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AND THE YOUTH SHALL SEE VISIONS: THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE IN CHAMPAIGN-URBANA AND THE FOUNDING OF HILLEL

(TITLE)

BY

SUSAN J. ROTH

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1995

YEAR

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ABSTRACT

Throughout American history, America's Jews lived in a mixed environment, one that both offered them the possibility of acceptance and demanded a certain level of conformity as its price. While antisemitism in America neither reached the level of virulence nor enjoyed the official sanction that it did in other parts of the world, it nonetheless has almost always been a part of the American Jewish experience, especially during the first half of the twentieth century. Much of American antisemitism was expressed through various forms of social discrimination (that was not always strictly social), justified by the image of "Jewish undesirability," which punished American Jews for both "clannishness" and trying too hard to become part of the American mainstream. This type of discrimination was particularly evident in the lives of Jewish college and university students.

During this era, the most common Jewish response to anti-Jewish prejudice was one of accommodation and assimilation, downplaying ones' Jewish identity in an effort to fit into mainstream American society, a strategy especially common among Jewish college and university students. The combination of a social environment that demanded conformity, and just as significantly, scant access to Jewish religious or cultural activities, gave the average Jewish-American college student little incentive to identify as a Jew. The B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, the brainchild of Rabbi Benjamin Frankel and

Edward Chauncy Baldwin, a non-Jewish English professor, filled this Jewish void beginning in 1923 at the University of Illinois. Hillel provided Jewish students across the United States with a source of positive Jewish identification, which in turn helped to reduce anti-Jewish prejudice both on campuses and in the larger American community.

This thesis, therefore, includes not only the early history of the University of Illinois Hillel itself, but of the surrounding Jewish community in Champaign and Urbana, Illinois, as well as a contextual overview of the American Jewish experience before, during, and after Hillel's founding. The sources range from previously published histories of the Hillel foundation movement to manuscript collections and oral histories, as well as more general works concerning the American Jewish experience and the history of college life.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the students and leaders of the University of Illinois Hillel foundation--past, present, and future. This is, after all, your history.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this thesis involved the input and assistance of many people. While it is not possible to mention every one of them, a few specific acknowledgements are in order.

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INTRODUCTION

When the first Hillel foundation formally opened its doors with a "Dad's Day"[1] reception and open house on Saturday evening, November 10, 1923, the event celebrated not only the founding of a new student religious organization.[2] Rather, it also heralded the beginning of a new American Jewish strategy for dealing with both the temptations of assimilation and the menace of antisemitism, one that was proactive, rather than reactive in its approach to keeping young Jews Jewish. The guiding philosophy of Hillel rejected the notion that one could be American _or_ Jewish, but rather insisted that it was not only possible, but desirable and even necessary to be both. Putting such a philosophy into practice, however, was sometimes an uphill battle, in an era that historian John Higham has labeled "the Tribal Twenties."[3]

The purpose of this thesis, therefore, is to examine the early history of the Hillel movement, focusing less on _what_ happened, which has been thoroughly covered in Winton U. Solberg's 1991 article, "The Early Years of the Jewish Presence at the University of Illinois,"[4] than on _why_ it happened, placing Hillel's founding and growth in the broader context of twentieth-century American Jewish history, as well as the history of campus life and student organization. The principal questions concerning the history of the Hillel movement that this thesis will address include the following:

1. Why did the Hillel foundation movement succeed in reaching

more Jewish college students than any previous Jewish student organization? 2. Why was Hillel first established in the Midwest, in particular at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign? 3. What role did Hillel have to play in combatting antisemitism and how well did it play this role? Each of these questions will in turn relate to the central argument, that the Hillel foundation movement was instrumental in sustaining and strengthening the Jewish presence on American campuses, at a time when antisemitism was rapidly gaining strength in the United States. Hillel did so by providing Jewish students nationwide with a positive source of identification, both through education and outreach, as well as a campus religious foundation of their own, something that had never previously existed.

1. An annual University of Illinois events, honoring the students' visiting fathers.

2. "Formal Opening of Hillel Foundation Takes Place Today," Daily Illini, 10 November 1923

3. John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), pp. 264-99.

4. Winton U. Solberg, "The Early History of the Jewish Presence at the University of Illinois," Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation 2 (Summer 1992), pp. 215-237.

CHAPTER I

AMERICAN ANTISEMITISM AND ITS PLACE ON AMERICAN CAMPUSES

The environment in which the first Hillel foundation was founded in 1923 was nothing if not mixed. American antisemitism, with many of its exclusionary manifestations was on the rise. The social environment of the University of Illinois, where the first Jewish student organization of its kind was founded, was not exempt from this kind of rising prejudice. On the other hand, the comparative mildness of American antisemitism, and general approval of free religious (if not ethnic) expression, the latter of which was especially evident on the University of Illinois campus (the birthplace of the larger campus religious foundation movement) undoubtably contributed to the successful creation of an organization that would not only strengthen the Jewish presence on campuses across the United States, but increase the acceptance of this Jewish presence.

To understand the story of B'nai B'rith Hillel, it is necessary to place it in the context of Jewish history. It is especially important to understand the changing nature of American antisemitism, tracing its rise in the years following the American Civil War to the years between the two world wars when it would become especially pronounced, before declining precipitously following World War II.

Antisemitism is unique among religious/ethnic prejudices

in three principal ways. To begin, it is as old as history itself, and even predates the rise of Christianity.[1] Secondly, there are numerous contradictions embodied within antisemitism, assigning Jews as a group "negative" characteristics that would be considered neutral or even positive in other peoples. Business acumen, praised in gentiles and called avarice when displayed by Jews, is only the most obvious example. The supposedly undesirable "Jewish" characteristics furthermore frequently contradict each other (the Jew as both Communist and greedy capitalist most immediately comes to mind). Finally, antisemitism has the ability to infect the minds of peoples of widely varying ethnicities, beliefs, and social classes.

The dominant strain of antisemitism that has manifested itself throughout most of the history of Western Civilization, however, arose as a result of the nascent Christian church's effort to distance itself from the faith from which it sprang and assert its supremacy as the one true religion. While Jews and Judaism have hardly been the only targets of Christian conquest and conversionary efforts, they <u>have</u> throughout history been singled out for special opprobrium. This is due in part to the dogma that the Jews were the first recipients of message of Jesus Christ, the perceived Messiah, only to reject him. Even more, the belief that the Jews were responsible for the Crucifixion (flying in the face of the historical facts that crucifixion was a Roman method of

punishment and that the Jews of that time were essentially powerless under Roman rule), which has persisted into the 20th century, was responsible for a special animus against the Jewish people, targeting them as the enemies of Christianity.

If Christianity had declared war on Judaism, however, it was always a limited war. Jew-hatred was tempered by a need for the survival of a remnant (weakened, persecuted, and scattered among the nations) as a witness to the Second Coming of Christ, following the final, apocalyptic battle between the forces of Christ and the Antichrist. In this final Christian triumph the Jews would disappear, either through conversion to Christianity or outright destruction. This Christian need for a surviving remnant of the Jewish people (and consequent missionary efforts with the intention to save souls from eternal damnation) undoubtably forestalled the Final Solution (an outgrowth of racial, as opposed to religious anti-Semitism). As historian Frederic Cople Jaher points out, however, "apocalyptic liquidation of the Jews is a doctrinal anticipation of the Holocaust."[2]

Preserving a Jewish remnant in any case did not exclude massacres and pogroms, with or without Church sanction, along with countless individual acts of violence against Jews, especially during the Christmas and Passover seasons. During that time, the Church fathers also sought to segregate Jews from Christians through ghettos, "Jew Badges" or special hats, and various other restrictions of physical and social

mobility. Additionally, restrictions on "normal" social intercourse between Jews and Christians, combined with Church teachings and medieval superstition, gave rise to certain myths of Jewish diabolism and malevolence.

The coming of the Enlightenment heralded the decline of medieval superstition and strict adherence to church doctrine. It also heralded the rise of "republican and romantic nationalism, and left-wing militancy," which according to Jaher, would "oppose the harsh treatment of the earlier era," and pave the way for the reentry of the Jewish people into European society. Jewish liberty, equality, and full citizenship, however came at a price. The required condition was "that Jews lose their creedal and ethnic identity and be absorbed into the religion of man, the nation-state, or the socialist utopia." Furthermore, the displacement of transnational Christendom in favor of the nation-state would ultimately pave the way for a peculiarly nationalist, even racialist form of anti-Semitism that would completely negate the possibility of Jewish absorption into the host society.[3] Nonetheless, it was the most noble ideals of the Age of Reason that became the basis for the founding of the American nation.

Was America different? Many contemporary scholars would agree that yes, America was (and is) like no other nation in its receptivity towards the Jewish people. Nonetheless, as Rabbi Stuart E. Rosenberg wrote in the early 1960's, "despite the obvious and often less than obvious patterns of their

accommodation to the revolutionary environment of the New World" throughout America's history, America's Jews never completely lost their sense of being strangers in a strange land.[4] While today Rosenberg's view of continuous psychological exile may be questioned, the Jewish sense of belonging (or not belonging) in America in many ways has been reflective of America's receptivity to the Jewish people, a viewpoint advanced by historian Leonard Dinnerstein, who has asserted in his recent work, Antisemitism in America, that if anything, American Jews today are more "at home in America" than ever before.[5]

America was not only different, but unique in its very newness and distance from European civilization, which, according to Jaher, gave the practical needs of European settlement priority over "traditional sectarian and ideological exclusiveness." Jaher also ascribes the comparatively positive response to Jews in America to "the absence of a medieval past and convergence of settlement with Protestant and Age of Reason countervailence against traditional Jew hatred." Indeed, during the colonial era, a general sectarian diversity, accelerated by the First Great Awakening, gave rise to "characteristically pluralistic trends in American society," even before the arrival of American nationhood.[6]

The paradise, to be sure, was an imperfect one. Traditional European Christian prejudices survived the

transplantation, and continued to exist throughout American history. American anti-Jewish prejudice, even at its worst, however, never reached the all-pervasiveness of its European counterpart. As Dinnerstein has pointed out, "once separated from the mother country, the United States never had an official church and the federal government never sanctioned antisemitic prejudices," or for that matter, anti-Jewish violence.[7]

Dinnerstein attributes the "difference" of the American nation to factors "unique to the history of the United States," including "the impact of the ideas of the Enlightenment, the outstanding intellectual insights and abilities of the framers of the Constitution, and the polyglot nature of American society."[8] The second of these factors, in part an outgrowth of the first, is most stirringly evident in George Washington's justly famous letter to the Newport, Rhode Island Jewish congregation, in which the first President of the United States assured the congregants that

> happily, the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support...[9]

More than a century later, Washington's assurance would seem far less apparent both to an American government facing a much more diverse America, and the American Jewish population that was a prominent part of this diversity. Dinnerstein's third factor, therefore, has been a subject of much discussion and

debate among generations of historians.[10]

The question of what makes a resident of the United States an American is one that has tantalized and troubled both thinkers and ordinary citizens since the founding of the republic. It was most memorably posed by J. Hector St. John Crevecouer, in his Letters From an American Farmer, in which he asked "What then is the American, this new man?"[11] It has been embodied in the national motto, "E Pluribus Unum" although the ideological emphasis has periodically shifted between "pluribus" and "unum." During the early republic, even with the existence of definite religious and ethnic minorities, American society was predominantly white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant. The very small number of Jews who lived in the Americas in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century were of (Spanish and Portuguese) Sephardic origin, and were educated and cultured enough to win the tolerance, and sometimes even approval, of the Christian majority. Although complete political equality was comparatively late in coming (religious tests for voting and officeholding sometimes remained enshrined in state law for decades after the Bill of Rights) the early American Jewish community enjoyed a social equality that no subsequent generation would match, let alone surpass, until the second half of the twentieth century.[12]

The level of social acceptance of early American Jewry was in itself unprecedented at the time. Jews were included in the membership and in some cases were among the founders of

such elite institutions as the Union Society of Savannah, Georgia, an upper-class philanthropic organization, and the Music Club of Philadelphia. Some even intermarried with the most aristocratic of Protestant families.[13] This process of "aristocratic assimilation" continued, albeit to a lesser extent, with the next, larger wave of Jewish immigrants, this time of German background, beginning in the first half of the nineteenth century. Most subscribed to Reform Judaism, which had its origins in Germany, and which in its classical form repudiated the notion of Jews as a separate people, differentiated from the majority culture. This optimistic assimilationism undoubtably smoothed the way for German Jewish acceptance in Christian American society. Furthermore, while the German Jews in America could be found in all economic classes, the majority gravitated towards the middle class, and the eventual upper class included such luminous family names as Straus, Morganthau, Ochs, Seligman, and Guggenheim. Through the Civil War this German Jewish elite enjoyed a social status similar to that of their Sephardic predecessors--Joseph Seligman was among the founders of the prestigious Union League--which would, ironically, later bar his own descendants from membership.[14]

This widespread acceptance would reverse itself markedly in the decades following the Civil War, which had in itself stirred up unprecedented levels of antisemitism.[15] The post-bellum "third wave" of Jewish immigrants from Russia and

Eastern Europe, largely from the poorest classes and the strictest Orthodox environments, was just a part of the broader spectrum of "new immigrants," from Southern and Eastern Europe. In comparison with their Northern and Western European counterparts, these immigrants were viewed as being less likely to assimilate into American society. The perceived strangeness of these new immigrants coincided with the growing fear and pessimism that characterized a post-Civil war America that faced hardening class distinctions and the disappearance of the Western frontier that, at least in many people's minds, had previously provided a much-needed "safety valve." The rise of labor unrest additionally made the immigrant a scapegoat, as agitators among the capitalist barons and as scabs in the eyes of labor activists.[16]

During this period of increasingly rapid social change (for the worse in the minds of many Americans), a newer, more sinister form of American nationalism was developing, one that put a premium on biological immutability. Historian John Higham has pointed out that while Darwin's theory of the interspecies struggle for survival was <u>not</u> primarily responsible for the outbreak of racially-based nativism, the nineteenth-century scientific revolution nonetheless "prepared the way and opened the possibility" for hardening cultural differences into racial ones. Additionally at a time when the Anglo-Saxon elite was beginning to feel the loss of its traditional economic and social hegemony, "they put aside

their boasts of the assimilative powers of their race." The fear now was that the "inferior" races would not only overtake, but ultimately obliterate, the "native Americans," spelling disaster for America.[17] Although this nativism was directed against a variety of European (and non-European) "new immigrants," prejudice against the newest wave of Jewish immigrants was significant in that it quickly spread to their "native" coreligionists.

