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The Twentieth Century Through American Jewish Eyes: A History of the *American Jewish Year Book*, 1899-1999

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“EVERYTHING MUST HAVE A BEGINNING, and the beginning is necessarily imperfect.”¹ With this modest disclaimer, the first volume of the *American Jewish Year Book* opened, appearing in time for Rosh Hashanah of the Hebrew year 5660 (1899–1900). American Jewry at that time boasted a population (according to the *Year Book*) of 1,043,800, making it the third largest Jewish population center in the world, after Russia and Austria-Hungary. New York, home to about half the nation’s Jews, had ballooned into the world’s most populous Jewish community, more than twice the size of its nearest rival, Warsaw. Over 40 percent of America’s Jews were newcomers, in the country ten years or less. And more Jews were pouring into the country every day.

The publishers of the new *Year Book*, the Jewish Publication Society (JPS), founded in Philadelphia in 1888, understood the changing situation of the American Jewish community better than did most American Jews. JPS leaders, many of them longtime community activists, viewed America as the future center of world Jewry and boldly aimed to prepare American Jewry to assume its “manifest destiny.” Germany, where many of their own parents had been born, had disappointed them by succumbing to “a revival of mediaeval prejudices.” “It befits us as free citizens of the noblest of countries,” they announced, “to take it up in their stead.” Blending together American patriotism with concern for the welfare of their fellow Jews abroad, they looked to publish books that would both prepare American Jewry to assume the burden of Jewish leadership and, simultaneously, announce to the world that the American Jewish community had arrived.²

The *Year Book* would advance both of these goals. Its editor, 36-year-old Cyrus Adler, was something of a wunderkind. America’s first Ph.D.

¹*American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 1 (1899–1900), p. ix. Subsequent references to the *Year Book* cite only volume, year(s), and page(s).

²Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888–1988* (Philadelphia, 1989), pp. 13–26, 357.

in Semitics from an American university (Johns Hopkins), he had already helped found the Jewish Publication Society, the American Jewish Historical Society, and Gratz College, and he was an editor of the *American Hebrew*—all of which he managed to do while working full time in Washington as the librarian of the Smithsonian Institution, one of the highest ranking positions then held by a Jew in the federal bureaucracy. Apparently, he edited the *Year Book* in his spare time—and for no money. He did so, he later explained, to help provide American Jews with the facts they needed in order to “grapple successfully with the large problems of the Jewish situation.”³ At the same time, he clearly sought to counter the snobbish European Jewish view that American Jewry was backward. As recently as 1888, the English-Jewish textbook writer, Katie Magnus, had described American Judaism as “not always in a very much better state of preservation than among the semi-savage sects of ancient civilization.”⁴ The new *Year Book* offered a contrary view: “A cursory examination,” Adler observed, “. . . will . . . convince the most pessimistic that Jewish ideals have a strong hold upon the Jews of the United States, especially in the direction of charitable and educational work.”⁵

The same cursory examination would disclose that the *Year Book* drew upon two venerable traditions. First, like an almanac, it provided American Jews with a reliable Jewish calendar, carefully listing dates according to the Jewish lunar system, as well as Jewish holidays and fast days, the new moons, the weekly “Pentateuchal” and “Prophetical” portions, and related information critical to Jews who sought to organize their lives according to the traditional rhythms of the Jewish year. Jewish communities had been producing these kinds of annual calendars since the dawn of printing, and one had appeared in America (covering a period of 54 years!) as early as 1806.⁶ Unlike secular almanacs, these volumes did not perpetuate beliefs in “astrology, prophecy, and mysterious occurrences in the natural world.”⁷ They did gradually expand to include useful information—everything from memorable dates to a list of the most important European highways. The *Year Book* would include some of these and other “useful” features. Second, the *Year Book* drew upon the 19th-

century tradition of the literary yearbook, the German *Jahrbuch*, which featured annual articles of communal and scholarly concern. The Hebrew annual *Bikkure ha-Ittim* (1820–31) and Isidor Busch’s *Jahrbuch* (1842–1847), both published in Vienna, offered examples of this genre, while in the United States the more popular *American Jews’ Annual*, published by Bloch Publishing Company from 1884 to 1896, similarly included literary articles in addition to an extensive calendar. The *Year Book* would include such material as well.

The most immediate model for the *Year Book*, however, was *The Jewish Year Book*, established in England in 1896 as “an annual record of matters Jewish.” Its editor, the “critic, folklorist, historian, statistician, [and] communal worker” Joseph Jacobs, believed that “inadequate information” lay at the root of many of Anglo-Jewry’s communal problems. Through his *Jewish Year Book* he sought to provide the facts and figures that the community needed to know about itself so that it might plan its future intelligently. He also provided additional data—a guide to Jewish reference books, a glossary of basic Jewish terms, lists of Jewish celebrities, and the like—to serve as a basis for Jewish home education and communal self-defense.⁸ The handsomely bound and printed “English Jewish Year Book,” as it came to be called, impressed American Jews, and in 1897 the influential New York Jewish newsweekly, the *American Hebrew*, urged JPS to produce a Jewish yearbook on the same model for American Jews. Cyrus Adler, who had actually proposed such a volume even before the British book appeared, heartily seconded the suggestion and offered his services. Unsurprisingly, when it finally appeared in 1899, the *American Jewish Year Book* followed its English predecessor in everything from its name and the spelling of “year book” as two words, to its size and its format. Later, it would far surpass its English older cousin and become the most important and enduring annual Jewish reference book in the world.

Setting the Course

The first two volumes of the *American Jewish Year Book* established patterns that lasted for many years. First, as noted, the volume opened with an extensive calendar—the only place in the volume that Hebrew words and letters appeared. This became, in time, the “official” calendar of the American Jewish community, and was widely consulted by non-Jews seeking to learn when Jewish holidays began and ended. In 1904 the *Year Book* added a multiyear listing of Jewish holidays for those who

³Vol. 5 (1903–04), p. viii.

⁴Katie Magnus, *Outlines of Jewish History* (London, 1888), p. 313; Sarna, *JPS*, p. 30.

⁵Vol. 1 (1899–1900), p. x.

⁶“Almanac,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (1901), pp. 426–28; Moses Lopez, *A Lunar Calendar, of the Festivals, and Other Days in the Year, Observed by the Israelites, Commencing Anno Mundi, 5566, and Ending in 5619*. . . (Newport, 1806).

⁷Maureen Perkins, *Visions of the Future: Almanacs, Time, and Cultural Change, 1775–1870* (New York, 1996), p. 1.

⁸Sarna, *JPS*, p. 79.

sought to plan ahead, and in 1906, as a service for “those who observe the Sabbath in the traditional way,” it began to print sunrise and sunset tables for various latitudes, so that Jews might know when the day of rest officially began and ended throughout the United States.⁹ Any reader who opened the volume was thus transported at once into the world of “Jewish time,” where days begin at sundown, and months are defined by the waxing and waning of the moon.

Following the calendar, the volume featured an extensive review of the previous year. In 1899 this was accomplished through two articles, one by Abram S. Isaacs on “The Jews of the United States,” and the other by the English *Jewish Year Book*’s Joseph Jacobs on “The Jews of Europe.” Isaacs’s article began on a triumphalist note that characterized much of the *Year Book*’s early writing about America:

The record of the Jews of the United States each succeeding year, as the population steadily increases, with corresponding growth in religious, charitable, and educational institutions, becomes more and more noteworthy While in many countries the mediaeval spirit prevails, making the Jew a wanderer and outcast, on American soil he seems to be preparing a distinctly new era [here] the genius of the Jew, his adaptativeness [*sic*], energy, persistency, is finding ample field for the highest and most varied endeavor.¹⁰

Jacobs offered a more sophisticated analysis, and in the process pointed to a problem that would regularly confront many a *Year Book* writer over the years. “Where the condition of Jews is favorable,” he observed, “there is little or nothing to say, so that what one has to report gives a rather sombre tinge to the whole picture, which is liable to be misleading.” He then went on to summarize the year “in two words—Zionism and Dreyfus,” predicting (correctly) that the former would “divide the communities of this generation” just as Reform Judaism did earlier ones and (less correctly) that the collapse of the case against Captain Alfred Dreyfus in France would deal “a severe blow . . . to Anti-Semitism throughout Europe.”¹¹

The decision to separate American from European events was reversed in the second volume of the *Year Book*. Henrietta Szold, perhaps the most learned American Jewish woman of her day and best known for her later role as founder of Hadassah, was then “Secretary to the Publication Committee” at JPS—actually its *de facto* editor—and she greatly assisted Adler with this volume. Her “painstaking and indefatigable labors,” Adler acknowledged in the preface, were responsible for “much of the ac-

curacy and many of the improvements” that the new *Year Book* introduced.¹²

One of these improvements was a different kind of review of the year, which Szold wrote by herself. A characteristically brilliant piece, it covered wide sections of the Jewish world in a single narrative that linked Europe and America together thematically. “In the annals of Jewish history, the closing year of the nineteenth century will occupy a prominent though not an honorable place,” Szold began. Notwithstanding many tales of woe—from “ritual murder charges” to “distress” to “famine”—she found “the prevailing gloom” to be “shot through with gleams of light.” A heightened degree of “self-respect,” she argued, was manifesting itself throughout the Jewish world—in Zionism, in movements of Jewish self-defense, and in Jewish religious life. The Old and New Worlds were, to her mind, inexorably linked insofar as Jews were concerned: “The Old World,” she wrote, “has for many years been setting the Jews of the New World difficult problems to solve. They must try to remedy in detail what the civilization of Europe perpetuates in the wholesale.” Even as she warned against “the rosy view of Judaism in America,” she predicted that “in the not too distant future the United States will become a centre of Jewish scholarship.” Yet it was not with America that Szold ultimately concluded, but Zion. Choosing her words carefully—she knew that *Year Book* readers disagreed violently over the wisdom of political Zionism, and on all such divisive issues the *Year Book* took refuge in nonpartisanship—she declared that “in the habitations of the Jews there is light . . . the Jew steps into the new century still conscious of his mission, occupied with the questions, political, social, ideal, that are at once summed up and solved in the word Zion.” And then, to ensure that opponents of Zionism did not complain, she recalled for her readers the spiritual meaning of the word: “Zion, that is, the mountain of the house of the Lord, to which the nations shall flow to be taught the ways of the God of Jacob, and to walk in His paths.”¹³

The essay, an engaging mixture of high intelligence and careful diplomacy, received accolades, but its solution to the question of *how* to review the year just past proved ephemeral. Over the next century the *Year Book* would grapple with this problem again and again, sometimes treating the Jewish world as a unified whole, sometimes focusing separately on some of its parts (notably the United States), sometimes creatively analyzing developments the way Szold did, and sometimes simply record-

⁹Vol. 8 (1906–07), p. vii.

¹⁰Vol. 1 (1899–1900), p. 14.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 20–21.

¹²Vol. 2 (1900–01), p. ix.

¹³Ibid., pp. 14–39.

ing facts for posterity without analysis—all the while never fully resolving the function of the annual review.

The major portion of the first two *Year Books*—and a prominent feature of all subsequent ones down to the present day—consisted of listings and directories. American Jewish leaders, like their British counterparts and like Progressive-era Americans generally, deeply believed in the value of facts, research, and quantifiable information. Theirs was, in the words of historian Robert Wiebe, “an age that assumed an automatic connection between accurate data and rational action.”¹⁴ As a result, from the beginning the *Year Book* set itself up as American Jewry’s central source for accurate data. It regularly apologized that its data was not accurate enough, and carefully marked unofficial data with a star (*), even as it offered assurances that “in a majority of cases it is entirely authentic.”¹⁵ Volume 1 featured a “Directory of National Organizations” providing extensive (and historically invaluable) information on the 19 nationwide American Jewish organizations then in existence, including, as available, when they were founded, their officers, membership, annual income, meeting date, objectives, activities, and branches. In the case of the then recently established “Orthodox Jewish Congregational Union of America”—today commonly known as the “OU,” or Orthodox Union—the *Year Book* went so far as to print the proceedings of its first annual convention (1898), complete with statement of principles. The fact that Cyrus Adler served as a trustee of the new organization probably didn’t hurt. A short report on the convention of the (Reform) Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), including the full text of its 1898 anti-Zionism resolution, also appeared in the volume.

The listing of national organizations was followed by a much longer 166-page “Directory of Local Organizations” listing synagogues, charitable organizations, women’s organizations, burial societies, clubs, and more—all organized by city and state. Henrietta Szold knew that the list was inadequate, and the next year’s *Year Book* (1900–1901) acknowledged that the original list “left so much to be desired” and replaced it with a list that was approximately twice as long. For students of American Jewry this second listing is of inestimable significance. For the linguist, Cyrus Adler dryly observed, there was “an almost infinite variety in the spelling of Hebrew names . . . found in the Directory.” This was an indication of the many and varied sources of Jewish immigration to the United States. The community, he believed, reflected “most of the peculiarities of Hebrew pronunciation now in existence.”¹⁶ For the geogra-

pher, the list also disclosed the remarkable spread of Jewish communities across the United States: Over 500 different cities and towns boasted some kind of Jewish congregation or organization at the turn of the century, including such unlikely places as Cripple Creek, Colorado, Pocahontas, Virginia, and Ponce, Puerto Rico. On the other hand, three states and one territory—Idaho, North Dakota, Wyoming, and Arizona—registered no Jewish organizational life at all, even though all but North Dakota were known to have Jewish residents. The Jewish Publication Society, whose membership was also listed for the first time in this second volume, reached further, embracing some 600 cities and towns (including Tucson, Arizona and “Indian territory”). Clearly, the JPS itself served as a link to some otherwise unaffiliated Jews who had no organized Jewish community around them.

The directory enumerated 791 Jewish congregations across the country. Yet only 91 of these belonged to the UAHC (Reform) and 50 to the OU (Orthodox). The other 650 were described as “barely organized,” “composed of the recently immigrated population,” and unable “to adapt themselves to the conditions of a national federation.” Moreover, only ten United States cities housed nine or more congregations. They were, in ascending order, Newark and San Francisco (9 each), Cincinnati and Cleveland (13 each), Boston (14), Brooklyn (25), Baltimore (27), Chicago (47), Philadelphia (50), and New York (62).

In addition to the directories of institutions, the second volume of the *Year Book* introduced several other new features that endured for many years. Three of them had clear apologetic motives, designed to demonstrate the patriotism, public service, and charitableness of America’s Jews—all virtues publicly called into question by critics of the Jews.

Ninety-four pages were occupied by an extensive “Preliminary List of Jewish Soldiers and Sailors who served in the Spanish-American War.” Those eager to denigrate Jews had long charged that Jews failed to defend their country on the field of battle, and in the 1890s these allegations had been printed in the respected *North American Review* and repeated by no less a personage than Mark Twain (who later recanted). The Jewish community’s leading apologist of that day, Simon Wolf, published a voluminous tome, *The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen* (1895), designed to refute this ugly canard through a listing of all known Jews (and, it turned out, quite a number of non-Jews with Jewish-sounding names) who fought in American wars from the Revolution to the Civil War. The *Year Book*’s listing provided a continuation of this list to demonstrate the Jewish role in America’s latest military action—one which many Jews had supported on patriotic grounds and as a kind of revenge against Spain for expelling Jews 400 years earlier. (For her part, Henrietta Szold, a pacifist, privately condemned the war as “all arro-

¹⁴Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York, 1967), p. 181.

¹⁵Vol. 2 (1900–01), p. viii.

¹⁶Vol. 1, (1899–1900), p. x.

gance.”¹⁷) Actually, Adler conceded that his list was no more accurate than Simon Wolf’s. In an unusual effort to forestall critics, and perhaps in a fit of pique over the problems the list caused and the flood of angry letters he knew it would engender, Adler testily admitted to the list’s faults himself—the only time readers were ever addressed in such a sneering tone in all of the *Year Book*’s history:

To save persons who will be called upon to criticize this list any trouble or undue expenditure of time, I will point out some of its most glaring defects. It is inconsistent and inconvenient in arrangement; it contains names which should have been omitted, and omits names which should have been included; it frequently gives names incorrectly or with insufficient data or under wrong commands; and it even contains some repetitions. These faults are mentioned so that those who might otherwise be obliged to give their time in discovering them will use it in aiding me to correct them.¹⁸

By the time America next went to war, in World War I, there would be a whole organization to meet the needs of Jewish servicemen, and the latter would be identified with a great deal more accuracy.

A second listing with somewhat apologetic aims consisted of “Biographical Sketches of Jews who have served in the Congress of the United States.” Eager to prove their “contribution” to American life, and doubtless proud of the fact that, in America, Jews could attain high political office, the *Year Book* maintained and even expanded this list through the years until it became a full-fledged list of “Jews in American Public Service” past and present (though a few non-Jews with Jewish-sounding names included on the list in the first years were subsequently dropped). In addition to senators and congressmen, the list came to include judges, governors, presidential advisors, ambassadors, and members of high-level commissions.

Still a third list introduced in 1900 was one of “Bequests and Gifts.” American Jews had long enjoyed a reputation in some quarters for being charitable, but no central record of their largesse existed. In hostile circles Jews were often perceived as stingy and avaricious. The *Year Book*, through its listing, gave publicity to major individual gifts and ensured that they would be permanently recorded, thereby encouraging others to make similar gifts and at the same time refuting the negative stereotype. Initially, even some \$500 gifts sufficed to make the list, but as time (and inflation) marched on, the bar rose. By 1929 the smallest gift listed was

\$15,000. The nature of the gifts also changed over time, reflecting the shifting worldviews and priorities of American Jews. In 1900 most were donations to American Jewish hospitals and synagogues, but three decades later many went to non-Jewish institutions (schools, museums, and universities), while a substantial number of others assisted the creation of Jewish institutions in Palestine.

Surprisingly, the first two volumes devoted only three pages each to what they called “Jewish Statistics”—the number of Jews in the United States and around the world. The reason, the editor confessed, was that these statistics rested largely “upon estimates repeated and added to by one statistical authority after another,” that utilized “unsatisfactory” methods.¹⁹ Official figures for Jewish immigration into the United States permitted some generalizations, and the first *Year Book* dutifully provided estimated population figures for each state and for the community as a whole (1,043,800). It then provided figures for the British Empire, broken down by country (148,130), and for 32 other countries where it claimed that Jews resided, ranging from Costa Rica (where it listed 35 Jews) to Russia (with 5,700,000). Several of these figures were reprinted unchanged for several years running, testimony to the sorry state of Jewish statistics when the *Year Book* began, and the editors’ inability, at least initially, to improve upon them.

No Longer an Experiment

Notwithstanding these and other faults, however, the *Year Book* quickly proved its “usefulness” to the Americanized middle- and upper-class Jews of Central European descent who dominated the JPS membership. The JPS resolved to publish it annually and to incorporate its own annual report into each volume. But it also went further. In the preface to the second volume Cyrus Adler announced: “The policy of the Society with regard to the *Year Book* is that each issue shall in the main be made up of new material, and not consist of repetitions with additions of matter already published.” That meant that each year the *Year Book* had to be planned afresh—no mean feat, given the small size of its staff, and made all the more difficult since the closest model available, the *English Jewish Year Book*, did repeat and update a great deal of material every year, much as most almanacs do to this day and the *Year Book* itself would do later. The decision not to repeat was partly dictated by costs. The 1900–01 *Year Book* had ballooned to 775 pages—a budget-breaker. The next year, by referring readers back to earlier volumes for some features, the vol-

¹⁷Jeanne Abrams, “Remembering the Maine: The Jewish Attitude Toward the Spanish-American War as Reflected in the *American Israelite*,” *American Jewish History* 76, June 1987, pp. 439–55; Henrietta Szold to Joseph H. Hertz, August 8, 1899, Szold Papers, Hadassah Archives, NYC.

¹⁸Vol. 2 (1900–01), p. 528.

¹⁹Vol. 1 (1899–1900), p. 283.

ume was kept down to 333 pages, including 18 pages of advertisements. At a deeper level, though, the decision to focus on “new material” sought — unsuccessfully as it turned out — to resolve an identity problem that the *Year Book* would grapple with for many years. Should it be a cumulative series of books, like the modern-day encyclopedia year book, each one focused on a single year, or should it be an annually updated reference work, each one essentially replacing its predecessor, much like the traditional almanac? In time, the *Year Book* became a hybrid. It positioned unique “special articles” and reviews of the year up front, and annually updated directories and reference lists in the back. To this day, some owners add a new volume to their shelf each year, while others discard each year’s volume when its successor arrives. But that was not the plan back in 1900. Then, the Jewish Publication Society seems to have believed that each volume of the *Year Book* would be uniquely valuable, and it encouraged subscribers to acquire the full set.

How to make each volume uniquely valuable proved something of a challenge, especially in the Jewish year 5661 (1900–1901) when the *Year Book* candidly acknowledged that “there was no occurrence of supreme importance by which to characterize either the internal history of the Jewish people or their relations to the world at large.”²⁰ That year the *Year Book* focused on the history of Romanian (then spelled “Roumanian”) Jewry, because, it explained, the community’s “unrelenting persecution . . . has produced a condition of affairs which will inevitably bring about a considerable migration to the United States.”²¹ The prediction proved accurate — some 80,000 Romanian Jews came to America between 1881 and 1914, a quarter of them between 1899 and 1902²² — and, writing in the *Year Book*, the expatriate Romanian historian Elias Schwarzfeld explained why. He described the Jewish condition in his homeland in the most lachrymose terms as a place where the Jew was “refused the rights of a man and a citizen,” was “robbed of the means of living,” was “persecuted by everybody,” was “without land and without protection.” In short, Romania was a “hellish country in which life had become intolerable.”²³ Revealingly, the *Year Book* juxtaposed this portrait with a fascinating article on “The Roumanian Jews in America,” which painted a far sunnier portrait. A gold mine of otherwise unavailable information on early Romanian Jewish immigrants, the article noted their success in the

food business (“By a moderate estimate there are in New York one hundred and fifty restaurants, two hundred wine-cellars, with lunch rooms attached, and about thirty coffee-houses kept by Roumanian Jews”²⁴), their distinctive religious and social lives, their contribution to the Yiddish theater, even their impact on Masonry. Written by the Romanian-American Yiddish journalist David Hermalin, the article also reflected, in part, the prejudices of the *Year Book*’s readership — Americanized Jews of Central European origin — particularly in its attack on Romanian political clubs, one of which was depicted as sinking “to the low degree occupied by the typical political organizations that infest the entire East Side of New York.”²⁵ This description of Romanian Jews in America ended on a mawkishly apologetic note not seen in previous *Year Book* articles:

On the whole, they are an industrious class of people, and grasp at every opportunity to Americanize themselves. They have a proper appreciation of American institutions, and learn to speak and read the English language in a shorter time than other foreigners. They regard the United States as their permanent home and do everything within the bounds of possibility to qualify themselves to be worthy citizens of the great Republic that has offered them a secure haven of rest.²⁶

As we shall see, pious pronouncements of this sort would become ever more common in the *Year Book* as domestic support for immigration waned and anti-Semitism swelled. The larger significance of the articles on Romania, however, was that they viewed a world Jewish issue — the persecution of Jews in Romania — through an American prism. Over time, this became one of the *Year Book*’s most enduring legacies, its volumes recounting the central issues of 20th-century Jewish life from an American Jewish perspective.

Another example of how the *Year Book* reported through American Jewish eyes was its coverage of the infamous 1903 Kishinev pogrom in Russia. The Easter-time attack, which killed 47 Jews and wounded more than 400 others, dominated Jewish public life in 1903, so much so that Rabbi Maxmillian Heller, writing in the *Year Book*, dubbed 1903 “the year of Kishineff.”²⁷ Instead of rehearsing the horrors, however, Heller focused on the response to them, especially in the United States. He described the “great meetings of protest . . . held all over the country,” the “large sums of money . . . collected,” President Theodore Roosevelt’s “cordial and sincere address,” and the petition to the czar that “an imposing array of the

²⁰Vol. 3 (1901–02), p. 15.

²¹Ibid., p. ix.

²²Simon Kuznets, “Immigration of Russian Jews to the United States: Background and Structure,” *Perspectives in American History* 9, 1975, p. 39; Samuel Joseph, *Jewish Immigration to the United States from 1881 to 1910* (New York, 1914), pp. 105–08.

²³Vol. 3 (1901–02), pp. 83, 86.

²⁴Ibid., p. 102.

²⁵Ibid., p. 96.

²⁶Ibid., p. 103.

²⁷Vol. 5 (1903–04), p. 17.

most resplendent names in American public life” had signed and that the State Department had unsuccessfully attempted to deliver.²⁸ With British Jewry divided on how to deal with the pogrom, he argued, American Jewry had taken over the leadership of the cause. His conclusion, which certainly echoed what many American Jews of the time believed, was that the Kishinev affair:

Gave to American Jewry the hegemony of the world’s Judaism by proving that American Jews have the courage and the public spirit openly to espouse the cause of their brothers as they stand ready to make the sacrifice involved in keeping open to the Jewish refugee this last asylum of the oppressed; they not only showed themselves possessed of the statesmanship which is equal to a great emergency, but they demonstrated that they have a Government back of them for which the resentment of the greatest of autocracies has no terrors, that they are equally sure of the active sympathy of their best fellow-citizens whenever they turn to them in a humanitarian cause.²⁹

This conviction that American Jewry had emerged from the periphery to stand at the very center of world Jewish life animated much of what the Jewish Publication Society and its leaders did during the late-19th and early-20th centuries, and was repeatedly reinforced by *Year Book* authors. In 1902, a woman with the arresting name of Martha Washington Levy quoted predictions, made in connection with the arrival on America’s shores of the great Jewish scholar Solomon Schechter, that “in this country will lie, in the near future, the centre and focus of Jewish religious activity and the chosen home of Jewish learning.” She went on to argue that “the centre of gravity of Judaism itself, in much that marks its highest aims, is tending toward this side of the water.”³⁰ Two years later, the Jewish merchant and communal leader Cyrus Sulzberger, reviewing the year, listed a range of positive developments taking place throughout the United States and concluded that “American Jewry looks with confidence into the future.”³¹ Two years after that, the Jewish educator Julius Greenstone wrote of America’s “blessed shores” for Jews and proudly pointed out that the year’s “most important event in Jewish literary circles” transpired that year in America: “the publication of the last volume of the Jewish Encyclopedia.”³²

By then the *Year Book* had formally “taken for its province the assem-

²⁸Ibid., pp. 21–22; Cyrus Adler, *The Voice of America on Kishineff* (Philadelphia, 1904), pp. 476–80.

²⁹Vol. 5 (1903–04), p. 39. See also Philip E. Schoenberg, “The American Reaction to the Kishinev Pogrom of 1903,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 63, March 1974, pp. 262–83.

³⁰Vol. 4 (1902–03), p. 15.

³¹Vol. 6 (1904–05), p. 39.

³²Vol. 8 (1906–07), pp. 263, 274.

bling of some of the important facts of American Jewish life,³³ and to that end it began to move beyond the year in review to offer both historical and reference articles about American Jews—a subject of enormous personal interest to editor Cyrus Adler. In 1902 it published “A Sketch of the History of the Jews in the United States,” probably written by Adler himself, as well as an adulatory biographical article on the 19th-century American Jewish naval commodore Uriah P. Levy, authored by Simon Wolf. Later it gave space to popular historical articles (as distinct from the dry-as-dust scholarly articles that the American Jewish Historical Society published) on such early American Jewish heroes as Gershom Seixas, “the Patriot Jewish Minister of the American Revolution,” and the antebellum Charleston poetess, Penina Moïse.

At the same time, the *Year Book* initiated in 1903 what Adler described as “the first installment of an American Jewish Who’s Who.” This consisted of 363 laboriously compiled sketches of “the spiritual guides of American Jewry”—rabbis and cantors—and was followed in subsequent volumes by hundreds more such treatments of Jews prominent in the professions, arts, sciences, journalism, business, and public life, and of Jewish communal workers. Adler and Henrietta Szold believed that this work would make American Jews more aware “of the forces at their disposal”—the many Jews who were making their mark on American and American Jewish life.³⁴ They therefore endlessly bewailed the large number of Jews who failed to return the circulars sent to them and who (unless information concerning them was available elsewhere) had therefore to be excluded. Today, of course, students of American Jewish history are grateful for the names that *were* included, since frequently the brief *Year Book* biographies provide information available nowhere else. By the time a more comprehensive *Who’s Who in American Jewry* appeared, in 1926, many of these Jews had passed from the scene.

As it approached its tenth volume (1908–09), the *American Jewish Year Book* had proved its worth, receiving wide recognition as the leading reference work of its type. But it also proved to be an overwhelming administrative and financial burden, one far greater than the Jewish Publication Society had ever envisaged. The JPS recovered some costs by printing its own annual report and membership roster in the *Year Book*, instead of separately as heretofore, but the underlying problem admitted to no easy solution. Year after year, preparation of the *Year Book* pitted those who counted costs against those who strove for quality.

Henrietta Szold at the JPS usually came down on the side of quality,

³³Vol. 5 (1903–04), pp. viii–ix.

³⁴Vol. 6 (1904–05), p. vii.

and then volunteered to do the extra work necessary to guarantee it—without additional compensation. But as time went on the burden became too great even for her, especially when she became the *Year Book's* coeditor with Cyrus Adler in 1904, and then sole editor two years later (the only time a woman edited the *Year Book* single-handedly). Her letters are filled with complaints about the “crazy orgy of work” and the “hated drudgery” involved in the annual labor; one evening in 1907 she “collapsed entirely” over it. In a particularly poignant letter to her then dear friend Dr. Louis Ginzberg, she described herself as a “veritable martinet, writing to certain organizations that would not answer, and writing again, and still again, all but sending . . . the sheriff after them.” But to no avail: “The stars with which I conscientiously mark unofficial information remain numerous in spite of the eighteen hundred personal letters I have dictated . . . not to mention circulars galore.” Still, individuals became angry when they found themselves or their organizations excluded from the *Year Book*, even if the exclusions resulted from their own neglect.

The fundamental question that the leaders of the Jewish Publication Society faced was whether all of this time, effort, energy, and money could be justified. Critics from among the membership of the JPS insisted that the answer was no. They found the massive amounts of data dull and repetitive, felt annoyed that the JPS produced the volume year in and year out even when it was one of only three volumes published during the year, and demanded that the *Year Book* be published, if at all, only once every few years so that it might prove less of a drain on limited resources. Community professionals, however, considered the *Year Book* essential, not only for Jews but for non-Jews. They noted that many libraries included the volume in their reference collections, and expected an updated edition annually—which, after all, is what made it a yearbook.

For a time, the JPS attempted to raise money for the *Year Book* separately, by raising the cover price to nonmembers and by selling advertisements on inside pages. There were ads for schools, books, magazines, clothing, railroads, insurance, even ads for Carmel wines “for the sick and convalescent” and for those who needed to “make blood.”³⁵ By 1907, however, the *Year Book's* annual cost, the enormous administrative burden of producing it, and the dissatisfaction of JPS members demanded a reexamination of the *Year Book*. Moreover, Henrietta Szold, emotionally distraught over her failed love affair with Louis Ginzberg, sought time off to travel abroad. She suggested to her boss, Judge Mayer Sulzberger—who was simultaneously chairman of the JPS Publication Committee and president of the newly organized American Jewish Com-

³⁵Vol. 8 (1906–07), p. *29.

mittee—that AJC take over the time-consuming statistical and research aspects of the *Year Book*. Given the AJC's belief that, as a defense agency, its proper function was “enlightenment,” and given, too, its emphasis on the need to base social planning upon “scientific inquiry,” this division of labor seemed to make good sense.³⁶

The Committee, however, went further—further, indeed, than Henrietta Szold herself wanted. Its leaders, many of whom were also active in JPS, agreed to take over total responsibility for compiling the *Year Book*, to supply an editor from within its own ranks (though JPS continued to supply editorial assistance, and Henrietta Szold continued to devote long hours to the work behind the scenes for several more years), and even to contribute \$1,500 toward the *Year Book's* publication costs. JPS, according to the new plan, would continue to serve as publisher, would pay the cost of printing its own report in the volume, and would assume responsibility for overall distribution. Both sides applauded the new agreement, and it came into effect in time to prepare the tenth *Year Book*, scheduled for 1908. For that issue, Herbert Friedenwald, secretary of the American Jewish Committee (and Cyrus Adler's brother-in-law), took over as editor, and with him a new era in *Year Book* history began.³⁷

Year Book as Advocate

Herbert Friedenwald (1870–1944) was born into one of Baltimore's most illustrious Jewish families. He received a Ph.D. in American history, served as the first superintendent (1897–1900) of the manuscript division of the Library of Congress, and was a founder and deeply engaged member of the American Jewish Historical Society. At the American Jewish Committee he served as executive secretary—the chief administrative officer—providing the Jewish titans who ran the organization with the information they needed to formulate policy.³⁸ The *American Jewish Year Book* came to serve as the permanent repository for this data, its published articles often undergirding AJC's policy positions.

