

# A Great Awakening

Jonathan D. Sarna

*The Transformation  
That Shaped  
Twentieth Century  
American Judaism  
And Its Implications  
For Today*

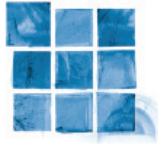
ועת  
לעשות  
Time to  
Act

Council  
for  
Initiatives  
in Jewish  
Education

**CIJE** ESSAY SERIES



MANDEL  
FOUNDATION



## MANDEL FOUNDATION

The Mandel Foundation was established by Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel, of Cleveland, Ohio. Its primary mission is to help provide outstanding leadership for the nonprofit world. The Foundation supports leadership education programs in its own institutions and at selected universities and organizations.

Mandel Foundation's approach to philanthropy is characterized by a conviction that exceptional leaders, professional and volunteer, form the critical factor in contributing significantly to community and society. Such leaders are guided by a powerful vision of the future that is illuminated by clear purposes, inspired by profound ideas and energized by imaginative resolutions to today's challenges

### The Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE)

Created in 1990 by the Commission on Jewish Education in North America, CIJE is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to the revitalization of Jewish education. CIJE's mission, in its projects and research, is to be a catalyst for systemic educational reform by working in partnership with Jewish communities and organizations to build the profession of Jewish education and mobilize community support for Jewish education.

## Learning from History

A century ago, the American Jewish community became deeply concerned about its viability. The assumptions that had guided its thinking for a generation were tested and found wanting. Jews wondered, neither for the first time nor for the last, whether Jewish life in this country would continue.

This essay looks back at a transforming moment in our past in an effort to place contemporary challenges into historical perspective. What makes the inquiry particularly pertinent is the fact that the American Jewish community *met* the multiple challenges it faced. An imaginative vision and innovative ideas revitalized its spirit and restored its self-confidence. The result—laden with implications for today—was a community that experienced a renewed sense of mission and an awakening of new life.

American Jews rarely look to history for insights into issues of contemporary concern. Critical challenges that emerge are inevitably seen as ‘new’ problems. History, it is assumed, has nothing to say about them.

In fact, history has a great deal to offer when properly studied. The misfortune, as Gerson Cohen pointed out years ago in an address to Jewish educators, is that we have failed to present history in a way that brings “its relevance home to the Jewish student.”<sup>1</sup> What we need—a far cry from what most Jews are taught—is a history that places today’s complex issues into context and perspective. Such a history would belie the present-mindedness of our day by showing how many of our problems are not new and how much can still be learned from Jews who faced similar challenges before.

## “The Immigrant Interpretation”

The years from 1881-1914 are generally known in American Jewish historiography as the era of mass immigration, the period when Central European Jews were overwhelmed by East European Jews and the nation’s Jewish population increased twelve-fold. Most historians assume that whatever else happened during these years was a response to this immigration, a subsidiary consequence of the era’s main theme. Leon Jick’s interpretation sums up what is essentially a consensus view:

The tidal wave of East European Jewish immigrants which began after 1881 inundated the Jewish community and transformed the confident [R]eform majority into a defensive minority. In the wake of the radically different values and attitudes of the newcomers and the problems created by their arrival, the process of adaptation and adjustment began anew. A new burst of organizational energy led to new modes of accommodation and to the creation of the complex institutional and ideological panorama of twentieth-century American Jewry.<sup>2</sup>

This view is not new; indeed, one finds it expressed as early as 1911 in Rabbi Solomon Schindler’s famous *mea culpa* sermon entitled “Mistakes I Have Made.” Schindler, who had by then abandoned his earlier radicalism and become a kind of born-again Jew, a *baal teshuva*, believed that post-Civil War Jews “seemed near assimilation.” Anticipating contemporary scholars, he attributed subsequent changes, including his own sense of personal guilt for having formerly espoused assimilation, to what he called the “new spirit” that East European Jews had brought with them:

A cloud came up out of the East and covered the world. It brought here to us two millions of people. Whilst they were different from us in appearance and habits, there were ties of blood between us and they brought a new spirit amongst us. They surrounded us like an army. This movement from the east to the west of this great army strong in the old ideals acting upon and changing our mode of thought, demanding from us change,—this was the hand of God.<sup>3</sup>

The assumption, then, is that East European Jews were responsible for introducing a “new spirit” into American Jewish life. They overwhelmed the hitherto dominant Reform Movement, reducing it, statistically, “to the position of a denomination of high social level representing only a fraction of the American Jews.” Scholars like Nathan Glazer and Henry Feingold go so far as to argue that without this immigration American Jews might well have assimilated and disappeared.<sup>4</sup>

Yet, well-rooted as this view is within twentieth-century American Jewish historiography, it does not stand up under close scrutiny. Nobody, of course, disputes that East European Jewish immigration had a profound historical impact. But it is extraordinarily difficult to argue that the immigration challenge is central to the whole period, sufficient in and of itself to explain all of the many changes that historians attribute to it. Three problems with the interpretation are particularly daunting.

First, the interpretation is, in many ways, anachronistic. Many of the changes attributed to mass immigration actually took place earlier, either before 1881 or before American Jews realized how portentous the immigration would be. So, for example, it is claimed that East European Jews are responsible for breathing a “new spirit” into American Judaism, resulting in a considerable movement back to tradition even among native-born Jews. Yet in fact this movement began much earlier, in the late 1870s, and was associated not with immigrants but with a core of American-born young people, particularly in Philadelphia and New York. Reports that “genuine Orthodox views are now becoming fashionable among Jewish young America” circulated as early as 1879,<sup>5</sup> and that same year saw the establishment of the new journalistic voice of these young people, the *American Hebrew*, described by one of its founders as “our forcible instrument for the perpetuation and elevation of Judaism”.<sup>6</sup> By the mid-1880s—that is, before immigration’s impact had fully been felt—the new conservative trend within American Judaism was already widely in evidence.<sup>7</sup>

New organizational forms likewise predated mass immigration. The tremendous growth of the Young Men's Hebrew Associations, to take perhaps the most significant example, began in the mid-1870s. By 1890, some 120 of the associations had been founded nationwide, many places scarcely affected by immigration.<sup>8</sup> These and other religious, cultural, and organizational changes cannot be attributed to mass immigration, and are therefore not explicable according to our current understanding of late nineteenth-century developments.

Second, besides being anachronistic, the current interpretation is also extraordinarily simplistic. It assumes that a wide array of late nineteenth-century developments can all be explained by a single factor, mass migration, and that this one factor was sufficient to trigger a full-scale cultural revolution in American Jewish life. Yet accounts of the founding of such new nationwide organizations as the Jewish Publication Society (1888), the American Jewish Historical Society (1892), Gratz College (1893), the Jewish Chatauqua Society (1893), and the National Council of Jewish Women (1893), as well as the ambitious project to produce a *Jewish Encyclopedia* in America (work on which began in earnest in 1898), demonstrate that they were not originally justified on the basis of the mass migration and have only limited initial connection to it. These were instead cultural and educational undertakings designed to promote Jewish learning on the part of native Jews, to promote America itself as a center of Jewish life, and to counter antisemitism.<sup>9</sup> Admittedly, some of these organizations subsequently changed their mission in response to the immigrant challenge. But we misunderstand a great deal if we assume, as so many today do, that immigration was the fountainhead from which all other turn-of-the-century developments flowed.

Finally, the immigrant interpretation is painfully insular. It assumes, quite wrongly, that American Jewish life in this period was largely shaped by Jewish events, and that the impact of surrounding American cultural and religious developments was negligible. It also

assumes, again wrongly, that the religious history of America's Jews was exclusively shaped by immigrating East Europeans. Instead of viewing American Jewish history in its broadest context, noting parallels to developments within American society and in Europe, the immigrant interpretation reflects and encourages a lamentable tunnel-vision that clouds our understanding of what the period's history was really about.

## A Jewish Renaissance in America

Contemporaries understood turn-of-the-century developments in American Jewish life quite differently. They used terms like “revival,” “renaissance,” and “awakening” to explain what was going on in their day, and they understood these terms in much the same way as contemporary Protestants did. The London *Jewish Chronicle* thus reported in 1887 that “a strong religious revival has apparently set in among the Jews in the United States.” It was especially struck by the number of American synagogues looking for rabbis and by the comparatively high salaries that rabbinic candidates were then being offered.

Cyrus Adler, writing in the *American Hebrew* seven years later, described what he called an American Jewish “renaissance” and a “revival of Jewish learning.” He listed a series of Jewish cultural and intellectual achievements in America dating back to 1879. By 1901, lawyer and communal leader Daniel P. Hays was persuaded that the previous decade had witnessed “a great awakening among our people—a realization that the Jew is not to become great by his material achievements, but by his contribution toward the higher ideals of life and by his endeavors toward the uplifting of the race.” Edwin Wolf, in his presidential address to the Jewish Publication Society in 1904, carried the same theme into the future: “We are,” he proclaimed, “laying the foundation for a Jewish renaissance in America.”<sup>10</sup>

Historians of American Judaism have paid scant attention to these claims.<sup>11</sup> Terms such as “revival,” “awakening,” and “renaissance” play no part in the traditional religious vocabulary of Judaism, and in America they run counter to the standard assimilationist model that posits “linear descent,” a movement over several generations of American Judaism, from Orthodoxy to Reform to complete secularity.<sup>12</sup> Where historians of American Protestantism have long posited a cyclical pattern of revival and stagnation (“backsliding”), a model that Catholic historians have now borrowed, no such pattern has been discerned in the story of American Judaism—at least until we reach contemporary time.<sup>13</sup>

My argument here, however, is that the explanation offered by turn-of-the-century Jews to describe the developments of their day was essentially correct. Jews *were* experiencing a period of religious and cultural awakening, parallel but by no means identical to what Protestantism experienced during the same period.<sup>14</sup> This multifaceted awakening—its causes, manifestations, and implications—holds the key to understanding this critical period in American Jewish history, explaining much that the regnant “immigration synthesis” cannot adequately contain.

