

SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

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Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

MarkKBauman@aol.com

Bryan Edward Stone, *Managing Editor*

bstone@delmar.edu

Scott M. Langston, *Primary Sources Section Editor*

sclangston@charter.net

Stephen J. Whitfield, *Book Review Editor*

swhitfie@brandeis.edu

Jeremy Katz, *Exhibit and Film Review Editor*

jrkatz@thebreman.org

Shari Rabin, *Website Review Editor*

rabinsl@cofc.edu

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rheimovics@cfl.rr.com

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For submission information and author guidelines, see <http://www.jewishsouth.org/submission-information-and-guidelines-authors>. For queries and all editorial matters: Mark K. Bauman, Editor, *Southern Jewish History*, 6856 Flagstone Way, Flowery Branch, GA 30542, MarkKBauman@aol.com. For journal subscriptions and advertising: Bryan Edward Stone, Managing Editor, PO Box 271432, Corpus Christi, TX 78427, bstone@delmar.edu. For membership and general information about the Southern Jewish Historical Society, visit www.jewishsouth.org or write to PO Box 71601, Marietta, GA 30007-1601.

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The Atlanta Federal Penitentiary and Area Jews: A Social Service Case Study

by

Mark K. Bauman and Leah Burnham*

In 1978 Robert Schneider sent a letter to Arlene Greenberg Peck, a volunteer working with Jewish prisoners at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary.¹ Schneider was an inmate at the Georgia State Prison at Reidsville, two-hundred miles from Atlanta, serving three life sentences plus ninety years for murdering three men involved in a nightclub feud the previous year. Schneider explained that his parents had died when he was a child and that he had lived a violent life and spent six years in prison for refusing to go to Vietnam. Twenty-five years old, married, and the father of three children, he was the only Jewish prisoner in Reidsville. Schneider beseeched Peck: “[He] felt completely cut off from the world . . . and [was] desperately looking for his ‘Jewish roots.’” He was aware of his Jewish identity, but had little knowledge of Judaism. Peck asked the readers of the *Southern Israelite*, “Does a Robert Schneider deserve our compassion? I think he does, if for no other reason than that’s what our religion teaches. I think he is entitled to religion that he seems to be searching for now.”²

Peck exchanged letters with Schneider for the next two decades, often giving him small amounts of money for incidentals. According to Peck’s daughter, Dana Peck Parker, the two lost touch only after he was repeatedly transferred. Parker remembers that Schneider was grateful to her mother and turned his life around. Her mother used a tough-love approach and was hard on Schneider. Peck told him “not to feel sorry for

* The authors may be contacted at MarkKBauman@aol.com and lburnham2@student.gsu.edu.

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himself.”³ Peck, in turn, got her rabbi, Marc Wilson of Atlanta’s Congregation Shearith Israel, involved with Schneider. Wilson and Schneider corresponded once a month, and Wilson occasionally visited the inmate at Reidsville and provided Jewish food, books, and possibly a *tallit*. The rabbi remembers that Schneider’s letters were “relatively articulate” and that the prisoner created an elaborate pillow that he sent to the rabbi and his new wife for their wedding.⁴

This experience was unusual in some ways although typical in others. Unlike Schneider, during the 1970s most Jewish prisoners were convicted of white-collar crimes. Schneider’s conviction for murder placed him in the Reidsville facility instead of the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary, where he would have been around more Jews and exposed to relatively extensive Jewish programming. The long-term associations between the inmate and Peck and Wilson were also unusual. Nonetheless, Schneider’s outreach to the Atlanta Jewish community in search of inclusion and identity, Peck’s response, and Wilson’s rabbinical involvement typified the extensive interaction between incarcerated Jews and the Atlanta Jewish community.

Although American Jewish history can appear as the almost unmitigated success of individuals who contributed disproportionately to society, an underside of criminality and spectacular court cases has also been documented. Jews broke blue laws by conducting business on Sundays. Some flaunted prohibition through misuse of kosher wine allotments, among other ways. Others were involved in the white slave trade. During the late nineteenth and into the first decades of the twentieth century, Monk Eastman and Harry “Gyp the Blood” Horowitz ran violent gangs in New York City. Abe Bernstein’s Purple Gang took Detroit’s Prohibition-era criminal activity to new levels, as did Kid Cann in Minneapolis and Alex Shondor Birns in Cleveland. Herman Rosenthal and Arnold Rothstein were key underworld figures who presaged the Bugs and Meyer Mob that merged into Murder, Inc. Louis “Lepke” Buchalter, Meyer “Mickey” Cohen, Meyer Lansky, Abe Reles, Harold “Hooky” Rothman, Arthur “Dutch Schultz” Flegenheimer, and Benjamin “Bugsy” Siegel partnered with the Italian mafia from New York to Las Vegas and Los Angeles.⁵ Jews involved in famous criminal court cases include Leo Frank, Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, and, more recently, Bernard Madoff and Jonathan Pollard.⁶

An extensive literature exists on these highly visible individuals and cases. This literature often discusses Jewish responses to and actions in behalf of individuals, notably Leo Frank and Jonathan Pollard. The same cannot be said concerning the involvement of Jewish institutions and individuals who assisted Jews who committed less publicized crimes. This article will address this void by providing a case study of the activities of Jewish communal organizations and individuals in Atlanta who assisted Jews incarcerated at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary.

The Atlanta Federal Penitentiary.
(Federal Bureau of Prisons.)

Several themes emerge from this new avenue of investigation. Representatives from eight congregations, the Hebrew Academy, the Bureau of Jewish Education, the Atlanta Jewish Community Center, the Atlanta Jewish Federation, and the *Southern Israelite* on the local level, and from B'nai B'rith, the Anti-Defamation League, and Chabad on the local, regional, and national levels participated in programs for Jewish inmates across at least nine decades spanning most of the twentieth century. Virtually every individual and organization committed to prison outreach involved themselves in similar activities with similar motivations in behalf of Jews in communities too small to hire full-time religious functionaries; military installations; mental institutions; orphanages; and senior citizen centers. Work with immigrants, those physically and mentally challenged but not institutionalized, and the homeless also fit within this overall category. Thus these programs are most accurately viewed in

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a holistic fashion. Jews felt an obligation to and an ethnic identity with fellow Jews in difficult and sometimes marginal circumstances, any societal stigmas notwithstanding.⁷

Although undertaken by local community members, the activities often had the imprimatur of national Jewish agencies. The inmates welcomed interaction with local Jews, and at least a few did not mind their names being known. The inmates and communal workers participated for diverse reasons and received varied benefits. The number of Jewish inmates fluctuated over time, with the high point during Prohibition and the Great Depression.⁸ So long as policies were followed, wardens and other prison personnel usually supported the Jewish activities, welcomed outside Jewish aid, and even spoke to the Jewish community. Jews served as volunteers and professionals, and volunteer service occasionally led to professional positions related to the penal system. Finally, the Atlanta Jewish experience resembles that of other Jewish communities and non-Jewish faith-based programs. As shall be demonstrated, the critical differences resulted from the size of the prison population served and, in the case of other religious groups, an emphasis on proselytizing that was absent in Jewish activism.

Early Activity: Rabbi David Marx and Others

Rabbi David Marx, the first member of the Atlanta Jewish community known to be involved with the prisons, acted as a volunteer chaplain conducting services and providing religious instruction at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary starting when the facility opened in 1902 and ending forty-four years later as his health declined. American-born and a recent graduate of Hebrew Union College, Marx pushed the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation (The Temple) into Classical Reform ranks when he became rabbi in 1895. An ardent follower of the prophetic social justice message of the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, Marx's outreach to the Jewish prisoners mirrored his other activities as chaplain to local military installations during the Spanish-American War and World War I, and as visiting rabbi to a congregation that he had established in West Point, Georgia. His prison activities also went hand in hand with his efforts on behalf of new Jewish immigrants.⁹

A conflict arose between Warden William H. Moyer and Marx in 1914, one of the few such conflicts in over eight decades. When the warden

rescinded the policy of allowing Jewish prisoners (numbering fifty-eight at the time) to observe the High Holidays, Marx, along with Isaac Haas and Albert Guthman, two influential Temple members, unsuccessfully beseeched him to change the policy. Marx thereupon requested the intervention of Representative Schley Howard (D-GA); Senator Hoke Smith (D-GA); Simon Wolf, attorney and former international president of the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith; and Myer Cohen, Wolf's son-in-law and law partner in Washington, D.C., and a member of the Committee on Civil Rights of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC). Cohen spoke directly with Thomas W. Gregory, the attorney general of the United States, who consequently directed the warden, according to Cohen's telegram to Marx, "to allow privilege Jewish prisoners abstain from work and hold religious services as heretofore." The attorney general had to be reassured that similar policies were in place at the prison in Leavenworth, Kansas, and had been the policy previously at the Atlanta facility. Cohen informed Gregory of a letter he had sent Francis Duehay, the superintendent of the Bureau of Federal Prisons, in which he likened the issue to "a return to Russian intolerance." Cohen went to the attorney general only after the superintendent had ignored his entreaties. Marx responded to Cohen's good news: "Permit me to thank you on behalf of the men at the Prison on your successful work. May the New Year be all the more enjoyable when you think at the time of the happiness you have brought to them."¹⁰

In his letter dated October 8, 1914, Marx informed Wolf, "The prisoners observed two days of Rosh Hashanah. One of the men read the services on the first day and Mr. Grossman [Leonard Grossman, a leader later in the fight for women's suffrage], a young lawyer here gave an address on 'peace'; I conducted services and gave a sermon on the second day. On Yom Kippur services were conducted by the men[,] and Mr. Heilbron went out and assisted. Meals were provided by the local charities."¹¹ The following year, The Temple began serving Passover seders to the inmates.

This incident is important for numerous reasons. It illustrates the deep commitment of Marx, other individuals, and local organizations to the Jewish inmates, as well as the rabbi's willingness to bring the rights of the inmates to the attention of two of the state's congressional representatives and two well-known and connected leaders of national Jewish

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Rabbi David Marx in 1917.

*(David Marx Family Papers, courtesy of the Cuba Family
Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum, Atlanta.)*

*Letter from Rabbi David Marx to attorney Simon Wolf, October 8, 1914.
(Temple Records, Mss. 59, courtesy of the Cuba Family Archives for
Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum, Atlanta.)*

organizations. Although it demonstrates antisemitism within the local and national prison system, it also illustrates the readiness of members of President Woodrow Wilson's administration to confront that intolerance. As shall become evident, B'nai B'rith's prison activism exceeded that of any other Jewish organization.

The context for the incident is also extremely significant. Leo Frank had been accused and convicted of murdering Mary Phagan in Atlanta and was incarcerated in the Tower, a local prison facility. Frank had been president of Atlanta's B'nai B'rith lodge, and Marx was Frank's rabbi and an ardent supporter. Marx had sought and received assistance from Wolf after Frank's conviction, whereas Louis Marshall, an attorney and one of the most influential Jews of his generation, demonstrated limited interest until after Wolf's involvement.¹² B'nai B'rith had served as the major Jewish defense organization prior to the establishment of the American Jewish Committee in 1906 and had created its Anti-Defamation League in 1913.

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It was only natural for Marx to look to Wolf, the B'nai B'rith, and the UAHC rather than Marshall's American Jewish Committee for aid in his fight for prisoners' rights. None of the individuals involved in taking away or regaining the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary's policy of Jewish holiday observance mentioned Leo Frank, but it is hard not to imagine that his case influenced prison officials, Marx, or the other participants in the conflict. It is also evident that the Leo Frank ordeal likely encouraged Marx to openly combat antisemitism rather than remain silent. Although the Frank incident is pertinent to this issue, at no other occasion did it seem to make a difference. The work of Atlanta Jewry to assist the Jews incarcerated in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary did not differ significantly from that of Jewish endeavors with prisoners throughout the United States.

Twenty-five years after Marx's defense of inmates' rights, another generation of inmates reciprocated. Retired Army major general George Van Horn Moseley, an outspoken antisemite and a leader of the Knights of the White Camelia, challenged Marx's patriotism and called him a communist before the House Un-American Activities Committee (the Dies Committee). The *Atlantian*, a newspaper published by the inmates at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary, ran a series of tributes to Marx. One signed "Obediently yours, Red," went as follows: "The besmirching of your name is an insult to the intelligence of the American people. I, many times a thief, stand beside you, and call upon Him to forgive them for they know not what they do." Having quoted Jesus at his crucifixion in behalf of the rabbi, Red praised those who spoke out in Marx's defense and asked, "I am just wondering if a great many people know that you have been coming in here to administer to us of your faith for over 30 years. Would that they knew of the dead and dying hopes that you have rekindled, and of the many times you went to bat for us, regardless of race, class, color or creed." Thus the Jewish prisoners offered Marx character references in appreciation for his efforts.¹³

Further B'nai B'rith efforts stand out clearly with the work of Jewish community activist Hyman S. Jacobs. In 1912 the warden at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary asked Jacobs to conduct weekly services for the Jewish inmates. Jacobs continued as a "dollar-a-year chaplain" under the auspices of B'nai B'rith for the next fifty-three years. The height of Jacobs's activity likely took place during Prohibition when an estimated 450 Jews

were incarcerated in the federal facility. Jacobs maintained that he had “a special ‘*semicha*’ issued by the Government.” Concerning his motivation, when Jacobs retired in 1963, Warden David M. Heritage noted that Jacobs had undertaken his task “to keep a promise he made to his father [Abraham Jacobs], a *Melamed* and Hebrew teacher for many years in Atlanta.” Besides conducting Sabbath and holiday services, Jacobs asked inmates’ relatives to give them money if they needed it, but he provided it if family members refused. In 1958 Max Waldman, an inmate who served as the Jewish chaplain’s clerk, remarked, “To us he is a spiritual torch, igniting within us the spark to seek the will to look forward to a brighter future. Mr. Jacobs truly is a symbol and a guide of true Judaism.”¹⁴

The tributes to Jacobs suggest the high esteem in which the prisoners, prison officials, and Jewish community held such work. At his forty-sixth anniversary, the members of the prison synagogue presented him with a scroll they had made “extolling his accomplishments,” and the entire congregation and prison officials commended Jacobs’s devotion. B’nai B’rith District Lodge 5 honored Jacobs as “Georgia’s ‘Jewish Circuit Rider’” in 1961 at its Miami convention and created the Hyman S. Jacobs B’nai B’rith Youth Fellowship in recognition of his endeavors. By the time Jacobs retired in 1963, he was unable to speak at the prison tribute because of declining health. Warden Heritage acted as emcee and gave remarks. Comments were made and letters read from the prison chaplain, leaders of Jewish community agencies, the director of the Bureau of Prisons, and Fred T. Wilkinson, the deputy director of the bureau and former warden at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. Wilkinson averred that Jacobs’s record of service was “unmatched in the annals of the American system of prisons – or for any other institutional history we have ever known.” Another fifty or more prison officials attended the ceremony voluntarily without pay. The entire prison congregation attended, and fifty non-Jewish inmates voluntarily assisted in the program. One of the latter painted portraits of Jacobs and his father, Abraham Jacobs.¹⁵ Although these accolades were given to Jacobs, they attest to the extremely positive view of the outreach efforts by all constituents.

