RESIGNING TO CHANGE: THE FOUNDATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE AMERICAN COUNCIL FOR JUDAISM

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Abstract

Resigning to Change:
The Foundation and Transformation of
the American Council for Judaism

A thesis presented to the Department of Near Eastern & Judaic Studies

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Between the founding of the American Council for Judaism in 1942 and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the organization’s character, mission, and membership base transformed around the axis of competing “pro-Reform” and “anti-Zionist” visions. The Council was established by a cohort of leading Reform rabbis in response to the growth of Zionism in the Reform movement, but in reality, most sought to reinvigorate their declining movement through reviving the ideology of classical Reform. As the Council shifted from concept to implementation, it was overtaken by leaders who prioritized the battle against the Zionist movement over outreach to the laity, and over the course of 1942 and 1943, the great majority of its founders withdrew from the anti-Zionist organization.

This study is an attempt to unpack the discourse of the Council’s foundation and comprehend the forces that impacted the Council’s evolution. I have endeavored to peel back the layers—the founders’ motives for establishing the Council, the close relationships they shared, the string of resignations that began shortly after its founding,
and the anti-Zionist ideology espoused by the Council’s leadership—to better understand the marginalization of the Council in American Jewish life. Furthermore, the Council presents a powerful case study which can help us better comprehend the nature of a struggling organization seeking to find its purpose and the best way to fulfill its mission, and the intellectual roots of the discourse that embodied that debate. In the end, as will be shown, what at first appears to be a unified opposition to Zionism was undermined by deep-seated disagreements over the nature of Zionism, Judaism, and Jewish history.
A Note on “Non-Zionism” and “Anti-Zionism”

Mark Twain once quipped, “When you catch an adjective, kill it.” This rule is not always possible (or wise) to apply in the extreme. Especially in this thesis, choosing the proper terms to describe various characters and their ideologies has proven challenging. The boundaries between “anti-Zionism” and “non-Zionism” are particularly fuzzy, as each term carries many nuanced and loaded meanings. Besides, their meanings change over time—and are highly dependent upon who utilizes them—in a way that makes assigning a definition (and applying it consistently) a nontrivial problem. Thus, in general, I have attempted to utilize the terms that the rabbis themselves used to describe themselves. In practice, this translates into a shift throughout the thesis from the use of “non-Zionism”—the term that the rabbis used to describe themselves at the Atlantic City meeting of “non-Zionist rabbis”—to “anti-Zionism,” especially as the Council shifted its weight towards its fight against Zionism. This is not the place for an extended treatment of the subtle differences between “non-Zionism” and “anti-Zionism,” but in short, the most extreme anti-Zionists, like extremists of all types, generally tended to minimize the importance of moderate positions. At the same time, after the State of Israel was established, the dividing lines adjusted noticeably. This terminological shift concretized the Council’s shift into the communal margins, all of which affected the way in which the Council leaders labeled themselves. Considering these terms’ peripatetic nature, I hope that it is sufficient to avoid compartmentalizing people into easily-defined (and thus inaccurate and facile) categories but let them slide from one to another as they in fact did.
# Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ iii
Abstract ............................................................................................................................... v
A Note on “Non-Zionism” and “Anti-Zionism” .............................................................. vii

Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 1
Chapter 1: Zionism: Rallying-Cry of a Declining Reform Movement ......................... 14
Chapter 2: Ties That Bind: The Dynamics of Council Membership ............................ 46
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council .............................................................. 77
Chapter 4: Taking Class-Action: The Ideology of Elmer Berger’s Council .............. 124
Chapter 5: Constructing a Usable Past for Non-Zionism and Anti-Zionism ............. 158
Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 192

Chronology of Events .................................................................................................... 197

Appendices

Appendix I: Pittsburgh Platform (1885) .................................................................. 200
Appendix II: Neutrality Resolution (1935) ................................................................. 203
Appendix III: Columbus Platform (1937) ................................................................. 205
Appendix IV: Jewish Army Resolution (1942) ............................................................. 210
Appendix V: Atlantic City Statement of Principles (June 1942) ............................... 212
Appendix VI: Donations to “Non-Zionist Rabbis Fund” (14 October 1942) ............ 216

Bibliography .................................................................................................................... 217
Introduction

As the sun set on the Sabbath eve of May 14, 1948, the State of Israel declared its independence. The following day, Rabbi Louis Wolsey (1877–1953) of Philadelphia’s Congregation Rodeph Shalom delivered a brief address before his synagogue’s Men’s Club, entitled “Why I Withdrew From the American Council for Judaism.” Wolsey, the central leader of the Reform rabbis who formed the Council in the second half of 1942, criticized the anti-Zionist Council for abandoning the “unexceptionally religious” mission he had envisioned for an all-out battle with the Zionist movement. Wolsey’s speech did not go unnoticed. In the weeks following its publication in Philadelphia’s Jewish Exponent, Wolsey received an abundance of congratulatory messages from Zionists across the United States. The response of Rabbi Elmer Berger (1908–1996), the Council’s executive director, was not quite as positive: In a lengthy letter published in the Jewish Exponent on June 4th, Berger declared, among other things, that the Council’s mission to fight Zionism was even more relevant now than ever. Berger specifically attacked the facts and figures underlying Wolsey’s criticism, beginning:

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2 Ibid., p. 13.
5 “Rabbi Berger Answers Rabbi Louis Wolsey,” Jewish Exponent (Philadelphia), 4 June 1948.
Dr. Wolsey’s comments contain gross inaccuracies both of fact and of spirit. For example, a superficial glance at the Council letterhead would have prevented him from making the inaccurate statement that the rabbinic membership of the Council “had dwindled to five.” Of the rabbis who originally formed the American Council for Judaism, thirteen are numbered among its present officers and Board of Directors. Others, not in the original group, have been added to the Council membership.\(^6\)

Whether or not Wolsey’s figures were accurate, the difference between five and thirteen is negligible in comparison with the Council’s original rabbinic membership, which nearly reached one hundred. In either case, it is incontestable that the Council’s rabbinic membership declined by an order of magnitude between 1942, when the Council was founded, and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

The decline in the Council’s rabbinic membership, while only a single statistic, represents a complete transformation of the organization. Wolsey called the June 1942 meeting of non-Zionist Reform rabbis in Atlantic City—out of which the Council would arise—in direct reaction the February 1942 meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the Reform rabbinical association, at which a resolution was passed that could be interpreted as favoring the creation of a Jewish army based in Palestine.\(^7\) However, for Wolsey and his colleagues, the resolution was merely symptomatic of deeper problems within the Reform movement and American Jewish life generally. Zionism, for these rabbis, was the rallying cry to challenge what they believed to be burning problems facing their ministry: the future of the Reform movement, the status of the Jew in the post-war world, and the relationship between Zionism and

\(^6\) Elmer Berger to the Editor, June 1948, American Council for Judaism Papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter ACJP-C), box 1, folder 1.

Reform Judaism. The “Statement of Principles” presented at the Atlantic City meeting reflected this viewpoint. Over the course of the summer of 1942, their caucus, as defined by the signatories of this Statement, swelled to a group of ninety-seven rabbis. In December of that year, this cohort formed the American Council for Judaism, the most important American Jewish anti-Zionist organization in the pre-State era.

Between the Council’s founding in 1942 and Wolsey’s 1948 denunciation of the organization he had founded, Wolsey and others witnessed the tremendous transformation that can take place within a single organization. At the Atlantic City meeting, forming a national organization was not high on the agenda. The discussion did not focus primarily on anti-Zionism: instead, the rabbis mostly spoke about problems facing the Reform movement, which they saw declining and shrinking under the pressure of Eastern European Jewish immigration to the United States. The later incarnation of the Council was not primarily a rabbinical organization, but became an organization focused upon and primarily composed of lay people. In lieu of lobbying Reform institutions—such as the Hebrew Union College (HUC), the rabbinical seminary founded by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise in 1875; the Central Conference of American Rabbis, established in 1890; and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Reform synagogue association founded in 1873—to a policy of education in the classical Reform theology that the Council originally espoused, the Council lobbied undersecretaries of State and

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8 Wolsey claimed 89 signatures in August 1942 (Louis Wolsey to Morris S. Lazaron, 15 August 1942, Morris S. Lazaron Papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio [hereafter MSLP-C], box 10, folder 5), 92 in October (Louis Wolsey to Theodore N. Lewis, 1 October 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 5, p. 2), and 97 by December (Louis Wolsey to Herman Snyder, 3 December 1942, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 9). However, the group would later stabilize at “95,” though the leaders would use that term even as rabbinical members began to drop out of the group (see n. 132).
9 Today, the UAHC is known as the Union for Reform Judaism.
Introduction

various congressional sub-committees on Near East policy in an attempt to obstruct the political forces advocating the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. And, as noted, of these ninety-plus rabbis, hardly any remained. The question must be asked: what exactly happened here, and why?

The other question, of course, is why it matters. Many groups are founded for one purpose and end up serving another, or fizzle out without accomplishing anything of significance. An organization’s importance, as determined by those looking back, often hinges more upon the path of history than the actions of the group itself. The 1882 formation of the Zionist organization BILU\(^\text{10}\) by twenty-six Eastern European Jews who aspired to immigrate to Palestine grows in import in light of the Zionist movement’s ultimate success in creating a Jewish state. Had the State of Israel not been established or otherwise found itself unviable in the world scene, as the Council’s leaders erroneously believed would take place, then perhaps the Council’s history would be more widely studied, and the BILU and other organizations like it destined to the dustbin of history, placed under the historical microscope primarily as an intriguing oddity, the remnant of a failed enterprise. But the State of Israel has become a vibrant country with a thriving society and culture, and the Council’s vision for American Jewry never materialized. Yet, in my research, I have found that the Council is not a misfit from the sideshow of things past: its story is important because it tells us a great deal about the struggle for organizational identity, the self-perceived role of rabbis in American society, and the way

\(^{10}\) An acronym for “Beit Ya’akov Lechu Ve-nelka” (“House of Jacob, let us get up and go,” from Isaiah 2:5, יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה YHWH יְהֹוָה YHWH יְהֹוָה YHWH יְהֹוָה YHWH יְהֹוָה YHWH יְhֹoָh YH环球 YH
that the Council rabbis felt about the changing Reform movement and the American Jewish scene in general.

The history of the American Council for Judaism has been treated extensively in a number of academic works, but the radical transformation that took place during its earliest years has not been the primary focus. Thomas Kolsky’s 1990 *Jews Against Zionism: The American Council for Judaism, 1942–1948* (Temple University Press) gives a detailed overview of the foundation of the Council and its early years. Kolsky’s work, based on his 1986 George Washington University dissertation of the same title, is one of the few studies on this subject based on significant and diverse archival research. *Jews Against Zionism* proves a useful guide to the primary sources housed at the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati and at the Wisconsin State Historical Society in Madison, Wisconsin. Kolsky provides deep insight into the Council’s activities and its attempts to fight Zionism during World War II and the years that followed, and successfully synthesizes the data from the extensive archival materials to weave an engaging organizational history. However, Kolsky fails to achieve a level of dispassionate discourse. In his preface, Kolsky claims that “Throughout my research and writing I have tried to remain impartial. My basic attitude toward the American Council for Judaism has been that its philosophy is as legitimate as that of the Zionists,” but he exhibits a subtle bias in which he consistently takes the side of the Council (against Zionism). Kolsky discusses the Council’s critiques of Zionism without the all-important

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Introduction

qualifying adjectives that denote that they were the Council’s perceptions of or beliefs about Zionism, and not necessarily facts as they really were, or he implies that the Council’s opinions were normative for Reform Judaism without sufficiently explaining the nuances of Reform ideology. Moreover, he adopts pro-Council terminology such as “neutrality agreement,” rather than the more detached “neutrality resolution.”¹³ This is not the place for an extended critique of Kolsky’s book, but one goal of this thesis is to revisit Kolsky’s conclusions and where necessary revise our understanding of how the Council became such a bastion of anti-Zionism.

Another book that discusses the Council in depth is Howard Greenstein’s 1981 *Turning Point: Zionism and Reform Judaism* (Scholars Press), which dedicates a chapter to the history of the Council within a broader discussion of the Reform movement’s reaction to Zionism. Greenstein argues that even though the Reform movement’s 1937 Columbus Platform stated clearly that “We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in [Palestine’s] upbringing as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life,”¹⁴ serious dissent within the Reform movement continued after the platform’s adoption. However, in a fashion similarly to Kolsky, Greenstein’s discussion of the Council’s transformation focuses almost exclusively on the leadership of the Council, and not the peripheral membership. Greenstein also does not complete the picture by bringing in other relevant episodes, such as the abortive founding of the magazine *The Jewish...*

¹³ See pp. 28–32. It is notable that Kolsky is not the only author who utilizes these terms; one goal of this thesis is to unseat the assumptions that lead to this terminology.

Introduction

Advance, that more fully explain the roots of the Council rabbis’ critiques of their movement and Zionism.

Rabbi Mark Glickman’s 1990 rabbinical thesis, entitled One Voice Against Many: A Biographical Study of Elmer Berger (Hebrew Union College), is an extraordinarily important piece of literature regarding the American Council for Judaism. Glickman provides an impressive and erudite biographical and intellectual sketch of Berger, the founding executive director of the Council—in many ways the driving force behind it. He brings forward many characteristics of Berger’s thought and praxis that would come to define the Council and constructs a solid reading and synthesis of Berger’s written works. However, he primarily focuses on the post-1948 era, and as such does not consider the way in which Berger’s ideology served as a push-factor with regard to the resignations of Council rabbis in the earlier period of the Council’s foundation.

In addition to Glickman’s thesis, many articles discuss the Council, such as Ellen Eisenberg’s “Beyond San Francisco: The Failure of Anti-Zionism in Portland, Oregon,” which describes the development of the American Council for Judaism chapter in Portland, and numerous other works that focus on individual Council rabbis.15 However, these articles as well as the many books discussing this period in American Zionism

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primarily draw upon Kolsky’s book, and do not grapple with significant amounts of new primary material directly related to the Council’s activities.

The prime exception to this rule is Monty Penkower’s “The Genesis of the American Council for Judaism: A Quest for Identity in World War II,” which discusses the role of Baltimore’s venerable Rabbi Morris Lazaron in the founding of the Council. Penkower examines Lazaron’s papers, housed at the American Jewish Archives, and concludes that “[t]he fires of the Holocaust seared the young Reform rabbinical wing, as it did their fellow American Jews, converting them to a visceral understanding of the indissoluble link that existed between Jewish catastrophe and Jewish sovereignty.”

Kolsky exhibits a similar emphasis, writing, “The most important reason for the Council’s failure was the Holocaust and its successful use by the Zionists for their political ends.” Kolsky’s argument continues:

The Holocaust, which ultimately made the establishment of Israel possible, destroyed any realistic chances for the Council’s success. It not only infused a crusading zeal into Zionism but also generated widespread sympathy for the Zionist cause among American Jews and non-Jews. In fact, disclosure of the full extent of the calamity that befall European Jews demoralized and silenced most erstwhile anti-Zionists by discrediting their facile optimism and liberal faith. The anti-Zionists were dealt a crushing blow. In the aftermath of the catastrophe, many who still opposed Zionism in principle were reluctant to fight against fellow Jews.

The major difference between the analyses presented by Kolsky and Penkower is that Kolsky is primarily concerned with the success of the Council—whether it achieved its goal to influence the government of the United States in order to terminate the Zionist

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17 Kolsky, Jews against Zionism, p. 5.
18 Ibid., p. 86.
Introduction

effort to create a Jewish state—while Penkower considers the fate of the Reform rabbis themselves, whether they became Zionists or not.

In this thesis, I hope to revise and reassess the account of the Council’s founding and transformation into a lay organization through two foci. Firstly, I will contextualize the founding of the Council within the Council rabbis’ wider initiative to mitigate the problems they perceived as challenging Reform Judaism. The American Council for Judaism was not the first time that this group of rabbis had mobilized. Understanding these earlier episodes—the attempt to found a League of Americans Against Zionism in the late 1910s (in opposition to the Balfour Declaration of November 1917) and the impulse to establish a Reform magazine in the early 1940s—is crucial to appreciate the primary and secondary interests of these rabbis, the dynamics of the Council’s transformation, and the place of Reform institutions within this history. Secondly, in contrast to Kolsky, who concludes that the Council’s transformation was architected by its leaders, the rabbi Elmer Berger and the businessman Lessing Rosenwald (1891–1979),¹⁹ I maintain that it was the resignation of numerous leading Reform rabbis from

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¹⁹ Kolsky writes, “Although initially founded by Reform rabbis, the ACJ was rapidly transformed into an essentially secular anti-Zionist political-interest group after Lessing Rosenwald assumed its presidency in April 1943. Three factors account for this change. First, Rosenwald was not interested in leading a primarily religious movement. Second, Rabbi Elmer Berger insisted on the primacy of the campaign against the establishment of a Jewish state. For him, preventing the creation of such a state was a prerequisite for reviving Reform Judaism. Third, a chronic shortage of funds severely hampered the ACJ’s work, forcing it to commit its limited resources almost entirely to political activities. Thus from 1943 to 1948, except for supporting the liberalization of American immigration laws, the organization concentrated on its battle with Zionism. As a result, despite the ACJ’s ideology being based on the fundamental doctrines of Reform Judaism, it neglected to develop a religious program before 1949. That was a damaging omission, resulting in the defection of many rabbis from its ranks. Moreover, it undoubtedly contributed to the impression that the Council’s objectives were entirely negative.” (Ibid., p. 195.)
the Council’s ranks that facilitated the centralization of power within the hands of Berger and Rosenwald. The organizational dynamic at work is more complex than inferred from the existing literature: the Council’s transformation was not strictly a top-down revolution. It was just as much impacted by those who left as by those who stayed the course and tried (ultimately unsuccessfully) to influence the Council from within. Thus, the resignations themselves illuminate Council’s changing character and internal rifts even more than letters between Council leaders discussing current activities.

Before turning to the resignations themselves, chapter one will address the rabbis’ feelings and fears about Zionism and the future of the Reform movement. In chapter two, we will examine the close personal and professional relationships between the rabbis to better grasp the dynamics of the signatories of the Atlantic City Statement of Principles and their relationship with the Council. In chapter three, we will see how those relationships played themselves out as the Council developed. The fact that the Council was formed on the eve of the Holocaust’s full disclosure and that as the news broke the Council shrank considerably might lead one to believe, post hoc ergo propter hoc, that the Holocaust led to the Council’s demise. However, a close examination of the primary materials proves otherwise: the Council, while weakened, was not completely destroyed. After 1948, when the Council ostensibly had failed in its primary objective, it adapted to the new conditions. As Berger articulated in his June 1948 letter to the Jewish Exponent as well as on many other occasions, the Council reinvented itself in the new environment as an organization working on behalf of American Jews who did not want to be intimately and directly connected with the newly established State of Israel. Similarly, the case for anti-Zionism was adapted in light of the Holocaust. In chapter four, we will
Introduction

consider the anti-Zionist ideology developed by Elmer Berger that powerfully reshaped the Council, and in chapter five we will examine the narratives of Jewish history that stood behind anti-Zionist and non-Zionist ideologies. This last chapter considers the historiographical literature written by what at first appears to be a solid bloc of rabbis opposed to Zionism and uncovers the deep rifts that ultimately prevailed amongst them. Reading the histories written by the non-Zionist and anti-Zionist Reform rabbis, we will learn not only about the rabbis’ reactions to the Holocaust, but also the origins of the ideological fault lines surrounding Reform Zionism and anti-Zionism. As will be shown, there existed profound disagreements over the basic meaning and history of Judaism. These points of contention inform a mostly forgotten discourse over the nature of the Jews that underlies the debates of Israel-Diaspora relations and the place of Zionism in Jewish life.

The primary sources I have consulted are drawn from the American Council for Judaism Papers at the Wisconsin State Historical Society, and from various manuscript collections at the American Jewish Archives. I did not restrict myself to the Council’s official papers or those of the leadership, but aimed to collect as many resignation letters as possible and the diverse documentation surrounding them. Through this material, I hope to comprehend the close relationships that these rabbis shared and their impact on the Council. These rabbis were not simply signatures listed on a statement but real people. They all had a childhood, an education, and professional relationships, all of which informed the Council’s formation. For many of these rabbis, their personal ties were sacred. When “elder statesmen” offered advice to the younger generation and were ignored, harsh feelings and deep cleavages arose within the movement.
Introduction

The rabbis’ papers and correspondence in particular provide a window into the day-to-day operation of the Council. These letters are full of criticism of the Council’s activities which I mine in order to understand the Council’s transformation. This resignation literature, which encompasses not only resignation letters \textit{per se} but also other criticism of Council activity or its program, as well as (mostly failed) attempts by Council leaders to recruit members, provides a particular methodology through which we can understand the Council. Resignation literature tells us one side of the story because it is intrinsically negative in character. But we also have access to the surrounding discourse, due to the extensive documentation of the American Council for Judaism. We can therefore contextualize the various resignations into a narrative of the Council’s history that the top-down theory of organizational development does not provide. This is further supplemented by the verbose and tell-all style that many of these rabbis utilized.

The breadth of this literature provides the ability to identify important emerging and coalescing trends within this discourse.

This thesis presents an important case study in how organizations are both led by their core leadership and are characterized by the people of whom they are composed. The sources tell a story of the process through which moderate members of the Council left—for varying reasons, often while remaining in agreement with the majority of the Council’s viewpoints—and those with more extreme views accrued more and more power. Over time, this power enabled them to take bolder action, causing less moderate leaders to leave. It also demonstrates the powerful fluidity within organizations: once resigned from the Council, rabbis did not cut off all ties with former colleagues-in-arms. Rather, former Council members were in touch with one another and often contributed
ideas, know-how and connections (especially with friendly laypeople on the congregational level) to the Council.

In addition to questions of the dynamics of Jewish leadership, the ways in which Jewish groups either find themselves within or without the mainstream, and the mechanism through which organizations discover themselves through a process of leaders’ self-selection, we find in the Council’s early years a telling example of how external pressure and crisis creates and fosters a fractious divisiveness. The Council’s internal divisions can be traced to the deeply held beliefs of the rabbis and the way in which both those convictions and their personal relationships fared under the constellation of forces that were of the events of the 1940s. Finally, as we shall see, these pressures brought out the deep differences in these leaders’ assumptions about the nature of Jewish life that might not have been so prevalent in a time of less extreme crisis.
Chapter 1:  
Zionism: Rallying-Cry of a Declining Reform Movement

Six years before Louis Wolsey publically declared that the American Council for Judaism should close its doors, he stood before thirty-five of his colleagues and told a story of backstabbing and betrayal, of double-crossing and double-dealing in which the Zionists aimed to undo the advances that Reform Judaism had made towards a universal understanding of Judaism and Jewish life in the nineteenth century. The indictment went further. In this introductory address to the Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Reform Rabbis, held on June 1–2, 1942, he presented to his colleagues a bill of wrongs against him and his compatriots in the fight for the universal conception of Judaism:

Here we shall say whether or not the Zionist speaker is right or not when he claims—even before the governments of the world—that he represents Jewish opinion or four million Jews; whether or not the Zionist movement means to absorb the totality of Jewish life, especially when the secretary of the Z.O.A. [Zionist Organization of America] seeks to prevent a signer of our call from attending this meeting; whether there is a moral deterioration in Jewish character when the mover of the Army resolution \(^{20}\) seeks to falsify the Conference record of that action; whether the creation of a Jewish state is consonant with the universal messages of Moses and the prophets; whether the Balfour Declaration is violated by the Zionist movement when Zionist executives seek to condition American Jewish life; whether, as some have asserted, Zionism is equivalent to the Jewish religion; whether the desire to create a Jewish state is a token of defeatism in religion, and lack of confidence in the universal moral mission of Judaism; whether or not racism and nationalism are fundamental to classic Jewish thought and hope, or whether they have both been borrowed from the non-Jewish philosophy of the 18th and 19th century; whether return to God means a return to Jewish nationalism; whether or not our salvation is in our religion or in a Jewish soil; whether the nationalistic movement is counter to every thought and emotion of Jewish history; whether retreat to a nationalistic ghetto is a surrender of the great universal messages of Jewish prophet and sage; whether the imposition of a secular gospel—sometimes by outright coercion—is a part of American and Jewish democracy; whether we should yield our sacred Jewish traditions to a

\(^{20}\) See pp. 32–35.
movement which is completely and deliberately non-religious and secular; in a word, whether we should consent to the destruction of our faith.\(^{21}\)

Wolsey’s diatribe is fascinating: even as he vilified Zionism, he constantly returned to the question of religion, “the universal messages of Moses and the prophets,” “the universal moral mission of Judaism,” and “the great universal messages of Jewish prophet and sage.”\(^{22}\) This address is paradigmatic of the Atlantic City meeting, where Zionism was equated with everything that is antithetical to classical Reform Judaism, including traditionalism, orthodoxy, particularism, and anti-Americanism. Even though Wolsey opened the Atlantic City conference with a broad polemic against Zionism, concretizing the way in which he felt threatened by it, Zionism \textit{qua} the Zionist movement was barely a part of the debate that followed. Instead, “Zionism” appears to be more of a keyword for all that is non-Reform, and the implications of alien and un-American forms of Judaism, rather than a particular demon to fight on the battlefield of politics. As will be seen, at Atlantic City and in the months that followed, Zionism played the part of a phantom concept that represented their fears for the future and concretized the decline of Reform to which the rabbis were witness.

On a number of levels, the rabbis saw the Reform movement weakening. Firstly, Reform congregations had seen a marked numerical decline. The massive migration of Eastern European Jews had swelled the American Jewish community, and by World War I, it was estimated that approximately 85 percent of American Jews were of Eastern European origin or descent. However, in the early twentieth century, the Reform

\(^{21}\) “Introductory Address to Meeting of Non-Zionist Reform Rabbis, at Atlantic City N.J., June 1, 1942 by Rabbi Louis Wolsey, Acting Chairman,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 4, pp. 3–4.

\(^{22}\) Ibid.
movement maintained itself primarily for Jews of German ancestry, and many congregations did not actively reach out to the new immigrants, who were often more traditional and observant than those who had come before them. By 1940, the Reform movement only claimed approximately 200,000 dues-paying members out of an estimated total American Jewish population of 4.7 million. In addition, the Reform rabbis who would form the American Council for Judaism saw the Eastern European Jewish immigrants as a threat to the hegemony of the tradition of classical Reform Judaism. Some of these rabbis were concerned that these immigrants joined Reform congregations for social reasons, rather than a belief in Reform theology. They were convinced that these new members brought traditionalism, higher levels of observance, as well as Zionism into the synagogue, in opposition to classical Reform. This wider context of decline, and the rabbis’ attempts to stem it, provides a framework through which we can understand the emergence of the American Council for Judaism. We must consider the divergent ways in which the founding Council rabbis who met in Atlantic City in June 1942 imagined Zionism and how it functioned as their rallying-call in relation to the other changes taking place within the Reform movement.

Nearly sixty years earlier, in the 1880s, Zionism had not yet established itself as a unified movement. Yet in 1885, when Rabbi Kaufmann Kohler of New York’s Temple


24 Louis Wolsey wrote, “It is perfectly stupid for people to join congregations without any reference to any platform for which it stands. Most people join congregations for social reasons. The principles of the respective congregations seem to mean nothing to them. This becomes all the more objectionable when one realizes that some Orthodox or Zionist people join Reform congregations and then proceed to sabotage its principles within the group.” (Louis Wolsey to Edward N. Calisch, LWP-C, box 2, folder 4, p. 1.)
Beth El sent out a call for Reform rabbis to meet and establish a declaration of principles for Reform Jewish life,\(^{25}\) many of the same forces were at work. Kohler and the eighteen rabbis who joined him that November in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, similarly to those who convened in June 1942, believed that their form of Judaism was threatened, on the one side from Felix Adler’s radical Ethical Culture movement,\(^{26}\) and on the other from the attacks of the more traditional Hungarian-born Alexander Kohut. There, the rabbis prepared an eight-point platform, which, among other things, stated:

We recognize in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect the approaching of the realization of Israel’s great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, or a sacrificial worship under the administration of the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.\(^{27}\)

The Pittsburgh Platform, while never officially adopted by the CCAR, served as the ideological and theological basis for classical Reform Judaism in America, and unequivocally pronounced its antipathy towards Jewish nationalism in any form.

The same rejection of Jewish nationalism found in the Pittsburgh Platform manifested itself in the Council, and, as will be discovered, the rabbis who founded the Council saw themselves as following in its footsteps. This was particularly true of David

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\(^{27}\) For the full text of the Pittsburgh Platform, see p. 200. Also see *Central Conference of American Rabbis, Forty-Sixth Annual Convention*, ed. Isaac E. Marcuson, vol. XLV (Chicago: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1935), 199.
Philipson (1862–1949) of Cincinnati, Ohio. At the Pittsburgh gathering, even as the youngest rabbi present, Philipson was invited to join the committee of five who actually drafted the Platform, and also served as the meeting’s secretary. In his later years, Philipson provided a link to Reform’s past and a sense of historical authenticity; by the 1940s, he was the Pittsburgh group’s only survivor. In 1935, when the CCAR decided to revise the Pittsburgh Platform, Philipson inaugurated the process of spiritual, theological and ideological reevaluation that would culminate with the 1937 Columbus Platform with a presentation on the history of the Pittsburgh Platform.28 And Philipson, an avowed non-Zionist, made the symbolic motion of being the first to sign the new Platform, even though it took a more positive stance towards Zionism.29 In a similar fashion, Philipson’s central position at Atlantic City, where he delivered the opening paper, connected that meeting with what the Reform leaders present believed to be its historical and theological predecessor. The implication was that the Columbus Platform—and the shift within the Reform movement it represented—was an aberration, a break from the true ideals of Reform.

In addition to Philipson’s, the other papers presented at the two-day meeting—on topics ranging from the future of Reform Judaism to the Hebrew Union College to practical programs to educate the laity about universal Judaism—and the relevant discussions, were transcribed by a professional stenographer. The student of Reform Judaism and American non-Zionism and anti-Zionism finds here an indispensable

28 See Ibid., pp. 190–206. Also see the founding of the CCAR: “Resolved, that the Rev. Dr. Samuel Adler, of New York, the only surviving member in this country of the Rabbinical Conferences held after the year 1840, shall be and is hereby elected Honorary President of this association.” (Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 5651/1890–91 [Cincinnati, OH: Boch Publishing and Printing Company, 1891], p. 4.)
29 Central Conference of American Rabbis, Forty-Eighth Annual Convention, p. 113.
window into their views on the then-current state of the Reform movement, the changes that had taken place in the first half of the twentieth century, and the reasons why they ultimately felt obliged to convene.

Only one of the papers given at Atlantic City—Elmer Berger’s “The Flint Plan,” which described his attempt to create an anti-Zionist organization at his synagogue in Flint, Michigan—dealt directly with the problem of Zionism. David Philipson’s paper, as mentioned, created a connection with the past, and Rabbi Abraham Shusterman (1906–1995) of Baltimore presented his view on “Judaism and its Future.” Shusterman, who would be one of the first Council rabbis to officially break with the emerging Council in December 1942, lamented that “we are convinced that only the message of Israel will save the world and a message needs messengers,” but those messengers were nowhere to be found.  

Rabbi Leo M. Franklin (1870–1948), rabbi emeritus of Detroit’s Temple Beth El, presented a paper entitled “The Reform Movement and the Hebrew Union College.” In this paper, Franklin described what he believed to be the root of Reform’s change, the inability of the College to inculcate the ideals of classical Reform within the youngest generation of rabbis ordained there. And in “A Program for Enlightenment,” Rabbi Isaac Landman (1880–1946), editor of the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, described a way to spread classical Reform amongst the laity. All in all, even though the conference was called in response to what the rabbis believed to be the co-option of the CCAR by pro-Zionist forces, Zionism was not the primary focus of the discussion. Zionism within Reform was not the disease, but symptomatic of the significant changes, in their view

30 Abraham Shusterman, “Judaism and its Future,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 4, p. 8
changes for the worse, that took place in the Reform movement between Pittsburgh and Atlantic City.\(^{32}\)

Of course, during the fifty-plus years spanning Pittsburgh and the Second World War, sweeping changes took place in America. The United States transformed into a true world power unafraid to flex its international muscles, and its Jewish community grew into one of the largest in the world. The Reform movement established a set of principles at Columbus, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis changed from an organization for all rabbis in America (as its name attests) into one primarily for Reform rabbis.\(^{33}\) And, as Melvin Urofsky describes in *American Zionism from Herzl to the Holocaust*, Zionism came to America in force:

Within the Jewish community organized anti-Zionism had practically disappeared [by the 1940s], … If nothing else, Adolf Hitler had convinced American Jewry that a national home in Palestine was an absolute necessity. Even Reform leaders changed their minds, and in 1935 the Central Conference of American Rabbis

\(^{32}\) “Dr. Jonah Wise said that we ought not to discuss the Jewish Army question at all, because it was only a symptom rather than a basic cause for our problems.” (“Meeting of Rabbis at Hotel Warwick, Philadelphia, Monday, March 30, 1942,” ACJP-C, box 2, folder 1.)

\(^{33}\) The initial resolution that established the CCAR declared the following rules for membership: “Resolved, That any rabbi now in office in any Hebrew congregation, or has held such office before, is entitled to membership in this association, provided he claims such privilege prior to Passover next and fulfills the obligations hereinafter mentioned. After that time there shall be entitled to membership all graduates to any acknowledged Rabbinical Seminary or College; all Doctors of Philosophy or Philology that possess the Rabbinical diploma hatarat hora-ah from a competent authority; all autodidactic preachers and teachers of religion who have been at least for three successive years discharging those duties in any one congregation; all authors of eminent books on any subject appertaining to Jewish theology or literature; and all such men who have rendered important practical services to the cause of Judaism; provided, however, such name or names be proposed for election in an annual general meeting of the association, and receive the consent of the majority of the members present.” (*Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 5651/1890–91*, p. 4.)
Chapter 1: Zionism: Rallying-Cry of a Declining Reform Movement

dropped its official opposition to the movement and declared Zionism a matter of personal conscience.\(^ {34}\)

Yet while the transformation of America was indeed extensive, and the Jewish organizational world transformed alongside it, the old guard remained; in this, Urofsky’s assessment is not completely accurate. The Zionist Organization of America had swelled its membership to over fifty thousand by the 1930s,\(^ {35}\) but the anti-Zionist forces within American Jewry were not completely neutralized. The class Urofsky terms the “German American aristocracy,”\(^ {36}\) who opposed Zionism in America, was still highly operative, even many of them were in their waning years. And the rabbinical leaders who assembled in Atlantic City certainly believed that the appearance of Zionist dominance was deceptive, and that the great majority of American Jews were not in sympathy with Zionism. For many, the crimes of Nazi Germany may have contributed to their involvement in attempts to rescue the Jews of Europe and otherwise fostered a more cautious manner of opposition to Zionism,\(^ {37}\) but that does not necessarily mean that, as Urofsky claims, they all believed that a “national home in Palestine was absolutely necessary.” If this were the case, the American Council for Judaism would never have been formed.

As Zionism slowly penetrated the mainstream American Jewish community, those who opposed Zionism in fact cleaved to classical Zionism itself. Of course, both “classical” Zionism and “classical” Reform were diverse movements and were not always so diametrically opposed to one another; yet what is of interest to us is that the


\(^{35}\) Ibid.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., pp. 59, 75, 89, 97, 99, 148, 164, 173, 250, 327, et al.

\(^{37}\) See p. 84.
most vocal critics of Zionism refused to see in that Jewish nationalist movement any measure of heterogeneity and focused upon its political aspect. The same could likely be said about Zionist critiques of Reform universalism, creating a situation where both sides ignored the dynamic aspects and internal division of their opponents. While classical Reform argued that the Jews were simply practitioners of a religious confession, these non-Zionists saw Herzl’s famous declaration that he had “founded the Jewish State” at the first Zionist Congress in 1897 as emblematic of opening a new chapter in the nature of Jewish experience. Ironically, the work of Yoram Hazony, founder of the Shalem Center, most likely would resonate with Zionism’s classical Reform opponents. In his book *The Jewish State*, Hazony argues that in Basel, Herzl really created (or attempted to create) a “Jewish state of mind,” or perhaps better phrased a Jewish political state of mind. The difference between Hazony and these opponents of Zionism is that while Hazony wrote about the positive values of the Jewish political tradition, those who formed the Council found few constructive elements in this tradition. In its more extreme forms, classical Reform opposition to Zionism as it manifested itself in the Council rabbis saw the roots of social and religious corruption within the Jewish political tradition itself, juxtaposing it against the prophetic religious tradition. At the same time, both sides would agree that Herzl’s establishment of diplomatic activities at the center of the Zionist movement irrevocably changed the nature of Zionism. In their view, it no longer was simply about a national-cultural-linguistic revival or a spiritual center in Palestine, but took on political characteristics in the attempt to create a state within the framework of the international system first established at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The critique

of many of these classical Reformers was that classical Zionism, in its aim to “normalize” the Jew and induct the Jewish people into the brotherhood of nations, would ultimately destroy what they believed to be the characteristics that made the Jews truly unique: their transnational, diasporic nature as well as the blissful ideals and ethics of a people untouched by the ultimately corrupting power of political and military sovereignty.

Over the course of the early 1920s, Zionist Reform rabbis repeatedly attempted to pass pro-Zionist resolutions at the annual CCAR convention. This is one of the few direct indicators of the small but growing minority of Zionists within the Reform movement. While a 1933 study of Hebrew Union College allows for some generalizations about the student body, no statistical surveys were taken which could answer the question of whether practicing Reform rabbis were “anti-Zionist,” “pro-Zionist,” or something in between. Rabbi Julian Morgenstern, president of Hebrew Union College from 1921 until 1947, conducted a study, which we will discuss below, in which he attempted to categorize the graduates of Hebrew Union College as well as Rabbi Stephen S. Wise’s Jewish Institute of Religion and determine how many of them were Zionists. However, this survey was carried out without actually polling the rabbis.

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Chapter 1: Zionism: Rallying-Cry of a Declining Reform Movement

themselves. A similarly severe lack of statistical data on American Jewry’s beliefs about Zionism led to disagreements between Zionist leaders and their opponents over the nature of the American Jewish public. Zionists argued that their organizations’ large memberships demonstrated their primacy in Jewish life, while others insisted that even a membership of five hundred thousand constituted only a small portion of American Jewry in toto. The Reform rabbis, especially the elder group who were predominantly non-Zionist, felt that they were the true heirs to the American Judaism of Isaac Mayer Wise, that the Pittsburgh Platform was to-date the most enlightened expression of Jewish religion, that they were the rightful leaders of the Jewish community, and that their alma mater, the Hebrew Union College, would be the source of the future of this non-Zionist leadership. But though one might be led to believe by the Pittsburgh Platform that early Reform Judaism was monolithically antinationalistic, there were a number of Reform rabbis who broke ranks and sided with Zionism. Rabbi Max H. Heller (1860–1929) of New Orleans—father of James G. Heller, president of the CCAR at the time of the Council’s establishment—was both a leader in the Reform movement and an outspoken

41 Morgenstern described his methodology: “It is hard to tell who are Zionists among the alumni [of the College]. Some men vote one way one day, and another day, another. None the less, I went through the list. I went through the list of alumni in two ways. I considered, first, as a group, the 220 Rabbis, whom it has been my privilege in this last twenty years, to ordain, to see how many of them are Zionists. I counted 59 out of 220. I think I was being liberal. When I was in doubt, I leaned backwards. I checked over this a few days ago, and I went over the list with Egleston, to see how many of that group he would call Zionists. Well, he found a few more. … I also went through the list of alumni who were ordained by my predecessor, Dr. [Kohler].” (“Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, p. 133.)
Chapter 1: Zionism: Rallying-Cry of a Declining Reform Movement

Zionist. In addition, a number of professors at Hebrew Union College openly expressed their sympathy with Zionism.

One of the most prominent Reform Zionists was Rabbi Stephen S. Wise (1874–1949), who served as a delegate to the second Zionist Congress and was a founder of the Federation of American Zionists. When Wise (no relation with Isaac Mayer Wise) founded the Jewish Institute of Religion in 1922, he created a second seminary for the training of Reform rabbis outside the environment of Hebrew Union College, and over the next twenty years, Wise would ordain 120 Reform rabbis. According to Morgenstern’s survey, which he presented at the Atlantic City meeting, over ninety percent of Wise’s graduates were “very ardent Zionists.” In the same period, Morgenstern found that the ratio of Zionists to non-Zionists graduating from Hebrew Union College was about one-third, the same as when Kaufmann Kohler was president.

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43 See Urofsky, *American Zionism*, p. 88; Meyer, “A Centennial History,” pp. 64–67. Under Kaufmann Kohler’s presidency, a number of these pro-Zionist professors were forced to resign, though Zionism was not the only issue at stake. As Meyer notes, Kohler sought to replace “those individuals who either lacked proper scholarly qualifications or were out of sympathy with his view of Reform Judaism—or both.” (Ibid., p. 62.) Some professors, such as Sigmund Mannheim, were expected to retire shortly, but Kohler confronted others more directly. In 1906, Kohler appealed to the board to restrain Max Margolis, a pro-Zionist professor who, while not directly preaching Zionism to his students, infused his interpretations of the prophets with Zionism and Jewish nationalism, which Kohler found to be particularly abhorrent, considering the central importance of the prophets in classical Reform ideology. When Kohler turned the courses on the prophets over to Moses Buttenweiser, Margolis resigned in protest.
45 “Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, p. 137
46 Note that in the Atlantic City notes, “Dr. Kohler” is misspelled as “Dr. Coulter,” likely a mistake on the part of the stenographer.
Chapter 1: Zionism: Rallying-Cry of a Declining Reform Movement

of the College in the 1900s and 1910s.\textsuperscript{47} This data evidences the conclusion of numerous scholars that while both Zionists and anti-Zionists in the early twentieth century believed their ideologies mutually exclusive, the Reform institutions were not singular in their anti-Zionism. In fact, numerous CCAR presidents, including Max Heller, were committed Zionists (though arguably, many anti-Zionists held this position as well), and rabbinical students at HUC were much more heterogeneous than some administrators may have wanted to believe.\textsuperscript{48} During the first half of the twentieth century, the number of Reform rabbis supporting Zionism grew into a significant minority and eventually became a group that could rival the non-Zionists.

This trend greatly troubled the non-Zionists. In his Atlantic City paper on the Hebrew Union College, Leo M. Franklin argued that the growth of Zionism within the Reform movement could be explained primarily by trends within the College, and those trends by the influx of students of Eastern European descent. He asserted “the College has to a considerable extent failed to influence the student mind sympathetically to a Reform interpretation of Jewish life,”\textsuperscript{49} implying at once that it was the College’s responsibility to turn out Reform ideologues, that this result was possible to achieve, and that these graduates could determine the future of the Reform movement. Though others

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 134
\textsuperscript{48} See Naomi Wiener Cohen, “The Reaction of Reform Judaism in America to Political Zionism (1897–1922),” 
\textit{Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society} XL (September 1950 to June 1951); Michael A. Meyer, “American Reform Judaism and Zionism: Early Efforts at Ideological Rapprochement,” 
\textit{Studies in Zionism} 4, no. 1 (1983); Jonathan Sarna, “Converts to Zionism in the American Reform Movement,” in 
\textsuperscript{49} Leo M. Franklin, “The Reform Movement and The Hebrew Union College, Atlantic City – June 2nd, 1942,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 4, p. 8
argued that identity formation was not so simple; the general consensus among these rabbis in 1942 was that the shift towards Zionism in the Jewish public was due to the influx of these immigrant Jews. Franklin’s speech is representative of this viewpoint, beginning his narrative with the “great influx of East European Jews who fled from the bloody pogrom of which they were the victims in the early [18]80’s.” He also maintained that the rise in Zionism at the College “must at least in part be accounted for by the fact that a heavy proportion of the students admitted to the College come from homes, if not from countries, where the Reform tradition was despised as a wholly wicked thing.” In response, Franklin proposed a wide array of changes for the College: only students with a Reform background should be admitted, the number of total students should be decreased, and a program of indoctrination should be instituted such that upon graduation, students would “be 100% in sympathy with the theology and ethics of Reform.” David Philipson agreed that teaching Reform theology should be mandatory, and Rabbi Morton Fierman (1914–1995) of Washington, D.C., brought forward the idea that Zionist rabbis such as Abba Hillel Silver of Cleveland were sending many students to the College and thus the students were under their Zionist influence.

50 “Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, p. 131
52 Ibid., p. 13
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., p. 16
56 “I have always felt,” said Philipson, “and still feel—I am not going to teach any more, I don’t suppose,—but it should be made a compulsory portion of the curriculum, and should not be made optional, as though it is not so important as Hebrew grammar, or Talmud, or any other discipline. It is extremely important.” (“Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, pp. 105–106.)
from the very beginning. Others argued that the path towards identity formation was more nuanced. Rabbi Milton Greenwald (1903–1969) of Evansville, Indiana, recalled that when he applied to HUC at the age of seventeen, he was asked, “If you are from an orthodox home, why are you coming to Hebrew Union College?” At the time, he didn’t know how to answer the question, and similarly Morgenstern presumed that others did not necessarily know what Zionism truly was when entering the College.

