

# THE CULT OF SYNTHESIS IN AMERICAN JEWISH CULTURE

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The 1955 Hebrew School graduation, at the Hebrew Educational Alliance of West Colfax (Denver, Colorado), featured a cantata chronicling three hundred years of American Jewish history. Prepared by the congregation's American-born Orthodox rabbi, Manual Laderman, it coincided with the celebration of the American Jewish tercentenary. Its words conveyed a message that generations of American Jews – Orthodox, Conservative and Reform – took as their central article of faith:

We pass to them – to all our sons and daughters – a **Judaism** and an **Americanism** which reinforce each other. . .of all the avenues that lead toward a new and better time, none is so promising as the road we have travelled for the last three centuries – **the American Jewish road of Faith and Freedom.**<sup>1</sup>

This understanding of the American Jewish experience – the belief that Judaism and Americanism reinforce one another, the two traditions converging in a common path – encapsulates a central theme in American Jewish culture that may be termed “the cult of synthesis.” Dating back well over a century, it reflects an ongoing effort on the part of American Jews to interweave their “Judaism” with their “Americanism” in an attempt to fashion for themselves some unified “synthetic” whole. Anyone even remotely connected with American Jewish life is familiar with this theme, which has elsewhere been described as a central tenet of

American Jewish “civil religion.”<sup>2</sup> In what follows, I seek to outline the history and practice of this cult, showing the range of beliefs, tenets, myths, symbols, rituals, and forms that it embraced, and pointing toward its larger cultural significance.<sup>3</sup>

Two methodological observations must be made at the outset. First, the use of the term “cult” points to the interpretive framework of religious studies. Cult, in the sense in which it is used here, means “a collective veneration or worship... in which the collectivity is defined and united by its common devotional practice.”<sup>4</sup> The “cult of synthesis” may thus be compared to the American “cult of true womanhood,” or to German Jewry’s cult of *Bildung*.<sup>5</sup> None of these cults were the narrow preserve of one subgroup or partisan movement. Their importance, instead, lies in the fact that they represented broadly shared ideals, embraced even by those who disagreed about lesser matters.

Second, the “cult of synthesis,” while central to the belief system of American Jews, was by no means unique to them. Parallel phenomena may be found both among other American ethnic and religious groups, and among Jewish communities elsewhere in the diaspora (particularly Germany).<sup>6</sup> A full-scale comparison would be valuable but stands beyond the scope of this paper. Impressionistic evidence, however, suggests that the cult played a larger role in American Jewish culture than in any of these others. The reason may lie in the fact that for American Jews the cult of synthesis represented more than just a familiar exercise in group loyalty and patriotism. For some, at least, it also represented a bold attempt to redefine America itself.

Charles Liebman, in his discussion of the “major ideas, symbols, and institutions arousing the deepest loyalties and passions of American Jews,” summed up the values underlying the “cult of synthesis” in two crisp sentences:

There is nothing incompatible between being a good Jew and a good American, or between Jewish and American standards of behavior. In fact, for a Jew, the better an American one is, the better Jew one is.<sup>7</sup>

The roots of this idea are easily traced all the way back to the Puritans, who, for their own reasons and within a definite supersessionist framework, linked their experiences with those of the Israelites of old, and over time helped to define America in terms drawn from the Hebrew Bible. The compatibility that they found between themselves and the Jews (“*New England they are like the Jews/ as like as like can be*”<sup>8</sup>) was largely typological in nature with the Jews representing the past, and their conversion the promise of the future. Still the nexus between America and Jew had been established.<sup>9</sup>

American Jews began to draw on these themes for their own purposes in the nineteenth century. Mordecai Noah, the most important American Jewish leader of the first half of the nineteenth century, argued on several occasions, in speeches directed to Christians, that the American Indians were originally Jews — descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes. Quoting published research, he linked the Indians to numerous aspects of Jewish ritual and custom and adduced many purported similarities between Indian languages and Hebrew. The Jews, he concluded, were both “the first people in the old world”—the ancestors of Christianity—and the “rightful inheritors of the new.” This proved, to his mind,

both the veracity of scriptures and the special status accorded America in the heavenly schema.<sup>10</sup> Noah also linked the Puritans to the Jews. In a letter inviting Daniel Webster to a Jewish charity dinner, for example, he reminded the Massachusetts senator that “your Puritan ancestors lived, a hundred years ago, under the Mosaic laws and flourished under the same government to which David and Solomon added power, glory and splendor.”<sup>11</sup>

Taken together, and stripped of their many layers of hyperbolic excess, Noah’s writings provide early examples of the political use of synthesis both to legitimate Jews’ place in America and to demonstrate their patriotism and sense of belonging. Noah seized upon and Judaized America’s founding myths, placing “Jews” – the “Lost Ten Tribe Indians,” and the Hebraic Puritans – at their center. Later, Jews would also lay claim to Christopher Columbus, insisting that he too was a Jew.<sup>12</sup> Of all the many ethnic and religious groups that have demanded shares in America’s founding myths, Jews are apparently unique in attempting to insert themselves into so many. This bespeaks their eagerness for acceptance, to be sure, but also their deep-seated insecurity.

Protestant efforts during the nineteenth century to identify Americanism squarely with Christianity stoked this insecurity. “With varying degrees of articulation and in slightly varying details,” Robert Handy writes, “[ante-Bellum] Protestant leaders from many denominations operated on the assumption that American civilization would remain a Christian one, and that its Christian (which for them always meant Protestant) character would become even more pronounced.”<sup>13</sup> Even Governor James H. Hammond of South Carolina, no paragon

of Christian living, wrote to the Jewish community of his state in 1844 that he thought it “a settled matter” that he “lived in a Christian land.”<sup>14</sup> Prof. Bela Bates Edwards of Andover Theological Seminary (d. 1852) found similarly “convincing evidence to show that this real, though indirect, connection between the State and Christianity is every year acquiring additional strength.”<sup>15</sup> Efforts like Noah’s to connect Judaism and the state sought to deflect, counteract and even subvert these Christianizing tendencies. By offering Jews a measure of reassurance concerning their place and contribution to American life, they helped to neutralize the insecurity that proponents of a “Christian America” naturally engendered.

With the establishment, in 1892, of the American Jewish Historical Society the small-scale effort at counter-history that Noah championed blossomed into a full-scale sacred history of American Jewry.<sup>16</sup> From the start, the new society privileged the goal of synthesis above all others and promoted an alternative Judeocentric reading of American history as its prime object:

The object of this Society is to collect and publish material bearing upon the history of our country. It is known that Jews in Spain and Portugal participated in some degree in the voyages which led to the discovery of America, and that there were Jews from Holland, Great Britain, Jamaica, and other countries among the earliest settlers of several of the colonies. There were also a number of Jews in the Continental army, and other contributed liberally to defray the expenses of the Revolutionary war. Since the foundation of our government a number of Jews have held important public positions. The genealogy of these men and the record of their achievements

will, when gathered together, be of value and interest to the historian and perchance contribute materially to the history of our country.<sup>17</sup>

Oscar Straus, the American politician and Jewish communal leader who presided over the American Jewish Historical Society in its early years, embodied this ideal of synthesis. His first book, *The Origin of Republican Form of Government in the United States of America* (1885), credited the ancient Hebrews with the first achievement of “a government of the people, by the people and for the people,” and pointedly observed that this took place “1500 years and more before the Christian era”:

The children of Israel on the banks of the Jordan, who had just emerged from centuries of bondage, not only recognized the guiding principles of civil and religious liberty that “all men are created equal,” that God and the law are the only kings, but also established a free commonwealth, a pure democratic-republic under a written constitution.<sup>18</sup>