Since the American Jewish Committee's stated purpose was “to prevent infringement of the civil and religious rights of Jews, and to alleviate the consequences of persecution,”³⁹ the *Year Book* focused more than ever, under Friedenwald, on the central issues affecting world Jewry: the dis-

³⁶See Naomi W. Cohen, *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee, 1906–1966* (Philadelphia, 1972), pp. 33–34.

³⁷The above five paragraphs adapted from Sarna, *JPS*, pp. 72–73, where full documentation is provided.

³⁸Vol. 46 (1944–45), pp. 47–54.

³⁹Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, p. 17.

crimination and oppression that Jews continued to experience in Russia, the possible curtailment of their free immigration into the United States, and manifestations of anti-Jewish prejudice at home and abroad. In every case, the *Year Book* stressed the American dimension of the situation, and, even more significantly, it displayed an activist tone not previously found in its pages.

In 1909, for example, the *Year Book* published a lead article on "The Passport Question," the campaign to abrogate America's 1832 treaty of commerce with Russia. The Russian treaty, negotiated during the presidency of Andrew Jackson, provided for "reciprocal liberty of commerce and navigation," and promised inhabitants of both countries freedom of entry, residence, and movement, as well as protection on a par with natives, provided only that they submit "to the [domestic] laws and ordinances . . . and particularly to the regulations in force concerning commerce." This proved uncontroversial until Russia, in the late 19th century, issued a series of "laws and ordinances" severely restricting the commercial and residence rights of Jews, and then interpreted this treaty to mean that Jews visiting from America also needed to submit to them. Beginning in 1865, and especially after 1881, Russia selectively denied visas to American Jews on grounds of their religion. Russia was not exactly a popular destination for turn-of-the-century American Jews, and those with wealth could usually obtain visas if they wanted them. Still, the effect of the Russian policy clearly discriminated: while most American citizens easily gained visas to enter Russia, American Jews, as a rule, did not.

The American Jewish Committee, according to Friedenwald's assistant (and later *Year Book* editor) Harry Schneiderman, focused on this issue for a high-minded reason, "the deep conviction that it was fighting not only to end the legalization of discrimination by a foreign power, as between American citizens, on the basis of religion, but also to uphold and safeguard the sanctity of the American principle of equality of all citizens, regardless of ancestry or religious affiliation."⁴⁰ We now know, however, that there was an even more compelling, unstated, reason motivating the AJC stand. As the Jewish banker Jacob Schiff admitted in a private letter to *New York Times* editor Adolph S. Ochs, "the moment Russia is compelled to live up to its treaties and admit the foreign Jew into its dominion upon a basis of equality . . . the Russian Government will not be able to maintain the pale of settlement against its own Jews."⁴¹ While officially and in the *Year Book* the battle was fought solely on the

⁴⁰Vol. 46 (1944–45), p. 49.

⁴¹Cyrus Adler, *Jacob H. Schiff: His Life and Letters* (Garden City, N.Y., 1929), pp. 151–52.

basis of the American principle of equality, those on the inside understood that the hidden "Jewish" agenda was to undermine discriminatory Russian laws that barred Jews from major commercial centers and confined them within a prescribed area of settlement.⁴²

The *Year Book* played a critical role in the "Passport" campaign. A 1909 article by Friedenwald, expanding on an article from the 1904 volume, included all resolutions passed by Congress on the subject dating back to 1879. The article closed on an upbeat note—"the hope is reasonable that the present administration will accomplish what was unattainable by its predecessors"—but Friedenwald made clear in his preface to the volume that if it did not, American Jews would fight for their rights. Using language that the previous editors would never have permitted, he wrote that "the continued discrimination by the Russian Government against American citizens of the Jewish faith . . . is an infringement upon the equal rights of our people which, as American citizens, they will energetically contend against until this disability is removed."⁴³

Two years later, when the American Jewish Committee's faith that President Taft would remedy the situation was shattered, its leaders fulfilled this pledge, and again they utilized the *Year Book* as one of their main platforms. A 110-page brief, written by Friedenwald and published as the lead article in 1911, set forth a full history of the "Passport Question," complete with numerous documents attesting to "hopes [that] have not been realized." Self-confidently and deftly exploiting the sinking political fortunes of President Taft, the *Year Book* appealed directly "to the people of the United States." "We have Petitioned for Redress . . . Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury," it concluded, echoing the Declaration of Independence. In the belief that the "righteousness" of its cause would ultimately triumph, the AJC, through the *Year Book*, submitted its "Facts . . . to a candid world."⁴⁴ As added ammunition (not disclosed in the *Year Book*), AJC, behind the scenes, organized mass demonstrations, newspaper editorials, and petition campaigns, and even dangled discreet political promises. On December 18, 1911, these efforts bore fruit. President Taft, seeking to head off certain congressional action, gave notice of America's intention to terminate the 1832 treaty. The *Year Book*, echoing the sentiments of the American Jewish Committee, exulted. It dubbed the successful conclusion of its long campaign an event of "epochal significance," ranking it hyperbolically

⁴²Judith Goldstein, *The Politics of Ethnic Pressure: The American Jewish Committee Fight Against Immigration Restriction, 1906–1917* (New York, 1990), pp. 143–44; Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, p. 59.

⁴³Vol. 11 (1909–10), pp. 43, vii.

⁴⁴Vol. 13 (1911–12), pp. 13, 42, 54, 62.

“with such historical events as the emancipation of the Jews in France and the removal of the disabilities of the Jews of England, if it does not surpass them in importance.”⁴⁵

As it turned out, the political success achieved in the “Passport” campaign proved disappointingly fleeting. The tactics that succeeded in forcing the president’s hand failed to work their magic when circumstances changed, and in their second major political battle of the early 20th century—the effort to keep America’s doors open to immigrants—the Jewish community came up short.

Once again, the cause was spearheaded by the American Jewish Committee and played out in the pages of the *Year Book*. In 1908, the *Year Book* reprinted a letter sent by AJC president Mayer Sulzberger to Senator William Dillingham. “We are keenly alive to the right and duty of every government to protect its people,” Sulzberger informed the senator—who chaired a new congressional commission investigating the subject of immigration—but “we deprecate most sincerely any nerveless or unmanly timidity about evils which may be coolly and sanely guarded against, without violating our national traditions and the dictates of common humanity, or depriving our country of a natural and healthy means of increasing its population and prosperity.” He warned against “persons . . . carried away by passion,” and requested permission for the AJC itself to present evidence to the commission, promising, somewhat disingenuously, to supply “facts, without color or prejudice.”⁴⁶ Actually, AJC leaders were “uptown” Jews, mostly Central European in origin, and sometimes they did display prejudice against their East European brethren. Yet they remained stalwart in their commitment to the idea of America as an immigrant haven. Year in and year out, the *Year Book* monitored congressional action bearing on immigration—in a section entitled “the Government of the United States and affairs of interest to the Jews”—and it carefully documented for the AJC and for Jewish voters not only what legislation had been proposed but also how individual senators and congressmen had responded. Its pro-immigration sentiments were unmistakable.

As the clamor of the restrictionists grew louder, the *Year Book*’s defense of immigrants became more spirited. In 1910 its lead article was “In Defense of the Immigrant,” and it devoted some 80 pages to the testimony offered by such Jewish leaders as Simon Wolf, Cyrus L. Sulzberger, Louis Marshall, Abram I. Elkus, and Max Kohler before the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, which the *Year Book* considered

“the best collection of information bearing upon the subject of Jewish immigration ever got together.” Every charge leveled against East European Jewish immigrants—criminality, economic dependency, aversion to farming, resistance to Americanization, and more—was exhaustively refuted, and the immigrants themselves won extravagant praise for their desire, as one witness put it, “not only to become acquainted with our language and our customs, but to become thoroughly acquainted with the spirit of Americanism and to try their best to become American citizens of the real type.”⁴⁷

In 1912, following the publication of the Dillingham Commission’s voluminous report on immigration, the *Year Book* warned “the friends of the immigrant,” that they “must be prepared for another contest, to prevent him from being shut out of the country.” It insisted, against the views of Congress, that the report, issued at the end of 1910, furnished “no justification” for immigration restriction. In fact, it charged (with considerable justification, as historian Oscar Handlin has subsequently shown⁴⁸) that the summary of the report “made hasty generalizations” unsupported by the evidence that the commission itself had collected. The implication was clear, and the report of the American Jewish Committee, published in the *Year Book*, trumpeted the call to action. It urged “all those who favor the maintenance of this country’s traditions” to exert their influence “to oppose drastic changes in our immigrant laws.”⁴⁹ The *Year Book* also published as its main article that year a long study of “Agricultural Activities of the Jews in America,” an obvious effort to rebut claims, heard even in Congress, that Jewish immigrants were “unproductive” and crowded into cities. The truth, according to the *Year Book* (which exaggerated) was that Jewish agricultural activity in the United States had displayed “remarkable growth” during the first decade of the century, largely owing to immigration, and that “the movement of the Jews in the United States toward the farm has gone beyond the capacity of any organization or any number of organizations to control.”⁵⁰

For all of the *Year Book*’s efforts, however, the battle to thwart immigration restriction was ultimately lost. While Jewish advocacy, chronicled in the *Year Book*, repeatedly delayed the passage of the literacy test for immigrants, and then ensured that victims of religious persecution were exempted from it, the legislation eventually passed over a presidential veto in 1917. Subsequently, in the face of burgeoning anti-Semitism, fervent

⁴⁵Vol. 14 (1912–13), p. v.

⁴⁶Vol. 10 (1908–09), pp. 244–45.

⁴⁷Vol. 12 (1910–11), pp. vii, 19–98, esp. p. 67.

⁴⁸Oscar Handlin, *Race and Nationality in American Life* (Garden City, N.Y., 1957), pp. 74–101.

⁴⁹Vol. 14 (1912–13), pp. vii, 295.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 55; cf. Vol. 12 (1910–11), pp. 35, 64–65.

nationalism, and overwhelming anti-immigrant sentiment in the early 1920s, a highly restrictive anti-immigrant quota was imposed that reduced Jewish immigration by more than 80 percent.⁵¹

In addition to the great campaigns over the passport issue and immigration, the *Year Book*, under Friedenwald, devoted more space than before to battling anti-Jewish prejudice in the United States. The very first volume Friedenwald edited, in 1908, carried a long, somewhat awkwardly titled article on "Sunday Laws of the United States and Leading Judicial Decisions Having Special Reference to the Jews." Since Sunday laws effectively discriminated against those who observed the Sabbath on Saturday, the subject had long been of concern to Jews, affecting them more than any other church-state issue. For Sabbath observers, these "blue laws" served as a weekly reminder that, religious liberty notwithstanding, they paid a stiff price to uphold the tenets of their faith. Rather than complaining outright, however, the *Year Book*, in this instance, made its case indirectly, using the words of a prominent non-Jewish jurist to legitimate its cause. Judge Thomas M. Cooley of Michigan, the distinguished author of *Constitutional Limitations*, was highly critical of American Sunday laws and it was with a powerful quote from him that the *Year Book* article closed:

But the Jew who is forced to respect the first day of the week, when his conscience requires of him the observance of the seventh also, may plausibly urge that the law discriminates against his religion, and by forcing him to keep a second Sabbath in each week, unjustly, though by indirection, punishes him for his belief.⁵²

The *Year Book* also noted, especially in its annual review of the year, a range of anti-Jewish incidents across the country. Yet, whereas in its listing for Eastern Europe, similar incidents were assumed to reflect the pervasive anti-Semitism of the local populations and regimes, in America case after case was presented as an aberration, and the *Year Book* seemed happy to note that the problem had quickly been rectified. So, for example, it reported in 1909 on "the statement of Commissioner of Police Theodore A. Bingham, of New York, that alien Jews make up one-half of our criminals." It then explained that the statement "was completely disproved by statistics, and it was withdrawn." Another potentially explosive report—that a marine in uniform had been barred from synagogue services—was caused, it disclosed, by a "newspaper distortion" that "promised to have unpleasant consequences." Happily, these consequences "were averted by the prompt action of the American Jewish

Committee." In yet a third case that year, in Springfield, Illinois, a "local chief of police attempted to fasten upon the Jews the responsibility for the lynching of negroes." Once again, the evil decree was averted: the Jew involved, "Abraham Raymers . . . was acquitted."⁵³

The most infamous case of American anti-Semitism from this period, the 1913 arrest, trial, and subsequent lynching of Leo Frank in Atlanta on charges of murdering a young Christian employee named Mary Phagan, did not, of course, fit this pattern. The *Year Book*, however, totally ignored the case until Frank was dead, and then dismissed it in exactly one sentence: "August 16 [1915]. Leo M. Frank, leading figure in celebrated murder trial, victim of mob near Marietta, Ga." Many Jews, in a private capacity, had tried to help Frank, believing him to have been the innocent victim of anti-Semitic hysteria—which we now know to have been the case. At the same time, however, Jewish leaders feared that any effort to turn the case into a "Jewish issue"—as opposed to a "matter of justice"—would harm the Jewish community and not help Frank at all. The American Jewish Committee, in the end, resolved to take no official action on the case, even though its president, Louis Marshall, vigorously advocated Frank's cause in his private capacity as a lawyer. The *Year Book* apparently took its cue from this policy decision, and its silence gave further evidence of the American Jewish community's unwillingness at that time to confront anti-Semitism openly. The less said publicly about it, Jews thought, the better.⁵⁴

To be sure, the *Year Book* did notice some anti-Jewish manifestations that continued to fester. "Jacques Loeb, biologist Rockefeller Institute," the *Year Book* of 1913 reported, was "excluded from Century Club, New York City."⁵⁵ Such social discrimination against Jews was quite the norm by that time—even in the case of the Century Club, which Jews had helped to found—and all the *Year Book* could do was publicize the slight. Worse news, too, was recorded: In Roxbury, Massachusetts, Jews at a mass meeting adopted a resolution "protesting against assaults upon them and demanding more adequate police protection."⁵⁶ Nothing came of the meeting, and physical attacks on Jews in Boston continued into the 1930s, protests notwithstanding. Still, the overwhelming impression presented by the *Year Book* of that time was that anti-Jewish prejudice was antithetical to America, and could be combated—America, the *Year Book* insisted, was not Europe.

The same sense of American uniqueness apparently underlay Frieden-

⁵³Vol. 11 (1909–10), pp. 62–63.

⁵⁴Vol. 18 (1916–17), p. 86; Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (New York, 1968), esp. pp. 74–76.

⁵⁵Vol. 15 (1913–14), p. 246.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁵¹Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, pp. 37–53.

⁵²Vol. 10 (1908–09), p. 189; Also see Jonathan D. Sarna and David G. Dalin, *Religion and State in the American Jewish Experience* (South Bend, Ind., 1997), pp. 139–65.

wald's reorganization of the way the *Year Book* presented the "leading events" of the year. American Jewish news now came first and generally occupied more space than the listing of events in any other country. One year, the events were actually divided into two sections, "the United States" and "Other Countries," as if Jews everywhere outside of America—including Palestine—occupied a totally different realm.⁵⁷ Later, the division was modified to read "United States" and "Foreign Countries," but the subheadings proved telling. Under United States, the first category of news was "the Government of the United States and Affairs of Interest to the Jews." Under Russia, the parallel category of news was "Persecution and Repression."⁵⁸

The *Year Book's* most significant paean to America in that era came in 1913–14, when it devoted more than a quarter of the volume to a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Jewish Publication Society (1888–1913). Since the JPS had founded and continued to publish the *Year Book*, the decision to devote so much space to the anniversary was natural. As the published proceedings reveal, however, the celebration was much more than an institutional birthday party. It also served as a public declaration that American Jewry had arrived and was making significant cultural contributions. "You in America are setting an example," the Anglo-Jewish author and bibliophile Elkan Adler wrote in a letter published in the proceedings; "indeed," he continued, "the eyes of Jewry are nowadays directed westward across the ocean . . ." The great Yiddish author Isaac Leib Peretz wrote from Warsaw, "How we envy you, our free brethren in a free land!" The Orientalist Nahum Slouschz, writing from Paris, compared American Jewry to the former great Jewish centers of "Jerusalem, Tiberias, Pumbedita, Toledo, and Wilna," and wrote that "the great Jewish metropolis of the United States is preparing for the bright day of the future renaissance."⁵⁹ Overall, the anniversary celebration articulated and symbolized the central values that both the Jewish Publication Society and the *Year Book* stood for: the centrality of American Jewry, the unity of American Jews, and the perpetuation of Jewish life and culture. A message published in the *Year Book* from the leaders of Jews' College in London captured both the prevailing mood and the vision of the future that the *Year Book's* own editors certainly shared:

We on the other side, in the older country, watch with deepest interest the marvellous [*sic*] strides you have made and are making in this great and glo-

rious land of freedom and independence, where careers and opportunities are open to talent and industry. . . . May you advance by leaps and bounds, and when we celebrate the Jubilee, which may we all live to see, when America will be the centre of Jewry, may this Publication Society be a world-wide organization fostering the Jewish spirit, strengthening the Jewish consciousness, giving adequate expression, and thus helping to do justice, to the Jewish life, the Jewish character, the Jewish soul.⁶⁰

The 1913–14 *Year Book* was the last to be edited by Herbert Friedenwald. He resigned from the American Jewish Committee in 1913, apparently because of ill health, and, while still comparatively young, retired to private life. Replacing him proved to be a most difficult task. The AJC first turned to the Russian-born former *New York Times* journalist Herman Bernstein—the first East European Jew to hold a significant position at the organization—but he lasted only a year before returning to journalism. Joseph Jacobs, who had founded and edited England's *Jewish Year Book*, succeeded him, but he died in 1916 after editing only a single volume. Cyrus Adler, who by then was overwhelmed with administrative responsibilities elsewhere, filled in for a year, and then turned the job over to Samson Oppenheim, like Jacobs an expert in statistics and research. The *Year Book* thus passed through five different editors in five years, 1913–1918. It nevertheless managed to appear dependably every fall, its format largely unaffected by the changes at the helm.

The "Great War" and its Aftermath

This period of instability coincided with the largest war the world had ever seen, known then as the Great War, and later (after an even greater cataclysm) renamed World War I. From the beginning, the *Year Book* carefully chronicled the war's devastating impact on Jewish communities on both sides of the struggle, based on the sources available. In addition to "events affecting Jews," it listed a whole series of Jewish towns as having been "partially or wholly destroyed" by invading armies. The section on Russia, for example, noted the following:

SEPTEMBER 25 [1914]. Kalish: Seven hundred and fifty houses, mostly Jewish, burnt. — Dzevitza (Radom): Jewish quarter and synagogue burnt. — OCTOBER 16. Druskeniki burnt. — . . . [November] 25. Plotzk: Jewish town-let, and Blony and Bakalarzevo reported ruined by invaders. . . .⁶¹

The news from Austria-Hungary was no better:

⁵⁷Vol. 11 (1909–10), pp. 55, 67.

⁵⁸Vol. 15 (1913–14), pp. 230, 232.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 44, 48, 53.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 155–56.

⁶¹Vol. 17 (1915–16), p. 269.

NOVEMBER 6 [1914]. Podheitz, Husiatyn, and Temboole: Galician Jewish townlets burnt in course of battle. — Halicz: The Jewish quarter burnt by retreating Austrians. — 13. Jewish quarters of Balshevitzi and Bolshabi, Galicia, burnt by Austrians. — 27. Belsitz and Burgatch, Jewish townlets, Galicia, almost completely destroyed. — Brod: Fire set to town; twelve Jews and three hundred houses burnt.⁶²

At the same time, the *Year Book* chronicled the heroism of Jewish soldiers on both sides of the struggle, listing their battlefield decorations and promotions, as well as the names of those who gave their lives in battle. Lest anyone miss the point, Cyrus Adler, in 1916, underscored in his preface why the information was so important: "The list of events, if judged alone by the military promotions and the necrology on account of the war, shows conclusively that the Jewish people are taking their equal share in the stupendous conflict."⁶³

The *Year Book* repeatedly apologized for its inability to present a full-scale narrative account of how the European war was affecting Jewish interests. It was simply too difficult to obtain full and accurate news from the war zone, it explained. Instead, in 1915, it provided background on one issue that the war was expected "to settle . . . for a long time to come," and that was "the fate of Palestine." An almost book-length article, written by Henrietta Szold, described "Recent Jewish Progress in Palestine," based on her wide reading as well as first-hand observations from her visit of a few years before. Her mood was characteristically upbeat, even concerning Arab-Jewish relations, which she found to be improving ("mutual respect is increasing"⁶⁴). Her tone, moreover, was overtly pro-Zionist, even though she knew that the *Year Book's* readers and sponsors remained deeply divided over the issue. Now that she was financially independent, she could be much more open about this than when she wrote the "Review of the Year" back in 1900. Her 1915 article was easily the best account of Jewish life in Palestine then available in English. As a guide to the future, however, it proved very wide of the mark. The impact that World War I would have on the Middle East eluded her completely.

America's entry into the war transformed the *Year Book's* coverage. Eager once again to prove the dedication of American Jews to the war effort,⁶⁵ the *Year Book* marshaled statistical evidence compiled by the AJC's "Office of War Records" to demonstrate Jewish patriotism and heroism. A (probably generous) preliminary count, taken before Amer-

ica had entered the war, estimated the number of Jews in the United States armed forces at 4,585, or 6 percent of the fighting force—far more than the Jewish percentage of the population as a whole.⁶⁶ In the midst of the war (1918), the *Year Book* listed some 1,500 Jewish commissioned officers by name.⁶⁷ Julian Leavitt, who oversaw the collection of war records for the AJC, reported four positive, if preliminary, conclusions: (1) "that the Jews of America are acquitting themselves magnificently, as soldiers and citizens, in this war;" (2) "that their contributions of men and means tend to exceed, by a generous margin, their due quotas;" (3) "that the Jewish soldiers at the front fight with no less valor than their comrades;" and (4) "that their losses are as great—and their rewards no less."⁶⁸

Beyond documenting military service, the *Year Book* reported with great pride on the material support that American Jews were supplying to those in need during the war, which was a turning point in the history of American Jewish philanthropy. An article on "Jewish War Relief Work," published before America's own entry into the war, recounted in bountiful detail how American Jews responded to the "beseeching eyes" of their fellow Jews around the world, and united to form a "Joint Distribution Committee" to coordinate war relief.⁶⁹ The JDC appropriated over \$32 million between 1914 and 1920, according to subsequently published figures in the *Year Book*.⁷⁰

American Jews also generously supported their own soldiers in uniform, through the medium of the Jewish Welfare Board (JWB). The War Department, the *Year Book* revealed, had sparked the creation of the JWB, since it needed a Jewish organization as a counterpart to the YMCA, which met the spiritual and social needs of Protestant soldiers, and the Knights of Columbus, which did the same for Catholics. "It is a commentary upon Jewish life in America," JWB executive director Charles J. Teller observed in an unusual editorial aside, "that with 260 years of history . . . and with literally thousands of organizations, no single agency could be selected as representative of the Jewry of America." The JWB was created to fill this void, with the mandate "to contribute on behalf of the Jews of America to the national work of welfare among the nation's uniformed men." Committed, as were the *Year Book*, the Jewish Publication Society, and the AJC, to the ideal of a unified American Jewry, the JWB proudly reported that it preached "no special -ism (ex-

⁶²Ibid., p. 226.

⁶³Vol. 18 (1916–17), p. vi.

⁶⁴Vol. 17 (1915–16), p. 95.

⁶⁵See Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, p. 100.

⁶⁶Vol. 18 (1916–17), pp. v–vi, 78.

⁶⁷Vol. 20 (1918–19), pp. 173–227.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 112.

⁶⁹Vol. 19 (1917–18), p. 194.

⁷⁰Vol. 22 (1920–21), p. 343.

cept Judaism), and it permits none to be preached," attempting instead to meet the religious needs of soldiers in their camps "as these needs are there ascertained." It then proceeded to explain to *Year Book* readers how the JWB met the religious needs of Jewish soldiers, providing in the process a rare description of American Jewish religious pluralism played out in military life:

For Jews desiring an orthodox service it promotes orthodox services. For sons of Reform Jews it supplies reform services with the Union Prayer Book. For the preponderating group of soldiers of orthodox Jewish families, whose requirements are best met by what is called Conservative Judaism, appropriate services are conducted accordingly. Without standardizing any doctrine of its own, the Welfare Board endorses all degrees of doctrine, if soldiers of Jewish faith uphold them.⁷¹

The "Great War" ended in 1918, but it still dominated the *Year Book* a year later. It was "not only fitting but also urgent," the book explained, "to record, while the recollection was still vivid, the salient facts respecting the participation of the Jews of various countries in the struggle."⁷² The task fell to a new editor—again—but this time he was a man who had already assisted in the preparation of the *Year Book* for a decade, and would last in his new position for 28 more years: Harry Schneiderman (1885–1975). Born in Saven, Poland, Schneiderman immigrated to the United States in 1890 along with his parents and siblings, including his sister, Rose Schneiderman, later a prominent labor organizer and social reformer. While she was organizing the first female local of the Jewish Socialist United Cloth Hat and Cap Makers' Union,⁷³ he, upon graduating from the City College of New York in 1908, joined the staff of the anything-but-socialist American Jewish Committee. Almost immediately, he began to assist with the publication of the *Year Book*. Named assistant secretary of the AJC in 1914, in 1919 he undertook to edit the *Year Book* as well. His one-time boss, Morris Waldman, characterized him as "the chronicler par excellence of world Jewish events: detached, impartial, with the historian's perspective."⁷⁴

Bringing these skills to the first volume under his supervision, Schneiderman published lengthy accounts of "The Participation of the Jews of France in the Great War," "The Story of British Jewry in the War," and "The Jewish Battalions and the Palestine Campaign." He also published another article by Julian Leavitt on "American Jews in the World War,"

⁷¹Vol. 20 (1918–19), p. 95.

⁷²Vol. 21 (1919–20), p. v.

⁷³Nancy Schrom Dye, "Rose Schneiderman," *Notable American Women: The Modern Period*, eds. Barbara Sicherman and Carol Hurd Green (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), p. 631.

⁷⁴Morris D. Waldman, "Harry Schneiderman," *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* (1943), vol. 9, p. 413.

though it was much shorter than his earlier piece, since a separate volume on the subject was planned. Still, Leavitt was able to confirm all of his earlier conclusions about Jewish heroism, explaining that "the qualities which had enabled the Jew to survive through the centuries—his capacity to endure, without breaking, prolonged and intense nerve strain; his qualities of initiative, his elasticity of mind, his capacity for organization, and above all, his idealism . . . [made] him a worthy fighter in America's cause."⁷⁵ Finally, Leavitt pointed to what he optimistically believed to be the lasting legacy of American Jewish participation in the war effort: a new appreciation, on the part of non-Jews, for what the Jewish soldier could accomplish:

[I]t is no secret that when the regular army officers were, in the early days of mobilization, confronted with the problem of converting the city-bred Jews into what they conceived to be proper soldier material, they were openly sceptical, not to say apprehensive. But it was not long before the ready wit of the Jewish recruits, their cool intelligence, their amenability to discipline, and the deadly seriousness with which they threw themselves into the work, convinced all sceptics of their worth.⁷⁶

As the Jewish soldiers returned from the front and America retreated into isolationism, the *Year Book* too shifted its focus back to domestic affairs. Once again, it sought to present a statistical portrait of American Jewish life based on questionnaires sent to Jewish organizations. Harry Schneiderman understood that "the manner in which the data were collected—almost exclusively through the mails—cannot be expected to yield complete and accurate results." Still, as a firm believer in the dispassionate character of facts and statistics, he presented what data he had. First, he revised the list of Jewish national organizations, and—under a new policy he initiated—added a brief introductory analysis to provide "a clearer interpretation of the facts presented." He pointed out that over one million American Jews were connected with one or another national Jewish organization, more than half of them in 15 fraternal orders and mutual benefit associations.⁷⁷

He also updated the *Year Book's* Directory of Local Jewish Organizations, last compiled 12 years earlier. In this case he concluded, based on less than fully persuasive evidence, that "two and one-half million of the three and one-third million Jews of the country, or nearly five out of six, come into direct contact with Jewish religious influences sometime during the year."⁷⁸ He also provided a tantalizing, if necessarily inadequate portrait of synagogue life in the United States (excluding New York

⁷⁵Vol. 21 (1919–20), p. 155.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 148.

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 331, vi, 303.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 331.

City), showing that half of the congregations reporting held services only on Sabbaths and festivals, a little over a third met daily, and the rest far less frequently. Of these synagogues, 60 percent conducted services only in Hebrew; 12 percent only in English, and the rest in both. While the *Year Book* did not officially categorize these congregations by movement—believing, as it did, in Jewish unity, it rarely paid attention to Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform differences—the growing number of dual-language congregations was another sign that the Conservative movement in Judaism was steadily gaining ground.⁷⁹

Finally, Schneiderman found a new way to list “Jewish Periodicals Appearing in the United States.” He separated “general newspapers and magazines” from “organs of associations and trade journals,” and presented in tabular form a full-scale portrait of the 145 periodicals, in four different languages (English, Yiddish, Hebrew, and Judeo-Spanish), that the postwar American Jewish community produced. Revealingly, not a single American Jewish periodical appeared any longer in German. Most first generation German-Jewish immigrants had passed from the scene by the end of World War I, and given the wave of anti-German hysteria that pervaded the country during the war, German periodicals could not survive.⁸⁰

Getting the Facts

The *Year Book's* renewed interest in statistics, carrying forward a tradition that went back to Joseph Jacobs and the English *Jewish Year Book*, was reinforced in 1919 by the establishment of an independent Bureau of Jewish Social Research, formed from a merger of the Bureau of Philanthropic Research, the Field Bureau of the National Conference of Jewish Charities, and the Bureau of Jewish Statistics and Research of the American Jewish Committee. According to its assistant executive director, Hyman Kaplan, writing in the *Year Book*, the bureau was designed to be the “social research agency of American Jewry, prepared to study its problems, to advance standards of philanthropic administration, and to serve as a central source of information on matters of sociological interest pertaining to Jewry all over the civilized world.”⁸¹ It promised to employ the “best standards in every phase of social endeavor” and to serve “as a guiding hand for executive action.” Its “accumulated experience,” it believed, could be “applied with redoubled ef-

fect and economy” to find the “best solution,” to the “many problems” of the Jewish community “still awaiting attention.” Meanwhile, its surveys, many of which appeared in the *Year Book*, sought to promote efficiency and a greater degree of professionalism in Jewish life—goals similar to those advocated by urban reformers throughout the United States—as well as to provide factual ammunition for use in communal defense.

Lithuanian-born Harry Linfield, a Reform rabbi with a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and a specialty in statistics, was the moving force behind the Bureau of Jewish Social Research. Later, in 1928, when the AJC ended its arrangement with the bureau, he came to head the statistical bureau of the AJC. Throughout the interwar period, the *Year Book's* most important quantitative studies were produced under his direction. An early study, “Professional Tendencies Among Jewish Students in Colleges, Universities and Professional Schools”—undertaken in 1918–19 just before many of these places initiated anti-Jewish quotas—examined 106 “prominent educational institutions” in order to secure “concrete information” concerning the professional career patterns of Jewish students. The information gathered—little known today even among scholars—sheds fascinating light on college training among postwar Jews. It is especially noteworthy for what it discloses about how Jews differed from their neighbors, and for its findings concerning Jewish women. The conclusions, which the study conveniently summarized, were as follows:

- (1) The Jewish enrolment in the 106 institutions covered is 14,837 or 9.7 per cent of the total registration, 153,085.
- (2) For the institutions in New York City, where comparison could be made on the basis of population, the proportion of Jewish students in the educational institutions is 38.5 per cent compared with a 25 per cent representation in the general population.
- (3) The proportion of Jewish female students to the Jewish registration is one to five, a much lower ratio than in the non-Jewish group where the proportion of females is more than one to three.
- (4) The following five branches of study, in the order mentioned, attract the largest number of Jewish students: Commerce and finance, medicine, engineering, law, and dentistry, representing together 84.5 per cent of the total Jewish enrolment in professional schools.
- (5) Of the total registration of Jewish female students 32.1 per cent are enrolled in departments of commerce and finance, 28.4 per cent in schools of education, and 14 per cent are in law schools, the latter proportion being almost equal to the proportion of Jewish men preparing to enter this field.⁸²

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 332.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 588.

