

SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

Journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society

Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*

Rachel Heimovics Braun, *Managing Editor*

Sandra Berman, *Primary Sources Section Editor*

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Note from the Primary Sources Section Editor . . .

As an archivist for the last thirty years, I have had the opportunity to uncover unique primary sources that were once hidden away in attics, basements, garages, and cellars. Researchers are regularly discovering documents in either newly accessioned collections or in those that have been gathering dust in repository stacks that add a different perspective to a point in history or that support or reject established historical arguments. *Primary Sources*, a new, annual section of *Southern Jewish History*, will invite historians of southern Jewish history and archivists to present, interpret, and comment on some of their research discoveries. It will also showcase some of the materials available in a variety of archives. Please contact me if you are interested in contributing.

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PRIMARY SOURCES

Grassroots Reactions to Kishinev Pogrom
in Fort Worth and Atlanta

by

Hollace Ava Weiner and Sandra Berman*

Letter to Governor of State of Texas, May 29, 1903
Handbill for Mass Meeting, Fort Worth, June 4, 1903
Address for Kishineff Relief Fund, Atlanta, June 4, 1903

Condemnation of the April 1903 Kishinev pogrom, in which forty-nine Russian Jews were butchered and 1,500 Jewish homes and businesses ransacked, was swift and widespread across the United States.¹ Front-page headlines decried the atrocities. Public protest meetings were staged in fifty cities.² A B'nai B'rith petition rebuking the czar and signed by 12,544 Americans was cabled to Moscow.³ These collective figures, however, tend to leave listeners unfazed, particularly a century later when such terms as "ethnic cleansing," "genocide," and "holocaust" have become commonplace.

The outrage the Easter pogrom of 1903 provoked in the United States comes into sharper, more poignant focus through examination of primary source materials preserved in two disparate southern repositories: the Texas State Library & Archives Commission in Austin and the Ida Pearle

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and Joseph Cuba Community Archives of The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in Atlanta.

The Texas archive preserves a handbill advertising a "MASS MEETING" in Fort Worth, a western cow town that in 1903 was home to a struggling immigrant shul. The circular, set in eight different typefaces and splashed with three exclamation points, is found in the papers of Governor Samuel W. T. Lanham. Printed on low-quality newsprint, the handbill was attached to a typewritten letter from Congregation Ahavath Sholom requesting that "his Excellency" the governor appear at Fort Worth's Kishinev protest alongside a host of local elected officials and entertainers.⁴

The Atlanta document, far more scholarly and sophisticated, is a seven-page reprint of a thousand-word speech delivered by a fifth-generation American Jew, the son of one of Atlanta's leading families.⁵ Printed on high-quality paper with a thick cover of card-stock, the booklet was published for posterity. It is accompanied in the Breman Museum archives with a clipping from the *Atlanta Constitution* of June 14, 1903, that includes a photo of the twenty-eight-year-old orator and praises his address as "one of the best speeches . . . heard in Atlanta regarding the massacre."⁶

Taken together, these documents convey the emotional pitch and grassroots concern of Jewish Americans, whether they were foreign born or citizens with roots extending to the Revolutionary War. Both sets of documents serve as appeals to non-Jews and stress common concerns for human decency and shared mistrust of Russia. Both speak to a brand of patriotism that perceives Jews as forebears of American ideals.

Taken separately, however, the Atlanta monograph and the Texas circular tell different stories. In small-town Fort Worth, Orthodox Jews may not have assimilated, yet they easily interfaced with the civic and business community. In Atlanta, because of its size and location in the Deep South, there were more fissures in the community. Atlanta's Jewish organizers remained cognizant of these divisions at every step.

Background and Implications

The riots in Kishinev, the provincial capital of Bessarabia, erupted on Easter Sunday, April 19, 1903. Provoked by rumors and sermons alleging that Jews had killed Christian children to obtain blood for Passover rituals, mobs of churchgoers, ruffians, common criminals, and peasants from outlying villages attacked the city's Jewish quarter. They maimed men, women, and even babies while ransacking businesses and residences. Police and soldiers garrisoned in the provincial capital waited three days to intercede, giving credence to accusations that the attacks were "abetted by the ruling authorities."⁷

Although accounts of the Kishinev massacre were horrific and bloody, the pogrom was part of a pattern of continuing violence that stretched from the 1880s to the Bolshevik Revolution. Such pogroms became the catalyst for the mass emigration of eastern European Jews from Russian lands. In the United States, the Kishinev massacre evoked human rights concerns as well as anxiety about how to assimilate a new tide of several hundred thousand refugees. Ripples from Kishinev extended to the international, national, and local levels.

The Handbill: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

What could be more ephemeral than a handbill? Today's promotion becomes tomorrow's litter. Distributed on street corners and left on countertops, a handbill evokes immediacy. The size of print and varied fonts telegraph urgency and import. Punctuation, as in the overuse of exclamation points and capital letters, likewise conveys emotion and relative significance.

The Fort Worth handbill promoting a June 4 "MASS MEETING! to protest the KISHINEFF BARBARITIES!" measures only eight-inches by five-inches, a piece of paper easy enough to grasp in one hand and bold enough to convey alarm. The circular makes assumptions since it does not include the year or street address of the rally, much less the city

where the protest is to take place. It fails to mention the word "Jew." The flyer assumes that the average person on the street had read the front-page headlines, which for five weeks had described the atrocities, the international reaction, and first-person accounts of witnesses who reached the West.

