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Max Lilienthal: Rabbi, Educator, and Reformer in Nineteenth-Century America

by

Bruce L. Ruben

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1997

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Abstract

MAX LILIENTHAL: RABBI, EDUCATOR AND REFORMER
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

by

Bruce Ruben

Adviser: Professor Robert Seltzer

This dissertation traces the life and career of the prominent nineteenth-century rabbi Max Lilienthal (1814-1882), a founder of American Reform Judaism who also made important contributions to the professionalization of the American rabbinate. Born in Munich, Lilienthal received a traditional yeshivah education followed by secular degrees from the gymnasium and University of Munich. He emerged as one of a new breed of rabbi who reshaped and broadened the profession in Western Europe and the United States. Invited to Riga to create a modern Jewish school, Lilienthal was enlisted by the Russian government in the national effort to reform Jewish schools there. In 1845 he joined the growing German-Jewish immigration to the United States.

Lilienthal established himself in New York City as the rabbi of three German synagogues, serving from 1846 to 1848. Subsequently he formed a successful private boarding school which allowed him to develop his increasingly liberal religious ideology. Engaged by Congregation Bene Israel, Cincinnati in 1855, he gradually moved the congregation into the Reform camp, while he simultaneously expanded his rabbinical role in unprecedented directions, as the first rabbi to preach in a Christian church, a member of the local school board, a founder of the University of Cincinnati, and a leader in city-wide charitable work. An outspoken advocate of the separation of church and state, he also articulated a Jewish version of an American civil religion, which helped his immigrant congregants integrate Jewish and American values.

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Lilienthal was a central figure in the conferences leading up to the creation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Hebrew Union College, and the Rabbinical Literary Association, precursor of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. He consistently strove for harmony among an increasingly polarized American Jewish leadership.

Broader historiographical concerns relate his career to the debate over the relative importance of German and American factors behind the success of American Reform, the lay-rabbinic power struggle, and a comparison of German Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish immigrant adjustment to an increasingly liberal American religious environment. The dissertation also traces Lilienthal's complex relationship with Isaac M. Wise, the dominant American Jewish leader of the period.

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My introduction to Jewish history was at Indiana University, where I wrote a Masters thesis with Professor Henry Fischel. A patient and enthusiastic adviser, he generously shared his vast knowledge of Greco-Roman and Jewish history and literature with me. My interest in the field was reawakened by Professor Robert Seltzer who guided me to the C.U.N.Y. Graduate Center, when, early in my cantorial career, I searched for a way to continue my academic training as a complement to my duties at Temple Shaaray Tefila in New York City. There, I have been fortunate to work with Rabbi Harvey M. Tattelbaum, who supported my efforts, allowing me to be flexible in my teaching hours to take advantage of the Graduate Center's course offerings. Stimulated and challenged by wonderful professors, particularly in the beginning by Gertrude Himmelfarb, but also by Philip Dawson, Abraham Ascher, Eiizabeth Brown and Stuart Prall, I elected to major in Jewish history after a fascinating course with Dr. David Berger. Subsequent courses with Dr. Berger, Drs. Robert Seltzer and Naomi Cohen confirmed my choice.

It was Professor Cohen who led me to consider Lilienthal as a topic for a dissertation. An important figure, long neglected in the historiography, he had careers on two continents that combined my interests in European and American Jewish history. Professor Cohen initially guided me, but after she moved to Israel I was fortunate that Professor Seltzer agreed to continue directing the dissertation. I have greatly benefited from his suggestions, criticisms, and the high standards that he demanded, as well as from his unflagging support. In addition, I appreciate the constructive comments of my second reader, Professor Mel Scult.

A number of other people and institutions have been very helpful. I especially thank Dr. Philip Miller and the staff of the Hebrew Union College Klau Library in New York City for making their collection available to me. Dr. Abraham Peck and Kevin Proffitt of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati were also of great assistance. I am

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Many other individuals generously helped me along the way. Dr. Karla Goldman shared her unpublished history of Congregation Bene Israel with me. Rabbi Alan Silverstein read and offered valuable comments concerning Chapter Six. Dr. David Laibman, Edith Miller, Joanne Jahr, Vera Jiji and Susan Morse proofread large portions of the document. Leslie Curtis offered immense support in addition to proofreading various drafts numerous times. Among other friends who helped sustain my progress were Rosalee Bachana, David Yerushalmi, Marilyn Sladowski, and Gene Guberman. Finally, without the encouragement and backing of my parents, my son Ari, and especially my wife Judith, this dissertation would never have been written. This work is dedicated to Ari and Judith.

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Introduction

This dissertation will examine the career of Max Lilienthal, a major rabbinic leader of nineteenth-century American Jewry, focusing on his role in the development of American Reform Judaism and in the emergence of a new professional rabbinate. Lilienthal himself was an important exemplar of the new American rabbi. His early training in *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and his efforts to modernize the educational system of the Russian Jews provided him models with which to approach the shaping of American Judaism. Combined with these European influences was the profound effect America had upon him and on his generation of Jewish immigrants. One of the earliest ordained rabbis in the United States, he became a pioneer in Jewish education, a leader in interfaith dialogue, and co-creator of the first successful national Jewish social and religious institutions. Embracing the opportunities and challenges of creating a Judaism consonant with freedom, voluntarism, and congregational autonomy, Lilienthal gradually evolved from a moderate to a Reformer.[1] And he helped lead an important segment of American Jewry through that same transition.

Stages of Lilienthal's Career

Born in Munich in 1814,[2] Lilienthal was a descendant of Court Jews whose wealth and influence allowed the family to take advantage of liberalizing developments in early nineteenth-century Bavarian society. An Enlightenment ideal, *Bildung* (self-development)

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[1]There is ambiguity inherent in these terms during the period that the dissertation covers since there was not a Reform movement in a formal sense until its institutionalization late in the nineteenth century. The same is true of Orthodox and Conservative forms of Judaism. The terms "Reform" and "Reformer" will be capitalized when referring to the self-identifying group of leaders sharing a general approach to the modernization of Judaism from at least the German conferences of the 1840s. Similarly, "Orthodox" leaders will be distinguished from "traditionalists" by their self-conscious opposition to Reform efforts. See Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. viii, ix.

[2]There is some question as to the exact year of his birth. See Morton J. Merowitz, "A Note on the Dating of Dr. Max Lilienthal's Birth," *American Jewish Archives* 26 (April 1974):78f.

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encouraged the belief that anyone, regardless of birth or religion, could perfect himself and advance in life through education. Urbanized and acculturated well before the majority of German Jews, the Lilienthals, though religiously observant, grasped the importance of secular education. Lilienthal studied at a yeshivah, had a thorough classical training in the gymnasium and became one of the first rabbinical candidates to earn a Ph.D. at the University of Munich, where he became imbued with the discipline and values of *Wissenschaft*, the historical- philological study of texts.[3]

After receiving his doctorate in 1837, Lilienthal was offered a diplomatic career as a result of his brilliant showing in the university examinations. Finding that in order to accept the position he would have to convert to Catholicism, he rejected the opportunity.[4] Returning to his goal of becoming a rabbi, he was judged too modern by the conservative standards of Bavaria in the late 1830s. Unable to find a pulpit, he became an independent scholar, studying the Hebrew manuscripts in the Royal Library of Munich. Reporting his findings in a series of bibliographical notices to the *Allgemeine Zeitung Des Judenthums*, the twenty-four-year-old Lilienthal attracted the attention of its editor, Ludwig Philippson.[5]

At Philippson's recommendation, the Jewish community of Riga, which had been under Russian rule since 1721, hired Lilienthal in 1839 to create a modern school similar to those established in Germany since the 1810s. Because of his success in Riga, in 1841, the Minister of National Enlightenment, S.S. Uvarov, summoned Lilienthal to lead the

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[3]Lilienthal was one of the first sixty in all of Germany and one of two or three in Munich before 1840. For a list of rabbis with doctorates see Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1994), pp. 39f. He received ordination from the chief rabbi of Munich, Hirsch Aub, after writing a dissertation on Jewish-Hellenistic religious philosophy.

[4]David Philipson, *Max Lilienthal: American Rabbi* (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1915), p. 8.

[5]*Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, (May 19, 1838-November 16, 1839), Literary Supplement.

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efforts to modernize Jewish education throughout Russia.[6] For several years, he traveled throughout the Jewish communities of Russia, trying to balance the demands of Jewish traditionalists on the one hand and the maskilim on the other. The Tsarist government, while claiming it wanted to enlighten and improve the Jews, made his job even more difficult when it issued a notorious edict of April 1843, expelling the Jews living close to the Prussian and Austrian borders. Lilienthal left Russia in July 1845, never to return. Though his efforts to establish modern Russian-Jewish schools and curricula were only partially successful, the experience made him famous while still a young man.

With no job prospects in Munich, Lilienthal became one of the first ordained rabbis to immigrate to the United States. He quickly became a leader of the New York Jewish community, serving a union of three German-Jewish synagogues: Anshe Chesed, Shaarey Hashamayim, and Rodeph Shalom. During his brief tenure as their joint rabbi from January 1846 to February 1848, he introduced moderate reforms, including confirmation,[7] more decorum at services, and German-language sermons. Lilienthal also strove to bring order and professionalism to the chaotic New York Jewish scene in the supervision of *kashrut,* weddings, divorces, and funerals. He set up a day school for the children of the three synagogues, which quickly became acknowledged as the finest in the city.[8] Among his other early efforts was the establishment of the first rabbinical court (*Beth Din*) in this country. After a power struggle with the board of Anshe Chesed, the largest member of the union, he resigned from his rabbinic position. In the following eight years Lilienthal ran a highly respected private Jewish boarding school in New York City, where he

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[6]Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983), p. 59.

[7]Confirmation is a course of study and ceremony devised by German Reformers in the early 1800s to teach the basic principles of Judaism to students after their b'nai mitzvah. Unlike bar mitzvah, it was also offered to girls.

[8]Hyman Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654-1860* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1945), p. 233.

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instituted pedagogical innovations stemming from his German Haskalah background.[9] During this period, Lilienthal helped organize a Jewish association, the Friends of Light (*Lichtfreunde*), where he revealed his evolving moderate Reform views. Lilienthal was also involved in an abortive effort by leaders of the Jewish community to create unity among the growing diversity of synagogues. By 1851, he reconciled with Congregation Anshe Chesed and the other German congregations, serving as their honorary rabbi until 1855.

Though he published many articles throughout his career in New York, both in American and European Jewish periodicals, none was as important as his series of contributions to the *Asmonean*, a New York-based weekly. When Lilienthal became an editor in 1854, he showed his deep commitment to critical and Jewish historical scholarship and used its methodology to justify Reform positions on key issues of the day.[10]

In July 1855, because of his growing religious liberalism and his excellent reputation as an educator, Congregation Bene Israel in Cincinnati invited Lilienthal to be its rabbi and director of the congregation's school. It was in Cincinnati that Lilienthal spent the rest of his life, gradually moving his congregation in a Reform direction and serving as its representative in the broader community. He was active on the Cincinnati public school board, and helped to found the University of Cincinnati, on whose board of trustees he served for many years. He strove to foster better understanding between Christians and Jews and was, apparently, the very first American rabbi to preach in a Christian church. Yet he was also active in the fight to ensure the continued separation of Church and State,

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[9]Merowitz, "Max Lilienthal," p. 53.

[10] For example, in the *Asmonean* 10 (June 1, 1854): 53, Lilienthal discussed the history behind the controversy concerning the obligation to observe two days of Jewish festivals. He favored doing away with the practice, based on an historical analysis of the conditions under which it was created. He also denied that the Talmud had the status of divine revelation, arguing that historical research concerning its authors would remove their "halos." Emphasizing that those authorities were mortal, the way was clear for reforms to answer the "needs of the age."

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especially regarding the debate over the use of the Bible in public schools.

Jewish religious leaders like Lilienthal believed that Reform would counter the apathy, ignorance, and stagnation into which Judaism in America had supposedly sunk. Responding to these concerns, Lilienthal played a central role in the development of the ideology and institutions of the American Reform movement. Working side by side with Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, he helped to organize a series of conferences that attempted to define the ideology of the American Reform. In addition, he wrote numerous articles for the *Israelite,* the Cincinnati-based Jewish periodical that was the polemical organ for the brand of moderate Reform ideology Lilienthal and Wise espoused. Lilienthal also wrote for other Jewish periodicals, often carrying on debates with ideological opponents such as the traditionalist Isaac Leeser on the one hand, and the radical Reformer David Einhorn on the other. Wise's and Lilienthal's efforts bore fruit in 1873 with the founding of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, which, within a few years, grew from 34 to 118 member congregations.[11] This achievement was followed in 1875 by the creation of Hebrew Union College, the first successful Jewish seminary in America, of which Lilienthal was a member of the governing board and a professor of history and homiletics.[12] In his last years he founded and presided over the Rabbinical Literary Association, a precursor of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. This group briefly united rabbis ranging from radical Reformers to moderate traditionalists, who presented papers at meetings of the association and attempted to raise the professional level of the rabbinate in America. In his lifetime he was recognized in both the Jewish and secular communities as one of American Jewry's preeminent spiritual leaders.

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[11]Meyer, *Response to Modernity,* p. 261.

[12]Ibid., pp. 261f.

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Relevant Primary Sources

Among the primary materials surviving from his German years are a doctoral dissertation, letters, articles for the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, sermons given in Munich (1839), and later reminiscences in the *Israelite*. None has been carefully studied by scholars. There are also two family histories that refer to this period.[13]

His years in Russia are the main portion of Lilienthal's life that has been extensively treated. His sermons, letters, and many articles about this period will be reexamined to establish his early religious and educational orientation, as well as the significance of these events in his development.

Much of the primary material from the New York period has not been examined with Lilienthal in mind. Among the important sources for this period are the Board of Trustees Minute Books of Congregation Anshe Chesed and of the union of the three German synagogues. (Minutes from other important synagogues of the city were consulted.) Lilienthal wrote extensively for the *Occident*, the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, the short-lived, liberal periodical *Israels Herold*, and the *Asmonean*. There are also accounts by *Occident* editor Isaac Leeser and other contemporaries in these periodicals, describing Lilienthal's rabbinate and schools.

For the Cincinnati period extensive primary sources have never been studied with regard to Lilienthal including the Minute Books of Congregation Bene Israel, the School Board Minutes, and the minutes for the Vestry, its executive committee. Since Lilienthal was co-editor and a contributor to the *Israelite* and the German language *Die Deborah*, his evolving religious positions can also be traced through his many articles in these Cincinnati-based periodicals. In addition, he created the weekly *Hebrew Sabbath School Visitor*, the first Jewish children's magazine; though written for children, it revealed both

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[13]F. Gordon O'Neill, *Ernest Reuben Lilienthal and His Family* (San Francisco: n.p., 1949); Sophie Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record* (San Francisco: By the Author, 1930).

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his educational philosophy and his attitudes towards broader Jewish issues. As head of the Rabbinical Literary Association, he edited two volumes of the *Hebrew Review*, which contained scholarly articles by his rabbinic colleagues and contributions of his own. While in Cincinnati he collaborated on several books and also wrote and published poetry, including *Freiheit, Frühling und Liebe.*

Previous Studies of Lilienthal

Given his importance in the history of nineteenth-century American Jewry, it may be surprising that there is only one book-length biography of Lilienthal, David Philipson's *Max Lilienthal, American Rabbi.* Written by Lilienthal's student and the successor to his pulpit in Cincinnati, it lacks critical analysis, footnotes, and bibliography. More than half of the volume presents English translations of Lilienthal's writings without any analysis. The treatment of the transitional New York period is especially weak. Philipson also wrote articles including: "Max Lilienthal" for the *Central Conference of American Rabbis Annual,* and "Max Lilienthal, 1815-1882" in *Centenary Papers and Others*, and he discussed Lilienthal in his history of Congregation Bene Israel.[14] Lilienthal's career is briefly covered in a similar uncritical fashion in two family memoirs.[15]

Articles dealing with Lilienthal usually focus on a particular aspect of his career. While no one has studied his German years, several eminent scholars have discussed Lilienthal's attempt to modernize Jewish education in Russia. Among them are Saul Ginsburg in "Max Lilienthal's Activities in Russia: New Documents"; Emanuel Etkes, "Compulsory Enlightenment as a Crossroads in the History of the Haskalah Movement in Russia"; Michael A. Meyer, "The German Model of Religious Reform and Russian

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[14]David Philipson, *The Oldest Jewish Congregation in the West: Bene Israel Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: C.J. Krehbiel, 1924).

[15]O'Neill, *Ernest Reuben Lilienthal and His Family,* and Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record.*

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Jewry"; and Michael Stanislawski, in *Tsar Nicholas and the Jews.* Stanislawski discusses the historiographical debate concerning Lilienthal's role and motives.

With regard to his American career, there are references to Lilienthal in Hyman Grinstein's *Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654-1860.* However, Grinstein's book does not offer any systematic assessment of Lilienthal's German background, career, or religious evolution. In addition, Grinstein published "The Minute Book of Lilienthal's Union of German Synagogues in New York" and mentions Lilienthal in his "Studies in the History of Jewish Education in New York City." Morton Merowitz, in "Max Lilienthal (1814-1882)--Jewish Educator in Nineteenth-Century America," discusses Lilienthal as an educator. An article by Sefton D. Temkin, "Rabbi Max Lilienthal Views American Jewry in 1847," presents a translation and analysis of one of Lilienthal's letters to the *Allgemeine Zeitung.*

Lilienthal is mentioned in biographies of several of his American colleagues. Most significant was his place in the life of Isaac Mayer Wise, documented in James G. Heller's *Isaac M. Wise: His Life, Work and Thought.* Unfortunately, the biography by Sefton D. Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise: Shaping American Judaism,* makes only scant reference to Lilienthal.[16] Recent dissertations treating the Orthodox rabbi Bernard Illowy and the early Philadelphia hazan and editor Isaac Leeser also mention Lilienthal.[17] Finally, Lilienthal's contribution is noted in Michael Meyer's history of the Reform movement and in Naomi W. Cohen's *Encounter with Emancipation.*[18]

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[16]James G. Heller, *Isaac Mayer Wise: His Life, Works and Thought* (New York: UAHC, 1965); and Sefton D. Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise: Shaping American Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

[17]Moshe D. Sherman, "Bernard Illowy and Nineteenth Century American Orthodoxy" (Ph. D. dissertation, Yeshiva University, 1991); Lance J. Sussman, "The Life and Career of Isaac Leeser (1806-1868): A Study of American Judaism in its Formative Period" (Ph.D. dissertation, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, 1987).

[18]Meyer, *Response to Modernity,* p. 238. Naomi W. Cohen *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830-1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984), p. 174.

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In summary, the only book-length treatment of this important figure is Philipson's old and incomplete biography. Except for a few articles directly dealing with Lilienthal as an historical subject, he has received only passing treatment. This dissertation is intended to fill a gap in the history of the development of American Judaism in the nineteenth century by reassessing a figure who, under the shadow of others, deserves a more adequate portrayal.

Historiographical Issues

Another aim of this work is to place Lilienthal's life and work in the context of broader historiographical concerns. There has been lively scholarly debate over the relative importance of German and American influences in the creation of American Reform Judaism. Leon Jick's *Americanization of the Synagogue* disputes the assumption that American Reform was a transplant of German-Jewish patterns, created by westernized immigrants. He argues that American Reform evolved out of a process of Americanization within the immigrant community.[19] Jick holds that the German-Jewish immigrants were still traditional when they arrived and that, in the course of their adjustment to American conditions, they created new religious patterns for which neither German-Jewish precedents nor the leadership of German-born rabbis was determinative.[20]

Naomi W. Cohen's *Encounter with Emancipation* rejects Jick's argument, asserting that Americanization as an independent variable, is not a sufficient explanation for the development of American Reform. (If that were so, the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue in New York, the oldest and also one of the most affluent, would necessarily have been the most Reform.) Without the ideological leadership of rabbis such as

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[19]Leon Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue, 1820-1870*, (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1976), p. X.

[20]Jick is therefore doing more than denying the importance of German patterns on the development of American Reform Judaism. He is also denying that the rabbis or elites had much to do with it. For him, Reform arose from below, from the laity.

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Lilienthal, a form of non-orthodoxy might have emerged, but not America Reform Judaism.[21]

This dissertation will argue that Lilienthal's American career shows an interplay of German and American influences in the development of Reform. In particular, Chapter Four examines the transformation of one congregation, Bene Israel in Cincinnati; Chapter Six discusses the national institutionalization of this change in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College. Lilienthal's evolution from traditionalist to radical Reformer affords the opportunity to examine these broader themes on a more intimate level.

German Factors

Chapter One, dealing with Lilienthal's German background and education, utilizes recent studies of German Jewry in the nineteenth century that have advanced our understanding of the roots of Reform Judaism in Europe.[22] These studies show that an embrace of the modern world by a substantial segment of Western and Central European Jewry in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries led to widespread acculturation and a new German-Jewish subculture expressing the ideals of an expanding middle class.[23]

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[21]Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 164-5. Her position is supported in Meyer's *Response to Modernity*, p. 235.

[22]Relevant works include Meyer, *Response to Modernity*; David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780-1840* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Ismar Schorsch, "Emancipation and the Crisis of Religious Authority: The Emergence of the Modern Rabbinate," in *Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1994), pp. 9-50; Steven M. Lowenstein, "The 1840s and the Creation of the German-Jewish Religious Reform Movement," in *Revolution and Evolution : 1848 in German-Jewish History*, ed. Werner Mosse, Arnold Paucker, Reinhard Rurup (Tubingen: Mohr, 1981); and Alexander Altmann, "The New Style of Preaching in Nineteenth-Century Germany," in *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1981), pp. 190-245.

[23] Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry*, pp. 5, 173.

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With acculturation came growing indifference toward traditional practices, which in itself did not ensure the development of religious Reform. Even though in England, Holland, Italy, and France a large percentage of the Jewish population was no longer observant, few attended Liberal or Reform synagogues during the nineteenth century. "In Germany and the United States, on the other hand, the abandonment of traditional practice by the individual (basically a negative phenomenon) was paralleled by the positive creation of a new religious ideology and new religious forms."[24] Though arising in a different political framework, German Reform had important commonalities with American conditions but, until recently, few scholars have studied both countries in juxtaposition in order to establish interconnections between these two groups.[25]

We will see that American Jews were in regular contact with their German counterparts through correspondence and periodicals. They carefully followed German developments such as rabbinic conferences, the opening of seminaries, and the progress of political emancipation. But the leaders were not afraid to assert their independence and sometimes even superiority to their German counterparts.[26]

Recent immigration research has shown that the character of German influence in America fluctuated with the waves of immigration. Many Jews that arrived in the forties and fifties came from traditional rural communities and had not become Germanized.[27]

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[24]Lowenstein, "The 1840s and the Creation of the German-Jewish Religious Reform Movement," p. 256.

[25] See Avaraham Barkai, *Branching Out: German-Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820-1914* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1994) for the most recent treatment of the interrelationships between the communities. Also *The Jewish People in America,* ed. Henry L. Feingold 5 vols. (Baltimore, 1992), vol. 2: Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration 1820-1880* takes recent research into the German situation into account. For a general discussion of the German period see also Cohen's *Encounter with Emancipation*, cited above.

[26]Barkai, *Branching Out*, pp. 158ff.

[27]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 212, Diner, *A Time for Gathering,* pp. 8ff. There is a debate about this point. See Selma Stern Taubler, "Problems of American Jewish and

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By the Civil War the majority of this wave (the group that Jick documented) had adjusted successfully to American patterns. The post-Civil War wave of immigrants was characterized by a preponderance of middle-class, urbanized, and Germanized Jews who brought a greater commitment to German culture and language than the earlier wave. This orientation, combined with a greater interest in German culture within American society at large in the late nineteenth century, reinforcing German influence on the development of Reform.[28]

Comparative Approach

The dissertation seeks to place German-Jewish adjustment to America within the context of the wider German immigration that began at the end of the Napoleonic wars and gained momentum in the 1840s. In Chapters Two and Three, the experience of Jews is compared with that of the arriving German Catholics and Protestants. Like the Jews, these predominantly traditional groups from rural backgrounds struggled to find ways to maintain their faith while adjusting to the liberal, voluntaristic, pluralistic, and competitive American environment. Recent studies have examined the tight-knit ethnic communities these Germans created in New York, Cincinnati, and other cities. These "little Germanies" shared a common language, customs, and cultural values, offering both a safe haven from which the immigrants could probe the opportunities of their new homeland and an milieu that delayed complete Americanization.[29]

German Jewish Historiography," in Eric Hirschler, ed. *Jews from Germany in the United States* (New York: Strauss and Cudahy, 1955),
p. 47 for another point of view. Also see Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, p. 42.

[28]Barkai, *Branching Out*, pp. 125ff. Alan Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation: The Response of Reform Judaism to American Culture, 1840-1930* (Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England, 1994), pp. 113f.

[29]One of the early studies of these communities was Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City 1825-1863*, 2nd edition (Syracuse: King's Crown Press, 1994). See also Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990). See also Agnes Bretting, *Sociale*

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In the case of Christian immigrants, German religious influence continued to be on the conservative side. Lutherans, who experienced a struggle between Americanized liberals and German conservatives between 1855 and 1865, resoundingly rejected attempts to liberalize their church. At the end of the century, regional Lutheran organizations still clung to the German language and sought "a high degree of isolation from the American environment."[30] With the influx of German immigrants, American Catholics abandoned post-revolutionary-war liberalism for a more traditional posture. When a liberal American Catholicism re-emerged later in the century, it was generally opposed by the German Catholic community.[31] Why then, did a significant number of German-American Jews abandon traditionalism by the 1870s in favor of Americanized Reform? German-Jewish immigrants, unlike their Christian counterparts who emigrated primarily for economic reasons, chose America to a great extent because it represented a substitute for European Jewish emancipation.[32] Frustrated by legal and religious disabilities, they found in America the realization of the promise of religious freedom and equality. They willingly embraced core American liberal values more fervently than did immigrants who came mainly for economic reasons.

Probleme deutscher Einwandere in New York City, 1800-1860 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1981).

[30]E. Clifford Nelson, *The Lutherans in North America*, Revised edition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 349f. See also Abdel Ross Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutherans in America*, Revised edition (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964) and W. Kent Gilbert, *Commitment to Unity: A History of the Lutheran Church in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

[31]Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1985), p. 116. For the Catholic resistance to liberalism see Philip Gleason, *The Conservative Reformers: German-American Catholics and the Social Order* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p. 30.

[32]Barkai, *Branching Out*, p. 10, credits Naomi W. Cohen in *Encounter with Emancipation* with this insight. There were some German Catholic priest and nuns, especially in the 1870s, who came to escape religious persecution as well. See Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*, p. 130.

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American Factors

There is no denying the impact that American culture had on the German-Jewish immigrants. Many of them encountered modernity for the first time upon their arrival in the United States. Jick is essentially correct in correlating upward mobility, assimilation, and the receptivity to Reform among these immigrants. Rapidly climbing the socio-economic ladder, Jews achieved remarkable success by the end of the Civil War; by the 1870s they wanted their religion fully to reflect American norms. Stephen Mostov has documented that mobility within the Cincinnati community in his dissertation, "A 'Jerusalem' on the Ohio."[33] Alan Silverstein has shown that American influence went beyond ritual and ideological changes, placing the development of Reform institutions within broader religious trends. Jews copied Anglo-American models in the formation of their national organizations and seminaries and followed later American trends as well.[34]

These ritual, ideological, and institutional changes, whowever, were not instituted until acculturation had progressed significantly. Jick underestimates the important role that leaders such as Lilienthal played for these traditional immigrants, who were adjusting to modernity and the New World at the same time. Lilienthal helped his congregants make sense of events and issues, ranging from the threat of missionaries to the meaning of the Civil War. Synthesizing American and Jewish cultural values, he offered them a Jewish version of an American Civil Religion. Later, he recast Judaism along the lines of the rising liberal religious tide which came to prominence in mainstream Protestantism during the decades following the Civil War. In an ideology that affirmed scientific progress, and modern historical criticism, liberal religious leaders in the Congregational, Episcopal,

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[33]Stephen G. Mostov, "A 'Jerusalem' on the Ohio: The Social and Economic History of Cincinnati's Jewish Community, 1840-1875," (Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1981). John Bodnar, in *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 170f. warns that the upward mobility model has some methodological pitfalls.

[34]Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation,* especially pp. 2-3.

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Methodist, Baptist, Disciples, and Presbyterian churches stressed immanence: God's divine presence within the world and human culture, as well as an overriding optimism about humanity's potential.[35] Jewish intellectuals like Lilienthal, feeling a resonance between these ideas and those of liberal Germany, gradually created an American Reform in harmony with these principles in the 1880s.

Lay-Rabbinic Power Struggle and the Professionalization of the Rabbinate

Long before the first rabbis arrived in the United States in the 1840s, American Jewry's lay leadership had developed patterns which allowed the tiny Jewish communities to adjust to American life.[36] When Lilienthal and other early American rabbis came to this country, they found that lay leaders controlled the congregations, while "ministers" (the title used for Jewish clergy in that era) had little status and no professional standing. The influx of German Jews overwhelmed the old traditional communities, straining their resources until there was a multiplication by division into local, largely ethnically-based synagogues. The chaotic conditions called for strong and creative leadership, but the rabbis were often hampered by a laity that expected to lead, rather than follow. The long struggle for an independent role in directing the course of American Jewry by figures such as Lilienthal helped motivate the professionalization of the American rabbinate through the creation of the Hebrew Union College, the first professional school, and the Rabbinical Literary Association, a rabbinic union.

Lilienthal also contributed to the professionalization of the rabbinate through the innovative ways he expanded the parameters of the position. Ismar Schorsch has traced the

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[35]Catherine L. Albanese, *America; Religions and Religion*, 2nd edition (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth Publication Co., 1992); and William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976).

[36]The most important source for the colonial patterns and their implications are the works of Jacob Rader Marcus, especially his *Colonial American Jew: 1492-1776.* 3 vols. (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1970).

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evolution of a new type of leader in Germany who preached, taught, performed pastoral duties, and represented the Jews in the wider community.[37] A representative of the new breed of university-trained rabbi, Lilienthal brought that vision of the rabbinic role from Germany. His pioneering efforts in such areas as education, community service, interfaith preaching, and anti-defamation were important paradigms for an Americanized modern rabbinate.

Legacy

A close study of Max Lilienthal's career and writings demonstrates that his role in the development of American Judaism is more important than has so far been recognized. He was pivotal in the establishment of the American Reform movement. Isaac Mayer Wise has usually been lauded as the founder of American Reform Judaism while Max Lilienthal is mentioned only in passing. Not merely Wise's subordinate, Lilienthal was the better educated, the more effective tactician, and the more profound thinker of the two. In his later years he was acknowledged as an elder stateman, universally praised for his efforts to bring peace to the ideologically-divided Jewish national scene. The dissertation ends with a discussion of the complex relationship between these two leaders in relation to the possible reasons for Lilienthal's relative present-day obscurity. It is hoped that this work will restore his place within the historical record of nineteenth century Jewry.

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[37]Schorsch, "The Emergence of the Modern Rabbinate," p. 210.

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Chapter One: European Prelude (1814-1845)

Family Origins

Maximilien Eduard Emanuel Lilienthal (known as Max Lilienthal) was born in Munich, probably in early fall of 1814, the same year that the family took Lilienthal as their official surname.[1] He was the first of seven children born to Dina Lichtenstein and Loew (or Loeb) Seligmann, who belonged to a group of families living in the small Jewish community in Munich granted special legal and social privileges by the government. Dina came from a family of wealthy merchants; Loew was a wholesale merchant descended from a long line of Court Jews.

The Court Jew, as Selma Stern has written, was "a large-scale Jewish merchant-financier with court connections, a type that was to become a key feature of central European life in the century 1650-1750."[2] In that turbulent period, absolutist rulers turned to skilled Jews to add wealth and power to their states. Court Jews served the nobility as contractors, agents, bankers, masters of the mint, and even diplomats. These men "formed a closely knit patrician group spread throughout Europe and [were] infused with a common *esprit de corps.*"[3] In keeping with their social status, Court Jews adopted aristocratic manners, speech and dress, and purchased elaborate homes. They arranged marriages for

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[1]This lengthy full name was found in an autobiographical sketch Lilienthal handed to Minister Uvarov upon his arrival in St. Petersburg, cited in Saul M. Ginsburg, "Max Lilienthal's Activities in Russia; New Documents," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 35 (1939), p. 42. Lilienthal gave his date of birth as November 6, 1814. O'Neill, *Ernest Reuben Lilienthal and His Family*, recorded the date as November 3, 1814. That date was supported by Sophie Lilienthal's *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 5. For a discussion of the contradictory statements made by Lilienthal himself see Merowitz, "A Note on the Dating of Dr. Max Lilienthal's Birth," pp. 78f.

[2]Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism, 1550-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 40f.

[3]Selma Stern, *The Court Jew: A Contribution to the History of the Period of Absolutism in Central Europe*, tr. Ralph Weiman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1950). esp. p. 227.

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their children to further their business enterprises. Though they assimilated the courtly lifestyle, most also showed a sense of *noblesse oblige* towards their Jewish communities, serving as their leaders and representatives.

In Germany, the Court Jew often defended the interests of large Jewish *kehillot* (communities) and the small Jewish rural groups (*landjudenchaften*) in the surrounding territory. Both the *kehillot* and the *landjudenschaften*, though dependent upon the local secular ruler for their corporate existence, were essentially autonomous and self-sufficient, administering synagogues, elementary schools, yeshivot, charitable organizations for the poor and sick, and a burial society. The leadership had the power to levy taxes and exercised considerable legal coercion over their members, short of capital punishment. These Jews, who lived their lives almost entirely within the Jewish community, had contact with non-Jewish society mainly when required by business.[4] In contrast, the Court Jews, because of their wealth, role in international commerce, and alliances with aristocrats and governmental officials, were the Jewish communities' link to the wider world. Max Lilienthal's ancestors belonged to this illustrious group.

Lilienthal's niece Sophie claimed one branch of their family had been prominent in the rural community of Schnaittach-Huttenbach in 1529. In the sixteenth century this largely Jewish village boasted its own chief rabbinical court.[5] A century later Loew Seligmann settled at Schnaittach and by 1710 members of his family had become community leaders. In the mid-eighteenth century, another Loew Seligmann rose to prominence when he and a partner became quartermasters to the army of the Elector of Bavaria during the Seven Years' War. In 1758 the two contracted to supply the troops and, though it became clear that they would suffer a great financial loss due to wartime

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[4]Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto; The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870* (New York, Schocken Books, 1978), pp. 20f.

[5]Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 1. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism*, pp. 44, 187.

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inflation, they honored the original prices in their contract. They also placed themselves in physical danger, following the army into enemy territory to help maintain its food supply. The army paymaster testified to their bravery and honesty, and as a result Loew was made the official purveyor of provisions and, subsequently, Bavarian court banker.[6] After the government granted him special privileges, he used his influence at court to aid his people. Following a series of successful investments in 1762 that greatly enriched the Bavarian court, he was allowed to purchase property in Schnaittach. In recognition of his father's service, his son, also named Loew Seligmann, became a fiscal agent of the Bavarian court, receiving a contract in 1791 to furnish precious metals to the Upper Palatine mint.[7] This Loew Seligmann (Max's grandfather) became a very wealthy man, owning two houses and a lucrative grain business. For many years he was also head of the Jewish community and, out of his own funds, built a school and gave financial support to Jewish scholars.[8] The government allowed him to travel freely without paying the onerous poll tax, permitted him to carry firearms, and bestowed upon him the title of Court Purveyor of Fürth. Max's father, named Loew Seligmann as well, was born in Schnaittach in 1777. Also a successful merchant, he settled with his wife Dina in Munich, where he followed the family tradition by serving as a member of the community's administrative board and the governing board of the burial society.

Though successful, Max's father had neither the power nor wealth of a Court

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[6]Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 1; Stern, *The Court Jew*, pp. 32f.; and O'Neill, *Ernest Lilienthal and his Family*, p. 3. Apparently, the exclusive arrangement was abrogated by the court when they allowed other purveyors to settle in Bavaria, resulting in a loss of business and much bitterness on the part of the Seligmann family. Sophie Lilienthal, "Lilienthal Familie, Schnaittach," Leo Baeck Institute Manuscript A. 632 2099.

[7]Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 1; and Stern, *The Court Jew*, p. 164. According to Stern, Jews were especially effective in procuring precious metals because of their good trade relations with Poland.

[8]Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 2.

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Jew.[9] The family's decline in status during the eighteenth century mirrored an economic decline affecting much of European Jewry, a development described by Jonathan Israel as the "waning of the European Jewish trade system" that created a "tightening economic corset" and "a general degradation and cultural impoverishment within Jewish society." He estimated that "by 1750 well over half of the 60,000 or so Jews living in the German states . . . lived a marginal existence of peddling, begging, and petty crime." Another scholar suggested that during the late eighteenth century "about eighty percent of all Jews belonged to the lowest social stratum." Only the few remaining Court Jews and their descendants were able to live above this marginal socio-economic level.[10]

The Impact of the Enlightenment on Nineteenth-Century Jewry

The eighteenth century brought vast intellectual and political changes to European society which would gradually break down the walls of separation between Jews and an increasingly secular world. First in France and England, later in Germany and elsewhere, a rational, cosmopolitan, and largely secular body of ideas revolutionized European philosophy. According to Charles Taylor, the new, optimistic understanding of the individual was central to many of the developments in areas as diverse as epistemology, politics, education, and religion. Most important, "within the forging of this modern subjectivity there comes a new notion of freedom . . . which seems to have proved itself definitive and irreversible."[11]

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[9]Sophie recounted that a fire wiped out much of the remaining family fortune during Max's youth. Ibid., p. 6.

[10]Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism*, pp. 250, 252. Monika Richarz, "Jewish Social Mobility in Germany during the Time of Emancipation, 1790-1871," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 20 (1975):70. Avraham Barkai, "The German Jews at the Start of Industrialisation: Structural Change and Mobility, 1835-1860," in *Revolution and Evolution*, pp. 139ff.

[11]Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 6ff. See also Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press,

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Among the enlightened in the German cultural sphere, this optimistic ideal of self-realization found resonance in the old, religious concept of *Bildung*. According to David Sorkin:

> From the late seventeenth century Pietism transformed *Bildung* into a public pedagogical idea through its core of religious subjectivism. The individual was to attain his form through the prototype of Christ in order to perform good works for the commonweal. It was through Pietism that the concept of *Bildung* entered German culture.[12]

While in the early German Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) the concept was secularized to refer to moral individualism, based on reason and the "cultivation of the heart," by the late eighteenth century *Bildung* came to represent "a new secular form of individual salvation."[13] Academics applied its lessons to a new humanistic education (*Wissenschaft*); theologians reshaped religion to foster moral growth; politicians hoped to create a new liberal society based on *Bildung* rather than on birth, privilege, or religious background.[14]

The Enlightenment fostered a debate that eventually led to the transformation of the status of Jews from a segregated, barely tolerated group into individual citizens.[15] For the first time young Jews were allowed to attend secular schools, where they became aware of

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1972), especially pages 42ff.

[12]Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry*, p. 15. The origins of the term are found earlier, among late medieval German mystics such as Meister Eckhart and Heinrich Seuse.

[13]Ibid., p. 17.

[14]Taylor, *Hegel*, pp. 6ff. See also Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry*, pp. 15ff. Not surprisingly, the nexus of *Bildung* and liberalism in the nineteenth century was in the universities. For the political implications of *Bildung* for German liberalism see James J. Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 14. For its implications in Jewish and Christian religious thought see Alexander Altmann, "The New Style of Preaching in Nineteenth-Century German Jewry," in *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History*.

[15]See Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews: The Origins of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 274-6, who also traces an undercurrent of anti-Jewish prejudice among some of the proponents of the Enlightenment; and Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism*, p. 265.

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the vast chasm between Jewish and European intellectual worlds. By the end of the eighteenth century, these secularly-trained Jewish intellectuals developed new approaches to politics, education, culture, and religion that became known as the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment).[16] Moses Mendelssohn and his disciples believed Jews had to become modernized to deserve full emancipation within European society. The Maskilim accepted the dominant culture's view that traditional Jewry was intellectually and morally backward, mired in non-productive occupations, and ignorant of the language of the country in which they lived. Yet because the Maskilim believed that every individual, and therefore also every group, was perfectible through *Bildung* or moral self-development, they held out hope for a bright new future for the Jews.

Modern education was the key to *Bildung:* broad exposure to classical and modern languages, the humanities, and above all the sciences. *Divrei Shalom Ve-emet* (*Words of Peace and Truth*), written by Naftali Herz Wessely in 1782 and considered by many to be the first public manifesto of the Haskalah movement,[17] advocated an emphasis on moral education, a concern for vocational training, and an approach to instruction that avoided corporal punishment and allowed time for play. In addition to catechism, Hebrew grammar, and Bible, Wessely stressed the teaching of the sciences, German, geography, history, mathematics, and medicine.[18] In the early nineteenth century, the next generation

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[16]On the Haskalah movement see in particular, Israel Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, 12 vol. trans. and ed. by Bernard Martin, vol. 8: *The Berlin Haskalah*, and vol. 10: *The Science of Judaism and Galician Haskalah* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1978); Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971); and *Out of the Ghetto* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978); Michael A. Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1967); Moshe Pelli, *The Age of Haskalah* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979); Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry*, Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1973).

[17]Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature,* vol. 8: *The Berlin Haskalah*, p. 66.

[18]Z.E. Kurzweil, *Modern Trends in Jewish Education* (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1964); Isadore Fishman, *The History of Jewish Education in Central Europe: From the End of the Sixteenth to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Edward Goldston, 1944).

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of Maskilim created modern Jewish schools which usually reflected Wessely's innovations. The new schools that arose in Seesen, Dessau, Frankfurt, Wolfenbüttel, and elsewhere affirmed the neo-humanist value of *Bildung* and imparted vocational skills "to create morally sound and productive Jewish citizens."[19] By the mid-century, these new schools had all but replaced the old *heder-yeshivah* system, de-emphasizing Talmud and replacing it with the study of the Bible in Mendelssohn's German translation, and the grammatical study of the Hebrew language. Religion, moral instruction, and Jewish history became recognized as separate subjects. Equally important was emphasis on secular subjects such as German, French, English, Latin, arithmetic, penmanship, nature study, geography, history, and bookkeeping. As Emanuel Gamoran wrote "the aim of these schools was to introduce the Jews to, and develop within them a love for, German culture."[20]

According to David Sorkin, the Maskilim "wanted to reshape Jewish society in their own image,"[21] encouraging Jews to abandon their lowly occupations in favor of useful and important professions that would bring them higher social status. As the facilitators of the modernization of Jewish religious and cultural institutions, the Maskilim relied on the State for leadership, viewing the government as a benevolent agent in liberating the Jews from their medieval backwardness. The Maskilim radicalized the accepted Enlightenment

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p. 21f.; Emanuel Gamoran, *Changing Conceptions in Jewish Education* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1924), p. 151.

[19]Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry*, pp. 125ff.

[20]Gamoran, *Changing Conceptions in Jewish Education*, p. 147. For the Haskalah's contribution to Jewish education see also Adolf Kober, "Emancipation's Impact on the Education and Vocational Training of German Jewry," *Jewish Social Studies* 16 (January 1954): 3-32; Kurzweil, *Modern Trends in Jewish Education*; Fishman, *The History of Jewish Education in Central Europe*; Mordecai Eliav, *Jewish Education in the Enlightenment and Emancipatory Periods* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1960); Arthur Galliner, " Aus der Geschichte des Philanthropins," *Das Philanthropin zu Frankfurt am Main: Dokumente und Erinnerungen*, ed. Albert Hirsch (Frankfurt: W. Kramer, 1964), pp. 11-18.

[21]Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry*, p. 61.

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belief in the potentially beneficent role of government; the right secular ruler could be virtually the messianic deliverer of the Jews.[22]

Jews became citizens of France in 1791 and, with the spread of revolutionary doctrines eastward, German states instituted hesitant steps towards Jewish emancipation. Unlike in France, German-Jewish emancipation was conditional, requiring educational and occupational changes by the Jews first. According to Steven Lowentstein: "Many German states tried to bring about the desired 'civic improvement' by direct governmental intervention."[23] The Bavarian government attempted to transform its Jews into modern citizens primarily through educational reforms. As early as 1804, the elector Maximilian Joseph opened all the schools in his country to Jewish youths and allowed the establishment of modern Jewish schools as well. These provisions were repeated in the 1813 laws aimed at encouraging Jews to enter new occupations other than trade. In 1823 Jews were compelled to attend Bavarian public or parochial elementary schools; five years later modern curricular requirements for Jewish schools were legally decreed.[24] Generally, Jews in the large urban centers embraced the governmental goals and enrolled in public secondary schools and universities in numbers far exceeding their proportion to the general population.[25]

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[22]Ibid., p. 66.

[23]Steven M. Lowenstein, "Governmental Jewish Policies in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany and Russia: A Comparison," *Jewish Social Studies* 46 (Summer and Fall 1984):304. Lilienthal made the same contrast between French and German approaches to emancipation during a discussion with Uvarov. He asserted that during the Revolution, French Jewry was granted full emancipation and they embraced citizenship. In Germany, emancipation had been promised based upon the willingness of Jews to change. Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 196f. Recent scholarship has argued that French assimilation was also gradual. See Jay R. Berkovitz, "The French Revolution and the Jews: Assessing the Cultural Impact," *AJS Review* 20, no. 1 (1995):25-86.

[24]Adolf Kober, "Emancipation's Impact on the Education and Vocational Training of German Jewry," *Jewish Social Studies* 16 (January 1954):13, 20. Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 6f. noted that teachers would have to successfully pass state examinations to qualify to teach. After 1833 all teachers had to be graduates of seminaries.

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Many of Munich's Jews who took immediate advantage of the new opportunities came from the privileged class, especially the eighteen families of Court Jews and sixteen of state suppliers.[26] Germanized and urbanized long before their rural brethren, they formed "the German-Jewish economic elite of the age of early industrialization (c. 1800-1880)."[27] A vanguard of modernization, they educated their children in secular schools, encouraged them to choose new occupations, and quickly adopted German cultural patterns. (That Max Lilienthal's family was part of this new subculture, sharing its cultural, educational, and spiritual values, was perhaps the determining factor in his professional development.)

At the same time, Jews faced continued official and unofficial discrimination. All Jews were subject to the onerous *Matrikelgesetz*, which limited the number of Jewish

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[25]David L. Preston, "The German Jews in Secular Education, University Teaching and Science: A Preliminary Inquiry," *Jewish Social Studies* 38 (Spring 1976):102. Recent research has shown that the revolutionary changes that brought acculturation to the Jews of Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries did not affect the majority of rural German and even French Jews until later in the century. For the German situation see Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry,* especially p. 59; Ernest Hamburger, "One Hundred Years of Emancipation," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 14 (1969): 3-66. Reinhard Rürup, "Emancipation and Bourgeois Society," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 14 (1969): 67-91; Lawrence Schofer, "Emancipation and Population Change," in *Revolution and Evolution*, pp. 63-90. For France see Berkovitz, "The French Revolution and the Jews," pp. 25-86; and Paula E. Hyman, *The Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace: Acculturation and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

[26]For a history of the Munich Jewish community see Hendrikje Kilian, *Die Jüdische Gemeinde in München, 1813-1871: Eine Großstandtgemeinde in Zeitalter der Emanzipation* (München: Kommissionsverlag, Uni-Druck, 1989). For Fürth see Leopold Löwenstein, *Zur Geschichte der Juden in Fürth* (Hildescheim: Olms, 1974).

[27]Werner E. Mosse, *Jews in the German Economy: The German-Jewish Economic Elite, 1820-1935* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 34, p. 67. He listed the Seligmanns among those forty or fifty families throughout Germany that made up the elite. Max only realized the extent of his German-Jewish community's modernity when he confronted the traditional Jews of Russia. In a letter to his father and future father-in-law he wrote: "Transport yourself fifty years back in Germany when there were five hundred *bachurim* (heb.) in Fürth . . . when the Jew was bearded and wore a mantle and a broad cap, and even then you would have a very weak facsimile of conditions here." Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 141. In spite of their sophistication, the members of the Munich community still created a traditional synagogue and resisted even the most moderate liturgical reforms. See Kilian, *Die Jüdische Gemeinde in München*, pp. 123ff.

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families permitted in any community. This 1813 law "effectively froze Jewish communities as they were, excluding Jews from moving into new areas or into areas where the number of Jews equaled or exceeded that of 1813."[28] Without a *Matrikel*, no young man could legally marry or have children. Unwilling to wait for a space to clear through the death of another member, many chose emigration.[29] Even the privileged Jews of Munich were subject to the *Matrikelgesetz*, which limited membership in the community to 380.[30]

Bavarian Jews were also hampered until 1861 by a law restricting freedom of movement.[31] Reinhard Rürup noted that this law prevented Jews from taking advantage of certain liberalizations of trade laws which had technically allowed them to get training in previously forbidden occupations but prevented them from earning a living in these fields.[32]

Anti-Jewish violence was also a reality of life in Bavaria. Riots broke out when the government promised the Jews further limited steps towards emancipation in 1819, 1820,

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[28]James F. Harris, "Bavarians and Jews," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 32 (1987):104. See also Ernest Hamburger, "One Hundred Years of Emancipation," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 14 (1969):5. According to Jacob Toury, "Types of Jewish Municipal Rights in German Townships: The Problem of Local Emancipation," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 22 (1977):55-80, the *Matrikel* was part the Bavarian Jew Law of 1813, which effectively abolished the corporate status of the Jews. In this sense the law was an advance, because for the first time, Jews were counted as individual citizens, rather than treated only as a group, p. 58. He noted that traditional Jews in Fürth and elsewhere were reluctant to relinquish their previous corporate status. pp. 59f. Rürup, "Emancipation and Bourgeois Society," p. 75 also noted that these laws were an attempt to systematize the welter of legal systems into one comprehensive and unified code.

[29]See Diner, *A Time for Gathering*, p. 16. In a letter to his family in 1844, Max referred to this restriction, concerned that his foreign rabbinical position would not qualify him to marry in Munich. Lilienthal wrote to his future father-in-law asking if a *Matrikel* number was available in Munich. Letter to Mr. Nettre, in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 156.

[30]Kilian, *Die Jüdische Gemeinde in München*, pp. 15f.

[31]Diner, *A Time for Gathering*, p. 16.

[32]Rürup, "Emancipation and Bourgeois Society," p. 81. See also Richarz, "Jewish Social Mobility in Germany during the Time of Emancipation," p. 75.

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and 1821. As late as 1848, there were attacks on Jews in rural areas of southwest Germany.[33] According to Eleonore Sterling these attacks were fueled by "German literature in the first half of the nineteenth century [which] frequently describes the Jews as the crucifiers of Christ and as the damned people. They are depicted as diabolical and sinister, close to the horrors of death, uncivilized, backward, and sub-human."[34]

The Transformation of Rabbinic Education

Max Lilienthal grew up during the turbulent years between the defeat of Napoleon and the revolutions of 1848. As observant Jews, his parents wanted their sons to have a yeshivah education. Family tradition relates that eleven-year-old Max promised his mother on her deathbed that he would become a rabbi.[35] Because the small Munich community offered limited opportunities for advanced Jewish study, the Lilienthals sent their son to Fürth to study at the yeshivah of Wolf Hamburger. This school, supported by Max's grandfather Loew, was considered the most important in Bavaria.[36] Fearful of the spread of reformist and secular thought, the traditionalist Hamburger had sent an urgent message

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[33]James F. Harris, "Bavarians and Jews in Conflict in 1866," p. 104; and Eleonore Sterling, "Anti-Jewish Riots in Germany in 1819, A Displacement of Social Protest," *Historia Judaica* 12 (October 1950):105.

[34]Eleonore Sterling, "Jewish Reaction to Jew-Hatred in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," p. 103.

[35]O'Neill, *Ernest Reuben Lilienthal and His Family*, p. 9. His mother Dina, only thirty years old at the time of her death, left behind seven young children. We can only speculate about Max's feelings, but his resolve to keep this promise survived many challenges and disappointments. It is unknown whether Max was already at the yeshivah at the time of her death since the family histories are vague and inaccurate about the years of his education. Sophie wrote that he finished his doctorate in 1827, when he would have been 13! Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 6.

[36]Steven M. Lowenstein, *The Mechanisms of Change: Essays in the Social History of German Jewry* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), p. 13. See also Berkovitz, "The French Revolution and the Jews," pp. 39f. "Fürth had become one of the largest and most important Jewish communities in Germany, and was the site of the well-funded and prestigious yeshiva." This is the same yeshivah that Lilienthal referred to as having 500 students just fifty years earlier. (See note 25 above.)

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in 1821 to his former student Rabbi Moses Schreiber (1762-1834, known as the *Chatam Sofer*), then in Pressburg, asking him to return to Fürth as Chief Rabbi. Rabbi Schreiber, who became one of the most determined opponents of Reform in Central Europe, had refused. Hamburger's fears were later realized when a number of his graduates became prominent liberal rabbis, including David Einhorn, Joseph Aub, Isaac Loewi and Max Lilienthal.[37] When the Bavarian government required the yeshivah to introduce modern branches of study into its curriculum in 1826, Hamburger closed the school and, by 1830, its students had dispersed.[38]

In 1813, determined to modernize the rabbinate, the Bavarian government had stipulated that rabbinical training must go beyond traditional religious subjects to include "Greek, Latin, logic, metaphysics, moral and religious philosophy, pedagogy, history, exegesis of the Old Testament, homiletics, and Jewish history, philosophy, and liturgy."[39] In these areas, all rabbinical applicants had to pass a battery of examinations that lasted eight to ten days. This set of academic requirements for rabbinical training in Bavaria provided the model for all of Germany.[40]

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[37]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal,* p. 8. He also studied with a Rabbi Wittelsbacher in Fürth, Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record,* p. 6. Other important orthodox graduates included Abraham Rice, first ordained rabbi to serve in the United States. See I. Harold Scharfman, *The First Rabbi, Origins of Conflict between Orthodox and Reform: Jewish Polemic Warfare in pre-Civil War America, A Biographical History* (Malibu: Pangloss Press, 1988), pp. 30ff. For a discussion of the Chatam Sofer and the traditionalists see David Ellenson, *Tradition in Transition; Orthodoxy, Halakhah and the Foundations of Modern Jewish Identity* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1989), pp. 163ff.

[38]Scharfman, *The First Rabbi,* p. 32. Lowenstein, *The Mechanisms of Change,* p. 13 notes that the school had eighteen teachers and eighty-eight teenage students in 1824. See also Monika Richarz, *Der Eintritt der Juden in die academischen Berufe, Jüdische Studenten und Akademiker in Deutschland 1678-1848* (Tubigen: Mohr, 1974), p. 195, n. 136. Scharfman described the view of Rabbi Hamburger's group, which, unlike the modern Orthodox, rejected any accomodation with modernity. They likened secular education to an evil woman, saying, "none that go into her return again." Scharfman, *The First Rabbi,* pp. 31, 33.

[39]Schorsch, "The Emergence of the Modern Rabbinate," p. 32.

[40]Ibid. Lilienthal's fellow yeshivah student Abraham Rice, who, refusing to attend a

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The acquisition of a doctorate was one of the most conspicuous marks of the new type of rabbi emerging in Germany in the mid-nineteenth century, created, in part, by this legislation.[41] Traditional rabbinical leaders had understood their office to be limited to

> the interpretation and administration of Jewish law. Rabbinic functions included responsibility for all matters pertaining to marriage, divorce, licensing of ritual slaughterers, preparation and sale of kosher meat, and government inquiries on Jewish law. The rabbi occasionally delivered sermons in conjunction with holidays but had nothing to do with teaching the young.[42]

The new rabbinical leadership defined their functions more broadly. In 1835 Zacharias Frankel, leader of the Positive-Historical school, wrote a memorandum to a governmental official that the rabbi now

> was to teach both the young and the old, the latter by means of sermons and lectures. He was to supervise the administration of charity, the conduct of the synagogue, and the competence of other religious functionaries. Authority to perform marriages and to issue divorce papers (the *get*) was his alone. He was to comfort the suffering and to render opinions of Jewish law. In sum, the rabbi constituted the life blood of the community. By representing a higher moral principle, the rabbi transformed the community into a spiritual whole.[43]

Lilienthal's family quickly embraced the new criteria for advancement, even though Jews who entered this track were exposed to an academic *Weltanshauung* that challenged the traditional understanding of the world. In 1826, at the rather late age of thirteen (most youths started at eleven), Lilienthal enrolled in the new Munich *gymnasium* where he studied the sciences and other secular subjects.[44] To qualify for the university these

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university, was unable to qualify for a pulpit in Bavaria. Rice would later become the first ordained rabbi in the United States. Rabbi Salomon Titkin expressed the same view, claiming that a university education disqualified a man for the rabbinate. Schorsch, "The Emergence of the Modern Rabbinate," p. 13.

[41]Ibid., p. 15.

[42]Ibid., p. 12.

[43]Ibid., p. 14.

[44]Max Lilienthal, "Notice Biographique," in Ginsburg, "Max Lilienthal's Activities in Russia," p. 42.

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students usually had to follow an arduous nine-year preparatory course emphasizing classical studies (Latin and Greek), French, mathematics, physics, natural history, geography, religion, music, calligraphy, drawing, and philosophy.[45] According to his autobiographical account (which is quite self-congratulatory) Lilienthal's work greatly pleased all of his professors and he graduated with honors in history, geography, German and French. Armed with these tools, the young scholar enrolled at the University of Munich, recently opened to Jews.[46]

Created by the Bavarian kingdom in 1826 from an older regional university, the University of Munich minimized its earlier Catholic orientation to espouse a "neo-humanistic" approach to learning infused with the secular ideal of *Wissenschaft,*[47] conceived as an organically united and ever-unfolding field of knowledge, scientifically and objectively obtained.[48] The goal of a *Wissenschaftlich* education was the germination and careful development of the student's inner intellectual and moral potential in order to become the best man of his age. "Academics must possess living awareness that 'science' (*Wissenschaft*) guides the mind directly to the vision which in a continuous self-creating process leads us to identify with ourselves and thereby to a truly blessed life."[49]

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[45]Fritz K. Ringer, *Education and Society in Modern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 34. For a listing of the required courses in Bavarian gymnasiums see Karl Neuerer, "Das höhere Lehrant in Bayern im 19 Jahrhundert," in *Ludovico Maximilianea Universität Ingolstadt-Landshut-München Forschungn und Quellen*, ed. Johannes Spöhr and Laetitia Boehm (Berlin: Duncker und Humbolt, 1878), pp. 247ff.

[46]He was probably the second or third Jew to attend the university in order to qualify for rabbinic ordination. See Schorsch, "The Emergence of the Modern Rabbinate," pp. 39ff. His brother Samuel also studied medicine there concurrently.

[47]Friedrich Paulsen, *The German Universities and University Study*, trans. Frank Thilly and William W. Elwang (New York: Schribner's Sons, 1906), p. 50f. See also Konrad Jarausch, "Die neuhumanistische Universität und die bürgerliche Gesellschaft, 1800-1870," *Darstellung und Quellen zur Geschichte der deutschen Einheitsbewegung in neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhundert* 11 (1980):11-58.

[48] Schorsch, "The Ethos of Modern Jewish Scholarship," in *From Text to Context*, p. 162.

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The first modern institution to promote this scientific approach to knowledge was the University of Berlin, which was founded in the wake of the Prussian defeat at the hands of Napoleon in 1806. Blaming the nation's military losses on educational and moral degeneration, intellectuals such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte, F.W.J. Schelling, Friederick August Wolf, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Leopold Ranke had created a new pedagogical theory which emphasized research and method rather than the transmission of a static body of knowledge. Pedantic memorization of facts was rejected in favor of creative scholarship in which students were encouraged to analyze evidence critically. In order to evaluate the consistency and reliability of sources scholars placed a special emphasis on first-hand examination of original historical manuscripts, seeking to integrate philological, historical, and cultural studies into a comprehensive discipline.[50] Berlin provided the pattern for universities throughout Germany, and in due course the Bavarian kingdom attracted a long line of prominent northern scholars to institute this new approach to study.[51]

Jews took advantage of these secularized schools in the early nineteenth century so that by 1850, the ratio of Jews to non-Jews in these schools was twice that of the population at large.[52] Some young Jewish academics, feeling the inadequacy of traditional Judaism compared to German philosophy and culture, wanted to modernize their faith using the methodology of *Wissenschaft.* In 1819 a group of like-minded young men immersed in advanced German culture founded an association to promote Jewish *Wissenschaft* "to rethink Judaism in terms of the historical canons of the German

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[49]R. Steven Turner, "The Prussian Universities and the Research Imperative, 1806 to 1848," (Ph.D. dissertion, Princeton University, 1972), pp. 261ff, 264.

[50]Ibid., pp. 281f. The approaches of Leopold Ranke and Friedrich August Wolf were especially important.

[51]Paulsen, *The German Universities* , p. 50. See also Turner, "The Prussian Universities, p. 267. For the influence of this model on American universities see Chapter Five.

[52]Schorsch, "Jewish Academics at Prussian Universities," p. 52.

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university."[53]

Embracing the *Wissenschaft* approach, Lilienthal enrolled in the philosophy department, the equivalent of a modern college of arts and sciences. Fritz Ringer explains that "in the reform plans of the German Idealists, the faculty of philosophy had been conceived as the heart of a philosophically and philologically oriented system of higher education."[54] A nineteenth-century German university student began his studies at about age nineteen, in an atmosphere of academic freedom. "He was now almost totally free in his approach to higher learning. He faced no fixed or supervised curriculum." His first academic priority was to prepare for a state examination over a period of two to six years. Passing these exams was the key to a successful future, providing access to civil service and other influential positions.[55] For most, this was sufficient certification, but some elected to work toward a doctorate which required independent research culminating in a thesis. It was toward the degree of doctor of philosophy that Max worked in the middle 1830s.[56]

At the university Lilienthal studied theology, Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldean, and classical languages, again obtaining the highest possible grades from his professors.[57] He demonstrated his mastery of Jewish *Wissenschaft* in his doctoral dissertation, "Ueber den Ursprung der jüdisch-alexandrischen Religionsphilosophie," which he completed in

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[53]Schorsch, "The Ethos of Modern Jewish Scholarship,"p. 162. Also Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew*, p. 161.

[54]Ringer, *Education and Society in Modern Europe*, p. 35.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Ibid., pp. 36f. This doctorate became a fairly common academic objective, pursued even by students who did not aspire to a scholarly career. There was a higher degree which required a second dissertation and entitled its holder to teach at a German university as an instructor.

[57]Max Lilienthal, "Notice Biographique" in Ginsburg, "Max Lilienthal's Activities in Russia," p. 42.

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1837.[58] His treatment of documents showed that he assumed that Jewish thought developed and changed from period to period to meet the needs of each new era, so that it was necessary to treat fully the historical context in which these works were created. For example, in his analysis of trends that led to the development of the Alexandrian philosophy, he began with the aftermath of the Babylonian Exile. Emphasizing discontinuities with the past, Lilienthal argued that post-exilic Judaism developed new types of leaders, as scribes and men of the Great Assembly replaced the prophets. Direct revelation was gradually replaced by the interpretation of the received Law. Lilienthal pointed to literature of the period, such as *First and Second Chronicles,* in which earlier events were reshaped according to later concerns, as examples of the new spirit .[59]

Another aspect of Lilienthal's methodology is illustrated by his treatment of the impact of foreign cultures on Jewish philosophical thought. He described the challenge of Chaldean and Persian religions to Judaism as examples of the general competition that arose between monotheistic and pagan doctrines. He credited the Aaronide priests with having responded to paganism by purifying the notion of monotheism and by spiritualizing God's relation to the world and to humanity.[60]

The Jewish community of Alexandria that took shape after the conquest of the entire region by Alexander the Great found its traditional monotheistic beliefs threatened by a sophisticated syncretic environment inspired by Platonism, Stoicism, Pythagorianism, and "Egyptian mysticism."[61] Lilienthal focused on two challenges to traditional Jewish thought: the concept of an ultimately unknowable God in Platonism, and its view of the

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[58]The dissertation, more like a modern term paper, was about twenty-two pages and offered only a few footnotes and quotations from ancient Greek writers.

[59]Max Lilienthal, "Ueber den Ursprung der jüdische-alexandrinischen Religionphilosophie" (Inaugural-Dissertation, University of Munich, 1839), p. 6.

[60]Ibid., p. 7f.

[61]Ibid., p. 12.

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nature of evil. Teaching that human understanding was limited to knowledge of the forms, Platonism challenged the possibility of direct Divine revelation. Evil had its source in matter, the opposite of the spirit, whereas the Biblical view took evil to be part of God's creation.[62] Lilienthal asserted that sophisticated Alexandrian Jews, led by Philo, created a new Jewish philosophy in order to maintain their traditional faith in the face of these challenges.[63] Among the fruits of this effort were a spiritualized understanding of revelation and a biblical exegesis based on allegory. Out of the contradiction of these opposing systems came important advances in Jewish thought.[64]

In his introductory remarks Lilienthal explained that it was this synthesis of opposites that had attracted him to the study of Hellenistic Judaism:

> One of the most interesting phenomena revealed in the field of the study [*Wissenschaft*] of Judaism in the course of time is and remains the Jewish Alexandrinian religious-philosophy. Out of the diverse and heterogeneous constituents which comprise it, the contradictory extremes of heathen philosophy and monotheistic revelation are united and reconciled.[65]

The Alexandrian synthesis was paradigmatic of what would become his life-long desire to reconcile opposing points of view. Unlike many leaders of an ideologically polarized generation, Lilienthal was able to appreciate all sides in a debate and to welcome the confrontation of ideas as a creative necessity.

Despite the opening up of German scholarship to young Jews like Lilienthal, in practice the schools were not all that secular and scientifically objective. Max later reported that he was often pressured by other students to convert:

> I still remember today my Christian fellow students at the University of Munich; they deplored the state of my soul, they said, because of my religious profession. Several of them, young men to whom I was attached by the bonds of the most sincere friendship, believed me irretrievably

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[62]Ibid., p. 13.

[63]Ibid., p. 15.

[64]Ibid., p. 18. He even posited the influence of this synthesis on early Christianity. p. 5.

[65]Ibid. p. 5. My translation.

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lost![66]

Further, the Christian professors required the Jewish students to take courses in Christian theology. A Russian bishop, who later tried to convert Lilienthal, could not understand how he had studied Christian theology and yet remained unconvinced of its truth.[67] Moreover, the promise that a degree would guarantee a job was not realized, since public positions, including academic posts, were closed to Jews until after mid-century.[68] After brilliantly passing his university examination, Max was offered a job in the diplomatic service. At first thrilled at the opportunity, he was deeply disappointed to learn that the appointment required conversion to Christianity. He rejected the offer indignantly, prompting the Minister of Foreign Affairs to warn him that this attitude made a Bavarian diplomatic career impossible.[69] After the successful completion of his dissertation in 1837, he returned to his plan to become a rabbi, completing his rabbinical studies under Hirsch Aub, rabbi of Munich.[70] When Lilienthal attained his rabbinical ordination, he became one of about sixty rabbis in all of Germany with the prestigious Ph.D. degree.[71]

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[66]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 7f., note 5.

[67]Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 235.

[68]Schorsch, "The Religious Parameters of Wissenschaft: Jewish Academic at Prussian Universities," *From Text to Context*, pp. 52f.

[69]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 8. Lilienthal, The *Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 6. According to his autobiographical sketch he ranked among the top seven students in the university based on his examination in philosophy. This success is what brought him to the attention of the Minister of the Interior. Max Lilienthal, "Notice Biographique," in Saul M. Ginsburg, "Max Lilienthal's Activities in Russia," p. 42.

[70]O'Neill, *Ernest Reuben Lilienthal and His Family*, p. 9. Kilian, in his history of the Munich community, labeled Aub as a moderate in the debate between Reform and tradition. He studied at the *Talmud Hochschule* in Prague, but, from 1826-7, studied philosophy at the University of Munich in order to qualify for a rabbinical position under the new laws. In 1832 Aub established a synagogue choir in the new Munich synagogue and reorganized the old liturgy. Kilian, *Die Jüdische Gemeinde in München*, p. 378. For the discussion of the fight over the introduction of the choir see pp. 123ff. Published in 1839, Lilienthal dedicated his dissertation to Aub. Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 8.

[71] Schorsch, "The Emergence of the Modern Rabbinate," pp. 39f.

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Early Sermons

In 1837, still a rabbinical candidate, Lilienthal delivered his first sermons to the Munich congregation. These addresses exhibited the characteristics of a new style, emerging during his youth.[72] The traditional *derashah*, with its exegetical complexities and focus on arcane literature, was no longer understood by the majority of the rapidly Germanizing congregants. Indeed, many saw the spirit represented in the old style sermon as repugnant to the modern ethos. Jews who visited Christian churches were impressed by both their decorum and edifying addresses.

> The modern Jewish sermon arose at a time when the Protestant pulpit in Germany had reached its zenith in the art of rule-bound (*schulgerecht*) preaching. At no other period before or after was there a similar abundance of treatises on homiletics offering guidance in the preparation, composition, and delivery of a sermon. The sermon had to conform to definite rules. . . . Homiletics was treated as a science. [73]

In German Protestantism the sermon was at the center of the service.[74] In spite of its strict formalism, the sermon became the principal means to a spiritual end, to exalt the heart of the worshiper. It was this type of sermon that Jewish preachers aspired to imitate in the early nineteenth century.[75]

Many of the early Jewish preachers read works on homiletics, were friendly with their Christian colleagues and even received critiques from their non-Jewish counterparts.[76] Moses Mendelssohn himself had written German sermons for Prussian

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[72]The sermons were subsequently published. Max Lilienthal, *Predigten für Sabbathe und Festtage* (München: J. Lindauer, 1839).

[73]Altmann, *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History*, pp. 191f.

[74]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 24, 143. See also Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry*, pp. 82ff.

[75]Altmann, *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History*, p. 192.

[76]Ibid., pp. 192ff, 197. For instance the great preacher Isaac Noah Mannheimer openly acknowledged his debt to the Christians: "We are pupils and disciples of these masters of the art of preaching." pp. 194-5. For examples of Mannheimer's sermons see Isaac Noah Mannheimer, *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge* (Wien: Israelitischen Bethause zu Wien, 1876).

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patriotic occasions, as had his followers. David Caro, an early *maskil* who was the first to advocate a program for a modernized rabbinate, argued that

> the new rabbi would fulfill his task most effectively from the pulpit. In carefully crafted and appealing German sermons he would interpret Scripture, urge fulfillment of God's commandments, inspire considerateness in personal relations, and imbue love of country and of humanity as a whole.[77]

Introducing this practice was the first step; Judaizing it was the second. As in community after community the vernacular sermon became a major part of the modern rabbi's duties, there was a growing dissatisfaction with the overly Christian nature of the new Jewish homiletics by the late 1830s. According to Alexander Altmann:

> It was increasingly felt that the Jewish preaching should free itself from Christian tutelage and evolve a more genuinely Jewish approach. . . . The prevailing sentiment was for a return in some limited way to a more exegetical type of sermon and a more liberal use of midrashic material.[78]

Though a number of leaders advocated the use of Jewish themes and examples, they never abandoned the principle that the sermon was meant to edify. To a large extent, the new style represented the actualization of the German philosophical traditions that the modern rabbis had learned at universities, since edification was the religious equivalent of *Bildung:*

> Edification became an end in itself in the measure in which religion came to be located in a state of soul. . . . *Erbauung* [edification] as the purpose of the sermon thus epitomizes the transmutation of Judaism that happened in the nineteenth century: 'Piety' was no longer conceived of in terms of obedience to the divine law as the precondition for the soul's closeness to God; it now stood on its own, drawing its nourishment from the autonomy of moral Reason, the subjectivity of feeling, and the objectivity of the Idea, to which the spirit was able to elevate itself. It was this kind of piety that the sermon sought to cultivate and to reconcile with biblical and rabbinic theology.[79]

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[77]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 101.

[78]Altmann, *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History*, p. 201.

[79]Ibid., pp. 233f. Often scholars have dismissed the ritual innovations of the early reformers as merely esthetic. For some of the academically trained preachers, there were profound philosophical and theological reasons for increased decorum and a vernacular sermon. Lilienthal would not have rejected the ideal of obedience to the divine law, yet he also strove for the edifying result in worship.

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Demonstrating his mastery of the German edificatory style, Lilienthal was sensitive to the latest trends, imbuing his talks with traditional Jewish themes and literary materials. His addresses usually followed a standard pattern of the day: first, a prayer or invocation to God, then the introduction of the theme, next, a two- or three-part statement of the thesis followed by a lengthy proof of each proposition, and, finally, a brief prayer.[80]

He appealed often to the faith and "higher nature" of his listeners, admonishing them to be virtuous while adopting a severe, pietistic tone. In the first, "*Der Herr und sein Name der Einig-Eine*," he suggested that the millennial suffering of the Jewish people had purified them, bringing them wisdom and virtue.[81] In "*Die Beruf*," Lilienthal contrasted the life ennobled by a higher calling to the slothful and meaningless pursuit of pleasure and sensuality in which most people were mired.[82] The final sermon in the collection, "*Unsterblickheit*," contrasted those who lived life with the awareness of their immortality and ultimate judgment with those who doubted these truths. The former were pilgrims who did not overvalue either the discomforts they encountered or the wealth and wisdom they might accumulate. The latter lived only for the moment, immersed in meaningless sensuality.[83] He appealed to the emotions of his congregants with graphic descriptions of the decay of the body in the grave, plundered by worms.[84]

As depressing as these passages were, they were part of a rhetorical technique whose goal was the uplifting of the listeners to holiness, piety, faith, and fear of God.[85]

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[80]For a discussion of German sermon structure see Bernhard N. Cohn, "Early German Preaching in America," *Historia Judaica* 15, part 2 (October 1953):91ff.

[81]Lilienthal, *Predigten für Sabbathe und Festtage*, p. 8. For Christian trends see Altmann, "New Style of Preaching," pp. 208ff.

[82]Lilienthal, *Predigten für Sabbathe und Festtage*, p. 19.

[83]Ibid., pp. 36f.

[84]Ibid., p. 31.

[85]Altmann, "New Style of Preaching," p. 220.

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Each sermon ended with the triumphant assertion of a central Jewish belief such as the unity of God and His Name, the ultimate value of a life in harmony with God's will, or the immortality of the soul.

The addresses were replete with appropriate scriptural references. In the second sermon, Moses was offered as a paradigm for a life inspired by a divine calling. In the third, Lilienthal conjured up the patriarch Jacob's deathbed as a springboard for his discussion of immortality. Each sermon had a biblical proof-text from the Torah, Prophets, Psalms, and liturgy. The first sermon began with a lengthy explication of the final phrase of the *Aleinu*: "The Lord shall be King over all the Earth: In that day shall the Lord be One, and His Name One."[86] The proof-text for "*Die Beruf*" was Proverbs 8:20: "I walk on the way of righteousness, on the paths of justice.[87] The final sermon was based on Psalm 16: 9-11: "So my heart rejoices, my whole being rests secure. For you will not abandon me to Sheol, or let Your faithful one see the Pit. You will teach me the path of life. In Your presence is perfect joy; delights are ever in Your right hand."[88]

While stylistically modern, Lilienthal's sermons were theologically traditional, in harmony with the religious conservatism of the congregation he addressed. He strove to impart spiritual edification, giving no hint of the sophisticated scholarship evident in his dissertation, and certainly no reflection of the reformist currents of his time.[89] In a passionate passage that touched on the contemporary debate between reformers and traditionalists of the 1830s, he blamed the arrogance of his era for the polarization which threatened the Jewish community and urged the parties to overcome the quarrels and strife

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[86]Translation from Joseph H. Hertz, *Daily Prayer Book*, revised ed. (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1974), p. 211. The liturgy is quoting *Zechariah* 14:9.

[87]Translation from *The Writings (Kethubim):*(Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1982), p. 213.

[88]Lilienthal, *Predigten für Sabbathe und Festtage*, p. 17.

[89]Many years later he still adhered to the opinion that the pulpit was an inappropriate medium for critical scholarship. *Israelite* 2 (August 10, 1855): 36.

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that divided them.[90] When he asserted that Jews had placed their will above God's will and their reason above God's reason, he seemed to favor an traditional position. He urged the congregation not to abandon the Torah that had been revealed on that first *Shavuot.*[91] Invoking the words of Deuteronomy he declared: "You all stand here today before the Eternal your God."[92] He told them to unite in order to build Jewish institutions and schools and to sanctify God's name through righteousness. Then "the Jewish name would be cleansed of all stains and shame" and, true to the ancient faith, Jews would be prepared for the great day when all would recognize God as Father and Lord."[93] In these sermons Lilienthal appears as a traditionalist rather than a reformer, advocating adherence to Torah as the basis for unity.

In Professional Limbo

Though eager and well-qualified, Lilienthal was unable to find a position in the modern German rabbinate. According to the family memoirs, he was rejected because of his progressive orientation, although this is probably reading back his later stance. Ernest Lilienthal suggested that "the government had issued an order forbidding congregations from selecting candidates with liberal views. The order had been pushed by elder rabbis, who regarded the Reform movement as the destruction of traditional Judaism."[94] David

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[90]Lilienthal, *Predigten für Sabbathe und Festtage*, p. 9. This would be a constant theme in Lilienthal's writing for the rest of his career.