One of the earliest warning signs appeared in 1877, when Judge Henry Hilton barred the aristocratic German-Jewish banker Joseph Seligman from entering the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga Springs, New York.[18] At the time, such an incident was rare enough to warrant newspaper headlines and genuine controversy. Many believed that the incident was, as poet William Cullen Bryant expressed it, "so opposed to the spirit of American institutions, that it could not possibly have a lasting effect." Bryant and those who expressed similar sentiments turned out to be completely off the mark.[19] One incident lead to another, and by 1879 Hilton, along with over one hundred other people at the Grand Union hotel, to found the Society for the Suppression of Jews.[20] The convention's proceedings included a statement that would come to characterize upper-class Gentile America's attitude towards American Jewry--"We do not like Jews as a class."[21]
The Society itself did not last long,[22] but the sentiment its organizers stirred up would, in the coming decades, gain

increasing acceptance among all classes of American society. Through this kind of public upper-class endorsement, anti-Semitism would gain a new cachet. If old-line Jewish aristocrats such as Joseph Seligman could be subject to social discrimination, than all American Jews were fair game.

Between the First and Second World Wars social and economic discrimination of this kind would steadily rise, commensurate with the increasing clamor for immigration restriction. Up through the 1920's Congress proposed a variety of restrictive measures. The one that would finally produce the desired effect of stemming the flow of "inferior races" into American society was the Johnson-Reed Act, finally formulated so that immigration was limited by (European) nationality to two percent of the number of each group already existing in the United States according to the 1890 census, and not surprisingly, heavily favoring "Anglo" and "Nordic" Europeans.[23] Despite limited displaced-person provisions following World War II, the European quotas remained in effect until 1965.[24]

The legislation not only greatly reduced the sheer numbers of new immigrants but did so, as Oscar Handlin put it, "in terms of a crude racist philosophy that set up standards of desirability."[25] And although Jews were far from the only "undesirables" in the eyes of nativist thinkers, it would not take long for them to be singled out in the discussion of the foreign menace. It was with chilling foresight that Madison

Grant, who had largely provided the intellectual rationale for restriction, quipped in 1919 that "there will be a great massacre of Jews and I suppose we will get the overflow unless we can stop it."[26]

Keeping foreign Jews away from American shores, however, did not reduce prejudice against their American coreligionists. Jews were reviled for supposed clannishness and unwillingness to blend into Protestant American society. Those Jews who attempted to blend in, however, found themselves shut out of the very society they desired to enter. Although formal discrimination was initially of a purely social nature, coming from resorts, clubs, and social organizations, it did not take long for it spread to the public realms of work and education. In the world of work, referring in large part to the white-collar sector, careers were increasingly advanced through social contacts--often made within the organizations that pointedly excluded Jews. Some employers went so far as to specify religious preferences in job advertisements. It was not surprising therefore that many American-born Jews gravitated towards salaried professions such as medicine and law, which offered a degree of independence from the increasingly prevalent discrimination of the business world. To go into such occupations, however, required a college education and frequently postgraduate education as well. And American colleges and universities in the early twentieth frequently reflected larger patterns of

American anti-Jewish discrimination.

The history of the Jewish experience on American college and university campuses is in many ways reflective of more general patterns of the history of Jews in America--as long as there was a very small number of Jews there was no discernable "Jewish Problem." The most noteworthy example of this phenomenon was at Harvard, which had graduated its first Jewish student in 1720, and where the Hebrew language had once been a required subject.[27] By 1906, Harvard had become the birthplace of the Menorah Society, designed to "promote the academic study of Jewish culture in the university and to serve as a platform for nonpartisan discussion of Jewish issues." This movement, which spread to other public and private campuses, including the University of Illinois in 1912, was the first intercollegiate Jewish organization of its kind and in a significant way the forerunner of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations.[28]

This early organization, reportedly formed in part in response to existing discrimination,[29] had at best limited power to combat the discrimination that by the 1920's would be both more frequent and more open, especially the efforts to limit the number of Jewish students entering the most prestigious universities. This discrimination was stepped up, not coincidentally at a time when an increasing number of Jews were pursuing a post-secondary education. Educational historian Stephen Steinberg points out that Jewish immigrants

not only valued education highly, but they also sent their children to college in disproportionate numbers. Steinberg also notes that, according to a 1923 editorial, "the upwardly mobile Jew 'sends his children to college a generation or two sooner than other stocks.'"[30]

This combination of disproportionate numbers and generational closeness to European forebears undoubtedly stoked the fires of prejudice in the minds of many "old stock" administrators and inspired them to respond accordingly in reshaping their schools' admissions policies. It was, however, Harvard's President Abbott Lawrence Lowell, who, when Harvard's Jewish student component passed the fifteen percent mark in 1922, took unprecedentedly explicit steps towards restricting further Jewish enrollment.[31] Lowell first announced a limit on scholarship aid available to Jewish applicants (aimed at the often needy sons of immigrant Jews) and then a limit on the number of Jewish students to be admitted at all.[32] Lowell's purported reasoning was that limiting the number of Jewish students at Harvard "would go a long way towards limiting race-feeling among the students."[33]

Lowell's overt quotas received significant public criticism, and by 1923 Harvard withdrew them in favor of subtler methods of discrimination that included considerations of "character," different standards for entrance examinations, and "geographic distribution" policies which favored the South and West over the more Jewish Northeast.[34] Harvard's

willingness to announce its discrimination, however, undoubtably contributed to giving other schools a license to discriminate. Discriminatory practices soon spread even to "less distinguished academies."[35] And although state universities were officially forbidden from imposing religious-based admissions quotas, many restricted Jewish enrollment through the limitation of out-of-state admissions.[36] Furthermore, even schools that practiced no overt official discrimination could develop a reputation for an antisemitic atmosphere. According to Heywood Broun and George Britt, the University of Illinois one of the universities that was reported to have a "pronounced anti-Jewish feeling."[37] However, the early history of the local Jewish community (from which most of the University of Illinois' Jewish students originally came) painted a noticeably different picture.

1. Frederic Cople Jaher, A Scapegoat in the New Wilderness: The Origins and Rise of Anti-Semitism in America (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 17.

2. Ibid., p. 35.

3. Ibid., p. 5.

4. Stuart E. Rosenberg, "America is Different," in Peter I. Rose, ed. The Ghetto and Beyond: Essays on Jewish Life in America, (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 83.

5.Leonard Dinnerstein, Antisemitism in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 228.

6. Jaher, New Wilderness, pp. 86-87, 107.

7. Dinnerstein, Antisemitism in America, p. xxviii.

8. Ibid.

9. David Max Eichhorn, Joys of Jewish Folklore: A Journey from New Amsterdam to Beverly Hills and Beyond (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1981), p. 240.

10. Dinnerstein, Antisemitism in America, p. xxviii.

11. J. Hector St. John Crevecouer, Letters From An American Farmer; Describing Certain Provincial Situations, Manners, and Customs, Not Generally Known; And Conveying Some Idea of the Late and Present Interior Circumstances of the British Colonies in North America, with a Prefatory Note by W.P. Trent and an Introduction by Ludwig Lewisohn (London: n.p., 1782; reprint, New York: Fox, Duffield & Co., 1904), p. 54.

12. Jaher, New Wilderness, pp. 100-103.

13. Ibid, pp. 102-103.

14. E. Digby Baltzell, "Jews and the 'Protestant Establishment,'" in The Ghetto and Beyond, pp. 299-300.

15. Jaher, New Wilderness, p. 241.

16. Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, pp. 42, 50-51, 71.

17. Ibid., pp. 135-36.

18. Dinnerstein, Antisemitism in America, p.39.

19. Carey McWilliams, A Mask for Privilege: Antisemitism in America (Boston: Little, Brown, 1948), pp. 3-6.

20. Dinnerstein, Antisemitism in America, p. 40.

21. "We Do Not Like the Jews as a Class" (1879) in Michael Selzer, ed., "Kike"--Antisemitism in America, Ethnic Prejudice in America Series (New York: World Publishing, 1972), p. 56.

22. Dinnerstein, Antisemitism in America, p. 40.

23. Leonard Dinnerstein and David M. Reimers, Ethnic Americans: A History of Immigration and Assimilation (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1975), pp.70-72.

24. John Higham, Send These To Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America (New York: Atheneum, 1975), pp. 55-56, 61-64.

25. Oscar Handlin, Adventure in Freedom: Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life in America (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), p. 204.

26. Higham, Strangers in the Land, p. 306.

27. Jaher, New Wilderness, p. 102.

28. Solberg, "The Jewish Presence at the University of Illinois," p. 219.

29. Ibid.

30. Stephen Steinberg, The Academic Melting Pot: Catholics and Jews in American Higher Education (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), pp. 9, 11.

31. Morton Rosenstock, "Are There Too Many Jews at Harvard?" in Leonard Dinnerstein, ed. Antisemitism in the United States, American Problem Studies (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 102-103.

32. Alan M. Dershowitz, Chutzpah (Boston: Little, Brown, 1987), p. 66.

33. Steinberg, The Academic Melting Pot, p. 23.

34. Dershowitz, Chutzpah, pp. 67-69.

35. Dinnerstein, Antisemitism in America, p. 85.

36. Marcia Graham Synott, "Antisemitism and American Universities: Did Quotas Follow the Jews?" in David A. Gerber, ed. Anti-Semitism in American History, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), p. 260.

37. Heywood Broun and George Britt, Christians Only, A Study in Prejudice (New York: Vanguard Press, 1931), p. 90.

CHAPTER II

THE LOCAL JEWISH PRESENCE AND CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT BEFORE 1923

The early history of both the Champaign-Urbana Jewish community, and the University of Illinois were important in creating a campus whose leaders would be comparatively accepting of Jewish students.[1] The first Jewish settlers in Champaign-Urbana reflected the more general pattern of Jewish immigration to Illinois and the rest of the Midwest. According to Rabbi David Max Eichhorn, the general American westward expansion coincided with the first major change in "the ethnic composition" of the American Jewish population. This group of German immigrants, most of whom arrived in the wake of the 1848 central European revolution were, "persons of learning with a progressive outlook" who were influential in the growth of American Reform Judaism, especially in the Midwest, a growth spurred by the founding of Hebrew Union College (HUC) in Cincinnati, Ohio. The first Jewish congregation in Illinois, Kehillat Anshe Maarav,[2] was founded in Chicago in 1847, and by the 1850's Jewish immigrants began coming to Illinois in significant numbers. Although the Jewish population in the Champaign-Urbana area did not stand out in size or prominence, it was in many ways typical of a mid-nineteenth century Jewish community in the Midwest.[3]

According to Asa Rubinstein, the arrival of the Illinois Central Railroad in the 1850's paved the way for significant immigration to the "Twin Cities" because the railroad made the

area "a valuable crossroads for commercial grain farmers," and as a result "created new economic opportunities for the enterprising Jewish merchants" whose families would later found the first permanent Jewish congregation. The early Jewish inhabitants of Champaign-Urbana, "prided themselves on their ability to adjust to the ways of their non-Jewish neighbors" and at the same time cling proudly to "their ancient religious heritage."[4]

The late-nineteenth century Champaign-Urbana Jewish community, although physically isolated from the larger Jewish population centers in Illinois, nonetheless managed to establish a strong and vibrant presence almost from the beginning. Two of the earliest Jewish settlers, Abe Stern, who arrived in Champaign as a peddler in 1861, and Morris Lowenstern, who established his dry goods business there in 1864, within decades became respected citizens and were among the "founding fathers" of the Sinai Congregation.[5] Another of the congregation's founders was Joseph Kuhn, whose son Isaac would be the first to propose a broadly inclusive congregation that would serve the religious needs of not only the resident Jewish community, but also of the Jewish students at the University of Illinois.[6]

The earliest known Jewish service to take place in Champaign-Urbana occurred on Yom Kippur of 1895, held in a room above a store. One of the participants, Albert Stern, recounted what he and his future bride, Amelia Alpiner,

encountered that night in a speech marking Sinai Temple's 50th Anniversary nearly sixty years later:

> The dimly lit room had one wall gas fixture. On a platform, slightly raised from the floor, stood Mr. Jos. Kuhn, - the father of Mr. I. Kuhn and Mr. Charles Wolf - and also participating was Mr. Morris Lowenstern. Those two devoted men conducted the service, alternately, reading from a single prayerbook - and so impressive were they that they seemed like true patriarchs.[7]

Rubinstein adds that "Those and other services expressed and reinforced a feeling of solidarity that grew despite the lack of a permanent temple or rabbi."[8]

The congregation was formally organized on February 7, 1904, following a meeting of twenty-two men from eighteen local families at the Grand Army of the Republic Hall. Rabbi George Zeppin, a representative of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), presided over the meeting. The first regular service was held on February 23, 1904, conducted by the visiting Rabbi Emil Leipziger in the local Elks Auditorium.[9]

Even after the congregation was formally established, however, it would be another decade before a building would be constructed, and nearly five decades before a full-time rabbi would be engaged. Even so, building a synagogue did not appear to be the most immediate concern, as the question of a building first arose in 1909, five years after the congregation's establishment. And it was not until 1913 that the congregants, at a special meeting, voted unanimously to purchase a site at the corner of State and Clark streets for

the price of $4500.[10]

This instance of general agreement, it should be pointed out, hardly reflected the diversity of observances and viewpoints within the small Champaign-Urbana Jewish community. For example, by the turn of the century, the Eastern European "third wave" of Jewish immigration had increased the number of Orthodox Jews in Champaign-Urbana, and in 1912 a group of Polish and Russian Jewish families formed Congregation B'nai Israel. Rather than creating a division, as one might expect, there was limited cooperation between the two congregations, largely in matters such as Jewish education. Sons of some of the Reform congregants received Bar Mitzvah training from the visiting tutors hired by B'nai Israel and children of Orthodox mothers who were members of the Ladies' Social Circle (the local Jewish women's philanthropic organization founded in 1894) were admitted to the Sinai Temple Sabbath School. Even so, it became clear fairly early on that a complete merger was unlikely to take place, due to "the desire of each group to maintain its own style of ritual and worship."[11] Also, the differing philosophies of Orthodox and Reform Judaism may simply have been too great.

