

SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY



JOURNAL OF THE SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME 14

2011

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SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society

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2011

Volume 14



Southern Jewish History

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Articles appearing in *Southern Jewish History* are abstracted and/or indexed in *Historical Abstracts*, *America: History and Life*, *Index to Jewish Periodicals*, *Journal of American History*, and *Journal of Southern History*.

Southern Jewish History acknowledges with deep appreciation grants from the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation, New York, and the Gale Foundation, Beaumont, Texas.

In memory of the late William Lee Frost, president of the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation and friend of *Southern Jewish History*.

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ISSN 1521-4206

Table of Contents

FROM THE EDITOR v–vii

Contextualizing the Franco-Jewish Experience in the South
Lee Shai Weissbach 1–35

A Tale of Two Cities: Race, Riots, and Religion in New Bern and
Wilmington, North Carolina, 1898
Leonard Rogoff 37–75

PERSONALITY PROFILE: Paula Ackerman: Pioneer in the Pulpit
Ellen M. Umansky 77–117

A Southern Senator and Israel: Senator J. William Fulbright's
Accusations of Undue Influence over American Foreign Policy
in the Middle East
Arlene Lazarowitz 119–154

PRIMARY SOURCES: The Bible and Bombings: Southern Rabbis
Respond During the Civil Rights Movement
Scott M. Langston 155–200

BOOK REVIEWS

Rebecca T. Albert, *Out of Left Field: Jews and Black Baseball*, re-
viewed by Jeffrey S. Gurock 201–204

Anny Bloch-Raymond, *Des berges du Rhin aux rives de Missis-
sippi: Histoire et récits de migrants juifs*, reviewed by Helen Y.
Herman 204–207

Karen L. Cox, *Dreaming of Dixie: How the South Was Created in American Popular Culture*, reviewed by Stephen J. Whitfield 208–211

Jonathan Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn, editors, *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader*, reviewed by Anton Hieke 211–214

EXHIBIT REVIEWS

National Museum of American Jewish History: Core Exhibition, Philadelphia, reviewed by J. Kime Lawson 215–219

Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina, traveling exhibition, reviewed by Patrick Lee Lucas 219–224

WEBSITE REVIEW

The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives website, reviewed by Julian H. Preisler 226–228

GLOSSARY 229–231

NOTE ON AUTHORS 233–236

ERRATA 237

Cover Picture: Nathaniel Jacobi's hardware store, Wilmington, North Carolina. Jacobi was one of the outspoken individuals in the drama of the election and riot of 1898 described on pages 37 to 75. (Courtesy of the New Hanover Public Library, Wilmington, NC.)

From the Editor . . .

The authors of the major articles in this issue are academics working in California, Connecticut, Kentucky, North Carolina, and Texas. Their subjects lived in France and scattered throughout the United States, went from New York to North Carolina, filled pulpits in Mississippi and Florida (although the longer journey pressed and broke gender boundaries), spoke from Arkansas and Washington about Israel and the Middle East, and built bridges in Mississippi and Georgia. Southern Jewish history certainly gets around!

In volume 2 (1999) of this journal, Anny Bloch (now Bloch-Raymond) wrote about Jews from Alsace and Lorraine who settled in the lower Mississippi. In this volume Lee Shai Weissbach adds considerable perspective to that pioneer work. He discusses the French background at length and relates the emigration to broader currents in Jewish and French immigration history in the United States. All too often segregation permeates the historiography between immigrant groups from the same country of origin with different religious affiliations. Thus, for example, few articles or books compare and contrast Jews and non-Jews from Germany. Weissbach begins to address the need for, and benefits of, such cross-religious research for France.

Expanding on brief references in his *Down Home* book and a presentation at a Southern Jewish Historical Society conference, Leonard Rogoff delves into Jewish political activism during Reconstruction. He finds Jews on both sides in North Carolina as well as elsewhere in the South. By doing so, he pushes back in time our understanding of Jewish partisan politics and also provides evidence against the notion that southern Jews eschewed controversy in order to fit into southern society.

In the journal's latest Personality Profile, Ellen M. Umansky traces the life and career of Paula Ackerman, the first woman to

fill a synagogue pulpit in the United States. When her husband passed away, the trustees of Temple Beth-El in Meridian, Mississippi, asked her to take his place as their spiritual leader. At first, with the acquiescence of the Reform movement, the appointment quickly aroused opposition. Yet her congregants loved Ackerman, who fit into their synagogue and the community.

Like Rogoff, Arlene Lazarowitz goes beyond the typical listing of Jewish office holding to investigate Jewish involvement in politics on specific issues, in this case, the opposition of Senator J. William Fulbright to Israeli policies. Lazarowitz demonstrates that, while Jews within Arkansas attempted to influence Fulbright, they were so few in number that their lobbying proved to be ineffective. Ultimately, however, they helped an opponent unseat the Arkansas Democrat at the ballot box.

Sandy Berman, Primary Source section editor, asked Scott Langston to write on two rabbis whose temples were bombed a decade apart. Specifically, Langston addresses how they reacted in their sermons immediately following the violence. Although their backgrounds, community circumstances, and even general context in the civil rights era differed, both rabbis boldly addressed their general and Jewish audiences to place the roles of Jews and hate-mongers, and what it means to be an American, in perspective.

This volume includes several book reviews assigned by editor Stephen J. Whitfield and an exhibit review assigned by editor Phyllis Leffler. This year Rachel Heimovics Braun suggested we add another section, this time on website reviews. When I polled the editorial board, the response was universally positive as long as, like the exhibit section, the reviews of high caliber websites would be conducted judiciously. Subsequently, Dina Pinsky, assistant professor of sociology at Arcadia University, agreed to serve as section editor, and the first review under her supervision appears here.

The journal editorial board continues to provide sound advice and assistance with peer reviews. Thanks also to Janice Rothschild Blumberg, Michael Cohen, Patrick Mason, Vann Newkirk, and Shuly Rubin Schwartz for providing outstanding

service as peer reviewers. The journal truly benefited from the work of Bruce Beeber, Karen Franklin, Bryan E. Stone, Bernard Wax, and Hollace Weiner as proofreaders. As has been the case for over a decade, the financial support of the Gale and Lucius N. Littauer foundations is gratefully acknowledged.

Mark K. Bauman

Contextualizing the Franco-Jewish Experience in the South

by

Lee Shai Weissbach*

Between 1830 and 1914, about ten thousand Jews are reported to have immigrated to America from the regions of Alsace and Lorraine in northeastern France.¹ However, in the past, scholars have paid little attention to this migratory stream. To the extent that they have taken notice, they have focused almost exclusively on settlement in the South, and especially in the so-called Gulf South, the region centered on the city of New Orleans and encompassing nearby locales including the interior of Louisiana, the states of Mississippi and Alabama, and the eastern part of Texas. In recent years, for example, the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience mounted an exhibit called *Alsace to America: Discovering a Southern Jewish Heritage*, and the French sociologist Anny Bloch-Raymond published a book based on her doctoral dissertation focusing on Jews from northeastern France who settled in the Gulf region.² So, too, in November 2009, the Historic New Orleans Collection, an important local museum and research center, organized a colloquium on the *Alsace-Lorraine Jewish Experience in Louisiana and the Gulf South*.³

It is time now to consider the experience of the Jewish immigrants who came to America from Alsace and Lorraine, and especially those who arrived in the South, in a larger demographic

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2 SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

and historical context by examining how the transplantation of these Jews fit into more general Jewish migration patterns in France and America, and by exploring the extent to which the Franco-Jewish experience in the U.S. was distinct from that of other immigrant groups. Thus, this article will begin by describing how the nineteenth-century arrival of Jews from Alsace-Lorraine fit into larger trends in Jewish migration and by examining the multiple factors that explain the pattern of settlement of French Jews in the United States. As this account will reveal, in establishing this pattern, the search for economic opportunity was paramount, but other factors, such as the phenomenon of chain migration and especially the desire to maintain contact with French culture, played a significant role as well. Finally, this essay will consider the relationship between Franco-Jewish immigrants and their German Jewish counterparts, revealing that because of the relatively small size of the Franco-Jewish community in America, French Jews became amalgamated with German Jews to a large extent, even as both groups moved along a path toward Americanization. Ultimately, French Jews developed a multifaceted identity in the United States. In some ways they sought to retain their French heritage, just as did French immigrants of other faiths. In other ways, they became integrated into the German Jewish population of the United States with whom they shared religion and European ties. With all this, they also became acculturated as Americans.

*Map showing Alsace-Lorraine
in relation to adjacent
geographic regions.*

Franco-Jewish Migration Patterns during the Nineteenth Century

In order to better understand the place of Jewish migration from Alsace-Lorraine to America as part of larger migration patterns, we begin back in France. On the eve of the Revolution of 1789, medieval restrictions on Jewish settlement still applied almost everywhere in the kingdom, and, as a result, the greatest part of France's Jewish population was located in the northeastern border regions of the country, where officials had used prerogatives granted by the monarchy to permit a limited degree of Jewish settlement. Indeed, some thirty thousand of France's forty thousand or so Jews lived in northeastern France, mainly in various small towns in Alsace and in the cities of Metz and Nancy in Lorraine.⁴ With the revolution, however, came the collapse of the old system of restrictions imposed on the Jews, who now came to enjoy the right of unrestricted settlement throughout France. Beginning with the elite and the more ambitious, many Jews took advantage of their new freedom of movement, and, within a relatively short time, the beginnings of a major demographic transformation could be detected.

In the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution, Jews began to migrate within Alsace and Lorraine. Most notably, they started to move into the main cities of the region. Strasbourg, Colmar, and Mulhouse, cities from which Jews had been entirely barred before the revolution, now became home to new Jewish communities. Strasbourg had a Jewish population of some 1,500 as early as 1808 and of nearly 3,000 by 1863. Mulhouse, which had a Jewish population of only 163 in 1808, was home to over 1,200 Jews by 1851 and nearly 2,000 by 1866. The historian Paula Hyman has shown that between 1820 and 1870, one-third to one-half of all Jews in Alsace relocated at least once, usually while they were young.⁵

While some of the Jews of Alsace and Lorraine moved to new locations within their home provinces, others left the region altogether. Mainly, those who left flocked to Paris. They went in such large numbers that by the middle of the nineteenth century, the Jewish population of the capital had increased from about five hundred individuals before the Revolution of 1789 (when their residence in Paris was technically illegal) to over ten thousand. By

4 SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

1872, about twenty-four thousand Jews lived in the French capital and 34 percent of all Parisian Jews were natives of either Alsace or Lorraine.⁶

Jews from northeastern France also fanned out to smaller cities and towns throughout the French interior, establishing new communities in many provincial cities and towns from which Jewish settlement had been banned previously. By 1872, forty-six cities and towns in France, besides Paris, had Jewish populations of one hundred or more individuals, and this number excludes the cities and towns in Alsace and Lorraine that had come under German control as a result of the Franco-Prussian War. The vast majority of France's provincial Jewish centers was small, with only triple-digit Jewish populations, but their very existence reflects the dramatic expansion of Jewish settlement into the interior in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Although a few of the Jewish communities that existed in 1872 were in cities that were already centers of Jewish life before 1789, places such as Avignon, Carpentras, and Bordeaux, the vast majority of the 1872 communities were newly established, mainly on the basis of the dispersal of Jews from Alsace and Lorraine.⁷

It was primarily the economic transformation of northeastern France during the nineteenth century that prompted so many Jews to migrate from their original homes there. The main occupations of Jews in Alsace and Lorraine were peddling, the sale of second-hand goods, cattle dealing, and other functions in which they served a largely rural population as middlemen. As the economy began to modernize, however, especially after the middle of the nineteenth century, these occupations became less viable. The arrival of railroads, banking facilities, and peasant marketing cooperatives resulted in the phasing out of just the kinds of occupations Jews had commonly pursued. To compound the problem, despite the departure of many, the total Jewish population of Alsace and Lorraine grew just as economic opportunities in traditional Jewish occupations shrank. High fertility rates and the migration of Jews from the German states to a France where they would be considered full citizens caused the Jewish population of Alsace alone to rise

from about 22,500 at the time of the French Revolution to over 37,000 by 1861.⁸

All the changes taking place in northeastern France prompted Jews to search for new sorts of economic opportunities. This often involved moving to a new location, generally a city or town that served as a center of trade and industry attuned to new economic developments. Of course, Paris fit the description of such a place, and fully half of the other French cities and towns with Jewish populations of one hundred or more in 1872 were themselves departmental capitals, urban places that were almost invariably the main market and service centers for their regions.

Factors besides the search for new economic opportunities also motivated Jewish migration out of Alsace and Lorraine. Some Jews may have been prompted to move away by the antisemitic outbursts that occasionally plagued northeastern France. The disruptions brought about by the Revolution of 1848, for instance, were the occasion for serious antisemitic rioting. During those disruptions, some 20 percent of all Jewish communities in Alsace were subject to turmoil. In the town of Altkirch, for example, peasants sacked the local synagogue and looted Jewish stores.⁹

Another motivation for Jewish migration was added after 1871, when Germany gained control of most of the territory of Alsace and Lorraine as a result of its victory in the Franco-Prussian War. Many of the Jews of northeastern France had developed such a sense of loyalty to their country that they simply could not abide living under German rule. For example, entire Jewish textile firms relocated from Bischwiller in Alsace to towns such as Elbeuf, Sedan, and Reims in France proper. Frenchmen of other faiths left the new German territories for patriotic reasons as well, joining thousands of Catholics and Protestants who had left before 1871, mainly in response to agricultural crises and changes in various government policies. One estimate reports that Alsace lost some 25 percent of its Jewish population, over nine thousand people, between 1871 and 1905, and about half of all the French Jews who came to America between 1830 and 1914 arrived in the four decades following the Franco-Prussian War.¹⁰ Certainly the best known Alsatian Jew to leave his hometown out of patriotic fervor was Alfred Dreyfus,

6 SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

whose infamous trial and conviction for treason had a role in the development of modern Zionism.

Less evident factors also played their part in decisions to migrate. It appears that in some cases the actions of particular organizations or individuals affected the inclination of Jews to leave their original homes and to establish new Jewish communities in new places. Already in the era of the French Revolution, Alsatian Jews were attracted to Dijon, for example, because of philosemitic sentiments expressed within the city's Collège de Godrans. One official of the *collège* went so far as to write a letter to the Alsatian Jewish leader Cerf Beer asking him to urge Jews to come to Dijon and establish their businesses there.¹¹

At the same time that many Jews from Alsace and Lorraine were relocating within France, a significant number quit the country completely in their quest for a fresh start. Those who left dispersed rather widely. The first Jews to settle in São Paulo, Brazil, were immigrants from Alsace-Lorraine who arrived in the middle of the nineteenth century. Similarly, the Jews living in the Canadian province of Manitoba in the years before 1882, although only a handful, were mainly fur traders originally from Alsace-Lorraine. Some Jews who left northeastern France relocated to Algeria, a French colony since the 1830s.¹² The United States, however, proved to be the most popular destination for Jews leaving France.¹³

Taken together, this information leads to the conclusion that in order to understand the appearance of Jews from Alsace and Lorraine in Louisiana and the Gulf South, or, for that matter, elsewhere in the United States, we must recognize their arrival as part of the much larger picture of Franco-Jewish migration both within France and across the seas during the nineteenth century.

French Jews and the Expansion of Jewish Settlement in America

In the same way that it is essential to understand the migration of Jews from northeastern France to the American South as an element in the migration history of French Jewry more generally, it is also necessary to understand how the arrival of these Jews fit into overall migration patterns in nineteenth-century America.

Just as Jews were on the move both within and beyond Alsace-Lorraine in the 1800s, Jews were migrating across America during that period as well. Just as Jews flocked to major urban centers and established new Jewish communities all over France in the decades following the French Revolution, so too did they fan out across the United States.

Around 1830, only about four thousand Jews resided in the United States, the vast majority of whom lived in just a few urban centers. The only American cities that had Jewish populations over one hundred were New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston, Richmond, Cincinnati, and New Orleans.¹⁴ Over the next half century, however, the Jewish population of the United States swelled to approximately 250,000, and the number of cities in the U.S. with Jewish populations of one hundred or more climbed to 160. Twenty-six of these places hosted Jewish populations of one thousand or more. For example, some sixty thousand Jews claimed New York City as their home around 1880, while four other cities in New York State also had Jewish populations over one thousand and eleven towns were home to at least one hundred but fewer than one thousand Jews. In Ohio, to take another example, Cincinnati and Cleveland had become major Jewish centers by 1880 and eight other towns had triple-digit Jewish populations. In Louisiana, New Orleans had about five thousand Jewish residents around 1880, and five other towns counted Jewish populations in triple digits.¹⁵

In the final two decades of the nineteenth century, America's Jewish population expanded even more rapidly as the mass migration of eastern European Jews to the U.S. began to make its impact felt. By the first decade of the twentieth century, the Jewish population of the country approached two million, and the number of individual Jewish communities continued to increase. In 1907 there were at least ninety American cities with Jewish populations of one thousand or more, and another 260 or so triple-digit Jewish communities.¹⁶

Exactly what role Jews from Alsace and Lorraine played in this American Jewish growth and expansion during the nineteenth century is not easy to discover, for it is difficult, if not

impossible, to systematically identify where all the Jews who came to America from Alsace-Lorraine in the 1800s settled. Nonetheless, some patterns are apparent. They reveal that, in many ways, French Jews behaved much like other French immigrants who came to America during the same period.

For one thing, French Jews, like their Catholic and Protestant counterparts, tended to come to the U.S. as individuals rather than in groups, and they did not necessarily gravitate to the same places. As the Harvard historian Patrice Higonnet has written, "traditionally, the French have not gone where other French were already living, but where new opportunities might be found." So, for example, many French settlers had originally been attracted to New Orleans, but after 1860, as railroads expanded and the Mississippi River became a less important route to the West than it had been previously, the French population of New Orleans and Louisiana actually declined from about fifteen thousand in 1860 to approximately ten thousand in 1880. Moreover, both Jewish and non-Jewish French immigrants tended to have economic motives for coming to the U.S. and all immigrants from France were likely to prefer urban settings, to find employment as merchants or artisans, and to succeed economically in America. The U.S. Census of 1910 revealed, for instance, that French Americans were more highly literate and had larger living spaces than other immigrant groups.¹⁷

The paramount importance of finding economic opportunity helps explain why the histories of a great many nineteenth-century American Jewish communities attest to the presence of individual settlers originally from Alsace-Lorraine. So, for example, Alexander Levi, born in 1809 in Hellimer, Alsace, came to America before 1836 and settled in the frontier town of Dubuque, Iowa. There he made a living first as a fur trader, then as a grocer, then as a miner and mining provisioner, and eventually as the owner of a dry goods store. Active in Dubuque's civic life, Levi was a member of the local Masonic lodge for fifty years. He also helped found the city's first Jewish congregation around 1860 and remained an important supporter. Significantly, when local historians explained why Levi settled in Dubuque, they observed that

“there were many avenues of opportunity in the region,” that “mercantile activity was booming,” and that “Levi was a man of entrepreneurial vision.”¹⁸

*Charcoal portrait of Alexander Levi, Dubuque, Iowa.
(Courtesy of Karin Pritikin, Chicago.)*

To take another example, Abraham Blum, together with his wife and five children, arrived from Alsace-Lorraine in St. Paul, Minnesota, prior to 1857. He soon became involved in Jewish communal affairs and was among a group of dissidents who split from the city's Mt. Zion congregation, although a few years later, in 1862, he also played a role in healing the rift in the community. In central Indiana, the Alsatians Samuel and Isaac Kahn were merchants in Bloomington by the 1850s, and around 1880 the French-born Isaac May was a store clerk in Muncie. He later moved to Rome, Georgia. In the American northwest, among the few hundred Jewish residents of nineteenth-century Tacoma,

10 SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

Washington, were at least two natives of Alsace-Lorraine: the liquor dealer Emile Marx, who arrived in 1888, and the dry goods merchant Theophil Feist, who arrived in 1889.¹⁹

Indeed, not only did individual Jews from Alsace or Lorraine end up in many different cities and towns throughout the United States but, like other Jewish immigrants, they often roamed around extensively before finding permanent homes. Bernard Ehrstein, for example, was born in Alsace in 1831 and arrived in Alexandria, Louisiana, in 1853. The late 1850s, however, found Ehrstein in business with his brother-in-law in Texas before Ehrstein spent the Civil War years in Mexico. Only after 1872 did he return permanently to Alexandria, where he opened a general store. Later he also engaged in the grocery business and in money lending. He finally died in Alexandria in 1902.²⁰ Similar is the story of Achille Baer, who was also born in northeastern France in 1831. Once in America, he operated a butcher shop in the frontier town of Cheyenne, Wyoming, and then in Red Jacket, Michigan, before finally moving his family to Denver, Colorado.²¹

An even more energetic wanderer was the Alsatian Lazar Kahn. Arriving in America in 1866, he spent nearly two decades doing business in several cities in the Midwest and in the South, including Marshall, Illinois; Nashville, Tennessee; Selma, Alabama; and Ironton, Ohio. In 1884, he relocated the foundry that he owned in partnership with his brother to Hamilton, Ohio, where the firm developed into the nation's largest manufacturer of stoves. From his base in Hamilton, Kahn became an internationally prominent figure, serving as president of the National Association of Stove Manufacturers from 1895 to 1897.²²

And then there is the example of Rabbi Abraham Blum (not the same Abraham Blum who settled in St. Paul), who was born near Strasbourg in 1843 and educated for the rabbinate in the Alsatian town of Niederbronn-les-Bains. He served as a rabbi in Lorraine soon after he was ordained, but in 1866 he came to America and accepted a rabbinic post in Dayton, Ohio. After three years there, he moved to Augusta, Georgia, where he was reported to be "fast acquiring a proper pronunciation of the English language." Next he moved to Galveston, Texas, where he stayed

from 1871 until 1885. When he left his Galveston pulpit to attend to his failing health, he again spent time in Ohio and Georgia, and also in South Carolina and Florida. By 1889, Blum felt well enough to resume his rabbinic duties, this time in Los Angeles. After several years in California, he moved again, now to New York City. There he served as the spiritual leader of a congregation in the Bronx, as a chaplain at Bellevue Hospital and several others, and also, for ten years until his death in 1921, as chaplain to the New York City Police Department.²³

*Rabbi Abraham Blum
proudly wearing his uniform
and badge as the first Jewish
chaplain with the New York
Police Department.
(Courtesy of NYPD.)*

12 SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

Primary Centers of Franco-Jewish Settlement in America

Despite what Higonnet has written about the disinclination of French immigrants to follow where earlier Frenchmen had settled, and despite the fact that there are many examples of American towns in which French Jews settled and multiple examples of peripatetic immigrants from Alsace-Lorraine, some places clearly attracted a disproportionate number of French immigrants, both Jews and non-Jews. The major port cities of New York, New Orleans, and San Francisco, for instance, became important places of settlement for those relocating from France, including Jews. Not only were these ports either initial or secondary points of arrival for new immigrants, but they also served as significant seats of trade and commerce offering numerous economic opportunities.

New York was, of course, well established as a major economic center and as the primary hub of Jewish life in America by the middle of the nineteenth century. Every significant segment of America's Jewish population was represented there, and Jews of French origin were no exception. Some sense of the attractiveness of New York is reflected in the fact that of the 134 Jewish immigrants known to have left for America between 1840 and 1870 from the department of the Haut Rhin, that is, from southern Alsace, eighty-nine (66 percent) indicated that they were bound for New York. It appears that as New York Jews began to spread out to Brooklyn, the first to arrive included Alsatians who established businesses on Fulton Street.²⁴ New Orleans, too, was one of America's great ports of entry, especially before the Civil War. New Orleans sea captains who had delivered cotton to Europe did not want to sail home with empty ships, so they offered immigrants passage at attractive rates. Among the travelers who took advantage of this opportunity were Jews and non-Jews relocating from France.²⁵

In the far west, the California Gold Rush that began in 1848 transformed San Francisco into a major port city, and that metropolis also became something of a magnet for those of diverse religions arriving from Alsace and Lorraine. The turmoil associated with the Revolution of 1848 was something of a push factor

motivating migrants to leave France, but much more important was the lure of potential riches to be had in California. Some twenty thousand Frenchmen arrived in 1851 alone.²⁶ Although the exact number of Jews who came is unavailable, San Francisco's Congregation Emanu-El, the oldest Jewish congregation west of the Mississippi and a pioneer in Reform Judaism, was said to have a "valued Alsatian contingent" by the 1870s, and a number of prominent Jewish leaders in the city were of French origin. These included the Lorraine-born Daniel Levy, who was "reader" at Emanu-El from 1857 to 1864,²⁷ and Raphael Weill, also born in Lorraine, who arrived in San Francisco in 1853 and who, according to one observer, eventually acquired a reputation as "the city's best-known merchant prince, boulevardier, club man, arts patron and connoisseur, gourmet chef, and perennially eligible bachelor."²⁸

San Francisco was not the only California city to attract Jews from Alsace-Lorraine during the Gold Rush era. According to one account of French settlement in America, among the most prominent French residents of Los Angeles in the 1870s were Leon Loeb, P. N. Roth, and the brothers Constant and Eugene Meyer, all Jews.²⁹ A number of other then-small California communities attracted Jews from Alsace-Lorraine as well. These early settlers included Leopold Hart and his half-brother, Lazard Lion, who were among the first Jews in San José, and Louis Wolf, who arrived in Temecula as a twenty-four-year-old in 1857 and ultimately became a successful storekeeper there.³⁰ The first Jews to arrive in Lompoc were the Alsatians Isidore and Hannah Weill, who came in 1880.³¹

Places that attracted clusters of immigrant Jews from Alsace and Lorraine existed in other parts of the country as well. In the Ohio valley, several small towns, including Wheeling, West Virginia, and Portsmouth, Ohio, became home to discernible groups of Jews originally from northeastern France. In Madison, Indiana, more than a third of the Jewish residents in 1860 were of Alsatian origin.³²

And in the Gulf South also, of course, places besides New Orleans had identifiable concentrations of Jews originally from

*Congregation Emanu-El, Sutter Street, San Francisco, California, 1866.
(From Rachel Wischnitzer, Synagogue Architecture in the United States,
courtesy of the Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, PA.)*

Alsace-Lorraine. Between 1850 and 1865 alone, some forty-five Jews from northern Alsace came to Montgomery, Alabama, for example, and the historian Moses Rischin reports that from before the Civil War until the 1920s, most of the Jews who lived in Opelousas, Louisiana, “were francophones, many from Alsace.”³³ So, too, in his study of the business of Jews in Louisiana, Elliott Ashkenazi identified Alsatian Jews in Bayou Sara, Clinton, Monroe, and Shreveport, Louisiana, and in Jackson, Mississippi.³⁴ Moreover, according to the research conducted by Anny Bloch-Raymond, Jews from Alsace-Lorraine actually “gave their names to the towns of Geismar, Klotzville, and Marksville in Louisiana.”³⁵

*Alabama's Kahl Montgomery (now Temple Beth Or) at Church and Catoma,
dedicated in 1862 with Alsatians among its founders.*

*(From: Maurice Eisendrath, 100 Years of Kahl Montgomery,
Published on the Occasion of its 100th Anniversary, 1952.)*

The Persistence of French Culture

As French immigrant populations grew in New York, Louisiana, California, and elsewhere, the economic attractiveness of these places was reinforced by the operation of chain migration and by the fact that these locales became centers of cultural continuity. Individuals or families who settled in a particular location often attracted relatives or acquaintances who wished to move to America. Earlier settlers facilitated employment for the newcomers, and resonances of the old country certainly helped with adjustment to a new environment. Thus, places where the French

language was in use and where French cultural ties could be maintained proved to be particularly attractive to French Jews in America.

The researchers Irwin Lachoff and Catherine Kahn report, for example, that the Alsatian Theodore Dennery settled in New Orleans, a city with a long French heritage, "because French was spoken in the streets and he felt at home," and Moses Rischin points out that the French origins of so many Jews in Opelousas gave them "a linguistic bond with . . . the dominant French-speaking elites" in their city and in the neighboring port town of Washington. The French language, Rischin adds, "also provided a linkage with the French-speaking white Cajuns and black Creoles who filled the unilingual agricultural communities of the surrounding prairie." Similarly, Elliott Ashkenazi, speaking of Jews from Alsace and Lorraine, observes that "Louisiana offered an obvious attraction, the language, and many a peddler had his task eased by the availability of a common tongue."³⁶

In the Ohio Valley, Gallipolis, Ohio, one of the several towns that became home to a contingent of French Jews, must have held a special attraction because of its French associations. Only the second permanent settlement in America's old Northwest Territory, Gallipolis had been founded in 1790 by émigrés fleeing the French Revolution. The name of the settlement, in fact, means "city of the Gauls." The town did not prosper at first, but over the years French immigrants continued to come to Gallipolis, and these included Jews. Three Moch brothers, originally from a small town between Strasbourg and Hagenau, arrived in the early 1850s, for example, and, in typical chain migration fashion, they were soon followed by their cousins Emma and Abraham Moch, by four Emsheimer brothers from the Alsatian town of Soultz-sous-Forêts, and by several members of the Frank family, also from Alsace.³⁷

The propensity of so many Jews from Alsace and Lorraine to settle where other French immigrants had made their homes reflects the fact that, as Anny Bloch-Raymond has shown, the Jews from Alsace-Lorraine who migrated to America were often intent on retaining elements of their French identity. They not only

*The Dennery family on Milan Street,
New Orleans, Louisiana, c. 1906.
Theodore Dennery seated in chair.
(Courtesy of Touro Infirmary Archives, New Orleans, LA.)*

continued to speak the French language, but thought of themselves as French.³⁸ The Alsatians among the founders of the Gates of Prayer congregation in New Orleans were said to be “the most patriotic of patriots, always loyal to France,” and when Rabbi Abraham Blum’s sons were born in Galveston, Texas, he gave them the French names Moïse and Jacques. The interest in France evinced by the celebrated poet Penina Moïse of Charleston no doubt reflects her father’s Alsatian heritage. Her first published poem was called “France after the Banishment of Napoleon,” and her “A Geographical Alphabet” opens with the lines “A stands for Alsace—a famous old place/That Prussia would in its dominions embrace.”³⁹

*Gates of Prayer synagogue, New Orleans, dedicated in 1867.
(Courtesy of Touro Infirmary Archives, New Orleans, LA.)*

So, too, French Jews in America were inclined to maintain direct contacts with France and with French institutions. During the Civil War, several Alsatian Jews in the Gulf South registered their property with the French consul in New Orleans in the hope that their property would be protected as Union troops occupied the area. Rabbi Blum regularly translated news items and other writings of Jewish interest from France for publication in English. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jews of French origin in Louisiana helped fund the rebuilding of a synagogue in the Alsatian town of Ingwiller, and Jews of Alsatian background in Illinois and New York helped underwrite a home for indigent Jewish girls in Strasbourg.⁴⁰

Another way that French Jews expressed their connections with France was by collaborating in local organizations with French immigrants of other faiths (settlers with whom they had much in common, as we have seen) and by associating themselves with French cultural developments generally. The Strasbourg-born Eugene Meyer was president of the French Benevolent Society of Los Angeles in the 1870s, for example, and, almost simultaneously, Daniel Levy served as president of San Francisco's Alliance française. Eugene Meyer also served as French consul in Los Angeles, as did his Strasbourg-born cousin Leon Loeb.⁴¹ When Meyer named his dry goods store the City of Paris, he was no doubt intending to advertise his French identity to his customers, although it was not only Jews from France who endeavored to link their retail businesses to French fashions, which were popular in America from the early nineteenth century onward.⁴² For example, in early twentieth-century Marion, Indiana, Saul Hutner called his women's apparel shop The Paris, and in Asheville, North Carolina, the Lipinsky dry goods store was called the Bon Marché.⁴³

So connected to their country of origin were some Franco-Jewish immigrants that they even traveled back to France on occasion. Bernard Ehrstein of Alexandria, Louisiana, spent two years back across the Atlantic in Strasbourg in the early 1870s, for instance, and Lazar Kahn, the stove manufacturer from Hamilton,

*Leon Loeb, French consul in Los Angeles.
Below, his daughter Rose Loeb Levi,
c. 1900.*

*(Courtesy of Linda Levi, their great grand-
daughter and granddaughter,
respectively.)*

Ohio, acted as an official juror at the Paris Expositions of 1889 and 1901. Michel Heymann, born in Schirrhoffen, Alsace, and eventually superintendent of the Jewish Orphan's Home in New Orleans, was a delegate to the International Prison Congress in Paris in 1895. Raphael Weill, the "merchant prince" of San Francisco, routinely spent six months a year in Paris.⁴⁴ Doubtless, family visits, vacations, and buying trips intertwined.

French Jews, German Jews, and Americanization

Despite the survival of a certain French self-image among Jewish immigrants from Alsace and Lorraine, in none of the places where they settled did Jews from France establish their own totally distinct sub-communities. Generally, even where they clustered, they seem to have become integrated into the institutions and social networks of other central European Jews, especially those from the states of southern Germany. In many ways, they seem to have become part of what historians usually refer to as the "German Jewish" population of the United States. So, for example, an 1855 letter to the editor from Daniel Levy in San Francisco informed the readers of the *Archives israélites* in Paris that in San Francisco the French Jews, "for the most part from Alsace and Lorraine, do not actually form a real group and are integrated into the mass of their nearest European neighbors."⁴⁵ Similarly, in 1856, the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, published in Leipzig, informed its readers that Alsatian and Bavarian Jewish women in San Francisco had declined to join the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society dominated by Polish and English Jews in their city, but instead had banded together to form what they called the German Women's Society.⁴⁶

Association with Jews from Germany came naturally. Even back in Alsace and Lorraine, significant ties of culture, marriage, and kinship existed between the Jews on the French side of the border and those in German states such as Bavaria, Württemberg, and the Palatinate. Although marriages between Jewish men and women both of whom were from France were common in America, patterns of intermarriage between French and German Jews persisted, as some intermarried couples made the move across the

Atlantic together and others wed in the U.S. In 1880s Vicksburg, Mississippi, for example, the French-born entrepreneurs Jacob Ehrman, Simon Metzger, and Marx Wolfe were all married to women of south German background, and the Prussian-born dry goods merchant Marks Sokolosky was married to a woman from Alsace. In Jackson, Michigan, the French-born furniture store owner Henry Hanaw was married to the New York-born daughter of German Jewish immigrants.⁴⁷ Except perhaps in the immediate aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War,⁴⁸ ties between Jews from southern Germany and Jews from Alsace-Lorraine seem to have been reinforced and even magnified, as individuals from these regions met on neutral ground in America.⁴⁹ The incentive for French Jews to bond with their German counterparts was especially strong in small towns. As the historian Amy Hill Shevitz has written, there “two or three Jewish families from Alsace would find their commonalities with two or three families from Bavaria more salient than their differences, given the greater difference between them and the much larger Christian population.”⁵⁰

Indeed, many similarities existed between the experiences of Franco-Jewish and German Jewish immigrants to America. Although French Jews did not have to flee legal discrimination, as German Jews sometimes did, members of both groups came for many of the same reasons, spread out widely across the United States, and exhibited similar patterns of chain migration and ethnic clustering. They also pursued the same kinds of economic activities, with some individuals prospering and others remaining in more modest circumstances. The French-born residents of Madison, Indiana, in 1860, for instance, included a clothier, a butcher, a rag dealer, and three peddlers. The French-born breadwinners of Alexandria, Louisiana, in 1880 comprised a retired merchant, a butcher, a cooper, two store clerks, and eight dry goods and grocery merchants. In Vicksburg, Mississippi, in the same year, the French-born male heads of household were a butcher, a grocer, three store clerks, and a broker, probably involved in the cotton trade.⁵¹ Even the relationships of French Jews and German Jews with their countries of origin were similar.

Members of both groups continued to use the languages they had spoken in Europe, to associate with non-Jewish immigrants from their original homes and to replicate some of their behaviors, to stay in touch with relatives in Europe, and to return there from time to time.⁵²

It appears that New York City was the only place in the United States where any institutions were established with an exclusively Franco-Jewish identity. In New York, Alsatian Jews founded congregation Shaarey Beracha (Gates of Blessing) in 1858. The founding rabbi of this congregation was apparently the Alsatian-born Elias Eppstein, who had earlier served congregations in Prussia and in Syracuse, New York, and who would later serve congregations in Jackson and Detroit, Michigan; in Milwaukee, Wisconsin; in Kansas City, Missouri; in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and in Quincy, Illinois.⁵³ Shaarey Beracha, which survived as a separate entity only until 1909, had its own mutual benefit society called the *Communauté israélite française*,⁵⁴ and New York City was also home to another mutual aid organization called the *Société israélite de New York*, founded in 1873. The *Société israélite* maintained its own cemetery on Long Island.⁵⁵

Rabbi Elias Eppstein.
(From Frank J. Adler, *Roots in a Moving Stream: The Centennial History of Congregation B'nai Jehudah of Kansas City 1870-1970*, courtesy of Congregation B'nai Jehudah, Overland Park, Kansas.)

Besides the long-standing association between the Jews of Alsace-Lorraine and their south German neighbors, perhaps the main factor driving the integration of French and German Jews in America was the fact that there were simply not enough French Jews in the country to sustain more than a handful of Franco-Jewish institutions. Even where they were most concentrated, as in the Gulf South and in California, their numbers were small in proportion of the total local Jewish population. Some idea of the paucity of French Jews in nineteenth-century America can be discerned from the fact that of the 138 burials recorded in the Gates of Mercy cemetery in New Orleans between 1828 and 1848, a period during which this was the only Jewish cemetery in town, only sixteen burials were of Jews born in Alsace-Lorraine or in other places in France.⁵⁶ The record of admissions to Jews' Hospital in New York in the 1850s provides an additional indication of the relative size of the Franco-Jewish population at midcentury, in this case, in America's foremost Jewish community. Between 1856 and 1858, when some 319 German-born Jews and some 256 Polish-born Jews were admitted to the hospital, along with sixteen American-born patients, a mere eight French-born Jews were admitted.⁵⁷

In 1900, there were only ninety-eight seat holders at New York's French congregation Shaarey Beracha, and only 138 members of the Société israélite de New York. By 1907, Shaarey Beracha had only forty-five members and membership in the Société israélite had declined to seventy-two.⁵⁸ Generally speaking, although the roughly ten thousand Jews who migrated from Alsace-Lorraine did constitute an interesting subgroup of American Jews with its own history, they could not possibly have constituted a completely separate sub-community in an American Jewish population that was growing to nearly three million by the beginning of World War I. By contrast, close to two hundred thousand German Jewish immigrants arrived in the U.S. just in the five decades between 1830 and 1880.⁵⁹

Consistent with the ties that developed between Franco-Jewish immigrants and their German Jewish counterparts was the

attraction of French Jews to American Reform Judaism. Reform had never gained a foothold in France, as it had in the German states, primarily because French Jews had been emancipated during the French Revolution without being required to acculturate first. This was contrary to the experience of Jews in Germany. In America, some French Jews remained traditionalists. In San Francisco, for example, the French-born Emanuel Blochman arrived in 1851 and joined the traditionalist Congregation Ohabai Shalom. In 1864 he founded a school to teach Torah to the city's Jewish children, and at various times he served the community as a dairy farmer, winemaker, and matzah baker. In New York, Shaarey Beracha seems to have remained traditionalist in orientation, with daily services conducted in Hebrew throughout its history.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, most French Jews in America joined the Reform congregations that were dominated by the German Jews with whom they came to be so closely bound.

The willingness of most French Jews to adopt Reform, with its assimilationist proclivities, was, moreover, consistent with their inclination to Americanize. In this they were similar not only to their German Jewish counterparts, but also to nineteenth-century Catholic and Protestant French immigrants to America. Many French Huguenots, for example, affiliated with the more mainstream Anglican Church when they came to the United States.⁶¹ Moreover, the French, never a huge immigrant group in America, did not create urban neighborhoods of their own and, as one scholar has concluded, "generally held no special reluctance toward Anglicanizing their names and their speech."⁶²

The desire of French Jews to integrate into American society, like the desire of their German Jewish and non-Jewish French counterparts, is reflected in their service during the Civil War. The Alsatian cousins Abraham and Isaac Hermann of Washington County, Georgia, were among the first of their neighbors to volunteer for the Confederate army in 1861, for example, and in Shreveport, Louisiana, the Alsatian brothers Samuel and Simon Levy also enlisted. Simon rose to the rank of captain, while his fellow Alsatian Henry Dreyfuss organized the Shreveport Home

*Shreveport, Louisiana, residents Simon Levy (above, left)
and Henry Dreyfuss (above, right), and the Dreyfuss Dry Goods Store,
northwest corner of Milam and McNeill Streets (below).
(Courtesy of Eric Brock and the Eric Brock Collection,
LSU- Shreveport Archives.)*

Guards to defend their city. In the north, the twenty-one-year-old New Yorker Kaufman Mandell, born in Dauendorf, Alsace, joined the Union army as a private in 1861 and rose to the rank of major in the cavalry. In Kentucky, the French-born Gabriel Netter served first as a captain in the Union Army's 26th Kentucky Infantry and later was commissioned a lieutenant colonel and authorized to raise a mounted regiment. He lost his life in battle near Owensboro, Kentucky.⁶³

The involvement of French Jews in local civic life and politics also attests to their desire for integration. Representative is the case of Abel Dreyfous, who was born in the Alsatian city of Belfort in 1815 and arrived in New Orleans by way of New York in 1836. Once in the Crescent City, he set up shop as a soap maker, but at the same time he began clerking in the office of a notary in order to prepare for entry into that profession. He eventually gained his commission, and by the time he died in 1891, he had become one of the city's most important notaries and well established within New Orleans society. Abel's son Felix became a leading New Orleans attorney and served in the Louisiana legislature. Among his other accomplishments, Felix was largely responsible for establishing the Levee Board charged with protecting New Orleans against flooding.⁶⁴

Bernard Schlesinger Weil, born in Alsace in 1802 and arriving in the U.S. by way of New Orleans in 1840, eventually founded a town in Wisconsin and in 1852 became the first Jew elected to the Wisconsin state legislature. In Indianapolis, Indiana, the Lorraine-born Leon Kahn served on the city's Common Council for eight years between 1869 and 1881. Mike Mandell and his wife, both born in Alsace-Lorraine, arrived in Albuquerque, New Mexico, just two weeks after their marriage. Mike became a successful merchant and, in 1890, the second mayor of the city. Similarly, in Dubuque, Alexander Levi became a justice of the peace, and in Temecula, Louis Wolf became not only a justice of the peace, but also a postmaster, school board member, Indian agent, and magistrate who was said to "[preside] over the law books with whiskey and [a] Colt revolver."⁶⁵

*Abel Dreyfous (above, left) and his wife, Caroline Kaufman Dreyfous.
Their son, Felix Dreyfous (below).
(Abel and Felix Dreyfous, courtesy of Lee Eiseman, Charlestown, MA.
Caroline Dreyfous, courtesy of Touro Infirmary Archives, New Orleans.)*

Conclusion

Previous studies of the relocation of Jews from Alsace and Lorraine to the American South have paid little attention to the way that population movement fit into larger patterns of Franco-Jewish migration in the nineteenth century, and, indeed, the dispersal of Franco-Jewish immigrants to parts of the United States beyond the South has received even less attention. Nor have studies of the arrival of Jews from Alsace-Lorraine in America taken account of similarities between Franco-Jewish immigrants and their non-Jewish counterparts. What this essay has demonstrated is that the arrival of Jews from Alsace and Lorraine in the South was only one element of a much larger story of Franco-Jewish migration and that the French Jews who arrived in the South did not behave all that differently from those who took up residence in other parts of the country. It was not only in the French-influenced Gulf South, for example, that French Jews attempted to maintain their French cultural identity. This they did wherever they clustered, and, in fact, the only exclusively Franco-Jewish institutions in the country were established in New York, and not in Louisiana. Moreover, this article has shown that in many respects, the experience of Jewish immigrants from France was similar to that of their Catholic and Protestant fellow migrants. The circumstances of all these immigrant groups were conditioned in part by the fact that French migration to America was never massive.

*The listing for New York's congregation Shaaray Beracha (Shaare Brocho)
in the American Jewish Year Book of 1900-1901.*

Ultimately, this article has revealed that the French Jews who moved to the United States during the nineteenth century, including those who came to the South, were possessed of a rather complex identity. To some extent, these settlers held on to their French self-image and to their connections with French immigrants of other faiths, at least for the first generation. However, because of their enduring identity as Jews and because of their relatively small numbers, they also became integrated in many ways into the German Jewish culture that dominated American Jewish communal life in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Alongside these two elements of their identity, moreover, was also a third, based on a desire to become American. Clearly, the experience of Jewish immigrants to the South from Alsace and Lorraine must be understood within the context of larger Jewish migration patterns in both France and America, and with an appreciation for the intriguing complex identity of French Jews in the United States.

NOTES

¹ Anny Bloch-Raymond, *Des berges du Rhin aux rives du Mississippi: Histoire et récits de migrants juifs* [From the Banks of the Rhine to the Shores of the Mississippi: The History and Stories of Jewish Migrants] (Paris, 2009), 14.

² See "Utica Site & Exhibits" on the Internet site of the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience at http://www.isjl.org/museum/utica_site.htm (accessed January 3, 2010); David Galef, "Arts/Artifacts: Vivid Reminders Of Jewish Life In the Old South," *New York Times*, June 21, 1998; Bloch-Raymond, *Des berges du Rhin*.

³ For more on this conference, see Erin Greenwald, "The Alsace-Lorraine Jewish Experience in Louisiana and the Gulf South," *Historic New Orleans Collection Quarterly* 26 (Summer 2009), 8-9, at http://www.hnoc.org/publications/pdf/HNOC_Q3_09.pdf (accessed January 4, 2010).

⁴ On the geography of French Jewry on the eve of the Revolution, see, for example, Simon Schwarzfuchs, *Du Juif à l'israélite: Histoire d'une mutation (1770-1870)* [From Jew to Israelite: The History of a Mutation (1770-1870)] (Paris, 1989), 19-37; Patrick Girard, *Pour Le*

Meilleur et pour le pire: Vingt siècles d'histoire juive en France [For Better or for Worse: Twenty Centuries of Jewish History in France] (Paris, 1986), 169-199; Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews: The Origins of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1968), 84-137, 321; Zosa Szajkowski, "The Growth of the Jewish Population of France," in Zosa Szajkowski, *Jews and the French Revolutions of 1789, 1830 and 1848* (New York, 1970), 76-80.

⁵ Paula E. Hyman, *The Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace, Acculturation and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, 1991): esp. 31, 88, 96.

⁶ Ministre de l'agriculture, du commerce et des travaux publics, *Statistique de la France* [Statistics of France] (Paris, 1855); *Statistique de la France, Résultats généraux du recensement de 1872* [Statistics of France: General Results of the Census of 1872] (Paris, 1873); Hyman, *Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace*, 86.

⁷ For more on smaller Jewish communities in the French interior, see Lee Shai Weissbach, "Studying the Era of Emancipation: The State of Franco-Jewish Local History," *Shofar* 14 (Spring 1996): 63-87.

⁸ Hyman, *Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace*, esp. 49, 86-87.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 25. See also Anny Bloch, "L'émigration juive alsacienne aux Etats-Unis (1830-1930)" [Alsatian Jewish Emigration to the United States (1830-1930)], *Archives juives* 32:2 (1999): 78-79.

¹⁰ See, for example, Vicki Caron, "Patriotism or Profit? The Emigration of Alsace-Lorraine Jews to France, 1871-72," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 28 (1983): 159; Anny Bloch, "Mercy on Rude Streams: Jewish Emigrants from Alsace-Lorraine to the Lower Mississippi Region and the Concept of Fidelity," *Southern Jewish History* 2 (1999): 88-89, 108 (n. 17). On French migration out of Alsace-Lorraine generally, see Nicole Fouché, *Emigration alsacienne aux Etats-Unis, 1815-1870* [Alsatian Emigration to the United States, 1815-1870] (Paris, 1992), passim; Jacqueline Lindenfeld, *The French in the United States: An Ethnographic Study* (Westport, CT, 2000), 3.

