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Rabbi Edward L. Israel:
The Making of a Progressive Interracialist,
1923–1941

by

Charles L. Chavis, Jr.*

Within a few years into his appointment as rabbi of Baltimore's historic Har Sinai Congregation, Edward L. Israel began to display the marks of a true progressive by speaking out against labor inequality in Maryland and throughout the country. In his response to one of the lesser-known labor strikes of the interwar era, Israel penned these words in May 1927:

Today, the sensual and luxury laden generation is nameless, but Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and the others who spoke in terms of justice and righteousness live on as a glory to mankind. The pulpit today may not be arrogant enough to dare to compare itself to these religious geniuses of the moral courage to speak in the name of God of mercy and truth wherever there is social or industrial injustice.¹

Serving as an arbitrator for the Western Maryland Railroad strike in behalf of disgruntled workers, Israel led an ecumenical investigation team whose report was praised throughout the country. However, missing from this report was the black worker. Between 1926 and 1936, the rabbi evolved from a progressive voice in the labor movement to become an interracial and interfaith advocate who was forced to acknowledge the dehumanization of Jim Crowism after being challenged by the key leaders of the early civil rights movement in Baltimore. His activism represented a lesser-known black-Jewish alliance that became an essential element of the black freedom struggle in Baltimore and Maryland during the 1930s and early 1940s.²

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Israel's compulsion for civil rights and social justice was informed by three distinct traditions and experiences. The first emanated from the social justice legacy of Rabbi David Einhorn, who had served Har Sinai in the late 1850s. Israel lamented on this connection in describing the legacy of the historic Har Sinai and the impact that it had on Reform Judaism:

Har Sinai is larger than ever before in its history. Its place in the community as a spokesman of liberal thought, begun by David Einhorn, is today more and more recognized. Not only that! The principles of Reform Judaism which Har Sinai fostered under the most untoward conditions are today almost universally accepted by the modern descendants of those of a former age who failed utterly to understand that religious philosophy and who heaped vehement reproach upon Har Sinai for daring to espouse the liberal cause.³

The second of Israel's influences was rooted in the Reform movement's Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, where acts of social justice as taught by the Hebrew prophets were emphasized. This platform represents one of many pillars that laid the foundation for the black-Jewish alliance during the first half of the twentieth century. The interracial labor movement of the 1920s, where Israel's progressive leanings were tested by the Jewish community and challenged by prominent black Baltimore leaders, comprised the third element.⁴

This essay will focus on Rabbi Edward L. Israel's evolution as a progressive, particularly on his role in the interracial labor movement of the 1920s, and will examine the ways in which he diverged from the status quo of Reform Judaism and was challenged by prominent leaders of Baltimore's black freedom struggle. The initial phase of the story sheds light on the social justice tradition of the Reform movement and how it shaped Israel's approach to interracial concerns. Through the lens of the rabbi, we gain insight into the American Jewish liberal legacy that informed his social justice activism and the limits that were placed on him from within the Reform movement as he spoke out against bigotry and labor and racial inequality.

Hasia R. Diner's *In the Almost Promised Land* is among several works that treat the nature and evolution of black and Jewish relations during the early civil rights movement. In understanding the evolution and interracial interactions and social justice activism of Rabbi Edward Israel, the long civil rights approach is helpful in providing framework and context

for the connections that such experiences had on the black and Jewish alliance of the classical phase of the civil rights era of the 1950s and 1960s. The efforts of the 1920s and 1930s, which challenged racial violence, labor inequality, and Jim Crow, served as the prequel to the later movement.⁵

By the end of the 1920s, Israel had established himself as a socialist progressive challenging the moderate and passive approaches of Progressive-era rabbinical social justice leaders. His position was informed by the connections he nurtured with Baltimore's prominent black leaders, including Carl Murphy and Dr. Lillie Carroll Jackson, who challenged Israel to remember the roots of the black-Jewish alliance of the first decades of the twentieth century during an era when other second- and third-generation Jewish immigrants began to lose sight of this strategic partnership.

Early Beginnings

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, on August 30, 1896, Edward Israel grew up while the country and Cincinnati continued to feel the effects of the Panic of 1893, one of the worst economic depressions in American history.⁶ His mother, Emma, was born in Cincinnati, and his father, Charles, arrived in the United States in the late 1880s during a wave of Jewish immigration from Prussia.⁷ His younger brother Dorman was born in 1900, across the Ohio River in Kentucky.⁸ Charles Israel arrived in America during a time when Jews were forced to deal with rising anti-Jewish sentiment. As Jews landed at New York's Castle Garden in large numbers, mostly from eastern Europe, they became convenient scapegoats for nativists who blamed them for America's economic troubles.⁹

Growing up in Cincinnati, Edward Israel had the advantage of experiencing American and Jewish influences while attending public and private schools for the first half of his life. As such, he became rooted in the second-generation immigrant culture endemic throughout Cincinnati. In 1910, at the age of fourteen, the future rabbi joined other young Jewish men entering the Reform rabbinical seminary, Hebrew Union College (HUC).

Israel's father became a successful insurance salesman, and the Israels made their home at 3589 Wilson Avenue. Like a number of Jewish homes in Cincinnati, the Israel home, less than two miles from HUC in the Clifton community, doubled as a boarding house and was opened to

*Rabbi Edward Israel, 1936.
(Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
of Maryland, Baltimore. 2012.108.130.)*

young Edward's classmates, who eventually felt like part of the family.¹⁰ As in Baltimore, Jews and African Americans in Cincinnati were often relegated to residential segregation and lived side by side as they were barred from moving into white Christian communities. A number of black men established businesses and lived next to Clifton in Avondale and Cumminsville.¹¹

Prior to this, Jews and Italians shared housing in the once aristocratic West End community near the Ohio River. As such, the West End was "a highly congested area built up with tenement and business houses, factories and railroads."¹² Indeed, such congestion was the result of the lack of housing for African Americans, many of whom migrated from the South. Most of this African American migration to Cincinnati took place during World War I as migrants were attracted to the economic opportunities

from the demand created by the war. In 1926, W. P. Dabney, editor of Cincinnati's black newspaper, the *Union*, wrote about the makeup of the community: "[T]he West End has a vast [Negro] colony which has largely driven out the Jews, Germans and Italians."¹³ Dabney points to a segregated community, wrought by white immigrant flight. The makeup of Cincinnati during Israel's upbringing provided a unique contrast for what he later experienced in Baltimore, where blacks and Jews shared a similar experience and were excluded from white Christian neighborhoods.¹⁴

Education and Early Adult Experiences

Israel began his nine-year course of study at HUC in 1910 while still a student at Woodward High School. Throughout his tenure he remained dually enrolled at two institutions besides taking courses at others. Shortly after graduating from high school in 1913, Israel continued his studies at HUC and entered the freshman class of the University of Cincinnati (UC). He also found time to take summer courses at Harvard University during his last two years at UC. Very little is known about Israel's time and experiences at UC, where he graduated in 1917 with a bachelor of arts degree.¹⁵ Apparently Israel did not become a liberal interracialist until he moved to Baltimore. One of his classmates recalled, "he was not an outstanding

Rabbi David Philipson, 1904.
(Washington Times, February 7, 1904.)

rebel” while he attended HUC and “[i]t was only later—in his Baltimore period that I heard and thought of him as a fighting liberal for social causes.”¹⁶

In 1918, Israel decided to take part in the Great War as a chaplain to the Jewish troops fighting in Europe. In October 1918, after soliciting the support of his rabbi and mentor Dr. David Philipson and University of Cincinnati president Charles William Dabney, he enlisted in the United States Army. Philipson and Dabney wrote letters in support of Israel’s application, each stressing his strong character and noble sense of patriotism.¹⁷

By February 1919, Israel began serving alongside his mentor (possibly in the student pulpit), Rabbi Philipson, at his childhood congregation, Rockdale Temple. In many ways Philipson provided Israel with a link to the ideals of ethical monotheism and social justice espoused by the Pittsburgh Platform and Classical Reform Judaism more generally. Shortly thereafter, Israel received his acceptance letter from the Jewish Welfare Board naming him as a noncommissioned chaplain to the Jewish American troops in Europe, and in late March he arrived in Chaumont, France.¹⁸

On Saturday, April 5, 1919, at age twenty-three, along with a class of ten other men, Israel received his official rabbinic ordination in absentia from HUC President Kaufman Kohler. As a chaplain abroad, Israel developed skills that became valuable to meet congregational needs. While in France, for example, he gained experience facilitating weddings and other activities, functions later central to his dual role as a congregational and activist rabbi.

Israel daily wrote to his love, Amelia Dreyer, a Cincinnati native whom he had met in 1917, describing his experiences and anticipating the end of the war. He also demonstrated the first glimpse into the ways in which his Jewish ethos and his radical conceptualization of ecumenism would become central to his approach to social justice. After the war, in 1919, Israel returned to the United States. He then wasted no time marrying his fiancée Amelia.¹⁹

Shortly after their wedding in November 1919, Israel began his rabbinical post at B’rith Sholom in Springfield, Illinois, where he delivered the sermon, “Our Vow.” “Religion to me,” he said, “has a broad and radical meaning. It is full of tolerance of divergent ideals and beliefs. It yields to reason and respects honest faith.” He then stated that Reform Judaism

Amelia and Edward Israel.
(Courtesy of the Jewish Museum
of Maryland, Baltimore. 2012.108.151.)

in all its breadth and radicalness never ceases to be Judaism. It never loses sight of its Jewishness. . . . Universal to the extreme, it is full of leniency and latitudinarianism. Yet I remain a Jew and no fad nor fancy, nor the paltry love of social advancement or the cowardly fear of prejudice can make me anything but a strong-back-boned Jew.²⁰

Little is known concerning Israel's tenure at B'rith Sholom, since the vast majority of the congregation's records were lost. Nonetheless, during his time in Springfield, Israel struggled to find confidence in his abilities. His wife commented on his experiences during the early part of his rabinate: "I think when he started out, of course, he always had a feeling for humanity, but I think he became much more of a crusader as he got older.

He wanted to get out and fight for his causes rather than just being vocal about them. In that way, I think he changed as time went on."²¹

Nonetheless, during his time in Springfield Israel gained considerable experience and began to develop his social justice message. He and Amelia also welcomed their first son, Charles Edward "Chuck" Israel.²² Little is known concerning why Israel only spent a year and a half in Springfield. He may have been looking to grow as a rabbi and social leader. He clearly sought a larger congregation where a higher salary would better support his family.²³

Washington Avenue Temple

On May 5th, 1921, Israel was elected rabbi of the Washington Avenue Temple (WAT) in Evansville, Indiana, for a one-year term. After a year WAT extended Israel's contract for three years and granted him a salary increase. From the outset, the Evansville Jewish community welcomed the Israel family. In response to his problems securing housing, the congregation quickly purchased a home for their rabbi's use. Amelia Israel recalls the devotion of the Jewish community: "It was a wonderful community. A very religious minded and temple going congregation. We loved the whole bunch."²⁴ Israel seemed to become more comfortable in the pulpit and began preaching sermons centering on religious instruction and the life application of scriptures specifically in regards to youth and young adults within the congregation.