Even within the larger Reform group, differences surfaced. Despite the 1914 agreement on the purchase of the State and Clark Street site for a building, dissenting voices were raised in the years between 1914 and 1918 concerning the location. The opposition to the chosen site was led by Isaac

Kuhn, who favored moving the Temple site to a location closer to the university, to be more accessible to the students. In his unpublished history of Sinai Temple, Jerome J. Sholem explained "Mr. Kuhn thought that such a house of worship would be an inspiration to the Jewish student population and could serve a double purpose of providing a synagogue for students as well as townspeople."[12] Kuhn was supported in his viewpoint by Edward Chauncy Baldwin, a non-Jewish professor at the university, who alerted the congregation of the possibility of a generous contribution by the well-known Chicago philanthropist Julius Rosenwald. In the end, despite Kuhn's efforts, the decision to locate at Clark and State Streets was sustained by one vote, and Rosenwald contributed only $500.[13]

The final decision on the Temple's location and Rosenwald's subsequent withdrawal of support, though, did not spell the end of Kuhn's dream of a university center for Jewish students. Rather, Kuhn's interest was shared by many of the founding families who, according to Rubinstein, were increasingly concerned about "the needs of the small number of Jews from the University of Illinois," both students and faculty, "who had come from strong metropolitan Jewish backgrounds but showed little pride in their heritage." Kuhn, who during his active life in the Champaign-Urbana community had encouraged further Jewish settlement in Champaign, had good reason to worry about the small but steadily increasing

Jewish presence on the campus of a university that throughout its early history was in many ways typical of colleges and universities of its time.[14] The actual religious environment at the University of Illinois, however, proved to be, in many ways, atypical.

Among Midwestern state universities, the institution now known as the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was comparatively late in its arrival. The first state-sponsored university in the Midwest appeared in Indiana appeared in 1820, followed by the establishment of the Universities of Michigan, Missouri, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota between 1837 and 1850, decades before the University of Illinois's incorporation in 1867. Allan Nevins, an early historian of the university, attributes this delay to "the want of interest in public higher education" within the state "that was to handicap its growth for so many years." According to Nevins, this resulted in part from a "rural apprehension of religious instruction." This fear was poignantly reflected by the state's early charters, which stipulated (among other things) that "no professor of theology was to occupy any college chair, no theological department of any sort was to be created," and "no religious tests were to be countenanced in selecting trustees."[15]

The University of Illinois, therefore, was not founded as a religious institution, but from the beginning was, according to Winton U. Solberg, "avowedly Christian but nonsectarian,"

reflecting the general philosophy of higher education during the late nineteenth century, namely that publicly supported schools were to be officially nonsectarian, while higher education nonetheless "should possess a specifically Christian component." This philosophy was evident in the administration of the University of Illinois--the Sunday Sabbath was strictly observed and while religion was in theory not to be forced on the (predominantly Protestant) student body, in practice religious life was strongly and publicly encouraged by university officials.[16] James Anderson Hawes has attributed this seeming paradox to the fact that prior to the arrival of a public university in Illinois, higher education in the state was the exclusive province of small, denominational colleges, and that "playing the great American game of 'moral uplift'" spread to the "nonsectarian" Illinois campus.[17] In any case, this religious environment would prove to be more beneficial than detrimental to the small but growing Jewish community.

Despite the comparatively late arrival of the University of Illinois on the academic scene, in many ways its secular campus environment typified the changes that took place in colleges and universities across the country between the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, which in turn reflected the increasingly rapid pace of change in American society. The initial upsurge in college attendance was one of the indirect results of the industrial revolution and accompanying urbanization of America. As

cultural historian Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz has explained it, the shift to a large-scale manufacturing economy, and accompanying bureaucratization of the working world, resulted in the increase in white-collar hiring within industrial enterprises. Combined with the growing need for professional "experts," such as doctors and lawyers, the end result was an unprecedented emphasis on formal schooling.

Before the Civil War, only a small percentage of young men went to college. Fittingly, this "elite" group consisted of primarily well-to-do young men who attended college for "the good times they had come to expect, contacts with others of their own kind, and the foundation for the culture of gentlemen." The minority came from the families of "the small urban professional elite" with the intention to improve, or at least maintain, their socioeconomic position. An even smaller minority of somewhat older men from rural backgrounds attended college to become ministers. The social, economic, and vocational differences between the majority and minority almost immediately created the conflicts between student and student, as well as student and faculty, that was to characterize the nonacademic side of higher education that was to be known simply as "college life." And this difference was exacerbated with the increased--and increasingly diverse--college attendance following the industrial revolution.[18]

"College life" was born amid the wave of student revolts against the strict discipline that characterized the American

college experience during the late eighteenth through the early nineteenth century. College administrators successfully quelled the riots themselves, but failed to crush the rebellious spirit of the upper-class student rebels. The end result was that, as Horowitz put it "collegians withdrew from open confrontation" and expressed their discontent in more covert ways, ultimately forming "a peer consciousness sharply at odds with that of the faculty and of the serious students." It was, in effect, the beginning of the differentiation between the "college man" and the mere student.[19]

This increased distancing of college men (and later college women) spurred the growth of fraternities, which began as secret societies and ultimately emerged as major social forces in campus life. The fraternity system, in turn, facilitated the creation of a student culture that not only glorified athletics and deemphasized "the life of the mind," but looked down on the student who prioritized studies over extracurricular activities. The anti-faculty mentality also lingered, even after a new generation of professors and administrators (some of whom had even been "college men" themselves), displayed a more forthcoming attitude towards student life beyond the classroom.[20] Henry Seidel Canby, in his memoir, <u>Alma Mater</u>, likened the arrival of this new kind of college spirit to "a vigorous kick of a football, too high, too aimless, into a drift of adverse winds," also adding that "if it [the kick] was not, like the shot at Concord Bridge,

heard round the world, was felt throughout America."[21]

While the "kick" did not take long to reach the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, it was resisted initially by the university administration. In fact, according to sociologist Joseph Demartini, during the administrations of John Milton Gregory and Selim Hobart Peabody, official resistance to extracurricular student culture actually increased. The conservative attitude of both administrators towards the culture of "athletics, Greek societies, and class rivalries," according to Demartini, put the university in conflict not just with its students, but with the more general trend of secularization of American higher education during that period. More concretely, the university continued to forbid fraternities and sororities and resist the growth of intercollegiate athletics, when other major universities recognized both as legitimate student activities.[22]

Fortunately for subsequent generations of students, the University of Illinois' environment underwent sweeping changes during the brief administration of Thomas J. Burrill. The changes Burrill instituted in student life--from the abolition of mandatory chapel attendance to the open acceptance of Greek-letter societies and intercollegiate athletics paved the way for the University's entry into mainstream college student culture, which by the early 1920's had reached its golden age both at the University of Illinois and on campuses across the country.[23]

Both nationally and locally, this college culture of the 1920's would center around the fraternity system as never before (or for that matter since). Historian Paula Fass notes that by the 1920's the demand for fraternities had become so great that many new, strictly local fraternities were founded and existing national fraternities expanded their chapter sizes, from as little as ten members at the end of the nineteenth century to as many as forty by the 1920's. At Illinois in particular, there were 80 fraternities and 30 sororities by the beginning of the 1920's.[24] Administrative attitudes towards fraternities and sororities also shifted towards acceptance and even encouragement during that period.

The question is, then, how well did Jewish students fit into this college culture, both nationally and locally? The answer is, at best, uneven. To begin with, there was indeed a grain (or more) of truth to the stereotype of Jewish ambition and intellectualism. The Jewish religious and cultural heritage valued knowledge and encouraged learning. While throughout much of Jewish history, the valued knowledge was almost entirely in the religious sphere, as Stephen Steinberg has pointed out, this intellectual tradition easily carried over to secular education. Additionally, the Eastern European immigrants saw university education as a way that they (or failing that, their children) would move up in the world. This desire to "move up" was not, as antisemites have charged, merely for the sake of social climbing, but as part and parcel

of truly "becoming American." The problem was, as Steinberg has aptly remarked, "early in the century, the prevailing mood in the American colleges, especially the prestigious Eastern colleges, was anything but one devoted to serious learning." As a result, antisemitic criticism was not confined to supposed undesirable social traits. Not only Gentile students, but even college administrators, who at other times bemoaned the scholastic laxness of "old stock" students, found ways to twist the intellectual seriousness and diligence of their Jewish counterparts into negative attributes. As Steinberg put it, "such a competitive situation does not generate good feeling, especially when the group with superior status takes second place."[25]

While some Jewish students did resign themselves to social discrimination and focused on their studies, most others found ways to expand their college experience beyond schoolwork. Some became the first rebels of college youth, joining their more nonconformist Gentile counterparts in a kind of alternative college life, one that centered around intellectual activities, such as literary and debating societies, and frequently branched out into radical politics.

One of the best examples of this type of iconoclasm at the University of Illinois, was undoutably Samson Raphaelson, who would later author the most famous popular screenplay about Jewish American assimilation and its conflicts--The Jazz Singer. Born on the Lower East Side to immigrant parents,

Raphaelson's background alone made him atypical of the majority of Jewish students at the University of Illinois in the early decades of the century. His reason for choosing the University of Illinois--tuition was free at the time, and the tuition rates at the University of Chicago were around $1000 a year--may also have set him apart from the comparatively privileged German-Jewish majority. Finally, his sense of individualism, complementing his ambition to become a writer, more than balanced his desire to break out of the ghetto and "into something more seemly," and caused him to eschew the fraternity scene altogether.[26]

Recalling his college years, Raphaelson has later admitted to having the makings of "the most dreadful rugged individualist you can imagine." However, while Raphaelson asserted that he "didn't care for the whole concept of fraternities," he also admitted to a certain wistful admiration of "the glamour of it," as well as "the luxury and the fellowship that seemed to be there," even as he questioned the true depth of that perceived fellowship. Throughout his college career, Raphaelson was well aware that both his Jewish background and his poverty made him ineligible for fraternity membership, but remained largely unresentful towards the [Gentile] fraternities, believing that if a group of men wanted to organize a club, it was their privilege to take or reject whomever they chose.[27]

On the other hand, Raphaelson asserted, he wouldn't have

joined a Jewish fraternity, even if one had asked him (none did), because he "didn't like the idea of the Jewish fraternities not letting Christians in." He later attributed this disdain to a feeling that the Jewish fraternities were being "un-American" in keeping out Christians (the exclusions were essentially mutual), while the Gentile fraternities were not so much specifically Christian, as "in some obscure way," American, and their exclusiveness could simply be attributed to "a vague snob tradition."[28]

Raphaelson's unease with active Jewish identification also influenced his refusal to join the local Menorah Society. While Raphaelson admitted his disdain may have also had to do with the perceived undesirability of the students who belonged, for the most part he simply "loathed all consciously Jewish-promoting Jewish organizations." Nonetheless, Raphaelson maintains that he was never self-hating and never denied his Jewishness ("It seemed obvious to me by my name and by my whole aspect"), but that he "never wore a flag, or paraded it." In the end, the only Greek-letter organization Raphaelson joined was Sigma Delta Chi, the honorary journalism fraternity, to which he was automatically accepted for his achievements as writer and editor for campus publications.[29]

Many Jewish students, however, sought to gain acceptance in the mainstream college society through their own fraternities and sororities. The oldest and probably best known of these was Zeta Beta Tau, or ZBT. Founded in 1898 at

the Jewish Theological Seminary, it was begun as a Zionist organization whose originally Hebrew-letter name was an acronym for the verse from Isaiah 1:27, Tzion B'mishpat Tipadeh, which translated as "Zion shall be redeemed with justice."[30] In the decades that followed, ZBT gradually evolved into a more conventional fraternity, with less of a Zionist emphasis.[31] Even then, however, ZBT maintained a unabashed pride in giving chapter presidents the Hebrew title of "Nasi"[32] and their secretaries that of "Sopher."[33] While it might have seemed quite a bold move for ZBT to use such obviously Hebraic nomenclature, on the pages of Banta's Greek Exchange it appeared no more outlandish than the "Eminent Supreme Archon" of Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE), or the "Grand Pyrtanis" or "Grand Crysopholos" of Tau Kappa Epsilon (TKE).[34]

In the following decades, other Jewish fraternities arrived upon the national campus scene, including Sigma Alpha Mu ("Sammys"), Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPis'), and Tau Epsilon Phi. The first national Jewish sorority was Alpha Epsilon Phi, founded at Barnard College in 1910, followed by the founding of Sigma Delta Tau (SDT) at Cornell University in 1910.[35] While not all of these organizations were so unabashed about identifying themselves as Jewish organizations as ZBT, none could avoid being identified as such by the non-Jewish majority. And by 1927 each of these national organizations had established a chapter at the University of Illinois, along

with two local Jewish sororities, Delta Alpha Omega and Rho Beta Iota.[36] Additionally, for those Jewish students who disdained all Greek-letter organizations that identified with a particular ethnic group, there was Pi Lamda Phi, a "nonsectarian" fraternity, founded at Yale in 1895 and reaching the Illinois campus by 1934, and its female counterpart, Phi Sigma Sigma, founded at Hunter College in 1913 and establishing a chapter at Illinois a decade later.[37]

The early Jewish student population at the University of Illinois, therefore, had various social niches, and unlike their counterparts at private schools, especially in the East, appeared to have suffered little if any officially sanctioned social discrimination. One indication of the absence of official approval of anti-Jewish (or anti-Catholic) social discrimination may be found in the minutes of the Council of Administration,[38] which refused to register "a local society known as the Ilus Club" until they struck the following clause from their constitution.

> Active membership shall consist of students of the University of Illinois with the exception of all Catholics and Jews.[39]

And in the larger social scene, the initially small and rather assimilationist Jewish student population enjoyed a fair amount of mobility. At the close of the nineteenth century, some were members of prominent Gentile fraternities and sororities and even recognized campus leaders. For example, Amelia Alpiner, the first known Jewish woman to

graduate from the university, was a charter member of Pi Beta Phi, one of the oldest sororities, established in 1895.[40] Recalls one member of the Cohen family, which played an important role in the establishment of Ivrim, the first Jewish student organization on campus, "she was identified as a typical Jewess but nevertheless a prominent woman on the campus."[41]

Opportunities for religious identification on the University of Illinois campus, however, were another matter. Ivrim, founded in 1908, and its successor Menorah, which reached the University of Illinois campus in 1912, were primarily educational and cultural in orientation. This lack of a genuinely religious Jewish organization was a matter of concern to many of the Sinai Temple families, both faculty and non-faculty, who welcomed student members of Ivrim, and later Menorah, into their homes for religious observances and cultural and educational gatherings. This concern, in turn, spurred the congregation, led by Isaac Kuhn, to raise the money needed to attract a rabbi who would be able to provide for the religious needs of the Jewish students. It was imperative, economics professor Simon Litman stressed in his memoir, "to have a rabbi who could win their confidence and whom they would respect."[42]

Finding and attracting such a rabbi, however, was no easy matter. As it was, the rabbinical students who came over from Hebrew Union College to officiate at the Reform congregation's

Sunday morning services were uneven at best. Recalls Litman, "they came inflicting upon us their amateurish delivery, their stiff gestures, and their more or less half-baked ideas." Student rabbis such as these, however, remained the norm for several years, occasionally supplemented by visits from prominent Chicago Reform rabbis. Then, one Sunday in 1921, Litman recalled:

> There came to preach in our temple a tall, impressive looking young man, with a cheerful contagious smile, with a genial manner, but with a great driving force back of his amiability, a young man with a great vision, with a desire to do service for his people.

