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Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

Rachel Heimovics Braun, *Managing Editor*

Eric L. Goldstein, *Book Review Editor*

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Israel Fine:
Baltimore Businessman
and Hebrew Poet

by

Peggy Kronsberg Pearlstein

In 1991, Marjorie Rosenblatt chanced to see *From the Ends of the Earth*, an exhibit of Judaic treasures at the Library of Congress. She was startled to find a book on prominent display composed by her great-grandfather, Israel Fine (1847-1930). Published in 1907, this particular copy of *Neginoth ben-Yehudah* (Songs of the Son of Judah) was probably presented to President Theodore Roosevelt and later transferred from the White House to the Library of Congress. In addition to two poems in honor of Roosevelt, the book also contained memorials to President William McKinley and Secretary of State John Hay and tributes to Theodor Herzl and Rabbi Benjamin Szold, among others. What is also surprising was that the poems were not written in Yiddish, the common language of most Jewish immigrants, but in Hebrew. The leather-bound display volume was opened to the book's inside covers which featured two brightly colored major American symbols: the flag of the United States and its shield. Until then, little was known about Israel Fine. By coincidence, Dr. Michael Grunberger, at that time head of the Hebraic Section at the library, was in the exhibit area and Rosenblatt spoke with him. Subsequently, she and Fine's great-grandson, Dr. Earl L. Baker, provided information on the family to Grace Cohen Grossman, then curator of ethnographic Judaica at the Smithsonian Institution, a collection that contained Hebrew language artifacts donated by Fine.¹

Fine was a businessman, Zionist, and Hebrew poet, who moved to Baltimore, Maryland, soon after his arrival in the United

States about 1890 and lived there until his death in 1930. In a photograph taken shortly before 1908, he appears as a middle-aged, bearded, gentle looking man. Spectacles dangle from the lapel of his jacket. Beneath them hangs the medal he received as the only American delegate to the Fourth Zionist Congress which was held in London in 1900.²

In several ways, Fine was typical of other Hebrew poets like Gershon Rosenzweig (1861-1914), Menahem Mendel Dolitzki (1856-1931), and a later generation that included Benjamin Silkiner (1882-1933), Ephraim Lisitzky (1885-1962), and Israel Efros (1881-1981). All arrived in the United States in the decade before and the decade after the turn of the century. Like them, Fine was an eastern European immigrant. Yiddish was their mother tongue, the language of everyday discourse, and the language in which the immigrants comfortably expressed themselves in the newspapers, in the theater, and in literature. But this small, elite group was unusual because the members had received Hebrew educations more advanced than others, and they worked to revive Hebrew as a modern tongue.

However, Fine differed from these poets in several respects. Most of them were much younger than he and arrived in America penniless. Thus, they struggled to earn a living even as they worked to bring a Hebrew literary movement into existence. Fine, who had been a businessman in Russia, immigrated as a mature adult with a family. He then prospered as the owner of a men's clothing factory. Although an eastern European immigrant, he became a member of a German Jewish Orthodox congregation in Baltimore and had business and social relationships among members of that community, demonstrating that in this period there were already connections between Uptown and Downtown Jews. It is unknown whether Fine attempted to have his poetry published in the Hebrew journals of the day. He seems to have written for his personal enjoyment and to share his verse with family and close friends. He composed poems in response to world affairs, life-cycle events such as birthdays and anniversaries, challenges in leadership faced by presidents and other government officials, celebrations

*Portrait of Israel Fine wearing his medal from the Fourth Zionist Congress.
The photo dates from before 1907, when it appeared in
Neginoth ben-Yehudah.
(Courtesy of Peggy Kronsberg Pearlstein.)*

of local Jewish community events and persons, and the plight of Jews abroad.

The Hebrew reading public in America was so small that poets and even prose writers turned to sponsors to underwrite publication of their books. For example, Philadelphia Judge Mayer Sulzberger, who was a well-known local and national Jewish leader and a knowledgeable Jew devoted to the Hebrew book, was one such sponsor.³ Fine, however, was sufficiently affluent to self-publish his two volumes of writings. A number of Fine's poems appeared with English translations alongside the Hebrew. The bilingual poems reflected an early adaptation to the surrounding Americanizing culture and opened his verse to others. It also attested to the existence of a group of individuals in the Baltimore Jewish community with proficiency in the Hebrew language who worked to sustain its place in Jewish culture within the broader American scene. This essay examines Israel Fine as an individual who made America and its values part of his life as a Jew while maintaining his commitment to Judaism and the Hebrew language. In so doing, it sheds substantial light on the history of the Baltimore Jewish community and aspects of Hebrew literature in the United States in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century.

Israel Fine Comes to Baltimore

The son of Judah (sometimes referred to as Lewin) and Mollie Fine, Israel Fine was born in 1847 in Pokroy (today, Pakruojis), Kovno (today, Kaunas), Lithuania. Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, Kovno became a center of Jewish cultural activity, which included the establishment of several prominent yeshivot. Fine's father, Judah, was a learned scholar and his mother, Mollie, was the mainstay of the family's dry-goods store, a typical arrangement among such families at the time. At eighteen, Fine married Minnie Racusin after which he studied privately for several years. He then ran his own business and, probably from the 1870s until his immigration to America, served as a sales representative in Moscow.⁴

Antisemitism and pogroms throughout Russia mounted after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881. During the reign of Alexander III, the government stepped up efforts to rid the country of its Jews. The increasingly hostile environment most likely led Fine to uproot his family and immigrate to the United States.

They came first to Philadelphia, perhaps to join Minna's Racusin relatives in the dry goods business. Minna and Israel had several children, Hyman (Shabbetai), Morris (Moses), Philip, Louis, Mary, Pauline, Mildred, and Mollie, some of whom were born in Russia. Hyman died in 1892 at twenty-seven; Moses died in 1903 at twenty-four. Fine lamented their deaths and memorialized the sons in poetry.⁵

According to city directory listings, Fine and Racusin left Philadelphia and relocated to Baltimore, probably for promising business opportunities and for personal reasons. The port city was well situated to distribute the goods it manufactured throughout the mid-Atlantic and southern states. There were also Jews in Baltimore who had arrived earlier from Pokroy, Fine's hometown. In 1877, these early immigrants established what they called the Pokroyer Shul. After fifteen years of holding services in rented rooms, the congregation erected a building on High Street in East Baltimore, approximately the time of Fine's arrival.⁶

Beginning in 1893, city directories provide a timeline of Fine's advancing prosperity as he moved from clerk in 1893 to storeowner in 1894 to clothing manufacturer in 1899. By 1906, the medium-sized firm was housed in a four-story structure known as the Fine building at 411 W. Baltimore Street in the heart of the garment district.

The company's economic growth is also traced in a business brochure published around 1915, the year that Baltimore manufacturers reached the height of their clothing production. The brochure was intended to promote "Fine Clothing" and its "College Cut Line" among business associates. It contains images of the firm's suits and coats, a drawing of the Fine building and its geographic location within the garment district, letters from satisfied wholesale merchants like Schwarzenbach & Son in Cumberland, Maryland, Loar & Hendrickson of Grafton, West

Virginia, and Joseph Mullen & Sons from Wilmington, Delaware, and photographs of Fine and his son, Louis.⁷

Published in the same year, a second, larger booklet, *Three Anniversaries in the Life of Mr. Israel Fine*, commemorates the fiftieth wedding anniversary of Israel and Minna Fine, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the business, and the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of "The Star-Spangled Banner." It gives additional information about the Fine firm and also served as another advertising tool.

In the latter booklet, the company asserted that the suits produced were the "finest custom-tailored garments made," because no cheap labor was used and only those designers, cutters, trimmers, and tailors at the top of their profession made the garments. Since all materials were bought for cash, it stated, the savings were passed along to the trade. Moreover in 1912, the firm was awarded a contract by Parker, Bridget & Co. to furnish eight hundred suits "to be worn by members of the Columbus Lodge on the occasion of the unveiling of the Columbus Statue at Washington, D.C."⁸

The pamphlets exemplify how Fine embraced modern sales methods to retain clientele and to seek new business. The publications indicate the measure of financial success Fine had achieved since his arrival in the United States. In a short time, he had gained parity with other local medium-sized manufacturers who were overwhelmingly of German Jewish origin. It is unknown, however, whether Fine began by supplying peddlers and other eastern European Jewish immigrants as did Jacob Epstein, the best-known of Baltimore's Jewish businessmen. Arriving penniless from Lithuania in 1882, Epstein started as a peddler and then opened a store and mail-order business, which "became the most important jobbing concern for the entire South. It employed a thousand people and generated a million dollars of income each month."⁹ Fine's business continued to grow too, permitting the poet-manufacturer to make donations to charitable institutions and to travel.