As AJHS president, he especially encouraged study of “the relation of the Jews with the discovery of this continent and their participation in the early settlement of the colonies.”<sup>19</sup> He hoped, he privately admitted, that evidence that Jews had actively participated in the discovery of America “would be an answer for all time to come to antisemitic tendencies in this country.”<sup>20</sup> If filiopietism and communal defense underlay much of what Straus and his colleagues produced, however, the history that resulted read like a sacred pageant. According to its ennobling script, Jews starred in all the central roles of American history: from the secret Jews in the Spanish Court who funded Christopher Columbus, through the

Jewish “pilgrim fathers” who fought for religious freedom in New Amsterdam, on to the patriotic heroes who contributed financially to the success of the American Revolution, and from there to the “loyal and faithful citizens” who while participating fully in America’s growth and development, “shared willingly in all the trials our country has passed through...until the present time.”<sup>21</sup> Each scene in this glorious pageant served the same central purposes. It offered an alternative “Jewish” reading of American history and strengthened the faithful in their belief that Americanism and Judaism walked happily hand-in-hand.<sup>22</sup>

The cult of synthesis was by no means confined to history. It actually permeated all of the major movements and ideologies of American Judaism. All shared the firm belief that Americanism and Judaism reinforced one another. As early as Thanksgiving of 1852, the Sephardic *hazan* of Mikveh Israel, Sabato Morais, preached that “with the spangled banner of liberty in one hand, and the law of Horeb in the other, we will continue faithful citizens of this glorious republic, and constant adorers of the living God.”<sup>23</sup> The noted Jewish educator, Henry Leipziger, speaking at New York’s [Reform] Temple Beth El on Thanksgiving, 1887, described the “Jewish form of government” as “republican,” and “free America” as the place where “the dreams of the prophets of old” were “to be realized.”<sup>24</sup> Cincinnati’s Rabbi David Philipson, in an 1891 address on “Judaism and the Republican Form of Government,” concluded that “Judaism is in perfect harmony with the law of the land; the two agree perfectly because they can never come into conflict.”<sup>25</sup> His nemesis, Chicago’s Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, speaking on the same

subject (“The Concordance of Judaism and Americanism”) at the 1905 celebration of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the settlement of the Jews in the United States, reached a similar conclusion: Jewish views “of liberty and law, of man’s inalienable rights and duties hallowed by the sublimities of his religion are in creative concordance with the distinctive principles pillaring American civilization.” The Traditionalist lay leader Solomon Solis Cohen of Philadelphia, who rarely agreed with Reform rabbis about anything, did so on this occasion. American Jews, he declared, “have striven... to preserve for future generations the Hebraic, the American ideals of freedom, justice, and equality. . .”<sup>26</sup>

Later twentieth century American Jewish thinkers scarcely deviated from these ideas. Arnold Eisen shows that such diverse American Jewish religious leaders as Leo Jung, Samuel Belkin, Abba Hillel Silver, Jacob Rader Marcus, Nelson Glueck, Louis Finkelstein, Simon Greenberg and Robert Gordis all argued in various ways for the compatibility of Judaism and American democracy.<sup>27</sup> Judah Pilch similarly extolled the secular Jewish thinker, Horace Kallen, for finding in both Americanism and Hebraism “a singleness of purpose.” “His Jewishness,” he argued, paraphrasing Louis Brandeis, made Kallen “a more enlightened American and a more conscientious citizen of the world,” and his “Americanism,” made him “a nobler Jew.”<sup>28</sup> Mordecai Kaplan’s phrasing, if more tentative, echoed the same familiar idea: “The American religion of democracy has room for Judaism, and Jewish religion has room for American democracy.”<sup>29</sup> Such quotations, a staple of American Jewish oratory for over a century, may well have been impelled, as Eisen argues, by “anti-Semitism and resultant Jewish insecurity,” as well as by the reality



that Jews felt “at home in a gentile nation to a degree unknown to most of their [European] parents.” It may also be, as he theorizes, that “the identification of Judaism with America rendered the abandonment of Judaism... unnecessary” since “by being a better Jew, one became a better American as well, and to be a better American was what the children of the immigrants most wanted.”<sup>30</sup> As the examples of Kallen and Kaplan demonstrate, however, the cult of synthesis was not just whipped up for internal consumption. Jews also looked outward and attempted to transform America’s vision of itself. By undercutting the claims of “Christian America” and promoting pluralism as a national ideal, they attempted to forge a new America – one where they might finally be accepted as insiders.<sup>31</sup>

Heroes of American Jewish history—those, so to speak, who became canonized into American Jewish sainthood—reflected precisely this ideal. Reading their biographies, autobiographies and obituaries one encounters, over and over, references to their pronounced success at integrating their Judaism with their Americanism and at achieving insider status—as if this were the supreme cultural achievement that any American Jew could attain. For instance, James Waterman Wise’s *Jews Are Like That*, published under a pseudonym in 1928, sketches the lives of nine prominent American Jews: Louis Brandeis, Henry Morgenthau, Louis Lipsky, Stephen Wise, Ludwig Lewisohn, Felix Adler, Aaron Sapiro, Louis Marshall, and Nathan Straus. “The men who are the subjects of these studies... are significant American figures,” the preface proudly proclaims. It then proceeds to show that “it is the Jew in each of them that conditions, that completes the American.” In the case of the Constitutional lawyer and Jewish communal leader

Louis Marshall this was relatively easy to demonstrate: even Wise, who did not like him, understood that he was “one of America’s leading constitutional lawyers” and at the same time “the defender of his people against wrongs and oppression.” The philosopher Felix Adler, who abandoned Judaism to found the Ethical Culture movement, comes as more of a surprise. Yet Wise, who knew him personally, characterized him in the book as “a Jew . . . in name, in background, in tradition . . . a Jew in himself,” and even “more than a Jew. . . Basically, he is the ancient Hebrew prophet.” Quoting Waldo Frank, he implied that Ethical Culture was itself a manifestation of the search for synthesis, appealing to “the prosperous Jews who had shown themselves most apt to run the American race.”<sup>32</sup>

Rabbi David Philipson’s aptly-titled autobiography, *My Life As An American Jew*, shows how leading American Jews came to internalize the “cult of synthesis.” The prominent Cincinnati Reform rabbi was a great apostle of the idea that “the future of Judaism lies in America” and he described the United States as the “second promised land” for the Jewish people.” Summing up his long life in his autobiography, he explains that “to me my Judaism and my American citizenship were but as the obverse and reverse of the shield of what I have loved to call American Judaism, under whose banner I have toiled and thought through all the years.”<sup>33</sup> His bookplate, “conceived late in life and executed by the San Francisco artist, Max Pollak,” graphically symbolized this idea [see figure 1]. It portrays Moses sitting on the left, Washington on the right, and beneath them two flags crossing: one containing the Ten Commandments, the other the Stars and Stripes. Revealingly, in terms of Philipson’s own priorities, Moses in the bookplate gazes

toward Washington, who faces forward, while the Stars and Stripes foreground and partially obscure the Ten Commandments numbered, in English fashion, from left to right.<sup>34</sup>

The pre-eminent twentieth-century exemplar of American Jewish synthesis was the U.S. Supreme Court Justice and Zionist leader Louis Brandeis. In the American Jewish imagination he came to embody the pinnacle of the synthesis ideal. At the justice's funeral, Felix Frankfurter spoke of how Brandeis "happily fused" within himself the dominant sources of western culture, Hebraism and Hellenism, and as if to prove the point he quoted passages applicable to Brandeis's life from the Greek historian Thucydides, the Hebrew prophets Malachi and Isaiah, and the English Baptist John Bunyan, author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.<sup>35</sup> Memorializing Brandeis in the *American Jewish Year Book*, the Zionist leader and jurist Louis E. Levinthal referred to synthesis over and over: "It was in his very being that these two—Americanism and Jewishness—were synthesized. . . ." he exulted. "He was a synthesis of two worlds."<sup>36</sup> Brandeis became, for many, the apotheosis of synthesis—much as Moses Mendelssohn embodied the ideal of *bildung* for German Jews.<sup>37</sup> This veneration of the justice's memory reflected, to a considerable degree, the cult of synthesis personified. He became a model for the ages, proof that a great American did not have to be Christian.