Marx, members of his affluent and acculturated Reform congregation, and Hyman Jacobs were not alone in these early encounters with federal prisoners. During World War I, Ida Goldstein served as a social worker at the penitentiary as part of the Jewish Education Alliance’s

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outreach efforts. Her future husband, Louis Levitas, conducted Sunday school classes there. She became friends with Eugene V. Debs, the perennial socialist candidate for the presidency, who was serving his sentence at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary under the Sedition Act of 1918 for opposing American participation into the war and undermining the draft.¹⁶ Ida and Louis Levitas, like Jacobs, were influential leaders of Ahavath Achim, an Orthodox synagogue of Jews originating in eastern Europe on the road to acculturation, and of numerous Jewish organizations. Although Temple members stand out prominently in Atlanta-area prison service activities, representatives of almost every congregation played significant parts. Concern for the prisoners' welfare transcended affiliation differences.

Robert Schneider, who was highlighted at the beginning of this essay, gained Jewish identity, values, self-worth, and long-term associations that helped him rehabilitate. The Jewish inmates assisted by Marx, Heilbron, and Jacobs were able to continue Jewish practices and likely found succor as part of a group. Other inmates sought Orthodox Rabbi Tobias Geffen's aid because of the shame they felt. Whereas Marx networked with the B'nai B'rith and UAHC and Jacobs with B'nai B'rith,

Rabbi Tobias Geffen in 1924.

*(Courtesy of Avie Geffen
and David Geffen.)*

Geffen was drawn into prison work through Agudas Harabbanim, a national Orthodox rabbinical association. Through this network, rabbis from Baltimore, Chicago, and New York wrote Geffen asking him to look out for prisoners they knew who were sent to Atlanta. Geffen visited these prisoners individually on a regular basis to keep up their spirits. Geffen's grandson recounts perhaps a representative situation during the early 1920s, when an individual from Detroit went to the rabbi's home on a rainy Friday night and introduced himself. He had been convicted of illegal alcohol sales and remained in the rabbi's home until his papers reached Atlanta and he could be incarcerated. At his request, while in prison he gave letters to Geffen to be exchanged with his wife through his rabbi in Detroit. He had told his wife that he was on a long business trip, and Geffen helped him maintain the charade.¹⁷

Inmate outreach continued through the next decades. During the 1930s Attorney Charles Bergman, an officer at Congregation Ahavath Achim, remained "quite active in religious work at Atlanta Federal Penitentiary." This was in line with his education work on the school commission as a member of the city council and as future president of the Bureau of Jewish Education.¹⁸ From 1946 Esther Rubin (Mrs. Joseph) Pintchuck participated in a weekly program of counseling, crafts, music, and devotionals cosponsored by B'nai B'rith Women and the Atlanta Council of Church Women for rehabilitating delinquent white women ("forgotten women") at the Atlanta Prison Farm. Mrs. Jerome Levy, an attorney, and Ethel (Mrs. Benjamin) Brodie also participated.¹⁹ When David Marx retired as rabbi of The Temple in 1946, the U.S. Attorney, at the behest of Warden Joseph W. Sanford, appointed Rabbi Harry H. Epstein of Ahavath Achim as his replacement. Continuing until 1951, Epstein's responsibilities "involve[d] visits with prisoners with the idea of improving their morale."²⁰

Increased Activism in the 1960s and 1970s

The 1960s witnessed a substantial increase in programming and personal involvement in outreach to Jewish prisoners, although no reasons can be discerned beyond conjectural linkage with this period of social activism. In 1946 the penitentiary newspaper had described prisoner Harry Rothschild as the "number one man of the Fed tennis team." The following year, a B'nai B'rith team led by lodge president Alex Miller, who defeated

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Rothschild in singles, received the Rusty Padlock trophy for winning five out of six tennis matches against a mixed group of Jewish and non-Jewish inmates. Although the *Southern Israelite* article announcing the results indicates that future matches were planned, no record of these are available until the 1960s. Then eight tennis players from the Atlanta Jewish Community Center, possibly at the behest of the Atlanta Jewish Federation, played against the inmates on an annual basis. According to Eddie Silverboard, Manny Wolfe managed the contest “mainly because he knew most of the inmates from the days of the old Crew Street gang.” The columnist averred, “There was only one incident, and that rather mild – one of the Fed’s players kept lobbing the balls over the wall and telling the guard that he’d be glad to go get them, but permission was refused naturally.” Although the last statement may have been made in jest, one memory clearly stood out in the minds of two participants over fifty years later. According to Miles Alexander, the staff “provided two balls to each team to play, which I found humorous since the absence of a third ball deterred any excuse to be looking around or leaving the court.” Elliott Levitas indicates that the balls had to be accounted for after each match for security reasons. Alexander participated because of his “empathy for Jewish white-collar crime prisoners who the program was trying to reach,” although many of the inmates who played were not Jewish. Levitas comments, “When I was asked if I would be willing to do this, I readily agreed to do it because I thought it was the right thing to do. After I had done it in retrospect, I felt gratified that I had. It was a fulfilling experience.” Alexander recalls that all “were very appreciative of our participation since it clearly gave them an outlet for an activity they enjoyed and contact with the outside world.” Although both men are partners in a law firm, neither remembers legal discussions with the inmates. Former U.S. Congressman Levitas added, “Prison officials were not only cooperative but also appreciative.”²¹

In 1963 Chaim Feuerman succeeded Jacobs as chaplain upon the latter’s retirement, although Feuerman had been assisting him for the previous six months as Jacobs’s health declined. Feuerman, an Orthodox rabbi, had been appointed director of the Atlanta Hebrew Academy, a Jewish day school, two years earlier. The prison activities were worthy of national Jewish news attention. When in 1965 the American Jewish Press Association met in Atlanta during American Jewish Press Week,

Feuerman made arrangements through the warden for journalists to visit the prisoners on a Sunday morning, and one journalist addressed the prisoners.²²

J. [Jacob] Joseph Cohen's penitentiary work overlapped with that of Feuerman and The Temple. Cohen conducted services and provided job counseling to the inmates from 1965 to 1975. Several experiences qualified Cohen for these efforts. During World War II, he had provided psychological counseling to shell-shocked soldiers in the Pacific. In 1946 he cofounded Apex Linen Service with two of his brothers, and he also served as president of Green Pest Control.²³ Like Jacobs and others, Cohen's was a long-term commitment suggesting that many of the lay people involved perceived the benefits of their work and what they got out of it in positive terms. Like others, Cohen's prison activities cannot be isolated from his other experiences.

Under Jacob M. Rothschild, who succeeded Marx to The Temple pulpit in 1946, the prison chaplaincy devolved into a regular duty for his assistant rabbis beginning with Stuart Davis (1962-1965). Rabbi Phillip Posner (1968-1971) recalls that conducting services had become routine by the time he began. Posner had served thirty-nine days in Parchman Prison in Mississippi as a Freedom Rider, something that helped him empathize with the inmates' situation. That they gave him metal bookends they had made as a departing gift suggests that they appreciated his efforts and got something out of them. During his employment interview in 1971, Alvin Sugarman was advised that this was part of his job description. Sugarman held the service on Saturday mornings from 8:45 to 9:45 until 1972 when he shifted the penitentiary service to 7:45 to allow time for him to return to The Temple to conduct its newly instituted bar mitzvah rites. According to the rabbi, during the first such Sabbath the inmates "raised hell" about the earlier time. An inmate at the back of the room insisted that the inmates do whatever the rabbi wanted. Sugarman "[never] had a word out of the congregation after that." The inmate in question was Simone Rizzo "Sam the Plumber" DeCavalcante, the head of the New Jersey mafia who had been sentenced to fifteen years for extortion and conspiracy in 1969. A non-Jew married to a Jewish woman, DeCavalcante enjoyed attending the Jewish services. The mafioso and rabbi remained in contact after DeCavalcante was discharged in 1976, retired, and moved to Miami. The rabbi recalls that the "sad part was

*Rabbi Alvin Sugarman in 1971.
(Courtesy of The Temple, Atlanta.)*

visiting those in solitary confinement. I sat on the floor where food was put in and heard their stories." Sugarman "felt very, very welcomed by the inmates. I encouraged them to serve their time and walk the straight and narrow." Nonetheless, another sad thing he experienced was when some were discharged and quickly reentered incarceration.²⁴

Sugarman was inside the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary during the Attica Prison riot in New York and was consequently locked in. He felt "spooky being locked inside." "It made me feel like them [the inmates] not having freedom to walk out the gate." This feeling was shared by one of Sugarman's successors as assistant rabbi, Edward Cohn (1974-1976), who commented, "You had to get through the fact that you had to go through the locked doors, and for a few minutes you were locked between

gates." Unlike Sugarman, Rabbis Cohn and Martin Lawson (1974–1976), Sugarman's early assistants at The Temple, had not been informed of the prison responsibilities. Lawson received sudden notification from Connie Giniger, a volunteer who had brought new energy to the program for Jewish prisoners, when, in 1973, she responded to an appeal to the Jewish community from Sugarman. Lawson remembers:

Sitting in my new office the phone rang. I heard the following: "Hello, Rabbi, this is Connie Giniger." Hello Connie, how can I help you? "Rabbi, I will be picking you up at 6:00 am on Shabbos morning." I thought that someone was pulling a prank. "Why are you picking me up at 6:00 am?" "Rabbi, we're going to prison."

Neither Ed [Rabbi Edward Cohn] nor I had been told that we were going to lead Shabbat morning services at the maximum security Federal Penitentiary every week. Our rabbinate was growing exponentially every moment!!²⁵

Giniger informed Cohn at his first *oneg shabbat* that he had to be at the prison at 7:30 a.m. Cohn and Lawson alternated Saturdays at the penitentiary. Cohn remembers that perhaps half of the prisoners who attended were not Jewish. These, he contends, were there for the *oneg shabbat* and wine. The Jewish inmates tended to be traditional rather than the Reform associated with The Temple. Yet "[it] was a good, it was an important thing to do." It served as part of Temple outreach before the term was used. "If they said they were Jewish, we said that they were Jewish." According to Cohn, B'nai B'rith sponsored the prison ministry, although another account suggests that the Jewish Welfare Board had appointed Sugarman. In either case, Temple rabbis received imprimatur from community organizations beyond and besides their synagogue.²⁶

The Prison Activism of Jewish Women

At about the same time Sugarman appealed to the Jewish community for volunteers, the director of B'nai B'rith's Commission on Community and Veterans Services informed Connie Giniger, the southeast director of B'nai B'rith Women, that a young former member of B'nai B'rith Youth was incarcerated in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary and had requested prayer books. The director asked that she investigate the situation. Giniger had received a business degree from the City College of New York, but her reading of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* moved her

to follow her dreams. She returned to school to obtain a teaching degree and taught for many years in New Jersey before moving to Atlanta where she taught at the Hebrew Academy. According to her daughter Barbara, she was “very creative. One of the first innovators in terms of open classroom She’s left a legacy.”²⁷

One of Giniger’s first projects was bringing greeting cards for the inmates to send to their families to help maintain those ties to the outside. She also had her fourth-grade students make holiday cards that she mailed to the approximately forty-five Jewish inmates. Although Sugarman had brought civil rights icon, mayor, congressman and future U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young with him to speak to the inmates, Giniger instituted a rap session every other Wednesday evening that became known as the Jewish Discussion Group.²⁸ She brought in physicians, attorneys, educators, and media personalities for open-ended discussions. Si Cohen, director of community and veterans’ services for the national B’nai B’rith, visited the prison congregation whose members pleaded for additional Judaica. Cohen authorized Giniger, like Feuerman an employee of the Hebrew Academy, to coordinate local B’nai B’rith efforts and author a pamphlet, *All Men are Responsible for One Another: Meeting the Human Needs of Prisoners*, based on the Atlanta experience to be distributed and presented at the BBYO convention in Starlight, Pennsylvania, as well as other venues. The pamphlet emphasized personal contact.

Giniger received permission to bring teenage Temple Youth Group volunteers to provide a chorus and instrumental music for Rosh Hashanah services at the penitentiary. Chaplain Urban A. Cain arranged the evening dinner, and Sisterhoods and B’nai B’rith Women sent holiday cards that the inmates could forward to their families. The national B’nai B’rith provided a Kiddush cup and candelabra. In conjunction with Giniger’s activities, Marshall Solomon, president of B’nai B’rith Gate City Lodge, joined numerous lodge members who volunteered to attend weekly services at the penitentiary. Others who volunteered for different activities included Harry Teitelbaum, director of Ahavath Achim’s Solomon Schechter School, and Leon Spotts, director of the Bureau of Jewish Education, who arranged and oversaw the Wednesday evening discussion group. According to Rabbi Cohn, Connie Giniger was “a very peppy lady. She was fun, and they didn’t want to let her down. This was an important thing.” To Rabbi Sugarman, “Connie was incredible . . . a

Connie Giniger c. 1979.
(Courtesy of the Giniger Family.)

spark plug. She gathered volunteers [and] she put her heart and soul into it.”²⁹ Giniger was a remarkable individual, but her work was clearly supported and impacted by a myriad of individuals and agencies. Few people mentioned in this article acted alone.

In 1974 Pat Weerts, assistant deputy of the Georgia Commission of Women’s Affairs, requested the help of B’nai B’rith because of its commitment to Jews incarcerated in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary to establish a halfway house for mostly non-Jewish women about to be discharged from the Georgia Penitentiary at Milledgeville. Giniger coordinated the new program and indicated, “These are trusted women. . . . What we want to do is offer them the security of a home-style life so they can work ‘on the outside’ as their release date nears. This way they can learn to cope gradually with the change from confinement and total supervision to freedom and challenge of daily life.” B’nai B’rith requested that the community provide the house in Atlanta and volunteers for the new project under the auspices of the B’nai B’rith men, women, and youth groups. Judy Katz, president of B’nai B’rith Women of Atlanta, and Marshall Solomon, then the Atlanta lodge’s social action chair, explained the need for a three- or four-bedroom house in “[an] older established ‘hamische’ neighborhood” on a bus route for ten to twelve women. The state would provide a housekeeper, and B’nai B’rith members volunteered to refurbish the building. B’nai B’rith also sought volunteers for a state-sponsored workshop to be trained in assisting illiterate adults to improve their skills. Another forty-five women were asked to visit Milledgeville to establish personal relationships with the inmates about to be released or paroled “by reinforcing their pride in appearance and ability.” The donation of a house even in poor repair would provide a tax deduction.³⁰

Later in 1974 Giniger was selected volunteer coordinator for the state Department of Offender Rehabilitation as the direct result of her work in behalf of B’nai B’rith to assist the Jewish prisoners at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary, for all women prisoners at the Milledgeville state corrections facility, and for the new Milledgeville women’s work release program at 41 Peachtree Place in Atlanta. The program extended further to the men’s prison facility at Stone Mountain.³¹ The Atlanta efforts thus mushroomed out into other areas of Georgia and from federal to state facilities.

