Zionism in the *Hebrew Union College Monthly*, 1896–1949

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Abstract

Much has been written on Reform Judaism's relationship to Zionism and its historical opposition to it through the nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, there has been little scholarship on the views of the students of Hebrew Union College (HUC), the Reform seminary established by Isaac Mayer Wise in Cincinnati in 1875. This thesis explores the evolution of Zionist thinking among the rabbinical students at HUC through their writings in the student-led journal, the *HUC Monthly*, from 1896 to 1949. The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter covers the early years of the journal, through the death of Isaac Mayer Wise and the first decade and a half of the twentieth century. Although Wise and his institution were vehemently anti-Zionist—as was the larger Reform world—there were still opportunities for the students to debate and explore Zionist thought and expression in the journal. The second chapter covers the years 1918–1935, just after the promulgation of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 and before the Reform movement embraced a much more nuanced view of Zionism with the passage of its 1937 Columbus Platform. In this period, there is a dramatic growth in the strength and popularity of the Zionist movement in America and worldwide. As a result, the HUC's rabbinical students showed stronger pro-Zionist leanings in their writing, even taking a more political stance on the subject. This is only strengthened with the rise of Nazism during the 1930s and, finally, with the establishment of the State of Israel in the late 1940s, as is discussed in the third chapter of the thesis. The findings of this thesis reveal how Zionist attitudes changed as students responded to developments in global world politics and to changes that took place internally at the College. This analysis helps us understand how Zionist thinking developed in the Reform world in America and at HUC—from one generation to the next. These essays concomitantly shed light on the concerns and excitement over the building of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine.

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Introduction

In 1896, the students of Hebrew Union College (HUC)—the Reform seminary in Cincinnati—started a periodical, *The HUC Monthly Journal*, that was published during the school year without any financial assistance or help from the Board of Governors. This initiative reflected the students' thoughts on the major issues of the day, including Zionism.[1] The purpose of this thesis is to explore the evolution of Zionist thinking among the rabbinical students at HUC through their writings and editorials in the journal from 1896 until 1949, just after the establishment of the State of Israel. Most of the articles were written by students, though HUC professors, alumni, and other important thought leaders of the time also contributed to its pages. Reading these articles sheds light on the discourse and interplay between the different thought leaders and students of the Reform movement and their changing attitudes towards Zionism.

This thesis will focus mainly on articles in the *HUC Monthly* that deal with Zionism, nationalism, and the Mission of Israel from the end of the 19th century to the creation of the modern state of Israel. In examining these articles chronologically, one can discern a definite change in attitude to the larger Zionist movement in America and abroad—as the Zionist movement gained in strength and popularity throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, the students reflected their growing embrace of the movement in their writings. The students who contributed to this journal were reacting to political developments in global world politics and to changes that took place in the College community. Reform rabbis in the field at this time taught that Reform Judaism's "Mission of Israel" was to be a "light to the nations." This assertion meant that Jews were obligated to bring their ethical heritage to all peoples. A

[1] Michael A. Meyer, "A Centennial History," in Samuel E. Karff, ed., *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976), 20.

universalistic mission that was inimical to the concept of Jewish nationalism. [2] Since this was the overarching message of the Reform Movement at the beginning of the century, many students remained anti-Zionist and wrote about Zionism through an exploratory lens while investigating how the Zionist movement relates to their own Jewish identities. Their confidence in their own Zionist beliefs, however, grew with the rise of the American Zionist movement headed by Louis Brandeis and by darkening realities for German and East-European Jewry during the 1930s and through the war years.

Reform Judaism and Zionism in the 19th Century

As early as 1845, many of the rabbinical thought leaders who influenced Reform Jewish ideology during the first half of the 19th century sought to extirpate the age-old prayerful longings for a return to Zion which Jews had recited during their daily prayers for more than a millennium. At the 1845 Frankfurt Conference, influential Reform leaders such as Rabbis Samuel Hirsch (1815-1889), David Einhorn (1809-1879) and Samuel Holdheim (1806-1860) asserted that all prayers that referenced a return to Jerusalem or the Holy Land were to be omitted from their prayer service because nationalism and statehood were incompatible with Reform ideology. A central point of concern for Reform Jews was seeing Palestine as *the* Jewish homeland for Jews. After the rise of Theodore Herzl (1860-1904) and the modern political Zionist movement, there were Reformers who were prepared to acknowledge that Palestine could serve as *a* refuge for oppressed Jews but not *the* Jewish homeland. In America, this idea was enshrined in the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 which stated: "We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a

[2] Michael A. Meyer, "Two Anomalous Reform Rabbis: The Brothers Jacob and Max Raisin," *The American Jewish Archives Journal* 68, no. 2 (2016): 1.

sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state." This philosophy became a core idea in the Reform movement through the 1890s and into the early decades of the twentieth century.[3]

As we will see throughout the chapters in this thesis, there were several approaches to understanding the Zionist movement. The two main approaches we will encounter in the *Monthly* were political and cultural Zionism. The notion of political Zionism, led by Austrian-born Theodore Herzl, was the idea of having a national homeland as a refuge for oppressed Jews around the world. Spiritual or cultural Zionism, meanwhile, aimed at forging a unity among Jews throughout the world with a spiritual/cultural center situated in Palestine. Cultural Zionists hoped to inspire a vibrant Judaism in the diaspora built on traditional ideals. In the late 19th century concerns arose among HUC's leadership around Herzl's brand of political Zionism. The founder and first president of the Hebrew Union College, Isaac Mayer Wise, was vehemently vocal about his anti-Zionist views and was passionate about the development of American Reform synagogues, traditions, and rituals. So zealous in this cause, Wise developed a new prayer book, *Minhag America*, which was compiled for American Reform worshipers. Wise, who had come completely under the spell of American nationalism with its basis in universal ideals, could not understand the Zionist aspirations of his European counterparts. Wise did not want to establish a national homeland for Jews in Palestine. He wanted to promote the portable and universal ideals of Judaism in America where Jews could experience freedom from oppression.

All discussions of American Reform Judaism and Zionism in the nineteenth century begin with the Reform movement's entrenched institutional opposition. At the 1869 Philadelphia Rabbinical Conference, the 1885 Pittsburgh Rabbinical Conference, the 1897 meeting of the

[3] Naomi Cohen, "The Reaction of Reform Judaism in America to Political Zionism (1897–1922)," *The Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 40, no. 4 (June 1951): 364.

Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the 1898 meeting of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), and on countless other occasions, resolutions against national restoration and Zionism won broad approval. The UAHC Resolution, signed by David Philipson (1862-1949), Simon Wolf (1836-1923), and Joseph Krauskopf (1858-1923) was adopted unanimously and summarized the major arguments that opposed Zionism:

> We are opposed to political Zionism. The Jews are not a nation but a religious community. Zion has a precious possession of the past, the early home of our faith, where our prophets uttered their world-subduing thoughts, and our psalmists sang their world-enchanting hymns. As such it is a holy memory, but it is not our hope of the future. America is our Zion. Here, in the home of religious liberty, we have aided in founding this new Zion, the fruition of the beginning laid in the old. The mission of Judaism is spiritual, not political. Its aim is not to establish a state, but to spread the truths of religion and humanity throughout the world.[4]

Simultaneously, Political Zionism was emerging within the context of liberal nationalism which was spreading throughout Europe. While the West was dissolving its ethnic identities, Eastern Europe was filled with ethnic groups that were distinct from one another. However, Jews in Eastern Europe could not be both fully modern and maintain their ethnic identity; thus, the conceptualization of a national homeland began taking shape. Auto emancipation and ideas of nationalism arose as a way for Jews to create their own cultural autonomy and a safe haven for Jews around the world. Influential leaders such as Theodore Herzl, the journalist and activist who was the founder of the Zionist Movement, Ahad Ha'am (1856-1927), the Hebrew essayist and cultural Zionist thinker, and Hayim Bialik (1873-1934), the famous Hebrew poet and thinker

[4] *Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations 5* (1893): 4002. David Philipson was "largely responsible" for the resolution's wording. See his *My Life as an American Jew* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1941), 137.

gained prominence with their writings and speeches. These leaders inspired and helped Zionism gain a foothold in the Reform world of America. Zionists who moved to Palestine were purchasing land, developing the Hebrew language, creating Jewish culture and fostering labor movements to work and cultivate the land.

In the late 19th century and early 20th century, Reform Jewish leaders were committed to enlightenment and emancipation that had started in Western and Central Europe and accordingly, integrated themselves into American society where they were allowed to practice their Judaism freely. Anti-Semitism still existed in America but it was so infrequent compared to their lives in Europe that Jews still thrived and Americanized their Jewish rituals. They changed their prayer book, used more English in their services, did away with religious garb like the prayer shawl and yarmulke (head covering). They modeled their liturgical practices after their Protestant neighbors by adding music with an organ and even held services on Sunday morning, not on the customary seventh-day Sabbath as they had done for centuries before.

The idea of having a single Jewish state in Palestine did not resonate with their current freedom in America. Their lives were so enriched that developing a single Jewish state in Palestine that might call into question their loyalty as ***American*** Jews and this was a risk they did not want to take. It brought into question and challenged their new American Jewish identity. They had made such important strides in the U.S., and they feared that supporting Zionism would jeopardize what they had worked so hard to achieve.

Reform's anti-Zionism was in place long before there was a Zionist Movement and at the heart of the controversy with Zionism lay the issue of two antithetical ideologies and two contradictory assessments of compatibility. Reform leaders were the most vehement critics of

Jewish nationalism in the United States.[5] There were, however, a few exceptions—Reform rabbis who openly advocated for Zionism—Stephen S. Wise (1874-1949), Judah Leon Magnes (1877-1948), and Abba Hillel Silver (1893-1963). Zionism and Reform Judaism were seen as incompatible in their beliefs and fundamental principles. The Zionism movement wanted to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine where Jews were the majority and lived their Judaism outside of ghetto walls. Jews of the Reform Movement wanted to integrate Jews into American society and live among their neighbors who observed alternative religious practices peacefully. For them, life in America offered Jewry an unprecedented opportunity. During the first two decades of the 20th century not only did most Reform Jews in America believe Reform Judaism and Zionism to be incompatible, Zionists also believed them to be mutually exclusive.[6]

Literature Review

Much scholarship has been written on the relationship between the Reform movement and Zionism, but there has not been a great deal of attention paid to the history of HUC's students and their evolving views on Zionism. In her book, *The Americanization of Zionism*, Naomi Cohen describes the different ways in which American Jewish organizations participated in proliferating their ideas on Zionism during the first half of the twentieth century. She concentrates on specific events, institutions and people that helped create the link between American identity and Zionism. In her work, she also emphasizes the Reform movement's theological rejection of Zionism in the early years as Reform theology was based on a more

[5] Naomi Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism, 1897–1948* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2003), 39.
[6] Michael A. Meyer, "American Reform Judaism and Zionism: Early Efforts at Ideological Rapprochement," *Studies in Zionism* 7 (Spring, 1983): 50

universal message.[7] In his institutional history of HUC-JIR, Michael A. Meyer discusses Zionism as it was perceived by certain professors, faculty and students in order to shed light on the larger history of the College.[8] Even though Zionism was the not the main focus of his writing; Meyer does discuss the different ways in which the students were shaped by the institution and faculty when it came to Zionism and the curriculum at HUC. Meyer also acknowledges that the student-led *Monthly* was an important work that provided HUC students with an opportunity to discuss the major issues of the day in a thoughtful way. In his essay, "Converts to Zionism in the American Reform Movement," Jonathan D. Sarna focuses on the changing attitudes towards Zionism as viewed among Reform rabbis and some lay leaders. Sarna reviews the changing attitudes of Zionism up through the 1930's and surveys the individuals who went from being anti-Zionists to Zionists and the impact they subsequently made. While all of these authors cite the *HUC Monthly*, none of them make the *Monthly* the focal point of their research. [9]

This thesis surveys the ways in which Zionism was articulated in the pages of the *HUC Monthly*. The *Monthly Journal* ran for over fifty years and, as we will see, was greatly impacted by global events, the perspective of the faculty at the College, and the creation of the State of Israel. Just as the world was discussing the creation of the Jewish Homeland, so too were HUC students. Through their own research and exploration, HUC students shared their own aspirations, concerns and thinking about a future Jewish state in Palestine.

Thesis Outline

[7] See also her article, "The Reaction of Reform Judaism," 361-394.
[8] Meyer, "A Centennial History."
[9] Jonathan D. Sarna, "Converts to Zionism in the American Reform Movement," in Shmuel Almog, Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira, eds., *Zionism and Religion* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 188-205. See also Meyer, "American Reform Judaism and Zionism," 49-64.

In the late 19th century, the Reform leadership in America mostly opposed Zionist ideology due to its nationalist motivations. Some of the Reform movement's greatest and most influential leaders, such as the President of the Hebrew Union College, Isaac Mayer Wise, were unwaveringly opposed to Zionism. He and other faculty members at the College who held similar views greatly influenced the students' thoughts and writings on Zionism as will be elaborated upon in the first chapter of the thesis. Students were cautious when discussing Zionism as it was still an ideology more than a reality at the end of the 19th century through the beginning of the 20th century. Before World War I, students spoke about Zionism through a discussion of the thinking of great Zionist authors and poets rather than vocalizing their own attitudes. It would have been very difficult for an HUC student during his period to espouse the principles of political Zionism considering the anti-nationalistic views that were held by the vast majority of Reform Judaism's thought leaders, including many members of HUC's faculty. We know some students at the Hebrew Union College had Zionist sympathies, because many of them later became advocates and supporters of the Zionist movement.

The *HUC Monthly* continued to thrive and reflect the students' ideals, thoughts and vision of Zionism, Americanism and Reform Judaism. As the second chapter demonstrates, the conversation around Zionism in the next decade and a half became more deliberate and forthright unlike some of the pieces written in the first decade of the century. This is different in that many of those students wrote about their passion for Palestine through other conduits such as their love for Hebrew. Unapologetically, students and faculty on both sides of this issue continued to write about their hopes, dreams and concerns vis-à-vis Zionism. However, the debate around Zionism changed from that of the previous generation. In the early 1920's, the issuance of the Balfour Declaration and the rise in prominence of outspoken Zionist leaders in America allowed the

students to write about their Zionism in a more secure and forceful manner. Furthermore, students began to expound on other realities that made the Zionist idea more complex. There were opposing perspectives on the possibility of creating a Jewish state with Arab neighbors, which seemed problematic for the future of Jewish life in Palestine. At the same time, the older generation of rabbis confronted a growing apathy towards religion from the younger generation. Zionism's appeal to American Jewish youth persuaded a number of senior rabbis to moderate their anti-nationalistic views in order to lure young people back to the synagogue. Lastly, the students were captivated by the idea of looking at their tradition more carefully and debating how to revitalize Reform Jewish life by reorienting its views on nationalism, Jewish ritual, and dual loyalty.