Before proceeding to make the case for a late nineteenth-century American Jewish awakening, a methodological problem must be disposed of. In recent years, timothy Smith, Jon Butler, and others have questioned whether “religious awakenings,” at least as historians describe them, ever truly existed. Are they, in Butler’s words, “interpretive fiction,” perhaps “more a cycle...in the attention of secular writers,” as Smith charges, “than in the extent of actual religious excitement?”

This question was debated at length at a session held in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1982, and it seems to me that William G. McLoughlin, in his response to these challenges, had the best of the argument. “The most important current interpretations of the Awakening cycle,” he wrote, “have divorced the construct from a direct



connection with revivalists and revival meetings. They see revivalism and revivalists as the symptoms of the process of cultural stress and reorientation, and not as the prime movers.” Borrowing concepts from anthropology and sociology, he defined an awakening as “a major cultural reorientation—a search for new meaning, order, and direction in a society which finds that rapid change and unexpected intrusions have disrupted the order of life.”<sup>15</sup> This definition matches, quite precisely, what I see as having happened in the late nineteenth-century American Jewish community.

I shall argue that a “major cultural reorientation” began in the American Jewish community late in the 1870s and was subsequently augmented by mass immigration. The critical developments that we associate with this period—the return to religion, the heightened sense of Jewish peoplehood and particularism, the far-reaching changes that opened up new opportunities and responsibilities for women, the renewed community-wide emphasis on education and culture, the “burst of organizational energy,” and the growth of Conservative Judaism and Zionism—all reflect different efforts to resolve the “crisis of beliefs and values: that had developed during these decades.”<sup>16</sup> By 1914, American Jewry had been transformed and the awakening had run its course. The basic contours of the twentieth-century American Jewish community had by then fallen into place.

## From Confidence to Crisis

The late 1860s and early 1870s were a period of confident optimism in American Jewish life. The Central European Jews who immigrated two decades earlier had, by then, established themselves securely. The Jewish community had grown in wealth and power and now stood at about a quarter of a million strong, with close to 300 synagogues from coast to coast. The community had created hospitals, orphanages, schools, newspapers, magazines, several fraternal organizations, a union

of synagogues, and, in 1875, a rabbinical seminary. The nation was booming; liberal Jews and Protestants spoke warmly of universalism; and rabbis and ministers even occasionally traded pulpits.

Small wonder that Jews looked forward with anticipation to the onset of a glorious “new era” in history, described by one rabbi in an 1874 lecture delivered “in every important city east of the Mississippi River” as a time when “the whole human race shall be led to worship one Almighty God of righteousness and truth, goodness and love,” and when Jews would stand in the forefront of those ushering in “the golden age of a true universal brotherhood.”<sup>17</sup>

Beginning in the late 1870s, this hopeful scenario was undermined by a series of unanticipated crises that disrupted American Jewish life and called many of its guiding assumptions into question. “Anti-Semitism”—a word coined in Germany at the end of the 1870s to describe and justify (“scientifically”) anti-Jewish propaganda and discrimination—explains part of what happened. The rise of racially based anti-Jewish hatred in Germany, a land that many American Jews had close ties to and had previously revered for its liberal spirit and cultural advancement, came as a shock. Here Jews had assumed that emancipation, enlightenment, and human progress would diminish residual prejudice directed toward them, and suddenly they saw it espoused in the highest intellectual circles, and by people in whom they had placed great faith. German antisemitism was widely reported upon in the United States, covered both in the Jewish and in the general press. “What American Jews were witnessing,” Naomi W. Cohen explains, was nothing less than “the humiliation of their Jewish parents, a spectacle that could shake their faith in Judaism itself.”<sup>18</sup>

What made this situation even worse was that antisemitism and particularly social discrimination soon spread to America’s own shores. Anti-Jewish hatred was certainly not new to America, but Jews had previously considered it something of an anachronism, alien both to the modern temper and to American democracy. Like

Jews in Germany, they optimistically assumed that prejudice against them would in time wither away. The two well-publicized incidents of the late 1870s—Judge Hilton’s exclusion of banker Joseph Seligman from the Grand Union Hotel (1877) and Austin Corbin’s public announcement that “Jews as a class” would be unwelcome at Coney Island (1879)—proved so shocking precisely because they challenged this assumption.<sup>19</sup>

The questions posed by Hermann Baar, Superintendent of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum, in his response to Corbin’s outburst, were the questions that Jews in all walks of life suddenly had to ask of themselves:

In what age and country do we live? Are we going to have the times of Philip II, of Spain, repeated, or do we really live in the year 1879, in that century of progress and improvement, of education and enlightenment? Do we really live in the year 1879, in that era of moral refinement and cultured tastes, of religious toleration and social intercourse? And if we really live in this era, can such an act of injustice and bigoted ostracism happen on American soil, in this land of the free and brave, in which the homeless finds a shelter and the persecuted a resting place, in which the peaceable citizen enjoys the blessings of his labor and the devout worshiper the full liberty of his religious conscience, and in which humanity teaches to other countries and nations the blessed code of right and justice?<sup>20</sup>

## Calls for a “Christian America”

By brazenly defending and legitimating antisemitism on socioeconomic, racial, and legal grounds, incidents such as these paved the way for a depressing rise in antisemitic manifestations of all sorts, from social discrimination to antisemitic propaganda to efforts to stem the tide of Jewish immigrants. Over the next two decades, Jews experienced a substantial decline in their social status. “Gradually, but surely, we are being forced back into a physical and moral ghetto,” thirty-five-

year-old Professor Richard Gottheil, of Columbia University, complained, speaking in 1897 to a private meeting of the Judaeans, the cultural society of New York's Jewish elite. "Private schools are being closed against our children one by one; we are practically boycotted from all summer hotels—and our social lines run as far apart from those of our neighbors as they did in the worst days of our European degradation."<sup>21</sup>

Developments within American Protestantism added yet another dimension to the mood of uneasiness that I sense in the American Jewish community of this period. The spiritual crisis and internal divisions that plagues Protestant American during this era—one that confronted all American religious groups with the staggering implications of Darwinism and biblical criticism—drove Evangelicals and liberals alike to renew their particularistic calls for a "Christian America." Visions of a liberal religious alliance and of close cooperation between Jews and Unitarians gradually evaporated. Although interfaith exchanges continued, Jews came to realize that many of their Christian friends continued to harbor hopes that one day Jews would "see the light." Much to the embarrassment of Jewish leaders, some Christian liberals looked to Felix Adler's de-Judaized Ethical Culture movement as a harbinger of Judaism's future course.<sup>22</sup>

On the Jewish side, this period witnessed a comparable crisis of the spirit. Alarmed at religious "indifference," Jewish ignorance, some well publicized cases of intermarriage, and Felix Adler's success in attracting young Jews to his cause, many began to question prior assumptions regarding the direction in which American Judaism should move. Was Reform Judaism really the answer? Had the effort to modernize Judaism gone too far? Would assimilation triumph?

By the 1880s, the Reform Movement was on the defensive, facing attacks from both left and right. Its uncertainty found expression in the 1885 Conference of Reform rabbis that produced the Pittsburgh

Platform. The question was also reflected in an 1884 letter to Rabbi Bernhard Felsenthal, a pioneer of American Reform, from a confused young rabbi named David Stern, who subsequently committed suicide. Stern remarked that the religious agenda of his day was “entirely different” from what it had been before. “Then the struggle was to remove the dross; today it is to conserve the pearl beneath.”<sup>23</sup>

Mass East European Jewish immigration, coming on the heels of all of these developments, added a great deal of fuel to the crisis of confidence that Jews experienced in the 1880s. In Russia, as in Germany, liberalism had been tested and found wanting; reaction followed. The resulting mass exodus strained the Jewish community’s resources, heightened fears of antisemitism, stimulated an array of Americanization and revitalization efforts, and threatened to change the whole character of the American Jewish community once East European Jews gained cultural hegemony.

So visible and longlasting was the transformation wrought by East European Jewish immigration that it eventually overshadowed all other aspects of the late nineteenth-century crisis. From the point of view of contemporaries, however, antisemitism at home and abroad, the specter of assimilation and intermarriage, and the changing religious and social environment of the United States were no less significant.

Faced with all these unexpected problems at once, American Jews began to realize that their whole optimistic vision of the future had been built on false premises. Even the usually starry-eyed Reform Jewish leader Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, writing in 1881, felt his faith in the future slowly ebbing away:

There is something wrong among us optimists and humanists, sad experience upsets our beautiful theories and we stand confounded before the angry eruptions of the treacherous volcano called humanity. There is a lie in its nature which has not been overcome. Will it ever be overcome? We hope and trust that it will. Till then, we poor optimists are sadly disappointed and made false prophets.<sup>24</sup>

Utopia, in short, had proved more distant than expected. The universalistic prophecies of the 1860s and 70s had failed, the hoped-for “new era” had not materialized, and conditions for Jews in America and around the world had grown worse instead of better. This posed a cultural crisis of the highest order for American Jews and precipitated the cultural awakening that changed the face of American Jewish life.