Whatever the process by which people came to their personal opinions and beliefs, the non-Zionist rabbis were clearly unsettled by the shift towards Zionism at Hebrew Union College and the Reform movement in general as a result. Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel (1907–1990), at the time serving in New York City, recounted:

About three weeks ago, I cooperated with the college in proctoring students who were taking entrance examinations … Not having returned in the last eleven years, I wanted to … see what kind of people were interested in going to a center of reform Judaism. … [T]here wasn’t one of those five men that I spoke with, who could begin to represent, either in his thinking or anything else, but first of all, a violent Zion [sic] point of view. I mean violent, for I just so much as asked the question, they just popped right back at me, “Well, what else could there be?” I didn’t even tell them how I felt. I said, “It’s very interesting.” Which is evidence that something has happened to New York. Something has happened over there, that is not very good for us, and the view of American Reform Judaism.

Schachtel and others like him were perceptive to look towards the College to see the future of the Reform movement. Yet, while so much of their unease was interconnected with the rise of “Zionism,” in fact, Zionism was simply the most visible—and for them the most repugnant—manifestation of the changes taking place within their movement.

They were also concerned about a growing traditionalism, ritualism and Jewish

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57 Ibid., p. 107.
58 Ibid., p. 110.
59 Ibid., p. 130.
60 Ibid., pp. 113–114.
particularism amongst the younger generation of Reform rabbis, which they connected with the intrusion of Eastern European and Orthodox Jews into their movement.\footnote{See the discussion of Schachtel’s view of the state of Jewish practice at HUC, in Julian Morgenstern to Louis Wolsey, 2 March 1944, American Council for Judaism Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, University of Wisconsin in Madison (hereafter ACJP-W), box 85, folder 9, p. 2.}

Zionism happened to be the most perceptible and easily attacked of the elements of the transformation of Reform Judaism that they could grasp.

The growing split that these rabbis perceived within the Reform movement was clearly manifested in the 1935 CCAR resolution unofficially known as the “neutrality agreement.” The first of the resolutions passed at that year’s convention in Chicago, the final resolution stated that the CCAR, as opposed to its previous position of anti-Zionism, “takes no official stand on the subject of Zionism.”\footnote{For the full text of the resolution, see p. 203. Also see Central Conference of American Rabbis, Forty-Sixth Annual Convention, p. 103.} This was a slightly redacted form of the original proposal put forth by the Zionist rabbis Felix Levy, James Heller and Barnett Brickner. Among other things, the original text of the resolution advanced that

When there is an honest difference of opinion in respect to the nature of Reform Judaism, anti-Zionists should not force their views down the throats of Zionists, nor in turn should Zionists now demand that the Conference, at least in the present status of the problem, commit itself to the Zionist philosophy and program. A policy of neutrality and of mutual respect and tolerance should be fostered.\footnote{Ibid., p. 102.}

This phraseology, asserting that the anti-Zionists had in the past “force[d] their views down the throats of the Zionists,”\footnote{Ibid.} along with the main motion, which claimed that the CCAR “as a body harbors at present no opposition to Zionism and will permit to every
constituent member the right to determine his own spiritual convictions”\(^{65}\) demonstrates
the perspective of the Zionists, from which the original proposal was written. The
animosity shared between Zionism and Reform Judaism has been amply documented. As
Naomi Wiener Cohen demonstrates, anti-Zionist resolutions were passed by the CCAR at
regular intervals in 1897, 1906, 1912, and 1917.\(^{66}\) Even with these anti-Zionist
resolutions in the CCAR’s past, Urofsky’s claim that with the neutrality resolution the
CCAR “dropped its official opposition to the movement and declared Zionism a matter of
personal conscience”\(^{67}\) might have been supported by the original resolution if it had
been accepted, but this sentiment is not to be found in a close reading of the final text.
Rather, the resolution as adopted argues that the composition of the CCAR—and thus the
Reform movement in a wider sense—had shifted away from nearly unanimous anti-
Zionism to become much more diverse.

When the neutrality resolution was proposed in 1935, it engendered considerable
debate. A close reading of this debate demonstrates that even as a single text sat before
the voting rabbis, they held sharply conflicting views on the meaning, purpose, and role
of the resolution. Rabbi Samuel H. Goldenson (1878–1962) of New York City’s Temple
Emanu-El, who would later become a leading Council rabbi, was an outspoken opponent
of the resolution. Goldenson stated that since the CCAR had already decided to revise the
Pittsburgh Platform, and the new Platform would certainly touch upon the issue of
Zionism, any resolution declaring neutrality on Zionism was unnecessary. In opposition,
the Zionist rabbi Morris Newfield of Birmingham, Alabama, intimated that while the

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\(^{65}\) Ibid., pp. 102–103.

\(^{66}\) Naomi Wiener Cohen, “The Reaction of Reform Judaism in America to Political

Chapter 1: Zionism: Rallying-Cry of a Declining Reform Movement

CCAR had “never taken a vote on the incompatibility of Zionism” with Reform, the body had previously been anti-Zionist, and thus the resolution was necessary to establish a basis of neutrality from the non-neutral status quo. James G. Heller argued that the neutrality resolution said “in effect that the question [of Zionism] is an open one from now on,” and so the resolution opened the issue of Zionism to further discussion. This is in direct opposition to Goldenson and others opposed to Zionism, who believed that the resolution closed the discussion.

This distinction between how the Zionists and non-Zionists viewed the function of the neutrality resolution further contextualizes the debate surrounding the 1942 Jewish army resolution: the non-Zionist rabbis viewed even the proposal of such a resolution as a breach of the 1935 resolution, which they saw as an agreement or contract to last indefinitely into the future. In the opening address to the Atlantic City conference, Louis Wolsey referred to the neutrality resolution as a “contract.” Samuel Goldenson similarly stated that the pro-Army resolution “violated a contract,” and Abraham Shusterman called the 1935 resolution a “sacred agreement” in his paper on “Judaism and its Future.” On the other side, Rabbi Henry J. Berkowitz of Portland, Oregon, twenty years

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68 Central Conference of American Rabbis, Forty-Sixth Annual Convention, pp. 110–111.
69 Ibid., p. 111.
70 “Introductory Address to Meeting of Non-Zionist Reform Rabbis, at Atlantic City, N.J., June 1, 1942, by Rabbi Louis Wolsey, Acting Chairman,” LWP-C, folder 1, box 4, p. 2.
71 “Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, p. 173
before an opponent of Zionism but by this time a convert to the Zionist cause,\textsuperscript{73} attempted
to dissuade his nephew Rabbi Malcolm Stern from attending the Atlantic City meeting by
arguing that “[t]he Chicago resolution of 1935 was \textit{merely} a resolution, not a
constitutional amendment, nor a legal contract,”\textsuperscript{74} and James G. Heller maintained that “it
\textit{was not} an ‘agreement.’” It was passed by a majority of 81 to 25 … after a resolution to
table it had lost by a vote of 51 to 53. … Yet now this has become a ‘Torah l’Moshe
miSinai [sic].’”\textsuperscript{75} Turning the tables, Heller used the non-Zionist rabbis’ early opposition
of the neutrality resolution to justify the 1942 resolution, and furthermore accused the
non-Zionists of holding a petrified view of Judaism, in opposition to Judaism as a
progressive, constant developing religion open to change.

In February 1942, when the CCAR passed a resolution “in complete sympathy
with the demand of the Jews of Palestine that they be given the opportunity to fight in
defense of their homeland on the side of the democracies under allied command to the
end that the victory of democracy may be hastened everywhere,”\textsuperscript{76} it drew fire from the
non-Zionist contingent for breaking what they saw as a sacred agreement that the
Conference would not touch upon issues of Zionism. However, just like the neutrality
resolution before it, its meaning and even formal name were up for debate. The resolution

\textsuperscript{73} Berkowitz recounted to his nephew Malcolm Stern, “It took me twenty years to get
away from the one-sided emphasis [against Zionism] that you adhere to!” (Henry J.
Berkowitz to Malcolm Stern, 9 June 1942, ACJP-C, box 1, folder 7.) Also see Sarna,
“Converts to Zionism in the American Reform Movement”; Eisenberg, “Beyond San
\textsuperscript{74} Emphasis in original; Henry Berkowitz to Malcolm Stern, 19 May 1942, ACJP-C, box
1, folder 7.
\textsuperscript{75} Emphasis in original; Circular letter from James Heller to CCAR members, 26 May
1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 3.
\textsuperscript{76} For the full text of the resolution, see p. 210. Also see \textit{Central Conference of American
Chapter 1: Zionism: Rallying-Cry of a Declining Reform Movement

came to be called the “Jewish army resolution,” but this is somewhat problematic, as it perhaps better reflects the proposed language of the resolution and not what actually was passed. In comparison to the resolution as originally proposed, which demanded that “the Jewish population of Palestine be given the privilege of establishing a military force which will fight under its own banner on the side of the democracies, under allied command,” the final version seems relatively tame. It did not explicitly call for a separate Jewish army—with the subtext that the Jews were a nation who deserved a state, just as much as the many other small armies fighting on the side of the Allies—or even a distinctively Jewish fighting force on a smaller scale. Instead, it could be interpreted more broadly as a demand that Palestinian Jews be allowed to join in the fight against Rommel’s Afrika Korps, which at that time posed a direct threat to Palestine. Thus, the term “Jewish army resolution” shows its true colors as the non-Zionists’ language and particular interpretation of the resolution. In either case, the non-Zionist members of the CCAR interpreted the resolution as one replete with Zionist rhetoric, and it was this demonstration of Zionist political power within the CCAR, which they believed should be “apolitical,” that caused them to react so strongly.

After extensive debate, the only discussion of resolutions recorded in that year’s account, the 1942 resolution was passed by a vote of 64 to 38. Rabbi after rabbi who would later sign the Atlantic City Statement of Principles stood up to register opposition. Samuel H. Goldenson, an opponent of the neutrality resolution seven years before, was now ready to make use of it to defend his beliefs. Goldenson stated that he had been notified of the possibility that another resolution might be proposed at the convention,

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77 Ibid.
opposing the creation of a Jewish army, and he counseled against it due to the 1935 neutrality resolution. “If such a resolution was offered,” he said, “it would stir up bad blood.”78 Goldenson further claimed that the neutrality resolution had been established so as “not to create situations in this Conference so as to divide one group against the other.”79 The venerable Rabbi Edward N. Calisch echoed Goldenson, recollecting that he had also counseled against that selfsame resolution in the “interest of harmony.”80 Rabbi Ahron Opher, a self-described Zionist who in fact was one of the signatories of the original proposal, argued for the withdrawal of the pro-Army resolution because it “would cause a rift in the unity of [the CCAR].” However, he stated this only after noting that a CCAR resolution “would have little effect upon the British Government,” implying that if it would have an effect on British policy, his position might be different.81

The non-Zionist rabbis came out in large numbers to express their opposition to the pro-Army resolution: Rabbi Irving Reichert (1895–1968) of San Francisco argued that an organization of Reform rabbis was not the proper venue for such a resolution,82 and Rabbi William Rosenblum (1892–1968) claimed that the resolution would “weaken the influence” of the CCAR.83 Rabbi Ephraim Frisch (1880–1957) of San Antonio, Texas, was against the resolution not only because of the neutrality resolution, but because he believed optimistically that “our future will depend upon a better humanity,”84 rather than on the creation of a Jewish army. These complaints show how the minority

78 Ibid., p. 172.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid., p. 176.
82 Ibid., p. 178.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., p. 180.
group of non-Zionists believed that the pro-Army resolution declared the CCAR as a Zionist organization and broke with the tradition of classical Reform Judaism that maintained optimism for a better future. In all, of the 38 in opposition, 27 asked to have their names recorded in the yearbook as such. Four months later, eight of those 27 would be in Atlantic City, and eight more would append their signatures to the Statement of Principles presented at that meeting.\footnote{Ibid., p. 182; “In Attendance,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 4.}

Between 1935 and 1942, a major change took place in the Reform movement that ultimately enabled the Atlantic City meeting to take place the way it did. In 1937, the CCAR passed the Columbus Platform, an updated version of the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885. One of the major innovations of the Columbus Platform was its clear realignment on Zionism; the new platform stated outright that “We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its upbringing as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life.”\footnote{For the full text of the Columbus Platform, see p. 205. Also see Central Conference of American Rabbis, Forty-Eighth Annual Convention, pp. 98–99.} As might be expected, this claim was highly contentious, and the Columbus Platform was only passed by the smallest of margins. In its debate, numerous non-Zionist rabbis expressed their specific discontent with the position on Palestine and Zionism.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 113–114.} The Columbus Platform’s preamble clearly stated that it was not “a fixed creed but … a guide for the progressive elements of Jewry,”\footnote{Ibid., p. 97.} yet with its passage, the Reform movement took on a responsibility that previously it had not had to shoulder. Whereas before, the Pittsburgh Platform had served as the movement’s unofficial ideology, with the
Chapter 1: Zionism: Rallying-Cry of a Declining Reform Movement

establishment of an officially recognized platform, the CCAR created the potential for a more organized response: anyone to come out against the platform and try to replace it with yet another. In this way, the passage of the Columbus Platform opened the door to meetings like that of the non-Zionist rabbis in Atlantic City, where David Philipson could claim that the Columbus Platform “has fallen dead” and implicitly call for another platform to replace it. That is perhaps the reason why, even though Philipson claimed that the Pittsburgh Platform was “the utterance most expressive of the teaching of Reform Judaism,” it was never officially declared the credo of the Reform movement. In the debate over the Columbus Platform, Rabbi Samuel Schulman said that “The tradition of this Conference has been a reluctance to formulate Principles in the form of a platform. This Conference has never drawn up a Platform. This Conference has gotten along very well without platforms.”

When the CCAR included the Pittsburgh Platform in its first yearbook, it was within the context of reprinting the resolutions of a series of rabbinical conferences, including Napoleon’s Sanhedrion in 1807, the 1845 Frankfurt Rabbinical Convention, the Philadelphia Conference in 1869, and numerous others. The inclusion of so many manifestos, which occupied over one-third of the yearbook, likely served as a compromise between the majority, who wished to include the Pittsburgh Platform in the yearbook, and the minority, who were opposed to the principles therein. Furthermore, it also functioned to ground the CCAR in the tradition of other conferences of liberal rabbis.

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89 “Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, p. 169.
93 Ibid., p. 31.
Both in Europe and America. This purpose is profoundly different from that of the
Columbus Platform, whose introduction effectively states that the world has changed, and
thus the Reform movement must change along with it.\textsuperscript{94}

When the question of a Statement of Principles was brought up in Atlantic City,
David Philipson is easily spotted as one of the most extreme voices. While Philipson had
served the purpose of adding historical authenticity to the Columbus Platform through his
role as Pittsburgh’s sole survivor, he also viewed the Columbus Platform as a departure
from the ideals of Reform Judaism. So, Philipson and others Atlantic City as an
opportunity to restore Reform Judaism to what he believed to be its earlier and purer
form through the issuance of a public statement, in opposition to those moderates who
argued against making any proclamation whatsoever.\textsuperscript{95} Philipson explained that the
Columbus Platform was not worthy of the Reform movement, and that perhaps it should
be relieved of its duties by the Statement of Principles prepared in Atlantic City:

“Nobody refers to [the Columbus Platform], nobody knows it because it was not truly
expressive of the most fundamental things of Reform Judaism. I think this Statement
is.”\textsuperscript{96} He also was quick to draw comparisons between Pittsburgh and Atlantic City,
arguing that there were only twenty rabbis at Pittsburgh, tacitly noting that there were

\textsuperscript{94} The Columbus Platform, officially entitled “Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism”
begins: “In view of the changes that have taken place in the modern world and the
consequent need of stating anew the teachings of Reform Judaism, the Central
Conference of American Rabbis makes the following declaration of principles. It presents
them not as a fixed creed but as a guide for the progressive elements of Judaism.”
\textit{(Central Conference of American Rabbis, Forty-Eighth Annual Convention, p. 97.)} For
the full text of the Columbus Platform, see p. 205.
\textsuperscript{95} “Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea,
Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, p. 166. Also see p. 84.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., p. 169.
more at the current meeting and furnishing it more authority.\textsuperscript{97} At the outset of the meeting, he had remarked that “that conference [in Pittsburgh] was the outcome of certain disquieting occurrences that had taken place in Jewish religious life,”\textsuperscript{98} and from the record we certainly understand that the non-Zionist rabbis in Atlantic City felt the same way about shifts in Reform Judaism during their own lifetimes. Within Philipson’s opening address on the Pittsburgh Platform, there was the implicit understanding that the reason Philipson addressed this topic was not only because he lent historic merit and authenticity to the meeting as the movement’s elder statesman, but that it was also the express purpose of both meetings to come out at the other end with a statement.\textsuperscript{99} And as some argued, such a statement would polarize Jewish life, or at least within the scope of their activity, polarize the CCAR. Rabbi Sidney Regner (1903–1993), a moderate voice, claimed that “I was very much disturbed from the very beginning of the call to this meeting”\textsuperscript{100} because he was afraid that it would create disunity. With regards to the “platform,” Regner believed that “the actual fact will be that we will create disunity and disruption in the Conference itself.”\textsuperscript{101} This fear of disunity was one of the prime reasons for people not to attend the Atlantic City meeting—Regner himself said that he took

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., p. 169. Also note that others were not as hasty to make the same argument. Herman Snyder noted that “In reference to the passing of the Pittsburgh Platform, which was done by a few men, that although a few men in number, they represented a great majority of like minded men. We have here a small number,” (Ibid., p. 178) and David Wice said that “The twenty men in Pittsburgh represented about eighty or ninety per cent of Reform Rabbis in America. We represent about five per cent.” (Ibid., p. 179)\textsuperscript{98} David Philipson, “The Message of Reform Judaism to American Israel and World Jewry,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 4.\textsuperscript{99} “Your Philadelphia meeting gave a committee charge of a program, and on that program we put the question of a Statement of Principles” (“Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, p. 166.)\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., p. 184.\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p. 186.
about ten days to consider the invitation for this reason—or later disassociate themselves from the Atlantic City group. After much discussion, the group found that they could not agree upon a final statement in the time allotted for the meeting—indeed, they could barely get through the first paragraph—and Julian Morgenstern’s suggestion that the statement be mailed to many potentially sympathetic rabbis for their edits was finally accepted. This set the stage for bringing many more rabbis into the group, and also finding out why many of them did not want to be associated with it.

While the Atlantic City meeting was a significant move by these rabbis to express themselves, it was not their first attempt to do something about what they felt was wrong in the Reform movement. Only two years previously, in 1940, Louis Wolsey sought to mobilize his fellow rabbis to the cause of saving Reform Judaism from itself: his plan that time was to create a magazine to be called alternately “The Jewish Advance,” “The Reform Advance,” or simply “The Advance.” It never quite got off the ground, but we can see in the relevant documentation not only how similar were the concerns—again without any serious discussion of Zionism—but also how many of the same rabbis were a part of the effort.

Between April and June 1940, Louis Wolsey along with William Fineshriber, another senior Philadelphia rabbi, solicited the support of various Reform rabbis and lay leaders for the support of a “monthly magazine … in the format of the ‘Mercury’ and the

102 Ibid., p. 184.
103 See pp. 78–83.
104 See the final session of the meeting, Ibid., pp. 189ff.
105 “Preview of The Jewish Advance,” no date, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.
106 Julius Gordon to the editors, 12 April 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18; Louis Wolsey and William Fineshriber to Morris S. Lazaron, 16 December 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.
107 Louis Wolsey to Albert F. Mecklenburger, 24 June 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.
Chapter 1: Zionism: Rallying-Cry of a Declining Reform Movement

Protestant and Catholic Digests, in the interest of a liberal interpretation of Judaism.”

They corralled a group of sixty rabbis to their cause, and solicited the support of the leaders of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods, and the Federation of Temple Sisterhoods. By 1941, the magazine’s prospects had severely declined. In October 1940, Wolsey reported that they had assembled a list of 40,000 names for a campaign to advertise the magazine and raise the necessary capital through pre-publication subscriptions. The drive was slated to begin in December 1940, but by February of the following year only 400 paid subscriptions had come in. Neither Wolsey nor Fineshriber had the wish or the wherewithal to bankroll the magazine; lacking the necessary capital to proceed, they hoped to assemble the funds through the auspices of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. In May 1941, Wolsey’s project was stuck in a sub-committee of the UAHC, and he lamented that “I should say the Union will never get out the paper.”

When examining the list of rabbinical supporters for the Jewish Advance, we find that of this group, 35 would go on to sign the Atlantic City Statement of Principles. Furthermore, many of the remaining rabbis were sympathetic to the Atlantic City

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109 Ibid.
110 Louis Wolsey to Albert F. Mecklenburger, 24 June 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.
111 Louis Wolsey to Mrs. Leon (Gertrude) L. Watters, 21 June 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.
112 Louis Wolsey to Jacob W. Mack, 7 October 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.
113 Louis Wolsey and William Fineshriber to Morris S. Lazaron, 16 December 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.
114 William Fineshriber to Morris S. Lazaron, 28 February 1941, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.
115 Louis Wolsey to Morris S. Lazaron, 7 May 1941, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.
116Louis Wolsey and William Fineshriber to Morris S. Lazaron, 1 May 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.
Chapter 1: Zionism: Rallying-Cry of a Declining Reform Movement

meeting’s purpose—or at the very least were contacted by Wolsey about it. This overlap in the rabbis involved is not the only connecting feature of the two initiatives: the impetus for action was a belief that Reform was, in the words of Wolsey, “in a decline,” and they must do something about it. Wolsey continued to explain:

> People are not as much interested in it as heretofore, and I think this is due not alone to circumstances, but also to the fact that they do not know what Reform Judaism stands for. They do not join Reform congregations because of the point of view of Reform. Other reasons are much more decisive in their affiliation—or their non-affiliation. Israel can be saved only by his religion, and that is why a medium of information and of inspiration should be provided.\(^{118}\)

A year and a half later, at Atlantic City, Isaac Landman expressed similar concerns:

> Our program of enlightenment must not only go to our own constituents, but it has to go to the non-synagogue Jews who have to be informed of Reform Judaism. … They want to be shown that Judaism doesn’t mean observations alone. They want to be given the assurance that just because they don’t observe all these things in their own homes they still can be Jews. I have had any number of people who come into my congregation, who are members, say “It is the first time I have ever heard an interpretation of Judaism which is compatible with the way I live.” … So in many ways we can enlighten them as to their life as Americans and their life as Jews. Where we have to follow a program of enlightenment is in the whole program of education, of what we call at least the Reform movement and what we mean by the Reform movement.\(^{119}\)

Landman believed that there must be a way to educate these lay Jews, many of them unaffiliated, about their religion and present them with the program of Reform. Wolsey described the Advance as a magazine for “making propaganda for Reform Judaism among our own people, and … informing Reform Jews as to the content of their religious

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\(^{117}\) Louis Wolsey to Jacob W. Mack, 7 October 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.

\(^{118}\) Ibid.

\(^{119}\) “Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, p. 154.
Chapter 1: Zionism: Rallying-Cry of a Declining Reform Movement

history and position.”\textsuperscript{120} The constructive program that Wolsey wanted to enact in 1940 was relatively consistent with what he and his colleagues advocated at Atlantic City in 1942. As we shall see, the idea to publish a magazine was central in these rabbis’ program for the proliferation of Reform, and as the Council developed the conception of a magazine was raised again and again by critics who wanted to emphasize “pro-Reform” over “anti-Zionism.”\textsuperscript{121}

While all agreed on the need for education, and a magazine seemed a fairly good way to go about it, the remaining question was a position on Zionism. Wolsey claimed that “our colleagues are greatly enthusiastic about the project [the Advance], because they already see a movement under way to scuttle Reform Judaism, and they wish to preserve it,”\textsuperscript{122} and by this he probably meant Zionism. But the focus of the magazine would not be anti-Zionism, but rather “religion as a major and paramount phase of Jewish history and thinking.”\textsuperscript{123} Looking at the titles of articles proposed for the first issues of the Jewish Advance, we find that Zionism was mostly untouched. Many of the writers included in the proposal would become central Council members, such as David Philipson, who was to write on the topic “What is Reform Judaism?,” Rabbi William Rosenau of Baltimore (1865–1943), slated to discuss “Abraham Geiger’s Influence,” and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{120} Louis Wolsey to Albert F. Mecklenburger, 24 June 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18; Louis Wolsey to Mrs. Leon (Gertrude) L. Watters, 21 June 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.
\item \textsuperscript{121} See pp. 73, 100–103.
\item \textsuperscript{122} Louis Wolsey to Albert F. Mecklenburger, 24 June 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18; Louis Wolsey to Mrs. Leon (Gertrude) L. Watters, 21 June 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.
\item \textsuperscript{123} Louis Wolsey and William Fineshriber to Julius Gordon, no date, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18. This letter was probably written in April 1940, as it was written in response to Gordon’s inquiry as to the policy of the Jewish Advance on Zionism, written to Wolsey and Fineshriber on 12 April 1940 (MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18).
\end{itemize}
others. However, Wolsey and Fineshriber did not restrict themselves to their fellow non-Zionists. Also listed on the prospectus were the moderate Zionist Rabbi Solomon B. Freehof (“A Great Talmudic Mind”), Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath (“Where on Earth is God?”), who would ascend to the presidency of the UAHC in 1943 and lead it for 30 years, as well as the scholar Solomon Zeitlin (“Israel: Race, Nation, or Religion?”), editor of the *Jewish Quarterly Review* from 1940 until his death in 1976. It is certainly possible that this broad base of contributors was an attempt on behalf of the organizers to try to be more moderate and bring in a more diverse group of writers and editors, at least for the first issues; Wolsey and Fineshriber admitted to inviting “a few ardent Zionists to be members of the staff” but clearly tipped their hand with regards to their definition of “religion” and “spirituality” when they described to Rabbi Julius Gordon of St. Louis their as-yet-untested conditions for publication:

> If whatever article you should send us from time to time would attempt to argue the pros in [sic] Zionism, I do not think we would object. If your article tried to show that the logic of religion ties up with Zionism, or that Zionism is a phase of the Jewish religion, or that the history of Judaism is essentially Zionist, we might not agree with you—in fact, I am very sure we would entirely disagree—but that would be no reason why we would not accept the article. If, however, your discussion of Zionism would be predicated entirely upon a nationalistic or secularistic point of view, then I think we would be tempted to decline the article, merely because it was not religious.

We can begin to understand both the discourse between “pro-Reform” and “anti-Zionism” that would arise in the resignations from the American Council for Judaism as well as these rabbis’ understanding of what is religious and what is not by considering the words of Rabbi Herman Snyder of Springfield, Illinois at the Atlantic City meeting:

124 “Preview of The Jewish Advance,” no date, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.
125 Louis Wolsey and William Fineshriber to Julius Gordon, no date, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.
126 Ibid.
Chapter 1: Zionism: Rallying-Cry of a Declining Reform Movement

We are not gathered here this morning because we are anti-Zionists, but rather because we are here being pro-Reform Judaism, and I believe the purpose of our gathering here [in Atlantic City] is not because we are opposed to an army of Jews, but rather we are for an army of the Lord.\textsuperscript{127}

These rabbis might have been “pro-Reform,” but for some this position ultimately meant “anti-Zionist” and all its implications. However, for many the focus was not upon Zionism or Zionist activity itself, but the antireligious (and thus anti-Reform) undertones that they believed Zionism encouraged.

Between these two projects, the Atlantic City meeting and the Jewish Advance, and their surrounding discussions—led by the same core group of rabbinical activists—we can see the fears that these leading Reform rabbis held about their own movement and the future of Judaism in America. Yet while Zionism appears to be such a prominent problem for them, it is striking how little Zionism itself is a part of the debate. Zionism, instead of the movement for a Jewish state in Palestine, represented the antithesis of Reform. As Louis Wolsey dramatically put it, the danger was not the rise of Zionism but the “destruction of our faith.”\textsuperscript{128} This, as we will see in the coming chapters, is in direct opposition to Rabbi Elmer Berger of Flint, Michigan, who would maintain that the real danger was the rise of a Jewish state and thus the subjugation of American Jews to the obligations of a “Jewish people.” This dichotomy is crucial, because even though Berger attempted to fight Zionism \textit{mano a mano}, his conception of Zionism’s character was just as imagined as Wolsey’s. For Wolsey, Zionism, and the perceived politicization of the Reform institutions, as evidenced by the Jewish army resolution, served more as a

\textsuperscript{127} “Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{128} “Introductory Address to Meeting of Non-Zionist Reform Rabbis, at Atlantic City N.J., June 1, 1942 by Rabbi Louis Wolsey, Acting Chairman,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 4, p. 4.
rallying cry than a concrete battle to be fought. While Wolsey and his colleagues were quite upset about the Jewish army resolution, their solution to the problem did not treat Zionism as such. Rather, they hoped to reach out to the Reform Jewish population, who were largely apathetic towards their conception of the ethical monotheistic religious creed of classical Reform. Only through understanding these characteristics of the negative feeling that these rabbis held towards the changes within the Reform movement can we begin to understand the ways in which the Atlantic City group of individual rabbis—in the words of Wolsey, "We have no organization"—into the American Council for Judaism, a representative lobbying group for Jewish laypeople that fought for what they believed to be their rights in the halls of Congress.

129 "Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey," LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, p. 140.
Chapter 2:
Ties that Bind: The Dynamics of Council Membership

In the weeks that followed the June 1942 Atlantic City meeting of non-Zionist Reform rabbis, Rabbi William Fineshriber of Philadelphia solicited members of the Central Conference of American Rabbis to sign the Statement of Principles prepared at the meeting. By the time this “Statement of Principles by non-Zionist Rabbis” was published in the New York Times on August 30, 1942, the list had grown to nearly ninety names. It was deemed important enough by the Council leadership to be reprinted in a pamphlet entitled “The Flint Plan,” the testimony of Rabbi Elmer Berger of Flint, Michigan, who was destined to lead the American Council for Judaism for twenty-five years. Berger’s pamphlet was distributed across the United States, and the “group of 95” whose signatures were listed within it was promoted far longer than many of them chose to be associated with the group. The pamphlet and the list it contains is a natural

131 Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 23 July 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9; Berger noted that “I have mailed copies of my pamphlet to the names you suggested. … We are running out of copies of that first pamphlet. There are not more than a dozen or so left and we are still being asked for more. I do not know what to do about it. I wish our group would get going so that it might take over the printing of that pamphlet on a larger scale. Our group here would have another 500 or 1000 printed.” (Ibid., p. 2.)
132 While the list of rabbis in “The Flint Plan” actually numbered 89, the term “group of 95” was the term that the leadership used to refer to the group: “Weinstein suggested that our 95 rabbis be asked to underwrite Berger’s salary” (Emphasis added; “Meeting of the Provisional Committee for the Formation of the American Council for Judaism,” 7 December 1942, ACJP-C, box 2, folder 1, p. 4); “We have a responsibility to the ninety-five men throughout the country.” (Morris S. Lazaron to Louis Wolsey, 13 November 1942, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 8); numerous other letters refer to “the 95” or “our 95” (Louis Wolsey to Morris S. Lazaron, 6 January 1943, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 10; Louis Wolsey to William Rosenau, 20 January 1943, MSLP-C, box 1, folder 5; Elmer Berger to Ephraim Frisch, 9 January 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1, p. 2) or “the ‘ninety’” (William F. Rosenblum to Louis Wolsey, 18 November 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 4, p. 1). Also
starting point for research into this peculiar group, even if it includes scant detail outside of each rabbi’s city. However, the list presents only a momentary glimpse into the beliefs of these rabbis, when during the summer of 1942 each fatefuly signed a form letter to Fineshiber. At that moment, each forever attached themselves to what the American Council for Judaism would later become. No matter their later beliefs or statements on the issue of Zionism, none could deny—excepting those few who claimed that they never officially approved the use of their names\textsuperscript{133}—that at one time they associated themselves with that group’s founders and agreed with this “Statement of Principles,” which claimed:

In the light of our universalistic interpretation of Jewish history and destiny, and also because of our concern for the welfare and status of the Jewish people living in other parts of the world, we are unable to subscribe to or support the political emphasis now paramount in the Zionist program. We cannot but believe that Jewish nationalism tends to confuse our fellowmen about our place and function in society and also diverts our own attention from our historic role to live as a religious community wherever we may dwell. Such a spiritual role is especially voiced by Reform Judaism in its emphasis upon the eternal prophetic principles of life and thought, principles through which alone Judaism and the Jew can hope to endure and bear witness to the universal God.\textsuperscript{134}

What this list of rabbis does not tell us is the story of why each signed the statement and what reservations they held. It does not tell us even the names of those who chose not to sign it and the reasons they did not, or those who agreed to sign it after it was published. It does not tell us what happened after the summer of 1942 and how each signatory was affected by the events of the following months and years. The list of rabbis

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\textsuperscript{133} See below, n. 192.

\textsuperscript{134} For the full Statement of Principles, see p. 212. Also see Elmer Berger, \textit{The Flint Plan: A Program of Action for American Jews} (Committee on Lay-Rabbinical Cooperation, 1942), p. 3.
creates the illusion that this group—many of whom held leading pulpits around the United States and even in England—was a monolithic one, composed exclusively of opponents of Zionism. Upon closer examination, we find that this cohort was much more diverse (and thus much more interesting). The group was composed of a tightly knit group of intimate friends who had collaborated in the past and shared deeply-held beliefs about the nature of Judaism. Simultaneously, this group contained a loose periphery who, though similarly like-minded, were often of a much more moderate complexion than the primary activists. Additionally, many Reform rabbis who were accosted by Wolsey, Fineshriber, and other leaders of this group, ultimately chose not to sign the Statement of Principles, turning it down for reasons similar to those on the periphery who initially signed the statement but later retracted their support.

So, we are challenged with a problem—one that similarly plagued the committee that drafted the statement\(^\text{135}\)—if we attempt to pick out “non-Zionist rabbis” and categorize them. When we examine discussions amongst the rabbis and the many resignations, we find that the relationships between these people and their beliefs are not at all simplistic. The case of the American Council for Judaism is extremely well-documented and thus presents a unique opportunity to study how a group seeks to find a common voice for their concerns, attempts to finds its true identity and purpose as its leadership crystallizes. When one chooses not to publicly associate themselves with a group, it does not mean that he or she shuns those who do so. Correspondingly, when someone “resigns” from an organization, it does not necessarily imply that he or she

\(^{135}\) Wolsey accidentally mailed Rabbi Julius Gordon of Congregation Shaare Emeth in St. Louis, a Zionist, regarding the Jewish Advance (Julius Gordon to the editors of the Jewish Advance, 12 April 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18); also see the discussion of the breakdown of rabbis graduating from Hebrew Union College in chapter 1, p. 25.
subsequently severs all connections with those who remain. Neither does attaching one’s signature to a statement or petition automatically mean that the signatory, in addition to simply showing support for the cause, views him or herself as an integral part of the sponsoring organization. By closely examining the correspondence between the leading members of the emerging American Council for Judaism from the Atlantic City meeting in June 1942 on, we can begin to understand the complex and fluid dynamic that characterized this group of non-Zionist Reform rabbis and the shifting power hierarchies that enabled the transformation of their objectives as the American Council for Judaism developed.

The earliest manifestation of what would become the American Council for Judaism can be found in the notes from a meeting of rabbis held at Philadelphia’s Hotel Warwick on March 30, 1942. In attendance at this meeting were Rabbis William Fineshriber, Eugene Sack, and Malcolm Stern of Philadelphia; Solomon Foster and David Wice of Newark, New Jersey; Jonah B. Wise, Sidney Tedesche, William Rosenblum, Nathan Perilman, Isaac Landman, and Samuel H. Goldenson of New York City; and Norman Gerstenfeld (Washington, D.C.), Alexander D. Goode (York, Pennsylvania), and Abraham Holtzberg (Trenton, New Jersey). They primarily traveled to the meeting from their homes on the east coast, and represented a small number of different cities. This geographical trend continued through the ascension of Rabbi Elmer Berger and the layman Lessing Rosenwald, the retired chairman of Sears, Roebuck and Co., and the crystallization of the American Council for Judaism as an organization in the spring of 1943. During this period, the leaders of the non-Zionist

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Chapter 2: Ties That Bind: The Dynamics of Council Membership

rabbinical group met numerous times in Philadelphia, New York, Pittsburgh, and Atlantic City, among other locations in the northeast. At the Atlantic City meeting on June 1–2, 1942, over half of the rabbis arrived from New York City, Baltimore, or Philadelphia, and none came from farther west than Chicago. Over time, this representation would shift, with the west coast and the southwest proving to be the strongholds of the Council.

There are a number of possible explanations for the early geographic strength of the east coast. Travel was not easy or cheap, and for many, getting across the United States for a two-day meeting would have been fairly onerous. Many who supported the meeting and would later sign the Statement of Principles were elderly and for that reason unable to travel. This was not a universal experience; for many of the elder generation who were physically able, such as David Philipson, their attendance was facilitated by their retirement, which afforded them greater personal freedom than rabbis who were active, such as Beryl Cohon of Boston and Samuel Sandmel, the director of the University of North Carolina Hillel. Furthermore, many of the rabbis in attendance at these planning meetings came from larger synagogues where they had assistants who could cover their religious services while they were away.

137 “In Attendance,” 1 June 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 4.
139 Henry Cohen to Louis Wolsey, 1 May 1942, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3.
140 Beryl Cohon to Louis Wolsey, 28 May 1942, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3; Samuel Sandmel to Louis Wolsey, 29 May 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 6. Other rabbis who could not attend for similar reasons include Rabbi Max Currick of Erie, Pennsylvania (Max Currick to Louis Wolsey and William Fineshriber, 28 May 1942, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3) and William F. Rosenblum (William F. Rosenblum to Louis Wolsey, 18 November 1942, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 8).
Chapter 2: Ties That Bind: The Dynamics of Council Membership

The picture that can be drawn from the source material is of a tightly knit leadership with connections on numerous levels: personal, professional and communal. On the personal level, many of the Reform rabbis—and not only the non-Zionist ones—had family connections in the rabbinate, or had grown up attending a synagogue at which an elder rabbi held the pulpit. These close personal relationships were important influences; the rabbis often inherited their mentors’ views or, as often was the case, the mentors desperately attempted to influence their disciples on the question of Palestine and Zionism. Numerous Reform rabbis in this period were related to one another, potentially following their influence into the rabbinate. The daughters of the German-born Reform rabbi David Einhorn famously married the two preeminent Reform rabbis of the time, Kaufmann Kohler and Emil G. Hirsch, and Isaac Mayer Wise’s son Jonah B. Wise was a prominent non-Zionist activist in the rabbinate. Many of the key actors in the story of the Council had relations in the Reform rabbinate as well. David Lefkowitz Sr. and Jr., who for a time served the same pulpit in Dallas, were both signatories of the Atlantic City Statement of Principles, and Ephraim Frisch ascended to his pulpit in San Antonio, which he held from 1923 to 1942, in large part because of his father-in-law, the Reform Rabbi Henry Cohen of Galveston, Texas’ “rabbinical patriarch.” There were many others for whom the profession of Reform rabbi was the “family business,” such as Irving Reichert and his younger brother Victor, who both signed the Atlantic City Statement of Principles, and the Zionist rabbis Maximillian Heller and his son James G. Heller. Yet another rabbinical family was that of the staunch anti-Zionist Henry

Berkowitz (1857–1924). Berkowitz’s nephew, Henry J. Berkowitz (1894–1949), also served in the rabbinate, and the younger Berkowitz’s nephew, Rabbi Malcolm Stern (1915–1994), served as the secretary of the earliest Council meetings and later a scholar of American Jewish genealogy.\textsuperscript{143}

In addition to close family ties, many of the rabbis were dear friends. In the context of the Council, the prime example was of course Elmer Berger, who grew up at the synagogue of Louis Wolsey, who was rabbi at Cleveland’s Euclid Avenue Temple from 1907 until 1925.\textsuperscript{144} Berger, born in 1908, was under Wolsey’s tutelage until he was at least seventeen years old. At the Atlantic City conference, Wolsey referred to Berger as his “disciple,”\textsuperscript{145} and many of Elmer Berger’s letters to Wolsey are signed “fondly,”\textsuperscript{146} “in fondest love,”\textsuperscript{147} “affectionately,”\textsuperscript{148} or simply “love, Elmer,”\textsuperscript{149} and Wolsey addressed Berger in similar terms.\textsuperscript{150} Berger and Wolsey were not the only rabbis to maintain a close friendship; the clues to personal relationships between many of the rabbis that transcended professional networking can be found in the salutations they utilized. Many letters include not only best regards to the recipient from the sender, but also to and from wives and even the rest of the family. Benedict Glazer’s letter to Louis Wolsey on May 31, 1942, concludes, “Ada joins me in sending you our fondest and best

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{145} “Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, p. 76.
\item \textsuperscript{146} Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 14 May 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9.
\item \textsuperscript{147} Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 23 July 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9.
\item \textsuperscript{148} Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 26 January 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1.
\item \textsuperscript{149} Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 6 January 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1.
\item \textsuperscript{150} Louis Wolsey to Elmer Berger, 4 February 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1.
\end{itemize}
Chapter 2: Ties That Bind: The Dynamics of Council Membership

wishes,”151 and David Lefkowitz, Sr., wrote to Louis Wolsey in December 1944, closing with the note, “Sadie and the children join me in all good wishes to you and your dear ones for a very Happy New Year.”152 Even more telling, many letters expressing criticism or disagreement over Council policies specifically talk about the rabbis’ personal relationships. Rabbi Ely Pilchik’s resignation letter to Morris Lazaron of July 15, 1942, closes, “With personal greetings to Morris [Jr.], Harold, and Cleme,”153 Lazaron’s children. In a series of correspondence between Louis Wolsey and Rabbi Ira E. Sanders of Little Rock, Arkansas, that concluded with Sanders’ resignation, Sanders wrote that “I trust that our friendship of over 20 years will, in no wise [sic], be impaired because of the position I am forced to take after three months of mental anguish and struggle. With love to Helen [Wolsey] and yourself in which Selma joins me, I am Cordially, Ira.”154 In response, Wolsey agreed that the feeling was mutual: “Please be assured that nothing you do will interfere with our personal relations. … I am altogether too fond of you to allow [our disagreements] to interfere.”155 A number of rabbis noted in later years that they specifically joined the Council, or refrained from resigning from it, due to their personal loyalties.156 Ephraim Frisch claimed that he joined the Council

152 David Lefkowitz, Sr., to Louis Wolsey, 19 December 1944, LWP-C, box 2, folder 2.
154 Ira Sanders to Louis Wolsey, 17 April 1944, LWP-C, box 4, folder 6, p. 2.
155 Louis Wolsey to Ira E. Sanders, 21 July 1944, LWP-C, box 4, folder 6.
156 Rabbi Nathan Perilman noted shrewdly that Zionists and their opponents “have both greatly overvalued the endorsements of their friends, because these friends have given their support out of simple humanity.” (Nathan A. Perilman, Understanding Ourselves [New York: Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York, 1945], p. 9.)
because of his close friendship with Wolsey, and Rabbi Abraham Cronbach (1882–1965) wrote in his 1959 autobiography:

When I discovered that the American Council for Judaism stressed religious objectives less than it did its anti-Zionism, I might, like all the other rabbis, with exceedingly few exceptions, have withdrawn from the organization. But, by that time, the Council was under fire, and I do not forsake my friends when they are in trouble.

The message is clear that these rabbis were connected on a very personal level that transcended the professional network. And once some of these highly connected rabbis began to resign from the Council—such as Abraham Shusterman of Baltimore, whose case we will discuss at length below—their close relationships become even clearer, as Council leaders express their feelings of betrayal.

In addition to personal friendships, many of these rabbis worked together on CCAR committees and often served the same communities, even in the same synagogue.

Some of the non-Zionist rabbis who worked side-by-side include Rabbis William Fineshriber and Malcolm Stern (Congregation Keneseth Israel, Philadelphia), David Wice and Solomon Foster (Congregation B’nai Jeshurun, Newark, New Jersey), David Philipson and Victor Reichert (Rockdale Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio), and Edward N. Calisch and Sidney Lefkowitz (Congregation Beth Ahabah, Richmond, Virginia). The

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157 Frisch wrote to Wolsey: “As my friend of nearly 40 [sic] years (& more counting College days), who knows that I have no axes to grind, and at whose initiation I participated in our formation of the Council, I want you to know of my change of attitude towards it so that you will not be surprised at what I am doing.” (Emphasis added; Ephraim Frisch to Louis Wolsey, 11 December 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 9.)


original Atlantic City Statement of Principles was also drafted by the four rabbis from Baltimore: Morris Lazaron, Abraham Shusterman, Abraham Shaw, and William Rosenau. All of them were heavily involved in the early Council, and Rosenau termed them as the “Baltimore group”\textsuperscript{160} and alternately as the “Baltimore rabbis,” “our Baltimore colleagues,” \textsuperscript{162} or “our Baltimore men.”\textsuperscript{163} Often, the older rabbis in the community looked out for the younger ones. Speaking of Shusterman, Rosenau remarked, “I wish to say that I am delighted at the youngest acquisition to the Baltimore group.”\textsuperscript{164} Shusterman also describes this relationship, explaining to Wolsey that “Rosenau and Lazaron are concerned about the professional future of Shaw and myself”\textsuperscript{165} because of their involvement in the Atlantic City meeting.