⁸¹Vol. 22 (1920–21), pp. 37–38.

⁸²Ibid., p. 386.

In 1927, in conjunction with the United States Census, which at that time regularly surveyed "Religious Bodies," Linfield collected information on the Jewish population in the United States and on Jewish communal organizations. The most important and sophisticated study of the American Jewish population yet undertaken, it disclosed a raft of important new information that the *Year Book* published in two chart-filled articles occupying more than 250 pages. By 1927, Linfield found, the Jewish population of the United States stood at 4,228,029 (3.58 percent of the population), up from 3,388,951 (3.27 percent) ten years earlier. The Jewish population continued to grow at a faster rate than the general population, but he warned that "this growth is slowing down."⁸³ He also found Jews "widely distributed within the states," spread over no fewer than 6,420 cities, towns, and villages, as well as 3,292 rural unincorporated districts. Seeking, perhaps, to counter the image that Jews "crowded" into narrow regions of the country, he somewhat downplayed the fact that more than 90 percent of the Jews continued to live in the North, that 87 percent lived in only ten states (New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, California, Connecticut, Michigan, and Missouri), and that 69 percent lived in but 11 cities—New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, Baltimore, Los Angeles, Newark, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis.⁸⁴

The data concerning Jewish organizations was even more revealing. Linfield found a total of 3,118 Jewish congregations in the United States, an increase of 1,217—more than 64 percent—from ten years before. This was particularly surprising since the Jewish population as a whole had only grown by 24.7 percent in the decade. The reason, he pointed out, was that synagogue growth had not previously kept pace with the growth of the Jewish population: the population increased more than 17 times over between 1877 and 1917, while the number of congregations had multiplied by less than six times. In the postwar period, however, as immigration lagged and Jewish communal wealth increased, new synagogues mushroomed. Linfield, in keeping with past *Year Book* practice, did not disclose how many synagogues followed Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism, but he did note that only 22 percent of them belonged to any national congregational federation at all; most remained independent. Moreover, only 56 percent of America's synagogues employed their own rabbis, another 5 percent shared rabbinic services, and the other 39 percent, including 112 (small) Jewish communities, had no rabbis at all. Moving beyond the synagogue, Linfield provided a blizzard of data

concerning Jewish education, culture, and philanthropy. He counted 1,754 Jewish elementary schools of various kinds (including 12 day schools), 912 Jewish youth organizations, 2,957 "social-philanthropic organizations," another 3,699 that he described as "economic-philanthropic organizations" (loan societies, mutual benefit societies, cemetery societies, etc.), 62 institutions for the promotion of health, 1,019 organizations devoted to the care of dependents, 1,227 Zionist organizations (divided into ten national federations), and much more. He even counted the number of Jewish theaters in the United States—24—and revealed that in any given month they collectively "gave 645 performances of 86 different plays."⁸⁵ Never before, the *Year Book* boasted, had the "varied types of organization which have been developed as instruments for performing the multifarious functions required by our many-sided communal life" been so comprehensively described.⁸⁶

Through most of the 1920s, the Bureau of Jewish Social Research's "guiding hand" shaped large sections of the *American Jewish Year Book*, especially as Harry Schneiderman was more than ever taken up with the affairs of the American Jewish Committee. Besides updating the population statistics on the basis of newly released census data, Harry Linfield also wrote the survey of the year till Schneiderman returned to the *Year Book* on a more full-time basis in 1928. Linfield reorganized the survey according to themes rather than by country, thereby making America seem much less distinctive than before. On the other hand, he added and enhanced the lists of appointments, honors, elections, bequests, gifts, and the necrology, all showcasing the achievements of Jews in American society.

Presenting Jews in a Good Light

This sharpened focus on Jewish achievements, while not wholly new, nevertheless reflected a heightened defensiveness on the part of American Jews. Anti-Semitism increased alarmingly in the postwar era as Americans, in Leonard Dinnerstein's words, grew "disillusioned with internationalism, fearful of Bolshevik subversion, and frightened that foreigners would corrupt the nation's values and traditions."⁸⁷ Henry Ford's rantings against "The International Jew: The World's Problem," in his widely circulated newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*, coupled with social discrimination against Jews in many quarters, left the American Jewish com-

⁸³Vol. 30 (1928–29), p. 158.

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 101–98.

⁸⁵Vol. 31 (1929–30), pp. 99–254.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. iii.

⁸⁷Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York, 1994), p. 78.

munity feeling uneasy and vulnerable. In subtle ways, the *Year Book* sought both to uplift it and to help it respond to critics. Thus in 1922 it published a list of about 1700 "Jews of Prominence in the United States." The list contained far less information than the biographical sketches printed back in 1903–06, and was described as "preparatory to an exhaustive 'Who's Who,' which is a desideratum" (in fact, after he retired from the *Year Book*, Schneiderman went on to edit *Who's Who in World Jewry*). Its virtue, if not its main aim, as the *Year Book* stated twice, was "to compile a new record of Jews who contribute to the sum of American life," and to serve as "an index to the contribution of Jews to the culture and civilization of America."⁸⁸

The next volume, the 25th (1923–24), may well have been the most apologetic in the *Year Book's* entire history. Five different articles in the volume aimed to respond, in different ways, to anti-Semitic critics who maligned and belittled the Jewish people and its faith. Hannah London's seemingly innocuous article, "Portraits of Early American Jews"—a topic far removed from the *Year Book's* standard fare—underscored, in the words of its author, "the encouragement given to American art by the Jews who first came to these shores and helped to establish the foundations of our Republic." In a tacit response to those who claimed that Jews were interlopers in America who confined themselves to mercantile pursuits, the *Year Book* article underscored "the positions of usefulness occupied by many Jews in the Colonial period," and their role in the "development of the fine arts."⁸⁹

Rabbi Moses Hyamson's article, revealingly entitled "The Jewish Method of Slaying Animals From the Point of View of Humanity," was a more obvious apologetic. An explicit response to calls for "the Jewish method of slaughtering animals [to] be abolished," on grounds of cruelty, the article patiently explained what the Jewish laws of *shehitah* (ritual slaughtering) entailed, and insisted that "the Jewish method of slaughter does not fall below, but, in many respects, is superior to all other methods . . . from the point of view of humanity and kindness to animals." In the best tradition of apologetics, it then proceeded to back up this claim by citing a bevy of great [non-Jewish] professors, surgeons, and physiologists who agreed.⁹⁰

Professor Israel Davidson's article, entitled simply "Kol Nidre," dealt with a prayer that, the *Year Book* explained, "has been the occasion of much misunderstanding and even misrepresentation." Anti-Semites had

long pointed to the prayer, recited at the beginning of the evening service on the Day of Atonement, as evidence that Jewish oaths could not be trusted. Davidson's exceedingly learned article, more appropriate to a scholarly journal than to the *Year Book*, placed the prayer in a different context, explaining that it referred "only to vows in which the votary alone is involved, but not to those which concern other people." Concluding with an adage that might appropriately have been applied to the *Year Book* itself, he advised against indulging "in too many explanations, because friends do not need them and enemies would not believe them."⁹¹

The article that followed, Benjamin Harrow's "Jews Who Have Received the Nobel Prize," was far less esoteric. Occasioned by the Nobel Prize awarded in 1921 to Albert Einstein, it pointed out that Jews had won nine of the 107 Nobel Prizes distributed since they began, and that one of America's own five Nobel Prize winners was a Jew, Albert A. Michelson. In an era when anti-Semites labeled Jews as the source of major world problems, the article served as a timely reminder to the faithful that they had made important positive contributions to the world that should not be overlooked.

Finally, this volume of the *Year Book* published, in 25 pages of small print, the one and only full-scale rabbinic responsum ever to appear between its covers. Professor Louis Ginzberg's "A Response to the Question: Whether Unfermented Wine May be Used in Jewish Ceremonies," translated from the Hebrew, was, once again, an obvious apologetic, designed to put a stop to widespread rabbinic abuse of the Prohibition Enforcement Act which permitted the manufacture and sale of wine for sacramental or ritual purposes only. The American Jewish Committee, concerned that the image of the Jewish community was being tarnished by the many cases of "so-called Rabbis" who took advantage of the Act "to enable wine to be procured for non-ritual purposes," gleefully trumpeted Ginzberg's "profound and exhaustive study," mischaracterized it as showing "a distinct preference" in Jewish law "in favor of unfermented wine," and ordered it published in the *Year Book* so as to make its recondite learning "readily accessible."⁹²

The following year, in a continuation of this defensive posture, the

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 192.

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 377–79, 401–25. David Golinkin, *The Responsa of Professor Louis Ginzberg* (New York, 1996), pp. 111–33 [Eng. Section], 1–77 [Heb. Section], notes that the *Year Book* version "is much more than a translation" from the Hebrew, since it adds one new section and synthesizes much of the original. He also lists several errors (p. 132). See also Hannah Sprecher, "'Let Them Drink and Forget Our Poverty': Orthodox Rabbis React to Prohibition," *American Jewish Archives* 43, Fall–Winter 1991, pp. 134–179; and Baila R. Shargel, "Louis Ginzberg as Apologist," *American Jewish History* 79, Winter 1989–90, pp. 210–20.

⁸⁸Vol. 24 (1922–23), pp. iii, 111.

⁸⁹Vol. 25 (1923–24), pp. 161, iii.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. iii, 174.

Year Book published "The Yiddish Press—An Americanizing Agency," by Mordecai Soltes. The article appeared at the very moment that American nativism stood at its peak and immigration into the United States was being severely restricted by a new quota system based on geography. Opponents of immigration charged that foreigners fomented radicalism and undermined American values. They viewed foreign-language materials, particularly newspapers, with great suspicion; a few years earlier, during World War I, some had sought to ban such newspapers entirely. Soltes's study, originally his Columbia University Teachers College doctoral dissertation and later published separately as a book, responded to these charges. Without questioning the goals of Americanization, he argued that the Yiddish press in fact furthered these goals, creating an "environment which not only does not interfere, but actively cooperates with the civic and patriotic purposes of the school."⁹³ He admitted that the best-selling Yiddish newspaper, Abraham Cahan's *Forward*, supported socialism, but insisted that it disavowed radicalism and sought to improve working conditions through democratic means. Indeed, by the time he was done with his exhaustive, chart-filled analysis, he had composed a paean to the Yiddish press, crediting it with promoting in its readers every value that supporters of Americanization cherished:

[I]t exhorts them to become citizens, to exercise their right to vote at the primaries and elections, and not to leave the control of politics entirely in the hands of professional politicians; to take advantage of their power to remedy the defects in our present social and industrial order by means of the ballot, and not to permit themselves to be swayed by agitators who advocate sabotage or terrorism; to adapt themselves to American conditions and standards, to leave the congested city life and to settle upon the farm; to organize and to remain faithful to their union, thereby aiding in maintaining proper American standards of living; in brief, not to remain strangers in this land but to become part and parcel of the American people.⁹⁴

The original German-Jewish leaders of the American Jewish Committee might have balked at such praise of the Yiddish press. Privately, many of them disdained Yiddish as an embarrassing "jargon" of minor cultural significance, and the *Year Book* had not previously paid it much heed. But in the face of xenophobic attacks, and with the emergence of East European Jews (like Harry Schneiderman) into positions of influence, these old cultural battles were beginning to fade. As the *Year Book's* articles amply demonstrated, American Jews were now much more united, bound together by common fears and a common determination to defend themselves against enemies both foreign and domestic.

⁹³Vol. 26 (1924–25), p. 332.

⁹⁴Ibid., pp. 328–29.

Years of Pessimism

In fact the old German-Jewish leadership of the American Jewish community was fast passing from the scene. The same issue of the *Year Book* that carried Soltes's article also noted the death of "an unusually large number" of the community's "most active leaders and public workers," including such well-known figures of German birth or descent as Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, Joseph Krauskopf, and Henry Berkowitz, the lawyer and lobbyist Simon Wolf, and Judge Mayer Sulzberger. Subsequent issues noted other prominent deaths—California congressman Julius Kahn, Hebrew Union College president Kaufmann Kohler, former commerce secretary Oscar Straus, and many more. All of these men received "warm and sympathetic and, at the same time vivid portrayals"⁹⁵ in the *Year Book*. Recounting just five of their lives took up 99 pages in volume 26. By volume 50, some 74 prominent American Jews had been memorialized at length. They were selected, Schneiderman explained on one occasion, "because of the profound impress they made upon their generation, and because it is believed that their lives will inspire future generations to live nobly, in consonance with the most exalted teachings of Judaism."⁹⁶ He felt that the biographies, most of them chronicling the lives of elite German Jews, constituted "a key to the history of Jewish life in America during the past century."⁹⁷ They also served as a tribute to an era that was waning. In its wake, Jewish leadership opened up to a new generation of Jews, many of them East European in origin.

The *Year Book*, like the American Jewish community as a whole, had many doubts about what all this portended. Pessimism, marked by fears about anti-Semitism and the fate of Jews abroad, had replaced the optimism of the century's first two decades. The problems of assimilation and communal decline evoked great concern, as the children of the immigrants seemed to be abandoning the synagogue, and many Jewish organizations suffered financial reversals. As early as 1914, the Jewish educator Julius Greenstone had apprised *Year Book* readers of the challenge that lay ahead. "The problem with which American Jewry is now confronted," he warned, "is nothing less than the problem of self preservation, the problem of preserving the Jewish people in Judaism in the new environment." He estimated that "more than two-thirds" of American Jewish children were growing up "outside the sphere of any religious influence and guidance," and he admonished his fellow Jews to feel "not

⁹⁵Vol. 33 (1931–32), p. iii.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Vol. 50 (1948–49), p. 95.

only anxious about our future, but thoroughly ashamed."⁹⁸ A subsequent article, published in 1921, warned of the need "to Americanize without deJudaizing the immigrant and his children."⁹⁹ Some of these fears concerning the future of Judaism seemed to be coming true by the end of the decade. Reform and Conservative rabbis, according to the *Year Book*, were lamenting that the synagogue was "being invaded by secularism."¹⁰⁰ The decline of the synagogue was so pronounced by the early 1930s that Judge Horace Stern of Pennsylvania wrote an entire article on the subject for the *Year Book*, blaming the problem, among other things, on competition from "automobiles, golf clubs, radios, bridge parties, extension lectures, and the proceedings of various learned and pseudo-learned societies."¹⁰¹

Even before the great stock market crash of 1929, a good many synagogues and other Jewish organizations had fallen upon hard times. Cyrus Adler declared in 1920 that "practically every Jewish organization of higher learning or science" in America "was broke."¹⁰² The Jewish Publication Society, copublisher of the *Year Book*, was \$120,000 in debt in the early 1920s, and later in the decade the fraternal order B'rith Abraham went bankrupt.¹⁰³ The *Year Book* itself was radically downsized for a time: volume 23, published in 1921, was condensed to 300 pages (plus reports), owing to "the greatly increased cost of paper, printing and binding," while volume 30, published in 1928, had to be compressed into just 270 pages (plus reports).

We know, in retrospect, that the problem was not confined to Jews. Historians of American religion now characterize the 1920s and early 1930s as an era of "religious depression" marked by declining church attendance and a deepening "secular" interest in universalism and the "cosmopolitan spirit."¹⁰⁴ Jews and Christians alike lamented, as Judge Stern did in the *Year Book*, that "religion at least in its organized forms, has to an appreciable extent lost its hold upon the present generation."¹⁰⁵ In its place, many young Jews turned to secular movements like socialism, Communism, and Zionism. The *Year Book* took little notice of these developments at the time, perhaps because neither its editors nor its spon-

⁹⁸Vol. 16 (1914–15), pp. 92, 121.

⁹⁹Vol. 23 (1921–22), p. 89.

¹⁰⁰Vol. 32 (1930–31), p. 72.

¹⁰¹Vol. 35 (1933–34), pp. 162–63.

¹⁰²As quoted in Sarna, *JPS*, p. 142.

¹⁰³Vol. 30 (1928–29), p. 31.

¹⁰⁴Robert T. Handy, "The American Religious Depression, 1925–1935," *Church History* 29, 1960, pp. 3–16.

¹⁰⁵Vol. 35 (1933–34), p. 163.

sors had much contact with the younger generation. Instead, it registered the fears of an older generation.

What the *Year Book* certainly did notice was the Great Depression. It chronicled both the hardships in the Jewish community and Jewish efforts to relieve the suffering. "Every Jewish social service organization in the country," it reported in 1931, saw its facilities and services "in demand as never before, and yet, at the same time, their resources were drastically reduced." It found that "practically every local federation in the country was compelled to reduce its budget," and that some Jewish social service agencies combined forces "as a result of the hard times." Several factors increased Jewish suffering, it observed, including "the failure of banks in which a very large proportion of the depositors and investors were Jews, strikes in trades employing many Jews, and discrimination . . . against Jews seeking employment"—the latter a theme that the *Year Book* had only rarely noted before. Jewish educational agencies were particularly hard hit, "necessitating in many cases the reduction of teaching staffs and the consolidation of classes." Nor were religious institutions "immune from the effects of the business depression." Graduating rabbis could not find jobs, and existing synagogues in several communities were compelled to merge. More broadly, the *Year Book's* annual listing of national Jewish organizations registered a small decline in 1930, its first since World War I, as three organizations went out of existence. The *Year Book* could not have realized at the time what historian Beth Wenger discovered only in retrospect, that "the Great Depression constituted a defining moment for American Jews, inaugurating alterations in Jewish families, occupational structures, political preferences, and communal organization that changed the face of Jewish life in the twentieth century."¹⁰⁶ What the *Year Book* did proudly record was that Jews not only participated "in all civic efforts to relieve suffering in general, but Jewish organizations also established special agencies to help meet the crisis." The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) opened its facilities to those needing food and shelter; synagogues welcomed the homeless; Jewish employment bureaus were formed; and special fund-raising campaigns were initiated.¹⁰⁷

The domestic problems that plagued American Jewry in the wake of the Great Depression diverted the community's attention from the international arena. As the *Year Book* itself admitted in 1931, "the Jews of the United States did not during the past years watch the situation of their overseas co-religionists with the same concentration as in the preceding

¹⁰⁶Beth S. Wenger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression* (New Haven, 1996), p. 9.

¹⁰⁷Vol. 33 (1931–32), pp. 38–44.

twelve months."¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, the annual "Review of the Year" did continue to monitor the unsettling developments in Germany, where Adolf Hitler was gaining in popularity.

Chronicling the Nazi Menace

Back in 1928, the *Year Book* had described Hitler as a "notorious agitator" and noted approvingly that "anti-Jewish demonstrations were suppressed whenever their proceedings went beyond legal bounds."¹⁰⁹ Hitler's activities received continuing notice in the ensuing volumes, and in 1931, after his National Socialists became the second largest party in the *Reichstag* (German parliament) by gaining 95 seats in the September 1930 elections, the *Year Book* reported "the same exhibitions of anti-Semitic fury and folly as have come to be universally associated with the Hitler movement—street attacks against Jews, molestation of Jews in cafes and theatres, disturbance of religious services in synagogues and of Jewish meetings of all kinds, desecration of synagogues, and pollution of cemeteries."¹¹⁰ German-Jewish leaders, who maintained close ties to the American Jewish Committee, played down the Hitler threat at that time, and the *Year Book*, to some extent, echoed their views. It cited Albert Einstein in describing support for the Nazis as "a symptom of despair in the face of depressed economic conditions and unemployment," and described the American Jewish community as being hopeful that the debt moratorium declared by President Herbert Hoover would improve Germany's economic situation and thus deal the National Socialist movement a "serious setback."¹¹¹

These hopes proved illusory, and when Hitler became Germany's chancellor in 1933 the *Year Book* reversed itself. The preface to volume 35 began with the announcement that the year "will stand out in the post-exilic history of the Jewish people as the year in which a country universally regarded as an outpost of civilization and culture permitted itself to be led astray by a malicious race mania onto a path of the most degrading mass persecution." It described the "world-shocking catastrophe which has befallen the Jews of Germany" as a development of "momentous significance to Jews everywhere," and devoted many pages to chronicling the events in Germany in frightening detail.¹¹² The next year, it chillingly listed "the names of a number of distinguished German Jews who

died by their own hands" as well as others, "ousted from the laboratories and lecture halls of German colleges and universities," whom, it said (with some exaggeration), were "cordially welcomed" in other countries.¹¹³ By 1935 it was warning of a "deliberate premeditated policy of a ruling clique ruthlessly to exterminate German Jewry—a policy springing from maniacal adherence to a fanatical dogma of race nationalism." Presciently, it also noticed that Nazism was extending beyond Germany's borders and "threatening the welfare of Jews in a number of countries outside of Germany."¹¹⁴

The press, even some Jewish newspapers, underreported German atrocities in the 1930s and misinterpreted their significance. The *New York Times*, for example, as Deborah Lipstadt and others have shown, "was anxious not to appear 'too Jewish,'" and therefore paid more attention to the deaths of non-Jewish civilians than to the murder of Jews.¹¹⁵ Even the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Haskel Lookstein has shown, had a "tendency . . . to bury atrocity stories rather than to give them prominence."¹¹⁶ Not so the *American Jewish Year Book*. Throughout the 1930s it documented in graphic detail both the Nazi horrors and the sorry plight of German-Jewish refugees. At the height of its concern, in the annual review of the year covering July 1, 1938–June 30, 1939, it warned of the "speeding up of the continuing process of liquidation of what still remained of Jewish life and interests in Germany." There is "no doubt," it mourned, "that the Nazi Government was bent upon annihilating the last vestiges of the German-Jewish community." It then proceeded to elaborate, revealing "the murder of hundreds of Jews in concentration camps," as well as the "frequent arrests and expulsions of Jews," both native born and immigrants. The dramatic conclusion—tragically prophetic and largely ignored in 1939—was that Germany would "not rest with the annihilation of the Jewish community within her own frontiers, but sought insofar as it was able, to visit the same fate upon Jews all over the world."¹¹⁷

More, perhaps, than any other single English-language source in the United States, the *Year Book* chronicled the unfolding tragedy not just of German Jewry but of European Jewry as a whole. Thus, 11 pages of small print in 1939 detailed the decline of Czechoslovak Jewry, particularly following the Munich Pact of September 1938 which, as the *Year*

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁰⁹Vol. 30 (1928–29), p. 40.

¹¹⁰Vol. 33 (1931–32), p. 76.

¹¹¹Ibid., pp. 35, 75.

¹¹²Vol. 35 (1933–34), pp. iii, 21–39.

¹¹³Vol. 36 (1934–35), p. iii.

¹¹⁴Vol. 37 (1935–36), p. 135.

¹¹⁵Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust, 1933–1945* (New York, 1986), pp. 155, 169–71.

¹¹⁶Haskel Lookstein, *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers?* (New York, 1985), p. 49.

¹¹⁷Vol. 41 (1939–40), pp. 261, 264, 268.

Book put it, “proved to be as disastrous to the Jewish population as to the Czechoslovak State itself.” Seven pages chronicled the deteriorating situation of Hungarian Jewry, where anti-Jewish laws undermined Jewish life, and domestic support of Nazism rose precipitously. With tragic accuracy, the *Year Book*, summarizing the situation, expressed “gloomy forebodings regarding the future.” Turning to Italy, the *Year Book* reported in six pages on how the “‘Aryanizing’ machinery was set into motion” by Mussolini, with the result that Jews were being excluded from political, economic, and social life. Though “the policy failed to win the support of many sections of the Italian population,” the *Year Book* reported, this “did little to impede the speedy deterioration of the once great Italian Jewish community.” The situation in Poland was no better. Discriminatory legislation, anti-Jewish agitation, the elimination of Jews from economic and professional life, “violence of almost unprecedented proportions,” and a policy of forced emigration all were detailed in 15 pages of text—though in this case even the *Year Book* could not envisage the horrors that lay ahead. So the narrative proceeded, country after country, in perhaps the most shattering review of the year in the *Year Book*’s whole history. A concluding section on “the refugee problem” did not mince words either. It described the situation in 1938–39 as “cruel” and “discouraging.”¹¹⁸

Worse was still to come, of course, and subsequent volumes of the *Year Book* continued the horrific story, setting forth the known facts in excruciating detail. In 1940, for example, it reported the death rate at the Buchenwald concentration camp as 30 percent, and described the condition of Polish Jewry under Hitler as “probably the greatest tragedy in the entire history of Israel.” Fourteen pages chronicled the year’s events there under such headings as “expulsions,” “depredations,” “massacres and executions,” “mass arrests and forced labor,” and “fate of Jewish women.”¹¹⁹ Two years later, the *Year Book* reported that “200,000 Jews have been killed by the Nazis since the occupation of Poland, most of them since March 1942 It was also confirmed from underground sources that thousands of Jews were being gassed by the Gestapo.”¹²⁰ By 1943, when reports of the Final Solution had been publicly confirmed, the *Year Book* understood that its predictions and fears had come true: “the Nazis,” it proclaimed, “are endeavoring to exterminate the Jews of Europe by all possible methods in the shortest possible time.”¹²¹

In setting forth this record of contemporary tragedy, the editors of the

Year Book believed that the facts spoke for themselves. They therefore spared no effort in collecting and detailing the horrors facing European Jewry, devoting hundreds of pages to this task in the *Year Book*, just as the American Jewish Committee did in the bimonthly *Contemporary Jewish Record*, which it founded in 1938. In 1941 the *Year Book*’s annual “Review of the Year” became a collaborative work, with chapters assigned to regional or local experts. The brilliantly crafted reports on events in the British Commonwealth, for example, were written for several years by Theodor H. Gaster, then editorial secretary of London’s Institute of Jewish Affairs and later a famous Orientalist. Yet neither Gaster nor anybody else accompanied their report with any call to action—that had not been the *Year Book*’s province since the days of the Russian Passport campaign. Moreover, in retrospect, we can surmise that the reviews of the year, graphic as they were, remained all too little read and appreciated by contemporaries. Most Americans, even a great many American Jews, failed to assimilate the magnitude of the unfolding Holocaust until it was practically complete. The problem, as a rereading of the *Year Book* clearly reveals, was not the absence of accurate information—in fact, those who took the trouble to read could learn a great deal about what was going on. The problem instead was a failure to come to terms with the information available. Far too many people dismissed what the *Year Book* and other Jewish periodicals published as being simply, in Deborah Lipstadt’s memorable phrase, “beyond belief.”

Although the contemporary reader cannot but be impressed by the extent and accuracy of the *Year Book*’s coverage of the unfolding tragedy of European Jewry, the annual “Review of the Year” which contained these reports rarely won pride of place in the *Year Book* during this period. The headlined articles in the front of the book, highlighted in gold on the cover, focused almost exclusively on domestic issues. There were the usual panegyric obituaries, yet another article on American Jews in agriculture (“more Jews are today thinking in terms of the farm than in any other period in the whole of American history,” it wishfully proclaimed), various articles on Jewish organizations, a list of Jewish fiction in English (omitting books deemed “unwholesome in content or treatment, or [that] present Jewish life in a distorted way”), and a series of articles on historic Jewish personalities (Maimonides, Rashi, Saadiah Gaon, Jehuda Halevi, Heinrich Graetz, and Nachman Krochmal), whose anniversaries occasioned popular retrospectives on their work and on its relevance for American Jews. Thus the front of the *Year Book* generally projected a message of continuity and normalcy, a sense of “business as usual” that stood in abject tension to the horrific reports found further on. This same tension characterized American Jewish life as a whole at that time, torn between a quest for domestic tranquility and the fright-

¹¹⁸Ibid., pp. 270, 285, 291, 374.

¹¹⁹Vol. 42 (1940–41), pp. 365–74.

¹²⁰Vol. 44 (1942–43), p. 247.

¹²¹Vol. 45 (1943–44), p. 232.

ening realization that the world Jews had known would never be the same.

Once the United States entered the war, the *Year Book's* focus broadened to include Jews in the military, notably "lists of American Jewish men who have been cited for bravery or have lost their lives in the service." The Jewish Welfare Board, the body charged with meeting the needs of American Jews in the armed forces, compiled this information, and its executive director, Louis Kraft, admitted in a *Year Book* article that, as before, the compilation served both patriotic and apologetic purposes: "to continue the story of our historic contribution to the preservation of America and to write in clear, bold letters the facts that bear witness to the willingness of Jews, from the beginning of their history, to fight and die in the struggle for the victory of the ideals of freedom and justice."¹²²

More substantial articles on Jews and the American war effort appeared only after Germany's surrender, in the volume issued in time for the High Holy Days of 1945. Pride of place that year went to "Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Jewish Crisis 1933-1945," by Edward N. Saveth, then a young AJC researcher and later a distinguished historian. Roosevelt, of course, had only just died, and Saveth's radiant appreciation of his "sympathetic . . . attitude toward the Jewish people" and his "defense of Jews against their oppressors" amply reflected what most Jews of that day fervently believed. To be sure, Saveth conceded that the administration's efforts to aid Jewish refugees "were not as effective as some had hoped." He insisted, however, that this "was not because the Administration was wanting, but because of the savage and inhuman character of the adversary." Later historians, relying on documents unavailable to Saveth, would disagree. Franklin D. Roosevelt's "steps to aid Europe's Jews were very limited," David Wyman concluded in his 1984 bestseller, *The Abandonment of the Jews*. "If he had wanted to, he could have aroused substantial public backing for a vital rescue effort by speaking out on the issue. . . . But he had little to say about the problem and gave no priority at all to rescue."¹²³

Other articles in the 1945 volume included a summary of "Jewish War Records of World War II" by the director of the Bureau of War Records of the National Jewish Welfare Board, and a survey of the work of "Jewish Chaplains in World War II" by the executive director of the Welfare Board's Committee on Army and Navy Religious Activities. By far the

most important article, however, was by Jacob Kaplan, then acting grand rabbi of France (and later its courageous chief rabbi), who produced a remarkable 48-page detailed account of "French Jewry Under the Occupation," complete with primary documents. Kaplan witnessed many of these events, playing a leading role in some of them, so his account was that of a historically sensitive participant-observer. For years, no better English-language survey of the Holocaust in France existed. The editors' hope that Kaplan's would be "the first of a series of articles on the experiences of the various Jewish communities of Europe during Nazi occupation"¹²⁴ however, went unrealized. The *Year Book*, like the American Jewish community generally, soon turned away from the bleak tragedy of European Jewry and focused upon the brighter future that everyone hoped lay ahead.

Postwar Challenges

Even before the war ended, the *Year Book* had been promoting American Jewry as the linchpin of the new postwar Jewish world order. In 1941, for example, editor Harry Schneiderman wrote:

In the United States, the only important Jewish community of the world left unscathed by the direct effects of the Hitler war, there were indications during the past year as in several preceding years, of a growing awareness of both the challenge and the opportunity presented by the community's unique situation. Although grateful for its immunity from the plague which has virtually destroyed Jewish life in Europe, it would seem that American Jews are realizing that they have been spared for a sacred task — to preserve Judaism and its cultural, social and moral values, to ransom Jewish captives as much as this can be done, to alleviate the sufferings of their brethren and to prepare themselves against the coming of the day when the way will be open for them to succor and rehabilitate the survivors of the unspeakable disaster which has temporarily prostrated them.¹²⁵

In the same volume, Maurice Jacobs, executive director of the Jewish Publication Society, declared bluntly that "America must now assume the full leadership in Jewish life. The day of German Jewry has passed. . . ." Historian Jacob Rader Marcus, in an address on "New Literary Responsibilities" also published in that year's *Year Book*, echoed the same theme: "The burden is solely ours to carry: Jewish culture and civilization and leadership are shifting rapidly to these shores."¹²⁶

As if to prepare American Jewry for its new mission, the *Year Book* began to devote greater attention to religious, educational, and cultural

¹²²Vol. 44 (1942-43), p. vi; Vol. 45 (1943-44), p. 180.

¹²³Vol. 47 (1945-46), pp. 40, 45; David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews* (New York, 1984), p. 311.

¹²⁴Vol. 47 (1945-46), pp. v-vi.

¹²⁵Vol. 43 (1941-42), p. 28.