## A “Bottom-up” Revival

Protestant awakenings, at least as historians have described them in America, operate from the top down. A revivalist, like Dwight L. Moody or Billy Sunday in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, stimulated a movement of religious revitalization, usually through his preaching. In retrospect, scholars discover that he defined the cultural issues (or less charitably embodied the “cultural confusion”) that characterized his era as a whole. Parallel Jewish awakenings, by contrast, percolated from the bottom up. Young people and others alienated from the religious establishment stood in the forefront of late nineteenth-century efforts to promote religious revitalization. Through their teachings (much more than their preaching) as well as their organizational activities they stimulated the conversions, religious excitement, schismatic conflicts, theological disputations, and institutional changes that promoted the cultural transformations we associate with a religious awakening.

Jewish awakenings are somewhat more difficult to identify and characterize than Protestant ones, since one cannot easily focus on the work of individual revivalists. What one can present is evidence of revitalization on the part of a whole range of individuals and groups caught up in a simultaneous process aimed at promoting Jewish religious renewal.

By far the most important group seeking to promote Jewish religious renewal in the last decades of the nineteenth century was

centered in Philadelphia<sup>25</sup> and consisted largely of young single men. Mayer Sulzberger (1843-1923), the city's foremost Jewish citizen, was the "patriarch" of this group, and his associates (several of whom were also his relatives) included such future activists as Solomon Solis-Cohen (1857-1948), Cyrus Sulzberger (1858-1932), Joseph Fels (1854-1914), Samuel Fels (1860-1950), and Cyrus Adler (1863-1940). All were initially involved in the Young Men's Hebrew Association of Philadelphia, founded in 1875 to promote social as well as cultural activities of a Jewish nature, including lectures, literary discussions, formal Jewish classes, and the publication of a lively newsletter.

Of primary significance, for our purposes, was their campaign, carried out in association with the YMHA of New York (founded in 1874), for the "Grand Revival of the Jewish National Holiday of Chanucka," complete with appropriate pageants and publicity. This was an effort "to rescue this national festival from the oblivion into which it seemed rapidly falling," and was a direct challenge to Reform Judaism, which had renounced national aspects of Judaism as antithetical to the modern spirit; presumably, the campaign also sought to counteract the evident allure of Christmas. In 1879, the "revival" proved a triumphant success. "Every worker in the cause of a revived Judaism," one of the organizers wrote, "must have felt the inspiration exuded from the enthusiastic interest evinced by such a mass of Israel's people."<sup>26</sup>

A few months before this "revival," on October 5, 1879, several of the young people in this circle bound themselves together in a solemn covenant "for God and Judaism" they called *Keyam Dishmaya* in which they pledged all in their power to bring Jews back "to the ancient faith." Solomon Solis-Cohen's papers preserve letters from a corresponding member of this group, Max Cohen, later librarian of New York's Maimonides Library, that indicate the earnestness and fervor with which these young people undertook their mission.

"[T]he great question for contemporary Judaism is whether it will continue God's work or cease to be," he wrote in one letter.

His own conclusion was unambiguous: “Israel must be whatever its children make it.... They who wish to give Israel her true position in the world’s autonomy must set a high ideal before them and abide thereby.”

In another letter, Cohen discussed his forthcoming lecture, entitled “The Restoration of the Jews,” and expressed pleasure “with the movement that is now on foot...to recreate the ancient Hebrew Sabbath.” He hoped that the Sabbath Movement would result “in the more universal observance of other Jewish ordinances and the incitement to higher spiritual life.”

Cohen was all of twenty-six when he expressed these lofty sentiments and still lived at home. His “Israel must be” letter concluded with the hurried note, “Mother is calling that it is time to blow out my lamp.”<sup>27</sup>

On the first anniversary of *Keyam Dishmaya*, one of its leaders was twenty-two-year-old Cyrus L. Sulzberger (1858-1932). He had just moved from Philadelphia to New York and was on the road too becoming a prominent New York merchant and communal leader (as well as the grandfather of the *New York Times* columnist C. L. Sulzberger). Sulzberger summed up the group’s achievements and aims in a remarkable and revealing letter:

...’That fateful 5th of October night’ has borne its fruit. The seed then planted fell on no barren soil. The covenant then made has not been broken. We have kept before us that vow ‘for God and Judaism’ and with that we have used all the abilities god has given us in His sacred cause. Looking back over the first year of our Berith [covenant], we have cause to be grateful to God for the successful manner in which we have begun our work. We have in the *American Hebrew* a means of addressing the community; we, here, [in New York] have in our Bible Class a means of addressing a smaller community whom, with God’s blessing, we shall redeem to the ancient faith. You in the Sunday School did good work in your address and have further good work to do; there is at least one straying sheep whom you can reclaim and there may be more. This the kind of



missionary labor in which we must engage. While we may not hope to live to see the fulfillment of all our desires, while we may not live to see the restoration of our people to the land of their inheritance, we may yet so live that we shall do our share toward hastening these events; we may so live that the work we now are doing will be taken in hand by others who profiting by our experience, our example and our lives, shall continue the good work we are in. May God grant us the ability to continue in the cause, may He raise us above the petty strifes of daily occurrences, may He strengthen us to renewed labor and renewed activity, may He bring us peace of mind wherewith to labor undisturbed, may He bless our covenant and grant us a successful issue in our labors ‘for God and Judaism,’ Amen.<sup>28</sup>

In this letter of 1880, Sulzberger spelled out the three cornerstones of the revival that he and his associates were trying to spawn: They sought, first, to revitalize and deepen the religious and spiritual lives of American Jews; second, to strengthen Jewish education; and third, to promote the restoration of Jews as a people, including their ultimate restoration to the land of Israel.

Together, these goals signified an inward turn among young American Jews. Their response to the cultural crisis of their day was to reject universalism, assimilationism, and the redefinition of Judaism along purely religious lines—themes heavily promoted by Reform Judaism at the time—in favor of a Judaism that was in their view more closely in tune with God and Jewish historical tradition.

## The New Leaders

No movement for change can confine itself to secret societies and clandestine cells. For this reason, and in order to promote their lofty aims among the ‘movers and shakers’ of the American Jewish community, these young Jewish revivalists established on November 21, 1879, a lively and important highbrow Jewish newspaper

in New York entitled the *American Hebrew*. “Our work,” they explained to the public in their first issue, “shall consist of untiring endeavors to stir up our brethren to pride in our time-honored faith.” The newspaper’s publisher, Philip Cowen, recalled half a century later that “we were fully convinced that not only New York Judaism, but American Judaism, awaited its journalistic redeemers!”<sup>29</sup>

The nine editors of the new newspaper, some Philadelphians, some New Yorkers, were all anonymous—understandably so, since their ages ranged from twenty-one to twenty-nine. They represented a new phenomenon on the American Jewish scene: Most were American-born Jews who were at once “strong for traditional Judaism” (two of the nine were rabbis) yet at the same time eager to accommodate Judaism to American conditions.<sup>30</sup>

“Our proclivities...are toward ‘reformed’ Judaism and yet our disposition is toward orthodoxy,” the editors admitted in their first issue. Years later, Max Cohen described his associates as having been “a group of young American Jews who, while not inordinately addicted to Orthodoxy as a rigid standardisation of thought and conduct, was yet opposed to the wholesale and reckless discarding of everything that was Jewish simply because it was inconvenient, oriental, or was not in conformity with Episcopalian customs.”<sup>31</sup>

By the time he published this recollection, in 1920, Cohen and the other erstwhile members of his group had moved far beyond the *American Hebrew*. Led by the indefatigable Cyrus Adler, who had joined the editorial board of the paper in 1894, members of this cohort of New York and Philadelphia Jews established a wide range of cultural and religious institutions and involved themselves in an array of communal projects. Some were designed to strengthen what became known as Conservative Judaism, one of the most significant and far-reaching outcomes of this whole religious awakening.<sup>32</sup> And all were designed to extend the work of Jewish cultural and religious renewal in new directions.

In the space of a few decades they created, among other things, the Jewish Theological Seminary (1886), the Jewish Publication Society (1888), the American Jewish Historical Society (1892), Gratz College (1893), and Dropsie (1907). They were associated with the publication of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901-1906); with the movement to bring the renowned Jewish scholar Solomon Schechter to America (he arrived in 1902); with the transfer to America's shores of the scholarly journal, the *Jewish Quarterly Review* (1910); and with the establishment, by the Jewish Publication society, of American Jewry's first high-quality Hebrew press (1921). They were also involved in the Jewish Bible translation project (1893-1917) and the Schiff Library of Jewish Classics (1914-1936), both specially funded projects of the Jewish Publication Society.

These highly ambitious and for the most part successful undertakings mirror the "organizing process" that Donald Mathews associated with the Protestant Second Great Awakening; they sought to provide "meaning and direction" to Jews suffering from the social and cultural strains of a transitional era.<sup>33</sup> Appropriately, the organizations intended to reach different audiences: Some looked to scholars, some to rabbis and teachers, and some to the Jewish community at large and to non-Jews.

In the case of Cyrus Adler, Naomi W. Cohen describes this multi-tiered cultural agenda as a conscious creation:

On one level, Adler envisioned the modern training of Jewish scholars, abetted by appropriate library and publication resources. On a second, he aimed for the education of American rabbis and teachers who would inculcate a loyalty to historical Judaism in consonance with acculturation to American surroundings. On still a third, he worked for a community knowledgeable about its heritage, that would appreciate the value of reading books of Jewish interest, of collecting Jewish artifacts, and of keeping alert to contemporary events that involved Jewry.<sup>34</sup>

All these levels sought to promote religious renewal, improved Jewish education, cultural revitalization, the professionalization of

Jewish scholarship, a positive Jewish image to the Gentiles, and the elevation of American Jewry to a position of greater prominence, if not preeminence, among the Jews of the world.