The turn of the century was an era of banner headlines and competing city newspapers. Radio was not yet in wide use. The telegraph was the main means of trans-Atlantic communication. For news updates, the public depended on multiple editions of newspapers published throughout the day.

On April 23, 1903, the *Fort Worth Telegram's* afternoon edition reported in a page one headline, "Massacre of Jews. A Story of a Race War from Russia." Three days later, the front page screamed, "Horrible Atrocities on Peacable [*sic*] Jews." More grim details emerged May 10, again on page one: "Story of Hebrew Massacre at Kishineff." Shocking details did not let up. "Terrible Scenes in Desolate Kishineff" were described in the afternoon paper of June 7, 1903, with "Anti-Semitic Feeling . . . Still Running High."⁸

That the brutal news from Bessarabia commanded front-page headlines in Fort Worth, a city with four-hundred Jews among its thirty thousand inhabitants, is an indication of the impact the Kishinev atrocities had on the American consciousness. Yet it also reflected the images and disproportionate influence of the Jewish community. Fort Worth, located in north central Texas, had few functioning Jewish institutions in 1903. These included a Hebrew cemetery that dated to 1879; an immigrant shul, Ahavath Sholom, chartered in 1892; a Zionist society organized in 1899; a Hebrew Relief Society formed in 1900; and a B'nai B'rith lodge and a section of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), both dating to 1901. A Reform congregation, chartered in 1902 with forty-three members, had become dormant within six months of its founding.⁹

It fell to Ahavath Sholom, an eleven-year-old immigrant congregation with a one-story wood-frame building and an

\$84 balance, to organize a response. Jolted to action, the shul's officers and trustees met May 10, 1903, at their regular bimonthly board meeting and discussed the "misfortune that happened to the Jews of Kishineff Russia." The board collectively donated \$62 for the national Kishineff Relief Fund in New York and voted to organize a "mass meeting" of the Jewish community on May 24 at the shul.¹⁰ That "mass meeting" raised \$234.25 and prompted additional action. Those attending "moved to publicize the names of donors in local papers" and to organize a larger, public "protest meeting against the Russian government."¹¹

At the congregation's next board meeting, on May 31, a two-man committee announced that the venue for the public rally would be city hall. The current mayor, a former mayor, and a congressman would speak; a Methodist minister would give the invocation; and the president of the Fort Worth Board of Trade would preside.¹² In previous years, the mayor had attended Ahavath Sholom's Purim Ball, an indication of cordial relations between local elected officials and congregational leaders.¹³ Now, in the Jewish community's time of distress, city officials were ready to assist their cause.

By then the handbill, preserved in the archives, which advertised the mass meeting of Thursday, June 4, was circulating throughout the town. Printed by the Press of Humphreys & Carpenter, the flyer advises readers to "watch Daily Papers for Program" details. The circular names the elected politicians heading the program as well as the entertainers, chiefly vocalist Maud Peters Ducker, the most sought-after local soprano for funerals, veterans' reunions, and civic events. The only Jew named on the flyer is pianist Ida Goldstick, twenty-two, whose parents, Mike and Sarah Goldstick, had emigrated from Russia in the early 1880s and were Ahavath Sholom congregants.¹⁴

During the final week leading to the rally, plans progressed efficiently. The daily paper published an article listing 136 donors to the Kishineff Relief Fund. Among those, eighty-two were eastern European immigrants who had

arrived in Fort Worth in the past eighteen years; sixteen were Reform or unaffiliated Jews, and thirty-eight were non-Jews. The latter contributions included \$10 from the Texas Brewery Company, \$5 from American National Bank, \$2 from South West Oil, \$2 from J. C. Harrison at State National Bank, \$1 from former mayor and newspaper publisher B. B. Paddock, and \$1 from Ben E. Keith, the leading fresh produce wholesaler.¹⁵ The article notes that a letter had been mailed to the governor on May 29 inviting him to participate in the rally.

The 166-word missive to the governor is typed on thin, blue-lined letterhead stationery that bears Congregation Ahavath Sholom's name positioned above a Corinthian-column capital. The congregation was apparently poor, and the trustees wrote few official letters, since the stationery was printed in the previous century. The date line bears the imprint: "Fort Worth, Texas ____ 189_" leaving a blank spot for insertion of the exact year. A slight brown stain from adhesive across the top edge of each page is evidence that the paper had been torn from a note pad.¹⁶

The text of the letter is composed with correct diction and spelling. However, the appellation "his Excellency," repeated in the salutation and the body, shows the trustees' European antecedents and deference for authority. The letter relates how the "horrors of the persecution of the Jews" have "shocked the civilized world." It reviews the nationwide protests "against the barbarities" of the Russians "toward the Jewish race"—a common if ambivalent catchphrase in the early years of the century for categorizing Jews, who were perceived as a people, a religious denomination, and not altogether Caucasian.¹⁷ The letter from the congregation goes on to ask that "your excellency . . . raise your voice with us in condemnation and protest against the atrocities of the Russians." It assures the governor that his "presence will largely aid the cause of humanity and civilization." The letter is signed by the committee, which consisted of L. G. Gilbert, forty, a Polish-born, department store owner who immigrat-

ed to the U.S. in 1888, and Ben Levenson, forty, a clothing-store proprietor who came to the U.S. from Russia in 1887.¹⁸

Governor Lanham, a five-term congressman and the last Confederate veteran to occupy the governor's mansion in Austin, had a record of representing cattlemen and pursuing citizen claims alleging Indian depredations. He declined the invitation with a formal written response to be read aloud at the rally by the mayor.