The booklets are unusual in that in addition to photographs of Israel Fine, his wife, and their son, Louis, and "a brief synopsis

Judah Fine, Israel's father, center, with S. (Hyman) Fine, left, and Morris A. Fine, right, sons of Israel Fine who predeceased their father. (As they appeared in Zemiroth Yisrael, courtesy of Peggy Kronsberg Pearlstein.)

of Mr. I. Fine's literary work," they also include several poems in Hebrew and English translation, including one on the occasion of President Theodore Roosevelt's birthday and others with a Jewish theme. There are pages of bits of information about Baltimore "firsts" and New York City "firsts" and the "Greatness of the United States" in terms of size, transportation, ports, and other facts.

Fine used the pamphlets as venues to show that he was a knowledgeable Jew with a command of the Hebrew language and, equally important, that he was a patriotic citizen who was proud of his adopted country and its leaders. In the midst of a world war that would soon envelop the United States, Fine demonstrated that an eastern European immigrant could become a successful businessman and loyal American, yet simultaneously remain a committed Jew.

The Fine family gradually acculturated and became prosperous enough to move from the downtown immigrant enclave to

the northwest neighborhood of affluent German Jews. By the early twentieth century, Israel Fine and his son Louis lived on McCulloh Street. They affiliated with Shearith Israel when that congregation relocated from West Baltimore in 1903 and erected a building at McCulloh and Bloom streets.¹⁰ Later, Israel Fine moved to 814 Chauncey Avenue, a row house in a more fashionable area, one block from Druid Hill Park. This home was close to the now Conservative-affiliated Chizuk Amuno Congregation, which in 1921 had moved from McCulloh and Mosher streets to Chauncey Avenue and Eutaw Place. Fine joined the synagogue and when he died in 1930, Rabbi Adolph Coblenz officiated at the funeral.¹¹ Although founded by Orthodox German-speaking Jews, the congregation had welcomed eastern European immigrants into its fold. Both congregations supported Zionism and wanted to maintain traditional Judaism and the Hebrew language, shared interests that overrode language, cultural, and class differences.¹²

The prosperity Fine experienced also provided the means to travel and to support a variety of charitable causes. In 1900, as previously noted, Fine traveled to London to serve as a delegate to the Fourth Zionist Congress. According to his account, after the close of the Congress, he and his wife attended the *Exposition Universelle*, the Paris world's fair, where they met acquaintances and business friends from Europe and the United States. In 1909, Fine traveled extensively to several European cities and to Palestine and Egypt. In each community, he visited the rabbis and professors to whom he had sent his book, *Neginoth ben-Yehudah*.¹³ In 1926, Fine again visited Palestine. After his return, he celebrated his seventy-ninth birthday by announcing the "donation of a home in Palestine as the first unit of an agricultural school for girls" to be built on land he had donated several years earlier in Herzliyya in honor of Hadassah.¹⁴ Since this Zionist women's organization had been founded by Henrietta Szold, daughter of Baltimore's Rabbi Benjamin Szold, Fine probably also felt more keenly about contributing to its causes. As an immigrant and aware of the enactment of congressional legislation in 1921 and 1924 that restricted immigration into the United States, Fine eagerly supported Hadassah's efforts to provide a new life in Palestine

to adolescent young women who had been dislocated after World War I.¹⁵

Fine used the occasion of his birthday to give to other causes and institutions. For example, in 1922, he declined a banquet in honor of his seventy-fifth birthday and instead distributed ten checks of seventy-five dollars each to the United Charities, the Blind Orphanage, the Women's Insane Asylum, Hadassah, the Free Loan Association of Jerusalem, Maryland Institute for the Blind, General Hospital, Hebrew Parochial School of Baltimore (forerunner of the Orthodox Talmudical Academy of Baltimore), and the Home for Convalescent Children.¹⁶ While Fine never noted that he was an officer of any of these institutions and his name does not appear on organizational rosters, business acquaintances, friends, and family may have influenced these philanthropic choices. But the charities also represented a cross section of general and Jewish endeavors with which Fine would have likely identified anyway, since he was an immigrant himself and recognized the needs of those less fortunate, most often women and children.

Within the Jewish community, Fine moved in other overlapping circles. His personal relations with prominent individuals ran across a spectrum that included people affiliated with Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism, with Zionists and non-Zionists, and with eastern European and German Jews. These relationships reflected his positive standing within the community and the extent to which German and eastern Europeans put aside differing social backgrounds and religious practices in order to come together for common interests, especially that of fostering the Hebrew language.

For example, in 1902, Benjamin Szold, rabbi emeritus of Reform Oheb Shalom, presented Fine with a carved wooden cane, the handle of which was shaped like a snake's head. On a metal plate was the inscription, "Presented by Benj. Szold to Israel Fine 8 Kislev 5662." Carved in the wood below that is the phrase, "The Lord will send the staff of your strength from Zion," from Psalms 110.2. Szold was also the subject of praise in several Hebrew poems written by Fine. A longtime member of Orthodox Shearith

Israel, Fine wrote a Hebrew poem in 1918 to Rabbi Schepsel Schaffer as he completed twenty-five years of service in that pulpit.¹⁷ Also Rabbi William Rosenau, who had succeeded Rabbi Szold at Oheb Shalom, wrote an editorial for the *Jewish Times* when Fine died.¹⁸

Moreover, Fine's writings drew together other people. On March 17, 1908, Purim night, Fine was surprised by a group of Jewish leaders who gathered to honor him as the author of *Neginoth ben-Yehudah*. They presented the poet with a large portrait of Fine, framed on either side by a Hebrew poem composed by Rabbi Schaffer in acrostic form with the letters of Fine's name beginning each line. The poem praised Fine for the "clarity of his language, the honored Hebrew tongue."¹⁹ Other early Hebrew poets in America and admirers of the language also viewed Hebrew as an honored tongue.

Early Hebrew Poets and Poetry in America

From 1880 to 1920, over three million eastern European immigrants came to the United States fleeing poverty and pogroms. Almost all of them Yiddish-speaking, they brought little of monetary value with them beyond the skills that would hopefully enable them to advance their position in life. Sixty per cent of the immigrants—mostly Jews working for Jews—were employed in the garment industry.²⁰

Yiddish newspapers like the *Forverts* (Forward) served as agents of change by supporting the immigrants' adjustment to their new country and helping them unite in their efforts to organize labor unions. They also functioned as a primary source for maintaining culture by serializing Yiddish fiction and publishing translations from European and American literature. During World War I, about 600,000 people a day read the various Yiddish newspapers published in the United States.²¹

Even before the appearance of the dailies, early arrivals to these shores were writing poetry in Yiddish. Morris Rosenfeld (1862–1923), for example, was popular among the masses because he wrote in *mamaloschen* about the plight of those laboring in sweatshops. "Good Yiddish literature," the editorials, essays, and

Louis, son of Israel Fine, was in business with his father.

(From Neginoth ben-Yehudah, courtesy of Peggy Kronsberg Pearlstein.)

novels written by erudite immigrants, however, appealed to a smaller, more educated audience.²²

Just as there were two Yiddish literary streams, “two Hebrews, the classical and the modern,” existed side by side in America and Europe. For rabbis and scholars, the Hebrew of the Bible, Talmud, and prayer book was the holy language, not

the language of everyday discourse. During the mid-eighteenth century age of modernization, the Enlightenment spread across Europe. A century later, this combined with the new force of nationalism. Enlightened Jews brought these two movements to the Jewish community, one outcome of which was the rebirth of Hebrew as a modern tongue. A number of these *maskilim* immigrated to the United States and infused Jewish culture in America with the fruits of their small Hebrew literary movement. While the masses of immigrants to this country gave way to the forces of Americanization, this little band of Hebraists, notes historian Alan Mintz, resisted acculturation striving instead to create a center for Hebrew literature in the United States.²³ For them, according to Mintz, "the Hebrew language was an object of veneration, a vessel of purity and even divinity; it was the language . . . also of poetry and philosophy."²⁴

As in Europe, the periodical became the primary medium of literary expression for poets. At least twenty Hebrew journals appeared in this country from the 1890s into the first decade of the next century, but most of them were short lived due to the lack of readers with sufficient knowledge of Hebrew and sufficient funds to purchase a subscription. For example, Samuel Benjamin Schwartzberg, the agent for the journal, *Ner Ma'arabi* (Light of the West), complained in 1898 that after four weeks of effort less than twenty-two copies of the monthly were sold in Pittsburgh and even less in Baltimore although thousands of Jews lived in these cities.²⁵

Many of these *maskilim* were also Zionists. They dreamed of building a *yishuv* in Palestine, a place where Hebrew would flower. As writers and educators, they were also inspired to advance Hebrew in this country. A cadre of such knowledgeable men and women developed in the United States through the pioneering efforts of Dr. Samson Benderly. The Safed-born and Johns Hopkins-trained physician became an innovative Jewish educator who developed the *Ivrit b'Ivrit* (Hebrew in Hebrew) method of teaching Hebrew in Talmud Torah afternoon religious schools and later in Jewish camps.²⁶

In his multi-volume *A History of Jewish Literature*, Rabbi Meyer Waxman noted that there were two periods of Hebrew literary creativity in the United States: from the last quarter of the nineteenth century until about 1905 and from that time forward. In the first period, the writers did not advance beyond “ornate writing” and they left little of lasting value. “Rather,” noted Waxman, “their contribution was to keep the flame of Hebrew literature and culture burning” for the next generation of Hebrew writers.²⁷ Fine knew some of these poets and they may have influenced each other although his relationship with others is unknown.