¹²⁶Ibid., pp. 780, 789.

activities in the United States, adding sections on these subjects to its annual review of the year. In 1943, it published major articles on "Jewish Book Collections in the United States" and on "American Jewish Scholarship." The latter, produced just before his death by the renowned German-Jewish scholar Ismar Elbogen, then a refugee in New York, symbolized a transfer of power. The Old World scholar offered his blessing to the land where he found refuge, describing it as "a center of Jewish scholarship," indeed, in the wake of the war, "the sole center—with the exception of Palestine." Reminding American Jewry that its intellectual forces had, in the past, been foreign-born immigrants, he challenged the community "to produce native scholars of its own."¹²⁷

Within two years, the *Year Book* reported that "the leading Jewish theological seminaries" had, in effect, responded. Spurred in part "by the catastrophic extinction of Jewish centers of learning abroad" and by the "glaring need of the American community for religious direction and informed leadership" they announced far-reaching programs of expansion. The *Year Book* also reported "increased community interest and support for Jewish education in many cities throughout the United States," and it saw "signs which indicated that American Jewish education was breaking away from its European moorings and becoming rooted in the American Jewish community and psyche." More broadly, it reported in 1945 a surge in Jewish organizational development in the United States, with "a larger number of new organizations . . . formed during the past five years than in any previous five-year period, forty seven new organizations having been established since 1940."¹²⁸

What these noteworthy facts all pointed to was confirmed statistically in the *Year Book* of 1946, when new figures revealed that "the major part of the present world Jewish population—about 5,176,000" were living in the United States and Canada. By contrast, "in Europe only an estimated 3,642,000 remain[ed] of the total Jewish pre-war population of approximately 9,740,000." The two continents had thus "reversed their order of 1939." Where before Europe had been "the greatest center of Jewish population," now, as a consequence of the Holocaust, that designation fell to North America.¹²⁹ The news was heralded by historians Oscar and Mary Handlin on the first page of the 50th volume of the *American Jewish Year Book*, published in 1949. "The events of the Second World War," they declared, "left the United States the center of world Judaism. The answers to the most critical questions as to the fu-

¹²⁷Ibid., pp. 47–65.

¹²⁸Vol. 47 (1945–46), pp. 215, 234, 242, 559.

¹²⁹Vol. 48 (1946–47), p. 599.

ture of the Jews everywhere will be determined by the attitudes and the position of the five million Jews who are citizens of the American Republic."¹³⁰

The Triumph of Zionism

Yet at the very moment that the *Year Book* trumpeted American Jewry's centrality, highlighting its religious and cultural advances and focusing on its future challenges, the eyes of the Jewish world actually turned eastward, toward Zion. The 1939 British White Paper that severely limited Jewish immigration into Palestine, the refusal of country after country—before, during, and even after the war—to take in Jewish refugees, and the mass murder of millions whose only crime was that they had nowhere to go, persuaded many who had formerly been apathetic of the need for an independent Jewish homeland. In 1942, a celebrated Zionist conference held at New York's Biltmore Hotel demanded that "the gates of Palestine be opened . . . and that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth integrated in the structure of the new democratic world."¹³¹ A year later, an unprecedented "American Jewish Conference," representing some 64 national Jewish organizations as well as many local communities, reiterated these demands, calling "for the attainment of a Jewish majority and for the re-creation of the Jewish Commonwealth."¹³² With the coming of peace, and the urgent need to find a home for hundreds of thousands of Jewish survivors and "displaced persons," the campaign to end the British Mandate and to establish an independent Jewish state in Palestine intensified. As the great Jewish historian Salo Baron noted in a retrospective on the year published in the 1947 *Year Book*, "the Palestine situation . . . has focused the world's attention." "More and more Jews, even among the non-Zionists, became convinced that the creation of some sort of Jewish state in Palestine had become a historic necessity."¹³³

Some leaders of the American Jewish Committee, however, remained unconvinced. For decades, AJC members had maintained divergent views on Zionism, and the *Year Book* had followed suit. Only once, in 1922, did it list news of Palestine under the heading, "The National Homeland."

¹³⁰Vol. 50 (1948–49), p. 1.

¹³¹Melvin I. Urofsky, *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust* (Garden City, N.Y., 1975), pp. 424–27; Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1995), pp. 617–19.

¹³²Vol. 46 (1944–45), p. 169; Alexander S. Kohanski, ed., *The American Jewish Conference: Its Organization and Proceedings of the First Session* (New York, 1944), pp. 178–81.

¹³³Vol. 49 (1947–48), pp. 103, 107.

Taking its cue from the U.S. Senate resolution supporting the Balfour Declaration, it quoted AJC president Louis Marshall who dismissed the "small minority" of Jews who opposed the declaration as "erroneous," their fears "groundless."¹³⁴ Thereafter, though, the *Year Book* took a more cautious stance, perhaps in deference to the AJC's non-Zionist proclivities. It reviewed events of the year under neutral headings ("Palestine and Zionism"), expressed sympathy toward Jewish settlers, gloried in their economic and cultural achievements, and sought to avoid political controversy by sticking to the facts.

The *Year Book's* challenge became more acute in the 1940s when the Zionist demand for an independent Jewish commonwealth in Palestine—as opposed to international trusteeship or a binational state—hardened the lines of division between Zionism and its opponents. "A bitter controversy raged within the Committee," Naomi Cohen writes in her history of the AJC, "as both sides continued to debate the issues of Jewish statehood, Arab-Jewish relations, and Diaspora Jewry."¹³⁵ The reports of the American Jewish Committee, published annually in the back of the *Year Book*, chronicled this controversy, which became more virulent in 1943 with the ascension to the AJC presidency of Judge Joseph M. Proskauer, who considered the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine "a Jewish catastrophe."¹³⁶ In 1944, ten percent of the AJC's members, including representatives from ten affiliated organizations, resigned, protesting the AJC's withdrawal from the American Jewish Conference, which had come out in support of Zionism. The AJC, whose leaders favored an international trusteeship over Palestine, labeled the Conference's call for an independent Jewish commonwealth "extreme." In a 1945 address published in the AJC report at the back of the *Year Book*, Proskauer went further, labeling supporters of the resolutions favoring an independent commonwealth in Palestine "ultra-Zionists" and accusing them of marring "the harmony of Jewish collaboration."¹³⁷

Meanwhile, the *Year Book's* annual review of the year, which included "Zionist and Pro-Palestine Activities," continued to chronicle events, sometimes, indeed, from a Zionist perspective. Rabbi Joshua Trachtenberg of Easton, Pennsylvania, who wrote the section on "religious activities" for the *Year Book* in 1943, was a lifelong Zionist and a leader in the League for Labor Palestine. In writing about the Reform opponents of political Zionism who founded the (anti-Zionist) American Council

for Judaism, he barely concealed his contempt. Devoting many sentences to opponents of the new organization, he closed by noting that the Central Conference of American Rabbis, which spoke for the Reform rabbinate, "urged the Council to disband."¹³⁸ Samuel Dinin, who wrote the section on "Zionist and Pro-Palestine Activities" a year later, was likewise a committed Zionist. While he displayed determined neutrality in writing about the American Jewish Committee's stance, he felt less inhibited in writing about the American Council for Judaism, which he characterized, quoting others, as "an attempt to sabotage the collective Jewish will . . . by a small body of men speaking for only themselves."¹³⁹

Pro-Zionist sentiments continued to appear in the *Year Book* throughout the Proskauer era, testimony to the AJC's commitment to the *Year Book's* editorial independence and its continuing tolerance of diverse views. The ordering of subjects within the annual "Review of the Year," however, remained telling. Headings like "religion," "education and culture," "social welfare," "anti-Jewish agitation," and "interfaith activities" always preceded news about "Zionist and pro-Palestine activities" in the United States. In the international section, developments in Palestine also took a back seat, appearing after the review of Jewish events in Latin America, the British Commonwealth, and Europe. Proskauer and the AJC eventually muted their opposition to Zionism, as the plight of Jewish refugees became clearer and American government support for the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states crystallized. Still, in the face of mounting interest in Zion, they remained determinedly America-centered, and so, likewise, did the *Year Book*.

Changes for the Golden Anniversary

The fiftieth anniversary issue of the *American Jewish Year Book*, published in 1949, marked a turning point both in the history of the series and in the history of the Jewish people. The *Year Book* itself announced that the year just passed, 1947–48, had "witnessed the most dramatic and perhaps most significant event in post-exilic Jewish history—the establishment of the first independent Jewish state since the loss of Jewish political independence some 2000 years before." It published the full English text of Israel's "Declaration of Independence" as well as a map of Palestine's "Jewish and Arab held sections." It also published, in English translation, a Jewish Agency survey of "Thirty Years of Jewish Immigration to Palestine," including an attractive graph, especially prepared

¹³⁴Vol. 24 (1922–23), pp. 66, 68.

¹³⁵Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, p. 253.

¹³⁶As quoted by Jerold S. Auerbach in *American Jewish History* 61, September 1979, p. 111.

¹³⁷Vol. 47 (1945–46), p. 688.

¹³⁸Vol. 45 (1943–44), p. 141.

¹³⁹Vol. 46 (1944–45), p. 170.

for the *Year Book*, that portrayed the different waves of Zionist immigration, periodized into different “aliyot,” from the Hebrew word meaning “ascents” or “pilgrimages.”¹⁴⁰

Still, it was America that occupied center stage in the 50th anniversary volume. The 14 pages devoted to three decades of Jewish immigration to Palestine were dwarfed by a pathbreaking 84-page article reviewing a full century of Jewish immigration to the United States, written by historians Oscar and Mary Handlin. Similarly, the “Review of the Year” section dealing with the United States occupied 149 pages as compared to the 40 pages in the parallel section dealing with “Palestine and the Middle East.” With time, Israel would come to occupy more and more space in the *Year Book*, but the focus remained firmly fixed on the American scene. The aim, the editor explained, was to keep American Jews sufficiently informed concerning Israel and world Jewry so as to help “keep alive and to nurture . . . that sense of kinship and common destiny which has inspired our community worthily to fill the role of big brother to our overseas brethren.”¹⁴¹

The celebration of the *Year Book*’s golden anniversary afforded an opportunity for a reflective look back over its first half century. Harry Schneiderman, who had been involved with every issue of the *Year Book* since volume 11 (1909–1910), rose to the occasion with a fact-filled retrospective that described the *Year Book* as a “running contemporary record of the growth of the community as reflected in the development of its institutions and in the outcropping of problems, both those special to the Jewish people and those general world problems that have affected Jews.” Back in 1899, when the *Year Book* began, he noted, the American Jewish population numbered about a million; 50 years later it stood at four-and-a-half million. Volume one of the *Year Book* listed 20 national Jewish organizations; volume 50 listed about 270. In 1900, 42 Jewish periodicals were published in the United States; volume 50 listed 175. Finally, as one more indication of how much had changed not just numerically but politically, culturally, and editorially as well, he noted that “the Review of the Year in 1948 covered almost 500 pages, compared with nineteen pages which the equivalent material covered in the first volume.”¹⁴²

As it turned out, volume 50 was also Harry Schneiderman’s final volume as editor. After 40 years of association with the *Year Book*, 30 as editor, he was ready to retire; he likewise retired at that time from the Amer-

¹⁴⁰Vol. 50 (1948–49), pp. 107, 744.

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁴²Ibid., pp. 85–104. The quotations are on pp. 85 and 102.

ican Jewish Committee. He was succeeded as editor by his 36-year-old associate, Morris Fine, who had by then already spent 13 years at the AJC, and who would remain on as editor until he retired in 1979.

The first volume of the *Year Book* under Fine’s sole editorship, volume 51, published in 1950, was visibly different from any of its predecessors, signaling a new era. Changes began with the cover, where a handsome blue replaced the drab green that had garbed every *Year Book* since 1899. The new *Year Book* also stood an inch taller and half an inch wider than its predecessor, its very appearance suggesting the enlarged stature not only of the *Year Book* but of the community that it represented. Finally, the new cover dropped the Hebrew year that once so visibly placed the volume in Jewish time. Where the spine of volume 50 had read “5709” and only below that “1948–1949,” volume 51 listed only “1950” on the spine, cover, and title page; mention of the Hebrew year 5710 was banished to the calendar section beginning on page 529. In fact, the *Year Book* no longer even appeared in time for Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. The *Year Book*’s readers—Jewish and non-Jewish—now almost all marked time according to the Christian calendar, beginning on January 1, and the *Year Book* followed suit.

The “primary function” of the *Year Book*—defined in volume 51 “as a volume of reference summarizing developments in Jewish life and those larger events of Jewish interest,”¹⁴³ remained the same under the new format, but the contents, subjected to a “thorough re-examination,” changed markedly. The front of the book was now divided geographically, beginning with the United States, and coverage was extended to cover four broad headings: “socio-economic,” “civic and political,” “communal,” and “cultural.” A whole series of new subjects appeared under these headings, some of which, like “Civil Rights,” anticipated the great themes of the postwar era. Others, like “Films” and “Radio and Television,” reflected a growing appreciation for the significance of popular culture. The *Year Book* also promised to devote greater attention to statistical data—volume 51 included more than 100 tables and graphs, along with a special listing making them easy to find. In order to make room for these new features, the necrology section was cut back, and the self-congratulatory listings of institutional anniversaries, “appointments, honors, elections,” and large bequests and gifts were eliminated altogether. In addition, for the first time, the volume was fully indexed, making information much easier to locate. Volume 51 also commenced a new arrangement with the Jewish Publication Society, the longtime publisher of the *Year Book*. After somewhat acrimonious negotiations, the AJC be-

¹⁴³Vol. 51 (1950), p. v.

came copublisher of the *Year Book* and assumed responsibility for its production and for distribution to non-JPS members. The JPS continued to distribute the *Year Book* to its own members at a substantial discount.

Beyond these surface changes, the new *Year Book* reflected dramatic structural changes that were transforming the American Jewish community as a whole in the postwar period, an era when both American government agencies and secular non-profit organizations also underwent massive restructuring. The professionalization of the organized American Jewish community revolutionized the contents and staffing of the *Year Book* as well as its editorial machinery. Indeed, the *Year Book's* reorganization into discrete topical sections, each one written by a professional who specialized in his or her area, mirrored the reorganization that had taken place earlier at the American Jewish Committee and the two other major Jewish defense organizations of the period, the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. All alike witnessed significant staff increases, a host of new, highly specialized job titles and divisions, and an influx of young, college-trained experts with professional training who gradually supplanted the oncedominant lay leaders. At the American Jewish Committee, historian Naomi Cohen found that "lay policy-making" gave way during these years to "institutional policy," and professionals, "to a large degree . . . determined policy and strategy."¹⁴⁴ It was these same professionals—members of what came to be known as the "Jewish civil service"—to whom the *Year Book* now turned as contributors; there were 43 of them in 1950 alone.

The second dramatic change reflected in the new *Year Book* was even more fundamental: It moved from its original concern with communal issues and achievements toward a much broader agenda defined by "intergroup relations" and social action. Before World War II, issues like anti-Semitism and the promotion of Jewish rights at home and abroad dominated the *Year Book*, much as they dominated the work of the American Jewish Committee and the other Jewish defense organizations. Now, they all modified their agendas seeking, in historian Stuart Svonkin's words, "to ameliorate interethnic, interracial and interreligious tensions by reducing prejudice and discrimination."¹⁴⁵ The American Jewish Committee explained this change, in its annual report in volume 50 of the *Year Book*, on the grounds "that there is the closest relation between the protection of the civil rights of all citizens and the protection of the civil rights

¹⁴⁴Stuart Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice: American Jews and the Fight for Civil Liberties* (New York, 1997), pp. 16–17; Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, p. 238.

¹⁴⁵Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, p. 18.

The Jewish Twentieth Century: Images that highlight the themes of this tumultuous era, its tragedies and its triumphs, from an American Jewish perspective.



CORBIS-BETTANN

Over two million East European Jews arrive in the "golden land" between 1881 and 1919, before restrictive immigration laws effectively close the gates.

BROWN BROTHERS



Orchard Street, on the Lower East Side of New York—first home for thousands of new arrivals . . .

many of whom find employment in "sweat shops," here, as cigar makers.



VIVO

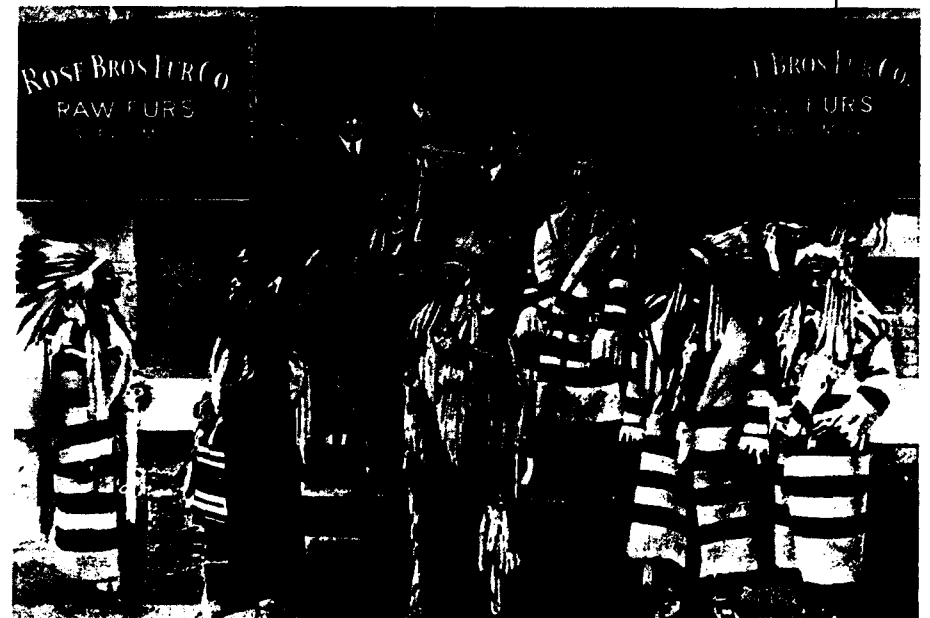
AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



To lessen the concentration in the urban ghettos, immigrant Jews are encouraged to settle in rural areas such as this farm colony in Woodbine, New Jersey, established by the Baron de Hirsch Fund (ca. 1900).

Still others strike out for the Midwest and the West. Here, in St. Paul, Minnesota, are the four Rose brothers, fur traders, in 1911, posing with Blackfoot Indians.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES





YIVO

The masses of Jews fleeing Europe are propelled by the combined forces of persecution and economic hardship. Here, following the Kishinev pogrom of 1903, wounded Jews wait outside a hospital.



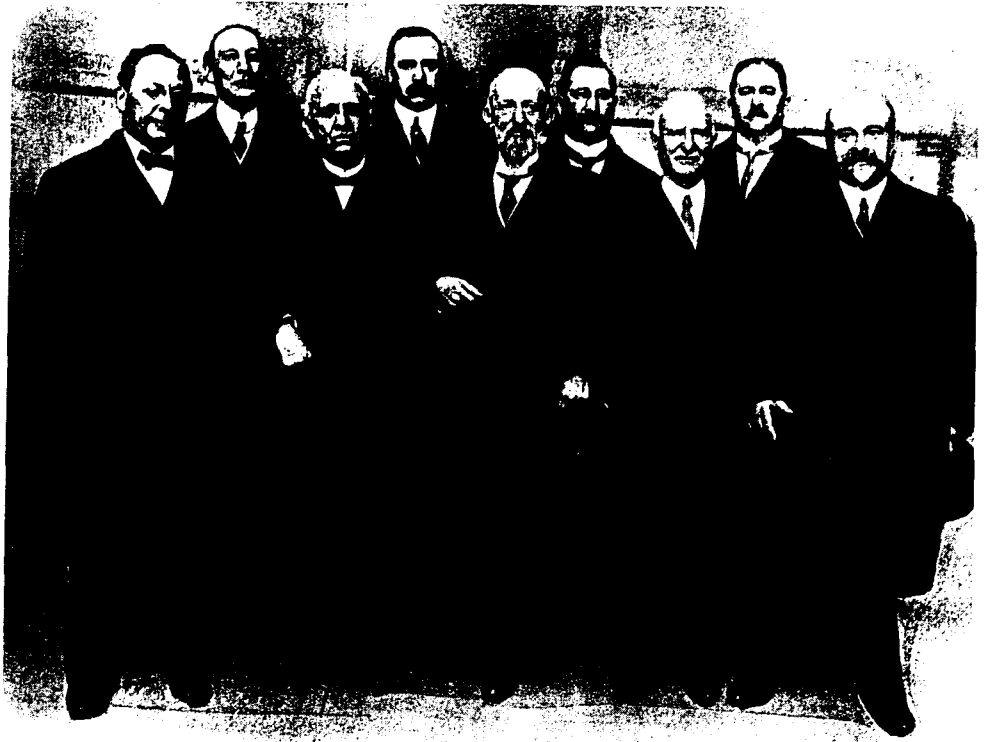
Two famous cases of anti-Semitism: (r.) Mendel Beilis, convicted in Russia in 1913 on a "blood libel" charge but later freed;

YIVO

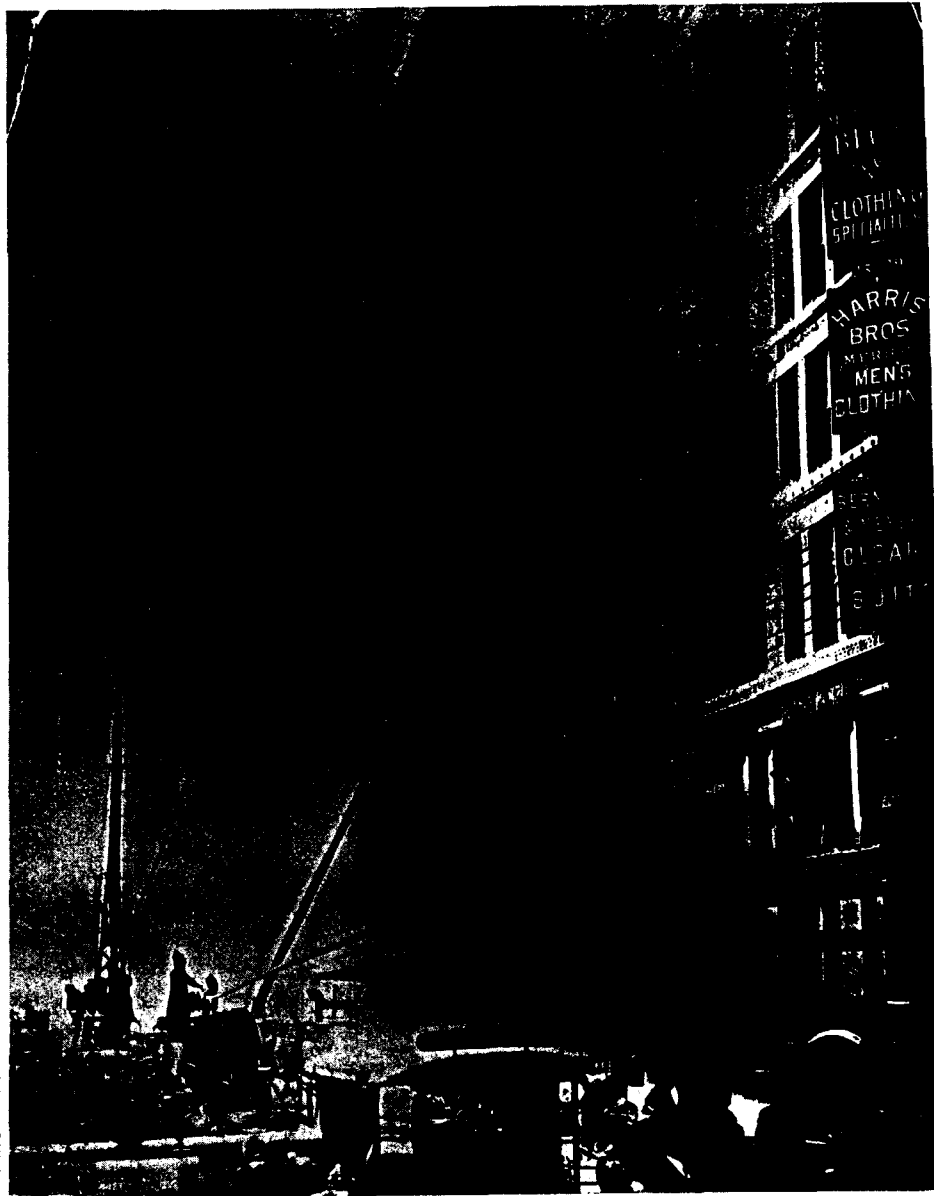


(l.) Leo Frank, lynched by a mob near Atlanta in 1915, after being falsely convicted of murdering a young girl.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES



An American Jewish Committee delegation goes to Washington, D.C., in 1911 to press the U.S. to terminate its 1832 treaty with Russia because of Russia's refusal to grant visas to American Jews. The first three in the front row, from the left, are Louis Marshall, AJC's second president; Judge Mayer Sulzburger, AJC's first president; and Oscar S. Straus, former U.S. secretary of commerce and ambassador to Turkey.



BROWN BROTHERS

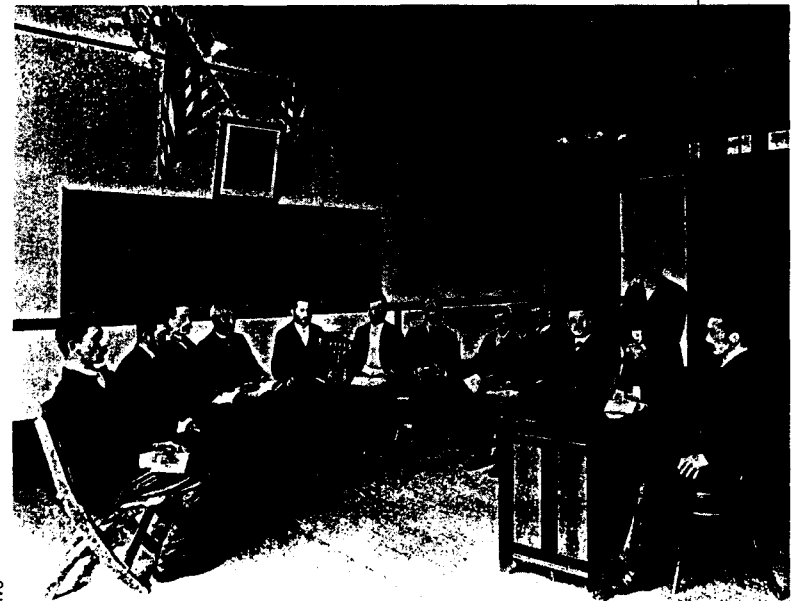
The fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Co. in New York, in 1911, where 146 workers, mostly young Jewish women, perish, spurs the growth of labor unions and the fight for improved working conditions.



BROWN BROTHERS

Jewish and Italian garment workers on strike, 1913.

Classes in English and citizenship help "Americanize" the immigrants.



YIVO



Zionist activity in Palestine gains momentum in the first two decades of the century. Here, Jewish farmers in Zichron Ya'akov, one of the early settlements.

The American Jewish women who establish Hadassah send two visiting nurses (with support from philanthropist Nathan Straus) to Jerusalem in 1913, to provide medical aid to needy Jews.



World War I—Jews on both sides of the conflict fight patriotically alongside their countrymen. Here, German Jewish soldiers . . .

(and) a joint seder for Allied American, British, and French Jewish soldiers, somewhere in Europe.





HADASSAH

A meeting of World Zionist Organization leaders in New York in 1915. Seated l. to r., Henrietta Szold, founder of Hadassah; Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, Jacob de Haas, Joseph Kesselman, Louis Lipsky, Charles A. Cowen, Shmarya Levin, and Rabbi Meyer Berlin.

CENTRAL ZIONIST ARCHIVES

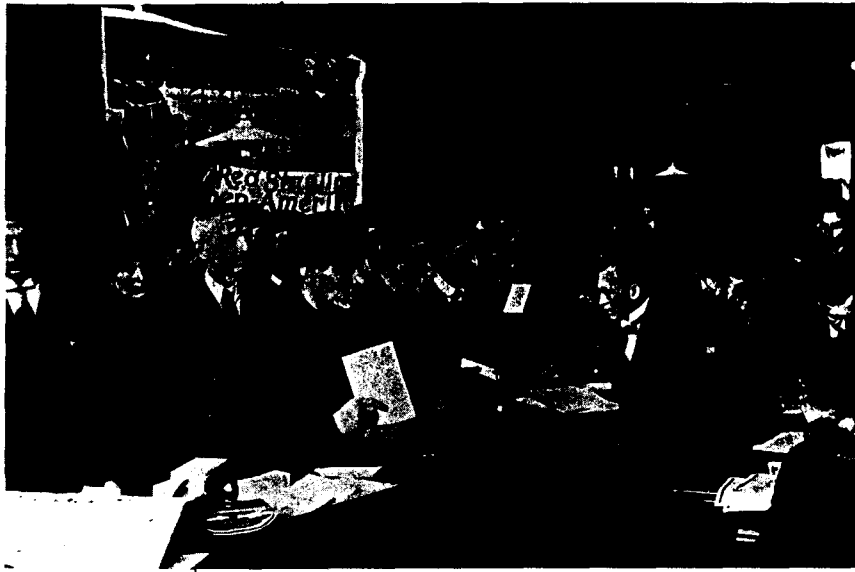


General Edmund Allenby enters Jerusalem on Dec. 11, 1917, after his British troops defeat Turkish forces. The League of Nations would give Britain a mandate over Palestine in 1922.

The ceremonial opening of the Hebrew University on Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem, 1925. Lord Balfour and Chaim Weizmann are among the speakers; an American Reform rabbi, Judah Magnes, is the university's first president.

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY





YIVO

In the postwar years, some Jews seek desperately to leave Europe and come to America. The Warsaw office of the Red Star Shipping Line, ca. 1921.

But throughout the diverse worlds of East European Jews, normal life resumes. A heder in Lublin . . .



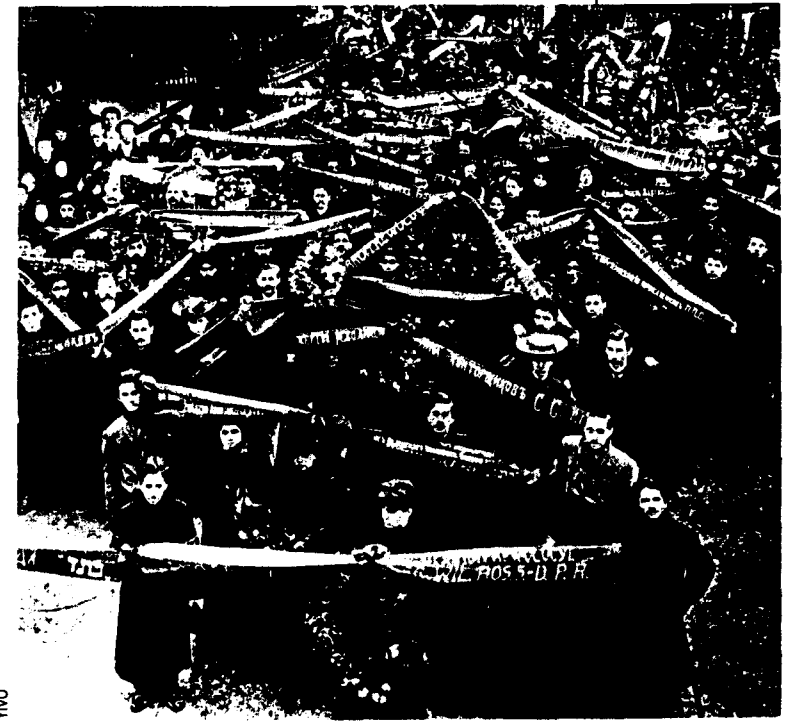
YIVO



YIVO

The Jewish Sports Club of Bialystok, 1923 . . .

A demonstration of the Jewish socialist Bund in Vilna.



YIVO



1933 in Germany—the start of the Nazi era. One early step is a boycott of Jewish stores. "Germans! Defend yourselves! Don't buy from Jews!" reads the sign.

Nov. 9, 1938, *Kristallnacht*. This synagogue in Wiesbaden, along with hundreds of others, is set aflame and destroyed.



Throughout the territories conquered by the Third Reich, Jews are deported to ghettos . . .

Or rounded up and slaughtered in mass graves, like this one in the Ukraine.





YIVO

Jewish partisans in Poland fight the Germans.

In the U.S., various Jewish groups try—unsuccessfully—to win government intervention to save Jews in Europe. In 1943 a delegation of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the U.S. and Canada marches in Washington to dramatize its appeal for help.