Three hundred people attended the Kishinev protest meeting of June 4, 1903, which was pronounced a success. An additional \$69.85 was raised. One of the vocalists sang an encore of "Dixie." By acclamation those present endorsed a resolution forwarded to the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith that condemned "the inhuman . . . atrocious . . . uncivilized and un-Christian . . . cruelties perpetrated upon . . . Jewish subjects of the [Russian] empire."¹⁹

Atlanta: A Speech Worth Repeating

Turn-of-the-century Atlanta ranked as the nation's forty-third largest city, touted as a gateway for growth and commerce.²⁰ Among its ninety thousand residents lived two thousand Jews who supported three synagogues and a network of Jewish institutions that ran the gamut from sewing societies and literary clubs to the Gate City B'nai B'rith lodge, established in 1870, and a Hebrew Orphans' Home organized in 1889. The city's Reform congregation, The Hebrew Benevolent Congregation (universally called The Temple) dated to 1867. Its American-born rabbi, David Marx, came to Atlanta in 1895 from his first pulpit in Birmingham. Like other Reform rabbis of the era, he served as a veritable ambassador to the gentile community.²¹ Eastern European immigrants, who began arriving in significant numbers after 1881, started an Orthodox congregation, Ahavath Achim, in 1887. A splinter group launched a second shul, Congregation Shearith Israel, in 1902. In Atlanta, unlike Fort Worth, widespread distinctions were drawn between the acculturated Jewish families that had resided in Atlanta for several generations

and more recent arrivals, with their Yiddish accents, religious garb, and need for social services. There were “two layers of Jewish life in Atlanta,” observes writer Larry Tye.²² News of the Kishinev pogrom brought the two layers into closer contact.

Like the rest of the nation, Atlanta learned of the Kishinev pogrom through newspaper headlines. Both the *Atlanta Journal* and the *Atlanta Constitution* carried wire-service accounts datelined St. Petersburg. Day after day, the news columns detailed the extent of the government-sanctioned horrors against the Bessarabian Jews and the mounting movement in the United States to rebuke the Russian czar and raise money to assist the victims. Particularly haunting was a front page article in the *Constitution* describing the murder of an Atlanta man’s aunt and uncle in the pogrom.²³

Amid rising distress, Ahavath Achim’s Lithuanian-born rabbi, Berachya Mayerowitz, launched a local Kishineff Relief Fund.²⁴ The rabbi reached out to leaders of The Temple to coordinate solicitations. A Central Emigration Committee, headed by Leon Eplan, a founder and past president of Ahavath Achim, took charge of the fundraising as well as plans to resettle Russian immigrants in Atlanta. The committee’s executive board was comprised of four leaders from the Orthodox Ahavath Achim: Rabbi Mayerowitz, Leon Eplan, and two other past presidents, Milton M. Hirsch and Dr. Benjamin Wildauer. Serving as “advisory” members were three representatives from The Temple—Rabbi David Marx, Henry Alexander, and Aaron Haas, an elder statesman who had served as Atlanta’s deputy mayor in 1875—and two delegates from Ahavath Achim—Morris Lichtenstein and Joel Dorfman. All were affluent and prominent in civic and Jewish affairs.²⁵

The Bijou, one of Atlanta’s two finest vaudeville stages, offered its premises, rent free, for a Kishinev benefit June 4, 1903. Leon Eplan, with input from local musicians, took charge of the program and the logistics.

Eplan, born in Odessa in 1865, had settled in Atlanta in 1882 and had risen from a peddler with a horse and cart into a well-to-do merchant and effective grassroots organizer. He was among the founders of the city's Jewish Progressive Club, the Morris Plan Bank, which extended low-interest loans to immigrants, and the Jewish Educational Alliance. He corresponded with relatives in Russia who were living in fear, and he passed along one of their letters to the *Atlanta Constitution*.²⁶ Eplan understood both the social unrest in Russia and the social currents of Atlanta. Under his direction, the program at the Bijou would stress unity, humanity, and cultural harmony, with classical music selections led by Jewish violinist David Silverman in concert with well known sopranos, tenors, and baritones from the Jewish and non-Jewish community.²⁷

Gauging the pulse and pocketbooks of his potential audience at the Bijou, Eplan established a three-tier ticket-pricing system that encouraged attendance from a cross section of people. General admission tickets were priced at fifty cents, reserved seating at seventy-five cents. Big money would come from auctioning off the Bijou's forty-eight boxes, which were "positively to be sold to the highest bidder"²⁸ and expected to "bring a fancy price."²⁹ A public auction, conducted in the theater lobby two days before the benefit, allowed class-conscious Reform Jews to demonstrate their philanthropy and avoid sitting with the riffraff.