The final chapter of this thesis surveys the last decade and a half of the Monthly, from 1936 until 1949. It was a period of great turmoil and significant historical events that turned the tide for the Zionist movement. The articles at the beginning of the chapter show the reevaluation that took place in which members of the Reform movement began to question the reforms made by the leaders of the previous decades. The overwhelming majority of the articles during these years promoted the belief that Reform Judaism and Zionism were reconcilable ideologies. It was during this same time period that the CCAR adopted a revised set of guiding principles: the Columbus Platform of 1937. This platform incorporated, for the first time, a statement of support for the establishment of a Jewish Homeland in Palestine. Evaluating and examining the decisions of their predecessors, the students' articles reflected on the current Jewish practices of the Reform Movement. Many of these essays evinced a growing awareness that Jews possessed their own distinct identity as a group within America and that society at large casts them as a separate group as well. In the last part of the chapter, a sense of urgency begins to appear in these

essays as the rise of anti-Semitism worsens in Europe. American Jews felt an obligation to help their brethren in Europe and expedite the establishment of a safe haven in Palestine for the persecuted Jews of Europe. The articles written during the late 1903s are almost all pro-Zionist and for the sake of Jewish survival. It is at this time that we also see articles advocating the establishment of an independent Jewish state.

It is clear from the *HUC Monthly* that students continuously kept themselves informed and wrote passionately about their Zionist beliefs. Even if they did not take a formal stand for or against Zionism, they still wrote articles that spoke about the Jews in Palestine and the possibility of creating a Jewish state. The editorials in the journal show that HUC rabbinical students did not openly endorse political Zionism during the last decade of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th century, they did indeed take a noticeable interest in learning about Zionism and reading the works of great Zionist thinkers such as Ahad Ha'am whose work would be featured throughout the Journal in all of the decades. The students continuously invited renowned Zionist thinkers and members of the faculty to contribute to the journal. While we do not know how the writers of the journal were chosen to contribute, we do know they were more likely to share their honest opinions and viewpoints regarding Zionism.

All in all, this thesis demonstrations how the majority of HUC students and members of faculty become more openly pro-Zionist over the course of time. Although Herzl's Zionist movement always had its cadre of American supporters – even in the liberal Jewish community – in the early decades of the 20th century, most Reform Jews could be classified as either non-Zionists or anti-Zionists during these early years. Additionally, it is clear that in debating Jewish nationalism and the goals of the Zionist movement, HUC rabbinical students simultaneously grappled with the meaning of Jewish-American identity.

1: Zionism in the *HUC Journal*, 1896–1919

From the very beginning of *HUC Journal*'s history, the topic of Zionism was discussed and debated by students and faculty alike. As it first appeared less than ten years after the Pittsburgh platform of 1885, many of the articles reflected the anti-Zionist stance of the platform and the Reform movement as a whole. However, the journal was not an organ of HUC's President and faculty of the period who were, as a whole, anti-Zionists. In fact, from the late nineteenth and through the first decade of the twentieth century we find numerous articles and editorials—mostly written by rabbinical students—that show a real affinity towards cultural Zionism if not political Zionism. While those voices remained in the minority, the journal was still considered a vehicle for the topic of Zionism to be openly debated and for pro-Zionist viewpoints to be articulated.

The failure of liberalism in Europe, left millions of Jews unemancipated, unable to participate in society freely and exiled from their homes. Through their own efforts, in the 1870's Jews began to establish groups such as the *Chovevei Zion* (Lovers of Zion) whose aim was to promote *Aliyah* to Palestine. In 1897 the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland took place where the assimilated Western Jew, Theodor Herzl, called for a democratic Jewish state in Palestine. The secularist leadership that helped establish Palestine was never divorced from the religious aspects of creating this state despite its political nature. In the backdrop of these events were the persecuted Russians that were in desperate need of refuge. As a response to the pogroms, Jewish pioneers called the *Biluim* established themselves as a movement whose goal was the agricultural settlement in the Land of Israel.[1] The challenges Jews faced at this time,

[1] Samuel Kurland, *Biluim, Pioneers of Zionist Colonization* (New York: Publisher for Hechalutz organization of America by Scopus Publishing Company, 1943), 2.

among others, fueled Zionism which proliferated and developed the long-awaited return to Zion that had been expressed in Jewish prayer and customs for centuries.

Notable Jewish leaders around the world began generating and initiating new ideas to try an mitigate the mistreatment of Jews around the world. Moses Hess (1812-1875), for example, known as the "Father of German social democracy" believed that Jews had a future in modern times only as individuals and not as a collective entity and as individuals they should merge into the general universalism. [2] Hess greatly contributed to the idea of creating a parallel between the socialist movement of this time with the universal message.

Hebrew author, scholar and editor, Peretz Smolenskin (1842-1885) also contributed to the conversation around Jewish nationalism. In a series of essays called "It Is Time to Plant" (1875-1877), Smolenskin's ideas about Jewish identity and the need for Enlightenment argue that Jewish identity should be separate from mere religious observance. He believed that with the emergence of secularized, modern Jews can and should be unified through the spiritual, intellectual and ethical heritage [3] (Chapter 2 will reflect this idea further when we will see how HUC students begin to discuss the amalgamation of Zionism, Jewish identity and spirituality).

For a generation that saw Emancipation as the key word for the solution of the Jewish problem in the modern age, the idea of *auto* emancipation became a challenge to the conventional wisdom of the age.[4] Russian Jewish doctor, Leo Pinsker (1821-1891), also published an important manifesto entitled, *Autoemancipation.* This brief, terse, and linguistically aggressive essay was reminiscent of a communist manifesto that was oversimplified in language in order to easily charm great masses and have a huge historical impact.[5] Pinsker was greatly

[2] Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1981), 36-38.
[3] Ibid., 59.
[4] Ibid., 73.
[5] Ibid., 75.

impacted by the Russian pogroms of 1881 and felt that the Jewish problem cannot wait for a messianic or utopian solution. Like Smolenskin, Pinsker believed the Jews needed a realistic and pragmatic solution- one that starts from the premise that the Jews are a nation, a people, not just a religious community.[6] For Pinsker, the Jews should be a nation like others around the world, they needed sovereignty.

These three major thinkers, among others, helped shape the early beginnings of Zionism in the modern era. They had a vision for creating a Jewish state that would be a social revolution and a refuge for Jews all over the world. While Reform Judaism and Zionism are rarely mentioned in the same context, they both independently tried to address the issue of Jewish survival. It would only be in the late 19th century that the two Movements were spoken about side by side.

Meanwhile, the Reform Movement was developing its own identity in the United States. Isaac Mayer Wise, the leading organizational intellect of American Reform, founded his famous seminary—the Hebrew Union College (HUC)—in 1875. As the movement gained momentum and more rabbis were becoming ordained in the United States the movement's rabbinical association, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), was founded in 1889. Even before the establishment of the CCAR, 18 reformist rabbis gathered together in Pittsburgh in November of 1885 in order to debate and adumbrate the "guiding principles" of American Reform Judaism. This famous document – "The Pittsburgh Platform"—asserted, among other things, a rejection of any hope for the reestablishment of Jewish "national life in Palestine," To quote the platform's own words:

> We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the

[6] Ibid., 75.

> sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state, 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.[7]

An editorial in the December 1899 issue of *HUC Journal* elucidates that Zionism is becoming the Jewish politics of the day. Zionism was called an "energetic attempt to solve the Jewish Question, simply to sweep away the misery of three-fourths of our brethren."[8] In this editorial, the authors acknowledge the negative responses they have received from much of their leadership and yet still articulate that Zionism must continue to be discussed as it is an important Jewish issue. They declare that the "fate of Zionism depends on the life and happiness of the great majority of our brother-Jews, we hope this number of our Journal will contribute some small share."[9] American Reform Jews were in a unique position in that they were one of the very groups of Jews to have religious freedom in the way they did. Despite that fact, some of the students at the College wanted to share their ideas and explore the concept of creating a Jewish homeland for all Jews.

In the following chapters, we will be able to see how the students' writings were directly affected by the leadership of the Zionist and Reform movements. The debate among students and faculty will waiver into the first few decades of the 20th century when things begin to change in the world and in these two movements.

Zionism in the *HUC Journal* Before I.M. Wise's Death, 1896–1900

[7] Walter Jacob, ed., *The Pittsburgh Platform in Retrospect* (Mars, PA: Publishers Choice Book Mfg. Co., 1985).
[8] "Editorial," *HUC Journal* 4, no. 3 (December, 1899): 57.
[9] Ibid.

Isaac Mayer Wise played a central role in the development of American Reform Judaism from the time he arrived in the U.S. (1846) until his death in 1900. He is frequently referred to as "the great architect of American Reform Judaism."[10] Wise was indeed the principal builder of the American Reform movement. He edited one of the first liberal prayer books for American Judaism, *Minhag America,* and in 1873 he founded the first congregational union of American congregations, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), which enabled Wise to establish his crowning achievement, the Hebrew Union College (established in 1875). He played a major role in adapting Reform Judaism to American life and the fruits of his efforts are still seen today. In the first part of this chapter, we will see how he significantly influenced the students he taught at HUC and shaped their opinions on a wide range of subjects including Zionism. It was widely known that Isaac Mayer Wise rejected Herzl's notion of political Zionism. In his address to the CCAR in the 1898, Wise denounced Zionism as a "*fata morgana* (a mirage), a momentary inebriation of morbid minds, and a prostitution of Israel's holy cause to a madman's dance of unsound politicians."[11] Therefore, the resolutions that condemned Zionism passed year after year.

Of the twelve articles written on Zionism before 1900, seven were unambiguously anti-Zionist. The remaining five either indicate a more positive impression, discuss Zionistic poetry or show a willingness or inclination to promote the discourse within the Reform Movement. We know that some of the students at the College were pro-Zionist but just chose not to write in the *HUC Journal*. For example, Judah Leon Magnes[12] wrote about his own pro-Zionist views in

[10] Jonathan Sarna, *American Judaism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 96.
[11] Howard Morley Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America* (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc., 1992), 248.
[12] Judah Magnes (1877-1948) was ordained in 1900 and would later serve as a prominent Zionist Reform Rabbi. To learn more about his life see Daniel Kotzin's biography, *Judah L. Magnes: An American Jewish Nonconformist* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

other publications outside of the College that were more aligned with his own ideology. Other students, however, expressed their views in the pages of the journal and while they often agreed with the majority view of Zionism as held by Isaac Mayer Wise and many of the College's faculty, there were instances where alternative viewpoints were discussed. In three of the four earliest editorials, Zionism was characterized as an "illusive phantasy."[13] Siding with their "distinguished German theologian [Isaac Mayer Wise]," the editors made a case for a strong American Jewish future. America had given Jews the religious freedoms they had been seeking for so many generations subsequently, it must have been hard to imagine them leaving America to develop a Jewish state that had no guarantees. Similarly, Leo M. Franklin's (1870-1948) article entitled, "A Danger and a Duty Suggested by the Zionistic Agitation," in June 1898, conveyed that a Jewish Homeland in Palestine would isolate Jews and eliminate any possibility of developing a culture while cutting the Jews off from commerce and international relations. His concern was that the Jews of Palestine would never have any chance of developing themselves or their civilization and that living in other countries such as Spain, Holland, Germany, England and America would give Jews "greater opportunities for brilliant and heroic deeds."[14]

More positive assessments of Zionism were expressed just a few months later in the December issue of the journal. In his article, "A New Palestine!" William H. Fineshriber (1878-1968) acknowledges the liberties of American Jews but reminds readers that they cannot view America with the same emotion with which they see Jerusalem and the historical and poetic associations that are attached with the holy city. He poses questions to his readers: "Is there

[13] Editors, "Two Aspects of Zionism," *HUC Journal* 2, no. 1 (November, 1897): 16. The other two articles that include this same message are "Editorial: Americanism and Zionism," *HUC Journal 2*, no.9 (June, 1898): 244-245 and "Editorial: Zionism," *HUC Journal* 4, no. 1 (October, 1899) 17.
[14] Leo M. Franklin, "A Danger and a Duty Suggested by the Zionistic Agitation," *HUC Journal* 2, nos. 5-6 (March 1898): 145.

anything illogical in our claim to form again a Jewish nation? Germany is for and of the Germans; France is for and of the French; why not a Judea for and of the Jews?"[15]

In an even more pronounced way, the April 1899 issue featured a ten-page spread justifying Zionism. In a lengthy article, Professor Caspar Levias (1860-1934), the only professor at the College who initially defended Zionism[16], bluntly shares his passionate opinions on Zionism and the vision for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. He opens his article revealing that he has resorted to writing in the *HUC Journal* because his motion to write in the HUC year book[17] was denied.[18] Nevertheless, he uses the platform he is given to share his ideas. He argues that living among other nations means that Jews must constantly adapt to new conditions which require fights and sacrifices giving up a part of their identity each time. In his view, there could never be a unified religion or nationality anywhere in the world because every culture and religion would have to give too much of itself in order to create a unified humanity. Jews are particularly special, according to him, and should not have to constantly modify their world view to live among other nationalities. Therefore, creating a Jewish Homeland is a reliable way to sustain Jewish ideology. He appreciates that both supporters and opponents of Zionism can muster equal number of scriptural passages to prove their perspective on Zionism; however, he argues that even the prophets, with their most universalistic visions always held the Jews at the center of their thoughts and wanted a return to Jerusalem.[19]

The December 1899 issue, "A Zionistic Symposium," included six articles by a myriad of authors and an editorial by the students of the *Journal*. The fact that this entire journal was dedicated to the topic of Zionism shows how much Zionism was being discussed at the College.

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[15] "Editorial: A New Palestine," *HUC Journal* 3, no. 3 (December 1898): 62.
[16] Meyer, "A Centennial History," 45.
[17] According to Dr. Michael A. Meyer this most likely refers to the *CCAR Yearbook*.
[18] Caspar Levias, "The Justification of Zionism," *HUC Journal* 3, no. 8 (April, 1899): 165.
[19] Ibid., 171.

This issue was designed to share the different viewpoints of Zionism during this time. Some of the articles were straightforward and conveyed their opinions regarding Zionism clearly while other articles were more nuanced. Some of the articles express their apprehensions around Zionism while others provide an openness and excitement regarding the Jewish Homeland. Of the six articles written in this Journal, four are unwaveringly anti-Zionist. The remaining two articles share some positive sentiments towards Zionism but are far less forceful with their semantics. Zionism was an issue that most of the faculty and students agreed with Wise.