While Brandeis and other elite figures achieved a level of sainthood in the cult of synthesis, parallel efforts to merge Jewish and American identities proceeded at the popular and folk levels. To take one obvious example, Jewish

naming patterns reflected this hope, merging as they did American forenames with Jewish surnames; for example, George Cohen, Edward Levy, and Roger Straus. In a few memorable cases, patriotic forenames actually resounded with this hope: George Washington Cohen, Jefferson Monroe Levy, Roger Williams Straus, Benjamin Franklin Peixotto, even Rutherford B Hayes Joel. One mid-nineteenth-century American Jewish family, the Pereles', named their three boys Franklin, Madison and Jefferson. Another, blessed with triplets, named them not just Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but Abraham Lincoln Danziger, Isaac Andrew Jackson Danziger, and Jacob John Conness Danziger, the latter named for California's senator.<sup>38</sup> Such naming patterns were by no means unique to Jews, but the juxtaposition of the American forename and the Jewish surname certainly symbolized the goal that Jewish parents were attempting to effect – if not on their own than through their offspring. They also hinted, however obliquely, that in America even a Jew could be a president and a senator.<sup>39</sup>

This same compound form—American on the front end, Jewish on the back end—came to characterize American Jewish education. By 1870, most American Jews received their general education in the public schools and their religious education thereafter in Sabbath, Sunday or supplementary schools. This was the “settled opinion” of American Jews, according to the Cincinnati Reform Jewish leader Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise. Even the Orthodox immigrant, Judah David Eisenstein, wrote to his grandfather back in Lithuania in 1881, that he would send his 5 ½ year old son, Isaac “to a public school to learn the language of the land” and “also engage a private teacher for him, to spend a few hours daily in Hebrew

studies.”<sup>40</sup> The great American Jewish educational reformer Samson Benderly became the leading proponent of this compound system. Opposing the kind of all-Jewish schools, that some Jewish leaders, familiar with Catholic parochial schools, had called for, Benderly insisted that “the only hope for Jewish Education in this country lies in schools supplementary to the Public School.” Only these, he believed, promoted a Jewish education that was “in harmonious correspondence with American life.”<sup>41</sup> By so stressing the synthesis ideal, Jewish education both mirrored and reinforced the cultural assumptions of American Jews. When modern Jewish day schools did finally emerge, in the 1930s, the ideal of synthesis – as expounded by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik in Boston and Rabbi Joseph Lookstein in New York – helped pave the way for their acceptance.<sup>42</sup>

Holiday celebrations (what religionists call “sacred time”) helped to reinforce the importance of synthesis as a Jewish communal value. Periodic national commemorations such as the Centennial Celebration of George Washington’s Inauguration in 1889, the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christopher Columbus’ voyage in 1892, the 250 anniversary of Jewish settlement in America celebrated in 1905, and the tercentenary of Jewish settlement in America in 1954, served as central occasions for trumpeting what one 1889 newspaper described as the way the “Jew was completely merged in the American.”<sup>43</sup> During the Washington centennial, New York’s chief rabbi, Jacob Joseph, published a Hebrew proclamation and prayer in the *New York Herald* in which he noted Washington’s respect for “our holy Torah,” and depicted Jews as eager “to become like other citizens of the country...and also to walk in the ways of Your holy Torah, without

being ashamed of anything.” Isaac Mayer Wise, who participated in the commemoration ceremony at Mount Vernon, declared that Washington “fulfilled... that which Moses has written.” “Moses, the son of Amram and George Washington,” he concluded “are the two poles of the axis about which the history of mankind revolves.” It was left to New York’s *Jewish Messenger* to summarize the central message of the day: “a good faithful Jew, a Jew true to the spirit of Judaism, could not be otherwise than a patriotic American.”<sup>44</sup>

The 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus’s voyage echoed these same themes. The celebration coincided with Hoshanah Rabba, the last day of the Jewish festival of Sukkot, and Jewish leaders made the most of the correspondence. “The day on which the Jews... in every part of the world were singing their hosannas,” one speaker pointed out, the cry “*Tierra, Tierra*” (“Land, Land”) arose from the *Pinta*. Chief Rabbi Jacob Joseph published yet another special prayer (this one written by his assistant Julius Buchhalter) and its flowery Hebrew text expressed gratitude not only for Columbus, “the first man in the New World,” but also for the two Jews who, according to the prayer, accompanied him on his voyage. The prayer also pledged proud allegiance to the values that America stood for and invoked God’s blessing upon the President and his administration. Rabbinic sermons made the same points. One was entitled “The importance of Columbus’s Discovery for the Jews.” Another considered “The Achievements of Columbus for the Benefit of Mankind and the Jews in Particular.” A third expressed gratitude to God for Columbus, since he had “founded a haven of repose for our noble race... he discovered a country for wandering Israel as well as for others.” Rabbi Isaac Mayer

Wise, in a retrospective on the day, took note of the rhetorical excesses that his rabbinical colleagues fell prey to. "Columbus Day," he observed, "was celebrated in most all temples and synagogues in the land with special eclat; the structures were decorated with national flags[;] choirs and congregations sang the national songs, preachers delivered eloquent orations. A vast amount of patriotism was elaborated and consummated." While admitting that the "outbursts of patriotism" were "extremely edifying to loyal citizens," Wise condemned the "Columbus culte [sic]" as "less legitimate in the estimation of strict monotheists." Legitimacy, however, was precisely what Jews of that time actually sought to gain. In the American mind, the Great Mariner had evolved into the embodiment of the national ideal, a symbol of American achievement, progress and goodness. By associating themselves with him, Jews sought symbolically to take upon themselves these same virtues, yoking together their Americanism and their Judaism, and demonstrating -- subversively, given standard narratives -- the historical indispensability of Jews to the whole American enterprise.<sup>45</sup>

The commemorations of both the 250<sup>th</sup> and the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Jewish settlement in North America, analyzed elsewhere by Arthur Aryeh Goren, carried similar aims. The former, Goren writes, "offered a superb opportunity to... prove the venerable lineage of America's Jews; reiterate once more the presumed affinity of Americanism and Judaism; and have others -- mainly non-Jewish notables and newspaper editorialists -- praise the rectitude and civic virtues of the Jews and their material and cultural contributions to the nation."<sup>46</sup> As for the latter, he reports that "the tercentenary committee defined the principal goal of the Jewish

observance as a celebration of America's democratic ideals. Thus the American Jewish experience was significant in that it bore witness to the success of this free society. No less important was the emphasis placed on the congruence between Judaism and American democratic ideals."<sup>47</sup> Both occasions, in short, celebrated the cult of synthesis in all its glory. They provided American Jews with bounteous opportunities to demonstrate both to themselves and to others how much Judaism and Americanism reinforced one another.

