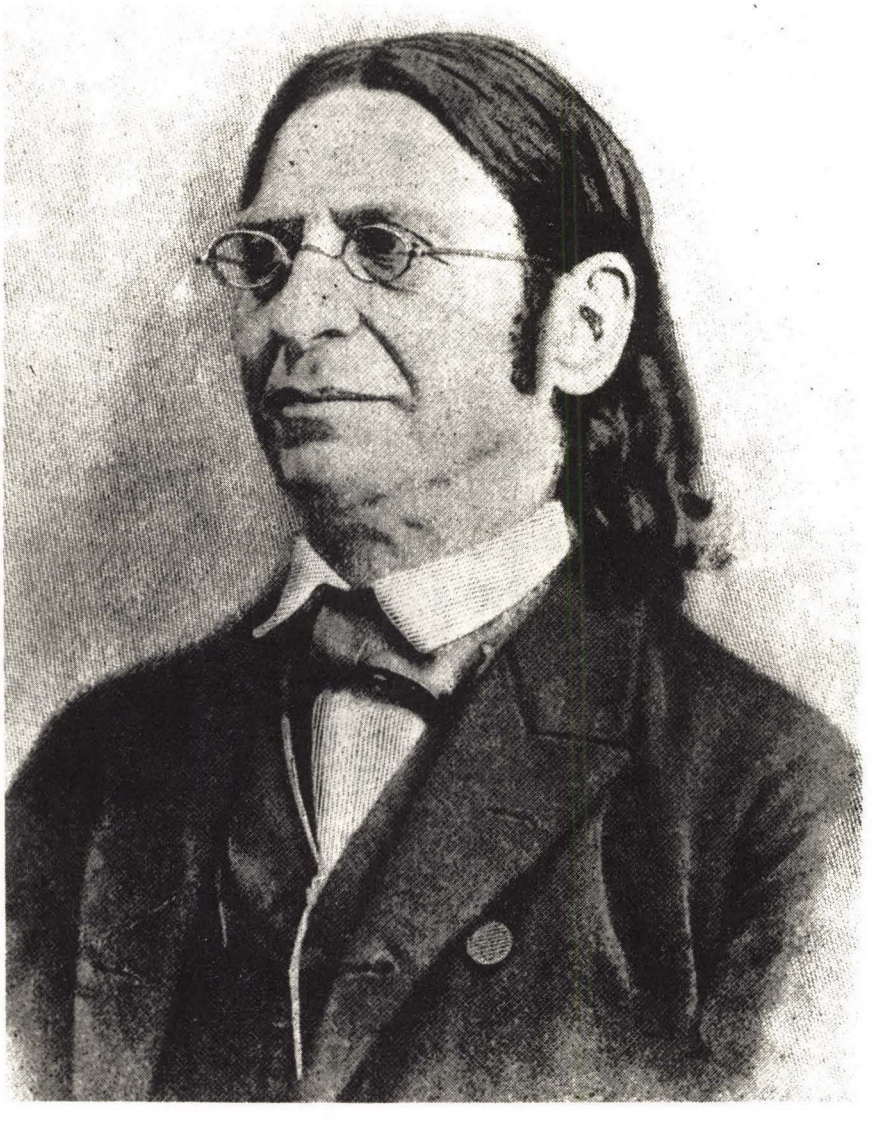


Dr. Isaac Marcus Jost of Frankfort, pioneer Educator and Reformer.
(The Jewish Encyclopedia)



Dr. Leopold Zunz of Berlin, founder of the Science of Judaism, became basis, and source for, Reforming Judaism.

(The Story of Reform Judaism by Sylvan D. Schwartzman*)*



Dr. Abraham Geiger of Breslau, Scholarly Exponent of Moderate Reform; students he inspired espoused Radical Reform in America.
(The Jewish Encyclopedia)



Dr. Zecharias Frankel, Breslau, 1855, father of the Historical School, around which rallied 19th century moderate Reform Judaism and 20th century Conservative Judaism.

(Universal Jewish Encyclopedia)



Samuel Holdheim of Berlin, exponent of Radical Reform by rejecting Talmud as a basis for Reform.

(Jewish Encyclopedia)



Rural scene in Bavaria, an hour's walk for young Reiss to trudge from the *Yeshiva* in Würzburg to the *Beth Hamidrash* in Zell.

(Courtesy The World Book Encyclopedia)

Chapter 1
Reiss' Childhood and Schooling

ON JULY 25, 1840, the 300-ton sailing vessel "Sir Isaac Newton," dropped anchor at the port of New York City. Among its passengers was Abraham Joseph Rice, the first rabbi to permanently settle on the North American continent.

Who was this scholarly man of middle age, selected and sent by his peers to serve as spiritual leader of United States Jewry?

Abraham Joseph Rice, nee Abram Joseph Reiss, was born in 1802 in the village of Gochsheim, Unterfranken, Bavaria [Bayern]. When he was one-and-a-half years old, a nurse carelessly let him fall from a table, and he became lamed for life. This accident may have been a blessing in disguise, for since his earliest childhood he had devoted himself to intensive study of *Torah* [Scriptures and its commentaries and codes].

In his boyhood, Abram attended *Cheder* [room—an elementary religious school]. In the home of his father, Me'ir, in Gochsheim, as in all rural Jewish communities throughout Germany, uncompromising religious observance was the way of life. Nurtured and reared in an atmosphere of strict tradition, the boy heard elders speaking with derision and scorn of a new and strange cult founded by a Jewish layman who introduced Christian forms and content into a "Jewish" school he founded.

Named after himself, Israel Jacobson, a wealthy financier, founded in 1801 the *Jacobsonschule* [Jacobson School], in Seesen, Westphalia, then under French rule. Stirred by ideas of equality set forth by the French Revolution when he and his fellow Jews were awarded citizenship in 1791, Jacobson sought to foster better relations between Jews and Christians and thereby to gain acceptability into Christian society. To help achieve this goal, his school provided for the free education and support of sixty children: forty Jewish and twenty Christian. From the latter came the idea of celebrating Confirmation, which was held for the first time, with girls participating, at a Sabbath service in a Jewish house of worship.

A decade after founding his school, Jacobson, at his own expense, erected a house of worship, installed an organ, and in this first "Reform Temple" fashioned a Jewish worship service for children from a Christian model. A choir of boys and girls selected from his school sang prayers and hymns in German, accompanied by an organ; their parents and friends, Jewish and Gentile, were in attendance. This event heralded by

church bells, held on July 17, 1810, became celebrated as the "Festival of the Jewish Reformation," for as of that date, Judaism had been re-formed according to what those who followed Jacobson called "*Die Zeitgeist*" [Spirit of the times]. He believed that the "Spirit of the times" is a revelation of God which could demand abolition of biblical commandments.

The outer wall of the ghetto demolished, Jacobson determined to destroy the inner wall of division and separation.

Jacobson, no doubt motivated by Moses Mendelssohn who translated the bible into pure German, sought to bring Jews and Christians into a closer relationship, and offer accommodation to those who had married out-of-faith when Napoleonic legislation encouraged legalizing civil marriages between Christians and Jews. The legislation also permanently fixed Jewish first and surnames, unlinking Jews from their Hebraic names that had been passed down for generations. The Napoleonic legislation hastened the assimilation of French Jewry and affected wealthier Jews in the larger cities of the German states.

In 1814, with the withdrawal of the French from Seesen and the surrounding region in Germany's War of Liberation, the Jews lost the civic equality they had enjoyed since 1806. Jacobson thereupon moved from Westphalia to Prussia, and in its capital, Berlin, in 1815, he opened his mansion for a school like the one in Seesen. Since the first school was unable to accommodate all who came to attend the worship, nor accommodate an organ, banker Jacob Herz Beer opened his palatial residence to a similar school and worship.

Most eminent of the preachers at Beer's prayer hall, was Dr. Leopold Zunz. He was distinguished for his scholarly essays, among them his copy of the manuscript of Shem-Tob ibn Falaquera's *Sefer ha-Ma'alot*. Of greater importance, he edited the *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judenthums*. Thereby, Zunz gave great impetus to those who sought to reform Judaism. Zunz became regarded as the founder of the modern "Science of Judaism."

Zunz, Beer, Jacobson, and other laymen who led the new Reform worship, in seeking to curry Christian favor, rejected Jewish belief in the coming of the Messiah. In the course of demonstrating their loyalty to the German "*vaterland*" they denied Israel's belief in its nationhood, and as rationalists they relinquished belief in the resurrection of the dead. They viewed Judaism as a universal religion and the Jews as a religious community.

To these preachers, the crumbling ghetto walls signified emancipation from Jewish laws and customs and entrance into Christian society.

Preaching that only the Ten Commandments were divinely inspired, spoken in all seventy tongues, to demonstrate that there is no difference

whatsoever between the Germans and the Jews as regards national features; difference of this kind being between the German and French Jews than between the Jewish German and the Christian German. They wanted to be regarded as Germans of the Mosaic faith, considered themselves Jewish humanists. Dr. Abraham Geiger, who would give the Reform movement intellectual stature, stated: "Over and above everything else, I am a human being; it is only second to that, or in constant relation to it, that I am a German and then a Jew."

In Germany too, where leading Jews converted in order to advance their economic and social status, Israel Friedlander, one of the wealthiest of Prussia's Jewish families, addressed Pastor Teller, the chief Consistorial Counsellor of Berlin, expressing the desire of many Jewish families for conversion and baptism. He asked that they be accepted under the condition that they be excused from believing in the divinity of Jesus and from participating in Church rites.

His expectation that, accepting a modified Christian creed, might enable Jews to participate in a much sought after political equality, was doomed to disappointment. Accepting a modified Jewish creed was to him the alternative, as a step towards acceptance by German society.

In 1816, a year after Jacobson opened his school in Berlin, the rabbis complained to the Prussian government. King Frederick William III, averse to all innovations, fearing revolutionary plots, and concerned that a "modern" form of synagogue worship might slow the flow of Jewish converts to Christianity, ordered Jacobson's "synagogue" closed. Its preacher, Israel (Eduard) Kley, left for Hamburg, to serve as principal of the Jewish Free School. He authored a "religious song book" and organized a worship similar to that which Jacobson had instituted.

That year Abram Reiss began his advanced studies at the *yeshivah* [seminary] of the renowned Rabbi Wolf [Abraham Benjamin] Hamburger in Fürth, kingdom of Bavaria in southern Germany. His grasp of the breadth and depth of talmudic knowledge gained the respect and admiration of students and faculty alike. This bright and alert fourteen-year-old lad, overheard hostile denunciations of the "*New Edifice*" established that year in the northern port city of Hamburg.

The leaders of the *New Edifice*, the merchants Meyer Israel Bresselau and Seckel Isaak Fränkel, authored a German-Hebrew language prayer book which they entitled *Sefer ha-Abodah—Minhag Kehal Bayit Hadash Asher Be-Hamburg* [Prayer Book—According to the Custom of the Congregation *New Edifice* which is in Hamburg]. They dedicated it to Israel Jacobson. They instituted the *Sefardic* pronunciation and cantillation; as Christian grammarians employed that dialect. The Hamburg *Beth Din* [ecclesiastical court] interdicted use of the Reform Prayer Book.

On October 18, 1818, Hamburg's *New Edifice* was dedicated. Herr Israel Eduard Kley, who had previously delivered sermons at the Beer mansion in Berlin, now shared the pulpit of the Hamburg temple with the eloquent Dr. Gotthold Salomon, who likewise had preached at Beer's prayer hall. Both preached regularly at the *Bayit Hadash* in Hamburg, titled *Die Israelitischer Tempelverein* [Israelite Temple Society].

The Temple preachers drew their inspiration from Dr. Aaron Chorin [Choriner], a businessman who occupied the rabbinical post at Arad, Hungary. Chorin, even as Moses Mendelssohn, may have inspired Jacobson at the turn of the century when he published in 1798, *Imre No'am* [Words of Pleasantness] in which he argued that the scales of sturgeon were of the kosher variety. Thereupon Rabbi Samuel Butschowitz of Assod, pronounced sentence: That Chorin must retract the contents of his publication, should he refuse to do so, his beard be cut off as a penalty for his heretical transgressions. They contemptuously referred to him as "Acher," Hebrew acronym of his name "Aaron Chorin Rabbiner," the name applied to Elisha ben Avuyah, after his apostacy in talmudic times. Before the high holy days in 1805, the youth of the community stoned him in front of the synagogue courtyard. Chorin, the first Reformer to be called Rabbi, because of his attempts to justify Reforms by citing Talmudic passages, recanted.

Mordecai Benet, chief rabbi of Moravia, declared the leaders and followers of the Hamburg Temple to be "neither Jews nor Christians, but people without faith." He charged that "their prayers were sinful and their only purpose in introducing Reforms was to curry favor and gain support of the affluent and influential."

Jacobson, seeking to gain government approval for the new ritual, first obtained letters sanctioning the organ from Aaron Chorin of Hungary, mediocre in his knowledge of talmud, and Eleazar Liebermann of Austria, a gambler, who falsely stated that the rabbis of Jerusalem concurred. Thereafter Liebermann apostacized.

Reformers viewed their Temple as a bulwark against entry into the Christian faith. Assimilation, apostacy, and conversion were rampant among Jews who sought to enter into the professions and climb the social ladder. Notable among them was the conversion of Felix Mendelssohn the composer, in 1809. Felix was the grandson of Moses who in 1783 published his translation of the Bible into German with his *Beir* [commentary], and thereby opened the new era of enlightenment in the life of European Jewry. Felix had been baptized at birth with his siblings by his father, Abraham. The father later professed to his daughter: "We reared you, your brother and sister in the Christian faith because that is the form of religion of most cultivated men;" "cultivated" referred to the Germans.

In 1817, across the channel, in London, thirteen-year-old Benjamin D'Israeli, instead of celebrating his *Bar Mitzvah* [lit. "Son of Commandment" ceremony marking his entry as an adult in fulfilling all the commandments incumbent upon mature Jews], was baptised by his parents. This assured his entry into a political career.

Chorin wrote a paper dated April 7, 1818, on the permissibility of an organ in a Jewish house of worship. He published it, along with those he claimed supported him, in *Nogah haZedek* [Light of Righteousness], an apologetic attempt by sympathizers, published in 1818 in Dessau. Over the years he served he guided the fledgling Temple. Upon his death, the Temple organ pealed to his memory and in his native Arad, Catholic church bells tolled during his funeral. All his children had embraced the Catholic church.

The leading European Rabbi, Moses Schreiber of Bratislava in Hungary, the city generally referred to by its German name Pressburg [in present-day Slovakia, Czechoslovakia], famed for his responsa, declared the organ inadmissible because of its pagan origin—the biblical Jubal. This responsum [interpellation and decision] of Rabbi Schreiber, better known under his pen name *Chasam Sofer* [Seal of a Scribe], was published in 1819, in Altona, with those of rabbis throughout Europe in a compendium of responsa, collectively a fierce polemic, titled *Eileh Dibrei haBris* [These are the Words of the Covenant] issued by the Rabbinate of Hamburg. All of these rabbis placed upon the organ-temple and their prayer book, the ban of excommunication.

The Rabbis called the "Templers" [Templars—Preachers of the Temple] *non-believers*, and they in turn, contemptuously called the rabbis *Altglaubige* ["Old-Timers," or "Old-Believers"]; a misapplied term taken from the sphere of Christian theology, which signified faith rather than action and did not represent Judaism. The Templers called their followers "Germans of the Mosaic Persuasion." They bethought their movement as being the Judaic counterpart of the Protestant Reformation —the Jewish Reformation. Accordingly they selected for themselves the slogan *Reformers*. The Rabbis in turn became titled by the fitting Greek term, *Orthodox* ["Correct Doctrine"], The Reformers then inflected the term Orthodox with contempt and derision.

From Berlin, Hamburg, and Frankfort, Reform made its way into southern Germany, to Fürth, Münich, and Würzburg; even overseas to America. In 1818, Samuel Myers of Virginia, in organizing a Jewish congregation in Norfolk, read *Modern Religion*, by Moses Hart, published that year in New York. Assimilationist Hart proposed a universal religion with special prayers, rites, theology, commandments, and nature festivals, all derived from the rationalism of the eighteenth-century Deists and the

French Revolution. At the same time, he corresponded with Moses Elias Levy, on the subject. Levy, a Florida landholder, then in Philadelphia on business, recommended to Myers that religion for the congregation they were about to found, be Reformed in consonance with the efforts of Israel Jacobson in Prussia.

Alarmed at the spread of Reform, in 1821 Rabbi Wolf Hamburger dispatched from Fürth an urgent message to his former student, Chasam Sofer, successful in combatting Reform in Hungary. Rabbi Hamburger requested the Pressburg rabbi to serve as Chief Rabbi of Germany with his office in Fürth, in order to combat the Reform movement which the *Chasam Sofer* had successfully defeated in Hungary. His success in combatting reformers who had either attended or graduated university, may be attributed to his secular as well as vast Talmudic knowledge. He knew mathematics, astronomy and physics, as well as anatomy and surveying, not only fluent in his native tongue, but also in German, French and Latin.

The Chasam Sofer was on an important mission to Vienna, which for the moment could not be delayed. Met and accompanied by a leading member of the Viennese Jewish community, they passed a long line of people waiting in the cold to enter a large building. At first he thought they were needy persons awaiting to enter a soup kitchen. But when he noticed that they were very expensively dressed, he asked about them. His host informed him that the building was one of the most famous theaters in Vienna and that night they were the fortunate ones, having tickets for the play, "Der Betler" [The Beggar], to be enacted by the most talented of actors.

"You mean to tell me, that people go to such lengths to see someone act like a beggar!" blurted out the Chasam Sofer indignantly. "Why, in my community I have, alas, real beggars, not actors, who are delighted with the smallest coins that people give them."

The host realizing that the Chasam Sofer was not familiar with the theater, explained: "Rabbi, please understand, it is the acting, that is what they are waiting to see."

The Chasam Sofer relaxed and bethought himself with a feeling of satisfaction. Now he understood why in contrast to the rabbis that he ordained, who receive very meager salaries, the Reform preachers were well paid. Why *Orech Yamim B'yeminah, Uvismolah Osher V'chovod* ["Length of days is in her right hand; In her left hand are riches and honor"]. He explained to his host: "It is the acting for which they are paid!"

Although the Chasam Sofer, a native of Frankfort [also Frankfurt] -am-Mein, was tempted to accept the call of Rabbi Hamburger and leave

for Fürth, he declined because of his concern for the 250 students attending his *yeshivah* in Pressburg who depended upon him for their material and spiritual wants. Chasam Sofer further felt that his departure from Hungary would leave open doors for the Reformers, whom he described as "foxes which destroy the vineyards." Rabbi Hamburger's worst fears were realized when two of his former students, Joseph Aub and Isaac Loüwi, after leaving his *yeshivah* without having attained ordination, attended universities and then, titled "Dr.", occupied pulpits in Bayreuth and Fürth, preaching Reform.

Other students of the Fürth *yeshivah* who studied at a German university and preached Reform were David Einhorn of Hoppstadten and Birkenfeld, who became the leader of radical Reform in America, Max [Maximilian] Lilienthal, who became the leader of moderate Reform in America, and Leopold Stein of Frankfort, who exerted a great influence on Reformers who settled in America.

Einhorn, who like Reiss, had attended the *Yeshivah* at Fürth, decried the ignorance of talmudic scholars of secular studies. Characteristic, said Einhorn, is the tale told of one of the learned talmudists of Fürth: Summoned before the magistrate to give a written deposition, he sent his wife as a substitute. When questioned as to why her husband did not appear, she naively replied: "My husband is a Hebrew scholar; he can not write German." Thus, Reiss, like the talmudic students and rabbis of his day, wrote the German tongue in Hebrew characters instead of the Gothic script.

The Orthodox regarded attendance at a university as the first step toward apostasy. As Einhorn observed, the Orthodox referred to a university in the manner that the *Proverbs* speak of an evil woman—"None that go unto her return again" and in speaking of an university education, "Numerous are those slain by her."

Among the "slain" was six-year-old Heinrich Karl Marx, christened by his parents, who in 1824 embraced the Lutheran faith. This guaranteed his acceptance in the Trier Gymnasium and Bonn University. Last but not least, in 1825, twenty-seven-year old Harry Heine embraced Christianity and changed his name to Heinrich. The University of Gottingen thereupon awarded him the degree of doctor of jurisprudence. Heine's bosom friend Moses Moser had joined Eduard Gans, the German jurist, founder in 1819 of the *Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*, whose goal was to prevent the conversion of Jews, but was himself baptized in 1825. Gans and followers of Reform viewed their movements as the antidote to assimilation and conversion which reached epidemic proportions. The Orthodox perceived them as being the door through which

Jews passed into the Christian fold. Heine himself admitted that: "Reform had attempted to heal the wounded body of Judaism, but because of its cob-web bandage of reason, Israel must bleed to death."

Universities attracted the youth and with government demanding secular education in *Yeshivos*, those in Prague, Frankfort, Altona, Hamburg, and Halberstadt closed their doors.

In 1826, special legislation in Bavaria required the *yeshivah* of Fürth to introduce modern branches of study into its curriculum: philosophy, literature, history, and natural science. Rather than submit, Rabbi Wolf Hamburger closed his *yeshivah*. The students dispersed, Abram Reiss removing to the Würzburg *yeshivah* under the direction of Rabbi Abraham Bing, who, like the Chasam Sofer, had been a student of Rabbi Hamburger at the Fürth *yeshivah* in its opening years.

The Würzburg *yeshivah* had ordained many famous rabbis, among them Nathan Marcus Adler ha-Kohen, Chief Rabbi of England; Isaac Bernays, elected to the rabbinical post of Hamburg where he led the opposition to the new Temple; Jacob J. Ettlinger, rabbi of Altona in Schleswig-Holstein, whose published responsa guided world Jewry, S[?] Enoch who founded in Altona a Burgerschule [Jewish secondary school], S[Z]eligmann Baer Bamberger, district rabbi of Würzburg and head of a *yeshivah* that he founded in that city; Samuel Mayer, at Hechingen the only rabbi-attorney in all Germany; Rabbi Moses Sachs, first Jew to emigrate from Germany to Palestine in modern times, and Benjamin Lilienthal, the first to emigrate from the United States to Palestine; also Sh'muel, the father of Joseph Leucht, Joseph becoming Rice's son-in-law half-a-century later. Even as at the Fürth *yeshivah*, a few of the Würzburg *yeshivah* students defected to Reform, among them Henry Hochheimer, and Judah Wechsler, probably Abraham's brother, who emigrated to America.

Reform-minded individuals who attended universities, whether or not they attained a diploma, deemed themselves divinely ordained to lead a congregation as rabbi. And if they had studied in a *Yeshivah* and could translate a page from the *Talmud* considered themselves learned *Talmudists*, thoroughly competent to deal with every aspect of Jewish law.

The Orthodox rabbis jibed that since the Reform "rabbis" began to call themselves "doctors," the Jewish people began to ail. The leaders of Reform, whether or not they possessed a doctorate degree, as long as they may have attended a university even for a semester titled themselves "doctor."

One of the leading "Doctors" was Abraham Geiger. At Breslau [Polish Wroclaw], in Prussian Poland, Rabbi Solomon [Salomon] Tiktin in 1836, became embroiled in bitter opposition to the appointment of

Geiger, for the position of *Rabbinatassessor* [Assistant or Second Rabbi].

Abraham Geiger, in his *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift für Jüdische Theologie*, founded a Scientific Theology of Judaism. He, together with Leopold Zunz, the founder of the Science of Judaism, laid the basis of Reform on the adamantine rock of science, thereby posing the greatest danger to Orthodoxy.

To the support of Tiktin came the militant champion of Orthodoxy in Prussian Poland, Rabbi Israel Deutsch of Beuthen [Polish: Bytom]. He and his brother, David Deutsch, rabbi of Muslowitz and Sorau [Polish Myslowice and Zary], opposed Geiger's nomination and jointly authored a pamphlet attacking his Reform views.

Geiger nonetheless won the election. Subsequently, at the funeral of one Heyman Oppenheim, those gathered to pay their respects had become incited against Reform by Tiktin's remarks. When Geiger began his eulogy as "second rabbi" the mourners were about to shove him into the grave. Geiger pleaded: "I do not want to disturb the rest of the dead. Go in peace."

Reiss, became fired with a zealousness to emulate Tiktin, Deutsch, and other Orthodox leaders in the battle against Reform. To this end, he dedicated himself with even greater devotion in the study of the Torah.

Reiss, in the course of his advanced talmudic studies, gained the coveted title, *Talmid Chacham* [advanced and pious scholar]. Fittingly, he was granted the *Hattarat Horoah* [authority to render decisions]. his *semicha* [ordination] bestowed by " . . . three of the most pious and learned *raufs* [rabbis] in Europe"—Rabbi Abraham Bing, Rabbi Wolf Hamburger, and the third, possibly the Chasam Sofer. His life's goal, to learn and to teach, inspired him to serve as rabbi and teacher.

Lacking the university education demanded by the Bavarian authorities to qualify for a synagogue post, thirty-year-old Rabbi Reiss accepted the distinguished post of Professor of *Talmud* at the *Beth Hamidrash* [House of Study] in nearby Zell.

It was an hour's walk from Würzburg to Zell. Reiss made his way past hills covered with lush vegetation and vineyards and along the Mosel River to Zell, a village of 3000 inhabitants, its houses aligned along the embankment guarded by old fortifications.

Jews had come to Zell only recently. First among them was Mendel Rosenbaum. A successful peddler who had influence with the Emperor. Mendel had been admitted to the town in 1820. He opened a blacksmith shop, hiring Christian workers to hammer out nails, since Jews were forbidden to engage in such a handicraft. Soon, Mendel was joined by the Rosenthal family. Together they purchased an abandoned Carmelite convent, located in the Zell bend, which had an impressive view of the valley.

Other Jewish families followed, taking residence in the former convent, until a hundred souls settled in what the Christians of Zell called "*Die Judenhof*" [Jews' Court].

In the first years of his settling in Zell, Reb Mendel's concern for the best education of his children, prompted him to request of Rabbi Abraham Bing to send his best scholar as instructor, promising one of his daughters in marriage. Rabbi Bing sent Lazarus [Eliezer] Bergmann. He married Rivka Sila Rosenbaum and in 1834 departed to settle in the Holy Land and founded a *yeshivah* in Jerusalem.

As Zell attracted other Jewish settlers, Rabbi Bing sent Rabbi Reiss to found a *yeshivah* there. Reiss corresponded with his colleague, Bergmann, on questions of Jewish law, as is the custom between talmudic scholars. Under Reiss's direction the Zell Seminary reached such a degree of excellence that it educated most of the leading rabbis of German Jewry.

Reiss was inspired by Mendel Rosenbaum's victory over a "Rabbi" Neuberger who sought to introduce Reform at Aschaffenburg in Bavaria; also, of Reb Mendel's preventing the Reformers, Max Lilienthal of Münich and a Dr. [Wolf?] Schlesinger of Frankfort-am-Mein, from gaining the pulpit at Würzburg upon the death of Rabbi Abraham Bing in 1839. That significant post, Chief Rabbi of Würzburg was awarded to Seligmann Baer Bamberger.

In connection with Reform, it should be noted that a descendant of Reb Mendel Rosenbaum, Rabbi Hilo Wechsler, a Cabbalist as well as Talmudist, published in Würzburg in German, a booklet entitled *Jaschern Milo Debor*.

Rabbi Wechsler stated that he was haunted by the cabbalistic interpretation of his dreams which revealed the ultimate destruction of German Jewry. Orthodox and Reformers alike would be annihilated for presenting only lip service to the Creator while misrepresenting the spirit of Jewish law in their daily lives. But their lives would be spared only by returning to their homeland, the Land of Israel, and Rabbi Wechsler asks: What better place to await the return of the Messiah?

During the mid-1830's, Rabbi Abram Reiss, envied his colleague Rabbi Eliezer Bergmann upon his emigration to the Holy Land. However, his assumption of Bergmann's position as *Rosh ha-Yeshiva* [Head of the Seminary] of the *Beth Hamidrash* [House of Study] of Zell, at the urging of the Chief Rabbis of Würzburg, coupled with his engagement and marriage to Rosalie, daughter of Sh'muel Halevi Leucht, the Leucht and Zell's founding Rosenbaum family intertwined through marriage, dictated his stay in his native Bavaria.

Chapter 2
Bavaria: Purgatory in Paradise

In 1836, the German *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* reported:

> THEY ARE emigrating indeed. We have young men who have completed their apprenticeship . . . who meet all the requirements . . . yet cannot obtain letters of protection and domicile . . . What else should they do but seek a new fatherland . . . ?

Beginning in the summer of 1836 boatloads of hundreds of Bavarian-Jewish youths, ages seventeen to twenty-five, arrived in the port of New York. Every summer thereafter thousands would sail and steam across the Atlantic to America. Thus began the mass migration of German Jews to America. They had left behind a land of incredible beauty, of hills and mountains, and of waterfalls whose white waters churned along narrow channels until drawn and lost in the quiet depths of blue lakes of clear, cold water. But they had also left behind a hostile people, where anti-Semitism was the official policy.

Bavaria, a paradise for Christians, proved to be a purgatory for Jews. After the defeat of Napoleon in Leipzig, Prussia, in 1813, as a reaction against the French Emperor's liberalism, the Kingdom of Bavaria enacted in its Edict of June 10, 1813 over three hundred restrictive laws governing its Jews. These included Pharaonic legislation intended to limit their numbers. Only the first-born son of a family was allowed to marry "because the number of Jewish families in places where they are living should not be increased; it is rather the intention to reduce them wherever the number is excessive." Sons other than the first-born could marry upon payment of a thousand florins [about $5000] or be granted the privilege if their elder brothers died or departed the country.

Young Bavarian Jews had yet another incentive to emigrate. Of all the 50,000 Bavarian Jews none could have a profession other than that of peddling. All other trades and professions were closed to them, obtainable only on payment of a high tax that could be refused.

That anti-Semitism had been deeply rooted within the populace was evidenced by the fact that many Bavarian towns had no Jewish inhabitants; once having been expelled, they were forbidden to return. The few communities where Jews settled in larger numbers, such as Fürth and Würzburg, came to be called "cities of refuge."

After the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo, Belgium, in 1815, the year

that the British signed a treaty of peace with the Americans at Ghent, Belgium to end the War of 1812, English and Dutch Jews resumed their migrations across the ocean. A few German Jews too, following the Pharaonic measures enacted against them in the Bavarian Diet during the war, began to trickle to America.

Leaders of Bavarian Jewry petitioned in 1819 for resumption of the rights extended to them in the days of the Napoleonic Conquest. Thereupon students at Würzburg University vented their hatred of the Jews by assaulting their Jewish classmates. They incited the townspeople to attack Jews, leading them with the cry, "HEP! HEP!"—the three initial letters of *Hiersolyma Est Perdita* [Latin for Jerusalem is lost].

Despite the outbursts of the mobs and the restrictive living conditions for Jews in Bavaria very few braved the Atlantic crossing. But the youths were soon inspired by success stories of those who preceded them.

One Bavarian emigrant, upon taking leave of the fatherland, was asked upon embarking for America, whether he would not come back from America, replied: "I will not return before North America has become Bavarian."

Das Füllhorn at Dinkelsbuehl, published letters of German Jews who had made the voyage to America. One of these, dated June 16, 1834 received by his parents in Bavaria, stated that after working a few days for a Frenchman, he then started his own business, which pleased him greatly. Also that there are 800 Jewish families living in New York, they have 3 synagogues, 2 German and 1 Portuguese.

Another report published in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* [Associated Jewish Press] came from a shoemaker. He wrote home that he had an ample livelihood, even if not wealth. His father in Bavaria rejoiced that he had full civil liberty and an opportunity to comply, unhindered, with all religious precepts.

One such report published in *Das Füllhorn* at Bamberg had been written by a fellow Bavarian Jew who had first emigrated to England in 1824 and then to America in 1834. After he established himself in New York City as a clothier, he wrote, on August 18, 1835, of his new-found happiness:

> Arriving here safely after a long and difficult journey, I got a job in a store where I remained for 15 months, and saved a nice sum of money; during this time I met an English girl outstanding in every respect who to my good fortune consented to marry me. We live an extremely happy and contented life and six months ago were blessed with a healthy, pretty little daughter.
>
> I own a well-stocked clothing store here and live quite happily among my friends and the relatives of my wife and as part of a circle

of many respectable Israelites, for more than 2,000 Israelites live here, most of whom are religious observers.

There are three synagogues here. One large German one [*B'nai Jeshurun*], which is very beautiful and a richly decorated Portuguese one [*Shearith Israel*] and further a small German synagogue [*Anshe Chesed*]. The Israelites living here come from various countries: Americans, Englishmen, Dutchmen, Portuguese, and German.

Everybody can choose freely whether or in which synagogue he wants to be enrolled. In general the Israelites here live completely free and without restrictions like all the rest of the citizens, and many immigrants still come to America from Germany and from our region [Bavaria] . . . .

Solomon Hirschell, [also Hirschel, Herschell] Chief Rabbi of England, wrote to the leaders of "*Kehilla Kodesh* [Kehilloh Kedoshoh] *B'nai Jeshurun*" [Holy Community Sons of Jeshurun] that he was

> happy to find that our brethern in the Western Hemisphere are not inattentive to their best interests, moral and mental improvements, and consequently obedient to the laws and observances enjoined by our God and bequeathed unto us by our fathers . . . .

Overseas, from America, letters from brothers and sons were reaching Jewish homes in Bavaria, telling of their success and happiness in a land of equal opportunity and religious freedom.

Finally, in 1836, Jewish scholars and congregational representatives of the Jewish communities of Bavaria, joined together to influence the Bavarian government to frame a general constitution which would allow for unrestricted emancipation of the Jews. The government then seized upon the emergence of a Reform movement as a reason to reject their petition, mockingly expressing its disapproval of "rationalistic criticism and enlightenment that had degenerated into destructive neologism and religious indifference."

Persecuted in Bavaria for a quarter-of-a-century, ever since the retreat of Napoleon, when his spirit of liberty, equality and fraternity dissipated, and when in 1836, the founding in Bavaria of an association for industrial and humanitarian pursuits foundered, and their last chance for gaining economic opportunity failed, the youth of Bavaria gave up hope of ever achieving minimal human rights. The mass-migration of Bavarian youth to America, was set into motion.

In the summer of 1836, two-to-three hundred Jewish young men sailed from Bavaria to America. In the summer of 1837, three-or-four hundred reached the port of New York, with an equal number reported

on the way. The mass migration of German Jews had begun from Bavaria; also the South German states of Baden and Württemberg.

That year, 1837, the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* reported:

> They are emigrating indeed. We have young men who have completed their apprentiship. . . . who meet all the requirements . . . yet cannot obtain letters of protection and domicile. . . . What else should they do but seek a new fatherland. . . .

Bavarian Jewish youths, among them many betrothed couples, embarked from German ports en masse. They were filled with cheer and hope upon entry into American ports, onto the shores of the land which represented freedom and opportunity. They were not disappointed and wrote home news of their new found liberty and achievements. The news spread like wildfire throughout Bavaria and the other German states.

In 1837, the newly arrived hundreds of Bavarian Jews took to peddling in the streets of New York, too many for any to earn even a bare living. The congregations, unable to support this sudden influx, organized a Society they named *Zeire Hazon* [Tender Sheep]. They planned to buy land upon which to settle those who had a knowledge of agriculture or mechanics, but when the wealthy, leading Portuguese congregation did not join, the "Tender Sheep" fell by the wayside.

In 1838, a thousand more immigrants arrived, mostly from Bavaria. Members of the German congregation *Anshe Chesed* [Men of Mercy], then bought land in Ulster County, New York, calling the colony, *Sholem* [*Sholam, Sholom:* Peace]. These colonizing farmers built houses, a synagogue; and used a live spring for a *mikveh* [ritual bath]. For some unrecorded reason, this colony was abandoned after three years; all that remained a century after their settlement was a pile of granite rocks, remains of their homes and synagogue and two slabs, monuments over graves of the first Jews to establish an agricultural settlement in America.

In the summer of 1839, thousands followed, the waves of Jewish emigrants from Bavaria cresting each year. A report from Würzburg in 1839 told:

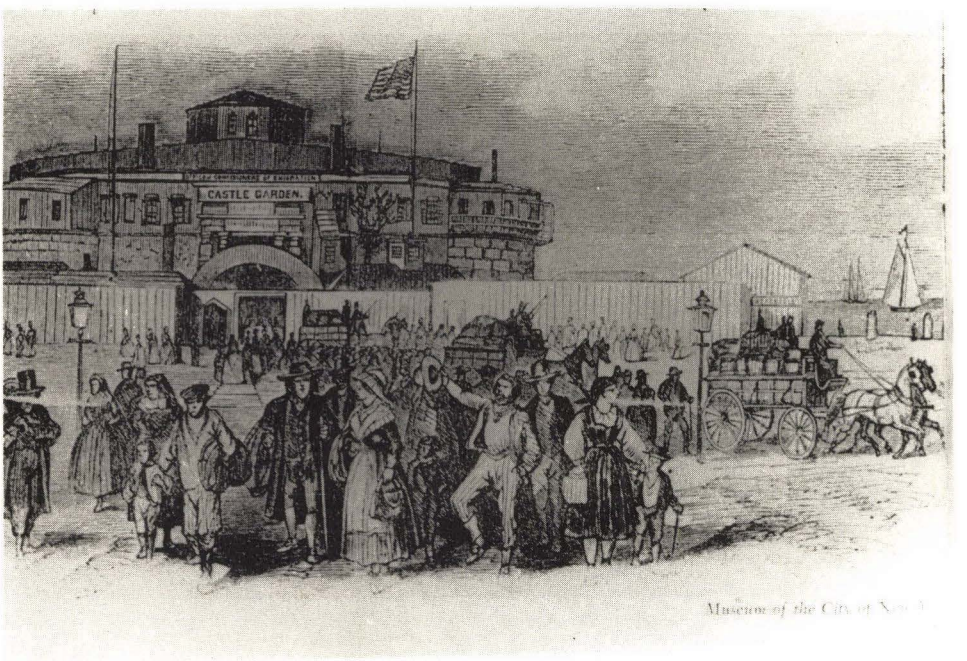
> Departures for America this year have now started on a large scale among us, and hardly a day passes without a band crossing our northern border. On May 6 the Israelites emigrating from the neighboring parts of the Bavarian and Saxon frontiers gathered in *Meiningen*, and almost 100 strong entered together upon their journey. They will betake themselves jointly to *one* ship and they intend to found a small Jewish community together in America. They are carrying a *sefer torah*, as well as a *megillah*, a shofar, etc. and hav-

ing taken along likewise such persons as are qualified for the exercise of religious functions, as slaughtering, circumcision, further—religious teachers, cantors, etc. They have made the necessary arrangements in Hamburg in advance so that they may live during the voyage undisturbed in their religion. . . .

A second report that year added:

> Not only artisans and merchants are emigrating but also men of the learned class, since the prospects for rabbinical or medical positions are not particularly bright owing to the vast number of candidates. . . .

This was an ominous note, for these rabbinical candidates were merely students who knew little more than to read Hebrew. Judaism in the western hemisphere had reached an all-time low.



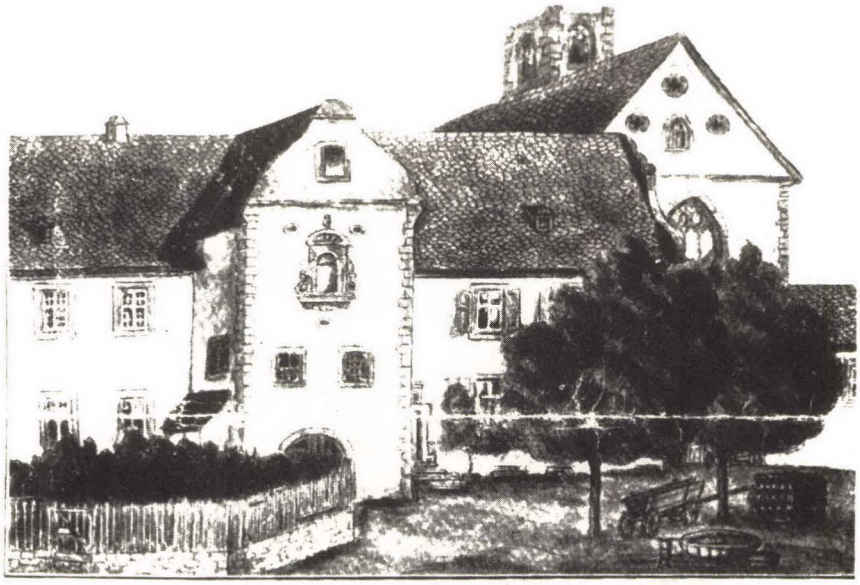
Castle Garden, an amusement park, was turned into an immigration depot, when that office was established after the mid-19th century.
(Museum of the City of New York)

BOOK II

CHIEF RABBI OF THE UNITED STATES

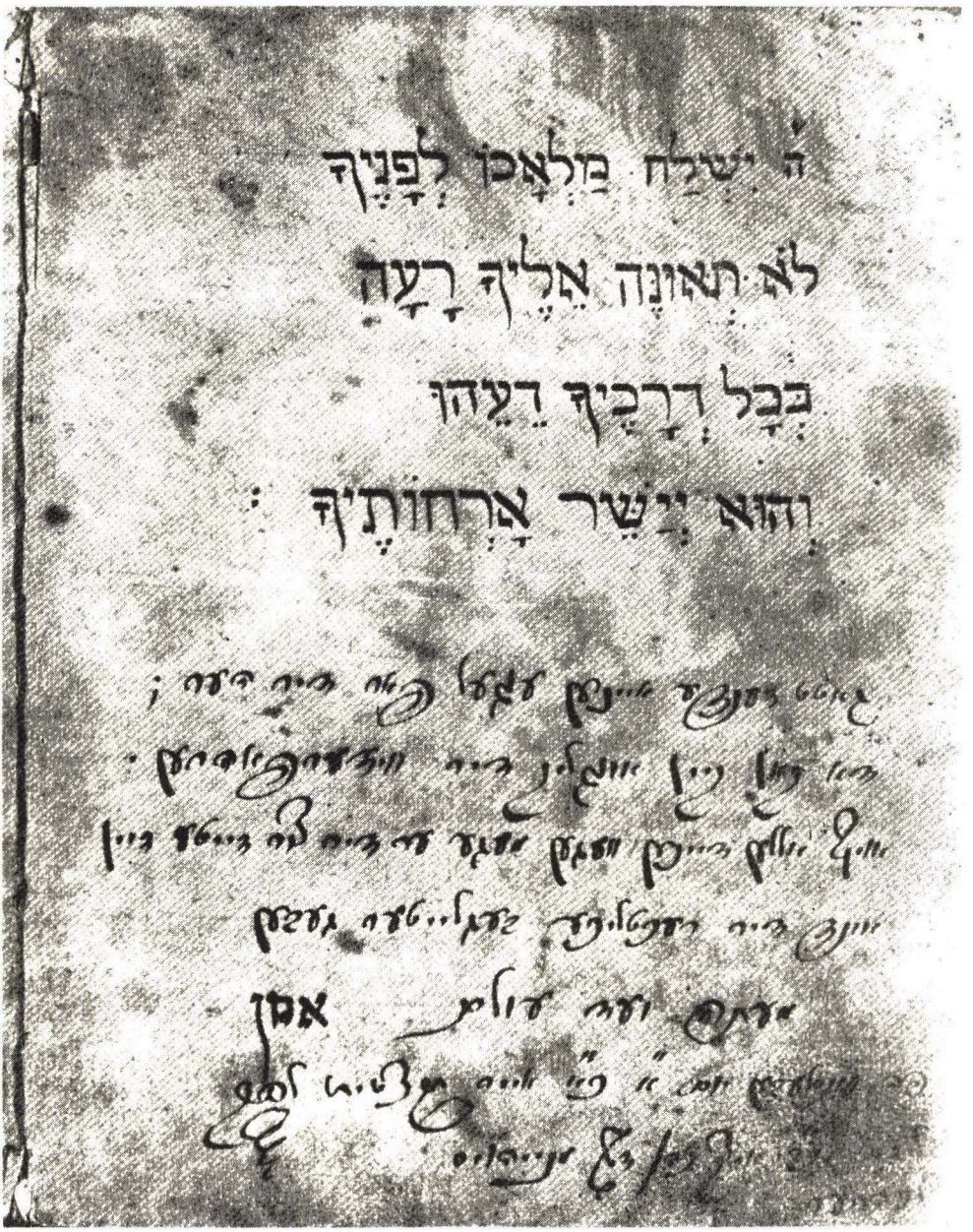


Aboard "Sir Isaac Newton," Rices sailed the Atlantic in 1840.
(Courtesy Dr. Jurgen Meyer, Bremen-Lesum, up Willmansland, Germany)



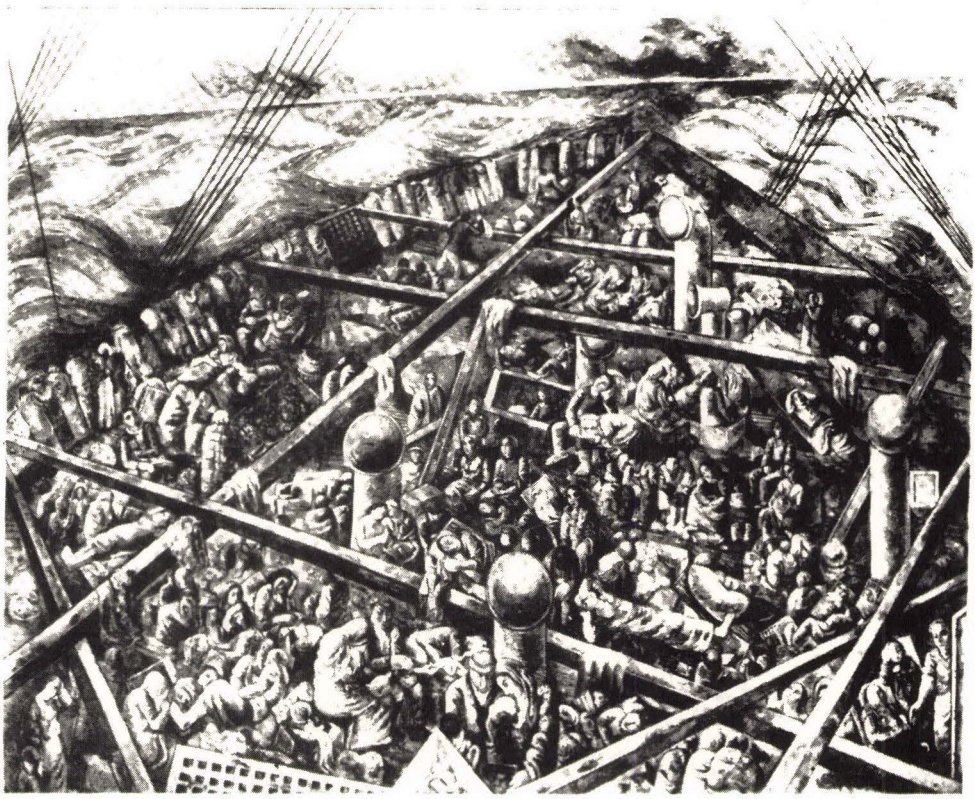
Beth Hamidrash in Judenhof, Zell, Bavaria, where Rice served as *Rash ha-yeshiva*, until being sent to America to serve as Chief Rabbi of the United States.

(Courtesy Dr. Arthur Hyman, Jerusalem, Israel)



Opening page, Ethical Testament to emigrant departing Unsleben, Bavaria for America in 1839.

(Frontispiece, *History of the Jews of Cleveland,* by Lloyd P. Gartner)



On deck of 19th century emigrant ship.
(Frontispiece, *To Dwell in Safety* by Mark Wischnitzer)



Standard Prayer Book of German Jews, Roedelheim, 1840.
(Courtesy Hebrew Union College Library, Cincinnati)



Miniature Prayer Book with prayers for travelers to America, Hannover, 1840.

(To Dwell in Safety by Mark Wischnitzer)



Steerage Passage, 19th century.
(A Short History of the Jews in the United States by Hyman Grinstein)



By Castle Garden Amusement Park in port of New York, mid-19th century, arriving immigrants accosted by carriage drivers, innkeepers, peddlers, and others.

(We Lived There Too by Kenneth Libo and Irving Howe)

The undersigned have been appointed an Executive Committee, for the purpose of raising funds to aid and assist persons, recently arrived from foreign countries, and who may be in a destitute situation.

In addressing you, it is proper to state that a meeting was convened, of a number of the House of Israel, at the suggestion of the officers of the several Hebrew Benevolent Societies, to take into consideration the distressed situation, of a great number of Israelites, lately arrived in this city from foreign countries. The funds of the different Societies having been nearly exhausted.

The gentlemen composing the meeting, having interchanged opinions, adopted the following Preamble, preceeding certain resolutions, one of which was as follows:—

"Resolved, that the Executive Committee be, and they are hereby impowered, under their hands and seals, to authorize such persons as they may think proper, to solicit Subscriptions in money, fuel, clothing, or such articles of food as the charitable and humane may be disposed to contribute."

PREAMBLE.

Whereas a great number of our nation, in very indigent circumstances, have arrived in this city, from different parts of Europe, and the probability of a number more shortly arriving the situation of most of them being such as to demand the attention and sympathy of every feeling heart; independent of the bounden duty we are under, as Yehudim, to assist each other in distress, and the bounden obligation by which we are commanded so to do, in Deuteronomy, Chap. 10, v. 19. ואהבתם את הגר כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים as read in Synagogue on the Last Sabbath, *Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.* And in Deut. XV. 11. פתח תפתח את ידך לאחיך לעניך ולאביונך בארצך *"Open thy hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land."*

And as the funds of the Congregations and the different Societies, are not in a situation to afford relief to the great number that may absolutely require the same, and as the approaching cold weather may find them in a still more deplorable situation: the present season should not be suffered to pass without taking some measures to provide a fund, at least sufficient to supply the destitute, with the means to keep them from perishing.

The Executive Committee met on the evening of the 29th of August, and appointed Mr. Samuel N. Judah, their Treasurer, and also, the following Gentlemen to hand round the subscription lists.

Messrs. SOLOMON J. JOSEPH, ABRAHAM MITCHELL.	No. 1.
Messrs. ELEAZER S. LAZARUS, MORLAND MICHOLL.	No. 2.
Messrs. T. L. TOBIAS, MYER LEVY.	No. 3.

In furtherance of this pressing business, you will be waited on by one of the above Committees and we trust and pray that this first call ever made in behalf of so great a number of strangers, will be answered by the usual liberality of our brethren.

The number already arrived is at least 3 or 400, and the probability that an equal number are now on their way to this country, and mostly bound to the port of New-York.

In addition to the duties of the Executive Committee, they will, as far as the funds admit, assist such persons as may be disposed to leave the city, and also endeavour to procure work for those who have trades.

An account of all donations will be duly entered on the minutes of the Committee, and a full and correct Journal kept of all proceedings, and which will always be open to the inspection of the contributors

Relief in fuel, &c. will be delivered in preference to money, which will only be given under special circumstances of the applicant. The Committee, deem it quite unnecessary to make any appeal to the feelings of their brethren: satisfied as they are that they have never failed to answer the call of the distressed.

Constituting this Committee your almoners, will, in a great measure, relieve yourself from private calls.

We are respectfully

Your humble Servants,

MOSES L. MOSES,
ABRAHAM MITCHELL,
SOLOMON J. JOSEPH,
MORLAND MICHOLL,
ISRAEL B. KURSHEEDT,
T. L. TOBIAS,
ELEAZER S. LAZARUS,
MYER LEVY,
NAPHTALI PHILLIPS.

tember 3d. 1837.

Circular of Hebrew Benevolent Societies of New York, September 3, 1837; an appeal for aid to German-Jewish immigrants; first arrivals of the previous summer.

(Lyons Collection SB III, 129, at American Jewish Historical Society)



Silhouette of Israel Baer Kursheedt (center) and family members.
(The Jewish Heritage in American Folk Art
by Norman L. Kleeblatt and Gerard C. Wertkin)



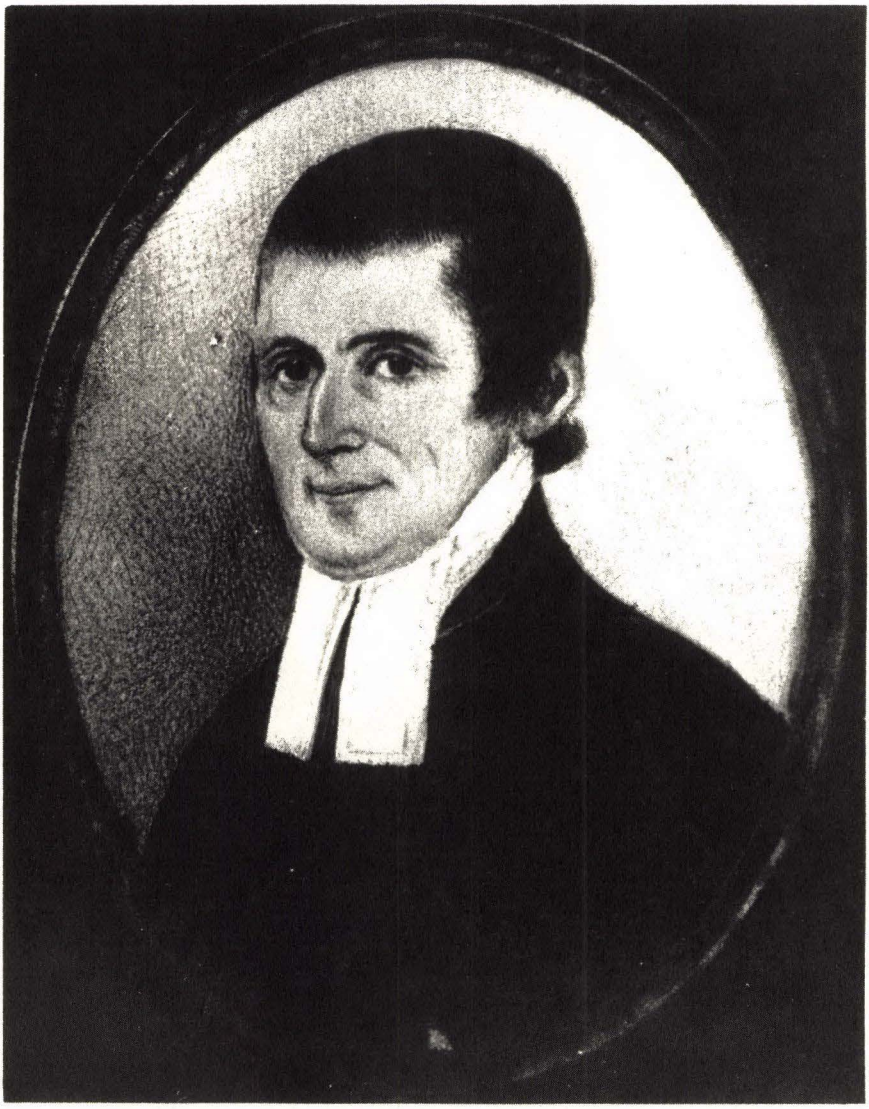
B'nai Jeshurun, New York, 1826-1850; first German-rite synagogue in New York City.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



Manuel Josephson, leading Talmudist in U.S., in Colonial and Revolutionary America, *Mickve Israel*, Philadelphia.

(Courtesy American Jewish Historical Society)



Reverend Gershom Mendes Seixas, lay Rabbi of New York, in Colonial and Revolutionary America.

(Courtesy American Jewish Historical Society)



Chacham Yehiel Besel, visiting Jerusalemite Rabbi embarked from America in the late summer of 1840 when the Rice's disembarked.
(*Shluchei Eretz Yisroel* by Avraham Yaari)

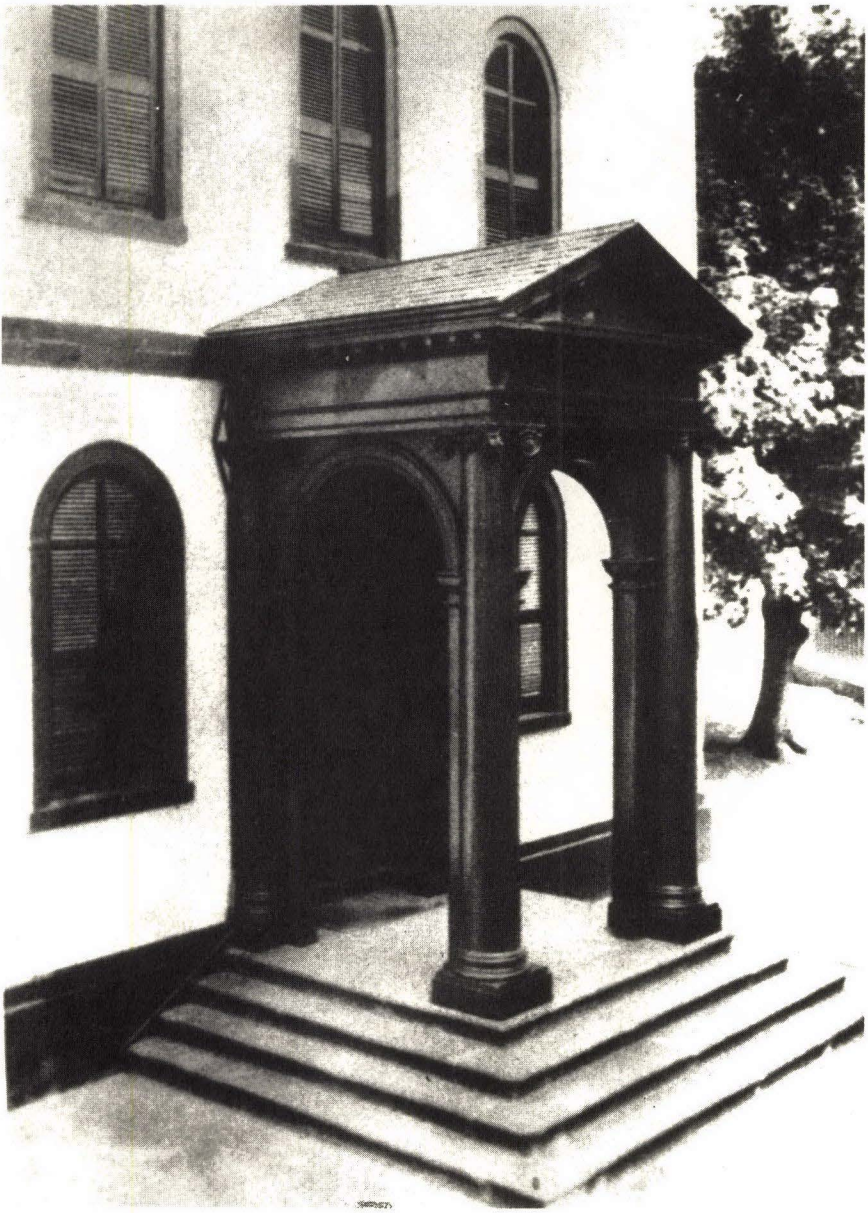


Henry Jones, clerk at *Anshe Chesed*, New York, welcomed Rice in 1840. He was a founder of *B'nai B'rith* in 1843.

(Courtesy B'nai B'rith, Washington, D.C.)



Rabbi Abraham Rice visited Newport Synagogue, September 5, 1840.
(Courtesy Rose Greenberg)



Portico of *Yeshuat Israel* Synagogue, Newport, Rhode Island. Vacationers held sporadic worship in summer, prior to High Holy Days.
(*Synagogue Architecture in the United States* by Rajhel Wischnitzer)

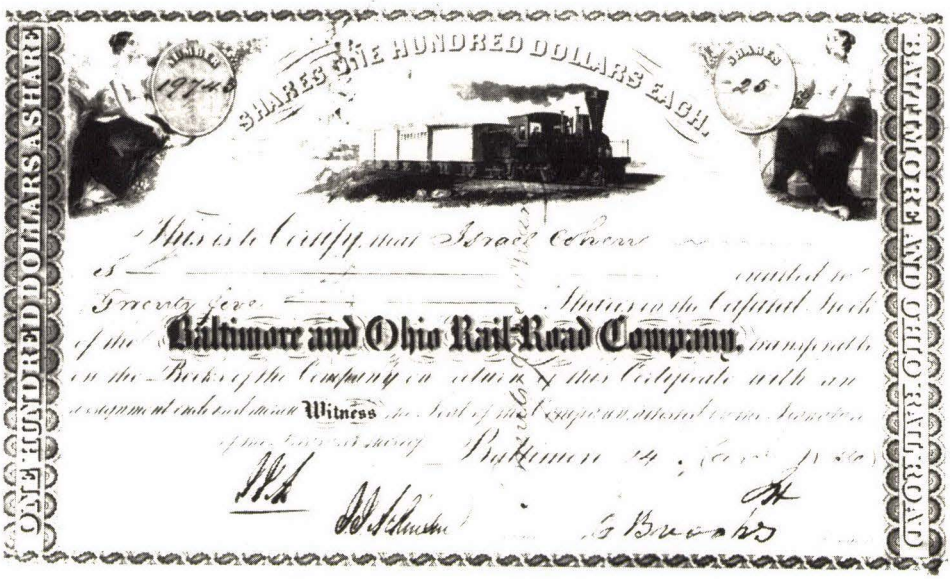


Seal of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation—*Nitgy Israel*, incorporated in 1830.

(*Chronicle of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation* by Rose Greenberg)

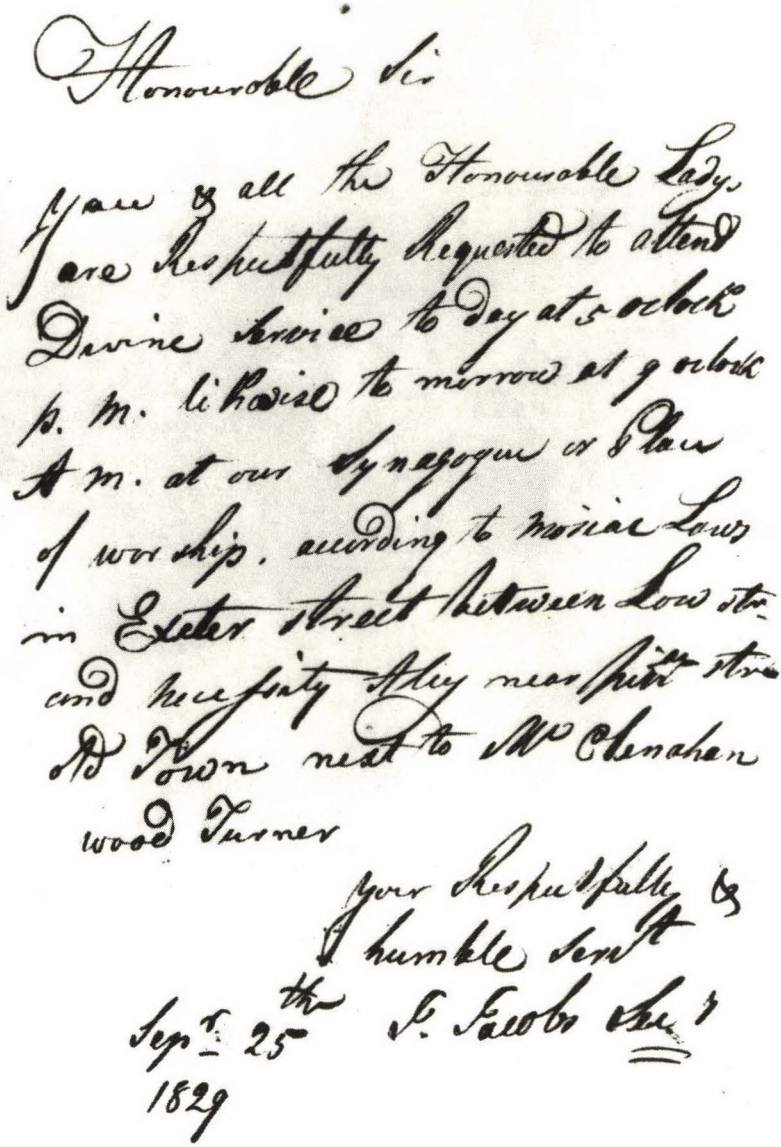


Aaron Weglein, president, Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, *Nitgy Israel*, 1836-1840, introduced his countryman, Rice, to Baltimore.
(History of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation by Adolph Guttmacher)



B&O RR stock of Israel Cohen, member of the banking firm of Jacob I. Cohen, Jr. and Brothers. His family synagogue in his residence followed the Portuguese-Order of prayers since the early 19th century.

(Author's Private Collection)



Honourable Sir

You & all the Honourable Lady,
are Respectfully Requested to attend
Divine Service to day at 5 oclock
p. m. likewise to morrow at 9 oclock
A. m. at our Synagogue or Place
of worship, according to Mosiac Laws
in Exeter Street between Low str-
and necessity Alley near Pitt str-
old Town next to Mr Chenahan
wood Turner

your Respectfully &
humble Servt
Sepr 25th J. Jacobs Secy
1829

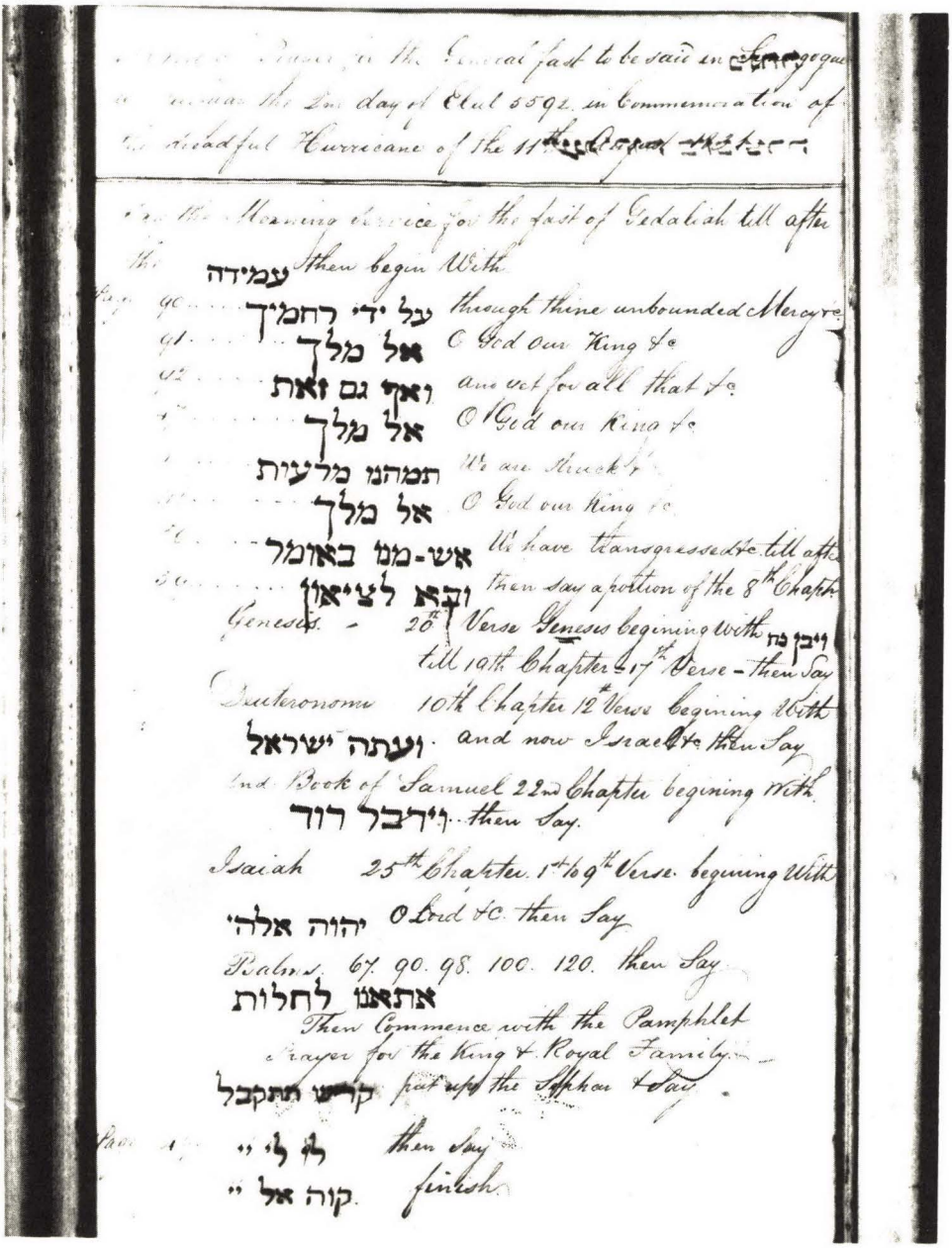
First recorded Jewish public worship in Baltimore, in Exeter Street. It followed the German-Order of prayer. An invitation sent to I. Jacob Cohen from Secretary Joseph Jacoby, who acted as lay Rabbi.

(Courtesy, Professor Abraham Karp)



First Public Synagogue in Maryland, Bond Street *Schul* of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation *Nitgy Israel*, in second story of Building at Bond and Fleet Streets, 1830-1832—1930 photograph.

(Courtesy Mrs. Rose Greenberg, Baltimore)



Prayers recited on anniversary of destruction of *Nidhei Israel*, Barbados, by hurricane of August 11, 1831. This sister congregation had lent its name, *Dispersed of Israel*, to *Nitgy Israel*, Baltimore.

(Courtesy The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



U.S. President William Henry Harrison, eulogized by Rice in 1841, in the Harrison Street *Schul* of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation.
(Author's Private Collection)



Harrison Street *Schul* of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, 1837-1845, at No. 2 Harrison Street; called "Die *Stadt Schul*"—the first Hebrew Congregation, followed by the Fell's Point Congregation in 1838.

(Courtesy Mrs. Rose Greenberg, Baltimore)



Baltimore harbor at the time of Rice's ministry at the *Stadt Schul* in the 1840s.

(The Legacy of a Liberal by Abraham Shusterman)

Chapter 3
Rabbi Sent to America

LATE IN 1839, Chief Rabbi Solomon Hirschell of England, who had expressed satisfaction with the religious life of the five thousand native American Jews two years earlier, at the beginning of the Bavarian Jewish emigration, now voiced concern over their spiritual well-being. Of sixty thousand Bavarian Jews, there were now over ten thousand Bavarian Jews in America. The Chief Rabbi was concerned, for he served as the religious guide of the German-rite synagogues, many of whom had emigrated from England, but now, twice as many Bavarian Jews had arrived. Rabbi Hirschell expressed the hope " . . . that someone might arise in America, in whose light and under whose leadership the Jewish communities of America might walk."

The depths to which American Jewish communities had sunk was in evidence throughout the country from New York to New Orleans.

In 1839, the leading synagogue in America, the Spanish-Portuguese *Kehillah Kedoshah Shearith Israel* [Remnants of Israel] in New York sent a "Circular" to all congregations in the United States stating

> how much the congregation has suffered from a want of a person very competent to teach the Hebrew. . . .
>
> They desire therefore to know whether there is in your congregation the prospect of obtaining the services of a well educated young man, or one with a small family, capable of teaching the Hebrew. . . .

Certainly no answer would be forthcoming from New Orleans. There, Congregation *Shanarai-Chasset* [Gates of Mercy, pronounced by many *Shangarai-Chasset*] elected in the previous year as their Reader of the prayers, Albert J. Marks, an actor, the only one in town who could read Hebrew. They titled him "Rabbi." His indispensibility became evident during the holiday of *Purim*. Rolly, as Marks was nicknamed, because of his being short, fat, and having a round face, as part-time fireman, was busy at the engine that night and there was no one who could read the *Megillah* [Hebrew Scroll of Esther]. Thereupon, in 1839, the townspeople of New Orleans, Jewish and Christian, in recognition of his high status in the Jewish congregation, titled him "Chief Rabbi."

Overseas, the Chief Rabbis were concerned about the lack of a religious guide in the spiritual wilds in America, into which the Bavarian youths had wandered.

The Chief Rabbis of Bavaria, felt that Rabbi Reiss was the best choice for the position of Chief Rabbi of the United States. The happiness of the Reiss' was marred in 1839 when they sadly buried their first child. Also that year, his rabbi and teacher who ordained him, Rabbi Abraham Bing, passed away, leaving a void in his life. When that year an opportunity presented itself for the Reiss's to depart to America, Rosalie may have urged a change of residence, perhaps to leave her sorrows behind. Reiss, determined to establish Orthodoxy in America on a firm foundation, accepted the challenge.

Sent to America, where no ordained rabbi had ever settled permanently before, evoked in Reiss feelings that were best stated by one who reflected on would-be emigrants:

> . . . In those days [since 1836] when a Europe-weary Jewish journeyman used to tie up his valise and say "I am emigating to America," it meant that he was a black sheep who was good for nothing . . . If a stout-hearted youth . . . came to his parents and said, "Let me go across the sea," the parents wept and resisted, as if their son were going to the other world . . . If an educated Jew . . . expressed determination to go to live in the land of freedom . . . [no one] could understand how an educated man could so lower himself as to prefer distant America, the land of the uneducated, the land of the blacks and Indians to Europe . . . .

Yet, his was a mission that would bring comfort to concerned parents, and build Orthodoxy in that spiritual wilderness called America.

In June, 1840, 38-year-old Abram Reiss, with his 30-year-old wife, Rosalie, and Blume Reiss, presumably his sister, rode the coach to Hamburg, port of embarkation. The trio boarded the English barque "Sir Isaac Newton"—its log listing virtually all its passengers as Jews: 128 from Bavaria and fifteen from other German states.

The ship's captain on the "Sir Isaac Newton," as on many vessels sailing westward from Europe to America during this period of Bavarian-Jewish mass migration, charged the Jewish travelers a trifle extra toward a separate stove in order to maintain the kosher diet; the women to take turns preparing the meals. They carried a scroll for worship. They also carried specially printed miniature prayer books, printed in 1840 at Hannover "for travelers crossing the seas to America," which featured special prayers for a safe passage. In New York City, they could obtain a standard-size copy of the *Roedelheim* prayer book, the standard for German Jews, reprinted there that year to accommodate the thousands of their countrymen who arrived in the previous three years.

Reiss embarked after the *Shavuot* [Pentacost] festival, 1840, when they

concluded *Sephirah*. This biblically ordained count of 49 days that began on the second day of *Pesach* [Passover], just completed, recalled their ancestors' journey of seven weeks from Raamses in the land of their enslavement to Sinai and freedom. Now, their descendants, Reiss and his fellow travelers, began anew their count of seven weeks of an ocean crossing, marking their flight from German oppression to American freedom.

The near two-month's passage, gave the Atlantic an opportunity to reveal all its moods. Even in calm seas when the journey lasted from only 42 to 52 days, travel on the high seas in a sailing vessel of three-to-four-hundred tons was a hardship for most. For the Reiss's and everyone confined to steerage, it was an ordeal just to survive: "The steerage deck was usually four-to-six feet high, filled to capacity with hard wooden berths. The long voyage was fraught with hunger, disease, and death . . . ."

On July 18, 1840 the Jews aboard the "Sir Isaac Newton," sailing in mid-Atlantic, observed the fast *Shivah Asar* [17th] *be-Tammuz*. This fast commemorated the breaching of the wall of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, where the First Holy Temple stood, and also recalled the discontinuance of sacrifices during the Roman siege of the Second Temple. The effect of the fast had been recorded by a Jewish emigrant who wrote:

> I doubt whether those who have fasted at home look as exhausted and starved as we do here on our ship, despite the fact that no one here has fasted. The bread tastes like matzos; however, for many of them here it is a torture to keep the Passover so long . . . .

After the fast, by means of a ladder they climbed from the dimly lit steerage below onto the moonlit deck above, and felt that they had experienced the darkness of exile.

The "Sir Isaac Newton" docked on the Jewish Sabbath in New York's harbor, Saturday, July 25th. The immigrants were all filled with hope and cheer upon seeing the American flag with its thirteen stripes and twice as many stars bidding them welcome.

But before disembarking on the 26th, the ship was suddenly overrun with a host of nondescript persons; each seeking to supply the new arrivals with various necessities. Chaos reigned on deck and worsened on the dock upon disembarking, at Castle Garden, a place of public entertainment. Unscrupulous characters cheated the newcomers; among them thieves, pick-pockets, carriage drivers who sold them bogus transportation tickets, and renters who brought them to flea-bitten boarding houses.

The Reiss' were most fortunate in that arrangements had been made when they were yet in Europe to be met by Israel Baer Kursheedt, the most learned Jew in America. As if destined by fate, he arrived in America

in 1796, the very year that Manuel Josephson died. Josephson had been the leading authority on Jewish law since Colonial days. Immediately after the French and Indian War, in 1763, Josephson served as President of the Portuguese synagogue of New York, that office thereafter held by Kursheedt in 1810–11. Upon Josephson's passing, his mantle of religious leadership fell upon Kursheedt. In 1840, the aging leader received the welcome news from the Chief Rabbis of Bavaria and England that they had selected a rabbi whom they delegated and sent to serve as "Chief Rabbi of the United States."

Upon the arrival of Reiss in New York, a visiting Palestinian rabbi was about to depart the city for Europe. He was Yehiel Besel, an itinerant Jerusalemite, who had come to raise funds for himself. Three days before Reiss's arrival, the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue of New York gave him twenty dollars for his ship's passage.

Seventy-four-year old Kursheedt had studied in his youth with Rabbi Abraham Bing and Rabbi Wolf Heidenheim, commentator of the Roedelheim prayer book, were instructed in *Talmud* and commentaries at the *yeshivah* founded by Rabbi Nathan Marcus Adler, who would succeed Solomon Hirschell as Chief Rabbi of England. Of his students' achievements, Rabbi Adler remarked that Abraham [Bing] was a *charif* [acute logician] and Wolf [Heidenheim] a *medakdek* [grammarian and philologist], but Israel [Baer Kursheedt] was a *chakham* [wise one] because his attainments were universal.

Since his arrival in the United States, Kursheedt had earned his living as a businessman. Of his Jewish knowledge, Reverend Isaac Leeser, *Chazzan* [Reader] of Congregation *Kehillah Kedoshah Mickve* [also *Mikveh/Mikve*] *Israel,* [Hope of Israel], Philadelphia, had affirmed that Kursheedt was "the only rabbinical student, regularly educated and of acknowledged eminence and piety, to be found throughout the wide continent."

Israel Kursheedt sought to have Reiss settle in New York City. There were 7,500 Jews in the budding metropolis, half the Jewish population of all other states combined. The city contained six of the seventeen synagogues in the land.

B'nai Jeshurun, founded under the name *B'nai Yeshiorun*, was the second oldest and the leading *Ashkenazic* synagogue in the United States. Fifteen years earlier, the congregation seeking funds distributed a Circular in 1826 which stated: "We, inhabitants of this great city, situated on the borders of the ocean, proclaim to our brethren in Israel, that many of our people have emigrated from beyond the sea, and being also informed that more will emigrate and establish a permanent residence with us. Therefore, . . . let us build a house unto the service of our God!"

Though preceded by the *Hebrew German Society, Kebilla Kodesh Rodeph Shalom* [Pursuers of Peace], Philadelphia, first permanent *Ash-*

kenazic [German-rite] congregation in the United States, founded in 1802, *B'nai Jeshurun* was the first to acquire a building of their own.

Ashkenazim [Jews of German origin] included Dutch, sometimes called Deutch because of their gutteral speech, Polish, Bohemian, English, in 1826, in the membership of *B'nai Jeshurun*, New York.

The highly respected Israel Baer Kursheedt, a founder of *B'nai Jeshurun*, did not invite Reiss to speak at his congregation, for Reverend Samuel Myer Isaacs had been elected its Lecturer and *Chazzan* in the previous year, 1839. Isaacs was assisted by Jonas Hecht, who that year had been examined by Kursheedt, joined by two others, to perform ritual slaughtering. They decided that he could serve in that capacity only if an expert is present to supervise.

Kursheedt, the leading lay scholar in rabbinics in the land, though of Prussian origin from the town of Kurcheidt, had studied in Bavaria, was most influential in the Bavarian synagogue *Anshe Chesed* [Men of Mercy]. He arranged for Rabbi Reiss to be its guest rabbi on the following Sabbath; the Hebrew date being *Tisha B'av*, a day which commemorated the destruction of both Holy Temples of Jerusalem. Since fasting and mourning is prohibited on the Sabbath day of rest, observance of the fast is transferred to the following day.

Accompanied by Kursheedt, Reiss entered *Anshe Chesed's* newly purchased Quaker Meeting House, a small building at 38-40 Henry Street in the midst of a large German-Gentile community called *Klein Deutschland* [Little Germany]. The order of prayers by this Bavarian congregation was that of the Jewish community of Fürth.

In his address, Reiss revealed that his mission in coming to America was to establish the true Orthodox faith and to prevent the entry of Reform. Reports stated that he spoke "cogently and well," but he did not prove popular with the congregation. Many feared establishment of an ecclesiastical hierarchy, the office of Chief Rabbi, vested with the power to determine religious matters of American congregations. This would prove to be an infringement on the religious freedom afforded each congregation and individual in the land of liberty that they balked at its possible infringement. Therefore, Reiss did not gain election to the pulpit of the Bavarian synagogue of New York.

Undeterred, Kursheedt determined to fulfill the mandate of the European rabbis to secure the position for Rabbi Reiss and establish him as chief rabbi. He searched for a plan. He arranged for Reiss to travel to Newport, Rhode Island. There, in the beautiful resort town by the ocean, among stately mansions, stood *Kehillah Kedoshah Yeshuat Israel* [Salvation of Israel], originally *Nefutzoth* [Nephutse] *Israel* [The Scattered Ones of Israel], a magnificent synagogue, erected during the French and Indian War [1759-1763], and which stands to this day.

Prior to the American Revolution, when Newport had the largest Jewish community in the colonies, numbering a thousand souls, Palestinian born Haijim Isaac Carigal [Karigal], a *Chacham* [Hebrew, "wise"—the designation for rabbi by *Sephardim*], had served the congregation temporarily as its spiritual leader.

Ordained at seventeen, he set out at age 20, in 1754, to raise funds on behalf of the Jews of his native Hebron. His itinerary: Egypt, Turkey, Greece, Syria, Iraq, Persia, and return to Palestine. In 1757, Carigal sailed to Italy, Austria, Germany, Holland, England, and returned to Palestine.

In 1761, Carigal again set sail from Jaffa, to raise funds for the Jews of his community. This time his destination was the New World. Reaching Curacao in the Dutch West Indies, he remained there two years. He returned to Palestine by way of Holland, Germany, and Italy.

Successful in raising funds for his community, the Hebronite, returned to America in 1768 to amass funds for the needs and comforts of his wife and son. From Jaffa to Marseilles, Paris, and London, he remained in the English capital, two-and-a-half years teaching rabbinics, sending his savings of a thousand dollars to his wife, then set forth for America.

In 1772 he sailed to Jamaica, Philadelphia, and in 1772, spent five months in New York, and in 1773 five months in Newport. Here he was highly esteemed by Reverend Ezra Stiles, minister of the Second Congregational Church of Newport and later President of Yale College in New Haven. Carigal, in one of his many contacts with Stiles, told him that there were three rabbis in the Caribbean region: Jamaica, St. Eustatia [Statia], and Surinam, where the major settlements of the Western Hemisphere were then located.

From Newport, Carigal sailed to Antigua, but instead landed in Paramaribo, Dutch Guiana, a forty-nine day voyage. After half-a-year in Guiana, he boarded a ship for Barbados where no rabbi had served *Kehillah Kedoshah Nidhe Israel* [Dispersed of Israel] for twenty-two years. Carigal accepted to serve permanently as its rabbi and the congregation agreed to pay transportation for his family, but they would not consider leaving the Land of Israel. Before Carigal could return, after a ministry of two years [1774–77] he died at age forty-five; his will provided that all his possessions be sent to his wife in Hebron.

One can only marvel at the sacrifices and devotion, the difficulties and dangers attendant to such a perilous journey taken by Carigal and all Palestinian rabbis on behalf of their families and communities in the Land of Israel. Their travels rival and even exceed those of the globetrotting discoverers of the New World.

Newport's Jewish community had dispersed by the time the English captured the city during the war for independence; its synagogue appropriately named *Nefutzoth Yisroel*. A few of the Jewish patriots returned after the war, and as the city declined in importance the Jewish community dwindled. The Newport synagogue closed its doors in 1793, because there were not a sufficient number of males [ten] for a quorum.

In 1822, when the last Jewish resident left the city, vacationing Jews reopened the abandoned synagogue that summer. In the following year, in 1823, to assure the reopening of the synagogue, Abraham Touro of Boston, son of the Reverend Isaac Touro, *Chazzan* at *Yeshuat Israel* before the revolution, bequeathed $10,000 "to revive the Jewish religion there, and in such way & manner as to induce some of that nation to settle & keep up a worship . . . ."

In 1824 the legislature of the State of Rhode Island and the Newport Town Council accepted Touro's offer and the General Assembly established the "Abraham Touro Fund." After completing repairs and redecoration of the building in 1828, the remaining funds were invested in bank stocks and other securities. Income from these, Kursheedt knew, were more than sufficient to support a spiritual leader. He hoped that Abram Reiss, a rabbi without a synagogue, and *Yeshuat Israel*, a synagogue without a rabbi, could be united if a sufficient number of vacationers could be induced to remain in the city and establish a permanent congregation.

However, Kursheedt had misjudged the Newport vacationers, none of whom would consider settling permanently in the town. To these Jews, some of whom were members of Portuguese synagogues, the will of the testator that only the *Sephardi* [Portuguese] rite of worship be held in the synagogue, presented no problem. Only that Newport had long since outlived commercial possibilities.

Reiss did not tarry in Newport, but took the next stage bound for New York City. By chance, Reiss, upon his arrival in New York, met Aaron Weglein, a countryman who hailed from his birthplace, Gochsheim, and who had opened an iron foundry in Baltimore. Since 1836, Weglein had served as president of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, *Kehilloh Kedoshoh Nidgy Israel*. Now he took it upon his authority as leader of the congregation to invite Reiss to serve as rabbi of Baltimore, to be the *Stadt Rav*, the authority in ritual for a Jewish community of 100 families, with many single persons, totalling about 600 persons, mostly newly arrived Bavarian Jews, and as the only rabbinic authority in America, Chief Rabbi of the United States.

As he prepared to leave for Baltimore, Reiss wrote on August 25, to Mr. Henry Jones, clerk at *Anshe Chesed* and the power behind the presi-

dent's throne, offering the congregation rabbinic advice whenever requested:

New York 26th Menachem 5600

Herrn Henry Jones

Ihr werthes Schreiben hebst inhalte ist mir richtig zugekommen. Haben Sie die Slietes Gute sagen Sie den Herren Vorstehern in meinem Namen meinen verbindlichsten Dank. Sollten dieselben in religioesen Angelegenheiten meinen schwachen Verstand zu hathe ziehen wollen, stehe ich zu jeder Zeit zu Diensten.

Emphehlen Sie mich der ganzen Gemeinde und ich ertheile Ihnen hier mit meinen priesterlichen Seegen.

Ihr Gewogeher,
Unterschrieben: A Reiss.

Meine Adresse ist

Jonas Friedenwald of care Mr. Reiss. Point Street Fellspoint No 22 in Baltimore, Maryland.

Anshe Chesed's clerk entered Reiss's letter into their minute book, in which he expressed appreciation to the Board of Directors and invited them to call upon him for his opinion in religious matters. Over a score years to come, successive officers of the congregation would call upon the rabbi to resolve complex religio-legal questions.

Chapter 4
Rice Settles in Baltimore

IN THE early days, in Baltimore, Mordecai Moses Mordecai, reputedly the son of the rabbi of Telsiai [*Yiddish* Telz], Russia, had been titled by the non-Jewish townspeople "Reverend Rabbi" because of his rudimentary knowledge of Hebrew. Mordecai had come to Baltimore in 1773, took a 99-year lease on a parcel "on the West side of Jones' Falls" [present Fallsway], erected a still, and operated a saloon, but Catholic patronage was wanting and he soon departed.

The reputation of his predecessor was even less impressive. In 1752,

the *Jew Tailor*, Henry Hart, was accused of an illicit relationship, thereby "begetting a Bastard child on the body of Susanna Talome . . . ."

A lone Jew, Levy Andrew Levy, settled in Baltimore about 1790. Though observant in his youth, succumbed to the urging of his daughter to follow the example of her mother and convert to Christianity. Upon her death and burial in 1807 in St. Paul's Episcoplian Cemetery, Levy contemplated conversion and finally baptised in 1827, at age 93. Two years after, Levy Andrew Levy was interred in his family plot in the Episcopalian Cemetery of Baltimore.

The first famed Baltimorian Jewish family that remained loyal to their faith were the Ettings, native Americans of German ancestry, who settled in the city in 1790. Solomon Etting, the most prominent member of this distinguished family, was married to the daughter of the merchant prince Barnard Grätz, Indian trader and land speculator of Philadelphia. Barnard possessed *Kabbalah* [license as a ritual slaughterer], which he used to advantage when he journeyed to trade in Indian country. He licensed his son-in-law to be a *shochet* [ritual slaughterer] for the same reason. Solomon Etting thus became the first native American with these credentials.

In 1797, Solomon Etting and his father-in-law, Barnard Grätz, prevailed upon Assemblyman William Pinkney to introduce a bill to abolish Maryland's requirement that anyone dealing with the law was required to declare his belief in the Christian religion; a bill that would be reintroduced and defeated annually over the next quarter of a century.

In 1801, Solomon Etting, joined by his uncle, Levi [Levy] Solomon, purchased a family cemetery in Ensor Town near "Jew Alley" [later called East Monument street], on the outskirts of Baltimore. It became known as the "Jews' Burying Ground." And in his fashionable home on Charles and Saratoga Streets, and after 1804, at their permanent residence at 278 Baltimore Street, Etting maintained a private synagogue, the service followed *Minhag Sepharad* [Portuguese Custom/Order of Prayers], which prevailed in all the seaboard synagogues from Newport to Savannah, as in the Caribbean.

In his commercial enterprises, Solomon Etting became a merchant-shipper. Together with other Baltimorians, he helped establish the city's Water Company and the Baltimore East India Company.

The second of the aristocratic Jewish families of Baltimore, were the Solomon brothers, Isaac and Levi, who were related to the Etting's. When a family member of the Solomon's died, interment was in the Etting family cemetery and worship held in the Etting synagogue.

Third of the upper class Baltimore Jewish families was that of Jacob I. Cohen, Jr., of Bavarian ancestry. Jacob was born in Richmond, Virginia

where he organized, about 1790, *Beth Shalome* [also *Sholem* House of Peace] the first synagogue in Virginia, and came to Baltimore about 1803. He established the banking firm of "Jacob I. Cohen, Jr. & Brothers"—one of the most reputable in the country. The Cohen family, became linked to the Etting family by marital ties; Benjamin I. Cohen, son of Jacob I. Cohen, married Kitty, daughter of Solomon Etting.

Like the Ettings, the Cohens established their own private synagogue in their spacious residence on North Charles Street, also following the *Sephardic* custom of prayer; they established their own burial ground on Saratoga near Carey Street.

These wealthy Jewish families remained aloof from those who followed them. Though they undoubtedly opened their doors to those who sought a house of worship, including the religious functionaries, Wolf Marschütz, the *shochet*, and Gabriel Isaac, the *mohel*, they refused to identify or mingle socially with their brethren who had come more recently from Germany or with the dozen Dutch Jewish families who originated in the West Indies. Not surprisingly, when Solomon Etting sent a generous contribution to *Shearith Israel*, New York, toward the rebuilding of their Mill Street Synagogue in 1817, he stated that there were only three Jewish families in Baltimore, for these were the only ones with which he associated. The other dozen or more Baltimorian Jewish families in the city did not exist for him. However, since there was no public Hebrew burial ground at this time, it appears that any Jew would have been buried either in the Etting or the Cohen cemetery.

The reason for private synagogues and cemeteries can be found in the colony's statute set before the American Revolution. It provided that in Maryland, any one denying "our saviour Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, or deny the Trinity" shall for the first offense be fined and have his tongue bored; for the second, his face shall be branded with a hot iron; and hanged for the third transgression.

Yet remembered was the first Jew in Maryland, "the Jew Doctor" Jacob Lumbrozo, who nearly suffered death for his religious convictions. Jacob came to the colony in 1656, an Indian trader, innkeeper, farmer. On February 23, 1658, he was accused of having committed "blasphemy," a crime carrying the death penalty in Catholic Maryland. According to the testimony of two witnesses in the court of Saint Mary's, then the capital of the colony, he said that the resurrection might have been done by necromancy or sorcery; also that the Jews did look to the coming of the Messiah. Fortune smiled upon "Ye Jew Doctor." Ten days after his arrest, he was released by an amnesty, proclaimed in honor of Richard Cromwell's accession of lord protector of England. After Lumbrozo's death in 1666, no Jew came to Maryland for almost a hundred years.

Though this statute's death penalty was repealed in 1776, Jews were not allowed to conduct public worship or to hold public office. After Reuben Etting had been appointed United States Marshal for Maryland by President Thomas Jefferson, his brother Solomon petitioned the state of Maryland to grant Jews equal rights. All attempts failed until Thomas Kennedy, a Christian, born in the year 1776 and imbued with its spirit, succeeded after an eight year battle which began upon his election to the Maryland Legislature in 1817. Kennedy was aided by Colonel W. G. D. Worthington who, at the 1824 session of the Maryland Legislature, cited Washington's friendly letters, written upon his election to the presidency, to all the Jewish communities in the seaboard states. Worthington further presented a memorial [as petitions were called in early America], its signatures included those of Solomon Etting, Etting's uncle, Levi Solomon, and Jacob I. Cohen.

With deep emotion, legislator John S. Tyson recounted at that 1824 session, Jewish suffering throughout the ages—telling of Jews

> sewed up in the skins of wild beasts and thrown to the dogs in Asia, chained to the galling oar for life in Africa, burned to death in Spain, flayed alive in Italy, fleeced and sentenced to banishment from time to time in England, plunged into the catacombs in France, knouted in Russia . . . .

Tyson emphasized that he did not fear the equality of Jews but their inequality:

> The right to put up one religion, is the right to put down another. The right to put down one, is the right to put down all, and the right to put down all, is the right to build one upon its ruins.

Concluding his memorable words, Tyson paid homage to Thomas Kennedy, sponsor of the bill who, he said, "Atlas-like, bore it upon his shoulders at a time when it was too heavy for all other men. It fell, he raised it, it fell again, he raised it again and again."

In 1826, the "Jew Bill" affirmed, Solomon Etting was elected to the City Council. He had served as Director of the Baltimore and Ohio, the first American railroad company, of which he had been a founder. The importance of the B & O was underscored that year by the opening of the Erie Canal to the North. The new waterway to the West threatened not only the B & O but the very future of Baltimore, which, situated at the mouth of the newly opened National Road from Cumberland in western Maryland, had become the jumping-off point for settlers heading West.

The Erie Canal, which joined the entire Great Lakes system with the Atlantic Ocean, now provided the route over which manufactured goods could flow into the West and raw materials into the East, perhaps even more economically than by way of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

The fears of Baltimorians were realized as New York City rose to displace Baltimore as the busiest port of trade for the Ohio Valley. Nevertheless, Solomon Etting helped maintain Baltimore as a great American port of commerce, competing favorably with the Erie Canal.

After the "Jew Bill" had passed, the Dutch and German Jews who preferred to worship according to the Ashkenazic-rite, rather than the Portuguese at Etting's private residence, were led in prayer by Joseph Jacobs, a manufacturer of "chemical colours."

The first record of public Jewish worship in Maryland is an invitation dated September 25, 1829, sent by Joseph Jacobs to Jacob I. Cohen, Esq., requesting his attendance "at our Synagogue . . . in Exeter Street," on the Sabbath preceding the Hebrew New Year. This worship took place exactly one hundred years after the founding of Baltimore.

Joseph Jacobs, no doubt led the high holy day worship and in the following years; described in the City Directory as "priest of the Jews." After the 1829 service, they named their congregation *Nitgy Israel* [Dispersed of Israel]. This name reflected the influence of the Dutch-Portuguese Jews from the West Indies. These Hollanders had founded all the earliest Hebrew synagogues in the western hemisphere; the leading communities being in the Caribbean prior to the mass migration of German Jews to America. Apparently, they had difficulty with the guttural Hebrew pronunciation and transliterated the Hebrew name, to read *Nitgy Israel*, which German Jews, later arrivals, corrected in their pronunciation and transliteration, to read *Nidche Israel*.

The name *Nitgy Israel* had most likely been suggested by David Nunes Carvalho, who was then living in Baltimore. He had served as *chazzan* at the Reformed Society of Israelites in Charleston from 1824 to 1828, when he moved to Baltimore. He became engaged as a merchant in marbleized paper manufacturing, traveling regularly between the port cities of Baltimore, Charleston, and Philadelphia; also to Martinique and Surinam where his relatives resided. Merchant David Carvalho maintained residences in Baltimore and Barbados, holding membership in the *Nidhe Israel* Congregation of Bridgetown, Barbados.

In December, 1829, the charter members, five in all, presented to the House of Delegates of Maryland a "memorial" [petition] that they may be incorporated under the name of the "Scattered Israelites for the purpose of building a Synagogue." But the author of the bill submitted: "An act to incorporate, in the city of Baltimore, the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation." On February 25, 1830, the charter was granted by the city

fathers. The synagogue officers bypassed that corporate name, preparing and publishing the "Constitution and By-Laws of the Hebrew Congregation Nitgy Israel of Baltimore 5590" [1830].

This name, *Nitgy Israel*—Scattered of Israel, appealed to Sephardic Jews, driven out of Iberia by order of the Holy Office of the Inquisition and dispersed throughout the Americas. Furthermore, the Hebrew letters נדחי ישראל *Nitgy Israel*, numerically equalled 613, the number of commandments in the Five Books of Moses, whose observance had been denied to their Marrano ancestors.

The Hebrew name took on additional significance in the following year, when its namesake, *Nidhe Israel*, in Bridgetown, Barbados, was completely destroyed on August 11th by a devastating hurricane that struck the island.

That the early Jewish communities in the western hemisphere regarded themselves as the last outposts of Spanish-Portuguese Jewry is evidenced by the names of their congregations. The Barbados community named their religious center, *Nidhe Israel* [Dispersed of Israel]; the New York congregation, *Shearith Israel*—Remnants of Israel; that at Newport, *Nefatzoth Israel*, since the 18th century, though in the 17th, *Yeshuat Israel* [Salvation of Israel]; while those at Philadelphia and Savannah named theirs *Mickve Israel* and *Mickva* [*Mickve*] *Israel* respectively [The Hope of Israel]. Israel was the common tie between the dispersed who hoped for salvation.

In 1830, the Baltimorian congregation *Nidgy Israel*, rented a room over a grocery store in the very center of what soon became called Old Town at the corner of Bond and Fleet Streets. This *Bond Street Schul* was the first public place for Jewish worship in Maryland.

In 1832, the congregation moved to a larger room at North Exeter Street [near what is now Lexington Street], its roster numbering 29 men. That year they purchased three acres on Belair road for a public burial ground. By 1835, the congregation had increased to 41 members and they moved into a one-story dwelling on High Street, near the bend between Fayette and Gay Streets.

In 1836, the vanguard of a mass migration of Bavarian Jews arrived in New York. Soon other ships docked in other seaboard cities, a number landing in the port of Baltimore. The one-story house on High Street could not accommodate the rapidly growing Jewish community. In 1837, as German Jewish immigrants continued to arrive in even greater numbers. Levi Benjamin, a Bohemian Jew married to a Quaker, treasurer of the *High Street Schul Nitgy Israel* [as the synagogue became popularly called] contributed the lot he owned at 2 Harrison Street, near the corner of Etna Lane and Gay Street; buildings and lots in Baltimore being generally owned by different persons. The congregation purchased the three-

story dwelling on this lot from its owner, Bertram Edes, a printer. This building was in the heart of Baltimore's German neighborhood referred to as *Klein Deutschland*. This Lombard Sector extended from Lloyd Street to Jones Falls [now Fallsway], a turbulent stream, to the west of which settled those not of German origin.

That year, 1837, Levi Benjamin, treasurer of the congregation [1833-40], showed keen foresight into the future development of the Jewish community, by donating another lot he owned at the corner of Lloyd and Salisbury [now Watson] Streets, as a building site for a future synagogue building. Intuitively he felt that the next Jewish neighborhood would move in that direction.

By 1838, Jews were living not only in the Lombard sector of Baltimore but also at the outlying Fell's Point, by the docks in the harbor area. Because the distance from Broadway [the main street] in the Fell's Point sector to Harrison Street in the Lombard sector was too far to walk on Sabbaths and Holy Days when travel is forbidden, the Jews in the harbor area obtained a place for a synagogue on Canton Street. They founded *The Baltimore Fell's Point Hebrew Friendship Congregation Of The City Of Baltimore; Oheb Israel* [Lovers of Israel], popularly called the *Pint Street Schul* [Pint being a corruption of Point]. They delayed its incorporation for six years.

The Fell's Point congregation, upon its organization in 1838, purchased acreage for a cemetery located midway between Canton Road and Philadelphia Road. The masons engaged to build a stone wall around the burial ground took their assignment literally. They completely enclosed the ground, leaving no entrance way. For some reason that was not recorded, the congregation left the wall closed for twenty years. At funerals, pall bearers lifted the coffins over the wall, followed by the rabbi, mourners and friends who ascended and descended by means of ladders set on both sides of the wall.

This cemetery may have been that referred to at the end of the nineteenth century, when it was noted that "there is a small cemetery, now disused, on the Philadelphia road, which was formerly maintained by . . . *Die Irische Hebra*" [The Irish Society]; presumably a crew of Irishmen who maintained the grounds.

After the Fell's Point Congregation was formed, members of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation began to refer to their synagogue as the *Stadt Schul*, signifying that it was the main synagogue in the city.

The first families: Etting, Solomon, Cohen, retained their *Sephardic-rite* private synagogues and retained membership in *Sephardic-rite Mickve Israel*, Philadelphia.

Chapter 5
Stars and Stripes Forever

RABBI AND Mrs. Abram Reiss arrived in Baltimore in the late summer of 1840. It was a city of two synagogues and their cemeteries; also two private synagogues and their cemeteries. Temporarily, the rabbi and his wife were accommodated at the residence of Jonas Friedenwald, anglicized from Friedewald, situated on Point Street near Thames Street in the Fell's Point business district.

In Baltimore the Reiss' became Americanized, for their surname was Anglicized to Rice, and as it happened with the Patriarch upon leaving his birthplace, Rice's given name became changed from Abram to Abraham.

Jonas Friedenwald and his sons would become the leading Jewish family in the city for a century to come, and devotees of Rabbi Rice for life. Jonas had come from Germany to Baltimore in 1832, together with his wife, four children, and aged father. At first, he mended and manufactured umbrellas, then invested his profits in a grocery, and then turned to dealing in junk; he had prospered in all his enterprises. A strictly observant Jew, Jonas did not waver even during the long ocean voyage to America when the kosher food situation became critical. The captain of the brig *Louise*, which brought the Friedenwalds from Bremen to Baltimore, had demanded that the meat they had in their cabin be turned over to him for safe-keeping. After it was returned, they refused to partake of it, for it was forbidden to do so by Jewish law. Herring and potatoes was their diet for two months, until they docked in Baltimore.

Since the main concentration of the estimated 200 Jewish families in Baltimore in 1840 was in the Lombard sector close by the *Stadt Schul*, permanent quarters for the Rice's were soon located at 12 Albermarle Street, present 5, within walking distance of the synagogue.

No sooner did Rabbi Rice affix upon the doorposts of his residence, the *mezuzos*, [lit. door-posts], when he received a strange inquiry from Israel Baer Kursheedt about a *mezuzah* [lit. door-post, singular: a case containing a parchment inscribed with biblical verses proclaiming the unity of God, urging to love Him, and declaring reward for obedience and punishment for disobedience].

The query pertained to the *kashrus* [ritual fitness] of a *mezuzah*. Kursheedt relayed a question he had been asked: "Were the parchment inscribed in Hebrew characters but in the early Samaritan style instead of

the later Assyrian style of lettering [the Assyrian script for Hebrew characters had replaced the former in the fourth century before the common era] and if this Hebrew script was inscribed directly to the doorpost instead of being encased in wood or metal, [enclosing the parchment in a case protected the sacred passages from erasure or defilement], would it be acceptable for compliance with the commandment?"

Rice replied that such a *mezuzah* would not be ritually acceptable. He commented that such a question typified those posed by cynics or skeptics rather than by one who seriously sought to observe the precept. Citing references, he told Kursheedt that the one who had asked the question of him, was to be classed with heretics and non-believers.

The ministry of the first ordained rabbi to minister in the United States officially began at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation—*Nitgy Israel*, the *Stadt Schul* of Baltimore, on the Hebrew New Year, 5600.

Rice's sermons, preached in Judeo-German during the high holy day season of 1840, have not been preserved. They must have presented his staunch Orthodox stand, as it is known that the ire of the non-observant became aroused. His opponents spread rumors to demean him. Rice responded in his Sabbath sermon, delivered the last day of *Chanukah*, December 26, 1840:

> Let my enemies take notice that there are no ways or means that they can devise which will deter or halt me. I am willing to offer myself and all I possess to bring God's teachings to you . . . I am obliged as your religious teacher, to point out to you your faults, for who can maintain that he is without a blemish? Let those who reject these teachings disseminate all sorts of fantasies about me. It is my love for you which inspires me to bring the word of God to you. I only need your confidence to accomplish this holy goal . . . .

Confronted by freethinkers and reformists with the claims of free speech and freedom to do as one pleases, Rice countered this erroneous notion with responsible speech and balanced freedom with discipline.

Ever since his settling in the United States, Rice was thankful for the freedom and liberty enjoyed by all its peoples. He realized that the Constitution and its Bill of Rights enabled Jew and Christian alike to live as equals in opportunity for achieving their hopes and aspirations.

Soon after his arrival in Baltimore, Rice received a letter from his mentor, Israel Baer Kursheedt, which contained the following inquiry: Was a Jew in litigation with a fellow Jew justified in insisting that the case be decided in a Jewish rather than a civil court? Twice in the 1830's, Kursheedt's synagogue, *B'nai Jeshurun*, had refused to permit the use of a *Sefer* [Scroll of the Law] for swearing an oath in a public court.

Jewish courts of law had functioned ever since the Law was given at Sinai. After the dispersion of the nation of Israel, Jews avoided secular courts in the diaspora. In Europe each town had its *Beth Din*, in which a tribunal of rabbis served as judges to settle disputes among Jews. In America too, in colonial days, a *Beth Din* of learned lay leaders convened whenever the need arose. Only after the Revolution did Jews turn to civil courts for adjudication, though some preferred to present their case before a *Beth Din*, which was occasionally convened.

In his reply, Rice, in 1841, expressed concern for the future of America because of prevailing conditions in the civil courts, where oaths were administered in a haphazard manner and acceptance of an oath was often mouthed in an insincere attitude:

> An oath amounted to nothing, something which no one understood was mumbled, amen was said, and the book was kissed, Judicial oaths were sworn carelessly . . . .

The civil courts in eastern cities were no different than those on the frontier, as reported by a western Jew:

> A man commits perjury quite as much, although not literally, when he tells a simple lie, as when he does it in kissing a piece of metal, lays his hand upon a book, or raises his right hand while listening to the mumbling of a few words, into the spirit of which he does not enter, and is deserving of punishment . . . .

False witnesses accompanied false swearing:

> . . . There was ever present a standing army of witnesses who knew everything and swore to anything; these people were to be feared and avoided . . . The testimony of witnesses was to be had for a price; as it was then common knowledge that there are a great many cheap things in this country, as for instance, titles, diplomas, witnesses, poison, etc. etc . . . .

Reverend Isaac Leeser, Minister of *Mickve Israel*, Philadelphia, and outstanding spokesman for Orthodoxy in America, acknowledging this great evil, expressed the hope—

> . . . to see an entire reform into the whole system of judicial, official, custom-house, and all sorts of oaths, including the one called 'Oath of Allegiance,' since it must be evident that perjury or false swearing is too often resorted to, with the full knowledge that a falsehood is uttered, notwithstanding the solemn invoking of the Holy Name . . .

As a consequence, Rice felt that the very foundations of American government and its excellent legal structure were being undermined by the indifference its citizenry displayed toward the sanctity of an oath administered in the civil courts.

Reacting to the injustices that prevailed in the civil courts, Rice expressed deep concern that its "good judicial system is filled with corruption." He therefore decided in favor of the litigant, favoring his request for a rabbinically administered oath in a Jewish court over one sworn in a civil court.

At this time in Kingston, Jamaica, British West Indies, Jews took oaths as jurors and witnesses on Christian Bibles. According to Reverend Moses N. Nathan, Editor of *The First Fruits of The West*, in 1844, noted that this, rather than arousing admiration, "excites" the "scorn" and "pity" of Christians. Jews had no right to swear on a Christian testament or "Kiss the book" for this was "repugnant to their faith."

Discussing the concept of religious freedom in America, Rice clarified its deeper meaning in a Thanksgiving Day address, asking:

> How is it possible that our religion should not flourish in this land where we happily enjoy the strongest assurances of complete freedom? These are questions which everyone is asking. The answer is contained within the very question itself. Not everyone who appears to be free is truly free. Very often we harbor a tyrant within our very selves, which enslaves us. This tyrant is our desire for pleasure . . . As long as we are enslaved to our desires and passions, we forget the Almighty . . . .

Rice's patriotism came to the fore in 1841, when he spoke at a special service to pay respects to the memory of William Henry Harrison, whose untimely death occurred March 4th, exactly one month after taking the oath of office, on the very day he was to have assumed office. The popular Army commander, famed for defeating the Shawnee Indians in 1811 at Tippecanoe, had been felled by a cold he caught a month earlier.

Rice memorialized Harrison at a service held at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, in the synagogue on the street bearing the President's name, the *Harrison Street Schul*. Rice expressed his love for the American system of government and urged his people to be patriotic Jews and loyal to the faith of their fathers.

> We eulogize the dead not only to express our respects, but rather to serve the living. In recalling the good qualities of the deceased, we are to contemplate the transience of life on earth and to make our decisions accordingly. The Book of *Ecclesiastes* therefore declares:

"It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men, and the *LIVING* will lay it to his heart."

Millions of people strove for a number of years to secure the election of William Henry Harrison, of blessed memory, as head of State. They pinned all their hopes upon his election to secure the happiness of the American people. Finally they succeeded, but did not begin to realize their hopes, as the Almighty removed him before he could even assume the duties of his office. It was as though the Almighty wanted to demonstrate to us the frailty of life and remind us of the words of the Psalmist: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchmen waketh but in vain . . . ."

We offer tribute to the memory of the late President when we will practice his good qualities. In his youth, he had devoted all his energies and talents to the good of our country and then he modestly retired to private life, without expecting or seeking any form of reward for his service. So, too, should we strive to live. When we remain idle or concentrate our energies on forbidden pursuits, we destroy time, which is life, and may be regarded as dead, as according to our rabbis: "Sinners are deemed dead during their lifetime." Jerermiah, too, emphasized: "Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan him; but weep sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no more."

People are terrified by the very thought of death. Yet, death is not feared by the person who understands that birth is the beginning of death while life is to observe the commandments of one's religion, to do one's bidding under all circumstances. This interpretation is especially true of the religious system of Judaism, which regulates the daily life of the Jew. In the morning, phylacteries are donned in worship to symbolize the might of the Almighty. Before each meal, hands are washed to represent purity. Grace is recited after each meal to affirm that everything is of the Lord. The performance of these acts teaches us that our desires are stilled; not by merely satisfying our bodily cravings but by our observing the words of the Lord. "Man does not live by bread alone, but by everything which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord does man Live." Upon retiring at night, the faithful Jew entrusts his soul to the Almighty, and prays that he will awaken on the morrow alert and refreshed. Death holds no terrors to a person for whom life is but a preparation for a greater life in eternity, where all his strivings and sufferings on earth will be compensated and rewarded.

In concluding our eulogy, we express our wish that the good policies which had been formulated by our deceased President be continued and that we support his successor, whom it may please

> the Lord to grant long life and happiness in all his endeavors. May we, as citizens, offer our greatest tribute, in adopting his deep love for his country. Our resolve to continue in his path will afford the soul of our deceased President, rest in peace!

Patriotism of the Jew in America peaked. But the problem was in place: Americanization of the Jew and simultaneously, Judaization of the Jew. Could Orthodoxy accomplish this goal or would Reform gain the upper hand? Rice, drew from the arsenal of Orthodoxy the weapon that would assure its continuity even in the spiritual wilderness called America: *Torah* Education.

BOOK III

RISING TIDE OF REFORM

MODERN

RELIGION.

BY

MOSES HART.

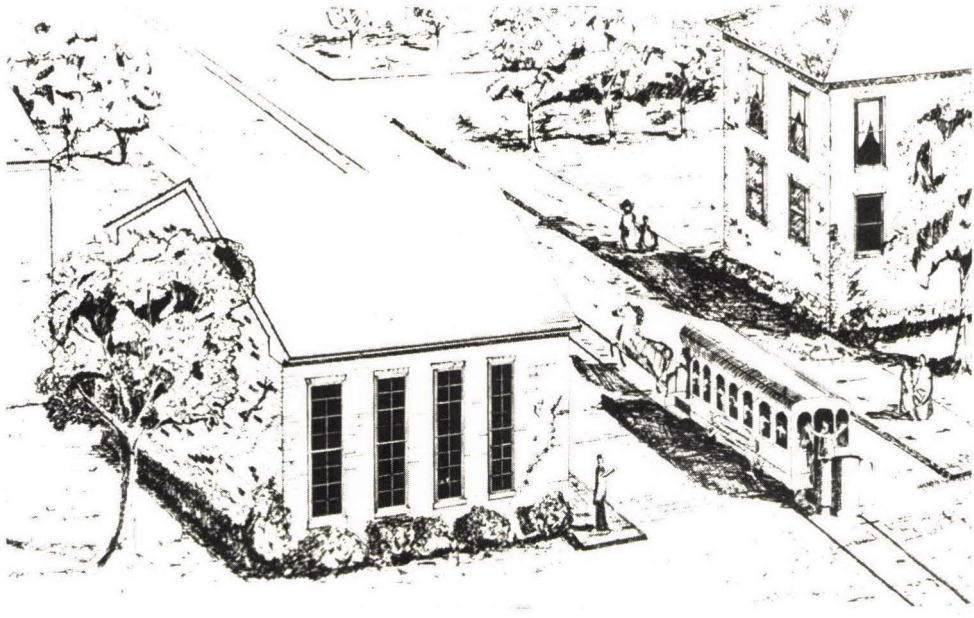
NEW-YORK:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR.

1818.

Modern Religion by Moses Hart, New York, 1818; First pro-Reform publication in America.

(Publications, American Jewish Historical Society)



At weekday dedication of *Mickva Israel*, Savannah, Georgia, 1818, organ first pealed in a U.S. Synagogue.

(Third to None by Rabbi Salu Jacob Rubin)

THE

CONSTITUTION

AND

BYE-LAWS,

OF THE

ISRAELITE CONGREGATION.

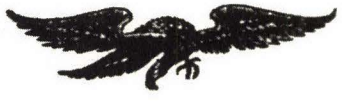
OF

SHANARAI-CHASSET,

(GATES OF MERCY,)

Of the City of New-Orleans

STATE OF LOUISIANA.



Founded February 2d, A. M. 5588.

BY JACOB S. SOLIS,

OF THE STATE OF NEW-YORK,

DECEMBER 20th, 1827.



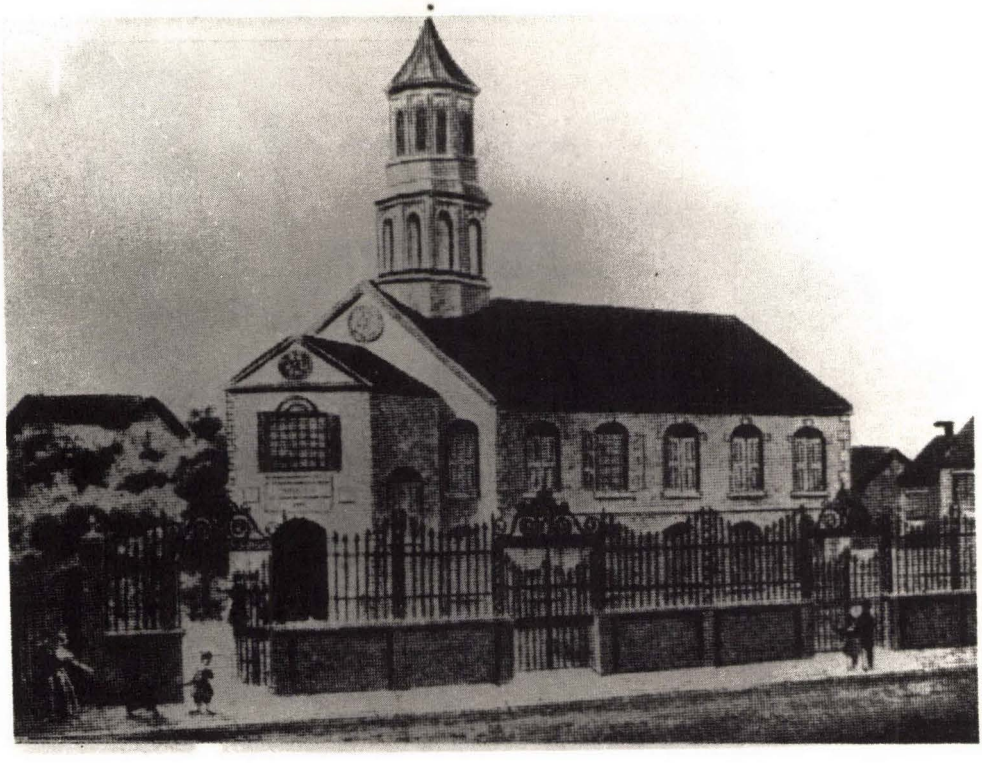
NEW-ORLEANS:

PRINTED BY F. DELAUP, PRINTER OF THE CONGREGATION.

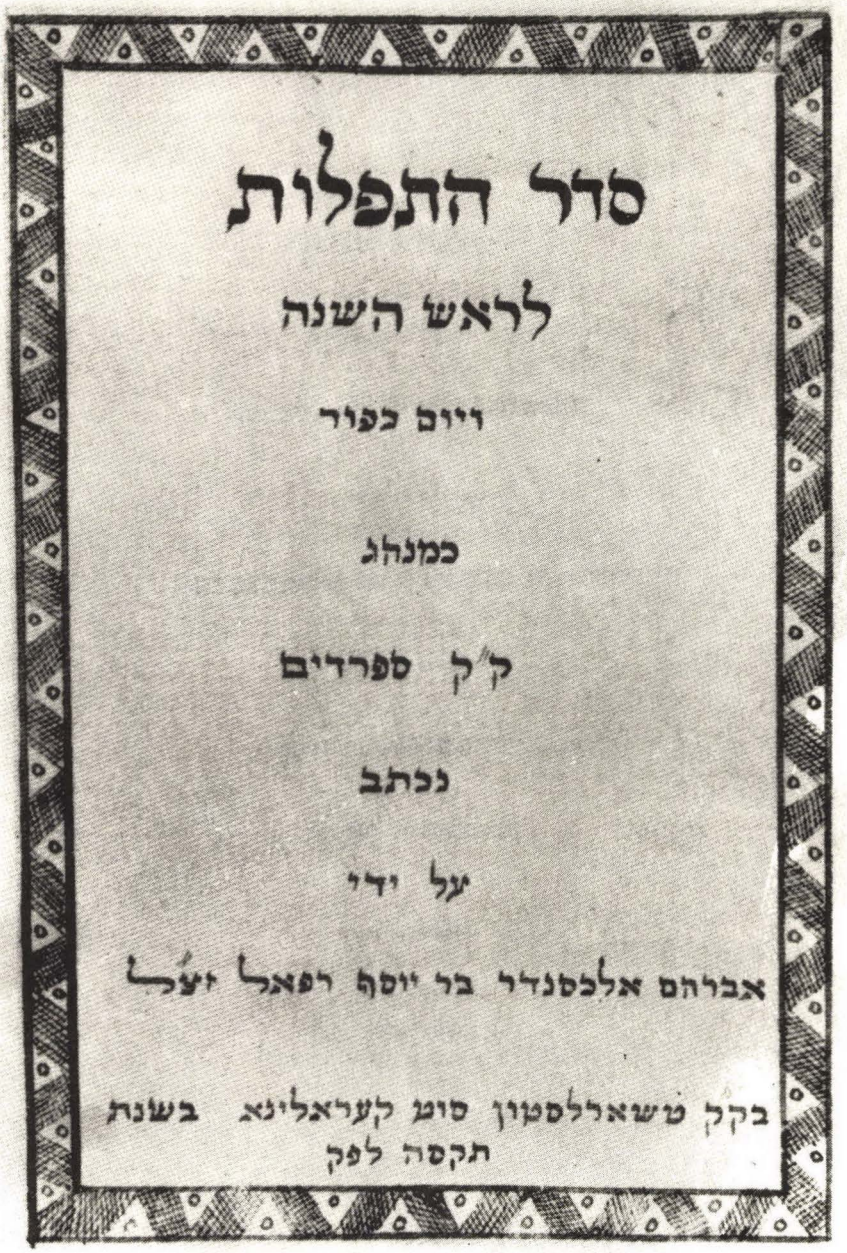
1828.

Title Page: 1828 Constitution of *Shanarai-Chasset* Congregation, New Orleans: First patronages of patrilinial descent to determine Jewish status of offspring, adopted in its' by-laws.

(The Early Jews of New Orleans by Bertram Wallace Korn)



Beth Elohim Synagogue, Charleston, South Carolina, 1794-1838.
(Painting by Solomon Nunez Carvalho)



Handwritten Prayer Book, Portuguese-rite, by Abraham Alexander, Reader at *Beth Elohim*, Charleston, S.C.

(Encyclopedia Judaica)

THE

SABBATH SERVICE

AND

MISCELLANEOUS PRAYERS,

ADOPTED BY THE

REFORMED SOCIETY OF ISRAELITES,

FOUNDED IN

CHARLESTON, SOUTH-CAROLINA,

NOVEMBER 21, 1825.

Charleston:
PRINTED BY J. S. BURGES, 44 QUEEN-ST.
1830.

Prayer Book compiled by American Reformers featured Isaac Harby's Articles of Faith, for the Reformed Society of Israelites, first Reform Congregation in America, 1824.

(Copy of Reprint in Author's Private Library)



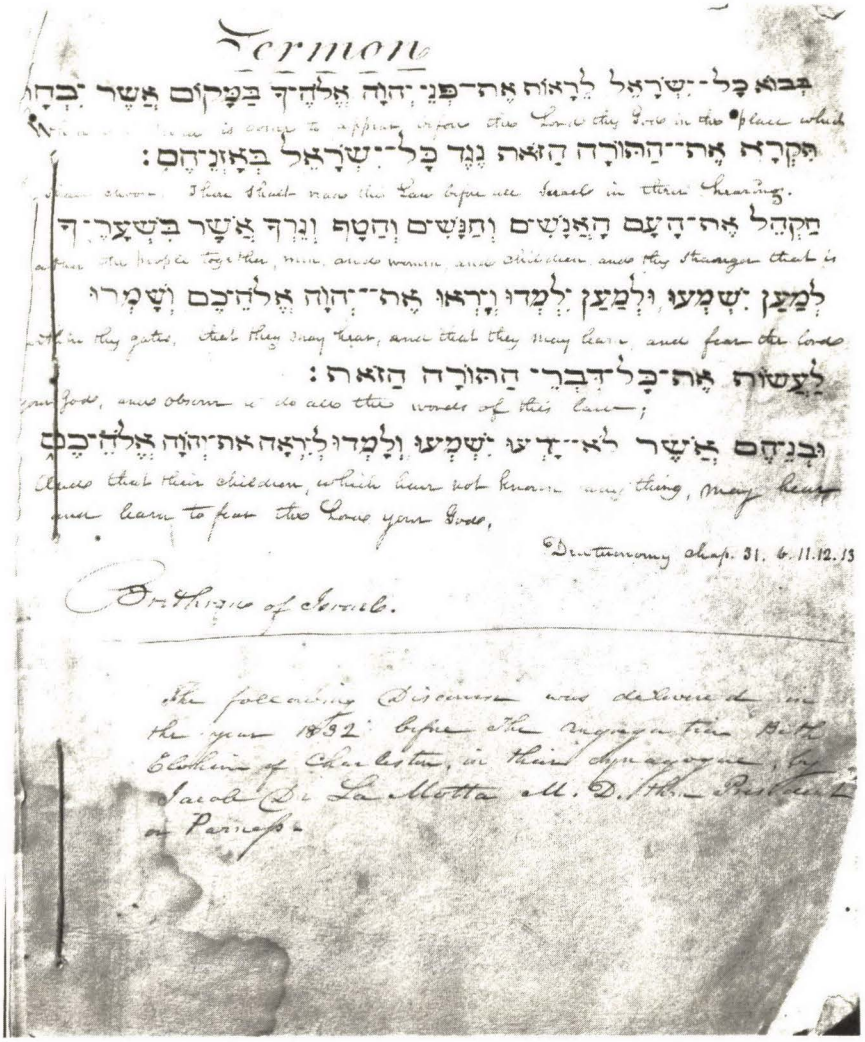
Silhouette of Playwright Isaac Harby, Charleston, South Carolina; first Reform "Rabbi" in America.

(Portraits of Jews by Hannan R. London)



Silhouette of Dr. Jacob de la Motta, M.D., Charleston, South Carolina, opponent of Reform.

(*Portraits of Jews* by Hannah R. London)



Sermon

בְּבוֹא כָל־יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵרָאוֹת אֶת־פְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בַּמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחָר

When [illegible] is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which

תִּקְרָא אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת נֶגֶד כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם׃

[illegible] choose. Thou shalt read this Law before all Israel in their hearing.

הַקְהֵל אֶת־הָעָם הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנָּשִׁים וְהַטָּף וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ

Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is

לְמַעַן יִשְׁמְעוּ וּלְמַעַן יִלְמְדוּ וְיָרְאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְשָׁמְרוּ

within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord

לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת׃

your God, and observe to do all the words of this law;

וּבְנֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעוּ יִשְׁמְעוּ וְלָמְדוּ לְיִרְאָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God,

Deuteronomy chap. 31. 6.11.12.13

Brithrin of Israel.

The following Discourse was delivered in the year 1832 before the Congregation Beth Elohim of Charleston, in their synagogue, by Jacob De La Motta M. D. the President on Parness.

First anti-Reform sermon in America, by Jacob de la Motta, *Beth Elohim*, Charleston, South Carolina, September, 1832.

(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



Exterior, *Beth Elohim*, 1840, Charleston, South Carolina, erected on site of first edifice destroyed by fire in 1838.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati)



Interior, *Beth Elohim*, 1841, Charleston, South Carolina, first Reform Temple in America.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati)



First meeting place of *Har Sinai Verein*, Baltimore; home of Moses Hutler, Exeter Street and Eastern Avenue; second Reform Congregation in America, 1842.

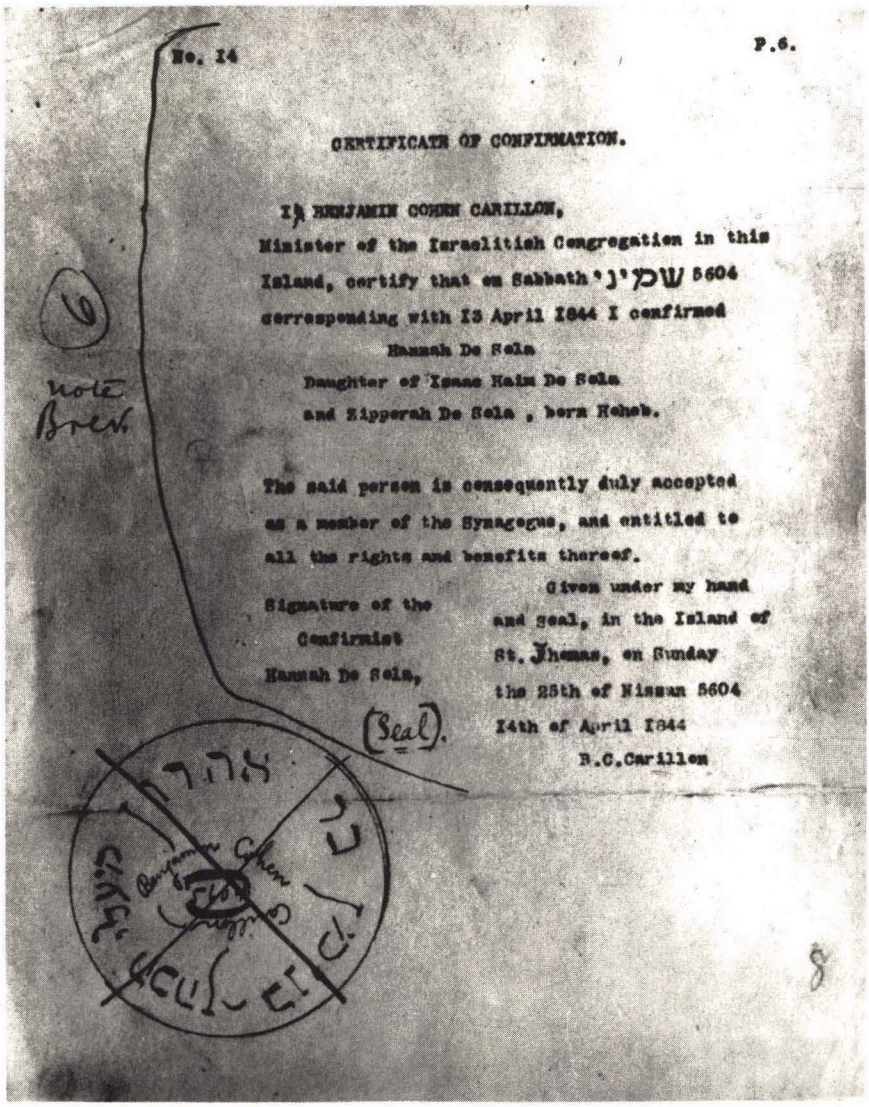
(The Legacy of a Liberal by Abraham Shusterman)



Dr. Gotthold Salomon, preacher since 1818 at the New Edifice, supplied Reform Prayer Book of Hamburg Temple to *Har Sinai Verein*, Baltimore, 1841.

(The Jewish Encyclopedia)

TOURO COLLEGE LIBRARY



No. 14 P.6.

CERTIFICATE OF CONFIRMATION.

I, BENJAMIN COHEN CARILLON,
Minister of the Israelitish Congregation in this
Island, certify that on Sabbath שבת 5604
corresponding with 13 April 1844 I confirmed
Hannah De Sola
Daughter of Isaac Haim De Sola
and Zipporah De Sola , born Heheb.

The said person is consequently duly accepted
as a member of the Synagogue, and entitled to
all the rights and benefits thereof.

Signature of the
Confirmist
Hannah De Sola,

Given under my hand
and seal, in the Island of
St. Thomas, on Sunday
the 25th of Nissan 5604
14th of April 1844
B.C.Carillon

(Seal).

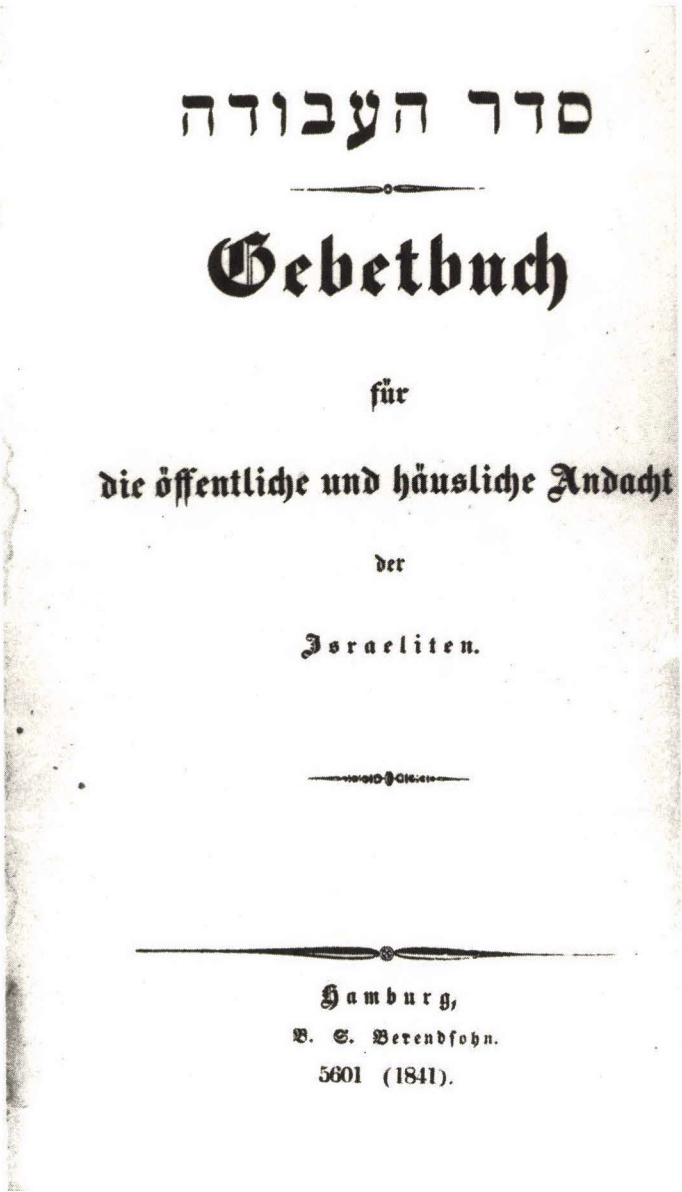
Earliest known Confirmation Certificate presented April 14, 1842, on girl's thirteenth birthday at *Berakha (W)eshalom*, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, Danish West Indies.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



Interior *Berakha (W)eshalom* Synagogue, Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands 1844; Third Reform Congregation in America.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)


סדר העבודה

Gebetbuch

für

die öffentliche und häusliche Andacht

der

Israeliten.

Hamburg,
B. S. Berendsohn.
5601 (1841).

Revised Reform Prayer Book of Hamburg Temple, introduced at *Cultus Verein*, New York, 1844.

(Library, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati)



First location of the Reform *Cultus Verein*, New York, 1845, (Forerunner of Temple *Emanu-El*) at Grand and Clinton, Lower East Side. Fourth Reform Congregation in America.

SUBSCRIPTION.

מורנו הרב המורה והמופלא רבי אברהם רייס נרו The *R, Rev. Rauf Abram Reiss*, who now resides in the state of *Maryland*, being the only regular constituted sacred functionary for that office ever sent to America, and whose diplomas are from three of the most pious and learned *Raufs* in Europe, and whose reputation and fitness meets with the warmest approbation of the *Rauf* רבי שלמה א"ב"ד of *England*, in a letter directed to *Moreland Michol Esq.* פרנס דקק בני ישורון Parnass of Bnai Jeshurun Shule; and also from the Rabbi and learned *M. Lehrens*, in the city of Amsterdam, Treasurer of the *Jerusalem Fund* in Europe, directed to *J. B. Kursheedt Esq.* late president of the Society תרומת הוקדש Terumat hakodesh, in New-York.

And whereas it is one of the first duties of Yehudem to contribute towards keeping such an individual from a state of poverty, after his being constituted for such a holy office in America.—

Therefore, we, the undersigned individuals, subscribe one shilling per month, payable quarterly, for three years; being one dollar and one half per annum, for the above object.

Adar 5601
(1841)

NAMES.	RESIDENCE.
פ"ומ דקק שארית ישראל	Original signed by many Contributors and the following Parnassin.
פ"ומ דקק בני ישורון	Mr Morland Michol. Broad Way
פ"ומ דקק אנשי חסד	Mr Barnet Levy. Chatham St.
פ"ומ דקק שער השמים	Mr. S. Silverman. Division St.
פ"ומ דקק שערי צדקו	Mr. M. Crestallier. Pearl St.

A Rauf is solely and only constituted such, by the ordination of one or more *other Raufs*, as the Executive Branch of all governments *can* and *do alone commission Temporal Judges;* when however capable the oldest *Lawyer* may be for this exalted situation; Still it is neither in the power of the community of *Lawyers*, nor of the Citizens generally, to elect or select the individual: Thus the person appointed may be a young and inexperienced Lawyer; still, after his commission is signed by the Governor, he becomes the sole Judge or arbiter of the Law, and in fact then forms part of the Power of the Law itself, in defiance of the people he governs: For in this Country *The Law* is the sole depotism extant.

Thus with *a Rauf* (since the early period of the Judges,) after he possesses his commission or *Semicha*, a decision by him will be imperitively binding, with good Yehudim on all Religious subjects, and prevents that perplexity or indecission so much to be dreaded.

Altho' these United States can date the first migration of some of our People, nearly as early as their return from western Europe to *England* under *Cromwell* and *Charles Rex;* still we have counted comparitively few in number, till within the period of the last Five Years, when our numbers have increased by an accession of nearly *Ten Thousand Souls* in the States of New-York, Pensylvania and Maryland.

The occasion for reference of differences of opinions in the legal matters of our religion, has been necessarily heretofore by a transmission across the atlantic to the *Rauf of England*, whose Jurisdiction comprised this Colony when subject to Great Britain. The arrival of *R. Rabbi Abraham Rice* last year in this country, obviates this difficulty.

The subscription is suggested at this small sum equal to the Twelve Tribes in number; that every member may have the merit of paying (tho' small,) to this *holy contribution.*

Subscription, *Adar*, 5601 [February-March, 1841], first United Jewish Appeal in U.S. to establish Rice as Chief Rabbi of the United States.
(Archives, Mickve Israel Synagogue, Philadelphia)

Resolutions adopted by the Representatives of the several METROPOLITAN and PROVINCIAL CONGREGATIONS appointed to confer on the subject of the appointment of a CHIEF RABBI, and confirmed by the said Congregations.

1.—That this Conference, having heard the Resolutions of the Committee of the Great Synagogue of the 14th November last, is of opinion, that *it is* desirable that a Chief Rabbi be appointed, duly authorised as the Spiritual Guide and Director of all the Jews of this Empire.

2.—That the amount required for the maintenance of the dignity of the office of Chief Rabbi be raised by sums to be contributed by the various Congregations in the Empire, in such manner as shall be hereafter agreed upon.

3.—That no person be admitted a Candidate unless he be רב אב"ד (Chief Rabbi), and must have held such office on or before ר"ח סיון תר"ב.

4.—That each Candidate shall present to the Committee, Testimonials of ability from Chief Rabbies and others, and shall be expected to be well acquainted with Ancient Classical and Modern General Literature, and to have a competent knowledge of some of the Modern European Languages.

5.—That he shall be able to deliver Discourses when required; and the successful Candidate will be expected to qualify himself to deliver such Discourses in the English Language, within two years from the date of his appointment.

6.—That the Candidates shall not have been under thirty, nor above forty-two years of age, at ראש השנה תר"ג (5603).

7.—That the Honorary Officers, and three of the Committee of the Great Synagogue, together with the Honorary Officers, for the time being, of the other London uniting Synagogues, do constitute a permanent Committee, who shall elect a President, with whom the Chief Rabbi may communicate, when necessary, on any subject relative to the exercise of the duties of his office.

That should it unfortunately happen that the רב should fail in his duty, the conjoint Committee, composed as above, shall in the first instance inquire into the matter; and, if they deem it requisite, convene a meeting of nineteen Delegates (to be elected by the vestries of the London uniting congregations, in the same proportion as constitutes this Conference), and such body, consisting of the conjoint Committee and Delegates, shall, after investigation, be empowered to do what is just and necessary.

8.—That the Chief Rabbi shall have the general religious direction and superintendance of each of the uniting congregations.

9.—That he shall determine all questions on religious points referred to him by any member of any such congregation.

10.—That he shall deliver Discourses in the several Synagogues, at such times as shall be hereafter arranged.

Partial list of requirements for applicants to office of Chief Rabbi of Britain, London, 1844.

(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



Nathan Marcus Adler, colleague of Rice, elected Chief Rabbi of Britain, 1845.

(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)

BALTIMORE, MARCH 28, 1842.

SIR,

You are respectfully invited to attend the Consecration of the ***New School-house,*** erected by the ***Hebrew and English Benevolent Academical Association of Baltimore,*** in Bond Street, between Pratt and Gough Streets, on Wednesday morning, the 30th inst., at 9 o'clock.

R. Goldsmith Secretary

Invitation to consecration of "New School-house" of First Hebrew All-Day School, Founded by Rice in 1841.

(The Making of an American Jewish Community by Isaac M. Fein)

Chapter 6
"First" All-Day School

ON THE very day that Rice set foot on American soil, on July 25, 1840, Isaac Leeser spoke on the absence of Jewish education for the youth:

> . . . the falling off . . . in religious observances is the offspring of ignorance and want of education . . . In several towns there is not even a single school where the Scriptures are expounded and the holy language of our ancestors is taught; so that some . . . banish the latter as useless from our form of worship . . . .

A decade prior to the arrival of Rabbi Rice, the immigrants who founded *Anshe Chesed* Congregation in New York appealed to New Yorkers for the establishment of a Hebrew School. They advanced the following argument for inaugurating this parochial educational institute:

> We witness in our generation the decline of the knowledge of the sacred tongue [Hebrew]. Very few among the young are familiar with it; most of the boys do not even know how to read the prayers correctly . . . .

The congregation then founded *Lomde Torah* [Learners of Torah], an afternoon supplemental school, referred to as an "evening school." The school lasted about one year. It was revived in 1838 when Jonas Hecht was elected *Chazzan*. He was assisted by Henry Jones, Secretary of the congregation.

In the previous year, in Philadelphia, Miss Rebecca Gratz, daughter of Michael Gratz, a prominent merchant and community leader, founded the first Hebrew Sunday School. When in 1841, Cincinnati's Jewish community leaders asked Rice if they should establish a Sunday School, he replied with an emphatic No! The reason being that Gratz's model had a Bible which contained both the Old and New Testaments. The "Scripture Lessons" were taught from a little, illustrated work published by the Christian Sunday School Union.

Rice had as his objective to establish a Jewish all-day school where there would be taught a variety of Hebrew subjects in its Jewish department, as distinct from a *yeshivah* which taught *Talmud* exclusively in its Jewish department.

The curriculum of the proposed all-day, all-boys school would be concentrated upon religious studies, which included reading Hebrew, some Hebrew grammar, translating *Siddur* [prayerbook], *T'nach* [Scriptures], biblical history, and commandments. secular studies included the three r's: readin', ritin', and 'rithmetic, grammar, spelling, geography, and composition.

At this time there was not one such school in all America. Rice insisted that only an intensive Jewish education in America could build the future of Judaism. Education of Jewish youth was his first and major concern. Its importance is underlined by the Jewish term *schul* [synagogue] derived from *schule* [school]. Without knowledge there could be no intelligible worship.

In an address dealing with "Our National Disaster," delivered Friday, September 23, 1841, Rice admonished his congregation of the catastrophe to Jewry that would result from ignoring the education of their children:

> We have seriously transgressed by neglecting the Jewish education of our children. Whenever I think of the present state of our children's religious education, my heart becomes filled with dread for our future. Should our present indifference perpetuate itself, the name "Jew" will disappear in this country.

In the second year of his ministry, he opened an all-day school at the *Harrison Street Schul* of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. It became called the Hebrew and English Benevolent Academic Association of Baltimore. On Sunday, October 17, 1841, at dedication ceremonies, Rice declared that "This institution is most likely the first of its kind in the United States." While it was in fact the first German-Jewish all-day school in America, he and his immigrant generation had no knowledge of the earlier Spanish-Portuguese all-day school in New York which closed its doors a score years earlier: the *Polonis Talmud Torah* of the Sephardic *Shearith Israel* Synagogue of New York, which lasted from 1808 to 1821; nor of its 18th century predecessor, *"Yeshibah* [sic] *Minhat Areb"* [Seminary of Pleasant Offering], whose doors closed a century earlier.

In his address, Rice spoke of the obligation devolving upon Jewish parents to give their children a complete religious education. He said:

> The first commandments of the Torah, which is to rear a family, requires in its fulfillment the raising of good children, taught to follow in the footsteps of our ancestors. Better not to rear any children at all, than to raise children devoid of any religious education!
>
> Of all parental obligations, the responsibility to impart to their

children a true religious education is the most important. Only religion will offer them happiness throughout their life. All earthly riches can not assure them happiness, for these fortunes are subject to change. Only religion is the treasure which offers support at all times. The talmudist Rabbi Nehorai said: "I abandon teaching my son all trades to teach him only the Torah, for a trade supports a man only in his youth but in his old age man is exposed to hunger. The Torah, however, supports a man in his old age as in his youth, offering him hope and a future [*Talmud Bavli, Kiddushin* 82a]."

Only the religious school, which instills faith in the heart of the child, achieves this goal.

Rice responded to the oft-asked question, "When should one's religious education begin?"

As regards the best time to acquire knowledge that will be retained throughout life, experience teaches us that it is during childhood and youth. Thus the book of "Train up a child in the way it should go, and even when he is old, he will not depart from it [Proverbs 22:6]."

When shall the Jew study his laws and commandments if not during his childhood? Where will the Israelite obtain his Jewish instruction if not in a religious school which prepares the child to be an observant Jew thoughout his life? To achieve this objective, the religious school should so instruct the child in the teachings of his fathers that his very personality is molded in their ways. He should be so instructed in the Jewish commandments, permissive and restrictive, that after he leaves the religious school he will continue to observe them joyfully and with satisfaction. Only when the child is young and is taught by a dedicated teacher, does the religious school achieve lasting results.

Rice clarified the relationship between Jewish and secular studies:

As between secular and religious education preference must be given to the latter. When one has not received religious knowledge, even though he may possess all other knowledge attainable and be, for example, the greatest artist, he is, notwithstanding this accomplishment, capable of doing harm to himself and his fellow man. Religion is of especial importance to the Jew, since it regulates for him all his acts, all his life.

Rice called to the minds of his immigrant generation their pious parents and of their devotion to Jewish observance:

All of you were born and reared in a land where our religion prospered . . . Here you have become estranged from our religion . . . Here the absence of responsible religious leaders has hastened the process of your estrangement . . . You may well perceive the fate that awaits your children. However, despite the void of religious education, human nature sooner or later turns us instinctively to religion. When that occurs, the individual who unfortunately had not received any religious instruction in his youth, develops his own system of beliefs . . . which, based on his own opinions and conclusions, prove false and erroneous. Such conditions have developed the hundreds of differing sects which have sprung up in this country . . . .

There are further those who believe that they have discharged their responsibility when they send their children for a few hours of religious instruction. They are mistaken, for Jewish education begins in the home where the child's personality is molded. The child is heartbroken when he sees his parents conducting themselves at home in a manner contrary to the teachings of the religious school. Strict observance is not an impossibility! All that is required is a determined mind and strong will to overcome all obstacles. We support societies that seek to cure bodily ills, yet we shy away from supporting those societies which seek to purify the soul. We weep when death removes our children, but we destroy our surviving children, for without religion there can be no life . . . .

On a happy note Rice performed the wedding ceremony of his former pupil in Zell, Me'ir Dov, addressing groom and bride, he admonished:

Since the bride had been raised in this country, I would call to her attention a few of the many faults which prevail in this land. Here, frivolity has corrupted not only the true concepts of religion and morality, but has even affected those of marriage and family life. I don't know the basis for the distorted attitudes which are prevalent in this land, that contrary to all laws of nature, women have been given such an exalted position in the family that it quite often leads to tragedy. Whereas the role of the woman has always been to help her husband and to recognize his authority, in this country the woman strives to be the boss of the house. An educated person and especially a Jewess, must realize that her goal in life must be more than just dressing-up and showing-off. The true Jewess is proud of her religion and establishes her home according to the principles of her religion. She is proud of her role as a woman and does not believe in the current vogue that it is a great mark of distinction for a woman not to be recognized as a woman. The bride, as

> the groom, must understand their proper role in marriage and plan their future life accordingly. I trust that the bride and groom will be able to distinguish between true and false interpretations of the significance of married life.

Rabbi Rice's endeavours to build a parochial school in Baltimore bore fruit; a Reverend Alois Kaiser assumed its presidency. In March, 1842, R. [Raphael? Reuben?] Goldschmidt, Secretary of the All-Day School, sent an invitation

> to attend the Consecration of the New School house erected by the Hebrew and English Benevolent Academic Association of Baltimore, in Bond street, between Pratt and Gough streets . . . .

Rice, in his educational program for children, could not guarantee that they would remain observant but he felt assurred that they would not join those who denied and discountinued observance.

Chapter 7 *The Uncircumcised and Intermarried*

IN HIS sermons, Rice reached the congregants assembled within the confines of his synagogue. But in his responsa, Rice, the leading talmudist in the land, became the acknowledged leader of observant Jewry throughout the country. They crowned him with the unofficial title, "Chief Rabbi."

In religious matters, American Jewish leaders had long been aware of the need for an ecclesiastical authority to head a tribunal or a chief rabbi to issue religio-legal decisions in ritual matters. The many inquiries directed at Rice underscored this need for a centralized decision-making person or group.

In 1841, Rice responded to Israel Baer Kursheedt on a series of problems relating to the burial of uncircumcised sons under thirteen years of age whose Jewish parents had neglected to fulfill that religious rite of circumcision called *bris* [covenant]; the burial of uncircumcised youths who after *Bar Mitzvah* [thirteen years and a day] had not fulfilled the rite, and of those who willfully or unwillfully neglected the obligation. In fact, the very day Rice set foot on American soil, Leeser complained that " . . . we refused to circumcise our male children . . . "

Isaac Leeser, in preaching to his congregation, *Mickve Israel*, of Philadelphia, addressed himself to parents who had neglected this rite for their children:

> You would be shocked, were any one to invite you to join another religion, to forswear directly your allegiance to Jacob's God. Yet do you feel the same regard for your children's future happiness, when you exclude them by your own sinning from the congregation of the faithful! . . . . The covenant can do them no bodily or mental injury; it is only an acknowledgment that in the flesh they belong to the house of Israel; and surely it is their right, as well as it was yours at your birth, that nothing should be done by their parents which of necessity must make their entrance into the great body of Jews more painful and more difficult, and consequently more uncertain, than it ought to be. You were children of the covenant, and yet you rebelled; let your own children have the same choice; . . . but let them never have cause to say, as many no doubt have said: "It is my father's and mother's fault that I am not an Israelite."

The question of burial of Jewish children who had not been circumcised according to the prescribed rites for entry into the covenant of Abraham posed other troublesome problems. Thus Reverend Leeser inquired in 1841 of the Chief Rabbi David Meldola of the *Sefardic* Jewish community of London, whether Leeser, as *chazzan*, might conduct funerals for Israelites who had not been circumcised according to Jewish law.

Rabbi Meldola's response, though not extant, may be gleaned from Leeser's subsequent action. At the end of the decade, Leeser's congregation, *Mickve Israel*, ruled that:

> No male over thirteen years of age who has not been entered into the Jewish covenant, shall on any consideration whatever be permitted to be buried in any burial ground of the congregation. And it shall be at the discretion of the Board, whether or not to permit the interment of such males, of over one year and under thirteen years of age, or to permit the funeral and other religious services to be performed on such occasion.

A frequently asked question was whether an uncircumcised boy who died during infancy or childhood, may be entitled to Jewish burial rites. This question had likewise been submitted to Rabbi Rice by Israel Baer Kursheedt. Rice gave his reply A boy who died before his thirteenth birthday, said Rice, is not in violation of that commandment and is entitled to a Jewish burial. However, circumcision must be performed symbolically prior to interment, even as it would be for an infant who died before his eighth day, the day of fulfilling the commandment of circumcision.

Furthermore, said Rice, the circumcised son of a Gentile mother, is regarded a non-Jew as the religion of the child is determined by the

mother's religious status only. In order for that boy to be entered into the Jewish faith, a *bris* followed by immersion in a *mikveh* [lit. gathering of water; a ritual pool] is required. However, if no *bris* had taken place and though the boy had been circumcised as a medical procedure and then, even if immersed in a ritual pool, he remains a non-Jew, because there was no intent of entry into the Jewish faith; the circumcision having been performed merely as an operation and not as a covenantal rite.

The grim specter of increasing intermarriage, coupled with the disregard of the circumcision rite, continued at an alarming rate. Five years passed when Leeser wrote:

> If one were merely to look at the singular changes which have within our recollection come over the nature of religious observance amongst Israelites . . . he would be apt to come to the hasty conclusion that Judaism has seen its best days . . . Some have thrown off the yoke of the law, retaining merely the name of Jews . . . others, in numbers scarcely ever before known, seek the alliance of the gentiles, and rear up their children in the customs and the laws of the various nations . . . .

In New York, the learned physician, Dr. Simeon Abrahams, who had for many years served as treasurer of congregation *Shearith Israel*, and who blew the *Shofar* [ram's horn] on the high holy days and filled his leisure time with the study of Hebrew literature, joined Leeser in his concern:

> The large number of persons who have contracted marriage with those not of our faith . . . are allowed to remain in good standing in the various congregations and societies to which they formerly belonged, as if they had committed no wrong, nor done anything against the common welfare of Jewish society, much less been guilty of an act which, above all others, is most certain to destroy them and their associates from being a nation on earth with distinct laws and origin.
>
> It has farther to be remarked, that the offspring of such marriages are generally introduced in the community of Jews, without their having become regular proselytes; they are unfortunately not looked upon by many as strangers to our faith, which they actually are; and thus the landmarks of our religion are broken down by the intermarriage of such children with those who are truly of the house of Israel, destroying thus the well established lines of ancestry, and those religious and national distinctions, which have kept us a peculiar people . . . . It will be difficult in a few years hence, to know who among us are actually entitled, according to our laws, to be

> regarded as Jews . . . . By allowing the transgressors to retain their former rights in congregations and societies, the name of Jew, in this country especially, will, I fear, soon be a matter of history . . . .

Congregation *Shearith Israel*, New York, thereupon voted the following resolution:

> That no seat in our holy place of worship shall hereafter be leased to any person married contrary to our religious laws; and no persons married contrary to our religious law shall be interred in any part of the burying ground belonging to this congregation . . . .

This resolution gave rise to a series of ritual questions as circumstances arose to test its implementation. In the main, the queries concerned interment of children under thirteen years of age if they were uncircumcised but of Jewish parents; or if they were uncircumcised or circumcised but the mother was Gentile and the father Jewish or the father was Gentile and the mother Jewish. There were also questions about the religious status of female children under twelve years of age of either Gentile father or mother.

A series of these question were resubmitted six years later, in 1847, to Rabbi Rice, and to Moses Noah, a rabbi visiting in New York, and a third party. Only a draft of Rice's reply is extant.

Rice distinguished between uncircumcised Jewish children and adults, between intentional or unintentional neglect, and allowed for exceptional cases in which circumcision posed a threat to life. He also examined the question of what the attitude of the synagogue should be toward uncircumcised Israelites. Are they entitled to participate in synagogal honors and to be called to the Torah to recite the benedication, in which one affirms one's being a member of a distinct people?

Rice first gave the basis for the sacred significance of the law of circumcision. According to Maimonides it meant attainment of perfectability of the person, for Abraham was called "perfect" only after fulfillment of the rite of circumcision. Furthermore, unlike the precepts of *tefillin* [phylacteries, donned in daily prayer on weekday mornings by Jewish males over thirteen years of age] and *tzitzits* [tassels—attached to the corners of a garment and worn daily, including holy days] which are not sealed in the flesh and are not with the individual after they are removed, the sign of circumcision is seared in one's flesh and remains as an ever-present, constant sign, a reminder to perfect oneself, to attain perfection through fulfillment of all the precepts of God.

Beginning with the adult who willfully and repeatedly publicly violates even one specific *mitzvah* [commandment or law of the *Torah*], he

is designated an apostate by Maimonides, a person who separates himself from the community of Israel. Therefore, Rice declared, one who rejects the divine law and follows the practice of other peoples, as in the case of a willful violator of the circumcision precept, should be denied all religious recognition by the Jewish community until such time as that individual repents and returns to the fold.

In his fulfillment of the rite of circumcision, a teenager is regarded as an adult. If, after a boy is thirteen years and a day old he neglects to fulfill the rite, he is not to be counted in a *minyan* for public worship, which requires ten male adults over age thirteen. His company should be avoided so that one may not be influenced negatively by him. Furthermore, his parents, who willfully disregarded the obligation to circumcise their son, should also be excluded from religious honors, the father being unworthy of being called to recite the Torah benedictions. As the Psalmist declared: "For unto the wicked God saith: 'What hast thou to do to declare My statutes . . . .'"

Rice urged congregations to deny all religious recognition to uncircumcised adults and to fathers of uncircumcised teenagers. They are to be regarded as apostates who do not have any share in the world to come, until they repent and return to the fold.

There is, however, an exception to the rule in the case of a hemophiliac, an inherited condition whereby one's blood does not clot normally. If such a person's two brothers had died after they were circumcised, then he would not be obligated to fulfill the ceremony of circumcision. In such a case Rice distinguished between the scriptural reference to an [*orel*] "uncircumcised" and a [*ben nachor*] "stranger" in regard to partaking of the Passover [sacrifice in Temple days].

In the case of a hemophiliac who is uncircumcised by necessity rather than by choice, as an *orel* he is excluded from participation in the paschal lamb sacrifice by a special ordinance that enjoins its participation upon circumcised Israelites specifically. But while the hemophiliac is excluded from fulfillment of this particular commandment, he is entitled and even obligated to participate and observe all the other biblical commandments. However, a *ben nachor*, one who remains a stranger by his willful intent and choice not to be circumcised, was not permitted to partake of the paschal lamb sacrifice or of any other precepts devolving upon Jews in all climes and times, in the diaspora as in the Land of Israel. He is designated a stranger, for he has estranged himself from the guidance of our Heavenly Father by his adamant refusal to fulfill a particular commandment. This is his status until he repents and returns.

Therefore, ruled Rice, one who is as a stranger because he willfully violates even one precept of the Torah, such as the commandment of cir-

cumcision, should be regarded as a non-Jew insofar as his participation in Jewish rites is concerned and should be excluded from congregational membership and synagogue honors.

The greatest number of problems caused by disregard of the circumcision law concerned the religious status of minors, boys under thirteen years of age who were uncircumcised because of parental neglect or disregard. Since children are not held accountable for violating positive commandments, it was asked if they could be accorded synagogal honors. Could they, for example, be called to the Torah on the holiday of *Simhat Torah* [Rejoicing with the Law] to recite the benedictions for the Torah with other boys under thirteen years of age? The ceremony *kol hanearim* [all the lads] had been a custom for almost a thousand years and was noted by Rabbi Moses Isserles (ReMA) in *Darkei Moshe* [Ways of Moses], his commentary on the *Tur* [lit. "Row" an allusion to the four rows of stones in the breast plate of the High Priest; Code of Rabbi Jacob, son of Asher; 14th century].

Rice stated that even though an uncircumcised minor is considered an Israelite, he should nonetheless be denied these honors in order to make him aware of the obligation to be circumcised and to make him regret his uncircumcised state. He will thereby be moved to fulfill the rite after attaining his thirteenth year. And as mentioned, if he fails to fulfill the rite after he is thirteen years and a day, he is regarded as a *ben nachor*, a stranger or a non-Jew, and he is certainly not allowed to participate in Jewish rites.

Israel Baer Kursheedt made Rice's ruling known to his son, Gershom, who was establishing himself as a broker and journalist in New Orleans. After the high holy days of that year, 1841, Gershom, a leader of *Shanarai-Chasset* congregation, influenced the membership to change its bylaw, which declared: "No Israelite child shall be excluded either from the schools, from the temple or the burial ground on account of the religion of the mother."

For the first time in Jewish law, patrilineal as well as matrilineal descent would determine the Jewish status of the offspring. This bylaw had been adopted thirteen years earlier when the congregation was founded, because at that time virtually all the early Jewish male settlers of the Crescent City were married to Catholic women, including the unordained rabbi, Manis Jacobs! He married Angelique-Charlotte Jacinthe Verneuille and wanted his children, Felix and Theresa, to be accepted as Jewish. Therefore he proposed the bylaw, which accepted such children in the religious school and provided a Jewish burial for them, though such a ruling was contrary to Judaic law and the tradition of four millennia.

Rice's decision moved congregations to take the action of withhold-

ing affiliation to those who married out of the Jewish fold. Following the lead of earlier established synagogues, congregation *Bene* [this transliteration replaced *B'nai*, its corporate name spelling] *Yeshurun*, Cincinnati, a year after its founding adopted the following resolutions on September 19, 1841:

> An individual cannot be considered qualified for membership who is united in marriage contrary to the laws and regulations of the Jewish religion.
>
> Any member marrying out of the pale of the Jewish religion . . . shall forfeit his membership.

Defying Rice's ruling, Gustavus Poznanski, *chazzan* of *"Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim"* [Holy Congregation House of God], Charleston, South Carolina, on August 14, 1841, officiated at the burial of a child of Solomon Lambert at the Hebrew Cemetery on Coming Street, though the child's mother was a Christian.

An earlier dispute over a burial which had taken place in 1785 resulted in a secession; the *Sephardic* element withdrew from *Beth Elohim* calling their synagogue by the original name of incorporation in 1750 *Beth Elohim Unveh Shallom* [House of God and Mansion of Peace]. They met in an upper story of a brick building on Beresford Street, and acquired their own cemetery on Hempstead [now Hanover] Street. By 1792, an understanding was effected and the Portuguese rejoined. In 1841, however, the Portuguese element inclined to Reform, did not resign when the Christian Lambert child was interred in their cemetery.

Rice referred to Poznanski and his ilk in his high holy day sermon, delivered the next month, on *Rosh ha-Shanah*, September 16, 1841 when he informed his congregation:

> Today there are people lacking in modesty, who consider themselves experts in religion, and express their opinions on the application of Jewish law. They are never satisfied to act alone against the tenets of Judaism but are determined to gain followers and seek to influence them. They strut about among their brethren posing as scholars possessed of great knowledge in Judaism.

There were no guidelines for congregations to judge officiants, ministers self-proclaimed. The clergy was a mere image of the congregational officials, and their leadership was as nominal as their scholarship.

Chapter 8
The First National Campaign

AMONG THOSE whom Rice referred to when he spoke of people lacking in modesty who "strut about among their brethren posing as scholars" was Leo Merzbacher, minister of *Anshe Chesed*, New York.

Merzbacher despite his claim to have been an ordained rabbi, doubting congregation *Anshe Chesed* engaged him to serve as "preacher and teacher." Coveting the title "rabbi" and added income it would bring, he declared that he would refuse to "*pasken sheelos*" [render religio-legal decisions] unless he received the title of "rabbi" and "all the emoluments of the rabbinical office." When these emoluments were not given to him, Merzbacher informed the officers of *Anshe Chesed* that he intended to return to his native Bavaria, complaining that his salary of six dollars a month did not suffice.

Anshe Chesed yielded and the newly titled rabbi, called himself "Doctor"—first of the Reform ministers in America to so title himself.

It was then that the Bavarian *Rodeph Shalom* congregation, though struggling to pay the rent for the private home at 156 Attorney Street that served as their synagogue, agreed to contribute to Merzbacher's salary. In return he was to preach on alternate Sabbaths at their worship and teach the children of their members on alternate days. Thus the two congregations retained Merzbacher in New York.

In Baltimore as in New York, income at the synagogue was minimal. For example, at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, offerings pledged by worshippers called to recite the benediction at the Torah amounted to less than a dollar a week. Affluent donors generally contributed "two bits," or 25 cents, while those of moderate means pledged "one bit," or 12½ cents, and the poor a "fipenny bit," or 6¼ cents.

Typical of the income from Sabbath pledges at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation is the following record:

Wolf in Harrison St.	6¼
Baker in the (Fell's) Point	12½
Scourer Peiser	6¼
Clerk of Rosenstock	6¼
Sondheimer's Brother-in-law	25
A tall man at Mayer's house	6¼
Relation of Reiter	12½
Cousin of Straus	12½
Himmelreich's Brother-in-law	25
Man with a Polish Cap	6¼
A new Polander	6¼

The Rice's lived frugally, and managed to meet their expenses. However, the rabbi and *rebbetzin* [rabbi's wife] felt abandonment, loss of the spiritual environment of the Old World. In the winter of 1841-42 they made known their intentions to leave the United States.