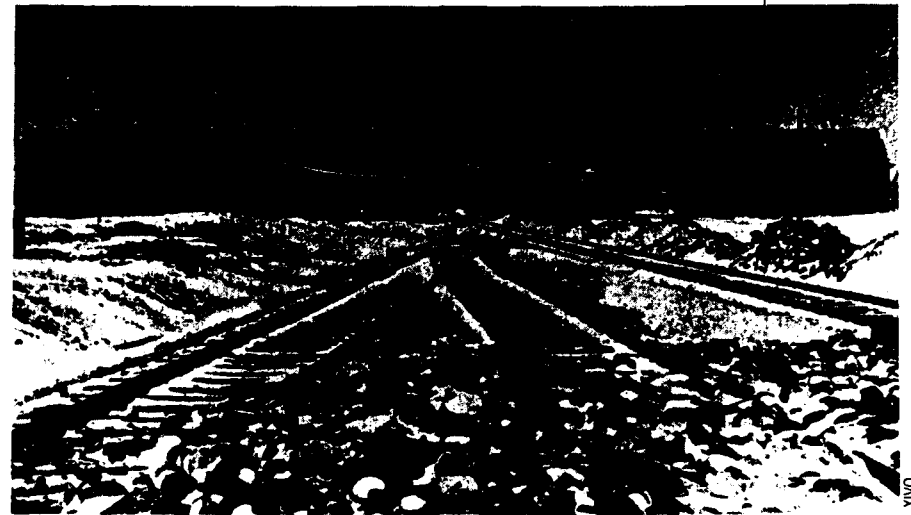
AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA



YIVO

The Warsaw Ghetto

The entrance to the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp

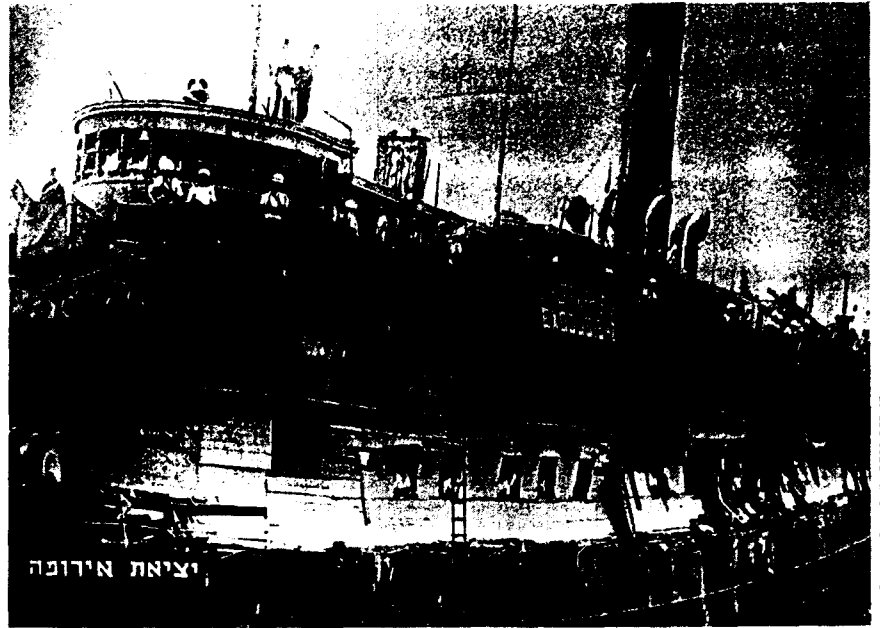


YIVO



U.S. Jewish soldiers at the Siegfried Line toward the end of World War II, led in prayer by Chaplain Sidney Lefkowitz.

At war's end—survivors. Buchenwald, 1945.



With thousands of "displaced persons" eager to find safe haven in Palestine, the Haganah ship *Exodus* sails in July 1947 with 4,500 refugee passengers—only to be apprehended by the British.

Standing beneath a portrait of Theodor Herzl, David Ben-Gurion proclaims Israel's independence on May 14, 1948.



AMERICAN JEWISH JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE



With the aid of the Jewish Agency and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, orphans of the war are gathered in a children's village in Holland and prepared for settlement in the new Jewish state.

Pres. Harry Truman greets Chaim Weizmann, Israel's first president, in Washington, May 1948.



UNITED JEWISH APPEAL



CENTRAL ZIONIST ARCHIVES

One of the many temporary *ma'abarot*, transit camps, that house hundreds of thousands of new immigrants to Israel.



Aug. 23, 1950, a historic meeting at Jerusalem's King David Hotel . . . Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion; Jacob Blaustein, president of the American Jewish Committee; Minister of Labor Golda Meir; and Minister of Foreign Affairs Moshe Sharett, at the signing of the "Blaustein-Ben-Gurion agreement" clarifying Israel's relationship to Jews in other countries.

The mammoth enterprise of raising funds for Israel enlists the aid of leading Americans. Here, in Sept. 1961, as an expression of gratitude, Foreign Minister-Golda Meir presents a State of Israel Bonds plaque to Eleanor Roosevelt.



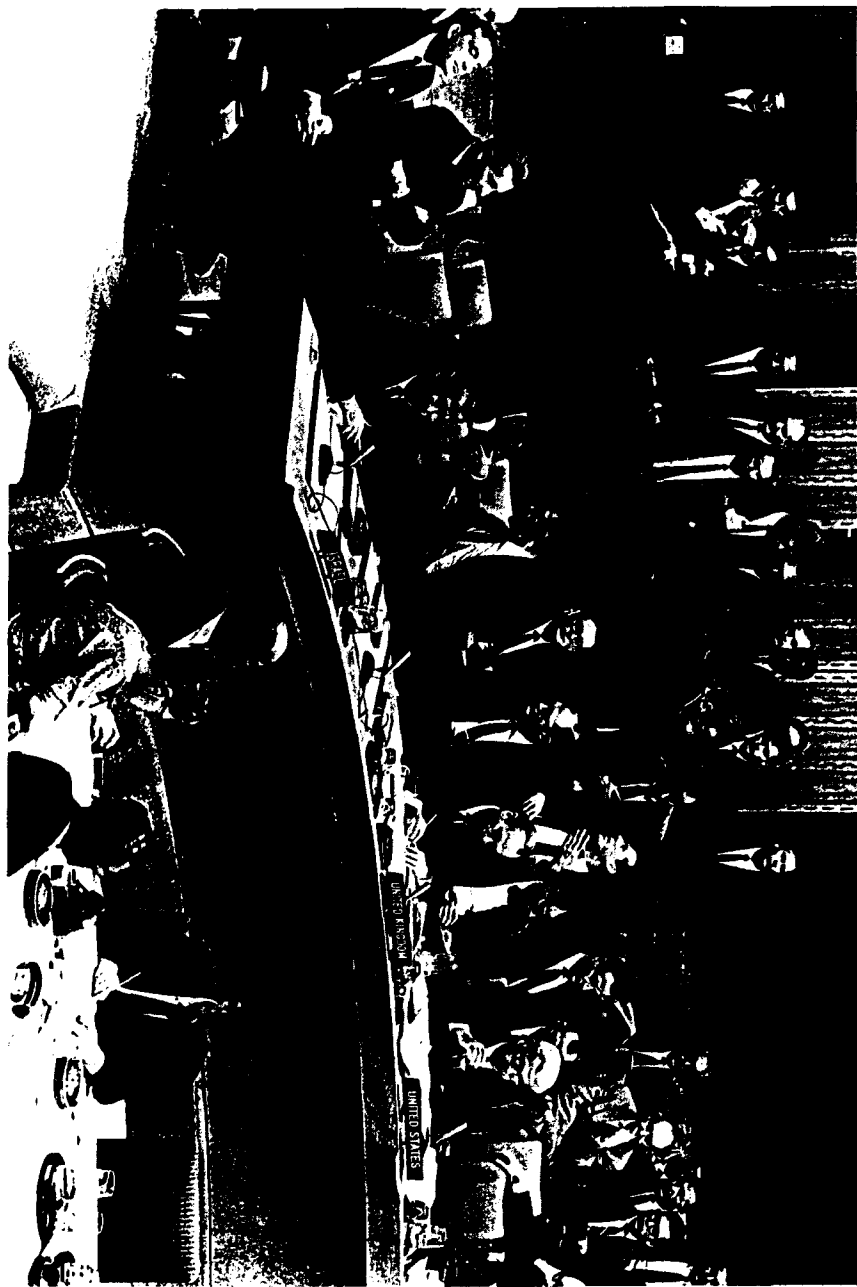
STATE OF ISRAEL BONDS



The 1961 trial in Jerusalem of former SS officer Adolf Eichmann focuses world attention anew on the Nazi era and the Holocaust.

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

June 7, 1967, the start of the Six-Day War. At the UN Security Council debate on the fighting in the Middle East, Abba Eban, foreign minister of Israel, addresses the council. To his left at the table are Lord Caradon (U.K.) and U. S. ambassador Arthur J. Goldberg.



UNITED NATIONS

1967: These images inspire pride and jubilation among Israelis and Jews world-wide over the recapture of the Old City of Jerusalem



Gen. Uzi Narkiss, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, and Chief-of-Staff Yitzhak Rabin enter the Old City through the Lions' Gate.

ISRAEL GOVERNMENT PRESS OFFICE

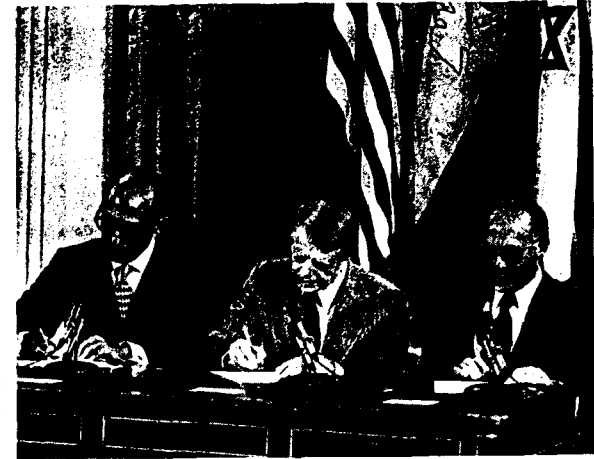


ISRAEL GOVERNMENT PRESS OFFICE

Rabbi Shlomo Goren, chief chaplain of the Israel Defense Forces, sounds the shofar at the Western Wall, the *kotel*.

Milestones on the road to peace—

With Egypt, March 26, 1979. Anwar Sadat, Jimmy Carter, Menachem Begin... the Camp David Accords.



ISRAEL GOVERNMENT PRESS OFFICE



ISRAEL GOVERNMENT PRESS OFFICE

With the Palestinians, Sept. 13, 1993. Yitzhak Rabin, Bill Clinton, Yasir Arafat... a Declaration of Principles.

With Jordan, Oct. 26, 1994. Yitzhak Rabin, Bill Clinton, King Hussein... a peace treaty.



ROBERT A. CUMINS

Images of American Jewish life:



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

Nov. 4, 1995. The peace rally in Tel Aviv at which Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated.

Nov. 6, 1995. World leaders attend Rabin's funeral on Mt. Herzl in Jerusalem.



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTOS



JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

In the 1960s, the civil rights struggle becomes a sacred cause for many American Jews. Among them is Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. In this 1965 demonstration in Selma, Ala., Heschel (2nd from right) marches with Ralph Bunche (3rd from right), Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. (4th from right), and Ralph Abernathy (5th from right).

In the 1970s, Jewish women create a Jewish feminist movement that presses for equal participation in religious life. In 1978, Sally Jane Priesand is ordained by the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, becoming the first woman rabbi in the U.S.



HUC-JIR



ROBERT A. CUMINS

In the 1980s, the plight of Jews in the Soviet Union arouses American Jews to action on many fronts. This mass rally in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 6, 1987, demands "freedom now" for Soviet Jews.

Toward the close of the century, the focus turns inward: return to tradition, Jewish education, search for new forms of religious life, outreach to marginalized Jews, an emphasis on "spirituality."



BILL ARON

A Shabbat service of the New York Havurah.

A class performance at the Solomon Schechter Day School of Westchester, a Conservative institution.



SOLOMON SCHECHTER DAY SCHOOL OF WESTCHESTER



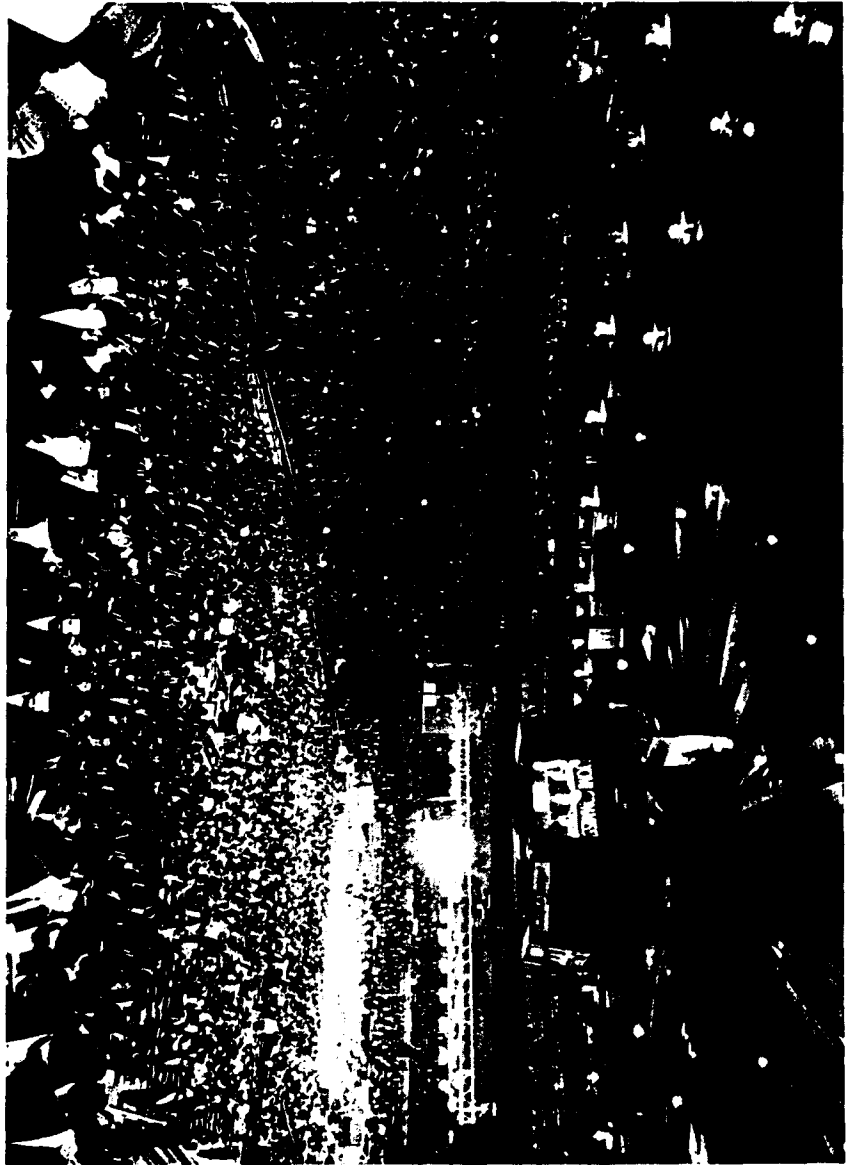
BILLARON

A Havdalah service at the Reform movement's Henry S. Jacobs Camp, Utica, Miss.

Youngsters from the Orthodox Union's National Jewish Council for the Disabled participate in the Israel Day Parade in New York City.



UNION OF ORTHODOX JEWISH CONGREGATIONS OF AMERICA



Orthodox Jews celebrate the tenth *Siyum Hashas*—completion of the *Daf Yomi* cycle of Talmud study—at Madison Square Garden, on September 28, 1997. Simultaneous events are held in the Nassau Coliseum and 35 cities nationwide.

G. KARLINSKY/AGUDATH ISRAEL OF AMERICA

The beginning of the century—and its end.



WASHINGTON HEBREW CONGREGATION

Confirmation class of the Washington Hebrew Congregation, Washington, D.C., about 1900.

Confirmation class of Temple Emanuel, Birmingham, Ala., 1997.



BILL ARON

of the members of particular groups.” Historian John Higham has dubbed this view, widely held at the time, as “the theory of the unitary character of prejudice.”¹⁴⁶ It was self-evident to the many Jews who espoused it that they should “join with other groups in the protection of the civil rights of the members of all groups irrespective of race, religion, color or national origin.”¹⁴⁷ Added encouragement may have come from the perceived post-war decline of domestic anti-Semitism that “allowed—and even compelled—Jewish defense organizations to develop a new *raison d’être*,” and from non-Jewish organizations like the National Council of Churches, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and the American Civil Liberties Union, which had cooperated with Jewish defense organizations during the war, and which now sought to continue to work with them on a common social agenda.¹⁴⁸ Whatever the case, the *American Jewish Year Book*, in its new garb, both documented and furthered the new communal emphases. Throughout the 1950s it published regular articles on civil rights, civil liberties, church-state relations, and, for a time, housing, education, and employment as well. These articles chronicled the battle against hatred and prejudice—no longer just anti-Semitism—in the United States. A few of the articles, like the one on “Civil Rights: The National Scene” in volume 51, did not mention Jews at all.

Finally, the new *Year Book* reflected a heightened Jewish organizational emphasis on social science as a tool for resolving communal problems. Quantitative studies, of course, had appeared before in the *Year Book*, and the American Jewish Committee had, from its beginnings, sought to ground social planning in scientific inquiry. But for the most part, statistical studies published in the *Year Book* during its first 50 years had been descriptive, designed simply to make data available or, in some cases, to rebut critics. This changed in the postwar period as both government agencies and private think tanks demonstrated the broader policymaking implications of the social sciences. The pathbreaking works undertaken in the 1940s and 1950s by German refugee scholars at the Institute of Social Research and Gunnar Myrdal’s well-publicized and highly influential 1944 study, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, proved particularly influential in Jewish circles. Dr. John Slawson, the Jewish social worker and Columbia-trained psychologist who became executive vice-president of the American Jewish Committee in 1943, appreciated the potential of social-science research, and greatly encouraged it. The *Year Book* now followed the same path.

¹⁴⁶John Higham, *Send These to Me: Immigrants in Urban America* (Baltimore, 1984), p. 155.

¹⁴⁷Vol. 50 (1948–49), p. 826.

¹⁴⁸Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, pp. 18, 25.

The opening article of volume 51, entitled "The American Jew: Some Demographic Features," set the tone for this new research agenda. "American Jews," it began, "are as yet unable to ascertain with any degree of precision how many persons make up that grouping, where they live, how old they are, where they came from, and how they earn their livelihoods." The periodic United States census of American religious bodies that Harry Linfield's statistical articles in earlier *Year Books* had relied upon did not ask these kinds of questions, and in any case the last such census had been taken 13 years before. In search of better data, Ben Seligman, then of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Boards (and later a professor at the University of Massachusetts and an expert on poverty), turned to local Jewish community population studies. For all of their faults and limitations—the biggest being that they did not exist for the Jews of New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia—the aggregated data offered productive policy-related insights. Seligman discovered, for example, that middle-class Jews, "the largest part of the Jewish population included in these surveys," had restricted their family size during the Great Depression and then experienced a spurt of births as prosperity returned during the war years and beyond. This, of course, was an early sign of what would become known as the "baby boom," and Seligman, who viewed the expansion as "purely a temporary phenomenon," underestimated its significance. In the long run, though, his warning about the "continuous aging of the Jewish population, a process which appears to be more marked than in the general population in this country," was absolutely on target. He was also prescient in noting that "American Jewry is . . . replenishing itself at a rate slow enough to cause concern to community leadership."¹⁴⁹ To be sure, he expressed no concern about intermarriage: It was not an issue in his day and he barely noticed it. His data concerning economic status, education, nativity and citizenship, and internal migration were also unsurprising. But his questions concerning the community's future were precisely those that postwar Jews would focus upon, and they also followed his lead in looking to Jewish population studies to answer them.

The problem of anti-Semitism, formerly a dependable feature of the *Year Book*, played less of a role in the postwar era, largely, as we have seen, because American anti-Semitism markedly declined. The section on "anti-Jewish agitation" in 1950 thus opened with the announcement, unthinkable in earlier days, that "organized anti-Semitic activity . . . continued at a low ebb."¹⁵⁰ Subsequent years painted a gloomier picture, especially as right-wing anti-Semitism rebounded, but through the 1950s

¹⁴⁹Vol. 51 (1950), pp. 7, 9, 23.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 110.

the section never exceeded ten pages—out of a *Year Book* that usually ran to more than 500 pages. George Kellman, the AJC staff member who wrote the annual article, portrayed organized anti-Semitism as the work of marginal individuals and groups—people, in other words, who required careful monitoring but did not pose a serious threat. Of greatest interest, perhaps, were the themes that he distilled from the anti-Semitic literature he annually perused. He astutely observed in his first article (1950) "that the principal theme exploited by anti-Semitic agitators was the identification of Jews as Communists. . . ."¹⁵¹

Communism and the Jewish Community

The spread of Communism, which terrified many Americans in the years immediately following World War I, haunted the country anew from the late 1940s through the 1950s. The Cold War against the Soviet Union, the protracted military conflict in Korea, revelations of damaging Soviet espionage activity in the United States, and domestic tensions combined to create the fear that supporters of the Communist Party were working to subvert the American way of life. Across the United States, and even in courtrooms and in the halls of Congress, Communists, suspected Communists, and former Communists saw their civil liberties curtailed: many lost their jobs, some were jailed.

For Jews, and especially for Jewish defense organizations, this "Red Scare" proved particularly unsettling. Anti-Semites had long insisted that Jews and Communism were linked, and it was no secret that Jews had for decades comprised a disproportionate part of the membership and leadership of the American Communist Party. Even though the overwhelming majority of American Jews were *not* Communists, to defend Jewish victims of the Red Scare—even to speak out for civil liberties at such a highly emotional time—risked the wellbeing of all Jews. The challenge, as the American Jewish Committee defined it, was to formulate a program of action, "having due regard to the problem of national security," that struck a balance "between the danger of Communism on the one hand and the necessity for preserving civil liberties on the other."¹⁵² As a corollary to this challenge, the AJC worked hard to combat the popular stereotype associating Jews with Communism. It set up its own "Committee on Communism" to counter Communist Party propaganda and to help undermine support for Communism in the American Jewish community.

The *American Jewish Year Book* pursued a parallel course. Beginning

¹⁵¹Ibid.

¹⁵²Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, p. 165.

in 1951, it highlighted the issue of civil liberties by devoting a special article to this theme and by placing it first in the section devoted to civic and political affairs. It sought to present the year's developments in an unbiased and balanced way, often by giving equal space to both sides. Careful readers may nevertheless have detected where the *Year Book's* real sympathies lay, as the following example from 1951 shows:

Considerable attention was given to the investigation of charges by Senator Joseph McCarthy (Rep.—Wis.) that the Department of State was lax in its hiring and retention of Communists, fellow travelers, and sexual perverts. Much criticism was levelled at Senator McCarthy and his supporters for allegedly making wild and irresponsible claims, for refusing to admit errors and exaggerations, and for actually hindering the effective carrying out of the government's own loyalty check on Federal employees.¹⁵³

There was nothing explicitly Jewish about the *Year Book's* discussions of civil liberties. Indeed, it rarely mentioned by name and never identified as Jews those charged with Communist sympathies, even when these were matters of common knowledge. Such silence echoed the American Jewish Committee's pledge "to be watchful of any and all attempts . . . falsely and viciously to identify Jews and Communists."¹⁵⁴ An italicized heading in the report of the American Jewish Committee, published at the back of the 1954 *Year Book*, made explicit the message that the rest of the book, with somewhat more subtlety, sought to convey: "*Communism: The Enemy of Judaism*."¹⁵⁵ On the other hand, the *Year Book* did identify as Jews those who opposed Communism, and, as we shall see, paid particular attention to ugly manifestations of anti-Semitism behind the Iron Curtain. It placed "American Jews" and "Jewish organizations" at the forefront, of those seeking to halt "the further development of the Communist anti-Semitic campaign" abroad, and quoted verbatim from Communists who used "anti-Jewish invective"—as if this demonstrated that Communists could not be Jews themselves.¹⁵⁶

For all this, it comes as something of a shock to discover that the *American Jewish Year Book*, which advertised itself as "a record of events and trends in American and world Jewish life," paid practically no attention to the central drama involving American Jews and Communism in the early 1950s—the arrest, trial, and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg on charges of spying for the Soviet Union. Astonishingly, the 1953 issue devoted exactly one footnote to this sensational case, and it read as follows:

¹⁵³Vol. 52 (1951), p. 25.

¹⁵⁴Vol. 53 (1952), p. 554.

¹⁵⁵Vol. 55 (1954), p. 501.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., p. 146.

In the case of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg (convicted spies), Communist propaganda insistently charged that the fact that the defendants were Jewish had been a factor in their conviction. On May 18, 1952, the National Community Relations Advisory Council denounced as fraudulent the effort of the National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case "to inject the false issue of anti-Semitism."¹⁵⁷

Subsequent *Year Books* did nothing to fill out this elliptical statement. Indeed, the most thoroughgoing discussion of the Rosenberg Case appeared in a 1954 article in the *Year Book* reviewing Jewish events in France! While Abraham Karlikow of the AJC's Paris office devoted an entire page to the impact of the Rosenbergs' execution on French public opinion and why Jews and Christians there had protested it, the impact of the case on America and American Jewry found nary a mention in the whole volume. One can only assume that, despite the complete editorial independence that *Year Book* editor Morris Fine remembers enjoying, the climate of opinion in AJC circles won out. Rabbi S. Andhil Fineberg, who led the American Jewish Committee's battle against Communism and served as its leading spokesman on the Rosenbergs, sought "to avoid any publicity which would help the Communists attract attention to the case."¹⁵⁸ In keeping with AJC policy on the case—"repudiate the false claim of anti-Semitism raised by the Communists to deceive American Jews" and "protect our country's reputation from the circulation abroad of Communist-inspired slanders"—he wrote a popular article for the *American Legion Magazine*, later reprinted in *Reader's Digest* and expanded into a book, that served as an influential brief against the Rosenbergs.¹⁵⁹ The *Year Book*, meanwhile, committed both to its goal of objective reporting and its responsibility to the needs of the Jewish community, remained guardedly silent.

The *Year Book* contributed much more to the elucidation of Communist attitudes toward Judaism through its detailed articles in the 1950s on Jewish life behind the Iron Curtain. In an era when some American Jews still believed in the myth of the Soviet "paradise," and a noted American Jewish Communist editor could publicly proclaim that Jews were better off in the USSR than in the United States,¹⁶⁰ the *Year Book's* reports on the purges and liquidations of Jews served as a pungent antidote. In the same way that it reported on Nazi activities in the 1930s, the *Year Book*

¹⁵⁷Vol. 54 (1953), p. 26.

¹⁵⁸Quoted in Svonkin, *Jews Against Prejudice*, p. 151. After reading an early draft of this article, Mr. Fine commented that AJC management had never sought to influence the *Year Book's* content, and expressed surprise that the Rosenberg case had not been covered.

¹⁵⁹Vol. 56 (1955), p. 620.

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

in the 1950s documented, in graphic detail, atrocities that other Jewish publications ignored or swept carelessly under the rug. Thus in 1950—reviewing events that took place from July 1948 to July 1949—it reported on “a drastic purge of a great part of the Soviet Jewish intelligentsia,” and “mass deportations of Jews from the Western border regions of the Soviet Union.” A year later, it disclosed that discrimination against Soviet Jews had risen sharply and that “the percentage of Jews in high party, state, army, and foreign service positions continued to decline considerably.” In 1952, it told how “tens of thousands of Jews” were forced to work as “slave laborers” in Russian “concentration camps” and announced that “there were no Jewish communal or cultural organizations, schools, periodicals, or Jewish institutions of any kind [left] in the Soviet Union except for a few remaining synagogues.” Two years after that, it chronicled in harrowing detail the notorious 1953 “Doctors’ Plot,” the allegation that leading Soviet doctors, most of them Jews, conspired with foreigners in a supposed attempt “to wipe out the leading cadres of the Soviet Union,” and it detailed the “orgy of denunciations, demotions and arrests of Jewish citizens in all parts of the Soviet Union” that followed.¹⁶¹

In its coverage of the Soviet satellite states, the *Year Book* followed a similar path. It devoted seven pages to the sensational 1952 Slansky Trial—the courtroom drama and “confession” of General Rudolf Slansky, secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, and 13 others, ten of them Jews, on trumped-up charges of conspiring with Zionists and Westerners against the state. Eleven of the defendants were hanged and, in the words of the *Year Book*, “an anti-Jewish campaign slightly masked as an international campaign against ‘Zionism’” commenced throughout the country.¹⁶² In Communist Romania, East Germany, and Hungary, similar anti-Jewish campaigns took place, and the *Year Book* carefully documented their propaganda, “designed to show that Jews were apt to be traitors, spies, imperialist agents, embezzlers, and outright murderers.” Taken together, all of these events added up to what AJC Soviet-affairs specialist Joseph Gordon, who authored these reports based in part on foreign-language and clandestine sources, described as “an immense cold pogrom.” Even after Josef Stalin’s death, he found, Communist leaders were dismissing Jews from their jobs, trying them in secret, and condemning them to lengthy terms at forced labor.¹⁶³

In publishing these accounts of Communist atrocities abroad, the *Year*

Book was also contributing to the battle against Communism at home. The annual report of the American Jewish Committee for 1951, published in the *Year Book*, made this connection explicit, pointing to the *Year Book* accounts, as well as other widely cited “scientific studies” by AJC, as evidence that the organization was fighting Communist propaganda. It boasted that the *Year Book*’s “information on Soviet slave labor camps, as well as the details about the steady liquidation of Jewish life in the Iron Curtain countries” had “precipitated widespread comment in the American press, and references to them appeared in nearly 200 newspapers and periodicals throughout the nation.”¹⁶⁴ This fact, however, takes nothing away from the veracity or significance of the *Year Book*’s articles on the Soviet Union and its satellites: History proved them right on all major counts.

The Issues of the '50s

The other European Jewish community that received extensive coverage in the *Year Books* of the 1950s was Germany. Though its postwar Jewish population was small—the 1955 *Year Book* estimated it at 23,000, fewer than the number of Jews in India—developments in Germany accounted for more pages in the mid-1950s than were allocated to any other foreign country, including Israel. The American Jewish Committee’s historically strong interest in Germany partly explains this anomaly. Whereas most other Jewish organizations, according to Shlomo Shafir’s careful study, “did not want contact with Germans and did not care much about the future development of Germany and its political culture,” the AJC remained vitally interested, partly because so many of its leaders boasted German roots, and partly because it maintained close links to the U.S. State Department, which supported the rebuilding of [West] Germany as a bulwark against Communism and Russian expansionism.¹⁶⁵ As early as 1951, the AJC’s executive committee endorsed a democratic Germany as “the best safeguard against the threat of Communism today and Neo-Nazism in the future.”¹⁶⁶ More tangibly, the AJC sponsored programs designed to promote democratic values in Germany, especially among the young. The *Year Book*, for its part, carefully monitored German events, paying particular attention to the success of democratization, the progress of “denazification,” evidence of “renazifica-

¹⁶¹Vol. 51 (1950), pp. 338, 340; Vol. 52 (1951), p. 329; Vol. 53 (1952), p. 317; Vol. 55 (1954), p. 273.

¹⁶²Vol. 55 (1954), p. 292.

¹⁶³Ibid., pp. 264, 266.

¹⁶⁴Vol. 54 (1953), p. 574.

¹⁶⁵Shlomo Shafir, *Ambiguous Relations: The American Jewish Community and Germany Since 1945* (Detroit, 1999), p. 105.

¹⁶⁶Quoted *ibid.*, p. 96.

tion" ("the regaining of influence . . . of those who had supported Nazism, or exploited the conditions it created"¹⁶⁷), manifestations of anti-Semitism, debates over reparations and restitution, and the gradual reestablishment of Jewish communal life. At its best, the *Year Book* functioned as something akin to Germany's conscience, reminding readers of precisely that legacy of the past that some Germans seemed eager to put behind them.

At the same time, the coverage was pervaded by an underlying sense of anxiety. Several articles on Germany during the 1950s appeared without an accompanying byline—an indication that they were written by "foreign correspondents or native observers"¹⁶⁸ who, probably fearing repercussions, took refuge in anonymity. The review of the year in 1950 found "anti-Semitism still virulent in Germany." An article five years later pointed to Germany's "moral rehabilitation of outstanding Nazis." The last article of the decade, citing German public-opinion polls, indicated "a considerable survival of Nazi attitudes."¹⁶⁹ By then, West Germany was a trusted ally of the United States, an economic and military power, and a full member of NATO. Yet the editors of the *Year Book*, like so many of the Jews who read it, remained profoundly ambivalent toward the country, following developments there with a strong mingling of emotions and a great measure of uncertainty and mistrust.