Of course, not all of the Reform rabbis were best friends. Rabbis Samuel Schulman and Ephraim Frisch shared mutual dislike for one another, stretching all the way from 1919, which might explain why Schulman did not want to be associated with the Council.\textsuperscript{166} But of the non-Zionist rabbis who would form the Council, many saw in their communal rabbinical leadership a coherent group fighting for a common cause, and were highly loyal to one other as leading figures of the Jewish community. These

\begin{footnotes}
\item[160] Morris Lazaron to Louis Wolsey, 13 November 1942, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 8; “Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, p. 165.
\item[161] Ibid., p. 182.
\item[162] Ibid., p. 203.
\item[164] “Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, p. 40.
\item[165] Abraham Shusterman to Louis Wolsey, 15 May 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 8.
\item[166] After Frisch accidentally telegrammed Woodrow Wilson in 1919 (see p. 62), Schulman refused to be in any association with Frisch whatsoever. (Samuel Schulman to David Philipson, 26 September 1919, David Philipson Papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio [hereafter DPP-C], box 2, folder 1.)
\end{footnotes}
relationships were complex and often connected to the rabbis’ roles within the local community: newcomers, like Shusterman in Baltimore, were just getting their footing, while someone like Fineshriber in Philadelphia, who would serve his synagogue for over fifty years, truly situated himself within the communal fabric and as a rabbi emeritus at his synagogue likely retained a significant loyalty from the membership.

Perhaps these elder statesmen led younger colleagues to follow their lead, because it was believed that they represented the communal power base that held the keys to job security. However, the assistant rabbis did not always follow their superiors into battle. Rabbi Robert Kahn of Houston lost his job because he was not anti-Zionist enough for his congregation, and Rabbi Benedict Glazer of Detroit’s Temple Beth El did not become involved in the Council even though his predecessor, Leo Franklin, was a big supporter. In some cases, the old hats of the community in fact would moderate their anti-Zionist activity in an attempt to get newcomers to join their cause, and sometimes, communal leaders had come into their positions of power specifically because of their moderate and diplomatic manner more generally, which they continued to exercise when the Council was established. In sum, intracommunal relationships are both complex and

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167 Weiner, *Jewish Stars in Texas*, pp. 184, 197–199. Also see Kahn’s letter of resignation from his synagogue (Robert I. Kahn to Officers and Board of Congregation Beth Israel, Houston Basic Principles Papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio, Manuscript Collection 132 [hereafter HBPP-C], box 1, folder 2).
168 B. Benedict Glazer to Morris Lazaron, 5 December 1942, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 9. Also see n. 169.
169 Leo Franklin wrote that “I shall be glad to serve on the Committee on Lay-Rabbinic Cooperation, tho’ because of certain local situations, it may not be immediately feasible to do much in the way of organization here. Briefly, I should want to win over Dr. Glazer to a more empathetic attitude before attempting to get any aggressive movement of this sort under way. While I have not yet discussed the matter with him, I believe that as a new man in the community he will want to go somewhat slowly. But his heart is in the right place. Upon my own co-operation you can of course depend.” (Emphasis in original; Leo Franklin to Morris S. Lazaron, 22 August 1942, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 5.)
Chapter 2: Ties That Bind: The Dynamics of Council Membership

difficult to track; the natural bias within the sources is that the relationships of those who lived in close proximity to one another are less well documented, because if one rabbi walked down the hall to speak with the other, that development is simply lost to us.

These rabbis were not interested in splitting their synagogues or opening intracommunal strife. This concern came forward particularly in the aftermath of Congregation Beth Israel of Houston’s late 1944 declaration of Basic Principles, which effectively made Zionist synagogue members second-class citizens.\footnote{See Weiner, \textit{Jewish Stars in Texas}, pp. 182–199; Kolsky, \textit{Jews against Zionism}, p. 80; Bobby Brownstein, “The Battle of the ‘Basic Principles,’ Congregation Beth Israel and the Anti-Zionist Revolt in American Judaism” (Masters Thesis, University of Houston, 1991); Meyer, \textit{Response to Modernity}, pp. 333–334; Howard Greenstein, \textit{Turning Point: Zionism and Reform Judaism} (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1981), pp. 51–71. Congregation Beth Israel also compiled an extensive documentary history, including hundreds of newspaper clippings and articles, see HBPP-C, box 1.} In 1943, Beth Israel pressured its longtime senior rabbi Henry Barnston to resign, due to his “timid” stance on the issue of Zionism. Robert Kahn, the associate rabbi and “heir apparent,” was at the time serving as a chaplain in the U.S. Army in the South Pacific. Israel Friedlander, Beth Israel’s highly active president, swiftly moved to replace Kahn, who leaned towards Zionism, with Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel, previously of Temple Shaaray Tefillah in Manhattan’s West Side. An outspoken opponent of Zionism, Schachtel was heavily involved with the American Council for Judaism, but he was unaware of Beth Israel’s exceptionally organized laity and their fight against what they saw as the Zionization of their synagogue by new members who were joining for social reasons, but did not believe in classical Reform. On November 23, 1943, the synagogue voted 612 to 168 in favor of the principles. In addition to affirming many of the tenets of classical Reform, the principles stated unequivocally that “We are a religious community, and neither pray for
nor anticipate a return to Palestine nor a restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state."¹⁷¹ New members joining the synagogue had to sign a waiver that “I/we understand that Beth Israel is an American Reform Congregation and I/we subscribe to the basic principles thereof.”¹⁷² Those members who could not agree with the principles were demoted to nonvoting status; ironically, Beth Israel could not collect a quorum of such voting members for its May 1944 elections.¹⁷³ Schachtel, who arrived in Houston in the midst of the laity’s push to pass the principles, found himself in a tight situation, and mostly remained neutral on the issue. In the months that followed, as Beth Israel’s policies received widespread criticism, Schachtel played a central part in defending and justifying the Basic Principles. However, by the time the congregation repealed the Basic Principles in 1968, Schachtel was quick to write to Jacob Rader Marcus and alert him to the news.¹⁷⁴

The events at Congregation Beth Israel deeply reverberated throughout the American Jewish community and especially amongst the rabbinate, who were concerned about their authority vis-à-vis the board and laity in general. As other synagogues began to consider similar measures, Morris Lazaron’s former congregation in Savannah, Georgia, approached him for advice. His response to their question as to the advisability of following Beth Israel’s lead was that “I don’t want to hurt [the Zionists in my

¹⁷² Application for Membership to Congregation Beth Israel, no date, HBPP-C, box 1, folder 3.
¹⁷³ Sydney H. Cohen, President of Beth Israel to All Members of the Brotherhood of Congregation Beth Israel, 1 June 1944, HBPP-C, box 1, folder 2.
¹⁷⁴ Hyman Judah Schachtel to Jacob Rader Marcus, 9 December 1968, HBPP-C, box 1, folder 3.
congregation] and I don’t want to drive them out … The congregation is a basic unit; it’s a family.”\textsuperscript{175} In another episode, Rabbi Ira Sanders of Congregation B’nai Israel in Little Rock, Arkansas, resigned from a vice-presidency of the Council because he believed that it was encouraging this kind of schism within synagogues. Sanders maintained that while he opposed political Zionism, “it must be opposed outside of the Synagogue which is sacred soil.”\textsuperscript{176}

This discourse over the role of the synagogue is important because after the Atlantic City meeting, the rabbis had a key part to play in the Council’s game plan: it was hoped that the rabbis in each community would help organize a “lay-rabbinical cooperation committee,” and so the rabbi would play the double role of leader of a unified synagogue community and assistant to communal infiltration from an outside organization. In cities with the most “successful” Council chapters, the rabbis used their position of power to push the Council’s agenda, such as in the case of Rabbi Irving Reichert of San Francisco, who preached anti-Zionism in his Yom Kippur sermon,\textsuperscript{177} and in these communities the rabbis formed a core of Council support.\textsuperscript{178} These communal leaders for the most part were on the east coast, with the significant exception of Reichert. They thus became the leadership of the early Council because they could communicate effectively and quickly in a way that in the twenty-first century world of email and text messaging seems normative but then was a true limiting factor for day-to-

\textsuperscript{175} Morris S. Lazaron to Benjamin K. Victor, 31 May 1945, MSLP-C, box 11, folder 8.
\textsuperscript{176} Ira E. Sanders to Louis Wolsey, LWP-C, box 4, folder 6.
\textsuperscript{177} “Where Do You Stand,” 8 October 1943, in Irving F. Reichert, Judaism and the American Jew: Selected Sermons and Addresses of Irving Frederick Reichert (San Francisco: The Grabhorn Press, 1953), pp. 135–143.
\textsuperscript{178} “At the first session, to which I invited five of my leading board members, I found so little interest in our battle that I made a study of the field with Morris and Rosenau.” (Abraham Shusterman to Elmer Berger, 3 January 1943, LWP-C, box 4, folder 8)
Chapter 2: Ties That Bind: The Dynamics of Council Membership

day operations for a group of geographically disparate volunteers with strenuous day jobs
working part-time for a cause in which they strongly believed.179

Another feature of the core group of rabbis is that the American Council for
Judaism was not the first time they had been activated as a cohort. As discussed above,180
many of them worked towards the ill-fated Jewish Advance. In addition, in 1918 and
1919, Rabbis Henry Berkowitz and a younger David Philipson, both members of Hebrew
Union College’s first graduating class, sought to organize the non-Zionist Reform rabbis
and create the League of Americans (against Zionism) in response to the publication of
the Balfour Declaration and the then-upcoming Versailles Peace Conference that would
take place from January to June 1919.181 These rabbis hoped to lobby President Woodrow
Wilson and the American delegation to their viewpoint on the question of Palestine. On
August 30, 1918, David Philipson sent out an invitation for a “conference to formulate
organization and action against Zionism”182 to a familiar group, including Rabbis Edward
N. Calisch, Louis Wolsey, Solomon Foster, Leo M. Franklin, Ephraim Frisch, and
Samuel H. Goldenson. They also contacted other leading Reform rabbis such as
Kaufmann Kohler, then president of Hebrew Union College, who if still alive in 1942
probably would have again received letters from Wolsey and Fineshriber about the
American Council for Judaism. In addition, they solicited prominent Jewish public
figures such as Congressman Julius Kahn (Republican of California), Simon Wolf, and a

179 Note that Ephraim Frisch explained his slip-up in 1919, where he prematurely
telegraphed President Wilson, by the slow communications infrastructure and the need to
act quickly. (Ephraim Frisch to David Philipson, 8 September 1919 [inferred], DPP-C,
box 1, folder 5.)
180 See p. 39.
181 Also see Malone, Rabbi Max Heller, pp. 182–184.
182 Edward N. Calisch to David Philipson, 3 August 1918, DPP-C, box 1, folder 2.
number of Jewish judges.\textsuperscript{183} The conference, which was scheduled for October, never took place. After receiving Philipson’s letter of August 30, Louis Marshall (1856–1929), president of the non-Zionist American Jewish Committee (AJC), wrote back on September 5: “The Jews should be united, with their minds intent upon but one thing, and that is, the winning of the war.” According to Marshall, while the AJC remained “non-Zionist,” it would be imprudent to oppose the Balfour Declaration because President Wilson and the other allied powers had endorsed it; furthermore, opposing Zionism at such a time would provide the Zionists with exactly what they were seeking, an opponent which would serve as a rallying-cry.\textsuperscript{184} Even while Marshall’s counseled against action, Berkowitz and Philipson continued their attempt to recruit leading Jews to lobby the delegation to Versailles through early 1919.\textsuperscript{185} The roster of those in the discussion holds much in common with those who were at the forefront of the debates over the Atlantic City meeting and the formation of the American Council for Judaism. In 1942, these same rabbis found themselves in the same profession, believed themselves to be fighting the same battles, and called upon the same cohort for action.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{183} Ibid.; Solomon Foster to Ephraim Frisch, 6 September 1918, DPP-C, box 1, folder 5; Leo M. Franklin to David Philipson, 20 September 1918, DPP-C, box 1, folder 5; Samuel H. Goldenson to David Philipson, 12 September 1918, DPP-C, box 1, folder 5; Louis Wolsey to David Philipson, 12 September 1918, DPP-C, box 2, folder 4; Kaufmann Kohler to David Philipson, 4 September 1918, DPP-C, box 1, folder 10; Simon Wolf to David Philipson, 7 September 1918, DPP-C, box 2, folder 4; Julius M. Mayer to David Philipson, 3 September 1918, DPP-C, box 1, folder 13.
\item\textsuperscript{184} Correspondence on the Advisability of Calling a Conference for the Purpose of Combating Zionism, (New York City: Zionist Organization of America, 1918), p. 7–11.
\item\textsuperscript{185} Henry Berkowitz to Louis Marshall, 22 December 1918, Henry Berkowitz Papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter HBP-C), box 1, folder 23; Isaac Landman to Henry Berkowitz, 5 March 1919, HBP-C, box 1, folder 20; Solomon Foster to Henry Berkowitz, 21 February 1919, HBP-C, box 1, folder 8; Max Currick to David Philipson, 23 January 1919, HBP-C, box 1, folder 5.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The common actors in the episodes of the American Council for Judaism, the Jewish Advance, and the League of Americans provides an opportunity to compare the attempts at activism and learn about how these rabbis operated and their abilities for cohesive and concerted action. Clearly, they were not altogether organized. There were numerous miscommunications in all three endeavors that demonstrate that organizing was not these rabbis’ strongest suit. In the case of the League of Americans, after reading President Woodrow Wilson’s letter to Stephen S. Wise published in the New York Times on September 5, 1918, in which Wilson praised the Balfour Declaration, Ephraim Frisch rushed a telegram to the White House, in which he wrote:

I respectfully urge reconsideration of your indorsement [sic] of the Zionist movement and the Balfour declaration as reported in the press this morning. Zionism is a religious as well as a political problem for Jews. Thousands of us are convinced that all attempts to revive a separate nationality for nationalistic interests amongst Jews are a menace to Judaism sure to lead to ultimate eclipse of our religious interests by political concerns, and that the establishment of a Jewish State would tend to distract our coreligionists here from a full and perfect allegiance to American citizenship and obligations.

This telegram, which Frisch also sent to the Times, the interview in which Frisch stated that the telegram was backed by a “national institution” (when in fact it was sent without the group’s approval), and the subsequent revealing of the names of the committee members the following day, led to a schism within the New York group of rabbis. Later that month, Samuel Schulman explained to Philipson:

As I have written you in two letters, I will, under no circumstances, serve on the Committee, if Rabbi Frisch is to remain on the Committee and be its secretary. This may sound to you harsh and opinionated. But I am in New York and you are

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188 “Rabbis Preach on President’s Note,” New York Times, 7 September 1918.
not. You have no idea how discredited Rabbi Frisch is in New York, because of his action.\footnote{Samuel Schulman to David Philipson, 26 September 1918, DPP-C, box 2, folder 1.}

Schulman explained that Frisch should have followed the direction of Philipson rather than taking action on his own, thus “dragg\[ing\] in the names of a number of men with whom he connected himself, by claiming to be the Secretary of a national committee.”\footnote{Ibid.}

When Wolsey and Fineshriber tried to start the Jewish Advance in the early 1940s, they incurred the wrath of the lay leadership for starting the initiative before consulting of the Board of Governors of Hebrew Union College.\footnote{Louis Wolsey to Jacob W. Mack, 7 October 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.} And when it came to the American Council for Judaism, there were countless organizational faux pas. Names were accidentally signed to statements after they resigned,\footnote{There were two particular cases of this complaint: Rabbi Eugene Mannheimer inquired in January 1943 as to how his name was attached to the Statement of Principles, and according to Louis Wolsey, there was a letter of 6 June 1942 “from which it was concluded you were in sympathy with our project and that you expect to participate.” Thus, Wolsey and his colleagues placed peoples’ names on the list without explicit permission. Additionally, David Wice’s name was appended to the Statement of Principles after his June 29, 1942, resignation. Wolsey was surprised to discover this, and explained away the discrepancy with the excuse that the \textit{New York Times} had used an older list that Wolsey had sent to Arthur H. Sulzberger, the \textit{Times}’ publisher, earlier that summer. (Eugene Mannheimer to Abraham Holtzberg, 31 January 1943, LWP-C, box 3, folder 5; Louis Wolsey to Eugene Mannheimer, 4 February 1943, LWP-C, box 3, folder 5; David Wice to Louis Wolsey, 31 August 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 11; Louis Wolsey to David Wice, 1 September 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 11.)} letters were sent out to laypeople without the approval of the synagogue,\footnote{See notes of the CCAR Committee on Arbitration, 13 January 1944, Stephen S. Wise Papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter SSWP-C), box 7, folder 8, which detail the complaint of Rabbi Brickner of Cleveland’s Euclid Avenue Temple that Elmer Berger directly solicited members of his synagogue board without his permission. Also see p. 106.} or even just a slip of the tongue at a speaking venue, calling refugees “refuse,”\footnote{Stephen S. Wise to Philip D. Bookstaber, 2 January 1946, SSWP-C, box 7, folder 7.} caused all sorts of havoc for the Council leadership.
There are additional clues that point to a situation in which a group of rabbis, trained in synagogue leadership and not necessarily in the business of entrepreneurship, did not know exactly what they were doing in the world of “getting things done.” They were slow to register as a non-for-profit corporation with the IRS, nor did they know its benefits for deducting donations;\footnote{Robert I. Kahn to Malcolm Stern, 23 April 1942, ACJP-C, box 1, folder 7; Robert I. Kahn to Abraham Holtzberg, 22 April 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 2.} they accidentally contacted pro-Zionists when they meant to only reach out to non-Zionists,\footnote{Irving Reichert to Elmer Berger, 14 December 1944, ACJP-W, box 102, folder 3.} and they were quite bad at keeping the rabbinical membership appraised of the changing situation within the Council. This last item would lead to the resignation of Irving Reichert, rabbi of Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco and creator of the largest Council chapter in America, from the national vice presidency of the Council in December 1944.\footnote{Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 12 January 1945, LWP-C, box 2, folder 2, p. 2.} As shall be seen, the Council’s gaffes ostensibly led to a number of other resignations, though it is clear that many of those who resigned for relatively minor reasons had expressed concerns about Council activity long before, often connected with these seeming small incidents. Furthermore, the activist rabbis were constantly unable to reach the goals they set for themselves, or alternately they set the bar perennially high. At the November 2, 1942, planning meeting at which the name “the American Council for Judaism” was chosen, the goal was to fundraise $25,000 “in the next 30 days,”\footnote{“Minutes of Lay-Rabbinical Chapter Committee Meeting, November 2, 1942, at Rodeph Shalom Temple, Philadelphia,” ACJP-C, box 2, folder 1.} but according to later testimony, the Council never had more than $20,000 at its disposal.\footnote{Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 23 July 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9, p. 3.} To cope with this financial crisis, Berger
offered to defray his salary in order to keep the organization going.\textsuperscript{200} Similarly, in the case of the Jewish Advance, Wolsey and Fineshriber aimed for 100,000 names for the advertising campaign, but were ultimately only able to collect 40,000.\textsuperscript{201} The rabbis’ unceasing failure to meet their stated goals can be tied either to a habit of setting excessively optimistic targets, their inability to function as an efficient organization, or both. Most likely it was a combination of these factors as well as an overestimation on their part as to how many American Jews would identify with and support their mission.

Outside of the core leaders of the group, there existed an extensive network of peripheral characters. Most of them did not come to the June 1942 Atlantic City meeting for the reasons outlined above, though in the weeks afterwards, many signed the Statement of Principles when solicited. Some of those who spoke out against the Atlantic City meeting, however, still saw themselves as part of an extensive conversation, even if they were mostly on the sidelines. In a lengthy letter to Louis Wolsey and William Fineshriber, Samuel Schulman, Rabbi Emeritus at Congregation Emanu-El in New York, outlined his reasons for opposing (and thus not attending) the meeting. Among them were the practicalities of his health, as well as his belief that the unity of the CCAR was of utmost importance. After counseling them to moderation, Schulman advised that “I admonish you most solemnly not to bring in the word Arab in any public statement you make,” arguing that it was not American Jewry’s position to meddle with the internal affairs of Palestine. Schulman concluded his appeal with a postscript asking that his letter

\textsuperscript{200} Louis Wolsey to Elmer Berger, 4 February 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1, p. 2.  
\textsuperscript{201} Louis Wolsey to Jacob W. Mack, 7 October 1940, MSLP-C, box 15, folder 18.
Chapter 2: Ties That Bind: The Dynamics of Council Membership

be read at Atlantic City so that his voice might be heard. At that meeting, in fact, Wolsey read many letters and telegrams from rabbis in absence, both supporters and opponents, and at meetings in the following months, correspondence from the rabbis who were unable to attend was regularly read in the author’s absence. While many of the absentee rabbis had something to say, a number were willing to donate as well. According to a list of donors to the “Non-Zionist Rabbis Fund” up until October 1942, seventeen rabbis not present in Atlantic City gave donations ranging from $3 to $35, with the average donation $9.29. As might be expected, those present in Atlantic City gave at a higher level, to the tune of an average donation of $32.05. The fact that so many who did not attend the meeting donated is significant, because they wanted to show their support even if they could not make it to the planning meetings. Still, most rabbis who signed the Atlantic City Statement of Principles limited their involvement to just that. They were silent supporters of the group, and just the same sent in silent resignation letters: if their relationship with the movement was tenuous to begin with, then perhaps their disassociation with it did not require an explicit resignation either.

The dynamic of the silent Council rabbis is particularly noticeable in light of the “liquidation vote” that took place in February 1943. After the Council was officially established in December 1942, Rabbis James Heller and Solomon B. Freehof, president

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203 “Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, pp. 2, 73.
and vice-president of the CCAR respectively, tried to negotiate a truce between the Council and the Conference. Heller wanted the Council to disband, or in their terminology, to “liquidate,” but the Council rabbis—or at least those who voted—decided nearly unanimously not to do so.\(^{206}\) Through this vote, we know that at this time, nearly all who voiced their opinion supported the Council’s continuing existence, but it appears that in the following months, most did not get further involved. Rabbi Eugene Sack, Louis Wolsey’s assistant rabbi who at the time was serving as a chaplain stationed in Camp Wheeler, Georgia, explained to Wolsey that “You can count me in on the Council—but as a passive member; for me there are so many more important things that need doing—particularly right now. After the war there’ll be time to review things and see where we stand.”\(^ {207}\) Particularly important to understand the dynamics of the Council, though, are not those who explicitly announced their loyalties, but the one-third of the rabbis who did not vote at all on the question of Heller’s proposal.\(^ {208}\) Wolsey argued that the lack of responsiveness might have something to do with the fact that many rabbis held chaplaincies, a plausible analysis, as there is evidence of rabbis resigning to take chaplaincy posts that would take them overseas.\(^ {209}\)

\(^{206}\) Wolsey recounted the voting record: “We received all-told 56 responses, of which 50 voted definitely against liquidation; 3 voted for liquidation, namely [Max] Currick, [Sidney] Tedesche, and [Jonah] Wise; Cronbach voted both ways; Eugene Mannheimer preferred to register as ‘not voting’; Sidney Regner voted for liquidation after the Conference passes a satisfactory by-law. In other words, we did not hear from 33. Some of these men are in the service and overseas, and probably that is the reason why we did not hear from them. The others undoubtedly must have taken advantage of the statement that if we did not hear from them, we should register them as against liquidation.” (Louis Wolsey to Elmer Berger, 4 February 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1.)

\(^{207}\) Eugene Sack to Louis Wolsey, 7 February 1943, LWP-C, box 4, folder 6.

\(^{208}\) See n. 206.

\(^{209}\) Telegraph from Morton Fierman to Louis Wolsey, 4 February 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 5; L. Elliot Grafman to Louis Wolsey, 25 November 1942, LWP-C, box 2, folder
Chapter 2: Ties That Bind: The Dynamics of Council Membership

After the continued low response rate to the Council’s communiqués, Elmer Berger, then serving as executive director of the Council, decided to try and re-enlist the delinquent rabbis. In November 1943, Berger wrote Norman Gerstenfeld: “It is a long time since I have seen or heard from you and I am writing now to ask you to be good enough to tell me your position with regard to the Council.” Gerstenfeld was not the only one who was out of touch with the Council leadership. Over time, more and more rabbis, including previously leading members, allowed their participation in the Council to lapse. Berger sent out a form letter to the Council rabbis that began “It is more than a year and a half since you gave your name as one of the Rabbis initiating the American Council for Judaism, Inc,” implying that the recipient had not given their support to more recent statements or initiatives. Through his use of the term “Inc.,” Berger blatantly revised the history of the foundation of the Council, making it appear as if the rabbis who affixed their name to the Atlantic City Statement of Principles automatically made themselves members of the Council. The Council was certainly not founded at Atlantic City, in June 1942, but incorporated in December 1942 and officially began work in April of the following year. Signing the Statement of Principles certainly did not give support

5. In fact, Julian Morgenstern insinuated to Berger that he should take a post for exactly the reason that it would necessitate the shutdown of Council operations (Julian Morgenstern to Elmer Berger, 1 July 1943, ACJP-W, box 85, folder 9).
210 In a note to Hyman Schachtel, he wrote that “Unless we move quickly and with determination we are going to lose our rabbinic following.” (Elmer Berger to Hyman Judah Schachtel, 26 February 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1.) We see that he did not exactly move quickly on this item, but that when he did, it was with force.
211 Elmer Berger to Norman Gerstenfeld, 29 November 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1.
212 While the letter in question was actually written to Louis Wolsey, from the context we can see clear that it was also sent to other rabbis. During late 1943, Wolsey was still in touch with Berger, and would not have to be told what the Council had done since the Atlantic City meeting.
213 Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 28 October 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1.
Chapter 2: Ties That Bind: The Dynamics of Council Membership

for the Council, “Inc.,” since it did not exist yet either in name or as a legal entity. Berger continued to lament that “There is still a very great number of the rabbinical members of the Council who have shown no active participation whatsoever,” imploring the recipient to begin to show such participation and to replicate the success of the rabbis in places such as San Francisco and Houston by building vibrant Council chapters. The evidence thus points to the fact that most of the rabbis who signed the Statement of Principles in 1942 were in fact silent partners, on call to take action when solicited, but for the most part too busy to be truly active. This could perhaps be understood in light of the dynamic of the two forms of “non-Zionism.” Many of the Council rabbis preferred to refer to themselves as “non-Zionists” to express their support for the resettlement of refugees in Palestine and also their opposition of the creation of a Jewish sovereign political entity in that land. However, other “non-Zionists” were in support of Zionism for other Jews, just not for themselves. As they were not politically active, they considered themselves “non-Zionists” because Zionists were those who actively fought for the creation of a Jewish state. We find that on both sides of the spectrum of Zionist discourse, there were rabbis who supported their respective causes but did not see it as their first priority.

The group was also highly fluid. Each individual resignation can be best understood not as a sharp break from the group, but the culmination of a prolonged discontent with the movement. As such, the transition from associated member to resignee did not necessitate complete disconnection from the group. We particularly see the dynamics of this fluidity as well as aspects of the core leadership when central leaders

214 Ibid.
resigned. The December 1942 resignations of Rabbis Abraham Shusterman and Abe Shaw of the “Baltimore group,” who believed that the purpose of the Council should not be to fight Zionism but to rebuild the Reform movement, caused a rush of vitriolic fury amongst the other leaders. Louis Wolsey in particular felt that he had been betrayed; he wrote to Edward Calisch, “I have not replied to any of Shusterman’s letters. I haven’t the heart to do it, because I am liable to say some immoderate things.”

He furthermore confided to Leo Franklin on the same day:

Let me say that [the resignation of Shaw and Shusterman] is about the most painful experience I have had in this whole movement. I deplore their withdrawal far more than I can say, and I have to catch myself lest I get angry about it. In both cases timidity seems to be the dominating motive. However, I do know that lay Zionists reached them. It is possible also that some of our Zionist colleagues may have talked to them. That happens to be one of their methods, for I know that Louis Newman tried to persuade [Rabbi Julian] Feibelman to get out of the A.C.J.—but he was unsuccessful.

In the aftermath of these events, Wolsey, Berger, Lazaron, Schachtel and Philipson—all Council leaders who would stay on board for years—unsuccessfully attempted to reconvert Shusterman to their ranks. When this proved impossible, Wolsey asked

215 Louis Wolsey to Edward N. Calisch, 13 January 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3.
216 Louis Wolsey to Leo Franklin, 13 January 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 5. While there is no corroborating evidence that Newman specifically contacted Feibelman about resigning from the Council, on February 11, 1943, Newman contacted William F. Rosenblum and implored, “You, [Sidney] Tedesche, Jonah Wise, [Hyman Judah] Schachtel, and others can render a real service to the cause of Reform Judaism, if you do your utmost to bring about the dissolution of the Council. Must this fight go on in New York, at the Union meeting, in the Board of Jewish Ministers, in the Association of Reform Rabbis, in the C.C.A.R., until incalculable damage is done?” (Louis I. Newman to William F. Rosenblum, 11 February 1943, SSWP-C, box 7, folder 8.)
217 Louis Wolsey to Abraham Shusterman, 26 December 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 8; Elmer Berger to Abraham Shusterman, 29 December 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 8; Abraham Shusterman to Elmer Berger, 3 January 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 8; Elmer Berger to Abraham Shusterman, 6 January 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1; Abraham Shusterman to Louis Wolsey, 6 January 1943, MSLP-C, box 16, folder 10; Abraham Shusterman to Morris S. Lazaron, 6 January 1943, LWP-C, box 4, folder 8; Hyman Judah
Lazaron to reach out to the former member of the “Baltimore group,” now divided, and collect all Council documents in Shusterman’s possession, claiming, “I cannot write to him because I am altogether too much aggravated.”\textsuperscript{218} In response to this request, Shusterman, who was the secretary at the Atlantic City meeting,\textsuperscript{219} returned all the papers presented there except his own,\textsuperscript{220} causing them great outrage. These rabbis had quite graphic things to say to one another about Shusterman, who they had seen as an up-and-coming leader of the non-Zionist movement. They were at first surprised by his resignation, but that quickly turned to disgust. Wolsey wrote to Lazaron on January 6th:

> What Shusterman did yesterday was almost unforgivable. He cut about the sorriest kind of a figure I have ever seen a man cut. He was simply pathetic—and we shall have to let it go with that. He doesn’t realize probably that he has assumed a very grave responsibility and that he will have to pay the price. If he thinks he can run a congregation on the basis of neutrality, or side-stepping, or surrender, or cowardice, then he misconceives himself, his career, and his congregation. Fence sitters never won a battle—and there is definitely a battle in the air.\textsuperscript{221}

Wolsey continued in a postscript:

> I am enclosing you copy of letter [sic] from Abe Shusterman which was received by Will [Fineshriber] and myself today. It is a pathetic letter and betrays utter unvisioning [sic] of the total situation. He evidently must be believe that when the Democratic Party wins, the Republicans should get out of the United States. He also asks us to give up the Council now in return for a neutrality which may or may not be observed. I am very much afraid that Abe has not been frank. What do you think? As to his promise for the tomorrow, I am wondering what confidence could be placed in his realignment. So far as I am concerned, I could never have any faith in his loyalty to the [Reform] movement which he suggests. He would pull out whenever certain considerations might appear to him to be important.\textsuperscript{222}

\textsuperscript{218} Louis Wolsey to Morris S. Lazaron, 20 January 1943, LWP-C, box 3, folder 8.
\textsuperscript{219} Abraham Shusterman to Louis Wolsey, 6 December 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 8.
\textsuperscript{220} William Rosenau to Louis Wolsey, 3 February 1943, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 11; Louis Wolsey to Morris S. Lazaron, 4 February 1943, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 11.
\textsuperscript{221} Louis Wolsey to Morris S. Lazaron, 6 January 1943, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 10, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., p. 4.
The Council rabbis believed that Shaw and Shusterman’s resignations were “the mistake of a lifetime,” which would “undoubtedly affect their careers.”223 According to Berger, this did in fact affect Shusterman’s career prospects, inasmuch as Shusterman was struck from the list of potential candidates for Houston’s Congregation Beth Israel’s rabbinical search that concluded with the hiring of Hyman Judah Schachtel.224 However, Shusterman’s career was still long-lived; he continued to head Baltimore’s Har Sinai Congregation for over thirty years and held important positions in the Baltimore Jewish community.225 We can understand Wolsey’s comments about Shaw’s and Shusterman’s future careers as being tied to his beliefs about the future of American Judaism. If, as Wolsey and his Council colleagues believed, Zionism was (or should be) on its way out in American Jewish life and their vision of classical Reform would reassert itself, then the decision to resign was a detrimental one; as it turned out, this was not the case.

In addition to their personal feelings towards the younger Baltimore rabbis Shaw and Shusterman, the Council rabbis misinterpreted their reasons for leaving the group. Berger and Schachtel believed that Shusterman, like others before him, resigned because he believed that the Council would damage the CCAR and the UAHC,226 and as cited

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223 Louis Wolsey to Edward N. Calisch, 13 January 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3.
224 “When [the Houston congregation] went about selecting the successor to [Henry] Barnston, their Bible was the list of 95. And here’s the Baltimore gossip. Shusterman applied and was being considered. They discovered that he had withdrawn from the group and his candidacy was immediately dropped.” (Elmer Berger to William Rosenau and Morris Lazaron, 19 August 1943, ACJP-W, box 73, folder 1, p. 2.)
226 See chapter 3, pp. 78–82. Elmer Berger to Abraham Shusterman, 29 December 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 8; Hyman Judah Schachtel to Abraham Shusterman, 7 January 1943, LWP-C, box 4, folder 8.
above, Wolsey believed that the resignations were the work of Zionist lobbyists.\footnote{227} However, a close reading of the correspondence shows that Shusterman held convictions against the developments in the Council for at least two months prior to his resignation, and after his resignation he hoped to continue to influence the Council from the sidelines. Shusterman was “seriously disturbed” by the future for the Council he saw at the November 2nd meeting at which the public relations expert Sidney Wallach presented his proposal for the Council’s activity. Furthermore, he hoped to “retrace [his] steps and … start a Reform magazine, working with Rubenstein [who presented on this topic at the November 2nd meeting] and Shaw,” effectively returning to the idea of the Jewish Advance.\footnote{228} Even before that, in October, Shusterman registered his feeling that “My anxiety is about the weakness of the reform movement. … I would like to see the Flint groups [for lay-rabbinical cooperation] organize as pro-reform groups rather than as anti-Zionist groups.”\footnote{229} Over the course of the next month and a half, Shusterman repeatedly pleaded with Wolsey to focus not upon anti-Zionism but on rebuilding the Reform movement. He wrote:

Every attempt to make anti-Zionism a total philosophy of Judaism, even by implication, is equally as secularistic as total nationalism. To organize merely for the purpose of combating such influences is to desert liberal Judaism. To make common cause with those who deny the primacy of the synagogue is farthest from my thoughts. Whatever anti-nationalism there is to be in our program should derive from our faith as Reform Jews that Judaism is a universal religion and that our Jewish future will not be circumscribed by geographical boundaries.\footnote{230}

\footnote{227} Louis Wolsey to Leo Franklin, 13 January 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 5.\footnote{228} Abraham Shusterman to Louis Wolsey, 9 November 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 8; “Minutes of Lay-Rabbinical Chapter Committee Meeting, November 2, 1942, at Rodeph Shalom Temple, Philadelphia,” ACJP-C, box 2, folder 1.\footnote{229} Abraham Shusterman to Louis Wolsey, 21 October 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 8.\footnote{230} Abraham Shusterman to Louis Wolsey, 6 December 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 8.
In line with this pronouncement, Shusterman’s resignation on December 24, 1942, was due to disagreement over the program of the proposed American Council for Judaism. Even though he disagreed with the focus on anti-Zionism, he wrote to Wolsey that “I will continue to keep in touch with you and Morris [Lazaron], to follow the progress of the group, to attend all meetings I can but to fight—possibly for the present—as a lone wolf.”231 It appears, however, that Shusterman was mostly out of touch with the Council group until 1948, when Louis Wolsey called for the Council’s dissolution,232 though this may simply be that the letters from the interim were lost and may also be accounted for by the reason that Wolsey himself was out of touch with Berger and the other Council leaders as the Council took shape. In any case, Shusterman is a prime example of how many resignations were not an extreme jump from one side of the spectrum to the other but more accurately the culmination of an extended process of internal dialogue over Council policies.

Even if some of the resigning rabbis eventually became Zionists, as did many of the younger ones who lived long beyond the State’s establishment, this process took a long time to come to completion, and it was certainly not their primary reason for resigning from the Council. The one exception here would be that of Rabbi Morris W. Graff of Roanoke, Virginia, who will be discussed in depth in Chapter 3.233 Other rabbis, such as Samuel Silver and Julian Morgenstern, would become favorably disposed towards Zionism but only after the Jewish State’s many successes.234 Additionally, as

233 See p. 98.

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demonstrated here, the resignations of the more central members such as Shusterman or the more important rabbis in the Reform movement such as Julian Morgenstern, president of Hebrew Union College, led to more chatter than those within the peripheral group, whose the Council leadership referred to in a more offhanded manner.235 Even more, most of the “resignations” might not even be considered so by the standard definition whereby one who resigns must be a part of the group from which he or she leaves: rather, many rabbis who rejected being a part of the group from the start, registering their complaints up front and refusing to be associated with the group at all. These “resignations” provide significant data that will explain the discourse that led to many of the actual resignations and helps us to comprehend the internal changes taking place within the Council that for most organizations is typically an opaque process.

This extended periphery presents us with a triad of concentric circles of involvement. In the center was the Council’s core leadership, extremists on the issue of Zionism, on the outside were those who were not involved, and in between were those who consist of the peripheral Council members and signatories on the Statement. As we will discuss in the next chapter, as rabbis moved from one group to another and the peripheral group shrank, the core group accrued more and more power within the organization. This in turn drove more of the moderate rabbis out of the organization, and even forced some central leaders into the peripheral category. In order to effectively make use of the list of rabbis who signed the Atlantic City Statement of Principles and the resignations of the following months and years as an effective source to understand

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235 Louis Wolsey to Morris S. Lazaron, 15 August 1942, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 5; Louis Wolsey to Elmer Berger, 3 February 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1.
the constitution of the early Council and the process by which the Council transformed years, the fluidity of the group’s dynamics on both a social and professional basis must be taken into account. Each of these rabbis was more than a name on paper, but held complex rationales for believing what they did at any point in time. As such, to understand the Council’s early years properly, we must be careful in our consideration of criticism of the Council: every reason for resigning has behind it a different motive, even if in essence the rabbis say the same thing, just as every rabbi’s reason for remaining in the organization held behind it a hidden impetus.
Chapter 3:
The Transformation of the Council

The transformation of the American Council for Judaism was a highly complex process that took more than two and a half years to complete. A comparison of the Atlantic City meeting of non-Zionist rabbis in June 1942 with the first annual American Council for Judaism conference, which took place in January 1945, would find a complete disconnect between them, both in terms of leadership and purported mission. These changes can be broadly understood through reading the variegated criticism hurled at the Council throughout this period, much of it in the form of resignation literature. A series of tropes are repeated again and again in this literature, including issues of “unity” or “peace,” a discourse on religion, politics, and the role of rabbis in public life, and democratic and totalitarian leadership. While not the only broadsides fired at the Council, these themes characterize the great majority of the debate over the Council’s actions in this period of transformation. These themes could be broadly periodized into distinctive yet deeply interconnected stages of organizational development, but I do not plan to investigate in depth the problematica of periodization because they are an all-too-easy trap into which to fall: motifs rise and fall in line with the Council’s activities, but once voiced, a criticism never disappears. It only changes in character and shifts from a mode of anticipation to one of precipitation. At this juncture, I will only venture to say that the stages generally proceeded from the period surrounding the Atlantic City meeting (circa April 1942 through the late summer), at which time there was a focus on the issue of “unity” or “peace,” to a discourse on religion and politics as the Council became a real organization in fall 1942 through April 1943. Following the appointment of Lessing
Rosenwald as the Council’s President in April 1943, the third stage materialized as what we find is termed “politics” became the *modus operandi* of the Council. As the Council established itself as an independent movement to fight Zionism in the sphere of public policy, placing itself outside the rigid boundaries of the Reform movement, the issues of “unity” transformed from Reform unity to Jewish communal unity. Once this happened, a particular discourse developed: the founding Council rabbis criticized “political Zionism” as a manifestation of all that they saw as unspiritual in the world, and as the Council became a “political” organization, over time it took on those very same characteristics that the rabbis despised. Furthermore, as the rabbinical membership shrunk, the leadership of Rabbi Elmer Berger and the layman Lessing Rosenwald attained more power and were able to take actions that upset members and caused them to withdraw from the organization. A large portion of this development can be attributed to a weakening process within the core leadership of the group, and can be seen by the discourse on totalitarian and democratic leadership and how the members describe the leaders’ (mostly Berger and Rosenwald’s) activities. Over time, the members began to see the Council as being just as bad as—and for similar reasons to—what they had originally rejected in Zionism. That all being said, the assorted criticism of the Council can be found across the strata of papers that describe both the Council’s activities and the ways that its followers and critics reacted to them.

As the June 1942 Atlantic City meeting approached, the pro-Zionist Reform rabbis attempted (and ultimately failed) to convince the non-Zionists that their meeting would split the Reform movement and that they should call it off for that reason. The Zionist Rabbi James G. Heller, then president of the Central Council of American Rabbis,
appealed to the Reform rabbinate in a circular; he asked them not to attend the Atlantic City meeting because the CCAR was the proper place to hold the debate over Zionism. He implored members to “cleave to their own organization, and use it and it alone for the corporate expression of their views and their programs.”236 Heller and other Reform leaders were worried that the meeting would conclude with a secessionary action and the establishment of a competing rabbinical Conference that would simultaneously wield less authority than the CCAR as a representative for the Reform movement and weaken existing institutions. Rabbi Harry W. Ettelson of Memphis, Tennessee, called this scenario an “independent Divisional Conference,”237 a term which elucidates the triple threat: that the new group would be a parallel to the CCAR (as another Conference), that it would be divisive, and that it would only represent a particular division or region of the country (at this time mostly eastern rabbis238), rather than a nationally representative organization. Rabbi David Max Eichhorn of Tallahassee, Florida, expressed a similar sensibility when he wrote that

This is no time for any group of rabbis, no matter how well-intentioned, to contribute to the Balkanization of Jewish life by issuing public statements through other than regularly established channels. In the case of this particular group of rabbis, that channel happens to be either the executive board of the C.C.A.R. or the expressed will of its membership in convention assembled.239

236 Circular from James G. Heller to members of the CCAR, LWP-C, box 3, folder 3.  
237 “I can not escape the conclusion that however sincere the motives or laudable the intentions, the fact of holding such a meeting, under the circumstances involved will be to create an independent Divisional Conference. Certainly the outline program of the Conference, the character of the papers, and everything about it, as your group has planned, suggests the pattern of a Conference in full. I am afraid that it will result in a schism within the ranks of the Reform Rabbinate, in spite of all protestations and purposes to the contrary. I hope I am mistaken, but my apprehensions as to such possible consequences preclude my uniting with you.” (Harry W. Ettelson to William H. Fineshriber and Louis Wolsey, 29 May 1942, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3.)  
238 See p. 49.  
239 David Max Eichhorn to Louis Wolsey, 14 May 1942, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3.
Eichhorn’s argument brings forward a constellation of concerns that characterize this period of the discourse over the Council. First, he contended that during wartime, the Jewish community should present a unified front. Throughout the entire literature, we find that rabbis on all sides of the ideological spectrum continually use the language of the war—Balkanization, Munich, Zionist “peace offensives”—to describe their situation. This can be tied both to the timely vernacular of the World War, and also to their conception of the fight over Zionism as an internal civil war over the future character of Judaism and the place of Jews in the post-war world. Additionally, Eichhorn connects the concept of unity with a lack of divisive public statements; Jews can have their own opinions behind the veil of the Jewish community, but in public they should maintain a solid front for the sake of the communal institutions (internally) and the Jewish policy interest (externally). Rabbi Arthur J. Lelyveld of Omaha, Nebraska, who later would head the (Zionist) Committee on Unity for Palestine, argued furthermore that the Atlantic City meeting would cause a “loss of prestige for our movement and our Conference” as well as provoke the Zionists to even stronger action in opposition.