Prison activities deeply moved Giniger and, consequently, her family. When the prison congregation—a mixture of twenty Jewish and non-

Jewish men—celebrated *rosh chodesh* for the month of Sivan during a Sunday morning service, with tears in her eyes, she reflected, “There is no distinction between age or color or clothing. The whole Congregation participates and for that brief moment a special enchantment, a sense of belonging encompasses the small room.” For Giniger, penitentiary outreach became a family undertaking and a common topic for family conversations. Besides her younger daughter, Barbara, she also brought her mother, Celia Lang, to penitentiary services. Her husband, Mort Giniger, a traveling salesman and Carolina director of B’nai B’rith Youth, spearheaded a B’nai B’rith-sponsored, once-a-month salesmanship course for the inmates. Although many of the inmates were incarcerated for white-collar crimes associated with money, the course stressed issues like how to dress properly and how to sell oneself after incarceration. Although Connie Giniger inspired both of her daughters, Patricia Giniger Snyder and Barbara Giniger Cooper, the younger daughter, who remained at home before attending college, was most impacted. In 1979 Barbara and her mother conducted their workshop, “All Men Are Responsible for One Another: Volunteers in Corrections,” at the National Conference of the American Society for Public Administration in Baltimore.³²

Giniger’s expansion of penitentiary outreach opened other initiatives. In 1975 Ronald Cahn, BBYO District 5 director and an executive board member of Gate City Lodge of B’nai B’rith, who had previously attended weekly services at the penitentiary with other lodge members, now helped head an effort to launch a one-to-one parole-advisor program for Jewish prisoners at the federal penitentiary. Cahn observed that this was the first B’nai B’rith lodge to create such a program. Edward Cohn commented, “The lay people from B’nai B’rith kept things going when we weren’t there. They were the determined effort . . . that the Jews weren’t going to be the orphans of the prison system. They were going to be touched. They were going to be a part of the Jewish community.”³³

Arlene Peck, who was sufficiently well known for Robert Schneider to contact her in 1978, began her work at the penitentiary in 1974 as liaison advisor to the Jewish Discussion Group. Her involvement began in an unusual fashion. Her then-husband, Howard Peck, had been asked by the head of the Bureau of Jewish Education to address the inmates as master

of his Masonic lodge on the benefits of being a Mason. When Arlene accompanied him, she was struck by how much the inmates craved attention and sought attachment to the Jewish community and Jewish identity. Because she felt sorry for them, she undertook her penitentiary responsibilities every Wednesday evening under the auspices of the Bureau of Jewish Education, as had Connie Giniger (although Giniger also worked through B'nai B'rith). According to Peck, she had fun leading the discussion group; "it was a kick." She grew the group to seventy-seven inmates including Jews, Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims who, she hoped, would behave better together under confinement if they got used to talking together. She brought in members of the state legislature to speak and arranged a day-out program to places of Jewish interest for those preparing to be discharged. Three guards accompanied them.³⁴

Marc Wilson, Peck's rabbi at Shearith Israel, remembers, "Once you got on Arlene Peck's radar, you couldn't get off." To him, she was "incredibly nice," and "she had a good heart." She invited him to speak. According to Wilson, it was "very, very casual. Most of the time there were more non-Jews than Jews." The inmates were very respectful of visiting clergy. The members of the Nation of Islam, he pointed out particularly, were "very gentle; very thoughtful" — this at a time when

Rabbi Marc Wilson in 2003.

(Courtesy of Marc Wilson.)

Louis Farrakhan and the Jewish community were especially at odds with each other. Wilson felt like a goodwill ambassador. In still another service provided by the Jewish volunteers, on one occasion Wilson provided moral support while accompanying Peck and Marcia Toppler (later Greene) to a hearing to speak in behalf of an inmate's moral character.³⁵

Peck travelled to the Soviet Union in 1976 where she distributed Bibles and other Jewish literature, illegal acts under Soviet law at the time. She and a friend arrived about the same time as journalists from the *Los Angeles Times*, so the Soviet secret service assumed that she was a journalist and did not prosecute. Upon her return, she spoke frequently and wrote a series of articles on her experiences. Robert I. Hern, an inmate, wrote to Adolph Rosenberg, then editor of the *Southern Israelite*, expressing the appreciation of the Jewish Discussion Group for the publication of the articles. He contended that the periodical was widely read and considered highly educational by members of the penitentiary group.³⁶

Peck was the most controversial Jewish volunteer at the penitentiary and one with a decidedly different perception of prison officials. Although all other Jewish sources praised the prison officials for their cooperation, Peck describes them as antisemitic. According to her, they rejected the provision of kosher food for the inmates as "Jew food." Her first major conflict occurred when she and Catholic priests brought tomato plants to the prisoners at their request. The plants were stored in the warden's office, and he called her to remove them immediately.³⁷

In another altercation, penitentiary officials limited her guests to six with at least one male to every female. This seemingly odd regulation makes sense in the context of a remark made by "The Members of the Jewish Discussion Group" in a laudatory foreword to Peck's book, *Prison Cheerleader: How a Nice Jewish Girl Went Wrong Doing Right*, her recounting of her penitentiary experiences. According to the inmates, "Admittedly, some of us initially attended the Jewish Discussion Group meetings solely to see the lovely ladies that Arlene Peck would invariably have among her guests. Being men deprived of female companionship we looked forward to speaking and sitting next to attractive members of the opposite sex. And the fact that most were pretty, intelligent, articulate and glamorous helped considerably." Peck admitted, "Usually I tried to throw in a couple of pretty girls to give the men something to look at."³⁸ The foreword's

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authors clearly praised Peck's efforts, but officials apparently had legitimate concerns.

The final straw for prison officials came in 1978 when Peck brought state senator and civil rights leader Julian Bond to address the Jewish Discussion Group on the Supreme Court's 1978 *Bakke* decision that limited affirmative action programs. Accompanying them, in addition to her regular volunteers, were his aide and a news reporter. Prison officials denied admission to Bond, his aide, and the reporter, but allowed entrance to Peck and her volunteers. Seemingly the dispute concerned policy and procedure. Peck maintained that she had obtained permission by phone, a procedure she had followed previously. She argued that she later attended an NAACP group discussion inside the penitentiary that had not required advance notice. Prison authorities countered that she received permission from an assistant chaplain unauthorized to grant permission, unlike earlier situations. From the penitentiary staff's perspective, Peck had failed to receive written permission, and Bond presented a security threat. The warden's executive assistant, William Noonan, specified that Bond would draw numerous inmates not normally part of the discussion group and that the consequent overcrowding would create a "potentially explosive [situation] in the prison setting." Peck maintains that they did not want Bond in the prison because he could uncover corruption, that guards ran the concession machines for personal profit. The day after the incident, Spotts, Peck's supervisor as the director of the Bureau of Education,

OPPOSITE PAGE: This picture of Arlene Peck and Julian Bond taken at the time of the confrontation with prison officials marked the end of Peck's work with the Jewish Discussion Group at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. Yet unlike almost every other Jew in the city who assisted Jewish inmates, Peck continued her involvement elsewhere. In collaboration with the controversial head of the Jewish Defense League, Rabbi Meir Kahane, below, she established Jewish discussion groups in other prisons. This 1980 picture depicts Peck and Kahane with an unknown prison chaplain working in behalf of Jewish discussion groups in penitentiaries in New York. Peck's various prisoner-related activities demonstrated her ongoing commitment as well as her role in nurturing a network of activists.

(Courtesy of Arlene Peck.)

received a memo barring Peck and her two regular volunteers indefinitely from the penitentiary.³⁹

Peck found support from inside and outside the penitentiary, including from U.S. Congressman Wyche Fowler (D-GA). Apparently a “personality conflict” already existed between Peck and prison officials, something evidenced by previous complaints to Spotts. Nonetheless, he and others viewed Peck as the “backbone” of the highly successful program. Vida Goldgar, columnist and future editor of the *Southern Israelite*, observed, “Mrs. Peck apparently pursues her goals in a somewhat unorthodox, possibly controversial, manner. She is outspoken and determined. But she appears dedicated to the program and intends to continue helping behind the scenes as other volunteers troop out to the gray stone complex on McDonough Boulevard on Wednesday evenings, doing their best to carry on.” Dana Peck Snyder recalled, “She didn’t make the warden very happy. This was a strong Jewish woman.” Snyder was not surprised that her mother had not received approval from the correct official: “She was not one to pay attention to details.” Rabbi Wilson remembers that Peck had several altercations with prison officials, mostly for advocacy in behalf of prisoners.⁴⁰

Wilson offers a different insight into inmate behavior in relation to the conflicts between Peck and the penitentiary officials: the inmates spent their time antagonizing the prison administration. He observes, “It got a yuck out of them to put the screws to the screws.” They constantly fought over the availability of kosher food although few were Orthodox. Rabbi Cohn bears out this position. He commented that, as a twenty-five-year-old, he had to get used to their conning. They were all innocent, they said. He learned that he was being told total lies. In her interview, Arlene Peck insisted that no one conducted Jewish religious services for the inmates – something that the inmates continuously complained about – that her program was new and unique, and that the local Jewish community did not provide her much support. The Atlanta Jewish Federation hated her, she claimed, because she involved the controversial rabbi Meir Kahane in prison-related and other activities. She and Kahane planned to make the discussion program national in scope. She said, “It was like pulling teeth to get people to go. When it became time for them to go, they’d back out.” When the interviewer informed her that services were being conducted, she insisted that his sources were lying.⁴¹

Peck's comments suggest that she was idealistic, albeit ill-informed. Two aspects of her idealism were a naïve acceptance of the words of the inmates and a rejection of protocol and authority. From the perspective of virtually every other individual interviewed, many inmates could not be trusted and liked to manipulate to anger prison authorities. The prison officials were uniformly cooperative, as one might expect of programs geared toward keeping the inmates happy and on the way toward rehabilitation. Peck took the inmates' statements at face value—a trait that some prisoners took advantage of to create situations that riled prison authorities. Numerous individuals interviewed also noted that Peck was sometimes difficult to get along with.

Peck's candid comments in her book illustrate a seamier side. She took pleasure in antagonizing prison officials and breaking rules, including providing a prostitute to an inmate and alcoholic beverages to inmates and their guards allowed out for one of her programs. Such actions gave her a thrill, unlike what she perceived would be her experience as a typical Jewish wife.⁴² In some ways, then, Giniger's and Peck's prison activities acted as a medium for their perceptions of the changing roles of women. Ultimately the Wednesday Discussion Group was reinstated after Peck's departure, and individuals continued to bring in outside speakers following penitentiary guidelines.

The stories of Ida Goldstein Levitas, Connie Giniger, Arlene Peck, and others demonstrate the active participation of Jewish women as professionals and volunteers in programs for Jewish male inmates. Fear concerning the circumstances in which they operated proved to be little deterrent to either men or women, and their motivations—with the exception of some of Peck's reasoning—were identical.

Denominational Diversity

The next major national and international Jewish organization to make its mark on the prison population was the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. In 1976 Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson (the Rebbe) delivered a *Farbrengen* message to the international followers of his movement that "emphasized and encouraged the sharing of the Purim experience with Jewish inmates in prisons." The Rebbe commented that the prisoners felt "isolation" and "rejection" and that sharing in the Purim celebration could help overcome these emotions. As a result of this public address, Rabbi

Meyer Weiner initiated the prison's first Purim services and party. Weiner made it clear that he undertook his work as a Jewish chaplain at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary under Schneersohn's influence.⁴³

The rabbi at Anshi S'fard, a small Orthodox/Hasidic synagogue, Weiner was not a Lubavitch employee. However his successor as chaplain, Shlomo Bluming, served as a Lubavitcher rabbi and the first director of Atlanta's Chabad Center. Chabad rabbis routinely provided chaplaincy services wherever they were located. As with every organization and congregation noted in this essay, prison chaplaincy efforts were viewed as one of many outreach efforts to Jews seeking spiritual fulfillment and inclusion within the Jewish community.⁴⁴ The participation of other elements of the Jewish community had been from the bottom up. Local lay and rabbinic individuals volunteered, chaplaincy became a mandate for Temple assistant rabbis, and area representatives functioned under local and regional B'nai B'rith auspices. With Schneersohn's *Farbrengen* message, Atlanta Chabad rabbis followed a mandate from the top down.

After Bluming's departure, Rabbi Yossi New was named director of Chabad of Georgia and served as a funded, part-time prison chaplain into the mid 1990s when a colleague assumed the responsibilities. New filled the pulpit of Beth Tefilah, a congregation in Sandy Springs, a northern suburb of Atlanta. In a departure from previous practices, the rabbi obtained furloughs for medium security prisoners to attend Yom Kippur and Passover services at his synagogue. On one occasion he had about eleven prisoners as guests in his home for a Passover seder. The prisoners conversed with the other guests as if they were not incarcerated, and then, because of curfew, departed in an unmarked prison van at the same time the matzo ball soup was being eaten. Only then did New inform his other guests about the inmates' identity.⁴⁵

On another occasion, the rabbi offered to provide the prisoners a meal following the Yom Kippur fast. They did research and requested sandwiches from a kosher deli that they heard gave the most generous portions of meat. Other activities had clearly become routine, and New's chaplaincy duties were mandated as a Chabad rabbi as a continuation of Chabad's mission. New visited the prison typically once a week on Sunday from eleven to one o'clock. He ministered to three Jewish inmates in the high-security section and seven in the low-security prison camp that housed nonviolent, sometimes white-collar criminals with shorter

Rabbi Yossi New.
(*Courtesy of Isser New.*)

sentences. The rabbi and inmates laid *tefillin*, recited prayers, and discussed the weekly Torah portion. In December he made special trips to give the inmates Hanukkah packages. The rabbi discussed their issues, counseled their families, and acted as liaison between the families and prison officials. When families of out-of-state prisoners visited, Chabad provided Shabbat meals. Although he did not offer Shabbat services at the penitentiary because he could not drive on the Sabbath, the rabbi provided *yahrzeit* candles, prayer books, and holiday foods. While New served as chaplain, an Atlanta inmate expressed "apologies to the Jewish community for any embarrassment I may have caused them." The inmates received the *Southern Israelite* for free, and the Jewish National Fund sent calendars. A non-Jewish prisoner asked for New's intercession to obtain a furlough so that he could attend the bar mitzvah of he and his Jewish wife's son. The rabbi remembers treating the inmates like regular members of society and not as numbers or prisoners. The religious services provided them an anchor and sense of normalcy.⁴⁶

In 1979 *Southern Israelite* editor Vida Goldgar reported on a Passover seder she attended at the penitentiary. About thirty inmates attended

along with volunteers active with the Jewish Discussion Group now coordinated by Harold “Mike” and Fredricka “Fritzi” Lainoff. Rabbi Bluming served as chaplain and conducted weekly services. The leaders of the seder were Rabbi Donald Peterman of Beth Shalom and Rabbi Shalom Lewis of Etz Chaim, with Cantor Isaac Goodfriend of Ahavath Achim in his eighth year at the prison seder.⁴⁷

Goldgar’s account provides evidence for several themes. It reflects the long-term commitment of the Jewish newspaper to cover community interaction with the penitentiary, as well as Goldgar’s direct contact with the programs and inmates. The extensive coverage of prison activities by the Atlanta-based, widely circulated *Southern Israelite* attests to the pride taken by the local and regional Jewish communities in prison outreach. Prison activities were important community news concerning what was considered a significant community responsibility. Atlanta Jewry did not hide its dirty linen of Jews convicted of criminal behavior. Nonetheless, little is mentioned of specific crimes committed – things that would place a stigma of criminality on the community.