Beyond these stirring occasional pageants, four annual holidays promoted the central ideas of the cult of synthesis, ensuring that they would be recalled at least once each season, particularly on Passover (Spring) and Thanksgiving Day (Fall), and secondarily on Independence Day (Summer) and Chanukah (Winter). Sermons and liturgies for each of these holidays reinforced the message that Judaism and Americanism drew upon common roots. The Reform Passover Haggadah issued in multiple editions by Rabbi J. Leonard Levy of Pittsburgh, for example, called for the placement of an American flag as one of the symbols on the Passover seder table and included the following remarkable dialogue between "child" and "reader:

**Child.** Where do we find civil, political and religious liberty united today?

**Reader.** Here in America. The fathers of this country fought against oppression that here all men should be free and equal before the law; free to worship God as their conscience dictated. To us the United States of America stands as the foremost among nations granting the greatest liberty to all who dwell here. Therefore we grace our table with the National flag...



America is the child of the Old Testament. It is the “Moses and Prophets” of modern times. . . .

The Pilgrim Fathers landed here inspired by Israel’s wandering to go out even to the wilderness and worship God. The immortal Declaration of Independence is the Great Charter announced before Pharaoh by Moses. The Abolitionists are the product of the Bible, and the love of civil liberty that moved Channing and Parker, Whittier and Lloyd Garrison was nourished by it. The Old Testament first taught men that Government must be a government by law equally applicable to all and this is the controlling idea of Mosaic and American legislation. The Fourth of July is the American Passover. Thanksgiving is the American Feast of Tabernacles.

It is therefore quite in keeping with the service this evening to pledge our country. In raising this third glass of wine to our lips let us pray that God will ever protect our land, that here liberty may forever dwell, that peace may abide within her borders and prosperity within her homes.<sup>48</sup>

While Levy’s devotion is somewhat extreme, David Geffen’s recent *American Heritage Haggadah* demonstrates that there is a long tradition of weaving American themes into the Passover tapestry. Indeed, both the Reform *Union Haggadah* and the Reconstructionist *New Haggadah* conclude the Passover seder with the singing of the hymn, “America.”<sup>49</sup>

An equally long tradition links the American holiday of Thanksgiving with Jewish themes. As early as Thanksgiving Day of 1844, Isaac Leeser, then serving as *hazan* at Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia, reminded his congregants that “as

Israelites we have an additional cause of thanksgiving,” and discussed America’s special meaning for the Jew. Some two dozen additional Jewish Thanksgiving Day sermons were published in America to 1900, many of which (like the sermons of Sabato Morais and Henry Leipziger quoted earlier) included standard cult of synthesis themes.<sup>50</sup> “America and the Jew: A Pageant for Thanksgiving Day,” first performed by Sunday School children in Temple Israel of Boston in 1922, went further. The play first recounted the story of Ancient Israel’s “joyful harvest,” based in part on the Book of Ruth. Then the narrator, “Spirit of Israel,” abruptly shifted focus to the New World:

But not alone in days of old did Israel thus bestow,

Nor yet to distant lands to see her labors must we go.

There is a land – bright, blessed land – the Promised Land, in truth,

Where Freedom, Plenty, Wisdom, Love – all beckon to our youth.

O Spirit of America, I bid you speak and tell

Of all the wondrous miracles thou hast performed so well.

“America” proudly recounted its story “of Liberty – of Harvest – and the Jew,” emphasizing the nation’s “beauties” and “full abundance.” The final “Tableau” – a remarkable paean to synthesis – concluded the performance:

*Children carrying fruit and flowers, grouped as convenient. In center, Israel raises aloft a Scroll of the Law. America, center back, poses with large flag. Autumn, at left, holding garland of leaves. Ruth and Naomi, right,*

*embracing. Two large American flags slowly unfurled from left and right balconies, if possible.*

Song – Ensemble,

“America the Beautiful.”

According to Temple Israel’s Rabbi Harry Levi, more than twelve hundred people witnessed “America and the Jew” in Boston, making its “emotional appeal and religious effectiveness” beyond compare. Promptly published by the educational arm of the Reform movement’s Union of American Hebrew Congregation, the pageant also played in other cities, spreading its patriotic message of cultural synthesis far and wide.<sup>51</sup> Those who witnessed the pageant understood that Thanksgiving was not only for the Children of the Mayflower. The “Spirit of Israel” extended its welcome to “America” as well – and then happily united with it.

The Fourth of July echoed the themes of Thanksgiving, but more distantly. Summer vacations muted rabbinical rhetoric and reduced educational programming. Still synthesis themes prevailed. The *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book* published by the Conservative movement, for example, included two revealing readings for the anniversary of American independence: one entitled “The Heritage of America,” and the other “America—Founded on Biblical Precepts.”<sup>52</sup> Chanukah likewise reinforced the message, though primarily by analogy. In J. Leonard Levy’s *Home Service for Hanukkah*, for instance, children pledged to remember the Maccabees’ example, and “like them, to be true to God, to our religion and to our country.” Louis Witt’s *Pictures Out of the Past: A Hanukkah Play* had one

character compare Judah Maccabee to George Washington (“he saved his country too!”), while another gave thanks “that we are living in this great land of peace and liberty.”<sup>53</sup> No matter what the season, then, American Jews reflexively mingled the Jewish and American components of their identity. Americanizing Jewish sacred days, and Judaizing American ones, they believed – deeply – that they could adapt to live in two worlds at once.

American Jewish folk art conveyed this same message. Indeed, iconography demonstrates even more persuasively than written texts just how much the cult of synthesis suffused the folk religion of American Jews; by no means was it confined to the elite. Hundreds of examples of decorative pieces that combine Jewish and American symbols survive.<sup>54</sup> Closely read, they point to different models of synthesis – different emphases and ideals – that mirror communal disputes concerning how Judaism and Americanism ought best fit together.

The earliest examples of synthesis art involve major Jewish symbols—for example, a *mizrah* (1850), a *shiviti* (1861), and a Torah binder (1869) -- that have been embellished with American motifs.<sup>55</sup> The *mizrah*, by Moses H. Henry, the son of a rabbi, has an American eagle and flag in the top central position surrounded by Jewish and selected Masonic symbols (fig. 2). This is an American patriotic variant of the traditional *mizrah*; a kind of “*Minhag Amerika*” where the basic form is determined by Jewish tradition and the detail is shaped by local custom. Alice Greenwald locates a deeper message in the Masonic imagery. According to her analysis, “the American Jew, who found in Masonry both a means for social

integration and an ideological system sympathetic to and derived from Jewish tradition,” likely saw “himself, his people and his traditional values as the cornerstone of that society.” If this is correct, then the *mizrah*, like so many other sources of synthesis we have seen, concealed a veiled subversive message: where most Americans saw Christianity as the basis for civil society, the *mizrah* insisted that its real foundation lay in Judaism.<sup>56</sup>

The same pattern of Jewish basic forms detailed with American motifs recurs in a Civil War-era paper-cut *Shiviti*, by Phillip Cohen (fig. 3). Here a small American flag flies atop each of two celestial columns in an otherwise traditional Jewish setting. Since these columns house the keys to the heavenly gate at the top center, the flags appear to be more than just an adornment. They imply that America plays a special role in Jewish life, affecting not just the world below, but, even more significantly, the passage to the world above.

Another American flag, flying from the “*lamed*” of *yegadlo* (“will raise him up”), distinguishes the Torah binder/wimpel made in New York in 1869 (fig. 4). Its date, the 26th of Tammuz, translates to Monday July 5 1869, and one presumes that the celebration of American Independence Day influenced the artist. Revealingly, the position of the flag over the word *yegadlo* seems to define *how* the boy will be raised up – in a staunchly American fashion. The Stars and Stripes precede the Tree of Knowledge that adorns the next word, *le-Torah* (“to Torah), implying -- as we know that Jewish education at the time also did -- that America comes first.