Tickets went on sale at multiple locations, among them the Baptist Publication Society, Harry Silverman's cigar store at Five Points, Miller's book store; Goodrum's cigar stands, Phillips & Crew piano and organ store, Elkin & Watson Drug Company, Brannen & Anthony's drug store, Oppenheim's saloons (there were three), and "all hotels."³⁰ Ticket receipts totaled \$500.³¹

The night of the benefit, despite inclement weather, the Bijou Theater was packed. Keynote speaker Henry (Harry) Aaron Alexander opened the program and set the tone. Alexander was a handsome young Jewish attorney with deep

roots in Atlanta's civic affairs and Reform Jewish community. A fifth-generation American and a third-generation Atlantan, Alexander had a pedigree. His great-great grandfather, British-born Abraham Alexander, Sr., was an officer in the American Revolutionary Army and was appointed U.S. Auditor for the Custom House in Charleston, South Carolina. In 1848 his grandson, Aaron, moved his family to Atlanta. They were the city's first American-born Jewish residents. Aaron Alexander established a successful hardware business and helped found the Atlanta Mining & Rolling Mill in 1866. His son, Julius, served in the Confederacy and married Rebecca Ella Solomons, who gave birth to Henry Alexander on October 10, 1874. Henry attended the University of Georgia and the University of Virginia, receiving a law degree there in 1895. That year he became chief clerk of the law department for the Cotton States and International Exposition, held at Atlanta's Piedmont Park. This prestigious position helped launch his legal career.³²

Henry Alexander's opening address at the Bijou riveted the audience. In less than ten minutes, he delivered a history lesson that linked the ancient origins of the "Hebrew people" to the aspirations of America's founding fathers.³³ Entwining religious vocabulary with democratic traditions, he referred to the "mission" of the "tribe of shepherds" from ancient Canaan, the "martyrdom" they had suffered, and the "Hebraic ideals" of "justice and brotherhood" that, from their genesis in the desert, had become the foundation blocks of American democracy. Solemnly, he recalled the "stain of crimson" inflicted upon Jews persecuted by the Pharaohs, the Caesars, and most recently the czars. With reverence, he mentioned other persecuted religious groups such as the Pilgrims and the Huguenots who had found safety and purpose in colonial America. As if speaking to a jury, he equated responsible behavior with American ideals, which in this instance included denouncing persecution abroad. Undoubtedly, Alexander had heard similar rhetoric, to good effect, from his own rabbi.³⁴

Mindful of the elephant in the room, Alexander confronted growing prejudices among Americans toward eastern European Jews:

I grant you that their garb may be outlandish, their speech unintelligible, and their ways and manners wholly foreign to this country; but do not forget that through the veins of the humblest Jew who lands at the port of New York, there flows the unsullied blood of the priests and the prophets, and, though his bearing be ungainly and his presence uncouth, his fundamental conceptions are identical with your own, and his soul is radiant with the very ideals of justice and of brotherhood that lie at the basis of your government.³⁵

With those specifics out in the open, Alexander moved toward his conclusion. Persecuted Russian Jews, victims of czarist pogroms, were "entitled" to American citizenship because the spiritual origins of Judaism were in consonance with American ideals. Alexander departed the stage to thunderous applause. The rest of the entertainment was "heartily received." The audience enjoyed encore after encore.³⁶

The talk of the town the next few days, however, was Alexander's eloquent speech. The *Atlanta Constitution* reprinted the address ten days later on page five beneath the two-column headline, "AN ELOQUENT PLEA MADE FOR THE JEWS." So many compliments poured in that Alexander was persuaded to give the text to Atlanta's Franklin Printing and Publishing Company for wider distribution. The speech reprint, which measures ten-inches-by six-and-a-half inches, was among the papers that the Alexander family subsequently donated to the Breman Museum.

Conclusions

Despite the passage of more than a century, the Alexander monograph and the Texas handbill and letter remain fresh and poignant, tangible reminders of the terror and alarm that the world's first, widely publicized acts of ethnic cleansing evoked in the United States. They also illustrate how several factors influence diverse degrees of peoplehood

or ethnic identity, and general community support. They demonstrate the development of an ecumenical language that facilitates the interaction of Christians and Jews at civic gatherings by equating Judaism and Americanism.

Long-term impacts in each city were vastly different. In Fort Worth, the public protest served as an exercise in community building. It strengthened ties within and beyond the Jewish community. The two-year-old B'nai B'rith fraternal lodge comprised of a cross section of Jewish men volunteered to bring refugees to Fort Worth through the Industrial Removal Office (IRO), a New York agency that relocated eastern European Jews to inland cities. Within two weeks of the protest rally, Fort Worth welcomed an immigrant family with four sickly children. The refugees' condition was so wretched that Orthodox women formed a Ladies Hebrew Relief Society, the forerunner of the Ladies Auxiliary to Ahavath Sholom, which still serves the congregation. Fort Worth eventually received seventy-two immigrant families through the IRO.³⁷

The venue of the 1903 protest—City Hall—and the lineup of elected politicians on the dais demonstrate the degree to which Fort Worth's Yiddish-accented businessmen had integrated into the economic and civic mainstream of their small frontier town. The decision to invite only non-Jewish leaders to speak reveals a degree of self-consciousness among the organizers, perhaps because of their foreign accents. On the other hand, it may indicate what savvy organizers and advertisers these merchants were. They knew how to package a program.

The organizers could have invited American-born Jews within their midst to speak, as Leon Eplan did in Atlanta by featuring Henry Alexander as keynoter. But few of Fort Worth's American-born Jews, including a Cincinnati-educated attorney, had participated in the planning process although several donated money to the cause. The meager participation by acculturated Jews demonstrates their reluctance to wear their Judaism in public.