One might expect variations in the nature of the coverage over eight decades and, for example, between the owner/editorships of Adolph Rosenberg and Vida Goldgar. Yet only two differences are apparent. One is an increase in the number of articles, and the second is a greater number of calls for local volunteers and assistance, both beginning during the 1960s. These changes coincided with the increase in programming and the involvement of more individuals and institutions. Whether the alterations in coverage resulted from the latter or if the wave of social consciousness and activism of the 1960s exerted a causal effect on both increased coverage and prison work remains conjectural.

This article also illustrates the overlap of chaplaincies and programs. As previously demonstrated, Hyman Jacobs’s tenure coincided with that of Temple rabbis. Here Goodfriend’s holiday participation overlaps with those of Chabad rabbis. Although we have not uncovered evidence of coordination across congregations and between individuals, at least some communication likely took place even if through gaining the necessary approval from prison officials. With the participation of Rabbis Peterman and Lewis, this seder provides the somewhat unusual situation of having four very different congregations – Chabad (Hasidic); Ahavath Achim (founded as Orthodox but changed to Conservative), Etz Chaim

*From the Southern Israelite, April 20, 1979.
(Digital Library of Georgia.)*

(Conservative), and Beth Shalom (Liberal Traditional)—represented on one occasion, a truly ecumenical Jewish holiday observance. The participation in penitentiary activities of rabbis and lay people from every Atlanta congregation, with the exceptions of the Sephardic Orthodox Or VeShalom and Ashkenazic Orthodox Beth Jacob, testifies to the widespread concern for the welfare of fellow Jews, the vast majority of whom were from elsewhere in the country. Although incarcerated, members of almost all segments of the Atlanta Jewish community viewed the inmates as worthy of consideration and inclusion.

From Within the Penitentiary

The Jewish community welcomed prison officials as speakers, something the officials appeared to be pleased to do. In 1942 Warden Joseph Sanford spoke to the Gate City Lodge of B'nai B'rith on conditions in the penitentiary. In 1957 The Temple Couples Club heard Warden Wilkinson discuss "The Road Back" for inmates. The presentation following a Friday night service was one of a series of forums on "sociological problems" sponsored by the club. Three years later, Harry Weissman, the director of the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary's Honor Farm, spoke at the Atlanta Jewish Community Center concerning "'The Man Returns'—Rehabilitation of the criminal so that he may return to society." The discussion included such issues as "Methods of Rehabilitation," "Capital punishment—yes or no," and "Conditions in our prisons."⁴⁸

Jewish professionals played roles in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary beyond chaplaincy and programming, thereby demonstrating the variety of prison activity. Weissman epitomized such involvement and how it could intertwine with other community engagement. He held the professional position with the Honor Farm while also serving with his wife as cultural chair of The Temple's Couples Club. When Warden Wilkinson addressed the club, Weissman moderated the discussion. He also participated when the prisoners honored Hyman Jacobs for forty-six years of chaplaincy service in 1958. Weissman provides a link to another national Jewish institution as well: in 1929, he graduated with a degree in agricultural engineering from the National Farm School organized by Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf in 1897 in Doylestown, Bucks County, Pennsylvania.⁴⁹ Perry Brickman consulted at the penitentiary for twenty years as an oral surgeon. During World War II, Dr. Harry R. Lipton, a lieutenant colonel

in the U.S. Public Health Service, was stationed at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. After the war, he continued to serve as public health staff psychiatrist at the facility. The inmates published articles showering praise on Lipton in their publication, the *Atlantian*. In this as in virtually every other instance described in this essay, these individuals do not represent isolated cases in Atlanta but rather examples of a national phenomenon.⁵⁰

With few exceptions, the inmates have been depicted thus far as recipients of services. Nonetheless, as when they defended David Marx in 1939, their Jewish identities and activities also provided one of their few opportunities for agency while incarcerated. Although the date it began remains elusive, the inmates maintained a congregation sometimes called Temple Jaacov and at other times Congregation Beth Yaacov. In 1946 Ben Cohen served as associate editor of the *Atlantian*, the prisoners' newspaper. Two years hence the paper reported on the inmates' celebration of Passover "in the accepted and traditional manner," including "the customary dinner for those of the Jewish faith." Inmates Solomon B. Heiman and Edward Rubin led the seder service, and through the years inmates acted as assistant chaplains; for example, Seymour Haber held the position in 1958 and 1960. In 1958 chaplain's clerk Max Waldman wrote a column that was cleared by penitentiary censorship before being published in the *Southern Israelite*. In it, Waldman reported that he conducted Rosh Hashanah services "in a conservative manner" with the assistance of inmates Harry Peltz and Joe Kaufman. According to Waldman, "It is probable that this great holiday has a deeper meaning to a Jew here than in many places of the world. Beyond His universal forgiveness of all who may have wronged Him, beyond His heartfelt penitence for our sins, thoughts must meet in necessary communion with the thought waves of our loved ones who bow in prayer apart, who once bowed at our side." The warden and associate wardens attended as guests.⁵¹

Jewish community members regularly commented about the inmate-run services, with Passover at the prison being the most noted holiday celebration. In "Unique Jewish Congregation," a columnist wrote that the men attended services in their prison garb—blue denim shirts and pants—and used a homemade bimah. During Passover thirty-two inmates participated in the seder attended by outside, invited guests with the encouragement of the wardens. The men prepared the meal and

*Unidentified individual at the Piggery on the
Honor Farm, Atlanta Federal Penitentiary, c. 1960.
(Harry Weissman Papers, courtesy of the Cuba Family Archives
for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum, Atlanta.)*

observed all other Jewish holidays. Plans were in the works for monthly Hebrew instruction, the showing of movies of Jewish interest, and speakers from the Jewish community. The Jewish prisoners were concerned that the local Jewish community not forget them and would contribute appropriate books and periodicals. "Even more would they hope that concerned and committed people will grant them opportunities, when they are released, to prove that they can take their rightful place in society as contributing citizens." Rabbi Posner commented at the end of an interview, "One of the things I do remember was the seder that the inmates prepared for the inmate community to which they invited representatives from the Atlanta Jewish community. They did a really nice job." Vida Goldgar, who attended multiple penitentiary seders, elaborated on her

*Seder conducted at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary in 1958. The ark in the background, which contained a donated Torah, was built by the prisoners.
(Harry Weissman Papers, courtesy of the Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum, Atlanta.)*

experience: "A mimeographed booklet sat alongside a Hagaddah [sic] that began 'Shalom—Welcome to the 1979 Temple Jaacov Passover Seder.'" One item especially caught her eye: "As detainees, we must consider ourselves lucky to be celebrating our Passover Seder with such abundance." The kosher meal, supervised by a Temple Jaacov member, included matzo ball soup, gefilte fish, chopped liver, kishke, and honey chicken. About thirty inmates attended along with volunteers from the Jewish Discussion Group.⁵²

Another form of agency was evidenced when prisoners gave gifts to the Jewish volunteers and honored them for service. When Jacobs retired in 1963, for example, the prison synagogue members played a prominent role led by their president Milton "Kingfish" Levine. Building a bimah and portable ark, compiling a Hagaddah, and making gifts for those who provided assistance offered the prisoners creative outlets. In 1972 the prisoners voted on and approved a motion to designate their synagogue to be an open congregation, thereby formally welcoming Jews and non-Jews. In 1976 Robert I. Hern wrote to Adolph Rosenberg thanking the editor in behalf of the Jewish Discussion Group for regularly sending copies of the *Southern Israelite* to the prisoners. Although the discussion group was organized and led by members of the Atlanta Jewish community, inmates were clearly empowered by their participation to communicate in this fashion.⁵³

Religion also lent itself to negative agency possibly related to Rabbi Wilson's observation concerning inmates' impulse to conflict with prison officials. In 1972 inmate Robert Greene filed suit against the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary requesting "more religious freedom and privileges for the Jewish congregation." Greene alleged that Jewish prisoners were being denied access to Jewish literature and services. Yet a *sefer Torah* was available at the prison for which prisoners had built a portable ark, and they had access to a small number of books of Jewish content in the chaplain's library. Greene maintained that Hebrew instruction had not been made available, but Assistant Warden J. D. Riggsby, who was in charge of programming, responded that no one had ever requested such instruction. Riggsby indicated a strong willingness to provide whatever books the prisoners required. Finally, Greene maintained that officials refused entry to Richard Henig, a member of The Temple who had been conducting services. As has been documented, services were conducted every

weekend, and holidays were regularly celebrated. Although U.S. District Judge Albert J. Henderson ordered the warden to respond through a U.S. District Attorney to Greene's petition within twenty days, it is hard to fault prison officials or local Jewish community members.⁵⁴

Nonetheless, an anonymous letter to the editor from the Congregation of Temple Yaakov appeared in the *Southern Israelite* on August 25, just eight months after Greene's suit. The letter lamented numerous issues while stressing that "more than all there is the very painful void of never seeing or talking with other Jews in the community." The inmates expressed a strong interest in learning Hebrew. "In short, we wonder why we are cut from the Jewish community in so great a city. Our mistakes did not impair our love for God, or lessen our need for kindness from our own kind." An editor's note indicated that Alvin Sugarman was currently conducting services and that anyone interested in teaching Hebrew should contact the rabbi.⁵⁵ Again, the prisoners' complaints do not seem to reflect the evidence as much as they do the tendency of some inmates to lash out in frustration at their predicament. Most Jewish prisoners were not from Atlanta, yet local Jews still ministered to them and attempted to involve them in the local Jewish community. Perhaps, too, the prisoners sought more contact with the Jewish community because they felt lonely.

National Jewish and Other Faith-Based Contexts

Although somewhat unusual for Atlanta, Rabbi Marx's conflict with prison authorities in 1914 was not a unique occurrence. In 1916 Rabbi Louis Bernstein, formerly a member of the Board of Charities and Corrections of Missouri, criticized the conditions at Jefferson City Penitentiary.⁵⁶ In 1934 Rabbi Charles Mantinband, who served as the Jewish chaplain at the Northeastern Federal Penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, and George Z. Medalie, president of New York's Jewish Board of Guardians, protested to the warden when the superintendent of federal prisons prohibited the provision of Passover food by outside organizations. The warden thereupon authorized the use of federal funds to purchase food for Passover. Yet when non-Jewish inmates deployed antisemitic remarks while protesting against special privileges for the Jewish prisoners, the 170 Jewish inmates decided to fast and pray on the first and last two days of Passover. In an ecumenical twist, Catholic prisoners forwarded a petition to Catholic Church officials in support of the Jews.⁵⁷ Conflict occasionally

occurred because of outside Jewish involvement, although not necessarily on the same level as in Arlene Peck's case. Samuel Weiskopf, for example, gave a Rosh Hashanah sermon about Jesus Christ for Jewish inmates incarcerated in San Francisco. A columnist for Houston's *Jewish Herald* lamented in 1911, "In our opinion, if San Francisco can not secure a Jewish chaplain for the penitentiary, let the Christian chaplain attend to the needs of the Jewish inmate. He would be considerate enough to speak on Moses and not Jesus for the forty-seven Jews in the penal institution."⁵⁸

As in Atlanta, however, prison officials around the country typically welcomed regular and holiday services.⁵⁹ In St Louis in 1912 the superintendent of the Jewish Educational and Charitable Association interceded with the officials at the Missouri State Penitentiary, the city work house, the probation office, and the industrial school for Jews to refrain from work on the High Holidays and, for Jewish children about to be paroled, to be released during the holidays.⁶⁰ Demand for books, other materials, and equipment was also universal. In 1975 President Gerald Ford expressed thanks to the Brandeis University National Women's Committee for distributing three hundred thousand books to federal prisons during the previous two years.⁶¹ With more Jewish prisoners, California volunteers independently took the same concept as Atlanta's Jewish Discussion Group many steps further. In 1970, the nation's largest prison, San Quentin, offered new Judaic studies courses including Jewish history, Zionism, Jews and dissent, and black antisemitism to the seventy-five to one hundred Jewish inmates and other prisoners who wished to attend.⁶²

Thus far, the picture has been of the Jewish community's open acceptance of Jewish criminality. Yet in Atlanta, as elsewhere, defensive efforts were often undertaken to document the relatively small number of Jews incarcerated in relation to the total Jewish population and the general prison population. Reminiscent of contemporary anti-immigrant rhetoric, in 1908 New York City Police Commissioner Theodore A. Bingham attacked Jewish immigrants as the perpetrators of most of the crime in the metropolis. Jews reacted in a variety of ways including the creation of the New York Kehillah.⁶³ Dr. H. S. Linfield, the director of the Jewish Statistical Bureau, was particularly active in this area and was likely charged with gathering and disseminating such data. He submitted regular reports often also through the American Jewish Committee.⁶⁴ Thus attempting to

influence the perception of limited Jewish criminality served as still another Jewish institutional imperative relating to Jews locked behind bars.

Unlike the situation in Georgia, some penitentiaries' Jewish prison populations were large enough and their programs sufficiently developed and supported to create Jewish chapels.⁶⁵ The first Jewish chapel in the federal prison system was established in Sing Sing in New York. B'nai B'rith established the second chapel at the Ohio State Penitentiary in 1929. Dedications became elaborate ceremonies with wardens, local rabbis, and B'nai B'rith representatives participating.⁶⁶

Like Hyman Jacobs and J. Joseph Cohen, laypeople around the country provided services to inmates over extended periods. For example, Charles Ascherman, a jeweler, assisted convicts regardless of race or creed in five Ohio prisons from 1935 into the late 1960s. His contact began when a teenage friend was sent to a reformatory. He arranged for the friend's early release, helped him find a job, and consequently became especially committed to parolees. Thus his initial involvement resulted from a direct link to an individual prisoner, much like the motivation of the director of the B'nai B'rith Commission on Community and Veterans Services described above.⁶⁷

Rabbis served penal institutions as chaplains, and statewide, national, and even international agencies have been devoted to Jewish inmates' interests. Rev. Dr. David L. Liknaitz served as honorary chaplain at the military and federal prisons at Leavenworth, Kansas, from 1905 until at least 1916. He introduced and conducted Friday night services on the first and third Sabbaths of the month and High Holiday services and Pass-over seders, provided prayer books, and furnished a *sefer Torah*.⁶⁸ David Marx's counterpart in Galveston, Texas, Rabbi Henry Cohen, supervised the Synagogue and School Extension in southeast Texas with Rabbi David Rosenbaum of Austin as his deputy. They and others routinely conducted services for the Jewish prisoners and acted in their behalf at the Huntsville State Penitentiary and Wynne Farm, an institution that housed tubercular inmates.⁶⁹ In 1909 when "Rev. Dr. Louis A. Alexander was unanimously elected Jewish chaplain, in all the prisons and public institutions in Boston and Eastern Massachusetts," he was the first Jew to hold that state office.⁷⁰ Rabbi Nathan Zelizer of Congregation Tifereth Israel in Columbus, Ohio, acted as part-time chaplain at the Ohio Penitentiary for twenty-seven

years until it closed in 1973. Zelizer linked the prison chaplaincy with chaplaincies for mental health institutions, as had Hyman Jacobs.⁷¹

Rudolph I. Coffee, rabbi of Temple Sinai of Oakland and president of the California Jewish Committee for Personal Service in State Institutions, catered to Jewish prisoners for decades. He had first become involved with the prison at Joliet while serving at Temple Judea of Lawndale, Illinois. In 1922 Coffee was credited as having visited more penitentiaries than any other rabbi in the country. In 1934 he presented a *sefer Torah* lent by the Hebrew Home for the Aged and Disabled of San Francisco to the 175 Jewish prisoners in San Quentin from around the country and overseas including "one colored man from Abyssinia." Six years later, he conducted a service at Folsom State Prison at which he presented the inmates with a *sefer Torah* donated by Maurice L. Raphael and San Francisco's Sinai Memorial-Chapel. In 1935 the warden of San Quentin called on Protestant and Catholic representatives to join with Coffee to lobby the California legislature for fifty thousand dollars for a prison chapel. The group elected

B'nai B'rith Messenger,
April 19, 1940.
(National Library of Israel.)