Israel also took this approach outside of the Jewish community, hosting a series of lectures including a popular series titled "What do Jews Believe?" and an ecological series of sermons on the biblical importance of protecting the environment. In 1921, Israel delivered one of his earliest social justice sermons, "Modern Theology," in which he proclaimed that modern theology concerned itself with the moral character of Pharaoh and his attitude toward his fellow creatures and his value as a member of society. The young rabbi asked, "Did Pharaoh have the right to oppress his people? Has any man . . . the right to oppress any fellow man? And the social consciousness has entered, through modern theology, the problem of poverty, the problem of social disease and industrial strife."²⁵

As Israel developed as a rabbi and social justice advocate, he slowly established his presence in the Reform movement. In 1921, he participated in his first Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) convention,

held in Washington, D.C. Israel joined two committees and attended a reception at the White House hosted by President Warren G. Harding. Israel spent only two more years in Evansville as he gained popularity and began getting offers from larger congregations including Temple Shomer Emunim in Toledo, Ohio, and Har Sinai in Baltimore.²⁶ Ultimately Har Sinai gave Israel an offer that Shomer Emunim and Washington Avenue Temple could not match.

The *Baltimore Sun* ran the article, "Har Sinai Temple Calls Rabbi Edward L. Israel," months before he took up residence in Maryland's urban center.²⁷ By September 1923, during his installation, the Reform and Baltimore religious communities discovered that Israel was quite different from his predecessor, Harvey Wessel, who was not nearly as vocal during his one-year tenure in the pulpit from 1922 to 1923. Israel urged his congregation and members of the community to seek open-mindedness, asking that "there be a little more of true justice, mercy and humility and fewer sham ideals, punctuated in grim reality and venom and hatred."²⁸

Baltimore Sun, July 24, 1923.
(*Newspapers.com.*)

***Har Sinai Temple Calls
Rabbi Edward L. Israel***

**Cincinnati Clergyman Elected By
Congregation — To Come
Here In September.**

Rabbi Edward L. Israel, of Evansville, Ind., was elected rabbi of the Har Sinai Temple at a congregational meeting last night at the temple, in approval of recommendations by the board of trustees.

Rabbi Israel was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, and was graduated from the Hebrew Union College five years ago. During the last two years of his college life he assisted Rabbi David Phillipson, rabbi of the Rockdale Avenue Temple, Cincinnati, a former rabbi of the Har Sinai Temple. During the World War he served as overseas chaplain under auspices of the Jewish Welfare Board. He is married and has one child. He is now rabbi of a temple at Evansville.

Rabbi Israel has signified his willingness to accept the call, it is said, and will be in Baltimore this week to select a home. He will begin his duties as rabbi on September 1.

J. D. Hornstein, chairman of the board, explained last night that a rabbi can be elected only by the congregation, and that the story regarding the election of the rabbi emanating from Cincinnati was premature.

*Har Sinai Congregation, Bolton Street Temple, Baltimore, MD.
(Courtesy of the Jewish Museum of Maryland, Baltimore. 1985.090.001.)*

Israel was aware of the reputation of Har Sinai specifically as it related to the legacy of the congregation's most notable leader, Rabbi David Einhorn, who spoke out during the antebellum period against proslavery advocate Rabbi Morris Jacob Raphall and fled the city amid threats against him because of his outspoken abolitionist views.²⁹ Behind the scenes, Israel had again depended on the support of David Philipson, who advised him as he transitioned in leadership and made his way to Baltimore. In correspondence with his mentor, Israel expressed anxiety about some of the requirements of the congregation's board of directors. The chair of the rabbinic search committee, J. D. Hornstein, had begun recruiting Israel through Philipson while the young rabbi was serving the Evansville congregation. In April 1923, Philipson, who had been Har Sinai's rabbi

between 1884 and 1888, facilitated the interview and recruitment process on behalf of Israel. Philipson wrote to Israel:

I do know that men in the congregation are very eager for a good leader. They are anxious to work. Poor [Rabbi Louis] Bernstein was building up a fine institution. They rallied around him splendidly. Of course, the two other Congregations are larger, but there is no reason why the oldest reform congregation in the country should not be made once again a very strong organization.³⁰

Following in the legacy of Reform pioneer David Einhorn, in 1923 Israel accepted the call to lead Har Sinai. The *Baltimore Sun* provided two days of coverage of his selection to the post in an article titled "Cincinnati Clergymen Elected by Congregation."³¹ A few months later in September, Israel was officially installed by Philipson and welcomed by Dr. William Rosenau, rabbi from 1892 to 1940 of the Eutaw Place Temple (Temple Oheb Shalom) on behalf of Baltimore's Reform community. From the outset, Israel advocated for an ecumenical and liberal approach to religion: "Only open hearts and minds, ready to investigate all that is new and follow it if it is worthwhile, will save religion."³²

During his first year at Har Sinai, Israel became an active member of the Social Justice Commission of the CCAR. Founded in 1889 by Isaac Mayer Wise, the CCAR served as the professional organization for Reform rabbis and, in many ways, an extension of the efforts of the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, which emphasized ideological and philosophical approaches to address the social and economic ills of society.³³ Leonard J. Mervis argues that rabbis involved in the platform "concerned themselves with social problems but in a manner that was idealistic and utopian."³⁴ Moreover, he writes, their "approach represented a philosophical attitude rather than a dynamic call to action."³⁵ Nonetheless by the late nineteenth century more direct approaches to social justice replaced these utopian ideals.

Working alongside the longtime chairman of the Social Justice Commission, Rabbi Ephraim Frisch of San Antonio, Texas, Israel began developing a more radical approach to combating social justice—an approach that proved to be problematic throughout his later tenure as chairman.³⁶ Patrick Jory suggests that such an approach was shared among individual rabbis who, he argues, were "understandably more militant and activist than CCAR."³⁷

*Challenging Tradition:
From Neophyte to Socialist Threat*

Three years into his tenure at Har Sinai, Israel adopted such an aggressive approach and began to assume the dual identity of rabbi and labor activist. In 1926, a labor dispute emerged with two of America's busiest railroads. A *Baltimore Sun* writer summarized the issue: "[B]oth the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the Western Maryland Railroad companies received request yesterday from the Order of Railway Conductors, the Brotherhood of Railway Conductors and the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen for increases in pay amounting to approximately twenty percent." Referring to the incident as a strike, Maxwell Byers, president of the Western Maryland Railroad, characterized the union's demands as "perfectly absurd."³⁸

Building on the same ecumenical partnerships that he had benefited from during World War I, Israel looked to Protestant and Catholic organizations including the department of research and education of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ (FCCC) and the department of social action of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) to join the effort in finding a moral way to deal with this major labor crisis. This partnership dates back to 1922 when these organizations issued a collective manifesto resulting in the termination of the twelve-hour workday by James Augustine Farrell, predecessor to John Pierpont Morgan and Elbert H. Gary as president of the United States Steel Corporation.³⁹

As a member of the CCAR Social Justice Commission, Israel assumed the lead and coordinated the partnership with the CCAR, the FCCC, and the NCWC, and in fall 1926 the organizations began preparing a joint report on Maryland's labor crisis. In October, in a letter addressed to commission chair Ephraim Frisch, Israel provided an update concerning the status and impact of the ecumenical effort: "This report is being submitted to both the Western Maryland management and the Union." As a result of this collaboration, Israel argued that "the public will be more convinced than ever of the fairness with which the social justice branches of the three great denominations are handling and judging the moral issues of industrial dispute."⁴⁰ By November Israel directed his attention to the ways in which the labor inequality within the garment industry affected the Jewish community in Baltimore.

In a letter to Abraham Cronbach, a Reform rabbi and professor at HUC, Israel discussed the possibility of focusing his doctor of divinity thesis on combating such issues in Baltimore:

To the garment workers, I endeavor to discover what occupations their children are going into, and how many had drifted away from all connection with synagogue, how many had remained Orthodox, and how many had become Reform. I intend to use Baltimore City as a sort of laboratory for the urban phases of my work.⁴¹

Israel's protest was part of the larger force within the United States to combat the anticommunist movement of the 1920s and 1930s. Around 1919, in the aftermath of World War I, workers began to strike and unionize throughout the country. This coincided with the founding of the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) after the split in the Socialist Party of America. From the outset, the CPUSA played a major role in the American labor movement, a movement dedicated to fighting for fair wages and safer working conditions. Americans became suspicious of anything that appeared to be connected to communism following the Soviet revolution of 1917. The anticommunist movement—the Red Scare—emerged as a reactionary fear of communism, which had become closely tied to the growth of unionization. Propaganda campaigns connected the labor movement with communism, a political philosophy that was considered to be the enemy of capitalism and democracy.⁴² By the mid-1920s anticommunist sentiment had spread beyond the labor movement to diplomacy as the U.S. State Department and diplomats began to fear communist advancement in neighboring countries such as Mexico, where America had vested economic and diplomatic interests.⁴³

In 1927, while continuing to try to resolve the Western Maryland Railroad strike, Israel responded to the foreign situation, challenging the American tendency to bully Latin American countries by attempting to connect them to the communist movement. Secretary of State Frank D. Kellogg's testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee less than two weeks earlier fed into the anticommunist hysteria: "The Bolshevik leaders have had very definite ideas with respect to the role which Mexico and Latin America are to play in their general program of world revolution. They have set up as one of their fundamental tasks the destruction of what they term American imperialism as a necessary prerequisite to the

successful development of the international revolutionary movement in the New World."⁴⁴ Israel argued that Kellogg was using such propaganda to exploit the Mexican people: "This country [the United States] now says in effect, to Mexico: Because we have invested money with you – however illegally – you must accept our ideals of law." He challenged the *Sun* for republishing Kellogg's testimony, arguing that "Secretary Kellogg's talk of Bolshevism is the height of the ridiculous. He clearly has a mania on that subject."⁴⁵

The rabbi concluded his message by referring to the God who individuals such as Kellogg believed supported such policies and rhetoric: "The God who rules in our relationship with our friends and who is a God of respect and good will is not the one whom we depend on when, as patriots, we think of our relations with Mexico and China."⁴⁶ Israel provides insights into political and diplomatic perceptions of Mexico during the 1920s that reverberate today in debates over immigration and Mexican-American relations. The young rabbi saw such issues as being connected with suffering immigrants in the United States and abroad. However, such a stance caused one of his colleagues to denounce him after Israel asked a fellow rabbi to support what that rabbi called the wives and children of "a bunch of Bolsheviks and Socialists."⁴⁷

With the ecumenical investigation into the railroad strike coming to a close, Israel served as an "inter-church" investigator conducting interviews with national newspapers and labor union organizations. In January 1927, as chair of the commission on social justice from 1923 to 1933, Israel submitted a report of the findings from the investigation at a special meeting of the CCAR. The report pointed to the Western Maryland Railroad as the only company that failed to meet the wage requirements for "Class A" railroads. Unlike the previous collaborations during the early twenties, these findings were hailed throughout the United States and received substantial press coverage in a number of publications including *Labor Age*, the *Baltimore Sun*, the *New York World*, the *Survey*, the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald-Tribune*, the *New York Evening Post*, and the *Literary Digest*.⁴⁸

In March 1927, the *Sun* ran an interview with Israel where he argued that the incident was nothing more than a lockout "brought about by the abrupt refusal of the management to negotiate with its employees." Ultimately, he saw the lack of "confidence between employer, and employee"

***Attacks Policy Of W. Md.
In Dealing With Strikers***

**Rabbi E. L. Israel, In Hagerstown
Talk, Says Employes Were
Locked Out.**

Hagerstown, March 30 (Special).—An attack on the policy of the management of the Western Maryland Railway in dealing with its striking engineers and firemen was made here tonight by Rabbi Edward L. Israel, of Baltimore.