Many of the attacks on Zionism in this issue are from important figures at the College including the President, Isaac Mayer Wise, and other respected professors. Seen collectively, one of their main points of contention is that Zionist ideology disrupts their ideal outlook of living freely on American soil in an unprecedented fashion. They were protective of their lives in America and did not want to align themselves with any cause that might jeopardize their prospects for full acceptance in the American nation.

The first article, "Zionism," was authored by Isaac Mayer Wise. He states, quite bluntly, that "we can never identify ourselves with Zionism:"[20]

> we have for so many decades attempted to make our neighbors understand, that we are men and patriots everywhere, Americans in America, Englishmen in England…and protest loudly and empathically against any and every denial of our civic virtues; - now come these Zionists and proclaim us as members of a foreign nation…No normal man can believe, that we Jews leave the great nations of culture, power and abundant prosperity in which we form an integral element, to

[20] I.M. Wise, "Zionism," *HUC Journal* 4, no. 3 (December, 1899): 47.

> form a ridiculous State in dried up Palestine; nor did Herzl or Nordau ever believe it.[21]

He felt that the Zionist creed was a wasted pursuit. More than that, he wanted to show that Jews were loyal to the country where they resided. He did not believe in having dual loyalty and saw his Americanism as inextricably woven with his Judaism. Jews did not need a nation because they were American through and through. He saw his Judaism as a faith and not a nationality. Wise further argued that

> no ordinary Jew, East or West, North or South, for many centuries thought of the problem, whether we are a race, a nation or a religious denomination; because these questions were not up for discussion in the world at large. Every Jew all the time felt that he belongs to the congregation of Israel, and has some particular duties to perform to this universal congregation and its members in whatever land they live or whatever language they speak. Nobody thought that this union of sentiments was racial of national.[22]

Wise claimed that Jews have always seen themselves as a religion exclusively, not a nationality or a race. In the article, he also denied the importance of learning Hebrew contending that it is a language no one understands anyway. For him, being Jewish meant that one could choose one's nationality, which was the country where one resided, and would speak the language of that nationality. Judaism could be practiced anywhere in the world and each Jew must be loyal to the country of his/her residence.

In his article, Wise makes particular reference to the need of Russian Jews to immigrate to Palestine. In 1882, the May Laws were imposed on Russian Jews by the Czar, Alexander II

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., 46.

(1818-1881). The May Laws prohibited Jews from living or working in the Pale and forced them to relocate elsewhere. This created great impoverishment for Russian Jews for several decades thereafter. This is why Wise advocated for Russian-Jewish refugees to immigrate to Palestine and settle there. His brazen article in the student journal sent a clear message. He wanted nothing to do with Zionism. According to his view, developing a Jewish homeland in Palestine was for impoverished refugees and not for American Reform Jews. To him, advocating for political Zionism meant disloyalty to America.[23] For leaders like Wise, America's form of government was outlined by Moses and developed under Joshua and his successors. He argued that Judaism shaped the American republic and played an influential role in its government, which is why he believed that Judaism was in perfect harmony with the law of the land.[24]

During his tenure at the College, Wise had was open about his negative attitudes towards Zionism and promoted the idea that Jews owe their loyalty to a universal religious ideal and not to a specific country. He was so steadfast in his ideals that he even refused the use of the chapel to an outside speaker who wanted to speak on the subject and his decision was even supported by the Board of Governors.[25] Wise hired faculty who shared similar views. Professors at the College such as history professor Gotthard Deutsch (1859-1921), ethics instructor Louis Grossmann (1863-1926), and homiletics instructor David Philipson were anti-Zionists who also contributed articles to this special issue of the *journal*. It is no surprise then when the students admitted that "the entire trend of our work at the College is such as to lead us away from [Zionism]."[26]

Like Wise, Rabbi Bernhard Felsenthal (1822-1908) of Zion Congregation in Chicago also contended that the aim and object of the Zionistic movement was to create a "legally secured

[23] Ibid., 45.
[24] Sarna, "Converts to Zionism," 197.
[25] Meyer, "A Centennial History," 45.
[26] "Editorial: That Zionistic Issue," *HUC Journal* 4, no. 5 (February 1900): 114.

home in Palestine for poor, persecuted Israelites" as was explicitly set forth in the first Basle Conference of 1897. His article, "Some Remarks Concerning Zionism," contained similarly strong language opposing Zionism. The editors of the journal never explain why they asked Rabbi Felsenthal to participate but it seems clear they knew his stance on Zionism prior to asking him to contribute. In 1869, Rabbi Felsenthal protested efforts aimed at Jewish colonization of Palestine and supported the resolution of the Philadelphia Conference of Reform Rabbis declaring that "the Messianic goal of Israel is not the restoration of the old Jewish state under a descendant of David, involving a second separation from the nations of the earth, but the union of all men as the children of God."[27]

In his article, Felsenthal not only shares his own beliefs regarding Zionism, but he also gives us a glimpse of what other Reform rabbis were saying about the new movement. His article is divided into ten sections where he begins each section by quoting or explaining a well-known aphorism of the time and then expounding his own notions regarding the subject matter. In the first two segments, he outlines what Zionism was created for according to the Basle conferences starting in 1897. His argument sets the stage for his entire article and his ideology for Zionism in the present and future. He reminds the reader that the "aim and object of the Zionistic movement is to create a legally secure home in Palestine for poor, persecuted Israelites who have no secure homes-to create a home where these poor people can enjoy undisturbedly life, liberty and freedom of conscience, and where they can live a life worthy of human beings."[28]

Felsenthal writes of "life and liberty"—words used in the Declaration of Independence—to describe what Palestine was supposed to do for the poor Jews. By using these words, he is

[27] Sefton D. Temkin, ed., *The New World of Reform* (London, 1971), 38–39. A decade earlier, Bernhard Felsenthal had supported the removal of prayers "for Israel's return to Palestine" from the prayer book of Chicago Sinai Congregation. See Bernhard Felsenthal, *The Beginnings of the Chicago Sinai Congregation* (Chicago, 1898), 25.
[28] Bernhard Felsenthal, "Some Remarks Concerning Zionism," *HUC Journal* 4, no. 3 (December, 1899): 48.

hinting at the fact that American Jews have already found this kind of liberty in America and do not have a need for a Jewish Homeland in Palestine. Later in his article, he articulates that there is no distinction between political and non-political Zionism. They are one and the same. The purpose of Zionism, he claims, is for people who want to feel secure in their own country where they can pursue "life and liberty and the pursuit of any honest vocation"[29] and that Jews should feel that they will not be "driven away again by a whimsical and despotic Russian autocrat, nor be mobbed and robbed again by a semibarbarous and besotted populace."[30] Once again, we see that the language he uses to describe opportunity and prosperity is borrowed from the Declaration of Independence and the language used to establish a Jewish Homeland is aimed at Russian Jews fleeing persecution and not American Jews. American Jews did not have the same life-threatening concerns Russian Jews had. Felsenthal feels a deep disconnect with Zionism and sees it as a salvation for Jews in need rather than for all Jews.

When Reform rabbis like Rabbis Wise and Felsenthal denounced nationalism at this time they were responding to both pressures of Emancipation and to the emergence of Zionist expression. By the middle of the 19th century, Zionism and Reform were not abstract ideologies but adversaries, each responding to the spirit of the age but in different ways. Reform was thoroughly committed to the promise of emancipation and even when it appeared to be problematic, Reform Jews trusted in its eventual success. Zionism regarded the Emancipation with distrust and vice versa. Many Reform leaders believed that the spirit of the modern progressive era would carry all humanity on a redemptive wave, while others insisted that

[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.

Zionism would actualize the Jewish people's capacity to redeem itself despite the obstacles posed by living in Diaspora.[31]

Gotthard Deutsch, professor of history at HUC from 1891-1921, also contributed to this issue and in his opening remarks, labels the return to Palestine the "Zionistic scheme."[32] (Like many professors at the College, Deutsch's attitudes to Zionism changed over time). Like Felsenthal, Deutsch saw the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine as a disruption to Jewish life in America. He points out that a return of all Jews to Palestine as was predicted in the Bible was a belief only held by the Orthodox who were looking to "reinstate the house of David and the sacrificial cult of [the] Levitic Priesthood."[33] He adds that Reform Jews need not involve themselves with returning to Palestine as a Jewish Homeland because the Zionist ideology is very problematic. His concerns are that, "Jews are not the people fit for hardships and pioneer life and… insurmountable complications would arise were the Jews owners of that territory."[34] Deutsch was concerned that because there were so many Christians and Muslims living in Palestine, a Jewish government would never prosper or survive there. Additionally, he believed that Jews had always had a hard time managing their own affairs in that historically, Jews have constantly called to the aid of the government where they resided to interfere and settle difficulties among themselves. In his view, Jews are too dependent on the foreign governments in order to create their own nation. He articulates that a great drawback of the Zionistic scheme is the lack of unity amongst Jews and that "Jewish solidarity exists rather in the fancy of the

[31] David Polish, *Renew Our Days: The Zionist Issue in Reform Judaism* (Jerusalem, 1976), 21.
[32] Gotthard Deutsch, "Zionism. From an anti-Zionistic View," *HUC Journal* 4, no. 3 (December, 1899): 58.
[33] Ibid., 60.
[34] Ibid., 67.

enemies of the Jews than in fact."[35] In his outlook, there were too many factions in the Jewish world and as a result the Zionistic scheme was ultimately doomed to failure.[36]

Louis Grossmann, professor of ethics at HUC, also contributed to this issue of the journal with an article titled "A Domestic Quarrel." He argued that American Jews were "too busy with building up a sound American Judaism and we have flung ourselves into this work of reconstruction and do not wish to be called off from it for any reason whatever."[37] His main concern was that graduates of the Hebrew Union College would be "dragged from real duty and from immediate service" calling the Zionistic issue an "adventitious campaign and a hysterical…paper and pamphlet passion."[38] As the title of his article suggests, Grossmann was worried that Zionism was a distraction from the domestic work the newly ordained rabbis were meant to do. He alleged that, "a sober student of Jewish history and a genuine lover of his co-religionists sees that the Zionistic agitation contradicts everything that is typical of Jews and Judaism."[39] Grossmann also protests that because Russian Jews were not yet emancipated, they were part of the reason American Jews were distracted from further developing their American Judaism. He refers to them as, "meddlers of our fate" who were "re-arranging the historic things of Judaism."[40] Grossmann saw American Jews as a nation. He believed that Judaism was a religion of cosmopolitanism that could teach the world about right and wrong and that Judaism was not just for those who were looking to return to Palestine. He acknowledges that many Jewish communities in the world needed salvation, but he was not willing to sacrifice any part of American Jewry. He concluded his article by saying that he "declines to reach out to St.

[35] Ibid., 69.
[36] Ibid., 70.
[37] Louis Grossmann, "A Domestic Quarrel," *HUC Journal* 4, no. 3 (December, 1899): 71.
[38] Ibid., 72.
[39] Ibid., 72.
[40] Ibid., 73.

Petersburg from New York and Vienna to Vladivostok across the throne of Alexander and the Sultan of Turkey!"[41]

Thus, it was surprising that the remaining two articles in this issue expressed positivity towards Zionism. The first of these articles was a two-page contribution by Gustav Gottheil (1827-1903), was a Prussian born rabbi that emigrated to America in the late 19th century. He became an influential figure, a well- known Zionist. and even attended the First Zionist Congress in Basel. In his article, he argues that as Zionists must turn the eyes of the American Jewish community

> to the East, to the land of their national birth, to the soil full of the most inspiring traditions, where Anti-Semitism can be changed into Prosemitism and where our religion shall achieve that rejuvenescence, which Reform, despite all the good it has undoubtedly accomplished, does not seem able to bring about.[42]

He urges his readers to continue discussions around Zionism for it is growing and gaining new friends daily. He believes in the colonization of Palestine and desires to see Jews working the land as is quoted in *Bereshit Rabbah* 39.[43]

Each person who contributed to this issue was invited to do so by the students. This helps inform us, the readers, that their teachers and mentors played a significant role in their lives and that the students revered their rabbinic mentors. The American Reform leadership of this time saw the potential for Jewish prosperity and were very protective of their new-found religious freedom. The Emancipation in Western Europe allowed the Jews who moved to America to demonstrate that they were a religious group and not a national one and could, therefore, also be loyal to their national country of residence. Their hope was that this kind of identity would lead

[41] Ibid., 76.
[42] Gustav Gottheil, "Zionism," *HUC Journal* 4, no. 3 (December, 1899): 55.
[43] This refers to Bereshit Rabbah 39:8 where God promises Abraham a land for his people.

to the end of antisemitism and could be seen as equals by their fellow countrymen. They were able to weave both, the Jewishness and national identity into one and in that way have more in common with those living around them. With Reform Judaism this was particularly possible because it allowed Jews to assimilate and practice their Judaism without having it interfere with their national identity. They did not have to follow halakha in the same way religious Jews did. Thus, they were able to integrate more easily. When Reform Jews began to settle in America in the late 19th century, they saw "America as 'their Israel and Washington their Jerusalem.' They were to be Americans of the Jewish persuasion."[44] Their connection to America was so strong and became such an important part of their new identity. Students at the Hebrew Union College followed in their teachers' footsteps and wanted to be the future leaders of this sovereign movement. It is also important to remark that Reform Jewish ideology asserted courageously and proudly that Jews lived everywhere in the world because God assigned them the special responsibility of being a "light to the nations." Jews had a sacred, sanctified obligation to make the world a better place, to be exemplars of "right-living." Zionism – confining Jews to their own patch of land – flew in the face of that duty.

The following year, the student journal published articles from both sides of the issue. The editorial, however, set the tone of the entire issue. It reads,

> due to the fact that the Editors of this paper, considering it advisable to place the arguments for and against Zionism side by side…that there are Zionists on the Editorial Board in the College at large, is true…but for the cause of truth, and for the information of future generations of historians who may happen to look

[44] Leonard A. Schoolman, *Reform Judaism and Zionism: One Perspective* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations,1983), 5.

through our file and find a Zionistic issue, it must be stated that this band of Zionists is in the minority.[45]

It is impossible to read the journal sequestered from the outside influences that shaped the students' lives, thoughts and opinions. American Reform leadership, particularly at the College, did not want to explore a Jewish Homeland in Palestine because they felt so strongly about living in America.