Gerson Rosenzweig, the single poet Waxman mentions from the early era, and one who was a dozen years younger than Fine, edited several of the short-lived American Hebrew periodicals. Known as the “sweet satirist of Israel,” and as an epigrammist, in 1898 he translated “America,” “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and “Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean,” into Hebrew. Like Fine, he too showed his faith in America through his endorsement of its leaders. The successful conclusion of the Spanish-American War that year, led by then Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt, saw Cuba on a gradual path to independence and the United States emerge as a world power. These events gave Americans a heightened sense of patriotism and pride in their country and later helped to catapult Roosevelt into the presidency.²⁸ Unlike Fine however, Rosenzweig also attacked what he saw as vulgar and backward in this country—the greenhorn and the peddler. And also unlike Fine, he viewed rabbis as being like other Americans whom he saw as mainly interested in wealth and honor.²⁹

Menahem Mendel Dolitzki was another poet from this early era. He wrote in Yiddish and in Hebrew. Born in Bialystok, he received a traditional Orthodox education as did Fine, but made his living as a Hebrew teacher. Dolitzki’s poetry had already been published in Europe when he was in his early twenties. It is possible that Fine knew him personally and had read his poetry, since Dolitzki lived in Moscow and Fine conducted business there. After witnessing the Russian pogroms in 1881, Dolitzki became a member of Hibbat Zion (Love of Zion), a Zionist movement that was widespread in eastern Europe before political Zionism

began with the First Zionist Congress in 1897. The Zionist poems he wrote have been described as “colorless and full of clichés but nevertheless exude warmth and innocent romanticism.” When Jews were expelled from Moscow in 1892, Dolitzki was welcomed to the United States by the small group of *maskilim* already in the country. Several volumes of his poetry were published in the dozen years after his arrival. In the preface to *Shire Menahem* (Poems of Menahem), a collection of Hebrew poems he had written while in Europe, he acknowledged Israel Fine’s assistance in bringing his work to the attention of Sigmund Sonneborn. A Baltimore German Jewish clothing manufacturer and Zionist supporter, Sonneborn underwrote the publication of this volume.³⁰

Fine was likely acquainted with his contemporary and landsman Isaac Rabinowitz (1846–1900), who had immigrated to the United States in 1891, about the same time as Fine. Rabinowitz published most of his Hebrew songs in Vilna in 1891 in a book called *Zemirot Yisrael* (Songs of Israel), a title which Fine later used for his own work. Fine wrote a poem in memory of Rabinowitz.³¹

Fine knew Yiddish and Hebrew writer and scholar George Selikovitch (1855 or 1863–1926), who was on the editorial staff of the Yiddish daily, *Tageblatt* (Daily Newspaper), for more than a quarter century. Fine was invited to the celebration of Selikovitch’s jubilee birthday and wrote a poem for the occasion.³²

Benjamin Nahum Silkiner was among the poets who were an entire generation younger than Fine. He is credited with attempting to modernize Hebrew writing in America and provide publishing venues for new writers. In 1910 he was part of a group of poets whose work appeared in *Senunit* (Swallow), the first anthology of Hebrew poetry to appear in the United States. In the same year, Silkiner published his epic poem, *Mul Ohel Timmurah* (Before the Tent of Timmurah) and became the first Hebrew poet to draw on a specific American theme when he wrote about the American Indians and their struggles with conquering Spaniards.³³

Israel and Minna Fine.

*(Courtesy of the National Museum of American History,
Smithsonian Institution.)*

Ephraim Lisitzky arrived in the United States at the turn of the century and, after living in other places, settled in New Orleans in 1918, where he served as director of the community Hebrew school. During his long career, he was a prolific author of several narrative poems with legends or episodes of American Jewish life. He sympathetically portrayed African Americans in his composition, *Be'ohalei Kush* (In the Tents of Kush), incorporating their spirituals and folksongs into his poetry. He, too, wrote about American Indians in an epic poem, *Medurot do'akhot* (Dying Campfires).³⁴

In 1919, rabbi, Jewish educator, and Johns Hopkins University professor Israel Efros, the youngest example of the "new generation" of Hebrew poets in Waxman's history, became founder and dean of Baltimore Hebrew College and Teachers

Training School. During this time, it is unknown if he and Fine had any relationship. He left the city in 1928 to teach elsewhere, and then became rector of Tel Aviv University in 1955. Efros, in an attempt to reflect a wholly American theme in his poetry, also wrote imaginatively about American Indian life in the Chesapeake region on the eastern shore of Maryland.³⁵

The small group of American Hebrew writers, many of whom were based in New York, clung like Israel Fine to a classical, lyrical mode of writing, suffused with biblical Hebrew. Unlike him, however, they are remembered for the imaginative verse they crafted, and each focused at one point on the theme of the American Indian. According to historian Michael Weingrad, their "interest in a 'vanished race' reflected a range of Jewish national concerns, from cultural assimilation to the possibility of genocide. . . . In the figure of the tragic Indian, these poets could express the individual immigrant's sense of impotence, loneliness and beleaguerment, as well as national outrage before the upheavals of modern history."³⁶

Jewish Baltimore

New York City, with its vast immigrant population, was indeed the great eye of the whirl of Yiddish writing and culture in the first decades of the twentieth century. It provided the milieu for the small group of Hebrew writers who strove to develop their own epicenter. Yet poets like Ephraim Lisitzky, Israel Efros, and Israel Fine lived elsewhere. The necessity of earning a livelihood or seeking to be with relatives and landsmen who had arrived earlier and settled in other cities often dictated immigrants' settlement patterns. In places like New Orleans, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, these poets found Jewish communities with synagogues, Zionist groups, Yiddish newspapers, and others interested in Hebrew letters.

Looking southwest from Baltimore, the southern city with the largest Jewish population in the first decade of the twentieth century was New Orleans, where Lisitzky lived from 1918 until his death. In 1907, New Orleans had a general population of about 300,000 that included a community of 8,000 Jews of

predominantly German and Alsace-Lorrainian background and Reform affiliation.³⁷

In the same year, the estimated Jewish population of Philadelphia, just north of Baltimore, was 100,000 in a city with almost 1.5 million individuals. Thousands of eastern European immigrants found work there in the sweatshops and factories, many of which were owned by successful and acculturated German Jews.³⁸ Short-lived Yiddish newspapers and journals attempted to serve this population, but they were up against the established press of New York which issued local supplements that appealed to a range of religious sentiments and political ideologies. There were Hebraists and Zionists like Moshe Katz (1864-1941), David Bear Tierkel (1874-1948), and Henry Gersoni (1844-1897) among the immigrants too, but they also looked to New York as the center of their movement or relocated there.³⁹

In contrast, New York still lacked strong Jewish organizational leadership in this early period. Many of Philadelphia's exemplary German Jewish communal leaders stepped in and played major roles in founding or influencing a number of national Jewish organizations including the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the Jewish Publication Society, and the American Jewish Committee, among others. And yet only one of the seven of this Philadelphia Group declared himself a Zionist.⁴⁰

Baltimore's Jewish population in 1907 was estimated to be about 40,000 in a city with a total population of about a half million.⁴¹ The four-fold increase in the number of Jews in Baltimore from 1880 onward was also the result of the massive immigration of eastern Europeans. They, too, found work in the city's burgeoning garment industry.