The young rabbi's name was Benjamin M. Frankel.[43]

1. Unless specifying one town or the other, I will be employing the commonly used term "Champaign-Urbana."

2. Literally, "Congregation of Men of the West."

3. Eichhorn, Joys of Jewish Folklore, pp. 281, 283.

4. Asa Rubinstein, "Midwestern Jewish Commitment and Practical American Idealism: The Early History of Sinai Temple, Champaign, Illinois," Journal of the Illinois Historical Society 75 (Summer 1982), p. 83.

5. Ibid; and Milton W. Matthews and Lewis A. McLean, Early History and Pioneers of Champaign County, ed. The Champaign County Historical Archives, Historical Reprint Series Number 3 (Urbana, Ill.: The Champaign County Herald, 1886; reprint ed., Urbana, Ill.: The Urbana Free Library, 1979), pp. 40-41. For unknown reasons, Matthews and McLean did not include Abe Stern among the "pioneers" worthy of inclusion, even though Stern arrived in Champaign, Illinois before Morris Lowenstern.

6. Rubinstein, "The Early History of Sinai Temple," pp. 84-86.

7. A.L. Stern, "Mr. President and Friends," address in honor of the 50th Anniversary of Sinai Temple, given at Sinai Temple, Champaign, Illinois, 17 January 1954, Sinai Temple Records, Champaign County

Historical Archives, the Urbana Free Library. Henceforth referred to as STR, CCHA.

8. Rubinstein, "The Early History of Sinai Temple," p. 88.

9. Stern, "Mr. President and Friends," STR, CCHA.

10. Jerome J. Sholem, "Sinai Temple," unpublished history, 10 January 1971, STR, CCHA.

11. Rubinstein, "The Early History of Sinai Temple," p. 94.

12. Sholem, "Sinai Temple," STR, CCHA.

13. Rubinstein, "The Early History of Sinai Temple," pp. 96, 98.

14. Ibid. pp. 92-93; Interview with the B'nai B'rith Panel, Discussion of the 19th and 20th Century Jewish History of Champaign-Urbana, 21 November, 1971, STR, CCHA. Participants included Julius and Sol Cohen, Ben Hamburg, Ruth Berkson, and Jack Marco.

15. Allan Nevins, Illinois, American College and University Series, ed. George Phillip Krapp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), pp. 2-3, 10.

16. Winton U. Solberg, The University of Illinois 1867-1894: An Intellectual and Cultural History (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1968), pp. 177-79.

17. James Anderson Hawes, Twenty Years Among the Twenty Year Olds: A Story of Our Colleges of Today (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1929), pp. 207-208.

18. Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures From the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), pp. 5-7.

19. Ibid, p. 11.

20. Ibid, p. 53.

21. Henry Seidel Canby, Alma Mater: The Gothic Age of the American College, The Leisure Class in America, (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1936; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1975), p. 55.

22. Joseph Raphael Demartini, "Student Protest During Two Periods in the History of the University of Illinois: 1867-1894 and 1929-1942" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1974), p. 161.

23. Ibid, p. 292.

24. Paula S. Fass, The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920's (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.143.

25. Steinberg, The Academic Melting Pot, pp. 13-15.

26. Samson Raphaelson Transcriptions: Columbia Oral History Tape, June 1959, pp. 1, 6; Family Tape 1, October 8, 1969, p. 68; and Family Tape 2, October 15, 1969, pp. 82, 93. Record Series 26/20/38, Box 1, University of Illinois Archives (Henceforth referred to as UIA. I wish to thank Mr. Joel Raphaelson for permission to quote from his father's papers.

27. Samson Raphaelson Transcriptions: Family Tapes 3-5, October 15 and 18, 1969, pp. 192, 225, 231, Record Series 26/20/38, Box 1, UIA.

28. Samson Raphaelson Transcriptions: Family Tape 8, March 26, 1971, pp. 231-32. Record Series, 26/20/38, UIA.

29. Samson Raphaelson Transcriptions: Family Tape 1, October 8, 1969, p. 74; and Family Tape 8, March 26, 1971, pp. 238, 243, 248. Record Series 26/20/38, Box 1, UIA.

30. J. H. Hertz, ed. Pentateuch and Haftorahs: Hebrew Text, English Translation, and Commentaries, 2nd. ed. (London: Soncino Press, 1981), p. 754. Transliteration the author's.

31. Clarence K. Weil, ed. ZBT 1898-1923: The First Twenty-Five Years, (New York: Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity, 1923), pp. 14-27.

32. Literally translated as "Prince," but more liberally, "President" as well.

33. Literally, "Scribe."

34. "Fraternity Directory," Banta's Greek Exchange, January 1925, pp. 96-98.

35. Francis W. Shepardson, ed., Baird's Manual of American College Fraternities: A Descriptive Analysis of the Fraternity System in the Colleges of the Unites States, With a Detailed Account of Each Fraternity, 13th ed. (Menasha, Wis.: Collegiate Press, 1935), pp. 51, 188, 216, 360, 674.

36. Solberg, "The Jewish Presence at the University of Illinois," pp. 223-24.

37. Baird's Manual, pp. 180, 366; and Pi Lamda Phi, The Manual for Pledges of Pi Lamda Phi (New York: Pi Lamda Phi National Office, n.d.?), p.15.

38. Responsible for giving student organizations official approval.

39. Council of Administration Minutes, 18 June 1907, p. 52, Record Series 3/1/1, UIA.

40. "Mothers Assn. Made A Wise Move by Electing Mrs. Stern as President," Champaign-Urbana (Illinois) News-Gazette, 24 November 1967, p. 6.

41. Interview with the B'nai B'rith Panel, 21 November 1971, STR, CCHA.

42. Simon Litman, Looking Back: An Autobiographical Sketch ([Urbana]: n.p., [1963]), p. 59.

43. Simon Litman, Ray Frank Litman: A Memoir, Studies in American Jewish History, Number 3 (New York: American Jewish Historical Society, 1957), pp. 170-171.

CHAPTER III

THE FOUNDING OF B'NAI B'RITH HILLEL AND RESPONSE

In the early 1920's, the idea of a Jewish student congregation was neither completely new, nor unique to the University of Illinois campus. As early as 1897, members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the rabbinic body of the UAHC had brought up the problem of Jewish college students too easily shedding their religious identity.[1] It was not until 1906, however, that the CCAR began to discuss the problem in earnest. The report frankly admitted that "the religious destiny of the best instructed of the growing generation of American Jewry is left to few, scattered, spontaneous, and altogether unguided efforts." The committee report also called for the CCAR to collect data regarding the numbers of Jewish undergraduate and graduate students on American campuses, as well as existing Jewish studies programs.[2]

A decade later, CCAR proudly reported on the growing number of "student congregations" on campuses around the country, which provided religious services for Jewish college students, on a semi-regular basis. The first of these student congregations appeared at the University of Missouri in 1915, under the supervision of Rabbi Louis Bernstein, of St. Joseph, Missouri. Where independent student congregations did not exist, local congregations ministered the religious needs of the students. For example, in 1918, the CCAR reported on the

efforts of Congregation Adath Israel in Boston to reach the Jewish students at the area's colleges and universities:

> Temple Announcements are regularly sent to them and special functions arranged for them. They are invited to attend all study classes and lectures given by the congregation and are, moreover, frequent guests in the homes of members.[3]

Even on campuses where there was no established student congregation or local congregation that would reach out to the Jewish student population, CCAR reported in 1920, visiting rabbis occasionally conducted religious services "sometimes in connection with the observance of special holidays, and sometimes in connection with the delivery of an address."[4]

Although the CCAR described these largely ad hoc efforts mostly in positive terms throughout the meetings, some committee members also raised voices of concern about their long-term efficacy. Concerns ranged from the inability of visiting rabbis to engender long-term Jewish commitment to the possibility that the needs of students from Reform families were not being addressed through some of the steadily available Jewish programming. One instance of the concern within the Reform Movement, expressed in a statement within the 1920 committee report, read:

> The Menorah and the Zionist Societies are succeeding beautifully and most commendably in reaching the Jewish students of conservative and orthodox tendencies, and in a comparatively small degree the Jewish students of reform tendencies.

The report then called for "the Union and the Conference to get together" to fill this unmet need.[5] Additionally, the 1917

Committee noted that "up to this time practically all religious work among Jewish students has been confined to men's colleges or to co-educational institutions," and advised the CCAR rabbis not to neglect outreach efforts to Jewish college women, "the wives and mothers of another generation."[6]

Although CCAR's main concern was with the students from Reform Jewish background, the Committee more frequently spoke in terms that included nearly all Jewish students who sought a place in the American mainstream. Regular leadership was of especial concern because, as the 1919 Committee rightly pointed out, "rabbis are busy men, who have many duties to perform and many calls upon their time and energy," and logically, even the most welcoming congregational rabbis would be likely to prioritize their congregants' needs over those of students.[7]

The ideal, therefore, was to place resident rabbis at "the larger universities at least."[8] Although it can be inferred that the Committee was specifically referring to Reform rabbis, the question of at what stage of their careers these rabbis would be did not appear to be satisfactorily resolved. Student and recently graduated Rabbis were primarily considered, but Rabbi David Phillipson, a member of the 1918 Committee, argued in favor of older, more experienced rabbis on the grounds that Jewish college students could be "extremely critical," and that "few young men, no matter what their ability, have had the experience and the knowledge of

human nature that would qualify them to act as preachers to these young people."[9]

The problem of finding steady religious leadership for the Jewish student population was clearly not unique to the University of Illinois. It was especially pressing, however, due to the fact that during this time period the resident Jewish community was struggling to find both leadership and a permanent congregational home. According to Abram L. Sachar, the second director of the University of Illinois Hillel and the first national director, the debate over Sinai Temple's location essentially pivoted on how important a priority the resident Jewish community considered Jewish students to be.

Isaac Kuhn had favored locating the Temple building near the university because, he argued, "our future belongs to the kids." Jacob Kaufman, on the opposing side, countered that the Temple was for the townspeople and that "those youngsters who are interested in religious services, they can take the trouble to come downtown." Sachar concludes that Kaufman's faction finally won because his views were in fact typical of the Jewish residents of Champaign, who "didn't know much about the students and ...really didn't care about them." Sachar also adds that many residents were furthermore "escapists, who didn't want to have anything to do with Jewish life themselves."[10]

But if the majority of the Jewish residents of Champaign-Urbana had little interest in the religious needs of a

comparatively small Jewish student population, there were a few members of the campus community who more acutely noticed the absence of a Jewish religious student organization, which was what Menorah, pointedly, was not. In his commemorative article, published in the Menorah Journal in 1915, national founder Henry Hurwitz was careful to emphasize his organization's "non-partisan" nature, insisting that it was "neither orthodox nor reform."[11] It is not impossible, however, to speculate on the possibility of actual hostility among some culturally oriented Menorah members towards the student Congregations, or at least a desire to protect their "turf." An example may be found in the "Activities" section of the early Menorah Journal, which reported "friction" between the University of Michigan Menorah chapter and the local Students' Congregation. This conflict was based in part on the fear that the Congregation was "entering on Menorah's field of action" and threatening its very existence. Although this local conflict was resolved successfully, it in many ways foreshadowed Menorah's unavoidable struggle with the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations for the guardianship of Jewish student identity.[12]

Because the University of Illinois lacked a viable Jewish student congregation prior to the arrival of Rabbi Frankel, the Menorah association was the organization for promoting the Jewish students' cultural identity. As its emphasis was intellectual rather than religious, however, it finally had

limited appeal. Professor Simon Litman, who was an active supporter of the Menorah Association, along with his wife, Rachel (Ray) Frank Litman (who prior to her marriage to Litman, had a career lecturing on Jewish religious topics that earned her the distinction as the first woman in the United States to preach in synagogues), later admitted that "we over-estimated the willingness and the ability of the rank and file of Jewish students to participate in a program that offered them nothing more than intellectual food." Litman ruefully added that "they had enough of it in their University Courses."[13]

If Menorah was guilty of intellectual elitism, however, the Jewish fraternities and sororities were undeniably infused with social snobbery.[14] Scholar Marianne Sanua has noted that in the more prestigious groups, standards of selectivity approached and sometimes even exceeded "those of their commonly anti-Semitic gentile counterparts." While Sanua asserts that fraternities and sororities did provide their members with a sense of self-respect, it was clearly a self-respect based on notions of what non-Jews considered acceptable, rather than an assertion of the innate worthiness of their own heritage.[15] Finally, the student Zionist movements on American campuses tended to be not only decidedly non-religious in character, but diametrically opposed to the philosophy that most Reform Jewish students then had imbibed, one which rejected the separatism of a Jewish state. In any

case, while there was Zionist activity on the Illinois campus, it apparently had little impact on campus life and definitely left little evidence of its existence.[16]

There was, in short, no standing Jewish student organization at the University of Illinois that either genuinely embraced the broad spectrum of Jewish beliefs and viewpoints or specifically concerned itself with supporting Jewish religious expression. This absence was especially glaring in light of the existence of professionally-run religious foundations for Christian students of nearly every major denomination. Indeed, it could be argued that the University of Illinois pioneered the modern student-oriented religious foundation movement in general, beginning with the establishment of the first Wesley Foundation by the Methodist minister John C. Baker, whom Sachar has described as "the father of the foundation movement." As part of his pioneering role as a minister to students, Baker also seriously addressed the church-state separation issue that had traditionally limited organized religious activity within a university setting. Baker's solution to this problem, according to Sachar, was to promote the idea of a religious foundation that would not be <u>in</u> the university, but <u>at</u> the university. While this distinction might have appeared to be merely semantic, according to Sachar, it made a big difference in terms of acceptance of the foundation by university authorities. Other Christian denominations, including Episcopalians, Lutherans,

and Catholics fairly quickly followed suit in providing professionally-led religious programming similar to the Wesley Foundation. As Sachar has frankly admitted, "the Jews were the last to come in."[17]

Sachar, who had come to the University of Illinois in 1923, following graduate work at Cambridge, had already experienced difficulties finding work that in many ways typified the career paths of Jewish academics in the 1920's, especially those in the social sciences and humanities.[18] Indeed, during the early decades of the 20th century, Jewish representation on American college and university faculties had decreased.[19] Sachar's appointment, moreover, had come on extremely short notice, following a resignation that occured two weeks before classes were to begin. Sachar later recalled that when he was contacted by the department to ask if he were still interested, he "almost ran from St. Louis to Champaign-Urbana." As Sachar gradually became settled in the University of Illinois community, sharing an apartment with Rabbi Frankel, he very quickly became aware of not only the lack of a religious organization for Jewish students comparable to what was available for their Christian counterparts, but of the public concern over this situation voiced by a few of Champaign-Urbana's leading citizens, both Jewish and Gentile.[20]

As a local macher,[21] Isaac Kuhn's interest in the needs of the Jewish students was well-known within Champaign-Urbana,

largely through his efforts to have the Sinai Temple building located near the campus. Neither his awareness nor his advocacy, however, was confined to the University of Illinois campus community. In a 1915 letter to Adolph Kraus, a prominent Chicago lawyer who was influential both within and beyond the Jewish community, Kuhn wrote:

> At large Universities [sic] all Christian denominations rightfully are looking after their young men and women to interest them in better living - physically and morally. Such is the case at the University of Illinois, and every broad-minded Christian connected with a University [sic] expects the Jews to do as much for their young people.[22]

Professor Armin Koller, one of the few Jewish faculty members at Illinois to identify himself publicly as a Jew during that period, wrote to Kraus in a similar vein, mentioning the University President's pointed query of "why do not you Jews get together...and take care of your own flock, whom do you expect to do it for you?"[23] Both letters to Kraus clearly indicated that the absence of a religious organization for Jewish students did not escape the notice of the non-Jewish majority. One Gentile faculty member, however, maintained an interest in the spiritual welfare of the Jewish student population that went beyond mere commentary. He was Edward Chauncy Baldwin, assistant professor of English.