Admittedly, the challenge posed by massive East European Jewish immigration led, for a time, to a greater rhetorical emphasis upon Americanization as a goal, but this should not be exaggerated. Promoters of Jewish renewal understood better than other Jewish leaders did that the real concern was not so much how to assimilate the East Europeans, as how to ensure that all American Jews would not assimilate completely. It was this critical insight, coupled with a prescient sense that American Jewry needed to prepare itself to play a central role in the affairs of world Jewry, that prompted these Jews to participate in the creation of these great institutions and projects that shaped American-Jewish cultural and religious life into the late twentieth century.<sup>35</sup>

Although this remarkable cohort of Philadelphia and New York Jews—most of them young, male, and well-educated laypeople, rather than rabbis<sup>36</sup>—formed the most visible leadership cadre of the late nineteenth-century awakening, they were by no means its only source of energy. In fact, more than generally realized, the awakening marked a turning-point both in the history of American Jewish women and in the history of the American Reform Movement.

## The Role of Women

The role of women in American Judaism had been undergoing change since the early decades of the nineteenth century. Influenced by the Second Great Awakening, Rebecca Gratz of Philadelphia introduced Jewish women into the world of Jewish philanthropy, establishing in 1819 the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, the progenitor of many similar benevolent organizations by and for Jewish women.

Previously, Jewish philanthropy had been part of the synagogue's domain and governed by men.

The Jewish Sunday School movement, pioneered by Gratz in 1838, transformed the role of Jewish women still further by making them responsible for the religious education and spiritual guidance of the young. By the time Gratz died, in 1869, it can safely be estimated that the majority of American Jews who received any formal Jewish education at all learned most of what they knew from female teachers. These teachers, in turn, had to educate themselves in Judaism, which they did with the aid of new textbooks, some of them written by women as well.<sup>37</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, thanks to a legacy left by Rebecca Gratz's brother, Hyman, women could receive advanced training in Judaism at Gratz college, the first of a series of Hebrew teachers colleges across the United States that trained women on an equal basis with men.<sup>38</sup> In still another transformation, this one beginning in 1851 and confined to Reform temples, women achieved parity with their husbands in the realm of synagogue seating. No longer were they relegated to the balcony or separated from men by a physical barrier; instead, by the late 1870s, mixed seating was the rule throughout Reform congregations.<sup>39</sup> Now, building on these earlier developments, women experienced still more far-reaching changes as part of the late nineteenth-century American Jewish awakening.

The first woman to achieve great prominence in the awakening was the poet Emma Lazarus (1849-1887), who was best known for her poem "The New Colossus," composed in 1883 to help raise funds for the pedestal on which the Statue of Liberty rests.<sup>40</sup> Born in New York to an aristocratic Jewish family of mixed Sephardic and Ashkenazic heritage, she had emerged at a young age as a sensitive poet (her first book was published when she was seventeen), but had never maintained close ties to the Jewish community; only a very small percentage of her early work bore on Jewish themes at all.

Antisemitism and the first wave of East European Jewish immigration shocked Lazarus. In 1882, in a burst of creative energy, she emerged as a staunch defender of Jewish rights, the poet laureate of the Jewish awakening, and as the foremost proponent of the “national-Jewish movement” aimed at “the establishment of a free Jewish State.”<sup>41</sup> Her oft-quoted poem, “The Banner of the Jew,” composed in the spring of 1882, began with the words “Wake, Israel, wake!” and ended on a militant note:

O deem not dead that martial fire,  
Say not the mystic flame is spent!  
With Moses’ law and David’s lyre,  
Your ancient strength remains unbent.  
Let but an Ezra rise anew,  
To lift the *Banner of the Jew!*  
A rag, a mock at first—erelong  
When men have bled and women wept,  
To guard its precious folds from wrong,  
Even they who shrunk, even they who slept,  
Shall leap to bless it, and to save.  
Strike! for the brave revere the brave!<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile, her essays, notably her *An Epistle to the Hebrews* (1882-1883), called for “deepening and quickening of the sources of Jewish enthusiasm” in response to the “‘storm-centre’ in our history” that Jews were passing through.<sup>43</sup>

Lazarus herself soon established close ties with the publisher of the *American Hebrew*, where much of her work now appeared, and she began studying the Hebrew language. Her interest, however, lay not in the religious revitalization of the Jews, as advocated by the members of *Keyam Dishmaya*; instead, she placed her emphasis on Jewish peoplehood, emphasizing the virtues of unity, discipline, and organization in the service of Jewish national renewal. Influenced by George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda*, Laurence Oliphant’s *The Land of*

*Gilead*, and Leon Pinsker's *Auto-Emancipation*, she abandoned her own skepticism concerning Jewish nationalism and became "one of the most devoted adherents to the new dogma." She embraced it as if it were a full-fledged religion, in doing so she recognized that she was not alone:

...Under my own eyes I have seen equally rapid and thorough conversions to the same doctrine. In the minds of mature and thoughtful men, men of prudence and of earnest purpose, little apt to be swayed by the chance enthusiasm of a popular agitation, it has taken profound root, and in some cases overturned the theories and intellectual habits of a life-time.<sup>44</sup>

With her untimely death, of Hodgkins disease, at the age of thirty-eight, Lazarus became something of a saint to Jews caught up in the late nineteenth-century awakening. A special issue of the *American Hebrew* memorialized her, with tributes "from the foremost literati of the age," and her *Epistle to the Hebrews*, published in pamphlet form in 1900, was kept in print for many years by the Federation of American Zionists.

Even as her memory was kept alive, however, her death came as a blow to the movement for Jewish renewal. It deprived it of its first truly significant convert to the cause, its most inspiring and cosmopolitan intellectual figure, and its foremost advocate (to that time) of what would shortly become known as American Zionism—the other great movement (along with Conservative Judaism) that the late nineteenth-century American Jewish awakening did so much to spawn.<sup>45</sup>

Yet another dimension of the effervescence of late nineteenth-century American Jewish religious life is suggested by the career of Ray Frank, known in her day as the "girl rabbi" and the "female messiah." While not of long-lasting significance, her brief stint as a charismatic woman Jewish revivalist demonstrates that the late nineteenth-century American Jewish crisis of expectations and faith was not confined to the East Coast, restricted to intellectual circles, or exclusively the preserve of traditionalists and proto-Zionists.

It was, instead, a complex nationwide phenomenon that affected a wide range of Jews, men and women, in sometimes unpredictable ways.

Ray (Rachel) Frank (1861<sup>46</sup>-1948), born in San Francisco, was a schoolteacher, writer, and lecturer. Critical of the Judaism of her day, she published in 1890 a stinging critique of the American rabbinate in response to a New York Jewish newspaper's call for articles on the question "What would you do if you were a rabbi?" What she "would not do," she emphasized, was emulate the many abuses she considered characteristic of the pompously materialistic American rabbinate. She called on rabbis to don "the spiritual mantle of Elijah," and implied that women ("were the high office not denied us") might do the job better.<sup>47</sup>

Shortly after this article appeared, Ray Frank achieved momentary fame when she travelled to Spokane, Washington, and became "the one Jewish woman in the world, may be the first since the time of the prophets" to preach from a synagogue pulpit on the Jewish high holidays.<sup>48</sup> According to the story widely reported in her day and subsequently preserved by her husband:

It happened to be on the eve of the High Holy Days and she made inquiries concerning the location of the synagogue as she wanted to attend services. When informed that there was no synagogue and there would be no services, she called on one of the wealthy Jews in town, to whom she had letter of introduction, and expressed surprise that a town containing many well-to-do Jews should be without a place of worship. The man, who knew Ray Frank by reputation, said, 'If you will deliver a sermon we shall have services tonight.' Ray acquiesced. At about five o'clock on that day special editions of Spokane Falls Gazette appeared on the streets announcing that a young lady would preach to the Jews that evening at the Opera House. The place was crowded. After the services were read, Ray spoke on the obligations of a Jew as a Jew and a citizen. In an impassioned appeal she asked her coreligionists to drop their dissensions with regard to ceremonials and join hands in a glorious cause, that of praying to the God



of their fathers. She emphasized the fact that they shirked their duty if they did not form a permanent congregation and that by being without a place of worship and all that it stands for they were doing an incalculable harm to their children. After Ray finished her sermon, a 'Christian gentleman' who was in the audience arose and said that he had been very much impressed by what he heard and if the Jews would undertake the building of a synagogue, he would present them with a site to be used for that purpose.<sup>49</sup>

Throughout the 1890s, Ray Frank delivered sermons and lectures, mostly in the West, and published articles extolling the virtues of Judaism, the Jewish family, and Jewish women. According to the memoir published by her husband after her death, people "flocked to listen" as she talked on 'Heart Throbs of Israel,' 'Moses,' 'Music and Its Revelations,' 'Nature as a Supreme Teacher,' and related topics.<sup>50</sup> In these lectures, she attacked divisions in Jewish life, called for peace in the pulpit, and promoted spirituality, simplicity, earnestness, and righteousness:

Give us congregational singing which comes direct from the heart and ascends as a tribute to God.... Give us simplicity in our rabbi, sympathy with things which practically concern us, give us earnestness, and our synagogues will no longer mourn in their loneliness.<sup>51</sup>