On the eve of this influx, there were six congregations in Baltimore that had been created by German and a smattering of Dutch Jews, who were the first to settle in the city. Baltimore Hebrew Congregation was started in 1829 as a traditional synagogue. In 1840, its members, who were primarily Bavarian Jews, engaged Bavarian-born Abraham Rice as the first ordained rabbi to occupy a pulpit in the United States. Several offshoot synagogues were

created by members who left the mother congregation. Har Sinai began in 1842 by those resentful of Rice's manner of enforcing tradition and who were interested in modernizing the service and making other changes that they would determine without rabbinic consent. A charter in 1847 established Hebrew Friendship (Oheb Israel). In 1853, Oheb Shalom was founded by young men for whom Baltimore Hebrew was too traditional and Har Sinai too liberal. These congregations were all part of the Reform camp by the end of the century. Shearith Israel, where Fine was listed as a member in 1910 and which remained Orthodox, was the fifth synagogue. It was formed in 1879 from a merger of two smaller congregations. As Baltimore Hebrew continued to introduce additional reforms, Jonas Friedenwald led a final breakaway group that created Chizuk Amuno Congregation in 1871. This congregation became Conservative in the second decade of the twentieth century and Fine affiliated there after its move uptown to a new building close to his home.⁴²

As noted above, as they gradually acculturated and became more affluent, the German Jews began to move away from East Baltimore into the northwest part of the city. "By 1900," noted Philip Kahn, "virtually the entire Baltimore German Jewish Community had moved uptown."⁴³ All but one of the German Jewish synagogues followed their upwardly mobile members to the northwest neighborhood and built large edifices in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. The one exception was Oheb Israel whose congregational leaders refused to relocate. When its members moved away and joined the other synagogues in the northwest area, eastern European immigrants purchased the downtown building in 1901 and started their own congregation.⁴⁴

Prominent rabbis served in the German Jewish synagogues during this period and Israel Fine was a friend and admirer of several of them. Adolph Guttmacher was rabbi of Baltimore Hebrew Congregation from 1891 to 1915. Charles A. Rubinstein served Har Sinai Congregation as its spiritual leader from 1898 to 1920. Hungarian-born, German-speaking Benjamin Szold, the first rabbi of Oheb Shalom, served from 1859 to 1892. He was

succeeded by William Rosenau who remained in that pulpit until 1940. Shearith Israel was sometimes called “Rabbi Schepsel Schaffer’s shul” for the religious leader who led the congregation from 1893 to 1928. Chizuk Amuno’s first rabbi, Henry Schneeberger who served from 1876 to 1912, was also the first native-born American rabbi. In 1920, Riga-born Rabbi Adolph Coblenz and Russian-born Hazan Abba Weisgal were elected by the congregation. This signaled the ascendancy of eastern Europeans and staunch Zionists into important positions of religious leadership in Baltimore.⁴⁵

During the last decades of the nineteenth century, the demand for ready-made clothing for a growing urban population stimulated the success of the German Jewish merchants. They were able to expand their retail and manufacturing businesses with the jobs they provided for the new immigrants who began to arrive in earnest during this same time. Department stores such as Hutzlers and Hochschild Kohn, and major clothiers like Henry Sonneborn & Company and Strouse & Brothers employed thousands of workers—most of them women—and many of them Russian Jews. Known as “the city that tries to suit everybody,” Baltimore, as previously mentioned, reached its peak during World War I as one of the top five centers in the country for clothing production. By 1915, almost three-quarters of the men’s garments produced in Baltimore came from Jewish-owned businesses while half of the city’s clothing workers were Jewish. In the large “inside shops,” as the factories were called, seven thousand men’s woolen suits could be manufactured per week.⁴⁶ Lithuanian-born Fine participated in this growth. The Fine Building on West Baltimore Street stood as a testament to his success as a clothing manufacturer.

While the Jewish immigrants in Baltimore worked hard to earn a living, they also drew sustenance from literary and cultural endeavors. They attended lectures by poets such as Morris Rosenfeld, readings by the likes of Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem, and eloquent and stirring lectures by rabbinic leaders including Judah Magnes and Stephen Wise. Yiddish theater brought actors and actresses to Baltimore to entertain. Local

*Double page spread with a play on the word "Fine"
from the 1915 business brochure of Israel Fine & Son.
(Courtesy of The Jewish Museum of Maryland, #1992.233.008a.)*

publications included the English weekly, *The Jewish Comment*, which began in 1895 for the more acculturated, and for the more recent arrivals, *Der Vegvayzer* (The Guide), which appeared from 1901 to 1910 and was the longest running of the Yiddish newspapers. *Ha-Pisgah* (Summit), a Hebrew journal, was published in the city between 1890 and 1892 before relocating to other cities.⁴⁷

In the late 1880s, the eastern European *maskilim* who arrived in the city formed a Hebrew Literary Society. They advocated replacing Yiddish with the language of the Bible. But they also recognized that English was the language of America. In 1889, the society joined with local German Jewish leaders to found the Russian Jewish Night School, which became the most important cultural institution in East Baltimore. Henrietta Szold, Rabbi Benjamin Szold's daughter, was the school superintendent from its

inception until 1893 when she moved to Philadelphia. A pioneer experiment in adult education, thousands of immigrants successfully learned to read and write English and studied geography and American history in order to become United States citizens.⁴⁸

Fine's involvement in these two organizations is unknown, but their existence along with Baltimore's Yiddish and Hebrew language publications offered the poet several venues for literary enrichment and interaction with others of the same interest.

Baltimore's Jews formed a rich Zionist network too, and this was especially important for Fine. The diverse religious and ideological views and the range in the socioeconomic distribution of the community led to a mixed network of societies that developed, each with its own perspective. The first organized group of Zionists, Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion), was formed as early as 1889. A second group, Hevrath Zion (Zion Association), had four hundred members by the time of the First Zionist Congress, held in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. Until the Congress ignited the movement, interest in Zionism was largely local among American Jews. That may account for the fact that the only American delegate at the First Congress was Rabbi Schepsel Schaffer. On his return from Basel, thousands flocked to hear him speak at Carl [presumably Carlin] Hall.⁴⁹ Other groups like Kadima that were concerned with local problems as well as with the *yishuv*, Poale Zion, which advocated a worker's state in Palestine, Mizrahi, composed of religious Zionists, the Theodor Herzl Zionistischer Verein, the first German-speaking Zionist society in the United States, and Hadassah, the women's organization founded by Henrietta Szold, who had become exposed to Zionism through her work with the Russian Jewish Night School, all came into existence in the city before World War I. From 1904 to 1918, Dr. Harry Friedenwald, a member of the prominent Baltimore German Jewish family, served as president of the national Federation of American Zionists, precursor to the Zionist Organization of America. Aid to Jews overseas helped break down fences between Russian and German Jews in Baltimore after World War I. They banded together to help their brethren in the face of immigration restrictions at home and the destruction of Jewish areas abroad.⁵⁰

Opposition to the movement primarily came from Jewish leaders affiliated with classical Reform Judaism but also from some Orthodox leaders. The former viewed Judaism solely as a religion without nationalistic aspirations. Their acculturation into the general population made them fearful of being charged with dual loyalty. The latter did not see the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine as part of "God's will."⁵¹ In Baltimore, William Rosenau, successor to Rabbi Benjamin Szold at Oheb Shalom Congregation and also Fine's friend, initially supported Zionism but later joined other prominent German Jewish Reform rabbis who spoke out against the movement.⁵²

However, prior to the rise of Zionism and the catastrophes of war, the lines were already blurred between the Uptown and Downtown Jews. The acculturation of the newer immigrants, bonds of marriage between their children, shared traditional religious observances, and the business successes of the newcomers, which enabled them to move to the northwest quadrant of Baltimore, all contributed to the meshing of German and Russian Jews. Israel Fine was an example of an individual who bridged the two groups at several crossings, but especially through his poetry.

Fine's Poetry

While he was devoted to family, business, Zionism, and philanthropy, Fine was also devoted to Hebrew. He collected and published his poems in 1907 in *Neginoth ben-Yehudah* along with English translations of some verse. Mollie Baker, Fine's daughter, wrote that he "labored many years, devoting all the time he could spare from his rest at night and on his drumming trips to the work, writing on trains and in hotels and whenever an opportunity offered. The purpose of [his] book," she noted, "was not to offer it for sale, but to distribute it to all parts of the world, without cost to anyone." And that he did. He saved the acknowledgments he received from leaders such as Justice Louis D. Brandeis, James Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, Lord Balfour, and the German Kaiser, none of whom could likely read the poems in the original.⁵³

*Example of Fine's bilingual poetry, appearing in Zemirot Yisrael.
Fine wrote this for the April 5, 1925, dedication of
the War Memorial Building in Baltimore.
(Courtesy of Peggy Kronsberg Pearlstein.)*

In 1917 the Baltimore Relief Committee published Fine's *Megilat 'Ekha ha-hadashah* (The New Lamentations). He wrote the Hebrew and Yiddish texts while Dr. Tobias Salzman provided an English translation for the narrative dirge of the horrors which had befallen the Jewish community of Russia under the reign of the czars and World War I. As a trilingual publication, the pamphlet bridged all sectors of the community and enabled the new immigrants who spoke Yiddish, the *maskilim* and Zionists who, like Fine, revered the Hebrew language, as well as the acculturated German Jews and non-Jews, for whom English was their native language, to read and sympathize with the victims.⁵⁴

In 1930, *Zemiroth Yisrael*, a compilation of Fine's Hebrew poems with some English translations, appeared. Here Fine included a list of his poetic and literary publications, the majority of which appear in his 1907 book and the 1930 compilation. There are no entries listed for any Hebrew periodicals, so it is possible that his verse appeared only in his own books and in local publications such as the *Jewish Comment*.⁵⁵

Several themes run through Fine's poetry: family, Jewish personalities and institutions, world Jewish affairs including Zionism, local people and events in Baltimore, and unabashed patriotism for the United States and its leaders.