[91]Ibid., p. 11. The occasion for the sermon was the second day of the festival of *Shavuot,* which commemorated the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai.

[92]Ibid., p. 12. Deuteronomy 29:9.

[93]Ibid., pp. 13f. The only hint of liberal leanings is found in an omission within the sermon. Lilienthal never mentioned the traditional belief in a personal messiah who would usher in the messianic kingdom. In a remark in "My Travels in Russia," he ridiculed the credulous messianism of a Russian Jewish soldier. Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 164.

[94]O'Neill, *Ernest Reuben Lilienthal and His Family*, p. 9. See also Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 7.

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Philipson noted that

> in this bitter opposition to all religious reform they were playing with fire, for the government was not satisfied with legislating against this alone, but in 1838 an edict was issued which reenacted all the harshest restrictive measures against the Jews.[95]

Jews faced further restrictions concerning residency, were excluded from joining the army and practicing law, and rabbis who were too modern were not eligible for pulpits. The same government whose laws had created the new rabbinate by demanding university education, now banned them from serving the Jewish community.

Lilienthal suffered from this discrimination though he was not associated with the Reform wing of German Judaism at this point. His rabbinical training had been first at the traditionalist Fürth yeshivah and later under the tutelage of the moderate Hirsch Aub. There was little in his dissertation to indicate a particularly reformist orientation. His choice of topic allowed him to avoid any critical analyses of either Biblical or Talmudic documents, which would have been problematic to observant readers. Additionally, he was careful to treat all scriptural sources and theological concepts with reverence. As Ismar Schorsch pointed out, the use of modern scholarship in and of itself was not proof of reformist tendencies, because, by the 1840s, even German Orthodoxy had its share of scholars of Jewish *Wissenschaft*.[96]

Nevertheless, there are hints from his circle of scholarly colleagues and friends that Lilienthal was sympathetic with some reforms. A new mentor, Dr. Ludwig Philippson, was a moderate reformer. Born in 1811, just a few years before Lilienthal, Philippson attended the gymnasium and during his university years also studied Philo. After completing his dissertation on Plato and Aristotle in 1831, Philippson became a preacher and rabbi in Magdeburg; in 1837 he founded the weekly Jewish paper, the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, which he would edit for over fifty years. Active in the fight for

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[95]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 9.

[96]Schorsch, "The Emergence of the Modern Rabbinate," pp. 18, 21f.

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Jewish emancipation and an organizer of the Reform Rabbinical Conferences in the 1840s, Philippson emerged as an energetic and influential figure in progressive German-Jewish circles.[97] Lilienthal also conducted a correspondence with Isaac Noah Mannheimer, who became the "First Teacher of Religion" in the state-supported Viennese synagogue in 1825. Facing an ideologically divided community, Mannheimer had introduced ritual and liturgical modifications in his synagogue by omitting some of the medieval poetry (*piyyutim*) from the services and by formulating a series of rules to foster decorum. At the time of Lilienthal's correspondence, Mannheimer's cantor, Solomon Sulzer, was composing his ground-breaking *Schir Zion* (1839), which successfully combined western musical traditions with traditional Jewish musical motifs and modes. The two worked toward a liturgy and musical service that would unify their polarized community along the lines of moderate Reform.[98] It may be that in the reactionary years just following his graduation, his association with these men made him suspect in the eyes of the conservative government and the older rabbinic leaders.

His need to find a position was compounded by his engagement to his childhood sweetheart, Pepi Nettre. Pepi's father, Isaac, was a close friend of Max's father and the children of the two families grew up together. Ernest Lilienthal recounted that "when the boys were in the University of Munich, Max studying for a doctorate of philosophy and

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[97]For a discussion of Philippson see Norton David Shargel, "Ludwig Philippson: The Rabbi as Journalist, An Anthology of his writings with an Introductory Essay" (Ph.D. Jewish Theological Seminary, 1990). Johanna Philippson, "The Philippsons, a "German-Jewish Family 1775 -1993," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 7 (1962):102ff. Israel Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, vol. 10: *The Science of Judaism and Galician Haskalah*, pp. 160-9. For Lilienthal's description of him see a letter to his brother Samuel in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal,* p. 143.

[98]Eric Werner, *A Voice Still Heard: The Sacred Songs of the Ashkenazic Jews* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976), pp. 206ff. Werner claims on page 318, n. 14 that Isaac M. Wise later used Mannheimer's liturgy as the basis for *Minhag America.* See chapters four and six below."See also Moses Rosenmann, *Isak Noa Mannheimer; Sein Leben und Wirken* (Vienna: R. Lowit Verlag, 1922); and *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Isaac Noah Mannheimer."

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Samuel for a medical degree, they fell in love, Max with Pepi, Samuel with Caroline."[99] While Samuel's courtship of the older sister Caroline developed normally, Max and Pepi would endure the trial of a long separation before they could marry.[100]

As he continued to look for a pulpit, Lilienthal made use of his skills in *Wissenschaft by* cataloguing the noted collection of Hebrew manuscripts in the Royal Library of Munich. Between May 19, 1838 and November 16, 1839 he wrote a series of "Bibliographical Notices" for the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums.* Published in the literary supplement, these reports described some 313 manuscripts in varying detail, including Hebrew Bibles, prayer books, medieval Jewish philosophy treatises, traditional commentaries, kabbalistic texts, and grammatical discourses.[101]

Exporting *Bildung*: Lilienthal's Russian Mission

Lilienthal's scholarly work captured the attention of Philippson, who, in 1838, had received a letter from the congregation in Riga requesting help in finding

> a German teacher and preacher, since German was the mother tongue of the Jews of Riga; such a man was not to be found in Russia where there was no modern education and no modern enlightenment among the Jews. The leader they desired must be a man of modern culture, but of conservative religious tendencies.[102]

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[99]O'Neill, *Ernest Reuben Lilienthal and His Family*, p. 8. Both girls were pretty, with soft brown eyes, black hair, and olive skin. Max was a tall, distinguished looking young man with red hair.

[100]Samuel left for America in 1841, Caroline arrived in Charleston in 1843 and they married soon after. O'Neill, *Ernest Reuben Lilienthal and His Family*, p. 14.

[101]Later Lilienthal would claim his research led the scholar Adolf Jellenik (1823-1893) to the important discovery that the *Zohar* (the classical text of Spanish Jewish mysticism) was written in the thirteenth century by Moses de Leon rather than by second-century rabbi Simeon ben Yohai. *Asmonean* 10 (June 9, 1854):62. He also began a history of the Jews of Bavaria which was never completed. Max Lilienthal, "Notice Biographique" in Ginsburg, "Max Lilienthal's Activities in Russia," p. 43.

[102]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 15. The letter requested "a German-Jewish rabbi trained in the spirit of 'pure Enlightenment'." Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews:*, p. 58.

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The Jewish editor recommended the twenty-four year old Lilienthal, who was still searching for a rabbinic post. Philippson had also recommended Lilienthal for positions in Leipzig and Szegedin, Hungary but after negotiating with the other congregations and then conferring with Mannheimer, Lilienthal decided to accept the Russian position.[103]

Riga had been part of the German cultural sphere since its origins, dating from 1226 when its charter was modeled on that of the German Hansa towns. The Germans remained the social elite who determined Riga's political, economic, and social life even after its annexation by Peter the Great in 1710. Consequently, in the early nineteenth century, Riga, now the fifth largest city in the Russian Empire, had the characteristics of a northern German city; German was still the language of business and culture, even for the Jews. Riga's modern Jewish school would be under the immediate jurisdiction of the nearby Dorpat University, a German language institution founded in 1802.[104] Lilienthal, however, only found out later about the city's German cultural affinities. When he accepted the job Lilienthal saw himself as a missionary for modern German-Jewish culture, attempting to enlighten the backward Russian Jews. He wrote:

> Something must be done for the Russian Jews, who alone of their

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[103]Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 159. Lilienthal's Russian years are the only period of his life to receive substantial scholarly attention. For example see David Philipson, "Max Lilienthal in Russia," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 12-13 (1937-8); Saul M. Ginsburg, "Max Lilienthal's Activities in Russia," pp. 39-51; Leon Scheinhaus, *Ein Deutscher Pionier: Dr. Lilienthals Kulturversuch in Rußland* (Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1911); Jacob S. Raisin, *The Haskalah Movement in Russia* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1913); S. M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland: From the Earliest Times until the Present Day*, trans. I. Friedlaender, 2 vols. Volume II: *From the Death of Alexander I. until the Death of Alexander III* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1918), pp. 50-59; and Israel Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, vol. 11: *The Haskalah Movement in Russia*, pp. 160-9. Recent treatments include Immanuel Etkes, "Parshat hahaskala mita'am vehatemurah be-ma'amad tenu'at hahaskalah be-rushya," [Compulsory enlightenment as a crossroads in the history of the Haskalah movement in Russia]. *Zion* 43 (1978), especially pp. 280ff; and Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews,* esp. chapter 3.

[104]Anders Hendriksson, *The Tsar's Loyal Germans: The Riga German Community, Social Change and the Nationality Question 1855-1905* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. ix, x, 1, 2.

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> coreligionists were behind the civilization of the age. The sphere of activity in such a vast empire flattered my youthful vanity, and hoping for the best results of my sincere endeavors - to raise millions of Jews to a higher standard - I asked the Russian ambassador at Munich for my passport.[105]

Lilienthal offered Russian Jewry the modern German-Jewish ideology of emancipation, based on the Haskalah movement, ideas that were "recapitulated without major revision down to the early 1840s."[106] German Jews were eager to export this ideology to other Jewish communities.

> All Jews were to be remade in the image of German *Bildung* - this was the new German mission. . . . Education was perhaps the major way that Jews from civilized countries proposed to take care of their unemancipated brethren during most of the nineteenth century. Max Lilienthal's famous attempt in the 1840s to modernize Russian Jewish schools and transform Jews into "useful citizens" by means of "*allgemeine Bildung*" is the classic example.[107]

Though Lilienthal's efforts began modestly with the goal of modernizing the small Jewish school in Riga, his mission grew in scope until it came to represent an epochal encounter between German-Jewish and Russian Jewish cultures at an important moment in the latter's development.

When Lilienthal left Munich for Riga in October 1839, he planned his trip so that he could meet with some of the leadership of German Jewry. First he visited Philippson in Magdeburg, from whom he received references for the congregation in Riga. He later recounted his impression to his brother Samuel:

> I spent some time with Philippson, a tall, spare, young man with an old face marked by lines of study and experience. . . The remembrance of contact with a great man, has an enlivening and inspiring effect, and his picture floats before me as an inspiration in many a fateful and trying hour.[108]

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[105]Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 159. See also Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 7.

[106] Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry*, p. 86.

[107]Steven E. Aschheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jews in Germany and German-Jewish Consciousness, 1800-1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), p. 19.

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Leaving Philippson, he sailed up the Elbe River to Hamburg. Though not impressed with the Hamburg Temple where the first comprehensive Reform liturgy had been formulated in 1818, he was pleased to meet its two preachers, Drs. Gotthold Salomon and Eduard Kley.[109] One of the first rabbis to emulate Christian sermonic style, Salomon had also been an advocate for Jewish emancipation, and, in 1837, had collaborated with Isaac Noah Mannheimer to publish a Bible translation for Jewish schools.[110] Kley had received a doctorate from the University of Berlin and was the author of a popular Jewish catechism.[111] To avoid conflict with the local rabbinic authorities, neither was called "rabbi," though Salomon had been ordained.

Lilienthal also met the more traditional but university-educated chief rabbi of the Hamburg community, *Hakham* Isaac Bernays, who was seeking to modernize the community synagogue within the parameters of Jewish law.[112] In Altona Lilienthal met with Dr. Solomon Steinheim, whom he called "the Maimonides of our day," because Steinheim was a physician who wrote on medical subjects and theology. (He composed music and poetry as well.) In 1835 Steinheim had published the first of four volumes of a theological defense of Judaism. A champion of Jewish emancipation, he also supported the ritual reforms of the Hamburg Temple. His home became a meeting place for leading

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[108]Letter to Samuel, Dec. 12-24, 1840 in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 143.

[109]Ibid. His own conservative tendencies may have prejudiced him against this vanguard of early Reform.

[110]Ibid. See Alexander Altmann, *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History*, pp. 193f. See also *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Salomon Gotthold" and Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 55f.

[111]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 55. For a collection of Kley's sermons see Eduard Kley, *Predigten in dem neuen israelitischen Tempel zu Hamburg*, Erste Sammlung (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1819).

[112]Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 161. Meyer, *Response to Modernity:*, pp. 60f. Bernays formulated the basis for "modern Orthodoxy," which influenced the views of his disciple, Samson Raphael Hirsch.

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contemporary writers, artists, and musicians.[113]

After a short stay in Lubeck, Lilienthal boarded a large steamer for St. Petersburg, arriving in the capital on October 24. To the young rabbi, it seemed to be "the most beautiful, cleanest, most marvelous city in the world."[114] He spent the next two months there, getting his bearings and meeting with important governmental officials. Crucial to the success of his efforts was a series of meetings he had with S.S. Uvarov, Minister of National Enlightenment. When the two met for the first time in St. Petersburg, Uvarov won him over immediately.

> Instead of a Russian bear, whom I had expected to meet, I found a thorough gentleman, whose highly intellectual features made the most favorable impression on me.... His aristocratic bearing is refined and polished by his thorough education; he speaks the modern languages as fluently as his native tongue.[115]

Lilienthal also recognized the minister as "one of the shrewdest Russian diplomats." He told his family that Uvarov showed him courtesy and "real fatherly kindness" in these first interviews in which they shared their views of the backwards state of Russian Jewry and discussed the means to ameliorate these conditions.[116] Uvarov predicted "the brightest future" for Russian Jewry "if they seize this opportunity of amalgamating themselves with European civilization." He assured Lilienthal: "I am a friend of your people; believe me, if we had such Jews as I met in the different capitals of Germany, we would treat them with

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[113]Ibid., pp. 67ff. See Joshua O. Haberman, *Philosopher of Revelation: The Life and Thought of S.L. Steinheim* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990) which contains an annotated translation of the first volume of Steinheim's *The Revelation According to the Doctrine of Judaism.* See also Hans-Joachim Schoeps, ed. *Salomon Ludwig Steinheim zum Gedenken: Ein Sammelband* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966).

[114]Letter to Samuel, Dec. 12-24, 1840 in Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record,* p. 26.

[115]Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal,* p. 190.

[116]Ibid., and Letter from Lilienthal to his father and his future father-in-law, dated September 1840, in Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record,* p. 20.

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utmost distinction."[117]

Some historians of Lilienthal's Russian educational mission cast Uvarov as a villain. Zinberg, for instance, characterized him as a "crafty courtier, an unprincipled careerist with enormous ambition and narcissism," who manipulated the young Lilienthal in order to further the tsar's agenda that "the education of the people should be carried through in the unified spirit of Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality." He points to "secret memoranda" that revealed a conversionary intent behind the goal of educational modernization.[118] Michael Stanislawski has challenged this accepted view:

> Uvarov's intellectual and cultural home was Germany, and he considered himself part of the vanguard of European culture. He spoke French, German, Italian, and English as fluently and more willingly than Russian, and wrote almost exclusively in the first two tongues. Fashioning himself an orientalist and a classicist, he wrote many essays, which he collected in two volumes published in Paris in the 1840s.[119]

A romantic nationalist, Uvarov's unconventional understanding of his Orthodox Christian faith was a "statist, nonpartisan Christianity," in which each nation must find its own separate development based on its unique spirit.[120] Stanislawski argued that his memoranda have been misinterpreted by Jewish historians,

> He [Uvarov] does *not* say that the Jews will or should be converted to Christianity in these schools or that such is their purpose; rather, in accord with his general views on the inexorable link between civic society, true culture, and Christianity, he affirms that Christianity is the purest manifestation of civility.[121]

Stanislawski insisted that Uvarov wanted to Europeanize, not convert Russian Jews. If

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[117]Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal,* pp. 194f.

[118]Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, vol. 11: *The Haskalah Movement in Russia*, pp. 74, 80. See also S. M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland,* vol. II, pp. 50ff.

[119]Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews*, pp. 60f.

[120]Ibid., p. 62.

[121]Ibid., p. 66.

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Lilienthal understood himself to be an ambassador of German-Jewish culture to the backwards Russian Jews, he could have found no one more sympathetic towards his views at the Russian court than Count S. S. Uvarov, Minister of National Enlightenment.

At their meetings Uvarov pressed Lilienthal to describe his program to modernize Jewish education, which included the establishment of new Jewish schools with less emphasis on Talmud and more on secular subjects. The Minster immediately directed him to create a graded plan for upper and lower schools. Emboldened by Uvarov's enthusiasm, Lilienthal recommended that Nicholas grant the Jews "full and complete emancipation" as the best method to insure their integration into Russian society. The minister demurred, saying that the Jews must first win the favor of the emperor by adopting modern culture. Lilienthal did not respond but later claimed already to have known that the job of convincing his coreligionists to trust the government would be much more difficult without relief from oppressive laws.[122] In spite of this putative disagreement, the two forged a good working relationship.

In "My Travels in Russia," written for the *Israelite* in Cincinnati during 1855-7, Lilienthal recalled some difficulties in his first weeks in St. Petersburg: "I felt hungry, and knowing that no Jews were permitted to live in Petersburg, I did not know where to get a *kosher* dinner." Unwilling to accept food from Jewish converts who had invited him to dinner, he finally found a Jewish soldier who hosted "a sumptuous dinner, which consisted of fish, soup, poultry and pie; although it was not very clean, I regaled myself after having fasted about fourteen days."[123]

Nor was the recollection of the arduous trip from St. Petersburg to Riga a pleasant

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[122]Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal,* pp. 196ff. For a discussion of the anti-Jewish persecution in tsarist policy see Mark Vishniak, "Anti-Semitism in Tsarist Russia, A Study in Government-fostered Anti-Semitism," in *Essays on Anti-Semitism,* ed. Koppel S. Pinson (New York: Conference on Jewish Relations, 1946); and Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews.*

[123]Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal,* p. 162. This may have been an exaggeration.

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one.[124] Lilienthal left the capital on December 28, 1839, traveling by sleigh through the bitter Russian winter. He suffered terribly from the violent, jarring motion on poor roads becoming so sick that, asking to dismount, he promptly fainted. Waking up he found that the carriage had left him behind in the deep snow. Panicking, he wandered for hours, with no provisions, passport, or light, not knowing that his carriage mates were searching for him. At two in the morning he found the road, and confused, began walking back towards St. Petersburg until a few hours later he collapsed in exhaustion. He might have died had not a Russian peasant found him and helped him return to his fellow travelers. He was able to recuperate the next day, since the Jewish Sabbath was approaching.

> On Friday noon we reached Dorpat, the only German university of Russia. I declared to my fellow travelers that I had to leave them, for, as I professed Judaism, it was forbidden me by law to travel on the Sabbath. I never concealed the creed which I professed from any person whatever, and I found it always the best mode to gain the respect of society.[125]

He made pleasant use of his short stay, visiting the university and library where he was shown a book left behind by Napoleon during his flight from Russia, but neglected to pay a courtesy call on the University's regent, Lieutenant-General Kraftsroem. Though this man would be his superior, being in charge of all the higher and lower schools in three provinces, it appears that the breach of protocol was not held against the young rabbi.[126]

Riga

After the Sabbath, Lilienthal boarded another carriage to Riga, mercifully falling asleep on his trunk. Unfortunately the driver also fell asleep and they both awoke to find themselves in a deep snow drift. Neither was hurt, so, gathering the luggage, they righted

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[124]Ibid., pp. 210ff.

[125]Ibid., p. 217.

[126]Ibid. He was put off by the fact that his future chief was a military commander, rather than a scholar. Later, when the official visited Lilienthal's school, he reprimanded Lilienthal for not having called on him when passing through Dorpat. Lilienthal used his recent accident as an excuse.

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the carriage and resumed the journey. On Sunday afternoon he saw the steeples of Riga in the distance. Years later he still recalled his state of mind:

> All the feelings of uneasiness, uncertainity and anxiety that assail us when standing at the gates of the unknown future of our career were stirring and moving my heart and soul. I had heard of the antipathy the Russian and Polish Jews have towards their German coreligionists. I knew very well how little they think of their abilities, and how far superior they fancy themselves in this respect.[127]

He feared that they would speak only Yiddish, would distrust his western dress and German culture, but most of all he worried that his youth would undermine his authority. Fortunately his fears were unwarranted, because the welcoming committee were dressed in European garb, spoke correct German, and were eager to engage him.

The next day, the committee showed him the schoolhouse, a rented building with airy, well lighted rooms and introduced him to the sexton of the congregation, in whose home Lilienthal would live for the duration of his stay in Riga. He also met the local rabbi with whom he developed respectful relations, since the older man was an eminent Talmudist and highly esteemed by his community. Over the next week he was introduced to important Jewish merchants, many of whom had made their fortunes in Riga, the second largest commercial port in the empire.

Hired as a preacher as well as school director, Lilienthal gave his first sermon on the following Sabbath, which was, according to his later account, "the first German lecture ever delivered in Russia."[128] The German portion of his audience was very satisfied with his modern German style, but the local rabbi warned him that the Polish Talmudic scholars preferred the older *derashah.* To please that faction of the congregation, Lilienthal delivered a traditional sermon the next week. Lilienthal instituted regular German sermons in Riga, though he sensed that the Polish Jews, who also attended his services, understood only a portion of his remarks. On the occasion of the inauguration of the school, he gave

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[127]Ibid., pp. 219f.

[128]Ibid., p. 232.

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an address before an audience that included the governor of the state, the director of the region's schools and his staff, the Catholic and Protestant clergy, the Russian bishop, and many other dignitaries. Lilienthal had it published, sending copies to the imperial family and various ministers in St. Petersburg. The emperor sent Lilienthal an expensive diamond ring to show his appreciation. Lilienthal's frequent talks, published by the community in a collection called *Predigten in der Synagogue zu Riga*, were dedicated to "his High Excellency, Sergius Uvarov." In his foreword, Lilienthal articulated his mission to raise the level of Russian Jewry to that of the Jews of Western Europe. He compared Russian Jewry to a sick man who cannot heal himself and to a captive who cannot free himself from his chains.

> This education is the duty of the rulers and princes established by God. No other government . . . has so earnestly and energetically undertaken to regenerate Judaism and to organize it as 'Russia's great monarch' and his ministers.[129]

His blatant identification with the Russian government certainly ingratiated Lilienthal to it.

While few details about the school are extant, it is clear that the rabbi attempted to implement much of the German-Jewish educational program discussed above.

> Our school had been organized. The curls (*Peoth*) of the Polish boys had mostly been cut off and they came to the school house neatly and properly dressed. A large number had been enrolled, the teachers had been engaged and the formal opening of the school had been arranged for. The portrait of the Emperor embellished the walls. . . . Our school was soon in successful operation. Our Jewish boys made rapid progress in every department.[130]

He was particularly pleased with the success of those boys who had studied Talmud, since he considered it " the best means to develop rapidly the mental capacities."[131]

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[129]Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, vol. 11: *The Haskalah Movement in Russia*, p. 76.

[130]Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 233f. See page 6 above. See also Steven J. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History,1794-1881* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), pp. 49ff.

[131]Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 234. This positive evaluation of talmudic study was a departure from the standard Haskalah

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He worked diligently to move the community in the new direction. To his fiancée Pepi, he wrote:

> As regards my occupation here, the people do nothing as I would like them to do it, and are not organized according to German methods. Everything is put on my shoulders; I am director of the society of orphans, member of the school commission, of the board of directors of the synagogue, keep the records and attend to the bills of the schools (that takes an immense lot of my time), preach a sermon every three weeks, give five hours' instruction to the confirmation class of boys, and five to the girls. In order to do this I begin my studies at five in the morning and go to school at eight and, with this and various societies, I am occupied until four. At four o'clock I give instruction to the confirmation class, then attend to whatever meetings there may be; at seven o'clock I must visit either the bishop, the director, the pastors, or the superintendent, and - what is still more tiresome - I receive many callers, who remain with me until nine o'clock.[132]

Especially important was the institution of confirmation for both girls and boys. At first Lilienthal met resistance, but eventually "they saw that this thing called confirmation consisted of nothing but instruction in the holiest, highest interests of mankind."[133] Confirmation was "adopted from Christianity, where it represented the culmination of a course of study intended to prepare the young person for adult status in the church." The Reform movement seized upon this ceremony as a way to inculcate religious principles in children whose Jewish identities were eroding in early nineteenth-century Germany.[134] The first confirmation had been performed in Dessau in 1803 under Israel Jacobson, an important early Reform leader. It was among the reforms that spread throughout various German states in the 1820s and 1830s, when it took on a more Jewish character; despite the criticism of its detractors, many felt that confirmation was more successful as an

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condemnation of the traditional curriculum.

[132]Lilienthal, *Lilienthal Family Record,* Letter to Pepi, date March 2, 1840, p. 16. He also began an extensive correspondence with important Russian maskilim including M.A. Günzberg and Nissan Rosenthal of Vilna. Philipson, *Max Lilienthal,* pp. 19f.

[133]Letter to his brother Samuel, dated December 12, 1840, in Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record,* p. 28.

[134]Meyer, *Response to Modernity,* p. 39. See also Jakob J. Petuchowski, "Manuals and Catechisms of the Jewish Religion in the Early Period of Emancipation," in *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History,* ed. Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 47-64.

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educational device than the ceremony of becoming a Bar Mitzvah.[135]

After hearing about some orphan boys wandering destitute around the city, Lilienthal convinced the board of trustees to transform a number of empty rooms in the schoolhouse into an orphanage. He galvanized the community into action as they furnished the rooms, gathered the children from the shanties in which they were hiding, bathed and clothed them, and contracted the sexton's wife to provide them with board.[136]

In July 1840, a professor from the local university formally reviewed the school and, after a rigorous four hour examination, reported to Uvarov that "the success surpassed the most brilliant expectations."[137]

> The Jewish school in Riga, which was founded recently under the guidance of the genial, experienced and thorough scholar, Doctor Lilienthal, has attained already a flourishing development. I report with pleasure the astonishing results in geography, history and arithmetic, German grammar and the Russian language. The present attainment of this new seat of enlightenment surpasses all the most eager expectations and assures for it a joyous, brilliant future.[138]

Lilienthal indicated that the emperor was also pleased and intended to reward him.

Lilienthal labored strenuously to justify the confidence the government had placed in him. Overworked, he began to suffer from headaches and a burning sensation in his chest, so worn out that he was forced to take a vacation. After numerous baths in the Baltic Sea he returned to Riga refreshed.[139]

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[135]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 39-40.

[136]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal,* pp. 235f.

[137]Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, vol. 11: *The Haskalah Movement in Russia*, p. 75. Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal,* pp. 243f.

[138]Scheinhaus, *Ein Deutscher Pioner*, p. 8. Translation in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 19.

[139]Ibid., letter to Father and Mr. Nettre, September 1840.

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While Lilienthal was organizing his school along German lines, Uvarov was working on another track, attempting to establish six local committees to set future educational and rabbinical policy. Only Odessa and Vilna responded, the rest viewing the plan as an "unprecedented intrusion into the internal workings of Jewish society." According to Stanislawski: "Faced with these disappointing results, Uvarov decided that the educational and intellectual regeneration of Russia's Jews must be spearheaded by the Jews of the West."[140]

The Campaign to Reform Russian Jewish Education

In January 1841, Lilienthal received an order to report to St. Petersburg to advise Uvarov concerning the "general affairs of the Jews in the Russian empire."[141] He spent five weeks with the minister, during which a new strategy emerged. Lilienthal sent letters to well known Western European Jewish figures, including Leopold Zunz, Abraham Geiger, Ludwig Philippson, and Samuel David Luzzato, to help locate teachers for a new network of schools. According to Jacob Raisin,

> For more than three years Lilienthal was one of the most popular personages in Europe. The eyes of all who had the amelioration of the lot of the Russian Jew at heart, it may be said the eyes of the civilized world, were fixed upon him as an epoch maker in the history of the Jews.[142]

Within a short time, the names of over two hundred potential teachers were gathered, German Jews ready to come to Russia.[143]

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[140]Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews*, p. 70.

[141]Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 244. It is likely that this was the break that Lilienthal had been angling for all along, since in spite of his success in Riga, the school boasted only 37 students in three grades. Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews*, p. 59.

[142]Raisin, *The Haskalah Movement in Russia*, p. 171. Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews*, p. 70 gives the text of a letter to the Italian scholar Samuel David Luzzatto. For other letters see Scheinhaus, *Ein Deutscher Pionier*, pp. 15ff.

[143]Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews*, pp. 71f. Ludwig Philippson had agreed

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At the end of 1841, Lilienthal made a trip to Vilna, as Uvarov's authorized deputy, to help the local Maskilim found another modern school and to tour other communities to instruct them as to the government's plans. Russian Jewry had its own small Haskalah group, who, in the last fifteen years had grown from a handful of individuals attracted to German models for modernization, to a small, thinly spread community with a more or less common ideology. Led by Isaac Baer Levinsohn, the Russian Maskilim emphasized the need for modern education, de-emphasized Talmudic study, rejected Yiddish, and advocated occupational reforms and cooperation with the Russian government.[144]

The Russian Maskilim welcomed him as a "liberator and redeemer." One maskil, Benjamin Mandelstamm, exclaimed: "He was in my eyes virtually like a new Moses through whom God had chosen to aid his people."[145] Pauline Wengeroff, who, as a child witnessed Lilienthal's visit to her native town, recalled:

> During his stay in Brest, Dr. Lilienthal gathered daily many young people about him, to whom he spoke of the necessity of acquiring West-European culture. He gave them useful advice, painted for them beautiful pictures of their futures as men of learning, and won thereby the hearts of these susceptible youths, who . . . laid out new paths for themselves in all other respects and constantly deviated more and more from the educational views of the older generation - the characteristic symptoms of the Lilienthal generation.[146]

Lilienthal convinced the Vilna community to cooperate with the plan after offering a

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to come himself, as had Jost; Mannheimer and Sulzer volunteered to train young men in preaching and liturgy to prepare them for Russian pulpits. The slow pace of Russian developments gave rise to a false rumor that the project had been abandoned. Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 26f.

[144]Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, vol. 11: *The Haskalah Movement in Russia*, pp. 3-52. See his discussion of Levinsohn's *Te'udah B'Yisrael* which received the government's imprimatur. See also David E. Fishman, *Russia's First Modern Jews: The Jews of Shklov* (New York: New York University Press, 1995) for the earliest manifestations of modern thought.

[145]Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, vol. 11: *The Haskalah Movement in Russia*, p. 83.

[146]Madam Pauline Wengeroff, *Memoiren einen Grossmutter* (Berlin: M. Poppelauer, 1908-10), esp. pp. 118-137, as translated in Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 10.

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personal guarantee:

> I shall not go a step further in promoting the plans of the government before having obtained the assurance that nothing will be undertaken against our holy religion, that I shall lay down my office as soon as I shall become convinced of the contrary.[147]

Against the advice of the local Maskilim, Lilienthal decided to bring his message to Minsk, where traditionalist forces opposed him at a public meeting with abusive behavior and threats. As a result, traditionalists in Vilna regained the upper hand, when, during a gathering they denounced Lilienthal's "scheme as godless and sinful; threats of the most daring kind were uttered." The meeting degenerated into chaos until the fire department was ordered to disperse the crowd by dousing it with water. Lilienthal returned to St. Petersburg to confer with Uvarov.[148]

Unfortunately, Lilienthal had begun to alienate the Russian Maskilim as well. They felt that he remained aloof from them, focusing on his attempt to woo the Hasidim and the Mitnaggdim (traditional Jews opposed to Hasidism). Having hoped that the new plan would open up teaching jobs for them, they were angry that Lilienthal preferred German scholars to staff the new schools. They accused him of holding the Russian Maskilim in contempt, and, in fact, in a letter to the education ministry he characterized them as "dirty, bearded Jews who are barely touched by the rays of enlightenment." Resenting this arrogant young foreigner who seemed intoxicated with his sudden, nearly messianic mission, they complained that a Russian Maskil would have been a more appropriate choice to lead the enlightenment effort.[149]

Lilienthal felt that the distrust of both the traditionalists and Maskilim had its origin in his German background, his youth, and his lack of experience in Russian politics. He

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[147]Max Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal,* p. 266.

[148]Ibid., pp. 312ff. Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews*, p. 75.

[149]Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, vol. 11: *The Haskalah Movement in Russia*, pp. 83ff.

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explained to Uvarov that the Maskilim were angry that a Russian Jew was not entrusted with the mission while the traditionalists suspected him of "being a missionary, fostering in disguise some proselytizing schemes." He suggested that the communities be asked to select representatives to attend a Jewish synod in an effort to win the confidence of the various factions. Uvarov backed this attempt to save his plan, ordering Lilienthal to embark on another tour of Russian cities to insure cooperation with the new approach.[150] Lilienthal was hesitant to expose himself to further physical threats until Uvarov offered him a police escort along with all the privileges of someone in the imperial service. To ease his way Lilienthal composed a polemical tract called *Maggid Yeshuah* in which he explained the desire of Nicholas to uplift the Jews by improving their education without infringing upon Jewish beliefs and laws. At the same time he warned that "the government would not brook any interference with its plans or any insults to Lilienthal during his imminent trip." The safety of the Jews depended upon their cooperation with the proposed commission.[151]

Lilienthal toured the entire Pale, stopping in

> Riga, Mitau, Kovno, Vilna, Minsk, Grodno, Belostok, Zhitomir, Berdichev, Kamenets-Podol'sk, Kishineve, Odessa, Kherson, Uman, Kiev, Chernigov, Mogilev, and Vitebsk. Everywhere, even in Vilna and Minsk, the communities welcomed Lilienthal, heard him out, and nominated candidates for the commission.[152]

Lilienthal's apparent success, especially with the traditionalists, was in large measure due to extreme threats concerning the consequences for non-cooperation.[153]

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[150]Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal,* pp. 323-5.

[151]Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews*, p. 77. His tract was answered by an attack by the maskil Mordecai Aaron Günzburg in *Maggid Emet.*

[152]Ibid.

[153]Ibid., p. 78. Stanislawski suggested that this argument was crucial in swaying the influential rabbi Yitshak ben Haim of Volozhin. This aspect of the discussion was entirely left out of Lilienthal's account of their meeting. Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal,* p. 350.

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A commission, made up of Rabbi Yitshak ben Haim of Volozhin (representing the Mitnaggdim), Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneersohn (head of the Liubavicher Hasidim), Bezalel Stern (director of the Odessa modern school), financier Israel Halperin, Uvarov, his assistants, Lilienthal, and maskil Leon Mandelshtam met in St. Petersburg from May 6 to August 27, 1843. (Though Lilienthal had also invited Western European leaders Adolphe Cremieux and Sir Moses Montefiore, both declined.) The commission met in secret and no official records were kept, but various participants left informal accounts indicating considerable diversity of opinion.[154] Surprisingly, the most heated discussions were between Rabbis Yitshak ben Haim and Schneersohn and between Stern and Lilienthal. In the end, perhaps under the threat of coercion, they all signed the document which established basic guidelines for Jewish education, including curriculum and books for public schools, rabbinical seminaries, and private Jewish schools. According to Stanislawski, "Haskalah was now the official policy of the Russian government" when the commission's work became law on November 13, 1844.[155]

Rather than uniting the Russian-Jewish community, the commission's work exacerbated the division between the traditionalist and modernist factions. Rabbi Yitshak told his closest followers:

> Believe me, I have nothing at all to tell you - one does not discuss failures. Salvation has not yet come, let us only hope that no further evil decrees befall us. A wind of destruction is prevailing over our nation, and only prayer and mercy can help us now.[156]

Rabbi Mendel Menahem told his Hasidim that he had been defiant, suffering repeated arrests for his refusal to alter Jewish law. Shortly after his return, he met with other prominent rabbis "to discuss the Petersburg conference and measures to be taken to stem the plague of Haskalah." He spoke disdainfully of the "intentions of the 'Berlintchikes' to

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[154]Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews*, pp. 78f.

[155]Ibid., pp. 83f. That they all signed is indicated by Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 38.

[156]Quoted in Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews*, p. 82.

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poison Jewish youth with the venom of heresy."[157]

Denouement

In July 1845, about eight months after the promulgation of the education law, Lilienthal suddenly left Russia. Though he never explicitly stated why he gave up the Russian mission, various theories have been advanced. Michael Stanislawski presented a nuanced rejection of most of the standard views, concluding:

> What is left, therefore, is a simple, if unprovable, hypothesis: realizing his failure in creating in Russia the future he envisioned, he submitted to the primary personal and familial demands of life and abandoned the Russian mission - through the back door.[158]

There is support for this thesis in the private letters between Lilienthal and his family. As Stanislawski noted, his father and future father-in-law vigorously questioned the viability of the mission on financial and professional grounds. The glorious career that he described to them did not materialize. His position as "First Learned Jew" was that of a bureaucrat at the Ministry of National Enlightenment, with a salary equivalent to that of a skilled laborer in St. Petersburg. It was "hardly commensurate with his ambitions and expectations or with the society life in the capital to which he aspired."[159]

Yet Stanislawski's conclusion that Lilienthal had left purely for pragmatic reasons ignores the likelihood that he became disillusioned with his mission. First, he was an idealistic young man who had chosen his dissertation topic because of the creative confrontation of ideas it represented. However, he found that rather than leading to an easy synthesis, the clash of viewpoints in Russian Jewish politics had polarized the factions

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[157]Joseph I. Schneersohn, *The "Tzemach Tzedek" and the Haskalah Movement.* trans. by Z.I. Posner (Brooklyn: Kehot Publication Society, 1969), p. 57.

[158]Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews*, p. 95.

[159]Ibid., p. 93. As oldest son he had felt responsible to recoup some of the family's fortune lost in a fire while he had been at the university. He must have also realized he would never duplicate in Russia the power and status of his Court Jew ancestors in Germany.

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even further. Further, Lilienthal the consensus maker was now hated by both the traditionalists and the Maskilim. Worse still, his naive belief in the benevolence of the Russian government received a harsh jolt as a result of the 1843 edict that banished Jews from the region near the western frontiers of the empire.

Why had Lilienthal written to his family up to his departure of his intention to continue working in Russia? Stanislawski notes: "Up to the time Lilienthal left Russia, he never expressed anything other than complete and absolute confidence in the aims and policies of the govemment."[160] Perhaps because he feared his letters were being read. He wrote to his father and Mr. Nettre in September 1840:

> I have risked a good deal writing this to you, for the mail is opened. However, you have driven me to such desperation that I will take the chance of putting it into words, although the secret police keep strict watch over correspondence, and would like to get knowledge of my opinions.[161]

In a December 1840 letter to his brother Samuel he explained:

> My position is so difficult, the circumstances are so varied and interdependent, the whole requires so much subtlety, suppleness and, alas, dissimulation, that one cannot give expression to it in a correspondence by letter, for various and many reasons.[162]

In July 1844, he dared to write of his deep dissatisfaction with his situation:

> Since the sad ukase that has proclaimed the banishment of the Jews from the boundaries, the future of the Jews has become so bad that unless the Lord, in whose hands the hearts of kings are like running water, takes pity on them, I would not wish to become a Russian Jew for any price in the world.[163]

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[160]Ibid., pp. 88f.

[161]Letter to his father and Mr. Nettre, Sept. 1840 in Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 21. Lilienthal discussed several disturbing incidents with the police as well as the high level of vice in the government in "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 168ff.

[162]Letter to his brother Samuel in Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 29.

[163]Ibid., p. 46. Letter to his father and Mr. Nettre. Many years later he explicitly connected his decision to leave with the ukase: "All hope of a repeal was gone, I then made up my mind to leave the imperial service, and in July, 1845, I left St. Petersburg for the shores of the land of human right and liberty." *Jewish Times* 1 (January 28, 1870):4.

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Lilienthal's disillusionment was slow to emerge, due to his illusions about the benevolence of the state, and his inflated conception of his own mission.[164] After being allowed to leave St. Petersburg in July 1845, ostensibly for a short vacation in order to marry Pepi, he sent his resignation to the Russian court and almost immediately left for America.[165]

Lilienthal's Russian mission remained unfinished resulting in some criticism for abandoning the project.[166] He did not directly refer to it in print until 1855, perhaps because he was troubled by this failure. Nevertheless, his effort did represent a notable moment in the modernization of Russian Jewry. For Lilienthal himself, the experience provided the foundation of a lifelong opposition to governmental interference in religious matters. It also was the first time he tried to realize his deep-seated belief, expressed in his dissertation and early sermons, that working for consensus was the most productive approach to the seemingly intractable problems facing Jewry. Passionate commitment to *Klal Yisrael* would always take precedence over ideology. Seeking to be a peacemaker and a unifier, he had the unpleasant fate of living in an age of increasing polarization and dissension.

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[164]Whittaker agreed, saying, "Even Lilienthal felt duped and grew to understand that the government had no intention of emancipating the Jews." Whittaker, *The Origins of Modern Russian Education*, p. 206.

[165]Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews*, p. 91.

[166]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 43.

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Chapter Two: "Chief Rabbi" (1845-1848)

On to America

Leaving Russia in July 1845, Lilienthal was finally reunited with his family and his fiancée Pepi. His brother Samuel had already married Pepi's older sister Caroline, so Max and Pepi made a second Lilienthal-Nettre union. Their wedding, postponed many times, took place in Munich on August 27, 1845.[1] The love between the two, deepened through the years of painful separation, remained a constant throughout their lives together.

Lilienthal preached several times in the Munich synagogue following his return, but found no permanent employment.[2] Without a rabbinic position he could not qualify for the *Matrikel* and he feared that his "wife and children would be considered illegal."[3] After conferring with their elders, Max and Pepi decided to join their brother and sister Samuel and Caroline in America. His sister Sophie and her husband John Lehrmaier had also emigrated, enlarging the Lilienthal foothold in America.[4]

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[1]Pepi reproached Max for the delays, causing the two to quarrel through the mail. As early as August 22, 1841, Max wrote of their approaching wedding. See Lilienthal, *Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 33. He kept waiting for an important appointment from the Russian government that would allow him to support his wife. In late 1844, believing the wedding to be imminent, he urged Pepi: "Make all necessary preparations; get your trousseau ready." Ibid. p. 51. Yet again there was a delay. Though the oldest child, Max was one of the last to marry. Eventually there were three Lilienthal-Nettre unions when the youngest Lilienthal, Henrietta, married Philip Nettre. Ibid., p. 6.

[2]Lilienthal, *Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 53; and O'Neill, *Ernest Reuben Lilienthal and His Family*, p. 12. Sophie reports that these sermons made a lasting impression on some listeners.

[3]Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 46, July 1844 letter to future father-in-law Isaac Nettre. Though at this time the problem of children was hypothetical, there was still a legal limit on the number of families allowed in any community.

[4]The family had also planned for Max's brother Seligmann to go to America since there was no financial prospects for him in Munich, and discussed sending Henrietta as well. Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, pp. 41f. According to Barkai, *Branching Out*, the "chain-migration" of siblings was the most decisive "pull" factor of increased emigration, p. 27. See also Ira Katznelson, "Jews on the Margins of American Liberalism," in *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States, and Citizenship*, edited by Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 173.

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Apart from the pull of family, Lilienthal was excited by the promise of American freedom. He had written about it in letters from Russia and had been getting detailed accounts about the New World from Samuel as early as 1840, when the young physician had emigrated to establish a career.[5] Max had shown a favorable opinion of America in a July, 1843 letter to his future father-in-law, Isaac Nettre, in which he advised him to send his son Philip there. At that time he thought the young lawyer would have far greater opportunities in the New World:

> Now that Germans of high character are gaining an upper hand in the North American free states, now that the monetary crisis seems to be passing and credit is being reestablished, now that the western colonies or states are making such rapid strides forward, a future of industrial and commercial activity is to be looked for, such as is not likely in Germany and in Europe where narrow-minded nationalism is on the increase. . . . I hope nothing for the Jews in Europe - everything in America.[6]

His pessimism about the Jewish future in Europe contrasted sharply with his optimism about America. Feeling that the Bavarian government had betrayed the promise of emancipation, he would soon follow the lead of an increasing number of German Jews who chose emigration rather than wait for civil equality in Europe.[7] Lilienthal came to the United States possessed by an idealistic love for the religious liberty that this country offered. In his correspondence to his friend Philippson, the editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, he would poetically rejoice in breathing the pure air of freedom.[8] He urged the German-Jewish intellectual readers of this periodical to come to America, anticipating the "On to America" movement of Leopold Kompert and others by several

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[5]See O'Neill, *Ernest Reuben Lilienthal and His Family*, Chapter 3, for his career as a homeopathic physician.

[6]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 151. Philipson quotes this letter earlier on p. 48. His translation is not consistent. Here Lilienthal attacks the "narrow-minded materialism" of Europe.

[7]Cohen, *Encounter With Emancipation*, pp. 4ff., and Barkai, *Branching Out*, pp. 10f.

[8]*Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 10 (January 5, 1846, written November 25, 1845) p. 18.

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years.[9] Love of America became an important early theme in many of Lilienthal's addresses and was the focus of a lengthy three-part article in Philippson's periodical.[10] Calling the United States the embodiment of the promise of Jewish emancipation and full of potential for greatness, Lilienthal never lost this admiration for America despite the many problems facing Jews in this country.

Max and Pepi emigrated at the beginning of the first wave of European immigration to America. Natural disasters, political oppression, religious discrimination, and economic dislocation provided the "push" for many Jews and non-Jews.[11] This influx began in the economic depression and reactionary political climate after the Napoleonic wars, when German Jews faced obstacles to making a living, getting married or raising a family. Along with their non-Jewish countrymen, who emigrated in far greater numbers, Jews were drawn by the promise of better economic opportunities, but they also sought the personal freedoms that this country offered: freedom of speech and religion, privacy, freedom from military service, and equality before the law.[12] Europeans, who closely

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[9]See Guido Kisch, "The Revolution of 1848 and the Jewish 'On to America' Movement." *Publication of the American Jewish Historical Society* 38, no. 3 (March 1949):185-234. Also Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 9-10. See Chapter Three below.

[10]*Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 10 (Sept. 14, 1846):553-5; and 10 (Sept. 28, 1846):585-6.

[11]The classic study of this immigration is Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Atlantic Migration 1607-1860; A History of the Continuing Settlement of the United States* (New York: Harper, 1961). A more recent account is Maldwyn Allen Jones, *American Immigration*, 2nd Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). The German immigration has been studied by Mack Walker, *Germany and the Emigration 1816-1885* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1964); Günther Moltmann, ed., *Germans to America: 300 Years of Immigration: 1683-1983* (Stuttgart: Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations, 1982); Magrit B. Knewson, *Immigrants from German-speaking Countries of Europe: A Selective Bibliography* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1991). For the German-Jewish immigration see Rudolf Glanz, "The Immigration of German Jews to 1880," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 2-3 (1947-8): 81-99. More recent discussions include Cohen, *Encounter With Emancipation;* Diner, *A Time For Gathering*, and Barkai, *Branching Out.*

[12]See Diner, *A Time For Gathering*, pp. 42-49, Cohen, *Encounter With Emancipation*, 4ff. Katznelson, "Jews on the Margins of American Liberalism," p. 171 discusses the effect

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watched the American experiment as it unfolded, created an idealized image of this country. America became a popular subject in German-Jewish literature as early as the 1820s. Many books, pamphlets, and articles in Jewish periodicals as well as letters from family members all inspired immigration.[13]

The Great Migration would drastically alter the religious composition of the American people. At the time of the Revolution, Catholics and Jews together constituted at most 0.1% of the population.[14] The vast majority of American colonists (perhaps 80%) were affiliated with religions of British origin: Congregationalists in New England, Anglicans in the South, and Presbyterians in the Middle colonies. Most Americans shared basic theological assumptions shaped by the Common Sense Realism of the Scottish School, and Enlightenment rationalism of the Revolutionary period.[15] After the Revolution, a large Protestant consensus came to accept the principles of the separation of church and state, along with "denominationalism," an ecumenical approach that repudiated the theory of one true church. In the non-establishmentary and pluralistic environment of America, churches depended upon the voluntary support of a committed laity, thus fostering an intense competitive environment. All churches were pervaded by a powerful patriotic spirit, as summarized by Sydney Ahlstrom:

> The prevailing spirit of the American nation during the antebellum decades was informed by a popular and patriotic version of the Puritan hope for a

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of market forces of supply and demand for labor on the immigration.

[13]Cohen, *Encounter With Emancipation*, pp. 10,17ff; and Diner, *A Time For Gathering*, pp. 37ff. Not all German-Jewish assessments of America were positive. See Steven M. Lowenstein, "The View from the Old World: German-Jewish Perspectives," in *The Americanization of the Jews*, edited by Robert M. Seltzer and Norman J. Cohen (New York: New York University Press, 1995), pp. 19-40; and Barkai, *Branching Out*, pp. 157ff.

[14]Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 515ff.

[15]Ibid., pp. 355f., 517. Ahlstrom characterized the doctrine as a common-sense apologetic philosophy for Christians in the Age of Reason. Founded by Scottish thinkers Thomas Reid and his disciple Dugald Stewart, the philosophy was brought to America by John Witherspoon, who left Scotland in 1768 to become president of Princeton University.

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> kingdom on earth, as that notion had been freed of its medieval and aristocratic components."[16]

The newcomers introduced religious trends often greatly at odds with the liberal Protestant ethos. By mid-century Catholics would represent the largest church in America with approximately 1.6 million members, served by 1800 priests in about 1600 churches.[17] Besides Catholics, the German migration brought large numbers of Lutherans, members of the Reformed Church, as well as adherents of many sects. In 1790, there were perhaps 1500 Jews in the United States; by 1825 the number had reached 3,000, and by 1848, 50,000. By 1860 the Jewish population had increased to 150,000, and by 1880, there were a quarter of a million Jews in the United States. Catholics, Lutherans, and Jews would struggle, each in their own way, for several generations in order to accommodate their traditions to the American situation.[18]

Numbers increased dramatically in part because the ocean voyage had become less risky due to technological advances. In the early nineteenth century, ships carried better

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[16]Ibid., p. 513. The literature on American Protestantism is immense. See Martin E. Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York: Dial Press, 1970), *Pilgrims in their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America* (Boston, 1984); Winthrop S. Hudson, American Protestantism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); John Von Rohr, *The Shaping of American Congregationalism, 1620-1957* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1992); and Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971). For a contemporary Protestant account see Robert Baird, *Religion in America* (1844; reprint ed., New York: Harper and Row, 1970). For an account of Protestants who rejected this dominant view see Mark Y. Hanley, *Beyond a Christian Commonwealth: The Protestant Quarrel with the American Republic, 1830-1860* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

[17]Ibid., p. 546.

[18] Diner, *A Time For Gathering*, p. 56. Ira Rosenwaike, in *On the Edge of Greatness: A Portrait of American Jewry in the Early National Period* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1985), pp. 17, 21-27, believes that the numbers were initially smaller. He discusses some of the considerable problems involved in census identification and analysis during the period. H. G. Reissner says that between 1831 and 1840 the German population in America grew from 6,761 to 152,454, and by 1850 it had reached 434,626 people. A decade later it more than doubled again, reaching 951,667 people. H.G. Reissner, "The German-American Jews (1800-1850)," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 10 (1965):68.

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instruments for navigation, increasing the safety and speed of voyages; ports developed signaling beams to warn of hazards in harbors. After 1815, the transport of emigrants became a regular feature of an expanding transatlantic commercial trade network. By mid-century there were ships designed especially for the emigrant traffic; in the 1840s sailing ships were gradually replaced by steamships that could cut the journey's duration from months to two or three weeks.[19]

Still, the trip was fraught with dangers, as travelers had to cope with weather delays, unscrupulous agents, innkeepers and con artists at the points of embarkation.[20] Since many ships were still primarily freighters, passengers had to bring their own cooking utensils, food, and rat-proof storage containers on the journey. The poor traveled in steerage, a hold below deck equipped with double wooden bunks, whose ceiling was usually four to six feet high. They hung cheese and sausages from hooks, and got fresh air from a hatchway to the deck open only during fair weather. The steerage passengers were crowded into one room with no privacy, subject to hunger, unhealthy conditions, and diseases such as typhus, cholera, small pox and dysentery. They sometimes experienced neglect and brutal treatment at the hands of the captain and crew and witnessed frequent fights on board.[21]

In all likelihood the Lilienthals did not live through the indignities of steerage, being

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[19]Hansen, *The Atlantic Migration*, pp. 172-3. See also David Budlong Tyler, *Steam Conquers the Atlantic* (New York: Appleton Century Co., 1939) for a history of the development of steamship travel.

[20]Ernst, *Immigrant Life*, p. 12.

[21]Ernst, *Immigrant Life*, pp. 13f. Vere Foster, an Irish philanthropist, traveled to America as a steerage passenger in 1850 in order to find out what it was like. His account of mistreatment is recounted in Charlotte Erickson, ed., *Emigration from Europe 1815-1914: Selected Documents* (London: A. and C. Black, 1976), pp. 255ff. It took him several years to fully recover his health after the voyage. Indeed, some died during the journey. See Raymond C. Cohn, "Mortality on Immigrant Voyages to New York, 1836-1853," in George Pozzetta, ed. *American Immigration and Ethnicity*, 20 vols. (New York: Garland, 1991) Vol. 2: *Emigration and Immigration: The Old World Confronts the New*, p. 119.

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able to afford more comfortable accommodations in individual cabins. But it was still not an easy trip, as witnessed by Charles Dickens, who visited the United States in 1842. He provided a colorful picture of the rigors of ship travel including the "extraordinary and bewildering tumult" of boarding and the stark and gloomy feeling of the ship after it had weathered a storm. Planking was torn away, masts were crusted white with salt, "rigging knotted, tangled, wet, and dripping: a gloomier picture it would be hard to look upon."[22] Dickens was ill for a good portion of the rough, winter trip. The experience on these small vessels could not have been pleasant compared to the relative luxury Pepi or Max had enjoyed in Europe.[23]

New York in the 1840s

Conditions were not much better in New York, since in the 1840s the city presented significant challenges for the newcomers. According to the *New York Times*, when a ship arrived

> everyone in the great city, who can make a living from the arrived immigrants is here (i.e. *im Hafen*): runners, sharpers, pedlars [*sic*], agents of boardinghouses, of forwarding offices and worst of all, of all the houses where many a simple emigrant girl, far from friends and home, came to a sad end.[24]

Runners, little better than ruffians, were known to steal luggage and misdirect new arrivals.

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[22]Quoted in Tyler, *Steam Conquers the Atlantic*, p. 96. For more colorful details see Charles Dickens, *American Notes, For General Circulation* (1842) (Middlesex: Penguin, 1972), pp. 66ff.

[23]Max had suffered from severe seasickness on the shorter steamboat trip from Lübeck to St. Petersburg in 1839. Letter to Samuel, Dec. 12-24, 1840 in Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 26. For a description of first and second class travel see quote in Barkai, *Branching Out*, pp. 37f. A young tailor traveling in steerage, perhaps motivated by sour grapes, suggested that upper class passage held challenges too: "It's really lucky that I haven't the money to travel second class. There you have to pay extra for the privilege of being beaten up." Ibid.

[24]*New York Times*, June 23, 1853. Cited in Bretting, *Soziale Probleme deutscher Einwanderer in New York City*, p. 39. Elizabeth Bogen, *Immigration in New York* (New York: Prager, 1987), pp. 15f.

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One observer reported in 1845 that "the swearing and fighting of these runners, the shouts of the passengers, the crying of the women and children, make as great a confusion as ever heard at Babel."[25] Concerned German-Americans wrote books and pamphlets advising prospective emigrees of the pitfalls involved. A Boston pastor, F. W. Bogen, advised them to keep their luggage with them at all times, and avoid engaging a runner or even asking one a question. Newcomers should never ask directions, pretend to know where they were going, and avoid bargain-rate inns, since these lodgings were often dirty and the owners cheated the clientele. In 1847 the state set up a commission of immigration to help regulate the chaos and control corruption in the New York harbor, finally opening Castle Garden in 1855, the nation's first official entry point.[26]

The Lilienthals' arrival preceded these reforms by a decade. Had his brother been there to greet Max and Pepi, they might have been guided through the dangers of the harbor, but Samuel and Caroline were living in a small South Carolina town at the headwaters of the Savannah River and would not see them for another three years.[27] Fortunately, no unpleasant experience was recorded in the family histories.

The Lilienthals arrived in America during a time of rapid national expansion as new towns grew up throughout the South, Midwest, and far West. Many of the new Jewish immigrants bypassed the established Jewish centers along the Eastern seaboard to capitalize on the economic opportunities offered by this growth. Often among the first white settlers, they established trade links between new settlements and the older cities of the East. They

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[25]Bretting, *Soziale Probleme deutscher Einwanderer in New York City*, p. 41.

[26]Bogen, *Immigration in New York*, pp. 15f.

[27] His letters from Russia had revealed his close connection with his family. That his brother and sister-in-law were not there to support them in the adjustment to American must have been difficult. O'Neill, *Ernest Reuben Lilienthal and His Family*, p. 14. Unfortunately there is no account of their trip or even a date of arrival. Probably the chaos of that period accounts for the fact that Max and Pepi do not appear in the *Passenger Lists of Vessels arriving in New York, 1820-1897* (Washington D.C.: National Archive Microfilm Publication, microcopy # 237).

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were pioneers in the development of cities such as St. Louis, Kansas City, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Omaha, and San Francisco because of the Gold Rush.[28]

Like thousands of other immigrants, however, the Lilienthals chose to remain in a New York burgeoning rapidly from the influx of new arrivals. Manhattan grew from 166,000 inhabitants in 1825 to 630,000 in 1855.[29] The immigrants, most of whom were poor, settled in over-crowded, squalid tenement housing. Both Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants chose their neighborhoods largely based on nationality, language, and religion:

> Few elements contributed more to the cohesiveness of a group than the compactness of its settlement. Existing customs prevailed with little outside interference, religious beliefs were nurtured in comparative security, and native languages were perpetuated over a long period of time. The immigrant community, like a decompression chamber, represented a place and a time of adjustment from one atmosphere to another.[30]

German immigrants, both Jewish and Christian, formed a community in New York called *Kleindeutschland* (Little Germany), which, at the time Lilienthal arrived, was still in its formative stage. By the 1840s it boasted the largest concentration of German-born immigrants in New York:

> It was a newly built-up area that was inhabited mainly by American-born workers and their families. The streets were either unpaved or paved with cobblestones, and they were lined with two-, three-, and four-story buildings made of wood, brick, and stone. Many of these had shops facing the street at ground level.[31]

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[28]See Cohen, *Encounter With Emancipation*, pp. 19ff. Also Diner, *A Time For Gathering*, p. 58.

[29]Ernst, *Immigrant Life*, p. 20. For a vivid study of New York in the 1840s see Edward K. Spann, *The New Metropolis: New York City, 1840-1857* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

[30]Ernst, *Immigrant Life*, p. 46. Diner, *A Time for Gathering*, pp. 89-92. See also Ira Katznelson, "Jews on the Margins of American Liberalism," pp. 159f., who suggested that these "city niches" represented a safe place from which immigrants could probe the opportunities of their new homeland. John Bodnar, *The Transplanted*, p. 118, challenges this view of American ethnic communities as decompression chambers. He emphasizes "the widespread divisiveness which pervaded immigrant communities based on rival ideals, leaders, and class distinctions."

[31]Nadel, *Little Germany*, p. 29.

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By 1855, the number of Germans had grown four-fold and the area had taken on more German cultural traits.[32] There, one could hear the German language spoken and find German stores:

> A visitor to Little Germany noted that the Germans were 'satisfied, happy and contented,' and, most significantly among their own people, they enjoyed life in the city where they 'could speak their own language and live according their own customs.' He added that 'according to the standards of the German workingman one can live like a prince for ten to fourteen dollars a month.' Despite their shabby apartments, he believed that 'they would never willingly leave their beloved *Kleindeutschland.*'[33]

German Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish immigrants shared a common language and cultural background that made their adjustment to America comparable in general terms.[34] Each group tried to adapt Old World institutions and models to the American scene in order to keep their faiths viable. For German Catholics, "the German language represented the old culture" which they wanted to pass on to the next generation.[35] Because of pressure from new Lutheran immigrants the New York Ministerium reversed an 1807 decision and reestablished German as an official church language.[36]

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[32]Ibid., pp. 3lf. Nadel offers detailed maps of the district. The early German district was centered in the eleventh ward between Houston and East Fourteenth Streets and Clinton Avenue and the East River. For the location of early synagogues see Grinstein, *The Rise*, pp. 32, 472f. Two of the German synagogues, Shaarey Hashamayim and Rodeph Shalom, were about six blocks north, much closer to the center of the German district. By the 1850s, the entire Jewish community would shift further north.

[33]Jay Dolan, *The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), p. 37. See also Moltmann, ed. *Germans to America*, pp. 145ff. William J. Thomas, Robert E. Pact, and Herbert A. Miller, *Old World Traits Transplanted: Americanization Studies* Vol. 3, edited by W.S. Bernard (Montclair, N.J., 1971); and Bretting, *Soziale Probleme deutscher Einwanderer in New York City.*

[34]This is not to say there were no significant differences in the adjustment process of Catholics, Lutherans, Jews, and other German immigrants, in part due to basic religious and historical conditioning of the groups. Further, within each group there existed subgroups; for instance Lutherans also came from the Scandinavian countries. See Charles P. Lutz, ed. *Church Roots; Stories of Nine Immigrant Groups that Became the American Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis: Augsberg Publishing House, 1985).

[35]Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*, p. 110.

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Like Catholics and Lutherans, the German Jews in America consciously acted out a dual German and Jewish ethnicity. German Jews spoke German in their homes, often taught their children that language, established German-Jewish newspapers, and developed social, cultural, and service societies for which German was the official language.[37] Lilienthal preached in German for many years, attended board meetings conducted in German, and taught German in his school.[38] He valued the cultural heritage and common memories shared with other German immigrants, and, as he wrote in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, since German Jews had a reputation for honesty and hard work, to be a German-Jew in America was a matter of great pride.[39] Even five years later he would speak movingly of the Fatherland: "How should we remember it otherwise than with love and gratitude; Fatherland . . . it brings back the joys of our sports of childhood, the loves of youth and the earnest hopes and struggles of manhood."[40] Further, in contrast to the dirty, crowded tenements of lower Manhattan, Lilienthal recalled the natural beauty of his homeland. "Truly, it is a great and beautiful country. Behold its nature, like God's garden it is situated in the very bosom of Europe."[41] Still, Germany

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[36]Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, pp. 519ff. See also Gilbert, *Commitment to Unity*, p. 11, and Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*, p. 87.

[37]Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, p. 58. Also see Reissner, "The German-American Jews," p. 94. This view has been challenged recently by Diner, *A Time for Gathering*, p. 45. Diner argues that, in contrast to the few rabbinic elites, "the vast bulk of the migrants, even those from Bavaria, Württemberg, and other clearly German regions, left traditional communities that were just beginning to experience Germanization and arrived in America only marginally 'German.'" The recent work on the "Little Germanies" that grew up in urban centers shows that the German origins may have been a significant part of the Jewish immigrants' identity.

[38]It was not until about 1850 that Lilienthal began to emphasize English education in his private school. See chapter three below.

[39]*Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 10 (January 5, 1846):18. "Der Name German-Jew ist zum Ehrennamen, zur Bezeichnung der Redlich und Ehrlichkeit hier worden."

[40]*Asmonean* 2 (August 6, 1850):122.

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lacked the one thing Lilienthal prized most: liberty. He wrote to the *Allgemeine Zeitung* shortly after his arrival, calling his new country

> the God-blessed land of Freedom, the beautiful soil of civil equality. How like a dream does the memory of old Europe lie behind me, with its restrictions. How hazy is the image of the memory of the terrible Jew-hatred of Russia.[42]

In pursuit of America's promise, Lilienthal willingly tackled the challenges of the adjustment.

New York's Jewish Community

The influx of Jewish immigrants placed increasing pressure on the long-established Spanish-Portuguese congregation Shearith Israel until, in 1825, English and German immigrants split off to form Bnai Jeshurun, beginning a process of multiplication by division.[43] In 1828, a group of German, Dutch, and Polish Jews seceded from Bnai Jeshurun and formed Anshe Chesed. Two other significant splinter congregations from Anshe Chesed were Shaarey Hashamayim (1839) and Rodeph Shalom (1842). By 1845, the year of Lilienthal's arrival in the city, ten synagogues existed in New York.[44]

The New York community was fragmented primarily along lines drawn by differences of *minhag*, i.e., each group worshipped according to the rituals they had brought from their country of origin.[45] To a lesser extent the lines were also drawn

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[41]Ibid.

[42]*Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 10 (January 5, 1846):18. (My translation.)

[43]Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 50. For the early history of New York see also Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew*, and *Early American Jewry* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1953). For the early national period see Joseph L. Blau and Salo W. Baron, *The Jews of the United States 1790-1840: A Documentary History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964). Also see Morris U. Schappes, *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States: 1654-1875* (New York: Citadel Press, 1952).

[44]Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 472-3.

[45]This same process of multiplication of congregations through division was mirrored by

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between the Reform amd traditionalist camps. That was the basis for the formation of New York's Temple Emanu-El, where, in the spring of 1845, young men reacted to the dismissal of the rabbi of Anshe Chesed, Leo Merzbacher, by seceding and forming their own Reform society with Merzbacher at the head.[46]

German-Jewish immigration also placed demands on the community's educational system. Until the nineteenth century, Jewish education in New York was sporadic at best, dependent on private tutorials and local synagogue schools. The few established Jewish schools offered minimal Jewish education along with secular studies. Jacob R. Marcus, in his study of colonial Jewry, suggested, "American Jews had no interest in giving their boys an extensive Jewish education. They had no use for it in this land."[47] Dissatisfied, the new immigrants formed synagogue schools and private Jewish day schools.[48] In spite of these efforts, Isaac M. Wise reported soon after his arrival in 1846 that only two

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the Catholic community, where new parishes based on ethnic and national differences broke away: "Each church was a replica of the church in the old country." Jay Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*, pp. 6, 91. Also see his "Immigrants in the City: New York's Irish and German Catholics," in *American Immigration and Ethnicity*, Vol. 19: *The Immigrant Religious Experience*, pp. 114-128.

[46]Reform first appeared in America in Charleston, South Carolina in 1825, and spread to Baltimore in 1842 when a group of German Jews formed the Har Sinai Verein. See Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 228ff. Their reforms were minor at first: instituting a choir, and barring the sale of synagogue honors. Jick, *Americanization of the Synagogue*, p. 91. Myer Stern, *The Rise and Progress of Reform Judaism: Embracing A History made from the Official Records of Temple Emanu-El of New York* (New York: By the Author, 1895), pp. 13f. According to Stern, they were drawn together "by liberal views which they held concerning religious affairs, due to the higher level of liberal education they had received." Like the efforts in Baltimore, they followed the model of the Hamburg Temple. Merzbacher (1809?-1856), a Bavarian Jew who arrived in America in the early 1840s, received the *morenu* degree from the arch-traditionalist Moses Sofer, and then studied at the universities of Erlangen and Munich. He created the first American Reform liturgy, *Seder Tefilah: The Order of Prayer for Divine Service* (1855) and served Emanu-El until his death in 1856.

[47]Marcus, *Colonial American Jew*, II, p. 1063, and general discussion pp. 1057ff.

[48]Lloyd P. Gartner, ed., *Jewish Education in the United States: A Documentary History* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1969), p. 1. The development of Jewish education will be treated below.

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people were able to read unvocalized Hebrew in New York.[49] There was a pressing need for improved Jewish education to maintain the continuity of faith while facilitating rapid acculturation in what was still a predominantly Protestant society. The challenge for the newcomers (both Jewish and Christian) was to prove that they could be part of the elect company of "true Americans," a challenge that also demanded new and creative religious leadership.[50]

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, there were no ordained rabbis in the United States. The early clergy, called "ministers," were often poorly trained and poorly paid. With little status or power, they were firmly under the control of the lay leadership. In the *Asmonean*, an early Jewish publication, editor Robert Lyon called for an "elevation of the priesthood" in order to make the rabbis "teachers of Israel, not mere hirelings of a moment, the pliant tool of a Parnas."[51] It is no wonder that few respectable families educated their children to become ministers. Isaac Leeser, not an ordained rabbi but was one of the early leaders of American Judaism, commented: "To judge from appearances

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[49]Isaac M. Wise, *Reminiscences*, tr. David Philipson, 2nd ed. (New York: Central Synagogue, 1945), p. 23. Wise may have exaggerated somewhat. See discussion of education below. Wise has been one of the most thoroughly documented American Jewish leaders. Among his biographies are Max B. May, Isaac Mayer Wise: *The Founder of American Judaism* (New York, 1916); Heller, *Isaac Mayer Wise*; and Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise: Shaping American Judaism.* Wise attended the *yeshivah* at Goltsch-Jenikau, and later spent two years at the University of Prague and one year at the University of Vienna. Though he attached "D.D" to his name in later years, this degree was never granted by a University. Sefton Temkin denied that Wise actually received rabbinic ordination either. Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, pp. 22ff.

[50]Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*,, p. 513. Immigrant Catholics and Lutherans had the same challenge. According to Dolan in *The Immigrant Church*, "Catholic apologists were working overtime to demonstrate the compatibility of their religion with the democratic system." p. 162. See also Gilbert, *Commitment to Unity*, pp. 10ff. At an 1855 synod, the leadership formulated an "American Lutheranism," which some Lutherans felt went too far in adapting to its American environment.

[51]*Asmonean* 2 (May 16, 1850):29. For further discussion of this situation see Jick, *The Americanization* pp. 58-9. Also Jacob R. Marcus. *United States Jewry: 1776-1985*, 3 vols. Detroit: Wayne State University, 1989, vol. I. p. 249. We will examine how this issue affected Jews and Catholics in more detail later in this chapter.

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then, one would suppose that the office of minister was not much esteemed among us."[52] Lay domination of the synagogue could only be remedied by the professionalization of the American rabbinate.

Leon Jick compared the Jewish leadership problem with the centralized, hierarchical Roman Catholic Church whose immigrants were also adjusting to American society. In their case, responsibility for reformulating the Church's role was left almost exclusively up to the clergy:

> By way of contrast American Jewry, structureless and leaderless, experienced great difficulty even in designating an appropriate forum in which issues and problems could be raised. As for planning or reformulation, they were clearly beyond the capacity of the rapidly growing Jewish population. . . . [S]ince there was no ecclesiastical authority existing in this country, matters were allowed to shape their own course - each congregation doing as it saw fit; without referring its action to any other but its own minister and even he at times was overruled by the laymen who composed the membership of the Board of Trustees.[53]

Rapid growth within the American Jewish community called for religious leaders who could bring order to the ritual and liturgical practices of the community, create schools to educate the growing numbers of young Jews, care for the sick and needy, and shape an American Jewish religion that would be both substantial and adaptable. Max Lilienthal was able to bring rabbinic professionalism, educational experience, and religious commitment to bear on many of the problems the community faced. A keen observer, he sought to apply his European experiences to the new milieu in which he found himself.

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[52]*Occident* 3 (March 1846):577. The moderate traditionalist Leeser (1806-1868), was born in Westphalia and came to the Richmond, Virginia in 1824. He was elected *hazan* of the Sephardic Mikveh Israel congregation in Philadelphia in 1829, and in 1843 founded the *Occident and Jewish Advocate*, a Jewish monthly. See Sussman, "The Life and Career of Isaac Leeser." Maxine S. Seller, "Isaac Leeser, Architect of the American Jewish Community" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1965). Also Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism: The Historical School in 19th-Century America* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1963), pp. 347ff.

[53]Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*, p. 58. Jick may have idealized the Catholic situation since the Church had complicated problems coping with the huge influx as well as with the intense rivalry between the Irish and Germans immigrants. Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*, p. 6.

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Appointment as "Chief Rabbi"

When Lilienthal and Pepi arrived in New York in November 1845, he was already rather well-known. His Russian exploits had been reported in the *Occident* as early as 1843,[54] and his arrival was announced in a non-Jewish local paper. "Dr. Lilienthal, chief rabbi of Russia [*sic*] will give a lecture in the Synagog [*sic*] Anshe Chesed next Saturday."[55] Six feet tall and thin, with red hair, blue eyes and very white skin, Lilienthal was an imposing figure who wasted no time making his presence felt.[56] On November 19th, he was invited to speak at the second annual banquet of the German Hebrew Benevolent Society. According to the *Occident*

> The Rev. Dr. Lilienthal followed, and spoke with much force, in German, of the gratification he felt in being on freedom's soil, in contemplating Christian and Jew united in the divine cause of benevolence; he gave an interesting although deplorable account of the sufferings of Israel in Russia, and in other lands, where the name of charity was again eclipsed by the cloud of despotism.[57]

This occasion was soon followed by an invitation to preach at Congregation Anshe Chesed on November 29th. Presented to a capacity crowd, this sermon was delivered with "an eloquence and fervor that did not fail to make a deep impression on the minds of the audience." Lilienthal discussed the nature of religion, calling Judaism the true faith. He urged listeners not to desert God and the Jewish faith now that "our rights as men are recognized and respected," ending with an appeal for Jewish unity and peace. James K. Gutheim, whose summary of the sermon appeared in the *Occident*, expressed the wish that "frequent opportunity to preach would be given to Dr. L., and that his services would be

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[54]*Occident* 1 (June 1843):137-142.

[55]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 51. It was also announced in the *Occident* 3 (December 1845):471.

[56]Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 54.

[57]*Occident* 3 (January 1846):525. His own account of the banquet is in his first correspondence to the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 10 (January 5, 1846):18.

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permanently engaged by our community."[58]

The boards of Congregations Anshe Chesed, Shaarey Hashamayim and Rodeph Shalom concurred with Gutheim's sentiments. In early December, they met to draw up a plan whereby Lilienthal would be hired as the rabbi of their united congregations, chosing a Union board of officers from each congregation to work out further details.[59] Anshe Chesed, the oldest and largest of the three, agreed to contribute $500 to his salary while the other two pledged $250 each. Relative to salaries of other Jewish clergy in America, this was a reasonable offer.[60]

One of the earliest extant contracts for an American rabbi, the list of his rabbinic duties was formidable.[61] The original German agreement of the three synagogues

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[58]*Occident* 3 (January 1846):525. He also preached at Shaarey Hashamayim and Rodeph Shalom. Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 51. In his first two addresses Lilienthal praised the blessing of religious pluralism that America offered, then he affirmed the exclusivist claim that Judaism represented the true faith. The tension between these two positions is discussed by John Murray Cuddihy in *No Offense: Civil Religion and Protestant Taste* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), p. 26. "As each of the traditional European religions arrived in America and clambered out of steerage, it confronted an unprecedented pluralistic situation: the existence of the other religions. In the American setting, and under the steady gaze of the American 'public philosophy' and its civil religion, these traditional monopolistic pretensions made their adherents uneasy and embarrassed." At other times these beliefs led to blatent competition for converts as we will see in Chapter 5 below. It was not until well into the twentieth century that American religions developed the general stance of polite civility towards other religions. See also Martin E. Marty and Frederick E. Greenspahn, eds., *Pushing the Faith: Proselytism and Civility in a Pluralistic World* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), p. x.

[59]His appointment was contingent on receiving proof of his rabbinic certification. Since a number of immigrants came to the United States claiming rabbinic credentials, the three synagogues demanded verification. Hyman Grinstein, "The Minute Book of Lilienthal's Union of German Synagogues in New York," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 18 (1943-4):323. He was given three months to produce the documentation. Ibid., pp. 324ff., 329.

[60]By comparison Rabbi Merzbacher had been paid six dollars a month to be preacher and teacher at Anshe Chesed as recently as two years earlier. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 89. In 1845, he received $200 per year from the newly formed Temple Emanu-El. By 1847 Merzbacher's salary reached $800. *Protokolle von EmanuEl Congregation Board of Trustees.* Feb. 16, 1847. Hazan Lyons of Shearith Israel received $125 per month, or $1250 yearly. *Congregation Shearith Israel, Minutes of the Trustees,* Oct. 21, 1844.

[61]*Minute Book of Union*, p. 323.

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stipulated that

1. He was to be the teacher of the Jewish religion in the three congregations.
2. He was to supervise religious services and was to rule on all questions pertaining to Jewish worship.
3. He was to preach in one of the three synagogues each Sabbath and festival.
4. He was to rule on all other questions of law based on specified codes.
5. He was to supervise the kosher meat and the baking of matzah for the congregation.
6. He was to supervise the school and be involved in religious instruction of the children.
7. All post-bar mitzvah boys and twelve-year-old girls would study religion with him and be examined on Shavuot to show their true devotion to Judaism.
8. He was to give an oration at all weddings, pending the permission of the president of the respective congregation.
9. He was to visit the sick, comfort the bereaved, and deliver funeral orations when desired.[62]

It is likely that Lilienthal helped to draft this contract. In theory it gave him the responsibilities and the authority of the new German rabbis discussed above. Though the minutes often referred to Lilienthal by the exalted title "Sein Hocherwurden Herr Rabbiner" (in the English minutes, Reverend Doctor), in reality he could do little without the approval of the Union board. Indeed, before he began the job, the Union board added an amendment to Lilienthal's contract that stipulated which law code he should consult for his rulings on Jewish law.[63]

The speed with which the leadership of the three synagogues developed the details of their unprecedented union was remarkable.[64] In little more than a week they forged a loose confederation that would meet jointly on a regular basis and develop policy on

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[62]Ibid., p. 326. My translation in paraphrase.