The speaker is a member of the committee of churchmen which recently investigated the Western Maryland strike.

Rabbi Israel said the strike was a lockout, brought about by the abrupt refusal of the management to negotiate with its employes.

"The essential factor of building up confidence between employer and employe was sadly absent on the Western Maryland," he asserted.

In dealing with the rights of stockholders to dividends, Rabbi Israel said that where there is a standard wage in an industry, that wage must be paid before there is any consideration of dividends.

Baltimore Sun, March 31, 1927.

(Newspapers.com.)

as the central issue concerning the Western Maryland situation. His inter-faith partnership set a precedent during the labor movement and represented an ecumenical approach to the social gospel that sought to address the morality of such economic injustice during the 1920s. By the end of the strike, Israel could clearly be described as a progressive liberal who had embraced his new role as chair of the CCAR's Social Justice Commission. The commission also emerged as a "powerful instrument of social action" directly addressing the concerns of everyday working Americans.⁴⁹ Rabbi Albert Vorspan sheds light on the significance of this ecumenical partnership towards combating social issues: "Never before, or since, has the Conference [CCAR] joined hands with Protestant and Catholic leaders so effectively in bread-and-butter, practical social action." He continues, "This period was the 'shining hour' for the CCAR as a vital exemplar of prophetic Judaism."⁵⁰ However, lost within the discussions and debates concerning workers' rights were African Americans.

The Labor Movement, the Pullman Company, and Race Relations

George Pullman founded Pullman, Illinois, during the 1880s to house his Pullman Company employees, including the black porters who attended passengers on sleeper cars.⁵¹ During the panic of the 1890s, workers' wages were cut almost one third, and thousands were fired as a result of the overexpansion of the railroad industry. Meanwhile, rent remained unchanged, along with the dividends stockholders received and management salaries. In May 1894, members of the American Railway Union (ARU) led by Eugene V. Debs declared a strike, refusing to handle Pullman cars. Jewish labor activist and founder of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) Samuel Gompers, fearing the worst, rushed to Chicago in an attempt to prevent Debs and the ARU from declaring the strike. Ultimately, this peaceful strike turned bloody as Chicago erupted, two thousand federal troops were called in, and twelve people were killed.⁵²

Two years later, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) gave the Supreme Court's imprimatur to segregation across the United States with the "separate but equal" doctrine. Jim Crow laws, disenfranchisement of African American men through Mississippi Plan policies on the state level, and horrific lynchings led to the founding of the Niagara Movement in 1905 and ultimately the NAACP in 1909. The latter organization especially brought together prominent black and Jewish leaders to fight systemic injustice and inequality in the United States.

By the first two decades of the twentieth century, Jim Crow and economic inequality were fully functioning throughout the nation. Blinded by the rhetoric of American exceptionalism, the social and economic injustices against African Americans, immigrants, and the poor were overlooked. Big businesses thrived, and the Ku Klux Klan underwent a revival beginning with the lynching of Leo Frank in 1915. The socioeconomic gap and segregation could be tracked aboard the Pullman sleeping cars where the business tycoons and the working poor interacted on a daily basis. African Americans bore witness to this culture. Pullman porters, who attended passengers on sleeping cars, were expected to work four hundred hours a month or travel eleven thousand miles on limited rest. Wages were kept low, and income depended heavily on tips.⁵³

In 1925, A. Philip Randolph established the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), an organization to aid African Americans in their

quest for labor rights. BSCP was the first labor organization led by an African American to win a collective bargaining agreement and obtain a charter from the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Working alongside individuals such as Marcus Garvey and W. E. B. Du Bois, Randolph developed an understanding of social justice that reflected a deep awareness of how race complicated labor conditions and class concerns for African Americans. Randolph's Methodist roots informed his philosophy toward the labor movement, and, consequently, Randolph aligned himself with progressive black clergy and white liberal Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish leaders such as Edward Israel to achieve fair working conditions for BSCP members as well as to combat segregation.⁵⁴

Randolph looked to the United Hebrew Trades, which protected Jewish workers, and saw the need for a similar organization to protect vulnerable African American laborers against massive corporations such as the Pullman Company. In adopting the term *brotherhood*, Randolph and the founders considered the spiritual sense of the word based on the sacred notion of community united in a common interest. Around 1925, a group of Pullman porters began looking for a qualified leader who would fearlessly advocate for their rights. For these porters such a task required both spiritual and practical importance, and they needed a leader whom they could trust, a "crusader capable of waging holy war."⁵⁵

Besides the sleeping car porters employed by the Pullman Company, a large number of African Americans worked directly for the railroads as chefs, bartenders, general porters, and dining car waiters. Historian Larry Tye sees the Pullman Porter as a metaphor for the "tens of thousands of other African-Americans who worked the railroads" including Baltimore's native son and future Supreme Court justice Thurgood Marshall, the NAACP *Crisis* editor Roy Wilkins, and theologian and educator Benjamin Elijah Mays.⁵⁶

While a student at Lincoln University in 1926, Marshall, who would later join Rabbi Israel's anti-Nazi protest in Baltimore's Inner Harbor, was a Pullman porter when he began working as a dining car waiter with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (B&O).⁵⁷ Unlike employees of the Pullman Company who worked on their signature sleeping cars, African Americans on the B&O dining trains served as either cooks or waiters. Marshall, not quite eighteen years old, came from a long line of railroad men.⁵⁸ As Marshall waited on the industrial tycoons of Baltimore, Randolph and

BSCP pressed to gain recognition as a union throughout North America. Offices sprang up in Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Detroit, Oakland, Boston, Buffalo, Washington, D.C., and other cities.⁵⁹

By 1927, the Pullman Company became the largest single employer of African Americans in the United States, with between “10,000 to 12,000 colored porters and maids in its employ.”⁶⁰ On September 7, 1927, the BSCP filed a case with the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) requesting an investigation into the Pullman Company’s unjust practices concerning rates and porters’ wages, tips, and working conditions.

*Title page of The Pullman Porter,
a fifteen-page pamphlet
issued by the Brotherhood of
Sleeping Car Porters, 1927.
(University of California, via
HathiTrust.org.)*

The BSCP Reaches Out to the CCAR

In 1925, the same year Randolph founded the BSCP, Israel and his wife Amelia welcomed their second son, his namesake, Edward L. Israel, Jr.⁶¹ The CCAR’s Social Justice Commission and other religious organizations were well aware of the Pullman porters’ struggle. By the end of September, while Israel was transitioning into his new position as the commission’s chairperson, he was approached by CCAR president Hyman G. Enelow, whom Randolph had contacted in the hope of obtaining a commission statement in support of the BSCP’s struggle to

gain greater recognition as a union. Possibly Israel may have also seen the efforts of the BSCP in the *Baltimore Afro-American's* (the *Afro*) consistent coverage of the organization surrounding their recent complaint with the ICC. In a letter to Enelow, Israel described his plans to go public concerning the plight of the sleeping car porters: "[I am] preparing a statement on the Pullman situation. . . . I tried to get all the information I could on the Canadian aspect of the problem. I learned that the sleeping car porters are organized and treat with management on the basis of collective bargaining."⁶² He included a memorandum drafted by his secretary concerning his previous conference in New York with Enelow where Israel discussed his plans to connect with several like-minded organizations concerning social justice. The memorandum provides further insight into what brought this to the attention of Israel and the Social Justice Commission: "Dr. Enelow requested Rabbi Israel to draw up a statement in response to a request from the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters with reference to their struggle for recognition as a Union, taking due cognizance of the advances which had been made along this line in Canada."⁶³

Israel worked that night and the next day to submit his first draft to Enelow in "the name of the Social Justice Commission," asking him to make "suggestions as to changes . . . which you deem fit and if it is all right, we shall forward a copy to the Brotherhood which they can release."⁶⁴ He enclosed with his letter the latest pamphlet concerning the situation. The office of the BSCP, located in New York City, had published a fifteen-page pamphlet that included a brief "History of the Brotherhood," "Wages and Working Conditions," "The Demands of the Brotherhood," "The Tipping System," "The Employee Representation Plan," "Welfare Work" and, lastly, "The Pullman Company."⁶⁵ These were the central concerns raised by the BSCP in the case that it submitted to the ICC.

The pamphlet exposed the gaps in the information being disseminated by the Pullman Company. According to the pamphlet, porters were paid a minimum wage of \$72.50 a month. Yet the porters were responsible "for purchasing the shoe polish and equipment for shining passengers' shoes . . . in addition to being responsible for purchasing their uniforms totaling to around \$80 a year. Another expense came in the area of meals, the cost of which en route averages about \$23.65 per month."⁶⁶

By the late 1920s the CCAR had developed a reputation for upholding the ideals of American democracy and advocating social justice. Nonetheless, it had been moderate in its rhetoric dealing with issues of national importance.⁶⁷ Maintaining this less radical approach became problematic for Israel leading up to and during the Great Depression. As David Polish has suggested, such an approach was shared among rabbis who, he argues, were “understandably more militant and activist than the CCAR.”⁶⁸

This moderate rhetoric was evident in Enelow’s critique of Israel’s first draft. Enelow wrote to Israel: “I have also studied the statement you are planning to issue in regards to the sleeping car porters. I think it’s all right, except perhaps I would omit in paragraph two the word ‘bigotry,’ and possibly also ‘race prejudice,’ and instead of that I might say ‘the special obstacle which Negro workers, etc.’ (Sometimes too strong an expression hurts).”⁶⁹ He continued with his critique of paragraph five:

I don’t know but . . . I might omit the word ‘tyrannical’ as too emphatic an expression. I hope you will understand I don’t object to the view, but I am afraid of words that might sound excessive. If you say, it is unjust, etc., it seems to me it means as much as the more emphatic phrase to one accustomed to the uses of sane language. I hope you understand that this is no criticism, but just an attempt to help – and, of course I may be mistaken.⁷⁰

Enelow’s reluctance provides evidence of the ways in which Jews negotiated their whiteness as they attempted to speak out against racial injustice. During the 1920s some attempted to maintain the alliance with African Americans of the early twentieth century while avoiding the flames of antisemitism.⁷¹

On October 12, 1927, Israel responded: “The Pullman Porter statement has changed as you designated and has been sent to the Brotherhood offices, the Pullman Company, and various publications such as Nation, New Republic, etc.”⁷² Even with Enelow’s more conservative rhetoric, however, Israel failed to obtain a response or publication from the popular liberal magazines. Only the African American newspaper the *Philadelphia Tribune* printed his report. Titled “Rabbis Endorse Porters’ Union at Conference,” it ran under Israel’s signature.