Fine memorialized his parents and his two sons who died. He lamented the death of a grandchild and celebrated the bar mitzvah of another. Fine responded with anguish to pogroms in Russia and with a cry for relief for Jewish war refugees in Europe. He paid tribute to Zionist visionary Theodor Herzl and to the Zionist effort to find a home for the Jewish people. He composed poems for prominent Baltimore Jewish communal leaders including Rabbi Szold, Rabbi Rosenau, Jacob Epstein, Harry Friedenwald, and on the deaths of Szold, Sigmund Sonneborn, Aaron Friedenwald, and others. Fine wrote poetry for the dedication of Shearith Israel's new building on McCulloh Street, the Orthodox Talmud Torah, Oheb Shalom's jubilee, the consecration of the Betsy Levy Memorial Orphan Home, and for the Hebrew Children's Sheltering and Protective Association, among others. Tributes to American political leaders and the centennial of "The

*President Theodore Roosevelt personally
autographed this photograph for Israel Fine.
(As it appears in Zemirov Yisrael, courtesy of Peggy Kronsberg Pearlstein.)*

Star-Spangled Banner” represented Fine’s many patriotic expressions toward his newly adopted country and its icons.

Fine was typical of other Hebrew poets who also contributed patriotic verse to the corpus of Hebrew Americana in the decades before and after the turn of the twentieth century. Gershon Rosenzweig, in *Ha’Ivri* (The Hebrew), and Avraham ben Meir Lurya (1838–1918) in his book, *Ha-Pa’amon* (The Bell), wrote about the death of President McKinley. Menahem Mendel Dolitzki and Nahum Meir Sheikovich (1849–1905), whose penname was Shomer, wrote poems about Theodore Roosevelt, the popular successor to McKinley, in the Hebrew journal, *Ha-Leom* (The Nation). Lewis also wrote about the Spanish-American War in his book, *Hofshiyot Kyuba* (The Freedom of Cuba).⁵⁶

After McKinley was assassinated in Buffalo in 1901, Israel Fine penned a poem describing his murder. Fine alludes to presidents Lincoln and Garfield who had met with the same fate, and the poem describes them extending their hands to welcome McKinley into the afterlife. Fine praised the leader who “freed the Cuban brave” from Spain.⁵⁷ The recent Spanish-American War in which the United States routed Spain from Cuba had ignited pride in American citizens, Fine among them. In addition, he must have felt keenly the assassinations of righteous government leaders in contrast to those of czarist despots by Russian radicals.

In his poem dedicated to the memory of John Hay, Fine called the secretary of state a “prince of the country” and the “world’s counsellor,” references to the roles he played in the formation of several treaties and in negotiations over the construction of the Panama Canal. Using biblical imagery, Fine described Hay as “a cedar fallen from Lebanon’s heights.” Fine credited him with interceding on behalf of the Jews of Romania with his 1902 note to signatories of the 1878 Berlin Treaty, protesting Romania’s restrictions on Jews in violation of that treaty. Hay was rewarded in the afterworld, penned Fine, “To behold there the Lord, in His Temple to dwell.”⁵⁸

Theodore Roosevelt appears to have been Fine’s most beloved American statesman. When McKinley was assassinated in 1901, Roosevelt assumed the presidency of the United States, the

position to which he was elected of his own accord in 1904. One of Fine's poems about Roosevelt was written during the election campaign. On October 24 of that year, the poet organized a delegation of prominent Baltimoreans including Congressman Frank C. Wachter and Louis Weis, the immigration commissioner, who called on the White House to present Roosevelt with the Hebrew poem dedicated to the anniversary of his birth and translated into English by Fine's son, Louis.⁵⁹

In the poem, Fine urged readers to note the approaching election and to vote for the hero of San Juan Hill who routed the Spanish from Cuba during the Spanish-American War. The Republican was also well-known for instigating government intervention in labor and business affairs for the benefit of the workers and the public. Although a factory owner, Fine declared that both merchants and workers had profited from Roosevelt's leadership. He credited the president with imposing arbitration to settle a 1902 coal strike and complimented him for his speaking out against the Kishinev pogrom of 1903.

A second poem composed on October 27, 1907, Roosevelt's birthday, commemorated the conclusion of peace between Japan and Russia at the end of the Russo-Japanese War. Roosevelt received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906 for his efforts to resolve that conflict. Fine referred to him as the "Prince of Peace" who quelled "the thirst for war in nations" and brought peace to Manchuria. The president, he wrote, was a *matnat shamayim* (gift of God).⁶⁰

Fine's greatest show of patriotism celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of "The Star-Spangled Banner" in 1914 and coincided with his fiftieth wedding anniversary. He wrote a Hebrew poem and had it written on a parchment scroll to resemble a Torah.⁶¹ Fine was particularly inspired by love for his adopted country and appreciative that he had been fortunate to leave Russia and was not caught up in the world war that enveloped Europe and created numerous Jewish refugees. While President Wilson would soon strive to "make the world safe for democracy," Fine's poem refers back to the war between the United States and Britain that began in 1812, and in which Washington and Baltimore suffered serious foreign attack. The refrain that is

interspersed throughout the poem varies slightly between verses. One chorus reads: "It is a jubilee unto us from a foreign dominion. The almighty redeemed us. He proclaimed liberty to our nation to be remembered from generation to generation."⁶²

Fine's writing won praise and criticism. In "La-Mevakrim" (For the Critics), Fine wrote, "ke-tarnigolim bi-ashpah mevakrim, le-hapes biheruzai mikhsholim" (like chickens in the garbage they [critics] peck to find a missing letter or grammatical [error] in my rhymes.) Hebrew writer Ephraim Deinard (1846-1930), an acerbic polemicist who attacked Reform Judaism, Hasidism, and Christianity, played on the words of that poem. He caustically commented, "vekhool ruah ayn bahem" (there is no spirit in them.) On Fine's fears that others would find mistakes in his writing, Deinard commented, "mevakrim shotim khaeleh aynom ba-Amerika, hoi Pharoah!" (There is no one foolish enough in America to bother doing a close reading of his poems!)⁶³

On Fine's death, Reform Rabbi Rosenau wrote a memorial that appeared on the editorial page of the *Baltimore Jewish Times*. Besides eulogizing his character and charity, the rabbi commented on his writing:

Israel Fine attuned his lyre in harmony with the keynote sounded by the earlier Psalmists of antiquity and the poets of medieval times. His meter may not have been always in accord with classic standards, but nevertheless proved itself delightful in its newer forms. In alliteration, assonance and rhyme, his poems abounded. They demonstrated also his marked wealth of vocabulary and his exceptional acquaintance with Scriptures. . . . He lived in the hearts of people. He was just to all others, although they may have differed with him in their Jewish preachment and practice. The non-Jew's merit, too, he never failed to recognize.⁶⁴

The iconic symbol of the American flag on the inside cover of Fine's book and on the scroll cover for his "Star-Spangled Banner" poem likely stimulated the inclusion of the items in exhibits dealing with Jewish history and American patriotism. A byproduct has been this investigation into learning more about the life and writing of Israel Fine. What has emerged is an image of Fine as an example of an eastern European immigrant who adapted and ac-

cultured in a variety of ways in America yet retained his commitment to Judaism. He became prosperous, charitable, and accepted by his German Jewish business associates and coreligionists in Baltimore and thus serves as an early representative of the intertwining of the lives of German and eastern European Jews in that city. Baltimore also emerges as a community with a rich Jewish cultural life that sustained not only Fine, but others like him. Like a number of other American Hebrew poets, he was highly patriotic toward his newly adopted country and its government and grateful for the freedoms it bestowed on its citizens. This was entirely compatible with Fine's Jewish involvement, his support of Zionism, and the advancement of Hebrew through his writing. For him and other *maskilim*, the Hebrew language was indeed "an object of veneration, a vessel of purity and even divinity"⁶⁵ This Baltimore bard and businessman was both exemplary of and distinctive among those early Hebrew poets in America whose work did not advance beyond "ornate writing," but who nevertheless kept alive Hebrew culture in their newly adopted country.⁶⁶

NOTES

The transliterations of Hebrew titles were provided by the author and are based on the romanization used by the Library of Congress, except when not available; otherwise from other libraries and works, including the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Israel Fine used a variety of translations and transliterations even for the same work. For ease of identification and to avoid confusion, this article will use the author's preferred version, even when Fine's usage is within a quotation. The author also wishes to thank Michael Grunberger, Sharon Horowitz, and Avi Bieler for their assistance with translations from Hebrew into English. The author also acknowledges with appreciation Jessica Elfenbein for her insightful paper, "Uptown and Traditional: A New Take on Baltimore's German Jewish Community" and Mark K. Bauman for his, "The South to Center Stage: The Origins of Reform Ideology at Baltimore's Har Sinai and in America" presented June 6, 2006, at the 2006 Biennial Scholars' Conference on American Jewish History held at the College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.