[63]Ibid., p. 329. They specify the code *Hoshen Mishpat,* a portion of the *Shukhan Arukh* dealing with the civil code.

[64]It is not clear why they felt such a need for haste. Perhaps they were afraid of competition from the new Temple Emanu-El, which though small did have the services of Rabbi Merzbacher. This possibility is supported by comments in an article in the *Algemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 10 (July 27, 1846):448. The correspondent was a member of Temple Emanu-El and suggested that there was sharp competition between the traditional German and the liberal upstart. According to him, Dr. Lilienthal was hired in a time of crisis. No hint of such a motivation is found in the Anshe Chesed or the Union minute books. The basis for the arrangement may have already been established by Merzbacher who had served Anshe Chesed and Rodeph Shalom simultaneously. See Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York,* p. 90.

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common issues. Each synagogue, however, kept its autonomy. Religious services were held separately; each group retained its own board and officers; no important matter could be resolved without the consent of its membership of all three constituents. This system allowed the synagogues to share resources when it benefited them, for example, in paying the rabbi's salary or running a combined school. A careful look at the plan reveals the pitfall in the system which confronted Lilienthal because each synagogue could go its own way if the leadership deemed it in their best interest. It was a complicated situation for the new rabbi who would sometimes be caught in the crossfire of conflicting demands.

In December 1845, however, optimism cancelled out any doubts about the plan. On December 29, the day after the general meeting at which his appointment was approved, the Union board unanimously ratified their choice. The three synagogues officially declared Lilienthal to be their joint rabbi as of January 1, 1846.[65] In a report to the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* Lilienthal described his position in enthusiastic terms. He reported that the combined congregations consisted of seven hundred families, but he had predicted that within three years there would be at least one thousand. Calling himself the *Oberrabbiner* (chief rabbi), he claimed he was the first rabbi to be established in the United States. God had given him, he said, another opportunity to serve the Jewish people.[66]

The Lilienthals set up their first family home at 21 and 1/2 Eldridge Street, slightly south and west of the early center of the emerging German community but very close to the major concentration of Jewish settlers, who, in the late 1830s and early 1840s, lived on the outskirts of the Lower East Side. Several of the early synagogues were located in this "Midtown" quarter on Pearl and Henry Streets. Lilienthal quickly began to socialize with prominent New York German-Jewish merchants and professionals and entertained

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[65] *Minute Book of Union*, p. 328.

[66] *Algemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 10 (Feb. 1846), p. 98. Here Lilienthal was carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment. Abraham Rice and Leo Merzbacher preceded him.

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them in his home.[67] It was important to him to associate with the social and intellectual elite since both he and Pepi came from wealthy, well-educated families. She, in particular, had been brought up in luxury. Her niece Sophie recalled: "Pepi drew beautifully, spoke French well and in all her bearing, gave evidence of her fine breeding and culture. Her children remembered their father reading French aloud to his wife, while she was busy with some household duty."[68]

In spite of his modest income, Lilienthal lived in a large home, capable of accommodating visitors.[69] Lilienthal's daughter-in-law Sophie recalled that at first the financial struggle was hard. Pepi "willingly undertook to do all the work of the household, and this included the making of clothes for both boys and girls."[70] When the couple arrived in New York in 1845, Pepi was already pregnant with their first child, Eliza. Eliza was born on June 4, 1846, followed by Theodore in 1847, Philip in 1849, Esther in 1853, and Jesse in 1855. Two other children, Albert and Victoria, were born later, in Cincinnati.

Though they lived far from one another, the young family had the emotional support of Samuel Lilienthal (Max's brother) and his wife Caroline (Pepi's sister). The four had been close since early adolescence. Max's nephew, Ernest Reuben Lilienthal, remembered that

> when they were young, these four, the two Lilienthal men, were absorbed in their careers, anxious about provision for their growing families, writing to each other when possible. The two Nettre-Lilienthal sisters were absorbed in the duties and joys of motherhood, bringing children into the world. Each event in the family of one sister was of utmost importance to the other.[71]

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[67]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 20.

[68]Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 56.

[69]O'Neil, *Ernest Reuben Lilienthal and his Family*, p. 26.

[70]Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 55.

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No doubt the loyalty and support of his brother and sister-in-law were of great help in these challenging years in New York. However, most important was the deep love he shared with Pepi. His niece Sophie later wrote that "the love and devotion between them was ideal and lasted beyond the grave."[72]

The arrival of Isaac M. Wise, in July 1846, turned out to be an important event, not only in American Jewish history but also in Lilienthal's personal and professional life. When the greenhorn Wise arrived in America only seven months after Lilienthal, he brought letters of introduction to the Lilienthal home on Eldridge Street. Lilienthal greeted him enthusiastically, encouraging the insecure Wise to continue in the rabbinate. In his autobiography Wise claimed that "the impression which I received in the Lilienthal home, perhaps decided my career in America."[73] Lilienthal helped Wise in practical ways as well, introducing him to important people and arranging preaching opportunities for him in New Haven, Albany, and Syracuse. From this exposure, Wise was hired to officiate in Albany for the High Holy Days, which subsequently became his first pulpit. Both representatives of the new breed of rabbi, i.e. products of the yeshivah and the German university, they enjoyed long intimate and theological discussions, remaining deeply fond of each other until Lilienthal's death in 1882.[74]

Installation Address: Modern Rabbinic Agenda

The Union board scheduled Lilienthal's installation service for January 10, at Congregation Anshe Chesed, following the conclusion of regular Sabbath services. During the ceremony the new rabbi elaborated the duties of the rabbi articulated his vision

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[71]O'Neil, *Enest Reuben Lilienthal*, p. 26.

[72]Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 56. His correspondence with her attests to this as well. See letters in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal.*

[73]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 19f.

[74] Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 129. *Israelite* 1 (August 11, 1854):37f.

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of the rabbinate and laid out his agenda. This speech, perceived as a strong statement of the traditionalist position, would be held up to him later when he began articulating a Reformist philosophy.[75]

With regard to his duties in the congregations, he addressed the Reform versus traditionalism controversy which had already broken out in American Jewry. He stated the position of both the traditionalists and the Reformers in a sympathetic manner:

> The one exclaims: 'Hold fast to the ancient institutions, hold fast to the venerable customs, hold fast to that which has been transmitted to us by our pious fathers. The law which Moses has instituted must eternally, eternally remain the inheritance of the congregations of Jacob.' The others say: 'Onward, onward, is our motto; onward is the watchword of the times, onward is the spirit of the age, we cannot, we will not, we dare not remain behind, if cold indifference shall not seize every heart, if all shall not be abandoned. Whoever will not follow the wheels of Time and history, will be crushed by the wheels of Time in its might, all-powerful revolutions, and then all will be lost.'[76]

Lilienthal assert that his duty was to "stand above all parties," and "reconcile all parties according to the law." At this time, he maintained that reforms should be made on the basis of *halakhic* precedent.[77]

He did not claim the authority to make these changes alone, but wanted to establish a *Beth Din* to aid in his "ministrations," a traditional court made up of "learned, pious and intelligent men" who would study legal precedents and issue rulings. By basing his authority on law and setting up a *Beth Din*, however, he seems to have wanted to remove

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[75]Rabbi Isaac M. Wise defended him against attacks by the traditionalists after Lilienthal began publically supporting the Reform position. *Israelite* 1 (August 11, 1854):37f.

[76] *Occident* 3 (March 1846):586.

[77]Ibid., p. 587. His theoretical position of finding legal precedent for moderate change is very similar to that of Zacharias Frankel, who would soon set up his seminary in Breslau along these lines. In his articles in the *Asmonean* starting in June of 1854, Lilienthal would demonstrate his affinity with Frankel more clearly. He would advocate the use of *Wissenschaft* as a basis for change as well. This "positive-historical" approach would become the theoretical basis for the Conservative movement in this country. His mentor, Ludwig Phillipson, editor of the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, also represented a moderate Reformist viewpoint. This desire to reconcile all parties, to find a basis for unity, was the constant in Lilienthal's thought throughout every period of his life.

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such decisions from the hands of the lay leadership. To mollify the laity, he pledged to listen to the advice of "the respected heads" of the congregations, as well as of individual members.[78] He made clear that his main concern was that he and the congregation work together in concord and peace.

Next Lilienthal turned to the duties of the rabbi in the synagogue, changing his tone abruptly from conciliation to denunciation as he condemned disorder during religious services. Calling such chaos an "iniquity," he said that the synagogue worship had "become an object of scorn, contempt and mockery to all nations." Invoking the Talmud, Maimonides, later rabbinic writings, and the *Shulchan Aruch*, he insisted it was a sin to show such disrespect before the Holy One. He promised to form a special committee, in conjunction with his *Beth Din*, to facilitate "improvement of our divine service" in order to purify and exalt Judaism. In addition, as rabbi, he promised to preach God's law and expound eternal truths at every solemn occasion.[79]

Turning to the duties of the rabbi in the school, Lilienthal emphasized that the most "excellent commission we have received of the Lord" was educating the children "as Jews, as good men, as useful citizens."[80] They must be given a thorough Jewish education, or, as they grew up in a free land and dispersed to distant parts of the country, they would give up their heritage. He assigned to himself the task of instructing the post bar mitzvah boys and girls beyond the age of twelve. Though he did not mention confirmation here, he had it in mind. (Introducing it was even stipulated it in his contract.) In addition, he promised to supervise the work of the schools, urging the directors and teachers to continue to work with him to foster knowledge and love for the holy law and faith so that Judaism would flourish in this country.[81]

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[78]*Occident* 3 (March 1846):588.

[79]Ibid., pp. 589f.

[80]Ibid., p. 591.

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Then, Lilienthal described the duties of the rabbi in the congregant's domestic life. He was to join with them at times of both joy and sorrow. He wished to treat each congregant as a friend without regard to financial status, vowing to help anyone who sought his advice or assistance. Finally, he prayed that"the ties of love may knit us still closer together; that mutual confidence may increase; that the beautiful work which we have commenced to-day may rapidly thrive and flourish." [82]

The congregations certainly understood the address as representing an observant point of view. Not grasping the modernizing agenda behind Lilienthal's words, they heard Lilienthal commit himself to the Law and were reassured. Even Rabbi James Gutheim, writing in the *Occident* reported:

> I am happy to state that the Chief Rabbi cherishes no sympathy with the so-called reforming Rabbis of Germany; but that he is adverse to their movements, and fully determined to uphold our religious institutions and be guided only by the law.[83]

This view of the "chief rabbi's" position was largely substantiated by Rabbi Isaac M. Wise. Citing some eight years of conversations about religious matters, Wise characterized Lilienthal as conservative in the beginning. He claimed that Lilienthal evolved a more liberal position only after years of struggle and self-education.[84] But Wise also pointed out pragmatic reasons for Lilienthal to expound a traditional position at the start of his tenure. The three congregations that hired him were among those who had rejected the innovations of Rabbi Merzbacher, who had recently broken from Anshe Chesed to establish a Reform congregation. Lilienthal was quite aware of this oppostion to change:

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[81]Ibid., pp. 591ff.

[82]Ibid., pp. 593f.

[83]*Occident* 3 (February 1846):574-5

[84]*Israelite* 1 (August 11, 1854):37-8. David Philipson, Lilienthal's student and first biographer, concurred with Wise's assessment. Lilienthal began as a proponent of traditional Judaism, but as he came to know American conditions he recognized the need for reform. Even so, he always advocated quiet, orderly change. Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 52.

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> The doctor came nine years ago to New York almost directly from Russia, not knowing the community at all. His friends and relations gave him a picture of New York as it actually is. The doctor was elected Rabbi of three German congregations; he was bound in duty to operate *with* and not *against* them.[85]

In evaluating Lilienthal's position in 1846, we should keep in mind the amorphous nature of "Reform" at this time. Leaders who represented a broad spectrum of belief and practice had internalized the values of the world outside the ghetto, and sought to harmonize inherited Jewish tradition with those values in a wide range of ways. Michael Meyer explains:

> Not all Jews who advocated significant religious reforms during the last two centuries identified their positions as Reform Judaism. . . . Only gradually did a denominational entity emerge out of a larger, less crystallized religious movement.[86]

In summary, Lilienthal's inaugural address established his modern rabbinic agenda, that of the new breed of German rabbi, yet it shows that he was still deeply committed to Jewish law, accepting only those changes that could be justified according to *halakhic* precedents.

Much hard work lay ahead for the rabbi to make this union of synagogues successful. Even prior to Lilienthal's installation, committees were set up to work out systems and procedures in a host of areas, including the school, confirmation, the decorum in religious services, kosher slaughtering, and conversion.[87] These areas of focus combined Lilienthal's desire to bring both order and professionalism to the various aspects of ritual life and to introduce moderate changes.

On Education

In the forties and early fifties, new Jewish immigrants to New York were

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[85]*Israelite* 1 (August 11, 1854):37-8.

[86]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. viii., x.

[87]*Minute Book of Union*, p. 331.

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reluctant to send their children to public school. They were eager to preserve both their Jewish and German heritages, which public schools threatened because, for the most part, instruction took place in English. However, the Public School Society of New York City set up a German language school in 1839. Some Jewish families sent their children to this school, located near Congregation Bnai Jeshurun in the center of New York's German-Jewish district. Such religiously neutral schools, teaching German, "perfectly suited the wishes of German-American Jews seeking to transmit their language,"[88] were very much the exception, however, with many new immigrants still opting for Jewish schools, which better met their needs.

The immigrants were more concerned by the non-denominational Protestant character of the public schools. Native Protestant civic leaders, motivated by a desire for social homogeneity and fear of immigrant influence, felt the best way to rid their cities of social deviance was through public education infused with Christian values.[89] Accordingly, the Bible was read daily in public school and "religion" was taught. To the Protestant majority, Americanization meant "some combination of learning English, understanding the Constitution, living productively with the law according to middle-class standards, and accepting the values of an undenominational Protestant paideia." [90]

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[88]Lloyd Gartner, "Temples of Liberty Unpolluted: American Jews and Public Schools, 1840-1875," *Bicentennial Festscrift for Jacob Rader Marcus* (New York: Ktav. 1976), pp. 166f. German Catholic immigrants, who also wanted to retain their German language and heritage, eventually opted for bilingual parochial schools.

[89]Carl F. Kaestle, *The Evolution of an Urban School System: New York City 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 138, 158. See also Spann, *The New Metropolis*, pp. 29ff. for the religious controversy and pp. 257ff. for the development of public education during the period.

[90]Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience 1783-1876.* Vol. 2 (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), pp. 244-5. See also George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 89. For a discussion of this issue in the Jewish community see Lloyd Gartner, "Temples of Liberty Unpolluted," pp. 157-190; Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 91ff.; and Diner, *A Time for Gathering*, pp. 152f. For the Protestant viewpoint see Handy, *A Christian America*, pp.

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In New York, the Catholics led a spirited debate over the Protestant nature of the public schools. An assertive bishop of New York gave a series of speeches on the insidious dangers of using the King James Bible, Protestant catechisms, and the glorification of Protestant heroes.[91] Jews added their voices to the dispute, causing the *New York Herald* to remark sarcastically in 1840 that "the battles over textbooks had made Jews and Catholics allies for the first time in 1,840 years." Both groups turned to the creation of parochial schools as an alternative.[92]

Wary of the public school, the new German immigrants were also dissatisfied with the minimal level of Jewish education supplied by existing day schools. From the 1830s through the 1850s, the immigrants, usually poorly educated but religiously traditional, created their own Jewish day schools, either attached to their synagogues or as private Jewish institutions.[93] The Judaic content of their curricula was substantial, even though the curriculum included secular subjects to ensure a full adjustment to American culture.[94]

35, 87ff.; and John Von Rohr, *The Shaping of American Congregationalism*, p. 271.

[91]Kaestle, *The Evolution of an Urban School System*, p. 151-3. Also see Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars in New York City, 1805-1973* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), p. xiv.

[92]Diner, *A Time for Gathering*, p. 152. Some Catholic immigrants sent their children to public schools "despite the clergy's warning of the danger to faith and morals with such a choice." Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*, p. 110. Others opted for bilingual German-English parochial schools which would help them retain their German heritage. Lutherans had formed their own schools in the early nineteenth century, but soon after public schools were introduced they relied almost solely on Sunday Schools for religious education. Gilbert, *Commitment to Unity*, pp. 16f. Bodnar disagreed noting that "the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church demonstrated a passion for developing its own schools, almost from the time of arrival in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio.... Concerned ultimately with the retention of doctrinal purity and good morals, nearly every synod convention in the century after 1840 took action regarding the school systems. Lutheran leaders told parents no Christian with a good conscience could send his children to a public school." *The Transplanted*, p. 195

[93]Gartner, ed. *Jewish Education in the United States*, pp. 1ff.

[94]Alexander M. Dushkin, *Jewish Education in New York City* (New York: Bureau of Jewish Education, 1918), p. 133. Secular studies had been part of the curriculum of American Jewish schools since 1755, when they were introduced by Shearith Israel in New York. Jacob R. Marcus noted the rarity of secular studies in the 18th century and

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In 1842, Bnai Jeshurun formed the "New York Talmud Torah and Hebrew Institute" under the leadership of Samuel M. Isaacs, preacher and hazzan of the congregation,[95] an all-day school with thirty male students that taught a mixture of Hebrew, religious, and secular subjects. Within one year the school had a roster of eighty boys and a budget of $1500. The yearly exams showed that children were able to translate large portions of the Bible. Under the guidance of the Hebrew teacher, two students were even able to read and translate Rashi. Isaacs hoped to make his school a community-wide project, but the other New York synagogues turned him down. Despite his success, in 1847 he was forced to close due to the financial troubles plaguing all of the Jewish schools during this period.[96]

His main competition was Anshe Chesed's all-day school, established in May 1845 with a student body of forty. Rodeph Shalom and Shaarey Shamayim quickly followed suit. When Lilienthal was hired, the Union board made it clear that education was its top priority; the rabbi went to work with the school committee immediately.[97] Proposing a fusion of the three schools, Lilienthal recommended that the congregations hold a fund-raising dinner to establish a fund for building a school house.[98] The idea was approved with the understanding that the three congregations would share the financial risk equally.[99] The Union board set up a school committee made up of two

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cited the commerical conditions fostered by the French and Indian War as well as the relative tolerance they encountered as motivations for this revolutionary change in attitude towards the non-Jewish world. *The Colonial American Jew,* Vol. 2, p. 1065.

[95]Samuel Isaacs (1804-1878) was born in Holland, lived for twenty-five years in England until he came to New York in 1839 to serve Bnai Jeshurun. In 1845 he left to lead the split-off Congregation Shaaray Tefila. In 1857 he founded the weekly *Jewish Messenger.* Schappes, *Documentary History of the Jews in the United States,* p. 437.

[96]Grinstein, "Studies in the History of Jewish Education," p. 43.

[97]*Minute Book of Union,* January 14, 1846, p. 335.

[98]*Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes,* Jan. 25, 1846.

[99]It is possible that this refers to the necessity of subsidizing the tuition of poor students.

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members from each synagogue. This evolved into the Hebrew Union School Society, to be administered by Lilienthal and nine directors.[100]

Lilienthal's school opened in September of 1846, on Ludlow Street. Calling it Union School #1, Lilienthal hoped to create a system of similar schools in other sections of the city.[101] Unfortunately, the trustees of Anshe Chesed did not feel that the facilities measured up to the cost of the new venture and decided not to join, promising however, that they would use their influence to obtain students for the Union School and would join as soon as the School Society was financially solvent.[102]

The Union School increased its enrollment by forty students between February and September of 1847. The elementary department taught Biblical history, Hebrew, translation of liturgy and Genesis and Exodus, catechism, and standard English subjects. Dr. Lilienthal supervised this division and publicly examined all boys of thirteen and girls of twelve on the first day of *Sukkot*.[103] A high school began with 80 pupils, offering a Jewish and secular curriculum similar to that of Bnai Jeshurun's school.[104] High school subjects included Bible, Jewish history, Hebrew language, and selections from the

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This school, like all of the period, worried about having enough funding for fuel, sufficent furniture, and minimal up-keep.

[100]Minute Book of Union, pp. 337f. *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 11 (January 4, 1847):26.
See also Merowitz, "Max Lilienthal," p. 50.

[101]Grinstein, "Studies in the History of Jewish Education," p. 48.

[102]*Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, October 18, 1846.

[103]Minute Book of Union, p. 326. The coed nature of the school was a departure from Bnai Jeshurun's school, where boys and girls were educated separately as late as the 1850s. Dushkin, *Jewish Education in New York City*, p. 47. It was apparently not a controversial point, though, because when Isaac Leeser visited the Anshe Chesed and Union Schools, he mentioned their coed constitutions without comment. See Lloyd Gartner, *Jewish Education*, p. 61.

[104] *Minute Book of Union.*, p. 351. Lilienthal and the school committee visited other schools, showing that, though he was a representative of the new German education, he was still open to American models.

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Shulkhan Aruch.[105]

The committee also planned an upper school that offered classes in mercantile and polytechnical studies, a unique feature for its day. (It is unclear whether this portion of the school ever functioned.)[106] In addition to mercantile and vocational studies, Lilienthal introduced instruction in needle work and abolished corporal punishment.[107] Changes in the public schools, including sewing for girls and some vocational skills, may have inspired these innovations.[108]

Lilienthal's educational system bore the clear imprint of the Haskalah's views of general and Hebrew education.[109] Just as Lilienthal had tried to implement a German model in Russia, he labored to institute many of the same innovations in the United States. Since a precedent for secular studies had long ago been established in this country, his curriculum was not controversial.[110]

Isaac Leeser, editor of the *Occident*, who visited the Union School in 1847, gave us the following description:

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[105]Merowitz, "Max Lilienthal," p. 51.

[106]Ibid.

[107]Grinstein, "Studies in the History of Jewish Education," p. 48. In the *Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes* for June 27, 1847 the issue of punishment was raised. Lilienthal also asked for permission to give the children a vacation and to take them on a walk. These requests reflect the new desire to make the education process more pleasant.

[108]Cremin, *American Education*, p. 394.

[109]See chapter 1 above, especially pages 20f.

[110]For general American influences see Leo L. Honor, "The Impact of the American Environment and American Ideas on Jewish Elementary Education in the United States," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 45 (April 1955):451-496. Hyman Grinstein noted in *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 225, that "Jewish education in New York before the Civil War was not to be compared either in effort or in results with that of Europe," especially with regard to Hebrew language study. William Chomsky, "Hebrew Grammar and Textbook Writing in Early Nineteenth-Century America," in *Essays in American Jewish History*, edited by Jacob Rader Marcus (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1958) documents the primitive and often inaccurate nature of the early attempts at Hebrew language texts, pp. 131ff.

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> From the synagogue we went with Dr. [Max] Lilienthal, who was also present to attend the examination, to view his Union School, No. 1, in Ludlow Street, where we found about 160 scholars engaged in their studies, under four teachers in three different rooms, opening one in the other. We hastily examined the first class, male and female, in Hebrew translation and reading, geography, English grammar, and German; and we must acknowledge that the proficiency displayed was excellent, and all that could be expected, if not more, from the short time the school has been in operation.[111]

When Anshe Chesed finally did join the Union School on October 31, 1847,[112] the New York Jewish community had "the largest and best-conducted Jewish school of its day; two hundred and fifty children were in attendance, and Lilienthal, the best Jewish educator of the age, was in full charge."[113]

Lilienthal also developed adult education within the synagogues, reflecting both traditional Jewish study and *Wissenschaft*. Besides his regular sermons each Sabbath morning he led a *Chevrat Shas* (circle for the study of Talmud). After each session he delivered a lecture to a large audience on the history of the Jews from the destruction of the First Temple to the present.[114] A number of articles that Lilienthal wrote for the *Occident* called "Sketches of Jewish Life in Russia" could also be considered an extension of adult education. For example, he published a biography of Chayim Selig Slonimski, the self-taught mathematician from Bialystok, whose greatness was recognized by Tsar Nicholas. In his colorful narrative, Lilienthal portrayed Jewish life in Russia in loving detail, balancing his admiration for the discipline of talmudic study with his disdain for the community's prejudice against Western knowledge.[115] In a second set of articles, a

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[111]Gartner, *Jewish Education in the United States*, p. 61f.

[112]*Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, Oct. 31, 1847.

[113]Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 233.

[114]*Occident* 4 (February 1847):555.

[115]Ibid., 5 (April 1847): 27-34; 5 (May 1847):93-97; 5 (June 1847):142-148. These articles gave Lilienthal an opportunity to share his first-hand knowledge of the Russian-

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"General Survey of the Condition of the Jews in Russia," Lilienthal discussed various types or classes of Jews he had encountered, including talmudic scholars, Hasidim, and the progressive Jews of Odessa. He assessed their degree of modernization with regard to education, dress, and beliefs.[116] In his dislike of superstition (especially Hasidism) and his concern for modernization Lilienthal conveyed his commitment to the principles of Haskalah.

On Confirmation

Confirmation had long been an important element in Lilienthal's program for modern Jewish education. The young rabbi had introduced the practice immediately after his arrival in Riga. In a letter to his brother Samuel, he described his efforts to explain the purpose of this rite of passage to his Russian congregants: "Finally they perceived that that which was called confirmation means nothing more than instruction in the holiest, most exalted interests of human kind."[117] Besides being an important part of his educational agenda, Lilienthal saw confirmation as a status symbol "to place our young congregations here, in all things that touch our holy religion, on an equal footing with the best organized congregations in the old world." One scholar suggested that "the educational innovation would serve to restore him [Lilienthal] to a place of prominence among the same enlightened circles of Europe from which he had fled."[118]

By January 14, 1846 the chief rabbi had prepared an extensive report proposing a class for post bar mitzvah boys and girls over the age of twelve that would meet with him

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Jewish situation without dwelling on his own failure.

[116]Ibid., 5 (August 1847):252-256; 5 (December, 1847):441-446. These articles began a long series about Russia that was sharply critical of Nicholas and his government. They reflected his own negative experience and may have attempted to justify his failure.

[117]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 147.

[118]Merowitz, "Max Lilienthal," p. 60, citing *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 10 (May 11, 1846):289f.

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two hours weekly over a six month period. The detailed course of study included: l) basic Jewish beliefs concerning the attributes of God, revelation, the Ten Commandments; 2) duties towards God, festivals and fast days, the High Holy Days and the duties associated with them; 3) duties towards oneself, parents and others; and 4) important phrases from the Bible. In this document, Lilienthal described the service of confirmation in great detail. To be held on the first day of *Shavuot*, it would include a public examination, a vow of faith, and the blessing of the confirmands. The following day, the second day of holiday, the confirmands would all be called to the Torah.[119]

With minor amendments, the Union board accepted his proposal. They also instructed the rabbi to defend the legal basis for the ceremony of confirmation to the three congregations. The minutes do not record the debate but it would appear that, having defended confirmation to the satisfaction of the board, he was then asked to justify it in a series of sermons.[120] In an article in the *Occident*, a congregant at the first confirmation ceremony reported that the rabbi "gave convincing evidence that the ceremony of confirmation is in accordance with the strictest rules of orthodoxy, as laid down in the Talmud and Schulchan-Aruoh [*sic*]."[121] We can infer that Lilienthal had to work hard to gain acceptance of this innovation.

The chief rabbi's first confirmation in New York in 1846 was a success.[122] In a

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[119]*Minute Book of Union*, p. 334.

[120]Ibid., p. 333-5. Grinstein claims that there was considerable criticism from the orthodox. *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 250. This can only be inferred from the rather cryptic discussion in the minutes. That there was further discussion of the legal issues involved in the confirmation proposal is evident in the minutes for February 1, 1846, *Minute Book of Union*, p. 337. Here the board ruled that children would not be called up to the Torah on the second day of *Shavuot*.

[121]*Occident* 4 (August 1846):552.

[122]Although some sources say it was the first confirmation ceremony to be celebrated in America, for example *Occident* 4 (August 1846):259; and Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 249), there is evidence of earlier celebrations. Dr. Barnet A Elzass described a confirmation service in the prayerbook of the Charleston

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report to the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* Lilienthal described how, on *Shavuot,* sixteen boys and girls participated in a moving ceremony at Anshe Chesed witnessed by 1500 guests.[123] A correspondent to the *Occident* added:

> No one doubted the excellent effect it had on the whole assemblage. The Rabbi delivered an impressive sermon, which drew tears from all, and satisfied every one, that far from being a destructive innovation, "confirmation" was an earnest appeal to every Jew to rally with heart and soul round the standard of our holy religion.[124]

On Decorum in Worship

As with his views on education and confirmation, Lilienthal's concern for decorum also represented a combination of German antecedents and American trends. In Europe, decorum was a major focus for early Reformers; familiar with orderly Protestant services in which the congregants sat in respectful silence, these Jews became embarrassed by the old style of Jewish worship, with its loud and disorderly praying and swaying congregants wrapped in prayer shawls, chanting difficult medieval Hebrew poetry that few understood. Michael Meyer writes:

> The earliest efforts of the new movement in Judaism had been directed toward a reform of the public services; the main attention, however, had been paid to aestheticizing the service, of making it decorous where it had been disorderly, of excising piyyutim, and thus shortening it, of introducing choral music and the German sermon.[125]

A prototype was the Westphalian consistory. Its leaders developed a series of ordinances whose goals were to enhance the dignity of religious services. In the process, the early reformers made the Jewish service more like the Christian, tending to minimize active

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congregation K. K. Beth Elohim, printed in 1830. The author claims that confirmation was conducted in Charleston in 1825. The liturgy consisted of a ritual dialogue between minister and youth. *Jewish Tribune* 7 (May 18, 1906):17

[123]*Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 10 (Jan. 4, 1847):25.

[124]*Occident* 4 (February 1847):552.

[125]David Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism,* rev. ed. (New York: Ktav, 1967), p. 152.

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congregational participation, and elevate the importance of the professional clergy.[126]

Further efforts to increase decorum that took place in Berlin, Hamburg, and elsewhere represented a spectrum from radical to moderate. Some ritual reforms were even advocated by the leader of Modern Orthodoxy, Samson Raphael Hirsch, who wore a black robe and introduced into his synagogue a regular German sermon based on Christian models, a male choir, and a heightened sense of propriety. In France, England, as well as Germany, the Orthodox countered the Reform threat by adopting much of its program. England's Chief Rabbi, Nathan Marcus Adler, instituted a series of regulations to bring order and solemnity to the service.[127]

Decorum was a concern of American Jews long before the Reform movement became a force in the United States. During the colonial period, congregations tried to limit noise and interruptions in the service by fining disruptors, denying them a seat, depriving them of ritual honors or even revoking membership in the community.[128] In 1805, Shearith Israel enacted punitive ordinances to establish better order at services, giving the president the power to fine or expel a guilty congregant. In 1809, some members of Shearith Israel tried to curtail the selling of *misheberachs* (blessings recited for a person during the ritual of Torah reading) because the custom involved interrupting the service for a raucous bidding for honors. Since this auction provided income for the congregation, the change was rejected. In 1829, another attempt to abolish the offerings failed.[129]

The newer synagogues of the city tried to strike a balance between tradition and decorum. In 1842, Anshe Chesed required mourners to recite the Kaddish prayer in unison. When Leo Merzbacher was Rabbi of Anshe Chesed, he made changes in the sale

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[126]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 35f. The rules were published Sept. 24, 1810 and were reprinted in the Haskalah journal *Sulamith* 3.1(1810):366-80.

[127]Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, p. 178.

[128]Marcus, *The Colonial American Jew*, Vol. 2, pp. 922ff.

[129]Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 272.

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of honors distributed during the service, introduced a choir to lead the congregational responses, and required that all notices be posted on blackboards at the entrance, instead of having them read out loud during services.[130]

Lilienthal, who had condemned the lack of decorum in his inaugural sermon, vigorously continued Merzbacher's efforts. The Union board set up a committee on synagogue order at a meeting in January 1846.[131] On March 3 the Anshe Chesed trustees resolved that notice be posted at the entrance of the synagogue:

> For the purpose of getting more order in the service . . . during the prayers, there will be several gentlemen who will recite the prayers with the *hazan* [Hebrew] for the purpose of showing the congregators [*sic*] the way the prayers are required to be read and all others are requested to read the prayers silently until they have learned the way to read them.[132]

Though Lilienthal had board support for increased decorum, progress was slow. Wise, visiting Anshe Chesed in July 1846, reported:

> The congregation was orthodox, and just as ill-behaved as in Germany. The cantor had on a Christian gown, trilled like a mock nightingale, and leaped about like a hooked fish. After the selling of the so-called *mitzvoth*, I lost patience with the intolerable sing-song with which the reader intoned the portion and read from the *Torah* and with the innumerable *Mi-sheberakhs*. "Why is this nuisance tolerated in a metropolis?" I asked my neighbor.[133]

While Wise was impatient for change, Lilienthal was willing to work patiently toward his goals from a position based on legal precedent. He established a detailed set of rules for decorum that were published in the *Occident*. The reporter noted that the chief rabbi based the rules "strictly on the ordinances of the *Shulkhan Aruch, Orach Chayim*. " They show his reliance on legal tradition to justify his changes:

> 1. On entering the Synagogue every one has to repair to a seat in a noiseless

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[130]Ibid., p. 275.

[131] *Minute Book of Union*, p. 331.

[132]*Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, March 3, 1846.

[133]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 22.

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> and decent manner. Ch. 3, 2; 95,3; 151, 1.
> 2. Every one is to sit in his seat in a modest and respectful manner- to bear in mind that he is in the house of God, where any indecorous or improper attitude is a sin. Ch. 95, 3 Toray Sahab.
> 3. All conversation during divine service is strictly prohibited. Ch. 51, 4; 56, l; 68, l; 124, 7; 146, 3;151, 1.
> 4. To recite the prayers in a loud voice, and more especially to anticipate or chime in with the reader, is in like manner prohibited. Ch. 101, 2 and 3; ch. 125, 1.
> 5. The going out during divine service must be obviated as much as possible. Whoever goes out and re-enters must do so without creating any noise or disturbance. Ch. 132,2; 146, 1.
> 6. During the morning service of the Sabbath the congregation are to be standing during the following prayers: . . .[a long list follows]
> Children under four years of age are not permitted to attend the Synagogue, on account of the unavoidable disturbance they create.[134]

The reporter claimed that order now prevailed in the synagogues. The congregations chanted Hebrew liturgy properly, using appropriate melodies for hymns, which were performed in responsively. This was said to have had the beneficial effect of keeping the congregants awake! The writer also noted that Rabbi Lilienthal replaced the traditional prayer, *ha-Notein teshu'ah* (He who gives salvation) with *Ribon kol ha-olamim* (Master of all the worlds), a prayer he had composed. He considered the former suitable "only to humble subjects of monarchs," whereas his own was more appropriate for citizens of a republic. Other congregations in Albany, Syracuse, Boston, and Newark adopted his liturgical change.[135]

Although the rules were not always followed, the Anshe Chesed board reaffirmed its commitment to the new regulations at a meeting in October, 1847.[136] On November 21 of that year, a report added further rules on where one could stand and sit,

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[134]Occident 4 (February 1847):552f.

[135]Ibid. See also *Minute Book of Union,* p. 338, 341, and Philipson, *Max Lilienthal,* p. 54.

[136]Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes, March 24 and 28, 1847. Joseph Bachman, a member, behaved improperly during services. He was summoned to come before the board. Mr. Bachman did not appear and was fined five dollars. The board also decided that proclamations be made in the synagogue on the next Sabbath to remind the members to keep order, and that fines would be enforced for non-compliance.

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when it was appropriate to fold one's prayer shawl, and what were the appropriate rituals surrounding the reciting of the mourner's prayer. The board expected compliance by women and children as well:

> The Directors hope that every member will see how necessary it is for a congregation to have its Divine Service performed with dignity and good order and for that reason the Directors flatter themselves that every member will act in accordance with the above rules, so that the board may not have occasion to impose a fine on those acting contrary to the above rules, which in no instance, will be remitted.[137]

Lilienthal was not successful in some of his attempts. Merzbacher had formed a choir at Temple Emanu-El, and Lilienthal wished to do so.[138] Wise reported that Lilienthal ordered a copy of Solomon Sulzer's *Shir Tsiyon*, a compendium of cantorial and choral music, blending ancient synagogal melody and contemporary compositional techniques. However, "his mighty *Parnass* declared obstinately that he was opposed once and for all to its introduction into the chief synagogue."[139] Wise commented: " I listened to the bitter war of words, and put an end to it by buying the *Shir Tsiyon* and taking it home with me."[140] Lilienthal also attempted, unsuccessfully, to have the sale of synagogue honors abolished and to limit the number of special blessings recited at the Torah (*misheberakhs*), failing probably for the fiscal reasons.[141]

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[137]Ibid., November 21, 1847.

[138]Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 275.

[139]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 51.

[140]Ibid. For a discussion of Sulzer see Chapter One above and Werner, *A Voice Still Heard*, pp. 206-219. *Shir Tsiyon* had a powerful impact in Germany, France, and eventually even in Eastern Europe and America. Meyer points out that because Sulzer's music was for all-male, a cappella choir, it could easily be integrated into even the most traditional synagogues. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 151. As with a number of innovations, it would only be a matter of time before a choir was introduced at Anshe Chesed. There would be a choir for the consecration of their new building on May 16th, 1850, and from then on the minutes record the efforts of Rev. Sternberger to train a regular salaried choir. See *Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes* for June 16, 1850.

[141]Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 274ff. The honors were traditionally sold through an auction that took place during services.

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On the Sermon

Central to the program for modernizing the service was the introduction of a sermon in the vernacular. There was no tradition of Jewish preaching in colonial America because the early settlers had not known vernacular preaching in the country of their origin, because the scarcity of Jews made it hard enough in most places to establish a quorum of ten worshipers, much less draw the kind of crowd that would warrant a sermon, and because there were no preachers or rabbis sufficiently trained in Jewish sources to construct sermons.[142]

The first Jewish preacher of note was Gershom Mendes Seixas of Shearith Israel in New York who adopted the sermon in imitation of Protestant models. Robert Friedenberg writes:

> By the time that Seixas became hazzan of Shearith Israel in 1768, the influence of the Protestant minister as a role model for religious leaders had begun to permeate the American Jewish community.... [Jews] perceived the roles that ministers played, not only as scholars and teachers, but also as counselors to their congregants, as social workers, and as agitators for social change. Particularly in these last capacities, the sermon was the major tool utilized by the Protestant minister. With models of this nature, the responsibilities of the hazzan began to change in the decades immediately preceding the revolution.[143]

Responding to the great emphasis that Protestants placed on preaching, the sermon became more accepted in Jewish congregations in the early nineteenth century. For instance, Seixas would often give a sermon on a patriotic occasion, such as a national day of thanksgiving or for a charitable cause.[144]

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[142]Robert Friedenberg, *"Hear O Israel": The History of American Jewish Preaching, 1654-1970* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989) pp. 2-5. See also Marcus, *Colonial American Jew*, Vol. II, pp. 971f.

[143]Friedenberg, *The History of American Jewish Preaching*, p. 8,

[144]Ibid., pp. 10-17. Like the Protestant minister, religion was linked with American values such as liberty, individualism, and voluntarism. See Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, p. 513. For a contemporary discussion of sermon style see Baird, *Religion in America*, pp. 192ff. See also John von Rohr, *The Shaping of American Congregationalism*, pp. 43f.

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With the influx of German-Jewish immigrants, many newcomers expected sermons of the type they had come to appreciate in Germany in the 1820s and 1830s. Samuel Isaacs gave monthly addresses at Bnai Jeshurun starting in 1839, and Rabbi Abraham Rice delivered regular talks in both English and German to his congregation in Baltimore.[145] At first, the sermon was not uniquely associated with the new Reform movement. In 1830 Isaac Leeser, the major advocate of traditionalism during the period, was actually the first American Jewish leader to give an English sermon at a regular Sabbath service; he did so every two weeks and on special occasions, as part of his duties as hazzan. For Leeser and his traditional colleagues, the sermon simply represented an element in the Americanization process (along with Sunday school, for example) rather than an acceptance of Reform principles. They would never have acquiesced to the religious revolution implied in the new German sermon which placed edification above *halakhic* observance.[146]

Lilienthal was considered an excellent orator, having preached in Riga and Munich to large crowds.[147] As we saw earlier, Lilienthal espoused the goal of edification through the sermon. While he would have liked to present the more intellectually and morally serious sermon favored by many of the early German Maskilim, he was forced to adjust his style for his East European congregants:

> I continued to preach with zeal throughout the summer and was delighted to see how the Polish Jews attended in constantly growing numbers; frequently too, I had the uneasy consciousness of not being understood and hence misquoted. The preacher here is in a peculiar situation. At home the congregation meets the preacher half way, inasmuch as they come to the service with the purpose of being edified. Here, the congregation and the

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[145]Friedenberg, *The History of American Jewish Preaching*, p. 41.

[146] Ibid., pp. 26f. See Lance J. Sussman, "Isaac Leeser and the Protestantization of American Judaism," *American Jewish Archives* 38 (April 1986):1-21. Sussman suggests that Leeser, while aware of developments in Germany and England, "was more directly influenced by the strong American Protestant tradition of preaching, which extended back to the Puritans.... In Philadelphia, Leeser and many of his congregants were in direct contact with William Henry Furness (1802-1896), a Unitarian minister who was a popular speaker with Christians and Jews alike." Ibid., p. 8.

[147]Lilienthal, Letter to his brother Samuel, in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 148.

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> visiting auditors, the latter of whom regard the sermon as a desecration, attend with the purpose of criticizing or of being entertained, and only when they weep and their own tears attest the influence of the sermon, or they cease their violent protestations against the preacher and say . . . 'he is a fine speaker.' For this reason I must always, though against my will, appeal to the emotions.[148]

James Gutheim reported in the *Occident* that it was not possible for him to do full justice to Lilienthal's first New York address.

> It was delivered with an eloquence and fervor that did not fail to make a deep impression on the minds of the audience, and the effects of which were reflected in many a tearful eye. I could but wish that frequent opportunity to preach would be given to Dr. L.[149]

Isaac M. Wise, who was thoroughly trained in the German rhetorical tradition, heard his friend preach on many occasions. His very first impression was favorable: "He pleased me very much, for he was an excellent and popular pulpit orator, used a glowing diction, and had a dignified carriage."[150] Later he would characterize Lilienthal as a "puritanical, profoundly moralistic and edifying [preacher]."[151]

Extant among Lilienthal's early sermons in America are Gutheim's summary of his address to Anshe Chesed on November 29, 1845, and his installation sermon, and an address for Sabbath *Nachamu* (the Sabbath following the fast day of the Ninth of Av) from the summer of 1847. They all followed a classic three-part form, as described by Bernhard Cohn:

> A sermon constructed after this pattern began with a general exposition of the main theme. In the course of the exposition the three parts were usually stated together in the order in which they were to be taken up individually in the frequently lengthy body of the sermon itself. As a rule, the parts were

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[148]Ibid.

[149]*Occident* 3 (January 1846):523. Gutheim was considered a fine orator in his own right.

[150]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 22.

[151]Bernhard N. Cohn, "Early German Preaching in America," *Historia Judaica* 15, part 2 (October 1953):1f.

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related and were treated in the order of ascending importance.[152]

After an opening prayer, Lilienthal introduced his theme, " Religion," promising to answer three questions: Is there any religion? Which is the true religion? How ought we to act and feel as professors of that true religion?[153]

The content followed the style of the German sermon as well, utilizing sweeping generalizations and abstract language. For instance, when he discussed Judaism, he characterized it as "the great principle of a pure monotheism." He sought to involve the congregation emotionally by describing the martyrdom the Jews had experienced as a test of their faith.[154] The *Shema* [the great liturgical pronouncement of the oneness of God] "still lives in the mouth and heart of every true Israelite." To this point the sermon could have been heard as a kind of Reform confession of monotheistic faith, not a call to traditional observance. However, in his third section Lilienthal challenged the congregation to cling to Jewish law in America where "we are at liberty to worship Him unmolestedly, according to the dictates of our conscience, and when our rights as men are recognized and respected." He concluded by exhorting the community to live in peace and harmony.[155]

As in his early Munich sermons, the style was modern; the conclusions traditional. The whole address was presented as an explication of a passage from the prophet *Malachi*: "Remember ye the law of Moses," and was peppered with quotations from Jewish sources such as Maimonides and the liturgy. The other two sermons also exhibited modern form and traditional conclusions. Lilienthal's use of the sermon

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[152]Cohn, "Early German Preaching," pp. 121f. Many of Lilienthal's printed sermons followed this form, including his early Munich addresses, and those printed in the *Occident* and later in the *Asmonean*.

[153] *Occident* 3 (January 1846):521.

[154]This idea was also found in the writings of Heinrich Graetz. See Robert Seltzer, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1980), p. 612.

[155]*Occident* 3 (January 1846):522f.

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underlined his moderate stance during this period. He wished to edify, but not to deny the centrality of traditional Jewish law-centered religion.

Other Rabbinic Duties

Lilienthal also officiated at life-cycle events, supervised the observance of dietary laws and was an active member of Jewish philanthropic organizations. Massive immigration and urban poverty created social welfare needs in the Jewish community far beyond the capacity of the old institutions to fulfill. As a result, a new network of benevolent societies, women's charities, and organizations to bring relief to indigents, educate orphans, assist in burials, and provide coal for the poor slowly took shape. The synagogues also had collections for the poor. These uncoordinated efforts resulted in duplication as well as neglect.[156]

Within weeks of his arrival, Lilienthal became involved in the German Hebrew Benevolent Society.[157] In addition, he called on the leaders of all the synagogues of New York to come to a conference to discuss the "deplorable condition of our brethren" in Russia; as a result a memorial statement was drafted, signed by the leaders of all the synagogues, but it is not clear if anything tangible resulted from the meeting.[158]

During the beginnings of his rabbinate Lilienthal also dealt with a number of *halakhic* (legal) issues, mainly of a ritual nature. When his stand is compared to the pronouncements of the German rabbinic conferences taking place at the same time, his

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[156]Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, pp. 147ff., 155f. For a discussion of poverty in New York in the 1840s see Spann, *The New Metropolis*, Chapter Four.

[157]*Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 10 (Jan. 5, 1846):18-20. Also report in Occident 3 (January. 1846).

[158]*Congregation Shearith Israel Minutes of the Trustees*. Dec. 29, 1845. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 425. In another international effort, Anshe Chesed collected money for charity to be sent to Jerusalem during the fall of 1846. *Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, Nov. 29, 1846.

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conservatism is evident.[159]

Burial customs

With the breakdown of the united community, each synagogue had to create its own burial society and cemetery. The Union board asked the chief rabbi to create an order for funeral and burial practices.[160] In November 1846, Lilienthal instructed the sexton in the law concerning new burial grounds and listed various articles he would need.[161] At the same time Lilienthal was formalizing these rules, the Breslau conference was rejecting many traditional mourning customs.

> The conference declared that the following customs which were survivals from earlier periods of Jewish life, viz. the tearing of the clothes [*keriah*, Hebrew], the abstention from shaving the beard, the sitting on the earth, the dispensing with leather footwear, as well as the prohibitions to wash, bathe, and greet acquaintances have lost all significance and religious meaning for our time.[162]

Early in 1847, the rabbi supplied the president of Anshe Chesed with written regulations regarding the washing, dressing, and interring of the deceased, which the board accepted.[163] Lilienthal clearly sided with the traditionalists.

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[159] The Breslau Conference was taking place July 13-26, 1846, i.e., during the first year of Lilienthal's New York rabbinate. To some extent, the comparison is unfair. The conference was a forum for discussing issues in the abstract. Lilienthal had to deal with a concrete situation in a traditional community. The contrast is still useful in showing his conservative tendencies. Lilienthal was kept abreast of these meetings through reports in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* and in the *Occident.*

[160] *Minute Book of Union*, p. 336.

[161] *Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, Nov. 29, 1846.

[162] Philipson, *The Reform Movement*, p. 217. Isaac Leeser reported the proceedings of the Rabbinic conferences in great detail in his *Occident.* See, for example, 4 (November 1846):399-402; 4 (December 1846):443-458 for report on the Breslau conference. Lilienthal was well aware of their activities and cited some of their rulings in articles in the *Asmonean* 10 (June through September, 1854.)

[163] Ibid., Jan. 3 and 24, 1847.

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Marriage

On February 8, 1846, he presented a series of rules for uniform procedures for weddings: 1) The bride and groom had to submit their names, addresses, positions, and birth dates to the rabbi. 2) The rabbi was to question the groom to make sure the marriage was in no way in violation of Jewish law. 3) Weddings were to take place only in the synagogue, unless an exception could be justified. 4) The wedding was to be announced in the three synagogues on the Sabbath prior to the event.[164] Lilienthal provided *halakhic* justification for all of his rules.[165] He also introduced a regulation whereby prior to the wedding the groom had to sign a *shtar halizah.* This document, produced in the *Minute Book of the Union* on March 18, 1846, guaranteed that, in the case of the death of the groom before the couple has an offspring, the brothers of the groom would perform the ancient ceremony of *halitzah,* which released them from the obligation of marrying the bride in order to produce an heir.[166]

Some of the earliest reforms to take effect in Europe were in the area of marriage procedures. Israel Jacobson had used his brief period of consistorial power in 1810 to rework the marriage ceremony and contract; several of his innovations found wider usage.[167] While the rabbinical conferences discussed wedding regulations at length, they put off detailed recommendations, stipulating only that Jewish wedding and divorce

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[164]*Grinstein, The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York,* p. 289. While some traditionalists objected to it, the custom was the result of a New York law, enacted in 1684, which required the names of the bride and groom to be publicly read or posted before the wedding. Jews conformed to the law by announcing the names in the synagogue. In 1830 the state law was changed to allow Jews to be married according to their own regulations, but by then the new custom had been established.

[165]*Minute Book of Union,* p. 338f.

[166]*Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes,* September 18, 1846. He even got the congregations to prepare a *halitzah* shoe, part of the ancient ceremony. The basis for this ritual is found in Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

[167]W. Gunther Plaut, *The Rise of Reform Judaism: A Sourcebook of its European Origins* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1963), p. 215.

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practices be in harmony with civil law.[168] Since this was already the case in America, little can be inferred as to Lilienthal's reformist tendencies on this issue. The Reformers in Breslau in 1846 rejected *halitzah*:

> At the closing meeting the commission on marriage laws recommended that the old institution of Chalitzah be declared unsuited to modern conditions, because 'the levirate marriage and the Chalitzah were instituted in a time when the views on the position of woman, the family rights, and the perpetuation of the individual were entirely different from what they are now.'[169]

Lilienthal's prenuptial agreement was an innovative effort to solve a difficult legal problem with regard to *halizah*, Lilienthal showed himself again to be more traditional than European reformers.

Dietary Laws

At the time of Lilienthal's arrival, Jews were purchasing meat directly from Jewish or Christian butchers who employed *shohetim* (ritual slaughters) without synagogue control. Abuses were rampant. When he learned that serious violations of Jewish law were common, Lilienthal called a meeting of the *shohetim*. Meat was not being properly washed or labeled, kosher and non-kosher meat were occasionally mixed, and inspection was lax. The butchers told the rabbi that they would tolerate no interference in this free land, and threatened to sue him for libel if he called attention to their violations of Jewish law. Further, if he tried to declare any of their meat non-kosher, they would lower their prices and Jewish women would buy it anyway.[170] Lilienthal was not an easy man to

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[168] Philipson, *The Reform Movement*, p. 218. At the Brunswick Conference in 1844, there was an extended discussion of the issue of Christian/Jewish intermarriage. The conclusion reached was that "members of monotheisitic religions are not forbidden to marry if the parents are permitted by the laws of the state to bring up the children in the Jewish religion." The conference resisted the more radical proposal that such marriages may be performed by Jewish clergymen. Plaut, *The Rise of Reform Judaism*, p. 222.

[169] Philipson, *The Reform Movement*, p. 218. Breslau Conference, 1846.

[170] Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 304f.

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intimidate. With almost seven hundred and twenty members and seat holders behind him, he attempted to set up rules and force the butchers to enter into agreements with the synagogues. He threatened to make public announcements exposing non-compliers. It is not known to what extent, if at all, he was successful. When the Union ended in 1848, it is likely his regulations were dropped.[171]

Lilienthal pushed for stricter adherence to Jewish law with regard to the baking of matzah for Passover. In the 1840s bakers solicited synagogues for matzah-making patronage, and, as a concession, they allowed the synagogue to send one or two men to supervise the baking. The bakers also agreed to donate a certain number of pounds to the poor.[172] Not satisfied with the standards, Lilienthal formulated a set of regulations for the proper baking of matzah. At a meeting of the Union board on March 1, 1846, he clarified the regulations in seventeen points, each with a legal source indicated.[173] Robert Spier, the baker contracted by the synagogues, claimed to have attempted to follow Lilienthal's regulations, but the rabbi was not satisfied and suggested that the three synagogues buy their own equipment. The cost would be covered by requiring each member and seat holder to place a two-year matzah order at a price slightly higher than the baker's. It was unlikely his idea was successful because the community became overrun with matzah bakers who sold their wares directly to the public.[174]

Again, Lilienthal adopted a more traditional position than some of radical Reformers in Europe who called for a complete end to dietary laws.[175] Showing his conservative

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[171]Ibid.

[172]Ibid., p. 307.

[173]*Minute Book of Union,* p. 343f.

[174]Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 308.

[175]This was the position of the Frankfurt *Reformfreunde,* a group of radical Reformers who created an association in 1842. See Meyer, *Response to Modernity,* pp. 122f. According to W. Gunther Plaut, while there was a private neglect of dietary laws among

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tendencies, Lilienthal set higher *halakhic* standards than had been accepted by his communities and struggled to establish consistency in areas that lacked professional supervision.

Beth Din

In his installation address, Lilienthal also promised to set up a *Beth Din*. Following biblical precedents, the early rabbis considered it obligatory to establish a court of law which had authority over civil and criminal cases. In the Middle Ages these courts were established in every Jewish community, but their jurisdiction in modern times shrank. When Jews became full citizens they tended to rely on the general courts, and the *Beth Din* was left solely with matters pertaining to conversion, divorce, supervision of dietary laws, and arbitration of religious disputes.[176]

Lilienthal wanted a *Beth Din* of "learned, pious and intelligent men" to "consult, deliberate, and decide with me." The *Beth Din* would work especially toward the "improvement of our divine service." By setting up this court, the "chief rabbi" intended to give legitimacy to his rulings.[177] Lilienthal may also have wanted to establish some independence from his synagogue. In spite of his title and the ambitious agenda he set forth, in many respects Lilienthal was controlled by his board. He needed special permission to visit a school, preach a sermon, or deliver a legal decision.[178]

In October 1846, the chief rabbi established his *Beth Din* made up of Rabbi Isaac

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early reformers, the question of *kashrut* was rarely discussed. He suggested that this was because their observance was chiefly a personal matter and early Reform concentrated on changes in the public realm. *The Rise of Reform Judaism*, p. 212.

[176]*Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Bet Din and Judges ," pp. 719-727. See also Eric Zimmer, *Jewish Synods in Germany during the Late Middle Ages, 1286-1605* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1978).

[177]*Occident* 3 (March 1846):588, 590.

[178]*Minute Book of Union*, p. 323.

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M. Wise, Doctor H. Felsenheld (a teacher in the Anshe Chesed school), and a rabbinical student named Kohlmayer. As elected head, Lilienthal presented the judges to his congregation and delivered a sermon explaining the functions of the court. It would differ from the traditional court in that it would be only an advisory council, and, in deference to the strong spirit of autonomy among the various American congregations, would not issue binding legal decisions.[179] With quarterly meetings planned, the court also went beyond the traditional judicial function of a *Beth Din* because the tasks it set itself included the preparation of a Jewish history and a Hebrew grammar for schools.[180]

Wise, Lilienthal, Leeser, and many other early leaders dreamed of unity among American Jews. Wise used the forum of the *Beth Din* to advocate his goal of unifying the various customs of the widely separated communities into a single American prayer ritual. The creation of such a liturgy, a *Minhag America*, based on *halakhah* and the demands of modern times would be one of his goals for many years.[181]

In his introductory remarks to the court on April 18, 1847, the chief rabbi expressed his hope that the *Beth Din* would play a great and beneficial role in the free development of the young congregations of North America. In addition liturgy and text books, the court discussed letters from European rabbis which raised issues of law, as well as questions received from American congregations. Future agenda items were to include principles for the general organization of the young congregations of America, and a plan for the education of these congregations' children.[182]

The court met only once. Leon Jick was probably right in affirming that "the

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[179]Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*, p. 118. See *Occident* 5 (May 1847):110.

[180]*Occident* 5 (May 1847):107-9.

[181]Ibid. At the meeting itself he added a third criterion for shaping the common liturgy: scientific *(wissenschaftlich)* principles.

[182]Ibid. pp. 110f.

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American Jewish setting was too anarchic to support even a modest experiment with authority."[183] Isaac Leeser expressed skepticism with regard to Wise's liturgical proposal. Though he had not seen the details, he felt that a common liturgy would replicate the efforts of the German Reform rabbis, whose conferences he had been reporting with great displeasure. He doubted that the *Sephardim* (Spanish-Portuguese congregations) would be willing to change their prayers for "the perhaps crude and ill-digested system which can be elicited by the few Rabbis now in America."[184]

Lilienthal defended his orthodoxy to Leeser when the latter lumped him together with the "few German Rabbis now in America" who advocated a "crude and ill-digested system" of reforms. Leeser apologized to Lilienthal and issued a retraction in a later article, saying, "he [Lilienthal] has never done, or authorized anything to be done, since his arrival in this country, which could authorize us to suppose that he would sanction any departure from the strict standard of orthodoxy."[185] This incident, coming during the summer of 1847, shows how determinedly Lilienthal maintained his traditional posture throughout his tenure. He continued to advocate only those reforms he could support on traditional legal grounds.

Power Struggles

In spite of his vision and his talent for organization, all of Lilienthal's proposals

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[183]Jick, *The Americanization*, p. 119.

[184]*Occident* 5 (June 1847):163.

[185] Ibid. 5 (August 1847):259. It is interesting to note that Lilienthal did not defend the orthodoxy of the rest of the members of the court. Wise was already more inclined to Reform positions at this time. He indicated in his *Reminicences* that he was even uncomfortable with the "old Jewish name of *Beth Din*."
p. 50. Also see Wise's remarks about Lilienthal's initial conservatism in *Israelite* 1 (August 11, 1854):37f.. Perhaps internal tensions contributed as well to the dissolution of the court. James Heller, in his biography of Wise, suggested that Wise's proposed liturgy was too radical for Lilienthal and Felsenheld and that they had to find a method of postponing action on it. *Isaac M. Wise*, p. 137.

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were subjected to severe scrutiny and amendment by the Union board, and its largest constituent, Anshe Chesed. Indeed, unless specifically invited, the board did not even admit the "chief rabbi" to its meetings, so that the rabbi and board had to communicate by letter.[186] Exclusion of Lilienthal from the meetings of the largest and most powerful constituent within the Union seriously limited his effectiveness in establishing his program and vision.[187]

The minute books of Anshe Chesed clearly reveal tensions between rabbi and board. On March 25, the board wrote to Dr. Lilienthal reminding him that he was required to announce weddings ahead of time. Lilienthal's reply is not recorded, but the incident demonstrates that the board did not hesitate to reprimand Lilienthal or other officials for suspected lapses.[188] In a similar episode the board asked the rabbi why he did not attend a certain funeral. He replied that he had not been asked to preach a funeral sermon and that his contract did not require attendance *per se*. At the next meeting, the board decided that in the future, Dr. Lilienthal would be asked to deliver a funeral sermon at every congregational funeral.[189]

The board also took the rabbi to task for his alleged lack of attention to the Anshe Chesed school. When the Union School opened in September of 1846, Lilienthal's energies were directed towards that new endeavor. As mentioned, Anshe Chesed decided not to join the Union School. On November 29, 1846, the secretary wrote Dr. Lilienthal, to find out why he did not visit the Anshe Chesed school more often. The rabbi replied on December 13 that he was busy with the many duties of his office, stating,with obvious

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[186]See for example *Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes* for September 18, November 29, December 13, 1846. When Lilienthal was present, it indicated this explicitly.

[187]Since we do not have access to the minute books of Rodeph Shalom or Shaarey Hashamayim, we do not know if he was excluded from their meetings.

[188]For instance, on November 15, 1846 Cantor Hecht was called to task for eating at a public feast with an uncovered head. He was given a two-week suspension.

[189]*Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, May 30, 1847.

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annoyance: "If the board of trustees thought that he did not do enough, he was ready and willing to resign, as he did not wish to have it thought that he gets his money for nothing."[190] The incident was smoothed over when Dr. Lilienthal appeared before the board in early January 1847.[191]

On October 10, 1847, tension erupted again when Dr. Lilienthal was accused of injuring Anshe Chesed's school by calling it inferior to the Union School. (Apparently he had told Dr. Felsenheld that the trustees and the school committee of Anshe Chesed were not satisfied with their school.) Further, they charged that he was still neglecting their school in favor of the Union School.[192] Lilienthal reminded the board of the circumstances connected with the establishment of the Union School, reviewing his work with both. He felt his first duty, according to his contract, was "to see that the children are taught in the Union School." After "considerable interchange of opinions and cross speaking, it was moved and seconded to drop the subject and direct the attention solely to the future improvement of the school."[193] The issue was resolved only at the end of October 1847, when Anshe Chesed finally decided to join the Union School.

The series of confrontations illustrated the attempt by Anshe Chesed's leadership to treat him as a hireling. Lilienthal's response showed that he would not tolerate such treatment; he was a thoroughly trained and conscientious professional who demanded corresponding recognition. The school incident also brought into relief the conflict between Lilienthal's duties to the Union and its various constituent parts. Anshe Chesed's decision not to join the Union School weakened the Union, because, without Anshe

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[190]Ibid., December, 13, 1846.

[191]Ibid., January 3, 1847.

[192]The complaint was brought forward by Felsenheld, a teacher at the Anshe Chesed school and one of the men who was a member of the ill-fated *Beth Din* that met the previous April. It is impossible to know if his motive was related to that incident.

[193]*Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, October 10, 1847.

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Chesed, the Union School lacked the support of its most powerful member. However, the larger synagogue still expected equal attention to its own school. Inter-congregational tension erupted on other occasions, as when Shaarey Hashamayim requested that the rabbi preach at its synagogue on a certain holiday. Anshe Chesed vetoed their request because they insisted he was contracted to preach for them on that occasion.[194] In such cases, the rabbi was caught in the middle of a struggle between two synagogue boards.

Beginning in March 1847, he began receiving less money. Previously the minutes recorded $125 as Anshe Chesed's contribution to his salary. After this time, however, $83.33 became the regular amount. The minutes do not indicate any reason for this cut in his pay. Not surprisingly, Lilienthal confided to Wise that he had become disheartened. "Lilienthal informed me," Wise wrote in his autobiography, "of his mournful experiences, and imparted to me his purpose of renouncing the ministry altogether and devoting himself entirely to the education of the young." In a bitter tone Lilienthal said he would not take the abuse involved in the rabbinate but would "do something else for a living."[195]

The final showdown between Anshe Chesed and their rabbi came about as a result of a seemingly trivial event. On December 14, 1847, a Mr. Nordlinger brought a complaint against Dr. Lilienthal. His child was very sick and he wanted to organize a *minyan* (prayer quorum) in order to have a prayer recited on his behalf. Since only five men were present for the service, one of Nordlinger's friends went to Shaarey Hashamayim, where the board and rabbi were in the middle of a meeting, and asked them to interrupt their discussion to complete the quorum. Although the *Parnass* agreed to do so, Dr. Lilienthal objected, observing that there were enough Jews in the neighborhood who could help make a *minyan*. By the time the friend returned to the distraught father, the required number for a service had indeed gathered. However, following the service, Mr. Nordlinger submitted a

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194 Ibid., May 2, 1847.

195 Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 129.

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formal complaint to the Anshe Chesed board criticizing Lilienthal for refusing to adjourn the meeting to achieve the quorum. The rabbi replied that he had nothing to say since the complaint was true. After Lilienthal left, the board wrote to their rabbi saying that he had offended them by not making a defense, and they ordered him to appear before the board the following Sunday.[196]

The sexton, Mr. May, personally delivered this letter to Lilienthal; the rabbi declined to accept May's letter and gave him one to take back to the board. When May warned Lilienthal that he would have to report the rabbi had not accepted the letter, Lilienthal answered, "Well you may do so." On December 16, the board decided by secret ballot that Dr. Lilienthal was guilty of Mr. Nordlinger's charge by a vote of five to one. The rabbi was suspended for three weeks from his services to the congregation, not only based on Nordlinger's case, but also for what the board of trustees perceived as insults directed at them.

On December 21, a number of congregants came before the board asking why their rabbi had been suspended. They were concerned that

> everything with respect to Dr. Lilienthal [be] peaceably arranged so as to put an end to general talk of it among members and even among strangers to this congregation, considering that the high station of the Rev'd Dr. Lilienthal should command the greatest respect for him on the part of the congregation, as well as the Trustees.[197]

Mr. Walter, speaking for the group, further expressed the opinion that the form in which the complaint was made was insulting toward Dr. Lilienthal.[198]

The president defended the actions of the board, claiming they had tried to avoid extreme measures but that Dr. Lilienthal's refusal to cooperate forced his suspension. The president added that the suspension was very lenient, given the triple offense: against Mr.

196*Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, December 14, 1847.

197Ibid., December 21, 1847.

198Ibid.

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Nordlinger, against the trustees at their meeting of December 14, and against the whole congregation.

A Mr. Hoffman remarked, "the best the congregation could do, to promote peace, would be, to beg forgiveness of the Rev'd Dr. Lilienthal."[199] After much debate, the board agreed to annul their action if the rabbi would "come this evening before the Board of Trustees and the members of this congregation present, and give sufficient redress for offenses given and thus remove the stain on the honor of the congregation." The board was told that Dr. Lilienthal was indisposed. They then agreed to dispense with a personal appearance and informed Lilienthal that they were not averse to reconciliation. Members who had been waiting outside the room presented a note from Dr. Lilienthal saying that he too would "consent to a reconciliation . . . provided that he could get afterwards full satisfaction from the congregation." Although the board considered this response to be vague, they accepted it, making the resolution of the crisis contingent upon Lilienthal's acceptance of their letter. He refused and the suspension stood.

On January 20, 1848, May reported to the board that Dr. Lilienthal had told him that "he would not come again to officiate in this synagogue until the case was settled." Consonant with this position, the rabbi refused to perform a wedding at Anshe Chesed. An irate board again wrote to Lilienthal asking him why he "did not deliver an oration on Saturday last and why he refused to marry Mr. Benjamin Forster in this synagogue." Dr. Lilienthal's response was obviously unsatisfactory because, on January 25, the board called a general meeting for February 13. After that meeting the board concluded:

> On motion: Resolved to inform Dr. Lilienthal, by a letter from the Board of the Resolution passed at the General Meeting of this day concerning the refusal of the members to give him any satisfaction and of the declaration of vacancy of the office of raby [sic] to this congregation.

On this note, the first period in Max Lilienthal's career in New York City came to an end. It would seem that at several points the parties might have peacefully resolved the

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[199]Ibid.

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confrontation. Though the congregation was concerned about its honor, it was willing to compromise while Lilienthal was not. To be sure, the minutes present only the board's point of view. Given the frustrations that the rabbi had experienced and his strong sense of personal honor, he did not want to capitulate. As a descendant of Court Jews, a graduate of a German university, and an official who had worked at the highest levels of the Russian government, it was beneath his dignity to do so. Soon afterwards, Lilienthal resigned from the other two synagogues. The congregational Union that he had forged lasted only a little more than two years.[200]

Lilienthal's treatment at the hands of his lay board was not an isolated case. Isaac Leeser had not long before lost his position after many years of service, as had Leo Merzbacher at Anshe Chesed in 1844. In Baltimore, after years of frustration, Rabbi Abraham Rice left his congregation and opened a dry goods store.[201] Within a few years his *parnass* would physically attack Isaac M. Wise.[202] All such incidents illustrated the widespread rabbinic-lay power struggles of the period.

In spite of talent, vision and valiant efforts, Lilienthal did not yet have the professional status to actualize his goals. In the years to come he would join forces with Wise, helping to forge Reform synagogues around the country into a congregational union. They would also found and teach at a rabbinical school that would train and set

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[200]According to Hyman Grinstein, Lilienthal resigned from the other synagogues almost immediately. The Union of German Synagogues did not survive his departure. *The Rise of the Jewish Community,* p. 398. Grinstein further speculated that the other synagogues could no longer afford to pay Lilienthal's salary and therefore had to disband. Ibid., p. 587, note 15. Elsewhere Grinstein speculated that Lilienthal did continue to serve Rodeph Shalom and Shaarey Hashamayim for a while, perhaps until April 1848, when the Union School was dissolved. *Minute Book of Union,* p. 323. Unfortunately the pertinent records of Rodeph Shalom and Shaarey Hashamayim are not extant.

[201]Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*, p. 73.

[202]Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, p. 192. The situation was not much better in German Catholic New York. When Father Gabriel Rumpler took over the St. Nicholas parish in 1842, "the trustees treated him like a hired hand, telling him how many candles he could light for Mass and even threatening him with bodily harm. Like his predecessors, Rumpler was not able to gain control over the affairs of the Church." Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*," p. 91.

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professional standards for their profession. Before Lilienthal could participate in these major developments in American Jewish history, he underwent a transformation in his own religious orientation, one that presaged a liberalization within the German-Jewish immigrant community itself.

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Chapter Three: Educator and Emerging Reformer (1848-1855)

Introduction

Eighteen forty eight was a year of revolutionary upheaval in Germany, and Jews were caught in the middle. Naomi Cohen explains:

> Since emancipation rode on the coattails of liberalism, many Jews allied themselves actively with the revolutionaries - on the barricades, in revolutionary parliaments, as student agitators, or as radical journalists. . . . The failure of the 1848 revolutions unleashed a new round of repression, frustration, and emigration. Political refugees fleeing the avenging arm of the state for their personal involvement in the wars turned to the United States. Low in number but disproportionately high in talent, the group included a large percentage of physicians, journalists, and rabbis.[1]

Many of the newcomers were not revolutionaries, but rather refugees from the anti-Jewish riots that preceded and accompanied the revolution. One immigrant remembered:

> With whom do you think the revolution in Bavaria started? With no one else but the Jews. In many places their windows have been smashed and their belongings stolen. These events intensified my desire to emigrate.[2]

The disillusionment that followed the failure of these revolutions also sparked the "On to America" movement, advanced by Leopold Kompert in Prague. Emigration committees were formed and a noticeable upsurge occurred.[3]

In New York, the German community was gripped by the events in their homeland. According to Stanley Nadel:

> The German revolutions dominated the politics of German New York for the remainder of the decade. Revolutionary organizations, fraternal orders, singing societies, newspapers, and the vast majority of German New Yorkers seem to have thrown all their organized activity into celebration of, or support for, the revolutionaries in the homeland. Political thought focused on Berlin, Vienna, and Frankfurt - a German constitution and German politics - rather than on New York and American conditions.[4]

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[1]Cohen, *Encounter With Emancipation*, pp. 8f.

[2]Barkai, *Branching Out*, p. 32.

[3]Ibid. See also Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 9f., and Guido Kisch, "The Revolution of 1848 and the Jewish 'On to America' Movement," 185-234.

[4]Nadel, *Little Germany*, p. 123.

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Yet the communal needs created by the new influx of immigrants made the local problems impossible to ignore. The numbers of Jews in America jumped from 15,000 in 1840 to 50,000 in 1850. Non-Jewish German immigrants arrived even faster (434,627 during the same decade), adding to the size and homogeneity of the German Towns in New York and elsewhere. Populations shifted, old neighborhoods were abandoned and new ones were founded, as *Kleindeutschland* grew from a "thin cluster of new immigrants in the 1840s into a large and stable ethnic enclave."[5] German language and cultural patterns were reinforced, somewhat delaying the need for adaptation to American culture by the immigrant population.[6] The established German-Jewish and Christian communities expanded parishes and synagogues, schools, and philanthropic organizations to accommodate the newcomers.

No autobiographical information has survived from this New York period, but it is not difficult to imagine the thirty-three year old Lilienthal's state of mind after his second major career failure. In early 1848 with two young children and a wife to support, he was still a relative newcomer to the United States.[7] If he could not serve as a pulpit rabbi, then he would devote himself to a portion of the modern rabbinic agenda: teaching. He created a private boarding school that was quickly hailed as one of the best in the country, giving himself the financial independence to develop his own religious ideology. In the years 1848-1855 he made the transition from modern traditionalist to moderate Reformer.

Private Boarding School

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[5]Nadel, *Little Germany*, pp. 32, 46. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, p. 522.

[6]Selma Stern-Taubler in Eric Hirshler, ed. *Jews from Germany in the United States*, p. 43 speculated that probably two-thirds of the German Jewish immigrants did not understand English during the 1850s.

[7]Fortunately his young family was joined that year by that of his brother Samuel, who moved from the south to the New York area. O'Neill, *Ernest Reuben Lilienthal and His Family*, p. 14.

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Immediately after his break with the Union of German Synagogues, Lilienthal began to devote himself "entirely to the education of the young."[8] On April 30, 1848, after meeting with the directors of the Union School, he agreed to take over the lease and pay the yearly rent of $400.[9] He found that his expenses were too great to cover operating costs, and, in January 1849, he moved the school to his home at 21 and 1/2 Eldridge Street, where it became "Dr. Lilienthal's Hebrew and Classical Boarding School."[10] Lilienthal assembled an excellent staff of teachers, and, as director, personally took an active role in the education of his wards. The students, former pulpils of the Union School, ranged from about seven to thirteen or fourteen years old, as was common for the period.[11] An early advertisement promised that the young boys who were to live and study there would be treated as members of the family, with every attention paid to their religious and moral training as well as their comfort.[12] One early graduate testified in 1851 that

> I felt as if I was in my own father's house, and I saw by the manner in which you took care of your pupils, that I should be as safe as in my parent's arms. . . . Every scholar will look upon you as a second father; and as our warmest friend.[13]

The school flourished and, by the spring of 1850, moved to new quarters at 307 Tenth Street, becoming "Dr. Lilienthal's Hebrew, Commercial, and Classical Boarding School." This district was "the newest, least industrial, and best portion of

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[8]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 129.

[9]*Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 16 (February 16, 1852):92.

[10]Merowitz, "Max Lilienthal," p. 52.

[11]*Occident* 8 (November 1850):52. In Schappes', *Documentary History of the Jews in the United States*, p. 116 we see that six was the minimum age in Spanish-Portuguese Talmud Torah.

[12]The advertisement appeared regularly on the last page of the *Asmonean*, a new Jewish weekly; for examples see Vol. I. pp. 48, 56, 64, and 72.

[13]*Asmonean* 3 (April 16, 1851):204.

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Kleindeutschland."[14] Located on Tompkins Square, a highly respectable neighborhood, the school was situated in a large and handsome house, occupying a "very healthy, airy and open position," and equipped with every modern improvement, including a safe and ample playground.[15] At an annual tuition of $200, Lilienthal's institute soon attracted an elite group of students ranging in age from seven to fourteen, from New York, Rochester, Philadelphia, Baltimore, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and New Orleans.[16] Mordecai Noah, a prominent New York Jewish communal leader who sent one of his sons to the school, praised it in an article in the *Occident*:

> I recommend the school of Dr. Lilienthal's with entire confidence to my co-religionists . . . and believe that every confidence may be reposed in the fidelity and character of the Doctor, for the improvement and comfort of the children entrusted to his care.[17]

By 1851, Lilienthal had expanded his institution again, constructing a spacious and lofty detached building on the lot that extended to Eleventh Street, with a covered area for recreation as well as a very large school room with high ceilings and good ventilation. One observer estimated that the addition would allow the school to accommodate nearly one hundred boys, but Lilienthal stipulated that the number never exceed seventy in order to

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[14]Nadel, *Little Germany*, p. 35. One of the motivations for moving the school may have been that the Bowery neighborhood, just a few blocks from Eldridge, had developed into a major area for saloons and bars. "On the Bowery you can count three dozen [bars] in the space of a hundred paces, often three in one house." While many establishments catered to respectable German families, others attracted the rougher elements looking for "crude but gaudy amusements." Ibid., pp. 104f. In addition, by the 1850s the Jewish community was moving north, vacating the older center. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 32.

[15]*Asmonean* 3 (April 16, 1851):204. From advertisement, see note 4 above. The area boasted first-class brick and stone houses, broad boulevards and a gracious feeling. Tompkins Square, called the "Weisse Garten" by the Germans, provided a large open public space. Nadel, *Little Germany*, p. 35.

[16]*Occident* 8 (November 1850): 424ff.

[17]Ibid., p. 424f. For a biography of this colorful early New York Jewish lay leader see Jonathan Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew: The Two Worlds of Mordecai Noah* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981).

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give each student proper attention.[18] Lilienthal also added new faculty and course offerings, including music and art.[19]

Lilienthal set high educational standards. Using examinations as much to measure instructors' ability to teach as to test the students' grasp of the material, he would test, teach, and test again.[20] In addition, he instituted public examinations, at first yearly, then semi-annually. The first, held in August 1850, was attended by parents, friends, the general public, and correspondents from the *Occident* and the *Asmonean*. Part examination, part performance, these presentations featured musical recitals and dramatic readings in German, English, and French, bolstering the reputation of the school considerably.