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240 Berger wrote in May 1942, “Isn’t this ‘peace’ like a Munich pact, which will continue to exploit our lack of organization until another time, when they may be stronger and more confident?” and further in the same letter, “Isn’t it true that our neutrality is like the neutrality of Vichy and won’t it lead to the same disastrous results?” (Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 14 May 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9); in early 1943 Wolsey described the Council’s activities, “In the meantime we are keeping perfect silence, in accordance with the terms of the armistice” (Louis Wolsey to William Rosenau, 20 January 1943, MSLP-C, box 1, folder 5, p. 2) and outlined their priorities in February 1943 as follows: “Our big job right now is to provide the sinews of war, so that we can transfer [Elmer Berger] to New York just as soon as possible” (Louis Wolsey to Leo M. Franklin, 19 February 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 8, pp. 2ff.)


242 Louis I. Egelson wrote to Wolsey, “I heard last Thursday that the Atlantic City conclave is to be held. Frankly, I have many misgivings about it. Resolutions from
Lelyveld further explained that such a meeting would “run a sword through the Conference,” a concern echoed by many others who believed that schism and division would be the only outcome of the Atlantic City meeting.

The CCAR was not the only institution that Reform leaders were afraid would find itself under attack. Julian Morgenstern, president of Hebrew Union College, was afraid that the Council would also start a rival seminary. The Council rabbis viewed the Hebrew Union College as compromised, since it did not forcefully infuse its students with the classical Reform viewpoint, and they saw Stephen Wise’s Jewish Institute of Religion—which, beginning in 1926, ordained numerous Reform rabbis preaching Zionism—as a powerful force in the development of Reform Jewish life. Morgenstern expressed concerns that should the Council take such action it would mean … that Reform Judaism, at least to the extent that it is represented by the Council, will be doomed to become a separatistic sect in Judaism, small and impotent, and probably doomed through the characteristic lack of

Atlantic City may be followed by counter-manifestos from the other group. Strained relations may follow, and might possibly result in the Conference taking a definite and outright stand in favor of Zionism. The results of such action I can visualize. I can only hope that whatever is done will be le-shem shamayim, and will redound to the benefit of Reform Judaism.” (Louis I. Egelson to Louis Wolsey, 26 May 1942, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3.)


Emil W. Leipziger of New Orleans wrote Wolsey: “I believe that meeting is a mistake. I feel that your purpose in promoting it is certainly not to split the Conference but I do believe that if it is held it will likely split the Conference in two.” (Emil W. Leipziger to Louis Wolsey, LWP-C, box 3, folder 5.)

See pp. 26–28.

“Do you realize that the Jewish Institute of Religion has 122 graduates, all of whom are Zionists and who are a bloc in the Conference? Do you realize that the J.I.R. has made life professionally difficult for our own H.U.C. graduates? Do you realize that they are in competition with us and have promoted not alone unemployment, but also opportunities for advancement? Fundamentally this whole Zionistic heresy is grounded not alone in the hostility of the J.I.R. to the H.U.C., but also to its desire to destroy or to absorb it.” (Louis Wolsey to B. Benedict Glazer, 12 June 1942, LWP-C, box 2, folder 10, p. 2)
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

reproductive faculties of our American Jewish families, to eventual disappearance and absorption, precisely like the Portugese [sic] Jews.\textsuperscript{247}

Here, Morgenstern voiced the opinion that the influx of Eastern European Jews would overwhelm the Reform movement, but he clearly believed that time was on Reform’s side\textsuperscript{248} and that thus the Council should be disestablished. Morgenstern’s fears in this letter were all the more exacerbated by the developments in Houston’s Congregation Beth Israel, whose board was in the process of splitting the congregation over the issue of Zionism just as Morgenstern wrote his letter. Morgenstern and others lived in dread that the Council intended to spread this phenomenon and create a national organization of such congregations, which would displace the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Reform synagogue federation. In this way, the Council’s opponents feared the establishment of organizations parallel to all existing Reform institutions. Elmer Berger’s radical beliefs about the nature of the Reform movement and the future of Judaism did not help to mitigate these feelings of dread.

In response to the contentions of rabbis such as Robert Kahn of the pre-schismatized Congregation Beth Israel in Houston (who would soon be replaced by Hyman Judah Schachtel) that the Atlantic City meeting would “be the first step toward more disunity and chaos,”\textsuperscript{249} the non-Zionist rabbis claimed that their efforts were being

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{247} Julian Morgenstern to Elmer Berger, 11 November 1943, ACJP-W, box 85, folder 9.
\item \textsuperscript{248} “We know that the next generation of these very Zionists will be much more thoroughly Americanized than their fathers” (Julian Morgenstern to Elmer Berger, 11 November 1943, ACJP-W, box 85, folder 9).
\item \textsuperscript{249} Robert I. Kahn to Malcolm Stern, 23 April 1942, ACJP-C, box 1, folder 7; Robert I. Kahn to Abraham Holtzberg, 22 April 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 2; identical letter also sent to Elmer Berger.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

misunderstood and that they had no intention of splitting the Reform movement.\textsuperscript{250} Berger wrote back to Kahn, “You have no right to assume that this group intends to secede from anything,”\textsuperscript{251} and Isaac Landman wrote on the same day that “There will be no split, there will be no establishment of another rabbinic council.”\textsuperscript{252} Isaac Landman’s younger brother, Rabbi Solomon Landman (1895–1951) of Kew Gardens, New York, explained to James Heller: “I am motivated by nothing so much as the desire to see that the Conference remain unified.”\textsuperscript{253} The Zionist Rabbi Henry J. Berkowitz did not believe the non-Zionists; he wrote his nephew Malcolm Stern that “Despite their assertions about ‘desiring unity in the Conference’ and their denials that this is a break in our ranks, the fact of an Atlantic City conference would be a schism and words to the contrary are nonsense.”\textsuperscript{254} Rabbi Joseph Rauch (1880–1957) of Louisville, Kentucky, who in the end attended the Atlantic City meeting but maintained a moderate voice, told Wolsey that “It has all the appearances of a definite break with the CCAR and will be so interpreted by many.”\textsuperscript{255} Rauch was insightful in noting that no matter what happened at the meeting, how it would be interpreted by their antagonists would have nothing to do with what actually took place and would be based on pre-conceived notions of what the non-Zionist rabbis believed and wanted.

Though Louis Wolsey’s committee had circulated a tentative schedule, until the meeting took place, no one was quite sure what would happen. When it was finally

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{250} Morris S. Lazarone wrote that “Not only my own position but the position of most of us has been misrepresented by the present Zionist leadership.” (Morris S. Lazarone to Leo Shubow, 19 November 1942, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 8.)
\item \textsuperscript{251} Elmer Berger to Robert I. Kahn, 27 April 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 2.
\item \textsuperscript{252} Isaac Landman to Robert I. Kahn, 27 April 1942, ACJP-C, box 1, folder 1.
\item \textsuperscript{253} Solomon Landman to James J. [sic] Heller, 14 May 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 5.
\item \textsuperscript{254} Henry Berkowitz to Malcolm Stern, 19 May 1942, ACJP-C, box 1, folder 7.
\item \textsuperscript{255} Joseph Rauch to Louis Wolsey, 8 May 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 11.
\end{itemize}
decided that the meeting would go on as planned, many prepared for the worst. The non-Zionist Rabbi William F. Rosenblum expressed concern that the elderly generation of more extreme anti-Zionists would control the discussion, complaining that “[Morris] Lazaron [has] become the ideologist of our group and [that … David] Philipson [was asked] to be the philosophical spokesman”\footnote{William F. Rosenblum to Louis Wolsey, 7 May 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 4, p. 1.} by giving the opening paper of the meeting. Rosenblum implored Wolsey to apply the pressure of moderation by giving the floor to younger rabbis, who unlike Philipson would “bring new light to bear on old problems” instead of “see[ing] new problems merely in the old light,”\footnote{William F. Rosenblum to Louis Wolsey, 7 May 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 4, p. 3.} and Rabbi Samuel Schulman also lobbied Wolsey for the meeting to be a low-key event.\footnote{Samuel Schulman to Louis Wolsey, 28 May 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 6. Also see B. Benedict Glazer to Louis Wolsey, 31 May 1942, LWP-C, box 2, folder 10.} The complaints about “unity” were mostly connected to some form of publicity or public action and the fear that extremist rabbis would work to render the group marginal in the Reform world. Rabbi Jonah B. Wise, the son of Isaac Mayer Wise, explicitly told Wolsey in April of 1942: “I cannot sign a communication which definitely puts the rabbis who have Zionist leanings in Exile.”\footnote{Jonah Wise to Louis Wolsey, 13 April 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 12. On June 26, Wise also wrote that “OWING TO RECENT DEVELOPMENT IN THE WAR AND THE GRAVE THREAT TO PALESTINE EXPIEICALLY TO OUR OWN PEOPLE THERE THE PUBLICATION OF OUR STATEMENT NOW WOULD BE A SAD MISTAKE WE URGE YOU MOST EARNESTLY TO WITHHOLD IT FOR THE PRESENT.” (Emphasis in original; telegram from Jonah Wise to Louis Wolsey, 26 June 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 1.)}
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

meeting. After the Atlantic City meeting, when William Fineshriber sought signatures for the Statement of Principles, a recurring theme amongst the negative responses was that they did not want to disturb Jewish unity. Rabbi Emil Leipziger wrote:

> Although I could sign this statement as far as my ideas are concerned, I feel that the logical thing for me to do is withhold my signature … I had fear and still have that the meeting will threaten the unity of the Conference and this will be especially true if the results of that meeting are publicized.\(^{261}\)

Rabbi Edgar Siskin similarly refused to sign the Statement of Principles, explaining that “I have concluded that the issuance of a statement of principles by a group of rabbis deliberating and acting as a body outside of the normal procedures of the [CCAR] is ill-advised.”\(^{262}\) Siskin here both echoed the wishes of other rabbis to utilize the previously existing channels of power and, similarly to Schulman’s previously noted concerns about unity, specifically tied his criticism to any publication of the meeting’s outcomes.\(^{263}\)

At Atlantic City, the type of publicity to pursue—if any at all—and how to phrase it was a topic of much debate, which took up much of the second day. Throughout the discussion the group continually reminded itself that they were loyal to the Conference,\(^{264}\) but that while it might make sense to avoid any publicity for the sake of

\(^{260}\) Wolsey wrote: “We wonder, however, whether you would agree to: (1) the releasing of the Statement to Jewish newspapers; (2) to the printing of it in some folder fashion, to be sent to that Gentile constituency who sponsored the Jewish Army thoughtlessly, and to certain Congressmen, perhaps all Congressmen, who have committed themselves to militaristic Judaism, and to such others of Christian leadership whose perspective of Judaism would be very helpfully fashioned by our Statement.” (Louis Wolsey to Johan Wise and Samuel H. Goldenson, 10 July 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 1.)

\(^{261}\) Emphasis added; Emil Leipziger to William Fineshriber, 10 June 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 5.


\(^{264}\) “In order to keep our record clean that history will record that we loved our Central Conference” (“Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, pp. 176); also see
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

unity, the world expected a public statement.\textsuperscript{265} On the other hand, Rabbi Sidney Regner of Reading, Pennsylvania, argued that no matter what happened, the statement of principles would cause disunity. Even though he believed that the present rabbis were loyal to the Conference, the statement that had been drawn up was too broad: instead of focusing on the specific issues which they came together to discuss, it provided "a platform which covers our entire view of Reform Judaism," and thus could not but lead to the creation of a parallel organization.\textsuperscript{266} When they got down to drafting the statement itself, the group could barely get through the opening lines before the meeting was forced to come to a close due to time constraints. As delegates prepared to depart, the central issue reared its head once again: Who was writing this statement, and to whom would it be addressed? At this time, the "American Council for Judaism" did not yet exist—it was not officially founded until six months later, in December 1942—and the rabbis certainly did not see themselves as an organization, but rather a group of "spiritually like-minded men."\textsuperscript{267} Rabbi Edward N. Calisch of Richmond, Virginia, an active member of the CCAR in the 1890s, argued that it was important that the statement note that the undersigned were signing \textit{as CCAR members} and not outside of it. Calisch and David Philipson argued that it was important to make the case for their loyalty, as an acknowledgement of their adversaries.\textsuperscript{268} Here, we find the seeds of the schism that

\textsuperscript{265} Ibid., pp. 175, 179ff, 183–186, 192ff.
\textsuperscript{266} Ibid., p. 184.
\textsuperscript{267} Ibid., pp. 184–187.
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid., p. 175.

A snippet of the discussion is as follows:

\begin{quote}
DR. [SAMUEL H.] GOLDENSON: I want to say something about that, here; who are we?
\end{quote}
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

would later erupt in the Council: There was a noticeable break between the moderates such as Samuel Goldenson, who valued the institutions (as well as their powerful pulpits) over ideological impulses, and the radicals who advocated swift action. Hyman Judah

THE CHAIRMAN [LOUIS WOLSEY]: We have defined that very often.

DR. GOLDENSON: In relation to this particular statement, if we are an organization—

THE CHAIRMAN: Which we are not.

DR. GOLDENSON: If we are an organization, we can say we speak for an organization by naming the organization. If we are not an organization, it seems to me that that must be indicated in the form of signatures of each person who takes part in this thing.

THE CHAIRMAN: I would say you are right, Dr. Goldenson.

DR. GOLDENSON: “We, the undersigned”

DR. [EDWARD] CALISCH: … I believe that the phrase as “loyal members of the Central Conference” of American Rabbis should remain in for one reason: our loyalty has been accused. We have been accused of being disloyal and because we have been accused of being disloyal, we have been accused of disrupting the conference. I think we should put that in as our protestation of our loyalty. I feel it should remain in.

DR. [ISAAC] LANDMAN: I think it ought to come out because anyone who has impugned our loyalty are members of the conference and we don’t have to advertise.

DR. [DAVID] PHILIPSON: I think we ought to do both. We ought to say “we, the undersigned, individual members of the [CCAR]” &c.

THE CHAIRMAN: Why not say, “We, members of the American Rabbinate” and not the conference?

DR. PHILLIPSON: Don’t let’s fool ourselves. [sic] The cry went forth for weeks we were going to split the conference, and that was their great rallying cry, we should not call this meeting on that account because the conference was in danger of a split. Now we can’t close our eyes to what has been and I don’t want to be put in the position of even aiding anything that would split the conference, whose organization meeting I called …

(Ibid., pp. 192–193)
Schachtel noted that “it is often said that age is cautious while youth is rash,” but he misunderstood the debate taking place around him: in truth, both extreme age and extreme youth displayed hasty tendencies, while those who found themselves somewhere in the middle were the cautious ones. Rabbis who held important and highly visible pulpits, such as Samuel Goldenson, felt a need to be more moderate; while those who were retired, such as Philipson and Lazaron, or who as of yet did not have careers too important to risk, such as Berger, were ready to get to work in a highly public fashion.

Depending upon who made use of the term and to whom they spoke, the concept of “unity” took on a multitude of meanings. As noted above, many used “unity” to refer to the maintenance of the Reform institutions. However, others used the concept to denote their fears for communal schism, and still others connected it with their beliefs that Jews should not display their dirty laundry in public. Elmer Berger and his mentor Louis Wolsey, in contrast, saw unity as a way to coerce silence. Furthermore, some believed that there should be unity and solidarity due to the catastrophic situation in Europe and that there should be a peace between the warring parties in Judaism. Rabbi Beryl Cohon of Boston did not use the term “unity” in his December 1942 resignation, but he expressed fears that if he publicly broke ranks with the Jewish community over the issue of Zionism, his congregation, then in its infancy, would suffer. Rabbi Max Currick, who did not attend the Atlantic City meeting but ultimately signed the

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269 Ibid., p. 175. While Schachtel was to take up a post at Houston’s Congregation Beth Israel the following year, his cautious position should come as no surprise. Schachtel himself was not the initiator of the “Basic Principles,” but arrived after it had been pushed forward by a highly active laity.

270 It is notable that Berger in particular saw the American Council for Judaism as a ticket out of what he saw to be a dead-end job in Flint, Michigan.

271 Beryl Cohon to Louis Wolsey, 1 December 1942, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3.
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

Statement, wrote that he did not approve of public protest because it would threaten all of Israel: “It did seem to threaten greater evil than it wanted to cure, because, innocently of course, it might … put a weapon into the hands of the enemies of Israel.”\textsuperscript{272} Later, in February 1943, when James Heller tried to negotiate a “truce” with the non-Zionists in which the Council would be disestablished and the CCAR would return to the status quo ante bellum, Currick placed his vote on the side of the liquidation of the Council because he believed that the non-Zionists should remain quiet for the time being and then resurface when public action would have greater chance for success. “After all,” he wrote, “with the possible change in conceptions of nationalism and the form of governments [sic] for small nations which may come after the war, we may be fighting windmills.”\textsuperscript{273} In Currick’s view, there was no way to tell how the post-war world would reorganize itself, and any action before that would be premature. William F. Rosenblum also expressed this view. Rosenblum argued simultaneously against schism within the American Reform rabbinate, and also, as a member of the Jewish Welfare Board’s Army and Navy Committee, encouraged Elmer Berger to join the army as a chaplain in unity with the war effort.\textsuperscript{274} Yet another proponent of unity was Rabbi Morris Feuerlicht of Indianapolis, who wrote to Morris S. Lazaron:

\begin{quote}
I still believe that there is unfortunately too much personal ‘dirty linen’ involved in the last pronouncement [against the Council] of the 733 ‘American’ Rabbis\textsuperscript{275}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{272} Max Currick to Louis Wolsey and William H. Fineshriber, 28 May 1942, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3.
\textsuperscript{273} Max Currick to Louis Wolsey, 2 February 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3.
\textsuperscript{274} William F. Rosenblum to Louis Wolsey, 22 February 1943, LWP-C, box 4, folder 4. Also see Julian Morgenstern’s similar exhortation of Berger to take up a chaplaincy post.
\textsuperscript{275} This was one of the first of a series of public statements against the American Council for Judaism that would be published over the years with the signatures of hundreds, if not thousands, of Reform, Conservative and Orthodox rabbis. See “733 Rabbis Rebuke Anti-
to be taken seriously with further polemics on our part—at least in public. I tried to make this clear in my own meager effort at the June [Atlantic City] meeting.\textsuperscript{276}

Elmer Berger held very different views on the idea of unity. In May 1942, he tried to convince Wolsey not to call off the Atlantic City meeting. In his lengthy and revealing letter, which he called a “eulogy to a great idea,”\textsuperscript{277} Berger explained:

I was afraid, from the beginning, that many of the men were interested in this meeting only in relation to their positions as non-Zionists in the Conference. That never disturbed me. In the grass roots of American Jewry the Conference is not the issue. It is still Zionism and its poisoning influences in Jewish life.\textsuperscript{278}

As such, unity was not a central issue for Berger; he viewed the Atlantic City meeting and that which followed outside the context of the Reform movement. When James Heller and the Conference leadership attempted to negotiate a deal with the Council in December 1942 and January 1943 that would convince the Council to stop operating in return for elevating the 1935 neutrality resolution to the status of a Conference bylaw, Berger responded simply that “The Council is not a Conference matter.”\textsuperscript{279}

Berger viewed this attempt at “unity” and “peace” as an effort to coerce the Council into silence, as, due to the ongoing negotiations, the two sides had agreed to a temporary “truce” by which both sides would cease publicity. Berger and others characterized the Zionists as pushing “peace” through “peace offensives,” thus sabotaging the Council by inducing inaction that would lead to a break in the morale of the Council rabbis, causing them to

\textsuperscript{276} Morris Feuerlicht to Morris Lazarov, 23 November 1942, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 8.
\textsuperscript{277} Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 14 May 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{278} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{279} Elmer Berger to Ephraim Frisch, 9 January 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1, p. 2. In a letter to Louis Wolsey, Berger complained that “The whole matter is already beyond the Conference and I resent, as violently as I can, the using of the Conference issue to cover Zionist weakness and uncertainty in our own ranks.” (Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 25 December 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9, p. 4.)
leave and inalterably weakening the movement.280 For example, Berger wrote to Ephraim Frisch: “There is the interesting fact that all the bitterness, recriminations and destructive divisiveness have come from the other side; that Heller called Wolsey from New York and agreed to call off the smear campaign if we would declare a moratorium on action. Shades of Austria and the Sudentenland [sic]!”281 In this description, Berger refers to Louis Wolsey’s account that

[Heller] telephoned me today [January 6th] from New York, to say that he had been in conference with the lay leaders of the Zionist movement, and he said they proposed to call off their plan of holding mass meetings in key cities of the United States and also to call off the barrage of vilification and vituperation, if we agree not to publish any statements for the present, or to conduct any propagandistic activities—until the matters of the [January 5] Baltimore meeting282 have been decided one way or another. I agreed.283

Berger, Wolsey, and the other Council leaders believed they had been led to silence by the Zionists’ peace negotiations with the express purpose that this silence slow them down and lead to their demise, and this tactic worked brilliantly. Berger confessed:

Today … I am bewildered. I have heard from Wolsey and Lazaron about the Baltimore meeting and … it looks very much as though we may be about through. Wolsey, I think, is discouraged, Lazaron seems determined and yet unsure that we can succeed and most of our men are so confused that I am, myself, wondering whether it is not a hopeless struggle. At any event, we are bound hand and foot by an unfair and futile “peace” proposal until we can meet again and determine what our reaction to the results of that Baltimore meeting will be.284

280 “I hope our men have the courage to maintain your position should the peace offensive develop [sic].” (Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 16 October 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9); “I referred a moment ago to some suspicions I have as to the motives for the peace offensive” (Elmer Berger to Ephraim Frisch, 9 January 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1, p. 3.)
281 Ibid., p. 5.
282 At this meeting in Morris Lazaron’s study, Wolsey, Heller, and their respective delegations initiated the aforementioned negotiations.
283 Louis Wolsey to Morris S. Lazaron, 6 January 1943, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 10, p. 2.
284 Elmer Berger to Ephraim Frisch, 9 January 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1, p. 1.
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

It was at this time that Berger reminded Wolsey of his initial vision for the Council, which he still sustained under the stress of these “peace offensives.” As far as Berger was concerned, the Conference had no business interfering with the Council, as it was not ever intended to be a strictly rabbinical organization. In Berger’s May 1942 “eulogy,” he advised Wolsey on how to proceed if in fact he canceled the Atlantic City meeting. Berger’s proposed plan of action was not to close up shop quietly, but to attempt to call a meeting of rabbis and laypeople to “face this issue squarely.” This letter, at bottom, was a lengthy declaration of war on the Zionists that clearly indicates much of what the Council would later become. Berger admitted that he had a particular vision for the Atlantic City meeting, which the other rabbis did not necessarily share with him. He declared that he was ready to bet his career on the battle against Zionism, proclaiming, “This is an all-out fight with me. I have nothing to lose but ten drab and discouraging years fighting for the thing that I thought we at last had [Reform Judaism] and winning a battle against formidable odds.” Six months later, Berger had come to realize that failure was not an option, admitting, “it means of course, the end of my career.” Over the course of the summer of 1942, Berger persistently pushed for the establishment of some sort of official-looking organizational infrastructure to lend the movement the appearance of the power and mass support that he believed existed for anti-nationalism in

285 “You will remember that I have argued from the beginning that the Conference was not involved. It has not been involved in any of the publicity. It need not be involved in any program we might plan.” (Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 25 December 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9, p. 1.)
286 Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 14 May 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9, p. 5.
287 Ibid.
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

the American Jewish population.\textsuperscript{289} And above all, he tried to shift the focus away from the CCAR and onto the fight against American Zionism on a wider battlefield. Berger thus saw “unity,” as the Zionists utilized it, as a method of coercion to constrain the non-Zionist rabbis’ work to the Conference and through this to silence them. He later incorporated these ideas into his 1945 book \textit{The Jewish Dilemma}, in which he argued against the organized Jewish community, which he believed abused unity in these draconian ways.\textsuperscript{290}

What differentiates the resignations for the sake of unity that were given over the summer following the Atlantic City meeting from what took place later, during the January 1943 debate over peace and the liquidation of the Council, was that the earliest resignations were primarily concerned with the Reform institutions’ survival, while later it was a search for peace under pressure from James Heller. The reason for this shift is that in the earliest period, there had not yet been any action. Berger, Wolsey, Fineshriber, Lazaron and the others were in the beginning processes of organizing the Council, and while claiming that they did not want to split the Reform organizations, the resignations and complaints were originating from the complainants. However, as the February 4, 1943, deadline approached, by which time the Council was to vote on Heller’s proposal to liquidate the Council in return for “official” neutrality on the issue of Zionism, the discussion of unity reached a high point. Additionally, the unity discussions over the

\textsuperscript{289} “I suggested to Lazaron that we ought to set ourselves up as a more permanent organization. I am still stumped about a name but we ought to establish ourselves as a non-profit organization. … to so establish ourselves would give the whole thing a semblance of stability. I suggested to Lazaron that before we do much writing to laymen, it might be wise to invest in some stationery.” (Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 23 July 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9.)

\textsuperscript{290} See pp. 140ff.
summer were not strictly resignations; rather many people simply expressed their views in an attempt to steer the non-Zionist group in the direction they sought. Heller’s jockeying in early 1943 applied a constellation of pressures onto the Council: many felt that the Council indeed posed a threat to the unity of these institutions, and those who had previously existing reasons for resignation, such as Rabbi Jonah B. Wise, took this opportunity to get out before it was too late.\textsuperscript{291} Furthermore, this pressure to settle the dispute and the Council’s resulting inability to take any public action—and thus raise the money and members that it needed to raise the confidence of potential members—brought forward the other major complaint against the Council, that its program was too negative and did not do anything positive for Reform Jewish religion.

What is so surprising in all of this discourse on unity and organizational action is that there was so little discussion of the Holocaust in explicit terms. In November 1942, the U.S. State Department gave Rabbi Stephen S. Wise approval to confirm the rumors that been circulating for some time, that the Nazis had murdered over a million Jews and had plans to destroy the rest of European Jewry. The Council rabbis were not unaware of the reports from Europe, but saw the peculiar timing and the surrounding political activism on behalf of European Jewry—all controlled by Zionists—as not simply suspicious but in fact overtly aimed at derailing their efforts. As a result, the non-Zionists refused to allow it to stop them.\textsuperscript{292} However, the European catastrophe did enter the discourse on unity, publicity and moderation. Even as early as the Atlantic City conference, Samuel Goldenson said:

\textsuperscript{291} Jonah B. Wise to Louis Wolsey, 26 January 1943, LWP-C, box 4, folder 12.
\textsuperscript{292} Louis Wolsey to Morris Lazaron, 2 December 1942, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 9.
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

Among the first things that I read this morning was a headline in this morning’s Tribune reciting the fact that 200,000 Jews have been killed in various parts of Central Europe. That has been in my mind ever since, and that sort of chastens me a little bit. It makes me more careful now than I would have been if I hadn’t seen that article. For that reason any utterance about Jewish problems and Jewish troubles and Jewish hopes, I think we ought to take extra time and pause about any statement that we now make. It is not an academic matter. We are not dealing with abstract propositions.  

Even with rumors flying around, and later the confirmation by Wise, the Holocaust only contributed to the discourse tangentially. More than anything else, the rabbis were likely to compare the Zionists to Nazis, as in the “Nazi methods used to disrupt and disorganize our people,” “Considering all the things that the Zionists are blitzing now,” and many other wartime metaphors which placed the Zionists in the character of the Nazis.

Some rabbis brought forward the contemporary world situation in their resignations, but it was only one factor of many that led to a belief in the importance of moderation and solidarity, not their direct reason for leaving. Rabbi Ely Pilchik (1913–2003) wrote Morris Lazaron in July 1942:

At this hour when over a million Jews have been massacred in Europe, and more due to be slaughtered—at this hour when the fate of the near-East … lies in the

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293 “Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, p. 172.
294 David Marx to Louis Wolsey, 26 May 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 5.
295 Louis Wolsey to Elmer Berger, 19 November 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1.
296 Sometimes they were much more explicit, as in when Elmer Berger compared the Zionist Ludwig Lewisohn to Adolf Hitler and Charles Coughlin, the Catholic priest who gave antisemitic sermons over the radio waves (Elmer Berger to Samuel S. Mayerberg, 22 February 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1, p. 2). Also see Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 16 October 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9: “They have exploited misery and ignorance and used religion as a cloak for politics a la Father Coughlin.” In another place, Berger characterized the Council as the United Nations: “It’s time to take the offensive and release a few blitzes ourselves. We’re like the United Nations now. We have the materiel. All we need is the unified command” (Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 26 January 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1, p. 4.), and “Only the Zionists hope, as Hitler must hope, to hang on long enough to liquidate the leadership of the anti-Zionists.” (Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 14 May 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9.)
balance, something is happening in American-Jewish life which may extinguish the last best hope for all Jewry for a long, long time.\textsuperscript{297}

In Pilchik’s resignation, the events in Europe—which at that time had not yet been officially confirmed—were not the primary reason for his withdrawal, but rather that he believed that civil peace need be the primary goal for Jews at that time. Later, in February 1943, he expressed more explicitly that “the hour demands not a clarification of principles and ideology but a concentrated effort to rescue millions of Jews—\textit{bodies of millions}.”\textsuperscript{298} There was a similar focus on refugees in the resignation of Rabbi Louis Witt (1878–1950) of Dayton, Ohio, who wrote that “We are confronted not by theory but by the tragic fact in Palestine. Half a million Jews are already there; at least another half-milllion stricken Jews may crave to get there and may be lucky enough to do so. What is going to happen to those Jews,—a million of them?”\textsuperscript{299} The common thread throughout was that the Council was too focused upon the theory and ideology of anti-nationalism and anti-Zionism and not on the practical problems facing the Jewish world. As Robert Kahn put it, “I have the feeling that we who are Zionists are not as reasonable as we are emotional.”\textsuperscript{300} This statement is incredibly revealing, as it reflected the feelings of both sides of the debate: the non-Zionists viewed the Zionists as irrational, acting solely upon their emotions. From the other side, the non-Zionists were seen as coldly calculating, lacking empathy for their brethren persecuted in Europe. It is crucial to disentangle the paradoxical discourse here under the pressure of the refugee crisis. Moderate non-Zionists criticized the anti-Zionists for being too theoretical and not being concerned

\textsuperscript{297} Ely Pilchik to Morris S. Lazaron, 15 July 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 11.
\textsuperscript{298} Emphasis in original; Ely Pilchik to Elmer Berger, 16 February 1943, LWP-C, box 3, folder 11.
\textsuperscript{299} Louis Witt to Elmer Berger, 10 August 1943, LWP-C, box 4, folder 11.
\textsuperscript{300} Robert I. Kahn to Elmer Berger, 7 July 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 2.
enough about the refugee problem. Berger, the quintessential anti-Zionist, likewise criticized the Zionists for a lack of concern about refugees: he maintained that Zionists only cared about creating a political entity in Palestine, and that their political interests trumped those of individual refugees.\(^{301}\)

In the absence of other options, the Reform rabbis preferred not to split their communities over ideological issues. Rabbi Benedict Glazer of Temple Beth El in Detroit wrote in December 1942:

> I find, at this moment, that I cannot undertake in good conscience to accept such a responsibility [of opening a Council chapter in Detroit]. … I feel that now is not the time to split Jewish communities in America wide open on the Palestine issue. We owe an obligation to the stricken Jews of Europe as well as to the bewildered and confused Jews of America. I am, therefore, in favor of working out some kind of compromise between Zionists and non-Zionists that will deal with immediate realities and not with conflicting and irreconcilable [sic] ideologies. Our Jews today are thinking in terms of these realities and not about the issue between Nationalism and Universalism.\(^{302}\)

For Glazer, the issue was not simply the tragedy of the Holocaust itself, but the challenge of mobilizing the local Jewish community to aid in the struggle for relief and rescue. He believed American Jews to be more concerned with the fate of European Jewry than with ideological differences. This is similar to Berger, who noted that the average Jew was not concerned with the internal battles of the Conference. But instead of believing, as Berger did, that the top issue would be “Zionism and its poisoning influences in Jewish life,”\(^{303}\) Glazer placed his concern with the Holocaust and the need to keep Jewish communities from splitting under ideological pressure so they could most effectively respond to the contemporary emergency. Still, among the rabbis who left because they became

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\(^{301}\) See chapter 4, p. 152.

\(^{302}\) B. Benedict Glazer to Morris Lazaron, 5 December 1942, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 9.

\(^{303}\) Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 14 May 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9, p. 1.
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

Zionists—a distinct minority—the Holocaust is not given as a reason for their conversion. The one documented example of a rabbi leaving because he became a Zionist was Morris Graff, who wrote:

Belief in Zionism and an unrestricted Jewish Commonwealth is the only hope for our people everywhere—[I] am tired of movements for alleviation of Anti-Semitism [sic] and Jew-Baiting. And if the Jew is not wanted anywhere, or if he becomes a problem in any country, to a majority of the citizens, or unwanted in their society, then he should have a place of his own to go too, to rest his tired body or soul.  

In this letter, Graff does mention antisemitism, which could be a reference to the Holocaust, but he does not affirm the Zionist narration of history in which the Holocaust proves the deterministic and teleologically inescapable eschaton that would come in the form of a sovereign Jewish state. From this data, we find that the presumption that the Holocaust Zionized the non-Zionist Reform rabbis does not hold across the board. Even if they left the Council, most did not become Zionists; telling evidence of this can be found in a May 1956 list of over 1300 American rabbis of all denominations who publically denounced the Council for their agitation against the United Jewish Appeal. In this list, we find only two Council alumni who publicly condemned the Council: Leo Turitz and Julius K. Gutmann. This is indicative that many of the Council rabbis who survived into the 1950s, even as they left the Council itself, sought to remain neutral on these issues, at least publically.

304 Morris Graff to Elmer Berger, 1 March 1945, ACJP-W, box 44, folder 3.  
306 It is notable that the founding Council group was exceptionally elderly, so many did not live long enough to sign this list in the first place.
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

After the 1942 Atlantic City meeting, the leadership aimed to stimulate local anti-Zionist activity along the lines of what Elmer Berger had accomplished in Flint, Michigan, as outlined in his perhaps mis-entitled pamphlet “The Flint Plan.”\(^\text{307}\) Besides Julian Morgenstern’s suggestion to solicit signatures for the Statement of Principles,\(^\text{308}\) the other actionable item decided at the Atlantic City meeting was to establish a “Committee on Lay-Rabbinical Co-Operation”\(^\text{309}\) under the command of Morris Lazaron. This committee would attempt to enact this “Flint Plan,” recruiting rabbis to organize similar committees on the local level which would serve as bases for anti-Zionist activism and education. This was the beginning of the Council per se, for while at the Atlantic City meeting the rabbis insisted that they were not there to create a national organization of any sort, the action of creating these committees led directly to the establishment of the Council that December. Berger’s “plan” lay directly at the center of this development: The Committee on Lay-Rabbinical Co-Operation distributed the “the Flint Plan” all around the United States to potential group leaders,\(^\text{310}\) and the groups established in the different centers were called “Flint groups.”\(^\text{311}\) Often the whole

\(^{307}\) This document could be read as wrongly titled because it does not exactly include a plan at all, but simply goes over Berger’s experience starting a non-Zionist lay organization in his synagogue.

\(^{308}\) “Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, pp. 167ff.

\(^{309}\) Ibid., pp. 90ff.

\(^{310}\) Adolph Rosenberg to Morris S. Lazaron, 1 October 1942, MSLP-C, box 1, folder 7; Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 3 July 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9. Additionally, Berger’s pamphlet “Why I am a Non-Zionist” was reprinted and widely distributed (Norman Buckner to Elmer Berger, 11 August 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9.)

\(^{311}\) Abraham Shusterman to Louis Wolsey, 21 October 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 8.
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

operation was termed the “Flint movement,” noting its origination with Berger’s activities in Flint.312

While these operations were beginning to take root, the plan to establish local chapters was in a battle over internal resources with the project of creating a magazine or newsletter along the lines of the Jewish Advance that would attempt to convert Reform Jews to classical Reform ideology. This impulse to create a magazine remained a part of the Council’s organizational discourse for a long time; starting at the Atlantic City meeting and throughout the fall of 1942 many of the moderate rabbis who would soon leave the Council circles continually brought up the magazine plan as what they believed to be the proper project for the Council to undertake. With this in mind, the discourse of “pro-Reform” and “anti-Zionism” becomes clearly understandable. While at first glance the juxtaposition of these two terms may seem biased, because an inversion of the terminology equates Zionism with anti-Reform, we find that the two terms in fact represent two specific paths forward that the Council could take: one focused on what the rabbis believed to be mass enlightenment, and the second on fighting Zionism itself.

At the November 2, 1942, meeting of the Lay-Rabbinical Chapter Committee Meeting at Wolsey’s synagogue in Philadelphia, the two plans came head to head when Sidney Wallach met with the group. Wallach (1905–1979) was supposedly a public relations genius,313 and had previously served as director of the American Jewish Committee’s education committee and assistant to Rabbi Morris Waldman, executive

312 Isaac W. Bernheim to Morris S. Lazaron, 1 October 1942, MSLP-C, box 1, folder 7.
313 William F. Rosenblum to Louis Wolsey, 18 November 1942, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 8, also in LWP-C, box 4, folder 4.
vice president of the AJC from 1928 to 1945. At this meeting, Wallach presented his proposal to work for the emerging Council and push the anti-Zionist agenda with the average American Jew. At the same meeting, we see how the magazine option still reared its head; Rabbi Charles Rubenstein (a colleague of Abraham Shusterman’s at Har Sinai Congregation in Baltimore) also presented a plan to create a newsletter. A number of factors lead us to understand the plans as being in competition with one another. The meeting was arranged so that Wallach would leave for fifteen minutes—during which time Rubenstein presented the competing option—and also each presented exact financial details. Both projects were projected to cost the same, $7500 per year, and so the two questions were which would reach more people, and whether, in the words of Hyman Judah Schachtel, “our movement [is] to be pro-Reform or anti-nationalist.” Isaac Landman and Shaw argued for pro-Reform, while Schachtel and Fineshriber advocated anti-nationalism. Fineshriber explicitly juxtaposed the two options, asking, “Shall we engage Mr. Wallach? Or shall we publish a magazine?” Whereas before, Wolsey claimed that they would do both, as the group discovered that they really had money for neither, the choice became mutually exclusive. They agreed to take on Wallach once they had the money to pay his salary, but as it turned out, as the Council continually struggled for resources, the leadership was forced to select an area in which to specialize with limited capital and the magazine plan eventually lost out.

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316 Minutes of Lay-Rabbinical Chapter Committee Meeting,” 2 November 1942, ACJP-C, box 2, folder 1.
It was not the specific dispute over the plan itself, but what the two options represented, that became a point of crisis within the Council leadership. Abraham Shusterman, who would resign in December 1942 for this reason exactly, expressed his concern in a letter to Wolsey shortly after the November 2 meeting:

Since our meeting on [2 November] I have been seriously disturbed. … The brilliance of Mr. Wallach’s presentation was over-shadowed by my feeling that my first love will be shattered by a consideration which is of secondary importance in my mind. Mr. Wallach wants to enter into a working alliance with the secularists and the non-reform Zionists. The methods he will employ are not open and direct, but sub-rosa. Our dream of a Reform magazine will be submerged beneath the propaganda methods of a professional publicist. In short, our movement has become something completely different from the expressed desires of Wolsey and Shusterman … I fear that we have permitted our movement to become so anti-Zionist that we have forgotten our original pro-Reform platform.

… Since returning from Philadelphia, I have been tempted to do a number of things. Temptation has come to me to tell you frankly that this Saul has no place among the New York prophets. I have also been tempted to retrace my steps, and to start a Reform magazine, working with Rubenstein and Shaw. I think that if you were not in this movement, I would have dissociated myself from it precipitously. … I am seriously disturbed. In fact, I feel that our Atlantic City group is now dead.

In Shusterman’s letter, we find a wonderful example of the conflation of complaints that would come out as the Council developed. First, Shusterman feels disgusted not by the message but by the methods by which Wallach wants to work. He feels dirtied by the concept of public relations itself; he believes that behind the “brilliance” of the front of public relations lies an undesirable underbelly of secularism. His description of Wallach as making a pact with the secularists is important. The “secular” aspect of Wallach’s anti-Zionism was not inherently tied with anti-Zionism itself but rather with a lack of spirituality; since Wallach was not a rabbi, how could he be expected to push forward the

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317 Abraham Shusterman to Louis Wolsey, 9 November 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 8.
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

spiritual mission of the rabbi to enlighten the laypeople as to the true nature of Judaism itself? As Shusterman put it only a few days later, “I prefer one [Elmer] Berger to a thousand Wallachs. Above all else, I prefer open, honest action in the name of God.”

The multiple implications in that statement are that first, public relations are not open and honest; second, public relations are not in the name of God; and thirdly, if a rabbi like Elmer Berger were at the helm, it might be otherwise. Rabbi William F. Rosenblum expressed a similar feeling, when he argued that if the emerging Council hired Wallach, he must be under the watchful eye of a committee of rabbis or a single rabbi “executive director” who would be the man in front of the press. This state of affairs is indeed the situation that developed, at least in theory, under the executive directorship of Berger, to whom Wallach served as a “consultant” or “public relations counselor.”

Other rabbis brought forward similar condemnations for the direction in which the Council was proceeding. In December 1942, Abraham Shaw made the case for a focus on Reform, with a magazine as a central element of the program, rather than anti-Zionism. A number of rabbis claimed that the Council’s program was “negative,” in other words that its campaign was of a negative nature and did not give a positive program for action. Rabbi Solomon A. Fineberg of Mount Vernon, New York, wrote that “I believe that attacks and denunciations will not begin to accomplish the job,” later claiming that “I believe that the [Council] has a very definite mission, but is missing the boat completely.

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319 William F. Rosenblum to Louis Wolsey, 18 November 1942, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 8, also in LWP-C, box 4, folder 4.
320 Abraham Shaw to Louis Wolsey, 1 December 1942, MSLP-C box 10, folder 9, also in LWP-C, box 4, folder 6.
321 Solomon Andhil Fineberg to Morris S. Lazaron, 4 October 1943, MSLP-C, box 11, folder 5.
by neglecting its more positive goals.”\textsuperscript{322} William F. Rosenblum resigned with the claim that “From the very beginning I pleaded … not to make of the [Council] an anti-Zionist movement and this is exactly what … it has become.”\textsuperscript{323} Instead, he would have it be a movement with a “positive emphasis on Reform Judaism as the most consonant expression of our religion on this continent and in fact in the world tomorrow.”\textsuperscript{324} And Louis Witt’s resignation, discussed above, focused on what he saw as the Council’s negative attitude toward Palestine and the refugees.\textsuperscript{325} Rabbis were not the only ones to claim that a negative attitude was bringing down the Council; at a meeting of the Council’s executive committee on December 13, 1943, Professor Elizabeth Stern of New York argued that the Council was perceived as being a group of “antis.”\textsuperscript{326} Rabbi Ephraim Frisch also complained to Berger that “The Council, particularly since it passed out of its provisional stage, has in its actual program, subordinated our paramount

\textsuperscript{322} Solomon Andhil Fineberg to Morris S. Lazaron, 30 November 1943, MSLP-C, box 11, folder 5. Also see Solomon Andhil Fineberg to Elmer Berger, 17 November 1943, MSLP-C, box 11, folder 5: “I have believed and continue to believe that there is a tremendous need for the reawakening of a religious attitude among Jews such as no existing organization—not even the synagogues and the unions of synagogues—are creating. Certainly the Jewish agencies which are not of a religious character cannot attempt this. What is needed is a movement (similar to the Reconstructionist movement) which is not, however, oriented in Zionism and which has quite a different conception of the relationship of the Jews to the general community than the Reconstructionists espouse. Thus far there has been nothing emanating from the [Council] which is directed towards the strengthening of Judaism, and that is why I fear that the organization will remain only absorbed in the political issues involved and not give its attention to the building up of a following of Jews whose objective is the quickening of religious devotion among Jews.”

\textsuperscript{323} William F. Rosenblum to Louis Wolsey, 22 February 1943, LWP-C, box 4, folder 4.

\textsuperscript{324} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{325} Louis Witt to Elmer Berger, 10 August 1943, LWP-C, box 4, folder 11.

\textsuperscript{326} Statement read by Mrs. Richard Stern to Executive Committee Meeting of the American Council for Judaism, 13 December 1943, attached to letter from Elmer Berger to Morris S. Lazaron, 20 December 1943, MSLP-C, box 11, folder 5.
objective of crusading for a dynamic, prophetic Judaism to a fight on Zionism.”