Assisting the IRO with Kishinev-era refugees prepared Fort Worth for the next wave of eastern European immigrants, some 263 refugees who resettled in the city between 1907 and 1913 through the Galveston Movement.³⁸ By that time, Fort Worth's Reform congregation, Beth-El, had reorganized, and its members actively participated on refugee-resettlement committees. Reform women in the local section of the NCJW started an Americanization school that convened at night at the county courthouse, another instance of bicultural cooperation at the small-town level.

In Atlanta, a dynamic urban center, the legacy of the Bijou benefit is more complex. Alexander's speech addresses seeds of discomfort over mass immigration. It is one thing to proclaim "brotherhood" in the abstract, as the *Atlanta Journal* did in an editorial May 23, 1903, decrying the Kishinev pogrom. It was harder to espouse brotherhood six weeks later as foreign-speaking, strangely-garbed, "undesirable . . . and . . . impoverished . . . aliens" began congregating on Decatur Street. On July 6, 1903, the *Journal* ran an editorial under the heading, "The Immigration Peril" that impugned the character of refugees who were other than Anglo-Saxon, Teutonic, or Scandinavian. "Europe sends us pushcart men, organ grinders and street peddlers, men who go to fill up the slums of our great cities," asserted the editorial, which advocated restrictive immigration laws.³⁹

The reprint of Henry Alexander's speech and the clipping from the *Constitution* illustrate a moment in time. The horrors of the pogrom hit close enough to home that residents from all social classes embraced the metaphor of Atlanta as the Gate City to the New South, an urban oasis with economic opportunities and diverse houses of worship. Leon Eplan and his committee seized the moment to capitalize on the city's idealized image of itself. Featuring the patrician Henry Alexander as keynote speaker at the Bijou represented a masterful power play. Alexander did not represent the consensus among conservative Atlantans, much less the views of the Jewish establishment. Yet his family's

lineage, wealth, and prestige coupled with his eloquence swayed Atlantans to contribute money and, at least initially, welcome and assist a new stream of Jewish immigrants.

Henry Alexander's speech was remarkable considering the underlying fears of the community of which he was a part. While Atlanta's German Jews actively contributed to Kishinev relief efforts, concern for the new refugees did not significantly alter the two-layer hierarchy that distanced one group of Atlanta Jews from the other. German Jews, although concerned with the welfare of their Russian brethren, remained segregated from this group by differences in religious observance and economic circumstances.

Three years later, when the Atlanta race riot of 1906 erupted, Russian immigrants made comparisons to Kishinev.⁴⁰ As in Kishinev, the Atlanta rioting continued several days, from September 22 to 25, until police authorities stepped in to quell the disturbance. The mayhem left twenty-seven people dead.⁴¹ Exaggerated reports of black men attacking white women preceded the violence. In the riot's aftermath, fears arose that exacerbated racial tension. Out-of-town newspapers in Richmond, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C., made unflattering comparisons to the Russian pogrom.⁴² In general, Jews did not speak out against the Atlanta race riot, just as they tended not to speak out against the lynching of African Americans, which was routinely reported in the press. Atlanta's Jews were more concerned with their own wellbeing and safety.

Reports of repeated violence breed indifference. The archival documents pertaining to Kishinev expose a time when such reports were rare. Although Henry Alexander's published speech and the Fort Worth handbill are products of different scenarios, they retain the urgency, alarm, and emotion that explain why, a century ago, a pogrom in far off Bessarabia shook Americans down to the grassroots.

Letter to Governor of State of Texas, May 29, 1903

*Congregation Ahavath Sholom to Governor Lanham, May 29, 1903.
(Courtesy of the Texas State Library & Archives Commission.)*

Congregation Ahavath Sholom⁴³

Fort Worth, Texas

May 29th '03

To: his Excellency, Hon. S. W. T. Lanham,
Governor of the State of Texas,
Austin, Texas,

Dear Sir –

The horrors of the persecution of the Jews at Kishineff has shocked the civilized world, and especially the citizens of our great country, and in every city meet- are being held protesting against the barbarities of the Russians toward the Jewish race. The citizens of Fort Worth have likewise ordered a mass meeting to be held on Thursday evening, June 4th 1903 at 8 o'clock P.M. at the City Hall, to which your excellency is cordially invited to raise your voice with us in condemnation and protest against the atrocities of the Russians. Kindly notify us if you can honor us with your presence on this occasion. Address your reply to our city Mayor, Hon. Thomas J. Powell. At this meeting there will be a subscription fund raised for the benefit of the sufferers, and your presence will largely aid the cause of humanity and civilization.

Very respectfully yours,

Committee.

Handbill for Mass Meeting, Fort Worth, June 4, 1903

*Broadside from the Records of Governor S. W. T. Lanham, May 1903.
(Courtesy of the Texas State Library & Archives Commission.)*

Address for Kishineff Relief Fund, Atlanta, June 4, 1903

*Cover of Alexander's speech
from the collections of the
Cuba Archives of the Breman
Museum, Atlanta.
The speech was
duplicated and distributed.*

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS
OF
HENRY A. ALEXANDER
OF THE BAR OF ATLANTA, GA
AT
BENEFIT CONCERT
GIVEN FOR
KISHINEFF RELIEF FUND
ON JUNE 4, 1903

More than four thousand years ago, amid the hills of Canaan, there came into existence amongst an obscure tribe of shepherds, a new religion that based itself upon the ideals of the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God. Endowed with a transcendent spirituality, this handful of desert wanderers, with an audacity

that sprang from absolute conviction in the final triumph of their faith, conceived it as their mission to spread and carry these ideals to all the peoples of the earth, and, looking upon the sea, and from the sea to the heavens, took the sands of the seashore and the stars of the heavens as the similitudes of their greatness. This people was the Hebrew people, and this faith was the Hebrew faith.