¹¹ See Henri Giroux, "L'Installation de la communauté juive de Dijon (1790-1792)" [The Establishment of the Jewish Community of Dijon (1790-1792)], *Mémoires de l'Académie des sciences, arts et belles-lettres de Dijon* 119 (1966-69): 103.

¹² See "Ambassador Danilovich, U.S. Ambassador to Brazil, Speaks in New York City" at <http://www.embaixada-americana.org.br/index.php?action=materia&id=2978&submenu=1&itemmenu=10> (accessed April 17, 2009); Harvey H. Herstein, "The Growth of the Winnipeg Jewish Community and the Evolution of its Educational Institutions" at <http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/jewishschools.shtml> (accessed April 17, 2009); Bloch, "Mercy on Rude Streams," 88.

¹³ See, for example, Hyman, *Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace*, 87.

¹⁴ Ira Rosenwaike, *On the Edge of Greatness: A Portrait of American Jewry in the Early National Period* (Cincinnati, 1985), esp. 31 (table).

¹⁵ Lee Shai Weissbach, "The Jewish Communities of the United States on the Eve of Mass Migration: Some Comments on Geography and Bibliography," *American Jewish History* 78 (September 1988): 79-108.

¹⁶ Jacob Rader Marcus, *To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585–1984* (Lanham, MD, 1990), 241; Lee Shai Weissbach, “Small Jewish Communities in the Era of Mass Migration: The American Experience” in *Patterns of Migration, 1850–1914*, ed. Aubrey Newman and Stephen W. Massil (London, 1996).

¹⁷ Patrice Higonnet, “French,” in *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Stephan Thernstrom (Cambridge, MA., 1980), 385–386; Laurie Collier Hillstrom, “French Americans” at <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3405800064.html> (accessed March 17, 2011). See also Polly Morrice, *The French Americans* (New York, 1988), 15–16.

¹⁸ “Levi’s Journey,” at http://levicelebration.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/panel2_fnl.23550131.pdf (accessed April 24, 2009); “Building a Community” at http://levicelebration.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/panel3_fnl.23550309.pdf (accessed March 14, 2011).

¹⁹ Gene H. Rosenblum, *Jewish Pioneers of St. Paul, 1849–1874* (Mount Pleasant, SC, 2001), 56; Judith E. Endelman, *The Jewish Community of Indianapolis: 1849 to the Present* (Bloomington, IN., 1984), 13; “Rome, Georgia” in the *Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities* at <http://www.msje.org/history/archive/ga/rome.html> (accessed May 7, 2011); Deb Freedman, “Dry Goods and Wet Goods,” at <http://drygoodsandwetgoods.com/> (accessed April 17, 2009).

²⁰ Martin I. Hinchin, *Fourscore and Eleven: A History of the Jews of Rapides Parish, 1828–1919* (Alexandria, LA, 1984), 103; Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Alexandria, Rapides Parish, Louisiana, 1880.

²¹ Achille was the grandfather of Max Baer, the famous boxer who wore a Star of David on his trunks and held the world heavyweight boxing title in the mid 1930s. See, for example, Bill Gallo, “The Legend of Max: Grin & Baer It,” at http://www.nydailynews.com/archives/sports/1997/10/26/1997-10-26_the_legend_of_max_grin_amp.html (accessed April 16, 2009); “Max Baer (boxer)” at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Baer_\(boxer\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Baer_(boxer)) (accessed April 16, 2009).

²² “Lazard Kahn, Manufacturer, Outstanding Man, Dies,” *Hamilton Evening Journal*, March 8, 1928.

²³ William M. Kramer and Reva Clar, “Rabbi Abraham Blum: From Alsace to New York by Way of Texas and California,” *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly (WSJHQ)* 12 (October 1979): 73–88; (January 1980): 170–184; (April 1980): 266–281. See also “Rabbi Abraham Blum Dies after Operation,” *New York Times*, August 7, 1921.

²⁴ Bloch-Raymond, *Des berges du Rhin*, 30; Bernard Postal and Lionel Koppman, *A Jewish Tourist’s Guide to the U.S.* (Philadelphia, 1954), 443.

²⁵ Barbara Krasner-Khait, “If Not Through New York, Then Where?” at <http://www.familychronicle.com/NotThroughNY.html> (accessed March 17, 2011).

²⁶ Morrice, *French Americans*, 13.

²⁷ Fred Rosenbaum, *Visions of Reform: Congregation Emanu-El and the Jews of San Francisco, 1849–1999* (Berkeley, CA, 2000), 28, 67.

²⁸ Leon Harris, *Merchant Princes: An Intimate History of Jewish Families Who Built Great Department Stores* (New York, 1994), 240. See also "Raphael Weill & Company" at <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~nmpelton/sfbweil.htm> (accessed January 10, 2010).

²⁹ Higonnet, "French," 382. Eugene Meyer, who arrived in Los Angeles by way of New York and San Francisco, was the grandfather of Katharine Graham, one-time publisher and CEO of the *Washington Post* and *Newsweek* magazine. See Katharine Graham, *Personal History* (New York, 1997), 4-7; or Katharine Graham, "Personal History" at <http://www.usatoday.com/life/books/fc/2001-07-17-personal-history.htm> (accessed March 11, 2009); "Notable Relatives: Katharine Graham (1917-2001)" at <http://homepage.mac.com/lindalevi/PersonalAW/KMGraham.htm> (accessed March 11, 2009). See also Ava F. Kahn, ed., *Jewish Voices of the California Gold Rush: A Documentary History, 1849-1880* (Detroit, 2002), 138-140.

³⁰ Dan Pulcrano, "Keeping the Faith," at <http://www.sanjose.com/history/jews/> (accessed March 18, 2009); Harold Brackman, "Jewish threads wind way through Temecula's history," at http://www.jewishjournal.com/travel/article/jewish_threads_wind_way_through_temeculas_history_20070518/ (accessed March 18, 2009).

³¹ The Weill's son became a director of Keystone Comedies and a founder of the Screen Actors Guild. See "Tracing the Tribe: The Jewish Genealogy Blog," March 24, 2008, at <http://tracingthetribe.blogspot.com/> (accessed March 18, 2009).

³² Amy Hill Shevitz, *Jewish Communities on the Ohio River: A History* (Lexington, KY, 2007), 41.

³³ Bloch, "L'émigration juive alsacienne," 82; Moses Rischin, *The Jews of North America* (Detroit, 1987), 227.

³⁴ Elliott Ashkenazi, *The Business of Jews in Louisiana, 1840-1875* (Tuscaloosa, 1988), 75, 92, 110.

³⁵ "Tracing the Tribe: The Jewish Genealogy Blog," May 6, 2008, at <http://tracingthetribe.blogspot.com/> (accessed March 18, 2009).

³⁶ Irwin Lachoff and Catherine C. Kahn, *The Jewish Community of New Orleans* (Mount Pleasant, SC, 2005), 52; Rischin, *Jews of North America*, 227; Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 158-59. On the French heritage in New Orleans, see, for example, Morrice, *French Americans*, 33-59; Leonard V. Huber, *New Orleans: A Pictorial History* (New York, 1971), 260-261.

³⁷ Shevitz, *Jewish Communities on the Ohio*, 40. On the early history of Gallipolis, see Hélène Fouré-Selter, *Gallipolis, Ohio: histoire de l'établissement de cinq cents français dans la vallée de l'Ohio à la fin du XVIII siècle* [Gallipolis, Ohio: The History of the Establishment of Five Hundred French People in the Ohio Valley at the End of the Eighteenth Century] (Paris, 1939); Phillip J. Wolfe and Warren J. Wolfe, "Prospects for the Gallipolis Settlement: French Diplomatic Dispatches," *Ohio History* 103 (1994).

³⁸ Bloch, "Mercy on Rude Streams," *passim*; Bloch-Raymond, *Des berges du Rhin*, esp. 105-111, 136-142.

³⁹ Bloch, "L'émigration juive alsacienne," 92; Kramer and Clar, "Rabbi Abraham Blum," *WSJHQ*, (October 1979): 81; National Council of Jewish Women, *Secular and Religious Works of Penina Moise, with Brief Sketch of Her Life* (Charleston, SC, 1911), i, 308; Harriet L. Parmet, "Penina Moise—Sweet Singer of Israel" at <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Penina+Moise--Sweet+Singer+of+Israel.-a0151974728> (accessed March 17, 2011).

⁴⁰ Ashkenazi, *Business of Jews in Louisiana*, 92, 121; Kramer and Clar, "Rabbi Abraham Blum," *WSJHQ* (January 1980): 181-182; Copybook of Samuel Haas, 1886-1887, Special Collections, Louisiana State University Libraries, at <http://www.lib.lsu.edu/special/guides/jews.html#H> (accessed March 18, 2009); "Le Home Israélite de Jeunes Filles" [The Jewish Home for Girls] at <http://judaisme.sdv.fr/aujourd'hui/laurew/home.htm> (accessed April 17, 2009).

⁴¹ Higonnet, "French," 382; Rosenbaum, *Visions of Reform*, 28; John Newmark Levi, Sr., "This is the Way we Used to Live," *WSJHQ* 4:1 (October 1971).

⁴² Hillstrom, "French Americans"; Morrice, *French Americans*, 66-69.

⁴³ Jerry Miller, "Marion's Chosen Few," *Marion Chronicle-Tribune Magazine*, July 17, 1977; Letterhead in Ms. Coll. #5, "Hebrew Union College Records," Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.

⁴⁴ Hinchin, *Fourscore and Eleven*, 103; "Lazard Kahn," *Hamilton Evening Journal*; "Biographical Sketches of Jewish Communal Workers in the United States," *American Jewish Year Book (AJYB)* 7 (1905-1906): 70; Harris, *Merchant Princes*, 240.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Kahn, *Jewish Voices of the California Gold Rush*, 83.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁴⁷ Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, Vicksburg, Warren County, Mississippi; Tenth Census of the United States, Jackson, Jackson County, Michigan, 1880.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Norton B. Stern, "When the Franco-Prussian War Came to Los Angeles," *WSJHQ* 10 (1977): 68-73.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Bloch, "Mercy on Rude Streams," 84; Bloch-Raymond, *Des berges du Rhin*, passim.

⁵⁰ Shevitz, *Jewish Communities on the Ohio River*, 58. On the integration of Alsatian and German Jews in the rural South, see Pamela Dorn Sezgin, "Country Jews: Reconsidering Nineteenth-Century Alsatian Jewish Identity in the Southern United States" (paper presented at the Biennial Scholars' Conference on American Jewish History, Charleston, SC, June 6, 2006), at <http://spinner.cofc.edu/~jwst/pages/Sezgin,%20Pamela%20-%20Country%20Jews%20+.pdf> (accessed January 5, 2010).

⁵¹ Elizabeth Shaikun Weinberg, "Hoosier Israelites on the Ohio: A History of Madison's Indiana Jews," *Indiana Jewish History* 27 (July 1991), 44a-44b; Tenth Census of the United States, Alexandria; Tenth Census of the United States, Vicksburg. See also Bloch, "Mercy on Rude Streams," 101-103.

⁵² See, for example, Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830-1914* (Philadelphia, 1984), esp. 3-39, 58-63. See also Leonard Rogoff, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 2010), 142; Mark K. Bauman, "On German American and American Jewish History," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 29 (Fall 2009): 67-71.

⁵³ Union Historical Company, *The History of Jackson County, Missouri* (Kansas City, MO, 1881), 766; Frank J. Adler, *Roots In A Moving Stream: The Centennial History Of Congregation B'nai Jehudah Of Kansas City, 1870-1970* (Kansas City, MO, 1970), 43-44; Irving I. Katz, "Eppstein: Beth El's Rabbi 100 Years Ago," *Detroit Jewish News*, April 26, 1968.

⁵⁴ Hyman B. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654-1860* (Philadelphia, 1945), 474, 477. Shaarey Beracha merged with New York's Temple Israel in 1909. *AJYB* 2 (1900-1901): 382, gives the founding date of Shaarey Beracha as 1851.

⁵⁵ *AJYB* 2 (1900-1901): 383-384. See also "Historique" [History] on the Internet site of the Comité des Associations Françaises de New York at <http://www.cafusa.org/p2.php> (accessed January, 10, 2010).

⁵⁶ Wilbur E. Meneray, "Jewish Burials in New Orleans, 1828-1848," *The Louisiana Genealogical Register* (March 1989): 88-94, at <http://files.usgwarchives.org/la/orleans/vitals/deaths/certif/jewish.txt> (accessed March 21, 2011). On the Gates of Mercy cemetery, see Jacob Rader Marcus, *United States Jewry, 1776-1985* (Detroit, 1989), p. 227; "The New Orleans Cemeteries," at <http://www.jewishgen.org/cemetery/northamerica/louisiana.html> (accessed April 17, 2009).

⁵⁷ Grinstein, *Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, 528-529.

⁵⁸ *AJYB* 2 (1900-1901): 382, 383; *AJYB* 9 (1907-1908): 302, 315.

⁵⁹ Marcus, *To Count a People*, 241; Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, 12.

⁶⁰ See Jeanne Abrams, "Orthodox Women in the 'Wild West'" at http://www.ou.org/jewish_action/article/orthodox_women_in_the_wild_west/ (accessed March 6, 2009); *AJYB* 9 (1907-1908): 302.

⁶¹ Hillstrom, "French Americans."

⁶² James S. Pula, *The French in America 1488-1974: A Chronology & Factbook* (Dobbs Ferry, NY, 1975), quoted in Hillstrom, "French Americans"; Morrice, *French Americans*, 73.

⁶³ Sezgin, "Country Jews," 10; Eric J. Brock, *The Jewish Community of Shreveport* (Charleston, SC, 2002), 20, 26; "Biographical Sketches," *AJYB* 7 (1905-1906): 86; Isaac W. Bernheim, *History of the Settlement of Jews in Paducah and the Lower Ohio Valley* (Paducah, KY, 1912), 43-45.

⁶⁴ Lachoff and Kahn, *Jewish Community of New Orleans*, 15; Bobbie Malone, "Ruth and Rosalie: Two Tales of Jewish New Orleans," *Southern Jewish History* 1 (1998), 122; "Abel Dreyfous" at <http://ourfamilybios.com/AbelDreyfous.htm> (accessed April 24, 2009).

⁶⁵ Postal and Koppman, *A Jewish Tourist's Guide*, 654; Endelman, *Jewish Community of Indianapolis*, 27; Naomi Sandweiss and Noel Pugach, *Jewish Albuquerque: 1860-1960* (Charleston, SC, 2011), 9, 35; "Levi's Journey"; Harold Brackman, "Jewish threads."

A Tale of Two Cities: Race, Riots, and Religion in New Bern and Wilmington, North Carolina, 1898

by

Leonard Rogoff*

In 1898, as election day approached in North Carolina, racial tensions erupted. To undo African American political gains, Democrats had launched a white supremacist campaign marked by intimidation and night-riding violence. This campaign was especially virulent in eastern North Carolina, where the black population was most concentrated. In two coastal port cities, New Bern¹ and Wilmington, Jews stood prominently on both sides of this conflict. In Wilmington, S. H. Fishblate, the town's former mayor, marched at the front of a mob of Democratic white redeemers who would unleash a bloody race riot. Up the coast in New Bern, Joseph Hahn, the county sheriff, stood before hundreds of African American Republicans urging them to fight.

The North Carolina election of 1898 has served as a case study of racial politics, a historically unique instance of the violent overthrow of a democratically elected government in America. The Jewish involvement, which has been little noted, sheds light on the contentious issues of the Jews' racial identity, social accommodation, and relations with African Americans. Jews were very few in North Carolina in the late 1800s, perhaps several thousand. Nonetheless, in New Bern and Wilmington, they played critical roles in an election still recalled as a turning point in the state, regional, and even national political history.²

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*S. H. Fishplate of Wilmington, North Carolina, 1895.
(Courtesy of the New Hanover Public Library, Wilmington, NC.)*

In 1894 a fusion of Republicans and Populists had won the governorship and General Assembly, ending almost two decades of Democratic rule. African Americans loyal to the Republican Party were the critical constituency of this coalition. In 1898 Democratic redeemers overthrew fusion government in a vicious white supremacist campaign, climaxed by the Wilmington race riot of 1898. By 1900 North Carolina disenfranchised blacks and encoded Jim Crow into law. The national press headlined the Wilmington riot and its consequences, and President William McKinley found himself unwillingly entangled. In the succeeding decades urban race riots broke out in Atlanta (1906), East St. Louis

*Sheriff Joseph Hahn of New Bern, North Carolina.
(Courtesy of his grandson and namesake, Joseph Hahn,
and the Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina.)*

(1917), Chicago (1919), and Tulsa (1921). Attesting to the election's persisting legacy, in 2000 the North Carolina General Assembly, seeking truth and reconciliation, created the 1898 Wilmington Race Riot Commission.

Both New Bern and Wilmington were port cities, which by 1890 had African American majorities. Since colonial days, each had been points of commerce on the coastal mercantile seaway that extended from Newport to the Caribbean. New Bern had been founded at the confluence of the Trent and Neuse rivers in 1710 by Swiss settlers and served as the colonial capital. Incorpor-

rated in 1739, Wilmington, sixty miles south in the Cape Fear basin, drew settlers from Barbados and South Carolina and grew into the state's largest city. The ports were home to a cosmopolitan elite of planters, traders, and merchants, Jews among them. North Carolina's contribution to the Atlantic trade consisted of tar, cotton, timber, and produce from inland plantations worked by African slave labor. When the Civil War ended, some 350,000 slaves were freed, with eastern North Carolina hosting the state's largest numbers. In 1890 Wilmington held 8,731 whites and 11,324 blacks, while New Bern was home to 2,572 whites and 5,271 blacks.³

The Jews of Wilmington and New Bern

Although Jews were present in both New Bern and Wilmington during colonial days, they did not arrive in sufficient numbers to form communities until the late antebellum years. In the mid-eighteenth century Sephardic merchants tied to Charleston, Newport, and New York established trade relations in the towns. With the advent of the railroad and steamships, immigrant German peddlers and storekeepers set up shop, some prospering as merchants and wholesalers. The city's commercial importance rose dramatically during the Civil War. Wilmington's blockade-runners, some Jewish-owned, and its railroad were the lifeline of the Confederacy. Although Jews suffered from anti-semitic charges of profiteering, they served the Confederacy loyally, and, in the postwar years, participated fully in the city's civic, political, and religious life. Jews, including the rabbi, were leaders in the town's German societies. By 1852 Jews were sufficiently numerous to organize a benevolent society, and three years later they dedicated a Jewish cemetery. Some forty Jewish families began congregational efforts in 1867, which sputtered until 1875 when ground was broken for the Temple of Israel, the state's first synagogue. It was erected on a downtown corner among the city's elite churches. In the 1890s eastern European immigrants augmented the city's largely German Jewish community of several hundred. Peddling and storekeeping, these immigrants catered to both a black and white

working-class clientele, and by 1898, the year of the riot, they organized B'nai Israel.⁴

New Bern experienced sporadic Jewish settlement. A Jewish burial ground dates to 1809, although no evidence suggests a viable community. By the 1850s German immigrants operated a handful of downtown stores. Most were retail outlets for wholesalers in Philadelphia or Baltimore with whom they had family ties. Not as old, large, or well established as Wilmington Jewry, New Bern's Jews were nonetheless well integrated into local society. Newspaper columns record Jews attending elite social events even as white-black tensions grew. The federal occupation brought more Jews to the community. Land was purchased for a new cemetery in 1877. In 1893, when little Chester Reizenstein asked why Jews did not have a church, New Bern Jews organized a congregation, which they named in his honor, Chester B'nai Scholem, and a year later they purchased land for a synagogue (which did not arise until 1908).

Historically, North Carolina Jews had lived on the political margins. The state's 1776 constitution limited public office to Protestants. When a Jew, Jacob Henry, was elected to the state legislature from Cartet County in 1808, his right to serve was challenged, and he held his seat only by a technicality. In 1835, in sympathy to Roman Catholics, the law was enlarged from "Protestant" to "Christian." The religious test survived constitutional challenges in 1858, 1861, and 1865. The *Occident and Jewish Advocate* documents for a quarter century the fruitless efforts by the state's Jews, spurred on by its editor Isaac Leeser, to eliminate the restriction. Not until 1868 when a postwar constitutional convention dominated by Republicans and African Americans enfranchised former slaves did North Carolina abandon the sectarian religious test, ranking it among the very last states to do so.⁵

The constitutional disqualification was an irritant to Jews but did not categorically disqualify them from politics or public service. In antebellum Raleigh Michael Grausman had served as an official of the state treasury. In 1865 Abram Weill was a Charlotte alderman, and two years later Emil Rosenthal was appointed to the Wilson town council. By the 1870s, with the religious test

removed, Jews won municipal elections. In Wilmington clothier Solomon H. Fishblate was first elected an alderman in 1873 and later served three terms as Democratic mayor in the years preceding the calamitous 1898 election. A Conservative Democrat, he spoke for white supremacy. Fishblate's son-in-law, Solomon Weill, served as a Democratic presidential elector, an assistant U.S. district attorney, and a member of the Democratic state executive committee from Wilmington.⁶ In nearby New Bern, Meyer Hahn and his nephew Joseph Hahn, owners of a livery, bakery, and dry-goods store, were elected as Republicans to various offices in the 1880s with overwhelming African American support. The Hahns and Fishblate were all synagogue-affiliated Jews.⁷

North Carolina Jews involved in politics generally identified with the Democratic Party—despite the religious test—sharing their neighbors' disdain for what they regarded as Republican radicalism. When a Democratic Club had formed in Wilmington in 1863, six prominent Jews were listed as members. In 1868 Maurice Bear, a Jewish Wilmingtonian, heard rumors that he had voted for the Republican Radicals. He went to the *Daily Journal* office to denounce the "lie" and aver that he had "voted the white man's ticket." Jewish-born Kope Elias led the Democratic patronage machine in western North Carolina. In 1887 he was elected to the state Senate even as the Raleigh *Caucasian* newspaper alleged that Elias, a member of his wife's church, was "anti-Christian." Jews served on the town councils of Tarboro, Charlotte, and Wilson, and Henry Morris was mayor of Tarboro in 1885. This pattern of Jewish civic involvement was commonplace across the South, Midwest, and West, in small towns especially.⁸

As Democrats, North Carolina Jews were repaying their loyalty to Governor Zebulon Vance, the state's most venerated statesman. At war's end, Vance had been arrested in Statesville by federal troops who had sought to humble the corpulent governor by riding him on horseback to prison. Local Jewish merchant Samuel Wittkowsky saved Vance from humiliation by offering his carriage. The two became lifelong friends. About 1868 Vance, a nationally celebrated Chautauqua orator, first presented his philo-semitic speech, "The Scattered Nation," in which he praised Jews

as our “wondrous kinsmen.” The speech was delivered and printed countless times across the state and nation. In fustian prose Vance expressed outrage at those who compared the moral, civilized Jew to the savage, barbaric Negro. Coming shortly after the adoption of a new state constitution that qualified Jews for public office, Vance intended “The Scattered Nation” to remove “objections to the Jew as a citizen.”⁹

Although Vance noted a racial hierarchy among Jews, with Germans at the top, he cast Jews as undeniably white. After the Civil War, with blacks freed, the South was reordering its racial, social, and political relations, and the place of the Jew was unsettled. Eric Goldstein in *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* argues that southern Jews generally supported black disenfranchisement but “shied away from high profile engagement with racial issues.”¹⁰ Jews aspired to whiteness, he argues. Conformity, fitting in, was necessary for social acceptance and economic success. Rarely did southern Jews advocate for black social or civil equality, according to Goldstein.

Historically, southern Jews had *not* been distinctive in their racial attitudes. Jews who held slaves had done so in ways typical of other southerners of their class and locale. Bertram W. Korn, the leading scholar of Jewish slaveholding, found “a pattern of almost complete conformity to the slave society of the Old South on the part of its Jewish citizens.” Jewish behavior toward slaves, he notes, was “indistinguishable” from non-Jews. A study of Charleston, for example, revealed that 83 percent of Jews owned slaves compared to 87 percent of Christians. Similar patterns were found in Atlanta and Savannah. In the early 1800s Wilmington Jews, such as the planter and industrialist Aaron Lazarus, had owned slaves, but slaveholding was rare among the more recent German immigrants. Only two Wilmington Jews were listed owning slaves in 1860.¹¹ Whether for reasons of principle, affordability, or inclination, Wilmington Jews were not at wartime directly invested in the plantation economy.

Commerce, however, intertwined Jews and African Americans. Jewish peddlers and storekeepers catered to black trade, especially as freedmen established themselves in towns. Jewish

merchants were accused of taking unfair advantage of poor blacks through credit and crop liens. Mark Twain in his essay *Concerning the Jews* wrote disparagingly of how northern Jews came south “in force, set up shop,” and exploited black farmers through the crop lien system.¹² In eastern North Carolina Jewish merchants did indeed purchase crop lands, obtaining some by foreclosure. Sheriff Joseph Hahn of New Bern owned tenant farms worked by African Americans, but local blacks supported him repeatedly and overwhelmingly in more than a decade of elections, which would not suggest anti-Jewish feelings. In Wilmington eastern European Jews, who began arriving in the early 1890s, resided and opened stores in a racially mixed, working-class neighborhood where they served a biracial clientele. As immigrants, eastern European Jews focused not on politics but on the immediate needs of earning a living, learning a language, and acculturating to a new society.

*S. H. Fishplate's clothing store in Wilmington.
(Courtesy of the New Hanover Public Library, Wilmington, NC.)*

Economic tensions in the 1890s threatened the Jews' security. After the Panic of 1893, which depressed farm prices, enraged farmers in the Deep South burned the stores of Jewish merchants who held crop liens. In their disdain for financial markets Populists, a party that emerged largely from farmers' movements, sometimes employed a coded antisemitic language. As commodity prices declined and crop liens led to farm foreclosures, Jews were often conflated with finance, personified by British and New York bankers. Rothschild was the straw man, especially after a bond scandal during the Cleveland administration. The question of Populist antisemitism has been contentious. South Carolina's Ben Tillman denounced Judas financiers, including the "London Jew" Rothschild, and Georgia's Tom Watson, who avoided antisemitic rhetoric during the 1890s, would later use popular resentment against rich New York Jews in rousing agrarian mobs against Leo Frank. In 1896 Democratic presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan, supported by the Populists, repeated canards about Jewish financial manipulators. North Carolina Governor Elias Carr, who served from 1893 to 1897, hoped to wean blacks to the Democrats by charging that "our negro brethren, too, are being held in bondage by Rothschild." Even the philosemitic Vance as a United States Senator warned Americans that "money changers were polluting the temples of their liberties."¹³

Populists, Richard Hofstadter argues, understood postwar American history as "a sustained conspiracy of the international money power." The Populist antisemitism of the 1890s was a "verbal" or "rhetorical" antisemitism, Hofstadter contends, but did not go so far as "a tactic or program" despite sporadic violence. Contrarily, C. Vann Woodward does not see an antisemitism that was uniquely or particularly Populist. Stressing its insignificance relative to anti-black racism, Woodward argues that such expressions were no more than a "folk stereotype" drawing on Shylock imagery pervasive in the larger culture. For North Carolinians such antisemitism was an abstraction, which they seemed not to have applied specifically to their Jewish neighbors.¹⁴

Combustible Politics

North Carolina's postwar politics were prone to violence. Reconstruction marked the ascendancy of the Republican Party in 1867, which was supported by newly freed African Americans, carpetbaggers (newly arrived white northerners), and scalawags (a minority of native white anti-secessionists). During Reconstruction blacks and white northerners won local offices in the revitalized party, especially in eastern North Carolina. In 1875 the Second District sent African American John Hyman to the U. S. Congress. The Reconstructionist state legislature affirmed racial political equality, although certainly not social equality, by ratifying the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. With blacks in the legislature, reforms were pushed forward in education, municipal government, civil law, and criminal justice. Although railroad money tainted politics, North Carolina did not succumb to rampant corruption. White opposition nonetheless turned violent as Ku Klux Klan terror struck Republicans, black and white alike, in the 1870s, most notably in the Piedmont counties of Alamance and Caswell. In 1876, as Reconstruction ended, the state returned to Democratic control with the election of Zebulon Vance as governor. Democratic redeemers would hold power until 1894 although Republicans remained strong in county politics. Since 1880 the "Black Second" District, where New Bern was located, had remained a stronghold of African American Republicans, who in 1882 sent James O'Hara to Congress where he served two terms.

To limit African American office-holding, the Democrats passed legislation that gave the General Assembly authority over local governments with the power to grant municipal charters, appoint officers, draw electoral wards, and manage finances. Democratic political machines, courthouse rings, dominated city and county politics. Grover Cleveland's ascendancy to the presidency in 1884 as a Democrat aligned the South with the nation. State Democratic control was narrow as a relatively strong Republican Party, with black support, contended, and each party factionalized. Of all southern states North Carolina was most given to bipartisan and multiracial politics. The Democrats in the revived party came from the rising class of business and profes-

sional townsmen. Democratic conservatives, led by former Confederates, resisted not just "Republican-Negro control," but progressives in their own party who wanted to reform currency, regulate railroads for the public good, and protect the rights and wages of workers.

In reaction to the Democrats' pro-business, pro-railroad politics, the state's numerous small farmers, suffering from the crop lien system, depressed prices, and high freight rates, organized farm clubs that evolved into the Southern Farmers' Alliance. In 1887 the Alliance formally organized in the state. By 1890 the state had 2,147 chapters with ninety thousand members. Originally loyal to the Democrats, Alliance members increasingly quarreled over monetary and railroad policy and loyalty to the national ticket. By 1892, after the Democrats nominated Grover Cleveland for president, Alliance members joined like-minded groups such as the Knights of Labor to organize as the People's or Populist Party. North Carolina historian Joe Creech observes, "produced perhaps the most powerful Populist movement in the country."¹⁵

With the inter- and intra-party fighting, political allegiances did not always adhere to the color line. Fusion created strange bedfellows. Farmers and urbanites, blacks and whites, progressives and conservatives, workers and business elites had varied interests. Among the Democrats wealthy eastern planters and poor western farmers divided over class. Progressives included both urban reformers and agrarian radicals. White Populists had originally found a home among Democratic progressives and were not accepting of black members even as they shared economic interests with them. A separate Colored Farmers' Alliance organized, which had ambivalent, uneasy relations with its white counterpart. Edward Ayers notes that white populists were "distrustful and contemptuous of black politicians but eager for black votes." Populist leaders, not always reflecting the anti-black views of their followers, tried to encourage a spirit of interracial tolerance and resisted efforts to limit black political rights, including the franchise. Blacks mostly remained loyal to the Republican Party, but debated whether to pursue a policy of black empowerment or cooperation with whites. Class lines also divided the black

community. Black professionals and tradesmen sought alliances with upper-class white Republicans, regarding them as more sympathetic than the white farmers and workers of the Populists. Other black leaders, notably George H. White, elected to the North Carolina house in 1880 from the Second District, argued for fusion with white Populists as most protective of the black franchise and political interests. In 1886 Craven County Democrats had resolved to secure Republican votes, and their candidate, Furnifold Simmons of New Bern, traced his electoral success to "the better class of colored men."¹⁶

*Furnifold Simmons.
(Courtesy of the North
Carolina Collection,
University of North Car-
olina at Chapel Hill.)*

In 1894 North Carolina Populists, outraged by Democratic efforts to dismantle the Farmers' Alliance, formed a Fusion ticket with the Republicans under the reform banner. White Populists had been wary of electoral reform for fear that it would lead to black office-holding, and expedience more than principle now led them to endorse black candidates. African American voters held the political balance, and both Democrats and Republicans sought their support. The black leadership divided between those who distrusted the Democratic legacy of the Populists and pledged their sole fealty to the Republican Party and those who saw Fusion as the route to reform and most protective of their interests. In 1894 Fusion candidates, with black support, swept the state, seizing control of the legislature and promising "to restore to the people of North Carolina local self-government." The 1895 Fusion state legislature expanded home rule, shattering Democratic hegemony. Although a Democratic-Republican ticket had won Wilmington's 1894 municipal election, the Populist-Republican General Assembly amended the city's charter to create a legislature-appointed police board to serve along with the elected board of aldermen, effectively giving the city two governments.

In the 1896 elections Democrats, in the name of white solidarity, urged the Populists to abandon fusion with the Republicans. Democratic boss Furnifold Simmons charged that the Fusionist legislature's reforms would lead to "Negro rule." The sixteen majority black counties in eastern North Carolina voted solidly Republican in 1896. Daniel Russell, a Republican who had run as a Fusionist, was elected governor, and African Americans won eleven seats in the legislature, posts in county governments, and appointments to state boards. The Fusionist state legislature ensured the black franchise and restored local government. Democrats were outraged. Simmons enlisted publisher Josephus Daniels of the *Raleigh News & Observer* to embark on an inflammatory white supremacy campaign for the 1898 elections. Their intent was to suppress the Populist vote and intimidate black voters from going to the polls.¹⁷

Political tensions were felt most violently in heavily black, eastern Carolina where white fears of "Negro domination" rose

highest. In Wilmington nearly half the aldermen were African American as were most policemen, some forty magistrates, and the port customs collector. Whites alleged crime and corruption. The *New Berne Weekly* warned that “the negro race is inseparable from Republicanism.” The people would never accept “the remotest possibility of conditions which shall give the negro a place upon the same plane as the Anglo Saxon’s.”¹⁸

Wilmington Burns

As city business people, Wilmington’s Jews had gravitated toward the Democratic Party. S. H. Fishblate, a New Yorker and Union Army veteran who had moved to Wilmington about 1868, served as a Conservative Party alderman from 1873 to 1875. A ward politician supported by the city’s political machine, Fishblate battled party reformers. In 1878 the aldermen selected the Jewish dry-goods merchant as mayor. The Republican *Wilmington Post* crossed party lines to express its “extreme pleasure” in the election of a Jew as proof of the city’s democracy and tolerance. In the 1880s another Jew, Solomon Bear, a Confederate veteran, joined Fishblate on the board. In 1893 the board voted Fishblate mayor by a vote of seven to two through an electoral system, the newspaper reported, intended “to keep the colored population from getting control of the city government.” In all Fishblate served sixteen years as alderman and three terms as mayor. Speculation was rife on a run for Congress.¹⁹

Elected from a racially mixed district, Fishblate was not at first indifferent to black political sensitivities. As mayor Fishblate promised to end “rowdyism” in the streets whether “white or black.” In 1888 he rejected white demands to end the African American Jonkonnu festivities, a Yule-time revelry of African origin. Fishblate was not alone among white Democrats in appealing to the black electorate; two of the most vicious practitioners of anti-black rhetoric during the 1898 elections, Furnifold Simmons and A. M. Waddell, had in previous decades expressed sympathy for black political aspirations. As a U.S. congressman Simmons had eschewed Democratic race baiting and supported black education and opposed black disenfranchisement. Like Simmons and

Waddell, opportunism marked Fishblate's political career. When the Fusionists enacted a new city charter in 1895, creating a police board to rule jointly with the Democratic-Republican board, Fishblate considered resigning but changed his mind, threatening the city with two mayors as well as two boards. After losing a party vote as mayoral candidate in 1898, Fishblate pledged his support for the Democrats, proclaiming, "The choice in this election is between white rule and Negro rule. And I am with the white man every time."²⁰

Alfred Moore Waddell.

*(Courtesy of the New Hanover Public Library,
Wilmington, NC.)*

Wilmington's combustible politics detonated when Alex Manly, an African American newspaper editor, wrote a provocative editorial in his *Daily Record* rebutting claims that black men

under Fusion government “would increase their ‘advances’ to women.” Manly acted after the state’s Democratic press widely reprinted the charge by Georgia racist Rebecca L. Felton that black rapists were imperiling white farm girls. To the contrary, Manly wrote that “poor white men were careless in the matter of protecting their women.” Many a “Big Burly Black Brute” who had been lynched for such liaisons had white blood himself or was “sufficiently attractive” to draw the love interest of “white girls of culture and refinement,” Manly argued.²¹

State Democratic boss Furnifold Simmons responded with an “Appeal to the Voters of North Carolina,” declaring “North Carolina is a WHITE MAN’S STATE, and WHITE MEN will rule it.” To enflame whites, Democrats distributed thousands of copies of Manly’s editorial. A campaign poster with a skull, crossbones, and a pistol warned Republicans that “degenerate sons of the white race” will “suffer the penalty.” The *News & Observer* printed daily on its front pages inflammatory headlines and racist cartoons of rapacious black beasts. It counseled, “The color line is sharply drawn. It is white against black.” The newspaper warned that Wilmington blacks were securing arms. A Secret Nine met to reestablish white rule in the city. The business community passed a resolution opposing “Negro Domination,” and white labor unions joined with the Merchants’ Association to eliminate blacks from the workforce. Hardware store owner Nathaniel Jacobi, a synagogue leader, helped draft a resolution that called upon businessmen to notify their “male Negro employees” that they would be fired if Republicans won the 1898 election. When a newspaper alleged that blacks, who were largely unarmed, were attempting to purchase guns from the North, Jacobi responded to an appeal to stop them from doing so.²² “Business interests” asked the Republican government to resign and, as a compromise thought agreeable to all parties, nominated sixteen moderate white “gentlemen,” including one Jew, Samuel Bear Jr., to replace them. Governor Russell saw a state descending into violence, and United States Senator Jeter Pritchard, a Republican, appealed to President McKinley to send federal marshals to preserve public order. The *News & Observer* denounced his appeal as a new feder-

al occupation. To a crowd gathered at the Opera House, attorney and former Confederate Colonel A. M. Waddell declared, "We will not live under these intolerable conditions. No society can stand it. We intend to change it, if we have to choke the current of the Cape Fear River with carcasses." Racist demagogue Senator Ben Tillman, who had led a massacre of blacks twenty years earlier, came from South Carolina to rouse North Carolina whites. Democrats and Red Shirts, a white-vigilante, paramilitary organization, paraded by the thousands, intimidating blacks.²³

On election day frightened blacks stayed home while white racists stuffed ballot boxes. After voting in Wilmington, Governor Russell hid in a mail car to escape a Red Shirt lynch mob. The next night whites held a mass meeting attended by Jacobi and Fishblate. A. M. Waddell was asked to read a resolution, apparently drafted by business leaders, that became known as the "White Declaration of Independence." The United States Constitution, it argued, "did not anticipate the enfranchisement of an ignorant population of African origin" or "for their descendants [*sic*] subjection to an inferior race." The declaration asserted that the "action of unscrupulous white men in affiliating with the negroes" was "causing business to stagnate." It ordered Manly to close his press and leave town in twenty-four hours or he "will be expelled by force."

After the crowd stood to cheer, Fishblate urged more extreme action. Unwilling to wait for the newly elected Democrats to establish white rule, Fishblate—playing to the crowd and likely coveting the mayoralty for himself—proposed that the mayor, police chief, and aldermen resign immediately. In response, a committee of five, including Fishblate, was appointed to amend the draft's wording. While the committee worked, Waddell and others urged a peaceful resolution of the crisis. Another speaker warned that Fishblate's resolution would lead to "anarchy." As a compromise, the committee suggested wording that only the mayor and the police chief should resign immediately. Fishblate and Jacobi objected that such wording did not go far enough, and that the aldermen should also be removed. Jacobi urged that city officials "should be commanded to resign one by one." Assured

*Nathaniel Jacobi (left) and
the interior of his hardware
store, Wilmington (below).
(Courtesy of the New
Hanover Public Library,
Wilmington, NC.)*

that their concerns would be addressed, the meeting approved the call to remove the mayor and police chief. The declaration was signed by 455 white citizens, among them eight Jews including Jacobi and Fishblate. Reporters, among them Charleston journalist Augustus Kohn, were called upon to serve as secretaries to record the transactions. A Committee of Twenty-five white citizens summoned thirty-two black leaders to the Court House and read them the declaration. They were given until 7:30 next morning to respond. Meeting at a barber shop, the black leaders dissociated themselves from Manly, who had already fled town, and agreed to comply. Fearing armed whites in the streets, they mailed their response, which did not reach the white leadership by the morning deadline.²⁴

Early the next day, "600 armed white citizens" met at the armory, which was located directly across the street from Temple of Israel. Led by Waddell, with Fishblate among the business leaders at the front, they marched to the Love and Charity Hall that housed Manly's press and set it aflame; accidentally, they claimed. Although some white leaders counseled peace, and some personally risked their own safety by protecting blacks, the redeemers unleashed a monster. Waddell's call for the mob members to go home went unheeded. All day armed white racist gangs pursued blacks and rampaged in black neighborhoods where they met feeble resistance. The Wilmington Light Infantry enforced martial law, arresting blacks and pointing rapid-fire guns, purchased by businessmen, at black churches in a futile search for arms. African Americans fled for forests and swamps where they huddled for a cold night. Estimates of black dead, some mowed down by Gatling guns, range from eleven to sixty. The Committee of Twenty-five marched on City Hall and forced the mayor, aldermen, and police chief to resign. They then installed their own Democratic government with Waddell as mayor. Among the appointees was Michael Kirchbaum, secretary of the Orthodox synagogue, as health officer. White Republicans and black elites were jailed overnight, placed on a train under armed escort, and exiled from town. Seeking asylum in New Bern, they were instead sent north on a steamer. Across the North protest rallies

*Alex Manly (above) and the destruction by a white mob of the
Manly printing press, November 10, 1898.
(Courtesy of the New Hanover Public Library, Wilmington, NC.)*

demanded federal intervention, but President McKinley refused. Philadelphia's *Jewish Exponent* compared the Wilmington riot to a Russian antisemitic pogrom. In Wilmington that Sunday, Reverend Payton Hoge of the First Presbyterian Church sermonized, "We have taken a city."²⁵

New Bern Simmers

In New Bern, sixty miles up the coast, Jews also found themselves ensnared in racial politics. In 1880 Meyer Hahn of New Bern was elected Craven County sheriff on the black-Republican ticket, which swept the district. The all-black township of James City, founded by former slaves, supported him 387 to 13. He was reelected in 1882 and 1884, defeating a wealthy white Democrat, Daniel Stimson. In 1886 Stimson defeated Hahn as the Republicans, Democrats, and African Americans each factionalized. Hahn alleged fraud, claiming that the Republican vote had been suppressed, even as Democrats claimed intimidation by the "Hahn faction." The North Carolina Supreme Court agreed with Hahn and declared the seat vacant. Hahn returned as sheriff in 1888.

Meyer Hahn and his brother Adolph had arrived in New Bern from New York as "newcomers" in 1866. Adolph had likely first come as a soldier in the Union occupation army. The German-born brothers operated a bakery, livery, and dry-goods store. The R. G. Dun & Company Credit Report described them as "sober enterprising men" of "excellent habits and good standing."²⁶ Adolph left town, but his son Joseph took over the bakery. The Hahns served on the Jewish cemetery board, and Meyer was the first president of New Bern's synagogue, Chester B'nai Scholem.

The *New Bern Daily Journal* noted disapprovingly that the Hahns attended black-Republican meetings. Joseph Hahn was elected Register of Deeds in 1892 and sheriff in 1894. He won James City by 311 to 5 as the Republican-Populist Fusion ticket swept the state. In that year Meyer was also elected county treasurer. With the legislative electoral reforms of 1895 county commissioners, once dominated by the Democratic Party, could no longer dismiss elected officials from their posts.

Joseph Hahn playing cards with himself.

A trick photo by Joseph Hahn.

*(Courtesy of his grandson and namesake, Joseph Hahn,
and the Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina.)*

In 1896 Joseph and Meyer ran against each other for sheriff with the nephew winning decisively. The Hahns' divisions likely reflected the uneasy, shifting alliances among Populists, Republicans, and African Americans. Some Craven County black Republicans had suggested running an all-black slate of their own rather than share the ticket with whites. Speaking at a black political rally in 1896, Joe Hahn confessed that, as a Republican, Fusion was not entirely to his liking, but he advised the crowd to "all vote the straight ticket." Blacks were divided on Fusion, on whether to accept white Republican patronage or pursue a politics of black political liberation. In the 1896 elections, party divisions and a national Populist Party that had endorsed Democratic candidate William Jennings Bryan for president challenged black support of the Republicans. Historian Jeffrey Crow points to the Republican "dilemma of needing black votes for election yet

resenting negro office holding and activity in party circles." In 1888 Governor Russell had stated unequivocally, "The negroes of the South are largely savages . . . no more fit to govern than are their brethren in African swamps." Yet in 1896 he changed his tune: "I stand for the negro's rights and liberties. I sucked at the breast of a negro woman." African Americans disdained Russell personally for his history of race baiting, and his nomination for governor splintered black Republicans. In the 1896 elections, although the Populist vote declined, Democrat Bryan won the state's presidential vote; Republican Russell won the governorship; and Fusion controlled the state legislature. The Black Second District sent George H. White to Congress. Judging by the overwhelming black support he received, Joseph Hahn was not victimized by anti-white sentiment.²⁷

In 1898 the Populists were further challenged as the agrarian economy improved, McKinley held the presidency, and Democrats embarked on the white supremacy campaign.²⁸ As racial tensions flared during the 1898 election, white supremacists targeted Joe Hahn after he brazenly chained black and white prisoners together for their transport from the New Bern jail to Raleigh's Central Prison. The outraged *Raleigh News & Observer*, in the midst of its white supremacist campaign, headlined, "CHAINED TO A NEGRO, Sheriff Hahn's Negro Deputies and His Idea of a Joke." It noted that Hahn was "more or less famous and infamous as the man who has nothing but negro deputies." The article continued, "'Yes,' said Sheriff Hahn, with great complacency, 'I brought a batch of convicts to the penitentiary yesterday. I brought the only Democratic-Populist in Craven County among the number and when I got ready to leave I picked out the blackest negro in the bunch to chain him to.' Then the sheriff laughed." The paper concluded, "It was difficult to tell which enjoyed the situation more, the sheriff or his negro deputies." The next day the *News & Observer* printed a front-page, racist cartoon that depicted a portly, strutting Hahn holding a rope leash at the end of which was a forlorn white farmer and a buffoonish African American.²⁹ Playing the race card, publisher Josephus Daniels wanted to wean white Populists back into the Democratic fold.

"To the Penitentiary"

The cartoon that appeared with Joseph Hahn's likeness in the

Raleigh News & Observer, October 14, 1898.

(Courtesy of the North Carolina Collection,

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.)