On one occasion, she disclosed a mystical vision, a call from God in which she herself was cast in the role of Moses ("I know I hold in my hand the staff of Moses. I kneel and raise my hands in adoration of the Eternal. I pray that all knowledge be mine... I go down. I will tell all I know to the world.... I must wherever and whenever I can preach my message."<sup>52</sup>) For the most part, however, hers was a conservative message. She opposed women's suffrage, spoke of motherhood as the culmination of womanhood, and reminded women "how all-important the home and the family are."<sup>53</sup>

Much like a Protestant revivalist, Frank was described by those who heard her as a spellbinding preacher whose enthusiasm proved

infectious. “Before she had finished,” the *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote of one of her lectures, “her words were dropping like sparks into the souls of aroused people before her.”<sup>54</sup> So well-known had she become that at the Jewish Women’s Congress, held in Chicago in 1893, she was invited to deliver the opening prayer. Four years later, in 1897, 7,700 people reportedly turned out to hear her at the adult education chautauqua at Gladstone Park in Portland, Oregon, on that was billed as “Ray Frank Day.”<sup>55</sup>

In 1898, Ray Frank travelled to Europe, where she met and married an economist named Simon Litman. Her marriage and sojourn abroad (the couple did not return until 1902) effectively ended her public career.<sup>56</sup> The success that she demonstrated during her years on the lecture circuit, however, suggests that her message struck a meaningful chord.<sup>57</sup> On the one hand, she spoke to the spiritual concerns and traditional values of American Jews of her day’ on the other hand, simply by virtue of her sex, she challenged Jews’ religious and gender-based assumptions. In evoking, simultaneously, both new and old she embodied, but in no way resolved, the cultural contradictions that underlay the religious ferment to which she herself contributed.

In raising the issue of women’s role both in American society and in Judaism, Ray Frank had pointed to one of the central concerns of the late nineteenth-century American Jewish awakening. In response to the manifold crises of the day, particularly assimilation and immigration, responsibility for “saving Judaism” came increasingly to rest upon the shoulders of women. Just as in Protestantism, so, too, in Judaism, religion had become “feminized.” The home, the synagogue, and philanthropic social work came increasingly to be seen as part of women’s domain, especially among Reform Jews. As a result, women became significant players in the campaign to revitalize Judaism to meet the needs of a new era.<sup>58</sup>

The National Council of Jewish Women, established in 1893, was the first national Jewish organization to take up this challenge.

Created at the Jewish Women's Congress of the Columbian Exposition, its original goals explicitly addressed the responsibilities of Jewish women to strengthen Jewish life;

Resolved, that the National Council of Jewish Women shall

- (1) seek to unite in closer relation women interested in the work of Religion, Philanthropy and Education and shall consider practical means of solving problems in these fields; shall
- (2) organize and encourage the study of the underlying principles of Judaism; the history, literature and customs of the Jews, and their bearing on their own and the world's history; shall
- (3) apply knowledge gained in this study to the improvement of the Sabbath Schools, and in the work of social reform; shall
- (4) secure the interest and aid of influential persons in arousing general sentiment against religious persecutions, wherever, whenever and against whomever shown, and in finding means to prevent such persecutions.<sup>59</sup>

Faith Rogow, in her recent history of the Council, points out that “no one believed more strongly in woman's ability to save Judaism than did Council women themselves.” Motherhood, the primacy of the home, the extension of motherhood into the synagogue—these were the values and goals that council members proudly espoused. Indeed, “motherhood and its presumed opportunity to influence husbands and children” was touted “as the only possible savior of Jewish life in America.”<sup>60</sup>

Through “sisterhoods of personal service,” Jewish women extended the sphere of “motherhood” into new realms aimed at combating the social crisis within the Jewish community. Initiated at Temple Emanu-El of New York in 1887, sisterhoods offered Jewish women the opportunity to emulate, from within a synagogue setting, the same kind of philanthropically directed urban missionary work performed by New York's Protestant and Catholic women, as well as the women of the Ethical Culture Society. Outdoor relief, home visits, religious schooling, industrial and domestic education, day nurseries, kindergartens, employment bureaus: These and related efforts devoted “to the care of the needy and the distressed” harnessed

the energies of Jewish women in ways that synagogues never had before. By 1896, practically every major uptown synagogue in New York had established a sisterhood, and in 1896 a Federation of Sisterhoods was established, in cooperation with the United Hebrew Charities.

What distinguished these efforts from their more secular counterparts was their religious character. Indeed, Rabbi David de Sola Pool, recounting the activities undertaken by the Orthodox sisterhood established in 1896 at the venerable Shearith Israel Synagogue in New York, stressed its role in “the loyal conservation and transmission of Jewish religious values.” Increasingly, in response to the perceived crisis of the day, women were fulfilling new roles within the Jewish community, expanding on those that they had formerly carried out almost exclusively within the home.<sup>61</sup>

All of these new themes—the cultural and educational work of young Jews in Philadelphia and New York, the Zionism of Emma Lazarus, the spirituality of Ray Frank, salvation through motherhood as preached by the National Council of Jewish Women, and the charity work of the sisterhoods of Personal Service—eventually came together in what became, after our period, the largest and strongest of the Jewish women’s organizations created to revitalize American Jewish life: Hadassah, The Women’s Zionist Organization of America.

Henrietta Szold (1860-1945), who played the dominant role in the establishment of Hadassah in 1912, had been involved in the work of Jewish renewal since she was a teenager, first as an essayist and educator, later as Secretary of the Publication Committee (that is, editor) of the Jewish Publication Society, and still later, in addition to her other work, as a leader of the Federation of American Zionists. She served as a role model to her peers and was respected as one of the most learned and accomplished Jewish women of her day.<sup>62</sup> Now, in the wake of her first visit to Palestine (1909), she and a few like-minded Zionist women activists in the New York area met to form a

new women's Zionist organization, which, at Szold's insistence, would have both a general and a highly specific purpose: "In America, to foster Jewish ideals and a highly specific purpose: "In America, to foster Jewish ideals and make Zionist propaganda; in Palestine, to establish a system of District Visiting Nursing."<sup>63</sup>

In many ways, the new organization did for Jewish women what foreign missions did for Protestant women: It provided them with an opportunity to participate in the 'holy work' of "salvation through social, medical and educational agencies."<sup>64</sup> As the historian of Hadassah's early years explains, Henrietta Szold firmly believed that women, unlike men, were interested in "specific practical projects of immediate emotional appeal to their maternal and Jewish religious instincts." Szold was convinced, therefore, that "we [American Jewish women] need Zionism as much as those Jews do who need a physical home." By working to strengthen Jewish life in the land of Israel, she hoped, women's own Judaism, and American Judaism generally, would be strengthened and renewed.<sup>65</sup>

## Redefining Reform Judaism

Reform Judaism, which by the last quarter of the nineteenth-century had become firmly established in the United States, maintained an uneasy relationship with all of these proponents of Jewish renewal. This was understandable: For half a century, young progressive American Jews had marched under the Reform banner and had viewed its program as the wave of the future, the only viable direction for Judaism in the New World to follow. Led by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, many Reform Jews had triumphalistically believed that their brand of Judaism would in time become *Minhag Amerika*, the rite practiced by American Jews as a whole. Now, unexpectedly, Reform Jewish leaders found this and other long-cherished assumptions of theirs called into question. Indeed, some critics argued that Reform,

far from being the solution to the crisis facing American Jews, was actually part of the problem.

Discounting those who had never considered Reform Judaism legitimate and favored the moderate traditionalism championed in earlier decades by Isaac Leeser.<sup>66</sup> Reform still found itself on the defensive. Shaken by the same crisis of confidence that transformed so much of American Jewish life during this period, it struggled to redefine itself.

The 1885 Pittsburgh Rabbinical Conference, called by Rabbi Kaufmann Kohler “for the purpose of discussing the present state of American Judaism, its pending issues and its requirements,” was Reform’s most significant attempt to respond to the new situation in which it found itself. Its objective was clearly stated: to unite the Reform rabbinate around “such plans and practical measures as seen demanded by the hour.” Michael A. Meyer explains in his history of the Reform Movement that the gathering was actually an attempt “to lay down a set of defining and definitive principles which would distinguish Reform Judaism from a wholly nonsectarian universalism on the one hand and from more traditional expressions of Judaism on the other.” Under attack both from the left and from the right, the rabbis who came to Pittsburgh now sought to focus Reform Judaism on a platform bold enough and inspiring enough to, as Kohler put it, “rally our forces,” “consolidate” and “build.”<sup>67</sup>

The well-known eight-point “Pittsburgh Platform” produced by the conference succeeded in its task. It was, in Isaac Mayer Wise’s famous words, a “Declaration of Independence.” It defined more clearly than ever before the Reform Jewish understanding of Judaism, and it laid down the gauntlet to those who understood Judaism differently.