At the examinations, students answered questions on a wide range of subjects. Since no record of the curriculum has survived, these tests give us the best overview of the ambitious course of study in Lilienthal's school. In August 1850, the students were tested in religion, American history, English grammar, bookkeeping, German and French translation, Hebrew, geography, arithmetic, and English literature. In May 1851, subjects also included how to write commercial letters in English, German, and French, English grammar and composition, drawing and penmanship.[21]

The emphasis on English subjects increased about the time the school moved to Tenth Street. A new advertisement appeared in the *Asmonean* with this addition: "Particular attention is paid to the English education of the pupils, five hours daily being

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[18]*Asmonean* 3 (April 16, 1851):204. *Occident* 9 (May 1851):105.

[19]*Asmonean* 6 (September 10, 1852):197. Merowitz suggested that these courses required an additional fee. "Max Lilienthal," p. 53.

[20]Judah Pilch, *A History of Jewish Education in America* (New York: National Curriculum Research Institute of the American Association for Jewish Education, 1969), p. 39.

[21]*Occident* 8 (November 1850):424ff. *Asmonean* 3 (April 16, 1851): 204.

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devoted to the exclusive study of the various branches of that language."[22] This change reflected both a growing demand by the families Lilienthal served for him to impart English skills and his increasing recognition of the importance of mastering English for success in America. Since five hours a day represented a major portion of the time spent in class, this commitment was a notable sign of acculturation within the immigrant community.[23]

Physical education and moral training were also included in Lilienthal's educational program.[24] Expanding the building on Eleventh Street primarily to create space for recreation during poor weather, he also added a gym teacher to his faculty. One observer noted that the students were "hale and hearty."[25] Moral training was always a central concern for Lilienthal. He wrote that *yirat shamayim* (the fear of God) was the basis of religion and that the knowledge of God's qualities would provide inspiration for his young wards. For instance, learning of God's kindness and omnipotence would teach them to trust God's mercy and to rely upon the Divine; meditation on God's justice would teach them a hatred of vice. To teach the importance of charity, Lilienthal encouraged the boys to form a "Juvenile Philanthropic Society." A main challenge facing private Jewish institutions was to achieve an appropriate level of discipline. To this end, the rabbi required the students to wear uniforms. Noah commended the school for its strictness, contrasting it with the indulgence that the children experienced at home, as did Robert Lyon, editor of *Asmonean*, who also praised the school's excellent discipline. Lyon added that its graduates received an education "which will fit them to be ornaments to society,

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[22]*Asmonean* 4 (May 2, 1851):11.

[23]The German Catholic community had similar concerns about the practical necessity of learning English to ensure socio-economic advancement. Like the Jews, they also felt ambivalent about giving up the German cultural heritage. Jay Dolan, *The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865* (Baltimore, 1975), p. 110.

[24]*Occident* 9 (May 1851):104.

[25]*Asmonean* 3 (April 16, 1851):204. Also *Occident* 9 (May 1851):104. The gymnasium was 25 by 46 by 16 feet.

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from a religious, social, and political point of view."[26]

By 1852, Dr. Lilienthal's school was so large that the public examinations took three evenings to complete and the audience was limited to friends and family. There were musical performances and dramatic productions of Schiller and Shakespeare, complete with costumes. The lower or junior department was questioned on German, geography, American history, German and English diction, French dialogues and verbs, Hebrew translation of the Bible, and arithmetic. The upper or senior department was quizzed about religion, bookkeeping, arithmetic, English grammar, American and world history, and geography.[27] Lilienthal showed his pedagogical savvy when he introduced the use of maps and other visual aids as part of the curriculum. He may have been the first American Jewish educator to formulate lesson plans.[28]

Robert Lyon called him the pioneer among those who founded Jewish schools in America, pointing out that while Lilienthal was not the first to establish a private school, he was the first, "notwithstanding the many oppositions he encountered, to set it on a firm basis."[29] There were a number of reasons for this achievement, not least of which were Lilienthal's reputation and skill as an educator. Moreover, Lilienthal willingly risked his own money to launch his enterprise, since the school did not have the backing of a synagogue or any other Jewish institution. Even schools with institutional support were on

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[26]*Asmonean* 7 (November 19, 1852):53. The students made a contribution to the German Hebrew Benevolent Society at its annual banquet in 1852. For a discussion of discipline see Pilch, *A History of Jewish Education*, p. 32. See also *Occident* 8 (November 1850):424ff. and *Asmonean* 4 (May 23, 1851):37 According to Grinstein, *The Rise*, one of the "reasons for the decline in Jewish parochial schools may have been their reported laxity of discipline," p. 245. The emphasis on moral training also reflected the core value of *Bildung*, or moral development that Lilienthal had brought from Germany.

[27]Ibid., 6 (Sept. 10, 1852):197.

[28]Pilch, *History of Jewish Education*, p. 39. Also Merowitz, "Max Lilienthal," p. 53.

[29]*Asmonean* 4 (May 23, 1851):37.

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shaky financial ground during this period.[30] Although Lilienthal struggled in the first year, his astute business sense and ability to meet the needs of the growing immigrant German-Jewish community enabled the school to grow and improve during his remaining years in New York.

The educational values expressed in the name of his school, "The Hebrew, Commercial and Classical Boarding School," were in full harmony with those of the German-Jewish community he served. These immigrants were attracted to the school in order to avoid the Christian influence that permeated the newly-created public schools. Concerned about passing on Jewish religion and values, Lilienthal worried that most Jews in America knew little about Judaism. Unable to read Hebrew and ignorant of their people's history and literature, they would, he feared, be prone to indifference or even apostasy. His goal was to educate American Jewish children to become faithful Jews as well as "intelligent, benevolent, and noble-minded members of society."[31] To underline his commitment, he personally tested the students in Hebrew and religious subjects at the public examinations.[32]

In a lengthy article on Jewish education, Lilienthal emphasized the need for intellectual understanding of Judaism. While he worried that most American Jews could not read the prayers or understand Hebrew, he was more concerned with their grasp of the doctrinal essence of Judaism. Since most children finished their education by early adolescence, he advocated the use of a catechism to supply students with a creed to make up for their limited formal Jewish training. This approach also reflected the nineteenth-

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[30]For instance, Congregation Anshe Chesed, reestablishing its school simultaneously with the founding of Lilienthal's school, was wary concerning the outlay of funds. *Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, April 30, May 7, 1848. The minutes for the next months reveal that its school was plagued with the constant need for repairs to its building, poor teachers, and an inattentive superintendent. Ibid., January 1, 1850.

[31]*Asmonean* 10 (September 1, 1854):156.

[32]Ibid., 3 (April 16, 1851):204. In a later examination, the subjects included Bible translation and religion. Ibid., 6 (September 10, 1852):197.

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century tendency to teach Judaism as a "Konfession" like Christianity, by including "Religion" as a new and distinct subject in the modern Jewish school.[33]

Also used in American public schools in the 1830s and 1840s, catechisms appeared in American Jewish schools during this period as well.[34] In 1839, Rebecca Gratz of Philadelphia introduced catechistical teaching at her new Hebrew Sunday School, and S.M. Isaacs introduced catechism into the curriculum of the afternoon school at Bnai Jeshurun in 1842.[35] Thus, Lilienthal was advocating an important German religious and educational innovation based on a pedagogical technique which had already taken root in the United States.

Lilienthal created a two-tiered curriculum, based on the following conception of the stages of cognitive development:

> The first one, according to the yet undeveloped faculties of the mind, should be a brief and preparatory one; the second should enlarge, complete and explain the foundations laid down in the former course. Catechisms, written after the same plan, should be used in both courses, with the difference only that the first must be short, simply and plainly written, in order that the child may easily comprehend and learn by heart his task, and the second, enriched with verses and other explanations and adapted to more developed faculties, must try to give a full and complete system of religion.[36]

The central themes of the catechisms were to be the following: God and His qualities, immortality of the soul, revelation, messiah, and moral law, including duties to self, to fellow creatures, and to God. Instruction was to be enlivened with stories and examples

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[33]Jakob J. Petuchowski, Manuals and Catechisms of the Jewish Religion in the Early Period of Emancipation," in *Studies in Nineteenth-Century Jewish Intellectual History,* pp. 48, 63.

[34]Kaestle, *The Evolution of an Urban School System*, p. 152.

[35]Gartner, ed. *Jewish Education in the United States*, pp. 6f. See also Pilch, Judah ed. *A History of Jewish Education in America*, p. 32. For specific catechisms used in American Jewish schools see Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 257. For the catechism at Bnai Jeshurun see Grinstein, "Studies in the History of Jewish Education," p. 43.

[36]*Asmonean* 10 (Sept. 15, 1854):172f.

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borrowed from daily life. Understanding these principles would "form an insurmountable barrier against apostasy."[37]

German Jews were also inclined to send their sons to his school, in part because it seemed to allow them to perpetuate the humanistic traditions they had admired in the old country. Merowitz suggested that Lilienthal "imitated the then-popular German gymnasium,"[38] a nine-year preparatory school that granted a degree preparing one for entrance to the university. Its curriculum was characterized by an emphasis on Greek and Latin studies, with the rest of the curriculum focusing on French, mathematics, physics, natural history, geography, religion, music, calligraphy, drawing and philosophy.[39]

Having himself been a product of a gymnasium and a liberal arts university, Lilienthal used this model for these upwardly mobile young American Jews. Like the gymnasium, New York school was an upper middle-class institution with elitest and classical pretensions, since its tuition fees excluded the less affluent and its advertisements claimed to teach Greek and Latin.[40] Judging from the areas covered in the school's public examinations, classical studies were actually given little emphasis; the curriculum emphasized commercial or practical subjects such as German, French, English, arithmetic, and bookkeeping. The school was actually more like the German *Realschule*, which prepared middle-class students for jobs in commerce and normally ended when the students reached age thirteen or fourteen.[41]

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[37]Ibid. For similar trends in Catholic catechisms and readers see Dolan, *The Immigrant Church:*, pp. 114ff. Lutherans also used catechisms in their Sunday schools, especially Luther's *Small Catechism*, brought from Germany. Gilbert, *Commitment to Unity*, pp. 3, 16f.

[38]Merowitz, "Max Lilienthal," p. 51

[39]Fritz K. Ringer, *Education and Society*, p. 34.

[40]Greek and Latin were promised in advertisements until the new location was established in 1850. The new advertisement, which emphasized English studies, dropped reference to the classical languages.

[41]Ringer, *Education and Society*, p. 34. Sorkin, in *The Transformation of German*

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Theoretically committed to the humanistic ideals of the enlightenment, he also clearly understood the practical thrust of American life:

> In our times . . . we are accustomed to judge everything from its practical side; our children have to learn a great many things at once, and this in but a short time. At thirteen years, the education is in a majority of instances said to be finished; the boy, if it is required, shall then be able to enter business, and shall know at least English, Arithmetic, French, German, and a little Bookkeeping with a host of minor things.[42]

He wrote, "We, in this country, sink under the burden of commercial competition, and valuing and appreciating everything, but after [*sic*]the profit it will yield."[43]

To be sure, there were American models for his school as well. Various Christian denominations developed private religious schools called "institutes," which also followed European models with regard to curriculum and structure. These schools went beyond the limited curriculum of the public schools, which focused almost exclusively on the "three Rs." Jews imitated these Christian private schools.[44] Another important model was the secular academy, which served as a transitional institution between the Latin (classical) school of the colonial period and the public high school during the nineteenth century. These schools catered to a middle class who could afford schooling beyond the elementary level, but who were not college bound. Like Lilienthal's, they mixed traditional classical studies with "realist subjects" such as foreign languages, science, engineering, business, handwriting, commercial arithmetic, bookkeeping, and home economics for girls.[45]

Jewry, p. 127, points out that Jewish schools in Germany also emulated the *Realschulen*.

[42]*Asmonean* 10 (August 11, 1854):133.

[43]Ibid., 10 (Sept. 1, 1854):156.

[44]Pilch, *History of Jewish Education*, p. 30ff. Also Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 247.

[45]Harry G. Good, James D. Teller, *A History of American Education*, 3rd edition (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1973), pp. 67f., 106f. Good and Teller found records of 139 incorporated academies in New York State between 1841 and 1860. For a list of courses they offered see p. 112. See also Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience*, p. 427, and Stuart G. Noble, *A History of American Education* (New York: Rinehart, 1954).

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The first American Jewish "institute" was the Misses Palaches' Boarding and Day School for Young Ladies of the Jewish Faith, in New York City. Founded in 1841, it seems to have had a close association with the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, Shearith Israel.[46] Teaching the English and Hebrew languages, the school drew on the same upper-class clientele Lilienthal would attract. These members of the most respectable families of the city paid $200 per year for board and tuition, the same as Lilienthal's school. According to its advertisement,

> The accomplishments and other languages are taught on the usual terms. Parents and guardians may rest assured that the greatest attention will always be paid to the religious and moral instruction of the pupils, combined with their mental improvement, every family being afforded with the aid of the best master in the various branches of study.[47]

A description of a public examination in December 1849 revealed a fuller picture of the course of study at Misses Palaches' School, which included Hebrew, biblical history, French, and English, along with the "elegant accomplishments."[48] Lilienthal knew about this boarding school from his first days in New York. In January 1846, when he was beginning to formulate plans for the Union School, he requested permission to visit the school.[49]

Lilienthal's school in turn served as a model for other schools, such as the boys' school formed in New York by Adolph Loewe. Developed from modest beginnings in December 1849, Loewe first advertised classes in Hebrew, German, and English taught at

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[46]For some reason Hyman Grinstein sets its founding in 1840, but its own advertisements indicate the year 1841. See for instance *Asmonean* 1 (Nov. 9, 1849):23. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York,* p. 242.

[47]*Asmonean* 1 (Nov. 9, 1849):23. Compared to the synagogue supported schools that charged from $9 to $24 a year, the cost of these private boarding schools was significant. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, pp. 242f..

[48]*Asmonean* 1 (Dec. 14, 1849):61.

[49]*Minute Book of Union*, Jan., 14, 1846, p. 336.

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two separate locations on alternating days.[50] By February 1851, he announced the opening of a "Hebrew Seminary" in addition to his day school. Originally the school accepted only twelve students, who would be given a thorough Hebrew, English and German education, but by 1852 the school had grown to forty.[51]. Taking a cue from Lilienthal's advertisement, he promised the students "would be treated in all respects as members of the family." Like the other schools, Loewe also had annual public examinations covering Hebrew studies, English reading, rhetoric, astronomy, physiology, and geography.[52]

Another local boarding school which followed Lilienthal's lead was the "Greene Street Educational Institution," whose formal opening was announced in January 1853 with a curriculum very similar to Lilienthal's. However the Greene Street school was coeducational, with one hundred boys and girls between the ages of five and thirteen years, four teachers, a governess, and a monitor.[53]

Although these private Jewish schools met many needs of the new German-Jewish community in the 1840s and 50s, other Jews argued for the greater usefulness of the public schools. For instance, the liberal newcomer Isador Busch spoke out forcefully for Jewish participation in public education and prophesied the downfall of all-day Jewish schools on the grounds that public schools had better facilities and were more

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[50]*Asmonean* 1 (Dec. 21, 1849):71. In the beginning Loewe did not even have his own site, nor was he a rabbi.

[51]Ibid., 6 (Sept. 10, 1852):197. After Lilienthal left the city Loewe's school became more prominent. Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 243.

[52]Ibid., 3 (Feb. 7, 1851):124.

[53]Ibid., 7 (Jan. 7, 1853):137. Grinstein lists other private schools in his *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 243 and p. 565, note 34. The *Asmonean* 12 (July 13, 1855) printed advertisements for other schools: G.M. Cohen's Educational Institute and Boarding School for Girls and Boys, opened May 1, 1855. John Livor's Institute of Day and Boarding School, The Polytechnic and Gymnastic Institute.

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convenient.[54] The debate in New York Jewish circles was gradually resolved through legislation that secularized the public schools by banning sectarian books (1851), made the reading of Scriptures discretionary (1855), and allowed local wards to choose their own text books (1856). As a result, Jews began flocking to the newly-secularized, free public schools by the late 1850s, causing many of the expensive private schools to collapse.[55]

When Lilienthal left New York in 1855, some of his students even followed him to Cincinnati. His successor, Reverend H. A. Henry, preacher at Congregation Shaarey Zedek, who brought students from that synagogue's school, had to make repairs to the school building when he took over, suggesting Lilienthal may have faced financial difficulties during the last years of his tenure as students gravitated to public schools. In the competition for the shrinking pool of parochial students, in his advertisements Henry underlined the traditional Jewish emphasis of the school and offered a limited number of openings for girls.[56] Henry struggled to maintain the boarding school until 1857, when it closed permanently.[57]

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[54]Lloyd P. Gartner, "Temples of Liberty Unpolluted," pp. 169f. Busch further insisted that as good republicans Jews ought to be in favor of public schools and oppose sectarian or church-schools of whatever denomination. *Israelite* 1 (December 8, 1854):173. A similar debate occurred among liberals in the Catholic community, where the commitment to parochial schooling was generally stronger. Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*, p. 91.

[55]Hyman Grinstein, "Studies in the History of Jewish Education,"p. 190. Lilienthal too would eventually back public education. A similar tendency can be seen in Christian religious education, which, in the face of competition from the public schools, turned increasingly to the Sunday School to impart religious values by the 1850s. See Jack L. Seymour, *From Sunday School to Church School: Continuities in Protestant Church Education in the United States, 1860-1929* (Washington, D. C.: University Press of America, 1982). Henry Barnard, an American educator, wrote in 1865: "Religious instruction has been withdrawn from the common school and intrusted wholly to the home and the church." pp. 31ff. For origins of the Sunday School movement see Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience*, p. 66.

[56]*Asmonean* 12 (August 3, 1855):121. See Ibid. 14 (May 2, 1856):19 for advertisements for a Jewish Academy for Young Ladies, at the same address. These notices stopped abruptly after Ibid. 14 (June 13, 1854):65.

[57]Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 93. Henry probably left New York in the spring of 1857. The last advertisement for the school appeared in the

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Lilienthal's school and those like it served the needs of a segment of upper middle-class German Jews in the 1840s and 50s that tried to maintain the educational values of the German-Jewish society while adjusting to America. These elite schools, which represented an interim solution, were quickly supplanted by religiously neutral public schools that Americanized the immigrant children more effectively. Thus the middle 1850s marked the beginning of a long-lasting love of American Jewry for public schools, forcing the synagogues to institute supplementary afternoon schools for their students. After 1857, a marked lethargy characterized the approach to parochial education in the New York Jewish community.[58]

Communal Activities

Even as Lilienthal labored to build his school, he was still active in congregational and communal activities. In 1848, like most German immigrants, Jews were gripped by the revolutionary events occurring in their old home. According to Stanley Nadel in his study of Little Germany:

> When Kleindeutschlanders mobilized in support of the German revolutions of 1848, a number of German Jewish societies marched in the grand parade, and the Harmony Society (a German-Jewish library association) held a public poetry Fest for German freedom.[59]

Lilienthal addressed the plight of those fleeing the upheaval in Europe on November 13, 1849, in a speech to the joint dinner of the New York and German Hebrew Benevolent Societies. He urged that the refugees be "received with a hearty welcome, with ready

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Asmonean 15 (April 10, 1857):201. The *Occident* reported Henry's arrival in San Fransisco in August 1857, where he eventually became the minister of Congregation Shearith Israel. *Occident* 15 (November 1857):407; Ibid. 16 (October 1859):606; and 19 (October 1861):323.

[58]Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 245.

[59]Nadel, *Little Germany*, p. 102. For Isaac M. Wise's reaction to the revolutions see *Reminiscences*, pp. 81ff. He became so agitated that he was tempted to return to Germany to take part in "the re-birth of Europe."

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assistance, if they are thrown, bereft of all, upon these shores."[60] In August 1850, speaking in German before a large crowd of Christians and Jews, Dr. Lilienthal once again urged generous support for German political refugees in the aftermath of the failed revolutions,[61] asserting that both Christian and Jewish German-Americans, who now enjoy the blessings of freedom, must answer the call of those "who have struggled and suffered for liberty."[62] His words revealed the powerful feelings of the German-American immigrant community towards its native land despite their embrace of America:

> Fatherland, the ground upon which our people have grown, upon which the history of our nation was developed. . . . How should we remember it otherwise than with love and gratitude? Fatherland, the soil which covers the graves of our fathers and mothers, . . . truly it is a great and beautiful country.[63]

While praising German's fidelity, industry, economy, knowledge, and perseverance, he noted that there was still no liberty in German lands. The people were subject to the caprice of tyrants who flaunted the rule of law, set brother against brother, and imposed taxes which robbed people of the fruit of their labor. Seeking to reduce the population to machines, German education led to blind obedience rather than to liberty. Lilienthal complained that "Germany had no heroes like Washington, no counselors like Jefferson and Adams, no wise and faithful servants like Franklin."[64] His appeal for funds was

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[60] *Occident* 7 (January 1850):512.

[61] There is a debate over the impact of these revolutions on American Jewry. Bertram W. Korn, "Jewish 48'ers in America, *American Jewish Archives* 2 (June, 1949):3-20, argued that, though the numbers of poliical refugees were small (he identified 28 Jewish Forty-Eighters), they had an important impact on liberal politics in America. See also Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 8ff.; and Barkai, *Branching Out*, p. 31. For dissenting views on the impact of 1848 see Bernard D. Weinryb, "The German-Jewish Immigrants: A Critical Evalution," in *Jews from Germany in the United States*, especially pp. 104ff. Also Hansen, *The Atlantic Migration*, pp. 272ff. Lilienthal's speeches were part of broader efforts throughout the German community in the United States to provide funds to help German refugees still in Europe.

[62] *Asmonean* 2 (August 6, 1850):122.

[63] Ibid. This speech was also mentioned in Chapter Two above.

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successful, and the sermon, which made a strong impression, was translated and published in full in the *Asmonean.*[65]

In spite of his bitter break with the three German synagogues, he was invited to preach, often in these same congregations, issue rulings on Jewish law, and work for their charitable causes. Apparently his rash promise to give up the rabbinate was short-lived, since he continued to serve as one, albeit on his own terms. Nor did the friction between Congregation Anshe Chesed and Rabbi Lilienthal last. As early as half a year after his departure, September 1848, a number of congregants petitioned the board to reengage the Reverend Dr. Lilienthal as their rabbi. This effort at rapprochement was premature, the leadership rejecting the proposal on procedural grounds.[66]

Anshe Chesed's decision to build a large, new building seemed to breathe a new spirit into the congregation. In the 1850s the Jewish community rapidly abandoned the old "Midtown" section, along with more prosperous New Yorkers who relinquished the downtown wards to the poor. According to Edward Spann in *The New Metropolis,* "The uptown movement was the most conspicuous part of a broad redistribution of population and of property which, though long in the making, only became a significant factor in the two decades after 1840." [67] Anshe Chesed's move to Norfolk Street placed them in the center of Little Germany; this now-distinctly German district would soon contain more

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[64]Ibid.

[65]Ibid. 2 (July 26, 1850):108.

[66]*Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes,* Sept. 19, 1848. There is evidence that Lilienthal stayed on quite good terms with Shaarey Hashamayim throughout the period, and officiated during the High Holy Days. Unfortunately, the Shaarey Hashamayim minute books are not extant for the period, nor are those of Rodeph Shalom.

[67]Spann, *The New Metropolis,* pp. 103, 146. Anshe Chesed's growth was more than matched by the German Catholic community who in 1851 moved out of their humble wooden structure into a new church, one of the largest in the city. Jay P. Dolan, "Immigrants in the City: New York Irish and German Catholics," in *American Immigration and Ethnicity,* Vol. 19: *The Immigrant Religious Experience,* p. 115.

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than four times as many German immigrants as it had in 1845.[68]

The synagogue's minutes for the period are full of the excitement entailed in planning, financing, and consecrating its new home. A main concern of the board was that the synagogue make a good impression on the city at the consecration ceremony, scheduled for May, 1850.[69] One historian suggests that Anshe Chesed was also driven by rivalry with Temple Emanu-El, which was becoming more influential. "In order to retain its wealthier members, it had to satisfy some of the demands for changes in the ritual."[70] The board began modernization in several areas, especially revising the liturgy. For guidance, Anshe Chesed turned to Dr. Lilienthal and two others. His "committee on divine service" presented its recommendations at the time of the opening of the new building. They suggested that the congregation adopt the moderate Reform ritual of Vienna, that the cantor face the congregation during services, and that women be included in the choir.[71]

The institution of a mixed, professional choir was surprising, considering that only two years earlier the president had argued with Lilienthal over the purchase of four-part synagogue music.[72] Now the board agreed not only to a four-part choir but also to a

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[68]Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 32. Nadel, *Little Germany*, p. 30ff. Between 1846 and 1855 the Jewish population of New York grew from 12,000 to 30,000, which contributed to the increase in membership in the local synagogues.

[69]Ibid., October 14, 1849.

[70]Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York*, p. 364. Emanu-El had moved uptown to Christie Street in 1847 and would move even further north to the elegant northern end of Little Germany on 12th street in 1854.

[71]Ibid. The ruling validated the synagogue's decision in late 1849 to include women choristers. See *Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, December 2, 1849 and January 20, 1850. It may well be that the congregation chose Lilienthal for this task knowing that his evolving moderate Reform position matched their own development. For Viennese ritual see Isaac Noah Mannheimer, *Gebete des Israeliten* (Vienna: J. Schlesinger's Buchhandlung, 1909).

[72]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 129. The leadership had not changed, but their desire to

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professional one, which required a significant outlay of funds.[73] Even more, the board agreed to admit three or four young women and engaged a professional female soloist who would be paid $50 a year.[74] This innovation marked a significant movement in the direction of Reform for this traditional congregation, since according to Jewish law it was forbidden to hear the voice of a woman during religious services.

The board also advocated more decorum at services, continuing trends earlier advocated by Lilienthal, by limiting the number of prayers that the congregation could sing loudly with the cantor, banning children under four from the sanctuary, prohibiting talk in the vestibule and among the women, and setting aside seating for guests and strangers. The new rules, along with fines for violations, were to be posted in both English and German.[75]

The *New York Daily Tribune* and the Jewish press covered the consecration ceremony for the new building on May 16, 1850 during *Shavuot.* It featured German lectures by Dr. Schlesinger, Samuel Isaacs of Shaaray Tefila, and Drs. Lilienthal and Merzbacher, as well as choral and orchestral performances.[76] Lilienthal spoke briefly in German, taking as his text Psalm 112: "I rejoiced when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord." He described the small room, heated only by a wood stove, which had originally served as the sanctuary for the congregants, and he expressed gratitude that they could now worship in a beautiful new building, fulfilling the promise

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acculturate to American worship styles overrode their earlier caveats.

[73]The choir director, Mr. Cohn, was engaged at an annual salary of $225 (*Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes,* August 19, 1949). Choir members were paid by receiving either free seats in the new synagogue (worth $50) or $36 per year for three years (Ibid., Nov. 18, 1849). By December 1849 the synagogue had hired eight paid singers, eight who worked in exchange for seats, and eleven children who received seats for their parents.

[74]Ibid., December 2, 1849 and January 20, 1850.

[75]Ibid., December 2, 25, 1849. See Chapter Two above.

[76]The clipping of the article in the *New York Daily Tribune* is included in the *Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes.*

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made to their parents back in Germany, who pleaded for them to keep their ancient faith. This well-received sermon led to two more on May 17 and May 25, prompting the board to send him a special letter of thanks.[77]

Lilienthal preached at several other synagogues while Anshe Chesed continued to maintain an informal relationship with him that continued into 1851.[78] After Lilienthal delivered a series of sermons for Passover, the Anshe Chesed board fully reversed its earlier opposition to the rabbi, resolving "that the Reverend Dr. Lilienthal shall have the privilege to preach in our synagogue any Shabbat [Hebrew] whenever the same may feel inclined to do so, provided that notice thereof be given to the Parnass in the time to have it published the week previous."[79] The association became even more cordial when the board asked the rabbi to act as superintendent of their school's examination.[80] At the same meeting the president urged the board to formalize its relationship with Lilienthal by making him their Honorary Rabbi, in recognition of the "many valuable and gratuitous services he had rendered the congregation." This proposal was sent to a meeting of all the members of the congregation, who unanimously elected him to this position.[81] Lilienthal responded:

> To the President and Trustees of the K.K. Anshi [*sic*] Chesed.
> Gentlemen:
> The letter sent to me by your secretary conveying the information of my having been unanimously elected Honorary Rabbi to your congregation has been duly received.

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[77]Ibid., June 16, 1850.

[78]He officiated at Shaarey Hashamayim and Ahavat Chesed during the High Holy Days in September 1850, and again at Shaarey Hashamayim for Washington's birthday in Feb. 1851. *Asmonean* 2 (Sept. 20, 1850), 2 (October 18, 1850); 3 (November 29, 1850); 3 (February 21, 1851).

[79]*Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, April 27, 1851.

[80]Ibid., Oct. 8, 1851.

[81]Ibid. Though Lilienthal was called "honorary rabbi," there was no other to share the duties with him. He was given no salary for the honor.

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> It is with much pleasure that I accept this honorable office, feeling that the appointment is the best proof I could receive of the confidence reposed in my feeble powers. I am truly happy that such an available opportunity is presented to me to labor for the advancement of our sacred faith and to promote the spiritual welfare of your thriving congregation.
>
> Though much engaged in my professional duties, I will not cease to devote my best energies for the interest and prosperity of your congregation so as to justify the confidence reposed in me. Devotedly wishing that the Almighty will be pleased to direct you, and now again, my congregation to the much deserved happiness by a continuance in the good path which they have previously entered, I subscribe myself very respectfully.
>
> Signed,
>
> M. Lilienthal, Dr. Rabbi.[82]

Though he seemed pleased, Lilienthal reminded Anshe Chesed that he had professional duties in his private school. Because the appointment was honorary, he could maintain an acceptable degree of autonomy.

Rapprochement with the larger and more influential Anshe Chesed opened the way for a similar arrangement with Rodeph Shalom and Shaarey Hashamayim. The *Asmonean* reported that "he has been reinstated in his important functions of Rabbi to the three congregations."[83] At that time its editor Robert Lyon offered this assessment of Dr. Lilienthal's New York career:

> The activity of this reverend gentlemen is at length producing its effect upon the community. No matter what reputation a man may have achieved in Europe, upon his arrival here, he has to undergo a probation before he finally settles down in his proper position.[84]

According to Lyon, when Lilienthal was reinstated as rabbi of the three synagogues in October of 1851, he had found his niche.

Lilienthal continued to serve the synagogues without any salary for the remainder of his time in New York. The Anshe Chesed minutes recorded that he supervised their school examinations, ruled on Jewish law, performed life-cycle functions, gave sermons,

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[82]Ibid., Oct. 13, 1851.

[83]*Asmonean* 5 (Oct. 24, 1851):6. The paper included a similar resolution by the board of Rodeph Shalom.

[84]*Asmonean* 5 (October 24, 1851):6.

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spearheaded charitable causes, and even made voluntary offerings and personal contributions to the synagogue.[85] In gratitude Anshe Chesed gave him several gifts and published formal resolutions of acknowledgment in the *Asmonean*.[86] It also offered free burial lots in its cemetery to him and his family.[87] This unusual relationship, made possible as a result of the success of his school, allowed Lilienthal to continue to serve as rabbi on his own terms.[88]

Plans for a National Convention

Beginning in 1847, when Lilienthal briefly established a national *Beth Din*, he became involved in broader developments in the American Jewish scene. In early 1849, he played an integral part in the effort by Isaac M. Wise and Isaac Leeser to organize a national convention to promote unity among congregations throughout the United States. While many scholars have discussed this early attempt at national organization, none has clearly delineated Lilienthal's important role in the project.[89]

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[85]*Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes,* March 28, 1852.

[86]Ibid., August 15, 1852 , October 20, 1853, and October 29, 1854.

[87]Ibid., August 1, 1853.

[88]This account does not exhaust Lilienthal's communal and charitable activities during the period. For instance, he preached at consecration services at Congregation Anshe Emeth of Albany in 1851 and at Congregation Ohabei Shalom, in Boston, in 1854. *Asmonean* 4 (Oct. 17, 1851):283; *Israelite* 1 (Sept.29, 1854):95. He was a regular speaker at the annual German Hebrew Benevolent Society dinner; see for instance *Asmonean* 7 (Nov. 19, 1852): 53; and he also spoke at the inauguration of the New Jewish Hospital in June 1855. *Israelite* 1 (June 1, 1855):373. Lilienthal claimed to have converted thirty-seven Christians to Judaism during the period and reconverted a number of Jewish apostates. *Israelite* 1 (Nov. 17, 1854):149. He also explained the nature of a Jewish divorce before the New York State Supreme Court. *Asmonean* 10 (June 9, 1854):63. Lilienthal worked on behalf of Jews abroad, to gain support for Ludwig Philippson's scheme for educating Turkish and Palestinian Jews in order to make them self-sufficient. *Israelite* 1 (August 28, 1854):78.

[89]Bertram W. Korn incorrectly claimed that Lilienthal opposed the convention out of fear "that the numerically superior traditionalist groups would outvote the Reformers and outlaw modernization." *Eventful Years and Experiences* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1954) pp. 35-38. See also Moshe Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism: The Historical School in 19th Century America* (Philadelphia: Jewish

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The convention, which never took place, was one in a series of endeavors by leaders of mid-ninteenth-century American Jewry to unite all the country's congregations in order to solve common organizational, educational, and communal problems. Isaac Leeser had first called for "all regularly organized congregations in America [to] elect delegates to meet at Philadelphia on the 7th day of November, 1841."[90] His aim was to strengthen traditional Judaism, establish a central ecclesiastical authority, and standardize religious education. The keystone of the plan was the creation of a central religious council, modeled on a traditional *Beth Din.* The proposal was rejected both by the old-line Sephardic synagogues and the Reform Charleston congregation.[91] The next attempt at national organization was Lilienthal's *Beth Din,* which strove for many of the same goals, with the important addition of creating a standardized prayerbook. The Leeser/Wise plan of 1849, which had its genesis in the months following the collapse of the *Beth Din,* represented a continuation of Lilienthal's agenda.

The efforts to organize the 1849 convention showed Lilienthal in a new role, working behind the scenes to shape American Jewry. Though he did not shrink from national leadership during this period, his recent failures in Russia and New York made him more reticent about stepping forward in a conspicuous manner. Consequently, while Lilienthal strongly supported the goals of the proposed conference, he allowed Wise to take the lead, establishing a pattern in their relationship that would continue for the rest of Lilienthal's life. Wise would be the outspoken crusader on the front lines; Lilienthal

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Publication Society, 1963), pp. 125-130; Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, pp. 150-156; and Lance J. Sussman, "The Life and Career of Isaac Leeser," pp. 275-278. Sussman also inaccurately claims that Lilienthal and the three orthodox congregations opposed the plan (Ibid., p. 277). Also pertinent is Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, pp. 53-57, though he does not treat Lilienthal's role in the proposed convention.

[90]Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, p. 375. The first synod of the New York Catholic Church took place in 1842, attempting to establish conformity. It was followed by others in 1850 and 1861 to bolster unity in that ethnically fragmented body. Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*, p. 163. For the history of Lutheran general synods see Gilbert, *Commitment to Unity*, pp. 9f.

[91]Sussman, *Isaac Leeser*, pp. 200ff.

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would be the backroom organizer and consensus builder.

When Wise returned to Albany in April 1847, he was disappointed by the failure of Lilienthal's *Beth Din.* In order to articulate his own vision for Reform and unity, he wrote two lectures in English which he delivered to a circle of friends. One of them sent these lectures to Isaac Leeser without Wise's knowledge, who published them in the *Occident.* In his editorial remarks, Leeser criticized their Reformist tendency, launching a long correspondence between him and Wise which culminated in their first face-to-face meeting in the fall of 1847.[92] The two adversaries were surprised to discover a mutual respect from which further correspondence developed. The moderate traditionalist Leeser and the moderate Reformer Wise found common ground on the need to bring together representatives of the nation's synagogues in order to confront American Jewry's many problems. In October 1848, Leeser published an editorial in the *Occident* entitled "Association," which called on congregations to gather to exchange ideas.[93] The effort was given impetus by Wise's call "To Ministers and Other Israelites" to meet in Philadelphia in May, 1849. Wise urged discussion aimed at linking national efforts concerning education, certification of rabbinic leadership, synagogues, and benevolent societies. He warned:

> If we do not stimulate all the congregations to establish good schools, and to institute a reform in their synagogues on modern Jewish principles, the house of the Lord will be desolate, or nearly so, in less than ten years.

He concluded:

> I call upon all my honoured friends, both ministers and laymen all who have an interest in God's law - come, let us be assembled in order to be united! Exercise all your influence on your friends and acquaintances to bring

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[92]Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, pp. 138ff.

[93]Ibid., p. 155. The role of Jewish newspapers is an important discussion which has been treated in Diner, *A Time For Gathering*, pp. 206ff.. These newspapers, in spite of small paid circulation, still linked the far-flung Jewish community from the East Coast to California. With regard to Leeser's efforts, see Seller, "Isaac Leeser, Architect of the American Jewish Community," p. 17. Also Sussman, *Isaac Leeser*, pp. 216ff. and Grinstein, *The Rise*, pp. 214ff.

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> together all men of zeal and piety, of wisdom and knowledge, to consider what should be done for the union, welfare, and progress of Israel. Let the place of assembly be *Philadelphia*, it being nearly the centre of the Jews living in North America; and let the time of meeting be the second day of Rosh Hodesh Iyar, 5609.[94]

In an effort to promote the first meeting, Leeser and Wise divided up the task of contacting everyone: Leeser was to champion the plan in Philadelphia, the West, and the South; Wise was responsible for the East, especially New York. Wise immediately went to New York and met with Rabbis Lilienthal and Merzbacher. According to Wise's *Reminiscences*, Merzbacher opposed the plan, anticipating Orthodox recalcitrance, while Lilienthal endorsed it.[95]

Lilienthal assisted Wise by hosting a meeting with him and a contingent from Cincinnati at his home, going so far as to offer Wise his pulpit to promote the idea. On February 1 Wise gave a speech before a large crowd at Shaarey Hashamayim advocating the plan.[96] Afterwards, Wise held a private meeting at which the president of Shaarey Hashamayim agreed to assemble the boards of all the German synagogues for him to address. At that gathering, on February 2, Lilienthal urged support for the convention and the group unanimously resolved to participate.[97]

In the next seven issues of the *Occident* the union was vigorously debated by Jews of every ideological tendency. While Leeser regularly editorialized in favor of the meeting, both traditional and liberal contingents were hesitant to attend any convention involving the other. Several traditionalists cited the radicalism of the Reform Conferences

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[94]*Occident* 6 (December 1848):35.

[95]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 86.

[96] *Occident* 6 (March 1849):614ff. In his *Reminiscences* Wise confused this lecture with a later one in March which would be published in the *Occident*. Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, p. 49, suggests that one of Wise's motivations for promoting the plan in New York was "to obtain a position", since he was very unhappy in Albany at this time.

[97]Ibid.

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in Germany as the reason for not associating with what they feared would be similar extremism in the United States.[98] Wise responded defensively:

> They said I agitate for the Jewish body, for the sake of getting an office, and further, they aver that I am a reformer. . . . I will never accept any salaried office from this convention; my motives are honest, and I will not give up the plan, whatever may be said or thought, till I have tried everything that can be tried. You aver that I am a reformer, to prejudice the people against this sound plan; to be sure, I am a reformer, as much so as our age requires; because I am convinced that none can stop the stream of time, none can check the swift wheels of the age; but I have always the *Halacha* for my basis; I never sanction a reform against the *Din* [Law]. I am a reformer, if the people long for it, but then I seek to direct the public mind on the path of the *Din;* but I never urge my principles upon another.[99]

Wise downplayed his Reform agenda in order to promote unity. As a result, many interested communities asked for more details concerning the convention. In response, Wise and Lilienthal published a circular in the March, 1849 issue of the *Occident,* reiterating the problems faced by American Jewry and listing the agenda for the proposed convention.[100]

To reawaken enthusiasm for the cause, Wise returned to New York on March 3, where Lilienthal arranged for him to speak again at Shaarey Hashamayim. Leeser, who was present, asked Wise to translate the sermon into English, which was then published in the *Occident,* though the editor distanced himself from its Reform-oriented ideas. In his talk Wise drew an analogy between the light in the biblical Tabernacle and the need for spiritual light in the congregations of Israel. He called on the congregants to choose

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[98]For instance, see the letter from S. Abrahams, *Occident* 7 (June 1849):143ff. Later that year Rabbi Abraham Rice expressed the same worry to Leeser in private correspondence. (Cited in Sussman, "Isaac Leeser," p. 277.) Samuel Isaacs of Shaaray Tefila in New York, was one traditionalist who strongly favored the conference. He promised that "Reform and anti-Reform will not escape our lips; there is a broad platform we can occupy in common, without in any way unfurling separate standards. . . . We can see nothing but benefit from meeting - the danger we apprehend is lethargic indifference." *Occident* 7 (June 1849):138f.

[99]Ibid., 6 (March 1849):616.

[100]Ibid., p. 581.

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representatives to this conference so that they could begin to address the pressing problems facing American Jewry.[101]

Inspired, a number of German-Jewish intellectuals formed a society called the Friends of Light (*Lichtfreunde*) "to assist in removing the great stumbling block, ignorance, by diffusing light and information in all directions."[102] The society was modeled on a similar Jewish group formed in Germany in 1792, described by Heinrich Graetz,

> whose chief aim was to regard each other as brothers and to support each other . . . but their collateral intention was to spread culture and promote enlightenment. The 'Friends' took a saying of Mendelssohn as their motto, 'To seek for truth, to love the beautiful, to desire the good, to do the best.'[103]

The gathering of Maskilim, inspired by Mendelssohn, never became a driving force in German-Jewish life, but this type of organization reappeared in the succeeding generations. In Frankfurt during the early 1840s, a group of radical lay reformers formed an association called the *Reformfreunde* which may also have influenced the New York *Lichtfreunde*.[104]

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[101]*Occident* 7 (April 1849):12ff. Heller mistakenly claimed that this address was given in Albany. Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, p. 165.

[102]Letter of Sigismund Waterman, secretary of the *Lichtfreunde*, to the *Occident* 7 (August 1849):271.

[103]Heinrich Graetz, *The History of the Jews*, 6 vols. reprint ed. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1891, 1946), 5:418f. Not limited to Jewish circles, the *Lichtfreunde* associations were also organized in churches as vehicles for political agitation during the period that liberalism was outlawed. Hiding behind the manifest purpose of religious reform, these clubs helped prepare the ground for liberal participation in public affairs. Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 13f., 23. According to Kenneth Scott Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age: A History of Christianity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Vol. I: *The Nineteenth Century in Europe: Background and The Roman Catholic Phase* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1959), p. 436, there was also a small, liberal German Protestant group that called itself the *Lichtfreunde* in 1850.

[104]Ibid. Also Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 122f. Steven M. Lowenstein, *The Berlin Jewish Community: Enlightenment, Family, and Crisis, 1770-1830* (New York: 1994), pp. 104ff. discussed a variety of institutions that arose in the wake of the Jewish

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Many of those that became the New York "Friends" had come to America in the aftermath of the failed liberal revolutions of 1848. They met once a week to hear lectures on such topics as the existence of God, the history of pagan worship, the immortality of the soul, and Jewish history.[105] The "Friends" were but one of many organizations that arose in Little Germany in the wake of the abortive German Revolution. According to Stanley Nadel, "This revolutionary agitation continued well into the 1850s, especially in the social circles of the postrevolution refugees."[106]

Lilienthal became an ardent advocate of the society.[107] His inaugural address to the group, on April 20, laid out the following agenda:

> We have identified the purpose of our organization with the words 'to spread light and enlightenment in Jewry': light and enlightenment for those who doubt and want certainty, light and enlightenment for those who ask what is archaic and must disappear, what is eternal and will remain; light and enlightenment for those who search for what our history and literature want, how they both developed and what their meaning is for the present.[108]

In addition to delineating this ambitious program, Lilienthal's address also marked his first public embrace of Reform ideology. Creating quite a stir when the address was published in the new liberal periodical *Israels Herold*,[109] was his widely quoted statement:"We

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enlightenment, including the Jewish salons where Jews and non-Jews, men and women, gathered to discuss ideas and culture.

[105]*Occident* 7 (August 1849):271.

[106]Nadel, *Little Germany*, p. 123.

[107]*Sinai* 1 (August 1856), pp. 203ff. See Grinstein, *The Rise of the Jewish Commmunity of New York*, p. 202.

[108]Lilienthal, "Erster Vortrag im Vereine der Freunde," *Israels Herold* 4(April 20, 1849):25.

[109]Lilienthal, "Erster Vortrag im Vereine der Freunde," pp. 25ff., 34f. This speech will be analyzed in detail below. The *Israels Herold* was the short-lived publication of Isidor Busch, one of the intellectual Jewish leaders who arrived after the failed revolution of 1848. A publisher of liberal Jewish periodicals in Europe, and active in politics, Busch began the *Israels Herold* within three months of his arrival in America, in late March 1849. See Guido Kisch, "*Israels Herold:* The First Jewish Weekly in New York," *Historia Judaica* 2 (October, 1940):65-84. For a discussion of Lutheran German language

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feel that we have broken with the past of Judaism, and that the bridge which would make a retreat possible is cut off."[110] Because this rhetoric frightened traditionalists who had been considering union, in his enthusiasm for the larger issues of Enlightenment and Reform, Lilienthal unwittingly helped to drive a wedge into Wise's and Leeser's fragile coalition for unity.

Present at the genesis of the *Lichtfreunde*, Wise gave his full support.[111] However, when he came to believe that its existence was a deterrent to his convention, he condemned the group. He reported that when he returned to New York to confer with the synagogue boards, all the congregational support for his conference had evaporated:

> As for New York, said one [board member], "progress will have to emanate from the Society of the Friends of Light. No other movement is advisable for the present." Another one said that if any one listened to the plans and purposes of the apostles of reform, as set forth in the Society of the Friends of Light, he would become very orthodox, and would strive earnestly to oppose every reform movement. A third one said: "If the bridges are burnt behind us, and nothing can be effected with the Judaism of the past, as has been claimed in the Society of the Friends of Light, then let us attempt nothing, and leave everything as it has been."[112]

Wise reported bitterly that he had been refused permission to speak at Anshe Chesed. When Leeser told him "the plan could not be carried out without the co-operation of New York," he replied that the New York congregations no longer supported the union and that nothing more could be done.[113]

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periodicals see Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*, pp. 87ff. Catholics had their own press too. See Jay P. Dolan, "The Immigrants and Their Gods: A New Perspective in American Religious History," in George E. Pozzetta, *American Immigration and Ethnicity*, vol. 19: *The Immigrant Religious Experience*, p. 125.

[110]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 65. Cited in *Occident* 7 (June, 1849):142, and later in *Sinai* 1(August 1856):203ff. The general revolutionary excitement may have encouraged Lilienthal to express reformist tendencies more forcefully than he might have ordinarily.

[111]See *Occident* 7 (August 1849):274 where his letter to the society, written April 4, 1849, is printed.

[112]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 91. See also May, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, p. 83.

[113]Ibid. This is verified by Sigismund Waterman in his letter to the *Occident* 7 (August 1849):271.

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Wise's angry views were reflected in a letter to the *Occident* by Joseph Beckel, one of his avid supporters and a member of Wise's German literary society in Albany. Attacking Lilienthal and the *Lichtfreunde* for foiling the unity plan, Beckel claimed that the rabbi was "the first and greatest opponent to a convention." Lilienthal, he said, had first advocated a complete revolution in his address , then temporized by saying that we must act cautiously to maintain peace. Beckel remarked caustically:

> A revolution accompanied with peace seems to me impossible; a man who means it truly, who is willing to live or die for his conviction, must not be afraid of a little war; he must not temporize for fear of losing a portion of his popularity. What then, let me ask, is the object of the Friends? Is it reform or not? radical change, or abiding by ancient custom? Is the bridge for a return to the past to be repaired, or to be further broken down, to make every return impossible?[114]

Critical of Lilienthal's position, Beckel seems to have misjudged the polarizing effect of calls for radical Reform in the agitation for the unity convention. Beckel also forgot that the Friends' ambivalent position, like Wise's, called for Reform while downplaying its radical implications at the same time. Though not a radical Reform society, the *Lichtfreunde* was a convenient scapegoat for Wise, Beckel, and others.

Beckel further charged that Lilienthal and the *Lichtfreunde* were part of a plot to sabotage Wise's efforts through deliberate misinformation. He claimed that the *Lichtfreunde* was organized after Wise's speech in March by "reactionists" who had "dug suitable channels to carry off the stream of enthusiasm." He called the society a closed, elitist, Jesuitical group, that wanted to dictate how people should think.[115]

In response, the secretary of the society, Sigismund Waterman, defended both the rabbi and the Friends: "Dr. Lilienthal is not opposed to a convention, but he may doubt

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[114]Ibid. 7 (June, 1849): 143f.

[115]Beckel felt that the society diffused the focus of the community, impeding Wise's goal of unity. *Occident* 7 (June, 1849):141. Leeser originally believed Beckel's account and accused Lilienthal of abandoning the cause. Ibid., pp. 146f. The editor retracted his accusation after he had the opportunity to speak to Lilienthal, who assured Leeser that he supported and would attend a conference. Ibid., 7 (August 1849):275.

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that it may be able to carry out the view of Dr. Wise." Lilienthal's caveat was realistic since, despite his protestations to the contrary, Wise was far more liberal than most of the other leaders who would have taken part in this union. Still, Lilienthal supported the convention at a meeting of the Friends.[116] Rather than blaming Lilienthal or the Friends, Waterman correctly pointed to "the natural working of passions and divergence of opinion" as the true cause of the failure of the Wise/Leeser plan.[117]

Another reason for the failure of the plan was that many of the congregations that might have participated were new immigrants preoccupied with adjusting to the new world and making a living. These concerns, which took precedence over the more theoretical and long-term challenges presented by the convention's advocates, combined with the general high level of apathy displayed by the American Jewish community to doom the plan.[118] The proposed conference attracted the support of eight congregations. In New York, only Shaaray Tefila, under the leadership of Samuel Isaacs, agreed to participate in the meeting. Since the organizers had set a minimum of twenty, the conference was postponed indefinitely. Although the support of the *Occident* had effectively made the plan a national concern, it had inadvertently underlined the serious polarization that already characterized American Jewry.

From *Wissenschaft* to Reform

To trace Lilienthal's progress towards Reform, further analysis of his speech to the Society of Friends is instructive. His statement at the inaugural meeting in March, 1849

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[116]Ibid., 7 (August 1849):272. Waterman reported that "the question whether a convention ought to be encouraged, was discussed and strenously advocated by the Rev. Dr. Lilienthal."

[117]Ibid.

[118] Korn, *Eventful Years and Experiences*, p. 38. Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, p. 129. Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*, p. 128. Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, p. 57, also attributed the failure to the weak personality of Leeser and the relative newcomer status of Wise.

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that "we feel that we have broken with the past of Judaism and that the bridge which would make a retreat possible is cut off" was his first public expression of a Reform position. Taken out of context (as it was by his opponents at the time), it sounded like a call for radical Reform, but, as Philipson wrote, Lilienthal's position was by no means as extreme as his rhetoric.[119] For example, later in the speech he cautioned that "such an effort [Reform] demands tenacity, patience and forbearance, and that the fiery spirit which burns in some of our members will face a difficult test of patience."[120]

Lilienthal asserted in his address to the Friends that the old Jewish world was collapsing: the Talmud was more and more foreign to Jews, and the beloved rabbinic literature that had given the Jewish people courage, consolation, and hope was increasingly inaccessible to Jews. The prayer service no longer elevated modern Jews. Many transgressed hundreds of customs and laws earlier deemed holy and inviolable, because of the harsh exigencies of life, out of presumption, or even because of conviction. The break from the past, he concluded, was complete.[121]

"It was life and science . . . that have broken the bridge, that have changed the old forms and opened our eyes."[122] "Life" referred to the vast political, social and economic changes that had swept through Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and demolished the traditional pattern of Jewish-Christian relationships. He traced the growth of secular education, the abandonment of Yiddish in favor of German, and the adoption of German styles and mores. A generation of clean-shaven, modern Jews rejected the "old, scorned image." No longer forced to be peddlers, Jews could now pursue respectable businesses. The French Revolution was also crucial in this shift in

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[119]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 65.

[120]*Israels Herold* 4 (April 20, 1849):25.

[121]Ibid., p. 26.

[122]Ibid.

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Jewish self-image because its ideology taught that "freedom was assured only when it broke with everything old." Even though, in the aftermath of the Revolution a calmer, less confused, more organic striving for freedom took its place, the resulting profound changes in Jewish life made a return to the past impossible.[123]

At this point in his address, Lilienthal asked, are we not rashly trading away our rich spiritual heritage for the sake of civil freedom? Was not the destruction of that heritage comparable to the bloodletting of the guillotine during the French Revolution? Was there some higher principle to justify that sacrifice? Lilienthal answered with a resounding yes: "Science [*Wissenschaft*] sanctions the break and calls it good; science excites the thirst for knowledge and stimulates our holiest interest in the All-Powerful."[124]

To explain the development of modern critical scientific thinking, Lilienthal recapitulated European intellectual history from the Protestant Reformation to his own time. Luther had challenged medieval Catholicism by giving the German people a vernacular translation of the Bible. The ensuing religious wars undermined Catholic spiritual hegemony, leading to a period of religious doubt that was the catalyst for modern philosophy. Exemplified by Voltaire's attack on religion and Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the skeptical trend was continued by the "Young Hegelians" at the University of Berlin in the late 1830s and 1840s: Strauss, Bauer, and Feuerbach, who shook the foundations of Christianity with their dialectical analyses.[125] Lilienthal also cited the importance of the growth of the natural sciences, whose discoveries in all spheres made any speculations based on faith suspect.[126]

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[123]Ibid., p. 27. These themes were prominent in Haskalah thought of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They internalized the negative image of the Jew held by the Christian world and their most radical members called for a complete break with the traditional past.

[124]Ibid.

[125]Ibid., 5 (April 27, 1849):34.

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As one intellectual revolution followed another, the Jews were not immune to the challenges to tradition. They too had their Luther -- Moses Mendelssohn -- who had given them a German translation of the Hebrew Bible. Once they were familiar with German literature, they realized the extent to which Jews were disdained by the Christian world. At the same time secular law replaced Jewish law in the courts, schools, and business, so that "the feeling of exile was extinguished and the words, 'rights of man and dignity of man' took its place."[127] In sum, Judaism had now to be modernized to adapt to these new conditions; it had to be exalted and defended to save the human dignity of the Jews, who could then fulfill their destiny as a light of religious truth to all peoples.[128]

This analysis of the collapse of the old Jewish world drew on Lilienthal's *Wissenschaft* training from the University of Munich. The speech, his first to a highly educated group in America, showed his grasp of Jewish and general European intellectual history that underlay his first public espousal of Reform ideology. Once again the question is posed: Had Lilienthal harbored these reformist tendencies since his student days, hidden them during his years in Russia and his first years in the United States, until he no longer was beholden to the three traditional German congregations? More generally, what was the connection between Jewish *Wissenschaft* and Reform?[129]

Like the Maskilim who had preceded them, the early exponents of Jewish *Wissenschaft* were not afraid to challenge traditional assumptions, nor were they only disinterested scholars. Ismar Schorsch argues that they pursued a two-fold agenda: first,

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[126]Ibid.

[127]Ibid.

[128]Ibid. Striking in its absence is any reference to America or its ideology. Lilienthal spoke to the *Lichtfreunde* as a German-Jewish intellectual. The full integration of his Jewish and American thought would come later. See Chapter Five below.

[129]Ismar Schorsch addressed this issue directly in "Scholarship in the Service of Reform," *From Text to Context*, pp. 303-333. Gershom Scholem addressed this issue as well in "The Science of Judaism - Then and Now," *The Messianic Idea in Judaism: And Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), pp. 304ff.

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to bring about a radical change in the Christian appreciation of Judaism in order to secure complete emancipation, and second, to imbue Jews with the self-knowledge "needed to reconcile an archaic and all-embracing religion to the pressures, opportunities and tastes of a new social context." *Jüdische Wissenschaft* was "both inherently and historically reformative," serving in its earliest stages as the cutting edge of a concerted effort to revamp Judaism to harmonize with a new legal and social context.[130] Yet within a few decades, a more conservative style of Jewish scholarship evolved which sought to bolster Jewish self-confidence by advocating a more favorable assessment of traditional Judaism.[131] This conservative approach allowed more traditional exponents, like Lilienthal, to understand Judaism within its historical context, as a dynamic, evolving religion, without adhering to the virulent anti-rabbinism of the early *Wissenschaft* or using its methodology as a destructive tool. He asserted that Jewish *Wissenschaft*

> has done more for the exalting of the Jewish religion in two decades in the eyes of the world than centuries of martyred brooding had willingly enjoyed with guilt. O, we can greet this epoch of Jewish science with nothing but joy and jubilation. . . . Science has grasped its mission that it must teach and preach to Jewry, and Jewry cleansed, has to give it to the world.[132]

In 1854 Lilienthal discussed the variety of *Wissenschaft* attitudes towards Reform in an article for the *Asmonean*. Describing the various parties or factions within the Jewish world in relation to historical and philosophical scholarship, he noted scholars had

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[130]Ismar Schorsch, "The Emergence of Historical Consciousness in Modern Judaism," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 28 (1983):419f. See also Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew*.

[131]Schorsch, "The Emergence of Historical Consciousness," p. 420. Schorsch also traced a third stage, crystallized by mid-century, that tried to raise *Wissenschaft* above religious controversy. Though the founder of Modern Orthodoxy Samson Raphael Hirsch rejected the evolutionary assumptions of *Wissenschaft*, other Orthodox scholars such as Esriel Hildescheimer, head of the Orthodox Seminary in Berlin, believed it was necessary to engage in *Wissenschaft* as a matter of prestige and competition with Reformers. See David Ellenson, *Between Tradition and Culture: The Dialectics of Modern Jewish Religion and Identity* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), pp. 3ff.

[132]*Israels Herold 4* (April 27, 1849), p. 35.

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concluded that rabbinic Judaism was not divinely ordained but rather the product of a long evolution. Some did argue, according to Lilienthal, that Jews should retain the whole system, avoiding a separation of the "essential from the non-essential," that would undermine the whole structure. They had been raised in strict observance of the tradition and continued to live this way, in spite of their intellectual understanding. Others scholars waited for the masses of Jews to mature intellectually, feeling the demand for reforms should arise from the people themselves.[133] The Reformers, however, refused to wait for the masses to be ready and wanted to eliminate a "heap of observances and ceremonies" and develop new forms. They insisted that Judaism must

> abolish all customs which are decidedly not of divine origin; then only, and but then, when Judaism is purified and reformed, may be expected the glory and the universal reign of monotheism, of which the prophets spoke in so glowing terms."[134]

They believed that, if this purification did not take place, Judaism would lose many of its adherents over time.

Lilienthal probably began his career in America as one of those *Wissenschaft* scholars who, in spite of his intellectual understanding, wanted to retain the bulk of the tradition. However, his experiences with the three congregations convinced him that indifference, alienation from tradition, and poor Jewish education could no longer be treated passively. Indeed, according to Stanley Nadel, a majority of the German Jews living in Kleindeutschland were religiously unaffiliated.[135] By 1849, Lilienthal had come

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[133]*Asmonean* 10 (August 4, 1854):125.

[134]Ibid.

[135]German New York was distinguished from other immigrant communities in America by the overwhelming predominance of secular subcommunities over religious ones. In 1856, the New York German newspaper *Staats-Zetiung* estimated that fewer than one out of five German immigrants were regular church-goers. Nadel, *Little Germany*, p. 99. Dolan, in "Immigrants in the City," p. 125, points out that while it is difficult to assess the level of indifference, "the Catholic press publicly admitted that thousands of Catholics seldom if ever attend Mass." Also see his *The Immigrant Church*, p. 7f. "Catholics in the ante-bellum period were not extraordinarily fervent in their religious practice; in fact many were ignorant of basic Christian beliefs."

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to believe the old Jewish world was collapsing and, out of his love for Judaism, adopted the more activist Reform position. While the available sources are inconclusive, his student and early biographer David Philipson concurred that during Lilienthal's New York years, he underwent a slow process of liberalization.[136]

There are indications that Lilienthal was moving away from traditional religious modes in the school as well. While all private Jewish schools included Hebrew and the Bible in addition to secular subjects, Lilienthal's was rather less observant than the others, with regard to religious practice. The Misses Palaches' School set a religious tone at its public examination by beginning with the unison singing of the hymn *Ein Keloheinu* and concluding with Psalm 29.[137] At the annual examination of the Loewe School, each student chanted a portion from the *Torah* with the ancient cantillation.[138] In contrast, Lilienthal never included any traditional religious observances in the public presentations. Although the Greene Street School made a point that prayers were part of the daily schedule, Lilienthal never advertised this aspect of his school.[139] Merowitz may be correct when he suggests that

> the boarding school phase of Max Lilienthal's pedagogical career marked a transitional period: although not yet a spokesman for Reform Judaism, he was becoming less dependent on traditionalist modes and patterns of education and life.[140]

Lilienthal was given another opportunity to express his views when, in 1850, he

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[136]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 52. Wise concurred with this view in the *Israelite* 1 (August 11, 1854):37-8.

[137]*Asmonean* 1 (December 14, 1849):61.

[138]Ibid., 6 (September 10, 1852):197.

[139]Ibid., 7 (January 7, 1853):137. Lilienthal may have had these traditional practices, but he chose not to emphasize them. In contrast, his successor Henry underlined these elements in his advertisements which offered daily services and a Sabbath afternoon lecture. *Asmonean* 12 (August 3, 1855):121.

[140]Merowitz, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 54. Lilienthal did become a spokesman for moderate Reform by the time he left New York.

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was invited to speak at the consecration of Anshe Chesed's new building. His eloquent speech in German, printed in an English translation in the *New York Daily Tribune*, addressed the need for reforms. As before, he characterized Reform as a natural consequence of historical forces: "Progress in religious views and forms cannot be prevented; its march cannot be forcibly stopped."[141] These remarks seemed to have elicited no negative reaction from the congregation or from the Jewish press.

In 1854, Lilienthal found a regular vehicle for expressing his views when he became an editor of the *Asmonean* following Wise's departure for Cincinnati. During the nine months in which he wrote a series of columns, Lilienthal presented his ideological position with sophistication and erudition, although he wrote under the pseudonym of "L.D." (perhaps because this gave him the liberty to speak his mind openly while serving relatively traditional synagogues).[142] In some articles, Lilienthal used the same conservative criterion for advocating change he had during his early years in New York: Jewish legal precedent. He considered the custom of purchasing a *misheberach* during the Torah service a "great nuisance"; such a transaction in which honors and blessings were sold to the highest bidder made him want to cry: "going, going, gone" like an auctioneer. He harshly condemned this practice as a desecration of God's name, in which the rich showed off their wealth while the poor were humbled, and quoted the *Shulchan Aruch* to prove that there should be no profane conversation during the prayers. Income lost by the removal of this odious custom should be replaced by a more dignified and dependable means for raising money.[143]

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[141] *New York Daily Tribune* May 18, 1850, p. 2.

[142] At first Lilienthal signed his articles "M"; however, the editor had him change to "L.D." to avoid confusion with Merzbacher. *Asmonean* 10 (June 1, 1854):53. Later the paper identified L.D. as the Rev. Dr. Lilienthal. *Asmonean* 10 (July 21, 1854):108. "In reply to numerous inquiries, we have to state that the contributions appearing in this Journal over the initials L.D. are from the pen of the Rev. Dr. Lilienthal."

[143] Ibid. See also *Anshe Chesed Trustees Minutes* for January 1, 1854. He calls them a great nuisance that disturbed the order and decorum due to the house of God.

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Though he sometimes relied upon legal precedents to legitimize eliminating customs such as the *misheberach*, he frequently used Jewish *Wissenschaft* to justify changes in Jewish ritual. Lilienthal applied the philosophical distinction between essence and accident as a tool to purify the religion. Like many Wissenschaft scholars he assumed there was

> an essence of Judaism, whose unchanging yet unfolding spiritual presence bestowed a vital sense for the continuity of Jewish history. At the same time, the category of essence reduced dominant features of traditional Judaism rendered offensive by the new social context to mere accidents of history.[144]

Lilienthal concluded that historical research would separate what was essential to Judaism from grafts "upon the tree of our creed."[145] An example was the sharp distinction these scholars made between custom (*minhag*), and law (*halakha).* Merely accidents or accretions developed to meet the needs of specific historical conditions, custom had a lower degree of obligation than law, which was essential to Judaism. (Lilienthal is not quite right since in traditional Judaism "a custom which is practiced by the general public has the power to annul a *halakha*.")[146] Lilienthal asked:

> Is it not ridiculous to assert that the *Minhag* [custom] of Israel is equally binding as the Torah? The Rabbis of old had to sanction those customs because the people had become accustomed to them, but in our age, where manners and customs and habits are totally changed, where the cause of such an antiquated *minhag* has become quite incomprehensible, who, if not blinded by ignorance, or by fanatic hypocrisy, will urge the necessity of observing those laws?[147]

He believed that many of the onerous restrictions under which Jews labored were

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[144]Schorsch, "The Emergence of Historical Consciousness," p. 421.

[145]*Asmonean* 10 (June 23, 1854):77.

[146]Ephraim E. Urbach, *Yad la-Talmud* (*The Halakha: Its Sources and Development*) tr. Raphael Posner (Tel Aviv: Massada, 1986), p. 38. Michael Meyer noted that even the modern Orthodox leader, Samson R. Hirsch, "did not believe that customary practice, however venerable, was binding in the new age simply on account of its antiquity. Far more sharply than the orthodoxy which preceded his own, Hirsch distinguished between custom (*minhag*) and divine commandment (*mitzvah*)." Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 78.

[147]Asmonean 10 (June 23, 1854):77.

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imitations of indigenous customs that had become out of tune with the spirit of the times. Judaism had to purify itself of these antiquated *minhagim* so that it could "stand upon the solid rock of Mosaic Law!"[148]

Lilienthal used a contemporary incident in Mantua, Italy to illustrate his *Wissenschaftlich* approach to Reform. The Jewish merchants of Mantua petitioned the *Beth Din* to abolish the second day of Jewish festivals in the diaspora, arguing that the celebration of a second day was a custom detrimental to their business interests. The Chief Rabbi of Mantua asked for opinions from rabbis in Palestine and Europe. Lilienthal was pleased that the question had arisen from the people themselves since it supported his contention that Reform should arise out of the need to reconcile a contradiction between "the necessities of active life and the dead forms of religion." He was also glad the issue forced "Orthodoxy" to acknowledge "the wants of changed times."[149] Lilienthal cited the decision of the German Reformers' rabbinical conference of 1846 that the second day of festivals had no binding force for the present time, but offered arguments of his own as well.

The Bible clearly dictated one day of observance (the first and last days of week-long festivals) as the core legal requirement. However, central to the biblical system for setting the Jewish calendar was the need to establish the time of the new moon visually. Messengers carrying the announcement of the new moon in the land of Israel could not reach all the far-flung Jewish communities soon enough to ensure simultaneous observance of all festivals, so a second day was added in regions outside Palestine. Although the sages of the Talmud subsequently developed a mathematical method for calculating the calendar, they continued to insist on observing the second day. Lilienthal agreed with the religious merchants of Mantua that the original reason was no longer valid.[150]

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[148]Ibid.

[149]*Asmonean* 10 (June 1, 1854):53. Lilienthal used the term "orthodox."

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Lilienthal also drew on traditional Jewish legal reasoning to argue it was permissible to overturn this talmudic precedent. He cited a Reform rabbi, Leopold Stein, who pointed out an inconsistency in the talmudic ruling. Yom Kippur was always an exception to the two-day observance because of the difficulty involved in fasting for forty-eight hours, showing that "the wants of life are mightier than all systems."[151] To prove that contemporary rabbis could overturn the weighty precedent of the Talmud, he cited the talmudic saying: "Every Jewish authority, even consisting of but three members, is alike to the Beth-Din of Moses."[152] He pointed out that Maimonides had ruled that two days of observance had the status of *minhag* (custom) rather than law, emphasizing that Maimonides had also ruled that "a law can be abolished if urgently demanded by the times." If a law could be overturned, how much the more so a custom. Because the times indeed demanded a change, Lilienthal supported the decision of the 1846 German rabbinical conference.[153]

The distinction between essence and accident alluded to earlier was also prominent in an article in Lilienthal's Jewish Literature column, "Kabbalah and Philosophy." Like many *Wissenschaft* scholars, Lilienthal disdained Kabbalah (Jewish Mysticism) as an alien plant which borrowed from Greek, Christian, Babylonian and other religious traditions, blaming it for most of the nonsensical *minhagim* [customs] and superstitious prejudices "that dominate our religion."[154] According to the Reformers, these accumulated irrational and outdated customs prevented Judaism from being in harmony with the spirit of the

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[150]The sages were concerned that their method might someday be lost, creating the possibility that the festivals would not be celebrated on the correct date.

[151]Ibid. Stein (1810-1882) was a moderate Reformer who served as the second rabbi of the Frankfurt community. See Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 123.

[152]Ibid.

[153]Ibid. He also cited the ruling of Rabbi Aaron Halevi of Barcelona. Implicitly, Lilienthal assumed that custom had less authority than law.

[154]*Asmonean* 10 (June 9, 1854):62.

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times. Citing historian Isaac M. Jost,[155] Lilienthal asserted that historical research had proved that Kabbalah was not nearly as old as it claimed. He reported that his own work with the Jewish manuscripts in the Munich library had led other scholars to examine previously unknown documents. Their research proved that the author of the classical mystical text, the *Zohar*, was not the second-century rabbi Simeon ben Yohai, but rather the thirteenth century mystic, Moses de Leon. Therefore Lilienthal claimed that the *Zohar*, "this, the source out of which the stream of *Kabbalah* gushed forth," was neither ancient nor authoritative.[156] Through historical research, Lilienthal tried to validate the expurgation of superstitions that mysticism had spawned in order to recover the essential core of Judaism.

In another lengthy article, Lilienthal claimed that the historical role of philosophy was to "make up for the mischief of *Kabbalah.* "[157] The Jewish mind, he felt, was peculiarly adapted to analytical thinking, so that the philosophy of the Bible was not burdened by incomprehensible doctrines such as the Trinity or the necessity of faith as a prerequisite for salvation. Unfortunately, Jewish thought had later tried to read the philosophical systems of other nations into the Holy Scriptures, failing to recognize that

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155 Schorsch, "The Emergence of Historical Consciousness," p. 422. Jost had translated the program of the radical wing of the Berlin Haskalah into the new *Wissenschaft* genre in his nine-volume *Geschichte der Israeliten* (1820-1828). It might be surprising that Jost, who was anti-rabbinic, influenced the more conservative Lilienthal. However, this work was the first major product of the Jewish *Wissenschaft* movement: a history encompassing the Maccabees to 1815, using source criticism, philology and non-Jewish sources. See Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, Vol. 10: *The Science of Judaism and Galician Haskalah*, pp. 22ff for a brief biography. Also Ismar Schorsch, "From Wolfenbuttel to Wissenschaft: The Divergent Paths of Isaak Markus Jost and Leopold Zunz," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 22 (1977):109-28. Only in the twentieth century would this anti-mystical attitude among Jewish historians be challenged by the research of Gershom Scholem.

156 *Asmonean* 10 (June 9, 1854):62. Lilienthal cited A. Jellinek's pamphlet, "Contribution to the History of Kabbalah."

157 Ibid. Again Lilienthal betrayed an important Jewish *Wissenschaft* bias in favor of philosophy. Its rationalism was in harmony with the spirit of the times and its creators, the Spanish Jews, were idealized by these nineteenth-century scholars.

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biblical philosophy surpassed all of those systems. Therefore, Jewish thought was influenced by the philosophical systems of every age, starting with the Greeks.[158]

Reciprocally, Lilienthal asserted that, because of the inherent philosophical capability of Jewish thinkers, no general movement of any spiritual importance was devoid of a Jewish contribution to its development. Nor was this contribution exhausted, since "the task the Jews and their religion have still to perform upon the great arena of human history, will not come to its end, until mankind will have reached its destiny."[159]

Lilienthal's survey of Jewish philosophy demonstrated his knowledge of primary sources and his ability to utilize modern research. He began with an account of biblical thought, illuminated by references to Persian influences such as the *Zend-Avesta.*[160] The next installment sought to show how Greek civilization and its metaphysical speculation encouraged the development of Jewish philosophy, leading to discussions of Philo and the role of Jewish thinkers in the development of Gnosticism.[161] Later articles covered Saadya, Ibn Gabirol, Bachya, Judah Halevi, Abraham ben David, Joseph ibn Zaddik, Abraham ibn Ezra, and Maimonides. Lilienthal was especially enamored of Maimonides, whom he discussed at length.[162] He saved his highest praise for the "great and immortal Baruch Spinoza," whose original philosophical system, according to Lilienthal, "pervades all modern philosophies."[163]

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[158]Ibid., 10 (June 16, 1854):70. Jewish philosophy should have been vulnerable to the same criticism as mysticism; i.e. it was an alien plant grafted on the biblical essence of Judaism. Lilienthal seemed to be implicitly denying this by claiming that Jewish philosophy had its origins in the Bible itself and, therefore, partook of Judaism's essence.

[159]Ibid., 10 (June 23, 1854):77.

[160]Ibid.

[161] The Hellenistic period had been the focus of his dissertation.

[162]Ibid., 10 (August 18, 1854):142. For other installments see (June 30, 1854):85; (July 21, 1854):110; (July 28, 1854):117f.; (August ll, 1854):133f. Some of the *Wissenschaft* scholars he cited included A. Jellinek, N. Krochmal, A. Geiger, and L. Zunz.

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Yet another issue that sharply divided Reformers and traditionalists was the status of the Talmud. In a discussion of rabbinic reasoning *(pilpul)* Lilienthal rejected the traditionalists' assumption that the Oral Torah was revealed on Mount Sinai simultaneously with the Written Torah. He complained that the resulting "heavenly halo" around talmudic decrees made reforms immensely difficult, since traditionalists asserted that Jews have "neither power nor wisdom enough to modify or to abolish a divine command."[164] According to Lilienthal, this view ignored the fact that Oral Law, of which the Talmud was the codification, evolved over almost ten centuries. An historical and scientific study of the Talmud would prove that its origin was human and not divine, leading to the realization that "the Talmud has no more authority in the synagogue than the fathers of the Church in Catholicism."[165]

In the article on *pilpul*, Lilienthal echoed the ideas of Abraham Geiger who asserted that the entire structure of the Jewish religion would be undermined if this historical approach to Talmud were to be accepted.[166] He quoted a traditionalist scholar who had told him, "Do not touch these things, although they seem to be an immense palace, they are

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[163]Ibid., 10(June 16, 1854):70. This open admiration for the heretic Spinoza was anticipated by one of Lilienthal's models, Moses Mendelssohn. See Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, pp. 33ff, pp. 50ff. Though Mendelssohn did not accept Spinoza's entire system, he hoped in his *Philosophical Dialogues* to vindicate the work of this ostracized figure by showing it paved the way for Leibniz. Immanuel Wolf also helped rehabilitate Spinoza's image, claiming that Spinoza revealed again "Judaism's fundamental idea of unity in all of its purity." See Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew*, p. 174.

[164]Ibid. 10 (June 1, 1854):53.

[165]Ibid. Lilienthal cited the work of the historian Graetz and later mentions the work of W. Landau, who wrote biographies of the early rabbis. In another article he claims Abraham Geiger "proved clearly and scientifically that not all the Talmud was of divine origin or obligation." *Asmonean* 10 (July 14, 1854):101.

[166]Geiger, one of the major Reform exponents of *Wissenschaft*, wrote an essay, "Das Verhaltniss des naturlichen Schriftsinnes zur thalmudischen Schriftdeutung" (1844) in which he questioned "the validity of the exegetical base which supports the sprawling superstructure of Rabbinic Judaism." Schorsch, "The Emergence of Historical Consciousness," p. 424. This hostile attitude towards talmudic logic almost lost Geiger his rabbinic position in Breslau.

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all but ashes: if you move them, the whole structure will tumble and crumble down."[167] Lilienthal did not believe that historical study would result in the destruction of all traditional Judaism, because there were processes at work beyond human control:

> The wheels of time do not need or adopt the advice of mortal man; ruled and moved by an external power, they pursue their onward march, and whatever has to give way to new forms and ideas, they will inexorably remove. Man may remain behind; but the genius of humanity, though sometimes retrograding, knows but the motto: Onward![168]

Lilienthal did not define what he meant by "an external power" or "the genius of humanity." He may have been referring to God, to the Hegelian Absolute in which "History" was the vehicle for the progressive manifestation of "Spirit" or "Reason," or to the nineteenth-century concept of progress. In any case, as in his *Lichtfreunde* address, Lilienthal asserted that history itself manifested an inevitable impetus for Reform.