Word reached overseas of Rice's imminent departure. Thereupon, Chief Rabbi Solomon Hirschell of London urged Moreland Micholl, president of the leading *Ashkenazic* congregation in America, *B'nai Jeshurun* of New York, to do all that was necessary to establish Rabbi Rice as Chief Rabbi of the United States.

In London, Rabbi Hirschell had only recently, on September 9, 1841, issued the warning that "any person or persons declaring that he, or they, reject and do not believe in the authority of the Oral Law cannot be permitted to have any communion with the Israelites in any religious rite or sacred act." He was aware of the danger posed to Orthodoxy by Reformers already arriving in America, and the dire need for Rice to reconsider and remain to prevent its inroads in America.

No one felt the need for a Chief Rabbi more than Israel Baer Kursheedt. Since the turn of the century, it was he who responded to many of the religio-legal inquiries, for he was acknowledged as the most learned in rabbinic lore. For four decades he had served the American community, but now he was advanced in years, soon to be an octogenarian. With the influx of thousands of new Jewish immigrants, inquiries increased and demanded the services of a full-time rabbi, a Chief Rabbi, whose opinions would be decisive.

The Dutch merchant prince and rabbi, Zebi Hirsch Lehren, rich and influential, European treasurer of the collections for the poor and pious Jews in the Holy land, *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh* [Society for Offerings of the Sanctuary], sounded the alarm. He called upon Israel Baer Kursheedt, a leader in the American-Palestine Relief fund, to spearhead a drive to finance for Rabbi Rice the office of Chief Rabbi of the United States.

Rabbi Lehren's name had always been associated in the mind of Baltimorian Jewry since 1823, when they received a letter written by the Palestinian emissary, Rabbi Benjamin Zeeb Ashkenazi dated June 2nd of that year. There were then an estimated 150 Jews in the city. Hirsch Lehren informed them of the coming to America of Rabbi Ashkenazi of Jerusalem, whom he credentialed.

Kursheedt and Micholl were veterans of two city-wide rallies. Five years earlier, in 1837, they had called upon American Jewry to support the hundreds of penniless German-Jewish emigrants newly arrived in New York; and in 1840, they had organized mass demonstrations to protest the false and malicious Damascus blood libel charge against Syrian Jewry.

Now, in 1841, Kursheedt and Micholl again joined forces to promote establishment of the office of Chief Rabbi of the United States and to secure Rice in that post. They launched a nation-wide campaign to establish the office of Chief Rabbi of the United States. In the spring of that year they circulated a "Subscription." According to the plan outlined therein, each congregational member would contribute a minimal fixed sum [reminiscent of the ancient *shekel*, the biblical coin equivalent to a silver dollar, that each Jew contributed to the support of the Holy Temple of Jerusalem]. This sum was to be remitted in twelve equal quarterly payments over a three-year period [1841-1843]. Thereby each person, rich and poor alike, by contributing a modest but equal sum, would participate in support of the " . . . only regular constituted sacred functionary . . . constituted for such a Holy Office in America."

The "Subscription" called upon each synagogue member to participate and explained the need for establishing the office of Chief Rabbi:

> The occasion for reference of difference of opinions in the legal matters of our religion, has been necessarily [sic!] heretofore by a transmission across the Atlantic to the *Rauf* of England, whose Jurisdiction comprised the Colony when subject to Great Britain. The arrival of the *R. Rabbi Abraham Reiss*, last year in this country, obviates this diffeculty [sic!] . . . a decision by him will be imperitively binding, with good Yehudim on all Religious subjects, and prevents that perplexity or indecission [sic!] so much to be dreaded . . . .

Kursheedt's friend, Haym M. Salomon, son of the famed Revolutionary War patriot, Haym Salomon, former president of *Shearith Israel*, New York, took an active interest in the drive. He wrote to *Mickve Israel* congregation in Philadelphia, urging a favorable response there as in New York, where members of five synagogues subscribed, according to Moreland Micholl, treasurer.

A loud outcry of protest to the "Subscription" to establish the office of Chief Rabbi reverberated from Charleston. Gustavus Poznanski argued that an ecclesiastical authority vested with such power "would easily exercise the most despotic hierarchal sway" and not only arrest the development of Reform but even abolish that which Reform had already achieved.

On August 10, 1841, Charleston's *Beth Elohim* congregation, upon Poznanski's instance, adopted this resolution:

> Resolved that all conventions, founded or created for the establishment of any *ecclesiastical authority* whatever . . . are alien to the spirit and genius of the age in which we live, and are wholly inconsistent with the spirit of American Liberty.

Ironically, many Orthodox agreed with Poznanski. American Jewry, in the main, opposed any centralized religious authority.

As an alternative to the office of Chief Rabbi, Leeser initiated a drive to unite all American congregations into a body that would elect a *Beth Din*, an ecclesiastical tribunal. Leeser opined that such an office would be more palatable for American Jewry to accept. They were reluctant to elect a Chief Rabbi, since that title represented autocracy in Europe; however, a body of three rabbis would appear more democratic. Furthermore, such a court had existed in America since colonial times when three learned layman served congregations in this capacity.

The reason for the office, Leeser explained, is that the greatest want of American Israelites is for a regularly established ecclesiastical tribunal before whom all religious inquiries could be submitted for decision. Leeser did not mince words when he declared:

> The truth must be spoken. In many communities, individuals have obtrusively offered their own sentiments, and if not able to rule according to their own vices have sown dissentions in the midst of our congregations . . . In modern times men have . . . set themselves above the law, and interpose their own will and their own interpretations between the doctrines of religion and their observance of them.

Leeser did not succeed in rallying the congregations to establishing the office of an ecclesiastical authority. Yet the drive initiated by Kursheedt-Micholl did succeed insofar as it provided the funds to tide over the difficult times of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation and paid the salary of Rabbi Rice, so that he remained in his pulpit in Baltimore, Maryland and served as Chief Rabbi to all who sought and accepted his authoritative opinion and decision in Jewish law.

The Orthodox drive had begun, but it was not however without its doubters and detractors.

Chapter 9
Reform Seeds in Charleston

WITHOUT THE office of chief rabbi to direct American Jewry, a pseudo-rabbi affected the establishment of a foothold for reform in the Western Hemisphere. In South Carolina, playwright Isaac Harby and twelve members of *Beth Elohim* synagogue were touched by the "*zeitgeist*" which wafted from the temple in Hamburg to alight on *Beth Elohim* in Charleston. On November 21, 1825, these native Charlestonians founded the Reformed Society of Israelites, meeting on Meeting Street, in Seyle's Masonic Hall. They sought religious emancipation in Judaism as the hand-maiden of civil and political emancipation.

Exceeding the reforms of the Hamburg Temple, limited to the organ, choir, and prayer book, the Charlestonians prayed with uncovered heads. Playwright Harby preached the sermons and authored a prayer book mostly in English for the Society, titled *The Sabbath Service and Miscellaneous Prayers*, the reason advanced by Joseph Lyons: "Hebrew . . . that guttural harsh barbaric tongue." The worship began with Harby's "Ten Articles of Faith," replacing the thirteen of Maimonides recited the world-over at the conclusion of daily worship. Like the Hamburg Reformers, the Charlestonians repudiated the beliefs in the coming of the Messiah, reward and punishment, and resurrection of the dead.

Harby departed for New York in 1828. David Nunes Carvalho continued as *chazzan* and officer. In 1832, the membership, planning to build their own temple, were influenced by the medical doctor and long time member of *Beth Elohim*, Dr. Jacob de la Motta, to return to the parent body. De la Motta, a military surgeon with the rank of captain, formerly lecturer at *Mickva Israel*, Savannah, Georgia and then *chazzan* at *Beth Elohim*, Charleston, was highly respected by the entire Jewish community. Upon payment of a fine, the members of the Reform congregation were readmitted as full-fledged members of the Orthodox synagogue.

Yet, Reformers bided their time. Attorney Joseph Lyons, writing from Savannah on September 23, 1833, the Day of Atonement, predicted the demise of all synagogues "in the U.S. 50 years hence."

Beth Elohim soon engaged Gustavus [Gedalia in Poland] Poznanski. He was born in Prussian Poland in 1803, left at age twenty-one for Bremen and Hamburg, where he received his education, and admired the Hamburg Temple service with its organ music. About 1830 he arrived in

New York. His Orthodox standing which he presented, and acquaintanship with *Sephardi* pronunciation and cantillation which he acquired at the Hamburg Temple; his attendance of that Reform worship which he did not disclose in America, gained for him the position of assistant *chazzan* of the Orthodox *Shearith Israel*. He studied the laws of ritual slaughtering and two years later obtained *kabbalah* from the Palestinian emissary, Enoch Zundel, then visiting America. Thereupon *Shearith Israel* congregation of New York engaged him as their *shochet*. Possessed of a fine musical talent, he also assisted *Chazzan* Isaac Benjamin Seixas in 1833, 1834 and 1835 in sounding the *shofar*.

In 1836, aspiring to a higher position, Poznanski applied to serve as *chazzan* and *shochet* of the Portuguese-rite *Beth Elohim* congregation in Charleston, South Carolina. He sent a recommendation from Leeser, who lauded Poznanski's strict Orthodoxy. Leeser's word carried weight, for it was generally known that he had an excellent understanding of the ministry and of Judaism, having himself completed several tractates in the *Talmud* in his student days in Germany.

Poznanski's peregrinations came to an end when he moved to Charleston in 1836, as reader of the prayers and ritual slaughterer. Two years later, Gustavus married 18-year-old Esther G. [Hetty] Barrett, daughter of an affluent Charlestonian family. Through his marriage, Poznanski was drawn closer to the inner circle of the Reform-minded members of *Beth Elohim*. Upon expiration of his contract the following year, the congregation elected him its religious leader for life.

Early in 1838, in a fire that devastated much of Charleston, the half-century-old synagogue, *Beth Elohim*, fourth oldest in the United States, burned to the ground. The site was cleared, and a new edifice began to rise the following year on the same location, at 86 Hassell Street.

In 1839, during the building of the new synagogue upon the ruins of the former, Gustavus became a mourner. First the loss of his brother Hyam in Charleston, then of his twenty-one-year old brother, Gershom, who was living in Charleston, but left for Florida to fight in the Seminole War. Gershom Poznanski was killed fighting the Seminole Indians. Having been raised in an Orthodox home, Gustavus observed seven days of mourning in the Orthodox manner. Yet, he harbored within himself the desire to model *Beth Elohim* after the Hamburg Temple.

In 1841, that first Reform Temple published a revised prayer book titled *Gebetbuch fur die Öffentliche und Häusliche Andacht der Israeliten*." Hamburg's *Chacham* Isaac Bernays promulgated an anathema against its use.

Isaac Bernays, a native of Mayence, Germany, and rabbi in Hamburg of the "German Israelitish Congregation" never called himself rabbi,

so as not to be classed with Aaron Chorin and other Reformers who called themselves "Rabbi." He therefore titled himself *Chacham* ["Wise"], the *Sephardic* nomenclature for rabbi.

Chacham Bernays fought fiercely against the influence of the Temple, aware that its strategic location and easy access to emigrants awaiting passage to America in the embarkation city of Hamburg would endanger Judaism in England and America. His fears were well founded, for from that port, the Temple exported its Reform prayer book and hymnals that accompanied the pealing sounds of its appealing organ to the port cities of the New World.

Bernays' fears were well grounded. In the previous decade, an Orthodox Polish youth, the emigrant Gustavus Poznanski, as a result of his brief stay in Hamburg, became fascinated by the Temple service and as a consequence, in a ministerial post, sanctioned and welcomed the newly revised Hamburg Temple prayer book in a century-old Orthodox synagogue in America.

As the new edifice of *Beth Elohim* rose, Poznanski's latent feelings forcefully emerged, and he approved installation of an organ with the proviso that it not be installed on the Sabbath day. The trustees of *Beth Elohim*, formerly members of Charleston's Reformed Society of Israelites, were elated by his approval. The issue was hotly debated at the ensuing congregational meetings. The organ issue divided the Jewish community; the vote was 47 in favor, 40 opposed.

Gustavus Poznanski became accredited as "the first Reform rabbi in America"; Isaac Harby forgotten.

Though he was far removed from the scene, the victory was also that of Dr. Leopold Zunz, a graduate of the University of Halle, who had advocated allowing an organ accompaniment to the service on Sabbaths and holy days:

> According to para 560 of the *Orah Hayyim*, the sages prohibited all song and music at any and every occasion, as a form of mourning for Jerusalem and the destroyed temple. The conservatives said, therefore no organ must be played in the synagogue זכר לחורבן [as a memorial].

They forgot these points:

> First, no distinction is made in the paragraph between song and instrumental music, hence according to their own logic no vocal music is admissible in the synagogue, still they delight in a *chazzan* who can sing a good chant.
>
> Second, it has been shown before that instrumental music was admitted occasionally in the synagogue by the most conservative

rabbis; hence this paragraph never was understood to have any bearing on the synagogue.

Third, not one of the laws mentioned in this paragraph is observed any longer by the conservatives, in regard to building a new house, setting the table, weddings, etc., what right have they to protest against the organ, on the ground of a law they no longer observed.

Fourth, Rabbi Moses Isserles, authority of the conservatives, remarks *in loco cit.* וכן לצורך מצוה הכל שרי [Also for a religious purpose all this is permitted]. They must rely on this passage in regard to singing in the synagogue, pray, would you not grant others the right to rely on this passage in regard to the organ?

Next comes paragraphs 339 and 340 of the *Orach Chayyim*, where music and dancing on the Sabbath is prohibited, hence the organ, also music, is, according to their logic, also prohibited. But they know well that music is considered חכמה ואינה מלאכה [a science and no labor], hence it is not prohibited of itself, but שמא יתקן כלי שיר [probably the instrument might break and be mended on the Sabbath—this would be a labor]. But it is seldom that anything breaks on an organ מלתא דלא שכיח לא גזירה ביה רבנן [The sages ordained no preventive laws in unusual cases], is an old maxim. And even if anything should break, the organist cannot mend it, this being the work of another man.

Besides this there are two passages of Rabbi Moses Isserles *in loco cit*, which set things all right. When Rabbi Joseph Caro says, "Some say, it is lawful to say to a gentile to play on a musical instrument," the above casuist states, "or also to mend a broken instrument," etc., then he adds, "and some maintain, that in our times all these things are permitted, for we are not acquainted with the art of mending musical instruments and therefore there is no apprehension that he [a Jew] might mend a musical instrument. It is therefore in order to allow all these things."

Rice refuted Zunz's arguments in his responsum forbidding playing musical instruments, including an organ, on Sabbaths and holy days. Rice stated that

> On the subject of sounding a musical instrument, the *Mishnah, Tract Bezah* 36:2, states that the following acts are forbidden on account of *Shvus* [lit. rest, abstention from secular occupation on Sabbaths and Festivals, i.e. climbing a tree being forbidden as that act may result in breaking a branch], clapping with the hands or dancing is forbidden, and the *gemara* [Amoraic rabbis of the *Talmud*] explain the reason—lest one fix a musical instrument—thereby transgressing a prohibited labor on a holy day.

> The sages of the *Mishnah* forbad even clapping of hands or skip and dance without musical accompaniment, for if such were permitted, it would lead to playing instruments and their repair on a holy day. We constantly see persons who play instruments, as a violin, oftentimes the strings break and they bind them, which on the Sabbath is a labor biblically forbidden because it forms a permanent knot . . . There can be no question that if an Israelite performs on a musical instrument, he would do whatever is required to play and thereby transgress a number of labors prohibited on the holy day. The *Magen Avraham* has stated that it is forbidden to tell a non-Jew to repair a musical instrument on the Sabbath or festival.
>
> Even though the new sect maintains that there is no possibility of breaking strings in an organ, we have not the authority to differentiate within the enactments of our Sages. The *Rambam* in *Hilbot Sabbath*, *Perek* 21 *halachah* 1, declared: "It is written in the Torah, 'Thou shalt rest,' " even from things that are not labors, and our sages issued many prohibitions because of *Shbuth*: of these are acts that are forbidden because they resemble labor, or because they may lead to a prohibited labor whose penalty is lapidation.

Since Poznanski disregarded Rice's decision, Leeser appealed to him, having recommended him to the position at *Beth Elohim* when he was regarded as a strictly Orthodox *chazzan*, to reconsider:

> I know you have the reputation for meekness, for angelic forbearance, and unflinching piety; Lord forbid that I should rob you of a single laurel-leaf which a loving partiality has twined round your brow; nevertheless, you must think me honest also, when I say, you acted without duly weighing the fearful responsibility which you assumed in siding with those who formerly did not value you very highly, and discarding your old friends, when you gave your advice that music should be introduced on the Sabbath, against the opinion of millions of Israelites, the voice of centuries, the doctrine of the west and best of men.

Leeser told Poznanski:

> You seem to rely for your chief support upon the assertion that the Synagogue is the legitimate successor of the temple. But this is a fallacy; the Synagogue . . . was contemporaneous with the house of God at Jerusalem, and was then, as it is now, a place for prayer, proclaiming of the law and prophets, and public instruction in matters of religion. I challenge you and your prototypes in Europe to lay your finger upon a single historical passage to prove that the Levitical music ever accompanied the Synagogue worship during the existence of the temple. On the contrary, the Levites were appointed

only for the *Beis Hamikdash* [Holy Temple] and persons strangers to this tribe were the officiants and lecturers then as now in the *Batei K'naysiyos* [meeting-houses], or as called by the Greek term, Synagogues. . . .

However, Poznanski ignored Leeser's plea, preferring his association with the elite of Charleston's Jewish families, who were members of the former Reformed Society of Israelites. Thereupon, Abraham Ottolenqui, the president changed the lock of the synagogue to keep out the opponents.

Angry Orthodox members cast aspersions on the parentage of Poznanski. To clear their "rabbi's" legitimacy, the trustees sent an inquiry to his native Storchnest. The reply confirmed that Gedalia Poznanski was the oldest of seven children born to Joseph and Sarah Poznanski.

At the dedication of the new building of *Beth Elohim*, at Sabbath services on March 19, 1841, the melodic tones of the organ, far from calming the membership, served instead to inflame them. Leader of the opposition, Dr. Jacob de la Motta, recalled the dedication of *Kehillah Kedoshah Mickva Israel*, Savannah, Georgia.

On Thursday, July 20, 1820, he delivered the *discourse*, though an organ chimed at the consecration service; the first to be heard in an American synagogue. But he maintained, that this was not contrary to Jewish law, for it was a weekday when music is permitted. But the organ that chimed on the holy Sabbath at *Beth Elohim*'s dedication sparked the fiery conflict that engaged Orthodox and Reform alike. It consumed them with an intensity that seemed to surpass the heat of the great fire that had razed part of the city. The Orthodox, under the leadership of Dr. De la Motta, withdrew and founded *Kahal* [Congregation] *Sheayreet* [Remnants of] *Israel*.

The controversy continued to rage unabated. "The dissentions of the synagogue," records relate, "were carried into the family—son being arrayed against father and brother against brother." An exception being Dr. De la Motta, who, in order to preserve peace in his family, resigned the presidency of the new Orthodox congregation, *Kahal Sheayreet Israel*. Not only did the Orthodox secessionists establish their own synagogue, but they also bought their own burial ground. Jacob De la Motta died two years afterwards, in 1845, interred in the *Beth Elohim* Cemetery.

Ever since De la Motta's resignation from the presidency and as Reader at *Sheayreet Israel*, Jacob Rosenfeld, an 1842 immigrant from Lissa, Posen [Poznan, Poland before 1793], Prussia, served gratitously as Reader. He soon learned English and delighted the congregation by his preaching in their native language and married Charlestonian Leonora Moses.

Thirteen years later, when philanthropist Judah Touro died in New Orleans, that Orthodox Jew provided five thousand dollars in his will for *Kahal Sheayreet Israel* and not one cent for the Reform *Beth Elohim*. The Orthodox congregation erected from a portion of those funds a high wall of red brick to separate its burial ground from that of *Beth Elohim*.

Gustavus Poznanski, ritual slaughterer and reader, in his changing the status of an Orthodox synagogue, became the first Reform leader to successfully spearhead the Reform movement in America.

Leeser thereupon, in conjunction with a committee of his congregation, *Mickve Israel*, Philadelphia, dispatched a "Circular" to all congregations to meet November 7. The purpose: to "plan for a general union," adding "that any congregation, who are duly impressed with the paramount obligation to uphold our blessed faith . . . that you will be found united with us in a common effort to spread the kingdom of Heaven. . . ." However, Othodox Jewry in America failed to organize and mobilize against Reform.

Poznanski instituted another major Reform on the first day of Passover in 1843. Again, following the lead of the Hamburg Temple, he lopped off the "Second Day of Festivals," that extra day added on to *Pesach* [Passover] *Shovuos* [Pentacost] and *Sukkos* [Tabernacles] by diaspora Jewry since time immemorial.

Ever since Jews settled outside of the Holy Land during the period of the Prophets, they added a second day in their celebration of the festivals. This was due to doubt among diaspora Jewry when the new month began, for such determination before the scientific calculations appeared in a written calendar was set by the visual sighting of the exact moment of the appearance of the new moon by two credible witnesses together with astronomical calculations by members of the *Sanhedrin* [Supreme Court of 71 Rabbis] in Jerusalem and dispatched by messengers to Jewish communities outside of the Holy Land.

Jews settled outside of the Holy Land, eagerly awaited arrival of messengers from Jerusalem bringing news of the day the new moon was hallowed. Thereby, they determined the correct day on which to begin celebration of the spring and autumnal festivals—Passover, Tabernacles—biblically ordained to be observed on the fifteenth of *Nisan*, and *Tishrei* respectively.

At times, messengers, unduly delayed, reached distant Jewish communities after mid-month, after the festival should have commenced. Diaspora Jewry, because of their uncertainty on which day the new moon had been proclaimed by Jerusalem's High Court—*sefeka de'yoma* [doubt of one day] as it became called—added a day in their observance of the biblically ordained festivals. Since one of the two days had to be the right

one, by observing both days, they made sure that they hadn't missed the correct day.

Jewish communities throughout the diaspora adopted this practice of adding a second day to the festivals. They observed the "Second Days of Festivals" after the year 66 C. E. when the *Sanhedrin* ceased to function, and continued its observance even after Hillel the Second wrote the "rules" for fixing the dates of the Hebrew calendar in the year 358 C.E., and all doubt had been thereby removed as to the exact date to commence observance of the festivals. Hillel had committed the calendar to writing at that time when communication beween the Rabbis of Palestine and Jews in the Empire had been forbidden by Roman Law. Though sound mathematical calculations precisely predicted in advance, for centuries to come, the day on which the new moon would appear, the Rabbis nonetheless declared the additional day, *Yom Tov Sheni Shel Goluyot*—the "Second Holiday of the Exiles," to be formally binding on all Jews beyond the bounds of the Holy Land.

Poznanski abrogated the "Holiday of the Exiles," reasoning that Jews in the land of the free were no longer in exile. They enjoyed equal rights in the United States, France, England, Holland, and in Central Europe and Eastern Europe, the age of enlightenment dawned. Loyalties expressed for Palestine represented "dual loyalty" and all prayerful petitions to return to Zion, unpatriotic. In this spirit, Poznanski selected the Hamburg prayer book wherein was expunged references of a return to Zion and Jerusalem and rescinded observance in their congregations of that "Second Holiday of the Exiles."

Overseas, the late Chasam Sofer had defiantly declared to Reformers that "Second Days" will be observed in the Diaspora forever, if only as a remembrance of our long and bitter two-thousand-year dispersion, just as we have tokens of our exile in Egypt and Babylon. Jewry throughout the centuries, even when they enjoyed freedom, never lost sight of their being in exile, and contrariwise, when Holy Land Jewry suffered brutal oppression they never regarded themselves exiles. Therefore Jews in the lands of the free, even more than those in the lands of oppression, should certainly observe the "Holiday of the Exiles" as a reminder of the redemption to come, of the traditional hope: "Next Year in Jerusalem!"

Rabbi Rice indicated that "in the land of freedom where we enjoy economic and political equality, we, enslaved to our desires, are yet in exile spiritually. We yearn for the day that our exile will end and we will enjoy genuine spiritual freedom only attainable in the Land of Israel."

Chapter 10
Reform Germinates in Baltimore

THE RETENTION of authentic Jewish customs and the rejection by Rice of alien ceremonies, united those who sought a Reform version of Judaism.

In Baltimore, in the spring of 1841, Jacob Ahrens, a Mason and Odd-Fellow, died. At the funeral attended by lodge members, some of whom were members of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation; lodge officers performed ceremonials of those orders. Rice was appalled, and he remonstrated with the warning that in the future he would not officiate at a funeral whenever such "heathenish rites" were performed.

Rice's perception of these funerary ceremonies as pagan was shared by his schoolmate Benjamin Lilienthal, a native of Altenmuhr, a village northwest of Gunzhausen, in Bavaria. He came to America in 1836, and after a stay in New York moved to Cincinnati. Lilienthal informed Rice that he was not acquainted with Masonic rites, but he had heard that the secret order had introduced a Christian conception of the deity, compulsory for the member upon entering the seventh degree. Lilienthal received confirmation of this suspicion in a responsum received from a Jerusalem rabbi by a fellow Cincinnati resident, Nathan Katz, in reply to an inquiry he had made about the Masonic order.

The Jerusalem respondent declared that no Jew should enter the Masonic ranks; he referred Katz to a Hebrew poem composed by Rabbi David Ibn Hasin, "that exposed Masonic trickery, treachery, and heresy and revealed its denial of the Jewish concept of God." However, concluded the respondent, "the main reason for secrecy of the Masonic order is not to conceal their form of worship but to protect the Free Masons from governmental scrutiny, for they practice free love in exchanging wives. Its Jewish members most likely profane the Sabbath, disregard the commandments, and engage in licentiousness."

Shocked at the conduct of worshippers, which included Masons, and Odd Fellows, who attended Sabbath worship in the morning but engaged in business in the afternoon, Rice directed the congregation: if any one called to the Law was known to have violated the Sabbath, they were not to respond with "the amen" after the recital of the Benediction.

Four persons seceded from the congregation. They were joined by William Solomon Rayner, who sailed with Rice aboard the "Sir Isaac Newton" to America, and had been offered the position of religious teacher at *Anshe Chesed*, New York. These, together with Masons and Odd Fellows, seventeen in all, founded *Har Sinai Verein* [Mount Sinai

Society], and held their first service for the festival of Pentacost, May 15, 1842, at the home of Moses Hutzler, Exeter Street at Eastern Avenue. Max Sutro served as reader. He was probably related to Adolph Heinrich Joseph Sutro, who came from Memel, Prussia, settled in Baltimore, turned Argonaut, to become Mayor of San Francisco.

That summer of 1841, *Har Sinai Verein* rented for the high holy days the Union Hall at the southeast corner of Baltimore Street and Post Office Avenue. Under Rayner's leadership, a significant change took place—the introduction of a harpsichord into their service. This led to their attempt to obtain hymnals and prayer books from the Hamburg Temple.

Like the Reformers in Charleston, those in Baltimore disregarded Isaac Bernays' interdict against the revised Hamburg Temple Prayer Book, issued in 1841, who declared its use "unlawful" and "sinful."

The Hamburg Temple served as a model for Baltimorians as it had for the Charlestonians. The secretary of *Har Sinai Verein*, M. Bettman, wrote to Dr. Gotthold Salomon, preacher at the Hamburg Temple, for assistance and guidance:

Baltimore, 1842

Mister Dr. Salomon
Hamburg.
Most worthy Sir!

A noble purpose makes bold!!

Primarily out of conviction, that goodness will be received *well* by you, I address a few lines to you and at the same time write you, to dedicate a small portion of your valuable time to our young society, which was started here about five weeks ago.

If you ever obtained a report about the *spiritual* condition of the Israelites, who live here, based on strict truth, then you will have seen, that it is very *degenerated*.

The superstition, which is battled so actively in Europe, seems to have a wide field *here* in this free land, where *good* as well as bad are free without restrictions, more so even than under the Orthodox Rabbis of Europe, whose fanaticism is limited back to narrow borders by the power of their government.

There are two communities here, each has her own shul or Synagogue. One Rabbi, Mr. Abraham Reiss, watches out for both of them. He watches over their souls, so quietness would not disturb them from their long sleep . . . .

The Jew, who has his conceptions about religion, whose senses win out over the forces of habit, here he is lonesome among the big crowd.

He doesn't attend public services, because it doesn't agree with his heart nor his mind. He leaves it to chance for the soul to be induced to contemplation.

To remedy this evil, we have initiated a society here, which has the name *Har Sinai*, & we decided to conduct the service as it is conducted in Hamburg.

To attain this object we petition you respectfully for your worthy & kind help (to send us) also 1 Dtz (dozen) prayerbooks, 1 Dtz. songbooks, the music that goes with the songs, also *please* for some of your speeches, for as soon as possible to be able to start services already to the nearing Holidays & we should be very glad to receive these soon.

For the buying of the above objects we send you herewith 40 auf Bremen nach Sicht (to Bremen to be paid on sight) . . . .

Respectfully M. Bettmann Secr.
Har Sinai Verein.

When prayer books and hymnals of the Hamburg Temple were received, *Har Sinai Verein* requested the loan of a *Torah* from the Fell's Point congregation. Refused, in desperation they turned to the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. When they were again refused, they substituted a printed Pentateuch.

As at the Hamburg Temple, the scriptural portions were read from the center pulpit. Also, the men in Baltimore as in Hamburg's temple, wore caps and prayer shawls, and the women sat apart from the men. Yet, though *Har Sinai Verein* arranged before the Sabbath a "*Shabbos goy*"—a Gentile to light the lamps, stoke the furnace, and to perform all labors forbidden to Jews on their day of rest, because of the musical instrumentation, some of the worshippers "longed for the traditions of their fathers" and returned to the *Stadt Schul*. A quorum yet remained and *Har Sinai Verein* continued to hold services.

Reformers regarded their organization as a *Verein*, a Society—specifically a *Cultus Verein* [Cult Society]. Isaac Leeser probed its origin when he described the *Verein der Reformfreunde* [Society for the the Friends of Reform], organized in Frankfort, Germany, in 1842. He took note of this Society for it sparked the formation of a second Reform society, the *Genossenschaft für Reform in Judenthum* [Association for the Reform of Judaism] in Berlin. Led by Sigismund Stern, a school teacher from Prussian Posen, he called for establishment of a "German-Jewish Church." All these societies, said Leeser,

> arose from a desire of those who had been long strangers to the Synagogue to have a species of worship which would attract them once a week to the house of God. They found men of talent to aid them with their eloquence, a [Leopold] Zunz, a [David] Friedlander, a [Gotthold] Salomon, and a [Joseph] Johlson . . . .

The *Cultus Verein* in Baltimore and Charleston, like those in Germany, formed the nuclei for Reform congregations of German Jews in America.

Rice would face the challenge of undisciplined Judaism in a land where freedom of and from religion rang.

Chapter 11 *Reform Pollinates in Virgin Islands*

VIBRATIONS OF Reform from *Vereinen* in the United States and Germany, reverberated across the waters to the British Isles. At London, twenty-four members of the Great Synagogue resigned to organize a Reform congregation, The West London Synagogue of British Jews. Their leaders authored a prayer book. Though they maintained separate seating for men and women, men wore hats or caps during worship, and they had no organ, the Chief rabbinate of England pronounced a ban of excommunication against the West London Synagogue.

In February 1842, Mr. Aaron Wolff of Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas in the Danish Virgin Islands ignored the ban. He wrote to Mr. Moses Mocatta of London, one of the leaders of the West London Synagogue, to congratulate him and request his recommendation for a competent minister for his congregation *Beracha (W)eshalom U-Gmilut Hasadim* [Blessing and Peace and Rendering Kindness].

Wolff stated the qualifications for such a person, that he should be

> One who might be able to carry out the improvements introduced in the London Reform Congregation . . . a minister of gentlemanly deportment, possessing a thorough knowledge of the English language, a strict Mosaic believer, a liberal man who does not place rabbinical writings on a level with the Pentateuch . . . .

Mocatta recommended a fellow Londoner, Benjamin Cohen Carillon, and with his letter sent along a copy of the abridged prayer book of the West London Synagogue. St. Thomas Congregation *Beracha (W)eshalom* sent a contract of engagement, and Carillon set sail for the Caribbean.

When he arrived in St. Thomas, the synagogue officers requested Carillon to approve the West London Synagogue prayer book. To their surprise, their new *chazzan*, recommended as "a liberal man," rejected

the Reform prayer book. Carillon explained that he did not object to its abridgement and Reform character, but that its composer, David Woolf Marks, was not ordained as a rabbi and therefore lacked the authority to edit a prayer book. The rabbis of the *Talmud*, however, had the authority to compose a prayer book and even though the *Talmud* could not lay claim to being of divine origin, their interpretation of the Bible was authoritative. Therefore, concluded Carillon, only an ordained rabbi had the authority to compose a prayer book.

Carillon submitted his opinion to Leeser for publication in *The Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, a monthly that began publication in April, 1843, the first enduring Anglo-Jewish newspaper in America. Leeser's *Occident*, which established him as the foremost Jewish lay minister in the land, would for a quarter of a century mirror the happenings and controversies, the events and anxieties, the gains and recessions in Jewish life at home and abroad.

Rabbinic and lay leaders contributed subjects of historical, polemical, and congregational interest. Editor Leeser, in editorials and articles, in his direct and eloquent style, presented vital issues that stirred the Jewish community from within and at threats posed from without. Wherever American Jews settled, they eagerly looked forward to reading its scholarly as well as controvertial articles in addition to local, national, and overseas news.

Reverend Henry Goldsmith, a teacher of Hebrew at the *Talmud Torah School* of *B'nai Jeshurun Congregation* entered a rejoinder. Goldsmith asked of Carillon: "How can the Talmud be authoritative without being of divine origin, even as the Bible?" Carillon replied: The *Talmud* is authoritative only insofar as being the best guide to understand and interpret the Bible, but not insofar as the making of laws is concerned." Goldsmith countered: "Either the Talmud is divine and entitled to the stamp of authority, or it is not divine and not entitled to authority."

Rice considered the subject of utmost significance and sent his statement to Leeser for publication in his *Occident*. Rice noted that the two reverends—Carillon, the Reformer who rejected the divine origin of the Talmud; and Goldsmith, the Orthodox who accepted the divine origin of the Talmud—were both in error:

> Neither of the two learned gentlemen had taken notice of the preface of Maimonides to the Mishna . . . wherein the Talmud is described as consisting of laws which are unquestionably divine, those which are not immediate, divine, and those which are not divine; all categories alike being equally entitled to authority, regardless of status . . . the Talmud is entitled to authority, though every part of it is not divine . . . .

> The endeavours of Mr. Goldsmith to prove the divine authority of the Talmud, being praiseworthy in so far as they show his adherence to that compendium of laws; but in my humble opinion . . . it is as dangerous to enlarge the limits of talmudic authority, as infidelity itself . . . .

Goldsmith's assertion that "the Talmud is divine, or it is not entitled to authority . . . ," declared Rice, "would bring us upon absurdities, or lead us to reject all obligations of its contents. Is the second day of festivals a divine law? Surely not; still we claim that the Talmud had the right to make such a law . . ."

The question of the Second Day of Festivals was more than academic, for in the previous year, at Charleston, Gustavus Poznanski abolished its observance for the members of *Beth Elohim* because it was rabbinically instituted before the calendar had been committed to distribution throughout the world.

Rice asked: "Who gives the Rabbins [sic!] the right to make laws?" And gave the answer: "We are specially commanded in the Scriptures . . . 'thou shalt not depart . . . from the law which they shall teach thee . . . ' This authority to make ordinances, ceased with the close of the Talmud, when the Israelites became scattered in small numbers all over the world, and there lived no longer masses of a thousand learned men in one place, as it was in earlier times, when all the doctors ["rabbis"] who taught in the spirit of the Talmud, lived in the Holy Land or its vicinity . . ."

Chapter 12
Reform Sprouts in New York City

THE POLLEN of Reform wafted from the Virgin Islands to sprout in Manhattan Island. Acting as an Orthodox rabbi, Leo Merzbacher, served since 1841 at the German congregation *Rodeph Shalom*. A native of Fürth, having studied rabbinics with Chasam Sofer of Pressburg, regarding himself as one who can "pasken shaalos" [issue responsa], though there is no record of his having been ordained, Merzbacher called himself "Rabbi."

In imitation of Dr. Louis Salomon, who that year, 1841, served as preacher and teacher at *Rodeph Shalom*, Philadelphia, Merzbacher, having attended University of Erlangen for his secular studies, felt entitled to assume the title "Doctor." As Doctor, Merzbacher enhanced his status and in 1843 was elected rabbi of *Anshe Chesed* as well as continuing at *Rodeph Shalom*.

In 1844, "Rabbi Dr." Leo Merzbacher, preached a sermon at *Anshe Chesed* in which he was critical of the custom of women shaving their heads before marriage and thereafter having to wear a *sheitel* [wig]. Merzbacher had the decision of the "First Reform Rabbi," as his authority.

In the little town of Mako, in the county of Csongrad [Csanada], Hungary. On the second day of *Shovuot* 5600 [Pentacost 1840], the rabbi ordered several ladies who appeared in the synagogue with their own hair visible, to leave the gallery. Their husbands turned to the Bishop Lonovics of Csongrad to decide the matter. He submitted the question to Dr. Aaron Chorin of Arad, who favored neither *sheitel* for the women nor head covering for the men.

Merzbacher failed to take into account that the married women in his congregation from the small towns and Bavarian cities too, where Reformers had entrenched; as in other German states, like those in Hungary, were strict in their wearing of a *sheitel* as an expression of modesty, and those who did not shave their heads were in the minority. Consequently his contract was not renewed.

Merzbacher then openly espoused Reform. Joined by like-minded persons, members of *Anshe Chesed* and *Rodeph Shalom*, he founded the *Cultus Verein*. Its sponsors advocated a change in Jewish worship in order "to occupy a position of greater respect among fellow citizens." They held their first service on the Hebrew New Year, September 14, 1844. Half-a-year later, on April 9, 1845, two weeks before Passover, the Reform congregation changed its name to *Emanu-El Verein* [God Is With Us Society].

James Koppel Gutheim, who arrived in America in 1843, numbered among the New York business men who favored Reform. A future rabbi of *Emanu-El*, Gutheim may have supported Merzbacher at the time of its founding.

The vacancy at *Anshe Chesed* and *Rodeph Shalom*, moved their officers to seek a rabbi who could preach and compete with Merzbacher at *Emanu-El*. That post was filled within a year after *Emanu-El* came into being with the arrival from Russia of Maximillian Lilienthal, who introduced himself as a "Chief Rabbi." Lilienthal would become a leading exponent of Reform Judaism in America.

Rice attributed the religious upheaval and anarchic condition to pseudo-scholars who misled Jewish communities, as well as synagogues who decided religio-legal questions by majority vote:

> In this country, our problems are created by persons in charge of our religious affairs who have neither knowledge nor understand-

ing of religious life . . . This state of affairs will continue as long as the evil of majority rule prevails in our religious life. Although this principle properly belongs in the political life of our country, it is an evil when applied to determining the religious life of our people. As long as the majority rule will continue to dominate and control our religious affairs, there will be no religious uplift in this country. This is so because the majority is woefully ignorant of religious matters and the voice of ignorance consequently decides religious questions and as a rule, insolence is more powerful than truth. Here, ignorance is a most serious problem, not only because you are unable to discern deception from the truth, but because of your regard for persons who possess the art of deluding you into believing that they are great scholars.

Rice the scholar, well aware that the great structure of Judaism had been built on infinitely detailed foundations, made known that popular leadership was inevitably false leadership.

Chapter 13
First Scientific Testing in Kashrus

TO THE surprise of many, Rabbi Rice excelled as a *sofer* [ritual scribe]. He wrote his own *megillah* [scroll of Esther] from which he read on the holiday of *Purim* and corrected the Torah scrolls as needed. One day, he was shocked when he looked over scrolls encased in *mezuzos* and *tefillin* [phylacteries donned in daily worship], and found them to be imitations, printed on paper instead of parchment, not hand-written.

Rice promptly sounded the alarm. He issued a warning to the public to beware of unscrupulous individuals who trafficked in the sale of counterfeit *mezuzos*, *tefillin* [phylacteries] and even *Torah* scrolls [Scriptures inscribed upon parchments—rolled about spindles]. Ritually, these biblical verses are hand written by a *sofer* [scribe] who is an observant, pious Jew.

When one ritual scribe was exposed in Frankfort-am-Mein, people asked if a scroll of the *Torah* by that scribe, if letter perfect, is *kosher* [ritually fit] for reading at public worship. Rabbi Mendel Lillig, a member of the Frankfort *Beth Din* [ecclesiastical court], commented with sarcasm: "Satan sits on a three legged stool. One leg is supplied by the cantors who instead of carrying aloft the prayers of Israel, as *chazzanim* should, take those prayers to the nether regions. The second leg is supplied by the

shochetim who feed the entire community improperly slaughtered fowl and cattle. The third leg of Satan's chair is supplied by the scribes, the *soferim*, who defile the *tefillin* and *mezuzos*."

Imported from Europe, the inscriptions, particularly for *mezuzos*, were counterfeited overseas by German-Jewish tradesmen. The Breslau rabbi, David Schlesinger, upon learning of a number of forgeries sent to his acquaintance, Adolph Bach of New York, advised him to pass along the information so that he might warn American Jewry. Bach sent that letter to Leeser, who publicized Schlesinger's alarm in his *Occident*:

> We have received a caution, addressed by Rabbi David Schlesinger, religious judge at Breslau, in Prussian Silesia, to Mr. Adolph Bach of New York, stating that there are men in that part of the world, who manufacture spurious *Tefillin* and *Mezuzoth*, which they sell at low rates . . . So also as regards *Sepharim* [Torah Scrolls], some of which we have ourself seen, and were sure they were manufactured merely for cheapness . . . Foreign imported articles of this kind should have a proper certificate, duty signed and sealed, to attest their genuiness.

In Europe, it happened, not infrequently, that years after a man bought his *tephillin* and opened them years afterwards for inspection of the parchments, they were found empty.

In matters of *kashrus* [pertaining to Kosher], even as one could not trust salesmen of scrolls, he could not place his trust in manufacturers of foods. This became evident in the early 1840s, when certain unscrupulous manufacturers admixed vegetable oils with lard oils and then sold the product as "pure oil."

On August 24, 1842, the *Baltimore Sun* reported on the widespread use of lard oil in a variety of products, including olive oil:

> Lard oil is now used for almost all purposes to which sperm and olive oil have hithertofore been applied, and with a large saving. It burns well in lamps, acts well on machinery of all sorts, on wool to be manufactured, and it is said sometimes gets upon salads and is eaten.

Because of the cheapness and plentifulness of lard oil, some companies imported olive oil which they then adulterated and sold as "pure sweet oil" or "pure olive oil." Some American companies shipped clarified lard oil to France and Italy for mixing with an equal proportion of expensive olive oil; it was then bottled and labeled "pure olive oil" and reshipped to companies in the United States, for sale as pure oil.

Somehow, rumors of these deceptive practices circulated. Rabbi Rice

banned the use of the questionable oils. Jewish housewives, observant of the kosher dietary laws were very troubled because they used "olive oil," referred to as "sweet oil," in preparing meals. One such concerned woman was Rebecca Esther Noah, wife of Judge Mordecai Manuel Noah of New York, in whose residence at the corner of Broadway and Franklin Street young Jewish immigrants from Bavaria enjoyed a kosher meal.

Dynamic Judge Noah, former Consul to Tunis, Sheriff of New York County, Surveyor of the Port of New York, Grand Sachem of Tammany Hall, newspaper publisher and playwright, and promoter of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, struck upon the novel idea of applying scientific testing to determine the *kashrus* of the products in question.

Together with a friend, Joseph Dreyfous, who was probably a pharmacist, Noah met with Dr. Lawrence Reid, professor of chemistry and lecturer at New York City's College of Pharmacy in his laboratory at 285 Broadway. They requested the professor to analyze the contents of various bottled oils sold in the city to determine their purity.

Dr. Reid was an innovative researcher in science, and he devised two tests that determined the purity of oils by coagulating any lard oils that may have been mixed with the olive oil into a separate mass. Reid said that any housewife or pharmacist could perform either of these tests which Leeser published in detail in *The Occident*.

The question seemed resolved when Jacob J. M. Falkenau, *shochet* of *B'nai Jesburun*, New York, announced to the public that testing the oils was unnecessary, since lard oils were prohibited only in ancient times. He adduced rabbinic statements to substantiate his contention.

Rice, who had banned olive oils suspected of lard content, promptly sent the following statement to *The Occident*":

> I was surprised to see in the last number of the Occident a remonstrance from Mr. Falkenau, of New York, about the lard oil, and, notwithstanding his acquaintance with Talmudic learning, I am obliged to say that the deductions he makes from his citations are quite incorrect. You will therefore permit [me] to speak at length on this subject.
>
> Our Rabbis prohibit certain articles of food prepared by Gentiles, because a frequenting of Gentile tables might lead us to mingle too intimately with them, and at length induce us to make matrimonial alliances with them, which last would superinduce the adoption of their modes of worship. Among these interdicted articles was at first comprised the oil of Gentiles; but afterwards Rabbi Yehuda Nesiah, the grandson of Rabbi Hackadosh, permitted such oil by the decision of the Beth Din. [*Mishna Aboda Zara.* II. para. 6.]
>
> But the meaning of this permission is merely the pure extracted

> oil; and the decision of Maimonides, [*Hilchoth Maachaloth Assuroth* 17, para. 22], that no one should prohibit the use of oil, refers only to the same article. But if the vegetable oil should be mixed with lard, there is no authority which says that the fat spoils the oil. The authority referred to treats only of a case where the oil has been boiled in a pot which had been used for meat; this is said to spoil the taste of the oil, though fat itself does not injure the taste of the oil. [*Yoreh Deah* 103, *Peri Chadash* and *Hagaoth Maimuni* on *Hilchoth Maachaloth Assuroth* 1, para. 22]. This mixed oil [lard with olive], therefore, is prohibited to any Israelite.

Rice's responsum, dated November 11, 1844, evoked yet another argument from Falkenau, who stubbornly refused to concede. Leeser closed the subject with a second and final statement by Rabbi Rice, published in *The Occident*, on February 3, 1845.

Overseas, Reformer Leopold Stein, at the time of his election in 1844 to the ministry at Burg and Altenkunstadt (Franconia) presented his view on *kashrus*. He stated that the rabbinic dietary laws have as their purpose our separation from non-Jewish society; precisely because of this, their abrogation is demanded by our time, which encourages contact with the non-Israelite world.

In accord with the *zeitgeist* to foster interrelationships, Stein's colleagues met that year at Brunswick (Braunschweig), Germany. At this conference, *kashrus*, along with many other restrictions, including interdictions against intermarriage, were virtually abolished. Across the German border, moralist Israel Lipkin of Vilna, Lithuania, better known as Rabbi Israel Salanter, prophetically admonished: "They created a new *Shulchan Aruch* [Code of Law] and permitted mixed marriages. There will come a time when the Gentiles will also draft a new Code of Laws; how bitter and woeful it will be for the Jew when that time arrives!"

Non-observance of *kashrus* deeply concerned Rice. The greatest argument against eating kosher food proved to be the first bite of non-kosher food. Many a Jewish immigrant broke involuntarily with *kashrus* by partaking of non-kosher foods during his months, long voyage across the Atlantic; others, when they were away from the city for months of peddling wares in the hinterlands.

Rice, although he had compassion for these poor peddlers who succumbed to *kashrus* violations in the wilds, had little sympathy for them when they returned to the city and willfully disregarded observance of the dietary laws. To them, Rice admonished:

> Whereas other religions are now strengthening their faith, we cast aside all that is sacred. Not only do you allow yourselves to en-

joy forbidden foods, but arrogantly boast of it in public, even describing such details as to its superb qualities and of the great quantities consumed. What impudence and licentiousness!

Rice ascribed a spiritual rather than a physical significance to the dietary laws:

> Non-observance of the dietary laws is harmful in its rendering the body unclean, evenmoreso, in its rendering the soul unclean and thereby robbing her of eternal happiness. Thus by violating the dietary laws, the body lowers the soul to mortality.

In drink as in diet, biblical laws counselled balance and moderation. Therefore, Rice opposed attempts by the "temperance movement" of his day to prohibit strong drink, explaining Judaism's viewpoint:

> The complete and total abstention from drink is contrary to our religion, which allows such a restriction only in the case of a person who has developed an uncontrollable passion, truly an addiction for strong drink. This is what our religion calls "temperance." How different is this position from that taken by our present day societies!

Thus, a benediction is said over a cup of wine each and every Sabbath, four cups are drunk on Passover eve, and there is no limit to its consumption on the Purim holiday.

The kosher dietary laws are most stringent during the Passover period, as seen in the preparation of the hand-made *matzah* [unleavened bread]. If the dough, consisting of only flour and water, was left unattended for eighteen minutes or more, natural fermentation would begin; the dough would rise as though yeast had been added, forbidding it for the Passover season. In the Old World, every Jew took great care to observe the mixing of the Passover flour and water, perforation of the dough to prevent its leavening. Thereby, he felt assurred that his *matzah* satisfied the most exacting requirements. Rice was appalled at the indifference of his countrymen in the New World towards such a significant obligation. He therefore chastised the lax, and urged each person to personally be at the bake-shop:

> We personally should be present at the bakery when our *matzah* is being prepared, instead of each one considering himself too prominent to personally attend to the baking of his *matzah* at the bakery, entrusting its preparation to the baker. Are these people as trusting in their business dealings as in their religious affairs? . . . We should not listen to those who say: "Don't we waste enough time

during the Passover Holiday itself? Why waste additional time with preparation of the *matzah* or with the other Passover preparations? Like our ancestors, let us rather place our trust in God . . . .

Even as Rice became deeply concerned about the lack of personal attention and involvement in the fulfillment of the divine commandments, he was elated when he received inquiries relating to the proper manner of observance. One such request, he received from Philadelphia.

In 1844, the officers of congregation *Rodeph Shalom*, Philadelphia, inquired of Rice relative to construction of a *mikveh* [ritual pool]. They asked of Rice if the water source for their *mikveh*, piping, intake, and outlet valves, conformed to ritual requirements.

Rice considered this subject of prime importance, because the main purpose of a *mikveh* was to maintain the standard of family purity in marriage. Wives were not permitted to engage in marital relations during their menses and for seven days after the flow ceased entirely. Then, only after the woman's immersion in a ritual pool filled with rain water, river, or well water, of at least 40 *seah* [240 gallons; a *seah* equalling six gallons]; enough to cover the entire body, was intimacy permitted between husband and wife. Pious men would also immerse in a *mikveh* prior to the holy days. Also proselytes to Judaism, male or female, had to immerse in a *mikveh* as a final step in entering the Jewish faith.

In colonial days, Philadelphia's Jews immersed in the waters of the Delaware River; in New York, women made use of a creek which ran up from the East River by the Mill Street synagogue of *Shearith Israel*, until the congregation in 1759 built a *mikveh* on its grounds. Undoubtedly, rivers offered the first ritual pools in the other Jewish communities, in Newport, Charleston, and Savannah.

After the Revolution, when *Mickve Israel* congregation in Philadelphia built its first synagogue in 1782, Manuel Josephson, one of the most learned Jews in America, pointed out that for the lack of a bathing place "for the purification of Married Women at certain periods" the Jews of Philadelphia broke a religious law, which was "highly criminal to both Husband and wife." Funds were subscribed, and during its building, a *mikveh* was constructed in its basement. The congregation's officers promised "that every married Man will use the most persuasive and other means, to induce his wife to a strict compliance with that duty so incumbent upon them."

The Portuguese-rite congregation *Mickve Israel* completed construction of its *mikveh* in 1786. By the turn of the nineteenth century, when a secessionist group from *Mickve Israel*, founded *Rodeph Shalom*—first permanent *Ashkenazic* German-rite congregation in the United States—the

mikveh had fallen into disuse because of improper upkeep. Periodic repairs reopened the *mikveh*, but by 1824 when *Mickve Israel* dedicated its new edifice there is no mention of a *mikveh* built therein.

In their inquiry on the proper construction of their *mikveh*, the officers of *Rodeph Shalom* informed Rice that " . . . there had been no ritual bath in Philadelphia many years, and consequently, the daughters of Israel were estranged and their children born of the ritually unclean . . ."

As they had been previously worshipping in rented quarters they had been unable to build one, unlike synagogues that met in their own buildings where they installed their ritual pool. Thus, in 1833, when the Mill Street *mikveh* of *Shearith Israel* closed as that synagogue prepared to move uptown to Crosby Street, *B'nai Jeshurun* of New York built their own *mikveh* in their Elm Street edifice; the Bavarian Jewish congregation of Louisville, *Adas Israel* [Congregation of Israel] built their own *mikveh* in 1836, the report from Kentucky telling that "some sort of ritual bath was dug"; the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, upon acquiring its Harrison Street location in 1837 built a *mikveh* in its basement.

In 1844, though *Rodeph Shalom*, Philadelphia, removed again to rented quarters in its new location on North Fourth Street, between Vine and Wood, its officers managed to obtain permission from the owner to install a *mikveh* as well as a ladies' gallery; the former was at the expense of the congregation, the latter at the expense of the owner.

Rice hastened to respond to *Rodeph Shalom*'s inquiry, since he was quite concerned that no *mikveh* had existed in the city for over a score years. He stated that the walls and bottom of a ritual pool may be hewn out of rock or of any suitable material. These may be set in the ground or upon the ground. It may not be prefabricated, to be brought and installed on the site, since in that case it constitutes a "vessel," which thereby renders the water in it *mayim she'uvin* ['drawn water': *Mik.* 4:1].

A "vessel" which arrests the free flow of the water disqualifies the *mikveh* for ritual use. Spring water, rain water, or melted snow or ice is acceptable, but care must be taken to ensure that the water flows freely, for any stoppage, obstruction or interference of its free flow renders the water "drawn"; but *zochalin* ["flowing" water within the *mikveh*] invalidates its ritual use.

A *mikveh* may be emptied by hand or by vacuum or pump, but not through a hole in the bottom, since the plug may be regarded as a "vessel" and may leak, thereby diminishing the minimum 40 *seah* of water required within the pool.

Rice noted that Philadelphia's water supply was the same as that of all American cities. From a great fountain [i.e. a lake], the source of the

city's water supply, the waters flowed into a reservoir ["brunenkasten"], located outside the city limits. The reservoir, an earthen excavation fashioned of hewn rock, functioned as a purifier, for therein the earthen particles separated from the water by settling to the bottom. The purified water then moved through metal or wooden pipes set in the ground into the city, where it was channeled by the city hydrants.

For persons who opined that the reservoir inhibited the flow of the water and thereby rendered the water unfit for ritual use, Rice explained that since the reservoir was of hewn stones, it should not be regarded as a receptacle but as a large, hollow stone pipe. Therefore, even though the reservoir was at a great distance from the source of the water, the water cascaded without interruption into the reservoir, and from the reservoir (a stone pipe) it flowed into the city hydrant. This constituted a continuous flow of water, even though it was regulated and controlled by means of faucets [*kranen*]. It is therefore fit for use in a ritual pool.

Rice added that in constructing the *mikveh*, the water supply may be regulated by means of a metal faucet, which may be located at the very wall of the *mikveh*, or if preferred, at the hydrant. If set in the ground, the control for the water outlet, leading from the ritual pool, must be installed so that it is impossible to remove the bung in the faucet. Lastly, all piping, from its very outset, must be permanently set in the ground.

Following Rice's guidelines, *Rodeph Shalom* constructed its ritual pool at the southwest corner of its synagogue. But few women resorted to the *mikveh*. Reverend Samuel Myer Isaacs, *chazzan* of *B'nai Jeshurun*, New York, upbraided the Jewish ladies for their neglect of the purity law and attributed the recent deaths of several young married women as a visible punishment of God.

Yet communities continued to build a *mikveh* in synagogues throughout the United States. Rice offered instruction on their construction to inquirers from other cities in the United States. His prominence as a rabbinic authority spread in Europe, where his responsum relative to constructing a *mikveh* was included in the responsa volume, *Gidulei Taharah*, published at Furth in 1845.

BOOK IV

TEACHING BY PREACHING



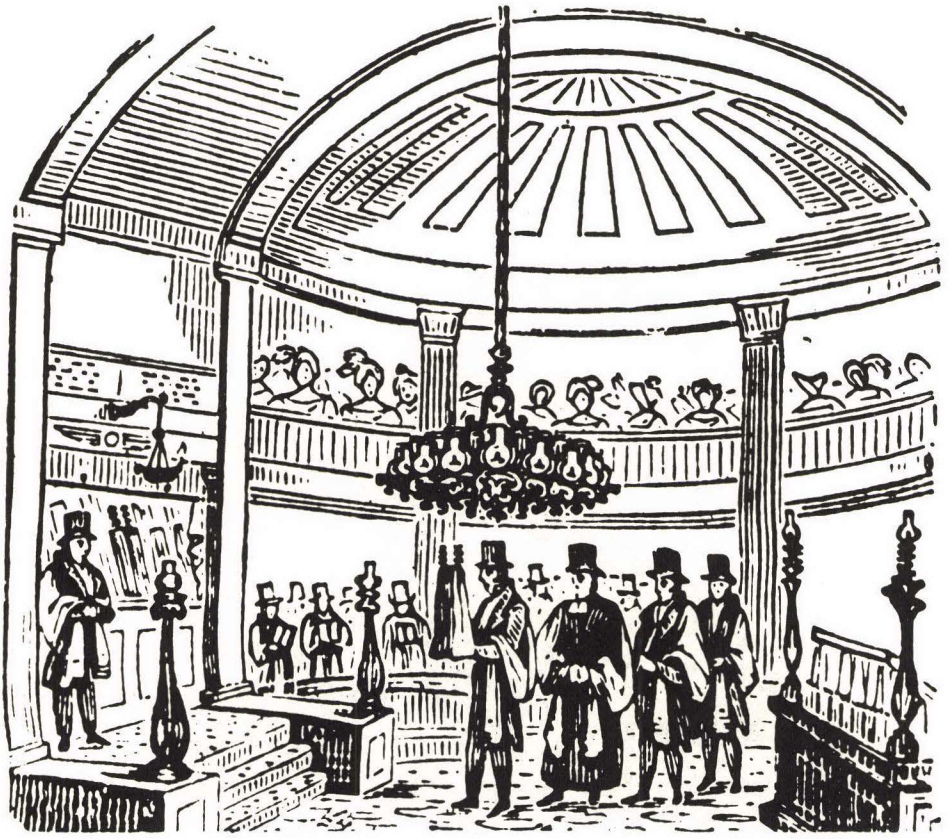
Reverend Isaac Leeser, Minister, *Mickve Israel*, Philadelphia, 1829-1850; Foremost spokesman of Orthodox Jewry in America; First to preach regularly on Sabbaths and Holy Days in America.

(Courtesy Maxwell Whiteman, Philadelphia)



Beth Shalome, Richmond, Virginia, erected 1822; Isaac Leeser assumed its ministry as Reader in 1824.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

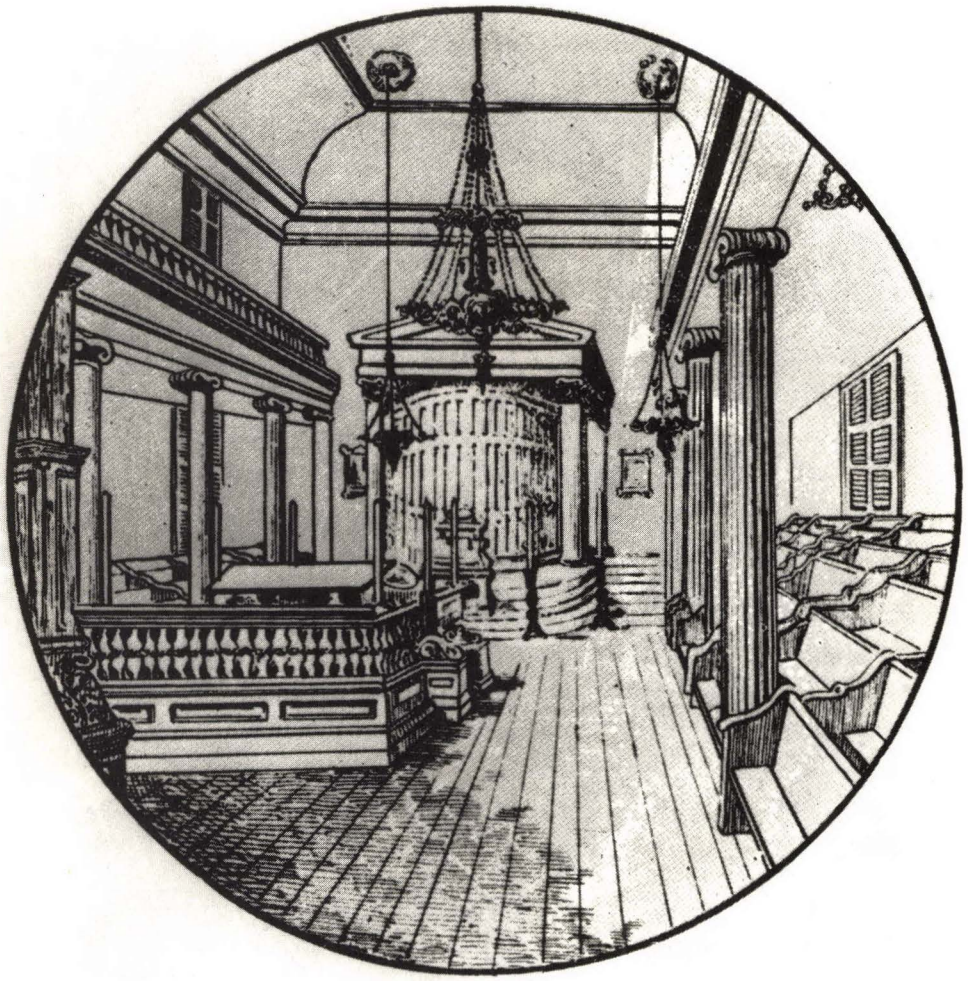


Isaac Leeser assumed ministry of Cherry Streeet Synagogue of *Mickve Israel*, Philadelphia, erected in 1824, as preacher in 1829.
(*Synagogue Architecture in the United States* by Rachel Wischnitzer)



Jacques Judah Lyons, a native of Surinam, Dutch Guiana, Minister of *Shearith Israel*, New York, 1839-1877, served as Reader. Not until 1857 did the Portuguese congregation engage a Preacher.

(*An Old Faith in the New World* by David and Tamar DeSola Pool)



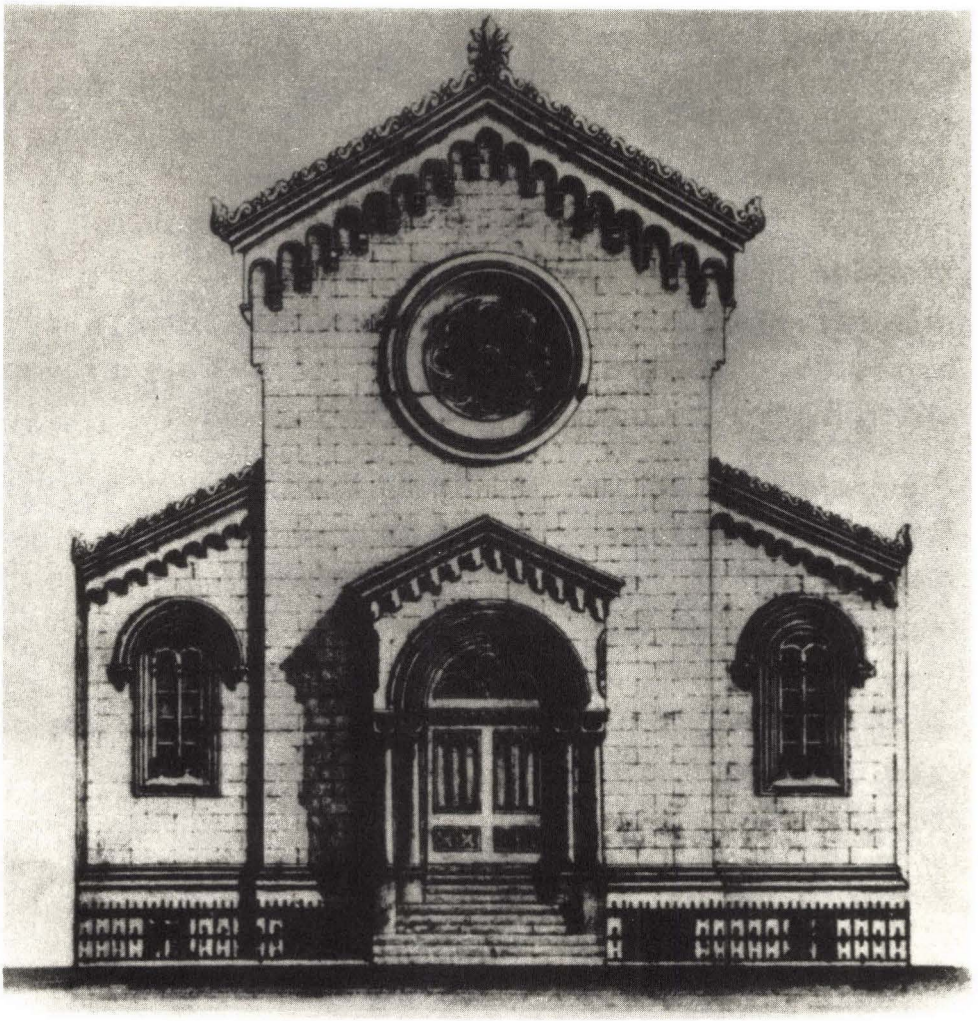
Interior, Crosby Street Synagogue *Shearith Israel*, New York, 1834-1860.

(An Old Faith in the New World by David and Tamar DeSola Pool)



Reverend Samuel Myer Isaacs, Minister, *B'nai Jeshurun*, New York, 1839-1845.

(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



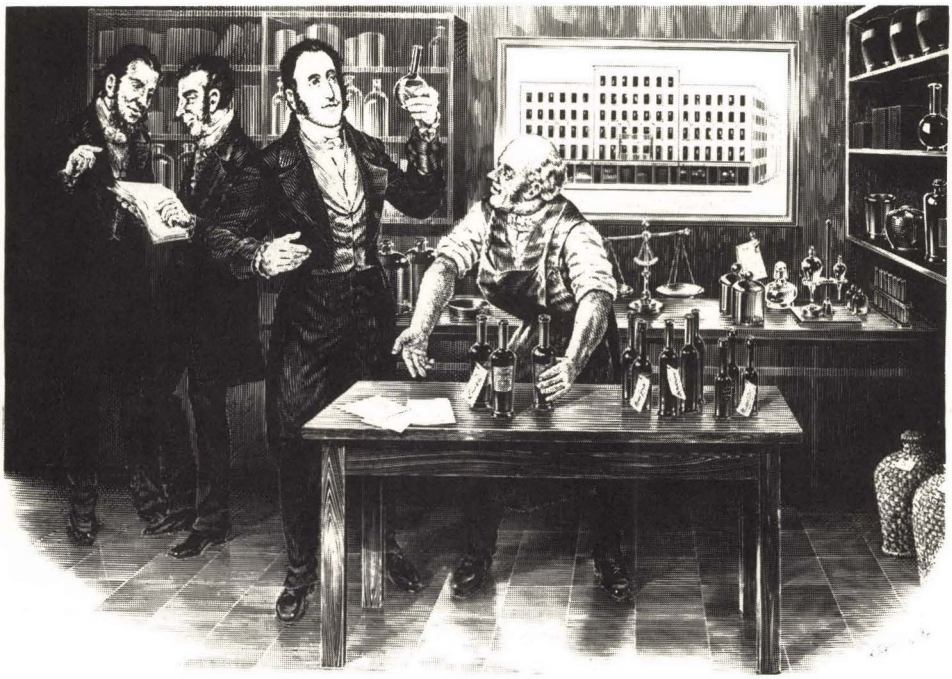
Shaaray Tefila, The Wooster Street *Schul*, New York, erected 1847; Samuel Myer Isaacs, Minister, 1845-1876.

(Shaaray Tefila: Its Hundred Years, 1845-1945, by Simon Cohen)

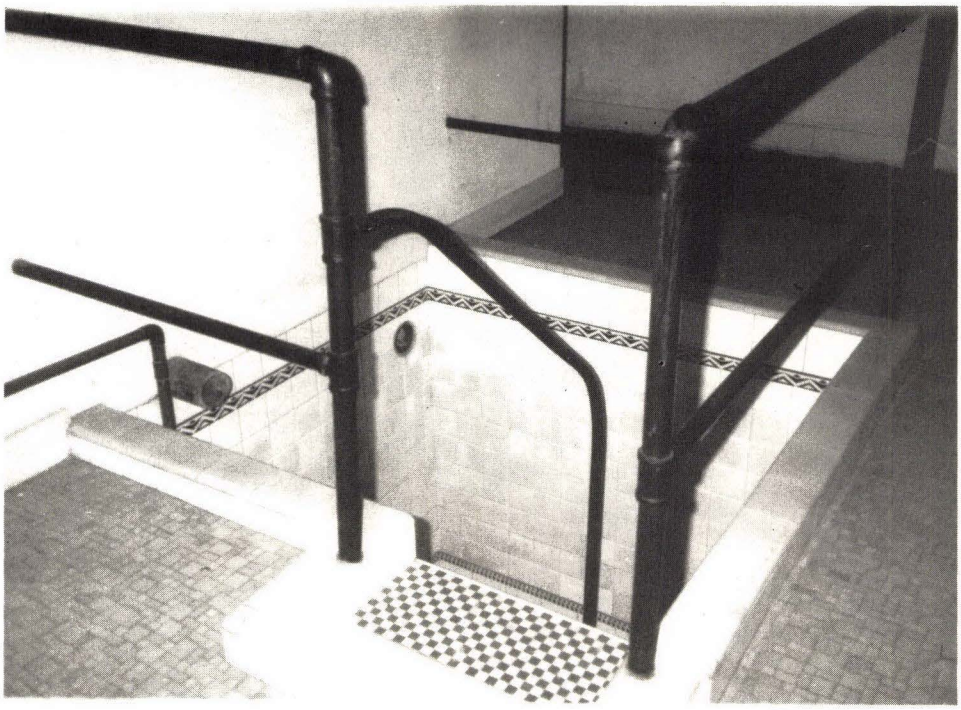


Rabbi Abraham Joseph Rice, sketch by H.B.R., leading Talmudist. Rice issued Responsa to individuals and congregations throughout the United States.

(Jewish Encyclopedia)



First scientific test to determine Kashruth of product, precipitated Rice Responsum. Historic illustration by Artist Kurt Friede.
(Archives, Kosher Overseers Association of America)



Mikveh of Lloyd Street *Schul*, Baltimore, 1845.
(Photograph by Rabbi Haim Kassorla)

ספר

גידולי טהרה

על הלכות מקואות

עם כמה שאלות ותשובות

שחיבר הנשר הגדול בעל כנפים שר התורה החכם הכולל המפורסם הרה"ג מהור"ר **מנחם** המכונה
מענדל קארנויא זללה"ה מק"ק פיורדא יע"א.

הובא לבית הדפוס

מאתנו החברים צעירי בני ישראל

יונה בלא"א הר"ר **מענדעל** ראָזענבוים שי' מק"ק צעלל סמיך לעיר ווירצבורג יע"א (תלמיד כרב המחבר [illegible]).
ואשר המכונה **אנשיל** בלא"א כה' **מאיר** שטערן זצ"ל מק"ק שטיינבאַך במדינת קורהעזען.

נדפס פה

ק"ק **פיורדא** יע"א.

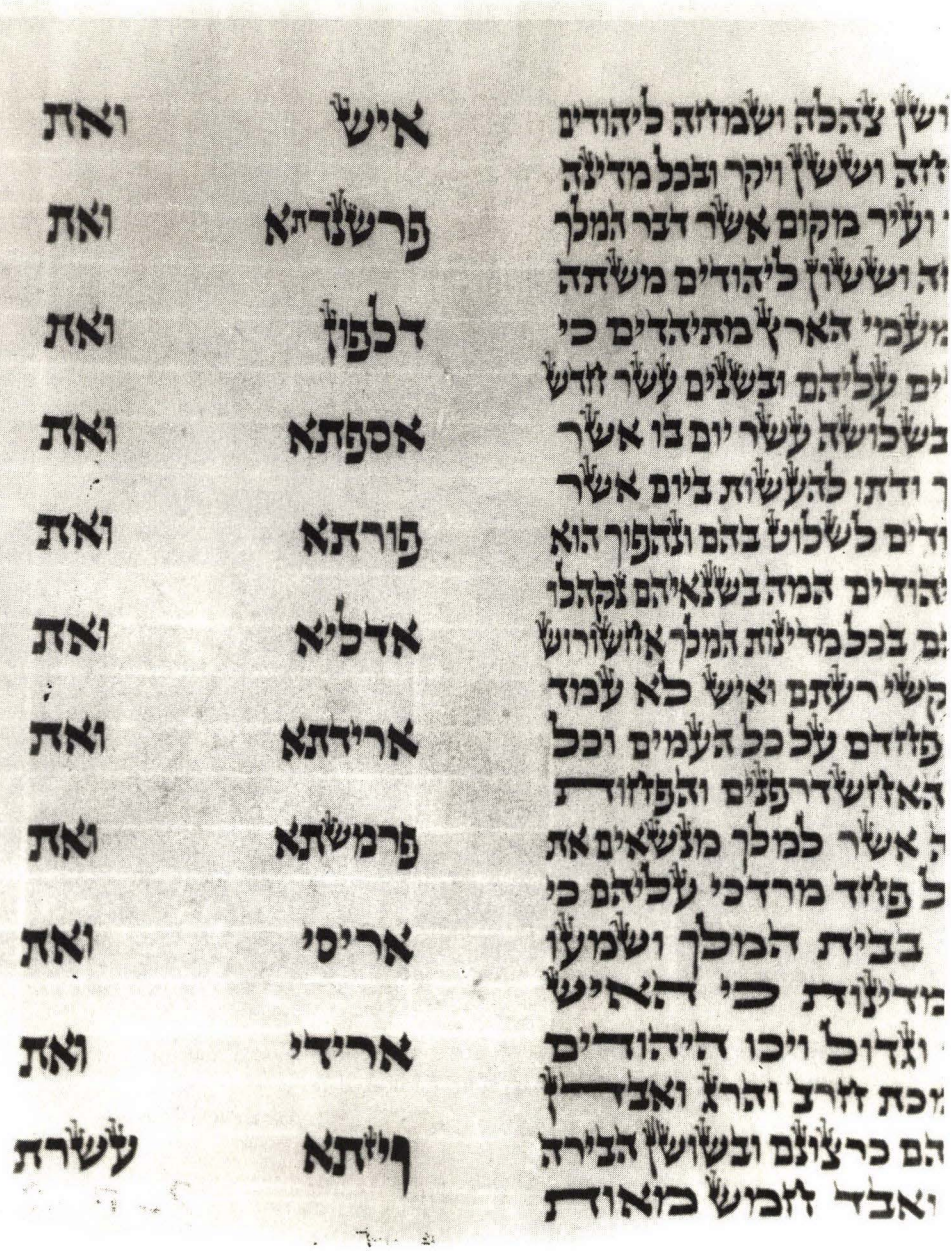
בבית וכדפוס **דוד** צירנדארף וחתנו **יודא** זאָמטער יצ"ו.

Title Page, *Gidulei Taharah*, Fürth, 1845; Included Responsum by Rice, on construction of a *Mikveh*.

(Courtesy Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Teological Seminary Library, Yeshiva University)



Kiddush Goblet, presented in tribute, Engraved Rev. A. Rice.
(Courtesy Isaac Rice, Great-grandson of Rabbi Rice; Emanuel, Israel)



Megillah (Scroll of Esther) hand-written by Rice, who alarmed the public on counterfeit scrolls, particularly in *Mazuzos* and *Tefillin* from overseas.

(Courtesy Isaac Rice, Great-grandson of Rabbi Rice; Emanuel, Israel)

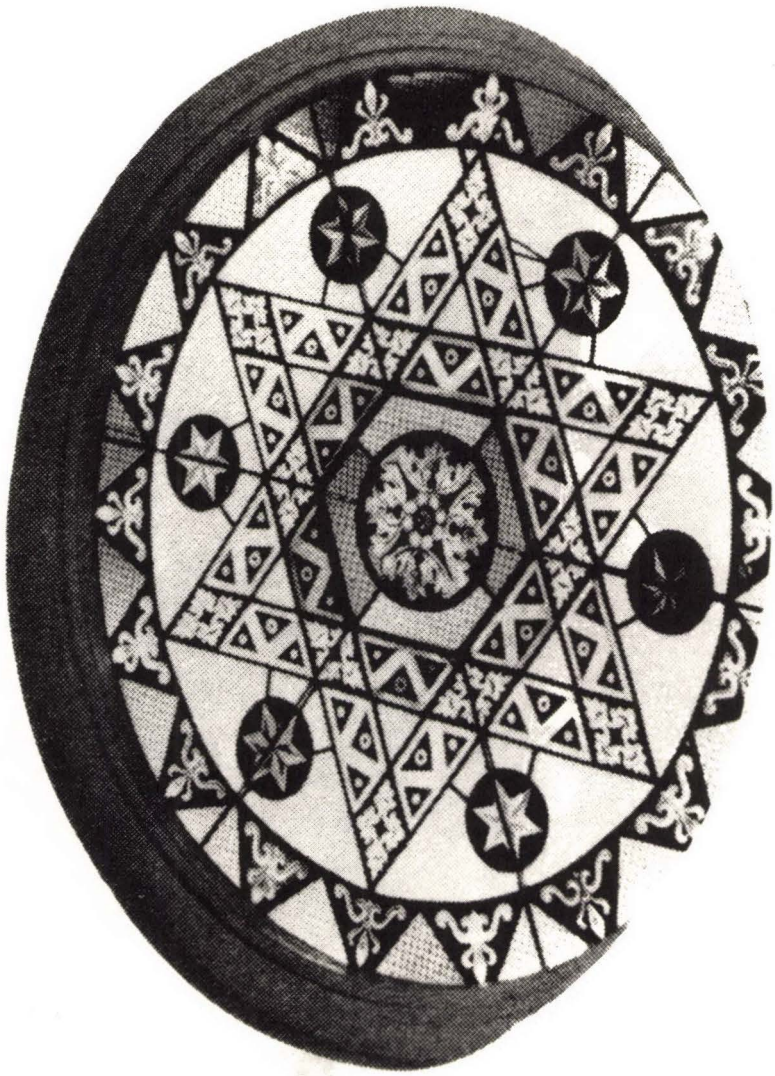


Lloyd Street *Schul, Nitgy Israel*, Baltimore Hebrew Congregation;
First Synagogue erected in Maryland, dedicated 1845.
(Courtesy Rose Greenberg)



Boot scrapers at bases of columns on portico of Lloyd Street *Schul*, Baltimore, 1845.

(Photograph by Rabbi Haim Kassorla)



Shield of David; First in an American Synagogue; set in window over Ark at Lloyd Street *Schul*, Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, 1845.
(Chronicles of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation by Rose Greenberg)

Chapter 14 *First Maryland Synagogue Dedicated*

IN 1845, in Thalmessingen [today Thalmassing, thirty miles southwest of Nuremberg], Bavaria, in the spring of that year, a woman alleged that a Jew took her daughter into his carriage, where he kept her confined under the threat of stabbing her with a poniard if she made the slightest sound, and then he shut her up in a barn guarded by a large dog. The victim was said to have escaped through a small hole that she made in the wall, and then she had been carried by the wind back to her own house. A witness affirmed that he had seen the newly made saint flying through the air! Despite the fact that an investigation proved the Jew innocent, it did not stop the rash of such incidents throughout Bavaria. At Wallerstein, fifty miles southwest of Nuremberg, a Jew was accused of carrying off a girl from the public high road. He was spared from the violent mob when the true culprit was caught and turned out to be a Christian. Nonetheless, the ignorant populace insisted that the kidnapper had to be a Jew and went on a rampage and destroyed the Jewish cemetery at Ratisbon.

Life and property under constant threat and attack, Bavarian Jews flocked to the Land of the Free. Synagogue expansion served as an indicator of the growing Jewish communities, in Baltimore as elsewhere.

The Baltimore Hebrew Congregation could no longer accommodate its ever-increasing membership. Since the mass migration of Bavarian Jews began seven years previously, perhaps a thirtieth of the 30,000 newcomers to America had settled in Baltimore.

In Baltimore, the building of the *Lloyd Street Schul* began on the lot contributed seven years earlier by the then treasurer of the synagogue. The officers and members took great pride in the rise of their edifice, while Rice concerned himself with the construction of its ritual pools, one for the men, the other for the women. He agonized over the proper disposition of the previous building and its sacred furnishings. Such problems had not occurred in Europe, Africa, and Asia, where Jews lived in ghettos or *mellahs* [ghettos in Moslem lands] for generations and never sold or abandoned their synagogues.

Rice noted that since the officers were to hand over the deed of the *Harrison Street Schul* to the builder as a down payment upon completion of the new structure, the sanctity of the old building would not be violated. However, he was in a quandry about the disposition of such

objects as the pulpit and lectern. He wondered if they could be turned over to the builder, along with the building, with the expectation that he would probably dispose of them by burning. He referred this perplexing query, along with his own opinion, to his revered teacher, Rabbi Seligmann Baer Bamberger of Würzburg, the successor to Rabbi Abraham Bing, for his final decision. The response is regretfully not extant, and no record tells of the disposition of the furnishings of the old synagogue.

As the time neared for completion of the new building before the high holy day season, cash was urgently needed to pay the builders. On the Sabbath day, July 5, 1845, Rice dealt with the subject of redeeming pledges; not only for the building but for the less fortunate in the community, the ill and impoverished:

> I say, true! There are some among us who give their share, but there are yet a greater number among us who give less than their share. Otherwise, our institutions would have been in a better financial standing and the needy and impoverished would enjoy speedier and more adequate relief. We must revise our entire attitude towards charity . . . .
>
> Charity is a holy duty for everyone, even the poor, and even those who receive charity themselves. No one is exempted from giving charity . . . . In our times, we consider charity a form of voluntary contribution, rather than as an act of doing justice and an obligatory responsibility. Since charity is given now as a voluntary matter, it is as often voluntarily omitted. Very few people honor their pledges, which they voluntarily offered. Most wait to be reminded, and it is a very short step from waiting to be reminded to refusing to honor the pledge altogether . . . .
>
> Why do people always boast so much when they give charity? Generosity is a duty and an obligation!

At this time the *Wiener Jahrbuch fuer Israeliten* reported that the Baltimore congregation consisted mostly of Germans, particularly of Bavarians dedicating a magnificient new synagogue. It added that "Prosperity is growing day by day, those who had immigrated as beggars are rich after 6-10 years, and the name German Jew has become here a name of honor and a guarantee of integrity and honesty." To those who had not redeemed their pledges towards the building and ignored the less fortunate Rice directed his remarks.

Because of the lack of a helping hand, Henry Jones, an officer of *Anshe Chesed*, New York, together with eleven like-minded men, founded on October 13, 1843, a non-synagogal society, which they called *Bundes-Brueder* [League of Brothers]. This benevolent society had as its mission

"uniting Israelites in the work of promoting their highest interests and those of humanity."

Henry Jones described the religious crisis which gave rise to the founding of this Jewish benevolent and fraternal society, later renamed *The Independent Order of B'nai B'rith* [Sons of the Covenant].

> The synagogue . . . used to be open twice a day; for a Jew desiring to find a friend, he had but to go there and make himself known by certain signs and tokens; he was sure to find assistance. The sign consisted of a grip given with a full hand and the magical words *Sholem Alechem* [Peace Be Unto You]. The *Messussah* [sic!] on the door-post was the countersign. The *Arbacanphoth* [Lit. "four corners"—a reference to the fringes worn by Jewish males all day as an undergarment], has almost disappeared from the breasts of our coreligionists, since the pass-word is not given twice a day as it used to be, and therefore has lost its magical power; since to speak plainly, a youth would rather not be recognized as a Jew, and never thinks of visiting a synagogue, it becomes necessary for us to try at least to remedy this evil and show the beauties of our Holy Religion.

In Baltimore, Rice inspired his congregation to provide these fraternal services, and personally assisted the needy, the orphans and widows.

Rice's deep concern for the needy had been expressed in his Thanksgiving sermon, delivered Wednesday, December 11, 1844, the date set by the Governor of Maryland for its observance. During that oration, Rice had pleaded the cause of the aged, of widows, and of deserted wives:

> We must show our thankfulness to the Almighty by helping others to have what we have; also, by helping the aged and widow find shelter from the cold; and it is not enough for us to praise God for having helped us to enjoy warm homes . . . Is there a greater need for help than in the want of widows and deserted wives with their children? Let us not say, "Times are hard!"

Rice further urged that a helping hand be extended to those in want and a friendly hand be given even to those who acted in an unfriendly manner:

> Should you ask: How can I be expected to respect my brother who is a beggar? The answer is clear. If he is lacking the dollar, is he also lacking in the image of God? Is he then not like you?
>
> Should you ask: How can I love my enemy? Again, the answer is clear. Though he may have insulted you and become your enemy, do you believe that he has also become an enemy of God? And fur-

thermore, can you be certain that he is entirely to blame? Only when we respect the divine element in every man, will we always discern reasons to respect and love him.

A source of friction were the differences between the Bavarian majority and Prussian-Polish minority who immigrated from the Kingdom of Posen. These non-Bavarians, politically German but religiously Polish in their minimal number of hymns added to the prayers, preferred the non-recitation of many liturgical hymns recited by the Bavarians.

Rice, though himself of Bavaria, agreed with the Poseners. He told the semi-orthodox members that it is absurd to complain about the non-recitation of non-obligatory poetical compositions while violating the Sabbath by engaging in business on that holy day of rest. In his sermon Rice admonished:

> They make the unimportant their chief concern and of the most important, a secondary matter. If a bit of *piyyut* [liturgical hymn] is omitted, there is a great outcry in the congregation that reaches to high heaven, and it has happened that such excitement has often divided a congregation into two parties, but the essentials of the religion—observing the Sabbath and Festivals—are pushed into the background. . . .

On September 20, 1845, Rice delivered his last address at the final Sabbath service at the Harrison Street *Schul*, urging future adherence to observance in his closing remarks:

> Many are the sacrifices you have brought to erect a suitable place for God to dwell in, but your duty is not done. You must consecrate the new house by true worship and by living a life that is acceptable to God.

Thus the early chapter in the life of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation—*Nitgy Israel*, the *Stadt Schul* of Baltimore, came to an end, as the doors closed at its *Harrison Street Schul*, and the doors of its *Lloyd Street Schul* opened.

In its issue of September 24, 1845, the *Baltimore Sun* described the new synagogue, the first to be erected in the state of Maryland:

> The building is a very neat one, built of brick and painted: it is sixty feet front by seventy-five deep, and surrounded with an iron railing on a granite base. The front is ornamented with four large pillars, with heavy granite base and granite steps . . . .
>
> The Ark in the Synagogue is a beautiful piece of workmanship; over which is painted the ten commandments, in Hebrew. The

> building, when completed, will cost about $20,000 . . . The iron work, gateways and railing, was done by Mr. Aaron Weglein . . . .

The most striking innovative feature, a Shield of David, conspicuously set in the main window of the synagogue above the Holy Ark, in the eastern wall, which everyone faced in prayer, was reputed to be the first such in any American synagogue, yet it was not mentioned in the description of the synagogue published in the local press.

Reverend Leeser of Philadelphia arrived to participate in the dedication. In his description of the new edifice, Leeser took particular notice of the lattice-work screening of the women's balcony and of an innovation that was then unusual "in that pews [in the men's section as well] instead of open seats were installed in the synagogue."

Leeser was no stranger to Baltimore. He had at times visited his uncle, Zalma Rehine [Rhine, Reine], who died two years earlier at age eighty-six. When Leeser first came to America from Münster, Germany, where he concluded his studies at the Gymnasium and his Jewish education, he clerked for his uncle Zalma at "Rehine & Judah," in Richmond. In the year of Leeser's arrival in America, 1824, Israel Baer Kursheedt left Richmond for New York and Leeser served in his place as *chazzan* of Congregation *Beth Shalome* [House of Peace]. When Zalma left Richmond for Baltimore in 1831, Leeser continued on to Philadelphia, to serve as *chazzan*-elect of *Mickve Israel*.

Leeser met Rice two years earlier, when they officiated at the funeral of Zalma Rehine, and thereafter acclaimed him as the authority in rabbinic law.

The family connection between Leeser and Rehine extended to Kursheedt and other early American Jewish families. This can be glimpsed from their intertwining through marriage.

Isaac Leeser's mother was the sister of Zalma Rehine, married to Rachel Judah. Rachel's cousin, Abigail Judah, was married to Asher, son of Israel Baer Kursheedt and Sara Abigail Seixas. Sarah Abigail's sister, Rachel Seixas married to Joseph Jonas; he being the pioneer Jewish settler in 1816 in Cincinnati, then in Indian country in the far west. The Seixas sisters, Rachel, Sarah Abigail, and Grace—mother-in-law of Asher Kursheedt, were the daughters of the distinguished Reverend, Gershom Mendes Seixas, minister of *Shearith Israel*, New York, from before the American Revolution until his death in 1816.

So, too, the early Baltimorian Jewish families, Etting and Cohen were tied through marriage connections. The most prominent of Baltimorian Jews, Solomon Etting, twice married; first to Reyna, daughter of Joseph Simon, pioneer Jewish Indian trader in the Ohio Valley and then to

Rachel, daughter of Barnard Grätz, titled the merchant prince of Philadelphia.

Conspicuous by their absence at the dedication were the Ettings and Cohens. Though of German ancestry, they, as native Americans, accustomed themselves in Philadelphia's synagogue to the Portuguese-rite, which they continued in their own family synagogues in Baltimore. These aristocratic first families did not mingle socially or religiously with the newcomer immigrants that comprised the membership of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation.

In the new *Lloyd Street Schul*, Leon Dyer, president of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, extended greetings to the overflow assembly at the consecration service, which commenced on Friday evening, September 26, 1845.

Dyer, one of the most flamboyant Jews on the American scene, had been president since 1841. His father, John Maximilian Dyer, first president of the congregation, had been a charter member. The Dyers' illustrious ancestor, Levi ben Gershon [Gersonides], the 14th century scholar, occupied the highest place among Jewish philosophers after Maimonides.

Leon Dyer, described as being "of large physique, strong personality, commanding presence and great executive ability," had been commissioned a Major by David G. Burnett, provisional president of the Republic of Texas in 1836, for serving in cleaning-up operations after the battle of San Jacinto. Earlier that year, Dyer had been assigned to the staff of General Winfield Scott, serving as Quartermaster General to his troops, who were fighting Seminole Indians after they massacred a company of over one hundred regulars in the Florida Everglades.

On the eve of the dedication, Sabbath, September 26, 1845, President Leon Dyer welcomed Rabbi Rice, and introduced the honored guests, Reverends Isaac Leeser and Samuel Myer Isaacs, the Christian ministers of Baltimorian churches, William Hamilton of the Methodist Church, George D. Purviance of the Presbyterian Church, Mr. Healey of the Baptist Church, Mr. Shrigley of the Universalist Church, and also the Honorable John P. Kennedy, Whig candidate for United States Congress.

Rabbi Abraham Rice conducted the service, chanted by Cantor A. Ansell. The ceremonies continued on the Sabbath day, Saturday, September 27, as Leeser later reported in *The Occident*:

> In the morning, the Rev. Mr. Rice, whom our readers know probably as a licentiate Rabbi, and a scholar of the celebrated Rabbi Abraham Bing of Wurtzburg, addressed the congregation, before

> the taking out of the law, in which he exhibited the duty and object of prayer, and showed that prayer should be a self-humiliation, a self-judging of the mortal before the Creator, and how the public place of worship was the proper spot where brother should meet with brother, to urge him forward in the path of righteousness.

Leeser addressed the congregation in an English style that deeply impressed the audience. In Philadelphia, he had delivered sermons in English for many years. And Leeser recalled that in the South, in Charleston and Savannah, Jacob de la Motta had spoken to those congregations in English.

Like the Americanized Leeser, Isaacs, the Englishman, delivered an English sermon with an impeccable diction and masterful rhetoric that captivated and delighted the congregation. The congregation was enthralled. These recent immigrants were beginning to speak English, and their children spoke English fluently.

Samuel Myer Isaacs' credentials were most impressive. He had formerly served as preacher at *Neve Tsedek* in West Norwood, London and for six years at *B'nai Jeshurun*, New York. Recently he resigned when the English faction of that congregation of fifty members seceded as a result of an election squabble that began in the previous year.

The officers having learned that Isaacs had recently resigned his pulpit in New York resolved to engage Isaacs to deliver regular English sermons on Sabbath and festivals, instead of an occasional sermon in German, as delivered by Rice. Like some of his contemporaries, Rice delivered sermons on Sabbaths, festivals, and high holy days in German; also, on occasion, as the Thanksgiving Day sermon, in German, as he was not yet proficient in English.

As the story was told, Morland Micholl had run for the office of president, and Henry I. Hart for the post of trustee of *B'nai Jeshurun*, of New York. However, a serious dispute about the legitimacy of the election ensued. The English were afraid that they would be ousted from the top management if they were to accept as members and enfranchise, according to state law, everyone who had taken a seat in the synagogue for the duration of a year and paid the customary dues. Accordingly, they denied seat holders the right to vote. The congregation split up into contending groups. A suit was commenced, by mutual agreement, in the Supreme Court, to determine who was legally elected. While the case was pending the trustees insisted that dues be paid. Certain dissident members refused, and an old resolution was invoked that members whose dues were more than six months in arrears were not entitled to any honors in the synagogue.

The English faction was in control early in 1845 when a German-Jew, in arrears in his dues, requested permission of the trustees to have his son, celebrating his *Bar Mitzvah*, to read from the *Torah* on the designated Sabbath. The trustees refused to grant this permission. When the Sabbath day arrived, the officers deliberately absented themselves, but trustees of the German faction gave permission for the celebration to be held at the afternoon service.

The English officials returned early that afternoon and nailed up the synagogue doors. When the worshippers arrived for the afternoon *Bar Mitzvah* service, they were unable to enter. The opposition members then forced open the doors and called the minister, Reverend Isaacs, to officiate. Isaacs refused on the ground that he was duty-bound to follow the instructions of the officers, whereupon the German faction conducted the service and seized control of the congregation.

The original officers who were of the English party and their followers, aware that they were in the minority, left the *Elm Street Schul* of *B'nai Jeshurun* in the hands of the German party. Isaacs, himself a native of England, resigned upon receiving the sum of $5000 compensation due to him.

Ironically, the Supreme Court ruled in their favor later that year, but the English group had taken the road of no return. Morland Micholl, president of *B'nai Jeshurun*, and its first president, and John I. Hart and his son Henry I. Hart, who ran for trustee, were among the fifty who resigned. They had acquired temporary synagogue quarters at 67 Franklin Street, near Broadway. They named their congregation *Shaaray Tefila* [Gates of Prayer], and it was popularly called the *Franklin Street Schul*.

Since Isaacs resigned from his ministry at *B'nai Jeshurun*, four months earlier, on May 6, 1845, the officers of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation invited him to serve as English lecturer at the *Lloyd Street Schul* the year round.

Isaacs declined the position of English lecturer at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, explaining that he would continue to serve his devoted followers of the new *Shaaray Tefila* congregation, who had already contracted for construction of their synagogue at 112 Wooster Street [later known as the *Wooster Street Schul*].

When Leeser later learned that the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation had offered Isaacs the post of English lecturer, he commented in *The Occident*:

> We deem it an undeniable truth, that the German language, no matter how eloquent the preacher, must soon become useless as a pulpit language, since the children of the present immigrants will

> soon know no other than the English language . . . . In saying this we by no means undervalue the learning and eloquence of . . . Rev. Rice . . . but only maintaining that we need another speech for the future Israelites in America.

The Orthodox were slow to appreciate this wisdom and thereby ways opened for the development of Reform.

Chapter 15
Ecclesiastical Authority

THE OFFICERS of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, as they awaited Isaacs' decision to serve as English Lecturer, moved to have the post of Chief Rabbi established and for Rabbi Rice to be installed in the office.

Rice gladly welcomed this position, for in addition to his congregational and educational responsibilities, he was overtaxed with the many responsa he issued to individuals and congregations throughout the United States. Thus he wrote to his European colleague, Rabbi Seligmann Baer Bamberger: " . . . all their questions are submitted to me. I have to carry the yoke of rendering legal decisions."

Furthermore, he had been sent to America to serve as Chief Rabbi, to lead his generation and protect them from the imminent dangers posed from overseas by German Reformers. As Rice stated, "though the great ocean divides us, the sparks scattered from the fires are already kindling a flame in our dwelling."

In reporting the dedication ceremonies, the *Baltimore Clipper* and *Baltimore Sun*, on Saturday, September 27, 1845, made reference to "the Rev. Mr. Rice, Chief Rabbi in the United States . . . ," and the *Republican and Daily Argus* of Baltimore, on that same date, spoke of "the Rev. Mr. Rice, Grand Rabbi of the United States . . . ."

These titles were passed on to reporters covering the dedication by officers of the congregation.

A "Hebrew Citizen," voiced objection to Rice being called "Grand Rabbi." He was probably William S. Rayner, a leader of the Reform *Har Sinai* temple, who objected on the grounds of "what threatened to become a Jewish hierarchy in our midst should not be tolerated any longer." In his letter to the Editors of the *Baltimore Sun* and *Republican and Daily Argus* he wrote:

> Gentlemen: I perceive in your paper of Saturday last, as well as in the [*Baltimore*] *Sun*, and also in the [*Baltimore*] *Clipper*, in the account given of the Coronation of the Hebrew Synagogue, you and the *Clipper* style Mr. Abraham Rice, the Grand Rabbi of the United States; and in the *Sun* the Chief Rabbi of the United States . . . .
>
> . . . there is reason for suspicion that some busy body, ignorant meddler of said Society, who is too stupid to feel as rational being, has misled the Editors, into this most inconsistent and ridiculous idea of Grand or Chief Rabbi of the United States. The fact is, that Mr. A. Rice is not a Grand Rabbi of the U.S., or the several Societies of this city, but in truth, not even a Rabbi officially of this very Society, where it is represented that he was officiating.
>
> It seems that the individual who at present officiates as President of said Hebrew Society, since his return from his pleasure excursion for the change of air . . . appears to be greatly busy to impress upon the minds of his Hebrew Brethern that the redemption of Israel depends on Whig doctrines . . . and here we will perceive how this eminent Hebrew President and dignified Whig candidate for Congress [Leon Dyer and John P. Kennedy] will jointly erect a Hebrew Temple of the United States . . . They have already provided a grand Rabbi of the U. States, as a piece of furniture for this most splended building, and all for our dear United States . . . .

To Reformers, an ecclesiastical authority would violate their religious freedom which granted them the right to interpret Judaism as they saw fit, restrict them from enacting religious rulings according to their wishes and even prevent them from establishing their houses of worship according to their congregational decisions.

As the opposition mounted against Abraham Joseph Rice to serve as "Chief Rabbi" for United States Jewry, there arrived from Russia Max Lilienthal, who laid claim to that title.

Lilienthal studied in his youth at the *yeshivah* of Fürth, as had Rice. He claimed ordination by Hirsch Aub, Chief Rabbi of Münich, but Aub's Orthodoxy seems to have been in question, for his congregation had a mixed membership of Orthodox and Reformers, and like his cousin, "Rabbi" Joseph Aub of Bayreuth, he may have espoused Reform.

After Lilienthal was graduated from the University of Münich, he gained prominence as a modern educator. This came to the attention of the Russian government, and they invited him to establish modern Jewish schools in the Pale of Settlement, the western strip from the Baltic to the Balkans, to which Russian Jewry was confined. The Russian Jews balked and thwarted his attempts, for they knew that the intent of the Czarist regime in establishing government-sponsored Jewish schools was to con-

vert the children to Christianity, the Czar's motto being: "One country, one language, one church." After five years of futile endeavors, Lilienthal stealthily fled Russia for America.

A week after his arrival in New York, the press announced: "Dr. Lilienthal, chief rabbi of Russia, will give a lecture in the Synagog [sic] *Anshe Chesed* next Saturday in the pulpit vacated by Leo Merzbacher." In truth, he had not been the Chief Rabbi of even a city, town or village. On the succeeding Sabbaths, he preached at the two other German-Jewish congregations. Pleased with his sermons, the three Orthodox German-Jewish congregations of New York united to elect him as their rabbi.

First and foremost among the Orthodox German-rite synagogues of New York was *Anshe Chesed*, founded in 1828. The rapid increase of membership due to the mass migration of German Jews from Bavaria forced them to move in 1836 from 202½ Grand Street to larger quarters at Centre and White Streets; in 1840 to the former Quaker Church at 38-40 Henry Street.

In 1839, unable to contend with the newer arrivals, a number of worshippers resigned from *Anshe Chesed*, rented quarters at 122 Attorney Street and founded *Shaarey Hashamayim* [Gates of Heaven]. In 1842, discontent brought on another secession from *Anshe Chesed. Rodeph Shalom* synagogue emerged at 156 Attorney Street. At the time Lilienthal assumed their ministry in 1845, *Anshe Chesed* had a membership of 320; *Shaarey Hashamayim*, counted 220 and *Rodeph Shalom*, 180. Totaling 720, the combined memberships represented a major force in American Jewry.

Upon his election in 1845 to serve as rabbi of the three German synagogues, Lilienthal signed his name to the agreement *Sein Hochehrenwurden Herr Rabbiner*, "Chief Rabbi." Referring to his election, a reporter stated that Lilienthal was Chief Rabbi of the congregations *Anshe Chesed*, *Rodeph Shalom*, and *Shaarey Hashamayin*.

"Chief Rabbi," Lilienthal observed that the *shochetim* [ritual slaughterers] were no longer under the control of the synagogues, with the exception of the Portuguese congregation, but were employed directly by the butchers. He further learned that meat was allowed to remain over three days and as long as seven or eight, without washing or removal of the kosher seals. Such unwashed meats are not allowed for cooking as the blood can not be exuded by the ritual of salting. Lilienthal further learned that some of the butchers, Jewish as non-Jewish, occasionally mixed non-kosher with kosher meat.

Lilienthal further received reports that at the abbatoir, there was laxity in the required examination of the lungs of "kosher" slaughtered cattle; moreover, that the inspector for the Portuguese congregation

placed seals even on the hindquarters, without *nikur* [*Yiddish* "treiberen"—removal of the sciatic nerve and forbidden veins as required by the kosher code].

When Lilienthal, acting under his self-assumed title "Chief Rabbi," attempted to create order out of chaos in *kashrus* of meats in New York City, he was told that the butchers would tolerate no interference. The butchers maintained: *Wir sind in einem frein Lande! Niemand hat uns Etwas zu befehlen. Wer sich in unser Geschaft mischt, dem hangen wir einem libel suit* . . . ["We are in a free land. No one can interfere in our business. If anyone should do so, we will sue him for libel."]

When Lilienthal threatened that he would declare those obstreperous butchers *passul* [unfit], he was told that the butchers would then lower prices on their meats, and Jewish women would flock to their shops despite the ban.

Mere mention of the title "Chief Rabbi" alarmed Reformers and Orthodox alike. In 1840, *Anshe Chesed* had not elected Rice because he came to serve as Chief Rabbi and were about to reject Lilienthal's quest for recognition as Chief Rabbi.

Dr. James Koppel Gutheim assuaged the concerned community; his communication was published in *The Occident* of February, 1846. He stated that "By virtue of his office as Chief Rabbi, he [Lilienthal] was their judge in religious matters. But far be it for him to entertain the idea of arrogating to himself an uncontrolled power . . . ." In truth, despite his grandiose title of Chief Rabbi, Lilienthal's power was restricted by the officers of his congregations.

Gutheim was then engaged in business in New York for the past two years since his coming from Germany, where he studied at the Teachers' Institute at Münster. He was about to depart for Cincinnati, where he had been elected "rabbi" of Congregation *B'nai Jeshurun*. Before his departure Gutheim suggested to Lilienthal that he "form a religious tribunal with whom he would deliberate . . . ," and thereby remove the antagonism engendered by his use of the title Chief Rabbi. Lilienthal heeded his advice.

Max Lilienthal fared better as a preacher. He delivered sermons on alternate Sabbaths at the three synagogues in his charge. He enjoyed telling the story of a congregant, presumably in another congregation, who during a sermon on the Ten Commandments cried out several times: "How good, how good!"

"Do you mean this absurd talk of the preacher?" whispered those sitting next to him.,

"No," was the reply, "I mean, how good it is that there is no eleventh commandment; it would surely have been forbidden to make

remarks during a sermon, and I would have been at a loss how to excuse myself."

Congregations wanted Preachers, not Chief Rabbis.

Chapter 16
Wanted! English Sermons

ENGLISH SERMONS in the synagogue, a novelty in German-Jewish synagogues, had been the practice in Spanish-Portuguese synagogues since colonial days. This was now an instrument for integration of traditional values by the Orthodox, and a vehicle of assimilation for the Reform.

Since the late eighteenth century, occasional sermons or lectures were delivered on special occasions at *Shearith Israel*, New York, by the Reverend Gershom M. Seixas, its minister. In the early nineteenth century, Seixas set the precedent for Reverend Emanuel Nunez Carvalho, minister of *Mickve Israel*, Philadelphia; Reverend Abraham Hyam Cohen, minister of *Beth Shalome*, Richmond; and Dr. Jacob de la Motta, lecturer at *Mickva Israel*, Savannah, and at the Charleston, South Carolina Portuguese Congregation *Beth Elohim Unveh Shallom* during its brief existence [1785-1793].

First of the Jewish ministers in America to preach regularly was Reverend Leeser, establishing this precedent ever since 1829 when he was elected to the pulpit of *Mickve Israel*, Philadelphia. Leeser observed that " . . . there was then not a single regular preacher in all America, England, Canada, Australia, and the West Indies [all English speaking countries] . . . ."

In Jamaica, Reverend Moses N. Nathan declared that there was a great demand for "synagogue preaching" which was yet unfulfilled.

Leeser enlightened readers of *The Occident* on the nature of sermons, which were then newly introduced into synagogues:

> Sermons, when good, are compositions of the highest order of merit, and are, perhaps, as difficult a portion of literature as any branch embraced in its wide-spread fields. How many of our readers have any idea what a good sermon is? How much thought it requires in preparation? How much reading and study before one sits down to compose it? . . . .

Second of the Jewish ministers in America to preach regularly was Reverend Samuel Isaacs. Ever since 1839, when he was elected to the pulpit of *B'nai Jeshurun*, New York, he delivered English sermons every Sabbath.

By 1845, in addition to Isaacs and Leeser, who regularly preached sermons in English, there were four other ministers who occasionally lectured in English: Gustavus Poznanski of *Beth Elohim*, and Jacob Rosenfeld of *Sheayreet Israel*, both in Charleston, and two who hailed from England serving in the West Indies—Benjamin Carillon and Moses N. Nathan, the former in Louisiana, having been replaced at *Shaar Hashamayim* in Jamaica by the latter. Occasional lectures in German were delivered by Leo Merzbacher of the recently formed Congregation *Emanu-El*, New York, and by Maximilian Michelbacher of *Rodeph Shalom* in Philadelphia.

Over the next few years, by the time of the dedication of the *Lloyd Street Schul* in 1845, many members of the congregation had become conversant in English and in their drive to become Americanized welcomed sermons in English. Though Rice also spoke English by this time, he did not have sufficient command of the language to preach in English from the pulpit.

Thereupon the officers of the *Lloyd Street Schul* requested Rabbi Rice to preach regularly in German every Sabbath and festival as well as on high holy days and special occasions. The officers conceded that, for the present, the German language remained their native tongue, for they spoke German at home, taught it to their children in the synagogue school, and wrote home in that language. An estimated two-thirds of the German-Jewish families did not yet understand English, though they made earnest efforts to learn it and to become Americanized.

Rabbi Rice welcomed their suggestion and became the first Orthodox Rabbi to preach sermons regularly every Sabbath and holy day, setting a precedent for his European colleagues. Overseas at this time Orthodox Rabbis lectured twice a year, on "The Great Sabbath"—the Sabbath before Passover and "The Sabbath of Repentance"—the Sabbath between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*; though occasionally a moral sermon was preached on a regular Sabbath by a *maggid* [narrator] or a *mochiah* [moralizer].

It seems that whereas European Jewry steeped in Jewish learning and tradition required, like a grandfather's clock, only two windings a year, the American Jew, like the pocket watch, required weekly windings to continue being observant and true to their faith.

Rice admitted that he was not an orator, but pointed out that lack of oratorical skill by no means represented a handicap, for the Scriptures teach that Moses, greatest of the prophets and teachers, was "slow of

speech and of a slow tongue. This instructs us," said Rice, "that the true word of God is to be accepted regardless of the manner in which it is delivered."

As Rice began to preach regularly, he welcomed the opportunity and advised the congregation:

> It will be my duty to instruct you in clear, simple language, the concepts and ideas contained in our system of laws, and to teach you the development and purpose of our festivals; especially, to enlighten you of the foundations of our religion.

Rice presented the aim and purpose of the sermon to his congregation:

> The Jewish preacher who earnestly desires to raise the standards of his people, should not be interested only in the applause and approval of his audience; he should not limit his sermons to moralizing, which merely serves as a harmless form of entertainment, leaving but little or no impression upon the congregation. He should instead expound and interpret the Holy Scriptures, which explanations will stimulate the imagination and not be easily forgotten . . . .
>
> The sermon must be instrumental in making the living Law the possession of the people. By means of the sermon, men and women must be instructed how to remain good Jews, how to be prepared to voluntarily bring sacrifices for our sacred faith . . . . Of what use, is the sermon or lecture which is presented only as a form of entertainment? This certainly does not lead to the way of truth . . . .
>
> It is not my purpose in speaking to you, to entertain you, for this place is too sacred for such frivolity. It is my purpose to make you think about religion and its application to our daily life.
>
> This then, is the task of the Jewish preacher. To teach and expound the ideas of our Torah; not merely the delivery of an eloquent sermon. Only when our people will become well versed in the Law, will their faith and morals be strengthened. Only when the attention of our people will become attuned to the wisdom of God's word, will they become convinced of its truth. The learned Jew will then hearken to the Law and observe it.

Rice added as an afterthought:

> We oftimes hear the complaint that the Jewish layman knows very little or nothing at all about his religion; even less than the layman of other religions. When asked about his religion, he is at a loss to offer an intelligent reply. It is therefore the duty of the Jewish preacher, each according to his ability, to teach religion at every opportunity.

Rabbi Rice, who discerned in Lilienthal who professed Orthodoxy, a Reformer, alarmed the public to take heed

> "that our chiefs and Rabbis, under the cover of the passions, are absolutely endeavoring to force false doctrines upon the people; so that the common man who cannot think farther than what stands clearly before him is induced to doubt whether these men will not carry their measures so far, that our holy religion will have to suffer a great change."

How little many immigrants knew of their faith can be glimpsed from Rice's need to explain to his congregants the story of the miracle that led to the celebration of the Festival of Lights.

On the Sabbath preceding *Chanukah*, December 20, 1845, at the approach of the holiday, Rice prefaced his recounting the historic events of the holiday, saying:

> We shall usher in the Chanukah festival on Tuesday evening. Although we will kindle lights in our homes and synagogues, darkness remains within our souls and coldness in our hearts. Very few of us even know the events we celebrate and how they are related to our days. The very fact that our people do not know their own history is a clear sign of the degeneracy of our generation . . . .

Even as Rice had begun to preach regularly every Sabbath since the high holy days of 1845, so did the Reformer, Leo Merzbacher, in New York. In the previous year Merzbacher had led a secession from the German Jewish congregations of New York. They joined the recently formed *Cultus Verein*, held their first service on the Hebrew New Year, September 14, 1844, and on April 6, 1845, two weeks before Passover, changed the name to *Emanu-El Verein*.

Rice explained the motives of Merzbacher and other Reformers. "You will perhaps ask: what induces these men all at once to disturb with so much violence our holy religion, the inheritance of our fathers?" And gives his answer:

> These men see the great abyss which separates us from the other nations and draw thence the conclusion that we can form a friendly alliance with the world only by throwing off our religion, and assimilating with the nations of the earth. They wish, therefore, that we should exchange the Heavenly treasure which we have received as a gift from our Father in Heaven for worldly and worthless goods; they wish, so to speak, to anticipate the Deity, and to improve the political condition of our brothers at the expense of our religion, as though God, through the faith which He has given us, were the

only obstacle why we are not placed on an equality with other nations . . . .

But is not the welfare of His children as precious in the eyes of the Almighty as it is in the eyes of the Reformers? Certainly when the time will come, Providence will liberate us from the yoke of our enemies, but not before that day has come: so long as the Omniscient does not deem the age ripe for our elevation, so long will all human exertions be vain and fruitless labor . . . . Alone, as our adored God in Heaven, do we stand before the face of the world unshaken in our faith for thousands of years; and alone we thus must remain; and even if mountains tumble into heaps, or valleys will be raised, we will remain and our holy religion will endure unimpaired, notwithstanding the assults of its enemies.

Rice warned against joining the new "sect," and pleaded for unity in Israel:

> The only and legitimate pride which the Jew bears in his heart is, that with us there are no sects, that the Jew in the East is like the one who lives in the West—that the religion in the South must be as it is in the North. This unity may be lost through a single ill-advised alteration; thereafter, every ignorant man would daringly attempt to modify the religion according to the notions of the feeble intellect; and there would arise a multitude of sects without any parallel. But no! O God, Thy name is one and Thy people, Israel will remain one.

Tale bearing, enmity, slander, and petty quarrels prevailed among the first-generation immigrants, whose life struggles oftentimes intermingled success and failure, frustration and irritation. Three years earlier, on the day before the Hebrew New Year, Rice had told his congregation:

"We have seriously transgressed: Let us resolve, here and now, to improve our conduct and change our ways. Presently, everyone is concerned only with their own selfish interests, and wholly disregard their fellow man . . . Wherever we turn, there is slander and enmity between one another . . . ."

Rabbi Rice did not mince words, speaking openly on such a subject as enmity between family members, families, friends; of discord and disharmony in the community:

> The truth of the matter is, we are not even able to see that we have shortcomings . . . because of our selfishness . . . and this is true to a lesser extent, of the shortcomings of our families, which again we do not discern as readily as the shortcomings of the families of others.

> When a member of a family insults another, we consider it only as trivial and as foolishness, crediting it to childishness, but when one is insulted by a member of another family, it is regarded as a sign of enmity . . . .
>
> Then again, should we not be ashamed of ourselves, when we are but reminded of the law: "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people." We are the most flagrant violators of this law . . . .

At times, when members became embroiled and embittered in disputes, and hostility flared, Rice sought to instill a spirit of understanding, as he did in his sermon on Sabbath, May 9, 1846, when he pleaded:

> Brothers of one religion! Children of one Father! Why bring hatred and controversy into the midst of our large family circle? Why rend asunder the bonds of friendship and brotherhood which have held us together for so many centuries? Let each of us cleanse his heart and forget all insults and injustices. Let each of us sincerely hold out a hand of friendship to an offender . . . Why shouldn't we learn to live in friendship with each other, even with those who differ radically from us in their way of life . . . . We are to fulfill the command to love our fellow man, by respecting him . . . . Let us all unite to perform and fulfill our tasks, in the realization that our unity has enabled us through the ages to continue our existence. Remember the slogan: "United we stand, divided we fall."

Indeed, Jews were brothers and sisters of one religion, but they were not followers of a unified clergy.

Chapter 17
Seven Days Shan't Thou Labor

TO BALTIMORE, as to other cities, amidst the many single youths from Germany, entire families too had emigrated. An early immigrant reminisced of the "good old days":

> The families had all brought with them their old country piety and also their Sabbath lamps with six or seven arms, filled with stearic oil, made cotton wicks by hand, and on Friday evening before beginning the Sabbath would light them, then offer a consecrative prayer and after that would not touch fire.

Still another recalled:

> Our nurse girl's mother was the *Shabbos goya* [a gentile who performed by prearrangement certain labors forbidden to the Jew on his holy days]—a necessary adjunct to every Jewish household at that time. It was her duty to come on the Sabbath, to light the fires and do such chores as the day of rest prohibited the members of a Jewish family from performing.

In business as at home, they observed the Sabbath and Festivals by closing their stores on that holy day:

> It was customary to close all business, and, in the wholesale as well as in the retail district, one could observe notices in the windows and doors of every Jewish business-house with the inscription, "closed on account of Jewish Holiday."

Perhaps the most complete and true to life description of the Sabbath is that sketched by a Bohemian Jew:

> On Friday the whole house is cleaned and set in order, and all the cooking required for the sabbath is done. On the Sabbath evening, everyone in the house changes their clothing, and the male portion of the family repair to the Synagogue. Meanwhile the lamp with six to twelve lights is kindled, a white cloth is spread over the table, and two loaves of bread and a cup of wine set on it. The mother reads the prayers, and everything around is clean, and assumes as it were, a festive look.
>
> When the father and his sons have returned from Synagogue, every child salutes his parents, with the solemn "Good Sabbath," after which the blessing received. "May God let thee be as Menassah and Ephraim" or "May God let thee be as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah" concluding with the blessing prescribed to the priests "may God bless thee and guard thee" etc. The whole family sing the hymn "Shalom Alechem," everyone washes his hands, and takes a seat at the table, the father arises and recites the benediction over the wine and bread, after which the cup is given to the mother and then to every child according to age; the father then breaks the Sabbath bread and gives a piece to everyone in the above order. This is followed by the Sabbath supper, which is generally of an excellent kind. Meat is never missed, and if possible, fish must grace the table. After the meat, several hymns are sung (Semiroth) after which the father loudly speaks the grace.
>
> So every Friday evening is a family feast to the poor, as well as to the rich, the exceptions are very rare. If there is a domestic quarrel in a house, the Sabbath eve brings peace. This is regarded so highly,

that the poor are sent flour, oil, money, and meat on Thursday, to have it for the Sabbath.

Contrasting sharply with those idyllic scenes of family observances of the Sabbath day, were the single youths on peddling trips who spent the day in an isolated farmhouse. They had with them hard boiled eggs, their standard fare, fresh vegetables, or would eat whatever the farmer's wife prepared for her family. Thus did the former peddler, Abraham Kohn, write in his memoirs:

> I met a peddler named Marx . . . an immigrant from Frankenthal in Wurtenberg. Wretched business! This unfortunate man has been driving himself in this miserable trade for three years to furnish a bare living for himself and his family. O God, our Father, consider Thy little band of the house of Israel. Behold how they are compelled to profane Thy holy Torah in pursuit of the daily bread. In three years this poor fellow could observe the Sabbath less than ten times . . . .
>
> They were city peddlers and country peddlers. The former sold notions, cigars, stationery and jewelry; the pack of the latter, as a rule, contained clothing and dry goods. At best, the foot peddler was a beast of burden. He staggered under a heavy load that was never less than forty pounds. . . . At times he walked as much as twenty-five miles a day . . . He could speak little English: he was homesick and footsore. . . .

After saving sufficient funds, some peddlers remained in the wilds, setting up trading posts at the confluence of rivers or elsewhere in the hinterlands; others returned to the city, where they opened a store or even became manufacturers. In the city, most of these former peddlers worshipped in synagogues on festivals and high holy days, though they had become lax in observing the dietary laws and even transacted business on the Sabbaths.

Having neglected religious observances on the road, upon their settling in the city, these youths imitated native-American Jews and earlier arrived German-Jews who disregarded holy days. At first, they locked the front doors of their stores on Sabbaths, while conducting business through the back door.

Rice contrasted the observance of his generation with that of his forebears:

> Instead of as in olden days when people hurried on Friday morning to complete their labors and prepare for the Sabbath, we now have people who, before the Sabbath begins, close the front

doors of their stores, but remain inside their stores late into the night . . . There are others who although they close their stores, violate the Sabbath by entering through the rear door and conducting business there. These constitute the more dangerous class of Sabbath violators, because though they realize their wrongdoing they admit that their passion for wealth is stronger than their loyalty to Judaism.

Instead of as in olden days, when the entire community assembled in the Synagogue on Sabbath eve at sunset, to usher in the Sabbath, we now find few, very few, and you can tell by their faces that they are not too happy to herald the Sabbath day. Their countenances and gestures seem to express the feeling: "Well, that day has arrived again which ruins our business!"

In olden days every Jew knew that whatever he accomplished in life, was a grant of God. It was, therefore, impossible for him to begin his daily activities without first stopping at the House of God. In our days, we appear here only on Sabbaths and not each and every Sabbath, and by our expressions and attitudes manifested here, one gains the impression that we consider our appearance here merely as a favor to God.

Rice sought to impress upon his congregation the seriousness of not observing the Sabbath. His pronouncement against Sabbath violators—that they were not to be honored with a call to the *Torah* to recite the benedictions—flared into a cause celebre. Unable to muster a sufficient number of Sabbath observers present during the reading of the *Torah*, however, Rice was forced to modify his stand. He allowed Sabbath violators to be called to the sacred scroll but said that the congregation might not respond "Amen," customarily said upon hearing the blessings recited.

In wholehearted agreement, Leeser admonished his congregation as well:

> There was a time when in our Synagogue polity, it was deemed important that he who violates the Sabbath, should not be called up to the law which condemns his course. The public violator of the Sabbath was considered ineligible to hold any office of honor, lest his example might prove detrimental to the common weal . . . Its object was for the general good, and doubtless there were many who, finding that they were held in disrepute by their co-religionists, in consequence of their public disregard of God's holy law, amended their conduct and became God-fearing Israelites . . . .

The subject of desecration of the Sabbath was of such concern that Leeser repeated his admonition to the American Jewish community, reminding that

> In days of yore, the violator was publicly stoned to death, and this by a direct decree from Heaven; but now, so far have we retrograded from the principles of our pious ancestry, that instead of shunning the meshes of those who would enthrall us in sin and ruin, we court their society, give them the first honours in the Synagogue, call them up to hear that law recited which anathematizes the Sabbath-violator . . . .

But the new immigrants followed the pattern set by their predecessors who had been observant upon their arrival in America and eventually surrendered such fundamental Jewish observance as the Sabbath. Thus, in 1836, when the mass migration from Bavaria had just begun, Leeser chided his congregation, native Americans, some descendants of Colonial families, for their neglect of the most holy day of the week:

> Lift up your eyes, you who are in the habit of attending in this house to adore the God of your fathers, and see how few young men resort hither, of how many families not even once attends on the Sabbath, how many middle-aged persons are known to follow their pursuits on the holy day, and how many children are put to work on the day which God ordained should be observed by even the stranger and the slave . . . .
>
> And when do many of those persons come? On the usual day of weekly rest? On a festival, when their business might suffer by their absence? No—Only on such days when their worldly affairs cannot be attended to, when the laws of men forbid work to be done; but at other times the world is more loved than God, and the courts of his holy house are left untrodden by their feet . . . .
>
> Why is the house of God empty? Why are the Sabbaths and festivals neglected? . . . It is, because the age has learned to love gain more than the law, riches more than virtue, the perishable more than the everlasting—in a word, love the outward world more than the Almighty God!
>
> The key to the strange conduct of Israelites in the present day . . . [is that] they have persuaded themselves that they must be foremost in the race for tangible advantages . . . Therefore, so many come ostentiously once in a long while to Synagogue, not from any devotional feeling, but to offer something extraordinary to God, to do Him a great favor, by sacrificing a day's labor or enjoyment as an evident and rare act of condescension on their part to ancient usage . . . .

Looking at the empty seats as he spoke to his congregants, Leeser wistfully remarked:

> Only look how pleasant it is for all worshippers, not the ministers only, to see the seats well occupied; to find themselves amidst a crowd of those who all pray in the same manner to the sole universal God whom we adore . . . .

Finally, he called attention to the grave danger to which parents exposed their children by their non-attendance at worship:

> Parents themselves, have no Sabbaths, no season for prayer, no time for national mourning, no festivals, no domestic duties; and they expect nevertheless that their children will, like themselves, remain nominal Jews . . . .

A weakening in the observance of the Sabbath and its disregard by the newcomer Bavarian Jews moved Rice to tell his people on the most sacred Sabbath of the year, *Shabbos Shuvah* [Sabbath of Repentance, the Sabbath between *Rosh ha-Shanah* and *Yom Kippur*], in his sermon preached on September 18, 1841, that "We must begin by observing our Sabbaths and holy days, and then we would be respected by members of other religions. They would not say that we violate our Sabbaths and festivals because of our boundless love for money . . . ."

On Sunday, September 4, 1842, the day preceding *Rosh ha-Shanah*, the Jewish community assembled at the burial ground of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, to recall the souls of their beloved departed. Rice spoke candidly to those who vacillated between observance and non-observance.

> I must describe the religious situation as it exists. I feel like the doctor who answered a call to treat the head of a family and recognized the patient to be deathly ill. The doctor was then confronted by the dilemma, whether to reveal or to conceal the true condition of the father to his family. If he revealed the truth, he might panic them, yet he felt himself duty-bound to advise the family truthfully and prepare them for the worst.
>
> I, too, in my calling as your rabbi, feel duty-bound to speak the truth regardless of the consequences. How foolish you are! If you would but open your eyes and look upon these graves hereabout and realize the transitoriness of life on earth. How can you expect to protect your possessions when you cannot even protect your very selves from destruction. Instead of destroying the Sabbath for the supposed safeguarding of your earthly possessions, you would be far wiser to safeguard the Sabbath and protect your everlasting possessions for all eternity, for the time when your earthly possessions will no longer be of any value to you.

In the following week, on *Yom Kippur*, reverenced as the Sabbath of Sabbaths, Rice continued to exhort his congregants to Sabbath observance. On that sacred day of fast and prayer, attired in white cap, white gown [*kittel*], and prayer shawl, he admonished:

> You have forgotten the grace of God which brought you here, helped you become established in this land where you enjoy far better conditions than you ever had known in your fatherland. In the past, some of you had to arise very early in the morning and work late into the night. Here, by the grace of God, your circumstances have improved. You now arise late in the morning, but never think of visiting the House of God for morning worship. The very fact that our Synagogue is closed from one Sabbath to the next is the clearest evidence of your irresponsible behavior in this land. This change of attitude can only be explained in that upon one's arrival in this land, one thinks that here he is no longer in the presence of the Almighty, and that in this land human destiny lies only in the accumulation of vast riches . . . .
>
> Would that people but remember that one's livelihood is destined by the Eternal, and that without the help of the Almighty nothing can be accomplished . . . But, alas, we are forgetful and always envy the possessions of others and are never satisfied with our own.
>
> Forgetfulness has caused many Israelites, whose number is woefully increasing annually, to transgress the Sabbaths and Holy Days . . . How else can we explain the Jew who is so arrogant as to open his store the very day he recites the Sabbath prayer: "Those who keep the Sabbath and call it a delight, shall rejoice in Thy kingdom . . . ."

In Philadelphia, Leeser complained of the same violations:

> How mortifying it is to a sincere Israelite to be asked by a simple-minded Gentile, how it happens that such persons, who are also Jews, violate the Sabbath . . . or eat the flesh of the swine, shellfish, and other kinds of food which other Jews and the Bible abominate?

So, too, did Isaacs declare a decade earlier, in August, 1844:

> We have gone too far already, there is a moral cowardice pervading our polity sufficient to stunt the growth of every plant of Judaism; we have become unmindful of our high-born destiny, our patriarchs names adorn the head of Christian families, whilst we name our children after modern heroes; we have copied the manners of those among whom we have the happiness to dwell beyond the bounds of prudence; we have no מזוזה [*mezuzah*] on our doors

> lest our neighbours should see them; we lay no תפלין [*tefillin*] on our arms lest our Christian friends should think our religion a mystery; we partake of their viands lest they should think us unsocial; we visit their churches lest they should deem us irreligious . . . .

While Jews in the United States were free to be Jewish in practice; many chose to be Jews by ancestry, as many German Jews had said in their native land, "We are Germans of the Mosaic persuasion." Voluntarianism had replaced authority; it was faith by convenience. Orthodoxy regretted laxity; Reform codified it.

Chapter 18
Synagogue Etiquette

RICE EMPHASIZED to his congregation the necessity of attending synagogue services regularly. He referred to Sabbath worship, for during the week the synagogue was closed. Ever since his arrival in Baltimore, Rice prayed on weekdays at home; in time, a quorum assembled daily, at dawn and dusk. On Sabbaths, they, and the elderly, attended the *Lloyd Street Schul*. These few arrived regularly and on time. But the storekeepers arrived at their leisure, long after worship had begun.

The Ladies' Gallery was filled to overflowing each Sabbath, but like the few businessmen, arrived at all hours after the prayers had begun.

In his sermons, Rice decried their infrequent, irregular attendance, late arrivals and early departures, and their irresponsible behavior whatever hour they arrived. Rice rebuked those who offended the decorum of the worship:

> As soon as we enter this House of God we show that we have forgotten the first rule of the Synagogue: "Know Before Whom You Stand!" Instead of entering the Sanctuary in a spirit of humbleness, most of us enter with an arrogant attitude, as though we were doing the Almighty a favor by leaving our material pursuits behind and once again visiting His abode.

Rice asked his congregants: "When we come to the synagogue, shouldn't we remember that we are in the presence of God, without having to be reminded! Should we, Jews, require special rules and regulations to control our behaviour in the synagogue!"

Disorder was the norm in all the German-Jewish synagogues in America. In Philadelphia, Leeser told his congregation:

> We say it with shame, nevertheless boldly, there are Israelites, both male and female, who seldom or never come in time, who think it a species of sin to be present when prayers commence . . . Another abuse consisted in the evil practice of quitting the synagogue during prayers . . . and we regret to say, that there are not rarely elderly men, who are not irreligious, and ought to know better, who make it a regular practice to run out as soon as *Hapthorah* [readings from the Prophets] begins, as though the reading of the Scriptures were of no interest to them . . . .

The scene of disorder in the synagogue was vividly dramatized by one whose pseudonym I.S.H. meant Hebrew for man.

> I visited one of the oldest congregations in this city [New York], for, notwithstanding that the orthodox are "behind the age" in Europe, yet their meetings are generally conducted with decorum, but think of my surprise and astonishment on may entrance into one here when, instead of finding the members of this pious congregation of worship engaged in prayer, study or meditation, the most of them were congregated round two stoves, situated at one end of the Synagogue near the doors . . . Among these pious loungers around the stoves, the oldest men in the synagogue appeared to be those who were the loudest in their conversation, and the most indecorous in their conduct.
>
> The portion of the "Law" . . . I promised myself some orthodox instruction . . . but instead of a preacher expounding the meaning of the whole or some part of what had been read, or explaining some of the tenets of Jewish orthodoxy, a small boy commenced, in a shrill, half-crying voice, to say something, which one of the pious men standing by the stove (for nobody could distinctly hear him) thought was the portion of the prophets for the day.
>
> Thinking that what I had seen so near the entrance of this holy orthodox synagogue, was not a fair specimen of the pious conduct observed in this non-progressive congregation, I took a seat near the center of the building, a little in advance of the reading desk, for the purpose of having a more full view of these pious orthodox folks, but alas!—man is doomed to disappointment; for, although at the stoves, conduct scarcely decent was observed by the men, think of my surprise when I, who thought that this was a place of Jewish worship, saw, among some of the females, far (if possible) more indecorous conduct than that of the men—in fact, conduct was here permitted that would not have been allowed in the boxes of a two shilling theatre.

A continued talking and laughing was kept up, and one of the *ladies* who, instead of reading all of the prayers in one of those ponderous books which all good and pious dames of the orthodox stamp should, was actually engaged with an opera glass during the whole time of divine orthodox service in making "observations" about the synagogue, and appeared, upon each and every "discovery" to report, Herschell-like [reference to Chief Rabbi Hirschell], the result of her labors to those who sat next her, and they, pious females, in their turn having a hearty laugh over each piece of information conveyed.

After the return of the "Law" to the Ark, most of the male part of the congregation hastily left, not remaining, like good and pious orthodox Jews, to say all their prayers, which the learned and pious of bygone days had prepared for their repetition. The reader now hastily went through a portion of orthodox service in double quick time, when there was some singing,—but oh, such singing,—by the whole of the holy congregation, neither choir nor musical instruments being allowed in this orthodox synagogue,—after which the service closed, when the few men who had remained rushed out, more like a small lot of Mexican cattle in a stampede, than pious men from a place of worship.

The greatest disorders occurred on the high holy days when synagogues were filled to overflowing with worshippers. Some spent the day running in and out, others paid a round of visits to the other synagogues, while still others left early and simply went home. Levity and indecorous conduct were manifested in the house of worship. Worshippers felt the service was too lengthy and openly exhibited uneasiness and inattentiveness.

On the holiest day of the year, Leeser complained that there were those who

. . . esteem themselves as conferring a benefit on the Synagogue by favoring it with their presence. They are often the wealthy and the respectable, who imagine that their humble brothers ought to be obliged to them for countenancing their religion, by taking for the day, the head places, and the best seats, for which they pay liberally, and have, therefore, more prerogatives in the Synagogue. They, too, expect to have then all the honors, and to be called up to the *Sepher* [Torah] . . . .

And how often do you see some of these rare visitors leaving the Synagogue immediately after having shown their Jewish feeling by promises to pay; lounging around as though they had no heart to stay any longer, as though they were wearied with the amount of piety they have already exhibited . . . .

Gentlemen regularly complained of those who chewed tobacco at prayer time and at regular intervals spat into a nearby spitoon. One annoyed worshipper urged

> that those certain articles of convenience which, for elegance-sake, I will term "expectoration boxes" be now and forever expelled from the holy Synagogue. It may be said that they are a necessary nuisance, and cannot be dispensed with. To this I would reply, that we never see them in respectable Christian churches, nor in the ball-room where people asemble for four or five hours, nor at an evening party where people are collected for polite social intercourse. Now, if these foul things are ignored at these places, why can they not be [dispensed with] in the house of God, where nothing should be seen that is likely to inspire disgust or to prove offensive to the human or divine eye? . . . .

But the spitoons at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation were not removed. In fact they were found in every pew, close to every worshipper. They were kept because of the potential revenue they added to the synagogue treasury. When the president noticed a worshipper causing a disturbance during the service by chewing and/or spitting tobacco, as for other offenses, he would send a white ticket to the offender with the sexton or officer. The white ticket was a warning to desist. If the offender did not heed the white warning, a blue ticket followed, which designated a fine of 25 cents. If the offender still persisted, a red ticket raised the fine to 50 cents.

A ticket could be sent to a member for any number of offenses, such as bringing in a child under five years of age, talking to a neighbor, overpowering the *chazzan* in singing, leaving one's seat in the midst of the prayers, or assembling in front of the synagogue.

Members who did not show up at the synagogue but who opened their stores on the Sabbath were fined three dollars. On one occasion, the congregation took Sabbath violators to court for refusing to pay the fine. The press reported that "several Jews were fined $3 each for violating Laws of Moses by opening their stores on Saturday," and observed that "this is the first time that the Christian magistracy has enforced obedience to the Laws of Moses by those professing themselves to be governed by those laws."

It is not known if tickets were meted out to ladies in the gallery. Though the women did not chew and spit, they did chat and chatter constantly, adding immeasurably to the disturbances during worship. Rice addressed them, saying

> As long as the President and Officers of the Congregation find

it necessary to repeatedly remind you to maintain decorum and proper conduct during worship and to request the women to cease the constant disturbances in the Ladies' Gallery, we have the clearest proof that we have lost our self-respect.

The ladies filled the gallery to overflowing. Dressed in all their fineries, they proved to be a major attraction and distraction, especially to the single young men back home after weeks or months of peddling in the back country. They persistently and periodically kept glancing upwards, but not towards heaven.

Leeser, in his synagogue, faced the same problem. He criticized those who craned their necks upward toward the ladies in the gallery, as well as for constantly looking towards the rear wall at the clock that loudly ticked away.

Rice gave the reason for the large female attendance at Sabbath worship:

> As far as our women are concerned, had the Synagogue not been a convenient place for them to show off the newest and latest of fashions in hats and dresses, the Ladies' Galleries would be quite empty most of the time . . . .

Rice castigated them:

> In our times, the present day standards dictate that a Rabbi is not supposed to talk about certain subjects as the duties of Jewish women; such talk being considered contrary to the present day standards of morality and decency. Yet, it is not considered indecent for men and women to exchange glances in the House of God! Let us better turn to our Torah and learn what is the standard of proper decency . . . .

A novel approach to solving disorderly conduct has been conceived but never carried out at *B'nai Jeshurun*, New York. That congregation passed a ruling in 1840 that a hat and cloak must be worn by the *shammash* [sexton], to add dignity to his person and impress worshipers of his station, but he refused to abide by the resolution. "It was only after the hat and cloak were brought and exhibited on the person of the *shamas* before the meeting, that the resolution was rescinded.

On the positive side, Rice bespoke the blessings bestowed upon those who kept the Sabbath holy:

> I can state without hesitation that those who observe the Sabbaths and Festivals lead happier lives than those who do not, for in order to be happy in life one needs a special experience and time

for reflection. There is no question that the proper observance of the Sabbaths and holy days is such an experience. Such period being about true reflection, results in the attainment of truth and understanding of good.

In store for the Sabbath observer were inherent rewards, as Rice taught:

> Let us now learn of the good which our observance of the Sabbath has to offer us. The prophet Isaiah described the reward in store for us, for the keeping of the Sabbath: "If you turn away, from pursuing thy business on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight . . . I will make thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father . . ."
>
> The prophet teaches us not to concern ourselves with business matters on the Sabbath day, for it is a holy day appointed for a higher purpose, to think about the deep, eternal problems in life . . . The book of *Job* tells us, as had the prophet, that only when we fully sanctify the Sabbath, will we find delight in the Lord and attain the highest state in life: "If thou put away unrighteousness far away from thy tents, and lay thy treasures in the dust, and the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks, and the Almighty be thy treasure . . . then surely shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty."

Despite Rice's exhortations, flagrant violations continued. At this time, he wondered whether it was even permitted a Jew to live in the midst of such an environment, in the religious wilds in which he found himself entrapped.

He submitted this query after *Succos* festival, in October, 1846, addressed to "the distinguished Rabbi Seligmann Baer Bamberger, whom he addressed by his Hebrew name "Yitzchok Dov" titling him "my teacher and my master. . . ."

In his letter, Rice told Rabbi Yitzchok Dov that religious conditions in America prompted him to leave for Bavaria. He added that his pious wife assisted him with all her strength to bear up under such trying circumstances. Nonetheless, he confessed, that he had his fill of the wickedness and degradation of his people and had on many previous occasions made plans to depart for Fürth.

In the fall of 1846, Rice revealed that he wept in solitude because he lived among so many Jews who ate forbidden foods, violated the Sabbath in public, even taken non-Jewish wives, and paid no heed to either private or public reprimand. Now he needed the opinion of his colleague and advisor.

Also that fall, Rice wrote to Rabbi Zebi Hirsch Lehren of Amsterdam, of his dissatisfaction and informed him of his intense desire to settle in Israel. A powerful motivation was pious Benjamin Lilienthal, who that year set out from Cincinnati to settle in the Holy Land. Lilienthal stopped in Baltimore, met with Rice who gave him letters of introduction to his colleagues, Rabbi Seligmann Baer Bamberger in Würzburg and Rabbi Lazarus Bergmann in Jerusalem, who emigrated from Zell, Bavaria twelve years earlier.

Rice told Lehren that he is unable to raise the flag of Torah and improve the religious status of his people. Lehren, leader of the cause of the Jews of the Holy Land in Holland and Germany, raising funds in the face of German Reformers who cried "Deutschland Ist Unser Vaterland," replied to Rice on December 7, 1846.

Enthusiastically, Lehren encouraged him to settle in the Land of Israel, asking why he should delay in America, for in the Holy Land he can rise in holiness. He cautioned that prior to embarking, he should pledge not to enter into disputes current amongst the Holy Land communities and not to associate himself in their disputes. He referred in particular to the antagonisms between Askenazi and Sephardi communities over funds allocated to their communities.

Lehren further advised that he carefully check on the trip with knowledgeable persons about the route, the type of ship, the schedule on the high seas, and of delays enroute. Most important, to collect sufficient funds not only for the trip, but to arrive with "hands full of all good." Lastly, should he not wish to raise funds for himself, he should obtain monies for the various parties in the Land of Israel.

Rice, unlike Benjamin Lilienthal who had ample funds and would receive a large sum from sale of his business in Cincinnati, had but meager savings, and would not seek funds on his behalf as Lehren suggested. He therefore did not realize his life's dream, to settle in the Holy Land, amidst pious and observant Jews.

That Rice had made a correct decision is evidenced by the experience of Samuel Hillel Isaacs, a Russian-Polish Jew who came to the United States in 1847. In New York, Isaacs learned the cigar trade and became the proprietor of a small cigar factory, then established himself as a wholesale leaf tobacco merchant. This deeply religious Jew scrimped and saved to realize his life's dream, to settle in Jerusalem. After thirteen years of labor, accompanied by his wife and four children, the Isaacs family sailed to London. This first stop on their trip to the Holy Land was the last. Unexpected financial difficulties prevented their continuing the journey. Sadly they returned to America.

Rice, destined to remain in America, dedicated himself to guiding American Jewry in the paths of authentic Torah-true Judaism.

In 1847, Rice surprised and delighted his congregation by delivering a Sabbath lecture in English, announcing that he would continue to present one English lecture a month, the others being in German, as previously. By coincidence, in Cincinnati, James Koppel Gutheim, a native of Westphalia, Germany, began to preach English sermons that year at *Bene Jeshurun*, a German membership congregation. Thus, Rice and Gutheim became the first ministers to deliver English sermons to German congregations. Leeser predicted that " . . . although the newcomers are themselves unacquainted with the English, still their children will understand in all likelihood no other language."

When Orthodoxy found its speech in America, it could explain its standard and rally by it; it could speak to its American generation.

BOOK V

RABONIM VS. RA-BONIM



"Go West Young Men"



Major Leon Dyer, President Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, 1841-47. Joined the Argonauts in 1849; Elected first president of the First Hebrew Congregation of San Francisco in 1850.

(History of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation by Adolph Guttmacher)



Obverse of Medal presented Leon Dyer, October 1, 1847, upon his departure to the West. In Possession of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation

(Jewish Encyclopedia)

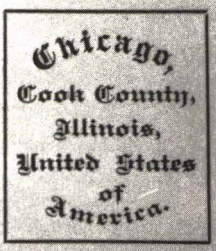


Dila Kohn inspired founding of the first Jewish Congregation in Chicago in 1847.
(History of Kehillath Anshe Maarabh by Bernhard Felsenthal and Herman Eliassof)



Abraham Kohn, Dila's son, pioneer and Jewish leader in Chicago.
(History of Kehillath Anshe Maarabb by Bernhard Felsenthal and Herman Eliassof)

CONVERSION CERTIFICATE.



REV. RABBI KALISH,
REV. I. KUNREUTHER,
REV. SAMUEL STRAUS,
Constituted Rabinate Collegium.

CERTIFICATE OF CONVERTION

TO

HANNAH בת ABRAHAM, THE PATRIARCH.

Know All Men by These Presents, that

Whereas, CAROLINE F. HAMLIN, from Lymaville, Stark County, in the State of Ohio, in the United States of America, personally appeared before us and declared: *That* from her own free will she desires to become a Jewess; *that* she has no earthly advantage nor fear in view, but *that* from inward persuasions of the high and sacred truths of Mosaism, she can find her perfect happiness only in the faith of Israel.

IN REFERENCE THERETO, we have caused an investigation into her principles and found her, according to our knowledge, conscience capable and worthy of convertion. And we hereby certify, that we have this day converted her to Judaism, according to Jewish rites, in the name of

חנה בת אברהם

In witness whereof we hereunto set our hands this 21st August, 5613 A. M., Chicago, Ill.

ISIDOR KALISH, RABBI. [SEAL]
I. KUNREUTHER, [SEAL]
SAMUEL STRAUS, [SEAL]

Conversion Certificate issued by non-Ordained Tribunal, 1851.
(*History of Kebillath Anshe Maarabb* by Bernhard Felsenthal and Herman Eliassof)



Reverend Ignatz Kunreuther, author of Independent *Minhag* Prayer Book for *Kebillath Anshe Maarabh*, Chicago.
(*History of Kebillath Anshe Maarabh* by Bernhard Felsenthal and Herman Eliassof)

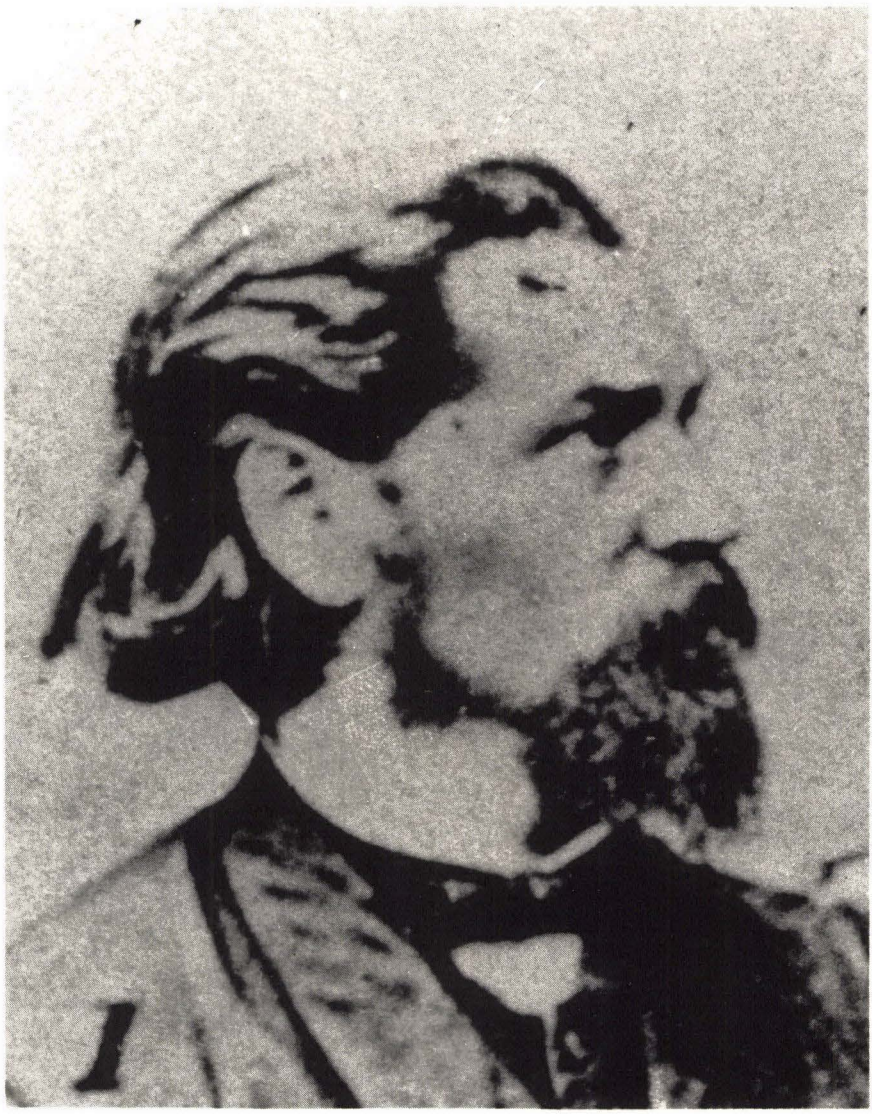


Dr. Isidor Kalisch, moderate Reformer, arrived in America, in 1848.
(Studies in Ancient and Modern Judaism by Isidor Kalisch)



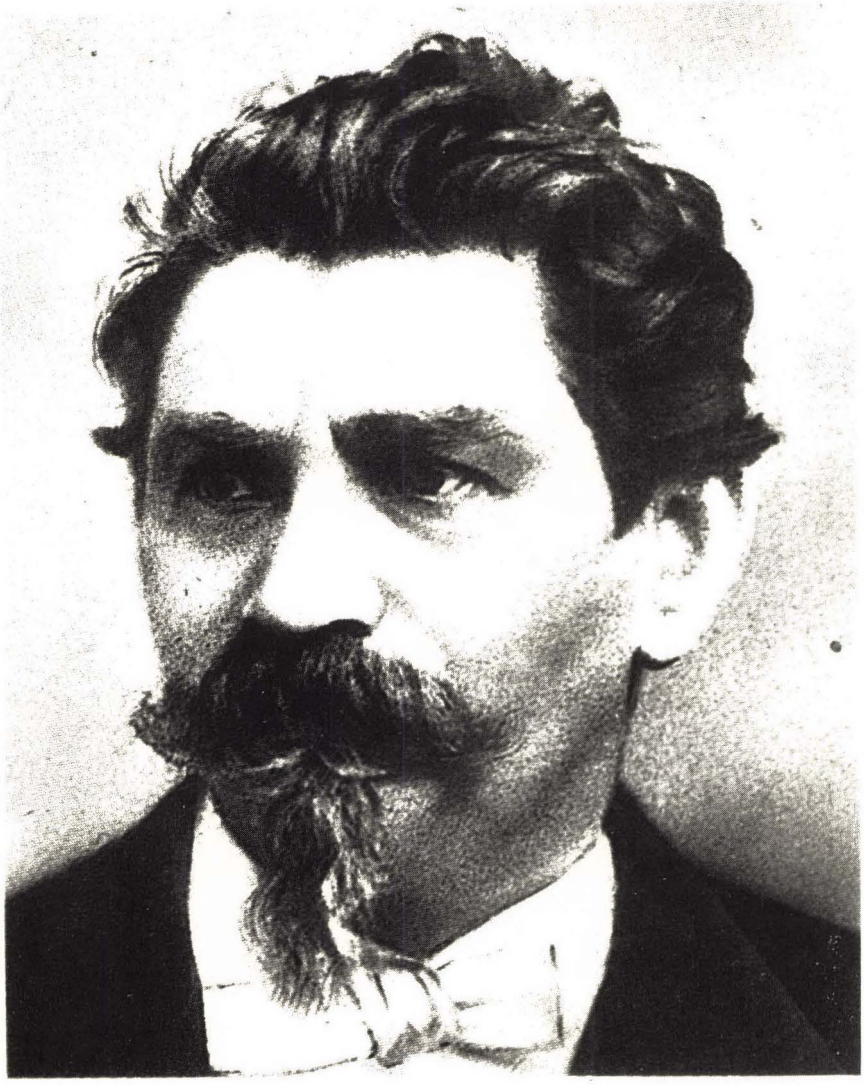
Dr. Henry Hochheimer, moderate Reformer, arrived in America, in 1848.

(History of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation by Adolph Guttmacher)



Dr. Wolf Schlessinger, moderate Reformer, arrived in America, in 1848.

(Author's Private Collection)



Dr. Adolph Huebsch, moderate Reformer, arrived in America, in 1848.

(Author's Private Collection)



Bernhard Illowy: First Orthodox Ordained Rabbi with earned doctorate, arrived in America, in 1848.

(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



Jacob Morris Raphall: Orthodox Ordained, First Rabbi, *B'nai Jeshurun*, New York, 1849.

(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Assocation)



Abraham Rosenfeld, outgoing president Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, 1849, caused Rice's resignation.

(History of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation by Adolph Guttmacher)



Abraham Rosenberg, incoming president Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, 1849, forced Rice's resignation.

(History of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation by Adolph Guttmacher)

קול יעקב

KOUL JACOB

IN

DEFENCE

OF

THE JEWISH RELIGION:

CONTAINING THE

ARGUMENTS

OF

THE REV. C. F. FREY,

ONE OF THE COMMITTEE

OF THE

London Society for the Conversion of the Jews,

AND

ANSWERS THERETO.

BY

JACOB NIKELSBURGER.

....LIVERPOOL, PRINTED....

NEW-YORK:

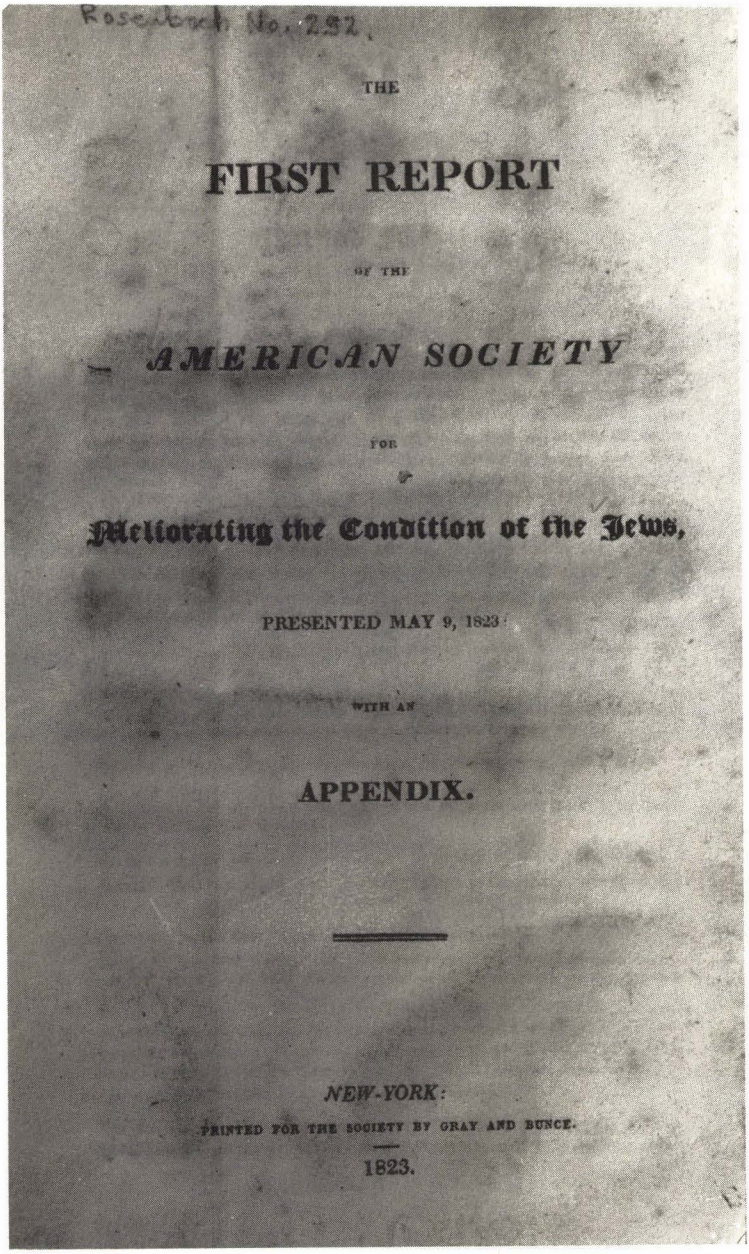
RE-PRINTED FOR JOHN REID, BOOKSELLER,

No. 99 WATER-STREET.

1816.

Publication of the London Missionary Society, 1816; Established branches in Asia, Africa, America.

(Library of the Author)


Rosenbach No. 232.

THE

FIRST REPORT

OF THE

AMERICAN SOCIETY

FOR

Meliorating the Condition of the Jews,

PRESENTED MAY 9, 1823:

WITH AN

APPENDIX.

NEW-YORK:

PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY BY GRAY AND BUNCE.

1823.

First Report, American Missionary Society, New York, 1823; Its tactics condemned by Rice and Leeser in 1849.

(Library of the Author)

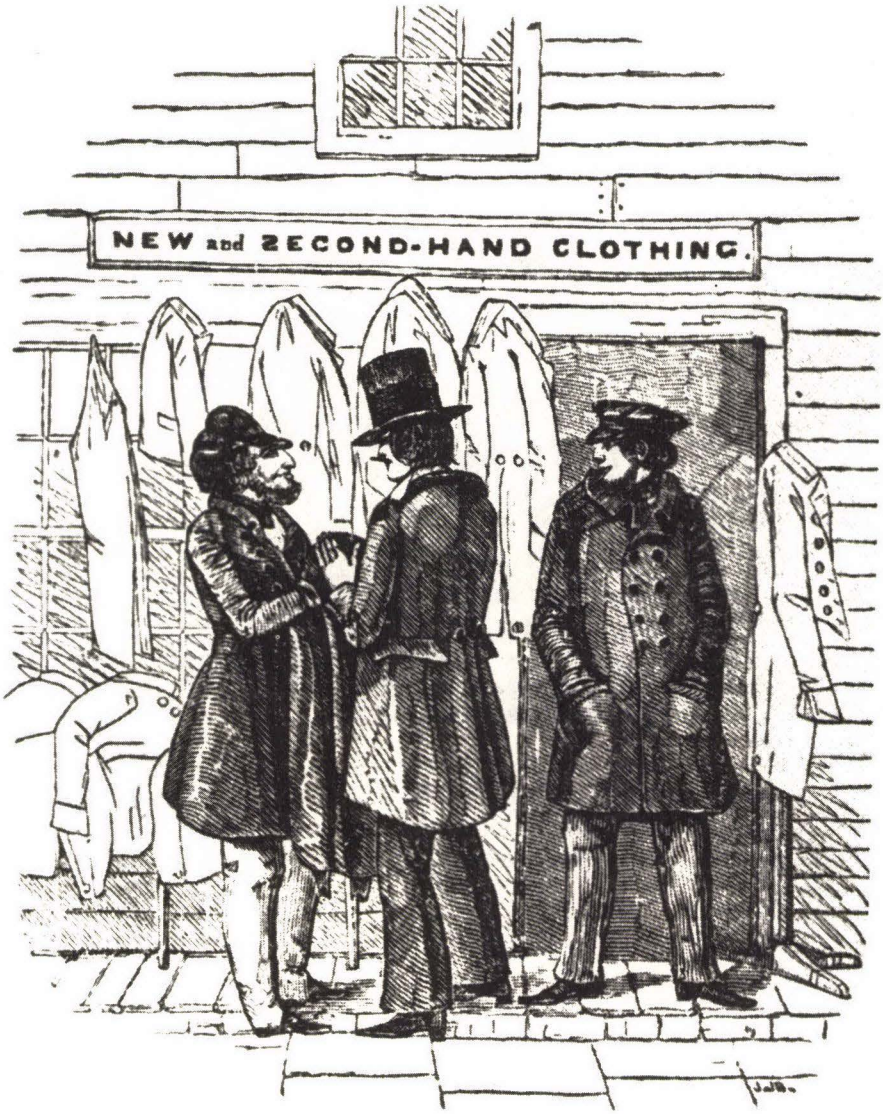


New York City in the 1850s.

(Central Synagogue, 140 *Years,* Stella F. Fuld, Editor)



Chatham Street Auction Houses, New York City, nicknamed "Jerusalem," where Rice obtained merchandise in the 1850's.
(Rise of the Jewish Community of New York by Hyman Grinstein)



German-Jewish proprietor of clothing store, his merchandise obtained from wholesaler or jobber, which originated at Chatham Street, New York.

(The Atlas, 1841)



German-Jewish peddler, supplied by proprietor of clothing store.
(The Atlas, 1842)

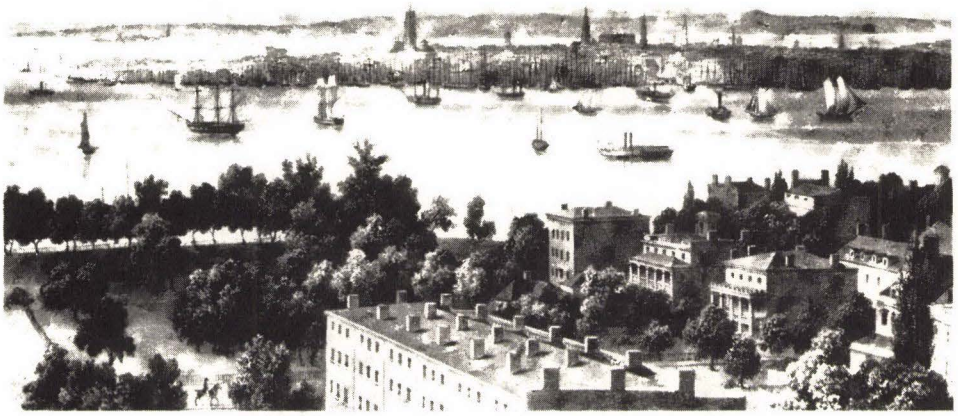


Prussian-Polish Jewish peddler in the 1850's.

(Autobiography of Charles Peters)



Russian Jewish peddler and German Jewish supplier, in the 1850s.
(A Short History of the Jews in the United States by Hyman B. Grinstein)



Manhattan harbor in the 1850's, where Rice came to trade as a merchant.

(Courtesy New York Public Library)

Chapter 19
Reputed Responsa Repulsed

RICE'S ORTHODOXY, he transmitted to his congregation through his sermons and to the nation through his responsa. The latter demonstrated his lenient rulings, but even these as his stringent ones, were opposed by Orthodox reverends and Reform ministers, who lacked Rice's depth of learning and breadth of perception. Rice was a *Rav* in the European tradition, an authority on a level far above the reach of the self-titled *Rabonim* [rabbis] and pseudo-Rabbis [*Ra-bonim*: lit. bad-boys] occupiers of pulpits. Rice's talmudic stature was on a level with the leading rabbis in Germany and Russia.

In the spring of 1847, on April 18th, Reformer Max Lilienthal, minister of the three German synagogues of New York, formed an ecclesiastical tribunal, with himself as head. He appointed as co-members of his *Beth Din*, Dr. Hermann Felsenheld, a teacher in the *Anshe Chesed* school under his charge, Dr. Jacob Kohlmayer [Kohlmeyer], a former rabbinical student, and the increasingly controvertial Isaac Mayer Wise. Upon Wise's arrival in America, he had been recommended to serve as assistant teacher at *Mishkan Israel* [Tabernacle of Israel] New Haven, Connecticut, founded in 1840. In his native Bohemia, Wise had been, according to an acquaintance A. M. Englander, "a schoolteacher in Tachau . . . then he did not dream to become once a traveller for the cause of the destruction of our ancient faith." Within the year, he gained the position of *chazzan* and lecturer at *Beth-El*, Albany, New York.

Each member of the *Beth Din* assumed a specific task. Lilienthal was to prepare a Jewish history for Jewish schools; Felsenheld, a catechism; Kohlmayer, a Hebrew grammar; Wise, a modified prayer book.

Lilienthal bypassed the more prominent Leo Merzbacher, minister of the German Reformed congregation *Emanu-El*, because that year, upon acquiring a Methodist church at 56 Chrystie Street for its services, *Emanu-El* retained the organ and applied the name "temple" to its house of worship for the first time in America. Lilienthal, though a Reformer at heart, as minister of the three Orthodox congregations of New York could not very well associate himself publicly with Merzbacher, described as "the first apostle of Reform Judaism on the continent," though Isaac Harby in 1824, Gustavus Poznanski in 1840 at Charleston, Max Sutro in 1842 at Baltimore, Benjamin Cohen Carillon in 1844 at St. Thomas, had preceded him.

Lilienthal apparently formed the short-lived tribunal for one immediate reason, to retain his rabbical position by justifying his introduction of the Reform ceremony of Confirmation at *Shavuos* services that year, 1847, and in the previous year at his congregation *Anshe Chesed*. The music of the Viennese cantor, Salomon Sulzer, compiled in 1840 and published in the volume *Schir Zion* [Songs of Zion] was sung at this first confirmation ceremony in the United States.

Despite his having the confirmation ceremony sanctioned by his *Beth Din*, the three German-Jewish congregations under Lilienthal's charge objected to this Reform ceremony and unceremoniously dismissed him. Lilienthal thereupon established that year, 1847, the Hebrew Union School as his private boarding school for boys. The students wore a special uniform and in daily conversation spoke in French and German. Its name recalled the union of the three German congregations of New York and drew from the parents affiliated with them who had sided with him. The school's excellence in general studies made the Hebrew Union School the most outstanding in the city and its reputation spread across the land, even attracting young people from as far away as Cincinnati.