Even, however, as the Platform distanced Reform from “Conservative Judaism” (which Kohler did not apparently distinguish from Orthodoxy<sup>68</sup>), the Conference as a whole did address many of the same themes that animated those young people and others who,

as we have seen, were self-consciously caught up in the movement for American Jewish renewal. Kohler, for example, called for greater “help and participation” by women in Jewish religious life. He also spoke out on behalf of a publication society and a periodical press to “foster Jewish life, awaken Jewish sentiment and train the Jewish minds and hearts.” Criticizing his Reform colleagues for “leaving the home unprovided,” he called for a revitalization of Jewish home life, including the renewed observance of Chanukah and major Jewish festivals. In addition, he and others at the conference called for educational reforms to counter the “appalling ignorance...which seems to constantly grow from year to year.”<sup>69</sup>

In short, even as the Pittsburgh Platform reaffirmed Reform Judaism’s opposition to Jewish nationalism (“We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine...nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state”) and reiterated its abrogation of those ceremonial laws “not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization,” Reform Jewish leaders did participate wholeheartedly in other efforts to revitalize Jewish life at the end of the nineteenth century. Educational and cultural programs, measures to revitalize Jewish home life, expanded roles for women, and enhanced spirituality in worship all loomed large on the new Reform Jewish agenda. In addition, the Movement participated in a general return to Jewish forms, characterized not only by a revival of certain Jewish ceremonies, like Chanukah and the synagogue celebration of Sukkot, but also by a return to distinctive Jewish terminology, such as greater use of the word “Jew” as opposed to “Hebrew” and “Israelite,” and the almost complete abandonment by World War I of such once commonly used terms, borrowed from Protestantism, as the Jewish “Church,” the Jewish “minister,” and the Jewish “Easter.”<sup>70</sup>

Most important of all, Reform Judaism in this period offered those disaffected with synagogue life a new alternative means of

actively expressing their faith.<sup>71</sup> following the lead of Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch of Chicago, it called upon Jews, in the words of the Pittsburgh Platform, to help “solve, on the basis of justice and righteousness, the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.”<sup>72</sup> This social justice motif—the Jewish equivalent of the Protestant Social Gospel—became ever more influential within Reform circles over the ensuing decades, and provided an alternative road back to Judaism for those whose interests focused less on faith than on religiously-inspired work.<sup>73</sup>

## A Paradigm Shift

The late nineteenth-century American Jewish awakening outlined here was thus a broad-based and multi-faceted movement of religious renewal, parallel to the awakening taking place at the same time within American Protestantism. Of course, many Jews remained unaffected by it—such is always the case with movements of religious revitalization. Those who did fall under its spell, however, included traditionalists and reformers, women as well as men, and Jews living in all regions of the country. There was no clear focus to this movement, no central leader, and no listing of agreed-upon principles. What did unite the various participants was a shared sense of cultural crisis and personal stress, a palpable loss of faith in the norms, institutions, authorities, and goals of an earlier era, and an optimistic belief, particularly on the part of young people, that through their personal efforts American Judaism as a whole could be saved.

As a consequence of the awakening, a massive long-term paradigm shift took place within the American Jewish community: a shift over time toward greater particularism as opposed to the earlier universalism; toward a heightened sense of Jewish peoplehood as opposed to the former stress on Judaism as a faith; toward a new



emphasis on rationalism; and toward the goal of a Jewish homeland as opposed to the diaspora-glorifying ideology of mission that was formerly predominant.

The transformation of women's roles, the revival of Chanukah and other Jewish ceremonies, the shift back to traditional Jewish terminology, the new emphasis on Jewish education and culture, the rise of the Conservative movement, the Zionist movement, the Social Justice movement, and, of course, many individual 'conversions' of assimilated Jews back to their faith: All testify to the magnitude of the transformation that ultimately took place.

Meanwhile, massive East European Jewish immigration heightened the sense of urgency that underlay the work of revival and resulted in parallel efforts to revitalize the Judaism of the ghetto.<sup>74</sup> The result, only discernible in retrospect, was a new American Judaism—the Judaism of the twentieth century.

## Reinventing American Judaism: *Four Lessons from History*

What are the implications of these developments for our own day? We face a crisis in many ways parallel to that experienced a century ago. Our community, too, has been rocked by a series of unexpected developments that have shaken it to its core. In our day, too, some of the most basic assumptions of American Jewish life have been called into question. As we once again struggle with the complex issues subsumed under the rubric of "Jewish continuity," there is much, I think, that we can learn from our late nineteenth-century forebears, particularly the following four lessons:

1. **Continuity may depend upon discontinuity.** Some of late nineteenth-century Jews' most successful and creative innovations,

notably their emphasis on religious particularism and on Zionism, turned past wisdom on its head. New historical conditions created new movements, new emphases, and new paradigms—the very opposite of the tried and true. Today, we, too, must be willing to challenge some of our most basic assumptions. Even as we support, and we must support, the so-called “continuity agenda,” it bears remembering that discontinuities—at least of the right sort—may have a greater impact still.

**2. We cannot place our trust in magic formulas.** Many of those engaged in the effort to preserve and revitalize American Jewish life in the nineteenth century did believe that they held the magic formula for success—spiritual renewal, Jewish education, Zionism, unleashing the potential of Jewish women, and so forth. In fact, as we have seen, not one of these panaceas by itself lived up to its advanced billing; all of them fell short. Together, however, these efforts succeeded wondrously, and in ways that nobody could have predicted in advance. The lesson, then, is to resist placing all of our eggs in one continuity basket.

**3. The most creative ideas for revitalizing Jewish life often flow from the bottom up, rather than from the top down, and from outsiders rather than insiders.** The young (like the *American Hebrew* crowd), the alienated (like Emma Lazarus), and those on the periphery of Jewish life (like Louis Brandeis), precisely because they are not wedded too the community’s central assumptions, are the most likely to come up with innovative approaches and creative ideas. That does not mean that all of their ideas are worthwhile, but it is worth recalling how many of the central developments in American Jewish life, even in our own day, have come from these “non-establishment” sources. We dare not close our ears too them.

**4. Finally: The American Jewish community benefits from challenges and often emerges from them stronger than before.<sup>75</sup>**

Over and over again, the community has confounded those who predicted gloom and doom, and has experienced surprising bursts of new life. There is no guarantee that this will happen again: The New World, after all, contains a number of examples of Jewish communities, like the Jewish community of Jamaica, that assimilated beyond the point of recovery. But if history offers us no guarantee of success, it does at least provide us with a warrant for hope. Late nineteenth-century American Jews, as we have seen, successfully reinvented American Judaism. Let their example instruct us and inspire us.

## Notes

An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the Conference on New Directions in American Religious History, held at Brown University, March 18-19, 1994 (sponsored by the Departments of Religious Studies, History and American Civilization; the Programs in Afro-American Studies and Judaic Studies; and the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America; and with the support of the Francis Wayland Collegium for Liberal Learning, the University Lectureships Committee, and the President of the University).

I am grateful to Professors Walter H. Conset, Jr., and Sumner B. Twiss for permitting me to pre-print this lecture. A different version will appear in Walter H. Conset, Jr., and Sumner B. Twiss, (eds.), *Religious Diversity and American Religious History: Case Studies in Traditions and Cultures* (University of Georgia Press, forthcoming). I am greatly indebted to Profs. Ewa Morawska, Lance Sussman, and Ellen Umansky, and to Nessa Rapoport, for their helpful and detailed comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

1. Gerson D. Cohen, "Translating Jewish History into Curriculum: From Scholarship to Paideia—A Case Study," in Seymour Fox and Geraldine Rosenfield (eds.), *From the Scholar to the Classroom: Translating Jewish Tradition into Curriculum* (New York: Melton Research Center for Jewish Education, 1977), pp. 37-38.

2. Leon Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820-1870* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1976), p. 193.

3. *American Hebrew* 88 (April 7, 1911), p. 667; on Schindler, see Arthur Mann (ed.), *Growth and Achievement: Temple Israel 1854-1954* (Boston: Congregation Adath Israel, 1954), pp. 45-62; Arthur Mann, *Yankee Reformers in the Urban Age: Social Reform in Boston 1880-1900* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1954), pp. 52-72.

4. Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 53, 60 (quoted); Henry Feingold, *Zion in America* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1974), p. 112.

5. *The Jewish Advance* 79 (December 12, 1879), p. 4.

6. Max Cohen to Solomon Solis-Cohen (November 10, 1879), Solomon Solis-Cohen Papers, Collection of Helen Solis-Cohen Sax and Hays Solis-Cohen, Jr., National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia, PA. I am grateful to Helen Solis-Cohen Sax, Solomon Solis-Cohen's granddaughter, for granting me access to these papers. See also Philip Cowen, *Memories of an American Jew* (New York: The International Press, 1932), p. 50.

7. See Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Making of an American Jewish Culture," in Murray Friedman (ed.), *When Philadelphia Was the Capital of Jewish America* (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1993), pp. 148-150.

8. Benjamin Rabinowitz, *The Young Men's Hebrew Associations* (1854-1913) (New York: National Jewish Welfare Board, 1948) [largely reprinted from *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 37 (1947)]; Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), pp. 15-16.

9. Sarna, *JPS*, pp. 13-27; Nathan M. Kaganoff, "AJHS at 90: Reflections on the History of the Oldest Ethnic Historical Society in America," *American Jewish History* 71 (June 1982), pp. 466-485; Mitchell E. Panzer, "Gratz College: A Community's Involvement in Jewish Education," *Gratz College Anniversary Volume*, Isidore D. Passow and Samuel T. Lachs (eds.), (Philadelphia: Gratz College, 1971), pp. 1-9; Peggy K. Pearlstein, "Understanding Through Education: One Hundred Years of the Jewish Chautauqua Society 1893-1993" (Ph.d., George Washington University, 1993), pp. 1-68; Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), pp. 9-85; Shuly Rubin Schwartz, *The Emergence of Jewish Scholarship in America: the Publication of the Jewish Encyclopedia* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1991), pp. 1-36.

10. [London] *Jewish Chronicle* (March 11, 1887), p. 13; *American Hebrew* 56 (1894), pp. 22, 181; *American Jewish Year Book* 3 (1901-2), p. 216; 6 (1904-50), p. 388; see also "What Renaissance Means," *Maccabean* 4 (May 1903), p. 288.