Lilienthal directly inserted himself into the Reform versus traditionalist controversy in the United States when he responded in the *Asmonean* to two of Isaac Leeser's anti-Reform articles in the *Occident.* It was probably this response that caused Wise to exclaim: "It is with a great deal of pleasure that we noticed in the *Asmonean*, the Rev. Dr. Lilienthal coming out publicly, boldly, and zealously in favor of reform and progress."[169]

Leeser had asked, "What good have they [Reformers] ever done for our cause?" Lilienthal objected to the personal nature of Leeser's attack, admonishing him to make principles and not personalities the focus of religious controversy. Further, Leeser had offered no "scientific" refutation of the Reform position.[170] Finally, Lilienthal argued that

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[167]Ibid., 10 (June 1, 1854):53. See Lilienthal, "My Travels in Russia," in Philipson, Max Lilienthal, pp. 295f.

[168]Ibid.

[169]*Israelite* 1 (August 11, 1854):37.

[170]*Asmonean* 10 (June 30, 1854):85. Lilienthal was consistent in his opposition to personal attacks. In another article he criticized Dr. Beer of the Theological Seminary of

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Reform had the best interests of Judaism at heart.

Lilienthal had addressed in a liberal spirit a series of problems plaguing the religion, such as the indifference of many modern Jews who neither attended synagogue nor gave their children a Jewish education. "Reform has tried its utmost by constant improvement to reconcile these masses, to bring them back to the sacred religion of our ancestors, and it can fairly boast that many . . . feel now proud of their Jewish name."[171] Moreover, Reform had fought against Jewish hypocrisy and self-deceit. "We are tired of seeing men violate the Sabbath until they accumulated an independent fortune, calling themselves orthodox anyway." The solution was to separate God's Law from the "transient work of mortal men." Through historical research, it would be possible to solve the contradiction between life and religion and "raise the Mosaic Law to its divine purity, yet to become the religion of all mankind." Restored to its primitive purity and simplicity, Judaism would unite Jews in the firm belief in one God and inspire them with the fervor of their ancestors, ready to make every sacrifice for their faith.[172] Arguing that much of the liturgy was no longer understood and that many prayers were "unfit for the times", he asserted that Reform would modernize the service, increase decorum, and raise the level of edification in order to make the service relevant again.[173]

Lilienthal asserted in conclusion, that Reformers did not advocate change for frivolous reasons, but were comparable to the architects of the Protestant Reformation.

Breslau, who called his traditional challengers "a class of imbeciles and idiotic pseudo-orthodox who were arrogant and ignorant." Ibid., 10 (August 4, 1854):125. Lilienthal responded: "We unwillingly confess that we were never more displeased with an article than with the above. Personalities are not scientific refutation and unfounded scolding is not learned proof."

[171]Ibid.

[172]Ibid. Implicitly Lilienthal is invoking his argument about customs which was discussed above. Centuries of accumulated superstitions and antiquated customs burdened the religion, he believed, and made it hard to observe authentically in the changed conditions of the nineteenth century.

[173]Ibid.

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Unlike the Christian Reformation which had led to warfare, however, the Jewish reformation would be a "fiery and earnest controversy that will enlighten all, that will remove every doubt, that will . . . turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers."[174] Deliberately avoiding rancor or personal attack, Lilienthal's polemical salvo concentrated on major problems that concerned both traditionalists and Reformers and how Reform would solve them. Knowing he was entering into a fierce controversy, he, nevertheless, represented himself as a man of peace and reason.

Lilienthal's concern for moderation and peaceful exchange was the focus of another article entitled "Parties - Keep Peace!" Attempting an even-handed analysis of the various points of view involved in the Reform versus traditionalist controversy, he stated: "We mourn, we regret this disunion, but we cannot deny its existence. What remedy now is to be applied to this evil? *Keep peace and nothing but peace*[his italics]."[175] Evidenced by the debates in the Talmud, there has always been a diversity of opinions within Judaism. The present strife only proved that Judaism was not fossilized. Jews, so in need of tolerance from other peoples, should be tolerant of one another, because excommunication and inflammatory speech only served to create a disastrous gulf between the parties. Reason, science, and mutual understanding would prevail over unreasoning fanaticism and, eventually, unity would return to the Jewish people.[176]

Lilienthal emphasized peace again in an article called "About What Are You Quarreling?" in which he tried to minimize the differences between the parties. No one disagreed concerning the biblical truths of the unity of God, Divine judgment in a future life, the immortality of the soul, or the ethical teachings of Jewish tradition.[177] With

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[174]Ibid.

[175]Ibid., 10 (August 4, 1854):125.

[176]Ibid.

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regard to ritual issues, adherents to "kosher housekeeping" and the observance of the Sabbath were found among the Reformers and traditionlists. Ritual innovations of the Reformers, such as the triennial cycle of Torah reading, editing the prayer book, and vernacular prayers, all had legal precedents. Even the introduction of organ and mixed choir could be justified on the basis of religious need. "All these innovations are nothing new . . . all these debates and discussions were heard centuries ago."[178] As the different customs of the Portuguese, German, and Polish rites proved, there had never been absolute homogeneity in worship. "What is new is the cry and clamor and tumult that is raised about such triflings; I consider it but a variety of *Minhagim*, but a reform not at all."[179] He concluded with an admonition to allow diversity and work for peace.

Lilienthal's columns in the *Asmonean* stopped abruptly in September 1854, when he accepted a corresponding editorship for the *Israelite*, Isaac M. Wise's new Jewish weekly in Cincinnati.[180] By that time, his articles on *Wissenschaft* and Reform established him as an important new liberal spokesman.

Many factors led to Lilienthal's gradual embrace of Reform ideology during the years 1848-1855. His successful private school afforded him the independence from congregational pressure he needed to develop his new postion. He was influenced by the

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[177]For his similarity to Moses Mendelssohn's precepts of natural theology see Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew*, pp. 19f. Mendelssohn listed three basic elements in natural theology: God, providence, and the reward of virtue, hoping the recognition of these basic truths might unify mankind. Lilienthal had the more modest goal of reunifying Judaism. See also Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, pp. 29, 249, 341. Also Moses Mendelssohn, "The Principles of Judaism - A Credo," in *Jerusalem and Other Jewish Writings*, Translated and edited by Alfred Jospe (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 154ff. Here the list is virtually identical to Lilienthal's.

[178]Ibid., 10 (August 25, 1854):150.

[179]Ibid.

[180]*Israelite* 1 (Sept. 15, 1854):76. In the next months Lilienthal wrote lengthy articles for the *Israelite* on a weekly basis, often developing the themes that he had discussed in the *Asmonean*.

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Revolutions of 1848 and by the resulting influx of new, highly educated immigrants with whom he formed the reform-minded *Lichtfreunde* Society. For this group he first formulated his conviction that Judaism must evolve to be in harmony with the spirit of the age. Further, his growing friendship with Isaac M. Wise led to many long discussions concerning theology that influence his thinking.[181] In addition, when he did return to Anshe Chesed, the synagogue was ready to embrace moderate reforms, instituting the Viennese ritual, a mixed choir, and repositioning the cantor to face the congregation because the leadership were eager to make a good impression upon their Christian neighbors and to compete effectively with the Reform-oriented Temple Emanu-El. Finally, his pressing concern for the continued survival of Judaism in America, threatened as it was by apathy, materialism, religious skepticism, widespread ignorance of Jewish traditions, and apostasy, led him to conclude that Judaism had to reform itself to be in harmony with the spirit of the age or face extinction in this land of freedom.

Leaving New York

On May 13, 1855, the president of Anshe Chesed called a board meeting in order to discuss a letter from their rabbi informing them that he had been "elected for lifetime as Rabbi of the congregation Bene Israel in Cincinnati, Ohio at the yearly salary of $1500 besides other incomes connected with the office." The board reacted by calling for a general meeting of the electors of the congregation on May 27, and by setting up a committee to meet with the reverend doctor to investigate under what conditions he would be willing "to remain as Rabbi of this congregation." [182] The minutes recorded neither the motivation for Lilienthal's letter, (did he expect a counter offer?) nor the results of the deliberations. After the committee informed him of the decision of the electors, he

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[181] *Israelite* 1 (August 11, 1854):37-8.

[182] *Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, May 13, 1855. The news of his new position had already been announced in the *Israelite* 1 (April 27, 1855):335.

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proceeded with his planned departure.[183]

A number of factors made the Cincinnati offer attractive for Lilienthal. The salary was generous and gave him financial security at a time when his wife was ill.[184] The life-time contract was an important feature of the offer.[185] He also had had an ongoing relationship with the synagogue's leadership, since several sons of prominent members had attended his private school.[186] In addition, Bene Israel, the oldest and most prestigious synagogue in Cincinnati, was moving in a more liberal direction, as can be seen in their advertisement for the position:

> K.K. Benai Israel, Cincinnati, O., is desirous of engaging a lecturer (in the English and German languages), and superintendent of their school. Salary $1000 per annum with a prospect of an increase to $1500. Candidates being endowed with the following qualifications:
>
> 1. Good theological learning and a general scientific education.
> 2. Liberal principles, progressive and in just accordance with our age. (No radical reformer!)[187]

Here, seemingly, Lilienthal would be free to speak his mind and lead his congregation according to the dictates of his developing vision. In addition, Cincinnati was becoming an important center of commerce to which many German immigrants were drawn. A "Little Germany" existed in Cincinnati as early as the 1830s and had already emerged as a cultural

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[183] *Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, June 24, 1855. There was a further attempt to keep him in New York, in the form of a petition calling for another general meeting, which was thrown out on procedural grounds. The *B'nai Israel Trustee Minutes* indicate that Lilienthal had not yet signed a contract on June 5, 1855, when he met with them in Cincinnati.

[184] *New York Times*, April 6, 1882, p. 2. "He continued as the head of the school until 1855, when his wife's poor health prompted him to accept a call to be rabbi of the congregation "Kal a Kodesh Beneh Israel, [*sic*]" of Cincinnati, where he remained until his death.

[185] Years later he bitterly recalled the early short-term contracts that forced rabbis "to flatter and humble themselves before every ignoramus who had a right to vote at the annual election." May, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, pp. 145f.

[186] Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 59.

[187] *Israelite* 1 (April 20, 1855):323.

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center for German-Americans.[188] Finally, Lilienthal would be able to continue to work closely with Isaac M. Wise. When the choice of Lilienthal was announced one week later, Wise noted, "there can be no doubt that the congregation has chosen the best man they could obtain." With his usual enthusiasm he proclaimed:

> Cincinnati is the Zion of the West, from which 'the Law shall go forth.' Here is a large and pleasant field for the devout laborer in the field of Judaism and enlightenment, and Dr. L. has the ability to verify our ardent wishes.[189]

Wise suggested that Lilienthal's reason for leaving New York was the shoddy treatment he endured from the German congregations. He felt it was a disgrace that they did not "pay a man for expounding the word of God," and vilified Anshe Chesed's lay leaders for "perpetuating the ancient, unintelligible traditional style of leadership."[190] Wise misconstrued Lilienthal's situation on both counts. Despite his fondness for his colleague, Lilienthal wrote a stern reply:

> Personalities should be avoided at any price, and will do no good, neither to the paper, whose editor you are, nor to the sacred cause, you so manfully defend. I can assure you, that Mr. H. Moses, since his re-appointment to the Presidency of the Norfolk Str. congregation, has afforded me any aid in his power, to carry out the improvements I proposed to the board of Trustees. If acting in perfect harmony, we were unable always to attain the aim and purpose we had in view, it was not his fault; but difficulties of the most different kind prevented the desired result. It is but justice on my part to give publicly this explanation, and I hope you will immediately insert it in the *Israelite*, in order to repay the unjust charge, made against the presiding officer of the respected *Congregation Anshe Chesed.*
>
> By doing so, you will greatly oblige,
>
> Yours truly
>
> Rabbi Dr. Lilienthal.[191]

Wise had accurately reported Lilienthal's frustration but had incorrectly identified

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[188]Agnes Bretting, "Little Germanies in the United States," in *Germans to America: 300 Years of Immigration*,, p. 147.

[189]Ibid. 1 (April 27, 1855):335.

[190]Ibid.

[191]Ibid., 1 (May 11, 1855):349.

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the forces at Anshe Chesed that had opposed him. As his Reform position developed, Lilienthal became increasingly impatient with the slow pace of change in the New York synagogues, especially in liturgical matters. However, it was not the lay leadership who opposed his reforms but the cantors. In his letter of resignation to Anshe Chesed, Lilienthal stated that his grounds for leaving were "having estranged to himself the rest of the Jewish clergy by putting the values of clergical service under scorn."[192] He could have left quietly, without comment or controversy, but could not resist the temptation to level a final critique upon those who had blocked his attempts at liturgical reform.

Though the New York synagogues had not paid their rabbi, they had often given him expensive gifts to express their appreciation. Before the *Israelite* had announced Lilienthal's appointment, Anshe Chesed had set up a committee to purchase another gift for their rabbi "in acknowledgment of the eminent services gratuitously rendered to this congregation."[193] When they gave it to him in late June, the gift unintentionally became a farewell present, for which Dr. Lilienthal graciously thanked the board.[194]

When he left New York, American Jewry was coping with the problems stemming from the massive tide of immigration, plagued by chaos, indifference, and the lack of direction shared by all the immigrant religions. By mid-century Catholics had become the largest religious denomination in the country, but the Church was torn by tensions between German and Irish sub-groups, and suffered from intense prejudices. Lutherans and other

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[192]Ibid., July 1, 1855. The last word is very hard to read. Even without it, the statement expressed his dissatisfaction. As late as April 1855, Lilienthal complained again about the ritual of *misheberachs* (blessings), the slowness of ritual responses sung by the choir, and the hollering of the cantor. *Anshe Chesed Trustee Minutes*, April 1, 1855. See also Ibid. January 1, 1854. The issue of *misheberachs* was important enough to him to be part of his initial negotiations in Cincinnati.

[193]Ibid., April 1, 1855. The committee was authorized to spend $200 to $250 on April 15, 1855.

[194]Ibid. The committee began its work April 1, and chose the gift (3 dozen silver tablespoons, 2 dozen teaspoons, a silver ladle and a silver cup, valued at $200.53, which was presented to the rabbi before the June 24 meeting).

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immigrant Protestant groups attempted to reorganize as well during this period.[195] The native Protestants struggled to find a new way to compete with the plethora of new religious groups arriving on American shores, sometimes by retreating into nativism or calling for a Christianization of America. Robert Baird, a contemporary representative of evangelical Protestantism, made a virtue of necessity when he praised the "voluntary principle" which called for complete liberty of conscience and worship.[196] Like immigrant Protestant and Catholic churches as well as native Protestants, Jewish leaders were searching for new paradigms, unclear as to which institutions were appropriate for this new land in which personal autonomy militated against old patterns of religious authority. All groups strove to offer their laity "a sense of belonging, an accommodating religious ideology, a modernized ministry, and a church-based religious school."[197] To survive in such a competitve, voluntaristic, missionizing climate, American religious groups needed to unite on a national level. By mid-century all American denominations were moving towards national denominational unions that provided standardized liturgies, doctrines, curricula and materials for local religious schools, and colleges to train modern ministers and religious educators.[198]

This was the agenda that Lilienthal brought with him to Cincinnati. In the years that followed, this educator, part-time rabbi, columnist, and Reformer was able to utilize his talents to an increasingly greater extent to serve the Jewish community. Now a seasoned leader, imbued with a definite ideological and religious vision, Lilienthal was ready to help

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[195]Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, p. 518. The Lutherans were undergoing similar institutional experiments. See pp. 518ff., p. 542. See also Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*, pp. 5f.

[196]Baird, *Religion in America*, p. 130. Silverstein discussed the nineteenth-century church and synagogue as a voluntary association, in *Alternatives to Assimilation*, pp. 9ff.

[197]Silverstein, *Alternative to Assimilation*, p. 35.

[198]Ibid.

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create institutions that would bring the German-Jewish immigrant community into harmony with mainstream American trends.

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Chapter Four: Lilienthal and the Development of Reform at Bene Israel (1855-1870)

Introduction

Both because of the character of the city and of its Jewish community, Cincinnati was an ideal arena in which Lilienthal would realize his vision of a vibrant Judaism, inspired by the spirit of the age and led by a new type of rabbinic leader. Its Jews came to see their adopted home as a new Zion, from whence would come a modern American Judaism.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Cincinnati was a city on the rise, with an idealized sense of its own future. One scholar wrote:

> From the mid-1820s to the mid-1850s, Cincinnati was perhaps the nation's premiere boomtown. Its population nearly doubled every decade, its economy grew and diversified, and physically and culturally it rapidly transformed from a rough frontier town into one of the nation's leading and most urbane cities.[1]

Some contemporaries optimistically claimed that it was only a matter of time before Cincinnati, already the "Queen City of the West," would become the greatest city in America, or even the world.[2] Charles Dickens, who visited in 1842, reported that "the inhabitants of Cincinnati were proud of their city as one of the most interesting in America: and with good reason." He noted that

> Cincinnati is a beautiful city; cheerful, thriving, and animated. I have not often seen a place that commends itself so favourably and pleasantly to a stranger at the first glance as this does; with its clean houses of red and white, its well-paved roads, and footways of bright tile. . . . The streets are broad and airy, the shops extremely good, the private residences remarkable for their elegance and neatness.[3]

The Jews, who immigrated to Cincinnati in great numbers during this period,

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[1]Mostov, "A 'Jerusalem' on the Ohio, p. 61.

[2]Jonathan D. Sarna and Karla Goldman, "From Synagogue-Community to Citadel of Reform: The History of K.K. Bene Israel (Rockdale Temple) in Cincinnati, Ohio," (Typewritten), p. 10.

[3]Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation* , pp. 207, 209.

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developed their own version of the prevailing Cincinnati optimism. Jonathan D. Sarna has suggested: "The community had come to represent a vision of the future, a Jewish version of the American dream, a 'sort of paradise,' not yet fully realized, but surely moving in the right direction."[4] More than just optimistic, Cincinnati Jewry believed it had a divine mission, which its founder Joseph Jonas first articulated in an article in the *Occident:* "The fiat had gone forth, that a new resting place for the scattered sons of Israel should be commenced, and that a sanctuary should be erected in the Great West, dedicated to the Lord of Hosts."[5] Lilienthal, Wise, and other local religious leaders would develop this Jewish vision of Cincinnati during the second half of the nineteenth century. According to Sarna:

> [It] rested on four central and inter-related premises: First, that the Jews could succeed economically in the city; second, that they could interact freely and on an equal basis with their non-Jewish neighbors; third that they had a mission, both as good citizens and as good Jews, to work for civic betterment; and finally that they had an obligation to develop a new kind of Judaism in Cincinnati, one better suited than traditional Judaism to the new American milieu.[6]

Lilienthal did much to develop this vision. He became part of the local elite, he was a leader in Christian-Jewish relations, he was a model of and an advocate for civic activism, and he was a central in the shaping of a new American Judaism.

Another important reason for Lilienthal's decision to settle in Cincinnati was the opportunity to work closely with Isaac M. Wise. Lilienthal had been one of the first people that Wise met in New York, serving as a mentor to the younger man. When Lilienthal formed a *Beth Din* in 1847, he invited Wise to be a member. The nature of the relationship began to change after Lilienthal quit the rabbinate in 1848; while Lilienthal developed his school, Wise was emerging as a new leader on the American scene. When

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[4]Sarna and Goldman, "From Synagogue-Community to Citadel of Reform," p. 1.

[5]Schappes, *A Documentary History of the Jews in the United States,* pp. 223-235. Sarna draws the parallel between this statement and the Puritan "errand into the wilderness." Sarna and Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati*, p. 2.

[6]Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy H. Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Center for the Study of the American Jewish Experience, HUC-JIR, 1989), p. 4.

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Wise joined forces with Leeser to promote a national convention in 1849, Lilienthal played a supportive role. This arrangement continued in Cincinnati as Lilienthal became the associate editor of Wise's *Israelite* and worked with him on various other projects. Rabbi Bernard Illowy called Wise the "Generalissimo" and Lilienthal his first "aide-de-camp."[7]

This arrangement was dictated by the contrasting personalities of the two men. Wise was short of stature, sickly and insecure, prone to egotistical and abrasive behavior. He felt compelled to defy the world and recognized in himself an inability to resist fighting back against the many attacks that he provoked. Wise needed to be the leader of any cause to which he devoted his considerable energy.[8] Lilienthal was described by one contemporary as vigorous and energetic, frank in the expression of his ideas, always courteous and good-natured. Another remembered him as "a most lovable man, handsome, tall, and of great intellect, a peace-loving person widely known as a 'prince of peace."[9] Lilienthal hated controversy and strove to build consensus. Consistent with his character and his earlier decision in New York, Lilienthal continued to avoid the leadership role, happily allowing Wise that distinction.

In spite of their contrasting characters, the two rabbis worked together effectively for over twenty-five years, complementing each other's strengths and weaknesses. Lilienthal, the stronger scholar, helped Wise, an autodidact, to develop the rationale for many of their positions, and Wise, more of a popularizer, softened Lilienthal's tendency

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[7]Henry Illoway, *Sefer Milchamot Elohim: The Controversial Letters and the Casuistic Decisions of the Late Rabbi Bernard Illowy, Ph.D.* (Berlin: M. Poppeauer, 1914). p. 2.

[8]Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, pp. 56, 58. See also Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, p. 122ff. Temkin tends to ignore Lilienthal's contribution. Michael A. Meyer, "In the Days of Isaac Mayer Wise," in *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years*, ed. Samuel E. Karff (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976), pp. 11ff.

[9]L. Hearn, "Cincinnati Saints," in *Barbarous Barbers* quoted in Sarna and Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati*, p. 50, and Max B. May, "The Jews of Cincinnati", in *Centennial History of Cincinnati and Representative Citizens*, by Charles Theodore Greve, 2 volumes (Chicago: Biographical Publication Co., 1904), Vol. I., p. 941. See also Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 56 for a discussion of his personality.

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towards elitism.[10] Lilienthal helped the impulsive Wise plan the strategy for their various projects and attempted to smooth over the inevitable controversies in which Wise became embroiled. They were able to work closely because they shared the same moderate vision of Reform, which they pragmatically adapted to the conditions of American Jewry in the mid-nineteenth century. Together they helped to create two of the major institutions of Reform Judaism: the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and Hebrew Union College. While scholars have treated Lilienthal as a footnote in the history of the American Reform movement, in part because Wise's need to take center stage caused him to dominate the historical record, we will see that Lilienthal's contribution was indispenable.

In recent decades there has been considerable debate among historians concerning the reasons for the success of mid-nineteenth-century Reform Judaism in the United States. Some assumed that Reform was a transplant brought from Germany by Jewish immigrants to America. Such was the view of Adolf Kober who wrote:

> The transferral of German Reform concepts into this country was straightforward and direct. For it was the leaders of Reform in Germany, defeated in Europe due to a variety of causes, who were to bring these ideas to the United States.[11]

Leon Jick emphasized the Americanization of the German-Jewish immigrants as the basis for the success of Reform in America. Only after Jews had learned English, climbed the socio-economic ladder, and adapted to local norms, did they create a Reform Judaism that matched their new American values:

> Individuals who felt themselves to be a part of the total society, sought Jewish institutions that were attuned to that society. The masses selectively

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[10]Illoway, *Sefer Milchamot Elohim*, pp. 5f. Shortly after Lilienthal's death, a columnist for the *St. Louis Jewish Tribune* characterized their relationship this way: "What Wise suggested, Lilienthal supported, and what Lilienthal pacified, Wise promoted. What Wise wounded, Lilienthal healed, and what Lilienthal whitewashed, Wise exposed. Where Wise wanted to lead, Lilienthal gracefully followed, and where Lilienthal wisely warned, Wise laudably obeyed." Quoted in Sarna and Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati*, p. 86.

[11]Adolf Kober, "Aspects of the Influence of Jews from Germany on American Jewish Spiritual Life of the Nineteenth Century," in Hirschler, ed. *Jews from Germany in the United States*, p. 153.

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> took from each leader the views that most effectively reinforced the changes that were in process. . . . Jewish doctrine had been redefined to conform to the presumed dictates of reason. Jewish ritual practice had been modified to reflect the tastes of an increasingly respectable acculturated constituency. It was decorous, dignified, and readily intelligible to any American audience.[12]

Jick denied that American Reform borrowed very much from Germany or that the German-trained rabbinic leadership had any decisive part to play in this transition, insisting that Reform arose from the American Jewish laity.[13]

Steven G. Mostov, in his dissertation about the social and economic history of Cincinnati's Jewish community, echoed Jick's view:

> The changes in synagogue policy which did occur were rooted in social rather than ideological concerns, and were designed to transform the synagogue into a dignified place of which up-and-coming Jewish merchants could be proud. This was evident both in the substance of the early reforms, all of which related to propriety, decorum, and aesthetics, and in the rationale given for adopting them. An ideology of Reform Judaism would only come much later, and would serve to legitimate changes that were already occurring.[14]

In her book on the German-Jewish migration, Hasia Diner subscribed to a similar position. "The impetus for Reform came mostly from the laity and its focus on practical ritual problems. Congregations in one city after another pushed for changes." She did allow that "the gradual trickle of European-trained rabbis to the United States, particularly after 1850, changed somewhat the process of Reform." She explained that "when they arrived in America, often invited by congregations searching for religious leaders, they

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[12]Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue,* p. 191.

[13]Ibid., p. 190. Theoretical support for Jick's theory can be found in the work of sociologist of religion Peter L. Berger, who argued that the pluralistic, voluntaristic nature of the American religious climate created a competition for membership. This competition, in turn, led to a new emphasis on the laity as consumers of religion. The consumer demand and control of a given socio-economic group led to standardization of religious content. See his *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, 1967), pp. 147f.

[14]Mostov, "A Jerusalem on the Ohio," p. 162

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introduced a theoretical rationale to justify and spur on the process of reform."[15]

Countering this "Reform from below" position is that of Naomi W. Cohen in *Encounter with Emancipation.* While she traced the many-faceted process of Americanization of the German-Jewish immigrants, Cohen argued that "two streams fed concomitantly into the development of American Reform, one pragmatic and one philosophical." Calling the process the "Americanization of Judaism," she argued that without the theoretical framework supplied by the rabbinic leadership from Germany, American Reform would never have been created.[16] This view has since been supported by Michael A. Meyer in his history of the Reform movement. "The rise of the Reform movement in America . . . must be attributed to both Germanizing and Americanizing trends. Neither trend alone will explain it."[17]

While Cohen and Meyer do not deny the role of Americanization, they assert that the American rabbinic leadership played an important role in the development of American Reform (i.e., "Reform from above") and that these leaders drew upon German Reform models and precedents. An assessment of the influence of German patterns is made more complicated because these early American rabbis were bitterly split over the relative importance of German versus American influences upon their Reform ideology. Avraham Barkai, who recently studied the relationship between the American German-Jewish immigrant community and the Jewish community they had left behind in Germany, argued that German influence also changed as the immigrants became more Americanized.

> Relations with the Jewish spiritual leadership in Germany were close, but the contacts loosened with the growth and development of American Jewry and the establishment of its own institutions. From Germany, their developments were closely, and during the first decades also sympathetically followed and commented on. For quite a time the rabbis, ministers, and lay leaders of the American congregations turned to their

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[15]Diner, *A Time for Gathering,* pp. 117f.

[16]Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation,* pp. 164f.

[17]Meyer, *Response to Modernity,* pp. 235f.

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> former teachers and acknowledged authorities of German Judaism for practical advice and spiritual guidance.[18]

According to Barkai, the ongoing process of Americanization was also an effort to shed the spiritual patronage of German Jewry.[19] The American rabbinic leadership, which supplied the theoretical framework for Reform, also underwent a process of Americanization. It developed German models and ideology to match American conditions and also to assert its independence from the German spiritual leadership. In contrast to Barkai, Alan Silverstein, in his recent work *Alternatives to Assimilation*, argued that German influence was more important later in the nineteenth century, following Christian developments. The contradiction between the two positions may be more apparent than real, because Barkai noted that a second wave of German-Jewish immigration after the Civil War brought "an increasing number of educated people rooted in and proud of their German cultural background."[20] It was this group that would help give an increasingly German shape to American-Jewish ideology and institutions later in the century. Silverstein also refined the idea of Americanization, placing Reform trends within the context of broader American patterns, especially those in American Protestant churches.[21]

This chapter will study the case of Lilienthal and Congregation Bene Israel from his arrival in 1855 to about 1870, in order to establish the relative importance of personal leadership versus socio-economic factors in the development of Reform there. It was during this period that Lilienthal crystallized his moderate Reform position, especially through his participation in the Cleveland Conference (1855), and persistently attempted to implement this vision at Bene Israel. He had minimal impact at first, during the period when the German-Jewish immigrants of his congregation were beginning to climb the

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[18]Barkai, *Branching Out*, p. 158.

[19]Ibid., p. 159.

[20]Ibid., p. 164.

[21]Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation, p.* 5.

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socio-economic ladder. Even after acculturation was largely completed, members of the congregation continued to resist Reform. Only when Lilienthal forced the issue by putting his career on the line did Reform finally come to Bene Israel.

Reform from Above: The Cleveland Conference

Lilienthal and Wise teamed up to convene the Cleveland Conference in October 1855, which was meant to be the fulfillment of their long-held dream of national unity. In calling this conference, Wise and Lilienthal were consciously following the model of the German Reformers, who had staged a series of conferences in Brunswick in 1844, in Frankfurt in 1845, and in Breslau in 1846, to forge their ideology.[22] Like their German counterparts, they hoped to develop principles that would guide the practical work of reforming Judaism from above. The goal of Cleveland, however, was far more inclusive, inasmuch as Lilienthal and Wise strove to find common ground between traditional and Reform factions in order to unify American Jewry. Believing that effective changes in areas such as Jewish law, liturgy, and education were only possible through national unity, the platform they forged was an attempt to transcend the polarization of the various tendencies. The conference succeeded, however, only in exposing the extent of the division among the leadership of American Jewry.[23] While many historians have discussed this important episode, none have looked closely at Lilienthal's role as an organizer, leader, and defender of the conference through which he emerged as an articulate spokesman for an American moderate Reform position.[24]

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[22]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 132.

[23]One scholar has even questioned whether Lilienthal and Wise were actually advocating Reform at all at Cleveland. Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, p. 141. This view seems to side with the radical Reformers and misses the nuances of Lilienthal and Wise's moderate Reform position. Temkin earlier cited Kaufmann Kohler's condemnation of Cleveland: "Had he [Wise] been successful, reformed Judaism would have been smothered in its very cradle." Ibid., p. 104.

[24]See Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 243f.; Cohen, *Encounter with*

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Lilienthal was undoubtedly involved in the planning of the conference from its inception.[25] Isaac Leeser would later claim that Wise and Lilienthal "concocted" the entire outcome before leaving Cincinnati, and he was basically correct in this assessment.[26] Lilienthal wrote lengthy articles to lay the groundwork for the approach that he and Wise would advocate in Cleveland. In an article called "The Reformers want to uproot all!" he tried to calm the fears of the Orthodox party by assuring them that

> what the reform party proposes, it proposes for the welfare of the future generations; it wishes to prevent the endless desertions and splits, it wishes to banish indifference, which has taken hold of a large portion of the Jewish community, it wishes to inspire the Jews with a new love for their religion.[27]

In the next week's edition of the *Israelite*, he began a long series of articles called "Minhag America" to show the methodology that he and Wise applied to the process of Reform. Reform was not an "all or nothing" proposition, but one that tried to harmonize religion with the needs of the times through changes that could be justified by a critical and historical study of the sources. In his various articles he cited the legal positions of Maimonides, Joseph Caro, and other venerable authorities as precedent for the changes he advocated. In order to reunite the Orthodox and Reform camps, the approach of the moderate Reformers in Cleveland would be based on biblical and talmudic authority.

Lilienthal and Wise wanted the conference to represent a wide cross-section of views among the leadership of American Jewry. Lilienthal proudly claimed:

> There is no doubt that the gentlemen who have promised to be present at the

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Emancipation, pp. 175f.; Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, pp. 283ff.; Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*, pp. 162f., Sussman, "Isaac Leeser," pp. 324ff. For Wise's role see Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, pp. 283ff. Also Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, pp. 136-149.

[25]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 307.

[26]*Occident* 13 (November 1855): 413. Wise commented in his *Reminiscences* that "the question of the ritual was discussed fully and freely in the *Israelite* in the hope of settling preliminaries as much as possible before the convening of the conference." p. 308.

[27]*Israelite* 2 (August 17, 1855):44.

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> next Convention in Cleveland will represent the most diverging opinions. The Ultra-Orthodox, Orthodox, moderate Reformers, Ultra-Reformers, all these parties have already declared to send their representatives and we feel really gratified that this is the case.[28]

He felt that all sides must be represented in order to harmonize the diverse points of view and he hoped that the Orthodox signatories, Rabbis Henry Hochheimer and Aaron Guenzburg of Baltimore, Dr. Bernard Illowy of St. Louis, and Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia, would attend. Unfortunately, by the time the conference began, all but Leeser had backed out.[29] At the other extreme, Dr. David Einhorn, the radical Reformer who had only just arrived in America, also refused to attend.

The conference, therefore, did not encompass the full spectrum of viewpoints, the Reformers having a clear majority when Lilienthal called it to order on October 17. The group voted to conduct the proceedings exclusively in German because that was the only language in which these new immigrants could express themselves fluently. They easily elected Wise as president, Dr. Elkan Cohn (Wise's successor in Albany) as vice president, and Lilienthal as secretary.[30] Since two of the three officers were moderate Reformers from Cincinnati, Wise would remark in retrospect:

> Two mistakes were made at the very start in the election of officers: I was elected president, Dr. Lilienthal secretary, and Dr. Cohn of Albany vice president. Instead of that, Cohn or Merzbacher should have been elected president, Leeser vice president, and a scribe, not an orator, should have been elected secretary.[31]

Had Cohn been elected president, the Cincinnati-based rabbis might not have alienated the Eastern leaders; had Leeser been vice president, the Orthodox faction would have been

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[28]Ibid., 2 (September 21, 1855):84.

[29]Sussman, "Isaac Leeser," pp. 327f.

[30]*Occident* 13 (November 1855):409. The choice of German shows the relative newcomer status of some of these men who had gathered to establish the basis for a united American Jewry. Leeser, who observed from the sidelines during the first session, claimed the Reformers had an eight to five majority. Sussman, "Isaac Leeser," p. 328.

[31]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 312.

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given a more significant role. The mistake in choosing Lilienthal as secretary had nothing to do with his ability to function in that capacity. Wise remarked about his performance in Cleveland that "the reading of the minutes always creates a sensation in the conference; for the secretary, Rev. Dr. Lilienthal, writes such masterly minutes, that its exactness and eminence surprises every hearer."[32] Lilienthal was such a strong orator, however, that he went beyond his secretarial role to play a major part in the conference. Leeser was especially impressed that Lilienthal possessed "a versatility and business tact, with a moderation in outward demeanor, coolness in argument, and polished manner" whose gentleness and courtesy made him a more dangerous opponent.[33] In the final analysis, the choice of officers reinforced the conviction of the Eastern and Orthodox factions that the Cincinnati moderate Reformers controlled the agenda of the conference.

Leeser had said before leaving for Cleveland: "If our Reformers are now honest, let them bring forward a system, whatever it be, which rests on Scripture and tradition, and we assure them that they will be listened to, and their arguments dispassionately weighed."[34] In spite of his misgivings and to his surprise and pleasure, this is what they did. The first order of business was to establish a common platform as the basis for their union and all future synods. After some debate, Wise read a prepared paper that listed four principles:

> 1. The Bible as delivered to us by our fathers and as now in our possession, is of immediate divine origin, and the standard of our religion.
> 2. The Talmud contains the traditional, legal, and logical exposition of the biblical laws, which must be expounded and practiced according to the comments of the Talmud.
> 3. The resolutions of the synod, in accordance with the above principles, are legally valid.
> 4. Statutes and ordinances, contrary to the laws of the land, are invalid.[35]

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[32]*Israelite* 2 (November 9, 1855):140.

[33]*Occident* 13 (December 1855):422.

[34]Ibid., 13 (October 1855):360.

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This platform, which acknowledged the importance of the Talmud, attempted to harmonize Reform and Orthodox positions. After Wise spoke, Lilienthal strongly supported the platform in a speech that cited the deplorable confusion, disunion and lack of religious observance that characterized American Jewry and the powerful need for unity.[36] Leeser was thrilled, calling "the 17th of October a day of joy for Israel, if all Jews would adopt in sincerity the Bible as the inspired word of God and the Talmud as indicating the rule of life by which they would be governed."[37]

After the platform was refined and approved, Leeser urged that the conference adjourn, publicize the platform widely, and reconvene the following summer in a centrally-located Eastern city. He promised that they could then "expect the co-operation of those who had been kept away" (i.e., the other Orthodox leaders). Outnumbered by Reformers, Leeser wanted to strengthen the Orthodox influence by postponing further action. His proposal was ignored and the conference continued after he left. Leeser's early departure was clearly a tactical error, since the group had only discussed the first of the three items on its published agenda; liturgy and education, both controversial, remained to be considered. With Leeser's departure, Wise and Lilienthal had an opportunity to further their moderate Reform agenda.[38] Wise was appointed head of committees to formulate a uniform American liturgy and to deal with ritual and legal questions.

Lilienthal chaired a committee formed to submit a plan for the establishment of an ongoing synod, meant to be "the highest authority of the oral law" in this country. After a

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[35]*Israelite* 2 (November 9, 1855):148. This formulation is the final, revised version of the principles. Leeser later wrote that he believed that Lilienthal, whom he considered "a tactician of rare power and penetration . . . must be regarded as the real author of the compromise resolutions offered as the basis of union." *Occident* 14 (May 1856):75f.

[36]*Occident* 13 (November 1855):411. It is easy to see why Leeser later claimed that the whole Conference had been choreographed from Cincinnati.

[37]Ibid. Wise was also excited, believing the two parties to be fully reconciled. *Reminiscences*, p. 314. Each side believed itself to have gained the victory.

[38]Sussman, "Isaac Leeser," p. 332. Sussman was unable to account for Leeser's early departure.

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speech by Wise, Lilienthal detailed the committee's recommendations with regard to representation, especially that there be an interplay of lay and clerical leadership, in which the practical skills of the former would balance the scholarship of the latter. He hoped that a synod, made up of seventy members, at least one-third clergy, would meet once every three years and that the resolutions of this body, unlike a conference, would be religiously obligatory (though no ruling could violate the Bible, Talmud, the Constitution, or laws of the United States).[39]

Lilienthal, also chairman of the school committee, emphasized the weakness of the education system and its reliance on catechism and a limited knowledge of Bible, the prayerbook and Hebrew. The committee also worried that American Jewish education was not producing its own rabbis, preachers or cantors. After debating the relative merits of religious and public school education, they set up a committee to consider the question further. Lilienthal asked that educators throughout the United States communicate their views to him, emphasizing that the education of the "rising generation" was "of the highest and most influential importance" to insure "a glorious future for the holy cause of our religion."[40]

Lilienthal was proud of the conference because, by making the Bible and Talmud the bases for reforms, the platform was broad enough to include "the most dissenting parties." He held that the conference had been more successful than the German rabbinical conferences of the forties, which "had failed to define the principles by which their actions and decisions had to be universally acknowledged as legal and valid, and the influence of their meetings exercised on the congregations was therefore an unimportant one." The

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[39]*Israelite* 2 (November 2, 1855):140; and (November 9, 1855):148. It is hard to square this suggestion of a binding synod with his avowed notion of individual autonomy. It is possible that his desire to harmonize traditional and Reform positions at this conference overrode other theoretical considerations. For the history and significance of the traditional institution of the synod, see Zimmer, *Jewish Synods in Germany During the Late Middle Ages.*

[40]Ibid., 2 (November 2, 1855):137.

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Cleveland conference would "result in more good than the dry historical investigations of Frankel's school. . . . Its aim is a thoroughly practical one, while the labor of Frankel's school is a merely theoretical one."[41] Lilienthal had already begun the process that Barkai called "shedding the spiritual patronage of German Jewry," by insisting that the American Jewish leaders were the equals of their German-Jewish counterparts and that the latter could even learn from American efforts.[42] Lilienthal believed that the conference, by bringing up the most important questions facing modern Jewry, would "promulgate a vast deal of knowledge," dispelling the ignorance and indifference plaguing the Jewish community. Finally, the conference had resolved animosities of many years standing: "The members of the most different parties departed as friends; though differing in opinions, all were convinced that each and every one of the members present had but the welfare, the success and prosperity of Judaism at heart."[43] Even Leeser, annoyed with the work of the conference after he left, withheld judgment, saying: "If the gentlemen I met last week are honest in their attachment to the Bible and Talmud, their reform must be harmless, since they can thus introduce nothing for which they cannot present to the world based upon *authority*."[44]

If the leaders of the conference believed that peace and unity had been achieved through their efforts, that illusion was quickly shattered. Critical reactions flooded the offices of the *Occident*, the *Asmonean*, and the *Israelite* from throughout America and

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[41]Ibid. Zacharias Frankel, the ideological father of present-day Conservative Judaism, had developed the "positive-historical" school which combined *Wissenschaft* with tradition. See Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 84ff.

[42]Barkai, *Branching Out*, p. 159.

[43]Ibid., 2 (November 2, 1855):137.

[44]*Occident* 13 (November 1855):414. Wise was more partisan in his appraisal. "I imagined that the battle had been fought and won. We all knew that we could gain the consent of the synod to any reform we wanted. . . . Orthodoxy was defeated, and grasped eagerly at the few concessions which we had made in order to proceed peaceably and unitedly along the path which we had entered. "*Reminiscences*, p. 316.

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Europe, making it clear that the conference caused an intensification of rifts that would never be fully bridged.

Dr. Morris Raphall of New York and other Orthodox leaders censured Leeser for compromising with the Reformers. They resented the leadership claims of the "midwestern yokels" who wanted to dictate to the more established Eastern communities.[45] Abraham Rice declared that he had no sympathy for the so-called "Cincinnati *Beth Din*:"

> Our holy religion does not permit itself to be fettered by any platform which any council may frame for it this day; because its platform was created by God himself, thousands of years ago, on Mount Sinai; His Word, like Himself, remains unchangeable.[46]

Illowy and Leeser got embroiled in a fight over why the former had not attended.[47] The Orthodox, in their criticism of Leeser, picked apart every word of the propositions, claiming he had been duped. As late as May 1856, he still defended the compromise, saying if the Orthodox felt that "enough was not obtained by way of compromise, the fault was more in those who were absent, than those who were present."[48] As a result of the violent attacks he experienced after the conference, Leeser moved further to the right. He eventually characterized the meeting as "worse than a failure," and its platform "little better than a mere trap, contrived, as we thought and still think, to make all reforms lawful on assumed Orthodox principles."[49]

Lilienthal, representing the Cincinnati moderates, described the attack of the right in an article in the *Israelite* in the following manner: "The Orthodox party . . . heaped

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[45]Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*, p. 163.

[46]*Occident* 13 (December 1855):451

[47]*Occident* 13 (January 1856):511f. Illowy also intimated that Wise did not live by the principles that were agreed upon at the Conference.

[48]Ibid., 14 (May 1856):77f. Many of the traditional attacks appeared in the thirteenth volume of the *Asmonean.*

[49]Ibid., 14 (February 1857):505ff.

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disgrace, suspicion, and heresy upon the resolutions passed in Cleveland without reasons, or arguments." They "most graciously declare all proceedings to have originated in frivolous heresy, contemptible ignorance and egotistical humbug."[50] He asserted that the Orthodox would accept only the *Shulkhan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law) as the unchangeable code and standard for Jewish practice. According to Lilienthal, the *Shulkhan Arukh*, an evolution from earlier codes and formulations of Jewish law, in many places contradicted the Talmud and Bible.[51] Whereas the Orthodox saw the Talmud as the bearer of divine law, passed down from Moses through a chain of tradition, Lilienthal treated it as a heterogeneous mixture of human and divine elements. The divine portions were eternal; the human parts were innovations "fit for further development." It was only through a scientific (i.e., critical) investigation that these latter elements could be distinguished from the divine essence in the Talmud. Progress was justified if it followed the same process of *halakhic* precedents by which rabbinical literature had developed after the Talmud's compilation.[52]

In sum, Lilienthal viewed the Talmud as a "Reform" document in its own time, and the rabbinical tradition that flowed from it as a continuation of the systematic, historical development of Judaism. In contrast, the Orthodox were said to maintain that the rabbinical tradition was a conservative mechanism for passing down divinely ordained practices, as when Leeser declared: "In America . . . people have thrown off, without authority, much that is essential and vital. Our reforms should begin with restoration."[53]

In a series of letters in the *Occident* and *Israelite*, Leeser and Lilienthal delineated the unbridgeable gap between them based on divergent views of the meaning of Jewish

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[50]*Israelite* 2 (Feb. 1, 1856):244.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid., 2 (December 7, 1855):180.

[53]*Occident* 13 (October 1855):361.

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history. Leeser would never believe

> that the prohibited things, which were always considered unlawful by us, could be permitted in the present age, simply because some really or pretended learned man . . . endeavored to demonstrate that, in modern times, this had all been changed, not by the decrees of the Most High, but by the silent action of the age, which had put Judaism on a different footing from what it was.[54]

Later, he stated more bluntly, "We wish to improve, not to please the spirit of the age, but the spirit of religion, and here we two diverge on opposite roads."[55] While Leeser held that spirit of the age was ephemeral with regard to religious practice, Lilienthal argued it was central. History was not a a collection of unrelated events, but rather "a series of logical causes and effects. The history of every nation is influenced by and influences that of other nations; by this mutual action and reaction the work of universal history is performed."[56] Lilienthal seemed to have been influenced by Hegel's philosophy of history with regard to the dialectical working out of the universal within the particular when he asserted:

> All the ideas forming the moving springs of history are absolute; while man's life and actions are confined within the limited sphere of space and time, so is human history as a whole a continuous process of freeing itself from the deficiency of the latter, a continuous process of an unceasing reform, and a never-stopping development to a higher degree of perfection.[57]

Jewish history should not be seen as separate from this universal series of causes and

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[54]*Occident* 14 (November, 1856):382. See also Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 175ff., and Sussman, "Isaac Leeser," pp. 332ff.

[55]*Occident* 14 (November, 1856):385.

[56]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 370.

[57]Ibid., p. 379. For the parallel concept see, for instance, G.W.F. Hegel, *Reason in History: A General Introduction to the Philosophy of History*. Trans. by Robert S. Hartman (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953), p. 20, where Hegel says "Spirit, and the course of its development, is the substance of history," and "first, the Idea, secondly, the complex of human passions; the one the warp, the other the woof of the vast tapestry of world history." p. 29. Lilienthal also shared Hegel's optimistic view in the inevitable victory of the spirit. Hegel wrote:"World history is the progress of the consciousness of freedom," and freedom is the final aim of God's plan. p. 24.

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effects; rather, its particularity reflected the spirit of the ever-developing whole at any given historical moment. For example, Lilienthal characterized the nature of the medieval period as an age dominated by the Catholic Church, during which reason was subjugated to fixed and unchangeable dogmas. Jews followed this trend through an extensive codification of law, which dictated all of Jewish life in the same way canon law did for Catholics. As the medieval age gave way to the Reformation, reason began to reassert itself, and eventually even the isolated Jewish culture was affected. The final stage, beginning with the French Revolution, further expressed this progression of the universal spirit of reason, indicating that Jewish Reform was "a legitimate offspring of the spirit of our age."[58] Lilienthal exclaimed to Leeser that only those men "advanced in age and led by endeared customs and habits stay with your party; almost the entire rising generation will join that of the Reformers." Lilienthal concluded that the conference had "assisted only in widening the gulf and calling forth a clearer and still more explicit statement of the principles separating both parties."[59]

Wise and Lilienthal encountered an even more damaging salvo from Dr. David Einhorn of Har Sinai Temple in Baltimore. A fellow Bavarian, Einhorn was a radical Reform scholar who actively participated in the German rabbinical conferences in 1845 and 1846 and had just arrived in the United States.[60] He issued a protest, signed by members of his new congregation, that attacked the conference, charging that, because many "do not

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[58]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 371, 377, 382. Lilienthal also translated Emanuel Hecht's *Synopsis of the History of the Israelites; From the Time of Alexander the Macedonian to the Present Age* (Cincinnati: Bloch Publishing Co., 1857) during this period. While it was meant as a school text, its underlying philosophy of history was the same. Here, while he shares Hegel's vision of the perfection of history as the realization of God's will; unlike the Protestant Hegel, he sees Judaism as the epitome of the religion of reason which would ultimately triumph. p. 118.

[59]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 386f.

[60]For a discussion of Einhorn and his intellectual position see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 244ff. See also Gershon Greenberg, "The Significance of America in David Einhorn's Conception of History," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (December, 1973):160-184.

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consider the talmudic exegesis of the Bible, which so frequently clashes with the spirit and text of scripture, as legal and obligatory," the Talmud could not be a unifying basis for solving the problems of modern Judaism.

> The declared legitimacy of talmudic authority cannot heal, but, on the contrary will render permanent our unhealthy religious condition, which consists not in the present conflict of parties, but must be sought for in the demoralizing effects of an antagonism between theory and practice, and in an opposition between prescriptive rules and the unyielding nature of religious and social wants. With the Talmud in hand it is no longer possible to obtain the honorable and efficient means of healing the gaping wound in the heart of Israel.[61]

Einhorn advocated abolishing much of traditional practice and law. Arguing that American Jewry must escape from the powerful grasp of the Talmud, he warned: "Keep a strict watch on hierarchical movements which would again forge its chains, though under the charming lullabies of peace, now in the guise of dogmas, and ere long by a *Minhag America*."[62]

The editors of the *Israelite* at first characterized the protest as rash, frivolous, and misguided, revealing "the ambitions of a few." But clearly a serious response was necessary.[63] Again, it was Lilienthal who took up the challenge. He summarized Einhorn's position in an article in the *Israelite*:

> 1. Dr. Einhorn asserts the time had arrived in which a radical reform of Judaism can and must be carried out and
> 2. The Talmud, as it stands, is an unfit instrument for any reform, and especially for this radical and uprooting one.[64]

Responding to the first point, Lilienthal cited the unsuccessful experiments of the European radical Reformers. Most Jews in Germany, France, and England had not been receptive to the radical approach, and the Reform leadership had adjusted to this reality. Lilienthal

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[61]*Occident* 13 (December 1855):449.

[62]Ibid., p. 450.

[63]*Israelite* 2 (November 30, 1855):173.

[64]Ibid., 2 (February 22, 1856):268.

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asserted that the most recent European conference in Wiesbaden (1855), also demonstrated this realization, since it dealt only with such moderate issues as school books and prayer books. Einhorn was mistaken if he believed the situation was different in America, where "ninety-nine of one hundred congregations not only will reject at once the deistical schemes of Dr. Einhorn, but are even still opposed to the slightest alteration of the service." Reform could only succeed if based, not on idealistic, ultra-radical schemes, but on a realistic understanding of the people's needs and the slow pace of liturgical changes in America, nurtured by careful education.[65]

Lilienthal also questioned the arbitrariness of Einhorn's reforms, in which he advocated throwing out almost all biblical and talmudic law, yet retaining circumcision and Saturday Sabbath observance. Either the choice of what to keep was up to every individual or some standard had to be found. Lilienthal argued, as he had against the Orthodox, that the Talmud, scientifically understood, was the ideal standard. "The Talmud, rightly understood, and not superficially read or misinterpreted, is a mighty reform in itself." [66]

Lilienthal also addressed the philosophical issue of personal autonomy, at the center of Einhorn's attack. The radical Reformer had expressed the fear that using the Talmud as the basis for Reform would reestablish the authoritarian structure of traditional Judaism in America. To Einhorn, this seemed to contradict the very principles upon which the United States was based. Although Lilienthal cherished the American system and the freedom it offered, for him individual freedom did not mean wholesale rejection of tradition, but that choices were to be made on the basis of a deep knowledge of Jewish law and history.

The Cleveland Conference marked the beginning of a long-lasting split between East Coast and Midwestern Reform leaders. While to some extent it can be explained as a personality clash between Einhorn and Wise, we can see from Lilienthal's reasoned

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[65]Ibid.

[66]Ibid., 2 (February 8, 1856):252f.

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response that substantive issues also separated the two groups. The Eastern Reformers tended to be more radical and emphasized German culture and language as the basis for Reform. Midwesterners such as Lilienthal and Wise were more moderate and pragmatic in their approach, linking Reform with American values. In spite of numerous conciliatory efforts by Lilienthal, the rift lasted well into the 1870s, hampering the ability of the American rabbinic leadership to shape a unified Reform doctrine or practice.[67]

Foreign periodicals also followed the Cleveland Conference, calling it the "American Provisional Sanhedrin." News of their ambitious agenda reached Rabbi Ludwig Philippson, Lilienthal's mentor in Germany, who reacted with skepticism and annoyance.[68] The *Allgemeine Zeitung* devoted two lengthy discussions to its proceedings, especially taking offense at the phrase "all Israelites agree" with regard to the status of the Talmud. They called the platform a fiasco and approvingly printed Einhorn's protest.[69] Rabbi Dr. Leopold Stein, a Reform leader from Frankfurt, was especially harsh, calling Wise a traitor and scornfully rejecting the "provisory Sanhedrin."[70] Lilienthal responded in an open letter to the editor and to Stein, acknowledging that the debate between Einhorn and the moderates had caused a sensation in Germany. Noting that Judaism was becoming more and more divided, Lilienthal traced the various parties in

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[67]See Martin B. Ryback, "The East-West Conflict in American Reform Judaism," *American Jewish Archives* 4 (January, 1952):3-25.

[68]*Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 19 (September 3, 1855):464f. For a discussion of Phillippson's attitude towards the American Jewish leadership, see Avraham Barkai, *Branching Out*, pp. 159ff.

[69]*Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums* 19 (November 26, 1855):622-3; and (December 10, 1855):634-37. The paper regularly received the *Israelite* and the German language *Die Deborah*, which was also edited by Wise and Lilienthal. See *Die Deborah* 1 (October 26, 1855):73; (November 2, 1855):81; (November 9, 1855):89; and (Decmber 14, 1855):129 for "Die Conferenz in Cleveland."

[70]See article in *Asmonean* 13 (January 11, 1856):101 titled "Is Dr. I. M. Wise a Traitor," and (March 28, 1856):186. This is the same rabbi that Lilienthal cited during the argument against celebration of the second day of a festival. See Chapter Three above.

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Germany, discussing the history of their rabbinic conferences and questioning their effectiveness. He compared American and German Reform efforts, citing some of the reforms that had recently taken place in Cincinnati, defended the conference's attempt to include all viewpoints, and concluded that the platform was an honest attempt to find the middle ground.[71]

On the basis of German accounts, the French journal *Lien d'Israel* gave a full and favorable report. The author hoped that the "Sanhedrin of the New World" would be the first link in a "universal authority that would eventually prevail in the Jewish world" and that

> the example of our brothers in America react upon the measures which will be submitted for deliberation to our Grand Rabbins in the coming spring, and may through the conformity of the greatest number of Rabbins, the ancient unity of Israel . . . be re-established.[72]

The statement of the French journalist illustrated the ongoing dialogue that developed between Jewish leaders and intellectuals on both sides of the Atlantic in the various Jewish periodicals. The *Occident*, *Israelite*, *Asmonean* and other papers printed articles by scholars and leaders in Europe and sent their journals abroad. American correspondents contributed regularly to the *Allgemeine Zeitung* and to other foreign Jewish periodicals. Underlining the importance of the exchange, Lilienthal requested that European periodicals be more punctual in sending their journals, explaining, "It is our intention to connect our American Israelites as closely as possible with those of other parts of the world, by informing them, correctly, of all that occurs among our brethren in all parts of the world."[73]

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[71]Ibid., 1 (March 28, 1856):257; (April 4, 1856):265; (April 11,1856):273; (April 18, 1856):281; (April 25, 1856):289; and (May 2, 1856):302.

[72]Printed in *Occident* 14 (May 1856):83.

[73]*Israelite* 3 (October 3, 1856):102. Other foreign reactions can be found in the *Asmonean* 13 (April 4, 1856):193. "Die Cleveland Platform" by Rabbi Zacharias Frankel, from his *Monatschrift fur Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums.*

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The interrelationships went further than the courtesy of sharing information, because American leaders wanted to be in tune with European trends. For instance, we saw that Lilienthal frequently compared the work of the Cleveland Conference with the German rabbinic conferences. All the American periodicals printed detailed accounts of the French Rabbinical Assembly in the spring of 1856 and related their rulings to American efforts. Lilienthal highlighted the decision of the French rabbis, "known for their undoubted orthodoxy," to allow the organ during services, comparing this ruling to the recalcitrance of American leaders, such as Rabbis Isaacs, Rice, and Raphall, "who unite for the purpose of defeating the schemes of the sinful reformers." He urged American Jewry to "follow the glorious example set by the rabbis of France."[74]

In spite of his antipathy to polemical exchanges, the Cleveland Conference established Lilienthal as an articulate spokesman on the national and international levels. Central to his disagreement with both traditionalists such as Leeser and radical Reformers such as Einhorn was his analysis of the needs of American Jewry. He insisted that the moderate Reform position best reflected the realities of American Jewish life, which required a pragmatic balance of modernity with the traditional orientation of this group.

Finally growing sick of "the aimless and useless controversy," Lilienthal could not bring himself to publish the proceedings of the conference, and withdrew from the polemical debate.[75] Not only unable to establish a national consensus for moderate Reform in 1855, he was also unable to implement it in his own congregation, Bene Israel. Minimal concessions won in the first months were later eroded, and it would take almost fifteen years before the congregation became receptive to his changes. It was only after the

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[74]See *Israelite* 3 (July 11, 1856):1; (July 18, 1856):12; (August 1, 1856):28f.; *Occident* 14 (September 1856):265-285. Leeser, in addition to reporting the Assembly proceedings, printed the response of the Orthodox rabbinical leader Samson R. Hirsch, which had been in the German periodical *Jeshurun.* See also *Occident* 14 (December 1856):443-447; (January 1857):486-493; and (February 1857):539-543 where Leeser printed the pastoral letter of the Chief Rabbi of the Central Consistory.

[75]Isaac M. Wise's eulogy for Lilienthal in *Hebrew Review* 2 (1881-2):188.

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Americanization of his congregants was well under way that they accepted Reform.

The Jews of Cincinnati and Reform from Below

The first Jew to settle in Cincinnati was Joseph Jonas, who came from England in 1817. The earliest Jewish settlers to join him in this frontier outpost were mostly English and Dutch. German-Jewish immigration drastically changed the character of Cincinnati's Jewish community, which grew from 100 in the 1830s to 1000 in 1840, to 2800 in 1850, to 6,000 in 1858.[76] By 1860 the Jewish population numbered 7500, when immigration numbers stabilized due to the Civil War. Over this period about 82% of the Jewish immigrants came from Germany; of these, 66% came from Bavaria, Lilienthal's home, most from upper Bavaria, usually villages in the Franconia region. Fleeing the insecurity and pauperization of their communities, these predominantly young men were searching for freedom and prosperity.[77] More fellow Jewish villagers and then virtually entire communities were transplanted, making for cohesive groups of transplanted immigrants.[78]

To be sure, the Jews were part of a wider German immigration that did much to shape Cincinnati's character. One contemporary observer wrote:

> With the year 1830, the stream of German immigration began to pour into Cincinnati. Newcomers from all parts of the former Fatherland entered into the city's diverse businesses, factories and professions. . . . As if by magic, new streets and boroughs arose.[79]

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[76]Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, p. 41. Contemporary accounts include the autobiography of Joseph Jonas, cited above, and Samuel Bruel, "Cincinnati Israelitish Institutions," *Israelite* I (July 15, 1854):1. Other general studies of the Cincinnati Jewish community include Ann Deborah Michael, "The Origins of the Jewish Community of Cincinnati 1817-1860," *The Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin*, 30 (Fall-Winter, 1972), no. 3, pp. 155-182. Barnett R. Brickner, "The Jewish Community of Cincinnati, Historical and Descriptive, 1817-1933," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 1933).

[77]Mostov, "A Jerusalem on the Ohio," p. 50. Much of the economic analysis that follows is based on this study.

[78]Ibid., p. 37.

[79]Emil Klauprecht, *German Chronicle in the History of the Ohio Valley and its Capital*

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By 1848, this observer estimated the German population to have been between 33,000 and 50,000 out of a total population of 111, 435. The Germans quickly formed schools, clubs, theater and singing groups, and lecture societies that added substantially to the cultural life of the community. Cincinnati was the first city in the country to introduce German bilingual education in the public elementary schools, an option that continued to be offered for over seventy-five years.[80] This strong German ethnic and cultural environment made Cincinnati a hospitable destination for the German-Jewish immigrants. Jews took an active part in German charities, schools, clubs, and cultural activities.

Of course, the existence of a thriving German community was not a sufficient cause, in itself, for German-Jewish settlement.[81] Proximity to Kentucky and Indiana and its location on the Ohio river positioned the city as a convenient trade center.[82] In addition, the development of canals and a railroad system solidified its economic position. However, the vast rural areas needed a wider trade network, and German-Jewish immigrants eagerly filled this niche. Forced by Old World economic restrictions into peddling, Jews found their skills welcome in the New. Hundreds of German-Jewish peddlers made their way to Cincinnati in the 1830s and 1840s; some of these made their fortunes when eventually they became merchants or bankers.[83] Operating with their own

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City Cincinnati in Particular, ed. Don Heinrich Tolzmann trans. Dale V. Lally, Jr. (Maryland: Heriage Books, 1992), p. 170.

[80]Ibid., pp. 170, 179. Carolyn R. Toth, *German-English Bilingual Schools in America: The Cincinnati Tradition in Historical Context*, Vol. 2 *New German-American Studies*, Don Heinrich Tolzmann, Gen. Editor (New York: 1990), p. x.

[81]Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 41, 60f. According to Mostov, "A Jerusalem on the Ohio," p. 83, about 60% of the Jewish immigrants to Cincinnati between 1810 to 1870 were from Southwestern Germany and Bavaria, another attraction for Lilienthal and his family.

[82]Maxwell Whiteman, "Notions, Dry Goods and Clothing: An Introduction to the Study of the Cincinnati Peddler," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 53 (April,1953): 309.

[83]Among the important local successes were Philip Heidelbach and Jacob Seasongood, both from Bavaria, who rose from peddlers to merchants and bankers. They would both become important lay leaders of Congregation Bene Israel during Lilienthal's years. See

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internal credit system, they created a complex system of distribution which connected retailers and wholesalers to manufacturers and importers. By 1850, although 24% remained peddlers and 13% were artisans, half of Cincinnati's Jews were proprietors, brokers and traders. By 1860, about 60% were proprietors, brokers and traders.[84] According to Stephen Mostov, with the advent of the Singer sewing machine, the ready-made clothing industry more than tripled in the decade of the 1850s. In 1860, Jews owned sixty-five out of seventy of Cincinnati's wholesale clothing firms, which in turn employed over half of the Jewish work force.[85] The upward mobility of the Jewish community was remarkable:

> Between 1850 and 1860 the average wealth of Cincinnati's Jewish merchants and the average size of Jewish businesses steadily increased to relatively high levels. . . . In the course of the decade the median wealth more than doubled to $9800, placing the majority of the city's merchant Jews within the upper reaches of the middle class.[86]

In addition, a group of wealthy Jews emerged; nineteen were worth over $50,000 and six were worth more than $100,000. The two richest, Jacob Seasongood and Philip Heidelbach, boasted net worths of over $200,000.[87]

Initially, the loss of the Southern markets during the Civil War was disastrous to Cincinnati's economy. However, its industries quickly converted to meet the demands of the war effort, and Cincinnati flourished as a major supplier of the western units of the Union army. In 1864, the Chamber of Commerce reported that trade had quadrupled in

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Sarna and Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati*, p. 4; Mostov, "A Jerusalem on the Ohio," pp. 126f.; Whiteman, "The Cincinnati Peddler," pp. 311-313; Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, p. 21; David Philipson, "The Jewish Pioneers of the Ohio Valley," *Publication of the American Jewish History Society* 8(1990):43-57; and Max B. May, "The Jews of Cincinnati," *Centennial History of Cincinnati*, Vol 1, pp. 939-949.

[84]Mostov, "A Jerusalem on the Ohio," p., 106.

[85]Ibid., p. 111.

[86]Ibid., p. 127.

[87]Ibid.

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value.[88] The Jewish merchants benefitted from the wartime economy, with the exception of businesses that had been too dependent upon trade with southern markets. By 1865, the median net worth of Jewish merchants had more than tripled to nearly $35,000; one-fifth were worth over $100,000 and the community's first millionaires had emerged.[89] After the war, the extraordinary demand for clothing collapsed, but the community continued to prosper, though at a more moderate rate.

The rapid rise of Jewish economic fortunes was mirrored by their residential patterns. The city's various ethnic groups tended to concentrate in distinct neighborhoods, the first Jews settling within a few blocks of each other, close to where they worked, socialized and prayed. As immigration increased, Jews also settled according to their respective regions of origin in the Old World, but Cincinnati's Jews were quite integrated with native-born and other ethnic groups. Unlike Irish and German Christians, who lived in more homogenous sections, for Jews, the key factor was proximity to the business district. By 1860, the center of Jewish residence had shifted to a neighborhood just north of the expanded central business district, with the wealthier Jews in the more exclusive area on its northern border that had been the city's most exclusive neighborhood, formerly home of the native-born elite, an area of "stately houses, 'glittering with the gay and costly equipages of wealth.'" Later, in the middle 1870s, they began moving to the surrounding hills, and beyond, to the suburbs.[90]

The first Cincinnati synagogue, Bene Israel, formed as a traditional *kahal* with members from various lands of origin, had attempted to fulfill all the ritual and communal needs of the still tiny Jewish settlement, providing a cemetery, a school, a ritual bath, and a place in which to worship and socialize. Bene Israel supervised kosher meat and the

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[88]Ibid., p. 215f.

[89]Ibid., p. 217.

[90]Ibid., p. 224.

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baking of matzah, dispensed charity to the needy, and hired a reader to lead services. Having bought land in 1829, the congregation moved into its first building in 1836. The community attempted to exert jurisdiction over its members in ritual matters, levying fines and disciplining members of the community. The lay leadership was generally knowledgeable enough to run the community without the assistance of a rabbi.[91]

When the large German-Jewish immigration overwhelmed the small *kahal*, a group broke away to form Bene Yeshurun in 1841. At that time these German Jews were not rejecting the traditionalism of Bene Israel; rather they wanted to replicate their own regional customs and rituals, as is evident in their constitution of 1841.[92] In effect they set up another *kahal* that attempted to serve its subgroup in much the same manner as Bene Israel had. They, both built new buildings, supported religious schools, maintained cemeteries, and thought of themselves as more observant than their rival congregation.[93]

Despite the arrival of Isaac M. Wise and Max Lilienthal in the mid-1850s, the two synagogues did not immediately become centers of Reform Judaism. The pace of religious change was slow, in spite of concerted efforts by both men, and by the early 1860s the synagogues had made only minor ritual and liturgical changes. Apparently the leaders had to wait until the Americanization process had matured before their reforms took root. The Civil War, which brought the Jewish community significant socio-economic success, helped in this process.[94] Shortly after the war Bene Yeshurun completed an expensive new synagogue, a symbol of that success. Its president justified the building, saying:

> Out of a few insignificant emigrants . . . we behold now thousands of influential and respected citizens . . . whose prosperity in particular among

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[91]Ibid., p. 147.

[92]Sarna and Goldman, "From Synagogue-Community to Citadel of Reform," p. 13.

[93]Ibid., pp. 16f.

[94]The Civil War exerted a powerful Americanizing influence on all immigrant groups. Bertram Wallace Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1957), p. 217. For further discussion see chapter five below.

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> the mercantile community, has exceeded their keenest expectations. Moreover, amidst dangers of war . . . the Almighty in his infinite mercy has preserved our lives . . . That this Congregation seems to feel and appreciate all these benign blessings, they evinced by their unanimous resolution that 'the Banner of Judah' shall no longer be carried through Alleys and By Streets [*sic*] but in broad avenues, and in the admiration of God. It shall be a monument to the glory of the Most High and in the honor of Judaism.[95]

Three years later Bene Israel also built a new, magnificent building to mark its arrival. As in Europe, both buildings were called "temples," distinguishing them from "synagogues," which were associated with past sadness and suffering, and underlining the affirmation that Cincinnati was not a place of "exile."[96] By the early 1870s, the lay leadership of the two temples had taken the lead in forging the first major institutions of American Reform Judaism. Cincinnati had begun to realize its vision of being the new Zion, from which would come a new American Judaism.[97]

This linkeage between socio-economic growth and the gradual acceptance of Reform seems to confirm Leon Jick's thesis, as described earlier. However, Jick underestimates the function of the rabbi as a guide and role model. Michael Meyer has argued:

> In the first half of the nineteenth century most German Jews who migrated to America had been only superficially Germanized. They had not gone to a German University; they spoke Judeo-German. Americanization was their first experience with integration into the modern world.[98]

As we saw above, this was true for many of the German-Jewish settlers in Cincinnati, who

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[95]Mostov, "A Jerusalem on the Ohio," p. 225.

[96]See Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*, p. 181 for Wise's comments on the occasion the dedication of his temple; and Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 63 for Lilienthal's remarks at the dedication of Bene Israel's new building. For a general discussion of the Reform use of the term "temple" see Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 42.

[97]Sarna and Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati*, pp. 14f.

[98]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 212. His view supports Jick, who, in *The Americanization of the Synagogue* claims that "few if any German-Jewish immigrants came to America with ideas for reform." p. 79. Hasia Diner emphasized the "regional hodegpodge and lack of a unitary "German" experience with regard to emancipation and modernization in *A Time for Gathering*, p. 14.

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came from tiny Bavarian villages, far from the modern urban centers like Munich, Lilienthal's home. They had lived in traditional communities, organized as *kehilot* and guided by centuries-old regional customs. Therefore, when they settled in Cincinnati, many Jews faced both the adjustment to a new country and to the modern world.[99]

It would have been surprising had these traditional people *not* turned to their rabbi to guide them through this difficult set of challenges. By virtue of his university training and subsequent intellectual struggles, Lilienthal believed he had harmonized Judaism with modernity. In Cincinnati this Jewish leader would find ways to Americanize this modern Judaism. In turn, his congregation learned from his sermons and adult education lectures; their children studied at a school whose modern curriculum he shaped; they read his newspaper articles and attended social, cultural, and musical events with him. He helped them apply American principles to educational issues and to financial problems. They saw him fuse traditional Jewish values of charity with those of American citizenship. He helped them understand the implications of the political and social events around them, from Christian revivalism to the Civil War. In short, both by his words and by his example, he helped them harmonize the values with which they had been raised with those of the world they wanted so much to embrace.[100]

Other problems also emerge from an analysis of the relationship between the Americanization process and Reform in Cincinnati. One might have expected that Bene Israel, the older synagogue by some twenty years, would have been quicker to adopt reforms. In fact, the opposite was the case with Bene Yeshurun being consistently ahead

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[99]This point has also been debated, since some scholars have argued that virtually all German Jews were influenced by the modernizing trends there. See Selma Stern Taubler, "Problems of American Jewish and German Jewish Historiography," in *Jews from Germany in the United States*, p. 47. Also Naomi W. Cohen refers to the "seasoning for emancipation," which German Jews underwent prior to emigration. Further, she points out that the Jews who left Germany were those willing "to break the hold" of the traditional Jewish setting into which they had been born by virtue of their decision to emigrate to America. *Encounter with Emancipation*, p. 42.

[100]His process of Americanization will be the next chapter.

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of Bene Israel. Though the members of Bene Israel had experienced the same socio-economic success as Bene Yeshurun, they hesitated for years to institute significant reforms. A new building was erected only in 1869, and even then they procrastinated with regard to reforming worship in it.

Bene Yeshurun, founded primarily by Bavarian Jews, was more homogenous than Bene Israel which had a significant number of Polish, Russian, Dutch, French and English members.[101] Possibly this diversity made consensus concerning issues of Reform more difficult for Bene Israel. Further, Bene Israel had long prided itself upon the ability of its lay leadership to run the synagogue without rabbinic leadership, whereas Bene Yeshurun had had a series of rabbis prior to the arrival of Wise.[102] This legacy of lay independence may have made it more difficult for Lilienthal to mold the congregation to his Reform vision. The differences between the leadership styles of the two rabbis undoubtedly had an impact on the pace of change. These last two factors underline the necessity of considering the complexities of the interrelationship between lay and rabbinic leadership in the history of congregational reform.

The Realization of Reform at Bene Israel

The hiring of Isaac M. Wise by Bene Yeshurun as rabbi in 1854 precipitated a crisis at Bene Israel. As this charismatic young Reformer moved his congregation in a more progressive direction, he drew members from the older synagogue and attracted newcomers. Wise promised "to elevate his synagogue into a model congregation for the entire West and South."[103] According to Wise:

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[101]Ibid. p. 152.

[102]Jonathan D. Sarna and Karla Goldman, "From Synagogue-Community to Citadel of Reform," p. 24. They had hired seven rabbis in ten years.

[103]Ibid. By 1853 Bene Jeshurun had already surpassed Bene Israel in membership. Mostov, "A Jerusalem on the Ohio," p. 168.

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> The result of all this was not long in appearing. The *B'ne Yeshurun* [*sic*]synagogue was crowded every Saturday, and the large and costly *B'ne Israel* [*sic*] synagogue became the gathering-place of the English-Polish-German orthodox, who exerted themselves to the utmost to perpetuate all of the old indecorum in the service. The *bona fide* members of the congregation became convinced that a change must take place, or else the congregation would soon dissolve.[104]

In desperation, the president of Bene Israel, Philip Heidelbach called a general meeting and by a vote of ninety-three to twelve the congregation elected Wise to serve them as well.[105] Until now they had relied solely on their knowledgeable lay leadership to conduct services, viewing Bene Yeshurun's need for a minister as evidence of weakness.[106] In addition, Wise had clearly identified himself as a Reformer, counter to the practice of a large number of Bene Israel congregants. Wise was jubilant: "It was a fairly won battle, a victory for the cause of progress in Judaism, for the B'ne Israel [*sic*] congregation was looked upon as the mother congregation of Western Jewry, and as the camp of simon-pure orthodoxy."[107]

Wise served Bene Israel for about six months and during that time preached on Saturday afternoons, opened *Noyoth* (a day school), and worked well with its officers in combating the Orthodox faction.[108] However, this solution was only temporary since

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[104]Wise, *Reminiscences*, pp. 276f. For a different analysis see Samuel Bruel, "Affairs in Cincinnati," *Occident* 13 (December, 1855): 458-464. Bruel, who was an old member of Bene Israel, became the spokesman for its traditionalists in the Jewish press, especially the *Occident* and the *Israelite*. He blamed the debt, combined with poor administration and high dues, as the main reason for Bene Israel's decline.

[105]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 277.

[106]Sarna and Goldman, "From Synagogue-Community to Citadel of Reform," p. 24. Bene Yeshurun had had seven different ministers in ten years.

[107]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 277. Wise published the results of the meeting and contract terms in the *Israelite* I (November 17, 1854):147f. As usual Wise's assessment was greatly exaggerated, since both synagogues were still very traditional and would remain so for years to come.

[108]Samuel Bruel disagreed with Wise's assessment. Concerning Wise's short tenure he said: "The ruse gained him a present of one hundred dollars for lecturing three or four times on Sabbath afternoons, but finding nearly empty benches, he abandoned the task. *Occident* 13 (December, 1855):459.

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Bene Yeshurun was adamantly opposed to sharing their rabbi with Bene Israel. Bene Yeshurun's board demanded that Wise resign after Passover, forcing the Bene Israel leadership to look for another rabbi who could stop the decline of the congregation. According to Wise, the president of Bene Israel informed him "that their congregation could secure Dr. Lilienthal, and that it depended on me as to whether negotiations should begin. I resolved at once to hand in my resignation."[109] With the way cleared, the congregation approached Lilienthal, whom they saw as a distinguished, progressive leader who could enhance its eroding status in the community and enable it to compete against Bene Yeshurun. Here was a leader with the credentials and experience worthy of the "oldest Jewish Congregation in the West."

Lilienthal arrived by train on the evening of May 29, and was met by the president and other members of the vestry (the executive committee), who had carefully planned his visit. He preached in German on Saturday morning and in English on Saturday afternoon so that all sectors of the congregation could hear their prospective spiritual leader. One observer rather sarcastically described the rabbi's sermon in the following words:

> The substance of it was the miserable condition in which Judaism now existed, and was in imminent danger of immediate annihilation. . . . There was but one hope to look forward to -- one means yet within reach, and that was the Universal Panacea of REFORM; and taken in such doses as he would administer, it would save us from perdition. He informed us that he intended to go hand in hand, in all matters concerning reform, with his beloved friend Dr. Wise; farthermore [*sic*] he told us, that when he returned to Cincinnati he would bring with him one of the first Talmudic scholars of the present day; that he, Drs. Wise and Rothenheim would form an ecclesiastical board to organize a proper reform and *Minhag* for America, and he hoped that the congregations of Cincinnati would co-operate with them.[110]

Lilienthal had apparently laid out his agenda in a clear and uncompromising manner, fully expecting that it would be in harmony with the views of a congregation that had advertised

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[109]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 283.