Israel, by contrast, enjoyed growing support from the *Year Book*. While the AJC remained officially "non-Zionist," and strove, in the words of its historian, "to demonstrate the compatibility of support for Israel with a concern for American affairs,"¹⁷⁰ the *Year Book* demonstrated the extraordinary interest of American Jews in Israel's development and followed news of the country closely. Beginning with volume 51, Israel always rated at least one article of its own in the *Year Book*, and, as if to highlight its special significance, the article (or articles) appeared in the table of contents under a distinct "Israel" heading, rather than, as heretofore, as part of the "Middle East." Most of the reporting was factual, but the *Year Book's* sympathies were clear. In 1950, for example, the review-of-the-year article on Israel went out of its way to note that Arabs enjoyed "equal voting rights with Jews" under Israeli law, and that in Israel's first general election, January 25, 1949, "Moslem women went to the polls for the first time in history."¹⁷¹ A year later, it initiated extensive coverage of Israel's flourishing Jewish culture. In 1952, it gushed that "progress" in

¹⁶⁷Vol. 53 (1952), p. 438.

¹⁶⁸Vol. 55 (1954), p. v.

¹⁶⁹Vol. 51 (1950), p. 332; Vol. 56 (1955), p. 359; Vol. 60 (1959), p. 188.

¹⁷⁰Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, p. 309.

¹⁷¹Vol. 51 (1950) p. 395.

Israel was being "made in every field," and that the previous year (July 1950–June 1951) "was marked not only by a remarkable growth of population through immigration, but also by the construction of new roads, houses and factories; the founding of new settlements and towns; the planting of new groves; the development of new skills, machines, and methods; and in some areas by the introduction of new amenities and conveniences."¹⁷²

The 1952 *Year Book* also carried, as an appendix to the AJC annual report, the full text of the historic August 23, 1950, exchange between Israel's prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, and AJC president Jacob Blaustein (later known as the Blaustein–Ben-Gurion agreement) defining the relationship between Israel and American Jewry.¹⁷³ Responding to fears lest Israel interfere with the "internal affairs" of the American Jewish community and provoke charges of "dual loyalty" by promoting the "ingathering of [American Jewish] exiles" to the Jewish state, the agreement aimed to ensure the ongoing support of American Jewish leaders for Israel, which both sides understood to be vital to its continued welfare. The AJC summarized the major points of the agreement as follows:

(1) that Jews of the United States, as a community and as individuals, have only one political attachment, namely, to the United States of America; (2) that the Government and people of Israel respect the integrity of Jewish life in the democratic countries and the right of the Jewish communities to develop their indigenous social, economic and cultural aspirations, in accordance with their own needs and institutions and (3) that Israel fully accepts the fact that the Jews in the United States do not live "in exile," and that America is home for them.¹⁷⁴

Despite this declaration of independence between Israel and American Jewry, in 1954 the *Year Book* initiated special coverage of the relationship between "The American Jewish Community and Israel," as well as between "the United States and the State of Israel." These were merged into a single article the next year, and for almost a decade its author would be historian Lucy Dawidowicz, then a researcher on the AJC staff. Her annual analyses underscored the importance of America's role in the Middle East and helped American Jewish leaders keep tabs on Israel's friends and critics. She paid particular attention to Russia's growing interests in the Arab world—emphasizing the point that Israel supported the West—and she chronicled some of the failures of America's Middle East policy, something that the *Year Book* had rarely done be-

¹⁷²Vol. 53 (1952), p. 407.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, pp. 564–68.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p. 552.

fore. Thus in 1958, reporting on the aftermath of Israel's 1956 Suez Campaign, she quoted a series of administration critics, including Eleanor Roosevelt, Prof. Hans Morgenthau, and former secretary of state Dean Acheson, who opposed the American policy demanding an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai. She noted as well that "many Jewish organizations criticized American policy," including 16 that urged the United States to reappraise the conflict as one "between the Free World and Nasserism [the policy of Egypt's dictator] backed by Moscow."¹⁷⁵ A year later, she criticized America's Middle East policy even more directly:

America's major objective in the Middle East—to keep Russia out—had manifestly been defeated. America's second objective—to maintain the peace—was not very much nearer attainment. The Baghdad Pact and the Eisenhower Doctrine, the two major American instruments that had been created to help preserve peace and stability in the Middle East, seemed, at the end of this period, to have outlived their effectiveness. None of the problems within the region had been settled . . .¹⁷⁶

Not since the early-20th-century debates over the Russian passport issue and immigration restriction had the *Year Book* permitted such direct criticisms of American policy to appear in its pages. The change undoubtedly reflected American Jewry's heightened self-confidence, partly influenced by the existence of the State of Israel, but also related to the decline of American anti-Semitism and the healthier national political atmosphere. The *Year Book* felt far less constrained in challenging American policy on the basis of its own sense of where the country's best interests lay. Like its sponsor, the American Jewish Committee, it "could believe and seek to convince the general public that its goals"—including support for the State of Israel—"were in fact more advantageous to the country than other alternatives."¹⁷⁷

While references to Israel multiplied in the *Year Books* of the 1950s, reflecting its increasingly important if not yet fully recognized role in Jewish life, the American Jewish community, its achievements and challenges, continued to dominate the *Year Book's* pages. In 1952, for example, some 50 percent of the front half of the book dealt with the United States, as well as most of the back half, which consisted of directories, lists, necrology, calendars, and two (AJC and JPS) annual reports. Most of the special articles in the 1950s, "surveys on important subjects of Jewish interest covering longer periods of history . . . [that] fill in the lacunae

¹⁷⁵Vol. 59 (1958), pp. 206–07.

¹⁷⁶Vol. 60 (1959), p. 109.

¹⁷⁷Cohen, *Not Free to Desist*, pp. 324–25.

necessarily left in the annual reviews,"¹⁷⁸ also dealt with the United States. The 1952 feature article, for example, was a "popular, yet authoritative summary" of the American Jewish labor movement, written by the ex-Communist writer and intellectual, Will Herberg. The *Year Book* had largely ignored the Jewish labor movement until then, but under the impact of contemporary controversies over the power and influence of unions, it now discovered the subject. Herberg's article, a comprehensive, sympathetic, readable, and somewhat apologetic survey that relied heavily on the scholarly insights of Professor Selig Perlman of the University of Wisconsin, stressed that Jewish unions, for all of their seeming separatism, radicalism, and socialism, were actually thoroughly patriotic, "committed to the responsible conduct of industrial relations under capitalism." Herberg traced at length the battle against Communism in the Jewish unions—a story he knew firsthand as a former Marxist and one-time editor of *Workers Age*—and emphasized that, with the exception of the furriers' union, "the Jewish labor organizations were saved from Communist control" and took "the initiative in fighting Communism on many fronts at home and abroad." Finally, in an oft-quoted observation, he noted that "the Jewish worker in America was typically a man of one generation: he was 'neither the son nor the father' of a proletarian." By his count, Jews in 1951 made up less than 40 percent of the membership of the so-called "Jewish unions," and that number was dropping. "The day of the old-time Jewish labor movement," he dramatically concluded, ". . . is over."¹⁷⁹

Three years passed before the *Year Book* published other "special articles" of significance, but in 1955 and 1956, in celebration of the American Jewish Tercentenary, it published a series of four of them, all designed to illuminate "the forces" that shaped the development of the American Jewish community from its beginnings.¹⁸⁰ Nathan Glazer, a rising star of American Jewish intellectual life, opened the series with a thought-provoking historical survey, "Social Characteristics of American Jews, 1654–1954," that reconceptualized the nature of American Jewish life from a postwar, middle-class perspective. "The fundamental ground-tone of American Jewish life," he announced, harmonized with Jews' "respectable, prosperous, 'middle-class' existence." Both the occu-

¹⁷⁸Vol. 53 (1952), p. v.

¹⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 3–74. The American Jewish Historical Society discovered the labor movement at precisely the same time. See Selig Perlman, "Jewish-American Unionism: Its Birth Pangs and Contribution to the General American Labor Movement," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 41, 1952, pp. 297–338.

¹⁸⁰Vol. 56 (1955), p. v.

pational structure and the values of American Jews, he found, were also decidedly bourgeois, if not in fact then at least in aspiration. The buoyant optimism and spirit of consensus that characterized the America of his day obviously found reflection here, especially as Glazer pointed to the emergence of a unified American Jewish community and to its rapidly rising "social and economic position." His paean to the middle class also scored points against Communists, who invariably glorified the virtues of the working class. But in seeking to account for Jews' extraordinary record of success, Glazer also pointed to a kind of "spirit of capitalism" that he discerned in Jewish culture. He even cited Alfred Kinsey's study of male sexual behavior to buttress this claim—an allusion that loosened the *Year Book's* traditionally Victorian standard of propriety. In a sense, Glazer discovered in American Judaism a parallel to what sociologist Max Weber had found in his study of Protestantism—a religion, history, and culture that were decidedly middle-class in orientation and that predisposed its members to success.¹⁸¹

The other articles in the series—Oscar and Mary Handlin on "The Acquisition of Political and Social Rights by Jews in the United States," Joseph L. Blau on "The Spiritual Life of American Jewry," and Herman Stein on "Jewish Social Work in the United States"—hewed more closely to the official Tercentenary line. Well-grounded historically and carefully researched, the articles also reflected the sense of pride and achievement that swelled the American Jewish heart during the celebration. The Handlins, for example, concluded their survey by promising "that the enormous distance the Jews have already come toward the acquisition of equal rights can leave only optimistic expectations for the future." Blau cited the social-justice ideals of American rabbis and argued that, to the extent they could be realized, "America, too, can be a holy land, not only for American Jews but for all mankind." Stein found that "after 300 years of living in this country, during which every diverse form of Jewish life has been able to appear, participation in social work under Jewish auspices has become the most universally accepted expression of Jewish communal feeling."¹⁸² A thoughtful review of the Tercentenary celebration by its executive director, David Bernstein, published in the 1956 *Year Book*, argued that these articles, along with the many hundreds of publications, ceremonies, exhibits, television and radio shows, and other tercentenary events, offered American Jews "a new degree of self-confidence," encouraging them "to reassess their own place in the American community." A more recent analysis of the Tercentenary, by

¹⁸¹Ibid., pp. 3–41.

¹⁸²Ibid., pp. 96, 164; Vol. 57 (1956), p. 93.

historian Arthur A. Goren, argues that it "intensified group consciousness and pride," and "encouraged the search for self-definition and self-understanding," thereby setting "the terms for the years to come."¹⁸³

The Upheaval of the '60s

The serene 1950s gave way to the turbulent 1960s, the decade of the civil rights movement, the controversy over the Vietnam War, the counterculture, and, of great significance for American Jewry, the great migration from inner cities to outer suburbs, and from the chilly Northeast and Midwest toward the sunbelt. While, as we shall see, the *Year Book* alluded to these great themes, its featured "special articles," highlighted in the preface and awarded pride of place at the front of the book, focused elsewhere. Some reflected the central Jewish issues of the day, like the Eichmann trial, the Second Vatican Council, and the Six-Day War. Only a few articles—in retrospect, the most influential and significant that it published—helped expose and define new trends in Jewish life.

The last *Year Book* volume of the 1950s featured two important changes that affected coverage of the 1960s. First, the volume was more than 150 pages shorter than its predecessor. At Morris Fine's suggestion, the AJC dropped publication of its annual report in the *Year Book* (the annual report of the Jewish Publication Society lingered through 1986). At the same time, the editors trimmed back many sections, particularly in the coverage of foreign affairs, dropping articles on smaller overseas Jewish communities. As a result, the Jewish world as reflected in the *Year Book* now seemed narrower, portending a long-term shift in world Jewry: the section entitled "foreign countries" that had covered 39 different countries in 1950, covered only 23 in 1959. By 1999, it would cover a mere 14.

The second change that took place on the eve of the 1960s was the appointment of Milton Himmelfarb to serve, along with Morris Fine, as *Year Book* editor. Himmelfarb had joined the American Jewish Committee in the 1940s, soon after his graduation from the City College of New York and the Jewish Theological Seminary College, and a year of study at the University of Paris. Since 1955 he had been AJC's director of information and research. A brilliant writer, editor, and thinker, he himself wrote nothing for the *Year Book*, publishing most of his provocative essays in *Commentary*.

The highlight of the 1961 *Year Book* was "Jewish Fertility in the United States," written by sociologist Erich Rosenthal, which demonstrated in-

¹⁸³Vol. 57 (1956), pp. 101–18; Arthur A. Goren, "A 'Golden Decade' for American Jews: 1945–1955," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 8, 1992, pp. 3–20.

controvertibly that Jews gave birth to significantly fewer children than their Protestant and Catholic neighbors—about 20 percent fewer than Protestants and 25 percent fewer than Catholics. Rosenthal's data quoted and supported demographer Donald J. Bogue's conclusion, in his *Population of the United States* (1959), that American Jews were "scarcely reproducing themselves." In keeping with the *Year Book's* ethos, Rosenthal drew no lessons from these findings, but Himmelfarb, who became something of a crusader for increased Jewish fertility (and himself fathered seven children) was far less shy. Summarizing Rosenthal's article in *Commentary*, he suggested that modern Jews, and women in particular, were placing material desires above the demographic needs of their own people.¹⁸⁴

Low fertility was not the only demographic problem facing American Jews. In the early 1960s, intermarriage began to be seen as a major concern. Earlier studies had found the intermarriage rate among American Jews to be extraordinarily low. Julius Drachslor's study of intermarriages in New York between 1908 and 1912 had pegged the rate in the world's largest Jewish community at 1.17 percent, approximately equivalent to the incidence of interracial marriages at that time. Barnett Brickner's analysis of Jewish-Christian intermarriages in Cincinnati (1916–1918) put the rate there at 4.5 percent. As late as 1950, Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy's analysis of intermarriages in New Haven found that only 3.9 percent of Jews married out of their faith.¹⁸⁵ The *Year Book* itself, in 1959, cited U.S. census data that placed the intermarriage rate for Jews at 3.7 percent, and argued that the true rate was "somewhere below 7 percent."¹⁸⁶ While all of these studies suffered from methodological flaws—some, for example, relied on "distinctively Jewish names," forgetting that the Jews most likely to intermarry had changed their names—they pointed to what was then a widely recognized truth. Through the 1950s, most Americans married people of their own background and faith. Notwithstanding melting-pot rhetoric, endogamy in America was the rule, and Jews were even more endogamous than their Protestant and Catholic neighbors.

In a pathbreaking 53-page "special article" published amid considerable fanfare in the 1963 *Year Book*, Erich Rosenthal argued that this sit-

¹⁸⁴*Commentary*, September 1961, reprinted in Milton Himmelfarb, *The Jews of Modernity* (New York, 1973), p. 120.

¹⁸⁵Julius Drachslor, *Intermarriage in New York City* (New York, 1921), p. 43; Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati, 1989), pp. 9, 20 n.28. Ruby Jo Kennedy, "Single or Triple Melting Pot? Intermarriage Trends in New Haven, 1870–1940," *American Journal of Sociology* 49, 1944, pp. 331–39; idem, "Single or Triple Melting Pot? Intermarriage in New Haven, 1870–1950," *ibid.* 58, July 1952, pp. 56–59.

¹⁸⁶Vol. 60 (1959), p. 9.

uation was changing. "Intermarriage," he warned, "is going to be of ever increasing significance in the future demographic balance of the Jewish population in the United States." Analyzing intermarriage data from Washington D.C., he found that the rate there had risen "from about 1 per cent among the first generation—the foreign born immigrants—to 10.2 per cent for the native-born of foreign parentage and to 17.9 per cent for the native-born of native parentage (third and subsequent generations)." College attendance, he found, "doubled the intermarriage rate." Moreover in smaller Jewish communities—the data he analyzed came from Iowa—the rate stood much higher. Between 1953 and 1959 it "fluctuated between 36.3 and 53.6 per cent and averaged 42.2 percent."¹⁸⁷ A follow-up study of intermarriages in Indiana that Rosenthal published in the 1967 *Year Book* placed the intermarriage rate in that state at 49 percent.¹⁸⁸

The *Year Book's* pioneering treatment of intermarriage in the 1960s placed the issue on the Jewish communal agenda. Reviewing some of Rosenthal's data, Marshall Sklare, the preeminent Jewish sociologist, writing in *Commentary*, underscored Rosenthal's findings, calling them "a sharp corrective" to prevailing assumptions concerning intermarriage. In memorable prose, he warned that "Jewish complacency" on this issue dare not continue, for the very survival of the American Jewish community was at stake. Himmelfarb's article on Rosenthal's findings was entitled starkly, "The Vanishing Jew."¹⁸⁹ Intermarriage rates continued to soar over the next three decades, but the "Jewish indifference" that Sklare and Himmelfarb so decried soon came to an end. Thanks in considerable part to the *Year Book*, which returned to the issue repeatedly, the intermarriage rate came to be as widely followed, in some circles, as the inflation rate, and it became a subject of discussion and concern throughout the American Jewish community.

At the very moment when American Jewry began to be concerned for its own demographic future, it was powerfully reminded of what had happened to European Jewry less than one generation earlier. In May 1960, Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann was found in Argentina and secretly transported to Israel for trial, an event that captured headlines around the world and stirred considerable controversy. The American Jewish Committee was itself divided over the legality of Israel's actions: Some, according to Peter Novick, "wanted to condemn Israel's 'violations of legal norms' and thus 'uphold our good name among our natural allies,

¹⁸⁷Vol. 64 (1963), pp. 3–53.

¹⁸⁸Vol. 68 (1967), pp. 243–64.

¹⁸⁹Marshall Sklare, *Observing America's Jews* (Hanover, N.H., 1993), pp. 234–47; Himmelfarb, *Jews of Modernity*, pp. 120–24.

the liberals of America.' Others worried that such a stand would alienate Jewish opinion."¹⁹⁰ The Committee, in the end, issued no statement. A short *Year Book* article carefully set forth the arguments on both sides of the controversy.¹⁹¹ A year later, in the wake of Eichmann's well-publicized Jerusalem trial, the *Year Book's* entire front section was devoted to the case, filling 129 pages (shown off in a beautiful new typeface introduced that very year). Much of this space was taken up with a review of the proceedings, the full text of the indictment, a summary of the judgment, and an analysis of "America's response" to the trial, as exemplified in editorials, radio and television coverage, and opinion polls. The opening article, however, was written by America's preeminent Jewish historian, Salo W. Baron, and it provided a full-scale survey of "European Jewry Before and After Hitler," based "on a memorandum that Professor Baron prepared for himself when he was invited to testify at the Eichmann trial . . . on the Jewish communities destroyed by the Nazis." The fact that Baron's testimony had been widely publicized—he was the opening witness at the trial—lent the article added significance. Though nobody knew it at the time, Israeli prime minister David Ben-Gurion met with Baron before the trial. "I told him," Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary, "that it is important to explain to our younger generation (and also to the rest of the world) how great was the qualitative loss in the destruction of the six million, and therefore, he must describe the spiritual character of the Judaism that was destroyed, illustrated by her great personalities. . . ."¹⁹² Baron, in spite of his well-known aversion to the "lachrymose conception of Jewish history," seems to have heeded the advice. He began by describing the Nazi onslaught as "the greatest catastrophe in Jewish history," and proceeded to spell out the "extraordinary intellectual and artistic fecundity of 20th-century European Jewry." Indeed, he went so far as to describe the "first third of the 20th century" as "the golden age of Ashkenazi Jewry in Europe" (a judgment that even his sympathetic biographer dismisses as "hyperbole"¹⁹³). More soberly, Baron concluded that:

Through the disappearance of the Jewish communities the European continent has been deprived of an industrious and enterprising population that contributed significantly to economic and cultural progress. Moreover, the Nazis' genocide left behind a permanent precedent and menace for all mankind.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (New York, 1999), p. 132.

¹⁹¹Vol. 62 (1961), pp. 199–208.

¹⁹²Ben-Gurion Diary, entry of 10 April 1961, as quoted in Robert Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron: Architect of Jewish History* (New York, 1995), p. 330.

¹⁹³Liberles, *Salo Wittmayer Baron*, p. 329.

¹⁹⁴Vol. 63 (1962), p. 48. The entire article is on pp. 3–53.

Longtime readers of the *Year Book* should not have been surprised by Baron's presentation, since the story of European Jewry—before, during, and after Hitler—had been extensively covered through the years in its pages. Postwar developments within Germany, as we have seen, were also closely followed. In 1960, the *Year Book* even devoted 17 pages to the activities of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.¹⁹⁵ But never, before Baron's 1962 contribution, had the *Year Book* devoted its lead article to the destruction of European Jewry, nor had it previously stressed so strongly the distinctively *Jewish* aspects of the tragedy. In the wake of the Eichmann trial, the article both reflected, and helped to further, a larger transformation within American culture as a whole: a growing appreciation for the enormity of the "Holocaust"—a term that only came into common usage in the 1960s—as well as its horrific impact on Jews and Jewish life everywhere.

The Holocaust also played a significant role in transforming the post-war relationship between Christian churches and the Jewish community. A whole series of publications appeared in the 1950s and 1960s that called attention to Christian anti-Semitism and sought to change what the French-Jewish scholar Jules Isaac, in a widely read book, called the "teaching of contempt." In response, Protestants and Catholics in the United States scrutinized their religious textbooks in an effort to purge them of anti-Jewish references. The *Year Book* devoted only sporadic coverage to these developments in the 1950s as part of its reviews of "Intergroup Activities." In the mid-1960s, however, it devoted two lengthy "special articles" to a single highly significant chapter in Jewish-Christian relations. The articles were entitled "The Church and the Jews: The Struggle at Vatican Council II."

Vatican Council II, an ecumenical council of cardinals and bishops, was announced by Pope John XXIII in 1959, just 90 days after his election. The new pope sought to promote "*aggiornamento*," an Italian word meaning modernization or adaptation; his idea was to harmonize tradition "with the new conditions and needs of the time."¹⁹⁶ Meeting from 1962 to 1965, the Council heeded his call, producing 16 documents that brought about *aggiornamento* in everything from liturgy and revelation to religious liberty and the relationship of the Church to the modern world. For Jews, one aspect of Vatican II was of paramount interest—its proposed statement on the Jews, part of its "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions." In her two *Year Book* special articles, Judith Hershkopf (Banki), then the assistant director of the AJC's Department of Interreligious Affairs, described in absorbing

¹⁹⁵Vol. 61 (1960), pp. 110–27.

¹⁹⁶"*Aggiornamento*," *Dictionary of Christianity in America* (1990), p. 31.

detail the contentious behind-the-scenes process that took place over the wording of this document.¹⁹⁷ Never before had a high-level internal Catholic debate concerning the Church's relationship with the Jews been so explicitly chronicled.

Hershcopf understood that the debate over the statement on the Jews was part of a larger struggle within the Catholic hierarchy:

[I]t was from the outset a highly-charged matter which became one of several key issues dramatizing the split between liberal and conservative viewpoints within Roman Catholicism and the fierce struggle for control between forces representing these viewpoints at the council. Like some of the other controversial subjects on which there was sharp division between a majority of the bishops and a small, but powerful and influential minority, it was subjected to various procedural delays and other tactics designed to prevent it from coming to a vote. Furthermore, the statement on the Jews became involved with political considerations never intended by its authors and the object of intensive diplomatic representations and political pressures.¹⁹⁸

She also set forth the full spectrum of Jewish engagements in this struggle, from those who sought to influence Church teachings, to those who considered the entire matter an internal Catholic affair that Jews should ignore. In the end, she showed, the final text of the Vatican II statement was diluted from what had previously been approved. The admonition "do not teach anything that could give rise to hatred or contempt of Jews in the hearts of Christians" was watered down to "do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ." Similarly, the injunction never to "present the Jewish people as one rejected, cursed, or guilty of deicide" was weakened into "the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures." While Hershcopf recognized Jewish disappointment at the new document, especially in its failure to condemn what Abraham Joshua Heschel called "the demonic canard of deicide," she observed that "in the perspective of 2,000 years of Catholic-Jewish history," the declaration still had "profound implications." "In years to come," she predicted, "it may well be seen as a definitive turning point in Jewish history and the beginning of a new era in relations between the Roman Catholic church and Jewry."¹⁹⁹

With interfaith relations improving, the *Year Book* felt free to edge away from a more traditional area of American Jewish concern, anti-Semitism. The late 1950s and early 1960s witnessed a "precipitous decline of every variety of anti-Semitism," historian John Higham has shown. He cites a

¹⁹⁷Vol. 66 (1965), pp. 99–136; Vol. 67 (1966), pp. 45–77.

¹⁹⁸Vol. 66 (1965), pp. 100–01.

¹⁹⁹Vol. 67 (1966), pp. 59, 46.

1962 opinion poll where only "one percent of the respondents . . . named the Jews as a threat to America. Only 3 percent said they would dislike having a Jewish family move in next door."²⁰⁰ As a result of this and other evidence, the *Year Book* in 1965 dropped its longstanding section on "Anti-Jewish Agitation," and covered the material instead under the headings "Rightist Extremism" and "Civil Rights and Intergroup Tensions." External threats against American Jews, this implied, no longer required the same kind of careful attention that the *Year Book* had historically lavished upon them. As its extended coverage of fertility and intermarriage indicated, the *Year Book* considered the most serious threats facing American Jews to be internal, and of their own making.

Civil Rights, Race Relations, Cold War, and Counterculture

The decision to cover some aspects of "anti-Jewish agitation" in the section on "Civil Rights and Intergroup Tensions" also reflected changes in the Jewish attitude toward the civil rights movement. From 1950 through 1966, lengthy articles on "civil rights" had appeared in the "Civic and Political" section of the *Year Book's* coverage of the United States, and they often enjoyed pride of place in that section. In 1958, the article on "Civil Rights" was the longest single article in the *Year Book*—53 pages—even though it scarcely mentioned Jews at all. The *Year Book* even went out of its way to define and defend its commitment to civil rights. The following message was reprinted annually, with slight changes, from 1955 through 1964:

Civil rights refer to those rights and privileges which are guaranteed by law to each person, regardless of race, religion, color, ancestry, national origin, or place of birth: the right to work, to education, to housing, and to the use of public accommodations, health and welfare services, and facilities; and the right to live in peace and dignity without discrimination or segregation. They are the rights which government in a democratic society has the duty to defend and expand.²⁰¹

Year after year, the *Year Book* traced developments in civil rights in all of the areas set forth in this statement, often with extensive charts that traced desegregation state by state. It especially highlighted progress: "the 'sit-in' movement at lunch counters," "desegregation of public elementary and secondary schools," "the Civil Rights Act of 1960," and "the

²⁰⁰Higham, *Send These to Me*, p. 172.

²⁰¹Vol. 65 (1964), p. 15. Compare vol. 56 (1955), p. 195, where the "rights and privileges" are "morally the heritage of every human being," instead of being "guaranteed by law." Also, the word "government" appears there without the qualifier, "in a democratic society." Other small stylistic improvements were added to the statement through the years.

inclusion of liberal civil-rights planks in the election platforms of both major political parties." In 1962 it exulted that "more state civil-rights laws were enacted in the United States during the period under review . . . than in any similar period in history." While in 1963 it described the process of desegregation of public schools in the South as "painfully slow" and it balanced its description of "numerous significant activities" by noticing "failures to act," the very next year it gave "especially full coverage to civil rights and the status of the Negro drive for equality, including the March on Washington and the progress of school desegregation."²⁰²

The 1965 *Year Book* introduced a new theme into the annual civil rights article: For the first time, subsections were devoted to "Negro-Jewish Tensions" and to "Antisemitism Among Negroes." Lucy Dawidowicz, who wrote the article that year, reported on the hundreds of Jewish stores "looted and damaged" during black riots in the North, and addressed tensions between Jews and African Americans in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn. She warned of the "tragic possibility" that in "resentment" against "antisemitism among Negroes," Jews would "withdraw from the struggle for Negro equality."²⁰³ A year later, the *Year Book* devoted three pages of its "Civil Rights" article to "Negro-Jewish Relations," and described at length the "demonstrably increased expression of anti-Jewish feeling in . . . almost every level of the Negro community."²⁰⁴ That, in fact, was the last time that the words "Civil Rights" appeared in the *Year Book's* table of contents. Thereafter the subject was covered only in an omnibus article now retitled "Intergroup Relations and Tensions in the United States." Then, in the 1969 volume, civil rights was placed in a subsection of that article entitled, "The Urban Crisis." Revealingly, the 1969 article's subsection devoted to "Black Antisemitism" was three times as long as the "Civil Rights" subsection.²⁰⁵

The *Year Book* handled a parallel tension—between its commitment to civil rights and its concern for the welfare of the Jewish community—somewhat differently in the case of South Africa. For years, the annual review of developments in South Africa, home to more than 100,000 Jews, had been written by Edgar Bernstein of the *South African Jewish Times*. Among other things, he described the government's segregationist policies, known as apartheid, and observed that "both Jews and non-Jews were divided on the government's program, and Jewish organizations refrained from political action except on matters directly affecting Jew-

²⁰²Vol. 62 (1961), p. 67; Vol. 63 (1962), p. 150; Vol. 64 (1963), p. 80; Vol. 65 (1964), p. v.

²⁰³Vol. 66 (1965), pp. 187–89.

²⁰⁴Vol. 67 (1966), p. 124.

²⁰⁵Vol. 70 (1969), pp. 76–89.

ish interests."²⁰⁶ Beginning in 1961, however, the *Year Book* divided its treatment of South Africa into two, with two different authors—something done for no other foreign country. One article, written in New York, dealt with political developments in South Africa. It described apartheid and its ramifications in highly critical terms, blaming them for the country's problems, and attacking white minority rule, segregation, discrimination, and repression.²⁰⁷ Generally, this article (like the parallel article on civil rights in the United States) made no mention of Jews at all. The second article, written by Bernstein in South Africa, focused only on the Jewish community—its religious and communal activities, incidents of anti-Semitism, cultural activities, and the like. In most cases this article, which had an entirely different tone, made no mention of apartheid at all.

Fear probably motivated this "two-article" policy: In the 1960s, critics of apartheid in South Africa, Jews included, were either exiled, imprisoned, or quarantined. Still, the *Year Book* made it appear as though political developments in South Africa had nothing to do with the internal Jewish community, and vice versa. Only in 1973 did this well-intentioned but utterly misleading policy come to an end, and it was not until 1988 that the *Year Book* finally set the record straight with a long lead article by the South-African-born Hebrew University scholar Gideon Shimoni, entitled "South African Jews and the Apartheid Crisis."²⁰⁸

No similar timidity affected the *Year Book's* coverage of events behind the iron curtain. As before, it carefully documented developments pertaining to Jews in the Soviet Union, relying for some 35 years upon the careful research of the Russian-born scholar, writer, and communal professional, Leon Shapiro. In addition, two articles by Jerry Goodman, in 1965 and 1969, chronicled American responses to Soviet anti-Semitism—the incipient stages of what became known in the United States as "the Soviet Jewry movement." Goodman, then on the staff of the American Jewish Committee and later executive director of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, reported with satisfaction in 1969 on the efforts to improve the situation of Russia's Jews. He listed public-relations successes, collective demonstrations, new groups that were demanding "even greater efforts on behalf of Soviet Jews," and academic and intellectual appeals on behalf of Soviet Jewry. "No other issue in Jewish community relations," he wrote, "received such steady focus . . . except the Middle East crisis."²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶Vol. 61 (1960), p. 338.

²⁰⁷Vol. 62 (1961), p. 362.

²⁰⁸Vol. 88 (1988), pp. 3–58.

²⁰⁹Vol. 70 (1969), p. 111.