On October 27 the Hahns were two of four whites among four hundred blacks at a Republican rally entertained by a brass band, for voters who "intended to cast their ballots for negroes." Joe Hahn called the "congregation" to order and delivered the keynote address. According to the *New Berne Daily Journal* account, "He advised the negroes to be quiet on election day, but if white men 'insulted' them 'to beat them like the devil the next day.'" It claimed that Hahn urged them "'to vote in the names of your wives and children,'" an assertion that struck the newspaper as "pathetic."³⁰ One day later, a letter to the editor, signed "SUPREMACY," asked, "Did Hahn Mean It?" The letter writer continued, "What I want to know is, whether a man in Craven county can give such advice to negroes without being in danger. I

do not believe he can, and I warn Sheriff Hahn of Craven county that if there is trouble with the negroes before, during or after election day, and there is loss of life, that he will suffer for it." The writer concluded ominously, "When the time comes for action the few white leaders will be put to test first." The *New Berne Daily Journal* echoed, "Joe Hahn defied public decency." Three days later Meyer Hahn appeared at a Court House rally of three hundred blacks. He was among three white men to attend.³¹

On November 5, at a counter-rally of "resolute men of the Anglo-Saxon race," a speaker counseled, "When the day of reckoning comes, don't vent yourselves on the poor dupes but on the miserable scoundrels who led them." Among the names shouted was that of Joe Hahn. A speaker denounced Hahn as an "insult to the whole race." On November 10, a letter signed "Anglo Saxon" listed Hahn among the "vile traitors" to the white race who should be "shunned as you would a viper." In Wilmington rioters had placed nooses around the necks of such "white niggers" and threatened them with lynching.³²

Yet, after the November 8 election New Bern did not explode even as Republicans bucked the state and national trend by holding onto Craven County government. The black vote remained steady although the Populist vote declined. The "revolutionary proceedings at Wilmington" have "stirred the people of New Berne," the newspaper noted, but "local conditions . . . are vastly dissimilar." It continued, "No disorders exist here, and while negro domination has been and is our portion, it is not so rank as to necessitate rash or precipitate action." The newspaper called for "cool deliberation" even as a Citizens Committee of Businessmen had organized to warn those fleeing Wilmington that New Bern, too, was "hot." The newly elected Democratic legislature would "redeem" local government, the newspaper opined. Within a year, the legislature replaced the county's black jailer and deputies with whites. In 1899 the county commissioners, as "an active and visible expression of the wish of the white people," removed Joe Hahn from office. The *Journal*, mouthpiece for white supremacy, observed, "Personally, Sheriff Hahn has made an efficient, honest and thorough going official, but it was the system which

*Examples of racist cartoons that appeared with frequency in 1898.
(Courtesy North Carolina Collection,
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.)*

he represented that was obnoxious." It objected that "a white man" had appointed "negro deputies." In his resignation letter Joe Hahn thanked the county board "for your uniform courtesy extended me during my official term, but feeling party affiliations render the course I am now pursuing to be the best interest of all concerned."³³

Aftermath: Embers of Redemption

In all the accusations against the Hahns as race traitors, their religious affiliation as Jews was never mentioned nor was their race questioned. Joe Hahn was admonished to heed his "white intelligence." Nor, by contemporary accounts, did racial antisemitism play a role in Wilmington although modern observers argue that a Jewish anxiety to fit in motivated Fishblate's racist politics. In 1901 writer Charles Chesnutt, a black North Carolinian, expressed his disappointment with Jews in his novel about the riot, *The Marrow of Tradition*. Chesnutt describes a "well-known Jewish merchant" who manned an anti-black checkpoint: "A Jew-God of Moses!—had so forgotten twenty centuries of history as to join the persecution of another oppressed race!" Chesnutt reflected the popular view that Jews were racially distinct. As did African American leaders some sixty years later, he assumed that blacks and Jews—whose "God of Moses" had liberated Hebrew slaves—would unite as pariah peoples. His expectation of sympathy counters the stereotypes of the Jew as an exploiter or financial manipulator of blacks.³⁴

Modern commentators were more likely to point to antisemitism as a significant factor in Fishblate's politics than did contemporary observers. In a memoir John D. Bellamy Jr., reflected, "Mayor Fishblate was a Jew, and he had many enemies among the people, but only for that reason." Bellamy, who had been a leader of the White Government Union and a speaker at Democratic white supremacy gatherings, had won election to the U. S. Congress in 1898 from a district that included Wilmington. He implied that the antisemitism was economic rather than racial or religious: "I must say that in my business dealings with him, I found him to be always honorable and fair." In fact, the R. G. Dun

& Company Credit Reports had described Fishblate, who suffered numerous financial embarrassments, as not a “desirable customer,” but the reports, written by local agents, did not specifically attribute his failures to the fact that he was a Jew, as they often did for other Jews in similar circumstances. Bellamy wrote his memoir in 1942 when antisemitism was rampant. As Woodward notes, Populist era antisemitism appears more “ominous and hideous” when viewed from a Nazi-era perspective. Contemporary newspaper accounts describe Fishblate as popular and speculate about his return to politics.³⁵

A recent historian of race relations, Laurie Gunst excoriates Fishblate as a racist in *Off-white: A Memoir*. Gunst, who was Fishblate’s great-granddaughter, attributes his politics to a Jew’s aspiration to whiteness.³⁶ Her feelings for Fishblate are entangled in personal and family history, and her perspective on black-Jewish relations reflects that of a modern cultural critic interested in race as a social construct. Certainly, Fishblate vocally identified with what he saw as the white man’s privilege, but whether he was motivated by anxieties about his own racial status is at least open to question. He was also a native New Yorker with Union Army service, a politician playing to the crowd, and a merchant whose livelihood depended on public goodwill. He would have wanted to affirm his southern allegiance perhaps even more loudly than a native would have.

Whatever prejudicial undercurrents may have flowed, two leaders of the white supremacy campaign, A. M. Waddell and Josephus Daniels, qualify as friends of the Jewish people. When Wilmington’s Jews laid the cornerstone of their synagogue in 1875, Waddell was the city’s official representative. The former Confederate colonel, who later threatened to choke the river with black carcasses, extolled the Jews as paragons of civilization. Daniels’s philosemitism traces to intimate Jewish friendships in his childhood and college years. Later as an ambassador he would assist Jews escaping Nazi Europe and rank among the nation’s leading Christian Zionists. Jews were a portion of the people. Religiously and politically, if not socially, Jews felt secure and were well integrated in Wilmington. In New Bern, a smaller town, the

few Jews mixed more easily with elites. Days after the 1898 election, a *New Berne Daily Journal* column on "gay circles" described a "pleasant entertainment" for Mrs. E. W. Rosenthal that included (judging by surnames) nine Christians and four Jews.³⁷

As a religious community Jews did not take a stand. At least one Wilmington minister, Reverend J. W. Kramer of the Brooklyn Baptist Church, served on the supremacist Committee of Twenty-five, and some Protestant clergy apparently joined the mob. After the riot, church sermons embraced white supremacy, and Kramer preached that "whites were doing God's service." No contemporary records document the role of Rabbi Samuel Mendelsohn of the Temple of Israel, but twelve years earlier he had spoken from the pulpit of the black First Baptist Church. A contributor to the rabbinic dictionary of Rabbi Marcus Jastrow of Philadelphia, whose niece he had married, the scholarly Mendelsohn was unlikely to join a gun-toting mob. He was civically involved with progressive groups dedicated to moral and intellectual uplift, one of which he served as state president. In 1879 he had written to Mayer Sulzberger, a national Republican leader in Philadelphia, that he had not yet become "so republicanized" as to "hazard my ease & avocation" by espousing "carpet-bag notions" on issues indifferent to a theologian. Seven years later, responding to the political question of home rule, he sermonized that "order is the most essential element of liberty; that such order can not exist without obedience to law."³⁸

Reconstructionist antagonisms toward the "carpetbagger" had given way to a warmer welcome to northerners who could bring capital and commerce to an economically depressed, agrarian society, and Jews were hardly alone among the newly settled northerners who ascended into positions of prominence in politics and business. Silas P. Wright, the Republican mayor of Wilmington, whom the mob would depose, was, like Fishplate, a northerner who had arrived after the Civil War. New Southerners embraced a capitalist ethic, and northerners were wanted, even recruited by state immigration boards, as investors, merchants, mechanics, and industrialists. With slaves freed, white southerners saw northern immigration as a means to ensure racial

hegemony. The Dukes of Durham, who had imported Jewish immigrant labor to work their tobacco factory, were prominent Republican dissenters, and Fusion Governor Russell came from the planter class. Like many of the state's Republicans, the Hahns were northerners with Union army service. They brought their politics down the railways along with commerce. Woodward notes that southerners held a "divided mind" on the New South commercial progress that its boosters claimed would outdo the North. Even as they "earnestly professed [a] code of shopkeeper decorum and sobriety," southerners still adhered to a "tradition of violence."³⁹

The riot led to one-party, Democratic government and opened the door to franchise restrictions. Wilmington's black population declined from 1890 to 1900, and whites became a slim majority. The *Raleigh News & Observer* reported, "Negro rule is at an end in North Carolina forever." It regretted the violence, but saw the action as necessary. Within two years the state legislature reversed the reforms that the Fusionists had enacted. The assembly instituted a poll tax and a referendum to disenfranchise blacks with a grandfather clause that protected illiterate whites if they had an ancestor who had voted prior to 1867. These actions achieved their intention to cripple the Republican Party. At the 1900 Craven County Republican convention, chaired by Joseph Hahn, fewer than fifty delegates gathered, three quarters of whom were black. Averse to "opposing White Supremacy," the party's county executive committee decided not to run a ticket. In 1904 less than half of the state's electorate voted.⁴⁰

"Southern progressivism," Woodward asserts, "generally was progressivism for white men only." The Wilmington Chamber of Commerce endorsed white redemption, and the *Charlotte Observer* applauded the political consequences of the riot: "The business men of the State are largely responsible for the victory." In the wake of the 1897 depression businessmen were especially vigilant. When first organized, the Farmers' Alliance movement had advocated cooperatives to compete with established merchants. Fusion politics threatened the businessman's economic wellbeing.⁴¹ The Jewish white redeemers of Wilmington no doubt

felt they were acting as guardians of morality and public order against what they saw as criminal, anarchic black rule. The *Jewish South*, a newspaper published in Richmond, cast the Democratic white redemptionists as reform-minded progressives: "The struggle for white supremacy in North Carolina was not a race war," the newspaper editorialized. "It was simply an organized effort to exchange a bad government for a good one." The *Jewish South* chastised the *Philadelphia Jewish Exponent's* advocacy of "the rights of the negro," echoing southern racial extremists who argued that blacks had degenerated since emancipation, that education had only made them more "immoral and dishonest." The newspaper averred, "Let us be thankful that the people of Wilmington have a good, clean government at last." In Atlanta's *Jewish Sentiment*, Frank Cohen also responded to northern Jewish criticism of the Wilmington riot as a "deformed opinion" of the "negro question." Here Jews were echoing the voices of other Democratic redeemers who saw white supremacy as an instrument of good government. Publisher Josephus Daniels, who orchestrated the white supremacy media campaign, was also a progressive Democrat. In 1900 progressive Democrats, led by Governor Charles Aycock, a former Red Shirt nightrider, oversaw a referendum that disenfranchised blacks. Yet, Aycock is still revered as the state's "Education Governor." Within the limits of racial segregation, as long as African Americans knew their place, white Democrats could safely advocate black uplift through education but certainly not through politics or social equality.⁴²

Jacobi and Fishblate's Democratic politics were consistent with those of white merchants of their class and color. If Zebulon Vance had once observed race-based "objections to Jews as a citizen," with Democratic redemption, North Carolina Jews were now secure in their political place as whites. Jews joined Democratic machines that ran city and county politics but were also very prominent among the reform advocates of a New South. In 1888 a writer observed that Sam Wittkowsky, a Charlotte alderman, "identified himself with the progressive element" of the city. In Enfield, Prussian immigrant Simon Meyer, whom a newspaper lauded as a "whole-souled, genial descendant of God's chosen

people," chaired the Democratic executive committee in 1898 and held numerous civic offices. In the late 1890s and early 1900s North Carolina Jews served on civic councils in the hamlet of Scotland Neck, the town of Goldsboro, and the city of Asheville. In the Progressive era, circa 1900 to 1914, Jews elected to office identified with home-rule efforts to place local politics in the hands of the citizens rather than with the legislature. Civic reform campaigns echoed across the South. Lionel Weil, who began an eighteen-year term on the Goldsboro town board in 1904, pioneered statewide efforts to reorganize municipal government, and in Asheville the Merchants Association president, Solomon Lipinsky, took a leadership role. In 1903 Fishblate considered another run for mayor.⁴³

The Hahns were hardly alone among southern Jews in the postbellum South who held Republican principles or involved themselves in racial politics. In Donaldson, Louisiana, historian Stuart Rockoff points to brothers-in-law Marx Schoenberg and Morris Marks who served as mayor and judge respectively in the Republican Reconstructionist government. Democrats, spurred on by inflammatory newspapers, physically threatened Schoenberg and Marx as carpetbaggers. In 1870 Schoenberg, a Radical Republican, was shot to death, and African American supporters killed the murderer in revenge. Hyman Rubin III identifies perhaps a half-dozen scalawags with Jewish-sounding names in South Carolina during Reconstruction, including the half-Jewish governor Franklin J. Moses, Jr.⁴⁴ During Reconstruction Samuel Fleishman of Marianna, Florida; M. H. Lucy of Alachua County, Florida; and S. Bierfield of Franklin, Tennessee, were murdered for black or Republican sympathies rather than for their religion. In Montgomery, Radical Republican H. E. Faber, a synagogue officer, served as mayor with black support until he was defeated in 1875 by Democratic white redeemer Mordecai Moses, a fellow Jew. The *Montgomery Advertiser* charged that Faber was a "bumbling, anti-Semitic Reconstructionist." Eric Goldstein describes Republicans as a "recognizable minority" among their fellow Jews in the post-war South. Newspapers rarely mentioned the religion of Jewish Republicans even in cases where they were threatened or subject to violence.⁴⁵

In their involvement in local politics, Fishblate, Jacobi, and the Hahns very much fit a national profile of Jewish political involvement. "First, Jews entered politics as businessmen," Hasia Diner observes. Despite sporadic outbursts of anti-immigrant prejudice, American politics became more inclusive over the nineteenth century, Diner notes. Mercantile interests dominated politics, and Jews, too, committed themselves to public service, which was in their economic self-interest. In the New South especially, with its gospel of salvation through commerce and industry, merchants envisioned themselves as agents of progress, builders of cities, and guardians of public order. Although nationally rabbis and Jewish journalists feared Jewish partisanship would provoke antisemitism, small-town Jews often served as mainstays of government. Frequently, they were newcomers active in local synagogues or Jewish societies. Newspapers welcomed their elections as proofs of democracy. One survey counts thirty-two Jewish mayors in thirteen southern states between 1875 and 1905.⁴⁶

Historians observe that a so-called Jewish vote did not coalesce until the 1920s at the earliest, nor did the community's putative liberalism emerge until the Roosevelt era. Jews gravitated to either party as self-interest and local politics dictated. As they rose into the middle class after the Civil War, they gravitated toward the party of pro-business conservatives, but in national elections they tended to vote Republican, a party that mixed reform with pro-business policies.⁴⁷ Southern Jews tended to be Democratic progressives, conservative on race but progressive on civic reform. In Atlanta, city alderman Joseph Hirsch, a Jewish community leader who ran for public office as a pro-business Democrat, took positions that were anti-black but supportive of municipal reform. A city publication in Donaldson, Louisiana, where Jews served twice as mayor, observed, "Our Jewish residents are reckoned among the best and most liberal minded citizens, and are associated with every progressive move." In Montgomery, Democrat Mordecai Moses, who won the mayoralty as the "true white man's candidate," oversaw the city's financial reform and electrification. In Jacksonville, Florida, Morris Dzi-

alynski, a Confederate veteran, was a Democratic alderman who battled black Republicans politically. First elected mayor in 1881, he won reelection the next year as a pro-business, “law and order” candidate—but on the People’s ticket in an effort to win Republican votes.⁴⁸

Political allegiances did not distinguish Jews. In the 1898 North Carolina elections Democrat Fishblate and Republican Hahn spanned the political spectrum. At least one Jew, Samuel Bear, Jr., was a centrist moderate, acceptable to Democrats and Republicans alike. That only eight Jews signed the White Declaration of Independence suggests that Jews were not extreme in their racial politics. Also telling are Jewish men among the city’s business elite—like Confederate veterans and community leaders Solomon Bear and Abram Weill—who did *not* sign the declaration. Nor, in the absence of evidence, can it be taken that their silence connotes a tacit endorsement of violent white supremacy. In this era of limited suffrage, generalizations about Jewish political views tend to focus on male, business elites, and the roles of women and lower-class Jews are less documented. All the Jews who signed the declaration were male merchants or industrialists mostly if not exclusively of German origin. Much of the Wilmington rioting took place in a mixed-race neighborhood where eastern European Jews were settling, yet they are absent from the detailed, extensive 2006 riot report, which is meticulous in naming names. Surviving correspondence from white Christian women includes those who endorsed the violence enthusiastically and those who expressed profound shame. The Jewish “quiet voices” of the later civil rights movement did not necessarily imply assent to racism or segregation, and a growing body of scholarship is bringing to light southern Jews who were vocal and active integrationists. Jewish women stepped forward while their businessmen husbands demurred.⁴⁹

This tale of two cities does not suggest any distinctive southern Jewish factor in matters of race, religion, or politics. In neither place was their whiteness questioned. No substantial evidence suggests that antisemitism, a specifically Jewish aspiration for whiteness, or any social desire to fit in, motivated their political

behavior. Their politics and racial attitudes were as varied as those of their white Christian neighbors. Joseph Hahn remained in New Bern as an established merchant, and in 1904 his fellow Jews elected him president of the local B'nai B'rith lodge. Not enough is known of the Hahns to dissect their political motives, but they were hardly alone among the capitalists and northerners in their political affiliation. Fishblate's and Jacobi's politics were typical of the businessmen who ruled North Carolina politics generally. Like many Democratic white redemptionists, Jacobi was a Confederate veteran.⁵⁰

The contrasting political experiences of the Hahns and Fishblate caution against defining a distinctly southern Jewish consciousness or ascribing essentialist racial or political categories to American Jewry generally. The events of 1898 demonstrate the Jews' Americanization. As Stephen J. Whitfield writes of "American Jewish culture," so, too, we can say of southern Jewry: it "has no essence, and has never been autonomous, but it does have a history."⁵¹

NOTES

This article expands the discussion of the 1898 election in Leonard Rogoff, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 2010), 162-168.

¹ New Bern, sometimes New Berne, has been spelled variously and inconsistently, and the diverse spelling in this article reflects the spelling in the original sources.

² The Jewish role in Wilmington has been noted in an op-ed piece by Mark Pinsky, *Raleigh News & Observer*, January 16, 2007, and in Laurie Gunst, *Off-White: A Memoir* (New York, 2005). The Hahns' involvement is mentioned in local histories, most notably in Alan Watson, *A History of New Bern and Craven County* (New Bern, NC, 1987), but without reference to their being Jews.

³ Helen Edmonds, *The Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 1951), 125.

⁴ For Wilmington's synagogue history, see Beverly Tetterton, *History of the Temple of Israel, Wilmington, North Carolina, 1876–2001* (Wilmington, NC, 2010).

⁵ See Morton Borden, *Jews, Turks, and Infidels* (Chapel Hill, 1984), 11–22 for a discussion of state constitutional religious tests. New Hampshire deleted its religious test in 1877.

⁶ Bill Reaves, "The Weill Family Misc. History" 1991, Bill Reaves Collection, New Hanover Public Library, 6–7; *Wilmington Messenger*, April 7, 1896. Weill relocated to New York in 1896 and died in 1898 prior to the riot.

⁷ *Wilmington Post*, March 22, 1878.

⁸ Howard Rabinowitz, "Continuity and Change: Southern Urban Development, 1860–1900," in *The City in Southern History*, ed. Blaine Brownell and David Goldfield (Port Washington, NY, 1977), 116; *Wilmington Daily Journal*, April 24, 1868.

⁹ Maurice Weinstein, ed., *Zebulon B. Vance and "The Scattered Nation"* (Charlotte, 1995), 89.

¹⁰ Eric Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, 2006), 58.

¹¹ Bertram W. Korn, "Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789–1865" in *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn (New York, 2010), 108; David Goldberg, "An Historical Community Study of Wilmington Jewry, 1738–1925" (History Seminar, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Spring 1976), 21–22; Anton Hieke, "Jews at the Cape Fear Coast: A Portrait of Jewish Wilmington, NC, 1860–1880," *Southern Jewish History* 13 (2010): 13–15. Hieke lists one slaveholder in Wilmington in 1860.

¹² Mark Twain, "Concerning the Jews," *Harper's Magazine*, March 1898, 533.

¹³ Quoted in Leonard Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home: Antisemitism and the American Jewish Experience* (New York, 1987), 113; Stephen Kantrowitz, *Ben Tillman and the Reconstruction of White Supremacy* (Chapel Hill, 2000), 247.

¹⁴ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F. D. R.* (New York, 1972), 70, 80; C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge, 1968), 155–157.

¹⁵ Joe Creech, *Righteous Indignation: Religion and the Populist Revolution* (Urbana, IL, 2006), xxii.

¹⁶ Watson, *History of New Bern and Craven County*, 481; Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York, 1992), 250; Jeffrey Crow, "'Fusion, Confusion, and Negroism': Schisms among Negro Republicans in the North Carolina Election of 1896," *North Carolina Historical Review* 53 (October 1976): 366–372; Woodward, *Burden of Southern History*, 156–157.

¹⁷ Edmonds, *Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 1951), 124–125; Crow, "'Fusion, Confusion, and Negroism,'" 383.

¹⁸ Hugh Lefler, *History of North Carolina* (New York, 1956), 691; *New Berne Weekly*, 25, 28 October 1898.

¹⁹ *Charlotte News*, March 29, 1893.

²⁰ *Wilmington Messenger*, November 21, 1895; March 28, 31, 1898; Gunst, *Off-White*, 258; 1898 *Wilmington Race Riot – Final Report*, North Carolina Office of Archives & History (Raleigh,

NC, 2006), 114; Edmonds, *Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina*, 127. I owe the characterization of Fishblate as a political opportunist to Beverly Tetterton, historian of the Wilmington Jewish community.

²¹ 1898 *Wilmington Race Riot – Final Report*, May 31, 2006, 98.

²² *Raleigh News & Observer*, October 8, 1898.

²³ 1898 *Wilmington Race Riot – Final Report*, May 31, 2006, 105, 697, 698, 964–995; Goldberg, “Historical Community Study of Wilmington Jewry, 1738–1925,” 35; “1898 Wilmington Race Riot Home Page,” <http://1898wilmington.com/index.shtml> (accessed August 3, 2008).

²⁴ 1898 *Wilmington Race Riot – Final Report*, May 31, 2006, 114. In addition to Jacobi and Fishblate the Jews who signed the declaration were A. A. Nathan, J. Elsbach, E. E. David, Martin Newman, I. L. Greenwald, and J. M. Solky. A possible ninth Jewish signee is H. D. Hahn, but both Jewish and Christian Hahns resided in Wilmington, and his name does not appear on Jewish community lists nor does evidence link him to the New Bern Hahns. LeRae Umfleet, *A Day of Blood: The 1898 Wilmington Race Riot* (Raleigh, NC, 2009), 74–75.

²⁵ 1898 *Wilmington Race Riot – Final Report*, May 31, 2006, 436.

²⁶ Watson, *History of New Bern and Craven County*, 481; North Carolina, v. 7, pp. 62, 139, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School. Neither Fishblate nor the Hahns, all northern merchants who had come south during Reconstruction, were labeled carpetbaggers, the derogatory term placed on northerners who came south after the war in search of wealth and political power.

²⁷ Watson, *History of New Bern and Craven County*, 491; Creech, *Righteous Indignation*, 166.

²⁸ Crow, “Fusion, Confusion, and Negroism,” 365, 368–369, 375; *New Bern Daily Journal*, October 28, 1898; Watson, *History of New Bern and Craven County*, 491.

²⁹ *Raleigh News & Observer*, October 14, 1898. Judging by photographs, the cartoon is a reasonable likeness of Hahn. The lack of any stereotypical Jewish features suggests no anti-semitic intent.

³⁰ *New Bern Daily Journal*, October 27, 1898.

³¹ *Ibid.*, October 29, 30, 1898.

³² *Ibid.*, November 5, 1898 and November 10, 1898.

³³ *Ibid.*, November 12, 1898 and September 14, 1899; Watson, *History of New Bern and Craven County*, 492.

³⁴ Quoted in Mark Pinsky, “Wilmington, 1898: the Jewish Dilemma,” *Raleigh News & Observer*, November 16, 2007.

³⁵ John D. Bellamy, *Memoirs of an Octogenarian* (Wilmington, NC, 1942), North Carolina Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Woodward, *Burden of Southern History*, 155.

³⁶ *New Bern Daily Journal*, October 30, 1898; Gunst, *Off-White*, 257–258; Charles Chesnut, *The Marrow of Tradition* (New York, 1993), 289–290; North Carolina, v. 24, pp. 148, 149, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School.

³⁷ *Wilmington Morning Star*, July 16, 1875; Joseph Morrison, "A Southern Philo-Semite: Josephus Daniels of North Carolina," *American Judaism* 12 (Winter 1963): 78.

³⁸ Umfleet, *A Day of Blood*, frontispiece, 125; Samuel Mendelsohn to Mayer Sulzberger, November 4, 1879; Home Rule Sermon, April 23, 1886, Samuel Mendelsohn Papers, University of North Carolina at Wilmington Special Collections.

³⁹ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge, 1971), 148, 158.

⁴⁰ *Jewish South*, November 24, 1898; 1898 *Wilmington Race Riot – Final Report*, May 31, 698; Edmonds, *Negro and Fusion Politics in North Carolina*, 125; Watson, *History of New Bern and Craven County*, 496.

⁴¹ *Raleigh News & Observer*, November 17 1906; Gunst, *Off-White*, 248; Kimberly Sims, "Wilmington Jewry: 1800-1914," (honors thesis, History Department, University of North Carolina at Wilmington, April 1999), 36; A. M. Waddell Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Hasia Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880* (Baltimore, 1992), 144.

⁴² *Jewish South*, November 24, 1898; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 251. Daniels, whose father was killed as a Union sympathizer during the Civil War, later regretted the newspaper's role in 1898.

⁴³ *Charlotte Observer*, January 11, 1931.

⁴⁴ Hyman Rubin III, *South Carolina Scalawags* (Columbia, SC, 2006), 119-122. See also Benjamin Ginsberg, *Moses of South Carolina: A Jewish Scalawag during Radical Reconstruction* (Baltimore, 2010.)

⁴⁵ Canter Brown, Jr., "Philip and Morris Dzilaynski: Jewish Contributions to the Rebuilding of the South," in *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History*, ed. Mark Bauman (Tuscaloosa, 2006), 223-24; Daniel Weinfeld, "Samuel Fleishman: Tragedy in Reconstruction-Era Florida," *Southern Jewish History* 8 (2005): 62-63; Stuart Rockoff, "The Mysterious Death of Marx Schoenberg: Jews & the Politics of Reconstruction in Ascension Parish, Louisiana," Southern Jewish Historical Society 35th annual conference, Chapel Hill, NC, October 22, 2010; see "Montgomery, Alabama," in the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities at <http://www.isjl.org/history/archive/al/montgomery.html> (accessed February 2, 2011). I thank Norwood Kerr of the Alabama State Archives and Dan Puckett for confirming Faber's Jewish origins. See Alabama Church Records Collection, Leopold Young, "A Sketch of the First Settlers in Montgomery and a Short History of Kahl Montgomery," (Montgomery, AL, 1900): 7, 9, Alabama Department of Archives and History; Eric Goldstein, "Jewish Merchants and Former Slaves: The Economic Relationship in the Post-Civil War South" lecture, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, February 4, 2008.

⁴⁶ Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 144-145; "Southern Jewish Mayors throughout History" at http://www.isjl.org/history/archive/archive_mayors.htm (accessed February 2, 2011).

⁴⁷ Gerald Sorin, *A Time for Building: The Third Migration, 1880-1920* (Baltimore, 1992), 195; Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 157.

⁴⁸ Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City*, 77–78.

⁴⁹ See Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2001), 147–168; Mark Bauman and Berkley Kalin, eds., *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s* (Tuscaloosa, 1997). In the case of signee E. David, he may have wished to dissociate himself from the store's employee, Charles McAlister, a white man who sympathized with blacks. McAlister was targeted by the Democrats, and under escort banished from the city. See Umfleet, *Day of Blood*, 114, 183, 166; "Donaldsonville, Louisiana," in the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, at <http://www.isjl.org/history/archive/la/donaldsonville.htm> (accessed February 2, 2011).

⁵⁰ *New Berne Daily Journal*, November 20, 1898 and December 4, 1899; Marilyn Stern, "Timeline of New Bern's Jewish History," typescript, Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina; Umfleet, *Day of Blood*, 191. Joseph Hahn, the sheriff's grandson and namesake, did not have a ready explanation for his grandfather's Republicanism. He did note however, that his father found the family's tenant farms unprofitable, and that he gave more in charity to the African American farmers than he collected in rent. He eventually turned over the deeds to the farmers, telling them that they needed the land more than he did. Joseph Hahn telephone interview conducted by Leonard Rogoff, December 12, 2005.

⁵¹ "Donaldsonville, Louisiana," at <http://www.isjl.org/history/archive/la/donaldsonville.htm> (accessed February 2, 2011); Stephen J. Whitfield, "The Braided Identity of Southern Jewry," *American Jewish History* 77 (March, 1988): 363.

PERSONALITY PROFILE

Paula Ackerman: Pioneer in the Pulpit

by

Ellen M. Umansky*

On January 26, 1951, Paula Herskovitz Ackerman formally became Spiritual Leader of Reform congregation Temple Beth Israel in Meridian, Mississippi. In so doing, she became the first woman to serve as the religious leader of a mainstream American Jewish congregation.¹ Asked by Beth Israel's president, on behalf of the board of trustees, to succeed her late husband, Rabbi William Ackerman, until a suitable rabbinic replacement could be found, the fifty-seven-year-old widow understood how revolutionary this noble experiment² might be. As she told a *Time* magazine reporter: "I have accepted this assignment . . . with the greatest humility" and am "glad to pioneer in the movement which we hope may lead to the ordination of women."³

Family Background

Born in New York City in 1893⁴, Paula Herskovitz was raised in Pensacola, Florida. Her mother, Dora Lang, immigrated with her family to New York from Kempen, Germany, near Düsseldorf. Paula's father, Joseph, came to the United States in the late 1880s from the tiny, rural village of Vaslui in eastern Romania and settled in Waycross, Georgia.⁵ He was then in his early twenties. Apparently, Joseph's parents encouraged him and his two younger brothers to emigrate, given the paucity of opportunities for

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Jews in Romania and the likelihood that if they stayed, they would be drafted into the Romanian army.⁶ Dora and Joseph met in New York, lived in Waycross for the first few months of their marriage, and then moved to Pensacola. Joseph, who came from an observant family and had received a good Jewish education as a child, continued to recite Hebrew prayers each morning and, along with the few other Orthodox Jews in Pensacola, hired a resident *shokhet* so that they could keep a kosher home. Paula was born shortly after her mother turned twenty. Apparently, when they joined Reform Temple Beth-El six years later so that Paula could begin Sunday school, they still considered themselves to be "Orthodox in their leanings." Nonetheless, they became active temple members and eventually identified as Reform.

Still, her mother, whom Paula described as quite pious and very active in Jewish communal affairs, continued to keep a "relatively Orthodox home," eating kosher-style (i.e., they never had bacon or "anything like that in the house"⁷), celebrating the holiday of Sukkot (Paula vividly remembered decorating and eating in their backyard sukkah when she was in her teens), and changing the dishes at Passover.⁸ Paula was confirmed at Beth-El and served for many years as one of its Sunday school teachers. Founded in 1876 and located on Palafox Street in downtown Pensacola, Temple Beth-El was (and remains) the oldest Jewish house of worship in Florida.⁹

While still a girl, Paula studied Hebrew. Her father wanted her younger brothers, Jennings and Toby (Tobias)¹⁰ to learn Hebrew and engaged an Orthodox rabbi in town to come to their home three times a week to teach them. Far more interested in Judaism than they, Paula apparently convinced her father to let her join them in their lessons. As an adult, she could still read Hebrew from a printed, vocalized text, although her ability to translate words was minimal. I first met Paula in Atlanta in 1985. I asked her: "When you were a child, growing up in Pensacola, did you ever think or dream of becoming a religious leader?" She answered:

*Paula H. Ackerman.
(Courtesy of the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of
Southern Jewish Life, Jackson, MS.)*

Oh no, what I wanted to be was a medical doctor. But Father wouldn't hear of it. That was back in 1911 [when Paula was 17 years old]. I'd won a scholarship to Sophie Newcomb in New Orleans. I'd graduated as valedictorian of my high school class — but when my father heard of my intentions, he hit the ceiling. He said, "If you want to go to college, you either go prepare to be a school teacher or a music teacher." That's all young ladies were supposed to do in 1911. And that's what he wanted. Well, I didn't want to be either one of them. And so I didn't go.¹¹

In the meantime, her father went into a new business and she had to help supplement the family income.¹² Despite her lack of formal training and initial intention not to become a teacher, she became a private music instructor (having studied piano as a young girl) and taught math and Latin at the local high school. Remaining active at Temple Beth-El, she taught in the religious school, was the Sunday school pianist, and led the congregational choir.

Rebbetzin in Pensacola and Natchez, 1919–1924

In 1912, at the age of eighteen, she began a seven-year courtship with William Ackerman, who had just come to Beth-El to replace Jacob Schwarz as rabbi. Ackerman had recently received a Ph.D. from Columbia University and rabbinic ordination from the Conservative movement's Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) in New York City. Hungarian-born, the son of a rabbi, and seven years Paula's senior, Ackerman briefly served as rabbi of Congregation Sinai (now called Temple Sinai), a small Reform congregation in Lake Charles, Louisiana, before moving on to Pensacola. There were few Conservative congregations in existence in 1912. The United Synagogue of America (now the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism), the congregational arm of the Conservative movement, was not created until 1913, and neither the Reform nor Conservative movement had yet established rabbinic placement bureaus. Indeed it was not until 1915, under the leadership of Cyrus Adler, that the United Synagogue began a concerted effort to obtain congregational placements for JTS graduates. Thus, in 1912 it would not have been unusual for a JTS

graduate like William Ackerman to seek a position at a Reform congregation.

Rabbi Ackerman was approximately five feet ten in height and slender, with bluish gray eyes and blond hair. Paula remembered him as very good-looking and full of fun.¹³ In contrast, Paula had dark brown, almost black, hair for most of her life (though by the time she reached her sixties it was speckled with gray) and her eyes were deep brown. Married in November 1919, Bill and Paula Ackerman left Pensacola shortly after their marriage for a better paying rabbinic position at Temple B'nai Israel (Children of Israel) in the port city of Natchez, Mississippi. An older and wealthier Jewish community than that of Pensacola, a group of traditionally religious German Jewish merchants purchased land for a Jewish cemetery in Natchez in 1840. By 1872, what began as a *chevra kadisha* adopted a more Reform style of worship and officially identified itself as Congregation B'nai Israel.

*Rabbi William Ackerman.
(Courtesy of the
Goldring/Woldenberg Institute
of Southern Jewish Life,
Jackson, MS.)*

While the Jewish population of Natchez never exceeded more than 5 percent of the city's population, it grew in size and prominence after the Civil War. Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century, nearly one third of Natchez's clothing and dry goods businesses, including several of the city's leading department stores, were Jewish owned, as were numerous banks and the city's Cotton and Merchants' Exchange. Some Jews volunteered for the local fire department, many were actively involved in the city's civic affairs, and a good number joined such fraternal organizations as the Masons, Odd Fellows, and the Knights of Pythias. In general, the Jews of Natchez enjoyed "close relations with their gentile neighbors."¹⁴ They also created local Jewish organizations and institutions, including the Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Association (founded in 1865 and later renamed the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Association), which ran B'nai Israel's Sunday school and visited the sick; the Hebrew Relief Association which helped Jewish immigrants find jobs and places to live; and the Standard Club, a Jewish social club established in Natchez in the 1890s, that like other such clubs throughout the country, was founded by wealthy German Jews. Both they and their eastern European counterparts sponsored balls, dances, and cultural events and "offered a comfortable environment [in which members could] play cards and billiards."¹⁵

By the time that Bill and Paula Ackerman arrived in Natchez, however, the city had already begun to decline. With an economy largely based on cotton, the arrival of the boll weevil in 1908 and the flooding of the Mississippi River that same year forced many businesses to close, including a good number that were Jewish-owned. By the 1920s, membership at B'nai Israel, then comprised of eastern European and central European Jewish immigrants as well as northern Jews who had settled in the South after the Civil War, became so low that the synagogue had trouble paying its dues to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), the lay arm of the Reform movement. By 1927, Natchez's Jewish population had declined from 450—its size when Temple B'nai Israel dedicated its new synagogue in 1905—to 150.¹⁶

*Temple B'nai Israel, Natchez, Mississippi.
(Courtesy of the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute
of Southern Jewish Life, Jackson, MS.)*

Paula and Bill Ackerman in Meridian, 1924–1950

Seen in this light, it is not surprising that in 1924, Paula and Bill decided to move with their then fifteen-month-old son, Billy, from Natchez to the larger Jewish community of Meridian, Mississippi. The trustees of Temple Beth Israel offered Rabbi Ackerman both a higher salary and a parsonage (or as Paula jokingly called it, a “rabbinage”¹⁷) that, for almost fifty years, remained Paula Ackerman’s home.¹⁸ Dating back to the mid-nineteenth century as a combined effort of the Jews of Meridian and nearby Marion, the

Meridian Jewish community was similar to that of Natchez. Originally founded by central European Jewish immigrants who by the end of the century had come to identify religiously with Reform, it also included eastern European immigrants, who, in contrast to the Orthodox eastern European immigrants of Natchez, soon formed their own congregation. Like Natchez, Meridian grew rapidly after the Civil War, although unlike Natchez, primarily as a railroad center. Like the Jews of Natchez, Meridian Jews were actively involved in the city's political, economic, social, and cultural life, enjoyed good relations with their non-Jewish neighbors, and engaged in a number of professions, including a disproportionate number in the dry goods and clothing business.

William Ackerman filled the pulpit of Temple Beth Israel, a congregation founded by "ten Reform Jewish families" in 1868, until his death in 1950.¹⁹ By the latter date, Beth Israel, boasting a membership of between 100 and 150 families, had become the second largest Jewish congregation in Mississippi. It was the congregation to which most Meridian Jews belonged, including many members of Ohel Jacob, the Orthodox congregation founded by eastern European immigrants in 1895. During her husband's tenure, Paula Ackerman taught pre-confirmation classes and actively participated in the temple sisterhood. She served as sisterhood secretary, program chair, and advisor but refused to become its president. She believed that the presiding officer should be a congregant rather than the rabbi's wife, a belief that underscored her view that the many tasks she assumed as *rebbetzin* made her more than a "congregational member." Indeed, at her husband's request and with his active encouragement, she led Friday night worship services when he was ill or out of town. While few *rebbetzins* of her day assumed this kind of leadership role, it was not unheard of. As early as 1926, Rebecca Brickner, wife of Reform Rabbi Barnett Brickner of the Euclid Avenue Temple (later called Fairmount Temple) in Cleveland, Ohio, occasionally led services in her husband's absence, and by the 1930s, American *rebbetzins*, more generally, had come to assume a number of public religious leadership roles.²⁰

Like many other Reform *rebbetzins*, Paula Ackerman became actively involved in the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (NFTS)²¹ both before and after her husband's death. She served as president of the Mississippi-Arkansas District of the Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, was on the NFTS national board, and spoke throughout the country as a member of its speakers' bureau. From 1944 to 1945, she chaired NFTS's National Committee on Religious Schools, a position from which she urged sisterhood members to help extend and improve Jewish education on the local level. In the early 1940s, as war raged in Europe and the Pacific, she described religious education as an excellent "battlefront." She exhorted sisterhood leaders to ensure that "American Jewish youth is not 'lost' to Judaism,"²² and she challenged those who were qualified to "rally to the noblest responsibility our Jewish inheritance requires today" and prepare to teach religious school.²³ By 1948, she became chair of the House of the Living Judaism fundraising campaign to build a headquarters for the major organizational bodies of the Reform movement in New York City. Jane Evans, NFTS's national director, initiated the campaign. Having long considered Evans to be a friend, and undoubtedly inspired by Evans's enthusiasm and vision,²⁴ Ackerman built on her own experiences in Meridian to encourage small sisterhoods in particular to raise funds.

Her interests, however, expanded beyond congregation-level education. In 1943, as a member of the NFTS national board, she was invited to a weekend seminar celebrating the seventieth anniversary of Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati, which she happily attended.²⁵ In addition, she was one of the first women to serve on the UAHC's Commission on Synagogue Activities, a position she held from 1947 until 1959. Like her husband, Paula Ackerman took an active interest in Meridian's civic, interfaith, cultural, and social affairs. Bill Ackerman's involvement was so great that in 1926, the local Kiwanis Club named him the city's "Most Worthful [*sic*] Citizen."²⁶ His congregants supported such efforts, and they took "great pride in how well he mixed into the larger community."²⁷ Indeed, like many other Jewish leaders in small cities and towns throughout the country, Rabbi Ackerman

*Temple Beth Israel, Meridian, Mississippi.
A postcard of the Greek Revival style temple used by
Congregation Beth Israel in Meridian from 1906 to 1964.
(Courtesy of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.)*

(like his wife after him) became what historian Mark Bauman has described as an ethnic broker, “a communicator . . . respected by his group” who acted “as a spokesman in intergroup relations.”²⁸

During the years of her husband’s tenure as rabbi of Temple Beth Israel, Paula Ackerman assumed a leadership role in the local Parent Teachers Association and the city-wide PTA Council, at one time serving as president. She also served on the Meridian City Council. She belonged to, and soon after moving to Meridian, took a leadership role in several local literary and classical music societies. An opera lover, who studied and regularly attended opera performances from the time she was a teenager until well into her eighties, Paula wrote opera and literary reviews, served as president and a charter member of the Meridian Civic Music Association, and became president of the Mississippi Federation of Music Clubs and the Matinee Musical Club, a position she held

three times. According to Paula, for a while she was known as Mrs. Opera, not just in Meridian but throughout Mississippi. She frequently gave lectures on German opera, especially but not exclusively Richard Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung*. One such lecture was given at a Junior League benefit concert in Meridian. As Paula later remembered it, although the Junior League invited her to speak and sold tickets for the talk, league membership was closed to her because she was Jewish.²⁹ Whenever she returned to Meridian from Atlanta during the opera season, the music clubs of Meridian held a joint meeting at which she gave a general lecture on the operas that she had seen. Ackerman also gave a more detailed talk on the one that she had found to be particularly outstanding. Apparently she delivered such talks for several decades until she left Meridian.³⁰

The Call to Spiritual Leadership

Yet none of these activities prepared her for the request made by Beth Israel's president, Sydney Kay, in early December 1950. On November 30, William Ackerman suddenly died of a heart attack. A week later, Kay, "simultaneously" with temple members from a variety of Jewish backgrounds and levels of religious observance (some of whom were members of both Beth Israel and Ohel Jacob), enthusiastically raised the idea of Mrs. Ackerman's performing "rabbinical function(s)" for the congregation.³¹ Unbeknownst to Paula, Kay called Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath, president of the UAHC to see what he thought of this idea. Apparently Eisendrath, despite having reservations about her qualifications, expressed initial approval.

By the early 1950s, as increasingly acculturated American Jews moved to the suburbs, the number of Reform (and Conservative) synagogues grew significantly. Consequently, as the number of congregations increased, so, too, did the need for more rabbis. Perhaps Eisendrath viewed Ackerman's assumption of leadership as a kind of litmus test to see whether the Reform movement was finally ready to ordain women. As Eisendrath knew, almost thirty years earlier, the HUC faculty had voted to admit women as rabbinical students, a vote subsequently overturned by the college's

Board of Governors. Indeed, a handful of women had previously taken classes at HUC and at Stephen Wise's Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR), established in 1922. These included journalist Ray Frank of Oakland, California, who studied at HUC for one semester in the 1890s (apparently at the invitation of President Isaac Mayer Wise); Martha Neumark, daughter of HUC Professor David Neumark, who unsuccessfully petitioned the faculty for a High Holy Day pulpit in 1921; Irma Levy Lindheim in the 1920s; and Helen Hadassah Levinthal and Dora Askowitz (who previously had received her Ph.D. in history from Columbia University) in the 1920s and 1930s at JIR in New York City. It was through Lindheim's efforts in 1923 that JIR formally revised its charter to state that it trained men and women for the rabbinate, although by the time it merged with HUC in 1950 it had not ordained a woman as rabbi. While Helen Levinthal completed the rabbinic curriculum in 1939, she graduated with a Master of Hebrew Literature, for as Stephen Wise later told her father, Conservative Rabbi Israel Levinthal, he felt that "'the time was not ripe for the J.I.R. to ordain a woman.'"³² While there is no evidence that large numbers of Jewish women were actively discussing and raising the issue of women's ordination in the United States in the early 1950s, the merger of HUC with JIR in 1950, only months before Sidney Kay approached Maurice Eisendrath, did lead to the resurfacing of this issue, at least among some in the Jewish community. As early as 1948, Dora Askowitz, having learned of HUC and JIR's plans to merge, asked Stephen Wise and Nelson Glueck, then president of HUC, "to see if in the revisioned seminary, women, as well as men, would be ordained."³³ She raised the issue again, less than a decade later, in an essay published in *Judaism* magazine.