The course of this people through history is marked by a deep and terrible stain of crimson. All races have had their struggles and their martyrdoms, but confined to limited times and places. The martyrdom of the Hebrew has covered all places and all times and his empire of pain, as wide as that of the Caesars or of Charlemagne, has covered Europe and had its seat in all the capitals of its countries. Of the great kingdoms of the earth, there is not one from the Pharaohs to the czars that has not shed his blood. There is not one that, looking upon the strange banner which he bore, and finding incomprehensible the truths emblazoned thereon, has not set upon him in fury and sought his utter extermination. Upon the Jewish soul to-day is carried the scars of wounds made by almost every race under the sun. Here fell the lash of the Egyptians, here the scourge of the Assyrian, and here entered the sword of Rome. Here burnt the fires of the Spaniard, and here the satire and mocking laughter of the Greek.

To all this, upheld by his great purpose and immutable conviction, he has opposed a calm and untroubled front, and even looked in pity upon his torturers. By his astonishing survival from the perils that beset him, he has demonstrated to mankind that the soul dedicated to the cause of imperishable truth becomes itself imperishable. And although since he left his own Judea, the earth has been to the greater portion of his race as a great dungeon, he has looked through the bars of this prison and lifting his eyes to the stars, has heard them sing again the songs of Amos and of Job, and proclaim anew the imperial destiny of Israel.

More than a century ago, amidst the storms of revolution, there was established in North America a new government that laid its broad foundations in the principles of religious liberty, and in the Hebraic ideals of justice and of brotherhood.

Encouraged by these principles, there flocked to its shores the victims of religious persecution from all parts of the world. Of such, indeed, was the greater part of its earliest population. Not the dregs and scum of Europe were they, but of that noble type which, holding its convictions of truth dearer than all else, is gladly willing to surrender everything, even life itself, in its sacred cause. Not aristocrats were they by the creation of kings, but invested only with that natural nobility that springs from the spirit of martyrdom. The judgment of the historian and statesman has long since recognized that the spirit of these men transmitted to their latest descendants has been the mightiest influence that has worked for the greatness of America. It is to the highest interest of America that to men like these and moved by this cause her doors should stand forever open.

Within the past month has come to our ears the appalling news of the latest tragedy in the martyrdom of the Hebrews, and by reason of that tragedy America is to-day face to face with another immigration that owes its origin to the same cause of religious persecution. It is appropriate to say on this occasion that, of all those who, for this reason, have sought refuge there, there are none, whether the Salzburgers of Georgia, the Huguenots of South Carolina, the Catholics of Maryland, or the Pilgrims of Massachusetts, that have a better title than the Jewish emigrant to the privileges of American citizenship, and none, who, by their own contributions to civilization can show a better right to live beneath the flag of the Great Republic.

I grant you that their garb may be outlandish, their speech unintelligible, and their ways and manners wholly foreign to this country; but do not forget that through the veins of the humblest Jew who lands at the port of New York, there flows the unsullied blood of the priests and prophets, and, though his bearing be ungainly and his presence uncouth, his fundamental conceptions are identical with your own, and his soul is radiant with the very ideals of justice and of brotherhood that lie at the basis of your government.

Is it not true that by his own sufferings in behalf of these ideals, borne throughout the centuries and through all the hells of

persecution, he has fairly earned the right to realize and enjoy them here? But more than this. Here, where we honor fidelity and courage of conviction, what shall we say of him, who for so long and against such odds, has massed his little band about the standard of his fathers, and flung defiance in the face of the ages? Is he not, in the fullest measure, entitled to American citizenship? That he is so entitled, this nation has declared and its open ports proclaim its welcome.

Never since history begun has liberty administered to despotism a more terrible and stinging rebuke than the spectacle of the American republic thus welcoming those whom Russian tyranny has found unworthy of its citizenship. This is the mighty protest which the American people make against the crimes of Kishineff. This is the protest that outweighs all the Secretary of State could say. This is the spectacle that will never fade from the hearts and consciences of men. If the day shall come, as many believe it will come, when the armies of America and England, beneath the shining banner of liberty, and the legions of the czar beneath the black eagles of despotism, shall meet in battle to contest the sovereignty of the world, it is the blood of Kishineff that, crying from the ground, will turn the tide for the soldiers of liberty.

*Top section of long
article reporting on
Alexander's speech.*

*From the Atlanta
Constitution, June
14, 1903.*

*(Courtesy of the
Cuba Archives of the
Breman Museum,
Atlanta.)*

 NOTES

The catalyst for this article was a handbill that Fort Worth historian Jan Jones found in the papers of a Texas governor and copied for Hollace Ava Weiner. The authors express their thanks to Bryan E. Stone and Marni Davis for their thoughtful critiques, with additional thanks to Davis for her research assistance.

¹ Paul R. Bartrop, Samuel Totten, and Steven L. Jacobs, *Dictionary of Genocide 2* (Westport, CT, 2008), 246–247. The current accepted spelling of “Kishinev” is used throughout this article except where it appears as “Kishineff” or “Kishinef” in proper names for organizations, published titles, direct quotations, and descriptions of archival materials.