¹ *Neginoth ben-Yehudah* (Baltimore, 1907). The romanized title that appears in the book is *Ng'inash Ben-Jehudah: Selection of Poems and Memorials in Memory of his Parents, His Sons, and of Celebrated Men, Well-known Institutions, Houses of Worship, etc.* Ng'inash may be a typo for the Hebrew Neginot. On Israel Fine see "Fine, Israel," *Who's Who in American Jewry*, 2nd ed., (New York, 1928), 175–176; Earl L. Baker, "Israel Fine—A Brief Biography," (n.p., n.d.), Smithsonian Institution, Division of Politics and Reform. Written by Israel Fine's great-grandson, the five typescript pages may have been compiled after Grossman contacted Baker for information about Fine. Also included in the Smithsonian file are photocopies of some of Fine's poetry and articles about him that appeared in the Baltimore English-language press, tickets of admission to the Fourth Zionist Congress, and some correspondence. Grace Cohen Grossman, *Judaica at the Smithsonian: Cultural Politics as Cultural Model* (Washington, DC, 1997), 215–217; Abraham J. Karp, *From the Ends of the Earth: Judaic Treasures of the Library of Congress* (Washington, DC, 1991), 119–120. The Jewish Museum of Maryland, Baltimore, (hereafter JMM), housed additional material including two pamphlets, *Israel Fine and Son* [1915] and Mollie Baker, comp., *Three Anniversaries in the Life of Mr. Israel Fine* (n.p., [1915?]); Alfred Segal, grandson of Israel Fine, telephone interview conducted by author, May 21, 2006.

² This framed photograph is in the collections of the JMM. Other photographs of Fine, his wife, sons, and father appear in his volumes of poetry.

³ Maxwell Whiteman, "The Fiddlers Rejected: Jewish Immigrant Expression in Philadelphia," in *Jewish Life in Philadelphia 1830–1940*, ed. Murray Friedman (Philadelphia, 1983), 93.

⁴ "Fine, Israel," *Who's Who in American Jewry*, 175–176, lists Israel's father's name as Lewin. Other sources identify the father as Judah. *Who's Who in American Jewry* gives July 17, 1848, as Israel Fine's birth date. "Israel Fine Dies at 83; Was Noted Poet," *New York Times*, November 25, 1930, would have him born in 1847 in order to be eighty-three at the time of death. In Mollie Baker, *Three Anniversaries*, 26, Fine's wife is listed as Minna Racusin. In Earl L. Baker, "Israel Fine," 2, the great-grandson notes that according to his own father, Fine was "somewhat well-to-do on immigrating to America."

⁵ Racusin is sometimes spelled Rakusin. The 1890 *Philadelphia City Directory* lists two Philip Fines, but no Israel Fine. The 1891 *Philadelphia City Directory* does not list an Israel Fine. There is a listing in 1891 for the business of Isaac and Philip Fine and Jon Racusin, but Fine's Hebrew name was Yisrael. The *Philadelphia City Directory 1892* has business listings for Philip and Louis Fine, for Israel Fine, and for Israel & Heyman. There is no Israel Fine listed in either the 1891 or 1892 *Baltimore City Directory*. Israel Fine first appears in 1893 as a clerk, along with Louis. In 1894, the *Baltimore City Directory* has business listings for Racusin and Fine and for Fine and Son.

For daughters see Earl L. Baker, "Israel Fine." According to the obituary in the *New York Times*, November 28, 1930, the daughters are listed as Mrs. Mary Hoffman, Mrs. Alice Baker (not Pauline as noted by Baker), Mrs. M. Segal, and Mrs. Culman Baker. The obituary includes Louis as a survivor as well.

Information about the Fine family is either inconsistent or nonexistent in the U.S. federal censuses. For example, the Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900, Baltimore City,

Maryland, states that Minnie Fine immigrated in 1895, yet the Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, Baltimore City, Maryland, states that Israel Fine immigrated in 1891. The Twelfth Census lists Mary's birth date as 1873 in Russia and Mollie's birth date as 1896 in Maryland. The Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Baltimore City, Maryland, lists Mary's birth date as 1867 in Russia. Her parents are listed as Israel and Mena Fine.

⁶ Isaac M. Fein, *The Making of an American Jewish Community: The History of Baltimore Jewry from 1773 to 1920* (Philadelphia, 1971), 142; Philip Kahn, *Uncommon Threads: Threads That Wove the Fabric of Baltimore Jewish Life* (Baltimore, 1996), 59, 217, 225. According to Kahn (who uses the spelling Pekroyer Shul), the congregation merged with Mikro Kodesh, founded in 1886, and again in 1963 with Beth Israel. Membership lists are not extant, so it is unknown if Fine was a member of the synagogue. Erin Titter, archivist, JMM, email to author, May 24, 2006.

⁷ *Israel Fine and Son, College Cut Clothing*, 1915, pamphlet collection, JMM. No similar business brochures are extant in the JMM for other clothing manufacturing businesses owned by German Jews, although they may exist elsewhere. Titter email.

⁸ Mollie Baker, *Three Anniversaries*, 6, 17. The booklet has 112 pages and ends with the translation by Abram Simon, of Washington, DC, of a Hebrew poem written by Fine at the installation of B'nai B'rith Monorah Lodge of Baltimore, June 14, 1915. Simon was the rabbi of the Reform Washington Hebrew Congregation.

⁹ Fein, *Making of an American Jewish Community*, 223.

¹⁰ Rev. Dr. S. Schaffer, "Sketch of the History of Shearith Israel Congregation," in Isidor Blum, *Jews of Baltimore: An Historical Summary of Their Progress and Status as Citizens of Baltimore from Early Days to the Year Nineteen Hundred and Ten* (Baltimore, 1910), 62. "Israel Fein" and "Louis Fein" are listed among those who joined the congregation at its new location. Each *Baltimore City Directory* beginning with 1893 provides addresses of the Fines as they relocated to choicer neighborhoods and streets. Earl L. Baker, "Israel Fine," 2.

¹¹ "Israel Fine Dies," *Baltimore Jewish Times*, November 28, 1930; Mrs. M. M. Blumberg, "Dedicated to Mr. Israel Fine in Honor of His Eightieth Birthday July 17, 1927," *Zemirot Yisrael* (Baltimore, 1930), 30, notes that Fine was a member of Chizuk Amuno. According to Alfred Segal, Fine's grandson, "When Israel Fine was clipped by a car and couldn't walk to shul, he established a shul in his attic where . . . the men congregated on Friday night and Saturday for services." Segal also explained that his grandmother, Minna Fine, was not involved in community affairs and that she only spoke Yiddish. Alfred Segal letter to author July 18, 2006.

¹² Jan Bernhardt Schein, *On Three Pillars: The History of Chizuk Amuno Congregation, 1871–1996* (Baltimore, 2000), 70–71, 140–141; "Israel Fine Dies," *Baltimore Jewish Times*, November 28, 1930; Blumberg, "Dedicated to Mr. Israel Fine." The author's Russian-born, widowed grandmother and her four sons joined Chizuk Amuno around 1919 or 1920. She supported her family by taking in boarders. This demonstrates that the synagogue was welcoming to lower class eastern Europeans as well as successful ones like Fine.

¹³ Mollie Baker, *Three Anniversaries*, 26–27, 32.

¹⁴ "Israel Fine Dies," *Baltimore Sun*, November 24, 1930; (the identical obituary appears in the [Baltimore] *Jewish Comment*, November 28, 1930); "Israel Fine Dies at 83; Was Noted Poet," *New York Times*, November 25, 1930; William Rosenau, "In Memoriam—Israel Fine," *Baltimore Jewish Times*, November 28, 1930; Benzion Eisenstadt, "Fine, Yisrael ben Jehudah, in *Dorot ha-Aharonim* (New York, 1913–1915), 278–279.

¹⁵ "Israel Fine Endows Home," *New York Times*, July 20, 1926. Herzliyyah (also, Herzliyya, Hertselyyah), named for Theodor Herzl, had been founded as a moshav in 1924 on land acquired by the American Zion Commonwealth Corporation, a land purchasing agency founded in 1914 by Bernard Rosenblatt, honorary secretary of the Federation of American Zionists. On Herzliyyah see *Encyclopaedia Judaica* VIII (Jerusalem, 1972), 421–422. On the American Zion Commonwealth Corporation see *Encyclopedia of Zionism and Israel* I (New York, 1994), 70–71.

Hadassah did not act quickly enough to build and Fine grew impatient. He deeded the land to the Jewish Yemenite settlers of the moshav to construct housing and a synagogue. Apparently, Hadassah remained only as a street name in the worker's area. Although a street was also named "Nahalat Yisrael" in honor of Israel Fine, the area continued to be called the "Yemenite Settlement" and Israel Fine was not remembered. Shoshanah Migdal-Klein-Bindiger, *Hertselyyah: he-'asor ha-rishon: yisudah, hakamtah, u-veniyatah . . . 1924–1934* (*Herzliyah: The First Decade; Its Foundation, Establishment and Development 1924–1934*) (Hertselyyah, 2005), 116 and n. 23.

¹⁶ "Will Help the Poor Upon 75th Birthday," *Baltimore American*, July 4, 1922. On his eightieth birthday, Fine gave \$640 to eight unnamed Jewish charities, "Birthday Gift to Charity," *New York Times*, July 18, 1927.