HUC Journal, 1900–1904

During this period of time, the College leadership was a bit unstable. Several rabbis would serve as President temporarily. After the death of Isaac Mayer Wise, Rabbi Moses Mielziner (1828-1903) was asked to become Acting President of the College while a search continued to replace Rabbi Wise. In 1903, Rabbi Mielziner died and Rabbi Gotthard Deutsch became acting President for four months until HUC elected Rabbi Kaufmann Kohler as the second President of HUC.[46]

Following the symposium of articles in the late 19th century, Zionism was barely mentioned in subsequent issues. In the few years to come, several pieces continued to be written about Hebraists such as the editorial that appeared in 1903 that discussed Ahad Ha'am's ideas as analogous with Reform Judaism. The articles written about Zionists and modern Hebraists were particularly notable because these influential leaders were never discussed in classes. The growing pro-Hebraism [at the College] was opposed by Kaufmann Kohler, who served as president of the College from 1903-1921 and took a militant anti-Zionist position and eliminated

[45] "Editorial," *HUC Journal* 4, no. 5 (February 1900): 114.
[46] "The Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Brief Biography," *The American Jewish Archives Journal* 26, no. 2 (November, 1974): 104.

modern Hebrew from the curriculum.[47] Thus, it was extremely rare for Hebrew to be read or spoken outside of Scripture. It seems that the students who wanted to discuss Zionism did so through the conduit of Zionist authors.

Jacob (1878-1946) and Max Raisin (1881-1957) were Zionists and Hebraists and used this kind of writing approach in the HUC Journal. They avoided having direct discourse regarding Zionism by reviewing the works of famous Hebraists in the HUC Journal. As Eastern European immigrants who grew up on the Lower East Side of New York, they greatly believed in the Zionist cause and even corresponded with Ahad Ha'am, an already famous Hebrew essayist and pre-state Zionist thinker.[48] Jacob Raisin, ordained in 1900, may not have directly written about Zionism but found other ways to display his love of Zionism and Hebrew. Jacob wanted to return prayer for the restoration of Zion in Reform liturgy that had been expunged in years earlier. While on a visit to Palestine in 1931, he wrote a letter to his wife that had he come earlier he might well have stayed in Palestine and, "have obtained genuine happiness in the calm and contentment which so many seem to have experience in their daily contact with Mother Zion."[49] Jacob's brother, Max Raisin, ordained in 1903, was even more involved in the Zionist cause. He continuously argued for the compatibility of Zionism and Reform Judaism in three languages. In so doing, he received disparagement from both sides as this was a time that was still mostly anti-Zionist in the Reform Movement. He even gave himself and rabbis like him the unofficial label of "Zionist Reformer" asserting that the two movements have a singular

[47] Ezra Spicehandler, "Hebrew and Hebrew Literature," in *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years*, ed. Samuel E. Karff (Cincinnati: HUC Press, 1976), 460.
[48] Sarna, "Converts to Zionism," 190.
[49] Meyer, "Two Anomalous Reform Rabbis," 16.

identity.[50] In his viewpoint, Reform Judaism would be the dominant religion in Palestine's future.

In the December 1900 issue of the *Journal*, Max Raisin contributed several special segments called "Hebraica." These publications were to "review and criticize current Hebrew literature…Mr. Raisin's presentation will certainly make clear the advisability and need of cultivating Hebrew studies on the part of Rabbis and Jewish students."[51] As a part of his publications, Max Raisin was to review the Hebrew works in hopes of awakening a love for modern Hebrew on the campus (Biblical Hebrew was always a part of the curriculum). Some of his works included an appreciation of Ahad Ha'am, and a review of Reuven Brainin's book on Mapu.[52] One can assume that Max Raisin knowingly chose to review the books of influential Zionists of the time. The question still remains, however, why did the Raisin brothers not directly advocate for Zionism in the *HUC Journal*? They both contributed articles to the *Journal* that dealt with other topics such as Russian migration (January 1900) and other contemporary issues. Their trepidations may well have stemmed from knowing the President of the College, Kaufmann Kohler, and other important members of the faculty were antagonistic towards Zionism.

***HUC Journal*, 1904–1919**

With the death of Isaac Mayer Wise, the financial challenges of the College, the changes in faculty and Rabbi Kaufmann Kohler assuming the role of president the *HUC Journal* ceased publication between 1904 and 1914. As we have noted, Rabbi Kohler's ardent anti-Zionist

[50] Ibid., 17.
[51] "Editorial," *HUC Journal* 5, no. 8 (December, 1900): 85.
[52] Abraham Mapu was a Lithuanian author who contributed to the Zionist movement whose work was reviewed by a pioneer Zionist and writer, Reuben Brainin (1862-1939).

position unquestionably influenced the spirit of HUC under his administration and shaped the thinking of many students were influenced by his teachings and his strong ideological leadership. During his tenure as President of the College, 1903-1921, Kohler said that Zionism must not be taught at the school because political nationalism is a variance with the basic concept of Reform: the mission of the Jew was not to return to Palestine, he averred, but to live in the world and be of it, to preach a religio-ethical universalism and to help usher in the long-awaited Messianic Age.[53]

He was adamant about pushing his agenda for his key Reform Jewish principles. Even though he accepted students who embraced Zionist thinking to the College, he did not want the College itself to become a forum for a Zionist agenda. In the fall of 1914, the HUC Literary Society invited Horace M. Kallen (1882-1974), a professor of philosophy at the University of Wisconsin to speak. Kallen's invitation was rescinded by Kohler because Kallen was an outspoken secularist and Zionist.[54] This sent a loud and clear message to the College community; the Hebrew Union College was unwaveringly anti-Zionist and was not interested in discussing the matter. Unsurprisingly, having the President of the College unbendingly anti-Zionist made it very challenging to write anything in the *HUC Journal* that was pro-Zionism or even discussing this position. It appears clear that even if students did want to write about Zionism or debate their views on its ideological merits, such discourse did not take place in the *HUC Journal* during this particular period of time.

As student enrollment increased and the quality of the rabbinical program improved, the *Journal* was revived in 1914 and renamed the *Hebrew Union College Monthly*.[55] Additionally, when the *Monthly* was reinstated we know that students' interest in Modern Hebrew literature

[53] "The Kohler-Margolis Affaire," *American Jewish Archives Journal* 26, no. 2 (November, 1974): 163.
[54] Meyer, "A Centennial History," 77.
[55] Ibid., 74.

continued without interruption. Students such as S. Felix Mendelsohn (1889-1953) wrote an essay on the Yiddish authors such as Mendele Mocher Seforim and Sholom Aleichem. He also contributed articles on Hebrew authors such as Ahad Ha'am and Moses Leib Lilienblum[56] -- among others.

When the Monthly was reinstated its first editor was Abba Hillel Silver. Ordained in 1915, Silver was an ardent champion of Zionism, a master of Hebrew language and revered academic scholar. He would later spend much of his career supporting Zionism and rallying for the Jewish Homeland in the Reform rabbinate in the post-World War I period. His dedication to classical Reform Jewish thought and practice never wavered, but these commitments posed no deterrent to his unflagging commitment to the Zionist idea. He was a venerated archetype for all Zionist Reformers in that he was fervently loyal to both Reform Judaism and to Zionism. While at HUC, he demonstrated his passion for Reform Judaism in his valedictory address in 1915 when he "gave testimony to his commitment to Reform. 'The Reform movement of the last century, in its radical re-interpretation for the past… in its adaptation to the demands of a new life, gave…inspiring proof of the originality and the creative genius of Israel…The principle of Reform is the *sine qua non* of Judaism's life and progress.'" [57] His favorable reputation would later serve the Zionist movement as he would become an influential leader in the Reform Movement.

Silver believed in the compatibility of Reform Judaism and Zionism and for him, Zionism made an important contribution to Reform Judaism (we will see more of this in Chapter 2, below). He contended that even if a strong Jewish commonwealth existed in Palestine, religion

[56] Spicehandler, "Hebrew and Hebrew Literature," 460.
[57] Polish, *Renew our Days*, 117.

would always have to be a central element in an American Jews' life.[58] Like the Raisin brothers, Silver chose not to write about Zionism in the *HUC*. In his tenure at the College, he wrote articles on a myriad of Jewish topics, but never wrote anything in favor of Zionism. It is hard to believe that central and deeply committed Zionist figure like Wise chose not to express his passion and excitement towards Zionism during his student years at Hebrew Union College. It seems that Silver and likeminded contemporaries were deterred from sharing their true ideologies in fear of upsetting or aggravating the College's establishment – its faculty and governors. They did not want to risk their future reputation as Reform rabbis or suffer professional setbacks in the CCAR.

However, writing about Hebraists and Zionist authors and essayists continued to proliferate in the *Monthly Journal*. It was in the January 1918 issue that the conversation around Zionism changed. Students continued to review the works of Zionist thinkers and started to become more openly resolute in their defense of Zionism. This is most likely because the Balfour Declaration was issued by the British government in 1917. This hugely important document signed by the British government validated the Zionist cause to become the mass movement that it was announcing the support for the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine which was, then, an Ottoman region. In the January 1918 issue, an editorial entitled "The Promised Land" spoke about Zionism during the First World War where the British Empire fought to liberate Jerusalem from the Ottoman Empire. The editorial stated that no matter what side you were on, one could not "help feeling a thrill and a tremor when he heard these tidings. The trumpet had been sounded in the city and each and every one was aroused." The article continued, "nevertheless, this excitement is in many instances dashed with regret and apprehension. Numbers of sincere Jewish souls, though overjoyed by the prospects of the long-

[58] Ibid.

desired Restoration, are cut to the quick when they realize that the fervent hopes expressed in the prayer book are rudely shattered; that the temple will never be rebuilt after the old pattern, and that the sacrificial cult will never be re-introduced." However, Great Britain's seizure of Jerusalem was a monumental event that had to be discussed in a positive light. No one could deny the magnitude and significance of this historic event despite the divergence in opinion of the past.

Following this editorial, the next time Zionism is directly mentioned is in the December 1919 issue written by Reuben Horchow [59]. Reuben Horchow traveled all over the world and wrote about his excursions in an article called, "Jew of Other Lands." His article is unique in that he explores countries and writes about communities that are rarely discussed in the Journal, such as the Jews of Constantinople. He shares his personal encounters of Jews he met on his journey. He even shares the perspective of his chauffeur, a Jews from India who longs to return to Palestine to rebuild the Temple.[60] From his encounters, he explains that hatred is ubiquitous throughout Europe. "In Europe," he says, "the Jew has always been hated. And today, that hatred of the Jew, founded in ignorance, in superstition, in economics, in what ground you will, is fanned to an ever-growing flame…the leaders, of whatever political concept, can always count on unanimity among their peoples in hatred of the Jew."[61]

As a result, he recounts from his conversations with Jews in Constantinople that, for them, "Zionism [is] the only possible solution of the world problem of the Jews." He continues, "the vast majority of the Jews of Constantinople are a poor, mean lot, living a barren life, devoid of interest in anything but the struggle for a bare existence; but the cultured important Jews feel

[59] A student at HUC who left and went on to become a lawyer and writer. When writing the article in the *HUC Journal,* he was an associate of the *Menorah Journal*. This was a campus wide organization that had its own editorial and was formed in 1906. Herchow was the representative at Yale University.
[60] Reuben Horchow, "Jews of Other Lands," *HUC Journal*, (December, 1919): 47.
[61] Ibid., 42.

keenly that Palestine offers for their people the chance for a larger, richer life…these leaders are prominent in public affairs and in the commercial life of the city; some even occupy posts in the government."[62]

Reuben Horchow's article is unique in that he talks about a community that is rarely spoken about. Many of the articles that talk about anti-Semitism deal with the Jews in Europe—Russia more specifically. However, we see that, like the Russian Jews, the Jews of Constantinople feel the same pressures of anti-Semitism and feel that Zionism is the best solution. Whether he does so intentionally or not, Horchow portrays Zionism as a unifying ideology for Jews all around the world, not just those in Eastern Europe. He remarks, that the Jews of Constantinople have a deep desire to return to Palestine as members of "an ancient and dignified race."[63] With these words, he unifies Jewish people all over the world and shows that the hardships of the Jews are shared by many.

Horchow concludes his article by pushing this point even further, "these are the conditions and feelings of the Jews as I saw them in the lands I visited and can summarize...more than ever they feel that the Jew, as a man without a country, will suffer from an intensified persecution which no loyalty of his to the land in which he lives can avert. They [i.e., Jews who still live in the Old World] feel that the Jew has reached the most critical period in history…and there is now only one feasible solution for their problems of existence, both spiritual and material. That solution is Zionism- a return to their historic land with as great speed as possible."[64]

Conclusion

[62] Ibid., 44.
[63] Ibid., 47
[64] Ibid., 47.

The changes that took place at the College and all over the world at this time greatly affected the students of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio and, as a result, their *Journal* writings. Anti-Semitism was crossing the ocean from the "Old World." Mass migration of Eastern European Jews transformed the make-up of the Reform Jewish communities that were largely developed by Central European Jews who understood Judaism to be their religion – not their national identity. Eastern European Jews, by contrast, came to the US with an innate understanding that the label Jew was much more than a religious affiliation. It was for these immigrants a nationality, an ethnos. These new American Jews identified with Jewish nationalism. Their immigrant Jewish predecessors, the Jews who immigrated to the US from Central Europe in the mid-19th century saw themselves as Jewish Americans – no different from Protestant Americans, Catholic Americans, and Quaker Americans. As a result of the Balfour Declaration, the economic ruin European Jewry suffered as a result of World War I and, particularly, because of the upsurge in antisemitism, the Zionist movement quickly attracted new adherents, including many of the rabbinical students studying at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati.

American Reform Jews reflected on the preciousness of their religious freedoms in America. In the early to mid-19th century, American Jews often sensed that America was truly a new Zion. This was the kind of language that was used by many American Jews which is why they were so concerned that Zionism would disrupt their beloved haven & home. Thus, it was no surprise that many students at the College were hesitant to agitate the stability that existed in their communities. Moreover, many of the student's parents were immigrants that had experienced terrible oppression in their home countries and, therefore, felt a true and abiding loyalty to America.

Their ability to practice their religion freely in an unprecedented fashion meant they could initiate and create many new Jewish communities. American Reform Jews conformed to the life in America and familiarized themselves by developing similar traditions to that of their Protestant neighbors. Some Reformers borrowed, what they saw as universalistic traditions like holding their major worship service on Sunday morning instead of on the traditional Shabbat morning service.