The first confirmation ceremony in the Americas, in 1844, introduced at *Beracha* [*W*]*eshalom* at St. Thomas in the West Indies, had resulted in the dismissal of its minister, Dr. Benjamin Cohen Carillon, The congregation at St. Thomas earlier that year welcomed the Reform prayer book of London's West End Synagogue, then requested its officer to send them "a liberal man" to lead them in their worship, but the Reform confirmation was considered too liberal, though advocated by Moderate Reformers; those Reformers who claimed that their innovations accorded with *Talmudic* and rabbinic law.

Carillon, after receiving his severance compensation, succeeded in obtaining the post of *chazzan* at *Shaar Hashamayim* [Gate of Heaven] congregation in Montego Bay, Jamaica, British West Indies, but there too he was soon dismissed "for attempting violent and unauthorized changes in the usual form of worship as current among Portuguese Jews."

An officer of the Jamaican synagogue stated for the record that

> though he [Carillon] had received a sum . . . equal to two thousand four hundred dollars, against his late congregation at St. Thomas, for a breach of contract by dismissing him, he has no right to expect that in Jamaica he will be sustained by the courts if he does anything against the reasonable demands of his constituents, to confine himself to the liturgy and not to destroy it . . . .

Having convened his *Beth Din*, Lilienthal declared Confirmation established a score years earlier in Europe, to be in keeping with tradition:

When the confirmation was first introduced in the Synagogue [about 1827], the so-styled Orthodox part, as usual, began to lament terribly. How dare you administer to the children an oath that they will remain Jews, continue to live in the faith bequeathed by their ancestors; is that not an abuse under the name of God? Are we not under the obligation since the revelation on Sinai? . . .

But there is no higher authority than the *Talmud* itself, which highly approves of this new invention of the modern Rabbis. The *Talmud*, Treatise *Nedarim*, page 8, says, in plain words: "Rabbi Gidel said in the name of Rab: Whence is derived the permission of obliging himself by a renewed oath to keep the law? Because it is said in the *Psalms*: 'I have sworn, and I shall keep it, to observe the statutes of the righteous.' "

Are we not under this obligation of an oath ever since the revelation on Sinai? But this verse proves that we are allowed to renew the oath.

In 1848, Wise, ignoring the dismissals of Carillon and Lilienthal, confirmed eight boys and three girls at *Shavuos* services at his congregation, Bavarian *Beth-El* [House of God] in Albany, New York. A mixed choir of four boys and four girls, and seven men chanted the service. They followed the music of Sulzer's *Schir Zion*; Wise having purchased that volume from Lilienthal.

Justifying the confirmation ceremony to the Orthodox community, Wise explained:

Confirmation according to the sense which we attach to it, is the public declaration of boys, having passed their thirteenth year, and girls, having passed their twelfth year of age, to be prepared and capable of practicing the religious duties which Judaism imposes on them; in connection with a religious act, to solemnize the moment of such an important declaration and impress it on the memory of the youth.

This is an ancient custom in Israel, which was first committed to writing by the author of the *Mishna* in *Perek Aboth*,

בן שלש עשרה למצוה

[a son of thirteen years has reached the age for the fulfillment of the commandments: *Ethics of the Fathers*, Chap. V:24]. Still, strangely enough, it is observed also by those few Israelites who pretend to reject the Rabbinical literature. In former days this religious observance was limited to boys only who, the Sabbath next following their thirteenth birthday, went to the Synagogue, read before the Congregation the current section from the Pentateuch, or the section from the Prophets, were called to hear the reading from the Law, or delivered a short treatise on a talmudical subject.

> Afterwards this was changed into a declaration of the creed and public thanks to the parents. The Reform in this matter, is that both boys and girls are admitted to the confirmation, according to *Exodus* XIX:3 (*vide Rashi* in *loco citat.*), who are previously instructed in the doctrines of Judaism, and that one day of the year is set apart for this solemnity (in most every congregation, the feast of revelation), for all who are of proper age . . . .

Wise's explanation in favor of the confirmation ceremony did not satisfy everyone. Attending the confirmation service as a spectator was the Reverend Julius Katzenberg, resident teacher at the Fulton Street *Beth Jacob* [House of Jacob] congregation. Katzenberg, had opened in the previous year a religious school at *Beth Jacob*, the second congregation in Albany. Katzenberg expressed horror at the Reform ceremony. Subsequently, many parents withdrew their children from "Dr. Wise's school" at Bavarian-rite *Beth-El* and enrolled them in "Reverend Katzenberg's school" at Polish-rite *Beth Jacob*.

Katzenberg turned to Rice for his opinion, and the Baltimore rabbi condemned and denounced the confirmation ceremony, for according to Jewish tradition, each Jew is sworn at Sinai to uphold the Law, even those souls of all generations to come were present and took that oath to observe and hearken unto the commandments, saying: "all that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Confirmation, a second oath, violates the commandment: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

Years afterwards, Wise recalled that his confirmation ceremony "called forth a number of strong articles against me from the pen of the celebrated Rabbi Abraham Reiss, of Baltimore."

Opposition was also forthcoming from Leeser in Philadelphia and Isaacs in New York, both of whom were skeptical about borrowing "strange fruits" from the Christian Protestant tree.

In the previous year, Rice had sensed great danger to Orthodoxy in Lilienthal's establishing his *Beth Din* in order to justify the confirmation ceremony as a stepping stone to all forms of Reform which he would claim were legally established by virtue of his ecclesiastical court. Rice therefore urged American Jewry to elect a Chief Rabbi in order to "prevent the uninitiated from giving crude decisions . . . as a result of which the people do not know whch decision they are to obey." Rice added that he did not seek the post; only that law and order be established in the Jewish congregations of America.

To offset Rice's standing as the authority in ritual matters, Lilienthal questioned his having permitted Caribbean citrons for ritual use on the coming *Sukkos* [Tabernacles] festival, on the grounds that they were

not pure citrons but of a grafted variety, forbidden for ritual use. Though the autumnal holiday would not be celebrated for another half year, arrangements had to be made in the spring for a shipment from the Caribbean islands to arrive in time for the *Sukkos* festival. But Lililenthal's questioning of the acceptability of Caribbean citrons caused many congregations not to place their orders, and no citrons were available that year from the usual sources in the Mediterranean.

At the urging of friends, Rice, who from his own knowledge had judged the Caribbean citrons to be ritually fit, sent his statement for publication in *The Occident*:

Baltimore, 20th April, 5607 (1847)

My dear Sir:

It is not long since, that several of my friends urged me to come out publicly, in your periodical, with my opinion about the *esrogim* [citrons], which are yearly brought from the West Indies to this country. I am so much disinclined to give publicity to any thing of a controversial nature in matters of our religion, that even now I should not trouble you, but that the time is approaching when our yearly communications are made to the West Indies for the due supply of citrons, and I think it therefore my duty, for the sake of our religion, to state that these *esrogim* are *kosher*, and there cannot be found any word against them in all *poskim, rishonim veacharonim* [early and later authorities]. All rumors that were set afloat against the *kashruth* of these *esrogim* are founded in error and misinformation. Now, my dear sir, I do not intend to injure the feeling of any of our learned men. I wish only to promote the unity of Israel in matters of religious observances, and endeavour to effect that our brethren of Israel shall not be wilfully deprived of the observance of *mitzvas luloff* [lit. commandment of the palm; one of four plants in observance of the Tabernacle festival] without just cause.

I remain, very respectfully,
Your obedient servant,
A. Rice

To the Rev. I. Leeser

Rallying to Lilienthal's side, the Orthodox Emanuel [Menachem] Goldsmith of New York and Isaac H. Levy of Cincinnati sent communications to *The Occident*.

Goldsmith stated that Caribbean citrons were of the garden and orchard varieties that had been grafted onto lemon stock and therefore they were ritually unfit. He related that he first inspected Caribbean citrons when in London, where he recognized them as being of grafted

stock. At that time he showed them to the Chief Rabbi Solomon Hirschell, who concurred with him and disqualified their ritual use in England. Goldsmith concluded that no blessing could be recited over Caribbean citrons unless it was established by experts or observant merchants that the citrons were ungrafted and pure.

Isaac H. Levy declared that he had examined over 500 West Indian citrons over the previous seven years and found all of them to have been grafted on lemon stock; they displayed such signs as a thin rind, analogous to that of a lemon. Levy concluded that all Caribbean citrons were grafted and were therefore disqualified for ritual use.

Leeser contested their attestations, stating that he, too, had examined a great number of West Indian citrons and had found all of them to be uniformly thick-skinned and dry, and that after preserving they had maintained all the characteristics and appearances of the imported Italian citron, known as "the preserved citron of commerce." Leeser further stated that he had received information that citrons of the West Indian islands were grown on original stock and had neither the taste, smell, nor appearance of a lemon or an orange. He therefore announced that all Caribbean citrons, whether grown in orchards or wild in the forests, were to be accepted as ritually fit.

Commenting editorially, Leeser stated that Rice, in permitting West Indian citrons, had never implied that grafted citrons were allowed. Rice would have forbidden such citrons, even if they were grown in the Holy Land. Rice only sought to dispel the notion that all Caribbean citrons were grafted, and he permitted the use of ungrafted citrons originating in the West Indian islands.

Unbeknown to those involved in the citron controversy, that two centuries earlier, when American Jewish life had flourished in the islands of the Caribbean, West Indian citrons were ritually used in their synagogues. Thus it was reported in the seventeenth century, at Barbados, British West Indies.

> At the Feast of Tabernacles each autumn the Jews of Barbadoes were able to perambulate round their Synagogues bearing **לולבים** [palm branches], and **אתרוגים** [citrons] of local growth.

To substantiate his opinion permitting West Indian citrons, Rice contacted persons in the Caribbean region and based on their statements affirming the purity of the West Indian citrons he issued a final statement in refutation of the opinions of Reverends Goldsmith and Levy. Therein he revealed that he had obtained first hand information from a number of residents of the West Indies that fruit trees, like non-fruit bearing trees, grew wild in the forests and jungles where none ever came to reap or

plant. "Why then," asked Rice, "should any one graft citrons where they are plentiful and free for the asking?"

Rice examined West Indian citrons and observed that they differed in shape from the Italian citrons, in that some were either rounded or elongated; nonetheless, Caribbean citrons, like those of the Mediterranean, were ritually fit without any qualifications for recitation of the blessings.

Publication of Rice's responsum in *The Occident* enthused one of its readers no end. In a letter to the editor, writing under the pseudonym *Emeth* [Truth], he praised Leeser for giving the subject space and urged him to limit his articles to those of a similar nature, since he deemed all others unworthy of print, stating:

> Undoubtedly, you will admit, that such discussions as those of our highly learned neighbors, Mr. Emanuel Goldsmith, with the Rev. Mr. Rice, of Baltimore . . . are of great consequence, and calculated to enlighten the community of Israel here . . . .

Wise, who would soon reveal his full Reform sentiments. upon reading *Emeth*'s suggestion, could not contain himself and ridiculed:

> [Emeth] . . . wishes a journal of this enlightened age shall fill up its pages with discussions about **אתרוגים מורכבים** [grafted citrons] and lard oil! . . . Are we Chabotnic [Chabad/Lubavitch] Chassidim?

But to the Orthodox community, these subjects were fundamental to a proper observance of Judaism. To Rice, if the ceremonies associated with the citrons on the *Sukkos* festival were suspended for only that one year, in all probability, American Jewry, lax in its general observances of Judaism, would have discontinued the ceremony altogether.

Citrons, in the years ahead, were again obtainable from Corfu and other Mediterranean islands. Though willows were obtained locally, myrtles, like citrons, were imported. Thus in the decade ahead, Simon E. Cohen Noot, *Chazzan* of the Dutch synagogue, *Bnai Israel*, New York, advertised:

הדסים לחג הסכות הבעל [הבא עלינו לטובה]

> that he has received from Europe a very large Myrtle tree, and is willing to dispose of some branches for the ensuing Tabernacle's Feast. . . .

Chapter 20
Piyyutim Pruning

CITRONS WERE not the only stormy issue in the Caribbean in 1847. American warships were steaming past West Indian islands toward Mexico. The Mexican War was on. It had been ten years in coming, since 1836, when Texas revolted against the Mexican government and declared its independence. The Mexican government warned the United States that if Texas were admitted to the Union, Mexico would declare war. Ignoring Mexico's warning, implementing its policy of "manifest destiny," the United States came to the aid of Texans when a dispute broke out over the western boundary of the Texas Republic.

In March, 1847 United States ships landed its forces on Mexican soil and captured Veracruz, to advance toward the Mexican capital. From Baltimore, an all Jewish regiment, the First Hebrew Guards, set forth aboard a ship under the command of Captain Henry Carroll, the only non-Jew in the company.

Major Leon Dyer resigned the presidency of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, a post he had held for six years in order to board a warship bound for the Lone Star State, where the action was being readied at San Jacinto and the Alamo. On the eve of his departure, the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, joined by the United Hebrew Assistance Society [later renamed the Hebrew Benevolent Society], presented Dyer with a silver medal in recognition and grateful appreciation of his leadership, at a banquet held in his honor.

Dyer's traits, devotion to country and dedication to the synagogue were inherited from his illustrious ancestors: Sir Edward Dyer, commander of the British fleet in the reign of Queen Bess [Elizabeth I] to defeat the Spanish Armada, launched by Philip II in an attempt to conquer England, and Gershom ben Judah *Me'or Ha-Golah* (known as Rabbenu Gershom), one of the first great talmudic scholars of Germany.

Upon Dyer's departure from Baltimore, Abraham Rosenfeld assumed the presidency of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. It was then that the Board of Directors discontinued auctioning the *mitzvos* [synagogal honors], which had unduly prolonged the worship and contributed to constant disturbances, as stated in the following complaint:

> It is notorious that in all the German congregations . . . the custom of selling the *mitzvoth* . . . (and also of) the making of offer-

> ings over the *Sepher* [Scroll] by which the service is constantly interrupted and unduly prolonged . . . the Sabbath morning service (drawn out to a preposterous length by an infinitude of *Misheberachs*) [blessings honoring the donor for his specified contribution to the synagogue], probably very profitable to the treasury, but decidedly destructive of true devotional feelings . . . .

To correct this situation, the officers set a fixed donation for each honor or *mitzvah* as it was called, to replace the auctioning of honors with its attendant unruliness. Rice welcomed this change since he had formerly criticized those worshippers who were "prompted to attend by dint of their curiosity, to see who will buy the honors, who will obtain an individual blessing. If you were to ask these curiosity seekers what they accomplish by attending divine worship, they would be at a loss to answer."

Aside from the selling of synagogal honors which prolonged the service, there were the recitation of *piyyutim* added on to the prayers.

Piyyutim [poetical hymns] as they were called by Occidental Jewry, *Shirim* [songs] by Oriental Jews, authored by pious, inspired individuals were selected over the centuries by cantorial preference to enrich and embellish the worship with their meter and rhyme. Recited or chanted, by their exultant and exuberant praises of the Creator through history and hortatory, scholarly presentation of legalistic [halachah] or homiletical [aggada] teachings, these aesthetic *piyyutim* lovingly enhanced prayer. In time, those *piyyutim* regularly preferred by the cantor assumed the aura of local custom—*Minhag*; each congregation having its own *Minhag*.

Leeser described those literary poetical compositions as being

> poetical pieces of comparatively modern origin adopted by the various congregations, which vary with almost every division of country, and are more or less extensive, often according to the fancy of particular cities, such as Frankfort and Amsterdam.

Most *piyyutim* were introduced in that which had been designated as *tefilah* [prayer]: the *amidah* [lit. standing: the silent prayer repeated aloud by the Reader]. The liturgical hymns introduced in the blessing of the *amidah*, chanted by the Reader in his repetition, were called *Kerovos* given the French suffix, became *Kerovaz*, later interpreted to be the acronym of Psalm 118:15 [קרו"בץ being the acronym of

קול רנה וישועה באהלי צדיקים

"The voice of joy and exultation in the tents of the righteous"].

Piyyutim likewise were introduced prefatory to *amidah*, in blessings of the *Shma* [affirming the unity of God], the obligatory biblical reading. In the evening worship these liturgical hymns were called *Ma'aravot*

[also *ma'arivos* or *Ma'aravim*, from *erev* meaning evening]; in the morning worship, were classified collectively *yotzros* [the blessing *yotzer or,* Hebr: Creator of Light].

These liturgical compositions originated over a millenia ago in Palestine, and spread to Babylonia. Persecution drove the Jews from Babylon to North Africa and Iberia, and from Palestine to Italy and Central Europe. In the medieval period, liturgical poetry flourished during the golden age of Jews in the Moslem lands, particularly in Spain. So prolific were the Spanish singers that almost every city and town had its own ritual. Over three thousand were recorded.

Introducing *piyyutim* into the blessings of the prayers was decried by such luminaries as Maimonides, Joseph Caro, Elijah ben Solomon Zalman, the "Vilna Gaon," because they caused a break in the blessings of the *amidah* and preceding blessings, and as such these interpolations being unlawful interruptions. In favor of the introduction of liturgical hymns were such personalities as Rabenu Gershom ben Judah Me'or ha-Golah [Light of the Exile], Rabenu Solomon ben Isaac [acronym, Rashi] and his grandson, Rabbi Jacob Tam, regarded their recitation not only permissible, but even meritorious. By the fourteenth century, the latter view prevailed in every European, African, and Asian synagogue.

The invention of printing had a two-fold effect on the number of *piyyutim*. On the one hand, printers weeded out mistakes of former copyists and thereby helped standardize the *piyyutim*. On the other hand, numerous invocations and hymns were added.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when Spanish and Portuguese Jewry were driven out of Iberia by the forces of the Inquisition, they were welcomed in the Ottoman Empire which encompassed Palestine and reached to the borders of Austria and Russia. A few Spanish and Portuguese Jews settled even beyond the borders of the Turks, in Poland.

The Jews of Eastern Europe, in Ottoman Hungary and across the border in Poland, had become acquainted with the lives of the *Cabbalists* of Safed who originated in Spain, and their Spanish-rite *Minhag Sefarad*, which had comparatively few *piyyutim* in their order of prayers.

Having suffered from severe hardships and pogroms, these Eastern European Jews within and beyond the borders of the Ottoman Empire, became inspirited with the mysticism of the rabbis of Safed, Palestine, in the hinterland of the Empire.

The *Sephardic* rabbis chose Safed, in Ottoman Palestine, to immerse in the study of *kabbalah* [mystic lore, metaphysics]. One of these, kabalist Solomon ha-Levi Alkabetz settled in Ottoman Turkey early in the sixteenth century. In Safed, Alkabetz composed the *piyyut L'cho Dodi* [Come, my beloved Israel]; his rhymed and acrostic song of joyous

welcome to the Sabbath became recited every Friday eve in Hungary and Poland as in Safed, and universally in synagogues the world over.

Among the best known liturgical hymns of the *Sephardim* that became part of the daily worship in synagogues the world over, is *Adon Olam* [Eternal Lord], praise of God and faith in His protection. Its authorship is attributed to Solomon Ibn Gabirol, the poet philosopher who lived in Spain in the eleventh century. Its universal place in the prayer book is shared by *Yigdal* [Magnified], ascribed to Daniel ben Juda, who lived in Rome in the fourteenth century. This *piyyut* presents the thirteen Articles of Faith, articulated by Maimonides.

Though *Sephardim* introduced these and other *piyyutim*, their prayer books were relatively free of the preponderance of poetical hymns which proliferated in those of the *Ashkenazim*.

Perhaps more than any other sixteenth century Cabbalist, Rabbi Isaac Luria influenced recitation of numerous additional *piyyutim* in the *Ashkenazic* prayer book.

Legendary Luria, known as the Ari, acronym of *ha'elohi rabbi yitzhok* [the divine rabbi Isaac], stressed the importance of preparation of the mind and wholehearted devotion prior to the utterance of prayer. These preliminary hymns and cabbalistic invocations, in addition to those surrounding the basic prayers exceedingly lengthened the worship. Luria established a rite called *Nusach Ari* [Order of Ari].

In American synagogues, recitation of these many *piyyutim*, particularly during festivals, caused great disturbances between worshippers who hailed from different European countries; Polish versus German; Dutch versus Bohemian; English versus Austrian. Not to mention impatient merchants who wanted to return to their places of business and instead of arguing, would either leave early or leave altogether and turn to Reform.

Rice opposed the recitation of many *piyyutim* recited at the *Lloyd Street Schul* as he had at the *Harrison Street Schul*, but stubbornly the officers continued them despite his urging their discontinuation.

Rice excoriated the worshippers:

> That it is contradictory and ridiculous for you to be indignant in the Synagogue when a *piyyut* is not recited from the festival prayer book, while outside of the Synagogue, you sacrifice Judaism for the sake of profit and pleasure.

In synagogues of Baltimore, as elsewhere, *piyyutim* only served to disturb and disrupt the festival worship. A. Ansell, cantor at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation since before the arrival of Rice, resigned and

accepted a call to chant the prayers, read the Torah, blow the *Shofar* at the year old *Beth El* Synagogue of Buffalo, New York in the New Year 5708 [1848].

Though American synagogues generally used the standardized Roedelheim prayer book, which standardized the *piyyutim*, disturbances occurred during Sabbath worship, and especially during festival worship because of their lengthiness which unduly prolonged the service; moreover no one, except the most learned, understood the classical Hebrew in which the *piyyutim* of early France and Germany [*Ashkenaz*] had been written.

Thus, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, foremost exponent of Orthodoxy in Germany in the nineteenth century, bemoaned ruefully:

> We must envy the age when Jacob's heritage was the common possession of the community of Jacob, and when its spirit infused all its adherents to such an extent that the *paitan* [poet] could assume that in the minds of his readers there was a knowledge of at least the main facts and halachic concepts, as well as the most important of the sayings of the *chachamim* [wise men], on which the *paitan* drew for content.

At the *Harrison Street Schul* of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, unrest and dissention amongst the worshippers peaked in 1844. Rabbi Rice then took into account the value of the *piyyutim* which had been composed by *g'dolei yisroel* [Sages of Israel] presented the principles of the *Torah sh'bal Peh* [Unwritten Law] in observance of Passover and holy days, he considered them in light of the lack of understanding of the worshippers of his day and age.

On the Sabbath that preceded the Passover of that year, Rice devoted his sermon to this sensitive subject:

> The holiday prayer book contains *piyyutim* in addition to the established prayers. These may be divided into two categories: The first includes those composed about a thousand years ago when the Hebrew language flourished and almost every Jew understood the sacred tongue. These were generally written in a light, simple style, so that even one who understood but little of the sacred Hebrew tongue could grasp its meaning. These *piyyutim*, included in our High Holy Day prayer book, should be retained along with our established prayers.
>
> The second [category] consists of *piyyutim* introduced into the Festival prayer book, and those of specially designated Sabbaths. These *piyyutim* were written in an uncommon, flowery language, which most people, in our day, no longer understand. The greater number of these *piyyutim* have as their theme the omnipotence of

God, while others are dedicated to a particular aspect of the day being observed, as for example, in the Passover [sic! This *Piyyut* is recited *Shabbos Hagadol* "Great Sabbath" before Passover at the *Shacharis* "morning" service] preceding the *Musaf* [additional] service, one *piyyut* contains the rules of the ritual preparation of vessels for the Passover festival, as its theme.

Such *piyyutim* as this one, which are preserved in our festival prayer book, need not be retained. I am convinced that the composers of these *piyyutim* never intended that they should be recited in times as these when it is oftimes difficult to count ten people in an entire community who even understand a portion of them.

Of course it is understood that though these *piyyutim* need not be recited, all rabbinically ordained prayers must be recited and in the Hebrew tongue . . . .

Following Rice's ruling, the discontinuance of certain *piyyutim* during the first days of Passover evoked such fury among the members that Rice found it necessary to calm them as in previous years when they did recite all the *piyyutim*. In his sermon delivered on the intermediate Sabbath of Passover, April 26, 1845, when the controversy first flared over the continued recitation of *piyyutim*, Rice explained his suggestion to discontinue certain ones:

Believe me! God who penetrates into the innermost recesses of the heart knows that I adamantly opposed the recitation of festival *piyyutim* of our holiday worship, not because I sought to offend my opponents, and gain the upper hand, but only to exclude from our worship that which was never a part of it, although considered of utmost importance by those very persons who neglect to observe the most important principles of our religion.

I am willing now to explain my position to all of you, in the best interests of our religion, which I have at heart. It was our great intellect, [Abraham] Ibn Ezra, who over nine hundred years ago, voiced the strongest opposition to the recitation of *piyyutim* in his day, the very opposition I now voice. Certainly, no one can dispute the scholarship of Ibn Ezra! He was held in the highest esteem by Maimonides, greatest of our scholars. Neither can anyone argue that Ibn Ezra wrote his opposition [of the recitation of *piyyutim*] for personal advantage, as for monetary gain, since his opinions and works were only printed after his death . . . .

Proper deportment in the synagogue was wanting. Recitation of the *piyyutim* distracted and disturbed synagogue devotion on festivals. Reformers sought to remedy the problem not only by eliminating them but by introducing liturgical forms borrowed from the church.

The break with Orthodoxy was hastened because of the reformers who criticized them as being "stabile [sic!] Orthodox Jews . . . all they wish for, is to repeat the same *Piyyutim* in the same order exactly, as their fathers did."

To those who recommended Reforming the worship, ostensibly and solely for the sake of order and decorum, Rice countered:

> Very often we hear the claim that the Sabbath is no longer kept because of our synagogue worship which must be Reformed. In truth, it is not our worship, but these people who need to be Reformed. Instead of turning your hearts and minds towards heaven during prayer, you turn them elsewhere; your hearts do not know what your mouths are saying. Were you to improve your behavior during worship, you would then truly enjoy the prayers. Were you to conduct the services according to the rules of the *Shulchan Aruch*, our Law Guide, no Reform of the worship would then be sought.

Rice sought to restore the inherent Jewish orderliness in the synagogue for religious law forbade even speaking during worship. He knew that Reform was not needed; only to regain the old grandeur.

Chapter 21
"Rabbis" Arrive in '48

A GERMAN-JEW who visited the United States, in the mid-19th century writing under the title *Deutsch-Amerikanische Skizzen fure juedische Auswanderer und Nichtaus-wanderer* [German-American Sketches for Emigrating and Non-Emigrating Jews], presented in his pamphlet, revelations of "Reverends":

> Remnants of offbeat student days at German universities have become doctors, preachers and rabbis in America. They manufacture good luck charms, swindle, deceive, own slaves. Some go into the business of making clothing for Catholic priests, or ignore poor Jews but cater to the rich. Their phony excuse is that they're merely emulating non-Jews. But the American priest, with real American diligence, gives several sermons, all read, each Sunday, leads services, teaches Bible class and explicates a prophetic text at evening prayer meeting . . .

The report added to the various activities of the "Reverends," the function of "ritual slaughterer":

> Wealthy Jewish farmers or plantation owners frequently move east from the south or far west. They lived for years as non-Jews and married Christian women, whom they now want accepted into the Jewish fold. One rabbi-reverend was agreeable. Maybe this was American, although certainly not Jewish. But contrary to both Jewish and American ways, he asked for a great deal of money for the religious instruction. Thanks to American free competition, an out-of-state rabbi-reverend, who by now has quite a clientele, charged much less and [got their business]. This despeicable [sic] activity is so transparent. People jokingly interchange "reverend" with *Rebberent* [rabbi plus rent], i.e., "rabbi-rent." Otherwise they generally look the other way. . . .

Into the American Jewish communities where religious chaos prevailed, many ignorant persons who represented themselves as scholars, caused people to disregard and disdain Torah observances. In 1848, a renewed surge of such pseudo-scholars arrived, adding to the confused state. They came along with the tremendous increase in immigration to America. This resulted from the failure of the revolutions of 1848 against oppressive regimes in Prussia, Austria, and Hungary.

The unrest of 1848 was no simple struggle of the have-nots against the haves. The revolutionists demanded not only a more equitable distribution of wealth and land but also civil rights, free speech, enfranchisement, limits over the power of the Church, wider education, and equitable taxation. The German nationalists fought for unification of Germany and the abolition of the many independent principalities and dukedoms. Those in Italy wanted to end the oppressive temporal power of the Pope, while in Hungary they fought for separation from Austria, and in Poland for restoration of constitutional rights denied by the Russian conqueror for almost a score years.

In Bavaria, conditions were far worse after the uprising than before. In Würzburg, Jewish assemblages were suppressed altogether, and a young Jew was fined for accepting the presidency of a charitable institution without prior consent of the city authorities.

Conditions deteriorated considerably in Central Europe, especially in the German states. Violent repercussions struck the Jew in the Prussian occupied duchy of Posen. Over 70,000 Posen Jews lived amidst 700,000 hostile Poles, who were promised Jewish property as bait to fight for the restoration of their country's independence from Prussia. Upon the failure of the revolt, having been denied their loot, the pogroms began. A great number of the anti-semitic Poles attacked. Over four thousand Jews of Posen lost their homes and were plundered of all their posses-

sions. Thousands were slain in the streets of Cracow [Krakow], Galicia, and Kasimir [Kazimierz], Russian-Poland; violently assaulted in Moravia, Bohemia, and Slovakia, Northern Hungary.

These "German" Jews, in the main Poseners, included those from the areas on the border between the eastern and western European communities of Silesia, Bohemia, and Slovakia. In addition to these immigrants from the "German" countries of central Europe, Jews began to arrive from eastern Europe, from Russia, as far north as the Baltic Sea and south to the Black Sea; among them Polish and Galician Jews.

America beckoned. The discovery of gold in California, in 1848, served as a magnate to many suffering Central European Jews, as well as those who had not been impoverished during the pogroms. The mass migration of Polish Jews which streamed into America since the early 1840s, poured in ever greater numbers in the late 1840s; they came from Germany and Poland, from Prussia and Prussian-Poland, mostly from the latter country. The greatest number from the duchy of Posen in northwestern Poland, lesser numbers from the kingdom of Poland in Czarist Russia, and would continue throughout the 1850s until the Civil War interrupted travel on the high seas.

By the fall of 1848, many new German-rite congregations had formed in cities throughout the United States; among them, *Chevra B'nai Jacob* [Literally "Association of the Sons of Jacob" or as they translated it "House of Jacob"] in Norfolk, Virginia. This congregation commissioned Aaron L. Goldsmith, a former Baltimore resident, to go there to purchase a *Torah* but none were available. Supply could not meet the demand of scores of newly formed synagogues.

Synagogue conditions in Chicago were no different, as described by Abraham Kohn, a former peddler who became a successful merchant. He related how his mother, Dila, had inspired the founding of Congregation of the Men of the West—*Kehilath Anshe Mayriv*, generally spelled by the officers *Kehillath Anshe Maarabh*, which they considered the correct paraphrase of the Hebrew. The members called this first synagogue in the city by its popular acronym—KAM.

There had been no *shochet* in the community, and Dila, a widow, had subsisted on a vegetable diet, eating only bread she baked, potatoes, eggs, and vegetables, since her arrival in Chicago in 1847. Abraham Kohn traveled all the way to New York to obtain the services of a *shochet* and he returned with Reverend Ignatz Kunreuther, who would also serve as *chazzan* of KAM, the synagogue Kohn had founded. He may have been related to a Rabbi Kunreuther of Burgebrach, whose father was rabbi of Gelnhausen, near Frankfort-am-mein, who emigrated to America in 1859.

One Orthodox ordained rabbi among the "forty-eighters" was Dr.

Bernhard Illowy, who fled Bohemia because of the authorities' opposition to his pro-revolutionary addresses. Illowy was the first rabbi in America to possess both ordination and a doctoral university degree; another from London, a 49er, the Orthodox ordained rabbi Henry Abraham Henry, who ministered in Cincinnati, New York and San Francisco.

The Eastern European rabbis who arrived in America in 1848, included Abraham Joseph Ash [Asch] of White Russia, and Judah Middleman of Russian Poland.

After the uprisings were suppressed, the autocratic governments, more firmly entrenched than before, favored conservative Orthodoxy in Judaism and restricted Reform. Reform temples were required to reinstate the traditional order of prayer, reintroduce the *almemar* [middle pulpit], abolish the choir and wear a *kittel* on the Day of Atonement. Only those rabbis who were Orthodox and who shaved with scissors rather than razors were admitted to office. In Mecklenburg, Prussia, marriage could only be solemnized by appointees of the Orthodox chief rabbi.

In Galicia, Bohemian Abraham Kohn, the Reform Rabbi who dedicated a Temple edifice in Lemberg, Galicia, four years earlier, was martyred there in 1848. Encouraged by the lawless conditions prevailing that year, a man hired by a fanatical clique entered Kohn's kitchen and poisoned his dinner. He died the following day, on September 7. The lives of Reformers were endangered by conservative extremists from within and without.

In 1848, a number of Jews who fled oppression were middle-class intellectuals, who now formed a larger proportion of immigrants to America than formerly. They harbored a predisposition toward Reform in religion as in government. Consequently, while the German government suppressed the Reform movement in Judaism after the 1848 revolution, it flourished in free America, where the First Amendment reinforced Jefferson's wall of separation between church and state, keeping governmental interference away from religion. Without government support of an office of Chief Rabbi, Orthodoxy lacked the power to thwart the threat of Reform.

Of the professionals and military men who fled to America in 1848, because of their participation in the revolutions that rocked central Europe that year, there were many who aspired to become leaders of Reform congregations, among them the "forty-eighters": Adolph Huebsch, a student; Isidor Kalisch, a journalist; Maurice [Moritz] Mayer, a lawyer; Benjamin Szold, a student; Henry Hochheimer, a soldier; and Julius Eckman, ordained by the Reform leader, Leopold Zunz. The latter two settled in Baltimore.

"Rabbi" Wolf Schlesinger, arrested for preaching revolutionary doctrine, escaped to America but as soon as conditions permitted returned to his position in Sulzbach, Bavaria.

Wise, who harbored the ambition to establish Reform not only in Albany but in cities throughout the United States, felt encouraged in 1848 by the sudden influx of Reformers, "forty-eighters" who fled from Germany and Austria where they had openly espoused the cause of revolutionary movements which were defeated by the reactionary regimes. They were now poised in America, to espouse the revolutionary cause of Reform in Judaism against the Orthodox whom they regarded as reactionary remnants of the Old World.

These Reform leaders, opposed "Rabbinism." They opposed the teachings of the rabbis of the *Talmud*, of the rabbis of the *Gaonic* period, of the subsequent rabbis whose responsa are still being issued. The Reformers assiduously avoided the title of "Rabbi," choosing instead such titles as "Reverend," "Doctor," or "Reverend Doctor." These titles suited Reform leaders who did not possess rabbinic ordination but had graduated from a university. Some who had only attended some classes at a university, nonetheless assumed the title of Doctor.

A major Reform thrust took place that fall. The Right Reverend Dr. Wise issued a call to the ministers and congregational leaders to convene for the purpose of selecting a *Beth Din* to deal with the problems confronting American Jewry. In doing so, Wise sought a vantage point from which he could move congregations into Reform. Seizing upon a problem that concerned the entire community, that of unqualified ministers who performed marriage and divorce ceremonies, Wise urged that a conference be convened to deal with this issue, and suggested that congregational leaders be invited to attend.

Leeser first attempted to organize a union of congregations seven years earlier, in 1841 "which was to supervise all spiritual aspects of each congregation's life . . . ." *Sephardic Shearith Israel*, then the most powerful congregation in the United States, fearing being outnumbered by the increasing *Ashkenazic* congregations, refused to join. Reform *Beth Elohim* of Charleston objected to any authoritative Orthodox body, opposed such a union, and the project failed.

Lilienthal in 1848 lent support to Wise's call for a conference. He pointed out that "because here the parties come from different localities, no one knows them and forbidden marriages could easily take place."

Emphasis was placed upon the sad plight of the *Agunah* ["chained woman"]. There were many women who could not remarry because they were chained to their husbands, who had not issued them a properly

executed *get* [Jewish Divorce], or, the whereabouts of their husbands was unknown.

Should an *agunah* have a child from a Jew, not her husband, it would be regarded a *mamzer* [illegitimate],for despite her having a civil divorce, she is regarded a married woman by *halachah* [adopted opinion; Jewish law]. The woman is disadvantaged, for *halachah* does not punish a husband's extra-marital affairs as adultry. If he remarries without a *get*, his children are not tainted as bastards. But a woman without a *get*, or one improperly rendered, remained a marriage prisoner. Only if an *Agunah* had a child from a non-Jew, would the child be deemed a Jew and not a *mamzer*.

Wise further raised the issue of the widow who is *z'kukah* [tied]. In Jewish law, the brother-in-law of a childless widow is obligated to marry her in a "levirate marriage." This protected widows, whose in-laws had no obligation to support her unless she had a child. However, if the brother-in-law refused to marry her, he then released the widow in an alternate ceremony analogous to divorce. Since widows could not remarry until the ceremony had been performed, Wise sought to abolish the ceremony and thereby establish a basis to excise by Reform, not only that commandment, but all biblical commandments.

Wise demanded a remedy be effected through his proposed rabbinic conference. He further called to public attention that there were also incompetent *shochetim*, which caused violations of the dietary regulations. This deplorable condition, and many more would be remedied by appointment of an ecclesiastical tribunal at the conference.

There were of course *shochetim* who were properly credentialed and whose qualifications were updated by Rabbi Rice. The indispensibility of Rabbi Rice to the Orthodox community on a national level manifested itself especially in the realm of *kashrus*. Typical is the Philadelphia congregation *Mickve Israel*, which in the spring of 1848 sought a qualified *shochet*.

Daniel Solis, who had first applied for the post of *shochet* in 1829, reapplied in 1848. Illustrative of his periodic re-examinations Lewis Allen, president of *Mickve Israel*, wrote in August, 1836 to Reverend Joseph B. Seixas, minister, and Naphtali Phillips, President of *Shearith Israel*, New York, to select a third person and examine Daniel Solis. Allen added, "I don't wish to trouble Mr. Poznanski."

Solis then appeared before the committee, consisting of Seixas, Phillips and Joseph Samuels. They checked Solis' knives, one old and two new, quizzed him pertaining the laws. They returned a certificate affirming that they had examined Solis "on the knife & in the dinim [laws] rela-

tive to the *Scheta* & *Bedeka* [slaughering and inspection of lungs, etc.], & find him perfect therein." They added a warning, that since he was a young man, he should frequently review the laws. Actually, regular review is required of all *shochtim*.

The next examination recorded of Daniel Solis took place in 1848. *Mickve Israel* congregation again learned with satisfaction that Daniel Solis, ritual slaughterer for *Mickve Israel* congregation under the ministry of Leeser [since 1829], had been tested and approved by Rabbi Rice. Solis informed *Mickve Israel* congregation of Rice's approval in his letter dated October, 1848:

> To the President & Members
> of K. K. M. I. [*Kahal Kadosh* (Holy
> Congregation) *Mickve Israel*]
>
> Gentm.
>
> Having just passed thro' a re-examination by the Rev. A. Rice of Baltimore & received a Certificate of my capacity from him, & after having served the congregation for upwards of sixteen years in the capacity of Shochet, I now offer myself as candidate for re-election.
>
> Yours Very Respy
> D. Solis
>
> Philad Apl 10/48

In the following year, Daniel Solis, congregational *shochet* since 1829, in the year Leeser's ministry began, resigned in 1849. in the year before Leeser's resignation. Philip Homberg, seeking the vacated post, wrote to the officers of *Mickve Israel* on March 21, 1849, stating Rice's approbation of his application:

> I respectfully take leave to offer myself [as] a candidate for the situation of *Schochet* and *Bodek* of your congregation, and enclose a letter from the Revd Abraham Rice of Baltimore directed to your worthy President, touching my fitness for the office I now solicit . . . . I have likewise my original *kabalah* from the Rab [Rabbi] of the City of Munster in Westphalia . . . .

Mickve Israel, favored and ultimately selected applicant Abraham Sulzberger, probably because in addition to being a *shochet*, he was a *mohel* [ritual circumciser] and a *chazzan*. The latter qualification would prove most important, for Leeser intended to retire from the pulpit of *Mickve Israel* in the coming year, and a replacement would be needed. In the

meantime, the officers wondered if a ritual slaughterer could also serve as a ritual circumciser, and they sent their inquiry to Rabbi Rice.

Rice was impressed with Abraham Sulzlberger and, in particular, with his illustrious paternal great-grandfather, the rabbi of Heidelsheim, Baden. He framed a very positive reply to Abraham Hart, president of *Mickve Israel*:

Baltimore 4th April 5609 [1849]

My Hon. Sirs

Your worthy letter was duly received. I examined Mr. Sulzburger & found him a first rate Schochet. It gives me a great pleasure that your Cong.r has elected Mr Sulzberger, because I know him as a true Israelite, who will observe the laws of our holy religion, which is a principal part in the way of Schehito [sic]. I hope you will assist him with all your power in way of religion. Hoping that you will enjoy a good health & spirit by the approaching festivals.

I am
Hon Sir
Your obt Servant

Hon. A. Hart *A. Rice*

P.S. A Schochet can be a מוהל, without any hesitation & in the old country we find many cases in that respect.

But these few who qualified were in the minority. The majority of religious functionaries were either unlicensed or their licenses were no longer valid.

Leeser, who seven years earlier had unsuccessfully attempted to establish a a congregational union, promptly endorsed Wise's call and stated that he had met "with Rabbi A. Rice, of Baltimore, who unhesitatingly offered to attend the meeting should it be convened as above." But Rice was convinced that Wise and Lilienthal did not have as their goal to strengthen observance. He discerned Wise's intent, although Leeser did not. To bring Wise's motives out in the open, Rice dispatched the following letter to Leeser:

Baltimore 15th Dec. 48.

My Dear Friend.

I think we are acquainted enough to talk with you freely, what my humble opinion is about the convention of Rabbis, spoken of in your last periodical. I know very much that you are sincere in religious matters as you are the latest [sic!; last] who would make

any innovation, but let me tell you as a friend you have to consider also, that in your early lives [sic!;life] you were mingled with the american life; many of your Ideas will not do for true Judaismen [sic!], though you may think it is no harm in it. The כחרי [*Kuzari*] says כונתך רצויה ומעשיך אינם רצוים [your intentions are acceptable but not so your acts], what is by many the case now. Further you know, that we have a certain class, which the word "Religion" is every moment in their mouth, but in their hearth [sic!; heart] is nothing as sellfishness & the true יראה [reverence] is wanting. What benefit shall arise from this "reunion"? If we all act according to our שלחן ערוך [*Shulhan Arukh*], one Jew can live in one corner of the world & yet we have with him one rule & regulation. Can we establish better rules as we find written down by our ancient [writers]? Or will we please the spirit of [the] times? if we would adhere conscientiously to our rules? Will they not say? מאי אהני לן רבנן, מעולם לא שרי לנו עורב ולא אסר לנו יונה—— [סנהדרין צט;][of what use are the Rabbis to us? They have never permitted us the raven, nor forbidden us the dove, *Talmud Babli—Sanhedrin*: 99:2.]

Is the convention of the German Rabbis lost from your memory? Are our Rabbis better men? Have we not some wolves clothed in sheeps-cover? How is it possible to establish an equal Reform in our prayers? & if it were possible what is done for true religion? These are only form & not [the] essential part of religion. Would or can this convention establish rules for keeping the Sabbath strikly [sic!; strictly]? That every married Jewish lady has to go to מקוה [*mikveh*]? Or will come the question for them, to abolish the second day of יו"ט [festivals]? I, for my part, can tell this prophesy, that the latter question will come sooner off.

You must not charge me, that I am too sanguinish, the heaven is my witness, that I deliberate very cool, but I am afraid for such a convention ואתה ! תקוה לגדל ענבים ותקבל באושים
ויקו לעשות ענבים ויעש באושים ישעיה ה — ב
["And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, And it brought forth wild grapes." Isaiah 5:2]

The only result will be, we will have more permissiveness and liencies [sic!; licentiousness] & no strength at all will derive from it.

I ask you? are we better Jews, if we say not any longer פיוטים [*piyyutim*]? Comes more Devotion in our Synagogues if we have a Choir. I say candidly, no! All is nonsense, we have here a Choir, Our Chasan & the whole Congn dont know what is devotion. This is all spoken of to please the spirit of [the] time[s] & to be like other sects.

In the same manner, I consider such a Convention, we like to be like other sects, they have their convention we must have ours

too. Our שלחן ערוך [*Shulhan Arukh*] is our Conference. We have no power to alter one Iod [*yud*—smallest letter in Hebrew alphabet] Instead to call חזק ונתחזק בעד עמיך [Be strong and let us be strengthened for the sake of our people] we will call

קשוט עצמך תחלה ואח"כ קשוט אחרים [ב"מ קז:]

[justify yourself and then justify others—*Talmud Babli—Baba Metziah* 107:2].

If every Rabbi has a true Jewish spirit & he will act according to our true religion, & keep st[r]ictly to our דין [law], than every one will bring back few to true religion וכל המקיים נפש אחת מישראל כאילו קים עולם מלא [סנהדרין לז']

[one who saves one Jewish life, is as he preserved an entire world—*Talmud Babli—Sanhedrin* 37:1]. To bring the eyes of the world on our Convention is nothing for a man who will do nothing for the world, only for the good of his faith.

My Dear, I hope you will not find yourself offended by my talking. You know me—for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. Take therefore the admonition of a true friend & consider well, before you go in, for such a step; on the consequences of introducing such a convention, who will be attended with dangerous consequences

I remain for ever, Your truly friend & humble servant
A Rice

NB. You must not laugh about my language. I write in English only for that reason, to make me more acquainted with the words.

Rice's call came after the depature of Leon Dyer and the seating of a new president, autocratic Abraham Rosenfeld, at the time of an upsurge of materialism and the decline of the spiritual in American life, the weakening of Orthodoxy and the strengthening of Reform in Jewish life.

Chapter 22
Gold Supercedes God in '49

IN 1849, even as Rabbi Rice contemplated a second time leaving for the Holy Land, men from Bavaria and all European countries and continents, including Jews, crowded aboard every available vessel to reach America, in their race to reach the golden land, to the gold-laden hills of the Sierra Nevadas. Most of these Jewish forty-niners were Polish Jews from Prussia and the Baltic regions where German was the mother

tongue; many from the eastern U.S., among them Leon Dyer, elected in 1850 first president of the First Hebrew Congregation of San Francisco.

S. Newman of Cincinnati described religious conditions in the Ohio Valley in that turbulent year of the gold rush, 1849:

> In one place, where there are a sufficient number of members to fill the Synagogue, the only attendants I found were the reader and the president, and such, I understand, is the case there every Sabbath. In another, with from 25 to 30 families, it is closed all year except on Rosh Hashanah and the Day of Atonement. *Schehitah* and *bedikah* [kosher slaughtering and inspection] are scoffed at as being merely traditional, too insignificant . . . Even where there is a *shochet*, his services are not required . . . In several places, though containing a great many Jewish families, there is no *casher* dinner to be obtained . . . .

Just prior to the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill, Leeser spoke of the neglect of God and His commandments:

> See how many violate the Sabbath; how many are married out of the pale of Judaism; how many eat forbidden food; how many disregard the Passover; how many neglect the precept of circumcision, and they say that we have not changed for the worse . . .
>
> Look at the records of the congregations in this country, and you will seek in vain for the representatives of many families among the professing Jews. Some have died out for the want of male descendants to bear their names; but many others have left the Synagogue, either by apostacy or the quiet intermingling with the gentiles; and in addition to several families thus extinct already, others are fast hastening to the same deplorable state . . . .

Disregard of the signs of Judaism, placed upon the entrances of ones home, upon the arm and forehead of men in prayer, of the kosher diet, of Jewish names, had become commonplace. Five years earlier, in August 1844, Reverend Isaacs bewailed:

> We have gone too far already, there is a moral cowardice pervading our polity is sufficient to stunt the growth of every plant of Judaism; we have become unmindful of our high-born destiny, our patriarchs, names adorn the heads of Christian families, whilst we name our children after modern heroes; we have copied the manners of those among whom we have the happiness to dwell beyond the bounds of prudence; we have no מזחה [*mezuzah*] on our doors lest our neighbours should see them; we lay no תפלין [*tefillin*] on our arms lest our Christian friends should think our religion a mystery; we partake of their viands lest they should think us

unsocial; we visit their churches lest they should deem us irreligious . . . .

Max Lilienthal attributed disregard of the Sabbath and dietary laws by German Jews of Orthodox homes to the laxity exhibited by the *Sephardic*, or native American Jewish community:

> The Israelites who many years hence came over to this America, were all of the rural districts in Germany, where at that time Orthodoxy was reigning supreme. They brought . . . no desire for a Reform over to this country, but being poor and hence obliged to direct all their individual attention to gaining a livelihood, religion was to them a matter of more than secondary consideration. When on a festival coming home from their peddling journeys, they were visiting the Portuguese Synagogues, in which the principle was established that however a man may live for himself, in the public services and institutions of the Synagogue the strictest Orthodoxy must be represented. Hence from the beginning the most prevalent maxim was taking root, that in order to provide for the wants of his family a man may indulge in all kinds of food, violate the Sabbath, trespass all ordinances, if, when coming home, he submits to all the rules of old . . . .

The year of the forty-niners was on when Abraham Kohn asked American Jewry:

> What will Judaism be in 50 years in this great Republic, if the mind of these young would be Philosophers, if the indifferentisms of our rich men towards our holy law, if the unintelligence of the masses of the Jews is not aroused, & the question agitated. Have we no other duty to perform towards our Almighty Father, but to pray on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kipur in the Synagogue, pay a few Dollars for maintaining the Congregation & charitable Society, & then leave the whole system to itself; [Is] Reform of our service in the Synagogue all we can do, to transmit our holy Law to generations to come? Is it not necessary first to impress each & every one that the great gift of our Heavenly Father, the Sabbath, should be strictly kept?

Leeser expressed deep concern regarding neglect of observance of the Sabbath:

> If one coming from abroad were to be transported suddenly to the cities of America or to the villages where scattered Israelites dwell, he would be very apt to imagine that but few Jews could be discovered among the inhabitants; since by those who bear Jewish names the Sabbath is *not* considered as sacred, but that, on the con-

trary, it is actually the busiest portion of the week for all practical purposes . . .

The time indeed was when the desecration of this day was looked upon as the greatest sin man could commit . . . but this state has unfortunately passed away . . . They have lost the shame of being discovered in contradiction to the divine precepts. Nay, even so far have many gone that *they refuse to take Jewish boys in their employ if the stipulation be that the Sabbath's rest should be permitted to them* . . .

Teach the young to violate the Sabbath, take them into your workshops and counting-houses, place them on horseback or in coaches, applaud their unwillingness to attend the House of God on that day, because you agree with them in not viewing it as sacred; and you teach them practically to disobey you whenever obedience might clash with their pleasure or self-will; you absolve them from morality, from kindness to the distressed, since in all these deeds the inclination has to be conquered, equally as with the Sabbath, in obedience to the unseen, but ever-present power of the Lord of all.

In Baltimore, Rice attributed the violating of Sabbaths and festivals and the growing intermarriage and assimilation and disregard of the commandments to the all-pervasive spirit of the gold rush:

Those familiar with present-day conditions, of the relentless drive and burning quest of this generation for gold and silver, of the confidence people place in these metals, of the power and position given to its possessors and honors bestowed upon them; people familiar with these conditions will admit that idolatry exists today, only that its manner of practice has changed.

When one acquires much gold and silver, the results are the same as in the practice of idolatry. Observe the character of such people! How they put all their faith in their wealth and neglect God's commandments! How they neglect to observe the Sabbaths and holidays as commanded by God! How they are never satisfied with their gold and silver and mislead others to ceaselessly seek its acquisition! Behold how changed one becomes when he acquires wealth! How arrogant they act, as though they would have acquired all the power of the world in their grasp, including the Almighty Himself! Behold the rich people of today, who like the idolators of bygone days, demand that everyone should bow low to their idols, before their gold chests! How they speak with contempt and with hate of those who refuse to bend and bow to their gold! . . .

In our day and age, hypocrites and flatterers swarm around every rich man, praising all his acts . . . They drop so low as to praise in a slave-like fashion every move of the rich, even applauding acts of which they disapprove . . . . Our moral standards are low; jealousy

and envy, passion and hatred, are no longer accidental among us . . . .

Rice blamed this misconduct upon the nominally Orthodox as upon the Reformers. He told his congregants that his earnest exhortations had not achieved its purpose: "God's word," he declared, "has not entered your hearts because of your ignorance of our holy religion, and the misleading example of others."

Rice's sermon, delivered April 12, 1849, inspired a worshipper to communicate to the *Baltimore Sun*:

> The Rev. Rabbi Rice, of the Lloyd street Synagogue, delivered Thursday, being the seventh day of the Passover Festival, a most impressive and interesting discourse. He was listened to with the profoundest attention, and captivated his numerous hearers by the elegance of his diction, and the richness of his oriental imagery; and powerfully worked on their convictions and feelings, by the cogency of his reasoning, and the vehemence of his persuasive eloquence.

Rice waxed eloquently because of his cause, to be the guide of Torah-true Jewry.

Chapter 23
Rice Resigns

OFFICERS AND lay leaders of congregations, by virtue of their wealth and office sought to lord over the religious functionaries. Either the pulpiteer followed their whims and wishes or the contract would not be renewed.

A visitor observed: "If the president of S.I. [*Shearith* Israel; a Portuguese Congregation] is a patriarch, the presidents of the *Ashkenazi* congregations are despots.

At the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, the Reform-minded Abraham Rosenburg, newly-elect president in 1849, sought to muzzle Rice in the pulpit and to assert his power over the rabbi. This was observed by Judah Rosewald, Torah reader for the congregation. He complained that the president and officers had assumed unwarranted authority and acted as arrogantly as the "Men of Sodom."

The weakened position of the Jewish religious leader in America, contrasted sharply with the powerful status of his counterpart in Europe. Thus did Dr. Jacob Rosenfeld, *chazzan* of *Sheayreet Israel*, Charleston, observe:

> In Europe . . . the Jewish ministers are, for the most part, vested with some power from the governments of such countries, to enact such laws, and make such regulations respecting Synagogue discipline and other religious matters, as they may deem wholesome or necessary. In this country it is different; the Jewish minister is but a *dead letter*, because all matters of the congregation, even such points of religion which require deep learning, are decided by a majority of the members, whether they understand anything about it, or whether they take the least interest in it or not. The minister in this country is, therefore, governed by his flock, instead of his leading them.

Max Lilienthal, who himself had been forced to resign, noted in 1849:

> So it happened with Cantor [Michael] Putzel. He was inducted in Easton, Pennsylvania two years ago, enjoyed general approval, married, and now with a wife and child has been discharged from his position and must open a dry goods business. He is a decent, fine, accomplished man who nevertheless could not get along with the congregation . . . .

Julius Eckman, after a brief one year ministry at the Portuguese-rite *Beth Shalome*, Richmond, Virginia, was terminated.

Leeser likewise described the rabbi or minister as being at the mercy of his congregation's lay leaders. Even his tenure after twenty years was insecure and he would resign the next year. He suspected that Rabbi Rice's position, as well as that of other spiritual leaders, was in immediate jeopardy:

> The ministers, when they possess the necessary qualifications, are not treated materially different from those nowise qualified . . . . The minister remains and is the mere official servant of his congregation, and nothing more; he is made and unmade by the popular breath, and this holds good with but two exceptions in the whole country, so far as known to us, and these are the *Hazzanim* of the congregations *Shearith Israel* and *Shaarey Tefillah* [sic!] of New York, the Rev. Messrs. [Jacques Judah] Lyons and [Samuel Myer] Isaacs, for they hold their appointment during good behavior. Even of the gentlemen who have rabbinic functions, we doubt whether they have any permanent appointment; and, unless we err, Drs. [Isaac Mayer] Wise, [Max] Lilienthal, and [Jacob] Kohlmayer, and Rev. A. Rice, hold their offices under very unsafe tenure . . . .

Leeser's suspicions were confirmed when, in the spring of 1849, Rice announced his decision to resign from the pulpit of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation after the fall holidays. He told his congregants:

> I am aware that my sermons have caused me much trouble and grief. My outspokenness has oftimes disturbed my peace and serenity. Yet, an inner voice, which you may call conscience, speaks to me and says: Be yourself! Act according to the obligations of your calling! . . . . My conscience further says to me: It is your rabbinic responsibility, your professional obligation, to teach the right path of our religion, regardless of the consequences to yourself! . . . . One must be prepared to sacrifice comfort and tranquility and even abandon one's occupation if need be, in the interest of truth. One should not be afraid to speak openly against the wealthy and influential, the powerful, regardless of the consequences.

By the "wealthy," "influential," and "powerful," Rice alluded to the officers who attempted to impose their will upon him. But even at this dark moment in his life, Rice sounded an optimistic note, expressing confidence in the ultimate acceptance of his teachings, even by Reformers:

> One who stands at the head of his people and strives to spread the word of God among them, must not become discouraged when his words are not accepted as they should be. As long as we live on this earth, we can but expect that the good and true has its struggles and its destiny, as does everything else in this world, but with this difference, that goodness and truth is eventually accepted even by its opponents.

News of Rice's intended resignation, to take effect in the fall, startled the community. The Baltimore press, on May 15th, 1849, published a story, captioned "Luther[a]n Correspondence," which attributed Rice's leaving his pulpit to his having given up his faith!

The Lutheran report spread like wildfire. Later that morning, two missionaries came to see Rice at his residence, No. 8 [present 10] North Exeter Street. They were Dr. M. Louis Newman, an Episcopalian, and Dr. F. J. Newhaus, a Presbyterian. Both were Jewish converts representing the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews. The American Society was an offshoot of the London Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews, originally the London Society for the Conversion of the Jews founded in England in 1808; its first president, Dr. Joseph Samuel Christian Frederick Frey, a Jewish convert. During a police investigation of criminal charges against a certain person, it was learned that Frey had attempted to seduce his wife. Frey promptly departed to America where he organized The American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews.

Drs. Newhaus and Newman, who sought to determine if Rice's faith in Judaism had faltered and to bring him into their missionary camp, were unceremoniously ushered out of his residence.

After the noon hour. Rice received a group of prominent Jewish communal leaders, among them the physician, Dr. Abraham B. Arnold in America since 1820 who opened his office in Baltimore during the previous year. They called upon him to discuss the "Luthern Correspondence."

Rice told them that missionary activity increased with the upsurge in Jewish immigration. In his weekly sermons he had told his congregation that his addresses were necessary not only to strengthen Jewish observance, but also to combat the influence of powerful missionary forces preying upon the uninformed and misinformed:

> In this country, in these times, it is imperative to speak in the native tongue because we and our children are here and now confronted with the danger of being vanquished by impostors and missionaries who present so convincingly an argument that a trained, expert eye is required to see the falsity of their ideas; also, because virtually all of the sources of our religious teachings are written in Hebrew and are therefore inaccessible to the vast majority of our people.

In the previous year Rice had written to Leeser about a case that had come to his notice and gained widespread notoriety. It concerned a 21-year-old Jewish youth who had studied philology in Germany. Once in this country, the young immigrant wanted to complete his studies but lacked the funds for tuition, books, and board. He resisted peddling, since this occupation would remove him from the centers of learning. Rice, having learned that missionaries had offered him a free education, requested Leeser to investigate the possibility of a school in Philadelphia that would grant the boy free tuition. The story gained widespread publicity when "A Baltimore Gentleman" wrote to the London *Jewish Chronicle* "respecting a young man who was tampered with by the missionaries . . . .having been promised a scientific training by his friends, the missionaries . . . ."

In London, as in Baltimore, there had recently taken place the celebrated case of a hungry fifteen-year-old Jewish boy. The teenager was offered food and clothing by members of the London Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews. After his acceptance, they persuaded him to be baptized in the Anglican Church. When his parents discovered his whereabouts, they pleaded to be allowed to visit their son. The mission's directors refused, fearing that the youth might return to Judaism. The Jewish community appealed to the King's Bench. The court rejected their petition, contending that since Judaism regards *Bar Mitzvah*

at age thirteen as the end of boyhood and beginning of manhood, the parents were no longer to be regarded as their son's legal guardian.

Rice, angered by the audacious visitation and allegation of the missionaries, and the attendant "Luthern Correspondence" of his supposed disaffection with Judaism as the reason for his resignation, advised his guests that he would write to Leeser to expose the apostate Jews, "in the name of our Holy Torah . . . so that these degenerates should know that my plans are only to serve God . . . ."

Leeser published Rice's letter. He informed the public that these missionary activities were directed by The American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews, who had opened missions at Baltimore, Charleston, Philadelphia, and New York; their tactics exposed by Abraham Collins in his book, *Israel Vindicated*. Leeser berated

> the shameless intrusion of a race of apostate missionaries, claiming to act under authority of the above society, in the peaceful domicile of the Rev. Abraham Rice at Baltimore . . . induced us once more to make a representation to the managers at New York, of the gross outrage they authorize their hirelings to commit, by intruding into Jewish homes, where their presence is neither wanted nor desirable . . . .

The missionary Society's managers ignored Leeser's demand to desist from their unethical conduct, and upon the organization of *Bnai Israel* [Children of Israel] Congregation at Augusta, Georgia in 1850, had their representative call upon Reverend Emanuel Marcussohn, the congregation's first *chazzan* and *shochet*. He was reputed to be "a talmudist of the most profound erudition."

An apostate Jew, representing the Society, during several visits attempted to illustrate to Marcussohn the possibility of the trinity by showing him three candles giving only one light. Marcussohn responded that the example was quite inappropriate, because if there are three candles and one light, this means that there are either four substances or if the three candles are one, two substances. Under no circumstances is there only one substance or three in one, and the three candles are assuredly three separate objects, though the substance they give forth is one.

Nonplussed by Marcussohn's arguments, the missionary left, not to return again. Yet he audaciously stated in the August issue of a missionary newspaper, the *New York Jewish Chronicle*, that Reverend Marcussohn had embraced Christianity! In consternation, the Augusta *chazzan*, like Rice, wrote to Leeser of "an article headed 'Conversion' which speaking of the conversion of certain Jews to Christianity, embraces my name among others, to my grief, surprise, and astonishment . . . ."

Leeser once again condemned the missionary tactics of the Society, but his words of denunciation went unheeded by its managers. However, he made the Jewish public aware of the danger posed by the "soul-snatchers." He added his hope that Rice would reconsider his resignation, for "We cannot afford to lose the services of one so devoted to the good of Israel's household."

Missionaries, unorthodox reverends, and pseudo-rabbis, overran Jewish communities throughout America in the mid-nineteenth century. The greater danger to Jewry was posed not by the missionaries, but by a one time Hebrew school or *Yeshivah* student who upon coming to America titled himself "rabbi." One of these, Max Lilienthal audaciously titled himself "Chief Rabbi."

Henry Lyon Goldberg, a New York scribe, self-proclaimed rabbi, upon election as spiritual leader of *Beth Abraham* [House of Abraham]—a Polish synagogue founded in 1848 at 63 Mott Street—titled himself "Chief Rabbi." In this storefront synagogue, his performance of marriage and divorce ceremonies gained such notoriety that the *New York Police Gazette* reported:

> Myers, a German Jew who came to America in 1832, lived in Baltimore about nine years [possibly William Myers, a member of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation in 1832], and in 1842 returned to New York. There Rabbi Henry Lyon Goldberg, residing at 63 Mott Street [same address as *Beth Abraham* synagogue], effected a divorce for him. Nine months later Myers was remarried by Rev. Goldberg and after having been reunited for a few months, Myers was again divorced by Rev. Goldberg. This time, a week after his second divorce, Myers married another Jewess, again by Rev. Goldberg.

A recapitulation of the facts . . . .

> Myers has been three times married, althoug[h] he had no more than two wives; his wife has been twice married, althoug[h] the man whom she married is still alive, and Mr. Goldberg performed three marriage ceremonies for only three individuals. The best of the joke is that Goldberg, who speaks English well, and has been for many years in this country, had no idea of his incapacity to grant a divorce . . .
>
> Officer Bomstead arrested Myers, and he was committed for further examination . . . .

Typical of the spiritual leaders who performed every conceivable religious service at a price is one who served the "*India Rubber*" *Schul* of New York. He is described as a *kol bo*—[an all-around man]: Reader, teacher, butcher, circumciser, *shofar* blower, scribe, and last but not least,

gravedigger. For women, he wrote amulets, listing all the angels and demons on pieces of parchment to protect them from the "evil eye." It was reported that for departed sinners, he recited appropriate prayers, and with the living, he played cards; and for everyone he had a blessing for *chai pasch* [Russian-Yiddish expression: *chai kak serebrom* —"eighteen nothings in silver"—meaning a lot of nothing] which came to a little over four cents. Often he had to accept bread, turnips, cabbage, and potatoes in payment. When that income did not suffice to feed his family, he peddled rubber suspenders, as did his members; hence the name of the synagogue, "*India Rubber*" *Schul*. A second "*India Rubber*" *Schul* sprang up in Chicago in the following decade.

During the previous year, self-serving Max Lilienthal complained that

> many religious functionaries who came here could not obtain any position and had to grasp at other trades, such as peddling or various crafts. Thus one opened a shoemaker's shop, another is learning cigar-making, a third bookbinding. Others become clerks in offices. Positions that become vacant become so only owing to the fact that the Jewish congregations here soon get tired of their cantors and discharge them after the first year of their appointment. Cantors and teachers in Germany should pay special attention to the fact that here all positions are given as a rule for one year only and the appointee must submit to a new election each year. Of permanent appointments they know nothing.

During the half-year that elapsed between the spring festival of *Pesach*, when Rice announced his forthcoming resignation and the fall festival of *Sukkos* when it would take effect, concerned communal leaders of American Jewry determined to open for him the office of Chief Rabbi.

The attempt to establish a Chief Rabbinate in America had been twice tried that decade. The drives to establish Rice as Chief Rabbi had been launched soon after his arrival in 1841 by Micholl and Kursheedt, and again in 1845 by Dyer. Now, again in 1849, Rice was the candidate selected by American Jewish leaders to serve as Chief Rabbi or chief of an ecclesiastical tribunal, which would be the final authority in ritual questions for the American Jewish community. To this end, Robert Lyons, publisher of *The Asmonean*, a weekly Anglo-Jewish newspaper that first appeared in New York that year, stated

> that the learned A. Rice has resigned his office of Rabbi of the German congregations in this city [Baltimore]; and embarked in commercial affairs. There are few men on this continent better qualified than this gentleman to become one of the future *Beth Din*.

Samuel Bruel, a leader of Cincinnati's Jewish community, agreed with Lyons. He too recommended " . . . that a competent person be elected Chief Rabbi, assisted by three *Dayanim* [judges] . . . ."

To accomplish this, Bruel suggested a congregational union. Each congregation would be requested to contribute towards the salaries of these judges the sum of one hundred dollars. Bruel declared: "I am led to believe that there are 40 congregations in the Union, which would yield $4,000 . . . to pay the Chief Rabbi $1000 and three associates $666 each . . . ."

Bruel's plan, called for congregational union, each member sharing in the responsibility for financing the office of Chief Rabbi, as opposed to the appeal to individual members that had been suggested in 1841 by Israel Baer Kursheedt and Moreland Micholl.

This renewed interest in establishing the office of Chief Rabbi and an ecclesiastical tribunal had the support of Leeser, who reasoned:

> Let us suppose . . . the appointment of an ecclesiastical chief, with two or more assistants, to constitute together a board on all matters relating to public worship, marriages, divorces, and the usual legal questions which should be decided only by those who have made the law of God their study through life; we ask what could be better than this very feature in our internal administration?
>
> But how is it now? . . . . When a case of conscience occurs. we have but few by whom we have a right to apply, or who are properly authorized to act in the premises. But a decision has to be given; and the consequence is, that it is either disputed, or it must be verified by an appeal to some European Chief Rabbi, not to those among us, who have perhaps equal knowledge as those abroad, because the latter are legally and truly in authority as judges under the law of God, whilst the former are merely learned but not accepted by the people . . . .

Leeser advanced yet another reason to elect a Chief Rabbi of the United States:

> The Chief Rabbi of England as a rule will not answer a minister or any private person from abroad, and only attends to questions emanating officially from a congregation . . .
>
> We want some generally acknowledged chief residing among us, and thereby accessible to us and all other Israelites, whenever something occurs of which the decision is not as readily within the reach of general information . . .
>
> We say, therefore, appoint someone of superior knowledge, to be a higher court of resort to the local ministers, that they may be properly guided in all matters of doubt.

Reformers, such as Wise, feared a Chief Rabbi's high office that would carry with it an aura of authority in America, Land of the Free. Only two years earlier, on March 5, 1846, the Chief Rabbi of England, Nathan Marcus Adler, categorically refused to perform the marriage of an Orthodox man to a young lady whose father was a member of the West London Synagogue of British Jews, unless she promised never to set foot again in that Reform temple.

But, as in the previous drive, opposition was forthcoming, not only from Reformers but from Orthodox leaders who sought to prevent the election of Rice as Chief Rabbi or as the head of a rabbinical tribunal.

Representative of those Orthodox in opposition to the plan was the Reverend Jacob J. M. Falkenau, whose father had served as *dayan* [rabbinic judge] at Fürth but who did not approve for Rice such an office in America. Yet, smarting from his previous encounters with Rice, Falkenau asked:

> Does the divine law command the people to elect, inasmuch as if they do not elect they shall have "no constituted ecclesiastical authority"? . . . . America has had before, and has at present, its "constituted ecclesiastical authority," constituted from Mount Sinai, constituted even if the people would never choose to elect any Rabbis . . . . The election of Rabbis . . . by congregations as their representatives in all matters concerning religion . . . . dates no farther back than the sixteenth century . . . . The congregations in America, many of them, have men among their own members whose good religious conduct and being learned in the law qualify them to act as "the constituted ecclesiastical authority" of their congregations . . . .

Leeser responded to Falkenau and all opponents of the office of Chief Rabbi:

> It is indeed proper for every congregation to choose itself a person competent to decide questions of law, complicated as they often are in our religious life. But where this has not been done, we must consult those whose evident respectability and certificates of character and capacity from duly authorized persons or bodies, point them out as those capable of granting advice and relief in the premises. It has been our duty at times to decide, at the spur of the moment, during our official term at Philadelphia, grave questions of law, according to the best authorities accessible to us; but we would never rest satisfied with our own decisions, and referred them first to Rabbi Solomon Hirschel, of blessed memory, who promised to reply in full but was no doubt prevented by the infirmities of age and bodily suffering to keep his word, and afterwards to Dr. [Nathan Marcus] Adler, the present chief authority in England . . .

> We have no separate clerical body as yet in America; and the query is, whether, as none exists, the few office-holders, who are evidently excelled in many instances by those who do not enjoy a salary from the public purse, shall exercise the whole of the rights belonging to the knowledge of the law. We could cite names of those who are now in retirement in various parts of the country . . . Yes, there are men in New York, Baltimore, Cincinnati, New Orleans and elsewhere, who need not feel ashamed at being compared with any minister now in power; and hence we say it is ridiculous in those who are appointed to read the prayers and to preach to congregations, to assume a dignity which is not theirs by any known rule of law or courtesy . . . The officiating Hazanim and preachers have no rabbinical functions even by courtesy, not to say even by right . . .
>
> There is only one remedy . . . to institute by general assent a superior Rabbinical tribunal for all America, the members of which should have the full supervision of ecclesiastical affairs in all the congregations, and without whose certificate of character no Synagogue functionary should be chosen . . . .

Leeser's wise counsel fell on deaf ears. The Orthodox community remained either apathetic or in opposition to the proposal, as were all Reformers. The office of Chief Rabbi remained an unfulfilled hope in America, the land of freedom of religion.

On September 29, 1849, the first Sabbath after the high holy days, Rice, with no prospect of becoming acclaimed as Chief Rabbi of the United States or chief of a national ecclesiastical tribunal, though facing an uncertain future, nonetheless spoke with courage and determination, at his "Farewell Address."

> I appear before you at this moment, with deep emotion, hardly able to express my innermost feelings. My entire being is urged by a strong inner voice to speak to you once again of the higher concerns of your existence. Today, as I resign this holy position, serving as your guide, I am filled with great concern, not for the well-being of myself or my family, which I leave at all times to the protection of the Almighty, but for your spiritual well-being. Though I would have wished to continue my instructions this day and gladly teach you of our sacred responsibilities before taking my leave of this holy place, yet I can but speak to you at this time a word of remembrance.
>
> One who seeks to accomplish a goal must never tire; he must ever remain determined. He must not allow himself to become misguided; not by people and not by thought of what the future may hold in store for him, even at the last moment. Ungratefulness shall

not deter him; danger shall not frighten him. He must always bring the absolute truth before the public. How faithfully I followed these rules is not for me to judge; I leave this judgement to the public. It is well known to the Creator above us, how often I was threatened with oppresive measures, but I endured these threats; how each step I took was met with mistrust and how my purest intentions were so often misinterpreted; but all of these vexations, I likewise endured. My name and character were assailed, but I continued to preach fearlessly the holy teachings of our religion.

You! Men and youths! Women and maidens! You are my witnesses that I never flattered people, either the prominent nor the humble. God, before whom I stand and before whom there is no concealment of thought, is my witness how forcefully His holy Law embraced me, and if should I have expressed myself harshly on occasion, it was only an expression of my zeal for a holy purpose. I do hope that some of the truths of our religion have now gained ground among our people and feel confident that definite gains have been achieved.

Though this was Rice's farewell address to a pulpit which he voluntarily but reluctantly left, he hoped that the time would come when there would be officers in charge who would not dictate to him his role as rabbi but when he could be the rabbinic authority undisturbed in the performance of his role as teacher and guide. Thus Rice concluded with a prayerful wish:

O Lord! Send your balm to my deeply affected heart, that it may receive its needed peace. May I again be able to preach Your Holy will to Your children so that my parting words to them not be in vain, but they bear fruit for the everlasting life.

Amen.

Chapter 24
Chatham Auction Houses

ABRAHAM RICE turned from the ministry to the world of commerce, with which he had no acquaintance.

The branches of business pursued by Israelites in this country were the clothing, shoe, dry goods, and liquor, together with jewelry, and rarely the grocery trade, are nearly everywhere their sole pursuit; a few only are actually engaged in shoemaking, tailoring, watch-making, cabinet-work, upholstery, and similar mechanical branches . . . .

These were the options that faced Rabbi Rice upon his resignation from the pulpit. Though he lacked the capital or experience to enter a trade, rejected an invitation from Isidor Bush to participate in the editorship of the newly founded German-Jewish newspaper, *Israel's Herold*. In Vienna, Bush had published many important works with his father, including the text of the *Talmud*. He had planned to leave Austria even before the Revolution of 1848 because he had little faith in the triumph of liberalism over any regime in that country. He hoped that *Israel's Herold* would be in the New World what the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* was in the Old World. His paper displayed the solid learning and literary standards of Europe.

But to Rice, participation in a newspaper to which Max Lilienthal contributed a column in which he expressed his Reform views was unthinkable. After the dedication of the Orthodox Fell's Point congregation, *Oheb Israel* congregation, in its new location on Eden Street, between Lombard and Baltimore Streets, in August of 1848, in which both he, Isaacs and Lilienthal participated, Rice discerned Lilienthal's Reform views from his address and refrained from further contact with the Reformer.

Rather than compromise his principles, Rice preferred to engage in a trade. Acting on the advice of friends, he became a dry goods jobber. Dry goods was a burgeoning enterprise over the past three years since 1846 when Elias Howe patented the sewing machine, and would skyrocket when in 1851 Isaac Singer perfected the invention and started manufacturing sewing machines. Rice could sell second-hand clothing and cheaply made garments, better known as "slops"; dress coats for two dollars, pants for one dollar, fancy silk and linen vests at fifty cents each, and a complete suit (pants, vest, and coat) five dollars. These he obtained on credit at below wholesale prices in the auction houses on New York's Chatham Street. This greatest wholesale clothing center in America was called Jerusalem, "from the fact that the Jews do most if not all the business on this street." He had it shipped to Baltimore, and from his residence sold it at wholesale prices to small dealers.

Strictly observant, Orthodox Jews, including a goodly number of qualified Orthodox religious functionaries, knowledgeable in Jewish law, engaged in the Chatham Street auctions. Among these was a Reader from Easton, Pennsylvania. Thus the *Allegmeine Zeitung des Judentums* reported that he was inducted in 1846, "enjoyed general approval, married, and now with a wife and child has been discharged from his position and must open a dry goods business. He is a decent, fine accomplished man who nevertheless could not get along with the congregation." They were so dominant there that the New York *Asmonean* decried the practice of syn-

agogue officials going to "Jerusalem" [i.e. Chatham Street] to select teachers and preachers. Its editor warned:

> We must not run the hazards of selecting our pastors from the Counting House of the Auction Room, we must know who it is who mounts the pulpit and reads the law to the people . . . .

Such a preponderance of observant Jews engaged in the Chatham Street trade that the *New York Drygoods Reporter and Merchants Gazette* noted that

> a new race of buyers have appeared [since about 1845] at our auction markets. We allude to our Jewish population . . . . At present we should think that full 25 per cent of the sales made in our auction rooms are to that class of buyers . . . . In fact, so important a class have they become that the importer arranges, in many instances, the time of his sale so as not to come on a Jewish holiday . . . .

Since Sunday replaced Saturday as the heavy trading day in the auction houses on Chatham Street, the New York *Chronicle* complained:

> Anyone who wishes to see the extent of [Sunday] Sabbath desecration among us, should take a walk through Chatham street on Lord's day. The open shops, the lounging multitudes at the corners of the streets, and all the signs of trade . . . .

Dealers came regularly to Rice's new location at 85 [presently 230] Howard Street to buy goods. Rabbi Rice was greatly assisted in the sale of his goods by teen-age Caroline, an orphan girl, probably Christian, whom he and his wife had befriended and opened their household to her in the previous year.



Chalitzah Ceremony, early 18th century, Amsterdam, Holland.
(Universal Jewish Encyclopedia)

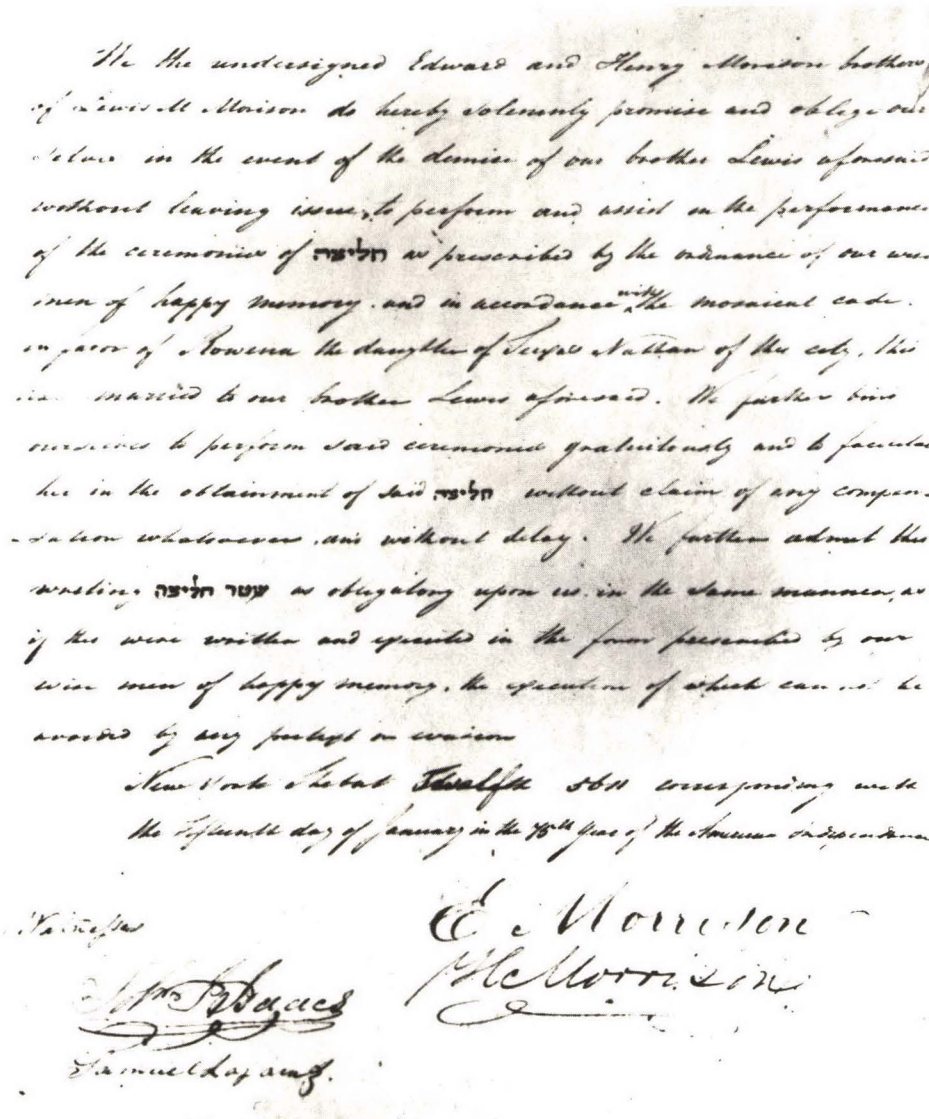
BOOK VI

MINIM VS. MA-MINIM



Chalitzah Boot, Safed, Palestine, 17th Century; Styled in pattern of the classical Etruscan and Roman sandals.

(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



We the undersigned Edward and Henry Morrison brothers of Lewis M. Morrison do hereby solemnly promise and oblige ourselves in the event of the demise of our brother Lewis aforesaid without leaving issue, to perform and assist in the performance of the ceremonies of חליצה as prescribed by the ordinance of our wise men of happy memory, and in accordance with the mosaical code in favor of Rowena the daughter of Teresa Nathan of this city, this has married to our brother Lewis aforesaid. We further bind ourselves to perform said ceremonies gratuitously and to facilitate her in the obtainment of said חליצה without claim of any compensation whatsoever, and without delay. We further admit this writing עטר חליצה as obligatory upon us in the same manner, as if this were written and executed in the form prescribed by our wise men of happy memory, the execution of which cannot be avoided by any pretext or evasion

New York Shebat Twelfth 5611 corresponding with the Fifteenth day of January in the 75th year of the American Independence

Witnesses

Wm. P. Baacs

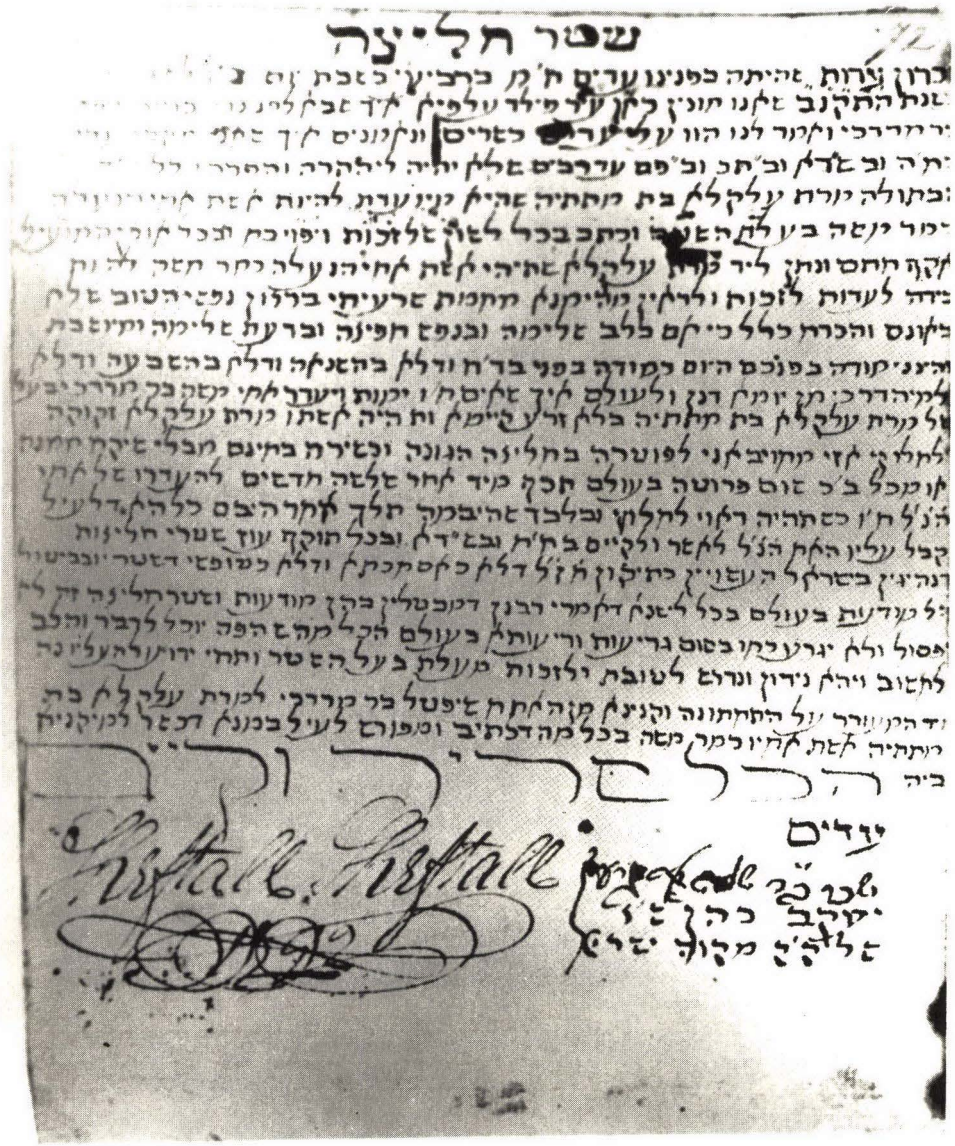
Samuel Lazarus

E. Morrison

H. Morrison

January 15, 1851, Promissory Writ of *Chalitzah* in English of Commitment to *Chalitzah* by Edward and Henry Morrison.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

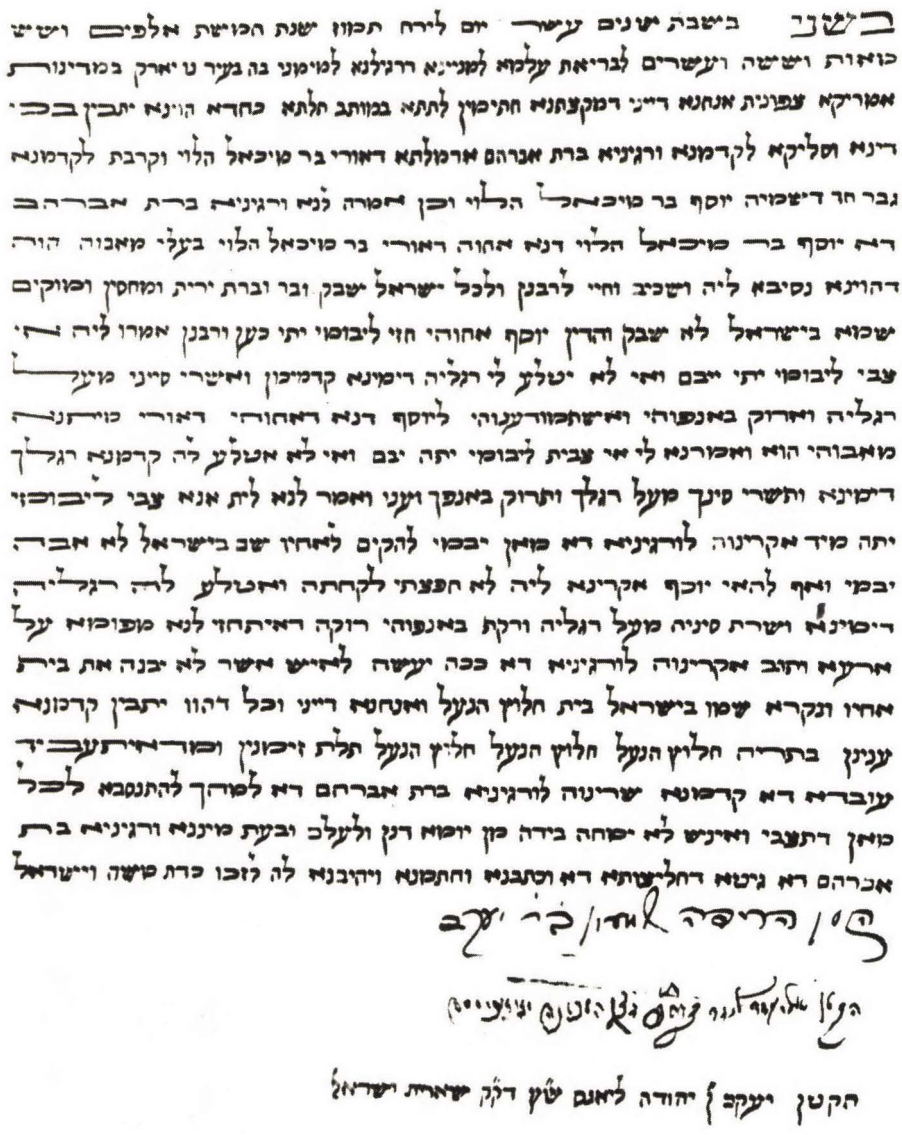


March 21, 1792, Philadelphia: Promissary Writ in Hebrew of Commitment to *Chalitzah* by Sheftall Sheftall.

(History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial times to the Age of Jackson by Edwin Wolf 2nd and Maxwell Whiteman)



USN Captain Jonas Phillips Levy gave *Chalitzah* to Virginia Lopez.
(Courtesy American Jewish Historical Society)



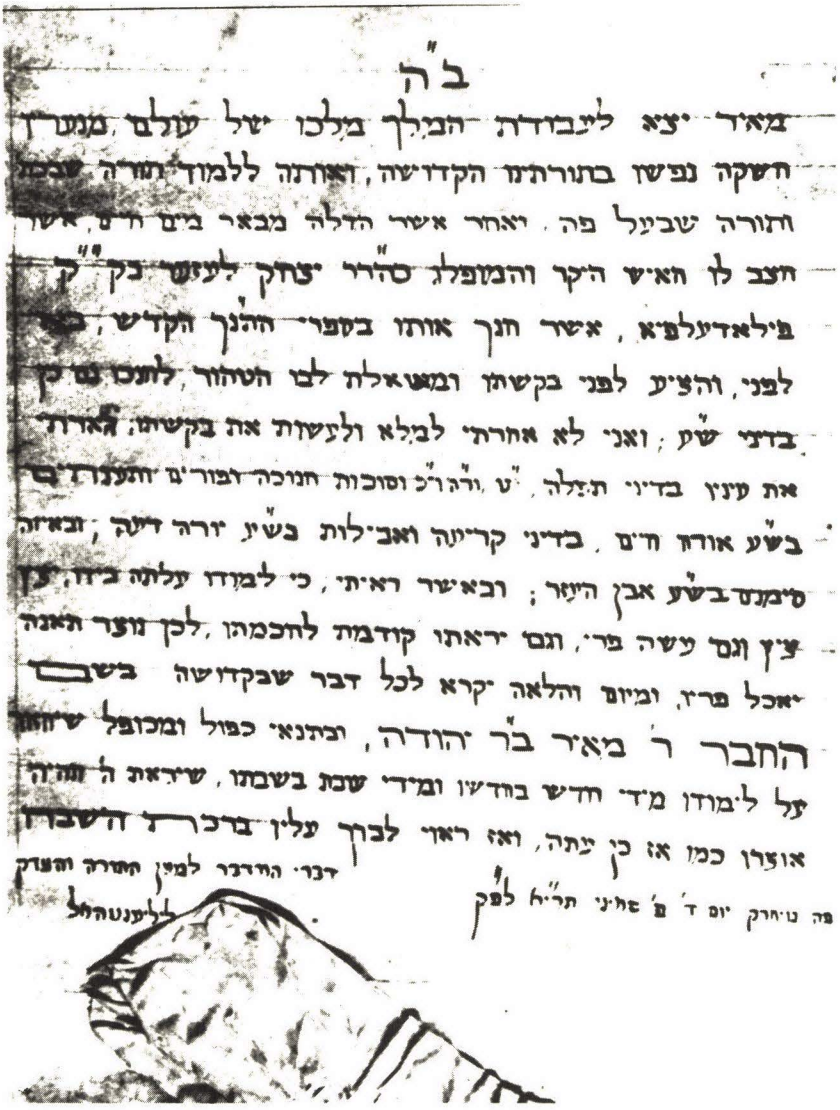
Writ of Attestation by Rabbinic Court consisting of Isaac Leeser, Jacques Judah Lyons, and one Dr. Simeon ben Yaacov—that the ritual of *Chalitzah* was performed by Jonas Phillips Levy, brother of USN Commander Uriah Phillips Levy, who died March 22, 1862, to Uriah's widow, Virginia Lopez, on June 25, 1868. *Beth Din* members were Dr. Simeon Abrahams, Reverend Isaac Leeser of *Beth-El-Emeth*, Philadelphia, and Reverend Jacques Judah Lyons of *Shearith Israel*, New York.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



Dr. Max (Maximilian) Lilienthal, minister German Synagogues of New York, 1845-1847, designed *Chalitzah* boot for ceremony he had to perform.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



Diploma issued by Max Lilienthal, Director of the Union Hebrew School to Meir Yehudah (Michael ?), student of Isaac Leeser, dated 1851, titling him *Chaver* [an observant Jew who knew commandments, but had to ask a rabbi the implications and ramifications in their implementation, which he did not understand.]

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

HISTORY

OF THE

ISRAELITISH NATION,

FROM

ABRAHAM TO THE PRESENT TIME.

DERIVED FROM THE ORIGINAL SOURCES,

BY ISAAC M. WISE.

(*Deutr.* xxxii, 7.) זכר ימות עולם בינו שנות דר-ודר

VOL. I.

ALBANY:
J. MUNSELL, 78 STATE STREET.
1854.

Title Page, History of the Israelitish Nation, Cincinnati, 1854, declared heretical by Rice.

(Library of the author)



Hebrew New Year, 1850; Orthodox Louis Spanier, President, *Beth-El*, Albany, N.Y., slaps Reformer Isaac M. Wise, and precipitates riot.
(*Isaac Mayer Wise* by Joseph H. Gumbiner)



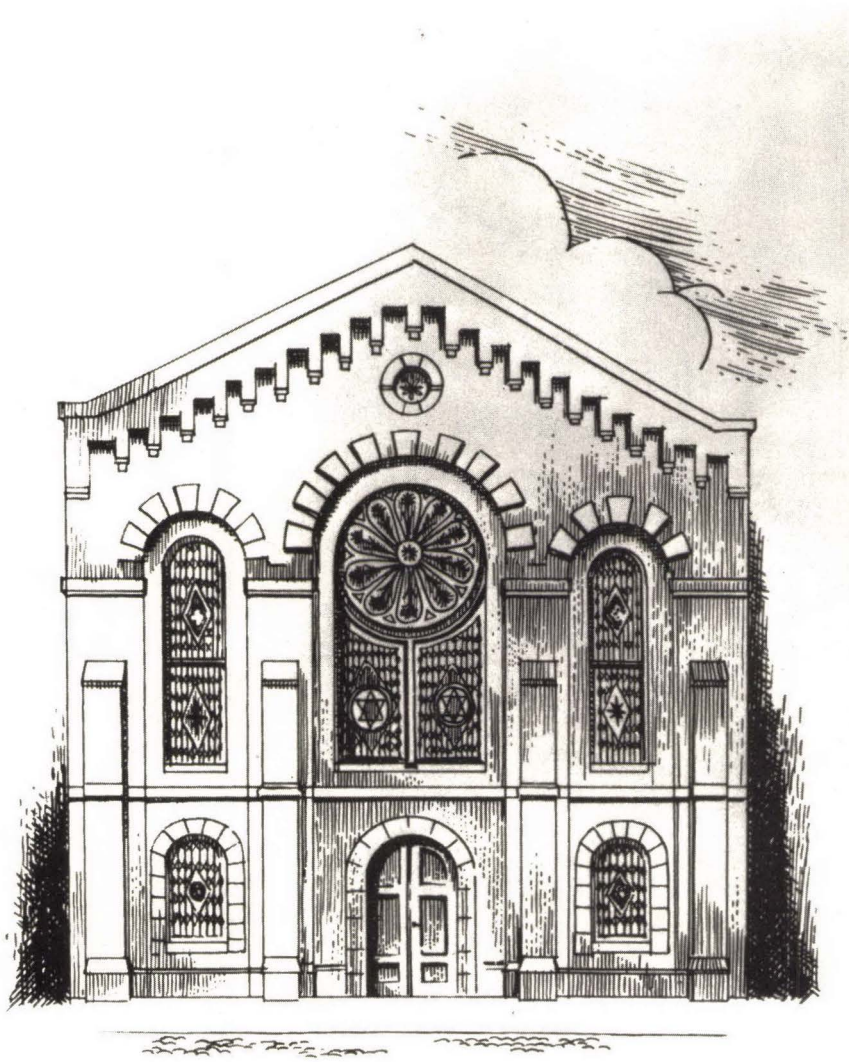
Dr. James Koppel Gutheim, first minister of *Bene Yeshurun*, Cincinnati, 1846-1850.

(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



Bene Yeshurun, Lodge Street Schul, Cincinnati, 1848-1866; Dedicated by James K. Gutheim in 1848.

(The History of the K. K. Bene Yeshurun, 1892)

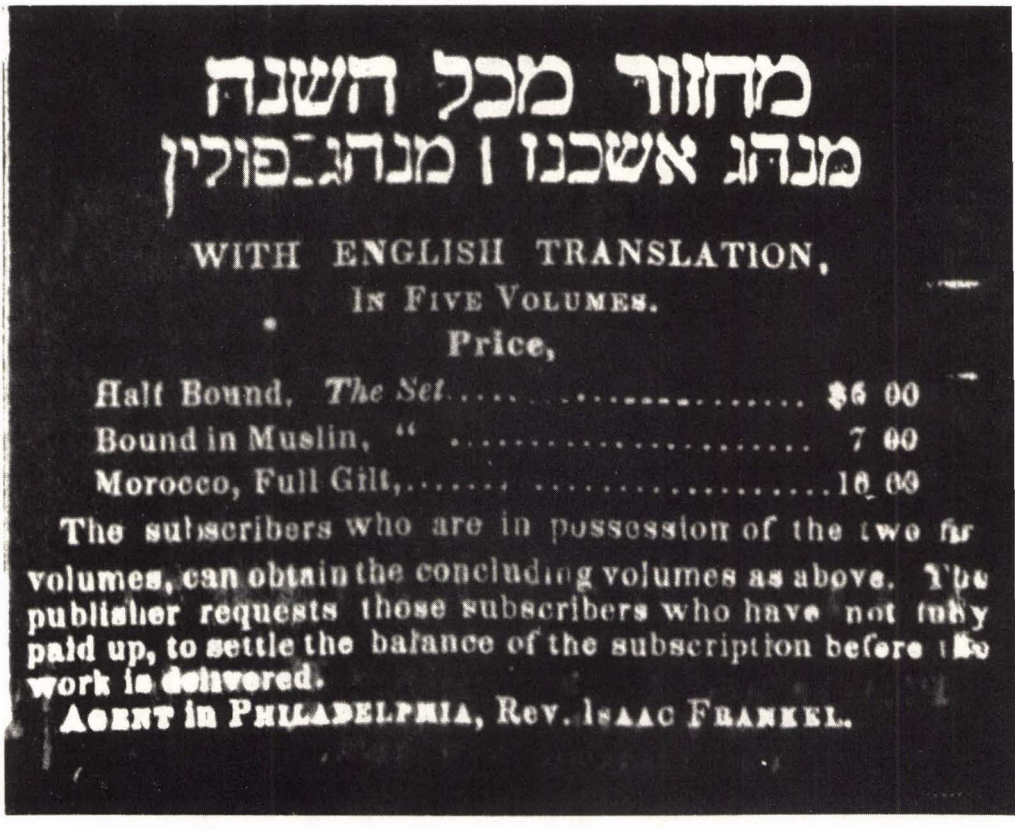


Har Sinai Temple, High Street, Baltimore, 1849-1873.
(The Legacy of a Liberal by Abraham Shusterman)



Dr. David Einhorn, Minister of *Har Sinai Temple*, Baltimore, 1855-1861.

(*The Legacy of a Liberal* by Abraham Shusterman)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1855 Advertisement in New York, offering *Minhag Ashkenaz* and *Minhag Polin*, Prayer books for sale.

(The Jewish Messenger, 1855)



Keneseth Sholom—Society of Concord, 1854, where discord reigned supreme in dispute over which *Minhag* to adopt.

(From a Minyan to a Community by B. G. Rudolph)



Isaac Mayer Wise, Excommunicated in 1850.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

Chapter 25
Rice Excommunicates Wise

WHILE RICE occupied himself daily with the task of earning a livelihood, he never neglected the study of *Torah*. He arose at three o'clock in the night, lit an oil lamp, and in the solitude of his study concentrated upon the sacred tomes of the *Talmud* and its commentaries. During those early hours he wrote numerous responsa, replying to inquiries submitted to him by individuals and congregations throughout the land. In the morning he closed the sacred tomes and donned his prayer shawl and phylacteries, joined by those who arrived to pray the *shacharis* service.

At Rice's home, the daily quorum met on Sabbaths, festivals and high holy days. Ever since Rice first settled in the city, he established a weekday *minyan* in his home, none being held daily at either the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation Lloyd Street synagogue, or at the *Oheb Israel* Fell's Point Eden Street synagogue. When Leeser came to Baltimore to dedicate the Lloyd Street synagogue in 1845, he took note of the *minyan* that convened daily at Rice's residence. He then referred to it by its popular name: "*The Howard Street Schul.*" Rice delivered sermons, read the *Torah*, and at the close of the Day of Atonement, worshippers came from the other synagogues to hear him chant the *Neilah* [concluding] service of the high holy day.

The number of mourners reciting the *kaddish* memorial prayer multiplied in July and August. Summers in Baltimore were hot and humid, and many deaths occurred during those months. Few forgot the summer of 1843. Having been exceptionally damp, epidemics and plagues took a great toll of human life, particularly children's lives. When it had at last subsided that year, the governor of Maryland set Saturday, August 26th, at summer's end in 1843, as the day to observe Thanksgiving.

In 1848, in Baltimore, during a summer that took the usual toll of children who suffered from the usual diseases aggravated by the heat and humidity, the two-year-old daughter of Abraham and Rosalie Rice succumbed. The tragedy was intensified by their having lost their first child, who had also died in infancy in Bavaria. They sadly laid to rest their only child in a family plot at the Belair Cemetery of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation.

At that time, members of the quorum that convened daily in the *Howard Street Schul* over the past decade, in their determination to as-

sist the Rabbi and his wife, assigned to Rice the post of Secretary, to record the congregational minutes as he had at times during his ministry at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. This post of Secretary on the Board of Directors of a synagogue was in those days filled by a knowledgeable person and was a paid position.

Soon the void in the home of the Rice's became unexpectedly filled when one day they found a male infant on their doorstep. The boy was uncircumcised and undoubtedly more than eight days old. Rumors circulated that a non-Jewish woman knew that the rabbi and his wife were of so kindly a nature that having taken in an orphan girl they would accept and properly care for the foundling. In the tradition of Abraham the patriarch, at the circumcision ceremony Abraham Rice gave his adopted son the name Isaac. In a sense, the Rices felt that the boy took the place of their son who died as an infant in Bavaria prior to their coming to America. Isaac's appearance suggested that he was of Nordic stock, but his actions and conduct demonstrated that he followed in the footsteps of his adoptive parents, growing up as a strictly observant Orthodox Jew.

The summer of 1850, exceeded the death toll of all previous years. Ships from all over the world docked in New York, Baltimore, New Orleans, and other eastern ports. Thousands of argonauts disembarked, pausing briefly as they were on their way to the Pacific coast, to gold fields of the Sierra. Rats too scampered off the ships, spreading disease and disaster, leaving behind a dreadful toll in human life.

During that summer, in the busy port of Albany, on the Hudson in upper New York, the youngest child of Isaac Mayer and Theresa Wise had fallen victim to the cholera epidemic. Ships bearing argonauts headed for the California Mother Lode had anchored in New York, the rat plague being borne by barges and other vessels that sailed up the Hudson to Albany and the Great Lakes ports.

Wise recorded:

> I observed none of the traditional mourning customs. This fanned the slumbering embers . . . into flame . . . . I was the subject of the most violent and bitter discussions . . . . The opposition did not stop agitating, and I did not have the courage to deal a decisive blow . . . . I was sick . . . and surrounded by foes.

Observant members of the Jewish community of Albany was appalled that the "rabbi" had not rent his garments, nor removed his boots, nor sat on a low stool in observance of his mourning. They hooted and jeered him. Embarrassed and embittered, Wise consoled himself by saying: "The storm will roll over, the dark clouds will be dispersed, and our horizon will be once more clear and pure . . . ."

But the storm did not roll over and the dark clouds did not disperse.

Wise's world darkened with the outpourings of wrath of an outraged community. Dejected and disgraced, he applied to serve the Reform congregation *Beth Elohim* in Charleston, South Carolina. Its pulpit had been vacated two years earlier by Poznanski, who had for awhile served on a volunteer basis and then retired on income from profitable real estate investments made after the 1838 fire had devastated a section of the city. He may have been advised by his in-laws who had correctly sensed the prosperity that would come with rebuilding.

Poznanski approved Wise's application. The officers invited the Albany Reformer to come to Charleston " . . . in order to afford the congregation the pleasure of forming his acquaintance and of hearing him preach the word of God, ardently hoping that his visit might result in his election . . . ."

Wise traveled by rail to Bridgeport and by steamer to New York. He visited with Lilienthal, who now devoted himself to his private school. Wise continued on to Philadelphia, Washington, and Wilmington, then went by boat to Charleston. He was unaware that Rabbi Dr. Morris Jacob Raphall, recently arrived from England as minister of *B'nai Jeshurun*, New York, had also just set sail for Charleston, invited to lecture at the Orthodox synagogue, *Sheayreet Israel*.

Dr. Raphall, a staunch Orthodox rabbi, had been secretary to Chief Rabbi Solomon Hirschell of London in the 1830s and rabbi in Birmingham, England, in the 1840s. Invited to the pulpit of *B'nai Jeshurun* in 1849, Raphall, on October 8th, accompanied by his sons, after a passage of only 20 days aboard the steamer "*Sarah Sands*," arrived in New York. Among his callers was Max Lilienthal, who came to pay his respects. Lilienthal expressed surprise that the rabbi of Birmingham would leave England for immature America. Raphall replied with the talmudic dictum: "Where there are no men, strive thou to be a man." Lilienthal sensed a formidable opponent and promptly took his leave.

At a congregational meeting held December 23rd, *B'nai Jeshurun* unanimously elected Raphall. His renown as an orator spread throughout the land. A number of congregations invited him to lecture at their synagogues, among them *Sheayreet Israel* of Charleston. The officers gave their consent, and the entire congregation escorted Rabbi Raphall to the Philadelphia Railway Terminus in New York as he set forth on his lecture tour. In Baltimore, Raphall spoke at the *Lloyd Street Schul* and visited with Rice, who had vacated that pulpit a few months earlier. They formed a life-long friendship. Then he boarded a steamer bound for Charleston, but "having been detained twenty-four hours on board the steamer, in consequence of the tempestuous state of the ocean . . . " the ship did not dock there until the Sabbath morning.

Wise had already arrived in Charleston the previous day. Wise was "domiciled in splendid rooms" a slave placed at his "disposal"; a guest of American aristocrats. Wise had preached Friday evening at *Beth Elohim* after being introduced by Dr. Poznanski. The substance of his sermon was relayed to Raphall when he disembarked after the Sabbath. The next day, in his address at *Sheayreet Israel*, Raphall inveighed heavily against Wise's theology.

Jacob Rosenfeld, minister of *Sheayreet Israel*, sensed an opportunity for an exciting encounter and scheduled a debate between the Orthodox Raphall and the Reformed Poznanski. Members of both congregations assembled on *Purim* eve, Monday, February 25, 1850, at the home of a prominent Charlestonian patrician:

> A long table stood in the upper part of the hall. On it lay the folios to be used in the fray. Dr. Raphall, a rotund little man with a black velvet skullcap on his head, sat at the head of the table, and next to him Mr. Poznanski in full dress, still, cold, and self-satisfied. The chazan and the officers of the Orthodox congregation sat at Raphall's side, while the officers of the Reform congregation, with (Wise) at Poznanski's side. The house was crowded with the adherents of both parties . . . .

Raphall presented the Orthodox creed postulated by Maimonides; Poznanski, the Reform creed, postulated by Harby; and then a lively discussion ensued:

> As the discussion reached its climax, Rev. Raphall put to Mr. Poznanski the question whether he believed in the Bible, i.e. the Law and the Prophets; he, in the presence of both congregations, replied, after a long hesitation, Y-e-s, —several of his own congregation inferring, from his evasion and long consideration, that he did not fully believe.
>
> Poznanski's hesitant yes to the question whether he believed in the Bible, prompted Raphall to put to him a further question, whether he believed in the coming of the Messiah. Poznanski again hesitated to answer. Suddenly Wise, the candidate for the office which Poznanski was ready to turn over in favour of a man of his own mode of proceeding, who had come as an observer to the debate, arose to take a lively part in the discussion which followed their presentations, and answered loudly and decisively with a resounding NO!, and then Poznanski assented to the same idea, but rather in a more subdued tone of voice. Raphall then put the question, "Do you believe in the Resurrection?" Again, Wise answered with a loud, decisive, and resounding NO! and again Poznanski assented in a subdued voice. This ended the drama. Raphall . . . rushed an-

grily out of the hall, followed by his whole party . . . as the Reform party applauded Wise.

As Wise set sail from Charleston, he bethought himself of the reception tendered him by Poznanski, who headed the committee. In the carriage from the wharf, Poznanski offered to enlighten him on the principles he was to defend. Wise answered, to the applause of the committee, that he came to set forth his own principles. The patronizing reader and ritual slaughterer advised the northerner how to sit in society with arms folded. But when Poznanski offered to delete from his sermon any *Germanisms*, Wise exploded: "If there are any, you will substitute *Polisms* for them. I speak German better than you and write better English than you will ever speak."

Upon his return to Albany, an elated Wise received word of his election to the pulpit of *Beth Elohim*. His wife, Theresa, still in mourning, would not hear of the move as yellow fever raged in that southern port. At the same time, *Beth-El*, unaware of their "rabbis" role in the Charleston debate, anxious to retain him in Albany, overlooked his violating the mourning laws and re-elected him for a three-year term with an annual salary increase of two hundred dollars as an incentive for him to remain in Albany.

Apologetically, he wrote the *Beth Elohim* congregation that he had no recourse but to decline acceptance. He dramatized the affection of his members for him in a most touching manner:

> If you had in a congregation a hundred of friends, who were attached with hearts and souls to you and to the cause which you plead; if you saw these friends mourn and weep because of your departure; if you saw bitter tears in the eyes of many of the daughters of Israel, in the eyes of innocent children and of their mothers, because you were about [to be] leaving them; if you saw these feelings of love and attachment manifested by public demonstrations, by farewell parties and speeches, by the petition of the ladies of the congregation, by the prayers of your scholars [students]; if you heard repeatedly, that the sacred structure, which you had built in the sweat of your brow, every stone of which you purchased by a drop of your heart's blood, if you heard that this much loved edifice would become a howling ruin, since you were told no other man could uphold it; and if even your opponents affirm all this, and petition you to stay, would you not yield . . . .

If such were indeed the sentiments in Albany, they were reversed exactly one month after he wrote that self-serving letter to the officers of *Beth Elohim*, Charleston. News reached the Albany community that

on April 21st, Rabbi Abraham Rice had publicly placed a ban of excommunication upon Isaac Mayer Wise for rejecting belief in the "Messiah" and the "Resurrection."

While Rabbi Rice would cajole and scold violators of *kashrus* and the Sabbath, he condemned and ostracized Wise who ridiculed and rejected observance of obligatory laws and commandments. Rice differentiated between those who violated commandments because of extenuating circumstances, and Wise, who of his own free will and volition denied basic beliefs of Judaism.

By denying the Messiah, Wise demonstrated to Rice his disbelief in the future joyful life of Israel in the Land of Israel. By his denial of belief in the resurrection of the dead, Wise rejected belief in the after life promised to Israelites, as stated in the *Talmud*, that "all Israel has a share in the world to come." Rejection of the future of Israel in this life [in the Promised Land] and the future life [in the world to come] is heresy. Therefore Rice pronounced upon Wise the ban of excommunication.

The very moment that Wise, exhilirated with the American utopia of friendship and freedom for Jews, and for him, Messiah and the future life had arrived, would ignore a blood-libel report that appeared in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 20, 1850, that originated in New York; but ten years after the blood-curdling libel from Damascus:

> Who would believe that the wild appetite for Jew-baiting crosses over even to North America? . . . A shocking event occurred last Sunday. It was the eve of the Day of Atonement for the Jews and they were all in the synagogue. . . . A rumor spread that the Jews had murdered a Gentile girl for their holiday. About 10:30 a crowd of some 500 men burst into the house, broke down the doors and literally pulled from their beds the sleeping women. . . . A most shocking riot was perpetrated. Everyone who resisted was knocked down. . . . The remarkable thing about the affair is that three Irish policemen were the leaders of this raging mob.

Rice pronounced that one who says that not every word in our *Torah* is from the Lord, or maintains that one or more of the precepts is not applicable or in force at this time, or denies the authority of the Oral Law [as had been attempted by Wise in the previous year when he sought to abolish observance of the Second Day of Festivals; as had Poznanski six years earlier], "according to the sentiments of Maimonides, he is deemed an apostate . . . ." Rice questioned " . . . .if a man who yields to the Congregation *Beth Elohim* of Charleston—a man who says that all post-biblical scriptures (in which the Talmud is involved) are exposed to his poor criticism, can be called an Israelite . . . ."

Following Rice's declaration of excommunication, first in the life of American Jewry, Rice affirmed:

> I come forth only to do my duty as a true Israelite, to show to my brethren the iniquity of these doctrines, and to warn them not to go in these paths. Thank God!—my motives are good. I live not on the fat of religion; with the sweat of my brow I have to labour to maintain my family. I have no desire to be called a Rabbi or a Doctor, or a great man in Israel. I strive only to do justice to the sacred cause of my religion, to show how Israel will be deceived by the expression "The sacred cause of Judaism."

Reeling from the blow of his excommunication, Wise reasoned:

> I am considered therein as a cast off from the Jewish community, because I agreed to the views of the Charlestonians . . . . Is there one passage in the Bible which says, cast out a man because he denied the Divinity of the *Talmud* . . . .

Wise mistakenly believed, as had Emanuel Goldsmith in his debate with Benjamin Carillon, that Orthodoxy considered the entire *Talmud* to be of divine origin. Rice had pointed out the error of that viewpoint, but that even those portions of the *Talmud* that are not of divine origin like those legislated by the rabbis, are as binding as those of the Scriptures, for the *Torah* bestowed upon them that right.

One who signed his name "Charlestonian" rallied to Wise's defense. He declared that the

> . . . letter signed "A. Rice" . . . contains enough to anathemize a large proportion of the Hebrews, in countries . . . beyond the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Synagogue. In regard to holding up (to terrify men), an extract from a great genius (Maimonides, who passed his days among the Orthodox as a heretic) men can pay tribute to that worth and genius, can follow his counsel as the counsel of other sages, and differ as they did in his day from him, without being apostates and unbelievers . . . .

Heartened by this support Wise responded " . . . that every man and every woman of the congregation *Beth Elohim* in Charleston is a true-hearted Reformer, a heroic defender of the sacred cause of progress . . . while the congregations in the north are still dead . . . ."

Meanwhile, Charleston's Portuguese-rite *Beth Elohim* engaged Dr. Julius Eckman. Forty-niner Eckman, Prussian-born and educated, a moderate reformer, came into conflict with Poznanski, a radical reformer.

Disapproving of Poznanski's theories in religion, particularly of his rejection of the resurrection of the dead, coupled with his denunciation of the Creed of *Beth Elohim*, displayed in golden letters on a marble plaque in the Temple, Eckman's contract was not renewed.

In 1852, Eckman left for *Bnai Israel*, Augusta, Georgia; in 1853, he ministered at *Schaarai Shomayim*, Mobile, Alabama [Different spelling but same name as the New Orleans German-rite congregation]; and in 1854, at *Emanu-El*, San Francisco, where after a year he opened his own school, *Hephtzi-Bah* [My Delight Is In Her]. In 1857, he began publishing a weekly, *The Gleaner Ha-Me'assef*, named after the Hebrew organ of that name published in Germany, first of the "enlightenment" era, devoted to the education of youth.

Eckman typified the restlessness of the times.

But nowhere would there be greater excitement than that which exploded in Albany, after Rice's excommunication of Wise in 1850.

Louis Spanier, president of *Beth-El* wrote to his kinsmen, Dr. Nathan Adler, Chief Rabbi of London and former rabbi of Hannover, Prussia, together with his successor in Hannover, Rabbi Samuel Ephraim Meyer [Mayer], of Wise's excommunication. They promptly responded, asking him to do all in his power to prevent Wise from preaching further because of his heresies.

Wise, confronted by Spanier's attempts to bar him from the pulpit, claimed that the president took that course of action because he feared being exposed for having violated the Sabbath, which would disqualify him from his office. With the backing of the trustees, Wise continued to preach. On June 1, he spoke against the propriety of observing such ceremonies as the "Second Day of Festivals," because they obstructed a spiritual approach to God.

The Orthodox majority in the congregation thereupon petitioned for Wise's formal impeachment and immediate dismissal. Spanier then ordered Wise to submit a handwritten defense of his views on the coming of the Messiah and resurrection of the dead. Wise refused, stating that he preferred to defend his views in person. Thereupon Spanier wrote to Dr. Raphall for a notarized statement of Wise's declarations in Charleston at the Poznanski-Raphall debate, which had led to Wise's excommunication.

Raphall promptly obliged, forwarding the following document to Albany:

> The undersigned, at the request of Mr. L. Spanier, do herewith certify that we were present at a public controversy held in this city between the Rev. Dr. Raphall and the Rev. Mr. Poznanski, and that at the said controversy, the Rev. Dr. Raphall propounded there two questions to the meeting; the first was:—

"Do you believe in the coming of the Messiah?" To which question the Rev. Dr. Wise, of Albany, who was present, answered foremostly in a loud and distinct voice,

"NO!"

The second question was,

"Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead?" The Rev. Dr. Wise was again heard by us to say in a loud and distinct voice,

"NO!"

Given under our hands and the seal of the Congregation Sheayreet [sic!] Israel, this day, the eight day of July, 5610 (1850).

Samuel Hart, Sen.,
President of the Congregation Sheayreet Israel.

Jacob Rosenfeld,
Minister of the Congregation Sheayreet Israel.

S. Valentine,
Secretary and Treasurer.

Sworn to and signed by, the Rev. J. Rosenfeld, Mr. Samuel Hart, Sen., and Mr. S. Valentine, in the presence of L. U. [probably J.] Moses.

Notary Public and Q.U., Ex. Off.

President Spanier published this document in *The Occident* and *The Asmonean*. He quoted from Rice's document of excommunication his rhetorical query: " . . . to ask all Jews, ministers, as well as competent laymen, throughout these United States, whether a man who denies two fundamental articles of the Jewish faith is a fit and proper person to hold the office of Rabbi and preacher in a Jewish Congregation?"

Spanier received numerous letters postmarked Baltimore, Charleston, Richmond, Philadelphia, New York, and other cities, as well as letters from Dr. Adler of London and Dr. Meyer of Hannover, all urging the removal of Wise from his ministry.

Robert Lyons, publisher of *The Asmonean*, reported:

> The publication of the Charleston certificate, appears to have operated as a firebrand amidst the worthy gentlemen comprising the congregation, Beth-El of Albany . . . . Not all the wrath of all the Caesars ever presented such a spring tide of vituperative phrases as the bilious temperament of a few choleric men have lately sputtered forth . . . .

> However, amidst all this, don't lose sight of the question—Does a disbelief in "The coming of the Messiah" and "The Resurrection of the Dead" disqualify a man from holding the office of Rabbi in a Jewish congregation!

Lyons, who was supportive of Wise, asked: "Why does Mr. Spanier persecute Dr. W[ise] in such a way? Is it the mere love of an attachment to our holy faith against godless attempts of the Reformer? We must doubt it very much . . . ."

In sympathy with Wise's views, Lyons appointed him editor of the literary and philosophy department of his Anglo-Jewish weekly, *The Asmonean*.

Wise promptly struck back at his opponents with an essay entitled "On the Immortality of the Soul," asserting that Maimonides had rejected belief in the resurrection of the dead!

Leeser consulted with Rabbi Rice and, in his refutation of Wise's essay, taunted the Albany Reformer about his scholarship:

> Dr. Wise boasts so much of learning, and still he misquotes the words of the learned. In his Hebrew letter he classes Maimonides on his side as regards philosophy. but I have been furnished with an extract from a comment[ary] on the *Moreh Nebochim* [Guide for the Perplexed], by Isaac Eichal, by Rabbi A. Rice, of Baltimore . . . .

Wise thereupon assailed Leeser in rebuttal:

> Our opponent was obliged to send to Baltimore, to have a passage of the *Moreh* translated for him, and now he is our judge . . . .
>
> A man, pretending to be a Jewish Minister, without ever having visited a Hebrew institute—pretending to be a Rabbi, without having the *Marenua Hatorah* [sic!] of any one authority in the world, travels in the United States as it appears, for the purpose of publishing slander against me, in the following words:
>
> If you believe in the *Yoreh Deah* you are not *yotze* [acting according to Jewish law] to let that man preach in your *shul*; for he does not believe in *Tehiyoth Hamethim* [Resurrection of the Dead] and the *Meshiach* [Messiah].

Reverend Leeser, who had never claimed ordination nor ever referred to himself as rabbi, challenged Wise, who claimed that he had been ordained in his native Bohemia by his teachers, Solomon Judah Rappaport, Chief Rabbi of Prague; Samuel Freund, Rabbi at the *Yeshivah* of Rabbi Loeb Schlesinger; and a third member of the *Beth Din*, Ephraim Loeb Teweles, to produce his credential: "I am not called doctor or

rabbi . . . .but I would like to see the diploma which constituted Dr. Wise a doctor of divinity . . . ."

Neither Leeser nor anyone else had ever seen the *Semicha* Wise claimed to have possessed. Like many Jewish youngsters of his day, Wise attended *Cheder* for his elementary religious studies, perhaps even a *Yeshivah* for his secondary religious studies. So, too, did he attend a gymnasium and a university for secular studies, but no one had ever seen his doctoral degree, though he titled himself Doctor.

Upon his arrival in America, Wise tutored immigrant factory workers in English in a New York night school. Then he taught Hebrew in the synagogue school of *Mishkan Israel*, in New Haven. Aspiring to a rabbinical post, Wise returned to New York, where Lilienthal, in the presence of Isaac D. Walter, president of *Anshe Chesed* congregation, made Wise an "assistant bishop" and introduced him to the public thereafter as rabbi.

An Orthodox protestor to Wise's pretentions to the title of rabbi, as of other Reformers, wrote:

> We live, we are sorry to confess, in an age where humbug seems to reign supreme . . . Of late we have had, and we must say, since an additional opportunity was offered by religious publications, such an immense accession of Right Reverends, Reverends and Doctors, without the necessary qualifications of right, reverence and *doctus*, that the quantity of these titles is frightful to behold, and from the surplus on hand, has become a perfect drug on the market . . . and the highest title, formerly only conferred by the true scholar, by the most eminent, learned masters of Sanhedrins, are now awarded by a congregational board of trustees, consisting of merchants, traders, &c, &c . . .
>
> These are all shams, without virtue, truth or substance, which, including Mr. Wise's Doctordom, flit for a short period life-like before our vision, and then, like Fata Morgana, dissolve into air, where they originated, and are seen no more . . . .

After he had served in the ministry for a few years, Wise became accustomed to being called "rabbi" or "doctor" and deluded himself into believing that he in fact was such. Having gained that recognition, he spoke in pious indignation of imposters to the title and decried the fact that "almost anybody considers himself capable of being a minister, teacher, rabbi, or any other body who wears a white crevat and styles himself reverend, or, Wise jibed, "**אי כבוד**" [without honor] as their Hebrew title runs . . . ."

Wise often repeated his charge, that

> whoever chooses is a minister, wears a white handkerchief around his neck, styles himself a reverend, makes laws, establishes customs, is an authority, and severs the congregations from each other. Knowledge or no knowledge, talent or none, piety or hypocricy, this is not the question; the congregation stands in need of a minister or a teacher, one comes, offers his services, pleases the men or the ladies, and he is the long expected Messiah. . . .

With the proliferation of those who titled themselves "rabbi-doctor," Wise, instead of producing his credentials, in a display of self-righteousness, pointed his finger at others though three pointed back at himself. He audaciously complained that "Reverend Doctors grow out of rocks and prairies in this country . . . Therefore it soon will be a shame for an honest man to be styled a Reverend Doctor . . . ."

Rabbi Rice, who all the while had refused to enter into polemics with the man he had excommunicated, could contain himself no longer and issued a warning:

> But the letter of Dr. Wise stirs up within me a desire to maintain silence no longer. I consider it my duty now to speak publicly my sentiments. "It is a time to be doing for the Lord; they have made void thy law" [Psalms 119:126], for I pity my brethren that the wayward fancies of man should be held before their eyes as truth and religion . . . .
>
> I come forth only to do my duty as a true Israelite, to show to my brethren the iniquity of these doctrines, and to warn them not to go in their paths . . . .that there is no person who represents a greater danger to our faith than Dr. Wise, may his name be obliterated. He is a wicked person and a great heretic . . . .

At Albany, Spanier and the *Beth-El* synagogue officers drew up a list of complaints: six specific charges against Wise. These he presented at the quarterly congregational meeting on September 5, 1850, by which time all traveling peddlers would have returned home in time for the Hebrew New Year beginning two days later.

Spanier read the charges, which were signed by him, the vice-president, secretary, and forty-four members. He proposed "that the contract with Dr. Wise should be declared null and void [and] that he, Dr. Wise, should forthwith be deprived of his functions as Rabbi and Preacher of the Congregation Beth-El."

The membership approved the officer's proposal, and the resolution was delivered to Wise. He replied, "That, in pursuance of his right, and under the direction of a majority of the Board of Trustees, that he should

persist in holding his office and doing his duty, he would continue in his office . . . ."

On *Rosh ha-Shanah* eve, Wise entered the synagogue, accompanied by his faithful trustees, but his seat was occupied by Spanier. Wise swallowed his pride and took another seat. Though he and his supporters controlled their temper, angry emotions seethed beneath the surface. It was the calm before the storm.

At the morning service his seat was again occupied, Wise took another seat. When the Holy Ark was opened prior to the reading from the *Torah* scrolls, Wise stepped up and walked across the pulpit towards the Ark to remove the Scroll and offer a prayer, as was his usual custom. Suddenly, Spanier moved between him and the Ark to block his approach and, without saying a word, struck Wise with his fist with such force that his cap flew off his head! Wise, stunned and speechless, stood bareheaded before the Scrolls of the Law reposed in the Holy Ark!

The moment of silence acted as a signal that triggered a terrible uproar. The young people of the choir, supporters of Wise, jumped down from the loft, fighting their way through the surging crowd of worshippers, everyone moving towards Wise, attackers and defenders alike. Within two minutes the entire assembly, wrapped in prayer shawls and with prayer books in hand, turned into a struggling mass. Finally, the sheriff and his posse arrived, but even they could not break through the crowd. They were in fact forced out into the street by the onrushing assembly surging out of the synagogue. The synagogue empty, the sheriff locked its doors, took the keys from Spanier, and each faction resorted to another location to complete the holy day worship.

The editor of the *Albany Evening Atlas* of September 7, 1850, with tongue in cheek in reporting the incident remarked: "It seems that they are not all united in love for the Rev. Dr. Wise, their spiritual adviser . . . ."

No sooner did the battered and bruised Wise reach home than the constable arrived to arrest him as the ringleader of a rebellious mob at a public service. Seizing him by the coat, he led Wise that *Rosh ha-Shanah* morning through the streets of Albany to the police station, where he was arraigned in court and then released. He left the station to the hearty hurrahs of the trustees and his followers, who were waiting outside. They followed him to his home, where services were completed.

The synagogue was ordered closed by order of the sheriff. Spanier and the congregation may have worshipped at *Beth Jacob* for all the other autumn holidays as well, for the sheriff, when he returned the synagogue keys to Spanier after *Rosh ha-Shanah*, requested that it remain closed until after all the autumnal holidays.

Closing the synagogue did not close the incident. Wise entered a suit against *Beth-El* for breach of contract and damages, and he was awarded a settlement of $800. During the Tabernacles holiday, he and his followers organized a reform temple, the fourth in the land, which they named *Anshe Emeth* [Men of Truth].

As if to taunt the Orthodox *Beth-El*, they used the settlement for a down payment on a Baptist church on one of the city's principal streets, on South Pearl at the head of Herkimer, nearby *Beth-El* on Herkimer Street.

Now Wise could preach the truth of his convictions in an unorthodox manner.

Chapter 26
Historical Histrionics

AFTER THE stormy fall holy days in Albany, Isaac Mayer Wise, crushed but not vanquished by the powerful Orthodox opposition to his heretical stand, set out on a lecture tour to vindicate and propagate his position. He hoped to offset and dispel the adverse effects and odium of the excommunication ban pronounced upon him.

In New York, Wise met with Lilienthal and Merzbacher. With their encouragement, he proceeded to Philadelphia. Samuel Adler, president of *Rodeph Shalom*, invited Wise to speak over the threats of the Orthodox "to devour him." In the former Kenild Church, on Juliana Street, acquired by *Rodeph Shalom* four years earlier, he addressed the congregation. Wise told the large assembly that he " . . . aimed to give Reform an historical foundation," asserting that Leeser agreed with him that "Reform, basing on the Gaon Saadia, Bachya [ben Joseph Ibn Paquda; Pakuda, Bakoda], Maimonides, and Isaac Abarbanel [sic! Abravanel], must be acceptable to every one." Leeser, who was in the audience, did not speak up, having already stated in *The Occident*

> that the Reforms affected by Saadiah and Maimonides in their generations, as also by Rabbi Yehudah [Hanasi Rabenu] Hakkadosh in the compilation of the Mishnah, bear scarcely any analogy to the measures at present advocated by our new *men*. Then it was to restore the beauty of religion, which had been dimmed by the lapse of ages of darkness; whereas now men endeavour to break down the landmarks of our faith, by introducing into it features hostile to its very existence . . . .

Commenting on what he saw as Wise's dichotomous position, Leeser told the public that "No one . . . .can divide himself into two, preach as an Orthodox and unite in prayer with the schismatics. He must be either one or the other . . . .[for] Judaism has but one Orthodox principle, and this is *whatever our religion teaches*."

In fending off Leeser's barrage, Wise challenged him in terms typical of one calling for a duel:

> After the numerous explanations which I have given on this subject in *The Asmonean*. I am entitled to declare that man to be a malignant and wilful slanderer, who, too ignorant to build up a reputation for himself endeavors to become popular by slandering me and misrepresenting my words. I challenge that man to come forward as a man of honor, and come himself, and discuss the matter in a public paper, when he shall always find me ready to defend my principles; but as long as he crept in the dark like a venemous serpent, I despise him as a malignant slanderer, and the principal cause of the trouble in Albany . . . .

Addressing himself to Philadelphia's *Rodeph Shalom* congregation of merchants and peddlers, Wise pointed out that

> Criticism, sound scientific and thorough criticism, the safest conductor to truth, were the perpetual guide . . . . [that] a thorough and scientific investigation of the Talmud and the post-Talmudical literature, in order to ascertain the principle on which our sages proceeded, would be the greatest service that could possibly be rendered to the cause of progress, improvement, and salutary Reforms . . . .

Many of those in the audience were spellbound as Wise attempted to reconcile his scientific treatment of biblical history with the Orthodox conceptions of Abraham ben Meir Ibn Ezra, the great medieval scholar of Spain, whose famed biblical commentary was unknown to most of them. Wise turned to Ibn Ezra, whom he called a biblical critic, and forerunner of Reform. Therefore, claimed Wise, since his Reforms were based on the authority of Ibn Ezra and developed over the centuries ever since the days of the talmudists, he was the true heir to traditional Judaism. "This," triumphantly exclaimed Wise, "is historical Judaism."

Wise borrowed the term "historical Judaism" from the "historical Jew" in the *Confession of Faith* by Dr. Ludwig Philippson, founder of the *Algemeine Zeitung des Judentums* and Reform preacher in Magdeburg, Prussia. Thus wrote Philippson:

> Several years ago I had an interview with a high dignitary.

After being introduced, he said to me, "To make it short, give me your confession of faith. I know but two classes of Jews, Reform Jews or Orthodox Jews; to which of the two do you belong?"

"I regret," replied I, "that your Excellency only knows those two, since I belong to neither of them."

"And what are you then?"

"I am an historical Jew. Permit me, Sir, to explain this in a few words. I as a Jew, stand on a history of four thousand years old, and only exist as such through this history. Take away this history from me, and I am nothing in view of religion, and by no means a Jew.

"If I look through this history, it teaches me that since the time of Abraham, yet more since the revelation through Moses, there are immutable doctrines and principles of God, of the world and of man, of morality and sanctification, prevailing through all centuries of Judaism, which appear clear and undoubted, amidst all the changes and revelations of the inward and outward fate of my tribe. I find also, that even in the practice of these doctrines and principles, a firm and characteristic aim has manifested itself, through all ages. Nevertheless it is an irrefutable fact, that at the different periods, not only various ideas have been attached to their eternal laws and principles, but that also the whole form and the real appearance of this Judaism, have been at the point of constant development.

This the Pentateuch teaches us already, for the moral doctrines of the Patriarchs appear to agree in essential points, different from the law of Moses; in the latter, we see already changes taking place, as when instead of the first born, the Levites and Cohanim are appointed; then the regulation about the slaughtering of animals throughout the land . . . We further observe it during the time of the Judges and Kings until Solomon, in regard to the different places of sacrifices, when but one such plan ought to have been established; also the arrangement which David and Solomon made regarding the Levites; the introduction of Psalms and music in the service of the temple by David. We see it in the unmistakeable relation of the Prophets to the Law; in the alteration of Laws, written down by Ezekiel in his exile; the radical changes and regulations of Esra [sic] and Nehemiah; in the establishing of synagogues *besides* the second temple; in the firmly adopted form of prayers which originated at the time of the sacrifices; in the strict obligation to these prayers, which arose afterwards contrary to all former intentions in the talmudic rabbinical law-apparatus, that from the time of the Maccabees and during the fifteen centuries after, spread itself about, adding more and more to it; the valid doctrines of which, nevertheless, gained strength only by slow degree; and after all could not

stand firm enough to prevent the arising of many different rites, and a variety of little Minhagims [customs]; all these facts convince me that Judaism has always carried within itself a great development, and again, that this development has sustained Judaism; without which, of course, it cannot be imagined, without which it could not have existed.

Steering a course between Orthodoxy and Radical Reform, Wise preached to the members of *Rodeph Shalom* a moderate Reform concept postulated by Ludwig Philippson, that historical Judaism continued the mainstream of Judaism. Wise formulated the teachings of Philippson in his address:

> The knowledge of these facts teaches me that Orthodox Judaism, consisting principally in the unchangeable obligation, to observe all the ceremonies, customs, usages, and habits, which formed themselves and were enacted, until the middle of the last century, regardless of the changes of life, circumstances, ideas and opinions, to which the individuals, and the mass of the Jews, were and still are liable . . . .is a fiction, and that Reform Judaism . . . .for the transposition of the Sabbath to the first day of the week, the setting aside of the circumcision, the exclusion of the Hebrew from divine service, the abolition of all our old tokens, in short the entire separation from the historical standard of Judaism, the total negation of the law, and even the ambiguity and doubtfulness of the doctrine, all this is such a destruction of the whole spirit of Judaism . . . is no less a fiction.
>
> The essence of Judaism will always be this, to maintain and uphold the eternal doctrines and principles, in the historical development . . . .
>
> The historical development, consists in the maintenance of all historical and general facts, as long as they are vital, and doctrines and principles appear in them in the influence of life, and in the higher spiritual view of the historical and concrete material.

Wise, concluded that:

> Notwithstanding the extreme parties who especially at times when the development appears more rapidly, show themselves the most obstinate. Such extreme parties have often existed amongst the Jews. Moses saw them in Korah, Samuel in Saul, the Prophets in the kings and princes opposite themselves, the Pharisees and Sadducees, the schools of Hillel and Shamai, the Rabbinites and Karaites, Maimonides and the French Rabbis, the Cabalists and Rabbinists, the Chassidists and Talmudists show as great an opposition in Judaism of old as we have it now. Never yet though, has Judaism been injured by these oppositions; the historical Judaism has stept

over them; and to that historical Judaism I am attached with my whole soul . . . .

In Baltimore, as in Philadelphia, at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, Wise called for constructive Reform structured upon a historical foundation. He recalled afterwards: "I embellished my thoughts with flowery expressions, threw bombshells into the camp of Orthodoxy, and held aloft the standard of constructive Reform. Everybody seemed to be satisfied. . . . except Rabbi Abraham Reiss . . . who could not digest the new themes."

At the prompting of the Orthodox, Rice requested permission of the officers to address his former congregants on the following Sabbath, but the officers refused permission. Wise jibed that "Reiss said he wished to make Weiss [*weiss* in German meaning "white"] black, but that request was denied and Wise remained white . . . ."

To Rice, Wise who irresponsibly and irreverently dismissed the fundamental principles of Jewish faith was "a wolf draped in the meek, wooly, garment of the harmless sheep"; the precursor of drastic and violent changes in Judaism and the Jewish community. Rice cried out in the words of the Prophet: "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight!"

To Leeser, Rice wrote in a most pessimistic vein: "In Baltimore, all hope is gone, for the people are in an undisciplined state."

Rice's influence yet had its effect at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. Those officers who demonstrated their satisfaction with Wise's suggested abolition of the "Second Days of Festivals," by opening their stores on that day, were admonished by the officers of the *Lloyd Street Schul* who passed a rule which made it obligatory for anyone holding or chosen for office to keep his place of business closed on that holy day.

Wise left Baltimore for the nation's capital. He met Secretary of State Daniel Webster, who introduced him to the Jewish Senator, Judah P. Benjamin. Wise gained an appointment with the newly elected president, Millard Fillmore. The chief executive acknowledged receipt of a petition from Wise's friends in Albany to appoint him to a post in the Library of Congress. Wise politely declined.

Wise returned to Philadelphia for a return speaking engagement at *Rodeph Shalom*, whose members wanted to elect him to their pulpit. Apparently even the Orthodox in that congregation felt that Wise was an improvement over their previous rabbi—"a tramp named Kohn." That

Orthodox reverend had fallen in love with a Gentile woman, eloped with her, and apostatized.

Wise lectured on "The Origin of Reform" and the congregation elected him to the pulpit of *Rodeph Shalom*. However, he declined their offer, saying that he preferred not to disappoint his devoted followers in Albany.

Robert Lyons, editor of the *Asmonean*, to clear the air in Albany and elsewhere, urged in his weekly, issue of November 7, 1851, for "congregations to coalesce for the purpose of creating an Ecclesiastical Board, a Beth Din . . ."

In the following issue of November 14, Lyons told his readers that

> the call has produced an echo, the reverberation of which has broken the thin crust that covered the crater of combustibles of which Jewish society in New York is composed. The ultra's of all shades are in arms, and the poor journalist is nearly overwhelmed by the cloud of scoria and torrent of lava ready to be poured on his devoted head.
>
> A *Beth Din*—"orthodoxy and tyranny" exclaim the new lights, the advocates of progress [radical Reformers, as Poznanski]. A *Beth Din*—"Where are your materials, and who will agree to its jurisdiction? argue the men who desire to renovate but dread demolition [moderate Reformers, as Wise].
>
> A *Beth Din*—"Who will be the *Rush* [sic! Rosh, head]? Who will guard us from changes?" urge the parties who wrapt up in their imagined sanctuary, violently oppose all movement, and obstinately stand tamely by, while the religion they profess to love and venerate is desecrated by all sorts of mummeries, perpetrated by unclear men in the name of Jewish rites. . . .
>
> What we seek is not the gathering of a conclave liable to these objections; we ask for an institution absolutely necessary to constitute our divided congregations, a Jewish community . . . We know men well *qualified* for the office, and we do not assume too much when we add, *willing* to accept and perform the responsible duties of so eminent a position in a fitting manner. All that is required is the assent of the congregations—of the people—and shall that be withheld?

Since Rice was in New York regularly in his quest to earn a livelihood, one wonders if Lyons had him in mind. At any rate, the congregations, the people, ignored Lyons call.

Wise, secure in his Albany Temple, devoted himself to translating Dr. Isaak Markus Jost's *Geschichte des Israelitishen Volkes* [History of the

Israelite Nation] into English. He interspersed what he discerned to be "the dictates of advanced science" in order to establish his historical basis for the Reform of Judaism in America. He signed his name as its author.

In the Spring of 1853, Wise proudly carried the completed manuscript to New York, seeking a publisher. In his satchel he carried a recommendation from Horace Greeley, founder of *The New Yorker* magazine, which two years earlier had popularized the slogan: "Go west, young man," and a letter from New York Senator William H. Seward, as well as 1500 names for advance subscriptions. None of the publishers he contacted would accept his work, but a determined Wise returned to Albany and contracted himself for 2000 copies.

Upon the appearance of Wise's publication of the *History of the Israelitish Nation*, Rice promptly issued a warning to American Jewry to beware, for that volume contained many distortions and falsifications, the most critical being his denial of the divine revelation—the very foundation of Judaism! Rice stated that he preferred not to try to reason with "an irrational and wicked individual."

While Rice in this singular instance resorted to an *argumentum ad hominem*, his epithet was mild when compared with Wise's in his attacks on his opponents. In turn, Wise heaped upon opponents many choice opprobriums; to name but a few he reserved for Leeser: publisher of falsehoods, a man throwing dirt, a man vomiting poison, vile and venemous subject, malicious slanderer, liar, hypocrite, barking dog, mad dog, ignorant fellow, ignoramus of the first water, jewelry peddler, even Haman, Polander, Russian serf, though Leeser was of German origin.

Rice explained his reluctance to attack the excommunicated Reformer in a note to Leeser:

> Pertaining Weiss [sic!], I am not inclined to indulge, to waste the very little time I have. It is as the prophet said: "The wise and learned person will keep silent at that time" [*Amos* 5; 13]. If the people would only be interested and wish to be convinced! But everyone does as he pleases. May God look down from heaven and see! . . . .

The Orthodox leader Morris Jacob Raphall, among others, joined Rice in his excommunication of Wise. They denounced him as an apostate, a heretic, and a German rationalist. Embittered by the barrage of hostile utterances cast at him from throughout the land, Wise said in his defense: "I was reviled, cursed, called a heretic . . . I was condemned, rejected and damned . . . I made the mistake of explaining miracles from the rationalistic viewpoint . . . I treated biblical history as secular history . . . ."

To counter Wise's Reform presentation of Jewish history, Dr. Raphall began writing a traditional version which he entitled *Post-Biblical History of the Jews*. It was published two years later.

Wise, though he lacked rabbinic knowledge, gained recognition by his publication of a history of the Jews, his lectures, and leadership in the Reform movment, that the officers of *Bene Yeshurun*, Cincinnati, vied with those of *Emanu-El*, San Francisco, to engage Wise of Albany, as their rabbi. Wise favored Cincinnati. there he felt he would enjoy unrestricted freedom to institute Reforms, without interference from the Rices', Leesers', Raphalls', and other leaders of Orthodoxy. Wise was convinced that Cincinnati's central location would enable him to become the dominant figure in spreading Reform in Judaism throughout the country.

In 1853 Dr. Jacob Rosenfeld, minister of *Bene Yeshurun* resigned and its officers invited Wise to lecture before the congregation. Wise promptly accepted and set forth from Albany in the company of Dr. Isidor Kalisch, who was en route from New York returning to his ministry at *Tifereth Israel* [Glory of Israel] Cleveland. Kalisch had three years earlier served the pioneer congregation *Anshe Hasid* [Men of Mercy], founded in 1841, the name thereafter spelled *Chesed*. Kalisch had been soon dismissed because of his Reformist views. Joined by a Reform-minded minority of twenty members of *Anshe Chesed*, he founded the Reform society *Tifereth Israel*, in 1850, fifth Reform congregation in the land.

The winter of 1853 was a bitter cold one. That December, the train plowed its way through deep snow that blanketed upper New York State. Wise and Kalisch dicussed at length their views. Neither man was an ordained rabbi, but both served as ministers of Reform congregations they caused to become established that year, so they had much in common. During that trip they formed a fast friendship that would play an important role in the future course of Reform. Kalisch detrained at Cleveland, Wise at Cincinnati, both to minister in the Buckeye State.

Wise looked forward with great anticipation to settling in Cincinnati, "Queen City of the West", with a population of 155,000, an estimated 5,000 of whom were Jews. In its Jewish population it was second only to New York, having displaced Baltimore, which was now in third place. Here he would build the citadel of Reform Judaism.

During his brief visit to Cincinnati, Wise gained information of the development of the Jewish congregations of Cincinnati.

Beginning with *Bene Yeshurun*, he observed that the congregation followed the German-order of worship, ever since its founding in 1840 by immigrant Bavarian Jews. They had seceded that year from the English congregation, *Bene Israel* [Sons of Israel], which followed the English and German rite, since its founding in 1824. *Bene Yeshurun* maintained its own

shochet, in its total separation from the older established English-rite congregation, *Bene Israel*, which maintained its own *shochet*. But since members of both congregations obtained their meats from the same abbatoir, the two congregations organized the "Cincinnati Kashruth Committee." This Committee, to which each appointed three representatives, supervised the ritual slaughterers, and conducted periodic examinations to check their skill and knowledge in the presence of the Trustees of both congregations.

The English congregation appointed David Mayer who may have been an ordained rabbi, Nathan Malzer, and Daniel Ullmann, president of *Bene Israel*. The German congregation appointed their minister, Dr. James Gutheim, Simon Louis [Lewis], and Samuel Bruel. These committee members elected Nathan Malzer, president.

In 1847, when James K. Gutheim came to minister at *Bene Yeshurun*, Wise bewailed the actions of this committee, in that "a poor *Shochet* was compelled to make the trip to Baltimore to undergo an examination by a competent authority." Rice licensed him, as recorded in the *Minute Book* of *Bene Yeshurun*:

> Mr L Aberhams [Lippman Abraham] fully qualified & trustworthy as Schochet in virtue of his Chapuleh [sic!] procured a short time since from Rabby [sic!] Rice in Baltimore . . . .

In January, 1848, a conflict arose between the *shochetim* "Mosaic Butchers" as Wise called them. Aaron Buxbaum, *shochet* of *Bene Israel*, charged Lipman Aberham [sic! Liebmann Abraham], *shochet* of *Bene Yeshurun*, who had been approved by Rabbi Rice in the previous year, as being unfit in his performance. The representatives of *Bene Yeshurun* who served on the "Cincinnati Kashruth Committee" constituted themselves into a *Beth Din* and exonerated their congregational *shochet*, declaring that the charge against Abraham had "originated in malicious & not religious motives." When in October, 1848, Buxbaum again charged him with being unfit, Abraham packed up his ritual knives and left the city.

In Feburary 1850, the *Bene Israel* committee members, Ullmann, Malzer, and Mayer made an unannounced visit to the slaughter-house. Buxbaum, engaged in the act of slaughtering, was asked to produce the knife he was using. Inspecting the knife, they found it defective and asked Buxbaum if it was in proper order. He replied in the affirmative. They told him it was quite defective and returned it to him for a recheck. Again Buxbaum maintained it was in good order. The committee ordered him to return with them in their carriage to meet with the committee members of the congregation he served.

Bene Yeshurun officers at odds with those of *Bene Israel*, were determined to vindicate him, but their minister, the scholarly Rabbi Henry Abraham Henry, who succeeded Dr. Gutheim in 1849, remained aloof from the disputation. Therefore, the officers had their most learned layman, Simon Louis, submit their version of the dispute to Rabbi Rice for decision.

In his letter, Louis complained "of the contrivance of the committee to surprise their ritual slaughterer, Aaron Buxbaum, in the slaughterhouse." Rice replied that Buxbaum is disqualified as a ritual slaughterer and took the precaution of separately advising Nathan Malzer of his decision.

Bene Yeshurun's officers rejected Rice's ruling. On March 5, 1850, the congregation withdrew its representatives from the "Cincinnati Kashruth Committee" and appointed Simon Louis as their authority and guide. Louis's first act was to license the debarred Buxbaum. In August, 1850, audaciously, Buxbaum

> . . . complained that he had been publicly slandered by Mr. N. Malzer & Hart Judah. The slander was intended or Calculated to injure him in his Capacity as [*Shochet*] . . . .

The conflict between the two Cincinnati congregations gained national attention. Leeser sided with *Bene Israel* Congregation because

> without vouching now for Mr. M's [Malzer's] superior capacity which we believe he does not claim we still must join him here, because the Reverend Abraham Rice has decided in his favor; and him we do know, that he has not his superior as a Talmudist in America, as far, at least, as we can judge . . . .

The controversy continued into May of 1851; the minutes of *Bene Israel* recorded that

> A letter from Dr Rice of Baltimore was referred to a special committee of conference with power to settle the whole subject of Killing meat with a similar committee from the congn Beni Jeshrun [sic!].

In July, Rabbi Henry resigned the pulpit of *Bene Yeshurun* and departed for his new ministry in Syracuse, New York. In August, the newly-elected Dr. Jacob Rosenfeld of *Sheayreet Israel*, Charleston, South Carolina, arrived. Rosenfeld had made known his Orthodox stand at the dedication of *Sheayreet Israel* in 1847 when he urged strict conformity to tradition:

> Guard your religion and public worship from innovations . . . to hold firmly and adhere religiously to the divine precepts, which have been given to our ancestors on Horeb, as an inheritance of the house of Jacob . . . .

Jacob Rosenfeld had gained the position by his relations in the Queen City. His brother-in-law Abraham Moses's wife, Annie Jonas, was the daughter of Joseph Jonas, pioneer Jew of Cincinnati, and founder of the Orthodox English congregation *Bene Israel*.

Therefore, his arrival by rail in Cincinnati a few hours after sunset of the eve of *Rosh ha-Shanah*, which that year coincided with the Sabbath, shocked the Orthodox Jewish community. The following morning, Nathan Malzer of *Bene Israel* announced that Rosenfeld had forfeited his right to officiate at *Bene Yeshurun*, having disqualified himself by violating the holy day, the transgression being that he traveled past the *t'chum* [border, boundary; *t'chum* being 2000 *amah* or 4000 feet, about two-thirds of a mile, beyond the border of a built-up area of a locality, i.e., walking over two-thirds of a mile beyond an inhabited area into a sparsely inhabited or an uninhabited area]. Walking on the Sabbath over 2000 *amah* [Hebrew measure equal to the distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle-finger] is forbidden. Malzer stressed that while walking is forbidden past 2000 cubits beyond the city limits, but traveling by a vehicle on a holy day is forbidden even within the city limits. However, *Bene Yeshurun* officers disregarded his protestations, arguing that Rosenfeld could not be faulted for the train being unavoidably delayed.

Thus matters stood at an impasse. Three days after Rosenfeld arrived, three Jewish peddlers came to Cincinnati. They informed friends that they had traveled on the same train with Rosenfeld, but when the conductor announced that the train had been unduly delayed and would not reach Cincinnati till late that night, they detrained at Cleveland. Rosenfeld, however, chose to continue on, though he knew that he would have to travel on the holy day, and violate both the Sabbath and *Rosh ha-Shanah*.

Nathan Malzer publicized Rosenfeld's willful transgressions, whereupon the officers of *Bene Yeshurun* blamed Malzer for stirring unrest in the congregation, stating that "ever since his residing in this city, [Malzer] has been the cause of *every* disturbance that has taken place among the congregations of this city, destroying all harmony . . . .endeavoring continually to corrupt our members by sedition, exciting them to disaffection, as was the case with N. Bing."

Nathan Bing, leader of the Orthodox at *Bene Yeshurun* charged that Rosenfeld had indeed violated the holy day; moreover, he acted as ritual slaughterer though he did not possess a license, that he slaughtered and

ate "Guinea-fowl,"—a non-kosher species prepared by his Gentile housekeeper, who did not salt the meat as required by Jewish law.

At a special congregational meeting, Simon Louis presented the charges. Rosenfeld, in refuting them, admitted that he arrived on the holy day, but declared that traveling by rail was nowhere prohibited in the Jewish Law codes. Handing Louis a volume of the Jewish code of laws, Rosenfeld demanded that he be shown an expressed prohibition against traveling by rail on a holy day.

As proof that travel on a holy day was permitted Rosenfeld disclosed that the Orthodox Reverend Solomon Jacobs, enroute to occupy the *Sheayreet Israel* pulpit he vacated in Charleston, arrived by boat in Charleston on that same holy day when *Rosh ha-Shanah* coincided with the Sabbath, six hours later than his late time of arrival in Cincinnati. Jacobs did not remain aboard ship until after conclusion of the second day of the New Year. Actually, Jewish law permits disembarking from a ship from above ten *tefachim* [handbreadths] (not from a canoe, raft, or barge), where the *t'chum* is not applicable. And neither did he, Rosenfeld, remain aboard the railcar until after the New Year.

Jacob Rosenfeld proceeded to refute the charges leveled against him. He produced documents that attested to his qualifications not only as *shochet* but also for the specialized function of *nikur*—removal of forbidden sinews and veins. As regarded the *kashrus* of guinea-fowl, Rosenfeld revealed that the Jews of Cincinnati were unaware that it was permitted by a tradition—for the Jews of Charleston, where he previously ministered, had eaten guinea-fowl. Moreover, Rosenfeld added that guinea-fowl was kosher even without a tradition, for like the turkey, an American bird imported into Europe where it had been unknown, European Jews accepted its *kashrus* though there was no tradition, for, he punned, "the American Indians could not have given any." Lastly, he informed that his meals were prepared by a Gentile housekeeper, but she was supervised by his wife, Lenora, a Jewess, as required by Jewish law.

Simon Louis, hailed in 1851 by the officers of *Bene Yeshurun* "as a gentleman of integrity, sincerity, and veracity; and anything said derogatory to his character, we consider an imposition on the community . . . ." was now, in 1852, for charging Rosenfeld with violations of Jewish Law, derided "as a detestable, worthless character, unworthy of notice . . . ." Louis barely escaped a beating at the hands of angered members.

Louis thereupon referred the issue to Mayer and Malzer who, in turn, submitted the subject to Rabbi Rice for adjudication. Rice declared that Rosenfeld, had acted contrary to Jewish law on all counts. The

officers of *Bene Yeshurun* at a meeting held August 25, 1852, announced that neither they nor their minister would acknowledge any *Beth Din* in this country or any other country, and awarded Rosenfeld a new three-year contract. He remained another year and in 1853, at Cincinnati, resigned; having been elected to the pulpit of *Mickva Israel*, Savannah, Georgia, due to influential in-laws there.

Prior to Rosenfeld's departure from Cincinnati, to assume the ministry of *Mickva Israel*, Savannah, Georgia, the congregation *Bene Yeshurun* tendered him a farewell banquet. The *Asmonean* and *Occident* detailed the festive departure and that the congregation, deeply affected by his leaving, presented him with a beautiful silver service.

But appearances are deceiving. A visitor disclosed that the President of *Bene Yeshurun*, Solomon Friedman, "who had a running antagonism with the rabbi," gave a very long speach, expressing deep sorrow at his departure. When an out-of-stater later asked the president about his sudden friendship, Friedman said: "You must be kidding. I was able to praise him because we were getting rid of him. And just to make sure he wouldn't change his mind, the service was not silver, but golden." Concluded the visitor: "This is a disgrace to both of them."

In January, 1854, following his election, elected to the ministry of *Mickva Israel*, Savannah, arranged through family connections, Isaac Mayer Wise returned to Albany, to settle his affairs and remained another few months, until after the Passover season. He mused about his election to *Bene Yeshurun* in the Orthodox stronghold of Cincinnati:

> I had read of continual quarrels among them about shochtim, and butchers; about eating hind-quarters, Guinea fowls, and other such things. I was fully posted up in the knowledge that the Rev. Mr. [Henry Abraham] Henry [minister from 1849 to 1851] and the Rev. Mr. [Jacob] Rosenfeld [minister from 1851 to 1853], had been their ministers, and that even they were not Orthodox enough for the people . . . . But then when I consider they had just unanimously elected Dr. Wise, of Albany . . . I was at a loss what to think . . . .

On April 20, 1854, a day after Passover, Isaac Mayer and Theresa Wise bid farewell to their congregation and friends in Albany, and moved on to Cincinnati.

Chapter 27
"The Jewish Luther"

> I daily pray God that some Jewish Luther would arise, and by preaching, by writing, and by prayer would cleanse the Augean Stables, would brush away the dust and cobwebs of ages, and would bring out Judaism in its native beauty, grandeur, and simplicity.

THIS LAYMAN'S prayer for a "Jewish Luther" was fulfilled in the person of Isaac Mayer Wise. But Dr. Wise found that Rice had exerted considerable influence upon Cincinnati's Jewish community. Rice denounced the election of one who earned the title "Jewish Luther," whom he had excommunicated. It was reported that "The Orthodox party in the East was furious at the sudden change of public opinion in Cincinnati." Upon his arrival, Wise remarked:

> that our brethren of Baltimore are the most obstinate friends of stability in the union; they hold tenaciously to every *Minhag* [custom], and are sincerely attached to every mis-usage left to us from by-gone ages, which they defend with chivalric bravery . . . .

Wise, upon beginning his ministry at *Bene Yeshurun*, wrote of his first impressions of the Jewish community in Cincinnati:

> Of course, everything was still officially Orthodox, but the leaders of Orthodoxy were weak and clumsy . . . .

Wise boasted:

> It did not take me long to become master of the situation in Cincinnati. The sacrosanct Orthodox party that had waged continual warfare for years with slaughterers, butchers, women's bath-house keepers, *Matzoth* bakers, *Ethrogim* dealers, and *Minhagim* peddlers . . . .disappeared like chaff, and no one knew what had become of all the gigantic minds and *lamdanim* [learned in Talmud]. The old *Beth Din* had been dissolved by a single pronunciamento uttered from the pulpit, and I assumed all rabbinical functions . . . .

Wise became the religious guide for the newly emerging congregations of the West. In the first month of his arrival in the "Queen City" he received a query from an outpost 400 miles Northwest of Chicago.

In the remote fur trading outpost of St. Paul in the Minnesota Territory, the few Jews in that northern region assembled to hold public

worship. Not having a *minyan* [quorum of ten males over thirteen years of age for public worship], they debated whether a co-religionist married to a Christian woman could be joined to a *minyan*, to be counted as "the tenth man" and accorded synagogue honors. One proposed that the question be submitted to Wise, another insisted it be sent to Raphall. As a compromise, they sent the query to both simultaneously.

Replied Dr. Raphall:

> New York, May 17, 1853
>
> In reply to your inquiry I beg to say that no congregation will receive as a member or admit to the ספר [Torah] for any דבר שבקדושה [sacred rite] a man who is married to a non-Israelite. His having children or not makes no difference. As to observing the covenant of Abraham, by having the children circumcised, is not enough. Before they can be recognized as Israelites they, like all other גרים [converts], must undergo טבילה [immersion in a ritual pool]. So must the girls [be immersed] . . . .

Wise replied:

> Our codes contain no law providing to exclude one from קהל [congregation] or forbid him to be called to the ספר [Torah] on account of his marriage connections, except the cases of ערוה [forbidden relationships, i.e. incest] as specified in Leviticus, Chap. 18, which please read.

Wise had become "master of the situation in Cincinnati" because there were members in the German-rite congregation *Bene Yeshurun* who had been influenced in their native land by such eminent Reformers as Dr. Abraham Geiger of Breslau, Dr. Ludwig Philippson of Magdeburg, Dr. Michael Sachs of Berlin, and in particular, by Dr. Leopold Stein of Frankfort. Wise boasted a personal acquaintanceship with Dr. Stein. He relished the thought that *Bene Yeshurun* members

> belonged to the better German element taught by Rabbis Leopold Stein, [Joseph] Aub, [Moses] Gutmann, M. [Moritz Abraham?] Levy [of Breslau?], [Samuel Wolf?] Rosenfeld, in Bavaria, and by [J] Mayer [of Hechingen?], [Naftali] Frankfurter in Würt[t]emburg . . . .

But it was to Dr. Leopold Stein, above all other German Reformers whom Wise credited with influencing followers who helped establish Reform Judaism in America. Stein's prestige rose with the Reform prayer book he composed in 1840 entitled *Gebete und Gesänge zum Gebrauch bei der öffentlichen Andacht*. In 1845, he chaired the second Re-

form rabbinical congress convened in Frankfort-am-Mein where he served as rabbi and pioneered Reform for over a decade. Wise stated:

> It may be put down as a fact that Reform among American Jews was accelerated by Leopold Stein, because many of our leading men and women in this country were educated under his influence and felt a rare attachment to him and his teaching.

Wise's charisma was such that the officers of the Orthodox *Bene Israel* congregation requested *Bene Yeshurun*'s officers to grant their rabbi permission to preach on alternate Sabbath mornings at their synagogue. The *Bene Yeshurun* officers rejected this proposal, but granted permission for Wise to preach on Saturday afternoons.

The Orthodox element of *Bene Israel* were displeased by the unorthodox content of Wise's responses to ritual queries and his sermons. However, the lecture that brought on the rift at *Bene Israel* took place not on the Sabbath, but on a weekday, at a celebratory occasion. This incident was recorded by Wise in his "Reminiscenses":

> The benevolent society celebrated its anniversary on Sunday evening. covers were laid for about two hundred people at Bernheimer's. The members of the various congregations were present in goodly numbers, food and drink were good, and at the close of the meal the traditional *nevorech lelohenu* [blessing after the meal] was recited. Immediately thereafter the business of the evening was broached. A number of toasts had been officially announced. I was to speak on charity, and the donations were to be collected after my address. Two speakers were to precede and two to follow me. The second toast was "Our Country," responded to by an ultra-Orthodox Englishman and a practiced speaker. He said not one word on the subject assigned to him, but devoted his remarks altogether to a scathing denunciation of the progressionists [sic!] and the world-unprovers, of the desire for novelty and sensation, so that all eyes were directed towards me. The English element was very prominent in Cincinnati at that time, and was well represented at the banquet.

After he had taken his seat, the toast on charity was announced, and Wise was introduced. He began as follows, without one prefatory word:

> "Once upon a time the frogs complained that they could find no rest nor peace, nay, more, that they could not sleep, for the earth revolved unceasingly. Some wise frogs interested themselves in the matter, and a general meeting of the frogs was called. The complaints grew louder and louder, until finally all the frogs were convinced

of the justice of the same, and thereupon the weeping and wailing became universal.

A wise old frog now took the floor and said: 'Wherefore wail and complain? Let us try to think of some remedy whereby we may remove the evil' The frogs became silent and hearkened. The wise frog continued 'Let us devise ways and means to bring our complaint before the throne of the God of justice, and ask him for relief.'

'But how can we reach the throne of the God of justice that is so high and far away?' asked an humble little frog. 'We can not leap high into the air, for we are only frogs.' This called forth renewed wailing and weeping.

The wise old frog arose once again and ordered the assembly to keep quiet. The frogs obeyed and he spoke: 'At night, after the scorching sun has sunk behind the mountains and the peaceful evening refreshes all creatures with its cooling breezes, all hearts beat kindly and glow with love. At such a time truly the all-just God will be merciful to us frogs, His creation. Let us be united, and we can accomplish anything. Let us unanimously and unitedly croak loudly and continuously after sunset in this fashion: "All-just God, we pray Thee to let the earth stand still for six hours after revolving for eighteen hours, in order that Thy harassed and troubled frogs may enjoy rest, quiet, and sleep." '

The glorious suggestion was greeted with jubilant shouts. All frogdom took an oath of fealty and jumped about comically. The frogs scattered in all directions, and kept their oath faithfully. As soon as after a hot summer day the evening, with its soft breezes and its balmy zephyrs, descended upon earth and breathed love and mildness into all hearts, the host of frogs came forth from the swamps and croaked and croaked loudly and clearly: 'O Thou all-just Creator of all, let the earth stand still for six hours in order that Thy frogs may sleep undisturbed!'