In a letter written to Maurice Eisendrath on December 10, 1950, Sydney Kay maintained that, pursuant to their conversation and his promise to keep him informed of the temple's "proposed revolutionary step of profering [*sic*] the pulpit of 81 year old Congregation Beth Israel to Mrs. William Ackerman, Sr.," he was writing to let Eisendrath know that the temple's board of trustees had since voted unanimously "to elect Mrs. Ackerman as its Spir-

itual Leader.” “This is particularly momentous,” he added, “in view of the fact that several members on our Board stem from real Orthodox roots . . . [and] that the thinking of the overall Jewish Community here is not usually so progressive or non-conformist.”³⁴ While, according to Kay, Paula was currently considering their proposal (which she apparently first learned of after the board of trustees’ vote), “for the Archives,” he concluded (perhaps referring to Beth Israel’s congregational archives—perhaps to the history of the Reform movement more generally), “whether she accepts or declines the honor, we are on record as having offered her the position of Spiritual Leader in an old and honored Liberal Jewish Congregation.”³⁵ Indeed, while Lily Montagu had long before assumed lay leadership of the West Central Liberal Jewish Congregation in London and Tehilla Lichtenstein continued to serve as leader of the Society of Jewish Science in New York City (a movement that sought to help Jews find health and happiness within a Jewish context), Paula Ackerman would become the first Jewish woman in the United States to become spiritual leader of a mainstream congregation.³⁶

It is unclear from Kay’s letter whether the “overall Jewish community” to whom he referred included Meridian Jews other than those who belonged to Beth Israel. Most likely, it referred to the more traditionally religious members of the temple.³⁷ Indeed, in a letter written by Paula Ackerman on January 12, 1951, to the managing editor of the *National Jewish Post*, she maintained that it was her intention to appear before “our local board” [the temple’s board of trustees] and later, the congregation as a whole, to explain “that any member . . . preferring the services of a neighboring rabbi for weddings or funerals” had her “full consent” to utilize the services of such a rabbi. “I will only perform such services for members who request them,” she wrote, and “as far as the legality is concerned, the state of Mississippi gives me that right” as leader of the congregation.³⁸

Paula Ackerman’s initial response to the board’s offer was that Beth Israel should hire an ordained rabbi. Sydney Kay said that they would look for one, but hoped that in the meantime, she would agree to the position (for \$300 a month, far less than they

had paid her husband, and far less than the amount they were willing to pay rabbis who later expressed interest). Having received Kay's assurance that Eisendrath thought her becoming the congregation's spiritual leader was a "wonderful idea," Paula then told him that she needed a month to consider the offer. "And so," she later recalled,

for a solid month, I prayed. I prayed the entire month of December and didn't give them my answer until after the first of January. . . . During that month a number of things happened to me that made me think the Lord was telling me to do it. One incident stands out clearly in my mind. At the time that the congregation came to me, I was scheduled to have a hysterectomy. I was 57 years old and still menstruating. I didn't want to have the operation. What's more, I didn't think that I should read from the Torah if I were menstruating [a view grounded more in folk tradition, or superstition, than in Jewish law]. Well I prayed to the Lord for guidance and from that moment on, from the moment I thought I would say yes to the congregation, my period stopped completely. I went to my gynecologist and told her about it. She said, "Don't feel that it's gone. Often, a shock like you've had with your husband's death and the congregation wanting you to carry on could make it stop. It could come back after seven years." Well, I have never seen it [i.e., her menstrual period]. And I never needed to have the hysterectomy. Wouldn't you think the Lord was telling me something?"³⁹

This was not the only time in her life that Paula Ackerman believed she had received a sign from God. Indeed, every morning during the two and a half years that she served as spiritual leader of Beth Israel, she would awake early each morning, go to the temple, sometimes as early as 6 A.M., enter the sanctuary, open the ark—and, just as she had during the month of December 1950 while deciding what answer to give the board of trustees—prostrate herself before the ark's two Torah scrolls, asking God for guidance. As she later wrote in one of her sermons:

I feel that in your life, and in mine, there is a Presence, there is an Influence—I call it God—you may call it what you will—Something, Someone—to whom I am attuned when I am at my best, revealed to me when I am revealed to myself. And when

this Presence comes and touches us and moves us, then Religion comes to us; for when God finds us, we find God; and then we know the meaning of adoration, of awe and reverence. We know that God is and we know what God is, when God is in our souls and lives.⁴⁰

Paula Ackerman did more than turn to God. She had a complete physical examination to make sure that she was healthy enough to take on this new position (apparently she was) and turned for guidance to old and trusted friends like the man Bill had replaced, Rabbi Jacob Schwarz, whom she had known since childhood and who, from 1932 until his retirement in 1952, served as the UAHC's national Director of Synagogue Activities. In a handwritten letter dated December 12, 1950, Paula asked Schwarz whether he was "as enthusiastic over the idea as Mr. Kay (our president) tells me Rabbi Eisendrath is."⁴¹ In a lengthy letter written eight days later, Schwarz pointed out some of the difficulties that might lie before her in assuming such a demanding role and cautioned her to consider them carefully before reaching her decision. Still, he concluded,

I do want to say that, as I am sure you know, I have the greatest admiration for your talents and confidence in your ability and integrity and if you do accept it will be a wonderful thing not only for yourself and the community but as opening up new avenues of usefulness for the Jewish woman and new opportunities for contributing to the spiritual life I know your deep faith, and trust and am sure that you will continue to make your life to the utmost useful and happy.⁴²

On December 12, a day after Kay wrote to Eisendrath informing him of the board's decision (the same day that Paula wrote to Jacob Schwarz for advice), Eisendrath responded to Kay thanking him "for your most interesting letter and for the formal announcement of that which you discussed with me over the telephone." He stated that he would be "especially interested" in learning whether or not Paula Ackerman accepted the board's proposal and appreciated being kept informed about the community's reaction should she say yes. "I hope," he maintained, "that it will be of the best and that your congregation will continue to

grow and prosper under the spiritual leadership that, with real pioneering courage you have chosen."⁴³

Yet when Kay happily informed Eisendrath by phone in early January that Paula had accepted their invitation, Eisendrath had second thoughts, asking Kay whether her background and knowledge were sufficient to enable her to serve as spiritual leader of their congregation. In a written reply, dated January 11, 1951, Kay simply stated, "My answer then and now, is that in the eyes of practically all of the members of our congregation she is qualified, and we want her."⁴⁴ Apparently learning of Eisendrath's change of heart, Paula Ackerman wrote to Nelson Glueck that she was "truly penitent" if the "very beautiful and well-intentioned action of Beth Israel" had caused him embarrassment. She emphatically assured him that she had "no intention whatsoever of making a career of the Rabbinate." Eisendrath, she continued, initially had no objection to the prospect of her acceptance "and even hoped it would lead to women students at HUC and JIR who would be ordained and serve congregations." Thus, she wrote, "If my service would be pioneering in this field, I should feel that my life had meant something. That is all I ask - to serve Beth Israel for an interim period and to plant a seed for enlarged activity for the Jewish woman."⁴⁵

While there is no extant correspondence from Glueck to Ackerman, she wrote to Jacob Schwarz on January 23 that Glueck was "very much more understanding and considerate"⁴⁶ of her than Eisendrath had turned out to be. Here she no doubt was referring to the press release issued by Eisendrath on January 15 denying reports that the UAHC had "given approval to the appointment of Mrs. William Ackerman as spiritual leader of Beth Israel Congregation of Meridian, Mississippi." Although in theory he believed that women should serve in the rabbinate, "to his knowledge Mrs. Ackerman did not possess the qualifications of a rabbi," nor, as far as he could gather, had she received rabbinical training or been ordained. The UAHC, he maintained, would have "grave reservations" about the rabbinical appointment "of any non-ordained person, male or female, to any pulpit in a Liberal Jewish congregation."⁴⁷

Paula Ackerman with Bible.
(Courtesy of the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute
of Southern Jewish Life, Jackson, MS.)

As Paula reminded Schwarz in a letter dated January 23, Eisendrath had known of the congregation's intentions since early December, was well aware of the fact that she was not seeking ordination, and knew that she was not being appointed as the congregation's "rabbi," but rather as their interim spiritual leader. Earlier having promised to "tell him everything" about the congregation's interaction with Eisendrath, she now sent him letters and other relevant materials from December and early January. As her friend, confidant, and advisor as well as Director of Synagogue Activities for the UAHC, Schwarz later told her he was happy to receive these materials, as it gave him "a much better understanding of the relationship between your congregation and the Union [UAHC] with respect to your election."⁴⁸ What Ackerman may not have known at the time was that four days after his press release appeared, Eisendrath, who was out of the country, wrote to Kay assuring him that he was working on getting someone from the UAHC to go to Meridian for Ackerman's formal installation.⁴⁹

Apparently several reasons ultimately led Paula to accept the board's offer. First, as she wrote to Schwarz in early January, before Eisendrath had second thoughts about her appointment, the congregation clearly wanted her. She had been there for twenty-seven years and found their confidence gratifying and challenging, giving her "the courage to try to lead them."⁵⁰ Second, she had received a good Jewish education; had long taught Sunday school and pre-confirmation; and for decades had led services when her husband was out of town. Acknowledging limitations in her preaching skills and Jewish knowledge, she asked Schwarz for recommendations of books that might be useful. At the same time, she reiterated her belief that what the congregation most wanted was for her to speak, not from books, but from the heart, sharing with them "the Jewish way of life that I've lived every day of my life—that shouldn't be too hard."

Third, the position she accepted was clearly, at least in her mind, not that of rabbi but of interim spiritual leader. It may well be, as Shuly Rubin Schwartz has maintained, that Ackerman was offering a "gendered response . . . [that served] to downplay the

importance of her decision without overturning it.”⁵¹ Still, her response was an honest one. Had the congregation formally asked Paula to be their rabbi, she might have refused. Instead, what they offered was a role for which she ultimately felt qualified and which, she believed, had already gained the approval of others.⁵² Fourth, it was Ackerman’s belief that this approval not only included that of Maurice Eisendrath, Jacob Schwarz, and other leaders of American Reform Judaism, but also that of non-Jews in Meridian. Subsequently, members of the Ministerial Association of Meridian, whom she knew through her husband and whom she considered to be friends, accepted her as Beth Israel’s spiritual leader and, although she never became a member, included her in all of their activities.⁵³ Fifth, were pragmatic concerns. After her father’s death in the fall of 1950, about a month before her husband died, Ackerman moved her mother from Pensacola to Meridian. In ill health, Dora Herskovitz lived with the Ackermans, and, after Bill’s death, with Paula until she died. For Paula, accepting the congregation’s offer meant financial and emotional security. The position enabled her to remain in the parsonage with her mother, who by 1951 relied on nurses’ home care. Last, after weeks of inner reflection and personal prayer, Paula came to believe that it was God’s will that she become Beth Israel’s religious leader and, as such, plant a seed for women’s future ordination.

Spiritual Leader of Congregation Beth Israel, 1951–1953

On January 26, 1951, three days after Ackerman wrote to Schwarz, the temple held its annual meeting. Paula delivered an address to a record-breaking number of congregants⁵⁴ that apparently “was followed by a rising vote of confidence” from the entire congregation.⁵⁵ According to Sydney Kay, her address was not written “but delivered entirely from her heart.” When she finished, he maintained, “it was hard to find a dry eye” among those in attendance. Indeed, after the meeting, several members voluntarily voted to raise their dues. Thus, Kay wrote to Eisendrath on January 29, given the fact that Paula’s assumption of religious leadership had become local news, it was “more imperative than

ever that we arrange for a formal installation so that the public at large can be invited."⁵⁶

In the meantime, word of Paula Ackerman's groundbreaking appointment had quickly spread. The *Meridian Star* applauded her already proven leadership ability within the Reform movement and, quoting Kay, declared her to possess a "brilliant mind," "friendly heart," and "helping hand," all requirements of a spiritual leader.⁵⁷ The *Cincinnati Post* printed an article that began with the headline: "Jewish Church May OK Women Rabbis,"⁵⁸ and *Newsweek* printed a short piece, stating that a fifty-seven-year-old mother had been elected to lead Congregation Beth Israel. *Time* magazine devoted four paragraphs to the story and included a large photograph of Paula Ackerman, under which was written, "Paul disapproved," referring to a New Testament quote traditionally attributed to the apostle Paul (who was identified in the article as a Jewish Pharisee) that "women should keep silent in churches."⁵⁹ For several weeks, newspapers throughout the world announced her historic appointment. Most described her assumption of religious leadership in a positive light. One glaring exception was Mr. A. Slabot, editor of *The New Orleans Jewish Ledger*, who, under the headline "Can You Top This," suggested that Ackerman's only qualification for the position was that she had lived with a rabbi and maintained that her appointment would only add to the confusion and apathy prevalent among world Jewry.⁶⁰ In response, Sydney Kay angrily wrote that Mrs. Ackerman had been elected to the position of spiritual leader because of her "exceptional intelligence, [religious] background, and personality" (although undoubtedly her civic and Jewish communal involvement were equally important) as well as the congregation's belief in a "progressive Judaism." Her assumption of religious leadership has been acclaimed by our entire congregation, he wrote, bringing members "closer to the Synagogue than anything that has happened in many years" and has been acclaimed by the "local citizenry as well."⁶¹

The story was also carried on the radio. Indeed, on the January 16 syndicated broadcast of her popular news and commentary program, *Kate Smith Speaks*, Smith announced that

Meridian Star, January 18, 1951.

Front page banner head with a lead story on Paula Ackerman's election as spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Israel.

(Courtesy of the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, Jackson, MS.)

widow of a Mississippi Rabbi is the newest member of a list of distinguished American women. . . . The woman of whom I'm talking today is Mrs. William Ackerman, Sr. of Meridian, Mississippi, who accepted a call to succeed her late husband . . . as head of Reform Temple Beth Israel in Meridian. She is the first woman spiritual leader of any American Reform Jewish congregation. . . . On behalf of American women of all faiths, I want to extend our very best wishes to Mrs. William Ackerman upon a noteworthy achievement.⁶²

Ackerman received what she later described as "beautiful letters" from members of the national membership organization and women's fellowship, National Methodist Women (which became part of United Methodist Women in 1968) who apparently were

intrigued by her appointment. Throughout the early 1950s, the ordination of women was actively discussed and debated within the Methodist Church (the largest group of Methodists in the United States), leading to women's ordination and their receiving full clergy rights in 1956. While there were some Reform rabbis who, like Eisendrath, publicly voiced disapproval of Paula Ackerman's appointment, many supported it. Rabbi Isaac Marcuson of Macon, Georgia, then secretary of the Reform movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), apparently kept her husband's name on the CCAR mailing list so that she would receive information and publications that might be useful, and other Reform rabbis, whom she remembered as being kind to her, offered suggestions for sermons and books that she might find helpful. Although a number of congregations, especially those that were either Orthodox or Conservative, "fought" her appointment,⁶³ among her most treasured letters was one that she received from Tamar de Sola Pool, former national president of Hadassah and wife of Orthodox Rabbi David de Sola Pool of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City.⁶⁴ Offering Paula her congratulations, Pool told her in confidence that she had been nominated for the well-deserved honor of Hadassah Woman of the Year.⁶⁵

Despite Maurice Eisendrath's initial approval of Ackerman's appointment, correspondence and congregational board minutes reveal that the UAHC-sanctioned installation that Kay and others had hoped for was not to be. By mid-January 1951, retired Rabbi Samuel Goldenson, who had served as president of the CCAR and rabbi of numerous Reform congregations, including Rodef Shalom in Pittsburgh and Temple Emanu-El in New York City, had been assigned by Eisendrath to deal with the matter. Having offered his services to the UAHC to work with "small, isolated congregations" to strengthen their commitment to "liberal prophetic Judaism,"⁶⁶ Goldenson wrote to Kay at the end of January. Although earlier in the month, he had looked favorably upon Ackerman's assumption of religious leadership, he had since reconsidered. After talking to several rabbis and giving the matter more thought, he concluded that despite Ackerman's "unusual

personality and her mental and social gifts which [when we spoke several weeks ago] seemed to me would amply qualify her for communal leadership," he feared that the step Beth Israel was taking "might lead to more problems raised than solved." Since as a woman, Ackerman had not been able to receive "the necessary qualifications for the discharge of the full rabbinical duties," he worried that despite the many years in which she stood by her husband's side, she would not adequately be able to religiously represent the community on public occasions, leading to moments of "considerable embarrassment" for her. He suggested that the congregation give itself time to recover from the loss of their rabbi and that, until then, Ackerman serve in a position of lay leadership.

This rather vague suggestion was followed by another, namely that after the congregation had readjusted "to the new situation in due regard to everyone's interest in the matter," should such a course of action be adopted, presumably to retain Paula Ackerman as spiritual leader of the congregation, "it would naturally be pursued with a view only to the local situation and would therefore not raise any questions nor any problems of a general professional nature." Here, it seems, Goldenson began to express his real concern. He apparently had visited several congregations in which the rabbis were fortunate enough to have "exceedingly able wives." Yet even they, he maintained, did not necessarily have Ackerman's qualities or qualifications. Thus, he was afraid that if she were to become Beth Israel's spiritual leader, other Reform congregations might see this as a precedent, leading other, not necessarily qualified rabbis' wives (or widows) to similarly serve as spiritual leaders. While Goldenson did not explicitly tell Kay that the congregation should rescind the offer, he suggested that they talk the matter over further on his planned trip to Mississippi at the beginning of March.⁶⁷

In the meantime, Ackerman met with the congregational board, indicating that she was willing to serve until a rabbi could be hired. On Friday evening, February 2, 1951, she conducted her first service as Beth Israel's spiritual leader. According to her son Bill, attendance was so great it was reminiscent of High Holy Day

services and, understandably, his mother was extremely nervous. "At 7:30 p.m. sharp," Bill remembered,

Mrs. Crumpton, the organist, began to play the massive pipe organ. Paula took a deep breath, bowed her head and intoned a silent prayer, then announced, "Well, this is it . . . let's go." She and the others [who were to sit on the bima with her, including Sydney Kay and Lucille Rosenbaum, president of the temple sisterhood] proceeded out the [temple] study door in single file and mounted the steps of the bima and sat in assigned chairs. . . . The choir, actually a quartet, began the opening hymn, and the first service in a Reform Jewish congregation led by a woman began.⁶⁸

She chose to deliver her sermon, "Reserve Resources," not from the raised bimah but from the floor, directly in front of the congregation. Asking for their support, without which, she said, she could not function successfully, she began by directly addressing those whom she identified as the three groups within the temple: the descendents of the congregation's founders, the intermarried, and the more traditionally religious. She told the descendents of Beth Israel's founders – the "nucleus of this Jewish community" – how important it was for them to extend open arms not just to her but also to other groups within the temple. Turning to the intermarried, she made it clear that Christian wives and husbands were welcome to attend services and participate in all temple activities and boldly asked that they consider raising their children as Jews and sending them to the temple's Sunday school. The reason she gave was that since Christianity taught that the only avenue to salvation and thus to God was by following the "Christian path," the Jewish parent of such children "would not have the same chance for salvation as the Christian parent." It was her belief, she maintained, that the child of a Jewish father and a Christian mother "would feel better and be much more secure in knowing that his father and his mother were together in religion as well as in everything else."⁶⁹

Most surprisingly, in what she admitted was a break from the tradition of Classical Reform Judaism and Beth Israel (but which drew, perhaps, on memories of her parents' experiences as

traditionally religious members of a Reform congregation), she told observant members of the congregation that if the men felt more at home worshipping with yarmulkes, she wanted to assure them that they were free to do so. Suggesting that perhaps they had not attended many congregational activities in the past because they had not felt completely welcomed, she emphasized how much she needed their participation. "I know," she added, "the other members of this congregation need . . . [you] also, since we are, after all, a very small group of Jews living in the midst of a predominately non-Jewish community."⁷⁰

One month later, Goldenson still had not visited Meridian. While Ackerman had already assumed her congregational duties, her formal installation had been postponed until someone representing the UAHC, presumably Goldenson, could attend. Consequently, Walter Kass, secretary of the congregation (and the father of Paula's daughter-in-law, Anne), sent a letter to Eisendrath telling him in no uncertain terms that members of Beth Israel's board of trustees were extremely displeased that Goldenson had not come to Meridian as promised and that they felt the UAHC in general and Eisendrath in particular had been "both uncooperative and remiss in not rendering" to them this one service that they had requested during their many years as members of the organization. "Let us remind you," Kass wrote,

that before we asked Mrs. Ackerman, officially, to become our Spiritual Leader, we conferred with *you*. We asked you to select a representative of the Union [of American Hebrew Congregations] to assist us in the installation of Mrs. Ackerman, believing in the autonomous right of each Congregation to select its own Spiritual Leader. . . . [While we were informed by letter that Rabbi Goldenson would come to Meridian], to date we have heard nothing further from you, [UAHC Administrative Secretary] Rabbi [Louis] Egelson, or Dr. Goldenson! Feeling that we have extended you and the UAHC every courtesy possible in this matter, as members of the UAHC, do we not have the right to know why we are being subject to the embarrassment meted out to us by you and by the UAHC?⁷¹

There is no extant correspondence indicating whether or not Kass received a reply but relations between Beth Israel and the

UAHC remained tense. The congregation eventually held a formal installation for Ackerman. The sanctuary filled with Jews and non-Jews from Meridian, but no UAHC representative appeared. In fact, Paula waited another thirty-five years to gain that recognition.

What began as an interim role became a full-time position that lasted for almost two and a half years. From 1951 to 1953, Ackerman conducted Friday evening and holiday services at Temple Beth Israel, officiated at weddings, funerals and headstone unveilings, and consecrated new homes. She taught and prepared interested non-Jews for conversion and performed conversion ceremonies before two officers of the congregation. Most of those whom she converted were Christians planning to enter into an interfaith marriage. According to Paula, she constantly received calls or visits from interfaith couples asking her to officiate at their wedding. Ackerman personally was not opposed to doing so, believing that if she officiated, the non-Jewish spouse might one day convert to Judaism. Yet she knew that her husband, perhaps because of his traditionally religious upbringing or rabbinic training at JTS, had taken a stand against this, insisting that the non-Jewish half of the couple convert before they got married. Conscious of the fact that she had taken over her husband's pulpit, Ackerman later said that she felt she should honor his point of view.⁷²

Another factor that led to her decision not to officiate at mixed marriages was Ackerman's genuine desire not to alienate traditionally religious members of the congregation. Indeed, after becoming spiritual leader, she took steps almost immediately to increase their involvement by having those that were qualified and willing read from the Torah at holiday morning services. Ackerman initiated *Yizkor* services on the last day of Passover, presumably in addition to those held on Yom Kippur. She encouraged those who wanted to have a brit milah for their sons to hire a mohel and said that if they were interested in her participating in the ritual, she was happy to do so. She especially enjoyed baby namings and fondly remembered naming her grandson, Joel, at his brit milah, and in August, 1953, as her "last official duty," her granddaughter, Carolyn.

*Paula Ackerman at the wedding of Sydney Kay's daughter,
Morele to Lewis Rosenfeld, December 1951, in Meridian.
The bride and groom are standing to Ackerman's left.
The others in the picture are friends.
(Courtesy of the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute
of Southern Jewish Life, Jackson, MS.)*

When she led services, Ackerman wore her husband's robe, which she apparently had altered, and a small white scarf made by some of the women of the congregation. The scarf, reminiscent of a tallit, draped around the middle of her neck and was tucked inside the robe. Clearly visible around her neck, falling just below the robe's v-shaped opening, was a necklace with a small round pendant that held a white Star of David. It was a gift sent to her from her mother-in-law after Rabbi Ackerman's death. A sign of her love and support for the role that Paula was about to assume, the necklace came with a note to wear it whenever she wore the robe. As Paula remembered, and as photos reveal, she always did so.⁷³

As spiritual leader of Beth Israel, Ackerman represented the congregation at regional rabbinical meetings and participated in interfaith programs in Meridian with local Catholic and Protestant clergy. Various national and local Christian youth groups, pastors, and teachers visited the temple, and Ackerman spoke to them about different symbols and rituals of Judaism, presumably including those in the temple's sanctuary. She accepted invitations to deliver the invocation at more than one state women's convention in Mississippi, the Matinee Music Club's annual luncheon in 1951, a seventy-fifth anniversary dinner of B'nai B'rith, and regional NFTS conventions.⁷⁴ At her initiative, beginning in 1951, morning services on Rosh Hashanah and Kol Nidre service on the evening of Yom Kippur were broadcast on local radio station WTOK. As Paula later reported to the congregation:

Many and favorable have been the comments from non-Jews and Jewish shut-ins in regard to these services. We rejoice to have reached so many in adjacent counties, as well as our own community. I consider it one of our most effective adventures in better understanding.⁷⁵

Following in her husband's footsteps and involving herself in activities that were fairly typical of rabbis during this era, she gave talks and presented special programs to groups within her congregation and to members of other Jewish groups in and outside of Meridian. She frequently addressed non-Jewish groups as well. For example, she spoke to the students of Meridian Junior College (now Meridian Community College) at a school-wide assembly, gave talks at local high schools, and spoke at a meeting of Meridian's Episcopal Church Guild. She also presented a program on Hebrew music to the Meridian Matinee Music Club, of which she had long been a member. Some of these talks were broadcast on the radio.⁷⁶

By the summer of 1951, a few members of Beth Israel complained about not having an ordained rabbi.⁷⁷ Consequently, that September the board sent out 175 letters, presumably one to each family in the congregation, asking whether they felt the board should conduct a rabbinic search. In response, only twelve said yes. Yet four months later, a three-person committee was formed

to look for "a new rabbi" (intentionally or not, implying that Paula was their current one).⁷⁸ Admitting their own inexperience in conducting a rabbinic search and clearly frustrated by the fact that the UAHC had "no organized process of securing a Rabbi" (apparently having defeated a proposition to establish a rabbinic placement bureau in 1950), committee members reported to the congregation on October 26, 1952, that they were dissatisfied with the few rabbis who had expressed interest in the position. They had thus decided that while the search for "the right man" would (at least theoretically) continue, they were in no hurry, for they believed that it was the congregation's good fortune to have "someone of Mrs. Ackerman's caliber as spiritual leader."⁷⁹ By the spring of 1953, however, Ackerman wanted to step down and appealed to the board to find a rabbi to replace her. The position, with its many demands, had begun to adversely affect her health, her mother's physical condition had worsened and she wanted to spend more time with her, and, as Paula later recalled, she found it too depressing to "bury her friends."⁸⁰

Formally leaving her position before the High Holy Days in September, Ackerman remained in Meridian. At first, she lived in a two-bedroom apartment with her mother, then in a smaller one on the corner opposite the temple. She helped care for her mother (who died in 1955) and enjoyed spending time with her son, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren, who stayed in Meridian for many years.⁸¹ Like her son Bill and daughter-in-law Anne, Paula remained an active member of Beth Israel, particularly its sisterhood, as well as the greater Meridian community. Although her arthritis began to bother her and walking became more difficult, she continued to lecture in and outside of Meridian, attend national sisterhood conventions, attend meetings of the various music and literary clubs to which she belonged besides writing reviews for these, and, on occasion, travel for pleasure.

Returning to Pensacola

Paula resumed the role of spiritual leader from January through June 1962. Temple Beth-El in Pensacola was in need of a rabbi and convinced Ackerman to help them through Sha-

vuot while they conducted a formal search for a replacement. Having been a long-time member, teacher, and *rebbetzin* of the congregation, she felt she could not refuse. Even after she agreed, however, she continued to live in Meridian, commuting the two hundred miles back and forth to Pensacola. "I said to myself," Paula later related, "I'll keep my apartment [in Meridian] and if Pensacola doesn't like me, I'll get in my car and go home. If I don't like Pensacola, I'll do the same thing. But we got along famously."⁸² Her responsibilities at Beth-El included leading Friday night and holiday services, performing various pastoral duties and life-cycle events, and teaching the five students in the confirmation class.⁸³

San Carlos Hotel, Pensacola, Florida.

Ackerman rented an apartment here when she returned to Pensacola.

This historic hotel was at the northwest corner of Garden and Palofox in downtown Pensacola from 1918 until it was torn down in the middle 1990s.

(Courtesy Pensapedia: The Pensacola Encyclopedia.)

Conclusion and Epilogue

Ackerman continued to live in Meridian until January 1970. During the late 1960s, she lived in a hotel across the street from the county court house. When the hotel was sold at the end of 1969, she decided to rent an apartment at the San Carlos Hotel in Pensacola, the same hotel where she used to go to formal dances as a girl and where her parents had lived for many years. Before she left Meridian, Beth Israel held a farewell dinner and a special Friday evening service in her honor. The temple sisterhood presented her with a beautiful gold and pearl pin. Over a decade later, when the San Carlos closed, she moved to Georgia, first to Atlanta and then to Thomaston, so as to be closer to Bill and Anne who had relocated to these communities.

Over twenty-five years ago, I was an assistant professor of religion at Emory University in Atlanta. One evening, I was at dinner with some friends, including Alvin Sugarman, rabbi at The Temple (formally, The Temple-Hebrew Benevolent Congregation) and a Ph.D. candidate at Emory, and Alvin's wife, Barbara. Knowing of my research and writing on Jewish women, Barbara, who was from Meridian and belonged to Temple Beth Israel as a child, turned to me and asked: "Ellen, do you know Paula Ackerman?" I remember saying, "I don't know Paula Ackerman, but if you mean Mrs. William Ackerman, who served as spiritual leader of Temple Beth Israel in Meridian, Mississippi, I know of her." In fact, several years before, I had included her in a book chapter I wrote on female Jewish religious leaders. "Well," Barbara continued, "she's alive and well and living in Atlanta." With Barbara Sugarman's help, I arranged to meet Ackerman, an opportunity that led to a friendship that lasted over four years until Paula Ackerman's death in January 1989.

In those years, I found Paula Ackerman to be a remarkable human being. It was easy to see why she was so beloved and admired by her community. What I remember most about her was her kindness, generosity of spirit, and deep and abiding faith. Indeed, I have never met a Jew, before or since, who spoke about talking to God as easily and unselfconsciously as Paula Ackerman. Thus, I am not at all surprised that her response to the invitation

*Paula Ackerman at home in Thomaston, Georgia, in October 1986.
At the time of this photo, taken by the author, Ackerman was 92 years old.
(Courtesy of Ellen Umansky.)*

to serve as spiritual leader of Temple Beth Israel was a religious one. As she told the congregation's members: "I have considered [this offer] carefully and prayerfully and I feel that in accepting it, I am answering the call of God whom, I have loved, trusted, and served throughout my entire life."⁸⁴ In so doing, she helped pave the way for the future rabbinic ordination of women.

In 1986, at my instigation, the UAHC agreed to formally recognize Paula Ackerman's contribution to Reform Judaism as spiritual leader of Temple Beth Israel from 1951 until 1953 and Temple Beth El in Pensacola from January to June of 1962. At a special Shabbat service held at The Temple in Atlanta on April 18, 1986, I paid formal tribute to Paula Ackerman, and Rabbi Malcolm Stern, representing the UAHC, presented the then ninety-two year old Paula with a plaque acknowledging her pioneering achievements. The Temple's sanctuary was filled with congregants,

friends, and family who drove to Atlanta from Pensacola, Meridian, and Thomaston. It was at that service that I met Morele Kay Rosenfeld, Sydney Kay's daughter. Thirty-eight years earlier, in December 1951, Paula had officiated at Morele's wedding to Lewis Rosenfeld. It was apparently the first wedding at which Paula officiated in Meridian (earlier, she co-officiated at two weddings, including one at Temple Emanu-El in New York City). While rabbis who were friends of the Kay family volunteered to officiate at Morele's wedding, Sydney Kay responded that he and his wife, Sylvia, would be honored to have them as guests, but Paula would officiate.⁸⁵

In assessing Paula Ackerman's historical significance, historian Stuart Rockoff has astutely noted that, for the members of Congregation Beth Israel, Ackerman's assumption of religious leadership was more of a conservative move than a radical change. The Meridian Jewish community had long prided itself on fitting in, "on being a respected and accepted part of Meridian society." As one Meridian Jew told Rockoff, "society in this city is based on 'who you are, not where you pray.'" Jews in Meridian, Rockoff continues,

were somebody in Meridian; they played a key role in the creation and development of the city. . . . And yet, like Jews through the South, there was always some sense of anxiety, of being different from the mainstream, a fear of sticking out too much. Having the "right kind" of rabbi was essential for a community like Meridian. This meant someone who would be an active part of the larger community, who would forge working and even personal relationships with the ministers of the leading churches in town. . . . They expected their rabbi to be a representative of the Jewish community that they could trust to interact with other civic and religious leaders and above all, to fit in. . . . William Ackerman was the right kind of rabbi for Meridian. And when she was the rabbi's wife, Paula Ackerman also performed this role beautifully. So when Rabbi Ackerman died, Jewish leaders turned to someone they could trust to follow in his footsteps.

My research on Paula Ackerman bears out Rockoff's assessment. Congregational minutes reveal that in 1952, at least one applicant for the rabbinic position at Beth Israel was rejected by

the search committee because he was foreign-born and spoke with an eastern European accent.⁸⁶ As one member of the committee told the UAHC official with whom he met, the congregation was looking for someone who was American by education and birth. They were also looking for a rabbi who would remain “personally aloof” from, and agree not to speak publicly on such political issues as segregation, race relations generally, and Zionism, pro or con. Then again, black civil rights was not nearly the hot topic it became after 1954 and the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of the Supreme Court or during the Montgomery bus boycott. The committee reported back to the board of trustees that they had made it clear to the UAHC that these were among “the important personal characteristics” that they were looking for in a rabbi.⁸⁷ While apparently, they had been told by the UAHC that finding someone who fit these requirements would be difficult, they knew that Paula Ackerman fit each of them.

Like them and like most members of the congregation, Ackerman had spent all of her life in the segregated South. While Jews later took an active role in carrying out integration in Meridian (leading to the bombing of Beth Israel’s education building by members of the Ku Klux Klan in 1968), during the early 1950s most avoided taking a public stance. Until then, it seems that the only blacks Paula personally knew or had known, were those that worked or had worked for her family or their friends. During Paula’s youth, her family had black maids and cooks. When her son, Billy, was born in Natchez, she hired what she later described as a “mammy nurse” for him.⁸⁸ By the time I met Paula in 1984, she saw racial integration as an example of how the South had changed since her childhood, but not as something substantially different from the increasing social integration of Christians and Jews, of which there was very little during her years growing up in Pensacola, and which remained restricted in Mississippi and elsewhere in the United States up through and beyond the 1950s. As a congregational leader, Ackerman’s focus was not on politics but on spirituality. Her sermons were on personal religion, drawing on Jewish and non-Jewish texts to awaken within her listeners an awareness of the presence of God. Nonetheless, the role that

Ackerman assumed as leader of Beth Israel was pioneering, something recognized at the time by her, Sydney Kay, the congregation, her supporters, and her critics. Even if it took the UAHC over thirty years to formally recognize her achievements, she paved the way for women in the American Reform rabbinate and demonstrated ways in which the Reform movement's theoretical commitment to women's equality could become a reality. During the years in which Ackerman served as spiritual leader of Beth Israel and later Beth-El, Reform rabbis knew of her work and on the whole accepted her. In fact, she was included among the Reform rabbis who marched in the processional at the dedication of the UAHC's new headquarters in Manhattan, the House of Living Judaism, in 1951.⁸⁹ Although for decades that work went largely unrecorded, Ackerman today is recognized as a significant figure in the history of Reform Judaism in the United States and in American Jewish history in general.

NOTES

¹ She was not, however, the first woman to become spiritual leader of an American Jewish congregation. That distinction belongs to Tehilla Lichtenstein, who in 1938 succeeded her husband, Rabbi Morris Lichtenstein, as leader of the Society of Jewish Science in New York City.

² Paula Ackerman, "Report to the Annual Meeting of Congregation Beth Israel, Meridian, Miss.," November 11, 1951, attached to minutes of Congregation Beth Israel.

³ *Time*, January 22, 1951.

⁴ As Paula Ackerman later remembered: "I was born by accident in New York City . . . We were living in Pensacola and there was a yellow fever scare and my mother was very pregnant with me and my father insisted that she get away from Pensacola and . . . she went to New York where my grandmother lived . . . I was born on the seventh of December, 1893, in my grandmother's home." When Paula was six weeks old, she and her mother returned by train to Pensacola. She spent her childhood in Pensacola with the exception of a brief time (c. 1899) in New York City with her mother and brothers (she was enrolled in kindergarten/first grade) while her father was in Cuba. Paula Ackerman, inter-

view conducted by Roseann Mann, Pensacola, FL, 1981. My deepest thanks to Roseann Mann for sending her copious pages of interview notes to me.

⁵ In his memoir *The Peddler's Grandson: Growing Up Jewish in Mississippi*, Edward Cohen writes about his grandfather, who interestingly enough also came to the United States from Vaslui, Romania, without his parents in the late 1880s and settled in the South. Edward Cohen, *The Peddler's Grandson: Growing Up Jewish in Mississippi* (Jackson, MS, 1991).

⁶ Paula Ackerman interview conducted by Ellen M. Umansky, February 21, 1985, Atlanta, (also told by Paula Ackerman to Roseann Mann. Ackerman interview by Mann).

⁷ Although according to Paula Ackerman, later in her life, her mother came to enjoy bacon, so much so that "she had to have it . . . though she was on a salt-free, sugar-free diet. We had to boil out the bacon, to take out the salt and the sugar so she could have it. And my father, who never could stand the smell of it, he used to laugh at her . . . I laughed at her [too] because she was so orthodox when I was a little girl." Ackerman interview by Umansky, February 21, 1985.

⁸ Ackerman interview by Umansky, February 21, 1985.

⁹ See Henry A. Green and Marcia Kerstein Zerivitz, *Mosaic: Jewish Life in Florida* (Coral Gables, FL, 1992).

¹⁰ As adults, Jennings and Toby legally changed their last names from Herskovitz to Hertz.

¹¹ Ackerman interview by Umansky, February 21, 1985.

¹² It's unclear whether her family actually needed the additional income, since Paula later told me that she had "trained servants" her whole life (as a child, during her married life, and after). In her interview with Mann, she said that although her family was not wealthy, they belonged to the Progress Club, a Jewish social club in Pensacola, where she particularly enjoyed the annual Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve dances and Purim and debutante balls. Progressive Clubs, such as the one in Pensacola, existed throughout the United States as the eastern European counterpart to the Jewish Standard Clubs created by German Jews and exclusive clubs created by non-Jews. Paula described the dress she wore for her debut at eighteen as pale yellow with a gray velvet sash with gray beads in the front. She told Mann that her father was in the "ready to wear business" and had a department store downtown, which apparently closed years later. "My father," she said, "carried the prettiest dresses in town. There was a [New York] designer who made them. Her name was Ray (sp?) Winn, and she made the dress especially for the occasion." She also described to Mann several "happy dinner dances" that she attended at the elegant San Carlos Hotel, which opened in 1910 (it closed in 1982 and was demolished eleven years later).

¹³ Ackerman interview by Mann.

¹⁴ "Natchez, Mississippi," in the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, at <http://www.msje.org/history/archive/ms/natchez.htm> (accessed August 10, 2010.)

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ackerman interview by Umansky, February 21, 1985.

¹⁸ The Ackermans named their son William Joseph Ackerman, Jr. He was given his middle name after Paula's father Joseph (who was still alive). According to Paula, her husband took the middle name Joseph shortly before their son's birth, so that Billy could be a "junior" (thus becoming William Joseph Ackerman, Sr.). Ackerman interview by Mann. While Jews of central and eastern European descent (Ashkenazim) do not traditionally name their children after living relatives, this is a custom, not a law. Twentieth century American Ashkenazim named "junior" include Reform Rabbi Julian B. Feibelman of Philadelphia and, later, New Orleans.

¹⁹ "Meridian," in Leo E. Turitz and Evelyn Turitz, *Jews in Early Mississippi* (Jackson, MS, 1983), 89.

²⁰ See Shuly Rubin Schwartz, *The Rabbi's Wife: The Rebbetzin in American Jewish Life* (New York, 2006). See pages 101–113 for a detailed description of Rebecca Brickner.

²¹ The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (NFTS) is now known as the Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ).

²² Schwartz, *The Rabbi's Wife*, 161.

²³ Pamela Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination, 1889–1985* (Boston, 1998), 121.

²⁴ I knew Jane Evans for over twenty years, and on several occasions, both formally and informally, spoke to her about her work as executive director of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. I can attest to her tireless energy, deep religious faith, and commitment to Reform Judaism. She remained actively involved in the UAHC, the World Union for Progressive Judaism, and the Jewish Braille Institute, which she founded, until shortly before her death in 2001, at the age of 96. She told me that the establishment of the House of Living Judaism in 1950 at 838 Fifth Avenue in New York City—resulting in the UAHC moving its headquarters from Cincinnati to New York—was her idea and that NFTS raised most of the funds.

²⁵ Ackerman interview by Umansky, February 21, 1985.

²⁶ "History of Congregations Beth Israel and Ohel Jacob, Meridian, Mississippi," in the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities, at <http://msje.org/history/archive/ms/HistoryofMeridianCongregations.htm> (accessed August 10, 2010.)

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Mark K. Bauman, "Role Theory and History: The Illustration of Ethnic Brokerage in the Atlanta Jewish Community in an Era of Transition and Conflict," in Bauman, ed., *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History* (Tuscaloosa, 2006), 242.

²⁹ Ackerman interview by Mann.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Sydney Kay to Maurice Eisendrath, December 10, 1950, Paula Ackerman Papers, Jacob Rader Marcus Center, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati (hereafter cited as Ackerman Papers, AJA).

³² Nadell, *Women Who Would Be Rabbis*, 82. See also Nadell's discussion of Helen Levinthal Lyons's work after she left JJR and her subsequent attempts to receive ordination, pages 108–112.

³³ *Ibid.*, 108.

³⁴ Kay to Eisendrath, December 10, 1950. By 1950, Paula Ackerman knew most of the Orthodox Jews in Meridian, including those who were not members of Beth Israel, as she and her husband always attended services on the second day of Rosh Hashanah at Ohel Jacob (which disbanded in 1990). As she later told Roseann Mann, she continued to do so even after her husband's death. Ackerman interview by Mann.

³⁵ Kay to Eisendrath, December 10, 1950.

³⁶ See Ellen M. Umansky, *Lily Montagu and the Advancement of Liberal Judaism: From Vision to Vocation* (Lewiston, NY, 1983); Ellen M. Umansky, ed., *Lily Montagu: Sermons, Addresses, Letters and Prayers* (Lewiston, NY, 1985); Ellen M. Umansky, *From Christian Science to Jewish Science: Spiritual Healing and American Jews* (New York, 2005).

³⁷ Paula Ackerman, cited in William J. Ackerman, Jr., "Footsteps," unpublished manuscript about his mother, 2004. The type of positive interaction and blurring of lines between traditionally religious and liberal Jews that the Ackermans found in both Natchez and Meridian is discussed by Lee Shai Weissbach and Leonard Rogoff in their books and articles on life among small town Jews. See, for example, Lee Shai Weissbach, "East European Immigrants and the Image of Jews in the Small-Town South" in *Dixie Diaspora*, ed. Mark K. Bauman, 108–142; Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven, 2005); and Leonard Rogoff, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, 2010).

³⁸ Paula Ackerman to Ben Gallob, managing editor of the [Indianapolis] *National Jewish Post*, January 12, 1951. This letter was written in response to a letter Gallob had sent her a day earlier. Ackerman Papers, AJA.

³⁹ Ackerman interview by Umansky, February 21, 1985.

⁴⁰ Paula Ackerman, "A New Year or Another Year," Sermon delivered Erev Rosh Hashanah, September 19, 1952, Temple Beth Israel, Meridian, MS, from small loose leaf with sermons, newspaper clippings, and handwritten notes. My thanks to William Ackerman, Jr., for sharing this loose leaf with me, which he later sent to the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience in Jackson, Mississippi. William Ackerman, Jr., died on February 2, 2007, in Ft. Myers, Florida, where he lived with his wife, Anne. Two weeks after his death, a memorial service was held in Meridian (where he had practiced dentistry for over twenty years) at Temple Beth Israel.

⁴¹ Paula Ackerman to Jacob Schwarz, December 12, 1950, Ackerman papers, AJA.

⁴² Jacob Schwarz to Paula Ackerman, December 20, 1950, Ackerman Papers, AJA.

⁴³ Maurice Eisendrath to Sidney [sic] Kay, December 12, 1950. Ackerman Papers, AJA.

⁴⁴ Sydney Kay to Maurice Eisendrath, January 11, 1951, Ackerman Papers, AJA.

⁴⁵ Paula Ackerman to Nelson Glueck, January 11, 1951, Ackerman Papers, AJA.

⁴⁶ Paula Ackerman to Jacob Schwarz, January 23, 1951, Ackerman Papers, AJA.

⁴⁷ UAHC Press Release, "Rabbi Maurice N. Eisendrath Denies Approving Appointment of Woman Rabbi," January 15, 1951, Ackerman Papers, AJA.

⁴⁸ Jacob Schwarz to Paula Ackerman, January 26, 1951, Ackerman papers, AJA.

⁴⁹ Maurice N. Eisendrath to Sidney [sic] Kay, January 19, 1951, Ackerman papers, AJA.

⁵⁰ Paula Ackerman to "Dear Friend" (written to Jacob Schwarz, whom she often addressed as "Dear Friend"), January 9, 1951, Ackerman papers, AJA. This letter and several others written by Ackerman from mid December, 1950, through January, 1951, are reprinted in Shuly Rubin Schwartz's "From Rebbetzin to Rabbi: The Journey of Paula Ackerman," *American Jewish Archives Journal* (2007): 96-106.

⁵¹ Schwartz, "From Rebbetzin to Rabbi," 101.

⁵² Interestingly, Ackerman privately referred to her position as that of "rabbi." She wrote: "There is no congregation in the whole country that I'd even consider serving as 'Rabbi' except Meridian where Bill and I worked together so happily for 27 years." Paula Ackerman to Jacob Schwarz, January 9, 1951.

⁵³ Ackerman interview by Mann.

⁵⁴ Sydney Kay to Maurice Eisendrath, January 29, 1951, Ackerman papers, AJA.

⁵⁵ Minutes, Congregation Beth Israel. Annual congregational meeting, January 26, 1951. My thanks to Stuart Rockoff for sending a copy of the board of trustees and congregational minutes from January 21, 1951, to October 26, 1952, to me.

⁵⁶ Sydney Kay to Maurice Eisendrath, January 29, 1951.

⁵⁷ *Meridian Star*, January 21, 1951, Ackerman Papers, AJA.

⁵⁸ "Jewish Church May OK Women Rabbis," *Cincinnati Post*, January 11, 1951, Ackerman Papers, AJA.

⁵⁹ *Time*, January 22, 1951, clipping in Ackerman Papers, AJA.

⁶⁰ Stuart Rockoff, "'Not to Be Taken Lightly': Paula Ackerman & Temple Beth Israel of Meridian, Mississippi," unpublished paper, n.d. My thanks to the author for sending a copy of his paper to me.

⁶¹ Sydney Kay to Mr. A. Slabot, editor, [New Orleans] *Jewish Ledger*, January 23, 1951, Ackerman Papers, AJA.

⁶² Quoted in Ackerman, Jr., "Footsteps," 51. Kate Smith, who was born in Virginia, was dubbed "The Songbird of the South." She is best known for her rendition of "God Bless America," which Irving Berlin wrote for her in 1938. She also had a successful radio, television, and broadcasting career.

⁶³ Ackerman interview by Mann.

⁶⁴ Tamar was also the sister of Tehilla Lichtenstein, who served as leader of the Society of Jewish Science from 1938-1973 with the public support of both Tamar and her husband, David.

⁶⁵ In describing the letter, Ackerman stated that Mrs. Pool wanted her to know that she would have won the award had she had more than one child (apparently the woman who won "had six or seven children . . . [which] entered into their decision." Ackerman interview by Mann.

⁶⁶ Walter Jacob, "Samuel H. Goldenson," in *Reform Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook*, ed. Kerry M. Olitzky, Lance J. Sussman, and Malcolm H. Stern (Westport, CT, 1993), 73.

⁶⁷ Samuel Goldenson to Sydney Kay, January 30, 1951. On page 163 of her book, *The Rabbi's Wife*, Shuly Rubin Schwartz incorrectly identifies Eisendrath as author of this letter. Paula Ackerman gave me a copy of this letter signed by S. H. Goldenson.

⁶⁸ Ackerman, Jr., "Footsteps," 54.

⁶⁹ Paula Ackerman, "Reserve Resources," cited in Ackerman, Jr., "Footsteps," 56.

⁷⁰ Cited in Ackerman, Jr., "Footsteps," 55.

⁷¹ Walter Kass to Maurice Eisendrath, March 4, 1951, Ackerman Papers, AJA.

⁷² Ackerman interview by Umansky, February 21, 1985.

⁷³ Paula Ackerman interview conducted by Ellen M. Umansky, November 14, 1984, Atlanta.

⁷⁴ Ackerman, Jr., "Footsteps," 79, 86.

⁷⁵ Quoted in Ackerman, Jr., "Footsteps," 84.

⁷⁶ Ackerman interview by Mann.

⁷⁷ At a special Board meeting held on June 2, 1951, first vice-president and board member Sylvan Straus reported "that a few members of the Congregation wondered, if no rabbi should be employed by the Congregation." The board then discussed this report, and it was pointed out that "only a very small minority may have caused this rumor, as an overwhelming majority is very satisfied with Mrs. Ackerman's appointment and the services she renders." The minutes neither identified the dissatisfied members nor indicated how many this "small minority" might have been. Minutes, Congregation Beth Israel, June 2, 1951.

⁷⁸ Why such a committee was formed when so few members favored the board's conducting a rabbinic search is unclear. Although board minutes indicate that the committee was formed after its June 2, 1951, meeting, the committee's report to the congregation on October 26, 1952, indicated that the committee had "been actively engaged [albeit unsuccessfully] in searching for a qualified and satisfactory Reform Rabbi for our congregation" for "the past two years" (in any case, an overstatement, since William Ackerman died at the end of November, 1950). "Report of Pulpit Committee Congregation Beth Israel," October 26, 1952, saved with Minutes, Congregation Beth Israel Archives, Meridian.

⁷⁹ Minutes, Congregation Beth Israel, October 26, 1952, AJA.

⁸⁰ Ackerman interviews by Umansky, November 14, 1984 and February 21, 1985.

⁸¹ After twenty years of practicing dentistry in Meridian, Bill and Anne moved to central Georgia, where he had a dental practice for twenty-five years. Consequently, in 1970 (around the time that they moved), Paula moved to the Jewish Tower in Atlanta, an independent and assisted living facility. At the time, and for many years after, her brother, Jennings, lived in Atlanta as well.

⁸² Ackerman interview by Umansky, November 14, 1984.

⁸³ Ackerman interview by Mann.

⁸⁴ Quoted in Ackerman, Jr., "Footsteps," 51.

⁸⁵ Morele Kay Rosenfeld to Ellen M. Umansky, February 21, 1990.

⁸⁶ In light of the fact that Rabbi Ackerman was born in Hungary, the objection of the committee seems to have been that the applicant (unlike Bill Ackerman and his predecessors) was not fully Americanized.

⁸⁷ "Report of Pulpit Committee Congregation Beth Israel," October 26, 1952.

⁸⁸ Ackerman interview by Umansky, February 21, 1985.

⁸⁹ Ackerman, "Report to the Annual Meeting of Congregation Beth Israel," November 11, 1951.