Coffee its chair. In 1941, after his retirement from Temple Judea, Coffee occupied a newly created position as the Jewish chaplain for San Quentin, Folsom, and Chino prisons. The previous year he had won election as vice president of the new Prison Association of California.⁷²

In 1937 the New York Jewish Board of Guardians conducted the first of several annual conferences for Jewish prison chaplains, during which plans for forming a national association were formulated. The bylaws and constitution were geared toward helping “integrate the work of chaplains with prison programs . . . which would stimulate the community’s interest in the services rendered to prison inmates by chaplains.” At the second conference, Rabbi Jacob Katz reported that his Jewish congregants at the Sing Sing prison expressed great interest in Jewish history and events unfolding in Palestine. For two years he and the inmates had been debating Mordecai Kaplan’s concept of Judaism as a civilization, with the discussions occasionally becoming “acrimonious.” Rabbi Abraham Holtzberg, chaplain at New Jersey State Prison, questioned the emphasis on Jewish ritual and the provision of special food during Jewish holidays and wondered if these things indirectly encouraged the inmates in “wrongdoing.” Instead, Holtzberg suggested that chaplains inculcated Jewish values to address recidivism.⁷³ Holtzberg’s was clearly a minority view in that Jewish chaplains and laypeople in Atlanta as elsewhere saw benefits in the special holiday celebrations and often fought with prison authorities to make certain that they would be available.

The first national association of Jewish prison chaplains formed by the conference was not the last.⁷⁴ In 1975 the Jewish Identity Center of New York organized a Union of Jewish Prisoners for Jews incarcerated in federal prisons as part of its outreach program. The organization had been in touch with several prisons housing five to twelve Jewish prisoners each and found sporadic Jewish religious services. The center sent literature with religious content to assist them “to re-establish a Jewish identity.” The organization solicited religious books and articles as well as money to provide “holiday fare” to Jewish prisoners incarcerated throughout the country.⁷⁵ Twenty years later, Gary Friedman founded Jewish Prisoners Service International and chaired it until his death in 2016. The rabbi at Congregation Shaarei Teshuvah in Seattle also served as the first Jewish chaplain for the Washington State Department of Corrections from 1992 to 2004 and communications director of the American Correctional

Chaplains Association from 1998 to 2016.⁷⁶ Through the Chabad-Lubavitcher network, programs were established in numerous American locations and as far away as Australia. Some of these go under the title Aleph Institute and employ the motto No One Alone, No One Forgotten.⁷⁷

Conferences and organizations offered mechanisms for communication and interaction, and the Jewish press served as another such platform. Jewish periodicals from Boston to Los Angeles informed readers concerning individuals, activities, and events throughout the country. On August 24, 1917, for example, the Chicago *Sentinel* reported that Rabbi David Marx “received a very hearty ovation” when he addressed the twelve hundred inmates at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary, and that after his address he conducted services for the Jewish prisoners.⁷⁸ Unsurprisingly given the extensive B’nai B’rith involvement already documented, its Los Angeles-based publication, the *B’nai B’rith Messenger*, published numerous articles on programs for Jewish prisoners from across the country.

Jewish youth throughout the country – mirroring those in Atlanta – demonstrated interest in the plight of inmates and participated in prison programs including attending regular and holiday services. Israel Kaplan, rabbi emeritus at Congregation Ahavath Chesed in Jacksonville, Florida, brought future historian Stephen J. Whitfield to Raiford Prison to assist him in conducting Sabbath services circa 1957.⁷⁹ Thirteen young men and women visited the twenty Jewish prisoners at the Correctional Facility in Wallkill, New York, north of New York City. The Hebrew Congregation at Wallkill had forwarded the prisoners’ invitation to Bet Kafe, a free Jewish coffee house in Greenwich Village. The young people brought Jewish foods and books donated by the Jewish Theological Seminary library. A Sephardi visited with a prisoner from the same background, and one visitor spoke with a former neighbor.⁸⁰ Neither were Connie Giniger and Arlene Peck alone among female activists. In 1914, the Independent German-American Woman’s Club, “many members of which number among our most active Jewish club women in the city,” visited the Illinois State Penitentiary even though “there are *no Jewesses among the women prisoners at Joliet.*”⁸¹

Although far more research is needed, this introductory comparative analysis suggests that the activities and experiences of the Atlanta Jewish community were relatively typical. Virtually every pattern identified for

*From the Aleph Institute website devoted to the organization's prison activities.
(www.aleph-institute.org.)*

Atlanta mirrored those found elsewhere. The few differences—including the creation of chapels and statewide organizations—resulted from the presence of larger numbers of Jewish inmates in specific prisons and states rather than regional differences.

Comparative studies concerning non-Jewish prison activities, including those of Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim organizations, also disclose similarities with and differences from the Jewish activities documented here. These groups dealt with larger numbers of prisoners in contrast to the extremely small population of Jewish inmates. Prisons typically employed full-time Catholic or Protestant chaplains professionally trained to work with the incarcerated, whereas Jewish chaplains were typically part-time volunteers. Many Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim clergy and laypeople considered proselytizing a legitimate goal. Jews, on the other hand, may have been motivated in their actions to counteract such conversion activities aimed at Jewish prisoners, but they did not espouse conversion as part of their mission. During the 1930s the emphases of

Catholic and Protestant clergy, however, shifted toward rehabilitation, a change that Muslim clergy undertook more recently.⁸²

The word *penitentiary* derives from *penitent*, and Protestants and Catholics became deeply involved in prison work virtually from the onset of incarceration as a punishment. Chaplains expanded their prison work during the Progressive Era, and the American Correctional Chaplains Association was established in 1885.⁸³ The Catholic Church and Episcopalian and other Protestant denominations sponsor national chaplaincy associations paralleling their Jewish counterparts. In 2011 the Association of Muslim Chaplains was established although statewide organizations existed earlier. From the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* and other sources, the activities of the Nation of Islam to proselytize inmates, give them a sense of pride and self worth, and help them once they left prison can be traced.⁸⁴ From Arlene Peck, we know that the local NAACP conducted a study group with speakers for African American prisoners at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary at the same time that she ran the Jewish Discussion Group.

Catholic and Protestant religious work at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary provides several specific insights for a comparative approach. The Reverend Dr. H. Park Tucker, a Baptist, served as full-time chaplain beginning in 1948, having previously served at Chillicothe Delinquent Center in Ohio. Tucker wrote "A History of the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary, 1901-1956," which praises Rabbi Marx profusely and provides substantial material for comparison and contrast with Jewish activities in that era. From 1901 to 1915, Dr. Tullius C. Tupper, an Episcopalian chaplain, served in a full-time capacity while Marx worked part-time. Tupper established and ran the prison library and school, compiled religious statistics, conducted funerals, censored prisoners' mail, and obtained the donation of numerous Bibles and other books. He also established the precedent of inviting local religious organizations to assist in services, much like the case later for the Jewish community. Music accompanied the services, guest speakers including evangelist Billy Sunday and Evangeline Booth, the commander of the Salvation Army, participated, and Tupper published a prison bulletin. Over the next five decades, Methodist, Congregational, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Christian ministers, as well as a major from the Salvation Army, served as chaplains, with local clergy filling in during vacancies. During the 1920s, under Rev. George

Ladlow, the Salvation Army chaplain, a Brighter Day League met twice a month as a discussion group featuring outside speakers similar to the Jewish Discussion Group of later decades. In 1923 the Protestant chaplain occupied a new residence built within the penitentiary "Reservation." Until 1920 all prisoners including Jews had to attend Sunday services.⁸⁵

During the 1930s chaplains were released from their responsibility over the educational program with the hiring of a full-time instructional employee. In 1939 a Saturday morning town hall forum was established under the auspices of the supervisor of education. Numerous outside speakers stimulated the discussions. Other individuals also assumed duties over the legal department and assistance to needy families. A full-time librarian took away another task, so that the chaplains thereafter concentrated on religious functions and services. Area ministers frequently assisted the regular chaplains so that, like the Jews, numerous Protestant denominations worked together. Into the 1940s and 1950s, for example, the local Salvation Army conducted monthly services, provided church music, and distributed religious literature. During the same period, Chaplain H. Park Tucker instituted a Religious Psychotherapy Group.⁸⁶

Tucker indicated that from 1901 to 1909, a visiting priest from Immaculate Conception Church conducted mass every fourth Sunday. By 1909 Catholics comprised one-third of the prison population, justifying the employment of a full-time chaplain. From 1909 to 1911, T. J. Morrow worked in that position. He helped Tupper with the library and education program, conducted an English class for mostly Italian prisoners, and ran singing and Bible classes. From 1911 on, regular Catholic chaplains filled the role with the exception of vacancies, during which local priests performed as part-time volunteers.⁸⁷ Father Michael J. Byrne greatly expanded the recreation program during his tenure from 1917 to 1922 and secured athletic equipment through donations from throughout the country. Initially Catholic clergy conducted weekly mass in the penitentiary auditorium. In 1917 Bishop Kelley of Savannah blessed a new Catholic chapel situated above the auditorium that seated five hundred people. Besides mass, Byrne heard confessions on Saturdays, conducted personal conversations with inmates on Tuesdays, helped Catholic inmates secure employment after incarceration, and assisted inmates' families through the St. Vincent de Paul Society. He also served the entire prison population as morale and welfare officer. Regardless of Byrne's

LEFT TO RIGHT: Hyman S. Jacobs, Chaplain H. Park Tucker, and Harry Weissman at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary, c. 1960. The handwritten message is from Tucker to Weissman and reads: "To my friend Harry Wiseman [sic], a gentleman & friend. Chaplain H. P. Tucker, U. S. P., Atlanta G." (Harry Weissman Papers, courtesy of the Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum, Atlanta.)

full-time status, Catholics, like Jews, could bear the brunt of prejudice, as when a deputy warden refused to allow Catholic prisoners to attend mass. Byrne was prepared to fight the issue in Washington—as Marx had done for Jews in 1914—until the warden and superintendent of prisons intervened and allowed the men to practice their beliefs. During the 1920s the Knights of Columbus offered the prisoners a vocational training course similar to what Jewish groups provided in later decades.⁸⁸ Thus, unlike Jewish prisoners, Protestant and Catholic inmates benefited from the presence of full-time clergy.

Until the 1930s these full-time employees of the prison system performed duties assigned by the wardens that far exceeded what their Jewish part-time volunteer counterparts would have even wanted to undertake. Beginning during the 1930s, they became religious specialists and engaged in programming similar to the work of the Jewish chaplains and religious lay leaders, but primary differences stemmed from the size of the inmate populations. The Protestant inmate population justified a full-time chaplain from the opening of the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary, and a full-time Catholic chaplain's position was established once the Catholic inmate population was sufficiently large to warrant it. Ultimately the increase in Catholic incarceration also justified the creation of a separate Catholic chapel, whereas a separate Jewish chapel was never considered.⁸⁹

Ministers from a variety of Protestant denominations catered to the needs of the Protestant inmates in the same way that Reform, Orthodox, Conservative, and Hasidic rabbis served the Jewish inmates. Behind prison doors the form of worship did not seem to be as significant as having people care and show interest, and being able to find respite and meaning in one's faith.

Conclusion

The prisoners' complaints and those of Arlene Peck—whether or not they had sufficient grounds—does not distract overly from the extensive record of Jewish commitment to the prisoners. Motivations varied from Jacobs's commitment to his father, to the social justice endeavors of Classical Reform rabbi David Marx, to the designated roles of Temple and Chabad rabbis, to the fulfillment of B'nai B'rith and Union of American Hebrew Congregations missions, to the thrill felt by Peck, and to the personal desire of individuals to help those in need. Motivation does not

appear to have changed over time. For almost every individual and institution, it centered on helping fellow Jews in need. The rise of activism of Chabad reflected the single alteration in any sort of evolving American Jewish zeitgeist. Rather than being hidden in shame, the activities of those individuals and organizations devoted to penitentiary outreach were advertised, and the Jewish community encouraged participation. With few exceptions, those involved received the support and cooperation of penitentiary officials who believed that the efforts of the volunteers would exert a salutary impact on the inmates. The religious freedom of those incarcerated as a constitutional right only arose as an issue on the few occasions when penitentiary officials denied the holding of religious services or withheld permission to miss work in order to participate in holiday celebrations.

Like the volunteers, the prisoners desired the Jewish programming for a variety of reasons. They gained a sense of fulfillment, Jewish identity, and belonging to the larger Jewish community and found diversion from the monotony of prison life. They attended for food, wine, and interaction with beautiful and interesting women, found positive and possibly negative agency, and gained hope for greater opportunity and inclusion within Jewish communities when they were freed from incarceration.⁹⁰

This article documents how penitentiary outreach mirrored programs to Jews in mental facilities, Jewish immigrants, Jewish orphans, college students through Hillel, Jews stationed at military installations, and Jewish senior citizens. Ministering to the needs of inmates and how inmates benefited from faith-based programming and worship did not differ markedly from these similar endeavors, and every individual and organization active in prison work did so as part of involvement in such similar activities. These stories of all of these people and programs are intertwined. Such a finding suggests that these programs should be viewed from a holistic perspective as fundamental aspects of Jewish social service.

Finally, this paper raises numerous issues for future research. What happened to the inmates who participated in these programs after they left prison? Did the programs help them stay out of prison? Did they join local Jewish communities, and did their incarceration impact the way in which the community received them?⁹¹ In terms of B'nai B'rith and Chabad, prison outreach clearly went beyond Atlanta. For example, the B'nai B'rith Community and Veterans Services Committee received requests

from Jewish prisoners at the Raiford State Prison and the Belle Glade Correctional Institute in Florida and federal correctional facilities in Leavenworth, Kansas, and Fort Worth, Texas, for programs similar to that developed by Connie Giniger in Atlanta.⁹² Research as that only touched on in this essay in other Jewish communities near federal and state penitentiary facilities and for Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim communities should be undertaken and compared and contrasted with the Atlanta experience. The preliminary research presented here suggests the potential fruitfulness of further study.⁹³

NOTES

¹ The Atlanta Federal Penitentiary opened in 1902 as a medium-security federal prison. It continues to operate today as the United States Penitentiary, Atlanta.

² Arlene G. Peck, letter to the editor, *Southern Israelite* (Atlanta), April 14, 1978; Arlene G. Peck, interview conducted by Mark K. Bauman, March 22, 2018.

³ Dana Peck Parker, telephone interview conducted by Mark K. Bauman, March 21, 2018.

⁴ Marc Wilson, telephone interview conducted by Mark K. Bauman, March 21, 2018.