Baldwin, whose religious background was Congregationalist and whose special fields included Old Testament literature, was a Philosemite in the truest sense, maintaining nothing but the highest regard for the Jewish contribution to

civilization.[24] In his 1913 book, appropriately entitled Our Modern Debt to Israel, Baldwin argued that the real "crowning glory" of the nineteenth century "was not the founding of trusts...nor even the establishment upon a firm basis of the great modern republics, but the rediscovery of the Old Testament," which in turn, facilitated the spread of Israel's special message to the modern world. In explaining the development of Israel's message to the nations, Baldwin sympathetically examined the role of the prophets, priests, and sages of Hebrew Biblical and post-Biblical literature, and even the positive influence of Jewish law and ritual, traditionally reviled in Christian thought.[25]

Baldwin concluded that "to Israel the debt of our modern world is simply beyond compute" for its contribution of a system of thought that promoted justice, righteousness, and brotherhood.[26] It was with genuine alarm, therefore, that he viewed the drift of Jewish youth from their religious and cultural moorings. In a 1923 article, he publicly called for "a radical change in the attitude current towards Jewish youth," one that he described as leaving the new college-educated generation "admirably equipped for the economic battle of life but bankrupt in their souls."[27]

By that time, Baldwin had already become intimately familiar with the Jewish students' situation at the University of Illinois. Having attended meetings of both Ivrim and its successor, Menorah, Baldwin was acutely troubled by the

ignorance of Jewish students of their own history and heritage, or even of their own Bible. In an article written for B'nai B'rith News Baldwin explicitly pointed out how this ignorance increased their desire to assimilate. Many applicants intentionally left "religious affiliation" off their application blanks. "Even more deplorable," wrote Baldwin, "is their frequent affiliation of themselves with activities purely Christian," citing the willingness of some Jewish girls to join the Young Women's Christian Association, despite the membership obligation "to live henceforth as Christians."[28]

For a decade prior to the founding of Hillel, Baldwin had also publicly urged Jewish leaders to be a little less concerned with outside discrimination and to pay more attention to the rapidly diminishing loyalty of their own youth.[29] A later B'nai B'rith memorandum succinctly summed up his view of why the priority of too many Jewish leaders was off the mark. With respect to Baldwin's view of the comparative religious provisions for college students, the memorandum read:

> His criticism is not that Christians do too much, but that Jews do too little and he finds it hard to account for such inaction in marked contrast to their active and justifiable resentment at the threat of race discrimination in certain of our American universities.[30]

What a Jewish student foundation needed first of all was professional leadership. And when it came to serving the needs of Jewish college students, that leader could not be just

anybody. In 1915, Kuhn had written to Kraus of the need for "the permanent presence of a first class rabbi....who could radiate Jewishness in all directions" and who would be willing to "devote all his time and energy to the Jewish problem of the Jewish students."[31] Less than a decade later, Kuhn, Baldwin, and Litman had found such a rabbi in Benjamin M. Frankel.

In retrospect, Frankel has frequently not received the credit he deserved for his instrumental role in the founding of B'nai B'rith Hillel. One recent historian, when writing about Hillel's origins, makes no mention of him at all, attributing his accomplishments to Abram Sachar, who took over Hillel leadership following Frankel's premature death.[32] Sachar's friend and colleague, Maurice Jacobs, wrote to him in a 1975 letter that at the University of Pennsylvania the 'kids' thought that Benjamin Franklin founded Hillel![33] But it was at the crucial early stages that Frankel's dedicated leadership made the difference between success and failure.

As the "biweekly" student rabbi officiating at Sinai Temple since 1920, Rabbi Frankel was already familiar with the situation within the University of Illinois campus community, and had quickly become well-liked and highly respected within the community. By the time of his ordination in 1923, "Big Ben" Frankel had already established a commanding presence.[34] Koller's daughter, Ruth Berkson, recalls that when the tall and physically large Frankel stood at the bimah,[35] he could

sometimes block the ark (containing the Torah scrolls) from view.[36] Frankel's personality similarly commanded attention. Sachar has recalled that "when he walked into a room, he dominated very quickly."[37]

The kind of dominance that Frankel exuded, however, was hardly of a threatening sort. In the eulogies that followed his death in 1927, Frankel was invariably lauded for his personal warmth and kindness, as well as for his brilliance, idealism, and speaking ability.[38] Most importantly, however, Frankel developed an unmistakable dedication to Jewish youth, a dedication that would influence the direction of his career, following his ordination in 1923. With his qualifications, he could have easily accepted, and was offered (more than once) a comfortable congregational post, which would have provided him with both status and financial security. Instead, he chose to stay in Champaign and continue with his part-time post with Champaign's tiny congregation while he worked more seriously with the students to create the first Jewish campus foundation in the United States. Sachar has pointed out that "it was almost providential that he came to Illinois, because that's where the foundation movement started."[39]

Frankel's powers of persuasion and dedication also helped see the flagship Hillel foundation through its difficult first years. Financial support was not initially guaranteed, and money for salary, rent, and even maintenance "had to be won by convincing individuals that here was a practical and useful

service."[40] According to Sachar, "He therefore had to become a mendicant and beg his way during the first couple of years."[41] During the summer of 1923, Kuhn and Frankel's colleague, Rabbi Louis Mann, provided assistance by travelling to Chicago and around the state to garner further financial support for Hillel.[42]

Despite the financial and other difficulties, Frankel never let go of his vision of what a Jewish student foundation should be. He named his foundation "Hillel" after the first century Jewish scholar and sage, whose patience, modesty, devotion to Jewish tradition, and passionate love of Jewish learning identified him "indisputably as the ideal symbol of the Jewish spirit." Hillel has also been remembered for his famous saying, "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am for myself alone, what am I?," a statement that in many ways explicated the Hillel foundation's mission. It was pointedly not intended to be separatist, nor to take the place of participation in the life of the larger university community. Rather, it was intended as a <u>supplement</u> to Jewish student life, by providing Jewish students with not only a forum for education and religious services, but an authorized "spokesman" for their needs and concerns.[43] The Hillel movement was essentially one that was intended to make it possible for American Jewish college students to be comfortable with both the Jewish and the American aspects of their identities, rather than having to suppress one for the

sake of the other.

Frankel also sought to make the Hillel foundation as inclusive as possible, so that it was "neither Reform nor Orthodox, Zionist nor Non-Zionist." When an early appeal to the UAHC for permanent sponsorship fell through, Sachar concluded that the UAHC's refusal was "providential," because it kept Hillel from becoming sectarian, merely a "Reform appendage."[44] Finally, Frankel made sure that professional leadership did not erase the fact that Hillel was to be first and foremost a student organization. Towards that end, he made the foundation "a little democracy," maximizing student participation in planning and governance.[45] Students worked in tandem with the Hillel director on a student council composed of the student chairs and sub-chairs of the initial student committees on Social Welfare, Open Forum, Publicity, Publications, Menorah,[46] and Social and Religious Education. The Dramatics and House committees were later added to the organization's governmental structure.[47] Programming ranged from religious services to Jewish studies courses that could be taken for university credit (following the precedent set by the Wesley and Newman foundations) to purely social events.[48]

The initial reaction of the Jewish campus community to this new organization was at best lukewarm. Aside from the fact that the organization's initial focus on religious activities limited its appeal,[49] assimilation was still very much the order of the day among most of the Jewish students

(and even, for that matter, the Jewish faculty) at the University of Illinois in the early 1920's. Sachar's early involvement with Hillel was as a mediator between Frankel and a faculty that did not initially welcome the rabbi's presence.[50]

Members of the Jewish fraternities and sororities, who strove to be thoroughly integrated into the campus community, were especially unhappy with the appearance of such an overtly Jewish institution on the campus. One telling incident occured shortly after the Hillel Foundation sign was posted at the organization's first headquarters. A ZBT delegation came over to complain that the sign was "too conspicuous." In answering the ZBT brothers' charge, Sachar reminded them of their own fraternity's origin as a protest against Jewish exclusion from Gentile fraternities, as well as the distinctly Hebraic origin of the initials "ZBT." He later recalled: "When I told this to the head of the ZBT house, he nearly had a heart attack."[51]

Assimilationist sentiments, however, were not the only reason for the initial Jewish ambivalence towards the new organization, either within or beyond the University of Illinois campus. Many of the existing Jewish organizations, including Menorah, the Jewish fraternities and sororities, and the Zionist groups were initially antagonistic towards Hillel, fearing "the encroachment into their sphere of their activities."[52] Menorah, which had originally styled itself as the most pluralistic of Jewish student organizations,

especially saw Hillel as a threat to its position on American campuses. This tension, as well as the clash between the two organizations' visions of what a Jewish student organization should be was also evident in the correspondence between Sachar and Henry Hurwitz, the national president of Menorah, especially in one letter in which Hurwitz warned of the possibility of Hillel "merely strengthening tribal loyalties."[53]

By the end of the 1920's, however, Menorah was seriously on the decline as a student organization. Even as Hurwitz was pleading with Hillel for greater cooperation and with B'nai B'rith for greater funding, Hurwitz was devoting more time to the increasingly professionalized Menorah Journal and less time to the Intercollegiate.[54] Also, on many campuses, students rejected Menorah for what they perceived as its "narrow intellectual concerns," and the organization also withered for lack of both funds and professional leadership. In the end, the Menorah Journal, which became a forum for the anti-Stalin Left, outlasted the Intercollegiate Association by several decades.[55]

At the University of Illinois, the members of the newly founded Hillel immediately voted to disband Menorah and in its place formed a Menorah committee within the foundation.[56] And within a few years, most of the members of the Jewish fraternities and sororities had not only accepted but promoted Hillel, and many even used their influence to get freshmen to

come to religious services and other Hillel events. By 1929, according to Sachar, "the fraternities and sororities vied with each other for officerships in Hillel."[57]

The Jewish student rank and file also quickly came to welcome the presence of the Hillel foundation. By 1926, nearly 325 of the 560 Jewish students at the University of Illinois that year attended the religious services and by 1927 nearly all of the 650 Jewish students enrolled at the university identified themselves as Jewish.[58] Beyond numbers, there was a palpable change in attitude among the Jewish students towards their identities as Jews. The change was most succinctly expressed by Baldwin, who wrote that "the somewhat furtive attitude, so characteristic of the Jewish student formerly, has given place to a self-respecting manner which is neither arrogant nor cringing."[59]

Frankel himself had immediately sensed the possibilities of his organization and within the first year worked tirelessly both to find a permanent sponsor and to facilitate the extension of his foundation to other campuses. Following the UAHC's rejection of sponsorship, Frankel made an appeal to B'nai B'rith, the oldest and most inclusive of Jewish fraternal organizations. Founded in 1843, by a small group of German-born Jews for the purpose of "Uniting and elevating the Sons of Abraham," B'nai B'rith had grown in less than a century, from a small, quasi-Masonic organization to a diverse, international philanthrophic network that sponsored

a variety of charitable and educational projects affecting Jewish life.[60]

At the B'nai B'rith meeting, Frankel, only in his mid-twenties, made his appeal in front of some of the most important Jewish public figures of the time, including Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, whose oratory was compared to that of William Jennings Bryan. However, Sachar recalled "Ben Frankel stole the show with a passionate appeal" for the flagship Hillel foundation "to be taken under the wing of B'nai B'rith." Frankel also promised that if that were done, Hillel would become a national movement.[61] In the years immediately following B'nai B'rith's acceptance of sponsorship (at which time it was formally renamed B'nai B'rith Hillel foundation), Frankel immediately began work to keep his promise. In 1924, the second Hillel foundation was established at the University of Wisconsin--Madison, and by 1927 Hillel had been established at eight universities, along with many more requests for new foundations.[62]

Frankel did not live to see the full realization of his dream of a national Jewish student organization. In 1927, at the age of thirty, he died of heart failure. Recalled Sachar, "Perhaps it was all for the best that it took him quickly, for his suffering was horrible, and had he recovered he would have been a hopeless invalid."[63] Frankel's death was widely mourned and for a while, the future of the Hillel organization looked uncertain. Rabbi Mann was eventually appointed as the

Acting National Director and Sachar took over the leadership at the local level. It was under Sachar's leadership, however, that Hillel would truly take off as a national organization.[64]

1. Central Conference of American Rabbis, Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (Cincinnati, Ohio: May & Kreidler, 1897), p. 85. Hereafter referred to as "CCAR, Yearbook," and according to year.

2. CCAR, Yearbook (1906), pp.188-89.

3. CCAR, Yearbook (1918), pp. 96-97.

4. CCAR, Yearbook (1920), p. 51.

5. Ibid, p. 54.

6. CCAR, Yearbook (1917), p. 128.

7. CCAR, Yearbook (1919), p.54.

8. Ibid.

9. CCAR, Yearbook (1918), pp. 98-100.

10. Interview with Abram L. Sachar in Chicago, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA.

11. Henry Hurwitz, "The Decennial of the Menorah Movement," The Menorah Journal 1 (October 1915), p. 254.

12. "Activities of Menorah Societies," The Menorah Journal 1 (December 1915), p. 330.

13. Anita Libman Lebeson, Recall to Life--The Jewish Woman in America (Cranbury, N.J.: Thomas Yoseloff, 1970), pp. 160-61, 178; Simon Litman, "Hillel, Early Days," address, November 1948, Simon Litman Papers, Record Series 9/5/29, Box 4, UIA; Litman, Ray Frank Litman, pp. 35-49, 160-61; Jacob Rader Marcus, The American Jewish Woman: A Documentary History (New York: KTAV Publishing, 1981; and Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1981), p. 380; and Marcus, United States Jewry 1776-1985, Volume IV (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), pp. 116-17.