He continued to disparage the Council for not taking enough action to save European Jews from the Nazi program of annihilation, but never said that he was a Zionist; in fact, Frisch decided to remain a Council member expressing serious caveats as to its actions, even though he decided that “events have confirmed the validity of my criticism.” In response, Berger claimed that “The Council is certainly neither anti-religious or opposed to doing everything possible for oppressed Jews. We are not separated by a gulf of ideology as we are from the nationalists. What we are in some disagreement about is not even tools, but techniques and strategies.” In this observation, Berger was perceptive of what it was that was so distinctively acrimonious about the Council’s activities to many of his colleagues. However, there is no evidence that he recognized that this was a real problem for his organization and that it might be a good idea to reconsider some strategies if the Council wanted to retain its rabbinical following.

A number of Council resignations cite a “last straw” event that pushed them over the edge and confirmed all that they had believed wrong with the Council. This ranged from Jonah B. Wise, who believed that among other wrongs, his office space was used without citation in the meeting minutes, to Irving Reichert, who resigned his national vice presidency in December 1944 (albeit retaining membership until the mid-1950s) because he felt he was being kept out of the loop on organizational matters. The Council leadership also made a fair number of blunders that alienated potential allies. In

328 Ephraim Frisch to Louis Wolsey, 7 February 1944, LWP-C, box 2, folder 9, p. 1.
329 Elmer Berger to Ephraim Frisch, 22 February 1944, LWP-C, box 2, folder 2, p. 6.
331 Irving Reichert to Louis Wolsey, 18 December 1944, LWP-C, box 4, folder 2.
November 1943, Rabbi Louis I. Egelson of Allenton, PA, complained that Berger had made use of his name when soliciting his synagogue members, and Berger was taken to the CCAR Arbitration Committee by the Zionist Rabbi Barnett Brickner of Berger’s childhood synagogue, Cleveland’s Euclid Avenue Temple, over a letter that Berger circulated to members in September 1943. According to the Temple’s Board of Trustees, Berger’s letter attacked their loyalty to Reform and made “invidious reflections upon the character of our Rabbi [and] the rectitude and intelligence of our Board.” In this episode, Louis Wolsey had provided Berger a list of his past confirmants from his time as rabbi of the Euclid Avenue Temple (1907–1925), whom Berger subsequently contacted with a solicitation for Council membership. Brickner and the board took offense—apparently board members were inadvertently contacted as well—and Brickner took it to the CCAR. In both instances, Berger apologized profusely, but the damage was already done. The CCAR’s arbitration committee declared Berger’s actions “unrabbinical,” and concluded that “this special form of entry into a community such as was practiced in the case of Cleveland is one that is bound to lead to recriminations to disturb the peace of the House of Israel and is unethical.” Furthermore, there were

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332 Telegram from Louis I. Egelson to Louis Wolsey, 2 November 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3; Louis Wolsey to Louis I. Egelson, 3 November 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3; Elmer Berger to Louis I. Egelson, 3 November 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1; Louis I. Egelson to Louis Wolsey, 5 November 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3.

333 J. H. Miller, President of the Board of Trustees of the Euclid Avenue Temple, to Elmer Berger, 8 October 1943, SSWP-C, box 7, folder 8.


336 Elmer Berger to Louis I. Egelson, 3 November 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1; Elmer Berger to Barnett Brickner, 16 September 1943, SSWP-C, box 7, folder 8.

Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

numerous instances of peoples’ names being used without their permission or otherwise after they had resigned from the Council. While these are not given as explicit resignation rationales, these episodes contributed checkmarks to the Council’s “negatives” column, further furnishing the Council’s bad reputation amongst rabbis as an organization that pushed itself onto communities with or without the consent of local leadership. This partly explains the reaction of Rabbi Ira Sanders of Little Rock, Arkansas, to the November 1943 declaration of Basic Principles in Houston, which made Zionists into second-class citizens. He expressed the fear that the Council, not succeeding in its original plan to make use of a broad network of non-Zionist rabbis to create local chapters, might circumvent the rabbinical path and make use of prominent laypeople in the synagogue to polarize the synagogue and perhaps even endanger the almighty freedom of the pulpit.

Another controversial event around this time was the infamous correspondence between Rabbi David Goldberg, Berger’s assistant, and Martha Silverman, a student at Wayne University in Detroit. On July 3, 1944, Silverman wrote Berger, stating that she had seen the Council’s Digest of Principles, and for the most part found it agreeable; however, she wrote that there was one principle that she could not accept:

I do not agree with first point, that the basis of unity among Jews is Religion. Without going into the reasons for it here, I would like you to know that I consider all religions outdated, as they have done nothing to make for progress but have kept people in ignorance. I should like to know whether I can apply for

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338 See n. 192.
340 Wayne University was renamed Wayne State University in 1956.
341 Leo M. Franklin to Jacob Goldberg, 19 December 1944, LWP-C, box 2, folder 2; Norman Buckner to Elmer Berger, 19 December 1944, LWP-C, box 2, folder 2.
membership in your organization under these circumstances, namely that I do not believe in Jewish religion, but I believe in fighting the nationalist program of the Zionists.\footnote{342}

Goldberg responded, in lieu of Berger, that Silverman was more than welcome to join the Council even though she did not believe in religion.\footnote{343} This correspondence, which was acquired and subsequently leaked by Rabbi Arthur J. Lelyveld, executive director of the Committee on Unity for Palestine,\footnote{344} caused great uproar within the ranks of the Council. Once the correspondence was published by Lelyveld, the Council’s men in Detroit, Rabbi Leo M. Franklin and the Pontiac, Michigan, businessman Norman Buckner, did some digging to find out exactly who Silverman was and the motive behind her letter. They discovered that she was a twenty-one year old university student, and supposedly had been persuaded by some friends (who were Zionists) to write the Council.\footnote{345} Even though Goldberg expressed in his letter to Silverman that his views were in line with Berger’s, Franklin contacted Berger and expressed his hopes that he would repudiate Goldberg’s statements. According to Wolsey, they never were.\footnote{346} “Certainly it can not be held that religion is a matter of indifference to the Council,” wrote Franklin. “If it were I for one would have nothing to do with it.”\footnote{347} Franklin was not the only Council member to express his disapproval of the matter. Louis Wolsey circulated a form letter and asked

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{342} Martha Silverman to Elmer Berger, 3 July 1944, MSLP-C, box 11, folder 7.
\footnote{343} David Goldberg to Martha Silverman, 5 July 1944, MSLP-C, box 11, folder 7.
\footnote{344} The Committee on Unity for Palestine, notably, was originally called the “Committee to Combat the American Council for Judaism.” See Kolsky, Jews against Zionism, p. 91; letter from Arthur J. Lelyveld, 4 December 1944, attached to letter from Louis Wolsey to Lessing Rosenwald, 7 December 1944, MSLP-C, box 11, folder 7; Norman Buckner to Elmer Berger, 19 December 1944, LWP-C, box 2, folder 2.
\footnote{345} Leo M. Franklin to Jacob Goldberg, 19 December 1944, LWP-C, box 2, folder 2; Norman Buckner to Elmer Berger, 19 December 1944, LWP-C, box 2, folder 2.
\footnote{346} Wolsey, Sermons and Addresses, p. 14.
\footnote{347} Leo M. Franklin to Elmer Berger, 19 December 1944, LWP-C, box 2, folder 2.
\end{footnotes}
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

Council members—both laypeople and rabbis—to voice their extreme dissatisfaction with the sentiment exclaimed in Goldberg’s letter. Wolsey’s circular bemoaned the situation in which the Council had been placed: Zionist organs cried hypocrisy over an organization that claimed to be religious in character but really was not. The form letter closed with the injunction that “the letter of Rabbi Goldberg should be repudiated, that he should be rebuked for usurping an authority he did not have, and for stating an opinion which was entirely unauthorized and incorrect, and that he be dismissed from his office.”

In the aftermath of the fiasco, Goldberg remained on the staff, but the opprobrium chastened the Council, which at the time was ramping up its efforts towards its first annual conference. Berger and Rosenwald hoped the event would be a milestone capping a year-long membership drive and fundraising campaign. This campaign was not as successful as Berger and Rosenwald had hoped that it would be, and the Goldberg-Silverman controversy, Wolsey’s noise-making, and Irving Reichert’s attempted resignation threatened the public display of organizational might that the Council leadership hoped the conference would be. Berger begged Reichert to remain in order to maintain the appearance of unity within the Council, and Reichert acquiesced to his request at least until the meeting took place, to see what would happen, but specifically asked that no business be done on the Sabbath and that religious services take place.

348 David Lefkowitz, Sr., to Louis Wolsey, 19 December 1944, LWP-C, box 3, folder 5.  
349 Form letter drafted by Louis Wolsey, attached to letter from David Lefkowitz, Sr., to Louis Wolsey, 19 December 1944, LWP-C, box 3, folder 5.  
350 Irving Reichert to Elmer Berger, 14 December 1944, ACJP-W, box 102, folder 3; Elmer Berger to Irving Reichert, 18 December 1944, ACJP-W, box 102, folder 3; Irving Reichert to Louis Wolsey, 18 December 1944, LWP-C, box 4, folder 2. Reichert specifically wrote that “In response to an urgent plea from Rabbi Berger, I have asked
Reichert’s protest is a prime example of the two levels of feeling amongst the rabbis about the Council as a “religious” organization. On the one hand they believed that the Council must maintain a “positive” program to educate the Reform Jewish laypeople about classical Reform theology and ideology. On the other hand, while they themselves did not advocate Jewish ceremonialism in their communities, they requested that the Council maintain a veneer of spirituality on top of its activities. The niceties of giving a prayer at the beginning of a meeting, having a rabbi nominally in command, or having rabbis associated with the organization, gave it the sense of a higher religious and spiritual purpose. This is closely related to the way in which the rabbis understood their relationship with laymen; their conception of laymen was that they were all uneducated and did not know what spirituality meant. “I need not tell you these absurd principles [of Houston’s Congregation Beth Israel] are far from intellectual,” Rabbi Ira E. Sanders wrote to Wolsey, “coming as they do, from untutored laymen, who know little or nothing about Judaism and less about drawing up principles to guide a congregation.”

Sanders’ viewpoint exemplified the way in which the rabbis understood their relationship with laymen; their conception of laymen was that they were all uneducated and did not know what spirituality meant.

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351 Ira Sanders to Louis Wolsey, 17 April 1944, LWP-C, box 4, folder 6.
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

The lay people were given the position of an underclass to the rabbis, as can be seen in the December 7, 1942, meeting at which the lay leadership of the Council first joined the rabbis. At that meeting at the Hotel New Yorker in New York City, the rabbis convened at 10:30 a.m., with David Philipson opening with a prayer. For the next five and a half hours, they discussed the important business of the day, officially deciding upon the name “The American Council for Judaism,” selecting Elmer Berger to be the executive director, as well as discussing the future program of the organization. At four in the afternoon, the laypeople arrived. We can tell that the two meetings were seen as having different levels of importance because the notes for the two meetings, even though they were temporally contiguous, are separated into two separate documents. Furthermore, the morning meeting was of the “Provisional Committee for the Formation of the American Council for Judaism” and the second session was the “Lay-Rabbinical Session” of said committee. The implicit subtext is that the committee consisted only of rabbis. The lay meeting was not opened with a prayer, and each of the rabbis “introduce[d] their lay representatives to the group,” implying that the laypeople were contingent upon their rabbi. Furthermore, at the lay-rabbinical session, the rabbis did almost all the talking, and the discussion related primarily to the new and updated Statement of Principles that Rabbi Morris Lazaron had composed. The outcome of the meeting was that a Lay-Rabbinical committee be appointed to act with Berger. That committee, in the end, consisted of rabbis with not a single layperson.

352 “Meeting of the Provisional Committee for the Formation of the American Council for Judaism,” 7 December 1942, ACJP-C, box 2, folder 1.
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

The transformation of the Council could only have taken place with the resignation of many of these rabbis. The role of the lay-rabbinical committee was to establish local chapters of the Council using the local rabbis as conduits; their resignation or refusal to cooperate on the local level simultaneously debilitated the project and also reduced the number of rabbis within the organization calling for a “pro-Reform” program. As the rabbinical membership dwindled, rabbis like Elmer Berger accrued more and more power within the organization and also served more and more as definitive arbiters of the Jewish religion for the lay membership. At the same time as this was happening, the core leadership of the organization became more self-enclosed and insulated. While Irving Reichert and Louis Wolsey discussed this explicitly when Reichert attempted to resign in late 1944, this trend is also visible in the discourse surrounding the Houston Basic Principles and the Goldberg-Silverman correspondence. When these episodes took place, the rabbis first contacted Louis Wolsey, even though by mid-1943 he was not as heavily involved in the day-to-day operation of the Council; since April 1943, this had been taken over by Berger, who was working full-

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354 See p. 119.
355 This may be a bias within the sources, in that the majority of documents relating to the Council are in the papers of Louis Wolsey. That being said, we find that there are an inordinate number of letters to Wolsey within the archives on these subjects, such as Ira Sanders to Louis Wolsey, 27 March 1944, LWP-C, box 4, folder 6; Edward N. Calisch to Louis Wolsey, 17 January 1944, LWP-C, box 2, folder 4; David Lefkowitz to Louis Wolsey, 19 December 1944, LWP-C, box 3, folder 5. In addition, Wolsey testifies that “It will interest you to know … that I have quite a number of letters voluntarily sent me, expressing precisely the same view as you [on the Goldberg affair]— and that without a solitary exception.” (Louis Wolsey to Irving Reichert, 22 December 1944, LWP-C, box 4, folder 2.) Furthermore, documents in one person’s papers are not restricted to letters to and from that person. Wolsey’s papers, as well as those of others, are littered with vast quantities of others’ correspondence that was either forwarded or copied to him.
356 We know this from the fact that, among evidence, Berger included Wolsey in a form letter detailing the Council’s day-to-day activities over the summer of 1943 (Elmer
time, and Lessing Rosenwald who served as the president and gave significant legitimacy
to the Council as a well-known and respected businessman. Thus, a particular power
hierarchy developed: Berger would provide the intellectual ammunition against Zionism,
and Lessing Rosenwald (and later Sidney Wallach) would provide the publicity to voice
the concerns, as in the publication of an article in *Life* magazine in June 1943.\(^\text{357}\) This was
the opposite of what the Council rabbis had expressed as their preferred operating
procedure, whereby a rabbi would be the organization’s public face.

As a whole, we find that as the Council became more active, the rabbis, many of
whom were no longer associated with it, began to describe the organization similarly to
how they had previously described (and still continued to describe) the Zionist forces, as
a “political” organization rather than a religiously- or spiritually-minded one. In order to
understand this discourse, we must first examine the way that they described the Zionists
and then see how they applied this same terminology against the Council. The non-
Zionist rabbis consistently criticized Zionism for espousing a “political” definition of
Judaism,\(^\text{358}\) but additionally they specifically condemned the “political” tactics of
Zionism. These include aggressiveness, name-calling, silencing the minority, and the use

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\(^\text{357}\) Lessing J. Rosenwald, “Reply to Zionism: Why Many Americans of Jewish Faith Are
Opposed to the Establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine,” *Life Magazine*, 28 June
1943.

\(^\text{358}\) “We have got to save the Jew in America, and we will not do it by accepting the
February motion which rammed a Jewish Army and political Judaism down our throats.”
(Louis Wolsey to Harry Witelson, 25 June 1942, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3.)
of “moles” and types of espionage. Zionists, in the non-Zionist conception, would stop at nothing to achieve their goals, and would exploit people and make use of their names to “advance their own political ambitions.” While politics in itself was not bad, the implication was that the only good type of politics was one “charged with spiritual imperatives.” This idea of spiritual politics is important because it can help identify what it was that the Council rabbis wanted to accomplish, and how they viewed themselves. The rabbis often tried to envision themselves in the role of the prophets, and as such thought that a prime role of theirs was to fight what was wrong in society; however, they also saw themselves as spiritual leaders both of their communities and the American Jewish world as a whole. Thus, for them any political action must be spiritually motivated and executed from a moral high ground, which, in the non-Zionist perception, Zionist politics certainly was not. The Council believed that Zionist subterfuge was behind the Silverman debacle, and some rabbis believed that Zionist spying was behind local political attacks. In one instance, Rabbi Solomon Foster described to Elmer Berger the attacks of local Zionists upon him after he had requested a run of Council literature:

359 “You have given [the Zionists] comfort, and you have very greatly encouraged the name-calling section of the aggressive name-calling rabbis of the Zionist organisation [sic].” (Louis Wolsey to Abraham Shusterman, 2 January 1943 [mislabeled 1942], LWP-C, box 4, folder 8.); “Their [the Zionists’] failure to reply and the weakness of what little defense they gave to the barrage of name-calling, was a dead give-away. … WE [sic] did not public any such statement, but the Zionists have quite flagrantly conspired to public their slanders and name-calling.” (Louis Wolsey to Morris S. Lazaron, 6 January 1943, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 10.);
360 Elmer Berger wrote to Malcolm Stern in 1948 that “This is a typical Zionist stunt [unclear to what he is referencing] and one of these fine days, people in the United States will begin to realize that they are dealing here not with a group of fine, upstanding and honorable people but with a political machine that stops at nothing and for which all things and all people are fair prey.” (Elmer Berger to Malcolm Stern, 2 March 1948, ACJP-C, box 1, folder 7.)
361 Victor Reichert to David Philipson, 19 July 1946, DPP-C, box 1, folder 18.
362 Morris S. Lazaron to Leo Shubow, 19 November 1942, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 8.
I may be wrong, but I have a suspicion that there may be some connection with the attack on me and your office. For just when I ordered from your office 500 copies of the special bulletin for distribution here, the attack on me was staged. Is it possible that this information might have been divulged to those who would be interested? I had told no one about my plans to mail the literature to many people here and just as I was ready to do so, attacks were made upon me!\(^{363}\)

In addition to describing the political tactics of the Zionists, the non-Zionists vouched that the Zionists were in fact totalitarian, anti-democratic, and even fascist. Of course, the discourse of totalitarianism permeated the milieu of the period due to the war, but that does not take away from the potency of the rabbis’ attacks upon one another. Echoing his later rhetoric about “double-book accounting,”\(^{364}\) Berger claimed in August 1943 that “Like the totalitarian movements in Europe, Zionism is all things to all people.”\(^{365}\) When a set of notes from a meeting between Zionist and non-Zionist leaders only represented the Zionists’ remarks, Wolsey wrote that “This is some more of the fascism of Zionism.”\(^{366}\) William F. Rosenblum commented in a similar fashion: “Real Reform Judaism with its emphasis on the AMERICAN milieu was unpalatable to our colleagues [James] Heller, [Barnett] Brickner, etc. although they never fail to yield to the fundamentalist demands of our K.K.K. the KEHILLAH OF KOSHER KOLLEAGUES!”\(^{367}\) In this remark, Rosenblum simultaneously connected Zionism with terrorism as well as teased out many elements of how the Council rabbis felt about the Zionists: that they were un-American, that they represented reactionary forces in society, that they symbolized a return to orthodox religion. Louis Wolsey further bemoaned that the anti-Zionists had been silent for so long, giving power to

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\(^{363}\) Solomon Foster to Elmer Berger, 26 March 1945, ACJP-W, box 56, folder 4.


\(^{365}\) Elmer Berger to Louis Witt, 18 August 1943, LWP-C, box 4, folder 11.

\(^{366}\) Louis Wolsey to Morris S. Lazaron, 6 January 1943, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 10, p. 3.

\(^{367}\) Emphasis in original; William F. Rosenblum to Louis Wolsey, 18 November 1942, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 8.
the Zionists and leading to appeasement, which “has practically developed into a totalitarian Judaism.”

Furthermore, the Council rabbis believed that the Zionists were acting undemocratically and hijacking the democratic process by trying to silence the minority opinion within the CCAR over the Army resolution. This was in opposition to some in the Zionist camp, who believed that the Council was acting against democracy by establishing itself at all. Their belief was that by “seceding” from the CCAR they were aborting the democratic process. As the Zionist Rabbi Robert I. Kahn put it:

There is a thing called democracy. Its basic assumption is that men, given the opportunity for cussin’ and discussin’, can come to some agreement about what is best. The minority, after such agreement, is not liquidated, nor does it, if it believes in democracy, take steps toward secession. On the contrary, the minority is expected to be a loyal opposition, helping to point the issues, and if its cause is right, becoming in time the majority.

To this, Berger fired back a lengthy response in which he stated:

You should remind the nationalists, not the anti-nationalists that there is such a thing as democracy and furthermore, that there is more to democracy than the superficial and obvious idea of majority rule. There are certain basic, moral restraints and adherence to contract and reluctance to tyrannize, even if one seems to be in the majority. The mere counting of noses no longer suffices as a definition of democratic vitality. By any moral definition of democracy I think the Conference’s vote and the subsequent statement of its President was a contemptible, disgraceful thing. Is such a body to provide moral and democratic leadership?

Berger’s claims require some brief explanation. Berger and his colleagues saw in the Jewish Army vote an attempt to rig the CCAR’s democratic process by stacking the deck; according to the non-Zionist rabbis, the resolution was pushed through after most of the

368 Louis Wolsey to Abraham Shusterman, 22 October 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 8.
369 Robert I. Kahn to Malcolm Stern, 23 April 1942, ACJP-C, box 1, folder 7; Robert I. Kahn to Abraham Holtzberg, 22 April 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 2; identical letter also sent to Elmer Berger.
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

rabbinic leaders had already left the conference. Berger’s phrase to “adherence to contract” also refers to the non-Zionists’ understanding of the 1935 “Neutrality Agreement,” which not everyone considered to be binding for all time. Furthermore, Berger and others believed that they were being denied the opportunity to have an independent meeting in Atlantic City. On top of this, they believed that a silent majority of Jewish Americans agreed with their positions—and the support they received from some laypeople only strengthened this viewpoint—and thus that the Jewish communal leadership was not representative of the gagged voice of the people.

The rabbis’ understanding of democracy focused on the freedom of speech and freedom of individual thought, likely because they believed that theirs were being stifled. Rabbi Samuel Schulman, when he wrote that he would not come to the Atlantic City conference because he opposed it, said that because Wolsey “argue[d] in one of your communications that the democratic process implies respect for the freedom of thought of

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371 See chapter 1, pp. 28–32.
372 Rabbi Harry Ettelson of Memphis, TN, who opposed the Atlantic City meeting, wrote to Fineshriber and Wolsey that “There can be no gainsaying, of course, that likeminded individuals, whenever they are so minded, have the right, whether on the basis of Judaism or Democracy, to meet” (Harry Ettelson to Louis Wolsey and William H. Fineshriber, 29 May 1942, LWP-C, box 2, folder 3.)
373 “There are more anti-nationalist Jews in this country than a great many people know about or care to admit if they do know about it.” (Elmer Berger to Robert I. Kahn, 27 April 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 2, p. 3.); “We have laymen who have promised us support and we owe them a responsibility.” (Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 25 December 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9, p. 4.); “However, I do not see how our 95 men can so expose themselves to the public as to desert a movement in which the laymen have manifested such enthusiastic and liberal an interest.” (Louis Wolsey to Morris S. Lazaron, 6 January 1943, MSLP-C, box 10, folder 10, p. 2.); “It would be another argument against liquidation to know that the organization of laymen is already underway in some places” (Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 26 January 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1, p. 1); “Since the announcement of the formation of the Council there has been a widespread, spontaneous response from the laymen of American Israel. This response has been without any organized or direct solicitation.” (Circular letter from Elmer Berger, 15 February 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1.)
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

the individual,” he hoped his letter would be read at the meeting.\footnote{Samuel Schulman to Louis Wolsey and William H. Fineshriber, 28 May 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 6, p. 6.} After the Atlantic City meeting, Berger wrote a letter to the editor of Cleveland’s \textit{The Jewish Review and Observer}, and when the \textit{Review} criticized Berger’s letter without concomitantly publishing it, Wolsey chimed in that

\begin{quote}
May I submit to you that it is quite unfair in a land of free speech and democracy to deny anyone who submits a sincere opinion the right to present his opinion. Your comment is almost totalitarian when yours columns are open only to your own point of view. Or is it a part of Zionist policy and thought that there is only one side?\footnote{Louis Wolsey to the editors of the \textit{Jewish Review and Observer}, 21 June 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 2, p. 1.}
\end{quote}

Wolsey continued to deride Zionism in his letter, writing, “Zionism and Zionists … have introduced nineteenth-century nationalism and anti-semitic \textit{sic} totalitarianism into … the Jewish community,” and further correlating “American and Jewish democracy and freedom of opinion and expression.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 2.} In December, Berger wrote Wolsey that the Council had “democratized” those non-Zionist Jews who could not speak for themselves, tying democracy with speaking up.\footnote{Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 25 December 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9, p. 3.} The non-Zionists thus connected their democracy with the totalitarianism and even Nazi tendencies of the Zionists, as in when Wolsey wrote to Robert Kahn: “One of our Zionist colleagues\footnote{It is unclear exactly which “Zionistic colleague” Wolsey refers to here, but the specific personality is unimportant inasmuch as the key is the equation of Zionism with Nazism and totalitarianism.} … actually sneers at the principle of freedom. Why, then, fight Hitler with a Jewish Army, for I should say both agree with one another … upon that subject?”\footnote{Louis Wolsey to Robert Kahn, 27 April 1942, LWP-C, box 3, folder 5.} Throughout the discourse on democracy, we see that the non-Zionists equate democracy and freedom of speech, ostensibly
because they believed that the Zionists were silencing them; on the opposite side, the Zionists believed that democracy meant solidarity and involvement in the democratic process, because the Zionists saw the non-Zionists as seceding from the Reform movement. As we can see, this cannot be completely removed from the context of the debates on the Atlantic City meeting, nor can they be understood outside the milieu of the second World War, inasmuch as all parties wanted to identify their adversaries with the closest that they could find to pure and popularly recognized evil, but in it the rabbis constructed a discourse on democracy and politics that informs to a great deal the criticisms they held against one another and which ultimately was turned onto the Council.

When Irving Reichert of San Francisco—arguably the Council’s most successful rabbinical ambassador, creating the largest Council chapter in the United States on the foundation of his pulpit—resigned from the Council as a vice president in December 1944, he had some choice words to say about Elmer Berger’s management of the Council. In his official letter to Berger, he cited as his reason that he had been left out of major decisions and had not been invited to the meeting of the Executive Board to take place in January 1945. This letter was relatively mild compared to his correspondence with Louis Wolsey regarding the way in which the Council was being run under Berger. Reichert wrote that he was afraid of the Council’s reputation; he was not included in the decisions on policy, and so he could not voice his opposition to statements that would ultimately tarnish him because his name was automatically attached—at the very least in

381 Irving Reichert to Elmer Berger, 14 December 1944, ACJP-W, box 102, folder 3.
the Council’s letterhead—with all Council activities. Wolsey’s response is a characteristically detailed description of his feelings on the situation—Wolsey accurately described himself as one whose “temperament loans so very much to articulation of my viewpoints”—and as such I will quote a large portion of it as it gives a wide-open window into his perspective:

The position you take is utterly unexceptional in every particular and I agree with it whole-heartedly. I even think your letter is mild, considering the gravity of the situation…

You have succumbed to the temptation to resign as vice-president. I have not done so as yet, but I assure you a similar temptation confronts me—for precisely the same reasons … As a matter of fact, all of us in the ACJ except the quadumvirate [sic] have been excluded from the counsels, from activity, and even from the right of free speech. It is a fascism considerably more irritating than that of the [Zionist Organization of America].

I have today prepared a letter with regard to the Goldberg[-Silverman] incident, and I am sending it to about 25 or 30 people as a round-robin, asking for their signatures, and I propose to read it at the meeting in January. That will bring the fascism of the executive office into the open…

Your letter does not say what argument Berger used in his attempt to dissuade you [from resigning]. Wish I knew. He does not take me into the ACJ’s counsels at all, and I hardly ever see him. …

As soon as you receive my round-robin letter, you will note that we are in perfect agreement on the Goldberg case. It will interest you to know, however, that I have quite a number of letters voluntarily sent me, expressing precisely the same view as do you—and that without a solitary exception.

Wolsey’s account brings out a number of criticisms about the Council’s management.

First, he corroborates Reichert’s claims that key leaders are being left out of the decision-making process. In fact, the leading figures are not letting anyone into that process, and

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382 Irving Reichert to Louis Wolsey, 18 December 1944, LWP-C, box 4, folder 2, p. 2.
383 Louis Wolsey to Elmer Berger, 5 January 1945, LWP-C, box 2, folder 2.
384 Probably referring to Elmer Berger, Lessing Rosenwald, David Goldberg, and Sidney Wallach.
385 Louis Wolsey to Irving Reichert, 22 December 1944, LWP-C, box 4, folder 2.
he terms it “fascism,” along with a reference to the Roman Empire, implying that the Council is run in the same fashion. Secondly, he claims that others have come to him with the same kinds of issues, and ties it together with the Goldberg controversy that was taking place at around the same time. Finally, Wolsey admits that he has been thinking about just the same things as Reichert has, and when he would resign the just a few weeks later, we find that he is true to his word. Wolsey explained to Berger that the Council was acting in an undemocratic, even suicidal, fashion, and squarely identifies the problems of the Council with Sidney Wallach and Lessing Rosenwald, writing that “The policy of Sidney Wallach does not fit in with my vision of the thing. As Public Relations Counselor, it has been his point of view that he should muzzle the public. I will admit that that policy augments his power, but I am not in favor of fascism.”

Berger, in typical fashion, blamed the Council’s actions on a lack of resources, both human and financial, and in a wave towards Wolsey’s complaints, concluded, “Finally, let me urge you to present the content of your letter in a proper form, with recommendations to the [upcoming] meeting. I am sure that everyone … will be willing to democratically discuss and abide by any decisions made.” Again, we find Berger using the term “democratic” to refer to the concept of freedom of speech, as well as co-opting the view on democracy previously espoused by the Zionists, that of following majority rule, rather than sitting “on the side-lines as an interesting spectator,” as Reichert phrased it.

It is interesting to compare Wolsey’s resignation correspondence with Berger with his later accounts of his resignation. While he resigned because of the Council’s way of

386 Louis Wolsey to Elmer Berger, 11 January 1945, LWP-C, box 2, folder 2.
388 Irving Reichert to Louis Wolsey, 7 January 1946 (mislabeled 1945), LWP-C, box 4, folder 2.
operating, he later described it in terms of the discourse on pro-Reform and anti-Zionism. In a December 1946 letter to Bernard Heller, he defended his founding of the Council, stating that he could show the evidence that it was different at the beginning—tipping his hand that he held onto the evidence because he felt the need to prove this point—and arguing that with the handover of the movement to laymen, “It actually became a place of refuge for atheistic and assimilating Jews.” He further stated that the Council of 1946 in fact advocated political Judaism, the type of Judaism he detested in 1942 and still did, whether it was Zionist or anti-Zionist.\(^{389}\) In his 1948 address on the subject of “Why I Withdrew from the American Council for Judaism,” Wolsey reiterated these same views, that it was the involvement of lay leaders that brought down the Council from its high place of righteousness. He even explicitly referred to the Goldberg incident, and declared that the Council acted in a manner of “dictatorialness and general irreligiosity.”\(^{390}\)

When Irving Reichert finally completed his resignation from the Council in July 1956, he echoed many of Wolsey’s criticisms of a decade earlier when he cited the Council’s abandonment of its original platform, and stated that “[The Council] has attempted to influence the policies of our government in precisely the same fashion as have the Zionists, whose political activities it severely criticizes.”\(^{391}\) He further argued that the Council was becoming obsolete because radical Zionist nationalism in America was becoming extinct in the aftermath of the foundation of the State and the Ben-Gurion–Blaustein agreements on the issue of the relationship between the State of Israel and American Jews.

\(^{389}\) Louis Wolsey to Bernard Heller, 18 December 1946, LWP-C, box 3, folder 2.  
\(^{391}\) Irving Reichert to Clarence Coleman, Jr., 23 July 1956, American Jewish Archives Small Collections, Correspondence File, folder SC-10053.
Chapter 3: The Transformation of the Council

With the resignations of Wolsey, the Council’s spiritual godfather, and Reichert, its greatest rabbinical activist, the Council completed its transformation into an organization of laypeople. The full process took many years, but the majority of it was swift, in 1942 and early 1943, as many rabbis of the CCAR rejected participation in the Council’s activities. Once the Council itself crystallized with the election of Elmer Berger as executive director and Lessing Rosenwald as president, the dynamics of leadership began to push out even those who were heavily involved in the Council’s activities. Furthermore, Elmer Berger’s extreme anti-Zionist ideology, which we will consider in the next chapter, presented a barrier to activity for some of the more moderate anti-Zionists who understood the implications of Berger’s theories. Yet the internal debates of the Jewish community over its policy towards Israel have continued ever since Israel’s birth. The themes of unity, (and to a lesser extent since the close of World War II, which contributed to this discourse of) democracy, fascism and totalitarian leadership are still there. In sum, the Council’s transformation was a complex process; by understanding the discourse through which it took place we can learn much not only about how organizations change and find their path in a universal sense in terms of the self-selection of leadership, but about the whole battle over Zionism in 1940s America.
Chapter 4:  
Taking Class-Action: The Ideology of Elmer Berger’s Council

Between the summer of 1943 and January 1945, Elmer Berger expended a considerable amount of energy promoting his views and those of the American Council for Judaism. As he recounted in December 1944, “For two years I have gone to every metropolis and cross-road in America to which I could gain entry and have tried to advance [our] cause.” 392 As he tried his best “to combine the best virtues of a traveling salesman and an author,” 393 Berger began to think more seriously about what it would take to win the battle against Zionism. When Houston’s Congregation Beth Israel formulated a set of Basic Principles, establishing a two-tiered membership system in November 1943, this process accelerated 394 and culminated with the publication *The Jewish Dilemma* in early 1945. *The Jewish Dilemma* was not Berger’s first foray into the world of the written word—his two 1942 pamphlets “Why I am a Non-Zionist” and “The

392 Elmer Berger to Irving Reichert, 18 December 1944, ACJP-W, box 102, folder 3; Berger’s letters reference his frequent trips in which he would give speeches and meet with groups of members and prospective members. His travel began in earnest in 1944 with his campaign to grow the membership of the Council (Kolsky, *Jews against Zionism*, pp. 98ff). Throughout his correspondence, Berger complains of a lack of opportunity to respond due to his trips, many to the west coast where the Council was very strong. Of the many examples, we find that on August 18, 1943, Berger wrote to Louis Witt, “I have just returned from a three weeks trip to the west coast and the southwest” (Elmer Berger to Louis Witt, 18 August 1943, American Council for Judaism Papers, ACJP-W, box 128, folder 10.); on August 19, 1945, Berger wrote to Morris Lazaron and William Rosenau: “I know you’ll be interested in the results of my trip. I visited Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, Dallas, San Antonio, Houston, New Orleans and Baton Rouge.” (Elmer Berger to Morris S. Lazaron and William Rosenau, 19 August 1945, ACJP-W, box 73, folder 1.).  
393 Elmer Berger to Jerome Rosenbloom, 3 November 1943, ACJP-W, box 106, folder 8.  
394 Elmer Berger to Irving F. Reichert, 16 March 1944, ACJP-W, box 102, folder 3.
Chapter 4: Taking Class-Action: The Ideology of Elmer Berger’s Council

Flint Plan” had seen wide distribution—but his new book proved to be the real start of his long publishing career. Over the course of his life, Berger would publish a series of books and pamphlets in which he recounted a narrative of Jewish history that denied the existence of a Jewish people and demonized Zionism in all its diverse manifestations. In these works, he fleshed out his anti-Zionist ideology, emphasizing what would during his tenure become the Council’s agenda. Berger’s ideology remained wholly consistent throughout the course of his career. The Holocaust and the ensuing establishment and success of the State of Israel, which converted many Reform critics of Zionism into supporters of the new State, did not have the same effect on Berger, but rather he continued to toe his own party line. Still, his thought is most systematically laid out in its earliest manifestations, The Jewish Dilemma (1945) and A Partisan History of Judaism (1951). These works provide clear insight into Berger’s ideology and how it impacted the development of the American Council for Judaism as well as how it ultimately pushed away many of its potential rabbinical allies.

395 See p. 46.
396 See Elmer Berger, Peace for Palestine: First Lost Opportunity (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1993), p. 268, n. 263: “As in all political problems, Americans are free, as individual citizens, to hold different opinions about U.S.-Israeli relations. To single out Jews incorrectly implies that they are directed by their Jewishness, so that as a group their political decisions about Israel are automatically motivated by visibly different criteria from the motivations of other Americans. This concedes a major argument to the Zionist ideological claim that all Jews are, as Herzl claimed, ‘one people,’ meaning that they share a common transnational nationality and that, as Jews, they accept extraterritorial nationality ties to the Israeli state. I strongly advance the opinion that if confronted with some such interpretation of the phrase, most American Jews would resent and reject such a distinction in the context of secular American life.” Also see Elmer Berger, “Against Zionism (Letter to the Editor),” New York Times, 18 November 1990, in which Berger claims that “the Jewish people” is a construction which infringes upon the rights of both Muslims and Christians living in the State of Israel as well as Diaspora Jews.
In *The Jewish Dilemma*, Berger makes his case for anti-Zionism, arguing that Zionism and emancipation are antithetical. He details a history of Zionist thought and praxis up to the rise of the Council, with special emphasis on the need for an organization to fight for the “Jewish John Doe,” a term he makes use of repeatedly.\(^397\) This term is significant inasmuch as he attempted to place the individual American Jew’s experience within a legal context; as we will see, Berger constructed his vision for the American Council for Judaism, somewhat paradoxically, as a lobbying group acting on behalf of anti-nationalist American Jews. In *A Partisan History of Judaism*, Berger attempted to write an anti-nationalist textbook on the history of the Jewish religion and those who practice it, with full disclosure that the reader would find Berger’s “partisan” opinions within it.\(^398\) Based on a lecture series,\(^399\) it may be related to Berger’s original study group at Temple Beth El in Flint, Michigan, where he was rabbi until he left to form the Council. Berger’s first foray into anti-Zionist activity, the Flint Committee in Opposition to Political Zionism, arose out of this group.\(^400\) Both books were written for an audience


\(^{398}\) In the introduction, Berger writes that “There is nothing wrong in religious partisanship … I am such a partisan in Judaism. I have no patience with ‘unity’ in Judaism or among Jews. I like the heterodox, the rebels, the challengers of authority who, time and again, put the clerics in their place and who, for me, made Judaism something in which I can believe rather than something to which I was born.” (Elmer Berger, *A Partisan History of Judaism* [New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1951], pp. 3–4.)

\(^{399}\) “The material in this book appeared originally as a series of informal lectures which I had the privilege of delivering to a group of members of the American Council for Judaism in New York.” (Ibid., p. 1.)

\(^{400}\) “For about four years I had conducted a study group in Jewish history and this group served as the nucleus of the anti-nationalist group.” (Berger, *The Flint Plan*, p. 13.)
Chapter 4: Taking Class-Action: The Ideology of Elmer Berger’s Council

of lay people.\textsuperscript{401} “confused” about the nature of Judaism and Jewishness. This choice of audience is representative of the Council’s turn toward the laity; Berger’s 1942 paper “The Flint Plan” was prepared explicitly with a rabbinical audience in mind.\textsuperscript{402} As the Council transformed into a lay organization, its focus shifted towards the idea of “re-educating American Jews”\textsuperscript{403} as opposed to working with rabbis, who, at least in theory, had received a solid Jewish education.

As Berger traveled across the United States to promote the Council, he participated in numerous public debates with Zionist leaders. Beginning with his debate at the Flint, Michigan, Jewish Community Center on March 17, 1942,\textsuperscript{404} Berger saw these events as a way to reach out to the undecided.\textsuperscript{405} As the leader of the anti-Zionist Council, he encouraged others to participate in similar local debates to raise awareness of the cause, even providing them with an exact line of argument as well as his personal assessment of their opponents.\textsuperscript{406} In these letters, we see that Berger was not only writing these books for his own enjoyment, but was formulating his ideology in a way such that

\textsuperscript{401} “Laymen” would be an inappropriate term, as the Council had a significant female membership base. See numerous membership lists published in \textit{Information Bulletin} beginning in October 1943.
\textsuperscript{402} “I wish that I might be able to offer my non-Zionist colleagues of the American Rabbinate some sure-fire formula for the creation of such local groups which might then be coordinated into some articulate, national organization.” (Berger, \textit{The Flint Plan}, p. 10.); also note that this paper was originally given at the Atlantic City meeting of non-Zionist Reform rabbis.
\textsuperscript{403} Elmer Berger to Morris S. Lazaron and William Rosenau, 19 August 1945, ACJP-W, box 73, folder 1, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{405} “The result was more than gratifying. The audience, much of it Orthodox or unaffiliated. … [A]fter I left the platform, dozens of people thanked me and took pains to explain that they had never understood Zionism before.” (Berger, \textit{The Flint Plan}, p. 12.)
\textsuperscript{406} Berger to Irving F. Reichert, 23 November 1943, ACJP-W, box 102, folder 3; Berger to Allan Tarshish, 15 February 1946, ACJP-W, box 121, folder 6.
he could syndicate his viewpoints through other rabbis who sought to “present the anti-nationalist arguments.”

The key thesis that spans Berger’s thought and is especially prevalent in his earliest writings is that the Jews are not—and never were—a united people or nation. Any attempts to prove otherwise are merely trickery meant to “confuse” everyday Jews about who they are and what they want. A large portion of Berger’s work is an attempt to prove this through scholarship of the early history of the Jewish people, the developments of emancipation, and the history of the Zionist movement. Whereas much of Berger’s portrayal of the history of the Jewish religion is normative for classical Reform, what sets him apart from others, even those who were non-Zionists, is his complete denial of a “Jewish people.” While classical Reform theology as crystallized in the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform argued that Jews did not constitute a nation, many Reform rabbis nevertheless continued to regard Jews as a “people,” albeit a “religious people” or a people with a common religious mission to be a “light unto the nations,” even if they did not have any political or diplomatic part to play in the world scene. Berger also recognized that the anti-nationalist mores of nineteenth century classical Reform

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407 Berger, Why I Am a Non-Zionist, p. 3.
408 “This book … is an attempt to explain why Jews are confused about themselves and thus acknowledges their part in the confusion of Christians about them.” (Berger, The Jewish Dilemma, p. 1.)
409 See Julian Morgenstern’s 1943 “Nation, People, Religion—What Are We?” The second section is entitled “Israel As a Religious People” (Julian Morgenstern, Nation, People, Religion: What Are We? [Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College, 1943], p. 4.) and also the venerable David Philipson, who argued in 1919 that “[T]here are the Jews by religion, those who claim that Judaism’s message to the world is a religious message, those who hold that the Jews are a religious people, those who assimilate themselves to the culture of their age, those, in a word, who are Jews in religion and in all other things consider themselves at one with their land, their age, their nation, their civilization.” (Emphasis added; David Philipson, “Judaism—Race, Nationality or Religion?,” Jewish Exponent [Philadelphia], 7 January 1910.)
“limit[ed] the meaning of the concept of ‘a Jewish people’ to ‘a religious people,’” and similar to many of his colleagues who opposed Zionism, he believed that the 1937 Columbus Platform, which took a more positive stance on Zionism and Jewish peoplehood, was a step backwards, not forwards. However, in contrast to his colleagues, Berger did not simply want to turn back the clock to 1885. In pre-print letters discussing *The Jewish Dilemma*, Berger declared that the thesis of his upcoming book would be “that Reform railed [sic] because it did not go far enough, not because it went too far.” In this way, Berger hinted at his ideas about the nature of Jewish religious and political hierarchy that sought to radically reorient the Jews not as a collective people, but as a collection of individuals.

In 1942, when Berger wrote his pamphlet entitled “Why I am a Non-Zionist,” he did not yet make the unequivocal argument against Jewish peoplehood. Other elements that would become central in his ideology, however, are present, such as the problematica of Zionist philanthropy and the cultural disunity of the Jews. However, over the course of the following years, Berger underwent a process of ideological coalescence, by which his ideas crystallized into an all-encompassing conception of Jewish life under the pressure of debate and intellectual criticism. Once this process began, Berger continued to promote his credo with surprising intellectual stamina. While he fought the concepts of Jewish peoplehood and Jewish unity throughout his career, once the State of Israel was established in 1948, his ideology changed to fit the new circumstances and the new role

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411 See p. 18.
412 Elmer Berger to Irving F. Reichert, 16 March 1944, ACJP-W, box 102, folder 3, p. 2.
414 Ibid., p. 10.
he envisioned for the Council. In 1961, Berger provided a clear definition of Zionism, non-Zionism and anti-Zionism using belief in a Jewish people and corresponding “rights and obligations” as the key dividers:

A Zionist is one who acknowledges this system of national rights and obligations, belonging to “the Jewish people.” …

A non-Zionist, generally, rejects this system of Zionist national rights and obligations … But he recognizes the system of national rights and obligations for “the Jewish people.” He may even reserve some of the rights and acknowledge some of the obligations for himself.