Perhaps the clearest symbol of this type of synthesis -- Jewish forms modified by American details – may be seen in the undated early twentieth-century

bookplate of Peter Wiernik, the Orthodox editor-in-chief of the well-known New York Yiddish daily, the *Jewish Morning Journal* (fig. 5). Designed by Joseph B. Abrahams, longtime secretary of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the bookplate depicts an open Torah ark with an American flag serving as the traditional curtain. A star of David and a Hebrew inscription reading “books of Peter Wiernik” adorn the top of the ark. A panel on the bottom, meanwhile, provides the owner’s English name (in larger type than in the Hebrew), as well as his signature mailbox (“Wiernik was known as *Der Brief-Kasten*, the letter box, since he conducted a question and answer column under that title.”) Here even more clearly than in the other examples, we see the juxtaposition of form and periphery. Synthesis for Wiernik meant that the core, symbolized by the Torah, was determined by Judaism. America’s influence, prominent as it was both in his life and in his bookplate, remained confined to external and surrounding details.<sup>57</sup>

A quite different model, emerging somewhat later than the first, pointedly counterpoised Jewish and American symbols, placing them, as it were, in separate spheres of influence. Instead of merging Jewish and American symbols, these designs compartmentalized them, maintaining each one within its own domain. The frontispiece of the published volume commemorating 250 years of Jewish settlement in the United States (fig. 6), for example, depicts Jewish symbols, the six pointed star and the menorah, at the bottom and American ones, the eagle and the stars and stripes on top, separated by a horizontal black-on-white bar. Judaism forms the base of American Jewish life, this design suggests, while America stands aloft, wings outstretched. The two balance but never touch.

More typically, artists created vertical barriers between the two realms, placing Jewish symbols, like the blue and white “Jewish” flag, and sometimes Hebrew writing on the right side (recalling the fact that Hebrew reads from right to left), and equivalent American symbols opposite them on the left. Many a decorated marriage certificate followed this pattern (fig. 7), perhaps recalling the fact that a Jewish marriage in America had to conform to two sets of laws: state law (for a marriage license) and Jewish law (for a *ketubah*). The arrangement of flags in synagogue sanctuaries made this same point, emphasizing the dual character of Jewish identity by flying the Stars and Stripes, according to protocol, on the left (viewed faced on), and the blue and white “Jewish” flag slightly lower on the right. The message conveyed in each of these cases was unmistakable: Jews should compartmentalize the “American” and the “Jewish” elements of their being, maintaining each within its own sphere without either impinging on the other.

Other modes of synthesis also found their way into folk art. In some cases, profoundly American symbols such as the flag were embellished with Jewish motifs, like the Star of David. Here, in contrast to the earlier model, America provided the form and Judaism the detail; prior emphases (and the hierarchy they reflected) were effectively reversed. In other cases, full-scale syncretism took place through a merger of Jewish and American symbols – a melting pot image. Mae Shafter Rockland’s 1974 Hanukkah Lamp composed of eight miniature Statues of Liberty candleholders on a Stars and Stripes base carrying the words of Emma Lazarus’ “New Colossus” exemplified this mode of synthesis. (fig. 8). In a different way, so did the eye-catching Los Angeles sign that read “Home of the KOSHER STYLE

BURRITO," immortalized by photographer Bill Aron.<sup>58</sup> Finally, in a category all its own, one finds numerous historical images of "Zion-in-America," -- that is, Holy Land motifs applied to the United States. While bespeaking the sense that America is something of a "promised land" for Jews, this genre is by no means confined to Jews. It demands separate treatment.<sup>59</sup>

All of these iconographic images have their analogues in contentious elite debates over Americanization, assimilation, the melting pot and pluralism. They illustrate different models of reconciling "America" and "Jew," different theories of Americanization, and different visions of American Jewry's future. For all of their differences, however, they also share a common core assumption. They take it as an article of faith that "America" and "Jew" *can* be reconciled. What they debate is *how* the grand synthesis may best be accomplished, not whether it is achievable in the first place.

Over the course of American Jewish history, the cult of synthesis has thus provided American Jews with the optimistic hope that, in America, they could accomplish what Jews had not successfully achieved elsewhere in the diaspora. Instead of having to choose between competing allegiances —the great enlightenment dilemma -- here they could be both American and Jewish. Their dual identities, they ardently believed, were complementary and mutually enhancing. This served both an apologetic and a subversive purpose: it provided a powerful response to Christian triumphalists and conversionists, who looked upon Jews as second class citizens, and it tacitly functioned to de-Christianize America's cultural boundaries so as to render Jews more welcome. In short, the cult served as the



medium through which Jews defined both for themselves and for others “the promise of American life” – a projection of the world as they wished it to be.

Underlying the cult, was the fact that America, more than any other major diaspora center where Jews have lived in recent times, was a nation in process, engaged in defining what being an American actually meant. Jews played a disproportionately important role in this process, and unsurprisingly they propounded a definition of America that warmly embraced them as insiders. This was the supreme achievement of people like Louis Brandeis, Horace Kallen, and Will Herberg; Mordecai Kaplan, at one point, explicitly sought to redefine America from a Jewish perspective.<sup>60</sup> The cult of synthesis provided the underpinnings for this effort. It offered a cultural justification for the insider status that Jews were simultaneously claiming as part of their reinterpretation of American identity as a whole. This also helps to explain why the cult won so much stronger a following in America than in other major diaspora lands. Here, Jews could help to shape a pluralistic national identity that won them insider status; almost everywhere else that seemed patently impossible.

There is, however, a significant coda to this analysis. During the turmoil of the 1960s and 70s, the cult of synthesis lost much of its following, falling victim to the divisive national debate over the Vietnam War. As American symbols like the flag became controversial, Jewish expressions of patriotism markedly declined. Revealingly, the revised Reform Jewish liturgy, *Gates of Prayer* (1975), conceived during this era, abandoned a fixed eighty-year-old patriotic prayer that “fervently”

invoked God's "benediction for this our country and our nation," replacing it with an anemic occasional prayer, divorced from the regular liturgy, that covered the nation, its inhabitants and its leaders in four short lines. A popular new Orthodox liturgy known as the *Artscroll Siddur* (1984) included no prayer for the government whatsoever.<sup>61</sup>

Everywhere, the rhetoric of synthesis gave way in these years to the rhetoric of tension: "the tension between assimilation and identity," "the tension between being an American and being a Jew," the tension (for Sandy Koufax) between pitching the World Series and observing Yom Kippur. At the same time, hopes for national unity gave way to expectations of [multi-]cultural diversity, while the core that once stood for America disintegrated and splintered. The cult of synthesis, as a result, seemed neither necessary nor desirable. Its attendant myths, rituals and symbols faded to a shadow of what they had been before.

Yet they did not disappear completely. Instead, as Sylvia Barack Fishman has shown in an important recent paper, the cult of synthesis was transformed and internalized.<sup>62</sup> Even as outwardly American Jews paid it less and less homage, inwardly it became one of their most pronounced cultural characteristics. "Conscious synthesis," she shows, was "replaced in large part by unconscious coalescence." By coalescence, Fishman means "the merging of American and Jewish attitudes and actions and the incorporation of American liberal values... into the perceived boundaries of Jewish meaning and identity." One example, among many in her study, is a precious quote from a Jewish woman whom she interviewed as part of a focus group in Atlanta:

The best part about being a Reform Jew is that it stresses the most important part of Judaism. It stresses free choice. Free choice is the basis of Judaism. Who Maimonides was or what little rituals people choose to perform—these are just small details. You can always pick those up later.