² Cyrus Adler, ed., *The Voice of America on Kishineff* (Philadelphia, 1904), xvii.

³ The Kishinev protest petition, authored by IOBB President Leo N. Levi (originally from Galveston, TX) in collaboration with attorney Simon Wolf, was cabled to Russia by Theodore Roosevelt’s administration where government officials declined to receive it or present it to Czar Nicholas II. Secretary of State John Hay placed it in the State Department Archives. The petition asks the czar to accord religious liberty to all subjects and reproaches the regime’s tyrannical practices against Jews. Jacob Rader Marcus, *U.S. Jewry, 1776–1985: The Germanic Period (Part 2)* (Detroit, 1992), 512–522; Adler, *Voice of America*, xxiv.

⁴ “Mass Meeting at City Hall—Thursday June 4—Kishineff Barbarities!” a broadside, Records of Governor S. W. T. Lanham, Correspondence, May 1903 [301–207], Texas State Library & Archives Commission; “Congregation Ahavath Sholom, Fort Worth, Texas to Governor S. W. T. Lanham, May 29, 1903, regarding persecution of Jews at Kishineff,” 1, 2, Governor S. W. T. Lanham, Correspondence, May 1903 [301–207].

⁵ “Introductory Address of Henry A. Alexander of the Bar of Atlanta, Ga. at Benefit Concert Given for Kishineff Relief Fund on June 4, 1903,” a cover and six pages, Mss 24, Henry Aaron Alexander Sr. Family Papers, The Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Community Archives of The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, Atlanta, Georgia, (hereafter cited as Breman Museum archives.)

⁶ “An Eloquent Plea Made for the Jews,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 14, 1903, in Alexander Family Papers, Breman Museum archives.

⁷ Authorities may have targeted Jews to silence dissidents pushing for constitutional monarchy. Marcus, *U.S. Jewry*, 520, 523.

⁸ *Fort Worth Telegram*, April 23, 1903; April 26, 1903; May 10, 1903; June 7, 1903.

⁹ “Sketch of Jewish Institutions of Fort Worth,” *Jewish Monitor*, September 10, 1915.

¹⁰ Congregation Ahavath Sholom minutes, May 10, 1903, translated from Yiddish by Esther Winesanker, minute books and translations on file at Fort Worth Jewish Archives of

the Jewish Federation of Fort Worth and Tarrant County at Ahavath Sholom (hereafter cited as FW Jewish Archives.)

¹¹ Congregation Ahavath Sholom minutes, Special Meeting, May 24, 1903, FW Jewish Archives.

¹² *Ibid.*, May 31, 1903, Special Meeting, FW Jewish Archives.

¹³ "Purim Masquerade Ball, A Splendid Affair," *Fort Worth Gazette*, February 28, 1896.

¹⁴ Ida Goldstick's brothers, Rufus and George, took the stage name LeMaire and became successful New York vaudeville actors and writers. Rufus LeMaire later became a Hollywood theatrical agent and casting director for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Jan Jones, *Renegades, Showmen, & Angels: A Theatrical History of Fort Worth, 1873-2001* (Fort Worth, 2006), 155; Maud Peters Ducker was a charter member of several local music societies and recommended the name "Harmony Club" for the city's early women's music club. *Fort Worth Press*, January 27, 1933.

¹⁵ "Mass Meeting Next Thursday, Public Invited in Behalf of Kishineff Sufferers. Promises: Addresses will be Made—Governor Lanham Invited—List of Local Donors to the Relief Fund." *Fort Worth Telegram*, May 31, 1903.

¹⁶ Description from John Anderson, preservation officer, Texas State Library & Archives, e-mail correspondence with Hollace Ava Weiner, May 1, 2009.

¹⁷ To Americans preoccupied with racial categories of "white" and "black," Jews presented a "conundrum," Eric Goldstein writes. Jews and non-Jews referred, somewhat ambivalently, to the "Jewish race" and to "Hebrew blood." Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton, 2006), 1-2, 11-26.

¹⁸ "Gilbert Family" folder and "Brachman Family" folder, Personalities/Family Histories box, FW Jewish Archives.

¹⁹ Liberal Donations to Kishineff Fund," *Fort Worth Telegram*, June 5, 1903.

²⁰ No. HS-7. Population of the Largest 75 Cities: 1900 to 2000 [As of April 1], Rank U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2003, <http://www.census.gov/statab/hist/HS-07.pdf> (accessed May 2, 2009).

²¹ 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; George Wilkes, "Rabbi Dr. 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 Doris H. Goldstein, *The Jews of Atlanta: 150 Years of Creating Community*, published in conjunction with "Creating Community: The Jews of Atlanta from 1845 to the Present," (Atlanta, 1995), 6-7, 22-23.

²² Larry Tye, "Hebrew with a Southern Accent," in *Homelands, Portraits of the New Jewish Diaspora* (New York, 2002), 268.

²³ "Uncle and Aunt Among Victims; Atlanta Man's Relatives Murdered in Russian Slaughter; N. Weltmann Hears of His Uncle and Aunt Falling in Massacre—Will send for Brother to Come to Him in This Country," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 22, 1903.

²⁴ Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 125.

²⁵ "Uncle and Aunt among Victims."