¹⁷ Arnold Blumberg, *A History of Congregation Shearith Israel of Baltimore: On the Threshold of a Century* (n.p., 1970), 10. See also Israel Fine, *Rev. Dr. Schepschel [sic] Schaffer, Twenty-Five Years of Activity in the Cause of Orthodox Judaism 1893–1918* (Baltimore, 1918). Although JMM cites Fine as the author, his name appears only as the author of the Hebrew poem.

¹⁸ "In Memoriam—Israel Fine," *Baltimore Jewish Times*, November 28, 1930. See below.

¹⁹ Translation from the Hebrew by the author with the assistance of Avi Bieler. The committee consisted of Rabbi Schaffer and Manes Strauss of Shearith Israel, German Jewish manufacturer and Zionist Sigmund Sonneborn, Zionists Louis Lutzky and Dr. Harry Friedenwald, leader of Chizuk Amuno Congregation; Also, Michael Simon Levy, the German Jewish straw hat manufacturer who was president of Chizuk Amuno, a Zionist and a Jewish communal leader; Rabbi William Rosenau of Reform Oheb Shalom, Orthodox leader Tanhum Silverman, Rosa (Mrs. Goody) Rosenfeld, whose husband was president of the Purim Association and brother-in-law of Joseph Friedenwald, and Israel Levinstein. In addition to the signatures, the brief explanation at the bottom of the portrait noted that "Compliments were exchanged, and Mr. Fine was urged to continue to sing of Jehuda and Jerusalem." The portrait is at JMM. "A groyser tiger surprise" (A Grand Surprise), *Baltimor Amerikaner*, March 27, 1980.

²⁰ Jacob Rader Marcus, *The American Jew, 1585–1990: A History* (Brooklyn, 1995), 161, 171; “A Sanctuary in the Wilderness,” in Alan Mintz, ed., *Hebrew in America: Perspectives and Prospects* (Detroit, 1993), 31.

²¹ Marcus, *American Jew*, 204–205, 207.

²² *Ibid.*, 208.

²³ See Mintz, “Sanctuary,” 31; Alan Mintz, “Hebrew Literature in America,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jewish American Literature*, ed. Hana Wirth-Nesher and Michael P. Kramer (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 93; Eisig Silberschlag, *From Renaissance to Renaissance: Hebrew Literature from 1492–1970* (New York, 1973), Part One, 248–290; “Hebrew Literature, Modern,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* VIII, 209–214.

²⁴ Mintz, “Sanctuary,” 31–32.

²⁵ Myer Waxman, *A History of Jewish Literature IV* (New York, 1960), 1049. Also called *Ner Ha-Ma’aravi*, the journal appeared 1895 to 1897. Schwartzberg made this complaint after the journal ceased publication.

²⁶ Marcus, *American Jew*, 200–204; Waxman, *History of Jewish Literature, IV*, 1052; Mintz, “Sanctuary,” 32–33. On Benderly see Nathan Winter, *Jewish Education in the Pluralist Society* (New York, 1966); “Benderly, Samson,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* IV, 477; Fein, *Making of an American Jewish Community*, 188–193. On Hebrew in America see Jacob Kabakoff, *Halutse ha-sifrut ha-’Ivrit ba-Amerikah: mehkarim u-teudot* (Pioneers of American Hebrew literature), (Tel Aviv and Cleveland, 1966); Kabakoff, *Shoharim ve-ne’emanim: masot u-mehkarim ‘al ha-sifrut veba-tarbut ha-’Ivrit ba-Amerikah* (Seekers and Stalwarts: Essays and Studies on American Hebrew Literature and Culture), (Jerusalem 1978); Gershon Shaked, “The Beginnings of Hebrew Literature in America,” trans. and ed. Evelyn Ben-Shim’on and Ruth Toket in *Identity and Ethos: A Festschrift for Sol Liptzin on the Occasion of His 85th Birthday*, ed. Mark Gelber (New York, 1986), 279–293; Ezra Spicehandler, “Ameriqa’iyut in American Hebrew Literature,” in *Hebrew in America*, ed. Alan Mintz, 68–104.

²⁷ Waxman, *History of Jewish Literature, IV*, 1050.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 1050–1051; Silberschlag, *From Renaissance*, 269; “Rosenzweig, Gerson,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* XIV, 303; Whiteman, “Fiddlers Rejected,” 93. The translations appear in Rosenzweig’s *Mi-zimrath ha-arez, American national songs in Hebrew* ([New York?], [1898]).

²⁹ Silberschlag, *From Renaissance*, 266–267.

³⁰ Whiteman, “Fiddlers Rejected,” 93 (quotation); Menahem Mendel Dolitzki, preface (in Hebrew), *Shire Menahem, hegyonot ve-hezyonot . . .* (New York, 1900).

³¹ “Rabinowitz, Isaac (Ish Kovno),” *Jewish Encyclopedia* X (New York, 1905), 303; “Shir Berakhah,” (Song [or Poem] of Blessing) in *Neginoth ben-Yehudah*, 36–37.

³² “Le-Yom huledet profesor zeh-li-kovets,” (For Professor Selikovitch’s Birthday [perhaps a play on words]), *Zemiroth Yisrael*, 85; “Selikovitch, George,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* XIV, 1135.

³³ Waxman, *History of Jewish Literature, IV*, 1063; “Silkner, Benjamin Nahum,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* XIV, 1540; Shaked, “Beginnings of Hebrew Literature,” 284–285; Jacob Kabakoff, “B. N. Silkner and His Circle: The Genesis of the New Hebrew Literature in America,” *Judaism* 39:1 (1990): 97–103; Mintz, “Hebrew Literature in America,” 100;

Michael Weingrad, "Lost Tribes: The Indian in American Hebrew Poetry," *Prooftexts* 24 (2004): 291-319.

³⁴ Mintz, "Hebrew Literature in America," 105-108; Waxman, *History of Jewish Literature*, IV, 1063-1065; "Lisitzky, Ephraim E.," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* XI, 304-305.

³⁵ Mintz, "Hebrew Literature in America," 102-108; Weingrad, "Lost Tribes," 309-311; Waxman, *History of Jewish Literature*, IV, 1065-1067; "Efros, Israel Isaac," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* VI, 468-469.

³⁶ Weingrad, "Lost Tribes," 295.

³⁷ See "Table 4. Jewish Population in Selected American Cities, 1878, 1907, 1927," in Gerald Sorin, *A Time for Building: The Third Migration 1880-1920* (Baltimore, 1992), 137. This table is adapted from Lee Shai Weissbach, "The Jewish Communities of the United States on the Eve of Mass Migration," *American Jewish History* 78 (September 1988): 79-108; "Table 14. Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places 1910 Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census" Internet Release Date, June 15, 1998, <http://www.census.gov/population/documentation/twps0027/tab14.txt> (accessed by P. K. Pearlstein, August 23, 2006.)

³⁸ Sorin, *Time for Building*, 137. Chicago also had a Jewish population of 100,000 in 1907, while New York boasted 600,000. Population estimates for all cities vary from source to source. For example, in Murray Friedman, ed., *When Philadelphia Was the Capital of Jewish America* (Philadelphia, 1993), Philadelphia's Jewish population is placed at 76,000 in 1907. In his introduction (p. 7), Friedman indicates that by World War I, the Jewish population was 200,000. See also "Table 14. Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places 1910."

³⁹ Whiteman, "Fiddlers Rejected," 84-89. Gersoni is also spelled Gershoni.

⁴⁰ Maxwell Whiteman, "The Philadelphia Group," in *Jewish Life in Philadelphia*, ed. Friedman, 163-178.

⁴¹ Sorin, *Time for Building*, 137; Fein, *Making of an American Jewish Community*, 149-150. Estimates for Baltimore also vary from source to source. See also Blum, *Jews of Baltimore*; Abraham D. Glushakow, *Baltimore Bicentennial Jewish Book* (Baltimore, 1975); Kahn, *Uncommon Threads*; Gilbert Sandler, *Jewish Baltimore: A Family Album* (Baltimore, 2000); Sandler, *Small Town Baltimore* (Baltimore, 2002).

⁴² On the early history of these congregations see Fein, *Making of an American Jewish Community*, 47-68, 108-119, 177-182; Kahn, *Uncommon Threads*, 17-24, 55-61; Schein, *On Three Pillars*.

⁴³ Kahn, *Uncommon Threads*, 55.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 55-61. Chizuk Amuno had already sold its downtown building to B'nai Israel, the *Russische Shul*, in 1895. Fein, *Making of an American Jewish Community*, 141-142.

⁴⁵ Schein, *On Three Pillars*, 70-71, 140-141.