Many professors at the College imbued their students with the foundational teachings of Reform -- ideals that emphasized the ideals of enlightenment thought, rationalism, liberalism, universalism and individualism as they moved away from the mentality of the Old World to the promising opportunities that they believed would come to them as citizens of the American nation. It is understandable why Jewish nationalism – Zionism – did not merit wide appeal among Reform leaders during the last decade of the 19th century. They did not want to be accused of having dual loyalties as Americans. Anti-Semitism was on the rise both in the United States and in Europe after World War I and Reform Jews who repudiated the nationalistic ideals in Palestine made the case against Zionism. This probably contributed to the anti-Zionist expression in the *Journal.*

Students used the *HUC Journal* to discuss what was happening in the Jewish world as a whole and in their Movement in America. The College community was continuously shaped by the Reform community in America and the events that took place around the world. For example, each student from outside the city had one member of the College's Board of Governors who was appointed to serve as that student's legal guardian during his stay at the College.[65] The relationships that students shared with the different lay leadership in their communities guided their learning. Additionally, these community leaders helped shape the way

[65] Meyer, "A Centennial History," 28.

in which the students viewed many issues, including Zionism. It is worth mentioning that the *HUC Journal* would have never exited with the financial assistance of the Board of Governors.[66]

During American Zionism's formative years, the late 19th century till 1917, Reform leaders frequently sermonized and advocated that America was the new Zion. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), the lay organization of Reform congregations resolved that "America is our Zion. Here, in the home of religious liberty, we have aided in founding this new Zion, the fruition of the beginning laid in the old"[67] These sentiments were ubiquitous as this UAHC resolution demonstrates. It is easy to understand why the vast majority of HUC rabbinical students during this period aligned themselves with these same ideals. The Zionist Movement was still very new at this time and its ideas were still emerging. Students at The College felt compelled to discuss these new ideas albeit some of the push back from prominent Reform leaders. They were enthusiastic about reading the works of Zionist thinkers and uncovering their ideologies on creating a Jewish state. The students frequently cited and wrote about Ahad Ha'am's Zionism as a conduit to explore their own thoughts about Zionism. The writings about Zionism at this time are prudent and exploratory in nature. However, after the First World War, we begin to see students taking a stance towards Zionism and see more pro-Zionist articles published in the 1920s and 30's.

[66] Ibid., 30.
[67] Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism,* 46.

2: Zionism Gains More Momentum, 1920-1935

Unlike the previous decade, the *Monthly* (formally known as the *HUC Journal*) included several articles dealing with Zionism in each issue between the years 1920-1935. The conversation around Zionism proliferated around the world and the students continued reflecting the different ways in which Zionism was being discussed. With the signing of the Balfour declaration, the increased anti-Semitism in the world and the exploration of creating a cultural Zionism or a spiritual center in Palestine, a shift occurred in the Reform Movement where many of its leaders referred to themselves as non-Zionists and not anti-Zionists. Anti-Zionists had always strongly advocated to discredit the spread of Zionism while the non-Zionists were more neutral in that they neither pursued nor rejected Zionist activities.

In his article entitled, "Converts to Judaism", Jonathan Sarna tries to understand why Reform Jews began to transition their judgements towards Zionism after the turn of the century. He argues that we can only speculate why prominent Jews changed their minds so drastically towards their view on Zionism. We do not know of people's personal or psychological factors that made them alter so drastically from one end to the other. However, Sarna points out that through Zionism many rabbis seemed to have recaptured an inspiring and rousing calling that fueled them as they had in their former days. This enthusiasm was reflected in the *Monthly Journal* and Sarna suggests that some of the older ideologies that were anti-Zionist that were seen as truths began to expire. He says,

> the key to understanding Reform conversions regarding their views on Zionism] is neither antisemitism nor the persecution of Eastern European Jewry but rather the larger cultural crisis to which both contributed. Events at the turn of the

century had outpaced ideology and many of the basic assumptions upon which nineteenth-century American Reform Judaism rested had proved false.[1]

Sarna pointed to the fact that American Reform Jews had previously poured all of their energies toward assimilating into America's general culture. However, with the growth of anti-Semitism during the 1920s, American Jews felt the need to protect themselves in an ever-volatile climate and while acculturating in America was still a priority, American Jews became increasingly convinced that European Jewry needed a refuge and a homeland that would ensure their protection. In the years that followed the promulgation of the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917, the world seemed very unstable for many Jews. Zionism became a mass movement after World War I and the onset of a series of worrisome problems that affected European Jewry: (a) Ukrainian Jewish communities were massacred, (b) Jewish Poles were forced to leave Poland as anti-Jewish policies arose economically, (c) anti-Semitism was rising in Germany and Austria, (d) great economic instability that arose from the Great Depressions and (e) strict immigration quotas imposed after the passage of the National Origins Act made it extremely difficult for oppressed European Jews to immigrate to the United States. There were fewer and fewer safe havens for Jews to reside. As a result, many Jews from all over the world made Aliyah to Palestine in waves for, both, ideological purposes and to escape persecutions. Yet Zionism continued to be a hotly debated issue. Some American Reform Jews believed that the pursuit of the Jewish state in Palestine was very necessary as a salvation for persecuted Jews while others still felt their American Jewish identity was threatened by this endeavor. One of the most influential figures in the popularization of Zionism among American Jews was the distinguished lawyer and future Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Louis D. Brandeis (1856-1941).

[1] Sarna, "Converts to Zionism," 195.

Brandeis, alone, was able to fuel the Zionist campaign with his influence and resources which helped the movement flourish and gain a reputation. Having been a well-respected lawyer and later America's first Jewish Supreme Court Justice, Brandeis spoke on behalf of those who were removed from Jewish religious life and found Zionism as a way to connect to their progressive Jewish ideals. From 1914-21, Brandeis emerged as America's foremost Zionist advocate. He excited Americans about the importance of the Balfour Declaration (1917-18), and he played a dominant role in crafting the so-called "Pittsburgh Program," the official program of the American Zionist movement (1918). He visited Palestine in 1919 and, in 1920, he became the honorary president of the World Zionist Organization. He played a prominent role in the WZO and other organizations that helped endorse the Zionist agenda.[2] Brandeis was not born into his Zionist ideals but rather sprouted them later in his life. His shift in Zionist thought most likely resulted from a complex series of remote and proximate causes, some of them conscious, some of the undoubtedly unconscious.[3] What was unique about Brandeis' Zionism was that it lay in his conception of Americanism. For Brandeis, the basic ideals of America were "the development of the individual for his own and the common good; the development of the individual through liberty, and the attainment of the common good through democracy and social justice."[4] These ideals could be shared by all citizens and because the American ideal was to develop one's self, Brandeis argued that various ethnic and national groups be allowed to retain their identity. For him, Zionism was a form of Americanism.

Additionally, he had the ability to prove that Zionism was not just a political movement but an opportunity for Jews to flourish in so many ways other than religious ones. This is not to

[2] Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism,* 34.
[3] Jonathan D. Sarna, "Louis D. Brandeis: Zionist Leader," *Brandeis Review* 11, no. 3 (Winter, 1992): 23.
[4] George L. Berlin, "The Brandeis-Weizmann Dispute," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (September, 1970): 38.

say that he didn't value being Jewish, it was that he felt there were many conduits to approaching one's Jewish connection. He was not a religious person in the conventional sense and supported the idea of having a Jewish Homeland to promote a different kind of Jewish expression. His Zionism included a development of well-managed commercial and industrial enterprises in Palestine. This nonconforming way of fostering Zionism gave a way for American Jews to identify with Zionism in new and different ways.

In this chapter, we will see the different ways in which HUC students expressed their views on Zionism. Like Brandeis, HUC students did not see Zionism as an exclusively religious endeavor. Their Zionist ideology invited conversation around the development of Jewish culture, literature, identity and language in Palestine. Students, at this time begin to adamantly push for the enhancement of a cultural Zionism.

Rather than discussing the articles of the *HUC Monthly* in chronological order as chapter one was laid out, the articles in this time period will be discussed by major theme. The three recurring themes that appear over and over again reflect the dialogues that occurred outside the HUC walls around Zionism. Just as Zionism gained momentum during this time period, the *Monthly* articles reflected those beliefs as they became increasingly more pro-Zionism. Of the thirty-seven articles that dealt with Zionism as the main topic of the article in this time frame, fourteen were pro-Zionism, four anti-Zionism, nine were neutral or informational in nature (these are mostly books reviews that don't explicitly take a stance though many of the authors were Zionists. Some of these articles include reports on what's happening in Palestine). Ten of thirty-seven articles were editorials that took a mostly pro-Zionist stance.

The first major theme of the three recurring topics of Zionism deals with the idea of creating a Jewish state where Jews can develop and live their Jewish identity as a majority rather

than living as an assimilated minority. The authors of these articles persevere to live in a land where they can develop their Jewish culture in a way that's lived every day rather than just seen in places of worship. The second major theme in the *Monthly* articles is how Reform Jews attempted to embrace Zionism in America. The first few decades of the 20th century are tumultuous in that it has become very difficult for Jews to live safely and comfortably anywhere in the world. Having witnessed these difficulties, the Reform Jews in America who are anti-Zionist become even more protective of their life in United States and with their own anti-Semitic challenges want to show the total compatibility between Reform Judaism and Americanism. As a result, students contributing to the *Monthly* echoed this sentiment and tried to bridge a similar gap between Reform Judaism and Zionism as way to create a stronger bond between these two ideologies. Lastly, the oppositional voice around Zionism still remained loud. There were still many Reform leaders and students who maintained that Zionism was inimical to Reform Judaism's principles as outlined in the Pittsburgh Platform. Many of these essays came from those who believed that Zionism contradicted American liberal ideals. Their concerns stemmed from the idea that a single Jewish Homeland in the Middle East would cause unnecessary difficulties for world Jewry in the future. Additional concerns were brought up regarding the complexities of living among or beside the Arab nations and the lack of support the Jews actually received from the British to pursue this endeavor.

The three major themes exhibited in the *Monthly* were much more forthright then they had been in previous years. As we will see below, students used stronger language, took clear stances regarding their beliefs and were much more imaginative in their writing around a Jewish Palestine. Not only did the pro-Zionist stance proliferate during these years, but the language used by the students was unapologetic and unambiguous in support of the Zionist movement.

Additionally, where previously students of the *Monthly* wrote about Zionist thinkers and their compositions, they now began to write about their own love for a potential Jewish state more openly. These changes were influenced by the departure of Kaufmann Kohler's tenure at the college, the issuance of the Balfour Declaration and other more outspoken Zionist leaders coming to the foreground.

Palestine as a Cultural Homeland for Jews

American Zionists at this time tried to find compatibility between Reform Judaism and Americanism or Zionism and Americanism. This form of justification or explanation was a way for Jews in America to safeguard the ideals about which they were most passionate. Having learned from their leadership, students at the College in this time period spent a lot of time trying to find similar fundamental qualities between Zionism and Americanism. As we will see in some of the articles below, students pointed to distinct links that made a more compelling case for pursuing Zionism as a Movement. Additionally, they believed that finding this common thread could help stave off anti-Semitism that was proliferating at this time and reawaken the link between Jewish religion and Jewish nationality. Zionists at this time wanted to explore their Jewish roots further by uncovering the particularistic elements of being Jewish. Students in the 1920's felt compelled to reintroduce prayers and rituals that spoke of the Jewish longing to return to Zion. These prayers had been removed from Jewish ritual in many of the 19th century American Reform prayer books. For these early Reformers, the United States had become a new Zion. By eliminating the traditional prayers and rituals that spoke of the Jewish longing to return to Zion, Reformers underscored their willingness to place universal ideals above Jewish particularism. We will see such a change in an article below.

It is worth pointing out that the students at the College at this time are mostly American born. These were the children of immigrants who had come to America in the previous generation and felt strongly about protecting their life in America as it was a safe haven for Jews at a time when they were being persecuted all over the world. Early Reformers felt grateful and protective of America as their safe haven because some of them were running from persecution while others just appreciated American ideals and saw it as an opportunity to live freely for the first time in many ways. This generation, however, was raised in America. They did not have the same experiences as the early Reformers who were greatly influenced by Emancipation in Europe. The idea of creating a Jewish State proliferated in their time and being a part of that conversation became important.

Establishing a Jewish culture in Palestine was written about in the January 1930 issue of the *Monthly* by rabbinic student Arthur Zuckerman (1907-1990). He opens his article stating that, "the culture of a people is the sum total of the expression of the that people in all walks of human life."[5] In his article, he acknowledges that Jews as a group have developed culture in many different countries where they have lived. However, that culture is intertwined with the secular life of that country. Zuckerman believed that to have an entirely Jewish culture meant having the ability to engage with Judaism in all parts of life, not just in the synagogue, for example. He believed that Jews of this time could not have the spiritual freedom necessary to do this because they were too assimilated in the countries where they resided. He claimed that the 19th century emancipation meant that Jews had no culture because they blended into the greater culture of the majority.

Fostering a Jewish state would allow Jews to develop their own culture that would take place every day, and not just on Shabbat. "Jewish culture is an autonomous community

[5] Arthur Zuckerman, "Culture and Nationalism," *HUC Monthly* (January 15, 1930): 13.

containing within itself the means for a complete participation in all forms of human activity."[6] In many ways, emancipation and assimilation meant that Jews didn't have the opportunity to establish their own ethnicity or civilization because they were living as a minority among others for so long. Having experienced freedom in an unprecedented way in America, Jews were ready to establish their own identity as a part of their studies at HUC. Zuckerman advocated that "in Palestine the Jew can 'drink' to the full ideals of his own people and make them his own"[7] and that in Palestine . . .

> there is no need to wrack one's brain as to how to create a Jewish social and culture community. It exists! It even has a name- the *Yishuv*. The Jew went back to his ancestral home and found that, as a Jew he could participate in every form of social and intellectual life... and the national language was revivified.[8]

Cultural discussions ensued at the College in the 1920's and 30's as a result of several fundamental changes that took place. Life at the College was changing as Rabbi Kaufman Kohler's ideas on Zionism lapsed and newer connections to Zionism proliferated, stressing that Judaism was a civilization rather than a religion and the Jews a people rather than a denomination.[9]

The students' articles dealt with Zionism more directly in spite of the fact that the new President of the College, Julian Morgenstern (1881-1976), was a non-Zionist. Rabbi Morgenstern eventually became a Zionist but this would only happen after the Holocaust. In the meantime, however, Morgenstern was sensitive to the needs of the students and reinstated modern Hebrew to the curriculum in 1923-1924. Additionally, Jacob Mann (1888-1940), who

[6] Ibid., 13.
[7] Ibid., 14.
[8] Ibid.,16.
[9] Meyer, "A Centennial History," 130.

joined HUC's faculty in 1922, taught students Hebrew literature and offered courses on Modern Hebrew Writers.[10] In 1932, two Hebrew speaking unions formed on the Cincinnati campus. One of these unions was named *Agudat Neumark* in memory of the devoted Hebraist and Professor of Jewish Philosophy, David Neumark (1866-1924). These developments generated the much-needed spirited discourse around Zionism that clearly appealed to the school's students. Rather than spending much of their time defending the Zionist cause, they were now able to have conversations about Jewish culture, literature, Hebrew and identity.