The frogs croak continually, the frogs croak still, and the earth—well, it moves none the less."

The Orthodox element of *Bene Israel*, insulted and infuriated, resigned, leaving control of the congregation that they founded a generation earlier to the Reform majority. They established *Sherith Israel*, electing Leopold Milius, president, and Nathan Malzer, Hyman and Nathan Moses, officers.

Compounded with his subsequent denial of fundamental beliefs of Judaism in his bid to head Reform in America, aroused the consternation of the Orthodox, one of whom demanded three years earlier, in his letter to *The Asmonean* dated April, 1850:

> . . . has Mr. Wise so little . . . .modesty, as to raise himself supreme ruler in his castle of vanity . . . .to consider himself a Brutus or a Luther?

Some members of the German community of Cincinnati elevated their minister, "The Jewish Luther," to the more celebrated title of "The Jewish Pope."

Chapter 28
Levirate: The Reform Lever

WISE, MINISTER of the German congregation *Bene Yeshurun* and with the reins of the English congregation *Bene Israel* in his grasp, took his first step towards gaining control of American-Jewish congregations everywhere.

Wise, whose ordination was unknown and his doctorate unrecorded, to deflect queries directed at his degrees audaciously seized upon the subject of charlatans, who usurped the titles "Rabbi," "Dr." Moreover, it was a signal for congregations to rally to his cause, Reform. In 1848 he had raised the issue of unqualified persons who issued the *get* [Jewish bill of divorcement]. Again, in 1855, he raised the issue, though he had no regard for its validity, in order to assert his authority as a spiritual leader and effect Reform. At this time of a carefree Jewish leadership, not only did this problem remain unresolved, but there came to light a case of moral turpitude even when there was a properly executed *get*. This matter took place at the Hanover Street congregation *Oheb Shalom* [Lover of Peace] in Baltimore.

In March, 1854, that newly organized congregation elected a Dr. Salomon to serve as reader and preacher. Its members who seceded from the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation to Reform the worship were pleased by Salomon's introduction of a Confirmation ceremony at the Pentacost Festival.

Salomon, a single man, told the congregation that he had been married but divorced his wife by a rabbinically issued *get* [divorce]. Assuming the perogative of a bachelor, he became engaged to a young lady, when an older woman suddenly arrived and moved in with the minister. When confronted by officers of the congregation, she stated that she was Mrs. Salomon, his lawful wife. The officers promptly dispensed with his services and they left the community.

Wise gloated over yet another *get*, the highly publicized Cleveland Divorce Case which attracted national attention. Around 1850, one

Nathan Becker married a Christian lady from Pennsylvania. Converted to Judaism by Dr. Isidor Kalisch, he insisted that Becker vow never to divorce her. A year passed when Cleveland's first Jewish divorce was reported in the city's newspaper, *Plain Dealer*, the editor explaining that "the old story" was the cause.

That Jewish divorce had been administered by Rabbi Joseph Levy. Rabbi Levy brought with him an extensive rabbinic library from his native Bohemia. He earned his living as a grocer in Cleveland, and each Sabbath taught the Biblical Readings to the worshippers at *Anshe Chesed* without accepting monetary compensation.

A scribe wrote the bill of divorce, and a third person constituted the required tribunal. Since no civil divorce had preceded the *get*, Kalisch berated the tribunal and scoffed that "the Chief Rabbi was a grocer . . . Of the other two Rabbis, one is a cigar maker, and the other a pedlar." Actually, the cigar maker, Bernhard Weidenthal, had authorization from European Rabbis to function as a scribe; the identity of the "pedlar" is unknown.

Kalisch, aggrieved by what he perceived as an affront to his position as rabbi, declared Levy's *get* null and void, claiming that only three ordained rabbis could issue a valid writ of divorce.

Isaac Mayer Wise endorsed Kalisch's rejection of the *get* issued by Levy. In truth, both, Wise and Kalisch were ignorant of Jewish law, for a *get* is valid if the tribunal was comprised of only one ordained *dayan* [judge], with a *sofer* [scribe], and two *edim kesharim* [qualified witnesses] to attest to the ceremony. Custom however is to have a tribunal of three rabbis.

Lyons, editor of *The Asmonean* sided with Kalisch; Leeser, editor of the *Occident* sided with Levy. Aaron Löwentritt, merchant and leader in the Jewish community upheld the elder scholar of the city, Levy.

But the problem remained: That a Jewish divorce had been granted without a civil divorce having been issued in advance.

Wise further noted that in New York, Reverend Simon C. Noot, Assistant *Chazzan* of congregation *B'nai Jeshurun*, in 1852 performed a religious wedding ceremony without a civil license having been issued.

Also in New York, Bookseller Chaim Nussbaum of *Shaarey Rachamin* [Gates of Compassion] congregation, 156 Attorney Street [previous home of *Rodeph Shalom*], came under fire for having performed a marriage ceremony between Passover and *Lag B'Omer*, when weddings were "forbidden unless for peculiar reasons." The complainent, who signed his initials "SA" [Dr. Simeon Abrahams], referred to Nussbaum as a "Book pedlar." SA an Orthodox and educated Jew, added that

> the impropriety of any individual assuming the right to perform the marriage ceremony exhibits itself in more phases than one, and perhaps those who unthinkingly allow it to be performed by such characters, may not in their Honey Moon joy think, that in after life their cheeks may often be crimsoned by their own offspring enquiering of Father and Mother *what* it was that caused them to be married by an obscure individual in the city of New York. . . .

"Ashkenazi" came to Nussbaum's defense, stating " 'qu'on ne doit laver sa linge salled qu'en famille—that family quarrells are not for the public entertainment.' "

SA, wrote to Robert Lyons, editor of *The Asmonean*, of complaints made ". . . about unknown individuals, or persons belonging to no congregation; or of ignorant and immoral persons such as glaziers, quack doctors, who without authority, performed these so called marriages."

Wise felt that such defects in Orthodox ministers was exactly what he needed to present for "public entertainment" and for his "private advancement."

But Wise needed a medium to publicize such instances and to promote his drive for Reform. Also, he needed an organ by which he could counteract Leeser's *Occident,* the organ of Orthodoxy.

On July 8, 1854, Wise began publication of a weekly Anglo-Jewish newspaper, *The Israelite*. Its motto was "Let there be light!"—the light, to Wise, being enlightenment, the illumination of Judaism by Reform.

Wise in naming his paper *The Israelite*, differentiated betweeen Israelites and Jews. He explained:

> The former are, as a class of people, known as belivers in the Old Testament, men and women who support congregations, public institutions of charity or instruction, visit houses of worship and assist in cultivating and promulgating the religious idea and advancing the cause of humanity.
>
> The other class called Jews are persons who do nothing for the benefit of man or the cause of Israel. They eat, drink. sleep, marry, raise a family, do business, make money and die like other heathens. They support no congregation, no beneficent or scholastic institution, worship nowhere, care for no soul, not even their own, live to die, to be really dead in time and eternity.
>
> This class of Jews does not belong to us Israelites; it belongs to the large class of nothingarians, the idle boarders of the American people, with whom we have nothing in common. . . . They have nothing to do with us. They do not recognize us and do not care for us, exactly as we do not care for them. We treat them as gen-

tlemen and ladies, if such they are, and consider them as dead-heads or dead weight on board our ancient ship.

Wise, however, did not publicly disclose the hidden meaning underlying the name *Israelite*, for on the surface is was perceived as a classy title, an elevated term, for Jew, which had been used by many a gentile in a derogatory manner. But he wasted no time in employing his newspaper to denigrate the Orthodox.

In *The Israelite*, he lashed out at Orthodoxy. Hurling in its first issues his first Reform missile into their camp, he attacked the biblical law of *chalitzah* [i.e. untying, loosening off—a release ceremony from a levirate marriage, of the obligation to marry a brother's widow if he died childless]. Wise declared it antiquated, impractical, and unreasonable, and advocated its abolition.

According to biblical law, if a married male Jew died childless, his surviving oldest brother had to marry his widow in order to perpetuate the family line and raise up an heir in his deceased brother's name. The sole purpose of the marriage was "raising the seed," and it had to be entered into only with the purest of intentions. When the purpose of perpetuating the name of the deceased brother was the only intent, then the *yabam* [levir, in Latin—a husband's brother] entered into a marriage called *yibbum* [levirate]. This law protected widows whose in-laws had no obligation to support her, unless she had a child.

By talmudic times the practice of the levirate ceremony, with proper intent lacking, was deemed objectionable. To marry a sister-in-law for beauty or other reasons became regarded as tantamount to incest. Therefore the *yabam* had the "right of refusal."

If the *yabam* refused to consummate the marriage, his widowed sister-in-law could remarry only after taking part in the *chalitzah* ["loosening off" the shoe] ceremony. After three months had passed since the death of the husband, to assure that no pregnancy had occured, two witnesses would testify in the presence of a *Beth Din* to the identity of the *levir* and the widow. Upon the *levir*'s refusal to marry his sister-in-law and his affirmation that he consents to *chalitzah*, a ceremonial leather boot is placed upon his right foot, laced, and tied beneath his knee. The widow then recites the biblical verse: "My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel; he will not perform the levirate duty unto me." The *levir* responds with the biblical statement: "I do not wish to take her." Thereupon the widow stoops and loosens the strings of the boot with her right hand. Holding up her brother-in-law's foot with her left hand, she pulls off the shoe with her right hand and throws it to the ground. Then she rises, and expectorates on the ground in front of him, in sight of the court of three judges and two witnesses and exclaims in

the words of the Bible: "So shall it be done to the man that doth not build up his brother's house, and his name shall be called in Israel, the house of him that had his shoe loosed."

The boot being a symbol of power, its removal signifies its surrender or the yielding of the owner's possession. Taking off the boot further called forth the traditional sign of mourning, as leather footwear are not worn the week following the loss of a close relation. In the instance of the *levirate*, because he had not fulfilled the marriage, his brother's name would not be kept "alive." Because of his refusal to marry his brother's childless widow, there would be no children to mourn the deceased brother. She, in turn, displayed her contempt for his refusal to perpetuate his brother's name by expectorating on the ground before him.

The *levirate* marriage became inoperative about a thousand years ago when polygamy was formally prohibited in European countries. Since that time it was superceded by *chalitzah*, the release ceremony that freed the widow to remarry. Over the centuries, in lands where families lived in close proximity, it was easily arranged for the brother-in-law and widow to come to the *Beth Din* for the *chalitzah* ceremony. However, during the mass migration of German Jews to America in the mid-19th century, families were separated by a vast ocean. Unable to go before a *Beth Din* with her brother-in-law, the widow remained *z'kukah* ["tied"] to her brother-in-law in a marital state; moreover, because she is *z'kukah*, and he is beyond reach, she suffers as an abandoned, deserted woman, as a forlorn wife, an *agunah* ["chained"], until some time in the distant future, if ever, when the *chalitzah* ceremony would be performed. She remained in a state of not being married but not being free to remarry—a state of suspended animation.

Prior to the arrival of Rice, Chief Rabbi Solomon Hirschell of the British Empire counselled congregations in regards to cases involving *chalitzah*. Thus he responded in 1830 to officers "of the British and German Congregations of Jews in Kingston, Jamaica" in the West Indies. Never was it imagined that an attempt would be made to abrogate this biblical law.

Wise took his cue from his mentor, Leopold Stein, the Reform leader who maintained that "the punishment of a surviving brother through *chalitza*, because he cannot, and may not, enter into a levirate marriage . . . neither wisdom nor reason . . ."

Convinced that the *chalitzah* ceremony, whereby the widow publicly insulted the unwilling brother-in-law by loosening his shoe and spitting "in his face" [actually on the ground before him], would prove to be the "Achilles Heel" of Orthodoxy, Wise felt that he held in his power the lever by which to displace Orthodoxy.

Wise first took issue with this law in the year he arrived in America,

in 1847. He then joined Lilienthal's New York *Beth Din*, where this idea of nullifying the ceremony of *chalitzah* crystallized. Lilienthal's *Beth Din*, had as one of its major objectives to " . . . study questions from European rabbis in regard to—*chalitzah* and *agunos*."

In the following year, 1848, Wise issued his call for abolition of the *chalitzah* ceremony. Again, in 1851, while he served on the staff of *The Asmonean*, Wise wrote that he had received an inquiry from a Philadelphian under the signature of *Ben Berith* [Son of the Covenant] regarding the propriety of observing the *chalitzah* ceremony. Wise then replied that *chalitzah* did not bear the stamp of divine authority, and he compared it to the benediction recited for kindling the *Chanukah* lights, which was not a divine law. The literary and philosophy editor of *The Asmonean* illustrated his point by telling *Ben Berith* of a dispute between two men in Albany over the question of whether or not recitation of the *Chanukah* blessings had been commanded by divine authority:

> Two men of this city, both well known to the community, are involved in a difficulty about the benediction to be spoken at the kindling of the Chanukah lights. The first states that when we say, "Blessed art thou, O Lord, who sanctified us by His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the lights of Hanukah," we utter a falsehood, for the last of the prophets expired a considerable time before the period of the Maccabees, and whereas God never spoke to anybody but the prophets, consequently God never commanded us anything concerning these lights, which are but a memorial of the glorious restoration of the independence of the Jewish nation; and of the re-dedication of the Temple of Jerusalem, under the Maccabees; a memorial ordered by wise, patriotic, and pious men, but not by God. The second one asserts that our Rabbis of old, who prescribed this commandment and this benediction, had a right to do those things, as well as the prophets, and to give ordinances in the name of God, as they were the heirs of the divine authority given to the prophets . . . .

To resolve such questions in the future, Wise, in his article in *The Asmonean*, then urged establishment of a *Beth Din*, a council composed of men "sensible to surrounding circumstances, cognizant of the requirements of the times . . . ."

Sensing the ominous danger posed by Wise in Cincinnati and the influx of Reformers who occupied pulpits in various communities, Reverend Emanuel Goldsmith of New York, in his Hebrew letter dated January 28, 1854, called upon the Orthodox leaders to issue through ecclesiastical courts in every city a ban of excommunication upon the "new lights."

In 1855, Wise felt renewed strength in that Dr. Max Lilienthal had accepted his invitation to come to Cincinnati, so, too, Wolf Rothenheim, who taught Hebrew in Lilienthal's Hebrew Union School, to seek election to the pulpit and school of *Bene Israel*.

Wise proclaimed on April 6, 1855:

> We declare this ceremony of *Chalizah* not binding, if the brother of the deceased either resides not in the place of the widow, or refused to comply with the biblical ordinance, or demands pay or other inducement for so doing; and we shall carry it into practice, unless we are shown sufficient ground, that it should not be so, within one month.

Rice promptly met the challenge. He replied within one week, on April 14, 1855, stating that he considered *The Israelite* to be an expression of Wise's irrationality. Rice sneered at Wise's threat to abolish *chalitzah*, jibing—"as if the entire Jewish nation depended on his declaration." Rice presented six points in refutation of Wise's arguments and asserted the validity of the *chalitzah* ceremony for all time:

> Firstly, the Talmud has interpreted the law of the levirate which begins "If brothers dwell together" as meaning that the two brother must have lived together in one certain time, but if the one brother is born after the deceased husband, the wife of the deceased is forbidden to him . . . .
>
> We have no right, in point of law, to give an explanation of a word, which is against the explanation of the Talmud . . . .all our reasoning about the word "together" in point of law, against the explanation of the Talmud, is null and void.
>
> Secondly: The *Chaliza* cannot be called the penalty of not complying with the law of *Yibum*, as viewed by the Reformers. Maimonides in numbering the commandments, reckons the command of *Yibum* as the 216th and the command of *Halizah* as the 217th.
>
> Thirdly: The duty of *Yibum* and *Chaliza* devolved on the woman as on the brother of the deceased husband; therefore, Maimonides says in *Hilchoth Ishus* 6.2. *Halacha* 8: Both are punished, if she remarries.
>
> Fourthly: Rabbi Gershom [ben Judah] did not abolish *Yibum*, as claimed by the Reformers. Rabbi Gershom decreed excommunication for polygamy and therefore favored the Talmudic view, with which most rabbis concurred, giving preference to *Chalizah*.
>
> Fifthly: It is, also, not the fact that *Chaliza* is a commandment which belongs only to the Holy Land . . . .
>
> Sixthly: If a person takes a woman, who has no *Chaliza*, it is against our law, and they cannot be married according to Jewish rites.

For the moment, Rice prevailed, but Wise plotted to defeat his arch-opponent.

Possessed of an organizing genius, Wise sensed that Reform could be instituted in America by emulating the European Reform leaders who held conferences to achieve their goals: at Brunswick in 1844, Frankfort in 1845, Breslau in 1846. Joined by Kalisch and Lilienthal, Wise spearheaded a call for an American Rabbinical Conference to be convened in Cleveland, in 1855, where Kalisch ministered, being centrally located on the rail line between East and West.

On July 6, 1855, the first anniversary of the appearance of *The Israelite*, Wise's colleague, Kalisch, issued the call for "The Conference." He exclaimed in the words of Mattathias of old: "Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me!" Kalisch invited rabbis and congregational leaders to come to Cleveland, after the autumnal holiday season, on October 17, to join in a cause that he presented:

> It is not unknown to you, that a great confusion and diversity in matters of doctrines and dogmas referring to our holy religion is prevailing in this country, and that each one attempts to convince the other of the superiority of his convictions, but instead of coming to an understanding, passion and bitternness, alas! soon interfere. They rebuke and condemn all dissenters, and declare their own party only the sole representative of true Judaism. This struggle of all against all must lead to discord, corruption, and eventually to dissolution . . . .
>
> Brethren! As Israelites, and especially as guides of Israelites, you are in duty bound to come forth, no matter whether you call yourselves Reformers [moderate Reformers], or ultra-Reformers [radical Reformers], or Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox. We all believe in One God and the Holy Writ, revealed to Moses and the prophets, and therefore let us agree upon the main points of our holy law, and with candor and love of truth strictly pronounce, what may be done, and what may not be done, consulting only the Holy Scriptures and the historically founded traditions as the fountain-head of the Mosaic religion, and making these the standard of our resolutions. I know, you would ask, what resolutions can we form? Is it not written in the Bible, *Deut.* iv, 2, "You shall not add unto the word, which I command you, neither shall you diminish from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God?"
>
> Have we not our Talmud? Have we not our Rambam and other *Poskim* [rabbinic authorities]? Have we not our codes of law by which we are guided? But you must not forget that the aforementioned biblical verse relates only to abstract ideas, morals and truths, communicated to us in the Bible, but not in reference to ceremo-

nies, and therefore history teaches us, that the Rabbis have added many ceremonies, for instance the Feast of Purim at the time of Mordecai and Queen Esther, the Feast of Dedication [Chanukah], and their observances, and that they have abolished many ceremonies . . . .(see *Soteh* 47 *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shechirot*, Chapter III, etc.). . . .

In order to effect his organization of Reform rabbis, Wise urged the *Bene Israel* congregation, where he lectured on alternate Sabbaths, to engage Max Lilienthal of New York as their rabbi. Acting on Wise's recommendation, *Bene Israel* elected Lilienthal. He accepted. Upon turning over his school in New York, the Hebrew Union School, to Henry A. Henry, rabbi of *Shaare Zedek*, departed for the west. The name of Lilienthal's New York school would a score years later be resurrected in Wise's Hebrew Union College.

Along with Lilienthal came Wolf Rothenheim to serve as a Hebrew teacher at *Bene Israel*.

Lilienthal preached his inaugural sermon at *Bene Israel*, Cincinnati, on July 14, 1855.

Referring to the proposed convention, Lilienthal called it a grandiose event awaiting to take place:

> The reestablishment of the old *Sanhedrin* [Supreme Court of Israel in Temple days], an ancient Jewish institution, by the means of which all the religious questions of the day may and will be solved to the entire satisfaction of all who can be satisfied . . . .

Enthused by the misleadingly "Orthodox" stand of Wise, Lilienthal, and Kalisch, Rabbi Dr. Bernhard Illowy, rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregation *Achduth Israel* [United Israel], St. Louis, Missouri, ignored Rice's stand and urged his Orthodox colleagues to attend. Illowy, a native of Bohemia, had been ordained at the *yeshivah* of the Chasam Sofer in Pressburg, Hungary, and had received his doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Budapest. He had championed the cause of freedom in the Revolution of 1848, which was quelled. He then fled to America, first serving in 1848 as rabbi of *Shaare Zedek* [Gates of Righteousness] congregation, New York, in 1853 of *Rodeph Shalom*, Philadelphia, and since 1854 of the United Hebrew Congregation of St. Louis.

Illowy responded to Kalisch's call. Writing in an elegant, poetical and hyperbolic classical Hebrew, he addressed himself to Isaac Mayer Wise, who spearheaded the drive for a rabbinic conference:

> To my friend, the eminent sage, whose name is known in the

gates of renown and praise, the teacher Isaac M. Wise, may his light shine, Rabbi of the Holy Congregation of Israel, Cincinnati.

Peace unto thee, eminent champion! I have attentively listened and I heard a voice calling on the heights: "Arise and let us go up on Mount Zion!"—and I thought to hear the voice of the shouts of war, the one calling "what of the night!"

Is not Zion's daughter forgotten as the dead from the heart? All her lovers abused, forsook, and deserted her. And like a widow she sits lonely in the valley of weeping and sings elegies for her sons who are gone and lost.

And I said, "thou who callest, who art thou? Art thou ours or our enemy's." I listened attentively, listened again, and when I again heard the voice—behold it was the voice of my friend which spoke and said: "who is it that should ascend the mountain of the Lord and who else should stand in the holy place, if not we?"

All the sons of the stranger and of the uncircumcised heart shall not ascend the holy mountain, says the Lord. I have called to set watchmen upon the walls of Zion's daughter, that there vanish not from Israel those who remember the Lord. My mind revived on hearing this. Like the sound of harps and flutes this voice reached my ears and I said, may thy power increase and thy strength grow greater though Isaac is thy name, and thy hand is on all, thy voice is Jacob's voice.

Hear this, ye learned divines, awake and rise, do you not see or not hear that also to you is directed the call? Rise and let us go up to the house of the Lord; rise, prepare a way in the wilderness, level a path in the desert to our God.

Though my hands are feeble, my feet are tied with bonds, I am not of those who are learned for a combat, am no champion, and no scribe; still I shall not abstain from following after the call of my friend calling in the mountains, and with thee I shall raise my voice and call in the streets of Israel's cities: "Rise, let us ascend the mountain of the house of the Lord."

Another Orthodox rabbi who planned to attend the Cleveland Conference was Joseph Levy. Like Illowy and Wise, he was a native of Bohemia. He had studied at the Prague *yeshivah*, and his ordination had been granted by the rabbis of Pieseck, Bohemia and Bresnitz, Moravia. He owned a grocery store in Cleveland, and he served as minister of *Anshe Chesed* congregation without recompense.

While preparing the groundwork for the conference, Wise addressed himself to the question of *agunos*, Jewish women who could not marry either because they had been deserted by their husbands, or because a husband refused to issue a *get*, or were unable to participate in the

chalitzah ceremony because of a brother-in-law who lived overseas or because he was not interested in fulfilling the ritual.

Seeking to abolish these religious impediments which kept the woman an *agunah*, Wise published in *The Israelite* an article by Dr. Meyer Mensor of Dublin, Ireland. He recommended a remedy that Wise urged be passed at the proposed convention:

> that if a man died childless, his former marriage should be considered as though it had not taken place, and this Chalizah will not be needed.

Dr. Wise heartily endorsed Mensor's suggestion regarding *chalitzah* and declared that

> the law as it now stands, is oppressive . . . . And we purpose to suggest an alleviation on the basis of our holy law . . . . We do not feel ourselves empowered as a single rabbi to pass it into a current law. We lay it before the public and heartily desire that it might be discussed at the approaching meeting of the rabbis of America.

Dr. Aaron Gunzburg [also, Guinzberg], minister of the *Eden Street Schul* of the Fell's Point Hebrew Friendship Congregation *Oheb Israel*, in Baltimore, seconded Wise's recommendation that the *chalitzah* question be alleviated by a synod and called for all rabbis to attend the forthcoming Conference.

Upon reading of the proposed Mensor alleviation and alteration of the law of *chalitzah*, Dr. Bernhard Illowy of St. Louis promptly withdrew his name as a sponsor and called upon Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler of London to censure the Dublin "rabbi," who was under his charge. Having written earlier why *chalitzah* is binding, Illowy again wrote to Wise on October 1, 1855:

> In answer to the call of my most esteemed friend, the venerable Reverend Dr. Guinzburg . . . I can state that, in the thirty-five years since the Talmud became the main branch of my studies, I never found in any of the various editions of the Talmud the passage quoted by the Rev. Dr. Mensor, and I suppose the matter of the case to be this:
>
> There is to be seen in the ancient representation of Esculapius, who was the best of the physicians, a serpent lying at his feet, Dr. Mensor by a mere mistake split the head of the doctor and sent the serpent to hell, whereas the contrary is said in the *Talmud* [*Bavli; Kiddushin* 82a; *Exodus:* 14:7 See *Rashi*]
>
> טוב שברופאים לגהינם, טוב שבנחשים רצוץ את מוחו
>
> ["] Split the head of the serpent and send the doctor to hell ["];

but both these sentences have been misunderstood. The first speaks relatively to those considering themselves, and not God, as the best physicians, and the second is in my opinion falsely read, and, instead of שבנחשים should be read שבלחשים, those who cure sickness by whispering certain words in the ear of the patient, as many at that time used to do (See *Talmud Sabb.* 14.4: ,

(אתא חד בר נשי ולחש ליה מן שמיה דישו פנדירא ואינשם

[Along came a person, to whom it was whispered that Jesus was *Pandera*—his father was *Pandera*, a Roman soldier—and (that person) became ill.]

On this occasion, I can not help communicating to you another explanantion of the passage given me by an old *Hasid* [pious Jew] residing in our city.

The ancient rabbis, he says, had forseen that a time will come when there will be no more rabbis; doctors will replace them. Only doctors and no rabbis will reign; doctors who will cure the eyes, and leave the heart and soul sick, and in a burst of passion and jealousy they scolded these doctors, saying, "The best of the doctors should go to hell."

Wise sidestepped the barb and stood his ground, deceivingly advising the public "that if an effective remedy should be applied, it must be based upon talmudical and rabbinical authority, against which the most Orthodox Jew could make no opposition."

Illowy spoke up to unmask Wise and reveal his real purpose of the impending Cleveland Conference:

> Now, in the name of the Talmud, they attempt to institute the following Reforms: Permitting the deceased brother's wife to marry without *Yibum* and *Halizah*; to shave with a razor, to eat and drink on fast days; eat roast fowl with butter; to sound metal trumpets on *Rosh Hashanah*; abolish second days of holidays; to bury gentile dead together with Jewish dead; not to differentiate between men and women in the Synagogue; shorten the blessings and praises.

Following Illowy's expose of the goal of those behind convening the conference, Isaac Leeser predicted that the convention would be attended by

> the ministers and delegates who represent the factionists among us; that the platform to be adopted would represent the characteristics of all the parents [Reform rabbis]; anti-Messianic, anti-Talmudic, anti-Sabbatic, anti-resurrection, anti-prophetic, anti-biblical, and whatever else the authors have declared as their histories, hymns, books and sermons.

Nonetheless, Leeser made it known that he would attend as a re-

porter for *The Occident*. Illowy thereupon wrote him a letter urging him to refrain from going, opening with a salutation in classical Hebrew style:

> God is with you. Thou the Lord's servant who is trusted in all His spiritual realms.
>
> This is my friend: His name is known in the gates of the famous scholars as a praiseworthy name: Isaac Leeser!
>
> I regret that you are going to Cleveland. Doctor [Aaron] Guinzburg [of Baltimore] has promised me under oath that he will not attend. If you go there, you shall be obliged to yield to the perverted ones, else your lone voice be lost in the majority. The Orthodox party and others wouldn't attend; not even those who have lost their standing as Jews, these half-Jews, including [Maurice] Mayer of [*Beth Elohim*] Charleston and others. But the outside world will think that all of the old party were represented at the conference. I would warn you that your honor not grace that gathering. Keep away from those people; else the guilt will fall upon you!

Yet, as a newspaper publisher, Leeser felt an obligation to his readers to report on the proceedings of the conference. He stated that he would come as an observer. Leeser arrived in time for the first session, which was held at the Medical College on Erie Street, Cleveland, on Wednesday, October 17, at 2:00 p.m.

Leeser noted that Lilienthal called the meeting to order. Twelve delegates were in attendance, representing only ten of the more than one hundred congregations in the land. Lilienthal disregarded the formality of requesting credentials of the rabbis, since Wise and others including Lilienthal had none, and the conference would have ended before it started. The two parties present were easily distinguishable:

> On the one side the Reform party was seated, and looked with apprehension towards the other side, where men of the Orthodox party were seated and looked with suspicion on the other side. The house represented a peculiar prospect to the impartial observer . . . .

Seated to the left of the chairman were the Reformers: Drs. Isidor Kalisch of Cleveland, Max Lilienthal, Isaac Mayer Wise, and Wolf Rothenheim of Cincinnati, Leo Merzbacher of New York, Elkan Cohn of Albany, and Dr. Benedict H. Gottheld of Louisville.

Seated to the right of the chairman were the Orthodox: Rabbi Joseph Levy, Reverend B. L. Fould [Fuld] of *Anshe Chesed*, Reverend Liebmann Adler of *Bet El* [originally *Bet-El Verein*], Detroit, and a Mr. Charles Kahn [Cohen?] of Cincinnati.

Kalisch, rabbi of *Tifereth Israel*, Cleveland, served as host. He was well acquainted with his Cleveland colleagues, Reverend Fould, his successor at *Anshe Chesed*, and Rabbi Levy, with whom he had a bout three years earlier in the celebrated Cleveland divorce case that stirred much excitement in the national Anglo-Jewish press.

In 1855, when Levy accepted the call to attend the conference of rabbis in Cleveland, Wise described him affectionately as a "learned rabbinical Jew of the oldest stamp. The old gentleman is a Bohemian by birth . . . he stands firm upon the basis of the rabbinical literature, and commands respect from his religious position by his simple, firm and decided language." Three years earlier Wise berated Levy, siding with Kalisch in the Cleveland divorce case.

Levy was seated next to Kalisch, chairman *pro tem*. The delegates agreed to conduct the proceedings exclusively in the German language, as that language was understood by all the members, some of whom could not express themselves adequately in English.

Kalisch relinquished his *pro tem* chairmanship to Wise, whom the delegates elected president; Lilienthal continued as secretary. The "excommunicated" Wise opened the session with remarks on the injustice of denying to anyone the right to the title of Jew, whether or not he read many prayers. whether or not he had an organ in his synagogue, or kept the Second Days of Festivals. Judaism consisted of high and eternal principles, declared Wise, and it was the duty of the conference to lay down such fundamental rules as would appear right and proper to all Israel. Wise then announced the first plank of the platform to be adopted:

> The first conference of American Rabbins [sic] acknowledges the Bible which we have received from our fathers as the revealed word of God, given to us by divine inspiration.

Leeser, startled to hear such an Orthodox stance, turned from spectator to participant. He told the delegation "that had the Orthodox ministers and congregations known on what principles those who had called the conference meant to act, no doubt many more would have been present."

Lilienthal responded in friendly fashion, to which Leeser similarly rejoined, and the first clause of the platform was unanimously adopted by the Orthodox and Reformers alike.

Leeser was perplexed but pleased. He could not believe the turnabout. In 1848, when Wise had first called for a conference of Jewish leaders in order to deal with "rabbis" who performed unauthorized weddings and divorces, and to alleviate the suffering of *agunos*, S. Newman of Cincinnati had revealed his true purpose,—to effect Reform:

> As regard to Judaism among such as call themselvers Reformers, I have found that all ceremonial laws, without exception, are considered either impracticable, or inconvenient, or unsuitable to the age . . . .

Wise read the second plank:

> that the Talmud contains the logical and legal development of the Holy Scriptures, and that its decision must guide us in all matters of practice and duty.

Rabbi Levy objected to the wording as not being explicit enough. The delegates thereupon adjourned at five p.m., planning to resume at ten o'clock the following morning.

The only progress made in the adoption of the second plank during the Thursday morning session was to strike the word "development" and insert the word "exposition"—"that the Talmud contains the logical and legal exposition of the sacred Scriptures." This term did not satisfy several delegates who complained that it did not signify the binding authority of traditions contained in the *Talmud*. The meeting then adjourned until three o'clock.

Leeser later observed that "Drs. Lilienthal and Rothenheim possess a versatility and business tact, with a moderation in outward demeanor, coolness in argument and polished manner, which qualities render them the more dangerous opponents, from their very gentleness and courtesy . . . ."

At the afternoon session, the discussion resumed. Leeser, now more participant than reporter, offered the following phraseology for the second plank:

> That it is the opinion and conviction of this conference, that the Talmud contains the divine tradition given to Moses, and that all Israelites must decide all questions according to its decision.

Arguing for the acceptance of this wording, Leeser asked:

> Where, then, should we go for a system of interpretation? Shall we go for it to the fathers of the Christian church? Or shall we seek it in the Caraitic [sic! Karaite: Jewish sect founded in 8th century that recognized only the scriptures as the sole source of law to the exclusion of the Oral Law] tradition? Hence it is the Talmud to which we must refer. It would, therefore, be only proper to acknowledge at once that, if we are to seek for the traditions of God anywhere it must be in the Talmud; and with this all Israelites would be satisfied, and have a common ground for elucidating our religion in all future conferences.

After a long discussion, the following compromise was adopted:

> . . . that the Talmud contains the traditional, logical and legal exposition of the sacred Scriptures . . . .

Following his return to Cincinnati, Wise posited that by accepting the Bible and Talmud,

> the orthodox of this country have not one word to say against the articles passed at the Cleveland Conference . . . because we have thus wrested form their hands the arms with which they fought against the reform party . . . We show them that the party of progress rests upon the solid basis of orthodox, historical and scientific principles . . . .

Leeser, elated over the adoption of an Orthodox platform, returned to Philadelphia joyful and jubilant. Had he attended the next session his delight would have turned to dejection, for at the Friday morning session Lilienthal expounded on the underlying meaning of the wording of the Talmud plank, saying that

> the divinity of the Bible and the legal validity of the Talmud, is entirely fit, to unite the most diverging opinions . . . .
>
> Everyone knows now, that the Bible . . . is considered as the unchangeable, divine code of the Jews, and that the weapons for entering the lists must be taken out of the vast armory of the Talmud . . . .
>
> All the forces and abilities of our scholars will henceforth be concentrated into the one point of disentangling the labyrinth of the Talmud, of examining its principles; of finding out the ways and means, by which its theories, according to its own comments, may be further developed and adapted to the wants and emergencies of our times . . . .
>
> We declare as senseless and useless any Reform not justified by talmudic principles or not rooted in the development of Jewish history . . . .
>
> The Conference therefore, above all, by the investigation of the appointed committee intends to find out the principles, which historically and lawfully proved and justified, may serve as a just guide in all future decisions; and once found and expounded, will mightily assist in the solution of all the problems . . . .

Lilienthal demanded:

> If it will not and can not be denied that the Talmud was a Reform; why can the principles, justifying the Reforms of the Talmud,

not be searched for and applied to the wants and demands of our times? . . . .

Once Lilienthal had interpreted the plank accepted at the Thursday afternoon session as allowing for Reform of biblical law and talmudic or rabbinic decisions, Wise rose to recommend the abolition of *chalitzah*. He referred to a responsum in *Torat Netannale* by Rabbi Netanale Weil, published in Fürth in 1794, which, he contended, advocated its abolition. Therein, Weil quoted rabbinic decisions that Wise declared even the most Orthodox Jew could not contest.

Lilienthal immediately offered the following motion:

> In order to diminish the number of עגונות [*agunos*] and to do entirely away with the *Chalizah* according to the opinion of the תורת נתנאל [*Torat Netannale*] it should be introduced as a general rule to give קדושין על תנאי [conditional marriage].

Yet, this same Max Lilienthal, soon after his election in the German congregations of New York, instituted in 1846 *shitre halitzah*; a regulation which provided for the signing by the brothers of the groom of documents guaranteeing that, in the event of the groom's death without issue, the brothers would perform the ceremony of *chalitzah* (release from the levirate obligation). By compliance, no difficulty arises should the eventuality occur. Thus, on September 18, 1846, at a meeting of the Congregation *Anshe Chesed*, the *minutes* of that date record that a "letter from Dr. Lilienthal was read requesting the Cong. to have a *haliza* shoe made. . ."

On November 30, 1847, "Chief Rabbi," Lilienthal stated in his communication to the editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*; "This year I had 100 weddings, one *Chalitzah*, two *Gitin al yeday shaliach* [writs of divorce sent by messenger to wife], and *shaalot* [religio-legal inquiries] without number. . . ."

To the consternation of Rabbi Joseph Levy and three others, Lilienthal's motion was adopted by majority vote; seven for, four against. Wise thereupon pronounced the rite of *chalitzah* legally abolished. Levy protested vehemently and amidst this stormy conclusion, the Cleveland Conference adjourned.

Upon his return to Cincinnati, Lilienthal sought to enlist public support for the change by arousing sympathy for the *Agunah*. So too, Kalisch, who presented in the press "Talmudical Evidence against the continuation of the ceremony of Chalitzah."

There were varied reactions among the Reformers to the platform adopted at the Cleveland Conference. Dr. Isaac Mayer, minister of *Berith*

Kodesh [Holy Covenant] congregation, Rochester, New York, where he taught Bible and Hebrew, simultaneously lauded and derided Wise, Lilienthal, Kalisch, Merzbacher, and the other Reformers for adopting the Cleveland platform. Mayer assented that the Talmud, which in itself was a Reform of Mosaic laws, as stated by Leo Merzbacher, was the best justification and basis for the present and future Reforms to be enacted. Then Mayer mocked them, jibing that not only the Talmud but the Bible too, could serve as a source for enacting Reforms. He asserted that you could prove anything you wished from the Bible. Even atheism is espoused therein, as illustrated by the following example:

> An atheist once maintained that he could defend his doctrine even from the Bible. When asked for his reference, he quoted from the first verse of the 14th *Psalm*: "There is no God."
>
> Of course, those not familiar with that verse and therefore not knowing that he omitted the preceding phrase, "The fool saith in his heart," thought that his proof and authentication were all-sufficient; while for those who knew the whole, inseparable text, it was evident not only that he had perverted and falsified the Scriptural passage, but silently proven, by his very reference, that he was what he would not permit others to call him.

Mayer, in common with his fellow Reformers, scintillated between Orthodoxy and Reform. Thus when his congregation purchased the Tabernacle Baptist Church on North St. Paul Street, Rochester, New York, he directed the fitting up of the baptismal pool into a *mikveh*, to satisfy the Orthodox, yet allowed men and women to be seated on the same floor with only an aisle as a *mechitzah* [divider] between them. To further curry favor with the Reformers he criticized the Orthodox worship as an "exceedingly ancient and superannuated mode of service," and introduced the confirmation ceremony.

Dr. Elkan Cohn, successor to Wise at the *Anshe Emeth* temple in Albany, had participated in the deliberations at Cleveland. Cohn opined that the Reformers had been caught in a trap, for their admission that the Bible was of divine origin and that the *Talmud* was its authoritative exposition would, if honestly followed, render all Reforms utterly impracticable.

Samuel Bruel, a leader in Cincinnati's Orthodox synagogue, *Sherith Israel*, writing in the Anglo-Jewish press, enlightened the Jewish community that the Reformers who met at Cleveland did not truly seek a legal basis in *Torah* and *Talmud* for their Reforms, since even before the conference each had acted as he pleased, considering himself an authority and a synod. The purpose of the conference, Bruel observed, was to give a semblance of legality to their already operative Reform acts.

Another former Cincinnatian, Rabbi Henry A. Henry, soon after his arrival in San Francisco, wrote of his disapproval of the violations of Jewish law by the one who claimed to be the first rabbi in the West. Writing under the pseudonym, Theophilus [Love of God], Henry publicized the acts of Dr. Julius Eckman, a contentious individual, who had been minister of *Emanu-El* for but one year.

Upon his arrival in America Eckman, in 1849, served as Reader at Richmond, Virginia; in 1850 at *Beth Elohim*, Charleston. Though the congregation was Reform, he claimed to be a *Rav Muvhak b'Yisroel* [truly expert rabbi], though his diploma was signed by the Reform rabbis of Berlin and Prenzlaw, and claimed a doctorate from the Royal Frederick Wilhelm College at Berlin.

In 1852, Dr. Eckman served *Bnai Israel*, Augusta, Georgia; in 1853, at the new edifice of the first synagogue in Alabama, *Sha'arai Shomayim* [Gates of Heaven] in Mobile; in 1854, *Emanu-El*, San Francisco.

In San Francisco, as in his previous congregations, the membership was unanimous in their disapproval of Eckman's ministry, but divided on his departure: "One side," wrote Henry J. Labatt, "wanted to ask Eckman to resign, and the other wanted to dismiss him." A compromise was effected. His contract was not renewed, and Eckman opened a school, performing also rabbinical functions.

"Theophilus" pen name of Rabbi Henry, charged Eckman with having converted a Christian lady without the "usual formalities" and immediately marrying her to a Jew; that he converted her, not for her love of the Jewish Religion, but because of her love for a Jewish fellow. The couple soon obtained a civil divorce, and Eckman married her to another Jew without requiring a Jewish divorce. Henry may well have quipped that since the conversion was not legal, no Jewish divorce was required.

"Theophilus" further charged that Dr. Eckman performed the marriage of a woman who, by Jewish law was yet married to her first and second husbands. She said that her first husband died in England and that in New York, a member of the *Beth Hamidrash* performed her second wedding, but adduced no proof for either claim.

Also, that Eckman had married *yevamos*, widows, whose husbands died childless, without having undergone the *Chalitzah* ceremony. Furthermore, the doctor had married a *Cohen* to a *Chalutzah*, though she was prohibited to a member of the priestly class. In response, Eckman stated that he did not believe in such laws, and arrogantly declared that he knew better than the *Talmud*.

Lastly, "Theophilus" spoke of similar acts committed by Dr. Eckman's successor at *Emanu-El*, Hermann Milton Bien, whose claim to the

pulpit was that he had taught Hebrew at a temple in Germany whose minister, Dr. David Einhorn, had recently come to America. Bien in his assumption of rabbinical functions converted to Judaism a young Irish girl without the *mikveh* ceremony in order to marry her to an elderly Jew whose friends remonstrated against this marriage.

Among the other miscarriages of his ministry, Bien wedded women who had no Jewish divorce, only a civil divorce. Bien argued in his defense, that since they had obtained a civil divorce he performed the ceremony which had been legalized by the talmudic ruling that "The Law of the land is the law."

Having settled the *Chalitzah* question to his satisfaction, Wise declared that according to the second article of the Cleveland Conference the ceremonials [*Mezuzah*, *Tzitzis*, *Tefillin*] are legally abolished.

An anonymous correspondent from Chicago, who signed only his initial H, asked of Leeser:

> Whom shall they [Jews of Chicago] follow? . . . Shall we travel on the orthodox road laid out for us in one month, with the principle: "The Bible is divine, and must be practised according to Talmudical explanations?" or shall we go the reform path, shown us a month later, with the declaration "*Kohanim* are a superfluous thing, *Lulab* and *Ethrog* must be abolished, *Halizah* has no foundation? . . . ."

Leeser, deceived and disillusioned, wrote in anguish: "The fraud was not in the two resolutions, but in the acts of the men afterwards." Denouncing Wise and his cohorts, Leeser challenged:

> Reformers! Why did you deceive us when we wanted to be one again with you? . . . to please us or to deceive us, you adopted our platform, but in your hearts you sneer at it. You do not believe in ceremonies . . . .
>
> It is alleged that Judaism is to convert the world; but just as the apostles of old it is held that Judaism, with its Sabbaths, festivals, onerous restrictions and duties, is not fit to become the world-religion, wherefore its modification is a duty, so that it may be reduced to such a shape as to make it universally acceptable . . . .
>
> It is possible that when we shall have arrived at such a result, we might admit many a nominal Christian to our communion, who would have no hesitation to come to Synagogue if no circumcision, no baptism, no Sabbath, no Passover, no Day of Atonement, no prayer, nothing distinctive Jewish were asked or needed. But what becomes of the Jews themselves under such circumstances? . . . .
>
> It is unlikely that this lessening process, this reducing of the whole law to eleven, seven, three principles, or one [*Chabakuk* 2 "And the

> righteous shall live by his faith"; *Tractate Makkot* 24a], will induce others to join us. Experience, on the contrary, has shown that Jews lapse into infidelity or apostacy by lessening their duties . . . .
>
> Yes, the rising generation, young America is before you. We confess that you will have plenty of followers. We have seen something similar. Eighteen centuries ago there was one Nazarine to one thousand Israelites, and now it is the reverse . . . .

Rabbi Rice was neither deceived nor disillusioned. He took issue with the two "Orthodox" resolutions that Leeser had heartily approved:

> I never had any idea to attend such a conference, and much less to agree with their voting. Our holy religion does not permit itself to be fettered by any platform which any council may frame for it this day, because thousands of years ago, on Mount Sinai; His word, like Himself, remains unchangeable . . . .

A most devastating protest came from Baltimore, and from a most unexpected quarter. Dr. David Einhorn, one of the greatest German Reformers recently arrived to serve *Har Sinai Verein*, unleashed a violent opposition.

Einhorn, a native of Bavaria, seems to have been a child prodigy. He attended the *yeshivah* of Rabbi Wolf Hamburger in Fürth, possibly a classmate of Rice, and was ordained at the age of seventeen. He matriculated at the universities of Erlangen, Würzburg, and Münich. Veering from Orthodoxy to Reform, he became a follower of the radical Reformer Samuel Holdheim, and entered the rabbinate as his successor at Birkenfeld, Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and then accepted the ministerial post at Pesth [Pesth and Buda became one city, Budapest, in 1872], and then in Austria, where after two months the government, supporting the conservative Orthodox rabbinate, closed his temple because of his radical Reforms. After three years of enforced seclusion, Einhorn turned westward, toward America.

Leopold Stein then recommended Einhorn to the American congregations *Har Sinai* Temple, Baltimore, and *Keneseth Israel*, Philadelphia. In his recommendation Stein stated that Einhorn was "gifted with an impressive voice . . . .he is one of the best preachers and his words are liquid fire . . . ." Elected by both, Einhorn preferred the ministry of *Har Sinai* Temple, Baltimore.

Fifty-six year old Einhorn arrived in New York from Bremen aboard the steamer *Washington*. A committee from *Har Sinai* escorted him to Baltimore on September 17, 1855, the first day of the *Sukkot* festival. The officers showed with pride their impressive edifice on High Street which the congregation erected seven years earlier.

Two weeks after his arrival, Einhorn learned of the platform adopted at the Cleveland Conference. He wrote a scathing "Protest," signed on November 6, 1855 by the officers and the entire congregation, thirty in all.

Einhorn, in his protest, forthrightly argued that

> with the Talmud in hand . . . .Reforms bearing on public worship and the general conduct in life, can best be smuggled in by a disregard of law, and a resort to juridical trick and chicanery . . . .

As an example of "juridical trick and chicanery," Einhorn offered Lilienthal's attempt to negate *chalitzah* by resorting to a conditional marriage agreement; i.e., that should the husband die without issue, the marriage shall then be considered null and void retroactively from the date of its original consummation. Such a device, according to Einhorn, would mean that the parties had lived in a state of concubinage. Further, such attempts to encase the Jewish life-current within the inanimate forms of bygone talmudic tomes show in the clearest light the dangers that threaten the most sacred provisions of the law and undermine Judaism.

The *Har Sinai* "Protest" sparked another, the "Resolutions of Congregation *Emanu-El* of New York against the Cleveland Conference of 1855." These angered Wise because *Emanu-El*'s rabbi, Leo Merzbacher, had strongly supported the platform. He turned his wrath against the *Har Sinai* protesters:

> A small party of ultra radicals raised the popular cry of "No Talmud!" against the "Articles of Union." We said at once this signified: "No Bible!"
>
> The premises from which we start . . . . There can be no Judaism without the observance of the Biblical laws . . . . The Biblical laws are impracticable unless they are expounded. The Jewish standard of exegesis in regared to biblical laws and the precedents that guides us in our decisions are in the Talmud, the historical development of the Law, without which we not only depart from the historical basis of Judaism, and must eventually be dissolved into diverging sects, but are also without any safe guide in our biblical researches . . . . All desirable Reform within the pale of Judaism can be obtained in this legal and historical way . . . .

Lilienthal thereupon took up the defense of the platform adopted at Cleveland. He refused to accept Einhorn's view that the Jewish religion existed principally in the Ten Commandments, and some appendices spared by peculiar grace and mercy, as circumcision and Sabbath were to be retained as a national mark and a sign of remembrance, but that all the laws of the Bible, obsolete and antiquated, were to be abolished, along with the *Talmud* and all its codes.

Lilienthal cited the following example:

> The *Rabbenu Tam* and the *Rosh*, as quoted by the *Tur Ebn Haeser* Ch. 141, declare it lawful to send a letter of divorce by mail . . . . They relate that in France and Germany, it was universally adopted *Minhag*, to marry by proxy and give the divorce by mail. The *Beth Joseph*, the adopted Code of the Portuguese Congregations (Ch. 141, 35), confirms this opinion; nevertheless, the *Remah*, always aggravating, forbids it, because he has not seen the *Minhag* practiced, and most of the Rabbis abide by his decision. But who gave that man such an authority? Neither by the grace of God nor that of man he has a right to claim it, and the strictest Orthodox, without yielding the least of his principles, may give his consent to the abolishment of a prohibition, that here in America already has caused the greatest inconvenience . . . .

Lilienthal proceeded to claim that the latter rabbis [after the fifteenth century] not only enacted laws on their own authority but they also disputed and contradicted the decisions of the rabbis of the *Talmud*, who themselves had introduced Reforms.

One of these disputed biblical laws to which Lilienthal and Reformers of that day referred to as having been rejected by the rabbis, had been authored by no lesser a personage than Hillel. When that talmudic sage observed people refusing to loan money because of the biblical law that every seventh year, all private debts shall be remitted [Deut. XV:9], which would violate the duty to assist, he introduced *prosbul* [also *prosbol*: Greek "for the court"].

Prosbul, Hillel's *takanah* [beneficial enactment], benefited rich and poor, lenders and borrowers, alike. At the Sabbath year, when loans are subject to remission, *prosbul* provided that at the appoach of the seventh year, debts be turned over to the *Beth Din*, under whose authority the debt was deemed as already collected.

Lilienthal argued against Einhorn's rejection of the Talmud as a basis for Reform and against his reductionist tendencies:

> Such wild schemes restraining, as Dr. Einhorn does, the whole Judaism to the Ten commandments and some few symbols, are impalatable to the by far largest majority of the congregations, and will prove to be but a check and impediment to the intended Reform . . . .
>
> The question now arises, how many Jewish congregations are willing to adopt such a course . . . There is of more than 100,000 Jews in the United States [1856]—but the small number of 30 men in Baltimore [*Har Sinai*] who are resolved upon adopting the same platform [Einhorn's] . . . .

> The ninety-nine of one hundred congregations not only will reject at once the deistical schemes of Dr. Einhorn but are still opposed to even the slightest alteration of the service . . . .

To these arguments, Einhorn curtly responded:

> I have nothing to do with the majority of the congregations; I am working for the few enlightened, who are rallying under my banner, trusting that the example set by my congregation, in due time, will exercise its influence over other congregations . . . ..

Wise, as editor of *The Israelite*, countered with an air of finality:

> This settles all controversies. As long as you remain an enemy of the Jews and Judaism, I am your opponent, but shall not enter into a public controversy with you.

Though Wise and Lilienthal, like Einhorn, rejected many biblical commandments and most talmudic and rabbinic enactments, as being out of step with modern times, they nonetheless quoted them as authoritative sources for rejection of the ancient laws, customs, and ceremonies.

Einhorn regarded Wise and Lilienthal as speaking with a forked tongue. They, like all Reformers, denied the validity of the Talmud and their rabbinic commentators, because of the advances of the modern age and of the scientific studies in Judaism, which they claimed invalidated many of the traditions of the past. Therefore, Reformers, in fact, regarded themselves superior to the medieval Maimonides and ancient Akivahs. Einhorn therefore considered it dishonest and deceitful of Wise and Lilienthal to claim the Talmudists as early Reformers, and refer to them for justification of Reform.

Einhorn frankly declared, that which Reform believed, that the Talmud was of no consequence. Wise and Lilienthal sought to ensnare the Orthodox by claiming that they believed in the teachings of the ancients; that they, even as the Talmudists, instituted legitimate Reforms; and that they drew their opinions from those ancient sources.

In the acceptance or denial of the authority of the rabbis of earlier centuries, Einhorn the radical Reformer, Wise and Lilienthal the moderate Reformers, locked horns and broke rank.

Chapter 29
Men of Confused Minds

EINHORN CLAIMED that his rejection of the *Talmud* as the authoritative commentary and complement to the Bible had its basis in the thought and work of Abraham Ibn Ezra. So, too, had Wise claimed that his Reforms were based on the authority of Ibn Ezra when he sought to offset the ban of excommunication placed upon him by Rabbi Rice.

That Ibn Ezra had become the biblical commentator to whom Reformers referred in order to justify change in Jewish law, is best evidenced by the following incident. When Elkan Cohn left Berlin for Albany, he asked Dr. David Cassel, professor in a Jewish boys' school, what kind of rabbinical books he should take with him. Dr. Cassel counselled: "First of all, the four *Shulchan Aruch* [Codes of Law], especially the אורח חיים [*Orach Chayim*] and אבן העזר [*Even Haezer*]," to which Cohn countered "that the אבן עזרא [*Ibn Ezra*] he has, is his Bible!"

When Einhorn adduced proofs for his Reforms from Ibn Ezra, Rice refuted them, but first he told him:

> You indeed acknowledge that the "Written Law" is of divine origin. But this cannot be; since no one can expound the written law without the oral law. Can you not call to your mind any more the words of Aben [sic! Ibn] Ezra in his preface to his Pentateuch commentary . . . "This is the method of the Caraites, such as Anan and Benjamin; and so act the false Messiahs and Jesus, and every unbeliever who believes not the bearers of the tradition of the law . . . ."

Einhorn asked Rice in reference to a polemical article he published in *The Occident*, "whether the members of a Reform rabbinical conference in Germany who had taken a stand against the whole of *talmudic-halachic* exposition had ceased to be Israelites," to which came the prompt response:

> I answer you unhesitatingly and without design: "Yes, they have ceased to be Jews," as according to Maimonides "among those who are deemed deniers of the law, is he who denies its exposition, the oral law."
>
> You, as a thinking Rabbi, try to maintain that it will be no more in consonance with the present age to interpret our religion according to the Talmudical decisions. Indeed! The heavens may vanish in smoke, and the earth wear out with age, and still not one iota will vanish from our religion . . . .

Rice proceeded to repudiate Einhorn's interpretation of several instances he cited to prove that Ibn Ezra contradicted *talmudic* interpretation.

Introducing his refutation, Rice said: "I owe it as a duty to the memory of Aben [sic!] Ezra, to lay open before the public tribunal the injustice of your interpretations, and to remove the impressions which you, without any sufficient ground, endeavored to palm off as emanating from him."

Rice quoted Ibn Ezra to dispel the notion of the Reformers that he did not accept the authority of the *Talmud*:

> This is a general principle, that we cannot make a perfect commentary on the manner of keeping the precepts of the laws, if we do not rely on the words of our wise men of blessed memory; for as we have received the written law from the fathers, so have we also obtained the oral law . . . .

Despite Ibn Ezra's declaration accepting "the words of our wise men," the talmudists and rabbis, Einhorn was bent on proving his contention that Ibn Ezra did not accept their authority. He offered more examples, the first being based on a biblical verse:

> But if the ox was wont to gore in time past and warning hath been given to its owner that he hath not kept it in, but it hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned and its owner also shall be put to death [*Exodus* XXI:29].

The *Talmud* interprets the phrase [*v'gam b'olov yumas*] "and its owner also shall be put to death," as the culprit who does not pay his ransom shall be put to death by an act of God, since no one can release himself from a judicial capital punishment by payment of a ransom.

But Ibn Ezra, stated Einhorn, interprets the phrase "and its owner also shall be put to death" as the culprit who does not pay his ransom shall be put to death at the hands of his peers. The Hebrew word *yumas* [shall be put to death] means by the decision of the courts and at the hands of man. If he were to have been put to death by an act of God, the Hebrew word *yamus* [he shall die] would have been used.

Here, Einhorn victoriously asserted, Ibn Ezra contradicts the interpretation of the Talmud! But Rice pointed out to Einhorn that he misunderstood Ibn Ezra, who had commented:

> But according to my opinion the Bible here ("and its owner also shall be put to death") refers to the analogy of the law "an eye for an eye!" Hence, the culprit was liable to be put to death by the hand

> of man if he refused to pay the ransom, for the law states, [*yumas*] "he shall be put to death," not [*yamus*] "he shall die!"

Rice explained to Einhorn that Ibn Ezra clearly stated that according to the literal reading of the written law, we should interpret the phrase, "and its owner also shall be put to death" [*yumas*] by the hands of man in the same manner as we would interpret the passage "an eye for an eye" [*Exodus* XXI:24]—that by right the injurer's eye should be taken for the eye of the injured. But Ibn Ezra explained in his comment on the passage "an eye for eye" that there is no difference between the oral and written law. The oral law interprets "an eye for an eye" as the eye of the injured is compensated for by a ransom, and so, too, in this passage, "he shall be put to death," the oral law provides for payment of a ransom.

Since the payment of ransom cannot be applied to save a criminal from a death penalty proscribed by a judicial court, "he shall be put to death," for which redemption is gained upon payment of a ransom, refers to death by an act of God.

Rice then asked of Einhorn: "Where, O, Learned Doctor, is the contradiction between Aben [sic] Ezra and the rabbis of the Talmud?"

Einhorn, unable to refute Rice's explanation of Ibn Ezra's intended meaning in his comment, argued instead that Rice refused to recognize a grammatical distinction between *yumas* [shall be put to death] by the hands of man and *yamus* [he shall die] by the hands of God. Thus Einhorn continued to declare that Ibn Ezra, the grammarian, contradicted the interpretation of the Talmud.

A second instance in which Ibn Ezra contradicted the talmudic interpretation of the Bible, according to Einhorn, was in regard to the following law:

> The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers, every man shall be put to death for his own sin [*Deut.* XXIV:16].

Ibn Ezra stated that "men of confused minds" imagine that this law, stating that "children shall not be put to death for the fathers" contradicts the passage of scripture that avers, "God visits the sins of the fathers on the children."

To the "men of confused minds," Ibn Ezra points out that whereas "the children shall not be put to death for the fathers" refers to capital punishment at the hand of man, the passage "God visits the sins of the fathers on the children" refers to punishment by the hand of God.

Who were these "men of confused minds" whom Ibn Ezra enlight-

ened? "None other," declared Einhorn, "than the rabbis of the Talmud!"

In reply to Einhorn, Rice introduced quotations from the talmudic tractate *Sanhedrin* [*Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin* 27:2; also *Berachos* 7:1], in which the question is posed:

> How is it that since God commands human tribunals not to punish children for the sake of their parents, that He should Himself avenge the sins of the fathers upon their children?

To which query, the proper answer is given:

> Upon those who act as their parents have done, when they persevere in the guilty paths of their progenitors.

It was this reply given by the rabbis of the *Talmud* that Ibn Ezra addressed to "men of confused minds," to "men of erring spirit," Rice explained. He told Einhorn: "You clearly demonstrate that you only read superficially, without sufficient reflection."

Einhorn countered:

> This explanation Mr. Rice maintains, is in keeping with the Talmudic interpretation which tries to resolve the contradiction by saying that God punishes only sinful children for the sins of their parents. We can hardly believe that Mr. Rice can be serious with such clear nonsense. Anyway, Mr. Rice would have done much better to use his old excuse that Ibn Ezra, when he ascribed this specific Talmudic interpretation to "Men of Erring Minds" forgot the Talmudic origin of this interpretation and that with "Men of Erring Minds" he meant men other than the Talmudists.

A third instance in which Ibn Ezra contradicted the talmudic interpretation of the Bible, according to Einhorn, was in regard to the law of the meal offering in effect in temple days:

> And if thou bring a meal-offering of first-fruits unto the Lord, of corn in the ear parched with fire, even groats of the fresh ear, thou shalt bring for the meal-offering of thy first-fruits.

Ibn Ezra comments upon this passage:

> Many are of the opinion that it treats here of an obligatory meal-offering. But according to my view there is no just ground for such an interpretation. It is here only commanded to offer the first fruits of the general harvest, but not the first fruits of each proprietor, and every one is permitted to bring a voluntary meal-offering for his first fruits.

Einhorn declared that the "many" whom Ibn Ezra opposed were those rabbis of the Talmud, to whom Ibn Ezra had referred as "men of erring spirit."

Once again Rice explained to Einhorn that when Ibn Ezra said that "Many are of the opinion . . . " he referred to the post-talmudic rabbis, "expounders of the Law" who often were called "the men of tradition," not the rabbis of the *Talmud*.

In rebuttal, Einhorn challenged Rice for excusing the digression of Ibn Ezra in assigning a voluntary character to the offering of first fruits, by the reason that Ibn Ezra did not recall the opposition of the "many"; the "many" according to Rice not being the rabbis of the Talmud, but others whom he did not seem to know! "A nice defense!" quipped Einhorn.

Rice then called to Einhorn's attention that Naphtali Herz [Hartwig] Wessely, eighteenth century Hebrew philologist of Hamburg, had noted Ibn Ezra's mention of the meal offering as being voluntary rather than obligatory. This was an oversight, for Ibn Ezra forthrightly stated:

> I have written all this to expound the Scriptural verses according to their most correct significations, and to show that the words of the receivers of the law [traditionalists] are exceedingly true.

Rice demanded of Einhorn:

> Now, Doctor, how can you prove by your logic that Aben [sic] Ezra had spitefully put himself in opposition to the Talmudists in this instance?

And yet another instance where Ibn Ezra contradicted the *talmudic* interpretation of the Bible, according to Einhorn, was in regard to the law: "Any fat of ox, or sheep, or goat, ye shall not eat."

Ibn Ezra commented that the prohibition of eating "any fat" was limited to the fat of sacrificed animals, as of oxen, sheep, or goats, specified in the text.

Einhorn declared that herein Ibn Ezra contradicted the rabbis of the Talmud who did not limit the prohibition of eating "any fat" to that of sacrificed animals, but interpreted the term to include the fats of animals not specifically included for sacrifices, such as buffalo and reindeer, even as those accepted for sacrifices, such as oxen, sheep, or goats.

Rice pointed out to Einhorn that Ibn Ezra erred in his opinion that only the fats of animals acceptable for sacrifices were prohibited, and that the fats of other animals were permitted; also that Nachmanides [Moses ben Nachman Gerondi; RaMBaN] had censured Ibn Ezra for his mistaken conclusion. But, concluded Rice, Ibn Ezra never had the least

intention of carrying his opinion into practice, to permit eating the fat of unsacrificed animals. "He lived among Jews and acted like a Jew!" affirmed Rice.

Despite Rice's cogent refutations, Einhorn felt that he had "proved" to his own satisfaction that Ibn Ezra openly opposed talmudic rulings. He sought to further strengthen his position by demonstrating that even the great Maimonides, author of the *Yad haHazakah*, authoritative code of Jewish law based on talmudic opinions, opposed talmudic authority.

This, according to Einhorn, is evidenced in his *Guide for the Perplexed*, which the Orthodox of his day ordered consigned to the flames because of its alleged heresies. In the *Guide*, Maimonides stated of the animal sacrifices commanded in the Bible:

> At that time it was the custom of the whole [pagan] world to sacrifice animals in the temples where the idols stood and to offer them instead as an act of worship. God in His wisdom has therefore not commanded us to abolish asacrifices, because it would have been inimical to human nature, which cannot easily liberate itself from established customs.

Maimonides explained that the animal sacrifices of the time of the ancient temple were sanctioned as a concession to the heathen sacrificial rites. Therefore, concluded Einhorn, sacrifices of animals were only tolerated at best by divine law and could be abrogated in the future return of our people to the land of their fathers. Thus Maimonides contradicted the *Talmud*, which stated that whoever denies the restoration of animal sacrifices should be regarded as one who denies the divine authenticity of the *Torah*.

This argument was also refuted by Rice, who called to Einhorn's attention that the Maimonidian view that animal sacrifice in ancient times was only a concession to the animal worship prevalent among the pagans was not his own but that this idea had been advanced by the rabbis of the *Talmud* in the *Midrash Rabbah*; hence Maimonides was in complete agreement with the rabbis of the Talmud.

Rice did not reply to Einhorn's conjecture that Maimonides inferred that when the Temple is rebuilt animal sacrifices will be discontinued, for at that time they will no longer be a concession to the long since discontinued pagan worship of animals. He also did not respond to Einhorn's opinion that Ibn Ezra had also placed himself in opposition to the view held by the rabbis of the Talmud that animal sacrifices would be restored upon the rebuilding of the Temple. Instead, Rice admonished Einhorn:

It must, however, not be forgotten to apply to this, as to many other passages, "the righteous shall walk therein, but transgressors shall stumble thereon" [Hosea 14:10].

It was not without good reason that Rambam [Maimonides] thus expressed himself in his preface to the *Guide for the Perplexed*: "The object of this treatise is to awaken the man attached to religion, whose soul is habituated and has attained faith in the truth of our law, and who is perfect in his religion and morals."

Like all Reformers of this time, Einhorn rejected the idea of a return to Zion, the rebuilding of the Holy Temple, and restoration of its attendant sacrifice of animals. Thus he responded to Rice:

The contradiction, proved by us, between the opinion held by Maimonides about the establishment of the cult-offering, and the Talmudic belief of the re-installation of the cult offering, Mr. Rice considers for one of those things, on which only sinners, like ourselves, stumble, but not pious people, like Mr. Rice and the like. But wouldn't it have been worth while, to give to us heretics a spark of enlightenment and to show us how one animal offering service should be re-installed after being disassociated for some thousands of years, which were only instituted to prevent us from becoming accustomed to the pagan offerings. About this we do not receive one single word of instruction . . . .

Convinced that all his attempts to point out to Einhorn that Ibn Ezra and Maimonides supported the talmudic views were wasted, Rice stated with an air of finality and a wave of argument:

Our wise men teach us, "Know what thou answerest an unbeliever"; to which Rabbi Jochanan said, "This means a gentile unbeliever, but a Jewish one would only become more confirmed in his unbelief. . . ." [Ethics of the Fathers 2:19; *Talmud Bavli*, Tractate *Sanhedrin* 38:].

I will cut short my discussion, which would, I am sure, never lead you to acknowledge the truth. I have to work for my living, and am not in the receipt of a considerable annual salary for doing nothing . . . .

But the dispute continued with a refutation by Rabbi Morris Raphall of Einhorn's attempt to link Ibn Ezra and Maimonides to the Reformers' opposition to talmudic interpretations of the Torah. Also an anonymous writer in *The Occident* joined in, quoting the talmudic statement:

"Whoever wishes to strangle himself should hang himself on a high tree." This quotation from the Talmud is not inept to the present controversy. The new lights are anxious to strangle all rabbinical authority, hence they hang on such a tree as Aben Ezra, in justification of their course . . . .

Another opponent of Reform who refuted Einhorn's anti-talmudic stand was Elias Mayer of Cincinnati, a community leader and a follower of Rice. He wrote a cynical polemic entitled "Theological Experiment," in which he described Einhorn's attempt to discard the *Talmud* and to reduce the 613 laws of the *Torah* to the Decalogue, and then to condense these ten commandments to but four.

When in the year 197 B.C. Sumerians invented the Parchment [derived from Pergamum, a city, where] persons of the Asian Minor kingdom of Pergamum [modern Turkey] introduced extensive use of parchment, usually manufactured of the skins of sheep or lambs which supplanted the papyrus used before. The Greeks reduced it by scraping and polishing, to so delicate a texture, that Cicero is said to have seen a copy of the Iliad of Homer, which had writing upon it, enclosed in a nutshell—very strange!

But this New-a-day—is nothing miraculous any more; as the reader will be convinced, when he knows, that by the new theory we become enabled to enclose the 24 Books of the holy Writ in a hollow space less than the half of a chestnut-shell.

The following experiment will manifest the clear and obvious truth of it.

1st. Reduce the Bible by Dr. Einhorn's method into the Decalogue.

2ly. Put this, with a portion of convenience, in a few drops of Einhornical, aquatic philosophic fluid of words, and reduce the same by light reflections into 4 axioms, viz:

1st. I am the Lord thy God!

2ly. Keep *one* day for Sabbath! (to hear a lecture)!

3ly. Honor thy parents, but not their religion!

4ly. Do nothing that puts you in jail!

Then write the four Axioms on a small strip of Sinai-Paper [*Sinai* Einhorn's periodical], with a juice of meat cooked in milk, and be sure that in a process of a very short time the whole compact of the oral and verbal Law will shrink together in two words, viz: *Ego Sum* [I am].

David Einhorn tended to limit Judaism to observance of the ten commandments, as did Wise and his fellow Reformers who upheld the Bible and *Talmud* as the basis for Reform at the Cleveland Conference. They

justified abolition of all biblical commandments, save those ten engraved in stone, on the grounds that King David had reduced the 613 to eleven, Isaiah to six, Prophet Micah to three and Habakkuk to one.

Wise agreed with Einhorn that only the moral law, the Ten Commandments, are binding and of divine origin. Wise asserted that these represented "pure religion," the "essence of Judaism." Yet, while claiming that this is "Reform Judaism," he deceptively maintained, for the benefit of the Orthodox, that by keeping only the Decalogue, this is "Real Orthodox Judaism."

Actually, the *Mabarshaw* [acronym of Samuel Eliezer ben Judah Ha-Levi Edels], a rabbinic sage, elucidated this subject in his commentary on its source in the *Babylonian Talmud, Tracte Makkos*, 24. He noted that all 613 commandments can be classified under eleven or three principles which lead the individual most directly to God conscientiousness.

Rice upheld the divine origin of the 613 commandments, and observed that Reformers were changing even those engraved in stone:

> We now find in each and every city a different Moses writing new tablets, such as in their opinion would be most suitable for modern times. But these tablets are not the Lord's; they come from dust and to dust they must return!

The battle lines were clearly drawn. The issue declared. Would the form and content of the faith of the fathers be changed almost to the point of non-recognition for accommodation and acculturation.



First Synagogue in the West, *Bene Israel*, the Broadway *Schul*, Cincinnati, founded 1824; Erected 1836.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

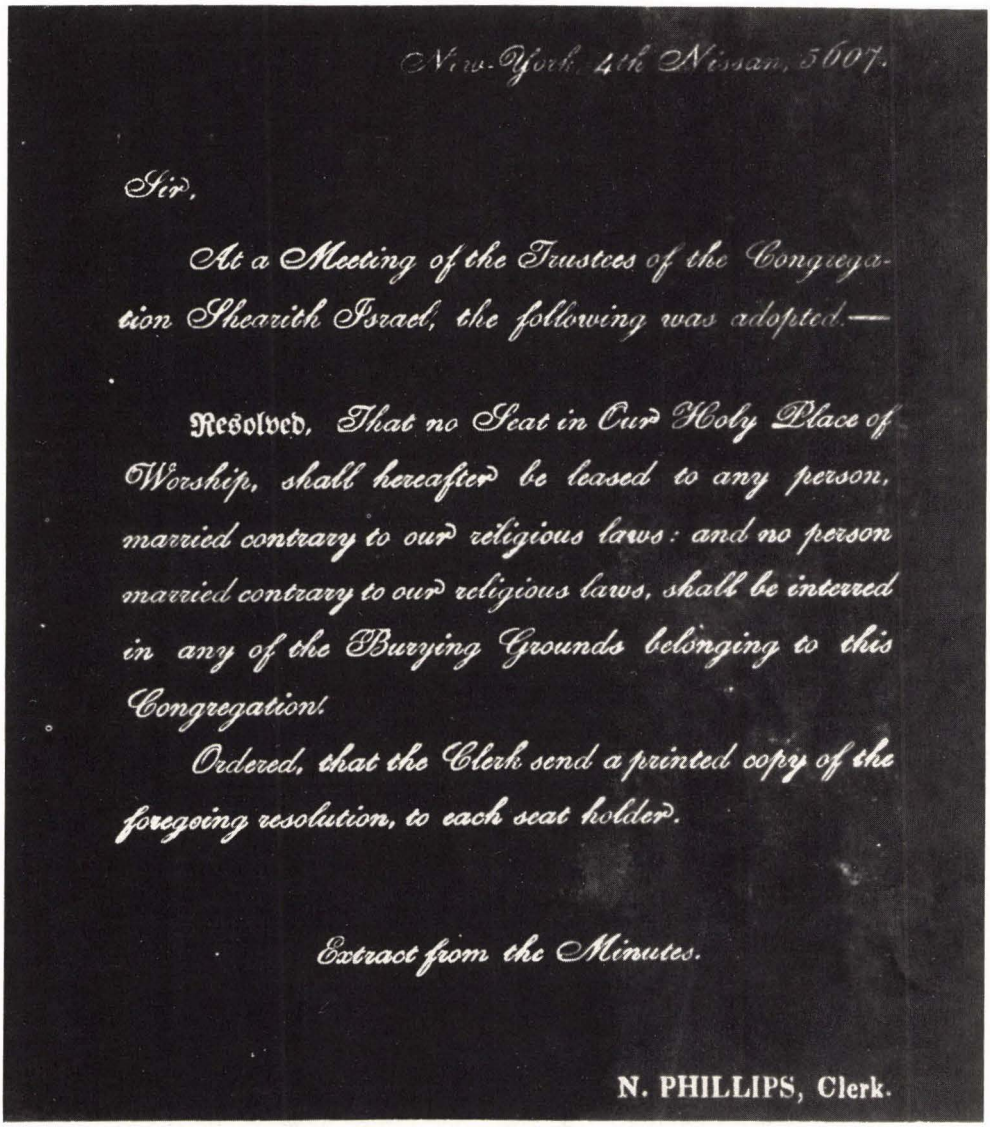
BOOK VII

SYNAGOGUES 'ORGAN'IZED AND CONVERTED



Second *Bene Israel* Synagogue, the *Broadway Schul*, Cincinnati, "Organ"ized in 1855.

("Queen City Heritage"; Courtesy Cincinnati Historical Society)



New-York, 4th Nissan, 5607.

Sir,

At a Meeting of the Trustees of the Congregation Shearith Israel, the following was adopted.—

Resolved, That no Seat in Our Holy Place of Worship, shall hereafter be leased to any person, married contrary to our religious laws: and no person married contrary to our religious laws, shall be interred in any of the Burying Grounds belonging to this Congregation.

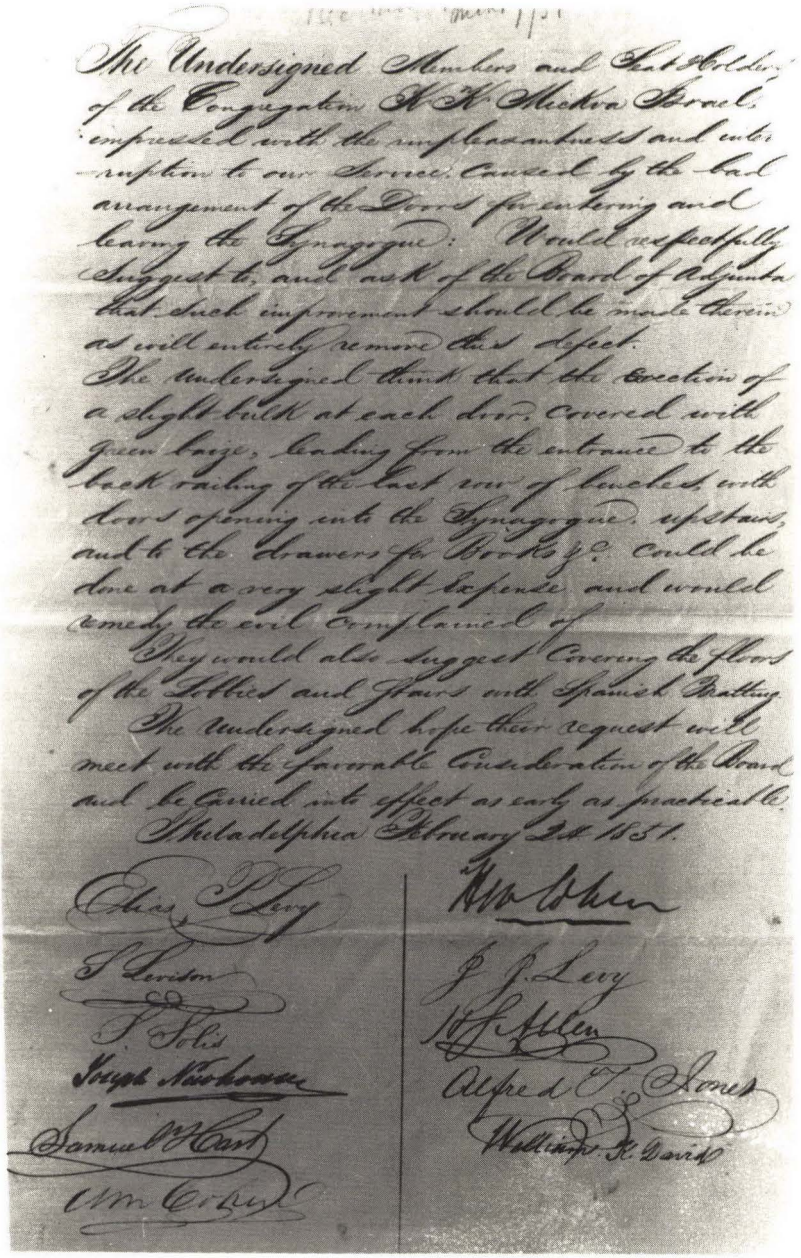
Ordered, that the Clerk send a printed copy of the foregoing resolution, to each seat holder.

Extract from the Minutes.

N. PHILLIPS, Clerk.

Resolution to stem tide of out-of-faith marriages; *Shearith Israel*, New York, 1847.

(Archives, Shearith Israel, New York)



The Undersigned Members and Seat Holders of the Congregation K K Mickva Israel, impressed with the unpleasantness and interruption to our Service, caused by the bad arrangement of the Doors for entering and leaving the Synagogue: Would respectfully suggest to, and ask of the Board of Adjunta that such improvement should be made therein as will entirely remove this defect.

The undersigned think that the erection of a slight bulk at each door, covered with green baize, leading from the entrance to the back railing of the last row of benches, with doors opening into the Synagogue, upstairs, and to the drawers for Books &c. could be done at a very slight expense and would remedy the evil complained of.

They would also suggest covering the floors of the Lobbies and Stairs with Spanish Matting.

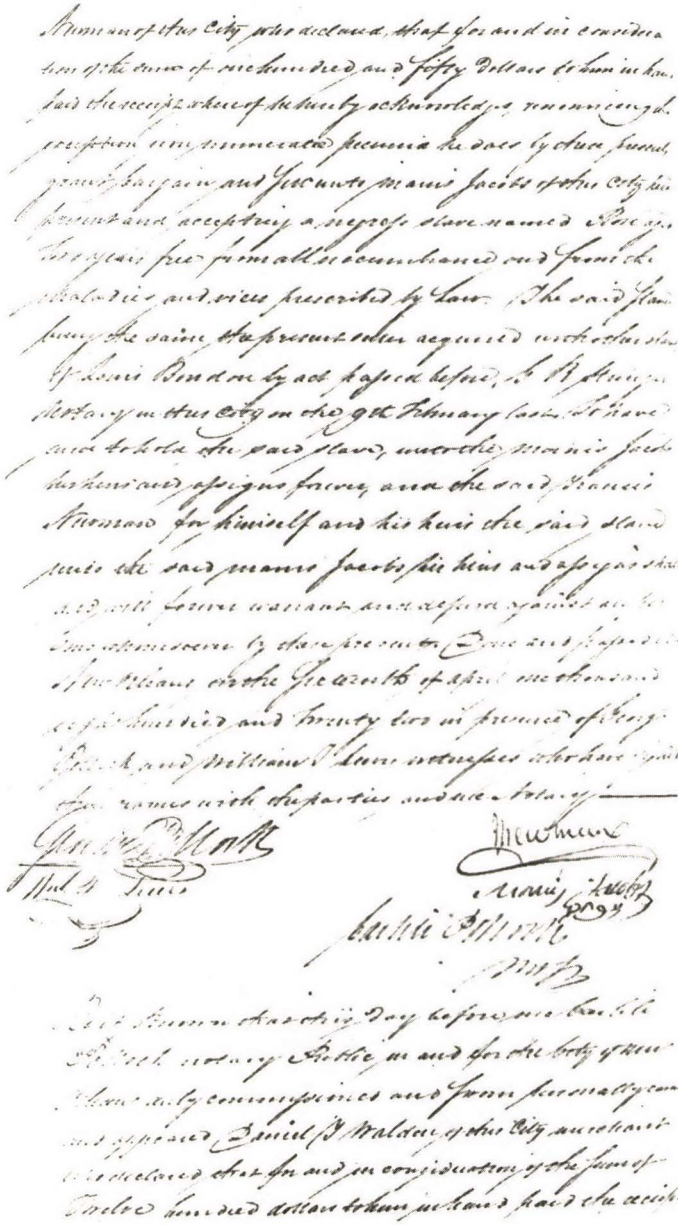
The undersigned hope their request will meet with the favorable consideration of the Board and be carried into effect as early as practicable.

Philadelphia February 24 1851.

Elias P. Levy
S. Levison
S. Solis
Joseph Newhouse
Samuel M. Hart
Wm Cohen
H W Cohen
J. J. Levy
H J Allen
Alfred T. Jones
William K. David

Memorial by members of *Mickve Israel*, Philadelphia, to improve synagoge decorum, 1851.

(Mickve Israel Archives)



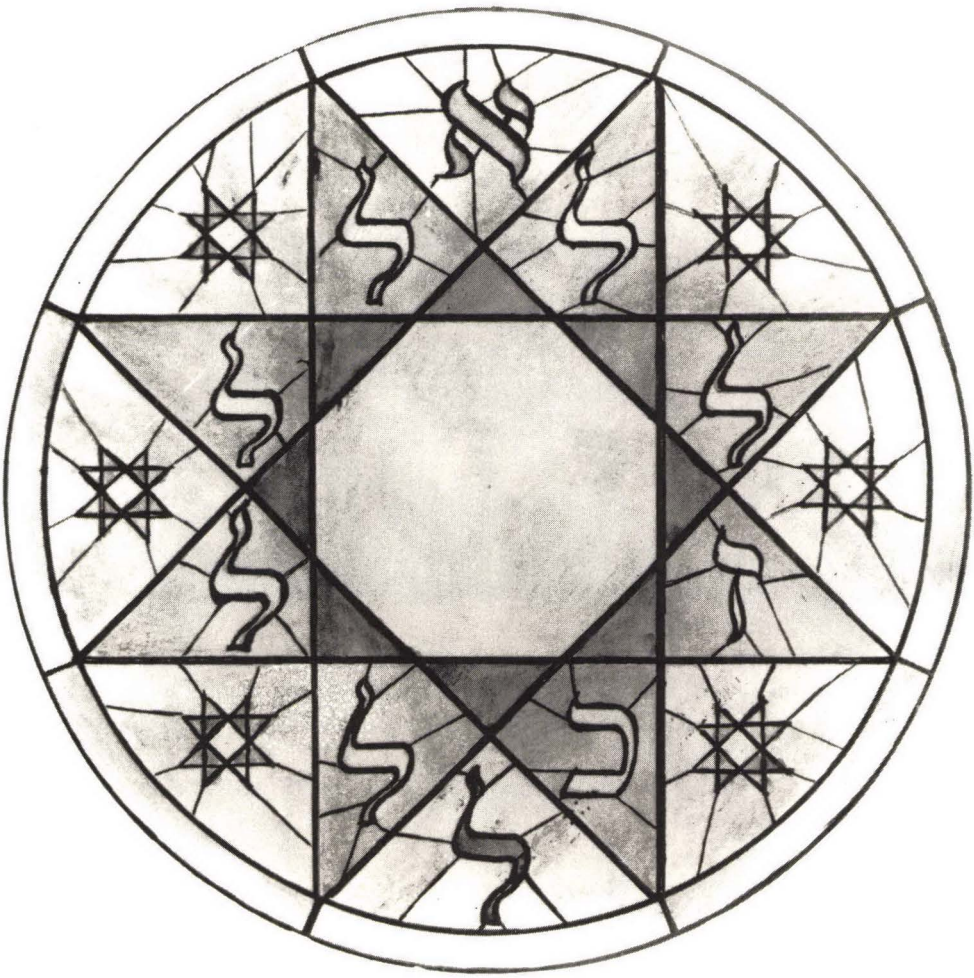
Manis Jacobs of *Shanarai-Chasset*, New Orleans, his Hebrew signature on a legal document, 1823, and knowledge of Hebrew, qualified him as rabbi.

(The Early Jews of New Orleans by Bertram Wallace Korn)



Nefutzoth Yehudah, New Orleans, 1847; former Christ Church converted to a synagogue, and donated to the Jewish community by Judah Touro, in order to perpetuate Orthodox Judaism in New Orleans.

(The Early Jews of New Orleans by Bertram Wallace Korn)



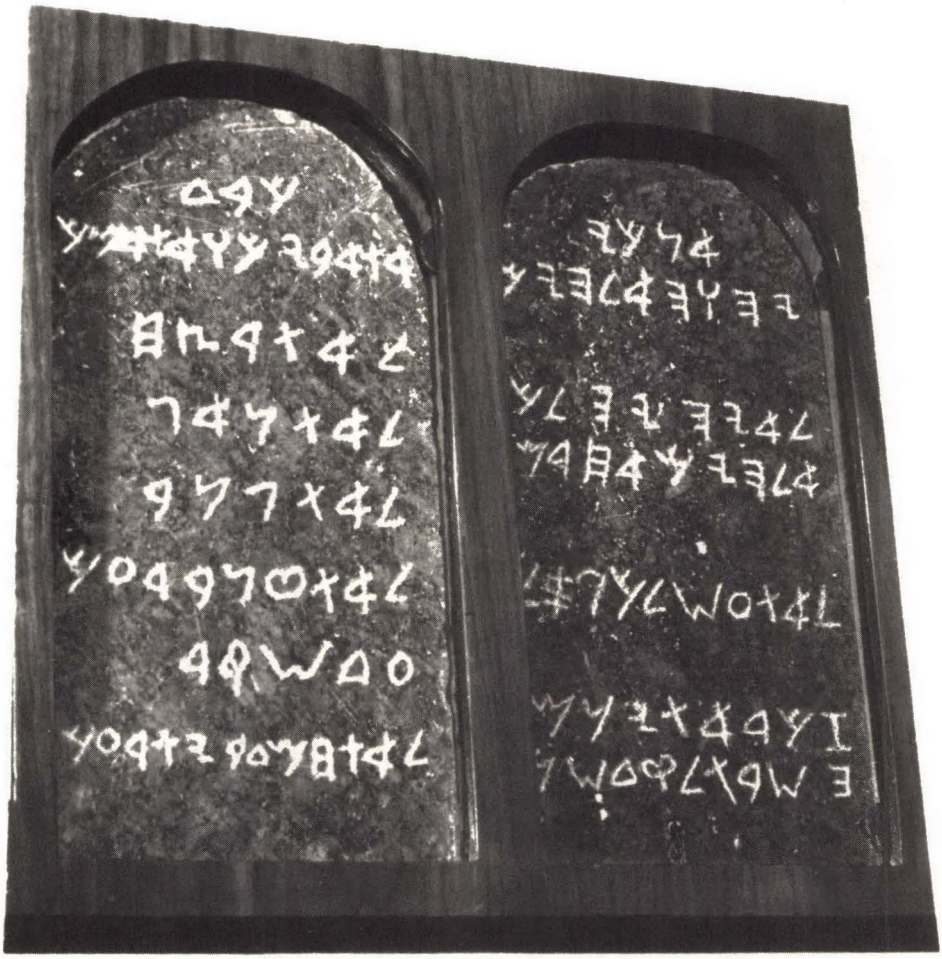
Historic illustration by artist Kurt Friede of Ten Commandments in circular form, in window of Temple *Emanu-El*, New York.

(Courtesy Kosher Overseers Association of America)



Temple *Emanu-El*, Chrystie Street, New York, 1848, a former Methodist Church; Featured the first circular decalogue in its window.

(The Rise and Progress of Reform Judaism by Myer Stern)



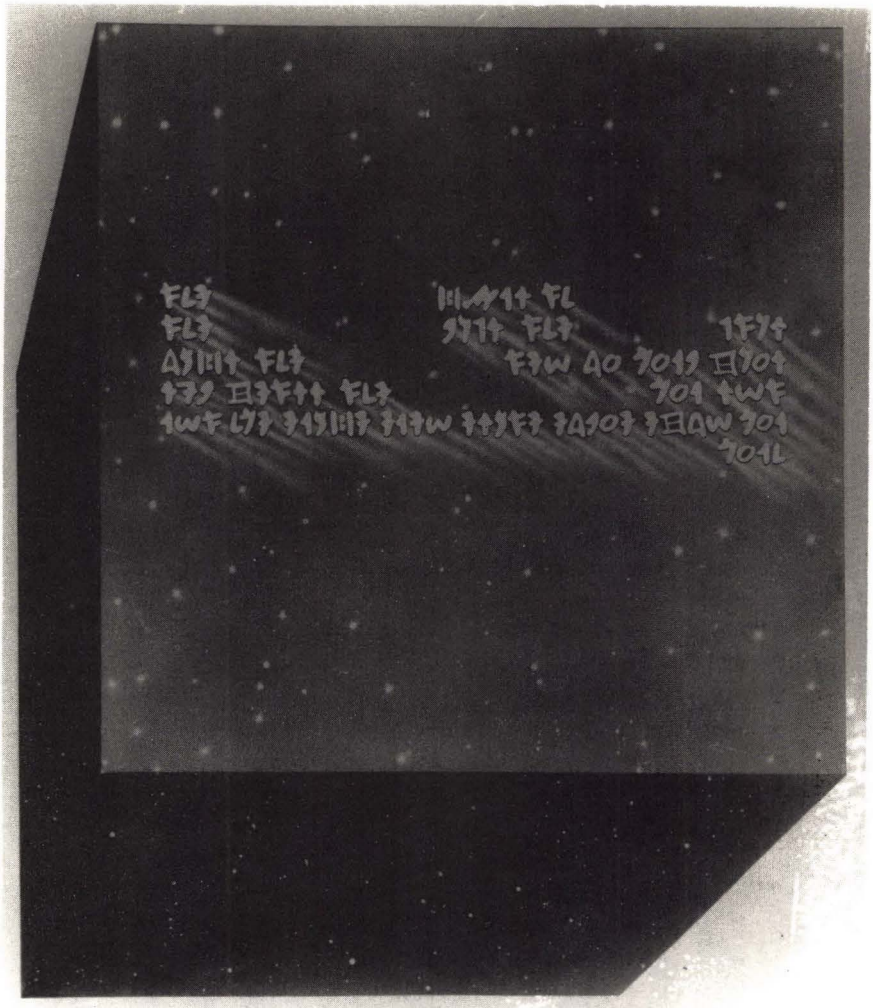
The Two Tablets in its supposed original form, from the motion picture, "The Ten Commandments."

(On Display at the Library of the Los Angeles Jewish Federation Council)



Anshe Chesed, Norfolk Street, New York, erected 1850; The Circular Decalogue in its window replaced within the year with the common form.

(*Synagogue Architecture in the United States* by Rachel Wischnitzer)

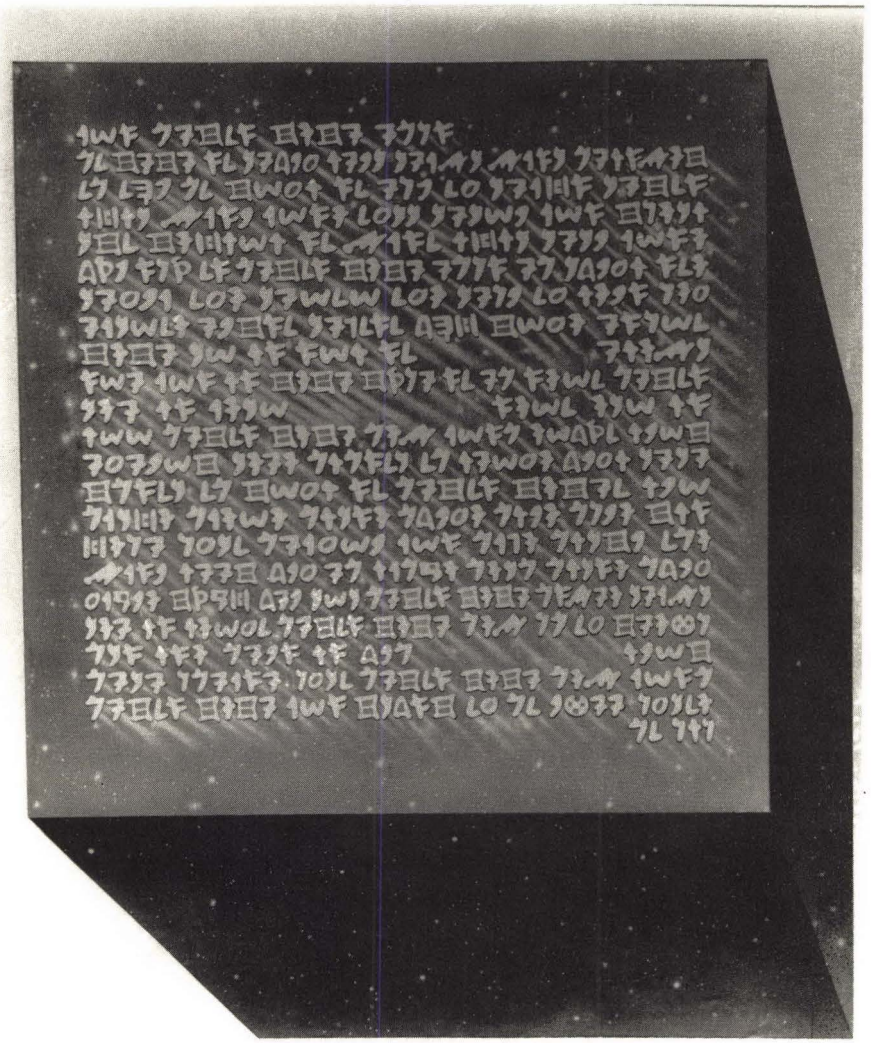


According to *Mar 'Ukvab*, Ezra changed the form of the ancient Hebrew characters to modern square writing, the Aramaic, a Babylonian script—Aramaic, brought with the exiles from Assyria to Judea.

According to Rebbi, the script originally was in the Ashshurith form. When the Israelites sinned at the time of Ezra, it was changed to the form of Samaritan script. But when they then repented the Assyrian form was restored. The script was called Ashshurith because it was *me'ushshar* [Hebrew "upright"].

According to Reb Simeon ben Eliezer, the Hebrew script never changed. [Ashuri, Hebrew "confirmed"].

[See: *Babylonian Talmud*: Sanhedrin 21, *Amud* 2; 22, *Amud* 1: *Baba Kama* 54, *Amud* 2; 55, *Amud* 1.] *(Hebrew Encyclopedia, Jerusalem)*



These tablets of stone, *Sanperyon* [Sapphires], according to the *Talmud* [*Yerushalmi Shekalim*], like the Star Sapphire, reflected light in starlight rays.

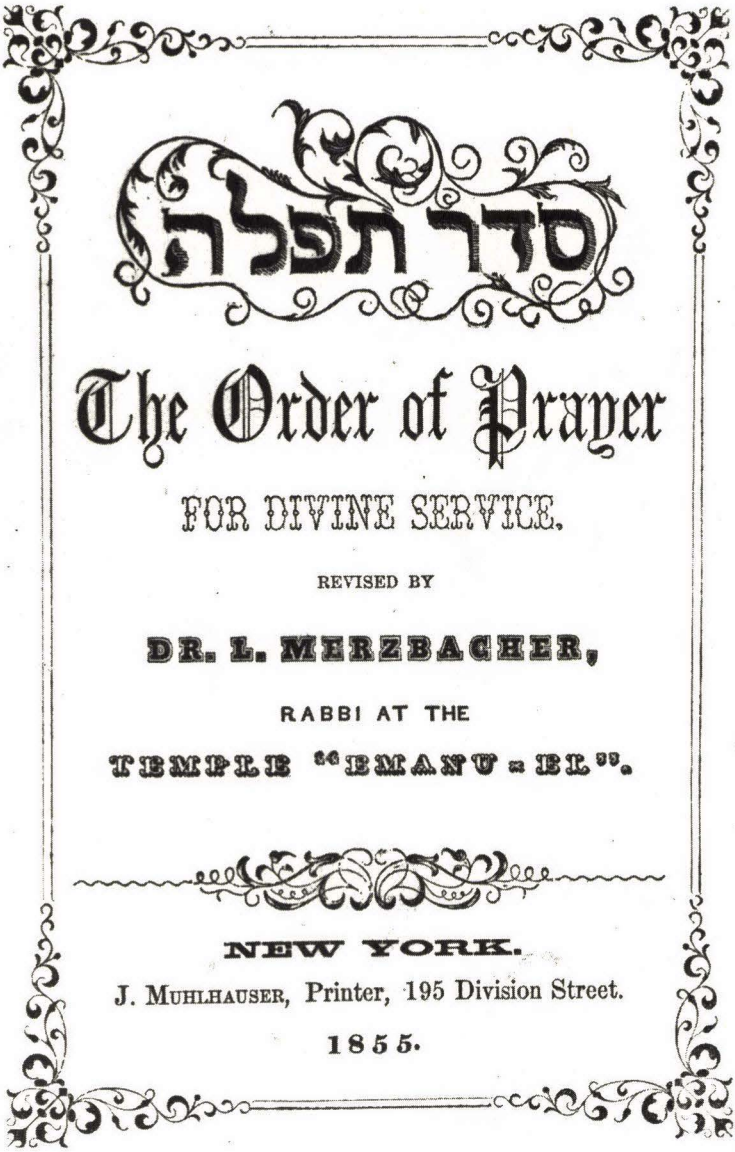
Art lettering by artist Harry Jacobs, design by graphic artist Robert Jacobs.

(Courtesy of The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)

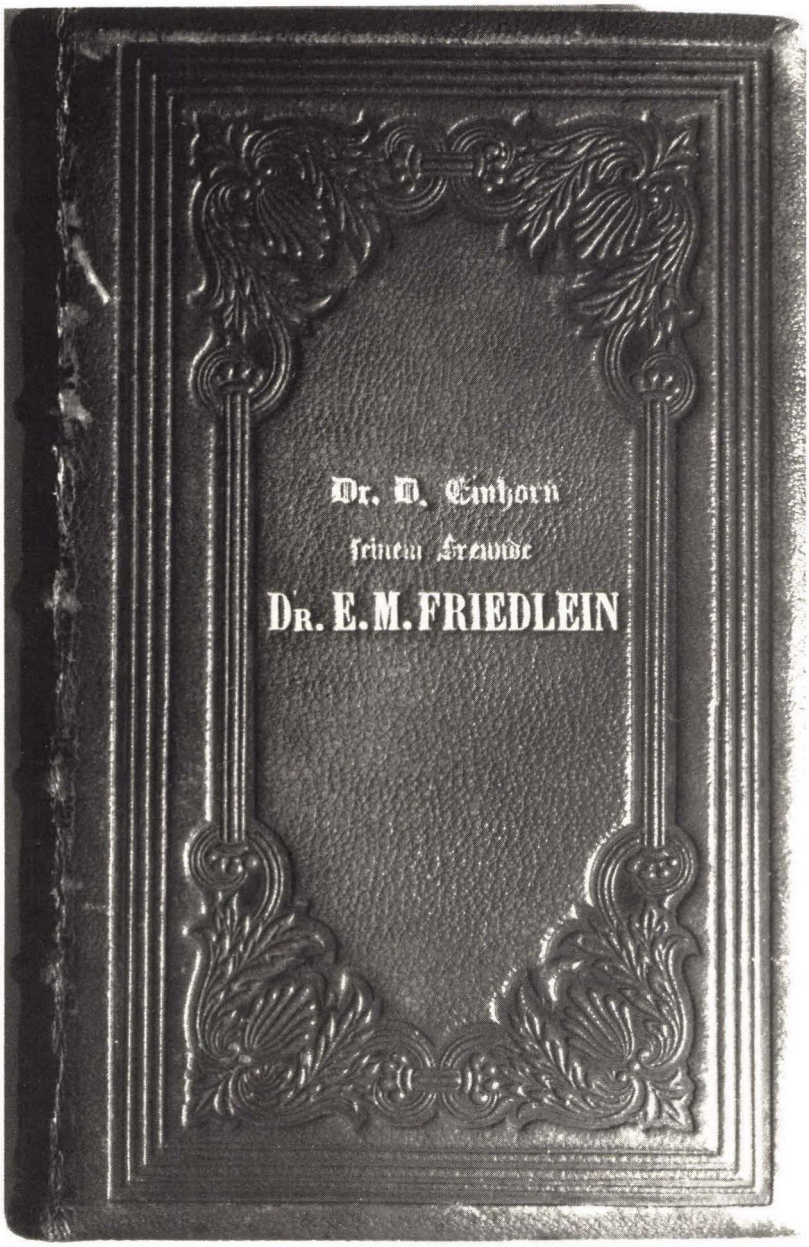


Seder Tefilah, revised in 1860 by Dr. Samuel Adler, minister, *Emanu-El*, New York, 1857-1874.

(Author's Private Collection)



Title Page of *Seder Tefilah*, New York, 1855
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



Presentation copy of Einhorn's *Olat Tamid* Prayer Book, to Dr. E.M. Friedlein.

(Library of the Author)



עלת תמיד.

Gebetbuch

für

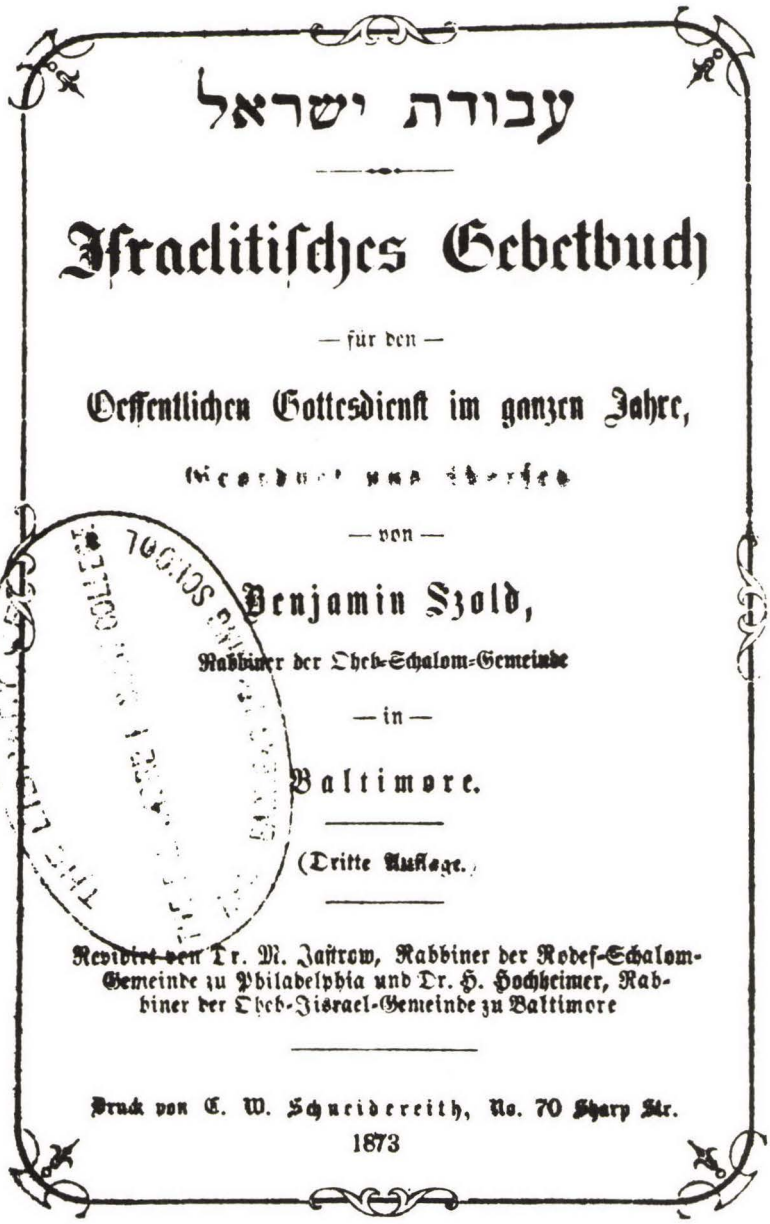
Israelitiſche Reform-Gemeinden.

עלת תמיד העשיה בהר סיני לריח ניחח אשה ליהוה.

Ein beſtändiges Ganzopfer, dargebracht am
Har-Sinai zum lieblichen Geruche,
ein Feueropfer dem Ewigen.
(4. B. M. 28, 6.)

Baltimore.
Gedruckt bei C. W. Schneidereith No. 61 Sharp-Straße.
1858.

Olat Tamid, composed by Dr. David Einhorn, 1856.
(Library of the Author)



עבודת ישראל

Israelitisches Gebetbuch

— für den —

Oeffentlichen Gottesdienst im ganzen Jahre,

[illegible]

— von —

Benjamin Szold,

Rabbiner der Oheb-Schalom-Gemeinde

— in —

Baltimore.

(Dritte Auflage.)

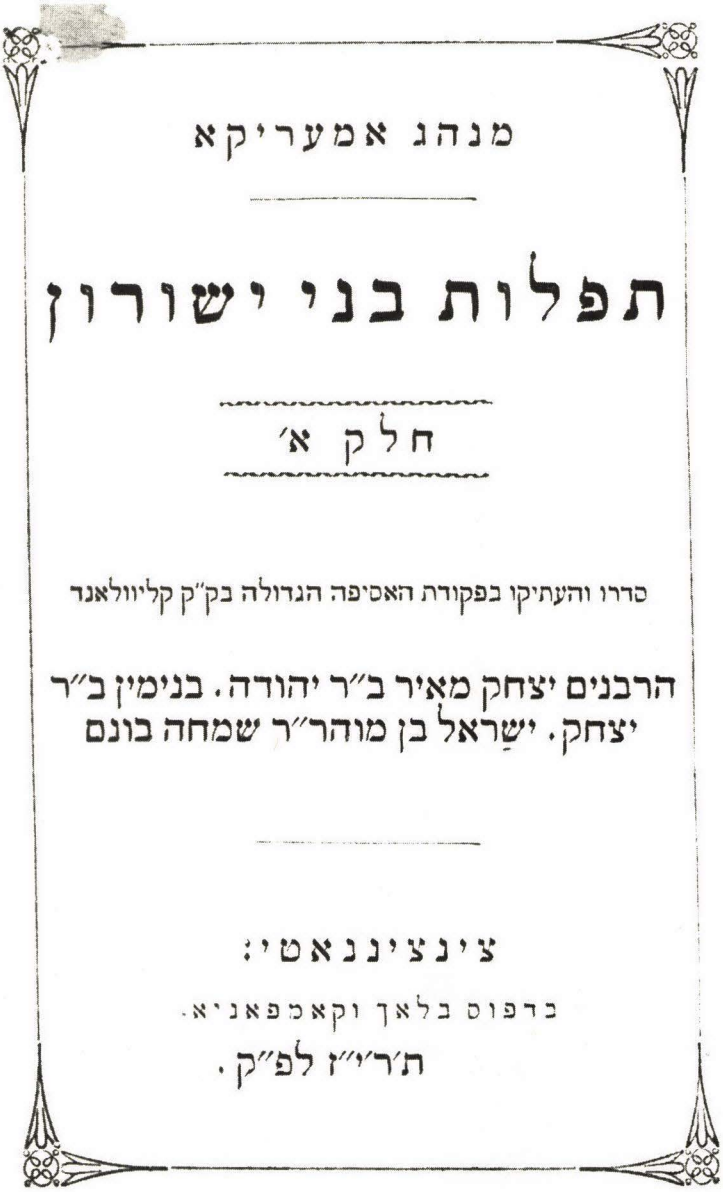
Revidirt von Dr. M. Jastrow, Rabbiner der Rodef-Schalom-Gemeinde zu Philadelphia und Dr. H. Hochheimer, Rabbiner der Oheb-Israel-Gemeinde zu Baltimore

Druck von C. W. Schneidereith, No. 70 Sharp St.

1873

Title Page, *Avodas Yisroel*, 1873, (Reform), edited by Benjamin Szold, revised by Marcus Jastrow, 1873.

(Library of the Author)


מנהג אמעריקא

תפלות בני ישורון

חלק א׳

סדרו והעתיקו בפקודת האסיפה הגדולה בק״ק קליוולאנד

הרבנים יצחק מאיר ב״ר יהודה. בנימין ב״ר
יצחק. ישראל בן מוהר״ר שמחה בונם

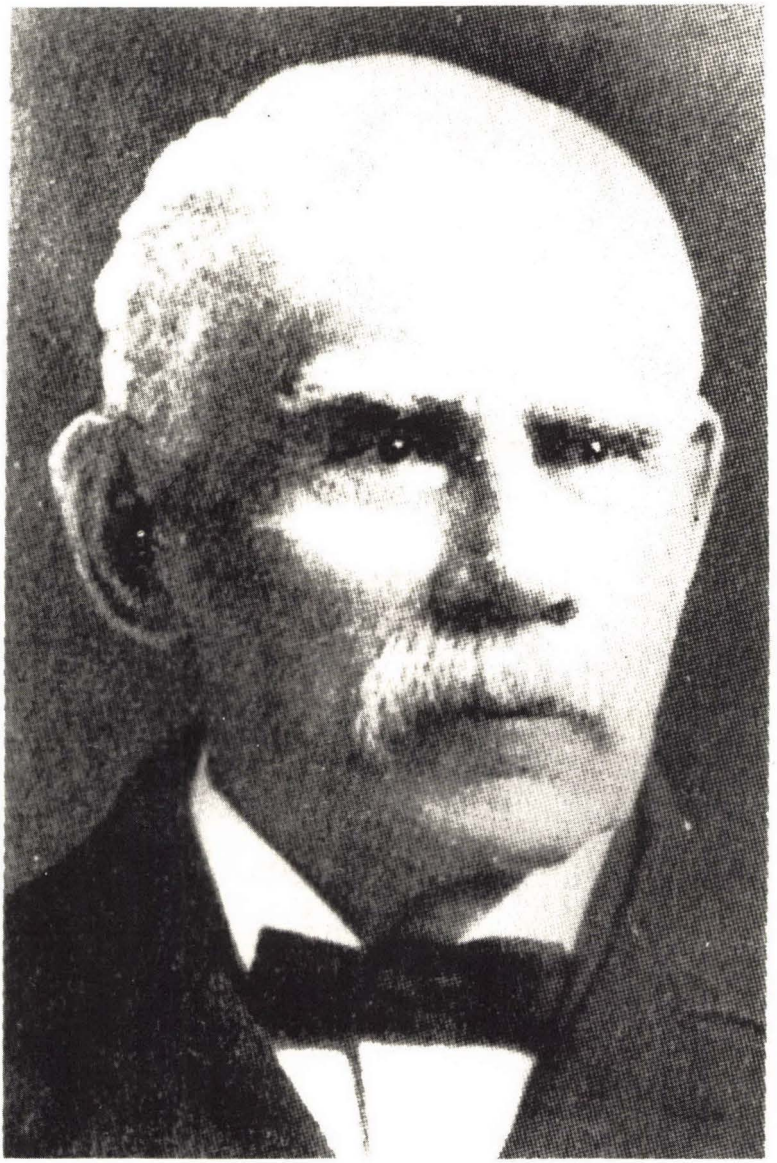
צינצינאטי:

ברפוס בלאך וקאמפאניא.

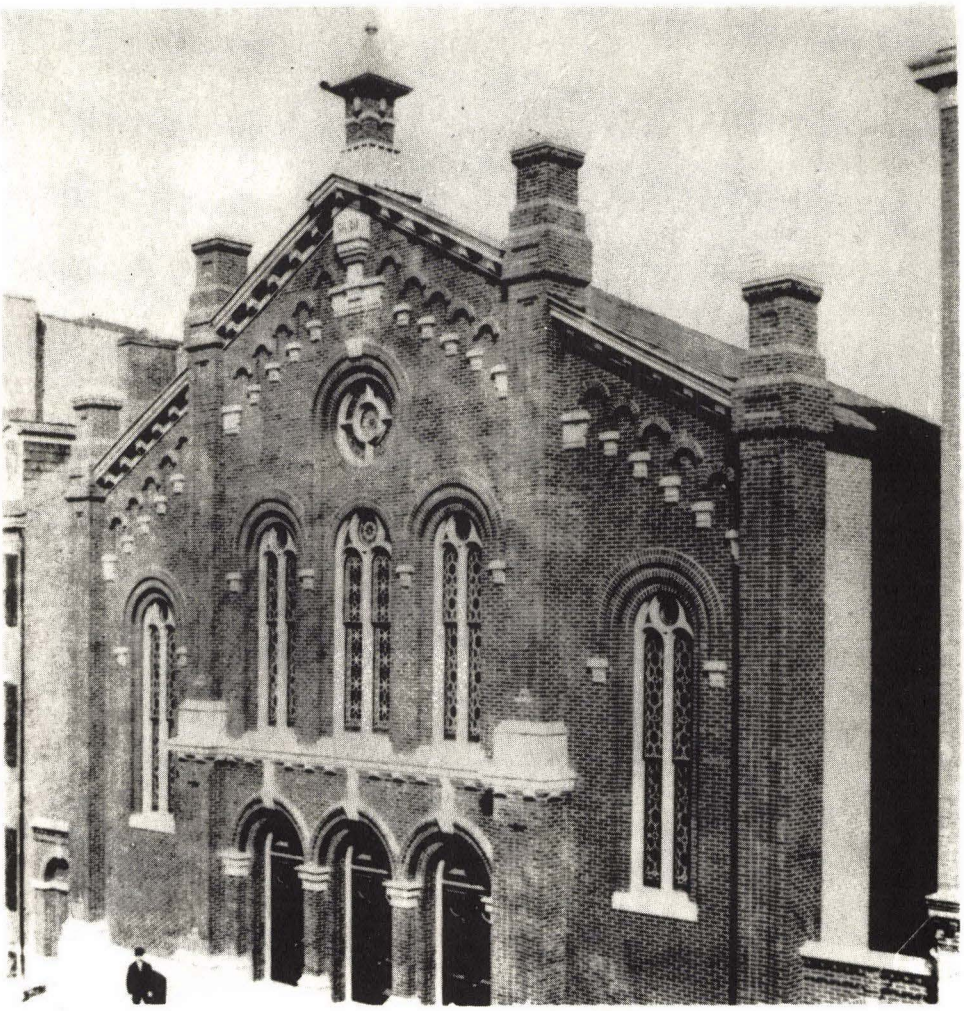
תר״י״ז לפ״ק.

Title Page, *Minhag America—Tefilos Bene Yeshurun*, 1857, "Wise's Prayer Book," was edited by Reformers Wolf Rothenheim, Isaac Mayer Wise, and Isidor Kalisch.

(Courtesy Hebrew Union College Library)



Julius Steifel, President, *Oheb Shalom*, Baltimore, 1853-1879.
(The History of Oheb Shalom by Louis F. Cahn)



Fifth Presbyterian Church, acquired by *Oheb Shalom* in 1858; Its organ continued to peal on Jewish Holy Days.

(The History of Oheb Shalom by Louis F. Cahn)



Marcus Jastrow, scholar and Reformer.
(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



Dr. Benjamin Szold, moderate Reformer, arrived in America, in 1848.
(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



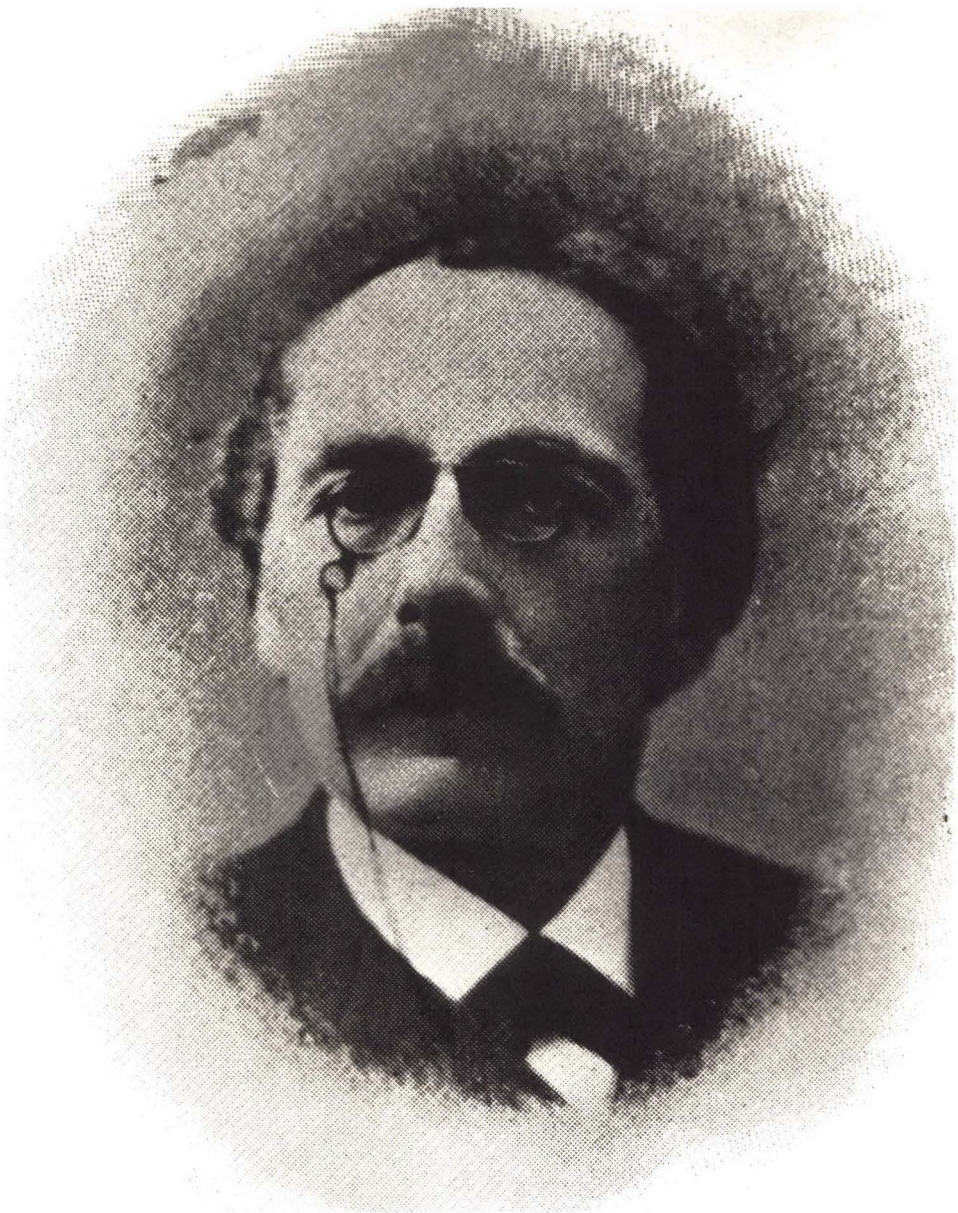
Salomon Sulzer, Austrian composer and cantor, published music which was introduced in European and American synagogues.

(Jewish Encyclopedia)



Dr. Gustavus M. Cohen, first professional musical cantor and choirmaster in America; At *Emanu-El*, New York, 1845-1852.

(History of The Jews of Cleveland by Lloyd P. Gartner)



Daniel Levy, Cantor of *Temple Emanu-El*, San Francisco, 1856-1864.
(The Chronicles of Emanu-El by Jacob Voorsanger)



Temple Choir in the 1870's: Male and Female, Jews and Gentiles.
(History of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation by Adolph Guttmacher)

(Unveränderter Abdruck.)

KOL KORE BAMMIDBAR.

Ueber Jüdische Reform.

Ein Wort an die Freunde derselben,

von

B. Felsenthal,

Sekretär des jüdischen Reformvereins in Chicago.

Chicago, 1859,

Gedruckt bei Chas. Heß, Ecke von Randolph und Dearborn Str.

Title-page of brochure by Dr. Felsenthal published in 1859.

Kol Kore Bamidbar, 1859, anti-Orthodox polemic by Dr. Bernhard Felsenthal.

(Library of the Author)



Dr. Bernhard Felsenthal, radical Reformer, minister, *Ohabei Or*, Chicago.

(*A Priceless Heritage* by Morris A. Gutstein)



Elias Greenebaum, President, *Kehillath Anshe Maarabh* [KAM], Chicago, 1857.
(*History of Kehillath Anshe Maarabh* by Bernhard Felsenthal and Herman Eliassof)



KAM, dedicated 1874: former Plymouth Church, corner Indiana Avenue and Twenty-sixth Street, Chicago.
(History of Kehillath Anshe Maarabh by Bernhard Felsenthal and Herman Eliassof)

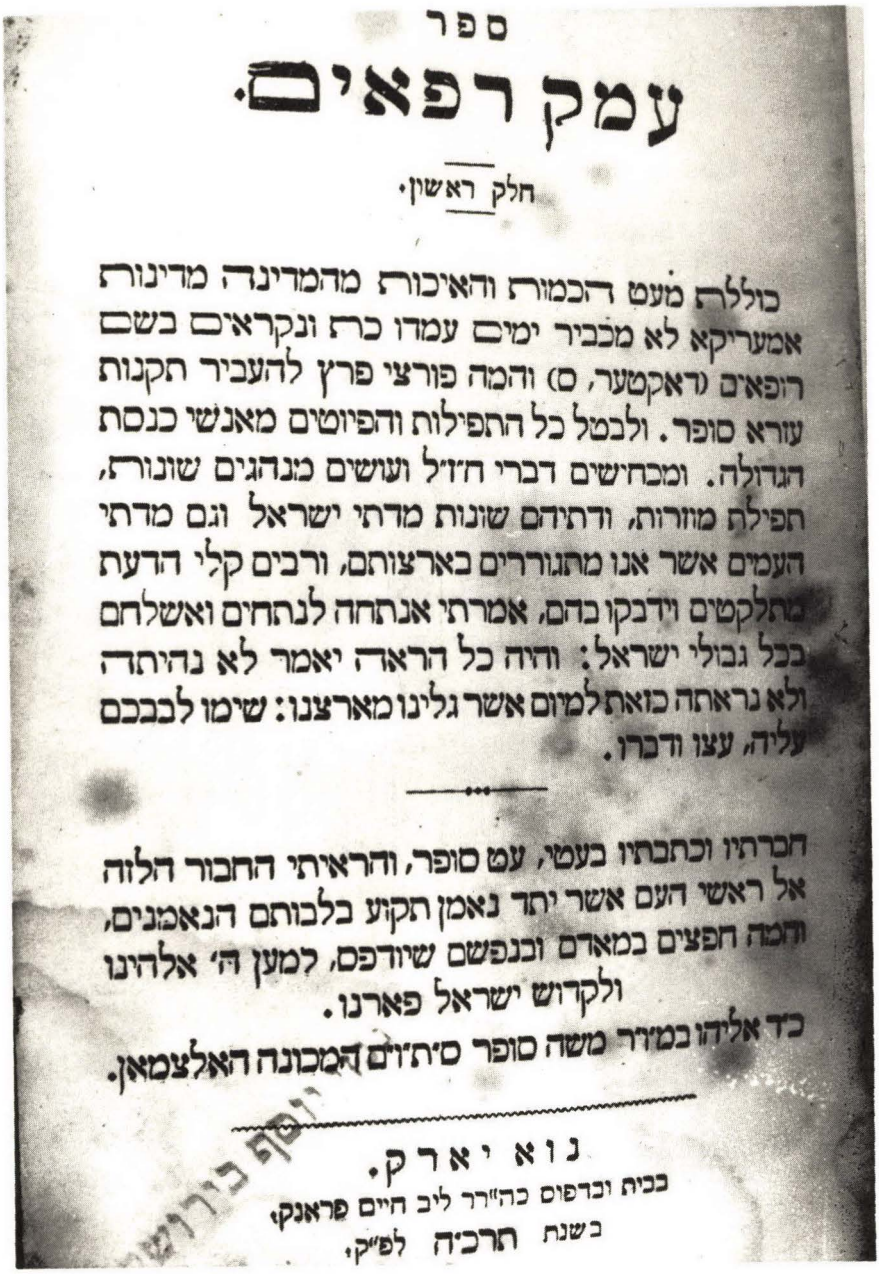
The Ten Commandments

(Revised and Improved Amid the Roar of Thunder of the Pittsburgh Conference)

1. I AM.
   I. M. Wise, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the bondage of Orthodoxy.
2. Thou shalt have no other Popes before me. Thou shalt not bow down to htem nor honor them for I, Isaac M. Wise, am a jealous rabbi, visiting the iniquity of the preachers upon the congregations of them that hate me through the columns of my two papers, and showing kindness and flattery to them that follow me and keep my commandments.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Western Pope in vain.
4. Remember Sunday to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the first is the Sabbath of the Christian, and there is no business done on that day, no money to be made for thee, thy son or thy daughter, or the stranger within thy gates. The Lord rested on the seventh day and blessed the Sabbath and hallowed it: but business is business; the Lord made a mistake, therefore we must hallow Sunday for the convenience of humanity.
5. Honor the Cincinnati College and support it, that the days of the Radical Reformer may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee (sic).
6. Thou shalt not eat Kosher.
7. Thou shalt not keep Kosher.
8. Thou shalt not fast on Yom Kippur.
9. Thou shalt not observe the Abrahamic rite.
10. Thou shalt not read Hebrew in thy prayers; thou shalt not commune with the Orthodox; the Conservative, nor have anything in common with thy Jewish neighbor.

Thirty years after the 1855 Cleveland Conference, Reform, under the leadership of Isaac Mayer Wise, reached its zenith at the Pittsburgh Conference. A vitriolic satire, in the style of the decalogue, was written by an Orthodox who expressed the hope that God would keep the American founder of Reform Jewish Institutions from being heard, "lest we become *meshugga*."

(Jewish Free Press, St. Louis, December 18, 1885*)*



ספר

עמק רפאים.

חלק ראשון.

כוללת מעט הכמות והאיכות מהמדינה מדינות אמעריקא לא מכביר ימים עמדו כת ונקראים בשם רופאים (דאקטער, ס) והמה פורצי פרץ להעביר תקנות עורא סופר. ולבטל כל התפילות והפיוטים מאנשי כנסת הגדולה. ומכחישים דברי ח"ז"ל ועושים מנהגים שונות, תפילת מזורות, ודתיהם שונות מדתי ישראל וגם מדתי העמים אשר אנו מתגוררים בארצותם, ורבים קלי הדעת מתלקטים וידבקו בהם, אמרתי אנתחה לנתחים ואשלחם בכל גבולי ישראל: והיה כל הראה יאמר לא נהיתה ולא נראתה כואת למיום אשר גלינו מארצנו: שימו לבבכם עליה, עצו ודברו.

חברתיו וכתבתיו בעטי, עט סופר, והראיתי החבור הלזה אל ראשי העם אשר יתד נאמן תקוע בלבותם הנאמנים, והמה חפצים במאדם ובנפשם שיודפם, למען ה' אלהינו ולקדוש ישראל פארנו.

כד אליהו במ"ר משה סופר ס"ת"ם המכונה האלצמאן.

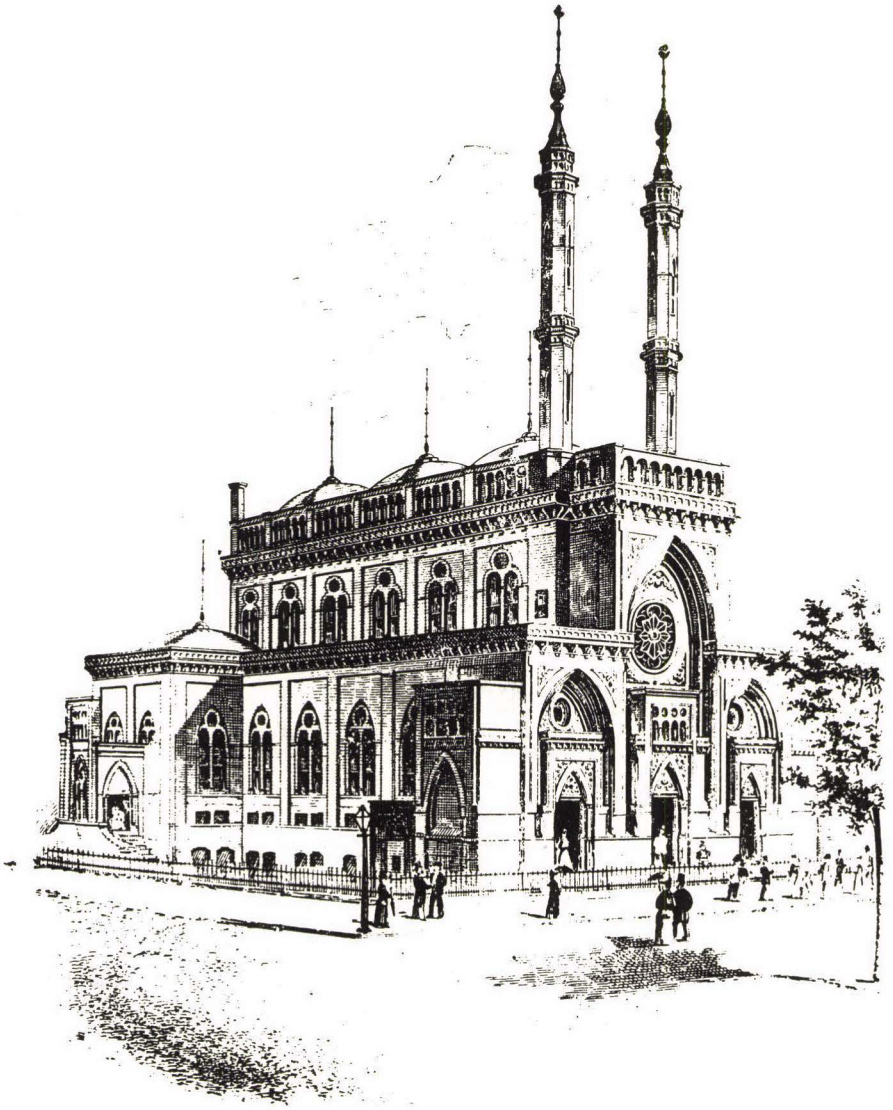
נוא יארק.

בבית וברפוס כה"ר ליב חיים פראנק,

בשנת תרכ"ה לפ"ק.

Emek Refoim, by Elijah Holzman, second Hebrew book published in America, anti-reform polemic.

(Library of the Author)



Plum Street Temple, *Bene Yeshurun*, Cincinnati, erected in 1866.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

Chapter 30
Embellishing the Temple

IN 1849, congregation *Anshe Chesed* opened the doors of its elegant new synagogue, largest in the city, at 172 Norfolk Street, in the lower East Side of Manhattan. A passerby was struck by the building exteriors, which he noted, like many "building exteriors collectively resemble Christian churches." Wryly he commented that "As with churches, the [sanctuary] is on the upper ground floor, perhaps its single 'elevation.' One walks up several steps instead of going down as intended by *Psalm* 130:1 ['Out of the depths do I call to you, God']. . . ."

Of all the innovations, that which caught the eye of the editor of *The Asmonean* was "the pleasing effect of the stained glass windows, particularly that containing the ten commandments which, in lieu of being on tablets, are inserted in separate panes round the window surrounding the Ark."

A visitor described his reaction:

> On entering the building, notwithstanding I was aware of its character, so ingeniously had the peculiar characteristic [accepted shape of the decalogue] that has ever marked the Jewish place of worship been obliterated, that I could not divest myself of the impression of being in a Catholic church . . . .

Anshe Chesed officers took the idea of a circular decalogue from *Emanu-El*, New York. When that Reform congregation acquired its new edifice, a church building, in 1847, it's minister, Leo Merzbacher, approved installing a stained glass window which presented the ten commandments in a rounded fashion. Thereby the Reformer unwittingly demonstrated that the decalogue contained the essence of Judaism; all other commandments, its outer ceremonial form, could be discarded or modified at best.

At the yet Orthodox *Anshe Chesed*, after its installation, questions were raised as to its permissibility. *Anshe Chesed*, served by *chazzan* Jonas Hecht since 1838 who was assisted by *chazzan* Leon Sternberger since 1849; Dr. Max Lilienthal 1845 to 1847; but no minister at this time, would render a ruling. They appointed the building committee to consult "whether it is against the *din* [Jewish Law] and ought to be fixed in the usual way on two tablets." The committee reported that "there was

nothing in the laws which prescribes any particular form; consequently it is not against the *din* to have them fixed as they are at present." Whom they consulted is unrecorded.

Neither *Chazzan* of *Anshe Chesed* nor Leo Merzbacher of *Emanu-El* were acquainted with *Tractate Baba Batra* of the *Babylonian Talmud* which in folio 14a describes the actual forms of the Decalogue, being letters hollowed through a square block of stone, six *tefochim* high, six wide, three thick [*tefochim* plural, *tefach* singular: a *tefach* being a liberal average of a man's handbreadth—four fingers not closely joined: on the linear scale—18 inches high, 18 inches wide, 9 inches deep]. The general version of arches is no doubt a figment of the imagination of non-Jewish sculptors.

Thus, either the semi-circular-topped or circular rendering of the Decalogue, departed from the actual square shape. Yet, usage of the arched-topped tablets had become so familiar that *Anshe Chesed* had after one year reversed from the innovative circular form to the "traditional" arched design.

That visitor, who left his impression of the innovations at *Anshe Chesed*, further questioned the propriety of the figure upon the *parochet*, the curtain overhanging the doors of the Holy Ark. An exquisitely embroidered bald eagle, emblem of the Union, on that velvet cover adorned the ark. It had cost the tremendous sum of $250. He wondered if the American Eagle, like that ancient Roman Eagle which was forbidden in the Holy Temple, would likewise be prohibited in the synagogue.

He surmised that the introduction of such an innovation, among others "appears to be a desire to produce a certain effect on strangers. I feel satisfied were they sure than none but Jews could have access to the Synagogue, they would care little about the matter . . . ."

Other synagogues would follow suit in the spirit of Americanism. In the West, the Milwaukee *Sentinel* reported that the at *B'ne Jeshurun*, "where the Scrolls are kept, hangs a heavy crimson velvet curtain, fringed with gold, and bearing . . . a spread eagle with the American shield, replete with stars and stripes . . . ."

> It has become a sort of fashion among the wealthier portion of the German Israelites, both here and in Europe, to desire a showy worship, and a more regulated manner of doing things than is customary among the so-called Orthodox . . . .

Thus Leeser explained the rage among wealthier German Jews who opted for choral singing and instrumental music in the synagogue. The pealing of the organ appealed especially to the officers and members of

synagogues who were of the wealthier class. They sought to find favor in the eyes of their Christian friends who visited the temple by creating a church-like setting in the synagogue, non-Jews thereby would feel at ease as in his prayer House.

The first recorded instance expressive of especial consideration to the visiting "stranger," appeared in a letter dated 1827. It has been sent by merchant Michael E. Cohen, the official shofar-blower of *Mickve Israel*, Philadelphia to the distinguished lawyer Zalegman Phillips, learned in Jewish codes of law:

> With reluctance find myself duty bound to adress [sic!] to your honour about the following circumstance what happened in our synagogue yesterday after the Whorshipe [sic!]. Mr Hyman Gratz invited the Christian Ladies (whom was in our Synag: at time of whorship) before the ארון הקדש [Holy Ark] did shew'd them the ספר תורה [Scrolls], but not being Satisfied with that, took out the Sepher of Mr. Peixotto had it undressd shewd the writing which the Ladies very delicate handled with their soft fingers the parchment. Sir [as] a member of the Congregation, I request your honour, to put a stop to such proceeding in future that our old Jewish rules should not be intire [sic! entirely] abolishd
>
> Nothing more at present I remain
>
> Sir Your humble Servt
> M. E. Cohen
>
> Z. Phillips Esqr
> March 11, 1827

In 1841, feminist and author, Lydia Maria Child of Boston visited New York. A philo-romantic who learned about Hebrews from the Puritanical Old Testament but had never seen a living Jew, visited the Crosby Street Synagogue of *Shearith Israel* on the day of the Hebrew New Year. She described her impressions:

> . . . all the services were performed in Hebrew, of which I understood not one sylable. To see mouths opened to chant forth a series of unintelligible sounds, has the same kind of fantastic unreality about it, that there is in witnessing a multitude dancing, when you hear no music . . .
>
> . . . The chanting was unmusical, consisting of monotonous ups and downs of the voice, which, when the whole congregation joined in it, sounded like the continuous roar of the sea.
>
> . . . The trumpet [sic!] . . . It did not send forth a spirit-stirring peal; but the sound groaned and struggled through it . . .

Thus, in Rochester, New York, Simon Tuska, son of Marcus

[Mordecai], rabbi of *Berith Kodesh* congregation, published in 1854, a little volume entitled, *The Stranger in the Synagogue*. The Reverend Henry W. Lee, rector of St. Luke's Church, wrote a foreword recommending the book, and added, "I take pleasure in saying that I regard it as being worthy of publication and an extensive circulation among both Jews and Christians." Tuska authored this booklet at the request of many non-Jewish friends who felt a deep interest in the rituals of Judaism, and who came as strangers into the Jewish house of worship.

Concern over gentile guests reactions in the synagogue moved Wise and his colleagues to completely transform the Jewish worship into one that would appeal to the "strangers" in their midst. Thus, in favoring a Gentile-Jewish choir of male and female choristers, Wise blasted the Orthodox Reader, the *Chazzan*.

Though Wise himself was raised in an Orthodox environment, as recalled by a fellow Bohemian, Rabbi Illowy, Wise revolted against his past, and remarked that the thrilling exclamations of the *Chazzan*, which once touched his heart, fill him now with disgust, and he thanked God if no gentile hears a Reader lead a service.

Wise stated the obvious, that the Temple was designed to find favor in the eyes of the Christian, the "stranger" who came to visit a Jewish house of worship.

Thus he opened his tirade against the Orthodox Reader, the *Chazzan*: "A singing individual, unable sometimes to translate the prayers he chants, is called a minister, and the places where he gives his regular concert is called a Synagogue, the men who help him chant or listen attentively to him, are called pious, and the whole concert is called divine service.

Wise unleashed his full fury against what he considered the "old style" of prayer: "In the orthodox synagogues everything is carried on after the old style and fashion, shouting and screaming, rocking and turning into all directions is the order of the day and every one can do after his heart's pleasure."

In the far west, at the cow-town of Los Angeles in California, a Reformer berated the high holy day conduct of "a few Jerusalem Israelites." Possibly referring to the quorum of Polish Jews who founded the first synagogue in town, *Beis Eil*, he mocked their *chazzan*: "The gentleman who officiated as reader shook himself as though he had the chills and fever, yet he yelled and screamed enough to set a whole regiment of dead soldiers crazy. . . ."

The earliest innovation in a Jewish house of worship in America, though not a Reform that violated Jewish law, was the introduction of a choir at synagogue dedications.

The first recorded choir in America sang at the consecration of newly enlarged and rebuilt Mill Street synagogue of *Shearith Israel*, New York, held Friday, April 17, 1818, before the Sabbath eve service. The musically gifted Jacob Seixas directed a chorale of "fifteen ladies and ten gentlemen."

By popular demand, Jacob Seixas again trained a mixed choir which sang at the dedication of the new synagogue of *Mickve Israel*, Philadelphia, on Friday, January 21, 1825, before the Sabbath eve service. Among the spectators, Rebecca Grätz, daughter of the merchant-prince, Michael Grätz, and active in social affairs, observed that "all who were there acknowledged that there has never been such church [sic!] music performed in Philadelphia."

In New York, in 1832, at the celebration of the fourth anniversary of the *Ashkenazi* synagogue, *B'nai Jeshurun*, an all-male choral society sang on that occasion.

In Cincinnati, at the dedication of the first synagogue in the "west," *Bene Israel*, in 1836, David I. Johnson, a Jewish pioneer in Ohio, led a choir of about twenty ladies and gentlemen of the congregation.

In 1847, those who in the previous year had seceded from *B'nai Jeshurun* with its *chazzan*, Samuel Isaacs, to found *Shaaray Tefila*, planned to dedicate their new edifice with a mixed choir. Reverend Ansel Leo, who succeeded Reverend Samuel Myer Isaacs as *chazzan* at *B'nai Jeshurun*, sent a letter of inquiry to Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler of England, asking whether a mixed choir may participate in a synagogue dedication.

Leo feared that a mixed choir at a dedication service might lead to its introduction at worship. His fears were well founded, for in that year *Emanu-El* of New York under the ministry of Leo Merzbacher and *Beth-El* of Albany under the ministry of Isaac Mayer Wise added ladies to their choirs on holy days. "Poor as the choir was," stated Wise, "it still was the immediate cause of getting rid of all the medieval rubbish at once."

Chief Rabbi Adler replied on May 31, 1847, that "it is by no means correct to permit ladies to assist with their vocal powers at the consecration of a synagogue."

Despite Rabbi Adler's ruling, Isaacs allowed a mixed choir to participate in the dedication ceremonies of *Shaaray Tefila* and Leeser delivered the consecration address on Friday, June 25. The event began before the Sabbath eve, forty voices of ladies and gentlemen accompanied by a thirty-piece orchestra comprised of the elite of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, performed.

Emanu-El, New York, in 1847, added women to its choir, established two years earlier as the first permanent choir to chant during holy day worship in a Jewish house of prayer. Though Reform in its prayers,

Emanu-El had previously been Orthodox in every respect. Men and women sat separately, heads covered, and volunteer members formed an all-male choir.

In 1849, *Anshe Chesed*, New York, followed the lead of *Emanu-El* and introduced a mixed choir in its new building during holy day worship.

Emanu-El, San Francisco, like their New York namesake, sought to introduce a mixed choir in 1854. They asked their minister, Julius Eckman, if it was permitted. Eckman, titled rabbi, for he claimed ordination, responded in an authoritative manner:

> I am here at the end of the land, I have no books to refer to, nor have I even had time to pursue the long arguments of the learned who want us to go hat in hand to ask permission of Rabbi Samuel [in the *Talmud*].
>
> However, if authority is required is the following not conclusive? We read *Nehemiah* VII:67 of the returning captives
>
> ולהם משוררים ומשוררות
>
> "And they had cantors and cantrices."

Wise introduced a mixed choir on August 8, 1854, soon after his assumption of the ministry of *Bene Yeshurun* as he had at *Anshe Emeth*, Albany, four years earlier. Wise, himself, led and taught the choir, playing his violin in teaching the new beginners. Because they had to be seated in the front of the worshippers, a most awkward situation, the congregation built a choir gallery. On *Yom Kippur* eve of the following year, the choir was reinforced by two professional vocalists, both of whom were Christians. In a pugilant mood he taunted his Orthodox opponents:

> Defend Yourselves!
>
> Having learned, that the pseudo-scholars of this city have again maintained, that the *Talmud* prohibits ladies, to co-operate in the choirs of synagogues, we challenge them to come forward as men, and show us one single passage in the *Talmud* to substantiate their pretentions.

By 1859, *Kehillath Anshe Maarabh* [KAM], Chicago, under the influence of Samuel Straus, a former *Yeshivah bochur* [Seminary student] who two years earlier had been president of the short lived Reform congregation *Ohabei Or* [Lovers of Light, "Light" representing enlightenment], introduced a mixed choir. An officer stated that "the choir, especially the ladies, excelled themselves in singing the hymns. When Mrs. Samuel Alsheeler [sic! Altschuler] sang the solo in *Min-Hamezar* by Halevi [prayer preceding sounding the *shofar* on *Rosh ha-Shanah*, many tears were flowing from the eyes of the faithful . . ."

To the objections of the Orthodox, officer Straus retorted: "King David said in *Psalm* 148, that בחורים וגם בתולות "Youths and maidens should sing the praise of the Lord . . ." He denied that a Christian led the choir, explaining that "The Rev. M[ax; also Marx] M. Moses leads the choir . . . A Christian gentleman is only a Conductor . . ."

The Orthodox at *Bene Israel*, Cincinnati, when Lilienthal, upon assuming ministry of the congregation in 1855, instituted an all-male choir. The Orthodox challenged him "to answer with *yes* or *no*, whether persons desecrating the Sabbath or holidays may be allowed to sing publicly in the synagogue choir? Yet, within a year he succeeded in introducing a mixed choir.

At Milwaukee, at *B'ne Jeshurun* congregation, Isidor Kalisch introduced a mixed choir, in which his successor, Dr. Ferdinand Leopold Sarner accepted gentiles. Wise had approved admission of gentiles to the mixed choir when Sarner served *Berith Kodesh* congregation in Rochester, New York, prior to his coming to Milwaukee in 1860.

At Louisville, Kentucky, *Adas Israel* congregation introduced a mixed choir in 1860, over the vehement objections of Reverend Lewis N. Dembitz, their aged sexton and *shochet*, recently retired. The officers retaliated by discontinuing his weekly pension. His attorney, Dembitz, sent a warning. The officers defended their action, replying on April 16:

> The old man of 76 winters, to whom Mr. Dembitz so poetically alludes, received his regular weekly pension for over three years—until he pronounced our מצות [unleavened bread for Passover]חמץ [leavened and forbidden], our שחיטה [ritually slaughtered meats] טריפה[lit. torn, i.e. non-kosher], and put our synagogue, on account of the Choir, in חרם [excommunication].

Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler's fears were realized. The mixed choir introduced at a weekday dedication became the norm in German synagogues on holy days. Moreover, choral singing invited musical accompaniment. Leeser objected to even an all-male choir, convinced that it would lead to coupling it with musical accompaniment:

> . . . as regards the singing, it ought to be performed, at least in the Sephardic custom, by the whole congregation, all aiming to sing in harmony, the *Chazan* leading the people, keeping time with them, and worshipping as one of them at the same time . . . This accomplished, no one would need a special choir, nor a musically trained choir-leader . . . .

The century-and-a-quarter-old *Mickva Israel*, Savannah, became

drawn into the Reform camp, first by introduction of a mixed choir and then by an organ.

The stage for Reform in *Sephardic* Savannah was set in 1853 by Jacob Rosenfeld of Cincinnati, formerly of Charleston. The Reform minded congregational activist Abraham Einstein on May 22, 1855, was the key figure at a presentation of a Torah Scroll he had ordered from his uncle, Rabbi Loeb Saenger of Buttenwiesen, Bavaria. After Rosenfeld offered a toast, *Mickva Israel*'s President, Jacob De la Motta, Jr., Esq., in his toast, alluded in a veiled warning to Rosenfeld's predilection for Reform:

> The sacred scroll of the Law, now before us, the emblem of our faith, may it never be polluted by the misconstruction of innovations. . . ."

By 1862, relationships between Rosenfeld the Reformer and the Orthodox members reached an impasse. Reverend Rosenfeld, arriving at the synagogue Friday evening, September 12th, found the synagogue door sealed. Stunned, he experienced the first rabbinic "lock-out" in America. Rosenfeld remained to found with about thirty followers the Polish-rite congregation *B'nai Berith Jacob* [Sons of the Covenant of Jacob].

After the Civil War, both congregations were "locked out" of their shattered houses of worship. The orphaned survivors met at the intact Hebrew Orphan Society Hall. Bereft of their organ, the Reformers agreed to Orthodox worship and the Orthodox, to a mixed choir. President-elect, Charles H. Moise, announced: "I occupy a conservative position . . ."; conservative meaning preservative. After five years, Reformer Raphael de Castro Lewis appointed minister, an organ reinstalled, the conservatives conceded. The first Conservative congregation expired.

Concern over the introduction of an organ into a Jewish house of worship was first voiced at the consecration of the new Mill Street Synagogue of New York's *Shearith Israel*. In his dedicatory address given by Mordecai Manuel Noah, former U.S. Consul to Tunis and editor of the *National Advocate*, he warned congregations to guard against those who would seek to imitate *Bayit Hadash*, dedicated that year in Hamburg, Germany, which featured a built-in organ that pealed on holy days.

An organ first chimed in an American synagogue, on Thursday, July 20, 1820, at the dedication of *Mickva Israel*, Savannah, Georgia. It did not constitute any violation of Jewish law, since this occurred on a weekday, when music was permitted. But the musical instrumentation at the Reformed Society of Israelites, Charleston, South Carolina, in 1824, during Sabbath worship, was a flagrant violation, and families were rent asunder in the aftermath. Fifteen years later, after a reconcilation, the wounds were reopened when the Reform faction gained control of the newly erected building of *Beth Elohim*, and built-in an organ.

Har Sinai Verein, Baltimore, in 1842 made use of a melodeon and *Emanu-El Verein*, New York, in 1847, purchased a church building and its organ chimed at worship on holy days.

Rice posited that any Jew who played a musical instrument on the Sabbath or on holy days was to be regarded an infidel. According to Maimonides, an infidel is one who rejects the divinity of the Law, or denies its commentary [the unwritten Law or *Talmud*], particularly one who follows Gentile practices, for that individual has excluded himself, by his act, from the Jewish fold, having thereby diminished the ranks of the remnants of Israel. Rice interpreted the Rabbinic aphorism that "a custom supplants a law," they meant that in following Gentile practices, one destroys Jewish law. For this reason, our wise men were strict in not allowing us to follow Gentile practices.

Rice emphasized that holding Jewish custom and keeping out non-Jewish custom is critical for the very existence and continuance of the Jewish nation. He explained that this is indicated by the Hebrew word for custom, *Minhag*, which is derived from *nahag*, meaning "ways, mannerisms, nationalism." Furthermore, the root of *nahag*, which is *hag* or *hagha* meaning "thought," signifies that the thoughts of a people are expressed through its ways and its customs, which bind it together in nationhood; moreover, that Jewish nationhood, its ways and customs, is derived from His thought. Since we cannot penetrate the Almighty's thoughts in His setting forth the nationality of His people, which is deep and concealed from our perspective and perception, our wise men were strict in protecting the practices of Israelites and excluding those of other peoples.

Rice warned those enamored of foreign customs, such as playing an organ in a Jewish house of worship, would suffer the maledictions enumerated in the Bible. There is an implied threat in the word *minhag*, hinted Rice, for its numerical value, ninety-eight, equals the number of maledictions enumerated in the *Torah*.

Leeser voiced his objections:

> The contemplated musical reforms . . . will ultimately prove worse than useless; people will indeed come for awhile, as long as the novelty lasts, to drink in the dulcet tones of woman's seductive voice . . . or the deep organ's swell; but what will the end be? Suppose the prima donna becomes old and ugly, or loses her voice . . . . it would argue but little knowledge of the human heart to imagine that, in the long run, people would neglect their business merely to enjoy church-music, when they can obtain, to say the least, as good if not much better and livelier secular strains, at more convenient times, when business hours are over, at theatres and

concerts, where they are annoyed by forced gravity, and the conventional superior decorum which they must exhibit in a house of worship.

We will advance nothing about the improbability that all are enthusiastically fond of music . . . But granting that even the most ignorant of the theory of sounds are transported to a pitch of adoration not otherwise attainable by church-chaunts [sic] and playing: still it must be apparent, that, unless you vary the entertainment constantly, the effect will soon die away, and this, just in proportion to the complication of the tunes sung or played.

Simplicity in sound is just like simplicity in dress, constantly pleasing; at least it is more calculated to gratify the senses for a longer time than extravagance in either kind. . . .

H of Chicago responded likewise:

. . . one of the chief demands of the reformers to have some young and, if possible, beautiful women to sing in the Synagogue,—and a Christian conducts the exhibitions of this Jewish choir. Is this not pleasant?

As a consequence of Rice's responsum, and Leeser's and H's opinion, when in 1849, it was proposed to install an organ in the synagogue, *Adas Israel*, Louisville, Kentucky, the Orthodox faction threatened to burn down the synagogue. After some years, the threat was forgotten and the organ installed.

A defiant Isaac Mayer Wise, in 1850, when *Anshe Emeth*, Albany, purchased a Baptist Church, sanctioned its organ to be played on Sabbaths and all other holy days.

Almost a year passed. The question was posed at Albany "as to whether it was permissible to use the organ on *Yom Kippur* . . . Maier Freund, an officer of *Anshe Emeth*, replied in great astonishment, 'If the organ is not to be played on *Yom Kippur*, our holiest day, of what use is it?' "

Wise twice responded in an affirmative refrain: first in 1850, and the second time in 1854, at *Bene Yeshurun*, Cincinnati. He called the pipe organ "the sublimest instrument of the world . . . It is not so much a single instrument as a multitude of them, dwelling together—a cathedral of sounds within a cathedral of service." Its deep tones were heard for the first time in a Cincinnati synagogue on August 24, 1855, two months before the Cleveland Conference.

Wise explained why he accepted the organ before convening the Cleveland Conference to legitimize such a Reform:

> The organ in the Synagogue is no Reform which requires the sanction of a conference or a synod. The Bible positively commands, to have music in the House of God. The Talmud did nowhere prohibit it, nor would such a prohibition against the letter of the bible be of any validity . . . .

Responding to Orthodox Cincinnatians who opposed its introduction, Wise pointed out that in his native Bohemia, "In the year 1716 a Jew of Prague built a new organ for the synagogue."

Wise referred to the Orthodox *Pinkas* Synagogue of Prague, which in the late seventeenth century introduced a portable organ into its services that was carried at the head of processions and played on festive occasions, as at the birth of Joseph II [1780]. It was played in the *Pinkas* synagogue at the *Kabbalas Shabbos* [welcoming the Sabbath] service held before the Sabbath began, long before sundown, so as not to violate the sanctity of the day of rest. Upon the dedication of an organ-temple in the city on April 3, 1837, the *Pinkus* synagogue discontinued organ music played at its "Welcoming the Sabbath" service, in protest.

Leeser noted that in Paris, as in Prague, the organ was played before the Sabbath eve:

> Our new lights have so great a predilection for reforms, that they have carried both the organ and the choir beyond their prescribed limits.
>
> I am creditably informed . . . that the great Synagogue of Paris has of late adopted . . . the choir and organ; the former is composed entirely of *male Israelites*, and the latter is played in honor of the approaching Sabbath; but at that part of the service where the Sabbath commences, the organ is discontinued, and the choir descend to their appointed place, to accompany the Chazzan.
>
> Can the Cincinnati reformers show the same course? On the contrary, they organize their choir with Jewish singers, and wanting them, the vacancy is filled with ladies of the gentile persuasion . . . The organ is allowed to be played on all occasions by either Jew or gentile. . . .

Wise rejected Leeser's argument:

> There was instrumental music in divine service in the Tabernacles of Moses and David, in the Temple of Solomon, and in the Second Temple, by an express command of the Bible, "And on the day of your rejoicing and your feasts you shall sound trumpets at your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, that it be a memorial unto you before the Lord your God."

"But," Wise jibed at the Orthodox, "the Bible is not authority enough to our conservative brethren, and, therefore, we call their attention to the fact that instrumental music was never banished altogether from the synagogue. There was the *Shofar* on New-Year's day; bands of music were taken into the synagogue at the dedication of a synagogue, or a *Sefer Thorah*, on *Symchas Thorah* [sic] Holiday, weddings, and other occasions; hence there can be no objection to the practice of having musical instruments steadily in the synagogue."

Wise, in his newspaper, *The Israelite*, enthusiastically advocated organ accompaniment during worship, Wise urged synagogues everywhere to accept this Reform, explaining that:

> The organ adds materially to the solemnity of divine service, it makes an edifying and elevating impression on the heart of the worshipper, and therefore there should be an organ in every Orthodox synagogue . . . .

Also in 1855, *Keneseth Israel*, Philadelphia, concurred and hired an organist to play the organ that remained silent for two years, since they bought the former church building.

Lilienthal who sanctioned organ music in the synagogue on holy days, defended Wise's position:

> As regards חקות הגויים [gentile laws], we believe, anybody who reads ¶ 178 in the *Yoreh Deah* must confess, that the clerical suits of our conservative *Hazanim* and preachers are expressly prohibited as such, while no mention is made of an organ or any thing like it; still none protests against the dress of those self-styled Orthodox ministers, partly on account of their profound ignorance of rabbinical literature, and partly on account of their notorious want of consistency, they pick out of the rabbinical precepts what suits them best.

Lilienthal clinched his argument in favor of organ music by referring to the resolution of a French Synod of Reform Rabbis. This group resolved in 1856 that:

> [it was] lawfully permitted to introduce an organ into the service of the Synagogue, and to have it played by a Gentile on Saturday and on the holidays . . . .

Julius Eckman insisted that the introduction of an organ into the synagogue is not only sanctioned by tradition since the days of musical instrumentation in the Holy Temple, but is a genuine *mitzvah*. Eckman approved the use of a melodeon in the two-year-old edifice of *Emanu-El*, San Francisco, in 1856, an instrument that was later replaced by the

more expensive and expressive organ. Eckman discussed the subject in *The Gleaner*, an Anglo-Jewish newspaper he founded that year. Captioned, "Sacred Music on Sabbath Days," Eckman wrote:

> The subject is trite: More than forty years ago, Rab[b]is of the old school in Europe and Palestine have decided (as their predecessors have in the Talmud), that "music on the Sabbath days for religious purposes and for divine worship, is not only allowed but as an act of true worship, a *mitzvah*."

Writing in his didactic manner, Eckman expounded:

> If it be asked, why have our forefathers not done so, we reply, they did so: The Levites played their instruments on the Sabbath in the Holy Temple of Jerusalem. And if it be objected, why was not music used since our dispersion, we would state that the times then were times of mourning, and they had not time to think of music. But the cultivated ear of our generation wants the aid of the refined arts in the service of religion as in their daily life. The reader will find, that in the Temple the Levites played music[al] instruments on the Sabbath! And we read in לקוטי מהרי"ל [*Likutei Maharil —Morenu Harav* Rabbi Jacob Levi collection of Jewish customs in synagogue and liturgy in the 14th and 15th centuries] that on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter Bunah, they had music on the Sabbath. What the Levites in the Temple and the Maharil thought well to do, honest men cannot think wrong to teach, and truly Orthodox men will listen to their teachers and not turn in a passion against men for teaching what is not generally known [for] were it generally known it would require no teaching.

When an Orthodox member, asked Eckman, "May a Hebrew play the organ on the Sabbath Day?," he quipped: "Fifty years hence our successors will wonder more at the question than at the reply."

In 1857, in Chicago, KAM [*Kehillath Anshe Maarabh*] voted Elias Greenebaum, a Chicago pioneer who arrived in the early 1840s, president. With his motto, "Equality, Reform, and Education, he defeated the "Orthodox" candidate, Samuel Cole, whose watchword was "Peace, Harmony, and Moderate Reform."

Under Greenebaum's leadership, the congregation elected the Reformer, Dr. Meyer Mensor, "rabbi and preacher" in October, 1857. Mensor, who claimed a degree of "Doctor of Divinity" from the University of Berlin, taught at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, and preached occasionally on high holy days at the Dublin Hebrew Congregation. Mensor was recommended to KAM by Isaac Wormser, a leading member whose brother, Lewis Harris, yet resided in Dublin.

Mensor's sermons in fluent English, tinged with an Irish brogue, thrilled the congregation. Though Greenebaum urged usage of the Hamburg prayer book, he agreed that Mensor revise the KAM ritual; his only accomplishment in 1858. Falling into disfavor, he was paid in November, 1858, nine months' salary in advance, and given traveling expenses. This German-Irish gentleman, departed with his Hibernian wife, and his plagiarized stock of sermons, back to the Emerald Isle.

Meyer Mensor, instead of returning to Ireland, settled in Sheffield, England, where he taught privately and preached at the Sheffield synagogue. In March, 1861, he was baptised in the parish church of Sheffield. In 1863 he was a curate of Christ's Church, Pitsmoor, afterwards vicar of the parish of Stoke Mandeville in Aylesbury.

After the departure of Mensor, KAM engaged Gustavus M. Cohen, "teacher, cantor, and choir director." Cohen, a native of Walldorf, Saxony, possessed a fine education in music and pedagogy, and twelve years earlier, upon his arrival in America, welcomed the organ accompaniment to a choir he trained at *Emanu-El*, New York.

Upon the death of *Emanu-El*'s minister, Leo Merzbacher in 1855, Cohen opened his private Educational Institute and Boarding School for Boys and Girls in New York, removed to Cincinnati in 1858 to serve at Wise's temple, *Bene Yesburun*.

In 1859, Cohen accepted KAM's call. Upon his arrival, he requested an organ accompaniment for himself and the choir. It was recorded that "the question having been hotly discussed in the congregation, and the members being divided in opinion, it was proposed to settle the matter by a vote." At this point, one member arose to demand an answer to the fundamental question:

> Is voting by congregation, on religious subjects, a vested right by the mosaic or rabbinical law; or is it a modern usurped authority? What is the proper mode of proceeding in such cases, and what are the Jewish regulations on the subject?

The Orthodox prevailed. Thereupon KAM's president Elias Greenebaum along with forty members resigned. They founded the Reform Society *Ohabei Or* and Gustavus Cohen assumed the title, "Reverend Doctor." President of *Ohabei Or*, Samuel Straus announced:

> A nice organ and a good organist are already procured for that purpose, and all who like to attend a service כדת מושה [sic!] וישראל [according to the laws of Moses and of Israel] are invited.

At this time Bernhard Felsenthal, a kinsman of Elias and his brother, Henry arrived, invited to clerk in their banking house: "Greenebaum Brothers." Like Elias, Henry was a community leader, having served as a member of the Chicago City Council in 1855 and 1856.

Elias Greenebaum was impressed with Felsenthal's Jewish background. He graduated a Teachers' Seminary, having studied under Rabbi Moses Cohen in Kaiserslautern, Bavaria, then taught twelve years in a synagogue school ten miles distant, in Munchweiler, but did not attain the rabbinical degree *Semicha*. In 1854, he emigrated to America. In the town of Lawrenceburg, Indiana, he taught religious subjects to a Jewish family for two years, then accepted a position as teacher to fifteen Jewish families in the neighboring town of Madison; also performing rabbinical functions.

During his ministry in Madison, Felsenthal told the Greenebaums that he introduced a mixed choir, explaining:

> The old forms will do no more, and in this relation, even amidst our hyper-Orthodox brethren, individuals are rarely to be met with who would not now feel ashamed to protest against singing by choir, as some years ago a pious Rabbi in Germany did, who is well known to us, because (he said) it is written תרי קולות לא אישתמעין [Two voices, sounded simultaneously, cannot be heard].

In 1858, the "light" dimmed at the moderate reform "Lovers of Light" congregation and the Greenebaum brothers, founded the radical *Juedischer Reform Verein* [Jewish Reform Society—forerunner of Temple Sinai]. Bernhard Felsenthal's career veered from the counting house to the house that counts.

The members of *Ohabei Or*, were attracted to the writings that issued forth from the sharp pen of the self-titled Dr. Felsenthal; he claimed a doctorate from an unnamed university. Remaining members of the "Lovers of Light" disbanded to join the newly formed Greenebaum Society; president Samuel Strauss, a moderate Reformer, rejoined KAM.

With the closing of *Ohabei Or*, Cantor Gustavus Cohen accepted a post at *Anshe Chesed* in Cleveland. There he formed the Zion Musical Society, the first such musical group in the land. In 1860, under his persistence, the congregation installed an organ. Despite all his accomplishments and strivings in the Reform tenor, after he served twenty years, Cohen was "politely dropped."

All the while, at the parent congregation KAM, the question of an organ continued to agitate the membership throughout the year. At a congregational meeting, "A Chicago Lady" spoke up:

> My friends of the "Moderate Reform party," let the [Orthodox] secessionists secede, but do not give up the ship! . . . Be gentlemen, and don't rob your Ladies of what they so sincerely like. Give us the Organ! . . . .