14. Dan A. Oren, Joining the Club: A History of Jews and Yale (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 84-85.

15. Marianne Sanua, "The Non-Recognition of Jewish College Fraternities: The Cases of Columbia and Brown University," American Jewish Archives 45 (Fall/Winter 1993), pp. 131-32.

16. The only archival information available about Avukah, the student Zionist organization whose editorials appeared in the Hillel Post during the 1930's and 1940's is a single notecard stating that " On October 29, 1947, Rabbi Saperstein reported that the organization [sic] had disbanded some years ago and had been replaced by the Intercollegiate Zionist Federation of America chapter." Another student Zionist organization, the Zionist Circle was reported as "inactive prior to 1939," Student Affairs: Student Programs and Services. Record Series 41/2/41, Boxes 4, 28, UIA. There are a flew flyers for the Intercollegiate Zionist Federation of America from 1946. Student Affairs: Student Organization Publications, Record Series 41/6/840, Box 36, UIA.

17. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA.

18. Ibid.

19. Jack Fischel and Sanford Pinsker, eds. Jewish-American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia, 1992 ed., s.v. "Academe," by Pamela S. Nadell.

20. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA.

21. Leo Rosten, The Joys of Yinglish (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), p. 328. Literally, "doer," but generally referring to a well-to-do person with influence in the community. If Isaac Kuhn could be considered a macher, than the Chicago community leader Adolph Kraus surely could be called a "gontser macher"(that is, "a real big shot").

22. Isaac Kuhn to Adolph Kraus, 18 November 1915, B'nai B'rith Hillel: Letters, Reports, and Various Other Items, Small Collections-1184, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institution of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio. Henceforth referred to as AJA, HUC.

23. Armin H. Koller to Adolph Kraus, 18 November 1915, B'nai B'rith Hillel Letters, Small Collections-1184, AJA, HUC.

24. Solberg, "The Jewish Presence at the University of Illinois," p. 225.

25. Edward Chauncy Baldwin, Our Modern Debt to Israel (Boston; Sherman, French, & Co., 1913), pp. 1-17 and passim.

26. Ibid, pp. 202-209.

27. Edward Chauncy Baldwin, "The Undying Fire," B'nai B'rith News, October 1923, p 38.

28. Ibid, p. 39.

29. B'nai B'rith, Hillel (n.d., n.p.), p. 9.

30. "Memorandum on the Jewish Student Situation in American Colleges," n.d., p. 1, B'nai B'rith Hillel, Small Collections-1184, AJA, HUC.

31. Kuhn to Kraus, 18 November 1915, B'nai B'rith Hillel, Special Collections-1184, AJA, HUC.

32. Daniel J. Elazar, Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1976), pp. 173-74.

33. Maurice Jacobs to Abram L. Sachar, 11 May 1975, Maurice Jacobs Papers, Small Collections-6627, AJA, HUC.

34. Samuel S. Cohen, "Friend and Leader," and Jerome Wechter, "The History of Hillel," The Hillel Magazine: Memorial Issue 20 January, 1928, pp. 4-5.

35. pulpit

36. Author's interview with Ruth Koller Berkson, Champaign, Illinois, 22 June 1995.

37. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA.

38. Hillel Magazine: Memorial Issue, 20 January 1928. As the title indicates, the entire issue, published shortly after Frankel's death, was devoted to eulogies.

39. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA.

40. B'nai B'rith, Hillel, p. 9.

41. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA.

42. Wechter, "The History of Hillel," p. 5.

43. B'nai B'rith, Hillel, p. 10.

44. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA.

45. Benjamin Frankel, "Attracting College Youth to the Synagogue," in CCAR Yearbook (1925), pp. 326-28; and Abram L. Sachar, "Hillel Ten Years After,"B'nai B'rith Magazine, October 1933, p. 30.

46. By then a subsection of Hillel at the University of Illinois.

47. Wechter, "History of Hillel," p. 5.

48. Solberg, "The Jewish Presence at the University of Illinois," pp. 229-30.

49. Dan Joseph, "Hillel," The B'nai B'rith International Jewish Monthly, October-November 1993, p. 62.

50. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA.

51. Ibid.

52. Litman, "Hillel, Early Days," p. 3, Simon Litman Papers, Record Series 9/5/29, Box 4, UIA.

53. Henry Hurwitz to Abram L.Sachar, 26 July 1928, Abram Leon Sachar, Correspondence 1924-1928, Manuscripts Collection #2, Box 51, AJA, HUC.

54. Henry Hurwitz to Abram L. Sachar, 18 June 1929, Sachar Correspondence 1929-1934, Manuscripts Collection #2, Box 51, AJA, HUC; and Howard M. Sachar, A History of the Jews in America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), p. 418.

55. Robert Alter, "Epitaph for a Jewish Magazine: Notes on the 'Menorah Journal,'" Commentary, May 1965, p. 51; Alan M. Wald, "The Menorah Group Moves Left," Jewish Social Studies 38 (Spring 1976), pp. 289-92; and Alan M. Wald, The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930's to the 1980's (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), p. 30.

56. "The Hillel Foundation," B'nai B'rith News, March 1924, p. 204.

57. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA.

58. Alfred M. Cohen, "Sabbath Eve at the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation, University of Illinois: Three Hundred and Twenty-Five Students Who Formerly Forgot They Were Jews, Attend Religious Worship," B'nai B'rith Magazine, October 1926, p. 40; and Louis L. Mann, "B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation," B'nai B'rith Magazine, April 1930, p. 267.

59. Edward Chauncy Baldwin, "Hitherto Hath the Lord Helped Us," pamphlet (Chicago: Webb-Linn, n.d.), Isaac Kuhn Correspondence, Small Collections-6493, AJA, HUC.

60. Edward E. Grusd, B'nai B'rith: the Story of a Covenant (New York: Appleton-Century, 1966), pp. 13-23, 90-91, and passim.

61. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA.

62. Leo Diamond, "The B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation at Wisconsin," B'nai B'rith Magazine, July 1926, p.341; and Sachar, "Hillel Ten Years After," p. 35.

63. Abram L. Sachar to Henry Hurwitz, 6 January 1928, Sachar Correspondence 1924-1928, Manuscripts Collection #2, Box 51, AJA, HUC.

64. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA.

CHAPTER IV

THE GROWTH OF HILLEL AND DECLINE OF AMERICAN ANTISEMITISM

When Abram L. Sachar took the helm as acting director of the University of Illinois Hillel, following Rabbi Frankel's death, he was no stranger either to the organization or the needs of the Jewish student population. As stated earlier, he was actively involved in the flagship Hillel during its first few years, serving as the faculty advisor and helping the fledgling organization gain support within the university and the off-campus communities, both Jewish and Gentile.[1] In addition, wrote the editors of the Hillel Bulletin, "Dr. Sachar has been one of the Foundation's best friends since its organization four years ago."[2]

Initially, Sachar's appointment as Acting Director was meant to be (as the title implied) temporary. Within a few years, however, directing first the University of Illinois Hillel, and by 1933 the growing national organization, would become the principal focus of his career for many years.[3] At first, Sachar took on the leadership of the local Hillel, while Rabbi Louis Mann of Chicago was appointed National Director. Each initially tried to combine his Hillel work with existing commitments, Sachar to his academic career and Rabbi Mann to Chicago's Sinai Temple.[4]

It became clear fairly quickly, however, that neither would have the time or energy to be able to combine their previous responsibilities with the demands of a growing

organization. In 1932, Rabbi Mann resigned from the national directorship, and Sachar took over the full-time responsibility for the national and the local Hillel.[5] There was, however, another reason behind Sachar's ultimate decision to leave the University of Illinois history department in order to devote his energies to Hillel. As early as 1929,the president of the university reluctancy informed Sachar that he could not continue to hold simultaneous positions as the head of a religious foundation and as a faculty member at a state-supported university due to the potential disapproval of the state legislature, on which the school depended for its support.[6]

Under Sachar's leadership, Hillel continued to grow and proliferate, and became a truly national organization. As the foundation spread, it became more diversified, adapting itself to the needs of different Jewish student populations on different campuses in different regions of the country. By 1938, the development of Hillel Counselorships, which provided more limited programming, made Hillel services available at colleges and universities whose Jewish student populations were too small to support a full-fledged Hillel foundation and which were not located near an existing foundation.[7] Even while Hillel foundations spread nationwide, however, in the early decades the national office (at Sachar's insistence) remained in Champaign, Illinois. Long after his career with Hillel ended, Sachar still maintained that the National

Director "ought to be on a campus, a small-town campus, in the heart of student life," in order to avoid becoming merely "a bureaucrat at a desk in a big city."[8]

Curiously enough, the region of the country where Hillel made a comparatively late appearance was New York City. Historian Deborah Dash Moore has commented upon the "strange contrast" between Hillel's success in obtaining support for Hillel programming, including accredited classes "with its apparent reluctance to reach out to the large numbers of children of Jewish immigrants attending college in the New York City area."[9] The hesitancy of the Hillel organizers was based in large part upon the belief that it was simply unnecessary in an area "where there were literally hundreds of Jewish organizations easily accessible to students." Hillel operatives also feared that they would not be able to develop a technique that would work successfully on campuses "where nearly all of the students commuted, leaving for their homes immediately after classes."[10]

The successful establishment of the Hillel foundation at Brooklyn College in 1940 quickly dispelled these doubts and furthermore proved Hillel's adaptability to the needs of a Jewish student population as different from that of the University of Illinois as the well-established German Jewish families of Champaign-Urbana were from the working-class Russian immigrants whose children made up the majority of the student population at Brooklyn College. The most immediate

measure of the Brooklyn College Hillel's success was the quick demise of the school's reputation as a "red" college. The Brooklyn College Hillel also pioneered the Interfaith Arbitration Council, which went beyond the usual "good-will" efforts to defuse and resolve interfaith tensions. Finally, in one of the most concrete expressions of interfaith good will, the Brooklyn College Hillel made its foundation facilities available to the college's comparatively small Catholic and Protestant student organizations.[11]

These kinds of activist efforts to promote good will and understanding between Jews and Christians on college campuses could not have been more fortuitously timed. Although the anti-immigrant fervor leveled off following the passage of the unprecedented restrictive immigration quotas of 1924, the all-around level of antisemitism remained high through the remainder of the 1920's, and would steadily increase during the Great Depression and the coming of World War II.[12]

Discrimination in educational admissions also continued long after the "immigrant problem" had been resolved. Although all Jews who pursued a postsecondary education were vulnerable, the actual effects of admissions discrimination varied according to both educational level and institutional location. Regarding the difference between undergraduate and graduate education, Leonard Dinnerstein has pointed out that while discrimination at the undergraduate level was more widely felt, it was barriers to admission to graduate and

professional schools that ultimately had the most debilitating effect. While rejection from private colleges and universities caused many Jewish students to turn to public institutions, being shut out of medical schools often resulted in forced career changes.[13]

Geographical region also sometimes (though by no means always) made a difference in the severity or mildness of admissions discrimination. For a variety of reasons, among them, the small and comparatively assimilated Jewish populations in these regions, schools in the Midwest, South, and Far West were far less likely to shut out Jewish applicants as a matter of policy than their Northeastern counterparts. On the other hand, Marcia Graham Synott has noted that by the 1930's, quotas managed to "follow" Jewish applicants, as certain schools "'hurriedly' erected 'barricades' in the form of 'regional quotas'" in order to stop a perceived mass influx of out of state Jewish students. Synott has also pointed out, however, that within any given region there was always room for differences in policies (and attitudes) among individual schools. The University of Illinois remained comparatively open throughout the era of admissions quotas. Between 1918 and 1934, the percentage of enrolled Jewish undergraduates rose from 4.25 to 9.06 and Jewish enrollment in the university's medical school rose by an even larger percentage between 1929 and 1934.[14]

Even then, as explained earlier, for most Jewish

undergraduates, getting admitted was only half the battle. As Stephen Steinberg has poignantly explained, the "Jewish problem" was not confined to issues of class and ethnicity. Rather, according to Steinberg, "the seriousness and diligence with which Jews pursued their studies not only represented unwelcome competition, but implicitly called into question the propriety of a 'gentleman's college.'" As a result, charges of Jewish social undesirability pervaded the campus atmosphere.[15]

Campus antisemitism was not even limited to its most commonly recognized form--social discrimination within a highly status-conscious student culture. Expressions of anti-Jewish religious prejudice were also a reality, even on the largely secularized American campuses of the early twentieth century. In 1920 one such incident occurred at the University of Illinois, concerning observance of the Sunday Sabbath, which caused muckraker Upton Sinclair to take notice in his expose of college life, The Goose-Step. It was an outgrowth of a long-running dispute concerning the Sunday closing of the university's gymnasium and the tennis courts.[16]

Students had already written letters to the editor of the Daily Illini, questioning and even raising objections to the Sunday closings, sometimes in fairly strong terms. However, when Samuel Shapiro wrote his comparatively lighthearted letter on the subject, suggesting that "the day of rest" should be redefined to make recreational exercise an

acceptable activity, Thomas Arkle Clark, the Dean of Men, responded swiftly. In a letter that appeared two days later, Clark declared that "this is a Christian country established upon Christian traditions," and proclaimed that it was the responsibility of the Christian community "to maintain these principles, even when they may be opposed by foreigners or by those who would like to wipe out all our Christian traditions."[17]

Several letters followed this exchange and while a few writers supported Clark, and one even cheered his effort to "defend the banner of Christ," more were critical of the Dean's statement, one accusing him of "giving in to emotionalism and hate."[18] Clark issued a written apology a few days later, but the incident was nonetheless significant in illustrating how a Jew could serve as a convenient lightning rod in a more widespread controversy.[19] Much of the evidence, however, suggests that for the most part, the University of Illinois community gave comparatively little sanction to overt expressions of antisemitism. For example, a 1923 Daily Illini editorial condemned Harvard's decision to impose Jewish admission quotas.[20]

What effect did the arrival of Hillel have on the status of the Jewish student at the University of Illinois? While the initial Jewish response may have been ambivalent, the non-Jewish reaction appeared to be at worst indifferent and at best unqualifiedly positive. The editorial board of the Daily

Illini, which had in the past urged student churchgoing, also hailed the arrival of the first Jewish religious foundation, declaring that "The Jewish student at the University has the respect of every one....They have won a place here and are to be commended for it."[21] In the subsequent years, Hillel had little trouble being accepted as an integral part of university life. Ben Frankel became the first rabbi to deliver an address at the All-University service, and in 1927, he co-authored an interfaith prayer with the directors of the Wesley and Newman foundations that was ultimately published nationwide. Although the Catholic participant, Reverend John O'Brien, was criticized by his Bishop for taking part, the prayer itself elicited an overall positive response.[22]