Dreaming about a possible Jewish state also meant thinking about a new linguistic innovation. Although the Hebrew language wasn't new, having it be the national language of country was a novel idea. Albert T. Bilgray (1910-1998) wrote an article wherein he articulated his belief that the revival of Hebrew would give the Jews a nationalistic identity and a mode of expression which would help create a Jewish culture. Bilgray conceded, however, that the flourishing of a Jewish culture in Palestine would ultimately drive a wedge between the Jews and the Arabs. Bilgray argued that through the Hebrew language the Jewish people would be able to tell their story. He acknowledged that other countries have their own languages that tell their story and have nationalistic association but contends that Hebrew is different because it has its own literature and isn't limited to one geographical area. Hebrew will create a national unity once it has had time to establish itself. Born of the Bible, Hebrew would serve as as a national and political unifier.[11] Lastly, he added, that "Hebrew, as other 'revived' languages is definitely associated with a national movement…poets and writers are utilizing the language to interpret the group experiences and national aspirations of the people."[12]

[10] Spicehandler, "Hebrew and Hebrew Literature," 461.
[11] Albert T. Bilgray, "Modern Hebrew: Phenomenon in Language", *HUC Monthly 19* No. 3 (January, 1932): 18.
[12] Ibid., 19.

Hans Kohn (1891-1971), a Zionist activist invited to write in the *Monthly*, shares a similar viewpoint to that of Albert T. Bilgray. Like many Zionists of this time, Kohn was greatly influenced by Ahad Ha'am. In his articles, Ahad Ha'am argues that in order to have a rich Jewish culture that is unified, Jews must all be able to contribute to the revival of the Jewish spirit and expression through art, literature and other creative means. Kohn was impressed by Ahad Ha'am's notions of cultural development as coming from within the community as a form of expression rather than as a result of exterior pressures. He quotes Ahad Ha'am saying that "We need a freedom for our national spirit, an unhindered possibility for movement in its historical atmosphere, in order that it may stir itself from its long slumber and be able to revive anew the national ideal and clothe it in a form which suits our needs today."[13]

Kohn explains that Ahad Ha'am was not an advocate of reviving the Jewish Homeland through politics and diplomacy. He saw the moral renaissance of the Jewish people as the essence of Zionism. Kohn tried to show the resemblance of the Zionist movement and the Reform movement and demonstration that they were more similar than one might assume. He uses Ahad Ha'am's arguments to show that both Movements were looking to develop a new Judaism that reflected the time period. Having a Jewish Homeland meant developing a spiritual effect that would influence the whole world. Kohn argued that the Reform movement in America was missing the immersive element that was needed in order to develop a deeply ingrained Jewish culture and Jewish identity. Kohn asserted that a strong Jewish state in Palestine could influence Diaspora Jewry by bringing together a once scattered people. Kohn was concerned that the essence of Judaism was in danger of petrification and that too much traditionalism pushes Jews away. A Jewish renaissance is the basis for a national Zionism and those ideas are compatible with Reform ideology. This kind of Zionism could only spring from a moral

[13] Hans Kohn (in Jerusalem), "Ahad Ha'am", *HUC Monthly 19* No. 6 (June, 1932): 17.

rebirth.[14] Kohn maintained that "the love for Zion which will be awakened in the hearts of the Jews, will teach them not to regard the work in Palestine as a benefit to the induvial but to ignore their single interests for the sake of the idea of Judaism."[15]

Ahad Ha'am's works are often reviewed and mentioned in the *Monthly*. His approach to Zionism was not political, but rather, cultural. His basis for fostering a Jewish state was so that the Jewish people could develop their own literature, culture and language in an environment that was immersive and not influenced by an outside dominant majority. The more Zionism proliferated, the more modern Hebrew and literature classes were added to the curriculum which helped establish a Zionist culture at the College.

The *Monthly* also published articles that advocated for a cultural understanding of Zionism. Zionist students wanted to assuage concerns around Palestine being anti-Jewish in order to pacify some of the apprehensions of anti-Zionists. Multiple students told stories that illustrated the incredible immersive nature of having a Jewish state. In March 1934, Theodore Cook's[16] (1909-1976) contributed an essay that depicted a *Purim* celebration in Tel Aviv. He described the Jews that gathered from all over the world to see the pageant. He recounted that in "Palestine there is reason for joy. Depression does not exist here. For conditions here are different and, in this difference, lies the hope of the Jew…For the Jew has ceased to be a ghetto Jew."[17] For students like Cook, having an entire city celebrate a Jewish holiday was a new phenomenon. Nowhere in America could HUC students find city-wide Jewish celebrations where everyone participated like he had seen in Palestine. This article is noteworthy both because it speaks to the immersive nature of living a Jewish life in Palestine and because it

[14] Ibid., 15-16.
[15] Ibid., 16.
[16] Theodore Cook was not a graduate of HUC and worked with B'nai B'rith in Philadelphia.
[17] Theodore Cook, "Purim in Tel Aviv," *HUC Monthly* 21, no. 4 (March 1934): 5.

showed anti-Zionists that Palestine was not just a political pursuit but a religious one was well. Additionally, just as Reform Jews were creating new ways to celebrate their holidays in America, so too, could Zionists in a new Jewish state.

One can see how some of these ideas seemed somewhat radical for this time. There were still many Jews who still felt that their roots in America were vulnerable. Some American Reform Jews felt they had to demonstrate their commitment to this country and conversations around creating a Jewish state could compromise that connection.

Bridging the Gap Between Reform Judaism and Zionism

Having been greatly influenced by the Age of Reason, American Reformers wanted their Jewishness to reflect that of the American creed. Their philosophies, speeches and writings all surrendered nationalistic notions. The Reform prayer books also removed prayers that were connected to Zion- the endeavor for Jews to return to the Holy Land. The Reform desire to be closely connected to Americanism was strong. Reformers equated their religious ideal with that of Americanism and many feared that supporting Zionism meant their loyalty to the Jewish people superseded loyalty to America. One reformer even went as far to say that the Biblical verse from Isaiah 1.27, "Zion shall be redeemed with righteousness" clearly referred to America, since only in that land was there hope for a righteousness.[18] This divide compelled students to write various articles in the *Monthly* during the 1920's and early 30's trying to unite Americanism and Zionism. Reform Zionists felt compelled to reconcile the perceived incompatibility between Reform Judaism and Zionism. Reform leaders tried to formulate a definition of Zionism that could be defended in staunchly American terms. HUC professors Caspar Levias (1860-1934) and Richard Gottheil (1862-1936) explained that Zionism was in

[18] Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism,* 46.

harmony with well-established American precedents. They pointed out that many Americans, including the Irish, the Germans, and the Scandinavians, had long maintained ties to "their kinsfolk and co-religionists [who] have a home of their own across the Atlantic,"[19] and Zionism would be no different. Levias suggested that the whole loyalty question was only raised by frightened rabbis of German background who had been unduly influenced by European conditions. "To us Americans," he uttered, "this may remain a subject of little concern. Our population consists of various elements."[20]

The student authors of the *Monthly* who advocated for Zionism on campus continued to do so exuberantly. Many Zionist thinkers in the Reform Movement believed that Reform Judaism and Zionism had a lot in common and bridging the gap between the two could create a spiritual and intellectual unity for Jews all over the world. Hayyim S. Brody (1904-1927)[21] argued that Reform American Jews should be part of making history and "unite these two great movements of modern Jewish life."[22] He says that Reform Judaism, especially in America is drifting, "in its beginnings it's motivations and purposes were rather definite, but at the present time it is sorely lacking in viewpoint and aim…today we find that it may turn out to be lacking in power of perpetuation, without which quality a movement, though outwardly successful, is doomed."[23] Like some of his colleagues, he feels strongly about Zionism's purpose of reviving the Jewish spirit which shares similar values to that of liberal Judaism. It is in this intersection that "Reform Judaism and Zionism meet." Brody tries to help people to see the similarities between the Reform movement and Zionism and bring them together as a unifying idea. His

[19] Sarna, "Converts to Zionism," 198.
[20] Ibid., 197-198.
[21] Hayyim Brody was never ordained as he had died battling a long illness. The announcement of his passing was included in the November 1, 1927, vol. 15, no. 1 issue of the Monthly.
[22] Hayyim Brody, "Zionism and Reform," *HUC Monthly* 9 No. 4 (March 1927): 15.
[23] Ibid., 13.

concern for a divided American Jewish community inspires him to emphasize the commonalities between the two ideologies. He attempts to intercept the two ideologies in their sense of liberalism. He argues that both Reform and Zionism cannot and should not try to exist on an individualist basis. In a response to those who have said that Zionism is anti- religious, Brody agrees. It is for this very reason, Brody argues, that Reform Jews be part of the larger Zionist conversation. Reform Judaism could encourage the development of a modern Jewish religious life in Palestine. He believes this is where "Reform Judaism and Zionism meet. Their relationship must at this stage become reciprocal"[24] contributing to each other's narrative.

Like Brody, Joshua Trachtenberg (1904-1959) also insisted that there should be a strong connection between Reform Jews and Zionists. His main concern is that of the next generation of Jews -- American Reform youth – who were disconnecting from their houses of worship. He believed that engaging with Zionist ideals would result in helping to stimulate renewed interest in Judaism among many of these young people. To show the disconnect of Jewish youth in America, Trachtenberg cited a study in his 1930 *Monthly* article that was done in the "The Voice of the Jewish Laity," a survey of the Jewish layman's religious attitudes and practices. This study showed that most of the people who completed the survey were well into their 40's and only a small fraction of those who completed the survey were young people.[25] He appealed to the older generations, who were set in their ways, to reconsider their view and foster a connection to the Zionist cause if they want to maintain a relationship with their youth. Young people, he explained, are excited to explore their spiritual roots. He admitted that Zionism has acquired an

[24] Ibid., 14.
[25] Joshua Trachtenberg, "Youth in the Temple" *HUC Monthly* (March 1, 1930): 16.
The National Committee on Religious Propaganda of the National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods received 1222 responses to questionnaire regarding temple youth. Published in the "The Voice of the Jewish Laity" the surveys that were returned were mostly from the older generation. 182 came from men under 30, 336 from men between 30-40 and 704 from men over 40. These figures indicative of the average age level of those concerned with temple problems.

unsavory reputation in American Reform circles as a result of a series of misconceptions that must be cleared up.[26] However, he argued that Zionism must be given a chance because it can be the foreground where the Jewish community can express itself socially, culturally and spiritually. Through these lenses, Jews in the Diaspora could be inspired to live a fuller and richer Jewish life. He insisted that "Jewish youth organizations of all types accost us. Their aims are at times quite inarticulate, their activities poorly organized, their members fluid. The movements which these youth organizations, in the main have taken to their hearts are Zionism and Socialism."[27] It was clear that Zionism possessed certain spiritual characteristics that stimulated and excited many Reform Jewish youth. If the Reform movement wanted young Jews to be engaged, they had to offer the younger generation activities that spoke to its ideologies. In his concluding sentences he boldly asked: "until when will the temple remain a patriarchs' club?"[28]

Moses Cyrus Weiler (1907-2000), another Rabbinic student, reported that Jews who live in Palestine celebrated *Shavuot* on the streets and "live their Judaism in Palestine."[29] He told readers that this engrossed way of experiencing Judaism excited the young generation. "The old are still orthodox; their religion is conventional and habitual. The young however, do not want to go back to religion, they would like to go forward, to religion."[30] These articles in the *Monthly* attempted to show that the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine constituted is a religious opportunity for Judaism to flourish in an unpreceded way and that joining forces could be an incredible opportunity for Reform Jews. Weiler concluded by saying that this new religion

[26] Ibid., 18.
[27] Ibid., 17.
[28] Ibid., 18.
[29] Moses C. Weiler "Is Modern Palestine Anti-Religious" *HUC Monthly* (January 15, 1931): 16.
[30] Ibid., 17.

[way of practicing Judaism] may be very close to Reform Judaism, for it too emphasized justice, righteousness, love.[31]

It is hard to say exactly why HUC students felt more compelled to write so positively about Zionism in this period. However, there were several changes around the world that took place during this time that, most likely, influenced their decisions. For instance, the enthusiasm engendered by the Balfour Declaration; the rise in anti-Semitism around the world in the 20s and 30s and the closing of the gates in the US (the National Origins Act). Several changes also took place in the College community as well. For example, Modern Hebrew teachings proliferated and as more professors took interest in Zionism and Modern Hebrew were hired at HUC, we see additional Modern Hebrew classes added to the course list. Moreover, faculty members such as Zvi Diesendruck (1890-1940) became a recognized figure in the field of Modern Hebrew. Hebrew became a bridge to study topics such as philosophy and created a culture around Jewish literature. The purpose of reading Hebrew was not just for Bible studies and liturgy but now shifted to create a culture around other works both Jewish and secular broadening the field of Jewish study.

Additionally, advocates like Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, Abba Hillel Silver and other pro-Zionist rabbis persisted in building support for Zionism within the Movement. These notable leaders greatly influenced conversations around Zionism within the American Reform community. "Silver believed in compatibility of Reform and Zionism, not the conquest of Reform by Zionism. For him, Zionism represented a vital addition to Reform not a substitute."[32] The pro-Zionist contributions made by Wise, Silver and others were particularly noteworthy because the relationship between Reform and Zionism was never binary in the Reform world. A

[31] Ibid., 17.
[32] Polish, *Renew Our Days*, 117.

spectrum of ideas always existed which is why both sides of the divide influenced the perspective of HUC students. The Central Conference American Rabbis was always divided when it came to Zionism. This divide trickled into the College milieu and created an opportunity for HUC students to reflect openly about their passion for or opposition to Zionism. However, for the most part, a 1930's survey showed that student opinion rose to 69% favorability to Zionism, 22% neutral and 9% opposed. A generation earlier, only 17% had been pro-Zionist.[33] As time progressed, Zionism became more widely accepted and spoken about more openly.

Students such as Judah L. Magnes (ordained in 1900) and Harvey E. Wessel[34] (1894-1983) became Zionists while students at the Hebrew Union College and published articles explaining how their embrace of Zionism came to be. They professed that their time spent at the College sparked an excitement for Zionism while studying topics such as Jewish liturgy and learning about world Jewry. For them, having the ability to study Modern Hebrew and explore Zionism was part of the freedom of being an American Jew. Zionism provided these students (who would both go on to become prominent Zionist leaders in the Reform Movement) with a sense of larger meaning.[35] Magnes' "born again" experience with Zionism was symbolized by the fact that he Hebraized his name from Julian Leon Magnes to Judah Leib. In a letter to his parents he described how Zionism transformed not only his intellectual and spiritual interests but his whole "mode of life.[36]"

In the May-June issue of 1920, Wessel published an article entitled, *How I Became a Zionist at the Hebrew Union College*. Despite the many objections to Zionism that existed at the College, Wessel openly expressed his enthusiasm for Zionism. His interest was ignited by his

[33] Max D. Eichhorn, "The Student Body- Today and Tomorrow" *HUC Monthly* (June,1930): 12-13.
[34] Ordained in 1920.
[35] Sarna, "Converts to Zionism," 191.
[36] Ibid., 196.

study of liturgy and learning about Jews as a people, rather than just a religion. Zionism gave him a sense of larger purpose and vision for the Jewish people that inspired others in his class as well. Wessel was not alone in his commitment to Zionism.