An anti-Zionist rejects the whole fundamental principle of a “Jewish people” with the character of a body politic. He believes the only national rights and obligations Jews possess are those of the countries of their citizenship. The anti-Zionist refuses to equate or confuse the citizenship rights and obligations of Jews, in whatever country they live, with this Zionist system of “Jewish” national rights and obligations. He refuses to accept the substitute of the one for the other. He refuses to contest with governments of countries where Jews live, to win for them the privilege of possessing this system of Zionist national rights and obligations. He denies there is any public body—including the Zionist organization—competent to represent a so-called “Jewish people;” and when such representation is claimed, he publicly repudiates it.\(^{415}\)

In other words, Zionists see themselves as a part of a Jewish people, and want to act upon those “rights and obligations.” Non-Zionists recognize its existence, certainly for others if not for themselves, and anti-Zionists reject it outright. Written after 1948, Berger refers to immigration to the State of Israel when he talks about “national rights.” However, even in the early and middle 1940s, Berger and his colleagues expressed fears about the dual loyalty arguments that might surface if such a state were created, and certainly the issue

\(^{415}\) Berger, *The Constitution and the Balfour Declaration*, pp. 11–12. One major difference between Berger’s earlier work and his later discourse was his adoption of the term “anti-Zionist” rather than “non-Zionist.” This can best be explained that first of all, his most important use of the term, his 1942 pamphlet “Why I Am a Non-Zionist,” was written for a group of “Non-Zionist Rabbis.” Also, over time, many “non-Zionists” came to support the creation of the State of Israel, and so Berger consequently took upon himself and his followers the more extreme title.
of the character (or lack thereof) of the Jewish people was one of Berger’s top subjects throughout the entire period. So even if his definitions of Zionism and anti-Zionism being tied to “rights and obligations” was a novel construction following the establishment of the State, he certainly believed from in the earliest period that anti-Zionists did not recognize the Jewish people.

On an intellectual level, Berger rejects the “Jewish people,” but the “rights and obligations” are the practical aspects that he intends as his target. The American Council for Judaism’s official platform, published in August 1943, states that “for our fellow Jews [meaning American Jews, as opposed to refugees] we ask only this: Equality of rights and obligations with their fellow-nationals.”416 Berger’s case against Jewish nationalism is that “Jewish John Does” deserve no special rights over other citizens, no matter what their citizenship—whether it is a right to immigrate to the Jewish state if they please, or special civil rights—nor do they want any special obligations to any entity save their country of citizenship. In other words, Berger understood Zionism as a monolith and refused to read the Zionist movement as one containing a broad range of heterodox views. And in taking this view on Zionism, he selected to read and critique the most extreme Zionists possible. He not only believed that the “Jewish people” did not exist, but imagined that Zionists intended to create a “Jewish nation” ex nihilo that might have different objectives than the United States of America. In this manner, he also takes anti-Zionism to its opposite extreme. It is no coincidence that the term “classical” is applied both to Zionism and Reform to describe the two movements’ early ideologies that saw each other as incompatible one with the other.

Chapter 4: Taking Class-Action: The Ideology of Elmer Berger’s Council

The “confusion” of the masses as to the true nature of Zionism (and the anti-Zionist response that follows from that understanding) is so mystifying for Berger because he himself was unable to reconcile radical Zionist theory with its more moderate expressions, such as the 1950 agreement between David Ben-Gurion, Israel’s first prime minister, and Jacob Blaustein, president of the American Jewish Committee. This agreement, which was reaffirmed in 1961, stipulated that the American Jewish community was independent from the State of Israel. The newborn State recognized American Jewry’s right to social, economic and cultural self-determination and acknowledged that American Jews were not living “in exile,” as the classical Zionist ideology of the “negation of the Diaspora” maintained. However, Berger proved incapable of harmonizing this agreement with his preconceived notion of the radical nature of the Jewish future that he believed that Zionists wanted to create. Berger was correct, up to a point: if one reads the earliest Zionist thinkers, as Berger advocated in his 1962 address “What Doth Anti-Zionism Require of Thee: To Understand, To Evaluate, To Interpret,” one will find in the Zionist program a radical program for remaking the Jewish people. But Berger refused to balance thought and its implementation. It is in this way that in his reading of Zionism, he emphasizes the most extreme elements, such as the Law of Return, and deemphasizes more moderate statements such as the Ben-Gurion–Blaustein agreements by claiming that they make use of a “double-entry bookkeeping

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417 Sarna, American Judaism, pp. 334–335; Cohen, Not Free to Desist, pp. 311–315.
Chapter 4: Taking Class-Action: The Ideology of Elmer Berger’s Council

system” where they say one thing to one group and something else to another.\footnote{420}{Berger, “What Doth Anti-Zionism Requite of Thee: To Understand, to Evaluate, to Interpret,” pp. 3–4.} In his review of *The Jewish Dilemma* published in the April 1946 issue of *Commentary*, Israel Knox concluded:

Paraphrasing Dickens, one is tempted to say, that since Rabbi Berger cannot, or does not wish to, share in Jewish peoplehood, he condemns it. But since he is compelled to witness it, he is frightened by it. Hence his book does pose a dilemma, but it is not “the Jewish dilemma”—it is his own.\footnote{421}{Israel Knox, “Whose Dilemma?,” review of *The Jewish Dilemma*, by Elmer Berger, *Commentary Magazine* 1, no. 6 (April 1946): p. 92.}

Reading Berger’s books, we find that they tell us much more about Burger’s neuroses than anything else. His repeated discussion of “confusion” reveals that it was he who was confused at the lack of response to his call for action. When he could not match up his expectations with reality and was unable to resolve the dissonance that resulted, he projected his own confusion about the status of world Jewry onto the Jewish population, who he assumed must be confused; if they were not, they would have rallied to his cause.

In addition to Berger’s peculiar focus upon “confusion” and his extreme construction of Zionism, meriting an even more extreme response, the other central focus of his writing is the lack of a Jewish people and the implications for concerted Jewish action and communal activity. While there may be “Jewish people,” i.e. more than one person who is Jewish, Berger did not believe that there was an effective method to determine who they are, what they do, or what they want.\footnote{422}{Berger, *The Jewish Dilemma*, pp. 10–11.} This poses a potential political problem: if Jews are simply individuals who share a common religion, how might they collaborate in any capacity? This is the very danger that Berger sees, in that by their nature political Zionists are organized, while individual non- and anti-Zionists
are not, and could not be. The very act of taking a vote—which creates the possibility for group action by choosing a democratically elected non-Zionist leader—would paradoxically lead to the politicization and nationalization of non-Zionist Jews. Berger sees the need for someone to organize for them, because they are confused and cannot do it themselves. Berger proceeds to describe just that dilemma—in his opinion, a very Jewish one—of people who cannot act politically without giving up what makes them Americans of Jewish faith. It is this dilemma, in Berger’s view, that necessitates the Council. As such, Berger justifies the American Council for Judaism as an organization that balances its identities as a political lobbying group and educator, through the “confusion” of individual Jews and non-Jewish government officials who must be respectively un-confused. Berger’s conception of the “Jewish John Doe” is the crux of this construction.

Just as Berger’s anti-Zionist ideology is equally radical as his reading of the Zionist thought, Berger’s construction of the anti-Zionist movement mirrors the structures of the Zionist movement. Berger denies the idea of a “Jewish people” and argues that Jews are not a “class,” but spread across all strata of society; yet ironically, the metaphor which best matches the way that Berger constructed his activities at the Council was that of a protracted class-action lawsuit. A single Jew could not on his or her own fight for their rights, and so the Council saw its pseudo-legal representation as paving the way for a collective settlement by which individual Jews might have their voice heard and put a stop to the damages which the Zionists (and later the State of Israel) were incurring upon them and their status in society. This is particularly noticeable

423 “Jews … are stratified in every way that American society is stratified.” (Ibid., p. 12.)
in Berger’s peculiar focus upon legal and diplomatic documents. Berger allocated a
tremendous amount of space in *The Jewish Dilemma* to the Balfour Declaration and its
implications, and published a lengthy article on the topic, entitled “What Does the
Balfour Declaration Mean?” which composed the entire December 31, 1943, edition of
*Information Bulletin.* After the State of Israel was declared in 1948, he published
pamphlets and memos dissecting the Law of Return, which permitted Diaspora Jews to
easily immigrate to Israel, and the case of Brother Daniel, a Jew who converted to
Christianity and then sought to immigrate to Israel, and their implications for the legal
status of American Jews.

In contrast to *The Jewish Dilemma*, which primarily attempts to describe the need
for an anti-Zionist organization to fight against the Zionists in the organized, political
world, *A Partisan History of Judaism* begins with an attempt to prove the cornerstone of
his philosophy, the absence of a Jewish people. In the above definitions of Zionism, non-
Zionism and anti-Zionism, Berger demarcates the dividing line: anti-Zionists reject a
Jewish people. This rejection is not only a negation of a contemporary Jewish people for
Berger, but also a denial that there was ever one in the past. Berger, in a (likely
unplanned) exaggeration and inversion of the historian Simon Dubnow, argues that

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424 Ibid., pp. 119–147.
426 *Four Articles On “The Law of the Return.”*
428 See p. 130.
429 Dubnow writes that “When a people loses not only its political independence but also its land, … and in addition loses its unifying language; if, despite the fact that the external national bonds have been destroyed, such a nation still maintains itself for many years, creates an independent existence, reveals a stubborn determination to carry on its
“the origins of Judaism were not in ‘the Jewish people’ and that the best and finest of Judaism today transcends ‘the Jewish people.’” He tells the story of the Hebrews (heterogeneous desert tribes with no common nationality), who briefly become Israelites (a nation) and finally Jews (again with no common nationality) charged with a universal mission in the Diaspora. Even without citing literature explicitly—we are lucky if he provides a list of works cited—we can identify much of what directly informs Berger’s demonstration that the Hebrews were never a unified people. In considering the foundational myths of the Jewish people, Berger is highly critical of the Biblical text, drawing on numerous secondary sources of critical Reform Biblical scholarship, written by scholars, such as Moses Buttenweiser and Julian Morgenstern, who were likely Berger’s professors at Hebrew Union College. According to Berger, the Hebrews entered the land of Cana’an in three waves; they did not conquer all of the land at once; and even in the times of the kings there was “never any real unity” between the northern and southern kingdoms. The only unifying element, according to Berger, was autonomous development—such a people has reached the highest stage of cultural-historical individuality and may be said to be indestructible, if only it cling forcefully to its national will.” (Simon Dubnow, “First Letter: The Doctrine of Jewish Nationalism,” in Essays on Old and New Judaism, ed. Koppel S. Pinson [New York: Meridian Books, 1958], p. 80.) Berger, unlike Dubnow, does not simply say that a transnational Jewish people improves on what came before, but that Judaism is simply not people-based.

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431 See chapter 5, pp. 159–161.
“the dimming memory of a desert origin and a desert god.”\textsuperscript{435} It is this desert god (always lower case) that would become the root of Prophetic monotheism, but

[c]ommon nationality, common allegiance, common social background, common ancestry, any of the things that have been grafted on by later writers who wanted to develop a national philosophy and tradition for Jews and Judaism—none of these is really substantiated in history.\textsuperscript{436}

Those whom Berger terms “the people who were eventually to become Jews,”\textsuperscript{437} thus did not practice Judaism, but a primitive,\textsuperscript{438} heterogeneous desert religion that over time assimilated into the Canaanite religion, becoming homogeneous as the Hebrews came under unified political leadership.\textsuperscript{439} Berger further provides evidence that the Hebrews were not “a” people, but “were simply desert people.”\textsuperscript{440} Moses marries out of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[435] Ibid., p. 29.
\item[436] Ibid., p. 30.
\item[437] Ibid., p. 12. Also see p. 30, “The people who were to become Jews.”
\item[438] “This is … a fairly simple and primitive god.” (Ibid., p. 45.) Also see the Pittsburgh Platform, which claimed that the Bible reflected “the primitive ideas of its own age.” (“Authentic Report of the Proceedings of the Rabbinical Conference Held at Pittsburgh, Nov. 16, 17, 18, 1885,” p. 108.)
\item[439] The implication here is that once the Jews are no longer under a unified political leadership, the religion should no longer be unified either. Once the State was established, Berger argues against what he saw as developing homogeneity in American Judaism, coerced by Israel’s theocratic apparatus: “We contend for the rights of American citizens who are Jews to develop a Judaism which will be singularly fitted for our life as Americans.” (Elmer Berger, “Excerpts from the Address of Rabbi Elmer Berger to the Meeting of the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Council for Judaism,” 31 January 1949, ACJP-W, box 23, folder 1, p. 2.) Also see Irving F. Reichert’s sermon April 4, 1952 sermon “Getting Back to Fundamentals”: “What message does our liberal synagogue choose to emphasize? The place of supremacy formerly occupied in the Central Conference of American Rabbis by the Commission on Social Justice, we are told, has now been taken over by the Committee on Customs and Ceremonies. So! Put a tallith and a yarmelke on the rabbi as they do in Tel-Aviv, teach the children to speak Hebrew and plant trees on Israeli Arbor Day, and presto! American Reform Judaism is up to date! Shades of Isaac Mayer Wise and Kaufmann Kohler!” (Emphasis in original; Reichert, Judaism and the American Jew, p. 14.)
\item[440] Berger, A Partisan History of Judaism, p. 37.
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Chapter 4: Taking Class-Action: The Ideology of Elmer Berger’s Council

the “Jewish people,” and if Moses, who Berger calls “one of the great characters in the history of mankind,” was not discrete in his choice of spouse, then all the more so, the Hebrews were a biologically heterogeneous group. In fact, Berger elevates the act of outmarriage and argued that it led to the later development of Prophetic religion. Moses worshipped the Midianite desert god of his father-in-law Jethro, who taught him the secret rites. When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, he took them to the Midianite shrine at which he first encountered this god. It was this god who provided the basis for the eventual development of Prophetic Judaism between 500 and 600 years later, but with the rise of the Prophets this (lowercase) god becomes an (uppercase) “God of justice and righteousness.”

Berger contrasts the Prophetic vision of universalism against the priestly class, associating the Temple and its sacrifices with rank materialism that he will later tie to Zionism. The prophetic stream is characterized by Berger as a force exposing corruption in the kingship, and as an evolutionary phenomenon, in which each prophet teleologically built upon the previous towards the universal conception of the Mission of Israel. Berger draws upon the classical Reform understanding of the Prophets when he assigns each prophet a central concept in Judaism: Amos brings forward the concept of Justice, Hosea love, Isaiah holiness, Jeremiah the personal God. This process culminates

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441 Ibid.
442 Ibid., p. 35.
443 Ibid., p. 41.
444 Ibid., p. 54.
445 Ibid., p. 55.
446 “Hosea too spoke bitterly of an Israel that put great store by gods and practices that were considered insurance policies for uninterrupted, material prosperity, while ignoring the moral and ethical principles which, with Amos, he considered indispensable to society.” (Ibid., p. 68.)
with Deutero-Isaiah (Isaiah 40–55), who gave Israel a universalism “unmatched until his time,” i.e. the mission of Israel, that the core of Jewish religion is “service to all the nations; bringing them understanding of the universally applicable truths” of the prophets. At this point, Berger declares that these people “may properly be called Jews” and pegs this development as “the distinguishing, historic contribution of Judaism to civilization and mankind. To this, all that went before is but prelude. Little that is new has been added since.”

The Prophetic movement serves as Berger’s yardstick against which all other Judaisms must be measured. Berger organizes the following constellation of concepts: Materialism, physicality, minutiae, legalism, and finally segregation (the opposite of integration and assimilation) are all considered unwelcome elements in Judaism. In Berger’s discussion of each consecutive period of Jewish history, they are brought forward to describe that which he finds distasteful: In the period of the first Temple, the Prophets stood against the king (materialism and corruption) and the priests (minutiae and legalism of sacrifices). In the period of the second Temple and the early Common Era, the schism between Hillel and Shammai also evokes this dichotomy. Hillel represents “the spirit of the prophets,” while Shammai is the “legalistic, reactionary school.” According to Berger, it was not the Jews who crucified Jesus—whom Berger

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447 Ibid., p. 75.
448 Ibid.
449 Ibid.
450 Ibid., p. 72.
451 Ibid., p. 87.
452 Ibid.
regards highly—

— but the “priestly, legalistic groups” who collaborated with the Romans. In the medieval period, Jewish leaders requested that the ghetto be established so that their Rabbinic, Talmudic legalism and minutiae could continue unimpeded, and ultimately a Jewish people could be constructed through segregation from the general populace. Berger then characterizes Zionists and all other particularists—known as “official” Jewry—as wanting to keep the ghetto walls standing in order to maintain their position of coercive power. Berger thus conflates the medieval Rabbis and the secular Zionists, describing what we begin to see clearly as a characterization of Zionism as focused on the material (a state or a land in which to be sovereign), on minute legal details (meetings and protocols), and on separatism (a rejection of emancipation, as discussed below). The triad of sacrifice, legalism, and materialism also lines up chronologically with the Priestly, Rabbinic, and Zionist “official Jewries” whose caricatures Berger depicts.

Berger begins to write the case of “official Jewry” vs. the “Jewish John Does,” who do not want to be a part of a Jewish people. Whether this “official Jewry” are the Priests, the Rabbis, or the Zionists, Berger sees the “official” as the antithesis of Prophetic Judaism, whom he characterizes as “the rebels who changed the world.”

Prophetic Judaism, for Berger, is portrayed as a rejection of the material (in the Mission

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453 See Ibid., pp. 86ff. Berger’s warm view of Jesus may have a lot to do with the intended audience of the book. As noted above (n. 408) as well as in the Forward to A Partisan History of Judaism, written by Paul Hutchinson of the Christian Century, his books were not only intended to be ready by Jews. Rather, in Berger’s view, by reducing the confusion of all, he hoped to increase the stature of Jews and so spread the spirit of emancipation.
454 Ibid., p. 89.
455 Ibid., p. 90.
456 Ibid., p. 94.
457 Ibid., p. 54.
Chapter 4: Taking Class-Action: The Ideology of Elmer Berger’s Council

of Israel to be dispersed amongst the nations), the legalistic and the minute (focusing on the ethical commandments, not the ceremonial), and the separate (because in and of itself it was created out of integration with the surrounding peoples).

In his construction of the battle over the nature of Jewish life waged between the “official Jewries” and the “Jewish John Does,” Berger once again interfaces with his peculiar anti-Zionistic foil, the autonomist Simon Dubnow. Both Berger and Dubnow opposed Zionism, but for wildly different reasons. Berger’s criticism of Zionism, focused on the basic concept of Jewish nationality, was naturally in conflict with Dubnow, who believed that Jews constituted a nation. Dubnow, however, espoused the historical basis and continued need for multiple centers of Jewish life, in opposition to classical Zionism. Dubnow conceived of the structure of the Jewish world around the idea of multiple autonomous centers of Jewish culture, while Berger’s conception centered on the Jews as an individual. The key point of conflict between Berger and Dubnow was over the idea of the “official Jewish community,” or in Dubnow’s terminology the kahal. In the discourse on the Jewish question in Russia, the kahal developed a negative connotation; after Tsar Nicholas I abolished the kahal in 1844 in the interest of creating a well-ordered police state, some believed that the kahal continued to exist in secret.\footnote{It is a fascinating paradox that the termination of the “official Jewish community” in the form of the “kahal” in Imperial Russia led to the creation of another form of “official Jewry,” the Rabbinical Commission and the state rabbinate. All in all, Berger’s thesis is that in the emancipated state—which Imperial Russia certainly was not—any sort of “official Jewry” was unnecessary. It is interesting to note here that the role of the “official Jewry” in Russia had much more to do with the government’s control of the Jewish community through a system of Jewish bureaucrats, in contrast to Berger’s narrative in which the “official Jewry” played the part of controlling the Jewish community from the standpoint of religious practice and belief. See ChaeRan Freeze, Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Imperial Russia (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2002), pp. 83–109.} The supposed existence of the secret kahal was used as evidence of the anathema “state-within-a-state,” which
would rear its head again in Berger’s thought with his fear of the accusation of double loyalty. What is most interesting about Dubnow, in this context, is that in contrast to those who vehemently denied the existence of the secret *kahal*, Dubnow placed the *kahal* in a central position within his master narrative of Jewish history. Furthermore, he insisted on the necessity to re-imagine the *kahal* and leverage it for the welfare of the Jewish people through autonomism. In Dubnow’s political platform, “On the Tasks of the Folkspartay,” his political party, he argued against the western conception that Jews were united only by religion, and furthermore wrote:

In our program of autonomy, the Folkspartay proposes to use the idea of communal self-administration that has been hallowed by the historical experience of many generations. … In all periods of the Diaspora, Jews in different countries had a substitute for territorial autonomy in the form of a more or less extensive communal organization. In the areas of Jewish settlement … there was a highly ramified organization of communities, unions of communities, and councils of lands. This old communal organization, however, was based on the civil inequality and complete isolation of the Jewish population. … The modern idea of self-administration differs from all the principles just mentioned: from the first—in the firm demand that the Jews take part in the civic and political life of the land as free men … from the second—in the secularization of the national idea, that is, from the its separation from the religious idea; … The unit of self-administration in our time can only be the free people’s community (*Volksgemeinde*), with elected councils that administer the local cultural institutions, co-operatives, and philanthropic agencies. The communities would then be united in a Union of Jewish Communities in the Russian empire, which would create central institutions of self-administration in the sphere of Jewish national interests. 

Berger categorically opposed Dubnow’s position. In fact, Berger could probably be best termed an “anti-Autonomist” rather than an “anti-Zionist,” inasmuch as he primarily opposed what he saw as the policies of the Zionists to establish an essentially autonomist or “diaspora nationalist” communal structure in America. Berger fought the American

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Chapter 4: Taking Class-Action: The Ideology of Elmer Berger’s Council

Jewish Congress and other political structures that, in his view, would be used by the Zionists to influence the character of American Judaism and further inject it with European characteristics and destroy the creation of “American” Judaism. For Berger, these communal structures—whether the American Jewish Congress, the kahal, or the “synagogue-community”—perpetuated the pre-modern status quo by which the communal authorities could control the lives of the “average” Jews.

In Berger’s discussion of the modern period, separatism and emancipation come to the forefront. Emancipation delineates the beginning of this period, and is the opposite of Zionism. Emancipation creates an inhospitable environment for Zionism and Jewish nationalism, and wherever emancipation does not exist, Zionism grows. The answer to the Jewish problem is not Zionism, but “a society of real equality and integration.” Zionists, in Berger’s assessment, are opponents of the proliferation of emancipation, because wherever Jews are emancipated, Zionism loses its usefulness. This is due to the fact that Palestine—and also Zionism—are seen as tools for saving Jews in distress; if Jews are no longer in distress (i.e. they are emancipated) this becomes unnecessary. To make his point, Berger juxtaposes the Balfour declaration and the emancipation of Russian Jews in 1917.

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461 See section entitled “Separatism and Universalism,” Berger, A Partisan History of Judaism, p. 82. This focus on emancipation was a serious part of his published literature. One way in which we can tell how high emancipation was on his list of publishing priorities is that in 1945, Berger published a pamphlet entitled “The Emancipation of the Jews” to mark the 154th anniversary of the emancipation of the Jews of France (Elmer Berger, The Emancipation of Jews [Philadelphia: American Council for Judaism, 1945]). It is quite telling that he would publish such a commemorative pamphlet on a year that held no numerical significance, as opposed to if he were to have published it on the sesquicentennial four years previous or even on the 160th anniversary.

462 Berger, The Jewish Dilemma, p. 18.

463 “On November 2, 1917, the Balfour Declaration was made public. It is an historic irony that during the same week, the Russian Revolution reached a definitive stage. Within the same week, Jewish nationalism was thus accorded official recognition and the
same time when the supposed recipients of its aid no longer needed it. Zionism is not worthless even in the eyes of its detractors: it serves a need, to help Jews in need of a safe haven. Previous to their emancipation, those Jews were generally unable to help themselves due to their unemancipated condition and their subsequent lack of funds; however, with the emancipation of the Russian Jews (at this point in Berger’s narrative, the Jews who need saving), Zionism outlived its objective. This brings forward the naked truth, as Berger sees it, about Zionism: the movement is not interested in saving endangered Jews. According to Berger, by this time, all are emancipated; he has not yet discussed the peculiarity of German Jewry. Rather, Zionism’s true interest lies in those already emancipated Jews. Berger believes that there is a hidden goal under the guise of philanthropy, one that it attempts to hide from the confused American Jewish masses: the “nationalization” of Jews, the creation of a Jewish polity that has never before existed, from which “normal” Jews cannot escape.464

According to Berger, in order for Zionists to succeed, they had to construct the idea of a “Jewish people” in the minds of the Jews. This was in opposition to the trend of emancipation, which “freed [Jews] from a rigid control by other Jews over his life.”465 Much of Herzl’s diplomatic effort thus was not strictly to convince the European heads of state that he represented the Jews, but also that the Jews were a people at all. Berger pegs Herzl’s failure to receive a colonial mandate on the absence of a Jewish people.466 At the

464 “But emigration was not all Zionism advocated. It advocated also the nationalization of ALL Jews, whether they emigrated or not.” (Emphasis in original; Ibid., p. 107.)
465 Ibid., p. 46.
466 Ibid., p. 77.
same time, Zionist leaders (notably the cultural Zionist writer Ahad Ha’am) recognized that “the physical transplantation of oppressed Jews to Palestine”\textsuperscript{467} was all well and good, but that the “definitive formulation of the doctrine of Jewish nationhood” was more important.\textsuperscript{468} Otherwise Herzl would find himself, as Berger described him, as “a general without an army.”\textsuperscript{469}

Berger applies the paradigm of east and west to categorize the Jewish world: the east (specifically Imperial Russia) is unemancipated, and the west (specifically the United States and France) is emancipated. The east needs the help of the Zionists,\textsuperscript{470} because they are oppressed. The west cannot (or rather, from Berger’s perspective, should not) be Zionist because they are emancipated; however, they hold the purse strings. Berger contrasts philanthropists such as Moses Montefiore and Edmund de Rothschild, who were not interested in nationalism but with helping poor people in need,\textsuperscript{471} with Zionist thinkers exemplified by Moses Hess, Leo Pinsker, and Ahad Ha’am who were “concerned less with Jews than with an artificial entity of the ‘Jewish people.’”\textsuperscript{472} Berger depicts Weizmann’s “synthetic Zionism” as a method to incorporate non-Zionists in western countries so that they can be involved in the Zionist enterprise—and supply it

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\textsuperscript{467} Ibid., p. 69.
\textsuperscript{468} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{469} Ibid., p. 77.
\textsuperscript{470} Berger claims that over half the delegates to the first Zionist congress hailed from “east of the Danube” (Ibid., p. 80.)
\textsuperscript{471} Ibid., pp. 61ff.
\textsuperscript{472} Ibid., p. 65. Berger writes in 1951, after the State of Israel was created: “The State of Israel was never the end purpose of Zionism. The State of Israel is only an incident in the history of Zionism, the purpose of which is to nationalize the lives of all Jews.” (Berger, \textit{A Partisan History of Judaism}, p. 136.)
with much-needed liquidity—even if they do not believe in the “formula[tion] of a new political philosophy for Jews everywhere”.\textsuperscript{473}

\[W\]ith the wave of a wand, Weizmann, by fiat, declared an end to the antagonism between nationalists and anti-nationalists among Jews. The old differences that had dated from the days of Herzl and Rothschild and Montefiore were to be dissolved in a new solution called “synthetic Zionism.” By thus applying chemistry to politics, Weizmann satisfied himself and Zionists that no one could any longer not be a Zionist.\textsuperscript{474}

In his 1908 speech before the Zionist Congress in which he outlined his theory of “synthetic Zionism,” Weizmann referred to a synthesis between “Political” and “Practical” tracks of Zionist activity (the latter of which he promoted) by noting that the diplomatic aspect can empower the practical, and the practical can lend diplomatic missions demonstrable facts on the ground.\textsuperscript{475}

The discourse of “practical” and “political” activity carries very different meanings for Berger and Weizmann. In Weizmann’s critique of the Herzlian type of political Zionism, “political” activity means a form of diplomatic, outward-facing activity with the objective to find a political sponsor on the world scene, whereas for Berger “political” is an inward-facing, coercive activity with the aim of ultimately turning Jews into a national entity. “Practical” activity also means something different for Berger and Weizmann. Berger emphasized the “practical” activity of helping Jews in need no matter where they be, while Weizmann referred to the “practical” Zionist activity of building settlements in Palestine. Of course, each spoke at different times—the refugee problems of 1945 were much more acute than those of 1908. However, Berger misappropriates

\textsuperscript{473} Berger, \textit{The Jewish Dilemma}, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{474} Ibid., p. 116.
Weizmann’s terminology of “synthetic Zionism” to describe the founding of the Jewish Agency in 1929. According to Berger, the non-Zionists were duped into believing that their financial support for Jewish organizations whose mandate was refugee relief (often in cooperation with the Zionist Organization) did not unwittingly aid the Zionist philosophy of nationalization. In reality, in Berger’s view, the non-Zionists are being deceived, because the Zionist organizations hide their true nature.

Berger’s prime example of this deception is the women’s organization Hadassah, which he claims changed its name from “Daughters of Zion” to hide its Zionist orientation. He continues:

I have repeatedly had the revealing experience of talking to Jewish women who were convinced anti-nationalists but who belonged to Hadassah because they wanted to do something for refugees. They did not know that they were counted as component parts of the Zionist Organization and that part of their dues went to finance political propaganda. They did not know that they were included whenever Zionism wanted to make a display of numbers in order to prove its right to speak for “the Jewish people.”

Berger writes for these “average” Jews, who were “confused about themselves.” The only explanation that Berger can muster to explain popular Jewish support for the “medieval and unacceptable” project of Zionism is confusion on their part. It is not only the “Jewish John Does” who are confused, but even many rabbis “do not understand the Zionist issue sufficiently.” This is also a key theme throughout the American Council for Judaism’s literature as well as Berger’s letters. Referring to his book The Jewish Dilemma, Berger wrote to Morris Lazaron on November 9, 1944 that “the book

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476 Berger, The Jewish Dilemma, p. 141.
477 Ibid., p. 133.
478 Ibid., p. 116.
479 Ibid., p. 134.
480 Elmer Berger to Hyman Schachtel, 31 March 1943, ACJP-W, box 117, folder 2.
cuts the knot of confusion.” While not necessarily referring to the book he would write two and a half years later, Berger wrote to Louis Wolsey in November 1942:

> These people are confused. They do not know what Zionism is. … I am going to write a primer myself, using one syllable words and print it in big type and deal with elementals as you would teach a child his A B C’s. ⁴⁸²

Berger was talking about confusion even earlier than this. In a May 1942 letter to James Heller, then president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, Berger asked at point-blank: “What … has the Conference ever done by way of clarifying the whole confusion as to what Zionism is in American Jewry?”⁴⁸³ In 1943 Berger wrote in his article *Silence is Consent* that “American Jewry has been confused,” ⁴⁸⁴ and in *The Flint Plan*, Berger announces that “a failure to understand [Zionism] allows for a deft confusing of philanthropy and politics which has completely disarmed most American Jews.”⁴⁸⁵ In his 1942 article *Why I am a Non-Zionist*, Berger again emphasizes that “the Zionist has so confused the whole problem of Palestine that there no longer exists an avenue through which such support might be given that does not at the same time lend strength to the [Zionist] political movement.”⁴⁸⁶ We know that in 1942, Berger and Wolsey were investigating the finances of the United Jewish Appeal (which Berger and his colleagues persist in calling the United Palestine Appeal even after its 1939 merger with the Joint Distribution Committee) and were appalled to discover $54,000 had been

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⁴⁸¹ Elmer Berger to Morris S. Lazaron, 9 November 1944, ACJP-W, box 74, folder 2.  
⁴⁸² Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 19 November 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9.  
⁴⁸³ Elmer Berger to James Heller, 1 May 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9.  
allocated to the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs in 1940 and 1941.\textsuperscript{487} This line of thought can be directly tied to later Council activities, such as the foundation of the American Council for Judaism Philanthropy fund, which aimed to provide philanthropy for settlers in Israel without nationalist sentiment.\textsuperscript{488}

It is precisely this problem, helping Jews in need, and the pressure that their plight placed on Berger’s optimistic view of emancipation, upon which he must focus. Berger’s readers would reject his thesis if he failed to address this issue, proven wrong by the very history he aimed to use as proof. Berger admits that “there are those who will say that Germany proves that the program of integration I propose will not work, that emancipation is an illusion,”\textsuperscript{489} and proceeds to explain how it in fact proves his model for modern Jewish history. Berger sees the modern period as a wonderfully positive development for Jews, one in which Jews were given the—much preferred—option of the emancipated model of “to the individual Jew everything; to the Jews as a nation

\textsuperscript{487} Louis Wolsey to Jonah B. Wise, 20 November 1942, LWP-C, box 4, folder 12; Louis Wolsey to Elmer Berger, 16 February 1943, LWP-C, box 2, folder 1. Elmer Berger wrote to David Lefkowitz, Jr., in early 1943 that “The statement of the 757 [against the American Council for Judaism] is, of course, full of inconsistencies and is signed by shochtim, Chassidim, melamdim, schnorrers and a few rabbis. It deserves axblast. It was published by the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs which is subsidized by the U.P.A. to which you and I give our money. How do you like that!” (Elmer Berger to David Lefkowitz, Jr., 3 January 1943, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9.) Also see “Meeting of the Provisional Committee for the Formation of the American Council for Judaism,” 7 December 1942, ACJP-C, box 2, folder 1, p. 1: “Wolsey read a report of the United Palestine Appeal for the two years, ending December 31, 1941, which indicated an expenditure of $528,768 for expenses in this country, including … an item of $75,000 for ‘The Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs.’ … [T]hus, we, by contributing to the United Jewish Appeal, have paid for our own condemnation.”

\textsuperscript{488} The fund was only established in May 1955 due to internal divisions (Kolsky, Jews against Zionism, p. 194.), but it is telling that Berger was critical of the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) and other “united” Jewish institutions at this time.

\textsuperscript{489} Berger, The Jewish Dilemma, p. 25.
nothing.\textsuperscript{490} However, in Berger’s view, there are those (i.e. the Zionists) who rejected it and might in doing so ruin it for everyone else. Berger insists that the promise of emancipation was very real; instead of seeing Germany as the example that proves otherwise, Berger contends that the emancipation of Germany Jewry was never very real to begin with. The Nazi Holocaust was brought forward by the Zionists to prove the ultimate failure of emancipation: In Germany, Jews had the ability to integrate into society, and then their neighbors turned on them and sent them to the gas chambers. Thus, the only way to secure the Jewish future is with power to fight future—and inevitable—persecutions, and according to this understanding, only a sovereign state would provide the diplomatic and military backbone to make this a possibility. Berger’s answer to this formulation of history was that even if Reform Judaism began in Germany, “the German people as a group never really felt the liberalizing impact of the democratic revolutions”\textsuperscript{491} and so never inculcated the deep meaning of emancipation. Germany “put on many of the cosmetics of the new, liberal states,” such as capitalism\textsuperscript{492}—which ultimately fosters such corporatism that Berger despises\textsuperscript{493}—but never achieved real emancipation. Berger describes a state of emancipatory limbo that existed in central Europe, betwixt and between East and West:

From Germany in the North to the Balkans in the South there stretches a corridor that was virtually untouched by the great democratic revolutions … Included in this corridor of corrupted feudalism are … Poland, Hungary, Romania, Germany, the Slavic states.\textsuperscript{494}


\textsuperscript{491} Berger, \textit{A Partisan History of Judaism}, p. 121.

\textsuperscript{492} Ibid., p. 124.

\textsuperscript{493} Ibid., pp. 93, 110–111, 113, 117, 121, 123.

\textsuperscript{494} Berger, \textit{The Jewish Dilemma}, p. 21.
Within this corridor, according to Berger, it is not unsurprising to find discrimination against Jews. Berger believes that the German emancipation was “superficial,” but does not give an explanation as to why it was superficial (or why emancipation in any other place was not in the same ways superficial) except to claim that it is related to the Germans’ nature to love authoritarianism and fascism:

> It was not so strange that the irrational, crackpot romanticist Hitler should have become this people’s champion. As the veneer of westernization cracked in Germany … there emerged from the depths the ugliest traits in the character of that unhappy nation. \(^{495}\)

For the unconfused, the Holocaust is thus the logical conclusion of the nature of the German people. This is in opposition to Soviet Russia, which merits Berger’s unmitigated praise because they emancipated their Jews; while Jews are known as a “nationality” in Russia, Berger claims that it has nothing to do with nationalism or a “Jewish people” but “for all practical purposes, this term … reflects the same status for Soviet Jews as a term such as Americans of Jewish faith connotes for American Jews.” \(^{496}\)

Soviet Jewry and the USSR demonstrate for Berger the potential for emancipation to spread to even those places where medievalism had lasted far longer than it should. In a place where twenty-five years before, no one would have thought Jews could thrive, the magic of emancipation makes anything possible. As such, Zionists are against emancipation. If only emancipation could be stopped (or even rolled back), then Jews would want to immigrate to Palestine. Berger sees historical events such as the Dreyfus Affair as elements that confuse; he notes, similar to other phenomena that he believes are

\(^{495}\) Ibid., p. 24.
\(^{496}\) Ibid., p. 15.
mischaracterized, “the truth of that episode should be better known.” Similar to some of his contemporary Reform rabbis who we will discuss in chapter 5, Berger argues that the Dreyfus Affair is notable not due to Dreyfus’ false accusation—proving the inevitability of antisemitism in France, another “birthplace” of emancipation—but because Dreyfus was ultimately cleared of all charges. Similar to the cases of Russian and German Jewry, the understanding of the modern Jewish experience espoused by the Zionist movement—that the Jews suffered under the wrath of the supposedly universalistic socialist revolution in Russia and that the emancipation of Weimar Germany went up in smoke—is turned upon its head to present a case in favor of emancipation.

On a more “practical” level, Berger also insists that Zionists have derailed attempts to assist Jewish refugees because they care more about creating a state—which

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497 Ibid., p. 205.
498 “[M]ore important than Dreyfus as the victim was that all of France split over the Dreyfus case … Dreyfus was condemned but, finally, the government was forced to re-open the case and the whole ugly plot was revealed.” (Ibid., p. 206.) Also see “Untitled speech, beginning ‘The title of my paper is a question raised by the British Foreign Minister, Ernest Bevin,’” ACJP-W, box 23, folder 1, pp. 8–9.
499 See David Ben-Gurion’s discussion of the matter: “The Bundists were Jewish socialists who were bitterly anti-Zionist. They saw the salvation of the Jews in joint efforts with the Polish socialists to overthrow the existing Tsarist regime. Once that happened, they said, it would be replaced by a socialist administration in which all peoples of all colors, creeds and nationalities would enjoy the good life and there would no longer be any persecution or discrimination. We Labor Zionists were of course in favor of a change of regime in Poland from feudalism to democracy … But we were convinced that this alone would not solve the Jewish problem. Even with a new regime, the Jews would still be subject to majority whim or policy, always subject to restrictions if not downright maltreatment. It gives me no pleasure to note that what I and my friends thought and said about this in the early years of this century has unfortunately proved right. … Many of the most vociferous Bundist leaders who gave energetic help to the revolutionary movements lost their lives in purges when the revolutionaries came to power.” (David Ben-Gurion, Ben-Gurion Looks Back in Talks with Moshe Pearlman [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1965], pp. 19–20.)
has infuriated the Arabs and thus caused the 1939 MacDonald White Paper, which brought immigration to a halt—than bringing their coreligionists to safety. He also criticizes failed Zionist attempts to abrogate the White Paper, claiming that it was “unnecessarily linked to a demand for the ‘Jewish Commonwealth.’” He further condemns Zionism for making it impossible for non- or anti-Zionist Jews to participate in philanthropy without equally participating in Zionism.

Berger makes the argument that Zionists twist history in the pursuit of ideology. Furthermore, he claims that Zionists pretend to provide the one true solution to the “Jewish problem” (which he defines as antisemitism). In making this argument, Berger projects his own activities onto his opponents. Berger admits that his work is “partisan,” but does not recognize that he is advocating an ideology of his own, that emancipation trumps all other social forces. Emancipation is the solution to the problems of the Jews, because it freed Jews from the Gentiles and also from the internal “segregating” forces of “official” Jewry. If emancipation would simply be allowed to grow in places where a “Jewish problem” exists, such as Imperial Russia, as the people “experienced the profound, moral and spiritual reformations of the West,” the Jewish problem would simply disappear. A telling item is how Berger defines emancipation and nationalism: He calls Jewish nationalism a “philosophy,” but designates emancipation as both philosophy and a remedy. We can recognize that in Berger’s ideology, emancipation serves the purpose of the only solution to the Jewish problem, in opposition

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503 Ibid., p. 124. Also: “Where men are free, Jews live in security. Where they are not free, Jews and others know no freedom.” (Berger, *The Jewish Dilemma*, p. 25.)
to the Zionists, for whom a Jewish state is the only solution.  

Another element of the Council’s agenda—the post-war repatriation of refugees in Europe—is clearly in these texts. Berger asks, “How many of [the 300,000 Jewish refugees who moved to Palestine] will elect to remain in Palestine? No one knows.” He additionally claims that of the Jewish refugees in Switzerland, eighty percent would like to be repatriated, and makes arguments that other Jewish refugees still identify with their countries of exile and would like to return. These Jews had identified as “citizens of Jewish faith,” and describes how the respective European governments-in-exile planned to return to the pre-war emancipation of the Jews after the Allied victory. In Why I am a Non-Zionist, Berger suggests that Palestine is not the only solution for displaced persons, claiming that idea “sounds like Axis propaganda.” In the first edition (October 15, 1943) of the Council’s organ, the Information Bulletin, the Council asked “that the United Nations ensure the earliest feasible repatriation or resettlement under the best possible conditions of all peoples uprooted from their homes by the Axis powers.” This was the thrust of the Council’s “Digest of Principles” that was printed in each issue of the Bulletin. In addition, according to these principles, Palestine should be “one” place of refuge, but not the only such haven. This is only one of the ways in which Berger’s ideas portrayed in The Jewish Dilemma and A Partisan History of

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505 Ibid., p. 52.
507 Ibid., p. 30.
508 Ibid., pp. 35–36.
509 Ibid., pp. 33–34 (Czechs), 34 (Yugoslavs).
510 Ibid., pp. 30ff.
511 Berger, Why I Am a Non-Zionist, p. 18.
512 “Statement of the American Council for Judaism, Inc.,” p. 3.
513 In original, emphasized as “ONE.” (“Digest of Principles,” Informational Bulletin [Philadelphia], 15 October 1943, p. 6.)
Chapter 4: Taking Class-Action: The Ideology of Elmer Berger’s Council

Judaism percolated into the Council’s agenda.

Another major item emphasized throughout Berger’s narrative is the failure of non-Zionists and anti-Zionists to put up a decent fight against the well-organized Zionist factions in Jewish life. Against Herzl’s “Congress of the Jews,” Berger mourns that “there was no effectively organized opposition … however great the dissent of scattered groups and individuals.” Rather, anti-Zionists “consistently underestimated its [Zionism’s] persistence,” and he laments that these same anti-Zionists, similar to the German people, “st[ood] by and watch[ed] their leaders cripple civilization, without lifting a hand to prevent it.” It is this paralysis of backbone the American Council for Judaism aims to undo. Berger claims that *A Partisan History of Judaism* is not meant to be a history of the Council, but the last portion of that work, as well as the end of *The Jewish Dilemma*, focus on the contemporary events that led up to the foundation of the Council, situating the organization as the heir of Prophetic Judaism and the advocates of the average, victimized Jews, even as they do not need a representative since they are not a single body but a disparate grouping of citizens. Berger poses a question to his readers: What side are you on, and what will you do? In his teleological account, the Council represents the next stage of Jewish life, transcending paradigms of “peoplehood” and classical Reform. It was Berger’s understanding of the Jewish peoplehood, the future of Reform, and his place in it—even though he maintained that he had no “Messiah

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514 Berger, *The Jewish Dilemma*, p. 79.
515 Ibid., p. 125.
516 Elmer Berger to Morris S. Lazaron, 15 April 1943, ACJP-W, box 73, folder 1.
complex⁵¹⁹—that pushed many of his colleagues away and sealed the fate of the American Council for Judaism as an extremist organization, outside the mainstream of American Jewish life.