The revisions suggested by Enelow are evident within the second paragraph, where Israel replaced his original language in exposing the

"bigotry" that was central to the black labor movement and the case of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. The published revised second paragraph reads, "The Social Justice Commission of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, discerns the special obstacles which Negro workers, struggling for human rights must overcome." Israel then argued, "we therefore, especially in this instance urge upon the public a spirit of fair-play for these men in their struggle for recognition."⁷³

Not only was Israel concerned with shedding light on the intersections of race and class, he also countered the narrative of the black male brute and the emerging black militant represented by figures including Jack Johnson, the first African American heavyweight champion, who was married to his third white wife, and the black nationalist and trade unionist Marcus Garvey, who awaited his release from prison in November 1927. To distance the porters from such stereotypes, Israel wrote: "The Pullman Porter is a distinctly fine type of manhood. The nature of our U.S. sleeping car porters requires as Pullman porters men of a sound moral character. They must represent a high standard of personal conduct. They must have a sense of moral responsibility in their protection of the traveling public."⁷⁴

He took this a step further referencing white male and female passengers in an attempt to humanize interracial interaction: "Theirs is an intimate relationship which every man and woman who travels must appreciate. Our hearts must surely respond to any effort to accord these men the inalienable human rights of organization, self-respect, and safeguards to health." Attempting to display a sense of neutrality as recommended by Enelow, Israel provided a caveat to his statement, which, he contended, "does not intend to assume an attitude of judgement regarding all details of difference between the Labor Union group and the Pullman Company. It asserts its sympathy with the fundamental aims of the workers on the basis of the Social Justice program of the Central Conference of American Rabbis."⁷⁵ Israel thus exposed the role of segregation and racial prejudice in shaping the decision that, he argued, involved human rights concerns rooted in racial inequality and the right to a living wage.

In spite of Rabbi Israel's call for humanitarianism and unity, members of the black press and community were not so quick to buy into his call for justice. Since 1920 Carl Murphy had been using the editorial pages

*Carl J. Murphy, editor of the
Baltimore Afro-American.
(Courtesy of the Lillie Carroll
Jackson Civil Rights Museum,
Morgan State University,
Baltimore.)*

of his newspaper, the *Afro*, to speak out against racial injustice and social inequality. Murphy often penned the more direct opinion pieces in the newspaper. For example, in the April 24, 1920, edition, Murphy openly challenged President Calvin Coolidge for his failure to combat segregation in the South.⁷⁶

Murphy was among the most prominent leaders of the black press during the first half of the twentieth century and one of the first black leaders to challenge publicly Rabbi Israel and his approach to combating racial injustice. Murphy, a native of Baltimore, took over the *Afro* newspaper in 1922 following the death of his father, John H. Murphy, Sr., who founded the paper in 1892. Previously, Murphy led the German department at Howard University between 1913 and 1918 after graduating from Howard University in 1911 with a bachelor of arts and from Harvard with a masters of arts in German in 1913. He pursued further studies at the University of Jena in Germany but returned to the United States in 1914 following the outbreak of World War I. Under his leadership the *Afro* became one of the largest and most financially successful African American newspapers in the United States.

By 1927 Murphy took aim at Rabbi Israel and his white coworkers in his editorial coverage of an interfaith "tolerance banquet":

Protestants, Catholics and Jews gathered in a goodwill banquet recently at the Southern Hotel. The Protestant speaker was the Rev. Charles E. Jefferson of the Broadway Tabernacle New York; the Catholic speaker, Senator Walsh of Massachusetts; and the Jewish speaker Rabbi Stephen Wise. The banquet was arranged by the Rev. Albert E. Smith, editor of the *Baltimore Catholic Review*, Dr. Peter Ainslie, of Christian Temple and Rabbi Edward L. Israel, of Har Sinai Temple. Inasmuch as no colored persons were invited to this banquet, we respectfully suggest that the name 'tolerance banquet' should have been changed to 'white tolerance banquet.' Not so much tolerance is involved when a Jew and a Christian, or a Protestant and a Catholic sit down at the banquet table together. It would have been a test of Christianity of the entire committee, however, had the program been broad enough to include all races.⁷⁷

Israel responded to Murphy's criticism in a letter published in the *Afro*:

I agree with you entirely that the banquet could have been called appropriately 'White Tolerance Banquet.' It aimed to deal specifically with the misunderstandings that exist among Caucasians of the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths. As to the intolerance against the Negro, I can assure you of my unqualified support in doing anything to overcome it.⁷⁸

This pledge marked the second shift in Israel's thinking and actions. After his exchange with Murphy, Israel developed a friendly relationship with notable African American clergy and civil rights leaders including Baltimore NAACP president Lillie Carroll Jackson and future Supreme Court justice Thurgood Marshall. He cultivated these relationships after joining the Urban League and NAACP in addition to being appointed to the Maryland Interracial Commission and the Maryland Anti-Lynching Federation. In a program sponsored by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) at Morgan College, he urged black students to recognize that social antagonism can only be broken down when there is "(1) a cleaning out at home, (2) a greater community cooperation, and (3) greater charity cooperation."⁷⁹

In June 1928, at the annual CCAR convention, Israel led the charge of the Social Justice Commission in challenging the issues of labor inequality that dramatically affected minority populations. He described such issues as being systemic in nature and argued that solutions to such ills could not be found "in any class conscious struggle, but in the triumph of

sound humanitarian principles, which regard mankind as one."⁸⁰ Israel thus rejected Marxism and preached reform over class conflict, specifically focusing on the ways in which race and ethnicity were overlooked or dismissed when characterizing issues as rooted in class struggle.


Nonetheless, Israel depicted the economic exploitation of African American and immigrant populations as the inevitable result of capitalism. He argued that those who uphold a "religious philosophy cannot sanction this practice which tends more and more to treat labor only as an instrument. Machinery and industry exist for man, and not men for them." He proclaimed, "No materialistic philosophy can solve these problems. It is in the finer industrial democracy that we place our hope."⁸¹ This hope for a truer democracy is similar to the prophetic call that was central to the classical civil rights movement and Martin Luther King's concept of the "American Dream," which King saw as being rooted in humanistic ideas central to the founding of this nation that affirmed the equality of mankind.⁸² Israel visualized the labor conflict facing the country as an American problem that transcended race and was not representative of true democracy. He critiqued labor inequality and other social justice issues experienced by African Americans as destructive to American democracy.

At this pivotal 1928 convention, under Israel's leadership, the CCAR adopted a new social justice platform to combat the economic concerns leading up to the stock market crash of 1929. In the conference bulletin, Israel published a condensed version of the platform to be distributed to Reform congregations throughout the United States. In the preamble, he described the nature and evolution of the platform: "Deriving our inspiration for social justice from the teachings of the prophets of Israel and the great tradition of our faith, and applying these teachings concretely to the economic and social problems of today." He then named seventeen social issues the CCAR vowed to address, including the distribution and responsibility of wealth, the right to a living wage, unemployment, hours of labor and days of rest, prisons and penal laws, and, lastly, lynching.⁸³ Among the most timely of these issues was lynching, which became slightly more common as the nation began to suffer the effects of the Great Depression. Maryland was no exception, and Israel rose to the challenge boldly denouncing the lynchings of Matthew Williams in 1931 and George Armwood in 1933.

Following a dispute over pay discrepancies between Matthew Williams, a native of Salisbury, Maryland, and his employer, Daniel Elliot, witnesses heard two shots fired. When authorities arrived, Elliot was dead, and Williams lay incapacitated and unconscious, lying in a pool of blood. Shortly thereafter, Williams was taken to the segregated wing of Peninsula General Hospital in downtown Salisbury. After citizens realized he was alive, a crowd of more than a thousand people demanded Williams. Eventually, the mob reached Williams, who was straightjacketed in the hospital. Mob members threw him out of the window to the angry crowd below. White thugs then stabbed and dragged Williams three blocks to the courthouse lawn, where they hung his unconscious body twenty-five feet above the ground. Shortly thereafter, onlookers witnessed the traditional conclusion to such a ritual, which historian Donald Mathews names "the southern rite of human sacrifice," as ruffians cut Williams's genitals from his body as souvenirs. Finally, as if they had not done enough, the white mob anointed Williams's lifeless corpse with oil and gasoline and set his mutilated body ablaze.⁸⁴

**SALISBURY KILLER IS HANGED
FROM TREE AT COURTHOUSE**

Mob Took Negro From Her Custody



MISS HELEN WISE

**BODY THEN IS BURNED
ON LOT NEAR EDGE OF
COLORED SETTLEMENT**

**Crowd Of 2,000 Applauds As Noose Tightens On
Bandaged Neck Of Murderer Of
White Employer**

**OFFICERS ON SCENE OFFER
NO PROTEST, WITNESSES SAY**

**Matthew Williams, Wounded By Self And Son Of
Victim, Taken From Hospital After Shooting
Of Daniel J. Elliott**

***Ritchie Hastening To City;
Statement Due Today***

(New York Bureau of The Sun)
New York, Dec. 4—Informed of the lynching of
Matthew Williams, Salisbury (Md.) Negro, tonight, Gov.