Both Magnes' and Wessel's articles help to illustrate the growing excitement around Zionism in this time period. Becoming a Zionist was as Brandeis identified, "an identity of spirit uniting Judaism and Americanism. He declared that 'the Jewish spirit…is essentially modern and essentially American. Therefore, in order to become a better American, the Jew must first become a better Jew, and this required becoming a Zionist.'"[37] Magnes and Wessel were both American rabbinical students who were not only studying Jewish texts but were weaving their learning of their ancient tradition with their ideas of the Modern Reform Jewish practice in America. For them and others like them, their transition to becoming Zionist was both a reflection of their Judaism and of their Americanism.

Opposition Still Remained

One of the great voices of opposition that still remained in the 1920's was of former President of the College Kaufmann Kohler. Having finished his tenure as President in 1921, Kohler's final farewell sermon was printed in the June 1922 *Monthly* issue when he served as the President Emeritus. In it, Kohler described his love for the Jewish people, the Reform Movement and for the College. While he never mentioned Zionism directly, his speech was filled with nuance that remained anti-Zionist. He spoke of his great love for America and how the Hebrew Union College had enriched the lives of a rejuvenated Israel in modern times and had "unfolded

[37] Berlin, "The Brandeis-Weizmann Dispute," 39.

and nurtured the spirit of the Jewish faith in dormant souls to win the thousands and tens of thousands anew for Israel's Only One God on the virgin soil of America."[38] He discussed his love for the heroes of an American Israel that saved Judaism through their leadership like Abraham Geiger (1810-1874), Leopold Zunz (1794-1886), David Einhorn, Samuel Hirsch and Isaac M. Wise - all of whom predated Zionism or expressed opposition to it. In his analysis of the bond that links Jews together, Kohler suggested that Reform and Orthodox Jews have a strong connection (albeit their conflicting past) and that the real threat to the future of world Jewry, he insisted, were the Zionists:

> Ours is not a political nation like any other, but a nation wedded to the Torah as its life purpose, said a thousand years ago the Gaon Saadia in protest against the race Jews. The issue today is no longer between Orthodoxy and Reform, but between a world with God and a world without God. It is irreligion in both the Anti-Semite and the Jewish Nationalist that imperils Jews and Judaism today.[39]

For a majority of Reformers, Zionism was a threat that promoted anti-Semitism. Their concern stemmed from this idea that if Jews were seen as homeless then they created a separation between themselves and other Americans. Zionism fed those fears which, in their eyes, led to greater bigotry and hatred.

Many students during this period of time continued to express opposition to political Zionism, and opposition to Zionism still ran strong among the HUC community. In December 1932, HUC student Samuel Volkman (1909-2006), ordained in 1934, wrote an article in the *Monthly* vocalizing his concerns about Palestine. He argued that, "the great leader of the Zionist Movement, Dr. Theodore Herzl came to his movement, we will remember, in reaction to the

[38] Kaufmann Kohler, "Farwell Sermon," *HUC Monthly* 8, No.8 (June, 1922): 222.
[39] Ibid., 223.

bitter Jew- hatred evoked by the Dreyfus trial... and was rudely awakened by this Parisian blast of anti-Semitism." [40] He continues,

> You may say that the Jews have in Palestine what amounts to a Jewish state (which is, of course, to stretch a point) but the vast Jewish population does not live in that state; the vast Jewish population still lives among the nations and struggles, an indissoluble entity, in the toils of *alt-neu* anti-Semitism.[41]

Volkman articulated his concern that Zionists have been under "the illusion"[42] that building up a Jewish State was the only way to solve the Jewish problem. His greater concern is that the Jewish problem of anti-Semitism may not be solvable at all. He also raises other concerns such as the Palestinian riots of 1929 and the semi-autonomous status of Jews under British sovereignty. In his mind, the Zionists have idealized the Jewish state in Palestine and at a closer glance it is not the solution to anti-Semitism nor does it contain the freedom of religion as hoped for by Ahad Ha'am.

Some students found it difficult to take stock in Palestine's future. Eli Tash (1909-2004)[43] questions whether Jews are even a race. He challenges the Zionists to think more carefully about creating a Jewish Homeland in Palestine. In his article, "Taking Stock in Palestine" he raises the questions for the anthropologists and political Jews have a culture, and if so, what's its content? Tash argued that Zionists have not been able to answer questions about Jewish identity adequality and until they do, a Jewish state in Palestine should not be pursued.[44] Tash was also concerned regarding the British's role in helping to create a Jewish Homeland. He

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[40] Samuel Volkman, "The World Jewish Congress- Some Reflections on Its History" *HUC Monthly 20* No. 2 (December, 1932): 14.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Eli G. Tash (1909-2004) was an HUC student, who was never ordained. A contemporary of David Max Eichhorn, he ultimately became a VP of Macy's Department Store and married Eichhorn's sister, Helene. See http://www.genlookups.com/wi/webbbs_config.pl/noframes/read/374#ixzz6H6rzqnSD.
[44] Eli Tash, "Taking Stock in Palestine," *HUC Monthly* (April 15, 1930):13.

believed they are invested in the Zionist cause for their own interests and that if problems arise with the neighboring Arabs the Jews would be left to their own devices. Tash believed that there were too many questions that have been left unanswered both dealing with Jewish identity and with a potential clash with the Arabs living in Palestine.

Stanely R. Brav (1908-1992) (ordained in 1934) argued that the British are indifferent about the Zionist cause and don't really care who inhabits Palestine. He believed that should a clash erupt between the Jews and the Arabs, the British wouldn't do anything about it as they are not invested in this region.[45]

Conclusion

Pro-Zionists students at this time continued to openly discuss their passion for a Jewish Palestine while opposition from anti-Zionist students appeared concomitantly. Those who were opposed to Zionism were concerned that it would destabilize their emancipated lifestyle in America. Additionally, their concerns for creating a Jewish state in an unpredictable Middle East had its validity. It was hard for American Jews, living comfortably, to see the appeal of such a transition. This kind of a move was only suited for Jews who were living in oppressed regions of the world. "Zionist sermons by the students could now be heard from the College pulpit. Student societies for propagating modern Hebrew and studying Zionist thought flourished."[46] Reform students wanted to develop their Jewish identity by strengthening Jewish culture and by supporting the revivification of Hebrew language in the ancient Jewish homeland of forebears.

The Zionist cause within the Reform movement would have never grown as successfully as it did had it not been for early Reform leaders – rabbis and student rabbis --within the movement making great strides towards Zionism. We begin to see a trend where important

[45] Stanley R. Brav, "A War With Windmills?," *HUC Monthly* (April, 1931): 31.
[46] Polish, *Renew Our Days*, 183.

members of the community begin to support Zionism despite the fact that many of them had been anti-Zionists in the past. Prominent leaders such as Rabbi Bernhard Felsenthal (which we discussed in chapter one) altered his viewpoint and became a Zionist later in life. When in 1869 he was protesting efforts aimed at Jewish colonization in Palestine, the same Rabbi Felsenthal in 1907 became a committed Zionist declaring his conviction that "Zionism alone will be the savior of our Nation and its religion, and save it from death and disappearance."[47] He and other important activists like him pushed for a Jewish "racial" unity- a word used interchangeably at that time with "ethnic" or "national." [48] Having been a supporter of Zionism long before Herzl or the Basel program, he became more involved in many Zionist organizations such as the World Zionist Organization (initially called the Federation of American Zionists, or the "FAZ"). He and other Reform leaders that embraced Zionism such as Max Heller (1860-1929), Stephen Wise and the Gottheils started as a small minority that gradually gained more influence over the CCAR which trickled into the College mindset.

These leaders loudly voiced their Zionist opinions in such important forums such as the CCAR, the *Maccabean* and other venues gave HUC students the confidence to write and discuss Zionism at the College (especially those who historian Jonathan D. Sarna have dubbed) "converts to Zionism," those who started as anti-Zionists but became Zionists later in life) It was true that the strong-willed and intimidating leadership that was mostly anti-Zionist at the College, leaders in the field influenced the students to not only write about their Zionist aspirations but they also pressured the administration to have more classes that taught Modern Hebrew, Hebrew literature and study Zionist thinkers in order to help this field of study flourish

[47] Sarna, "Converts to Zionism," 188.
[48] Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism,* 52.

at a time when students were thirsty to further their Jewish identity and revitalize a sense of Jewish culture.

3: The Creation of the Jewish State, 1936-1949

From 1936 to 1949 – the last thirteen years of the journal's publication – articles on Zionism appeared frequently. Five of the articles updated the journal's readers on what was happening in Palestine politically, culturally and economically. Two of the articles expressed anti-Zionist points-of-view or, similarly, evinced a critical perspective on the Jewish Homeland's development. Thirty-two articles contained a positive outlook on Zionism and Zionist activities. Of the thirty-nine articles in total, thirteen of them are editorials. The students who contributed essays to the *Monthly* were interested, informed and made sure to educate themselves on the topic of Zionism. It is clear from the number of editorials focusing on Zionism that students had a vested interest in and cared deeply about Zionism and the relationship it had with the Reform Movement. They wrote about the Zionism that informed the lay leadership in their synagogues where they worked,[1] discussed the politics around immigration to Palestine,[2] and they updated the journal's readers regarding current events that were taking place in Palestine.[3] The *Monthly* provided readers with information on the delegation of Zionist leaders that was sent to the United Nations in order to participate in the deliberations over the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, including conversations about the prospective state's boarders[4]. The student compositions were written by the leaders of HUC's student body, and they testify to the fact that these student rabbis were clearly informed about and interested in the Zionist movement as well as the *Yishuv* in Palestine.

The remaining articles in this chapter reflect the major events that took place in the greater Reform Jewish world and in America. Eastern European Jewry was facing increased anti-

[1] "Editorial: Laymen on the March," *HUC Monthly* 26 No. 4 (April, 1939): 1.
[2] "Editorial: Farewell and Welcome," *HUC Monthly* (June, 1945): 3.
[3] "Editorial: United We Speak," *HUC Monthly* (March, 1943): 1.
[4] "Editorial: The Delegation of the U.N.," *HUC Monthly* (Passover, 1947): 3.

Semitism such as the 1935 Nuremberg Laws in Germany that had made it impossible for Jews to remain citizens in the Reich. In 1939, the growing Arab resistance to Zionism and a deteriorating international situation led the British to impose severe limitations on Jewish immigration to Palestine.[5] As a result, in the 1940's, the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and the American Zionist movement launched a vigorous campaign in an effort to whip up enthusiasm among American Jews for the Zionist cause. These activities clearly alarmed the anti-Zionist camp.[6] Anti-Zionists continued to express their concern that Americans would see Zionists as anti-American or, alternatively, as Jews whose loyalty to the U.S. played second fiddle to their loyalty to the developing Jewish homeland in Palestine. A major clash occurred between the pro-Zionists and Anti-Zionists in the Reform rabbinate when the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) passed a resolution that favored the creation of a "Jewish Brigade" in Palestine in 1942.[7] This was particular surprising for Reform rabbis because the CCAR had once been dominated by rabbis who had spoken out in strong opposition to Zionism. An increasing number of rabbis in the CCAR considered themselves Zionists and, ultimately, the pro-Zionist contingent outnumbered the anti-Zionists. Once a resolution calling for the creation of a "Jewish Brigade" in Palestine was adopted by the CCAR, tensions between the two factions grew. In response to the 1942 resolution, Rabbi Louis Wolsey (1866-1948), an anti-Zionist member of the CCAR, retaliated by establishing the American Council for Judaism (ACJ). The ACJ believed that the future of Judaism was in the Diaspora and regarded the anti-Semitic atrocities across the world as temporary and rejected the notion that Judaism was anything but a religion.[8] The ACJ and those who continued to fight Zionism still believed that Judaism was nothing more than a

[5] Thomas A. Kolsky, *Jews Against Zionism, The American Council of Judaism, 1942–1948* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 3.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., 4

religion -- a spiritual tradition with a universalistic message for all humankind. Those opposed to Zionism rejected any notion of Jewish nationalism, and that included opposition to the prospect of creating a Jewish state in Palestine. They wanted to continue seeking emancipation in other countries in hopes of integrating their Jewish values, which they saw as universal, with those who lived around them. The response to world events continued to shape the students' outlook towards Zionist thought. Jews around the world were deeply troubled by the mistreatment of Jews and were constantly trying to find the right solution to Jewish salvation.

Simultaneously, at the College, the president, Rabbi Julian Morgenstern's (1881-1976), views on Zionism were transforming. Having previously been an anti-Zionist, his views on Zionism were beginning to evolve. He admitted that Reform Judaism "has by no means completely solved the problems of Judaism and [he conceded] that Zionism, like Reform Judaism, is indispensable to Judaism."[9] Morgenstern added that the "conflict within Jewish ranks is between Universalism or Reform Judaism on the one hand and Particularism, Nationalism or Zionism on the other."[10] During Morgenstern's tenure at the College, the debate around universalism versus particularism became widely discussed by students at the College as we will see later in this chapter. Students explored the question in depth as a way of expressing their own Jewish thoughts while continuing to grapple with and be part of the conversation around building a Jewish state. Morgenstern was not "primarily a theologian and felt no need to indoctrinate students at the College with a definite theological position. Himself a theist, he tolerated religious humanism among both faculty and students."[11] Unlike Kohler, Morgenstern did not serve as President of the College with any desire to impose specific beliefs and convictions on

[9] "Morgenstern Approves Jewish State in Palestine in Future if Jewish Population Wills It," *Jewish Daily Bulletin 7* No. 1779 (October 6, 1930): 3.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Meyer, "A Centennial History," 90.

the students. He managed publicly to remain between the "outright proponents and [the] most vociferous critics of Zionism."[12] This change is significant because Morgenstern's two predecessors, Isaac M. Wise and Kaufmann Kohler, were both anti-Zionists and were very vocal with their opinions. Morgenstern's focus was on making "changes in the structure and character of the institution,"[13] and therefore the students felt more compelled to share their personal Zionist beliefs at a time when Palestine seemed like a salvation for anti-Semitism around the world. Morgenstern took it upon himself to revive the school which was in need of new blood, a revision in curriculum and much needed flexibility.[14] His personal approach to student learning at HUC made it possible for students to cultivate their own opinions, and this spirit helped to bring about an ideological revolution at the College that encouraged students to explore and express their opinions in an unprecedented fashion.