Sachar also witnessed the positive effect of Hillel on people's minds and hearts in a very personal way. As a young instructor, he had arrived in Champaign-Urbana not knowing anybody and uncertain of his housing prospects due to the fact that he had received his appointment at the last minute. He found a suitable room in a private house and made arrangements to rent it, only to be asked two days later if he was Jewish by the renter, who then informed him that she and her husband "as pious Christians" would not feel comfortable having him live in their house. Sachar did manage to find another room, out at the edge of town, and lived there for a few months before he began sharing an apartment with Frankel. He nonetheless remembered the incident, which undoubtably gave

him his first major impression of the Champaign-Urbana community, as "almost fatal."[23]

A decade or so later, when the story of Hillel had appeared in the local newspapers, and Sachar had been appointed National Director, the first efforts were made to erect a permanent foundation building after years of using rented quarters. A young woman came to offer Sachar a building site, adding that she thought it would be an ideal place to build a Hillel foundation. When she described the site, Sachar realized that it was exactly where he had once tried to rent a room. Sachar then told the young woman his story. When he did, he later recalled, she turned red and told him "I want you to know that my mother, who is no longer here, regretted every day of her life, that un-Christian attitude that she had taken." She added that in the subsequent years after rebuffing Sachar, her mother had read about the Hillel foundation, regretted her action, and spoke of how proud the family would have been if he had boarded in their home.[24]

The staff and student membership of the University of Illinois Hillel Foundation (and others) were nothing if not fully conscious of the existence of antisemitism, even within the fairly tolerant Champaign-Urbana community, that continued through the 1930's and 1940's. A 1933 Hillel Post editorial discussed the "Jewish problem" at Illinois and concluded that while "the prejudice against Jews in some quarters is too deep-seated to be affected by what a small, shifting group can

accomplish," it was possible for the Jewish students to improve the campus situation simply by going out and taking greater part in the campus community. The author insisted that "there is no faculty prejudice against Jews and there is no real student prejudice, either, if you'll but get in to find out."[25]

As much as this editorial affirmed the possibility of Jewish acceptance within the campus community, it also betrayed a certain self-criticism and self-consciousness on the part of the Jewish minority at Illinois that was echoed across the country as Hitler became an increasingly visible threat in Europe and antisemitism correspondingly spread within the United States. Although European-style political antisemitism never gained a firm foothold in the United States, antisemitic Christian clergymen, most notably Father Charles Coughlin (the "radio priest") gained a widely popular following, and the number of antisemitic organizations proliferated.[26]

Historian Howard M. Sachar has pointed out that for contemporary commentators to accuse the 1930's and 1940's American Jewish community of a lack of will to action is to ignore the historical fact that during those decades Jews were "a beleaguered and mutilated people, their powerlessness devastatingly exploited and exposed by Adolf Hitler."[27] Accusations about excessive Jewish power belied the reality of a people who, despised from without and divided from within,

had very little real power. The end result was an undeniable pessimism and fearfulness on the part of most American Jews, whose leaders increasingly urged them to maintain a low profile and be circumspect in their behavior.[28]

By 1932, America's college and university campuses, following a three-year lag, felt the full effects of the Great Depression, which included a significant drop both in enrollment and revenues. The effect of on the student populations could be summarized as a decrease in collegiate frivolity and an increased percentage of students working to make their way. For the first time, fraternities and sororities fell seriously out of favor, and organized student radicalism grew to the point of coalescing into the first mass student movement in the mid-1930's.[29]

Although the Hillel foundation movement felt the economic pinch of the depression and the general pessimism of times, it not only survived but continued to grow and prosper. To keep afloat as fewer outside funds were forthcoming, local foundations for the first time requested student (and parental) contributions towards the Hillel programming, and even instituted annual membership dues (although no student was excluded for inability to pay). Although B'nai B'rith funding <u>was</u> reduced (as was most B'nai B'rith programming), never did the leaders of the larger affiliated Jewish community hint, let alone publicly suggest, that the Hillel Foundations were an expense that B'nai B'rith could not bear.

Rather, requests for new foundations were unhesitatingly approved and the benefits of the Hillel program were continuously extolled at B'nai B'rith meetings.[30]

The foundations, in the meantime, expanded their social service work and turned them increasingly inward, to address the needs of an increasingly indigent student constituency. Among the best known of these programs was the emergency loan fund, which provided non-interest bearing loans to needy students for the basic necessities of college life, including doctor bills, books, laboratory fees, and graduation expenses. To ensure that the poorest students were decently clothed, several foundations, including that of the University of Illinois, maintained wardrobes of clothes to lend (and more affluent students were urged to donate unneeded clothing to the Hillel wardrobe).[31] Housing was another area where the Illinois Hillel foundations and its counterparts elsewhere provided assistance for Jewish students, something the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. had done for Christian students for decades.[32]

Even as the University of Illinois Hillel expanded its social service programming, throughout the 1930's and into the war years, religious, cultural, and social activities were maintained at their high-quality level. Jewish studies classes taught by Sachar and others remained popular among both Jewish and gentile students. The popular Open Forum series, which presented speakers from outside the university community,

featured such luminaries as journalist Dorothy Thompson, socialist leader Norman Thomas, and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.[33] A few of the programs, such as the graduate student social group and the informal Friday night speaker series, remain part of the University of Illinois Hillel programming even today.[34]

In the final years of the Depression decade through World War II, however, Hillel most impressively rose to meet the difficulties facing Jewish students. According to Dinnerstein, during those years leading up to World War II, the rising tide of antisemitism "paralleled increased national involvement with European affairs." Opposition to entry into another European war came from many corners of American society, but some of the anti-war movements, such as the America First Committee (despite the efforts of AFC leader John T. Flynn to repudiate profascist and antisemites within the organization), had an undeniably antisemitic tinge, and in some cases, openly promoted the belief that "a vengeful Jewish cabal was seeking to thrust the United States into yet another conflict."[35]

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor effectively ended mass opposition to United States entry into World War II, but neither the common effort to win the war nor the war-engendered prosperity was able to stem, let alone reverse, the rising tide of American antisemitism, which boded especially ill for American Jewish efforts to rescue their European coreligionists from the Nazi onslaught.[36] The closing of

immigration doors against Jewish refugees by the United States (and other nations) is already well-known. What is less realized is that many Jewish organizations made some concerted effort to lobby for maximal use of the immigration quotas or to pass emergency legislation to allow more refugees temporary entry, while others raised money to pay the steep emigration expenses that barred the escape of others, or made special efforts to rescue selected individuals or groups. If anything, therefore, the seemingly piecemeal rescue efforts of the American Jewish community were in fact quite commendable, given the hostile environment in which these efforts were carried forth. If any legitimate criticism can be leveled at Jewish organizations the 1930's and 1940's, it could be for the lack of unity, as different sectors advocated different methods and tactics to bring the European Jewish plight to American attention and even to deal with day-to-day antisemitism.[37]

The differing viewpoints among Jewish groups during the late 1930's and early 1940's were evident between Jewish student groups on the University of Illinois campus. The editors of the Hillel Post cautioned their readers to avoid "attracting undue attention by creating too much noise" and warned that "rowdyism is unforgivable in any student, but in a Jewish student dangerous." Yet the editors also printed editorials written by the local president of Avukah, the national student Zionist organization that more forcefully

spoke out against the Nazi atrocities and urged greater Jewish student activism.[38]

When it came to the refugee crisis, however, Hillels across the country translated spoken concern into action. The Hillel Refugee Project was the brainchild of Sachar and other Hillel leaders who learned that European Jewish students could enter the country on student visas, which permitted them two years of study at an American University, with subsequent renewal privileges. Beginning with the University of Illinois campus, Sachar talked with the leaders of Jewish fraternities and sororities to provide room and board for the refugee students, while the Hillel organization on each campus provided money for the minor living expenses. Sachar also took a leave of absence from the National Directorship and spent several months in Washington, D.C., making visa and transportation arrangements for each student, and personally encountering antisemitic intransigence from State Department officials who refused to provide a blanket endorsement to bring over students.[39]

Despite the frustration that he encountered, Sachar could later proudly recall the successes of Hillel's efforts to rescue "some of the most gifted kids in the world, who would have no chance over there," as well as to give Jewish fraternities and sororities "a reason for being that was more than social."[40] Although the bulk of the Hillel Refugee work took place in the pre-war years, it continued in a different

direction following the United States entry into the war, which virtually shut off immigration altogether. When it was no longer possible for Hillel to bring in new people, the Hillel Refugee program then focused on refugee students who had already entered the United States, but had "gone through such a terrifying experience abroad that the stay in college has been a real therapy." A B'nai B'rith convention report on the refugee program stated that "if Hillel had done little else...but help in this superb venture, it would have justified itself."[41] In the postwar decades, the Hillel Refugee program was occasionally revived, first to sponsor sixty more students immediately after the war, then again in 1956, following the revolt in Hungary, and in 1979, in the wake of the Khomeni revolution in Iran.[42]

The Hillel wartime program, however, did not stop with the Refugee Program--Hillel members and leaders raised money for more general refugee and Zionists, contributed to the larger war effort, and created special programming for Jewish soldiers stationed near the campus community. Hillel Directors played an especially valuable role, fighting the spread of Nazi propaganda on American campuses, stepping up interfaith good-will efforts, providing counseling to help students deal with the unusual stresses of wartime, and keeping in touch with those who left college to go into military service.[43]

During the years immediately following World War II, American Jews witnessed a marked decline in the level of

antisemitism, following decades of steadily rising bigotry. Dinnerstein notes that given these circumstances, especially the wartime escalation of bigotry, "the transformation in public rhetoric and behavior afterwards was so swift that careful observers were at a loss to explain the changes." He is also careful to point out that while antisemitism did not disappear altogether during the postwar decades, it lost its previous social acceptability, which in turn may have hastened its decline.[44]

Two of the most frequently cited reasons for the postwar decline in antisemitism are the discovery of the extent of Hitler's "Final Solution," which exposed the consequences of prejudice for their true ugliness, and the emergence of the modern State of Israel, which gave Jews the world over a renewed sense of pride in a restored homeland. In addition, there are two less immediately apparent reasons, both cited by Dinnerstein. The first is that the postwar economic boom spurred a renewed sense of American optimism and the unprecedented increase in social and economic opportunity following the war deflected American attention from "the alleged culpabilities and minorities in their midst." The second reason, which would have special impact on American college campuses, was the change in attitude experienced by the many veterans who, after fighting Hitler's overtly racist regime, and in some cases, experiencing discrimination as they served their country, resolved to fight bigotry at home.[45]

The en masse appearance of returned war veterans changed the college atmosphere in profound and lasting ways. In the first place, the returning soldiers brought a war-hardened seriousness of attitude and little patience with collegiate hijinks and fraternity hierarchies, as well as little use for the traditional racial and religious barriers within the fraternities. Finally, the G.I. Bill of Rights, with its generous educational provisions for returning veterans, democratized higher education as never before.[46]

Although by the early 1950's, the numbers of veterans on campuses declined, their attitude of greater academic seriousness and social tolerance remained. The 1954 Supreme Court desegregation decision also affected the fraternities and sororities, and many battles were fought between administrations and Greek organizations, as well as local chapters and national hierarchies, over the removal of racial and religious barriers.[47] During the postwar decades, admissions barriers also fell slowly but steadily, as states outlawed discrimination in nonsectarian and public institutions and Federal support was made contingent on nondiscriminatory policies. The University of Illinois was one of many schools that eliminated potentially discriminatory application questions in response to a 1948 survey by the Chicago Council against Racial and Religious Discrimination.[48] In addition, the long deferred dream of a Jewish-sponsored, nonsectarian university became a reality

with the opening of Brandeis University in 1948. Sachar, following his retirement from the National Directorship of Hillel, became the new university's first president.[49]

If American Jews today are "at home in America," as Dinnerstein has proclaimed,[50] than Jewish students are surely at home on American campuses, as they have never been previously. Harvard, whose name was at one time practically synonymous with quotas, now boasts one of the most widely acclaimed Hillel foundations in the United States.[51] Jewish studies are now an integral part of the academic offerings on campuses nationwide, and the needs of Sabbath and holiday-observant Jewish students are honored almost universally.[52]

Yet all is not well on American campuses, any more than it is beyond them. If antisemitism on the political right has declined precipitously, left-wing antisemitism, usually expressed in the guise of anti-Zionism, has risen noticeably. On American campuses, this leftist antisemitism has especially pervaded Black student and Third World student activism, and even the campus multicultural movement.[53] More "traditional" antisemitism has also made a resurgence in recent decades, usually in the form of "fraternity vulgarities and athletic excesses" that often make use of Nazi imagery.[54] Still another contemporary form of campus antisemitism, too long unrecognized for what it is, has been the attacks, usually (though not always) verbal, against JAPs (Jewish American Princesses), unique in that "JAP-Baiting" solely targets

Jewish women.[55]

On the other side, acceptance has come at a price, namely unprecedented rates of Jewish-Gentile intermarriage, as well as increased voluntary assimilation. While few American Jews would wish for a return to the bad old days of bigotry-imposed segregation, the challenge of "keeping Jews Jewish" in a free society is one that continues to confound American Jewish leaders and organizations. The current leaders of Hillel are no exception, as they continue to reevaluate and seek ways to fulfill Hillel's role as envisioned by Benjamin Frankel--"to stimulate a Jewish consciousness in the university student."[56]

1. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA.

2. "Commission Chooses Dr. Sachar to Direct Foundation Activities: History Instructor Will Serve as Acting Director for Semester; to Conduct Temple Services," Hillel Bulletin 16 February 1928, pp. 1-2.

3. The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, 1943 ed., s.v. "Sachar, Abram Leon."

4. Deborah Dash Moore, B'nai B'rith and the Challenge of Ethnic Leadership, SUNY Series in Modern Jewish History, Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore, eds. (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1981), p. 142.

5. Ibid.

6. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA.

7. B'nai B'rith, Hillel, pp. 4-5.

8. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA. Although the national Hillel office remained in Champaign, Illinois through Sachar's tenure, in later years it was moved to Washington, D.C.

9. Moore, The Challenge of Ethnic Leadership, pp. 148-49.

10. B'nai B'rith, Hillel, pp. 42-43.

11. Ibid., pp. 26, 43.

12. Dinnerstein, Antisemitism in America, pp. 105, 128.

13. Leonard Dinnerstein, "Education and the Advancement of American Jews," in Uneasy at Home: Antisemitism and the American Jewish Experience (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 50, and Synott, "Anti-Semitism and American Universities," p. 259.