Following this horrific incident, Maryland's leading political figure, Governor Albert Ritchie, equally condemned Williams and the actions of the "nameless" mob: "The crime of the Negro Williams was a shocking thing but he could have paid the penalty for it through the established legal machinery. The action of the mob in lynching him must bring the blush of shame to every law-abiding Marylander, whether on or off the eastern shore."⁸⁵

Hospitalized for exhaustion, Israel responded to the governor in a letter from his sickbed. He believed the Williams lynching on the Eastern Shore required "the demonstration of a strong, courageous character" on the part of state leaders.⁸⁶ Furthermore, Israel raised the question:

What is going to be the answer of the constituted authorities? Are we going to witness in Maryland the usual conclusion to these barbaric scenes? . . . Is a travesty of a coroner's inquest going to gather with the fake solemnity and declare that the negro came to his death at "the hands of persons unknown" while all the while the identity of the mob leaders is a matter of public knowledge?⁸⁷

Israel next critiqued Ritchie and the legacy of the state for attempting to politicize the Williams lynching: "What are we going to find [in Annapolis]—real courage or petty politics which prates of State's rights yet will do nothing to uphold the dignity of those rights in the face of possible loss of political prestige?"⁸⁸

Although lynchings were relatively infrequent on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the community's apathetic responses and silence represented the prevailing ethos of white supremacy and racial violence in a region that historian John R. Wennersten says was "in spirit and sense of place . . . more like the Deep South when it comes to racial attitudes."⁸⁹ Such a southern cultural legacy was rooted in a twisted variant of Christianity that was employed as a medium to safeguard white supremacy, American exceptionalism, and false notions of democracy. Israel challenged the silent clergy who perpetuated such a view and called on them to reevaluate their moral and political obligations as Christian leaders: "What are the ministers in the churches of the Eastern Shore going to do? I ask whether they are going to be frightened into silence or are going to do what real religion commands—not only protest, but take the active steps toward removing the disgrace."⁹⁰

By 1931, Israel had established a record of advocacy for social justice, which he perceived as a central component of the Jewish and Christian traditions. In an article published in the *Jewish Forum* and quoted by Franklin Roosevelt, Israel argued, "The Social Justice ideal of Judaism is almost as integral a part of its historic tradition as its unique God concept."⁹¹ In addition, he challenged the apathetic tradition of American southern society that insisted "the province of the pulpit is to stay clear of such matters." Throughout American history white supremacists demanded that religious groups conform to their prejudicial mores. According to Israel, this legacy justified segregation and turned a blind eye to economic exploitation and racial violence. At the same time, he admonished Jewish religious leaders to challenge the political establishment. "Today, even though it may cause anti-Semitism, Jewish leaders must become the outspoken exhorters to social justice, regardless of what the conservative terms to be expediency or proprietary."⁹²

As the 1930s marched on, Israel continued to challenge state and national political leaders in behalf of social justice. In 1932, he published a letter to the editor in the *Sun* in which he openly criticized the comments of one of Maryland's most prominent political figures, Dr. William Campbell Bruce. In a previous column in the *Sun*, Senator Bruce argued that "prejudice is inseparable from Eastern Shore stock and that he is proud to be born of that same stock."⁹³

Like other leaders, Bruce did not defend the Williams lynching, but his response maintained a precedent that "allowed Eastern Shoremen to defend their conduct." Likewise, Israel criticized Ritchie's "conspicuous lack of aggressive leadership" since he failed to release a statement following the lynching while rushing a day later to Chicago to deliver a political speech.⁹⁴ As state leaders like Bruce and Ritchie attempted to put the Williams lynching behind the "Free State," the following year they received a rude awakening as the tradition continued, and George Armwood became the latest lynching victim along Maryland's Eastern Shore.

"Acres of Diamonds"

To Edward Israel and African American civil rights and religious leaders, 1933 represented a unique time in black-Jewish relations in Maryland. The lynching of George Armwood coincided with the rise of

Nazism in Germany, which forced political and religious leaders to consider the suffering of African Americans in contrast to the suffering of Jews in Europe. Out of this context Israel preached a prophetic sermon titled "Acres of Diamonds" at the Howard University chapel in Washington, D.C.⁹⁵ He argued that organized religion failed to meet the challenge of social justice in unemployment and race lynching, among other areas. As Hitler's intentions became clear and Nazi Germany continued to rise, Israel asked congregants to consider the suffering of blacks and Jews comparatively. Reported by the *Afro* on March 25, 1933, Israel proclaimed, "I, as a Jew, talking to a Negro congregation, can speak as a brother. You know the story of the masses of Jews in Poland and Russia. You know the story of the Jews and Hitler in Germany. . . . You know this story today in lynchings. . . . The same Congress that refuses to pass the [Costigan-Wagner] Anti-Lynching Bill opens in prayer."⁹⁶

Such a prophetic call galvanized African American civil rights and religious leaders in Maryland to join together to bring an end to lynching in the state. Consequently, a little over a week following Armwood's lynching, several civil rights advocates established the Maryland Anti-Lynching Federation (MALF) at the home of socialist and civil liberties activist Elisabeth Gilman. The founding officers included the Reverend Asbury Smith of the McKendree Methodist Church, chair George B. Murphy, Jr., of the *Afro*, and vice chair Israel.⁹⁷ Comprised of over thirty religious and interracial organizations, the MALF represented a clear representation of the transition from rhetoric to direct action.

Through MALF, liberals took a policy-based approach to combating race lynching in their state. Such an approach was evident during the organization's first meeting, where the participants established four committees, each of which took a progressive approach as they framed their organization's ideology. The antilynching activists addressed some of the common issues such as the failure to prosecute known vigilantes and what they saw as one of the underlying issues supporting Maryland's race lynching tradition—the role of education. The committees thus focused on developing antilynching legislation, education reform, membership, and fundraising.

As with the founding of the NAACP, liberal Jewish and non-Jewish white allies worked with African Americans to fight lynching. The youthful Asbury Smith, Edward Israel, and Elisabeth Gilman became the faces

of the organization. Smith, like Israel, maintained an active role in politics on the state level. Known for his work in the “sociological fields,” Smith chaired the State Emergency Peace Campaign and the Interracial Commission of the Baltimore Federation of Churches, in addition to serving as a member of the National Urban League.⁹⁸

Likewise, Gilman represented the interracial makeup of the organization's leadership. A devout socialist and daughter of Johns Hopkins University president Daniel C. Gilman, she emerged in the 1920s as a pioneering political figure and financial supporter of social justice organizations including MALF. In 1928, Gilman began holding some of the first interracial dinners in Baltimore at her home in the upscale Mount Vernon neighborhood. There she honored NAACP pioneer and grandson of William Lloyd Garrison, Oswald Garrison Villard. After the Southern Hotel refused to serve the six blacks out of more than one hundred people in attendance, Gilman moved the dinner to her home. In the early 1930s, she joined the Socialist Party and even pursued runs for mayor of Baltimore and governor of Maryland.⁹⁹



Elisabeth Gilman, c. 1910.
(*Wikimedia Commons.*)



Oswald Garrison Villard, c. 1910.
(*NAACP Collection, Library of Congress.*)

Gilman's relationship with Villard led him to become a regular speaker at the federation's meetings, where Villard, like Israel, contrasted Maryland's and the nation's attitude toward lynching with the atrocities taking place in Germany. In December 1933, a few months following the George Armwood lynching, the MALF hosted Villard at the Westminster Presbyterian Church. Placing the events in global perspective, he lamented,

We have lived through one of the most disastrous weeks in our history. . . . Today, if we protest against the horrible brutalities in Germany, the ill-treatment of political prisoners in Poland, Yugo-Slavia, of Japan's action in Manchuria, what standing are we going to have? Will it not be enough for despots everywhere to point the finger of scorn at us and repeat three words, "Maryland, Missouri, California." Hitler himself could make the same reply if there were American protest against anti-Semitic crimes in Germany.¹⁰⁰

Beyond placing lynching in Maryland in global perspective, Villard spotlighted two other cases of lynching that took place just months apart: the lynching of Lloyd Warner in St. Joseph, Missouri, and Thomas Harold Thurmond and John M. Holmes in San Jose, California.¹⁰¹

One year later, Asbury, Israel, Gilman, and other MALF members traveled to Washington, D.C., where they joined political, civil rights, and religious leaders from throughout the nation to testify at the Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynching hearing. The ten delegates from Maryland included Juanita Jackson Mitchell of the Baltimore City-Wide Young People's Forum (C-WYPF); journalists Clarence Mitchell and Louis Azreal; Johns Hopkins professor Dr. Broadus Mitchell; Father John T. Gilliard, SSJ, chaplain to the Oblate Sisters of Providence; W. Preston Lane, attorney general of Maryland; and Simon E. Sobeloff, U.S. District Attorney for Maryland.¹⁰² Regardless of their efforts and those of many others, their antilynching bill never made it through Congress.

Alliance with Dr. Lillie May Carroll Jackson

In spite of failing to make any progress relating to antilynching legislation, Israel continued to work alongside local and national black leaders in Baltimore. However, his liberal ideals were soon challenged a second time when he was forced to confront the antiblack racism practiced by members of his congregation, who owned a number of retail stores and

Lillie Carroll Jackson.

*(Courtesy of the Lillie Carroll Jackson Civil Rights Museum,
Morgan State University, Baltimore.)*

entertainment venues in predominantly black West Baltimore along Pennsylvania Avenue but failed to provide jobs for the black customers on whose dollars they depended. By 1936, with black unemployment rates nearly triple the national average, problems such as these had begun to arise throughout northern cities, sparking a movement commonly known as the Buy Where You Can Work campaign.¹⁰³ For those who valued the role that Jews had historically played in the black freedom struggle until this point, such discrimination by Jewish business owners was alarming.

Dr. Lillie Carroll Jackson was one such leader and, like Murphy, she challenged the limits of Jewish liberalism, sparking a national discussion concerning racism among Jews and antisemitism among African Americans.

Committed to interracial and interfaith work, besides being a member of the NAACP and the National Urban League, Israel participated in the C-WYPF, an interracial civil rights youth group founded by the daughter of Dr. Lillie Carroll Jackson, Juanita Jackson Mitchell, in 1931 in response to the lynching of Matthew Williams. In December 1935, C-WYPF hosted its monthly meeting, at which members focused on "Germany's Treatment of the Jews: Is It Justified?" On December 13, following the meeting, Israel quickly penned an article, "Jew Hatred Among Negroes," in response to his experience at the meeting and sent it to the national NAACP executive secretary Walter White. After reviewing Israel's letter, White responded three days later promising to share the article with Roy Wilkins, editor of the *Crisis*. He went on to corroborate Israel's perceptions:

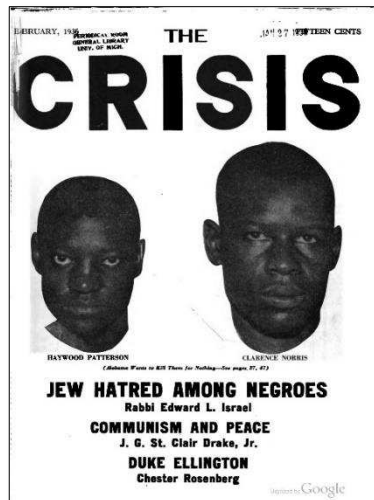
I too am much concerned about the growth of anti-sem[i]tic feeling among Negroes. I confess I was deeply disturbed at certain Negro reactions to the opposition of the Association [NAACP] and myself to American participation in the 1936 Olympics if held in Berlin. These reactions are too long to try to tell them in a letter, but I hope sometime soon to be able to sit down and discuss the whole matter with you. One thing is certain and that is that, whatever its cause, this feeling must be combated wisely and effectively. I wish you would write me specific ways in which you think this can be done. I have talked this over with several of my Jewish friends during the last few weeks, and I would like to know what you think could and should be done so that I may combine your suggestions with my own ideas.¹⁰⁴

Two months later Israel's letter was published in the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine, garnering national attention. In the essay Israel recounts the C-WYPF symposium, "Germany's Treatment of the Jews: Is It Justified?," which was set up like a simulated debate in which Israel spoke for the negative and his opponent, a professor of sociology who, Israel argued, was not antisemitic but rather treated the subject objectively, providing historical background for the events that led to the development of Nazism's racial policy.¹⁰⁵

Israel began his article by laying out the evidence concerning the growth of “anti-Jewish feeling among the colored people,” pointing to national events such as the Harlem riots, where “the chief target of Negro wrath seemed to be the Jew.” Israel argued that this anti-Jewish attitude was not confined to the “Negro intelligenzia,” but that it was also showing up among the leadership of national interracial organizations (most likely the National Urban League) and in the lower class where black domestics began posting classified ads requesting work from “Gentiles only.” According to Israel, forum leadership warned him that “some of our people feel that Hitler is justified in his treatment of the Jews.”¹⁰⁶ Indeed, Israel understood that such attitudes existed among the black population. Nonetheless, he did not believe it was pervasive. In addition, Israel described himself as an ally in the black freedom struggle, pointing to his support for the black community, including the federal antilynching bill and his rejection of segregation pacts and racism within his own congregation.