President Benedict Schlossman, referred the question to Dr. Wise for decision. He received the following reply:

> Instrumental music in the synagogue, an organ especially, is legal and admissible, even according to the rabbinical codes of the canon law. The Orthodox Jew cannot lay his finger on one passage or authorized work, and say, therefore we should have no organ. On the contrary he can say, instrumental music at divine service is commanded in the bible, has been used always in the house of God . . .

Responding to Wise's assertion, that instrumental music is a divine commandment, the Orthodox spokesman, Leeser, stated that the Reform opinion is based on an erroneous assumption that the synagogue was the successor to the Holy Temple where music was played on holy days. To the contrary, Leeser asserted, the synagogue is not the legitimate successor to the Temple, as Wise had repeatedly claimed. The synagogue existed at the time of the Holy Temple and it functioned as a House of Prayer wherein the Law and Prophets were read and expounded. Never were musical instruments played in the synagogue; only in the Holy Temple of Jerusalem, where animal sacrifices had been brought, officiated by a priesthood, was musical instrumentation obligated. Outside of the Temple precincts, playing a musical instrument was strictly enjoined on holy days, both in and out of the synagogue.

Leeser made it inestimably clear:

> We do not wish to be understood as taking the sanctuary of Jerusalem as a model for us to imitate in our Synagogues, or if (a synagogue choir) were even allowable, that we would advocate a choir, whose business it should be to sing in the Synagogue. On the contrary, the temple was organized by a special ordinance, the whole worship was national, not individual; whereas our houses of worship are congregational and individual . . . .

Reformers however maintained that the temple of Jerusalem was of the past, not of the future. Since emancipation budded in European lands and the blossoming of freedom in America, they no longer considered themselves living in the diaspora with aspirations to return to the land of their fathers. In a joyful mood, they introduced music into their Temples which to them replaced the ancient Temple with its musical instrumentation during worship the year round.

KAM thereupon voted to install an organ. Violent objections to its introduction can be realized when one considers the Orthodoxy of its founders. A score years earlier, in 1849, they complained about purchasing the frame building on Clark Street, between Adams and Quincy street [where Chicago's main post-office now stands] because it was situated on the west side of the street. Thus there would not be a *Mizrach* [East] wall, and they would not be facing during prayer in the direction of the Holy Temple of Jerusalem.

The Orthodox element gone, KAM's officers elected to its pulpit vacated by Mensor, another Reformer, Dr. Solomon Friedlander, a graduate of the University of Heidelberg with the degree M.D., and associate preacher of the Berlin Reform Society under the radical Reformer Samuel Holdheim. Having arrived to dedicate himself to a lifetime of service to the cause of Reform in Chicago, his life abruptly terminated. Half-a-year after his ministry began, bitten by a spider, his medical knowledge of no avail; his wife returned with his body to Westphalia, Germany.

Wise arrived to dedicate the new edifice KAM as an organ-temple on May 28, 1860. He told the membership in his dedicatory address:

> We do not believe our Orthodox friends of Chicago will start a new congregation on account of the organ. When they will consider properly they will find, they can not lay their finger upon any passage of the codex (ד' שלחן ערוך) to show why we should have no organ in the Synagogue. This being no violation of orthodoxy, there is no cause for them to withdraw from the congregation.

The Orthodox minority founded congregation, *Kehilah Anshe Chesed* [Congregation of Men of Mercy].

Wise upon learning of the new Orthodox Synagogue, countered:

> The organ in the Synagogue is now a Jewish custom . . . In American this organ is found . . . in ten Synagogues. The respective congregations number from eleven hundred to twelve hundred male members. Is any body in Chicago prepared to prove that twelve hundred men in Israel are not sufficient to establish a custom in a country?
>
> There are organs in the synagogues of Hamburg, Berlin, Breslau, Vienna, Buda-Pesth, Prague, Stuttgard, Frankfort, Mayence, Coblence, Cologne, and almost every other large congregation. If the organ ever had been a Gentile custom, it is no longer so, after having been introduced in so many synagogues abroad, and in American ones.

With an air of finality, Wise quoted the talmudic principle

יחיד ורבים הלכה כרבים

—that when one versus many, the decision rests with the majority.

Whereas in the Talmud, the majority were most learned rabbis, amongst Reformers the majority were ill advised laymen and irreverent reverends.

In Baltimore, the question of the admissibility of an organ sparked a religious war at the "Lovers of Peace" *Oheb Shalom* congregation. Its membership was comprised of two secession groups from the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. The members were mostly in the clothing business, former peddlers.

The first group broke away because they had received scant consideration from those in charge when they applied for their high holy day seats. Leading this group was Philip Herzberg [Hertzberg], a devotee of Rice and Abraham Rosenfeld, the latter as president of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation in 1848 and 1849 had forced Rabbi Rice's resignation. Their request for loan of a *Torah* scroll of the officers of the *Lloyd Street Schul*, during the ministry of Henry Hochheimer, denied, they obtained a scroll from nearby Fell's Point "Lovers of Israel" *Oheb Israel*. After the high holy days, on October 31, 1853 they founded "Lovers of Peace" *Oheb Shalom* in Fell's Point. Upon the death of one of their members, the congregation purchased a cemetery—two acres of land on Trappe Road for two hundred dollars.

A second group seceded from the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, in 1857, upon the election of Bernhard Illowy to join *Oheb Shalom*, after some members unsuccessfully attempted to repeal an old law of the congregation that prohibited Sabbath violators from holding office.

In 1858, upon acquiring its first permanent building—the former Fifth Presbyterian Church on Hanover, between Lombard and Pratt Streets with a built-in organ, the "Lovers of Peace" were divided over the question of using the idle organ during worship. Leeser reported in *The Occident*:

> It was debated what Rabbi, whether Mr. Rice of Baltimore, or Dr. Wise, of Cincinnati, should decide the question, when the choice fell on the latter; wherefore the point was settled before the letter of inquiry was sent, since Dr. Wise's opinions are well known, and the majority, by the mere vote of reference, decided beforehand, that they meant to have instrumental music. The next thing, was to have the doctor brought out from the retirement of his Zion, to come to give the law in person to his new disciples . . . .

Leeser, however, wondered why *Oheb Shalom* turned to the "new light" of distant Cincinnati, rather than Baltimore's, David Einhorn:

> Why was not the temple of Dr. Einhorn copied, and that learned man consulted? Since we can discover no real difference between the published doctrines of these two sages . . . .
>
> Their quarrels are, indeed, about the shadow of nothing, and their mutual dislike is to us a matter of profound mystery, unless both wish to rule, and the world cannot bear two suns . . . .

On August 13, 1858, Wise delivered the dedication address at *Oheb Shalom* and recorded his thoughts at the time:

> I spoke with more animation than usual; for I witnessed the triumph of a principle in the very city of Baltimore, where so much and so violent opposition had been raised against moderate Reforms. There is the home and hotbed of the most non-sensical kind of sham Orthodoxy, represented by Mr. Reis and others, who consider themselves very wise and learned, while actually they know very little. Besides, the quarrels which those men caused in several congregations and among themselves, sustaining now two small and poor miniature congregations [*Shearith Israel* and *Howard Street Schul*], there is little or nothing known of them outside of Baltimore, and in Baltimore they are too well known to be regarded . . . .

Wise denounced:

> Mr. Reis and others . . . consider themselves learned, while actually they know very little. Rice is very little known outside Baltimore and in Baltimore too well known to be regarded.

Wise haranged the Orthodox in the *Oheb Shalom* congregation for their opposition to the organ:

> The ultra Orthodox count about fifty to sixty friends in the whole city, and the radicals [*Har Sinai*] have about the same number of friends. Many belong to the respective congregations of the ultra wings without entertaining the opinions of their leaders, who are violent indeed in opposing and condemning their opponents . . . .
>
> A double headed opposition was encountered; both extremes of the house of Israel, who have so long opposed each other here, unite now independently in opposition to the new move in *Oheb Shalom* . . . .although they support each other in opposition to our system, the *Sinai* [published by David Einhorn] gives Mr. Reis an occasional "purff" [derogatory notice] and *vice versa* . . . .

In his dedication of *Oheb Shalom*, Wise preached that it was the duty of every man to know, investigate, reflect, criticize, and expound Judaism, and that every Israelite was to be his own priest and scribe, teacher and expounder of the law.

Leeser was shocked by the statement. Conditions were serious enough with unordained rabbis holding pulpits and deciding Jewish law, and now compounded by Wise's approving the religious decisions enacted by lay leaders, officers of congregations, and at times by vote of the members. This created further confusion and disorder in Jewish life.

Leeser challenged Wise's statement that every Jew had the authority to determine what is lawful or unlawful and which law may or may not be observed. He asked Wise, "if it truly was within the province of each Jew to decide his own law, to keep the Sabbath after his own fashion, to ride on Sabbath in a railroad car, to smoke segars [cigars] on the Sabbath, to dine off a table where nothing but prohibited food was to be had, to eat oysters on the opinion [held by Wise] that they were marine vegetables, to eat whatever one explains to himself the Law to mean?"

Wise countered that only scavengers were forbidden and oysters were no scavengers, riding and smoking on the Sabbath comported with the day of rest, while side tracking the issue of laymen deciding questions of Jewish Law.

Leeser likened the evil of majority rule in religio-legal matters to that of mob rule, as the Jewish congregations were led by ignorant but brazenly bullish lay religious leaders. He attacked the lack of uniformity and concensus as to how the tenets of Judaism should be practiced that prevailed throughout the country and indeed throughout the Americas:

> There are congregations scattered over an immense surface of country, from the snows of Canada to the tropical heats of Guiana, and one community knows absolutely nothing of the state and the wants of the other. Everything is not only conducted on an independent footing, but at times with an utter disregard of the best interests of our religion. What the majority resolves upon is the law; and the enactments are now and then diametrically opposite to a sound construction of our laws and ceremonies. And for the same reason mere tyros in religious knowledge, not rarely [usually] are the persons to speak of Reforming a system of which they scarcely know the first principles . . . .

Repeating his charge, the editor of *The Occident* told his readers:

> The worst feature in our present position, is the absolute isolation in all our communities, especially in America, where each one,

almost, adopts and rejects what happens to suit the views of the accidental majority. The *people* do not ask what is lawful, but they enact just what they like, and make rules and laws to please themselves, without troubling themselves whether they act in conformity with our authorities or not . . . and where is this to end? . . . .

A classic case of an isolated community that rendered its religious decision by majority vote of the congregation is that which occurred in San Francisco in 1857:

> An Israelite married a woman of the Christian faith, the ceremony was performed in a Roman Catholic Church; the issue of this union, a boy, was not initiated into the covenant of Abraham. The man died some two years ago, and was entered [sic] in the city cemetery. At this late day, a relative of the deceased demands urgently, a removal of the remains to the Israelitish burial ground, and their [sic] reinterment in accordance with our ancient rites.

That relative asked at a congregational meeting:

> Is the congregation bound to comply with the demands of the claimant, or can it, consistently with our faith, be refused?

That question was decided by laymen who had no rabbinic knowledge nor ecclesiastical authority to render a decision.

Typical of layman's decisions in matters of Jewish law, is that instance when Wise was yet in Albany. His congregation, *Temple Anshe Emeth* appointed an investigatory committee to determine whether is was unlawful for alterations to be made in the reading of the sabbatical sections of the law. Mr. Adolph Sinzheimer, Chairman of that committee, reported to its members on April 3, 1853:

> I take the liberty of laying before you an extract from the authorized law, so as to enable you to judge, whether such alterations in the reading of the Thorah, as proposed at a late meeting of the congregation, are lawful or not.

After presenting his findings, Sinzheimer concluded:

> It is for you, gentlemen, to consider in how far these ancient customs agree with those prevalent in our days, and to decide whether an alteration in our present mode of reading the law is beneficial or not; hence what alterations, if any, are necessary to be made in order to restore to the synagogue it's ancient simplicity, connected with a proper arrangement to satisfy the demands of the modern and enlightened Israelite.

One "enlightened Israelite" demanded abolition "Of blowing the Shophar on Rosh-hashana, *seventy two* times, *thirty* of which are consecutive. On Hoshanganaraba [sic], of shaking the branches of willow with an energy and violence, as meaningless, as it is ridiculous; as though our sins were to drop off, with the falling leaves."

Others preferred replacing the rams' horn with either a cornet, trumpet, or bugle; a more modern instrument.

The battles over musical instrumental accompaniment to the synagogue service continued to rage at congregations in various parts of the country. Although some found the new temples uplifting and inspiring, the majority of the worshippers did not. A visitor to Temple *Emanu-El*, New York, expressed a similar view. After observing the worshippers listening to the organ and choir, which occupied a considerable part of the service, their silence made him comment "that they appeared to be dummies."

Thus for the sake of law and order, as early as the 1820's, the Reformed Society of Israelites in Charleston, forbad striking "*the impious Haman*" at the festival of *Purim* and decried throughout the year the custom of "*seesawing*" during the prayers or uttering them "in too loud a voice."

Reformers preferred orderliness to the old order of worship with its warm, cultural baggage which embraced spiritually, albeit in a loosely organized and seemingly indecorous fashion. Even where there was no Reform element, Poseners sought to separate from Bavarians, leaving the more "western" Bavarians less restrained from Reforming.

So, too, in Rochester, New York. As *Berith Kodesh* turned to Reform, the Polish-rite element, including English Jews, formed a committee calling themselves the "Pious Five," and founded *Adas Jeshurun* [Congregation of Jeshurun]. They strenuously objected to Dr. Isaac Mayer's attacking the custom of "beating Haman" on *Purim* and the practice of "throwing nuts" at one another at the service of the Rejoicing of the Law. Mayer wanted to "cleanse" the ritual of folk customs "not suited to the age."

Dr. David Einhorn frankly admitted the ineffectiveness of Reform innovations in the worship:

> Devotion is as good as extinguished in our synagogues. They have become more beautiful and splendrous. Even the religious service has acquired a shining shell. Silence and decorum, singing and organ music have become the order of the day. Everything has become more cut to size, but the material has become thinner and lacks genuineness. The Jewish congregations do not know how to pray anymore.

Reform, for the sake of Reform, was totally unrabbinic, but it created an excitement; its innovations held a feeling of modernism and convinced many that deviation was permitted and progressive. Ritual committees and congregations learned that they could get the answer they desired to their inquiries by asking the right person; in common law this is called "forum shopping;" in Jewish life this is called *Hefkerus* [a-free-for-all].

Chapter 31
Styling the "Service"

AS THE rage of Reform swept across the land, a Synagogue worshipper questioned the age-old practice of seating separately male and female:

> I ask the dispassionate and reasonable to look at our Synagogues, and to tell me why they present so sad a spectacle? Families separated: women above, men below; some standing up, some sitting down . . . . Why should families be separated?

Mixed seating during worship had never been permitted in the synagogue. Thus, the Portuguese-rite *Mickva Israel* in Savannah and *Beth-El-Emeth* [House of the God of Truth] in Philadelphia permitted women to come down from the ladies' gallery for the minister's sermon only after the conclusion of worship.

Even in the American organ temples of the 1840's [*Beth Elohim*, Charleston, 1841; *Har Sinai Verein*, Baltimore, 1842; *Emanu-El*, New York, 1847], men and women sat separately.

Thus it was in the Temples in Germany, where women remained segregated, relegated to the gallery, though without curtain or latticework to hide its occupants from view. This accorded with the Orthodox position, for only when females were seated on the same level as the males was a *mechitzah* [divider] required to prevent conversation, fraternizing and mingling between men and women, rather than commonly believed, to obstruct visual contact [*Babylonian Talmud Midos* 2:5].

Anshe Emeth, Albany, became the first Jewish house of worship since the early synagogues of the Christian sect to introduce mixed seating. In the fall of 1850, that Reform congregation purchased a church. Its acquisition accelerated Wise's Reform objectives for therein he approved retention of the pews [also called slips] for mixed seating. Since Merzbacher had approved a mixed choir, the choristers, male and female, seated together in the choir loft, why not the congregation?

A storm of condemnation followed Wise's permitting mixed seat-

ing. At New York, Nathan Oettinger, a knowledgeable Hebrew scribe and bookseller, denounced the mixed seating, and in Cleveland, Rabbi Joseph Levy of *Anshe Chesed* congregation politely called it "an irreverent innovation." Rabbi Rice's position was well known and needed no comment other than Wise was an excommunicate, unrepentent heretic.

Orthodoxy regarded mixed seating as a biblical violation. Jewish worship required intense individual concentration and a feeling of aloneness and helplessness, so that the person realized that he or she could depend only upon the Creator. The Orthodox viewed mixed seating in family pews as diverting one's attention to one's family and friends, away from prayer, and the close proximity of males and females as a stimulous even to sensuous thoughts. Family pews therefore, also ran counter to the sanctity and modesty demanded in the synagogue. In its house of worship Judaism required the individual's togetherness with the Almighty.

It may be recalled that in the new edifice of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation on Lloyd Street a decade earlier, pews were installed, but separate seating was observed: men in the main hall, women in the gallery.

It would be four more years since Wise, at *Anshe Emeth*, introduced mixed seating in pews, before another temple permitted mixed seating. Early in 1854, *Emanu-El* of New York, moved into a church building on Twelfth Street, and its minister, Dr. Merzbacher, approved mixed seating in the family pews therein.

Much of the impulse for Reform of mixed seating came from the women. During the Jacksonian period the cause of women's rights was given inpetus. The younger Jewish women urged rebellion against being segregated in the Ladies' Balcony.

Merzbacher and Wise, ignored the fact that the introduction of mixed seating in the early Christian church, marked the first break with Judaism. In almost all other respects, the early church resembled the synagogue, prior to the Nicene Council of 325 C.E.

In 1855, Congregation *Berith Kodesh*, in Rochester, rented the Tabernacle Baptist Church for one year. Since there was no gallery, the men and women sat on the same floor, separated only by an aisle, with a short curtain between them. But because that was not a proper *mechitzah* [a partition of above shoulder height, 55 inches high, or of about five and one-half feet] between them to prevent frivolity and levity, the Orthodox members resigned. The curtain was removed and soon the aisle no longer served as a barrier.

At the end of their lease of the church building, the remaining membership of *Berith Kodesh* decided to construct their own edifice. Their minister, Hungarian born Marcus Tuska, since 1849 Reader, Ritual Slaughterer, Ritual Circumciser, and "Priest of the Jews Synagogue," as

the press referred to him, advocated eliminating the ladies' gallery from the building plans. Leeser decried Tuska's proposal for "seating of the men and women together after Gentile fashion . . . ," but the congregation, having become accustomed to common seating on the ground floor, approved the plan and called for eliminating a gallery from the building plans. However the congregation purchased a church offered for sale.

Mixed seating at the "Sacred Covenant" *Berith Kodesh* in Rochester led to a "mixed *mikveh*." In the Baptist church, after its purchase, Dr. Isaac Mayer, successor to Marcus Tuska, found the baptismal fount intact and by the vote of the congregation established it as a ritual pool; its conversion to a *mikveh* in question.

Unlike European congregations which maintained their synagogues for centuries, the great influx of Jews into the United States, moved many congregations to purchase a church edifice. Converting the church into a temple thereby became simplified, as the pews, organ, choir loft, were generally acquired with the building.

In 1856, Leeser reported that Dr. B. E. Jacobs, minister at *Mishkan Israel*, New Haven, recently acquired the Third Congregational Church building on Court Street, instituted a Reform "which would seat the men and women together in pews, after the fashion of the gentiles." Leeser added that it "had sadly marred the harmony of the people . . . ."

There were times when physical action, and not *halachah* was operative for change: At *Bet El*, Detroit, the question of family pews discussed, the official vote was not conclusive. On the day before *Rosh ha-Shanah*, several men of the Reform faction entered the synagogue and removed the seats from the women's section. The next day there was no choice but to let the women sit with the men, "and the women never gave up the privilege."

In 1858, *Keneseth Israel*, Philadelphia, following the example of reform congregations in various eastern cities, seated men and women together.

In 1860, in San Francisco, A.M. Engländer reported in *The Weekly Gleaner* that at *Emanu-El*, Dr. Elkan Cohn justified seating the sexes together. In a sermon he preached on Sabbath *Vayelech*, he drew his theme from the verse in *Deuteronomy* XXXI:12:

> "Assemble the people, the men, the women, and the little ones," urging therefrom, that men, women, girls, &c., are not only allowed to unite and hear the word of God, but they are bound to do so. He complained of our religion as having for such a length of time excluded women from so many privileges to which they are justly entitled, but that the time has come when this evil ought to be remedied.

Englander, concluded that ". . . he exalted the ladies to such a degree, he spoke so much of their greatness, that the congregation did not think themselves to be in a synagogue, but in heaven amongst the angels; even the ladies were taken by surprise as they never were aware before of being so great." Women, in the west, were treated by men like princesses. Yet Cohn's ecstatic elevation of their exalted status even caught the women in his congregation off guard. It should be noted that in these early years in the west, women were few, so few that they were treated with deference and great respect, yet Cohn's exaltation of the women exceeded even that accorded to them by the predominantly single male population.

Emanu-El acclaimed Dr. Cohn's interpretation and voted "that the seats be transformed into pews; and that the ladies and gentlemen be seated promiscuously [sic!]."

However, in contrast to the ready acceptance of mixed seating at *Emanu-El*, the people of *Anshe Chesed*, Cleveland, experienced the more than usual discord that accompanied such a change. In 1861, their minister, musical director Gustavus Cohen, sanctioned removal of the women's gallery and the introduction of family pews during the remodeling of the synagogue building. Reports told that:

> This last extremity has not been reached without the most violent opposition, and its final consummation has resulted in severing the connection of several of the old members of the society . . . .

The Temple, replete with an organ, mixed choir, mixed seating, family pews, became more church-like in its physical features, and these changes invited others.

"Why," asked a Reformer, "are our Synagogues disfigured by having a hugh platform (or as I once heard it called a pen) in the centre, with the minister's back to half the congregation . . . ?"

Leeser warned of the danger associated with the proposed innovation, to remove the *almemar* [center pulpit] and connect it with the front Ark; thereby eliminating the procession with the scrolls or palms and citrons customarily circling round the central pulpit during festivals:

> Some may allege that the changes are small and unworthy of notice. But we dissent from such an excuse; as they show a sort of recklessness in favour of a departure from our ancient usages which we see nothing to justify. Singular as it may appear the position of the *Tebah* [front platform for Ark containing the Scrolls], *Shulchan* [table upon which the *Torah* is read], *Alemar* [sic! *almemar* in southern Germany; central reading desk on enclosed platform upon which reading-desk stands] or reading-desk as it is indifferently called,

has been a fruitful theme of controversy within late years, whereas anciently it occupied the centre of the Synagogue, so that the person who read the law was elevated in the midst of the people, and thus within the sight and hearing of all those present; and there surely can be no good reason for its being placed just in front of the ark, which must compel the reader to have his back turned to the same during the service, a position notoriously opposed to our usually received opinions, and by implication condemned in the Scriptures by the prophet Ezekiel. But it seems there is an inordinate desire to depart from the customs of our fathers, even in the so-called Orthodox congregations, and to introduce some innovation or another, more or less startling . . . .

Structural changes completed, attention turned to remodelling the Readings and Reader.

The central pulpit from which the Torah was read having been removed, the Torah readings came under fire.

Once a year, the five books of Moses were read in weekly portions, from beginning to end, in synagogues the world-over. This annual cycle of reading the scroll of the *Torah* came under scrutiny by Reformers. Some suggested abbreviating its weekly portions by having the scroll read once in three years instead of one. Others recommended a greater reduction, by having the scroll read in its entirety but once in seven years.

During this debate, San Francisco's dry goods dealer, Samuel Wand, asked Dr. Julius Eckman, whether it is permissibile to read the Law in a triennial, or in a septennial, cycle. He replied abruptedly: "The case is too plain to require an answer."

Wise, in his patronizing manner, left no doubt in the mind of Samuel Wand, responding:

> Many people believe the custom of reading the Law through in the Synagogue only once every three years is new, while actually this was the established custom in Palestine during the Talmudical age, and most likely long before that, or probably as long as the Bible was read in public. Maimonides says briefly: (*Hilch*[oth] Tefillah XIII, para. 1) "Some finish the reading of the Law every three years, but this is not a general custom."
>
> The *Talmud*, however, makes no mention of "Some," but says in explicit words, "In Palestine the reading of the Law was finished every three years." (*Megillah* 32a).
>
> "בני מערבא מסקי לאורייתא בתלת שנין"

Orthodox members complained that the triannual rhythm did not allow for the annual celebration of the reading of the Law—*Simchas Torah*.

Samuel Bruel, leader of the Orthodox in Cincinnati, punned that by reading the scroll once in three years instead of one year "the community would derive little benefit, as they would be apt to forget the history of the creation, by the time they reached the death of Moses."

Complaints were raised pertaining to the practice of auctioning the calls, [*ufrufen*], the highest bidder acquired the honor to recite the benedictions at the reading of the *Torah*. While this represented no violation, discontinuance of calling of persons to recite the benedictions would violate tradition, as recommended by a Reformer:

> The Synagogue . . . is not a banking house, or a commissioner's office . . . Yet, our sacred edifice is metamorphosed into a place of business; a rich man is called to the Law on *Roshashanah* [New Year] or *Kippur* [Day of Atonement—on other days the Synagogue might as well be closed, so far as it matters to him] and a large crowd being present, he takes the opportunity to display his dollars; he is, however, careful not to offer above a trifle on an ordinary Sabbath that he chances to be there . . . the *mitzvah* of calling to the *Sepher* creates disorder, and . . . disunion in the congregation . . .

Leeser responded:

> Respecting the propriety of calling up five or seven persons . . . it amounts to an obligation. The Law which Moses commanded, is the inheritance of the community of Jacob. As its heirs, therefore, we should be acquainted with its testamentary obligations and demands.

As for the money offerings, Leeser stated that "Unfortunately few communities are wealthy enough to enable them to dispense with some extraordinary means for raising a revenue . . ."

A visitor to America in 1853, wrote in reference to synagogue donations:

> Thousands of dollars are collected annually through *Misheberach* donations [upon being called to the Torah], long ago eliminated by better German congregations, and *Hashkabah* [prayer for the dead] gifts. The amount is trumpeted out. Anniversary celebrations are a more enjoyable way of "making money." To show off and promote themselves, even paupers give enormous amounts . . . *True* Jewish charity is given without show . . . The ostentatiousness is America's doing. . . .

An innovative radical Reformer actually suggested that parading the Torah be discontinued, that its silver adornments be removed and its

mantle dropped, and better still, the hand-written scroll be replaced with a printed pentateuch:

> Can the ceremony of taking out the "Sepher Torah" not be well dispensed with? Let the Law, either in a roll or a volume, be kept on the *Tebah* and the minister read therefrom in due time the chapter of the day . . . And where is the propriety that five or seven congregators are to be called up? the impropriety, I beg to state . . . ." Another asked: "Why are seven men called up to the *Torah*, when nine-tenths of them neither attend to, or understand what is said? . . . Why not . . . abandon the unmeaning, the painful ceremony of marching with the sacred law, disfigured by petticoats, and bells, from *Achol* [sic! Hechal: Ark] to *Tiban* [reading desk], and from *Tiban* to *Achol*? . . . .

To the questions asked by these religious abolitionists, Leeser replied:

> . . . we do not see any disturbance of the sacred worship by this means, nor do we regard that absolute quiescence which distinguished Christian churches as at all desirable . . . The system of preserving the Law in a manuscript roll . . . is a biblical precept, wisely contrived to keep the text always free from arbitrary changes and additions or diminutions; since the great care required to furnish a correct manuscript will prevent a falsification of that Divine treasure . . . [The Scroll] must be fastened with a band, and covered with a mantle, as a preservation against damp or dust. Lastly, the silver adornments embelish rather than diminish the beauty of the Scroll.
>
> The mantles used by us, being generally the gift of some pious person, are made and ornamented handsomely; but the necessary decorations do not destroy their sanctity, any more than an elegant Bible would be out of place, richly bound and mounted with valuable ornaments, when presented to a friend . . . Respecting the propriety of calling up five or seven persons . . . it amounts to an obligation. The Law which Moses commanded, is the inheritance of the community of Jacob. As its heirs, therefore, we should be acquainted with its testamentary obligations and demands . . . .

Having Reformed the *Torah* reading, Wise turned to Reforming the *Haftorah* [readings from the Prophets]. He recommended that "the section of the Prophets [be] read by the rabbi before he preaches and in the same language as he preaches." Dr. Bernard Henry Gotthelf, minister of *Adas Israel* in Louisville, dispensed with the reading of the *Haftorah* altogether. A visitor reported that at *Adas Israel*, when the reading of the *Torah* concluded, the closing of the scroll acted as a signal which triggered

a general stampede of the men and children out of the synagogue; women in the rear.

In 1849, *Anshe Chesed*, in New York, was the first congregation not to include in the plans for its new building a central pulpit. There being no *almemar* to obstruct eye to eye contact between worshippers and cantor, the officers in 1850 directed its cantor, Jonas Hecht, who had served the congregation for twelve years, to conduct the worship from the front pulpit and turn around to face the Holy Congregation [*K'hal Kodosh*] instead of the Sacred Ark [*Aron Kodesh*].

In 1856, the question was raised at *Berith Kodesh*, Rochester, New York, "Where shall the 'Reader' stand?" At the *almemar* where he read the prayers and biblical portion, or the front pulpit where stood the Sacred Ark and the Scrolls of the Law. By congregational vote, the membership opted for the front pulpit. Rather than the Reader face the Ark containing the Scrolls and lead the congregation as "first worshipper," *Berith Kodesh* opted that he face them, act as a performer and they, the congregation, be the audience.

When Dr. Elkan Cohn similarly ordered Daniel Levy, *chazzan* at *Emanu-El*, San Francisco, to face the worshippers, Leeser asked if

> the learned Rabbi ever read Ezekiel? Perhaps not; if so we would refer him to that prophet's book, viii.16, where he will see that praying in this manner cannot be acceptable, according to the Scriptures . . . .

Daniel Levy obediently complied with Cohn's demand, turning his back to the Sacred Ark to face the people. Shortly afterwards Levy became ill and could not be re-engaged for the coming year's high holy day services. Cohn then engaged a celebrated concert singer, of the Catholic faith, to lead the services on the most sacred days.

In his facing the congregation, the sight of the reader's beard became regarded as unsightly, out of style, since shaving off the beards had become fashionable among the immigrants as it had been among native Americans since colonial days. Reformers, in their assimilationist tendencies, now reached out to Americanize the appearance of the cantor. Certainly a clean-shaven "cantor" in a Reform temple seemed preferable to the sight of an elderly, old-fashioned, bearded reader of the prayers. They disregarded the opening prayer in the high holy day *musaf* [additional service], "*Hineni*" ["O, Behold Me"], a prayer for the cantor or reader who leads the congregation in worship, in which he pleads to the Almighty: "Accept my prayer as the prayer of a trained elder, a venerable person, whose beard is full . . . ."

The bearded Dr. Isidor Kalisch attempted to prove the permissibil-

ity of shaving with a razor [a one-edged blade instead of the permitted two-edged blade-like scissors], on the grounds that the biblical prohibition referred only to shaving off one's beard for participation in the death rites of heathens. He sought to adduce proof from the *Talmud* and the *Mishnah* to substantiate his position:

> Regarding your question about shaving the beard with a razor, I must tell you, that the talmudical interpretation is correct, and only the casuistical law concerning the same is based on misapprehension of the *Mishnah* (Treatise *Makkoth*, fol. 20, b). "Who produces any baldness upon his head, who cuts the curls of both sides of the temples, who cuts off the extremity of his beard, and who makes only one incision on account of a dead, he is guilty of violating the law."

"You see," emphasized Kalisch, "the *Mishnah* took the passages in the Bible merely concerning the dead as a heathen custom; but never prohibited it, if it was only a general custom of common life and society . . . ."

Responding to this new challenge posed by Kalisch in *The Israelite*, Rabbi Rice submitted a communication to Leeser dated January 20, 1856. Published in *The Occident* under the title "More Errors," Rice pointed out that Kalisch did not understand the rabbinic explanation of the *Mishnah*, which clearly indicated that shaving with a razor was prohibited at all times. Furthermore, stated Rice, no mention is made of prohibiting this act solely in connection with heathen rites over the dead, for in *Leviticus* XIX:27, the words "for the dead" do not appear in connection with the prohibition to razor-shave, whereas the words if one "produced any baldness upon his head" or makes "an incision on account of a dead" relate only to the heathen rites for the dead.

Rice asked the readers:

> Shall it now be said that before the appearance of Rabbi Kalisch neither Alphesi [Isaac ben Jacob Alfasi, known as Rif], nor Maimonides [Moses ben Maimon, known as Rambam], nor Rabbenu Asher [Asher ben Jehiel, knows as Rosh], nor the Tur [Jacob ben Asher], understood the *Mishnah*?

Rice opined that it is absurd for Kalisch and Reformers to claim that they discovered that which the great sages of the past did not know, or that they had discovered an approach to the study of *Torah* which is completely new. Contrari-wise, the Orthodox are those who join the ranks of the *chazal* [acronym for *chachomeinu zichronom livrochoh* "our wise men of blessed memory"]. The Orthodox walk with the *rishonim* and *achronim* [early and latter day rabbinic commentators], and *chachmei hamesora*

[learned men of the tradition], and do not attempt to rationalize from beyond the bounds of the *chukei ha-Torah* [laws of the Torah].

Moreover, Maimonides added, "whoever denies the authority of the scholars of the 'chachmei hamesorah' " to declare that even those who admit the truthfulness of the unwritten Torah, the Talmud, but are critical of the *chachmei chazal* [the teachings of our wise men], are deemed denyers of fundamentals, and classed as heretics; also not only if they deny *halachos* [laws] but *chazakos* [enactments] as well. He is a follower not of a *tzadik* but of *tzaduki* [followers of Tzadok who denied the authenticy of the *Torah she-be'al peh*—unwritten Torah—and the authority of the *mesorah*—transmitted tradition] as did Beitos and Tzadok. So stated Maimonides in *Hilchot Teshuva*, chap. 3, *halacha* 8.

Quoting the Bible, which as noted totally prohibited shaving with a razor, Rice concluded his refutation of Kalisch with this ironic remark:

> With these few remarks let us dismiss Mr. Kalisch, and wait patiently the new developments of the new truths, which he promises to lay before the Synod which is to meet hereafter [in Philadelphia in 1856, but never convened]; and then we shall know something of the manner in which Rif, Ran [Nissim ben Reuben Gerondi, known also as Ran], Rambam, Rashi [Solomon ben Isaac], and Tur are to be instructed in the elucidation of the *Mishnah*.

Kalisch, although derided by Rice for distorting the biblical text and talmudic commentary, refused to admit his error, arguing that "now a-days, where shaving [by means of a razor] is only a custom of decency, and stands in no connection whatever with religion, [such, as shaving, is] allowed biblically and as well as talmudically." Audaciously, he added: "Rabbi Rice might now be convinced, that my new discovery, as he styled it, is founded on the most distinguished of rabbinical authorities . . . ."

Consequently, in the organ temples, bare-faced cantors faced bare-headed worshippers. Setting the precedent, razor shaven Isaac Harby faced the congregation of the early radical Reformed Society of Israelites in Charleston [1824-1833], worshipping with their heads uncovered, but at *Beth Elohim*, its parent body, which had introduced an organ under Poznanski's leadership in 1840, the men still worshipped wearing hats.

A quarter of a century later, the second Reform temple to follow suit, *Emanu-El*, New York, it was the women who doffed their hats in 1845; the men continued to wear theirs during worship until 1850.

In 1854, *Keneseth Sholom* [*Kenesseth, Keneses, Knesseth; Shalom*]—*Society of Concord*, Syracuse, suffered discord when it permitted women to descend from the galleries and sit with the men, while the choristers and

organist ascended into the gallery. But the moderate reform element left when the president ordered the men to uncover their heads. These seceded to form *Adath Jeshurun* [Congregation of Jeshurun].

The removal of hats during worship, was best explained when three decades later, at the dedication of the Orthodox synagogue *B'nai Israel* on Grant Street in Pittsburgh, one complained in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch* that:

> Visitors, who have been taught from childhood's happy hour to reverently uncover their heads when going into a Christian Church, are much bothered to keep their head gear on . . . As often as they remove it, some zealous Hebrew insists on putting it back upon the visitor's head.

How could Jews who had been reared and raised in an Orthodox synagogue and environment succumb to the Christian practice of removal of a headgear during worship? Many who had peddled in the hinterlands, and remained at the home of a villager or farmer over the weekend, accompanied their host to the church service on Sunday morning. Having once removed their hat and become accustomed to the church service, they had become acclimated to such a practice. Others, who removed their hats in their stores and professions, and who sought to impress their Christian guests, readily welcomed the Reforms that de-Judaized synagogues. They rationalized that Reform had but Americanized, not admitting that they had Christianized the Jewish house of worship.

At radical Reform *Har Sinai* in Baltimore, the men most likely removed their hats when David Einhorn arrived in 1855, for his congregation in Pesht, Austria, had prayed with their heads uncovered. Einhorn alone wore a cap common to clergymen.

In San Francisco, Einhorn's protege, Hermann Milton Bien, improvised upon the clerical cap. Bien, the innovator, who invented a rocking chair that operated a fan, had taught in Einhorn's temple school in Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Germany, and his former principal recommended him in that capacity to *Emanu-El* in San Francisco. Aspiring to greater heights, Bien, after three months refused to sign a new contract until the officers engaged him as their rabbi. The officers acquiesced.

Many of the officers dealt in merchandising clothing. They readily understood and appreciated Bien's argument when he wanted them to make him their Rabbi. On being asked for his certificates, he declared, there was as little need for such in this case as there is in ordering a man to make a coat. The tailor makes it, said he, if it suits, he is your tailor, but you never ask him for his certificates. All he "unfortunately" (as he expressed himself) could present was no other testimonial than a letter from Dr. Einhorn, whose disciple Bien claimed to have been.

Soon after the officers of *Emanu-El* conferred upon Bien the title he coveted, he assumed all the functions of an ordained rabbi. His predecessor, however, preferred to title him, "Pastor." No sooner did Bien ascend the pulpit when his expression of ecumenism drew national attention.

In early May, 1856, his friend, James King of William, Editor of the *Daily Evening Bulletin* exposed the dealings of James P. Casey, a local politician and unsavory business opportunist. An enraged Casey marched into the *Bulletin's* editorial room to demand an apology. Ordered out of the building, Casey vowed he would kill the editor. King scoffed at his threat in his column of Wednesday, May 14, 1856.

That evening, about five o'clock, Casey approached the newspaperman on the street, speedily drew out a revolver, aimed it, and pulled the trigger. King fell to the ground, mortally wounded. Casey was locked up in the city jail. Three days later, a crowd of several thousand vigilantes, enraged over this latest in a succession of homicides, seized Casey and sentenced him to death. As King's solemn funeral cortege moved through the city streets, the vigilantes hanged Casey and another accused murderer.

On the following Sabbath, May 24, the *Emanu-El* worshippers were surprised to find their temple draped in black, so ordered by Bien. Even more so, when at the end of the service, he recited *Kaddish Yosom*, the "Mourners Prayer" which he expressedly declared to have been appropriated for the soul of the deceased James King of William, a Christian.

A storm of opposition struck the "rabbi" of *Emanu-El*. Bien warded off the attacks, responding: "*Kaddish Yosom* is in my humble opinion nothing else, like all *Kaddeshim*, than a prayer for closing a part of the divine service, or an ancient lecture to commemorate the dead, or a sermon, and has directly and in the meaning of its words, nothing to do with a dead Jew, or a dead Gentile. And as it happened that our Jewish population in San Francisco felt the warmest sympathy in events touching the interest of every good citizen and the highest principles of the country; freedom and justice. . . ."

In truth, *Kaddish Yosom* affirms the faith of Israel in the unity of God, and specifically mentions Israel. Therefore, this prayer can not be recited to the memory of a non-Jew.

Bien, the innovator, elevated from teacher to rabbi, aspired yet to an even higher status.

Hermann Bien visualized himself in his new role, not only as rabbi but as a modern High Priest in the Holy Temple of the new Jerusalem, San Francisco. He may have been inspirited by the ritual circumciser, Abraham Galland of San Francisco, who that year, 1855, having been

elected ritual slaughterer of *B'nai Israel*, Sacramento, was described as "High Priest" by the City Directory. Accordingly, Bien designed a tall black velvet miter, upon which he had embroidered in shining letters the phrase *Kodesh La Hashem* קודש לה' ["Holy Unto the Lord"] which had appeared on the ancient, high priestly miter, displaying the Tetragrammaton. But for the rest of the priestly vestments he had to satisfy himself with the usual black gown and white neckcloth worn by the ministers of the day—and, for good measure, dyed his whiskers! and, thus adorned, crowned by his priestly, or Episcopal headgear—which may just possibly have also been influenced by Wise's wry report that an eastern Christian editor had declared that "a rabbi was certainly equal to a bishop"!

Soon retired from his "priesthood," Bien focused his creative talents from mitre designing to fashioning Oriental costumes for his play "Samson and Delilah" staged at Maguire's Opera House and for "Dagon and Zebaoth" at the Union Theatre.

Bien not only wrote and directed these plays, but with baton he conducted the brass band, for he was an accomplished musician. Generously, he contributed the proceeds to benefit a celebrated German university that he had attended.

Playwright Bien regarded "Easter Eve," his piece de resistance; a rewrite of the Exodus story presented in dramatic dialogue. He intended it to replace the *Haggadah*, the retelling of the exodus events by ceremonials and recitations in the traditional home service on Passover Eve.

Despite Bien's debacle, Dr. Meyer Mensor, in the following year, 1857, when he began his ministry in Chicago, made his initial entry onto the pulpit of KAM with a blare of trumpets, wearing a tall priestly mitre upon which was engraved קודש לה' ["Holy Unto the Lord"].

There were other significant changes of vestment.

Whereas Bien proudly displayed an unusual headgear and Einhorn and other Reform rabbis the usual style, Dr. E. M. Friedlein, upon his guest appearance at the radical Reform congregation *Keneseth Israel* in Philadelphia in 1860, was the first Jewish minister to appear without headgear. Wise declared "that it was nowhere prohibited in the Bible or Talmud to conduct divine worship in the synagogue bare-headed, and that it was allowed to enter the temple of Jerusalem and stand before the alter with head uncovered. . . ." To the objections of moderate Reform members to Friedlein's having preached without his clerical cap, an officer of the congregation punned that "In a western congregation they are more liberal; they allowed a man to preach without a head."

Caps removed, the officers at *Keneseth Israel* further prohibited the wearing of prayer shawls by the minister, the cantor, the choir, or the worshippers.

In the deep south, in Alabama, *Kahl Montgomery*, organized in 1852, turned to Reform, and adopted the title *Beth Or* [House of Light]. The officers ordered discontinuation of wearing the traditional white *kittel* [robe] and *kippah* [cap] on high holy days.

The Americanized Jewish southerners in discarding Jewish ceremonial vestments, may have mused over an incident that occurred at Polish-rite *Beth-El*, Buffalo, New York. In 1847, the year that a Jewish community became a reality at Buffalo, *Beth-El* held the first Jewish worship in the city, in rented quarters on the third floor of the Hoyt Building, at the corner of Main and Eagle streets.

> It was on the Day of Atonement that Rev. Mr. [Isaac "Itzig" Moses] Slatsky stood in the synagogue the whole day, as the custom was, in his white linen robe and white cap, with a white girdle about his loins. Toward dusk he again began to officiate. The congregation could no longer read without lights; but it being strictly forbidden to the Israelites of the Orthodox school to kindle a light or touch a candlestick on such a day, they sent for some non-Israelite to light their hall. They happened to procure a tall negro. He, on entering the synagogue, seeing Mr. Slatsky with his pallid face and his long white beard, in full keeping with his white attire . . . was seized with terror—ran out as quickly as he could—and reaching the stairs, fell headlong down the whole flight, causing quite a sensation by his precipitate exit.

While the white gown frightened the *Shabbos Goy* [Sabbath Gentile—one who performed tasks forbidden to Jews on holy days] black gowns may have proven less threatening.

Christian ministerial cloaks completed the Rabbinic vestments. A visitor observed:

> Rabbis, preachers and cantors—all "Reverends," even with the orthodox—use sacristies in which to don their robes of office. There are various head coverings and loosely fitting tunics. English churchyard-like pleats fill their robes. Their round, mushroom-like berets make them look like puffed-up, somersaulting peacocks. There's also the many-pointed hat and pleated coat of the Russian pope. Wisely, it's Russian *green*. For [Rav David] Kimchi says *Kemarim* [idol-priests] wear *black dress*.

The guest jibed: "There's more: pious ladies, using their imagination, come in with velvet and silk. The priestly garb will save Israel! Superficial attempts at Reform can take credit for such ostentation and aping of American Christianity. . . ."

In Buffalo, *Birkas Cohanim* [the priestly blessing chanted by the

reader and repeated in unison by the descendants of the priestly class], may have scared children and visitors in the Reform Temple.

Thus, at *Kehillath Anshe Maarabh*, Chicago, a member urged the *Cohanim* [members of priestly lineage] to cease their traditional chant which they claimed terrorized especially the children and Christian guests. Wise suggested a stronger Reform: "Or better, let them be silent altogether. We need no longer a priesthood, and have none in fact. Shadows are not realities." Wise further urged abolishing the office of *chazzan*, remarking: "Just think how foolish your prayers would sound, if read in the style of chant in a modern language . . ."

Wise's recommendation accepted, the ceremony of the *Duchan* [*Yiddish*, to pronounce the Levitic benediction] was abolished; the reason being that the privileges of the priest and Levite are sacerdotal and thus bound up with nationalism, conflict with patriotism and Americanism.

Stockinged feet was equally repugnant to the Reformers. In New York, upon assuming the ministry of *Anshe Chesed*, Dr. Jonah Bondi in 1858, recommended that on the high holy days, "the *Cohanim* wear their boots when pronouncing the blessing over the people" instead of removing them as required by tradition, and that the cantor discontinue wearing the white cap and white robe.

In the final analysis, Dr. Liebmann Adler of *Bet El*, Detroit, observed in 1860, that:

> No matter how necessary the Reform of the Synagogue service is, and how much praiseworthy work has been done in that direction . . . one has modeled the new service too much after the example of the Church.

Moderate Reformer Adler was replaced the following year, 1861, by Radical Reformer Abraham Laser. He transformed *Bet El* Synagogue into Temple *Beth El*, by introducing a melodeon and mixed choir. Calls to the Torah were abolished, along with the wearing of prayer shawls.

Whatever the intent of the Reformers, Adler's conclusion made clear that too much, if not all appearances, of the Temple resembled the congregational church far more than it did the synagogue. Reform's changes were both real and apparent.

Chapter 32
"American Way of Prayer"

> WE SUFFER in this country by the great variety of Synagogue forms, known as the various *Minhagim*. There is actually no union between the natives of Poland and Germany, nor even between those born in this country, if their parents happened to be attached to one of the other modes of worship . . . .

Thus Leeser explored the upheaval that took place in synagogues throughout the land which led to reform of the worship. Though he hailed from Germany where the German-rite form of worship prevailed, Leeser readily accustomed himself to the Portuguese-rite followed in the *Sephardic*-rite synagogues in Richmond and Philadelphia under his charge:

> We hesitate not in subscribing to the forms of prayers as used among the German and Portuguese Jews, which are identical in all the material parts, and only differ in some variations of reading, and the quantity of superadded poetical effusions of the middle ages, known as the *piyutim*, and other pieces of evidently comparatively modern invention . . . .

From his own clerical leadership Leeser could attest that one could readily adapt to an order of prayers [*minhag*] different from that in which one was raised.

This was observed by a visitor to *Shearith Israel*, New York, in 1853. He noted that though German, Dutch, and Polish Jews comprised half the membership, they had acclimated to the Portuguese *Order of Prayers*. He concluded: "the *minhag* is childish, involving elitism, clannishness, opportunism, and arrogance."

Throughout the world, the core of prayer, the *Amidah* [lit. "standing" as it is recited in a standing position], was standard for all Jews, set during Temple days by the Men of the Great Assembly. But after many Jews of the Holy Land had settled in Babylon, they, as those residing in Palestine, added liturgical compositions to embellish the prayer. In the medieval period, Spanish Jewry, the descendants and inheritors of the Babylonian tradition, added liturgical hymns [*piyyutim*] composed by their poets; so, too, compositions of inspired poets of Germanic Jewry, were added to their prayer as had been those of their predecessors, those of the Palestinian tradition. Not only did they differ in the *piyyutim* each selected to embellish the *amidah* and other standardized blessings, but like-

wise in basic order of *z'miros* [hymns based upon a combination of biblical verses that preceded the Psalms].

The variance in the *piyyutim* between German and Portuguese Jews, gave rise to two different prayer rites. The prayer book of the *Ashkenazim* became called *Minhag Ashkenaz* [the German Way (of prayer)] and the Spanish-Portuguese *Minhag Sepharad* [the Spanish Way (of prayer)].

After the expulsion of Spanish Jewry, a few of their rabbis settled in Safed, Palestine, a neglected hinterland of the Ottoman Empire which streched from the Sudan to Poland. They devoted their lives to the study of *kabbalah* [transmitted teachings: literally "to receive"—esoteric doctrine concerning God and the universe]. Introduced mysticism and hymns authored by the mystics of Safed.

Having suffered from severe hardships and pogroms, Eastern European Jews within and beyond the borders of the Ottoman Empire, became inspirited with the mysticism of the rabbis of Safed. Strictly adhering to the stricture of the one they called "Rebbi," these adherents to strictest tradition became called *Chassidim* [pious ones].

The *Chasidic* movement in Jewish history was a comparatively recent phenomenon. In the mid-seventeenth century, the *Ashkenazic* Jews of the Ukraine were decimated during the Ukrainian insurrection against the Poles. The Ukranians, massacred Jews in what became called the Cossack Wars. In the early eighteenth century, new life and hope was fused into those suffering Jews by Israel ben Eliezer, universally known as the *Baal Shem Tov* [Hebrew: "Master of a Good name"]. His followers, the *Chasidim*, rallied to his motto, "serve the Lord with joy," which moved them to sing and dance in prayer and study.

Many of the Jews of the Ukraine and Poland, especially in the towns and villages, were attracted to mysticism and metaphysical studies, the *Kabbalah*. These teachings had been carried into neighboring Turkey by the Spanish *Kabbalists*, after their expulsion from the Iberian peninsula. The Turkish Ottoman Empire [1517-1918] in its zenith embraced Turkey, Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Hungary, and the Ukraine. Jews of the Ukraine learned from the newcomer *Sephardim*, refugees of Spain, *Kabbalah*. They too began to speculate on the mysteries of God and the universe, searching out the hidden meanings in the Bible, and concerned themselves with the conquest of evil.

During the eighteenth century, pseudo-*Kabbalists* swarmed throughout the Polish countryside, undertaking to exorcise demons, expel ghosts, cast out evil spirits, which the lesser, or uneducated, *Chasidim* had deluded themselves as being possessed. A counter movement began in the cities, by those who never became influenced by *Chasidism*. They became known as *Misnagdim* [opponents]. Such was the chasm between the two

parties that even the learned *Chasidic Rebbe* [Yiddish for rabbi], Shneur Zalman of Lyady, Belorussia the protagonist of intellectual *Chasidism*, came under fierce attack from the *Ashkenaz* leader, Rabbi Elijah Gaon of Vilna, the rabbinic giant of his day.

In the eighteenth century, *Chassidim* assailed the lengthy *Minhag Ashkenaz* liturgy which their ancestors had brought from Germany centuries earlier. They eliminated from their *Ashkenazic-rite* prayer book numerous *piyyutim*, and retained the basic prayers as in the Spanish-rite *Minhag Sefarad*. The *Chasidim* kept a minimal number of *piyyutim*, modeled on the simplified order of prayers in the Spanish-rite *Minhag Sefarad*; even appropriating that name for their order of prayers, which they similarly titled *Minhag Sefarad*.

Chassidicism represents less liturgy, less intellectualism, more ecstaticism, more devotionalism through song and dance.

Minhag Sepharad replaced the centuries established *Minhag Ashkenaz* throughout many towns and villages of Russian-Poland, but in the cities, the main synagogue, the *Stadt Schul*, retained *Minhag Ashkenaz*. Other Polish synagogues, particularly in Prussian-Posen, followed the same order of prayer as in the *Stadt Schul*, only they had discontinued recitation of the many *piyyutim* contained in the *Minhag Ashkenaz* prayer book. Their form of prayer became *Minhag Polin* [the Polish Way (of prayer)].

Polish Jews, in the main from the Kingdom of Posen under Prussian rule, who emigrated to England, had worshipped in their native land, either *Minhag Ashkenaz* in the *Stadt Schul*, or *Minhag Polin* elsewhere. They reached a happy medium in England, and compiled a merged prayer book, *Minhag Ashkenaz u'Polin* [the German and Polish Way (of prayer)].

But throughout Europe and other continents there were an estimated 3000 "ways" of prayer: *Minhag Fürth, Minhag Frankfort, Minhag Vienna, Minhag Amsterdam*, among the best known variations of *Minhag Ashkenaz*. Not only did most cities in Central Europe have their own prayer book incorporating the *piyyutim* they chose, but synagogues in the very same city differed in its selections.

In the early nineteenth century, the grammarian Wolf [Benjamin] Heidenheim, edited the various local ways of worship prevailing in the Jewish communities of central Europe. He selected the ones common to most synagogues, and published them in a prayer book he entitled *Siddur Safah Berurah* [Prayer Book of Clear Speech].

Heidenheim's prayer book became generally acknowledged as the standard for Jews of German origin. It became known after the town in which he lived, Roedelheim, located near Frankfort-am-Mein.

In America, many synagogues of German Jews introduced the

Roedelheim prayer book. But with the Bavarian mass migration, came Jews from Posen and Poland, those who followed *Minhag Polin*, and many who clung to local customs in their forms of prayer. As a consequence, in American synagogues Dutch, English, Polish, and German Jews clashed over the question of which *piyyutim* to recite or not to recite. Secessions ensued; each minority establishing its synagogue according to its accustomed form of prayer.

The early colonial synagogues having been founded by Spanish and Portuguese Jews in the seventeenth century, at New York, Newport, Philadelphia, Charleston, Savannah, established *Minhag Sepharad*. German Jews who later arrived accustomed themselves to this *Sephardic* order of prayer. But this adjustment was fraught with conflict.

Such had been the case in the largest Jewish settlements in the Caribbean. At Paramaribo, capital of Surinam, Dutch Guiana, when the "Hoogduitshe," as the *Ashkenazim* were called by the Portuguese, gained power in the early eighteenth century, they seceded from the Portuguese-rite congregation *Beracha we-Shalom* [Blessings and Peace] and founded in 1734, the German-rite *Neve Shalom* [Dwelling of Peace].

Thus Surinam became the protype for the German Jews of Savannah, Georgia. In 1739, the Lutheran Pastor, writing to his colleague in Germany, revealed that the *Sephardic* and *Ashkenazic* groups led completely separate existences:

> The Jews have no synagogue, which is their own fault, the one element hindering the other in this regard. The German Jews believe themselves entitled to build a Synagogue and are willing to allow the Spanish Jews to use it with them in common; the latter, however, reject any such arrangement and demand the preference for themselves.

As a consequence, the *Sephardim* continued to worship in their rented house and the *Ashkenazim* in their "old and miserable hut" until 1740, when the Savannah settlement nearly collapsed. They may have united at that time, and under *Sephardic* leadership, *Ashkenazim* joined in incorporating in 1790 a charter to *Kahal Kadosh Mickva Israel*; its first building in 1820 dedicated by Dr. Jacob de la Motta. The Portuguese-rite *Minhag Sepharad* prevailed in Savannah as in New York, Newport, Philadelphia, and Charleston, all founded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

A change took place in 1785. That year, the German Jews in Charleston, seceded from the Portuguese *Beth Elohim* and called their synagogue by the corporate name of *Beth Elohim Unveh Shallom* following the German-rite. The rift involved a dispute over a burial rather than

ritual. Those who seceded promptly acquired their own cemetery on Hemstead [now Hanover] street. That faction then met for worship in an upper story of a brick building on Beresford street. After seven years, in 1792, an understanding was effected, and they rejoined the parent congregation.

In 1802, the first permantly established *Minhag Ashkenaz* synagogue in the United States was founded at Philadelphia, by thirty German-Jewish families who seceded from the Portuguese-rite *Mickve Israel* and established *Rodeph Shalom* to worship according to the German and Dutch *minhag*.

That year, 1824, marked the formation by English Jews, of the first synagogue in the "west"—*Bene Israel*, Cincinnati, following the German and Polish rite.

In 1824, New York City boasted the largest Jewish community in the United States, taking the lead from Charleston which at the turn of the century had taken it from Philadelphia, which during the Revolution had taken it from Newport. Such was the shifting of the Jewish population during that half century.

By 1824, there were a large number of newly arrived German, English and Dutch Jews to form their own congregation. They seceded that year from the Portuguese-rite synagogue to found German-rite *B'nai Jeshurun*.

Led by Israel B. Kursheedt and John I. Hart, son of Reverend Judah Hart of Portsmouth, England, they purchased in 1826, the "First Coloured Presbyterian Church" of New York and converted that architectural gem into what popularly became called the "*Elm Street Schul.*" *B'nai Jeshurun* constitution, published that year, specified the " . . . worship therein according to the rites, customs and usages of the German and Polish Jews . . . ." Hart modelled *B'nai Jeshurun*'s order of prayers upon the services of the Great Synagogue in London, as the majority of the English members were of Prussian origin.

In 1826, Solomon Henry Jackson, the first Jewish publisher in the United States, reprinted the Portuguese prayer book with an English translation. It was entitled *The Form of Daily Prayers, According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews.* This replaced the depleted copies of Isaac Pinto's English translation, printed in 1766.

Whereas all the *Sephardic* synagogues in America accepted this standardized Portuguese-rite prayer book, many of the *Ashkenazic* synagogues obstinately continued to follow the customs of their native localities, and rejected the standardized German-rite Roedelheim prayer book.

The variety of customs in the order of prayers, though incidental to

the main body of prayers, coupled with the different dialects of the newcomers, would cause secessions *ad infinitum*, as synagogue groups divided and subdivided into congregations of persons who had in common their native form of worship and/or native land.

The order of prayers in their synagogues, reflected the localities from which they had emigrated. In New York the different customs in addition to regular congregations gave rise to two "storefront" congregations: first of these *Ohabey Zedek* [Lovers of Righteousness], founded in 1835 by Posen and German Jews who seceded from *B'nai Jeshurun* in order to worship according to *Minhag Polin* [Polish order of prayers].

The immediate reason for the cessation however was a trivial disagreement between the Posen element and the English trustees. A young man wishing to marry the daughter of the president of *B'nai Jeshurun* requested that his prospective father-in-law, John I. Hart, perform the ceremony. The Trustees refused, and the bridegroom and his friends withdrew to found congregation *Ohabey Zedek*. They rented the Washington Hall, 533 Pearl Street. This was the same hall that *B'nai Jeshurun* had rented prior to purchasing the African Church building. Reconcilation was soon effected and after three months, they rejoined the parent body.

Two years passed, and in 1837 the Poseners at *B'nai Jeshurun*, strengthened by newcomers from their native land, seceded again, and this time succeeded to permanently establish their *Minhag Polin* synagogue. Meeting at 472 Pearl Street, they founded *Shaare Zedek* [Gates of Righteousness], in 1837.

With the mass migration of German Jews after 1837, the Roedelheim *Minhag Ashkenaz*, prayer book, according to the order of prayers of so-called German Jews—was reprinted in New York City in 1840, to satisfy the needs of 10,000 recently arrived Bavarian immigrants. But this standard prayer book of German Jews did not find acceptance among those German Jews who came from the villages and towns of Prussian occupied Posen. Though under German rule for over half-a-century, they remained Polish Jews and identified with the Jews from the Kingdom of Poland proper. In their synagogues they followed the Polish order of prayers—*Minhag Polin*. Only for those Poseners who had worshipped in the main synagogue of the cities of Posen and Poland, the *Stadt Schul*, the *Minhag* was invariably *Ashkenaz*, but with variations from the *Ashkenaz* in vogue in Germany.

Persecution, the desire for freedom, economic opportunities, and to avoid Prussian military conscription, a policy in effect since 1812, motivated Posen's Jews to depart their native land, Though young men were not allowed to emigrate because of the army draft, many managed to escape. Their emigration surged after the failure of the Revolution of

1848, when Polish peasants pillaged the Jewish quarters in villages near Posen, forty thousand having arrived that decade, and surging.

To meet the needs of the German and Polish Jews accustomed to the order of prayer established in Germany and in the main synagogues of Polish cities, and to offset Wise's intention to publish a Reform prayer book, Leeser in 1848 revised his *Siftei Zadikim* [Lips of the Righteous] prayer book *Minhag Sephard* published in 1837 to *Minhag Ashkenaz*, entitled *Sidur Divrei Zadikim, The Book of Daily Prayers for Every Day of the Year According to the Custom of the German and Polish Jews*. With Leeser's English translation, it had an advantage over the Roedelheim prayer book.

Despite Leeser's Hebrew-English prayer book, most worshippers continued to use the prayer book of their native country. Dr. Hermann Felsenheld, a Hebrew teacher at *Anshe Chesed* during Lilienthal's ministry, and afterwards at his Hebrew Union School, and who had been a member of Lilienthal's *Beth Din*, noted that in one place members quarrel about *Minhag Polin* or *Minhag Ashkenaz*, and in another place about *Minhag Fürth* or *Minhag Frankfort*, it might have a good effect to publish a *Minhag America*—an American Way of Prayer, just for the sake of quieting those quarrelers.

The German congregation, *Anshe Chesed*, founded in 1828 by Jews from Fürth, Bavaria, experienced a secession in 1839 by some of its German members who may have come from a different city and preferred the particular *Minhag* of their locality. These secessionists established in 1839 the German-rite congregation, *Shaarey Hashamayim*. Another such clash took place between German and Polish elements at *B'nai Jeshurun* synagogue in Newark, New Jersey, typical of many other synagogues throughout the land; the issue being whether to adopt the German-rite or Polish-rite mode of worship and if the German-rite, which one.

Viennese Jews exerted their dominance at *Anshe Chesed* in 1849, effecting the switch from *Minhag Ashkenaz* to *Minhag Vienna*.

At *Ohabei Shalom* [Lovers of Peace] congregation in Boston [founded in 1843], the members fought bitterly over the question whether to elect a German or Polish cantor. Whereas in the 1840's the majority German-rite Bavarians who had established *Minhag Fürth*, won that battle. In the 1850's, the Poseners though in the majority seceded to found the Polish-rite *Adath Israel* [Congregation of Israel] and of course engage a Polish cantor.

Another typical occurrence took place in Pittsburgh. German Jews founded *Shaarey Shamayim* [Gates of Heaven] synagogue in 1848. Four years passed, when the Prussian element defected to found Polish-rite *Beth Israel*.

In the "west," in 1849, the influx of German Jews into Chicago gave

rise to the founding of twin synagogues: the Bavarian claimed to be older. Their synagogue incorporated by the name *Kehillath Anshe Maarabh*, but the officers claimed the correct paraphrase of the Hebrew to be *Kehillath Anshe Maaribh*, confusion cleared by its acronym KAM. Generally titled the *Bayerish Schul*, it followed *Minhag Ashkenaz*. Its members hailed from Southern Germany.

The other Chicago synagogue incorporated under the name *Kehilath Beney Sholom*, but the officers claimed the correct paraphrase of the Hebrew to be *Kehillath B'nai Sholom*, which the members simply called by the acronym KBS. Generally titled the *Polishe Schul*, it followed *Minhag Polin*. It's members hailed from Posen.

In the far west, in San Francisco, in that year, 1849, the year of the gold rush to California, Jews of the Golden Gate city formed the First Hebrew Congregation of San Francisco [later *Sherith Israel*]. Led by the English Jew, Lewis Abraham Franklin in his tent store, the Poseners worshiped according to the *Polish-rite*.

The Bavarians however set their own *Yom Kippur* service in a room where gold dust was weighed, probably owned by a kinsman, so that they might pray according to the *German-rite*. Their constitution of 1851 declared: "The mode of worship of this Congregation shall be in conformity with Minhag Askenass." Having observed *Rosh ha-Shanah* in the tent with the Poseners, these worshippers represented their synagogue as the First Hebrew Congregation of San Francisco [later *Emanu-El*].

Reportedly, after *Neilah* [closing—fifth and last service of the Day of Atonement], as the Bavarian worshippers were on their way to break the fast of twenty-four hours, the Polish Jews were on their way to their tent synagogue. Having miscalculated, the Bavarians returned to their prayer room where instead of weighing gold, the Almighty would weigh their deeds. They fasted another day, almost fifty hours in all!

When Leon Dyer of Baltimore arrived the following year, he was elected by the Bavarians as the "First President of the First Synagogue of San Francisco." Under his leadership the correct day for atonement was observed.

By 1850, Polish-rite synagogues preponderated. Of the seventy-seven Jewish congregations, only nineteen described themselves as being of the German *minhag*, and one of the Bavarian *minhag*.

Leeser who, in the 1840's, had discounted the differences between the Portuguese and German orders of prayer, in the 1850's admitted that "there is actually no union between the natives of Poland and Germany, nor even between those born in this country, if their parents happened to be attached to one of the other modes of worship . . . ."

In the nation's capitol, the Washington Hebrew Congregation's first

worship in 1852 followed *Minhag Sulzbach*, which these German Jewish immigrants brought with them from Sulzbach. In 1861 the newly adopted Constitution prescribed *Minhag Aschkeness* [sic!], according to the *Roedelheimer* prayer book.

In Syracuse, in 1854, *Keneseth Sholom* Society of Concord experienced great discord as Englishmen, Polanders, and Dutchmen, dissented from *Minhag Ashkenaz*, organized *Beth Israel* according to *Minhag Polin* and elected a reader, teacher, *shochet* and *mohel*. The congregation built its synagogue on Grape Street and became called the *Grape Street Schul* [Grape, now Townsend]. One wonders if the region, famed as of that year for its Concord grape, inspired the name of Syracuse's first synagogue.

Dissention took place in all the early synagogues where Germans and Poseners assembled for worship, enabling Reformers to appear to be peace makers, establishing a *Minhag America*, supposedly for all Jews in America. Thus, in Milwaukee in 1855, advocates of the German-rite at Polish-rite *Ahabath Emuno* [Love of the Faith] seceded and formed *Anshe Emeth* [Men of Truth] congregation. These Orthodox groups had in 1854, seceded from *Imanu-Al* [God is With Us], organized in [the previous year], whose by-laws specified that the order of prayer be German-rite *Minhag Frankfort*.

In Rice's *Howard Street Schul* too, as soon as the Polish-rite minority numbered a quorum of ten, they separated to form their own congregation. Thus, when Wise visited Baltimore in 1855, he reported:

> Two of our congregations, the Howard Street, [*Schul, Minhag Ashkenaz*] and Gay Street [*Schul, Shearith Israel*, which seceded [in 1852] from Rice's private synagogue [to worship according to *Minhag Polin*], both strictly Orthodox, have never done anything for education, for they think if they say ninety-nine prayers every day, which most of them do not understand, that they have done enough, and thereby have purchased heaven for themselves.

Upon revisiting Baltimore five years later, Isaac Mayer Wise reported that the congregation "under the lead of Rabbi Abraham Reis has about 16 members and pretends to be strictly Orthodox, and the others say they are as Orthodox as they can be under the prevailing circumstances." Wise attacked all the splits in *minhagim* and used them as a basis to condemn the Orthodox forms of prayer in order to pave the way for his Reform prayer book:

> According to the Orthodox *Din* [law], such men who split congregations for the sake of a *Minhag* should be laid in *Cherem* [excommunication] . . . . But why do those gentlemen insist upon

having a German or a Polish *Minhag*, when we, by adoption, are Americans?

What bettter right had the Germans, and Portuguese, in days long past to establish a *Minhag*, or form of worship, than we, Americans, have in the present time? . . . . . Let us have an American *Minhag*, adapted to the customs, tastes and wants of our people, and our age.

"American" to Wise was a euphemism for "Reform." The first of the Reform prayer books, *The Sabbath Service*, published in 1830, in English, had been composed and authored by playwright Isaac Harby and other members of The Reformed Society of Israelites in Charleston. After rejoining the parent body, *Beth Elohim*, in the mid-1830's, they gained control of the new synagogue edifice in 1840, and their minister, a ritual slaughterer, Dr. Gustavus Poznanski, introduced the Hamburg Temple prayer book, which in turn was accepted by his successor, Maurice Mayer, in 1850.

Two years after Poznanski introduced the Hamburg prayer book, *Har Sinai Verein*, in Baltimore, followed suit. In 1842 the second Reform congregation in the United States obtained copies of that prayer book, which became the standard for most Reform congregations for that decade, though a few ministers composed their own prayer booklets for their congregations.

American Reformers began the creation of their prayer book versions by first dismembering the Orthodox prayer book. First, the early portion of the service, *Shacharis* [*Shachar* dawn], came under the Reformers cutting hand.

In 1845, *Nefutzoth Yehudah* [Dispersed of Judah] was organized in New Orleans, its constitution providing that the prayers be "unalterably fixed according to the forms of Portuguese Jews."

In 1849, the scribe, Nathan Oettinger of New York completed "a handsome Sepher commissioned for and by Judah Touro" and certified by Reverend Chaim Nussbaum for its correctness. This scroll, which he purchased, he placed in the synagogue, *Nefutzoth Yehudah*, and presented it to the Orthodox congregation under the presidency of Gershom Kursheedt. The Synagogue was named after its donor.

In 1854, after the death of Judah Touro, who would not allow any change in the worship, Dr. James Gutheim, minister of the Portuguese-rite synagogue, *Nefutzoth Yehudah*, received with satisfaction the congregational decision to follow his advice and discontinue the talmudic portions dealing with Temple sacrifices as well as all the Psalms, the service beginning "at 9:30 a.m. with *Nishmath*."

The early portion of the prayers, *shacharis*, having been abridged, the

last portion *musaf* [additional], came under Reform excision. As the service became bereft of tradition, it lost its import, becoming less necessary. Reform was on its way to becoming a High Holy Day and Sabbath religion.

First to dissect the Sabbath service was Harby, followed by Poznanski, Merzbacher and Wise. Beginning in 1847, when Wise ministered in Albany's Orthodox synagogue, *Beth-El*, he deleted from the early morning service all prayers pertaining to the restoration of Temple sacrifices or the restoration of Israel to its ancient homeland as obsolete and not consonant with American freedom.

Wise discontinued recitation from the *musaf*, a prayer written in Aramaic, *Yekum Purkan*, which petitioned Heaven to bestow blessing " . . . to our teachers and rabbis of the holy communities in all the lands of our dispersion, in the land of Israel, and in Babylon." Wise ridiculed the idea that "We pray for our chief officers in Bable [sic!], who have not been in existence for the last five hundred years." He likewise expunged the Talmudic-Aramaic portions from the Friday evening service.

Leeser wrote with ire and satire:

> What fools were the Jews of the last century not to see that *Yekum purkan* would drive the young men from Synagogue, and open wide the doors of the church to find satisfaction in a new belief!
>
> We would not dread a missionary rising in an assembly of Jews to preach his apostacy . . . But far otherwise is it when a profound Jesuit tells the people that the worship will go to ruin if *Yekum purkan* is recited on the Sabbath in the Synagogue . . . .
>
> Believe me, that our good doctors, who see no salvation outside of Reform, *will not be satisfied with any concession short of an abandonment of religion* . . . These deceivers, in their younger days, sat at the feet of the teachers of the *Talmud* in good old Germany and learned Poland . . . But behold the change; these men eat prohibited food publicly, they smoke segars or pipes on Sabbath publicly, they keep no positive precepts publicly . . . and what is more deplorable still than their own apostacy, their flocks support them, applaud them, and march along the same road of improvement. And they commenced with laying the fault of our decay to *Yekum purkan*, and a *Kaddish* less was to be the panacea for all our ills.

At *Emanu-El*, San Francisco, Dr. Elkan Cohn like Wise abridged the *musaf* service. He informed his congregation that he had abolished most of the *musaf* on the high holy days and preached "on the propriety of abolishing [throughout the year] the *Mussaph* service altogether."

He demanded of those who opposed this change:

> . . . Tell me, ye self-styled Orthodox . . . why is a portion of our prayers said aloud by the Hazan, and then silently by the congregation? Why is there a repetition of the Amidah—or as it is sometimes called the additional service [sic! *Musaf* is the additional service] . . . .

Leeser, astounded at Cohn's actions, expressed surprise and shock:

> He surely cannot have forgotten that he was, when in Brandenburg [Germany] . . . Orthodox in a pre-eminent degree . . . Nor can it have escaped his memory, that while we were with him at the Cleveland conference he requested the gentlemen composing that body to remain in the hall to enable him to read *Mincha* and say *Kaddish*, as it was the anniversary of his mother's death. Then he prayed the whole *Shemonah Essray* according to the German Minhag . . . .

In the mid-1850's several Reform prayer books authored in America made their appearance, specifically designed by the Reform rabbi for his congregation but available for adoption by others.

In Cleveland, in 1850, as a prelude to Kalisch's preparation of a prayer book, the officers of the newly formed congregation *Tifereth Israel*, where he would serve as cantor, preacher, and teacher, required him to consult "two assistant rabbis" once a month for their approval of his manner of conducting the form of worship established according to the *Minhag Frankfort-am-Mein*.

In 1855, Dr. Leo Merzbacher of *Emanu-El*, New York, published *Seder Tefilah: The Order of Prayer for Divine Service*. Almost all of its hymns were composed by Dr. James Gutheim.

In 1856, Dr. David Einhorn published for his congregation, *Har Sinai*, Baltimore, *Olat Tamid* [Eternal Offering]; most of its hymns were in German.

That year, Isaac M. Wise's *Minhag America—Prayers of B'nai Jeshurun*, was being prepared by the Cincinnatians Isaac Mayer Wise, "rabbi" of the congregation, Wolf Rothenheim, a teacher in Lilienthal's school at *Bene Israel*, and Isidor Kalisch, ministering at *Ahabath Achim* [Brotherly Love]. Wise intended it not for Cincinnati alone, but for congregations throughout the United States, as had Merzbacher and Einhorn. But Wise proved his version to be the most popular and himself to be the better promoter.

Ever since his joining Lilienthal in 1847, to serve as a member of his *Beth Din*, when he was assigned to prepare a prayer book, this project was uppermost in his mind.

That year, a reader of *The Occident*, writing under the pseudonym

Joseph, sought to resolve the issue and bring unity into American synagogues:

> It is well known that the American Israelites came from different countries, and brought with them diverse *Minhagim* [customs]; and this circumstance must always prove a source of confusion and disagreement in the various Synagogues and the congregations; whereas the whole people of Israel serve the same one God, read and believe in the one *Torah* . . . why then should they become strangers to one another, by a diversity of forms? inspired by one hope, walk together the same way, abide by the same customs. . . .
>
> Verily, I, myself, am so strange, so lonely when I enter a Synagogue that has another *Minhag*, that I can hardly fancy the people worshipping around me to be my Jewish brothers. These different forms, these, so to say, outwardly diverse coloured garments, constitute the partition-walls, dividing the Portuguese, German, and Polish Jews from one another, and they are rendered to each other as strangers, although all descended from the same ancestry, and observing the same religion. But the American Jew should know and love his brothers, and thus should the dividing wall be entirely removed.

One is led to believe that the writer Joseph, may have been Isaac Mayer Wise, who that year joined Lilienthal's *Beth Din* with the mandate to write a prayer book to be called *Minhag America*, for he suggests

> that the establishment of a *Minhag* in America, independent of all other *Minhagim*, is lawful and possible to all those who know how to distinguish between law (*din*) and custom (*Minhag*) . . . .

Leeser commented editorially: "Not having yet received the projected forms of prayers laid by Dr. Wise before the late meeting of the *Beth Din* in New York, we must be excused from any remarks. . . ."

To prepare the public for acceptance of *Minhag America*, as well as to institute Reforms, with himself as the leader of Reform, Wise, in 1848, called for a Conference of American Jewish leaders, ostensibly to set standards for reverends engaged in performing marriages, divorces, and the issue he raised of the Levirate. It was then that Dr. Simeon Abrahams of New York disclosed what he believed to be Wise's real intent to the Jewish public:

> Now, can it for a moment be doubted the chief reason for this call is no more nor less than the alteration of the "Liturgy"? Let them try to hide if they can; for no sooner would these "sages" be congregated, than the "American System" [*Minhag Amerika*] of prayers and service would be recommended . . . . No sooner would

such a Convention be organized than the remodelling of the "American Prayer-Book" would be introduced . . . .

After the Cleveland Conference of rabbis in 1855, Wise began the composition of his *American Prayer-Book*, in collaboration with Kalisch. Soon thereafter Kalisch moved to Cincinnati, to serve as lecturer at the *Judah Touro Verein*, a Reform society named after the great American Jewish philanthropist of New Orleans who died in the previous year.

Judah Touro was a pious, Orthodox Jew, son of Reverend Isaac Touro, Reader at *Yeshuat Israel*, the synagogue at Newport, Rhode Island, when it had a thousand Jewish souls prior to the American Revolution. Had the Reformers of Cincinnati been aware that Touro left funds in his will for twenty-two Orthodox synagogues only and not one cent for Reform Temples, they would not have named their Society *Judah Touro Verein*. Thus he left five thousand dollars for the Orthodox *Sheayreet Israel*, in Charleston, but not one cent for the Reform *Beth Elohim*.

No sooner did the members of the *Judah Touro Verein* learn of staunch Orthodoxy and opposition to Reform, when they renamed their Society *Ahabath Achim* [Brotherly Love].

Wise and Kalisch were joined in the preparation of the Reform prayer book by Wolf Rothenheim, a teacher who had served in Lilienthal's private school in New York, and followed his mentor to Cincinnati.

In 1856, *Keneseth Israel* of Philadelphia requested its minister, Dr. Lazarus Naumberg, to rewrite the liturgy, and include prayers in German. Their temple prayer book would then replace that of the Hamburg temple used by the congregation. Two years later, a difference of opinion over a ritual question, resulted in Naumberg's dismissal, along with the Posener Reformer they elected in the previous year, Dr. Solomon Deutch.

In 1857, *Minhag America—Prayers of Bene Jeshurun*, rolled off the presses. No sooner had Wise's *Minhag America* made its appearance, Leeser published a caution to "congregations in the West" against its adoption. Samuel Bruel, an officer of the Orthodox *Sherith Israel* Congregation in Cincinnati, wrote to the world-renowned Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch of Frankfort-am-Mein, Germany. He asked whether it was permitted to pray from the *Minhag America* prayer book.

The renowned Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch of Frankfort replied that Wise's prayer book should be condemned as utterly unworthy. Malzer's colleague, Samuel Bruel, declared:

> That a cordon should be drawn round the district in which it is now [*Bene Yeshurun*], to prevent its infectious disease from

propagating any farther; because it is injurious to the rising generation; it is anti-Jewish, and inconsistent with propriety . . . .

Thereupon, at the conclusion of the Passover service, on April 15, 1857, Moses Malzer of *Sherith Israel* read Hirsch's statement, then denounced the *Minhag America* prayer book. He mourned the demise of those Jews who digressed from the traditional prayer book, and after recitation of a chapter from the *Talmud* a member recited *Kaddish deRabbanan*—the traditional prayer mourners recite.

Wise ridiculed the act in his *Israelite* under the heading "A True Anecdote":

> In one of the hyper-Orthodox Synagogues out west, not a hundred miles from Cincinnati [actually in Cincinnati], one of the celebrities of stability read in the Synagogue, ש'ש'פ' [seventh day of Passover] last, an article by Rabbi Sampson Raphael Hersch [sic] of Frankfort-am-Mein against Reform and Reformers. When he was done, his neighbor rose and said קדיש דרבנן [the rabbis' kaddish—recited by mourners].

Dr. Bernhard Illowy, upon reading the contents of *Minhag America*, promptly pronounced a ban of excommunication:

> . . . that any Israelite who used this book in his house for the purpose of prayer is entirely excluded from all religious communion by the decision of the Jewish canon law . . . .

Ignoring the ban pronounced upon Wise's prayer book, the officers of *Adas Israel*, Louisville, adopted *Minhag America*. They requested Wise to lead them one Sabbath a month in his prayer book, at a salary of two thousand dollars a year. Congregation *Bene Yeshurun* denied their request and compensated by raising his salary by an increment of two thousand dollars a year. The Orthodox at *Adas Israel* guided by the advice of Cincinnatian Moses Malzer seceded to join Congregation *Beth Israel*, chartered six years earlier as the "Polish House of Israel."

In New York, in 1857, *Minhag America* was welcomed at *Anshe Chesed*, by its minister, Dr. Jonah Bondi. In 1858, Dr. Kalisch having been elected to its ministry, *Minhag America* was adopted at *B'ne Jeshurun*, Milwaukee. This new congregation was formed that year by a merger of three congregations: German-rite *Imanu-Al*; Polish-rite *Ahabath Emuno*, which had seceded from *Imanu-Al*; and a localized German-rite synagogue, *Anshe Emeth* [Men of Truth].

Also in 1858, the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation replaced *Minhag Ashkenaz* with *Minhag America*.

The fifth congregation to adopt *Minhag America*, *Oheb Shalom* on

Hanover Street, in Baltimore, invited Wise to introduce his prayer book and dedicate their edifice, a former church building, on April 13, 1858. The congregation announced in the German press:

> The Israelites of Baltimore are herewith informed that the divine worship in *Oheb Shalom* Congregation commences on next Sabbath at half-past eight, and will be held for the first time according to the newly adopted *Minhag Amerika*.

In an effort to ridicule the adoption of the banned *Minhag America*, an anonymous Orthodox of Baltimore inserted in the next issue the same advertisement but substituted the last word "America" with the Hebrew word רוק [RVK], meaning bachelor, unfruitful, or its homonym [ROK], meaning empty.

But there was more to the three letters that comprised that Hebrew word than appeared on the surface. Leeser admitted that "The last word was at first a puzzle to us, but it has been explained by our correspondent to be composed of the Hebrew letters that spell the initials of the names Rothenheim (ר), Wise(ו), and Kalisch(ק)."

"But, is there not something ominous to the phrase [*Minhag ROK*]?" questioned Leeser, as he referred the readers of *The Occident* to *Isaiah* 1.50,6, where the prophet says: פני לא הסתרתי מכלמות ורק "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those that plucked off the hair; my face I hid not from abuse and spitting" [רוק ROK: Hebrew for spittle or spitting].

Leeser concluded: "Well may we weep over the degeneracy of the times, when men [of *Oheb Shalom*] utterly unfit to the task of reviewing a book of prayers, decide after one debate, on which, perchance, there was no one who defended the old custom, to adopt a work which has nothing but רוק ROK [emptiness] for its authors and recommenders . . ."

In Baltimore, rejection of Wise's prayer book at *Oheb Shalom*, came unexpectedly from within and within a year after its acceptance.

In 1859, *Oheb Shalom* elected Benjamin Szold of Hungary to its pulpit. The former student of the *Yeshivah* of Pressburg and University of Breslau, accepted the pulpit on the condition that Wise's prayer book for Sabbaths, be replaced by one he would compose. Szold further objected to the congregation using the Orthodox *Roedelheim Tefillah* prayer book on festivals and high holy days. Three years later Szold together with Dr. Marcus Jastrow, published *Abodath Israel* [Worship of Israel] for Sabbaths and Festivals, popularly referred to as the "Szold-Jastrow Prayer Book."

In Hartford, Connecticut, Dr. Isaac Mayer, first minister of *Beth Israel*, authored his prayer book titled, *Independent Minhag*.

As Reform prayer books proliferated, the debate raged at *Kehillath Anshe Maarabh* in Chicago as to which to adopt. Radical Reformers proposed that *Minhag Hamburg* be selected and Dr. Solomon Deutsch of *Keneseth Israel* in Philadelphia be elected their spiritual leader. The Orthodox opted for *Minhag Frankfort*, but after one week it was dropped in favor of the moderate Reform prayer book, *Seder Tefilah* of Leo Merzbacher, newly revised by Dr. Samuel Adler of *Emanu-El*, New York. But after reconsideration, it was finally resolved to keep the moderate Orthodox prayer book *Minhag of Kehillath Anshe Maarabh* composed by its *chazzan*, Reverend Ignatz Kunreuther, Abraham Kohn and other committee members.

In protest to the adoption of Kunreuther's Orthodox *Minhag of Kehillath Anshe Maarabh* the radical Reformers seceded, one of them complaining:

> Its compilation of prayers is a relic from the time when the congregation had in itself opposing elements and was concocted by a "committee to please all" . . . It is a real curiosum . . . It passes by the members under the appropriate name of "stump-tail service" . . . .

Leeser observed:

> Now, among the nine Reformed congregations in this country, six of them have adopted a separate mode of worship, while the remaining three are like the naked boy on the sign, "He would be clothed if he knew the fashion."

Commenting on the proliferation of Reform prayer books, Leeser called to public attention that

> the whole business of prayer-book making seems overdone . . . Almost every prominent Reform congregation has, through its minister, or committee of ladies and gentlemen, issued some sort of hymn or prayer-book, more or less deviating from the ancient standard, every one introducing a new principle into the chaos of confusion already existing . . . .

A visitor to the Reform temples in eastern cities remarked: "When I visit, examine and consider (as I have done), the three several and *distinct* services, as adopted in the Temples of Charleston, New York, and Baltimore, I ask myself, can these be branches from one parent stem?

Dr. Jonah Bondi, in New York, recommended a Reform prayer book by a Dr. [Samuel?] Mayer of Württemberg, Germany, titled: *Israelitische und Gebetordung fur Synagoge und Schule wie zur hanstichen Gottesverehrung*.

The multiciplity of Orthodox *Minhagim* prayer books gave rise to the popular Wise's *Minhag America*. Leeser would have been wise to heed Rice's advise that only those *piyyutim* be retained that had been written in simple, biblical Hebrew and had gained wide acceptance. What was needed was not an "American Way" prayer book *Minhag America*, but a "Jewish Way" prayer book *Minhag Yisroel*.

The best *Minhag*, superior to all, was cited by George Einstein, president of *Bne Jeshurun*, Leavenworth City, Kansas: "We conduct our worship according *Minhag Shulchan Oruch* [Way of the Jewish Code of Laws].

The derisive expression *Minhag ROK* had taken hold throughout the country. Six years after its first usage, a Chicagoan wrote to *The Occident* under the caption "Radical Reformers," about the "conflicting parties" within *Kehillath Anshe Maarabh*. He stated: "Some want *Minhag America*, and some refer to it as 'Minhag Raik' מנהג רוק [the custom of shallowness and ignorance . . .]" As a consequence, American Jews became called *Ama Raika* [ignorant people].

Wise sought to create a new custom in prayer, a new *Minhag* in *America*, convinced that it would become the standard, universally accepted. He did not understand the simple fact that a *Minhag* is established by the people, not by an individual, and when accepted by all the people, the entire nation of Israel, has the force of law. Like matter, a *Minhag* can neither be created nor destroyed.

It was then that the venerable Rabbi Schachna Isaacs, arrived from England to settle in Cincinnati. He was shown a copy of *Minhag America* prayer book. Horrified by its denial of fundamental Jewish beliefs, he summoned the Orthodox leaders and in their presence pronounced a ban of excommunication upon Wise and all Reformers; then ceremoniously consigned the *Minhag America* prayer book to the flames.

When Wise heard that the learned, pious rabbi, Schachna Isaacs, commited his *Minhag America* to the flames at Cincinnati's Polish-rite *Sherith Israel*, he grasped at straws and contemptuously called that synagogue, a *Beth Hamidrash*, which name conjured to Reformers the gathering places of Russian-Polish Jews whom they despised. In a play upon the title of the women's *Yiddish* translation of the Polish-rite prayer book, *Ze'enah Urenah* [Hebrew "Go and See"], Wise referred to *Sherith Israel* by the contemptuous demoralizing expression, *die veibershe schul* [*Yiddish* for women's synagogue], signifying ignorance of the Hebrew language needed to understand the Hebrew prayers, Wise punned:

> In the *Zeenah Urenah Beth Hamidrash* here . . . Mr. [Schachna] Isaacs of Hamilton, Ohio, [a town 22 miles north of Cincinnati] . . . was disturbed when reading his prayers in a most un-

becoming manner, altogether against the established
דין דקדיש וברכו [law pertaining to prayers].

After Wise's prayer book had been consigned to the pyre, congregations bent on Reform continued to ignore the ban and some of them welcomed *Minhag America* into their temples. Reform had a new *minhag* which to Orthodoxy was totally *ROK*, devoid of authenticity, truth, and compatibility in any way with the historical *minhagim*, those compilations that selected various poetical hymns and orders of *psalms* but retained the basic unit of prayer intactum, without deviation, rejection, or renunciation. To the Orthodox, *Minhag America* was not a new *minhag* restating tradition, but a non-*minhag*, a denial of tradition.

Perhaps Wise also felt that *Minhag America* was a non-*Minhag*, for he later asked: "Why should there be an established set of prayers . . . It is to say the least, quite foolish to prescribe to a person what he should pray, the lips only can pray that which the heart dictates . . . a rabbinical maxim . . . 'Whoever makes his prayer an established one (i.e., written down and established) his prayer is no supplication.' "

Wise hedged, saying: we should suggest, either . . . the ancient Hebrew purified of the antiquated matter, as we have done in the *Minhag America* or let all the prayers be *ex tempore* by the minister of the congregation. One or two prayers, concise and comprehensive, will suffice for every divine service. A new established set of prayers is a new orthodoxy . . . unfit for our age and country."

A decade passed, Isaacs' deed gained the plaudits of Elijah Moses Holzman, a *Torah* scribe in New York. He was a native of the Russian province of Courland in Russian Poland, arrived in New York City as soon as shipping lanes were safe for travel following the war between the States. He heard of Wise's prayer book, *Minhag America*. Curious to see its contents, Holzman ordered a copy and was stunned by its excision and rejection of basic Jewish beliefs. Inspired by Schachna Isaacs' act, reducing the pages to ashes, Holzman said that he had "Sanctified the Name of God in Public."

Holzman wrote an anti-Reform polemic, in Hebrew, which he dedicated to Rabbi Isaacs and published in book form, entitled *Emek Refoim* [Valley of the Dead]; *Refoim* being a play upon the word Reform, also the Hebrew *Rofim* [doctors], a reference to Reform rabbis who preferred the title Doctor; also a reference to the *Psalmist* who said that the *Refoim* will not rise at the time of the Resurrection, this belief denied by the Reformers.

Identifying *Refoim* as the biblical race of giants, the *n'filim*, who because of their wickedness were destroyed by the Great Flood save, Og,

who survived, but as leader of the wicked ones, he is considered as dead even during his lifetime.

Holzman alludes to Wise, Lilienthal, and Rothenheim as the White, Black, and Red. In this book he authored a poem titled "A new song shall I sing for the wicked doctors, the reds and the whites, for darker than dark is their appearance." He concludes with the excommunication of Wise, Lilienthal, and Rothenheim.

Sidestepping the ban of excommunication, Reformer Dr. Abraham Laser of *Bet El*, Detroit, replaced *Minhag Ashkenaz* with *Minhag America*. Open warfare erupted between Laser's Bavarian supporters and the Polish and Hungarian faction. The Bavarians in the majority, seventeen Polish-Poseners, formed a new congregation, the *Shaarey Zedek Society*, engaged an Orthodox Reverend, M. Sapper, a reader, and instituted *Minhag Polin*.

In San Francisco, in 1864, the Board of Trustees of *Emanu-El* agreed to adopt Merzbacher's *Seder Tefilah*, the middle-of-the-road prayer book between the radical *Olat Tamid* of Einhorn and moderate *Minhag America* of Wise. Triumphantly, President Henry Seligman announced the adoption of *Minhag Merzbacher* and sixty seceeded to form *Ohabei Shalom* [Lovers of Peace] according to *Minhag Ashkenaz*.

Of all the lively altercations between "Rabbi" and "Congregation," commonplace in the mid-nineteenth century, caused by *Minhag America* versus *Minhag Ashkenaz*, none in the East reached the high pitch of excitement as in that "Wild West" shootout between Minister Moses May and officer A. [Abraham?] Waldman, of *Beth Israel*, Portland Oregon.

Founded in 1859, a succession of ministers followed. In 1860, 28-year-old Hermann Milton Bien of San Francisco served but a year. He removed to Virginia City, succeeded by a Reverend Herman P. Bories. In 1863 Dr. Julius Eckman of San Francisco was elected. He ministered for six years and returned to the city by the Golden Gate, succeeded by a Dr. Isaac Schwab who after two years was succeeded by Moses May.

Worship was conducted in the Orthodox manner. A visitor from New York described to Reverend Samuel Myer Isaacs, editor of the *Messenger*, how the services in Portland's *Beth Israel* were conducted "in the orthodox style, so that our correspondent fancied himself back again in Wooster Street *Schul* [*Shaaray Tefila*; Isaacs minister]."

Not rehiring Schwab split the community; seceders, possibly the Prussian element who preferred *Minhag Polin*, founded *Ahavai Sholom* [Lovers of Peace] congregation.

The hiring of May further exacerbated the conflicts within *Beth Israel*. Until the arrival of May the prayerbook *Minhag Ashkenaz* had been established as the form of worship. May opted for *Minhag America*, while

the members were divided between *Minhag Ashkenaz* and the one created by the Board of Directors of *Beth Israel, Minhag Portland.*

The Orthodox, favoring *Minhag Ashkenaz* sought to oust May, but for the moment he and *Minhag Portland* prevailed. The Orthodox, in seeking to fire May, accused him of

> referring to the married women of his congregation as ladies of easy virtue, casting aspersions upon his own wife in public which received the "condemnation of Jew, Gentile and heathen" (heathen, referred to the Indian); outrageously slandering and blackmailing several members of the Congregation; condeming himself, by his own actions, as an immoral man and an unbeliever in the doctrines of Holy Writ; acting as a libetine and rake during a visit to San Francisco; calling the officers and members of the Congregation outlandish names; threatening to join the Unitarian Church in the event Mr. Philip Selling [Orthodox] were re-elected President; opening mail belonging to others for the purpose of slandering the authors of the letters; and when he was called a liar, black-guard, scoundrel and villain, he offered no word for his defense but walked away and therefore gave rise to the belief that he felt himself guilty of these charges. . . .

The Reform-minded Board of Directors absolved May of all charges. May, now determined to introduce *Minhag America*, created an atmosphere in the community, explosive, not merely figuratively.

A. Waldbaum of Beck & Waldman, President-elect of *Beth Israel*, a strictly Orthodox man, opposed the officers on the issue of changing the *Minhag Ashkenaz* worship, but he directed his sharpest barbs against minister Moses May. Arguments between President and Rabbi had been ongoing throughout the decade of the seventies, ever since May's arrival in 1872.

The climax in the struggle between May and Waldman erupted in a fist-fight and shoot-out beneath the window of the magnificent Esmond Hotel in the center of town where President Rutherford B. Hayes was staying during his visit to Portland.

Fortunately, the U.S. President was not out on Front Street that Friday morning, October 1, 1880, at 9:30 a.m. Minister May was conversing with Isaac May, possibly a relation. The May's, Isaac and the Reverend Moses, standing beneath the suite of President Hayes, were on Front Street in front of May's store, Hexter & May, located on the ground floor of the hotel, facing Front Street, adjacent to the store of Beck & Waldman.

A. Waldman of Beck & Waldman, president of the synagogue, ap-

proached from behind. He grabbed minister May by the collar, pelted him in the eyes, smashing his spectacles. The rabbi whipped out a pistol from the folds of his frock coat, and shot wildly at the heart of the president of the "House of Israel." He missed the mark but his second shot came closer, tearing through Waldman's coat. As May reloaded, one Morris Isaacs rushed forward and restrained the rabbi before he could replace the bullets and fire a third time. Different versions were given to the press; each contestent presenting his version of the encounter.

The *Daily Standard* of Portland, Oregon, carried the story under the headline *PASTORAL RELATIONS* and subheadline, *How Rabbi May And Brother Waldman Serve The Lord.*

> Friday morning at 9:30 the hilarious pop of the little pistol was heard on Front Street. People who rushed in that direction saw the Rev. Rabbi [M.] May and Mr. [A.] Waldman, of Beck & Waldman, engaged in a melee which resulted something in this style: The Rabbi shot twice at Waldman, and tore a piece out of his coat, and came near killing an honest man, and Mr. Waldman put a pair of beautiful rings about the Rabbi's eyes. . . .
>
> It seems that while Rabbi May and [a] Mr. May, of Hexter & May, were standing on the street engaged in a close conversation. Mr. Waldman walked up to them, unnoticed by either and, grabbing the Rabbi by the coat collar, struck him two severe blows in the face, smashing his spectacles and injuring him severely. The Rabbi then dived for this temporal ammunition and fired at Waldman twice . . . He was then knocked down by Mr. Morris Isaacs, and he voluntarily threw his pistol into the store of Hexter & May. Waldman then bounced [pounced] on his adversary and administered a severe castigation before they could be separated. . . .
>
> Waldman . . . a well known and highly respected citizen . . . was arrested in the afternoon by Constable Sprague and taken before Judge Bybee and fined for assault, but, as far as can be learned, Rabbi May was not molested. . . .

A reporter of the *Daily Standard* visited both parties and obtained their statements.

Waldman said "that for a long time trouble had been brewing in the congregation over the doings of the Rabbi, who was not only deficient mentally, but also morally, and who would have long ago been kicked out of his charge but for the sympathy which was expressed for his family . . ." He added: "It is reported, though I cannot vouch for its truth, that the Rabbi fired at his wife one day, indeed, the marks of the bullet can be seen in his own house . . ."

May told the reporter that "he was called a liar by Mr. Wald-

man . . . received an anonymous letter threatening that he would be killed with the same pistol which an evil and false report said he had once fired at his own wife . . ." He added: "In religious matters Waldman annoyed him continually, interfering with him and wishing to teach the religion of Waldman instead of that of Moses [May?], and because he did not, has been trying to ruin him by setting adrift reports about the moral standing, which the Rabbi characterized as false, shameful, and hollow."

Concerning the altercation, May said that while engaged in conversation with a friend he was grabbed roughly from behind and received two terrible blows in his eyes. His glasses were smashed. Not knowing who assailed him, he drew his pistol and dazed and blinded, fired in the direction of the blows.

> "I would have killed if I could," said the Rabbi, "and would have done so to even my father or brother had they treated me as this man Waldman did. . . ."

The *Daily Oregonian* likewise reported the tale of the gun-totin' rabbi and editorialized: "Fortunately, neither shot took effect. Parties interfered and separated the belligerents. . ."

Reports of this confrontation between Rabbi and President, soon reached the eastern United States.

Isaac M. Wise writing under the caption *A VERKEHRTE WELT* [A Topsy-Turvy World] noted: "Mr. Waldman was not hurt, but the rabbi was soundly thrashed for being such a poor marksman . . ." As for May, Wise concluded, "though not recognized as a rabbi but merely tolerated, on account of relationship, as a *shtaz matz* [religious factotum] . . . and we can not understand how a man of a family can take his life in his own hands, especially when he knows as little how to pull a trigger as he knows of the *Shulchan Aruch* [the standard Jewish code of laws]."

Wise concluded: "There is of course, a vacancy in the Portland congregation, and poor May will either have to go to peddling or join the shooting Baptists. It is a pity that Israel should have produced a shooting clergyman, and still more a pity that the Christians in Portland believe that May is a high priest in the synagogue . . ."

Wise was ungrateful. May's fray came as an immediate and direct result of his attempt to introduce Wise's prayer book, and he fired his six-shooter in favor of the American Way—*Minhag America*.

BOOK VIII

"ZIOMANIA" IN AMERICA



Proto-Zion flag, designed by Jacob Askowith for dedication of *B'nai Zion* Educational Society's Zion Hall, Boston, 1893.
(Author's Private Collection)



Chacham Haijim Raphael Isaac Carigal of Hebron; preached at *Yeshuat Israel*, Newport, Rhode Island, in 1773.

(Courtesy American Jewish Historical Society)



Dutch-Portuguese Jews of New Port, welcome shipment of matzah from Jerusalem in 1651. Historical illustration by Kurt Friede.
(Collection of Kosher Overseers Association of America)

PUBLICACAÒ.

Que fazem os Senhores H. Hm. da Santa Cidade de חברון, que DEOS reſtaure.

NOS abaixo firmados, com lagrimas nos olhos, & triſteza de coraçaõ, notifficamos por eſta, a todos os Senhores Parnaſſim, Thezoureyros, & individuos, de todas as קהלות קדושות de Israel, que habitaõ pellas partes da America, hûa pequena parte, do noſſo grande aperto & conſternaçaõ, da decadencia & mizeravel eſtado, em que a o preſente, ויקהל do Aº. 5532.) nos achamos todos os moradores, da populoſa & Santa Cidade de חברון, (que em noſſos dias Deos reſtaure,) colmada de ſabios, virtuoſos, & tementes de Deos, ſitio por quem Deos publicou, ſer a mais fermoſa de todas as terras, donde eſtaõ ſepultados, os tres Patriarcas, ABRAHAM, ISHAC & JAHACOD, Pilares do Mundo; motivado das guerras que ha entre os Governadores & Senhores deſta Cidade, que tem originado hûa grande miſeria, careſtia & fome, por ja aver tres annos que eſtá ſitiada, por Mar & por Terra, impedindo o paço de ſahir & entrar, que nos tem aſſolado & acabado todos os noſſos bems, que foy cauſa de individarnos, augmentandoſe os devitos de tal maneira, que a o preſente tem chegado a ſomma de 30000 peças, de vinte por cento de intereſe, ficando a viſta dos noſſos acredores, por naõ poder ſatisfazellos, apertados & ultrajados, & ja para dilatar o tempo da paga de ditta ſomma, temos peitado a o Senhor da Cidade, com aver empenhado todas as peſſas ſagradas das Santas Eſnogas para rogar a os acredores nos desem tempo, para uſcar algum alivio & ſocorro, & agora pellos noſſos peccados, nos achamos novamentes perſeguidos, com proſecuçoens & maõs decretos, por razaõ dees noſſos acredores, que eſtaõ determinados a deſterarnos deſte ſacro lugar, mando os principaes deſta ſanta congrega, pondo-os em amargas priſoẽs & ſuas mulheres & filhos vendidos por eſcravos, reſolvidos ja a apoderarſe das noſſas ſantas Eſnogas, naõ nos ficando ſo, que a noſſa miſeravel vida, para ſentimento deſtes continuados golpes, diſgraças, & infortunios.

Eſte

Eſte foy o motivo de avermos deliberado, (o que até o preſente jamais para eſtes lugares ſe fes,) de mandar por Saliah de Miſvah a o Senhor H. H. R. SEMUEL ACOHEN, a todos as ſantas קהלות deſtas partes, para que depois de referirlhes bocalmente, eſta noſſa inexplicavel diſgraça & conſternaçaõ, em que agora nos achamos, rogarlhes, pedirlhes, & ſuplicarlhes, com animo poſtrado, que como caritativos, piadoſos, eſmoleiros, & tementes de Deos, que ſempre ſerviraõ de deffença & amparo, a todos os grandes apertos, em que ſe acharaõ muitas vezes, os noſſos circunviſinhos, tomem parte no noſſo ſentimento, ſe comovaõ do noſſo grande aperto, & naõ encubraõ os olhos da noſſa conſternaçaõ & perigo, em que a o preſente nos achamos, antes abrem a ſua liberal maõ, participando do que Deos lhes foy ſervido conceder, para eſtablecimento, deſta ſanta cidade, matrona de Israel, a que naõ fique em poder de eſtranhos, & para eſta grande misvah de פריון שבויים, para por eſte meyo, (com o favor divino,) poder achar algum alivio, para a redempçaõ das noſſas almas & as das noſſas mulheres & familhas, livrandonos deſta amarga oppreſſaõ, por cuja obra meritoria interogaremos a divina clemencia, que o merito dos prtriarcas, ſepultados em eſta, ſerva de amparo a todos que participarem para eſta pia obra, para concederlhes hûa dilatada vida, em companhia de ſuas caſas & nobles familhas, acompanhada com todas as ſortes de felicidades corporaës & eſpirituaës. AMEN !

AHARON ALFANDERY,
HIYA ZEEBY,
ELIAU BEN ARAHA,
HAIM JOS. DAVID AZULAY,
HAIM JEUDAH GOMES PATO
PINHAS MORDECH. BAGAIJO

ISHAC ACOHEN.

1773 Certification of Palestinian emissary Rabbi Semuel Cohen of Hebron. [Facing pages]

(Courtesy The American Jewish Historical Society)

THIS IS TO CERTIFY.

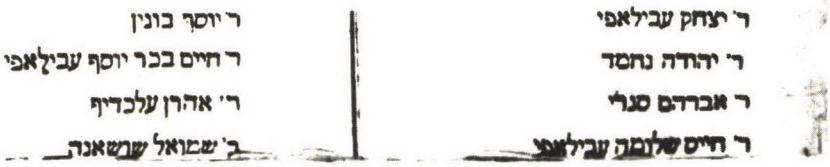
THAT we Governors of the Synagogue of the Holy City טבריא whose names are signed in Hebrew in the Certificates, Give permission to Rabbi Semuel Ishaki, to collect all donations and offerings that was recently offered in the Synagogues of our Brethren in America, Jamaica, and other parts of the West Indies; and all other gifts of individuals that may be charitable to subscribe toward this purpose, of relieving his brethren who are in great distress; and we do continually meditate and study the Law of God by day and night, for the benefit and merit of our brethren in other parts of the world.

Dear Brethren,

You have now to perform the great precept of פדיון שבוים Redeeming those who are in Captivity, for we have no means of redeeming ourselves out of this trouble, therefore the Almighty will have mercy on us and help us, by the means of your goodness. And this Rabbi Semuel Ishaki, has permission to renew accounts for the benefit of the holy land: that you may have the merit and a portion in the holy land. And for this goodness, the Almighty will grant you long life and every happiness the world can afford, and on the return of Rabbi Semuel Ishaki, the true messenger, we engage to make מי שברך on the Sepulchre of the great and holy רבי עקיבא and on the Sepulchre of רבי מאיר בעל הנס whose merits may protect you, and us, Amen.

In the Year A. M. 5583.

This is a translation of the Hebrew Certificates, delivered to the above-mentioned Rabbi Semuel Ishaki.

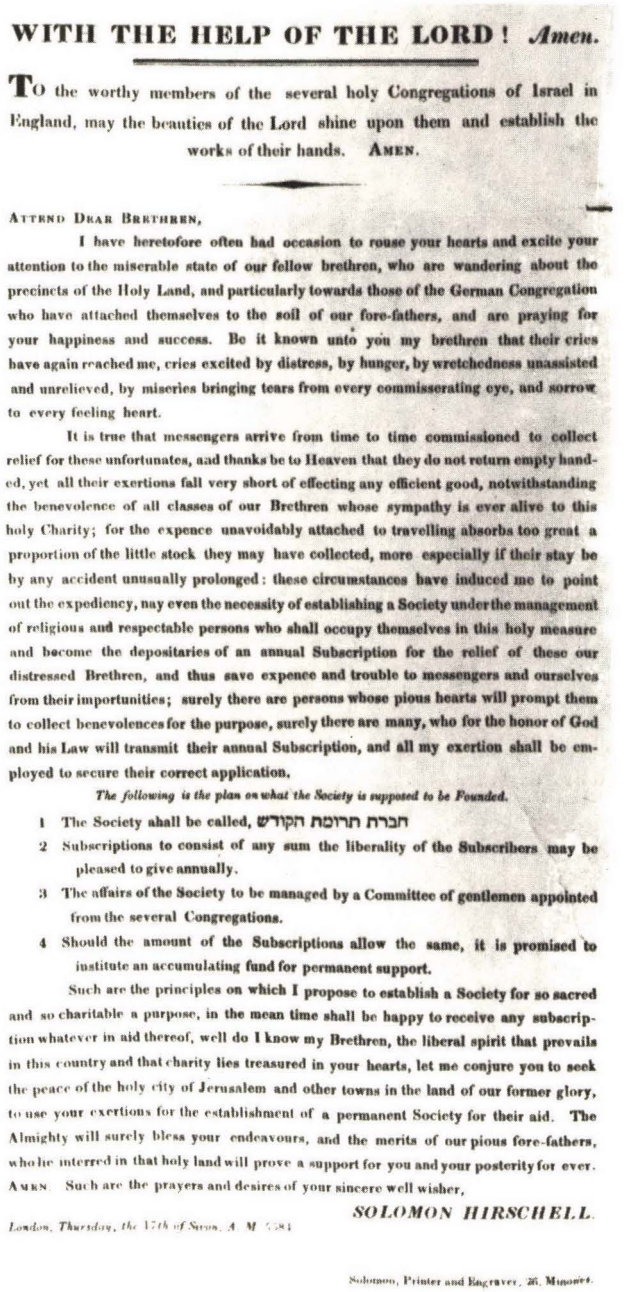


1823 Certification of Palestinian emissary, Rabbi Semuel Ishaki of Hebron, prays for donors at the tomb of Rabbi Meir Baal Haness.
(Courtesy American Jewish Historical Society)



Tzdakah Collection Plate, mid-19th century, at weddings, for institution of Rabbi Meir Baal Haness.

(Author's Private Collection)



WITH THE HELP OF THE LORD! *Amen.*

To the worthy members of the several holy Congregations of Israel in England, may the beauties of the Lord shine upon them and establish the works of their hands. AMEN.

ATTEND DEAR BRETHREN,

I have heretofore often had occasion to rouse your hearts and excite your attention to the miserable state of our fellow brethren, who are wandering about the precincts of the Holy Land, and particularly towards those of the German Congregation who have attached themselves to the soil of our fore-fathers, and are praying for your happiness and success. Be it known unto you my brethren that their cries have again reached me, cries excited by distress, by hunger, by wretchedness unassisted and unrelieved, by miseries bringing tears from every commisserating eye, and sorrow to every feeling heart.

It is true that messengers arrive from time to time commissioned to collect relief for these unfortunates, and thanks be to Heaven that they do not return empty handed, yet all their exertions fall very short of effecting any efficient good, notwithstanding the benevolence of all classes of our Brethren whose sympathy is ever alive to this holy Charity; for the expence unavoidably attached to travelling absorbs too great a proportion of the little stock they may have collected, more especially if their stay be by any accident unusually prolonged: these circumstances have induced me to point out the expediency, nay even the necessity of establishing a Society under the management of religious and respectable persons who shall occupy themselves in this holy measure and become the depositaries of an annual Subscription for the relief of these our distressed Brethren, and thus save expence and trouble to messengers and ourselves from their importunities; surely there are persons whose pious hearts will prompt them to collect benevolences for the purpose, surely there are many, who for the honor of God and his Law will transmit their annual Subscription, and all my exertion shall be employed to secure their correct application.

The following is the plan on what the Society is supposed to be Founded.

1 The Society shall be called, חברת תרומת הקודש

2 Subscriptions to consist of any sum the liberality of the Subscribers may be pleased to give annually.

3 The affairs of the Society to be managed by a Committee of gentlemen appointed from the several Congregations.

4 Should the amount of the Subscriptions allow the same, it is promised to institute an accumulating fund for permanent support.

Such are the principles on which I propose to establish a Society for so sacred and so charitable a purpose, in the mean time shall be happy to receive any subscription whatever in aid thereof, well do I know my Brethren, the liberal spirit that prevails in this country and that charity lies treasured in your hearts, let me conjure you to seek the peace of the holy city of Jerusalem and other towns in the land of our former glory, to use your exertions for the establishment of a permanent Society for their aid. The Almighty will surely bless your endeavours, and the merits of our pious fore-fathers, who lie interred in that holy land will prove a support for you and your posterity for ever. AMEN. Such are the prayers and desires of your sincere well wisher,

SOLOMON HIRSCHELL.

London, Thursday, the 17th of Sivan, A. M. 5584

Solomon, Printer and Engraver, 26, Minories.

1824: Solomon Hirschell circular for establishment of London Office of the Society for Offerings of the Sanctuary.

(Courtesy The American Jewish Historical Society)

CONSTITUTION,

AND

BYE-LAWS,

OF

חברת תרומת הקדש

THE SOCIETY

FOR THE OFFERINGS

OF

THE SANCTUARY.

INSTITUTED.

5593.

New-York.

Printed by S. H. Jackson,

163 Chatham-St.

1833: New York Society for Offerings of the Sanctuary.
(Publication American Jewish Historical Society)

DISCOURSE

ON THE

RESTORATION OF THE JEWS:

DELIVERED AT THE TABERNACLE, OCT. 28 AND DEC. 2, 1844.

BY M. M. NOAH.

With a Map of the Land of Israel,



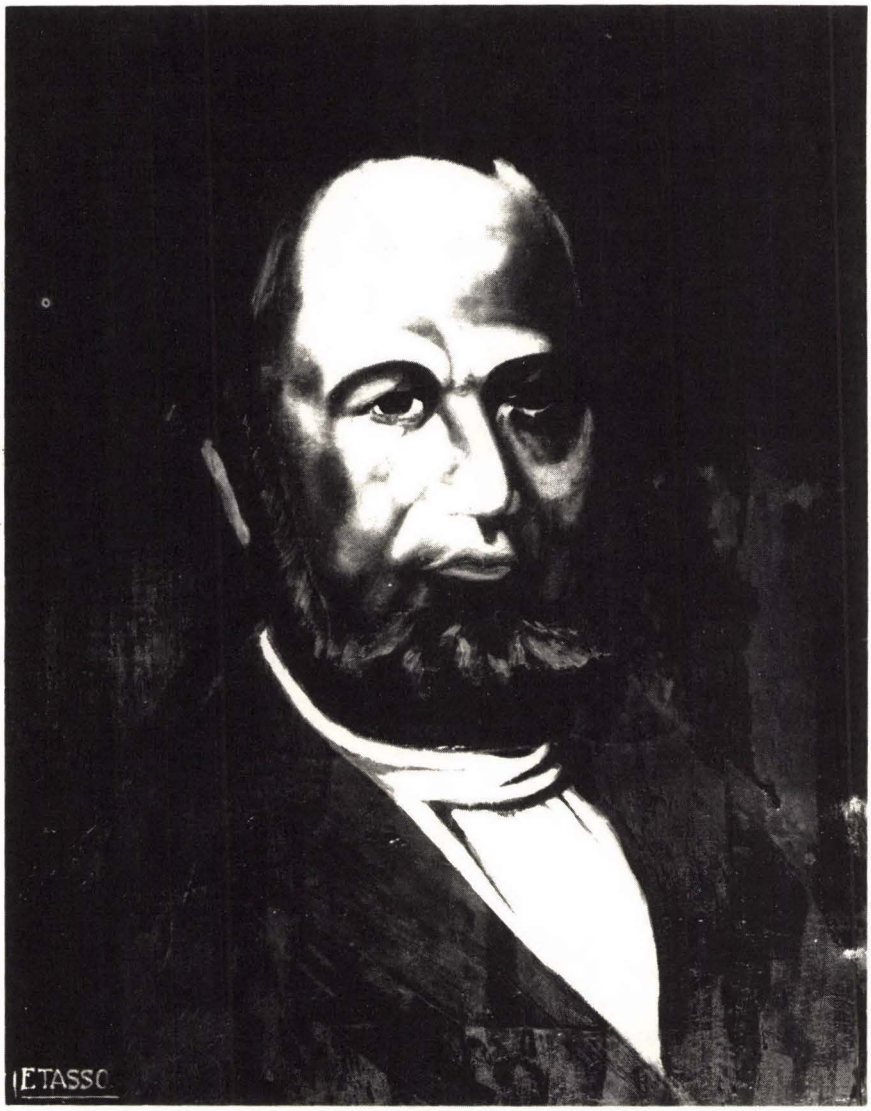
NEW-YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, 82 CLIFF-STREET
1845.

Discourse on Jewish Homeland in Palestine by Mordecai Manuel Noah, published in 1845.

(Author's Private Library)



Mordecai Manuel Noah: A Sketch.
(The American Jewish Album by Allon Schoener)



Rabbi Rice, led Baltimore and the nation in raising funds for Palestinian Jewish Relief. Oil painting by Ervin Taussing, Highland Park, California, 1957.

(Author's Private Collection)



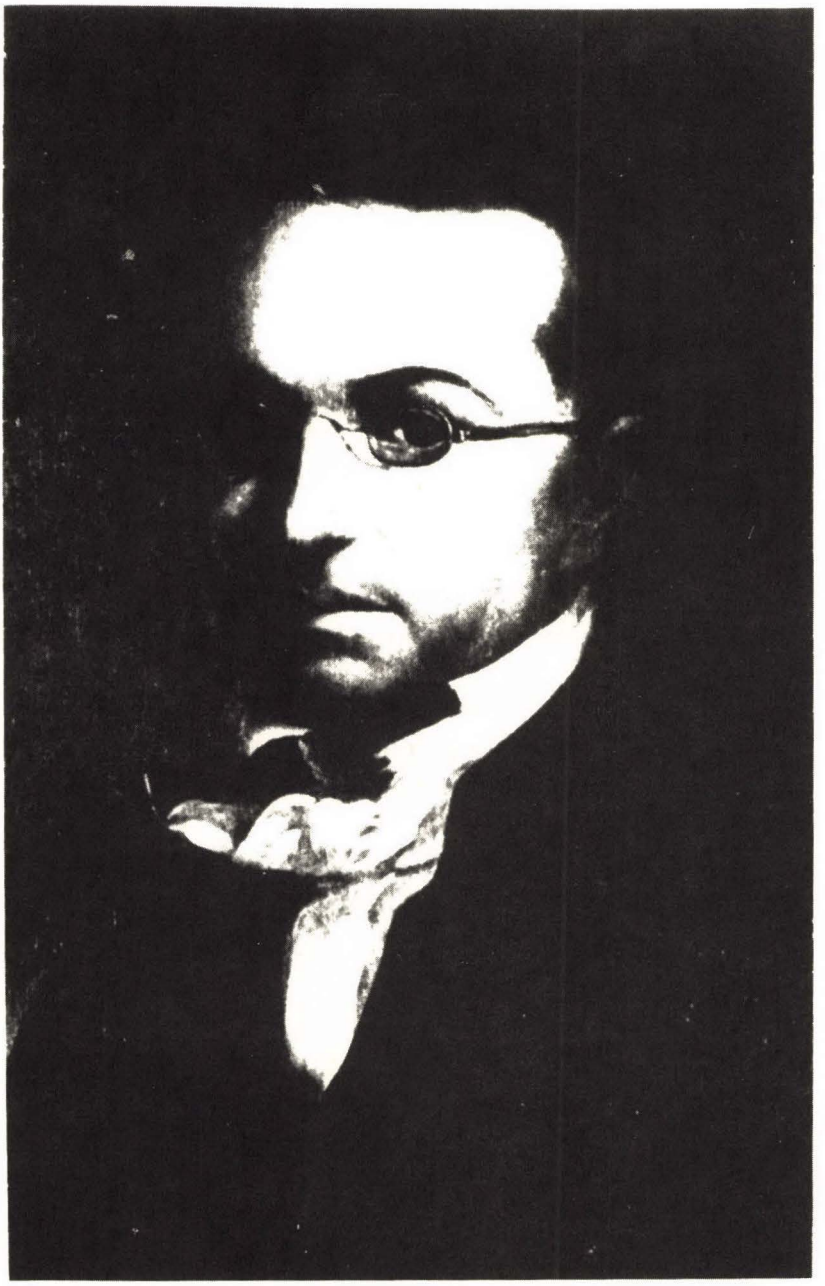
Reverend Samuel Myer Isaacs, leading representative of the North American Relief Society for Assisting Palestinian Jewry during the Crimean War.

(*Shaaray Tefila* by Simon Cohen)



Warder Cresson, First U.S. Consul to Jerusalem; Given Hebrew name Michael Boaz Israel upon becoming a proselyte to Judaism. Advocated return to the soil.

(Courtesy American Jewish Historical Society)



Reverend Isaac Leeser, advocated support for Cresson's Agricultural Projects in Palestine.

(Courtesy Maxwell Whiteman)

A

DESCRIPTIVE GEOGRAPHY

AND

BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF

PALESTINE.

BY RABBI JOSEPH SCHWARZ,

FOR SIXTEEN YEARS A RESIDENT IN THE HOLY LAND.

TRANSLATED BY

ISAAC LEESER,

ONE OF THE EDITORS OF THE NEW EDITION OF THE HEBREW BIBLE, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED WITH MAPS AND NUMEROUS ENGRAVINGS

"For the stones thereof are dear to thy servants, and its dust they kindly cherish."
PSALM cii. 16.

PHILADELPHIA:
PUBLISHED BY A. HART,
LATE CAREY AND HART.
5610-1850.

Geography of Palestine by Rabbi Yehosef (Joseph) Schwarz, translated by Leeser, Philadelphia, 1850.

(Author's Private Collection)



Rabbi Yehosef Schwarz, advocated return to the soil for Palestinian Jewry; Most resided in the four Holy Cities.

(Frontispiece: A Descriptive Geography of Palestine by Joseph Schwarz)



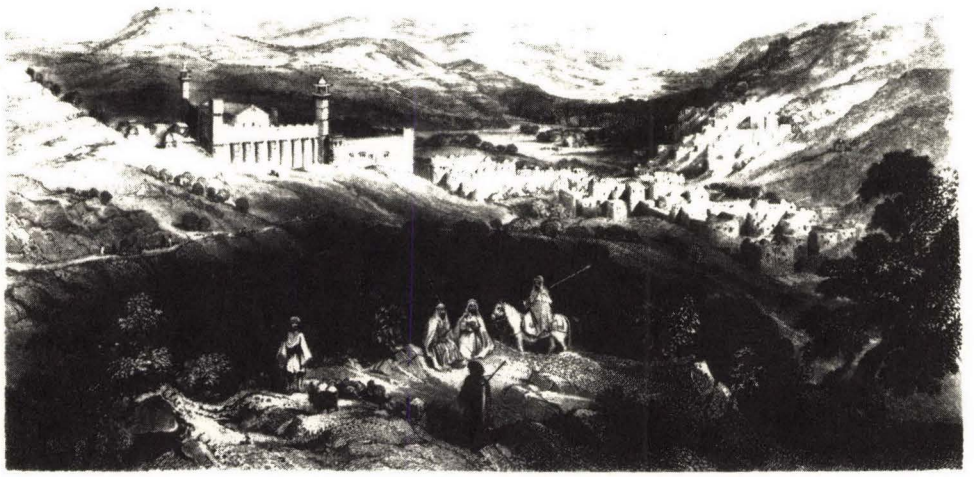
Jerusalem, 1847: "City of David."

(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)

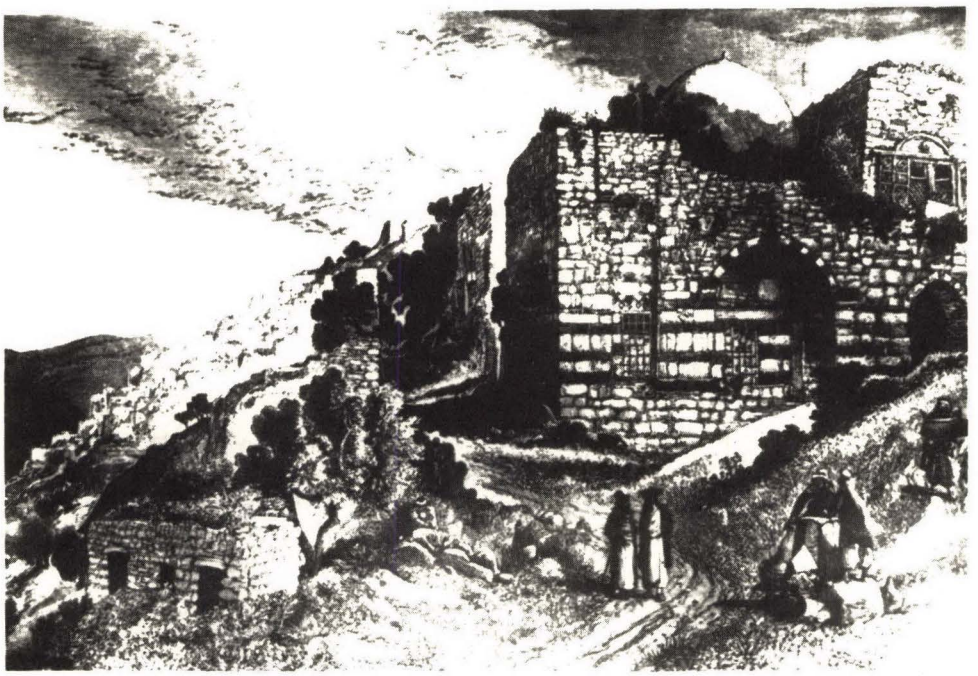


Tiberias, 1848: "City of the Patriarchate."

(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



Hebron, 1839: "City of the Patriarchs."
(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



Safed, 1870: "City of the Cabbalists."
(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)

פיליאדעלפיא ק׳ק מקוה ישׂראל

New-York, 26th Kislev, 5610 : or, 11th December, 1849

The undersigned, כשרה *from the Holy City of Jerusalem, (may it soon be restored,) respectfully begs to inform the President and Trustees of the K. K. :—* מהוה ישראל

That on his return to New-York, he found letters from his Congregation of Asse[illegible] Perushim, in Jerusalem, who, not only in the strongest terms describe and lament their dest[illegible] and misery, but also express surprise and regret that his stay in the United States should, as yet, have been productive of no relief to them : which appears to them the more strange, as their brethren, the Hebrews of these United States, have at all times, and justly, ranked high for their beneficence and zeal in the sacred cause of Israel. אשכנזים פרושים ק׳ק ירושלם עה׳ק ת׳ן

The undersigned deems it needless to remind the President and Trustees, that, when he visited their Congregation, they were pleased to promise their kind and continued support to the Holy City, and especially to the Congregation of Ashkenazim Perushim, (which numbers seven hundred and two souls,) of which he is the representative. But as he is most anxious that the fruits of his mission should speedily reach and relieve the afflicted sufferers in Jerusalem, so as to attest not only how faithfully he has labored to do his duty, but likewise with what piety and charity the Congregations have responded to his call, he urgently requests the President and Trustees of the K. K., מקוה ישראל *would please, without delay, collect the amount subscribed for the current half year, and send the same either to Major Noah, or to Mr. M. Michael, both of this city, for transmission to Sir Moses Montefiore. And the undersigned fully relies, that, in those Congregations where* חברות *Societies have been formed for the support of Jerusalem, the President and his co-adjutor in the good work will watch over its continuance, as our holy law enjoins* מוצא שפתיך תשמר ועשית

"What thy lips utter, thou shalt keep and perform."—(Deuteronomy XXIII., 24.)

The undersigned takes this opportunity to offer his best thanks to the President Trustees, and Congregation, דק׳ק פיליאדעלפיא

for all their kindness to the Holy City, and to him personally. May their reward be abundant, both here and hereafter, from the All Bountiful, who chose Jerusalem to let his name rest thereon. And, as the undersigned cannot quit New-York, and these States, to return to the Holy City, until he knows that the sums subscribed have been transmitted to Sir Moses, he begs the President will please favor him with a line, stating the amount collected, and the date of its transmission to Major Noah, or Mr. Michael. בנא יארק

With gratitude, and best wishes, he respectfully remains.

AARON SELIG ASKENAZI.

Mell M: 63 New York

Rabbi Aaron Selig, emissary of the Ashkenazim-Perushim in Jerusalem; Letter to officers of *Mickve Israel*, Philadelphia, 1849.

(Courtesy American Jewish Historical Society)



Ashkenazim-Perushim Synagogue Enclave, Jerusalem, 1848.
(A Descriptive Geography of Palestine by Joseph Schwarz, Philadelphia, 1850)

WINE FROM THE HOLY LAND.

☞The Rev. Simon C. Noot, No. 48 East Broadway, offers for sale thirty-two barrels of Wine, made in the city of Jerusalem, and bearing the certificates of the heads of the congregations as to its genuine and pure character. Each barrel contains 33 gallons. Families, congregations and heads of churches destitute of possessing a portion of this Wine, now three years old, for religious purposes, are invited to examine and purchase the same in lots to said purchasers. je17—1t

Among the Scattered Tribes of Israel.

I, the undersigned, who am appointed to read and expound the law; testify that the Wine before me is the pure blood of the grape, without any mixture of intoxicating liquor. It was sealed and set apart by two true witnesses, who know the law and keep it, and who on the truth of Judaism, and in their hearts testify, that the Wine is pure and perfect; and that the very learned and distinguished ***Rabbi Moses Suze*** is sent out as a messenger ***from the Holy City of Jerusalem***, with forty-two casks of it, which he bought here from a merchant of Israel. That it was made here three years since under our own inspection and according to the Rabbinical law. The said Rabbi is going with it to Beyroot, and from thence to Smyrna, to put it on board an American ship, (brig Cyclops,) Captain Calhoon, master, bound for New-York. And we, the witnesses, certify that before any stranger was allowed to touch or taste said Wine, it was put into casks about thirty or thirty-three gallons each; and each cask sealed with two seals, according to law. I, therefore, testify that this Wine ***is pure and holy***, and fit for religious purposes; and is superior in quality and purity to any other kind of Wine. And in accordance with this, I have caused the Sultan's seal to be affixed to this Certificate.

Signed and sealed in my presence, this 5th day of Adar, (February,) Rshon 5608, (or 1848.)

Sultan's Seal.

ABRAHAM JEHOSHUA,
Head Sagan (ruler) in the Synagogue
of the City of Jerusalem.

The above is a correct translation.
WILLIAM L. ROY.

1848 circular of Rabbi Moses Suze's kosher wine from Holy Land.
(Lyons Collection, American Jewish Historical Society)



View of Jewish Quarter, Jerusalem, 1850. Chief Rabbi Abraham Jehoshua, certified as kosher, 42 casks of wine brought to America by Rabbi Moses Suze.

(*The Geography of Palestine* by Joseph Schwarz)

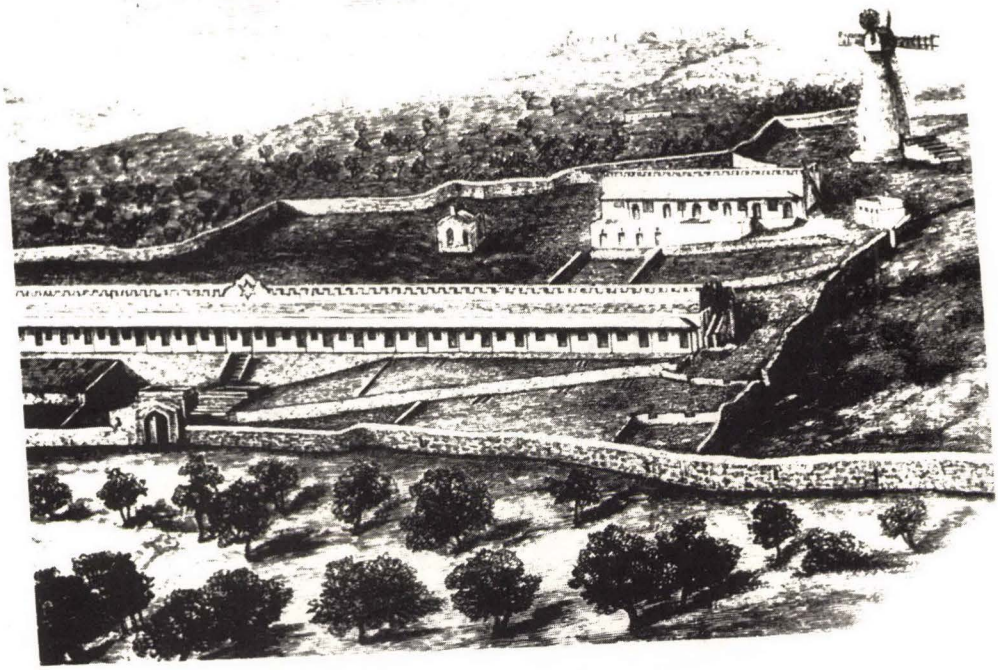


Mohammet Ali, Pasha of Egypt and Ruler of Syria-Palestine, 1831-1839.

(*Jerusalem in the 19th Century* by Yehoshua ben Arieh)



Abdul Majid, Sultan of Ottoman Empire.
(*Jerusalem in the 19th Century* by Yehoshua ben Arieh)



Mishkenot Shaananim, first buildings outside walls of Old City of Jerusalem, built by bequest of Judah Touro of New Orleans; fulfilled by executor Gershom Kursheedt, and Sir Moses Montefiore in Jerusalem in 1855.

(*Sir Moses Montefiore* by Dr. S. U. Nahon)



Judah Touro, first American-Jewish philanthropist, founded New City of Jerusalem, 1855.

(Collection of Redwood Library and Athenaeum, Newport, Rhode Island)



Sir Moses Montefiore, English philanthropist, implemented and supplemented Touro's will in building *Mishkenot Shaananim*, in 1855.
(*Sir Moses Montefiore* by Dr. S. U. Nahon)



Gershom Kursheedt of New Orleans, kinsman of Montefiore, executor of Touro will, travelled from New Orleans to Jerusalem in 1855.
(Collection The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



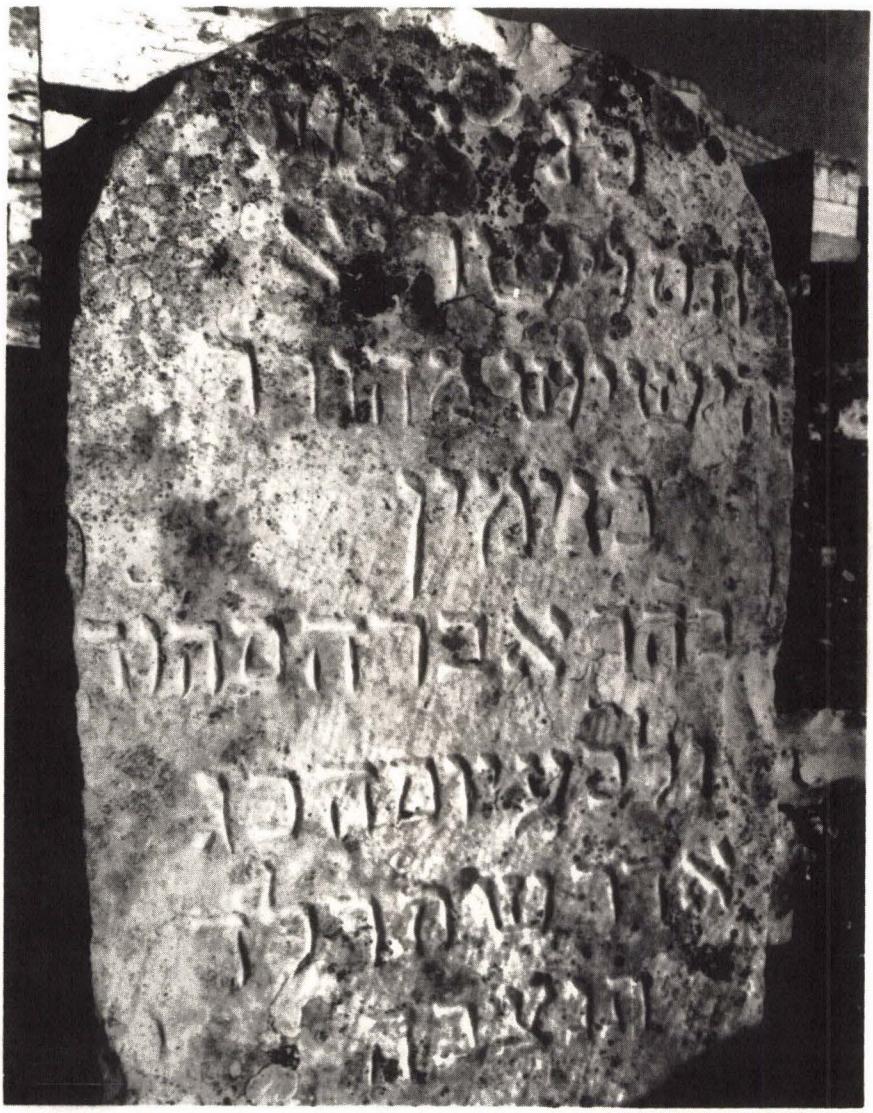
Port of Jaffa, mid-19th century.

(*Sir Moses Montefiore* by James Weston)



USN Captain Uriah Phillips Levy (Captain—highest naval title in 1860) with honorary title—Commodore.

(Courtesy American Jewish Historical Society)



פ״נ איש	בה״ר אברהם הו״ד
תם וישר י״א	נלב״ע יום הכ״ג
הישיש מהור״ר	אדר ש׳ תרל״ד
בנימין	תנצבה

Monument to Benjamin Lilienthal, first American Jew to emigrate and settle in the Land of Israel in 1847; Located on Mount of Olives.
(Photographed by Meir Urback, Jerusalem, collection of the Author)


ספר

מטעי משה

אשר מגזע שתילו יפרד לשני בדים בערונות מטעו

להשקות בגן עדנו מנוזלי לבנון:

Title page, *Matei Moshe*, by Moses Aharonson, first publication of Responsa pertaining to America. Included Responsum by Rice. Enroute to the Holy Land Aharonson died in Chicago in 1875; His volume published by his widow, Jerusalem, 1878.

(Library of the Author)



Palestinian emissary Hayyim Zvi Sneersohn, travelled to India, Australia, and America, where he influenced President Grant in April, 1869, to replace an unsympathetic American Consul in Jerusalem.
(Encyclopedia Judaica)



President Ulysses Simpson Grant, inaugurated March, 1869, empathized with Hayyim Sneersohn.

(Library of the Author)



Proto-Zion flag, Dual Shield of David; Postcard circa 1900.
(Author's Private Collection)

Chapter 33
American Exile and the Messiah

IN 1857, A. Tuska [possibly Benjamin?], son of Reverend Marcus Tuska of Rochester, New York, a clothier in Marysville, a town in the California Mother Lode country, opposed building an Orthodox synagogue "*Minhag Polen*," because he favored Wise's *Minhag America*.

Another son of the Rochester Reverend attended the *Judische-Theologisches Seminar* [Jewish Theological Seminary] at Breslau from 1857 to 1860. Its director, Dr. Zacharias Frankel, espoused the idea of "positive historical Judaism." Simon received a copy of the prayer book *Minhag America*, whose composer, Wise, also preached historical Judaism. Surprised that Wise had deleted prayers for the coming of the Messiah, the restoration of Israel to Zion, and the enthronement of a descendant of the Davidic dynasty, the young student sought the opinion of his elders.

> [He showed] to a mixed company [Orthodox and Reformers] a copy of *Minhag America*, and called their attention to the omission of the prayers for the Messiah, &c.
>
> "Well," said a witty Orthodox of the company, "if I was in America, I should omit those prayers too; but here we are still in גלות [exile], and have reason to pray for the coming of him who is to restore us to the promised land."
>
> "*Ja, America ist das gelobte land* [Indeed, America is the promised land,]" remarked another, "and those who live there need not pray for another."

That insightful sentiment resounded loud and clear at the dedication of *Beth Elohim* in Charleston, South Carolina, where Gustavus Poznanski had proclaimed, " . . . this synagogue is our *Temple*, this city our *Jerusalem*, this happy land our *Palestine*."

Leeser deemed those individuals and congregations who severed their ties to their ancient homeland as having been misguided by

> men among us who regard the present era as something so far superior to any which have preceded it . . . . In this century, they imagine, the Jew need not be any longer the Jew of the fourteenth or eighteenth; but he has now, according to these philosophers, a different mission . . . . that now a change has come . . . We are no longer hated by the world; we are citizens of the state, equals in the eyes of the law, and we suffer no injury because we believe in a

> blessed Unity . . . . Hence every land is our Palestine, every city our Jerusalem, every synagogue our Temple. Hence it would be uncitizen like to pray for the restoration of Israel to Palestine; to look forward with a longing eye to the day when the wilderness shall bloom in beauty and fruitfulness, when Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, and the son of David shall rule over the assembled faithful . . .

At *Emanu-El* of San Francisco, Elkan Cohn preached:

> The present generation do not intend to return to Jerusalem and to bring sacrifices. To us, there is no Messiah; we live happily here, and enjoy all privileges we wish to enjoy; we wish not to bend the knee to a Jewish king . . . .

Julius Eckman of San Francisco told the readers of his *Weekly Gleaner* that classical Judaism was out-of-date:

> The ideas of Revelation, of Prophecy, are now viewed in a different light than formerly. The ideas of a Messiah, Resurrection, Restoration of Israel to Palestine and the Temple Service with animal sacrifices, are totally exploded.

In conversation with a friend, he stated that Judaism "is on the eve of great changes . . . " Asked: "Do you mean the literal restoration of the Jews to Palestine?" he replied with an intense gaze, evasively and slowly:

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

Had Eckman been able to gaze a century into the future, he would have thought twice before hedging "on the literal restoration of the Jews" and speaking "of the chosen people" being "one of the chief factors in reaching that 'final solution.' "

In 1859, in Milwaukee, Isidor Kalisch, minister of *B'ne Jeshurun*, taught his adherents that Israelites need not believe in a Messiah, as neither the Bible nor the *Talmud* expounds anything of this doctrine. In the following year, while Kalisch was away on a "prospecting tour," a potential proselyte moved to Milwaukee from his farm in the interior of the state. During the "rabbi's" absence, the farmer received instruction in Judaism from the *chazzan* of the congregation for the purpose of becoming a convert to Judaism. Upon Kalisch's return, he took over the instruction. The first principle he taught the candidate was that belief

in a personal Messiah is not a Jewish doctrine and that he did not believe in it. The concept of a universal Messianic era had replaced it in Reform circles.

A congregational member reported that Kalisch's response was as unsatisfactory as it was un-Jewish:

> This, of course, rather chilled the zeal of the new convert, and he came back to his boarding-house from the visit to our "worthy Rabbi," saying that he and the Doctor did not agree, that the Doctor was no Jew for him, that he does not want to become such a Jew as the Doctor is. He would not even go to the Synagogue where this Shepherd in Israel preached on Sabbath, although he had attended Divine service regularly every Sabbath during the Doctor's absence.
>
> He now says, he will wait till the Doctor's time as spiritual guide in the Congregation expires, which happy event will take place on the first day of May next [1860]; and then he will take his lessons of some one who believes in one of the fundamental principles of Judaism.

A correspondent wrote to Leeser of his visit to Kalisch's Temple and of the "latest metamorphosis of this gentleman":

> The very same Mr. K. who a short time since asserted publicly, that an Israelite need not believe in a Messiah, as neither the Bible nor the Talmud know any thing of this doctrine,—the very same Mr. K. who a few months ago wrote, that the six hundred and thirteen precepts of the Torah have been reduced by David to eleven and by Micah to three,—the same Mr. K. now finds it proper to proclaim that any one who dares to doubt one iota of the Bible, or who does not keep each and every precept of the Pentateuch, is a sinner.
>
> What is the matter with Mr. K.? Is he a candidate for the Rabbinical chair in a pious congregation? What else can be the solution of this strange conversion?

The writer obviously did not understand Kalisch and his colleagues, Wise and Lilienthal, who called themselves moderate reformers. Unlike the radical reformers, as Einhorn, Felsenthal, and Maurice Mayer, who clearly stated their denial of the divinity of the commandments of the *Torah*, save the decalogue, and rejection of the *Talmud*, the moderate reformers declared their acceptance of its divinity, yet attempted to base their rejection on talmudic sources. Thereby the moderate reformers attracted many Orthodox who were duped into believing that Reform was based on the Bible and Talmudical sources and therefore authentic Judaism.

Kalisch's successor, Ferdinand Sarner, formerly of Rochester, New York, remained briefly for the high holy days and then left for Memphis, where he became distinguished three years later as the first Jewish chaplain in American history. When Samson Falk, a regular minister, finally came to Milwaukee three years after Kalisch departed, he continued the Reform policies of Kalisch, denial of the coming of the Messiah and Resurrection of the Dead.

In Baltimore, the Reformers' rejection of these basic beliefs of Judaism attracted the attention of the Christian community. In 1858, the *Baltimore Sun* reported that the leaders of both Baltimore Reform temples, the moderate *Oheb Shalom* and the radical *Har Sinai*, agreed that:

> Among the most important changes which have thus far characterized the movement, the restitution of Mosaic polity, and the return to Jerusalem, and the re-establishment of sacrificial worship, are no longer objects of hope and prayer.

Leeser countered:

> We believe in divine revelation . . . also in the resurrection, restoration, and many other tenets of our religion. All these things the new sectarians deny . . . .
>
> Why do we hide it, that they have more contempt for us than for the Christians? They assail the latter on account of their belief in their Messiah, who, according to their notions, has come, and they assail us on account of our belief in the Messiah who is yet to come. Why do we hide it, that they have established a false Messiah, namely, the Messiah of reason? the French Messiah of the eighteenth century promised to the Americans by Thomas Paine? . . . .

When Bernhard Felsenthal ministered at Madison, Indiana he advocated removal of certain fundamentals, which he called "unfounded dogmatical notions" from the beliefs of Judaism:

> The dogma of the coming of the personal Messiah Ben David, of the bodily resurrection of the dead, of the return of the Jewish nation to Palestine, of the restitution of the old Mosaic polity by immolating animals, of the atonement of our sins by the pious doings of others, of the angels and the whole celestial aristocracy . . . .

After Bernhard Felsenthal began his ministry in Chicago, he published in 1859 *Kol Kore Bamidbar* [A Voice Calling in the Wilderness], a pamphlet in which he pleaded for adaptation of some ancient ceremo-

nies to modern and western conditions; and that most of the Mosaic laws are obsolete forever. He denied belief in the Messiah, and classified his Orthodox opponents as *Gewohnheitsmenschen* [creatures of habit], superstitious in their practice of Judaism.

Dr. David Einhorn, of *Har Sinai*, Baltimore, and Dr. Samuel Adler, minister of Temple *Emanu-El*, New York, since 1857, bestowed upon Felsenthal, after he became rabbi of *Sinai* Congregation, Chicago, in 1861, the title of *Morenu ha-Rab* ["our teacher, the rabbi," ordination]. Felsenthal reciprocated. He titled Adler, "The Jewish Luther" and Einhorn, "The Jewish Melanchthon" [Philip Melanchthon was Luther's Chief Associate].

But the original "Jewish Luther," Isaac Mayer Wise, excommunicated by Rice for his denial of belief in the coming of the Messiah during the Poznanski-Raphall debate in Charleston, revealed to the world in his newspaper, *The Israelite*, that the Messiah had already come, that George Washington, liberator of American Jewry, was their Messiah:

> The restoration of the Jewish government has already been fulfilled; but admitting it should be expected once more, who told you that it will not be effected by a general emigration of the Jews to the holy land, as was the case in the time of Esrah without having a king Messiah? . . . .
>
> The Orthodox say the Israelite must believe that a personal Messiah, the son of David, will come, redeem Israel, restore it to its land and be its king, but the Reformers believe by the natural progress of science, philosophy, civilization, humanity and truth, Israel and all mankind will be one happy fraternity before God in truth, love and justice . . . .
>
> The *Talmud* states, and Maimonides repeats it, that there is no difference between this time and the reign of the Messiah except the oppression of government. Hence, whenever political oppression is totally removed, as in the United States, the Messiah has come, and so he will come to all nations. Washington was no less a Messiah than Cyrus. What inquisition committee will decide which of the two dogmas is the genuine Orthodox? . . . .

Wise's article in *The Israelite* attracted national attention and much space given in city newspapers throughout the country.

Rabbi Rice promptly refuted Wise's arguments. He stated that according to Maimonides, the time of the coming of the Messiah would be accompanied by the absence of political oppression. The coming of the Messiah, Rice explained, meant much more than political freedom, as indicated by Maimonides in his *Yad haHazakah*:

> The Sages and the Prophets did not yearn for the days of the Messiah so that Israel might exercise dominion over the world, or rule over the heathens or be exalted by the nations, or that it might eat, drink and be merry. Their aspirations was for Israel to be free to devote itself to the Law and its wisdom, with no one to oppress or interfere, and thus be worthy of life in the world to come (*Rambam: Hilkhot Malakhuth*, 12:4).

The *New Orleans Picayune*, among other newspapers, had carried Wise's denial of the coming of the Messiah. Reverend Solomon Jacobs, minister of *Shanarai-Chasset*, the "Teduskai" [German]-rite congregation, published his rejoinder in the Crescent City press:

> My attention has been called to a paragraph going the rounds of the press, which is of so strange a tenor as to require a prompt reply.
>
> The paragraph in question is copied from the *Israelite*, a Jewish periodical published in Cincinnati. It stated that the Jews of America were satisfied with the messiahship of Washington, as were the Jews in the Second Temple with that of Cyrus . . . .
>
> The Israelites of America are decidedly patriotic. The name of Washington is to them a cherished heirloom. They hold it in the profoundest reverence. His deeds inspire them with ambition. His wisdom and courage are a watchword with them. They can never forget that to him they owe their freedom. To his love of toleration they owe their standing in society, elevated, esteemed, and respected.
>
> The native born Israelite proudly treads the land of his birth, and thrice happy he feels when he reflects that the power, the wealth, and the influence of this great Republic owe their origin to the genius of Washington . . . .
>
> Israelites treasure his name, because that name is a pledge for "liberty, equality, fraternity." Besides, they recognize in the administration of the laws of the country, state and federal, an approximation to the rabbinical enactments (vide [see elsewhere] Beecher's political lectures). But while they do all this, and while they would freely bleed and die rather than suffer a reproach to be cast upon the name of Washington, they never have, and never will be satisfied with the *Messiahship* of Washington, as it is termed. He must be wrongly impressed indeed, who thinks we cannot owe allegiance to our religion and our country, at the same time . . . .

In Philadelphia, Leeser rebutted Wise's declaration in his *Occident*:

> It is only such men as Dr. Wise of Cincinnati, who would persuade the Christian world that the Jews of America have abandoned

a belief in the coming of the Messiah; but the majority of Israelites believe, as their fathers did before them, that it is the duty of a true Jew to pray for the coming of the Messiah, as it is also his bounden duty to implore God's blessing on the country in which he dwells.

Leeser responded to the Reformers charge that prayers for Zion conflicted with loyalty to Washington and represented dual allegiance:

> Let our enemies say that we are aliens to the state, as we hope for a national reunion, we have no interest in any other country than Palestine; but tell them, that wherever we are, we are by the dispensation of God; whatever land we live in, we consider our fatherland up to the moment in which it may please the Lord to summon us away . . . .
>
> The Israelite is from duty and inclination obedient to the laws of all lands; and what citizen or subject can be more so? Why then should strangers regard him with suspicion, because as a speculative doctrinal point he entertains views of his own, which can at the same time never come in conflict with his social obligations? . . . Whilst you do your duty as citizens forget not that you must follow faithfully in the path of duty as Jews . . . .

Wise, however, rejected the rejoinders of Rice, Jacobs, and Leeser, and ridiculed the belief in a return of Israelites to Zion:

> We still cry intolerably about persecution, misery, reproach and shame to which we are exposed, although, thank God we live in the land of liberty and enlightenment. We pray in the heart of a republic for a Messiah, King of the Jews, although we would quarrel with anybody who would only speak of a king or prince over us. We still implore God to bring us back to Jerusalem, when none of us would go even to Joppa, if a hundred prophets would come . . . .
>
> Our Orthodox brethren can not induce five hundred persons in this country to pray sincerely for their return to Palestine or for the restoration of a kingdom in Israel, or the restoration of bloody sacrifices . . . .

Overseas, Kaufmann Kohler, the radical Reformer who would later occupy the pulpit of *Bet El* in Detroit, made it inestimably clear that those in the Reform camp "no longer wait for a Jewish kingdom in Palestine, and the rebuilding of the old slaughter-house [Holy Temple] as the center of Divine worship."

Rice countered by enlightening those who were perplexed, who wondered whether the Jews' prayers for a return to their ancient homeland, heralded by the coming of the Messiah, implied a dual loyalty that affected their patriotism.

When we understand the Messianic concept as expressed in the Maimonidian code, we realize that this belief is in no manner related to our loyalties to the States; especially so, since it is not within our power to bring about the Messianic era which will be ushered in only by the will of the Almighty. We are, in fact, bidden to obey the laws of the State wherever we are destined during our dispersion.

Thus did Jeremiah the prophet direct the Jews during their exile in Babylon: "Build ye houses and dwell in them; and plant gardens and eat the fruit of them" (29:28).

Jeremiah clearly taught the Jews that as they settle among other peoples, they must do their share in the building of the country of their exile. At the same time, Jeremiah directed the Jews not to relinquish the belief in the coming of the Messiah: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous shoot, and he shall reign as king and prosper, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his day Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord is our righteousness" (23:5-6).

Hence, the very Prophet who instructed the Jews to become useful citizens of the State wherein they settled also admonished them to keep before them the Messianic ideal of the glorious period for Israel and mankind.

Rice admonished those who felt that Judaism could flourish without the Messianic ideal and that one could be a good Jew even if he did not believe in the coming of the Messiah:

Judaism without the Messianic ideal is utterly meaningless, and even as the name Jew removed from the Jewish religion is an empty title, so is the Jewish religion, removed from the Messianic concept, an empty title.

Judaism, or the Jewish way of life, is achieved only by the observance of its entire Law. While everyone knows that hundreds of laws in our Torah can only be observed in the Holy Land and Holy Temple, and since everyone realized that the laws of the Almighty are eternal and unchangeable even as the Creator Himself, which concept we affirm in the hymn *Yigdal*: "God will never replace, nor ever change His eternal Law for any other law"; we naturally yearn for the time when we will be able to practice the Law in its entirety, including those practicable only in the Holy Land and Holy Temple. This yearning is expressed at the conclusion of *Yigdal*: "Messiah He will send to redeem those who await exile's end."

This theme, fundamental to Rice, he promulgated at the approach of the festival of freedom when the Messianic goal is a central theme:

. . . We also express our deep longing for the Messiah during this holiday of Passover in the beautiful "*Brah Dodi*" *piyyut*, in which Israel is depicted as a beloved awaiting the coming of her lover, the redeemer [Messiah].

Maimonides stated in his code [*Rambam*: Laws of Repentance 3:6], that those who do not believe in the coming of the Messiah will be precluded from their portion in the world to come, for the *Torah* states that God "will return and gather thee from all the peoples": [*Deut*. 30:3].

How then can one reject the belief in the coming of the Messiah and yet consider himself a Jew?

As for those who ridicule the very idea of the coming of the Messiah, it is a common practice for people to scoff at concepts which their minds can not grasp. These scoffers argue that the coming of the Messiah has been disproven by the fact that he has not appeared during our 1,800 years vigil for his coming. But they do not realize that whereas 1,800 years is as an eternity in the sight of humans whose life span is but seventy years, what significance does 1800 years have to the Eternal, who is, was, and will be, beyond the boundaries of time?

We, as faithful Israelites, must accept all the prophecies of the coming of the Messiah and believe in its eventual fufillment. The God of Israel, who delivered us out of the Egyptian and Babylonian exiles, will also deliver us out of this third exile by the coming of the Messiah and the Messianic era!

On Israel's national day of mourning, Rice spoke forcefully of the deep attachment of the Jew to the Holy Land and Holy Temple:

> We have awaited the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah [40:1-2] over the many centuries. Those who do not understand our religion consider it folly to still await its fulfillment. However, we who are convinced of the truth of this prophecy now more than ever before that we are under the special protection of the Almighty . . . . We are so firmly convinced in our belief that the restoration of our nation will come to pass, that it seems to have already taken place. We are so surely convinced in the future of Israel that nothing can undermine our confidence in the realization of God's promise.

Jacob Mayer, a protege of Isaac Mayer Wise, the cantor of Wise's temple, *Bene Yeshurun*, who afterwards served as "rabbi" in Cleveland and Baltimore, vehemently disagreed with his mentor that Washington was the Messiah. Mayer believed that Jesus Christ was the Messiah!

In 1867, Wise recommended Mayer to the ministry of *Tifereth Israel*,

Cleveland. Though it was said that his sermons lacked accuracy and substance, they had a magnetism that drew listeners, mostly Christian, who came from surrounding villages and towns.

In 1870, Mayer hosted on July 11th, the "Second Cleveland Conference" and then joined Wise in revising his *Minhag America* prayer book. This heightened Mayer's prestige to such an extent that his congregation awarded him a ten year contract. But four years later, in 1874, because of talk of his alleged intimacy with a Jewish woman, he suddenly departed with his wife and family for Baltimore, elected to the pulpit of *Har Sinai* congregation, recently relocated in its new building on Lexington Street near Pine.

Jacob Mayer enthralled the worshippers with his pleasant and powerful voice in chanting the prayers and preaching the sermons. "His voice," it was recalled, "was very baritone and very penetrating . . . . He did not read, he prayed the prayers." His oratory had a flashy brilliance which dazzled the audience. When he lectured in German there was not a vacant seat anywhere in the temple, and he also lectured effectively in English, Italian, or French. His mastery of languages was impressive and he tutored Hebrew, Latin, and Greek.

In 1876, after two years in the pulpit of *Har Sinai*, he became adored even more than their former preacher, the renowned Dr. David Einhorn. His esteem was especially due to his having successfully promoted good relations between Christians and Jews. But this remarkable familiarity and exceptional popularity with the Christian ministers and community puzzled many in the Jewish community.

Responding to rumblings in the community that Mayer was an apostate, Drs. Henry Hochheimer and Benjamin Szold reported that they had investigated the rumors and had substantiated that Dr. Jacob Mayer had been baptized in Glasgow, Scotland, and engaged in missionary activities for the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews in Africa.

Mayer furiously denied the charge and on the next Sabbath, when he took the *Torah* out of the ark, he swore by his life and that of his wife that it was not he who had apostasized but his identical twin brother, Jesaias.

Dr. Mayer was vindicated by Mr. P. Stern of Albany, Georgia. Stern, then visiting Baltimore, appeared before the Board of *Har Sinai* and testified to the truth of Mayer's claims. A month afterwards, a letter was read at the Board meeting from a Mrs. Elsie Fuchs of New York City. She commented favorably on the "rabbi's" integrity.

David Kemper, a member of *Har Sinai*, soon confirmed the existence of Jacob's twin brother:

> When I first heard him [Jacob] in our pulpit I recognized him immediately as the brother of my former teacher, Jesias Mayer, who lived in Westphalia. Moreover I remember distinctly meeting this very man when he visited his brother in Westphalia. These two brothers looked exactly alike. You might know I was elated to meet Dr. Mayer in our pulpit.
>
> Other rabbis in our city became jealous of him—upon investigation it was rumored that he had become a convert to Christianity while in London, England, and that he had been engaged by a missionary society to preach the gospel in Africa. Of course, he created a turmoil in our congregation. Two factions were formed—one which believed in the accusation as true and another which believed in Dr. Mayer.

Nonetheless, there were members who wondered if the rabbi occupying *Har Sinai*'s pulpit was indeed Jacob, the Jew, or his twin brother Jesaias, alias Jacob the *meshumad* [apostate]. These disillusioned members, confused and concerned, withdrew from the congregation and held services at the Masonic Temple.

To solve the riddle, the *Har Sinai* Board, in support of their rabbi, sent fifty dollars in gold to his brother, Jesaias in Westphalia, with a letter of credit on a London bank in the amount of two hundred dollars to cover his expenses of travel to go to Glasgow, Scotland. There, officers of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews in Africa, could identify Jesias and send confirmation that he was indeed the Mayer who had converted to Christianity.

Har Sinai received a reply but not from the London Society in Glasgow. It was from Westphalia, from Jesaias Mayer himself, stating that he was unable to make the trip in the fall of that year on account of illness. He added that he did not care to travel even if he was in good health because he did not like the people of Glasgow.

When the contents of this letter was relayed to Drs. Hochheimer and Szold, they mocked Mayer, accusing him of having fabricated the twin brother tale and of himself having converted to Christianity. Thereupon, the Board of Directors of *Har Sinai* advised their "rabbi" to "seek redress in court against those who defamed and injured him in the community."

William Solomon Rayner, merchant and financier, a founder and leader in *Har Sinai*, as Mayer's staunchest friend, then moved into action. In Mayer, Rayner discovered a liberalism that he greatly desired and admired. Determined to do all in his power to prepare him for that suit, Rayner advanced Jacob Mayer one thousand dollars to travel to Europe and bring back evidence of his innocence!

Jacob Mayer, instead traveled to Canada, and had a confederate in England send false letters to Rayner. After a suitable time lapse, he returned to Baltimore, to claim victory, claiming in triumph that the letters had cleared him. Somehow the *Jewish Times* of New York learned that Mayer never sailed to Europe, and invited a lawsuit. The publishers stated bluntly, "Let convert Mayer appear to the courts . . . . We defy him or the congregation [*Har Sinai*] to bring a libel suit or any other suit."

Dr. Szold, the moderate Reformer who had opposed Einhorn, the radical Reformer, in the years that both had ministered in Baltimore, now traveled from Baltimore to New York, to meet with Dr. Einhorn. He pleaded that he use his influence with *Har Sinai*'s officers to settle the matter out of court and thereby avoid a lawsuit developing between his congregation, *Oheb Shalom*, and *Har Sinai* congregation. Einhorn agreed, and he urged William Rayner to request the rabbi's resignation. In a conciliatory tone, Einhorn said to Szold: "Let us not talk about former happenings between us. Let everything be forgiven and forgotten."

Jacob Mayer resigned in 1877 and left for Philadelphia, where he founded a new congregation, the *Freie Gemeinde* [Free Congregation]. Its membership was composed of religious radicals who were not Jews, though a few Jews may have been identified with the organization. Mystery shrouds what happened afterwards to Mayer and his wife and family. Three conflicting accounts, one stating that he died in Philadelphia, another maintains Schenectady, and still another St. Louis, agree that he died in great poverty.

Wise, and his colleagues, observed a discreet silence about Jacob Mayer through all his trials and tribulations and their aftermath.

Neither Mayer, who believed in Jesus as the Messiah, nor Isaac Mayer Wise, who postulated Washington as the Messiah, accepted the Jewish belief in Moshiach ben Dovid, as the long awaited Messiah, to redeem the two tribes and Mashiach ben Yosef to redeem the ten tribes, both yet to come. Pehaps two will be needed, one to take the Jew out of exile and the other to take the exile out of the Jew.

Yet, messianic future-oriented Judaism prevailed even among Reformers who found that America was not Messianic Israel. A pole reflex of Messianism came to Reform in the concept of the Messianic age and that through social justice it could be brought to pass.

Chapter 34
Jews of the Pale and Palestine

THE LONGING of the Jew to return to the land of Israel, long expired in the view of Reform, was countered by the constant coming of the Orthodox to his ancestral homeland. Thus is was stated in America's Jewish press:

> Ever since Palestine became again permitted to the Jews, the aged and infirm resorted thither to end their days . . . . [They were] pious persons, at an advanced age, without sufficient means to procure their few wants, who had periodically hastened to the Holy Land, to lay down their bones near where sleep the mighty heroes of Israel . . . .
>
> [They were] without industry, without agriculture, without commerce; necessarily dependent on charity to procure the commonest necessaries of life . . . . Hence, the small number of our people in Palestine, notwithstanding the constant and unceasing immigration; as they go thither, not to rear a healthful family, but to spend the remnant of their days in contemplation, study, and prayer . . . .

Pious Jews had settled in the "Four Holy Cities" of the Holy Land: Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias, Safed [Zafeth, Tzfas]; lesser numbers in Jaffa [Joppa], Haifa, and elsewhere.

Jews in America maintained their support of Holy Land Jewry from the very establishment of their first communities in the western hemisphere. Thus in the mid-seventeenth century, the Dutch-Portuguese Jewish community of five thousand souls, in Recife, Pernambucco, Brazil, sent contributions via Amsterdam, to their brethren in Palestine.

In North America, in 1650, a quorum of Dutch-Portuguese Jews sailed into Narraganset Bay to settle in Newport [New Port], Rhode Island. That autumn, their leader, Habib ben Am, wrote on behalf of the Jews of Newport, to his brother Abraham Israeli, living in Jerusalem, requesting that he send via Amsterdam, *Shmura Matzah* [Unleavened Bread guarded—from the time of the wheat harvest], to arrive in time for the spring festival of Passover.

Israeli sent the requested [*special matzah*] cakes to Amsterdam, where a relative brought them to America, along with copies of the *Haggadah*. Upon arrival in Newport, just prior to the Passover festival, the shipment of Passover Bread was happily welcomed by the first Jewish community of North America.