A Southern Senator and Israel:
Senator J. William Fulbright's
Accusations of Undue Influence over
American Foreign Policy
in the Middle East

by

Arlene Lazarowitz *

When J. William Fulbright (D-AR) chaired the influential Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 1959 to 1974, he was an exacting critic of American policies in the Middle East, especially America's relationship with Israel. Members of the small Arkansas Jewish community disapproved of Fulbright's assertions that the American Jewish community and Israel dictated Middle East foreign policies. Historians have not addressed the question of whether or not southern Jews influenced their representatives. This essay offers a case study of a United States senator from Arkansas, of his position on Israel, an issue of critical interest to Jews, of his opposition to what he perceived as an all-powerful Jewish/Israeli lobby, and of local Jewish responses.

Arkansas's Jewish Community

Few Jews lived in Fayetteville, a town in the southern foothills of the Ozark Mountains in northwestern Arkansas, when Fulbright, who was born in 1905, was growing up in an affluent area of the town. By the time that Fulbright was in his teens, only two Jewish families, both merchants, lived in Fayetteville. An economics professor and well-regarded legal scholar, Julian Waterman, began teaching at the University of Arkansas's flagship campus in Fayetteville in 1914. In his formative years,

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Fulbright's relationship with Jews was limited. Ironically, given the charges of antisemitism that were later levied against him, it was Waterman's own perceptions of antisemitism that may have helped Fulbright secure his first prominent position. In 1939 the University of Arkansas faculty preferred that Waterman, by then dean of the law school, be appointed president of the university. Waterman, according to Fulbright, refused the trustee's offer because "he felt that as a Jew he would be subject to prejudice which was much worse in those days." Others in Fayetteville, including Waterman's wife and a family friend, believed that the university trustees never offered the position to him. They conjectured that the university's failure to offer the position greatly saddened him. Fulbright believed that Waterman recommended that the future senator be appointed president, a position he held until he was terminated two years later by the newly elected state governor. Waterman was named vice-president. Although Fulbright was shunned in the university community after removal from the presidency, Waterman was one of those who remained loyal to him. Not until the 1960s, when Fulbright spent little time in Fayetteville, did Jews arrive in the area in larger numbers as managers of the rapidly developing industry or as professors at the university. But even then, the Jewish community remained small.¹

During Fulbright's tenure as a national politician, the center of Arkansas's Jewish community was Little Rock, the state capital, where the community of approximately fourteen hundred had been a substantial presence in the business and professional realm for decades. Their income, social position, and role in civic affairs relied on their connections with the white gentile majority.

During the early 1950s, a distinct increase in antisemitic literature connected the civil rights movement with a Soviet-Communist-Zionist conspiracy. With notable exceptions, Little Rock Jews, fearful for their livelihoods, did not challenge the segregationist southern tradition. Some southern rabbis and a few other Jews provided leadership in the civil rights struggle, sometimes even jeopardizing southern Jews. Nevertheless, the level of engagement in civil rights did not determine whether or not a

*J. William Fulbright, 1968.
(Courtesy of J. William Fulbright Papers,
Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.)*

synagogue would be bombed or threatened with bombing. In Little Rock, Rabbi Ira E. Sanders led the quest for racial justice. The members of his Reform congregation, B'nai Israel, the largest in Little Rock, supported his activities. Although most Little Rock Jews sent their children to suburban high schools, about sixty-five Reform Jewish women in the city rendered a significant civil rights service in the controversy over the 1957 desegregation of Central High School. Although they had to relinquish public leadership roles to avoid antisemitic repercussions, they were particularly active in the Women's Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools after the public schools were closed in the aftermath of the altercations at the high school. Worried about boycotts of their businesses and professional offices, their husbands remained silent. A majority of the Jewish community viewed civil rights activism as reckless.²

Ironically, a southern Jew helped shape and clarify Fulbright's views on race in the South in the 1950s. A millionaire department store owner from Mississippi and an accomplished writer about the American South, David Cohn became a trusted Fulbright aide. In 1944, he wrote that any attempt to change "the social segregation of the races" by law would lead to violence. Although the problem was "incapable of solution," and "the issue of segregation must not be called into question," the "Negro question," except for "social segregation" might "be gradually adjusted or removed through the exercise of patience, wisdom, and good will on both sides." Fulbright's stance on civil rights reflected these views. By 1957, he favored peaceful school integration and was embarrassed by the ridicule the confrontation brought to Arkansas. Yet, he remained silent until 1957, when he filed an *amicus curiae* brief with the United States Supreme Court on behalf of the Little Rock school board that called for delay, the essence of Cohn's stand.³ Sanders and Fulbright may have wanted the same outcome, but their motives differed. Sanders was genuinely concerned about the difficulties that African Americans faced in Little Rock, while Fulbright focused on the national and international image of the state he represented.

On the subject of Israel, however, Arkansas's Jewish community was more united. As will be seen, the small, but influential, Little Rock community made repeated and unsuccessful attempts to elicit Fulbright's support on Israel's behalf.⁴

Julian Waterman.

*(Courtesy of the J. William Fulbright Papers,
Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.)*

J. William Fulbright and Middle East Foreign Policy

Foreign affairs defined Fulbright's political career. Even after he left the Senate, Fulbright continued his keen interest in foreign policy into the 1990s. The focus here is on his approach to the Middle East, during a period in which the United States was determined to keep the politically and militarily unstable region within the American security and economic sphere of influence, while denying access to the Soviet Union.

At Oxford University, where Fulbright studied as a Rhodes Scholar, he savored the intellectual atmosphere, so different from his native Fayetteville. Oxford was markedly unlike the University of Arkansas, with its emphasis on agriculture, where he studied as an undergraduate. He acquired a strong interest in foreign affairs through extensive travel in Europe and Asia. While he continued to represent a southern state, this interest informed his career in national politics. Some congressional colleagues would resent his air of certitude about foreign policy and his inclination to lecture.⁵

Elected to the House of Representatives in 1942, Fulbright became a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, where he displayed an internationalist outlook. The single House term was best represented by his introduction in 1943 of what is known as the Fulbright Resolution, an appeal for American membership in a postwar collective security organization. After his election to the Senate in 1944, he originated the international scholar and cultural exchange program that bears his name.

Once Fulbright joined the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1949, committee hearings, numerous speeches, and articles he wrote for popular and scholarly publications provided him forums for his opinions. From his perspective, although Congress was not prepared to manage the administrative details of foreign policy-making generally handled by the White House, Congress did play a constructive role in formulating solutions to long-range problems including those in foreign policy. Not only could Congress serve as a debating forum, he thought it should also introduce new proposals, while serving as a platform to launch

and debate new directions. In his role as a dissenter on foreign policy matters, such as the war in Vietnam and American policies in the Middle East, Fulbright was able to use his influential post to affect public discourse.⁶ The notice he drew from his forceful opposition to American involvement in Vietnam provided him with the prominence to draw attention to other foreign policy matters of intense concern for him.

A highly regarded voice in the foreign policy field, Fulbright held complex and often contradictory convictions. Initially a dedicated liberal internationalist, he would become an opponent of American commitments abroad. After World War II he assailed presidential use of foreign policy prerogatives and contended that American overseas commitments were too far-reaching. While not an isolationist, Fulbright now argued for a careful balance of obligations abroad. Support for Israel's survival should not be the same as open-ended backing of the foreign policy actions of the Israeli government, where, from his perspective, they conflicted with American national interests.

The Zionist notion of a Jewish homeland in the Middle East won early support on Capitol Hill. Congress unanimously supported the Balfour Declaration of 1917, the British promise of free immigration and a homeland for Jews in Palestine, part of the Ottoman Empire granted to Great Britain at the conclusion of World War I. The Democratic and Republican Party platforms also reflected this sentiment beginning in 1944, when they included planks favoring a Jewish homeland. By passing pro-Zionist resolutions and sending letters to the White House, Congress played a role in the formation of American policies toward a future Zionist state. However, this limited aid was restricted by the constitutional foreign policy powers reserved to the executive branch, made more powerful by White House assertions of its foreign policy prerogatives especially in the postwar period. Congress played a constraining or modulating role, but ultimately did not determine policy.⁷ Fulbright thought that United States policies had become subservient to Israeli demands and was determined to use congressional authority to alter America's relationship with Israel.

Fulbright's scrutiny raised central questions during a period when the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon administrations reevaluated and fundamentally transformed the American relationship with Israel and the Arab countries. In addition to apprehensions about Soviet attempts to bring the Arab nations, especially Egypt, into the Soviet orbit, the United States wished to promote regional security as well as avert an arms race and the possibility of nuclear proliferation in this unstable region. Ensuring Western access to the substantial Middle East oil reserves always remained a prominent and urgent priority.

Middle East policies were intertwined with the cold war. While Fulbright's views about Israel would remain consistent, his attitude toward the Soviet Union evolved. In the immediate post-World War II period, he was a strident cold war internationalist, supporting increased presidential powers to use American power and influence to contain the Soviet Union, which he viewed as the patron of every revolutionary movement.

In 1959 when Fulbright assumed the Foreign Policy Committee chairmanship, American policy toward Israel was in flux. Safeguarding American economic and security interests in the region and unspecified assurances to safeguard Israeli independence remained the only constants. Although the Truman administration recognized the new state of Israel in 1948, it embargoed arms shipments when Israel came under siege from its Arab neighbors. The Eisenhower administration continued this precedent of refusing the sale of armaments to Israel, a void filled by France and England. The Soviet Union broke diplomatic relations with Israel in 1954, recognizing that it had nothing to gain from Zionism, that Israel was in the American camp. Moscow then sought closer ties with the Arab states, especially those close to its vulnerable southern border. Meanwhile, American Middle East strategy was also designed to improve relations with the Arab states. Jewish groups, making their first attempts to unite into a political force in support of Israel, were still largely ineffective and had little influence in the Eisenhower administration. In the 1956 Suez crisis, the administration aligned with the Soviet Union to censure Israel's participation in the assault on the canal

*Senator Fulbright with President John F. Kennedy,
at the White House.*

*(Courtesy of the J. William Fulbright Papers,
Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.)*

zone. The administration objective was to keep Israel at a distance, primarily due to concerns about an Arab-Soviet alliance and Western access to oil. The Kennedy administration modified this stance by selling Hawk defensive weapon systems to Israel, as well as assuring Israel of American assistance if the Arab nations invaded.⁸

A decisive policy change followed. The Johnson administration sold tanks and other military hardware to Israel that it justified as defensive in nature, although A-1 Skyhawk attack aircraft, F-4 Phantom jet fighters, and Patton M-48 tanks, which

could easily be modified to be virtually identical to the newer American M-60 tanks, were offensive weapons. Johnson acknowledged "a deep feeling of sympathy for Israel and its people," and enjoyed close ties with American Jews. After Israel's decisive military victory in the 1967 Arab-Israeli Six-Day's War, America replaced France as the major supplier of sophisticated military equipment to Israel, and American support for Israel expanded significantly. The regional balancing act tilted toward Israel, and a patron-client relationship solidified and reinforced the relationship between the two nations. The Yom Kippur War in October 1973, in which Israel struggled to recover from a surprise Egyptian and Syrian attack, gave the Nixon administration the opportunity to reassert American leverage in the region and undermine Soviet influence, at the same time that it deferred for future peace settlements the complicated issue of the rights of the Palestinian people displaced in this conflict.⁹

Until 1974 because of his powerful Senate committee chairmanship, Fulbright's objections compelled successive administrations, American Jews, and the Israeli government to respond to his charges, even when he could not alter administration decisions. In 1969, for example, he complained to Secretary of State William P. Rogers about the planned transfer of Joseph C. Sisco from his post as a United States representative to the United Nations to a position as Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asian Affairs at the State Department. He thought the move would offend Arabs, who perceived Sisco as demonstrating "a very strong bias in favor of Israel," a charge that would complicate peace efforts in the Middle East. Fulbright's prediction was mistaken. Sisco tried to persuade Israel to withdraw from the territory it acquired in the 1967 War, while he aimed to convince Arab nations that the United States sought to be evenhanded.¹⁰

Lobbying and United States-Israeli Relations

Especially in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the establishment of Israel in 1948, American Jews focused on the development of American foreign policy toward the Middle East. This well-educated, relatively small ethnic group, less than 3 per-

cent of the population, disproportionately participated in politics as voters, activists, and generous contributors to candidates, political parties, and special-interest organizations. A relatively united post-state American Zionist movement developed over time and sporadically. Government-sponsored violent antisemitism in Europe and disclosure of the horrors of the Holocaust weakened American Jewish opposition to Zionism and the position of such groups as the American Council for Judaism, the only Jewish organization whose primary purpose was opposition to Zionism. The organization retained some influence with the Eisenhower administration, but that access faded in the Kennedy administration. After the 1967 War, anti-Zionism among Jews generally ceased. In judging political candidates and the decisions of policy makers, many Jews vigilantly monitored perceived threats to Israel's survival and lobbied to counteract such actions. Support for Israel's security and welfare informed their voting behavior. Concentrated in pivotal electoral states, they could influence the outcome of a close election. These politically interested people and numerous Jewish organizations exerted an indirect influence on policy, one that continually irritated Fulbright.¹¹

In 1954, American Jewish leaders, concerned about what they considered the pro-Arab leaning of the State Department and the indifference of the Eisenhower administration, organized the American Zionist Committee for Public Affairs (AZCPA), under the leadership of I. L. Kenen, as the only official American lobbying group for Israel. Although Kenen stressed that the AZCPA was not an agent of a foreign government, the informal relationship was substantial, a point not lost on Fulbright. Reorganized in 1959 as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) as a domestic lobby, the organization increased its effectiveness in associating American national interests with those of Israel. Because AZCPA had come under scrutiny as an agent of a foreign government, AIPAC argued that it represented the American Jewish community and had no official relationship with the Israeli government.¹² Fulbright was aware of the close connection between AIPAC and the Israeli government.

Had these interest groups not emerged and gained strength in the 1950s and 1960s, the American response to Israeli requests for financial and military assistance may not have been as substantial. Members of Congress were responsive to their financial and electoral influence. Campaign contributions, as well as research analysis and assistance, could and did affect congressional foreign aid allocations. AIPAC experienced more success lobbying Congress than the White House, where it had less access. Congressional support for Israel's requests transcended regional and party divisions. Not all of Israel's supporters represented areas with large Jewish populations. AIPAC staff members monitored congressional debates, constantly mindful of problems as well as opportunities to garner support. The organization became alarmed, for example, in 1969, when Secretary of State William Rogers proposed a plan for Israel to withdraw from the lands it acquired in the 1967 war. AIPAC persuaded a majority in Congress to pass resolutions opposing the measure. Although other factors, such as an Egyptian military buildup and Soviet involvement in the region, persuaded the administration not to pursue the Rogers Plan, solid congressional support for Israel was persuasive, especially as a political gauge of public support for Israel. AIPAC also assisted congressional staffs with current and relevant material about the region from a pro-Israel perspective through *Near East Report*, a weekly newsletter, and the research papers and memoranda it sent to members of Congress, as well as to other policy and opinion makers. Furthermore, AIPAC effectively used a communications network of letters, telegrams, and telephone calls to grass roots supporters and other Jewish organizations, asking them to contact members of Congress. One of those organizations, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, formed in 1954 by thirty-eight constituent organizations, provided a prominent voice for all of its members. The main contact between the executive branch and the Jewish community, it served as a liaison between its constituents and the White House, although it was less effective than AIPAC in influencing foreign policy. AIPAC and the Conference of Presidents were the only two pro-Israel registered domestic lobbies.¹³

*Fulbright meeting with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1961.
(Courtesy of the J. William Fulbright Papers,
Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.)*

While Jewish lobbying groups did not create the perception that Israel was a reliable if not always a cooperative and compliant strategic and security asset in the American competition with the Soviets in the Middle East, they employed this impression to their advantage. Fulbright, who supported the Rogers Plan, did not heed the advice of his Jewish constituents. The spiritual leader of the Orthodox congregation in Little Rock, along with members of the congregation, implored Fulbright to speak out against “the grave harm and injustice implicit” in Rogers’ proposal, which they perceived as “the consequence of yielding to hard-line Soviet-Arab demands.”¹⁴

Fulbright, Israel, and American Jews

The early cold war period unfolded as a critical time in the development of United States-Israel relations. Early on, Fulbright directed his attention to the role of special interest groups in forming foreign policy, particularly on what he considered undue American Jewish and Israeli influence on America's role in the Middle East. Although he endorsed the Truman administration's decision to recognize Israel and acknowledged Israel's precarious strategic situation, his repeated requests for what he perceived to be a balanced approach to the region earned him a reputation for being anti-Israel and pro-Arab. In the 1950s, Fulbright used committee hearings to confront Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, criticizing him for being insufficiently concerned about Soviet ambitions in the region. Withdrawing American aid to Egypt for the Aswan Dam project he thought would allow the Soviets to exploit this issue in the Arab world.¹⁵ In 1959, he related to a fellow senator, he had "thought for some time that we should be friendly toward [Egyptian President Gamal] Nasser." He insisted that these perceptions were mistaken, that he did not conceive of himself "as being pro-Arab or anti-Israel, but rather pro-American."¹⁶

In the early 1960s Fulbright turned his attention to the sizable annual congressional subsidy to Israel, a persistent interest that expanded throughout his tenure in the Senate. The imbalance between aid to Israel and to the Arab states troubled him. For example, in the postwar period between 1948 and 1954 American foreign aid to Israel amounted to \$341 million, in contrast to \$12 million to Egypt. In the second Eisenhower administration and in the Kennedy administration, between 1958 and 1964, \$165,996 was appropriated to Israel, while just \$65,700 was allocated to the United Arab Republic (a union of Egypt and Syria). Under the Johnson administration, in 1969 alone aid to Israel amounted to \$40 million, while aid to the United Arab Republic dropped to \$4 million.¹⁷ Fulbright criticized Israeli policies and denounced the strategies of Israel's organized American Jewish supporters. He argued that Americans had "allowed themselves to be drawn to the Israeli side by bonds of sympathy and by the impact of the most powerful and efficient foreign policy lobby in American

politics." These "sentimental and cultural bonds" misled American policy makers to "rationalize our involvement in terms of geopolitical metaphors."¹⁸

Fulbright thought that settling the Arab-Israel dispute would moderate the cold war, which extended to the Middle East during the mid-1950s. Continuing American interest in the region was now assured, since limiting the Soviet sphere of influence was an essential component of the containment policy. Furthermore, another possible source of contention was added to the tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. As with the war in Vietnam, he worried that the situation in the Middle East could lead to a nuclear war. In his search for forces that impeded an Arab-Israeli settlement, he centered on the Israeli government and its American Jewish supporters. Fulbright was determined that long-term American national interests be paramount when Israeli and Arab interests were considered.¹⁹ In numerous committee hearings and in his writings, he focused on this issue. While he recognized Israel's security concerns, he frequently alleged undue congressional support for Israel and what he considered Israeli manipulation of American policies in the Middle East. In the forward to a book that Seth Tillman, his speechwriter, wrote about the Middle East conflict, Fulbright blamed these groups for the American government's failure to use its financial and political power over Israel to achieve a comprehensive peace settlement. He worried that the international community regarded the United States as "responsible for Israeli policy and as the only power which has the capacity to influence that policy."²⁰ This overstatement reflects Fulbright's superficial understanding of this patron-client relationship and the intricacies of the Middle East conflict. He believed that support for Israel was the consequence of domestic politics, while disregarding considerations of balance of power and cold war issues, as well as the need for a reliable strategic ally.

Israel's supporters perceived these critiques as evidence of antisemitism. The charges remained a sensitive issue for the senator. In response to a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, Fulbright's press secretary quoted Fulbright as saying that it was not "fair or accurate to categorize [his] position as anti-Israel,"

since he sought "a more balanced policy in the Middle East." Overall, these were not the tirades of an antisemite or one who hated Israel, but expressions of indignation about what he considered the subordination of American national interests in favor of those of Israel, as well as anxiety about the possibility of a confrontation with the Soviet Union in the Middle East. Fulbright maintained that he understood why memories of the Nazi Holocaust and Arab "talk about 'holy wars' and about throwing the Jews in the sea" made Israel "preoccupied with its survival." While he conceded that the "Israeli conviction of Arab hostility is by no means invention," he insisted, without proof, that there was "a touch of paranoia about it."²¹

Friction grew heated in 1963, as Fulbright directed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to conduct hearings to investigate the Jewish Agency, a registered agent of the Israeli government highly successful in raising funds from wealthy American supporters. He accused the organization of channeling funds thorough the American Zionist Council to establish a favorable climate of public opinion for Israel in the United States. Specifically he alleged that it used more than \$5 million dollars in tax-free donations to the philanthropic United Jewish Appeal, which were recycled back from Israel, then disbursed through "conduits" of the Jewish Agency's American section to shape American opinion and modify United States policies. Fulbright relentlessly reprimanded the B'nai B'rith and AIPAC for activities that Fulbright considered abuses and which by the 1960s had become considerably effective in promoting pro-Israeli legislation in Congress. Although the Kennedy White House, concerned about adverse publicity in the Jewish community as it planned for the 1964 election campaign, attempted to suppress the hearings findings, Fulbright insisted on releasing them. As a result the Foreign Agents Registration Act was amended to regulate the political activities of foreign agents.²² As an American organization, AIPAC would be exempt. By 1961 and the American sponsored invasion of the Bay of Pigs, Fulbright began to have serious questions concerning the malicious nature of Soviet motives. By the mid-1960s he saw possibilities in working with the Soviets to solve the Arab-

Israeli conflict. The 1967 war between Israel and its Arab neighbors signaled for Fulbright the possibility that plans for easing cold war tensions would unravel.

In 1967 Israel faced both a massive Arab military buildup and Egypt's blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba through the Straits of Tiran to ships bound to and from the southern Israeli port of Eilat. The port, Israel's only access to the south, was a vital trade outlet to the Indian Ocean through which Israel received much of its shipping from Africa and Asia. Meanwhile Palestine Liberation Organization fighters in Syria, Lebanon, and the Sinai Peninsula attacked Israeli border towns. In response to these provocations, Israel launched a preemptive strike against its Arab neighbors. Just days before the outbreak of hostilities, Fulbright, a firm supporter of collective security, contended in an NBC *Meet the Press* interview that to avoid a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union over tensions in the Middle East, the crisis should be submitted to the United Nations Security Council because Israel was "the creation of the United Nations." An outbreak of hostilities "could become a hot war as has been going on in the Far East," a reference to the war in Vietnam.²³

Israel's overwhelming victory, one that doubled the nation's size at the expense of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, by bringing East Jerusalem, the West Bank of the Jordan River, the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights under Israeli control, resulted in persisting tensions in the region. United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, passed in November 1967, calling for Israel to relinquish these lands in return for recognition from the Arab states, was a vaguely worded document about which the two sides could not agree. Fulbright incessantly advised American policy-makers to induce Israel to relinquish these Arab lands. In part, this stand reflected concern about appeasing oil producers in the region and, in part, indicated his movement away from internationalism. These oil producers were "basically friendly to the United States," and it would be unsuitable "to involve ourselves as partisans in a quarrel between foreign states that has no direct bearing on the United States." He later characterized Israel's failure to follow his advice, especially its refusal to negotiate the

status of East Jerusalem, as lacking in “flexibility and foresight.” Fulbright recommended that Jerusalem be internationalized.²⁴ While support for Israeli policies shifted, for example, under the Carter administration, Congress and the White House would not concur with Fulbright that the land dispute component of the Arab-Israeli conflict did not directly involve United States interests.²⁵

Fulbright concentrated his attention on the potential military confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union as tension mounted over the Arab-Israeli conflict and the almost simultaneous escalation of the war in Vietnam. Instead of authorizing additional military assistance to Israel, Fulbright claimed that the United States could better serve Israel by promoting a negotiated settlement of the dispute. Providing additional aircraft would “lead to greater Egyptian dependence upon the Soviet Union and thus bring us one step closer to a dangerous and unnecessary confrontation with the Soviets.”²⁶

In 1970 he argued that the Soviets recognized the folly of continued rivalry and acknowledged that their interests corresponded with those of the United States in the region. Each had been manipulated by their client states—the Americans by Israel and the Soviets by the Arab nations.²⁷ In 1970 the former cold war warrior concluded that in light of the Soviet Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT) with the United States, the Soviet Union could become a partner in bringing peace to the Middle East. After criticizing Israel’s policies toward its Arab neighbors and the Palestinian people who occupied the land that Israel captured in the Six-Day War, Fulbright made a surprise recommendation for a United Nations Security Council guarantee, with Russian support, to assure Israel’s security. In return, Israel would withdraw to its pre-1967 borders, agree not to violate those borders, and compensate Palestinian refugees displaced in the series of wars since 1948. For Israel, such a guarantee could not replace a treaty with all of the Arab states that recognized Israel, including the territories acquired in the 1967 War. In an exchange with Senator Abraham Ribicoff (D-CT), Fulbright declared that United Nations Resolution 242 to be “still the most complete, impartial, and generally accepted policy statement for a Middle

East settlement." Ribicoff, a Jew and generally a supporter of Israel, was not convinced. Fulbright later modified his withdrawal blueprint to allow Israel to retain the Golan Heights and Jordan Valley for security reasons. If lack of confidence in the United Nations were to jeopardize this guarantee, Fulbright made an extraordinary recommendation for a bilateral United States guarantee to Israel. When reporters pointed out that this plan deviated from his opposition to American commitments abroad, he contended that his objection pertained to commitments not formally submitted to the Senate. A treaty with Israel would have to be ratified. Fulbright thought a formal guarantee, in accordance with United Nations Resolution 242, might contribute to political stability in the area because he believed "the status quo was not in the long-term interest of the United States or Israel." His suggestion for a treaty "was intended to provide further assurance to Israel" of its security because he knew Israel had reservations "about depending solely on a U.N. agreement." The guarantee was restricted because it would not allow for "American troops to fight in the Middle East." In addition, such a commitment to Israel had to be balanced "with justice for the Arabs and the national interests of the United States."²⁸ Although Israel had requested a mutual security treaty in the past, no administration had taken such a bold step.

Israel and its American Jewish supporters found these conditions unacceptable. Fulbright's reliance on collaboration between the United States and the United Nations recalled his post-World War II faith in multilateralism. He failed to comprehend Israel's aversion to and distrust of a possible solution based on "the stationing of sizable United Nations forces in military neutralized zones on both sides of the border at all of the points which are critical to Israel's security." He also dismissed Israel's aversion to involving the Soviet Union, which had supported Arab nations since the mid-1950s. For the former cold war warrior, Soviet attempts "to maximize their influence in the Arab world" was "normal behavior for a great power," and Israel was employing "Communist-baiting humbugery" to "manipulate" American

NBC's Meet the Press, March 8, 1970.

*Moderator Lawrence E. Spivak (left) with newsman
Edwin Newman (center) and Senator Fulbright (right).*

*(Courtesy of J. William Fulbright Papers,
Special Collections, University of Arkansas Libraries, Fayetteville.)*

policy in the Middle East. He decried America's willingness to "permit client states like Israel and South Vietnam to manipulate American policy toward purposes contrary to our interest." Fulbright would later characterize the United States as a "crippled giant . . . highly susceptible" to these anti-communism manipulations, "rather like a drug addict" in a world "full of ideological 'pushers.'"²⁹ This appeal for selectivity of commitments was indicative of his movement away from promoting open-ended responsibilities characteristic of his earlier cold war stances.

Several political leaders took advantage of the outcry from American Jews over Fulbright's statements. For example, Repre-

sentative Gerald R. Ford (R-MI), known as a friend of Israel, told an AIPAC luncheon gathering of 150 House members and 250 Jewish leaders that Fulbright, "a self-proclaimed peace advocate, has undermined prospects of a real Arab-Israeli settlement by tacitly encouraging the Soviet Union and Arab extremists to desist from a genuine peace and to continue a great military escalation in the hopes of forcing their will upon Israel." His comments in support of Israel drew repeated applause, while his allusion to Fulbright met with hisses.³⁰

When Egypt and its Arab neighbors attacked Israel in October 1973 in the Yom Kippur War, Israel appealed to the United States for military supplies and equipment. Even before this attack Fulbright predicted Arab retaliation for the 1967 war, and he viewed the Israeli military position as precarious. He urged Israel to "negotiate a political settlement . . . and not wait for the situation to deteriorate." After initial delays over concerns about Soviet military aid to Egypt, the Nixon administration airlifted the requested assistance. This sale led to an Arab oil embargo, which Fulbright attributed to continued sales of American military equipment to Israel. AIPAC took the lead in lobbying on Israel's behalf. Subsequent swift passage of a \$2.2 billion arms and aid package to resupply Israel after the war partly reflected AIPAC's vigilant effort to educate members of Congress to the gravity of the crisis. This aid package outraged Fulbright.³¹

When asked in a CBS television *Face the Nation* interview if King Faisal of Saudi Arabia were to refuse to increase oil production unless the United States modified its policy toward Israel, would Fulbright advocate modifications in United States policy, he answered: "I would." A few years later, he argued that access to oil was a "*vital* [italics in original] interest, whereas our commitment to Israel is a less-than-vital interest." Although the "all-out supporters of current Israeli policy in Congress" were "well aware of this priority of interests, [only] by denying the connection can support of Israeli policy be given precedence over our national energy requirements." He did not believe it "necessary to sacrifice oil to Israel, or Israel to oil." An "equitable settlement" could "assure the survival and security of Israel and also solidify

our good political and economic relations with the Arab countries." A "reasonable" settlement must allow for "self-determination by the Palestinian people," as well as "the establishment of a Palestinian state in the territories now occupied by Israel." It must include "restitution for the Palestinian people, [f]orcibly expelled from their homes and country . . . just as the Jewish people were deserving of restitution after World War II." Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's "step-by-step" disengagement agreements, while "admirable," did "not deal with the central, crucial issues." A conference should be convened in Geneva, co-chaired by the United States and the Soviet Union, to negotiate a "general settlement based on Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders, self-determination of the Palestinian people, and a special status for Jerusalem, all under the guarantee of the great powers as members of the Security Council of the United Nations." Because the United States "made it possible for Israel to exist as a state," it was "not too much to ask in return that Israel give up East Jerusalem and the West Bank." He predicted that these concessions would result in lower oil prices. The United States would have to "accept the Russians as full partners in the making and guarantee of a Middle East peace; and the Israelis must accept the Palestinians, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), as negotiating partners with a right to form a state of their own."³² In 1977, a Carter administration proposal for such a conference would come under fire from Israel. Its supporters were unwilling to permit representation by the PLO and opposed bringing the Soviet Union into the peace process.³³ The conference was not held.

Accusations of undue Jewish congressional leverage put Fulbright at distinct odds with influential senatorial colleagues, whom he accused of doing all they could "to encourage the Israelis," instead of playing a "constructive role." In 1973 he announced in a *Face the Nation* interview that a Zionist lobby entirely in control of Congress would not permit the United States to work with the Russians to curb the flow of arms to the Arabs and Israelis, repeating an observation he had been making since the 1960s. Only collective action under the United Nations held any

hope of change. The United States lacked “leverage” over Israel, although it received American funding, because “Israel controls the Senate.” When moderator George Herman observed that this was “a fairly serious charge,” Fulbright responded that he was simply stating the facts. As evidence he pointed to an amendment to a Soviet trade bill, offered by an ardent cold war warrior, Senator Henry Jackson (D-WA), that would prohibit the Soviet Union from receiving most-favored-nation trade status until it permitted unfettered Russian Jewish emigration to Israel, legislation the Nixon administration fervently opposed as detrimental to *détente*. The two senators, with markedly dissimilar views of the Soviet Union, waged an acrimonious verbal battle. Fulbright told a national television audience that “on every test on everything the Israelis are interested in the Senate . . . the Israelis have 75 to 80 votes.” When challenged on these figures, he responded that it was not “in any way an overstatement.” These senators “believe in the policies of the present government of Israel.” Fulbright believed “that Israel’s long-term security and survival” depended “upon a settlement of her ongoing war with her neighbors.” He also alleged that the legislation “only served to set back the trends toward better Soviet-American relations.” Congress was guilty of “nearly allow[ing] our detente with the Soviet Union to go on the rocks in order to obtain an agreement on large-scale Jewish emigration—a matter of limited relevance to the basic issue of human rights in the Soviet Union and of no relevance at all to the vital interests of the United States.”³⁴

This attack on Jackson and the assertion that Israel controlled the Senate brought a stinging rebuke from Rabbi Elijah E. Palnick, who succeeded Sanders as spiritual leader of Temple B’nai Israel in Little Rock. In an open letter, Palnick described Fulbright as “petty, petulant, and even slanderous” in attacking those with whom he disagreed. This was a “low blow, in bad taste.” Fulbright responded that he appreciated the liberal Palnick’s support of his opposition to the war in Vietnam and “it distresses [him] very much” that Palnick felt his judgment was “erroneous in the present crisis.” The “issues involved in the Middle East and the security of Israel” were so complicated that Fulbright preferred to

discuss them in person the next time the senator returned to Little Rock. Philip G. Back, Arkansas chairman of Bonds for Israel, told reporters that the Arkansas Jewish community “uniformly disliked” Fulbright’s charge, and he wondered if Fulbright was a “friend of the Jewish community.”³⁵

*Rabbi Elijah E. Palnick (left) and Rabbi Ira E. Sanders (right),
Palnick’s predecessor at Temple B’nai Israel, Little Rock, Arkansas.
(Courtesy of Temple B’nai Israel, Little Rock.)*

Certain of another, probably devastating, Arab-Israeli war, Fulbright intensified his charges. He understood the “myopia among the Israelis, with their siege mentality,” but had no patience with Israel’s American supporters, “who, by underwriting intransigence, are encouraging Israel on a course which must lead

toward her destruction." Congress did not escape reproach: "So completely have the majority of our officeholders fallen under Israeli domination that . . . they deny the legitimacy of Palestinian national feelings." Neither Israel's "uncritical supporters in our Congress and in our media . . . appreciated what is at stake," as well as "the enormous distortion of American interests." Given how much the United States had done for Israel because it "alone . . . made it possible for Israel to exist as a state, it is not too much to ask in return that Israel give up East Jerusalem and the West Bank." The Palestinian people had "as much right to a homeland as do the Jewish people." In a spurious accusation he asserted that the Israeli lobby was ubiquitous: "The Zionists are extremely powerful in this country, especially in the field of communications. The most prestigious newspapers in this country are devoted to this cause, and most of the TV networks are owned by people sympathetic to the same cause." Educating public opinion would be an "uneven battle," given "the facilities at the disposal of the Zionists. He suggested that even the American military establishment seemed "deeply devoted to the cause of Israel."³⁶

In 1974 Arkansas's voters, who generally did not share his interest in foreign affairs, voted overwhelmingly to terminate Fulbright's thirty-year career in the United States Senate, choosing instead the popular Arkansas governor, Dale Bumpers. Fulbright lost for a myriad of reasons, including his segregationist racial views that galvanized African American voters for Bumpers. As much as a third of the conservative Arkansas electorate disagreed with Fulbright's stand on the Vietnam War. Many in Arkansas concluded that Fulbright, despite his frequent visits to the state, acted as a national figure, out of touch with the citizens of their rural southern state and unconcerned with their needs. Leaders in the Little Rock Jewish community agreed. In 1973, Rabbi Palnick, at the time that he criticized Fulbright's *Face the Nation* comments, noted that he thought Fulbright had abdicated his responsibilities "in the area of local problems." Palnick, who was openly involved in direct movements against segregation, exemplified a generational shift in southern Jewish civil rights leadership. Fulbright's liberal voting record in a conservative state, such as his support

for organized labor and antipoverty programs, also influenced the vote. Fulbright's positions on Israel and the Middle East antagonized not just Jews, but Baptist and other Christian supporters of Israel. Instead of considering his political vulnerability, Fulbright focused on the Zionist lobby and "Jewish money." Shortly after Fulbright's appearance on the 1973 *Face the Nation* program Jewish leaders throughout the country actively solicited candidates to oppose Fulbright in 1974, and they approached Bumpers, who was already considering the race.³⁷ However, given Fulbright's political problems in Arkansas, with its small Jewish population centered in Little Rock, it is highly unlikely that their efforts were the basis of Fulbright's defeat.

Fulbright the Private Citizen

Although no longer in public office, Fulbright remained keenly attentive to foreign policy matters, with the Middle East his principal interest. As he continued to write and lecture, the tone of his accusations of undue Jewish and Israeli influence and his pro-Arab leanings became more pronounced. He lobbied in support of Arab nations. He wrote Andrew Young, ambassador to the United Nations during the Carter administration, that his Washington, D. C., law firm was registered to represent Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In 1980 Fulbright explained his position in simplified terms for a constituent by writing that "we give unlimited support to Israel . . . because the Jewish community in this country, through its numerous organizations and the devotion of its members, is able to influence the policy of our government."³⁸

For years after leaving office Fulbright continued to criticize his former Senate colleagues for their susceptibility to Israeli influence to the point that Randall Woods, his most recent biographer, maintains that Fulbright became "obsessed with the existence of an extensive Zionist conspiracy that had as its goal the bending of the American political system to Israel's every whim." The tone grew more strident as he saw his influence diminish as a private citizen, and he realized that he was at a loss to alter the situation. Despite private talks with some of President Gerald R.

Ford's advisors, including Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, he could not persuade them to abandon the customary interim approach for a comprehensive settlement for the region. He blamed the Israeli lobby, "a determined, intelligent minority with large resources." Meanwhile, "the great majority [were] indifferent and unwilling to inform themselves about these rather complex issues." He aimed intense criticism at the media, arguing that the "major communications media are strongly oriented to Israel." The influential *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* were singled out as "owned and largely staffed by true friends of the Zionists." For the few articles critical of Israeli policies, there would "be dozens of articles favorable to Israel." Fulbright's overstatements concerning Jewish influence continued. In 1976 he asserted that it was a "simple fact . . . that a clear majority of both Houses of Congress have been vigorously and effectively supported, financially and otherwise, by the Jewish community which they represent."³⁹ Presidential politics was similarly affected. Referring to the 1980 presidential race between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, he suggested that if a "presidential candidate was willing to take the risk he could find surprising support for a more objective policy in the Middle East, but that is not in the cards at the present." In fact just 45 percent of Jews voted for Carter, primarily due to the risks they thought he had taken with Israel's security.⁴⁰

After returning from a tour of the Middle East in 1975, Fulbright reiterated his concerns about the possibilities of another major Arab-Israeli war. Again he emphasized the need for peace-making efforts. In a memorandum to Ford, he conveyed his sense that the "status quo is not benign," that it "foster[ed] a steady and accelerating slide toward war." After meeting with the leaders of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, whom he described as "moderate and responsible men, united in a consensus for making peace with Israel on the basis of the 1967 borders," he expressed concern that they might be ousted from power if Arab lands continued to be occupied. He repeated his consternation that the American commitment to Israel was "open-ended . . . providing . . . the means for an Israeli policy" beyond American control.⁴¹

When Ford failed to respond with the desired statement, Fulbright sent a copy to Brent Scowcroft, Ford's National Security Advisor, asking him to convey the message to the president. Two months later he sent a similar message to Kissinger. While he was "well aware" that a statement of urgency on the Middle East situation "may bring on immediate, disagreeable political repercussions," he was certain that "a positive unequivocal statement by the president that he intends to insist upon a comprehensive statement with appropriate guarantees can have the most beneficial effect upon our economy and upon the confidence of the Europeans and the Japanese in the soundness of our policy." Israeli security would better be "assured by a comprehensive political settlement than by military means," that made Israel dependent on the United States.⁴² The Ford administration did not take Fulbright's advice.

After returning from a three-week study tour of the Middle East, Senator Charles H. Percy (R-IL), Fulbright's successor as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, wrote to Fulbright that his findings critical of Israeli policies "caused dismay, rage, and anger in the Jewish community throughout the country, and particularly in Illinois." He concluded reluctantly "that some elements of the American Jewish community are more extreme in their point of view, and unrealistic, than the people of Israel who are actually living there." This statement underscored existing differences between American and Israeli Jews. Fulbright appreciated Percy's statements, especially because they were "said by someone who has a history of supporting the Israeli Government."⁴³

Fulbright wrote to Carter shortly before he was inaugurated, encouraging him to put forth a "strong initiative" for peace in the region. Although it is unclear if the memorandum persuaded Carter, Fulbright's recommendations paralleled the initiatives that Carter revealed just two months after taking office, including a call for self-determination for the Palestinian people. Fulbright accurately predicted the "controversy might indeed be sharp and protracted." After Egyptian President Anwar Sadat visited Jerusalem to offer recognition to Israel in return for Israeli withdrawal

from the Sinai Peninsula, Fulbright advised Carter to "be willing to take responsibility for insisting that Israel accept the principle of withdrawal."⁴⁴ Carter's attempts to reach a comprehensive strategy would elude him. The most he could obtain would be the Camp David Accords that returned the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt and lessened tensions between that country and Israel.

Fulbright continued to complain that the Israelis and their American supporters had "long taken the position that if you do not do exactly as they wish, you are anti-Israel and anti-Semitic." He charged that this lobby could "elect or defeat nearly any congressman or senator they wish, with their money and coordinated organizations."⁴⁵ In 1980, after the Senate defeated a bill to censure Israel over Israeli settlements on the West Bank, Fulbright congratulated Adlai E. Stevenson III (D-IL) for voting against a foreign aid bill for Israel, which Fulbright described as Stevenson's "dedication to the public welfare in spite of the overwhelming subservience of [his] colleagues to a foreign government."⁴⁶

Assessment

American Jewish groups, including his Arkansas Jewish constituency, resented Fulbright's constantly expressed disapproval of their lobbying methods on behalf of Israel. Accusations of a vast manipulative impact that American Jewish supporters of Israel had on Congress and American public opinion brought a predictable storm of protest from American Jewish groups. In acknowledging congressional support, AIPAC's chairman explained that it was "because the members of the House and Senate believe the maintenance of a balance in the Mideast and the maintenance of a strong Israel is in the interests of the United States." An AIPAC newsletter accused Fulbright of consistent partiality against Israel and its American supporters, as well as unfair censure of his Senate colleagues who supported Israel. In 1974, the Anti-Defamation League released a study reprimanding Fulbright for "false charges that the Israelis control Mideast policy in the Congress," to the detriment of American national interests.⁴⁷

How credible were Fulbright's accusations? It is ironic that at the same time that Fulbright became even more outspoken after he left office, the American Jewish community, never monolithic, expanded its own public criticisms of Israel. Jews openly questioned Israeli policy on such issues as the failed incursion into Lebanon in 1982, especially the siege of Beirut. They also opposed Israel's connections with the apartheid regime in South Africa. Differences had surfaced before, especially when the Likud Party won the 1977 elections, and Menachem Begin, who was determined to retain the lands won in the 1967 war, was appointed prime minister. Many American Jews opposed his claims of sovereignty over what he considered biblical Israel, as well as his extension of settlements into the region. In the 1980s, however, those who criticized these policies, such as the American Jewish Committee, were more united and more willing to voice their criticisms openly. An essential component of the Jewish lobby's power was dependent on the Jewish community speaking with a common voice. By 1988 three major Jewish organizations, the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, and the Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith, argued that AIPAC's predictable reactions to events in the Middle East were not always in Israel's best interest.⁴⁸

The legislative influence of AIPAC and other domestic Jewish lobbying groups is widely recognized. During the period under study, they attracted broad support by framing Middle East issues in terms of the concerns of the United States. This congressional and public support prompted policy makers to consider these political factors.⁴⁹ However, to argue that this highly successful lobbying force controlled American policy in the Middle East would be a vast overstatement. Other strategic and economic forces were at work, especially American concerns about the Soviets, as well as access to the vast Arab petroleum reserves.

Fulbright made sweeping charges about American Jewish influence over policy making. Ultimately, however, the White House and the State Department determine the direction of foreign policy. Generally, they pursued a broader approach to global obligations than Congress. Congress's leverage in support-

ing Israel is through its control over appropriations. But even here the executive branch created a budget to which Congress responded. In the Middle East, American presidential perceptions of Israel as a balancing force against Soviet support for the Arab states, whether or not sound, were a factor that Fulbright dismissed. Fulbright exaggerated as he wrote and spoke about Israeli influence and overlooked instances in which pro-Israeli interests failed to secure the policies they desired as well as instances of conflict between Israeli supporters and American policies. American presidents resisted suggestions that the United States recognize Israeli control of the areas it seized in the 1967 war. Although AIPAC disapproved of Kissinger's "shuttle diplomacy" in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War because he placed America's continuing mediating role in the region over advancing Israeli interests, the lobby's disapproval did not play a role in this process. AIPAC sustained overwhelming defeats when it could not prevent the Carter administration's sale of advanced F-15 fighter jets or the Reagan administration's sale of Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) airplanes to Saudi Arabia. The F-15 fighter sale demonstrated that the Israeli lobby could not overcome the tenacity of a president involved and fully committed, even though AIPAC was determined to expend all resources to prevent a sale. The AWACS case illustrated the leverage of a newly-elected popular president and the influence of oil and aerospace interests. Ultimately it was the foreign policy leadership's perceptions of American interests, while cognizant of domestic politics, that determined America's diplomatic and foreign aid decisions.⁵⁰

In Arkansas, despite the organized Jewish community in Little Rock, Jews had little if any influence over their junior United States senator on Israeli issues. Fulbright was too independent and the community was too small for them to persuade Fulbright.

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PRIMARY SOURCES

The Bible and Bombings: Southern Rabbis
Respond during the Civil Rights Movement

by

Scott M. Langston*

“. . . And None Shall Make Them Afraid,” sermon by Rabbi Jacob M. Rothschild, delivered on Friday, October 17, 1958, Atlanta, Georgia
“The Friday Following the Bombing of the Temple,” sermon by Rabbi Perry E. Nussbaum, delivered on Friday, September 22, 1967, Jackson, Mississippi

The role of southern rabbis during the modern civil rights movement has been chronicled from a variety of perspectives.¹ Typically, these studies emphasize the role rabbis played in their congregations and communities in responding to segregation, as well as their personal experiences navigating precarious situations. While scholars have generally noted the biblical, and especially prophetic, underpinnings of rabbinic responses to segregation, detailed analysis of how rabbis used the Bible to justify their own support of the movement, to encourage others to follow suit, and to rebut segregationists has been lacking. When interpreting biblical texts, these rabbis mixed contemporary and biblical ideas in order to address their particular situations. This mixing was sometimes done intentionally, but occasionally could even be done unconsciously as rabbis traversed between the biblical and contemporary worlds with varying

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degrees of effort. Regardless of their level of intention or awareness, this process reflects how the ideas of the rabbis and the biblical writers interacted within the climate of the mid-twentieth century South, especially as they sought to negotiate and address the challenges brought by the civil rights movement. The analysis of southern rabbis' uses of the Bible, however, does not stop with their interpretation of texts, but goes further by examining the Bible's usefulness as a tool for achieving certain goals. Living among Christians, who for the most part regarded the Bible highly, southern rabbis, like their counterparts throughout the country, found it to be an effective instrument for interacting with them, as well as for addressing their own congregations.

The following sermons illustrate how two southern rabbis—Jacob M. Rothschild and Perry E. Nussbaum—used the Bible in their initial responses to violence, namely, the bombings of their synagogues. As such, they prove to be useful primary sources, providing windows into the thoughts, attitudes, and actions of these rabbis, including the early strategies they employed in the aftermath of the bombings.² Furthermore, they reflect how the two rabbis related to contemporary cultural attitudes and ideas. They also open up future possibilities for comparison with other uses of the Bible during the civil rights era, both Jewish and Christian and clerical and non-clerical, as pro- and anti-segregationists struggled against each other.

Rabbi Jacob M. Rothschild³

For the Jews of Atlanta's Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, more commonly known as The Temple, the violent backlash against the civil rights movement came forcefully to their collective doorstep on Sunday, October 12, 1958. In the early morning hours someone detonated fifty sticks of dynamite against one of The Temple's side walls, destroying offices and Sunday school classrooms and causing about \$200,000 in damage. Within minutes of the bombing, a person identifying himself as "General Gordon⁴ of the

Rabbi Jacob M. Rothschild, c. 1958.
(Courtesy of Janice Rothschild Blumberg.)