In the pursuit of derailing Zionism, Berger created a new ideology of Jewish life, which many of his fellow non-Zionist rabbis found distasteful. In an unsigned September 1945 letter to Berger regarding a proposed revision to the Statement of Principles, we find a strong expression of disapproval towards Berger’s new ideological direction, which fairly sums up the response that Berger received to his theories from even some of his closest allies and supporters:

The ‘revision’ lacks coherence and simplicity. It is a confused attempt to promulgate a new doctrine of emancipation instead of nationalism as the core of Jewish life. In attempting to do this, it omits completely the fundamental reason for our opposition to Zionism: our concern and our passion for the Jewish religion. The revision is more concerned with a sociological theory than with the facts of Jewish life and faith.⁵²⁰

As Berger continued to build the American Council for Judaism into what was effectively a lobbying organization that walked the halls of Congress, testified in Senate sub-committees, and hobnobbed with under-secretaries of State, his vision for the organization clashed with those who started the organization with him. Many of the rabbis were unhappy with how much he focused on the theoretical aspects of emancipation and how little he seemed to show empathy for the Jewish refugees; many others saw and understood just how much the Council was becoming like the Zionists they despised. And as the organization’s rabbis slowly left, there were fewer and fewer rabbis who could challenge Berger’s conception of Judaism that he broadcast to the lay

⁵¹⁹ Elmer Berger to Irving F. Reichert, 15 March 1944, ACJP-W, box 102, folder 3.
Chapter 4: Taking Class-Action: The Ideology of Elmer Berger’s Council

membership. More than anything else, it was Elmer Berger’s ideology and vision that shaped the development of the American Council for Judaism. His “dilemma” dictated the problems he tried to identify and solve for the American Jewish community, but in the end, it turns out that his dilemma was not one that a great majority of the Jewish population shared with him, as he believed until the very end.
Chapter 5: Constructing a Usable Past for Non-Zionism and Anti-Zionism

When Rabbi Julian Morgenstern stepped down from the presidency of Hebrew Union College in June 1947, he was approached by the Board of Governors to prepare a volume of articles and sermons. In the preface to this book, *As a Mighty Stream: The Progress of Judaism Through History*, published in 1949, Morgenstern looked back on his career and was surprised at how much he had written over its course. As Rabbi Sheldon Blank, who taught Bible at Hebrew Union College for many years, describes, Morgenstern was a driving force at the College, both before his appointment to the presidency in 1921 and after he left that post, teaching until 1957 and publishing (among many other endeavors) substantial monographs yearly in the *Hebrew Union College Annual* through 1970.\(^\text{521}\)

Few Reform rabbis wrote as prolifically as Morgenstern did. But many did see educating the Jewish public about their history as a significant part of what it meant to be a rabbi. A number of rabbis who were involved in the founding of the American Council for Judaism wrote broad histories of the Jews or otherwise grappled with Jewish history in their sermons, editorials, and other writings. In reading these sources, it is clear that few Reform rabbis were truly innovative in their approach to history. Most were not historians by training or profession, and with the exception of scholars such as Morgenstern, few pursued original research; rather, they sought to disseminate the truth about Judaism as they saw it to their congregations in the most effective way possible. It

is striking that within a subset of the historiographical literature published by Reform rabbis in the first half of the twentieth century, we find a number of distinctive and repeated themes, such as the primacy of the Hebrew desert experience, the importance of prophetic religion in the development of Judaism, and the comparative study of emancipation in Europe and in America. It is outside the scope of this study to consider the entire historiographical literature of American and German Reform. However, by approaching historiographical works by leading Reform rabbis who were associated, at least nominally, with the American Council for Judaism—and certainly, to varying degrees, were a part of the non-Zionist tradition—we can understand how the Reform rabbis constructed narratives of Jewish history to support classical Reform theology and how they hoped to propagate it. Furthermore, we will see how Elmer Berger in particular attempted to leverage the historical narratives to pursue particular ideological ends. While Berger started with many of the same basic data, relied upon many of the same assumptions, and followed many of the same cues and patterns as his colleagues, he arrived at radically divergent conclusions regarding the true constitution of Judaism. In this way, we can further understand how Berger’s anti-Zionist ideology alienated other, more moderate non-Zionist Reform rabbis from the American Council for Judaism, even while they may have agreed upon some of the basic historical data by which Berger reached his conclusions.

The Council rabbis, on the whole, treated similar questions repeatedly and answered them the same way over and over again with surprising rhythm, often providing the same exact details as prooftexts. This can be accounted for by the fact that they all went to rabbinical school at the Hebrew Union College, and as such were under the
influence of a rather limited group of teachers and mentors. Rabbinical students often spent eight years or more at the College, also receiving a degree from the University of Cincinnati, as did Rabbis Allan Tarshish, Samuel H. Goldenson, Morris Lazaron, Louis Wolsey, and many others. While the College did not force the credos of classical Reform Judaism upon its students, many years at the same institution under the same teachers will indubitably leave its mark. Rabbi Julian Feibelman’s autobiography and the 1965 collection *Telling Tales Out of School* note the close relationship between many of the faculty and their students, and at the 1942 Atlantic City meeting of non-Zionist rabbis, a number of rabbis fondly recalled specific classes, such as Morgenstern’s course on Amos, from their time at the College that impacted their philosophy of Judaism. This intellectual imprint is distinctly visible in the way that many made use of the work of their teachers, such as Moses Buttenweiser, who was professor of Bible at Hebrew Union College from 1897 until 1933, when he was effectively laid off due to the College’s decreased enrollment. In *Not By Power*, published in 1949, Rabbi Allan Tarshish (1907–1982), an important Council rabbi who remained involved through the

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524 “Atlantic City Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis Held June 1–2, 1942 at Hotel Chelsea, Atlantic City, New Jersey,” LWP-C, box 1, folder 3, pp. 108, 111, 121.

Chapter 5: Constructing a Usable Past for Non-Zionism and Anti-Zionism

1950s, made a point of extensively quoting Buttenweiser’s translations of the prophets, and additionally quoted Morgenstern as well as Dr. Kaufman Kohler, Morgenstern’s predecessor as president of the College. Even if an aspiring rabbi’s time at the College did not affect their preconceived beliefs about Zionism, the College’s curriculum forced them to grapple with trends in Reform historiography developed by scholars such as Buttenweiser and Morgenstern. For many of these rabbis, it was this conception of the lifestyle of the ancient Hebrews and the process of the development of prophetic Jewish religion that they received from Morgenstern and Buttenweiser that ultimately served as the foundation for their discussions of timely problems of social justice, world peace, the place of the Jew in the world, or Zionism.

The markings of a common stream of thought are visible, even if the author does not quote his teacher explicitly. Writing about the nature of the polytheistic worship that the Israelites adopted upon conquering Canaan, Allan Tarshish wrote in 1949:

Not only did the Hebrew people adopt their [Canaanite] neighbors’ successful methods of farming, but they also adopted many of the gods and religious practices of the Canaanites. For not only would their neighbors tell them the best ways to farm but they would also remind them that they had to satisfy the various gods of the country.

This is nearly identical to Solomon Landman’s description of the same issue in a 1944 textbook that he prepared for his synagogue’s Hebrew school:

As the years went by, and the Hebrews mingled more and more with the Canaanites, they began to copy some of the customs of their neighbors. For instance when the Canaanites taught them to farm better, they told the Hebrews

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527 Ibid., p. 93.
528 Ibid., pp. 79, 82.
529 See chapter 1, pp. 26–28.
530 Tarshish, Not by Power, pp. 23–24.
that it wasn’t enough just to put seeds into the ground. The Canaanites said that they had to ask the Canaanite god of the land to make those seeds grow. Now, how can you ask the Canaanite god to do that? Well, you had to bring gifts to make this god, Baal, friendly.\footnote{Solomon Landman, and Benjamin Efron, \textit{The Jews: A History of the People and Their Religion: Part I: The Hebrews Become Jews} (New York: Temple Isaiah of Kew Gardens, 1944), p. 23.}

In Morgenstern’s paper \textit{The Foundations of Israel’s History}, presented at the 1915 convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, he notes:

Their first great problem [of the ancient Israelites after they entered Canaan] was to learn how to till the soil. Their only teachers could be the Canaanites alongside of whom … they speedily settled… “What must we do to farm successfully?” they asked, and the Canaanites replied, “You must plow and sow and reap.” “And is that all?” “No,” was the answer, “if you would live in this land and be successful farmers, you must, of course, worship the gods to whom the land belongs, and who bestow its agricultural blessings.” This was an irrefutable argument.\footnote{Julian Morgenstern, “The Foundations of Israel’s History,” in \textit{Central Conference of American Rabbis Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention}, ed. Rabbi Isaac E. Marcuson (Charlevoix, Michigan: 1915), p. 276.. Also in Julian Morgenstern, \textit{As a Mighty Stream: The Progress of Judaism through History} (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949), pp. 55–56.; and see Morgenstern, \textit{As a Mighty Stream}, p. 222.}

These accounts are not similar simply by coincidence; they are evidence of a much wider shared historiography within Reform and especially within the type of Reform espoused by the Council rabbis. On many other points, the histories give the same answers to the same questions, and after perusing a large quantity, one gets the feeling that he or she is reading the same story over and over again. That is not to say that all Reform rabbis believed the same things about Judaism and Jewish history, or that they were unoriginal in their thinking. Rather, in works by rabbis involved in the Council, we find a surprising amount of common ground.

Not only are the contents similar, but also the titles are picked from amongst the same stables. It is either a well-known quote from the prophets—such as Tarshish’s “Not
Chapter 5: Constructing a Usable Past for Non-Zionism and Anti-Zionism

by power” (quoting Zechariah 4:6, “Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit”533) or Morgenstern’s “As a mighty stream” (quoting Amos 5:24, “But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.”534)—or alternately an exclamation of the eternality of the Jewish people and religion. Examples of the latter type are Hyman Judah Schachtel’s 1935 pageant The Eternal People, whose script notably begins with a description of the “permanent stage,”535 and Solomon Landman’s Story Without End.536 These were not the only two genres from which to pick a title, but they were the most common. Other titles, such as Morris Lazaron’s hagiographical Seed of Abraham,537 clearly reflect the ideological objectives inherent in the work and shed light upon the goals of Reform historiography: In Lazaron’s book, a key objective is the reclamation of Jews who are not always recognized as Jewish contributors to Western civilization, such as Heinrich Heine, Karl Marx, Mary, and Jesus, whose chapter is nearly twice as long as all the others; his title implies that these people belong to the Jews because they were Abraham’s progeny. This was a particular expansion of the idea of the “cult of synthesis”—which Jonathan Sarna describes as the impulse of American Jews to demonstrate that “Judaism and Americanism reinforce one another, the two traditions converging in a common path”538—to encompass Western civilization as a whole.

Morgenstern, for example, argues that the Jewish contribution to Western civilization

533 Zechariah 4:6, לַא בְּעָלֶה אִילָא בְּלָה כִּי אָסְפָה וְיִוְהָ שֹׁפֶרִים מִשְׁמָא אֱלֹהִים.
534 Amos 5:24, לַא בְּעָלֶה אִילָא עָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּר וָיִוְהָ שֹׁפֶר קִנְבָּא כָּל אָסְפָם.
was so great that if the Jews had not been persecuted and locked into the ghetto, the
Reform movement would have begun in the fifteenth century, and pre-empting the
Protestant Reformation, Judaism would have become the dominant world religion.\textsuperscript{539}

The Reform historiography of this period is clear on the early history of the Jews: the Hebrews who invaded Canaan did not practice Judaism or even monotheism in a
strict sense.\textsuperscript{540} The Jewish religion only arose with the exile to Babylon and the transition from a henotheistic religious viewpoint—whereby the Israelites worshipped the Israelite
god and the Assyrians worshipped the Assyrian god, and if one moved to (or were
conquered by and then exiled to) another land they must take up the worship of that
land’s god—to the idea of one God who ruled all peoples.\textsuperscript{541} Some argued that with the
rise of the prophetic movement, beginning with the prophesies of Amos and climaxing with the universalistic Deutero-Isaiah, Judaism began to develop,\textsuperscript{542} but the clear consensus is that what the Hebrews practiced upon their (not fully complete\textsuperscript{543}) conquest of Canaan was not quite fully formed. Furthermore, the Hebrews only became “Israel” with the rise of David and the establishment of the united monarchy; previously, they were simply an assortment of disconnected tribes with no common unity.\textsuperscript{544} In describing the pre-Canaanite existence of the Hebrews, the historiography is nearly unanimous as well. The desert was the founding place of the Israelite religion, because the desert was “no-mans land,”\textsuperscript{545} such that no one people—even Israel—could claim the sole deed to

\textsuperscript{539} Morgenstern, \textit{As a Mighty Stream}, pp. 180ff.
\textsuperscript{540} Tarshish, \textit{Not by Power}, pp. 21.
\textsuperscript{541} Morgenstern, \textit{As a Mighty Stream}, pp. 260ff.
\textsuperscript{542} Tarshish, \textit{Not by Power}, pp. 41, 78.
\textsuperscript{543} Ibid., pp. 23–24; Morgenstern, “The Foundations of Israel’s History,” p. 259.
Chapter 5: Constructing a Usable Past for Non-Zionism and Anti-Zionism

the desert god YHWH, the creator-god,\textsuperscript{546} and his law. In the desert, the Hebrews lived a
democratic, even communistic, lifestyle, where everyone shared complete equality, all
goods and wealth were communal, and all could do as one pleased.\textsuperscript{547} In the pseudo-
anarchistic society of the desert, crime was nearly unknown,\textsuperscript{548} and the life they lived was
similar to the Bedouin who continued to inhabit the Arabian desert throughout history.\textsuperscript{549}

This characterization of the desert as the cradle of Israelite religion—in fact, the
place where the religion finds its inspiration and where it goes to recharge when it is
challenged—brings forward a number of themes within the subtext of the histories:
contrary to the Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel, which maintains that
“The Land of Israel was the birthplace of the Jewish people,”\textsuperscript{550} the Hebrews found their
inspiration outside of the land of Israel; the nomadic way of life in the desert was a
positive lifestyle, corresponding to Israel’s wandering among the nations; when Israel
settled, or even better, “sojourned”\textsuperscript{551} in the land of Israel, the positive elements of the
desert lifestyle were superseded by the trappings of an agricultural society and thus an
agricultural religion. This is all in opposition to the view—later expressed by the Israeli
scholar Shemaryahu Talmon in his article “The ‘Desert Motif’ in Biblical and Qumran
Literature”—that the desert lifestyle was mostly imagined by those readers of the Bible.

\textsuperscript{546} Morgenstern, “The Foundations of Israel’s History,” p. 267; Tarshish, \textit{Not by Power},
p. 21.
\textsuperscript{547} Landman, \textit{Story Without End}, pp. 2–3; Morgenstern, “The Foundations of Israel’s
History,” p. 296; Morgenstern, \textit{As a Mighty Stream}, pp. 208ff, 217–219; Tarshish, \textit{Not by
Power}, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{548} Morgenstern, \textit{As a Mighty Stream}, pp. 218ff.
\textsuperscript{549} Lazaron, \textit{Seed of Abraham}, p. 12; Morgenstern, \textit{As a Mighty Stream}, p. 208.
\textsuperscript{550} Itamar Rabinovich, and Jehuda Reinharz, ed. \textit{Israel in the Middle East: Documents
and Readings on Society, Politics, and Foreign Relations, Pre-1948 to the Present},
\textsuperscript{551} Morgenstern, “The Foundations of Israel’s History,” p. 258.
Chapter 5: Constructing a Usable Past for Non-Zionism and Anti-Zionism

Talmon furthermore continues to claim that “whenever desert life is reflected in Biblical imagery, they give witness to a deep-seated aversion to and a great fear of such conditions, not a longing for them.” With this in mind, the consistent and prominent use of the desert in Reform historiography is all the more noticeable as a usage of history for the purpose of the imagined ideal of Jewish life that the Reformers hoped to develop. This is in line with the Reform historiography’s positive orientation towards the Canaanites and the impact of close Canaanite-Israelite contact upon the development of Israel, which we will discuss shortly. It also dovetailed with the Reform idea that life in the Diaspora and close contact with Gentile neighbors was necessary for religious progress. As Morgenstern argues, only when the Jews are cut off from contact with non-Jews via the mechanisms of the European ghettos of the fifteenth centuries onward, Jewish religious development comes to a halt. This suspension of religious development creates the uncanny disconnect between Jewish and non-Jewish realities, leading to the crises of modernity in Jewish life.

The desert life is particularly pervasive in Reform historiography, but Elmer Berger’s grasps upon the concept of “desert religion” more than anyone else. Throughout *A Partisan History of Judaism*, he stresses the purity and simplicity of the desert religion against the complex rites of the Israelite priesthood. Berger sees the desert not only as a symbol of the simplicity of pre-Canaanite life, similar to the other Reform writers, but,

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553 Morgenstern, *As a Mighty Stream*, pp. 183ff.
554 “The desert god is the golden thread, so to speak, which distinguishes Judaism from the amalgam of living and religion with which these Hebrew or Israelitish people came into contact in the Land of Canaan. It accounts for the Prophets.” (Berger, *A Partisan History of Judaism*, p. 31.)
in addition, applies the concept as a metaphor to explain the situation of American Jews.

After discounting the story of Joshua, as Morgenstern and others did before him, Berger takes up the theories of Theophile Meek’s 1950 book *Hebrew Origins* to explain the founding of the Israelite kingdom in terms of the “Habiru” theory,\(^{555}\) which identified the Hebrews with the elusive “Habiru” warrior people.\(^{556}\) While others had talked about the Hebrews as a transnational people and Morgenstern described three waves of migration into Canaan,\(^{557}\) Berger does all this, and more. He portrays the migration process in a unique way that leads to its application to the story of Jews in America. Discussing the attempts to unify the Israelites living in Canaan under the Judges, Berger asks his readers:

> Why, then, did Deborah think she had any basis or reason to call on these diverse peoples, who had come to this land over several centuries, for help and to join her confederacy …? She did it on the grounds that all of these people, at one time or another, had a common desert background and were desert people … she counted upon a lingering memory, which she hoped to find, of a desert god.

It is significant that her appeal is not to the memory of a common origin nor to a great king who might have been glorified in a common history; nor does she appeal on the basis of memory of a former common land or national experience. It is a god which she uses as a rallying cry.\(^{558}\)

If one were to replace Canaan with America, “desert background” with ancestry in Europe, and “lingering memory … of a desert god” with orthodoxy and nostalgia, under Berger’s ideology, the passage remains sensible: America’s Jewish immigrants had nothing in common with one another except the fact that they came from Europe. As such, they had just as much in common with the rest of America’s immigrant society, and there was no reason for them to find any reason for common unity besides religion. This

\(^{555}\) Also see Moshe Greenberg, *The Ḥab/Piru* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1955).


\(^{557}\) Morgenstern, *As a Mighty Stream*, p. 349.

Chapter 5: Constructing a Usable Past for Non-Zionism and Anti-Zionism

use of religion is important, because paradoxically the word “religion” is used in two ways: in *The Jewish Dilemma*, he argues for his form of religion (classical Reform) against the old world religion that Zionists, hailing from Eastern Europe, depend upon for their call for action. Instead, Berger, wants to use *God* as the rallying cry, which is a code-word for spirituality and ethical monotheism.

Implicit in Berger’s comparison is not only that America is the new promised land, but also that the earlier Jewish settlers in America “were already partly American themselves”—just as earlier Hebrew settlers in Canaan “were already partly Canaanite themselves”559—and thus the ideology of Zionism and traditional religion would not work upon them. This is where Berger differs from many of his rabbinical colleagues: they would argue that using God as a rallying cry, as Deborah did in Berger’s account, would be a fantastic strategy; they believed that given a choice between using religion, “the memory of a common origin,” or “a former common land or national experience,” that religion should be the ideal choice. However, Berger argued that Deborah “counted upon a lingering memory … of a desert god,” and similarly believed that the advocates of orthodoxy in America depended upon the lingering memory (and the nostalgia that replaced it) of the old country, and thus that if any type of religion must be the rallying call for Jewish action it should not be the desert religion, democratic as it was, but the religion of the prophets. On this point, the Reform rabbis would have agreed, but Berger is also arguing against the impulse of Louis Witt’s 1918 *Pictures Out of the Past: A Chanukah Play*, in which a Jewish grandmother discovers to her surprise that her grandchildren are celebrating Christmas on Chanukah and decides to teacher her children

559 Ibid., p. 29.
about their past. In Witt’s play, the grandmother chastises her daughter for allowing the grandchildren to celebrate Christmas because they believe in Santa Claus and want to receive presents. After the ensuing storytelling session, the mother exclaims, “I haven’t heard the story for so many years, mother. I can see myself a child again, lying in the light of the fireplace, drinking in the words of the Chanukah story. And to think that these are now my children!”

Berger, based upon this passage, would have criticized this attempt to recapture Jewish youth through nostalgia, preferring to reach out to them with what he and his colleagues would have called “positive religion.” Paradoxically, Berger would also have argued that the nostalgia for the desert religion—against the “partisan, nationalist-minded authors” who rewrote the history of the Jews to make “Jewish John Does” forget their desert roots—prevailed in the development of the Prophets. So for Berger, as the desert religion was a positive development, nostalgia was a good strategy on a spiritual level, but when nostalgia was utilized for nationalistic purposes, it was a disgraceful tactic of partisan historians.

The Reform writers, as a whole, also shared a voice on Israelite life and culture after the settlement of Canaan. According to these histories, the Israelites intermingled with the neighboring peoples, who were more technologically, socially, and culturally advanced than them, with the exception that the Israelites continued to worship the monotheistic desert god. The Reform rabbis discounted the book of Joshua, believing

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Judges to be a more reliable historical text, and they envisioned a process of positive assimilation through close contact between the Israelites and Canaanites as they lived side-by-side for hundreds of years before all were destroyed in wave after wave of attacks by the growing world-empires of the Assyrians and Babylonians. In Morgenstern’s construction of Jewish history, in particular, “positive assimilation,” or as he preferred to term it, “acculturation,” was a process that began in Canaan once the Hebrews left their desert womb and has accompanied the Jews throughout history and holds the key to understanding the process of Reform that roots Reform Judaism in antiquity. In response to the destruction of the Israelite kingdom, the prophets, at first predicting the coming national ruination and then compensating for it once it took place, remodeled Israelite religion into the universal form of Judaism that these rabbis held so highly.

Morgenstern’s conception of “positive assimilation” is particularly interesting to consider in light of Gerson Cohen’s idea of “the blessing of assimilation.” Cohen’s thesis is that Jews cannot—and, historically, have never been able to—fight assimilation; rather, as he shows through the evolution of Jewish names and Jewish language, it continues regardless of the Jewish community’s efforts to put a stop to it. Even more, according to Cohen, assimilation (for which he also uses the term “acculturation,” similar

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563 “If Jewish culture is anything at all, it is decidedly the result of assimilative, syncretistic processes—what modern anthropological science has come to call ‘acculturation’—operating ceaselessly through the long reaches of Jewish history” (Morgenstern, *As a Mighty Stream*, p. 216, also see pp. 227, 298ff, 389.)
to Morgenstern\textsuperscript{566} has benefitted the Jews. Cohen, who gave his address at the 1966 commencement of the Hebrew Teachers College, argued that assimilation is a useful tool for the reinvention of Judaism and its transmission to a new generation, which is not as much of an all-encompassing argument as Morgenstern’s. Assimilation (or even better, “Reform”), in Morgenstern’s conception, was the central process of Jewish life and existence. Elmer Berger took this to the next level. He agreed with Morgenstern as to the centrality of assimilation in the development of ancient Israel,\textsuperscript{567} especially with regards to the Israelite festivals. He also focused on the lack of assimilation in the early modern period with the rise of the ghetto,\textsuperscript{568} another element of Morgenstern’s narrative. However, Berger’s construction of this period does not place the blame for the Jews’ persecution and corresponding lack of assimilation upon the Gentiles, as Morgenstern and others do, but squarely upon the “official Jewry” who established the ghetto for their own benefit and the creation of an artificial “Jewish people.”\textsuperscript{569}

On top of this basic history, each author added his own specific themes and details to tailor it to his intended audience. One of the most common themes was a synthesis of Jewish and American history. Rabbi Solomon Landman, writing for his synagogue’s Sunday school in 1944,\textsuperscript{570} peppered his history with allegories about the

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\textsuperscript{566} Ibid., p. 151.
\textsuperscript{567} Berger, \textit{A Partisan History of Judaism}, pp. 46, 49–50.
\textsuperscript{568} Ibid., pp. 98ff.
\textsuperscript{569} “Mendelssohn was immediately attacked by those who wanted to preserve a segregated ‘Jewish people’; who saw in the ghetto an opportunity for the rabbis, the clerics, and the professional Jews to hold other Jews in the palms of their hands and did not want Jews to achieve national assimilation and cultural integration.” (Ibid., pp. 105–106.)
\textsuperscript{570} “The authors are deeply grateful to the members of the Board of Trustees of Temple Isaiah of Kew Gardens, whose lively interest in Jewish education prompted them to authorize the preparation of this work, and whose understanding of the principles and
founding of the United States of America. He describes the Jews in Egypt as similar to “the immigrants who came to America: in search of a land of opportunity, a place where they could bring up their families with fewer worries than was possible in the place they had left.” When enslaved, the Hebrews are compared to the American colonies under the British, and the Exodus in particular is described in a fascinating way:

> Then came a time of many plagues in Egypt. Plagues and epidemics were quite frequent in ancient days, since the people knew practically nothing about germs and medicines and drugs. There was much illness and many deaths as a result of the plagues. The Egyptians were too busy tending their sick and burying their dead to watch the Hebrews. Moses decided that that was the time to make the dash for freedom. So, he gathered the Hebrews together and started along the road he had mapped out long in advance.

In this passage, not only is God removed as the protagonist of the Exodus, in contradistinction to the traditional Passover Haggadah, which reduces Moses’ part in the story, but also the Exodus is described in the terms of the Underground Railroad, with Moses leading the runaway slaves. Soon afterwards, Moses is compared to George Washington as the “father of his country,” and the disunited Hebrew tribes are paralleled to the States under the Articles of Confederation. The states are correlated with the tribes, nationhood with the creation of a universal code of law, and weakness of United States under the Articles of Confederation with the independent tribes and the aims of the authors led them to sponsor its publication.” (Landman, *The Jews, Part I*, Foreward.) In the introduction to the first chapter, it is clear that Landman is writing for the Hebrew school, when he explains what history is and compares the coming history of the Jews to the history of America that the student is learning in public school. (Ibid., pp. 1ff.)

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571 Ibid., p. 9.
572 Ibid., p. 11.
574 Ibid., p. 14.
Chapter 5: Constructing a Usable Past for Non-Zionism and Anti-Zionism

strength of the Constitutional United States with Israel under David.575 As a whole, Landman has undertaken a grand mixing of metaphors, but the emphasis is laid out clearly for reader, who is intended to identify the founding of the Kingdom of Israel with the founding of the United States. When it comes to Israel’s enemies, Landman is much clearer in his choice of metaphors; the antagonists—whether the Assyrians, the Ptolemies, Antiochus, the Romans, the Crusaders, or the Inquisition—are always Nazis.576

The theme of historical synthesis between American and Jewish history was not the sole intellectual stakeout of Solomon Landman, but a constant theme throughout the literature. In his pageant The Eternal People (1935), Hyman Judah Schachtel divides Jewish history into two acts. The lachrymose Act I takes place in Babylon, Spain, England, and other places of Israel’s persecution, and the much lighter Act II opens with the beginning of Jewish life in America as Israel’s saving grace. The play closes with the optimistic “Spirit of Israel” proclaiming that the Jews will again find peace even in the time of Nazi terror, with American Jewry serving a central role in serving their brethren’s needs.577 Louis Witt’s Pictures Out of the Past: A Chanukah Play (1918), in which a Jewish grandmother discovers to her surprise that her grandchildren are celebrating Christmas on Chanukah and decides to teacher her children about their past, also places an emphasis upon the harmony of Americanism and Judaism, comparing Judah to George

575 Ibid., pp. 15–16.
Chapter 5: Constructing a Usable Past for Non-Zionism and Anti-Zionism

Washington. The most unreserved expressions of synthesis were in works intended for a young audience, but the other writers did not let them maintain a monopoly: the descriptions of the ancient Israelites as profoundly democratic and the source of democratic values, predating the Greeks, are in the same intellectual vein.

Another theme, not universal but nearly ubiquitous, was a prudential usage of the lachrymose conception of Jewish history, that Israel’s existence in the Diaspora was simply a trail of tears. Most of the writers refrained from using it as the overarching theme of their history; rather, it was utilized to make a specific point. In Schachtel’s pageant, it was used to contrast the old world Jewish experience with the American Jewish milieu. The character of the grandmother in Louis Witt’s Chanukah play provided the martyrdom of the Jews a reason for continued Jewish existence: “We may thank God that we are living in this great land of peace and liberty. But there are other lands where Jews are still suffering like martyrs, even in this very hour.” Allan Tarshish and Morgenstern argued that Jewish religion progressed only in times of crisis, so the persecution of the Jews led directly to religious and civilizational improvement. At the same time, Morgenstern argues that the ghetto was where the Jews developed their deficient characteristics, where the Jews got out of step with the rest of the world. In this way, Morgenstern explains how what he believes was the constant process of reform and progress, which he believes acted upon the Jews throughout all history, came to a halt, causing the problems of modernity.

578 Witt, Pictures out of the Past, p. 15.
581 Morgenstern, As a Mighty Stream, p. 179; Tarshish, Not by Power, pp. 18, 66, 179.
These peculiar parallels draw out a common set of beliefs and intellectual sources. Similar to the attempts of the CCAR to place itself within the dynamic of European rabbinical conferences,\(^{582}\) we see that Reform scholars try to smoothly inherit the nineteenth century German-Jewish scholarly tradition of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. In particular, we can see the influence of nineteenth century scholars of the *Wissenschaft* tradition, such as Heinrich Graetz and Abraham Geiger, whom Hebrew Union College certainly saw as its intellectual progenitors. Graetz, though rarely quoted directly,\(^ {583}\) shifted the turning point in Jewish history to the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE, a trait shared with much of Reform historiography.\(^ {584}\) However, Graetz made this adjustment for a different reason than the Reformers. Graetz envisioned his scholarship partially as an attempt to retake the meaning of Jewish history from Christian scholars, who placed the major turning point of Jewish history at the destruction of the Second Temple in order to imply the primacy of ‘Israel of the Spirit.’\(^ {585}\) Reform scholars utilized this structure because they believed the first exile was the proofext *par excellence* for the universal religion of the later prophets. Geiger’s influence can also be seen not only in his appropriation as one of the founders of Reform in Germany, but through Geiger’s

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\(^{582}\) See chapter 1, p. 36.


\(^{584}\) Mattuck, *What Are the Jews*, p. 43.

Chapter 5: Constructing a Usable Past for Non-Zionism and Anti-Zionism

attempted reconstruction of the Jewish Jesus which found its way into the Reform movement’s vision of Christian-Jewish relations in the United States.\textsuperscript{586}

Another important element of nineteenth-century scholarship that these writers draw upon heavily is Biblical criticism. During the time of Isaac Mayer Wise, Biblical criticism was looked down upon at the Hebrew Union College, but in the years following his passing in 1900, the critical method of Biblical scholarship grew in popularity under the presidency of Kaufmann Kohler, who was more supportive of the Wellhausen school. By the time Julian Morgenstern presented his paper on ‘The Foundations of Israel’s History’ at the 1915 CCAR convention in Charlevoix, Michigan, a great many of the Reform rabbis viewed Biblical criticism, or as Morgenstern preferred to call it, “Biblical Science,”\textsuperscript{587} as a useful tool. Elmer Berger was also an avid employer of the critical technique, though he applies it primarily to the Pentateuch and the historical books which discuss the Kingdom of Israel. As mentioned above, Berger argues that these texts were rewritten by “partisan, nationalist-minded authors.”\textsuperscript{588} This is interesting in light of Berger’s consideration of the Prophetic movement of which he is so fond. Even though some of the most profuse exhorters of the primacy of Prophetic religion in Judaism, such


\textsuperscript{587} “The name [Biblical criticism] is rather unfortunate since ‘criticism’ is to most people a word of negative connotation. To the popular mind, Biblical Criticism represents a dangerous and destructive tendency in Bible study, the aim of which is to pick the Bible to pieces, to deny all its truth, sanctity and religious value, and to undermine all the foundations of religious belief and practice. Such a conception is altogether ignorant of the true nature and purpose of Biblical Criticism. Its sole aim is to discover all the truth about the Bible, just because the Bible is the wonderful book it is.” (Morgenstern, “The Foundations of Israel’s History,” p. 239.) Also see the discussion following Morgenstern’s paper (Ibid., pp. 287–289.) and Blank, “Bible,” pp. 287–290.

\textsuperscript{588} Berger, \textit{A Partisan History of Judaism}, p. 38.
as Moses Buttenweiser, were more than happy to rearrange major portions of the prophets, Berger curiously avoids criticizing the Prophetic texts. It appears that Berger sees the critical method more as his own partisan tool, to be used in opposition to the partisan tools of his opponents.

Morgenstern’s use of the term “Biblical Science” is important to unpack not only because he was responding to critiques of Biblical criticism as “higher antisemitism,” but because the ideal of Wissenschaft or ‘science’ of Judaism can be clearly identified in the term “Biblical Science.” However, Morgenstern’s term was not widely adopted by other Reform rabbis; in the discussion following his 1915 paper, there was not even a consensus as to whether the results of his study should be taken seriously as Morgenstern made significant use of the critical method and left out aspects of Israel’s history, such as the exodus from Egypt, because he did not believe there was enough substantiating documentary evidence. William Rosenau, in particular, emphasized critically:

What [Morgenstern] presents as the result of careful study, and as shared by the most prominent Biblical critics is not actually so. There is very much difference of opinion among Biblical scholars, and many, after more mature consideration, have rejected these conclusions of higher criticism. I believe it necessary to warn the Conference against the arguments and exposition of this paper. It contains much that is opposed to the traditions of Israel with regard to the Torah and Haftarah. And by maintaining silence at this moment, the Conference may seem to endorse these views, and so lay itself open to criticism.

Thirteen years later, William Rosenau followed the same position in his 1928 pamphlet The Story of the Jew: In Shortest Possible Compass, in which he gave a brief summary of Jewish history from Genesis to modern times. For the lay reader, Rosenau’s history might

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be easily confused with a traditional Jewish history, as it maintains many time-honored beliefs about Jewish history; however, like the other histories we will consider, Rosenau elevated America to a high pedestal as the prime example of interreligious coexistence.\footnote{William Rosenau, \textit{The Story of the Jew: In Shortest Possible Compass} (1928).}

This implies that while some subscribed to the higher critical views of Morgenstern and his colleagues at the Hebrew Union College such as Moses Buttenweiser, this belief was not a necessary precondition for a construction of Jewish history that elevated Judaism as a religion, and prophetic Judaism in particular, to the detriment of Jewish nationalism. The use of Biblical criticism, however, certainly contributed a degree of intellectual leeway with which to pick and choose historical facts with which to construct an ideologically appropriate historical narrative.

Whatever the opposition of some Reform rabbis, mostly of an older generation, to Biblical criticism, the ethos of the ‘scientific’ study of history and the collection of ‘facts’ was stressed amongst the younger generation of American Reform rabbis in their education at the College under Kohler and Morgenstern. In Abraham Holtzberg’s revealing introduction to his 1916 rabbinical thesis, he writes that

\begin{quote}
\textit{We must not forget that History is a Science.} Its facts can never be doubted. One may indeed, differ as to the interpretation of facts but never dispute the fact per se! Our method of procedure, therefore must be scientific. We must employ the deductive as well as the inductive methods in ascertaining the various causes for the development of this movement [Zionism]. We must furthermore look behind these causes to see through the philosophy of History whether these causes are natural or superinduced by our reason. With this in view, let us approach our subject.\footnote{Emphasis in original; Holtzberg, “The History of the Zionist Movement from Zvi Hirsch Kalischer to Theodore Herzl,” Introduction.}
\end{quote}

Holtzberg’s claims as to the nature of history are also supported by Morgenstern’s conclusion to the discussion of his 1915 paper, in which he stressed the importance of
facts and the nature of history as “primarily a concatenation of facts and events.” This preoccupation with the science of history is not simply a trait we can check off to identify the pedigree of this type of Reform historiography. It reveals a significant aspect of how Julian Morgenstern in particular, and the Reform rabbis more generally (and, as might be expected, also more moderately), conceived of historical determinism. In the Reform writings, and especially stressed by Morgenstern, Reform is a constant process that cannot be denied; the uncontestable historical facts along with the scientifically determined processes of history (such as Reform) predetermine the outcome of history.

With this in mind, we can better understand Morgenstern’s November 1943 appeal to Elmer Berger that the American Council for Judaism discontinue its operations and simply let history take its course. In Morgenstern’s conception, the great majority of Zionists were of Eastern European descent, and so given enough time, their children would fall under the sway of the Americanization process that affects all immigrants, and will find that they no longer believe in Zionism; as such, time was on the side of the non-Zionists. This “process of historical evolution” which Morgenstern advocated is a counterweight against those who believed in the power of individuals to fight against the

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593 Central Conference of American Rabbis, Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention, p. 297.
594 “Time is on our side. We know that the next generation of these very Zionists will be much more thoroughly Americanized than their fathers of the present generation, and that, certainly, by the third generation, there will be no distinction between their point of view and ours. Unity in American Judaism will come in time through the process of historical evolution. Obviously it cannot be hurried. Meanwhile, we must mark time carefully and make sure that we do not lose our connection and sense of relationship with the Jewish community as a whole.” (Julian Morgenstern to Elmer Berger, 11 November 1943, ACJP-W, box 85, folder 9) In 1965, he continued to believe that “That organization [the Council] cannot live. In due time it will be extinct.” (Morgenstern, “What Are We Jews?,” p. 20.)
inertia of this evolution. In the discussion following Morgenstern’s 1915 paper, Moses Buttenweiser stated:

There are two schools of historians. The one regards environment as the paramount factor in historic evolution. It bases itself upon this principle in reconstructing those periods of history… The other school holds that all progress in history proceeds from great personalities. Dr. Morgenstern evidently belongs to the first school. I acknowledge allegiance to the other.\textsuperscript{595}

In Buttenweiser’s typology of history provided here, Morgenstern does not believe that the Jews needed a Moses—or for that matter, a Jeremiah, Isaiah or Amos—to reach a point of uniqueness. Underlying Buttenweiser’s comment was the debate over Morgenstern’s ‘scientific’ construction of Jewish history; numerous rabbis harshly criticized Morgenstern for being “mechanical,” voiding the uniqueness of Judaism, and ignoring the national psychology of the Jews.\textsuperscript{596} Buttenweiser here argues that the uniqueness of Judaism arises out of the great personalities who shaped its history. This perspective should not come as a surprise from Buttenweiser, a scholar of the prophets, who believed that their writings profoundly shaped the development of the Jewish religion. In light of the juxtaposition between Buttenweiser and Morgenstern, we can further clarify the debate between Berger and Morgenstern over the role of the American Council for Judaism. While Morgenstern believed in the preeminence of the historical process itself, Berger and his supporters would have sided with Buttenweiser in their belief that individuals have a degree of agency in history. Berger and the other leaders of the American Council for Judaism saw two forces of history, the influx of Eastern European Jews (and their accompanying traditionalism and nationalism) as well as Morgenstern’s conception of the process of Reform. Morgenstern, on the other hand,

\textsuperscript{595} Central Conference of American Rabbis, Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention, p. 291.  
\textsuperscript{596} Ibid., p. 292–293.
believed that this Reform process, like a geological force, given the necessary time, would ultimately prevail over all others. The Council rabbis thus expressed an element of ambivalence about the historical predetermination of the preeminence of Reform, while simultaneously arguing that a Jewish state was preordained to failure. In sum, the Council saw itself as fighting one of history’s prevailing winds, the seemingly unstoppable and unintegratable immigration of Eastern European Jews to America, whereas Morgenstern saw those winds flying in the opposite direction.

As a whole, while the authors share many themes and influences, they were not very systematic in their histories; the most systematic aspect of them is how they repeat similar details in every history. This, of course, depended upon the audience: if one were writing for children, as Solomon Landman did, then the exact usage of the terms “Israelite,” “Hebrew,” and “Jew” might not seem as important as if one were effectively arguing for Judaism’s raison d’être, as Morgenstern found himself doing at the Chautauqua Institute in his recollection Behind Closed Doors. Elmer Berger’s conception of history was much more systematic than the others’, because the purpose of his history was not simply to educate but to propagate the foundations for his ideology of Jewish life. The only rabbi who approached Berger’s level of sophistication was Morgenstern, who as an academic ostensibly aimed to reach a clear perception of the ancient life of Israel and the process of the historic development Jewish religion. But Morgenstern, like Lazaron, Tarshish, and all the others, no matter their audience, found Reform to be the apotheosis of Judaism or even, as Morgenstern argues, of Western

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civilization as a whole. Berger, rather, sees emancipation as this crowning point of civilization, and builds his historical narrative to support this conclusion.

In addition, Berger is the only Reform writer at this time to present a systematic interpretation of modern history that is not Reform-centric. Many do not touch the modern period at all, as in the case of Landman’s textbook, which concludes with the Protestant Reformation, or gloss over it with a discussion of emancipation, antisemitism, and Zionism, as was the case of Tarshish’s Not By Power and Schachtel’s The Eternal People. But as opposed to the ancient history, regarding which the Reform writers made a clear and consistent value judgment, that the prophetic vision was the root of all that is good in Judaism, the Reform rabbis did not make any such judgments about the nature of the modern period. The Reform writers, instead, chose to highlight the accomplishments of Reform Judaism. In a tribute to Moses Mendelssohn, entitled “Judaism and the Modern World,” Morgenstern chooses to induct Mendelssohn into the ranks of the Reform movement as an “unconscious protagonist.”\(^{598}\) He then proceeds to detail the modern period (beginning with Mendelssohn) as providing three choices to the Jew: rejection of the world outside of the now self-imposed ghetto (orthodoxy), wholehearted assimilation into non-Jewish society, or a give-and-take relationship with non-Jewish civilization (Reform). Morgenstern developed this characterization of the modern period on many other occasions, and in this way, constructs the modern period to highlight Reform as the principal character of the modern drama.\(^ {599}\)

\(^ {598}\) Ibid., p. 173.
\(^ {599}\) Ibid., pp. 185–186. Also see Julian Morgenstern, “Assimilation, Isolation, or Reform?,” Contemporary Jewish Record, April 1942, included in As a Mighty Stream as “‘Melting Pot,’ ‘Cultural Pluralism,’ or What?” (pp. 319–334), and Julian Morgenstern,
Chapter 5: Constructing a Usable Past for Non-Zionism and Anti-Zionism

Two Council rabbis in particular, Irving Reichert of San Francisco, and Abraham Holtzberg of Trenton, New Jersey, wrote about Zionism in their rabbinical theses, which are representative of the way in which the Reform rabbis wrote about Zionism in general. In his 1916 thesis, entitled “The History of the Zionist Movement from Zvi Hirsch Kalischer to Theodore Herzl,” Holtzberg argues that there were two primary causes for Zionism: the “innate religious idea,” by which he meant the impulse within Jewish religion for a return to the land of Israel, and the antisemitism of the nineteenth century which proved to the Zionists that “emancipation was not emancipation, nor was freedom, freedom, nor liberty, liberty.” Holtzberg describes three forms of Zionism: the most prominent was nationalistic, in the vein of Leon Pinsker’s *Autoemancipation*; religious, as in Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Kalischer who believed that life in the land of Israel would allow a more complete fulfillment of the commandments; and philanthropic, epitomized by Baron Edmond de Rothschild and others who were neither religious nor nationalistic but saw Zionism as a purely philanthropic act. In this typology, he drew heavily on Richard Gottheil’s 1914 *Zionism*, and we can see how this classification filtered down into Berger’s philosophy; Berger simply ignored the *religious* form of Zionism because he approached Judaism and the commandments from a harshly critical point of view.

Another important aspect of Holtzberg’s discussion of Zionism in his thesis was that he did not look down upon it as such; he maintained that Zionism held value for those Jews who needed it. At the same time, he still believed that the rise of Zionism in the 1890s

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601 Ibid., chapter 4, pp. 3ff.
was a crucially important turning point in Jewish history, and in many other Reform rabbis’ treatments of Zionism, this attitude holds: they did not demean the movement, even if their personal beliefs were that Zionism was not for them and American Jews.

This is demonstrative of how, even amongst the Council members, “non-Zionism” consisted of a wide breadth of beliefs about Zionism. In Hyman Judah Schachtel’s *The Eternal People*, the Zionist pioneers are portrayed extremely positively, in a way characteristic of American Jewish ideas about the *chalutzim*. 602 They enter the stage dancing to the anthem *Hatikva* and dressed in open-necked shirts and blouses, and a full-page caricature completes this image of the “Pioneers of Palestine” with arms outstretched as if dancing for joy. They declare, “Fugitives are we from hatred,” and, recalling the Haggadah, conclude with the cry, “There [in the Diaspora] we were bound! / Here we are free! / There we were slaves! / Here we are men! / REJOICE!” 603

Allan Tarshish’s discussion of Zionism is not as cartoon-like, but shares a number of key features with Schachtel and Holtzberg. First, similar to Schachtel, Tarshish’s chapter on Zionism is placed second-to-last, immediately preceding a summarizing chapter—or in Schachtel’s case, a summarizing scene—that posits the primacy, vibrancy, and optimism towards the future of American Jewish life, even against the backdrop of the success of the *yishuv*. Also, all three posit the importance of antisemitism, and specifically the Dreyfus Affair, in the development of Zionism.