11. Evyatar Friesel comes closest to the mark in his "The Age of Optimism in American Judaism, 1900-1920," *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus*, Bertram W. Korn (ed.), (New York: Ktav, 1976),

pp. 131-155, but he sees the idea of “optimism” as the motivating force behind developments in this period, while to my mind this optimism is not a cause but a result.

12. For a review of recent research, see Steven M. Cohen, *American Assimilation or Jewish Revival* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 43-57. Cohen properly observes (p. 43) that “generational change has long occupied a central place in research on Jewish identification in the United States.” I have critiqued “generational determinism” in American Jewish historical writing elsewhere; see *Modern Judaism* 10 (October 1990), p. 353, and *Judaism* 34 (Spring 1985), pp. 246-247.

13. Glazer, writing in 1957, titled his final chapter in *American Judaism*, covering the period 1945-1956, “The Jewish Revival.” For more recent developments, see, for example, M. Herbert Danzger, *Returning to Tradition: The Contemporary Revival of Orthodox Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

14. Compare William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform* (University of Chicago, 1978), p. 2: “Until the present generation...periods of cultural readjustment have been associated almost wholly with the Protestant churches.”

15. William G. McLoughlin, “Timepieces and Butterflies: A Note on the Great-Awakening-Construct and its Critics,” *Sociological Analysis* 44 (1983), p. 108; the entire “Symposium on Religious Awakenings,” with articles by R. C. Gordon-McCutchan, Timothy Smith, William McLoughlin, John Hammond, and John Wilson may be found in *Sociological Analysis* 44 (1983), pp. 81-122. See also the follow-up by Michael Birchen, “The Awakening-Cycle Controversy,” *Sociological Analysis* 46 (1985), pp. 425-443. The essays that sparked this controversy include William G. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*; and Jon Butler, “Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretive Fiction,” *Journal of American History* 69 (1982), pp. 305-325. For a parallel analysis to McLoughlin’s that I have found helpful, see Vytautas Kavolis, *History on Art’s Side: Social Dynamics in Artistic Efflorescences* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972).

16. McLoughlin, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, p. xiii.

17. Isidor Kalisch, “Ancient and Modern Judaism,” *Studies in Ancient and Modern Judaism*, Samuel Kalisch (ed.), (New York: George Dobsevege, 1928), p. 61. For a statistical picture of Jews in this period, see *Statistics*

of the Jews of the United States (Philadelphia: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1880). See also Benny Kraut, "Judaism Triumphant: Isaac mayer Wise on Unitarianism and Liberal Christianity," *AJS Review* 7-8 (1982-83), pp. 179-230.

18. Naomi W. Cohen, "American Jewish Reactions to Anti-Semitism in Western Europe, 1875-1900," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 45 (1978), pp. 29-65 (quote is from p. 31); Michael A. Meyer, "German-Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model*, Jacob Katz (ed.), (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1987), pp. 247-267; *idem*, "The Great Debate on Antisemitism: Jewish Reactions to New Hostility in Germany, 1879-1881," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 11 (1966), pp. 137-170; Hans L. Trefousse, "The German-American Immigrants and the Newly Founded Reich," in *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History*, Frank Tommler and Joseph McVeigh (eds.), (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), pp. 160-175.

19. Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 39-41; Stephen Birmingham, *Our Crowd* (New York: Dell, 1967), pp. 167-180; *Coney Island and the Jews* (New York: G. W. Carleton & Co., 1879).

20. Hermann Baar, *Addresses on Homely and Religious Subjects Delivered Before the Children of the Hebrew Orphan Asylum* (New York: H. O. A. Industrial School, 1880), p. 238.

21. *American Hebrew* 62 (December 10, 1987), p. 163. For developments in this period, see Naomi W. Cohen, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age: the Jewish View," *Jewish Social Studies* 41 (1979), pp. 187-210; and John Higham, *Send These To Me* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), pp. 116-195.

22. Paul A. Carter, *The Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (Dekalb, IL: University of Illinois, 1971); Naomi W. Cohen, "The Challenges of Darwinism and Biblical Criticism to American Judaism," *Modern Judaism* 4 (May 1984), pp. 121-157; Kraut, "Judaism Triumphant," pp. 202-225; *idem*, "The Ambivalent Relations of American Reform Judaism with Unitarianism in the Last Third of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 23 (Winter 1986), pp. 58-68.

23. David Stern to Bernhard Felsenthal (April 24, 1884), Felsenthal Papers, AJHS.

24. *American Israelite* (May 1881) as quoted in Dena Wilansky, *Sinai to Cincinnati* (New York: Renaissance Book Company, 1937), p. 101. Although not noticed by recent biographers, a contemporary, Henry Illiowizi, believed that a “remarkable change” came over Wise in the 1880s; he became more conservative. See Henry Illiowizi, *Through Morocco to Minnesota: Sketches of Life in Three Continents* (n.p., 1888), p. 87.

25. The leadership role played by Philadelphia Jews during this critical period in American Jewish history was first pointed to my Maxwell Whiteman, “The Philadelphia Group,” in *Jewish Life in Philadelphia 1830-1940*, Murray Friedman (ed.), (Philadelphia: ISHI Publications, 1983), pp. 163-178, and is further analyzed in Friedman (ed.), *When Philadelphia Was the Capital of Jewish America*.

26. David G. Dalin, “The Patriarch: The Life and Legacy of Mayer Sulzberger,” in *When Philadelphia Was the Capital of Jewish America*, Friedman (ed.), pp. 58-74; Philip Rosen, “Dr. Solomon Solis-Cohen and the Philadelphia Group,” in *ibid*, pp. 106-125; Jonathan D. Sarna, “The Making of an American Jewish Culture,” *ibid*, pp. 145-155; Jonathan D. Sarna, “Is Judaism Compatible with American Civil Religion? The Problem of Christmas and the ‘National Faith,’” in *Religion and the Life of the Nation: American Recoveries*, Rowland A. Sherrill (ed.), (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 162-163; Sarna, *JPS*, pp. 14-15. The quote is in a letter from Max Cohen to Solomon Solis-Cohen (December 22, 1879), Solomon Solis-Cohen Papers.

27. Max Cohen to Solomon Solis-Cohen (October 14, 1879); Max Cohen to Solomon Solis-Cohen (November 10, 1879), Solomon Solis-Cohen Papers.

28. Cyrus L. Sulzberger to Solomon Solis-Cohen (October 5, 1880), Solomon Solis-Cohen Papers. The letter is signed with Cyrus’s Hebrew name, “Yitzhak Aryeh.”

29. *American Hebrew*, November 21, 1879, p. 3, reprinted in Philip Cowen, *Memories of an American Jew*, p. 55; see also p. 49, and Max Cohen to Solomon Solis-Cohen (November 10, 1879), Solomon Solis-Cohen Papers.

30. Cowen, *Memories of an American Jew*, pp. 40-111, esp. p. 42, 50; Charles Wyszowski, *A Community in Conflict: American Jewry During the Great European Immigration* (New York: University Press of America, 1991), pp. xiii-xvii.



31. *American Hebrew*, November 21, 1879, p. 4, as quoted in Wyszowski, *A Community in Conflict*, p. 101; Max Cohen, "Some Memories of Alexander Kohut," in Alexander Kohut, *The Ethics of the Fathers* (New York: privately printed, 1920), p. xcvi.

32. For a somewhat different analysis of the relationship between the "Historical School" and Conservative Judaism, see Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism: The Historical School in 19th Century America* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1965), pp. 169-170.

33. Donald G. Mathews, "The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process," *American Quarterly* 21 (1969), pp. 23-43. Some measure of the organizational revolution within the American Jewish community of that time may be discerned from the fact that 13 of the 19 national Jewish organizations listed in the first volume of the *American Jewish Year Book* (1899) had been founded after 1879.

34. Naomi W. Cohen, "Introduction," in Ira Robinson (ed.), *Cyrus Adler: Selected Letters* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1985), I, p. xxx.

35. Cf. Sarna, *JPS*, pp. 13-20, and Sarna, "The Making of an American Jewish Culture," pp. 149-50, where portions of this argument first appeared.

36. On this point, see Sarna, "The Making of an American Jewish Culture," p. 151.

37. Dianne Ashton, "Rebecca Gratz and the Domestication of American Judaism" (Ph.D., Temple University, 1986); Evelyn Bodek, "Making Do': Jewish Women and Philanthropy," in Friedman, *Jewish Life in Philadelphia*, pp. 143-162.

38. Panzer, "Gratz College" (cited *supra*, n. 9), pp. 1-6. According to Panzer's footnote, three of the college's first four graduates were women (p. 6, n. 12).

39. Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Debate Over Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue," in *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed*, Jack Wertheimer (ed.), New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 366-379.

40. John Higham, "The Transformation of the Statue of Liberty; *Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp. 71-80.

41. A large literature seeks to explain Lazarus's "conversion"; for an analysis of this literature see Joe Rooks Rapport, "The Lazarus Sisters: A Family Portrait" (Ph.D., Washington University, 1988), pp. 12-108. Quotes are from the centennial edition of Emma Lazarus, *An Epistle to the Hebrews*, with an introduction and notes by Morris U. Schappes (New York: Jewish Historical Society of New York, 1987), pp. 64, 73.

42. Emma Lazarus, *Selections from her Poetry and Prose*, Morris U. Schappes (ed.), (New York: Emma Lazarus Federation of Jewish Women's Clubs, 1978), pp. 35-37.