Here we see the working out in life of what we earlier saw in folk art: the grafting of an American value (“free choice”) onto the body of Judaism itself. What in art might have been represented by an eagle or an American flag is represented here by “free choice.” Through the alchemy of coalescence, sacred American values have been “reinterpreted by American Jews as authentic Jewishness.”

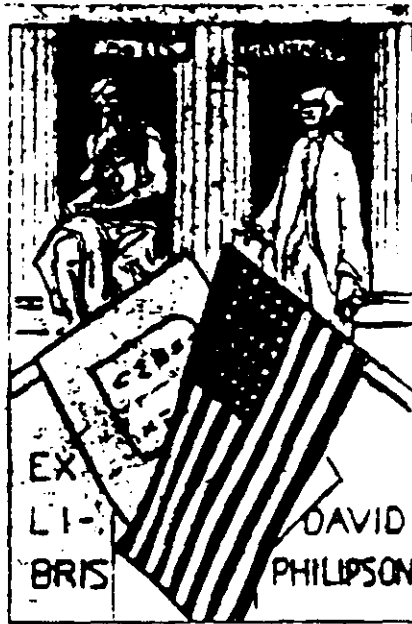
Fishman’s findings uncover a new phase in the history of the cult of synthesis. As Jews have become cultural insiders, gaudy public displays of religious patriotism, like the cantata for schoolchildren composed by Denver’s Rabbi Laderman, now seem dated, even a bit embarrassing. Unconsciously, though, many still crave what Laderman so enthusiastically promised: “a Judaism and an Americanism which reinforce each other . . . the American Jewish road of Faith and Freedom.”

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> As quoted in Roberta K. Waldbaum, "One Nation, Under God," *Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Notes* 11:3-4 (1991-92), 6; on Laderman, see Ida L. Uchill, *Pioneers, Peddlers, and Tsadikim: The Story of the Jews in Colorado* (Boulder, CO, Quality Line Printing Co., 1979 [1957]), 237-38. The ideology of the tercentenary is conveyed in Arthur A. Goren, "A 'Golden Decade' for American Jews: 1945-1955," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 8 (1992), 10-17.
- <sup>2</sup> Jonathan S. Woocher, *Sacred Survival: The Civil Religion of American Jews* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 87-89.
- <sup>3</sup> For related analyses, see Eli Lederhendler, "America: A Vision in a Jewish Mirror," in Lederhendler, *Jewish Responses to Modernity: New Voices in America and Eastern Europe* (New York: New York University Press, 1974), 104-139, and Jerold S. Auerbach, *Rabbis and Lawyers: The Journey from Torah to Constitution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 3-25.
- <sup>4</sup> "Cult," *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995), 297.
- <sup>5</sup> Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (1966), 151-174; David Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry 1780-1840* (New York: Oxford, 1987).
- <sup>6</sup> See, for example, John J. Appel, *Immigrant Historical Societies in the United States, 1880-1950* (Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania, 1960); W. Gunther Plaut, "German and Jews—The Symbiosis That Failed," *Judaism* 40 (Fall 1991), 531-42; Jurgen Matthaus, "Deutschtum and Judentum under Fire," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 33 (1988), 129-147.
- <sup>7</sup> Charles Liebman, "Reconstructionism in American Jewish Life," *American Jewish Year Book* 71 (1970), 68.
- <sup>8</sup> Peter Folger, *A Looking Glass for the Times* (1676) as quoted in Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 77.
- <sup>9</sup> Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, 72-80; cf. Eugene R. Fingerhut, "Were the Massachusetts Puritans Hebraic?," *New England Quarterly* 40 (December 1967), 521-531.
- <sup>10</sup> Mordecai M. Noah, *Discourse on the Evidences of the American Indians Being the Descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel* (New York, 1837); Jonathan D. Sarna, *Jacksonian Jew: The Two Worlds of Mordecai Noah* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981), 135-137.
- <sup>11</sup> *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* [=PAJHS] 11 (1903), 186-187.
- <sup>12</sup> Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Mythical Jewish Columbus and the History of America's Jews," in *Religion in the Age of Exploration: The Case of Spain and New Spain*, ed. Bryan F. Le Beau and Menachem Mor (Omaha, NE: Creighton University Press, 1996), 81-95.
- <sup>13</sup> Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 30.
- <sup>14</sup> Hammond's exchange with the Jewish community is reprinted in Jonathan D. Sarna and David Dalin, *Religion and State in the American Jewish Experience* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 116.
- <sup>15</sup> Handy, *Christian America*, 56.
- <sup>16</sup> Jeffrey S. Gurock, "From Publications to American Jewish History: The Journal of the American Jewish Historical Society and the Writing of American Jewish History," *AJH* 81 (Winter 1993-94), 165-172; Ira Robinson, "The Invention of American Jewish History," *AJH* 81 (Spring-Summer 1994), 309-320.
- <sup>17</sup> *PAJHS* 1 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1905 [1892]), iii.
- <sup>18</sup> Oscar S. Straus, *The Origin of Republican Form of Government in the United States of America* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1901), 117; see Naomi W. Cohen, *A Dual Heritage: The Public Career of Oscar S. Straus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1969), 14-17, 70-73.
- <sup>19</sup> *PAJHS* 1 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1905 [1892]), 3.
- <sup>20</sup> Cohen, *A Dual Heritage*, 71.
- <sup>21</sup> *PAJHS* 14 (1906), 74-75.
- <sup>22</sup> Louis Brandeis extended this ideology to embrace Zionism as well, even appropriating the term "Jewish pilgrim fathers" for Zionist ends. See Jonathan D. Sarna, "'The Greatest Jew In the World Since Jesus Christ': The Jewish Legacy of Louis D. Brandeis," *AJH* 81 (Spring Summer 1984), 358.