Confederate Underground" called the offices of the United Press International (UPI) and claimed responsibility. He also warned, "This is the last empty building in Atlanta that we will bomb. All nightclubs refusing to fire their Negro employees will also be blown up. We are going to blow up all Communist organizations. Negroes and Jews are hereby declared aliens." As news of the bombing spread, people across the nation, including Jewish and Christian clergy, the mayor of Atlanta, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower, expressed sympathy and support for The Temple and its members. Various groups offered rewards for the capture of the perpetrators, and the *New York Times* even covered the developing story for several days.⁵

The bombing of The Temple was not an isolated incident. Since the Supreme Court's striking down of school segregation in 1954 in *Brown v. Board of Education*, hundreds of bombs exploded across the South in retaliation. By the end of the decade, about 10 percent of those bombs had been aimed at Jews, in spite of the fact that they comprised far less than 1 percent of the region's population.⁶ Even though African Americans had pressed for and made some gains in Atlanta—for instance, the integration of the police force, school board, public golf courses, and public transportation—the city had somehow avoided the spreading anarchy until the morning of October 12.⁷ For Atlanta's Jewish community, though, this was not the first time it had been the object of violence.

In 1915 Leo Frank, a member of The Temple and superintendent at the National Pencil Factory, had been lynched for the murder of Mary Phagan, a white, thirteen-year-old factory employee, even though substantial doubts had been raised about his guilt. Frank's trial, which began in 1913, and his lynching left their mark on Atlanta's Jewish community. According to Melissa Faye Greene, "The most awful and lasting legacy of Frank's murder for The Temple Jews of Atlanta was the sense of isolation: they were marginal, they were dispensable, they were still 'the other' in the mind of white

Christian Atlanta.”⁸ Although it had been over forty years since the Frank trial and lynching, and despite the fact that Atlanta’s Jews got along well with the city’s non-Jews, an underlying sense of fear still resided among them. The Temple bombing brought these fears to the surface.

The Temple’s rabbi, Jacob M. Rothschild, had been speaking in support of civil rights for African Americans since his arrival in 1946. After growing up in a Reform congregation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and graduating from Hebrew Union College, Rothschild briefly served a congregation in Davenport, Iowa, before returning to his home congregation, Temple Rodef Shalom, as assistant rabbi. When World War II broke out, he enlisted as a chaplain and spent most of the war in the Pacific Theater. Shortly after being discharged, he began his rabbinate in Atlanta. Living in a segregated and largely Christian city, Rothschild crossed religious boundaries and participated in interfaith and community organizations, while also attempting to strengthen the Jewish identity and practice of his congregants.⁹ As the years went by, he also grew more active and vocal in support of civil rights. During the first High Holy Days that followed the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Rothschild addressed the decision head on. Acknowledging the “supreme delicacy of the problem,” he nonetheless pointed out Judaism’s deeply rooted teaching in the “belief in the equality of all men” and the responsibility of Jews to live up to their spiritual heritage.¹⁰ In a sermon titled, “Can This Be America?” given in 1958 (approximately five months before The Temple bombing), he expressed shock over the bombings of synagogues and Jewish community centers throughout the South. Somewhat ominously, he indicated it was “hard to believe that it [i.e., a bombing] could happen here.”¹¹

While some of his congregants agreed with Rothschild’s approach toward civil rights, others were uncomfortable with his outspokenness. Clive Webb notes that, “Some of the sternest criticism that the rabbis faced came from their own

congregations” because rabbinic support for African American equality “threatened to erode the already precarious security of southern Jews.” Among his fellow rabbis in the South, there was widespread support for integration, at least in principal, but much disagreement over how it should be addressed. Rather than acting collectively, though, southern rabbis responded on an individual basis. Rothschild openly advocated civil rights and worked to build support among Jews and Christians, even exercising great influence in crafting the so-called Ministers’ Manifesto, a statement issued by the Atlanta Christian Council in response to the controversy swirling around efforts to integrate Little Rock’s Central High School in 1957.¹² The Temple bombing, however, meant the issue could no longer be ignored or quietly brushed aside by his congregation. In the following days, Rothschild, who had regularly encouraged others to apply the message of the biblical prophets to modern issues,¹³ strategically used the Bible to respond to the bombers, his congregants, and the larger non-Jewish community.

“ . . . And None Shall Make Them Afraid ”

The day after the bombing, the rabbi prominently displayed the title of his upcoming Friday sermon on The Temple’s outdoor sign where all could see it: “. . . And None Shall Make Them Afraid.” Those who stopped at the nearby traffic light, including many on their way to work, would have clearly seen the sign. This was in some ways his first public response, and it had come in the form of a biblical phrase. This phrase appears in several places in the Prophets (*Nevi'im*)—Micah 4:4, Ezekiel 34:28, Zephaniah 3:13, Isaiah 17:2—making it difficult to know exactly which text he had in mind.¹⁴ Nonetheless, it makes little difference because the rabbi’s intent was clear. This biblical phrase expressed his message of defiance to the bombers: they had failed, and Rothschild refused to be intimidated.

Micah 4:4 is perhaps the most well-known rendering of this phrase: “But they shall sit every man under his vine and

under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid.”¹⁵ While in its biblical context this phrase reflects a future hope for a peaceful time in which people will fear no one, Rothschild appropriated it to express a response to a present reality. The rabbi and his congregation had many reasons to be afraid—their status as a minority living in a volatile social situation, their past experience of one of their own being lynched, and now an attack on the architectural center of their congregation with an accompanying threat that the people would be next. Rothschild, however, transformed this verse of hope—perhaps unconsciously—into an expression of determined defiance. With the shattered building now constituting its context, the phrase’s significance changed. Their present circumstances overrode the ancient context of the biblical prophet, uncovering a usefulness that those focused on the text’s historical meaning likely would miss. When formulating doctrine, these historical concerns might take precedence, but when responding to an act of terror, they made little difference. Rothschild, however, was not presenting an exegesis of a passage of scripture, nor was he trying to develop, explain, or apply doctrine. Instead, he was attempting to respond powerfully to a violent act of intimidation. Given these circumstances, the phrase’s ability to summarize succinctly his refusal to be intimidated, along with the ease with which it could be remembered, made it particularly useful in responding to the bombers. At the same time, it also sent a message to The Temple’s members. Although the phrase aptly expressed the rabbi’s determination, many of his congregants remained uncertain. The phrase, therefore, encouraged his congregants to refuse to be intimidated.

The average person who passed by The Temple during the first week of the bombing and saw the rabbi’s sermon title probably would not have known this phrase’s biblical origins. They may not have even associated it with the Bible at all. This made little difference because Rothschild was capitalizing on the phrase’s poetic power, rather than on its doctrinal or theological assertions, or even the Bible’s cultural

authority. His use reflects a little studied and underappreciated aspect of the Bible's reception history¹⁶: its role as a source for poetically powerful phrases that, at least in this instance, acted as the leading edge of a response to powerful and sometimes violent opposition.

The rabbi, however, returned to the phrase's biblical meaning when he delivered his sermon to an audience filled with both Jews and non-Jews who had gathered for Shabbat services on the Friday night following the bombing. As the title of his sermon, it reflected one of the themes emphasized throughout, namely, that the bombers failed to intimidate him and his congregation. Yet, he did not actually quote the phrase until the sermon's last sentence: "With God's help we shall rebuild in pride and gratitude—and create a stronger Home of the Spirit where He may dwell in our midst. Together with an aroused humanity we shall rear from the rubble of devastation a city and a land in which all men are truly brothers—and none shall make them afraid."¹⁷ In keeping with the biblical prophets, Rothschild articulated a hope and a vision for what society could become. Having used this phrase to defy the bombers and to strengthen the resolve of his congregation, he now sought to encourage and give hope by focusing his audience on their society's potential.

Rothschild's handling of the phrase reflects the possibilities residing in any biblical text. Whether done consciously or not, the rabbi shaped the present situation in accordance with the prophetic idea by adhering closely to the phrase's biblical meaning. Just as the prophet attempted to give hope to a people living in a discouraging situation, so too did Rothschild. When, however, he recontextualized the phrase, he used the present situation to reshape and bring new meaning to the prophet's words. The biblical wording—not the biblical meaning—proved most useful to Rothschild in this regard. Taken together, both uses reflect a symbiotic relationship between the biblical text and the contemporary situation in which each influences and shapes the other. The rabbi used both to express simultaneously hope and defiance.

*Mayor William B. Hartsfield (left) with Rabbi Rothschild
at The Temple, examining bomb damage to the north wall.
(Courtesy of The Temple-Hebrew Benevolent Congregation of Atlanta.)*

The Moral Law, Democracy, and American Identity

While Rothschild used the prophetic phrase to characterize society's ultimate goal, he turned to other biblical texts to critique modern American society. He began his critique by identifying the bombers' intent as an effort to create panic and confusion, to tell "an already fearful minority" (that is, Atlanta's Jewish community) that they and their religious ideals were unwelcome, and to make clear to "all the bewildered and confused people of America" that the bombers had the means to spread terror, and they, the bombers, were, in fact, the law of the land. Rothschild rebutted these intentions, asserting that the bombing had taught three truths:

The first of them is that this must be a land ruled by law and not by men. This was always a truism in American life. None doubted it. Yet, now, for the first time, its real meaning has become clear. To advocate the disregard of one law creates an atmosphere of lawlessness in which men reserve the right to choose the rules by which they will live. Once man decides that it is within his personal province to decide which laws he will obey and which he will ignore—then there is no law at all. And this is anarchy. Southern leaders have made possible—unwittingly, I am sure—the creation of just such a society as this—a society without control by law, a government of anarchy. To be sure, they do not advocate violence. They, themselves, abhor it. But their words loose the uncontrolled passions of men who are quick to get their way by violence and who seize the opportunity in their march for personal power. Thus, it is clearer now than ever before that we must restore America to the rule of law.

And that law must be the moral law. This is the second truth we have learned. It is not easy to live by the rigorous demands of our spiritual forbears [*sic*]. Yet, it is more dangerous not to. For every time we stray from the paths they have set for us, we bring ourselves near to danger and destruction. The difficult way is still the safest way, after all. Once again we are confronted with and challenged by the prophetic ideal that teaches us that all men are brothers, that justice and righteousness must prevail, that only the work of righteousness

shall bring peace to the world, that we must love our neighbor as ourselves and pursue with diligence the path of justice.

In these first two truths, Rothschild emphasized some of Reform Judaism's central tenets: the moral law (rather than the Torah in its entirety) and prophetic ideals, namely, the brotherhood of all and the pursuit of justice and righteousness. In doing so, he was laying the foundation for a more far-reaching argument: the bombing was not merely a Jewish issue, but an American one, a connection he skillfully makes with the help of the Bible.

It is the moral law that undergirds the very foundations of democracy. Our country is founded upon the biblical ideals first taught by the prophets of Israel and later incorporated into the ideology of Christianity. We know it today as the Judeo-Christian tradition. When we fail to live by the spiritual truths of our religious faith, we weaken the principles of democracy. And conversely, when we fall short of the goals of freedom and equality set forth by the founders of our Republic, we have demeaned our religious faith.

It is not surprising that Rothschild invoked the Judeo-Christian tradition. Doing so was increasingly common in 1950s America. What he does with it, however, is significant. The term, "Judeo-Christian," had been used since the 1930s to describe a common set of values and beliefs shared by Jews and Christians. During the 1940s and especially during World War II, the Judeo-Christian tradition was increasingly associated with democracy, particularly in opposition to fascism. By the 1950s, according to one scholar, "good Americans were supposed to be, in some sense, committed Judeo-Christians. It was a recent addition to the national creed." As the cold war struggle with the Soviet Union intensified, the Judeo-Christian tradition helped define the magnitude of the conflict and vilify the "godless" Russians and Communism.¹⁸

Against the broader cultural backdrop of an increasingly accepted connection between Judaism's prophetic ideals and American democracy, Rothschild unfolded his argument:

It is in the realm of choice that the third truth lies. For who is to blame for the wave of violence that has swept across our land? The guilty ones are not alone the political leaders whose words fan the flames of hatred and incite to violence. Not even those who perpetrated the very acts themselves bear all the blame. Responsibility rests equally with those good and decent people who choose to remain silent in such a time. Too many of us, motivated by fear, led by the desire to be comfortable and safe, have failed to live by the ideals which we know to be right and good.

Put simply, the silent majority, so to speak, contributed to the bombing by failing to apply Jewish ideals to the desegregation struggle. Nonetheless, the bombing itself had "roused the conscience of decent men and women everywhere," many of whom had heretofore remained silent. The messages of support that had poured in from across America led Rothschild to conclude:

They [the messages] assure us that the dynamiters—whichever they are—do not represent America. They are a cancer to be cut out of the body politic and left to die. Except for these few—our letters tell us—all Americans stand united and strong—a people dedicated to righteousness [the prophetic ideals of Judaism].

By asserting a united American response against the perpetrators, Rothschild effectively isolated them, at least rhetorically, while also positioning Jews as part of the American mainstream. He did so by emphasizing that the bombing was not primarily an antisemitic act, nor was it carried out largely in retaliation for his activities in support of desegregation. Rather, "all bigots and their bigotry are inseparable. Hate is readily transferred from one minority to another. We live now in an atmosphere of hate." Having characterized the bombing as a general act of bigotry, rather than one of specific antisemitism, Rothschild was then able to portray Jews and desegregationists as true Americans. Thus, the bombing was an attack on American values, values evident in the symbols present in "every house of God," including The Temple:

In our Temple, that light [the Eternal Light] hangs from the great seal of America. The ideals of democracy upon which our freedom rests have not been shaken by this blast any more than the walls of this building have been weakened by it. Decency, equality, brotherhood, humanity—all these still live—now stronger than ever—in our hearts.

And here, in the Ark of the Covenant, are the scrolls containing the moral law. There they stand—crowned with their silver ornaments—as they have stood in every Jewish House of Worship through centuries of time. Proudly they bear witness to the law of God, to the ideals towards which man is urged ceaselessly to strive—and which will yet become the pattern of his life on earth.

“Holy shall ye be, for I the Lord your God am holy” [Leviticus 19:2] is the challenge they proclaim. “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart” [Leviticus 19:17]. “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” [Leviticus 19:18]. “Justice, justice shalt thou pursue” [Deuteronomy 16:20]. “Have we not all one Father, hath not one God created us all?” [Malachi 2:10].

The association of biblical ideals with democracy and the founding of the United States was nothing new. American Christians were particularly fond of doing this, especially when it buttressed Christianity’s status as the nation’s unofficial religion. Rothschild, however, actually used this association to accentuate his congregation’s Jewish legacy in spite of the fears of some that openly advocating civil rights, especially on the basis of Jewish ideals, could only mean trouble under their present circumstances. Rather than trying to live quietly among a sea of white, Christian opposition to black civil rights, he had urged The Temple’s members to put aside their fears and boldly embrace civil rights on the basis of their Jewish ideals. In essence, he argued that when Jews actively live out their religion’s ideals, they are living as Americans in the fullest sense. Rothschild’s equation of the Bible, democracy, and American origins essentially moved Jews from the minority to the majority. What’s more, the Bible provided the crucial link in making this move. Rothschild used both the prophetic underpinnings on which American

democracy was based and the biblical moral law on which a peaceful and orderly American society depended (at least, according to him) to calm Jewish fears of being marginalized as not quite American enough. Not only did this use of the Bible give Jews a solid claim to American identity, it also challenged the widespread understanding of true Americans as Christians.

American Christians, and especially Protestants, commonly used the Bible's alleged connections to democracy and the founding of the nation to bolster their contention that the United States was a Christian nation. In practical terms, this meant that Christians, and in particular Protestants, constituted a sort of American aristocracy in terms of national identity. When coupled with racial considerations, a white Christian represented the highest level of American identity. As a key component in establishing and supporting this notion, the Bible also played a major part in challenging it. As indicated, Rothschild actually agreed that the Bible, democracy, and the founding of America were connected, and he even used that connection to support Jewish claims as true Americans. However, instead of using this connection to enhance Jews' social power and authority (in the same way that white Christians often did on their own behalf), he ultimately used it to enhance the status of African Americans. This essentially challenged the American identity of any who might embrace segregation. Plainly stated, if true Americans embraced the teachings of the Bible and democracy, then segregationists were not true Americans; their view was at odds with the Bible and democracy. Or, to redefine the words of "General Gordon," who had telephoned the UPI offices just after the bombing occurred, Jews and Negroes were not aliens; segregationists were.

Of course, Christian segregationists had believed for a long time that the Bible supported their notions of American identity and were not bashful in appropriating its influence. Once again, however, the Bible proved crucial as Rothschild challenged white southern Christian notions of American

identity. If, as both sides agreed, the Bible undergirded American democracy, then controlling the Bible's meaning in this regard was critical. Rothschild thus turned the Bible against segregationists, exposing them and their actions as un-American. He did not directly challenge the segregationists' use of the Bible. Instead he defined the Bible's message in terms of justice, equality, and love for all, and then simply assumed it as such throughout his sermon. The message is clear: if you are American, you respect the Bible, and that means insisting on equality for African Americans. Rothschild, thus, used the Bible to define American identity in such a way that segregationists—rather than Jews, African Americans, and desegregationists—were marginalized.

In using the Bible to challenge Christians, Rothschild followed a tactic that many southern rabbis in previous decades had employed. Usually southern rabbis used the Bible to challenge Christian doctrinal assertions or to check Christian encroachment on Jewish religious practices. They had also employed it to build bridges to the larger Christian community by emphasizing commonalities.¹⁹ Rothschild, however, went beyond these traditional uses by appropriating it to embrace a controversial social position in a volatile and dangerous situation. In doing so, he was able to avoid making it a Jewish versus Christian issue, which potentially could have further marginalized his congregation. Rather, by packaging the Bible with democracy he redefined American identity in such a way that presented the Jew in the South who opposed segregation as a more accurate reflection of a true American than the white Christian who supported segregation. Certainly, the bombing of The Temple gave these arguments a potency and platform they otherwise may not have had, but the Bible provided the link he needed to make such a response.

Rabbi Perry E. Nussbaum

Rabbi Perry E. Nussbaum served as the rabbi of Temple Beth Israel in Jackson, Mississippi, from 1954 until 1973,

when he retired. A native of Toronto, Ontario, and a graduate of Hebrew Union College, Nussbaum served several congregations before coming to Jackson, as well as acting as an army chaplain during World War II. Many of his pulpit stays were short and turbulent, being characterized by numerous conflicts with his congregants. Nonetheless, he seemed to be an effective administrator and a good speaker and pastor. The Jackson congregation was small, consisting of about one hundred members (about one fourth the size of Atlanta's Temple), and on the whole, "highly assimilated." Nussbaum, therefore, like Rothschild, attempted to institute a program of Jewish education among his congregants. As was the case with Rothschild, Nussbaum encountered a city and state that was ardently Christian, although Mississippi was especially fundamentalist and evangelical. While in Jackson, he engaged in interfaith activities, even though clergy from some of the leading Protestant churches sometimes excluded him because he was Jewish. Whereas Rothschild had been able to work with various established ministerial and community religious organizations in Atlanta, Nussbaum was not allowed to participate in the Jackson Ministerial Association. He, however, got along well with other Christian clergy and formed close relationships with some. He even helped found an alternative clerical organization, the Jackson Interfaith Fellowship (which later became the Greater Jackson Clergy Alliance), the first group of Jews and Christians in Mississippi to integrate. Nussbaum also was a driving force in organizing the Mississippi Assembly of Jewish Congregations in 1955.²⁰

Regarding civil rights, Nussbaum initially was not overly aggressive in advocating equality for African Americans. He favored it and even addressed the issue in sermons, but he also realized the hazards of actively and openly embracing it. During the late 1950s and early 1960s Citizens' Councils grew considerably stronger in Mississippi and especially in Jackson where the local chapter kept a card file detailing the racial views of most white people in the city.

Rabbi Perry Nussbaum, April 1967.
(Courtesy of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of
the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.
Americanjewisharchives.org)

Nussbaum found this disturbing, as he did the rash of bombings in 1958 aimed at Jewish organizations in Nashville, Miami, and Jacksonville. The bombing of the Atlanta Temple particularly disturbed him, prompting him to write a column in the temple bulletin entitled, "It Can Happen Here." When a copy somehow made it into a Jackson newspaper, the city's leaders were not happy, and there was even an unsuccessful effort made at Temple Beth Israel's next board meeting to force Nussbaum to receive board approval before making public statements. In spite of this, Nussbaum grew more active in his support of the civil rights movement. Although initially not supportive of the Freedom Rides, during the summer of 1961 he began weekly visits to those riders who were Jewish and imprisoned in the Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman, located 150 miles from Jackson. When he encouraged other area rabbis to do the same, most responded negatively. In 1964, the rabbi participated in the Committee for Concern, an interfaith and interracial group that sought to raise money to help rebuild African American churches that had been bombed or burned.²¹

Although both Nussbaum and Rothschild worked in contexts where segregation was the rule, Nussbaum worked in a state that has been described as "the most openly segregationist state in the South." According to historian Clive Webb, compared with other southern rabbis, Rothschild led a "charmed existence," living in "an unusually progressive city" that was the only city in the South where a rabbi could be secure enough to compare Jim Crow laws with Nazi atrocities against Jews. While Rothschild clearly confronted great difficulties and danger, Nussbaum lived in an even more perilous climate. Members of his own congregation twice tried to have him relieved of his duties, while others threatened to end their financial support. Few rabbis, according to Webb, received less clerical support than Nussbaum, although Rothschild did respond positively after Nussbaum encouraged him in 1963 to organize a civil rights dialog among rabbis. Both rabbis also sent each other messages of encour-

agement after their respective temples were bombed, and corresponded somewhat throughout the years. Additionally, Nussbaum regularly exchanged letters with fellow rabbi and civil rights advocate Charles Mantinband of Temple B'nai Israel in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. On the whole, though, Nussbaum received little support. Nonetheless, throughout the 1960s he continued to press for equal rights for African Americans, and in 1966 he began sponsoring at Beth Israel one-day scholarly lectures for the clergy, including African American ministers. Thus, when Beth Israel was bombed on Monday night, September 18, 1967, the rabbi's stance on civil rights was well-known. In fact, according to the *Jackson Daily News*, Nussbaum indicated after the bombing that even though he had not received any recent threats, he had feared that something like this might occur "because of the nature of Mississippi's racial climate in connection with my congregation and myself who have tried to help these unfortunate people [i.e., African Americans], who have long been intimidated by violent organizations like the Ku Klux Klan." Jackson's other paper, the *Clarion-Ledger*, however, quoted Nussbaum as asserting that his work with the Committee of Concern had nothing to do with the bombing.²²

Temple Beth Israel had dedicated new facilities just six months prior to the bombing. The dedication ceremony was an interfaith and interracial event, with leaders from both the local African American and the white Christian communities attending and participating. The inclusion of blacks stirred controversy in Jackson and within the Temple. Three of the five members of the building committee refused to attend the ceremony, and, one month later, in what Nussbaum described as "one of the roughest congregational annual meetings I've ever attended," the congregation voted to require board approval before non-Jewish organizations could use their facilities. In the words of Clive Webb, "No southern rabbi suffered more than Perry Nussbaum." In addition to the opposition he faced within and outside his congregation, he also became a target when his home was bombed on No-

vember 21. No one was injured, but the violent attack left the Nussbaums shaken. Both the bombing of the temple and Nussbaum's home two months later were perpetrated by members of the local Ku Klux Klan.²³

In the wake of the bombing, which caused an estimated twenty-five thousand dollars in damage, support for the temple began to build. The *New York Times* covered the story, although not to the extent it had when the Atlanta Temple was bombed.²⁴ Joining the efforts of local law enforcement, the FBI became involved in trying to capture the perpetrators. Community and state leaders, including the mayor and governor, denounced the bombing, and the *Clarion-Ledger* called it "a cowardly, dastardly, criminal occurrence." Four days later a group of about forty ministers, mostly from the recently formed Jackson Clergy Alliance, along with other concerned individuals, engaged in a "walk of penance" in which they walked approximately one mile from a shopping center to the temple. Once there, about 150 people gathered at the synagogue to pray and express support for the congregation and opposition to the bigotry that had spawned such an act.²⁵ The following evening—the first Friday after the bombing—Rabbi Nussbaum addressed his congregation.²⁶

"I Shall Not Fear the Malicious Ones"

Nussbaum drew on the Torah reading for that week, Deuteronomy 26:1–29:8, to shape his remarks, asserting that, "Perhaps the timeliness of the sedra will supply some answers to the questions some of you have been asking."²⁷ The book of Deuteronomy constitutes the last instructions of Moses before the ancient Israelites entered the land of Canaan, representing the last stage of their journey after having gained their freedom from Egyptian slavery and after wandering in the Sinai desert for forty years. Nussbaum called his listeners' attention to this context and characterized the *sidrah* as Moses's efforts to sum up and describe the "basic equipment" the Israelites would take with them into the Promised Land, that is, "the rewards and punishments if the

*Rabbi Nussbaum surveying damage to the secretary's office
at Beth Israel, Jackson, Mississippi, September 18, 1967.*

*(Courtesy of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of
the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.*

Americanjewisharchives.org)

army of the Lord neglects its compact with God." Even after forty years in the desert, many of the Israelites did not understand the essentials of their religion; they were "interested only in the material logistics of establishment."

The theme of rewards and punishments structured Nussbaum's interpretation of the temple bombing. In fact, he placed not only the bombing, but also the larger struggle over segregation and the congregation's response within the context of the biblical covenant made between God and the Jewish people. By turning to the Bible, in general, as "Judaism's and our congregation's source of answers and encouragement" and, in particular, the week's Torah reading as a source of help for "those who will listen—and reflect—and not deny the rationale of it all," the rabbi made sense of the racial chaos that had descended on his congregation, the city of Jackson, and the entire South. Nussbaum attempted to demonstrate how, rather than being relics of the past, Moses's words were being lived out at that moment²⁸:

WILL YOU ALLOW ME TO PUT SOME OF IT INTO CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGE?

AFTER YOU'VE BUILT A SYNAGOG—YOUR SYMBOLIC HERITAGE—
AFTER YOU'VE FURNISHED IT AND SETTLED IN IT—GO TO IT—
BRING GIFTS IN GRATITUDE AND STAND BEFORE THE ALTAR OF
YOUR SYNAGOGUE AND RECITE:

I am here—and here only—because I want to repay my God—
Oh, not just in MATERIAL THINGS—NOT JUST THROUGH MY MON-
EY TO KEEP THE SYNAGOGUE GOING—NOT JUST FOR DELIVERANCE
FROM THE PERSECUTOR—THE PREJUDICED—THE BIGOT—THE
GODLESS WHO YET INHABIT THIS COMMUNITY.

I am here—and here only—because the MIGHTY STRENGTH OF
FAITH DRIVES ME HERE IN COMMITMENT! "GOD IS MY ROCK & MY
SALVATION—AND I SHALL NOT FEAR THE MALICIOUS ONES."

The rabbi connected the Israelites' entrance into the Promised Land with Temple Beth Israel's recent construction and dedication of its new synagogue. It was indeed an important event in the congregation's life, but just as the physical process of the Israelites entering the Promised Land was not the

central point of their existence, so too the building, maintenance, and gathering at the new synagogue did not represent the fulfillment of the congregation's religious responsibilities. The rabbi then made explicit what these responsibilities were:

OH GOD—I fulfill the compulsions of my Religion—I give of the first fruits of my material blessings only because I understand what I must do to be faithful to YOU and MY RELIGION

To the Levite—to the Synagogue

To the stranger, the fatherless, the widow. I have helped them
EAT THEIR FILL

I UNDERSTAND THEY SHALL NOT WANT. OH GOD, I AM ONLY A HUMBLE STEWARD OF WHAT I POSSESS, ONLY YOUR AGENT TO DO JUSTICE AND IMPLEMENT THE PRINCIPLES OF THIS RELIGIOUS WAY OF LIFE I CLAIM AS MY OWN.

GOD, I HAVE DONE WHAT YOU HAVE COMMANDED ME. I AM NOT CONCENTRATING NOW ON ONE OBJECTIVE ONLY—TO HURRY UP AND REPAIR THE DAMAGE TO A BUILDING!

With this last statement Nussbaum attempted to focus his congregation's attention on what he believed was the bigger issue—not the “material logistics,” that is, repair of their new building, although this was important, but the effort to bring about justice for African Americans. The rabbi did not see the new synagogue as the primary locus of Judaism. It was not the Promised Land; it was not some sort of protective bubble from the prejudiced, bigoted, and godless elements of southern society in which Jews could carry out ritual and cultural practices. The primary locus of Jewish religion was living out Jewish ideals among the prejudiced, bigoted, and godless within southern society. Dangerous and intimidating as it was, Nussbaum insisted that his congregants overcome their fears and fulfill all of their covenant responsibilities.

“Why Did This Happen?”

Once again proclaiming the timeliness of the Torah reading, the rabbi furthered his point by integrating the tem-

ple bombing into the biblical passage. He did so by combining portions of the biblical text with references to their contemporary circumstances, as illustrated in the following table:

Deuteronomy 27:14–24 (according to the Jewish Publication Society’s <i>Tanakh</i>)²⁹	Rabbi Nussbaum’s rendering of Deuteronomy 27: 14–24
27:14: The Levites shall then proclaim in a loud voice to all the people of Israel	The LEVITES PROCLAIMED WITH A LOUD VOICE that the inventory to be made is not only for the purposes of making a claim on the INSURANCE COMPANY but to review the curses man brings down on himself
27:15: Cursed be anyone who makes a sculptured or molten image	Your images and idols – be cursed.
27:16–23: In sum, these verses chronicle a series of curses against those who commit various social and sexual wrongs	Have you done injustice – be cursed
27:24: Cursed be he who strikes down his fellow countryman in secret	Have you STRUCK DOWN YOUR NEIGHBOR IN SECRET – JEW, Xn [Christian], WHITE, BLACK – be cursed

In recreating the scene from the Torah, Nussbaum rhetorically took the Levites from their place with the Israelites on the verge of entering Canaan and made them the heralds of the covenant in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1967. His congregants were not hearing distant and dead words that held only ritual and cultural significance. They were at that moment the modern version of the biblical Israelites, and their Promised Land was the South, but it was not the mythical, glorified land of milk and honey and peaceful coexistence. Their neighbor (fellow countryman) was not only their fellow Israelite, but now included Jackson’s Christian white and black populations. Being Jewish clearly was not merely a matter of heritage. It required social action, and the neglect thereof

risked bringing down curses upon them. Nussbaum had connected one of the hallmarks of Reform Judaism—social justice—with covenant obligations. While acknowledging that such correlations were harsh, he also reminded his congregation that, “Judaism has never said, ‘Oh, just call yourself a God-believer and you’ll go to heaven.’ IF YOU SIN AGAINST GOD—WHAT A REMINDER, NOW THAT OUR PENITENTIAL SEASON IS UPON US—IT IS BECAUSE YOU HAVE SINNED AGAINST MAN.”

If his congregants were uncomfortable at this point, this surely increased with his next statements:

If our Synagogue was bombed, it was not just because there are Antisemites left in our world—but because HATRED IS COLOR BLIND. IT DID HAPPEN HERE because it HAS BEEN HAPPENING ALL ABOUT US.—AND WE ARE TO BLAME ALSO FOR WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING ALL ABOUT US.

If our Synagogue was bombed, it was because SO MANY OF THE SANCTIMONIOUSLY GOOD PEOPLE IN BETH ISRAEL AS WELL AS ALL OF THE CHURCHES IN OUR COMMUNITY HAVE SAID “ITS NONE OF OUR BUSINESS”—this climate of vicious bigotry which LIKE THE HURRICANES OF THIS WEEK [Hurricane Beulah and perhaps Hurricane Doria] HAVE—played with us for years while it [bigotry] danced maliciously from place to place over the stormy sea of contemporary life—and finally came down with ALL ITS CURSES once again on people—this time on US—Jew and Xn in Jackson.

If our Synagogue was bombed, it is because there are people who profess the teaching of the Scrolls in our Ark—Jesus did not reject our Torah—Xns do not reject OUR Torah—Jews still abide by our Torah—if our Synagogue was bombed it was because this MAKES SENSE, “Cursed be he who will not uphold the terms of this Teaching and observe them” [Deuteronomy 27:26].

Nussbaum placed blame for the temple bombing squarely on the hatred of bigots and the failure of the people of Jackson—both Jew and Christian—to stand against such hatred. It was not primarily an act of antisemitism. The rabbi apparently did not want his congregation to use antisemitism to shield

their failure to challenge the bigots. Nor was the bombing entirely the result of Jewish inaction. Here the rabbi used the Torah to bind Jews and Christians together in their culpability. While acceptance of the Torah—as well as the entire Hebrew Bible—as sacred scripture by both Jews and Christians had often been used in the past to emphasize their unity and encourage positive relations, Nussbaum used it to highlight a different kind of unity—shared guilt. Southern Jews and Christians were reaping the fruits of their failure to live up to the terms of the covenant, which in the modern South required opposition to segregation.³⁰ Rather than being cowed by those who perpetrated the bombing or silenced by those who urged neutrality or moderation in the face of segregation, Nussbaum used the Torah to advocate a more vigorous opposition. Nussbaum, like Rothschild, was not simply following the well-trod path of previous rabbis who used the Bible to check Christian encroachment on Jewish belief and practice or to build bridges across religious divides. He too was going further by using the Bible to embrace a controversial social position in a volatile and dangerous situation. Whether or not Nussbaum and Rothschild were using the Bible in a different way than had most of their predecessors is not yet clear. More research into rabbinic uses of the Bible is necessary before making this judgment.

If failing to live up to the terms of the covenant had brought about the bombing, embracing its requirements—in this case, fighting for equal rights for African Americans—carried the promise of blessing. Invoking the promises contained in Deuteronomy 28, the rabbi closed with this challenge:

WHY DID THIS HAPPEN . . . ?

Yes, God had something to do with it. I believe in His design—His purpose for the sons of God. God has said from the days of that wandering Aramean—Abraham, our Father—be MEN, STRONG IN CONVICTION! ALL I CAN DO FOR YOU IS TO KEEP THE RIGHT WAY OF LIFE IN FRONT OF YOU. BUT I CAN'T MAKE YOU FOLLOW ME. YOU MUST SHARE WITH ME. YOU MUST BE MY CO-

WORKER! I CAN'T GUARANTEE YOU'LL GO TO HEAVEN JUST BECAUSE YOU PROFESS ME AS YOUR GOD. IT'S NOT ENOUGH!

BE REASONABLE. DON'T MAKE ME [GOD] THE SCAPEGOAT. MAKE UP YOUR MINDS TO WALK WITH ME AND ONLY THEN CAN I CONVERT YOU INTO A HOLY PEOPLE; WILL MY PURPOSE BE ACCOMPLISHED.

"These are the terms of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to conclude with the Israelites in the land of Moab, in addition to the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb." [Deuteronomy 28:69]—and in Jackson, Miss. on Sabbath Eve, Friday, Sept. 22, 1967, as the calendar is reckoned. Amen.

Nussbaum's initial public response to the bombing did indeed reflect Reform Judaism's prophetic emphasis on social justice. But it was the Torah's idea of the covenant and its attendant obligations that provided Nussbaum the interpretive lens through which he articulated the bombing's meaning. In short, it was a manifestation of a curse: not a divinely initiated one, but one arising from neglect of the Torah's social obligations. As such, Jews were not so much helpless victims of antisemitism as they were active agents in shaping their circumstances. Likewise, southern Christians were not helpless victims of bigotry and hatred, but active agents in creating an environment in which such attitudes could thrive. Rather than emphasizing the hope for and need to work toward an ideal society rooted in justice—something that prophetic texts often did—Nussbaum followed the Torah's lead in describing the repercussions resulting from a society that does not insist on justice for all its members. Both societies—the ideal and cursed—were thus the product of human action, that is, adherence to or neglect of the covenant.

The Sermons in Retrospect

The sermons of Rabbis Rothschild and Nussbaum represent immediate responses to what must have been disorienting circumstances. While their main points were

clearly made and certainly understood by their audiences, later reflection calls attention to ideas that may not have been foremost in their minds, but nonetheless were present in the fabric of their words. It also demonstrates how two rabbis responded to attacks on their congregations, albeit under somewhat different circumstances. Much had transpired during the nine years that separated the two attacks. Events such as the sit-in campaigns, the Freedom Rides, James Meredith's enrollment at the University of Mississippi, the protests in Birmingham, Selma, and Montgomery, Alabama, the rise of Black Power, the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, and the eruption of riots in northern and western inner cities, all combined to create a starkly different environment in 1967 from that which existed in 1958. Other events such as the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Malcolm X, the implementation of the Great Society, America's deepening involvement in Vietnam, and the Six Days' War furthered the differences. The widespread patriotic fervor and religiosity of the 1950s was challenged by the counterculture of the 1960s. It is difficult to gauge the specific impact of the different circumstances on the two sermons, but they surely played a role in shaping the rabbis' responses. Perhaps the 1950s patriotic surge in the aftermath of World War II and during the early stages of the cold war struggle with the Soviet Union played some role in Rothschild's decision to emphasize American ideals, while the growing discontent and challenge to authority of the 1960s influenced Nussbaum's focus on the social disarray created by disobeying the precepts of the Torah.

The effectiveness of their responses on their congregations and larger communities can be debated, but these sermons reflect how both rabbis nurtured what has been called "a counteracting climate of conscience in their communities," even though their situations and circumstances differed.³¹ As such, their voices were not particularly quiet as they publically resisted efforts at intimidation, simultaneously chastising and encouraging their congregants and fellow

southerners. The Bible provided them a language and framework through which they could do so.

Although both used texts from the Torah and the Prophets, the main texts they emphasized—prophetic for Rothschild and Torah for Nussbaum—greatly affected the character of their responses. So, too, did their refusal to see the bombings as primarily antisemitic acts. By distancing the Temple bombing's root cause from antisemitism, Rothschild could portray the problem as a broadly American issue that caused an American response based on ideals founded on Jewish scripture. On the other hand, Nussbaum hardly mentioned American aspects, choosing instead to emphasize the more specifically Jewish implications of the bombing as a manifestation of a breach of the covenant. As with the choice of biblical texts, both rabbis reflected Jewish and non-Jewish aspects of the respective incidents, but it seems highlighting prophetic calls for social justice lent itself better to responding in broad, national terms as Americans, while emphasizing the Torah's covenant better facilitated a response as modern followers of Judaism.

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**“. . . And None Shall Make them Afraid,” sermon by
Rabbi Jacob M. Rothschild, delivered on Friday,
October 17, 1958, Atlanta, Georgia³²**

“Boruch attoh Adonay Elohaynu melech ho-olam sh’hechiyonu v’keyimonu v’higionu laz-man ha-zeh. Praised be Thou, O Lord our God who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this day in joy.”

These words are the traditional blessing of our faith uttered on occasions of rejoicing. We say them on our festivals, on Chanukah which commemorates the rededication of the Temple after the Maccabean victory, on birthdays and anniversaries and at dedications. Why then speak these words tonight, here in this

*Jacob M. Rothschild sermon, October 17, 1958, opening page, typescript.
(Courtesy of Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library,
Jacob Rothschild Papers, Emory University, Atlanta.)*

place? Better the prayer of mourning, mourning for the shattered stained glass windows of our sanctuary, mourning for our fellow-men who could fall so far short of God's way for them, mourning for a city and a land that could nurture and encourage so vile an act as the desecration of a House of God.

Not so. We sit in the place of devastation, true. And still we can say the age-old prayer of joy and hope. Why? Because truths that we and so many of our fellow Southerners had been reluctant or afraid to face, now at last we can no longer ignore.

What message was the explosion meant to deliver? What effect was it supposed to have? Its intent was clear enough. This was an act designed to strike terror into the hearts of men. It was intended to cause panic and confusion. It was to say to an already fearful minority: "You are not wanted here. Don't speak; don't preach the ideals of your religious faith. You are second class citizens marked for a life of fear." And more than this. It was to say to all the bewildered and confused people of America: "Terror is at hand. We have the means to spread that terror and to rule by force. Law is dead. We are the law."

Never was a message so garbled in its transmission. Never did a band of violent men so misjudge the temper of the objects of their act of intimidation. For this is what really happened: Out of the gaping hole that laid bare the havoc wrought within, out of the majestic columns that now lay crumbled and broken, out of the tiny bits of brilliantly colored glass that had once graced with beauty the sanctuary itself—indeed, out of the twisted and evil hearts of bestial men has come a new courage and a new hope. This single act of devastation has taught lessons which all words, all prayers, all pleas had been unable to teach. It is of these truths of which I would speak to you tonight.

The first of them is that this must be a land ruled by law and not by men. This was always a truism in American life. None doubted it. Yet, now, for the first time, its real meaning has become clear. To advocate the disregard of one law creates an atmosphere of lawlessness in which men reserve the right to choose the rules by which they will live. Once man decides that it is within his personal province to decide which laws he will obey

and which he will ignore—then there is no law at all. And this is anarchy. Southern leaders have made possible—unwittingly, I am sure—the creation of just such a society as this—a society without control by law, a government of anarchy. To be sure, they do not advocate violence. They, themselves, abhor it. But their words loose the uncontrolled passions of men who are quick to get their way by violence and who seize the opportunity in their search for personal power. Thus, it is clearer now than ever before that we must restore America to the rule of law.

And that law must be the moral law. This is the second truth we have learned. It is not easy to live by the rigorous demands of our spiritual forbears. Yet, it is more dangerous not to. For every time we stray from the paths they have set for us, we bring ourselves near to danger and destruction. The difficult way is still the safest way, after all. Once again we are confronted with and challenged by the prophetic ideal that teaches us that all men are brothers, that justice and righteousness must prevail, that only the work of righteousness shall bring peace to the world, that we must love our neighbors as ourselves and pursue with diligence the path of justice.

It is the moral law that undergirds the very foundations of democracy. Our country is founded upon the biblical ideals first taught by the prophets of Israel and later incorporated into the ideology of Christianity. We know it today as the Judaeo-Christian tradition. When we fail to live by the spiritual truths of our religious faith, we weaken the principles of democracy. And conversely, when we fall short of the goals of freedom and equality set forth by the founders of our Republic, we have demeaned our religious faith. Long ago, a biblical writer set forth the challenge in simple and stirring words: "Behold, I have set before thee this day life and good, the blessing and the curse; therefore, choose ye life." We have now determined to meet the challenge in our own day. We, too, shall choose the good so that we may have life.

It is in the realm of choice that the third truth lies. For who is to blame for the wave of violence that has swept across our land? The guilty ones are not alone the political leaders whose words

fan the flames of hatred and incite to violence. Not even those who perpetrated the very acts themselves bear all the blame. Responsibility rests equally with those good and decent people who choose to remain silent in such a time. Too many of us, motivated by fear, led by the desire to be comfortable and safe, have failed to live by the ideals which we know to be right and good. Now we have discovered at long last what can happen when men are afraid to speak and when they allow the shadow of cowardice to creep into their souls. Thus, a strange phenomenon has taken place: When the fear of violence did serve to silence men, the act of violence has freed their tongues and loosed their hands for the work of righteousness. So men, now, say aloud what they have always known in their hearts to be true but could not bring themselves to utter. Editors, ministers, educators, men and women in every walk of life have demonstrated a new-found determination to affirm with courage the principles by which men must live. The curtain of fear has been lifted. Decent men are at last convinced that there can be no retreat from their ideals. Neither violence nor the threat of violence shall force us to abrogate the spiritual foundations of life itself. We do not make such an affirmation out of sheer bravado. We do not say it just to keep our spirits high. We affirm our spiritual heritage because we know that only when man—every man—lives by God's law, no matter how dangerous or difficult it may seem to be—that only then can he find personal security and help achieve peace and tranquility for all humanity.

Nor do we stand alone. On that certain knowledge rests the most heartening lesson we have learned. This dastardly and despicable act of desecration has roused the conscience of decent men and women everywhere. The countless messages of comfort and encouragement that came to us expressed the shock and revulsion of all America. They were addressed to us, but their words bring comfort and hope to all whose hearts have been gnawed by fear and whose souls were corroded by doubt. They assure us that the dynamiters—whatever they are—do not represent America. They are a cancer to be cut out of the body politic and left to die. Except for these few—our letters tell us—all Americans stand united and strong—a people dedicated to righteousness.

We are grateful for the magnificent response that has come to us from near and far. But we are not surprised. And surprised even less by the dignity and courage of the Jewish community itself. We Jews are well acquainted with blatant anti-Semitism and the use of naked violence. Our history is replete with the madness of pogroms and the bestiality of Jew-hating and Jew-baiting madmen. Fresh in our minds is the holocaust of the six million. Burned into the minds and hearts of Atlanta Jewry is the searing memory of the infamous Frank case. Yet, our Jewish community demonstrated only the highest qualities of courage and dignity. There was no hand-wringing, no panic and, above all, no cry for recrimination and revenge. After the first flush of incredulity and understandable shock, we Jews—the members of the temple and all our co-religionists—reacted calmly and with praiseworthy understanding. This bombing was but the act of a few bigots and hatred-haunted madmen. It did not represent the will nor the way of our fellow-citizens. This we know with an almost instinctive certainty. The terror on Peachtree Road did not spread to a terror in our hearts. I bless you for your sanity and courage.

And I applaud you for your determination to stand firm in the ideals of our religious faith. Your presence here tonight in such overwhelming numbers bears testimony to that dedication. You give incontrovertible testimony to the firm conviction that neither the threat of violence nor the act of violence can make us forsake the timeless truths by which we shall live. Nor is the response one of mere bravado alone. Now we are more certain than ever before that only when men are willing to live by God's law can they achieve personal security and dignity. What was till now only the theoretical application of an oft-repeated but seldom tested preachment suddenly has been forged in the fire of experience. Yesterday, our Temple—tomorrow, your church. No one is safe in the jungle of lawlessness and hate.

Yes, yesterday, our Temple. Why our Temple? Was it because the rabbi of this congregation has spoken out, has sought to bring the eternal truths of Judaism to bear upon the social problems of today? I have spoken out—here and in the larger community—as you well know. Even now, I would not—could

not—have done otherwise. And I do not seek to exculpate myself when I tell you that I firmly believe that I cannot justly accept the blame—or the credit, as you will. Unhappily, ours is not the only Jewish House of Worship that has been damaged by the blast of dynamite. And there is neither rhyme nor reason to the site selected for destruction. Synagogues have been bombed in communities where nothing at all has been said or written by the rabbi or any Jew at all. On the other hand, in at least one city a rabbi has spoken and not his but another Temple was desecrated. Christian clergymen have at times been outspoken but no churches have yet been bombed—thank God.

What, then, is the answer: All bigots and their bigotry are inseparable. Hate is readily transferred from one minority to another. We live now in an atmosphere of hate. It is directed toward the Negro minority. But in our midst is a small, virulent group of Jew-haters, an organization made up of neo-Nazis who would finish here what Hitler began in Germany. Because such venom is inseparable, I have no doubt that they hate Negroes too. At the moment, however, their primary target is Jews. They have taken advantage of the aura of hatred and that growing acceptance of lawlessness so noticeable in today's South to carry out their own personal vendetta.

They failed—and their failure is happily not limited to their attack upon us. They roused the conscience of a city and a nation. They awakened us to the danger of ceding leadership to the mob. They proved the need for courage and idealism and responsibility. Perhaps the magnificent response engendered here was made possible because eighty ministers issued their Manifesto less than a year ago and thus helped to bring sanity into our city. Perhaps those of us who stood and fought have succeeded in leading many along the paths of righteousness. Whatever the reason, even now, this night and in this place, I tell you that they have lost and we have won.

Tonight, our shattered building stands as mute witness to the evil that lurks in the hearts of men ruled by hatred and dedicated to the destruction of our noblest dreams. Our answer to them speaks louder even than that monstrous blast that shook the

silence of a peaceful night. The symbols of that answer stand untouched and strong in every house of God—as they are visible in this Sanctuary which bears the scars of man’s sad failure as a child of God. There is the Eternal Light. It shines forth once more and speaks its message of reassurance and of hope. God lives. He dwells in every human heart. If only man will seek to find Him there. And God lives eternally—even as this light is everlasting. So must our faith be eternal—it cannot be extinguished or dimmed—nor put to rout by the threats of witless men.