603 Emphasis in original; Schachtel, *The Eternal People*, pp. 42–44.
Chapter 5: Constructing a Usable Past for Non-Zionism and Anti-Zionism

Irving Reichert’s 1921 rabbinical thesis, simply entitled “The Dreyfus Affair,” focuses squarely upon what would be the foundational experience of many Zionists of Herzl’s generation. What is most striking about Reichert’s work is that he, like the other Reform writers who address the Dreyfus Affair, portray the trial and Dreyfus’ conviction and later acquittal as a prime example of the strength of the French democratic institutions and the weakness of antisemitism, in contradistinction to the Zionist understanding of the trial, for whom the Dreyfus Affair demonstrated a dreary future for Jews in the Diaspora. Reichert writes that “The verdict … provoked universal indignation and astonishment. Apparently the innocence of Dreyfus was evident to everybody except to the French Nationalists and anti-Semites.” While the French declared “A bas les Juifs!” (“Down with the Jews!”), there were mass-meetings, demonstrations, and riots against the French consulate in London, Budapest, Naples, Milan, and other European cities.604 Reichert vividly recounts the American reaction to Dreyfus’ conviction:

In America the resentment was profound. Crowds stood outside newspaper offices in almost every city and town, eagerly waiting for the announcement of the result. When it appeared, it was greeted on all sides with expressions of grief and dismay. The government offices at Washington virtually suspended business to discuss the gravity of the situation and its critical implications. Mass meetings of protest were held immediately in New York and Louisville; others were set in motion all over the country. … Popular indignation spent itself in acts of unmistakable hostility—in Indianapolis the French flag was publicly burned while thousands stood by and applauded; in a New York theatre an actor impersonating a French officer was hissed off the boards, and prolonged cheers for Dreyfus shook the house.605

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605 Ibid., p. 135.
Many of the events that Reichert describes in this passage did in fact take place, and Reichert is correct about the high interest in the case abroad. Especially following the fabricated story of Dreyfus’ attempt to escape from his imprisonment on Devil’s Island in September 1896, the “yellow press” grasped upon the case, which became daily news. During the second trial, which began in August and September of 1898, there was certainly great public interest. However, while some anti-French activities took place, as Reichert describes, they were more strongly tied to the anti-Catholic sentiment brewing in turn-of-the-century America or alternately with Jewish solidarity with Dreyfus.

This is not the place for close criticism of Reichert’s scholarship in what was not a rigorous scholarly exercise. What is important is that Reichert and his colleagues constructed a narrative of the Dreyfus Affair in which the Affair was not an indicator of the worsening position of the Jew in the world. Rather, it was symptomatic of the

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606 “Burn the Flag of France: Emblem of the Nation Reduced to Ashes by an Indignant Indianapolis Crowd,” Chicago Daily Tribune, 10 September 1899. While no specific evidence describes the New York theater events, there was a play put up in the Fourteenth Street Theater, called “Devil’s Island,” which received good reviews. (“New Theatrical Bills: A Noisy Dreyfus Melodrama,” New York Times, 30 August 1898.) Plays focusing on Dreyfus were common in a number of cities. (“Dreyfus Play in Havana: Frenchmen Resent Reflections on the Honesty of the Trial,” New York Times, 19 September 1898; “Yiddish Play in the Ghetto: Jews Applaud the Presentation of P. Tomashefsky’s ‘Captain Dreyfus’,” Chicago Daily Tribune, 24 December 1898.) In the case of the Havana play, Reichert’s description definitely would have matched the occasion, where the New York Times described that “from the start the sympathy of the audience for Dreyfus was plainly manifested.” In Havana, in fact a number of Frenchmen were ejected from the theater when they caused a commotion when the play insinuated that the Dreyfus trial was conducted in a dishonest manner.


608 Ibid., pp. 123–127.

goodwill of the non-Jewish world, which rejected the antisemitism of the nationalistic parties. As Tarshish put it, “It was of course true that Dreyfus was wrongly condemned, but it was also true that he was released and acquitted by the united forces of progress and decency. … The Dreyfus case was in reality a victory for the forces of democracy and enlightenment, for Dreyfus was finally vindicated.” Schachtel’s depiction of the events also maintains this ideological direction; while he recognizes the Zionist impulse with a soliloquy by Herzl regarding what must be done in the aftermath of such a trial, Schachtel concludes the scene by demonstrating through the character of Emil Zola the optimism of Reform that the forces of emancipation will triumph over nationalism, tribalism and xenophobia. Overall these writers express great optimism for the Jewish future in the emancipated world. While many did recognize that Jews were persecuted, it was generally believed that that was only taking place “over there” and that “over here,” it would never happen. However, most writers exhibited a certain amount of nuance about it; one of Schachtel’s unnamed American Jewish characters displays the fear that “We Jews in America may yet suffer from this renewed outburst of anti-Semitism abroad.” This nuance, however, was not present in Berger’s account of the Dreyfus Affair. Berger follows the same cues as Reichert and the other optimists, when he writes that “Where, in all the world, a century before, would more than half a nation have come to the defense of a Jew?” However, he then proceeds to integrate it into his extreme vision of Jewish history, continuing to write, “Had Herzl possessed a knowledge of history he would have seen in the Dreyfus case a brilliant, heartening proof of the success

[611] Schachtel, The Eternal People, p. 34.
Chapter 5: Constructing a Usable Past for Non-Zionism and Anti-Zionism

of emancipation.”\textsuperscript{612} This is in opposition to the other writers, who while generally
optimistic do not in the same breath demean the Zionists as confused and
unknowledgeable. They may have disagreed with the Zionists, but understood that they
were simply reacting to their own environment.

What is most striking about Berger’s departure from the mainstream Reform
historiography is his conception of the absence of Jewish peoplehood. Whereas, as Nils
Roemer remarks, Abraham Geiger and Heinrich Graetz “regarded the fact that \textit{Judentum}
denoted a religion and a people as a major advantage,”\textsuperscript{613} Berger denied that Jews \textit{ever}
constituted a people. The mainstream Reform historiography, in opposition, maintained
that the Jews were a people \textit{at least} during the time of the united kingdom of David and
Solomon. And even amongst those who were “non-Zionists,” like Morgenstern, who
believed that since the exile, Jews did not consist of a nation, there was the possibility
that a nation could arise once again if a Jewish state were reconstituted.\textsuperscript{614} This
question—namely, what is a Jew, a nation, a people, or a religion?—was asked
repeatedly and the answers that are given will serve to clarify the positions of these rabbis
as well as how they used the tools of history to back up their claims. Morgenstern argues
that the Jews were once a nation but became a “people” with transnational characteristics,
and furthermore states that it was this transformation that enabled the Jews’ survival in

\textsuperscript{612} Berger, \textit{The Jewish Dilemma}, p. 207.
\textsuperscript{613} Nils Roemer, \textit{Jewish Scholarship and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Germany}, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{614} “True, Israel was a political nation once, and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility,
or even of probability, particularly in the light of developments during the last few
months, that a section of our people may once again become a political nation of some
kind in the land of Israel’s first sojourning. But political national existence, whether of
the past or of the future, is merely an incident of Israel’s historic existence, and not at all
its essence, so we maintain.” (Morgenstern, \textit{As a Mighty Stream}, p. 394.)
the Diaspora. David Philipson argues that the Jews are a “religious people” not because of the Jews’ history but because of their worldwide mission to effect the religious improvement of all peoples of the world, and furthermore that “what was once disintegrated can not be reintegrated. The Jewish nation, as a political entity, was disintegrated, it can not be reintegrated,” arguing for a belief in the final verdict in history that turned the Jews from a transitory national entity into an eternal religious one. Rabbi Israel I. Mattuck of London, England, expressed his agreement in his 1939 book entitled *What Are the Jews*. Mattuck argued that the Jews, when they were a nation under the Kingdom of Israel, were by nature a religious nation, as opposed to a political (or, to use his term, “politico-national”) one, which explains not only their failure as a state but also their nature in the Diaspora. On top of that, Mattuck maintained that even as Jews were highly divided religiously, culturally and linguistically, “In spite of these differences and variations, there is a measure of unity comprehending [sic] all Jews. It is a curious kind of unity.” In comparison to Elmer Berger, who denies all of this and argues that the Jews were never unified, these writers start to sound moderate indeed.

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615 “Israel is a people and has been a people from the very moment of its entrance into Palestine over three thousand years ago. Until the promulgation of Jeremiah’s doctrine of the new covenant and, even more specifically, until the reformation of Ezra and Nehemiah, Israel was a nationalistic people, little, if any, different from the other adjacent, nationalistic peoples and, like them, in constant danger of eventual extermination and disappearance through conquest, massacre and exile at the hands of the successive world-empires.” (Morgenstern, *Nation, People, Religion*, pp. 18–19.)
616 Philipson, “Judaism—Race, Nationality or Religion?”
618 Ibid., pp. 18–28.
In this chapter, we have considered Morgenstern in depth\(^6\) (though not exclusively) because not only did specific details from his history of ancient Israel presented at the 1915 CCAR convention trickle down into the historical writings of other contemporary Reform rabbis, but he also presents an excellent foil to Elmer Berger. According to Ofer Shiff, Morgenstern “represented the most markedly universalistic flank of the Reform Movement;”\(^7\) this claim is inaccurate so long as the Council members remained a part of the Reform movement, but otherwise it is fairly truthful. Morgenstern, as the President of HUC, represented the Reform establishment and as such the more “mainstream” form of universalistic Reform beliefs. Berger, on the other hand, held particularly extreme views. Furthermore, due to Morgenstern’s copious writing regiment, his viewpoints are extremely well documented, and in this literature we find that Morgenstern was a person whose viewpoint regarding Zionism and the State of Israel was mutable. Similar to other non-Zionist Reform rabbis who lived well into the post-1948 era, he was eventually overcome by “a natural pride … in all that [the State of Israel] accomplished in its remarkable history;”\(^8\) by 1965, he was decidedly pro-Israel, even if he maintained concerns similar to the Reform movement in the twenty-first century about religious pluralism in the State of Israel.\(^9\) This is the exact opposite of Elmer Berger, who in latter days was closely associated with the Arab camp.\(^10\)


\(^7\) Ofer Shiff, Survival through Integration: American Reform Jewish Universalism and the Holocaust (Boston: Brill, 2005), p. 3.

\(^8\) Morgenstern, “What Are We Jews?,” p. 20.

\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^10\) Elmer Berger, Memoirs of an Anti-Zionist Jew (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1978); Berger, Peace for Palestine.
In the sources discussed above, we see a wide variety of opinions about Jewish history, its nature and content, within the Reform movement, even among those who generally saw themselves as “non-Zionists.” At the same time, there is an uncanny similarity in opinion amongst leaders on a number of key issues relating to the foundation of the people of Israel, the primacy of religious reform, and the nature of Zionism and emancipation in the modern period that leads to the conclusion that there was an underlying historiographical basis for the conception of Reform non-Zionism of the founders of the American Council for Judaism. In truth, the historical narratives that Berger developed in *The Jewish Dilemma* and *A Partisan History of Judaism* do not break so much on the level of minutiae with Morgenstern and the other Reform history-writers; it is in his conclusion as to the nature of the Jews where he makes his departure from the pack. At the same time as many of his Reform rabbinical colleagues might agree with the facts themselves, he arranges them in a way that takes the opinions of non-Zionism to an extreme. He picks and chooses his facts not strictly to educate, but to reach a predetermined ideological endpoint. Throughout this historiographical literature, Berger was not alone in using Jewish history as a tool to construct a usable past, but he was the only one to utilize in as openly a “partisan” a way. He justifies his perspective due to the “partisan” nature of religion, but whether or not others make use of the same tactics, in his writing we see a level of extremism that alienated other rabbis who could see through the historical narrative he constructed and realize the true nature of the American Council for Judaism, separate from what was mainstream in contemporary classical Reform Judaism.

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Conclusion

In 2005, Rabbi Howard A. Berman took the reins of the American Council for Judaism with a clear mandate to shift the focus towards advocacy for classical Reform. By 2008, however, Berman left the Council to establish the Society for Classical Reform Judaism, taking with him the Council’s treasurer, B. H. Levy, Jr., and about half the board. Differences of opinion apparently persisted within the Council over the organization’s agenda, but the split was not a product of infighting. Rather, it was based on a sober assessment of the potential for the success of the Council’s re-organized mission to promote classical Reform. According to Berman, pursuing that agenda under the auspices of the Council would “meet significant resistance because of the public’s perceptions of what the Council was and might be.” A mutual decision was reached whereby the Council would focus on its traditional dissent with Zionism, and the Society would be established to champion classical Reform.625

In light of the history of the American Council of Judaism, it is tempting to compare and contrast Berman’s initiative with the Council’s original visions for the American Council for Judaism. This is not the place for an extended treatment of the Council’s recent history, but one element that is especially pertinent to this thesis is Berman’s goal to build a board of directors that is half lay and half rabbinical. Considering that the Society is committed to the “progressive spiritual values, rich

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intellectual foundations, and distinctive worship traditions. It would seem imperative to involve both Reform rabbis and cantors. It remains to be seen how effective the Society for Classical Reform Judaism will be, but it appears that they recognize the important role the membership plays in steering an organization’s direction. While some might argue that those at the helm have full control of the course, as I hope has been effectively illustrated, this is not exactly the case. Just as the rabbinical exodus that took place in the Council’s earliest years transformed the organization’s character, a conscious effort on behalf of the Society’s leaders to foster the proper membership to achieve their goals may prove effective.

The impact of the Council’s historical legacy upon Berman’s choice to split from it is also telling. Evidently, the Council’s reputation is hard to live down: the Council’s earliest organizational faux pas apparently set a precedent. This “baggage,” which the Society for Classical Reform Judaism seeks to avoid, was the result of the close relationships between the rabbis and their discontent over the Council’s path. This trend continued in the years after the establishment of the State of Israel: in the words of Dr. Albert Belton, who served as the Council’s Research Director from 1956–1959, the Council “became the American Headquarters of an international conspiracy dedicated to the destruction of Israel.”

One reason why the Council was unsuccessful is simply personal issues. Given the closely interconnected network of the founding Council rabbis, it might be easy to discount this group of rabbis as not representative of the wider consensus that ultimately

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627 Draft letter from Dr. Albert B. Belton to Leonard R. Sussman, 12 April 1959, ACJP-C, box 1, folder 10.
rejected the Council’s proposals for Jewish life. Even if the various rabbis’ criticisms of the Council seem insignificant, they contributed to a brand that years later inhibited Berman’s agenda and caused him to seek its realization elsewhere. These rabbis’ close social and professional network only served to intensify and magnify these effects. In the Council’s attempt to essentially “reboot,” we can clearly see the intersection between intellectual and organizational history that plays itself out in this thesis: while some may like to believe that a free marketplace of ideas exists in which intellectual discourse continues unimpeded, the personal relations that an organizational history uncovers—both positive and negative in nature—reveal just how closely the proliferation of ideas is related to the personal affects and rapport of the individuals espousing them.

The other reason why the Council was less than successful was the divisions within the Council that at bottom were the result of deep disagreements over the nature of the Jewish people and Jewish history. In the aftermath of the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, these differences of opinion were thrown into sharp relief. For this reason, the Council—or more accurately, Elmer Berger’s beliefs—eventually found itself in the margins of the American Jewish Community. Years and years of negative publicity convinced many in the Jewish world that the Council was best associated with enemies of the State of Israel, a preconception which apparently continues to haunt the Council’s leadership.

Whatever Berger’s nonconformist views, he proved to have some keen insight. However, he combined his perception with an invective that turned away potential allies. Berger was head-on in his reading of classical Zionism, even if he tended to focus upon its most radical elements, ignoring the movement’s heterogeneity, and was subsequently
proven unable to reconcile his reading with moderate contemporary expressions. In May 1942, he also correctly predicted—though not without a sharply opinionated style that may turn readers away from his startling intuition—one direction in which the Reform movement would take their relationship with the State of Israel. He wrote, “Someday Reform can … become a Reform Mizrahi, ineffectually lost in a political movement, futilely and tragically trying to create Reform Judaism, I suppose, in Palestine.”\textsuperscript{628} Furthermore, he was correct that the discourse over the nature of the Jewish people was disappearing. His belief that this silencing was a plot to control the future of the Jews may be too sinister to wholly accredit, but even a cursory examination of the Jewish world demonstrates that the essence of the discourse has changed dramatically. According to Berman, “wild-eyed anti-Zionism” no longer drives the Council; rather the modern-day Council has become more moderate, seeing itself as a dissenting voice on the centrality of Israel in American Jewish life and identity.\textsuperscript{629} Furthermore, the concept that Jews consist of a “people” is, for the most part, considered an untouchable “third rail” in twenty-first century Jewish life. Naturally, a vibrant debate continues over the nature of this “people,” but at the very least the organized Jewish community, as evidenced by its support for Birthright Israel, has decided that the Jews are a people centered in Israel.

This century’s debate over the nature of the Jewish people brings forward the ways in which both sides have changed. As mentioned, the Council has ostensibly abandoned “anti-Zionism” for a more moderate stand of “dissent.” On the other hand, many Zionists have decided that the State of Israel is the “center” of a worldwide Jewish people, demonstrating a shift towards the cultural Zionist writer Ahad Ha’am. Still, even

\textsuperscript{628} Elmer Berger to Louis Wolsey, 14 May 1942, LWP-C, box 1, folder 9, p. 4. 
\textsuperscript{629} Howard A. Berman, in discussion with the author, 20 March 2009.
Conclusion

as mainstream Zionism drops the “negation of the Diaspora,” which delegitimated all Diasporic existence and culture, for some Israelis, the Jews are—and have always been—a “nation.” This represents a triumph of Zionist ideology, in the sense that for many Jews basic tenets of Zionism have outgrown the movement and become basic assumptions.

What we have thus witnessed in the years since 1948 is a broadening and shifting of the moderate viewpoints within modern Jewish discourse on the nature of the Jews. Ultimately, the Zionists succeeded in creating and expanding a middle road that American Jews, some of whom might otherwise be uncomfortable associating with a foreign entity, could tread. Berger, sticking to his mantra that Jews were “confused,” failed to create this middle ground and thus shift the realm of the moderate, where his thousands of supposedly silent anti-Zionist American Jews could find their voice. But in the end, the “non-Zionist movement” that the Council hoped to foster was doomed to failure, not because the Holocaust proved classical Reform optimism wrong, but because Zionism’s success has been the Council’s failure. Whereas Zionism has proven able to create a narrative of Jewish history and life that speaks to Jews of the middle road, the competing forces within the Council ultimately shattered it and left only a completely committed but miniscule core that, lacking the broad range necessary to reach out to mainstream American Jews, retreated into extremism.

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630 This can be seen vividly in the pro-Zionist resolutions of the early 1920s proposed in the CCAR. In each successive resolution, the Zionists attempted to create space for cooperation with their opponents. In particular, these resolutions were signed by mixed groups of Zionists and non-Zionists, exemplified by the 1922 resolution, co-sponsored by Isaac Landman and the Zionist rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, as opposed to another resolution on Palestine in 1923 that was sponsored by the non-Zionists Henry Berkowitz and David Philipson. (Central Conference of American Rabbis, Thirty-Second Annual Convention, p. 81; Central Conference of American Rabbis, Thirty-Third Annual Convention, p. 92.)
Chronology of Events

1873   Founding of Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC).
1875   Founding of Hebrew Union College (HUC).
1885   Establishment of Pittsburgh Platform.
1890   Founding of Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR).
1897   First Zionist Congress meets in Basel, Switzerland.
1890   Founding of Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR).
1897   First Zionist Congress meets in Basel, Switzerland.
1917   Balfour Declaration establishes British support for a “Jewish national
       home” in Palestine.
1918–1919  Rabbis Henry Berkowitz and David Philipson attempt to form League
           of Americans (Against Zionism).
1935   CCAR passes “neutrality resolution.”
1937   CCAR establish the “Columbus Platform.”
1939   Britain publishes the MacDonald White Paper, limiting Jewish
       immigration to Palestine.
1940–1942  Rabbis Louis Wolsey and William Fineshriber attempt to establish a
           Reform magazine, to be entitled “The Jewish Advance.”

1942

February 27   CCAR passes “Jewish army resolution,” ostensibly supporting
              creation of an independent Jewish army.
March 18     Meeting at Congregation Rodeph Shalom (Philadelphia) of dissident
             rabbis regarding “Jewish army resolution.”
March 30, April 6  Further planning meetings for Atlantic City conference.
April 15    Louis Wolsey invites non-Zionist rabbis to Atlantic City meeting.
May        Rabbi James G. Heller, CCAR president, attempts to convince non-
          Zionist rabbis to cancel their meeting.
May 6–11    Zionist leaders meet in New York City and establish the Biltmore
          Program, explicitly declaring intent to create Jewish state.
June 1–2   Meeting of Non-Zionist Rabbis in Atlantic City.
Chronology of Events

June–August  Rabbi William Fineshriber attempts to collect signatures for Statement of Principles presented at Atlantic City.
June 29  Rabbi David Wice resigns.
August 30  Atlantic City Statement of Principles published in *New York Times* with 89 rabbis’ signatures attached.
November 2, 23  Rabbis meet in Philadelphia, choose the name “The American Council for Judaism,” and consider future action.
November 24  U.S. Department of State authorizes Rabbi Stephen S. Wise to officially confirm rumors regarding Nazi Holocaust.
December 1  Rabbi Abraham Shaw of Baltimore resigns from Council.
December 7  Lay-Rabbinical Session of the Provisional Committee for the Formation of the American Council for Judaism at Hotel New Yorker, New York City; Elmer Berger elected as executive director.
December 24  Rabbi Abraham Shusterman of Baltimore resigns from Council.

1943

January 5  Heller and Wolsey meet in Baltimore. Heller offers a deal: The Council will “liquidate” itself, and the CCAR will make the neutrality resolution a bylaw. Council rabbis will vote on proposal by mail.
January 26  Rabbis Jonah B. Wise and Julian Morgenstern resign.
February 4  Council’s rabbinical members vote to continue the Council.
April 29  Lessing J. Rosenwald joins the Council as President.
June  CCAR passes resolution denouncing the Council.
September 1  American Jewish Congress, a “parliamentary” Jewish representative organization, endorses the Biltmore Program.
October 8  Rabbi Irving Reichert promotes Council in his Yom Kippur sermon.
November 23  Houston’s Congregation Beth Israel establishes “Basic Principles” which strip Zionist members of voting rights.
Chronology of Events

1944

April 14  Rabbi Ira E. Sanders of Little Rock, Arkansas, resigns in response to Houston Basic Principles.

July 3–5  Correspondence between Rabbi David Goldberg, Berger’s assistant, and Martha Silverman, a university student, over relationship between American Council for Judaism and religion.

December 4  Goldberg-Silverman correspondence published.

December 14  Rabbi Irving Reichert resigns as National Vice President but retains Council membership.

1945

January 5  Rabbi Louis Wolsey resigns from Council.


September  Elmer Berger publishes The Jewish Dilemma.

Nov. 29, 1947  United Nations votes to partition Palestine.

May 14, 1948  State of Israel declares independence.

May 15, 1948  Louis Wolsey addresses Rodeph Shalom Men’s Club on topic “Why I Withdrew from the American Council for Judaism.”

1950  Ben-Gurion–Blaustein agreement signed, regarding relationship between State of Israel and American Jewish community.

1951  Elmer Berger publishes A Partisan History of Judaism.

July 23, 1956  Rabbi Irving Reichert officially resigns Council membership.

August 29, 1968  Elmer Berger officially resigns from the American Council for Judaism, and establishes American Jewish Alternatives to Zionism.

December 1968  Congregation Beth Israel officially repeals Basic Principles.

October 5, 1996  Elmer Berger passes away.

2008  Founding of Society for Classical Reform Judaism.
Appendix I: Pittsburgh Platform (1885)

In view of the wide divergence of opinion and of the conflicting ideas prevailing in Judaism today, we, as representatives of Reform Judaism in America in continuation of the work begun at Philadelphia in 1869, unite upon the following principles:

First—We recognize in every religion an attempt to grasp the Infinite One, and in every mode, source or book of revelation held sacred in any religious system the consciousness of the indwelling of God in man. We hold that Judaism presents the highest conception of the God-idea as taught in our holy Scriptures and developed and spiritualized by the Jewish teachers in accordance with the moral and philosophical progress of their respective ages. We maintain that Judaism preserved and defended amid continual struggles and trials and under enforced isolation this God-idea as the central religious truth for the human race.

Second—We recognize in the Bible the record of the consecration of the Jewish people to its mission as priest of the One God, and value it as the most potent instrument

“Authentic Report of the Proceedings of the Rabbinical Conference Held at Pittsburg, Nov. 16, 17, 18, 1885,” pp. 107–109. Also see Year Book of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 5651/1890–91, pp. 120–122; Central Conference of American Rabbis, Forty-Sixth Annual Convention, pp. 198–200; “The Pittsburgh Platform - 1885,” http://ccarnet.org/Articles/?id=39&pge_id=1606. It is notable that there exist small differences between the various published editions of the Pittsburgh Platform. Most of these differences are of a typographical nature related to punctuation and capitalization of terms—and similar errata are extant in the various printed editions of the 1935 Columbus Platform as well—but two particular changes are more notable. In the second plank, “divine providence and justice dealing with man” is rendered “divine providence dealing with men” (emphasis added) in the edition published on www.ccarnet.org. In addition, the fifth plank, which discusses Jewish nationalism, declares in the original that Reform Judaism does not expect to return to “sacrificial worship under the administration of the sons of Aaron” (emphasis added), while later editions simply state “sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron.”
of religious and moral instruction. We hold that the modern discoveries of scientific 
researches in the domains of nature and history are not antagonistic to the doctrines of 
Judaism, the Bible reflecting the primitive ideas of its own age and at times clothing its 
conception of divine providence and justice dealing with man in miraculous narratives.

Third—We recognize in the Mosaic legislation a system of training the Jewish 
people for its mission during its national life in Palestine, and today we accept as binding 
only its moral laws and maintain only such ceremonies as elevate and sanctify our lives, 
but reject all such as are not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization.

Fourth—We hold that all such Mosaic and Rabbinical laws as regulate diet, 
priestly purity and dress originated in ages and under the influence of ideas entirely 
foreign to our present mental and spiritual state. They fail to impress the modern Jew with 
a spirit of priestly holiness; their observance in our days is apt rather to obstruct than to 
further modern spiritual elevation.

Fifth—We recognize in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect 
the approaching of the realization of Israel’s great Messianic hope for the establishment of 
the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a 
nation but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, or a 
sacrificial worship under the administration of the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of 
any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.

Sixth—We recognize in Judaism a progressive religion, ever striving to be in 
accord with the postulates of reason. We are convinced of the utmost necessity of 
preserving the historical identity with our great past. Christianity and Islam being 
daughter-religions of Judaism, we appreciate their mission to aid in the spreading of
monotheistic and moral truth. We acknowledge that the spirit of broad humanity of our age is our ally in the fulfillment of our mission, and therefore, we extend the hand of fellowship to all who co-operate with us in the establishment of the reign of truth and righteousness among men.

Seventh—We reassert the doctrine of Judaism, that the soul of man is immortal, grounding the belief on the divine nature of human spirit, which forever finds bliss in righteousness and misery in wickedness. We reject as ideas not rooted in Judaism, the beliefs both in bodily resurrection and in Gehenna and Eden (hell and paradise) as abodes for everlasting punishment or reward.

Eighth—In full accordance with the spirit of Mosaic legislation which strives to regulate the relations between rich and poor, we deem it our duty to participate in the great task of modern times, to solve on the basis of justice and righteousness the problems presented by the contrasts and evils of the present organization of society.
Appendix II: Neutrality Resolution (1935)

*As Originally Proposed:*

In the past, despite the fact that for many years members of the Central Council of American Rabbis have believed that there is no inherent incompatibility between Reform Judaism and Zionism, this Conference has repeatedly adopted resolutions expressing its deep dissent from the principles and policies of the latter. We believe that the time has come for a change in the attitude these former actions implied.

When there is an honest difference of opinion in respect to the nature of Reform Judaism, anti-Zionists should not force their views down the throats of Zionists, nor in turn should Zionists now demand that the Conference, at least in the present status of the problem, commit itself to the Zionist philosophy and program. A policy of neutrality and of mutual respect and tolerance should be fostered.

We cannot blot out the record of the past. But we can determine our present stand. Be it, therefore, *resolved* that the Central Conference of American Rabbis as a body harbors at present no opposition to Zionism and will permit to every constituent member the right to determine his own spiritual convictions and his own practical stand upon this important problem.

*As Passed:*

Whereas, At certain foregoing conventions of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, resolutions have been adopted in opposition to Zionism, and

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Whereas, We believe that such an attitude no longer reflects the sentiment of a very substantial section of the Conference membership, and†

Whereas, We are persuaded that acceptance or rejection of the Zionist program should be left to the determination of the individual members of the Conference themselves, therefore

Be It Resolved, That the Central Conference of American Rabbis takes no official stand on the subject of Zionism; and be it further

Resolved, That in keeping with its oft-announced intentions, the Central Conference of American Rabbis will continue to co-operate in the upbuilding of Palestine, and in the economic, cultural, and particularly spiritual tasks confronting the growing and evolving Jewish community there.

† This paragraph was ultimately dropped from the resolution, as per Morris Newman’s suggestion. ([Ibid., pp. 110–111.])
Appendix III: Columbus Platform (1937)

In view of the changes that have taken place in the modern world and the consequent need of stating anew the teachings of Reform Judaism, the Central Conference of American Rabbis makes the following declaration of principles. It presents them not as a fixed creed but as a guide for the progressive elements of Jewry.

I. JUDAISM AND ITS FOUNDATIONS

1. Nature of Judaism. Judaism is the historical religious experience of the Jewish people. Though growing out of Jewish life, its message is universal, aiming at the union and perfection of mankind under the sovereignty of God. Reform Judaism recognizes the principle of progressive development in religion and consciously applies this principle to spiritual as well as to cultural and social life.

Judaism welcomes all truth, whether written in the pages of scripture or deciphered from the records of nature. The new discoveries of science, while replacing the older scientific views underlying our sacred literature, do not conflict with the essential spirit of religion as manifested in the consecration of man’s will, heart and mind to the service of God and of humanity.

2. God. The heart of Judaism and its chief contribution to religion is the doctrine of the One, living God, who rules the world through law and love. In Him all existence has its creative source and mankind its ideal of conduct. Through transcending time and

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space, He is the indwelling Presence of the world. We worship Him as the Lord of the universe and as our merciful Father.

3. Man. Judaism affirms that man is created in the Divine image. His spirit is immortal. He is an active co-worker with God. As a child of God, he is endowed with moral freedom and is charged with the responsibility of overcoming evil and striving after ideal ends.

4. Torah. God reveals Himself not only in the majesty, beauty and orderliness of nature, but also in the vision and moral striving of the human spirit. Revelation is a continuous process, confined to no one group and to no one age. Yet the people of Israel, through its prophets and sages, achieved unique insight in the realm of religious truth. The Torah, both written and oral, enshrines Israel’s ever-growing consciousness of God and of the moral law. It preserves the historical precedents, sanctions and norms of Jewish life, and seeks to mould it in the patterns of goodness and of holiness. Being products of historical processes, certain of its laws have lost their binding force with the passing of the conditions that called them forth. But as a depository of permanent spiritual ideals, the Torah remains the dynamic source of the life of Israel. Each age has the obligation to adapt the teachings of the Torah to its basic needs in consonance with the genius of Judaism.

5. Israel. Judaism is the soul of which Israel is the body. Living in all parts of the world, Israel has been held together by the ties of a common history, and above all, by the heritage of faith. Though we recognize in the group loyalty of Jews who have become estranged from our religious tradition, a bond which still unites them with us, we
maintain that it is by its religion and for its religion that the Jewish people has lived. The non-Jew who accepts our faith is welcomed as a full member of the Jewish community.

In all lands where our people live, they assume and seek to share loyally the full duties and responsibilities of citizenship and to create seats of Jewish knowledge and religion. In the rehabilitation of Palestine, the land hallowed by memories and hopes, we behold the promise of renewed life for many of our brethren. We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its upbuilding as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life.

Throughout the ages it has been Israel’s mission to witness to the Divine in the face of every form of paganism and materialism. We regard it as our historic task to cooperate with all men in the establishment of the kingdom of God, of universal brotherhood, Justice, truth and peace on earth. This is our Messianic goal.

2. Ethics

6. Ethics and Religion. In Judaism religion and morality blend into an indissoluble unity. Seeking God means to strive after holiness, righteousness and goodness. The love of God is incomplete without the love of one’s fellowmen. Judaism emphasizes the kinship of the human race, the sanctity and worth of human life and personality and the right of the individual to freedom and to the pursuit of his chosen vocation. Justice to all, irrespective of race, sect or class, is the inalienable right and the inescapable obligation of all. The state and organized government exist in order to further these ends.
7. Social Justice. Judaism seeks the attainment of a just society by the application of its teachings to the economic order, to industry and commerce, and to national and international affairs. It aims at the elimination of man-made misery and suffering, of poverty and degradation, of tyranny and slavery, of social inequality and prejudice, of ill-will and strife. It advocates the promotion of harmonious relations between warring classes on the basis of equity and justice, and the creation of conditions under which human personality may flourish. It pleads for the safeguarding of childhood against exploitation. It champions the cause of all who work and of their right to an adequate standard of living, as prior to the rights of property. Judaism emphasizes the duty of charity, and strives for a social order which will protect men against the material disabilities of old age, sickness and unemployment.

8. Peace. Judaism, from the days of the prophets, has proclaimed to mankind the ideal of universal peace. The spiritual and physical disarmament of all nations has been one of its essential teachings. It abhors all violence and relies upon moral education, love and sympathy to secure human progress. It regards justice as the foundation of the well-being of nations and the condition of enduring peace. It urges organized international action for disarmament, collective security and world peace.

3. RELIGIOUS PRACTICE

9. The Religious Life. Jewish life is marked by consecration to these ideals of Judaism. It calls for faithful participation in the life of the Jewish community as it finds expression in home, synagog [sic] and school and in all other agencies that enrich Jewish life and promote its welfare.
The Home has been and must continue to be a stronghold of Jewish life, hallowed by the spirit of love and reverence, by moral discipline and religious observance and worship.

The Synagog [sic] is the oldest and most democratic institution in Jewish life. It is the prime communal agency by which Judaism is fostered and preserved. It links the Jews of each community and unites them with all Israel.

The perpetuation of Judaism as a living force depends upon religious knowledge and upon the Education of each new generation in our rich cultural and spiritual heritage.

Prayer is the voice of religion, the language of faith and aspiration. It directs man’s heart and mind Godward, voices the needs and hopes of the community and reaches out after goals which invest life with supreme value. To deepen the spiritual life of our people, we must cultivate the traditional habit of communion with God through prayer in both home and synagog [sic].

Judaism as a way of life requires in addition to its moral and spiritual demands, the preservation of the Sabbath, festivals and Holy Days, the retention and development of such customs, symbols and ceremonies as possess inspirational value, the cultivation of distinctive forms of religious art and music and the use of Hebrew, together with the vernacular, in our worship and instruction.

These timeless aims and ideals of our faith we present anew to a confused and troubled world. We call upon our fellow Jews to rededicate themselves to them, and, in harmony with all men, hopefully and courageously to continue Israel’s eternal quest after God and His kingdom.
Appendix IV: Jewish Army Resolution (1942)

As Originally Proposed:

Whereas, the free peoples of the world are now engaged in a war for decency, justice and good faith in international relations, and for the defense of their homes and their freedoms against oppression and slavery

And whereas, the Jewish population of Palestine is eager to defend its soil and its home to the last man,

And whereas, despite its formal approval of the plan, the Government of Great Britain has still failed to avail itself of the offer of the Jewish Agency for Palestine to establish a military unit based on Palestine, composed of Palestinian and stateless European Jews,

Be It Resolved, that the Central Conference of American Rabbis adds its voice to the demand that the Jewish population of Palestine be given the privilege of establishing a military force which will fight under its own banner on the side of the democracies, under allied command, to defend its own land and the near East to the end that the victory of democracy may be hastened everywhere.

As Passed:

Whereas, the free peoples of the world are now engaged in a war for decency, justice and good faith in international relations, and for the defense of their homes and their freedoms against oppression and slavery

Appendix IV: Jewish Army Resolution (1942)

And whereas, the Jewish population of Palestine is eager to defend its soil and its home to the last man,

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Central Conference of American Rabbis is in complete sympathy with the demand of the Jews of Palestine that they be given the opportunity to fight in defense of their homeland on the side of the democracies under allied command to the end that the victory of democracy may be hastened everywhere.
Appendix V: Atlantic City Statement of Principles and Signatories (June 1942)

We, Rabbis in American Israel, who believe in the universalism of Judaism’s ethical and spiritual values and teachings, express our hearty agreement with the following Statement drawn up by those who convened in Atlantic City, June 1st and 2nd, 1942, for the purpose of giving voice to our convictions and to discuss ways and means of giving greater emphasis in Jewish life and thought to those doctrines and of securing wider recognition and appreciation of them among our neighbors.

The special reason for our gathering is in the growing secularism in American Jewish life, the absorption of large numbers of Jewish nationalistic endeavors and the tendency to reduce the religious basis of Jewish life to a place of secondary importance. A further reason for taking counsel together is in our realization that at this time more than ever all men for their own good and the good of mankind should give every emphasis to those moral and religious values and principles that transcend boundary lines and hold all men in a common bond of human fellowship.

(1) We believe that the present tragic experiences of mankind abundantly demonstrate that no single people or group can hope to live in freedom and security when their neighbors are in the grip of evil forces either as perpetrators or sufferers. We hold therefore, that the solution of the social, economic and political problems of one people are inextricably bound up with those of others. To this general rule the problems of our Jewish people constitute no exception, though

unhappily we Jews are often the first victims of the distemper of peoples and suffer most from the maladjustments of society.

(2) We declare our unwavering faith in the humane and righteous principles that underlie the democratic way of life, principles first envisaged by the Prophets of Israel and embodied in our American Bill of Rights. In keeping with these principles we hold that the Jewish people have the same right to live securely anywhere in the world and to enjoy the fruit of their labor in peace as have men of every other faith and historic background. We fervently hope and earnestly trust that in the coming peace programs that right will be fully recognized, unequivocally expressed, and inextricably woven into the texture of the new world order.

(3) Realizing how dear Palestine is to the Jewish soul, and how important Palestinian rehabilitation is toward relieving the pressing problems of our distressed people, we stand ready to render unstinted aid to our brethren [sic] in their economic, cultural and spiritual endeavors in that country. But in the light of our universalistic interpretation of Jewish history and destiny, and also because of our concern for the welfare and status of the Jewish people living in other parts of the world, we are unable to subscribe to or support the political emphasis now paramount in the Zionist program. We cannot but believe that Jewish nationalism tends to confuse our fellowmen about their place and historic role to live as a religious community wherever we may dwell. Such a spiritual role is especially voiced by Reform Judaism in its emphasis upon the eternal prophetic principles of
life and thought, principles through which alone Judaism and the Jew can hope to endure and bear witness to the universal God.

The maladjustments of society and the consequent sufferings are at bottom due to man’s forgetfulness of the elementary decencies and virtues and to the violation of moral and spiritual principles that have universal vitality. It is incumbent, therefore, upon all of us, Jews and non-Jews alike, to stress to the utmost in thought, word and deed those teachings of our own religion that are all-inclusive, if we would permanently correct the evils that so often bring suffering to mankind.

Reform Judaism, as we conceive it, is the contemporary manifestation of the eternal prophetic spirit of Israel, through which alone Judaism and the Jew life to witness the universal God.

Henry Barnston, Houston, Texas
Samuel H. Baron, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.
Elmer Berger, Flint, Michigan
Louis Binstock, Chicago, Ill.
Sheldon H. Blank, Cincinnati, Ohio
Joseph Blatt, Oklahoma City, Okla.
I. Mortimer Bloom, New York, N. Y.
Edward N. Calisch, Richmond, Va.
Simon R. Cohen, Richmond, Va.
Simon Cohn, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Beryl D. Cohon, Boston, Mass.
Abraham Cronbach, Cincinnati, Ohio
Max C. Currick, Erie, Pa.
Julian B. Feibelman, New Orleans, La.
Morris M. Feuerlicht, Indianapolis, Ind.
Morton C. Fierman, Washington, D. C.
Solomon A. Fineberg, Mt. Vernon, N. Y.
Solomon Foster, Newark, N. J.
S[amuel] J. Levinson, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Aaron L. Weinstein, Jamaica, L. I., N. Y.
†David H. Wice, Newark, N. J.
Jonah B. Wise, New York, N. Y.
Louis Witt, Dayton, Ohio
Samuel J. Wolk, Brooklyn, N. Y.
Nathan Stern, New York, N. Y.
Allan Tarshish, Hazelton, Pa.
Maurice Thorner, Jersey City, N. J.
Benjamin A. Tinter, Ft. Monmouth, N. J.
Leo E. Turitz, Bradford, Pa.
Samuel M. Silver, Univ of Maryland
Herman E. Snyder, Springfield, Ill.
George Solomon, Savannah, Ga.
Solomon E. Starrels, Albuquerque, N. M.
Jacob M. Rothschild, Pittsburgh, Pa.

† Regarding the signatures of David H. Wice and Eugene Mannheimer, see n. 192.
Appendix V: Atlantic City Statement of Principles and Signatories (1942)

Leo M. Franklin, Detroit, Mich.
Ephraim Frisch, San Antonio, Texas
Norman Gerstenfeld, Washington, D. C.
Samuel H. Goldenson, New York, N. Y.
L. Elliott Graffman, Long Beach, Cal.
Milton Greenwald, Evansville, Ind.
Julius K. Gutmann, Danville, Va.
Carl N. Herman, West Palm Beach, Fla.
Abram Hirshberg, Chicago, Ill.
Maurice A. Hirshberg, Calumet City, Ill.
Samuel Hirshberg, Milwaukee, Wis.
Abraham Holtzberg, Trenton, N. J.
Samuel D. Hurwitz, Camp Wolters, Tex.
Pizer W. Jacobs, Blytheville, Ark.
David Jacobson, San Antonio, Texas
Louis A. Josephson, Cleveland, Miss.
Samuel Koch, Seattle, Wash.
Isaac Landman, Brooklyn, B. Y.
S[olomon] Landman, Kew Gardens, L. I., N. Y.
M. S. Lazaron, Baltimore, Md.
David Lefkowitz, Dallas, Texas
David Lefkowitz, Jr., Shreveport, La.
S. M. Lefkowitz, Camp Livingston, La.
Ira E. Sanders, Little Rock, Ark.
Samuel Sandmel, Chapel Hill, N. C.
Hyman J. Schachtel, New York, N. Y.
David D. Shor, Helena, Ark.
Abraham Shusterman, Baltimore, Md.
Joseph Rauch, Louisville, Ky.
Irving F. Reichert, San Francisco, Cal.
Victor E. Reichert, Cincinnati, Ohio
Max Reichler, Brooklyn, N. Y.
William Rosenau, Baltimore, Md.
Jerome Rosenbloom, New York, N. Y.
William F. Rosenblum, New York, N. Y.
Clifton H. Levy, New York, N. Y.
†Eugene Mannheimer, Des Moines, Ia.
Charles Mantiband, Williamsport, Pa.
David Marx, Atlanta, Ga.
Israel I. Mattuck, London, England
Julian Morgenstern, Cincinnati, Ohio
Nathan A. Perlmutter, New York, N. Y.
David Philipson, Cincinnati, Ohio
Isador E. Philo, Youngstown, Ohio
Appendix VI: Donations to “Non-Zionist Rabbis Fund” (14 October 1942)

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<th>Donor</th>
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<td>Central Synagog</td>
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Average donation: $16.21; Average donation of rabbis at Atlantic City: $32.05; Average donation of rabbis not at Atlantic City: $9.29.

Bibliography

Archives Consulted

ACJP-C  American Council for Judaism Papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio. Manuscript Collection 17.

ACJP-W  American Council for Judaism Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, University of Wisconsin in Madison.

DPP-C  David Philipson Papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio, Manuscript Collection 35.

HBP-C  Henry Berkowitz Papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio, Manuscript Collection 25.

HBPP-C  Houston Basic Principles Papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio, Manuscript Collection 132.

LWP-C  Louis Wolsey Papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio. Manuscript Collection 15.

MSLP-C  Morris S. Lazaron Papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio. Manuscript Collection 71.

SSWP-C  Stephen S. Wise Papers, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio. Manuscript Collection 49.

Interviews

Howard A. Berman, 20 March 2009.

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Chicago Daily Tribune.

Jewish Exponent (Philadelphia).


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———. The Flint Plan: A Program of Action for American Jews: Committee on Lay-Rabbinical Cooperation, 1942.

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