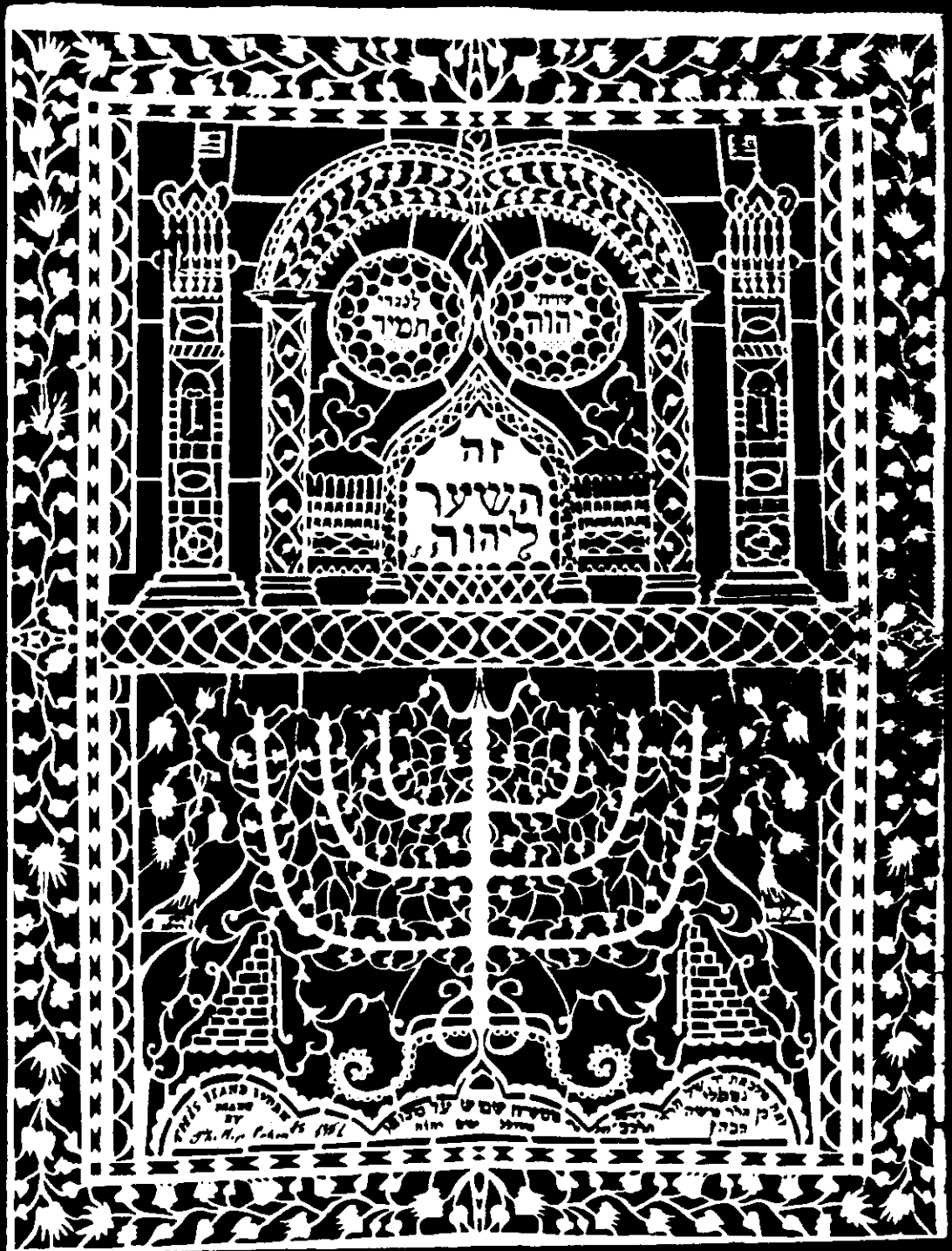
- <sup>23</sup> Sabato Morais, sermon delivered at Mikveh Israel, November 25, 1852, as quoted in Ruth Alpers, "Traditionalism, Americanization, and Assimilation: The Struggles of Sabato Morais, 1851-1897," (Ordination thesis, HUC-JIR, 1994), 30.
- <sup>24</sup> Henry Leipziger, *Why We Should Be Thankful: Address... Delivered in Temple Beth-El, Thanksgiving Day, November 24, 1887* (New York: Temple Beth-El, 1887).
- <sup>25</sup> *Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbi* 2 (1892), 53.
- <sup>26</sup> *PAJHS* 14 (1906), 115-16, 160.
- <sup>27</sup> Arnold M. Eisen, *The Chosen People in America: A Study in Jewish Religious Ideology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 36-40.
- <sup>28</sup> Judah Pilch, "Introduction," in Horace Kallen, *Of Them Which Say*, p.xi.
- <sup>29</sup> Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Future of the American Jew* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 522.
- <sup>30</sup> Eisen, *Chosen People in America*, 40-41.
- <sup>31</sup> Moses Rischin, "The Jews and Pluralism: Toward an American Freedom Symphony," in *Jewish Life in America: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Gladys Rosen (New York: Ktav, 1978), 61-91; Mordecai Kaplan, J. Paul Williams and Eugene Kohn, *The Faith of America* (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1951); Mel Scult, *Judaism Faces the Twentieth Century: A Biography of Mordecai M. Kaplan* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 281-282.
- <sup>32</sup> James Waterman Wise ("Analyticus"), *Jews Are Like That! Essay Index Reprint Series* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969 [1928]), quotations are from pp. x, 186-187, 139, 135.
- <sup>33</sup> David Philipson, *My Life As An American Jew: An Autobiography* (Cincinnati: John G. Kidd & Son, 1941), 223,500, 164.
- <sup>34</sup> Philip Goodman, "American Jewish Bookplates," *PAJHS* 45 (March 1956), 176, 192.
- <sup>35</sup> The eulogy is reprinted in Irving Dilliard, ed., *Mr. Justice Brandeis, Great American: Press Opinion and Public Appraisal* (St. Louis, 1941), 126-127; see Sarna, "The Greatest Jew in the World," 362-363.
- <sup>36</sup> Louis E. Levinthal, "Louis Dembitz Brandeis," *American Jewish Year Book* 44 (1942-43), pp.49,51.
- <sup>37</sup> George L. Mosse, *German Jews Beyond Judaism* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press & Indiana University Press, 1985), 10, 15, 81.
- <sup>38</sup> Most of these names may be found in Malcolm H. Stern, *First American Jewish Families* (Baltimore: Ottenheimer, 1991) and Jacob R. Marcus, *The Concise Dictionary of American Jewish Biography* (New York: Carlson, 1994). For "Joel," see the "Joseph A. Joel Correspondence File" in the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH; for Pereles, see Jacob R. Marcus, *The American Jewish Woman: A Documentary History* (Cincinnati: OH: Ktav, 1981), 238; and for the Danzigers, Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 202-203. As early as 1853 a visitor to New York's Congregation Shearith Israel found Sephardi children with "names like Washington" [see Gershon Greenberg, "A German-Jewish Immigrant's Perception of America, 1853-54," *AJHQ* 67 (June 1978), 319.]
- <sup>39</sup> Jonathan D. Sarna, "The Myth of the Jewish President," *Sh'ma* 10/198 (October 3, 1980).
- <sup>40</sup> Lloyd P. Gartner, *Jewish Education in the United States: A Documentary History* (New York: Teachers College, 1969), 86; Lloyd P. Gartner, "From New York to Miedzyrzec: Immigrant Letters of Judah David Eisenstein, 1878-1886," *AJHQ* 52 (March 1963), 242.
- <sup>41</sup> Nathan H. Winter, *Jewish Education in a Pluralist Society: Samson Benderly and Jewish Education in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 1966), 49, 55; Jonathan D. Sarna, "American Jewish Education in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Jewish Education* (forthcoming).
- <sup>42</sup> Joseph Reimer, "Passionate Visions in Contest: On the History of Jewish Education in Boston," *The Jews of Boston*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna and Ellen Smith (Boston: Combined Jewish Philanthropies, 1995), 289; Jeffrey S. Gurock, "The Ramaz Version of American Orthodoxy," *Ramaz: School, Community, Scholarship and Orthodoxy* (New York: Ktav, 1989), 40.
- <sup>43</sup> *American Israelite*, May 9, 1889, p.1.
- <sup>44</sup> *New York Herald*, April 20, 1889, n.p. [translation mine]; *Jewish Messenger*, April 26, 1889, p.4. I am indebted to an unpublished seminar paper by my student, Robin L. Kahn, for these citations.
- <sup>45</sup> This paragraph is drawn from Sarna, "The Mythical Jewish Columbus and the History of America's Jews," 81-84, where full citations are provided. See also Claudia L. Bushman, *America Discovers Columbus* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992), 158-159, 168; Moshe Starkman [Khizquni], "Tefilah Le-Yovel Ha-400 Le-Giluy 'Ameriqah,'" *Bitzaron* 37 (January 1958), 129-131; J.D. Eisenstein, *Ozar Zikhronothai: Autobiography and Memoirs* (New York: the author, 1929), 76; and *American Israelite*, October 27, 1892.
- <sup>46</sup> Arthur Aryeh Goren, "Pageants of Sorrow, Celebration and Protest: The Public Culture of American Jews," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 12 (1996), 206-211.