43. Lazarus, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 8.

44. Lazarus, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, pp. 34-35, 80; Arthur Zieger, "Emma Lazarus and Pre-Herzlian Zionism," in I. S. Meyer (ed.), *Early History of Zionism in America* (New York: American Jewish Historical Society, 1958), pp. 77-108. Emma's older sister, Josephine Lazarus (1846-1910), also came to adopt Zionism as her religion, although she sought a universal religion and dabbled with Unitarianism as well. Her *The Spirit of Judaism* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1895) documents in part American Judaism's spiritual crisis. For her Zionism, see Josephine Lazarus, "Zionism," *American Hebrew* 62 (December 10, 1897), pp. 159-162 [and revised in *New World* 8 (June 1899), pp. 228-242]; and her "Zionism and American Ideals," *Maccabean* 8 (May 1905), pp. 198-204. No full-length study of Josephine Lazarus exists, but useful information can be found in Rapport, "The Lazarus Sisters," pp. 109-154.

45. Cowen, *Memories of an American Jew*, p. 344.

46. Ray Frank's year of birth is a matter of dispute. I follow Reva Clar and William M. Kramer, "The Girl Rabbi of the Golden West," *Western States Jewish History* 18 (January 1986), p. 99, who base themselves on the 1870 United States census records. The standard date, supplied by her husband (who expressed some uncertainty about it) is 1864 or 1865; see Simon Litman, *Ray Frank Litman: A Memoir* (New York: American Jewish Historical Society, 1957), p. 4. Rogow in *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, p. 228, cites unnamed records dating her birth to April 10, 1866. Might she have sought to conceal her date of birth when

she married her much younger husband, Simon Litman, who was born in 1873?

47. *Jewish Messenger*, May 23, 1890. Reprinted in Jacob R. Marcus, *The American Jewish Woman: A Documentary History* (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1981), p. 380; see also Litman, *Ray Frank Litman: A Memoir*, pp. 12-13. A month later, she replied to a question from *The Jewish Times and Observer* on “What would you do if you were a *rebbitzin* [rabbi’s wife]?” Her reply is reprinted in Litman, p. 14.

48. Excerpts from her Yom Kippur sermon (1890), where this quote appears, may be found reprinted in Ellen M. Umansky and Dianne Ashton, *Four Centuries of Jewish Women’s Spirituality: A Sourcebook* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), pp. 128-129.

49. Litman, *Ray Frank Litman*, pp. 8-9; see also Clar and Kramer, “The Girl Rabbi of the Golden West,” pp. 104-5, 108.

50. Litman, *Ray Frank Litman*, p. 68.

51. Quoted in Litman, p. 15.

52. *Ibid*, pp. 43-45.

53. *Ibid*, pp. 55-57.

54. *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 18, 1895, quoted in *ibid*, p. 50.

55. *Papers of the Jewish Women’s Congress* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1894), p. 8, cf. pp. 52-65; *Reform Advocate*, August 7, 1897, p. 412, as cited in Clar and Kramer, “The Girl Rabbi of the Golden West,” p. 231.

56. For her subsequent career and her contributions to the founding of Hillel, see *ibid*, p. 143-202; and Winton U. Solberg, “The Early Years of the Jewish Presence at the University of Illinois,” *Religion and American Culture 2* (Summer 1992), pp. 215-245.

57. Clar and Kramer, “The Girl Rabbi of the Golden West,” pp. 345-351, discount Frank’s religious motivations and credit her success to her agent, Samuel H. Friedlander, whom they believe both managed her affairs and kept her name before the press. It would seem more likely that Frank hired Friedlander as a consequence of her success. Only *after* she

demonstrated that she had something to promote did it make sense for her to have a promoter. Even Clar and Kramer agree that she was a woman of “multiple and formidable talents.”

58. Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993*, pp. 43-78; Karla Goldman, “The Ambivalence of Reform Judaism: Kaufman Kohler and the Ideal Jewish Woman,” *American Jewish History* 79 (Summer 1990), pp. 477-499.

59. Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting*, p. 23. Note that immigrant aid, later so important a part of the Council’s work, went unmentioned in this resolution.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 53, 76.

61. No full-scale history of synagogue sisterhoods has yet appeared. I base this sketch on Jenna Weissman Joselit, “The Special Sphere of the Middle-Class American Jewish Woman: The Synagogue Sisterhood, 1890-1940,” in Jack Wertheimer (ed.), *The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed* (New York: Cambridge 1987), esp. pp. 208-210; Richard Gottheil, *The Life of Gustav Gottheil* (Williamsport, PA: Bayard Press, 1936), pp. 179-181; Hannah B. Einstein, “Sisterhoods of Personal Service,” *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1906) vol. 11, p. 398; and David De Sola Pool, *An Old Faith in the New World* (New York: Columbia University, 1955), pp. 369-70. In response to the demand for professional social workers, sisterhoods later transformed their activities and forgot their origins, as Gottheil and Joselit indicate. For the development of the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (1913), see Michael A. Meyers, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford Press, 1988), pp. 285-86.

62. The most recent full-length biography is Joan Dash, *Summoned to Jerusalem: The Life of Henrietta Szold* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979); for Szold’s early life and work, see Alexandra Lee Levin, *The Szolds of Lombard Street* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1960); and Sarna, *JPS*, pp. 23-135.

63. *American Jewish Year Book* 16 (1914-15), p. 284.

64. William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 111; cf. Patricia Hill, *The World Their Household* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984).

65. Carol B. Kutscher, "Hadassah," in Michael N. Dobkowski (ed.), *Jewish American Voluntary Organizations* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 151-152; *idem*, "The Early Years of Hadassah, 1912-1922" (Ph.D., Brandeis University, 1976); Henrietta Szold to Alice L. Seligsberg (October 10, 1913) in Marvin Lowenthal, *Henrietta Szold: Life and Letters* (New York: Viking Press, 1942), p. 82.

66. On the anti-Reform animus of Mayer Sulzberger, Cyrus Adler, Moses Dropsie, and other Philadelphia Jewish leaders caught up in the spirit of religious renewal, see Sarna, "The Making of an American Jewish Culture," pp. 150-151.

67. "Authentic Report of the Proceedings of the Rabbinical Conference Held at Pittsburgh, Nov. 16, 17, 18, 1885," reprinted in Walter Jacob (ed.), *The Changing World of Reform Judaism: The Pittsburgh Platform in Retrospect* (Pittsburgh: Rodef Shalom Congregation, 1985), pp. 92-93; Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 264-270; Jonathan D. Sarna, "New Light on the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885," *American Jewish History* 76 (March 1987), pp. 358-368.

68. Sarna, "New Light on the Pittsburgh Platform," p. 364; cf. Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, pp. 222-228.

69. "Authentic Report," pp. 92-102, 109. The Platform is conveniently reprinted in Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 387-388.

70. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 264-295, covers this period; for the movement away from 'Hebrew' and 'Israelite,' see *inter alia*, Kaufmann Kohler, "Arise and give Light, or Judaism and the Jewish Pulpit," *The American Jewish Pulpit: A Collection of Sermons* (Cincinnati: Bloch, 1881), p. 9; the diary of David Philipson, September 11, 1890, in Box 3, David Philipson Papers, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH; and Benjamin Rabinowitz, "The Young Men's Hebrew Association (1854-1913)," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 37 (1947), pp. 302, 307. How Judaism in this period gradually ceased to be described in Christian terms and began to be described in its own terms requires a separate treatment.

71. Professor Ellen Umansky properly observes that by this time "many middle- and upper-middle-class Jewish women had already come to identify social service as a spiritual path and didn't need the Reform movement" for this purpose. Instead, she suggests, what Reform Judaism may have done for many Jewish women is to validate as religious "activities in which they were

already engaged.” (Letter to the author, May 18, 1994; see also Umansky and Ashton, *Four Centuries of Jewish Women’s Spirituality*, pp. 15-17.)

72. “Authentic Report,” pp. 102, 109, 119-120.

73. On various aspects of the Social Justice movement and its relationship to the Social Gospel, see Egal Feldman, “The Social Gospel and the Jews,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 8 (March 1969), pp. 308-322; Leonard J. Mervis, “The Social Justice Movement and the American Reform Rabbi,” *American Jewish Archives* 7 (1955), pp. 171-230; Bernard Martin, “The Social Philosophy of Emil G. Hirsch,” *American Jewish Archives* 6 (June 1954), pp. 151-166; John F. Sutherland, “Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf of Philadelphia: The Urban Reformer Returns to the Land,” *American Jewish History* 67 (June 1978), pp. 342-362; and Jonathan D. Sarna, “Seating and the American Synagogue,” in Philip R. Vandermeer and Robert P. Sweierenga (eds.), *Belief and Behavior: Essays in the New Religious History* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991), esp. pp. 195-202.

74. See, for example, Jeffrey Gurock’s account of the Jewish Endeavor Society in Dobkowski, *Jewish-American Voluntary Organizations*, pp. 228-231.

75. See Jonathan D. Sarna, “The Impact of Nineteenth-Century Christian Missions on American Jews,” in Todd M. Endelman (ed.), *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1987), pp. 232-254.

## About The Author

Jonathan D. Sarna is the Joseph H. & Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University. His many publications include *Jacksonian Jew: The Two Worlds of Mordecai Noah* (1981); *People Walk on Their Heads: Moses Weinberger's Jews and Judaism in New York* (1982); *The American Jewish Experience* (1986); *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture* (1989); *The Jews of Boston*, with Ellen Smith (1995). In addition, his articles and reviews have appeared in numerous scholarly and popular journals. With David G. Dalin, he is finishing a volume entitled *Religion and State in American Jewish History*; and he is currently working on a new history of American Judaism.