⁴⁶ Jo Ann E. Argersinger, "The City That Tries to Suit Everybody: Baltimore's Clothing Industry," in *The Baltimore Book*, ed. Elizabeth Fee, Linda Shopes, and Linda Zeidman (Philadelphia, 1991), 81, 86-87; Fein, *Making of an American Jewish Community*, 133-137. See also Philip Kahn, Jr., *A Stitch in Time: the Four Seasons of Baltimore's Needle Trades* (Baltimore, 1989).

⁴⁷ Fein, *Making of an American Jewish Community*, 172–174. *Ha-Pisgah* (1889–1899) was also published in New York, Boston, and Chicago.

⁴⁸ Fein, *Making of an American Jewish Community*, 173–174; Kahn, *Uncommon Threads*, 141–142.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 194, 196–198; David Panitz, *Sefer Zikhronot Tsiyon* (Book of Remembrances of Zion) (c. 1902–1903; reprint, Jerusalem, 1978 or 1979), 46, 54–55; S. Schaffer, “Zionism” and “Autobiography of Rev. Dr. S. Schaffer,” in Blum, *Jews of Baltimore*. Schaffer notes that he was president of the Hovevei Zion chapter in Baltimore and then president of the Council of Baltimore Zionist Associations. In 1901, he was one of fifteen delegates from the United States to the Fifth Congress. On Schaffer see also Henry L. Feingold, *Zion in America: the Jewish Experience from Colonial Times to the Present* rev. ed. (New York, 1981), 201. Carl Hall, which was the way Panitz wrote it, was perhaps part of Carlin’s Amusement Park, north of Druid Park Drive, between Park Circle and Liberty Heights Avenue. In October 1897, Schaffer was one of the speakers at a rally at then-Orthodox Keshet Israel synagogue in the Jewish quarter of Philadelphia. It was held by the newly formed Ohavei Zion chapter to review the proceedings of the recently held First Zionist Congress. Harry Boonin, *The Jewish Quarter of Philadelphia: A History and Guide 1881–1930* (Philadelphia, 1999), 80–81.

⁵⁰ Fein, *Making of an American Jewish Community*, 193–208.

⁵¹ Sorin, *Time for Building*, 223.

⁵² Fein, *Making of an American Jewish Community*, 198.

⁵³ Mollie Baker, *Three Anniversaries*, 27–29. One of Fine’s obituaries states that “much of his writing was done riding on street cars to and from work,” “Israel Fine Dies,” *Baltimore Jewish Times*, November 28, 1930. Other Hebrew poets were engaged in earning a living as well and were also only able to compose in what spare time they had.

⁵⁴ The title page has the logo of the Central Jewish Relief Committee. The verso of the title page states that all of the proceeds from the sale were devoted to the relief of the “Jewish war sufferers.” In addition to Hebrew and English, there was also a Yiddish title page, *Di naye Megilas Ekhah*. The Central Relief Committee, organized by the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, was formed to aid European Jews during World War I. *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* III (New York, 1941), 92–93. Translators of other poems were Fine’s sons, Louis and Philip, Cantor Tobias Salzman, Teresa Brafman Cohen, wife of Simon Cohen, founder of Oheb Shalom, Louis Michel, Benjamin Cohen, and Abram Simon.

⁵⁵ The Hebrew poem Fine wrote on the death of Rabbi Szold appears on the front page of *Jewish Comment*, August 8, 1902, in the issue immediately following Szold’s death.

⁵⁶ Kabakoff, *Shoharim ve-ne’emanim*, 250–258; Avraham ben Meir Lurya, *Hofshiyot Kyuba*, (New York, 1901). Lurya was also known as Abraham Lewis.

⁵⁷ “A Dream Phantasm,” and “Ahare Mot Makinli,” (After the Death of McKinley), in *Neginoth ben-Yehudah*, 21–22, 125–127; Kabakoff, *Shoharim ve-ne’emanim*, 253. Kabakoff notes that in order to maintain rhyme, Fine, in the fourth line of the poem, corrupts the grammar. Since his poems were shared among close family and friends and those who may not have been as well versed in Hebrew as perhaps poets and literary critics, he sacrificed correctness for the sound of the rhyme.

⁵⁸ "Hay, John Milton," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* VII, 1946; "John Hay," and "Le-zikaron Dzohn Hai" (In Memory of John Hay), in *Neginoth ben-Yehudah*, 20–22, 119–121. John Hay served as secretary of state under presidents McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt from 1898 until his death in 1905. One outcome of the treaty was recognition of Romania as a separate kingdom. Another was the special legal status given to some religious groups. Hay interceded on behalf of the Jews who had been denied special status.

⁵⁹ "Shire tehilah u-vrakhah" (Songs [or Poems] of Praise and Blessing) and "President Roosevelt" in *Neginoth ben-Yehudah*, 1–4, 9–11; Kabakoff, *Shoharim ve-ne'emanim*, 253–258. Isaac and Manes Hamburger, Moses Pels, and Louis Baker were also in the delegation. The president presented Fine with an official autographed photograph which Fine included in his business brochure and in his 1907 book.

⁶⁰ "Le-yom huledet nesianu Teodor Roozvelt" (For the Birthday of Our President Theodore Roosevelt) and "A Poem" in *Neginoth ben-Yehudah*, 27–29, 49–50.

⁶¹ Grossman, *Judaica at the Smithsonian*, cover, 215. Cantor Tobias Salzman provided the English translation. The English and Hebrew poems were printed on white silk with a border of red, white, and blue ribbon. Each verse was alternately printed in blue or red ink. A portrait of George Washington with an eagle superimposed on an American flag above the president and a laurel wreath below with words, "The Father of his country," appears at the head of the scroll. At the end is a portrait of Abraham Lincoln. Above the president is an American flag with the words, "E Pluribus Unum," and below his portrait is an eagle in flight with the words, "Emancipation Proclamation Abraham Lincoln" in the bird's claws. The scroll mantle cover contains an American flag with a ribbon inscribed "The Star-Spangled Banner." The Hebrew inscription is "The flag [of the tribe] of Judah," referring probably to Fine's father, Judah. The reverse side of the mantle has an American flag with the dates 1814–1914 and, in Hebrew, "Israel Levin Fine/Fromma Minna Fine/1865–1915/Baltimore," referring to their jubilee wedding anniversary. Grossman, *Judaica at the Smithsonian*, 215. "The Star-Spangled Banner," written by poet-lawyer Francis Scott Key, was inspired by the valiant American defense of Fort McHenry, Maryland, against the British in 1814. Thus it had local appeal for Fine. He donated the scroll to the Smithsonian Institution in 1921.

⁶² Mollie Baker, *Three Anniversaries*, "Shir ha-degel" (Song of the Flag), 50–51, and "The Star-Spangled Banner," 52–57. See also Kabakoff, *Shoharim ve-ne'emanim*, 261. The mantle cover for "The Star-Spangled Banner" scroll appeared in the exhibit, *From Haven to Home: 350 Years of Jewish Life in America*, Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, November 2005–February 2006. The scroll cover moved to the exhibit, *For Which It Stands*, McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum, Chicago, May 13–November 13, 2006. It will be included in Katy Kendrick and Marilyn Zoidis, *For Which It Stands: The American Flag in American Life*, (Washington, DC, forthcoming). Marilyn Zoidis, email to author, January 13, 2006.

According to an April 19, 2006, *Washington Post* interview of Brent Glass, director of the National Museum of American History, conducted by Philip Kennicott, the American flag has taken on "new narrative importance to the public since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. It is famous for its role in the War of 1812, which was the only other time Washington suffered

serious attack. . . . The flag is no longer simply an object, a symbol, but since 9/11 has become a 'holy relic' . . . that links us to defining moments of national injury."

⁶³ Ephraim Deinard, *Kohelet Amerikah* (A Catalogue of Hebrew Books Printed in America from 1735 to 1926), (St. Louis, 1926), 94–95; Deinard, *Sifrat Yisrael be-Amerikah* (The Hebrew Literature in America), (Jaffa and New York, 1930–1934), 67; "Deinard, Ephraim," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* V, 1462. Deinard was a traveler, bibliophile, publisher, founder of the early American Hebrew journal, *Ha-Leumi* (The National), and Hebrew author of fifty books and pamphlets. Born in 1846, in Kurland, today part of Latvia, he came to this country in 1888 and nine years later unsuccessfully attempted to establish a Jewish agricultural settlement in Nevada. An ardent Zionist, he moved to Palestine and lived there from 1913 to 1916, trapped by the outbreak of war, before returning to the United States. He spent his latter years in New Orleans at the home of his son-in-law, Reform Rabbi Mendel Silber. Translation from Hebrew by the author, with assistance from Dr. Michael Grunberger and Sharon Horowitz.

⁶⁴ William Rosenau, "In Memoriam-Israel Fine," *Baltimore Jewish Times*, November 28, 1930. In a brief three line notice, *Ha-Do'ar* (The Mail), the American Hebrew weekly, noted the death of the aged Hebrew poet, December 19, 1930.

⁶⁵ Mintz, "Sanctuary," 31–32.

⁶⁶ Waxman, *History of Jewish Literature*, IV, 1049.