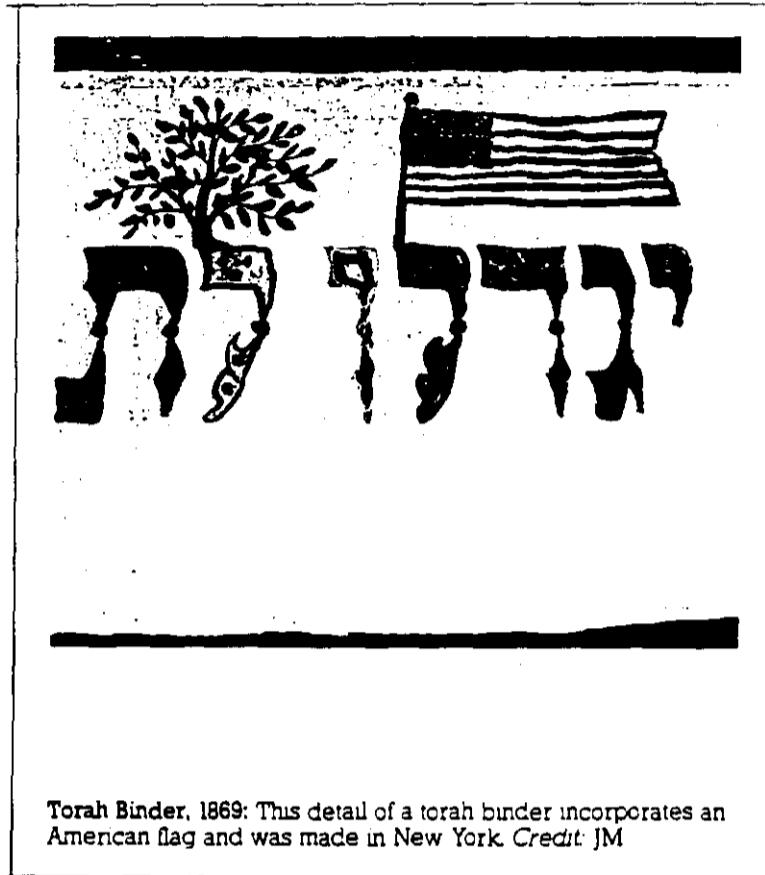
- <sup>47</sup> Arthur Aryeh Goren, "A 'Golden Decade' for American Jews: 1945-1955," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry* 8 (1992), 10-17, esp. 14.
- <sup>48</sup> J. Leonard Levy, *Haggadah or Home Service for the Festival of Passover* (7<sup>th</sup> edition, Pittsburgh: Rodef Shalom Congregation, 1922 [orig. ed., 1903]), 25-27.
- <sup>49</sup> David Geffen (ed.), *American Heritage Haggadah: The Passover Experience* (Jerusalem: Gefen Publishing, 1992); *The Union Haggadah* (n.p.: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1923), 120-121; Mordecai M. Kaplan, et al, *The New Haggadah for the Pesah Seder* (New York: Behrman House, 1942), 176.
- <sup>50</sup> Isaac Leiser, "Motives of Thankfulness," *Discourses on the Jewish Religion* (3<sup>rd</sup> series, Philadelphia: Sherman & Co., 1867), 118-139, esp. 134; other sermons are listed in Robert Singerman, *Judaica Americana: A Bibliography of Publications to 1900* (New York: Greenwood, 1990), s.v. "Thanksgiving."
- <sup>51</sup> Fannie Barnett Linsky, *America and the Jew: A Pageant for Thanksgiving Day* (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1923), esp. 5, 13-14, 19-20.
- <sup>52</sup> *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly of America and United Synagogue of America, 1946), 268, 352-355.
- <sup>53</sup> J. Leonard Levy, *Home Service for 'Hannukkah Written for Congregation Rodeph Shalom* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Pittsburgh: Rodeph Shalom, 1910 [1903]), 6; Louis Witt, *Pictures Out of the Past: A Hanukkah Play* (Cincinnati: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1918), 16-17.
- <sup>54</sup> Dr. Grace Cohen Grossman of the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles has been collecting this material for years and has graciously shared her work and ideas with me. Her work-in-progress will document this genre far more fully than I can here.
- <sup>55</sup> Norman L. Kleeblatt and Gerard C. Wertkin, *The Jewish Heritage in American Folk Art* (New York: Universe Books, 1984), 52, 57, 58.
- <sup>56</sup> Alice M. Greenwald, "The Masonic Mizrah and Lamp: Jewish Ritual Art As a Reflection of Cultural Assimilation," *Journal of Jewish Art* 10 (1984), 87-101, esp. 101.
- <sup>57</sup> Goodman, "American Jewish Bookplates," 176, 192.
- <sup>58</sup> The photograph is reprinted in Allon Schoener, *The American Jewish Album: 1654 to the Present* (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), 294.
- <sup>59</sup> See now Jeffrey Shandler and Beth S. Wenger, *Encounters With the 'Holy Land': Place, Past and Future in American Jewish Culture* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1997).
- <sup>60</sup> Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Greater Judaism in the Making* (New York: Reconstructionist Press, 1960), 477; see also works cited above, nn.22, 31.
- <sup>61</sup> *The Union Prayerbook for Jewish Worship* (Cincinnati: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1895, I, p.99; *Gates of Prayer: The New Union Prayerbook* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1975), 452; *The Complete ArtScroll Siddur*, ed. Nosson Scherman (New York: Mesorah, 1984), 450 [the prayer for the government was restored in the Rabbinical Council of America edition]; see Jonathan D. Sarna, "Jewish Prayers for the United States Government: A Study in the Liturgy of Politics and the Politics of Liturgy," *Moral Problems in American History: Essays in Honor of David Brion Davis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), [forthcoming]
- <sup>62</sup> Sylvia Barack Fishman, *Negotiating Both Sides of the Hyphen: Coalescence, Compartmentalization and American Jewish Values*. The Rabbi Louis Feinberg Memorial Lecture in Judaic Studies. (Cincinnati: The Judaic Studies Program of the University of Cincinnati, 1996). The discussion that follows is based on this paper, see esp. pp.1, 12, and 30.





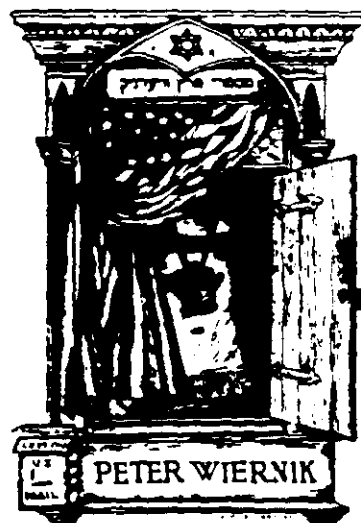






Torah Binder, 1869: This detail of a torah binder incorporates an American flag and was made in New York. *Credit: JM*





The Two Hundred and  
Fiftieth Anniversary  
of the Settlement  
of the Jews in  
the United  
States

1655

1905



Addresses delivered at  
Carnegie Hall, New York,  
on Thanksgiving Day, 1905

MCMV

Together with other select-  
ed addresses and proceedings.



LONG LIVE THE LAND OF THE FREE

SUBJECT: Ketubah

COUNTRY: New York USA  
DATE: 1927  
ARTIST:  
CATALOGUE #: 34.255  
DONOR: Herbert and Nancy Bernhard



Attachment: This marriage certificate is of special interest because of the mixed symbols of the American flag and the Israeli flag emerging from the lyre.

Ceremonial



Plate 17 (cat. 126). Hanukkah Lamp. Mae Shafter Rockland (1937- );  
Princeton, New Jersey, 1974. Wood covered in fabric with molded plastic figures.