²⁶ Eplan's Russian relative sent him a clipping from *The Odessa News* about what provoked the Kishinev riots: "The Christian citizens . . . created disturbances directed against the Jews. . . . (The) direct cause of the trouble is traced to a few unprincipled Christians who spread a rumor that the Jews have killed several Christian children for the sole purpose of obtaining blood for religious purposes." "Big Benefit Tonight for Kishinef Jews," *Atlanta Constitution*, June 4, 1903; Mss 12, Samuel Leon Eplan Family Papers, Breman Museum archives. On Eplan, Lichtenstein, and conflict between Jews of eastern European and German descent in the Atlanta Jewish community, see Mark K. Bauman, "Role Theory and History: Ethnic Brokerage in the Atlanta Jewish Community," *American Jewish History* 73 (September 1983): 71-95.

²⁷ The Bijou program included selections by Beethoven and Tchaikovsky; arias and duets from sopranos Mrs. T. H. Wingfield and Mrs. Jimmy Byrd Cooper, tenor J. W. Marshbank, and baritone Thomas F. Weaver. The accompanist was pianist S. R. Cooper. Mrs. Vance Hunter did several readings. "Benefit Concert Will Be Held Tonight; Atlanta Will Contribute Tonight to Help the Suffering Jews in Far Away Russia," *Atlanta Journal*, June 4, 1903.

²⁸ "Will Auction Seats for Kishinef Benefit; Sale will be Held in the Lobby of Bijou Theatre Tomorrow at Noon." *Atlanta Journal*, evening edition, June 1, 1903, 7.

²⁹ "To Seek Aid for Survivors; Final meeting of Central Emigration Committee Today," *Atlanta Constitution*, May 25, 1903.

³⁰ *Ibid.*; Phillips & Crew piano and organ was located at 37 Peachtree, Elkin & Watson Drugs at 29 Marietta Street, the Brannen & Anthony drugstore at 102 Whitehall, and Israel Oppenheim's saloons at 33 N. Forsyth, 27 N. Pryor, and 7 E. Alabama. Oppenheim lived on Washington Street. *Atlanta City Directory*, 1903.

³¹ "Benefit Concert made \$500 for The Jews; Sufferers from the Massacre in Russia are Aided by the People of Atlanta," *Atlanta Journal*, evening edition, June 5, 1903.

³² Henry Alexander was elected to the Georgia General Assembly and served from 1909 to 1910. In 1914 he was asked to help in the appeals process for Leo M. Frank, a Jew convicted of murdering thirteen-year-old Mary Phagan, a worker in the factory where Frank was superintendent. During World War I Alexander served as a U.S. Army captain, and in 1921 he married Manya Zelmanova Klinitzkaya, the daughter of a Talmudic scholar from Russia. Such an intermarriage of a scion of an old, established American Jewish family with an eastern European was rare during this era. Alexander died in 1967. His life blended both layers of Atlanta's Jewish society. Alexander Family Papers, Breman Museum archives.

³³ For expansion on this theme of equating Judaism and Americanism, see Scott Langston, "Interaction and Identity: Jews and Christians in Nineteenth Century New Orleans," *Southern Jewish History* 3 (2000): 89-90, 93, 98-100.

³⁴ Wilkes, "Rabbi Dr. David Marx and the Unity Club."

³⁵ "Introductory Address of Henry A. Alexander of the Bar of Atlanta, Ga. at Benefit Concert Given for Kishineff Relief Fund, on June 4, 1903," 5-6.

³⁶ "Benefit Concert Made \$500 for The Jews," *Atlanta Journal*, evening edition, June 5, 1903, 6.

³⁷ Hollace Ava Weiner, "Removal Approval: The Industrial Removal Office Experience in Fort Worth, Texas," *Southern Jewish History* 4 (2001): 1-44.

³⁸ "Statistics of Jewish Immigrants Who Arrived at the Port of Galveston, Texas, During the Years 1907-1913, Inclusive, Handled by 'Jewish Immigrants' Information Bureau' of Galveston, Texas," Henry Cohen Papers, Manuscript Collection 263, Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati.

³⁹ "The Immigration Peril," *Atlanta Journal*, July 6, 1903.

⁴⁰ David Yampolsky, a Russian Jew living in Atlanta, described the 1906 race riot as a "pogrom on the blacks." Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City*, 191.

⁴¹ "The race for governor between Hoke Smith and Clark Howell turned into an ugly campaign of racial hatred aimed at disenfranchising the African American voter. Reports of attacks on white women by black men that same summer were emphasized and exaggerated in the local press, and racial tensions were soon strained to the breaking point." The Breman Museum, Seeking Justice: The Leo Frank Case Revisited, an exhibit, Race Relations-text panel, 2007; Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (Athens, GA, 2008), 8.

⁴² The *Richmond News Leader* and the *Washington Star* likened the Atlanta riots to the slaughter of Jews in czarist Russia, while the *St. Louis Dispatch* editorialized, "With what grace can Americans offer words of scorn and loathing against Russia to the massacre of the Jews when such atrocities are possible in the capital of one the oldest American states?" The *Atlanta Journal* rejected the analogy, declaring, "The Negro race is the criminal race in the South. The Jews of Russia are a law abiding and inoffensive people." Mark Bauerlein, *Negrophobia: A Race Riot in Atlanta, 1906* (New York, 2001), 230.

⁴³ The primary sources are presented here without correction to any errors in punctuation, spelling, or grammar that appear in the original.