⁵ Marni Davis, *Jews and Booze: Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition* (New York, 2012); Edward J. Bristow, *Prostitution and Prejudice: The Jewish Fight Against White Slavery, 1870–1939* (New York, 1983); Albert Fried, *The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Gangster in America* (New York, 1980); Alan A. Block, *East Side–West Side: Organizing Crime in New York, 1930–1950* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1983); Burton B. Turkus and Sid Feder, *Murder, Inc.: The Story of the Syndicate* (New York, 1992); Rich Cohen, *Tough Jews: Fathers, Sons, and Gangster Dreams* (New York, 1998); Leo Katcher, *The Big Bankroll: The Life and Times of Arnold Rothstein* (New York, 1959); Nick Tosches, *King of the Jews: The Arnold Rothstein Story* (London, 2005); David Pietrusza, *Rothstein: The Life, Times, and Murder of the Criminal Genius Who Fixed the 1919 World Series* (New York, 2003); Bradley Lewis, *Hollywood's Celebrity Gangster: The Incredible Life and Times of Mickey Cohen* (New York, 2007); Robert Lacey, *Little Man: Meyer Lansky and the Gangster Life* (New York, 1991); Dennis Eisenberg, Uri Dan, and Eli Landau, *Meyer Lansky: Mogul of the Mob* (New York, 1979); Paul Sann, *Kill the Dutchman: The Story of Dutch Schultz* (New York, 1971); Paul R. Kaviieff, *The Purple Gang: Organized Crime in Detroit* (New York, 2000); Gus Russo, *Supermob: How Sidney Korshak and His Criminal Associates Became America's Hidden Power Brokers* (New York, 2006); Jenna Weissman Joselit, *Our Gang: Jewish Crime and the New York Jewish Community, 1900–1940* (Bloomington, IN, 1983); Robert A. Rockaway, *But – He Was Good to His Mother: The Lives and Crimes of Jewish Gangsters* (Jerusalem, Israel, 1993).

⁶ Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York, 1968); Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (New York, 2003); Simon Baatz, *For the Thrill of It: Leopold, Loeb, and the Murder That Shocked Chicago* (New York, 2008); Hal Higdon, *Leopold and Loeb: The Crime of the Century* (Urbana, IL, 1975); Virginia Carmichael, *Framing History: The Rosenberg Story and the Cold War* (Minneapolis, MN, 1993); Alvin H. Goldstein, *The Unquiet Death of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg* (New York, 1975); Walter Schneir, *Final Verdict: What Really Happened in the Rosenberg Case* (Brooklyn, 2010); Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton, *The Rosenberg File* (New Haven, 1997); Wolf Blitzer, *Territory of Lies: The Exclusive Story of Jonathan Jay Pollard, the American Who Spied on His Country for Israel and How He Was Betrayed* (New York, 1989); Bernard R. Henderson, *Pollard: The Spy's Story* (New York, 1988); Ronald J. Olive, *Capturing Jonathan Pollard: How One of the Most Notorious Spies in American History Was Brought to Justice* (Annapolis, MD, 2006).

⁷ An example of the holistic view of service programs supported by Gate City Lodge of B'nai B'rith appears in "Atlanta Lodge drive aids Russian immigrants," *Southern Israelite*, August 17, 1979. "[C]onducting services and supporting Jewish inmates at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary" stood along with picking up household goods and clothing for the 150 Soviet families expected to settle in the city, a minicamp for blind children, a BBYO chapter for twenty mentally handicapped children, and activities at the Veterans Administration hospital and Jewish Home.

⁸ We were able to trace only two inmates after incarceration. William Silver, according to prison records, broke prohibition laws in New York and entered the Atlanta Federation Penitentiary around 1910. He had run a liquor enterprise with his two brothers for whom he took the rap. His father-in-law was Philip Solomon "Shalom" Clein, the *shamash* at Shearith Israel in Atlanta. Because of this connection, Rabbi Tobias Geffen visited Silver in jail. After serving his sentence, Silver remained in Atlanta where he ran a janitorial service, the Atlanta Winter Cleaning Company. William Silver (his grandson and namesake), telephone interview conducted by Mark K. Bauman, March 19, 2018. Harry Goldenhirsch was convicted of mail fraud and served in the penitentiary from 1929 to 1932. As Harry Golden, he later gained renown as a speaker, author, and publisher of the *Carolina Israelite*. Kimberly Marlowe Hartnett, *Carolina Israelite: How Harry Golden Made Us Care About Jews, The South, and Civil Rights* (Chapel Hill, 2015).

⁹ Mark K. Bauman and Arnold Shankman, "The Rabbi as Ethnic Broker: The Case of David Marx," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 2 (Spring 1983): 51–68; Mark K. Bauman, "The Emergence of Jewish Social Service Agencies in Atlanta," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* (Winter 1985): 488–508; "Rabbi Marx Dies at 89, Brilliant Career as Spiritual Leader of Temple for 51 Years," *Southern Israelite*, February 23, 1962.

¹⁰ The conflict was actually more complex than depicted here. Myer Cohen, telegram to David Marx, September 18, 1914; David Marx, telegram to Myer Cohen, September 18, 1914; David Marx, letter to Myer Cohen, September 22, 1914; Earnest Knaebel, assistant attorney general, letter to Myer Cohen, September 22, 1914; Simon Wolf, letter to David Marx, September 25, 1914; David Marx, letter to Simon Wolf, October 8, 1914. These documents are all in The Temple Records, MSS 59, box 2, file 5, Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History at the Breman Museum, Atlanta (hereafter cited as Cuba Family Archives). Archivist Jeremy Katz graciously provided this and other Breman records.

¹¹ Marx letter to Wolf, October 8, 1914, Cuba Family Archives. Mr. Heilbron, whose first name is unknown, conducted Sunday school classes at the penitentiary under Marx's direction. This partnership between a rabbi and layperson typified future interactive efforts.

¹² Simon Wolf served as president of the Hebrew Orphans' Home in Atlanta, an institution to which Marx was also deeply committed. B'nai B'rith District Lodge 5 established the home in 1889 as one of a network of such enterprises nationally. In a similar fashion to how chaplaincies in multiple venues mirrored that in the Atlanta penitentiary, B'nai B'rith's participation in prison outreach fit well with its mission to assist Jewish orphans. On Wolf, Marshall, Marx and the Frank case, see Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise*, 346, 348. Connie Giniger's penitentiary work through B'nai B'rith and presumably that of many others discussed below fell under the auspices of B'nai B'rith's Commission on Community and Veterans' Services, a reflection of how the fraternal order viewed the work as part of similar endeavors. Barbara Giniger Cooper, telephone interview conducted by Mark K. Bauman, April 9, 2018.

¹³ This and other tributes from the *Atlantian* quoted in "Dr. Marx Retains Respect of Community: Many Tributes Offered in Defense of Rabbi's Character; Chosen as Flag Day Speaker by Elks," *Southern Israelite*, June 16, 1939.

¹⁴ "Atlanta Federal Prisoners Honor Jacobs for 46 Years as Chaplain," *Southern Israelite*, June 20, 1958, (for "dollar-a-year" and Waldman quotations); Greville Janner, "In American Gaols," *Southern Israelite*, February 3, 1956, reprinted from *Jewish Chronicle* (London, England, for quotation on his ordination); "60 Year Volunteer: Georgia's 'Circuit Rider' Will Be Honored by District 5, B'nai B'rith, on June 4," *Southern Israelite*, June 2, 1961; Adolph Rosenberg, "Federal Prison Rites Pay Rare Tribute to Retiring Chaplain," *Southern Israelite*, December 27, 1963 (warden's quotation concerning Jacobs' father; Wilkinson quotation). In 1900 Jacobs helped organize the Georgia Association of B'nai B'rith Lodges and later served as president of Atlanta's Gate City Lodge and presided over B'nai B'rith District 5. He helped form B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations at the Universities of Florida and Georgia as well as Atlanta's B'nai B'rith Women's chapter. In 1945 the executive director of the Atlanta Federation of Jewish Social Services and of the Atlanta Jewish Welfare Fund called Jacobs "the indomitable, unperturbed 'lone wolf' of B'nai B'rith work" for Jacobs's efforts in behalf of the Jewish students at the Riverside Military Academy. Jacobs also led services for Jewish patients at the State Hospital in Milledgeville and for outlying congregations lacking rabbis. Edward M. Kahn, "Atlanta Takes Stock: The Jewish Community at Work During 1944-1945," *Southern Israelite*, September 14, 1945. Jacobs served as president of Ahavath Achim, the Atlanta congregation of the more affluent and acculturated eastern European Orthodox Jews, and held dual membership at The Temple. Apparently, at least for some of his tenure, Jacobs and a Mr. Golden served as Marx's assistants during services at the prison, and Jacobs conducted services in Marx's absence. Jacobs continued to assist Rabbi Harry Epstein, but when Epstein resigned in 1951, Jacobs assumed the primary responsibility with the assistance of M. Krugman (1950-1953) and Seymour Haber (1954), with an occasional visit by Rabbi Arnold Heisler. In December 1951 the executive director of the southern Zionist district, Irvin Abrahamowitz, conducted services, introducing still another organization. The local Christian Science community provided a similar mix of individuals. During the 1920s the Jewish prison population

at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary approximated 160. During the 1930s this number increased to 175. The Protestant chaplain frequently attended the Jewish services. H. Park Tucker, "The History of the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary, 1901-1956" 260, 268, 349, 503-4, 505, Appendix E, 613, Archival Collection, Federal Bureau of Prisons, National Archives, College Park, Maryland. Tucker's history was graciously provided by Anne Diestel, Archivist/Historian, Federal Bureau of Prisons, National Corrections Academy.

¹⁵ "Atlanta Federal Prisoners Honor Jacobs"; "60 Year Volunteer"; Rosenberg, "Federal Prison Rites." Dr. Irving Greenberg, honorary president of the Hebrew Academy, who spoke at the 1963 tribute, was Arlene Peck's uncle.

¹⁶ Elliott Levitas, son of Ida Goldstein and Louis Levitas, telephone interview conducted by Mark K. Bauman, February 13, 2018. The Jewish Educational Alliance, forerunner of the Atlanta Jewish Community Center, largely served eastern European Jewish immigrants and their children.

¹⁷ David Geffen, e-mail to Mark K. Bauman, March 23, 2018. Ultimately, Tobias Geffen investigated this man's case and helped him obtain parole. Geffen often helped locate men who had abandoned their wives so that the women could receive a get. To this end, he, a witness, and a scribe visited a man in a Florida prison and convinced him to sign the Jewish divorce document that the scribe wrote inside the prison. The rabbi served Congregation Shearith Israel in Atlanta from 1910 for almost six decades and represented the less acculturated and less affluent eastern European Jews in the city. See Joel Ziff, ed., *Lev Tuviah: On the Life and Work of Rabbi Tobias Geffen* (Newton, MA, 1988), 32, 33.

¹⁸ "Charles W. Bergman, New Atlanta School Commissioner," *Southern Israelite*, June 30, 1933; "Education Bureau Invites Public to Hear Israeli Scholar Rabin," *Southern Israelite*, April 21, 1967. Bergman was also involved with B'nai B'rith and served as president of the Atlanta Zionist district. *Southern Israelite*, December 5, 1941; April 21, 1967.

¹⁹ As was virtually universally the case, prison work served as one of numerous, often interrelated, causes for Pintchuck. She also worked in behalf of American Relief for Korea, Inc., the Atlanta War Records Committee during World War II, and provided assistance in Grady Hospital's children's polio ward while president of B'nai B'rith Women of Atlanta (1947-1949). Pintchuck was elected district deputy of B'nai B'rith Women, chaired the Inter-faith Committee of The Temple Sisterhood, and served on the boards of National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), the Jewish Children's Services, and the Battle Hill Haven of the Women's Advisory Committee for Georgia Civil Defense. *Southern Israelite*, December 28, 1945; January 30, 1948 (includes a picture of her at the prison farm); July 29, 1960.

²⁰ "Rabbi Epstein Named Chaplain in Atlanta Pen," *Southern Israelite*, March 15, 1946. Epstein served as chaplain for area military bases during World War II and honorary chaplain of Jewish War Veterans post 112. Mark K. Bauman, *Harry H. Epstein and the Rabbinate as Conduit for Change* (Cranbury, NJ, 1994), 58.

²¹ "Sports on Bennett Field," *Atlantian*, July/September 1946; "B'nai B'rith Bests Pen Tennis Team," *Southern Israelite*, July 4, 1947; Eddie Silverboard, "Hits—Splits—Bowling Bits: Eight AJCC Racketeers Serve at Atlanta Federal Pen," *Southern Israelite*, September 3, 1965; Miles Alexander, e-mail to Mark K. Bauman, February 22, 2018; Levitas interview, February

13, 2018. The Jewish program was neither unique nor isolated since the penitentiary conducted a tennis program that expanded, especially under Warden Fred T. Wilkinson, an avid player. Tucker, "History of the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary," 595.

²² Rosenberg, "Federal Prison Rites"; "Education Intangibles Theme for Hebrew Academy Season," *Southern Israelite*, October 20, 1961. Feuerman served on the board of the Atlanta Jewish Community Center, and during his short tenure, the Hebrew Academy grew exponentially. He remained penitentiary chaplain until his departure for a new position in Montreal in 1967. *Southern Israelite*, January 14, 1966; November 22, 1963; "Nation's Jewish Editors Head for Atlanta Parley Next Week," *Southern Israelite*, May 13, 1965; Gertrude Krick, "Hebrew Academy Success Story: From Affiliation to Accreditation," *Southern Israelite*, December 10, 1971; "Rabbi Feuerman to Leave Academy for Montreal Post," *Southern Israelite*, May 5, 1967.

²³ A member of Gate City Lodge, Cohen's prison activities exemplified his many volunteer commitments often in leadership capacities in behalf of the Louis Kahn Group Home for the Elderly, the Atlanta Jewish Community Center, the Hebrew Academy, and the Jewish National Fund. He participated in the Russian immigrant resettlement and employment committee of the Jewish Family and Children's Bureau. "Joseph Cohen, ex-JFS chairman, dies at 64," *Southern Israelite*, June 27, 1986; "Joseph Cohen to Head AJWF Allocations Committee," *Southern Israelite*, September 26, 1975; February 14, 1975; February 16, 1973; April 5, 1947; January 4, 1980; December 24, 1971; November 13, 1970; October 19, 1979; Rosalind Pap, "Remembering J. Joseph Cohen," *Southern Israelite*, July 25, 1986; February 26, 1971; May 2, 1969; November 3, 1961.