One might have expected that the Vietnam War too would have benefited from such a "steady focus." America's longest and fourth most deadly war, Vietnam involved the American Jewish community in myriad ways. Thousands of Jewish soldiers fought in the war, many (but nobody knows how many) died or were wounded, Jewish chaplains and the National Jewish Welfare Board tried to meet the needs of the Jewish soldiers, and, of course, numerous Jews and Jewish organizations vigorously and publicly protested the war. Yet, between the Tonkin Gulf Resolution of 1964, which authorized the use of American military forces in Vietnam, and the fall of Saigon in 1975 that ended the war, the word "Vietnam" appeared in the *Year Book* index exactly three times, once in 1968 and twice in 1970 (a few other mentions, including a brief but important discussion in the 1967 *Year Book*, did not, for some reason, appear in the index.) Remarkably, the indexed citations all dealt with the relationship between America's Vietnam policy and its Middle East policy. Neither the contributions that American Jews made to the war effort (the kinds of articles that had appeared during the Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II), nor the contributions that they made to the antiwar effort received any sustained treatment. The *Year Book* did note, in 1967, the "disquiet experienced by American Jews in 1966 . . . as a consequence of President Johnson's criticism of Jewish attitudes toward the war in Vietnam," and his suggestion (later denied) that "American support for Israel would depend on Jewish support of administration policies in Vietnam." Lucy Dawidowicz, reporting on this for the *Year Book*, observed that "the public positions taken by some Jewish organizations on the war in Vietnam remained unaffected by the incident," and she provided evidence, not entirely persuasive, that Jews were as divided over the conflict as other Americans.²¹⁰ A year later, Dawidowicz chronicled the debate among liberals, many of them Jews, over support for Israel in the Six-Day War, given their vigorous opposition to the Vietnam War. In a sharply worded analysis that deviated from the *Year Book's* usual standard, she concluded that "many leftists were too committed to their political ideologies to respond to political realities."²¹¹ Two years after that, the "Middle East and Vietnam" again briefly occupied the *Year Book* when it noted criticism by American Jewish peace activists of a letter seen as supportive of Vietnam policy sent by Israeli prime minister Golda Meir to President Richard Nixon.²¹²

Looking back, though, what the *Year Book* failed to report about the

²¹⁰Vol. 68 (1967), pp. 79–81.

²¹¹Vol. 69 (1968), p. 224.

²¹²Vol. 71 (1970), pp. 238–39.

American Jewish community and the Vietnam War looms far larger than what it did cover. Internal divisions within the Jewish community (including the American Jewish Committee) about the war, a history of playing down communal controversies, and perhaps a sense that no dispassionate analysis of "American Jewry and the Vietnam War" was even possible, given the mood of the country, resulted in a "record of events and trends" that was wholly inadequate. Twenty-five years later, this painful gap in our knowledge still makes it difficult properly to assess the war's impact on American Jewish life, and the Jewish role both in the war and in the struggle to end it.

The *Year Book's* coverage of Jewish student activism in the 1960s was only slightly better. Although it was widely known that Jews played a disproportionate role in the riots and demonstrations that overtook college campuses in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and even *Fortune* magazine (January 1969) devoted an article to "The Jewish Role in Student Activism," written by Nathan Glazer, the *Year Book* played down these matters, a reticence that recalls its silence about Jewish Communists a generation earlier. In 1969, "Student Activism" and the "New Left" did receive brief coverage under the heading "Patterns of Antisemitism" in the article on Intergroup Relations. Quoting Glazer, the *Year Book* concluded that at most "3 to 4 per cent" of "committed, identifiable radicals on the most active campuses" were Jews, and, paraphrasing Glazer, it explained their radicalism as being "rooted in the Jewish politico-cultural heritage of liberal and Socialist thought, and the influence of liberal and/or radical parents."²¹³ A year later, it quoted a similar explanation by sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset, that Jewish student leftists exhibited "familiar forms of Jewish self-hatred."²¹⁴ It was not until 1971 that the *Year Book* offered a more sympathetic analysis, citing Rabbi Oscar Groner of B'nai B'rith Hillel, who described "a new breed" of Jewish students, "not Jewish radicals but radical Jews . . . [who] are radical in and about their Jewishness." In conjunction with this, the *Year Book* also noted the explosive growth of Jewish student newspapers "expressing a wide range of opinion: radical Zionist, Jewish nationalist, and religious Orthodox."²¹⁵ But though the article alluded to Jewish students' "reawakened sense of Jewishness," it failed to explore, then or later, what this development meant. Indeed, coverage of Jewish student activities (outside of what went on in formal Jewish college organizations like Hillel) remained relegated, along with civil rights and anti-Semitism, to the *Year*

²¹³Vol. 70 (1969), p. 73.

²¹⁴Vol. 71 (1970), p. 209.

²¹⁵Vol. 72 (1971), p. 142.

Book's section on "Intergroup Relations and Tensions in the United States," as if Jewish student activists were not an integral part of the Jewish community at all.

Seminal Studies of Communal Change

For all that it excluded and missed, however, the *Year Book* under Fine and Himmelfarb provided broad coverage of Jewish communal affairs as well as a series of stunning articles that focused attention on developments in Jewish life that had previously gone unrecognized. In addition to Rosenthal's pieces on fertility and intermarriage, the 1960s saw the publication of such classic special articles as "Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life" and "The Training of American Rabbis," both by Charles Liebman, and "Jewish Studies in American Liberal-Arts Colleges and Universities," by Arnold J. Band. All three of these focused on the United States, and each pinpointed themes that would become increasingly important in coming decades.

"Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life" was the first major sustained treatment of that subject anywhere. Prior to its 1965 publication, the *Year Book* had noted Orthodox Judaism, for the most part, in its annual article on religious developments. In 1956, for example, it cited an American Jewish Committee study of a medium-sized Northeastern Jewish community ("Riverton") that found Orthodoxy on a steep decline, dropping in one generation from 81 percent among "grandparents" to only 16 percent among "parents."²¹⁶ Most scholars of the subject believed that Orthodoxy in the United States had no future. In the early 1960s, however, Milton Himmelfarb noticed that Orthodoxy was on the upswing, especially in New York, and felt that the subject deserved in-depth examination. After rejecting one manuscript on the subject, he turned to a young assistant professor of political science at Yeshiva University who had just published a sociological analysis of contemporary Orthodoxy in the journal *Judaism*,²¹⁷ and offered him what seemed like an enormous sum at that time, \$500, for a full-scale survey. Charles Liebman accepted, and after three drafts and hours of editing Himmelfarb pronounced his long article acceptable. In fact, the article revolutionized the study of Orthodox Judaism in America, and turned a generation of wisdom concerning the subject on its head.

From its opening page, Liebman's article exuded optimism about "the

vitality of American Orthodoxy." He characterized predictions of the movement's demise as "premature, to say the least," and pronounced Orthodoxy to be "on the upsurge," its inner core "growing in numbers and financial strength." Then, in pages filled with provocative insights drawn from the sociological study of religion, he proceeded to describe the full spectrum of Orthodox Jews, from the "uncommitted" to the "sectarians," as well as a wide range of Orthodox institutions. His closing echoed the surprising optimism of his opening paragraph, and set the tone for much of what has been written about Orthodox Judaism, even by many non-Orthodox writers, ever since. Orthodoxy, he concluded, was "the only group which today contains within it a strength and will to live that may yet nourish all the Jewish world."²¹⁸

Liebman's second article, "The Training of American Rabbis," published in 1968, looked critically at the students, faculty, curriculum, and overall environment at the "three American institutions having the largest rabbinical training programs" — Yeshiva University (Orthodox), the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (Conservative), and Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (Reform).²¹⁹ The very subject matter of the article, let alone its critical tone, would have been unthinkable in earlier decades. "Any bias in this article is on the side of criticism rather than praise," Liebman warned in his introduction. Reflecting the anti-establishment ethos of the late 1960s, he suggested that "the public-relations department of each seminary can be relied upon to extol its glories."²²⁰ Meanwhile, he himself lashed out at the seminaries, arguing that they "to some extent" had "failed to prepare rabbis adequately for the pulpit," that they were less concerned than their Christian counterparts with "self-evaluation and criticism," that they stressed "tradition and continuity" over "renewal and change," and that they had "little to say about the Jewish community." A "personal conclusion" — another innovation that earlier editors, concerned about objectivity, would have deleted — argued for alternative programs of rabbinic training. The fact that two such programs were founded that very year, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College in Philadelphia and Havurat Shalom Community Seminary in Boston, shows that Liebman had his finger on the community's pulse, especially since both of the new schools stressed several of the same ideals and values that he called for. Within a generation, not only would the training of rabbis at all the institutions he studied be completely transformed, but all three programs would also face significant new competition.

²¹⁶Vol. 57 (1956), p. 189.

²¹⁷Charles S. Liebman, "A Sociological Analysis of Contemporary Orthodoxy," *Judaism* 13, Summer 1964, pp. 285–304.

²¹⁸Vol. 66 (1965), pp. 21–92, quote on p. 92.

²¹⁹Vol. 69 (1968), pp. 3–112.

²²⁰Ibid., p. 4.

Arnold Band's "Jewish Studies in American Liberal-Arts Colleges and Universities" was no less prescient. Charting "the spread of Jewish studies as an accepted academic discipline" in America's colleges and universities—from about 12 positions in 1945 to over 60 full-time positions in 1965—Band concluded, correctly, that "we are on the threshold of a new, and promising period in Jewish scholarship in America." Two decades earlier in the *Year Book*, Ismar Elbogen had already described America as "a center of Jewish scholarship," based on the activities of individual scholars, most of whom taught at Jewish institutions. Band, by contrast, excluded Jewish institutions from his survey completely (only Brandeis, as a non-sectarian Jewish-sponsored university was included), and focused on the development of Jewish studies under non-Jewish auspices. Without overlooking problems—he generously estimated, for example, that only 5 percent of Jewish students took these courses, and he found the courses scattered over a wide range of different programs and departments—he nevertheless exuded optimism.²²¹ In fact, the field burgeoned far more quickly than he could have imagined. By 1969, it was large enough to warrant the creation of a professional organization, the Association for Jewish Studies. In 1974, Charles Berlin, surveying, in the *Year Book*, library resources for Jewish studies, reported that the association's membership had grown "to nearly 600, with more than half engaged in Jewish studies on a full-time basis."²²² By the turn of the century that number would more than double: The "new and promising period" that Band had foreseen had come to pass.

The *Year Book* under Fine and Himmelfarb looked at many other areas of Jewish communal concern in the 1960s as well. Its strategy was to turn to leading scholars and thinkers and help them translate academic prose into language that Jewish communal leaders could understand. Walter Ackerman thus surveyed the state of Jewish education in the United States, and Lou Silberman reported developments in Jewish theology, a subject the *Year Book* had never even considered before.²²³ Previously, for 24 years (1942–1965), the *Year Book*'s "American Jewish Bibliography" section had carefully listed English-language publications on Jewish themes with only descriptive notes. Now that annotated listing was dropped, replaced by bibliographical essays, one by Daniel J. Elazar analyzing recent literature on Jewish public affairs, and another by Menahem Schmelzer reviewing contemporary offerings in Jewish scholarship.²²⁴ The "steady increase in the number, diversity and specialization of books

²²¹Vol. 67 (1966), pp. 3–30.

²²²Vol. 75 (1974–75), p. 5.

²²³Vol. 70 (1969), pp. 3–36, 37–58.

²²⁴Vol. 68 (1967), pp. 178–221; Vol. 71 (1970), pp. 308–24.

in English about themes of . . . Jewish interest"²²⁵ partly explained this change, but a larger transformation, already evident in the *Year Book*'s "special articles," also underlay it. In the 1960s, the *Year Book*, like many American newspapers and magazines, embraced a more personal and passionate style that allowed authors to express more freely their own views and judgments. It now regularly published subjective and even controversial articles—such as those of Charles Liebman—and was no longer satisfied with lists of facts or chronologies of events.

The Six-Day War and its Legacy

"June 1967 marked a watershed in contemporary Jewish public affairs," Daniel Elazar boldly announced in the 1969 *Year Book*. The Temple University professor of political science described Israel's victory in the Six-Day War as "the climax of a generation, the sealing of an era, and the culmination of a 1900-year cycle." The war, he believed, made Jews both old and young "deeply aware of the shared fate of all Jews, and of the way that fate is now bound up with the political entity that is the State of Israel."²²⁶ Scholars have since debated the extent to which the Six-Day War actually transformed contemporary Jewish life. Some of the changes attributed to the war—including a greater focus on Israel and a shift toward emphasizing Jewish issues, as opposed to universal ones—had, at least in the case of the *Year Book*, begun to show themselves earlier, and the changes that did take place in the war's wake were subtle rather than drastic.

Nevertheless, the *Year Book* treated the Six-Day War as an event of supreme significance, worthy of a special 115-page section that included five different articles. The first, contributed by the Israeli journalist and editor Misha Louvish (who wrote the annual article on Israel for the *Year Book* from 1959 to 1983), summarized what he described as "the greatest victory in Jewish military annals," and went on to trace the political and economic developments that followed in its wake. The American Jewish Committee's Abraham S. Karlikow followed with a piece that revealed the war's devastating impact upon Jews in Arab lands, where he painted a tragic portrait of persecution and suffering. In the war's aftermath, he disclosed, "Jewish life in Aden and Libya came to an end"; "the disappearance of the Jewish community in Egypt" became "almost . . . inevitable"; the Jewish community in Lebanon was "melting away"; and conditions for the remaining Jews in Iraq and Syria were grim and getting worse, since Jews could not leave owing to a "ban on Jewish emigration."²²⁷ The next

²²⁵Vol. 68 (1967), p. vi.

²²⁶Vol. 70 (1969), p. 172.

²²⁷Vol. 69 (1968), p. 133.

piece, covering “international politics,” was written by George E. Gruen, the American Jewish Committee’s resident Middle East specialist and for more than two decades the author of the *Year Book’s* annual article on “The United States, Israel and the Middle East.” He provided readers with a masterful synthesis of diplomatic activities surrounding the Six-Day War, especially on the roles of the United States and the United Nations. Following his piece, Leon Shapiro and Jerry Goodman, in a joint article, traced responses to the Six-Day War in the Communist world, paying particular attention to the fate of Jews there. Finally, Lucy Dawidowicz devoted 31 pages to “American Public Opinion” during the war. Her opening paragraphs summarized her findings, and spelled out critical themes that students of the war’s impact on America and American Jews would elucidate for years to come:

For four weeks, beginning May 15, 1967, when Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq began mobilizing their forces against Israel, until June 10, when the six-day war ended, most Americans were caught up in Middle East events. The Israeli-Arab crisis affected Americans more deeply than any foreign conflict—except, of course, the war in Vietnam—partly because it was a microcosm reflecting the larger conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States.

The conflict aroused in American Jews unpredictably [sic] intense feelings regarding Israel, Jewish survival, and their own sense of Jewish identity. The relatively cool responses from official Catholic and Protestant spokesmen had unforeseen and dramatic consequences for relations between Jews and Christians. Finally, the crisis, especially because of what was called its parallels with the war in Vietnam, created deep and lasting divisions among a wide variety of leftist parties and organizations in the United States.²²⁸

For all of the intense feelings that it generated, the war soon faded from public discussion, and by 1970 the *Year Book’s* main coverage of Israel had returned to the pattern established in the 1950s with two annual articles, one on “Israel” and the other on “The United States, Israel, and the Middle East.” Four years later, the 1973 Yom Kippur War did not even rate a special article, let alone a special section, in the *Year Book*; George Gruen and Misha Louvish simply dealt with the war and its aftermath in expanded versions of their regular articles. Nevertheless, Israel did slowly assume a more important position within the *Year Book’s* coverage of events. This was evident in the number of “special articles” concerning Israel, three in the 1970s alone. Whereas before, only the Eichmann Trial and the Six-Day War had brought Israel to the front of the book, articles now appeared concerning “North American Settlers in Israel” (1970), “Religion in Israel” (1976), and “Israel and the United Nations” (1978), as well as a full account of the 1975 United Nations reso-

²²⁸Ibid., p. 198.

lution equating Zionism with “racism and racial discrimination” (1977). The first of these articles was particularly interesting, for it predicted (quite wrongly) that “the post-June war spiral of American *aliyah* [would] continue,” and it linked the rise in the number of North American Jews settling in Israel to growing dissatisfaction with life in the United States. After listing a long litany of domestic American problems—a reflection of the times in 1970, and a harbinger of the *Year Book’s* own changing mood—it concluded that “Jews in America . . . feel a sense of frustration and guilt at what happened to their dream of a brave new world.” Some of these dissatisfied Jews, it claimed, “make their way to Israel,” hoping to find in the Promised Land what they miss in the United States: “like-minded, socially alert human beings.”²²⁹

The article on “Religion in Israel,” by Zvi Yaron, then a senior executive at the Jewish Agency, was even more significant since it represented the *Year Book’s* first in-depth effort to help its readers understand an internal Israeli problem that was receiving growing coverage in the United States. The *Year Book* had reported on religious tensions in Israel for years, and back in 1959 it noted that Reform and Conservative rabbis, “emerging from a self-imposed silence,” had begun “to criticize more openly the political agreements between the Orthodox parties and the Israel government, and the continued discrimination against non-Orthodox forms of Judaism.”²³⁰ The importance of Yaron’s article was that it sought to move beyond these issues, eschewing “simplistic interpretations of the problem” in order to place the debate over religion in Israel in historical and conceptual perspective based on the uniqueness of the Israeli situation:

[W]hat we have in modern Israel is not the classical church-state conflict between secular and religious forces, but a debate between opposing views of the relationship between the Jewish nation and traditional Judaism. . . . To religious Jews the new secularism is an aberration that is not only untrue but also un-Jewish. To secular Jews the traditional religion is an unconscionable burden that depresses the potentialities of man and thwarts the free development of Jewish culture.²³¹

While he offered “no shortcut to resolving the religious problem in Israel,” his long and copiously footnoted study set a new standard for *Year Book* coverage of such divisive issues. Israeli ambassador Shabtai Rosenne’s article two years later on “Israel and the United Nations: Changed Perspectives, 1945–1976” reflected a similar attempt to place an Israeli problem in a broader perspective for American Jewish readers.

²²⁹Vol. 71 (1970), pp. 183–84.

²³⁰Vol. 60 (1959), p. 63.

²³¹Vol. 76 (1976), p. 43.

Beyond representing an expansion of the *Year Book's* mission, both articles also exemplified an important new development in post-1967 American Jewish life: Increasingly, American Jews were embracing Israel's problems as their own.

The growing importance of Israel in American Jewish life also appeared in the *Year Book* in a more subtle way, through the articles on "Jewish Communal Services: Programs and Finances." Introduced back in 1952, and written for more than two decades by the assistant director of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, S. P. ("Pete") Goldberg, this regular feature analyzed and published the disbursements and the receipts of Jewish communal agencies. While no more interesting than most other budget reports—which may be why the feature disappeared in the 1980s—Goldberg's articles pointed to important trends. In this case, reviewing the figures for the mid-1970s, he noted that more and more communal funds were flowing to Israel:

Since the six-day war in 1967, Jews in the United States, Canada, and other countries have recognized that the welfare, health, education, and related needs of immigrants in Israel required massive additional voluntary support for services which the people of Israel could no longer help finance because of their other direct responsibilities. The result was a historic outpouring of aid for the Emergency Fund of UJA [United Jewish Appeal] in 1967, with \$173 million obtained by the community federations and welfare funds in addition to the proceeds of the 1967 regular campaign. Together, welfare funds raised a record sum of \$318 million in 1967. This record was exceeded each year since 1971 and a new peak was reached in 1974 (\$660 million) in response to the challenge faced by Israel in meeting human needs after the Yom Kippur war.²³²

All told, according to Goldberg, about 75 percent of amounts budgeted in the early 1970s went to Israel, compared with less than 60 percent a decade earlier.

Finally, Israel's impact on American Jewish life was reflected in the *Year Book* through the appearance of articles dealing with American Jewish life written by scholars who had themselves settled in Israel. In the years following the Six-Day War, a small stream of important American Jewish academics settled there, and several of them—notably Charles Liebman and Daniel Elazar—had contributed to the *Year Book* regularly. Having moved to Israel, these scholars continued to write for the *Year Book*, demonstrating in the process that the study of American Jewry was no longer confined to the United States, and that the bonds linking Jewish scholars in America and Israel were growing stronger.

²³²Vol. 78 (1978), p. 175.

The '70s, Decade of Doubt

Nevertheless, after the Six-Day War, as formerly, American issues continued to dominate the *Year Book*. What changed—and rather dramatically—was the *Year Book's* perception of America. In the face of an unexpected rise in anti-Semitism, negative demographic news, burgeoning religious and political tensions within the Jewish community, and a national atmosphere poisoned by the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal, and economic woes, the buoyant optimism of the earlier postwar decades collapsed. Against this generally unhappy background, the *Year Book* in the 1970s offered a much more pessimistic assessment of contemporary and future trends in American Jewish life, and it was not alone. For American Jews generally, the 1970s were a decade of doubt.

Earl Raab, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco, noticed signs of the new national mood as early as 1970 in his survey for the *Year Book* of "Intergroup Relations and Tensions in the United States." He spoke of a sense of "uneasiness" within the American Jewish community, and wrote that Jews were "developing some insecurities." "There was," he discerned, "a growing sense of the minority status of the Jews in America, as a new administration [that of Richard Nixon] took office and the Middle East crisis became chronic."²³³ A year later, Philip Perlmuter, director of the New England region of the American Jewish Committee, confirmed this trend. In his survey of intergroup relations for the *Year Book*, he found that the events of the year "rekindled suspicion, anxiety and fear in Jews about their own security."²³⁴ By America's bicentennial in 1976, historian Henry Feingold was lamenting, in his lead article, that "a year seldom passes without some new gloomy readings of the community's condition." While he pronounced himself "optimistic about American Jewry," he knew that his was a decidedly minority stance.²³⁵ David Dalin, then at the San Francisco Jewish Community Relations Council, reviewed the developments of the decade on the opening page of the 1980 *Year Book*:

[The] "Golden Age" in American Jewish life has come to an end. American Jews have been experiencing a growing anxiety over various developments in the last decade, including the growth of Black Power, the emergence of quotas in employment and education, and the growth of Arab influence in the United States. The political climate of the country is clearly changing;

²³³Vol. 71 (1970), p. 191.

²³⁴Vol. 72 (1971), p. 132.

²³⁵Vol. 76 (1976), pp. 3, 37. The *Year Book* published one volume covering 1974–75 "so that in future, volume numbers will coincide with years." Vol. 75 (1974–75), p. v.

there appears to be a growing indifference to Jewish concerns. Jews see themselves faced with new threats to their security.²³⁶

In addition to these external threats, the *Year Book* highlighted internal risks that the American Jewish community faced. Writing from a demographic perspective, Sidney Goldstein of Brown University, in a comprehensive review of available data published in 1971, warned that Jews, already less than 3 percent of the total population, were “undergoing a continuous decline in proportion, as the total population grows at a faster rate.” He also found that Jews were aging, becoming “more geographically dispersed,” intermarrying more, and coming increasingly to resemble their non-Jewish neighbors in education, occupation, and income. “To what extent,” he wondered ominously, “will the diminution in the distinctive population characteristics of Jews and their greater residential integration lead to behavioral convergence?” While he personally advocated the creation of “a meaningful balance between Jewishness and Americanism,” his question hung in the air.²³⁷

By the mid-1970s additional demographic data became available, thanks to the first National Jewish Population Study, sponsored by the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, under the scientific direction of Fred Massarik of UCLA. The *Year Book* published articles based on this study every year from 1973 to 1978, and much of the news was disturbing. For example, the study lowered the estimated number of Jews in the United States by 400,000, and acknowledged that Jews had never reached the six-million mark in the United States—contrary to the *Year Book*'s earlier, overly optimistic estimates. In addition, Massarik disclosed that “the proportion of individuals under 5 years of age has been decreasing for the last ten years,” and that “the proportion of Jewish persons intermarrying in the period 1966–1972 was 31.7 per cent, much higher than in any comparable earlier period.”²³⁸ Reviewing this data in 1981, Sidney Goldstein reported that the concerns expressed in his earlier article had been borne out and “many of the patterns that were then emerging have become further accentuated.”²³⁹

Beyond demography and intergroup relations, the *Year Book*'s downbeat view of American Jewish life was reinforced by a spate of obituary articles. Nine men (no women) received long, loving tributes in the *Year Books* of the 1970s, compared to only four (Herbert H. Lehman, Felix Frankfurter, Martin Buber, and Max Weinreich) who received such treatment in the 1960s. While all nine were significant figures (Jacob Blaustein,

²³⁶Vol. 80 (1980), p. 3.

²³⁷Vol. 72 (1971), pp. 3–87.

²³⁸Vol. 74 (1973), pp. 270, 292; Vol. 75 (1974–75), p. 295.

²³⁹Vol. 81 (1981), p. 56.

Jacob Glatstein, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Horace M. Kallen, Reinhold Niebuhr, Joseph Proskauer, Maurice Samuel, Leo Strauss, and Harry A. Wolfson), the disproportionate attention paid to them only added to the overall sense of gloom and loss that pervaded the *Year Book*, as if American Jewry's best years lay behind it and its greatest men were passing from the scene. This was even true in the case of Niebuhr, the only non-Jew ever memorialized by the *Year Book*, whose passing seemed to symbolize the end of a transformative era in Jewish-Christian relations. The great Protestant theologian was “a true and tested friend of the Jewish community,” Seymour Siegel wrote in his obituary. He then pointed out that Niebuhr's widow, shortly after her husband's death, sought to have his name removed from the masthead of *Christianity and Crisis*, a journal he had founded, because its editorial policy changed and it now “published articles critical of Israel's administration of Jerusalem.”²⁴⁰ This same heavy sense of loss may be seen in YIVO secretary Shmuel Lapin's obituary for the Lublin-born, American Yiddish poet, Jacob Glatstein. Describing how Glatstein came from a world where Jews “lived, thought, and felt as Jews twenty-four hours a day,” and where “their heroes and models were drawn from the Jewish tradition,” he paused to lament: “How different this is from our condition, in which the young of even the most committed segments of the Jewish community identify with the same sports and television heroes as does the rest of American society.”²⁴¹

Indeed, the *Year Book* projected an American Jewry that was literally coming apart during the 1970s, just as racial, ethnic, religious, generational, and gender differences were simultaneously sundering American society at large. Before, the *Year Book* had generally focused on the Jewish community as a whole, and only rarely—in articles like “Roumanian Jews in America” (1901) and “Orthodoxy in American Jewish Life” (1965)—on its component parts. In the 1970s, by contrast, about a third of its special articles dealt with subcommunities or movements within the American Jewish community, including articles on Reconstructionism, Reform Judaism, Sephardic Jews, Jewish academics, and the Jewish women's movement. One article based on the National Jewish Population Study went so far as to divide the community into 11 “socio-ideological types,” including the affiliated and unaffiliated members of the three main religious movements, plus “agnostic-atheist Jews,” “just-Jewish” Jews, “ex-Jews,” “non-Jews” (married or born to Jews), and “miscellaneous Jews.”²⁴² References to the American Jewish community as a whole by no means disappeared during this time, but analyses of its constituent

²⁴⁰Vol. 73 (1972), pp. 605–10.

²⁴¹Ibid., p. 617.

²⁴²Vol. 78 (1978), p. 263.

elements attracted far more attention, especially when they gave voice to those who had not been heard from before.

Charles Liebman, in 1970, focused on one of the smallest pieces of the American Jewish religious pie, Reconstructionist Judaism.²⁴³ His article—which was widely discussed and frequently cited—detailed Reconstructionism's ideology, programs, history, institutions, and constituency, and argued that the study of this “numerically and institutionally insignificant” movement was nevertheless “basic to an understanding of American Judaism.” Reconstructionism, he explained, embodied, with some minor exceptions, the values and attitudes of the great bulk of American Jews; it encompassed what Jonathan Woocher would later describe as “civil Judaism.” While Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Judaism represented “three *elitist* ideologies of the American Jewish religion,” Reconstructionism, Liebman declared, articulated “the folk religion . . . the *popular* religious culture”; indeed, it sought “to formulate the folk religion in elitist terms.” In keeping with the downbeat temper of the times, Liebman was pessimistic about Reconstructionism's future; in fact, he was pessimistic about American Judaism as a whole—which may be why, by the time the article appeared, he had settled in Israel.

For related reasons, the *Year Book's* articles on Reform Judaism and Sephardic Jews also reached pessimistic conclusions. The former, written by historian Sefton Temkin, was timed to mark the centennial of Reform's congregational body, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and for the most part it chronicled in a straightforward way the history of Reform Judaism in the United States. But as it turned to the question “what of the future,” it changed tone. It warned that in the course of time Reform Judaism's base “may be eroded through intermarriage and assimilation,” and quoted a survey of Reform rabbis, who “expressed concern that Reform Judaism was in the midst of a crisis—a situation that will become worse, many felt, before it becomes better.” The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, it concluded, “has lost a vision of itself as pioneer, together with the exhilaration of recent success.” It was, according to Temkin, “shadowed by the disenchantment that hangs over much of American life.”²⁴⁴ In the same volume, Rabbi Marc Angel's article on “The Sephardim of the United States,” while more innovative methodologically and highly significant in terms of placing Jews of Iberian and Levantine descent on the radar screen of the American Jewish community, ended just as pessimistically. “If there is no reversal

²⁴³Vol. 71 (1970), pp. 3–99.

²⁴⁴Vol. 74 (1973), pp. 3–75, esp. pp. 71–75.

in the trends indicated by our data, no viable Sephardi communities may be left in the United States in two or three generations from now,” it concluded. Unless religious observance strengthened and the “widespread ignorance of Judaism and Sephardi Jewish tradition” reversed, Angel warned, “the Sephardi heritage will be lost.”²⁴⁵

Year Book articles on “Jewish Academics in the United States” and on “The Movement for Equal Rights for Women in American Jewry” offered a welcome respite from all this pessimism, addressing timely themes that had not been considered before. The “Jewish Academics” article, by Seymour Martin Lipset and Everett Carl Ladd, Jr., looked beyond Arnold Band's focus on Jewish studies and found that Jews generally formed “a heavy proportion of academe”—a far cry from just one generation earlier, when the *Year Book* reported that, owing to anti-Semitism, Jews represented “but an insignificant proportion of the faculties” in America's colleges and universities,²⁴⁶ and some infamous departments hired no Jews at all. After an exhaustive chart-filled study, Lipset and Ladd, both distinguished sociologists, concluded that Jews had not only found a home in the academy, but “by every criterion of academic accomplishment, Jewish faculty as a group . . . far surpassed their Gentile colleagues.” They explained this success, following the economist Thorstein Veblen, on the basis of Jewish academics' marginality, “the impact of their ‘hyphenate’ status, of having left the traditional Jewish world, but not becoming fully part of Gentile society.”²⁴⁷

“‘Who Hast Not Made Me a Man’: The Movement for Equal Rights for Woman in American Jewry,” by Anne Lapidus Lerner, then an instructor in modern Hebrew literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, covered what Lerner described as a “specifically Jewish brand” of feminism, “which, while questioning many traditional Jewish assumptions, was frequently accompanied by growing respect for Judaism and Jewish values.” Tracing developments among Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews, as well as in Jewish organizational and family life, she predicted, accurately, that Jewish feminism was “not likely to disappear.” To the contrary, she optimistically concluded that “Judaism has always survived by evolution, never painless,” and that in the same way Jewish feminism should be “confronted and accommodated to ensure the survival of American Jewry.”²⁴⁸ Twelve years later, Professor Sylvia Barack Fishman of Brandeis University, as part of her larger *Year Book* study of feminism's impact on American Jewish life, found that a

²⁴⁵Ibid., p. 136.

²⁴⁶Vol. 39 (1938), pp. 61–62.

²⁴⁷Vol. 72 (1971), p. 125.

²⁴⁸Vol. 77 (1977), pp. 37–38.

great deal of accommodation had in fact taken place. "Jewish religious life and Jewish culture have been profoundly transformed by Jewish feminism in all its guises," she wrote. "From birth onward, American Jewish girls today are more likely than ever before in Jewish history to be treated in a manner closely resembling the treatment of boys." Looking back, she pointed to Lerner's article as a "striking piece of evidence for the legitimation of Jewish feminism by the Jewish intellectual and organizational establishments."²⁴⁹ Like Liebman's article on Orthodoxy, Lerner's piece both recognized a significant trend in American Jewish life and focused communal attention upon it.