Thus were the first bonds established between the Jews in America and Holy Land Jewry.

Since nearly all the Jewish inhabitants of the Holy Land required assistance in normal times, that regular support did not suffice during periods of crises. During periods of warfare in the region or when crops failed, or natural disaster struck, the Jewish community of that afflicted Holy City sent emissaries [*meshulachim*: messengers; also *sheliche derabbanan*—rabbinic messengers generally referred to by the acronym *SHaDaRim*] to the far-flung corners of the globe, to collect alms for their maintenance. These appeals touched the hearts of the Jews all over the world.

American Jews gave money to Palestinian emissaries out of charitable sentiment, emotional attachment to the Land of Israel, or a belief that Jews living and praying in the Holy Land contributed to the spiritual welfare of those who paid for their support. The emissaries on their part, emphasized that they prayed for the donors and mentioned their name and of their beloved deceased at the Wailing Wall—that western portion of the wall that stood on the perimeter of the Holy Temple Mount.

First of the Palestinian emissaries to visit North American Jewish communities was Moses Malki, a *Sephardi* rabbi of Safed. He arrived in 1759, during the Colonial period, when the British flag waved over its colonies, and stayed two months in Newport and four months in New York. At this time, Newport had the largest Jewish community in North America, one thousand persons.

The funds Malki raised would be distributed to the *Ashkenazic* minority as to the *Sephardic* majority, since the Palestinian-Jewish community was small and they prayed together as in America at this time.

Upon Malki's return to Safed, he was shocked to see the city in ruins. He learned that on October 30, 1759, while he was yet in America, an earthquake shook Safed and killed 160 persons. In light of the magnitude of the catastrophe, Malki's collections proved insufficient, and Hayyim Mudahy, a Jewish ecclesiastical judge of Safed, set forth for America to seek help for the victims of the quake. In 1761, he arrived in the port of New York from Constantinople [though its name had been changed to Istanbul in 1453, when it became capital of the Ottoman Empire, the name change formally took place in 1930].

Rabbi Moses bar David, a Polish Cabbalist from Palestine, travelled to India, Syria, Egypt, and arrived in Newport in 1772. Ezra Stiles, a student of Hebrew and soon to be President of Yale College, discussed with Rabbi Moses the topic of the Messiah. Moses adduced textual proof for the coming of two Messiahs, Ben Joseph to lead the ten tribes and Ben David, the two, noted in talmudic and apocalyptic literature.

One afternoon, during his five weeks stay in Newport, a foursome gathered in Reverend Stiles' home: Stiles, Rabbi Moses, *Chazzan* Isaac Touro, and a man with odd notions, a Mr. Pipels. On a previous occasion Pipels professed to Stiles to be a visionary. On this occasion, he contended that angels had appeared to him to tell him that he had died and returned to life; also that he would live to the age of 218, during which time he would see a Return of the Jews.

Rabbi Moses smiled and asked for a description of the angel that brought him this report. As Pipels gave a detailed description, the rabbi announced that it was he, Moses, who appeared to him in the vision but he had told him nothing of the sort. Pipels became flustered and abruptly took his leave, and returned to his home in Philadelphia.

A year later, in 1773, the Hebronite, *Chacham* Haijim Isaac Carigal arrived in Newport; his second trip to the Western Hemisphere. His sermon delivered at *Shavuos* worship, on May 28, 1773, was published two months later, the first rabbinic homily printed in America. After half-a-year, Carigal sailed for the West Indies.

The Palestinian rabbi, Haijim Isaac Carigal, during his sojourn in Newport, Rhode Island, informed Reverend Ezra Stiles, that there were about 1,000 Jews "in all Judea or Holy Land A.D. 1773," the same number as in Newport at that time. As in Newport these were in the main *Sephardim*, many having arrived since the exile from the Iberian Peninsula.

Two months after Carigal's departure, the Polish rabbi, Tobiah bar Jehudah came to Newport. Stiles spent much time in discussing with this wandering preacher, Jewish mysticism, the Messiah, and even alchemy.

Rabbi Tobiah departed Newport early in 1774. In the summer of that year, *Chacham* Aaron Bosquila of Smyrna, Turkey [present Izmir: about a hundred miles south of Constantinople] came to Newport and after six weeks in the Colonies departed from New York to Curacao. *Shearith Israel* of New York that year had provided passage for a Rabbi Ezekiel to St. Eustatius [Statia] in the British West Indies that year.

In 1775, Hebron Jewry languished under the heavy hand of the Turkish rulers as the Ottoman authorities arbitrarily imposed on them a crushing mulet [fine]. *Yeshivah Keneset Israel*, pride and glory of Hebron Jewry, was in danger of closing. Their rabbi, Samuel Cohen, thereupon undertook to travel to Amsterdam, London, and Newport on its behalf.

British warships in Newport harbor had their guns ominously trained on the town that summer; rebellion was in the air. Rabbi Cohen left Newport on the eve of the American Revolution, to visit Philadelphia and New York. The Jewish communities of these cities responded generously to his appeal. While in Philadelphia, he endorsed the *shochet* of that

city, Israel de Lieben [Delieben], to serve in that capacity, and so attested in a document he sent from New York to that synagogue's officials.

On April 19, 1775 Minutemen fought Redcoats in Massachusettes. "The shot heard round the world" was heard loud and clear in New York by Rabbi Samuel Cohen, who hastily set sail for his return to Palestine. Almost half-a-century elapsed before another Palestinian emissary set foot on American soil.

War between the Ottoman Empire and its rebellious satellites began in 1821 when Greece declared its independence. The Turkish *Sultan* [Arabic: Ruler] called upon the *pasha* [Turkish: Ruler] of Egypt for aid in quelling the Greek rebellion. *Pasha* Mehamet [Mohammet, Mohammed, Muhammed] Ali, helped put down the revolt, but Russian troops invaded Turkey, and Greece gained its independence.

In 1822, during the Turko-Greek war, Greeks captured the wife and six children of Rabbi Aaron Judah Corcos of Jerusalem while they were traveling from Constantinople to Smyrna. Held for ransom, the rabbi went on his personal mission to raise funds in order to redeem his family, reaching America in 1823.

In New York, Mordecai Manuel Noah, who in his service as American Consul to Tunis a decade earlier, had to deal with buccaneers of the Mediterranean on matters of ransom, espoused the rabbi's cause. He spoke at *Shearith Israel* during the intermediate days of the festival of Tabernacles, 1823, and raised one hundred and seventy five dollars. Rabbi Corcos sailed on to Charleston and then to Curacao, Dutch West Indies; his passage paid in advance by the Portuguese congregation of New York.

In the previous year, 1822, the Turko-Greek War had caused much hardship to the Jewish community of Tiberias. The Turkish governor levied a confiscatory tax of 8,750 guineas upon the Jewish community of Tiberias "for expenses of the war." To meet this requisition, the Tiberians had taken a loan, turning over the synagogues and other communal buildings as security; nonetheless many were held for ransom until the sum would be paid. In desperation, they sent their rabbi, Samuel Isaacki [Isaackie, Isaakie, Ishaki] to America, to obtain funds to pay for the war tax and ransom, to gain release of their imprisoned brethren.

Rabbi Isaacki arrived in America, accompanied by a personal attendant, in 1824. That year, New York surpassed Charleston as the largest Jewish community in the United States. The Minutes of *Shearith Israel*, New York, dated March 18, recorded: "The President stated that a Rabbi Isaackie [an] Ashkenazi, a Missionary from Tiberia[s] in the Holy Land had arrived here from London . . . that the purport of their visit was to procure aid for our distressed Brethern [sic!] in the Holy Land. . . ."

Isaacki emphasized to the officials of *Shearith Israel*, the obligation to reserve for Palestine relief "*Shekel* Money." He referred to the "*Machazit ha-Shekel*" [Half-Shekel]: a silver coin paid in Temple days by an annual levy for the maintenance of the Sanctuary in the Holy Temple; that tax is symbolically commemorated in synagogues by the offering of a silver coin on the eve of the *Purim* holiday. Also, that the "*Ma'ot Purim*," [monies donated on Purim], be set aside by the congregation for Holy Land relief. Isaacki's recommendation was favorably received.

The trustees of *Shearith Israel* were about to send their Purim Collection, which amounted to $150.00 directly to the Chief Rabbi of London when Rabbi Isaackie protested. He explained that *shekel* funds as *Shalach Manot* [Sending Gifts] on that holiday, must be transmitted by a personal messenger and could not be sent through the mails. He threatened that "unless the money is paid to himself, he shall return to London, considering himself no longer in the capacity of *Shaleach* [Emissary]."

The impasse was resolved when it was agreed that the congregational subscription be sent directly to London and individual subscriptions be given to Isaacki for his carrying the collection on to Tiberias. Having obtained from individuals, "the sum of $179.75/100," Rabbi Isaacki was appeased.

Annually, since 1824, as at the meeting held March 21, 1830, attended by Moreland Micholl, treasurer, I. B. Kursheedt, and three others: "it was unanimously resolved to forward to Rabbi Hirschell *Ma'ot Purim* and the *Machazit ha-Shekel*."

Of utmost concern to Jewish communities in the Holy Land was the distribution of the collections received from London, Amsterdam and other cities. In Palestine, as in America, *Sephardi* and *Ashkenazi* Jews were separated into two communities by virture of their traditions and order of prayers. To eliminate friction between them, leaders of Holy Land Jewry established *Pekidim v'Amarkulim* [Officers and Treasurers], charged with distributing the collections fairly and equitably between the various congregations.

This was the beginning of the *chalukkah* [distribution] system, whereby funds collected from all over the world would, by the hands of the *Pekidim v'Amarkulim* in Jerusalem, be first apportioned to pious scholars and students and then to the ordinary Jewish peasant living in the Holy Land.

Of utmost concern to Jewish communities in the diaspora were visitations by fraudulent emissaries who remain nameless. Their deceptive usurpation of funds was described as "that complete system of robbery and deception . . . by persons pretending to have authority to collect for the Palestine fund, who afterwards were proved to be rank imposters."

Even more so, American Jews keenly felt the loss to properly credentialed and honest emissaries of as much as a third of the donations, needed to cover costs of their passage, room and food, as well as commissions.

The arrival of Palestinian Rabbis in Amsterdam, London, and New York in the early 1820's, sparked the establishment of societies in those cities to collect funds for Palestine and transmit collections directly to Rabbis Hirschell or Lehren for the Holy Land relief.

To eliminate the practice of sending emissaries, Rabbi Zevi Hirsch Lehren, director of an Amsterdam banking house, founded *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh* [Society for Offerings of the Sanctuary]. He then traveled throughout Central Europe to raise funds for the society he founded.

Thus, Rabbi Lehren wrote from Amsterdam on 20 *Sivan* 5583 [June 2, 1823] "To The President &, &- of the Congregation, Baltimore":

> I crave your reference to the circular of the Chief Rabbi of England . . . respecting our poor Brethren in *the land of Israel*, and here I beg your attention to the object of my *Mission* from the *Holy Land*, it is a Custom of dire necessity to send from *the land of Israel* Missionaries to every part of the world where our Brethren the Seed of our Fathers, Abraham, Isaac & Jacob, are in Congregation to receive the Collections which they contribute yearly for our Pious Brethren in the Holy Land, for men whose lives are devoted to the service of the God of our forefathers, for men whose very lives are held on a Precarious tenor, through the [predjud]ice of a Pasha, when he is inclined to extort money.
>
> Your Brethren in Europe have ever been Zealous for the welfare and quiet of their brethren in Jerusalem, who tho[ugh] under the Tribulations of Tyrannical Despots, the Strangers in their own Country, still consider the Title Deeds in our possession.
>
> Let it not be said that our Atlantic Brethren have not the same Blood of commiseration flow in their veins! God forbid, that Israel dispersed in distant Climes, should thereby be distanced from that which is inherent in Israel (charity) . . .
>
> Let me therefore Beseech you my dear Brethren, to make your collections in the same manner as done in Europe, in having a *Land of Israel* Box in your synagogues . . . allso [sic] every Private family put by a Triffle [sic] every week or month in their Houses, such contributions are Remitted (through a new appointed *land of Israel* Treasurer in America) to the Chief Rabbi in London, or to the General Treasurer H. Lehren, Esq, Amsterdam. . . .
>
> We the undersigned the Overseers, Distributors, and Treasurer for the Holy Land, do hereby Certify the . . . Mission of R[abbi] Benjamin [Haim] Ashkenazi as by our Seal this 20th day of *Sivan* S.M. 5583—
>
> H. Lehren
> Ab S. Prins
> S. B. Rubens

In England, Chief Rabbi Solomon Hirschell, established that year the London *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh*, and sent a circular, requesting congregations in America and England to collect annually for Palestine and send their collections to the London Society.

On June 13, 1824, Chief Rabbi Solomon Hirschell sent a printed circular to the congregations in England, requesting them to assist "German congregations who have attached themselves to the soil of our forefathers. . . ." Rabbi Hirschell explained that in view of the tremendous expense attending the travels of messengers, he had been induced to establish in London, along with Lehren of Amsterdam, the society, *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh*.

American Jewry committed itself to send funds for Palestine, which it collected annually from synagogue appeals, charity boxes in synagogue vestibules, and collections at funerals, directly to London, to the *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh*.

Thus when Palestinian emissary Rabbi Haim Ashkenazi arrived in 1826 in New York as a representive of Safed, he was informed that all collections were being sent directly overseas; *Shearith Israel* only paid fifteen dollars, towards his passage.

In 1831, conditions improved for the Jews of Palestine. That year, Egypt's *pasha*, Mehemet Ali, demanded of Turkey her province of Syria, of which Palestine was an extension, as her prize for aiding Turkey in her war against Greece. Turkey went to war with her rebellious province, and taxed the Jews far beyond their means. It was observed that "The extortions and oppressions were so numerous that is was said of the Jews that they had to pay for the very air they breathed."

The *pasha* had captured Jerusalem in the winter of 1831, and defeated Turkey in the following year to take control of Syria-Palestine. Liberally, Egypt granted the Jews of Palestine equality with the Muslims. The Jews breathed easier as a new era dawned for the Jewish communities of Palestine. But that year drought brought in its wake, hunger and starvation.

In 1832, Mendes I. Cohen of Baltimore's Jewish aristocracy, visited Palestine, describing the critical conditions that prevailed.

This emergency brought Rabbi Enoch Zundel to Europe and America. He arrived in New York, in July, 1832, to collect funds for the poor of Jerusalem who suffered from the high prices for food during a "dreadful famine in the Holy Land." That collection was sent directly to London. As with Rabbi Ashkenazi, *Shearith Israel* only provided towards Rabbi Zundel's expenses.

Zundel delayed departure due to an epidemic that raged in the port city. The Palestinian awaited return of many prominent and wealthy individuals who had scattered to Newport and other places because of the health hazard in New York. As a consequence of his prolonged stay, *Shearith Israel* incurred heavy expenses for his board. The cost for Zundel's stay continued to mount that fall.

Following a meeting of the trustees of *Shearith Israel* on November 11, 1832, they sent communications to the rabbis of *Sephardic* congregations in London, Paris, Amsterdam, and Bordeau, warning that

> ". . . a Voyage across the Atlantic [by messengers from the Holy Land] would be attended with considerable expence and lots of time and inevitably result in disappointment, and that the pittance they might perhaps gather would merely be sufficient for their personal support."

The Chief Rabbis suggested in their replies that the three New York congregations, the Portuguese *Shearith Israel*, English *B'nai Jeshurun*, German *Anshe Chesed*, jointly establish a sister society of the London and Amsterdam *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh*. All funds collected in New York's synagogues were then to be sent to the New York *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh*. And this Society forward the funds for Palestine relief either to the London or Amsterdam Society for direct transmission to Palestine, thereby obviating the expenses entailed by visiting emissaries.

The officers of three congregations welcomed the idea. They founded the New York Society *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh* for obviating the necessity of sending recognized and distinguished emissaries; even more for "the purpose of counteracting the imposition that has been often practised on the congregations by false *Messengers* from the Holy Land coming to this country with forged documents, and thus obtaining money under false pretences, and appropriating the same for their own use instead of remitting the money collected to the poor of the Holy Land. . . ."

At a meeting held February 28, 1833, the New York *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh* resolved that Charity Boxes for the Holy Land be installed in each Synagogue vestibule.

Whether the presence of Rabbi Zundel had a role in the founding of the New York *Hebrah* is not known. There is a record that during his prolonged stay of three-quarters-of-a-year in New York, which would last until the spring of 1833, he was called upon to serve in a rabbinical capacity. Among his services to the community, he taught and licensed the assistant *Chazzan* of *Shearith Israel*, Gustavus Poznanski, as ritual

slaughterer. He approved a Hebrew Dictionary prepared by a non-Jewish scholar, William L. Roy of Brooklyn. Zundel gained the respect of all the community, and he raised funds from non-Jews as well. Many regarded the return of Jews to Palestine as a stage in the acceptance of Christianity by the Jews.

Rabbi Zundel's presentation to *Shearith Israel* of "2 pounds of Palestinian earth" to be sprinkled on the dead prior to burial as a symbolic identification with the sanctified dust of the Holy Land, had a profound impact upon Jewish New Yorker W. N. Polack, an agriculturist. Polack identified the earth of the Promised Land not with death but with its life giving properties and plants. Zundel's act instilled within him a desire to settle and seed the soil of the Holy Land.

Polack set sail for Jerusalem in 1833, possibly accompanying Rabbi Zundel. Upon arrival in Jaffa harbor, the flag of Egypt flew over the port and so too, over the gates of Jerusalem.

It is not known if Polack had attempted farming, but it is recorded that after four years, he returned to the United States to join the pioneers of *Sholem*, a Jewish agricultural colony in upper New York.

Polack's interest in farming, may have had long lasting effects. Rabbi Moses Sachs of Jerusalem soon founded an agricultural society, the first Jews' return to farming the soil of the Holy Land since ancient times. Sachs, the first recorded German Jew to settle in Palestine in the nineteenth century, had come there in 1830, after having studied with his colleague, Rabbi Rice, in the *Yeshivah* of Fürth, Bavaria.

Sachs was joined by Rabbi Eliezer Bergmann, another colleague of Rice, they having studied together at the *Yeshivah* of Würzburg, Bergmann emigrated from Bavaria to the Holy Land in 1835, and Rice succeeded him as *Rosh ha-Yeshivah* at the *Beth ha-Midrash* of Zell.

In 1834, Palestinian emissary, Moses Suze, was a guest at Bergmann's home in Zell, while traveling through Europe on a mission to raise funds to ransom imprisoned rabbis of Tiberias who could not pay the war tax imposed upon them by the Ottoman ruler. Suze's visit had a profound impact on Rabbi Bergmann, inspiring him to emigrate to Palestine.

Upon Bergmann's arrival in Jerusalem, he wrote to his father-in-law, Rabbi Ezekiel [Zekel] Rosenbaum in Zell, that Jews were now being allowed to buy houses in Jerusalem. Also that several Polish Jews purchased homes in a corner of the walled city, not far from one of the city gates where prices were very low. Aside from these exceptions, Jews generally could not afford to buy even the cheapest house.

Most Holy Land Jews continued to live off of the support sent by *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh* societies in New York, Amsterdam, and Lon-

don, to the *Pekidim v'Amarkulim* in Jerusalem. These officials divided the collections between the various congregations in the Holy Cities, who in turn apportioned the sums to their needy members.

In 1836, Rabbi Hirschell wrote to H. M. Hertz of Charleston, South Carolina, to thank him on behalf of the London *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh* for his remittance of twenty pounds in aid of the Jews of the Holy Land. Four years earlier *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh* had been founded in New York, and the Chief Rabbi suggested its formation in Charleston. In his letter, the Chief Rabbi noted that "we sometimes remit our donations through him but we have always the receipt of Jerusalem direct. . . . I shall be most happy to see a Committee formed in your city, similar to the one established in New York, in connection with our Society here."

Also that year, Rabbi Hirschell wrote to George A. Fürst, Secretary of *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh*, New York, stating: "I sincerely hope that the good feeling now prevailing among the Jewish Congregations in America may continue & that their endeavours to promote the happiness of the distressed Israelites in Jerusalem may be crowned with Success."

A most significant event in Jewish life took place in 1836, with the *firman* [royal decree] issued by Egypt's Ibrahim Pasha, stepson of Mehamet Ali, to Abraham Shlomo Zalman Zoref, one of the prominent *Ashkenazim Perushim*, allowing the Jewish community in Jerusalem to repair its ancient synagogues: Cabbalist *Sephardi* synagogue, *Beth El*; the *Sephardi* complex—*Yohanan Ben Zakkai* and its three wings—*Prophet Elijah, The Middle Synagogue, Kehal Istanbul*; the *Ashkenazic* complex—*Churvat Rabbi Yehudah he-Chasid* [no longer *Chasidic*] and its two wings—*Menachem Zion, Sha'arei Zion*.

Perushim, [those who break away], were known in their native Lithuania and Poland by the title *Misnagdim* [opponents]—both appellations emphasizing separation from and opposition to their sworn enemies of the *Chasidim* [pious ones] who emphasized joy in worship over solemnity in study.

In Palestine as in Europe, *Ashkenazim* were divided into two groups: *Perushim* [*Misnagdim*] and *Chasidim*. They formed two distinct communities. Since most of the support of the *Perushim* came from Vilna, their community in Palestine was called *Kolel Vilna* [Community of Vilna]. These were devotees of the famed Rabbi Elijah, the "Gaon of Vilna" [Vilnius], Lithuania in Poland. The Gaon's followers hailed not only from Lithuania, but also from Grodno, Pinsk, Minsk, and other cities in Russia, and they constituted the largest *Ashkenazic* community in Palestine numbering 702 souls. *Kolel Chasidim* was comprised in the main of those who

emigrated from Galicia, Austria; also from Russia and Russian-Poland, from Karlin, Krakow, Volhyn, and Zhitomir.

The *firman* further permitted Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe to Palestine. Hundreds of Russian Jews streamed to the Holy City. That year, 1836, which marked the beginning of the mass migration of hundreds of German Jews, mostly from Bavaria, for America; a small number emigrated to Palestine. Year after year, immigration to America and Palestine increased markedly.

The Russian and German *Ashkenazim Perushim* needed funds to rebuild the *Rabbi Judah He-Hasid* synagogue, originally founded in 1700 by Rabbi Yehudah He-Chasid but burned in 1720 by creditors. That catastrophe gave rise to the synagogues adjectival title *Churva* [The Ruin]. Almost a century passed when an epidemic in the Galilee in 1812, brought a score of *Ashkenazim* to Jerusalem. In 1820, they regained possession of the *Churbah* site, and in the 1830's with the influx of Russian and German Jews, the *Ashkenazim* sought funds to rebuild the devastated edifice. In 1836, Rabbi Zadock ha-Levi Kraus left Jerusalem to raise funds for this sacred cause.

The Governors of the *Sephardic* Congregation in Amsterdam sent a Circular to synagogue officials in America. One of these, addressed to the "Reverend Parnassim [Presidente and Residente] and Elders of the Israelite-Portuguese Congregation in Philadelphia [*Mickve Israel*], on 19 Av, 5597 [August 20, 1837], read in part:

> It is now the intention of the German Congregation of *Perushim* in Jerusalem to build a new Synagogue—in spite of existing conventions—they have, as we are informed dispatched such a messenger, called [R. Zadok ha-Levi Kraus] to collect gifts for this purpose. The Congregation possessing already a Synagogue, the construction of a new one is of no urgency at all, and the movement of an enterprise of this kind is undoubtedly ill choiced. . . .

Rabbi Zadok ha-Levi Kraus traveled to Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers, in 1837, and possibly because of the opposition of the Jewish leaders of Amsterdam, returned from North Africa to Tiberias. At this time, European Jewish leaders were primarily concerned with aid for the pitiful survivors of the great earthquake that struck on January 1, 1837, killing 4000 Jews in Safed and 1000 in Tiberias, cities that lay in the cleft of the Great Rift—a vast geological furrow stretching from Turkey to the coast of East Africa, and in Palestine, along the Jordan River through the deep depression of the Salt Sea [*Yam ha-Melach:* called by Christians, the Dead Sea].

The mission of Rabbi Zadok Kraus proved successful. The survivors

of the quake made their way to Jerusalem, and the restorers of the *Churva* synagogue, both were recipients of the funds.

Events soon took place that sent shock waves through Jewish communities the world over.

The rumblings began in 1839, when the Turkish Sultan, Abdul Majid [Mejid: Mahmud II], with the aid of Britain and other powers forced Ibrahim Pasha and his troops to leave Syria and Palestine. Pasha Mehemet Ali's nine year occupation of Syria-Palestine ended, and Turkish rule resumed. The Muslims hungered to seize the wealth of the Christian monasteries, and thirsted for revenge on the Jews because they had enjoyed equality under Egyptian rule. Britain, however, averted bloodshed by demanding of the Ottoman Empire in return for its role in the war, protection for Christians and Jews.

No sooner had the Sultan approved protection for non-Muslims, when during the transfer of power, a blood libel blared from the Syrian capital, Damascus.

It happened February 4, 1840. Father Thomaso, the Superior of a Franciscan convent in Damascus, who practiced medicine in Damascus for many years, disappeared together with his servant under mysterious circumstances, leaving no trace. The French Consul, Ratti Menton, notorious for his hostility to Jews, encouraged by some of the monks, began an investigation in the Jewish quarter, on the theory that it was a "ritual murder." Thereupon, Moslem authorities imprisoned seven persons meeting at the Harari home and David Harari, one of the most prominent Jews of Damascus, was charged with murdering the priest in order to drain his blood for the Passover ritual.

Two witnesses, one Christian, one Moslem, came forward to vindicate the Jews. They told that they had been with David Harari that entire day, remaining with him until evening to console him on the death of his child. They left before dusk, when seven Jews, as part of a quorem, had come to participate in a prayer service, as required during seven days of intense mourning.

A Jewish youth, a tobacconist in the Moslem quarter by the city gate, came to testify. He told that he remembered seeing the Capuchin priest and his servant passing by the door of his shop at six o'clock, a full hour and a half after the Christian and Moslem guests had left David Harari's house.

But instead of calling Harari's witnesses, the Moslem interrogators tortured the seven Jews who had come to the home of Harari. One of them, Negrin, a barber, "confessed" in the horror chamber and accused a few leaders in the Jewish community. Two others of the seven, abjured their faith under the nightmare of unbearable tortures, and embraced

Islam. The interrogators tortured to death David Harari, as the murderer of the priest and the Jewish youth who came from his shop to testify, as his accomplice.

Jewish communities throughout the world were deeply stirred. Protest demonstrations were held in London, Paris, and New York. Sir Moses Montefiore, having just returned from the Holy Land, having visited there the four Holy Cities over a period of ten months, from November 1838 to September 1839, set out again from London, for the Ottoman capital and Jerusalem. Sir Moses was accompanied by Adolphe Cremieux later to become the French Minister of Justice. That leader of French Jewry joined because the French Consul in Damascus openly supported the accusations against the Jews.

Sir Moses Montefiore, the leading Jew of the nineteenth century, had been elected a fellow of the Royal society, served as Sheriff of London and Middlesex, and High Sheriff of Kent, and had been knighted by Queen Victoria. He pioneered the Imperial Gas Association, which introduced gas lighting in English homes and on the continent; founded the Alliance Insurance Company, directed the Alliance Marine Insurance Company, the Provincial Bank of Ireland, the Imperial Brazilian Mining Company, the Chilean and Peruvian Mining Company, the Irish Manufactory Company, and the British Colonial Silk Company.

At Alexandria, they met with Mehemet Ali who assured them that he had no part in the blood libel and succeeded in securing from the Pasha, the exoneration and release of the remaining prisoners, promptly arranged for the release of the Jews yet imprisoned. Apparently, the Pasha still had considerable influence in Syria.

The Montefiore delegation proceeded to Constantinople. Sir Moses met with the Sultan, Abdul Megid, who denounced the ritual murder accusation. The Sultan issued a *firman* declaring just treatment to be accorded all Jews in the Ottoman Empire. Sir Moses sent copies of the Sultan's *firman* to *Chacham* Bashi, Chief Rabbi of the Jews of Turkey.

1840, the year 5600 on the Hebrew calendar, year of the Damascus blood libel, proved to be most momentous for world Jewry. In that year, United States acquired its first Rabbi, Abraham Rice, during the mass exodus of Jews from Bavaria to America. That year, increasing numbers of German Jews began migrating to Palestine. That year, when Turkey guaranteed equal rights to Jews in the Ottoman Empire, the German Jews of Jerusalem sent Circulars to European synagogues and to *B'nai Jesburun*, New York, asking for aid in rebuilding places of worship and other ancient buildings in ruin in the Holy City.

B'nai Jesburun did not respond. It seems that the congregation had been distracted from the Jerusalem synagogue appeal by the Damascus

protest, as well as the appearance of a Palestinian rabbi. Yehiel Besel had come to New York from Jerusalem at that time, not to raise funds for the Jerusalem synagogues but for his personal needs.

Rabbi Besel, an *Ashkenazi*, came garbed in Oriental attire, as adopted by many *Ashkenazim* in Jerusalem. In seeking donations from individuals, Besel had a New York artist draw a portrait of himself holding a Hebrew Book. He made lithographs of this portrait and gave them as gifts to donors.

Shearith Israel, in keeping with its policy of discouraging Palestinian rabbis from coming to America, authorized twenty dollars for Rabbi Besel's passage to London and he received little or no encouragement. This did not discourage another rabbi of that given name from undertaking the journey to America.

In 1846, Rabbi Yehiel [Yeckiel, Jechiel Ha-] Cohen of Jerusalem arrived in New York. Desperately, he solicited funds for the Jews of Hebron. They were suffering the horrors of famine brought on by a drought of that year, aggravated by the havoc wrought by battling Moslem sheiks. *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh* not only refused to present to him funds of their treasury, but they even opposed his personal solicitation of individuals. Nonetheless, his personal requests were honored and many persons contributed liberally.

Upon the return of Rabbi Cohen to Jerusalem, his rabbinic peers, in recognition of his sacrifices for the starving community of Hebron, celebrated his homecoming. The first American Consul to Jerusalem, Warder Cresson, joined the rabbis in welcoming Cohen under whom he studied, hoping to be admitted as a full-fledged Jew.

Warder Cresson, an economist, who belonged to a well-known and wealthy family, had left his comfortable home and farms on the outskirts of Philadelphia, to travel to Palestine as the first American Consul to Jerusalem, under commission of May 17, 1844.

On November 5, 1847, Cresson wrote to Isaac Leeser of Rabbi Yehiel Cohen's homecoming welcome the previous week. He told that he attended the celebration, and dined with the rabbi. Also that Cohen revealed to the rabbis present, that had it not been for Cresson's certificate, he would not have obtained one cent from Americn Jews, as they would only send their contributions to London. Cohen gave them an accounting, which left the sum of $1350, after expenses.

From America, congregational collections continued to be sent from the New York *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh*, under the presidency of Israel Baer Kursheedt, to Sir Moses Montefiore of London. In his religious beliefs, as a staunch adherent to Orthodox Judaism, he had served as first president of the London Board of Deputies of British Jews and he

had been elected president of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of London six times. On his estate in Ramsgate, he had built a small but singularly beautiful family synagogue.

Sir Moses Montefiore's most ardent desire was to see a synagogue built in the Holy City, especially so, since many *Ashkenazi* Jews, fleeing pogroms in Posen, Austria, Hungary, and Germany, fled to Palestine when the 1848 Revolutions failed to achieve freedom in those lands.

Leeser felt that 1848 was a most momentous year and wrote:

> Events are now transpiring in Europe, which for their astonishing suddenness and generality are unparalleled in history. The fabrics of statesmen, monarchs, and philosophers are brushed aside as the broom of a housewife sweeps away the cobwebs which formed overnight . . . Nationalities, too, long numbered among "the things that have been" are awakened from the slumber of ages; and Germany, and Poland, and Hungary, and Italy, and Ireland speak of resuming their ancient rank as especial peoples, independent and united to govern themselves with laws proceeding from themselves and enacted for their benefit and individual prosperity. . . .

European nationalism suggested to Leeser Jewish nationalism, a form of pre-Herzlian Zionism:

> And if ancient Germany again becomes a nation, if Poland throws off successfully the chains of mighty oppressors—if fair Italy takes a rank as one people . . . why should not the patriotic Hebrew also look forward to the time . . . when he may again proudly boast of his own country. . . .

The advent of Jewish nationhood, when Messiah, a descendant of David, will reign as King of Israel, presupposes a return to the soil. Thus Leeser argued:

> Many nations have born sway over it [Palestine], but it has not responded with its healthful products to their devices; just as the instrument of some great musician refuses its melodiousness to any other hand save its master's, who knows its full power and how to elicit all its sweetness.

Determined to make the young and healthy Palestinian and immigrant Jews independent of charity from abroad, Sir Moses Montefiore set forth from London for Constantinople, for an audience with Abdul Majid, the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. The Sultan warmly welcomed Sir Moses and issued a *firman*, granting him the right to purchase land in the vicinity of Jaffa and Jerusalem, and, of even greater import, official authority for Jewry to build anew, upon its ruins, the Cabbalist *Sephardic*

synagogue, *Beth El* [House of God], founded in Jerusalem in 1757, by one of the first Yemenites to return to the Holy Land, Rabbi Shalom Shar'abi.

With *firman* in hand, Sir Moses arrived in Jaffa; his third trip to the Land of Israel. News of permission to rebuild the synagogue spread like wildfire. An elated Warder Cresson informed Leeser that Rabbi Yehiel Cohen, recently returned from America, had agreed to the request of leading rabbis of Jerusalem that he return immediately to America, to again raise funds, this time for what they considered to be "a miraculous occurrence"—that after two thousand years of exile, a ruling government had granted permission to Jews to build anew a synagogue in the Holy City.

A Reverend Nicolayson, a resident British missionary, reported to the London headquarters of the Society for Ameliorating the Condition of the Jews, that the Jerusalem rabbis had a "new scheme" to send a deputation to America to solicit from large numbers of German Jews settled there for "the new German congregation at Jerusalem" and expressed alarm that the Jews had "a plan of establishing proper schools, hospitals, manufactories and trades."

The American press carried news of the new Jerusalem synagogue. Thus the New York *Times* noted in its Sunday issue of October 22, 1848: "Jerusalem is crowded with Jews from various parts of Europe, who have taken refuge in the Holy City from the existing revolutions. . . ."

The *Times* further noted:

> The Sultan had granted permission to the Jews in Jerusalem, to erect a large and elegant synagogue, and a messanger has arrived in this country to solicit aid in carrying out this object.

Likewise, did the *New York Tribune* report in its issue of November 23, 1849, under the caption, "Temple of Jerusalem":

> The Sultan of Turkey has given permission to the Jews of the Holy City to erect a magnificent Temple, or synagogue . . . being the first and splendid place of worship which the Jews have been permitted to erect of 1800 years in Zion . . . that important project, which taken with the great revolutions in Europe, will be deemed among the pious, a most significant sign.

That Jerusalemite messenger was Rabbi Yehiel A. Cohen, sent by the rabbis and trustees of *Beth El*—the new synagogue to be built in Jerusalem.

Recently rebuilt *Menachem Zion*, and other *Ashkenazi* synagogues of the *Churva* cluster, readily accommodated the influx of Jews from Posen, Germany, and Hungary, in 1848. But it was a new edifice for the mystical

synagogue of the Cabbalists, *Beth El*, that captured the attention of public opinion. Perhaps because of the *firman* obtained for the first time from the ruler of the Ottoman Empire by no less a personality than Sir Moses Montefiore, *Beth El* excited the Messianic dreams and stirred the imagination of Jews the world over.

In 1848, the symbolic significance attached to the official permission to dig the foundation for a "House of God" in the Holy City, excited Americans no less than news of the feverish "*diggins*" in the California Mother Lode. Europeans too were to be found who were drawn not to the gold laden hills of the Sierra but to the God permeated hills of Zion. There were Jews too, who were drawn not to the City by the Golden Gate, but to the City by the Jaffa gate. To them, the stones for building of their synagogue near the site of the ancient Holy Temple were more precious than all the nuggets emboweled in California's Mother Lode.

In 1848, the discovery of gold in the California Sierras, the upheavals in Europe, the disintegrating Ottoman Empire, the return to the Land of Israel, gave many cause to believe that that year marked the *aschalta d'gulta* [beginning of the redemption] of Israel to the Land of Israel. Little did they dream that exactly one century later, Israel would become crowned with statehood.

In addition to that auspicious omen from the Ottoman capital, that *firman* to build *Beth El* anew, Constantinople approved a United States expedition to the Holy Land. The basis for such permission from Turkey originated at the turn of the century, when President John Adams appointed an American mission in Turkey to arrange a treaty of amity and commerce. After three decades of intermittent negotiations, a treaty, bestowing upon Americans privileges was signed on May 7, 1830.

In 1831, Commodore David Porter, *charge d'affaires* of the American legation in Constantinople, chose David Darmon, a Syrian Jew, U.S. Consular Agent to Palestine. When the U.S.S. *Delaware* dropped anchor off Jaffa in 1834, Darmon welcomed the fleet's Commodore and his men at Jaffa. In 1844, Warder Cresson, a Philadelphia Quaker, was the first officially appointed American Consul. He issued papers of protection to Jews and others who were not citizens of the United States.

On March 31, 1848, Lieutenant William F. Lynch, Commander of the U.S.N. *Supply*, [formerly *Crusader*] dropped anchor in the port of Haifa. Even as Jerusalem Jewry cleared the rubble for the rebuilding of their "House of God" in Jerusalem, this American expedition had come to study the practicability of the restoration of the Jews to Palestine. Commander Lynch predicted that "the final dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire" in the not too far distant future would "ensure the restoration of the Jews to Palestine."

As the American flag was raised at Haifa Bay on March 31, 1848, perhaps for the first time in Palestine beyond the consular precincts, U.S. Naval Commander Lynch remarked: "May it be the harbinger of regeneration to a now hapless people!"

In a spirit of joy and exhiliration, Lynch predicted that:

> In all probability the Jew is destined to be the first agent in the civilization of the Arab, and the Jewish villages scattered throughout Arabia may yet initiate the trade which will affect the desired change.

From Haifa the Lynch expedition, lugging their disassembled boats, proceeded overland, stopping over in Tiberias, on their way to navigate the Jordan River and "to circumnavigate and thoroughly explore the Lake Asphaltites . . . . [Salt Sea]."

Lieutenant Lynch while resting in Tiberias on his overland trek from Haifa to the Salt Sea, noted that there were a thousand Jews in that holy city:

> Besides the Jews, there are in Tiberias from three to four hundred Muslims and two or three Latins, from Nazareth. . . .
>
> Tiberias is held in peculiar venerations by the Jews, for here they believe that Jacob resided, and it is situated on the shores of the lake whence they hope that the Messiah will arise.

Lynch further noted:

> The Jews here are divested of that spirit of trade which is everywhere else their peculiar characteristic. Their sole occupation . . . is to pray and to read the Talmud. . . .
>
> They have two synagogues, the Sephardim and Ashkenazim, but live harmoniously together. There are many Polish Jews. . . . They describe themselves as very poor, and maintained by the charitable contributions of Jews abroad, mostly in Europe. More meek, subdued, and unpretending men than these Rabbis I have never seen. . . .
>
> In the evening we visited several of the synagogues. It was impressive yet melancholy to witness the fervid zeal of the worshippers. In gabardines, with broad and narrow phylacteries, some of them embroidered, the men were reading or rather chanting, or rather screaming and shouting, the lamentations of Jeremias—all the time swaying their bodies to and fro with a regular and monotonous movement. There was an earnest expression of countenance that could not have been feigned. The tones of the men were loud and almost querulous with complaint; while the women, who stood

apart, were more hushed in their sorrow, and lowly wailed, moving the heart by their sincerity. . . . Whatever they may be in worldly matters, the Jews are no hypocrites in the article of faith.

There are about three hundred families, or one thousand Jews, in this town. The sanhedrim [sic! Sanhedrin: Supreme Court and Legislature of ancient Israel] consists of seventy rabbis, of whom thirty are natives and forty Franks [*Sefardim* who came from North African countries and had French citizenship], mostly from Poland, with a few from Spain. The rabbis stated that controversial matters of discipline among Jews, all over the world, are referred to this sanhedrim [sic!].

The *Sanhedrin* of ancient Israel required seventy-one members. Lynch's mention of seventy rabbis comprising the Tiberias *Sanhedrin*, would account for the absence of Rabbi Moses Suze, who was in America at the time. But in any event, Lynch erred in his statement, for what he probably heard was that the ancient *Sanhedrin* had functioned in Tiberias. That was after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans but before the fifth century of the common era. An attempt had been made in the sixteenth century to revive the *Sanhedrin* in Safed and the name *Sanhedrin* given to the rabbinical assembly convened by Napolean in Paris in 1807 in order to approve Jewish adherence to his civil code.

Lynch wrote of marriages, probably *Arusin* [betrothed], of Palestinian Jewish girls:

The females marry very early. There was one in the house, then eleven and a half years of age, who, we were assured, had been married eighteen months. Mr. [Heim] Wiseman [Jewish inn-keeper at whose hotel the members of the expedition lodged, and who served as their host] pointed out another, a mere child in appearance, ten years of age, who had been two years married. It seems incredible. The unmarried wear the hair exposed, but the married women studiously conceal it. To make up for it, the heads of the latter were profusely ornamented with coins and gems and any quantity of another's hair, the prohibition only extending to their own. Their dress is a bodice, a short, narrow-skirted gown, and pantalettes gathered at the ankles. Unlike the Turkish and the Arab women, they sometimes wear stockings. The bodice is open in front, and the breasts are held, but not restrained, by loose open pockets of thin white gauze.

The early age of marriage, as reported by Lynch would be discounted in a privately published report by two influential members of London's Board of Deputies of British Jews and widely circulated in America.

. . . every Jewish child born in Palestine is inscribed in a book as

> entitled to receive his portion of the alms. One of the results of this disgraceful system [Chalukkah] is that the most common marriages that take place are between boys of fifteen and sixteen, and girls of thirteen and fourteen, the moving idea being that every child born will produce an additional income from the Cholucah [sic!], and hence procreation [in fulfillment of the Biblical Commandment "Be fruitful and multiply"] is regarded as a legitimate means of livelihood!

Actually, marriage of teenagers were commonplace amongst Jews from North African countries and to a lesser extent, amongst those of Eastern European origin.

While Lynch visited in the holy city of Tiberias by the shore of Lake Kinneret in the Galilee, Rabbi Suze of that Gallilean holy city had come to America to raise funds for the many needy Jews in his community. Aware that the *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh* acted as the sole agency for Palestinian Jewry, and that its officers would not favor him or any Palestinian emissary who came to America to solicit funds, Suze presented himself as a wine merchant.

Arrived in New York, Suze announced in the press that he had for sale forty-two kegs of 1845 vintage kosher wine from Palestine; each containing thirty-three gallons; each having two seals of kosher endorsement by the Rabbis of Jerusalem. Suze told potential buyers that the grapes had been pressed by pious Jews in Gath, and that he purchased the casks from a Jewish merchant in Jerusalem.

In addition to the kosher seals affixed by the rabbis of Jerusalem at Gath, Rabbi Suze displayed a Certificate of *Kashrus* written in Hebrew, and signed by Rabbi Abraham Yehoshua, dated 5 Adar I, 5608 [March 10, 1848]; also an English translation by William L. Roy, whose *Complete Hebrew and English Dictionary* published in New York, had an endorsement by Palestinian emissary Rabbi Enoch Zundel.

Suze emphasized to all potential buyers that all profits from their sale would be turned over to the needy Jews of Tiberias.

Suze even attended a "tea meeting" at the First Wesleyan Methodist Church to arrange for possible purchase of Holy Land wine.

Most of the shipment was taken by Reverend Simon Noot, *chazzan* of *Bnai Israel* the Dutch synagogue of New York. He advertised in the June 14, 1848, issue of *The Morning Star* that he had thirty-two kegs for sale. Noot sold most of the Holy Land wine at public auction, on June 30.

Reverend Jacques Judah Lyons, minister of *Shearith Israel*, a native of Dutch Surinam, felt a kinship with Noot, a native of Holland. Sympathetic to the cause of Moses Suze. Lyons arranged for the Tiberias Rabbi to be present at a public forum on July 12, to raise a collection,

over the opposition of the *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh*. Remarkably, most who attended and donated were Christian sympathizers.

No sooner had the Tiberian, Rabbi Moses Suze, embarked at New York to return to Palestine, when from Palestine disembarked the Jerusalemite, Rabbi Yehiel Cohen. On his second visit in as many years, he had come to raise funds for a remarkable cause, to rebuild the *Cabbalist Sephardi* synagogue of Jerusalem *Beth El*, for which the Sultan had issued a *Firman*.

The Trustees of the *Sephardi* synagogue, *Shearith Israel* of New York, considered the erecting of a synagogue in Jerusalem, a cause of singular significance. They called upon Mordecai Manuel Noah, who for decades championed all Palestinian-Jewish causes, to deliver an appeal for the sacred project.

Noah had addressed a largely Christian audience on the subject of Palestine in a two part address at the *New York Tabernacle*, the largest hall in New York City, on October 28 and December 2, 1844. Entitled "Discourse on the Restoration of the Jews," he then appealed to the theology and humanity of his Christian listeners for help in securing Palestine for Jewish settlement."

On the same theme and title, Noah delivered in the following year a stirring address at *Shearith Israel* synagogue. Published that year, 1845, under the same title, "Discourse on the Restoration of the Jews," it enjoyed a wide distribution.

The esteem in which Mordecai Manuel Noah was held by American Jews in Palestine is noted in a letter to him from Warder Cresson, dated Jerusalem, November 5, 1847. Cresson wrote: "James Nathans of your city [New York, sends] a bloodstone with this engraving upon it[:] "Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem."

In 1848, responding to Rabbi Yehiel Cohen's quest for funds for building the Jerusalem synagogue *Beth El*, the Trustees requested Noah to present an appeal at a public service to be held at *Shearith Israel*, Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, November 3, 1848.

Noah, believing that the rare grant permitting rearing a synagogue in the Holy City marked the beginning of the advent of the Messiah, eagerly and heartily accepted the privilege of participation. Thereupon, Naphtali Phillips, Clerk of the Congregation, dispatched to all the Hebrew congregations in the city a written invitation to attend the lecture to be delivered by Mordecai Noah on Thanksgiving Day. In his call, Phillips stated: "For the first time since our dispersion, the Jews of Jerusalem have obtained permission to erect, in that holy City, a synagogue, which will do credit and honor to our nation, and accommodate the increasing number of our people, who are imigrating [sic!] to Zion for pious objects. . . ."

Attendance by the members of *Shearith Israel* however was lessened by petty dissentions. At issue was the letter of attestation Cohen brought with him from the Holy Land, addressed not to the Trustees of *Shearith Israel*, but to Israel Baer Kursheedt. The honor of the Trustees had been slighted. As a result of the heated dispute, neither the officers nor Kursheedt, nor members, attended.

Publicity in the press however drew a record crowd. Noah addressed mainly a Christian body. He attributed historic significance to the granting of permission by Turkish authorities to build the synagogue of the Cabbalists, a foreboding of the restoration of the Jewish nation to its ancestral homeland, and declared that "the time will come, the hour will arrive" when all Jews will be redeemed. He manifested his love for Zion in a reference to the *Shofar*, that "When the trumpet sounds from Mount Zion every ear is opened, every heart throbs. . . ."

Noah suggested "that Syria [Palestine] will revert to the Jewish nation by *purchase*, and that the facility exhibited in the accumulation of wealth has been a providential and peculiar gift to enable them, at proper time, to re-occupy their ancient possessions by the purse-string instead of the sword," whereas in 1818, in his address delivered at the consecration of the second Mill Street Synagogue of *Shearith Israel* he urged conquest of Palestine by a Jewish army.

Noah expressed the hope that he would be able to travel to Jerusalem to witness the laying of the cornerstone of the new synagogue. His lifelong wish unfulfilled, he left to his people a legacy of a hope for a Jewish homeland, a Jewish state in the Promised Land.

An appeal about to begin, the overflow audience comprised principally of Christians "left *en masse* the moment the collection began to be announced by Mr. S[olomon] I. Joseph." The Jews present contributed $134 ". . . for the purpose of enlarging their present Synagogue on the same site it now occupied which is called by some the buildings of the 3d Temple."

Rabbi Yehiel Cohen, determined to raise at least as much as he had on his first trip, a sum over a thousand dollars, tarried almost a year in his fund raising mission. Before taking his leave from the United States, Cohen wrote on September 9, 1849, a letter "To the President, Trustees, and Members of *K. K. Mickve Yisrael*, Philadelphia, respecting establishing a permanent Society in the "City of Brotherly Love," that would annually raise funds for all poor Jews of the Holy Land, to be forwarded to Sir Moses Montefiore:

> Gentlemen:
>
> Ere I take my final departure from a city in which I have been received by my brethren in friendship and esteem and for whole

favors permit me to express my gratitude. I am induced to address your respectable body on a point of vital importance to the interests of humanity.

It cannot be denied that by the present faulty system of sending messengers from the Holy Land, great expense is incurred and at least one third of the collection is thus absorbed exclusive of the messengers commissions. There are at this moment four messengers in the States, each for a separate body. They are all true and honest men, but it ill behooves Israelites to strive to preserve distinctions; and I sincerely hope the day is not far distant when all will be known and distinguished by only one name, *Yehudee* [Jew].

That eminent philanthropist, Sir Moses Montefiore will admit of no distinction in the distribution of all moneys entrusted to him for the Holy Land.

Now there is in this city [Philadelphia] a *Hebra* [Society] just established for the relief of the Polish Jews in Jerusalem. I wish them every success; but I would respectfully appeal to the respected members of your congregation to establish a *Hebra* for the equal relief of all suffering Jews in the four cities of the Holy Land without distinction of *Minhag*; and the amount annually collected sent to Sir Moses Montefiore whose name is a sufficient guarantee for rectitude of conduct. A small trifle from each member would suffice; and the dispatching of messengers would be thus entirely obviated.

I earnestly trust that my brethren will give me credit for good intentions. And now farewell! May the God of Israel have each of you in his safe keeping; may He bless and prosper your children; may He drive from you all the evils of life, and speedily and in our days restore all Israel to their rightful inheritance, the Holy Palestine, prays,

Your brother in faith, and
Sincere well-wisher
Yehiel Cohen

Cohen's reference to "distinction of *Minhag*," alluded to that order of prayer which in Palestine, as in America, divided the *Sephardi* from the *Ashkenazi* not only in ritual but socially as well. As a specific instance, Philadelphia's Polish Jews who had founded *Beth Israel* synagogue according to the *Minhag Polin*, had established their separate Palestine Society, soliciting donations only for the Polish Jews in Jerusalem, but not for fellow *Ashkenazim* from Germany, England, Holland, Hungary, or Austria.

Yehiel Cohen succeeded in his mission, Jerusalem Jewry would soon begin building a new and elegant *Sephardi* synagogue on the site of the ruins of the former *Beth El*; its design and stature ranked with the Greek, Latin, and Armenian edifices. Rabbi Cohen continued on to the Carib-

bean. At Jamaica, Reverend Solomon Jacobs, in a stirring address at the Portuguese Congregation, urged liberal support.

Even as Cohen left for Palestine, there arrived in America the Palestinian emissary, Rabbi Aaron Selig [Ashkenazi], "a native of Lithuania in Poland," who had been a resident of Jerusalem for eighteen years. He came to raise funds on behalf of the *Ashkenazim Perushim* of Jerusalem.

In the summer of 1848, Selig had boated from Jaffa to Gibraltar, on to Liverpool, arriving in New York in the late fall. He met with Reverends Jacques Judah Lyons, Samuel Myer Isaacs, Ansel Leo, Dr. Simeon Abrahams and Judge Mordecai Noah. His credential was most impressive, signed by five Jerusalem elders, which included David Tevele, son of the late Chief Rabbi of England, Solomon Hirschell.

They invoked upon Jewish communities in "all the lands of America to the borders of East India [?] as well as West Indies" Divine blessings vouchsafed for participation in the messianic restoration to Palestine, and emphasized that Jewish prayers were issuing uninterruptedly from Zion and particularly from the Wailing Wall.

Selig requested of the leaders of New York Jewry that all monies he solicited for the seven hundred *Perushim* of Jerusalem, which comprised the largest Jewish community in the Holy Land, be transmitted directly to England. He carried with him a record book wherein he would enter the name of every contributor and the amount contributed.

In New York, Reverend Samuel M. Isaacs, Moreland Micholl and Mordecai M. Noah were the accredited agents of *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh*.

From New York, Selig proceeded to Philadelphia, meeting with Isaac Leeser and Abraham Hart, minister and president of *Mickve Israel*. Three months passed since Yehiel Cohen's plea to the officers of the Portuguese synagogue to establish a Philadelphia *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh* and thereby the four Holy Cities of Palestine would no longer continue to send messengers, when the officers of *Mickve Israel* received a printed circular dated December 11, 1849, from the recently arrived Jerusalem emissary, Rabbi Aaron Selig. Therein he appealed to the President and Trustees of *Sefardi Mickve Israel*, many of its members *Ashkenazim*, requesting funds for support of the *Ashkenazim Perushim* of Jerusalem.

From Philadelphia, Zelig proceeded to Baltimore, where Rabbi Rice extended a warm welcome. Upon the insistance of Selig, Rice assumed the leadership of *Mishmeret Hakodesh Yesod Olom* [The Sacred Watch Foundation of the World], established in Jerusalem for the *Ashkenazim Perushim* community. Rice pledged that this Baltimore Society, *Mishmeret Hakodesh* would forward annually its *Perushim* collections directly to London.

Selig, instead of returning to New York, became the first Palestinian emissary to travel throughout the Ohio Valley and Great Lakes. From Baltimore he traveled to Cincinnati. Reverend James K. Gutheim, president of the Society for the assistance of the Jews in the Holy Land, along with David Mayer, Daniel Ullman, Nathan Malzer, and others led in the collection. At Louisville, likewise, an annual collection would be sent to Sir Moses Montefiore.

Selig boated down the Ohio and Mississippi to establish connections and collections in New Orleans, Louisiana, and on to Mobile, Alabama, and northward to Charleston, South Carolina, where he was received by Reverend Jacob Rosenfeld, Richmond, Virginia, returning to New York.

In January 1850, Selig set forth for Hartford, Connecticut, where he organized another branch of *Mishmeret Hakodesh Yesod Olom*. He continued on to New Haven, then to Boston where he signed up both *Ohabei Shalom* and *Beth Israel* congregations for annual collections.

At this time, Reverend Samuel Myer Isaacs of New York received a letter from Sir Moses Montefiore thanking him for his collection which he forwarded to Jerusalem for distribution "among *all* the poor of the Holy Land, according to the wish of the donors." Isaacs thereupon joined forces with the existing *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh* Society, determined to discontinue the coming of emissaries who expended much of their collections for their expenses. Isaacs advised the public:

> The system of encouraging messengers from the East, has, for years, been productive of evil; it has fostered mendicancy, it has destroyed harmony, and robbed the poor pilgrims of hope . . . a fourth part of the sums collected by messengers, swells the pockets of the employed, exclusive of his travelling expenses and what he gathers on his own private account. . . . Let us then urge congregations to discountenance all messengers.

Rabbi Selig traveled from New York City to northern New York. At Albany, Isaac Mayer Wise promised aid, but instead presented him with a flourishing statement:

> Our worthy Brother Rabbi Aaron Selig Ashkenazi, messenger of our poor Brethren in the holy City of Jerusalem, which the Lord may restore, has come to us to solicit our aid for the poor of our people, but since many of our members are absent from the City, nothing could be done in his favor until Pesach [פסח] next I will try to constitute with God's help [בע"ה] a society to aid the poor of Jerusalem. It is a lamentable feature of the total absence of national love among our brethren the remnants of Israel, that even the rich, whom God has blessed with abundance, withdraw their

hand from the needy and poor watchmen, that God's mercy allowed to remain in the sacred vineyard.

Utica Jewry gave him a hearty reception, as did Syracuse Jewry.

Aaron Selig traveled on to Rochester, where another disinterested Reform minister, Marcus Tuska, did little more than to copy Wise's letter, adding the cryptic message: "I hope that other Congregations and individuals will do more for the house of Israel."

In Buffalo, ten persons meeting at a private house of one Solomon Fridenberg, possibly assembled for a *Minyan*, each pledged weekly contributions of two cents for the benefit "of the poor Israelites of Jerusalem," to be collected by the Society *Mishmeret Hakodesh* which Selig organized there. Thirty-eight others followed including A. Ansell, the Reader, who formerly served at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation during Rice's ministry.

Even as Rabbi Selig returned to New York before heading westward through the United States, there arrived in New York City during that year 1850, not one, but two Palestinian emissaries.

Off the same boat, disembarked Rabbis Zadok Ha-Levy Kraus, his second trip to America, and Yehosef [Joseph] Schwarz. The duo were leaders of the *Deutsch-Hollandischen Gemeinde*, referred to *Kolel* [Communal Society] *HOD* [glory: Acronym for Holland-Deutchland]. "Kolel *HOD*" had been founded in Jerusalem by Bavarian Rabbis: Rabbi Moses Sachs, had come to the Holy City in 1830, Rabbi Yehosef Schwarz in 1833, Rabbi Eliezer Bergmann in 1835. This first community in Palestine to be comprised of persons from a certain country served as a model for *Kolel Vilna* and all others *kolelim* [Communal Societies] that followed, numbering thirty in half-a-century.

Even as Rabbi Selig collected funds for the *Ashkenazim* of Jerusalem who hailed from Russian Lithuania and Russian Poland, the newly arrived emissaries had come to raise funds for the needy Jerusalemite *Ashkenazim* of Germany and Holland.

When Bergmann arrived in Jerusalem, he found four other "German" Jews in the Holy City; three [Dutch] from Amsterdam, and Yehosef Schwarz of Germany. Absent was Rabbi Moses Sachs who was travelling in Europe at the time. By 1842, there were sixty members of twelve German-Jewish families who had emigrated to Jerusalem; most of them poor; dependent on aid from the diaspora.

A great increase into *Kolel HOD* took place that year, during the 1848 Revolutions in Europe. Not only Jews, but many Christians came that year to Palestine. This brought on extraordinary construction in the European Christian religious and national communities since Turkey had

recently granted Christians the right to hold property in their own name. The value of land and rents quadrupled in the areas of Jerusalem and Jaffa. Apartments became scarce and since the Christians could afford to pay a much higher rent, the Moslem owners dispossessed the poorer German and Dutch Jews. To assist them, they had founded *Kolel HOD* and sent Rabbis Kraus and Schwarz to America and Eliezer Bergmann to European countries, to solicit funds for apartments, to accommodate homeless and needy German and Dutch Jewish immigrants recently arrived in Jerusalem.

Unlike most emigrants to the Land of Israel, Rabbi Zadok ha-Levi Kraus, who emigrated from Mogilev in Byelo-Russia, in 1822, possessed much wealth. He influenced his son-in-law, Rabbi Moses Sachs, to settle in the Holy City in 1830, having acquired a sizeable property. On its grounds Kraus constructed by his house, a synagogue for the German and Dutch Jews. But its size could not accommodate their increase of the 1840's.

When Rabbi Yehosef Schwarz visited Philadelphia to raise funds for building a German and Dutch synagogue, he met with Isaac Leeser who became deeply impressed with his scholarship. Leeser took especial notice of the Hebrew book Schwarz had authored, titled *Tebuot ha-Aretz* [Produce of the Land]. Therein Schwarz described his explorations throughout Palestine over a period of fifteen years, since his settlement there. He recorded the history, geology, fauna and flora of Palestine. Leeser felt that his writings placed him in the forefront of the country's explorers and geographers. Determined to see the volume published in English, Leeser influenced Abraham Hart, President of his synagogue, to underwrite its publication costs and then translated and published it in 1850 under the title *Geography of Palestine*.

At the same time, Leeser, himself of German origin, urged American Jewry to contribute to the German community in Jerusalem, *Kolel HOD*.

Palestinian emmissaries, Kraus and Schwarz and Selig were busily engaged in visiting American communities, when there disembarked on February 15, 1849, yet another emissary, a non-Palestinian. The exotic, oriental, introduced himself as *Chacham* Nisim Mizrachi from Shushan, the ancient capital of Persia, wherein Queen Esther saved Jewry from extermination, giving rise to the holiday of *Purim*.

The *Chacham* revealed that he was one of four Persian emissaries sent throughout the world to raise funds for their imprisoned brethren, held captive in that city on the charge that they had murdered persons to drain their blood for ritual purposes on Passover. The ransom for their release, $48,000 had to be turned over within the year. Therefore, he informed that his mission had already consumed half-a-year and had to be com-

pleted within the balance of the year. Possessing letters of approbation from the Chief Rabbis of London, Rabbi Nisim Mizrahi hopefully accomplished his mission in time to combat a new Haman.

The presence of six emissaries within a span of a year, from 1848 to 1849, five from Palestine and one from Persia, moved Leeser to urge all forty congregations of the United States to send annually from ten to twenty-five dollars for the support of all Palestinian-Jewish communities. Thus, would be eliminated the need for Holy Land *meshulachim* to travel to America.

In New York, *Shearith Israel* took the lead, and adopted the following resolutions which it sent to the other synagogues in the city:

> Whereas the poor of the Holy Land among our brethren have always been the objects of solicitude and attachment among the pious of our faith throughout the world and their support is a duty which devolves on Jews and which should never be neglected, And whereas the custom of sending messengers from the Holy Land to collect charity is attended with great expense and sometimes with great difficulty in relation to the distribution of the funds collected.
>
> Therefore Resolved that this Congregation entertaining such views do hereby appropriate an annual sum of twenty-five dollars . . . towards the support of all poor Jews in the Holy Land and by this mode avoid hereafter the recognition of any messenger. . . .

Thereupon, *Shearith Israel* sent to *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh* in London, twenty-five dollars for distribution to all Holy Land Jewry, and requested the other New York City synagogues do likewise. Of the two leading German congregations in New York, *Anshe Chesed*, under the ministry of *Chazzan* Leon Sternberger, thereupon voted in favor, *Emanu-'El*, under the leadership of Leo Merzbacher, turned its back on participating in any Palestinian charity.

But virtually all other congregations ignored Leeser's plea, and the example set by *Shearith Israel*, New York. An exception to the rule was *Bnai Israel*, New York, comprised of Dutch Jews. Faithful to Amsterdam's Zevi Hirsch Lehren, these Hollander "Sons of Israel" who founded their synagogue in 1847, organized in 1849 their own *Terumat Hakodesh* Society, but no records remain to tell of its continuation or termination.

As a consequence of the policy of the New York *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh*, not to contribute to the arriving emissaries, the Palestinian communities unable to exist on the subsidies sent to them from Amsterdam and London in times of emergency, had no recourse but to send emissaries who would resort to individual donors, who in turn did not

contribute to the *Hebrah*, which in turn ceased to exist, possibly as early as 1849.

Dr. Simeon Abrahams, a surgeon in New York, troubled by the loss of funds to Palestinian Jewry by expenditures incurred by the Messengers, but at the same time inspired by the dedication and enthusiasm of the emissaries, left for a visit to the Holy Land in 1849.

Dr. Abrahams noted that there were about five thousand Jews in Jerusalem, "most of them in a very abject and impoverished state. . . ." He advanced the following reasons for their lowly state: Cost for the necessities of life were as high in Jerusalem as in New York, and business was at a standstill; there were few young people, the greater number of Jerusalem's Jews were pious elderly men and women who came to live their remaining days in the Holy City in order to be buried in its sacred soil; one of every three, young or old, had diseased eyes and many were blind of one or both eyes; many suffered various illnesses; few, very few, would enter the only hospital in Jerusalem operated by the missionaries.

The hospital of the missionaries was attached to the Jerusalem agency of the London Society for Ameliorating the Condition of the Jews which admitted only Jewish patients and even kept healthy persons there. The rabbis excommunicated anyone making use of its services and in 1846 even stationed private guards near the medical building. They denied a Jewish burial to any Jews who died in the hospital.

To counter this move by the rabbis, the London Society purchased land near the Jewish cemetery for the burial of Jews who died in its hospital. But this provision enticed few ailing Jews to enter the hospital's precincts.

Warder Cresson, who had come as the U.S. Consul to Jerusalem, had been appalled by the tactics of the missionaries. Cresson was revulsed by the unprincipled activities of all missionary societies, particularly the members of the London Society for Ameliorating the Condition of the Jews. Especially disturbing to him had been the hospital and waystation by which to entrap poor Jews, but even more so by their latest tactic, to purchase of land to be given to Jews to farm; all these acts of generosity given with the purpose of converting them to Christianity.

Since his arrival in the Holy Land, be became convinced of the truth of the Prophets of Israel and the truth of Judaism. After four years of study and committment, Cresson overcame the objections of the Chief rabbi of Jerusalem and the *Beth Din* of the Holy City inducted him on March 17, 1848 into the nation of Israel. He was given the Hebrew name, Boaz Michael Israel.

Dr. Simeon Abrahams, like Cresson, was incensed when in the year

of his visit, 1849, the London Society rented a large house with spare rooms situated about an hour's walk from the seaport town of Jaffa, ostensibly to serve as a waystation where weary "indigent Jews can have food prepared according to the Casher manner." Poor Jews could stay and rest on their way to Jerusalem and be supplied by the missionaries "with bread and water," not to mention spiritual nourishment.

Dr. Abrahams, during his stay in Jerusalem, commissioned a scribe to copy his manuscript, a ritual of circumcision, titled: *Ze Safer Haberit* [This is the Book of the Covenant]. Thereupon, the rabbis of Jerusalem bestowed upon Dr. Abrahams an honorary *Morenu* [Degree granted to one knowledgeable in *Talmud* and Codes of Law; A degree above *Chaver* "colleague," and below *Morenu Harav* "ordination"].

Upon his return to the United States, Dr. Abrahams, distressed over the medical and survival needs of an impoverished Jerusalem Jewry, and desirous that every cent given by American Jewry reach the needy of Palestinian Jewry, severely criticized the fund-raising messengers arriving to solicit for Palestine relief:

> All admit that something should be done by which the whole amount raised for these poor people should reach them, without discount, drawback, or commission of whatever kind: whereas by the system of accredited collectors who every now and then come over, a great portion is lost in travelling expenses, besides which, one-third of the net proceeds is retained by them for commissions. . . .

Rabbi Rice's ardent desire to personally settle in the Holy Land remained unfulfilled. His colleagues from Fürth and Würzburg settled in Jerusalem, kept him advised of conditions there. To help alleviate their suffering, he dedicated all his energies for their benefit; the full extent will never be known.

Fragmentary references surface from time to time of Rabbi Rice's service to Holy Land Jewry. Thus the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation *Minutes* of December 14, 1851, record:

> The Board agreed further to give $5.00 to the ארץ־ישראל fund as a Donation to Mr. Ab. Reis [sic!] . . . .
>
> H[enry] Hocheimer, Sec'y.

Instead of giving his predecessor his title, Rabbi, and his correct and complete name, Hochheimer begrudged Rice's Orthodoxy and leadership out of the pulpit.

In 1852, the *Minutes* of *Mickva Israel*, Savannah, Georgia, notes its sending the congregation's contribution of twenty-five dollars for Palestine Relief to "Rev. Rice of Baltimore."

Local causes likewise commanded Rice's attention. Thus, in the summer of 1853, when cholera struck in the port city of New Orleans, it was Rabbi Rice of Baltimore who forwarded six hundred dollars to the Hebrew Benevolent Society of the Crescent City, to help the victims and their families.

News of Jewish suffering in the Holy Land reach America that year, 1853.

Sampson Simson, joined by such prominent Jewish leaders, as the Reverend Samuel Myer Isaacs, Reverend Isaac Leeser, Dr. Simeon Abrahams, founded in place of the defunct *Hebrah Terumat Hakodesh*, the North American Society for the Relief of the Poor in the Holy Land and advised that American Jewry

> desirous of transmitting monies for the poor of the Holy Land, free from any Messengers fees, beg to notify Congregations and Individuals that they will shortly forward all monies sent for that purpose to Moses Montefiore.

In Jerusalem, the *Pekidim v'Amarkulim* expanded to include supervisors; its name enlarged to *Pekidei u-Mashgichei ve-Amarkelei Eretz Yisrael* [Officers, Overseers, and Treasurers of the Land of Israel].

In 1853, from overseas, news of the outbreak of war between the Ottoman Empire and Russia with its allied armies of England, France, and Sardinia, attended by intense Jewish suffering in the Holy Land, reached America.

The religious conflict began in 1840, after an army of the Turks ended Egypt's brief rule in Palestine, during the 1830's. An unarmed clergy crusade of the European powers poured into Palestine. They turned their sights on the Christian sites that had been under control of the Ottoman Empire since its rulers conquered the land from the Arabs and ruled it for over three centuries.

In 1841, England and Prussia founded an Evangelical Episcopate at Jerusalem and France assumed protection of the Roman Catholic Church. The Greek Orthodox Church, aided by Russia, disputed the claims of the French clerics' guardianship of church sites. Their conflicting claims drew the Ottoman rulers into the dispute. Russia thereupon turned their dispute with France into a pretext to demand of Turkey humiliating conditions. Turkey's refusal to accede led to Russia's declaration of war upon Turkey.

In 1853, European powers in conflict with Turkey for commercial, strategic, as well as political reasons, prepared to attack Turkey, advancing Russia's displeasure over its protection of holy places as a pretext to declare war. Joined by the allied armies of England, France, and Sardinia,

Russia engaged the Ottoman Empire. The Crimean War had begun.

In the first half of the 19th century, the Jewish population of Palestine tripled, a third of the three or four thousand Jews of Palestine being *Ashkenazim*, mostly from the Russian Pale. Thus, by the 1840's, in the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem there were in addition to the two thousand *Sephardim*, a thousand *Ashkenazim*—500 from Russia, 250 from Poland, also about 30 from Germany and Holland.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the population of Jews in Palestine had increased to almost 12,000, many East European. The land was barren and desolate, except for their settlements in four cities that constituted the civilized settlements of the Holy Land.

Jews of the Holy Land had come to spend their last days in study and prayer; nearly all the inhabitants were primarily dependent on charity collected in Russia where three-fourths of world Jewry resided.

Over half the contributions Palestine Jewry had received from the diaspora Jewry were suddenly cut off. The Czarist government prohibited further remittances from the Russian Pale to Turkish Palestine. Russian Jewry made up five of the seven-and-a-half million Jews in the world.

The loss of half their stipends could not have come at a worse time. Scarcity of food caused prices to soar, and a small portion of wheat that had cost four piastres before the war suddenly increased to twenty-five-and-one-half piastres. Rents rose proportionately, as did all other necessities. Thousands could not even afford a morsel. Many of those weakened by hunger and starvation became susceptible to disease, which reached epidemic proportions. Emergency aid was desperately needed for Holy Land Jewry.

Colonel Abraham Andrews, president of congregation *B'nai Israel* of Sacramento City, California, forwarded a contribution of two hundred and fifty dollars to Reverend Samuel M. Isaacs of New York, treasurer of the North American Relief Society for Palestine, with an apologetic message:

> Our little congregation have been painfully impressed by an appeal from Jerusalem to the Congregation of Great Britain and America . . . .
>
> It will not be overlooked by our brethren at home, that we have been peculiarly sufferers in the floods and flames which have so often desolated and destroyed Sacramento City . . . the suffering of our people in Palestine . . . the cities of Jerusalem, Zaply [sic! Safed], Hebron, and Tiberias, suffering the horrors of famine and disease and death . . . .
>
> This bitter time for Israel will pass, and the people shall be gathered together, and our Messiah will come . . . .

When these reports reached Baltimore, Rice single-handedly undertook the campaign on their behalf. He circulated subscriptions for "our brethren in the Holy Land who were poor and in great distress for the want of the means of support." The Anglo-Jewish press began to report Rice's role in raising funds for the destitute Jews of the Holy Land.

Christians as well as Jews responded. Dr. W. Wyatt, pastor of St. Paul's Parish in Baltimore, forwarded the donations of his parishioners to Rabbi Rice. In England, Dr. John Aiton of Edinburgh, Scotland, determined to aid Palestine Jews, published "An appeal to Presbyterians of all denominations in behalf of the Jews in JERUSALEM and the HOLY LAND."

Rabbi Rice's devoted follower, Major Leon Dyer, set off for Palestine. In 1835 Dyer had rushed off to act as sutler to Amerian troops in Florida during the Seminole War with the Indians, and in 1836 to Texas during the Lone Star's war for independence and in 1847 during the Mexican-American war. Now, in 1853, during the Crimean war, Dyer daringly made his way half-way around the world to aid the Jews of the Holy Land. Dyer spent 25 days in the Holy Land, from December 1853 into January 1854.

On January 18th, 1854, Judah Touro of New Orleans died. A strict Orthodox Jew, modest and unassuming, his will surprised Jewish and Christian institutions alike. Among his many benefactions, in his bequest, Touro assigned ten thousand dollars for the *North American Relief Society*.

Upon receipt of the news, the North American Relief Society introduced a novel plan. It called for the establishment of "a permanent fund the interest of which shall be annually applied to the relief of Indigent Jews in Jerusalem." The Society would probably have withered had it not been for the Touro legacy. The interest in the 1850's amounted to about seven hundred dollars a year for Palestinian Jewry. But it would take another twelve months before the first year's estimated seven hundred dollars in interest could be realized, and immediate succor was needed if the Palestinian Jews were to survive the winter of 1853-54.

Touro made an even greater and ever enduring contribution to the Land of Israel. Gershom Kursheedt, executor of the Touro estate, and President of the Touro Synagogue *Nefutzoth Yehudah* [Dispersed of Judah] of New Orleans, informed his kinsman, Sir Moses Montefiore, that the first American-Jewish philanthropist had bequeathed fifty thousand dollars for the poor of Jerusalem.

Judah Touro revered the memory of his father, Isaac, *chazzan* at *Yeshuat Israel* synagogue in Newport, Rhode Island, who inspired him to live as an Orthodox Jew in New Orleans, the pleasure city by the Gulf.

Blessed to have amassed a fortune, the detailed records of munificent

contributions that unassuming and modest Touro made throughout his life time to individuals, filled many carts. In accordance with his will, it took two days to burn those books. Thereby none of the recipients' names would ever be revealed. With the aid of his religious guide, Gershom Kursheedt, his will disclosed his donations of a considerable amount to every Orthodox synagogue in the United States and the largest single sum for building the foundations for the future Jerusalem.

Gershom Kursheedt left for London in 1855, and together with Lady Judith and Sir Moses Montefiore to journey to Palestine, to fulfill Touro's will. At Constantinople, Sir Moses met with the Sultan, who treated his old friend and party most cordially. Before departing, the Sultan bestowed upon Sir Moses Montefiore the Order of Medjidjeh—highest honor in the Ottoman Empire.

The Montefiore party arrived in Jerusalem on July 18, 1855. Ahmed Aga Dindac, the previous governor of Jerusalem, who owned land outside the walled city desired by Montefiore for almshouses, spoke to Sir Moses in language reminiscent of the biblical Efron, from whom Abraham the Patriarch wished to purchase for a burial plot. The Hittite Efron declared his readiness to give the land to Abraham, and after a lengthy argument demanded 400 shekels, saying: "Between you and me, what does it amount to?" The Arab Dindac also declared his readiness to give the land to Montefiore:

> You are my friend, my brother, the apple of my eye, take possession of it at once. This land I hold as an heirloom from my ancestors. I would not sell it to any person for thousands of pounds, but to you I give it without any money: it is yours, take possession of it. I myself, my wife, and children, we are all yours.

Arrangements for the transfer of the land were finally concluded with the help of an interpreter:

> Tell Sir Moses to give me a souvenir of one thousand pounds sterling, and we will go at once to the Cadi.

Montefiore had intended to purchase with Touro's bequest a plot of land upon which to build a Jewish hospital. But the Paris branch of the Rothschild family had already opened a hospital in the name of Mayer Rothschild, in 1854, eighteen beds and a dispensary. The family sent Dr. Albert Cohn to Jerusalem to be chief physician. Even as the Rothschild hospital opened, a second hospital *Bikur Cholim* [Attending to the Sick] was being built by the *Perushim*.

Determined to make Jerusalem Jewry self-sufficient and not dependent on charity from abroad, Sir Moses utilized the Touro windfall to build a windmill, the beginnings of industry in greater Jerusalem.

"Greater" because with the rest of the legacy he built, as Touro willed, almshouses for the poor. These with the adjacent mill, Sir Moses and Kursheedt had erected within a section of land they obtained outside the walls of Jerusalem. Thereby Touro's great gift to his people, marked the beginnings of the New City of Jerusalem.

On August 14, 1855, Sir Moses set the cornerstone, destined to be the foundation stone of Jewish Jerusalem outside the walls of the ancient city.

Construction of the Touro buildings outside the city walls was delayed; permission to build finally approved in 1860, only after the Russians were given a permit to begin building their compound consisting of an inn, cathedral and hospital, outside the city walls.

It took more than the $50,000 provided by the Touro legacy. Montefiore wrote in his Diary: "Blessed be the memory of Mr. Touro, nevertheless his legacy has cost me five thousand pounds." Named *Mishkenot Shaananim* [The Abodes of the Serene], this Touro quarter was later renamed after Sir Moses, *Yemin Moshe* [Moses' Right Hand].

In the summer of 1860, Gershom Kursheedt journeyed once again from New Orleans "with a view of receiving the keys of the almshouses, just finished there, and giving possession thereof to the persons who are to enjoy the privilege of occupying them . . . ." This ceremony in 1860 marked the beginning of the new city of Jerusalem, beyond the walls of the Old City whose Jewish population over the 12,000 mark was more than half the city's inhabitants.

No sooner had the buildings made possible by Judah Touro, an American Jew, when another American Jew, Benjamin Lilienthal, moved with his family outside of the safety of the walled city into the first of the apartments of *Mishkenot Shaananim*—"The Abodes of the Serene." At each end of the elongated building, a synagogue was placed; one *Ashkenazi*, the other, *Sephardi*. With its crenellations and later awnings, Touro had laid the nucleus of a new town outside Jerusalem.

The Touro apartments were light, airy, and heavenly while the apartments for the poor in the Old City were dingy and dark. But they were far from serene, as the name implied.

Life beyond the safety of the walls, recalled to Benjamin Lilienthal, the experiences of the pioneer Jews of Cincinnati. Within the city limits they heard the cry of the savage, and beyond its perimeter, danger lurked for Jewish peddlers who trudged trails and paths of the Ohio Valley where hardy settlers lived and Indians lurked. In their new abode "The Abodes of the Serene" the Lilienthal family were on constant guard; their lives threatened by maurauding Arabs. Nonetheless, Benjamin admonished his family that misfortune would befall any member of his family who would leave the Holy Land.

The experiences of Benjamin Lilienthal, the first American Jew to settle in the Holy Land, depict the difficulties entailed. Fifty-three year old Lilienthal set sail from New York to Palestine on 5 *Tammuz*, 5606 [June 29, 1846]. He stressed it was the first part of the week, Monday, and not Thursday; setting out by boat on the latter part of the week being forbidden because of its proximity to the Sabbath.

Twenty-two days out of New York, after a delightful, exhilirating voyage, Lilienthal arrived in Portsmouth, England. After a three weeks wait, he booked passage on a small vessel leaving for Egypt, via Sardinia, Corsica, Sicily. He spent the High Holy Days and Tabernacles festival in Alexandria, then set sail for Beirut and from there to Jaffa. A four hour mule ride brought him to Ramla, then a short ride to Hebron, and finally throught the gate and into the walled "City of our Fathers," Jerusalem, 23rd *Cheshvan*, 5607 [November 12, 1846].; the Jewish quarter on the right, Christian, on the left.

Lilienthal presented Rice's letters of commendation and recommendation addressed to Rabbi Eliezer Bergmann formerly of Heidenheim, with whom he stayed at his Jerusalem residence for a few weeks; also Rabbi Yehosef Schwarz, bringing him regards from his brothers in New York City.

As soon as Lilienthal earned 36 piastres from tailoring, he rented his own apartment; windowless and stoveless, only an earthen vessel for cooking heated the room. It cost him fifty piastres for wood and trim as he constructed his own cabinets and shelves, and windows too. But his being in the Holy City more than compensated for all his discomforts.

Soon, Lilienthal received from Nathan Malzer, who was related to his deceased wife, three hundred gold dollars for the sale of his tailoring establishment in Cincinnati. Though the Russian Jews did not esteem one who was not a lifelong student of *Talmud*, nonetheless, they arranged for him to marry a daughter of a *Talmudic* scholar, and provided a home valued between three and four hundred gold pieces on the condition that he would be a student of *Torah* and maintain his piety. Lilienthal dedicated himself to higher Jewish studies, receiving ordination.

Among the first to propose that Jews engage in argriculture to become self-sufficient and self-sustaining in Palestine was Dr. Chaim Lorje of Frankfort on the Oder. Influenced by his reading of *Kabbalah*, he predicted the coming of the Messiah in 1850. His prediction premature, Dr. Lorje organized a colonization society to buy land for Jewish agricultural development in Palestine, but factionalism disintegrated his plan.

Return to the soil, as to the soul of the Promised Land, had first been proposed in nineteenth century Palestine by Rabbi Moses Sachs. Rabbi Benjamin Lilienthal favored a return to the Land of Israel not only for

study and prayer, but of equal import to farm and thereby become self-sufficient.

Such a project was supported by I. F. Kraus, a Philadelphian Jew who emigrated to Palestine in 1851, possibly with one Hirschburg, likewise of Philadelphia. One wonders if I. F. Kraus was related to the Jerusalem Rabbi Zadok ha-Levi Kraus, father-in-law of Rabbi Moses Sachs.

At that time, Rabbi Moses Sachs founded in Jerusalem, the *Palestine Agricultural Society*. Its officials were Rabbi Sachs, Benjamin Lilienthal, and Warder Cresson.

In 1852, Cresson issued a circular for the formation of agricultural colonies in Palestine, which urged their establishment in order "To facilitate the migration of such of them as desire to settle in the land *given by the Almighty in Covenant* to Abraham and *his seed forever*."

That year, Leeser, elected an honorary member of the Palestine Agricultural Society, welcomed its formation. "But after all," wrote Leeser, "it would be much better if a proper system of agriculture could be introduced into our ancient heritage by which means those who now lack bread might be enabled to obtain it for themselves from the bosom of the earth."

The Palestine Agricultural Society acquired limited funds but with Cresson devoting much of his private fortune, purchased a section of land in *Emek Refoim*, near Jerusalem. But this first attempt at farming failed.

And in 1853, Leeser complained once again, that the funds sent to Palestine seemed to have no permanent effect upon the dismal poverty of the land and its Jewish inhabitants. Too much of the money, he felt, was going to support aged scholars, and complained:

> The Rabbins and the learned obtain an undue share of the receipts while the many are but poorly supplied. We would at first hardly believe it when the report reached us; but the thing is undoubted, that the few obtain much and the many but little.

Soon thereafter Leeser urged American Jewry to follow the example set in England, where there had been formed an Association for Promotion of Jewish Settlements in Palestine. This Association included Jewish and Christian members. Isaac Leeser published its circular in the *Occident* and urged American Jewry to support its efforts to form agricultural colonies in Tiberias.

From the first hand reports of Yehosef Schwarz, Leeser became convinced that modern technology would restore Palestine to productivity:

> In a country where at present everything is wanting, where irrigation has to be carried on by the clumsiest machinery which de-

mands a constant and expensive waste of labor, here the American plough is a curiosity . . . where in short, modern improvements have not shown themselves. . . . endeavors should be made to introduce what modern experience has proven to be useful.

Leeser declared that a new kind of immigrant was necessary—those who are young and able-bodied. He suggested that "the surplus of unemployed Israelites of Poland, Russia, Galicia, Hungary, and Turkey should be planted in agricultural colonies in the valleys of the land of Israel." Until the coming of hardy youths, Leeser urged support in agricultural colonization for the strong and healthy living in Palestine.

I. F. Kraus wrote to Leeser from Jerusalem on May 24, 1854, that

only two Palestinian Jews have bought land; both own "garden property" . . . a quarter of an hour from Jaffa.

It is suitable for gardens, grain and wine growing and has an excellent location, surrounded on all sides by beautiful Jaffa gardens on the most beautiful road of Eretz [Land of] Israel, with a magnificent view over Jaffa and the Mediterranean Sea on one side and, on the other side, the Plain of Sharon up to the mountains of Judah.

On this land there is 1.) a large well with large amount of good water which must have cost at least 1500 Piaster to dig. 2.) a simple Arabic house valued about 2000 Piaster, 3.) a supply of about 500 young mulberry trees for silk production [4.)] and a large tree, the largest in all of Jaffa, the leaves of which are used by the Arabs for medicine, 5.) a number of machines for artificial irrigation of the land, cars, carts, a windmill, agricultural and garden tools etc. all of which he has purchased in Constantinople a few years ago and brought onto his land, all of it valued at 30,000 Piaster . . .

This land together with the machines is offered to you or your company which you may form; he [the owner] will give it in partnership so that he can have his livelihood and the land will belong to the company after his and his wife's death. He does not have a large family and is alone with his wife. He is very clever and knows how to deal with the Arabs; he likes to remain active, and could, as representative, buy . . . etc. render the best services . . . Naturally, it would be very desirable for him to get in touch with an American Colony in Jaffa, which would be designed for Jews. Also, he would join, in this case, some . . . who are here and understand such work . . .

Kraus concludes:

You can see that this is a practical subject and you could with it easily make a start, which would be of the most important consequent for your future. Mr. Moses Sachs, who is of good authority as he

is very knowledgeable of local conditions, will also write about this matter. . . .

The farms and orchards acquired by these Jews near Jaffa were like those of others, harrassed by small bands of roaming Bedouins. These maurauders stole, plundered, then disappeared into the desert. Some brazen bands even approached within the walled city. Leeser suggested that at Jaffa and other Holy Cities, an armed Jewish militia be formed "to chase away from their doors the covetous Turk or the prowling Arabian. . . ."

In 1854, Americans who farmed in the area appealed to the U.S. Consul for protection. Commodore Higham, commanding the U.S. naval forces in the Mediterranean, dispatched from Constantinople, the S.S. *Levant*, a man-of-war corvette of 36 guns, to Palestine. On June 3, the S.S. *Levant*, under the command of Captain C. C. Turner, dropped anchor in Jaffa harbor.

Warder Cresson wrote to Leeser that when Captain Turner ascertained that Americans had been driven off their farm settlement located four miles beyond the walls of Jaffa, he had the maurauding Bedouins seized and tried before the Turkish officials in Jaffa. They were imprisoned. The Americans returned to their farms, but other Bedouin bands attacked. Turner then, prior to his departure, gave the Americans a few "Halls' Carbines," to drive off attacking bandits; a tactic that set a pattern for years to come.

Cresson, requested future protection for American-Jewish colonists:

> . . . And we would most respectfully solicit the protection of the President and government of the United States of America, especially during our infancy; and there is no doubt but that we would succeed in our all-important undertaking, and most important it is to the future welfare of our poor brethren in the Holy Land.

Cresson's plea was heeded. Three years passed when in 1857, American nationals were assaulted by murderous Arabs in what became called the "Jaffa outrage." Thereupon a U.S. naval vessel appeard off Jaffa at the Consul's request to protect the settlers and restore American prestige.

In 1855, Sir Moses Montefiore had become convinced of the persuasive arguments of Rabbi Sachs' plan to solve the problem of the dependence of Holy Land Jews on aid from the diaspora, by engaging in agriculture as in ancient Judea. Moreover, Leeser's advocacy of agriculture, coupled with Kraus' offer, and his observation that its appraisal at one thousand piastres per acre "is very cheap," had its desired effect. That year, he purchased land near Jaffa, presumably the acreage of "approximately eighty 'morgens' " recommended by I. F. Kraus. This, in addi-

tion to his purchase of land near Jerusalem for the building of a windmill next to the Touro almshouses.

Cresson's *Emek Refoim*, served as the prototype for Sir Moses' orange grove near Jaffa, acquired in 1855. This first Jewish grove in modern Palestine failed, due to the lack of sufficient financial aid. To Leeser, President of the American committee of the Palestine Agricultural Society, Sachs complained bitterly in his letter from Jerusalem dated May 6, 1856:

> Maybe some of our Jewish brothers could be saved from death, starvation is rampaging in Zion's walls, and the mouth of our great leaders is closed . . . there is no agriculture, yes, unfortunately, they even have destroyed the committee for Agriculture; in short, everything goes bent and wrong. The curse of God rests on the H.[oly] City of Jerusalem.
>
> Brothers of Israel! don't tarry, give alms for Jerusalem, send money quickly, but you must specify that it is destined for food and bread, and not for other purposes of life nor other dead purposes.

As a postscript to his letter written under duress, Sachs bewails:

> Thousands of people in Palestine wish to occupy themselves in agriculture, but unfortunately, nobody in Europe wants to hear of it. They have given little for Jerusalem and nothing at all for help to agriculture, not a single cent for Jerusalem. It is thus a great error of the times that Sir Moses Montefiore had given 570 Pounds for Jerusalem for agriculture; this is a great mistake, or false deception. Only Safed and Tiberias had received some means for agriculture, but nothing succeeded.

The Jewish community of Tiberias, instead of sending an emissary to obtain funds for agricultural projects, felt that their prayers on behalf of all Jewry, obligated them to participate in the building of a new synagogue and school in their Holy City. They therefore sent Nachum Cohen, possibly a rabbi, for this sacred purpose. Cohen, in some unexplained manner, went to Washington, D.C., and received from the Secretary of State a document entitling him to use the railroads free of charge. Although Jews in various cities contributed to the proposed Tiberias synagogue, he had little success in New York City.

But as the rabbis of old emphasized: *Im Ein Kemach, Ein Torah* [If there is no flour—bread—, there is no Torah], without an agricultural life, there could be no spiritual life.

This condition was brought to the fore, forcefully and repeatedly. Thus the *Alliance Israelite Universelle*, founded in France, in 1860, to defend Jews in lands where they were oppressed and to consider emigra-

tion, reported in 1866, that the Jews of Chabatz, Serbia, expressed their wish to emigrate to Palestine. The *Alliance* asked: "But what are they to do in a country without agriculture and industrial pursuits? Its inhabitants are in squalid misery. . . ."

When the *Alliance* wanted to direct their emigration to America, Isaacs asserted that they "would be woefully out of place among the Yankees," and advocated their settlement in Palestine, where "the material obstacles have been partially overcome by the Jaffa colonists and would be as nothing to a large body of men determined to make the land subservient to their intelligent will."

A decade earlier, in New York, the prominent Jewish leader, Sampson Simson, thoroughly in accord with the view that charity must be given to the Jews of the Holy Land in order to fulfill the God-ordained commandment of *yishuv Eretz Yisrael* [settlement of the Land of Israel], nonetheless wanted Jews also to be trained in trades and in agriculture. On the other hand, those who opposed charity for the "indolent" Palestinians and refused to give contributions, constantly stressed the need for colonization only. Thus, the land-settlement schemes received the support of both friends and foes of Palestinian relief, but it would take years to initiate.

Simson died in 1857. His will, the amount of $50,000 reminiscent of Judah Touro's, he bequeathed to Moses A. Isaacks, his nephew, who could use only the income of this sum during his lifetime, the principal was to revert "to any responsible corporation in the City existing at the time of the death of my said nephew whose permanent fund is established by its charter for the purpose of meliorating the condition of the Jews in Jerusalem, Palestine." Simson stipulated that this money was to be used to teach the Palestinian Jews "arts, sciences, and mechanical and agricultural vocations."

When Moses Isaacks died, his children contested the will, claiming that the North American Relief Society, of which Sampson Simson was the founder, had not been chartered "to meliorate the condition of the Jews in Jerusalem." The court upheld this contention. Ironically, Sampson Simson was a most prominent attorney.

Seven years passed. Hirschberg, that American Jew who earlier had emigrated to Palestine, was returning to Philadelphia, carrying with him a letter from fellow American I.F. Kraus, dated Jerusalem, July 16, 1862:

> . . . In this good and wide land (you do know its [biblical] borders) there are just a few of the people of Israel and these few are, in addition, poor and much in need of help; and one cannot expect from them that they should occupy themselves with tilling the fields and raising cattle, as they do not have the means to buy the land.

> Either it is necessary that rich people come to the land who could buy in and conduct the business. Or the local poor people must be supported from abroad for the purpose of agriculture. There are many here who would, at once, move into the country if given the opportunity. For this purpose there should societies be formed in all lands . . .

Love for the land of Israel by American Jews was best symbolized by an act of an American-Jewish naval Commander.

Commodore Uriah Phillips Levy, honored with the highest rank in the U.S. Navy, was given command as flag officer of the Mediterranean squadron, on February 21, 1860. During the outbreak of war in Italy at the time, to protect American interests in the eastern Mediterranean, Commodore Levy ordered his sloop-of-war, the *Macadenian*, into the port cities of Smyrna, Turkey; Beirut, Syria; and Jaffa, Palestine.

Levy, ever proud of his heritage, looked upon Palestine, as the Holy Land, the Land of Israel. Upon his return to the port of New York, he brought to *Shearith Israel* an entire wagon load of earth from the Holy Land, replenishing the exhausted two pounds supply of earth brought over thirty years earlier by the Palestinian emissary, Rabbi Enoch Zundel.

Such was the love of the American Jew for the Land of Israel, that if he could not live upon its soil, he would at least have its precious earth with him in death. One American synagogue, that of eighteenth century Curacao, imported sand from the Holy Land which they mixed with the native sand to carpet their planked floor. Such was the attachment of American Jewry to the land of their ancestors.

The sacrifices of the few American settlers in the Land of Israel, and of the Palestinian emissaries adhering to a kosher diet in their journeying between the western and eastern hemispheres in sailing ships and steam vessels, astounded even the hardiest traveler. But none of them, save Benjamin II who sought to emulate and surpass the world-wide journeyings of the medieval traveler Benjamin I [ben Jonah of Tudela], in America from 1859 to 1862, could compare to the bravery of the round-the-world Jewish Magellan, the *Ashkenazi* rabbi, Jacob Mordecai Netter.

Unlike all Palestinian emissaries who reached America by travelling westward, Rabbi Jacob Netter began his journey by travelling eastward. Unlike others who spent a year in their mission, his took about five years, beginning in 1855-1856 and ending in 1860.

Netter's journey began in Vienna, in Austria-Hungary. From Constantinople, he went on to Jerusalem, visiting the grave of his mother who died when he was nine years old. Here he received his credentials to raise funds for the indigent Jews of the Holy Land.

From Palestine, Netter boated to Bombay, Hong Kong, Macao, and

Canton. With a boatload of Chinese, he crossed the Pacific, a seventy-four days voyage that brought him to San Francisco. He arrived there in January, 1859, and left in May of that year, preceeding globetrotting Benjamin II in California by a year, who visited Palestine in the 1850's.

Netter preached in San Francisco, on April 16, 1859, the Sabbath before Passover, *Shabbos Hagadol* [Great Sabbath]. The preacher compared the six Great Powers of Europe to the six Great Powers of Biblical days. He inferred that there has been a transmigration of political souls, foretold their doom and saw a great new power on the horizon in North America. During his stay in the Golden Gate city, he dedicated poems he authored, one to *Emanu-El*, the other to *Sherith Israel*, and another to jeweller and watchmaker, Abraham Finberg [Fineberg?], a prominent member of *Sherith Israel*, his host.

During that half year he may have visited the mining communities throughout the Mother Lode, but left no record.

From the West Coast Netter journeyed across the continent by the Butterfield Stage along the Southern Route to the gateway to the west, St. Louis, then northward to the string of cities along the Great Lakes.

Half-a-year had passed since he delivered a lengthy sermon on the "Great Sabbath" in San Francisco, when on October 1, 1859, Netter preached at length at Utica, New York, the Sabbath between *Rosh ha-Shanah* and *Yom Kippur*, on *Shabbas Shuvah* [Sabbath of Return, generally translated as the Sabbath of Repentence]. Such was the rivalry between the two congregations in Utica, Polish *Beth El* and German *Adath Jesburun*, that each made separate collections for Palestine.

Rabbi Jacob Netter probably spent the autumnal holidays in New York from which city he booked passage for Europe. Prior to his departure, he commented:

> And so there are many ignorant ones who transgress the commandments of the Torah in the free land of America because of the wilfulness of their hearts and because of the success of freedom. It is practically the same as it was in ancient times during the Exile of Egypt and Assyria. Therefore the time of redemption has come.

After a crossing of the Atlantic in forty days, and being the first rabbi to encircle the globe, Jacob Mordecai Netter reached his final destination, Vienna, in 1860. Netter published that year an account of his travels around the world, entitled *Slavim min ha-Yam* [Sea-Gulls from the Sea].

Netter's visitation to California, that golden land which elicited numerous reports and wide-spread comments in the European-Jewish press, loomed in tenfold exaggeration in the minds of the poverty-stricken masses of Palestine Jewry.

Upon Netter's triumphant return and remittance to the *Pekidei*

u-Mashgichei ve-Amarkelei Eretz Yisrael of Jerusalem of the goodly sums he acquired for the poor, the elder rabbis of the Holy City were determined to tap this source of wealth. To the city by the Golden Gate—San Francisco, to that glittering gold country—the rabbis of the *Kolel Perushim* sent Rabbi Abraham Nissim Ashkenazi. His was a life and death mission, for that year, 1860, the harvest failed in the South of Palestine from natural causes, and destroyed in the North by an insurrection of the Moslem and Druse.

The Jerusalem rabbis chose Nissim, referring to him by his Hebrew name which meant "miracles," rather than by his surname Weinstein. Probably it was because he had five years earlier accomplished miracles by being extremely successful in raising funds in Eastern Europe for construction of the Great Synagogue of Jerusalem on the ruins of that of *Rabbi Yehudah he-Chasid*, situated near the rebuilt *Beth El*.

They addressed his credentials to the rabbis, elders, philanthropists, and all other Jews "residing in peace in all the States of gracious America and the magnificent State of California."

Apparently the Jerusalem rabbis depended on miracles. Nissim took with him the same record book previously kept by Rabbi Aaron Selig. He was instructed to continue inscribing the donor's names; the collections to be transmitted directly to London and Jerusalem.

Arrived in America, the odds would be against his success. American Jewry, on the eve of the Civil War, faced a severe economic depression. A letter from Jerusalem published in the Philadelphia *Occident* on the eve of Nissim's arrival, on October 4, 1860, spoke disparagingly of the coming of messengers, and warned "to give them nothing beyond helping them to return home. . . ."

Implacable opposition to Palestine was voiced by the leaders of Reform Judaism that then swept the country. Isaac M. Wise commented in his *Israelite* on a rumor that Napoleon III intended to "make Rothschild King of Jerusalem and open the country again for Hebrews. He condemned the rumor "so absurd that none can believe it, for it is evident that European and American Israelites would not emigrate to Palestine and there fight half-savage Arabs, Drusses and Turks, and wild beasts in order to have a king of their own, the vast majority of the enlightened Hebrews being republicans in principle . . ." Such rumor circulated from a Christian claim that the Rothschild's had, through their loans in the Greek war of 1820-21, acquired a mortgage on the Holy Land.

In New York, Abraham Nissim began to perform miracles. Eighty dollars had been collected by Pesach Rosenthal, rabbi of the *Beth Hamidrash* and forwarded to Samuel Myer Isaacs by John Boyer, President of the Russian Congregation. The English and German congrega-

tions contributed their share, while at the same time responding to a circular letter from the President of the German and Dutch community of Jerusalem, *Kolel HOD*, seeking donations for a "Habitation for Poor and Pilgrim Jews" to be erected in Jerusalem.

Nissim would travel both the eastern routes taken by Selig and the western route of Netter. Like Selig, Nissim travelled from New York to Boston, returned to New York. One Bostonian donor sent his remittance to Reverend Isaacs with the regret "that clouds are gathering over this land and paralyzing its commerce."

Nissim left for Schenectady. There *Shary Shomaim* [sic! *Sharei Shomaim*] President, Pfeifer Levy and Secretary David Marks, promised him "a yearly contribution to the utmost extent of our power."

On to nearby Troy, Utica, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo, then continuing along the Great Lakes, he came to Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati. Indianapolis and Lafayette followed, but he hurriedly turned westward, to travel across the "Great American Desert," across the plains and Rockies, before the snows began to fall; his sights set on the golden shores of the Pacific.

In September, 1861, after the autumnal holidays, Nissim at the Missouri River, boarded the westward-bound Overland Stage, even as the world traveler Benjamin II, had ridden the eastward-bound Overland Stage that summer, before the holy day season.

Nissim's first dated California entry in his book is a note signed by the secretary of *Sherith Israel*, San Francisco, dated November 22, 1861. The Prussian-Polish congregation had contributed one hundred dollars for the *Perushim* community of Jerusalem. *Sherith Israel's* rabbi, Henry A. Henry, wrote in December: "It shall ever be my study D.V. [Deo Volente: *B'ezras Hashem* "God willing"] to use my humble influence for the benefit of my Coreligionists in the Land of Promise. . . ."

Rabbi Henry further noted the formation in San Francisco of a Society called *Ohavei Zion* [Friends of Zion] "for the relief of our brethren and is now at this time fairly organized. . . ."

Moses Arye Bian [Biach], treasurer of the Russian *Beth Hamidrash—Chevra Shomre Shabbos*, handed Nissim nine dollars from its treasury. President Abraham Abba Segal sent him a Hebrew letter stating that most members contributed through the new society *Ohavei Zion*; its secretary was the well known journalist, Isidore Nathan Choynski.

Returned to New York at the end of January, 1862, Nissim announced on February 14, his forthcoming departure "on this week's steamer."

In his parting valedictory in Hebrew sent to Reverend S. M. Isaacs, he stated: "Every footstep I have taken from New York to San Francisco,

has reminded me that Israel has not changed, for in every way have I been received with true Jewish kindness."

Rabbi Abraham Nissim had truly performed miracles. He had doubled the sum raised by Rabbi Aaron Selig a decade earlier, remitting over twenty five hundred dollars. His predecessor in the east, had prepared the New England, Great Lakes, and mid-western communities for receptivity to his mission. Rabbi Abraham Nissim had opened the fabled, fabulous far west, a few of its nuggets providing for Jerusalemites residences in *Kohel HOD*.

Remittances to Palestine halted during the Civil War. The North American Relief Society, with its base of ten thousand dollars from Touro's legacy, accumulated $700 interest annually to Palestine; also the Civil War brought a temporary halt to visitation by Palestinian messengers. But the ground had been well prepared in the far west by Nissim for the next emissary.

In 1865, when the Civil War ended in America, a great outbreak of cholera spread throughout Jerusalem. Three thousand lives were lost out of a Jewish population of 20,000. The wealthy and those of modest means fled the city but about 15,000 of the poorest and most helpless remained; half of these, Jews.

Two years passed, when a locust plague consumed the crops and food prices soared. Starvation was widespread throughout the Holy Land.

The rabbinic authorities organized for the first time a "Central Committee" consisting of representatives of both the *Ashkenazic Kolelim: Ashkenazim Perushim* and *Ashkenazim Chasidim*. The member *Perushim Kolelim* included the Polish Congregation of the District of Warsaw and the German Congregation *Ahavat Zion*. The member, *Chasidim Kolelim* included the Congregation of *Kaliner*, and the Austrian Congregation of *Galicia*. They engaged a permanent secretary to systematically and regularly distribute all donations.

The "Central Committee" selected the distinguished Rabbi Nathan [Neta] Notkin [Natkin], son-in-law of Joseph Zundel Salant and subsequently of Isaiah Burdaki, the two most influential leaders of the *Ashkenazic* Jews in Jerusalem, as the next emissary to America.

Notkin arrived in New York in January 1868. To his surprise, he met another emissary who had preceded him. Rabbi Aryeh Leb Cohen, had come as a representative *Sephardim* of the Holy Land. These rabbis, natives of Russia and Prussian Poland, agreed to travel together as a Committee, for their mutual benefit.

This Committee of Notkin and Cohen described in *The Jewish Messenger* "the terrible truth that dire distress is now existing in Palestine." Everywhere, they received collections made "at the earnest solicitation

of the accredited messengers . . ." which would forward collections they would obtain to the North American Relief Society.

At this time, Dr. Simeon Abrahams, President of the North American Relief Society received word of a bequest of a thousand dollars from the estate of Rosanna Osterman of Galveston, Texas, she being the sister of Leon Dyer of Baltimore, who had been closely associated with the late Rabbi Rice. But neither the Committee of Cohen and Notkin, nor anyone in Palestine would benefit from Rosanna's will, contested in court by the Osterman family.

In March, Notkin and Cohen proceeded to Philadelphia. Leeser revealed in the *Occident*:

> . . . By-the-by, we saw lately two messengers, Rabbi Nathan Notkin and Rabbi M. [sic! Aryeh Leib] Cohen, who had been out last year to collect funds in consequence of the losses sustained for a second time by the locusts, that plague of eastern countries. . . .

In May, the rabbinic duo set forth for an extended journey to the cities along the Great Lakes, but enroute, before reaching Cincinnati, Cohen, for some unrecorded reason, returned to New York and soon left for Palestine.

Notkin continued on alone to Cincinnati, then onward to Montreal, Boston, and after a few months lapse in his record, during his overland journey to the Pacific we next hear of him from San Francisco, where the Society for the Relief of the Jews of Palestine; formerly *Ohavei Zion* [Lovers of Zion], founded by Nissim seven years earlier, responded to Notkin's appeal.

Notkin traveled into the gold country of the Sierra Nevada, and like the world traveler, Benjamin II, left a record of his travels.

On February 10, 1868, at California's capital city, Sacramento, gateway to the Mother Lode, President L. [Louis] Elkus of *Benai Israel* stated in his poor English, that "for to relieve of our corelegonists in Jeroselem," the congregation contributed seventy-five dollars. The next day, at Marysville, gateway to the northern mines, a similar amount was given by the Hebrew Benevolent and Congregational Society of Marysville, according to its president, Joseph Lask.

A week later, on February 18, Notkin solicited in Nevada [City], California, from The Nevada Hebrew Society, and received ten dollars from President H. Barett, and on the same day, at Grass Valley, Solomon Sanders, president, raised eighteen dollars and fifty cents. On February 24, at Stockton, gateway to the Southern Mines, a collection was made by H. [Herman] Kullman, president of congregation *Rahim Ahoovim* [sic!

Ryhim Ahoovim; also *Re'im Ahuvim*], Society of the Lovely Nation.

On March 18, 1868, Notkin in Southern California, was the first Palestinian emissary to come to Los Angeles. Charles Prager, Secretary-Treasurer of the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Los Angeles appropriated one hundred dollars. By boat Notkin traveled to Panama City, obtained funds from individuals, crossed the Isthmus by the Panama RR, by ship to New Orleans and then toured the Gulf and Piedmont states, to New York and returned to Jerusalem; his mission most successful.

While Rabbi Nathan Notkin was in metropolitan San Francisco on the Pacific coast, there arrived in metropolitan New York on the Atlantic coast, in February, 1868, the Palestinian messenger, Azriel Selig Hausdorff. He had been sent by *Kolel HOD*, which group had not become a member of the "Central Committee" of the *Ashkenazim Kolelim* represented by Notkin. Hausdorff had come to collect donations for the building of almshouses for the poor of the German and Dutch community of Jerusalem.

Alsacian Hausdorff had emigrated to Palestine in 1847, joined *Kolel HOD*, and a decade later, had been chosen to travel to Europe to raise funds for additional housing. The shortage of living space in Jerusalem became acute for many well-to-do Christians arrived and paid the higher rent demanded by Moslem landlords. The poorer immigrant Jews could find no housing; even as those who came with the increased immigrants of a decade earlier, in 1848. With the ever increasing immigration of German Jews, the housing shortage became acute by 1868, and Hausdorff was selected to journey to America.

In New York, Hausdorff made contact with the Board of Delegates of American Israelites. That organization, founded that year to rescue Edgardo Mortara, a seven year old Italian-Jewish boy, kidnapped by Papal representatives, allocated one thousand dollars for *Kolel HOD* almshouses to be built near Mount Zion.

Seven years passed since Azriel Selig Hausdorff's visit to America, when all the *Sephardi* and *Ashkenazi* communities including *Kolel HOD*, united in the choice of Rabbi Nathan Notkin, to represent all the *Kolelim*, of all the four Holy Cities of the Holy Land of Palestine. Netter became distinguished as the first emissary to travel on behalf of all Jewish communities of Palestine.

Netter, in his second mission to America, succeeded and exceeded in his fund raising on behalf of all Palestinian Jewry.

American Jews who settled in Palestine numbered twelve in Jerusalem and perhaps as many in the other cities.

By 1870, American Jews in Palestine included the New York Jew, W. N. Polack, who in 1834 went to Palestine as a settler; the New Yor-

ker, James Nathans; Nachum Harris, a founder of the *Beth Hamidrash* of New York, in 1850; also, by 1854 the Philadelphians I. F. Kraus, one Hirschburg, Cohen and his father-in-law Moshe Yitzchok Goldsmith.

One American married couple remained but briefly. Cincinnatian Hyman Moses emigrated to Palestine in 1867, a short time after Notkin's visit, together with his wife. They sold all their belongings and set forth for the Holy Land. Leeser and Isaacs both reported on their projected "Pilgrimage to Palestine." Speaking in warm terms, they wrote: "We bespeak a cordial reception to Mr. Moses knowing, as we do, the sincerity of his motives and the laudable object he has in view."

For some unexplained circumstance, the Moses's remained in Jerusalem but a short while. On their way back to the States, the London *Jewish Chronicle* reported: "Besides giving liberal donations for all worthy purposes, they formed a committee to distribute future gifts which they might forward." Indeed, upon their return to Cincinnati, the Moses's remained for many years the staunchest and most active supporters of Palestine relief in his city.

Most remarkable was the determination to settle in the Land of Israel, of an American Jewess, who travelled there and remained.

The first known American woman to emigrate to Palestine was Mrs. Rachel Cohen of New York, a widow. She planned to leave with her son and two daughters. Reverend Isaacs tried to discourage her, as did Leeser who objected on the grounds that Palestine "was not very favorable to afford a home of comfort to any one—unless she was amply provided with funds for permanent support." Claiming that two married daughters—one in New York, the other in San Francisco—had undertaken to provide for her needs, she persisted in going "to live and die on the soil watered by the nation's tears."

The year 1870 marked eighteen centuries since the destruction of Judea and the loss of Jewish nationhood in the world community of nations. That year, there arrived in America, a unique personality, a Jerusalemite, a Judean diplomat without portfolio, who became an American citizen before returning to the Land of Israel. He was Hayyim Zevi Sneersohn, a grand-grandson of Shneor Zalman, Rabbi of Ladi, the founder of Chabad Chasidism.

Russian Sneersohn had emigrated as a child to Palestine with his family in 1840. His brilliance in talmudic learning moved the rabbis to ordain him at his *Bar Mitzvah*. By 1860, as a young man, he traveled to India, Persia, China, and Australia, to raise funds for the poor of Jerusalem and Hebron; also to rebuild the walled city of Jerusalem.

In the late 1860's, Hayyim Zevi Sneersohn left from Jerusalem for Paris and London and arrived in New York in early 1869. He came not

to raise funds, as had Netter and earlier rabbinic emissaries, but to act in the capacity of a diplomat, to better relations between the United States and Palestine.

On February 17, 1869, the Jerusalem rabbi lectured at the New York Historical Society by invitation of Drs. Samuel Adler, David Einhorn, James Gutheim, Adolph Huebsch, Moses Mielziner, Henry Ward Beecher, and many other. He told the audience that there were 3,100 Jewish families in Jerusalem worshipping in fourteen congregations: three *Sephardic* and eleven *Ashkenazic*.

In Mid-April, in Washington, D.C., Sneersohn met with Hamilton Fish, American Secretary of State. He complained that the American consul proselytized for Christianity among local Jewry. Shortly thereafter, he was invited to an informal reception given by the President of the United States, Ulysses S. Grant, recently inaugurated.

The story of his visit, reported in *The National Intelligencer* of the capital city, was that Sneersohn, attired in his oriental costume, addressed the President. Grant then "rose courteously to receive the Rabbi," who thereupon said:

> "Mr President: Permit me to give my thanks to the Almighty, whose mercy brought me here to behold the face of the chosen by the millions of this great nation. . . . I come to your Excellency from the East, . . . to entreat you in the name of God, who created all men equal, to listen to the prayer of your humble servant, standing before you to advocate the cause of his oppressed brethren in the Holy Land. The Israelites in Palestine possess no political or civil rights whatever, and oftentimes deprived of protection by the representatives of the civilized nations which the Christians enjoy, are exposed to violence and arbitrary rule. The only shelter the Israelites occasionally find is in the courts of the different European consulates, where one of their coreligionists is employed either as interpreter or deputy consul, who convey their grievances to the proper channel. This free Republic alone, whose banner covers the oppressed, whose foundation is based on equality, toleration, and liberty of conscience, has no Israelites employed near the consul at Jerusalem. I do pray, therefore, your Excellency, to turn your attention to the deplorable condition of my brethren in the Orient, that the principles of this Government may be truly embodied in its representatives abroad; and I do further pray that your Excellency may show me that mark of favor which will enable my brethren in the Holy Land in the hour of need to seek refuge under the Stars and Stripes, that this free country and its exalted chief should be blessed on the sacred spot of our common ancestors."
>
> At the close of his address, the President, evidently deeply moved by the Rabbi's sincere and feeling words, inquired with interest as

to the circumstances affecting the Jews at Jerusalem which might be guarded by the American Consulate; and replied, with his wonted quick decision, "I shall look into this matter with care."

The Rabbi then closed the interview with the following fervant invocation: "Before I part from you, Mr. President, allow me to offer my fervant prayer from the depth of my heart: Almighty God, whose dominion is an everlasting kingdom, may he bless and preserve, guard and assist your Excellency and your family. May the Supreme King of Kings grant you a long life, and inspire you with benevolence and friendship towards all mankind."

At its close, the whole crowd, who had forgotten each his own personal interest in the impressive scene which was passing, were seen to be affected, some even to tears; and from some lips a fervant "Amen" was heard in response. The President replied, with evident feeling, "I thank you for your wishes and prayers." While he was making a note for future reference, the Rabbi and his friends retired. Even office seekers seemed to say, "That man's mission ought not to fail." Of course, American sympathy will respond to such an appeal; and the American Government cannot refuse so humble a request as that the Israelites of our own and other lands shall have in the American Consulate at Jerusalem, an advocate whose voice will be heard throughout Christendom, as well as at the court of the greatest of the Mahommedan powers.

The Washington National Chronical noted that Sneersohn was "the representative of one of the oldest [of nationalities], addressing himself to the youngest of nationalities," and observed:

> Rabbi Sneersohn and a large body of his friends in this and other countries look to our government to take the initiative in accomplishing for the Israelites of Jerusalem what they have secured for Germans in Germany and Chinese in China. The Holy Land is the "Fatherland" of the Israelites.

In May, he traveled to Cincinnati, where he told audiences that he felt he could discern the finger of God pointing to a day "not far distant, he hoped, when the great deliverance would take place and the land [of Israel] be restored to the Jewish people."

Returning to New York, Sneersohn lectured at Cooper Institute, introduced by the Christian clergyman, Reverend Dr. Howard Crosby. He stressed the need to purchase land and erect buildings, because the restoration would not be accomplished just by the word of God. He pointed out that Abraham too, bought land, even though it had been divinely promised to him. America, he felt, was the chosen agent for the restoration of the Jewish homeland.

> It is an undeniable fact that, from this country of America, the first light went out to shine upon the other countries. The Stars and Stripes . . . will call the sons of Israel to ascend the Holy Mountain, and the Flag of Freedom will wave over the Holy Ground. . . .

Arriving in New York in January 1870, Sneersohn, in diplomatic fashion, wrote to President Grant. He thanked him for removing the offending American consul in Jerusalem and gave gratitude for his appointment of a new consul to Jerusalem. Having spent a year in Roumania, he then entreated:

> Therefore, I feel myself encouraged in again praying to the great American people and their chosen chieftain. Five hundred thousand souls in Roumania are . . . subject to the malicious will of all. Their crime is their belief in One God; their sin, that they are scions of the stock of Abraham.
>
> The influence of the United States can be exerted in two different ways . . . in the appointment of consuls friendly toward our race in that country [Roumania]; but more especially would such an appointment prove efficacious . . . if a Jewish citizen were sent there as consul. . . .

After his signature he added the title, "Rabbi from Jerusalem," as if to suggest that his was a diplomatic mission.

He returned to New York for the Passover holidays, then set out by rail on April 27, 1870, for California. The golden spike had been driven at Promontory, near Ogden, Utah, in the previous year to complete the transcontinental railroad.

On May 15, Dr. Elkan Cohn introduced the Jerusalem rabbi at *Emanu-El*. On June 24, Benjamin Franklin Peixotto introduced him at Mercantile Library Hall.

Sneersohn was deeply impressed with the accomplishments and standing of Peixotto. A descendant of colonial *Sephardic* Jewry, a past Grand Saar of the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith, Peixotto managed an insurance agency, and recently opened a law office. The rabbi recommended Peixotto to President Grant as the next consul to Roumania. Though presidential advisor Simon Wolf had already recommended another Jew, Grant accepted Sneersohn's recommendation.

At Los Angeles, Sneersohn lectured at Wilson's Hall, introduced by John G. Downey, former Governor of California. The Los Angeles *Star* observed:

> It was a very interesting discourse, tracing the varying fortunes of the country and its inhabitants from the early ages to the present time . . . and the glorious confidence entertained by all, that the day of their redemption draweth nigh.

Sneersohn returned east, to New York, and on to Jerusalem. He left as an American citizen, a personal witness to the belief that the Stars and Stripes would be a banner protecting the oppressed people of Israel. Having influenced the placement of a Jewish consul in Bucharest, and a new consul in Jerusalem, Hayyim Zevi Sneersohn had become the first proto-Israeli diplomat.

Benjamin Lilienthal, the first American Jew to permanently settle in the Land of Israel, joined by fellow American M. Koppel, spearheaded a drive

> for the relief and comfort of all such Israelites as are come from the United States and also for the purchase of a piece of ground near Mount Moriah, as near unto the spot where our Temple stood, as it shall be possible; for the building of a Synagogue, a Public School or any other Structure that shall seem advisable for their need.

To achieve his goal, Benjamin Lilienthal made but one exception to his ruling not to depart the Holy Land. He embarked for America in 1867 to raise the needed funds. Provided with a warm recommendation by the American Consul, Victor Beauboucher, addressed to Dr. Max Lilienthal of Cincinnati, and Samuel Myer Isaacs of New York, dated November 1, 1867:

> The number of American Jews residing in Jerusalem is very limited, a dozen altogether, but these unfortunates are the most miserable of all and do not receive pecuniary succor from any one, the German Committees never having given them a cent, and those of America perhaps do not know them at all.
>
> I have done all I could to relieve these poor people ever since two years that I am in Palestine, and seeing their increasing misery, I this day address myself to you, in order that something may be done in their favor by the Committee of which you are a member.
>
> One of them, Benjamin Lilienthal, whom I know as an honest man, left yesterday for the States, and will be able orally to make to you the lamentable narration of the position of his coreligionists and fellow-citizens in Palestine. . . . .

Sailing westward from England to America, a fierce mid-Atlantic storm forced the ship to return. Believing this to be a divine sign, Lilienthal returned to the Holy Land, never to step off its soil again.

In sharp contrast to Benjamin Lilienthal and all Orthodox Jews who looked forward to the eventual restoration of the Holy Temple, another Cincinnatian of the same surname, Max Lilienthal regarded its rebuilding as an anomaly, an absurdity. Thus Lilienthal declared:

> We owe no longer any allegiance to Jerusalem, save the respect all enlightened nations pay to this cradle of all civilizing religions. We cherish no longer any desire for a return to Palestine, but proudly and gratefully exclaim with the *Psalmist*, "Here is my resting place; here shall I reside; for I love this place."

Max Lilienthal had not taken heed of such ominous communications as that published in the *Allegemeine Zeitung*, dated January 9, 1841, Boston, Massachusetts, that Jews "cannot become good Republicans, and that they should be dispatched to Palestine, for which a society should be formed. . . ." Nor did he take notice of the New York blood libel, reported in *Westerzeitung*, September 20, 1850.

> A shocking event occurred last Sunday [September 15, 1850]. It was the eve of the Day of Atonement for the Jews and they were all in the synagogue. . . . A rumor spread that the Jews had murdered a Gentile girl for their holiday. About 10:30 a crowd of some 500 men burst into the house, broke down the doors and literally pulled from their beds the sleeping women. . . . Everyone who resisted was knocked down. . . . The remarkable thing about the affair is that three Irish policemen were the leaders of this raging mob.

Lilienthal was blinded by American democracy and German culture. Like all Reformers, he believed this combination had achieved the utopian society envisioned by the Prophets of Israel, the Messianic era.

Max Lilienthal dramatically expressed the Reform view when he refused to participate at *Bene Israèl*'s *Tisha B'ab* service commemorated annually, on the 9th day of the Hebrew month of Ab, the destruction of the Holy Temples. He based his action on the ground that the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem should not be observed by prayers of lamentation and fasting, for to him, as to Reformers, this catastrophe was really providential, inasmuch as it was the beginning of the world mission of the Jews. The loss of a separate Jewish nationality was the necessary preliminary to the universal Jewish mission in all portions of the earth. This idea had been clearly enunciated by David Einhorn, who said: "The one temple in Jerusalem sank into the dust, in order that countless temples might arise in Thy honor and glory all over the wide surface of the globe . . . ."

But throughout America in the West and far West too, there were Orthodox Jewish congregations, who prayed three times a day for the restoration of Zion, the return of Jews to Zion, and payed as well as prayed. Their words and deeds, and the contributions of individuals from such remote frontier towns as Arkadelphia, Arkansas, proved to be the

strongest reply to the Reformer assimilationists who opposed Zion and rejected the belief in the restoration of Israel and the coming of the Messiah.

Reverend Isaacs, national treasurer of the North American Relief Society for Palestine, replied to the Reformers who refused to come to the aid of Holy Land Jews:

> Are the poor in Palestine to starve, is no tear of sympathy to be shed in their behalf, no tongue to speak of their distress? . . . .
>
> Yes, the poor of Palestine will yet find hearts to feel for them, although you may treat them with indifference, or change their advocates with inconsistency. Yes, even in this glorious land which I revere with you, but not as "our Jerusalem," hearts sympathize with their distress and relive their sorrow to the utmost of their power . . . .

During the Crimean, War, (1852-1854), the Jewish population of Palestine dropped from 12,000 to 10,000.

Calling on his fellow Jews to observe the *Tisha B'av* fast, Samuel M. Isaacs noted that the "black fast," as it is generally termed, "is observed with great rigor . . . While some of the minor fasts are neglected, this, as well as the 'white fast' (the Day of Atonement), is most scrupulously observed."

Isaac M. Wise may have been startled by the organization of *Bnai Zion* in New York in the spring of 1867. Organized by Reverend Dr. Aaron Messing, this proto-Zionist organization had its membership open to youths, fourteen years and up, to raise funds for the poor of Palestine.

Inspired by the "Sons of Zion", an unnamed American Jew created his conception of a *Yisroel Fohn* [Israel Flag]. In a painting on a Hebrew New Year's card, he depicted a flag of two blue stripes and four Shields of David on a white background.

This flag was held aloft by a young Israelite, perhaps a self-portrait of that Americanized Jew, hatted, attired in a blue suit, and draped in a *Talis* [Prayer Shawl]. That devotee of a Jewish homeland, underscored that dramatic depiction with a prophetic rhyme in *Yiddish*:

> Es flatered in der luften
> Yisroel's alte fohn. —
> Bald kumt tzu uns die geulah,
> Ich zog die besurah ohn!

His blue-white color combination had its source in the poem *Zivei Eretz Yehudah* [Deer of the Land of Judah]. Written about 1860 by the poet Ludwig August Fränkl, a relative of Zacharias Fränkel, founder of the historical school of Judaism, a verse fervently intoned:

All that is sacred with all appear in these colors:
White—as the radiance of great faith
Blue—like the appearance of the firmament.

The *Bnai Zion* of 1860's inspired other "Sons of Zion" who in the 1870's sought to stimulate a large scale immigration to Palestine. They founded the society *Hibbat Zion* [Love of Zion], and their movement became called *Hovevei Zion* [Lovers of Zion]. The *Hibbat Zion* societies adopted the Shield of David with the word "*Ziyyon*" in the center, as a national emblem.

The *Bnai Zion* "Sons of Zion" further inspired the educator, Rabbi David Blaustein, to found *B'nai Zion Educational Society*, a youth movement whose library and center he opened at the dedication of its newly established Zion Hall, 170 Hanover Street, Boston, on July 21, 1891.

A dedicated leader of *B'nai Zion Educational Society* Jacob Baruch Askowith [Askovitz] and his son Charles designed a flag for the *B'nai Zion Educational Society*, two horizontal blue strips on a white background, framing a *Magen David* in the center. At the dedication, Dr Charles Askowith was given the honor of unfurling the flag, while reciting the poem "Banner of the Jew" by Emma Lazarus, a Jewish poetess.

Jacob Askowith proudly carried this "First Zionist Flag" in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1892, in the 400th anniversary parade celebrating the voyage of Columbus. This flag, denominated in the press as the "Flag of Judah," became the prototype of the standard adopted by the World Zionist Organization in 1897 at the suggestion of a Boston delegate to the World Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland. That delegate was Bostonian Isaac Harris, who urged its adoption of this "Flag of Judah."

This "Flag of Judah" had been preceded half-a-century earlier by the "Banner of Judah," displayed at the anniversary meeting of the *New York Hebrew Benevolent Society*. Bostonian Mrs. Lydia Maria Child attended that session in 1841 and left the following description:

> Suspended in the dining hall, between the American and English flags, may be seen the Banner of Judah, with Hebrew inscriptions in golden letters. How this stirs the sea of memory! That national banner has not been unfurled for eighteen hundred years. The last time it floated to the breeze was over the walls of Jerusalem, besieged by Titus Vespasianus. Then *our* stars and stripes were not foreseen, even in dim shadow, by the vision of a prophet; and here they are intertwined together over this congress of nations!

That "congress of nations" became a reality at the end of the nineteenth century, when Jews of many nations assembled to spearhead the world-wide Zionist movement.

In 1895, Theodore Herzl, leader of the "Lovers of Zion" *Hovevei Zion*, prepared a design for a Jewish flag: seven gold stars on a white field, which to the founder of political Zionism, represented "a seven-hour working day in our new and pure life." In 1896, Herzl proposed a modified version of this flag in his manuscript, *The Jewish State*: six stars placed on the tips of the six angles of the Shield of David; a seventh Shield of David hovering above.

Herzl's companion, David Wolffsohn, it is said, regarded the *talis*' blue stripes upon a white background as the traditional flag of the Jew. Inserting in its center a Shield of David, symbolizing the protection of the Almighty, the flag represented under the colors of the heavens, the nation of Israel under divine protection.

The Askowith family, in fact, regarded the "Flag of Judah," assigned by Jacob as sacred. When the oldest brother, Elias, died, that first flag of Zion, was, like a *Talis*, placed in his casket and buried with him.

That "Flag of Judah" created by Americans, the Askowith's, and promoted by their fellow Bostonian Isaac Harris, and sponsored by Wolffsohn became adopted as the national Jewish flag at the First Zionist Congress in Switzerland in 1897.

"Zionism," coined by Nathan Birnbaum in his journal *Selbstemanzipation* [issue of April 1, 1890] at the end of the nineteenth century for the Jewish nationalist movement was fiercely opposed by the leading anti-Zionist, Isaac Mayer Wise, who called it "Ziomania." Abraham Rice, who decades earlier led United States Jewry in the raising of funds for Palestinian Jewry and assisted Benjamin Lilienthal to emigrate to the Land of Israel; together with such personalities as Samuel Myer Isaacs and Isaac Leeser were truly the pioneer American Zionists.

Unlike many Reformers, Rice and his followers felt unconflicted in their proto-Zionism a direction regarded by the Reformist as an issue of dual loyalties; a representation refuted by the course of history when Reform was compelled to reverse its stand. The Orthodox tradition influenced them by keeping alive and strong the *mitzvah* of Return to Zion and the vision of Jerusalem rebuilt.



KOROPKA

Coins of Oppression and Suppression in the Land of the Czars, 19th Century

(Great Jewish Portraits in Metal, Edited by Daniel M. Friedenberg)

Koropka (i.e. Box for *Shechitah*, copper coins. Tokens minted by Jewish communities in Russia for its tax on *Shechitah*, which was placed in a box by the side of the *Shochet*, in which the *Koropka* fee was deposited, since the Czar's tax required a *Kopek* or two for all ritual objects, as for *Shechitah*.

BOOK IX

THE RUSSIAN BETH HAMIDRASH



Jews in hiding from Czar's troops patrolling Russian-German border; Sketch by Abel Pann.

(Author's Private Collection)

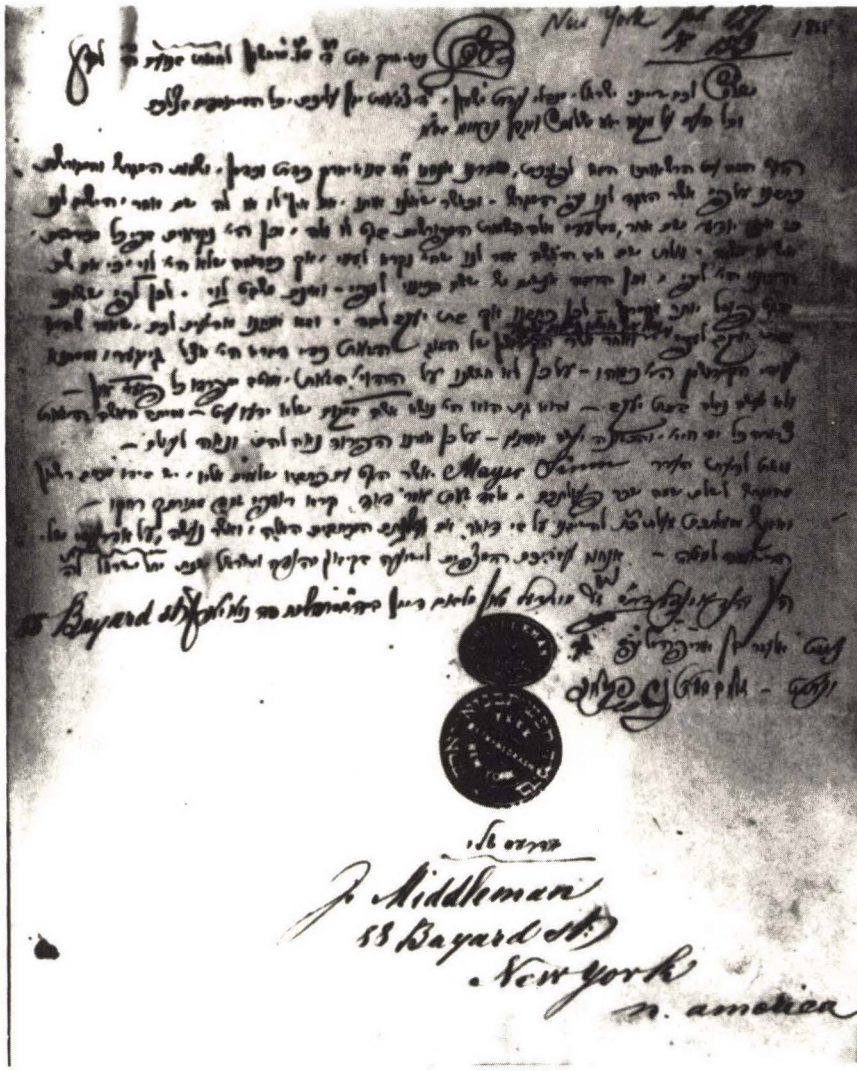


Eastern European Jew prays on deck of emigrant ship America-bound; 19th century.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)

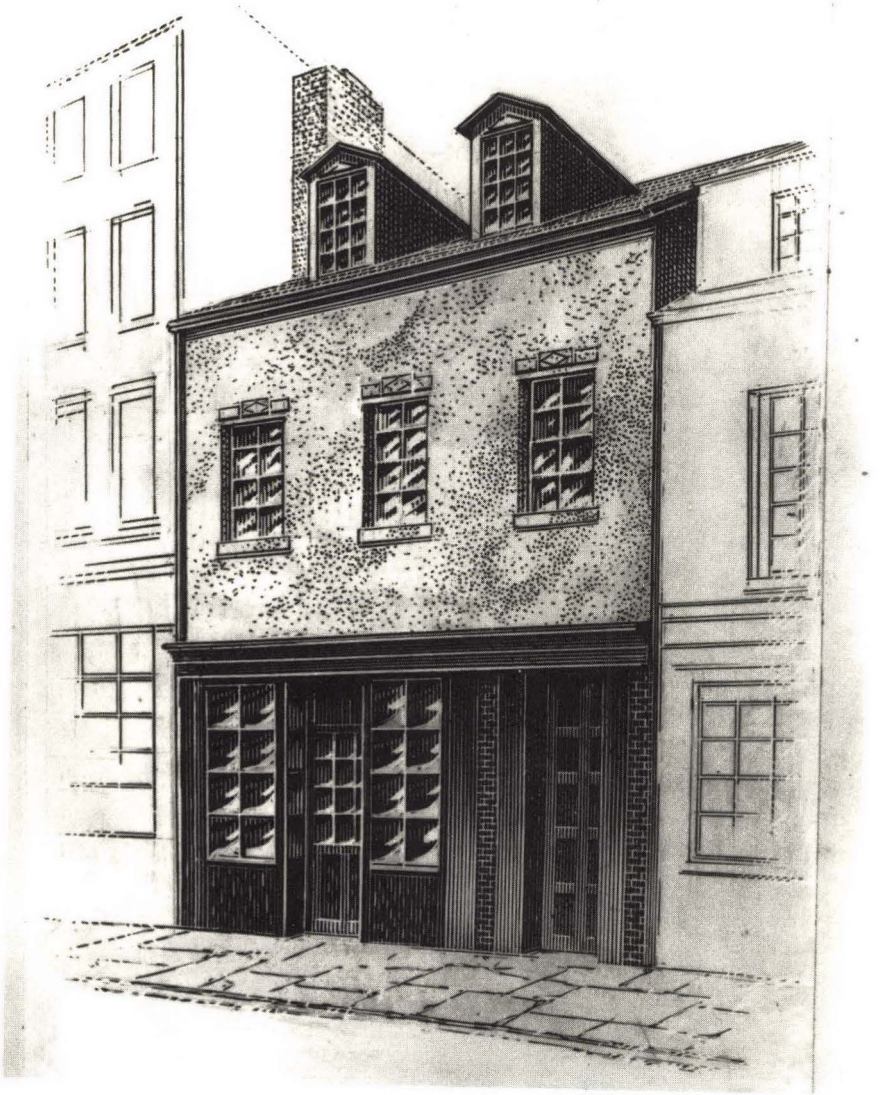


Russian Jewry Ghettoized along Western Border.
(*Journey Into Our Heritage* by Harry Gutkin)



Orthodox Rabbi Judah Middleman, of the Free *Beth Hamidrash*, New York, issued Letter of Attestation dated November 13, 1856, to affirm religious divorce of a couple married by Reformed Dr. Abraham Geiger of Breslau.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



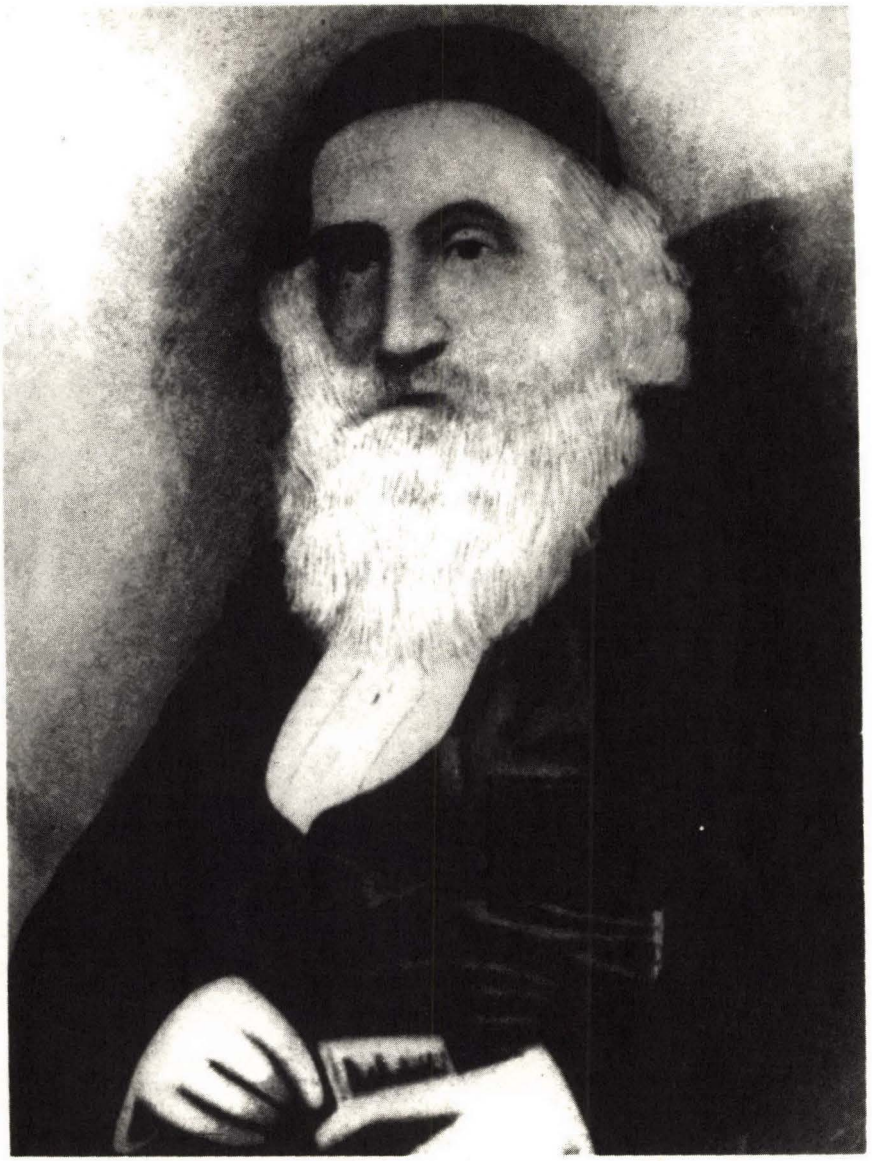
First Russian *Beth Hamidrash* in United States, 1850-1852, in Garret at 83 [Bayard] Mott Street, New York.

(Collection of Kosher Overseers Association of America)



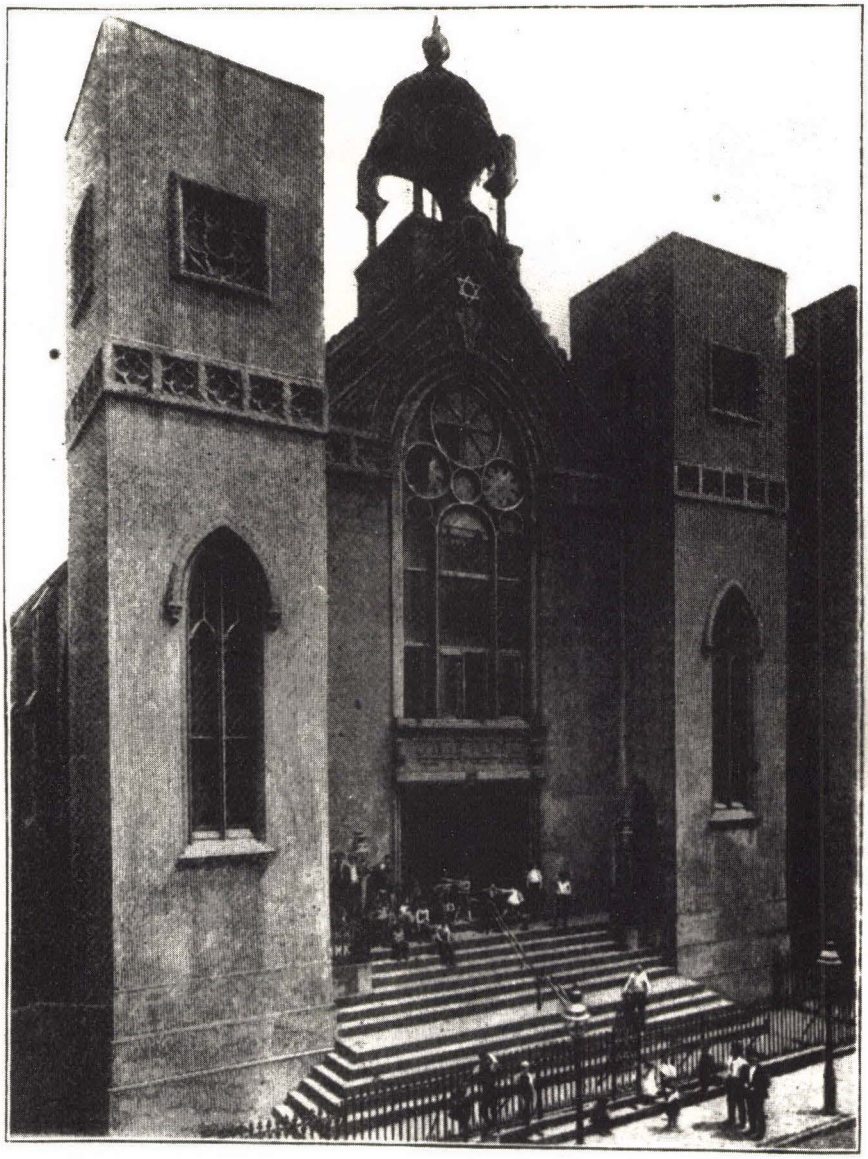
Sampson Simson, barrister, bequeathed large sum for *Beth Hamidrash* in his will, in 1858.

(Courtesy American Jewish Historical Society)



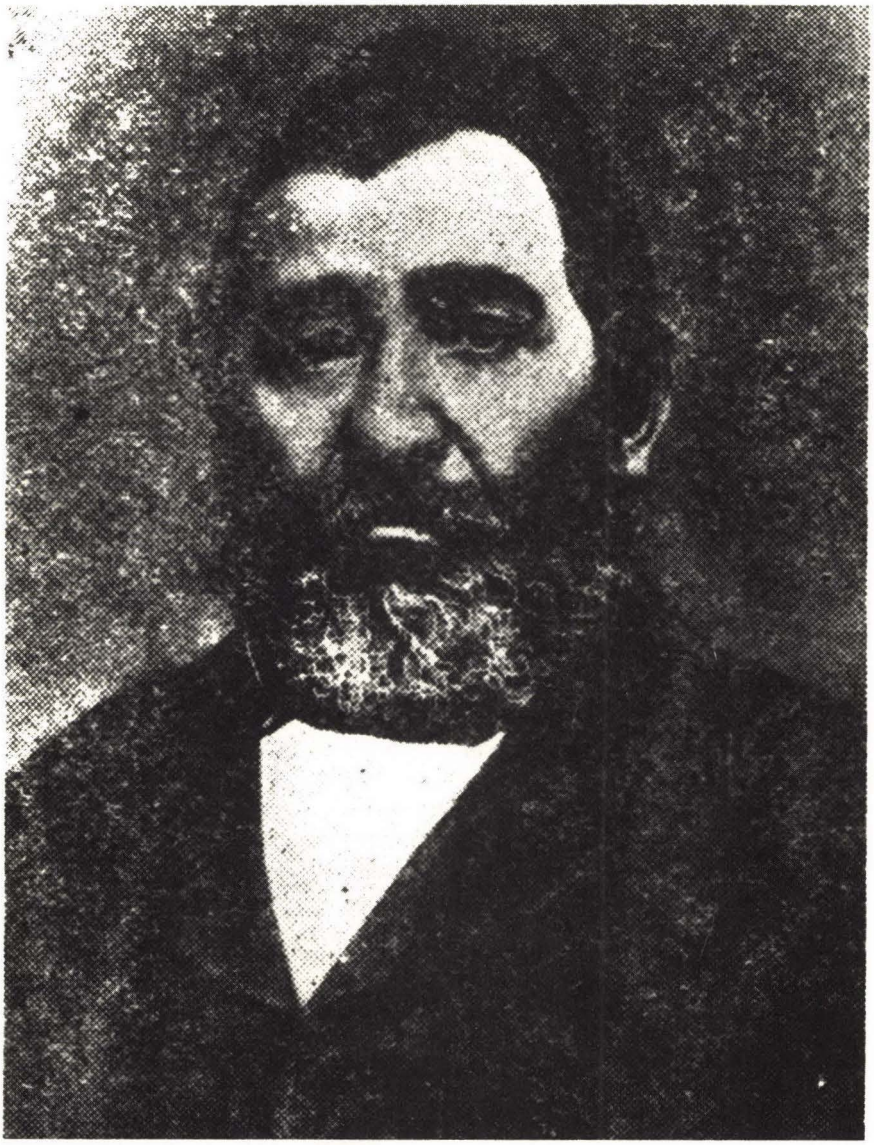
John I. Hart, inventor of oil silk, and minister from France to Spain under Napoleon I, first president of *B'nai Jeshurun*, New York, visited *Beth Hamidrash* in 1857; deeply impressed by Rabbi Ash's Talmudic knowledge, he influenced Sampson Simson's donation, which helped fund the Russian Synagogue, a former Welsh Methodist Church, at 78 Allen Street, Lower East Side, New York.

(Century of Judaism by Israel Goldstein)



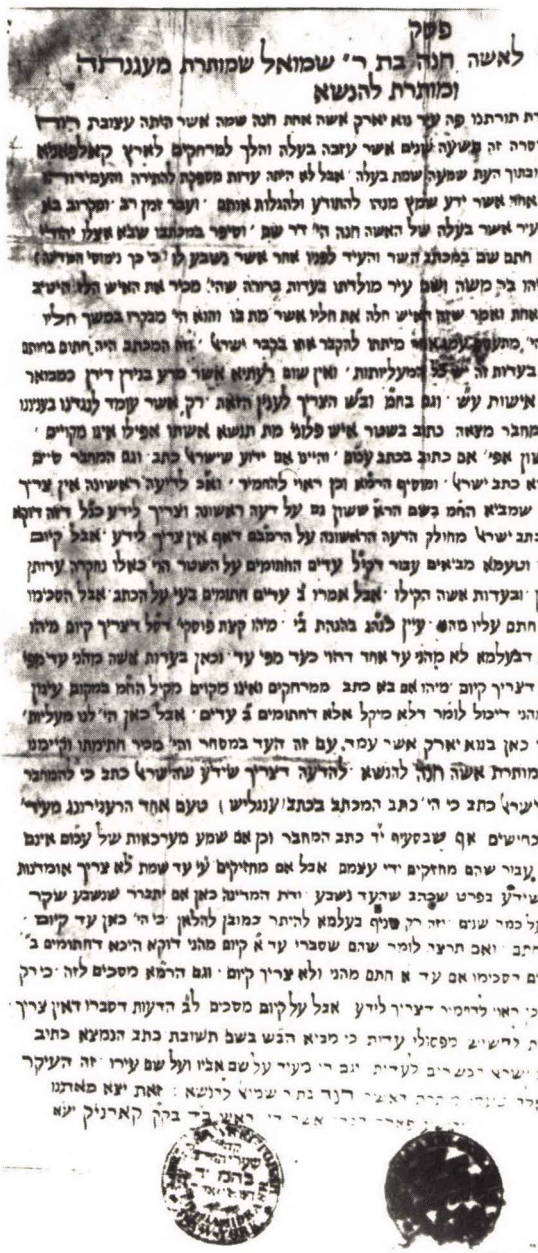
Beth Hamidrash Hagadol, 64 Norfolk, near Grand Street, New York, a former Methodist Church, remodeled and dedicated in 1885. Founded in 1859, following its secession from the *Beth Hamidrash*, Rabbi Ash served as its rabbi in its first location at Forsyth and Grand, and subsequently in its Norfolk Street *Schul* until his death in 1888.

(Jewish Encyclopedia)



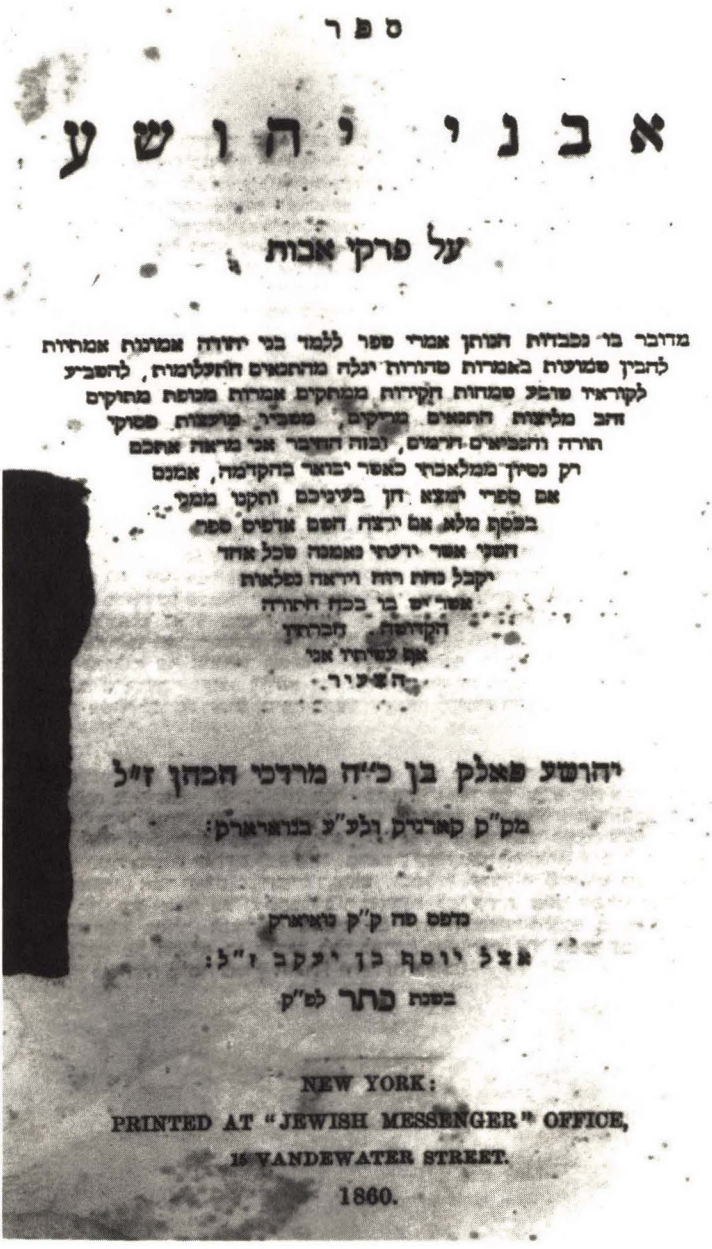
Abraham Joseph Ash, Rabbi of the Russian *Beth Hamidrash*, New York, in the 1850s: 1852 at Elm and Canal Streets; 1853 at 514 Pearl Street; 1858 in its first building, a former Welsh-Scotch Methodist Church at 78 Allen Street, dedicated by Rabbi Rice.

(*Otzar Zichronotai* by Azriel Eisenstein)



1860: Decision of Rabbinical Court headed by Joshua Falk, rabbi of the *Beth Hamidrash Shaarei Torah*, New York, sanctioning release of *Agunah* from her husband, who left for California in 1851 and whose death is affirmed by witnesses.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



ספר

אבני יהושע

על פרקי אבות

מדובר בו נכבדות הנותן אמרי שפר ללמד בני יהודה אמונות אמתיות
להבין שמועות באמרות טהורות יגלה מהתנאים התעלומות, להשב"ע
לקוראיו שובע שמחות חקירות ממתקים אמרות מנופת מתוקים
זהב מליצות התנאים מריקים, משביר מועצות פסוקי
תורה והנביאים הרמים, ובזה החיבר אני מראה אתכם
רק נסיון ממלאכתי כאשר יבואר בהקדמה, אמנם
אם ספרי ימצא חן בעיניכם ותקנו ממני
בכסף מלא אם ירצה השם אדפיס ספר
השני אשר ידעתי נאמנה שכל אחד
יקבל נחת רוח ויראה נפלאות
אשר יש בו בכח התורה
הקדושה. חברתיו
אף עשיתיו אני
הצעיר.

יהושע פאלק בן כ"ה מרדכי הכהן ז"ל

מק"ק קארגיק ולע"ע בנואיארק:

נדפס פה ק"ק נואיארק
אצל יוסף בן יעקב ז"ל:
בשנת כתר לפ"ק

NEW YORK:
PRINTED AT "JEWISH MESSENGER" OFFICE,
15 VANDEWATER STREET.
1860.

Avney Yehoshua by Joshua Falk, New York; First Rabbinic commentary authored and published in America, 1860.

(Library of the Author)

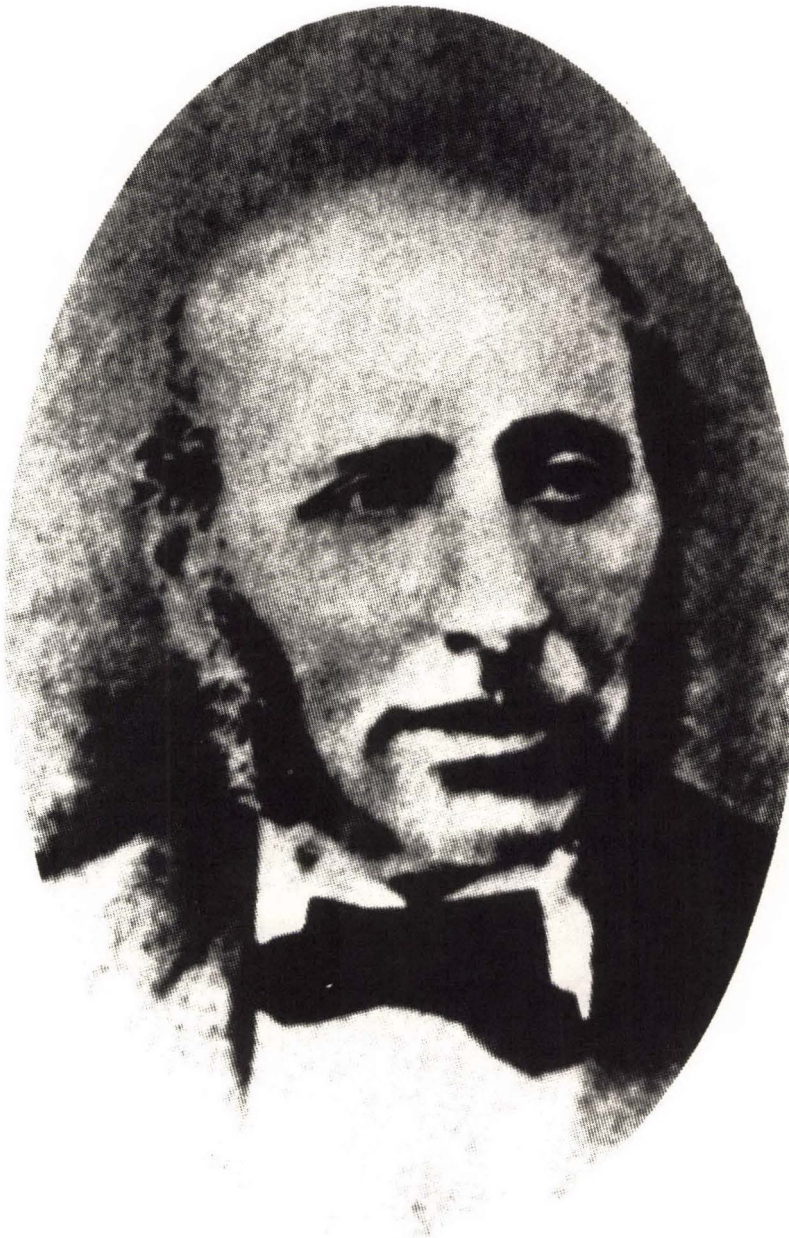


Dr. Isaac Mayer, Reformer, minister, *Berith Kodesh*, Rochester, New York 1856-1859. His ritual slaughtering challenged, and was charged to be non-kosher.

(Hartford Jews, 1659-1970, by Morris Silverman)

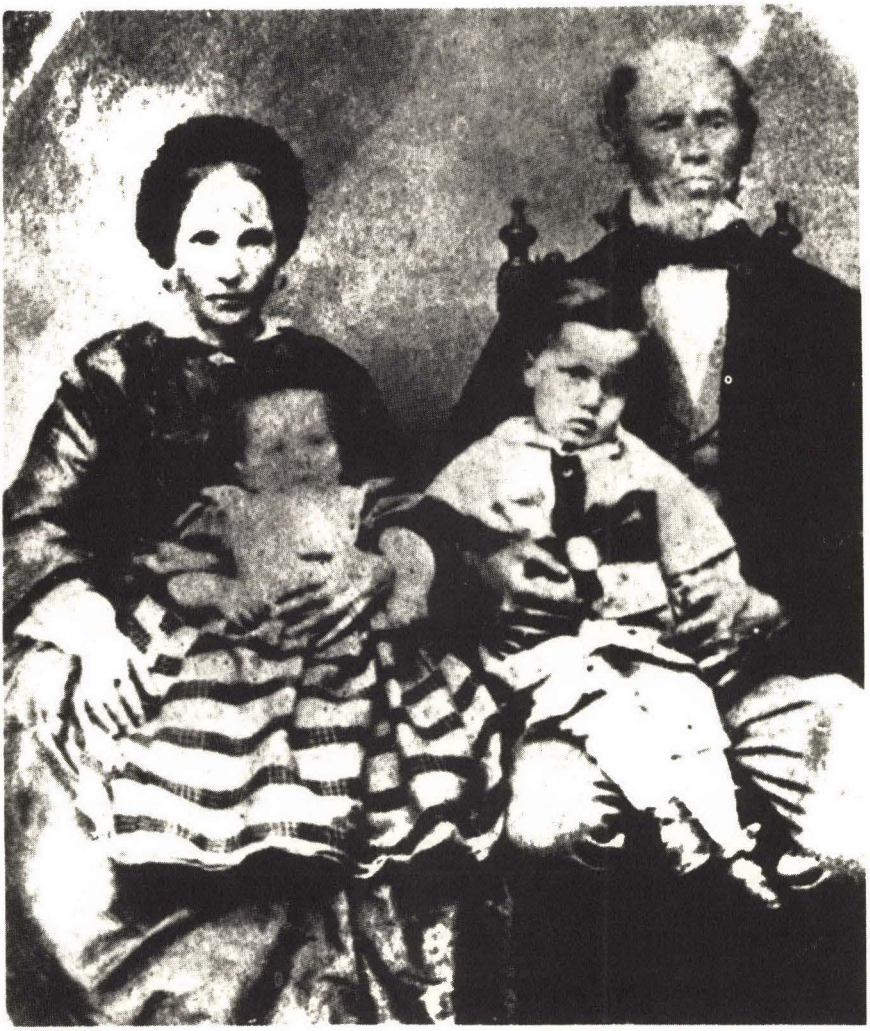


Dr. Isaac Mayer Wise sanctioned Isaac Mayer as a ritual slaughterer, and was in turn charged by the Orthodox as a slaughterer of rituals.
(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



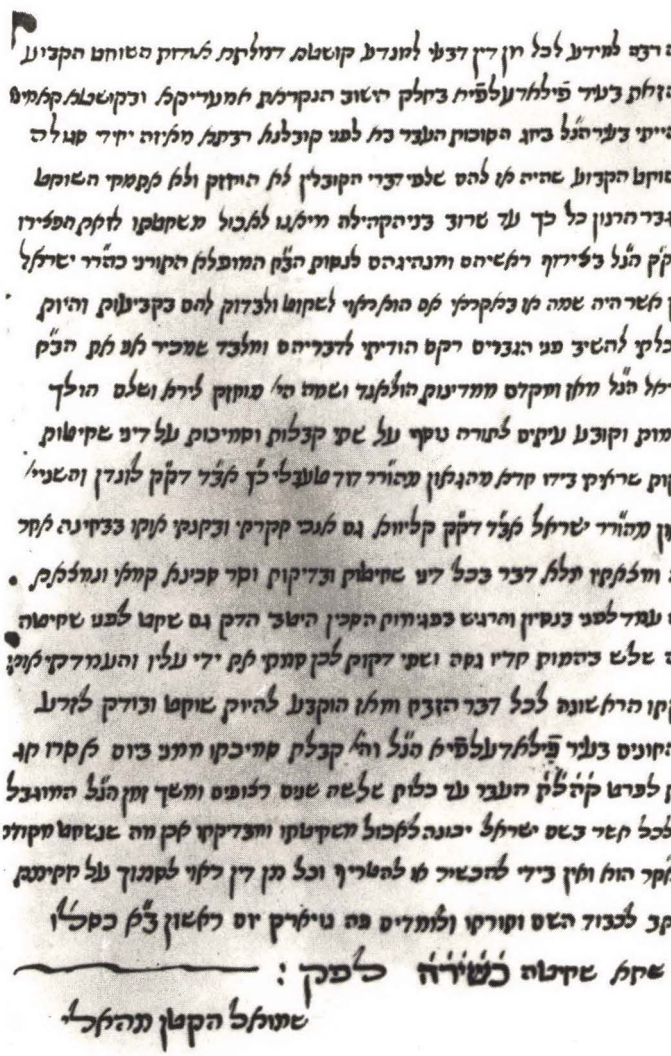
Samuel Marcus Cohen, Orthodox Reverend of Detroit's "*Kol Bo*"—performed all Rabbinical functions.

(The Jews of Detroit by Robert A. Rockaway)



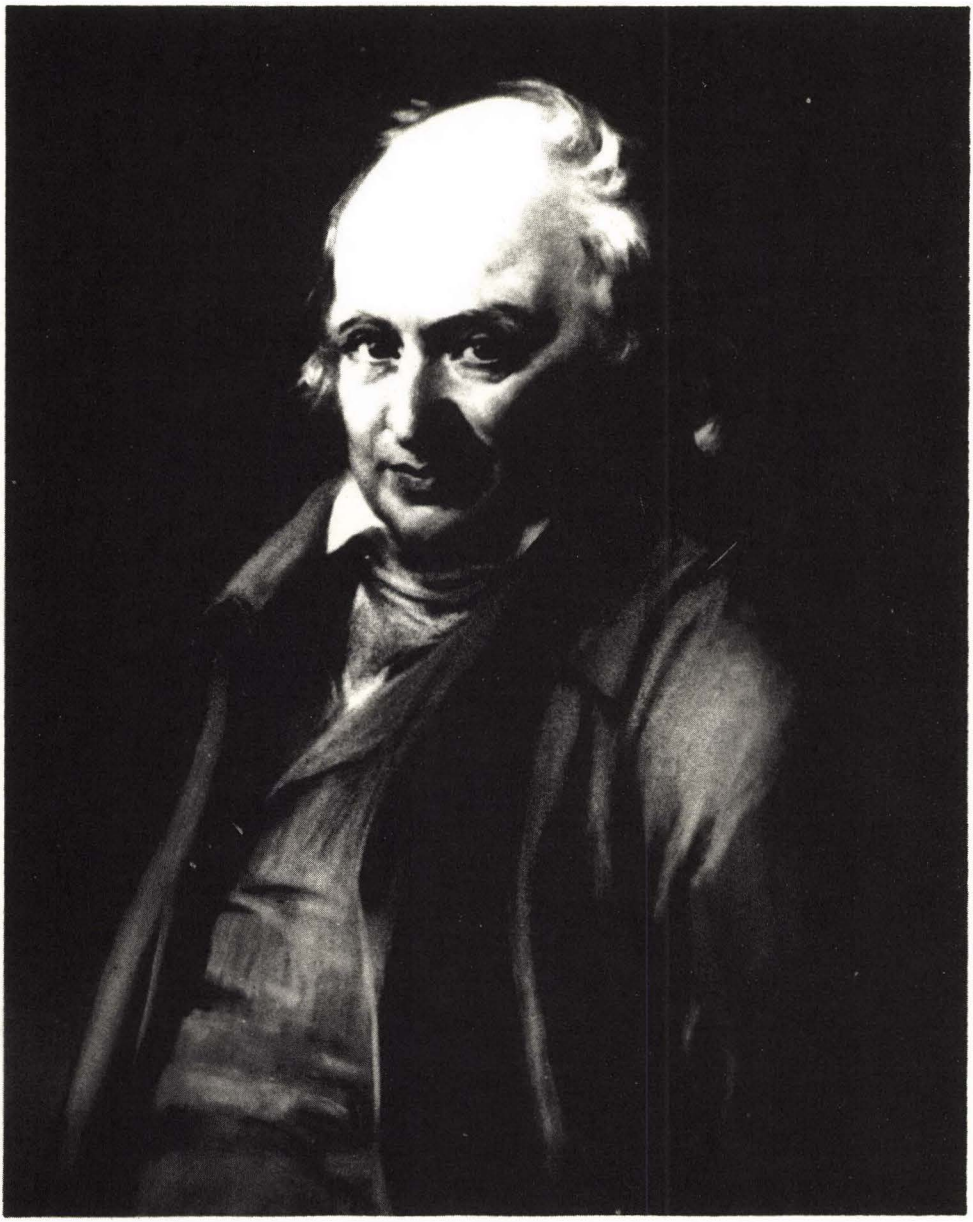
David Marx, first Kosher butcher in Detroit and his family, 1850's; Lacking a head-covering, the Orthodox claimed he likewise was lacking in *Yiras Shamayim* [fear of Heaven].