During the question and answer period of the forum, he was further shocked when he was asked “why Jewish department store owners in Baltimore refused to sell to Negroes.” Israel responded: “This condition is true in one or two instances. It is also true that several Jewish department stores have no such attitude and that, moreover, the department stores controlled by non-Jews almost universally exclude Negroes.”¹⁰⁷

*Cover of The Crisis, February 1936,
featuring an article by Edward
Israel. (Google Books.)*



As the question and answer period continued, Israel casually mentioned the upcoming Olympic games and the protest against their being held in Berlin. In response, the forum president, Juanita Jackson Mitchell, introduced a motion to send a telegram protesting the decision to hold the games in Berlin. Israel was further shocked when two members in the forum opposed the resolution. Israel argued, "It was no love for Hitler but an anti-Jewish sentiment which gave rise to some outspoken oppositions to the motion." In the end Israel argued that the rise in anti-Jewish sentiment was based on "distasteful experiences with or their dislike of certain inferior people who happen to be Jews." Considering the similarities in their experiences in America he urged the readers of the *Crisis* to remember that fascism and Nazism represented a threat both to blacks and Jews and expressed the hope that the "two minority groups who have so many problems in common, particularly in these trying times, and whose salvation depends similarly upon a successful resistance to Fascism and Nazism, will come to understand each other a little better."¹⁰⁸

In many ways Israel saw this alleged increase in antisemitism as a threat to the black and Jewish freedom struggle in America, something that he was indeed familiar with but had come to appreciate more fully as Nazism and fascism began to spread throughout Europe. In defending his strong record of combating racism, Israel was unable to see the full scale of antiblack racism practiced by Jewish business owners and developers, who were prominent members of his congregation.

Following the publication of Israel's essay, Roy Wilkins, the acting editor of the *Crisis*, replied to a letter from both Israel and White, telling him to anticipate several letters responding to his essay that would appear in the March and April issues of the magazine.¹⁰⁹ Among the letters that Wilkins received was that of Dr. Lillie Carroll Jackson, Baltimore NAACP president and mother of the forum host. In response to Israel's article, Jackson described grievances that the black community had towards members of the Jewish community. Jackson seemed to argue that what Israel saw as anti-Jewish hatred was quite the contrary, but she noted there was a lack of trust between the two groups. She argued, "We admit with Rabbi Israel that Gentiles have exploited and still are doing so, but because both Jews and Negroes represent minority groups, who are being persecuted, the Negroes naturally expect better treatment from the Jewish group."¹¹⁰

This lack of trust, she argued, was fueled by the growing trends of racism and mistreatment that African Americans suffered at the hands of their Jewish neighbors. Jackson laid out four specific examples: Jewish store owners who failed to sell their products to African Americans; Jewish property owners who ran up the prices of properties in black neighborhoods; Jewish family members who treated black domestic laborers harshly; and Jewish political leaders who made promises to support black political candidates only to renege after they secure the black vote. In the end she offered a solution:

I feel that fair-minded Jews, Gentiles and Negroes in a community should get together to discuss pro and con the grievances of their groups toward each other; then do all they can within their own race to create good will. Thus, through an honest and sincere cooperation the injustices felt by each group may be corrected and all races live in harmony.¹¹¹

By 1936 the Baltimore branch of the NAACP had grown from two hundred to more than two thousand members, and this growth put it in position to be the ideal location for the organization's national conference between June 29 and July 5. Hosting the conference, Jackson placed Israel among the list of notable conference speakers for his lecture, "Fascism and Minority Groups."¹¹²

Conclusion

Israel's activism in many ways was not unique. Leaders such as Rabbi Ira Sanders of Little Rock, Arkansas, took similar approaches to advocating for civil rights and social justice. Israel's experiences, like Sanders's, speak to what James L. Moses calls the "precarious position of the Southern rabbi and the Jewish community during the civil rights struggle."¹¹³ In spite of the success of Israel's activism, it did not come without criticism from national Reform leaders as well as members of his congregation.¹¹⁴

As Israel evolved as an interracial activist, he joined the ecumenical movement in the 1930s, partnering with and working alongside some of the nation's most prominent African American religious leaders, including Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, Vernon Johns, and Howard Thurman.¹¹⁵

As the Depression moved into the 1930s, Rabbi Israel continued to advocate for social justice and equality, against labor inequality and racial

violence, and to link racism in the United States with its counterpart in Nazi Germany. Early African American civil rights leaders in Baltimore challenged Israel to move beyond liberal rhetoric. The rabbi's reputation as a labor unionist and his work with national and local civil rights leaders placed him on the radar of the antisocialist political activist Elisabeth Dilling, who identified him with other Maryland progressives and such notable figures such as Albert Einstein, Walter White, and W. E. B. Du Bois in one of her first radical publications.¹¹⁶

Toward the end of the rabbi's life, President Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized Edward Israel as "one of the great liberals of our time."¹¹⁷ Despite such praise, Roosevelt failed to heed the prophetic warning of Reform Jewish leaders, including Israel, pertaining to domestic injustices. Lynching dramatically declined, although the blood of black bodies continued to stain American democracy, and Adolf Hitler continued his march through Europe killing millions of Jews. Roosevelt simply did not adequately address these atrocities.

Unfortunately, Rabbi Israel did not live to see the end of the war. He died suddenly on October 20, 1941, of a heart attack as he rose to speak at a meeting of the executive board of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), an organization that he was supposed to begin leading as executive director just two days later. Thousands of supporters filled the Har Sinai sanctuary for his funeral, and thousands more stood outside as the synagogue had reached capacity. Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, a social reformer, NAACP leader, and a close friend of Israel's, delivered the eulogy to the crowd of thousands. Maryland governor Herbert O'Connor and Baltimore Mayor Howard Jackson attended and served as honorary pallbearers.

Governor O'Connor's remarks fittingly describe the impact that Israel made: "His untimely death removes one of America's foremost and effective advocates in the cause of tolerance and social reform."¹¹⁸ Rabbi Wise lamented, "The impression he has left on American Jewish life will abide. He was the most Jewish of Jews, as well as deeply American. The tragedy of his going as he stood on the threshold of a second career to help American Jews realize their heritage is no mean portion."¹¹⁹ On behalf of the Baltimore branch of the NAACP, Dr. Lillie Carroll Jackson offered her condolences for the loss of Israel, whom she described as an "esteemed and honored friend."¹²⁰

Rabbi Abraham Shusterman filled the pulpit at Har Sinai following Israel's death in 1941 and remained there until 1972. Like Israel, Shusterman was a student of David Philipson and graduate of HUC, and he picked up the mantle and went on to participate in interfaith efforts throughout the state and the nation, extending the black-Jewish alliance from the early to the classical phase of the civil rights movement. Shusterman went on to join forces with Baltimore's African American leaders planning civil rights protest and joining the Clergy Brotherhood of Baltimore.¹²¹

Possibly because of his short life, Edward Israel is an essential figure missing from the scholarship of the early civil rights movement. His work with pioneering figures including Carl Murphy and Lillie Carroll Jackson made him part of the generation of activists who laid the foundation and preceded the more famous relationships between Rabbi Joachim Prinz, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., during the height of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

NOTES

¹ Edward L. Israel, "Strike Situation on Western Maryland and the Principles Involved as Seen by an Interchurch Investigator," *Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen's Magazine* (May 1927): 412.

² My use of the phrase *black-Jewish alliance* can be seen as problematic. For example, a number of notable historians have become critical of the phrase. See, for example, Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century* (Princeton, 2010), 15; John Bracey and August Meier, "Towards a Research Agenda on Blacks and Jews in United States History," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12 (Spring 1993): 61. Much of their concern, however, focuses on the representations of the "alliance" during what Bayard Rustin named the "classical phase" of the American civil rights movement, the 1950s and 1960s. Bayard Rustin, *Down the Line: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin* (Chicago, 1971), 111. Outside of the work of Hasia R. Diner, very few scholars reference the phrase when attempting to understand the significance of the relationship between blacks and Jews during the early civil rights movement, 1890 through the 1940s. Hasia Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land: American Jews and Blacks, 1915-1935* (Baltimore, 1995), ix, xi, 236, 238, 240. For the purposes of this essay, I will use the term sparingly, defining it as the historic relationships maintained by blacks and Jews based on similarities in their struggles, both domestically and abroad, between 1890 and the 1940s. The term *alliance* in this case centers around a consistent relationship between blacks and Jews based on both shared interests and

more formal "associations," represented within the activism leadership by interracial civil rights organizations such as the NAACP and the National Urban League.

³ Edward L. Israel, *Ninth Annual Report: Har Sinai Congregation* (Baltimore, 1932), 3; Abraham Shusterman, *The Legacy of a Liberal: The Miracle of Har Sinai Congregation as It Is Recounted on the One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth Anniversary* (Baltimore, 1991 [1967]), 23.

⁴ The role of the Pittsburgh Platform in shaping Reform Judaism is a topic hotly debated by historians. Jonathan D. Sarna sheds light on this debate: "For some, the Pittsburgh Platform was Reform Judaism. For others, it was but a manifestation of Reform, no more binding than any other Reform pronouncement on the movement's adherents." Jonathan D. Sarna, "New Light on the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885," *American Jewish History* 76 (March 1987): 368. See also Walter Jacob, ed., *The Changing World of Reform Judaism: The Pittsburgh Platform in Retrospect* (Pittsburgh, 1985); Sefton D. Temkin, "The Pittsburgh Platform: A Centenary Assessment," *Journal of Reform Judaism* 32 (Fall 1985): 1-12; Dana Evan Kaplan, *Platforms and Prayer Books: Theological and Liturgical Perspectives on Reform Judaism* (Lanham, MD, 2002).

⁵ Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land*, ix, xi, 236, 238, 240. For more on the long civil rights movement see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91 (March 2005): 1233-63.