14. Synott, "Antisemitism and American Universities," pp. 244, 259-62.

15. Stephen Steinberg, The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America (New York: Atheneum, 1981), pp. 232-33.

16. "The Closed Sunday," Daily (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Illini, 8 October 1919, p. 4; "Intolerance," Daily Illini 16 November 1919, p. 4; and Upton Sinclair, The Goose-Step, (n.p.: Upton Sinclair, 1923; reprint ed., n.p.: Bonibooks, 1936), pp. 260-61. Sinclair described Dean Clark's letter to the Jewish student's questioning of the Sunday closings as "a piece of insolent rudeness."

17. "The Closed Sunday," Daily Illini, 8 October 1919, p. 4; "Inquitious Champaign on a Sunday," Daily Illini, 19 February 1920, p. 4; "The Reasons for a 'Champaign Sunday'," Daily Illini 21 February 1920, p. 4.

18. "In Reply to Dean Clark," Daily Illini, 22 February 1920, p. 4; "He Who Runs May Read," Daily Illini, 24 February 1920, p. 4; "A Reply to Mr. Binford," "An Old Fashioned Idea," "Toleration," and "Why Discriminate," Daily Illini, 25 February 1920, p. 4; "What Christianity Is," Daily Illini, 26 February 1920, p. 4, "The University Has No Religion,""Tyranny of the Majority," and "In Reply to Binford," Daily Illini, 27 February 1920, p. 4; and "In Reply to Binford," Daily Illini, 28 February 1920, p. 4.

19. "What Dean Clark Meant," Daily Illini 26 February 1920, p. 4; and Solberg, "The Jewish Presence at the University of Illinois," p. 222. Winton U. Solberg makes no mention of the controversy that predated Shapiro's letter to the editor.

20. "Harvard's Decision," Daily Illini 12 April 1923, p. 4.

21. "Go To Church Today," Daily Illini, 23 September 1923, p.4; "Judaism Unknown to Jewish Youth Declares Baldwin," Daily Illini, 19 October 1923, p. 8; and "Welcome to Hillel," Daily Illini, 10 November 1923.

22. Winton U. Solberg, "The Catholic Presence at the University of Illinois," Catholic Historical Review 76 (October 1990), pp. 788-89; and Solberg, "The Jewish Presence at the University of Illinois," p. 233.

23. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA.

24. Ibid.

25. "Jewish Problem at the University of Illinois? Yes, Indeed--Two of Them," B'nai B'nai Hillel Post 27 October 1933, p. 2.

26. Dinnerstein, Antisemitism in America, pp. 111-13, 123, 126-27.

27. H. Sachar, The Jews in America, p. 552.

28. Dinnerstein, Antisemitism in America, pp. 123-24.

29. Robert Cohen, When the Old Left Was Young: Student Radicals and America's First Mass Student Movement, 1929-1941 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 4-7, 9-11, 15-20; Demartini, "Student Protest," pp. 319-20; Eileen Eagan, Class, Culture, and the Classroom: The Student Peace Movement of the 1930's, American Civilization, Allen F. Davis, ed. (Philadelphia; Temple University Press, 1981), pp. 3-4, 10-11; and Roger Ebert, ed., An Illini Century: One Hundred Years of Campus Life (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967), pp. 125-26, 135-37, 141-42.

30. Report of Proceedings of District Grand Lodge No. 2, B'nai B'rith, June 1931 to May 1932, Including Eightieth Annual Meeting Held at Dayton, Ohio, Commencing May 29, 1932, pp. 105-111; and Report of Proceedings of the District Grand Lodge No. 2, B'nai B'rith, June 1938 to May 1939, Including Eighty-Seventh Annual Meeting Held at Kansas City, Missouri. Commencing May 28, 1939, pp. 128, 141; "Foundation Addresses Appeal Directly to Jewish Students For Aid to Continue Activity: Al Hollender Named General Chairman; Eight Team Captains Selected to Canvass Independents as Full Support of Campaign is Assured by Organized Collegians, B'nai B'rith Hillel Post, 18 December 1933, p. 1; and "Keep Student Activities Alive," B'nai B'rith Hillel Post, 17 December 1934, p. 2.

31. B'nai B'rith, Hillel, p.23; and "Needy Students Provided With Clothing by New Welfare Committee: All Houses Donate Garments for Secret Distribution as Committee Sees Fit," Hillel Post, 14 October 1938, p. 1.

32. B'nai B'rith, Hillel, p. 23; and Thomas Arkle Clark and Arthur Ray Warnock, Facts for Freshmen Concerning the University of Illinois (Champaign, Il: University of Illinois, 1911), p. 81.

33. "Hitler's Rule Described: Miss Thompson Paints Picture of Persecution," B'nai B'rith Hillel Post 8 December 1933, p. 1; "200 Students Enroll For 3 Hillel Courses Under Dr. Sachar," B'nai B'rith Hillel Post 19 October 1935, p. 3; "Mrs. Roosevelt to Open Hillel Forum Series: 'Youth in World of Turmoil,' to Be the Opening Subject," Hillel Post, 8 October 1937, p. 1; "Hillel Proudly Presents Mrs. F.D.R.: Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt Speaks Next Friday; Youth is Topic," Hillel Post, 5 November 1937, p. 1; Lester Seigel, "Mrs. Roosevelt Discusses Timely Topics During Her Stay Here," Hillel Post 23 November 1937, p. 1; David S. Hessell,"Norman Thomas, Economist, Lecturer, Inaugurates '39 Open Forum Series: Twin Cities Respond Well in Open-Forum Ticket Sale; Complete Sellout Seen," Hillel Post, 27 October 1939, p. 1; "Enrollment in Hillel Courses Increased," Hillel Post 21 February 1940, p. 3.and "Dorothy Thompson Will Open New Hillel Forum Series October 29, " Hillel Post, 8 October 1941, p. 1.

34. Hillel Foundation at the University of Illinois, At Hillel! August 23 -October 17, 1995, newsletter, (Champaign, IL: [AriLeib Productions,] 1995). More recently, the University of Illinois Hillel Foundation has been promoting other "new-old" activities such as the Women's Group and the Hillel Chorus, as well as a revival of its historic partnership with Sinai Temple.

35. Dinnerstein, Antisemitism in America, pp. 128-29; H. Sachar, The Jews in America, p. 519; and Michele Flynn Stenehejm, An American First: John T. Flynn and the America First Committee (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House Publishers, 1976), pp. 121-23, 129-34.

36. Dinnerstein, Antisemitism in America, p. 127.

37. Abraham J. Karp, Haven and Home: A History of the Jews in America (New York: Schocken Books, 1985), pp. 293, 298; and David S. Wyman. The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941-1945 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp. 327-330.

38. "We Heed Forbearance," Hillel Post, 18 February 1937, p. 2; "Enormous Campaign Undertaken by Avukah to Acquaint Students With Judaism, Hillel Post, 9 December, 1938, p. 3; and "Avukah Urges Participation of Student Body For Aid In Fight Against Fascism," Hillel Post, 24 February 1939, p. 3.

39. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976, STR, CCHA; "Students Aid German Refugees," B'nai B'rith Hillel Post 10 March 1936, p. 2; and "Hillel's Social Welfare Program," Hillel Post 27 October 1936, p. 6.

40. Interview with Abram L. Sachar, 2 February 1976.

41. Minutes of the Meeting of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Commission, November 1942, p. 12, B'nai B'rith Hillel, Small Collections-1185, AJA, HUC; and Reports of Proceedings of District Grand Lodge No. 2 B'nai B'rith, May 1929 to June 1940, Including Eighty-Eighth Annual Meeting Held at Toledo, Ohio, Commencing June 2, 1940, p. 128.

42. Joseph, "Hillel," p. 63.

43. "B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations are Insurance Against Propaganda on Our Campuses," flyer 1936-37, B'nai B'rith Hillel, Small Collections-1184, and B'nai B'rith Hillel Commission, November 1942, p. 13, B'nai B'rith Hillel, Small Collections-1185 AJA, HUC; and "Flowers for Lives," Hillel Post, 17 March 1939, p. 2

44. Dinnerstein, Antisemitism in America, p. 150.

45. Ibid, p. 151.

46. Calvin B.T. Lee, The Campus Scene, 1900-1970: Changing Styles in Undergraduate Life (New York: David McKay Co., 1970), pp. 76-77, 82-84.

47. Ibid, pp. 90-91.

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55. Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Deborah, Golda, and Me: Being Female and Jewish in America (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991), pp. 231-33.

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CONCLUSION

When studying the history of the Hillel Foundation movement, it is important to consider not only the "what," but the "why." Specifically, why the Hillel foundation succeeded where Menorah failed, why the University of Illinois was in fact an almost ideal setting for the founding of Hillel, and why an organization that promoted a visible Jewish identity succeeded in the face of not only Gentile bigotry but the self-effacing Jewish attitude of the early twentieth century, one that largely counseled **sh'a shtill**[1] in matters of Jewish identity as the best way to deflect antisemitism.

Hillel succeeded in reaching a broader constituency than any Jewish student organization had previously (or even since), because of its very broad-based philosophy. As Abram L. Sachar has explained in his 1946 essay on the history of the Hillel foundations, the Hillel leaders chosen since Frankel's day "understood that they were to be hospitable to every wholesome expression of Jewish life, that they were not to be missionaries for any individual point of view."[2] According to Alfred Jospe, one of the reasons for Menorah's demise was its essentially narrow focus, with its programming "geared to the intellectual interests of a small minority," resulting in the lack of "a mass base on which to draw for new leadership and support."[3]

Another reason for Menorah's failure was the lack of both professional leadership and community support. As Sachar has

explained, because Menorah ultimately depended on voluntary student leadership for its existence, it "thrived when there were gifted students on campus" but "languished when such students were not present to take the initiative." By contrast, B'nai B'rith recognized that to be sustained effectively, leadership of the Hillel foundations had to be supplied by adult professionals, who were "specially prepared for the purpose," lived within the campus community and devoted their careers to the students.[4]

Finally, it could be argued that by the 1930's, the Intercollegiate Menorah Association's *raison d'etre* had simply become outdated. As Rabbi Gary T. Greenbaum has explained it, the strictly intellectual and cultural focus of Menorah was right for its time during the early decades of the twentieth century, serving "small groups of intellectual, second generation American Jewish students" by providing them with the "missing link" between their cultural heritage and the larger "chain of culture that they so highly prized." With the rise of Hitler and the increased interest in student Zionism, the Menorah ideal of a non-partisan Jewish cultural group became increasingly less attractive.[5] The quick absorption of the Menorah Society at the University of Illinois into the first B'nai B'rith Hillel foundation was only the first of many examples of the recognition by Jewish college students themselves of their need for a more all-encompassing Jewish resource. Hillel's quick replacement of Menorah there does

not, however, entirely explain why the Hillel movement itself originated in Champaign, Illinois, a fact that is not widely known even among historians.

Based on the study of the religious and social environment in Champaign-Urbana and at the University of Illinois, however, it is possible to conclude that this largely non-Jewish Midwestern university community was, if anything, an ideal place to start up a comprehensive Jewish student movement. This conclusion can be based on several observations. First, the religious environment at the University of Illinois, in which official church-and-state separation was endorsed even as voluntary religious participation was strongly encouraged (in a way, quintessentially American), proved to be very hospitable to the development of a religious Jewish student organization. It is of especial significance that the student religious foundation movement itself, beginning with the Wesley (Methodist) foundation originated on the Illinois campus.[6]

Secondly, the presence of a Christian advocate of a religious Jewish student organization was an unquestionably decisive factor. While the third factor may not please contemporary Jewish activists, the comparative assimilation of the early Champaign-Urbana Jewish community may very well have smoothed the way for the acceptance of Hillel as a natural part of the religious community, rather than as something strange and alien. Finally, the very smallness of the local

Jewish community, as well as its uneven outreach efforts, were instrumental in sparking concern over student assimilation, and finally in efforts to counteract it.

Finally, Hillel was effective in combatting antisemitism precisely because its strategy was proactive rather than reactive. Specifically, it cast Hillel directors in the roles of ombudsmen for Jewish student concerns and mediators between Jewish and Gentile students, so that each director would act as "an authorized spokesman" concerning Jewish matters, and whenever possible, defuse conflicts and misunderstandings before they became major disputes.[7] Additionally, the educational and outreach efforts among both Jews and Gentiles, went a long way towards helping the larger Jewish community to "turn from pogrom Judaism to program Judaism."[8]

How well has the Hillel Foundation movement succeeded in the postwar decades? The reports have been pointedly uneven. On one hand, the Hillel foundation movement has now become international (and even adaptable to the needs of students at universities in Israel).[9] On the other hand, Hillel has also faced lack of Jewish student interest, even disdain for the organization as, among other things, "nerdy." More recently, the International Director, Richard Joel, has instituted a number of financial and organizational reforms, which so far have shown signs of success. Only time will tell if Richard Joel will earn a place in Hillel's history equal to that of Benjamin Frankel and Abram L. Sachar. The ultimate success of

Joel and future Hillel leaders, however, will depend on their continued ability to see Jewish youth not only as children (banim), but as builders (bonim), specifically, the builders of the Jewish future.[10]

1. Dershowitz, Chutzpah, p. 92. Literally, "keep quiet."

2. Abram L. Sachar, "The B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations in American Universities," in American Jewish Committee American Jewish Yearbook v.47, Harry Schneiderman and Julius B. Maller, eds. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1945), p. 145.

3. Alfred Jospe, "Jewish College Students in the United States," in American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Yearbook v. 65, Morris Fine and Milton Himmelfarb, eds. Philadephia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964, p. 136.

4. Sachar, "B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations," pp. 142-43.

5. Gary T. Greenbaum, "The Jewish Experience in the American College and University" (Rabbinic thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1978), pp. 65, 73.

6. Solberg, "The Jewish Presence at the University of Illinois," pp. 229-30.

7. B'nai B'rith, Hillel, p. 10.

8. Report of Proceedings of District Grand Lodge No. 2, B'nai B'rith, June 1938 to May 1939, p. 233.

9. Ruth Freeman Cernea, Ed., The Hillel Guide to Jewish Life on Campus: The Most Comprehensive Guide to a Quality College Experience (Washington, D.C.: B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, 1993), pp. 167-68; and Moore, The Challenge of Ethnic Leadership, p. 204.

10. Abramowitz, "De-Nerdification of Hillel," pp. 37-42, 81-82. "Banim" and "Bonim" refer to Isaiah 54:13, which states: "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, And great shall be the peace of thy Children," Hertz, Pentateuch and Haftorahs, p. 42. The early rabbinic literature interpreted this passage so that through a wordplay, "your children" [b'nayikh] also meant "your builders" [bonayikh].

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