(The Jews of Detroit by Robert A. Rockaway)



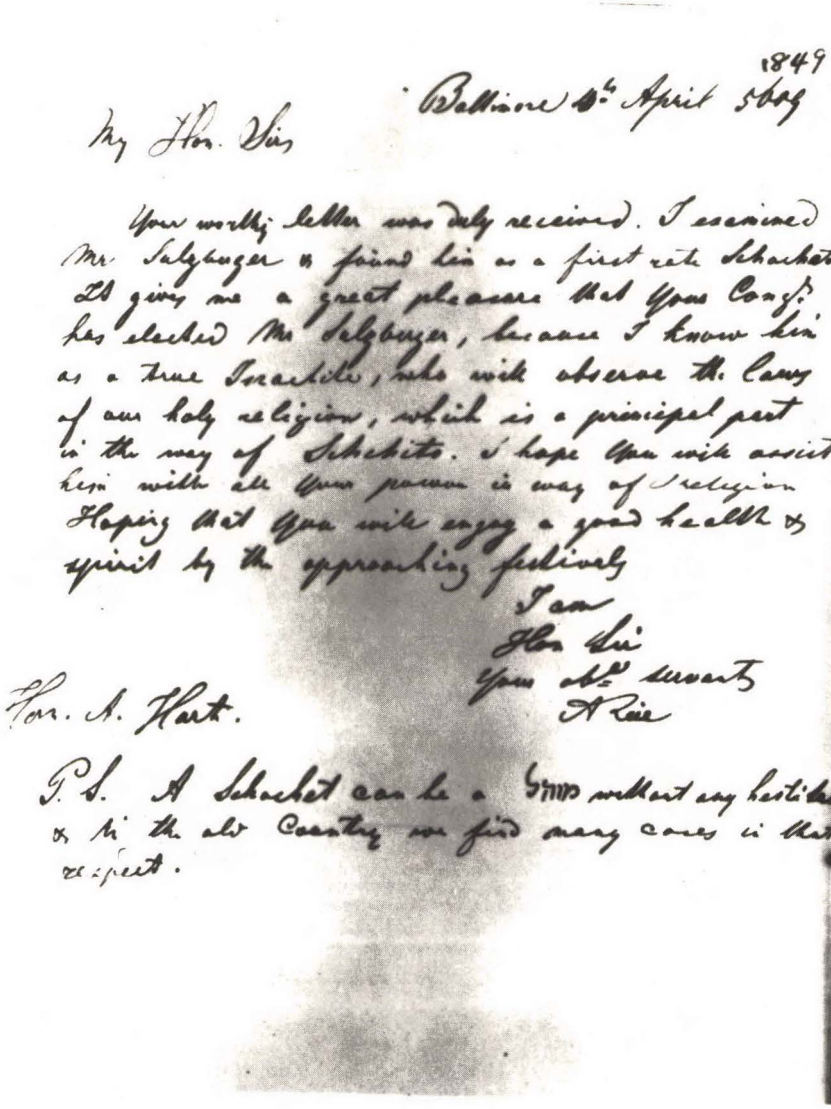
New York, 1775, Rabbi Shmuel ha-Kohen of Hebron, last Palestinian emissary to visit Colonial America, tested and approved Israel De Lieben, to serve as a ritual slaughterer for the Jewish community of Philadelphia.

(AJHS, Lyons Collection, Box I, No. 255)



In the early 1770s, Indian trader and *Shochet* Barnard Gratz, of Fort Pitt and Philadelphia, questioned Israel De Lieben's qualifications to act as ritual slaughterer.

(*Portraits* by Hannah R. London)



1849

Baltimore 10th April 5609

My Hon. Sir

Your worthy letter was duly received. I examined Mr Sulzberger & found him as a first rate Schochet. It gives me a great pleasure that Your Congn. has elected Mr Sulzberger, because I know him as a true Israelite, who will observe the laws of our holy religion, which is a principal part in the way of Schehito. I hope You will assist him with all Your power in way of religion Hoping that You will enjoy a good health & spirit by the approaching festivals

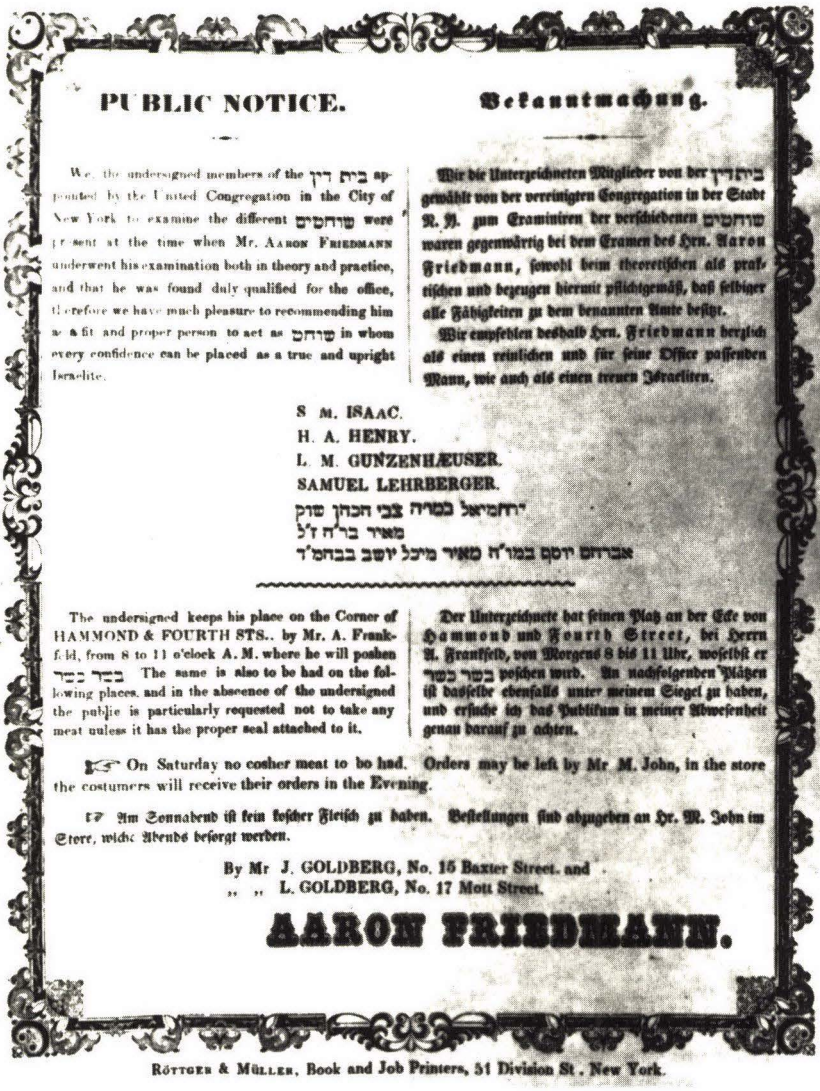
I am
Hon Sir
Your obt. servants
A Rice

Hon. A. Hart.

P.S. A Schochet can be a מוהל without any hesitation & in the old Country we find many cases in that respect.

1849 endorsement by Rice of Abraham Sulzberger, *Chazzan* of *Mickve Israel*, Philadelphia, to act as *Schochet*.

(Rice Collection: Jewish Theological Seminary Library)



PUBLIC NOTICE.

We, the undersigned members of the בית דין appointed by the United Congregation in the City of New York to examine the different שוחטים were present at the time when Mr. Aaron Friedmann underwent his examination both in theory and practice, and that he was found duly qualified for the office, therefore we have much pleasure to recommending him as a fit and proper person to act as שוחט in whom every confidence can be placed as a true and upright Israelite.

Bekanntmachung.

Wir die Unterzeichneten Mitglieder von der בית דין gewählt von der vereinigten Congregation in der Stadt N. Y. zum Examiniren der verschiedenen שוחטים waren gegenwärtig bei dem Examen des Hrn. Aaron Friedmann, sowohl beim theoretischen als praktischen und bezeugen hiermit pflichtgemäß, daß selbiger alle Fähigkeiten zu dem benannten Amte besitzt.

Wir empfehlen deshalb Hrn. Friedmann bestens als einen reinlichen und für seine Office passenden Mann, wie auch als einen treuen Israeliten.

S. M. ISAAC.
H. A. HENRY.
L. M. GUNZENHÆUSER.
SAMUEL LEHRBERGER.
ירחמיאל במוהר צבי חכהן שוק
מאיר בר"ח ז"ל
אברהם יוסף במו"ה מאיר מיכל יושב בבחמ"ד

The undersigned keeps his place on the Corner of HAMMOND & FOURTH STS., by Mr. A. Frankfeld, from 8 to 11 o'clock A. M. where he will poshen בשר בחר. The same is also to be had on the following places, and in the absence of the undersigned the public is particularly requested not to take any meat unless it has the proper seal attached to it.

Der Unterzeichnete hat seinen Platz an der Ecke von Hammond und Fourth Street, bei Herrn A. Frankfeld, von Morgens 8 bis 11 Uhr, woselbst er בשר בחר poschen wird. An nachfolgenden Plätzen ist dasselbe ebenfalls unter meinem Siegel zu haben, und ersuche ich das Publikum in meiner Abwesenheit genau darauf zu achten.

☞ On Saturday no cosher meat to be had. Orders may be left by Mr. M. John, in the store the costumers will receive their orders in the Evening.

☞ Am Sonnabend ist kein koscher Fleisch zu haben. Bestellungen sind abzugeben an Hr. M. John im Store, welche Abends besorgt werden.

By Mr J. GOLDBERG, No. 15 Baxter Street. and
" " L. GOLDBERG, No. 17 Mott Street.

AARON FRIEDMANN.

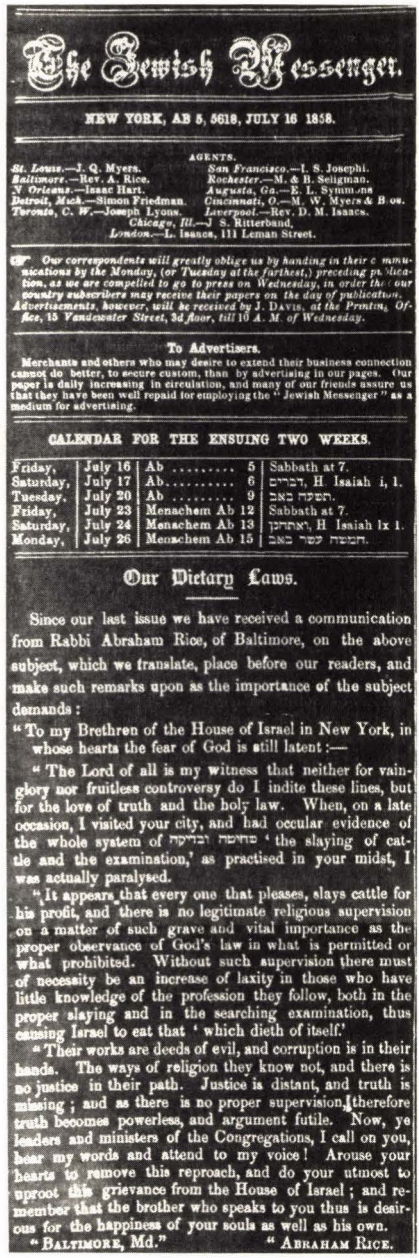
Röttger & Müller, Book and Job Printers, 51 Division St. New York.

1856 Public Notice approving Aaron Friedmann to serve as Ritual Slaughterer, signed by Rabbi Abraham Ash, Rabbi Henry A. Henry, Reverend Samuel M. Isaacs, and others.

(Advertisement, Jewish Messenger, New York)



New York abbatoir visited by Rabbis Rice and Ash in June, 1858.
(New York Historical Society)



The Jewish Messenger.

NEW YORK, AB 5, 5618, JULY 16 1858.

AGENTS.

St. Louis.—J. Q. Myers. *San Francisco.*—I. S. Josephi.
Baltimore.—Rev. A. Rice. *Rochester.*—M. & B. Seligman.
N. Orleans.—Isaac Hart. *Augusta, Ga.*—E. L. Symmons
Detroit, Mich.—Simon Friedman. *Cincinnati, O.*—M. W. Myers & Bro.
Toronto, C. W.—Joseph Lyons. *Liverpool.*—Rev. D. M. Isaacs.
Chicago, Ill.—J. S. Ritterband.
London.—L. Isaacs, 111 Leman Street.

☞ *Our correspondents will greatly oblige us by handing in their communications by the Monday, (or Tuesday at the farthest,) preceding publication, as we are compelled to go to press on Wednesday, in order that our country subscribers may receive their papers on the day of publication. Advertisements, however, will be received by* J. Davis, *at the Printing Office, 15 Vandewater Street, 3d floor, till 10 A. M. of Wednesday.*

To Advertisers.

Merchants and others who may desire to extend their business connection cannot do better, to secure custom, than by advertising in our pages. Our paper is daily increasing in circulation, and many of our friends assure us that they have been well repaid for employing the "Jewish Messenger" as a medium for advertising.

CALENDAR FOR THE ENSUING TWO WEEKS.

Friday,	July 16	Ab	5	Sabbath at 7.
Saturday,	July 17	Ab	6	דברים, H. Isaiah i, 1.
Tuesday,	July 20	Ab	9	תשעה באב.
Friday,	July 23	Menachem Ab	12	Sabbath at 7.
Saturday,	July 24	Menachem Ab	13	ראיתיקן, H. Isaiah lx 1.
Monday,	July 26	Menachem Ab	15	תמוזות עשר באב.

Our Dietary Laws.

Since our last issue we have received a communication from Rabbi Abraham Rice, of Baltimore, on the above subject, which we translate, place before our readers, and make such remarks upon as the importance of the subject demands:

"To my Brethren of the House of Israel in New York, in whose hearts the fear of God is still latent:—

"The Lord of all is my witness that neither for vainglory nor fruitless controversy do I indite these lines, but for the love of truth and the holy law. When, on a late occasion, I visited your city, and had occular evidence of the whole system of שחיטה ובדיקה 'the slaying of cattle and the examination,' as practised in your midst, I was actually paralysed.

"It appears that every one that pleases, slays cattle for his profit, and there is no legitimate religious supervision on a matter of such grave and vital importance as the proper observance of God's law in what is permitted or what prohibited. Without such supervision there must of necessity be an increase of laxity in those who have little knowledge of the profession they follow, both in the proper slaying and in the searching examination, thus causing Israel to eat that 'which dieth of itself.'

"Their works are deeds of evil, and corruption is in their hands. The ways of religion they know not, and there is no justice in their path. Justice is distant, and truth is missing; and as there is no proper supervision, therefore truth becomes powerless, and argument futile. Now, ye leaders and ministers of the Congregations, I call on you, hear my words and attend to my voice! Arouse your hearts to remove this reproach, and do your utmost to uproot this grievance from the House of Israel; and remember that the brother who speaks to you thus is desirous for the happiness of your souls as well as his own.

"Baltimore, Md." "Abraham Rice.

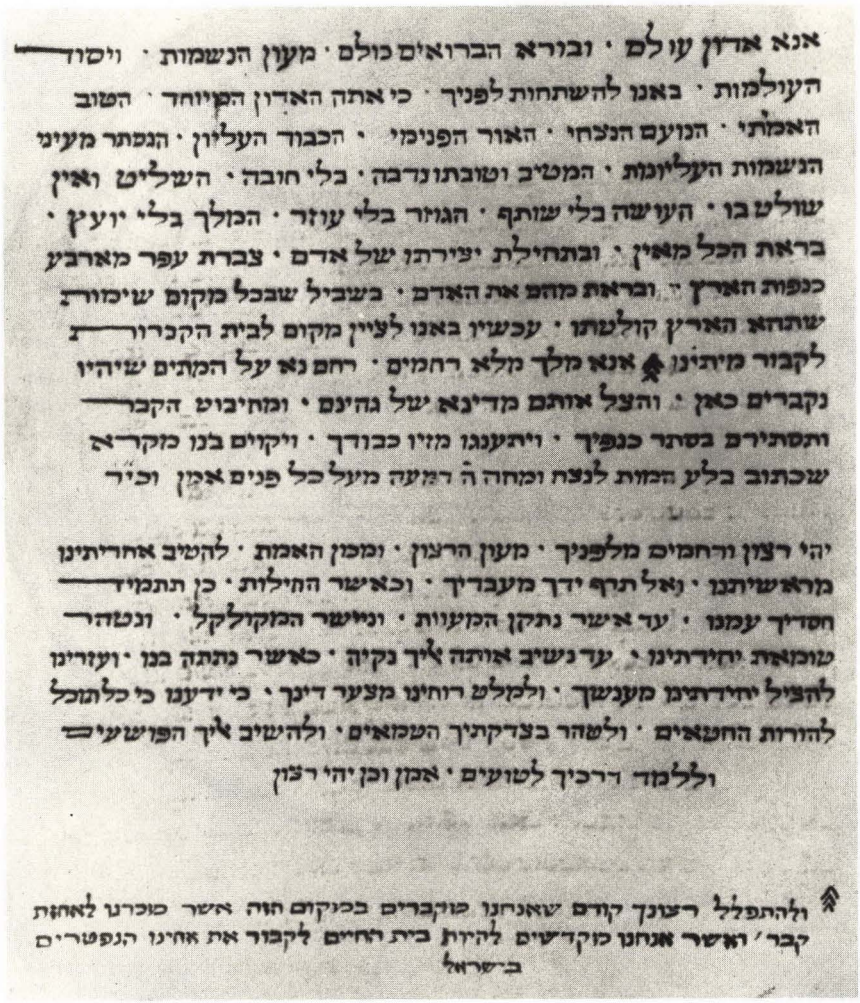
After visitation to the New York abbatoir, Rice issued alarm in Jewish press of New York pertaining to *Kashrus* violations.

(*Jewish Messenger, New York, July* 16, 1858)



1850s—Rabbi Rice consulted on cemetery relocations: *Shearith Israel* Cemetery, West 21st Street near 6th Avenue, New York City, closed for further interments in 1851, but the congregation did not relinquish the ground. By 1858, when the other Manhattan Jewish congregations closed their cemeteries, officers of *Anshe Chesed* consulted with Rabbi Rice pertaining to the proper disinterment of graves to the new grounds in Cypress Hills, Long Island.

(*An Old Faith in the New World* by David and Tamar de Sola Pool)



אנא אדון עולם · ובורא הברואים כולם · מעון הנשמות · ויסוד
העולמות · באנו להשתחות לפניך · כי אתה האדון המיוחד · הטוב
האמתי · הנועם הנצחי · האור הפנימי · הכבוד העליון · הנסתר מעיני
הנשמות העליונות · המטיב וטובתו נדבה · בלי חובה · השליט ואין
שולט בו · העושה בלי שותף · הגוזר בלי עוזר · המלך בלי יועץ ·
בראת הכל מאין · ובתחילת יצירתו של אדם · צברת עפר מארבע
כנפות הארץ · ובראת מהם את האדם · בשביל שבכל מקום שימות
שתהא הארץ קולטתו · עכשיו באנו לציין מקום לבית הקברות
לקבור מיתינו ✱ אנא מלך מלא רחמים · רחם נא על המתים שיהיו
נקברים כאן · והצל אותם מדינא של גהינם · ומחיבוט הקבר
ותסתירם בסתר כנפיך · ויתענגו מזיו כבודך · ויקוים בנו מקרא
שכתוב בלע המות לנצח ומחה ה׳ דמעה מעל כל פנים אמן וכיר

יהי רצון ורחמים מלפניך · מעון הרצון · ומכון האמת · להטיב אחריתינו
מראשיתנו · ואל תרף ידך מעבדיך · וכאשר החילות · כן תתמיד
חסדיך עמנו · עד אשר נתקן המעוות · וניישר המקולקל · ונטהר
טומאת יחידתינו · עד נשיב אותה אליך נקיה · כאשר נתתה בנו · ועזרינו
להציל יחידתינו מענשך · ולמלט רוחינו מצער דינך · כי ידענו כי כלתוכל
להורות החטאים · ולטהר בצדקתיך הטמאים · ולהשיב אליך הפושעים
וללמד דרכיך לטועים · אמן וכן יהי רצון

✱ ולהתפלל רצונך קודם שאנחנו מוקברים במקום הזה אשר מכרנו לאחזת
קבר׳ ואשר אנחנו מקדשים להיות בית החיים לקבור את אחינו הנפטרים
בישראל

Dedication Prayer, *Shearith Israel*, Salem Fields Cemetery, Long Island, New York, 1851.

(Courtesy American Jewish Historical Society)



Seal of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, New York, comprised of U.S. Orthodox congregations, 1859.
(Courtesy American Jewish Historical Society)

Chapter 35
Vanguard of the Ostjuden

CONCOMITANT WITH the worsening of the plight of the Turkish-Palestinian Jews during the Crimean War, the position of the Jews of the Russian Pale deteriorated. Most of the world's ten million Jews lived under the rule of the Russian Czars. These unassimilated Jews felt the heavy hand of the nation of hatred rather than did the assimilated Reformers in the Republic of the United States.

An exception among the leaders of Reform was Dr. Maurice Mayer, who from the year of his arrival, 1848, until 1851, had taught in Lilienthal's Hebrew Union School and then succeeded Dr. Julius Eckman as minister at *Beth Elohim*, Charleston. Mayer described the condition of the Russian Jews in 1855, the last year of the Russo-Turkish war:

> Bitter, almost intolerable as the fate of our poor brethern in Russia and Poland was in former years, it has become worse and worse during the last, thanks to the war in which Russia is now engaged . . . even [Jewish] children of not more than nine years were forcibly taken away from their parents to be educated in military schools, not for service alone, but for the Greek Church . . . .
>
> In September last a decree was issued, which subjected all Hebrew books to a stamp tax of 1 1/2 *kopecka* (about two cents) per sheet, which, considering that the Russian and Polish Jews are generally Talmud students, and that there is scarcely a family without a copy of the voluminous Talmud, must bring a considerable revenue to the crown, while it falls very heavily upon our poor brethren . . . .

As the Crimean War neared an end, the death of the tyrannical Czar Nicholas I, and the accession to the throne of Czar Alexander II ushered in a new era of relative liberalization, but not for the Jews. They had little respite from oppression.

Russian Jews sought to escape the aggressive measures directed against them by the government. Their oppression began in the late eighteenth century when Prussia's Catherine the Great, a German princess, became Empress of Russia. The Czarina embarked upon an expansionist drive that brought many new territories under her control. With the partition of Poland in 1792, the Czarina's Russian Empire acquired one million Jews; these, were in addition to the other four million Jews who lived in Russia at that time.

Russian anti-Semitism always deemed the Jews to be an unassimilable part of the population. They could not become "Russified" or converted to Christianity. Every effort then, had to be made to isolate them. Catherine's move came in response to an association of Moscow merchants who complained about Jewish competitors. The Czarina decreed that all Jews must be confined to that sector the Russians called "Cherta Osiedlosti"—"Pale of Settlement"—that four-hundred mile strip of land along Russia's western border that stretched from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south—the largest ghetto the world has ever known.

In 1817, Emperor Alexander I, grandson of Catherine the Great, founded and patronized the Society of Israelite Christians in an effort to convert the Jews to the Russian Orthodox Church. To prevent their emigration westward into Central Europe, he forbad them to reside within fifty versts [thirty-five miles] of the border. Moreover, they had to settle within one of the seven prescribed provinces.

Conditions worsened after 1825. Alexander's brother, Nicholas I, succeeded to the throne. Czar Nicholas ruled feudal Russia with an iron hand as an absolute monarch. On the one hand there were millions of serfs; on the other hand there was the fabulously wealthy nobility who governed them. In between these extremes, the Jews predominated in a new bourgeois class composed mainly of Polish Jews recently absorbed by Russia from its Polish domain. To Nicholas, in their middle-class trade occupations, they represented a visibly alien population; an unassimilated, noxious element, for he was determined to Russify all his subjects.

Two years after coming to power, Nicholas I ordered conscription into the army for all Jewish youths, ages 12 to 25. His purpose was to remove them from their people and convert them to the Russian Church.

Russian Jewry used every means at their disposal to prevent their male children from being inducted into the army. They married them off at a young age, hid them, even maimed them. Czar Nicholas thwarted these attempts by organizing a secret police force, the "*chappers*" (grabbers, catchers, snatchers), as they were called in *Yiddish*, hired thugs, who indiscriminately seized male Jewish children in broad daylight, some as young as six years of age, marching them away to unknown regions. These Cantonists [conscripted Jewish children] taken to barracks, or Cantons, were never heard from again. On the long march, thousands died from hunger, and inhuman treatment. Those who survived the ordeal of the long march were trained for future military service. They were treated brutally and forcibly converted to Christianity. When the children reached the military age of eighteen, they were then inducted into the regular army for a period of 25 years.

In 1836, Czar Nicholas imposed another oppressive measure, censorship of Jewish books, especially the *Talmud*, which he considered an evil work. Taxes continued to be levied on religious ceremonial objects; there was a *Koropka* [Russian for *Pushke* "a collection box"] in which a *kopek* (cent) or two, even three, were dropped additional to the cost when buying for religious purposes. There was a tax for Sabbath candles, yeast for *challah* breads, kosher meats, and anything ritual.

By 1840, the Czar had decided on a new tactic to convert the Jews: opening Jewish secular schools. A number of German Jewish Reformers applied, including Samuel Adler of Alzey in Rhenish Hesse. Max Lilienthal, selected for the post, spent years in this program, but was jeered by Russian Jewry. After Lilienthal's failure and flight from Russia in 1845, the Czar planned more forceful methods to Russify the Jews.

That year, 1845, Czar Nicholas I expelled all Jews living near the German frontier to prevent their escape from Russia. In the following year, on May 31, he issued a *ukase* [Imperial Edict] from his palace in St. Petersburg prohibiting Jews from wearing their national garb; this law to take effect immediately after October 1:

> All Jews under sixty were compelled to lay aside their peculiar costume, and to assume one of the costumes of the country. With the girdle, the caftan, and the sable cap, also to be removed were the beard and the long ringlets, which shaded the Jew and which he regarded as venerable, holy, and inviolable . . . .

These edicts were carried out with all imaginable harshness:

> The poor fathers of families must also procure new costumes for themselves and their household, if they wish to avoid the risk of having the Polish dresses torn from their bodies in the open streets. But, besides this, there are many Jews who regard the laying aside of the Polish costume as a matter of conscience. For this reason there was also an unusually great animation in the Synagogue in Poland on the Day of Atonement [September 30], 1846; so terrible was the lamentation that arose there, that it struck awe even into the heart of the passing stranger. Many Jews retain their peculiar costume by paying the legal tax, as they are permitted to do so until 1850; but the tax is so great, that few can avail themselves of this permission for any length of time.

Rabbi Rice, who was then serving in the pulpit of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, chided his people in his Sabbath sermon delivered on January 16, 1847:

> Let us realize our blessings! Read of the recent news of a ruler who hurled all his hatred against our brethren in the far north; how

> he seeks to compel them to change their garb, even their appearance, to conform to his will. Contrast how fortunate we are! How secure and serene, how free and unmolested we live here! Let us be thankful to God!

The failure of the Revolutions of 1848 in Central Europe was felt across the borders of Prussia, Austria and Hungary, in Russia. Russian Jews were struck by the backlash as the Czar imposed cruel edicts. A Jewish settler in Texas wrote to these unfortunate East Europeans and to all of Central European Jewry:

> Russia can undertake to drive 600,000 Jews from their homes and firesides in Poland into the interior of his barbarous and dreary dominions, and Austria dares to lay the burden of the expenses of the Hungarian War upon the shoulders of the oppressed Jews of that province. But who can force them to stay in those countries? What circumstances can hinder their emigration? . . . America bids them welcome! The government of the United States would feel proud of affording the shelter of the Star spangled sky to "the descendants of the noble patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," (as President Tyler was pleased to write to a Jewish gentleman of Baltimore on a certain occasion) [letter of President John Tyler to Joseph Simpson, of *Har Sinai Verein*, July 10, 1843].

The writer from the Lone Star state apparently did not know that the Czar held his Jews captive. Only few managed to traverse the thirty-five mile *Judenrein* sector from which they had been barred at the risk of their lives. This small number escaped over the Russian border to a German seaport, finally arrived in the United States. During the 1850's, they founded Russian-Jewish congregations in New York and San Francisco.

Those few Jews who managed to leave Russia for the United States arrived garbed in their traditional caftan and fur caps, with their ringlets curled down alongside their full beards. They carried their sacred books, which were stamped with the imprint of the censor. They had evaded government edicts by bribing the corrupt and greedy officers of the Czar.

But having escaped the clutches of the tyrannical Nicholas I, these Russian Jews again found themselves under attack in America—by none other than their own brethren.

Assimilated German Jews despised the *Ostjude* [Eastern Jew], be he Russian, Lithuanian, Galician, Polish, Hungarian, as a person of lower status, to be kept at arm's length. Contemptuously, the Reformed *Yahudim* called the East European Jews "Wasserpolaken." They regarded his *caftan* as the peculiar adoption of discarded Polish aristocratic dress of bygone centuries. An account states that

> [The German Jews] considered themselves even farther removed in social distance than in miles from these poor, benighted peddlers with long beards, with sidelocks, and long coats. They sensed that all the progress they had made in breaking down barriers, in preventing the development of a ghetto, and in gaining recognition for themselves as persons rather than as Jews with their Christian neighbors, might now, with the new connotation that was attached to the word Jew, come to a sudden halt.

The German Jews' outlook was best expressed by Dr. Hermann Felsenheld:

> Spiritually I am a German, for my inner life has been profoundly influenced by Schiller, by Goethe, by Kant, and by other intellectual giants of Germany. I have drunk from the springs of German literature; I have sat at the feet of German teachers; and I acknowledge, with a certain pride, in thought and feeling *I am a German*.

The Russian Jews' outlook was best expressed by one of them in a play upon Felsenheld's diatribe:

> Spiritually I am a Jew, for my inner life has been profoundly influenced by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses, David, Akiba, Rashi, Maimonides, and by other intellectual giants of Judaism. I have drunk from the springs of rabbinic literature; I have sat at the feet of religious teachers; and I acknowledge, with a certain pride, in thought and feeling *I am a Jew*.

The gap between the assimilated German Jew and the observant Russian Jew seemed unbridgeable. The German Jew in America prided himself as a bearer of the German heritage, which he regarded superior to the Jewish tradition. Hence, not once did Felsenthal refer to himself as a Jew, which religion he regarded antiquated and inferior. Judaism must be Reformed in order to make it palatable to the Christians whose favor he sought to be accepted as an equal.

The Russian Jew, in the New as in the Old World, prided himself on his Jewish heritage. Hence, not once does he mention Russian literature but rather rabbinic literature, and delights that he has mastered Judaism above all other isms.

Unlike the westernized German Jew, the Russian Jew remained unassimilated in America as in Europe, in his outward appearance and inward thoughts. Speech marked a fundamental difference between the two groups. The Russian Jew spoke *Yiddish*, a language discarded by the German Jew ever since the days of the French Revolution. They referred to *Yiddish* as *Jargon* [jibberish, barbaric, unintelligible language]. It was

widely regarded by the German Jew as a corrupt and lowly derivation of German itself. *Yiddish* sounded to the refined ear of the modern Germanic Jew like the "cackling of hens or the snorting of cattle."

Moreover, the tone and manner and the particular gesticulations of the *Yiddish*-speaking Russian Jews disturbed the Americanized German Jew. Though recent arrivals themselves, they resented the newcomers for their conspicuous "oriental" garb and "outlandish" speech.

Irritated by the less Germanized and more Hebraized "low-down gutteral *Yiddish*" spoken by the *Ostjuden*, a German Jew complained in the *New York Independent*:

> They are never educated in their own language, speaking a miserable German and a worse Hebrew, which two languages are so commingled and polluted as to render the admixture unintelligible to any but each other . . . .
>
> Russian Jews are but little better than the Polish . . . . Nothing appears more strange to an American than that Russian [and] Polish Jews are unable to speak their mother tongues . . . .

Not only the speech and garb of the Russian Jews but also their occupations came under attack from the time of their settlement in American cities during the 1850s. At St. Louis, Missouri, Reformers criticized their choice of occupation, which was generally tailoring:

> The body of the Jews here are of Polish origin and habits, and have generally followed the clothing trade, which is little calculated to gain the esteem of our fellow-citizens; but even many Jews were unwilling to join them, on account of their intolerance and exactions at every opportunity . . . .

The East European Jew reciprocated the disdain of the German Jew. A Russian-Jewish immigrant, revealing his innermost feelings, spoke for all his countrymen:

> When I first put my feet on the soil of Chicago, I was so disgusted that I wished I had stayed at home in Russia. I left the Old Country because you couldn't be a Jew over there and still live, but I would rather be dead than be the kind of German Jew that brings the Jewish name into disgrace by being a Goy [Gentile]. That's what hurts: They parade around as Jews, and down in their hearts they are worse than Goyim, they are *meshumeds* [apostates].

Such was the gap between German and East European Jew, that when Moses Minz, a Polish Jew, lost everything in San Francisco in a fire that burned his store to the ground, the German *Eureka Benevolent*

Society refused to assist him. The "Bayers" asserted that Minz was merely a "Pollack."

And in Oregon, separation between these two groups, it was noted, "is principally due to the passionate hate which the Bavarian Jews and the Polish-Russian Jews—naturally of the lower classes—mutually cherish."

The distance between the Russian Jews and "Americanized" Jews widened to the extent that by the end of the century, a Jewish historian stated that "Prior to 1880 a Russian Jew was hardly ever seen in America," though by then an estimated 4,000 had settled in New York City, in the lower east side bounded by Canal, Elm, Mott and Bayard Streets, and there were 30,000 settled throughout the United States.

Radical Reformers sped entry of Russian-Polish Jews into moderate Reform and ultimate assimilation. As moderate Reform became radical by the time of the Russian mass migration to America, Reform-financed Conservative Judaism filled the vacuum left by moderate Reform in order to attract the Russian Jew into Americanization, but distanced from the German Reformers.

Chapter 36
More polish and Less Polish

POSEN JEWS, unlike the Bavarian Jews, were hampered from emigrating to America in the early years of German-Jewish mass migration because of the Emigration Tax that most could not afford. In 1840, the Royal Ministers' Reports of June 18, and September 8, stated: "Concerning these, if they have been set too high, the royal governments must make a report, in case they do not reduce them themselves."

Some Prussian and Russian-Polish Jews had made their way to America during the Bavarian mass-migration. Thus a Dr. M. Wiener observed in 1842: "With regret I must confess that the European Israelite, especially the Pole and the Bavarian, becomes accustomed with remarkable speed to walking through the streets smoking, with his cigar in his mouth, on the first Sabbath which he greets in the land of freedom and equality."

By 1843, a hundred Jews in Poland addressed themselves to an Emigration Society for Israelites in Germany, to assist them to migrate to America, adding that ten thousand of their fellow-countrymen were ready to follow. At this time, few, if any, were assisted.

The German Jews not only disdained their Russian and Polish coreligionists, but also regarded with contempt those from Prussian occupied Posen, who though politically German subjects were not steeped in German culture. The Bayers [Bavarians] snubbed the Pollacks [Prussians]. Though their children learned German from Prussian schoolmasters, as they had in their youth, they spoke at home a Posen *Yiddish* that was spoken in Northern Germany and England. The Posener *Judisch* differed from the *Judisch* of the South German Jews. Bavarian, Baden, Württemberg and other non-Prussian German Jews considered the Posen *Judisch*, a relic of their pre-civilized past, calling them "Pollacks," "Polanders," "Wasser-Polaken," or "Hinter-Berliners." In the 1840's, a quarter-of-a-century after the occupation of western Poland by the Prussians since the defeat of Napoleon, the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* published in Berlin, remarked, "The Polish Jews is the dirtiest of all creatures."

The German Jews directed their opprobrious name-calling especially to Jews of Lower Poland, to those of Galicia under Austrian rule since the division of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century.

The Bavarian Jews had been estranged from the Prussian-Polish Jews in their homeland even during the mass migration when the few "Hinter-Berliners" from Prussian-Poland traveled through Berlin or made their way directly to a port of embarkation. The Polander came from the city and travelled alone, not like the Bavarian who came from his village with friends, relatives, or family. The Prussian and East European Jew felt alone, and needed to create a fellowship in a synagogue of his own. Therefore, he did not feel at ease in a German *Ashkenazic* rite synagogue which had been the rite in his *Stadt Schul* in Prussia or Eastern Europe.

Furthermore, Reform had taken hold of Bavarian synagogues whose migration from Orthodox Bavarian communities continued to diminish, whereas, the Prussian was increasing to help stave off Reform. Thus a vast gulf between the German and Prussian Jew remained until the latter "Americanized" and became engulfed by Reform, to be indistinct one from the other after the Civil War era.

But one concession was made by the Bavarian to the Prussian-Pollack. In the event of a sale, the Bavarian remarked: *Wird er nicht kriegen a "bayer" (buyer) wird er kriegen a "Bollack"—Auch gut.*

Yet, the Posen Jews who arrived in America, because of the German occupation, had become westernized in dress, appearance, and speech. The Poseners spoke German as well as Polish, and identified with Germany, as their passport into western civilization and Americanization. One tactic of Posen Jews of Prussian Poland, was to substitute Germanic

names for Polish towns from which they had emigrated, even as in time the Russian-Polish *Chasid* discarded his *kapote* and *shtreimel* [long robe and furry hat]. Though these Prussian-Polish Jews became German-Jews "made-in-America," seeking the more prestigious Germanic guise to the more authentic Polish, the Bavarian and other German Jews distanced themselves from the *ersatz* Germanized Jews.

A report tells:

> There is more *Rishus* [wickedness] between the Bavarian and Polish [Posen] Jews than there is to be found between Russian, Greek, and the Russian Jew. The former will not take the life of his Polish coreligionists, but he will ruin him in business, whenever he has a chance . . . .

Because they were heavily influenced by German secular literature, Reformers in particular were of the opinion that everything that was of German origin stood above all else. They regarded the Jews of Prussian-Poland as lacking culture, below their station in life and never quite accepted the Bohemian or Czech Jews.

The Bavarian Jews and those of other German states lumped the Posen Jews under Prussian rule together with those of the Kingdom of Poland under Russian rule as barbaric *Ostjuden*, since they had not imbibed secularistic literature but adhered to what they considered to be the antiquated and outmoded law of the ancient *Talmud*.

Isaac M. Wise, the Americanized Bohemian, stated that after German Polish Jews had centuries earlier emigrated to Poland, they continued tenaciously to speak German intermingled with corrupted Hebrew; Jews from Russia, Poland and Hungary added Slavonic terms. So, he concluded, these "Hoch-Polish" [Russian Jews from Upper Poland as distinguished from Jews of Lower Poland] have now a *jargon* without alphabet, for they used the Hebrew, and without grammar—an obsolete and corrupt German-Hebrew-Slavonic excuse for a language. He concluded that in America, "the Polack will be wiped out in the rising generation."

Socially and culturally as well as intellectually, the German Jew refused to accept the Posen Jew. If a Bavarian entered into marriage with a Polack, he or she took a step down on the social ladder. He should have sought a mate with "More polish and less Polish."

In time, as Posen Jews climbed the ladder of success in America, and even managed to intermingle socially with the Bavarians, the Poseners too, set up social distinctions and barriers between themselves and the Russian Jews.

A few Russian and Russian-Polish Jews had been barred from membership in the Posen synagogue, *Shaare Zedek*, meeting at White and Centre in lower Manhattan. In 1843 they founded *Beth Israel* at 70 Leonard Street, in New York's lower east side, the first Russian-Polish synagogue in the United States. In the following year, the trustees of *Shaare Zedek* passed a resolution "that no man can become a member hereafter what [sic!] was a Russian subject eccept [sic!] which are members at present—they the Russians are allowed to be seatholders only."

A trickle of East European Jewish immigrants continued to reach American shores after 1846, when Czar Nicholas I forbad them to wear their garb and ordered them to shave their beards and cut off their ringlets. These hardy, pious, Russian Jews settled in New York; in 1849 a few joined the west-bound argonauts. One of these, Solomon Silberstein, left for San Francisco in the year of the gold rush. But instead of heading for the Mother Lode in the Sierra, in 1850, he boarded a ship for Russian Alaska, to trade for furs as he had in his native city, Grodno, Russian Poland. From Alaska, he sailed beyond the Aleutians into Russian Siberia, but never on the Sabbath:

> Silberstein even ventured across the Bering Strait to Kamchatka and Vladivostock to import merchandise to California. His business increased to such an extent as to make it worthwhile to charter a special vessel to carry his goods, and he would not permit the captain to start on the Sabbath.

Disturbed by the Orthodoxy of San Francisco's Russian Jews, Dr. Julius Eckman, in his animosity and antagonism for the newly organized *Beth Hamidrash—Chevra Shomra Shabbos* [Society of Sabbath Observers], sarcastically described their object and satirized its constitution in his publication, *The Gleaner*:

> Its object is to preserve the ancient Orthodox faith intact. The members formerly attended the "Polish Shool [sic!]," but this synagogue not proving strict enough, they separated for the purpose, says their secretary, of giving an example of an Orthodox 'shool'.
>
> Among the laws of their constitution we find, that only such persons are admitted who observe the Sabbath, who live cosher, who do not shave, and who live in other respects in conformity with what they term Orthodoxy. Lastly, to preserve the purity of their faith, no other language is to be used at their meetings and for their transactions except what their constitution called שפת עברית [*Yiddish*, Jewish language] meaning the dialect common among the vulgar Russian and Polish Jews, nor are any characters to be found in their books but the Jewish.

> The study of the Holy Thora [sic!] is not neglected; every Sabbath afternoon a "shtickele" [*Yiddish*, piece of] ספר חיים [*Sefer Chaim* Book of Life] is read, "verteitsht" [*Yiddish*, translated] and expounded for the edification and enlightenment of the members.
>
> Their number amounts to about 25, of whom each member pays 50 cents per month, as dues to the laws.
>
> On the first Sabbath of their meeting, after מנחה [Minchah, afternoon service], they spoke of several items of their constitution, which were to be committed to writing at the next meeting on a week day. And some members proposing the following day, Sunday, for that purpose, their motion was overruled, it being חקת הגויים [Gentile custom] to meet on Sunday.
>
> We hear that they are going to write for a שוחט *shochet* [ritual slaughterer] to New York. For though the *shochat* of that city, a Russian, is in every respect qualified to be a member of their קהל [congregation], but for his office they want a man who has קבלה [license] from the *Beth Hamidrash* of New York.

An Americanized Jew who looked into the Russian Orthodox *Beth Hamidrash* on the day of *Yom Kippur* in 5616 [1856] observed:

> This congregation so exactly perpetuates the usages, customs, and habits of the Russian Jews, that they cover the floor of the Synagogue with straw during the *Kipur* day; because in their country the Synagogues being paved with stone, and they wearing no shoes on that day are obliged to cover the floor with straw; they continue also this custom in San Francisco, although their Synagogue is not paved with stones . . . .

The temple and synagogue buildings of the German Jews, whether Bavarian or Prussian, had an elegant appearance typical of grandiose structures which sharply contrasted with the less ostentatious, almost humble, worship quarters of the *Beth Hamidrash* of the Russian Jews.

Dr. Julius Eckman enlightened the American Jewish communities on the origins and manner of the synagogue of the *Ostjuden* called the *Beth Hamidrash*:

> There existed in every Jewish congregation, during the middle ages, a *Beth Hammidrash* [sic!]. There were one or more rooms, containing libraries for the use of those who had not the means of procuring books at their own houses and at their own expense. These *Bathei Midrashim* [Houses of Study] were exactly what our libraries are, only that they had an exclusively religious character. The contents of all the books were religion, and even this supply was not always of the purest sources. Moses and the Prophets, the Commentaries of an Abn Ezra, Abarbanel, Maimonides, are rarely found there, and more rarely studied.

Heaps of casuistical works filled the shelves and tables, and numbers of piously-disposed Jews would pore over these night and day; we speak literally—for the voice of students was not silent either day or night, except on that from Friday to Saturday, when no vigils were allowed.

Every congregation maintained a considerable number of *Bachoorim* [young men], who would usually, on alternate days, have free board at the tables of the members. In some places, these would amount to more than a thousand. They would flock from distances to study where some eminent Rabbi was the teacher.

Though Eckman recalled such "houses of study" from his youth, his Reform predilections surface as he continues his description of the *Beth Hamidrash*:

In modern times, the *Bathai Midrashim* are deserted, owing partly to the spirit of materialism, at whose shrines Israel's sons are early made to worship: but chiefly on account of more correct views entertained about these studies, and the requirements of religion. Our Hebrew scholars have a wider field to cultivate than that of mere ceremonial casuistry.

Thus the musty, close atmosphere of the *Beth Hammidrash* is shunned by the students, and the seminaries, colleges, and universities, are sought. Instead of the exclusive study of the obsolete and antiquated views of the medieval Rabbis, the capacious minds of our students extend their pursuits to philosophy, to the sciences, to languages, and to divinity.

However, here and there, there are some men, who, as living antiquities, love to breathe the close, dense air of the years 1100-1150, and hence, in large places, some relic of a *Beth Hammidrash*, with inmates whose appearance easily tells their idiosyncracies, is to be found; but western Europe, England, and the United States, is no more the soil on which they thrive.

We are not aware of the existence of a *Beth Hammidrash* in Paris. Berlin and London supply, each, one; but they belong to a by-gone age. The Russian emigrants, ignorant of the changes and requirements of our times, incapable of discerning the difference of the spirit breathed in the Bible and the Casuists, have made a *Beth Hammidrash* in the city of New York; and we hear of no other in the whole United States, except here in the city of San Francisco, where the Russian Jews have opened one some eighteen months ago [September, 1855]. There is no doubt of the honesty of purpose of these men, but we lament their want of knowledge. The ancient *Beth Hammidrash* was, comparatively speaking, the monastery of Judaism; the students, the ascetics; the studies, the scholastic; hence their revival and existence, an anomaly [in the modern 19th century].

Dr. Max Wolff of Denmark, possibly a son of Abraham Alexander Wolff, Chief Rabbi of Copenhagen, was elected rabbi. This evoked Dr. Wise's snide remark that the San Francisco *Beth Hamidrash* "rendered the human race and Judaism about the same service as does the New York *Beth Hamidrash*."

In New York, the *Asmonean* took notice on January 18, 1850 of the first *Beth Hamidrash* to be officially so named in America, though it may have been in existence for over a year. Russian-Polish and surprisingly, German Jews selected ordained Abraham Joseph Ash, a native of Semyatitch, Byelo, or White Russia, just east of Russian-Poland to serve as their rabbi. Jews from White Russia, along with those of northeastern Poland, Latvia and Lithuania, were collectively known as "Litvakes" or "Litvaks" [Lithuanians]. Thus Ash was also referred to as a Lithuanian.

The membership, mostly natives of Poland, listed Rabbi Ash, Israel Cohen Shapiro, whose father was a rabbi; Fivel Phillips, a Scribe, Samuel Hillel Isaacs, a Reader and Calendarian. Isaacs attempted to emigrate and settle in the Holy Land but upon reaching London was forced to return when his finances proved insufficient to continue on, while Nahum Harris soon successfully emigrated to the Holy Land; Abba Baum, Eliyahu Grinstein, Dovid Lasky, Avraham (Isodir) Raphall, Avraham Ratzker, Avraham Reiner, Yehoshua Rothstein, Shlomo Rotschild, Tuvia Schwartz, Chaim Sokolsky; also three German Jews joined the Russian *Minhag Ashkenaz* congregation: Avraham Binyamin of Hamburg, Shmuel Bush of Bavaria, Yerachmiel Zak of Berlin.

By 1850 Ash and his countrymen, rented a garret at 83 Bayard Street on the Lower East Side. Ash responded to religious questions. Typical is the query posed during the high holy days. Member Tuvia Schwartz, who was to sound the only *Shofar* available, pointed out to Rabbi Ash that it had a hole in it which when blown changed the elongated *glissando* [sliding] sound of the *tekiah* into a series of *staccato* sound of the *teruah*. Such an imperfection ordinarily would disqualify its use. Ash permitted Schwartz to stuff wool into the hole as an emergency measure.

The fewer Polish-Jewish members of the *Beth Hamidrash* were guided by Rabbi Judah Middleman, a native of Lemberg, Galicia [that part of Russian-Poland west of the Ukraine]. He resided in Warsaw and traveled to America by way of London where he remained long enough to publish *Paths of Truth*, being a defense of the talmudic traditions against the attacks in the booklet titled, *The Old Paths*, by the missionary Rev. Dr. Alexander McCaul.

Rabbi Middleman, as Rabbi Ash, had arrived in New York in 1848. Middleman earned his living in business and supplemented his income before Passover as a "matzah baker." Middleman served as president,

while Ash, who served gratuitously as first rabbi of the *Beth Hamidrash* earned his living, as did his fellow Russian Jews, as glaziers. They learned this trade during their brief stay in England enroute to America. They were constantly carrying the tools of their trade, a diamond with glass in a frame-box which they carried either under the arm or on the back, ceaselesly crying out in the streets: "Glass Put In."

In his sermon on the Sabbath of Repentence, Rabbi Ash lashed out against the Reform Temple *Emanu-El*; an excerpt of his homily in *Yiddish* rendered as follows by a Reform visitor who preferred to remain anonymous:

> A parcel of ignorant foreigners, lately come to this country, who try to pull down the sacred edifice of Judaism . . . That not only all members of the Temple are candidates for *Gehinam* [hell], but also, all such as merely go there to satisfy their curiosity.

That Reformer commented: "Oh! What a pity it is that the Rev. Speaker is not Chief Rabbi of the Jews in these free United States of America, that he could put all members of the Temple in *Cherem* [excommunication] . . . ."

Although the Russian and Prussian Jews were united in their opposition to Reform, they were not united amongst themselves. Whereas in Europe, being geographically separated, they had maintained their own congregations and forms of worship, in America they were at first brought together in the same congregation by force of circumstances, each group being too poor and too small to establish an independent house of worship.

In 1848-49, the Russian rabbi, Abraham Joseph Ash, and the Polish rabbi Judah Middleman arrived in New York. They founded by 1850 the *Beth Hamidrash* [House of Study] for daily study and worship. Ash was honored as rabbi of the "House of Study" and Middleman as president. They differed not only in ritual, but also in dialects of *Yiddish*.

At the New York *Beth Hamidrash*, the two Russian-Polish factions, clashed. Rabbi Ash, a *Litvak* from northern Russia [Upper Poland], spoke *Yiddish* rapidly and with a universally accepted pronunciation of the vowels. Rabbi Middleman, a *Galitzianer* from southern Poland [known as Little or Lower Poland], spoke a drawn out *Yiddish*, like an American southerner who speaks English with a drawl, and with his provincial pronunciation of the vowels. Rabbi Middleman, lived among the sect of *Chasidim* [pious or saintly] of the Belzer dynasty, centered in Lvov [Ger. Lemberg]; Ash, lived among the *Lubavitch*, a different sect of *Chasidim*. Nonetheless, his communication with Rabbi Saul Nathanson

signified that Middleman was indeed a *misnagid* [opponent] of *Chasidism*. Ash likewise lived among *Chasidim* and was said to have been a *Kotzker Chasid*.

The congregation rented the top floor of the former courthouse at 514 Pearl Street corner Centre at twenty-five dollars a month; the first floor being occupied by a newly formed congregation of Posen Jews, *Beth Abraham* [House of Abraham]. *Beth Hamidrash* moved from the top floor to the first floor of the old courthouse vacated by *Beth Abraham*, when the Posen congregation moved to 9 Henry Street, then merged with the larger Posener congregation *Shaare Zedek* [Gates of Righteousness], when in 1850 it acquired the *Anshe Chesed* building located at 38 Henry Street [*Anshe Chesed* having dedicated that year its newly constructed edifice at 172 Norfolk Street].

In 1852, *Beth Hamidrash* moved to Elm and Canal, voting Rabbi Ash, on June 2, a salary of two dollars a week. In 1853, disagreement arose between *Beth Hamidrash* rabbi, Abraham Joseph Ash, and president Rabbi Judah Middleman, over married women who did not shave their hair. Middleman, though generally stringent in matters of ritual, expressed leniency.

As a consequence, Middleman and his Polish Galician constituency withdrew from the Russian dominated *Beth Hamidrash* led by "Lithuanian" Rabbi Ash, and formed a *minyan* in his house at 88 Bayard Street. Soon Middleman founded the *Beth Hamidrash Livne Yisroel Yelide Polin* [House of Study of the Children of Israel born in Poland] at 132 Walker Street. The Polish *Beth Hamidrash* continued to grow, and moved to larger quarters at 8 Baxter Street, and ultimately evolved into the *Kalverier Schul*, with an impressive edifice on Pike Street.

But in the mid-1850's both East European congregations were struggling for their existence when the original *Beth Hamidrash*, led by Ash, its roster numbering eighty men, mostly Russian Jews received a windfall.

In 1855, John I. Hart, founder of two uptown synagogues, rode in his carriage downtown to the Lower East Side, to observe *yahrzeit* for a parent. He preferred *Minhag Ashkenaz* at the Pearl Street *Beth Hamidrash*, where a daily *minyan* assembled every morning and evening for worship. After reciting the mourner's *kaddish*, Rabbi Ash "learned" a chapter of the *Mishna* from the *Talmud* with him. Hart was so impressed that he influenced his bachelor friend, Sampson Simson, a wealthy barrister, whose barony in Yonkers extended from Palisade Avenue to Saw Mill River, to include the *Beth Hamidrash* in his will. Thereby *kaddish* would be recited to his memory "after one hundred and twenty years" [a wishful expression for one's life to equal the lifespan of Moses].

Sampson Simson died the following year. In 1858 the Pearl Street Russian *Beth Hamidrash* received a legacy of $2000 towards purchasing a building. The Welsh Methodist Church at 78 Allen Street was available, but an additional $2000 was needed for a down payment. Rabbi Ash appealed for the additional $2000 needed for the down payment. The following idyllic description of the *Beth Hamidrash* appeared in the press, translated from his *Yiddish* draft:

> This institution, at present situated in New York, is like a lily in the country of America . . . . It is the only institution in the land where religious knowledge is completely absent, which [institution] mocks every scorner, the person who goes astray, and the ignoramus who is self-willed and departs from the ways of the Lord and His laws; and it bids defiance to every unbeliever and infidel, who endeavors to mislead multitudes of Israelites by a guilful tongue, by profuse, vain talk, devoid of knowledge and faith, only to find favor in the eyes of misled Hebrews, and to lighten for them the yoke of the service of the Lord and His commandments, in order that they may be ensnared, and snatched from among the rest of Israel as though this were one's whole duty . . . .
>
> The *Beth Hamidrash* has attracted . . . morning and evening . . . from the day of its founding . . . every person in whom the spirit of the Almighty is active, to pray in the assembly of the faithful. The house is full to overflowing, on Sabbaths and Festivals, in the evening and morning, joining in communal prayer before partaking of their meals. It is well calculated to incite every Israelite who enters into this house to pray, to prepare to appear before his Maker with religious fervor and devotion . . . .
>
> It is open daily to everyone spurred to the study of the law . . . It is filled with all sorts of holy books, several sets of the Babylonian and Jerusalem *Talmuds*, the *Turim, Rambam*, *Rif*, *Shulchan Aruch*, Rabbinical opinions, Bibles, commentaries, books of devotion and instruction, *Midrashim*, *kabbalah*, and it has many books in the *Hechal* [hall], so that every one who desires instruction may obtain it . . . .
>
> A portion of the law is expounded publicly . . . every evening . . . for people resting from their daily task, to teach them the law, that they may know the God of their fathers, and the deeds which they should do in His service, and to warn them that they be not ensnared in transgression. Besides this, either in pairs or single . . . there are found herein . . . students of the law, many of whom know how to decide for the people correctly matters of religious obligation . . . .

The $2000 mark was soon achieved: $1300 contributed by the membership, and the $700 balance given by two uptown donors, leaving a mortgage of $7500; the full purchase price $11,500.

Thereupon, the *Beth Hamidrash* purchased the Welsh Methodist church. Rabbi Judah Middleman of the rival *Beth Hamidrash Livne Yisrael Yelide Polin*, questioned the permissibility of converting a church into a Jewish house of worship.

Though many churches had been purchased and transformed into synagogues over the previous decade, there is a record of only one person seeking approval for such a conversion. In 1847, Judah Touro of New Orleans wrote such a letter of inquiry to Isaac Leeser. Upon receiving his affirmative reply, Touro traded a lot he owned at the corner of Canal and Dauphine streets for the outmoded Christ Church sanctuary at the corner of Canal and Bourbon, which had belonged to an Episcopalian congregation. The renovation took three years, and in 1850 Judah Touro presented the keys to *Nefutzoth Yehudah* to Gershon Kursheedt, and "to his brothers of the Portuguese *Minhag*."

But Reverend Leeser was no authority to East European Jews. They turned for rabbinic decision to the world-famed scholars in the lands from which they emigrated. Middleman, a native of Lemberg [Polish, Lvov] wrote to his rabbi, the renowned Joseph Saul Nathanson [Nathansohn], the world-renowned Galician rabbi of Lemberg, one of the leading European rabbis, who, together with his brother-in-law Mordecai Zev Orenstein authored the classic commentary called *M'forshei Hayam* ["Searches of the Sea"—the sea being the *Talmud*]. He questioned the permissibility of using a former church for Jewish worship. Consequently, the dedication of the *Beth Hamidrash*, set for Monday, May 17th, the day before the *Shavuot* festival, was postponed.

On May 18, 1858, *Erev Shavuos*, Rabbi Abraham Joseph Ash wrote to Rabbi Jacob Ettlinger of Altona, Germany, seeking approval for conversion of the Allen Street church into a synagogue. He informed Rabbi Ettlinger that originally the building had been a private house that had later been remodeled into a Protestant church that never had images or statues.

Rabbis Nathanson and Ettlinger promptly sent their replies, both allowing the conversion. The *Beth Hamidrash* set the Sabbath of June 26th as the new dedication date and invited Rabbi Rice to deliver the main address.

German Orthodoxy had an ally in the new Russian influx. What they had in common was rejection of Reform, though the older establishment was closer socially to the Reform element.

Chapter 37
Movement of Burial Ground

A TRUSTEE of congregation *Anshe Chesed*, New York, reported at their board meeting on May 30, 1858:

> . . . that in about a week the Rev. Mr. Abraham Reiss was expected to arrive from Baltimore [to dedicate the *Beth Hamidrash*] . . . and suggested inviting him to inspect the [*Anshe Chesed* 45th Street] cemetery and give his competent advice about the removal of the corpses there . . . .

The cemeteries of Manhattan had become endangered a decade earlier by the encroaching buildings being erected. Since the Revolution of 1848, great waves of immigration poured into the United States from central European countries. Many thousands entered through the port of New York, and remained there. A building boom ensued on Manhattan Island. To accommodate the living, the city encroached on the "cities of the dead." Squares were paved and parks were planted over Potter's fields; even some Christian cemeteries were covered over for public use.

Thus, E. Block of New York wrote to Leeser on September 5, 1849:

> I have been to two or three funerals recently and have been struck by the narrow and confined appearance of the butial place of one of the richest and most numerous congregations of the great metropoly [sic!] and apart from the certainty of the necessary of removal in a few years away from a continually encroaching population, it seems like a desecration of remains of the dead to huddle them together in such a spot surrounded as it is and overlooked by houses that resemble barracks, teeming as they do with that description of population that swarms upon the outskirts of a large city. Can you not in your next Occident suggest the idea of a general Jewish cemetery, located upon Long Island, and guarded by State charter perpetually against desecration by any possible change of destination. . . .

With the building boom, the ground reverberated with the blasting of rock that cradled Manhattan Island, to set the foundations of the new buildings. Tombstones in nearby cemeteries toppled, cracked, shattered. Congregations removed the tombstones to protect them and replaced them with wooden markers to identify the graves. They planned to restore the tombstones when the blasting ceased.

When in 1851 the City of New York passed an ordinance to prohibit burials south of 86th Street, most Jewish congregations whose cemeteries were in that sector, purchased burial ground in Cypress Hills, Long Island. First to purchase land, *Shearith Israel*, acquired twelve acres opposite what is called the Cypress Cemetery.

Anshe Chesed's burial ground was visited by a committee. The minutes of April, 1853, recorded that: "in consequence of a report having reached him [the President], that said burying ground [on 45th Street] was in a very dilapidated condition . . . that 4 coffins were partly uncovered by the ground and that part of the fence was in a very bad state almost broke down . . . that we would probably be notified to remove these coffins on account of their protruding too much on the adjoining lot . . ." The coffins were covered, the fence repaired and ground acquired in Cypress Hills.

The president of *Anshe Chesed* further noted that congregation *B'nai Jeshurun* planned to remove the dead from their burial ground in 32nd Street. Subsequently, the minutes of *Anshe Chesed*, July of 1853, recorded that no further burials take place in the congregation's burial ground on 89th Street. It was resolved that as of July 17, 1853, all burials take place "in the new cemetery in Queens County, Long Island."

Property values soared in Manhattan, and the acreage of burial grounds became sought after by developers. In 1853, *B'nai Jeshurun* voluntarily opted to vacate its cemetery on 32nd Street. A Christian passing by at night noticed much activity in the Jewish burial ground; graves being dug up and removed. Aware that *Shearith Israel* was contesting removal of its dead from its Oliver Street cemetery as demanded by the city fathers who wanted to extend the Bowery, he wrote a letter to Robert Lyons, editor of *The Asmonean*, who sounded an alarm. Lyons was informed that Morris Raphall, the congregation's rabbi, had taken ten men to view the cemetery. They determined that the ground was entirely unsafe, probably due to the blasting. Raphall then rendered his opinion that the transfer might be made. The task proceeded at night so as not to be noticed and upset other Jews in the community.

Two years passed when the officers were concerned with "the damages done by the last heavy rain to the old burial place of this congregation on 45th Street. A committee reported that they had visited that place which they found in the most awful and shocking state, as the heavy rain had washed off the ground from the graves on one end of the place, by which a great many coffins were uncovered, and bones they believed to be human ones were scattered around; they also reported that the wooden fence around the place was good in itself, but the ground on

which it stood was so tender that a wooden fence could not be of durability or use and must give way. They suggested replacing it with a stone wall.

In 1855, the city approved extending the Bowery. This necessitated cutting a swath through the two-century old cemetery of *Shearith Israel*. The Portuguese congregation had no choice but to remove all graves from that strip of its Oliver Street burial ground to its 21st Street cemetery.

On the other hand, *Shaaray Tefila*, that year voluntarily became "the sixth Jewish Congregation which had the arduous duty of disturbing the remains of the deceased congregation . . . ." Its decade-old burial ground subsequently became incorporated into Central Park.

Of all the synagogues in New York, only the Portuguese congregation *Shearith Israel* retained its burial grounds in the city: its oldest dating to the colonial period is located on Oliver Street and bounded by the Bowery and Henry Streets.

Its second cemetery opened in 1802 at 13th Street, for those dying of pestilential disorders. But the city, in widening of the street that year, left less than twelve feet of cemetery space. Its lone occupant was disinterred and transferred to the old ground and the 13th Street cemetery closed in 1803.

Its third cemetery opened in 1805, at 11th Street by Sixth Avenue. A score years passed when agitation to close all burial grounds in Lower Manhattan had begun. The cry attributed to epidemics that issued forth from the deceased. Actually, recurrent yellow fever emanated from the filth in the streets, hogs roaming at large, clouds of dust rising in dry weather, and ankle-deep mud in rainy weather. There was not one sewer in all the town; each house had its own cesspit, the contents of which were dumped from the shore into the nearest slip or quay on the Hudson or East River. The 11th Street Cemetery was condemned and closed in 1830.

Its fourth cemetery opened in 1830 at 21st Street, and closed in 1855, when graves from the Old Oliver Street had to be transferred because of the widening of the Bowery.

Shearith Israel alone, of all New York synagogues was not tempted to sell its burial grounds by the tempting monetary offers of builders.

Rabbi Rice clarified that, in Judaism, the sanctity of the human body is such that it must be honored in death, to rest in peace until the time when it will be resurrected by the Almighty. Therefore, removal or transfer of the dead is not sanctioned, except when a body was to be reburied near relatives in a family plot (and even then only under certain conditions), or when a person was to be returned to the land of Israel, or when

the deceased had expressed a desire to be temporarily interred in one place and later to be removed to another.

As regards the last instance, the *Trustee Minute Book* of *Shearith Israel*, New York, records that on November 25, 1855, Rabbi Rice, upon invitation of the officers, came to their synagogue while in New York on business to render a decision on such a question:

> The President stated that he had specially convened the Board for the purpose of considering the application of Mr. Joel Wolfe to remove the remains of his wife from its present resting place in the *Beth Haim* [lit. House of Life, euphemism for a Jewish cemetery] on Long Island in the regular row, to a Plot in said Cemetery which Mr. Wolfe was ready to procure. And that the *Revd Rabbi Rice* of Baltimore was now present to give the religious law in reference to the subject . . . .
>
> At the following meeting held December 3, 1855, Mr. Wolfe's letter requesting permission for reinterment was read, and it was permitted on the grounds that Rabbi Rice of Baltimore has given his opinion that Mrs. Wolf[e] was buried according to the meaning of the word **על תנאי** [conditionally]—having expressed the desire for temporary burial until later transfer to another burial place . . . .

In June, 1858, the officers of *Anshe Chesed* looked forward to the coming of Rabbi Rice to New York in the latter part of the month. They invited him to advise them on the manner prescribed by Jewish law for disinterment and transfer of their deceased members from 45th Street in Manhattan to its recently acquired *Anshe Chesed* burial ground in Cypress Hills on Long Island. This removal would also solve a case that had caused much unpleasantness over the past seven years.

They recalled that in October of 1851, they consulted with Rabbi Rice, seeking his opinion on the disinterment of the remains of the elder [Abraham?] Dittenhoefer from the *Anshe Chesed* cemetery on 89th Street in Manhattan to the Cypress Hill cemetery of *Emanu-El* on Long Island.

The elder Dittenhoefer had been a member of *Anshe Chesed* and a close friend of Rabbi Rice's. A year after his father's passing and upon the death of his widowed mother, Frumet, Dittenhoefer's oldest son, Isaac, a member of Temple *Emanu-El*, purchased a family plot in the temple's new cemetery in Cypress Hills. He did so after consulting with the rabbi of the temple, Dr. Leo Merzbacher. He encouraged Isaac to purchase the plot in which to reinter his father, and then request of *Anshe Chesed*'s officers to arrange for the reburial of his father in the family plot.

The officers of *Anshe Chesed* consulted with their former minister,

Max Lilienthal, and with their former teacher, Hermann Felsenheld; also with the scholarly Jewish bookseller, Chaim Nussbaum. All three concurred that it was unlawful to allow such a disinterment.

Isaac Dittenhoefer thereupon called upon his "rabbi," Dr. Merzbacher, to contest the decision. Merzbacher appealed to the officers of *Anshe Chesed*, arguing:

> But as even justice is denied by men of mercy it becomes inevitable to resort to that remedying power of the pen which, however painful the act, opens the tumor and affords an outlet to the concealed ulcerating matter, quickening the restoration to health and soundness of mind and body concerned . . . .
>
> When his venerated mother departed this life in the month of October last, he unhesitatingly caused her interment in this newly possessed resting place, not aware of any obstacle to be met with, in joining those "who were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death not divided." For I must acknowledge that my humble opinion, openly expressed on that occasion, supported this view, and consequently I share the responsibility, as I did not know of any existing lawful impediment, nor did I expect any stupid resistance . . . .

Rice, because he had been a friend of the late Dittenhoefer, felt a personal obligation to state his approval of the decision of the tribunal consulted by the *Anshe Chesed* officers. His letter was published in *The Asmonean*:

> Baltimore, January 12, 5612 [1852]
>
> Robert Lyon Esq.,
>
> My Dear Friend
>
> Though, thank God, I reckon not myself any more among the hords of Doctors and Rabbis in this country, yet for the love of my religion and the true cause of Judaism, I consider it my duty to come forward, stating my humble opinion in such an important case like that mentioned in your valuable paper of the 9th January: About removing the remains of the father of Mr. Dittenho[ef]er from his resting place, and particularly, as the old gentleman was a friend of mine for may years, I think to do a favor to his memory, if I can prevent his disturbance.
>
> It is a matter of sorrow to see our brethren in faith so eager to imitate other confessions, without consideration of our holy religion.
>
> It is clearly understood in all *Poskim* [rabbinic authorities] that we are not allowed to touch a grave without serious motives, and the great man whom we trust in all his decisions. says, "The dead must not be removed at all."

> Here it is distinctly said, that it is only allowable when a family grave was long in existence, to bring a member of the family there, but not to disturb a father's grave to make a family grave. This last we call *arrogance* and *false pride*.
>
> Though I belong not to the triumvires, who Dr. Merzbacher mentioned in his letter, yet I say they have done right and justice not to allow the bones of the old gentleman (Blessed be his memory), to be removed.
>
> Please give a place in your paper to these few lines that such actions may not be done in Israel, which are against all our ancient rules.
>
> From your humble servant,
> *A. Rice.*

Upon the publication of Rice's responsum, the officers of *Anshe Chesed* replied to Merzbacher that his request was contrary to Jewish law, adding that it had been the expressed wish of the deceased to be interred in the original *Anshe Chesed* burial ground. They asked Merzbacher:

> If he [Isaac Dittenhoefer] as much desire that the remains of the two parents should lay together, why did he not place his mother in the burial ground with her husband? A much wiser course than disturbing the bones of a good old man who had been buried over a year, and then, those who had been companions in life would not have been separated in death . . . .

But unforseen circumstances arose that resolved the seven-year-old unfulfilled request of Isaac Dittenhoefer to move his father's remains and still satisfy Orthodox law—the disturbance caused by the blasting of the rockbed of Manhattan Island to those who were to "rest in peace." Thus were the older Dittenhoefer's remains distinterred with all others from the *Anshe Chesed* Manhattan burial ground.

Jewish law provided that remains could be removed from their resting places if the burial ground had become an unsafe place for the preservation of the interred or if the city requisitioned the site for public purposes.

Therefore in 1858, the *Anshe Chesed* officers decided to unite all those who had been buried in the old 45th Street cemetery with those interred in family graves at the new Cypress Hills cemetery on Long Island.

In July, 1858, Rabbi Rice directed the officers of *Anshe Chesed* to move all who reposed in *Anshe Chesed*'s burial ground to Cypress Hill's Jewish cemeteries across the East River in Long Island, for reinterment.

Chapter 38
Russian Rabbis

HIS VISITIATION with the officials of *Anshe Chesed* completed, Rabbi Rice remained in New York for a major event in the life of East European Jews in America.

On July 26, 1858, Rabbi Rice delivered the main address at the dedication of the first permanent building of the first *Beth Hamidrash* in America.

To raise funds towards the $7,500 mortgage payments of the Allen Street *Beth Hamidrash*, its officers planned a lottery to be held during the *Chanukah* holiday in December. The idea of a lottery as a fund raiser in synagogues had first been introduced in Philadelphia by *Mickve Israel* in 1790.

On *Rosh ha-Shanah*, a most holy day on the Jewish calendar, Rabbi Abraham Joseph Ash and the worshippers, attired in white robes and caps, fervently offered prayers for a New Year of life and happiness for all mankind. Suddenly, police entered the synagogue. They walked up to the pulpit, and in the midst of the prayers arrested Rabbi Ash with two other rabbis of the *Beth Hamidrash*, charging them with selling bogus lottery tickets.

Headlines blared: *THREE JEWISH RABBIS ARRESTED AS LOTTERY TICKET VENDORS*. After criticizing the police for their insensitivity, an uptown New Yorker demeaned Rabbi Ash. Quoting from the high holy day prayer, *Odom yesodo m'ofor* ["Man's origin is dust"] he expounded: "Man should always remember that they are from dust, and return to dust, and as dust has resemblance with ashes, I feel my thoughts logically led upon that venerable subject, the imposter Ash . . . ." *The Asmonean* editor assented: "If this is the method in which they are to be established, Heaven save us from them . . . "

News of the arrest of the Russian rabbis traveled from coast to coast. At San Francisco, Dr. Julius Eckman, publisher of *The Gleaner*, asked: " . . . is it credible that New York police would enter any place of worship and arrest a minister while he is instructing the people?" For the benefit of "Christian readers who do not know how to solve this apparent mystery . . . ." he clarified:

> As we call every man "Mr." (an abbreviation of the Latin word "Magister," signifying *master, ruler, chief, teacher*), so do the Russian

> and Polish Jews style every adult member of their creed *Rab* or *Rabbi*; which rendered in English means *master, ruler, chief, teacher*. We therefore need not wonder when we read of honest Rabbi M. or N. working at his trade, or vending meat, fish, or vegetables; and it is thus that we hear of an exception—a very rare exception . . . of a rabbi dealing in lottery tickets, though in the present instance they happened to be bogus. Thus much for the use and abuse of the title of Rabbi . . . .

In Cincinnati, Wise, who did not have a rabbinical degree, joined in denouncing the ordained rabbis of the *Beth Hamidrash*:

> The rumors in several papers, that the lottery dealers and the denunciant in New York are Rabbis . . . are gross *FICTIONS*. The whole gang is a set of imposters, who assume titles, names and stations, best suiting their vile purposes. A class of masked hypocrites who, being entire strangers to modern civilization and the principles of sound morality, band together for the only purpose of disgracing Judaism. This explanation will suffice also for those periodicals, who some months ago lauded the midnight efforts of those sons of darkness. Let them correct their blunders about the New York Allen Street gang.

Trial was held. Rabbi Ash and his cohorts were acquitted of all charges of complicity in an unlawful act.

No sooner had the press quieted when that winter a new outburst thundered forth against Rabbi Ash from Yehoshua Rothstein, President of the *Beth Hamidrash*. He fiercely fought against Ash continuing as rabbi, not because of the lottery scandal, but because he felt that his honor had been slighted in some trivial maner. As a rebuke to Ash, Rothstein absented himself from worship. Rabbi Ash and his followers thereupon appointed Henry Shuck as president. But Rothstein reappeared the following Sabbath to assume his official duties. At the morning service, both Rothstein and Shuck, each acting as president, energetically gave orders as to which persons were to be called to read and recite blessings at the *Torah* readings. Confusion and disruption ensued; the membership split into two feuding factions on that "day of rest."

Rothstein instituted legal proceedings, contesting the validity of the new election, and won the verdict. Upon obtaining a settlement of $300 Rabbi Ash resigned, and with twenty-three followers left the *Beth Hamidrash* to found the *Beth Hamidrash Hagadol* [Grand House of Study]; Henry Shuck accepted the presidency. They rented the top floor of a building on Forsyth Street at the southwest corner of Grand, and dedicated its synagogue on the Sabbath, *Nahamu*, August 13, 1859. Soon thereafter they purchased their own burial ground in Union Fields.

As their name indicated, in the "Grand House of Study," prayer, as in the parent *Beth Hamidrash* was accompanied by study. Upon conclusion of a portion of a tractate of the *Talmud*, beadle Nathan Mayer served a *Seudas Mitzvah* [religious banquet]. So, too, did a festive meal absolve a mourner from fasting on the day of his *yahrzeit* [anniversary of the passing of a loved one]. The "meal" consisted of a piece of sponge cake and brandy: the charge to the mourner ten cents for each person present. Mayer, who collected dues and donations, received an annual salary of $75 which he doubled by serving the "banquet" for those observing *yahrzeit*.

A year passed, and the peace between Rabbi Ash and the officers shattered once again on the holiest day of the year, the Day of Atonement. Under the direction of the newly elected president, Aaron Hershfield, the officers engaged Cantor Israel Warschauer to come from Russia and serve as *chazzan* of the *Beth Hamidrash Hagadol*; the first professional cantor to be engaged by a Russian-Polish congregation in America. Before the arrival of Cantor Warschauer, the officiating *Baal Tefilah* in the Russian and Polish *Beth Hamidrash*, [in the Portuguese and German synagogue called *Chazzan*] were so titled because of his ability to read Hebrew and preferably possessed of a pleasant voice. Thus he was referred to as Reader in the earlier American Synagogues.

It was *Yom Kippur* 5620, which that year [1859] was observed on Saturday, October 8. The day was hot and humid; the synagogue was filled to capacity. As the noonday sun blazed, the stuffiness increased, the discomfiture intensified. Elderly worshippers, fasting and thirsty, were especially distressed. But the windows remained shut because the president feared that if they were opened a draft might adversely affect the cantor's voice.

The rabbi, Abraham Ash, concerned for the worshippers and himself, wanted the windows opened, as did many *Chasidim* who scorned the novelty of a cantor and his "foreign melodies." Consequently, *Chasidim* opened the windows; *Misnagdim* closed them. Windows were raised and lowered, as an exercise in futility continued throughout the greater part of the day.

The *Misnagdim* won; the windows remained closed. Ash and his followers withdrew joined by *Chasidim*. They founded a *Shtiebel* or *Stuebel*, meaning ["little house"] in *Yiddish*—the nickname for a *Chasidic* house of prayer. Thus, in the fall of 1859, the first *Chasidic Shtiebel* in America opened at 21 Delancy Street in New York.

The New York *Shtiebel* carried on as in the Old World. Every Saturday night, they celebrated the departure of the "Queen Sabbath" with a *Melave Malka* [Escorting the Queen] banquet. Questing to be on

familiar terms with the Almighty, they not only expressed their feelings in singing chants with the old time hilarity, as they partook of fish, meat, and liquor contributed by individual members, but after the meal, linked arms and danced with gusto until midnight.

In the spring of 1860, at the approach of the Passover festival, the officers of the *Beth Hamidrash Hagadol* on Forsyth Street reconciled with Rabbi Ash. He resumed his post as rabbi without recompense, having become independently wealthy as a clothing manufacturer. Since the wealthy were elected to the presidency of congregations, Ash was no exception and he, as President Ash, contributed generously to the upkeep of the synagogue.

That year, President Ash welcomed the newly arrived Rabbi Selig Poppers to serve as rabbi of the *Beth Hamidrash Hagadol*. Rabbi Selig Poppers, a talmudic scholar and Hebraist, authored an erudite introduction to the Hebrew language—*Derekh ha-Kodesh* ["The Sacred Path"]; his manuscript was never published.

Poppers immediately turned his attention to correct *kashrus* disorders for the benefit of the observant Jewish community of New York. Six years earlier, in 1854, the German congregations had formed a union to oversee the *shochetim*. To combat this congregational union, the *shochetim* formed their own union, perhaps the first union of workers ever organized in the United States. Kosher meat in New York continued unregulated and unsupervised.

The ritual slaughterers had an unsolicited ally in Isaac Mayer Wise. He stated in his *Israelite* on February 9, 1855:

> The officers of all the Synagogues, the temple [*Emanu-El*, New York] excepted, are attempting to form a union in controlling the *Schochtim*, etc. Great things come to pass in the metropolis of America. Next comes the *Bes Din* with the power of administering *malkus* ["lashes" for transgression of biblical commandments], *makus mardus* ["beating for rebellion" against rabbinical ordinances], *Cherem* [excommunication], *Neziphah* [censure], etc.

In the far west, in San Francisco, prior to October 1854, the two synagogues, *Emanu-El* the German-rite and *Sherith Israel* the Polish-rite, had one *shochet*, Isaac Goldsmith, a Russian Jew of high moral character and strictly religious conduct.

That fall, the officers of *Emanu-El* requested their newly elected rabbi, Julius Eckman, to issue *kabbalah* to a recent arrival from Germany, as they did not want an East European to serve their German congregation. Eckman declined stating that during his voyage from Panama, he observed on the California-bound steamer that young man eating *tereifa* [non-kosher] meats.

Upon that chaps arrival in San Francisco, he opened a butcher shop on the Sabbath day. He worked on that day of rest, cutting meats and carrying the orders to his customers. Moreover, he roomed in a boarding house which served *tereif* meals.

Upon Eckman's refusal to certify the applicant whom he termed an *am ha-aretz* [an "ignoramus"], a *Reik* ["worthless" character], President Henry Seligman, declared: "We are Reformers, and do not take matters so strictly." They censured Eckman and engaged the butcher as their *shochet*. Eckman's ministry at *Emanu-El* soon terminated.

Lawlessness prevailed in the wild West and no less in the East; in the metropolis of New York as in San Francisco.

Rabbi Poppers sought to bring law and order into the realm of kosher meats. With the backing of Rabbi Morris Raphall, Poppers called upon Rabbi Rice to endorse non-union Reverend Isaac Marks of Poland, as *shochet* for "God fearing Jews." Accordingly, Reverend Samuel Myer Isaacs, publisher of *The Jewish Messenger*, inserted the following notice on April 15th of that year:

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Rev. Isaac Marks respectfully informs the Israelites of New York City and its vicinity, that he is fully qualified and competent as שוחט ומוהל [*shochet* and *mohel* ritual slaughterer and circumciser]—having held office as Minister to the Hebrew Congregation of Great Yarmouth and Glasgow, under the authority of the Rev. Dr. [Nathan] Adler, Chief Rabbi of Great Britain, by whom he is recommended, and also by other chief rabbins [sic!] and respectable gentlemen in Europe. He is a native of Russia-Poland, and has been examined as שו"ב [שוחט ובודק] [*shochet*—ritual slaughterer and examiner] by the בית דין [*Beth Din*—Ecclesiastical Court] of the *Beth Hamidrash* in this city, and by R. Abraham Rice of Baltimore, and resides at No. 185 West 35th Street, near Eighth Avenue.

I know Rev. I. Marks to be fully competent שוחט ומוהל as [*shochet* and *mohel*—ritual slaughterer and circumciser].

M[orris] J[acob] Raphall, Dr.

I confirm the above

S[amuel] M[yer] Isaacs

Thereafter, Isaacs continued to agitate in his *Jewish Messenger* for the city-wide regulation and control of *kashrus*. In May, 1860, he asked:

"Why is there no religious united superintendance of butchers who supply kosher food, as regards their source of supply?"

Whereas in earlier years kosher meat had been sold by non-Jewish butchers, supervised by the respective congregations whose members they supplied, there were now Jewish butchers, totally without supervision, who acted irresponsibly and unconscionably.

Having endorsed Isaac Marks as ritual slaughterer, Rice, joined by Isaacs, Raphall, and the rabbis of the *Beth Hamidrash*, approved a particular store, the butcher shop of C. Willmot, as one that scrupulously followed the laws of *Kashrus*. The following notice appeared in *The Jewish Messenger* of August 17, 1860:

Take Notice

Establishment of a new [*kosher*] *meat market*

C. Willmot

> Begs to inform his friends and the Jewish community that he has established at No. 569 Eighth Avenue, between 46th and 47th Streets in this city, a כשר [kosher] Meat Market, and has engaged for this purpose the Rev. Isaac Marks, who is fully qualified and competent as שוחט [*shochet*—ritual slaughterer], having held office as Minister to the Hebrew Congregation of Great Yarmouth and Glasgow, under the authority of Rev. Dr. Adler, Chief Rabbi of the British Jews, by whom he is recommended, as also by other chief rabbins of Europe; also by the *Beth Hammidrash*, and by the Rev. Drs. Raphall and Isaacs of New York, and the Rev. A. Rice of Baltimore, and will take particular care to attend to the superintendance of this establishment from 6 to 10 A.M.
>
> He therefore solicits patronage of those families who depend upon a proper place for getting real כשר [kosher] meat . . . .

It is noteworthy that Isaacs' *Jewish Messenger*, Leeser's *Occident*, and the later *American Hebrew* published by Frederick de Solla Mendes, did not accept advertisements of "forbidden" food and of non-kosher restaurants.

The most distinctive contribution of the *Beth Hamidrash*, that of licensing ritual slaughterers, in which Rabbi Rice participated, drew the anger of a member of the now Reformed *Anshe Chesed*, which for a score years still remained America's largest German-Jewish congregation. That *Anshe Chesed* member complained that:

> Our German congregation, numbering between 7 & 800 members have to beg . . . a Polish *Beth Hamidrash* for a קבלה [license

for a ritual slaughterer]. I think this state of things is too humbling and degrading not to require a speedy remedy . . . .

Robert Lyons, the editor of *The Asmonean*, differed with that *Anshe Chesed* member. He reported that the membership of the Allen Street *Beth Hamidrash* consisted of

> a large number of learned and Religious men continually engaged in Talmudic study. Although most of them are Polanders, yet decisions made there on questions submitted, are received as Orthodox and legal.

Even Wise begrudgingly admitted in his *Israelite* that its members " . . . may have a piece of a *Morenu* [rabbinical degree] from somewhere . . . ."

In 1860, Wise visited New York. He commented on the Jewish institutions, including benevolent societies, fraternal societies, synagogues, temples, and Russian-Polish congregations, stating that

> on the religious thermometer . . . all shades and descriptions of religious opinions are represented in this community; from the zero of indifference to the highest degree of Polish *Hasidism* . . . .

Wise singled out the *Beth Hamidrash* and its forty members for particular derision:

> There is the *Beth Hamidrash* where the souls of the departed are saved from *Sheol* [grave] for a few dollars; decisions on pots, spoons, knives, forks, plates, oxen, cows, calves, sheep, and their derivatives, poultry, &c., are rendered with remarkable ease; bills of divorce, *chalizah*, and other dispensations are granted, all very cheap and with very little trouble. the saints of the frigid zone sit together, their long beards, curse Reformers, redeem the world, claim of hard times, examine *Shochtim*, and make money on the Quaker principle [never to charge more than their services are worth].

Of the Russian-Polish rabbis in America, Leeser frankly stated:

> We are, indeed, unacquainted with the *Beth Hamidrash* in New York; perhaps its members are what their name professes, regularly educated theologians; but they have so little influence in the community that we ourself have no acquaintance with a single man among them . . . .
>
> We do not wish to be misunderstood, that there are no men in the United States fit to be elected Rabbis; for on the contrary, we

know of several, especially our learned friends in Baltimore [Abraham Rice, Bernhard Illowy] and elsewhere, whose decisons will be cheerfully obeyed in all the dispersions of Israel . . . .

Rice's extensive talmudic knowlege, drew the attention of the Russian rabbis who consulted him and highly valued his opinion. Thus, they turned to him for his decision in the practice of the "bleeding of cattle."

The question first surfaced in 1854. Abraham Joseph Ash, Rabbi of the *Beth Hamidrash Hagadol*, forbad *shochet*, Aaron Zevi Friedman an emigrant from Stavisk [near Lomza] in Russian-Poland, to continue slaughtering for the *Beth Hamidrash Livne Yisrael Yelide Polin*; the reason being that Friedman slaughtered calves that had been bled within the previous twenty-four hours.

Rabbi Judah Middleman, who then occupied the pulpit of the *Beth Hamidrash Livne Yisroel Yelide Polin* and formerly President of the *Beth Hamidrash* and who was highly respected as a talmudic jurist, disagreed with Ash's ruling. Middleman authorized Friedman to continue serving as *shochet* for the *Beth Hamidrash*. He supported his decision with the concurrence through correspondence he had with his rabbi, Joseph Saul Nathanson, who replied that he approved Friedman's kosher slaughtering of bled cattle, but added this caution: "Only this—it [the bleeding] must be performed by an expert." If it was performed by an inexperienced person, the calf's esophagus or trachea might have been pierced in drawing blood from the neck, thereby rendering it *terefah* [torn] and unfit for kosher slaughtering.

Rabbi Ash then ascertained that in the Lemberg area of Galicia in Little Poland, however, where only veterinarians were allowed by law to bleed calves, kosher slaughtering of such bled calves was permitted. In correspondence with Rabbi Abraham of Stavisk in Russian-Poland, from which city *shochet* Aaron Friedman hailed, Ash received a reply which stated that permission to bleed calves and allow them for kosher slaughtering had been at first granted only for sick cattle, but afterwards withdrawn since they were being bled by inexperienced persons. Rabbi Ash further revealed that Friedman had been forbidden to slaughter in Stavisk because he had disregarded this edict.

Thereupon, Rabbi Ash reaffirmed his denial of permission to *shochet* Friedman to continue kosher-slaughtering calves that had been bled. He maintained that such permission by Galician authorities applied only to calves that were shipped to New York's abbatoir in open boats on the decks during the summer months, being exposed to the sun for many days. Some of these overheated calves contracted a malady which could be remedied only by letting blood. But, maintained Ash, none of the

Galician rabbis had intended to allow the bleeding to near death of healthy animals, as was done in New York.

Nonetheless, Friedman continued to kosher slaughter bled cattle. Rabbi Ash then wrote to Rice of the situtation and invited Rice to join him on his next business trip to New York, to visit the abbatoir and render his opinion.

Rice, accompanied by Ash, observed that the calves were bled for several successive hours before being slaughtered, the healthy animals as well as the sick ones. He learned that they were bled in this manner in summer as in winter; the purpose being not to alleviate suffering but to render the veal white and tender in order to satisfy customers' preference for such cuts of veal. In calf after calf a cut was made and kept open until the blood no longer spurted. As the flow slowed to a drip, the wound was closed so that the animal did not expire.

Rabbi Rice was appalled. He condemned the manner in which the calves were bled and prohibited these bled animals for *kosher* slaughtering. Immediately, upon his return to Baltimore, he dispatched a letter to the Reverend Samuel M. Isaacs, minister of *Shaaray Tefila* of New York, for publication in his weekly *Jewish Messenger*, now in its second year. Dated July 16, 1858, Rice's responsum stated:

> To my Brethren of the House of Israel in New York in whose hearts the fear of God is still latent:
>
> The Lord of all is my witness that neither for vain glory nor fruitless controversy do I indite these lines, but for the love of truth and the holy law. When, on a late occasion, I visited your city, and had ocular evidence of the whole system of ritual slaughtering and inspection of cattle, as practiced in your midst, I was virtually paralyzed.
>
> It appears that every one that pleases, slays cattle for his profit, and there is no legitimate religious supervision on a matter of such grave and vital importance as the proper observance of God's law in what is permitted and what prohibited. Without such supervision there must be of necessity an increase of laxity in those who have little knowledge of the profession they follow, both in the proper slaying and in the searching examination, thus causing Israel to eat that "which dieth of itself"!
>
> Their works are deeds of evil, and corruption is in their hands. The ways of religion they know not, and there is no justice in their path. Justice is distant, and truth is missing; and as there is no proper supervision, therefore truth becomes powerless, and arguments futile. Now, ye leaders and ministers of the Congregations, I call on you, hear my words and attend to my voice! Arouse your hearts to remove this reproach, and do your utmost to uproot this grievance

from the House of Israel; and remember that the brother who speaks to you thus is desirous for the happiness of your souls as well as his own.

Baltimore, Md.

Abraham Rice

Rice's indictment was directed at the *shochtim* who slaughtered calves that had been bled on the day prior to their killing. He found support for his stand in Cincinnati, where, as in New York, *kosher* slaughter was ongoing. The rabbis of Jerusalem to whom the subject had also been referred, concurred with Rice's decision to forbid to the Jewish consumer calves that had first been bled and then slaughtered as *kosher*.

As the debate over the kosher slaughtering of cattle that had been bled continued, Isaac Mayer Wise, agreed with Rice in this singular instance. He decried the practice of bleeding calves, without mention of cruelty to animals being contrary to *kashrus*:

> The cruelties and atrocities, prolonged often during twenty-four hours, practiced by butchers on calves, in order to give a white color to the veal, would exceed all belief, were they not well attested. The poor animals are slowly and gradually bled to death, their mouths are filled with salt, and then they are run bled, so that they are suffering from burning thirst. The animals die under most excruciating tortures in burning fever, accompanied by violent inflammation of the brain . . . but were calves slaughtered according to the Jewish ordinances, veal, though not so white, would be neither more unwholesome nor more dangerous at any time, than other food.

Without a doubt, *Kashrus* presented the greatest problem confronting Orthodoxy internally and nationally. Across the Hudson River, from New York City, over two hundred Jewish families lived in Newark, New Jersey. In November, 1858, one of them reported that two months earlier a few members of Congregation *B'nai Jeshurun* questioned whether the three ritual slaughterers were indeed qualified to perform kosher slaughtering.

The congregation decided to sent them to the *Beth Hamidrash* in New York for examination; each to obtain a new *kabbalah*. Isaac Schwarz, the *chazzan* announced publicly that any *shochet* who would not comply would be dismissed.

One of the newly engaged ritual slaughterers, who had received a license five weeks earlier, returned with a statement that he may slaughter only if a qualified ritual slaughterer is present, and after a month to return for re-examination. Two others were rejected as incapable. After a month, the first returned for his examination, and failed the test.

Left without any licensed ritual slaughterers, "the people cried out, 'when shall we get meat?' " The officers thereupon allowed them to perform kosher slaughtering to the discomfiture of many.

To settle the matter, the officers of *B'nai Jeshurun,* Newark, then appointed a *Beth Din* consisting of Reverend Emanuel Goldsmidt of New York, Reverend I. Schwarz of their synagogue and a Mr. B. Yeiteles of Newark. They established regulations, yet the ritual slaughterers continued to slaughter kosher without license.

In the far west, the question of supervision of four or five ritual slaughterers of San Francisco came to the fore in 1855. The *shochetim* of San Francisco, uncontrolled and undisciplined, engaged in petty squabbles in their quest for golden fees literally, each seeking a larger share of the gold dust and nuggets remunerated for their services.

When an official committee of *Emanu-El* rescinded the license of a *shochet* whom he had earlier approved, an infuriated Eckman who felt his authority questioned and threatened, published a haughty letter in the *Daily Herald*, denying the committee's right to oversee the ritual slaughterers, and he singled them out for incompetence.

Dr. Eckman, who claimed ordination from Dr. Leopold Zunz, in seeking to establish himself as the rabbinic authority of the city, thereby brought himself into conflict with his congregational officers who deemed themselves as the only authorities in matters of ritual and ritual slaughterers. They brought to an abrupt end the ministry of Dr. Julius Eckman.

Reverend Meyer Welhof, who officiated prior to Eckman's arrival, "was appointed to his old position." Prior to Welhof's ministry at the German-rite *Emanu-El* in 1852-53, Reverend Alexander Iser served in the previous year, in 1851-52, as minister of the Polish-rite *Sherith Israel.*

Also in 1852, a budding reverend came upon the scene. He was Abraham Galland, a clerk in Shasta, who moved on to the mining camp of sixteen shanties, Jackass Bar. Galland bought a shanty from a man who turned over to him his medical practice as well. Galland became a "cure-all medical man." He dispensed Brandreth's Pills and whiskey, the latter giving him courage to become a ritual circumciser, at which profession he excelled. Like Eckman, Welhof, and Iser, he served as a rabbi-cantor-teacher, serving in 1855-56, *B'nai Israel*, Sacramento, where he was described as "Pastor, Jewish Synagogue" and "High Priest," 1857; *Chebra Bikur Cholim Ukedisha* [Society for visiting the sick and for funeral arrangements] in San Francisco, 1861; *Beis Eil*, Los Angeles, in 1861, and after 1865, as first rabbi of *Ohabei Shalome*, San Francisco. As rabbi of the "Lovers of Peace," he performed, in 1867, ritual circumcision for the first set of triplets born in the Golden Gate city.

Before Galland became a *mohel*, Reverend Dr. Issachar Zachariah in

1850 perfomed circumcision rites for the first Jewish boy born in the city. Zachariah, in 1851, became the founding president of the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Stockton which developed into congregation *Ryhim Ahoovim*. After Zachariah, Abraham Abrahamsohn, peddler, tailor, miner, and *matzah* baker, became a performer of circumcisions in early 1852. He departed after Passover for Australia.

In the fledgling Jewish community Leon Dyer in 1850 had been honored as the first president of the First Hebrew Congregation of San Francisco. But before Dyer and Zachariah, Lewis Abraham Franklin preached the sermons at High Holy Day services in 1849.

Nonetheless, Alexander Iser, who did not engage all his life in business as did Franklin, or in a medical capacity as did Zachariah, is to be credited as being the first to act in an official capacity as salaried rabbi to minister in the Far West. By the time Eckman arrived in 1854, Iser was ministering at Congregation *Khal Kodesh Magen David* in Nashville, Tennessee. Regrettably, there is no record to whether or not the Polish Reverend Iser, had *semicha*.

During his San Francisco tenure, Alexander Iser published an Almanac booklet of about 34 pages which included a listing of two kosher boarding houses, a butcher shop, and the bakery of kosher matzos. Iser had undoubtedly superintended *kashrus* in California, which turned to chaos after his departure in 1853. Perhaps he prepared the Hebrew calendar, published in his *Almanac*, so that there not be a repeat of the 1849 incident whereby the German-rite worshippers observed *Yom Kippur* on the wrong day, leaving them no choice but to fast two days.

In San Francisco, in addition to the questionable qualifications of the ritual slaughterers, Theophilus [Rabbi Henry] pondered the query "if a *shochet* who shaves with a razor vitiates his *Shechitah*?"

In Detroit, Kashruth conditions reached a critical stage. All seemed in order when *Bet El Verein* was organized in 1850 and Samuel Marcus Cohen of New York engaged as a *Kol-bo*: reader, teacher, *shochet, mohel*. Excitement generated by his service quieted after Cohen died in the cholera epidemic of 1854. Then Wise recommended Dr. Liebmann N. Adler, recently arrived from Lengsfeld, Germany. He, too, acted as reader, teacher, *shochet*, *mohel*. All the while David Marx was the kosher butcher, and an honored founder of the congregation.

In 1859 a storm again erupted. Storekeeper Meyer Wise fared poorly in his grocery and began to sell meat which he himself killed, though he had no ritual license to perform kosher slaughtering.

Dr. Liebmann Adler announced in the synagogue that the meats that Meyer Wise sold in his store were not kosher and his butcher shop not to be patronized. Meyer Wise thereupon went to Isaac Mayer Wise and

his colleagues in Cincinnati. At the same time, Adler wrote to advise them of the scandalous incompetence of storekeeper Meyer Wise.

Meyer Wise returned form Cincinnati with a statement of approval from the Reform leaders and continued to perform ritual slaughtering. Liebmann again declared Meyer Wise unfit and an unrepentent violator of the Sabbath, which alone disqualified him. What he said about Isaac Mayer Wise is not recorded.

Liebmann Adler warned the public again that no one should eat in any Jewish home unless he knows who is the ritual slaughterer and the butcher who sells kosher meat.

In Indianapolis, Indiana, at the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, reader Max Moses was fired on the ground that his *chalef* [lit. change (from life to death)—the ritual knife for slaughtering] was not sharp and smooth as required. Replaced by *shochet* Mr. Hart, the board dismissed him on *Yom Kippur*, for igniting the gas lights in the synagogue on that sacred Sabbath of Sabbaths. Hart learned the meaning of the prayer that proclaimed: *Mi y'ani, umi y'asher* "Who will be empoverished and who will be enriched" or in more personal terms, "Who will be hired, and who will be fired."

Moses and Hart were succeeded by Judah Wechsler, who came to the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation in 1858, a year after its founding. A student of Seligmann Baer Bamberger, the "Würzberger Rav" and who claimed to have been ordained by Rabbi Wolf Hamburger, he left his Orthodoxy behind in Bavaria. Yet he performed as *shochet*, as he was required to call at every married member's house twice a week to kill poultry for the household. But his skill as a *shochet* was questioned soon after his arrival. Wechsler obtained credentials as a ritual slaughterer from Isaac Mayer Wise, and the opposition was stilled. Ironically, Wise who no longer observed *kashrus*, had the gall to license ritual slaughterers.

Four years after Rice issued his ruling, forbidding bleeding of cattle, the practice continued in New York. In his opposition, he was supported by the rabbis of the *Beth Hamidrash*, including their most recent rabbi-elect, Rabbi Moses Joseph Aharanson.

Upon his arrival from Russia, Rabbi Aharanson set aside a prayer room in his home at 46 East Broadway. A quorum asembled daily, morning and evening, for prayer. On Sabbath morning he preached in *Yiddish* and he became popularly called the "East Broadvayer *Magid*" [preacher]. About the year 1861, after he lost his savings in a poor business venture with Rabbi Abraham Ash, he gained appointment as rabbi of the *Beth Hamidrash Hagadol*, where he succeeded Selig Poppers as rabbi. He gained reknown not only for his oratory but as a rabbinic

authority, and became recognized not only in New York but throughout the country; he even gained the respect of the scholarly Reform leaders.

Beth Hamidrash Hagadol, rabbi Aharonson and its President, Rabbi Ash, the leading Russian rabbis of America, became involved in a bitter conflict over the *kashrus* of California wines; also, in a difference of opinion pertaining to Palestinian emissaries collections for *Yeshivah Etz Chaim* in Jerusalem. Aharonson was forced to resign.

In 1864, Aharanson was appointed rabbi of the Allen Street *Adas Jeshurun* [Congregation *Jeshurun*—founded in 1856 by Polish Jews]. In the following year, the rabbi and officers quarreled. That evening after worship, to quell the strife, Abba Baum, president of the congregation came to the rabbi's home with two members, but before they crossed his threshold, he allegedly broke the window and shouted for help. The police arrived and arrested the trio, charged with attempted assassination. In the morning they were released. Thereupon, President Baum appointed Rabbi Isaac Gellis to replace Rabbi Aharanson. Gellis became famed not for his ministry but for the delicatessen factory he later established on Essex Street, which would bear his name for over a century.

Aharanson continued in the rabbinate. Joined by his followers, in 1865 he re-established a congregation at his home and directed bitter barbs particularly against Rabbi Ash, for siding with and inciting Aba Baum. Aharanson served primarily in matters of marriage and divorce, and after a decade traveled westward, possibly to raise funds to realize his lifelong wish, to settle in the Land of Israel with his wife and family. However, he died enroute, in Chicago in 1875.

Aharanson's dream unfulfilled, his family fulfilled his desire in part. They published his last volume, *Matei Moshe* [Plantings of Moses] in Jerusalem, in 1878. This was the first *sefer* by an American rabbi to be published in the Holy Land. Included therein were responsa on the bleeding of calves, in which Aharanson quoted the decision of Rabbi Rice, of whom he spoke with highest esteem, referring to his wealth of talmudic learning and noble character. This was high praise, ranking Rice on a par with leading Russian rabbinic talmudic scholars. Lithuanian-born Aharanson, himself an outstanding talmudic scholar, had achieved prominence in Europe as a rabbi, preacher, author, having published overseas the responsa volumes *Pardes Hachachmah* [Garden of Wisdom] in 1836 and *Pardes Habinah* [Garden of Discernment] in 1855.

Joshua Falk, who succeeded Aharanson as rabbi at the *Beth Hamidrash* became immortalized for his authorship of *Avne Yehoshua* [Monoliths of Joshua], published in New York in 1860. This was the second Hebrew work of scholarship published in America.

The first scholarly Hebrew work to be published in the United States appeared in the previous year, 1859. Entitled *Dinei Nikur* ["Laws of Extracting" veins from meat], authored by B. I. Hamberger, probably a non-East European. This *halachik* volume appeared as an illustrated Hebrew-English guide for American *shochetim*.

Equally prominent among the Russian rabbis, Pesach Rosenthal devoted his life to teaching and for the poor of Palestine, placed charity boxes in stores on the East Side of Manhattan, which he personally collected. His piety and character gained him many supporters. Tragically, he died at age 61 in 1861.

The rabbis Ash, Middleman, Poppers, Aharanson, Gellis, Falk, Rosenthal and their followers, mostly learned, pious laymen, comprised the leadership of East European synagogues they called *Beth Hamidrash*. Their synagogues were ridiculed by the Americanized, assimilated Wise, who jibed:

> Let any one step into the "Beth Hamidrash" of New York, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and ask what Judaism means; and he will receive an answer, sufficient to terrify any reasonable man, or to make him laugh . . . .

Wise, himself not a German, but a Bohemian, was beset with self-hate. To deny his own background, he let loose his feelings of inferiority upon those of non-Germanic background from Eastern Europe. In a similar vein, he despised Orthodox ordained rabbis, while he himself possessed no degree of ordination.

Chapter 39
Resuccitating the Sabbath

IN SHARP contrast with the Orthodox Russian *Beth Hamidrash*, the Reform German temple had by the late 1850's been thoroughly de-Judaized. This was accomplished in the conversion of Orthodox German and Prussian-Polish synagogues into temples by demolishing the middle pulpit and the ladies' gallery, installing an organ and redesigning the pulpit before the ark. Whenever a church was purchased, remodelling required as little as the replacement of the Star of Bethlehem with the Star of David.

Worship in the cathedral-like temples had been Reformed to have the demeanor of a church service, and that its prayers not offend non-Jewish visitors. In intelligible German or English, aside from a few

Hebrew verses, the Reform prayer book had been "cleansed" of Jewish beliefs in the restoration of Zion, which implied to the mind of Americanized Reformers "dual loyalty" and deleting references to the coming of the Messiah, offensive to Christian guests who believed the Messiah had already come.

Bareheaded worshippers unencumbered by prayer shawls, many of mixed marriages, sat in mixed seating. At times, they shared the family pew with "strangers" especially during Confirmation. Reverently, they listened to the Jewish or Gentile cantor, accompanied by a mixed male-female, Jewish-Christian choir. All sat silently, reverently; the Jewish hosts pleased with the natty appearance of their razor-shaven "rabbi" who, draped in clerical robe, preached the lofty ideals of "peace on earth, good will towards men."

Yet, spires of elegant temples failed to inspire attendance. Leeser noted that the magnificent temples were empty shells:

> All these attractions combined have not charms enough to bring our Reformers into the house of God . . . .
>
> On a Sabbath you would find the worshippers made up of some old good Orthodox men, a few strangers, and ladies and gentlemen, the latter predominating, as the music of the organ seems to have some attractions for them. But should you inquire, "Where are your Reformers?" the answer would be "in their stores attending to their business, smoking segars, &c".

Overseas, Rabbi Israel Hildesheimer, President of the *Eisenstadt Yeshivah* that he founded in Eisenstadt, Hungary, one day met a Reformer who proudly pointed out the neat and tidy appearance of the grandiose Reform temple as compared to the Orthodox synagogue, shabby outside and untidy inside.

"You are quite right," replied Hildesheimer, "your temples are closed and unused throughout the week, and none enter or leave. You unlock your doors only on the Sabbath day, so they naturally have that Sabbath look about them. However, ours are constantly in use for daily prayer and study, so, of course, they have that used weekday look!"

With the decline of attendance at Sabbath services in the Reform temples during their golden age of the 1850s, Isaac Mayer Wise eyed Orthodox communities that turned to Sabbath observance; one of these in Kings County, New York.

A few Bavarian and Portuguese Jews resided in suburban Brooklyn, a borough of New York. They had been boated on the Sabbath across the East River to attend worship at a Manhattan synagogue. By the mid-1850s, when their numbers had increased to twelve, so as not to con-

tinue violating the Sabbath by riding on a holy day, they founded Congregation *Baith Israel Anshei Emes* ["House of Israel Men of Truth"], first synagogue in Brooklyn. Within the decade they built their synagogue on Boerum Street, three blocks from the City Hall of King's County. Leeser praised the group and told the public:

> This movement . . . recommends itself particularly to those who from conscientious scruples rather forego the Synagogue than cross the river on Sabbath.

Wise took particular note of the Sabbath action taken by all the Jews of the town of Cumberland on the Potomac in western Maryland, situated in the wilds of the Alleghenies between Pennsylvania and Virginia [West Virginia since 1863]. They repented of their violating the Sabbath by conducting business on that holy day; publishing their resolutions in *The Miners' Journal* of Pottsville, Pennsylvania, issue of July 1853:

> *Notice*, We the undersigned, citizens and merchants of Cumberland, professing the *Hebrew religion*, have at meeting assembled,
>
> *Resolved*, That we feel it to be our sacred and solemn duty, to adhere in future more strictly to our religious faith, principles, and ceremonies.
>
> *Resolved*, That we will in future abstain from all manual labor whatsoever, on Saturday, the Sabbath day, the day consecrated by our religion as a day of rest, transmitted to us, in all its sacredness and with all its solemn duties, by our ancestors.
>
> *Resolved*, That we will close our respected places of business every Friday evening at sundown, and keep such closed until Saturday night, and will abstain from doing any business whatsoever.
>
> *Resolved*, That we tender to our friends and customers individually and collectively our sincere thanks for the liberal patronage bestowed on us, and hope that by thus notifying them of the step we have taken, of keeping more strictly our religion, that they will patronize us further on such days as we are permitted by our religion to transact business . . . .

The editor of *The Miners' Journal* commented:

> As this will involve a considerable sacrifice . . . it should induce their patrons to make more frequent visits at such times as they are permitted to transact business.

The good people of the region heeded his suggestion and patronized the stores and businesses of Cumberland's Jewish merchants on the weekdays. Thus *The Miners' Journal* reported in September: "All the Israelites there now observe the Sabbath."

Leeser reported that in the West, the Ohio and Mississippi Valley, where virtually every synagogue followed *Minhag Polen*, comprised of Prussian-Polish and English Jews, he found that "unfortunately, the state of religion is in most cases very deplorable, the Sabbath being habitually profaned almost everywhere." There were exceptions. In Cleveland "there are many who keep it holy," no doubt because of the influence of the teachings of the pious Rabbi Joseph Levy.

Sabbath observance was the hallmark of Russian Jewry. In San Francisco, in 1855, about thirty Russian Jews resigned their membership in the Prussian-Polish *Sherith Israel* synagogue and founded the *Beth Hamidrash Chebra Shomra Shabbos*. They admitted to membership only Sabbath observers. The bearded Russian Jews wore caftans and fur caps and sashes and objected to those who violated the Sabbath, yet at *Sherith Israel* were given synagogal honors on the Sabbath. They no doubt preferred their native Russian order of worship, either *Minhag Ashkenaz* or *Nusach Ari* [Version of Ari] over that of *Minhag Polin*, preferred by the Posen Jews in the majority at *Sherith Israel*.

Wise bethought himself of how the Cumberland, Cleveland, and San Francisco synagogues filled every Sabbath with worshippers as on the high holy days. Also, he took note of the increased Sabbath attendance in the Orthodox synagogue in his own community, Cincinnati. But three years after a minority seceded from *Bene Israel* because of the Reforms introduced by its minister, Max Lilienthal, the Orthodox synagogue *Sherith Israel*, enjoyed a full attendance on Sabbaths, while that of Wise's temple, *Bene Yesburun*, and of Lilienthal's temple *Bene Israel*, decreased.

In 1859, Samuel Bruel, an officer in *Sherith Israel*, stated with pride:

> Their house of prayer [*Sherith Israel*], which was designated by others, sneeringly, as the pious Synagogue, when organized, was intended to conduct its religious forms and prayers in strict accordance with the Orthodox customs . . . . They are gratified to learn from strangers that there does not exist a house of prayer, at this date, in the United states, which is so well attended, mornings and evenings, throughout the year, without regard to the inclemency of the seasons.

But these instances of Sabbath attendance in Orthodox synagogues were the exceptions to the rule. Leeser bewailed the universal violation of the Sabbath amongst the Orthodox:

> We all know, to our sorrow, that in so many places this great day is not now honored by the Israelites, who pursue their usual avocations as though no prohibition were recorded against their so doing in the Ten Commandments . . . .

> Of the whole range of difficulties to which the apathy now discoverable can be traced, none is more prominent than the weekly Sabbatic rest on the seventh day, which is the chief business time . . . especially the manufacturing cities . . . especially if we superadd [sic!] that the first day is . . . the day whereon no business can be done for profit, and scarcely any recreation is permitted, without exposing one to a fine or imprisonment . . . . Many, therefore, violate it from no unbelief in religion . . . but because it interferes with their worldly interests. The Synagogues are hence empty, instead of being filled with attentive worshippers . . . .

Leeser stated "in some places that not a single man regards the sanctified day of the Lord." Although the women's gallery in the synagogue may have been filled, husbands, fathers, and sons were in their stores or on the road. He asked:

> What use is there, then, for Synagogues, when no one, or but a handful, attends? Is not the preacher's ardor chilled when he has to speak to empty benches? When he knows that those who should occupy the seats which are vacant before him, are away at their work, or in their stores and counting-houses? . . . .

Another observer foresaw the disregard of the Sabbath as a sign of the ultimate dissolution of the Jewish community:

> Is not the departure of a portion of our people from the ancient rule attributable to a non-observance of the Sabbath? I claim that the violation of this one commandment, as is done by more than two-thirds (I allude to the males) of the Jews in this country, is the root of all the evil which has sprung from so-called modern Reform, and which, if not speedily arrested, bids fair to lose for Israel its identity; nay, to eventually bring us to the condition of one of the denominations of Christendom . . . .

Joseph Abraham, a prominent member of *Sherith Israel*, Cincinnati, sounded an alarm. He had written to Leeser two years earlier, in 1858, that he had traveled to St. Louis and Charleston and had spoken to Jewish residents of those cities:

> They both tell me that Reform is on the decline, but it will not do to be silent. The present state of things is to be deplored, but I am not of those who would silently sit & mourn the ruins, but actively pursue a course to remedy the existing wrong. If the conservative would only act together and act with vigor and perseverance they have abundant power and ability; their very supineness adds strength to their enemies. Besides yourself, there is [Samuel Myer] Isaacs, [Morris Jacob] Raphall, I[sidore?] Turk of St. Louis,

> [Abraham] Rice of Baltimore, Jew of Syracuse [Bernhard Illowy—as he then signed his correspondence], Goodheim [sic! James K. Gutheim], [Jaques Judah] Lyons, [Henry Solomon] Jacobs, and a vast number more who I need not & cannot name who should aid this cause . . . there is no question that it is only a matter of time and unless Judaism be sustained by some united action there will be none here . . . .

An event then occurred in Italy that suddenly moved Orthodox Jewish leaders to heed the advise of Isaac Leeser and Joseph Abraham, and unite. Unity amongst the Orthodox was unexpectedly bolstered from an event that rocked the Jewish world.

A Jewish child by the name of Edgardo Mortara was forcibly taken from his parents' home in Bologna by papal guards, under instructions from the Holy Office. Reportedly, the child had been secretly baptized several years earlier by the Catholic servant girl in the Mortara household. The Pope was petitioned by governments and by royalty to return the boy, but to no avail. Moses Montefiore, who had traveled to Constantinople and met with Sultan Abdul Majid of the Ottoman Empire four years earlier on behalf of Holy Land Jewry, now made a journey to the Vatican, but was not granted an audience. All attempts to recover the child failed. Edgardo Mortara was placed in a convent to be educated for entry into the Augustine Order.

Jews in America, as in England, France, Germany, and Austria, were stirred to form unions for the protection of Jewish rights and to aid their brethren in oppressed lands. In New York, in 1859, Samuel Myer Isaacs took the initiative to form the Board of Delegates of American Israelites styled after the Board of Deputies in England. Asher Kursheedt, son of Israel Baer Kursheedt, president of *Shearith Israel*, New York, served as president of this national body under Orthodox leadership.

Neither Rabbi Rice nor any ordained Orthodox rabbi joined Reverends Samuel M. Isaacs, Isaac Leeser, and lay leaders who comprised the leadership of the Board of Delegates of American Israelites. Yet, Wise sensed the possiblility of an opposition force to Reform and asserted that its organization aimed at the destruction of the Reform movement. Disturbed to find Orthodoxy still alive and resurrected, he demanded:

> Please enlighten us on the real business of that body in contemplation . . . .
>
> Our New partisans dream this is the center of the world. If New York takes a snuff the world sneezes, if it is night in New York the world sleeps. A Board of Deputies in New York, they think must revolutionize the world. There they see them come, in their fantasy, from east and west, north and south, to represent their congrega-

tions, pass grand eloquent resolutions, appoint chiefs, Nasis [Princes] and judges, and the glory of New York shines resplendently . . . .

Then come our Englishmen who imitate London as far as possible, hence also a Board of Deputies [name of the Orthodox union in England] must be forged, but the real intention of the chief movers in the matter is to crush the spirit of Reform in this city [Cincinnati], and if possible all over the union.

Like Wise, his colleague Lilienthal complained:

If we would make such a proposition, if we are advocating the measures of Reform, then by a certain class of clergymen and their followers in this country, we are decried as heretics and apostates. A whole dictionary of abuse and slander is heaped upon our poor heads: Judaism is declared to be in danger, on account of our frivolous innovations; Dr. Raphall and Mr. Isaacs, the *Beth-hamidrash* and some other obscure Synagogues in New York; Mr. Rice in Baltimore, the Walnut St. congregation [*Sherith Israel*] in Cincinnati and other companions of the same stamp are uniting for the purpose of defeating the schemes of the sinful Reformers; and all the *Parnassim* [Presidents], whose authority is barely kept up, by rallying a thoughtless crowd under their banner, bearing the inscription "No innovation," make front against the attempts of those German [Reform] Rabbis, who are told by our antagonists to be the cause of the downfall of Judaism in America.

But the divisiveness in the Orthodox community thwarted their unification on a permanent basis, and a golden opportunity was lost to them. Laxity in religious observance prevailed. One after another, Orthodox German-Jewish congregations were inexorably drawn into the vortex of Reform.

Rice admonished the nominally Orthodox: "You need not criticize the Reformers, while you yourselves tread the law underfoot," and he urged them to return to observance of all the commandments:

This is the time, in fact, to labor for God, since now people neglect the law, the precepts; which, without distinction, have their foundation only in faith, while all human reasoning only leads us to false views and superficiality. The *Torah* itself declares: "They pursue me with falsehood, therefore do Thou help me."

In 1859, Wise determined to bring his members, the nominally Reformed, out of their stools, and from behind counters in stores and counting-houses into the empty pews of the temples. He embarked upon an ambitious undertaking. He launched a drive for Sabbath observance.

He appealed to merchants to close their stores on holy days, reminding them that "The Sabbath is the cornerstone of practical Judaism . . . ."

Upon learning of the drive, Leeser commented:

> Should they succeed in their efforts to make the day of rest kept as it should be, it would be a lasting disgrace to congregations which, nominally Orthodox, have no regard for the Sabbath, and seek their gains when they should be present in the house of God . . . .

Wise claimed victory. On November 4th of that year, he published a list of merchants, members of the Reform temples of Cincinnati, who had joined the ranks of Sabbath observers.

In the east, the radical Reformer David Einhorn took up the cry for Sabbath observance, and Wise triumphantly announced:

> Forty members of *Har Sinai* congregation of Baltimore, have resolved to discontinue doing business on the Sabbath day . . . .

In the far west, Nathan Koshland of Sacramento, California, complained in a letter to Leeser, dated March 4, 1856, "that the Jewish citizens here are so neglecting as not even to come to [minyon] on Sabbath . . . . [many] made money their God." In the following year, San Franciscan Julius Eckman spearheaded the Sabbath movement in his *Gleaner*:

> We hear objections against making a difference between the day and the eve, when the Bible makes no distinction and tells us, uncompromisingly, "From even to eve ye shall observe the Sabbath." Still if the objectors are honest they will admit that, if the observance of the Sabbath is a duty, such observance is to be compared to a man paying a debt; and if the debtor imagines he cannot pay the whole debt and, in fact, pays nothing on it, is it not better to commence paying a part than to pay *nothing*, because he cannot pay the *whole*? . . . .

Elkan Cohn, rabbi of *Emanu-El*, San Francisco, though he himself did not observe the Sabbath, thereupon urged his members to observe the Sabbath and at least to close their stores and attend worship on the high holy days. His call met with some success, as evidenced from the fact that whereas five years earlier it had been reported in San Francisco that "On the Rosh Hashanah festival, two-thirds of the Jewish stores were closed," in 1859 a report stated "that since all the Jewish places of business were closed, the steamers had to postpone their departure for a day . . . ."

Although the Reform drive to bring about a commitment to Sabbath observance appeared to be a meritorious endeavor, it was exposed by Leeser as a sham, a deceit, foisted upon the public:

> Dr. Cohn is represented as ardently advocating the Sabbath. This is the case with all our preachers, even those who ride on the day of rest and eat forbidden food, for they advocate the Sabbath somewhat after the fashion of the Catholic Sunday, when people are expected to go to Church at some time of the day, and then do as they please afterwards. Now, such a Sabbath is not wanted in Israel, nor such teachers either, who would bargain with Sabbath-breakers for a couple of hours attendance at public worship on the condition of their going next to their work, business, or pleasure, for the remainder of the day . . . . But the modern taste is, in some respects, for infinitesimal doses; and why should religious teachers not administer the same . . . .
>
> Dr. Cohn preached on Friday evening [Summer, 1861] . . . and gave a death-blow to Sacrifices, *Tephillin*, and *Titzith* as being no longer wanted, and not in accordance with the spirit of the times . . . .

Rabbi Rice perceived in the Reformers call for Sabbath and Holy Day observance a deception and manipulation. He questioned the Reformers' regard for Sabbath observance while they rejected the other biblical and rabbinic observances:

> The Reformers proclaim the Sabbath commandment and cry out for its observance. But why only the Sabbath? If the Reformers acknowledge that the Sabbath ordinance is of divine origin, then all of the other laws of the *Torah* must be accepted as being of divine origin; the entire *Torah* must then be accepted as the word of God, and no preference can be made, to accept one law and disregard another. Since all the laws alike are of divine origin, how then, can they consistently retain the one and reject the other?
>
> Reformers, however, know all this well enough, and since they claim that the *Torah* was not given by God, and not of divine origin, there is no reason for them to make an exception of the law of the Sabbath, except for their political considerations, in order to diffuse from this standpoint their idle human dreams; but even as human life terminates on earth, so, too, will this delusion be dissipated.

Leeser likewise lashed out against the contradiction between the Reformers' advocacy of Sabbath observance and their disregard, not only for the proper observance of a sanctified Sabbath, but also for all the commandments enjoined upon the Jew:

Let us take, for example, that a teacher of the new school should succeed to demonstrate that *Tephillin* and *Mezoozah* are of no earthly use, and show his sincerity, by not following the ancestral observances himself; he will have the satisfaction to see that all his hearers will, one after the other, not bear the law of God on their head and arm, nor ornament their doors with the token that they believe in the Providence and Legislator, who is God. Still he will insist that the Sabbath is to be held sacred, in order that the people may come and hear him give his sermon, and be amused or instructed, by the organ and choir, which are confessedly the new means of improving and teaching believing Israelites . . . . The new men will insist that people should keep the Sabbath, in order that they may come to hear him propound his doctrines, which he wishes to substitute for the ancient mode of living and believing . . . .

What effect, however, can going to a place of worship have, if in the very act of entering it, a part of the duties pertaining to the Sabbath be violated? . . . . Instead of strengthening religion . . . they only give the impulse for more extensive violation of the day of rest. The minister permits the railroad car drawn by a horse or locomotive to visit the temple, but the templar, when he has heard the music, been ravished by the choir, and fortified in his rebellion by the sermon, takes the same means to return, not into the bosom of his family to enjoy a pleasant Sabbath, to have a delight in the day of the Lord . . . but to his counting-house, to his ware-room, to his store, to his work-shop, or if not this, then to repair in the afternoon to some place of amusement, to some public drinking saloon, to enjoy a sociable glass perhaps with the very man who had instilled such a mode of Sabbath-keeping into his mind, and which, though he was at first startled at hearing it proposed, has become at length quite delightful to his newly-awakened love for enlightenment, to his ardent sense of the beauties of modern progress . . . .

Although Leeser lambasted the Reformers, he also did not neglect to chide the Orthodox:

. . . mere Sabbath-keeping is no Judaism, especially a Sabbath where people *go shopping*, smoke segars, go to beer gardens, ride in stages and railroad cars, and follow their pleasures . . . .

People must learn to regard the Sabbath a blessing and celebrate it free not only from toil, but also from pursuit of vain pleasures, and those profanations which have of late been sanctioned and encouraged by some Reform teachers. There ought to be no smoking of tobacco pipes or segars; no riding in carriages or cars; no traveling for pleasure of business; no resorting to beer-gardens or wine-shops; or bargaining outside of stores and warehouses . . . .

As for the Reform Sabbath movement, after a few weeks it collapsed because "the desire of doing a business seems to overcome the voice of conscience . . . ." Thus Leeser reported in *The Occident*, June 28, 1860, that the efforts by Reformers in Chicago, Houston, Richmond, and New York to induce Sabbath observance among merchants had failed:

> The Sabbath, we regret to hear, is uniformly violated all over the West, indeed, all over the country, more especially in the country towns . . . .

In the nation's capitol, Naval Captain Jonas Phillips Levy, brother of Naval Commander Uriah Phillips Levy, requested of the Mayor, James G. Berret, to permit Jews to open their stores on Sunday, when they close on Saturday. The mayor of Washington City replied on November 18, 1859:

> In reply to your inquiry I have to say, that a law of Maryland, which Congress has extended over this District, expressly forbids "any bodily labor on the Lord's day, commonly called Sunday," under penalty.
>
> That day has become consecrated over the civilized world for more than eighteen hundred years, and the best interests of morality, of society, and of humanity require that it should be kept "holy," according to the sacred injunction.
>
> In obedience to the law and my own convictions of duty, I shall feel it incumbent to exert my official authority in insisting that "all places of business" shall be closed on Sunday, and in requiring every penalty for its violation to be rightly enforced.

With the collapse of the Reform Sabbath movement, the radical Reformers, taking their cue from Mayor Berret, began to advocate transfer of the Sabbath worship to Sunday. This was reported in the press:

> . . . that the Jews cannot afford to lose two days in the week, and as Saturday, their Sabbath, is one of the best days in the week for trade, and Sunday, one of the worst, it is proposed to accept the Sunday of Christians . . . .

Moderate Reformers like Wise, did not favor the change. He termed Sunday a Christian institution. "You can desecrate the Sabbath," he claimed, "but you cannot consecrate the Sunday."

Radical Reformers, instead of referring to Sunday as the "Christian Day of Rest," preferred the eupheumism "Civil Day of Rest." As early as 1837, the issue has been debated by German Reformers in the *Frankfurter Journal*. But it remained for radical Reformers Samuel Holdheim and Samuel Hirsch to force the issue. These two Samuel's argued that

a Saturday-Sabbath was valid only when the Jew lived in ancient Palestine, but in the Diaspora the civil day of rest, a Sunday-Sabbath, was appropriate.

The proposal to change the biblically ordained day of rest had been put forth by Samuel Holdheim at the "Conference of the Rabbis of Germany" that took place at Frankfort-am-Mein, July, 1845. However, in February 1846, Rabbi Rice countered this proposal and dedicated an entire Sabbath sermon to the significance of Saturday, the seventh day of the week, as the only day for observance of the Jewish Sabbath:

> In these times when religious issues have become a subject for public discussion even as political issues and everyone feels himself qualified to state an opinion about God's work, it is most important to assist the layman defend himself against unwarranted interference in matters of conscience. In our modern day and age, the Sabbath especially has been singled out for attack, as though this day was created only for our entertainment and enjoyment and consequently we have even the freedom to exchange it for another day of our choosing.
>
> The Biblical reading of this Sabbath contradicts this irreligious and erroneous opinion. It establishes only the Sabbath day as having been instituted by God as a Holy Day, which can never be exchanged for any other day of our choosing.
>
> At the time our people began their wanderings in the wilderness, the Almighty supplied them with *manna* for food. They were told to gather each day only the supply needed for that day, excepting Friday, when they were told to gather twice the daily requirements. Moses explained: "Tomorrow is a solemn rest day . . . Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none" [*Exodus* 16:23, 26].
>
> Despite Moses' teaching and explanation, some persons went into the fields on the Sabbath to gather the *manna*. God then spoke: "How long refuse ye to keep My Commandments and My laws? See that the Lord hath given you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day: [*Exodus* 16:28-29].
>
> Since the *manna* was withheld on the Sabbath day to two million Israelites who had been given a double portion on the sixth day, conclusively is proven that the day following the sixth day of the week is the divinely ordained, true Sabbatical day of rest.
>
> That the Sabbath is divinely ordained is clearly stated: "See that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath" [*Exodus* 16:29]. Were it immaterial to God which day man rested, would He then have angered at those who went out in the fields to search for *manna* on the seventh day, the Sabbath? Would He not have advised them to observe the Sabbath on the day following the Seventh, on Sunday?

> It is absurd to contemplate the appointment of a day other than the seventh as the Sabbath, since God had at the very creation of the universe destined the seventh day to be the Sabbath day for Israelites forever. We, humans, can not delve into the rational of why the Almighty had selected the seventh day as the Sabbath and we are not at liberty to exchange the divinely ordained seventh day for another day of rest . . . .

Reformers argued that the Sabbath transfer was *Shabbas Sheni* [Second Sabbath], analogous to *Pesach Sheni*. According to biblical text [Numbers 9:10-11], if an individual is prevented from making the Passover sacrifice on the assigned day (fourteenth of *Nisan*), he is permitted to transfer it to the next month (fourteenth of *Iyar*).

The advocates of the Sabbath transfer to Sunday ignored the verse that followed [Numbers 9:13], which indicated that *Pesach Sheni* could only be enacted for individuals meeting specific criteria. Anyone else not keeping the Passover "shall be cut off from his people; because he did not bring the offering of the Lord in its appointed season, that man shall bear his sin."

In the United States, the notion of transferring the Jewish Sabbath to Sunday had first been subtly hinted at by Gustavus Poznanski in 1850, when he introduced a modification in wording into the Jewish prayers of the Sabbath day at *Beth Elohim*, Charleston: ונתתו לגויי הארצות ["Thou hast given it—the Sabbath—to the Gentiles"], instead of ולא נתתו לגויי הארצות ["Thou has *not* given it to the Gentiles"].

The Orthodox mused that if Saturday rest was given to the non-Jews, then the Sunday rest, according to Poznanski, was given to the Jews.

Leeser called public attention to this change, concluding that

> there can be but one deduction from this substitution, viz. the desire of changing the seventh day of the week as a Sabbath, to the more general one of the first day, in order to assimilate our observances to those of non-Israelites . . . .

As early as 1854, at *Har Sinai*, Baltimore, a group headed by Dr. Morry Weiner and Abraham Pollock seceded in order to hold a Sunday service in place of a Saturday service. After a brief experimental period, the dissidents returned to the fold. Nothwithstanding their failure, David Einhorn officially proposed the change in 1857. Leeser then inquired:

> But what are they to celebrate on that particular day? Are they to declare the glory of God for the creation of light? The giving of the Law? The Completion of all that was formed? and this in the

face of an empty house on the Lord's own appointed day when those who come on the first day were too busy in the search of gain to enter into God's courts, to seek His presence with thanks giving? . . . .

Like the Sabbath Saturday movement of the Reformers, so did their Sabbath Sunday attempt fail. As that initiated at *Emanu-El*, New York, they all dissolved after but one month. Thus came to an abrupt end the Reform Saturday and Sunday Sabbath movements. There was but one solitary exception for a successful Saturday morning closing of stores.

The time would come when London-born Henry Cohen, arrived in Woodville, Mississippi. The congregation was to be found in their stores on Saturday, the most important day of business, so they claimed, as that day farmers came into town. Cohen influenced them to close their stores during the morning service. They consented because they enjoyed the young man's engaging manner and skillful preaching.

Since the farmers were aware that the Jewish stores would be closed, most of them postponed their visits into town until the afternoon. Non-Jewish merchants too closed shop for the morning and some of them also attended the service to hear the eloquent young preacher.

The entire community titled Henry Cohen, "Messenger of the Lord,"—unbeknown to them a talmudic term, which in the modern times referred to the emissaries from the Holy Land.

Radical Reformers attempted seventh day observance, a Sunday-Sabbath, because of three reasons: economics, (a six-day work week followed by the civil day of rest, Sunday), attendance (to attract merchants and their families to the Temple on the day that did not interfere with business), and acceptance (that "strangers" should feel little difference between Temple and Church).

Had Reformers succeeded in this ultimate innovation that struck at the Decalogue they claimed divine, there would have been no distinction between Jew and Gentile.

Chapter 40
Polemical Warfare

DESPITE THE failure of the Reformers to fill the empty pews in their temples, Wise, aware that the Orthodox generally fared no better, opined that since ten of the one hundred and fifty congregations in the land had become Reformed by the late 1850's, all others would follow

suit in the near future. After visiting Baltimore in the winter of 1859-60, Wise eulogized Rice's Orthodoxy:

> The advocates of congealed conservatism are dead letters and the rolling wheels of the car of progress run over them, and their work meddles with the dust of past ages. There is no alternative between death and life, and conservatism is death in another form . . . .

Anticipating the demise of all the Orthodox in America, Wise memorialized its adherents:

> We leave them untouched and unnoticed, as a monument of bygone days; we know it is the last ray of light the setting sun of this system is shedding. We do not wish to disturb the last hour of its existence, we pass it, like a cemetery, knowing, here rest the decayed bones of past ages.

Even as Christianity desired the demise of Judaism, in order to justify its claim as successor to Israel, so, too, did Reform desire the death of Orthodoxy, in order to justify its claim that it superceded the older, antiquated form of Judaism, and that they represented the new Judaism. Even as Christianity replaced the Scriptures they called "Old Testament," with a "New Testament," so, too, did Reform replace the "Old Law" with a "New Law," alluding to the ancient rabbis as the "Old Lights" and to themselves as the "New Lights." After all, did not gas lights replace oil lights in the mid-nineteenth century. Modernity must replace antiquity. A new faith must replace fossilized commandments.

Dr. Judah Wechsler, Reform minister of the Indianapolis Hebrew Congregation, while visiting Wise tendered his last respects to the Orthodox of the Jewish community of Cincinnati:

> . . . the future of Judaism is ours . . . . The days of Orthodoxy are numbered in this country, the light [Reform] is shining forth and will illumine obscurity everywhere . . . . your days are numbered, "and the Indianapolis preacher is prepared to inscribe its obituary . . . ."

To Samuel Bruel, who had become the spokesman of Cincinnati's Orthodox Jewry, Wechsler declared that he represented "Seashore orthodoxy," explaining that he regarded that term appropriate because "orthodoxy has no safe place any more to seek shelter, and as the land lying adjacent to the sea or ocean is only a small portion of the earth—so are the Orthodox and ever will be a small portion of the followers of Judaism." He added that "galvanized ceremonies" was equally an appropriate term for Orthodox observances.

Samuel Bruel retorted sarcastically, and with tongue-in-cheek mimicked Wechsler:

> O Light! Light! Shine out and protect us from falling; the days of Orthodoxy are numbered in this country; its doom is sealed; the rattles are already in its throat; and the Indianapolis preacher is prepared to inscribe its obituary . . . .

Wise taunted Bruel and all Orthodox leaders:

> O, the dim-eyed dwarfs who, standing in the narrow hall of their limited conceptions, suppose to look to the end of the world and hurl the thunderbolts of condemnation at the devoted heads of men created in the image of God, and open the gates of hell to their own brothers!
>
> O, the eyeless mules who, throwing up a heap of mud suppose to have created a world, and then in their boundless vanity, assume the right to legislate for their Creator! . . . .

Wise, spokesman of Reform, threw down the gauntlet to the leaders of Orthodoxy:

> Let the Raphalls, Isaacs, Leesers, Rices, Malzers and the other old men cry and groan, and remember the good olden times. The barriers of other ages must be reduced, the obstacles removed, as civilization and science and philosophy and good will progress among mankind, in the same ratio our exclusiveness in forms, our *separatism* in social and domestic life, and our religious peculiarities, principles excepted, must give way, must fall to the ground. Here is one of our objects which we steadily seek to accomplish, the main cause why Jews do not like us, why we have opponents on that side . . . .

Reports told of Wise's having violated the dietary laws while on vacation in the summer of 1856. His itinerary on that trip included Indianapolis, Terre Haute, Vincennes to St. Louis, and return by way of Quincy, Chicago, and Milwaukee. Everywhere he preached Reform, but at St. Louis he found great opposition on the part of the leaders of the Jewish community, a group of English Jews, whom he called "illiterate infidels." One of those leaders, Sam L. Moses, responded:

> Dr. Wise is the last to call others to task, as his course is the reverse of consistency; a friend of mine, one of those English Jews he terms infidels, illiterate, and atheists, assures me that he sat next to Dr. W[ise] at the breakfast table in a public hotel in this place, and that the Doctor was not as abstinent as one might expect of a

> Jewish Rabbi, at a table which was not covered with viands which are all permitted . . . .

During Wise's vacation in the following year, 1857, he again headed West, stopping at Lafayette, Iowa, a town fourteen miles north of Cedar Rapids. There he allowed the *shochet* to perform his functions on a festival day. Leeser, also on a western tour, arrived in Lafayette soon after and forwarded to Rice the question raised by the community of whether kosher slaughtering was permitted on a holy day. Rice replied that it was not allowed, and he forbade the *shochet* to slaughter during a festival.

Wise received word of Rice's ruling, which he ignored. But he ridiculed Leeser for not being able to depend on his own interpretation of the law:

> In Lafayette, Ia, that the Rev. Isaac Leeser, editor of the *Occident*, the self-made champion of American Orthodoxy, our great opponent was asked, whether a *Shochet* may perform his functions the first day of *Yom Tob*; if he could do it on *Ereb Yom Tob* [the festival eve]? to this the Rev. gentleman was unable to reply, and he sent an extra dispatch to Mr. Reiss of Baltimore, to decide this difficult question . . . .

Leeser disregarded the snub, but two years later he set the record straight during an encounter with Wise:

> . . . whenever we met, whenever we came in collision, whether in conversation, conference, or controversy, or in giving religious opinions, he was wrong and some one else right. Has he forgotten his learned decision about killing on a holy day, sent to Lafayette? Did Rabbi Abraham Rice of Baltimore side with him or with another person?

To Wise, the dietary laws of *kashrus* had lost all meaning, and chided the Orthodox as "hypocrites" for disregarding the dietary laws:

> Ye transgressors of the rabbinical laws, how dare ye judge and condemn others by a code which you daily violate! . . . .
>
> When you travel you eat in hotels contrary to your laws (foods prepared by gentiles, milk, bread, and cheeses of gentiles . . .)
>
> Blush, ye transgressors, ye hypocrites, if you dare think for a moment, that you will judge and condemn others by a code of laws, which you violate every day and every hour of the day, day and night . . . .

To eliminate "separatism in social and domestic life" there was almost no limit except conversion to which some Reformers might go. Thus, Max Lilienthal urged abolition of the dietary regulations:

> Practical Reform signifies change of forms . . . . In former days necessity dictated that Jews and Gentiles be separated from each other as far as possible; therefore we have so many Rabbinical laws about eating (as the prohibitions of the breads of the gentiles, milks and cheeses produced by gentiles, the wines of gentiles, and their mode of shaving by razor) and other ordinances.
>
> What shall we now do with those laws, when we are citizens of almost all civilized countries, and by our own free will come in contact with all classes of people? Evidently they exist no more for us . . . .

Wise argued that "The whole Kashruth establishment is kept up among Orthodox Jews in obedience to rabbinical authority, and not according to Moses and the prophets, who," he said, "knew nothing of kitchen and table laws and observances." "Trephah," Wise declared, in the sense of forbidden food, besides fat, blood, and animals that died of themselves or were torn by their prey, according to the Law of Moses, is only the flesh of the unclean animals mentioned in the Law. This definition permitted to his followers meat previously deemed non-kosher.

Wise found a powerful ally in one who called himself by the pseudonym, "Jeremiah of Memphis." It happened after Wise dedicated in Memphis, Tennessee, a former bank building as the new synagogue of congregation *B'nai Israel*, on March 26, 1858. To Wise, "Jeremiah of Memphis," experiencing setbacks in his battle to introduce Wise's Reforms in his community, bewailed to his leader:

> The little Reform which we have introduced is taking steps backward . . . President and Secretary have resigned their offices . . . but that all powerful animal "*Casher Meat*" is reigning supreme over any thing around it . . . .

The Reformist, "Jeremiah," had earlier suffered a setback when the congregation, in need of a spiritual leader, turned to Isaac Leeser for his advice. Leeser recommended Reverend Jacob Joseph Peres, an Orthodox minister, a native of Holland. *B'nai Israel* thereupon elected Peres, as its first minister. "Jeremiah of Memphis," a cynic and satirist, who led fellow Reformers in an aborted attempt to gain control of the congregation, complained:

> Atheism and Orthodoxy walk hand in hand . . . A patent right for two sets of Kosher stomachs is applied for, the one to digest the forty-eight hours Kosher fleish [meat salted within three days after kosher slaughtering] the other to suggest if it is not one of the seventy-two hours "critter" [meat unsalted within three days after kosher slaughtering].

A later Reform leader, Dr. Albert [Aaron Siegfried] Bettelheim, explained that the ethical, not the ritual, that counts: "It is more important to guard that which goes out of the mouth than that which goes in."

Like "Jeremiah," Wise, the wily Reform leader, capitalized on ridicule of Orthodoxy and public sympathy. Thus, to offset Leeser's stance on these highly emotionally charged subjects, such as intermarriage, though he had no compunctions about wining and dining with non-Jews, a direct path to intermarriage, and welcoming their membership in the temple, he took up the cudgel for Jews who married out-of-faith.

Thus, whenever an Orthodox minister refused visiting a terminally ill Jew, married to a Christian, probably because he had not repented of his transgression, Wise complained in his *Israelite*. On one such occasion he told his readers that it happened

> not one hundred miles from this city [actually in Philadelphia] . . . a man called Samuel Delissia, about 65 years old, fell sick and thought that he must die. He sent Mr. Oppenheimer for the minister of his congregation who came into the house but refused to see the dying man. He [Leeser] said, "I can not do it, as the man married a non-Jewess; to go up stairs or near the man would be to act contrary to the constitution of my congregation . . . ."

Wise declared: "It is a disgrace for a congregation to have laws contrary to Judaism and pretend to be Orthodox . . . ," and that "In the same city a man whose name is *Schwefelholz Hausirer* [fictitious German name meaning "Door-to-Door Salesman of Sulpher-Wood" or "matchmaker"] accepted a female proselyte contrary to the Orthodox rules of the *Joreh Deah* . . . ."

In a similar case that occurred the following year, in 1860, in New Orleans, Reverend Solomon Jacobs of *Shanarai-Chasset* refused to see a dying man who had married out of the faith. Wise, seeking to arouse resentment against Orthodoxy, spoke out in opposition to Jacobs and in sympathy with a man who had been refused a minister's comforting words " . . . upon his dying hour because in a moment of passion love conquered his religious scruples, and he married a girl of his heart, although she was not a Jewess."

With intermarriage rampant and religious laxity the norm, especially in the West, Wise became the official guide of the emerging Reformist "western" congregations.

Thus, in 1860, when the Reform element gained the upper hand at *B'nai Israel* of Memphis, the congregation discontinued the services of Jacob J. Peres. Disregarding Leeser, the officers of the Memphis congregation turned to Wise for his recommendation of a spiritual leader.

That year, Wise traveled east to further his moderate Reform movement, as he had a decade earlier. On his lecture tour in 1860, Wise, on his arrival in Syracuse, first met with his "old tried friends." He boasted to them of the favor the enlightened trustees had conferred upon him in dispensing with his attendance at synagogue during the week days—in order that he might not violate his principles by laying his *Tefillin*!

Contrast Wise's *Chilul ha-Shem* [desecration of the Name of God] by his refusal to don phylacteries with the *Kiddush ha-Shem* [sanctification of the Name of God], by the pride and honor bestowed upon them by Illowy.

It happened after the Civil War, in the autumn of 1867, that Illowy, then retired on his farm at Foster's Crossing, Warren County, Ohio, took his son Henry on a visit to the east. They left Cincinnati at midnight over the Marietta and Cincinnati railroad. Arrived at Belpre very early in the morning they crossed over on a steamer to Parkersburg, West Virginia.

The only train out was one that carried the B&O.R.R. [Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road] laborers, mostly Irishmen, dropping them off along the line. The rabbi and his son climbed aboard an ordinary box car with an aisle in the middle and wooden seats, two benches always facing each other, on either side of the aisle. They found two vacant seats, one on one side of the aisle, and the other just opposite, on the other side of the aisle.

Rabbi Illowy took one seat with a laborer at his side and two facing him; Henry took the other. After the train chugged away, the rabbi donned his *talis* and took out his *tefillin*, rolled up his sleeve, placed one on his arm, then wound the band on his forearm and placed the other on his forehead.

Those in the seat in front and next to him, immediately stopped smoking, laying their pipes on the window sill, and ceased all conversation. Then, those immediately behind, and in front, and on the opposite side, until everyone in the car lapsed into silence. Not until Illowy wound up his *tefillin* and folded his *talis*, were pipes relit and conversations resumed.

What a lesson of reverence for religion did these laborers teach the sons and daughters of Israel and last but not least, Wise, who during his visit to Syracuse, rejected *tephillin* and denied basic observances of Judaism. One of the Syracuse Jews related:

> During the conversation he strongly censured our sages, who "went so far" as to forbid us to cook meat with butter, of which "no mention is made in the Bible," and which is a "great foolishness in our enlightened age"! He further said that he would allow any thing to be done on the Sabbath, which is no bodily labor, if

for the purpose of pleasure, as for instance, smoking a cigar and similar things.

In Syracuse, as in Memphis and elsewhere, the "enlightened" officers of the synagogue were in the minority while the majority of the membership were still Orthodox. Thus when Dr. Bernhard Illowy visited Syracuse after Wise's departure, he learned that the congregation did not care to listen to Wise but preferred to listen to him, "who teaches what he believes and believes what he teaches."

Wise attempted to abolish what he regarded as outworn "merchandise." In *Deborah*, the German section of his publication, *The Israelite*, Wise spoke of *tefillin* and *tzitzis*, in juxtaposition with products such as lard oil and tallow candles, characterizing both as being goods that were not much in demand.

Dr. Elkan Cohn, minister of *Emanu-El*, San Francisco told a father who brought his son for *Bar Mitzvah* preparation that he would not teach him the knowledge of "Laying *Tephillin*" [phylacteries] because he felt it "all was nonsense."

S. Newman of Cincinnati's Orthodox Jewish community, had then exposed Wise's and Cohn's, and all Reformers true intent:

> *Mezuzah, Tsitseet*, and *Tephillin*, originally instituted as external symbols, that we might by continually looking at them, "remember the commandments of the Lord and do them," are likewise dispensed with; for, being able to read, they [Reformers] say they can remember the commandments without these signs, or rather, they do not see the utility of remembering laws which they have no desire to practice . . . .
>
> Such are the prevailing ideas which have taken deep root among those not provided with ministers to expound the word of God, and also among those whose very minister has himself encouraged his congregation in its backsliding . . . .

During his lecture tour in 1860, while visiting Chicago, Wise spoke derisively of the distinctive observance of *tefillin* and *tzizis*. He suggested dispensing with them on the following "legal" grounds: Unless they are worn perpetually, it is better that *tefillin* are not used at all, because the spirit of that ceremony can be retained in the memory and viewed in the mind's eye. And the commandment of *tzitzis* cannot be carried out unless the fringes are made on each and every garment that a man wears, and on all their corners as well, no matter how many there are.

Leeser, who happened to be visiting Chicago at the same time, was told by one who heard Wise's address "that it was the boldest speech

he had ever listened to . . . " Later that day, Leeser saw Wise in a chance meeting at the office of a mutual acquaintance. He asked Wise: "What is, we demand, the number of the *obsolete* observances . . . the Sabbath, *Tephillin*, *Tzitzith*, *Mezoozah*, fasts, *Hanukah*-lamps, and *Purim* . . . if not the very main features which distinguish the life of an Israelite? . . . What is *Yom Kippur* to you? Only an absurd pagan ceremony, as you can prove with your own holy records . . . ." After an hour's discussion, Leeser came to the same conclusion as Rice had five years earlier: "that it would be vain to attempt coalescing on religious grounds . . . the Reformers, if Dr. W[ise] is considered the exponent, seem to limit Judaism to something like the Ten Commandments . . . "

The Ten Commandments represented the eternal truths to the Reformers; the remaining 603 commandments were merely a repugnant crust of outmoded usages that had buried the Jewish spirit. Reform Judaism was going to scrape off those ancient modes, which had lost all meaning in the enlightened age of the nineteenth century, and reveal the loftiness of the Jewish spirit to the entire world.

It would be the duty of Reform preachers

> to throw light upon God's revelation in our times . . . to lift the pearls of thought out of the deep shaft of the past, thus permitting the congregation to behold the immeasurable biblical, talmudic, and midrashic treasure of ideas, and revealing the proud spiritual tower that Israel continued to build even with wounded limbs . . . towards the recognition of its world-embracing mission.
>
> Having stripped Judaism of the web of laws that enveloped and gave special meaning to the life of the individual Jew, the Reformers created a new physical structure in which to house their ideally conceived spirit of Judaism. It was the temple, with its divine worship, which alone could afford adequate expression to the Jewish spirit.

Many pronouncements as to the future of Judaism in America were made by both the Orthodox and the Reform antagonists. Israel Joseph Benjamin [Benjamin II], the world-traveler, who had traveled the length and breadth of Asia and Africa from 1846 to 1851, and in America from 1859 to 1861, predicted:

> The Reform movement is powerfully felt in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Albany, Cincinnati, Chicago and San Francisco, and there is no doubt that in the next generation Reform will gain the upper hand that Judaism will be transformed much faster than people in Europe imagine . . . .

Chapter 41
Baltimore Boasts Best Talmudist

IN 1859, as Reform gained ground everywhere, members of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation arose to forcefully protest the confirmation ceremony for girls introduced by their minister, Dr. Henry Hochheimer. They further rejected his attempt to abolish the custom of having a boy deliver a sermon at his *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony, and defeated a motion by a member to introduce Wise's prayer book.

As a *coup de grace*, the determined Orthodox members, led by Jonas Friedenwald, obtained a court writ enjoining the congregation from entering into a three-year contract with Hochheimer. After Hochheimer consented to resign following the expiration of his old contract in October, in order to "restore peace and harmony," the lawsuit was withdrawn.

Hochheimer, unanimously elected a second time to the pulpit of *B'ne Jeshurun* in Milwaukee, declined again as he had two years earlier. Nor did he accept the proferred ministry of *Oheb Shalom* on Hanover Street in Baltimore, whose new *Torah* scroll he had dedicated three years earlier. Hochheimer preferred the pulpit of the Eden Street Fell's Point Hebrew Friendship Congregation—*Oheb Israel*, and was unanimously elected as its minister on August 8th, 1859.

Oheb Shalom on Hanover Street thereupon contacted Benjamin Szold of Hungary, to serve its congregation. Szold, came highly praised by his renowned teacher, Zacharias Fränkel, founder of the Moderate Reform rabbinical school in 1854 and leader of the movement to which he gave the name "Positive Historical Judaism." *Oheb Shalom*'s officers tempted Szold with the following inducements:

> The congregation is honorable and generous, and you will have a good chance to live quite a satisfied life, especially since a sphere of activity is open before you which cannot be found in Germany as far as extent and fruitfulness is concerned. Here the word is free, like the air, and, with electric speed, it hurries through the vast and glorious country.

Unlike Germany, where Orthodoxy managed to arrest the spread of Reform, in America, the land of the free, religious preferences were unfettered and unhampered. Intrigued by the unlimited possibilities for Reform in America, Szold accepted. He realized that opportunities were offered that had been unavailable to a Reform leader in Europe. Whereas European countries were ruled by conservative governments which op-

posed liberalism in both religion and politics, the United States government extended to religious leaders, Reform as well as Orthodox, full freedom of expression without interference or favoritism.

Upon Szold's arrival in Baltimore, he visited Rice, representing himself as Orthodox. He then wrote to Wise, representing himself as Reform. Thereupon, Bernhard Illowy, formerly of Syracuse, New York, elected to succeed Hochheimer as rabbi of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, commented:

> Szold publicly declared in the *Israelite* that he is in accord with Dr. Wise in religious matters while assuring Mr. Reis [sic!]and others on numerous occasions that he is Orthodox—that the organ and the *Minhag America* is not against his own convictions. Wherefore does he now deny those convictions? . . . .
>
> Why does Dr. Wise have the courage to call himself the father of Reform Jews in America, which he really is, and why does Szold, ashamed, play a double role; namely, among the Orthodox he pretends to be Orthodox and assures the Reformers that he is Reform . . . .
>
> Orthodoxy now knows the personality of Dr. Szold, who like a drunkard staggers, not knowing whether to turn right or left . . . since he is a stranger and does not know where the majority of his customers are to be found, as he tries to please all parties . . . .

Leeser suggested that Szold's professions, of whichever party he claims to belong, be disregarded:

> The public cannot be interested whether the new Rabbi is going to throw himself into the embrace of the *Israelite* or not, or whether he had declared himself as an Orthodox to Mr. Rice or not. His congregation appears delighted with him, and it is their business, not ours, to accept or reject his Reforms . . . .

Rice, however, felt that since Szold had referred to him in support of his Orthodoxy, he had to expose the deception:

> I owe it to the holy religion which we profess in common . . . to appear in public in order to utter nothing but the simple truth, and to exhibit on which side the justice of the case lies; especially when the wolf appears draped in the meek, woolly garment of the harmless sheep; for men of this stamp are far more dangerous to a religious life than those who boldly and openly utter their erroneous opinions.

David Einhorn, the radical Reformer, attacked Szold for claiming that he was a Reformer:

> Herr Szold is not able to think clearly, to speak in an orderly manner, to write correctly . . . . There is only one excuse, Herr Szold does not know what he is talking about . . . . A chick barely out of the egg wants to play the role of a roaring lion . . . a man who cannot distinguish his right hand from his left.

The youthful, thirty-one year old Szold countered that his name would be remembered with love while that of Einhorn, "will be execrated with an eternal curse by the entire world." Einhorn responded in his German monthly, *Sinai*: "If the honest Orthodox Rabbi Abraham Rice would curse me, which he does not do, I would forgive him, but not to forgive an ignorant youngster."

Although, in 1859, Baltimore had only 6,000 Jews (1500 families), far behind New York with its 40,000 Jews, even before the arrival of Illowy it outstripped the larger metropolis in its outstanding rabbinic leadership. Leeser, like German Jews of that period, not taking notice of the Russian rabbis, in his observation that:

> Baltimore now has the best assemblage of Talmudists in the country, namely Reverends A. Rice, H. Hoc[hh]eimer, A[aron] Gunzburg and here and in Europe, without reckoning Benjamin Szold and David Einhorn.

While both, the Eden Street *Oheb Israel* and Hanover Street *Oheb Shalom* congregations were electing Reformers to their pulpits—Henry Hochheimer and Benjamin Szold respectively—the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation advertised in the Anglo-Jewish press for "the services of a Preacher who is of strict Orthodox principles . . . A man of a university education with principles strictly Orthodox . . . ."

There was only one rabbi in the entire United States who could qualify: Dr. Bernhard Illowy, who was then rabbi at *Keneseth Sholom* in Syracuse, New York. The congregation released him reluctantly: "At last Dr. Illowy has left us for Baltimore, in spite of all endeavors and prayers of our Congregation to have him tarry in their midst."

Before his engagement in Syracuse, Illowy had served the United Hebrew Congregation *Achduth Israel* in St. Louis, Missouri. His impact there had been impressive, of long lasting duration. Three years after he left that pulpit, at a general meeting held Sunday, July 17, 1859, that membership expressed their dedication to continuing his princples:

> Resolved, That, strongly impressed with the great good that must result to themselves and their children, by preserving and advancing in the path of Orthodox Judaism . . . the members of this con-

> gregation will strive to the utmost of their ability to uphold the purity of their faith as they have received it from their own fathers.

After Illowy had arrived in Baltimore, David Einhorn befriended him, respecting his secular as well as talmudic knowledge. Both had broken ranks with Wise at the time of the Cleveland Conference.

In 1859, Einhorn, after four years in Baltimore, still ministered to a small congregation of about eighty members, *Har Sinai*. Illowy learned that

> The Rabbi [Einhorn] and the principle members eat *Terefoth* and *Chamez* on Passover, smoke cigars and ride on Sabbath, while many members keep a *Kocher* [sic!] house, are partly Orthodox, and the heads of the congregation themselves eat *Matzos* on Passover with the *Schamez*. It is half way radical in practice, and entirely so in theory.

Einhorn called upon Illowy and soon became a daily visitor, except for Saturdays and Sundays. He would usually arrive about one o'clock in the afternoon, drink a cup of black coffee and smoke a cigar, discuss various subjects, and leave at about three.

Cigar smoking Einhorn created quite a squabble soon after his arrival in Baltimore. On the first Sabbath, the officials of the congregations visited him at his residence. He lit a cigar and offered one to each of his guests. A meeting of some indignant members followed. They sent him a protest, to which Einhorn complimented his small following, saying *Klein aber Rein* [Small but Sound].

Einhorn respected Illowy's erudition. After his ordination, Illowy had gained his Doctor of Philosophy in Hungary and then further studied at the rabbinical school in Padua, Italy. He was a learned talmudist and an accomplished linguist. Besides a thorough knowledge of the classical languages: Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, he also spoke fluent German and English and knew French and Italian.

The two men had much in common, but because of a clash of principles, after a few months Einhorn abruptly broke off their friendship. Illowy had accepted an invitation to deliver the address at the annual dinner of the Hebrew Benevolent Society on December 21, 1859. Its treasurer, was Levi Collmus, who in the 1830s had contributed the ground upon which the *Lloyd Street Schul* was built. He was a founder of this mutual aid society when it was chartered in 1834 as the first secular Jewish organization in Baltimore.

About three weeks before the dinner, Illowy happened to meet the president of the Society, and asked quite off-handedly (as if the matter

were taken for granted in the very Orthodox Baltimore) whether there were arrangements for washing one's hands before, and saying grace after, the meal. To Illowy's great astonishment, he was told that both were prohibited by resolutions of the Board of Trustees. He thought at first that the president was joking, but when he became convinced that it was all said in earnest, he at once informed him that under these conditions he would not deliver the address, would not dine with the Society, and insofar as his influence went, none of his members would attend. Illowy was then told that this resolution had been passed by the trustees at the insistence of Dr. Einhorn.

On the following Sabbath, at the close of his sermon, Illowy denounced the action of the trustees of the Hebrew Benevolent Society as of the most intolerant and sinful nature, and he declared that attendance at this dinner would be tantamount to attendance at the feast of Ahasvueros in ancient Persia! No man who had any regard for religion or had any respect for his own person would attend a dinner at which, by resolution of the Board of Trustees, he was forbidden to give thanks to God for the good things he enjoyed and for his ability to enjoy them. He then entreated everyone to send contributions to the treasurer of the Society so that the poor would not suffer from the senseless and sinful actions of the trustees.

The Baltimore Hebrew Congregation was then the largest and wealthiest congregation in the city. The trustees of the Hebrew Benevolent Society soon learned that Illowy's interdiction had been effective and that the dinner would prove a disaster unless something was done, and quickly. The prohibition had reverberated throughout the city, and all the religiously inclined members of the other congregations, including the moderate Reform ones, heeded Illowy's advice. Tickets were being returned in large numbers.

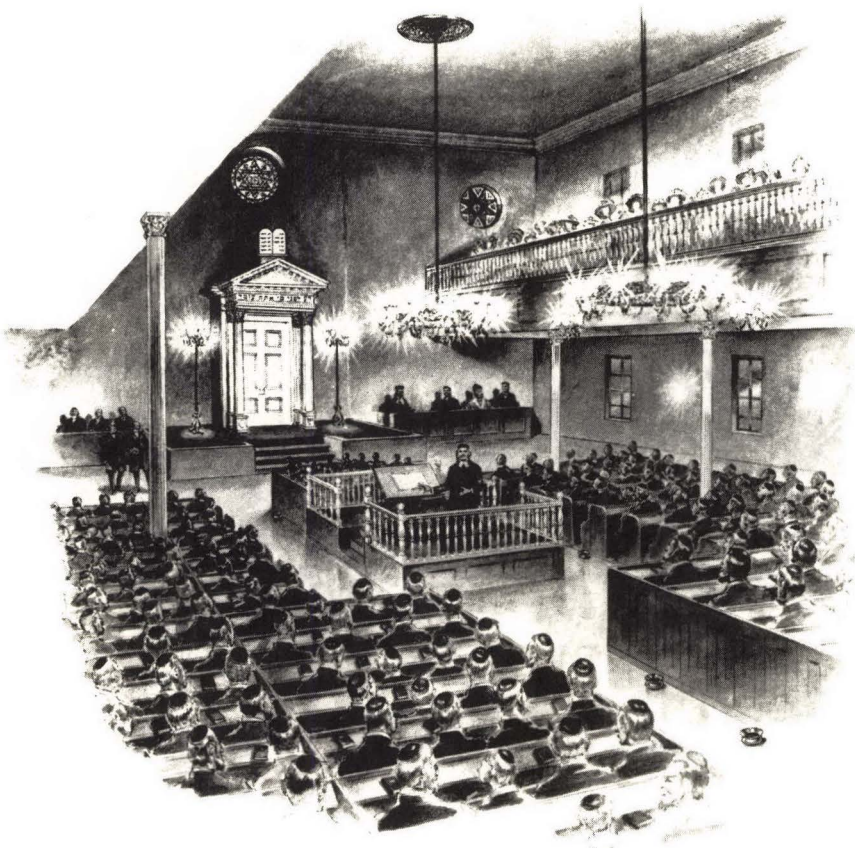
An emergency meeting of the trustees was called and the resolution was rescinded. Illowy, in his sermon on the following Sabbath, withdrew his interdiction and urged all to attend. Both in terms of attendance and of the sum donated, it was the most successful dinner in the history of the Society. But as a consequence, Einhorn ended his friendship with Illowy.

Soon thereafter, Rice also parted ways with Einhorn, but under different circumstances. In one of Einhorn's many verbal tilts with Rice, upon being confronted by a talmudic passage that substantiated Rice's conclusion, Einhorn remarked that he did not place any more value in the *Talmud* than in any Bavarian document offering privileges to Jews.

Even a functional *entente* between the Orthodox and the Reformers was becoming strained for both sides.

BOOK X

DEDICATION TO EDUCATION



Rededication of elongated and redecorated Lloyd Street *Schul*, Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, September 15, 1860, by Rabbis Rice and Illoway. Historic illustration by Kurt Friede.