⁶ "Edward L. Israel," Ohio Deaths, 1908-1953, FamilySearch, accessed March 11, 2019, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:X8QS-713>.

⁷ Most Jews who migrated to the United States from Prussia actually came from Posen, but historians and others have considered them as Germans similar to Rhinelanders or Bavarians. See Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880* (Baltimore, 1992), 28.

⁸ "Dorman Daniel Israel," United States World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, FamilySearch, accessed March 13, 2018, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K6F3-N6M>.

⁹ James S. Olson and Heather Olson Beal, *The Ethnic Dimension in American History* (New York, 2011), 183; Castle Garden, also known as Castle Clinton, was the precursor to Ellis Island and functioned as an immigration processing center from August 3, 1855, until it closed on April 18, 1890. See George J. Svejda, *Castle Garden As An Immigrant Depot, 1855-1890* (Washington, DC, 1968).

¹⁰ Abraham I. Shinedling, "Edward L. Israel - A Memoir," December 1970, 2-3, box 3, folder 3, Edward Leopold Israel Papers, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (hereafter cited as Israel Papers and AJA).

¹¹ Twenty-four African American homeowners lived in the Avondale community and sixty-one in Cumminsville. For more information on black homeowners in Cincinnati, see Wendell P. Dabney, *Cincinnati's Colored Citizens: Historical, Sociological and Biographical* (Cincinnati, 1926), 428.

¹² Dabney, *Cincinnati's Colored Citizens*, 382-83; "Statistics of Jews," *American Jewish Year Book* (Philadelphia, 1916), 278; Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, for the United States, Regions, Divisions, and States," U.S. Census Bureau Working Paper No. 56, September 2000, 68, accessed July 13, 2019, <https://census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2002/demo/POP-twps0056.pdf>.

¹³ Dabney, *Cincinnati's Colored Citizens*, 146. See also, Robert B. Fairbanks, "Cincinnati Blacks and the Irony of Low-Income Housing Reform, 1900–1950," in *Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820–1970*, ed. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. (Chicago, 1993), 196.

¹⁴ Isaac M. Fein, *The Making of an American Jewish Community: The History of Baltimore Jewry from 1773 to 1920* (Philadelphia, 1971), 242; Garrett Power, "The Residential Segregation of Baltimore's Jews: Restrictive Covenants or Gentlemen's Agreement?" *Generations* (Fall 1996), 5–6.

¹⁵ University of Cincinnati, *The Cincinnati* (Cincinnati, 1917), 61, University of Cincinnati Libraries, Cincinnati, OH. The *Cincinnati* is the UC student yearbook.

¹⁶ Harvey E. Wessel to Edward Cohen, n.d. [1973], box 2, folder 13, Israel Papers.

¹⁷ David Philipson was a prominent leader and scholar in the Reform movement. He served as secretary at the famous Pittsburgh conference in 1885 and as rabbi of Har Sinai from 1884 to 1888. Philipson actively supported the Pittsburgh Platform, spread its principles, and positioned it as the ideological basis of Classical Reform Judaism. See David Philipson to the United States Army, October 30, 1918, box 1, folder 15, Israel Papers; Charles Dabney to the United States Army, October 30, 1918, box 1, folder 1, Israel Papers; David Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York, 1907); David Philipson, *My Life as an American Jew: An Autobiography* (Cincinnati, 1941).

¹⁸ Based on the time of his enlistment and of his official ordination, Israel did not receive his formal rabbinical ordination prior to entering the U.S. Army as a chaplain.

¹⁹ After the rabbi's death, Amelia Israel eventually moved to California with her sons, where she continued to carry on her husband's legacy and remained active in local political organizations, serving as vice president for the Fullerton Democratic Women's Club. She remained in California until her death in December of 1981. "Amelia Israel," United States Social Security Death Index, FamilySearch, accessed March 1, 2019, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:V3G4-T2P>; "Democrats Convene," *Los Angeles Times*, February 18, 1960; Correspondence concerning marriage, 1919, box 1, folder 4, Israel Papers; Mrs. E. L. Israel, interview by Edward Paul Cohn, June 1972, quoted in Edward Paul Cohn, "A Rabbi Named Israel" (master's thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1974), 17; "Edward L. Israel," Ohio, County Marriages, 1789–2013, FamilySearch, accessed March 1, 2019, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:X8TT-P6V>; "Edward L. Israel," New York Passenger Arrival Lists (Ellis Island), 1892–1924, FamilySearch, accessed March 1, 2019, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:J6WS-T4S>.

²⁰ "Our Vow," September 26, 1914, box 4, folder 4, Israel Papers.

²¹ Mrs. E. L. Israel interview, quoted in Cohn, "A Rabbi Named Israel," 17.

²² Charles Edward Israel was born in Evansville, Indiana, in 1921 and worked on immigrant service ships during the post-World War II years. By 1950 he had joined his mother and brother in California, where he married Margaret Braithwaite. "Charles Edward Israel," New York, New York Passenger and Crew Lists, 1909, 1944, 1948, 1950, FamilySearch, accessed April 1, 2019, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2HSH-PV8>, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2HSH-PNT>, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVP8-HTWB>, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:>

24TK-Q47; "Charles Edward Israel," California, County Marriages, 1850-1952, FamilySearch, accessed April 1, 2019, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-893H-VC9?cc=1804002&wc=965M-RM3%3A151625301>; "Charles Edward Israel," Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Baltimore City, Maryland, FamilySearch, accessed April 1, 2019, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33SQ-GRHH-FT?cc=1810731&wc=QZF3-KY6%3A648803201%2C649359801%2C649315601%2C1589285049>.

²³ Cohn, "A Rabbi Named Israel," 25.

²⁴ Mrs. E. L. Israel interview, quoted in Cohn, "A Rabbi Named Israel," 21.

²⁵ Edward L. Israel, "Modern Theology," January 14, 1921, Israel Papers.

²⁶ Kerry M. Olitzky and Marc Lee Raphael, *The American Synagogue: A Historical Dictionary and Sourcebook* (Westport, CN, 1996), 294.

²⁷ "Har Sinai Temple Calls Rabbi Edward L. Israel," *Baltimore Sun*, July 24, 1923.

²⁸ "Liberalism Urged by Har Sinai Rabbi," *Baltimore Sun*, September 1, 1923.

²⁹ Jonathan D. Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader* (New York, 2011), 185-190.

³⁰ Rabbi Louis Bernstein had preceded Harvey Wessel at Har Sinai from 1920 to 1922. Thus when Israel was elected rabbi the congregation had a tradition of short tenures in its pulpit. J. D. Hornstein to Philipson, n.d. [1923], box 1, folder 12, Israel Papers; "Necrology," *American Jewish Year Book* 25 (Philadelphia, 1923), 138; "List of Members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis by State and City," *Central Conference of American Rabbis Annual Convention* 32 (1922), 303.

³¹ "Rabbi Edward L. Israel Called to Har Sinai Post," *Baltimore Sun*, July 23, 1923; "Har Sinai Temple Calls Rabbi Edward L. Israel," *Baltimore Sun*, July 24, 1923.

³² "Liberalism Urged by [Har] Sinai Rabbi," *Baltimore Sun*, September 1, 1923.

³³ Bertram Wallace Korn, *Retrospect and Prospect: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1889-1964* (Cincinnati, 1965), 272; Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Detroit, 1995), 276.

³⁴ Leonard J. Mervis, "The Social Justice Movement and the American Reform Rabbi," *American Jewish Archives* 7 (1955): 172. See also, James H. Moorhead, "'God's Right Arm'? Minority Faiths and Protestant Visions of America," in *Minority Faiths and the American Protestant Mainstream*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna (Urbana, IL, 1998), 346-48; Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (Cambridge, 2005), 150; Dana Evan Kaplan, "Introduction: Conflicting Visions of the Reform Movement in the United States Today," in *Contemporary Debates in American Reform Judaism: Conflicting Visions*, ed. Dana Evan Kaplan (New York, 2001), 8-9; Arnold Jacob Wolf, "Reform's Original Sin," in Kaplan, *Contemporary Debates in American Reform Judaism*, 91; Harold S. Silver, "From the Christmas Tree to the Yarmulke: What Separates Classical Reform from Mainstream Reform?," in Kaplan, *Contemporary Debates in American Reform Judaism*, 96.

³⁵ Mervis, "Social Justice Movement," 172.

³⁶ For Frisch's career in social activism, see Hollace Ava Weiner, *Jewish Stars in Texas: Rabbits and Their Work* (College Station, Tex., 1999), 156-81.

³⁷ Abraham J. Karp, "The Conservative Rabbi—'Dissatisfied but Not Unhappy,'" in *The American Rabbinate: A Century of Continuity and Change, 1883–1983*, ed. Jacob Rader Marcus and Abraham J. Peck (Hoboken, NJ, 1983), 223.

³⁸ "Western Maryland Head Calls Demands Absurd," *Baltimore Sun*, February 2, 1926.

³⁹ Abraham Cronbach, "Joint Endeavor and the Public Good," *Christian Century* 52 (January 22, 1936): 173.

⁴⁰ Edward Israel to Ephraim Frisch, October, 27, 1926, box 2, folder 12, Ferdinand M. Isserman Papers (hereafter cited as Isserman Papers), AJA.

⁴¹ Edward Israel to Abraham Cronbach, December 24, 1926, box 1, folder 1, Israel Papers. For more on Cronbach's impact on Reform Judaism and pacifism, see Abraham Cronbach, *The Quest for Peace* (Cincinnati, 1937).

⁴² Gloria Skurzynski, *Sweat and Blood: A History of U.S. Labor Unions* (Minneapolis, MN, 2008), 29; Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill, 2015), 140; Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States: Postwar Struggles, 1918–1920* (New York, 1987), 250; Markku Ruotsila, "Leftward Ramparts: Labor and Anticommunism between the World Wars," in *Little "Red Scares": Anti-Communism and Political Repression in the United States, 1921–1946*, ed. Robert Justin Goldstein (Farnham, UK, 2014), 165.

⁴³ James J. Horn, "U.S. Diplomacy and 'The Specter of Bolshevism' in Mexico (1924–1927)," *The Americas* 32 (July 1975): 31–45, accessed May 1, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.2307/980401>.

⁴⁴ Scholars of Mexican-American relations during the 1920s have paid considerable attention to the historic events that took place toward the end of the decade, more specifically the goodwill mission of Dwight Whitney Morrow to Mexico in 1927. As a result of this hyper-emphasis, scholars have failed to pay attention to the events leading up to Whitney's mission under the leadership of his predecessor, James Rockwell Sheffield. During Sheffield's tenure Mexico began to come into its own, place its interest above others, and display independence from the United States. Under the leadership of Alvaro Obregon, Mexico became the first western nation to recognize the Soviet Union. This radical shift was the result of large Soviet purchases of Mexican goods and products. "Secretary Kellogg on Bolshevism in Mexico and Latin America: Submitted to Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate," *Advocate of Peace through Justice* 89 (February 1927), 115.