In our Temple, that light hangs from the great seal of America. The ideals of democracy upon which our freedom rests have not been shaken by this blast any more than the walls of this building have been weakened by it. Decency, equality, brotherhood, humanity—all these still live—now stronger than ever—in our hearts.

And here, in the Ark of the Covenant, are the scrolls containing the moral law. There they stand—crowned with their silver ornaments—as they have stood in every Jewish House of Worship through centuries of time. Proudly they bear witness to the law of God, to the ideals towards which man is urged ceaselessly to strive—and which will yet become the pattern of his life on earth.

“Holy shall ye be, for I the Lord your God am holy” is the challenge they proclaim. “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart”. “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”. “Justice, justice shalt thou pursue”. “Have we not all one Father, hath not one God created us all?”

This law still lives in our hearts, still guides our steps, still lifts us up to the vision of a world of brotherhood and peace. The lamp of faith has not been dimmed. On the contrary, this despicable act of desecration has turned up the flame of faith and kindled the fires of determination and dedication. It has reached the hearts of men everywhere and roused the conscience of a whole community.

We are grateful for their support and sustained by their devotion. With God’s help we shall rebuild in pride and gratitude—and create a stronger Home of the Spirit where He may dwell in our midst. Together with an aroused humanity we shall rear from

the rubble of destruction a city and a land in which all men are truly brothers – and none shall make them afraid.

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**“The Friday Following the Bombing of the Temple,”
sermon by Rabbi Perry E. Nussbaum, delivered on
Friday, September 22, 1967, Jackson, Mississippi³³**

Read selected passages from KI SOVO (Dt 26:1–29:8)

WHAT SHALL A RABBI SAY TO HIS CONGREGATION?

We have spent these past few days in making assessment of our damages.

PAY TRIBUTE TO SIDNEY GEIGER – Bettye Driskell – Henry Rudd

those who wanted to help but could not because the synagog problem since Tuesday has been PHYSICAL – and it could only be met by those experienced in reconstruction & the operations of this building.

PERHAPS THE TIMELINESS OF THE SEDRA WILL SUPPLY SOME ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS SOME OF YOU HAVE BEEN ASKING:

MOSES HAS DEVOTED AN ENTIRE BOOK FOR REVIEW AND RE-ASSMENT [SIC] OF RELIGION. FOR 40 YRS HE HAD BEEN IN COMMAND OF AN ARMY. HE HAS BEEN TALKING LOGISTICS! HE COMES NOW TO FUNDAMENTAL LOGISTICS – he MUST describe their basic EQUIPMENT when they are about to enter the Promised land

SO NOW HE SUMS IT ALL UP. NOW HE TELLS THEM ABOUT THE REWARDS AND THE PUNISHMENTS IF THE ARMY OF THE LORD NEGLECTS ITS COMPACT WITH GOD!

THE BIBLE IS STILL JUDAISM’S AND OUR CONGREGATION’S SOURCE OF ANSWERS AND ENCOURAGEMENT . . . THIS SEDRA WILL HELP THOSE WHO WILL LISTEN – AND REFLECT – AND NOT DENY THE RATIONALE OF IT ALL.

*Perry Nussbaum sermon, September 22, 1967, page 1, typescript.
(Courtesy of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of
the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.
Americanjewisharchives.org)*

ONE OF THE CRUCIAL POINTS HE MAKES IS AT THE VERY END OF THIS SEDRA. IT HAS TO BE FACED UP TO. LISTEN:

“Yet to this day the Lord has not given you a mind to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.” Think of it. After 40 years of wandering in the most miserable of conditions, after praying and suffering as no human being was ever forced to suffer in recorded history, after FINALLY BRINGING THEM TO THE PROMISED LAND AND BEING DENIED A REWARD WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN HIS—TO GO WITH THEM AND EAT OF THE FRUITS IN THAT LAND OF PROMISE—HIS REWARD WAS TO ONLY SEE IT FROM A DISTANCE. Think of it!

SHOULD HE HAVE SAID TO THEM OUT OF ALL HIS FRUSTRATIONS? Don't worry. Everything is going to be a bed of roses. Because you have become God's Chosen People, God will take care of you! God will guarantee you prosperity & security. MOSES FOR 40 YEARS HAD TRIED TO REASON WITH THEM. For 40 years he had tried to forge a WAY OF LIFE which was to have its roots not in BLIND EMOTIONALISM, PETTINESS, SELFISHNESS, SUPERSTITION, BUT IN A PROGRAM INSISTING ON USE OF MAN'S INTELLECT. AND HE HAD TO SAY TO THEM—THOSE PEOPLE INTERESTED ONLY IN THE MATERIAL LOGISTICS OF ESTABLISHMENT

Oh my people, you still do not understand. You still will not look to the essentials. GOD IS NOT GOING TO DO YOUR REASONING FOR YOU. HE GAVE YOU THE POTENTIALS. BUT GOD IS NOT GOING TO DO FOR YOU WHAT YOU MUST DO FOR YOURSELVES. GOD IS NOT GOING TO MAKE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE OUT OF YOU. GOD IS NOT GOING TO MAKE JEWS OUT OF YOU. YOU MUST USE YOUR OWN GOD-GIVEN ENDOWMENTS.

THAT WAS THE CRY OF A FRUSTRATED MAN. BUT ALWAYS A HOPEFUL MAN. A REALIST! BUT HE KNEW THEM! HE COULD IDENTIFY ALL THE PEOPLE TO WHOM HIS RELIGION MEANT NOTHING AT ALL.

IS THIS TIMELY?

REVIEW WHAT WE READ: WILL YOU ALLOW ME TO PUT SOME OF IT INTO CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGE?

AFTER YOU'VE BUILT A SYNAGOG—YOUR SYMBOLIC HERITAGE—AFTER YOU'VE FURNISHED IT AND SETTLED IN IT—GO TO IT—BRING GIFTS IN GRATITUDE AND STAND BEFORE THE ALTAR OF YOUR SYNAGOGUE AND RECITE:

I am here—and here only—because I want to repay my God—Oh, not just in MATERIAL THINGS—NOT JUST THROUGH MY MONEY TO KEEP THE SYNAGOGUE GOING—not just for deliverance from the PERSECUTOR—THE PREJUDICED—THE BIGOT—THE GODLESS WHO YET INHABIT THIS COMMUNITY.

I am here—and here only—because the MIGHTY STRENGTH OF FAITH DRIVES ME HERE IN COMMITMENT! “GOD IS MY ROCK & MY SALVATION—AND I SHALL NOT FEAR THE MALICIOUS ONES.”

OH GOD—I fulfill the compulsions of my Religion—I give of the first fruits of my material blessings only because I understand what I must do to be faithful to YOU and MY RELIGION—

To the Levite—to the Synagogue

To the stranger, the fatherless, the widow. I have helped them EAT THEIR FILL

I UNDERSTAND THEY SHALL NOT WANT. OH GOD, I AM ONLY A HUMBLE STEWARD OF WHAT I POSSESS, ONLY YOUR AGENT TO DO JUSTICE AND IMPLEMENT THE PRINCIPLES OF THIS RELIGIOUS WAY OF LIFE I CLAIM AS MY OWN.

GOD, I HAVE DONE WHAT YOU HAVE COMMANDED ME. I AM NOT CONCENTRATING NOW ON ONE OBJECTIVE ONLY—TO HURRY UP AND REPAIR THE DAMAGE TO A BUILDING!

IS THIS SEDRA TIMELY FOR THE SABBATH OF THE WEEK OUR SYNAGOG WAS BOMBED?

The LEVITES PROCLAIMED WITH A LOUD VOICE that the inventory to be made is not only for purposes of making a claim on the INSURANCE COMPANY but to review its curses man brings down on himself:

Your images and idols—be cursed.

Have you done injustice—be cursed.

Have you STRUCK DOWN YOUR NEIGHBOR IN SECRET—
Jew, Xn, White, Black—be cursed.

HARSH! Of course! Judaism has never denied that there are REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS. Judaism has never said: Oh, just call yourself a God-believer and you'll go to heaven. IF YOU SIN AGAINST GOD—WHAT A REMINDER, NOW THAT OUR PENITENTIAL SEASON IS UPON US—IT IS BECAUSE YOU HAVE SINNED AGAINST MAN. AND FOR GOD'S SAKE, GET RID OF THE ARROGANT IDEA THAT YOU CAN BE DECLARED EXEMPT FROM THE STERN JUDGMENT WHICH IS YOUR CONSCIENCE! AND THE DICTATES OF MORAL LAW!

If our Synagogue was bombed, it was not just because there are Antisemites left in our world—but because HATRED IS COLOR BLIND. IT DID HAPPEN HERE because it HAS BEEN HAPPENING ALL ABOUT US.—AND WE ARE TO BLAME ALSO FOR WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING ALL ABOUT US.

If our Synagogue was bombed, it was because SO MANY OF THE SANCTIMONIOUSLY GOOD PEOPLE IN BETH ISRAEL AS WELL AS ALL OF THE CHURCHES IN OUR COMMUNITY HAVE SAID "ITS NONE OF OUR BUSINESS"—this climate of vicious bigotry which LIKE THE HURRICANES OF THIS WEEK HAVE—played with us for years while it danced maliciously from place to place over the stormy sea of contemporary life—and finally came down with ALL ITS CURSES once again on people—this time on US—Jew and Xn in Jackson.

If our Synagogue was bombed, it is because there are people who profess the teaching of the Scrolls in our Ark—Jesus did not reject our Torah—Xns do not reject OUR Torah—Jews still abide by our Torah—if our Synagogue was bombed it was because this MAKES SENSE, "Cursed be he who will not uphold the terms of this Teaching and observe them."

BUT LIFE IS NOT ALL CURSES. This is what Moses was trying to say.

JUST DON'T LOSE PERSPECTIVE.

USE YOUR REASON.

OPEN YOUR EYES AND HEARTS TO THE CHALLENGES OF LIVING. THERE IS ALWAYS THE SUNLIGHT OF TOMORROW. AND YOU WILL BE BLESSED—"Blessed shall you be in the city and blessed shall you be in the country." "Blessed shall you be in your comings and blessed shall you be in your goings." —I DO NOT KNOW ANYTHING MORE TIMELY FOR BETH ISRAEL CONGREGATION & JAX & MISS.

THERE IS PROMISE. "The Lord will make you the head, not the tail; you will always be at the top and never at the bottom" —IF, IF, "only you obey and faithfully observe the commandments . . . and do not deviate to the right or to the left" from any of them.

WHY DID THIS HAPPEN — THIS TRAGIC CHAPTER IN THE LIFE OF A SMALL JEWISH CONGREGATION IN A GREAT AMERICAN METROPOLIS?

Yes, God had something to do with it. I believe in His design—His purpose for the sons of God. God has said from the days of that wandering Aramean—Abraham, our Father—BE MEN, STRONG IN CONVICTION! ALL I CAN DO FOR YOU IS TO KEEP THE RIGHT WAY OF LIFE IN FRONT OF YOU. BUT I CAN'T MAKE YOU FOLLOW ME. YOU MUST SHARE WITH ME. YOU MUST BE MY CO-WORKER! I CAN'T GUARANTEE YOU'LL GO TO HEAVEN JUST BECAUSE YOU PROFESS ME AS YOUR GOD. IT'S NOT ENOUGH!

BE REASONABLE. DON'T MAKE ME THE SCAPEGOAT. MAKE UP YOUR MINDS TO WALK WITH ME AND ONLY THEN CAN I CONVERT YOU INTO A HOLY PEOPLE; WILL MY PURPOSE BE ACCOMPLISHED.

"These are the terms of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to conclude with the Israelites in the land of Moab, in addition to the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb." —and in Jackson, Miss. on Sabbath Eve, Friday, Sept. 22, 1967, as the calendar is reckoned.

Amen.

NOTES

I am grateful to The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives (Cincinnati, Ohio) for their permission to publish the text of Rabbi Perry E. Nussbaum's sermon. Likewise, I want to thank Emory University's Manuscript, Archives, & Rare Book Library (Atlanta, Georgia) for allowing the publication of the text of Rabbi Jacob M. Rothschild's sermon. Their generosity and support of historical research is greatly appreciated. The archival staffs at both institutions were most accommodating and provided helpful assistance.

¹For example, see P. Allen Krause, "The Southern Rabbi and Civil Rights" (rabbinical thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1967); Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin, eds., *Quiet Voices: Southern Rights and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s* (Tuscaloosa, 1987); Clive Webb, *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* (Athens, GA, 2001).

²It is not the intent of this essay to discern whether or not Rothschild or Nussbaum intentionally sought to make a particular point or consciously used the Bible in a specific manner. While intent can be discerned with reasonable certainty in some instances, it can be difficult to prove in others. Nonetheless, assumptions that undergird and inform certain statements or actions, as well as their broader implications, can, with careful analysis, be uncovered with some degree of plausibility.

³A version of this section of the essay was presented at the 2010 Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting in Atlanta, GA.

⁴Probably a reference to Confederate General John Brown Gordon, a trusted military officer serving under Robert E. Lee and purported leader of the Ku Klux Klan in Georgia during the late 1860s, U.S. Senator (1873–1880 and 1891–1897), and governor of Georgia (1886–1890).

⁵Melissa Faye Greene, *The Temple Bombing* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), 1–2, 246, 253–258. See also, Janice Rothschild Blumberg, *One Voice: Rabbi Jacob M. Rothschild and the Troubled South* (Macon, GA, 1985), 83–84; "President Asks F.B.I. Aid in Blast," *New York Times*, October 13, 1958, as well as "Temple Bombing Stirs Wide Hunt," October 14, 1958; "Note Threatens Jews in Atlanta," October 15, 1958; "and Anti-Semitic Data Seized in Atlanta," and "Bombing Suspects Tied to 'Hate' Unit," October 16, 1958.

⁶Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism* (New Haven, 2004), 309.

⁷Greene, *Temple Bombing*, 185–188.

⁸*Ibid.*, 6, 74. In 1983 an individual came forward with information supporting Leo Frank's innocence. This led to a request for the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles to pardon Frank. After some deliberation, the board ultimately decided not to issue the pardon because they deemed it impossible to determine conclusively Frank's guilt or

innocence. A few years later, the board ruled that the state of Georgia had denied Frank his constitutional rights by failing to keep him safe from the lynching that occurred while he was imprisoned. See Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (New York, 2003), 645–649.

⁹ Greene, *Temple Bombing*, 15–23; Janice Rothschild Blumberg, “Jacob M. Rothschild: His Legacy Twenty Years After” in *Quiet Voices*, ed. Bauman and Kalin, 261–264.

¹⁰ Jacob M. Rothschild, “The Challenge of a Dream,” October 7, 1954, Jacob Rothschild papers, box 12, folder 8, Manuscript, Archives, & Rare Book Library (MARBL), Emory University, Atlanta, GA (hereafter cited as Rothschild Papers). The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was rendered on May 17, 1954.

¹¹ Rothschild, “Can This Be America?,” May 9, 1958, Rothschild Papers, box 13, folder 2.

¹² Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 170–172; Greene, *Temple Bombing*, 105–106, 178, 184–185; Blumberg, “Jacob M. Rothschild,” 267–269. While Rothschild helped write the Ministers’ Manifesto, he did not sign it due to its overtly Christian language and because he wanted it to come from the Christian clergy.

¹³ Blumberg, “Jacob M. Rothschild,” 261.

¹⁴ The Bible used as the source for all chapter and verse references in this article is the Jewish Publication Society’s, *The Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia, 1917).

¹⁵ The translation comes from the Jewish Publication Society’s, *The Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia, 1917). The same translation is also reflected in the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV), which was published in 1952, and, in turn, was a revision of the *American Standard Version* published in 1901.

¹⁶ Reception history is a relatively new methodology that studies how biblical texts have been used throughout the centuries not just in religious or theological contexts, but also in political, cultural, social, artistic, and other settings. The Bible’s religious and theological meanings and uses, therefore, are only one aspect of its history.

¹⁷ All quotations from Rothschild’s sermon come from a manuscript, “. . . And None Shall Make Them Afraid,” October 17, 1958, Rothschild Papers, box 13, folder 3.

¹⁸ Mark Silk, “Notes on the Judeo-Christian Tradition in America,” *American Quarterly* 36 (Spring 1984): 65–70.

¹⁹ See, for instance, Scott M. Langston, “Rabbi Morris Newfield: Ambassador to the Gentiles, A Balancing Act,” *American Jewish Archives Journal* 59 (2007): 79–88; Langston, “Interaction and Identity: Jews and Christians In Nineteenth Century New Orleans,” *Southern Jewish History* 3 (2000): 83–124; George R. Wilkes, “Rabbi David Marx and the Unity Club: Organized Jewish-Christian Dialogue, Liberalism, and Religious Diversity in Early Twentieth-Century Atlanta,” *Southern Jewish History* 9 (2006): 35–68; Mark K. Bauman and Arnold Shankman, “The Rabbi as Ethnic Broker: The Case of David Marx,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 2 (Spring 1983): 51–68.

²⁰ Gary Phillip Zola, “What Price Amos? Perry Nussbaum’s Career in Jackson, Mississippi” in *Quiet Voices*, ed. Bauman and Kalin, 230–241; Blumberg described Atlanta in 1946,

the year Rothschild arrived, as "a completely segregated city." Blumberg, "Jacob M. Rothschild," 262.

²¹ Zola, "What Price Amos?," 238–250; Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 183–187; "Synagogue Blast Reward Offered," *Jackson (MS) Daily News*, September 19, 1967. Zola identifies the newspaper that published Nussbaum's temple bulletin column as the *Jackson (MS) State Times*, October 15, 1958.

²² Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 189–197, 204–207. Regarding the rabbinical dialog on civil rights, Webb indicates that an informal meeting was held on November 18, 1963, in Chicago, but it is not known who attended or what was discussed. Zola, "What Price Amos?," 251–254; "Synagogue Blast Reward Offered," *Jackson Daily News*, September 19, 1967; "Neighbors Swell Ranks for Prayer," *Jackson (MS) Clarion-Ledger*, September 20, 1967. The *Clarion-Ledger* also reported that Beth-Israel's bombing was not the first in Jackson that year. In February and March, a business and a personal residence had been bombed, and dynamite was found near the Briarwood Presbyterian Church.

²³ Jack Nelson, *Terror in the Night: The Klan's Campaign Against the Jews* (Jackson, MS, 1993), 45–46; Letter from Arene and Perry E. Nussbaum to Dear Friends, October 1, 1967, Perry E. Nussbaum Papers, Mss Col. 430, box 3, folder 6, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH (hereafter cited as Nussbaum Papers); Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 192.

²⁴ "Mississippi Rabbi Sees Rise in Violence," *New York Times*, September 20, 1967.

²⁵ Webb, *Fight Against Fear*, 192; Nelson, *Terror in the Night*, 59–60; "Synagogue Blast Reward Offered," *Jackson Daily News*, September 19, 1967, and "Demolition Team Joins Blast Probe," September 20, 1967; "Bombing of Temple is an Act Deeply Deplored by Citizens," *Clarion-Ledger*, September 20, 1967; "March to Jewish Synagogue Tonight," *Jackson Daily News*, September 21, 1967, and "Blast Probe in 4th Day; March Held," September 22, 1967; "Clergymen Stage Walk in Jackson," *Clarion-Ledger*, September 22, 1967; "Group Prays for Brotherhood," *Greenville (MS) Delta Democrat Times*, September 22, 1967.

²⁶ Nussbaum's sermon does not appear to have been printed in either of Jackson's newspapers.

²⁷ All quotations from Nussbaum's sermon come from a manuscript, "The Friday Following the Bombing of the Temple," undated, Nussbaum Papers, Mss Col. 430, box 4, folder 2.

²⁸ The use of capital and lowercase lettering in the excerpts from Rabbi Nussbaum's sermon reflects the manner in which it appears in the manuscript.

²⁹ While the Jewish Publication Society's *Tanakh* was not completed in its entirety until 1985, the Torah portion of the translation was issued in 1962, with a revision in 1967. This seems to be the translation used by Nussbaum.

³⁰ The day after Nussbaum's sermon, a lengthy and intriguing letter was published in the *Clarion-Ledger* by one of Beth Israel's members, Mrs. Robert D. Levy. Levy echoed parts of Nussbaum's explanation for why the bombing occurred: "It is only right that such violence should rear its ugly head and deliver its wrath upon my Temple. It is in the terms of

our agreement. It is obvious that we were 'chosen' for this. Our share of the bargain gives the Creator permission to exhibit us so that all mankind may see the perfection and the flaws; the strength and the weakness of His product. The Jewish people are the looking glass of all humanity. We are the instrument in which all history reflects itself. And if mankind does not like what he sees in the mirror, who should he blame? When you look into a mirror, do you see the mirror?" See, "Temple Blast Could be a Bell That Tolls for all of Jackson," *Clarion-Ledger*, September 23, 1967.

³¹ Bauman and Kalin, eds., *Quiet Voices*, 16.

³² Jacob M. Rothschild's sermon can be found at Emory Univ., MARBL, Jacob Rothschild Papers, box 13, folder 3. It is presented here without correction to any errors in punctuation, spelling, grammar or word usage that appear in the original.

³³ Perry E. Nussbaum's sermon can be found at The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH, Perry E. Nussbaum Papers, Mss Col. 430, box 4, folder 2. It is presented here without correction to any errors in punctuation, spelling, grammar or word usage that appear in the original.

Book Reviews

Out of Left Field: Jews and Black Baseball. By Rebecca T. Alpert. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 215 pages.

The use of sports as a device for understanding the status of Jews and their place economically and socially within American society is a relatively new approach to American Jewish historical writing. So Rebecca Alpert's bold assertions (3) that an examination of the Jewish role in the "segregated institution" of black baseball leagues "sheds light on the development of American Jewish racial, ethnic and religious identity," reveals the complexity of cooperative and competitive dimensions of Jewish-black economic and social relationships, while addressing issues of Jewish commitment to social justice in the twentieth century, is worthy of serious consideration. Additional depth and nuance to these critical aspects of Jewish minority group life is always welcome. Unfortunately, Alpert's book all too often goes far afield from this warranted rationale for investigation. Through abundant research of previously untapped sources, she surely tells previously untold stories. But *Out of Left Field* frequently loses focus as a work of American Jewish history. Those interested in knowing more about the so-called Negro Leagues and their idiosyncratic players will benefit more than readers curious about the Jewish role therein.

For example, one of Alpert's prime concerns that leads her away from her central theme is her attempt to integrate the Belleville Greys into the normative American Jewish historical narrative. Impressed that this club, formed in the 1920s as an outgrowth of a Temple Beth El Community in Virginia, did not play games on Saturday, she legitimizes them as a Jewish team without delving into the full nature and texture of their religious faith commitments. Content with their sketchy religious bona fides, Alpert proceeds to devote inordinate space chronicling their baseball exploits. But as she tells the tales of stars like Buster

Haywood, as a sports saga would, she also reveals that he had just the most tenuous connection to the community. Moreover, “like other players, and even some community members, he used common Christian language to describe the group to outsiders.” This was a way, Alpert avers, that would help the community’s unusual nature make sense to those who could not connect “black” and “Jewish” (61). However, though the tales are interesting and the accounts well-written, I am unconvinced that she is actually writing about a Jewish team, but rather of a club representing a syncretistic sect, no matter how fascinating their achievements.

Eventually, however, Jewish entrepreneurs, like Ed Gottlieb, Abe Saperstein, Syd Pollock, and others—introduced briefly early in the book—become the focus of her concern and the central rationale for this study, as the complicated questions of black-Jewish relations enter the fray. The prime time for black baseball leagues was the Second World War when fans of all races—starving for entertainment with the major leagues stripped of many of the great white players in the service—flocked to alternative games. (This was also the era of the now renowned Girls Professional Baseball League, immortalized in the film *A League of Their Own*.) At this point with profits to be made, Jewish and black lords of Negro baseball “vied for economic power” and acrimony between minority competitors emerged. Alpert is at her best when she notes the use of antisemitic rhetoric by black owners—depicting Jews as greedy interlopers into their game as surely some of them were. African Americans emulated the canards that what she calls “the white power structure” used to denigrate Jews. Meanwhile, Jews in the business saw ownership of teams as a way of making a quick buck in a high risk industry. Not unlike their incursions into Hollywood and other mass media at the time, they viewed themselves as innovative and creative at a time when other avenues of economic advancement were closed to them. But, in so doing, they were not beyond exploiting stereotypes of blacks, through using “comedy baseball,” an on-the-field, in-the-game form of minstrel show. Jews played the clowns in these acts, which had their inglorious history within “white” baseball, albeit outside of the foul lines. But such routines helped put fans in the stands at Negro

League games, though many blacks were understandably offended. Alpert wisely also points out that African American outrage had its own economic motive. It was part of their “struggle for control of their leagues” (112). For her, such stereotyping and competitions revealed and anticipated “fault lines” within a once supposed “special relationship” between Jews and African Americans long before the era of the civil rights movement (77).

For Alpert, some Jews deserve praise for their selfless contributions to breaking the color line. But, there were those who were politically “out of left field.” Although there were Jewish business-types who saw profit motives in bringing in skilled blacks to upgrade faltering teams’ performances that presumably would attract fans, Alpert is enamored of the Jewish writers for the Communist *Daily Worker* who, from the 1930s on, drummed up support for integration of professional baseball. It was they, she writes, with their unsullied commitment to social justice—along with the determined men of the black press—who kept the issue alive and worked to arrange major league tryouts for individual players. Beyond their journalism, they used their contacts with their powerful labor forces, lobbied politicians, sent petitions, picketed stadiums, and organized rallies. Unquestionably, Alpert is on a mission to have their story told. For her, it is a triumphant saga that was lost “in the context of the virulent anti-communism that began to take hold in America in the 1950s” that for decades read them out of historical writing (136–137). She even goes so far as to credit them with deeply influencing the general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Branch Rickey, to conduct “the great experiment” with Jackie Robinson. Alpert laments the effort of Rickey, a staunch ant-Communist, to minimize the Communist newspaper’s and its party’s role (180). Perhaps, it just made strategic sense to keep groups like the End Jim Crow in Baseball Committee “far away from the spotlight” as he made his controversial move (160).

Meanwhile, as this transformative moment in American history took place, the entrepreneurial Jewish black sports moguls—like Saperstein and Gottlieb—are ostensibly the villains of her piece. They benefited from rounding up subsequent black stars for the white bosses who ran the Big Show, while on another sports

front kept professional basketball segregated. Saperstein had a particular interest in not undermining the talent base of his Harlem Globetrotters—a challenge he faced immediately after the National Basketball Association was integrated. The “Globies” would then abandon all signs of playing legitimate basketball and become a comedy act—albeit a very popular one—for future generations of fans.

For readers of *Southern Jewish History*, the most salient aspects of Alpert’s often all-too-wide ranging labors is a reminder that black-Jewish relations in the twentieth century on and off the field were fraught with potential for misunderstandings, exploitations, and aggressive rivalry. Yet there were also moments and incidents of sympathy and comradeship, all derived from the marginality both of these minority groups felt—albeit to different degrees—in the early decades of the past century. Moreover, these tensions were real and apparent everywhere in this nation, both in the South and North wherever, in this case, the games were played.

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Des berges du Rhin aux rives de Mississippi: Histoire et récits de migrants juifs [From the Banks of the Rhine to the Shores of the Mississippi: History and Narratives of Immigrant Jews]. By Anny Bloch-Raymond. Paris: Michel Houdiard, 2009. 217 pages.

In September 1991 sociologist Anny Bloch-Raymond was in New York City visiting La Société israélite des Français de New York when one of its members showed her a *New York Times* article entitled “Small-Town South Clings to Jewish History.” The article noted that Jewish villagers were disappearing but that their cemeteries and synagogues were being preserved. Some German and Alsatian families who had settled in southern villages were named. As a researcher with France’s National Center of Scientific Research, and as the author of several works on immigration to

the United States, Bloch-Raymond was intrigued. She wanted to learn more about these German and Alsatian Jews, so she contacted the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience in Jackson, Mississippi, which circulated her request for material. The twenty responses she received led to an exchange of information and to several trips to the United States, starting with a first visit to New Orleans in June 1992. In the course of these visits, Bloch-Raymond visited temples, cemeteries, and archives, and she interviewed numerous descendants of the original immigrants. They sought her help in learning about their family histories; and, in turn, they supplied her with letters, memoirs, and journals. Supplemented by state censuses, French departmental registries, passports, and references to numerous articles and books, *Des berges du Rhin aux rives de Mississippi* constitutes a rich portrait of this immigrant population from its arrival until recent times.

These Jews came from the French and German provinces bordering the Rhine, and they landed in two main waves, from 1830 to 1860 and again from 1880 to 1930. From 1830 to 1914 only about 10,000 Jews came from France and about 200,000 from Germany. Two-thirds of them chose to settle in New York, but about 10 to 12 percent chose the South (mainly Louisiana). Family connections, business prospects, land prices, and language all influenced choices. Most of the newcomers were fairly young and regarded immigration as an adventure. They saw this nation as a place where they could make their fortune and escape the poverty and prejudice they experienced at home.

Most were shopkeepers and artisans with some education. A majority of the new arrivals in the South settled first along the Mississippi and its tributaries. Only a minority of these Jews claimed in the departure registries to be peddlers, but many began their new lives that way. Some sold to the riverboats, others to the plantations along the river and the small settlements in the interior. Gradually, as the immigrants amassed capital, they settled down, opened small stores, and, as they prospered, moved to larger towns. Some of the more successful became factors and brokers, serving as lenders and intermediaries between growers

and purchasers, and thus promoted the economic and commercial development of the South.

Bloch-Raymond's main objective is to show how the immigrants and their descendants adapted and how they forged a new life in the South. She examines several aspects of acculturation in cuisine, décor, and language. An especially significant topic is the role of religion in the lives of these families. Dispersed among small communities, Bloch-Raymond's Jews believed that their best chance for acceptance lay in minimizing their differences with their neighbors. Conversion was rare. These families' form of Judaism was largely devoid of ritual and observance and stressed ethics and charity instead, plus engagement in civic and synagogue activities. Coupled with an emphasis on the values they shared with their neighbors, rather than on theological differences, this orientation also served to demonstrate their loyalty to community, region, and country.

Such choices are unsurprising. Having emigrated to escape discrimination, these Jews did not want to replicate the problems that visibility provoked. In both France and Germany, antisemitism had encouraged Jews to assimilate. Post-revolutionary France granted the Jews citizenship but urged them to practice their religion in private and act like Frenchmen in public. German Jews did not gain full civic equality until 1870, and even then found that citizenship was not enough to breach the barriers to mobility. Some had converted, but many turned to Reform Judaism in the hope that modernizing their faith would facilitate acceptance. Thus it was understandable that the immigrants from Germany would be Jewish in a way congruent with a need to win inclusion. Even if they had wanted to be observant, circumstances made it difficult to keep kosher, and Saturday was the main business day. Bloch-Raymond's interviewees generally felt that social integration was successful and that relations with their neighbors were cordial. Jews were nevertheless excluded from some social clubs and New Orleans Mardi Gras krewes. But interviewees were more likely to mention the Dreyfus affair than the lynching of Leo Frank, a phenomenon consistent with positive feelings about the New World.

Bloch-Raymond's interviewees were more ambivalent about the black-Jewish encounter. The interviewees stressed the respectful treatment given to black customers in their stores as well as the warm personal bonds formed with household servants. The immigrants and their progeny do not appear to have questioned the institutions of slavery or segregation, and they accepted the southern way of life. Despite sympathy for the victims of racial supremacy, most of these families stayed silent and neutral during the civil rights battles. Some Jews did not want to imperil their relationships with the white majority; some feared attacks on their homes or businesses from the Ku Klux Klan or the White Citizens Council. One interviewee put it succinctly: "The Jew of the South does not seek to be a martyr but to be accepted" (165).

Des berges du Rhin aux rives de Mississippi is to be commended for balancing theoretical discussions of assimilation, acculturation, and ethnicity with personal histories and anecdotes. A few errors should be noted, however. Ex-Klansman David Duke never became governor of Louisiana, though he did get 39 percent of the vote in the 1991 election. The author cites the non-existent Article 14 of the Constitution as the source of religious freedom. The First Amendment of the Bill of Rights guarantees religious liberty; the Fourteenth Amendment "incorporates" that guarantee and makes it applicable to the states via the due process clause. Finally, as in any research involving interviews with subjects who have not been randomly selected, one has to wonder if these responses are representative of the larger group or reflect only the views of the people willing enough to respond. One might call this the "reunion phenomenon"; those who attend reunions feel positively about their school experience and their subsequent careers and lives. Aside from these minor problems, Bloch-Raymond has performed a worthwhile service in applying sociology to this segment of American Jewry. In presenting her findings in highly accessible French, *Des berges du Rhin aux rives de Mississippi* has also rendered easy the task of translation that this volume merits.

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Dreaming of Dixie: How the South Was Created in American Popular Culture. By Karen L. Cox. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011. 210 pages.

“**W**hat’s playing at the Roxy?”, a Times Square tout asks in *Guys and Dolls* (1950). He proceeds to answer his own question with a plot summary: “A picture about a Minnesota man/So in love with a Mississippi girl/That he sacrifices everything/And moves all the way to Biloxi.” These scintillating lines of Frank Loesser’s can be considered the encapsulation of the argument that Karen L. Cox advances in her study of how the South was packaged in popular culture, starting in the late nineteenth century and ending in the 1950s. Framing roughly the half-century between, say, *Plessy v. Ferguson* and its invalidation in *Brown v. Board of Education*, *Dreaming of Dixie* shows how Tin Pan Alley, Broadway, Hollywood, Madison Avenue, the radio networks, and the tourist industry all coalesced around a benign and sentimental depiction of the region. Thus they helped to heal the scars of the Civil War, even as they envisioned a national reunification suffused in a romantic glow. The marriage of a Confederate army veteran and a northern lass at the end of *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), after the threat of black assertiveness has been crushed, should therefore be regarded as the sinister earlier version of what’s playing at the Roxy. Cox calls it “the culture of reconciliation” (2). But the point of her book is insistent: the various institutions of mass culture were united in accentuating the most reassuring (and often misleading) features of the region. It was admired for having managed to resist the discontents of an urban and industrial civilization and for having achieved such bucolic tranquility that not even the black populace could be restive. The realities of racial injustice could be evaded, Cox suggests, because the myth of moonlight and magnolias was so beguiling.

Dreaming of Dixie therefore updates, however implicitly, what was once labeled consensus history. The author demonstrates that those who were primarily responsible for the amplification and perpetuation of this myth hailed mostly from the North and the Midwest (or lived in southern California). Even those who

reinforced such nostalgia, like Atlanta's Margaret Mitchell, needed a publisher in New York, as well as a Hollywood studio to adapt *Gone with the Wind* (1936) three years later. White southerners hardly objected to what they saw other Americans swallowing, along with their pancakes endorsed by "Aunt Jemima" and their rice recommended by "Uncle Ben." A whole nation seemed to be singing "Swanee" and "I Want to Be in Dixie," or buying tickets to *Show Boat*, or getting some sense of plantation life by watching Shirley Temple and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson in *The Little Colonel* and *The Littlest Rebel*. After all, even Amos and Andy were recent migrants from Atlanta, and their comedy show, at the peak of its popularity early in the Depression, reached about half of all the homes that had radios.

The chapter on popular music notes the curious inauthenticity of Tin Pan Alley. The intense longing for a bandana-clad black "Mammy" came from songwriters who never had one. The "Jewish immigrants who were pounding out a living," the author observes, "with few exceptions had never been to the places that were the subjects of their songs" (16). (Of course Stephen Foster, a Pennsylvanian who was Irving Berlin's hero, had never seen the Suwannee River either.) But otherwise her book is inattentive to the way her subject connects not only with southern history but with Jewish history as well. The hyperlink is popular culture itself. Opportunity in mass entertainment drew Jews eager to lift themselves up from destitution, and some succeeded because they figured out how to gratify the taste of gentile America. Cox notes the ethnic origins of Berlin, George Gershwin, and lyricist Jack Yellen, as well as performers Al Jolson and Eddie Cantor. But what about independent producer David O. Selznick, who ensured that the "Scarlett fever" the nation contracted would not abate? He made *Gone with the Wind* the highest grossing film (adjusted for inflation) ever. *Show Boat* was not only a timeless (and ahead-of-its-time) Broadway musical; it also went through three screen incarnations (the last in 1951), thanks in no small part to the storytelling of Edna Ferber, the lyrics of Oscar Hammerstein II and the score by Jerome Kern. *Amos 'n' Andy* could extend its impact across a continent because of NBC, which was the creation of

David Sarnoff. Cox fails to mention *Li'l Abner*, which, more than any other comic strip, injected hillbillies into the national folklore. Al Capp's achievement was anomalous, however. The yeomanry or the poor whites very rarely inhabited the South that Jewish purveyors of the popular arts imagined. An elegant upper class, consisting of cavaliers and their belles and their devoted black servants, were presented instead.

It is highly unlikely that the Jewish artists and entrepreneurs conjured up the charming images of a leisurely pre-modern world *because* it was southern. But in their effort to ascertain popular moods and needs, such Jews found nothing about their idealized South that inhibited or dismayed them. Indeed it might be even argued that they were more progressive on the race question than their predecessors in minstrelsy had been. The ballads Jolson performed in blackface were not remotely as repugnant as the "coon songs" of an earlier generation; and a song that Berlin wrote (for Ethel Waters) even conveys what a black woman has to tell her children—their father won't be coming home because he has been lynched ("Supper Time"). *The Birth of a Nation* is the most disturbingly racist film Hollywood ever made; the vexing black stereotypes offered up in *Gone with the Wind* are mild by comparison. That Disney, the most *goyish* of the studios, found *Song of the South* (1946) too embarrassing to re-release on video reinforces this claim. Cox nevertheless sees no real change over time in the six or seven decades of mythmaking that her book otherwise so convincingly treats; a greater interest in ethnicity might have enabled her to notice some improvement, however modest.

Dreaming of Dixie opens with a report entitled "A Northerner Views the South," by Ruth Landes, an anthropologist whom Franz Boas, an ardent foe of racism, trained at Columbia University. (Both were Jews.) Landes noted in 1945 that the region was so thoroughly "gilded in sentimentality" that outsiders could barely fathom the realities of the region (1). Nor did its tiny Jewish minority do much to complicate that picture. Only two Jews from below the Mason-Dixon Line are mentioned in Cox's book. One is Moses Ezekiel of Richmond, the sculptor of the Confederate monument at Arlington National Cemetery. The other is David Cohn,

an apologist for the white supremacy he knew from birth in the Mississippi Delta. Both thus helped to forge a distinctive southern identity. Its vestiges can be discerned even now, during the commemoration of the Civil War, a century and a half later. What was that conflict about? Diverging from other Americans, and even more sharply from professional historians, two out of every three southern whites told Harris Interactive pollsters that the central issue was “states’ rights,” not slavery.

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Jews and the Civil War: A Reader. Jonathan D. Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn, editors. New York: New York University Press, 2010. 448 pages.

With *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader*, Jonathan D. Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn present an introduction to the Jewish perspective of the conflict in time for the sesquicentennial of the attack on Fort Sumter. Their reader consists of seven parts, linked by short introductory remarks that deal with various aspects of the war in respect to American Jewry: “Jews and Slavery,” “Jews and Abolition,” “Rabbis and the March to War,” “Jewish Soldiers during the Civil War,” “The Home Front,” “Jews as a Class,” and “Aftermath.” In their introduction the editors quote Bertram W. Korn—the scholar of the subject until now: “We need to know much more than we do now before we can feel that we are fully aware of the experiences of Jews during the Civil War” (ix). Indeed, Mendelsohn and Sarna offer as leitmotif for their book the aim to “rescue, organize, and assemble choice examples of this literature [on the subject]” (x). The articles cover more than sixty years of historiography on the subject, including Jacob Rader Marcus’s “From Peddler to Regimental Commander in Two Years: The Civil War Career of Major Louis A. Gratz” (1949), Korn’s “Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789-1865”

(1961), Thomas D. Clark's "The Post-Civil War Economy in the South" (1966), and Robert Rosen's "Jewish Confederates" (2006). Most of the articles date from the 1960s to the 1990s.

In his introductory "Overview: The War between Jewish Brothers in America," Eli N. Evans describes the Civil War as a war that affected all of American Jewry. The conflict demanded of every American a choice of loyalties, to be either Unionist or Confederate. Jews shared the tendency to act according to their regional patriotic creed—to strive to maintain the Union or to help achieve the independence of the Confederacy. The general portrait of Jews during the war, as shown by Evans, therefore indeed invites "comparison of broader development within Civil War historiography," as Sarna and Mendelsohn advocate in their preface (x). In his own introductory essay, "Before Korn: A Century of Jewish Historical Writing about the American Civil War," Mendelsohn dates the historiography from the 1880s/1890s, when the topic of Jews in the Civil War became of interest (for instance in Simon Wolf's programmatic *The Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen* [1895]), and ends the account with Korn's more complex observations in *American Jewry and the Civil War* (1951). Korn's remains the decisive work in the field, but his book is not excerpted in this reader—which makes sense if *Jews and the Civil War* is appreciated as a supplement to Korn.

Rooted in the nature of any compilation is the challenge of choosing the appropriate texts. The articles chosen for Parts 1 through 3 ("Jews and Slavery," "Jews and Abolition," and "Rabbis and the March to War"), for example, are standard. Bringing them together for this reader connects their fields very well. But while Rosen offers a general view on "Jewish Confederates" in Part 4 ("Jewish Soldiers during the Civil War") and the excerpt stirs the reader's appetite for Rosen's book of the same title, a general account of Jewish Unionists is missing except for the exemplary biography of Major Gratz. Still, Stanley Falk's "Divided Loyalties in 1861: The Decision of Major Alfred Mordecai" presents a great—and well-known—portrait of a soldier who was caught between Union and Confederacy, consequentially suffering the difficulties in loyalty to which not only Jews were subjected dur-

ing the conflict. On the other hand, whereas three articles (in Part 6: "Jews as a Class," and Part 7: "Aftermath") deal directly or indirectly with General Ulysses S. Grant's famously infamous General Order No. 11 that expelled Jews from his military district, a comparable examination for the southern side is noticeably absent. Louis Schmier's or Mark Greenberg's excellent observations on the antisemitic resolutions of Thomasville, Georgia, in 1862 could have balanced the picture. (To be sure, both articles are mentioned in the rather extensive "For Further Reading" section.)

In Part 5 ("The Home Front"), both essays deal exclusively with the experience of women: David Morgan's "Eugenia Philips: The Civil War Experiences of a Southern Jewish Woman," and Dianne Ashton's "Shifting Veils: Religion, Politics, and Womanhood in the Civil War Writings of American Jewish Women." Morgan profiles the wartime career of one of the best known and most undiplomatically outspoken female Confederate patriots, including the difficulties that Philips met in Union-occupied New Orleans. Ashton complements Morgan with her evaluation of the wartime diaries of Confederate patriots Phoebe Pember (who was Eugenia Philips's sister) and the Virginian Emma Mordecai, as well as the writings of Rebecca Gratz, the Unionist teacher from Philadelphia. These Jewish women expressed the firm religious and intellectual convictions of the sides they selected and faced consequences. Fascinating though these two articles are, a balanced set of readings might have addressed the home front beyond the experiences of women. Among other possibilities, William Warren Rogers' "In Defense for our Sacred Cause: Rabbi James K. Guthman in Confederate Montgomery" (which is also mentioned in the "Further Readings") might have supplemented Morgan and Ashton. Their articles present the stories of four women, three of them Confederates, thus leaving "The Home Front" a little heavy on the southern side.

The seventeen articles that found their way into this book (or nineteen counting the two introductions) constitute essential reading for anyone who is interested in the subject. *Jews and the Civil War* will make for especially fascinating reading for laypeople, even though professional historians will have most of the pieces

reprinted in this volume already on their shelves. Unfortunately, most of the articles are reprints of a rather ripe age, some in an abridged version. The question therefore arises whether *Jews and the Civil War* successfully meets Korn's hope to know more now than we did when the articles first appeared. The articles are certainly among the most noteworthy, but they are also the most familiar to specialists. Without doubt, the greatest achievement of *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader* is to have brought these pieces together in one handy volume. If the editors had also decided to include primary sources, such as diaries and firsthand accounts, however, this compilation could have enriched even further our knowledge of *Jews and the Civil War*. For the historian, it is a call to delve deeper into the Civil War experience for Jews.

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Exhibit Reviews

National Museum of American Jewish History: Core Exhibition.

Curators: Josh Perelman, Ann Meyerson, Nina Spiegel. 101 South Independence Mall East, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. November 12, 2010–continuing. Catalog: Jonathan Sarna, Beth Wenger, Michael Berenbaum, Pamela Nadell, and Josh Perelman. *Dreams of Freedom-National Museum of American Jewish History Catalog*, Philadelphia: NMAJH, 2011 (225 pages). Website: <http://www.nmajh.org/>

Since its founding in 1976, the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia (NMAJH) has grown to become the largest collection of American Jewish artifacts—holding over 25,000 historically significant pieces. The museum showcases eye-popping displays like a menu and an oyster fork from the 1883 Trefa Banquet. To accommodate this impressive assortment, including interactive exhibits and numerous iconic documents, NMAJH opened a new building in November 2010. Nestled on Independence Mall among the most recognizable symbols of American freedom, the structure is a four-story tribute to the confluence of American and Jewish identities in shaping American history. Each floor of the three-and-a-half story core exhibition narrates Jewish agency in American history chronologically, from the top floor downward. The first floor contains the *Only in America*® Gallery/Hall of Fame, a “who’s who” of exceptional American Jewish luminaries.

The mission of NMAJH “is to present educational programs and experiences that preserve, explore, and celebrate the history of Jews in America.” The consulting historians committee was headed by Jonathan Sarna and included Beth Wenger, Michael Berenbaum, and Pamela Nadell. Each member has written enduring, widely respected and deep contributions to the field of American Jewish History. Josh Perelman earned his Ph.D. from NYU both in American Jewish history and in Hebrew and Judaic Studies, and has many years of museum experience. Together,

*Façade of the National Museum of American Jewish History
dedicated November 2010, with the nineteenth century
monument to Religious Liberty in front.
(Courtesy of the National Museum of
American Jewish History, Philadelphia.)*

Interactive map, surrounded by various cities with their own artifacts and multimedia, shows the transformation of the nation's borders, economy, and populations in the nineteenth century. Charleston, New Orleans, and Houston are among the featured cities. (Courtesy of the National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia.)

these scholars undertook the gargantuan task of creating what NMAJH boasts to be “the only museum anywhere dedicated to chronicling the American Jewish experience.” The panel also authored the NMAJH catalogue, *Dreams of Freedom*, which smoothly summarizes the museum’s themes with a diversity of voices and glossy exhibit photographs.

The galleries at NMAJH document the national story of how Jews fleeing European persecution to find freedom settled in America and prospered despite their neighbors’ prejudices and differences. Jewish citizenship in the United States eased the nation toward pluralism while American Judaism became more democratic by gaining recognition in American civic life. Each gallery attaches this coda to focal points in American history with original documents and poignant material examples. Interwoven with this grand narrative, however, are exhibits recounting distinctively American Jewish cultural experiences such as peddling and store-owning, philanthropic ef-

forts, new Jewish denominations and community centers, tenement life, success in the entertainment and garment industries, vacationing in the Catskills, youth summer camps, hopeful reactions to the founding of Israel, and solidarity with Soviet Jews.