(Courtesy The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)

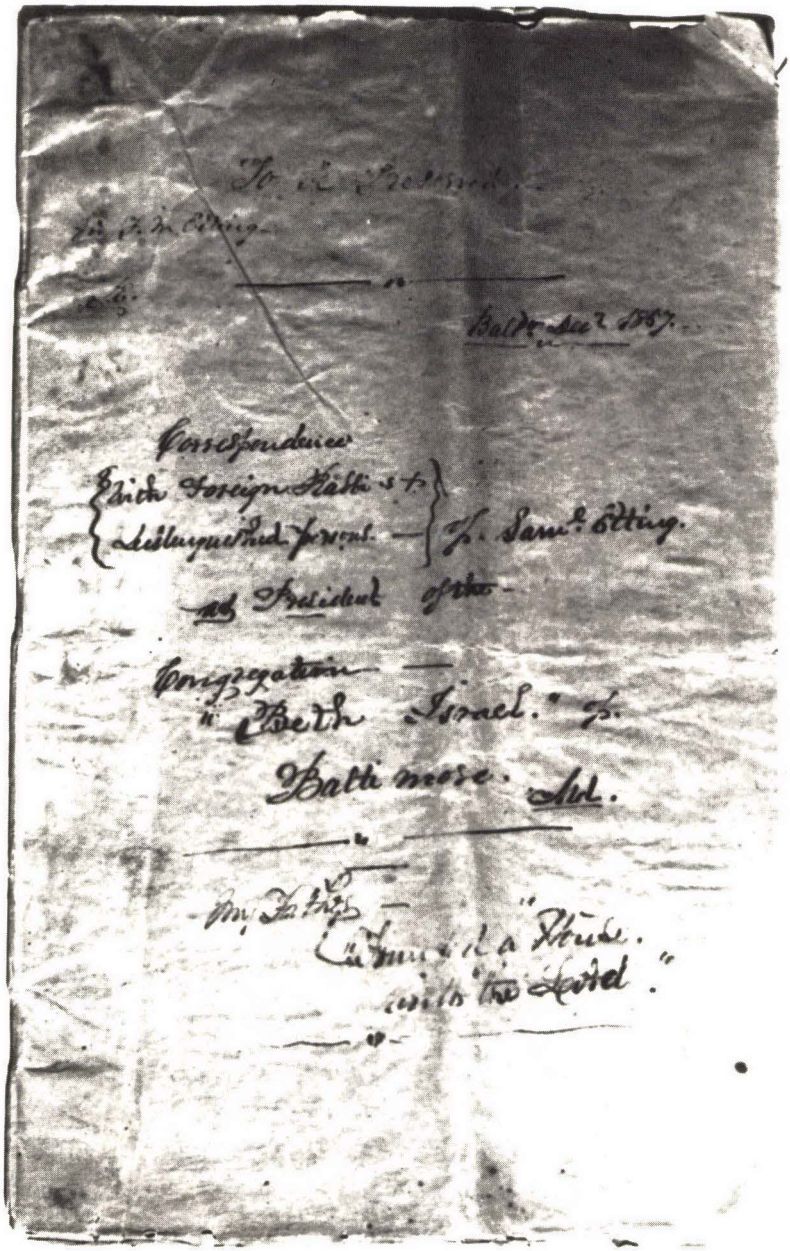


Aaron Freidenwald, M.D., son of Jonas, a student of Rice, and his personal physician, acquired Rice's Book of Homilies which he preserved and passed on to his son, Dr. Harry Friedenwald, M.D.
(Vision: A Biography of Harry Friedenwald by Alexandra Lee Levin)



Jonas Friedenwald, a pioneer German-Jewish settler in Baltimore, and life-long devotee of Rice.

(*Vision* by Alexandra Lee Levin)



Paquet Cover: Correspondence of President Samuel Etting, Portuguese Synagogue, Baltimore, to American and European Jewish leaders, 1857.

(Collection of Kosher Overseers Association of America)



Samuel Etting, conducted first *Yom Kippur* worship at Portuguese Synagogue, *Beth Israel*, Baltimore.

(Portraits of Jews by Hannah R. London)

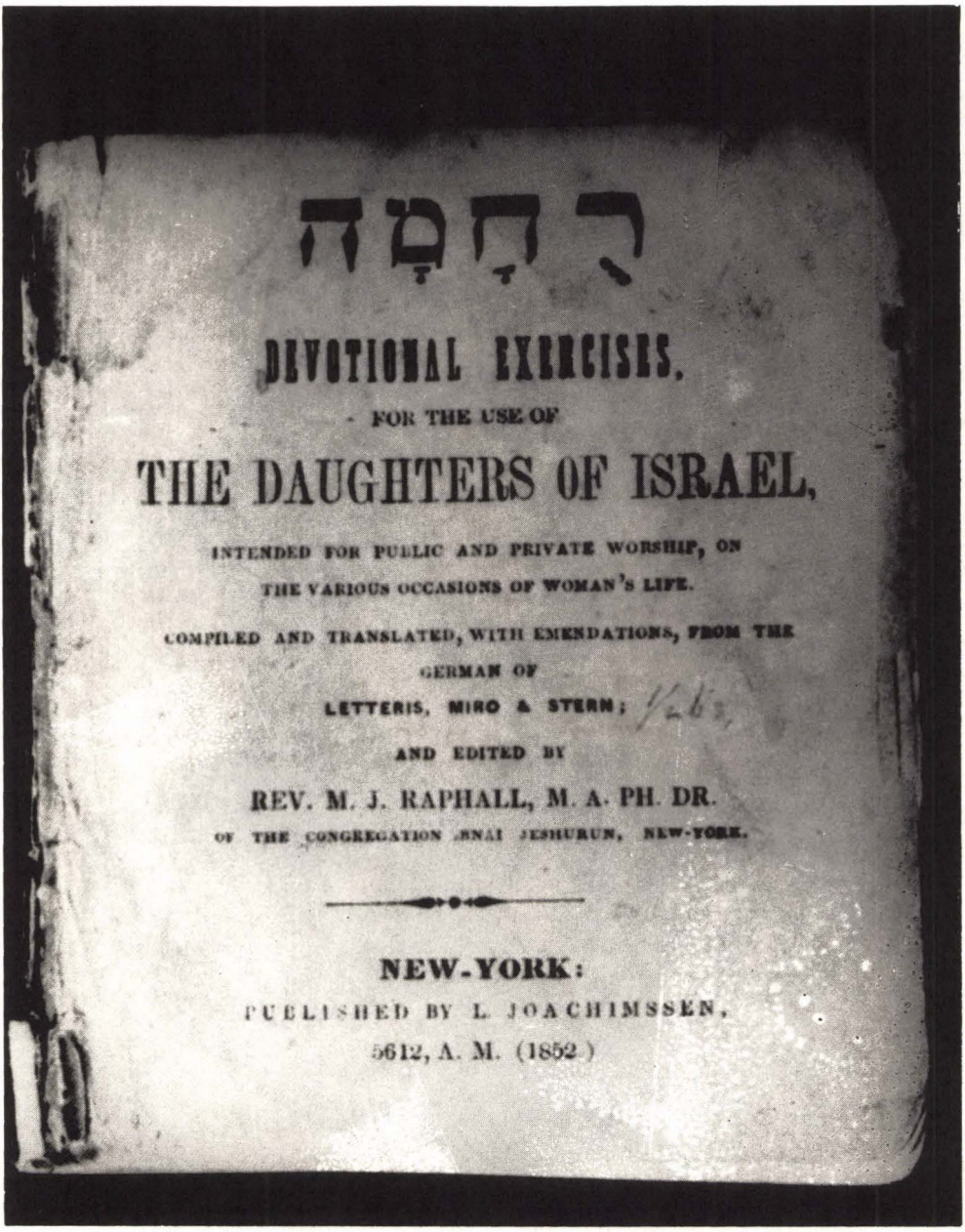


Rebecca Gratz, founder of first Hebrew Sunday School, 1838.
(Portraits of Jews by Hannah R. London)



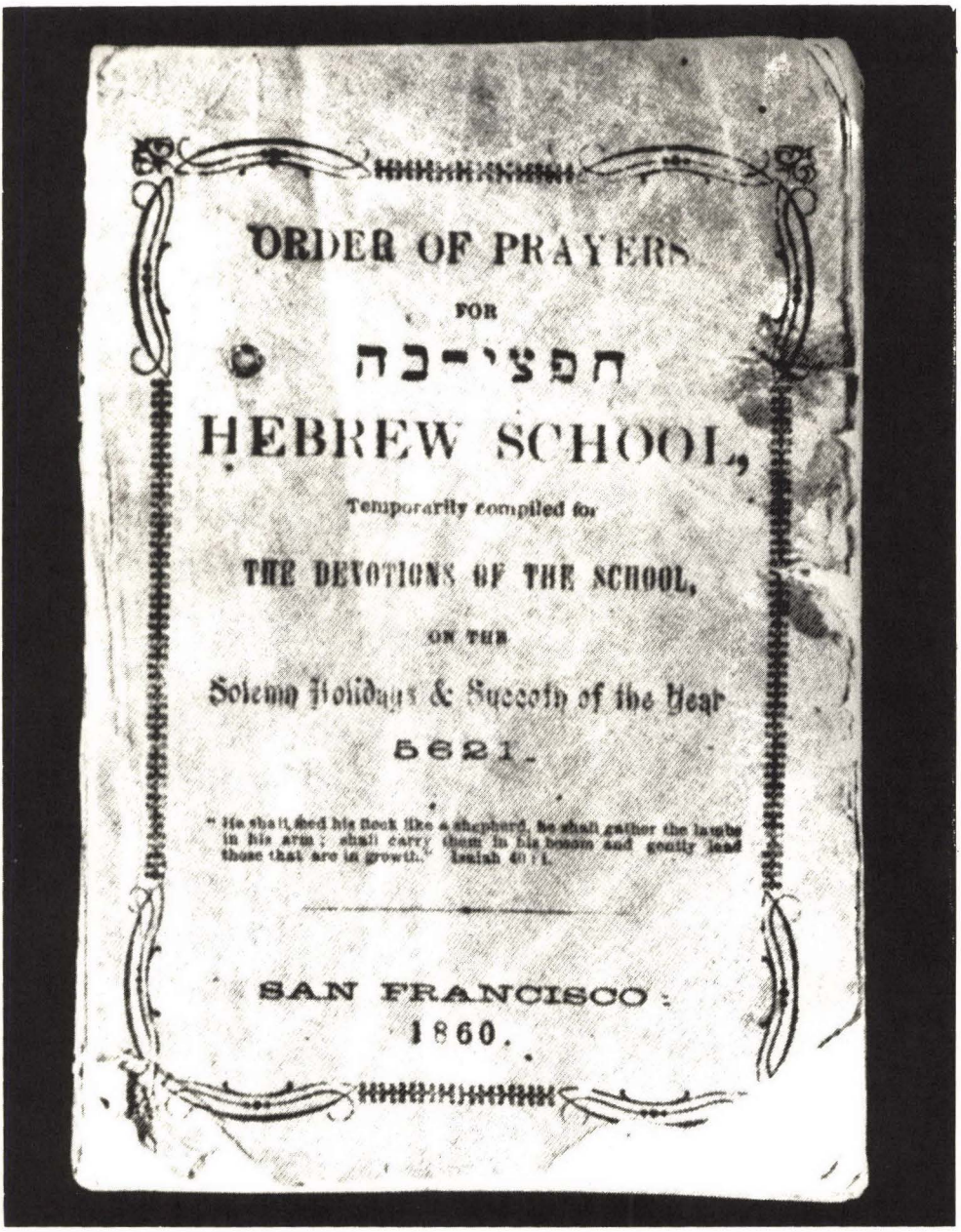
Solomon Nunes Carvalho, founder of Hebrew Sunday School, Baltimore, 1858.

(*Carvalho* by Joan Sturhahn)



1852 Prayer Book for "Daughters of Israel" by Orthodox Rabbi Morris J. Raphall.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



ORDER OF PRAYERS

FOR

חפציבה

HEBREW SCHOOL,

Temporarily compiled for

THE DEVOTIONS OF THE SCHOOL,

ON THE

Solemn Holidays & Succoth of the Year

5621.

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs in his arm; shall carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are in growth." Isaiah 40 11.

SAN FRANCISCO:

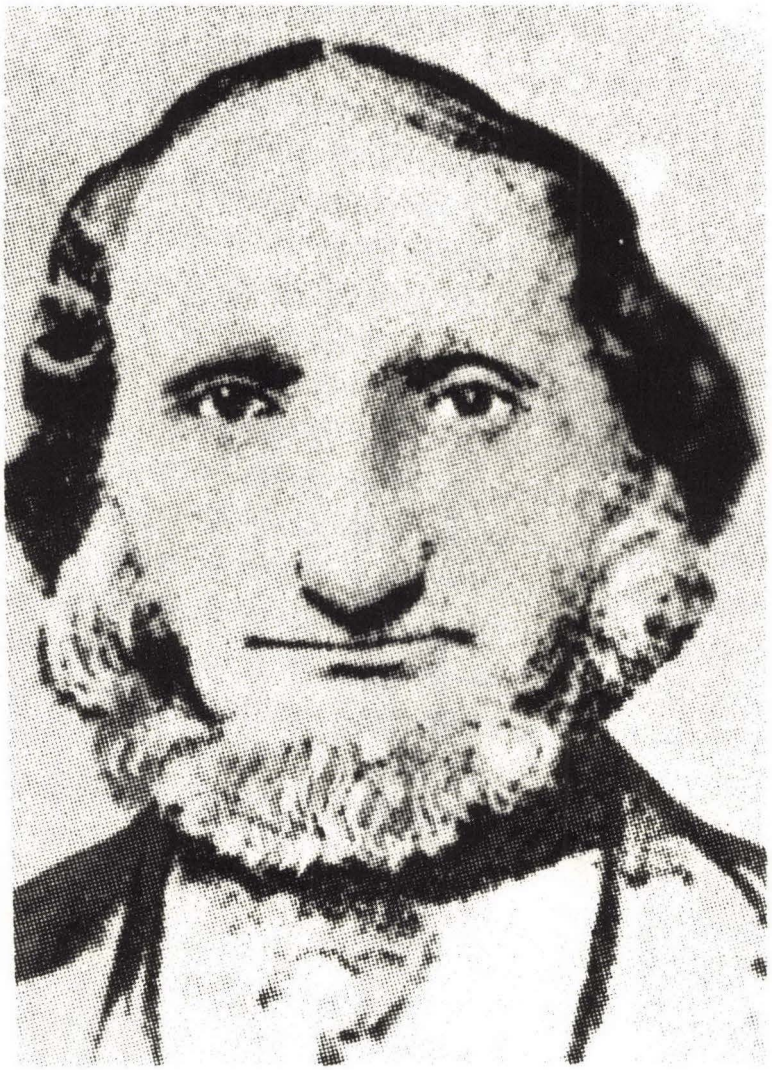
1860.

1860 Prayer Book for children, by Reformer Julius Eckman.
(Courtesy of Professor Abraham Karp)



Dr. Bernhard Illowy, Rabbi, Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, 1859-1862.

(*Frontispiece: Letters and Decisions* by Henry Illowy)



Reverend Samuel Landsberg, Reader, Washington Hebrew Congregation, organized 1852 in Washington, D.C. He joined Rice and Illoway in first ordination ceremony in United States, granting *Semicha* to Judah Rosewald.

(The History of Obeb Shalom by Louis F. Cahn)



Torah Ark of Rededicated Lloyd Street *Schul*, Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, 1860.

(*History of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation* by Adolph Guttmacher)



Joseph Leucht, Cantor, Lloyd Street *Schul*, 1860.
(History of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation by Adolph Guttmacher)



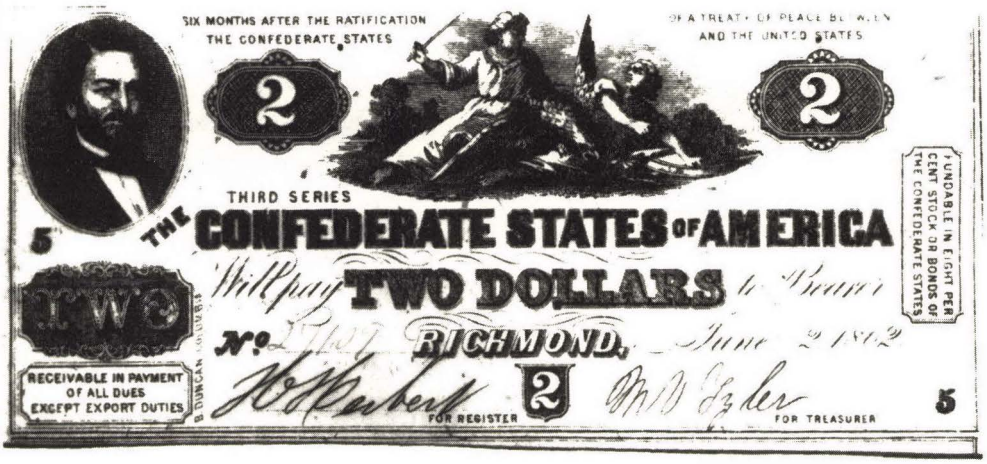
East Side of 300 block of North Howard Street, residence of Rice at 111 North Howard Street [present 316 North Howard Street] during the 1850's, was located on west side, across the street.

(Photograph by Courtesy of Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland)



Virginia Treasury Note, July 21, 1862 Jefferson Davis, Inset; Inflation peaks at new high.

(Author's Private Collection)



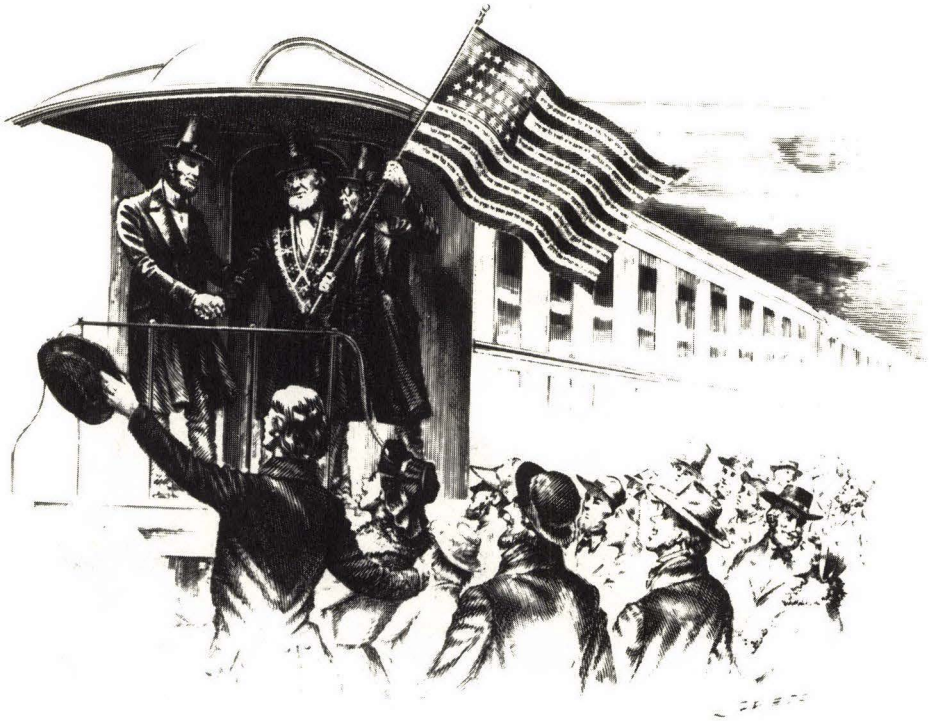
Confederate Bill, June 2, 1862; Judah P. Benjamin, Secretary of War, in inset.

(Author's Private Collection)



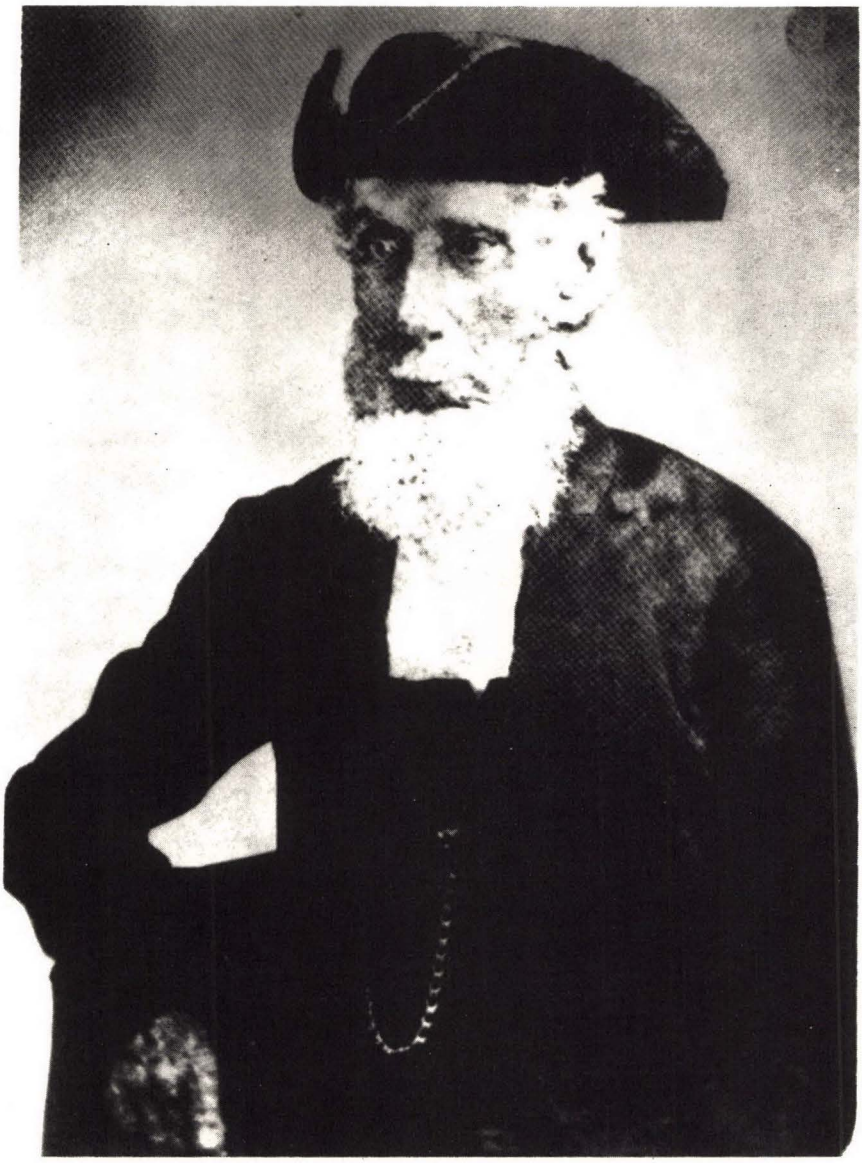
Biblical Flag: Inscribed by Abraham Kohn, City Clerk of Chicago, 1861, as Civil War brewed.

(Courtesy The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



Abraham Jonas joins Abraham Kohn in presenting Abraham Lincoln, president-elect, a biblical flag at Springfield, Illinois, 1861. It adorned the Oval Office throughout the Civil War. (Historical Illustration by Artist Kurt Friede)

(Courtesy The Orthodox Rabbinical Association)



Reverend Jacob de Isaac Mendes De Solla, minister of Portuguese Synagogue, Baltimore, 1857.

(History of the Jews of the Netherlands Antilles, Volume I., by Isaac S. and Suzanne A. Emmanuel)

Chapter 42 *Maryland's Portuguese Synagogue-School Dedicated*

THE BALTIMORE Hebrew Congregation under the leadership of Illowy sought to further enhance the worship by engaging the services of a strictly Orthodox cantor. They requested Rabbi Rice to correspond with Rabbi Seligmann Baer Bamberger of Würzburg, a classmate of Rice's, and with Samson Raphael Hirsch of Frankfort-am-Mein, in order to seek referrals.

Rabbi Bamberger recommended Joseph Leucht for the post. Like Bamberger and Rice, Leucht's father had studied at the Würzburg *yeshivah*; his mother taught by Rice in Zell, Bavaria. After successful negotiations, twenty-year-old Joseph Leucht, an unostentatiously pious young man, arrived to serve as cantor for the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. His pleasant and powerful voice delighted the worshippers. Leucht was the second professional cantor to chant in an American synagogue.

At his residence, Rice taught the *Talmud* to Joseph Leucht. There, Joseph met Caroline, the young lady brought up by the Rice's. A year later, in August of 1860, Joseph married her.

Whereas all German-Jewish congregations in the United States were turning to Reform, the teachings of Rice yet kept the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation in the Orthodox fold. Rice perceived that Orthodoxy could be revitalized only by educating the youth in all of Judaism. He placed that responsibility of beginning the child's education primarily in the home. Invited to the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation by Illowy, he told the mothers:

> I address myself especially to you esteemed women! You are the ones who are the hopeful props of Judaism. Not sermons, not schools for children, can restore the disrupted state of our Jewish affairs. Judaism will rise and fall in proportion to the fulfillment of your Jewish responsibilities and in the measure that you fashion Jewishness in your homes.
>
> Believe me, that where the sanctity of the Jewish marriage laws are neglected, there will never be born a true Jewish offsping. In a home where Jewish sanctities are neglected not even one child would be won for God; where the holiness of family life is neglected, Judaism will never thrive . . . .
>
> Your child's cradle is the Temple where you are to bring proper

sacrifices to God. If you wish to educate your tender infant for God, let nothing un-Jewish touch his lips, let nothing un-Jewish enter his ears, let nothing un-Jewish meet his eyes; then, and only then will the religious school, be able to nourish what you have planted. Be not the cause for beholding the biblical depiction of our sacred mother Rachel weeping hopelessly, because she was seeking to verify if God is in the hearts of her children, but had not found God among them . . . .

Training and education must begin from earliest childhood . . . . Children who are not instructed by their parents by the tender age of five or six to perform their religious obligations, to wash their hands and recite the blessings before and after meals, will never learn to keep these teachings. The entire course of your child's life is determined by his early training and education . . . .

Only when the true-believing Jew will practice his religion at home with the same zeal and promptness as he does in public, will he leave a strong and lasting impression upon the children, and then will we have accomplished a regeneration in our religious life. But if parents will continue to practice at home the religious obligations without zeal but simply as a matter of routine, then what are we to expect of our children?

Though Rice was engaged in business pursuits throughout the decade of the fifties, he constantly participated in furthering Orthodox Jewish education. Perhaps his greatest achievement was the All-Day School, Hebrew and English Benevolent Academic Association of Baltimore, he founded at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation in 1841. When Leeser visited that school in 1851, he noted that there were 200 children, boys and girls, attending classes in the basement classrooms, under two teachers for the Hebrew and many more for the English. An inspired Leeser organized that year an all-day Jewish parochial school in Philadelphia.

Reformer Julius Eckman sneered at Orthodox All-day schools, calling the secular studies in their day schools "cosher geography."

In 1852, Rice gave his support to the Hebrew Society for the Education of Poor and Orphan Children which opened the United Hebrew Select School to educate needy children; many of the over 7,000 Jews in Baltimore were struggling to earn a living. Many parents could not afford even the minimal tuition of 62½ cents per month, and there were also orphans.

Much of the funds were obtained by volunteers who collected pennies. Also, the Society placed orphan children in homes of poor people who needed the extra income, however small. The Society paid the tuition.

In 1853, Mr. Brown, a highly regarded educator and principal of the United Hebrew Select School invited Rice to participate in the first examination of its students. Brown had been a teacher of Hebrew at the *Har Sinai* school, founded in 1845; his salary was two hundred dollars per year. The directors of the United Hebrew Select School expressed their appreciation " . . . particularly to Rev. J. N. M. Jilton, of the Newton University [and] to Rev. A. Rice . . . ."

Also in 1852, a private school was opened by the Reverend Solomon Jacobs, an Orthodox minister who arrived from a ministry in Kingston, Jamaica. In the previous year, he served as *chazzan* of the *Lloyd Street Schul*. At his all-day school, the third in Baltimore, Jacobs also boarded students who came from out of town. Among its subjects, French was taught.

Always ready to support serious Jewish educational efforts, Rice came to the aid of Solomon Nunes Carvalho, who in 1856 founded the Baltimore Hebrew Sunday School Association, together with an Orthodox Portuguese-rite synagogue, *Beth Israel* [House of Israel]. It opened in rented quarters at the Red Man's Hall on 71 [present 16 west] Lexington Street. This was the third *Sephardic* congregation founded in 19th century America; the first having been *Nefutzoth Yehudah* in New Orleans, in 1847; the second being *Shaar Ashamayim* in San Francisco, in 1853.

Solomon's father, David Nunes Carvalho, a merchant in Charleston, South Carolina, had served as *chazzan* at *Beth Elohim*, and in the mid-1820's, in the Reformed Society of Israelites in Charleston. Solomon had been tutored for his *Bar Mitzvah* at the private school of Isaac Harby, founder of that Reformed Society. Nonetheless, his innermost feelings inclined him towards Orthodoxy.

His lasting claim to fame, was his adventures with Colonel John Charles Fremont's fifth expedition to the Far West. Carvalho had been engaged as official photographer and artist of the expedition and he had barely survived the crossing of the snowbound Wasatch Mountains into Mormon Utah in the winter of 1853-54.

From Salt Lake City, Carvalho journeyed to Los Angeles, arriving in June 1854. Samuel K. Labatt, a native of Charleston, South Carolina, heartily welcomed native Charlestonian Solomon Nunes Carvalho, both *Sephardic* Jews. Samuel, with his brother, Joseph Isaac, proprietors of the "Tienda de China," the most pretentious and most specialized store in the "cow-town" of Los Angeles, moved in August to a prime location. They apportioned a place in the unoccupied second floor of their "Nuevo Tienda de China" to open for Carvalho a studio—the first photography shop in Los Angeles.

In Los Angeles, probably as early as 1850, a quorum convened for

worship on high holy days and other occasions. In 1860, the Polish-rite congregation officially organized under the name *Beis Eil* [House of God]. But Carvalho, himself in financial need upon his arrival, perceived the necessity for a Hebrew Benevolent Society to care for persons like himself, who arrived without funds and needed assistance, or to care for the ill, and those who died in their midst.

Carvalho sparked the formation of a Hebrew Benevolent Society, organized by his initiative that summer of June 24, 1854. This Society in Los Angeles, as in most western communities, served as a charitable organization, contributing to the poor, tending to the sick and burying the dead. Carvalho influenced Samuel Labatt to assume the presidency of the first Jewish Society in Los Angeles. Labatt had formerly acted as secretary of The Hebrew Benevolent Society of New Orleans where he resided from 1831 until coming to San Francisco in 1849 and Los Angeles in 1853. At the first meeting of the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Los Angeles, on July 2, 1854, Labatt thanked Carvalho "for his valuable services in organizing this Society, and that he be elected an honorary member . . . ."

Carvalho learned from the Labatt brothers, that in mid-September of the previous year, 1853, a Portuguese congregation had been formed in San Francisco, a congregation in which their father, Abraham Cohen Labatt, and brothers Henry J., and David C. had been associated. The Portuguese congregation rented a room "which was fitted up in a neat and tasty style for worship." After the high holy days, on November 5, the name *Shaar Ashamayim* [Gate of Heaven] was formally adopted.

When San Francisco *Sephardim* organized *Shaar Ashamayim* in September, 1853, the trustees included the Zachariah brothers, Jonathan and Eleazar; the former a temporary trustee, the latter a permanent trustee. Their brother, Dr. Issachar Zachariah, is not mentioned for he may have by then returned east. He was probably the Dr. Issachar Zachariah who had in the following decade, according to the *New York World* "as President Abraham Lincoln's chiropodist, enjoyed Mr. Lincoln's confidence perhaps more than any other private individual . . . [and was] perhaps a most favored family visitor at the White House."

Another *Sephardi*, Joseph Shannon was elected to the presidency of *Shaar Ashamayim*. Joseph Shannon, active in communal leadership, had in 1852 consecrated *B'nai Israel*, Sacramento—a former Methodist Church, the wooden edifice shipped around the Horn. This was the first edifice of a synagogue in the Far West.

During the summer of 1854, the pioneer congregations *Emanu-El* and *Sherith Israel* erected their synagogue buildings in the record time of one month, in time for the high holy days. In the following year, 1855, the

officers of the Portuguese congregations were offered leading posts in those congregations. They accepted and disbanded *Shaar Ashamayim*.

As if to counterbalance the loss of the *Sephardic* synagogue on the west coast, Carvalho determined to build one on the east coast. Perhaps he was thereby expressing his thanks to the Almighty for delivery from death in the crossing of the frozen and snow-covered Wasatch mountains in mid-winter.

He further recalled the Portuguese synagogue of his youth, the old Orthodox Portuguese *Beth Elohim* synagogue of Charleston, whose interior and exterior he painted by memory after its destruction by fire in 1838.

Beth Israel's president, Samuel Etting, like his father, Solomon Etting, a native American, who was one of the earliest Jewish settlers in Baltimore, remained aloof from the German *Ashkenazic* community of Baltimore. Now, upon the formation of a *Sephardic* congregation Samuel assumed a leadership role.

To gain national and international attention for the Portuguese congregation of Baltimore, first to be founded in the seaboard states of America in the nineteenth century, on behalf of the congregation, Samuel Etting bestowed honorary memberships in Baltimore's *Sephardic* congregation upon leading Jewish personalities in England, France and the Caribbean.

The list represents the most outstanding Jewish leaders of the period: Chief Rabbi of London, Nathan Marcus Adler, Chief Rabbi of the Central Consistory of France, the Reverend Dr. Salomon Ullman, Baron Lionel de Rothschild and Baron Anthony de Rothschild, Albert Cohen, B. S. Phillips, Michel Bague, M. M. Kroningswater, Leopold Laval, and Germane Halphin, Haim Gaudella, Honorable David Salomon, I. S. Abascasis, Moses Mocatta, Isaac Cohen, Laurence Levy and B. L. Joseph of Liverpool, and Major Aaron Wolff of St. Thomas, West Indies and Sir Moses Montefiore, the most distinguished Jew of the nineteenth century.

In his letter to Sir Moses, Samuel Etting wrote on November 2, 1857:

> . . . we commence the structure with, I regret to say, very limited means & comparatively few in numbers, till by the zeal manifested by our People backed by some liberal donations from our Christian Bretheren, we trust to be able at no very distant day to rear us a modest Temple, wherein to worship our own God in our own way. A right guaranteed to every man under the Constitution of our Country.

> At present we occupy a large & well adapted room, & our German Bretheren have kindly loaned us from their Synagogues Sepherim [Scrolls of the Law] . . . .
>
> Thus Sir commences an enterprise which I hope & fervently pray we may be able to carry out to a successful issue.
>
> From the very kind & most respected terms in which my particular Friend D. S. Car Esq. our former Minister at Constantinople, made mention to me of your goodself I am the less backward in addressing you, feeling satisfied that my doing so will not be considered presumptious looking to the good cause it advocates . . . .

The honors were accepted but no contributions tendered. Yet, Carvalho and Etting were encouraged in the spring of 1857 by the emergence of a new Portuguese synagogue, *Beth-El-Emeth* [House of the God of Truth] organized in Philadelphia. That congregation purchased a church on Franklin Street which under Leeser's ministry they altered into a synagogue.

An inspired Carvalho and Etting persevered and succeeded in securing a building at 24 Paca Street, between Lexington and Fayette. On Wednesday afternoon, September 27, 1857 they led in the joyful dedication of *Beth Israel*; the Committee consisted of David Judah, Joseph Friedenwald, as well as founder Solomon Nunez Carvalho and Samuel Etting, President.

Carvalho's wife, Sarah Miriam Solis, was the guiding light behind the Sunday school. Being a Philadelphian, she recalled that in 1837 Rebecca Gratz had founded the Hebrew Sunday School Society of Philadelphia, the first Jewish Sunday school in America. Solomon served as *chazzan* and secretary-treasurer of the synagogue, and his wife, Sarah Miriam Solis, was the teacher of it's Baltimore Hebrew Sunday School Association.

In Baltimore too, in 1857, the Hebrew and English Benevolent Academic Association of Baltimore, that all-day school founded by Rice in 1841, closed its doors. In New York City that year, the congregational Union School at *Anshe Chesed* was dissolved. Also in 1857, Rabbi Henry A. Henry's Hebrew Union School. So, too, that year, the Baltimore school of Reverend Solomon Jacobs. And in New York City, the congregational Union School at *Anshe Chesed* dissolved. Also the Hebrew Union School of Rabbi Henry A. Henry, closed its doors.

As the sun set on Day-Schools in the East Coast, it rose on the West Coast. In 1859, Reverend Henry A. Henry, the first Orthodox ordained rabbi to minister in the far western United States, urged the Polish-rite *Sherith Israel* members to establish a strictly Orthodox day school:

> By an especial invite, I have come to this meeting (a mass meeting for the purpose of establishing a school); and having spent thirty years in the education of our youth, [about] 10 years of that time in America [1849-1857] and two years in California [1857-1859] . . . .
>
> If you think of establishing a school, establish it on Orthodox principles; in the name of our God, let it be purely Orthodox (great applause).

In his publication, *The Gleaner*, the Reformer Julius Eckman voiced strong objections to Henry's proposed Orthodox parochial school:

> We do not see at the meeting any members of the German section of Hebrews. This shows that they are satisfied with our public schools and feel no want of a Hebrew School.
>
> We heard no more attempts to make it appear that we want an Orthodox school. As much as we respect Orthodoxy, we have no desire for an Orthodox Hebrew-English grammar, nor for a *frum* [pious] arithmetic, nor for a *cosher* geography . . . .
>
> To bring children from our spacious and splendid public schools, into the misty atmosphere of a subterranean locality, whither the rays of the sun never penetrate . . . would be preparing graves—not establishing schools for our children.

Eckman's opposition came at a time when Reform temples had few worshippers and its schools were without many students. In San Francisco, at his private school *Hephtzi-bah* ["My Delight Is in Her"], he kept a little lamb for enlivening the studies and attracting students. In 1860 Eckman founded a Junior Congregation. He published a prayer pamphlet for them entitled "Order of Prayers for Hephtzi-Bah Hebrew School, Temporarily compiled for the Devotion of the Solemn Holidays of the year 5621 [1860]," which contained

> abstracts of the Hebrew Prayers in the English language appropriately arranged for different occasions and especially for the Biblical Sabbaths and Feasts. Some Hebrew sentences are retained,such as *Shema*, *Kodosh*, *Barechu*, etc . . . .

In Cincinnati, Wise heartily welcomed Eckman's publication of the juvenile prayer book, explaining its needs:

> Children can not pray with adults; they have other hopes, wishes, feelings, sentiments and conceptions which must be expressed in other forms. Nor are children usually much benefitted by sermons preached to adults, especially not by German sermons.

In Baltimore, with the closing of All-Day schools, Rice supported the Orthodox Sunday School of the Portuguese synagogue in order to offset the total loss of Jewish education for children now atending the Free Public School.

Rabbi Rice in 1842, opposed instituting a Sunday School at *Bene Israel*, Cincinnati, because it might follow the pattern set by Grätz's Sunday School. On the table in her Sunday School, lay a much worn Bible containing both the Old and the New Testaments, and for religious instruction, "Scripture Lessons," a little illustrated work published by the Christian Sunday School Union. Furthermore, in 1838, the Reformer Gustavus Poznanski, opened a Sunday School at *Beth Elohim* in Charleston, patterned after Grätz's in Philadelphia. Also, Henry Hochheimer opened a Sunday School at *Oheb Israel*, which innovation served him as a springboard for instituting Reforms in its synagogue,

Rice, gave his support to the proposed Baltimore Hebrew Sunday School Association because of its Orthodox leadership. Religious and competent persons were selected to perform the responsible duties of teachers. When the school opened its doors on December 7, 1856, it was reported in the press:

> The books of instruction have been carefully selected and approved by Rev. Rabbi Rice, Rev. Isaac Leeser, Rev. M[oses] N. Nathan [formerly of Kingston, Jamaica, who in 1845 edited a Jewish monthly, *First Fruits of the West* and presently of Charleston], and Rev. A[braham] De Sola of Montreal, and others.

While Rice endorsed Carvalho's Sunday school, David Einhorn cautioned parents not to send their children there. He issued the following warning, published on March 20, 1857 in *The Asmonean*:

> We repeat our admonition to all fathers and mothers of Baltimore:
>
> *Beware of sending your children to that school*
>
> —for it is nothing, from its beginning even to its end, but a daring sport with holy things, calculated only to demoralize, cripple and unJudaise those dear to your heart . . . .

Einhorn gave no reason to the public for his caution and his warning went unheeded. Rice's endorsement caused registration to soar at the Baltimore Hebrew Sunday School Association. By March, 1857, one hundred and fifty students had enrolled in its classes.

But there was another force that served to undermine the all-day school and favor the Sunday School in Baltimore. With the opening of

free public schools, the rich discontinued supporting education for the poor attending Jewish All-Day Schools. Poor parents began sending their children to free public schools, now that they had become aware that public education was no longer an arm of Protestant Christian Evangelism. Children were attracted to the light and airy classrooms in new public school buildings, rather than the dingy, dark classrooms in the basements of synagogues. This further accounted for the popularity of the one-day-a-week Sunday Schools over the All-Day Schools. Parents of low income were moved in that direction by their conflict with the rich parents, as indicated in a letter written by one of the members of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation on May 18, 1857:

> The education of our youth was never neglected in Baltimore . . . our teachers have not many equals in this country . . . . You may find fault with the Lloyd Street Congregation which had a school connected with its Synagogue, but was dissolved on the sole ground that the poor and disinterested members could not pay an equal portion with the rich . . . . Sixteen years ago [1841] when this school was connected with the synagogue by mutual consent, we were in Baltimore only one class of people; I mean to say we were all poor, and every thing was in its right place, &c; but now we are two classes, and nothing seems to be in its proper place.

That same conflict undoubtedly adversely affected the Baltimore Hebrew Sunday School Association in 1859. Etting at this late date still hoped that his European and Caribbean honorees would respond with contributions, especially the Montefiore's and Rothchild's, but regretably not a franc or farthing was forthcoming. After two years of its existence, *Beth Israel* closed its doors; the Torah on loan returned to the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. Even the offer of its minister Reverend Jacob de Isaacs Mendes de Solla to officiate gratuitously, could not avail. Solla departed September 30, 1858 to minister at *Beth Jahacob*, Montego Bay, Jamaica.

But the failure to attract children to the Sunday school among Reformers too, may have motivated them to establish all-day schools; Temple *Kehillath Anshe Maarabh* and *Sinai* in Chicago. However, these Reform all-day schools fared no better than the Sunday schools.

The Reform all-day schools had probably been the brain child of Wise, when in 1855 he opened the doors of Zion College in Cincinnati; a "Jewish university" for the training of rabbis, teachers, scientists, and businessmen, where Jewish and secular subjects were to be taught to Jew and non-Jew alike. The college had a starting enrollment of fourteen students, two of whom were Christians. The All-Day Schools, Wise hoped, would provide Theology candidates for Zion College. But lack of out-

side support brought Wise's grandiose dream to an abrupt end, and his Zion crumbled within the year.

Zion College has been so named, to symbolize the new mount from which Reform would draw knowledge and inspiration.

The idea of a college in which youths could be instructed in English and in the classics and liberal arts, Hebrew language and literature, had first been proposed in the 1830's by Mordecai Manuel Noah. In 1843 he proposed such a plan to Leeser. In 1844, Felsenheld proposed that he would conduct such a school. In 1848 the idea was again broached by Leeser. The Hebrew Education Society of Philadelphia, *Chevras Chinuch Neorim*, was founded, of which Leeser was the founding father and Solomon Carvalho, ever interested in Jewish education, served as a "Manager." The college formally opened in Philadelphia fifteen years later under the name Maimonides College.

Rice had always been aware of the need for more English-speaking rabbis. After he had become conversant in English, he himself had preached once a month in that tongue. Furthermore, he had encouraged Leeser to continue with his translation of the Bible into English, the language of the future generation of American Jews.

With an eye towards English-speaking Orthodox rabbis in America, Rice, in 1857, actively supported the Jews' College of London. Its doors opened two years earlier, on November 11th; its purpose—to graduate English-speaking Orthodox rabbis. That year it was

> Rev. A. Rice who gratefully acknowledged subscriptions for the "Lord Mayor's Commemoration Scholarship," for youths to attend the Jews' College of London for rabbinic training.

Most significant, Rabbi Rice, in 1860, joined by Rabbi Illowy and Reverend Samuel Landsberg, who though not an ordained rabbi was a man of great Talmudic learning, bestowed upon the English speaking Judah Rosewald, a middle-aged businessman, who devoted himself intensively to rabbinic studies, *Semicha*. Thus Rabbi Rice and his colleagues gained the distinction of being the first to award rabbinic ordination in America.

Wise took note of this ordination, and in November of that year, 1860, announced the opening of a College for every branch of Hebrew learning; its goal, ordination of English-speaking rabbis. Fifteen more years would elapse before it became a reality. Its name, Hebrew Union College, reflected Lilienthal's influence, for his educational institute in New York for boys had been named by him, the Hebrew Union School, a take off from the name Union School which he administered at the German congregations before his resignation, where he established his private school, the Hebrew Union School.

The rabbinical student at Wise's Hebrew Union College that attracted the greatest attention, was Ray Frank. A native San Franciscan, of East European ancestry, she claimed to be a descendant of the Vilna Gaon.

As a young lady, while serving as a teacher in Ruby Hill, Nevada, two miles from the fabulous silver mining town of Eureka, she was inspired by the visit of Isaac Mayer Wise, and other leading personalities. The great riches of the region served as a magnet, drawing many dignitaries to the boom-town. Ray took an active interest in the Hebrew Congregation of Eureka, first in Nevada. After six years of teaching she returned to San Francisco. Her literary abilities gained for her the post of correspondent for the press in the Bay area.

In her capacity as a news reporter, she visited Spokane, Washington, arriving there during the High Holy Days. There being no synagogue, she arranged a service at the Opera House attended by Christians and Jews. Her sermons influenced a non-Jew in the audience to donate land for the Jews to build a synagogue.

She never forgot the one she called a "dear old gentleman," Isaac Mayer Wise. To his pleasant surprise, she came to Cincinnati and enrolled at the Hebrew Union College to further her knowledge of Judaism. Soon a group of wealthy Chicagoan Jews offered her a pulpit they would establish should she accept to serve "as their spiritual leader." Ray declined, returning to the coast where the San Francisco *Chronicle* heralded her as "the first woman rabbi in the world."

Dr Jacob Voorsanger of *Emanu-El* objected, claiming that Ray Frank's title of rabbi was a "usurpation of the rabbinical office." Isaac M. Wise concurred, stating that Ray Frank "had not the requisite oratorical capacity and without that, success in the pulpit is not very likely." What disturbed Voorsanger and Wise was that Ray Frank had in common with them not only the pulpit but also non-ordination. But to Reformers, oratory was the qualification that determined an individual's fitness for the ministry. Ray Frank would prove that she was eminently qualified as a preacher.

To prove her competence in the pulpit, the "girl rabbi" as she was popularly called, embarked on a lecture tour, preaching and creating a sensation as a "curio" wherever she appeared.

Proclaimed a rabbi by congregations and the press, Ray Frank conducted High Holy Day services at Congregation *Emanu-El* in Victoria, British Columbia, Passover services in Stockton, California, *Chanukah* at San Francisco's orthodox congregation *Nevah Zedek* [Righteous Dwelling] addressed a session of the Pacific Theological Seminary of San Francisco. In Los Angeles she lectured at the Unitarian Church, introduced by Rabbi Abraham Blum, and at Chautauqua in Portland, Oregon, in-

troduced by no lesser a personage than Joaquin Miller, poet laureate of California.

Ray Frank, hailed as a Deborah-Rabbi-Priestess, Wise, while maintaining that she was not a rabbi, not having been ordained, nonetheless granted: "There is no civil or canon law which forbids anybody preaching or teaching in a synagoue."

The fame of the "Woman Rabbi of the West" spread far and wide. *The Jewish Chronicle* of Mobile, Alabama, mused:

> There are quite a number of women occupying pulpits in the Christian church today, particularly in the Unitarian and Universalist branches thereof, but a woman in the Jewish pulpit is a novelty.

Ray Frank married at age forty. One wondered what kind of a role model would a pregnant Rabbi Ray present, while officiating before a Bar Mitzvah, or better yet, while solemnizing the marriage of a groom and his pregnant bride. Others, at a loss how to address her husband, pondered: Since the spouse of a rabbi is a "rebbetzin," should he be so addressed? For these and a host of other perplexing queries arising from a historical first, a female rabbinatte, there could be but one response: TYKV [acronym: *Tishbei Yetaretz Kushyos V'abayos:* Elijah will answer questions and prayers].

Chapter 43
First Synagogue Rededicated

BALTIMORIAN JEWRY had come of age. In 1860, the Jewish community numbered an estimated eight-or-nine thousand and the roster of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation showed 148 heads of families. Fifteen years earlier, when its *Lloyd Street Schul* had been built there were only about eight-or-nine hundred Jews in the city and less than 75 heads of families on the congregational roster.

As early as 1851, when Leeser visited the *Lloyd Street Schul*, he expressed its need for larger quarters:

> On the Sabbath the synagogue was filled almost to its full capacity, and we should judge that the space was not large enough for all those who belong to the congregation; hence we should not be surprised that before many years a new synagogue will have to be erected to accommodate the constantly increasing number of Israelites in the flourishing city of Baltimore.

To accommodate its increased membership, the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, largest in the city, planned to enlarge its building by extending the eastern end thirty feet; this would add to its 280-person seating capacity also allow space for a middle pulpit. In the basement Passover bake ovens beckoned annually for preparation of the unleavened.

While increasing the synagogue in its length acted to unify the congregation, the lengthening of the worship by recitation of the *piyyutim* tended to divide congregation, even as it had fifteen years earlier when the synagogue was built.

The recitation of these liturgical poetical compositions that were added to the prayers on festivals created controversy before Passover of 1860 as it had been before Passover of 1845, prior to the first dedication of the *Lloyd Street Schul*. Rice then told the members that it was absurd to complain about the non-recitation of a non-obligatory poetical composition while violating the Sabbath by engaging in business on that holy day of rest.

Israel Joseph Benjamin, the world traveler, during his visit to Baltimore in 1860, as an impartial observer, noted the stubborn opposition to the discontinuation of *piyyutim*.

Passover nearing, officers of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation requested their rabbi, Dr. Illowy, to settle the controversy. He recommended their discontinuation, and his written decision, addressed "To the President & Trustees of L[l]oyd Str[eet] Congregation" dated May 30, 1860, was copied into the congregational minutes of June 3rd. The secretary's poor command of the English language is evidenced in his almost incomprehensible, indecipherable, transcription of Illowy's words:

Illowy, in his decision, distinguished between *piyyutim*: those inserted in the benedictions before the *Shema* "Hear, O. Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One" and those inserted in the benedictions following the *Shema*. Though not obligatory, those *piyyutim* recited before the *Shema*, referred to as *Yotzer* and *Ahabah*, should be recited wherever it had been adopted, as at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. They can be discontinued only if a majority of the congregation agree that they are no longer to be recited. As for those *piyyutim* inserted in the benedictions following the *Shema*, called *Zulas* and *Ge'ullah*, their recitation should be discontinued, as according to most casuists, they interpose an interruption between obligated prayers.

Wise, upon receiving word that the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation had decided to discontinue *piyyutim* for the spring and autumnal festivals, reported that the sun was beginning to shine on the *Lloyd Street Schul*. An officer responded that Wise had falsely reported that the congregation had voted to discontinue the recitation of all *piyyutim*. The

fact is, he stated, that the congregation had decided to discontinue only recitation of that *yotzer* which appears " . . . before *Tefilah* [the Silent Prayer], because some authorities consider it a *Hefsek* [an interruption]."

Furthermore, continued the retort, Wise had also falsely stated that "the honorable Mr. R[ice]" was groaning as a result of this decision, in his statement as follows:

> *Also thou my Brutus*! Mr. R.[ice] exclaimed, and sighed over the fall of Zion. Arrest it, if you can, this spirit of progress which powerfully seizes upon all institutions and triumphantly unfurls its glorious banner upon all heights of civilized nations.

Illowy retorted: "This report is false, because I consulted him before we decided to eliminate the *yotzer* between *Geullah* and *Tefilah*."

Wise was actually discomfited by the discontinuation of certain *piyyutim* at the Orthodox Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, for he felt that this step might lessen any disorder that was brewing, and weaken the Reform element in its attempt to transform that synagogue into a temple. Wise seized upon all reports of synagogal disorders and used them to ridicule Orthodox worship.

Bernhard Illowy, rabbi of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, invited his colleague, Rabbi Rice, to deliver the dedicatory address of the enlarged and restored *Lloyd Street Schul*. The dedication was set for Friday evening, September 14, 1860, the Sabbath preceding the Hebrew New Year.

Rice stood once again on the pulpit he had occupied throughout the decade of the 1840s, and from which his successor, Henry Hochheimer, a decade earlier, would not grant him permission to present a refutation of Wise's preachment of Reform from its pulpit.

The overflowingly crowded assembly included students of the parochial school Rice had founded at the congregation, old and new friends devoted to him, invited guests and dignitaries.

Rice opened his emotion-packed address:

> I am compared to an old father who after many years of separation from his children, there suddenly presented itself an opportunity to see his children for a limited time . . . .

Following this introduction, he exhorted the congregation to be loyal to the tenets of Orthodoxy and the faith of their fathers, and he spoke of the central theme of Judaism:

> "*Shema Yisrael*," Understand well, you Israelite; "*Hashem Elohanu*," that the Eternal who is our God, "*Hashem Ehad*," is the only true God!

This formula contains the foundation of Judaism. It is a verse which every Jew, whether Orthodox or Reform, always bears on his lips, in sorrow as in joy, in hope or in despondency; a verse with which life commences and with which life terminates. Its formula is now accepted by the entire civilized world which believes in a Supreme Being and by those who believe that it is enough if only this faith is kept in their heart.

We Jews do not have a faith only; we have a Law as well. These laws did not originate in the bosom of mortal man, for they are the living words of God communicated to Israel. Like God, they are true; like God, they are eternal; and like Him, the *Torah* is unchangeable. The *Torah* is perfect, even as her Creator is perfect, and not subject to change.

Our *Torah* is not content with an inner faith alone; it is intended to regulate the entire man, his requirements with his enjoyments, sensual desires and inclinations. This is precisely the significance of the *Torah*'s command that we are to serve Him in all the outward acts of life, while devoting our inward thoughts to Him.

Rice then took issue with the Reformers, who rejected the Law governing the faithful of Israel:

It is untrue when some allege, because they do not understand the reason and purpose of the divine commandments, that they are onerous and to be discarded. The actual reason that the Law is violated is because these individuals are governed by their sensuality and they therefore invent all imaginable excuses to renounce whatever may place a bridle on their passions and limit their desires.

Did ever a man on his sickbed first desire to investigate in what manner the physician's medicine could restore him to health? And thou, man, wouldst first prove the efficacy of the remedies prescribed by thy God! Is it not enough for thee when He says: "If thou wilt fully hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and do what is right in His eyes, and listen to His commandments and observe all His statutes, all the diseases which I laid on Egypt will I not lay on thee, for I am the Lord, Thy physician" [*Exodus* XV:26].

It is not without reason that our fathers at Sinai did first pronounce the word *na-aseh* "we will do" and only then did they utter *nishma* "we will understand"; for the more we exercise the precepts with zeal and sincerity, the more shall we become convinced of their divine origin. First, practice thyself in obeying the Law honestly and truly; then will the understanding thereof surely follow. Truth always bears with her the proofs of her identity.

Rice urged practice of the Law as taking precedence over understanding the underlying reasons:

> Brothers and Sisters! Learn the full import of our Jewish watchword: "Our God is One" . . . .
>
> What is secret belongs to the Lord our God . . . . The true Israelite desires not to lift the veil of the future; this he leaves to the providence of God; but the revelation which the Law has imparted becomes his concern which he must guard for himself and his descendants by fulfilling all the words of the Law . . . .

Contrary to the Christian position that faith is more important than law or works, Rice established law and faith as parallel principles, both being of divine origin and to be maintained equally with full devotion, Rice then turned to that central principle, the Sabbath, the observance of which leads the individual to the awarenes of the Creator:

> By means of the Sabbath you must realize that the Lord our God, is thy God, the One who is the sole and only Creator. If you entrust to Him on the Sabbath, your household, your business, your strength, your toil, your property, your means of support, you will have shown that "you fear the Lord your God," and that "you serve Him and cleave to Him!"
>
> If such is your course, then build to Him, the Only One, a House for worshipping Him therein. But if you profane the Sabbath, then your house of God is only a blasphemy, your prayer a deception, your worship an uttered falsehood.
>
> The Sabbath testifies that the Lord our God is the One who caused us to hear at Mount Sinai the command: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The Sabbath day has been given to us, to renounce everything; property and possessions, gain and enjoyment, only to fulfill the commandments of our God . . . .
>
> If you, then wish to bear the name "Orthodox," you must prove by word and deed, that you earnestly seek to carry out the dictates of the *Torah*.

Rice could attack Reform, but he could also chastize the Orthodox for desecrating the Sabbath, which was only too well known to him:

> If I, however, speak of genuine Orthodoxy, you, my friends, have no right to think that I am referring to you, for you care only for the name, but in your practices you live as heedlessly as those who profess Reform. If Orthodoxy had had only such defenders as we find in these times, Orthodoxy would have, as the Reformers contend, long since been entombed.

Following this admonition, Rice, who dedicated his life to entrenching Orthodoxy in America, despite its decline, voiced a note of optimism for the survival of Orthodoxy. He gave a scathing denunciation of Re-

form, in which he decried its pronouncement that Orthodoxy was dead and only awaited burial. He would provide the means to make its entombment not only premature, but its destiny immortal.

> But the fact is otherwise, in truth, Orthodoxy lives on in the hearts of its adherents; it imparts to them now, as formerly, courage and strength. True Orthodoxy enters, even at this day, into the ranks, ready for the contest—when life with its trials, attraction with its enticements, the passions with their temptations, assail the sons of Israel.
>
> Orthodoxy is today the sole comfort, the only prop which can keep the Israelite erect, and conduct him safely even beyond the power of the grave. It is written with blood on every page of the world's history—how thousands of men and women, youths and maidens, nay, tender children, gladly sacrificed their lives for their faith, and with their last breath uttered the declaration of faith. I ask you, were these pious ones, Reformers? Can Reform exhibit such victims?
>
> No! Orthodoxy is indeed, not dead; it lives, this venerable old mother. Orthodoxy does not die, for its form and essence both emanate from the divine source. But Reform, which seeks to declare all the precepts null and void, renders a man dead, as we are told by our wise men: "When a man is dead, he is freed from observance of the commandments." We may well invert this dictum to teach us that "A man who frees himself from the observance of the commandments is dead."

Reformers had talked a great deal about the tarnish, dust, and mustiness of the ancient, meaningless ceremonies that they felt obstructed the real beauty of Judaism. They cried out for the removal of this "useless dust," and alleged that the "eternal and essential in our religion [lay] buried beneath a dead weight of ceremonies which [had] lost all their meaning." Men like Rice and his co-worker Leeser, gave lie to the assertion.

Rice vehemently denounced this Reform viewpoint, declaring that Judaism in its essence consisted of both belief and Law, which emanated equally from a divine source:

> The entire civilized world now believes in a higher Heavenly Being, and they think that it is sufficient to carry this belief in their hearts. However, this belief alone is not our belief, not our concept of God. In addition to our belief in God as a higher Heavenly Being, as the Creator, we understand by our God, the Lawgiver of Israel, the One who revealed Himself to our fathers upon Mount Sinai, with the proclamation:

"I am thy God"; to whom we must devote our entire life, in the observance of His commandments, statutes, and ordinances. We, Jews, do not have a faith only; we have laws which were not enacted by mortals, but are the word of God; and even as God is eternal and unchangeable, so are His laws.

Our *Torah* is not content with our having an inner belief alone, but desires the entire being. It is intended to regulate the entire man, with his sensual desires and inclinations, his enjoyments and all his needs. The *Torah* requires every Jew to regulate his outer life, even as his inner beliefs. The injunction to serve God is therefore emphasized in the *Torah*, in a threefold manner: "with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

In the acceptance or rejection of this principle is the parting of the ways between Orthodoxy and Reform . . . .

Like Rice, his admirer, Leeser, repudiated the Reform conception of Judaism as merely a faith with ten commandments, not 613 *mitzvos*.

Ours is not a system of faith merely; it is far more, it is a system of actions which is to regulate our conduct as individuals, as members of the community, as children of the everlasting Father!

Thus Rice explained to the congregation that in their differentiation between the form and essence of Judaism, Reformers broke with the ancient tradition. The very basis of Orthodoxy, he explained, holds the belief in the immutability of the word of the *Torah* and its divine origin. These fundamental beliefs were rejected by the Reformers, who felt the Decalogue alone to be of divine origin. They therefore saw no difficulty in denying the immutability and inerrancy of the *Torah*.

Rice's masterful and powerful rededication address, which was published in its entirety in English translation in the Anglo-Jewish press, reached Jewish communities throughout the United States from coast to coast. It was a *chizuk amunah* [strengthening of faith], as a rally for the *yehudim* who were denigrated by the Reformers.

After Rice concluded his address, Rabbi Illowy, minister of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, spoke of the vitality and vibrancy of Orthodoxy. Like Rice, he expounded the traditional religious teachings which his mentor Rice expounded:

We *Yehudim* have not only a belief, we have laws in addition and these laws have their origin not in the bosom of a mortal man, but they are the living word of God communicated to Israel.

His use of the word *yehudim* suggests he was talking about Jewish masses, not self-proclaimed upper classes, such as the German Reformers.

Illowy's address too, was given widespread publicity in the press, much to the displeasure of Wise, who complained:

> Sermons were preached on this occasion by Rev. Dr. Illowy and Mr. Reis, of course, in opposition to Reform. Why do we in our sermons never mention the Orthodox party; why can they not preach without giving us a hit? The pulpit is not for polemics; we wish the Orthodox preacher to remember this . . . .

Wise conveniently forgot his attacks *ad hominum* and presumably hoped that his readers would do the same. Actually, Wise himself initiated polemical sermons in 1850, when accorded the hospitality of various Orthodox synagogues, he preached on their pulpits, by advocating his Reform views. The sermons of preachers since that year contrasted sharply with those of earlier American preachers. During the first half of the nineteenth century, sermons had always been sentimental, philosophical, or apologetic. After 1855, polemic was often resorted to in the sermons of Wise and Max Lilienthal, Samuel Adler, Samuel Deutsch, Samuel Hirsch, and other Reformers, who waged incessant warfare on Orthodoxy from the pulpit and the press in the name of Jewry committed to assimilation.

As a result of the antagonisms and sensitivities created by the rift between the two factions of Judaism, the mere appearance of an Orthodox preacher in a Reform pulpit constituted sufficient doubt to disqualify him from preaching in some traditional pulpits. Thus in 1851, when the Orthodox Rabbi Henry A. Henry spoke at *Emanu-El*, New York, as a guest lecturer, he was refused permission to preach the following Sabbath at the Orthodox *Shaaray Tefila Wooster Street Schul*; the reason given was that when he had preached in "the temple," he had heard the organ and, of course, had "unfitted himself by this act from ever preaching again in an *Orthodox* congregation." The division was broadening; each side had its leader: Wise for the deviationists, Rice, in part, for the traditionalists.

By 1853 Leeser attributed the breakdown of Orthodoxy and the transformation of synagogues to Reform temples to the fact that the Orthodox permitted Reformers to preach in their pulpits:

> It is with deep regret, that we have seen of late, in several cities, men invited to preach who had no claim to be listened to by old-fashioned Jews, in Synagogues professedly governed by ancient rules and usages.

Again in 1860, as more Orthodox congregations turned to Reform, Leeser alerted Jewry:

> We know not a single city, where at the first there were men enough in any one community to form a Reform Synagogue, of the kind now existing, by their own unaided means. But thanks to the undecided, and timid, and vacillating, that the mischief which they themselves deplore has been rooted in New York and Albany, Cincinnati, Baltimore, and elsewhere; they could not resist in the beginning; they could not refuse to let Dr. So and Mr. That preach in their Synagogue; they could not, for peace's sake, object to this or that little Reform.

Leeser particularly alluded to Wise's lecture tour and to other Reformers who preached from Orthodox pulpits. Their arguments were convincingly presented and their oratory proved effective to the nominally Orthodox. Those who were ignorant of Jewish beliefs and practices and lacked sufficient strength and capable Orthodox leadership, fell prey to those moderates, who claimed to be historical Jews, the true Orthodox, and thereby were ensnared by the Reformers, who used the titles rabbi and doctor (of philosophy) with superficial or distorted knowledge of Talmud or university.

Wise, unable to gain entry once more at the *Lloyd Street Schul*, became disturbed at the strengthening of Orthodoxy in the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. He vindictively and sarcastically accused Illowy of not having composed his dedication sermon or any of his other sermons, but of plagiarizing those of the Reformers:

> The Lloyd Street Congregation passed a resolution that their minister should preach only every other Sabbath, and then no longer than half-an-hour, as the gentleman is sick from over-exertion. Having labored so hard in Americanizing [Salomon] Plessner's Speech and improving [Leopold] Stein's and [Ludwig] Philippson's Orations, his health declines, and he needs some rest, which the congregation generously granted him. The conduct of the congregation deserves particular laudation.

The Board of Directors of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation quickly replied to Wise:

> *Resolved*, That we, the members of the Board of Managers of this congregation, feel called upon to denounce the same as a malicious slander on our worthy minister and ourselves, false in fact and ungraceful in detail, such as could only have been conceived in a spirit of detraction and misrepresentation . . . .

Wise later admitted that it was primarily the American Reform preachers who turned to the sermons of such early European Reform

preachers as Leopold Stein, Ludwig Philippson, [David Woolf] Marks of London, [?] Isaacs of Liverpool, [?] Mayer, and [Isaac Noah] Mannheimer for preparation of their own sermons. Actually, any rabbi who uses the *Midrash* [homiletical commentary on scripture], extracts the sermons of others.

Intransigent Wise did not retract his *l'shon hara* [slanderous accusation] of Illowy, but suggested in a hyperbolic and satirical style that Illowy's greatness has not been properly recognized and that he should be elected Chief Rabbi:

> Dr. Illowy is very popular here; every body speaks about him, his piety, and his literary labors. I expect he will soon be chosen chief rabbi of Baltimore, and general superintendent of all Hebrew schools here. The letters he occasionally publishes vie in popularity with those of Bayard Taylor, and his literary attainments are fully appreciated by the great and good. He is very pious, very much so, indeed, more than he used to be. He is a great man, too great almost for Baltimore; he must go to a larger city, where his gigantic talents will be better appreciated. The congregation, feeling the greatness of the man, and being filled with awe and reverency, will not take the responsibility of a re-election upon themselves, as the other time some forty men did. I propose that the congregations of the United States unite and elect Rev. Dr. Bernhard Illowy, chief or grand rabbi of all mankind, as he is the great guardian of Orthodoxy and so forth. O, sinful world that sees not its greatest man!

Isaac Mayer Wise was possessed with the fear of Orthodox Jewry uniting to elect a Chief Rabbi who would then lead the battle against Reform. His fears were not without foundation, for there were Orthodox leaders who continued to propose Rabbi Rice's election as Chief Rabbi of the United States, a post which was denied to others, but he acted as if he were the incumbent!

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1851ב

1851-1852 *Almanac*, a 34-page booklet: First Jewish publication in California, by Reverend Alexander Iser, first Jewish minister in California. Iser's *Almanac* prevented a recurrence of the previous year when one congregation had to observe a two day *Yom Kipur* due to a miscalculation.

(Courtesy Magnus Museum, Oakland, California)

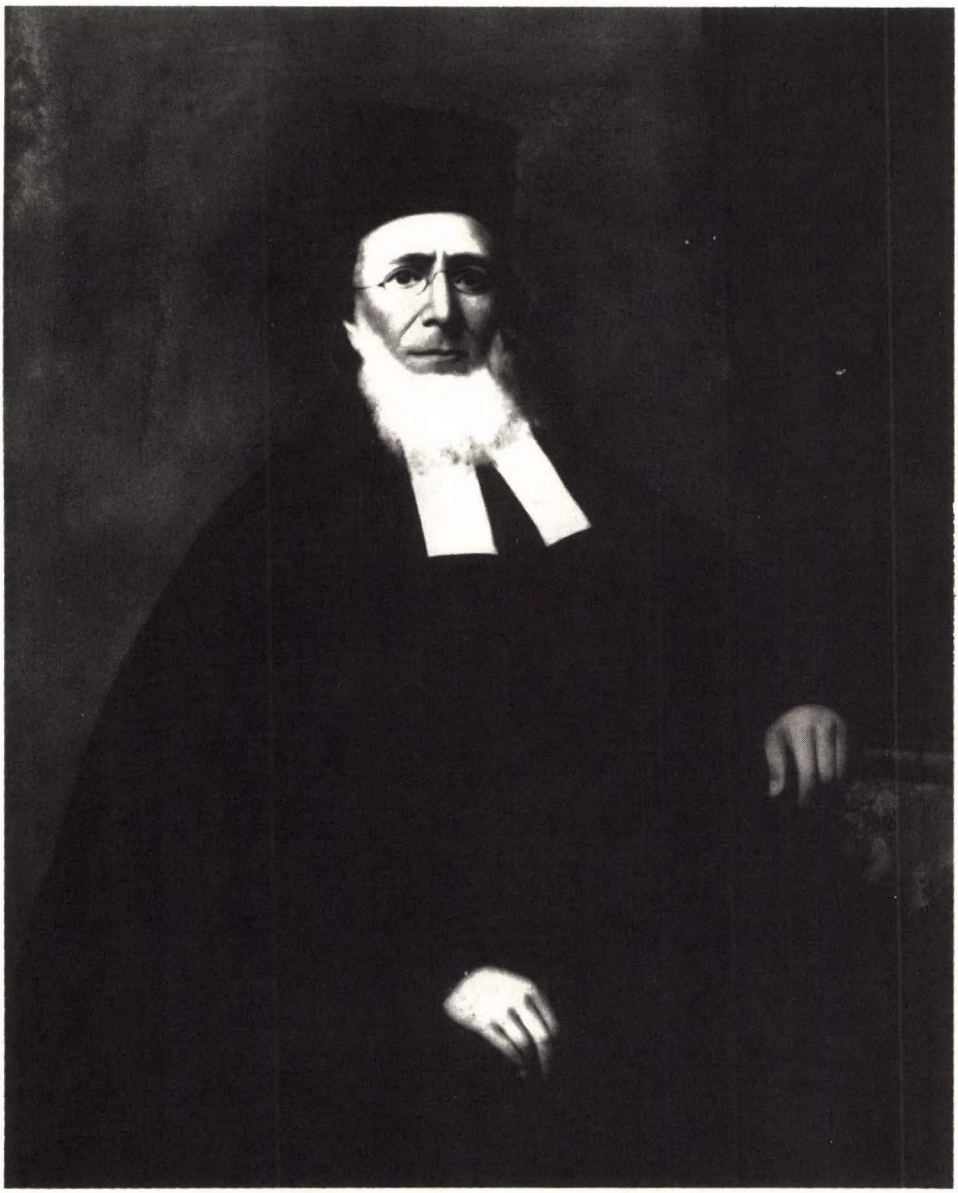
BOOK XI

OFFENDERS AND DEFENDERS OF ORTHODOXY



Native of Falticeni, Moldavia in the Ottoman Empire, globetrotter Israel Joseph Benjamin (Benjamin II), a staunch Orthodox Jew, spent a year in visiting Jewish communities in the cities and mining towns and camps of California in 1860-1861. Benjamin II established the Hebrew Benevolent Society, *Jeshuath Israel* at Folsom, and a "Charitable Society" at Mokelumne Hill—both in the Southern Mines of the Mother Lode. Frontispiece, *Reise den Ostlichen Staaten der Union und San Francisco*, Hanover, 1862.

(Library of the Author)



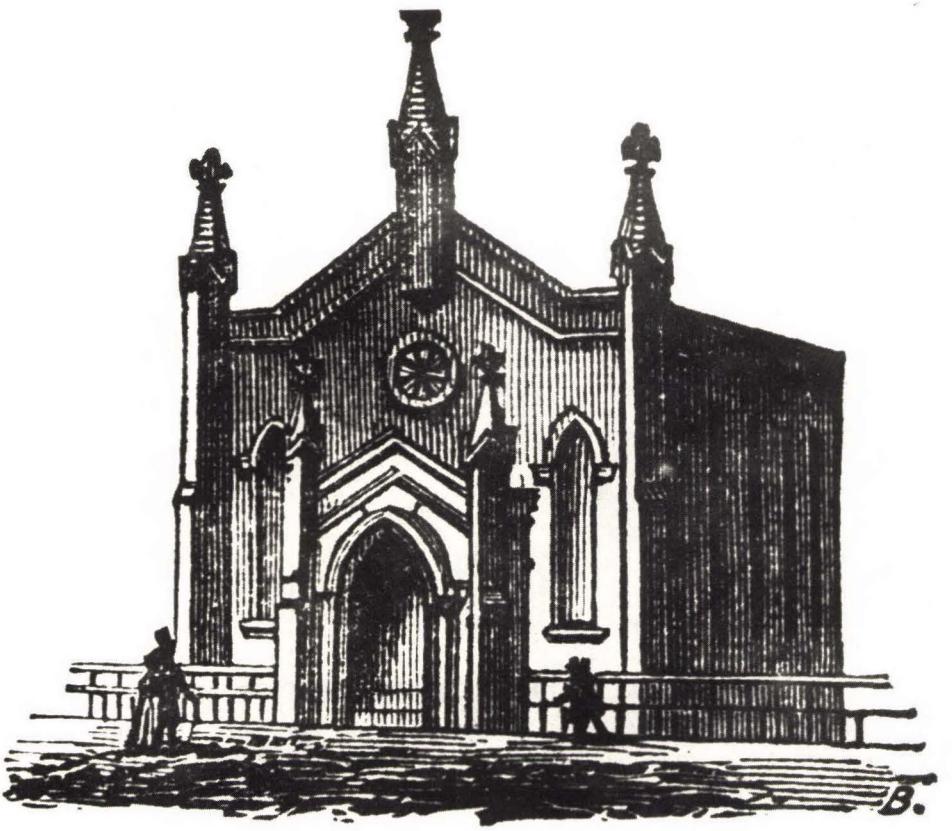
Rabbi Henry Abraham Henry, first Orthodox Rabbi in California, minister of *Sherith Israel*, San Francisco, 1857-1871.

(Courtesy Magnus Museum, Oakland)



Polish-rite *Sherith Israel*, first congregation to hold worship in San Francisco, erected August, 1854.

(*Chronicles of Emanu-El* by Jacob Voorsanger)



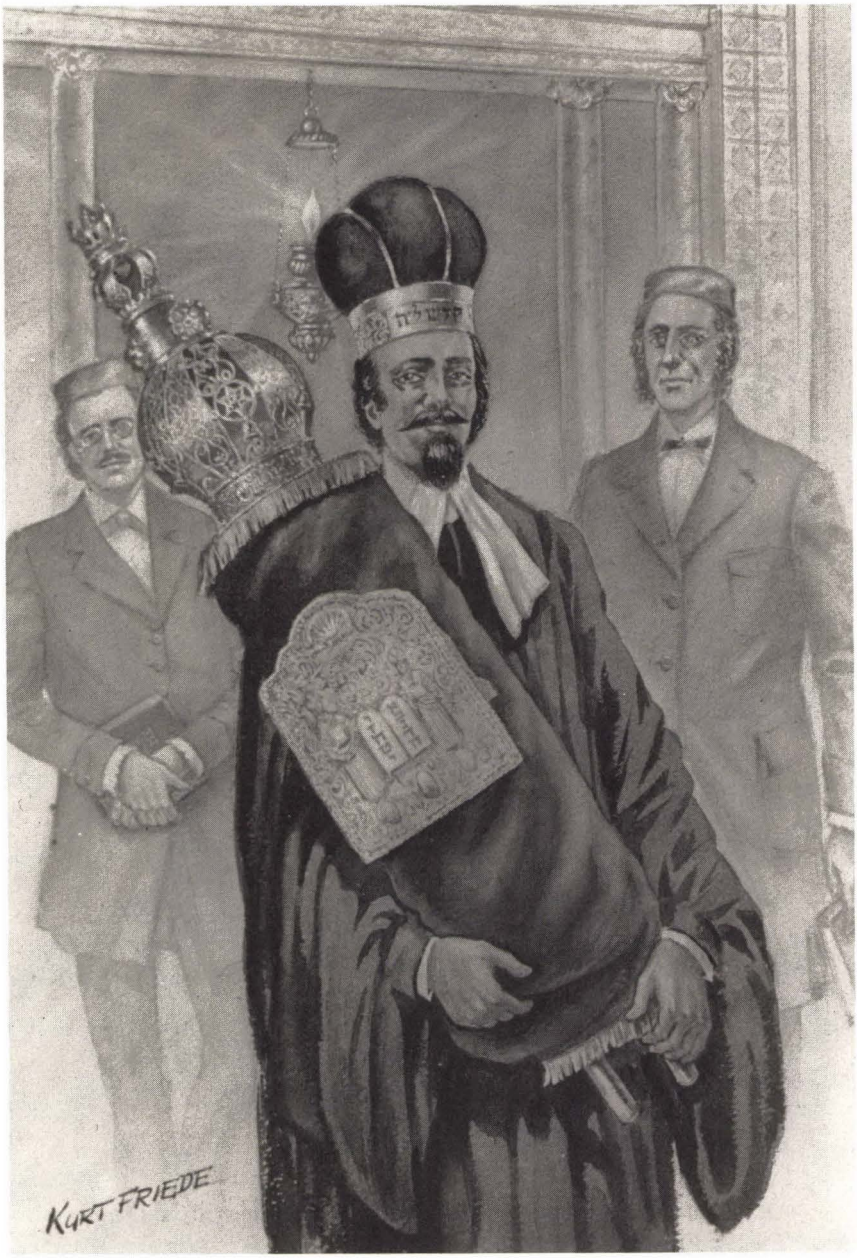
German-rite *Emanu-El*, first congregation to incorporate in San Francisco, erected August, 1854.

(*Chronicles of Emanu-El* by Jacob Voorsanger)



Dr. Julius Eckman, first Reform "rabbi" ministered in California, at *Emanu-El*, 1855-1856.

(Chronicles of Emanu-El by Jacob Voorsanger)



Hermann Milton Bien, minister *Emanu-El*, San Francisco, 1856-1857, topped with replicated mitre of ancient High Priest; flanked on his left by *Emanu-El* president, Henry Seligman, and to his right, Reader Daniel Levy Esq. He titled himself, "High Priest."

(Historic Illustration by Artist Kurt Friede)



Dr. Elkan Kohn, successor to Dr. Hermann Milton Bien, ministered at Temple *Emanu-El*, 1860-1886.

(Author's Private Collection)



When his shots misfired, "Pistol Packin' Rabbi" Moses May was pelted by *Beth Israel* president, Abraham Waldman, in front of the Esmond Hotel where U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes was house guest.

(Historic Illustration by Artist Kurt Friede)



Beth Israel, Portland, Oregon, first synagogue in northwestern United States, erected 1861. Conflict over proposed change to Reform Prayer Book led to violent confrontation between "rabbi" and president.
(Publications of Western States Jewish History)



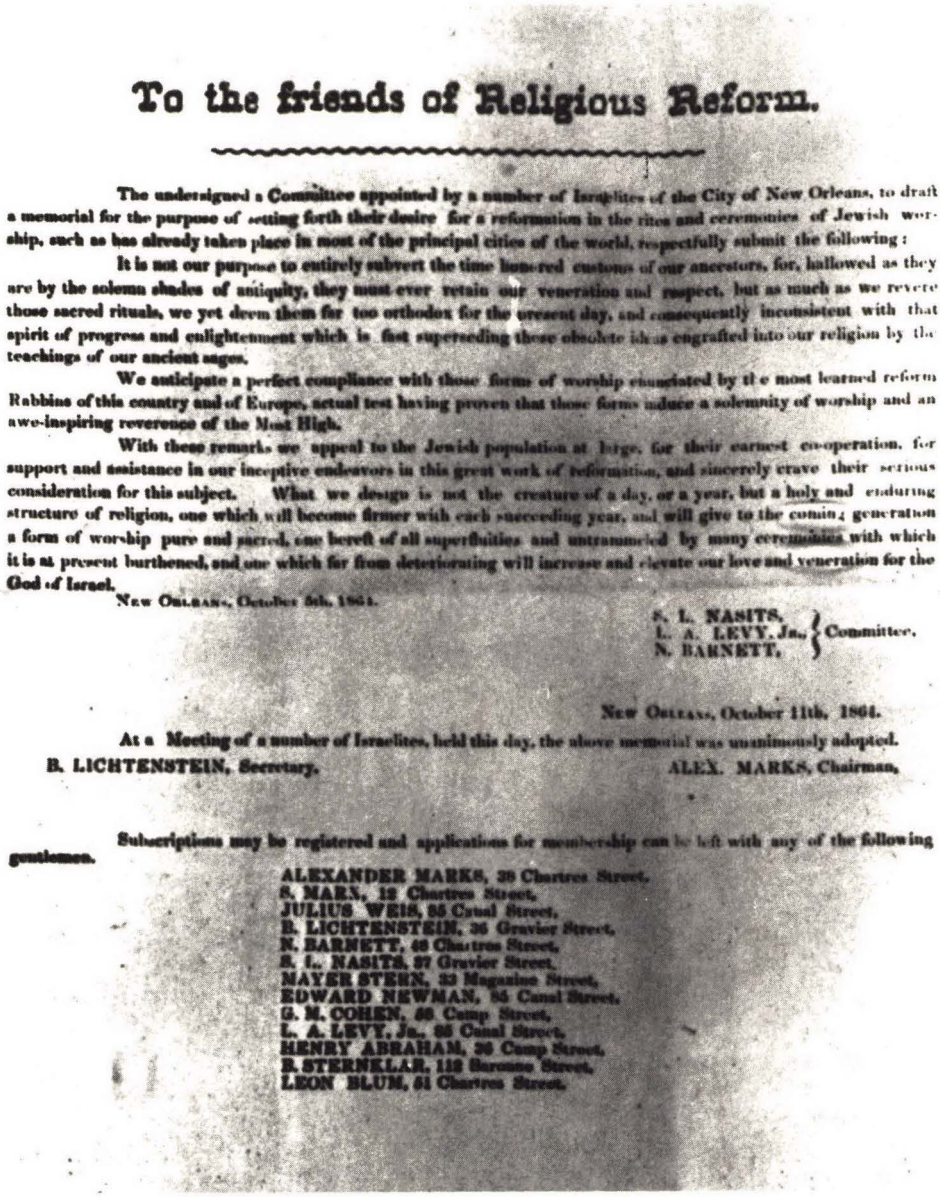
Har Sinai, Lexington Street, Baltimore, a former church building, dedicated 1873; Dr. Jesaias Mayer, "rabbi," 1874-1877.

(*Legacy of a Liberal* by Abraham Shusterman)



Jesaias Mayer, apostle of Reform, "Apostate Rabbi," hosted "Second Cleveland Conference" in 1870.

(Courtesy American Jewish Archives)



To the friends of Religious Reform.

The undersigned a Committee appointed by a number of Israelites of the City of New Orleans, to draft a memorial for the purpose of setting forth their desire for a reformation in the rites and ceremonies of Jewish worship, such as has already taken place in most of the principal cities of the world, respectfully submit the following:

It is not our purpose to entirely subvert the time honored customs of our ancestors, for, hallowed as they are by the solemn shades of antiquity, they must ever retain our veneration and respect, but as much as we revere those sacred rituals, we yet deem them far too orthodox for the present day, and consequently inconsistent with that spirit of progress and enlightenment which is fast superseding those obsolete ideas engrafted into our religion by the teachings of our ancient sages.

We anticipate a perfect compliance with those forms of worship enunciated by the most learned reform Rabbins of this country and of Europe, actual test having proven that those forms induce a solemnity of worship and an awe-inspiring reverence of the Most High.

With these remarks we appeal to the Jewish population at large, for their earnest co-operation, for support and assistance in our inceptive endeavors in this great work of reformation, and sincerely crave their serious consideration for this subject. What we design is not the creature of a day, or a year, but a holy and enduring structure of religion, one which will become firmer with each succeeding year, and will give to the coming generation a form of worship pure and sacred, one bereft of all superfluities and untrammeled by many ceremonies with which it is at present burthened, and one which far from deteriorating will increase and elevate our love and veneration for the God of Israel.

New Orleans, October 8th, 1864.

S. L. NASITS,
L. A. LEVY, Jr., } Committee.
N. BARNETT,

New Orleans, October 11th, 1864.

At a Meeting of a number of Israelites, held this day, the above memorial was unanimously adopted.

B. LICHTENSTEIN, Secretary. ALEX. MARKS, Chairman.

Subscriptions may be registered and applications for membership can be left with any of the following gentlemen.

ALEXANDER MARKS, 39 Chartres Street.
S. MARX, 12 Chartres Street,
JULIUS WEIS, 85 Canal Street,
B. LICHTENSTEIN, 36 Gravier Street,
N. BARNETT, 40 Chartres Street,
S. L. NASITS, 97 Gravier Street,
MAYER STERN, 33 Magazine Street,
EDWARD NEWMAN, 85 Canal Street,
G. M. COHEN, 60 Camp Street,
L. A. LEVY, Jr., 98 Canal Street,
HENRY ABRAHAM, 36 Camp Street,
B. STERNKLAR, 118 Baronne Street,
LEON BLUM, 61 Chartres Street.

In Louisiana, Call to form Reform Congregation.

(Temple Sinai, The First 100 Years)

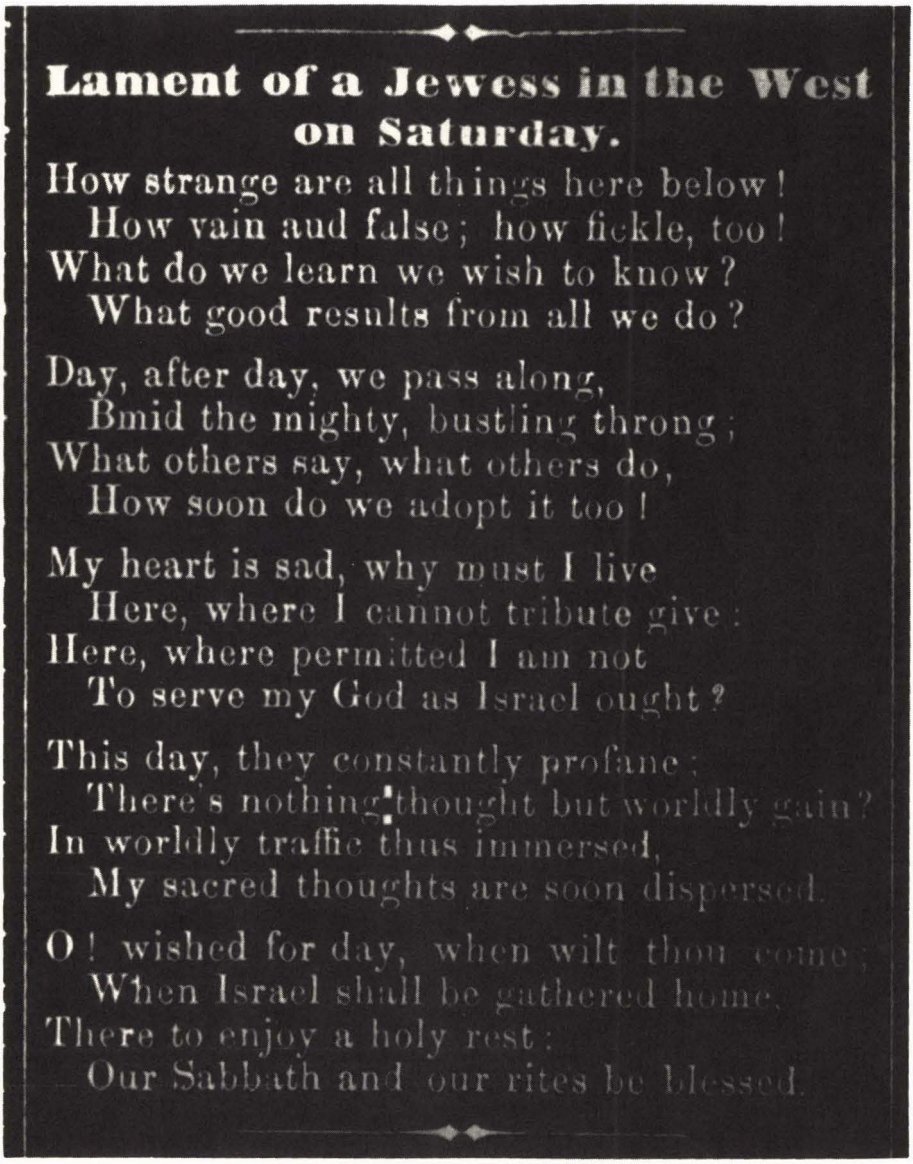


In Mississippi, Henry Cohen, titled "Messenger of the Lord"—from the Aramaic "*Shluchei d'Rachamono*," called for Reform.

(Messenger of the Lord by A. Stanley Dreyfus)



"Priestess" Ray Frank, first woman "rabbi." In her sermon entitled *The Sounding of the Shofar*, she boasted: "I lived among trappers and Indians, but always as a Jew. Did I need grander temples to worship in? . . . In the murmurs of the pines I hear the psalms of David, the fragrance of the incense is as of old, the winds speak to me in His voice." *(Courtesy Western States Historical Society and American Jewish Historical Society)*



Lament of a Jewess in the West on Saturday.

How strange are all things here below!
How vain and false; how fickle, too!
What do we learn we wish to know?
What good results from all we do?

Day, after day, we pass along,
Bmid the mighty, bustling throng;
What others say, what others do,
How soon do we adopt it too!

My heart is sad, why must I live
Here, where I cannot tribute give:
Here, where permitted I am not
To serve my God as Israel ought?

This day, they constantly profane;
There's nothing thought but worldly gain?
In worldly traffic thus immersed,
My sacred thoughts are soon dispersed.

O! wished for day, when wilt thou come;
When Israel shall be gathered home.
There to enjoy a holy rest:
Our Sabbath and our rites be blessed.

Poetic "Lament of a Jewess in the West on Saturday." Author unknown.

(The Israelite, Vol II, No. 36, March, 1856)



Jews' College, Finsbury Square, London, 1855—An Orthodox Theological College.

(*History of Jews' College* by Reverend Isidore Harris)



Hebrew Union College, 1873.
(We Lived There Too by Kenneth Libo and Irving Howe)



Rabbi Dr. Israel Hildesheimer, established Orthodox Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin.

(The Jewish Encyclopedia)

Chapter 44
Chief Rabbi of the United States

AT THE outbreak of the Civil War Rabbi Henry A. Henry of *Sherith Israel*, San Francisco, asked of Reverend Isaac Leeser of *Beth-El-Emeth*, Philadelphia, "We hear nothing in this region of Wise and Lilienthal—I suppose you do—how goes the war [between rabbinic traditionalists and liberals]?"

While the leaders of Orthodoxy and Reform in Baltimore and elsewhere engaged in open warfare, the battle between northern abolitionists and southerners defending slavery resounded nearby Baltimore, in the nation's capital, and reverberated throughout the land.

A National Fast Day for the Union was set for January 4, 1861. How many fasted in Baltimore is questionable, for this city was the scene of an attack on the Massachusetts regiment on its march to Washington, D. C. The Union arrested the secessionist ringleaders of the riot and declared martial law to safeguard the passage of Union troops through to the nation's Capital. Yet the opposition continued. The most vocal sentiment in this community was pro-Southern; of these none more pronounced than Rabbi Illowy.

Rabbi Bernhard Illowy declared himself openly in sympathy with the secessionists:

> Who can blame our brethren of the South for their being inclined to secede from a society . . . whose union is kept together . . . by . . . heavy iron ties of violence and arbitrary force? Who can blame our brethren of the South for seceding from a society whose government cannot or will not protect the property, rights and privileges of a great portion of the Union . . . ?

Illowy substantiated his views from Scriptures:

> Why did not Moses, who, as it is to be seen from his code, was not in favor of slavery, command the judges in Israel to . . . take forcibly away a slave from a master? . . . Why did Abraham, Ezra, etc., not free slaves? . . . All these are irrefutable proofs that we have no right to exercise violence against . . . institutions even if religious feelings and philanthropic sentiments bid us disapprove of them. It proves, furthermore, that the authors of the many dangers, which threaten our country with ruin and devastation, are not what they pretend to be, the agents of Religion and Philanthropy . . . .

Following the secession of southern states from the Union, Abraham Kohn, City Clerk of Chicago, an ardent Republican, took his quill in hand. Like a Torah scribe with his feather-pen in hand, he carefully lettered upon the white stripes of a silk flag of thirty-four stars, the Hebrew verses four through nine from the first chapter in Joshua; its key message—"Be strong and of good courage."

Together with Abraham Jonas of Quincy, Abraham Kohn presented to Abrahan Lincoln that biblical flag on February 11, 1861, as the newly-elect president set forth for the nation's capitol, from the train depot in Springfield, Illinois.

Speaking to a cheering audience from the rear platform of the train, Lincoln parted with these words:

> Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail.

President Lincoln placed the biblical in his Executive Mansion, and sent an official letter of acknowledgment to Kohn through the Honorable Jonathan Young Scammon, a member of the bar in Hyde Park, a Chicago suburb.

Its inspiration was long lasting. Half-a-century passed when Ohio's governor, William McKinley, alluded to the flag in the course of a speech he delivered at Ottawa, Kansas:

> . . . That commandment, thus assured, Mr. Lincoln journeyed to the Capital, where he took an oath to save the Union. And the Lord our God was with him, until every obligation of oath and duty was sacredly kept and honored. Not any man was able to stand before him. Liberty was the more firmly enthroned, the Union was saved, and the flag which he carried floated in triumph and glory from every flagstaff of the Republic.

On March 4, 1861, Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as president of the Union he called "this almost promised land." But the country was not united, for six of the thirty-four states had seceded from the Union. The uncertainty posed by the crisis caused business to slump throughout the country. That month, the treasurer of *Oheb Shalom* in Baltimore complained that there was only eighty dollars in the treasury.

Civil War erupted on April 12. Trade between the North and South came to a halt, discontinued between the neighboring cities of Baltimore

and Richmond, the states separated by armies facing each other at the Mason-Dixon line. Many stores in Baltimore closed. Jewish merchants, unobservant of the Sabbath, were seen for the first time in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. A member noted that

> amid the din and bustle of war . . . . In Business circles there is a "masterly inactivity" and merchants, having nothing to do, have now more time appropriate to the house of worship of their creator. As a natural consequence our Synagogues have more male visitors than usual at this season of the year.

Ironically with the upsurge of synagogue attendance, donations decreased. In Richmond, Virginia, at Congregation *Beth Ahabah* [House of Love] it was observed:

> Like all congregations, Jewish and Christian, *Beth Ahabah* suffered from the War between the States. Membership and treasury were depleted, but all did their share.

In 1861, in Baltimore, *Oheb Shalom*'s Minister, Dr. Benjamin Szold, volunteered to have his salary reduced from $125 to $75 per month in order that the congregation be enabled to meet its note on the due date for their Hanover Street building purchased three years earlier.

The *Minutes* of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation reveal that "In consequence of the times the annual salary of Dr. Illowy was reduced from $1500 to $600, that of Mr. Leicht [sic! Leucht] from $1000 to $800 [to a] salary of $600. We are informed that Dr. Illowy's friends made up a collection for him to the amount of $400."

This report was signed by "G," probably Vice-president Isaac Greenbaum. He had opposed Illowy's Orthodoxy and his re-election, for under Illowy's aegis, in 1861, the constitution of the congregation had been revised to stipulate that "fixed prayers shall always be read in the original Hebrew language, according to the custom of the Orthodox German Jews."

Pro-Southern Rabbi Illowy's position was tenuous and tottering. Few German Jews of the congregation owned slaves, the reason being that a slave cost at least $600 dollars and many being petty merchants or peddlers could not afford such a luxury. But, most Baltimorian non-Jews, even the non-affluent, favored the institution of slavery. Illowy's pro-slavery sermon was published and distributed in Baltimore and throughout the South where it became a most popular essay. *Shanarai-Chasset* of New Orleans promptly offered Illowy its ministry at a salary of $2000 per year. Its pulpit had been open since the demise of Reverend Solomon Jacobs on August 2, 1860.

Shanarai-Chasset members remembered Illowy's visit to New Orleans in 1855, when he spoke in the German synagogues of the Crescent City. At that time "his addresses produced such an effect that an effort was made to retain him as Preacher and Rabbi of the Congregation . . . ." However, Illowy declined their gracious offer in a letter to the committee dated January 25, 1856. Whatever his reason for his non-acceptance at that time, he had a number of good reasons to accept this pulpit in 1861.

On the eve of his departure, the ladies of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation presented Illowy with a gold watch and the gentlemen tendered him a silver service. The farewell address was delivered by Rabbi Judah Rosewald.

On an interim basis, the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation engaged Aaron Gunzburg to serve as teacher. Gunzburg had ministered at the *Eden Street Schul* of *Oheb Israel* congregation, of Baltimore, from 1848 to 1856. However, the congregation wanted to engage a rabbi. The congregation's treasurer and former president, Jonas Friedenwald, who had been a personal and intimate friend of Rabbi Rice's for over twenty years, met with him and suggested that he return to his former pulpit.

Rice hesitated, for he preferred to abide by the rabbinic injunction "not to use the *Torah* as a spade with which to dig" [*Ethics of the Fathers*, 4:7]. Thus, during his ministry he served selflessly his community and individuals and congregations throughout the land. This was true both when he was professionally engaged as a rabbi as well as when he chose to be a rabbi without a pulpit, but never without a local and national following.

Rice had managed to earn a living as a petty merchant for over a decade since he resigned his pulpit. However, at the outbreak of the Civil War, with meager income, and inflation raging, he could no longer meet the increased expenses. Furthermore, he now suffered from a heart ailment and could no longer stand on his feet for hours at the New York auction houses to obtain his merchandise. He sold out his remaining merchandise and opened what he thought would be a less arduous business, a grocery on Lancaster Street. This venture proved to be a disaster. His small savings dwindled to almost nothing. He told friends that he awaited help only from God, in whom he put his trust. This was typical of Rice; he had preached these sentiments at the rededication of the *Lloyd Street Schul* in the previous year:

> It is real Judaism, not to tremble when you do not know today where you will earn your bread tomorrow, but rather to surrender yourself fully to fulfill the divine behests, heedless of your earthly wants . . . this is real Judaism.

Leeser marveled at Rice's fortitude and optimistic spirit during such a time of abject personal distress. To him it symbolized "how truly the pious leans on the arms of Him who supports the universe by His might . . . ."

Prompted by the financial instability and religious confusion at the time of the outbreak of the Civil War, and his high regard for the rabbinic scholarship of Rabbi Rice, the Reverend Samuel Myer Isaacs of New York proposed that Rice, the only really eligible candidate, be elected Chief Rabbi of the United States. Only the election of a Chief Rabbi, he felt, would restore law and order to the Jewish community.

But as occurred a decade earlier, strong opposition to the idea of a Chief Rabbi issued forth from the pen of Wise who apparently thought himself to be the leader. He said in a mocking manner which managed to insult Catholics and Jews with one blow, that:

> The *Jewish Messenger* of New York wants a Chief Rabbi, a sort of American Jewish Pope, or something like it. Why not give us at once an established hierarchy, celibacy, converts, a Jesuit order and such other wholesome institutions to put down Reform and progress? Those men propose always half way measures, never come forward with the whole matter. . . .

Three years earlier, Wise declared in his *Israelite*:

> Ill fated Germany and the neglected Synagogue of England assign the fate of Judaism to petty tyrants, the chief rabbis, who backed by their respective governments have, it is true, inflicted a serious wound on Israel's faith, still have preserved it intact, and protected it against the horrors of disunion to an alarming extent. In America, thank God, we have no chief rabbis, no religious despotism. . . .

The widespread storm of opposition to the idea of a Chief Rabbi in America, the land of the free, prompted Isaacs to modify his stand and to employ a different tactic to achieve his objective:

> It is not necessary to elect a Chief Rabbi, but it suffices to appoint a Board composed of duly qualified, God-fearing theologians, who should have to decide according to the established laws of Israel . . . . Such a Board should not lead to anything like the much-dreaded priest-craft, the fear of which has been artfully used by interested parties to bring it into disrepute.

Leeser supported Isaacs call for an ecclesiastical tribunal, when a lesser-known Reform leader, Dr. Max Delbanco, minister of Congrega-

tion *Achduth Veshalum* [Unity and Peace] of Evansville, Indiana, attacked him for urging the establishment of such a tribunal:

> How great a man is the Rev. Isaac Leeser . . . who can have the idea of putting into the hands of *three most learned rabbis* the power of giving laws to all the Israelites of the United States. But stop! Mr. L[eeser] is right. I should not have used his name vainly, for it is holy and we ought to put to the ten commandments another one: Thou shalt not use the name of the Rev. Isaac Leeser in vain, for he is the *Very Right Rev. Isaac Leeser D. D. Venerable Prince of the Sanhedrin of the United States* . . . .
>
> I say again, as long as I am here, I will do all in my power, to prevent Orthodoxy from getting a stronghold in this place . . . .

Delbanco made good on his earlier pronouncement that in the chicken farming community of Evansville, "As long as I will be preacher and teacher here, Orthodoxy will have little to roost on . . . ."

In agrarian America, everyone knew you didn't invite the fox into the chicken coop.

Wise, who had vehemently rejected Isaac's suggestion that Rice be elected Chief Rabbi of the United States, also voiced his objections to rumors of Raphall's being proposed for such a post:

> Frank Leslie [newspaper publisher] makes of Rev. Dr. Raphall a chief rabbi of New York, and then he advances him at once to a *chief rabbi of American Jews* and preacher of the *great synagogue* [*B'nai Jesburun*] of New York . . . . He says of Dr. R[aphall]; "that in his thirteenth year he received the Hebrew degree of *Chavir Locius* [scholar in residence], which entitled him to the honorable designation of Rabbi."
>
> The facts are neither Dr. R[a]phall nor any other man in this country is a chief rabbi nor is there such a thing in New York as the *great synagogue*. The Israelites are strict congregationlists. We have neither popes, bishops, chief rabbis nor cathedrals. Every synagogue is independent . . . . According to Leslie, Dr. R[aphall] was not ordained at all as a Rabbi.

Over the signature of "A Jew," a reply came to the Reform leaders:

> Tis true, that the American Protestants have their Bishops and the Catholics their Archbishops, but American Jews refused to have a religious chief . . . .
>
> The day will come when necessity will compel us to organize our congregations under a religious chief.

Just as the 1841, 1845, and 1849 drives to establish Rice as the Chief Rabbi met with either opposition or indifference, the 1862 initiative like-

wise met with rejection. The American Jewish community sternly refused to establish an ecclesiastical authority in Jewish life, preferring individual and congregational decisions in matters of religious law and congregational government. The spirit of individual independence and synagogue autonomy prevailed. Rice actually had the position; what he did not have was the office.

Rabbi Morris Raphall, who had hoped to establish an office for Rabbi Rice as head of a rabbinical tribunal, if not the Chief Rabbi, realized that American Orthodox Jewry like the Reformers, would not accept religious authority over their congregations and themselves. He therefore invited Rice to move to New York City and join him in a newspaper venture, to publish in partnership an Orthodox *Yiddish* weekly newspaper; its proposed title was *Wöchentliche Jüdische Zeitung* [Weekly Jewish News]. Such a Judeo-German periodical would have been the only one of its kind in America. From this vantage point, Rice could disseminate his authoritative decisions and views to Jewish communities throughout the land.

Raphall's prominence had reached a high that year in the Jewish community and on the national scene. Raphall's prestige rose as a result of his having become the first rabbi in American history to deliver, on February 1, 1860, an opening prayer at a session of Congress. This was the 36th session and a stormy one, when the slavery issue divided the country. Attired in his cap and prayer shawl, Raphall engendered in the sight of Reformers the question of "Church and State"—separateness or togetherness, but this was overshadowed by the question of "Freedom versus Bondage."

But the battle in Congress and the nation, despite Raphall's popularity, doomed the success of a newspaper as the outbreak of open warfare would sever circulation between Northern Jewish communities and those south of the Mason-Dixon line. Even Wise, the veteran editor of five years, was barely able to keep his newspaper in print, after the beginning of hostilities, in the summer of 1861:

> The Post Master General of the United States has stopped the mail to the seceding states; thus nearly one half of our list of subscribers is gone without prospects of an early settlement of this affair . . . .
>
> These are hard times, we know it, therefore none will think hard of us if we lay down our pen and like others wear a white cravat and kid gloves.

It was an impossible time to start a paper not dedicated to the war, thus the publication of a *Yiddish* newspaper was aborted. Rice then seriously considered Jonas Friedenwald's proposal, to return to the

ministry of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, from which he had resigned twelve years earlier. Upon the urging of his wife, Rosalie, and his son-in-law, Joseph Leucht, cantor of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, Rice informed Friedenwald that he would accept.

At a meeting of the congregation's Board of Directors, Jonas Friedenwald, informed the membership of Rice's acceptance to serve again in its ministry. He made the motion to have Rice nominated and Solomon Preiss, president of the congregation, seconded it, after which it was to be presented before the congregation.

At a congregational meeting that followed on January 5, 1862, Cantor Leucht stated to the officers:

> On account of those unfortunate times wich [sic!] had befallen . . . it was the intention of the Revd. Gentleman to leave the city . . . Friedenwald appealed to the members to retain him here for this congregation as their Rabbi or lecturer as his past Services is well known to the congregation.

The secretary of the congregation further recorded:

> Mr. Jacob Honnet and S[imon] Rosenfield [Rosenfeld] addressed the meeting also in behalf of the Revd A. Rice. When Several Resolutions and different questions on Law were made, the meeting was then called to order and great confusion existed amongst the members. Mr. S[olomon] Preiss acted as Secr[etary] protem . . . .
>
> The meeting was then called to order by the President, and Mr. S. Rosenfield [Simon Rosenfeld] offered the resolution:
>
> Resolved: That the Revd. A. Rice be Employed as our preacher from this day untill [sic!] the 4th of October next and shall receive $250. for said Service; said resolution was unanimously carried. 49 members being present . . . .
>
> The President then appointed the following named Gentleman to Inform the Revd of his Election.
>
> Simon Rosenfield
> Jos. Greensfelder
> Jonas Friedenwald

Upon his being presented with the resolution, Rice surprisingly did not accept his election, not because the monetary compensation was low, but because of his having been elected as preacher rather than as rabbi. He declined the post offered in a form he regarded as an indignity. From the officer's position, this move had been deemed expedient at that meeting, in order to placate those who were opposed to Rice's election as Rabbi. The committee promised to correct this at the quarterly meeting, scheduled for Sunday, April 6, 1862. At that meeting, Rice was officially

elected rabbi of the Baltimore Hebrew congregation at a salary of $500 a year.

At Cincinnati, Wise was stunned by the news of the election of Rice. The election reported to him by one of his friends, a member of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, opposed to Orthodoxy and his election, spoke demeaningly of Rice's title:

> A motion was made by a number to elect MR RICE[sic!] as RABBI of the congregation. After a long debate, pro and con, and some confusion and disturbance, the President adjourned the meeting, when a majority of the members left the room.
>
> The President and the friends of the REV. MR. RICE remained, and the President again organized the quasi meeting, and the REV. MR. RICE was elected by those present, the parties voting by yeas and nays, instead of by ballot, which the law of the congregation demands. The action has caused great dissatisfaction in the congregation, a large majority of members being opposed to the action.

In New York, Reverend Samuel Myer Isaacs, Rice's follower, was elated. He stated in his *Jewish Messenger*:

> We are pleased to learn that the Lloyd St. Cong. have done themselves credit by electing the Rev. Abraham Rice, for a term of three years, their spiritual guide. Such a course must be truly gratifying to the venerable rabbi, for we understand the election for a longer term than the original resolution, was done entirely by the congregation, without the knowledge of Mr. Rice.

In Philadelphia, Leeser too was delighted at his rabbi's election. He reported in his *Occident*:

> We are informed that the venerable Abraham Rice has again been summoned from his long retirement to assume the office of Rabbi of the old congregation, Lloyd Street, Baltimore . . . .
>
> We know of none in the country on whose shoulders the dignity of Rabbi could be more fittingly placed than on those of our friends of the old school of Talmudists. Unimpeachable in his private and religious conduct, he is the very man to whom people can resort for direction and advice in the duties which they have to perform as Israelites; and though Mr. Rice is not equal to some others as a popular speaker, he always expressed himself cogently and well, and after listening to him no one needs to divest himself of erroneous impressions which sophistry may have produced, which is often the case with others. We trust that Mr. R.[ice] will be aided from the Source of light to diffuse religious conformity among his flock, and that these may advance in intelligence and union to promote the

cause of Israel among themselves and by their example elsewhere also.

Leeser's and Isaacs' hearty approval of Rabbi Rice's election infuriated Wise, who lashed out at, and denounced, them:

> . . . pious, humble, self-denying and weak like, the editors of the *Occident* and the *Messenger* . . . your time is past, your cry is heard no longer. Onward wings the genius of the age; there is no retrogression in history. Whatever . . . the Reis, and the *Beth Hamidrash* crew may tell you, it is in vain; retrogression and cessation are unknown strangers in the history of Judaism, two evil demons banished to their infernal abode by the omnipotence of progressive science and criticism.

Rice's legitimacy, in ordination and scholarship, made him more than a worthy opponent when he was a businessman, how much more so did he threaten Wise's pretentions, as rabbi of a significant pulpit, acclaimed by leading scholars who were in effect, his disciples.

But in the early years, Rice's devotion to learning and disseminating ritual decisions to all parts of the country from his synagogue, made him the source of Jewish knowledge in America. When globetrotter Israel Joseph Benjamin, visited Baltimore in 1860, he recorded in his diary that

> In addition to the Howard Street Congregation, there is a small congregation [*Shearith Israel*] whose rabbi is Abraham Reiss. A very pious man with a wealth of talmudic learning.

Benjamin the Second noted not only Rice's scholarship but that he was a rabbi of Polish-rite *Shearith Israel* as well as the German-rite *Howard Street Schul*. The members of *Shearith Israel*, had originally been members of Rice's *Howard Street Schul*, along with their president, Philip Hertzberg. In 1853, Hertzberg led a secessionist group to found *Oheb Shalom*, but soon thereafter, when that congregation tended towards Reform, he joined Rice's Howard Street congregation, and served as president in 1855, when a Torah was dedicated. He thereafter joined the Polish-rite Jews of the *Howard Street Schul* in establishing *Shearith Israel*.

Rice's Howard Street congregation moved with his residence: At 12 Albermarle Street throughout the 1840's, then after Rice entered into business, at his new location at 85 [present number 230] North Howard Street from 1851 to 1855, 87 [present number 232] North Howard Street from 1855 to 1860, and at 111 [present number 316] North Howard Street from 1860 to 1861.

Jewish education, at its lowest ebb in America, at the time of Rice's

arrival in America, a score years earlier, had been given its initial boost by his founding the first German-Jewish day school in the United States. His example was followed by other congregations and set the foundation for Jewish education in America.

Under the influence of Rice, Jewish education was strengthened and ranged from the elementary to rabbinics.

Chapter 45
Orthodoxy Lives On!

RICE ASCENDED the pulpit as rabbi of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation on April 12, 1862, preaching his sermon that day, the Sabbath before Passover. His message impressed itself indelibly upon the minds of the assembled congregation:

> Ever since Israel deviated from the paths outlined by our Heavenly Father; ever since our nation had forgotten its true destiny, it had become stylish for so-called "leaders of the nation" to promulgate their conceptions and views of our Holy *Torah* in their entry sermons. Such promulgations are quite ridiculous! According to such conceptions, it would appear as though our *Torah* and its commandments were dependent upon their views, instead of their views, as for all of us, upon our *Torah*.
>
> So do not expect to hear such an introduction from me today in my entry sermon. I have lived a long time among you and all of you know what to expect of me. What I was, I still am, and unchanged I hope to remain unto the very end. The *Torah* which shows us the way we are to go, as individuals and as a people, also shows the leader the direction he is to take . . . .

This brought to the memory of the old-timers of the congregation Hochheimer's inaugural sermon, delivered on the pulpit of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation upon Rice's resignation in October, 1849. Hochheimer had then preached, as all the Reform preachers did, what Rice called "their conceptions and views of our Holy *Torah* . . . " Leeser then commented on the Reformers merchandising Judaism into a commodity:

> It is no longer as formerly sufficient for the community to know whether the talents of the preacher are extensive enough, whether his intentions are good; people want also to know before hand his views, the bent of his mind, so that they may be enabled to judge

before he commences whether they can coincide with his views, whether they will be inclined to follow him . . . and thus the orator, in the place consecrated to God, becomes as it were an article of merchandize, which is subjected to each one's taste, and is dependent on the changeful humour of the fashion of the day . . . .

Other Reform clergy presented their conceptions of Judaism at their inaugural sermons. Typical of this practice is the address of Kalisch delivered in May, 1857, when he assumed the pulpit of *B'ne Jeshurun*, Milwaukee and likewise offered a contemporary Judaism which could change with the times, but was therefore not timeless:

Institutions created to give expression and outward form to Judaism must change as times and conceptions do; must renew their forms as the spirit inhabiting them perpetually labors to change it . . . .

Rice in his inaugural address, responded to the dangers posed to Orthodox Judaism by the Reform leaders:

We live in a different age from that of our ancestors . . . . Never before had Judaism lost as much ground as now! Whereas our predecessors who had been threatened by enemies from without were strongly attached to our spiritual and cultural treasures from within, we, in a free America, who are permitted to practice our precepts, are instead divesting ourselves of our sacred duties; instead of leading a more intensive Jewish life, we turn our backs and dance around the Golden Calf and shout: "These are thy gods, O Israel!" [*Exodus* 32:4].

We have broken the tablets of the Law, for the Law does not conform to the standards of the Golden Calf. Therefore, in every city in these United States, another Moses appears who is anxious to write another set of the Tablets of the Law—but all of these tablets are fashioned by irreligious, insincere men. They are not God's design; they come from dust and go to dust. Verily, we are missing a true Moses in our day—one who would have the courage to take all of the modern Golden Calves and destroy them in order to convince our people of their folly. We must unmask the false and treacherous Moses's—the leaders who mislead . . . .

If you are in earnest with our Heavenly Father, then study the Law of God. Don't exchange it for idols, for a false Moses. Learn it yourselves and impart it to your children that God's Law, our *Torah*, must be our life's guide in times of sorrow and distress, in times of prosperity or poverty. The Jew needs no priests, no mediators. The Jew knows who is his protector and shield. Then we shall find God, then we shall find safety and peace of mind.

Rice poignantly concluded his inaugural sermon with a plea that he could have the strength to fulfill his life's mission of teaching Judaism unchanging, but sensitive to the time.

> All Merciful Father!
>
> You, who are able to peer into the inner heart of man! It is well known to You that I am entering into this holy position against my wishes. I would have preferred to live my remaining days in retirement and obscurity; but You wished differently. May Your will rule! Grant me strength to spread Your holy word in truth. Grant me power to stand against injustice. Grant the community confidence and dedication, so that my words not be falsely interpreted, and when it is my time to depart, may they say of me: "The law of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found on his lips; He walked with Me in peace and uprightness and did turn many away from iniquity" [*Malachi* 2:6].

Rice's health was declining. His physician, Dr. Aaron Friedenwald, son of Jonas Friedenwald, ordered Rice not to take the long walk to the synagogue at Lloyd and Watson Streets from his residence at 111 [presently 316] North Howard Street because of his weakened heart. Vacancies were few, and the Rices were obliged to accept a residence at 133 [presently 1135] East Baltimore Street at the inflated rental of $200 dollars a year!

It seems that Rice's modest synagogue, which he served as a volunteer, continued at Howard Street, the worshippers no doubt assuming the rental charge.

Rice as the leading, internationally recognized rabbinic authority in America, continued to respond to numerous religio-legal inquiries, despite his many activities in the ministry of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation. Among the few of Rice's responsa extant, was that sent to his former student Me'ir Dov of New York, in 1862. In this letter, he responded to inquiries on the proper construction of a ritual bath. In a follow-up communication to Me'ir Dov, Rice confided:

> Concerning my position, you know very well that I never intended to be a rabbi and a leader in God-forsaken cities as these. But necessity can not be denied.
>
> With regard to my studies, I do all I can. I am obliged to teach the children every morning till noon, since I only receive five hundred dollars and have to spend two hundred dollars for rent. Expenses are enormous!
>
> Preaching, too, costs me great exertion. But, Blessed be He and Blessed be His Great Name! I am very much accepted in the eyes

of my community, and every time I preach, the congregation is filled with people from throughout the city, from all the local Synagogues . . . .

As for the rest, you know all there is to know. Things are the same here as in New York . . . . May the Almighty One, who is compassionate of all His creations, protect us during these critical times.

A few months after Rice returned to the pulpit, inflation reduced the value of the dollar, especially in Baltimore, where "Virginia notes" were valued at seventy cents to the dollar and "Confederate bills" at fifty cents to the dollar. Such were the conditions that, when President Solomon Preiss unlocked the charity box to which he held the key, the thirteen dollars therein were all in counterfeit coin! As a consequence, Rice's salary of five hundred dollars per annum was tragically halved.

With the "war to free the slaves" raging Rice spoke appropriately at Passover on the biblical theme of going from slavery to freedom:

Among the many teachings of Passover, our festival of freedom, it has taught the peoples of the world, helping the poor, hungry, and unfortunate is of primary significance. In this spirit, we began our Passover *Seder* last night with the call: "Let all who are hungry enter and partake!"

The Passover festival has especially taught the world the true meaning of freedom. At the *Seder*, we recounted the story of the *Exodus*, as we began with the classic words: "We were slaves unto Pharaoh in Egypt." After centuries of enslavement, God sent Moses to tell Pharoah: "Israel is My son, My firstborn . . . Let My son go forth that he may serve Me" [*Exodus* 4:22-23]. We were taught that the first step necessary for the attainment of freedom, is to serve God. One who truly becomes a free person must accept the concept that the Almighty is the only Power in existence; a concept we repeat in the Exodus story: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me" [*Exodus* 8:16; 9:3].

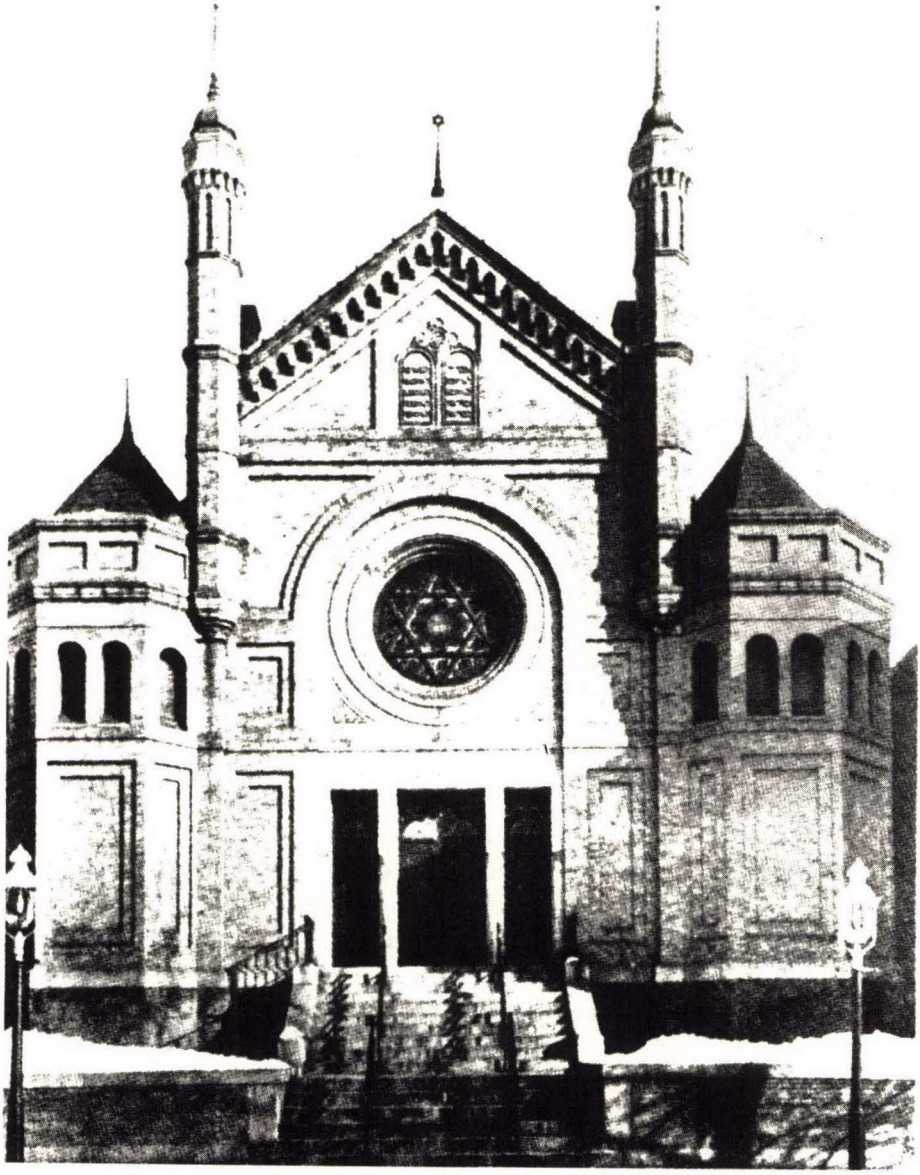
Serving God leads to true freedom. Not the guarantee of your rights, nor the opportunity to freely conduct your business without restrictions, makes you free. Only when you are in His service, fulfilling His will, do you become free. All the various measures enacted to assure us our freedom will not sustain us as a people if we break our ties with God. As long as we do not understand this principle, we are not truly living in freedom. All of Judaism is centered about this concept, of our being God's people: "And I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you for a God" [*Exodus* 6:7] . . . .

But what has happened to us in this land of freedom? It tested us and we have failed!

Serving God in penury, battling ill health and Reform attack, was Rice's freedom and he dedicated himself selflessly to the service and welfare of the community. Many stories circulated of his sacrifices. One told of his trip to the capitol, Annapolis, despite a worsening heart condition, to plead with Augustus Bradford, Governor of Maryland, for the release of a Jew from prison of whose innocence he was convinced. The Governor later remarked of Rice that he "never saw such an intellectual man . . . ." Rice succeeded in his mission of mercy, and the wrongly imprisoned man was released. On the other hand, when it happened that Rice unmasked a bigamist, one who had deserted his wife in Germany in order to marry a Baltimore girl, Rice took steps to have that individual imprisoned. Freedom and justice under God were inseparable values for him.

Rabbi Rice did not allow his personal hardships to affect his cheerful, optimistic outlook, though deeply aggrieved by the war that raged: The American and Jewish nations torn asunder, Union Jew fighting Confederate Jew on the political front, Reform Jew battling Orthodox Jew on the religious front. Rice sought to repair the breaches in the wall of Judaism, as he said, "a bit here and a bit there," seeking to safeguard the edifice of centuries. As Rice attempted to hold back the flood waters of Reform and religious anarchy, he succeeded in part in Baltimore but Orthodoxy was being submerged by the rising tide of Reform throughout the United States. In Judaism, as in government, war was waged between the forces of secession and union. Disunion and disagreement were the order of the day.

Tragically, Rice's strenuous efforts as rabbi, preacher, and teacher, and respondent coupled with his deep concern over the tragic times, finally felled the veteran leader, champion and pioneer of Orthodoxy in America. After the High Holy Day season of 1862, he was suddenly stricken by a fatal heart attack. Dr. Aaron Friedenwald, his former student and admirer, attended him in his last illness. After reciting the penitential prayers of the dying, with the *Shema* upon his lips, Rice departed this earth on Wednesday, October 29, 1862.



Shearith Israel, McCulloh Street, dedicated 1879; founded by Rice in 1841 as the "Howard Street *Schul*," followed in the spirit of observant Jewry.

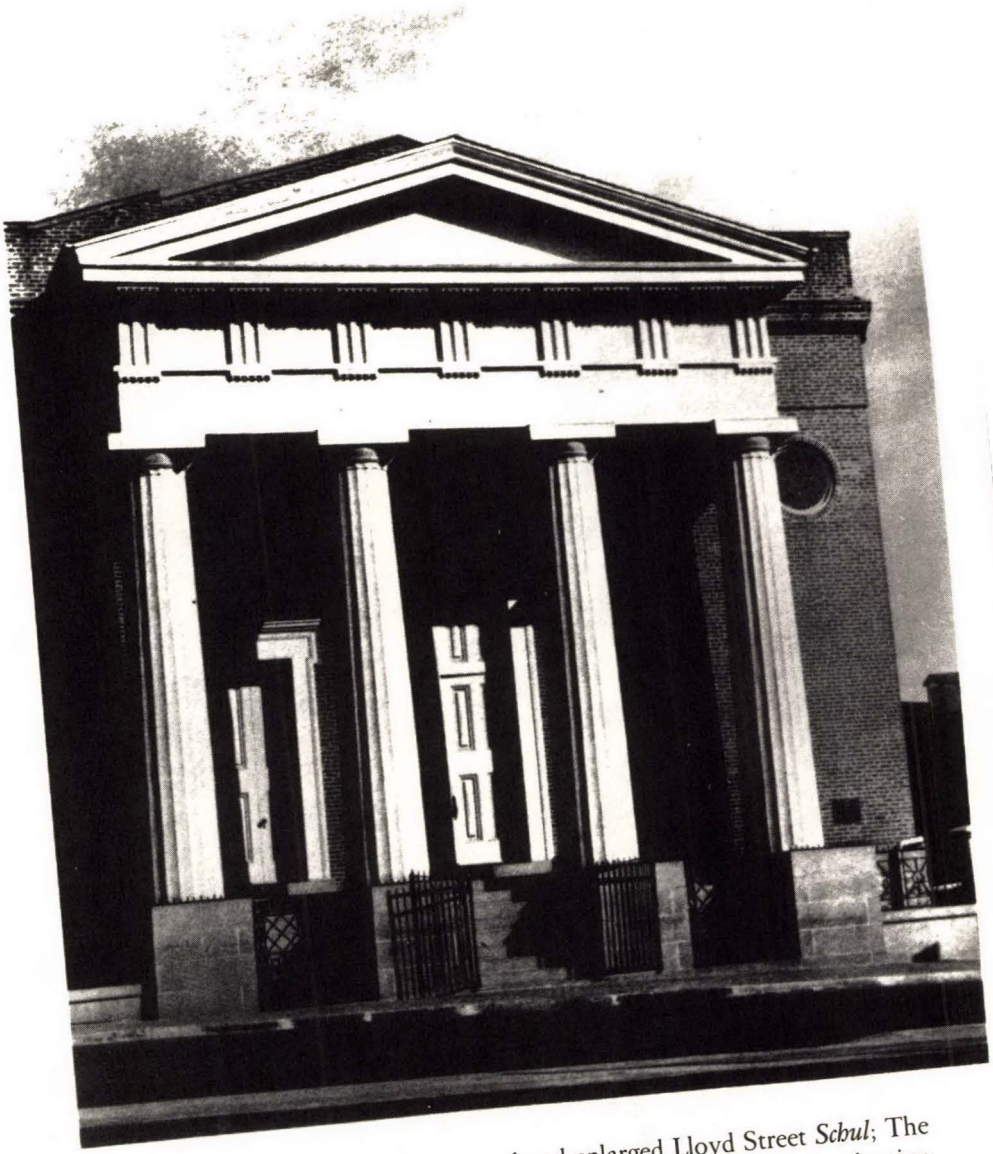
(*A Pictorial History of Maryland Jewry* by A. D. Glushakow)

BOOK XII

RABBI RICE IMMORTALIZED

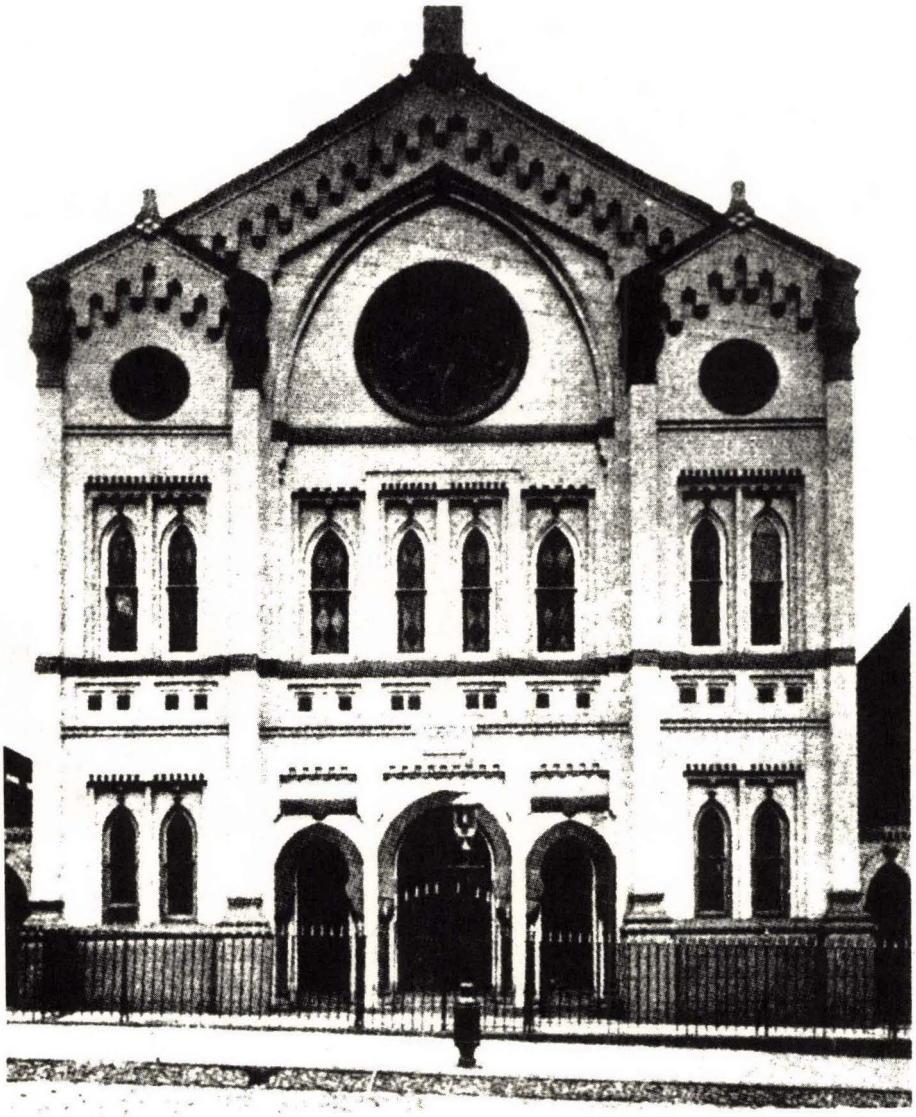


Plaque to Rice at Baltimore Hebrew Congregation; dedicated 1955.
(Courtesy Rose Greenberg)



Facade and portico of renovated and enlarged Lloyd Street *Schul*; The synagogue Rice dedicated in 1845, and rededicated in 1860 as a bastion of Orthodoxy, turned to Reform in 1868.

(Courtesy Maryland Jewish Historical Society)



Chizuk Amuna, ca. 1871, "The Friedenwald *Schul*," founded by Orthodox secessionists from Reformist Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, led by Jonas Friedenwald in 1868. *Chizuk Amuna*, therefore, acquired on the next block of Lloyd Street, a grandiose, Moorish-style building for their synagogue in 1876.

(*A Pictorial History of Maryland Jewry* by A. D. Glushakow)



The Lloyd Street *Schul*, turned Temple, in 1868, sold to Lithuanian Catholic Church in 1889, was reclaimed for Orthodoxy by East-European Jews with grants from Volhynia, in the Ukraine. Its name is reminiscent of the Zion fund headed by Rice in the 1850s—*Mishmeres Hakodesh*.



Title Page of the Minute Book of the *Shomerei Mishmeret* congregation, 1890.



פ.נ.

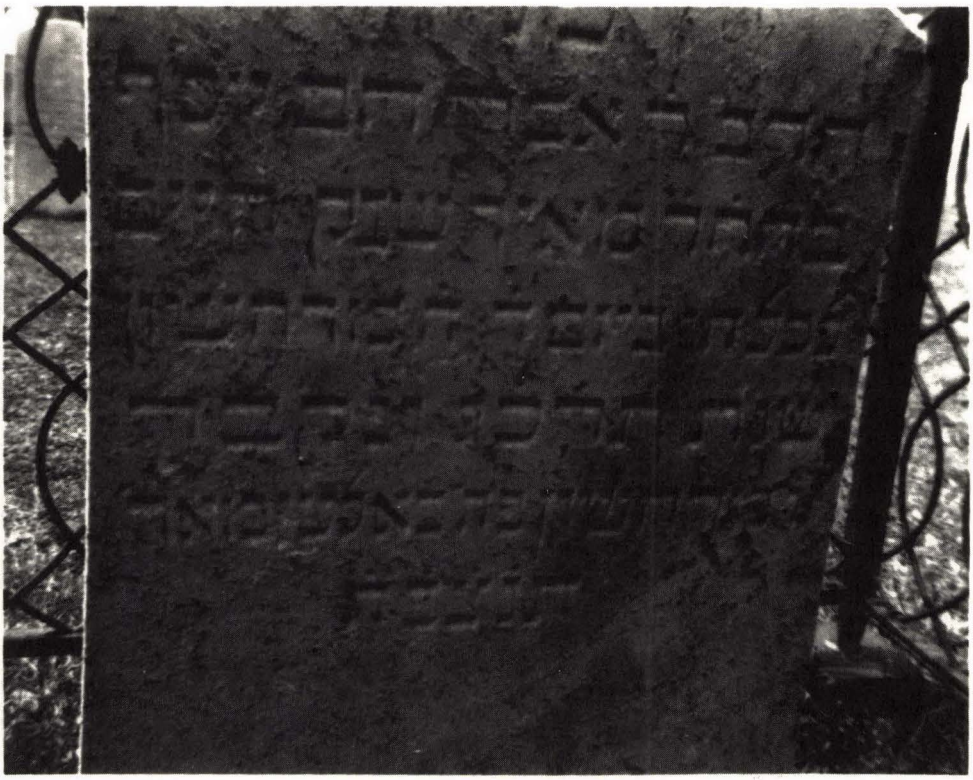
הרב ר׳ אברהם יוסף
בהה״ר[1] מאיר שבק חיים
לכל חי ביום ד׳, ה׳ מרחשון
שנת תרכ״ג, ונקבר
ו׳ מרחשון פה באלטימאר

תנצב״ה

[1] בן הרב הגדול ר׳

Tombstone of Abraham Rice.

(Photographed 1952 by the Author)



פ.נ.

אשת חיל מרת רייצלה
בת החבר ר׳ שמואל הלוי
נפטרה בש״ט[2] יום ג׳, ז׳ אלול
תרל״ט לפ״ק

תנצב״ה

[2] בשם טוב

Tombstone of Rosalie Rice.

(Photographed 1952 by the Author)



Rice Family Plot.

(Photographed by Rabbi Eliezer Rabinowitz, Baltimore)

Chapter 46
A Great Man in Israel

NEWS OF the passing of Rabbi Rice plunged the Baltimore community into deep grief. As the news spread, Jews throughout the land knew they were orphaned of leadership. What was his attitude toward death? In his last moments, there might have flashed in the mind of Dr. Aaron Friedenwald what Rice had said at the rededication of the *Lloyd Street Schul* just two short years ago:

> Our master will soon summon us; therefore, let everyone be prepared to have finished all the work that he could accomplish, for only after our labor is completed is it pleasant to sleep. We indeed exclaim with a loud voice "Remember us unto life! Inscribe us in the Book of Life!" but we must never forget the Divine Law: "For dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return" [*Genesis* 3:10].
>
> Reflect, therefore, my brother, that when you lie, as it were, chained to your couch of suffering, still and helpless, smitten on your death bed—when your house, your business, your wealth, have no more charms for you—at the time your friends stand near you as you exhale your last life's breath with the declaration of faith: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, is the Only One," there is then but one healing balm left for you, and that you will find only if you heeded the Divine call and lived by that declaration of faith. How happy you will be at that time, for then, since you will have well deserved and earned your future eternal life, the angels of mercy will joyfully receive your disembodied spirit and greet you with the blessing: "Thou art blessed in thy coming" [*Deut.* 28:6], merited because thou hadst acquired the blessing in thy going out.

A special meeting of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation was convened. Preparations and resolutions were recorded in the congregational minutes:

> Baltimore, October 29th 1862
>
> A Extra Board meeting was held this day. The President S.[Solomon] Preiss, Esqr called the meeting to order. Roll called. All officers, present. The president rose in appropriate manner and annouonced [sic!] the death of Revd. Dr. A. Rice, the Rab[b]i of this Congregation. There being a great many members present, whereupon, Mr. Julius Bucksbaum offered the following.
>
> Whereas, a deep interest is manifested by the members of this

congregation, also from the other congregations to pay the last tribute to the remains of so a Worthy Rab[b]i Therefore be it resolved that this Board adjourn for the purpose of opening a Extra Congregation meeting w[h]ich was Unani[m]ously agreed to.

The president S.[Solomon] Preiss Esqu called the meeting to order. A quorum according to law where [sic!] present and stated to the congregation that by the request of the Board he called this meeting in order for the members to Express their wishes, and to make such arrangements as they may deem necessary.

Mr. M. H. [N. H.? H.N.?] Springer then addressed the meeting: it was announced by the president that Mr L[ouis] Hertzberg and others where [sic!] present and wished to take charge of the remains, so it may be buried in Landen Hill [Louden Park?] cemetary. Mr Simon Frank offered the following resolution.

Resolve that a Committee of 3 members be appointed to wait on the beraved [sic!] family of Revd. Dr. Rice, when Revd Jos[eph] Leucht appeared and stated in behalf of the afflicterd family as their wish to bury his remains on the L[L]oyd Str[eet] Synagogue Burial Ground. On motion of Mr. N. H. Spring[er], a Committee of 2 members of the Board in conjunction with Revd. Leucht be appointed, to Select such a lott[sic!] on the Burial Ground as they may think proper, for the last resting place of such a Worthy Rab[b]i w[h]ich was Unaninously [sic!] agreed to. Committee [Samuel] Siegel, [S.?] Ryter [Rider?] & Revd. Leucht.

(Later inserted) consisting of a lot for two Graves and a space of Ground of 2 feet to be left vacant on the northern side.

Mr M. [Moses S.] Cohen offered the following resolution w[h]ich was Unamiously [sic!] carried

Resolve[d] that a Committee be appointed by the President to draft resolution Expressive of the feelings of Solem[n] regret experienced by the members of this congregation at the demise of their devoted minister the Revd Dr. A. Rice and of their Symphaty [sic!] with the ber[e]aved family of the deceased, and that resolution of the Committee be inserted in the *Occident*, *Jewish Messenger*, *Frankford Messenger* & *Baltimore Sun* and a copy be also sent to the ber[e]aved family. Committee M[oses] Cohen, N. H. Springer, [Jonas] Friedenwald, [Moses] Wiesenfield [sic! Wiesenfeld], M[eyer] Styn [sic! Stein]. On motion the president S.[olomon] Preis[s] was requested to act in conjunction with the Committee

On motion a com[m]ittee was appointed to superintend the Burial Ceremonies

committee [Jonas] Friedenwald
[B] Honnet
[Isaac] Arnold

On motion a com[m]ittee of 5 members be appointed to procure Hearse and 30 carriages or more for those members & Seat holders who wishes to attend the funeral. agreed to

committee A[braham] Rosenfeld
S[imon] Frank
S H [Henry S?] Lewyt
[Moses] Wiesenfeld
[A?] Bachrach

On motion the president was instructed to procure a person to watch on the Burial ground for Seven Successive nights. A. On motion the meeting adjourned.

By order
S. H. Lewyt, Secr

A. On motion the president was requested to call a[n] Extra meeting on Sunday next at 10 Oclock. So ordered.

In Baltimore, the many people in deep mourning at Rice's bier evidenced that the Jewish community had sustained an irreparable loss. All felt that a friend and a father had been recalled. Proof that a great man in Israel had fallen was publicly demonstrated by the immense funeral cortege of more than thirty horse-drawn carriages, extending for half a mile, which moved in solemn procession from Rice's home on East Baltimore Street to the burial ground of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation.

The women mourners stepped down from the carriages outside the cemetery and remained there. They did not enter the burial grounds, because a few months before Rice's death, one of the rabbi's last acts was to inform the Board of the synagogue

> that according to our laws, it is not allowed for ladies to step on the Burial ground at the time we bury our dead. It is therefore your duty to establish a law about this matter.

The Board fulfilled its "duty" and ordered the

> *shames* [sexton] at the funeral to inform the ladies in attendance of the . . . law and it shall be his duty to remain at the gate of the inside ground, and not to permit any ladies within the Grounds as long as the Gentlemen are upon the Ground.

All pictures or images that had been engraved upon the tombstones during the decade of Dr. Henry Hochheimer's ministry had been sanded

clean during Illowy's two-year ministry, for he had stated that "it is contrary to Mosaic law." There were also no plants, neither shrubs nor flowers, placed on any of the graves, for Illowy had also forbidden them as counter to the laws. The cemetery of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation truly represented a strict Orthodox burial ground, fitting to receive the revered remains of the blessed rabbi.

In strict compliance with Rice's will, held by his son-in-law, Reverend Joseph Leucht, his body was laid on the bare ground in the manner common for the Orthodox in Europe. The bottomless coffin was placed over his body and the grave was then covered with earth. His will further specified that no eulogy be offered at his grave. Thus was laid to rest the pious rabbi, Abraham Joseph Rice, on the sixth day of *Cheshvan*, 5623, Thursday, October 30, 1862.

Rice was buried in honor with notification in all the Jewish press, excepting Wise's *Israelite*. Strangely, there was a watch at the Rice grave for seven days after burial, not for religious purposes, but because it was necessitated as medical students stealthily exhumed freshly interred bodies for research.

At the conclusion of the week of *Shiva*, at a meeting held on November 2nd, the congregation arranged for a temporary wooden railing to enclose the family plot. Since Rice left an ethical will but no testamentary estate to his widow, the congregation resolved to provide for his bereaved spouse, Rosalie Rice, a pension for life. The congregation minutes read a recognition of Rice's rabbinate and her role as the first *rabbetzin* in the land:

> The following resolution [s] were offered and received at an Extra meeting of the Lloyd street Congregation of Baltimore held November 2d 1862 among other proceedings. A committee was appointed to draft resolutions expressive of the deep sorrow occasioned by the sudden death of our beloved Rabbi and Preacher, the Revd Abraham Rice. The Com[m]ittee reported the following, w[h]ich was Unanimously adopted.
>
> We mourn the loss of a true and faithful guide, whose earnest exhortation we may never listen to again, but our great loss is his gain, for he has passed from this transitory life to the realms of everlasting peace and happiness, there to receive the rewards of a life well spent, and in the constant preparation for w[h]ich he found all his pleasure and all his hopes.
>
> To the ber[e]aved widow and family we would express our warmest sumpathy [sic!] in their sad ber[e]avement, and pray that the consolation of our holy religion may prove healing balm to their bleeding hearts.

Resolve that this report be so read upon the minutes of the congregation, a copy be presented to the bereaved family and published in the Jewish press generally and also in the *Baltimore Sun*.

M. [Moses] Cohen
Signed Jonas Friedenwald
H. N. Springer
[Meyer] Stein
M. [Moses] Weisenfeld

Com[m]ittee

As a further tribute to respect to the memory of the lamented deceased, it was resolved by the congregation to pay his salary for the current year to the widow, and also thereafter an annual pension of three hundred dollars.

Reverend Samuel Myer Isaacs of New York offered tribute of a beloved friend and junior colleague to Rice's memory:

We have, during our public career, frequently been called upon to place on record the departure from our midst of many of our friends, who having left this world for a better scene, have at the same time enabled us to speak of their worth as an incitement to others to perceive that "the righteous walk in good paths"; but the resolutions which have been transmitted to us from Baltimore, and which may be found in this day's issue, reach our very heart, for they inform us that our teacher and our friend RABBI ABRAHAM RICE, after living a life of usefulness, and devoting his very soul to the happiness of Israel, has ceased to exist here, to commence a renewed life in a communion of saints and spirits.

If an inseparable intimacy of twenty years gives man the right to judge of his fellow being's worth, then we [have] abundant reason to speak well of our deceased friend, for we knew his value, respected his learning, revered his principles. There was something so sterling in his character, that we look in vain among our valued colleagues for his peer. Like a sturdy oak, he stood firm; nothing could move him from the inflexibility of his principles. Although all around him was indifference and innovation, he was unchangeable.

Let it not be said that his life was devoted only to trim the midnight lamp, and that his course of action was "piety without good works." We know to the reverse; for a period of many years we have transmitted large sums to Palestine, to the friends of his youth, to the descendants of his early teachers, to such of his associates that

settled in the land of Israel's past glory and future hope, yes, and even to the stranger who had entered the covenant. Sad will be the news to those poor pilgrims of hope, when they hear of his death. Their tears and their prayers will plead for him at the Throne of Mercy. But we refrain from dwelling on this theme. Rabbi A. Rice has paved his own way to Heaven. "Righteousness preceded him, to form a path for his steps."

He died as he lived, strong in the faith of Israel, mourned by his bereaved and adopted daughter, lamented by the Israelites of Baltimore, and especially by the members of the Lloyd Street Congregation, who, by the provision they have made for his widow, the respect they evinced at his funeral, eloquent tribute they have penned to his worth, talent and principles, have given the most substantial evidence that while they regret their loss, they bend in submission to the will of Heaven, who called upon his faithful Abraham to ascend the mount, while he responded "Behold, here am I."

May the Being enthroned on high console the mourners, in the life giving hope that the one they miss, has safely landed on the shores of bliss!

Leeser, who had respected Rice's talmudic and rabbinic learning, superior to all rabbis in America, and admired Rice's purity of character for over a score of years, enshrined some facets of his Rabbi's personality in his encominium:

His congregation have honored themselves by estimating him properly, and have in their resolutions given expression to their regret, which is shared by many outside of Baltimore . . . .

[Rice] brought with him the reputation of a thorough Talmudist, which he maintained in a pre-eminent degree among all who have reached America since his arrival, being still the first among many able and learned men in his department. Unassuming in manners, intent on doing the work of his Master in heaven, he walked humbly before God, and excited not the envy of those even who with a daring hand attempt to pull down the ark of the covenant.

As a spokesman for moderate Reform, Wise, with whom Rice had waged incessant polemics and excommunicated noted at his death what he denied during his lifetime:

Rabbi Abraham Rice or Reis was buried with all the honors due to a man on account of his learning and piety . . . .

Yet, he could not pass up his chance for the last word:

> The age with its wonderful progress and revival went traceless by him; he was not influenced by the age and exercised none on it. In a better world he will find answers to the numerous questions that estranged him to the world. God will answer and receive his soul in grace.

As spokesman for radical Reform, Einhorn, with whom Rice had many disputations until they were silenced by the parting of the ways, gave him high tribute in *Sinai*; and used it as a blow to Orthodoxy:

> The religious system was to him not artificially acquired but harmonized with life and spirit . . . . It must be recognized that he belonged to the honest Orthodox, rare in America.

Illowy, ministering in New Orleans, did not learn of Rice's demise until three weeks later, because of the interrupted and delayed communications brought about by the war. Speaking from the heart, Illowy, who had cherished his personal association with Rice during his ministry at the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation from 1859 to 1861, told his congregation that the news of the passing of Rabbi Rice,

> affected him so painfully that he could not avoid making some remarks in honor to the blessed memory of the deceased in his sermon of the following Sabbath, though he would rather have postponed such a mournful task for a week-day . . . .

Therefore, on the Sabbath *Vayeitzei*, November 28, 1862, Illowy acquainted the New Orleans Jewish community with his first-hand knowledge of Rice's outstanding personality and his foremost position as preserver of Orthodoxy in America against the attacks of missionary Reform:

> Rabbi A. Rice cared very little for the fat, milk, and wool of his flock . . . . If there were more such teachers in Israel, we should not see so many sons and daughters in Israel led astray by false and erroneous doctrines and shallow principles. Religion would not be so slightly treated, and Israel would not deviate so far from the path on which their fathers and forefathers had gone before them . . . .
>
> Our younger generation do not know more of their own history than this, that their fathers were Jews and that they were born such. Where lies the cause of this great evil? It lies in the great want of true and faithful ministers, who fear God more than the loss of material gain; who do not wish to please but to teach; not to flatter, but to show the truth in its true light . . . .
>
> There was always peace in his heart, even when his enemies raged, because they had to hear from him the truth which their

neighbors did not venture to tell them; there was peace in his heart even when he scourged the wicked with the rod of his mouth.

Perhaps Illowy's tribute was the most eloquent and most accurate of all. He could identify struggle for struggle with his master.

At the conclusion of the month of mourning, [*Shloshim:* Heb. "thirty"], a special service of esteem was scheduled in New York City at the Posener-Polish Congregation *Shaare Zedek*, 38 Henry Street. At that location, at *Anshe Chesed*, in 1840, Rice had delivered his first address upon his arrival in America. The large assemblage present for the *hesped* [eulogy] delivered after the *Mincha* [afternoon service] by Rabbi Moses Aharonson on Sunday afternoon, November 31, 1862, represented most of the congregations of New York City. Samuel Myer Isaacs reported in *The Jewish Messenger*:

> It would be a matter of impossibility to give our readers even a mere synopsis of the eulogium which occupied more than an hour in its delivery. The revered speaker quoted from *Treatise Sabbath*, showing the imperative propriety of delivering an oration upon the occasion of the death of a pious and learned Israelite, strengthening his remarks by the wise sayings of our sages, and exhibiting a remarkable familiarity with the philosophical writings of our most learned Rabbis.
>
> After giving a brief sketch of the labours of the deceased among his flock, and the zeal and interest manifested at all times to him in the cause of Judaism, he dwelt upon his many virtues as an Israelite, drawing an affecting picture of the nation in distress, surrounded on all sides by enemies and calling in vain for her champion who lies lifeless at her feet, to gird on his armor and defend her.
>
> Rabbi Aaronson . . . demonstrated by past experience and historical proof that the departure from the sphere of usefulness of so able and zealous a pastor as the late Rev. Abraham Rice, was beyond a doubt, the result of our transgressions, our open desecration of the Sabbath, our utter disregard of the dietary regulations of our religion, our want of appreciation of the prosperity and peace we enjoy, the evil example constantly before our children, in fine convincing proof of the existence of sin in Israel . . . .
>
> His Scriptural quotations were apt and pointed, and his many illustrations of the deep loss we have sustained by the death of this great scholar—a bountiful harvest to prove by deed and action, by their zeal for the law of God and the religion of their fathers, by their obedience to the precepts of the Rabbins [sic!], and their earnest study and practice of Judaism, that they were indeed worthy of being the chosen people of God. He compared our learned men

to precious Jewels whose coruscating splendor was unequalled, showing that this loss was irreparable and bade them guard these intellectual treasures with vigilant care.

At the close of the eulogium, prayers were recited and appropriate offerings made in memory of Rabbi Abraham Rice.

Isaacs concluded his report with this observation:

That this brief sketch is all we can give of a eulogium so eloquent and appropriate, so replete with learning and Talmudic knowledge; we can only say that every word was almost a volume in itself, and the orator was a thoro[ugh] master of his subject.

We think the tribute of respect paid to the late Rev. Abraham Rice, fitting and appropriate, and trust that he now reaps in Heaven, the blessed rewards of his trials and labors on earth among the children of Israel. May his soul rest in peace.

As the year after his death drew to a close, a monument was erected to his memory, which according to the wishes expressed in his will, contained no platitudes, only his name; the final tribute was held on Sunday, October 18, 1863. On this occasion the congregation approved replacing the wooden railing marking the family plot, where the Rice's infant daughter had been buried in 1848, with an iron one. Though iron was costly and difficult to obtain during the war, nonetheless the determined congregation managed to accomplish this final tribute to the memory of their revered rabbi.

After only a few months since the dedication of the monument to Rice's memory, tragedy struck again with the death of Rice's adopted daughter, Caroline, married to Cantor Joseph Leucht only two years earlier. Thus the *Minutes* of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, January 24, 1864, record:

A[n] extra Board meeting was held this day. The Pres. S[olomon] Preiss, Esqr presiding called the meeting to order, and anniounced [sic!] to the members the death of Mrs Leucht when on motion a committee was appointed to draft resolution of Condolence and to be presented to our whorthy [sic!] C[h]azan in the name of the congregation

Com[m]ittee [M.] Lieblich
[H.] Sonneborn
S.[Solomon] Price

The com[m]itte[e] retired and offered the following resolution
Whereas it has pleased the Almighty Deposer of Events to call

from this Earthly Existence, to a better and purer one the Estimable wife of Mr. Jos Leucht our worthy Chasan and in order to testify the sentiments of this Board and our Congregation

Resolved. That in deceas[e] of Mrs Caroline Leucht this community has lost (although very young) really a mother in Israel, who by her example and Modest deportment won the respect and friendship of all whose privilege it was to know her and whose moral and religious Character Evinced the Excellent training of an adopted Father, who had preceeded her but a few short months [after first *yahrzeit*] to their long rest.

Signed
S. [Solomon] Preiss.
H. Sonneborn
M. Lieblich

Chapter 47 *Indelible Impress into the 20th Century*

IN KEEPING with Rice's pious spirit, the congregation sought to elect a staunchly Orthodox spiritual leader. They wrote to the rabbi of Würzburg for a recommendation. However, because the war had halted passenger travel across the Atlantic, it was not possible to engage a European rabbi during this time.

Without an Orthodox rabbi in their midst, Reformers in the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation sought to undo Rice's work. When they did achieve the upper hand in 1868, the Orthodox, faithful to the teachings of Rice, resigned and met in quarters on North Exeter Street. They founded *Chizuk Amuno* [Upholding the Faith] Congregation, popularly called *The Friedenwald Schul*, since the Friedenwald's were the greatest contributors.

In 1876, *Chizuk Amuno* aquired a magnificent Moorish-style building on Lloyd Street, on the same side as the Lloyd Street Temple, on the next block. Its Torah Ark far more splendrous than that of the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation.

Under the Friedenwald leadership the scrupulous adherence of the new congregation to Orthodoxy, evidenced the spirit of rabbi Rice in their midst. Thus, the rabbi Rice ordained, Judah Rosewald, did not fail to investigate such detail as to whether or not the cords in the cushions in the synagogue were *shaatnaz* [a mixture of plant and animal derivative, as wool and flax], prohibited by biblical law.

To honor Rice's memory, Dr. Aaron Friedenwald, annually, on the Day of Atonement, recited the *yizkor* memorial prayers to his rabbi and teacher, pioneer of the American rabbinate.

On August 18, 1876, guest rabbi Henry W. Schneeberger, the first native American Orthodox Rabbi, delivered his probationary sermon at *Chizuk Amuno*:

> The speaker cautioned those present not to imbibe the false teachings that now pervade in so many minds in Israel. Not every synagogue in the country can be called the House of God. He hoped, however, that the eyes of those living in error may be opened and that they may become inspired by the true teachings of Judaism. He counselled those present to battle for the maintenance of what is holy, to struggle for the cause of truth in Judaism, and attributed the success of the congregation in erecting the new structure to their perseverance in holding what they believe to be a sacred cause.

Fired with Orthodoxy's teachings, the young Schneeberger made a deep impression at *Chizuk Amuno*, Baltimore, and he was elected to its pulpit. Rice's traits were personified in his devotion to Orthodoxy.

Schneeberger's popularity as an orator disturbed Rice's old enemy, Wise, who was disappointed that he, a native American chose an Orthodox pulpit. He reprimanded him in a patronizing manner:

> I have heard you speak, and your honest, sincere, fervid manner could not help impressing me; what a pity that these qualities—not too common now-a-days—should be wasted in the service of Orthodoxy, which to be sure "is not yet dead," but which is wasting away gradually, and when it is dead, every one will wonder that it lived so long!

Wise's condescending manner actually repelled the Orthodox rabbi Schneeberger, who carried on the mandate from Sinai.

Shearith Israel, the synagogue that sprung from Rice's *Howard Street Schul* acquired its first building in 1879; a decade after The Friedenwald *Schul* acquired its edifice, which included those of Rice's *Howard Street Schul*.

So profound was Rice's impress that even after the turn of the twentieth century, Baltimore remained a leader in Orthodoxy. This feeling of his lasting influence was expressed by his devotee Moses Brettenheimer in 1902, when he said: "It is now full forty years since his death and still his memory is alive . . . ."

His son-in-law Reverend Joseph Leucht wrote his sentiments of Rice in 1904 shared by all the community:

> I loved him and venerated him . . . . Rabbi Rice was one of those pious and learned men whose influence though silent is nonetheless powerful, and that the city of Baltimore is known to this day for the true religious spirit of its Jewish inhabitants is perhaps in no small degree due to Rabbi Rice's early teaching and practice.

"Reb Avraham," as Rabbi Rice was affectionately and informally called by his intimate devotees, succeeded in perpetuating Torah-True Judaism for future generations in "The Land of Promise" and beyond the seas, in "The Promised Land."



Rabbi Abraham Joseph Rice

(Courtesy A.D. Glushakow)



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IN

COMPANION VOLUME

OF

THE FIRST RABBI

HOMILIES, RESPONSA, POLEMICS,
LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS

Transcribed, Translated, Edited

BY

RABBI I. HAROLD SHARFMAN, D.H.L.

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ERRATA

"Who can discern his errors? cleanse Thou me from hidden faults"—Psalm 19

In the year 1989/5749 TiSHMaT *"Thou Shalt Elide"*

As author of *The First Rabbi,* I beg the reader's indulgence for any inaccuracies that have appeared in this printing. To the best of my knowledge errors of commission and omission are hereby cleared and corrected. Also, the few typographical errors are noted in this presentation of "errata."

—Dr. I. Harold Sharfman

Acknowledgements: *Add,* Rabbi Sholom Ginsberg of Congregation Kehillat Yitzchak of Los Angeles.

Add, Mr. Bernard Fishman, Director, Jewish Museum, Baltimore.

Dedication: *Add, Rabbi* before Zebi.

Page 37, para. 4: "foundered" should be "floundered"

Page 70, para. 3 [correction]: That Kursheedt studied "at the *yeshiva* founded by Rabbi Nathan Marcus Adler" (1803–1890), is in error.

Kursheedt had studied at the *yeshiva* of Frankfort, presided over by Rabbi Nathan Ben Simeon Ha-Kohen Adler (1741–1800).

Page 98, caption: "1842" should be "1841"

Page 103, source: (The Rise and Progress of Reform Judaism)

Page 158, caption: "Isaac Rice" should be "Shraga Rice"

Page 159, caption: "Isaac Rice" should be "Shraga Rice"

Page 168, para. 3 [correction]: Levi ben Gerson [RaLbaG]; another source states Dyer's ancestor to be Gershom ben Judah, see p. 226.

Page 194, para. 2: "*Jesburun*" should be "*Yesburun*"

Page 235: Delete last sentence at bottom of page.

Page 250, para. 3: "Polish" should be "Posen-Polish"

Page 275, para. 4: The family plot described, may or may not be that plot selected upon demise of Rabbi Rice (see p. 708, para. 3).

Page 276, para. 1 [correction]: Moses Brettenheimer's recollection of the adoption of Isaac Rice, written in 1904, is a classic example of how history becomes story over the passage of time.

Shraga Rice, great-grandson of Isaac Rice, noted in his letter to the author, dated February 24, 1989, Emanuel, Israel, that by the year 1849–50, Isaac must have been a teen-ager, and not an "infant," as stated by Brettenheimer, since Isaac's wife Kalma, was born in 1830. Shraga also adds that Isaac was possibly of French background.

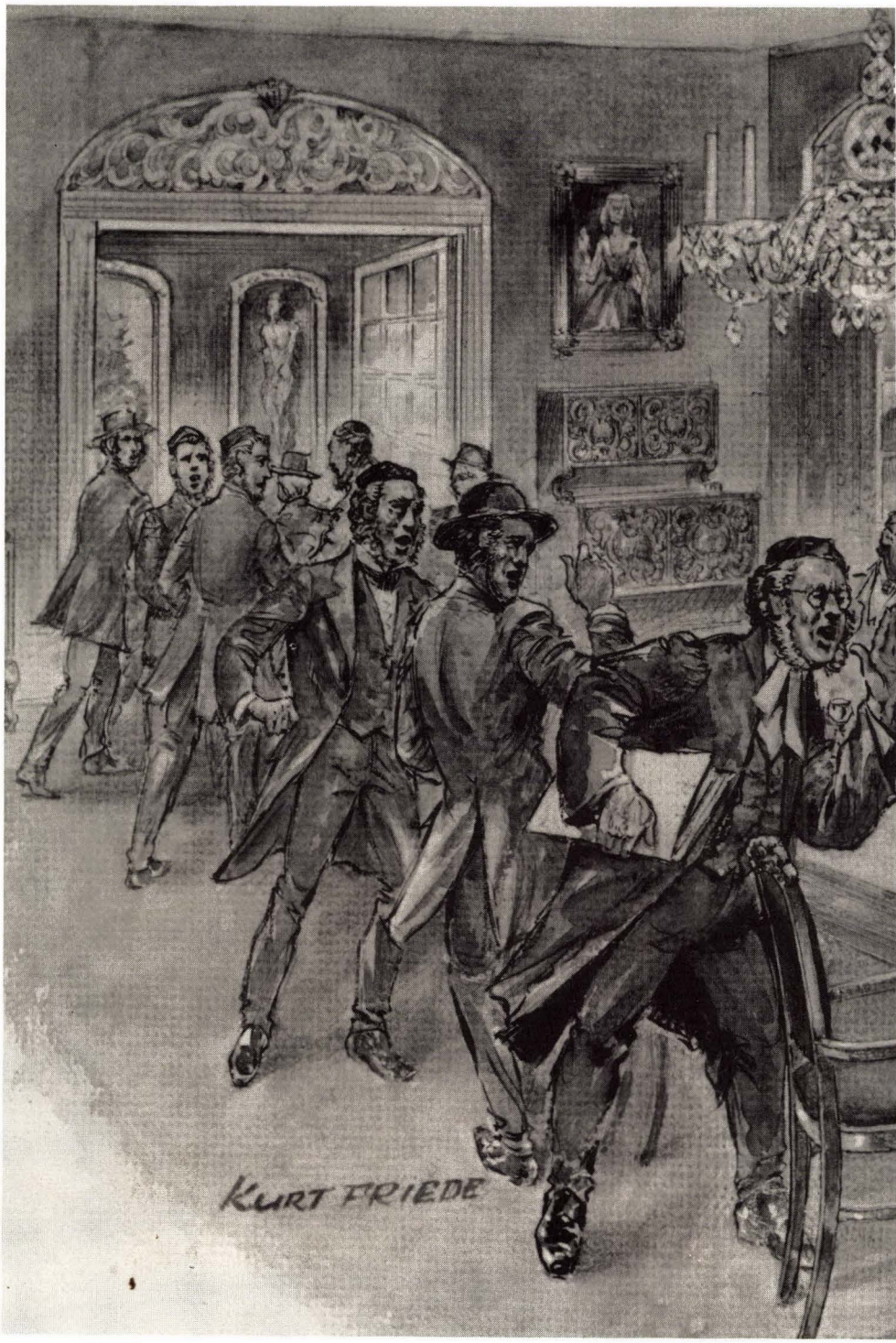
Page 295, para. 4: "dicussed" should be "discussed"

Page 296, para. 3: "Lipman" should be "Lippman"

Page 300, para. 1: "silver service" should be "Golden Service"

Page 305, para. 4: Dr. Louis? Salomon, formerly in Philadelphia in 1841 (see p. 137).

Page 307, para. 6: "belivers" should be "believers"
Page 311, para. 4: "brother" should be "brothers"
Page 316, para. 1: "explanantion" should be "explanation"
Page 348, para. 2, caption: change "me'ushshar" to "me-ushar"
Page 368, para. 2: "htem" should be "them"
Page 397, para. 6: "triannual" should be "triennual"
Page 410, para. 3: "*Sepharad*" should be "*Sefarad*"
Page 425, para. 5: "Cincinnati" should be "Hamilton"
Page 427, para. 4: Adolph, English name; Abraham probable Anglicized Hebrew name
Page 489, para. 3: After "5597" close quotation marks, opening with "Reverend . . . ."
Page 506, para. 3: Omit apostrophe before *El*
Page 596, para. 6: *Add* "Forsyth Street" before *Beth Hamidrash Hagadol*
Page 599, para. 3: Azriel (also Israel)
Page 621, para. 2: After "*Minhag America* is" delete "not"
Page 648, para. 4: delete sentence, "Also in 1857, Rabbi Henry A. Henry's Hebrew Union School."
Page 650, para. 1: "atending" should be "attending"
Page 672, caption: *Add* "From Collection of The Orthodox Rabbinical Association"
Page 684, para. 4: After "biblical," insert "flag"
Pages 704–705: captions reversed
Index to Vol. I: *Add*, Cohen Mendes, I., pp. 24–25; 266.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