⁴⁵ "Arbitration with Mexico Urged by Rabbi," *Baltimore Sun*, January 24, 1927.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Edward L. Israel, "As to Social Justice and the Central Conference Rabbis: A Specifically Jewish Note in the View of the Matters Now Occupying the Attention of the Commission," *American Israelite*, July 20, 1928.

⁴⁸ "Rabbi Ephraim Frisch's Internal Report on the Maryland Strike to CCAR Social Justice Commission," January 4, 1927, box 2, folder 12, Isserman Papers.

⁴⁹ "Attacks Policy of Western Maryland In Dealing with Strike," *Baltimore Sun*, March 31, 1927.

⁵⁰ Albert Vorspan, *Giants of Justice* (New York, 1960), 165.

⁵¹ Ted Newcomen, "Pullman, Illinois: Changes in Community Planning from the 1880s to the 1990s," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 4 (1998): 10.

⁵² Almont Lindsey, *The Pullman Strike: The Story of a Unique Experiment and of a Great Labor Upheaval* (Chicago, 1964), 228; Harold C. Livesay, *Samuel Gompers and Organized Labor in America* (Long Grove, IL, 1993), 12.

⁵³ Jack Santino, *Miles of Smiles, Years of Struggle: Stories of Black Pullman Porters* (Urbana, IL, 1989), 6–10.

⁵⁴ Cynthia Taylor, *A. Philip Randolph: The Religious Journey of an African American Labor Leader* (New York, 2005), 31–33.

⁵⁵ Larry Tye, *Rising from the Rails: Pullman Porters and the Making of the Black Middle Class* (New York, 2004), 131.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, xv.

⁵⁷ For information on the anti-Nazi protest see Deborah R. Weiner “Insiders and Outsiders: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Baltimore during the Interwar Era,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* (Winter 2015): 477–78; Eric L. Goldstein and Deborah R. Weiner, *On Middle Ground: A History of the Jews of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 2018), 227–28, 232.

⁵⁸ B&O Employee Card for Thurgood Marshall, 1926–1929, B&O Railroad Museum and Archives, Baltimore, Maryland. Marshall’s father and uncle served as sleeping car porters. His uncle, Fearless Williams, the personal assistant to the president of the B&O Railroad, was possibly able to pull strings with management to secure employment for his young nephew. See Larry S. Gibson, *Young Thurgood: The Making of a Supreme Court Justice* (New York, 2012), 90.

⁵⁹ Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, *The Pullman Porter* (New York, 1927), 6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶¹ Edward L. Israel, Jr., was born in Baltimore, attended the historic Baltimore City College, and enlisted in the U.S. military. Shortly thereafter he moved to California and started his own company, the Edward Lumber Manufacturing Company. He remained in California until his death in 1992. “Edward L Israel,” Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Baltimore City, Maryland, FamilySearch, accessed April 1, 2019, <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:X34C-D4Z>; “3 East Bay Lumber Men Are Indicted,” *San Bernardino County Sun*, December 10, 1960; “Edward Leopold Israel,” California Death Index, 1940–1997, FamilySearch, accessed April 1, 2019, <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VPZR-LXS>.

⁶² Edward Israel to H. G. Enelow, September 22, 1927, box 10, folder 12, Hyman G. Enelow Papers (hereafter cited as Enelow Papers), AJA.

⁶³ Edward Israel to H. G. Enelow, September 22, 1927, box 10, folder 12, Enelow Papers.

⁶⁴ Edward Israel to H. G. Enelow, September 23, 1927, box 10, folder 12, Enelow Papers.

⁶⁵ BSCP, *The Pullman Porter*, 3.

⁶⁶ Edward Israel to H. G. Enelow, September 22, 1927, box 10, folder 12, Enelow Papers.

⁶⁷ In terms of international affairs, in 1927 the CCAR had urged the U.S. government to provide support for famine relief in China and to remove troops from Nicaragua.

⁶⁸ David Polish, “The Changing and the Constant in the Reform Rabbinate,” in Marcus and Peck, *American Rabbinate*, 223.

⁶⁹ H. G. Enelow to Edward Israel, September 26, 1927, box 10, folder 12, Enelow Papers.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1998); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).

⁷² Edward Israel to H. G. Enelow, October 12, 1927, box 10, folder 12, Enelow Papers.

⁷³ Edward L. Israel, "Rabbis Endorse Porters' Union at Conference: Urge Fair Play for Men Whom They Call Fine," *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 27, 1927.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Hayward Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950* (Westport, CN, 1998), 11.

⁷⁷ Carl Murphy, "Toleration," *Afro-American* (Baltimore), December 31, 1927.

⁷⁸ "Not Fair to Criticize," *Afro-American* (Baltimore), January 14, 1928.

⁷⁹ "At Morgan College," *Afro-American* (Baltimore), April 5, 1930. A historically black institution, Morgan College became Morgan State College in 1937 and Morgan State University in 1975.

⁸⁰ "Rabbi Would Save Personality of Labor," *New York Times*, June 30, 1928.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Lewis V. Baldwin, *To Make the Wounded Whole: The Cultural Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Minneapolis, MN, 1992), 72; James H. Cone, *Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare* (Ossining, NY, 1991), 27-28.

⁸³ Edward L. Israel, "As to Social Justice and the Central Conference Rabbis," *Jewish Exponent*, July 20, 1928.

⁸⁴ Mathews contextualizes such a cultural phenomenon: "Given the brutality of lynching and the contempt with which its victims were treated, one might be excused some skepticism that in executing a black victim, whites were making him sacred." Donald G. Mathews, "The Southern Rite of Human Sacrifice: Lynching in the American South," *Mississippi Quarterly* 61 (2008): 27; "Eye Witness to Lynching Tells How Mob Acted," *Afro-American*, December 12, 1931.

⁸⁵ "Ritchie Orders Mob Members' Arrest," *Baltimore Sun*, December 6, 1931.

⁸⁶ "Rabbi Israel Urges Action on Lynching," newspaper clippings and correspondence relating to the lynching of Matthew Williams, Governor Albert Ritchie Collection, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ John R. Wennersten, *Maryland's Eastern Shore: A Journey in Time and Place* (Centerville, MD, 1992), 137.

⁹⁰ "Rabbi Israel Urges Action on Lynching."

⁹¹ Edward L. Israel, "Some Thoughts on Social Justice Today," n.d., Har Sinai Collection, Jewish Museum of Maryland, Baltimore (hereafter cited as Har Sinai Collection); Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Campaign Address at Detroit, Michigan," October 2, 1932, Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, The American Presidency Project, accessed May 1, 2019, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=88393>.

⁹² Israel, "Some Thoughts on Social Justice Today."

⁹³ "Dr. Israel on 'Dr.' Bruce," *Baltimore Sun*, January 31, 1932.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Israel borrowed the title from the famous inspirational lecture, published in 1890, by Russell Conwell, a Baptist minister and founder and first president of Temple University in Philadelphia.

⁹⁶ "Religion Fails, Rabbi Israel tells Howard," *Afro-American*, March 25, 1933.

⁹⁷ George B. Murphy, Jr., the nephew of Carl J. Murphy, was born in Baltimore in 1906 to George B. Murphy, Sr., and Grace H. L. Murphy. Like the rest of the family, Murphy went on to work for the *Afro*, serving as a correspondent in Harlem during the 1930s and eventually working his way up to becoming the editor in chief of the *Washington Afro-American* during the 1940s. Like his uncle, Murphy, Jr., was heavily involved in the antilynching protest of the early civil rights movement and went on to establish friendships with W. E. B. DuBois and Paul Robeson. Eben Miller, *Born along the Color Line: The 1933 Amenia Conference and the Rise of a National Civil Rights Movement* (New York, 2012), 164; Farrar, *Baltimore Afro-American*, 5,6; "George B. Murphy, Jr.," Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, Baltimore City, MD; "Named Honorary Head of Anti-Lynching Group," *Baltimore Sun*, November 7, 1933.

⁹⁸ "M. E. Pastor Accepts Memorial Church Call," *Baltimore Sun*, January 19, 1937.

⁹⁹ "City's 'Nation' Dinner Most Memorable in Series—Villard," *Afro-American* (Baltimore), March 17, 1928.

¹⁰⁰ "Asserts Lynching Increases Crimes," *Baltimore Sun*, December 2, 1933.

¹⁰¹ "Inquiry Ordered in Missouri Mob's Burning of Negro," *Albany* (New York) *Evening News*, November 29, 1933; "Slayers of Hart Lynched by California Mob after Body of Victim is Found," *Baltimore Sun*, November 27, 1933.

¹⁰² "City to Send Ten to Lynch Hearing," *Baltimore Sun*, February 20, 1934.

¹⁰³ Andor Skotnes, *A New Deal for All? Race and Class Struggles in Depression-Era Baltimore* (Durham, NC, 2012), 283; Andor Skotnes, "'Buy Where You Can Work': Boycotting for Jobs in African-American Baltimore, 1933–1934," *Journal of Social History* 27 (Summer 1994): 735–36; Weiner, "Insiders and Outsiders," 477–78.

¹⁰⁴ Walter White to Edward Israel, December 16, 1935, box 2, folder 1, Israel Papers.

¹⁰⁵ "Jew Hatred Among Negro," *Crisis* (February 1936): 39.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹⁰⁹ Roy Wilkins to Edward Israel, February 25, 1935, box 2, folder 1, Israel Papers.

¹¹⁰ Lillie M. Jackson, "Letters from Readers: Jew Hatred Among Negroes," *Crisis* (April 1936): 122.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr., "N.A.A.C.P.—Welcome to Baltimore!," *Crisis* (July 1936): 200.

¹¹³ James L. Moses, *Just and Righteous Causes: Rabbi Ira Sanders and the Fight for Racial and Social Justice in Arkansas, 1926–1963* (Fayetteville, AR, 2018), 6.

¹¹⁴ Abraham Shusterman, *Legacy of a Liberal*, 79.

¹¹⁵ "Annual School of Religion Set at Howard University," *Washington Post*, November 5, 1934.

¹¹⁶ Elizabeth Kirkpatrick Dilling, *The Red Network: A "Who's Who" and Handbook of Radicalism for Patriots* (Chicago, 1934), 114, 129, 181, 197.

¹¹⁷ "Twentieth Anniversary of the Death of Rabbi Israel," 1962, Har Sinai Collection.

¹¹⁸ "Dr. Israel's Death Mourned," *Baltimore Sun*, October 21, 1941.

¹¹⁹ "Funeral of Dr. Israel to Take Place Today in Baltimore," *Jewish Telegraph Agency*, October 22, 1941.

¹²⁰ Lillie M. Jackson telegraph to Mrs. Edward L. Israel and Family, October 20, 1941, box 2, folder 15, Israel Papers.

¹²¹ Lenora Heilig Nast, Laurence N. Krause, and Richard C. Monk *Baltimore: A Living Renaissance* (Baltimore, 1982), 89, 90, 97.