[110]*Occident* 13 (December, 1855):459. That Lilienthal had been elected first and then introduced to the congregation was confirmed by the *Israelite* 1 (April 27, 1855):335, which announced the election in April before the visit.

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for a Reformer. After examining the school on Sunday morning, the trustees invited the rabbi to attend their meeting that afternoon for the purpose of finalizing the agreement.[111] At this meeting, Lilienthal pressed the board for a commitment to minor liturgical reforms. The board wanted Lilienthal to sign the contract immediately, but he hesitated, saying he had promised to confer with his wife first. This was not acceptable to the board, which "fully expected from Dr. Lilienthal to bind the contract according to the wish of the congregation." After more discussion, Lilienthal accepted the office.[112]

Samuel Bruel, the spokesman for the Orthodox opposition within the synagogue, offered another behind-the-scene perspective on the negotiating process. He asserted that Lilienthal was elected without an opportunity for the congregation to get to know him, a procedure contrary to the by-laws of the synagogue. The Orthodox faction complained that, given the financial condition of Bene Israel, it would be a burden to pay the rabbi a yearly salary of $1500. Bruel also claimed that the rabbi's remarks were not well received and related that

> those who visited him at the house where he was a guest assailed him in a manner which he did not expect, and he intimated to his host that he had no idea of meeting with so many adverse to his notions, and that he would not promise to return to Cincinnati; but after a great deal of persuasion he consented, though, he said, reluctantly, to accept the office and terms tendered to him.[113]

This account explains Lilienthal's insistence that they accept some moderate reforms as part of his terms, as well as his hesitation with regard to signing the agreement. For their part, the leadership may have been genuinely concerned that the rabbi would make good on his threat not to return, and hence insisted that he sign immediately.

Most contemporaries agreed that when Lilienthal began, Bene Israel was still a

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[111]*Bene Israel Trustee Minutes*, May 25, 1855.

[112]Ibid., June 3, 1855. Lilienthal's wish to confer with his wife first was later stricken from the minutes, without explanation.

[113]*Occident* 13 (December, 1855):460.

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traditional synagogue.[114] During Wise's short tenure a Reformist faction was mobilized at the congregation, particularly among the leadership, but a large Orthodox contingent remained hostile to changes.[115]

During the summer of 1855, Lilienthal took a series of controversial steps that alienated Orthodox members. David Philipson reported that his refusal to observe *Tisha B'Av*, the fast day commemorating the destruction of the First and Second Temples, led directly to the departure of the Orthodox forces from the synagogue:

> The irreconcilable in the congregation, however, were not to be won over. The climax came when the rabbi refused to be present at the service on *Tisha B'ab*, the fast commemorative of the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem. Members that had been antagonizing all reforms withdrew and formed the *She'erith Israel* congregation.[116]

Oddly, in spite of the alleged importance of this act, there is no mention of it in the Trustee Minutes, Vestry Minutes, or the *Israelite*. In addition, *Tisha B'Av* occurred on July 24 that year, before an important meeting on August 5 that the entire Orthodox contingent attended. If they had already left the synagogue, they would not have attended this meeting. It appears as if Philipson was inaccurate, both with regard to chronology and to the precipitating event leading to the break-off.

Bruel treated the *Tisha B'av* incident as one of several events leading up to the climactic split on August 5.[117] According to his account, when the rabbi failed to appear at the evening and morning services, his friends claimed that he was unwell. However, Lilienthal gave a sermon the next week that explained the cause of his absence. "He gave

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[114]See Philipson, *The Oldest Jewish Congregation*, p. 23, and Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 276.

[115]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 277.

[116]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 62.

[117]*Occident* 13 (December, 1855):460. A much later article in the *Israelite* further confirms Bruel's account over Philipson's, claiming it was the "admission of ladies to the synagogal choir" and some "trifling changes in ritual" which precipated the division. *Tisha B'Av* was not mentioned. 14 (June 26, 1868):4.

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us to understand that the fall of our nation and temple should be to us rather a source of rejoicing than otherwise; for mankind are now in our day more enlightened, and by far better in all respects."[118] This explanation was bolstered by a long series of articles in the *Israelite* by D.E. de Lara which asserted that "few people now a days yet look back with regret to lost independence and political nationality. . . . Let the truth be told: the day is kept as a mere matter of form." He echoed Lilienthal in insisting that the political regeneration of the Jewish people was neither practical nor desirable.[119]

Lilienthal, now an associate editor of the *Israelite*, was writing and printing articles by others that supported his agenda. He explained that the periodical was a better vehicle for learned discussions of issues than the pulpit, which should emphasize devotional and edifying topics.[120] He initiated a series of articles called "Minhag America" that explored various Reform topics from prayerbook reform to burial customs and invited other learned leaders to respond.[121] The rabbi took the position that "we are fully entitled, as long as we abide by our religious laws, and as long as we can prove the legality of our alterations, to choose and to make any *Minhag* we like."[122]

Lilienthal also used the *Israelite* to justify another controversial move that he made during that busy first summer. He formed a society for the organization and support of a

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[118]*Occident* 13 (November 1855):360.

[119]*Israelite* 2 (August 10, 1855): 36. De Lara was a Jewish educator from Spain, who taught European languages for thirteen years in England before coming to New York.

[120]Ibid, p.34.

[121]*Israelite* 2 (August 17, 1855):50; (August 31, 1855):60; (September 7, 1855):68; (September 14, 1855):77; (September 21, 1855):85, etc.. He advocated eliminating *kapparot* (swinging a chicken to assuage sin), and suggested major changes in the *Duchan* ceremony (the blessing of the congregation by the priests). Another article in this genre was a proposal to abolish *halitzah*, the ceremony by which a couple was freed from the obligation of leverite marriage. (November 2, 1855):140.

[122]*Israelite* 2 (August 17, 1855):54.

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mixed choir to be used at services.[123] Long before Lilienthal's arrival, in the earliest days of the predominantly English congregation, a congregational chorus of mixed voices had been a staple of Sabbath services. During the consecration of the first building, a choir consisting of "twenty ladies and gentlemen of the congregation" helped celebrate the event. Joseph Jonas reported, however, that since the emigration of many German brethren "the sweet voices of our ladies are seldom heard."[124] The congregation had rejected the idea of a mixed choir for the occasion of the consecration of the new building as recently as 1852.[125] After Wise had instituted a choir and organ at Bene Yeshurun, Lilienthal felt the need to bring a higher level of edification to his services. Wise later reflected on why the choir was so important to their efforts:

> It is scarcely conceivable now what a victory for culture and progress the introduction of a synagogal choir was at that time. No reform of the Jewish religion was possible until the Jewish ear had again become accustomed to harmony and beauty. The service would have disappeared gradually altogether if it had not been reinstated in its old dignity and uplifting solemnity by song.[126]

The institution of a choir, *per se*, was not a problem for the Orthodox at Bene Israel; it was Lilienthal's insistence that it be a mixed choir of men and women. The Orthodox claimed that it was against Jewish law for men to hear a woman's voice while praying. In support of Lilienthal, the *Israelite* published an article that asked "Does the Canon Law Permit Ladies to Sing in the Synagogue?" The first line of argument was the *halakhic* principle that customs eventually gained the status of law in Judaism. Though Lilienthal had argued against this principle in the *Asmonean* articles, here he used it to

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[123]*Israelite* 2 (July 27, 1855):23. Bruel reports that they collected almost $500 for this purpose. *Occident* 13 (November 1855):360.

[124]Joseph Jonas' account is in Schappes, *A Documentary History*, pp. 223-235.

[125]Philipson, *The Oldest Jewish Congregation*, p. 23f.

[126]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 260. See Chapter One above for the importance of "edification" in the modernization of German-Jewish services.

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justify the innovation of female choristers; since many respectable synagogues did have female singers, it is "as much a sanctioned custom as theirs."[127] Perhaps sensing the weakness of this argument, the editors turned to an examination of the legal passages that traditionalists cited to prohibit women's voices at services, mainly the concern that a woman's voice would arouse "impure affections" in male worshippers. The editors argued that since these sources were not themselves supported by passages from the Bible, they were not intended to be legally binding.[128]

Through their spokesman Samuel Bruel, the Orthodox criticized Lilienthal's arguments in print, but the rabbi pressed ahead.[129] The congregation made room for the ensemble by removing some of the ladies' gallery, causing some temporary difficulties when Mrs. Jonas, wife of the synagogue's founder, was forced to give up her customary seat. A mixed choir, which performed for the first time during the festival of *Sukkot*,[130] became a permanent feature of the synagogue.

Lilienthal worked persistently for liturgical reforms. As early as mid-June 1855, the board met to act on the rabbi's proposals concerning the selling of *mitzvoth* and *misheberachs*.[131] By the end of the month a special committee presented a long report that the board approved.[132] Lilienthal also proposed minor alterations in the Sabbath

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[127]*Israelite* 2 (August 10, 1855):36.

[128]Ibid. Many legal sources were then analyzed to support this contention.

[129]Ibid., 2 (September 21, 1855):83. Here Bruel pointed out that Lilienthal had pushed for the establishment of the mixed choir and then claimed that its existence justified the custom. Also 2 (October 5, 1855):102. Bruel charged that Lilienthal perverted the meaning of the text in the original code and presented his own analysis of the sources.

[130]*Bene Israel Trustee Minutes*, August 19, September 16, 1855. The synagogue eventually engaged an architect to design a gallery for the choir. *Bene Israel Trustee Minutes*, March 23, 1856.

[131]Ibid., June 10, and 19, 1855. See the previous chapter for a discussion of these rituals.

[132]Ibid., June 26, 1855.

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prayers, on which the board debated without coming to any conclusion.[133] At a general meeting of the congregation on Sunday, August 5, whose purpose was to make changes in the by-laws to accommodate the reforms he sought, the Reform and Orthodox forces fought to define the future direction of the synagogue. The congregation adopted Lilienthal's changes point by point: the sale of *mitzvoth* was abolished, the number of *misheberachs* was limited, and alterations in the service were adopted that would increase decorum and eliminate some *piyyutim* (medieval liturgical poetry).[134] According to the *Israelite*, a majority of the members approved all of Lilienthal's moderate Reform agenda.

A very different picture of the meeting, however, emerged from Samuel Bruel's report to the *Occident*. According to his account, Lilienthal had insisted that the changes he proposed were of a mild character and were sanctioned by the highest legal authorities. However, since this was a democracy he promised to abide by the will of the majority, declaring: "If they wished for reform he was satisfied; if they wished to remain Orthodox he was equally satisfied; he was their servant."[135]

Bruel admitted that the changes were approved forty to thirty-eight, but claimed that a two-thirds majority was required to amend these statutes, so the introduction of the reforms was in opposition to the charter. The Orthodox group concluded that they could "no longer enjoy the benefit of the synagogue," because it had become a "reformed temple." They refused to acknowledge Dr. Lilienthal as a rabbi or to adopt the improvements in the service that he and his supporters had forcibly pushed through.[136]

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[133]Ibid., August 1, 1855.

[134]*Israelite* 2 (August 10, 1855):38.

[135]*Occident* 13 (December, 1855):461. This statement encapsulated Lilienthal's leadership style, his desire for unity and consensus. It is hard to imagine the more doctrinaire and egotistical Wise making this statement.

[136]Ibid. Bruel also noted that the charter required a month's delay between the introduction of proposed changes and their approval. Therefore, he felt the changes were

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When the meeting adjourned, the disenchanted Orthodox met at a local hotel, where they unanimously resolved to rent a room and form a new synagogue which became Congregation Shearith Israel.[137] The *Occident* reported these events with the following dig: "These are the first fruits of modern reform, *division* and *disunion*, as elsewhere; and our fears are fully realized."[138]

The synagogue had lost members and revenue, but Lilienthal persevered because he believed that Reform was the only long-term answer to the synagogue's problems. In recognition of the trials that the new rabbi had faced in his first months, the ladies of the synagogue presented Lilienthal with a new "clerical suit" as a "testimonial to their high regard and esteem" for him and in appreciation for his "services rendered to our congregation." The ladies urged him to "proceed unflinchingly and fearlessly in the path you have chosen and thus far successfully pursued, and with our prayers and influence, and above all with the assistance of our great Father, we have no doubt of your ultimate success."[139]

The progress of Reform at Bene Israel was never smooth because Lilienthal encountered resistance to his innovations from the sizable traditionalist group that remained even after the break that created Shearith Israel. The *Occident* reported that, in the summer of 1856, Lilienthal retreated from his earlier stand on the observance of *Tisha B'Av*, by attending the service and advising his congregation to fast. While the *Occident* was probably using the incident to embarrass the rabbi, his reversal pointed out a real conflict being played out in Bene Israel. In a candid series of articles in the *Israelite,* the rabbi explained his quandary. The Reform group had hired him to take a firm stand, and make a

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illegal.

[137]Ibid., p. 462. Bruel suggests that, had they lost, the Reformers were ready to leave as well.

[138]*Occident* 13 (November 1855):369.

[139]*Israelite* 2 (October 19, 1855):115.

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clean sweep of outmoded traditions, yet he now had second thoughts. They warned him to "go on, or we'll get tired of you and your ministry, and your best and warmest friends will desert you." The conservative party told him he had gone too far, too fast, and, as a result they also threatened to remove their support from him and the synagogue.[140]

The rabbi complained that the Reformers never came to the synagogue other than on the High Holy Days, so they were not present to support the changes they advocated. The traditionalists, who came regularly, participated in the services, and gave weekly contributions to the synagogue, felt comfortable with the old traditions and rejected any disruption of their habitual worship patterns. Lilienthal suggested that the conflict was, in part generational, since it was usually the older members who favored the more conservative approach. The younger people were kept away by their consuming interest in financial matters, which made spiritual concerns secondary.[141] In a second article Lilienthal was especially critical of the Reformers, who avoided services and even the general meetings during which Reform measures were debated. He blamed the lack of progress on their apathy, complaining that they only seemed inspired by efforts to abolish old traditions. When positive measures were considered, "our friends will shrug their shoulders, look on us with a contemptible pity as if we too were advocating retrogression and obscurity." While they seemed to want a religion with minimal ceremony, he warned that Judaism had to keep its particularity in order to fulfill its messianic purpose of bringing all people to monotheism and defeating heathenism.[142]

Assimilatory pressures militated against his efforts to attract the younger members, whom he had characterized as preoccupied with financial matters. Sunday laws made it difficult for Jews to do business on that day, so there was strong incentive for Jewish

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[140]Ibid., 3 (March 20, 1857):297f.

[141]Ibid.

[142]Ibid., 3 (March 27, 1857):300. This statement is an echo of his criticism of Einhorn's radical Reform following the Cleveland Conference.

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merchants to work on Saturday. Lilienthal and Wise attempted to alleviate the competition by getting all the Jewish merchants to close on Saturday. Launching a campaign in November 1859, they got the signatures of a number of the prominent Jewish leaders, including those of Bene Israel, but, after some temporary compliance, the effort failed.[143]

That same month Lilienthal successfully overcame a challenge by the traditional faction in his synagogue to abolish the choir. The *Israelite* reported that only twenty-two voters out of two hundred favored the move. With its usual hyperbole the paper announced that the Orthodox had gone home saying: "Our time is over."[144] Perhaps as a result of this vote, the rabbi felt emboldened to propose further Reform measures. When, in a sermon in January 1860, he advocated changes in the service, the board encouraged him to elaborate upon his recommendations.[145]

No further mention of these proposals can be found in the minutes during this period. This may be because 1860 was a turbulent year for the rabbi. In July he was accused of violating Jewish law by eating non-kosher food. Lilienthal pleaded "not guilty" because, though he admitted to eating the food, he had believed it to be kosher. The witnesses accepted his explanation and he was exonerated.[146] Two weeks later the *Israelite* reported that a large group of influential members of Bene Israel had gathered to express "their admiration and respect for their worthy Minister and Pastor." At that meeting the president remarked upon the "malignant and malicious persecution which the Rabbi had suffered during the past year," indicating that the recent accusation was one of a series of attacks, as the president said, to break him down. He wanted Lilienthal to know that he had the devotion and respect of not only the members of the synagogue, but also of

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[143]Ibid., 6 (November 6, 1859):140.

[144]Ibid., 6 (November 11, 1859):150.

[145]*Bene Israel Trustee Minutes*, January 29, 1860.

[146]Ibid., July 15, 1860. As assimilated as the membership was becoming, it expected their rabbi to maintain strict observance of Jewish law.

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the wider Cincinnati community and offered him a gift of $400 in gold "as a slight testimonial of their regard and friendship." The rabbi responded with a highly emotional speech that brought tears to many. The leadership feared that he would leave them, having "received pressing calls from congregations at the East, to accept the position of minister with them." Therefore, the board felt it necessary to let him know "the high approbation" they had for his "capacities as a spiritual guide and moral instructor of an enlightened Jewish congregation." They praised his patience and self-reliance in navigating through the conflicts between the various factions, while "pursuing his onward course." They also lauded the scholarship and theological sophistication with which he proposed these "well-timed alterations of many ceremonies of our ritual."[147]

In spite of this strong expression of support, it was not until April 1863 that the board finally acted upon the rabbi's Reform proposals. Admitting that "the present service is not at all suited to the spirit of the age or to the rising generation," they resolved "to use our energies to build a temple with all the necessary improvements, viz., family pews, an organ, a choir, etc."[148] These steps would attract the younger generation without violating the fundamental principles of Judaism. Still, these ideas were stalled in committees for over two more years, as resistance to the changes persisted. Finally, in late October 1865, the congregation agreed to adopt the triennial cycle for reading the Torah (a system whereby the Torah is read over a three-year period), to read the prophetic portion in English or German, to buy a melodeon to accompany the choir, to add English and German prayers, and to delete negative references to the Diaspora.[149] The next year the board

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[147]*Israelite* 7 (July 27, 1860):26.

[148]*Bene Israel Trustee Minutes*, April 8, 1863.

[149]Ibid., October 28, 1865; *Israelite* 12 (November 3, 1865):141. See Philipson, *The Oldest Jewish Congregation*, p. 28. The Board minutes differed from the other two sources with regard to the extent of the reforms, in that they mentioned only minor issues of decorum. Regulations involving changes in the ritual for the *misheberach* were posted in the vestibule of the sanctuary. *Bene Israel Trustee Minutes,* December 3, 1865. The reason for the discrepancy between the periodical and the minutes is not known.

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reaffirmed their full support for the Reform course taken by their rabbi and underlined their satisfaction with a $1000 New Year's gift.[150] The congregation had, in theory, turned a corner and now supported their rabbi's program. Yet, it would take another crisis until they actually instituted the changes.

In September 1867, Lilienthal's beloved wife Pepi died after a prolonged struggle with tuberculosis at the age of forty-six. The loss was particularly difficult for the rabbi, who was left with a large, young family.[151] Added to this burden was his continued frustration with the lack of progress at Bene Israel toward his goals of a new temple and more thorough Reform. In December 1867, he was invited to deliver a lecture at Temple Emanu-El in New York while on a visit to his brother. That temple, searching for an English lecturer to work alongside their rabbi Dr. Samuel Adler, immediately expressed their interest in hiring Rabbi Lilienthal.[152] Over the next month the two parties conducted negotiations over the length of the contract, salary, and job title. With regard to the last, Lilienthal was willing to take a position subordinate to Dr. Adler, even at this stage of his professional career, if he were given the title "minister." Lilienthal made another trip to New York to clarify his position with Adler and resolve his differences with the Temple Emanu-El board.[153]

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[150]*Israelite* 13 (September 21, 1866):5.

[151]Three older children had left the house already, leaving Esther (15), Jesse (12), Albert (8), and Victoria (6). His deep love for his wife, evident to all who knew them, was expressed in several poems in his book *Freiheit, Fruhling und Liebe* (Cincinnati: Bloch Publishing Co., 1857). See especially p. 89f "Mein Ideal" and "Meine Frau." Sophie Lilienthal also reported that the rabbi was not well off at this time, since he had to ask his children for the $200 for a monument for Pepi. Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record,* p. 71.

[152]*Temple Emanu-El Trustee Minutes*, December 18, 1867, and January 6, 1868. Their search coincided with the completion of their elaborate new building, for which they raised over $700,000. Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue*, p. 179.

[153]*Temple Emanu-El Trustee Minutes*, January 14, 1868; January 24, 1868; February 23, 1868; March 10, 1868.

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Meanwhile, Lilienthal felt compelled to notify Bene Israel of his intentions in a sermon in late January 1868. His offer to resign was not accepted. At the next board meeting on March 5, the rabbi presented a personal, heartfelt letter in which he tendered his resignation. He attributed his decision to leave to the loss of his adored wife, explaining: "My house stands desolate, the companion of my studies, the advisor in my efforts is gone . . . and my children were now motherless." It would comfort them to be reunited with his brother and his family in New York. He offered to help with the process of finding a new rabbi, since his new appointment was not to begin until August. The board again refused to accept the resignation saying that to do so would "materially impare [*sic*] the congregation,"and set up a committee of officers to meet with the rabbi. Even though Lilienthal had by then agreed to Temple Emanu-El's terms, he delayed notifying them of his acceptance.[154] After the board meeting, a number of local Cincinnati communal leaders, led by Judge Bellamy Storer, intervened. Acknowledging the tremendous loss that the rabbi's departure would mean to his congregation, the group asserted:

> The Doctor has so essentially aided us, in the education of our youth, by his devotion to his duties on the School board, and has moreover become so identified with our philanthropic institutions, in all that serves to aid the poor and homeless, that we cannot part with him, without the expression of our high esteem for his moral worth, as well as his profound scholarship. May we hope that his resignation may be recalled, and our community still be permitted to enjoy the benefit of his learning and noble character.[155]

In a dramatic move, Judge Storer invited the Bene Israel board to his home for a special meeting on March 24, after which the rabbi withdrew his resignation, apparently because he had received concessions that persuaded him to stay. While the details of this meeting were not recorded in the minutes, it is clear that the lay leadership promised to deliver on the long-delayed reforms and the new building.[156] Lilienthal apparently never notified

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[154]*Bene Israel Trustee Minutes*, March 5, 1868. *Temple Emanu-El Trustee Minutes*, March 10, 1868. Lilienthal's acceptance letter was dated February 28.

[155]*Bene Israel Trustee Minutes*, March 22, 1868.

[156]Ibid., March 24, 1868. The details of this meeting were not recorded in the minutes. It

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Temple Emanu-El of his decision to stay, in spite of numerous letters from that congregation. They found out about his decision through a notice in the *Israelite*, and formally declared the office of English minister to be vacant.[157]

Were the Temple Emanu-El negotiations a ploy to gain those concessions from Bene Israel? Evidence from private correspondence to various synagogue leaders shows that this was not the case. To Philip Heidelbach and Jacob Seasongood, Bene Israel's wealthiest members, he wrote: "I feel it, I cannot be happy in Cincinnati; every nook and corner reminds me of my loss. I am undermining my health and doing injury and wrong to my children." A few days later he wrote to President Freiberg: "I cannot help it. I have struggled all night, in vain. I cannot be happy anymore in Cincinnati. Please call a meeting of the congregation and have my resignation accepted."[158] However, in his letter to the board on March 15, he mentioned other concerns "which in this for me so painful hour, I avoid mentioning, having stated them repeatedly from the pulpit. They are known to you all."[159] Clearly he was frustrated about the lack of progress on the new building and reforms. While the concessions that he received at the March 24 meeting affected his decision to stay, the crucial factor may have been less tangible: an outpouring of support and love from his congregation and from the most prominent members of the broader Cincinnati community that did much to assuage his sense of personal loss.[160]

On their side, the Bene Israel community, when faced with the potential loss of

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is possible that he also pressed for the reinstitution of the Sabbath School, since the board acted quickly to reinstate it. See next chapter.

[157]*Temple Emanu-El Trustee Minutes*, April 24, 1868.

[158]American Jewish Archives, Manuscript Collection, #24.

[159]Ibid., Letter to Bene Israel officers and board, March 15.

[160]In the *Temple Emanu-El Trustee Minutes*, April 16, 1868 is a letter written to that board on March 16, in which Lilienthal revealed another factor in his choice. "I know the prejudices existing against me in New York; please assist me by your hearty cooperation in overcoming them." He had anticipated a hostile reception, based on ongoing East-West tensions.

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their leader, finally committed themselves to his agenda. Committees were empowered to act, money was raised, and in June 1868, the cornerstone was laid. When the new temple was dedicated in August 1869, the congregation ushered in a new era of Reform and prosperity. The change was not a by-product of upward mobility, but rather the result of Lilienthal's personal influence. Over the thirteen years since he had arrived in Cincinnati, he had grown into a leader of great importance, with an ideology that spoke effectively to his acculturated congregation. The development of Lilienthal's rabbinate is therefore central to understanding the reform of his synagogue.

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Chapter Five: The Americanization of Lilienthal's Rabbinate (1855-1870)

Introduction

When Bene Israel's leaders affirmed the importance of Lilienthal's contribution to their community during the Temple Emanu-El incident in 1868, they called attention to his role on the school board and in local philanthropic institutions, which they felt brought honor to the congregation.[1] From the moment Lilienthal arrived in Cincinnati, he sought to expand his rabbinate beyond traditional responsibilities. In the bitter aftermath of the Cleveland Conference, with its "aimless and useless controversy," he retreated from the national rabbinic arena and focused his energies on congregational and communal challenges.[2] Turning toward the areas of education, charitable work, social organization, interfaith dialogue and anti-defamation, Lilienthal developed innovative approaches that would have a lasting impact on Cincinnati Jewry. He became a model of the new Americanized professional rabbi, active in Jewish and non-Jewish causes, both as a religious leader and as a concerned citizen.[3]

Salo W. Baron, in his essay "The Image of the Rabbi, Formerly and Today," traced the remarkable shift in the rabbi's role.[4] Abraham Feldman located the cause for these

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[1]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 69.

[2]See Isaac M. Wise's eulogy of Lilienthal in the *Hebrew Review* 2 (1881-2):188.

[3]Lilienthal himself commented with some amusement upon the new diversity of his activities. In 1870, serving as both president of a national singing festival and of the medical college of Cincinnati in addition to many other leadership positions, he exclaimed: "What a chameleon are circumstances not making out of an American rabbi." *Jewish Times* 1 (January 28, 1870):6.

[4]Salo W. Baron, *Steeled by Adversity: Essays and Addresses on American Jewish Life* (Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 1971), pp. 147-157. See also Jacob Neusner, ed., *Understanding American Judaism: Towards the Description of a Modern Religion: Part I. The Rabbi and the Synagogue* (New York: Ktav, 1975), Ch. 7 Abraham J. Feldman, "The Changing Functions of the Synagogue and the Rabbi," pp. 103ff; Bertram W. Korn, ed. *Retrospect and Prospect: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventy-fifth Anniversary of the Founding of the C.C.A.R. 1889-1964* (New York: CCAR, 1965); Jacob Rader Marcus and Abraham Peck, *The American Rabbinate: A*

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changes in the evolution of the structure and function of the American synagogue; no longer a communal institution, the American synagogue was now a voluntary association requiring a new type of leader. Feldman gave credit to the early Reformers for establishing the pattern, which, in turn, influenced Conservative and Orthodox leadership. Other accounts of the modern Conservative and Modern Orthodox rabbi support this claim.[5] Lilienthal's evolving rabbinate presents a paradigm of this professional development.

We have noted that the role of the rabbi had already changed dramatically in Germany during Lilienthal's youth, as the responsibilities of the office were extended beyond ruling on Jewish law and officiating at life-cycle functions. The modernized rabbinic leader conducted worship services, preached in the vernacular, taught the children and supervised the religious schools, performed pastoral duties, administered the distribution of charity, and in some cases, represented the Jewish community in the non-Jewish world. He became "the lifeblood of the community. By representing a higher moral principle, the rabbi transformed the community into a spiritual whole."[6] Lilienthal

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Century of Continuity and Change 1883-1983 (Hoboken, Ktav, 1985); Elliot L. Stevens, ed., *Rabbinic Authority: Papers Presented Before the 91st Annual Convention of the C.C.A.R.* (New York: CCAR, 1982); and Samuel E. Karff, ed., *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Insitute of Religion at One Hundred Years* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976). Donald M. Scott, *From Office to Profession: The New England Ministry, 1750-1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1978) makes the same case with regard to the New England ministers who had filled a public office during the colonial period and then became a new type of professional clergy in response to post-revolutionary changes in their church. Martin E. Marty, *Righteous Empire* (New York: Dial Press, 1970), argues that the legal disestablishment of the church led to a change in the role of its leadership. pp. 68ff. See also Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation*, pp. 21ff., and 127f.

[5]Feldman, "The Changing Functions of the Synagogue and the Rabbi," p. 105. For Conservative views see for instance Arthur Hertzberg, "The Changing American Rabbinate," *Midstream* 12, no. 1 (January 1966):16-29; and Simon Greenberg, "The Rabbinate and the Jewish Community Structure," *Conservative Judaism* 23 (Spring 1969):52-67. For Orthodox views see Irving Greenberg's response to Simon Greenberg above; Basil Herring, *The Rabbinate as Calling and Vocation: Models of Rabbinic Leadership* (Northvale, N.J.: J. Aronson, 1991); and also Walter Jacob and Moshe Zemer, *Rabbinic-Lay Relations in Jewish Law* (Pittsburgh: Rodef Shalom Press, 1993).

[6]Schorsch, "The Emergence of the Modern Rabbinate," p. 14. See also Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 100ff, and his "Christian Influence on Early German Reform Judaism,"

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would realize these ideals in his Cincinnati rabbinate, and move beyond them in new ways that were appropriate to the American scene.

Some of these modern elements were mentioned explicitly in Lilienthal's initial contract with Bene Israel:

> The duties to be performed are those of the Jewish form of Worship. The party of the second part has to deliver discourses in English and German alternately every Sabbath and Holidays, is to superintend and oversee any School which now is or hereafter may be connected with said congregation, and to perform such other duties as are usually connected with the offices of Rabbi, Preacher, and Minister.[7]

The agreement stipulated the use of both English and German, reflecting the recognition that some immigrants could not yet understand English sermons. Education was also an important concern for both rabbi and congregation. The contract also left Lilienthal with leeway to define the "other duties as are usually connected with the offices of Rabbi, Preacher, and Minister." He immediately began to broaden his role, within the congregation and in the larger Jewish and general communities.

Lilienthal as Preacher

We have already noted that modern rabbis in Germany, emulating their Protestant counterparts, made the sermon the centerpiece of an edifying worship service.[8] As orators immigrated to the United States, congregations sought their talents. While Lilienthal had long been recognized as an eloquent speaker, capable of great emotional power and spiritual inspiration, in New York he was still more comfortable speaking in German. As late as 1854, when Lilienthal spoke at the consecration of a Boston synagogue, a reporter commented that "the sermon was brief, and was spoken in broken English, fully

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in Charles Berlin, ed., *Studies in Jewish Bibliography, History, and Literature in honor of I. Edward Kiev*, (New York: Ktav, 1971), pp. 293ff. Meyer argues here that Reform rabbis refashioned their image to conform to that of Christian clergy.

[7]Memorandum of agreement. American Jewish Archives, Small Collection SC-7248.

[8]See Chapters One and Two above.

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understood, however, by the audience."[9] In Cincinnati, Lilienthal was required by his contract to preach in English every other week so his skills improved quickly. For certain topics he may still have preferred German. A traditional opponent once asked him to preach on Jewish messianism, complaining in the *Occident* that the rabbi had refused to comply for a long time. The man was further annoyed that, when he finally addressed the subject, it was only in German.[10] However, by the time Bene Israel rededicated their synagogue in 1860, the rabbi only spoke in English at the ceremony.[11] By 1868 Temple Emanu-El was looking for an "English Minister" to work with Rabbi Samuel Adler, who preached only in German. Lilienthal, by now eloquent in English as well as German, was considered ideal for the job.[12]

He preached on many occasions in other synagogues in Cincinnati and around the country. He substituted for Wise for several weeks at Bene Yeshurun.[13] He also preached in Dayton, Ohio before a mixed congregation of Jews and gentiles, gaining praise as an "exceedingly polished orator."[14] That year, 1864, he returned to Anshe Chesed, in New York, to deliver a series of German and English sermons to a large audience.[15]

By the end of the Civil War Lilienthal was a master of the English sermon. He gave a major address on the occasion of a Union Victory Evening, proclaimed by Lincoln on April 14, 1865, which corresponded to the fifth night of Passover. He expressed his

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[9]*Israelite* 1 (September 29, 1854):95. By this time he was writing articulate articles in English for the *Asmonean* and the *Israelite*.

[10]*Occident* 14 (December, 1856):450ff.

[11]*Israelite* 7 (September 14, 1860):86.

[12]*Temple Emanu-El Trustee Minutes*, December 18, 1867, January 6, 1868

[13]Ibid., 7 (September 7, 1860):78.

[14]Ibid., 10(April 8, 1864):323.

[15]Ibid., 11 (August 19, 1864):85. According to Avraham Barkai in *Branching Out*, only 8 out of 84 congregations had English sermons in 1864. p. 168.

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own and his congregation's feelings of thanksgiving and joy. In a sermon to his congregation on April 22, 1865, Lilienthal attempted to explain Lincoln's place in history in light of the president's assassination. Extremely emotional, this speech urged moderation and calm during the terrible grief they were all experiencing. He sought to turn the thoughts of the congregation away from revenge and toward the constructive lessons of the great leader's life and death.[16]

His growing facility with English opened up the opportunity to engage in a pioneering interfaith dialogue. In March 1867, he and Dr. Thomas Vickers of the First Congregationalist (Unitarian) Church exchanged pulpit visits. The Unitarians were, as the *Israelite* pointed out, "an assembly of persons in advance of any established church having the most radical platform in religion."[17] Unitarians and Reform Jews shared a belief in the perfectability of humanity, in a religion consonant with reason and progress, and in "the imminent arrival of a 'religion of humanity,' characterized by the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man."[18] Further, the two groups were united in their fight for "a secular democratic America against the forces of sectarianism and evangelical Christianity." These commonalities made it natural for liberal Christian and Jewish clergy to exchange pulpits.[19]

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[16]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 398-429. The congregation was proud of these sermons and paid to have them published. We will analyze the content of these addresses in a later section.

[17]*Israelite* 13 (March 15, 1867):6. Unitarians, beginning in the early 19th century, were pathbreakers for a wider religous liberalism that would emerge late in the century. For the development of these trends see Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism.* For a general introduction to American Unitarianism see Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, pp. 391f. 399ff. See also Catherine L. Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*, esp. pp. 133ff.

[18]Benny Kraut, "Judaism Triumphant: Isaac Mayer Wise on Unitarianism and Liberal Christianity," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 7-8 (1982-1983):180. There is a striking similarity between the Unitarian notion of perfectibility and the German idealist conception of *Bildung, e*mbraced by the German-Jewish middle class.

[19]Benny Kraut, "The Ambivalent Relations of American Reform Judaism with

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Lilienthal found in Vickers, also a product of a German university, an intellectual equal, who, according to the *Israelite*, "preaches Hegel and Strauss and prays Kant. Listening to him, I fancy sometimes to attend the lecture of some of the boldest German thinkers." Lilienthal spoke at the church on "The Free Church in the Free State," making the congregation "thrill with divine emotion." Vickers preached at Bene Israel, without any mention of Christian theology, expressing regret for the many centuries of Christian fanaticism that had caused the Jews so much suffering. He called Christianity "a transformed Judaism, the religion of Moses put into Hellenistic form," referring to Jesus as "that mythic personage." The reporter felt that the exchange was nothing short of miraculous.[20]

Lilienthal came to earn the title the "Broad Church Rabbi," on one occasion volunteering to take over the duties of the minister during the latter's absence.[21] He continued to preach frequently in non-Jewish pulpits and even at Christian funerals. In 1876, during a trip to San Fransisco, he created a stir when he was invited by an old friend, Rev. E. Rexford, to preach before an "immense audience" at his Unitarian Church.

Unitarianism in the last third of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 23, no. 1 (Winter, 1986):61. He lists some of the liberal Christian and Jewish clergy who became involved in these exhanges. See page 61, n. 8.

[20]Sarna and Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati*, p. 50, and *Israelite* 13 (March 15, 1867):6. See also Allan Tarshish, "Jew and Christian in a New Society: Some Aspects of Jewish-Christian Relationships in the United States, 1848-1881," *A Bicentennial Festschrift for Jacob Rader Marcus*, ed. by Bertram W. Korn (New York: Ktav, 1976), p. 579, which documented the national and international attention that this episode received. Also Benny Kraut, "Judaism Triumphant," p. 189. Egal Feldman, *Dual Destinies: The Jewish Encounter with Protestant America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), p. 125. For a discussion of Vickers, see Reginald C. McGrane. *The University of Cincinnati: A Success Story in Urban Higher Education* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), pp. 81f. Vickers had just arrived in Cincinnati when he helped arrange the exchange. Also in his first year he became involved in a fierce controversy with Cincinnati's Archbishop John B. Purcell, when he claimed that free thought was impossible under Catholicism. This controversy gained national and international attention, almost wrecking the First Congregational Church. In the 1870s Lilienthal and Vickers worked together to create the University of Cincinnati. It is likely that this friendship helped move Lilienthal closer to the liberal wing of Reform.

[21]Sarna and Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati*, p. 50. Lilienthal substituted for Rev. Spaulding of the Universalist Church for two weeks. Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 98.

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Lilienthal commented at that time:

> I always cheerfully seize the opportunity of stating before a Christian audience the sublime doctrines of our religion. For Christians they are a 'terra incognita'. . . The masses in general hear Judaism decried so much, either in the pulpit, or in the Sunday School, that a fair and impartial judgment can scarcely be expected. Hence, I always seize the opportunity whenever offered to preach in churches and to speak on Judaism and its liberal tendencies.[22]

David Philipson called this aspect of Lilienthal's ministry "the most striking service he performed." He asserted that Lilienthal "did much towards furthering the spirit of good will in the community and bringing to Christians a better understanding of Jews and Judaism." Through these exchanges, Lilienthal, perhaps more than anyone else, contributed to the local conviction that Cincinnati was "a city of mutual good will and understanding where Jews and Christians interacted freely."[23]

Lilienthal as Educator

One reason why Lilienthal had been such an attractive candidate for Bene Israel was his reputation as an educator. Several prominent members had sent their children to Lilienthal's New York school and as a result, recommended him highly. Bene Israel wanted to compete with Bene Yeshurun's day school, *Talmud Yelodim*, which was thriving under the supervision of Rabbi Wise.[24] The weekend school, established by the ladies of Bene Israel in 1842 under the supervision of Joseph Jonas, had grown to forty-six students. Though some traditional rabbis objected to a Sunday school, discouraging the young German children from attending, it continued with diminished strength.[25]

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[22]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 97f.

[23]Ibid., p. 96; and Isaac M. Wise's tribute to Lilienthal on the occasion of Lilienthal's twenty-fifth anniversary at Bene Israel. Ibid., p. 70. Also Sarna and Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati*, p. 2.

[24]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 59.

[25]Schappes, *A Documentary History*, p. 234. There was actually an early superintendent, Louisa Symonds, who was forced to resign because it interfered with other duties.

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Bene Israel's 1854 contract with Rabbi Wise stipulated that he act as superintendent for a new school.[26] He set up a day school, *Noyoth*, concurrently with the weekend school.[27] The board hoped that the school would soon be able to pay off its debt because the members of the school board, who were also the officers of the congregation, wanted the school to be financially independent. By late April 1855, the school minutes reported that 75 students attended the day school.[28] This early success could not be attributed to Wise, who did not attend meetings of the school board or participate in day-to-day decisions in running the school.

Lilienthal had a different approach. Even before accepting the job, he asked for the opportunity to hold an examination at the school and the school board ordered the teachers to prepare the students to receive him on Sunday, June 2. In July the school board made him an honorary member, allowing him to attend to the many details of shaping and running the school. The school board was actively involved in its daily activities in such matters as cleanliness, discipline, punctuality, educational materials, furniture, even the purchase of coal. They hired teachers, set salaries, and responded to the complaints of parents. Lilienthal immediately took control of the school, indicating that he would soon complete a plan for its organization.[29] By September the superintendent presented a complete list of seventy-seven students to the school board, categorized by grade and

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Schappes speculates that Rabbi Abraham Rice of Baltimore was behind the opposition to a Sunday school.

[26]*Israelite* 1 (November 17, 1854):279.

[27]Wise, *Reminiscence*, p. 277.

[28]*Bene Israel Trustee Minutes*, January 25, 1855.

[29]*Bene Israel School Board Minutes*, May 21, July 1, 1855. Lilienthal's first act was to cancel a planned summer vacation, instituting half days during the hot summer months. July 15, 1855. At this time, he also announced the reopening of his boarding school. Ten pupils had followed him from New York, and the *Israelite* announced there was room for two or three more students. *Israelite* 2 (July 27, 1855):17. Nothing more is known about the boarding school.

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tuition.[30]

Following the pattern he had established in New York, Lilienthal made public examinations central to his pedagogical system. He invited the trustees to attend two days of testing in early October. After another set of tests in November, he reported that he was pleased in most curricular areas, except for arithmetic. The first annual public examination that took place on December 26 and 27 "resulted in the entire satisfaction of the board and the parents," so that the school board's report acknowledged "the hearty and energetic co-operation of our worthy superintendent, Rev. Dr. Lilienthal, who proves to be the untiring and experienced man we wanted in the Institute."[31]

The topics covered in annual examination indicate the ambitious curriculum that the new superintendent formulated for his pupils. They were tested in Jewish catechism, Hebrew grammar, their ability to translate the Bible and prayers, and in biblical history; they also had to show their proficiency in English grammar and syntax, United States history and geography, arithmetic, business skills, and German grammar, dictation and translation. The highest class debated "Was Julius Caesar a Good Man?" before an appreciative audience.[32] As a result, ten new pupils applied for admission; by January 1856, Lilienthal requested more rooms within the synagogue for the school.[33]

"The Aim of Our Schools" in the September 1855 *Israelite*, outlined Lilienthal's educational philosophy. He had fully adapted the Haskalah theory to the American situation. The purpose of the school was to make "our children dutiful sons and daughters, useful members of society, respected citizens, and good and enlightened Jews . . . an

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[30]*Bene Israel School Board Minutes*, September 9, 1855.

[31]Ibid., October 7, November 17, 1855. *Israelite* 2 (January 11, 1856):218.

[32]*Israelite* 2 (January 11, 1856):218.

[33]Ibid.; *Bene Israel Trustee Minutes*, January 4, 1856; *Bene Israel School Board Minutes*, January 6, 1856.

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ornament to society, and the pride and glory of our nation." Jews must get a thorough, modern education in order to be worthy of newly-won "human rights and human liberty," and to show the whole world that "we Jews can be as good and worthy as members of any denomination." Now that they had gained the rights that this country offered, Jews must "contribute to the welfare of the community at large." They must exemplify American values, inculcating them in their children by teaching them American history, its constitution and laws, and inspiring them "with the glory, with the valor that distinguished the immortal founders of this glorious republic."[34]

New Reform elements were present in this article not evident in his educational writings even a year earlier in the *Asmonean.* First, he asserted that "the Jewish nation without religion is a regular nonsense, for our whole mission and destiny is nothing but religion."[35] Lilienthal no longer viewed the loss of national sovereignty as a tragedy for the Jewish people. The Jewish mission was to set a moral example for the world, so that "by their own deeds and actions, they will contrive to hallow the name of their God, and to glorify the cause of our nation."[36]

A second Reform theme in this article was an emphasis on individual autonomy. It was important to teach students to think independently, in order to be good citizens and good Jews. This new emphasis, the most striking departure from his earlier pedagogical approach, showed the growing influence of American values upon his thinking. In the earlier *Asmonean* article, noting the brief period available for Jewish education, Lilienthal had remarked: "Therefore we must try to give the young mind at once a correct opinion of its creed and its principles" by means of a catechism that would enable the student to learn

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[34]*Israelite* 2 (September 14, 1855):74f. This emphasis on citizenship became an important part of the Cincinnati Jewish ideal.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid. This position paralleled his refusal to mourn on *Tisha B'Av* during his first summer in Cincinnati. See above.

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"a full and complete system of the religion, in order that no queries may remain unanswered, all doubts be erased and that a sure conviction, a true persuasion may be created in the mind of the youth."[37] By way of contrast, in the 1855 *Israelite* article, he urged that the time be taken so that children "become used to exercise their own abilities, not to rely upon the assistance of a teacher or of a dead formula."[38] Lilienthal concluded the article by returning to the issue of autonomy: "As soon as our children will know for themselves, how to discriminate between good and bad, right and wrong, divine and human, they will exercise their own judgment, will not abide by blind authority, will try to be good Jews with heart and soul."[39] Individualism had become central for Lilienthal as he grew to appreciate American freedom and its implications for Judaism.[40] Lilienthal may have been the first Reform educator to explicitly articulate this pedagogical goal.[41]

In order to transmit the depth and richness of Judaism, students required study on a more advanced level. Lilienthal had long bemoaned the fact that the American Jewish community was not producing educated teachers and religious leaders. If the religion was going to survive and flourish in America, there had to be institutions to train leaders.[42] The effort to professionalize the rabbinate in America mirrored a national proliferation of

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[37]*Asmonean* 10 (September 15, 1855):173.

[38]*Israelite* 2 (September 14, 1855):75.

[39]Ibid.

[40]For a discussion of the importance of this concept in Reform thought see Eugene B. Borowitz, *Choices in Modern Jewish Thought: A Partisan Guide* (New York: Behrman House, 1983): pp. 244ff.

[41]It is odd that the one scholar who made a systematic study of Lilienthal's educational career concluded that the rabbi "failed in that he was unable to develop an image of the ideal Jewish child, which image he should have projected onto all of his educational undertakings." Merowitz, "Max Lilienthal," p. 63. On the contrary, this article shows that Lilienthal was clearly a pioneer in articulating a Reform-oriented ideal for education.

[42]*Israelite* 2(November 9, 1855):148.

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theological seminaries in mid-century, which addressed the need of many Christian denominations to an establish American-trained leadership.[43]

Lilienthal promoted a Jewish school system because of the religious nature of most American schools and colleges during the period. These institutions, though meant to serve the broader community, were still church-sponsored. Most of the faculty and presidents were clergy, and Christian concerns were prominent in the curricula. Especially in the West, "the larger mission of the colleges was the civilizing task of spreading Protestant Christendom to the untamed wilds."[44]

Lilienthal was deeply involved in the efforts to establish Zion College, an institute of higher Jewish education that opened in Cincinnati in the fall of 1855, which he referred to as "the Jewish University, the crowning establishment of a Jewish school system."[45] Wise and Lilienthal had launched the idea for an independent institution for higher Jewish education in New York, even before Lilienthal had moved to Cincinnati. In late May 1855, the "Zion College Association of New York" was formed at a meeting at Temple Emanu-El. A vice president of the organization, Lilienthal was one of a committee of five that drafted the preliminary resolution for the group.[46] Similar associations were formed in

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[43]Cremin, *American Education,* p. 400. According to his estimate, there were 22 theological seminaries in 1831, 44 by 1850. and 124 by 1876. See also *George M. Marsden, The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 80.

[44]Marsden, *The Soul of the American University,* pp. 80ff. The Protestant establishment was especially concerned to combat the growing Catholic presence in the West. They, too, were forming colleges after 1850.

[45]*Israelite* 2 (November 9, 1855):148. The school actually functioned as a high school. During this period, the modern sequence of primary and secondary school followed by college was not formalized. The precise place of the college within the American educational system was also not clearly defined. See Cremin, *American Education,* p. 403.

[46]*Israelite* 1 (June 8, 1855):379. See Heller, *Isaac M. Wise,* pp. 274ff. for details. Heller is incorrect when he states that the College opened in the fall of 1856, p. 275. See Wise, *Reminiscences,* p. 324. Also Bertram W. Korn, *Eventful Years and Experiences,* pp. 156ff.

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Cincinnati, Cleveland, Louisville, and Philadelphia. In August, the Cincinnati branch considered a plan by Wise and, at the September meeting, resolved to open the college as soon as possible. Wise cited Lilienthal's New York boarding school as the model for a college to teach Jewish, classical, scientific, technical, and mercantile subjects.[47] The local boosters enthusiastically offered to meet all of the first year's expenses, regardless of the contributions of the other Zion Association branches, so that, against Wise's better judgment, the school opened that fall.[48] Its opening was celebrated by a banquet that raised $800, attended by Cincinnati's elite, which included the governor of Ohio and two judges. The college boasted a student body of fourteen, including two Christians and a faculty of five professors. Subjects taught at the college were Hebrew, English, German, mathematics, history, geography, and archeology. Lilienthal, who taught classical languages and literature, asked for no payment.

Within a few weeks the efforts of the two rabbis came under bitter attack by New York leaders who felt they had been excluded from the process of founding and organizing the school and who resented having "to support an institution, to the program of which, as we have it, we can never give sanction." Since Cincinnati's action constituted "a breach of the covenant whereon all other associations were formed," the New Yorkers dissolved their branch of the Zion Collegiate Association.[49] Critics accused the Cincinnati leaders of being opportunistic in setting up a school that would serve their ideological viewpoint. Orthodox rabbi Bernard Illowy was particularly critical of their efforts. Ultimately

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[47]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 324. *Israelite* 2 (August 10, 1855):37. Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, p. 280.

[48]Wise, *Reminiscences*, p. 304.

[49]The meeting took place October 28, 1855 and the report was published in the *Occident, Israelite*, and *Asmonean*. See *Occident* 13 (December, 1855):453ff. This protest came on the heels of the Cleveland Conference, which had polarized the Reformers of the East and West. The New York group's strong reaction also reflected the fallout from this split. See below.

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communal apathy and lack of financial support caused them to abandon the school,[50] which received virtually no support from communities beyond Cincinnati and, in spite of excellent results at the first annual public examinations, lasted little more than one year.[51]

Noyoth Institute, the day school which had begun to flourish under Lilienthal, eventually succumbed to a variety of pressures. The rabbi had sought to raise standards by testing the children on a monthly basis and reporting the results to the board.[52] He set up rules, hired and fired teachers, and ran the public examinations, incorporating dramatic presentations and displays of the children's work. The school board invited outside examiners to assist the superintendent.[53]

The problem was not the quality of the school, or even its size, which increased to 118 students, but rather the large number of non-paying and half-tuition students.[54] Since the synagogue would not subsidize the school, its board was forced to try various fund-raising approaches, such as an annual banquet to cover the deficit. Though the affair succeeded in covering a good portion of the debt, it did not put the institution on a fully solvent basis.

In the spring of 1857, one of the school's teachers accused Lilienthal of embezzling money meant for wood and fuel. The school board investigated and ascertained that the charge was false, demanding that the accuser apologize to their rabbi. When he refused, they voted unanimously to discharge the teacher.[55]

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[50]Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism* , p. 57.

[51]Wise, *Reminiscences*, pp. 334f. See also Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, p. 281.

[52]*Bene Israel School Board Minutes*, February 17, April 6, 1856.

[53]Ibid., January 25, 1857.

[54]See Merowitz, "Max Lilienthal," p. 55.

[55]*Bene Israel School Board Minutes*, April 26, May 3, 1856.

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In spite of continuing financial concerns, the school board worked with Lilienthal to develop a curriculum for commercial subjects, implemented in 1857. Because the rabbi was in Europe, the yearly examination was held in March 1858, and attended by a number of local dignitaries.[56] In April 1858, Lilienthal's financial statement revealed a deficit of at least $500. The school board decided to lower salaries and stop accepting non-paying students, inadequate measures because less than half of the students paid full tuition.[57] In late August, the deficit remained about the same. Mr. Seasongood, the president, moved that, since the school could not support itself and many of the students who had previously paid full tuition had withdrawn, the day school be discontinued.[58] He advocated the establishment of a supplementary religious school under the control of the congregation. In November 1858, the synagogue board voted formally to discontinue the primary school, although it lingered on until August 1859.[59]

During the next ten years there is a gap in the school board minute books nor was there any record of a standing school committee in the trustee minutes found during most of the 1860s. Opening the new temple in the fall of 1869 gave fresh impetus to form a new school board with Lilienthal as its superintendent. He and the board developed a set of rules and regulations to govern the behavior of both students and teachers.[60] Children were expected to arrive punctually at 8:30 A.M. on Saturdays and 9:00 A.M. on Sundays, properly dressed, and to behave in an orderly manner. No child was to be admitted who

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[56]Ibid., March 20, 1858. His return was delayed by heavy storms that forced his disabled steamship to dock in an Irish port after fifteen days at sea. For twenty-nine days there was no word about either the ship or Lilienthal, causing the anxiety of the entire Jewish community to be "exceedingly great." *Israelite* 4 (Feb. 5, 1858): 246.

[57]Ibid., April 25, 1858.

[58]Ibid., August 29, 1858.

[59]*Bene Israel Trustee Minutes*, November 22, 1858; August 4, 1859.

[60]*Mound Street Temple Religious School Accounts*, October 12, November 20, 1869.

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could not read. The teachers were to arrive early, enforce the rules, keep careful attendance reports, and hold regular examinations. The board required students to provide their own books and materials, and pay a six-dollar fee in advance. The school board successfully avoided the fiscal problems that had plagued the earlier school.[61] The school was divided into four levels. The oldest children, under Lilienthal's instruction, covered the reading and translation of Hebrew, Hebrew grammar, and Jewish history of the biblical and post-biblical periods in the light of modern scholarship.[62] Given permission in 1874 to hire an assistant teacher for the class, he chose his son Albert.[63]

Copying the pattern of Christian religious periodicals of his time, in December 1874, Lilienthal introduced a children's newspaper, the *Hebrew Sabbath School Visitor*.[64] Distributed to the entire school on Saturdays, the paper's purpose was both to instruct and amuse the students with a blend of moralistic fiction, articles on Jewish holidays, Bible stories, jokes, anecdotes, and riddles. Woodcuts illustrated the text. Lilienthal also promised to reward good students by listing their names in the paper.[65] The tone of the writing was paternalistic and sweet (by modern standards), meant to be read to the children by teachers in the religious school to whom occasional pedagogical remarks were addressed. An early edition of the paper announced that "the success of our Sabbath School paper is secured. We have already more subscribers than we expected for the beginning." The children were asked to find additional subscribers through a contest in which the children who enlisted the largest number of new subscribers would receive a

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[61]Ibid., November 5, 1870.

[62]Ibid., October 12, 1878.

[63]Ibid., October 18, 1874. Albert was paid $5 a month for his efforts.

[64]Morton J. Merowitz, "Max Lilienthal," p. 57. For another discussion of the paper see Edward L. Cohn, "The Sabbath Visitor: A Child's Paper." American Jewish Archives, SC-2228. In about 1880, the name was shortened to *The Sabbath Visitor*.

[65]*Hebrew Sabbath School Visitor*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1874).

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gift.[66] The paper listed subscribers as far away as Pottsdam, Pennsylvania.[67]

Lilienthal's newspaper had serious pedagogical aims, teaching the doctrines of Judaism, and encouraging a "life of charity and morality." He was concerned to teach the children to be proud of their Jewish heritage, striving to inculcate an appreciation of biblical history, to present Jewish heroes in fictional pieces in order to bolster the students' Jewish identities, and to counter of the influence of Christian missionaries who preyed upon Jewish youth.[68] In later years he also discussed the growing antisemitism emerging in Europe, especially in Russia.[69]

The paper was one of the important pioneering contributions that Lilienthal made in the field of religious education, helping to explain the success of his school. The *Sabbath Visitor* was one of Lilienthal's main pedagogical legacies. After his death the editorship went through several hands until the prominent rabbi, Dr. Kaufman Kohler, took over the task in 1884.[70]

Another contribution to the success of the school was the holiday celebrations. A Purim festival in March 1870, the first gala party, was a choreographed affair, including a procession of children, a speech by the rabbi, an address by the school board chairman, choral singing, and a supper for the children followed by a party for the adults. Its formality shows how far the temple had moved from the traditional frivolity: there was no reference to the reading of the *Scroll of Esther* or to noisemakers to drown out the name of the villain of the story. Instead, the rabbi infused the event with the edifying solemnity that

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[66]Ibid., Vol. l, no. 5, p. 20.

[67]Ibid., Vol. 1, no. 17, p. 67.

[68]Ibid., Vol. 3, no. 51, p. 404. Merowitz, "Max Lilienthal," p. 57.

[69]Merowitz, "Max Lilienthal," p. 58.

[70]Edward L. Cohn, "The Sabbath Visitor."

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served as the model for subsequent festive events.[71]

Lilienthal also started a children's benevolent society, like the one in his New York school. This society collected money for a variety of causes through solicitation and fairs, giving support to the Alliance Israélite Universelle, to a monument for the poet Lessing in Magdeburg, Germany, to the Hebrew General Relief Association, the Orphan Asylum, and the Hebrew Benevolent Society. The group also donated money to purchase a map of Palestine for the school, covers for the Torah scrolls, and clothing for a poor student. Like the paper, the society, which gave the children practical lessons in the virtues of charity, outlasted its founder.[72]

The Sabbath School prospered, attracting the attention of the Bene Yeshurun leadership who approached the school board about a possible merger of the two schools.[73] The board discussed the idea at a meeting at which Lilienthal spoke in favor of the proposal. The motion lost by a small margin and, two months later, was defeated again.[74] By 1871 the school boasted 150 students; by 1875, 175 students. In 1879 the school board established an endowment that made it possible to do away with tuition, causing the student body to jump to about 225 by 1881. In those years, the board had to turn some children away due to overcrowding, but it eventually adjusted to the influx.[75] After the rabbi-superintendent's death, the school board eulogized their "beloved Rabbi Dr. Lilienthal, his eminent talent as a teacher, and his indefatigable zeal to make our Sabbath School the model School of this kind in the country, [who] worked so prominently

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[71]*Mound Street Temple Religious School Accounts,* March 6, 1870. See also the plans for a Chanukah celebration, November 26, 1870.

[72]Ibid., October 18, 1881, October 15, 1882.

[73]See for instance Ibid., October 27, 1872; September 28, 1873; October 7, 1874.

[74]Ibid., June 12, 1870; August 14, 1870.

[75]Ibid., November 30, 1879; October 18, 1881.

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towards the success of it."[76]

Public School Advocate

Though Lilienthal never turned his back on Jewish education, he gradually abandoned his early commitment to the day school format because Americanizing young Jewish immigrants through non-sectarian public schools became his priority. In a series of articles in the *Israelite* (1854) Isidor Busch had argued that "as good republicans we ought to be in favor of public schools."[77] The following year (1855), Lilienthal confronted the public school issue when he chaired the committee on education at the Cleveland Conference. Split on the issue of whether to favor public or parochial schools, the committee voted to solicit statements from rabbis and teachers throughout the country in order to prepare a position paper for the next synod.[78] After Cleveland, Lilienthal's retreat from theological and polemical debate was mirrored by a shift in his pedagogical interests. According to Wise, "the natural sciences appeared to him [Lilienthal] to contain all that is worth knowing." This new-found commitment to secular learning, combined with his intense desire to Americanize Jewish youth help explain his conversion to the cause of public school education.[79]

By 1860 he was such a strong supporter of public schools that he ran successfully for the Cincinnati school board. Both the Democrats and Republicans nominated him. He would serve on that body for thirteen years, during which he worked to make the public schools free of sectarian influence.[80] During that time he also helped shape the curriculum

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[76]Ibid., October 15, 1882.

[77]*Israelite* 1 (December 8, 22, 29, 1854.

[78]*Israelite* 2 (November 9, 1855):148.

[79]*Hebrew Review* 2 (1881-2):189.

[80]*Israelite*, 6 (March 30, 1860):307; (April 6, 1860):315. Also Sarna and Klein, *The*

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and teaching methods in the schools through the influence of his book *Things Taught: Systematic Instruction in Composition and Object Lessons*, which he co-authored with Robert Allyn in 1860.[81] Lilienthal was so well regarded that, even when he moved to a new ward, he was elected there and was given a big party by his old board colleagues.[82] In 1870 he proudly stated in the *Jewish Times*:

> We have no Sectarian Jewish schools in this city. All our children go to our excellent Public and High Schools. These are our pride and glory. We foster and support them as the fundamental basis of all of our American Institutions. Undermine and break up our free schools, and the whole fabric of our American liberties will in time crumble to pieces.[83]

Lilienthal's commitment to public schools extended into the area of higher education. The old collegiate model of higher education, based on the English system of education, was perceived by some contemporary pedagogues as inadequate to meet the demands of increasingly urban and industrial American society. Many mid-nineteenth-century educators, trained in German universities, advocated implementing its modern curriculum, emphasizing science, modern languages and literature. They envisioned an integrated system of state education culminating in advanced studies at a university which, within two generations, was a reality.[84]

Jews of Cincinnati, p. 50. That Protestants still hoped to use the public schools to promote a Christian America is well-documented in Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 35f. See also Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, pp. 81ff.

[81]Sarna and Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati*, p. 50.

[82]*Israelite* 16 (July 23, 1869):10.

[83]*Jewish Times* 1 (January 14, 1870):9. This statement was an exaggeration since Bene Yeshurun's day school was in existence until 1885. There were also at least two other day schools in Cincinnati during that period. See F. Michael Perko, "The Building Up of Zion: Religion and Education in Nineteenth Century Cincinnati," *Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin* 38 (Summer, 1980):97.

[84]Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith, eds. *American Higher Education: A Documentary History*. 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), Vol. 2, pp. 475-489. Some of these theorists included Henry P. Tappan, James Morgan Hart, and

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In 1869, Lilienthal led the efforts of the Cincinnati school board to form the McMickens University (the precursor of the University of Cincinnati). As a member of the school board with a doctorate from a German university, he had the qualifications to help Cincinnati develop its own institution, but still his prominent role was remarkable, given the Christian character of American colleges and universities during this period. The great proponent of the Prussian university ideal, Henry P. Tappan, chancellor of the University of Michigan from 1852 to 1863, strove to establish a nonsectarian school, yet "assumed that the university would be broadly Christian and even Protestant as was his Prussian model." The conservative Noah Porter, philosopher and future president of Yale, wrote in 1869: "American colleges should have a positively religious and Christian character." In the same year the University of California, ostensibly founded on secular principles, was also nonsectarian Protestant.[85] Lilienthal's participation occurred concurrently with a court case over the issue of using the Bible in public schools that polarized Cincinnati.[86] That he was chosen to help create the university is a tribute to the general respect he enjoyed.

In 1869, Lilienthal was appointed to a committee to consolidate the various educational funds and organizations into a university offering free education for all local citizens (non-residents would pay a nominal fee). They recommended opening a number of academic, professional and polytechnical departments in a university closely tied to the school board and to the city council. Due in part to Lilienthal's efforts, the state legislature passed the legislation to create the university on whose board he sat for nine years.

David Philipson, one of the first rabbinical students at Hebrew Union College, attended McMickens University in its early years. When he enrolled in 1879, it was "a very modest institution," housed in a single building, boasting only a handful of students

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Daniel Coit Gilman. See also Joel Spring, *The American School, 1642-1990*) 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1990), p. 149; Cremin, *American Education*; and Marsden, *The Soul of the American University.*

[85]Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, pp. 108, 125, 143.

[86]For Lilienthal's views in this famous court case see below.

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and a faculty of six members. Still, he noted that it was the first municipal college in the United States and would serve as the capstone of Cincinnati's educational system.[87] Lilienthal worked diligently to raise the university's academic standards, and he arranged for some important acquisitions, especially in the school's geological collections. Merging his rabbinic and educational vocations, Lilienthal gave the invocation and benediction at the first commencement, in June 1878.[88]

Exemplar of Civic Virtue

Since the purpose of education was to create good Jewish American citizens, Jews felt compelled to realize those American ideals by working actively for civic betterment in education, culture, philanthropy, social work, and good government. Lilienthal established the pattern in Cincinnati for a Jewish aristocracy "whose merit was in its cultural, its benevolent philanthropy and its devotion to the highest level of civil responsibilities.[89] Lilienthal worked on a variety of fronts within the overall Jewish community of Cincinnati, continuing the concerns he had pursued in New York. David Philipson said of his Cincinnati career:

> The activity of the new rabbi of Bene Israel Congregation expanded in many directions. Throughout the remaining twenty-seven years of his life he gave himself without stint and without measure to the service of his coreligionists and his fellowmen. He was a prominent figure in all Jewish public affairs as well as in movements of a larger public interest.[90]

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[87]David Philipson, *My Life as an American Jew: An Autobiography* (Cincinnati: J.G. Kidd, 1941), pp. 18f.

[88]McGrane, *The University of Cincinnati*, pp. 64ff. The interelationships between his rabbinic and educational roles will be further elaborated in the next chapter, since at the same time he was helping to found the university, he was working with Wise to create Hebrew Union College. From the beginning, the legitimacy of Hebrew Union College was dependent upon the existence of a secular university in Cincinnati that the students were required to attend.

[89]Sarna and Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati*, pp. 9f. See also Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 109ff.

[90]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 60.

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His early communal ventures followed traditional rabbinic paths, but as he became more established he branched out into new areas.

In his first communal initiative the rabbi proposed the establishment of a *Beth Din* for Cincinnati in July 1855, consisting of Rabbi Dr. Rothenheim, a talmudic scholar and Reformer who had come from New York, Rabbi Wise, and Lilienthal himself. The *Israelite* reported on the case of a man who was accused of remarrying a local woman while hiding the fact that he still had a wife and child living in Europe. (In addition, he was accused of having secretly embraced Christianity while still in Europe; while the *Beth Din* exonerated him posthumously, they acted before documentation from Germany conclusively proved the truth of the charges.[91]) Why did Lilienthal's court not continue? Perhaps as his philosophy matured, he sensed a contradiction between a rabbinical tribunal that issued binding rulings on Jewish law and the Reform principle of individual autonomy. After the Cleveland conference, he definitely turned away from traditional legal concerns towards charitable and social causes.

Among the most important of these efforts was his work to improve the system for distributing alms to the Jewish poor. It was his plan to establish a comprehensive benevolent society to coordinate charitable activities for the Jewish population of Cincinnati. In 1856, he invited various leaders to his synagogue, proposing a single treasury out of which the poor would be supported. He argued that this would cut down on the annoyance of daily requests for alms and avoid creating "a permanent class of beggars." At a subsequent public meeting, Lilienthal was chosen to be on a committee to both draw up a constitution for the new Hebrew Relief Society and to collect further contributions. The *Israelite* predicted that the society would succeed brilliantly and, indeed, it set the pattern for later United Jewish Relief efforts. The new organization was a source of pride to his congregation. In a resolution of gratitude in 1860, they credited

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[91]*Israelite* 2 (February 1, 1856):243.

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Lilienthal with developing the system whereby charity was "dispersed in a well-regulated manner by united action of the members of the various Hebrew congregations of our city."[92] He also helped organize a relief society to care for Russian-Jewish refugees. His efforts to alleviate the increasingly difficult situation for Jews in Russia also occupied him for many years. In the last year of his life, the American Jewish community chose him to "visit their oppressed brethren over the ocean," but Lilienthal died before he could undertake the arduous trip.[93]

Another feature of his expanded new rabbinate was to help create a City Relief Union. He became a director of the city-wide group in 1861, serving in that capacity until his death. This work endeared him to rich and poor alike.[94] The members of the Relief Union published this tribute to Lilienthal on the occasion of his death:

> We know of no language that would fully express our feelings of sorrow, and much less could we express the sympathy of the thousands of our worthy poor, irrespective of religion or nation, who have received sympathy and help from his unselfish and generous hand. Our association with him in the Relief Union and elsewhere for twenty-one years, has taught us to love him for his noble traits of character, always ready to give aid and advice to the unfortunate.[95]

Lilienthal also worked hard to improve the hospitals of Cincinnati, both those that served the Jewish community and the city at large. At a time when the Jewish hospital of Cincinnati, the first of its kind in the United States, was floundering, he helped to reestablish it, holding board meetings at his temple and serving on its board for years.[96] Just as his charitable work began in the Jewish sphere and later branched out into the

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[92]Ibid., 3 (September 19, 1856):94; and 7 (July 27, 1860):26.

[93]*American Israelite* 28 (April 14, 1882):332.

[94]See *Jewish Times* 1 (January 7, 1870):3; and Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 100.

[95]*American Israelite* 28 (April 14, 1882):334.

[96]*Israelite* 3 (October 17, 1856):118; and (May 8, 1857):347. See also Sarna and Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati*, p. 44.

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broader community, Lilienthal later became involved in the work of other local hospitals. During a cholera epidemic in 1866, Lilienthal was chosen to be a member of a city-wide committee to deal with the crisis.[97] On one occasion he gave a speech at a benefit on behalf of the Catholic Good Samaritan Hospital. He also served for many years as president of the Cincinnati Medical School.[98]

Lilienthal was active in many social and cultural organizations. Groups like B'nai B'rith helped the immigrants to cope with the challenges of adaptation to American life, by offering them "a 'secular synagogue,' a sense of belonging and of mutual assistance . . . yet one devoid of theological or liturgical commitments."[99] In the first few years Lilienthal supported the local B'nai B'rith, and, in March 1860, he took part in the anniversary festivities for the local Bethel lodge.[100]

He also lectured for the Young Men's Literary Club, a precursor of the Young Men's Hebrew Association, helping to establish its Cincinnati branch shortly after the end of the Civil War.[101] This important communal Jewish organization, which had first appeared in Baltimore in 1854, spread during the late 1850s to Augusta, Buffalo, Cleveland and Louisville. After the Civil War, the movement grew rapidly, in part due to Lilienthal's efforts.[102] Just as B'nai B'rith had helped the German-Jewish immigrants

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[97]Philipson, *My Life as an American Jew*, p. 83.

[98]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 100; and *Jewish Times* 1 (January 28, 1870):6.

[99]Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation*, p. 34. See Deborah Dash Moore, *B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership* (Albany: State University of New York, 1981), pp. 6ff.

[100]*Israelite* 3 (August 8, 1856):37f; (August 22, 1856):55; and 6 (March 9, 1860):282.

[101]*Jewish Times* 1 (December 10, 1869):5.

[102]Benjamin Rabinowitz, "The Young Men's Hebrew Association (1854-1913)," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 37 (1947): 226ff. See also Louis Kraft, *The Development of the Jewish Community Center: Purposes, Principles and Practice* (New York: Jewish Community Center, Centennial Committee, 1967), pp. 1ff.

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adjust to America, the Y.M.H.A. offered an alternative for the children of immigrants who might have felt uncomfortable with religious organizations, yet wanted to engage in Jewish cultural and social activities.[103] While the organization paralleled the successful Young Men's Christian Association, Lilienthal was quick to point out the differences:

> Of course the sphere of action cannot be the same as that of the Christian Young Men's Associations. Our young men have, thank God, no criminals to redeem; no drunkards to reform; no paupers to support, as they are liberally provided for by our benevolent institutions. Their constitution, therefore very appropriately declares that they were organized 'for the purpose of cultivating and fostering a better knowledge of the history, literature, and doctrines of Judaism; to develop and elevate our mental and moral character; to entertain and edify ourselves with such intellectual agencies, as we deem fit, and finally and above all, it is our mission to promulgate the sublime and eternal principles of Judaism to the world, and when necessary, to defend, though honorably and peaceably, the faith of our ancestors.'[104]

His appeal inspired about a dozen young professional men to form the Cincinnati branch of the Young Men's Hebrew Association. The group met on Sunday afternoons at Bene Israel to hear lectures on Jewish themes in the light of critical scholarship.[105] Lilienthal gave several lectures to the group in its early months that helped launch the organization. One of his topics was "The Literary and Political Progress of the Jews from Mendelssohn to our Day."[106] At its first anniversary celebration, Lilienthal advocated spreading the movement throughout the nation; in the *Jewish Times*, he wondered why New York, with its wealth of "eminent Hebrew theologians," had not followed the good example of other cities. In part as a result of his prodding, a New York branch was formed in 1870.[107]

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[103]Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation*, p. 82.

[104]*Jewish Times* 1 (December 10, 1869):5.

[105]Ibid. This arrangement also allowed young professionals, who felt compelled to work on Saturday, to benefit from Jewish studies.

[106]*Israelite* 15 (February 12, 1869):2. See also (February 26, 1869):6, for full text of the lecture.

[107]*Israelite* 15 (November 6, 1868):6; *Jewish Times* 1 (December 10, 1869):5; Rabinowitz, "Y.M.H.A.," p. 229.

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In Cincinnati, the group swelled to over seventy members. The proceedings sometimes became heated, such as the second anniversary celebration that erupted into a major controversy about Reform. Tempers ran high and Rabbis Wise and Lilienthal felt the need to respond to the dispute in sermons the following weeks in their pulpits. As a result of the debate, even a large number of Christians attended the subsequent meetings. As usual, Lilienthal felt open discussion of issues was healthy. Encouraged by its success, the group moved, in 1870, to a suite of rooms of its own, including a large lecture hall, reception room, and reading room. On that occasion, Drs. Lilienthal, Wise and Vickers, the Unitarian minister, addressed the organization.[108] Off to a strong start, the young organization would eventually play an important role in American Jewish communal life.

Mirroring his involvement with educational and charitable activities, Lilienthal did not limit himself only to Jewish cultural and social organizations. When he arrived in Cincinnati, he became a member of the Masons and of the Allemania club, a society that celebrated the German cultural legacy of Jewish and Christian immigrants. For the latter, Lilienthal wrote original poetry to help celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of Schiller's birth in November 1859.[109] Lilienthal joined other social organizations including the German Pioneers, the Cincinnati *Turngemeinde*, and the Foresters Congress.[110] Finally, as noted above, in 1870 he was appointed president of a national German singing festival (Sangerfest).[111] From various accounts, it appears that Lilienthal relished these social activities, which afforded him moments of levity and relaxation in his challenging schedule.

Lilienthal's energetic devotion to a wide range of Jewish and secular communal

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[108]Ibid., 2 (March 11, 1870):21. Lilienthal continued to support the group, helping it to reorganize in 1873, and to establish a permanent organization in 1877. Rabinowitz, "Y.M.H.A.," p. 230.

[109]*Israelite* 6 (November ll, 1859):150; and 6 (March 9, 1860):282.

[110]*American Israelite* 28 (April 14, 1882):332. (The *Israelite* changed its name in the 1870s.)

[111]*Jewish Times* 1 (January 28, 1870):6.

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activities made him a beloved and important local figure who inspired an outpouring of sentiment at the time of his death. His funeral cortege was one of the largest Cincinnati had ever seen, about two hundred vehicles. Each group of which he had been a member strove to honor his memory by taking their place in the procession, and by publishing heartfelt tributes in the *American Israelite* and elsewhere.[112] Lilienthal became a Jewish exemplar of civic virtue, combining the traditional values of charity with American values of public service and good citizenship. Under his leadership Cincinnati Jewry became a national model for community service and philanthropy.[113]

Defender of Jewish Rights

Another way in which Lilienthal expanded the traditional rabbinical role was combating Jewish defamation, both at home and abroad. He showed his growing comfort and confidence in America when he defended Jewish equality in an outspoken manner. In an article, written for the *Israelite* in August 1856, he took Horace Greeley and the *New York Tribune* to task for "absurd misrepresentations" of Turkish Jewry found in an article in that paper, which he called "medieval-like calumnies and disgracing stories." He reprimanded Greeley, whom he nevertheless acknowledged as a champion of liberality, for his ignorance of the history of the persecution and suffering of Jews which had led to their degraded station in many countries. Lilienthal was surprised that Greeley was not aware that the Jews in Turkey had only recently been granted rights. He attacked Greeley's invocation of the myth of the wandering Jew: "We are no strangers, wherever we reside . . . but true and useful citizens to every country in which we dwell."[114]

When, in November 1856, Governor Samuel P. Chase of Ohio addressed a

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[112]*American Israelite* 28 (April 14, 1882):332f.

[113]Sarna and Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati*, pp. 9f.

[114]*Israelite* 3 (August 15, 1856):44.

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Thanksgiving proclamation to the "Christian People" of his state, Lilienthal responded:

> The Israelites of this city felt grieved when the reading of the proclamation you issued for the celebration of the next Thanksgiving Day, being addressed but to the Christian community and not calling on members of any other denominations.[115]

Chase was a liberal politician with close ties to the Jewish community, so that Lilienthal couched his criticism of the governor as if he were coming to his defense. He characterized Chase as a "champion of the most liberal principles" who did not intend to wound the feelings of the Jews by using the term "Christian" in his proclamation. While he felt sure that the governor had used the term in a generic sense, he urged him to widen his Thanksgiving proclamation to include Jews. The governor responded graciously, saying that he never had any intention of wounding the sensibilities of his Jewish constituents when he used the customary phrase "as becoming a Christian People." Reaffirming his "constant avowed support for religious and civil liberty and equality," he looked forward to the day when "the icy barriers, created between brethren of the same great family, by religious differences, will dissolve and disappear under the fervid rays of truth." Lilienthal and Wise commented: "We are heartily tired of protesting every year against these illiberal and unconstitutional proclamations," advocating recourse to the courts to establish their inadmissibility.[116]

Jews also felt their equal status was threatened when the Christian majority scheduled public events on the Jewish Sabbath. Though Christians resented Jews who wanted to conduct their businesses on Sunday, they found nothing wrong with forcing Jews to violate their Sabbath in order to participate in these events. In a July 1857 article called "Again on Saturday," the editors complained that the school board showed little respect for Jews when they scheduled the examination for promotion to intermediate and high schools on the Jewish Sabbath. If the board truly wanted to make the public schools

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[115]*Israelite* 3 (November 21, 1856):154.