²⁴ "Unique Jewish Congregation," *Southern Israelite*, July 21, 1967; "Will Address AJCC Group," *Southern Israelite*, May 3, 1968; Phillip Posner, e-mail to Mark K. Bauman, March 7, 2017; Alvin Sugarman, telephone interview conducted by Mark K. Bauman, March 5, 2017; "Rabbi Samuel Will Install Rabbi Sugarman April 26," *Southern Israelite*, April 12, 1974. On DeCavalcante, see Henry A. Zeiger, *Sam the Plumber: The Real-Life Saga of a Mafia Chieftain* (New York, 1970). In 1965 Richard J. Lehrman became Rothschild's assistant and conducted Sunday morning services and counseled prisoners at the penitentiary for three years. After serving as assistant rabbi at The Temple, Lehrman became the founding rabbi of Temple Sinai, thus providing a link to still another congregation. Although this article stresses the Jewish community's contribution to the lives of the prisoners, in his interview Sugarman noted that after he informed DeCavalcante about a child with spina bifida who celebrated his bar mitzvah at The Temple, the Spina Bifida Foundation consequently notified the rabbi that the DeCavalcante Family Foundation had contributed four thousand dollars to the cause. After his discharge from the penitentiary, DeCavalcante continued to be in touch with Connie Giniger. When she visited New Jersey, he had his chauffeur pick her up at the airport and drive her to the Playboy Club, where DeCavalcante met her and treated her to lunch. Cooper interview. Rabbi Rothschild's widow, Janice Rothschild Blumberg, recalls the presence of Meyer "Mickey" Cohen in the penitentiary. This Jewish boss of the West Coast rackets was convicted of tax evasion and false and fraudulent statements, transferred to the Atlanta facilities in the early 1960s after the close of Alcatraz, where he had been incarcerated, and discharged in 1972. Janice Rothschild Blumberg, e-mail to Mark K. Bauman, March 27, 2018; "Meyer Harris Cohen," Alcatraz, California, U.S.

Penitentiary, Prisoner Index, 1934-1963, AncestryLibrary, accessed May 11, 2018, https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=xVp148&_phstart=success-Source&usePUBJs=true&gss=angs-g&new=1&rank=1&msT=1&gsfn=Meyer%20Harris%20&gsfn_x=0&gsln=Cohen&gsln_x=0&catbucket=rstp&MSAV=0&uidh=d24&pcat=ROOT_CATEGORY&h=1518&recoff=8%209%2010%2022%2068&dbid=34666&indiv=1&ml_rpos=1.com; Lewis, *Hollywood's Celebrity Gangster*; Steve Stevens and Craig Lockwood, *King of the Sunset Strip: Hangin' With Mickey Cohen and the Hollywood Mob* (Nashville, 2006); Tere Tereba, *Mickey Cohen: The Life and Crimes of L.A.'s Notorious Mobster* (Toronto, 2012).

²⁵ Sugarman interview; remarks by Rabbi Martin Lawson during The Temple's 150th anniversary, February 2, 2018, "The Temple and the Brockey-Rothschild Memorial Institute Present: *Aseh L'cha Rav*—Find Yourself a Teacher: Temple Rabbis Return Home," brochure, The Temple, Atlanta, Georgia, February 2-3, 2018; Edward Cohn, telephone interview conducted by Mark K. Bauman, March 5, 2018.

²⁶ Cohn interview; Adolph Rosenberg, "Atlanta Penitentiary Inmate Claims Jewish Prisoners Deprived of Religious Freedom," *Southern Israelite*, January 21, 1972.

²⁷ On this and following see Vida Goldgar, "Connie Giniger Mobilizes Communal Talent for New Era at Federal Pen," *Southern Israelite*, October 12, 1973; Sugarman interview; Adrienne Abramson Mendel, "The Atlanta Story," *Congressional Record*, March 21, 1974 (the bottom of the *Congressional Record* page indicates that this document was available from the B'nai B'rith Commission on Community and Veterans Affairs); Cooper interview.

²⁸ Congressman Andrew Young to the editor, *Southern Israelite*, May 18, 1973.

²⁹ Cohn interview; "Connie Giniger: 92, Germantown, Md.," *Southern Israelite*, April 6, 2018. Ten to fifteen members of The Temple Youth Group participated in numerous Sabbath services, according to Giniger's daughter Barbara Giniger Cooper, a regular attendee. Cooper recalls something similar to what several interviewees commented about. When a person entered the penitentiary, they stood between a gate in front and a gate behind. It was "really frightening." The volunteer faced the choice of going forward or backward. As a teenager, she got used to this. "Once the gate closed there were always bodyguards—inmates that would surround us to make sure we'd be safe." When one inmate convicted of bank robbery was released from prison, Connie and Morton Giniger introduced him and his wife into their Temple *havurah* group where they were made welcome. An artist who painted a picture for Giniger, he became very active in The Temple. Cooper interview. Giniger indicated, "My visits are always emotionally charged experiences and yet the prisoners know what areas are beyond our purview. Legal action regarding their parole, pardon or appeal status are NOT legitimate expressions of the type of service we can properly undertake." Mendel, "The Atlanta Story."

³⁰ Similarly, in 1962 Rabbi Morris Shapiro of Temple Beth Israel of Jackson, MI, helped establish a halfway house "similar to that of Father Dismas Clark's 'The Hoodlum Priest,'" in St Louis. Staff Reporter, "Rabbi Had Light Case Load in World's Largest Prison," *Sentinel* (Chicago), August 2, 1962.

³¹ Vida Goldgar, "B'nai B'rith Seek Atlanta 'Half-Way' House for Georgia Ex-Prisoners," *Southern Israelite*, January 25, 1974; "Notes," *Southern Israelite*, July 26, 1974; Cooper interview. Giniger addressed the University of Georgia Hillel Foundation on "All Men are

Responsible," based on her prison work and pamphlet. "Mrs. Giniger Will Speak at UGa," *Southern Israelite*, February 6, 1976.

³² Connie Giniger, "Sunday Morning Reflections," *Southern Israelite*, July 16, 1976; Cooper interview; "Connie Giniger: 92." Barbara Giniger Cooper received her bachelor's degree in administration of justice and was then serving as a job development specialist at American University. During her college years, she worked as a cooperative education intern with the Montgomery County Detention Center and as a volunteer assisting female inmates. Her mother's work had inspired her to pursue this major and her career with substance abuse and prevention for the criminal justice system. Patricia Giniger Snyder produces videos concerning reentry issues for federal clients. Connie Giniger's position as coordinator was only funded for one or two years. At the end of that period, her supervisor, Tom Jenkins, had already departed. She was placed with probation and parole, a position not on a par with her previous work. She became regional director of B'nai B'rith Women and finished her professional career as the director of Meals on Wheels for Jewish Family and Career Services. Governor Jimmy Carter honored Connie Giniger for her penitentiary efforts, and U.S. Senator Herman Talmadge placed an article discussing her accomplishments, "The Atlanta Story," by Adrienne Abramson Mendel, in the *Congressional Record*, March 21, 1974.

³³ Cohn interview.

³⁴ Arlene Peck, interview conducted by Mark K. Bauman, March 28, 2018; Arlene Peck, *Prison Cheerleader: How a Nice Jewish Girl Went Wrong Doing Right* (n.p., 2009), 11-16 (the "kick" quotation is on p. 16). Peck's book, providing her description of her work and her side of the various conflicts, should be read with care. For example, on p. 17 she claims, "I could be the first female into the institution with a regular program." She either ignores or is unaware of Connie Giniger's prior efforts and creation of the program. Nonetheless, Peck was a deeply committed Jewish communal leader. She served as the first president of the Atlanta women's division of the American Society of Technion and as vice president of North Atlanta ORT, Tel Chai and Sabra Hadassah, the Shearith Israel Sisterhood, and the first female vice president of that synagogue. "Technion," *Southern Israelite*, September 30, 1977; "Technion Women," *Southern Israelite*, April 29, 1977.

³⁵ Wilson interview; Peck interview. Wilson and Peck recall that Mike Thevis, a non-Jewish prisoner who attended the discussion group regularly accompanied by two bodyguards, was one of Peck's favorites. Thevis was one of the more notorious inmates from Atlanta at the time, having been involved in strip clubs, pornography, and murder. While he languished in prison, she accepted his offer of picking up family movies at his mansion for sale at a bazaar.

³⁶ *Southern Israelite*, April 16, 1976; "Arlene Peck Will Speak at Shule," *Southern Israelite*, February 6, 1976; Arlene Peck, "Look Out Russia, Here Comes Arlene Peck," *Southern Israelite*, January 23, 1976; January 30, 1976; February 27, 1976. Peck was described as "a contributing writer to the *Jewish Post and Opinion* (Indianapolis) and "a TV personality, columnist, and humorist." "Bat Ami Hadassah launches new season," *Southern Israelite*, August 17, 1979; "Atlanta City of Hope to have luncheon," *Southern Israelite*, August 29, 1986.

³⁷ Peck interview.

³⁸ Peck, *Prison Cheerleader*, 8, 15.

³⁹ Vida Goldgar, "Jewish Group Leaders Barred: Prison Program in Jeopardy," *Southern Israelite*, March 31, 1978; Peck interview.

⁴⁰ Goldgar, "Jewish Group Leaders Barred"; Peck interview; Wilson interview; Parker interview.

⁴¹ Wilson interview; Cohn interview. Wilson notes that the Muslim prisoners also wanted access to kosher food because of their religious dietary requirements. When they got on that cafeteria line, they were given thirty days in a holding cell.

⁴² Peck, *Prison Cheerleader*, 17, 31–33, 44–46, 59.

⁴³ Weiner was assistant director of the Atlanta Bureau of Jewish Education and regional director of United Synagogue Youth. He also conducted Torah study classes on Wednesday evenings in his home for Hillel college students. "Atlanta Jews Get Shalach Monos Thanks to Chabad-Lubavitch," *Southern Israelite*, March 12, 1976; October 1, 1976; December 12, 1975; "Regional NCSY Shabbaton Set for Birmingham," *Southern Israelite*, January 24, 1975; "Hillel-Federation Charts Winter Quarter Courses," *Southern Israelite*, January 10, 1975.

⁴⁴ "Lunch and learn Talmud at AJCC," *Southern Israelite*, October 14, 1977; January 19, 1972; "Chabad's Rabbi Bluming Accepts Pulpit in Connecticut," *Southern Israelite*, August 12, 1983. Bluming also served as chaplain of the city department of public works, taught a lunch and learn Talmud class cosponsored by the Atlanta Jewish Community Center and Bureau of Jewish Education, purportedly the only one of its kind at the time at a JCC, and developed numerous other creative programs in the city. He had previously served a year as chaplain for the Orange County Prison in California. Bluming had worked in Atlanta for nine years when he departed in 1983, which would indicate that he was already in the city when Weiner served as prison chaplain.

⁴⁵ Yossi New, telephone interview conducted by Leah Burnham, March 24, 2018; "Chabad's Rabbi New to head Atlanta's new Orthodox shul," *Southern Israelite*, December 7, 1984.

⁴⁶ New interview; Max Meltzer, "Jews behind bars: Rabbi New provides link to Yiddishkeit," *Southern Israelite*, December 20, 1985.

⁴⁷ Vida Goldgar, "My four seders," *Southern Israelite*, April 20, 1979.

⁴⁸ "B'nai B'rith Meeting," *Southern Israelite*, October 16, 1942; "Temple Couples Club to Hear Pen Warden," *Southern Israelite*, October 18, 1957; "At Home Series," *Southern Israelite*, March 25, 1960. The four-hundred-plus-acre Honor Farm was opened during the 1930s and closed in 1995. It was designed for exemplary prisoners to produce food for themselves and the inmates at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. Lauren King, "Weird South: Archive Materials on the Old Atlanta Prison Farm," *About South*, November 15, 2014, accessed April 18, 2018, <https://medium.com/about-south/weird-south-archive-materials-on-the-old-atlanta-prison-farm-7f8b28a78781>.

⁴⁹ "Temple Couples Club"; "At Home Series"; "Atlanta Federal Prisoners Honor Jacobs." Weissman began working at the Honor Farm in rural DeKalb County as a dairyman in 1941 when he brought his family from Pennsylvania to live on the farm. He won promotion to assistant manager in 1942 and to manager in 1945. He retired in 1961. The farm produced beef, pork ("the piggery"), dairy products, and vegetables for human and animal consumption. It became a model for outstanding farming. Weissman actively participated in Jewish services at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary and took his son to a Passover seder where the young boy found the hidden matzo, something Donald Weissman recalls over six decades

later. Donald Weissman, e-mail to Mark K. Bauman, April 17, 2018. Susan Weissman Shields remembers that her father treated the prisoners fairly and with dignity. No guards were stationed at the farm, and the prisoners recognized that they were being given special privileges including family visitation. Susan Weissman Shields, interview conducted by Crystal Perez for the DeKalb History Center, January 20, 2012, accessed April 18, 2018, <http://www.dekalbhistory.org/documents/2012.3.392SusanWeissmanShields.pdf>. See also Harold Martin, "Prisoners Work on Model Farm," *Atlanta Constitution*, July 11, 1946; "Story Behind Prison Honor Farm Which Has no Bars, Few Escapes," *Suburban Gazette*, November 11, 1959; Harry Weissman, "The Contribution of Atlanta's Farm to Institutional Economy," *Prison Problems: Answers to Some Pertinent Questions!*, U.S. Bureau of Prisons (1954), 49; Dorothy Cremin, "Prisoners Beat Rap On High Cost of Living," *Atlanta Journal*, June 20, 1957; "Rewarded for Capture," *DeKalb New Era*, December 12, 1957; Jack Wolfe, "USP's Honor Farm No. 2," *Atlantian*, undated clipping, 10, Harry Weissman Collection, in possession of Donald Weissman (hereafter cited as Weissman Collection); *DeKalb New Era*, December 12, 1957, 1 (about a prisoner who escaped from the Honor Farm and was captured by two DeKalb County police officers); Warden W. H. Hiatt to Harry Weissman, July 15, 1949 (praising Weissman for his assistance in capturing three inmates who escaped the Honor Farm), Weissman Collection. On the origins of the Honor Farm, see Tucker, "History of the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary," 111-16.

⁵⁰ In 1951, for example, Col. Maxwell B. Grossman was appointed commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Corrections. Grossman had represented the United States in 1950 at an international penal conference. Barbara Abrams worked as social worker in the Ohio penitentiary system. Participation in general prison reform was also not unusual. Michel Heymann, superintendent of the New Orleans Widows and Orphans Home for twenty-one years (1868-1870, 1887-1908), served as a delegate and gave presentations at several International Prison Reform Congresses. Locally, he belonged to the Prisons and Asylums Commission, Prison Reform Association, and Board of Charities and Corrections. In 1895 Heymann attended the Fifth Congress of the International Prison Association in Paris as the representative of Louisiana. "Col. Grossman Commissioner of Correction," *Jewish Advocate* (Boston, MA), January 25, 1951; "Public Officials, Community Leaders Pay Last Respects to Col. Grossman," *Jewish Advocate*, June 20, 1963; "Col. M. Grossman to Represent U.S. at Penal Conference," *Jewish Advocate*, June 15, 1950; "Social Worker at NCSY," *Cleveland Jewish News*, October 22, 1993; "Supt. M. Heymann Resigns," *Jewish Herald* (Houston), November 19, 1908; *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), July 26, 1895; William J. Batt, Heymann obituary, American Prison Association, 146-47. The last two documents were graciously provided by attorney and author Marlene Trestman.

⁵¹ "Sports on Bennett Field," *Atlantian*, July/September 1946; "Atlanta's Religious Views," *Atlantian*, July 1948; "At Home Series"; Max Waldman, "Rosh Hashona in Atlanta," *Southern Israelite*, January 31, 1958.

⁵² "Unique Jewish Congregation"; Rosenberg, "Atlanta Penitentiary Inmate Claims Jewish Prisoners Deprived of Religious Freedom"; Goldgar, "My four seders."