NMAJH also shows many pieces of interest to historians of the southern Jewish experience. The top floor covers the mainstays of antebellum history including exhibits on the thriving Jewish communities in Savannah and Charleston. The Moroccan Torah, believed to have been the first brought into the colonies at Savannah in 1737, is on display, along with a choir book from Charleston's first Reform temple. A Civil War exhibit includes the voices of Union and Confederate Jews with their uniforms, a profile of Judah P. Benjamin's achievements, along with divisions among American Jews over slavery. Because NMAJH is telling a national story, however, the later period exhibitions lose focus of place and local narratives and tend to blunt regional distinctiveness. The Leo Frank video exhibit in the *Dreams of Freedom* gallery, for instance, frames his murder within a growing wave of national antisemitism by displaying a Ku Klux Klan robe with copies of *The International Jew* and *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The result is provocative, but Steve Oney's opus on the Frank case has pointed more toward local demagoguery and cultural anxieties specific to Marietta, Georgia, as having fomented Frank's lynching. The civil rights exhibit on the second floor highlights liberal Jewish involvement as Freedom Riders and vanguard feminists, but only includes a postcard from Leb's Restaurant in Atlanta that was targeted by anti-segregationist protestors in 1964, along with the iconic January 1969 "Black vs. Jew" cover of *Time* as counter-examples to the freedom narrative. Southern Jews who wanted to preserve the racial status quo are mentioned in exhibition texts, but not represented with much material culture. The point of this museum, however, is to underscore American Jewish achievement rather than failures.

Overall, NMAJH is well worth the afternoon and the small admission fee. Its historians have told a familiar and inspiring national story and chosen an evocative array of artifacts.

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Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina. Curator: Leonard Rogoff. Raleigh installation: exhibit designer, Jennifer McRae; exhibit consultant, Benjamin Filene; cinematographer, Warren Gentry; fabricator: Mike Cindric/Design Dimension, Inc. Greensboro installation: Shane Carrico, curator of exhibits, Greensboro Historical Museum. Presented by Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina, with presenting sponsors: Leon Levine Foundation, Sandra and Leon Levine, and the State of North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources. Raleigh: June 2010–March 2011; Greensboro: April–September 2011; Wilmington (opening October 2011); Charlotte (opening January 2012); and Asheville (to be determined). Additional resources include accompanying book: Leonard Rogoff, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina*, 2010 (432 pages.) Website: <http://www.jhfn.org>.

The exhibition, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina*, represents a significant coming together of material culture, ideas, and interest in the life of Jews in North Carolina from the 1870s to the present. The traveling exhibition originated at the North Carolina Museum of History and has planned stops in Greensboro, Wilmington, Charlotte, and Asheville through 2012. Part of a larger multimedia project, the exhibit stands alongside a 432-page book (Leonard Rogoff), a 60-minute documentary film (Steve Channing), educational DVDs and teachers' guides, and collateral local programming and celebrations at each of the exhibition sites. This reviewer considers a visit to the Greensboro exhibition in May 2011, in the context of this larger project, by looking at both the content and design of the exhibition as interrelated aspects of the visitor experience.

For traveling exhibits, design professionals and content specialists must exercise care in how much information to include within design elements, text panels, and visual materials—and in the transmission of information through both the design and in the particulars of the various components within the experience as a whole. Particularly given the constraints of the various galleries

in which the exhibitions will be mounted and the kinds of artifacts that can be loaned for relatively long periods of time, exhibit organizers may often experience constraints in what they can share with the public. Nonetheless, museum staffs have an obligation to balance those constraints with the benefits visitors receive from accessing important stories and historical concepts, as well as the careful curation of artifacts, visuals, and texts to support rather than detract from the central message of the installations.

First and foremost, the premise of documenting stories and exploring the presence of Jews in the Tar Heel State indicates an important effort by the Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina and the North Carolina Museum of History. As a partner institution, the Greensboro Historical Museum (GHM), among others, shares in the storytelling about and with Jews in the everyday history of the state, and this indicates perhaps the greatest success of the traveling exhibition, both at its origin and then in the satellite of communities where visitors can view it. Without question, the base stories within the exhibition (and in the larger multimedia project) provide rich source material for the curators and designers to manipulate and share with visitors. These creative individuals and scholars, however, fall short, collectively, in their construction of key narratives and command of exhibit elements to communicate the story of Jews in North Carolina in a clear and meaningful way. While Rogoff addresses some of the contextual and content issues raised in this review in the more comprehensive work in book form, the limited scope of the exhibition content and particularly its physical form make easy comprehension by visitors deeply problematic.

Four key areas of exploration—faith, family, business, and learning—provide the frame for the visitor experience within the installation, materialized in a keystone design element in the hall, each with limited explanation. Preceded by five kiosks (and ideas) on the way to the exhibition and, at Greensboro, two additional concepts within the exhibition space itself, the tapestry of thinking presented underscores the presence of Jews in all walks of North Carolina life from a wide perspective. The keystone design elements, unfortunately, do not contain sufficient

information to help viewers understand the importance of the themes, and thus the intellectual framing for each area, or how they relate together. Curators and designers provide an additional dozen questions on waist-high standards clustered at the entrance to explore some myths and assumptions about Jews and Jewish life. Unfortunately, no single organizing principle or text panel aids the visitor in understanding the material within the experience or, interestingly enough, understanding the Jewish experience among the material, both in terms of the larger context of North Carolina life and within mainstream culture. All of the design elements within these various well-made exhibit components follow a similar scale and form (keystones, kiosks, standards) and contain both images and texts of a consistent size and hierarchy. The visitor thus encounters the content and form of the exhibit unsure of the hierarchy of main ideas and subsidiary ones and, at Greensboro, because of the layout, this confusion consistently dissuades the visitor from sorting it all out.

What makes the exhibit stimulating visually counters the educational aims of the effort. As the visitor wades into the material, the cogency of any single message dissolves in the bright colors, number of moving visual images, in the visitor interactives, and the texts in the exhibit's landscape. Nowhere does the curatorial team provide a visual or textual orientation to the story. The intellectual and design confusion that result cloud the importance and long-lasting legacy of the exhibit: the stories of Jews and their everyday lives as *part of* the South. These individual stories chronicle the rich experiences and varied lives of Jews in North Carolina, largely from the latter half of the nineteenth century and the opening decades of the twentieth century. This reviewer left the experience thinking: where's the map?

The particulars of the individual stories stand in bold relief as interesting and often poignant recollections in visual, aural, material, and textual form. However, significant questions remain. How many Jews settled in North Carolina in the time period covered by the exhibit? Where did Jews reside? How did they contribute explicitly and meaningfully to the various communities of North Carolina? How representative are the Jews selected for

inclusion in the four exhibit areas of Jews throughout the state? What of the Jews who settled in the antebellum South, for example, who seem to be invisible in the framework for the exhibit? And what of the embedded nature of Jewish culture and customs in the latter twentieth century or the twenty-first? These areas of explanation and exploration remain untapped as possible explorations for the exhibit organizers due to the lack of carefully framed overviews that move beyond the provocative and toward a concrete position centered in the Jewish experience. They stand as evidence that further overall explication would aid the visitor to the exhibit who brings no prior knowledge of Jewish life to the exhibit hall.

In terms of the interactives, the exhibit contained three kinds: physical models, moving images, and manipulated material culture. The first two, in principle, aid in the explanation of complex spaces, rituals, and practices. Models of a synagogue and design elements within religious spaces, as well as a pseudo compilation of store shelves and store front windows provided a kind of entourage around which exhibit organizers placed other elements. The mercantile section, nearly immersive, offered a change of pace from the frontal orientation and encounter in the remainder of the exhibit. Moving contemporary images of Jewish religious practices in the home and temple took form on large monitors placed in the space. The celebration of a Sabbath meal included the fabrication and installation of a table in which an additional digital monitor had been placed. Though popular, this latter design element occupied valuable real estate within the physical exhibit without delivering any additional insight for the visitor. The more successful movie "books" mounted on a library reading table in the education section provided an easy interface, cleverly linked with the subject matter. The least successful design/content interface, though, involved the use of a modified period refrigerator and stove which, when opened by the visitor, offered visual and aural explanation of a kosher kitchen (refrigerator) and the particulars of a recipe (stove). It seemed quite odd, actually, that such important messages could be so easily missed, notwithstanding

the cultural connections one could make with the placement of disembodied Jewish voices in an oven interior.

In terms of treatment for the room itself, GHM installers did not address the architectural envelope into which they inserted this traveling exhibition. While this reviewer recognizes the challenges inherent in adapting prefabricated exhibition elements in an odd-shaped gallery with relatively low ceilings, greater care could have been made to use the quirky angles of the space to greater advantage in clarifying exhibit content, hierarchy, and central message. In this room, the noisy hum of a pair of dehumidifiers compromised the aural elements of the exhibit, further muddying the message carried by Jews from the past and projected into the space. Given these challenges, a more studied approach for the exhibit installation (even with its pre-designed elements) surely would have resulted in a more clear vision shared with visitors in both sight and sound as they contemplated the intellectual content of the ideas presented.

When this reviewer visited the gallery, one of the volunteer docents characterized that the exhibit carried messages that Jews represent a peculiar kind of southerner intertwined within the predominantly non-Jewish South. Such a story reinforces the stereotypes of difference in faith, family, business, and learning, without recognizing and celebrating the commonalities that Jews share with other southerners with whom they have interacted over a couple of centuries. Even if the essential message of the docent represents a valid interpretation of the central theme of the exhibit, the content and form of the exhibit components do not help sharpen and deliver that single, clear idea—leaving visitors to make the connections about difference and similarity unaided by the wise insights of the curatorial and design team.

In the lobby downstairs from the main exhibit space at the GHM, museum staff pulled together artifacts from local collections and fashioned a small display, perhaps twenty feet square, populated by a series of vitrines, text panels in banner form, and a visually stimulating, though confusing, timeline of Jewish events particular to Greensboro. In contrast to the exhibit above, this smaller installation did not suffer from the same design and idea

confusion, save the timeline. Certainly the scale of this smaller effort contrasted with the larger endeavor upstairs and, stripped of color and moving images, this smaller setting seemed more successful in delivering a message of intertwined southern and Jewish lives. Without the visual stimuli of the larger installation, this local perspective, offered in the lobby, actually achieved the intention of explaining an important aspect of southern life in a more lucid manner.

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¹ *The author gratefully acknowledges the keen eye and sharp thinking of Natalie Lentz Wall who walked through the exhibit and reviewed several drafts of this review.*

Note from the Website Review Editor . . .

I am thrilled to introduce the first website review to be published in *Southern Jewish History*. From this issue forward, website reviews will be a regular feature of the journal. In our increasingly digital world, the information on southern Jewish history available at our fingertips can sometimes be overwhelming. Our hope is that readers will benefit from critical reviews of museum websites, special collections, online exhibits, digital archives, and genealogical websites. Unlike book reviews, which focus on content, website reviews will also evaluate the form and function of websites, such as aesthetics, use of multimedia technology, and accessibility. We will be featuring a range of websites, from large multifaceted organizations—such as the American Jewish Archives site reviewed in this issue—to smaller websites dedicated to temporary special exhibits.

If you know of websites that you think should be reviewed, please contact me. I would also like to hear from you if you are interested in being a potential website reviewer.

Dina Pinsky
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Website Review

The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives.
<http://www.AmericanJewishArchives.org>. Reviewed June 19, 2011.

For those of us who are researchers, genealogists, historians, teachers, etc., whether professional or amateur, websites are a valuable tool to assist with our research, guiding us towards essential resources and records. I rely on many websites to help guide me in my various research projects. Important aspects I look for in a website are ease of access to data, speed of download, and simplicity of search features. Overall website organization and design are also important, because the ability to navigate easily through the pages and components of a website can make or break the experience. If you cannot easily locate a database, or if the search functions are confusing, the search process can be slow and frustrating.

The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati identifies, collects, and preserves materials that document American Jewish life. Undoubtedly because of its affiliation with the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, there is clearly a substantial amount of material reflecting the Reform presence in America. For those interested in southern Jewish history, the website will be quite useful as the Reform movement had and continues to have a strong presence in the American South. The website is extensive, reflecting the enormous scope and mission of the organization. It serves as an online source of historical records housed in its archive and presents information on their programs, exhibits, events, and news.

The “Do Research” section on the home page serves as the portal to the research collections and the options available for accessing information on the collections. Among the choices are the online catalog, major manuscript collections, and genealogical

Website at www.AmericanJewishArchives.org.

research. The online catalog does not contain all the materials in the archive, but includes all new accessions since 1997, all major manuscript collections, and the entire photo collection, as well as family histories and most of the nearprint collection. The manuscript materials section spells out what is available on-site and online. One can search various topics such as personal and family papers, rabbis, organizations, and synagogues. The user clicks on each topic and receives an alphabetical listing of the holdings, each with a brief description. Those collections that have a full inventory or search tool available online are noted. Information on photographs, microfilm, audio-visual, and nearprint materials is also included. The genealogy section includes a good introduction, ideas on how to start your family tree, useful links, and instructions on searching the online catalog for family and personal collections. There is a useful "Frequently Asked Questions" section and also information about the newest collections available at the archive. The online catalog search parameters are typical of a library catalog and include title, keyword, subject, etc.

This website is very extensive, and the research portion contains a great deal of material organized in several sections. The organization of the website is mostly very clear. However, visitors must be able to take time and go through the various steps required to fully comprehend what is available on the site since there are too many options for just casual usage. For information on exhibits and programs, the non research portions of the website are easy to use and understand. These sections are predictably less detailed, and much of the detail and content are devoted to the research aspects and collections of the American Jewish Archives.

Considering the immense amount of information it includes, I found this website to be well-organized, easy to search, and fairly simple to follow. The serious researcher, the family genealogist, or the casual historian, will no doubt find this website extremely useful. The synagogue collections have been most helpful to me especially with regard to the scope and content notes. I found the collections useful for dates and information regarding my research into West Virginia Jewish history and also American synagogue architecture.

Julian H. Preisler, Falling Waters, WV

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Glossary

Ashkenazi (plural: **Ashkenazim**) ~ A Jew associated with central and eastern Europe

Bimah ~ platform from which services are led in a synagogue

Brit milah ~ ritual circumcision performed on males eight days old; based on biblical mark of covenant

Chanukah, *see* **Hanukkah**

Chevra kadisha ~ literally, “holy society”; Jewish burial society

Erev ~ literally, “evening,” meaning the evening of when Jewish holidays and the Jewish Sabbath start; **erev Rosh Hashanah** ~ the evening at the start of Rosh Hashanah

Goyish ~ Pertaining to a **Goy** (plural: **goyim**) ~ gentiles, people who are not Jewish

Hanukkah ~ variants include Chanukah, Hanukah ~ Feast of Lights, eight-day holiday commemorating victory of the Maccabees over Syrian rulers, 167 BCE

Ketuvim ~ the third and final division of the Hebrew Bible, the books that come after **Nevi'im**

Kol Nidre ~ the name of service in the synagogue on the eve of Yom Kippur; prayer recited in the synagogue on the eve of Yom Kippur

Mohel ~ person who performs ritual circumcision

Nevi'im ~ the second division of the Hebrew Bible, comprising the books of the Prophets, and coming after the Torah

Passover ~ spring holiday commemorating the deliverance of the ancient Hebrews from Egyptian bondage

Rebbetzin ~ rabbi's wife

Rosh Hashanah ~ literally, *head of the year*; new year on Hebrew calendar; one of holiest days of Jewish year

Sephardic ~ having to do with Jews and Judaism associated with Spain and Portugal

Sidrah ~ variant: **sedra** (plural: **sidrot**) ~ the weekly portion of the Torah that is read in the synagogue on Shabbat

Shabbat ~ Jewish Sabbath; Friday evening at sunset to Saturday evening at the appearance of the first stars

Shavuot ~ literally, "weeks," spring harvest celebrated fifty days after Pesach on the anniversary of Moses receiving the Ten Commandments

Shokhet ~ ritual slaughterer, kosher butcher

Sukkah ~ temporary open-air structure used for the festival of Sukkot

Sukkot ~ fall holiday or Festival of Tabernacles commemorating the Hebrews' wanderings in the desert after the Exodus from Egyptian bondage

Tallit ~ prayer shawl

Tanakh ~ The acronym for the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible: Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvi'im

Torah ~ Five Books of Moses; first five books of the Bible

Trefa ~ non-kosher food

Yarmulke ~ skull cap

Yizkor ~ Memorial prayer for deceased family members recited in the synagogue on Yom Kippur, Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkah

Yom Kippur ~ Day of Atonement; holiest day of the Jewish year

Note on Authors

Jeffrey S. Gurock is Libby M. Klaperman Professor of Jewish History at Yeshiva University. He is the author or editor of fifteen books including *Judaism's Encounter with American Sports* (2005).

Helen Herman has master's degrees in sociology and history and a J.D. degree. Before retiring, she taught at Loyola Law School in New Orleans and was dean of students at Tulane Law School. She has had an abiding interest in France since studying French in high school and spending her junior year of college in Paris. She has lived in Paris periodically and lived in New Orleans for many years.

Anton Hieke, a native of Anhalt, Central Germany, majored in history and minored in American as well as Jewish studies at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg and earned a master's degree with his thesis on the Impeachment of Andrew Johnson. Recently, he finished his dissertation on the German Jewish immigrants of Reconstruction Georgia and the Carolinas. He currently works with the Zentrum für USA-Studien (ZUSAS)/Center for United States Studies in Wittenberg, Germany. Hieke's publications include "'Aus Nordcarolina:' The Jewish American South in German Jewish Periodicals of the Nineteenth Century." *European Journal for Jewish Studies* 5 (2011); "Jews at the Cape Fear Coast: A Portrait of Jewish Wilmington, NC, 1860-1880," *Southern Jewish History* 13 (2010); and "Farbrekher in America: The Americanization of Jewish Blue-Collar Crime, 1900-1931," *aspeers* 3 (2010).

Scott M. Langston teaches religion at Texas Christian University and American history at Tarrant County College, both in Fort Worth, Texas. He has written several essays and books in the fields of southern Jewish history and the reception history of the Bible, including *Exodus Through the Centuries* (Blackwell, 2006). He is a former president of the Southern Jewish Historical Society

(2006-2008) and currently the first vice president of the Texas Jewish Historical Society.

J. Kime Lawson is a Ph.D candidate in the Department of History at Temple University and Assistant Editor for Temple's "Faculty Herald." He earned a B.A. in religious studies from Gardner-Webb University (1999) and a M.A. in religion from the University of Georgia (2002). Kime's research interests include nineteenth and twentieth-century U.S. cultural and religious history, and Southern Jewish history. He is currently tracing the networks of political support for the founding of Israel in 1940s South Carolina.

Arlene Lazarowitz holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of California, Los Angeles. She is currently professor of history at California State University, Long Beach. Her most recent articles are "Ethnic Influences and American Foreign Policy: American Jewish Leaders and President Jimmy Carter," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* (Fall 2010) and "Different Approaches to the Search for Balance: The Johnson Administration, the State Department, and the Middle East, 1964-1967," *Diplomatic History* (January 2008). She is currently working on two articles: "President Ronald Reagan and the American Jewish Community" and "President Gerald Ford and the Israeli-Egyptian Conflict over the Sinai."

Patrick Lee Lucas, associate professor of interior architecture, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, received his doctorate in American studies from Michigan State University (2002), a M.S. in interior design from University of Kentucky (1998), and a B.Arch. from University of Cincinnati (1988). Lucas explores the intersection between design and community in two major projects, one on Greek Revival architecture and "Athens" nicknamed communities and a second on the North Carolina architect, Edward Loewenstein, and his mid-century modern design aesthetic as evidence of community values. Active in history, American studies, and design organizations, Lucas has given numerous papers at conferences throughout the United States and abroad. He has published in several journals and his work appeared in the premiere issue of *Interiors: Design, Architecture, and*

Culture. In 2009-2010, he served as the Chancellor's Fellow to the Lloyd International Honors College. During the following academic year, he studied community engagement as the Faculty Fellow to the UNCG Office of Leadership + Service-Learning. In 2011, he received the UNC Board of Governor's Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Julian H. Preisler is a professional researcher and genealogist. His recent works include *Jewish West Virginia* (2010) and *Historic Synagogues of Philadelphia & The Delaware Valley* (2008). He has conducted genealogy research for over 15 years. His interests include American synagogue architecture and local Jewish history. Future research plans include synagogue architecture in the American South and documenting America's demolished synagogues.

Leonard Rogoff, historian of the Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina, has written and lectured extensively on the Jewish South. His books include *Homelands: Southern Jewish Identity in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (2000) and *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (2010). He served as consulting historian for the exhibit "Migrations: the Jewish Settlers of Eastern North Carolina" and the multimedia project "Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina."

Ellen M. Umansky is the Carl and Dorothy Bennett Professor of Judaic Studies at Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut, and director of the university's Bennett Center for Judaic Studies, positions she has held since 1994. She is an active member of the American Academy of Religion, the Association for Jewish Studies, and the Southern Jewish Historical Society. Author of many essays, book chapters, encyclopedia articles, and books, including the recently revised and expanded *Four Centuries of Jewish Women's Spirituality: A Sourcebook* (co-edited with Dianne Ashton, 2009), she is currently working on a book that focuses on Judaism, feminism, liberalism, and God.

Lee Shai Weissbach is Professor of History at the University of Louisville, where he has also been chair of his department and associate dean in the College of Arts and Sciences. He received his undergraduate training at the University of Cincinnati and earned

his doctorate at Harvard. He has been the recipient of a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship (1996) and served as a Fulbright Fellow (2006) at the University of Haifa in Israel. His publications include *The Synagogues of Kentucky: Architecture and History* (1995), *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (2005), and numerous journal articles. Recently, Weissbach edited a special issue of the journal *Jewish History* on synagogue architecture and prepared for publication the memoir of his grandfather, a Lithuanian Jew who immigrated first to the United States and later to Palestine early in the twentieth century.

Stephen J. Whitfield holds the Max Richter Chair in American Civilization at Brandeis University, and is the author most recently of *In Search of American Jewish Culture* (1999, paperback edition 2001). He also serves as book review editor of *Southern Jewish History*.

Errata for Volume 13 (2010)

The following corrections were brought to the editor's attention by Leonard Rogoff.

Pages 3 and 4: The Mordecais were Ashkenazic and not Sephardic in origin.

Page 17, lines 10–14 assert that the North Carolina state constitution did not allow non-Protestants to serve in office until 1868. In fact, in 1835, the religious test was amended to “Christian” to allow Roman Catholics to serve.

Page 52, 3rd full paragraph, lines 4–5: “The North Carolina constitution of 1776 forbade Jews from voting.” The religious test applied only to public office. Even here theory proved different from practice and interpretation. Jacob Henry successfully ran for the state House of Commons—part of the legislature. When his second election (1809) was challenged, the House rejected the challenge on the technical grounds that the constitutional provisions—the religious test oath—applied to the executive branch or civic department but not the legislature. Essentially the constitutional provisions were being ignored or sidestepped.

Visit the SJHS Website

Find recent issues of *The Rambler*, the SJHS newsletter, and information about annual conferences and other Southern Jewish Historical Society activities, membership, grants, and publications.
<http://www.jewishsouth.org/>

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Award for Best Article

Recipients of the SJHS quadrennial prize for the outstanding article published in *Southern Jewish History*:

2001 (volumes 1–4) Scott Langston for “Interaction and Identity: Jews and Christians in Nineteenth Century New Orleans” in volume 3.

2005 (volumes 5–8) Adam Mendelsohn for “Two Far South: Rabbinical Responses to Apartheid and Segregation in South Africa and the American South” in volume 6.

2009 (volumes 9–12) *tie result* Dianne Ashton for “Quick to the Party: The Americanization of Hanukkah and Southern Jewry,” in volume 12; and Leonard Rogoff for “Harry Golden, New Yorker: I ♥ NC,” in volume 11.

Contents of Back Issues of Southern Jewish History

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Why Study Southern Jewish History, *Gary P. Zola*

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Bryan Edward Stone

Synagogue and Jewish Church: A Congregational History of
North Carolina, *Leonard Rogoff*

Amelia Greenwald and Regina Kaplan: Jewish Nursing Pioneers,
Susan Mayer

PERSONALITY PROFILE, Harry Reyner: Individualism and Community in Newport News, Virginia, *Gertrude L. Samet*

AS TOLD TO MEMOIRS, Ruth and Rosalie: Two Tales of Jewish New Orleans, *Bobbie Malone*

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REVIEW ESSAY, In the High Cotton, *Stephen J. Whitfield*

VOLUME 5 (2002)

Rabbi Alphabet Browne: The Atlanta Years, *Janice Rothschild Blumberg*

Rabbi Bernard Illowy: Counter Reformer, *Irwin Lachoff*

James K. Gutheim as Southern Reform Rabbi, Community Leader, and Symbol, *Scott M. Langston*

A Sugar Utopia on the Florida Frontier: Moses Elias Levy's Pilgrimage Plantation, *Chris S. Monaco*

LETTER TO THE EDITOR, Revisiting Annie T. Wise, *Arlene G. Rotter*

INDEX TO VOLUMES 1 THROUGH 5

VOLUME 6 (2003)

Christian Science, Jewish Science, and Alfred Geiger Moses, *Ellen M. Umansky*

Synagogue Music for Birmingham, Alabama: Arthur Foote's *Azi v'Zimrat Yoh*, *John H. Baron*

Two Far South: Rabbinical Responses to Apartheid and Segregation in South Africa and the American South, *Adam Mendelsohn*

The Ku Klux Klan and the Jewish Community of Dallas, 1921 – 1923, *Rosalind Benjet*

Articles relating to Southern Jewish History Published in *American Jewish History*, *American Jewish Archives Journal*, Their Predecessors, and *Southern Jewish History*, *Mark K. Bauman*

VOLUME 7 (2004)

HISTORIAN PROFILES

In Distinguished Company: A Profile of Solomon Breibart, *Harlan Greene and Dale Rosengarten*

“What Was on Your Mind Was on Your Tongue”: A Profile of Leonard Dinnerstein, *Clive J. Webb*

“A Sense of Connection to Others”: A Profile of Stephen Whitfield, *Deborah R. Weiner*

Edgar Goldberg and the *Texas Jewish Herald*: Changing Coverage and Blended Identity, *Bryan Edward Stone*

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS, A Prussian-born Jewish Woman on the Florida Frontier: Excerpts from the Memoir of Bertha Zadek Dzialynski, *Canter Brown, Jr.*

BOOK REVIEWS

Emily Bingham, *Mordecai: An Early American Family*, reviewed by Jennifer A. Stollman

Alan M. Kraut, *Goldberger's War: The Life and Work of a Public Health Crusader*, reviewed by Jane Rothstein

Raymond A. Mohl with Matilda “Bobbi” Graff and Shirley M. Zoloth, *South of the South: Jewish Activists and the Civil Rights Movement in Miami, 1945-1950*, reviewed by Deborah Dash Moore

Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank*, reviewed by Marni Davis

VOLUME 8 (2005)

Entering the Mainstream of Modern Jewish History: Peddlers and the American Jewish South, *Hasia R. Diner*

Samuel Fleishman: Tragedy in Reconstruction-Era Florida, *Daniel R. Weinfeld*

Anti-Jewish Violence in the New South, *Patrick Q. Mason*

The “Typical Home Kid Overachievers”: Instilling a Success Ethic in the Jewish Children’s Home of New Orleans, *Wendy Besmann*

Macey Kronsberg: Institution Builder of Conservative Judaism in Charleston, S.C., and the Southeast, *Peggy Kronsberg Pearlstein*

NECROLOGY: Samuel Proctor (1919-2005), *Chris S. Monaco*

BOOK REVIEWS

David J. Ginzl, *Stein Mart: An American Story of Roots, Family and Building a Greater Dream*, reviewed by Hollace A. Weiner

Jeffrey Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston: Brith Sholom Beth Israel and American Jewish History*, reviewed by Deborah R. Weiner
Clara Silverstein, *White Girl: A Story of School Desegregation*, reviewed by Adam Mendelsohn

Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small Town America: A History*, reviewed by Leonard Rogoff

VOLUME 9 (2006)

Sophie Weil Browne: From Rabbi's Wife to Clubwoman, *Janice Rothschild Blumberg*

Rabbi Dr. David Marx and the Unity Club: Organized Jewish-Christian Dialogue, Liberalism, and Religious Diversity in Early Twentieth-Century Atlanta, *George R. Wilkes*

Uptown and Traditional, *Jessica Elfenbein*

Israel Fine: Baltimore Businessman and Hebrew Poet, *Peggy Kronsberg Pearlstein*

At One with the Majority, *Mary Stanton*

NECROLOGY: Saul Viener (1921-2006), *Bernard Wax*

BOOK REVIEWS

Marcie Cohen Ferris, *Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South*, reviewed by Hasia R. Diner

Valerie Frey, Kaye Kole, and Luciana Spracher, *Voices of Savannah: Selections from the Oral History Collection of the Savannah Jewish Archives*, reviewed by Mark I. Greenberg

Laurie Gunst, *Off-White: A Memoir*, reviewed by Cheryl Greenberg

C. S. Monaco, *Moses Levy of Florida: Jewish Utopian and Antebellum Reformer*, reviewed by Saul S. Friedman

VOLUME 10 (2007)

SJHS MEMORIES

Ruminations about the SJHS, *Bernard Wax*

The Pioneer Period of the SJHS (1976-1983), *Saul J. Rubin*

The Distance Traveled: Reminiscences of Twenty-five Years in
SJHS, *Janice Rothschild Blumberg*

Conferences and Presidents: SJHS History in Pictorial Memory

Making History: An Interview with Saul Viener, *Eric L.
Goldstein*

Reflections on the Past and Future of the Southern Jewish His-
torical Society, *Eli N. Evans*

Framing Florida Jewry, *Stephen J. Whitfield*

A Shtetl in the Sun: Orthodoxy in Southern Florida, *Edward S.
Shapiro*

"The Law of Life is the Law of Service": Rabbi Ira Sanders and the
Quest for Racial and Social Justice in Arkansas, 1926-1963,
James L. Moses

The Unusual and Bizarre, Barney and Clyde: A Tale of Murder and
Madness, *Jean Roseman*

Review Essay, [More than Plantations and Pastrami](#): Southern Jew-
ish History Comes of Age, *Kirsten Fermaglich*

Review Essay, Measuring Julius Rosenwald's Legacy, *Stuart Rockoff*

BOOK REVIEWS

Andrea Greenbaum, ed., *Jews of South Florida*, reviewed by Mark
I. Greenberg

Eliza R. L. McGraw, *Two Covenants: Representations of Southern
Jewishness*, reviewed by Bryan Edward Stone

Mary Stanton, *The Hand of Esau: Montgomery's Jewish Community
and the Bus Boycott*, reviewed by Dan J. Puckett

Deborah R. Weiner, *Coalfield Jews: An Appalachian History*, re-
viewed by Dana M. Greene

Hollace Ava Weiner and Kenneth D. Roseman, eds., *Lone Stars of
David: The Jews of Texas*, reviewed by Bobbie Malone

VOLUME 11 (2008)

In the Shadow of Hitler: Birmingham's Temple Emanu-El and Nazism, *Dan J. Puckett*

Harry Golden, New Yorker: I ♥ NC, *Leonard Rogoff*

Charleston Jewry, Black Civil Rights, and Rabbi Burton Padoll, *Allen Krause*

PERSONALITY PROFILE: A Sephardic Physician in Williamsburg, Virginia, *Alan L. Breitler and Susan Pryor*

PRIMARY SOURCES: Tales of Two Weddings

Henrietta Shebeiner marries Aaron Davis, June 7, 1870, Eufaula, Alabama, *Daniel R. Weinfeld*

Rosa Benjamin marries Jacob Katz, July 7, 1886,

Micanopy, Florida, *Rachel Heimovics Braun and Marcia Jo Zerivitz*

BOOK REVIEWS

Hollace Ava Weiner, *Jewish 'Junior League': The Rise and Demise of the Fort Worth Council of Jewish Women*, reviewed by Ieva Zake

VOLUME 12 (2009)

Quick to the Party: The Americanization of Hanukkah and Southern Jewry, *Dianne Ashton*

Two Generations of the Abraham and Fanny Block Family: Internal Migration, Economics, Family, and the Jewish Frontier, *Mary L. Kwas*

Commerce and Community: A Business History of Jacksonville Jewry, *Stephen J. Whitfield*

NOTES: A Second Eyewitness to Jim Conley's Actions: The Leo Frank Case Revisited, *Stephen Goldfarb*

PRIMARY SOURCES: Grassroots Reactions to Kishinev Pogrom in Fort Worth and Atlanta, *Hollace Ava Weiner and Sandra Berman*

EXHIBIT REVIEWS

Beyond Swastika and Jim Crow: Jewish Refugee Scholars at Black Colleges, Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York, reviewed by *Philip Kasinitz*

Forgotten Gateway: Coming to America through Galveston Island, 1846–1924, Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, Austin, Texas, reviewed by *Bryan Edward Stone*

Voices of Lombard Street: A Century of Change in East Baltimore, Jewish Museum of Maryland, Baltimore, reviewed by *Marni Davis*

VOLUME 13 (2010)

Jews at the Cape Fear Coast: A Portrait of Jewish Wilmington, NC, 1860–1880, *Anton Hieke*

That Spirit Must be Stamped Out: The Mutilation of Joseph Needleman and North Carolina’s Effort to Prosecute Lynch Mob Participants during the 1920s, *Vann Newkirk*

Kristallnacht and North Carolina: Reporting on Nazi Antisemitism in Black and White, *Robert Drake*

The Hermans of New Orleans: A Family in History, *Stephen J. Whitfield*

Rabbi Benjamin Schultz and the American Jewish League Against Communism: From McCarthy to Mississippi, *Allen Krause*

PRIMARY SOURCES: Leo Frank Revisited: New Resources on an Old Subject, *Sandra Berman*

NECROLOGY: Solomon Breibart (1914–2009), *Janice Rothschild Blumberg*

BOOK REVIEWS

Matthew H. Bernstein, Screening a Lynching: The Leo Frank Case on Film and Television, reviewed by *Michael Rothschild*

Benjamin Ginsberg, Moses of South Carolina: A Jewish Scalawag during Reconstruction, reviewed by *Robert P. Bloomberg*

Leonard Rogoff, Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina, reviewed by *Michael Cohen*

Hans J. Sternberg with James E. Shelledy, We Were Merchants: The Sternberg Family and the Story of Goudchaux’s and Maison Blanche Department Stores, reviewed by *Mary L. Kwas*

Bryan Edward Stone, The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas, reviewed by *Stuart Rockoff*

Clive Webb, Rabble Rousers: The American Far Right in the Civil Rights Era, reviewed by *Leonard Dinnerstein*

Index of Authors
Southern Jewish History Volumes 1 – 13

- Ashton, Dianne, "Quick to the Party: The Americanization of Hanukkah and Southern Jewry," v. 12
- Baron, John H., "Synagogue Music for Birmingham, Alabama: Arthur Foote's *Azi v'Zimrat Yoh*," v. 6
- Barr, Terry, "A Shtetl Grew in Bessemer: Temple Beth-El and Jewish Life in Small-Town Alabama," v. 3
- Bauman, Mark K., "Articles relating to Southern Jewish History Published in American Jewish History, American Jewish Archives Journal, Their Predecessors, and Southern Jewish History," v. 6
- Benjet, Rosalind, "The Ku Klux Klan and the Jewish Community of Dallas, 1921 – 1923," v. 6
- Berman, Sandra "Grassroots Reactions to Kishinev Pogrom in Fort Worth and Atlanta," (with Hollace Weiner) v. 12
- "Leo Frank Revisited: New Resources on an Old Subject," v. 13
- Besmann, Wendy, "The 'Typical Home Kid Overachievers': Instilling a Success Ethic in the Jewish Children's Home of New Orleans," v. 8
- Blanton, Sherry, "Lives of Quiet Affirmation: The Jewish Women of Early Anniston, Alabama," v. 2
- Bloch, Anny, "Mercy on Rude Streams: Jewish Emigrants from Alsace-Lorraine to the Lower Mississippi Region and the Concept of Fidelity," v. 2
- Bloomberg, Robert P., *Book Review*, Benjamin Ginsberg, *Moses of South Carolina: A Jewish Scalawag during Reconstruction*, v. 13
- Blumberg, Janice Rothschild, "Rabbi Alphabet Browne: The Atlanta Years," v. 5

- “Sophie Weil Browne: From Rabbi’s Wife to Clubwoman,” v. 9
- “The Distance Traveled: Reminiscences of Twenty-five Years in SJHS,” v. 10
- *NECROLOGY: “Solomon Breibart (1914–2009),”* v. 13
- Braun, Rachel Heimovics, “Rosa Benjamin marries Jacob Katz, July 7, 1886, Micanopy, Florida,” (with Marcia Jo Zerivitz) v. 11
- Breitler, Alan L., “A Sephardic Physician in Williamsburg, Virginia,” (with Susan Pryor) v. 11
- Brown, Jr., Canter, “A Prussian-born Jewish Woman on the Florida Frontier: Excerpts from the Memoir of Bertha Zadek Dzialynski,” v. 7
- Cohen, Michael, *Book Review*, Leonard Rogoff, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina*, v. 13
- Davis, Marni, *Book Review*, Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank*, v. 7
- *Exhibit Review*, “Voices of Lombard Street: A Century of Change in East Baltimore,” Jewish Museum of Maryland, Baltimore, v. 12
- Diner, Hasia R., “Entering the Mainstream of Modern Jewish History: Peddlers and the American Jewish South,” v. 8
- *Book Review*, Marcie Cohen Ferris, *Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South*, v. 9
- Dinnerstein, Leonard, *Book Review*, Clive Webb, *Rabble Rousers: The American Far Right in the Civil Rights Era*, v. 13
- Drake, Robert, “*Kristallnacht* and North Carolina: Reporting on Nazi Antisemitism in Black and White,” v. 13
- Elfenbein, Jessica, “Uptown and Traditional,” v. 9
- Evans, Eli N., “Reflections on the Past and Future of the Southern Jewish Historical Society,” v. 10

- Fermaglich, Kirsten, *Review Essay*, “[More than Plantations and Pastrami](#): Southern Jewish History Comes of Age,” v. 10
- Ferris, Marcie Cohen, “‘From the Recipe File of Luba Cohen’: A Study of Southern Jewish Foodways and Cultural Identity,” v. 2
- Friedman, Saul S., *Book Review*, C. S. Monaco, *Moses Levy of Florida: Jewish Utopian and Antebellum Reformer*, v. 9
- Goldfarb, Stephen, “A Second Eyewitness to Jim Conley’s Actions: The Leo Frank Case Revisited,” v. 12
- Goldstein, Eric L., “Conferences and Presidents: SJHS History in Pictorial Memory Making History: An Interview with Saul Viener,” v. 10
- Greenberg, Cheryl, *Book Review*, Laurie Gunst, *Off-White: A Memoir*, v. 9
- Greenberg, Mark I., *Book Review*, Valerie Frey, Kaye Kole, and Luciana Spracher, *Voices of Savannah: Selections from the Oral History Collection of the Savannah Jewish Archives*, v. 9
- *Book Review*, Andrea Greenbaum, ed., *Jews of South Florida*, v. 10
- Greene, Dana M., *Book Review*, Deborah R. Weiner, *Coalfield Jews: An Appalachian History*, v. 10
- Greene, Harlan, “In Distinguished Company: A Profile of Solomon Breibart,” (with Dale Rosengarten) v. 7
- Harris, Stacy, “Kosher Country: Success and Survival on Nashville’s Music Row,” v. 2
- Hawkins, Richard A., “Lynchburg’s Swabian Jewish Entrepreneurs in War and Peace,” v. 3
- Hieke, Anton, “Jews at the Cape Fear Coast: A Portrait of Jewish Wilmington, NC, 1860-1880,” v. 13
- Kasinitz, Philip *Exhibit Review*, “Beyond Swastika and Jim Crow: Jewish Refugee Scholars at Black Colleges,” Museum of Jewish Heritage, New York, v. 12

- Krause, Allen, "Charleston Jewry, Black Civil Rights, and Rabbi Burton Padoll" v. 11
- "Rabbi Benjamin Schultz and the American Jewish League Against Communism: From McCarthy to Mississippi," v. 13
- Kwas, Mary L, "Two Generations of the Abraham and Fanny Block Family: Internal Migration, Economics, Family, and the Jewish Frontier," v. 12
- *Book Review*, Hans J. Sternberg with James E. Shelledy, *We Were Merchants: The Sternberg Family and the Story of Goudchaux's and Maison Blanche Department Stores*, v. 13
- Lachoff, Irwin, "Rabbi Bernard Illowy: Counter Reformer," v. 5
- Langston, Scott M., "Interaction and Identity: Jews and Christians in Nineteenth Century New Orleans," v. 3
- "James K. Gutheim as Southern Reform Rabbi, Community Leader, and Symbol," v. 5
- Malone, Bobbie, "Ruth and Rosalie: Two Tales of Jewish New Orleans," v. 1
- *Book Review*, Hollace Ava Weiner and Kenneth D. Roseman, eds., *Lone Stars of David: The Jews of Texas*, v. 10
- Marcus, Robert, co-author with Jim Quinlan, "David Mendes Cohen, Beleaguered Marine," v. 4
- Mason, Patrick Q., "Anti-Jewish Violence in the New South," v. 8
- Mayer, Susan, "Amelia Greenwald and Regina Kaplan: Jewish Nursing Pioneers," v. 1
- Mendelsohn, Adam, "Two Far South: Rabbinical Responses to Apartheid and Segregation in South Africa and the American South," v. 6
- *Book Review*, Clara Silverstein, *White Girl: A Story of School Desegregation*, v. 8
- Monaco, Chris S., "A Sugar Utopia on the Florida Frontier: Moses Elias Levy's Pilgrimage Plantation," v. 5

—— *Necrology: Samuel Proctor (1919-2005)* v. 8

Moore, Deborah Dash, *Book Review*, Raymond A. Mohl with Matilda “Bobbi” Graff and Shirley M. Zoloth, *South of the South: Jewish Activists and the Civil Rights Movement in Miami, 1945-1950*,” v. 7

Moses, James L., “‘The Law of Life is the Law of Service’: Rabbi Ira Sanders and the Quest for Racial and Social Justice in Arkansas, 1926-1963,” v. 10

Newkirk, “That Spirit Must be Stamped Out: The Mutilation of Joseph Needleman and North Carolina’s Effort to Prosecute Lynch Mob Participants during the 1920s,” v. 13

Pearlstein, Peggy Kronsberg, “Macey Kronsberg: Institution Builder of Conservative Judaism in Charleston, S.C., and the Southeast,” v. 8

—— “Israel Fine: Baltimore Businessman and Hebrew Poet,” v. 9

Pryor, Susan, Breitler, Alan L., “A Sephardic Physician in Williamsburg, Virginia,” (Breitler, Alan L.) v. 11

Puckett, Dan J. *Book Review*, Mary Stanton, *The Hand of Esau: Montgomery’s Jewish Community and the Bus Boycott*, v. 10

—— “In the Shadow of Hitler: Birmingham’s Temple Emanu-El and Nazism,” v. 11

Quinlan, Jim, co-author with Robert Marcus, “David Mendes Cohen, Beleaguered Marine,” v. 4

Rockoff, Stuart, *Review Essay*, “Measuring Julius Rosenwald’s Legacy,” v. 10

—— *Book Review*, Bryan Edward Stone, *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas*, v. 13

Rogoff, Leonard, “Synagogue and Jewish Church: A Congregational History of North Carolina,” v. 1

—— *Book Review*, Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small Town America: A History*, v. 8

- “Harry Golden, *New Yorker*: I ♥ NC,” v. 11
- Roseman, Jean, “*The Unusual and Bizarre*, Barney and Clyde: A Tale of Murder and Madness,” v. 10
- Rosengarten, Dale, “In Distinguished Company: A Profile of Solomon Breibart,” (with Harlan Greene) v. 7
- Rothschild, Michael, *Book Review*, Matthew H. Bernstein, *Screening a Lynching: The Leo Frank Case on Film and Television*, v. 13
- Rothstein, Jane, *Book Review*, Alan M. Kraut, *Goldberger’s War: The Life and Work of a Public Health Crusader*,” v. 7
- Rotter, Arlene G., “Climbing the Crystal Stair: Annie T. Wise’s Success as an Immigrant in Atlanta’s Public School System (1872–1925),” v. 4
- *Letter to the Editor*, “Revisiting Annie T. Wise,” v. 5
- Rubin, Saul J., “The Pioneer Period of the SJHS (1976–1983),” v. 10
- Samet, Gertrude L., “Harry Reyner: Individualism and Community in Newport News, Virginia,” v. 1
- Sapon-White, Richard E., “A Polish Jew on the Florida Frontier and in Occupied Tennessee: Excerpts from the Memoirs of Max White,” v. 4
- Shapiro, Edward S., “A Shtetl in the Sun: Orthodoxy in Southern Florida,” v. 10
- Stanton, Mary, “At One with the Majority,” v. 9
- Stollman, Jennifer A., *Book Review*, Emily Bingham, *Mordecai: An Early American Family*,” v. 7
- Stone, Bryan Edward, “‘Ride ‘em Jewboy’: Kinky Friedman and the Texas Mystique,” v. 1
- “Edgar Goldberg and the *Texas Jewish Herald*: Changing Coverage and Blended Identity,” v. 7
- *Book Review*, Eliza R. L. McGraw, *Two Covenants: Representations of Southern Jewishness*, v. 10

- *Exhibit Review*, “Forgotten Gateway: Coming to America through Galveston Island, 1846–1924,” Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum, Austin, Texas, v. 12
- Umansky, Ellen M., “Christian Science, Jewish Science, and Alfred Geiger Moses,” v. 6
- Wax, Bernard, *Necrology: Saul Viener (1921–2006)*, v. 9
- “Ruminations about the SJHS,” v. 10
- Webb, Clive J., “Jewish Merchants and Black Customers in the Age of Jim Crow,” v. 2
- “‘What Was on Your Mind Was on Your Tongue’: A Profile of Leonard Dinnerstein,” v. 7
- Weiner, Deborah R., “The Jews of Keystone: Life in a Multicultural Boomtown,” v. 2
- “‘A Sense of Connection to Others’: A Profile of Stephen Whitfield,” v. 7
- *Book Review*, Jeffrey Gurock, *Orthodoxy in Charleston: Brith Sholom Beth Israel and American Jewish History*, v. 8
- Weiner, Hollace Ava, “Removal Approval: The Industrial Removal Office Experience in Fort Worth, Texas,” v. 4
- *Book Review*, David J. Ginzl, *Stein Mart: An American Story of Roots, Family, and Building a Greater Dream*, v. 8
- “Grassroots Reactions to Kishinev Pogrom in Fort Worth and Atlanta,” (with Sandra Berman) v. 12
- Weinfeld, Daniel R., “Samuel Fleishman: Tragedy in Reconstruction-Era Florida,” v. 8
- “Henrietta Shebeiner marries Aaron Davis, June 7, 1870, Eufaula, Alabama,” v. 11
- Whitfield, Stephen J., *Review Essay*, “In the High Cotton,” v. 4
- “Framing Florida Jewry,” v. 10

—— “Commerce and Community: A Business History of Jacksonville Jewry,” v. 12

—— “The Hermans of New Orleans: A Family in History,” v. 13

Wilkes, George, “Rabbi Dr. David Marx and the Unity Club: Organized Jewish-Christian Dialogue, Liberalism, and Religious Diversity in Early Twentieth-Century Atlanta,” v. 9

Zake, Ieva, *Book Review*, Hollace Ava Weiner, *Jewish ‘Junior League’: The Rise and Demise of the Fort Worth Council of Jewish Women*, v. 11

Zerivitz, Marcia Jo, Rachel Heimovics, “Rosa Benjamin marries Jacob Katz, July 7, 1886, Micanopy, Florida,” (with Rachel Heimovics Braun) v. 11

Zola, Gary P., “Why Study Southern Jewish History,” v. 1

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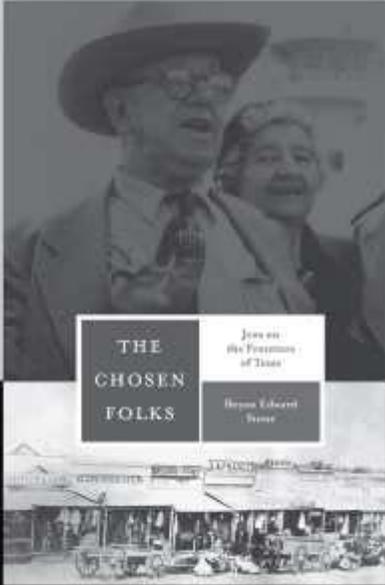
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