[116]Ibid.

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accessible to all religious denominations, why did they force Jewish children to violate their Sabbath? In the same vein they criticized the Republican party for holding their state convention on Saturday. Was it ignorance, they wondered, or willful obstinacy that caused the Jews to be ignored?[117]

The Bible Case

It is likely that one of Lilienthal's primary motivations for serving on the Cincinnati school board was to work for religiously neutral public schools. The Cincinnati school system, like others in America, had been designed by the Protestant elite to inculcate the values of citizenship and morality, especially among new immigrant children. The early regulations of the board stated: "The habits, manners, and morals of the pupils are to be strictly guarded while in school. . . . The moral restraints and obligations of the Bible are to be inculcated as a means of securing good behavior."[118] The curriculum included readings from the St. James version of the Bible and the singing of Protestant hymns. By the late 1830s the Catholic leadership had already begun challenging Protestant domination of the common schools; Archbishop John B. Purcell again raised the issue in 1855. Protestant elements remained in the curriculum into the 1860s, leading dissatisfied Catholics to flock to the parochial schools. Finally in 1869, the competition between the

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[117] *Israelite* 3 (July 10, 1857):4; Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, pp. 58ff. Also see Handy, *A Christian America*, pp. 73ff. for the importance of the Sunday Sabbath observance for the Christian agenda.

[118] Nancy K. Hamant, "Religion in the Cincinnati Schools, 1830-1900," *Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio Bulletin* 21 (October 1963):239. There are many discussions of the Cincinnati Bible Case including Janet A. Miller, "Public Elementary Schools in Cincinnati, 1870-1914," *The Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin* 38 (Summer 1980): 83-96; F. Michael Perko, "The Building Up of Zion: Religion and Education in Nineteenth Century Cincinnati," ibid., pp. 97-114; Robert Michaelson, "Common Schools, Common Religion?" *Church History* 38 (1969), pp, 201-217. For the implications in the Jewish community see Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, pp. 83ff. For a discussion of constitutional issues see Mark DeWolfe Howe, *The Garden and The Wilderness: Religion and Government in American Constitutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp.150ff.

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rapidly growing Catholic schools and the public schools began to threaten the latter.[119] In an effort to bring Catholic children back to the public schools, F. W. Rauch, a newly elected Catholic member of the school board, forged a plan with the archbishop's brother to merge the two school systems. In order to accomplish this end, the schools had to be made religiously neutral, so another member of the board, Samuel Miller, proposed an amendment to the plan that would bar the use of all religious books, even the Bible. This proposal touched a raw nerve, prompting intense debate throughout Cincinnati's religious community. The court issued a restraining order against the board that set the stage for a court case (Minor v. Board of Education) which would attract national attention.

In December 1869, Lilienthal began a series of articles in the New York Reform paper, the *Jewish Times*, which discussed what became known as the Bible Case. A personal friend of many of the protagonists, including the members of the board, the lawyers, and the judges, he was able to identify the significance of the controversy in clear, dramatic terms:

> We are in the heat of a contest, the decision of which will be of the highest importance to the whole nation. Shall the Bible and singing of religious hymns be retained in our free schools or excluded from them? Shall our schools be free schools, indeed, or shall they be tinged with any kind of sectarianism? This is the question of the day, which is now tried before the Superior Court of this city.[120]

Lilienthal recognized that the crux of the issue was a non-sectarian standard for schools that would foster the separation of church and state. This position, he indicated, was opposed by Catholic clergy who reviled such schools as "godless" but who also rejected the use of the Protestant version of the Bible. Lilienthal believed that the concern of these Catholic leaders was not to merge the two school systems, but rather to divide the tax revenues

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[119]Hamant, "Religion in the Cincinnati Schools" estimates that over a third of the school children of Cincinnati attended Catholic school in 1869. p. 242.

[120]*Jewish Times* 1 (December 10, 1869):4. See also Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 120ff..

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allocated for the school fund.[121] "Fanatical" Protestant leaders also opposed strict separation, exclaiming from their pulpits: "This is a Christian country, and the Bible cannot be excluded. . . . Neither Infidels nor Catholics shall interfere with the religious spirit of our institutions." A few feared a plot by Catholics to destroy the public schools. Lilienthal characterized the trial as "a regular tournament between modern philosophy and obsolete theology."[122]

While the nation waited for the court's decision, Lilienthal contributed an essay to the *Jewish Times,* "Is the Bible fit to be used as a School Book?" He suggested that contradictions in biblical teaching and modern science made scripture problematical as a textbook. He believed that the two viewpoints might be reconciled if one avoided the dogmatism of theology, admitting that his own efforts to write a biblical history for his Sabbath School which reconciled science and religion had so far been unsatisfactory.[123] The following week Lilienthal treated the *Jewish Times* readership to a recent sermon, "The Christian Jew," in which he laid out his vision of a non-sectarian, modern society.

> Our progressive civilization is neither Jewish nor Christian. It is something greater, something broader than all these sectarian terms, it is divine and providential. It is as deep and beneficial as God's unfathomable wisdom. . . . In the gradual development of all human faculties, every nation has its mission, every religion its task, every individual his duty to fulfill. However diverging the opinions, they still must cooperate for the harmonious execution of the Divine will, which works out the happiness of all members of the

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[121]Ibid. The Catholic clergy immediately distanced themselves from Rauch and Miller's plan, though many lay Catholics still approved of the change. See Perko, "Building up of Zion," p.105, and Hamant, "Religion in the Schools," p. 245.

[122]*Jewish Times* 1 (December 10, 1869):4; and (December 17, 1869):6.

[123]Ibid., 1 (December 24, 1869):5. Always sensitive to international trends, Lilienthal pointed out that the German Reformer, Abraham Geiger, had posed the same problem at a recent synod. Lilienthal had also consulted his friend Rev. Thomas Vickers of the Unitarian Church for help. In raising the problem of reconciling science and the Bible, he anticipated concerns of the last quarter of the nineteenth century when all religions would have to harmonize Darwinism with their doctrines. See Naomi W. Cohen, "The Challenges of Darwinism and Biblical Criticism to American Judaism," *Modern Judaism* 4 (May 1984): 121-157.

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human family.[124]

Lilienthal's vision of religious pluralism, furthered by this case, was part of an emerging civil view of society.[125]

Although the decision was two to one against the civil view in the superior court, Judge Alphonso Taft, in his important dissenting opinion, argued forcefully that religious equality required governmental neutrality. He claimed that "between all forms of religious belief the State knows no difference."[126] During the wait for the appeal in the Ohio Supreme Court, the battle shifted to the upcoming elections for school board. At a pre-election rally, Lilienthal articulated the supremacy of the state over the church: "The State first, and the Church afterward." He was an American first, and then a Jew, and he hoped that others would place their loyalty to the State before their Christianity.[127] He summarized his stance:

> 1. Bible or no Bible, our children will visit the public schools. Our Sabbath schools and synagogs [*sic*] give us ample room and time to impart to them the required religious instruction.
> 2. No division of the school fund, no matter under what pretext it may be demanded.
> 3. Not a penny out of the public funds for the support of any sectarian institution, be it for charitable or educational purposes.

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[124]*Jewish Times* 1 (January 7, 1870):4. For a similar expression of toleration and religious pluralism see also his *Freiheit, Fruhling und Liebe* (Cincinnati: Bloch Publishing, 1857), pp. 131f. He hopes for the day when Catholic, Jew, and Protestant will join hands in reconciliation, when the dishonor of fanaticism will be gone.

[125]Robert Michaelsen, "Common Schools, Common Religion," p. 217. For a general discussion of this secularization process see Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*. Also see Cuddihy, *No Offense*, especially Chapter One: "The Emergence of Denominational Pluralism." Leo Pfeffer, *Creeds in Competition: A Creative Force in American Culture* (New York: Harper, 1958).

[126]Howe, *The Garden and the Wilderness*, p. 150. Also Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, p. 84. For biographical information concerning Taft see Charles Frederic Goss, *Cincinnati: The Queen City, 1788-1912*, 4 vols. (Chicago; S. J. Clarke, 1912), vol. 4, pp. 800ff.

[127]Robert Michaelsen, "Common Schools, Common Religion," p. 216, quoting a Cincinnati paper, *Commercial*, March 31, 1870.

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4. No union of state and church, under any shape and form whatsoever.[128]

According to Lilienthal, the city voted by a margin of 3,000 against retention of the Bible in the public school. However, through various legal maneuvers, the "pro-Bible" forces managed to achieve a majority of four on the next school board. The Ohio Supreme Court eventually vindicated the rabbi's position in 1872 when it unanimously overturned the lower court's ruling, setting aside the original injunction. From 1873 there were no more Bible readings or religious opening exercises in Cincinnati schools. According to Naomi W. Cohen: "The Cincinnati case was a landmark in the story of American Jews and church-state separation. A victory for the Reform separationists, it broadened the base of their quest for religious equality." Lilienthal continued to lead the fight for a strict separation of church and state for the rest of his life. His forcefully articulated position helped to establish the normative Jewish stance on this issue.[129]

A Christian Nation

It was precisely this separation of church and state that some Protestant leaders questioned. From the 1840s, many American Protestants felt threatened by the large influx of Catholic and Jewish immigrants that challenged their hegemony. Some ministers responded by launching a campaign to foster the concept of a Christian nation.[130] Shortly after Lincoln was elected, Protestant groups began to advocate amending the Constitution to recognize Christianity's special status. In 1864 the National Association to Secure the Religious Amendment to the Constitution formulated a new preamble that would read:

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[128]Quoted in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 122.

[129]Supreme Court case 23 Ohio St. 211 (1872). See also Hamant, "Religion in the Cincinnati Schools," p. 247; and Cohen, *Jews in Christian America,* pp. 83, 85.

[130] Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 73-5., 97; and especially her *Jews in Christian America*, Chapters Two and Three. Also Schappes, *A Documentary History,* p. 235; Feldman, *Dual Destinies*, pp. 74ff. Feldman argued that "by 1860 Protestant aggressiveness and Jewish laxity constituted a dual threat to the survival of Judaism in the United States. p. 83. For the Protestant perspective, see Handy, *A Christian America*, p. 57.

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> We, the people of the United States, humbly acknowledging Almighty God as the source of all authority and power in civil government, the Lord Jesus Christ as the ruler among the nations, his revealed will as the supreme law of the land, in order to constitute a Christian government . . .[131]

Though they were unsuccessful, the group continued for years to push for a Christian amendment, supported by preachers, evangelical periodicals, as well as a number of respected laymen. The movement held that only a constitutional change could establish the legal underpinning for their agenda, the preservation of a Christian nation. Lilienthal addressed the threat posed by this movement in a sermon in December 1870:

> What do the reverend gentlemen mean and intend by inserting the name of God into our constitution? Was the Almighty Ruler of All Nations less God and Father because His Holy name was not mentioned in that holy instrument? . . . What kind of a Christian nation shall this people be, according to the desire of these reverend gentlemen, a Catholic or a Protestant one? Which one? These gentlemen do not come out in their true colors; they of course mean a Protestant Christian nation.[132]

He argued that the amendment would increase denominational tensions, especially with an increasingly influential Catholic Church. To be sure, Lilienthal trusted the Catholics as little as he did the Protestants, fearing their well-organized clergy was primed to do battle with the modern state both in Europe and America, and ridiculing the newly proclaimed doctrine of Papal Infallibility. Arguing that the Constitution already protected all Americans, he advised those who would introduce Christianity into the Constitution to

> let well enough alone. . . . Let us hold firmly to the entire separation of church and state and our beloved country will not only prosper and succeed as heretofore, but will always lead the van of human liberty and civilization.[133]

Missionaries

Jewish leaders responded aggressively to Christian proselytizing efforts in the years before the Civil War. Though only a few Jews converted to Christianity, Jewish leaders

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[131]Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, pp.66ff.

[132]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 113ff.

[133]Ibid., pp. 114, 118.

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resented the negative image of Judaism propagated by the missionaries and their tactics of preying on the most vulnerable members of the Jewish community, the poor, sick, and ignorant.[134] In spite of their ideological and religious differences, for Lilienthal, Wise, Leeser and others, the struggle against missionaries was an expression of Jewish self-affirmation.

Some missionaries claimed that the Jewish prophets had predicted various details in the birth and life of Jesus, a method widely used in Christian polemics in the Middle Ages. In this connection, in an article called "The Spiritualists and Christianity," Lilienthal criticized a recent book based on the Gospel of Matthew. Systematically analyzing twelve instances of Old Testament prophecies that missionaries claimed were fulfilled by Jesus, he concluded: "I find no allusion in the Old Testament to any isolated circumstance that happened at the birth or during the life of Jesus."[135]

Another common rebuttal to the missionaries was to compare the "irrationality" of Christian doctrine to the "rationality" of Judaism, thereby proving the latter was more in tune with the *Zeitgeist*. In an article: "Reply to the Christian Apologete," Lilienthal made fun of the doctrine of the Trinity. To make a Jew believe, "most of whom are gifted with some talent for arithmetic -- that One is Three and that Three is One, that is more than any Human Being can demonstrate." If church scholarship had not succeeded in explicating this mystery from the Council at Nicea until the present time, how could Jews be expected to subscribe to it? As Jews emerged from their pre-Enlightenment isolation and discovered "the vast content of Heathenism which is retained still to-day in the Christian catechism," they could hardly be expected to be drawn to it. Jews believe in a God, that, being a spirit,

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[134]Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 67f; and her *Essential Papers on Jewish-Christian Relations in the United States: Imagery and Reality* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), p. 15. The discussion in this section is especially informed by Jonathan D. Sarna's "The American Jewish Response to Nineteenth-Century Christian Missions," pp. 21-42 in *Essential Papers on Jewish Christian Relations in the United States.*

[135]*Israelite* 2 (April 25, 1856):340.

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could neither be born by a virgin nor die as a mortal. Lilienthal concluded that the Christian apologete was wrong when he claimed that the Jews were ripe for becoming converts to Christianity.[136]

In another article Lilienthal described an incident in which some Christian women, who visited Bene Israel in order to hear him speak, asked after the service if Jews believed that their Christian souls would be saved. Lilienthal replied that "the pious and the good of all denominations will participate in the kingdom of heaven." He quoted Jesus' words to them to prove the centrality of ethical behavior to salvation, adding that, in Jewish theology, a redeemer like Christ was unnecessary. He exclaimed with pride:

> How glorious, how truly the creed of love and reason is our faith! How contended [*sic*] must feel the Jewish rabbi by being entitled to give such assurances, breathing grace and mercy when compared with the Christian minister, who, obliged by his peculiar creed, is compelled to answer such questions in the following terms: He, who does right and loves mercy, but is not baptized, will yet, notwithstanding his good actions, be condemned to everlasting suffering in Purgatory! . . . How ridiculous, how blasphamous [*sic*] sounds this very doctrine. Truly we can glorify in our faith and exult in the words of the Prophet Moses: 'It will be your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of all nations.'[137]

He also attacked missionary efforts on practical grounds. Upset by a pastoral letter from the Protestant bishop of Jerusalem concerning missionizing to poor Jews in Palestine, Lilienthal warned that Jews would not embrace Christianity out of sincere conviction, though perhaps due to their poverty they would "have the pleasure of cleaning and washing at the baptismal font." Although he complained of the persecution to which the Jews were subject, he pointed out that, in spite of a huge outlay of expenses, the missionary efforts had been ineffective:

> Six Jews converted during the last year? And at what price? Of hundred thousands of pound sterling and thalers! Truly, the Jew is a costly thing!

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[136]Ibid., 3 (August 1, 1856):30. Compare this attack with his important contribution to interfaith relations in Cincinnati. His interfaith work was only with liberal churches, such as the Unitarians with whom he felt an affinity. Wise also emphasized the irrationality of Christian doctrine in his polemics. See Kraut, "Judaism Triumphant," p. 183.

[137]Ibid., 3 August 15, 1856):45.

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> . . . Never was money more useless, squandered away, never could millions be applied to better purposes than those spent for the conversion of the Jews.[138]

In an earlier article he commented that it would be better if the missionaries spent their money for the "amelioration of the thousands of miserable and wretched men crowding the streets of Christian cities and professing to be Christian."[139] He also praised efforts by European Jewish leaders "to advance the intellectual and material interests of the Jews of Palestine and thereby rectify the wretched conditions that caused even a few Jews to turn to the Christians for help. Urging Bishop Gobat to stop deceiving himself and others, he offered to convert him to Judaism.[140]

Facetious or not, Jewish leaders did convert Christians to Judaism. An audacious counter to Christian missionizing efforts, Lilienthal and others considered these conversions an extension of the doctrine of voluntarism that justified the competition among the various Protestant sects for adherents. They insisted Judaism was a vibrant religion worth leaving Christianity to join. According to Jonathan D. Sarna: "American Jews insisted on their right to battle Christianity on equal terms - no holds barred" and they trumpeted their successes. Sarna added: "The argument from proselytization stands as one of American Jewry's most original and important contributions to counter missionary problems."[141]

Active in converting Christians to Judaism, Lilienthal boasted in 1854 that he had converted thirty-seven Christians to Judaism in the nine years he had been in the United States. He gave an example of a Christian man who fled from Bavaria in order to have the

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[138]Ibid., 3 (July 18, 1856):12.

[139]Ibid., 2 (April 18, 1856):332.

[140]Ibid., 3 (July 18, 1856):12.

[141]Sarna in Cohen, ed., *Essential Papers on Jewish-Christian Relations in the United States*, p. 29.

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freedom to study Judaism with him and to embrace it.[142] Two years later, Lilienthal reported: "It has been generally observed that the cases of Christians becoming converts to Judaism, hitherto regarded as enormous anomalies, rapidly are increasing." He cited several incidents, including four in Berlin in one year.[143] That he continued to convert Christians to Judaism can be seen in an 1864 announcement in the *Israelite*:

> Miss Mary Elizabeth Forghum, a very intelligent and high-minded young lady of Dayton, O., having on conviction renounced the faith of Christianity, was converted and admitted in the pale of Judaism on Sunday, November 20th, 1864 in the synagogue of that city, by the Rev. Dr. Lilienthal of Cincinnati.[144]

The paper reported that the rabbi tenderly addressed the young convert in an imposing ceremony in the presence of many friends, prior to her marriage to a Jewish man.

Lilienthal also reconverted Jews who had been enticed by Christian missionaries. He described several experiences, including the story of a Jewish woman who, after being converted by the Methodists, felt remorse and returned to Judaism. He also reconverted a man and his sons after they began coming to services at his New York congregation. Confronted by a group of missionaries at his home, Lilienthal bluntly told them, that, except for "a very miserable minority, . . . a Jew could never believe in the unintelligible doctrines of the Christian religion, and that all the missionary efforts with Jews will prove abortive."[145]

With a zeal that matched the Christian missionaries, Lilienthal, Wise, and other

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[142]*Israelite* 1 (November, 17, 1854):149.

[143]Ibid., 3 (August 22, 1856):52.

[144]Ibid., 11 (November 25, 1864):171. See also *Jewish Times* 2 (October 21, 1870):532f., where he detailed two more conversions of Christian women.

[145]Ibid., 1 (November 17, 1854):149. He also had a low opinion of the religious revivals that were a common feature of evangelical Christianity during the period. In a sermon he ridiculed the idea that prayer meetings could solve the serious problems of society such as political corruption and financial crises. A true revival would have to begin with a reform of domestic and public life. *Israelite* 4 (April 23, 1858):334.

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Reformers espoused a triumphant Judaism that taught that all humanity would someday acknowledge the truth of the one God as taught by the Hebrew prophets. Radicals like Einhorn claimed that, given the religious freedom found in the United States, there was no impediment "to prevent us from unfurling the banner of the 'One,'" so that the time was ripe to strip Judaism of "all exclusively national or sectional attributes." In our day Judaism might "obtain its fixed aim of redeeming the world of all, even the most refined heathenism, as concealed in the Christian trinity." From this perspective, Jews were "the Savior of all the nations by leading them to the worship at the altar of the only true God."[146] Lilienthal agreed, though he claimed that Jews were not yet ready for such a radical universalization of their faith. Like Wise, he believed there must be "a steady and incessant progress" in which Judaism would develop "its universal character" and divest itself of "its peculiarly national garment." "The destiny of Israel was delineated before it appeared at Mount Sinai . . . to be the instrument in the hands of Providence, for the final redemption of mankind," when "God will be one and His name one."[147] Lilienthal reiterated this theme in the conclusion to his translation of Emanuel Hecht's *Synopsis of the History of the Israelites:* "Israel does not falter in the accomplishment of its holy mission, to be the redeeming Messiah to all mankind."[148]

International Jewish Rights

Lilienthal covered international politics in the *Israelite* for many months, during

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[146]Ibid., 2 (February 8, 1856):252. For a discussion of Jewish triumphalism see Kraut, "Judaism Triumphant," especially pp. 183f.

[147]Ibid., 2 (November 30, 1855):172.

[148]Hecht, *Synopsis of History*, p. 118. It is interesting to compare Lilienthal's text with Hecht's original, which reflected the more traditional view that an individual Messiah will come from the midst of Israel. "Nur durch die vollste Bethatigung dieser Liebe kam aus Israel's Mitte der Messias fur die ganze Menschheit." Emanuel Hecht, *Israel's Geschichted von der Zeit des Bibel-abschusses bis zur Gegenwart* (Leipsig, 1865), p. 310.

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which he chronicled what he believed to be "a steady improvement of the condition of our coreligionists in the largest portions of Europe."[149] (His concern for Jews around the world contradicts the stereotype that all Reformers rejected ethnic identity.) Scanning the foreign journals, he offered detailed summaries of the status of Jewish rights in France, England, Holland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Prussia, Scandinavia, Turkey, and even in the Orient and Africa. He expressed optimism on the accession of Alexander II to the throne of Russia, on the Jewish policies of Napoleon III, and on the decision of the Sultan of Turkey to improve the standing of that country's Jews. He pointed with pleasure to what were minor concessions towards the Jews in Austria, and was pleased to report progress in his native Bavaria: "The Jews were put on equal footing with their Christian fellow-citizens in all places in which Jews are living," as old residence restrictions were abolished and limitations on the Jews' ability to practice certain trades were abolished.[150] Seeing evidence of progress, he asserted: "Time will never roll backwards, Onwards! is the watchword that rules all movements of the human race."[151] Liberalization was not automatic, however, and he admitted that serious opposition to the full emancipation of Jews remained.

Lilienthal played an important role in the local efforts to protest the ratification of a treaty between the United States and Switzerland. According to Naomi W. Cohen, "Under the Swiss constitution, only Christians were guaranteed religious freedom; moreover, the cantons had the right, which some put to use, of refusing entry and commercial privileges to foreign Jews." American Jewish merchants did not have the rights that American Christians enjoyed when doing business in Switzerland. The New York Jewish press protested that, though Switzerland had the right to regulate the status of Jews in its own

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[149]*Israelite* 2 (November 30, 1855):172.

[150]*Israelite* 3 (July 18, 1856):12f. and 3 (July 25, 1856):20.

[151]Ibid. 2 (May 9, 1856):357.

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land, the United States tacitly supported the superiority of Christianity by signing that treaty. Although the anti-Jewish clause was eliminated from the 1855 draft, individual cantons still discriminated against American Jews. In 1857, an American Jewish merchant was ordered to leave the canton of Neuchâtel, sparking protests in cities throughout the United States.[152] In Cincinnati, Lilienthal signed a petition inviting local Jews to a meeting to discuss the treaty; at that meeting Lilienthal was appointed to a committee of five to draw up a "memorial to the President of the United States."[153] In October 1857, a group that included Isaac Mayer Wise presented their concerns to President Buchanan and received assurances from the president that the matter would be resolved. Not until 1874, however, when Jews won legal equality in Switzerland, were visiting American Jews guaranteed their rights in that country.[154]

According to Lilienthal, one of the most serious foes of European Jewish emancipation as well as of liberalism was the Catholic Church. In articles on international affairs in the *Israelite*, he hoped for the "liberation of Italy from the mediaeval misrule of Roman priests." He reported that Sardinia protested "the hard intolerance of the Roman church," which did not allow Protestants to worship in the countries it controled and threw English missionaries into dungeons. He bemoaned the blunder committed by Austria for concluding a concordat with Rome. In a later article he declared: "the militant Catholic church is on the alert and profits by every opportunity to extend its power, assume its obsolete privileges, and enslave the minds of all the free-thinking people of our time." He characterized the doctrine of immaculate conception as "the first victory achieved by blind faith over reason." He derided the Jesuits, who were sent everywhere "to disseminate their principles of Egyptian darkness and to ban the enlightened spirit of the present

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[152]Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, p. 53. See also her *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 101ff.

[153]*Israelite* 4 (September 11, 1857):76, and 4 (September 18, 1857):85.

[154]See Morris Schappes, *A Documentary History*, pp. 315-324 and notes.

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civilization."[155]

In 1858, Lilienthal was at the forefront of expressions of indignation when news reached the United States of an Italian-Jewish child, Edgar Mortara, secretly baptized by his Catholic nurse, who was taken from his parents by force and placed in a Catholic institution for the education of converts.[156] Lilienthal's open letter to the Jewish people of the United States, which anticipated the later response of Leeser and other Jewish leaders, charged that

> the forced abduction of the child of Mr. Mortara in Rome, Italy, by order of the Catholic clergy, has created throughout the civilized world a cry of horror and indignation. Religious liberty is set at naught by the fanaticism of the Roman Inquisition.[157]

Lilienthal called upon American Jews to hold public protests and to send petitions to the government, following the lead of French, Sardinians, and German Jews. He organized a meeting of Cincinnati's Jews at his synagogue in October 1858, the first of many in the United States, where a petition was sent to the Secretary of State, to be forwarded to the papal representative to the United States.[158] The disorganized Jewish efforts to get the administration to apply pressure upon the papacy failed, but the incident showed Lilienthal was willing to take a leadership role in the defense of Jewish rights internationally.

As already noted, Lilienthal believed in the ultimate victory of reason and freedom

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[155]*Israelite* 3 (November 21, 1856):154. In one of his letters to Isaac Leeser, he compared "the perfect intellectual stagnation" of the Catholic church with the the degeneration of traditional Judaism into "cabbalistical mysticism or the most subtile [*sic*] and resultless polemics," which were an echo of scholasticism. Ibid., (December 5, 1856):170f.

[156]For a full discussion see Bertram W. Korn, *The American Reaction to the Mortara Case* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1957); Schappes, *A Documentary History*, pp. 385-392; Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 215ff.

[157]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 110.

[158]Ibid. See also Schappes, *A Documentary History*, p. 386.

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over despotism. In his letters to Isaac Leeser, he affirmed that human history was "an unceasing reform, and a never-stopping development to a higher degree of perfection."[159] All Jews would someday experience that millennial time of liberation and equality. Though the United States was moving toward that ideal faster than any other country, Lilienthal often quoted the adage: "Vigilance still remains the price of liberty."[160] Exercised locally, nationally, and internationally, this involvement in Jewish rights became a central element in his new professional rabbinate.

Prophet of American Civil Religion

Lilienthal loved America, especially for the freedom and opportunity it offered to Jews. He had experienced firsthand anti-Jewish disabilities during his youth in Germany and Russia. From his arrival, Lilienthal embraced this country; his enthusiasm never flagged. The failure of the Cleveland Conference in 1855 turned him from theology and traditional Jewish learning to a religion of patriotism. According to his friend Wise: "Patriotism was the principal topic of his conversation and the main subject of his sermons." Perhaps more than any other rabbi of this period, this love of America became a surrogate religion.[161]

This patriotism represented an Americanization of Lilienthal's earlier embrace of the Haskalah belief in the progressive, even messianic nature of the State. In Germany he had believed the State would regenerate the Jewish community. In Russia he had pinned his

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[159]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 379.

[160]*Jewish Times* 3 (February 17, 1871):804-5.

[161]*Hebrew Review* 2 (1881-2): 188. Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, p. 86. See also Jerold S. Auerbach, *Rabbis and Lawyers: The Journey from Torah to Constitution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) for a discussion of the merging of American and Jewish values. Lilienthal's position anticipated the thought of Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan, who integrated Jewish and American values in his ideology. See Mel Scult, "Americanism and Judaism in the Thought of Mordecai M. Kaplan," in *The Americanization of the Jews*, pp. 339-354.

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hopes for the modernization of Jewish education upon the good intentions of the Czar and his ministers. Deeply disappointed by the failure of both governments to fulfill their redemptive role, he invested the same hope in America, articulating a Jewish version of American civil religion.

The notion of civil religion, developed by the sociologist Robert Bellah, proposes that alongside the various faiths in America there is a public religion, complete with beliefs, symbols, and rituals, which serves as a vehicle for national self-understanding.[162] Formulated in the early years of the republic by founding fathers immersed in Enlightenment ideology, civil religion was neither sectarian nor Christian in content, yet borrowed heavily from biblical imagery. The founders identified America with Israel as both the promised land and a light to the nations. The Declaration of Independence and Constitution were the sacred scriptures of this ideology; Washington was "the divinely appointed Moses who led his people out of the hands of tyranny."[163] Lilienthal wrote poetry, preached, and acted out the principles of this civil religion, finding in it the inspiration for his Americanized Jewish ideology. In effect Lilienthal served the function of prophet for the civil religion, nurturing its growth and, eternally vigilant, chastising authorities when they failed to realize its sacred vision.[164]

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[162]Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," in his *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York, 1970), p.171, 176. See also Catherine L. Albanese, *Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976); and Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, pp. 383f. who wrote that in the Revolutionary Era patriotism pervaded every aspect of the country's thought and feeling, transcending the differences among the various churches.

[163]Ibid., p. 176.

[164]For parallel attempts to merge American and Catholic values see Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, pp. 549ff. Orestes Brownson (1803-76) combined "outspoken 'Americanism' with Catholicism." He believed that Catholicism was a fulfillment of American ideals. So did his disciple Isaac Hecker 1819-88), who portrayed "Catholicism as an answer to man's spiritual dilemmas and as a fulfillment and guarantee of democracy's highest ideals." Hecker and his followers became an important force within the Catholic church as champions of a revised estimate of American freedom and voluntarism. For Lutheran efforts at Americanization see Gilbert, *Commitment to Unity,*

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In 1857 he published a collection of primarily patriotic poems, *Freiheit, Frühling, und Liebe*, which took most of its themes from the ideals of the Revolutionary War.[165] The first section entitled "Freiheit" [freedom] these included: "Unsure Flagge," "Washington," "Mount Vernon," "Lexington," "Der Obelisk auf Bunkerhill," and "Der Vierte Juli 1776." He wrote of the blood of heroes that guaranteed the country's freedom, and the flag that had inspired men to victory. Washington was the first and greatest star in the American firmament "on whose day freedom always smiles." The last poem in the "Freiheit" section presented an assessment of America in 1857: "It is accomplished, a lad now stands as a giant among the nations. The wish, which was only an ideal, you have realized before all the world."[166]

The Civil War

In one of the poems, Lilienthal praised the Union in the following terms:

> Die Union ist ein Zauber,
> Der unser Land unschlunget.
> Ein Ring voll wunderkraften
> Den Keine Nacht bezwinget.[167]

The Civil War presented Lilienthal with the greatest challenge to this faith in America because it "raised the deepest questions of national meaning" for civil religion.[168] Lilienthal reflected later that that period had been

> the gloomiest in the history of our country; it was as if the sun of liberty were setting forever! Monarchs were rejoicing, but the nations were desponding; kings and their myrmidons were shouting, 'The people's

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p. ll. In 1855, Samuel Schmucker, professor and later president of the Gettysburg, Pennsylvania seminary issued a synodical platform which sought rapproachment among American Protestants by forming an "American Lutheranism."

[165]Cohen, *Jews in Christian America*, p. 37.

[166]Lilienthal, *Freiheit, Fruhling und Liebe*, pp. 9, 41. (Quotations are my translations.) The last two sections treat springtime and love.

[167]Ibid., p. 37. "The Union is a magic, by which our land is undefeated. A circle full of miraculous power that no night can conquer."

[168]Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," p. 177.

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> government is a vision and delusion,' but nations were despairing -- the last hope of the regeneration of the human race seemed to be lost forever.[169]

In the months before the war, Lilienthal preached a number of sermons on the urgency of preserving the Union. Downplaying the differences between North and South, he searched for ways to reconcile the two regions.[170] Living in Cincinnati, close to the slave state of Kentucky and the abolitionist centers of the North, the disagreement between the two regions was an immediate and concrete reality. Always the peace maker, he sought to find a middle ground that would keep his beloved adopted country from being destroyed by a tragic war.

In the debate over slavery, American rabbis could be found on either side. Morris Raphall of New York tried to show that slavery was justified by the Bible, while David Einhorn of Baltimore insisted that, until the Negro was free, Jews and other minorities were profoundly threatened. Isaac M. Wise objected to the fanaticism of Protestant abolitionists; though he did not approve of slavery, he did not want to see civil bloodshed.[171] Lilienthal's position was close to that of his friend Wise, characterizing the abolitionists as "incendiary radicals who were bringing the nation to the brink of disaster." Though he felt that slavery was immoral, he defended the right of the southern states to determine their own economic system.[172] When the war broke out, he threw his support to the Union, which infuriated a Mr. Cohen in New Orleans, who scrawled the following message over a picture of the rabbi which he had formerly displayed on his wall:

> Sir: Since you have discarded the Lord and taken up the Sword in defense of a Negro government, your picture that has occupied a place in our

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[169]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 399. Lilienthal echoed Lincoln's speeches when he argued that saving the Union was "not for America alone but for the meaning of America to the whole world." Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," p. 177.

[170]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 124.

[171]Bertram Wallace Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1957):16ff, 20ff., 25.

[172]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 403.

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> Southern home, we return herewith, that you may present it to your Black Friends, as it will not be permitted in our dwelling.[173]

The former admirer, now a Confederate soldier, called Lilienthal a demagogue and threatened "to rid Israel of the disgrace of your life." Mr. Cohen misunderstood the rabbi's stand, since Lilienthal became anti-slavery only after Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. In his victory sermon at the end of the war, Lilienthal confessed to being ashamed that he had not had the moral courage to oppose slavery from the beginning, waiting until it was national law to accept the need for abolition. He now admitted that slavery was an "everlasting blemish."[174]

Jews enlisted in the armies of both the Union and Confederacy, a breakthrough in Jewish military participation in America. It has been estimated that almost eight thousand Jews served in the ranks of the Union and Confederacy, giving rise to a call for Jewish chaplains.[175] In the South, there was no legal barrier to this, but Federal law still stipulated that chaplains must be "regularly ordained ministers of some Christian denomination." The law was tested in September 1861 when Michael Allen, a student of Isaac Leeser, was made chaplain of a cavalry unit. (Allen had also studied Jewish law with Lilienthal while he was in New York.) Allen served as chaplain for the soldiers of all faiths during a two month career that was cut short by the actions of a zealous Y.M.C.A. worker. When he reported to the army hierarchy that Allen was neither Christian nor an ordained

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[173]Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, pp. 56f. This passage shows how popular Lilienthal had been throughout the country. As one of only a few ordained rabbis, he was often present at the dedication of new synagogues and other important events in widespread communities. Lithographs of him were sold all over the country. See Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, p. 28.

[174]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 403ff.

[175]This represents a large increase over the Mexican War in which just fifty eight Jews served. See Ira Katznelson, "Jews on the Margins of American Liberalism," in *Paths of Emancipation; Jews, States, and Citizenship*, edited by Pierre Birnbaum and Ira Katznelson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 177.

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clergyman, the chaplain quit rather than face the dishonor of dismissal.[176] Although Lilienthal, as his former teacher, had a personal interest in Allen's case, he chose to let Wise lead the campaign to have the law changed.[177] A Jewish colonel and his officers chose Rev. Arnold, lecturer at Congregation Shearith Israel in New York, as their chaplain in order to challenge the law. Through publicity, petitions, and the lobbying efforts of the Jewish Board of Delegates, they countered the opposition of fundamentalist Protestant groups. After Fischel met with President Lincoln, legislation was introduced in Congress, passed in July 1862, that authorized "the appointment of brigade chaplains, one or more of which shall be of the Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish religions."[178]

The role that Lilienthal and Wise played during the last phase of this controversy was colored by partisanship because they were angered by the Board of Delegates' claim to represent "all the Israelites in the United States." They felt that the Board, primarily an East Coast traditionalist group, did not represent them. They wrote editorials in the *Israelite* and *Sinai* in which they attempted to undermine the credibility of the Board of Delegates as well as Fischel. Especially damaging to Fischel's cause was the protest which Lilienthal and five other rabbis published in January 1862 in newspapers in Washington, Philadelphia and New York, which objected to "the assumption of titles and functions by the so-called 'Board of Delegates' [because] as a religious organization, it [Judaism] is represented by no particular body of men in this country or elsewhere." According to Bertram Korn, Congress could have used this protest as an excuse to withhold support from Fischel's proposals, but chose to overlook the challenge. It is a testament to the intensity of the rivalry that split Jewish leadership during this period that they were not able

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[176]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, pp. 57ff.

[177]For pertinent articles in the *Israelite* see Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, p. 259 n. 25.

[178]Ibid. pp. 61ff., 71ff. See Alan Tarshish, "The Board of Delegates of American Israelites, 1859-1878," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 49 (September 1959):16-32; and Chapter Six below.

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to put aside their personal and religious differences to support Fischel's cause.[179]

In December 1862 General Grant issued his infamous General Order no. 11, expelling all the Jews from the military department of Tennessee. The war had created a tremendous demand in the North for Southern cotton, and in the South for war materiel, manufactured goods, medical supplies, gold and silver; speculators and traders made millions of dollars on illegal commerce that met these demands. Grant or his subordinates blamed the Jews of the area for profiteering in Tennessee. In what has been called the "most sweeping anti-Jewish regulation in all of American history," Grant ordered the expulsion of all Jews from the entire department in twenty-four hours.[180]

A victim of this expulsion, Cesar Kaskel informed Jewish communities and newspapers, telegraphed the President, and went to Washington to protest this order. Stopping off in Cincinnati, he conferred with Lilienthal and Wise, who decided to appeal to the President themselves. Arriving in Washington, they discovered that Kaskel had met with Lincoln, who immediately overturned the order. The delegation decided to thank the President personally for his prompt assistance. According to Wise's account in the *Israelite*, the delegation, with Lilienthal at their head, arrived in Washington about 5:00 p.m. and, by 8:00 p.m. the same evening, was ushered into the President's office. They had a private, frank, and open thirty-minute discussion during which the delegation thanked the President for his swift action. Lincoln "expressed surprise that Gen. Grant should have issued so ridiculous an order." He criticized it for condemning "an entire class or nationality for the sins of a few," declaring that he knew "no distinction between Jew and Gentile, that he feels no prejudice against any nationality."[181] Pleased with the

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[179]Ibid., pp. 72-4.

[180]Ibid., pp. 122f.

[181]Schappes, A *Documentary History*, pp. 474f. See also Gary L. Bunker and John Appel, "'Shoddy,' Anti-Semitism, and the Civil War," *American Jewish History* 82, no. 1-4, (1994): 43-72, for a discussion of the outbreak of anti-Semitism in the war and Lincoln's role as a moderating agent, p. 70. The Cincinnati Jewish community, so

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meeting, Lilienthal and his group hoped to influence Congress to go on record against this bigotry and intolerance, but the Republicans felt it was more important to protect their most successful general than to condemn an injustice. Wise commented: "Sorry we are to say that Congress did not think proper to be as just as the President is."[182]

The crisis of the Civil War called forth new themes in the civil religion: death, sacrifice and rebirth. Abraham Lincoln not only formulated its meaning, he embodied it in his own person. The Gettysburg Address, described by one scholar as "a symbolic and sacramental act" gave redemptive meaning to the terrible sacrifice of the soldiers who had given their lives "so that the nation might live." Called the "New Testament" of civil religion, the address employs Christian symbolism of death and rebirth without explicit Christian referents.[183] Lilienthal expressed these new motifs in the series of speeches that he gave to his congregation at the end of the war.

In his Union Victory address, the rabbi recalled "those days of agony and national misery," from the news of the secession of the Southern States through the end of the long war to reestablish the Union. The division had mocked America's holiest symbols: Bunker Hill, Independence Hall, "the sacred grave of the Father of his Country," and the flag. "Long was the struggle, terrible the sacrifices, numerous the disappointments; but 'Onward, always onward!' was the war cry of the army, the prayer of the nation."[184] Forgotten was his enmity towards General Grant, whom he now called a hero; the Union

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important in the clothing industry, did not escape the accusations that they were involved in the manufacture of "shoddy" merchandise at the expense of the war effort. See p. 56.

[182]Schappes, A *Documentary History*, p. 475; and Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, pp. 127f.

[183]Indeed, after his assassination Lincoln was explicitly identified with Jesus. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," p. 177.

[184]The speech entitled "The Flag and the Union," is printed in full in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 398-414. See specifically pp. 399ff. What is striking in the first address is the lack of any reference to the Passover holiday, during which the speech was given. Certainly there was an obvious parallel to be made between the ancient festival of freedom and the victory celebration, but Lilienthal focused only on the moment's meaning from an American point of view.

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army was one of the "grandest military powers of the globe." He remembered the many fallen heroes that had made this day possible, quoting the psalmist: "They that sow in tears will reap in joy." In the language of sacrifice and redemption he declared: "With millions of lives and millions of treasure, we have brought a sacrifice for our national existence, and morally atoned and morally redeemed we are standing before the astonished and amazed world."[185] The victory was the next historical step after the French Revolution "towards the emancipation of the human race." "We have fought and conquered for the nations all over the world, for by our victories we have reinstated labor in all its pristine and becoming dignity."[186] His congregants should follow the lead of the President by saying: "Let there be no hatred, no vengeance against the South. Let the leaders feel the majesty of the law; but to repentant rebels give pardon, mercy, and brotherly love."[187]

It was a speech of thanksgiving, joy, and patriotism. The rabbi and his congregation went home in a jubilant mood, unaware that the President had been shot that evening. When Lilienthal heard the next morning, he rushed to the telegraph office to get the latest news. In shock, he was at first unable to believe that the President had been assassinated. "Tears began to relieve our stupefaction." His reaction was to quote the lament of King David over Abner : "Indeed, a great man has fallen in Israel."[188] In a sermon to his congregation on April 22, 1865, Lilienthal called Lincoln "the first laborer president," because he rose from poverty to the Presidency showing "for the first time the full meaning of American liberty and equality.... The people, the laboring classes all over the world, were now emancipated."[189] He praised Lincoln for his undying love of the

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[185]Ibid., 404.

[186]Ibid., pp. 406ff. The institution of slavery demeaned the dignity of labor. He developed this theme further in his next address. See Ibid., p. 417.

[187]Ibid., p. 412.

[188]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, p. 207.

[189]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 417. The entire speech is on pages 415-429.

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Union, "as immovable as the North Star." Earning the reverence and love of the people through his sincerity, simplicity of heart, and homely shrewdness, Lincoln had become a man of superior destiny. His death helped the nation to understand even more fully the meaning and value of the country's institutions, by showing that the machinery of government transcended even the death of the man who had come to represent its highest

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values.[190] Lincoln had

> closed his life with an act of unexampled magnanimity and clemency by dismissing the armed leaders of the rebellion to their homes, that they might return to peace and equal rights in the country they had deluged with blood. Let us profit by his almost divine example.[191]

Lilienthal urged his listeners to avoid vengeance and the suspicion of widespread conspiracy. They should trust in the law of the land to bring the criminals to justice. He concluded that, though Lincoln was now a martyr, he died preserving the Union, and all Americans must take up and faithfully execute his legacy.[192]

The war accelerated the pace of Americanization among all immigrant groups. As Bertram Korn wrote, they had earned their stake in the country by

> enduring the hardships of battle, burying sons and husbands and friends, participating in the multifarious welfare activities of the homefront, taking sides in political arguments -- these and a thousand other aspects of life in a nation at war with itself Americanized the large immigrant population at a much more rapid rate than that of more peaceful times.[193]

No longer strangers in the new land, many American Jews looked to their leaders to merge their adopted country's values to those of their tradition. Lilienthal, at least as much as any other rabbi of his time, created that synthesis.

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[190]Ibid., pp. 419f. The language of this speech substantiates Bellah's point about the new sacrifice/redemption imagery in American civil religion. Here Lilienthal is helping to create religious meaning as the events are unfolding before him and his congregation.

[191]Ibid., p. 424.

[192]Ibid., pp. 427ff.

[193]Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, pp. 217f. See also Ira Katznelson, "Jews on the Margins of American Liberalism," p. 17. The immigrant Lutherans experienced the same accelerated Americanization process as the Jews. See Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*, p. 167. "This [the war] created a sense of belonging, a sentiment of proprietary interest in the new homeland. Their neighbors also regarded them as genuine participants in the salvation of the Republic. . . . It gave them good reasons to participate with other Americans in national holidays, especially memorial days." For a general discussion of Lutherans during the war see pp. 151-168. The war had the same effect on Catholics, whose service to the country won them a degree of respect undreamed of a decade ago. Catholics also pointed to their own heroic sacrifices as proof that they too were patriotic, and shared a full-hearted love for America. Cross, *The Emergence of Liberal Catholicism*, p. 30.

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In the years after the Civil War many of his public utterances continued to reflect American civil religious values. At the occasion of the laying of the cornerstone of a new temple building in Indianapolis in December 1865, Lilienthal noted that the occasion also marked the first Thanksgiving after the war. As the nation again enjoyed peace and unity, he hoped that the temple would "rise to its future glory, a powerful witness to truth and liberty, to progress and reform."[194] In 1867, he linked American and Jewish themes in his speech to a Unitarian church. A reporter noted: "The Jew touches the hearts of his "Christian audience. . . . He makes them thrill with divine emotion at the grand accords of liberty, humanity, brotherly love, one God, one right, justice for all."[195] At the long-awaited ceremony to lay the cornerstone of Bene Israel's new building in 1868, Lilienthal spoke of the supreme authority of the American constitution, both divine and ennobling. "Jews consider and revere this sublime document almost like a divine revelation." Its most precious principle was the strict separation of church and state. Rejecting prayers for a return to Palestine or of a restoration of sacrifices, he asserted that Reform best harmonized Judaism with America and with the spirit of the age. Its ideas would "lead and guide Judaism in its relation to our country."[196] At the dedication of the new temple in the fall of 1869, he reiterated: "We cherish no longer any desire for a return to Palestine, but proudly and gratefully exclaim with the Psalmist, 'Here is my resting place; here shall I reside; for I love this place.'"[197]

One of the first ordained rabbis to come to this country and one of the few with a

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[194]*Israelite* 12 (December 22, 1865):196.

[195]Ibid., 13 (March 15, 1867):6.

[196]Ibid., 14 (June 12, 1868):4f.

[197]Ibid., 16 (September 3, 1869):8. These themes were reiterated throughout the rest of his career. For just a few examples, see speeches to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, July 15, 1874; *Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations*, p. 85; and later (1876) pp. 208, 273f.

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German doctorate, Lilienthal played a pioneering role in the forging of a new professional rabbinate. In the varied aspects of his profession, ranging from preaching, teaching and communal work, to the fight for Jewish equality, Lilienthal expanded traditional rabbinic roles, providing an important model for future rabbis.

According to his friend Wise, "He [Lilienthal] was popular and influential in the city of Cincinnati and far beyond its confines, more so, perhaps, than any rabbi ever was in America."[198] His successor, Rabbi David Philipson, remembered that

> Dr. Lilienthal was an unusual personality. He was one of the most distinguished-looking men I have ever known. I still see in my mind's eye the stately figure crowned with silvery gray of honorable old age. He was early one of Cincinnati's foremost citizens and one of American Jewry's leading rabbis.[199]

By the 1870s, after Isaac Leeser, Abraham Rice, and others of that first generation of American Jewish leadership had died, Lilienthal became the elder statesman of the Jewish clergy. Respected by all of the parties, the Jewish papers frequently called him "venerable." In the last period of his life, without giving up any of his diverse professional and communal obligations, Lilienthal found himself in an ideal position to play a pivotal role in the creation of the central institutions of American Reform.

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[198]*Hebrew Review* 2 (1882):189.

[199]Philipson, *My Life as an American Jew*, p. 81.

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Chapter Six: The Institutionalization of Reform Judaism (1870-1885)

Introduction

The decades following the Civil War were characterized by economic growth and by revolutionary changes wrought by industrialization and urbanization. In the Northern states, especially, there was "unprecedented prosperity, a sense of power, a spirit of buoyant confidence, and exuberance of energy." Industry expanded rapidly; "cities grew so fast that no one could keep track of them." The optimism of the period encouraged churches and synagogues to replace old, outgrown buildings with expensive new structures.[1]

Equally significant was the huge new influx of immigrants that far surpassed earlier records. German immigration jumped to about 130,000 a year between 1866 and 1873, spurred by the promise of an expanding economy. After a lull due to an economic downturn between 1873 and 1882, the numbers jumped to a new high, with the majority settling in "the already teeming cities."[2] Once again the influx would delay the process of complete Americanization for some churches. In the late nineteenth century perhaps one and a half million Lutherans arrived, many very strict in their observance.[3] The new wave of German Catholics, militantly conservative and "possessing a rich and deep theological tradition" had the support of the anti-modernist papacy and were buttressed by a large

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[1]Samuel Eliot Morrison, Henry Steele Commager, William E. Leuchtenberg, *The Growth of the American Republic*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969) vol. 1, pp. 723ff. Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America*, p. 174. Also Jick, *The Americanization of the Synagogue,* pp. 178ff.

[2]Robert Henry Billigmeier, *Americans from Germany: A Study in Cultural Diversity* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publ. Co., 1974), p. 91. The total immigration was even higher. See Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, pp. 735. See p. 749 for a breakdown by decade.

[3]Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, pp. 756ff. The institutional history of this denomination is so complex that only the most general statements can be made. See Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, Vol. 2: *The Nineteenth Century in Europe: The Protestant and Eastern Churches*, pp. 61f., 128ff. Revivals, awakenings, and a fresh burst of pietism characterized Lutheranism's reaction against liberalism in the nineteenth century.

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number of conservatives among the Irish-American clergy.[4]

German-Jewish immigration also resurged, forming a second wave that increased the Jewish population from 150,000 in 1860 to 280,000 in 1880.[5] Mostly middle-class and urbanized, they were "more educated and more proud of their German culture" than the earlier wave had been. In their own way they too "delayed the ongoing process of 'Americanization' when it seemed to be reaching its goal."[6] Unlike their German Christian counterparts, these Germanized Jews had been shaped by the middle- class liberalism of their native land.[7] In addition, by 1870, at least twenty rabbis, trained in modern German universities, held rabbinic positions in America. Both the laity and rabbis would infuse a new dose of German-Jewish liberal thought into the ideological struggles of the 1870s and 1880s.[8]

These Jewish intellectuals participated in a late nineteenth-century religious ethos, characterized as the golden age of liberal theology in the United States, especially among

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[4]Ibid., pp. 828f. For German Catholic conditions see Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age*, Vol. 1: *The Nineteenth Century in Europe: Background and the Roman Catholic Phase.* German Catholicism participated in a revival that increased in intensity as the century progressed, again in reaction to the dominant liberalism. The old orders were revived and there was a new active participation by laity in orders and congregations, p. 353. Roman Catholicism in Germany attained a kind of national solidarity in the wake of the unification struggle, which sharply contrasted with the divisions in France and lethargy in Italy. For the situtation in America, Philip Gleason noted in *The Conservative Reformers,* p. 30, that " most of the German clergy and prelates in the Middle West... aligned themselves firmly with the conservatives." He also notes that "the hostility of the liberals taught the German-Catholic immigrants that they could not count on sympathetic support from their ethnic brethren when their religion made them obnoxious to Americans." Ibid., p. 19.

[5]Barkai, *Branching Out*, p. 125.

[6]Ibid., p. 153.

[7]See Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry,* pp. 173ff.: "By 1871 fully 80 percent of German Jewry qualified as bourgeois." Their ideology combined Enlightenment rationalism and *Bildung.*

[8]Barkai, *Branching Out*, pp. 153f. See also Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation*, pp. 114f.

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Congregationalists in the Northeast and among Northern Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Northern Baptists. Liberal Protestantism, which had experienced a long, slow development in America, achieved its classical form in the decades after the Civil War.[9] Widespread belief in the immanence of God in the world and human nature led to a humanistic optimism, embraced by liberal Protestants, Jews, and even some Catholics.[10] Reform Jewish leaders, finally finding support for their liberal ideology in broadly-held American religious values, successfully initiated the changes they had advocated for decades.

In the 1870s and early 1880s, a temporary unanimity emerged among the various factions of American Jewry. Based on a broad, pragmatic platform that tried to avoid divisive issues, the rabbinic and lay leadership established the major institutions which Lilienthal, Wise, and even the traditionalist Leeser had been advocating since the 1840s: a union of congregations (Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1873), and a rabbinical school (Hebrew Union College, 1875). However, within a few years of Lilienthal's death in 1882, that unity disappeared permanently, to be replaced by sharply defined denominational movements that came to be called Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox.

Scholars have tried to understand the basis for that short-lived unity and the reasons for its dissolution. As we saw earlier, Leon Jick argued that the Americanization of the earlier immigrant population of German Jews created a set of shared values among the American Jewish laity who established these central institutions of Reform Judaism. This does not explain the subsequent fragmentation, which occurred beyond the historical scope of his book. Michael Meyer characterized the unity of this period as ephemeral, shattered

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[9]Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, pp. 763,775. Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*, pp. 120ff. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse*, p. 2.

[10]For liberal Catholic trends see Cross, *The Emergence of Liberal Catholicism in America*. Jay R. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1985), pp. 307ff.

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by Reform's radical drift in the 1880s and 1890s. With the arrival of the masses of religiously traditional Eastern European Jews, Reform came to represent "the particular religious affiliation of American Jews of German descent."[11] Alan Silverstein placed the shift within broader American religious trends, arguing that the unity of the 1870s and early 1880s was based upon an Anglo-American Christian model of a "national religious union." Christian churches established broad-based organizations and schools during this period, a trend Jews mirrored. However, in the 1880s, German university-trained clergy came to the United States, bringing German ideas and culture that resulted in a new, divisive religiosity in both Christian and Jewish institutions.[12]

This chapter will examine Lilienthal's role in establishing and maintaining the earlier Anglo-American approach to American Reform that he hoped would eventually embrace all of American Jewry. Most accounts of this period focus exclusively upon the efforts of Isaac M. Wise, but Lilienthal played a crucial role in the creation of a consensus among the radical Reform, moderate Reform, and proto-Conservative factions.[13] Guiding and supporting Wise through the polemical battles that led to the establishment of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and Hebrew Union College, Lilienthal called for calm, open-minded dialogue, tolerance of differences, and an emphasis on common goals. As the elder statesman of American Judaism, he became universally recognized as the "prince of peace." He considered his crowning achievement to be the creation of the Rabbinical Literary Association, which, in 1879, brought together members of all three factions.

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[11]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 264.

[12]Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation*, pp. 35ff. The German-Jewish community had long been divided on ideological lines; each group created independent institutions. Samson Raphael Hirsch established a Neo-Orthodox community in Frankfurt; in 1854, Zacharias Frankel formed the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau for moderates; and in 1872 the Reformers opened the *Hochschule für Wissenschaft des Judentums*. See Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 191.

[13]The label "proto-Conservative" identifies the same group which Moshe Davis called the "Historical School" in his *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*.

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Within a year of Lilienthal's death, this broad-based American Reform began to unravel. The first rabbinical ordination at Hebrew Union College featured the famous "trefa banquet" which did much to drive the proto-Conservatives away.[14] In 1885, the radical Reformers, under the leadership of Kaufmann Kohler, forged the Pittsburgh Platform that firmly established the new sectarian trend. Wise was forced to forsake his lifelong goal of a united American Jewry in order to save a lesser unity of moderate and radical Reformers, and a year later, in 1886, the Jewish Theological Seminary was created to serve the proto-Conservative camp.[15] Could Lilienthal, the master tactician, have guided Wise through the conflicting demands of the left and right? He alone was certainly not a sufficient cause for the earlier consensus, nor his death the reason for its collapse. However, no less a witness than Wise himself compared Lilienthal to Aaron the high priest, the prototypical peacemaker. On the occasion of Lilienthal's twenty-fifth anniversary celebration at Bene Israel, Wise declared:

> Once, twice, ten times, again and again, he made earnest attempts to unite the discordant elements, to bring peace into the camp of Israel, and he did succeed; every good work succeeds. He did succeed in establishing the Rabbinical Literary Association. . . . It means a good understanding among the leaders of American Israel; it means 'peace be to all that thou hast.' God bless the harbinger of peace.[16]

East-West Confrontation

The polemical clash that erupted after the Cleveland conference of 1855 created a

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[14]"Trefa" refers to non-kosher food. This incident will be discussed below.

[15]Though this event and the Pittsburgh Platform are often portrayed as the genesis of the Conservative Movement, in fact it was not until the early twentieth century that this group became ideologically distinct from Orthodoxy. See Jeffrey S. Gurock, *American Jewish Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective* (Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav Publishing House, 1996), introduction and pp. 1ff. Also see Mel Scult, *Judaism Faces the Twentieth Century: A Biography of Mordecai M. Kaplan* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), pp. 179ff., which treats the institutional debate among Seminary graduates in the late 1910s over ideology.

[16]Quoted in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 71.

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long-enduring split in the Reform camp.[17] In part, the animosity could be traced to competition between the more established East Coast congregations and the emerging West, especially Cincinnati, but more significantly, the two wings espoused differing approaches to Reform. As we saw, the Eastern group, led by David Einhorn and Samuel Adler, advocated a radical approach, eliminating many of the customs and rituals that made Judaism distinctive. What would remain was a pure philosophical core of ethical monotheism, inspired by the prophetic tradition. These doctors of theology, deeply influenced by the German intellectual orientation, wanted to purify Judaism for an elite few. The West, under the leadership of Wise and Lilienthal, advanced a more moderate approach. Changes were to be made gradually, as the congregations were ready for them, and these trends were justified, at least during the early period, by reference to traditional sources. Wise and Lilienthal also spoke of eliminating out-of-date rituals and customs, but their ultimate goal was to Americanize rather than to Germanize Judaism. Enamored with the religious freedom in this country, they wished to bring Judaism into harmony with its Enlightenment-based principles. By the late 1860s and early 1870s the theological differences between Eastern and Western Reform leaders had narrowed. Wise and Lilienthal sometimes took more radical stands than the Easterners.[18] What continued to separate the two camps were issues of organizational strategy. While Einhorn and Adler were exclusivists, meeting only with fellow rabbi doctors, Wise and Lilienthal were inclusive, inviting all Jewish ministers, regardless of training, under their umbrella. They even solicited the cooperation of lay leadership for the practical wisdom they would bring to their projects.

More than anything else, however, the split represented a clash between the two

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[17]See Martin B. Ryback, "The East-West Conflict in American Reform Judaism."

[18]For instance, Wise took a more radical stand than Einhorn with regard to circumcision as a requirement for conversion at the Philadelphia Conference in 1869, and denied the efficacy of atonement on Yom Kippur at the Cincinnati Conference in 1871. Lilienthal was widely perceived as theologically radical in his later years. See below.

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dominant personalities of the period, Wise and Einhorn. Wise represented everything that Einhorn rejected; he was not a Ph.D., hence not of the highly educated elite, and he was popular and charismatic, appealing to the masses successfully through his periodical the *Israelite*. Einhorn fought back in his less successful *Sinai* and later in the *Jewish Times*.[19] Each man attacked the other in print and took pleasure in blocking one another's projects.

After many years of avoidance, Lilienthal returned to the polemical arena in an effort to mediate this East-West controversy. He had a foot in each camp; though he was a pragmatic Americanizer, he was also part of the elite, German university-trained group of rabbis and shared some of their values. Indeed, as noted above, he and Einhorn had attended the same yeshivah in Fürth as well as the University of Munich. The *Jewish Times* identified him as one of their own: "The Rev. Dr. Lilienthal, of Cincinnati, had in his sermons and official acts unhesitantly pronounced in favor of radical Reform."[20] Rabbi Illoway, who spent several years in Cincinnati's Congregation Shearith Israel, claimed that "Wise was conservative, but pressure exercised upon him by his colleague, Dr. Lilienthal, and a few other Rabbis of radical tendencies" pushed him to the left.[21] Wise himself suggested that Lilienthal had become "a realist and latitudinarian," rejecting most traditional theology.[22] In a speech celebrating the proposed opening of Hebrew Union College on May 22, 1874, Lilienthal observed:

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[19]Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, p. 209. Its editor, Moritz Ellinger, had been Einhorn's schoolmate and lifelong friend and its pages represented Einhorn's positions. See also Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 255.

[20]*Jewish Times* 2 (November 25, 1870):616f. The parties themselves continued to perceive their differences according to the earlier radical versus moderate categories, though by now the distinction had become blurred.

[21]Henry Illoway, *Sefer Milchamot Elohim*, p. 3. He claimed Lilienthal was very radical in his views.

[22]*Hebrew Review* 2 (1881-2):189. We saw in Chapter Four, however, that Lilienthal's congregation was resistant to radical ritual changes, prompting him to maintain a moderate stance on these issues.

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> The trodden paths of antiquated theology will not do any longer. The natural sciences, justified criticism and restless skepticism have undermined many of its foundations. . . . Free investigation and free inquiry, sanctioned by reason, though discredited by systems of blind faith, must rule supreme. And though we may have to surrender many an idea and sentiment heretofore endeared to us, truth and pure religion will only gain by this process.[23]

Lilienthal does seem to have become theologically more radical in his last years, rejecting the divine origin of the Bible, as seen in an article in the *Hebrew Review*:

> We know and admit that the Bible, and especially the Mosaic books, are composed of various parts, written and collected at various times. There are legendary parts, historical, legal and dogmatical parts; there are poetical, devotional and homiletical parts, belonging to different times, different periods of Jewish history. They have neither claim nor title to equal value or lasting importance. A large part - nay, the largest part of the Mosaic books . . . have lost all practical significance.[24]

These positions did not stop him, however, from working closely with Wise, because the pragmatic approach of the two friends stressed practical achievements over abstract theology. Rabbi Aaron Hahn of Cleveland confirmed this assessment of Lilienthal's position:

> Our lamented friend, the Rev. Dr. Lilienthal, did not side with any of these parties. He belonged to the party which acts upon principles and policy of expediency. Personally he has reached the pinnacles of enlightenment, the summits of theological knowledge and the peaks of progress. . . . But in spite of his liberal and enlightened views and aims, he was no radical reformer.[25]

From the end of the Civil War until the late 1870s, when the opposing sides finally reconciled, the two camps tried to block the other's efforts to establish the central institutions for American Judaism. Time and again, Lilienthal urge both sides to avoid personal attacks, believing that they should tolerate differences in order to work for the

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[23]From a speech delivered at Bene Jeshurun on May 22, 1874, cited in Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 83.

[24]Max Lilienthal, "The Jew A Riddle," *Hebrew Review* 2 (1881):131.

[25]*American Israelite* 28 (April 14, 1882):333.

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shared goals of union, a college, improved Jewish education, and so forth. Often frustrated, with patient efforts, Lilienthal helped to realize this unification of the two wings of American Reform.

First Attempt at Reconciliation

In 1866, shortly after the end of the Civil War, Wise wanted to initiate a call for another rabbinical conference. Recognizing that the rift between the Eastern radical Reformers and the Western moderates had not yet healed, Lilienthal cautioned delay. Impatient, Wise began to agitate for a national meeting in the *Israelite*; as a result Lilienthal, who insisted on the presence of ordained and university-trained rabbis, set out to mend the ties with the Eastern group. Largely through Lilienthal's persistent and careful negotiations, the groundwork was laid for what would be the 1869 Philadelphia Conference.[26]

While Lilienthal was engaged in this correspondence, Wise was working on another track, perhaps impatient with the rabbinic leadership. In March 1869, Wise called for a broad-based conference of Hebrew ministers, teachers, lay leaders of congregations, and representatives of the Young Men's Hebrew Associations,[27] to set up a publication society, harmonize the efforts of congregations, and, rather vaguely, "elevate Judaism." As the responses began trickling in by the end of April, Wise made it clear that he hoped to avoid the mistakes of Cleveland by letting others lead; indeed the laity would run the conference, with rabbis and ministers present only in an *ex-officio* status. By May, he had gotten commitments from eleven congregations, well on his way to his goal of twenty

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[26]Illowy, *Sefer Milchamot Elohim*, p. 7. "Lilienthal persisted and after many and long diplomatic negotiations and many promises that Wise would be deferential and submissive, a conference was arranged to be held in the city of Philadelphia in the Fall of 1869." See the Appendix for a list of Jewish Conferences during the period.

[27]*Israelite* 15 (March 5, 1869):4; and (April 9, 1869):4. See Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, p. 209f, Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 260.

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congregations. Throughout the summer more joined, so that by the end of the 1869 High Holy Day period, success seemed assured. The New York-based *Jewish Messenger* commented: "The fact that a conference will be called at an early day, through the intervention of Drs. Wise and Lilienthal, and Mr. Mack [President of Bene Yeshurun] and others appears to be now well established."[28] The paper was pleased with the broad platform and the geographical diversity of the participants.

On the brink of success, the leaders abandoned the conference in deference to a rabbinical meeting in Philadelphia, which opened on November 3, 1869. Wise later expressed the view that Einhorn and the Eastern radicals had again frustrated his efforts:

> Eighteen congregations has already sent in their consent, when all at once the Rev. Drs. Adler and Einhorn convened a conference of rabbis to Philadelphia, November 3, 1869. We understood well that this call, intentionally or unintentionally, was calculated to counteract and frustrate the convention called through the columns of this paper. But what could we do? We must either go there and drop our conference for the moment, or not go there and widen the breach between the parties. We preferred the former and went to Philadelphia.[29]

In fact, the newly-formed *Jewish Times* had already announced the Philadelphia Conference in the late spring of 1869.[30] Both conferences were successfully recruiting attendees throughout the summer, but Einhorn's decision to meet in November was probably due to the likelihood that Wise would soon succeed in holding his own, more broadly-based conference. Once the date for Philadelphia was set, Wise "caused inquiries to be made . . . whether he would be received as a member or not." It is likely that it was through Lilienthal's intervention that Wise was invited to attend, albeit under rather restrictive conditions: he could not bring his Western allies, he had to promise to be deferential to the Eastern elite, and he had to drop his plans for a congregational union.[31]

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[28]*Jewish Messenger* 26 (October 22, 1869):1.

[29]*Israelite* 17 (June 2, 1871):8.

[30]*Jewish Times* 1 (June 4, 1869):8,9.

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Yet, the invitation meant acceptance into the elite circle of rabbis with doctorates, and in the end Wise could not resist the temptation.[32]

Einhorn had set the agenda for Philadelphia in advance (as Lilienthal and Wise had done at the Cleveland conference of 1855). Wise noted that "every proposition not embraced in the printed pamphlet was treated with a sort of contempt, for which we cannot account."[33] Wise, who arrived late, played a passive role for the most part. In a contemptuous description, the *Jewish Times* later claimed "[Wise] listened with the docility and attention of a pupil and had sagacity enough not to betray his rabbinical ignorance by too lively a share in the discussion."[34]

In good German academic style, the conference began by establishing seven principles that distinguished Reform from traditional Judaism, rejecting bodily resurrection, a personal messiah, and the priesthood, while embracing universalism and the use of the vernacular in worship.[35] The rabbis then turned to practical issues concerning marriage, divorce, and circumcision. Wise favored the radical suggestion that circumcision was not necessary for conversion to Judaism, and Einhorn opposed him on grounds that Jewish law required circumcision.[36] Wise also advocated the inclusion of lay leadership in the

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[31]*Jewish Times* 2 (August 26, 1870): 408. See Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, p. 215, n. 318; and p. 216.

[32]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 255f.

[33]*Israelite* 16 (November 19, 1869):8.

[34]*Jewish Times* 2 (August 26, 1870):408. Sefton Temkin, trans. *The New World of Reform:Containing the Proceedings of the Conference of Reform Rabbis in November 1869* (London: Leo Baeck College, 1971), p. 43. This work contains a complete transcript of the proceedings, translated from the original German. Lilienthal, claiming "official business" kept him from attending, expressed his full support, requesting that the Conference "record his name in the list of members." He submitted a lengthy set of proposals to the group advocating the harmonization of Jewish marriage and divorce law with that of the State. He rejected levirate marriage and halitzah, showing how much he had changed since he ordered a halitzah shoe made for his New York congregations. See Appendix IX, pp. 105-110; and Chapter Two above.

[35]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 256.

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next conference. Einhorn dismissed him, saying that the laity was not "advanced enough" to be included. Without the tactical support and academic stature of Lilienthal behind him, however, Wise was consistently outmaneuvered by Einhorn's group.[37] Perhaps as a conciliatory gesture, the Eastern Reformers appointed Wise and Lilienthal to set up the next conference in Cincinnati.

In spite of his misgivings, Wise tried to put a positive spin on the Philadelphia Conference, indicating that "the declaration of principles and the alteration of laws were not new and not unwelcome by anybody." Though he saw himself as a centrist, he praised the radical position for its value as a vanguard, pointing the way forward.[38] When criticism increased from the traditionalists, Wise distanced himself from the decisions of the conference. Particularly controversial was the conference's position that English and German prayers should replace some of the traditional Hebrew liturgy.[39] Michael Meyer noted:

> The conference had foolishly ignored the fact that, while most congregations were in favor of progress, they abhorred radicalism.... In their unwillingness to compromise, they [the radical Reform] were weakening, not strengthening American Jewry. Wise was therefore ready to abandon the radicals. During the following months he involved himself in a separate initiative, one that would rapidly outflank his rivals and leave the Philadelphia gathering an isolated incident.[40]

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[36]The debate also reflected the difference between Wise's inclusive and Einhorn's exclusive approach to membership in the Jewish community. Wise wanted to make it easier to become Jewish; Einhorn wanted to retain circumcision "as a protecting wall against the influx of foreign elements." *Jewish Times* 1 (November 12, 1869):6.

[37]This scenario would repeat itself again in 1885, when, after Lilienthal's death, Kaufmann Kohler and the Easterners imposed their vision on American Reform. Temkin, *The New World of Reform*, p. 43.

[38]*Israelite* 16 (November 19, 1869):8.

[39]See for instance *Israelite* 16 (December 3 and 17, 1869); and (December 24, 1869):8 where a correspondent charged that these proposals "would ultimately destroy any vestige of our nationality as Israelites."

[40]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 258.

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Reform Efforts to Create Union

Within a few months of the Philadelphia Conference, Lilienthal and Wise decided to organize a congregational convention, even though this move meant breaking their promise to the Eastern Reformers. Lilienthal tried to finesse the matter in a letter to the *Jewish Times*. Defending their conference, he claimed that its scope was limited to a revision of Wise's prayer book, *Minhag America:*

> In order not to come in collision whatsoever with the Philadelphia conference, and to avoid any ill-feeling and misunderstanding . . . the prayer book question had not been touched by the Philadelphia Conference and was therefore a question fairly open for discussion and action. For the reason first stated, no question acted upon by the Philadelphia Conference or under consideration by the same was either mentioned or approached.[41]

In the conference that took place in Cleveland during June 1870, Lilienthal played an active role in the work on liturgy and ritual. The body took moderate stands, including the declaration that "Sabbath services shall, under no consideration, be transferred to any other day of the week."[42] The deliberations went slowly; because the weather was uncomfortably hot, the group adjourned, promising to meet again in New York in October to continue the revision of the prayer book. In spite of Lilienthal's attempt to placate the East, the *Jewish Times* was furious, labeling the Cleveland conference "a conscious falsehood."[43] Charging Wise with hypocrisy and equivocation, the paper called Wise a tyrant and "the Barnum of the Jewish pulpit." Rabbis Huebsch, Lilienthal, and others

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[41]*Jewish Times* 2 (August 5, 1870):358. Other moderates, notably Dr. Adolph Huebsch of New York, faced with revising the liturgy of his own congregation, pressed for a conference to revise Wise's liturgy. Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 258f. Actually, the prayerbook issue was central to the East-West conflict, since Einhorn had a rival liturgy which competed with Wise's. Both men trumpeted the dispersion of their book, printing the names of the congregations that adopted their liturgies in the *Israelite* and the *Jewish Times*.

[42]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 359, Heller, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, pp. 394f. Radical Reformers had been considering a switch to Sunday services, in line with Christian observance.

[43]*Jewish Times* 2 (August 26, 1870):408f.

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escaped unscathed, since invariably Wise served as a human lightning rod for the hostility of critics.[44]

Undeterred by this blistering attack by the *Jewish Times*, the group reconvened in New York in October 1870.[45] They unanimously elected Lilienthal president, perhaps because he was less offensive to the Eastern Reformers than Wise. Hoping to make peace with Einhorn's group, the conference had formed a committee for reconciliation, but the radicals refused to come. While recognizing the failure of the effort, Lilienthal urged the reconciliation committee to continue to try to make peace. Offering to join in its efforts, he said,

> Entering the path of reconciliation, it will lead us sooner to the culmination of our own work, than if the breach and wound were not healed, or would grow greater yet. Only by a consolidated action, only as brethren is it possible to accomplish something. Is not our contest for something essential? What is moderate Reform and what radical Reform? That which one party is not willing to touch, the other party, likewise, keeps hands off, if perhaps for other reasons. That much is certain, that the position is no ground for a division.[46]

Lilienthal addressed the Eastern leaders' personal animosity towards Wise by denying that one man could dominate American Judaism. The time of personal rule had passed:

> Not mere individuals can do the work, but all united must join hands. Let us make every possible step, let us move all levers to effect a unity of all our colleagues so that we may accomplish our work to the glory of Judaism, the honor of the Jewish ministry, the joy of the congregations.[47]

The committee received his remarks enthusiastically and resolved to renew its efforts to achieve unity.

The conference's only serious clash was over a proposal to change the name of the

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[44]Ibid.

[45]For a full report see *Israelite* 17 (November 4, 1870):8.

[46]*Jewish Times* 2 (November 4, 1870):564. Lilienthal seems to have seen the ambiguity inherent in these categories.

[47]Ibid.

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prayerbook. While this may have been an attempt to defuse Eastern concerns over Wise's power, Wise took it as a personal attack, positing that the revision of his *Minhag America* was the central purpose of the conference. He walked out in protest, and it took the efforts of Rabbi Huebsch and others to bring him back. This rather childish behavior became standard for Wise at these meetings.

The liturgical work of the conference progressed very slowly, in part because the members continually got sidetracked into discussions of Indiana's divorce laws, a proposal submitted by Lilienthal to abolish the second day of Rosh Hashanah, and Wise's plan to set up a rabbinical college. The pretense that the group was only concerned with liturgical reform was dropped. The participants saw themselves as the rabbinical body of American Jewry and agreed to convene another conference the following year in Cincinnati.

Wise was now upbeat, even though the revisions of *Minhag America* were still not complete.[48] Meanwhile Lilienthal took advantage of his good relationship with the *Jewish Times* to publish a letter of reconciliation with Einhorn's faction shortly after the conference:

> Dear TIMES, except [*sic*] my sincere thanks for the conciliatory remarks with which you closed your report on the conference. You were perfectly right in stating that the men assembled there cared more for a reconciliation and union of all the Reform rabbis than for any other business. . . . Let us take a calm and considerate review of the situation.[49]

Lilienthal addressed the competition between Einhorn's and Wise's prayerbooks head on, saying the issue was secondary compared to the greater one of unity. He pointed out that Einhorn and Adler did not use the same prayerbook, and that his congregation, Bene Israel, had used a combination of the Adler, Einhorn, and Wise liturgies on Yom Kippur. Arguing that the choice of liturgy should be left up to each rabbi and congregation, he assured the radicals that the Western congregations earnestly wished for a union.[50] This

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[48]*Israelite* 17 (November 18, 1870):8.

[49]*Jewish Times* 2 (November 25, 1870):612.

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letter was classic Lilienthal, stressing pluralism and tolerance of differences. He differed from the ideologically pure Easterners mainly in his insistence that the highest value was the achievement of larger common goals.

Though Einhorn's faction did not share Lilienthal's pluralistic, pragmatic vision, they focused their attack on Wise, whom they blamed for the antagonism between Western and Eastern congregations. The *Jewish Times*' editor, Moritz Ellinger, claimed that, in the interest of harmony, it would have been better to leave out the question of a uniform prayerbook, adding that

> We are pleased that Rev. Dr. Lilienthal, the President of the late Conference in this city, in his correspondence in another column, endorses our views in this matter, and justifies the action of the original callers of the Philadelphia Conference. . . . Let all those members who attended the late New York Conference evince the sincerity of their professions of peace and union by answering the summons [for a continuation of Philadelphia] and peace will once more be established in Reform Israel.[51]

The Easterners would be reconciled only if the Westerners participated in a continuation of the Philadelphia Conference according to their radical agenda.

Lilienthal and Wise had no intention of returning to the platform of Philadelphia. In April 1871, when the *Israelite* issued a call for a conference in Cincinnati in June, it explicitly expanded the agenda from the earlier focus on *Minhag America*.[52] This conference was to become an established institution, working for the "benefit and progress of Judaism." The *Israelite* listed almost thirty participants, ministers and lay delegates, representing Midwestern, Southern, and Eastern congregations.[53] At the opening session, outgoing President Lilienthal set the wide-ranging list of tasks: finishing the prayerbook, establishing a rabbinical college to train American rabbis, formulating a

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[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid., pp. 616-7.