⁵³ "Atlanta Federal Prisoners Honor Jacobs"; Robert L. Hern, letter to the editor, *Southern Israelite*, April 16, 1976; Rosenberg, "Federal Prison Rites."

⁵⁴ Rosenberg, "Atlanta Penitentiary Inmate Claims Jewish Prisoners Deprived of Religious Freedom," *Atlanta Constitution*, January 13, 1972.

⁵⁵ The Congregation of Temple Yaakov, letter to the editor, *Southern Israelite*, August 25, 1972.

⁵⁶ *Jewish Independent* (Cleveland, OH), October 20, 1916.

⁵⁷ "Jewish Prisoners Are Denied Passover Food," *B'nai B'rith Messenger* (Los Angeles, CA), April 6, 1934.

⁵⁸ "The Country Rabbi's Column," *Jewish Herald* (Houston), October 26, 1911.

⁵⁹ See, for example, "Services at Penitentiary," *Jewish Independent* (Cleveland), October 12, 1917; "Jewish Prisoners Observe Passover," *Jewish Advocate* (Boston), April 12, 1931.

⁶⁰ "Holyday Observances," *Jewish Review and Observer* (Cleveland), September 6, 1912. See also "Observe Holy Days," *Sentinel*, September 21, 1917. Often getting off work for holiday observance was through the intercession of local Jews. In this case Morris Shlensky interceded for the Jews incarcerated in Joliet.

⁶¹ "Books for Prisoners," *Jewish Advocate*, February 20, 1975. See also "Jewish Inmates Need Tape Recorder," *Cleveland Jewish News*, June 30, 1966. Rabbi Nathan Zelizer, the prison's Jewish chaplain, explained that the Jewish prisoners had greater needs than those of other religions "perhaps because of the higher education level of the Jewish prisoner, or, as I would prefer to believe, their Jewish heritage, both spiritually and psychologically."

⁶² "San Quentin Prison to Offer Course in Judaic Studies," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, December 25, 1970.

⁶³ Arthur A. Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community: The Kehillah Experiment, 1908-1922* (New York, 1970). In fact, when Bingham made his assertions, Jewish criminality in New York was disproportionately high. Annie Polland and Daniel Soyer, *Emerging Metropolis: New York Jews in the Age of Immigration, 1840-1920* (New York, 2012), 162-63.

⁶⁴ In 1932 Jews constituted 15 percent of New York State's population but only 4.9 percent of its prison population. "Low Rate of Criminality Among Jews," *Jewish Advocate*, September 29, 1933. Linfield's study, published in *American Jewish Year Book* 33 (1931-32), found that Jews comprised 1.74 percent of the inmates in state reformatories and prisons from 1920 to 1929 in contrast to the 3.43 percent of Jews in the total population. "Percentage of Jewish Inmates Very Small," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, September 18, 1931. For another Linfield report, see "Low Rate of Criminality," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, February 14, 1936. Statistics from the Federal Bureau of Prisons support the figures developed by Jewish sources. In 1929, for example, 285 Jews were incarcerated at the Atlanta, Leavenworth, and McNeil Island facilities out of 10,068 total inmates. Annual reports graciously provided by Anne Diestel.

⁶⁵ "Jewish Inmates Need Tape Recorder," *Cleveland Jewish News*, June 30, 1966, for the Jewish chapel at the Columbus, Ohio, penitentiary.

⁶⁶ "Jewish Chapel at Ohio State Penitentiary Dedicated," *Sentinel*, March 8, 1929.

⁶⁷ Grace Krieger, "A Friend of the Friendless Prisoner: Charlie Ascherman Gives Devoted Service to Cause of Helping Parolees," *Cleveland Jewish News*, September, 29, 1967, 17. Krieger identified Columbus insurance agent Abe Wolman as "another longtime champion of the 'cause.'"

⁶⁸ David L. Liknaitz, "Urgency of Jewish Prison Work," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, December 15, 1916.

⁶⁹ "Rabbi Visits State Prison," *Jewish Review and Observer*, March 12, 1920; "Union of American Hebrew Congregations: Prisoners' Welfare Work In Texas," *Jewish Review and Observer*, November 27, 1914.

⁷⁰ *Jewish Herald*, September 9, 1909.

⁷¹ "Chaplain Should Serve Inmates," *Cleveland Jewish News*, December 14, 1973. Zelizer complained that rabbis were not serving the seven other correctional institutions in Ohio, although two Hebrew Union College students served the Jewish inmates at the Lucasville, OH, facility. This was not the only time that rabbinical students served inmates. In 1926 students from the Hebrew Theological College conducted High Holiday services at the Statesville branch of the Illinois state prison system. The inmates' "Executive Committee" thanked them for their efforts. Rabbi A. Neuberger, "Jewish Inmates of Statesville Penitentiary Thank Hebrew Theological College for Sending Rabbi to Conduct Yom Kippur Services," letter to the editor, *Sentinel*, September 24, 1926.

⁷² Coffee had been visiting San Quentin and Folsom every month for twenty years even before becoming full-time chaplain. In 1943 he reported that there were roughly seventy-five Jewish inmates in each prison. Rudolph I. Coffee, "I Go to Prison Every Month," *Sentinel*, September 23, 1943; "Sec. Blumenthal and Rabbi Coffee Visit Folsom State Prison," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, June 30, 1922; "Real Prison Reform," *Sentinel*, January 24, 1919; "An Echo From Joliet Prison," letter to the editor, *Sentinel*, May 9, 1919; "Sefer Torah is Given to San Quentin Prison," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, April 20, 1934; Rudolph I. Coffee, "Yom Kippur at San Quentin," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, October 5, 1934; "Dr. R. Coffee Heads Project for Chapel at the State Prison," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, March 1, 1935; "Sepher Torah Makes a Hit During Game at Folsom Prison," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, April 19, 1940. By 1927 laypeople and rabbis conducted High Holiday services throughout the California state prison system. "Holy Day Services at State Prisons," *B'nai B'rith Messenger*, September 30, 1927.

⁷³ "Rabbi Discusses Problems of Jail Inmates: Sing Sing Prisoners Interested in Palestine, Judaism," *Jewish Advocate*, July 15, 1938; "Sing Sing Prisoners Interested in History," *Sentinel*, March 10, 1938.

⁷⁴ "Plan National Jewish Chaplains Prison Group," *Sentinel*, May 20, 1937.

⁷⁵ "Jewish Identity Center is a Prison Outreach Program," *Sentinel*, June 26, 1975.

⁷⁶ Jewish Prisoners' Service International, accessed May 11, 2018, <http://jpsi.org/about/who-we-are/>. See also Neshama: Association of Jewish Chaplains (NAJC), accessed May 11, 2018, JewishChaplain.net. The Jewish Prison Outreach Program of Congregation Neve Shalom in St. Louis won the "2011 Unsung Heroes Award." Congregation Neve Shalom, accessed May 11, 2018, <http://www.neveshalom.org/html/outreach.html>.

⁷⁷ For example, in 1984 Rabbi Moishe Mayir Vogel began his career work with Jewish inmates when he led High Holiday services at the Federal Prison Camp in Allenwood, PA. In 1991 he moved to Pittsburgh where he launched Aleph Institute-North East Region. In 2005 his institute opened a facility in the Squirrel Hill section of that city where he catered to Jewish prisoners and their families. "Reaching Out to Jewish Prisoners," The Aleph Institute North East Regional Headquarters (Pittsburgh, established 1991), accessed May 11, 2018, http://www.alephne.org/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/3627454/jewish/Our-History; Aleph Institute (Miami, established 1982), accessed May 11, 2018, www.aleph-institute.org;

“Reaching Out to Jewish Prisoners,” accessed May 11, 2018, <http://jewishprisoner.com/AboutUs.aspx>. See also “No One Alone, No One Forgotten,” accessed May 11, 2018, <https://aleph-institute.org/wp/programs/prison-programs/>. The Rabbinical Association of Greater Boston included a Chaplain’s Service Department that worked with local prisons. Rabbi Joseph S. Shubow, “Prison Riots,” *Jewish Advocate*, December 4, 1952.

⁷⁸ “Prison Welfare in Georgia,” *Sentinel*, August 24, 1917.

⁷⁹ Stephen J. Whitfield, e-mail to Mark K. Bauman, May 14, 2018. Whitfield recalls having a thrill in doing this while not feeling any peril.

⁸⁰ “At Inmates’ Request: Involved Greenwich Village Youth Are Visiting Jewish Prison Inmates,” *Sentinel*, March 8, 1973.

⁸¹ Nannie A. Reis, “A Visit to the Illinois State Penitentiary at Joliet,” *Sentinel*, October 23, 1914. The sisterhood of Baton Rouge’s Congregation B’nai Israel forwarded gift boxes and eyeglasses to prisoners in the Louisiana State Penitentiary, or Angola. Congregation B’nai Israel Sisterhood minutes, January 1910, October 1910, January 1918, December 12, 1921, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati (hereafter AJA). See also Baton Rouge Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society minutes, January 1910, October 1910, AJA. The Columbia, SC, section of the NCJW raised money to train female teachers for vocational education for the Door of Hope, a program for prison inmates. Columbia, SC, NCJW minutes, October 18, 1921, AJA. The Selma NCJW women donated funds for a chapel to be built at the federal prison in Alderman, WV, after an investigation of Jewish needs. Selma, AL, NCJW minutes, February 9, 1928, February 23, 1928, April 17, 1928, December 5, 1930, AJA.

⁸² See, for example, Richard Tewksbury and Sue Carter Collins, “Prison Chapel Volunteers,” *Federal Probation* 69 (June 2005): 26–30; Jody L. Sundt, Harry R. Dammer, and Francis T. Cullen, “The Role of the Prison Chaplain in Rehabilitation,” *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* 35 (2002): 59–86; Judith Coleman, “Chaplains: God’s Partners in Prison,” *Corrections Today* 65 (December 2003): 122–25; Diana Eck, “Muslim Chaplaincy in the U.S.,” The Pluralism Project, Harvard University, accessed May 11, 2018, <http://pluralism.org/religions/islam/issues-for-muslims-in-america/muslim-chaplaincy-in-the-u-s/>. In “Faith at Angola Prison: After ‘Civic Death,’ a Resurrection,” *Commonweal* 144 (April 14, 2017): 10–11, Michael Hallett contends that Angola “is the only prison in America that allows inmates to run their own churches—a practice with roots in the prison’s history as a plantation, where slaves organized their own churches.” Prisoners formed “Baptist, Pentecostal, Catholic, Methodist, and other Christian worship communities—collectively referred to as the ‘Angola Church.’” Small numbers of Muslims also practice their religion at Angola (10). The New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary offers courses to inmates and trains inmates to be ministers within the prison. Inmate ministers lead the prison churches, conduct funerals, and visit inmates on death row. These inmate congregations even tithe, giving back what they can in stationery, toiletries, etc. Hallett is apparently unaware of the Jewish congregation that existed at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary.

⁸³ American Correctional Chaplains Association, accessed May 11, 2018, <http://www.correctionalchaplains.org/>. Richard Denis Shaw, *Chaplains to the Imprisoned: Sharing Life with the Incarcerated* (New York, 1995) explains the chaplains’ roles as seen by inmates, chaplains,

and coworkers. Shaw's chapter 2, "Historical Perspectives on the Prison Chaplaincy," emphasizes the negative view of the role of chaplains during the Progressive Era (23–33). For overviews of the interface of religion and prisons in American Jewish history, see Jennifer Graber, *The Furnace of Affliction: Prisons and Religion in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill, 2011); Jennifer Graber, "Prisons and Religion in the Americas," *Religious Compass* 7 (2013): 532–40; Larry E. Sullivan, "History of Religion in Prisons," in *Encyclopedia of Prisons and Correctional Facilities*, ed. Mary Bosworth (Thousand Oaks, CA, 2004): 420–22; Harry R. Dammer, "Religion in Prison," in Bosworth, *Encyclopedia of Prisons and Correctional Facilities*, 835–40, which provides a good historical overview and discussion of issues including what inmates derive from religious programs, separation of church and state, and a short bibliography; Bruce D. Stout and Todd R. Clear, "Federal Prison Chaplains: Satisfied in Ministry But Often Undervalued," *Federal Prison Journal* 2 (Winter 1992): 8–10. In *Prison Religion: Faith-Based Reform and The Constitution* (Princeton, 2011), Winnifred Fallers Sullivan discusses the issue of church and state, something extensively debated among contemporary criminal justice academics and practitioners. Professor William Sobel, Georgia State University, graciously provided several of these citations.

⁸⁴ The organizations include the Association of Professional Chaplains, the National Association of Catholic Chaplains, and Episcopal Bishop for Armed Forces and Federal Ministries. Association of Muslim Chaplains, accessed May 19, 2018, <https://associationof-muslimchaplains.org/about-us/#story>; Malcolm X with Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York, 1992 [1965]); Jed B. Tucker, "Malcolm X, the Prison Years: The Relentless Pursuit of Formal Education," *Journal of African American History* 102 (Spring 2017): 184–212. For a list of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim programs for inmates, see Jail and Outreach Ministry, accessed May 10, 2018, <http://jail-outreach-ministry.com/resources/>. See also Eck, "Muslim Chaplaincy in the U.S."

⁸⁵ Ernest Rogers, "Park Tucker Keeps Spiritual 'Bargain' As Chaplain of Atlanta's Penitentiary," *Atlanta Journal and Atlanta Constitution*, January 17, 1954. Tucker, "History of the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary," 9–11, 41, 45, 145, 194, 260.

⁸⁶ Tucker, "History of the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary," 340–43, 399–402, 446, 492–500, 561–62.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Appendix, 68–72.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 134, 151–63, 208; Michael J. Byrne, "Work of a Federal Prison Chaplain," *Bulletin of the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia*, June 1, 1921, 16.

⁸⁹ In 1921 the First Church Scientist of Atlanta created a group to cater to Christian Science inmates. With small numbers, this group may have had more in common with the situation for Jews. Tucker, "History of the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary," 149.

⁹⁰ In "Religion in Corrections," *The Encyclopedia of Crime and Punishment*, ed. David Levinson (Thousand Oaks, CA, 2002), 1375, Harry Dammer summarized the positive and negative reasons why prisoners of all religious beliefs seek and benefit from religion-based programs while incarcerated. These are identical to those described here for the Jewish prisoners at the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary.

⁹¹ Initially the authors hoped to locate prison records to be able to quantify information concerning the Jewish prisoners and possibly trace their actions after incarceration. Although

some digitized databases are available, they do not record the religion of the inmates. Requests directed to the National Archives and Records Center in Morrow, Georgia, and to the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) did not result in finding records concerning the various prison activities of the inmates or Jewish community, even with the cooperation of NARA archivist Shane Bell and the historian of the BOP, Dr. Jody Klein-Saffran.

⁹² Mendel, "The Atlanta Story."

⁹³ The keyword "prison" on the Historical Jewish Press search page, hosted by the National Library of Israel, draws 26,014 links. Although some of these were from the *Palestine Post* and European Jewish newspapers, the majority were from the *Sentinel* and *B'nai B'rith Messenger*. The authors reviewed the first 337 items as a sample. Historical Jewish Press, accessed May, 2018, <http://web.nli.org.il/sites/JPress/English/Pages/default.aspx>.