Yet the most significant Jewish movement of the 1970s from the *Year Book's* perspective—the only one that received article-length treatments year after year, and the only one in which the American Jewish Committee actively participated—was the Soviet Jewry movement, the campaign to fight anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and (increasingly) to promote the right of Jews there to emigrate. In 1971, the *Year Book* reprinted the summary report prepared by the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry covering its activities during 1970. In 1973, it devoted 15 pages to the "American Response to Soviet Anti-Jewish Policies." In 1974/75 and 1976, it chronicled, in 46 surprisingly frank pages, the struggle (at times within the Jewish community itself) over the "Jackson-Vanik amendment," the law sponsored by Senator Henry Jackson and Congressman Charles Vanik that made American "most favored nation" trade benefits and bank credits to the Soviet Union contingent on free emigration, even at the expense of the "détente" policy favored by the Nixon administration. In 1977, it reprinted the declaration of the second Brussels conference ("The Second World Conference of Jewish Communities on Soviet Jewry") and profiled the 11,000 Soviet Jewish immigrants who had recently settled in the United States. In 1979 it offered a retrospect on "Soviet Jewry Since the Death of Stalin," paying special attention to "anti-Jewish policies" and "Jewish dissidence."²⁵⁰ To be sure, Leon Shapiro, the author, found it "difficult to envision a mass exodus of Soviet Jews." He urged that the emigration issue "not monopolize the attention and efforts of those seeking to help Soviet Jews," and called for parallel efforts "to strengthen Jewish life in the Soviet Union."²⁵¹ That, in part, was a slap at the anti-establishment organizations working to free Soviet Jews, notably the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews and the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, whose activities (and very existence, in the case of the Union

²⁴⁹Vol. 89 (1989), p. 11.

²⁵⁰Vol. 72 (1971), pp. 165–69; Vol. 74 (1973), pp. 210–23; Vol. 75 (1974–75), pp. 199–234; Vol. 76 (1976), pp. 160–70; Vol. 77 (1977), pp. 153–81; Vol. 79 (1979), pp. 77–103.

²⁵¹Vol. 79 (1979), p. 103.

of Councils), the *Year Books* of the 1970s largely ignored. As the *Year Book* portrayed it, the Soviet Jewry movement in the United States was basically an establishment movement, directed by recognized leaders who operated through regular organizational channels (closely linked, we now know, to the *Lishka*, the clandestine liaison operation funded by the Israeli government) in order to bring diplomatic pressure to bear on the problem.

In fact, this was only part of the story. Another part, the saga of the "army of housewives" who maintained direct contact with the "refuseniks," employing underground channels to support and free them, has yet to be fully told. Still, by focusing as it did, the *Year Book* helped to nurture and publicize the "established" Soviet Jewry movement. Given the longtime commitment of the *Year Book* (and the American Jewish Committee) to human rights, religious freedom, and anti-Communism, the decision to focus on the movement was a natural one, a reflection of the *Year Book's* central ethos and values.²⁵²

Anxieties of the '80s

In 1980, Morris Fine retired as coeditor of the *Year Book*. "For close to forty years now, whatever merit the *Year Book* has had has been very largely Morris Fine's doing," his successors wrote in tribute. In fact, Fine continued on as editor emeritus, and was still helping out in the *Year Book* office two decades later. David Singer now joined Milton Himmelfarb as coeditor of the *Year Book*. Singer became sole editor of the *Year Book* in 1987, when Ruth R. Seldin joined as associate editor.

The watchword of the *Year Book* at the commencement of the 1980s was "anxiety." Summarizing the state of intergroup relations in 1980, Murray Friedman of the American Jewish Committee described "a deepening sense of Jewish anxiety" occasioned by, among other things, the rise of evangelical Protestant missionary activities directed toward Jews, black-Jewish friction, and "a resurgence of Nazi groups."²⁵³ That same year sociologist Steven M. Cohen expressed anxiety over the future of Jewish philanthropy, warning—wrongly as it turned out—that "relatively fewer Jews in the future will amass large fortunes" and—accurately—that younger Jews would be less inclined to contribute to organized Jewish philanthropy than their elders.²⁵⁴ David Dalin, in the lead article that year, used the same term—"growing anxiety"—to describe

²⁵²See Murray Friedman and Albert D. Chernin, eds., *A Second Exodus: The American Movement to Free Soviet Jews* (Hanover, N.H., 1999).

²⁵³Vol. 80 (1980), pp. 71, 83, 86.

²⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 50.

the response to Nazi provocations against Jews in Skokie and San Francisco. In both cities, he reported, Holocaust survivors "viewed the reappearance of the swastika in their midst as a direct threat to both American democracy and Jewish survival."²⁵⁵

As a consequence of this "anxiety," the *Year Book* portrayed an American Jewish community that was lurching rightward politically. Friedman noted "a new militancy with regard to the defense of Jewish interests [that] . . . was bound to effect [*sic*] the usually liberal social-political posture of American Jews."²⁵⁶ Dalin traced growing Jewish disaffection with the American Civil Liberties Union, which had defended the right of Nazis to march, and observed that "whereas in the past most Jews supported liberal causes, including free speech for Nazis, even when they seemed to threaten Jewish interests and security, this is no longer the case."²⁵⁷ The results of the 1980 election—the so-called Reagan landslide—seemed to confirm that political changes were in the wind. "The GOP candidate made sizeable gains among Jewish voters," the *Year Book* reported. "In 1980, for the first time since 1928, most Jews did not vote for the Democratic candidate." Milton Himmelfarb, however, read the election returns differently. In a symposium quoted in the *Year Book* he warned "that the figures on the decline in the Jewish vote for the Democratic presidential candidate were deceiving." "In local races," he pointed out, "the Jewish Republican vote increased, but not significantly."²⁵⁸

Lucy Dawidowicz, in 1982, sought to place the situation of American Jews of the day in broader historical context. In one of the most ambitious special articles ever to appear in the *Year Book*—described by the editors as "comprehensive and magisterial"—she reviewed a full century of historical developments since the onset of mass East European immigration in 1881, examining American Jewry "from the twin perspectives of Jewish history and American history." Her survey, later published as a book entitled *On Equal Terms*, uncovered "cycles of distress and oppression" as well as "cycles of prosperity and tolerance." As for the new era beginning in 1967, she explained, it reflected both cycles at once, its "swinging pendulum" inaugurating "an era of unpredictable crisis and an even more unpredictable Jewish revival." Jews in this era, she reported, "no longer felt at ease, no longer felt quite at home." Young people were taking over and everything was "new"—culture, politics, even anti-Semitism. Internally, Jewish life was also undergoing great changes. She detected, especially among the religiously Orthodox and the

²⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 3–4.

²⁵⁶Ibid., p. 86.

²⁵⁷Ibid., p. 5.

²⁵⁸Vol. 82 (1982), p. 105.

politically aware, a "new Jewish assertiveness," "openly acknowledged pursuit of Jewish self-interest," and "more intensely felt Jewish commitments."²⁵⁹ The phenomenon that Dawidowicz discerned became known as bipolarity, the sense that Jewish life was oscillating between the best of times and the worst of times. This theme, expressed in countless ways, characterized much of the *Year Book's* coverage through the next two decades, as it documented the crises and anxieties that plagued the American Jewish community, as well as its initiatives and achievements.

Some of the bleakest data that appeared in the *Year Book* flowed from surveys: national and local Jewish community surveys, poll data, and random samples designed to quantify demographic and social trends in American Jewish life. The 1980s saw a pronounced rise in the number of articles printed based on survey data—several per year—and for a time the *Year Book* also admitted into its pages specialized methodological studies, such as "Counting Jewish Populations: Methods and Problems."²⁶⁰ The results, almost invariably, contained bad news, boding even worse for the future. The Israeli demographer, Uziel O. Schmelz, for example, concluded his study of "Jewish Survival: The Demographic Factors," with the grim prediction that "roughly around 1990, the total number of Jews in the world will start to decline. This decline will accelerate as the losses due to insufficient fertility, aging and assimilation in the Diaspora increasingly outweigh the natural growth of Jews in Israel."²⁶¹ As it turned out, the prediction was partially correct, partially self-fulfilling, and partially wrong. The very next year, the *Year Book* did register a whopping drop of 1.5 million in the world Jewish population—fully 10 percent—but that was because it abandoned the old overly optimistic estimates of Leon Shapiro in favor of the newer more pessimistic ones produced by Schmelz's own division of Jewish demography and statistics at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.²⁶² Schmelz and his associate, Sergio DellaPergola, also calculated a slight decline in the world Jewish population in 1990, just as predicted. But that population, according to their subsequent calculations, began thereafter to rise again, thanks to Israel's prodigious birthrate, and by the end of the 1990s it was still rising. Schmelz did much better with his 1983 prediction concerning Diaspora population trends. He and DellaPergola foresaw that the American Jewish population would decrease at a slower rate than the rest of Diaspora Jewry, and calculated that "the

²⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 88–97.

²⁶⁰Vol. 88 (1988), pp. 204–21.

²⁶¹Vol. 81 (1981), p. 108.

²⁶²Vol. 82 (1982), pp. 277–90. See vol. 70 (1969), pp. 273–88, for Schmelz's critique of the *Year Book's* earlier estimates of world Jewish population.

joint share of Jews in the United States and Israel" would consequently increase from two-thirds of world Jewry in 1975 to fully 80 percent in the year 2000. That, in fact, is precisely what happened.²⁶³

Other social scientists who published in the *Year Book*, while more circumspect in their predictions, were as a group no more optimistic. Steven M. Cohen, reporting on a national survey of American Jews, found that "on all measures of communal activity . . . younger respondents (ages 18–39) score[d] considerably lower than their elders"—a finding that boded ill for the future.²⁶⁴ Barry Chiswick described American Jews as a successful but "troubled minority." Given the effects of secularization, very low fertility, and increasing intermarriage, he concluded that their numbers would likely decline as Jews fell victim "to their own success."²⁶⁵ Gary Tobin and Alvin Chenkin ended a survey of "Recent Jewish Community Population Studies" by showing that Jews had a "lower birth rate and a higher average age" than most Americans and that "families consisting of two parents and children" had become "a distinct minority."²⁶⁶ Eytan Gilboa warned that notwithstanding the "remarkably stable and consistent" pattern of American Jewish support for Israel, "older, less educated, and more religious individuals" displayed more commitment "than those who are younger and better educated, and who cannot remember a time when there was no Israel."²⁶⁷ Finally, Bruce A. Phillips reported that Los Angeles Jewry had a higher intermarriage rate and a lower rate of communal affiliation than Jews back east. In these and in many other ways, he argued, Los Angeles represented "the new face of American Jewry."²⁶⁸

A Bipolar Community?

By the late 1980s, a few social scientists came to believe that what looked and sounded like bad news really reflected, as Phillips implied, a new form of American Jewish community—not decline, but an historic transformation. Nathan Glazer described this development in the *Year Book* as "a substantial and meaningful debate over the future of the American Jewish community" pitting pessimistic "assimilationists" against optimistic "transformationists." In fact, the debate revolved around a pivotal question, in Glazer's words, whether "American Jewry is headed for assimilation or whether it is engaged in transforming the

²⁶³Vol. 83 (1983), p. 185.

²⁶⁴Ibid., p. 94.

²⁶⁵Vol. 85 (1985), p. 131.

²⁶⁶Ibid., p. 177.

²⁶⁷Vol. 86 (1986), pp. 124–25.

²⁶⁸Ibid., p. 158.

terms in which Jewishness and Judaism are to be understood." Glazer found merit in both positions, though on balance he was more pessimistic than optimistic, and his essay—unadorned by even a single table or chart—helped clarify the debate for *Year Book* readers.²⁶⁹ What is remarkable, however, is that the *Year Book* itself scarcely opened its pages to the optimistic "transformationists," notwithstanding the academic status of some of the group's scholars and the popularity of their views in the community at large, as reflected in Charles Silberman's 1985 bestseller, *A Certain People: American Jews and their Lives Today*. It was left to Lawrence Grossman in his "Jewish Communal Affairs" article in the 1988 *Year Book* to explain the issue dispassionately, based on an AJC conference (where in fact Glazer had spoken) that brought both sides in the clamorous debate together:

What emerged was a recognition that the questions were much more complex than simply whether Jewish life in the United States was thriving or declining. It became clear that demographic data were hard to interpret and even harder to project into the future, and that any assessment of the "quality" of Jewish culture was inescapably subjective. One thesis that drew considerable attention was that, while certain parts of American Jewry were indeed deepening their Jewishness, others were on an accelerated assimilatory course out of the Jewish community.²⁷⁰

For the most part, however, the *Year Book* continued to challenge the transformationist approach, notably in a 1992 multi-authored article on "Jewish Identity in Conversionary and Mixed Marriages," where the optimistic arguments of transformationists were forcefully rejected. "The chances of a mixed marriage resulting in a single-identity household at any level of Jewish identification," the authors concluded gravely, "are extremely slim." They went on to warn that if "present trends continue, the already low overall level of Jewish identification is likely to fall further, and dual-identity households may eventually rival if not outnumber single-identity households. Unambiguous Jewish identity may become the mark of a minority."²⁷¹

If demographic and social scientific data found in the *Year Book* portended the "worst of times," *Year Book* coverage of Jewish education, religious life, and culture in the 1980s and 1990s painted a brighter picture altogether. Walter Ackerman, in a 1980 article on "Jewish Education Today," highlighted the "continued growth of the day school movement." He reported that about one-fourth of all the children in Jewish elementary schools studied in Jewish all-day schools, and because of this the av-

²⁶⁹Vol. 87 (1987), pp. 3–19.

²⁷⁰Vol. 88 (1988), p. 203.

²⁷¹Vol. 92 (1992), pp. 39–40.

erage number of pupil hours per Jewish school year had increased in just over a decade by 35 percent. He also pointed to “the expansion of educational camping,” the “explosive expansion of Jewish Studies programs in American colleges and universities,” and to a variety of other new educational initiatives. No Pollyanna, he did take account of many negative trends in American Jewish education, notably the fact that “the vast majority of children who enter a Jewish school terminate their studies long before they can be expected to have attained any recognizable or long-lasting skills and competencies.”²⁷² But if his conclusions were mixed, in keeping with the regnant “bipolar” interpretation of American Jewish life as a whole, an extensive *Year Book* survey of “Jewish Education in the United States” 19 years later, by historian Jack Wertheimer, ended on a much more ebullient note: “the field of Jewish education today, perhaps as never before, is arguably the most dynamic sector of the American Jewish community.”²⁷³

Wertheimer, professor of American Jewish history and later provost of the Jewish Theological Seminary, became the *Year Book*'s foremost interpreter of American Jewish life at the end of the 20th century. Besides his survey of Jewish education, he authored three additional articles: “Jewish Organizational Life in the United States Since 1945” (1995), “Current Trends in American Jewish Philanthropy” (1997), and “Recent Trends in American Judaism” (1989). The latter, by far the most important discussion of Jewish religious life ever published in the *Year Book*, appeared just a year after Lawrence Grossman announced in his review of Jewish communal affairs that “the issue that most worried American Jewish leaders . . . was conflict between the Jewish religious movements.”²⁷⁴ Annual coverage of American Jewish religious life resumed that year, after a quarter-century hiatus, and much of the coverage was given over to “religious polarization” and “tensions within each movement.” Wertheimer, however, sought to transcend these “headline-making clashes” in order to shed light on deeper questions of religious observance and the overall condition of Judaism in the United States. His 100-page article, later expanded into a book, offered a balanced portrayal of American Judaism, noting both positive and negative trends, and it concluded, as Dawidowicz and Ackerman had, with a mixed assessment, another warning that the American Jewish community was polarizing:

[I]n the religious sphere, a bipolar model is emerging, with a large population of Jews moving toward religious minimalism and a minority gravitat-

²⁷²Vol. 80 (1980), pp. 130–48.

²⁷³Vol. 99 (1999), p. 115.

²⁷⁴Vol. 88 (1988), p. 188.

ing toward greater participation and deepened concern with religion. The latter include: newly committed Jews and converts to Judaism, whose conscious choice of religious involvement has infused all branches of American Judaism with new energy and passion; rabbinic and lay leaders of the official denominations, who continue to struggle with issues of continuity and change within their respective movements; and groups of Jews who are experimenting with traditional forms in order to reappropriate aspects of the Jewish past. These articulate and vocal Jews have virtually transformed American Judaism during the past two decades. At the same time, an even larger population of American Jews has drifted away from religious participation. Such Jews have not articulated the sources of their discontent but have “voted with their feet,” by absenting themselves from synagogues and declining to observe religious rituals that require frequent and ongoing attention. To a great extent, their worrisome patterns of attrition have been obscured by the dynamism of the religiously involved. It remains to be seen, therefore, whether the transformation of American Judaism wrought by the committed minority during the past two decades will sustain its present energy and inspire greater numbers of Jews to commit themselves to a living Judaism.²⁷⁵

The one area where the *Year Book* proved less equivocal—indeed, it was refreshingly upbeat—was in its appraisals of Jewish culture. The editors placed new emphasis on culture in the 1990s, just as “cultural studies” in the academy were taking off, and in 1991 two articles appeared: Sylvia Barack Fishman’s “American Jewish Fiction Turns Inward,” and Ruth R. Seldin’s “American Jewish Museums: Trends and Issues.” Fishman set out to describe “a remarkable literary trend . . . a new, inward-turning genre of contemporary American Jewish fiction which explores the individual Jew’s connection to the Jewish people, to Jewish religion, culture and tradition, and to the chain of Jewish history.” She concluded, enthusiastically, that contributors to this genre “articulate[d] the spiritual struggles of their age.”²⁷⁶ Seldin, meanwhile, traced “the proliferation of Jewish museums over the last few decades,” which she, following Charles Silberman, related to “a major renewal of Jewish religious and cultural life in the United States . . . on the part of third- and fourth-generation American Jews who are not in flight from their past—as were their second generation parents—but who, on the contrary, are trying to recapture it.” She described “the burgeoning of Jewish museums” as “one of the success stories of American Jewish life.”²⁷⁷ A subsequent article on Jewish film, if less evaluative, was similarly upbeat, and so were the annual surveys of American Jewish culture (replete with words like “fertile,” “diverse,” and “inventive”) begun in 1998 by Trinity College professor of

²⁷⁵Vol. 89 (1989), p. 162.

²⁷⁶Vol. 91 (1991), pp. 35, 69.

²⁷⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 75, 112.

humanities Berel Lang. The only negative cultural note was sounded by Brandeis University's Alan Mintz, in an article on "Israeli Literature and the American Reader." "Despite favorable notices," he observed, "Israeli novels in translation have not sold very well." Since the literature is so good, he wondered, "why don't people read it?"²⁷⁸

By the 1980s, the *Year Book's* coverage of anti-Semitism reflected the bipolarity of the American Jewish community on this topic as well. Involved members of the American Jewish community knew that anti-Semitism was no longer a serious problem in the United States. While it had not totally disappeared, it had declined to historically low levels. But the majority of American Jews continued to view it as a highly important problem—more important, according to one of Steven M. Cohen's surveys, than assimilation or the quality of Jewish education.²⁷⁹ The *Year Book*, of course, refused to cater to this popular notion. As we have seen, it had long since dropped its section on "anti-Jewish agitation." In fact, the word "anti-Semitism" (or any variant thereof) did not even appear in its index! The subject was covered to some extent under "intergroup relations," but it rarely occupied more than ten pages, and in 1989 it filled less than two.²⁸⁰ As a sign of the times, the "anti-Semitism" subsection of "intergroup relations" was merged in 1991 with the section on "extremism," and, beginning in 1996, the whole article on "Intergroup Relations" disappeared, incorporated into an overview of "national affairs." Even then, there was so little news that "anti-Semitism and extremism" together occupied only two pages in 1999, mostly devoted to the aftermath of a riot that took place eight years before. Nevertheless, as the *Year Book* regularly noticed, "both behavioral and attitudinal anti-Semitism were perceived by many Jews to be greater than was reflected in the data collected and assessed by Jewish agencies."²⁸¹ The establishment and the masses, in other words, viewed reality very differently.

In 1986, the threat of anti-Semitism seemed momentarily to bring the two sectors of the Jewish community back together. As the *Year Book* noted in retrospect:

Many of the specters haunting the consciousness of American Jews materialized at some point during 1986. Organized anti-Semitic groups made front-page news, some of them trying to turn economic crisis in the farmlands to their advantage. A Jewish Wall Street financier [Ivan Boesky] was caught in some illicit and profitable deals. There were continuing attempts to "Chris-

²⁷⁸Vol. 97 (1997), pp. 93–114.

²⁷⁹Vol. 83 (1983), p. 100.

²⁸⁰Vol. 89 (1989), pp. 179–81.

²⁸¹Vol. 95 (1995), p. 104.

tianize" America. And an American Jewish spy [Jonathan Pollard] was arrested for turning over valuable American secrets to Israel.²⁸²

In the end, though, the *Year Book* reported that "general empirical measures of anti-Semitism remained historically low," and the issues that seemed so threatening at the time quickly faded away. Only black anti-Semitism continued to be newsworthy; in 1993 it was described as "the major source" of American Jewish anxiety. That same year, the *Year Book* devoted four pages of small type to the August 19, 1991, anti-Semitic riot by African-Americans in Crown Heights, and to the murder, close to the scene, of Yankel Rosenbaum, an Australian Hassid. In a rare admission, it confessed that mainstream Jewish organizations were "noticeably hesitant" both in responding to these incidents and in labeling them anti-Semitic, in part because "mainstream Jewish organizations were generally distant from the Hassidim and ambivalent toward them."²⁸³ By 1999, though, even black anti-Semitism no longer seemed so important an issue, at least from the *Year Book's* perspective. Indeed, that year it quoted a finding by the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding that "cooperation, rather than conflict, was 'the dominant theme between African-Americans and Jews.'"²⁸⁴ There was no evidence, however, that popular opinion had yet come around to the same position.

Imperfect Israel and Shrinking Diaspora

As domestic issues polarized the American Jewish community, the State of Israel—which, around the time of the Six-Day War, had been a focal point of communal unity—now became a divisive communal issue as well. Policies toward the Arabs, the peace process, Israel's religious life—these and other Israel-related themes became increasingly controversial during the 1980s and 1990s. Through these years, Israel dominated the agenda of the American Jewish community, especially given the American government's role in the peace process. The *Year Book* provided reliable information concerning these developments, documenting the clamorous debates that filled the press and the airwaves. The surpassing importance of Israel to American Jewish leaders was demonstrated by the large fraction of the *Year Book* that Israel annually occupied. In one extraordinary year, 1990, Israel-related articles occupied more than half the

²⁸²Vol. 88 (1988), p. 143.

²⁸³Vol. 93 (1993), p. 92.

²⁸⁴Vol. 99 (1999), p. 134.

volume! And while its articles reflected a range of perspectives, they aimed to inform public opinion rather than to sway it.

Already in 1980, the *Year Book*, reporting on the events of 1978, discerned “growing concern in Israel and within the American Jewish community that the special relationship between the United States and Israel was being eroded under the impact of new circumstances in the Middle East.” It described two camps—“Peace Now” and “Secure Peace”—that held opposite views concerning the policies of Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin, and it observed that criticism by American Jews of the Begin government had attracted substantial press attention.²⁸⁵ Two years later, George Gruen reported in the *Year Book* that “the American Jewish community found itself increasingly caught in a painful dilemma” concerning Israel. He himself bitterly criticized American policies, describing them as revealing both “a lack of consistency” and a failure to understand Arab motives.²⁸⁶ The disastrous 1982 war in Lebanon, to which the *Year Book* devoted three special articles in 1984, underscored the divisiveness surrounding Israel’s policies. Ralph Mandel opened the volume by describing Israel as “deeply divided” and a “land of extremes, where the middle ground was often inhospitable, when it was not totally inaccessible.” George Gruen showed that American Jews, too, were divided. He quoted one rabbi who declared that the invasion “threatens to tear us apart,” and devoted seven pages to documenting both the range of American Jewish responses to the war as well as press coverage of these internal communal divisions.²⁸⁷ The *Year Book* was also highly critical of media coverage of the war, describing some reporters as lacking “essential background information on the complicated situation” and quoting experts who found “distortions and biases,” especially in the nightly newscasts.²⁸⁸

Meanwhile, the *Year Book*’s own coverage of Israel was in the process of changing. In the early 1980s it referred to the lands Israel won in 1967 as “Judea and Samaria,” the traditional biblically rooted term for Jewish settlement preferred by Israel’s Likud government. By the late 1980s it spoke instead of “occupied territories” and “administered areas,” implying that Israel exercised only temporary oversight over these lands.²⁸⁹ It also began to display a great deal more sympathy for the Arabs living under Israeli administrative rule, criticizing the Israeli security forces for “stifling at birth any potential emergence of a local Palestinian leadership,” and attacking the government’s policies of deportation and ad-

²⁸⁵Vol. 80 (1980), pp. 87, 104–05.

²⁸⁶Vol. 82 (1982), pp. 119, 131.

²⁸⁷Vol. 84 (1984), pp. 3, 84–90.

²⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 79, 121.

²⁸⁹Compare vol. 83 (1983), p. 231, and vol. 88 (1988), pp. 364, 388.

ministrative detention.²⁹⁰ The Arab uprising known as the *Intifada* received extensive coverage in the *Year Book*, and, again, much of it was critical of Israeli policies. Ralph Mandel documented cases of military brutality against Arab civilians and disputed government claims that such abuses were “exceptional.” He described what he called a “chasm of mistrust, enmity and sheer hatred that was generated by IDF [Israel Defense Forces] activity in the territories,” and quoted sympathetically data critical of government actions provided by B’Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories.²⁹¹ By 1991 the *Year Book* was speaking openly of “American Jewish disenchantment with Israeli actions.”²⁹² Almost the same words—“the disenchantment of U.S. Jews with Israel”—were repeated seven years later, and the phenomenon was blamed both on “discomfort with the Israeli government’s hard-line approach to the peace process” and on proposed legislation that, if passed, would have rendered “Conservative, Reform or other non-Orthodox conversions performed in Israel or abroad invalid under Israeli civil law.”²⁹³

Even as the *Year Book* admitted these criticisms into its pages and gave voice to divisions concerning Israel’s policies among both Israeli and American Jews, it also devoted new attention to the cultural life of Israel, which it generally reviewed in upbeat terms, paralleling its positive view of American Jewish culture. “Israel, at the end of the 1980s, was a society with an impressive and dynamic cultural life,” the Yale-trained journalist Micha Z. Odenheimer reported in 1991. “In poetry and music, fiction, art and philosophy, Israel maintained a pace of creative achievement and intensity unmatched by many older, larger, and wealthier countries.” Two years later, the *Year Book* reported that the same “cultural foment [*sic*] and vitality . . . continued into the early 1990s,” and four years after that it found that “the peace process created a sense of hope and liberation that encouraged artistic expression.”²⁹⁴ While it did notice cultural cleavages surrounding both religious and ethnic issues, the *Year Book*’s coverage of culture, in Israeli life as in American Jewish life, emphasized the creative and the vibrant. Culture, the *Year Book* implied, carried with it an almost redemptive quality, articulating and sometimes bridging the sharp divisions in Jewish and Israeli life and pointing the way toward new solutions to problems that political and religious leaders found intractable.

²⁹⁰Vol. 89 (1989), p. 372.

²⁹¹Vol. 90 (1990), pp. 402, 405–06, 457.

²⁹²Vol. 91 (1991), p. 178.

²⁹³Vol. 98 (1998), pp. 443–44.

²⁹⁴Vol. 91 (1991), p. 424; Vol. 93 (1993), p. 403; Vol. 97 (1997), p. 497.

The double celebration in 1998 of the 100th anniversary of the Zionist movement and the 50th anniversary of the State of Israel permitted the *Year Book* to reexamine Zionism and Israel from a broader historical perspective. To mark these occasions, it commissioned four different special articles, as well as an eight-page photographic spread—an editorial first. But it stoutly resisted panegyrics. To the contrary, Professor Anita Shapira of Tel Aviv University, in an article that placed Zionism in the context of the “upheavals of the 20th century,” observed that “Zionism, like other ‘isms,’ is suffering the symptoms of aging. Its ideological fervor has been dampened; its recruiting abilities have declined considerably.” Journalist Yossi Klein Halevi, while noting Israel’s most significant contributions—“ingathering diasporas, psychologically healing the Jews, and re-empowering Judaism”—pointed to “unforeseen dilemmas” that threatened “to undermine those remarkable achievements.” Finally, Professor Arnold Eisen of Stanford, offering an American Jewish perspective on “Israel at 50,” spoke of a “combination of joy and apprehension, illumination and perplexity, transcendent faith and satisfaction in the everyday” that characterized his own feelings concerning this milestone. At “the heart of the American Jewish response to Israel,” he explained, was a “combination of relationship and distancing.”²⁹⁵ The *Year Book*, through the century, had captured and reflected all of these contradictory themes. As in so many other respects, so too in relation to Zionism and Israel, it mirrored, through the eyes of American Jews, the twists and turns of historical development.

The same was true, of course, for the *Year Book*’s coverage of Jewish life outside of Israel and the United States. As already noted, the Diaspora both shrank and consolidated in the postwar era. With the passage of half a century since the close of World War II, some 67.4 percent of Diaspora Jewry lived in the United States, according to Sergio DellaPergola’s figures in the *Year Book*, and 95 percent of Diaspora Jews lived in just 14 countries. Only 36 Diaspora countries boasted Jewish populations of 5,000 Jews or more. Most of the 200 or so countries of the world were completely barren of Jews or contained communities so small as to be unsustainable.²⁹⁶ Against this background, the *Year Book*’s coverage of Jewish life in “other countries” markedly contracted, largely due to the difficulty of finding capable and willing authors. Even significant Jewish communities, like Argentina, no longer received annual coverage, while Brazil, the eighth largest Jewish community in the Diaspora, and Belgium, the 14th largest, received no article-length coverage in the

²⁹⁵Vol. 98 (1998), pp. 24, 26, 48, 64.

²⁹⁶Vol. 99 (1999), p. 578.

1990s. The *Year Book* focused instead on those Diaspora countries that American Jews, and Americans generally, cared most about, English-speaking countries like Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and South Africa; and European countries like Germany, France, Italy, and the former Soviet Union. Meanwhile, occasional special articles filled in some of the gaps. In 1985, for example, the *Year Book* devoted its entire front section to Latin American Jewry, including a survey article by Judith Laikin Elkin and a demographic study by U.O. Schmelz and Sergio DellaPergola. In 1993 the front section was devoted to articles about Europe. Still, whole regions, including the Caribbean, North Africa, and Asia, received minimal *Year Book* attention in the final decade of the century. From the cloudy perspective of the American Jewish community, which the *Year Book*, in this case, did little to clarify, these dwindling Jewish communities had already ceased to exist.

The Year Book and the Jewish 20th Century

As the *Year Book* reached its centennial, coinciding with the start of a new century and a new Christian millennium, the American Jewish community stood at a crossroads in its history. Demographically, the community was stagnant. It had not grown appreciably since 1960, comprised a smaller percentage of America’s total population than it had in 1920, and seemed likely to witness an actual decline in numbers in the decades ahead. In 1998, for the first time, the *Year Book* reported that (based on 1996 data) Greater New York had fallen from the top spot on the list of “metropolitan areas with the largest Jewish populations.” Greater Tel Aviv had overtaken it.²⁹⁷ Furthermore, Israel seemed poised to overtake the United States as the largest Jewish community in the world; its Jewish population was just under one million less than that of the United States, and growing fast.

Meanwhile, the great issues of the 20th century, including immigration, Zionism, and the battle against anti-Semitism, no longer inspired and united American Jews as once they had. Nor was there any large community of suffering or persecuted Jews anywhere in the world calling upon the American Jewish community for assistance. As a result, Jack Wertheimer noted in the *Year Book*, Jewish organizational life in the United States had entered a “period of introspection and retrenchment.” With funds, energy and priorities being reallocated, he heard one message resounding unambiguously: “the future begins at home.”²⁹⁸

²⁹⁷Vol. 98 (1998), p. 511.

²⁹⁸Vol. 95 (1995), p. 3.

For a century, the *American Jewish Year Book* has been attentive to just such messages as it chronicled events and trends in American and world Jewish life. From its modest, imperfect beginnings, it helped to inform and educate American Jews as they assumed the burden of Jewish leadership, and annually it documented American Jewry's burgeoning and multifaceted role at home and abroad. Its listings, directories, population figures, quantitative studies, annual reviews, and special articles supplied the basic information that Jewish leaders required for their work, and helped to clarify the central issues affecting Jews everywhere.

Through the years, the *Year Book* summarized the leading events of Jewish life, striving for dispassion but often, as we have seen, displaying subtle biases and agendas perhaps more evident in retrospect than to contemporaries. At times, the *Year Book* also assumed a prophetic voice, forecasting events and trends with stunning accuracy. And occasionally, it even served as the community's censor, shaping and withholding information to support the community's "best interests" as it conceived them. Whatever its imperfections, though, the *Year Book* has consistently served as an invaluable guide to Jewish life, and especially American Jewish life, in the 20th century. Its wide-ranging coverage, its emphases, its reliability, and its dependable quality make the *Year Book* an unparalleled resource for those who seek to study the history of American Jewry and for those who seek to shape its future.