[52]*Israelite* 17 (April 14, 1871):8.

[53]Ibid. (June 9, 1871):8. This showed regional diversity in the support for the conference, counteracting the claim that they represented only the Western congregations.

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common curriculum for Sabbath Schools, creating a Hebrew Publication Society, sponsoring circuit rabbis to preach to smaller congregations, and arranging that future conventions incorporate the presentation of scholarly papers. He made another gesture of reconciliation toward the Eastern Reformers (who may have begun planning their own seminary), while elaborating on the plans to open a rabbinical school in Cincinnati in conjunction with McMickens University (later the University of Cincinnati):

> We do not doubt, that the Hebrew congregations in the East, and especially in the city of New York, where so much wealth and talent is congregated, will also open a Seminary for the institution and education of ministers for our flourishing congregations.[54]

Claiming that he welcomed this effort, Lilienthal suggested a joint committee to establish a curriculum for both seminaries. Unfortunately, Lilienthal's committee had to report their inability to resolve "some personal differences of opinion . . . between the gentlemen of the conference, held in Philadelphia in 1869, and the members of this conference."[55]

After Lilienthal's speech, the Cincinnati Conference began the work of creating permanent institutions, including a yearly conference of rabbinic and lay leaders and a union of congregations. The purpose of the latter would be to support a school "for the education of rabbis, preachers and teachers of religion," but it would also create texts for Sabbath Schools and inexpensive English-language Jewish Bibles. Two years later, these became the rationale for the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. The proposed structure of union membership, limited to congregations who paid dues on a per member basis, anticipated that of the UAHC. A curriculum for the proposed seminary, formulated by Rabbis Wise, Lilienthal, Huebsch and others, was traditional, with emphasis on Bible and commentaries, Hebrew and Aramaic languages, and the study of Mishnah, Talmud,

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[54]Ibid. This is also an example of how Lilienthal's role in the wider community dovetailed with his Jewish activities, since he was simultaneously involved in the creation of McMickens University and a rabbinical seminary which would need a connection with a secular university. See previous chapter.

[55]Ibid., 17 (June 16, 1871):8.

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and Midrash. Advanced students would also be exposed to modern German biblical scholarship that would draw on archeology and philology. This curriculum became the model for the courses at Hebrew Union College, which would place a strong emphasis on the study of traditional texts along with critical methodology.[56] Indeed, a comparison of the proposals of the 1871 Cincinnati conference and the early work of the UAHC shows a strong continuity between the two, belying claims that the latter was a reaction against rabbinical efforts.

Completing its work, the conference declared itself to be a permanent institution, and announced it would hold the next meeting in Chicago the following year. Wise, with his usual dramatic flair, predicted "a chapter of Jewish History was made in one week, which is calculated to open a new and promising future to American Judaism."[57] While he was right that the work of the Cincinnati Conference would be the basis for the future institutions of Reform Judaism, he could not have foreseen the convoluted path that led to their creation.

The furious Eastern Reformers were contemptuous of the results of the Cincinnati conference, believing that Wise's sole purpose was to thwart Einhorn.[58] The *Jewish Times* focused on a liturgical debate, glossing over in the *Israelite* account. In the course of a discussion of the High Holy Days liturgy, Wise had denied that the doctrines of personal redemption and reconciliation with God were authentic Jewish beliefs. He was supported by Dr. Mayer, who went so far as to reject a personal God. After a heated debate, the majority rejected these notions.[59] The *Jewish Times* seized upon this incident to ridicule Wise: "According to the philosopher Isaac M. Wise, Judaism knows no personal

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[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid., 17 (June 23, 1871):8.

[58]*Jewish Times* 3 (June 9, 1871):233.

[59]Ibid., 3 (June 16, 1871):244ff. Wise again exhibited impulsive behavior by temporarily storming out of the room.

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God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is a mere ethereal essence, as conceived in the world-redeeming brains of Isaac M. Wise."[60] Derisively they called him "a modern saviour, Rabbi-in-Chief of America" who must have had his own divine revelation since this understanding of God could not have come from the Bible itself. They called the conference a farce and a desecration of God's name.[61]

One week later, prominent Eastern rabbis, spanning the ideological spectrum from radical Reformers such as Drs. Adler and Einhorn to proto-Conservatives such as Dr. Benjamin Szold, declared that denial of the existence of a personal God "is a slander upon Judaism and a blasphemy." To allow anyone with such beliefs to prepare a prayerbook "stigmatizes prayer as an absurdity." The signatories seriously distorted the debate, missing the point that it was not Wise who had made the statement concerning a personal God. They also incorrectly claimed that "scarcely a voice was heard in opposition," in contradiction to the report in the *Jewish Times* itself.[62] Nevertheless, the protest created such an uproar that the broad achievements of a foundation for a union and college were eclipsed.

As in the past, Lilienthal stepped in to restore calm and clarity. In an article in the *Jewish Times* he claimed that the conference had tabled these liturgical issues in order to focus on more important concerns. Separating himself from Wise, Lilienthal recalled that the conferees had allowed Wise to speak out of courtesy. Admitting that Wise's and Mayer's remarks were "inconsiderate expressions," he still insisted that they had the right of free speech and were alone responsible for their positions. After the two expressed their opinions a stormy debate ensued, ending when the conference voted almost unanimously to table the discussion. He reminded the *Jewish Times* that "our aim and purpose was and

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[60]Ibid., pp. 248f.

[61]Ibid.

[62]Ibid., 3 (June 30, 1871):280.

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must be A UNION OF ISRAELITE CONGREGATIONS," admonishing: "Let us learn how to forget and forgive mistakes; let us stand united as a band of brethren, working for the same good and holy cause, and a bright future will be in store for the young Judaism of America."[63] In response, the *Jewish Times* called Lilienthal's defense lame and laid responsibility for the remarks of Wise and Mayer upon the whole conference. They concluded "conference, prayerbook, congregational union, all sink into insignificance when the ground-work of our religion had been assailed and attacked."[64]

Insisting that he was tired of the bitter recriminations, Lilienthal tried once more to bring reason to the charged situation. He heatedly denied that the conference was "the clique of Rev. Dr. Wise;" it was rather "a body of independent men, who have the interests of Judaism as much at heart, as anybody you may name." Unable to comprehend why the "episode" had caused so much trouble, he assured the *Jewish Times* that plans for a union, a seminary, and the other noble intentions of the conference would continue, regardless of the paper's attempt to derail them.[65]

Wise also claimed to be at a loss to understand why an "unimportant episode," that had merely been touched upon during the last day of the conference, could cause such an uproar. Charging that enemies of the conference seized upon this incident to prove that the members of the group were atheists, he launched into a garbled discussion of various theological systems that posited an impersonal view of God.[66] Later he insisted that personal malice was behind the protest, ironically pointing out that the same group who had accused him of not being reform enough in 1855, was now protesting that his theology was too reformed. He lashed out at those rabbis who conducted services on Sunday,

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[63]Ibid., p. 275.

[64]Ibid., p. 281.

[65]Ibid., 3 (July 14, 1871):309.

[66]*Israelite* 18 (July 14, 1871):8

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banished Hebrew from the service, ate pork, and smoked on the Sabbath, but "assume the surplice of holy inquisition, to wrap themselves in the long gown of unholy hypocrisy."[67]

Despite the personal vindictiveness of the *Jewish Times'* attack, Lilienthal and Wise could not see that, underneath, the two sides represented incompatible viewpoints: American ideological pragmatism and German ideological purity. For Lilienthal and Wise, the theological debate over the nature of God was unimportant because their focus was on the practical agenda of establishing American religious institutions. To the Eastern doctors whose German academic orientation was all-important in shaping their perspective, philosophical principles were primary. In Philadelphia, Einhorn had established his premises before addressing practical problems. From his point of view, if the Cincinnati conference was based on blasphemous first principles, then all the institutional plans "sink into insignificance." The *Jewish Times* and the Eastern bloc succeeded in derailing the institutional plans of the Cincinnati leaders temporarily so that a Chicago conference planned for June 1872 never occurred. However, the institutional framework for a union and rabbinical college conceived by the Cincinnati conference was resurrected two years later, under the leadership of the laity of Wise's and Lilienthal's synagogues.

Founding of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations was a direct result of the 1872 annual report to the Bene Yeshurun congregation by its president, Moritz Loth. A prosperous Cincinnati merchant, Loth had been a key player in the earlier conferences and a signatory to the call for the second conference in Cleveland. Though pleased with the material success of American Jewry in the 1860s, he declared that building temples was not enough. He asked the various congregations of Cincinnati to appoint committees to call a general conference of congregations of the West, South, and Northwest in order to

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[67]Ibid., (July 21, 1871):8; (July 28, 1871):8.

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establish a union whose purposes would be the following: to establish a Jewish theological faculty, to publish proper books for Sabbath schools, and to adopt a code of laws to uphold circumcision, Saturday Sabbath observance, kosher slaughtering, and dietary laws. More conservative than his rabbi, Isaac Mayer Wise, Loth feared that unchecked reforms would be disastrous to Judaism.[68] His agenda was traditional enough even to attract the Orthodox congregations of Cincinnati.

Given Loth's conservative bent, the early Union represented more of a continuation of Cleveland 1855 than it did of Cincinnati 1871. Like the earlier Cleveland Conference, its goal was the unification of all American Jewry by adopting a position midway between Reform and Orthodoxy. According to Steven Fox, the Union of American Hebrew Congregation's constitution was intentionally written to appeal to both Orthodox and Reform constituencies, and, until as late as 1903, the group perceived itself as an umbrella organization for all American Jewish congregations.[69]

Wise was pleased with his president's initiative, characterizing it as "our innermost wishes for American Judaism," but warned that "limits of reform should be left up to Rabbis."[70] The *Jewish Times*, still hostile to Wise, saw the proposal as "a protest against the tendencies pursued by the Cincinnati reformers, and a repudiation of the 'renowned preacher' and 'speculative theologian' occupying the ministerial chair of the congregation in question."[71] In this they were partly right, since Loth reflected the conservative impulse in Cincinnati congregations with which Lilienthal and Wise had been coping for almost twenty years. There must have been behind-the-scenes negotiating between the rabbis and

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[68]*Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations* (PUAHC) vol. I, page ii.

[69]Steven A. Fox, "On the Road to Unity: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations and American Jewry, 1873-1903," *American Jewish Archives* 32 (1980):152.

[70]*Israelite* 19 (October 18, 1872):8.

[71]*Jewish Times* 4 (October 25, 1872):688.

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their lay leadership, because by the time they brought the first convention to order in July 1873, the organizers had removed all ideological requirements. The new organization welcomed "any Hebrew Congregation in the United States, lawfully organized," requiring only that they choose representatives and pay dues on a per member basis.[72]

Another potentially divisive element in the original call was its regionalism, inasmuch as it only invited congregations in the South, West and Midwest. The *Jewish Times* was angry New York was excluded, ignoring an existing society in New York whose purpose was to establish a Hebrew College. Predicting failure, the paper bitterly charged that "whatever has been done so far, whatever organization has been in existence, is to be abandoned at the bidding of the Convention of Cincinnati; for from Cincinnati is to go forth the law and the redemption of American Israel."[73] The *Jewish Messenger,* a New York-based paper with a traditional religious orientation, was similarly annoyed, pointing out that the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, which could serve as the basis for a union, had been ignored.[74]

Again, we can surmise that behind-the-scenes negotiations ensued because, by the time of the July 1873 meeting, the Union welcomed all congregations in the United States. It declared:

> We, the delegates representing the various congregations of the South and West . . . do hereby cordially request our sister congregations throughout the United States to cooperate with us for the purpose of forming a more perfect union of congregations.[75]

In this way, the Union mirrored the pattern of American Protestant denominations that, by the mid-nineteenth century, created nation-wide bodies governed by congregational

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[72]PUAHC I, p. 23.

[73]*Jewish Times* 5 (August 22, 1873):408.

[74]Fox, "On the Road to Unity, p. 152. Its editor, Samuel Isaacs was one of the founders of the Board of Delegates.

[75]PUAHC I, p. 18. Accusations of regionalism persisted for years even though the leadership sent this invitation to every congregation in the country.

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representatives. According to Alan Silverstein, "By 1840, to be a bona fide American religious movement meant to be organized as a national union."[76] Like their Christian counterparts, the founders of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations were determined to avoid doctrinal disputes: "Union meant setting aside differences in ritual or theology in order to unify all Jewish congregations in practical projects."[77] Lilienthal and Wise, avid Americanizers, had long been promoters of this pragmatic approach.

Were Wise and Lilienthal being marginalized in this new effort to create a union and college for American Jewry? Michael Meyer suggested that "the lay initiative. . . put their rabbi [Wise] on the sidelines."[78] Steven Fox, in his history of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, commented that "prior to 1873, all attempts to unite American Israelites were made by rabbis. Having failed, the rabbis were forced to stand aside and allow the laity to proceed."[79] Various contemporaries agreed, including the *Jewish Messenger,* which commented in 1874, "What the clergy have failed to do, the laymen are striving very faithfully to begin and to advance."[80] At the first annual conference of the Union, temporary president Sigmund Mann made a similar point, comparing their conference with that in Cleveland in 1855 when only rabbis attended: "Today the practical businessmen of this land are here assembled."[81]

Actually, lay participation in conferences had always been part of Lilienthal and Wise's plans. As early as 1855, Lilienthal had argued for the necessity of lay input in order to contribute a practical perspective. Similarly, at the Cincinnati conference in 1871,

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[76]Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation*, p. 36.

[77]Ibid., p. 46.

[78]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 260.

[79]Fox, "On the Road to Unity," p. 157.

[80]*Jewish Messenger* (May 29, 1874), cited in Fox, "On the Road to Unity," p. 157.

[81]PUAHC I, p. 28.

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the lay leaders were invited to be voting members of the proceedings. Lilienthal and Wise's influence behind the scenes in the origins of the Union was great, especially because the Union's key early leaders were Moritz Loth and Julius Freiberg, presidents of Bene Jeshurun and Bene Israel respectively. These men had heard numberless sermons and lectures by their clergy and could not help being influenced by their viewpoints. Further, all Union executive meetings were held either at Bene Israel or Bene Jeshurun, and for the first five years of its existence Hebrew Union College would essentially be a ward of these two congregations, holding all of its classes and board meetings on their premises.

Since the 1840s the two rabbis had advocated the need for a union, a rabbinical school, and strengthened Sabbath schools. They were willing to take a subordinate role in order to accomplish these ends. Paradoxically, by relinquishing direct control, the two leaders achieved virtually everything for which they had worked so long.

Founding of Hebrew Union College

For decades Lilienthal and Wise had advocated the necessity of training American rabbis. They felt they could not continue to depend on German theological schools for religious leaders, so that the creation of their own rabbinic institution was crucial to the long-range survival of the American Jewish community. In 1855, they opened the ill-fated Zion College in Cincinnati. In 1865, the New York Reformers had established the Emanu-El Theological Seminary Association, never more than a glorified Hebrew school. In 1867, moderate traditionalists, led by Isaac Leeser, opened Maimonides College in Philadelphia, but after Leeser died, in February 1868, the school lost its driving force and closed its doors in 1873.[82] When Loth called for a conference in 1872 he made clear that his primary concern was to create an American-trained rabbinate: "We must have Rabbis

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[82]See Bertram W. Korn, "The First American Theological Seminary: Maimonides College, 1867-1873," in *Eventful Years and Experiences*, pp. 151-213.

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who possess the ability to preach and expound eloquently the true text of our belief. Such Rabbis we can only have by educating them, and to educate them we must have a 'Jewish Theological Faculty.'"[83] Lilienthal and Wise may have played subordinate roles in the founding of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, but they were central to the formation of the Hebrew Union College. Wise's role in this regard has been well documented; the focus here will be on Lilienthal's contribution to the creation of the first successful American rabbinical seminary.

Lilienthal was involved with the development of Hebrew Union College on several levels, helping to create the structure of the college, prepare its curriculum, build the library, and teach its students, for whom he also acted as a mentor. At the first annual conference of the UAHC, in July 1874, Lilienthal was named to the Board of Governors of the proposed school, a position he held until his death. The role of the Board of Governors was "to control and manage the school, and it was responsible for every detail of its creation."[84] By July of the next year, the Governors promised that the preparatory department of Hebrew Union College would open on or before October 1875. Timing was crucial because Henry Adler, a wealthy lay leader, had offered the school a gift of $10,000 with the stipulation that it be used within three years.[85] The Governors worked diligently and submitted a code of regulations by which the school would be administered.

The job of preparing a curriculum for the school fell to the rabbinic members of the Board of Governors, Drs. Lilienthal, Wise, and Wolfenstein. The 1875 annual report detailed a curriculum for the first four (preparatory) years of study, a program that emphasized Bible, Rabbinic literature and Jewish history. Wolfenstein later told a story

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[83]PUAHC I, p. i.

[84]Ibid., I. p. 106.

[85]Fox, "On the Road to Unity," p. 145. See also Michael Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: At One Hundred Years*, ed. Samuel E. Karff (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976), p. 17.

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that illustrated the dynamics of those early meetings:

> We met a consecutive number of Sundays at Cincinnati. . . . Our meetings were very animated as a rule. Lilienthal and myself agreeing and Wise opposing us. . . . It was on one of those occasions when Lilienthal, lighting a fresh cigar, broke out in a laugh, in which he liked to indulge so heartily, and turning to me exclaimed: 'Wolfenstein, you are a fool and I am another. We quarrel with Wise, and nevertheless, he will do as he pleases.' He was certainly right.[86]

Wolfenstein and Lilienthal argued for a scholarly and theoretical emphasis, while Wise wanted traditional and practical courses. In the compromise curriculum, the school would not offer Wissenschaftlich courses until the third and fourth years. Later, Wolfenstein would return as an examiner for the school and remark, "I did not find much of the program we had carried out."[87]

Lilienthal never abandoned his quest for more *Wissenschaft* in the curriculum. He gave a lengthy address at the annual UAHC Conference, in July 1875, arguing for the need to connect the curriculum of the school with scholarly trends in Europe. He proposed that the Board of Governors consult with Hebrew scholars in Europe and America. He was especially concerned about the four years of rabbinical training that followed the preparatory division and sought to elucidate the principles that should inform a rabbinic program appropriate for the American community. On the one hand, much of the old literature was irrelevant so that careful thought was needed to choose appropriate rabbinical literature for the less academically inclined American student. On the other hand, the future rabbis had to master comparative philology, mythology, philosophy, history, and "a host of other new sciences."[88]

Beyond his own commitment to this innovative program of study, Lilienthal wanted to use the curriculum as a means to reconcile Reform scholars in Europe and radical

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[86]Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, p. 282.

[87]Ibid.

[88]PUAHC I, p. 168.

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Reformers in New York with Cincinnati. Wise, concentrating on the classical heritage, wanted to make the school acceptable to the traditional congregations. For a while, the Hebrew Union College managed to balance these opposing trends and, in its first decade, was accepted by both radical Reformers and proto-Conservatives.[89]

The Hebrew Union College opened on October 3, 1875, in the vestry rooms of Bene Israel, after an impressive ceremony held at Wise's Bene Jeshurun.[90] Its student body of ten, mostly of high school age, met in the afternoon in a single class after public school was over. Lilienthal worked hard to raise the level of what was really little more than an intensive religious school, instituting the system of regular monthly examinations he had used years before in his private school.[91] By the UAHC Annual meeting in 1876, the Board of Governors reported an increase in number to seventeen students and recommended that Lilienthal be added to the faculty.[92] Lilienthal accepted the invitation and taught without compensation from 1876 until his death. Initially asked to teach a course in Jewish history from the 5th century B.C.E. to the 6th century C.E., he later taught other Jewish history courses on both the earlier and later periods. Throughout this time, he remained active on the curriculum, examination, and disciplinary committees. Wise remembered that students were not always well behaved in the first years:

> There sat the wise men of Israel, namely the good old teacher Solomon Eppinger and fourteen noisy boys, most of whom had come only to kill time and at the command of their parents. Four of them wanted to study; ten wanted to make noise.[93]

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[89]Ibid., and Michael Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 262.

[90]Michael Meyer, Hebrew *Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion At One Hundred Years*, p. 18.

[91]PUAHC I, p. 230.

[92]Ibid., p. 312.

[93]Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion At One Hundred Years*, p. 19. See also Jacob R. Marcus, "Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial Documentary," *American Jewish Archives* 26 (November 1974):108-9 for

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President Wise also referred to the problem in his 1875 annual report:

> At the beginning some difficulties were experienced in enforcing a proper discipline, but they were soon overcome without rigorous means, merely by moral suasion and personal attention, exercised by the teachers, and supported by Rev. Dr. Lilienthal, and the President.[94]

Another source of disruption was the presence of two young women among the class, one a grandchild of the instructor, Solomon Eppinger, the other Wise's niece. According to David Philipson, "the boys rather resented the presence of these girls" and played practical jokes on them.[95] These incidents may have been part of the motivation for a plan to open a ladies' seminary. Moritz Loth, in his 1877 annual report suggested that

> in order to offer the daughters of Israel the same opportunity of obtaining a Hebrew and Classical education, including music and the arts . . . I respectfully and earnestly recommend the adoption by this council of measures which will call into existence a Young Ladies' Hebrew Seminary.[96]

Lilienthal was on the committee to put this idea into effect, but it never materialized.

Lilienthal was a mentor for the young students. David Philipson recalled the influence of the older man upon him in his autobiography, *My Life as an American Jew*. He remembered the many Friday evenings he spent as a guest in the Lilienthal home, celebrating the Sabbath with them. As he had in New York, the rabbi helped create a feeling of extended family for the students in the young school. Often away from home for the first time, these children found this very comforting.

Perhaps the high point of Lilienthal's involvement in the Hebrew Union College came in April 1881, when a new college building was completed and the school could

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David Philipson's stories of practical jokes.

[94]PUAHC I, pp. 230f. This mild approach to discipline had long been Lilienthal's preference, going back to his early years in New York.

[95]Marcus, "Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial Documentary," p. 108.

[96]PUAHC, I, pp. 188f., and pp. 246f. While the Reformers wanted to equalize the educational opportunities for young women, they were hardly, in 1877, advocating the ordination of women rabbis.

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finally leave the basements of the two large Cincinnati Reform synagogues. The Union had purchased a three-story mansion in a fashionable part of the city and converted it into a school building with a library, classrooms, and chapel.[97] Lilienthal, on the committee to prepare the dedication, offered a prayer at the celebration, thanking God for inspiring the Israelites of America to create the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, which in turn had endowed Hebrew Union College: "We have been asked to dedicate in their name this splendid building to the noble purpose of educating ministers and instructing them as servants of the Most High, the Holy One, Father of the whole human race."[98] Especially significant to Lilienthal was the fact that the students would be educated "on this virgin soil of human liberty [so that] they may teach the Sacred doctrines of civil and religious liberty."[99]

East-West Reconciliation

With each year the UAHC gained more congregations, and the successful opening of Hebrew Union College also boded well.[100] Eventually the New York rabbinical leadership, both the proto-Conservatives and the Eastern Reformers, seeing the wisdom of supporting the new institutions, began a cautious process of reconciliation.[101] As

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[97]Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: At One Hundred Years*, p. 19.

[98]Ibid. and PUAHC, II p. 1064.

[99]Ibid. The rabbi rarely passed up an opportunity to remind his audience of the uniqueness of American religious liberty, so central was it to his vision.

[100]See Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation*, p. 48 for a chart of the Union's growth. In 1874, the Union boasted 56 affiliated congregations, the next year 72, then 81, etc.

[101]This story has been told, but never with reference to Lilienthal's role in the healing process. See Ryback, "The East-West Conflict in American Reform Judaism," pp. 3-25; Fox, "On the Road to Unity," pp. 145-193; Tarshish, "The Board of Delegates of American Israelites, pp. 16-32; Max J. Kohler, "The Board of Delegates of American Israelites, 1859-1878," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 29 (1925):111.

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previously mentioned, Eastern newspapers, representing Einhorn's faction (*Jewish Times*) and the traditionalists (*Jewish Messenger*), were initially skeptical of the Union and school, not least because they had felt excluded by the regional bias of Moritz Loth's original call. Furthermore, they were annoyed that Eastern institutions such as the Board of Delegates had been ignored by the Union.

Lilienthal sounded one of the first conciliatory notes in a speech to the UAHC Annual conference in July 1875.

> I am a man of peace, and am sure I express the unanimous sentiment of this large assembly if I assert that we are tired of the wrangling and quarreling of some of the ministers of this country. The Congregations want peace and harmony; let the ministers, the preachers and teachers of peace, set the good example of extending the brotherly hand of reconciliation. If mistakes have been made, and they have been made, it is no use of denying it, let them be forgotten. . . . Let us show the world we are first in soliciting harmony and in advocating reconciliation in fostering mutual good will.[102]

He particularly hoped that the two branches of Reform would cooperate in the Hebrew Union College. Lilienthal's speech elicited loud cheers, after which the Union unanimously adopted his resolution.

The East showed no signs of cooperating. To the contrary, in January 1877, the *Jewish Times* announced plans for their own convention of congregations that would erect an "Institution for Jewish Science and Theology" to rank with the best in the country. The article explicitly cited "the example of our brethren in the West," whose energy had brought about the opening of the Hebrew Union College.[103] Over the next few months, the *Jewish Times* agitated for the conference, set for May 1876. The list of rabbinical participants represented the major scholars of the young country, ranging from radicals such as Adler, Einhorn, and Kohler, to moderates such as Huebsch, to proto-Conservatives such as Marcus Jastrow, Sabato Morais, and Benjamin Szold.[104] With

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[102]PUAHC I, p. 170.

[103]*Jewish Times* 7 (January 28, 1876):759.

[104]Ibid., 8 (May 26, 1876):200.

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HUC barely opened and struggling to maintain itself, this powerful bloc of Eastern rabbis presented serious competition.

That this disparate group of rabbis was able to cooperate even to a limited extent is evidence of a change within the Eastern leadership, which had been brought together under the auspices of the Board of Delegates. During the 1870s, that organization emerged as a meeting ground for proto-Conservatives and radical Reform leaders. This had not always been the case. The Board of Delegates, formed by Isaac Leeser and Samuel Isaacs in 1858 to respond to the Mortara Affair, was originally a moderately traditionalist organization dedicated to Jewish anti-defamation. The founders also hoped the Board would address wide-ranging issues such as the improvement of Jewish education, professional standards for clergy, charity, and aid to the sick and immigrant groups.[105] Leeser, who shared Lilienthal and Wise's Anglo-American vision of denominational union, hoped the Board would become the basis for a national union of congregations. In the first years, avowedly Reform congregations were conspicuously absent from its ranks.

The religious makeup of the group changed as the emphasis of the organization narrowed to the fight for Jewish rights. Reformers, who had been deterred by the traditionalist emphasis in earlier projects, felt free to associate with its new direction. Some key members of the Board became more hospitable towards Reform, including Myer Isaacs, son of the founder, so that by the mid-1870s the Reformers had gained a majority.[106]

In spite of their differences, the Easterners were united in their distrust of Wise, who, they felt, liked to portray himself as the lone proponent of Jewish learning in America. They also remained scornful of "that college of Wise's" and his request for contributions from the New York congregations. Wise, they claimed, spoke about the

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[105]Tarshish, "Board of Delegates," p. 16.

[106]Ibid., pp. 30f.

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young school as if it were "the grandest institution of Jewish learning ever established in the world since the time of Jochanan ben Sacchai."[107]

Soon after the Easterners' convention, the UAHC met in Washington, D.C. to commemorate the country's centennial; again it was Lilienthal who tried to keep peace by putting the proposed New York school in a positive light:

> Whereas, our sister congregations have resolved to open, in the city of New York, a second Hebrew college for the education and instruction of Jewish ministers; and whereas our brethren in the Eastern metropolis, assisted by other congregations, have got the means, the men, and by their side peculiar scientific institutions to make the proposed institution a success; and whereas in our country there is room enough for several institutions of the kind; therefore be it Resolved, that the delegates of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, assembled in Washington, D.C. hereby tender their Eastern sister congregations, engaged in the noble work of opening a second Hebrew college for Jewish ministers, their hearty congratulations, wishing that very success may crown their praiseworthy efforts.[108]

Although the committee rejected his suggestion inviting the Easterners join the Union,[109] his conciliatory effort caused the UAHC to form a committee to confer with the Board of Delegates of American Israelites to formulate "a plan for concerted action." The proposal used some of the same language as Lilienthal's original resolution, including approval of the Easterners' effort to begin their own school.[110]

The fact that some of the men active on the Board were now also members of the UAHC helped. The Eastern Reformers on the Board of Delegates saw the benefit of a merger between the two groups, though the proto-Conservatives feared that the merger would lessen their influence.[111] In spite of his qualms, Mayer Sulzberger, a proto-

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[107]Ibid., 7 (February 17, 1876):809. The reference, of course, is to Rabbi Yochanan ben Zaccai's gathering at Yavneh after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E..

[108]PUAHC I, pp. 239f.

[109]Ibid., p. 250.

[110]Ibid., p. 253.

[111]Tarshish, "Board of Delegates," p. 31, and Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, p. 198.

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Conservative lay leader, agreed to address the council at the 1876 UAHC Convention in Washington on behalf of the Board of Delegates. Although the actual merger would take two years to finalize, the groups agreed to cooperate on a project to collect statistics on American Jewry.[112]

In the meantime, the Easterners did open the Hebrew Theological Seminary, which, by March 1877, boasted twenty-five students. Its faculty consisted of Dr. Moses Mielziner, a fine Talmudist, and one other teacher. As late as June 1877, the supporters of the new school resisted efforts to unite East and West.[113] Frustrated with the Easterners' unwillingness to support the Hebrew Union College, and sensing that their reticence was based on their distrust of him, Wise commented in the *Israelite* that these gentlemen had Wise on the brain, that they erroneously believed that he monopolized all the power in the Union.[114]

At the annual meeting of the Union in June 1877, the joint committee was able to report progress on a plan that would make the Board of Delegates an arm of the UAHC, which would then assume the cost of subsidizing a Jewish Publication Society. Lilienthal's friend Dr. Wolfenstein, a member of the merger committee, was delighted about the prospect of a truly national organization, transcending parties and regions.[115] The final details of the merger were worked out by the time of the UAHC Annual Conference in July 1878, where the two sides celebrated an unprecedented moment of Jewish unity. Moritz Ellinger, editor of the *Jewish Times*, recounted that "it was amusing and pleasant to see men, who for years have warred against each other . . . shake hands and exchange opinions in the most friendly manner." During the banquet Ellinger offered a

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[112]PUAHC I, p.; 245.

[113]Ibid., pp. 345f.

[114]*Israelite* 28 (June 18, 1877):4.

[115]PUAHC I, pp. 347f. Lilienthal's name, while on the original committee, does not appear in later negotiations, but it is likely that he was influential behind the scenes.

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toast: "No East, no West should now divide our common religious interests. We are one people, we are brethren, let us join hands."[116]

Though Einhorn had fought Wise since he had come to America, in the last year of his life he became a member of the Board of Governors of Hebrew Union College. The Hebrew Theological Seminary in New York was transformed into a preparatory school for the Cincinnati rabbinical school. In 1879, Lilienthal was one of three rabbis appointed to examine the New York school. Some of the proto-Conservatives such as Frederick De Sola Mendes served as examiners for the Cincinnati school; the *American Hebrew*, which represented the views of the proto-Conservatives, praised the College in the following terms: "For framing minds of such tendencies the Hebrew Union College possesses possibilities, which only require efficient co-operation and encouragement from the American Jewish public, to develop into a permanently fruitful institution."[117]
When the new college building was opened, the *American Hebrew* called it "an event in Jewish history" that was achieved by intrepid men despite many obstacles.[118] Lilienthal's quarter-century-old dream of a true unity of the liberal and moderate wings of American Jewry had been achieved - - or so it seemed.

Rabbinical Literary Association

Even before the success of the East-West reconciliation Lilienthal initiated efforts to fulfill his last major goal, a union of rabbis.[119] He felt that if rabbis and ministers met regularly in a congenial atmosphere they would be able to solve many of the important

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[116]*Jewish Times* 10 (July 19, 1878):1.

[117]*American Hebrew* 2 (March 19, 1880):50.

[118]Ibid., 6 (April 29, 1881)121.

[119] Sidney Regner, "The History of the Conference," *Retrospect and Prospect*, p. 2, says that it was a rabbinical conference in all respects except in name. Heller, *Isaac M. Wise*, p. 439 discussed the organization but focused on Wise.

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problems facing modern Judaism, such as "harmonizing religion and science, practical life with tradition, and silencing the antagonistic voices of atheism and pessimism."[120] Having been involved in many polemical battles over the years, Lilienthal had no illusions about the substantive differences between the various parties. Yet he believed that only "from controversy will the truth be created."[121] Lilienthal himself hoped this organization would be "the crowning point of the years I have spent in my holy and responsible office."[122]

At the annual UAHC Conference in July 1877, he announced that "The undersigned beg leave to inform your honorable body that they have united for the purpose of starting a Jewish Literary Association, consisting both of ministers and laymen."[123] He hoped the group would share information on ancient and modern Jewish literature, especially from the perspective of German scholarship. The group would discuss theological questions, organize lectures, publish a quarterly, and afford access to the latest scholarly views to the students at HUC who could not read German.[124]

A year later, at the 1878 annual conference in Milwaukee, the Rabbinical Literary Association was formally organized, a constitution adopted, and an executive committee appointed. Lilienthal, the chairman, promised to "complete the organization before July 1879, when the association will meet in New York to elect permanent officers and begin its work."[125]

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[120]*American Israelite* (formerly the *Israelite*) 26 (August 1, 1879):4.

[121]Ibid.

[122]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, p. 95.

[123]PUAHC I, p. 387.

[124]Ibid. This reflected Lilienthal's ongoing concern that the rabbinical students be exposed to German scholarship.

[125]*American Israelite* 25 (July 19, 1878):4.

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At the July 1879 meeting in New York, Lilienthal attracted rabbis from across the spectrum from the proto-Conservative camp to the radical Reformers. After the group formulated its structure and objectives, it elected Lilienthal president. He had been busy over the past year corresponding with prominent scholars in Europe, including Ludwig Philippson of Bonn, Adolph Jellinek of Vienna, and Heinrich Graetz of Breslau, who all agreed to be honorary members of the new group. Jellinek promised to help the association acquire a valuable library from Vienna. Graetz suggested that the literary association join hands with a similar group established by the Alliance Israelite in Paris; the two could jointly sponsor prizes for essays in Jewish scholarship and develop textbooks on Jewish theology.[126] Lilienthal also took advantage of his stay in New York to meet with Rev. Samuel Isaacs, editor of the *Jewish Messenger* and head of "Hebraica," a publication that he hoped to merge with the quarterly that the Rabbinical Literary Association would produce.

The next year, in Detroit, the first convention of the Rabbinical Literary Association took place. According to Lilienthal: "During the whole meeting, it was not once necessary to call any speaker to order; everyone, it appears, knew exactly his place and duty. . . . It was on the whole, one of the most pleasant and most dignified meetings we have attended."[127] Lilienthal felt the meeting promised: "The happy dawn of peace and concerted effort among its [American Jewry's] teachers."[128] Even Wise, who had a history of turbulent behavior at these conferences, acknowledged the group's debt to his friend at its conclusion:

> We had come here with doubts as to the practicability of this meeting; we had come with fears that questions and discussion might arise which would

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[126]Ibid., 26 (August 1, 1879):4. This correspondence fulfilled his wish, expressed in 1875, that Hebrew scholars in Europe and America cooperate to create a course of rabbinical study.

[127]Ibid., 27 (July 23, 1880):28.

[128]Ibid.

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> be carried to an unpleasant extent, threatening the harmony and cooperation of the leaders of American Judaism. The venerable leader [Lilienthal] has again taught us the lesson of peace.[129]

The rabbis heard papers on subjects such as "The Law," "Pedagogics in Sabbath Schools," and "Theology in the Age of Criticism." Committees were also formed to consider a myriad of *halakhic* issues from *kashrut*, marriage, and divorce laws to funeral rituals.[130] The group revealed its basically Reform orientation when, during the discussion of dietary laws, one member remarked that "they have ceased to be a burning question" because they were rarely observed any longer.[131]

By considering these issues, the conference moved beyond its function as a literary discussion group and revealed its intention to become a rabbinical union. The group wrestled with their authority to rule on matters of Jewish law, especially in the context of the separation of church and state. Lilienthal addressed this issue directly in his opening remarks:

> We do not, and cannot claim, as at present constituted, any legislative authority. The autonomy of the congregation begins to be recognized everywhere, and is nowhere a more stubborn fact than in this country, where Church and State are entirely separated. We Israelites have no priests.[132]

They wanted to avoid any taint of a European, state-supported religious hierarchy. They also rejected the pattern of centralized control characteristic of the Catholic Church, emphasizing instead the autonomy of each congregation and its leadership. The group considered calling a formal synod which would have *halakhic* authority, but felt that this was beyond its legitimate purview. They did set up a committee that would suggest

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[129]*Hebrew Review* 1 (1880):95.

[130]Ibid., p. 85.

[131]Ibid.

[132]Ibid., p. 7.

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guidelines for such a body at the next annual meeting.[133]

The *Hebrew Review*, the quarterly journal of the Rabbinical Literary Association, reported these proceedings in detail, along with the texts of the papers delivered at the conference. After some delay, Lilienthal, who edited this periodical, sent the journal to all R.L.A. members and other subscribers.[134] The *American Israelite* welcomed the *Hebrew Review*, claiming it was well-received in Europe as well. Lilienthal declared that "they know across the ocean that free thought and free speech are characteristics of our country" and that some German and French articles were being translated for subsequent issues.[135]

The *American Hebrew,* which had initially lauded the formation of the R.L.A. and its "energetic president," however, was not happy. Wise's article on "The Law" led the proto-Conservative newspaper to call for his resignation as president of the Hebrew Union College. If Wise really believed that only the Ten Commandments were unchangeable law, then it was hypocritical for him to teach at a school that emphasized the study of traditional texts. If he was consistent, he should avoid teaching the classical legal corpus, thus neglecting his stated duty.[136] The proto-Conservative group may have been wary of Lilienthal's organization in any case, because its sole representative on the original board, De Sola Mendes, had withdrawn sometime after the 1879 meeting. Lilienthal was far from having achieved the broad-based unity for which he hoped, but as usual he remained sanguine:

> We heartily welcome the criticism on the articles in the *Review* published

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[133]Ibid., p. 86.

[134]*American Israelite* 27 (October 1, 1880):108.

[135]Ibid., 27 (April 8, 1881):317.

[136]*American Hebrew* 3 (July 9, 1880):85; (July 16, 1880):106; 5(November 26, 1881):14f. The paper misinterpreted Wise's article which argued that the Decalogue was the basis for all of Jewish law. *Hebrew Review* 1 (1880):31.

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> by the weekly Jewish Press. It reflects the various shades and opinions which now prevail in Judaism. The chaos which hangs over many a vital question can be dispelled only by a discussion and an earnest exchange of ideas. In this era of transition it is the only means of securing harmony for the future. As long as personalities are avoided, and only the case in question is argued, success will finally be secured.[137]

The number of attendees at the second meeting of the Rabbinical Literary Association, held in Chicago in July 1881, grew to almost thirty. As a conciliatory gesture towards the more traditional clergy, a banquet held in their honor by Congregation Bene Shalom was strictly kosher.[138] Unfortunately, the harmony that had pervaded the first gathering was broken on several occasions. The first outburst came over the issue of whether a synod should be called; Samuel Hirsch loudly denounced Wise's advocacy of such a gathering, beginning with reasoned arguments but drifting into a personal attack on Wise.[139] Some leaders, distrusting Wise and the power he already wielded through the College and Union, feared a synod would only add to his control of American Reform. After enduring what the *American Israelite* characterized as a torrent of abuse, Wise appealed to Lilienthal to stop the attack. When Lilienthal was unable to do so, Wise left the hall and Lilienthal adjourned the session.[140]

A paper offered by Moritz Ellinger, entitled "Ancient and Modern Rabbis," elicited more fireworks. In it, Ellinger, not a rabbi himself, discussed the new and increased responsibilities of the modern rabbinate. He suggested that the number of capable rabbinic leaders had decreased and that many rabbis lacked enthusiasm for their work. Emil Hirsch angrily rejected the negative characterization, blaming the demoralization of American rabbis on autocratic lay leadership. This time Lilienthal was able to turn the controversy in a productive direction with a resolution making the professionalization of the rabbinate a

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[137]*American Israelite* 27 (April 8, 1881):317.

[138]Ibid., 28 (July 15, 1881):20.

[139]Ibid.

[140]Ibid.

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major focus of the R.L.A.

The Rabbinical Literary Association then formed a committee to consider establishing a "mutual protective and aid association" for Jewish ministers. A fund created by annual contributions would "support such members as have, in consequence of sickness or other cause beyond their control, lost their positions and have no other means of support." Another committee was appointed to formulate regulations for the engagement of ministers and to define the responsibilities of clergy and congregations to each other.[141]

Alan Silverstein suggested that the efforts of Reform leaders to professionalize the rabbinate in the 1880s followed a broader shift within American society. Protestant ministers sought to transform their vocation into a profession in a desire for more status within a growing culture of professionalism that had spread since the Civil War. These ministers organized

> literary and other professional groups for clergy collegiality and in recasting modes of training. Greater emphasis was placed upon the professional character of the ministry. Vigorous attempts were made to upgrade the standards of ministerial training.[142]

Lilienthal, ever attentive to American trends, also followed the lead of professional societies which established codes of ethics and standardized expectations for their members in the late-nineteenth century.[143]

The R.L.A. might have done much to raise the professional level of the rabbinate by regulating placement, setting standards for congregational-rabbinic relations, and providing support for needy colleagues. It also could have offered professional advancement for clergy through the sharing of scholarship. But this promising organization did not survive the loss of its leader. When Lilienthal died in the spring of

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[141]*Hebrew Review* 2 (1882):52f.

[142]Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation*, p. 128. Also see Scott, *From Office to Profession;* Marty, *Righteous Empire.*

[143]Ibid., p. 127. Also see Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism.*

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1882, the *Hebrew Review* ceased publication. Though the group attempted to replace him, first with Kaufmann Kohler and then with Adolph Huebsch, it disbanded in 1883.[144] The work of the Rabbinical Literary Association would be continued when enough like-minded rabbis had graduated from Hebrew Union College and formed the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1889. However, the Central Conference differed from Lilienthal's conception of a broad-based association serving all American rabbis because, by that time, ideological fragmentation had become a permanent feature of American Jewry.

Lilienthal as the Prince of Peace

Lilienthal was vital and active in the full range of his professional, civic, and educational projects until days before his death. In fact, the American Jewish community had chosen him to make an arduous trip to Russia with Moritz Ellinger on a mission of support for Russian Jewry, planned for the summer of 1882.[145] On the evening of April 1, 1882, he suffered a stroke that paralyzed his left side and died peacefully on April 5, at the age of sixty-seven, surrounded by his brother, his children, and many admirers. There was an outpouring of tributes from many of the synagogues and organizations with which he had been associated. The *American Israelite* gave a full account of the funeral.[146]

The tributes referred repeatedly to his central role as the peace-maker of American Jewry. During the funeral Adolph Moses of Louisville wondered:

> Oh 'Prince of Peace,' who will in the future, when the east contends with the west, step between them and join their hands together? Oh 'Prince of Peace,' who will in the future days allay the passion and jealously of blind prejudice? 'Prince of Peace,' why hast thou left us? On whom will thy

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[144]*American Israelite* 28 (April 21, 1882):338; and American *Hebrew* 15 (July 27, 1883):21. See also Marcus, "Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial Documentary," p. 128, who noted that rabbis "assembled as a conference enjoyed a literary and cultural program," at the time of the first Hebrew Union College ordination in 1883.

[145]*American Israelite* 28 (April 14, 1882):332. See Chapter Five above.

[146]Ibid., pp. 329, 332f.

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> mantle fall?[147]

Rabbi Aaron Hahn of Cleveland also acknowledged this as Lilienthal's greatest quality:

> Peace was his first and his last word in all transactions of his life. Who, my friends, will now mitigate the jealousies of our Rabbis? Who will, like he, humble himself before all classes of our ministers only to reconcile them to each other?[148]

The *American Hebrew* emphasized this theme in its eulogy, which, in light of the imminent separation of the proto-Conservative group from the Reformers, took on special significance.

> With all his energy and zeal, he was a true disciple of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing it. Not all the enthusiasm of a holy task ever beguiled him into angry remonstrance or passionate reproach; he was emphatically a man of peace. Such men are the desideratum of the day. In these times, when opinions clash and conflict runs high, when partisanship is keen, and esprit de corps often covers one blunder by boldly perpetrating another, the man of peace, who can control the warring elements, brings them to helpful harmony and unites their energies to blessing instead of to evil, is the true leader of his fellowmen. Such a one has passed from us. . . . Who shall occupy though they cannot fill the position of Dr. Lilienthal in the counsels of the Jewish nation here?[149]

His old friend Isaac M. Wise knew more than any other man how much Lilienthal had done for the cause of peace. Wise was devastated by the death of his co-worker, whom he tenderly referred to by his Hebrew name, Menachem:

> I lament the loss of the man who has brought us all nearer to one another in the kindness of his heart by his pleasant and conciliatory words and his restless work in the vineyard of humanity and brotherly love. . . . With all of you I feel the loss we sustain by the death of this Rabbi in Israel, who was a banner-bearer in our midst, a Captain of the Host of the Lord, a harbinger of peace, whose vacant place in the ranks of our champions can not easily be filled. But better than all do I know what I have lost, with whom I have lived and toiled, suffered and hoped, prayed and struggled, these thirty-six years. Therefore, I cannot speak, for I cannot yet think; therefore I can only lament and weep.[150]

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[147]Ibid., p. 332.

[148]Ibid., p. 333.

[149]*American Hebrew* 10 (April 21, 1882):110.

[150]*American Israelite* 28 (April 14, 1882):332.

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Reform and Conservative: A Parting of the Ways

No person of Lilienthal's stature emerged to take over his role as peace-maker in American Jewry; polarizing forces intensified in the mid-1880s which resulted in the permanent factionalization of American Judaism into distinct ideological movements. On the one hand, the proto-Conservatives began defining themselves and their concerns in a way that gradually led to the creation of their own school.[151] On the other, the Reform movement, under the influence of Kaufmann Kohler, drifted in an increasingly radical direction. At the beginning of the decade it was still not obvious that the proto-Conservatives would have to create their own movement. The two groups shared the intellectual and cultural background of German university training and both approached Jewish texts with historical-critical methodology. Further, they shared the concern for dignity and decorum in religious services, and some of the major proto-Conservative leaders even officiated in synagogues with organs.[152] Most scholars agree that two events were critical in precipitating the split: the "Trefa Banquet" of 1883 and the Pittsburgh Platform of 1886. In both episodes, Lilienthal's diplomatic skills were sorely missed.

The first incident was meant to be the joyous conclusion of an epochal moment, the first ordination of American-trained rabbis. In July 1883, amidst tremendous excitement,

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[151]Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, pp. 200ff. Sabbath observance, dietary laws, Hebrew language, and resettlement of the land of Israel were among the defining concerns of their program. For another view of the significance behind the rise of this group see Jonathan D. Sarna, "A Great Awakening: The Transformation that shaped Twentieth-Century Judaism and its Implications for Today," (New York: Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, 1996). He places the movement within the context of late nineteenth-century religious revivals, pp. 12f.

[152]Among those proto-Conservative rabbis with university training were Henry Hochheimer (Ph.D., University of Munich); Marcus Jastrow (Ph.D., University of Halle); Alexander Kohut (Ph.D., University of Leipzig); Frederick de Sola Mendes (Ph.D., University of Jena); and Benjamin Szold (three years of philosophical and language study at the University of Breslau). See Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, Appendix A, for biographies of the leadership. According to Davis, Szold, Jastrow, Hochheimer, and De Sola Mendes had organs in their synagogues. See ibid., p. 212.

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Jewish leaders from all over the country assembled to celebrate the occasion, which also coincided with the tenth anniversary of the Union.[153] David Philipson, one of the four graduates, would later recall:

> I have lived through many great moments but never have I seen a company so exaltingly excited as the men and women at the close of this first ceremony of ordination in the United States. Men wept for joy and women threw their arms around the necks of the participants in the ceremony. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to recapture the ecstasy of that thrilling moment. It was a high point in the career of Reform Judaism in the United States.[154]

Philipson went on to describe the events of the evening. The Cincinnati committee had engaged a Jewish caterer to plan the dinner, with instructions to make it kosher. Apparently the man had known to exclude pork products, but had not realized that shellfish was also not kosher. The meal featured little neck clams, crab, and shrimp salad, and mixed milk and meat, also contrary to Jewish dietary laws. When the first course was served, two rabbis rose from their seats and left while several others refused to eat anything.[155] According to Philipson, "The Orthodox Eastern press rang the changes [*sic*] on the terefa banquet week in, week out."[156] Michael Meyer assumes that:

> Wise himself had not been party to this breach of *kashrut*. Indeed, it was politically so preposterous a faux pas that he would never have allowed it to happen. But that it could have occurred at all simply brought into focus what the afternoon's ceremonies had so deftly obscured: the supporters of the College represented such a wide spectrum of attitudes to Jewish tradition that the alliance forged over the previous years was unlikely to remain long intact.[157]

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[153]Marcus, "Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial Documentary," p. 128.

[154]Jacob R. Marcus, "An Intimate Portrait of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations: A Centennial Documentary," *American Jewish Archives* 25 (April 1973): 19.

[155]For the complete menu see, Ibid., p. 20. See also Marcus, "Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial Documentary," pp. 128ff.

[156]Marcus, "An Intimate Portrait of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations: A Centennial Documentary," p. 19.

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As might be expected, the proto-Conservatives took the incident as proof that Hebrew Union College was not training rabbis for all segments of American Jewry. Frederick de Sola Mendes, who had been an official examiner at the College, complained:

> The Rev. I.M. Wise, President of the Hebrew Union College, and ordainer of four rabbis, has not yet thought fit to protest against the clam-frog-crab banquet tendered by the Jews of Cincinnati to the Jewish ministers and laymen. Does the eleventh chapter of Leviticus form any part of the college edition of the Pentateuch?[158]

He charged the school with inconsistency between precept and example and predicted a disastrous blow to its prestige. Both de Sola Mendes and Marcus Jastrow broke with the Reformers over this event.[159] Had Wise apologized for the mistake, he might have minimized the damage, but instead he joked about those Jews who were obsessed with "stomach Judaism." Rather than being conciliatory, he attacked de Sola Mendes furiously. This defensive reaction helped launch what would later become the Conservative movement.[160]

It is difficult to understand why Wise, who had spent so many years trying to make Hebrew Union College acceptable to all of American Jewry, would suddenly undermine those efforts. Why would the man regarded by many as "the head of all Israel in the United States" and who had guided the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in a non-denominational path, adopt such a partisan position? Could it be that without his friend Lilienthal he was no longer able to balance the conflicting demands of the left and the right? In the year after Lilienthal's death, Wise came increasingly under the influence of

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[157]Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: At One Hundred Years*, p. 41.

[158]Cited in Plaut, *The Growth of Reform Judaism*, p. 55.

[159]Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, pp. 219f.

[160]Ibid., and Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, p. 286. According to Michael Meyer, Wise personally refrained from pork on sanitary grounds and excluded all seafood, except oysters. Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: At One Hundred Years*, p. 42. Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation*, p. 116.

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Kaufmann Kohler and the radical Reformers. When the proto-Conservatives found a new spokesman, Alexander Kohut, who had recently arrived in New York from Hungary, it was Kohler who, in 1885, responded with a spirited defense of Reform. The debate between the two scholars sharpened the ideological issues separating the two camps as American Jewry moved away from the earlier model of a theologically diverse union that Lilienthal had espoused.[161]

To clarify where Reform stood, both with regard to the proto-Conservatives and to threats from the left such as Ethical Culture, Kohler called the Pittsburgh Conference in November 1885. Michael Meyer explained the bind in which Wise found himself:

> As head of the Hebrew Union College, he could not afford to be left out, though he must have realized that his presence in a gathering likely to reach radical conclusions might well jeopardize the continued participation of more traditional congregations in the UAHC.[162]

Even though the conference elected him president, without the strategic support of Lilienthal, Wise's influence was marginal. W. Gunther Plaut has commented:

> To be sure, the famed Isaac Wise of Cincinnati, was elected President, which was a wise political move. For while the Cincinnati rabbi's ego was served, his theology was not. When the platform was adopted, his ideas had crumbled in defeat, and the far more radical philosophy of Einhorn, represented by Hirsch and Kohler, had carried the day.[163]

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[161]Silverstein, *Alternatives to Assimilation*, p. 116. See also Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 183f. for the issues in the debate.

[162]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 268. The following discussion of the Pittsburgh Conference and its platform is not meant to be a complete treatment of the history and content of that important event, but rather an attempt to indicate the shifting ideological climate of which it was a symptom. For general treatments of the Pittsburgh Conference and platform see David Philipson, "The Pittsburgh Rabbinical Conference," *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook* 45 (1935): 190-206; Sefton D. Temkin, "The Pittsburgh Platform: A Centenary Assessment," *Journal of Reform Judaism* (Fall 1985): 1-12; Walter Jacob, ed., *The Changing World of Reform Judaism: The Pittsburgh Platform in Retrospect* (Pittsburgh 1985); and Jonathan D. Sarna, "New Light on the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885," *American Jewish History* 76 (March 1987):358-68. Robert M. Seltzer, "From Pittsburgh '85 to Minneapolis '85: How Judaism Confronts Modernity," *Central Conference of American Rabbis Yearbook* 95 (1985:23-31.

[163]W. Gunther Plaut, "The Pittsburgh Platform in the Light of European Antecedents," in *The Changing World of Reform Judaism*, p. 17. Wise's marginalization followed the

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Kohler set the agenda; the famous Pittsburgh Platform that emerged from the proceedings was basically his document.[164] Whatever Wise's private misgivings, he hailed the platform as a "Declaration of Independence."[165] The proto-Conservative leader Kohut bitterly asked "Independence from what?" and answered his own question: "Independence from Judaism."[166] Wise threw himself enthusiastically into the polemical fray, defending the platform as if it were his own. He claimed that "we *are* the orthodox Jews in America, and they *were* the orthodoxy of former days and other countries." He warned the proto-Conservative group that they would have to join the Reformers or remain isolated because Reform represented "the overwhelming majority of all American Jewish citizens." He challenged the the proto-Conservatives from the pages of the *American Israelite*: "You cannot destroy the Union, or this College; you try in vain. If one congregation or ten are forced out of the Union by priestly dictation, twenty other congregations will come in, and you will stand isolated."[167]

The lay leadership of the Union and Hebrew Union College, still faithful to the earlier vision of a united American Judaism that transcended ideological differences, issued a disclaimer to the Pittsburgh Platform at its July 1886 meeting:

> The Union of American Hebrew Congregations is now and has always been since the hour of its formation, a *real* Union of American Congregations united for the purposes set forth in the Preamble and Article II of the constitution, and no attempts looking towards an abandonment of the principles therein set forth have been made or would be tolerated, as any action to the contrary of these expressed ideas on the part of any officers of this Union we consider as endangering its future welfare and interests.[168]

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pattern of the the 1869 Philadelphia Conference.

[164]Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, p. 268. Philipson, "The Pittsburgh Rabbinical Conference," p. 198 names five rabbis on the platform committee: Kohler, Emil Hirsch, Sonneschein, Krauskopf, and himself. Wise was excluded from this important preliminary work, which was already based upon Kohler's formulations.

[165]Plaut, *The Growth of Reform Judaism*, p. 34.

[166]Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, p. 228.

[167]Cited in Philipson, "The Pittsburgh Rabbinical Conference," pp. 201 and 203.

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Bernhard Bettmann, president of the Board of Governors of Hebrew Union College also issued a disclaimer from the doctrines of the Pittsburgh platform. The *American Hebrew* took neither statement seriously and demanded that the UAHC take action against Wise. However, the Union never officially rebuked Wise.[169] Though it remained the official policy of the Union to embrace all American congregations, there was no longer an eloquent spokesman for the cause of a broader union. Again, had Lilienthal lived, he might have articulated such a position. Given the respect which the *American Hebrew* had accorded him over the years, Lilienthal might have once again, as he had in the past, persuaded the factions to stay together.

In fact, the Pittsburgh Platform served to finalize the split between the proto-Conservatives and the Reformers. Within months, Sabato Morais, Alexander Kohut and others founded the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. This group would find its constituency in the flood of Russian immigrants unleashed by the pogroms of 1881. The Conservative movement helped Americanize these more traditionally oriented Eastern European Jews, much as the Reform of Lilienthal and Wise had helped acculturate the earlier German immigration.[170]

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[168]Fox, "On the Road to Unity," p. 171.

[169]Ibid., pp. 171f.

[170]Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism*, pp. 235ff. Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, pp. 314ff.

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Conclusion

Evolution of Lilienthal's Religious Ideology

The broader context for this study of Lilienthal has been the development of Reform in the German- Jewish immigrant community, comparing it to other German immigrant religious groups and weighing the role of American versus German paradigms. These factors alone, however, do not explain why Lilienthal changed from a modern traditionalist to radical Reformer during the course of his maturation. Because he wrote very little of an autobiographical nature, except pieces for the *Israelite* on his years in Russia, we are left with brief, tantalizing remarks concerning Lilienthal's intellectual evolution by his friend Wise in the *Israelite* and in the eulogy Wise published in the *Hebrew Review.* Though there is insufficient evidence to trace his development in detail, some conclusions do seem warranted.

A key to Lilienthal's values can be found in the multivalent concept of *Bildung,* which provided the ideological underpinning for the German-Jewish subculture into which he was born. *Bildung* emerged in the eighteenth-century German Enlightenment, in contrast to the earlier notions of self, as the conviction that the modern subject is self-defining.[1] As more sense of human control over the world developed, a new freedom and confidence in human subjectivity also grew.[2] Kant postulated autonomy as the goal of human self-emancipation. The Romantic era, both a reaction against and a continuation of the Enlightenment, reinvested *Bildung* with a "mystical aura of untrammeled personal development of personal powers and faculties to some kind of transcendental fulfillment."[3] Hegel had held that the self-realization of the Spirit (*Geist*) was found in freeing itself from

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[1]Talyor, *Hegel*, p. 7.

[2]ibid., pp. 8f.

[3]Diehl, *Americans and German Scholarship*, p. 18

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limiting conditions as it pressed onwards to autonomy.[4] Translated into politics, this new optimism and freedom provided a spiritual justification for a rejection of feudal and aristocratic power.[5] In pedagogical theory, a profound belief in the self-formative power of education provided the theoretical basis for the modern German university system, whose faculty influenced generations of scholars and leaders in all fields. Religion was also challenged by critical scholarship which applied the philological and historical methodology of *Wissenschaft* to sacred documents, reshaping itself around the notion of individual autonomy and ethical perfection.

In spite of his exposure to this liberal nexus of ideas in the German-Jewish subculture and especially at university, Lilienthal retained his religious traditionalism for many years. Understanding the concept of *Bildung* rather conservatively at first, he advocated the religious goal of "edification" through uplifting sermons and increased decorum.[6] This was consonant with the eighteenth-century meaning of *Bildung* as moral cultivation rather than as the drive for complete individual autonomy.[7]

Throughout his life, Lilienthal gradually embraced the more radical implications of *Bildung*, both personally and intellectually. His Russian experience helped him understand the significance of the modern German-Jewish values with which he was raised in contrast to the conservatism of the traditional and Hasidic Judaism he encountered in Eastern

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[4]Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, p. 35.

[5]For the connection between spirituality and politics see Sheehan, *German Liberalism*, p. 14.

[6]Lilienthal's early sermons in Munich were full of such pietistic and moralistic messages.

[7]For a discussion of the evolution of the concept see Chapter One above, pages 19f. Taylor, Hegel, p. 11; Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry*, p. 15. Similarly, some American clergymen studying in Germany in the mid-nineteenth century encountered biblical criticism without losing their faith. Diehl, *Americans and German Scholarship*, p. 66. Lilienthal also recognized that many people can study the same concepts and come to a variety of conclusions, based on their background and inclinations. See *Asmonean* 10 (August 4, 1854):125 for his discussion of *Wissenschaft* and Reform.

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Europe. He frequently commented on the distance between the Russian-Jewish and German-Jewish cultures in letters to his family.[8] His failure to bring *Bildung* to the masses of traditional Russian Jews may have sharpened his awareness of the radical implications of the concept.

Lilienthal's coming to America, a substitute for unfulfilled European emancipation, filled him with a lasting desire to celebrate and defend its freedoms. Barely off the boat, he wrote of America as "the God-blessed land of Freedom, the beautiful soil of civil equality."[9] He was a serious student of the heroes, foundational documents, and the animating principles of this country, which meshed easily with the Enlightenment principles learned in his youth.

Within six months of his arrival, he forged a close relationship with Wise. Wise, initially the more progressive, commented that Lilienthal gradually, over many years, became more open to Reform ideas in their discussions concerning theology. These developments were given their first public expression in the 1849 *Lichtfreunde* address and more fully in Lilienthal's 1854 *Asmonean* articles.

After his move to Cincinnati, other figures would challenge Lilienthal further. His exchange of letters with Leeser in 1856 led him emphasize the overwhelming importance of harmonizing Judaism with the "spirit of the times." That religion must consciously adapt to modern culture if it was to remain vital and relevant was also a primary belief of modernist Protestantism in the late nineteenth century.[10] Lilienthal's portrayal of the development of

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[8]See, for instance, a letter dated Riga, September 16, 1840 to his father and prospective father-in-law. Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 140f. The Russian Jew "despises all education, hates all culture, opposes all good manners, misinterprets every effort at enlightenment, understands not a German word."

[9]*Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums* 10 (January 5, 1846):18.

[10]Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse*, p. 2. Modernism was the most pronounced form of the liberal Protestant theology developing after the Civil War. "The modernists shared a basic optimism about creating heaven in the present through concerted human effort." Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*, p. 135.

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history in those letters was the working-out of *Bildung* in universal terms: "So is human history as a whole a continuous process of freeing itself from the deficiency of the latter [time and space], a continuous progress of an unceasing reform, and a never-stopping development to a higher degree of perfection," which was itself governed by divine Providence.[11]

He encountered a sympathetic exponent of Protestant modernism in Dr. Thomas Vickers, the Unitarian minister with whom he exchanged pulpits in 1867. Their relationship went beyond these exchanges since they worked together for many years, serving on school board committees during the Bible controversy and helping to found the University of Cincinnati in the 1870s. Lilienthal called his friend "a profound thinker, an eminent scholar, and aforcible writer."[12] This German-university-trained theologian stimulated Lilienthal to move closer to the forefront, so that by the 1870s Lilienthal was identified by the *Jewish Times* as a radical Reformer. Indeed, he had gone beyond Wise on such issues as the acceptance of the documentary theory of the formation of the Bible, encouraging Wise to institute critical studies into the curriculum of the Hebrew Union College. Editing the *Hebrew Review*, which published articles meant to "put modern Judaism on a basis, firm and reasonable, built upon literary research, learned investigations and the lessons taught by our own Jewish history,"[13] he located himself within the most liberal trends in both his own religion and in Protestantism in the decades following the Civil War.[14]

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[11]Philipson, *Max Lilienthal*, pp. 379, 383. This expressed the second important characteristics of modernism, that God is immanent in human cultural development and revealed through it. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse*, p. 2.

[12]*Jewish Times* 1 (December 24, 1869):5. Lilienthal consulted with him many times as he attempted to write a biblical history for use in his Sabbath school.

[13]*Hebrew Review* 1 (1880): 6.

[14]Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*, p. 125.

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Certain behavioral patterns provide a basis for speculation into his motivations and character. For Lilienthal, each move in a progressive direction seems to have been a response to moments of professional failure or personal loss, which led him to embrace a new, more liberal ideology. When his mission to bring *Bildung* to Russian Jewry failed, he gave up his Haskalah belief in government-initiated enlightenment and enthusiastically turned to democratic values. After he lost the power struggle in the three German synagogues in 1848, he espoused a belief in a moderate Reform based on *Wissenschaft.* After the failure of the Cleveland Conference of 1855, he rejected most of traditional theology to create a Jewish version of an American Civil Religion.[15] In 1867, during his wife's final illness and in the midst of frustrating obstructions at his temple, he began his important interfaith work with the Unitarian Church and established his working friendship with Dr. Vickers. In the next few years, he was to move even further left.

Underlying these shifts may have been an ambivalence concerning his vocation that went back to his youth. He oscillated between wanting and not wanting to be a rabbi. After he promised his dying mother that he would become a rabbi, he almost abandoned the plan when tempted by a diplomatic position. Though offered a number of pulpits with the help of Lugwig Philippson, he chose instead an educational position in Russia. In New York, he avoided resolving his differences with the three German synagogues, and he renounced the pulpit in favor of founding a private school. When Wise complained to him about his troubles in Albany, Lilienthal revealed his disgust with the rabbinate in an odd metaphor for a rabbi to use: "There is no help for you. . . . If you want to be the Christ, you must expect to be crucified. I will not. I shall do something else for a living."[16] When Lilienthal rejected much of traditional Jewish theology after 1856, he compensated

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[15]Isaac M. Wise, *Hebrew Review* 2 (1881-2):188.

[16]Wise, Reminiscences, p. 129. He was also bitter about the short-term contracts, prevalent in his early years, that forced rabbis "to flatter and humble themselves before every ignoramus with a right to vote in the annual elections." May, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, pp. 145f.

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by throwing himself into the school board, community service, organizing charities and social agencies, thereby expanding the role of the modern rabbi in unprecedented directions. In 1868, the death of his wife and the crisis over Reform at Bene Israel seems to have rekindled his ambivalence once again, causing him to consider leaving the congregation and community that he had served for thirteen years. His renewed activities on the national scene in the creation of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Hebrew Union College, and the Rabbinic Literary Association may have helped him resolve his personal and professional crises, but an 1877 letter to his son Philip seems once again to express underlying ambivalence when he exclaimed: "Thank God, Yom Kippur is over, and I stood the onerous office like a major."[17]

Lilienthal seems at times to have been more concerned about the economic success of his offspring than about their commitment to Judaism. He worked hard to get them positions with Seligman Brothers, a prominent Jewish banking firm in New York. It was his idea, in 1871, that his and his brother Samuel's children set up the Lilienthal Pact, a family fund which would ensure their financial security.[18] Perhaps it was his hope that the next generation of Lilienthals would regain the socio-economic stature that the family had lost with the end of the Court Jew in Germany. A number of his seven children became part of the German-Jewish elite in New York and San Francisco, but only one of his children, Jesse, exhibited strong Jewish commitments as a lay leader at San Francisco's Temple Emanu-El.[19]

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[17]Lilienthal, *The Lilienthal Family Record*, p. 76. This comment, written when he was in his early sixties, is admittedly open to a number of interpretations. Leading a congregation while fasting for a full day can be a daunting task for even a younger rabbi.

[18]Ibid., p. 73. According to his niece Sophie, he based his idea on the model of the Rothschilds and Seligmans, though on a much smaller scale. Incorporated in 1880, the fund upon which seven families drew for many years, was valued at $500,000 in 1903. O'Neill, *Ernest Reuben Lilienthal and his Family*, pp. 69ff.

[19]Though the family rejected spiritual vocations, they thrived in the spirits business. Theodore and Albert formed Lilienthal and Company, a liquor distributor serving the West Coast. They coordinated their efforts with another family business, Lilienthal Brothers,

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Institutional Innovator

Through his many articles, Lilienthal emerges as an effective popularizer of the Reform intellectual world-view, a somewhat Hegelian vision of history and a Kantian vision of human potential, which he translated into American terms for his congregants and readers. He left no systematic theology nor did he publish a significant book on a Jewish subject.[20] Believing practical results mattered more than theoretical discussions, his lasting contributions were in Jewish institutional life, which he approached creatively and pragmatically.[21]

Lilienthal's effectiveness in the creation of the UAHC, HUC, and Rabbinic Literary Association was the climax of a lifetime of attempts to find creative and pragmatic solutions to the problems facing the Jewish communities he served. In many of these efforts, his goals were down-to-earth: better textbooks, improved curriculum, higher standards for rabbinical training, a uniform liturgy, the stuggle against missionaries, and help for the needy. He worked equally hard for long-range goals: greater unity within American Jewry, increased commitment to Jewish education, religious equality, interfaith dialogue, sharper separation of church and state, expansion of Jewish rights at home and abroad. To achieve these ends, he was willing to negotiate with seemingly irreconcilable parties, regrouping after failures even as he cast them in a positive light. The title "prince of peace," more than any other, characterized much of his career.

N.Y. which distributed for breweries throughout the Eastern States. In 1890, they consolidated under the leadership of their cousin Ernest to form the Crown Distilleries Company. O'Neill, *Ernest Reuben Lilienthal and his Family*, pp. 53ff. As for his daughters, though Eliza and Esther married successful merchants, the youngest, Victoria, never married.

[20]The closest was his translation of Emanuel Hecht's *Synopsis of the History of the Israelites for the Time of Alexander the Macedonian to the Present Age.*

[21]For instance, he had belittled the "dry historical investigations of Frankel's school" because their aim was "merely theoretical." *Israelite* 2 (November 2, 1855):137. See page 170, above.

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Pursurer of Unity

In the nineteenth century, the Jewish community's varied responses to modernity produced a wide ideological spectrum of movements. Though some of his efforts contributed to increased polarization, he saw himself among those who tried to counter divisiveness within the Jewish community, pursuing consensus, even as his religious views changed. He advocated tolerance of differences, hoping an exchange of ideas devoid of personal attacks would lead to creative solutions. He exemplified this ideal, even as he demanded that others transcend the rancor of the period to work for *Klal Yisrael.*

As a rabbinical candidate in Germany, Lilienthal condemned the acrimony resulting from the debate between reformers and traditionalists, urging the community to unite in order to build Jewish institutions and schools. While in Russia, Lilienthal sought to forge a working agreement among the Maskilim, Mitnagdim, and Hasidim.

In 1854, even as Lilienthal was emerging as a spokesman for Reform, he called for harmony among American Jewry in a series of articles in the *Asmonean.* After the Cleveland Conference of 1855, he labored to find a middle ground between the radical Reformer David Einhorn and the traditionalist Isaac Leeser. During the late 1850s and 1860s, Lilienthal sought, especially in his sermons, to equate Judaism with American values, as a basis for consensus within the Jewish community. When the issue of slavery threatened to destroy the Union, true to form, Lilienthal searched for a way to reconcile North and South.

Lilienthal reentered the religious debates in the late 1860s, when he attempted to mediate the dispute between Wise and Einhorn, focusing on the tangible benefits of unity and cooperation over ideological purity. Lilienthal helped to form the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College as institutions whose membership would embrace radical Reformers, moderate Reformers, and proto-Conservatives. The short-lived Rabbinical Literary Association, the climax of his search for consensus, was intended to bring together American rabbinic leadership through study and discussion of

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controversial issues. Widely eulogized at his death, Lilienthal was mourned by American Jewry as its most important spokesman for a united American Judaism.

Historical Legacy

Given Lilienthal's important contributions to nineteenth-century Judaism and the degree of respect he received in his time, why is he not widely remembered today? Perhaps it was just because he lived and worked in the shadow of the dominant Jewish leader of the period, Isaac M. Wise. Wise's need to occupy center stage and Lilienthal's willingness to relinquish that honor dovetailed.[22] They made a remarkable team: Wise the colorful, impulsive, and charismatic provocateur; Lilienthal the scholar and tactician who masterfully tried to smooth over every crisis in which Wise became embroiled. They worked intimately at every stage of the development of American Reform. Though Wise would live eighteen years longer, he never found the time to record the contribution of his "beloved Menachem," with whom he "lived and toiled, suffered and hoped, prayed and struggled" for thirty-six years.[23]

In his last years Wise was the patriarch of American Reform Judaism, presiding over the Hebrew Union College and the Central Conference of American Rabbis until his death in 1900. Yet for all his prominence Wise was effectively outmaneuvered by Kaufmann Kohler, Emil G. Hirsch, and the other radical Reformers who forced him to acquiesce to elements of the Pittsburgh Platform that contradicted positions he had held earlier in his life.[24] After decades of fighting over the format of liturgy, the CCAR readily adopted the *Union PrayerBook* in 1894, following Einhorn's *Olath Tamid* rather than

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[22]One striking example of this tendency for self-effacement is found in his journal, the *Hebrew Review*, which reported the scholarly proceedings of the Rabbinical Literary Association. Lilienthal created the journal and edited it by himself during the last years of his life. Yet it was Isaac M. Wise's picture that appeared at the front of the volumes.

[23]*American Israelite* 28 (April 14, 1882):332. Instead it fell to Rabbi David Philipson, Lilienthal's student and successor to offer an homage.

[24]Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise: Shaping American Judaism* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 290ff. See also Meyer, *Response to Modernity*, pp. 268ff.

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Wise's more conservative *Minhag America.*[25] Did the younger generation sense that, for Wise, his principles took second place to a need to be considered the "founder of American Reform Judaism?" Perhaps in those years of waning influence and concern for his place in Jewish history, Wise had no inclination to highlight the earlier achievements of his friend Lilienthal who had successfully guided him through so many ideological struggles.

Even if Lilienthal had lived longer, his and Wise's synthesis of moderate Reform practice with American values would hardly have met the needs of many in the late nineteenth-century Jewish community. They offered the German-Jewish immigrants a vision of America as a new Zion, where practicing Jews could be fully at home, where reason and equality would usher in a millennial age in which the great principles of Jewish ethical monotheism would be universally acknowledged. This vision was threatened by diverse forces in the last decades of the century. On the one hand, Felix Adler's Ethical Culture tested the limits of Reform universalism, forcing Reform to define itself with greater doctrinal specificity. On the other, the rise of anti-Semitism challenged the view that complete acceptance into American society could occur as a result of conforming to American social norms and embracing its ideals.[26] Finally, the Lilienthal-Wise synthesis was not viable as an ideology that could have guided the masses of still traditional Eastern European Jews or their secular, socialist counterparts through the difficult process of adjustment to America, in part because these new immigrants did not share the earlier wave's German cultural background, in part because American society and economy had

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[25]Temkin, *Isaac Mayer Wise*, p. 299.

[26]Lilienthal wrote of this new racial anti-Semitism in his last article, "The Jew, A Riddle," *Hebrew Review* 2 (1881):119-134. He cites "the fanatic tirades of the Jew-baiters, Stoecker, Marr, Henrici, Smith, and compeers." However, he declared that the Jew "will never surrender his abiding faith in a better future for the human race. He will still hope and trust that the time must come in which the doctrine of the fatherhood of God and of the common brotherhood of men will not be a barren phraseology. . . . Then racial antipathy, racial persecution, will be either ridiculed as a nightmare or be pitied as temporary insanity."
p. 128.

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changed so much by the 1890s.

Yet to say that Lilienthal's impact was transitory would be incorrect. The educational, social, and benevolent institutions he helped form to solve the problems of his times flourish and have become the models for other later efforts. Though the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College never fulfilled their original all-embracing purpose, they still serve as an umbrella for an important segment of American Jewry with its own internal diversities. The other American Jewish denominations have followed the Reform movement's pattern of national union, college, and rabbinic organization that Lilienthal helped establish. The vision of a non-ideologically based national union transcending differences to solve common problems has reappeared in the twentieth century in the guise of national Jewish charitable and social action organizations, such as the Council of Jewish Federations, the American Jewish Committee and American Jewish Congress. Lilienthal's contribution to the creation of an American rabbinate has endured as well. The abysmal training and status of the clergy, so common in the mid-nineteenth century, is a thing of the past. Lilienthal promoted a vision of professional schools that impart scholarship and practical skills to prepare effective American religious leaders. Like Lilienthal, many rabbis still teach in colleges and universities, engage in a vigilant defense of Jewish equality, and take part in inter-religious dialogue. His pursuit of peace, both within the Jewish community and in the broader world, has been perpetuated by many of America's rabbis. Lilienthal's legacy continues to inspire and inform the American Jewish community to which he devoted so much of his life's work.

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Appendix: Jewish Conferences (1855-1885)

Date	Conference	Participants	Agenda
October 1855	Cleveland	Rabbis	Unity, Education, Liturgy
November 1869	Philadelphia	Rabbis	Reform principles
June 1870	Cleveland	Lay, Rabbis	Liturgy
October 1870	New York	Lay, Rabbis	Continuation of Cleveland
June 1871	Cincinnati	Lay, Rabbis	Liturgy, College, Union
July 1873 (Annual)	Cincinnati	Lay, Rabbis	First Annual UAHC Convention
May 1876	New York	Rabbis	Hebrew Theological Seminary
July 1879	New York	Lay, Rabbis	RLA, Unify rabbis, scholarship
July 1880	Detroit	Lay, Rabbis	RLA, Same agenda
July 1881	Chicago	Lay, Rabbis	RLA, professionalization of rabbinate
July 1883	Cincinnati	Lay, Rabbis	RLA, Same agenda
November 1885	Pittsburgh	Rabbis	Principles of Reform Judaism

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