As noted above, the articles on Zionism and related issues that appeared in the *Monthly* during this time period were overwhelmingly pro-Zionist, and they took a strong stance in favor of creating a Jewish state in Palestine. Major events in the world inspired many rabbinical students to articulate their positions and advocate for the important issues of their day. In previous years, Zionism was rejected by the overall majority of American Reform leaders in part because they did not see themselves as a nation nor did they feel the need to return to their ancestral homeland in Palestine. Added to that, American Reform Jews believed that America was their new Jerusalem and they were destined to live among the American people as was articulated by the CCAR and the UAHC decades earlier. However, in the mid to late 1930's, the Reform Movement began to transition from being mostly anti-Zionist and non-Zionist to becoming more pro-Zionist. Dr. Jonathan Sarna explains there are many reasons why people

[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

became Zionists at this time; there is no one reason. Moreover, we see more students, faculty and prominent Zionist thinkers contribute articles that passionately advocated for Zionism in an unprecedented fashion. The beginning of the chapter shows how the authors were very reflective in nature. They examined and criticized the previous generations' outlook and views on Zionism opposing old notions from the late 19th century and early 20th century.

Many of the articles written during this period attempted to explain what it meant to be a Jew in this era. When looking at Jewish demographics in America at this time, we see that nearly 40% of temple members had East European parentage.[15][16] Thus, in addition to creating a Jewish Homeland, providing a safe haven for Eastern European Jews became another priority for these community members. It was at this time that an overall approach to Jewish practice began to shift within the Reform movement. Moving away from the strictly universalistic platform upon which earlier Reformers based their Judaism, American Reform Jews were now revisiting a more particularistic approach to their Jewish practice. Reform Judaism was transformed "by the collapse of Emancipation in the heart of Europe…and reversed course in response to the ominous turn of the history."[17] Therefore, notions of nationalism were not rejected as they had been in decades past. In this time period, we will see how Reform Jews attempted to answer how they fit into the Palestinian Jewish narrative and what it meant for Reform Jews to participate in the upbuilding of Jewish Palestine. Pro-Zionists during this time begin to define who they were and whether their notions of universalism in Reform Jewish practice were still relevant in the world in which they lived. The school witnessed an increase in the student body of students

[15] Reform laity was undergoing similar changes with regard to Zionism: a survey of forty-three Reform congregations in eleven large cities, conducted from 1928 through 1930, demonstrated that nearly 40 percent of the temple members now had East European parentage, and 19 percent of UAHC families were enrolled in a Zionist organization.
[16] Marc Lee Raphael, *Profiles in American Judaism The Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist Traditions in Historical Perspective* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.), 30.
[17] Polish, *Renew Our Days*, 183.

coming from Eastern Europe. Ultimately, these students would graduate from the College and join the ranks of the CCAR. By the 1930's, the College was no longer combating Zionism as it had in the past and professors could engage and teach in complete freedom.[18] As a result, students and faculty plunged into a deeper discussion about Jewish identity, and they contemplated whether Jews were a race, nation, religion, people or some combination therefore.

In the latter part of the 1930's, the deteriorating international situation contributed immeasurably to the development of Zionism. The rise of Nazism in Germany, the unprecedented intensification and expansion of anti-Semitism both in Europe and in America, as well as the general assault on liberalism all dramatically weakened the theoretical foundations of Reform's anti-Zionism.[19] From the beginning of the American Republic, Jews hoped to be fully integrated into American society as free and equal citizens. This aspiration encountered many disappointments over the course of American history. The dramatic intensification of antisemitism during the decades following World War I spurred a wave of insecurity throughout the Jewish community. Some Jews were determined to fight back and compel the American nation to live up to the lofty ideals enshrined in the Republic's founding documents. Others feared that European bigotry would become more normative in the U.S. Regardless of their disposition toward American antisemitism, an increasing number of Jews were keenly aware of the continuing persecution of Jews around the world. Once America and many other nations had largely closed their gates to Jewish refugees in the late 20s and early 30s, a Jewish homeland in Palestine seemed to many to be the only feasible salvation. This realization intensified once Hitler came to power in 1933. Many of the articles in the 1940's bear witness to these worrisome and frustrating circumstances.

[18] Ibid.
[19] Kolsky, *Jews Against Zionism,* 3.

The first part of this chapter reports on the somewhat philosophical and introspective essays written by students who were evaluating the decisions of the Reform leadership from decades past. The next section of this chapter deals with questions that pertain to the ideas that the rabbinical students and Reform rabbis had about Reform Jewish identity as well as their opinions on what a Reform Jewish belief and behavior should look like in the present and future. However, this exploration seems to get cut off somewhat quickly with the rise of Nazism in Germany, and a sense of urgency rises to create a safe haven for Jews around the world.

Looking at the Future of the Reform Movement by Examining the Past

Many of the articles in the *Monthly* between 1936-1949 assessed the attitudes expressed by the leadership of the Reform Movement in decades past. Analyzing the decisions of their predecessors, students begin to reflect, and they try to understand their own position regarding Zionism and what role Zionism will be playing in their lives as future Jewish leaders in America. The students were in a transitional time from that of the previous generation of Reform rabbis. In the early years of the 20th century, America was seen as the safe haven for Jews around the world. However, by the 1930's and 40's, American Jews came to the realization that the U.S. was no longer willing to serve as a safe haven for European Jews who were facing cruel oppression which ultimately culminated in mass persecution.

American Jews, too, confronted heightened levels of bigotry and prejudice at home during this same period of time. In the 1920s, the revered business icon Henry Ford popularized an American version of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* with serialized articles in his newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent*. Father Charles Coughlin stereotyped American Jews as Communists on his weekly radio broadcasts in the 1920s and 30s. Even the American icon

Charles Lindbergh became a spokesman for American isolationism in the 1930s, and he described American Jews as having different loyalties from those of the American nation. All of these figures – and others – provoked feelings of insecurity among American Jewry, and many Jews were fearful of being accused of having "dual loyalties."[20]

In 1937, the CCAR adopted a new platform known as "The Columbus Platform." This new statement of Reform Jewish principles endorsed the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine that would serve as a haven of refuge for the oppressed and also as a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life. It read:

> 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.

The shift and coalescence into a pro-Zionist sentiment position came to be the dominant position in American Reform Judaism in the 1940s. As a result of this change, students used the *Monthly* journal as a forum to reflect on the vision and decisions of their predecessors and, also, as a way to help them wrestle with and develop their own opinions towards the Movement's embrace on Zionism.

The conversation that was dominant during this time period was that of transition in more ways than one. It was clear that attitudes towards Zionism were dramatically shifting and the

[20] On antisemitism in America, see Leonard Dinnerstein, *Anti-Semitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Reform movement as a whole was beginning to reevaluate what it meant to be a Jew in America. It is important to note that the College had been dealing with a much lower enrollment of rabbinical students due to the effects from the Great Depression. Enrollment had gone from 120 in 1928-29 down to fifty-eight – less than half- in 1934-35.[21]

In any event, the May 1936 issue of the *Monthly* was entirely dedicated to the topic of "Reform Judaism and Zionism." The articles in this edition of the *Monthly* did not exclusively focus on Zionism alone, rather, it discussed the compatibility between Zionism and Reform Judaism. It had been thirty-seven years (since December 1899) that an entire issue of the *Monthly* was entirely dedicated to a discussion of Zionism. Yet, in contrast to the 1899 edition of the *Monthly*, the 1936 issue had a completely reverse outlook towards Zionism. In the May 1939 issue of the *Monthly,* all seven articles clearly viewed Zionism in a positive light. In fact, of the seven articles about Zionism in this issue, six were written by previously ordained rabbis whose ordination dates ranged from the late 1800's all the way till the mid 1930's. The seventh was by the prominent Jewish philosopher, Horace Kallen (1882-1974). It is possible that the students who edited this issue of the journal wanted to demonstrate that rabbis spanning several decades were all expressing the belief that Reform Judaism and Zionism were compatible ideologies.

This isn't to say that divergent opinions didn't exist among faculty and students during this time. Like other decades, a mix of attitudes towards Zionism persisted. The difference now was that pro-Zionist essays were more numerous, and this indicated that HUC students felt empowered to write positively about Zionism and to consider how Jewish nationalism would likely affect them and their future rabbinates.

Between the years 1917-1935 the CCAR adopted a series of resolutions dealing with the allowance of Jewish migration from all over the world into Palestine as a Jewish refuge. Students

[21] Meyer, "A Centennial History," 121.

reflected on these resolutions because many of those who were in the previous generation of Reform leaders wanted nothing to do with creating a Jewish Homeland in Palestine. These incremental but important decisions were meant as a sign of support for those Jews living under oppressive conditions in Europe. Especially after the passage of the National Origins Act in 1924, American Jews viewed Palestine as a safe haven for Jews who faced intolerable conditions in Europe. Those members of the CCAR who still had reservations about Zionism as an ideology were nevertheless prepared to accept Palestine as a place of refuge and *a* (but not *the*) Jewish homeland – even if they did not necessarily support the idea of creating an independent Jewish state. Increasingly, Reform rabbis and rabbinical students writing for the *Monthly* were beginning to see the importance of supporting the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Rabbi James G. Heller (1892-1971), ordained in 1916, was an ardent Zionist and a member of the CCAR when the majority of its members were anti-Zionist. His essay in the May 1936 issue of the *Monthly* argued that "the time has come for Reform Judaism to abandon the interpretation of Jewish life that springs, not from the depths of its own spirit, but from the ephemeral conditions of the Age of the Enlightenment."[22] He disputed that the ideology that dominated American Reform Judaism during the early years of the 20th century. He insisted that the ideology that was expressed in the Pittsburgh Platform was no longer relevant and that Zionism was indeed compatible with Reform Judaism.[23] Having been exposed to so many different viewpoints towards Zionism in the consecutive decades of the early 20th century, Heller articulated his belief that there was a certain glamor about Zionism that had blossomed since the issuance of the Balfour Declaration. He also insisted that the universalistic ideals that dominated the thinking of

[22] James G. Heller, "Retrospect and Prospect," *HUC Monthly* 23 No. 6 (May 1936): 15.
[23] Ibid.,13.

previous generations of Reformers were disappearing.[24] Having lived through an era where the there was so much anti-Zionist sentiment in America and especially at the College, he saw the newness of the American experience as wearing off. He argued that the older generation needed to awaken to the new realities of the world. Moreover, he insisted that Reform leadership must never abandon its "attitude towards the Bible as the record of Israel's envisioned course, but only be willing to add a new chapter in the same spirit."[25] An active member of the Labor Zionist Organization of America and the son of one of American Reform Judaism's pioneering Zionists – Rabbi Max Heller—little wonder the students asked him to contribute to this issue of the *Monthly*. Heller was a prominent rabbinical leader who was witness to the shift in position towards Zionism in the Reform Movement and his conclusion was that Zionism could create a sense of solidarity for Jews around the world. He had seen the transition occur over decades, and he believed that Reform Judaism needed Zionism at least as much as Zionism needed Reform.[26]

As students began reflecting on the 1920's and 1930's they saw a period of total disaster where Jews suffered cruelty all over the world except for Western countries where anti-Semitism was simultaneously on the rise. Fearful for their own people and deeply troubled by the persecution in Europe, many HUC rabbinical students wanted influential rabbis to contribute writings about the importance of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Solomon A. Fineberg (1896-1990), ordained in 1920, wrote:

> The past few years have brought a swift and apparent change in the attitude of many Reform Jews to Zionism. There has been considerable departure from the attitude expressed in the Pittsburgh platform. The many Reform Jews who were

[24] Ibid., 13.
[25] Ibid., 14.
[26] Ibid., 15. On Max Heller, see Bobbie Malone, *Max Heller: Reformer, Zionist, Southerner* (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1997).

> enrolled in Zionist ranks have intensified their devotion to the cause. Others, formally indifferent to the fate of Palestine, having embarked ardently in the work of reconstruction. Zionism now appears as a saving for some Jewish life even to those who have placed their complete faith in universal emancipation.[27]

Reform Judaism and Zionism both tried to address the survival of Jews all over the world but their approaches were radically different. Both movements removed conventional ideas of Judaism that had been unchanged for centuries, but each did so in its own way; Reform led by the Age of Enlightenment and Zionism by the conviction that the best response to the challenges of modernity was the reconstitution of a an independent Jewish state in Palestine. Zionists, by definition, rejected Reform's conviction that Judaism could survive and even flourish in the Diaspora. Many Reformers found it difficult to abandon the teachings of the Pittsburgh Platform:

> We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the administration of the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.

The mid-to-late 1930's proved to be a pivotal time wherein we begin to see the union of both movements for the first time. American Reform Jews could openly discuss the pursuit of a Jewish state while remaining committed to the teachings of Reform Judaism without fear of being accused of dual loyalties. As Fineberg wrote in the *Monthly*: "assuming that emancipation is the finality of our efforts, that universal enlightenment is our goal, the Reform Jew need have no qualms in helping to rebuild Palestine."[28]

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[27] Solomon A. Fineberg, "Meeting Zionism on New Grounds," *HUC Monthly* 23 No. 6 (May 23, 1936): 23.
[28] Ibid., 24.

The students also invited another strong advocate of Zionism to contribute to this issue, Edward L. Israel (1896-1941), who was ordained in 1919. In his article, "Reform Judaism and Zionism", Israel argued that, "Zionism is our only hope for life and salvation."[29] He began his article by saying that, "the mere fact that we have changed our point of view is entirely in harmony with Reform Jewish philosophy…we make changes in our interpretation of Jewish traditions. We even change Reform Jewish tradition."[30] He asserted that early Reformers were so set on changing the ghetto Jews to a religion that was more harmonious with the habits of the Western World, that Reform Jews forgot to make changes with their own interpretations. Like more and more individuals of this time, he contended that Reform Judaism and Zionism were compatible and Zionism did not threaten their status as Americans or as Reform Jews. He also reminded his readers that Jews were experiencing anti-Semitism in America not because they were becoming Zionists but because, "[the Jew] is an unassimilable racial element or, in some instances, a racial element with whose blood the non-Jew does not want to merge."

The contributors to the *Monthly* in the 1930's were greater supporters of Zionist Movement and welcomed a more positive perspective on Zionism, certainly in comparison to the days of Isaac Mayer Wise. Early Reformers thought that the nationalist movement that sought to create a Jewish Homeland in Palestine was trying to turn back the clock on the process of integration in America. American Reformers "tailored their liberalism to fit the American temper, indicating thereby a greater concern for their security and a desire to demonstrate and unquestionable patriotism."[31] But this mentality and aspiration was no longer relevant in the 1930s. The universalistic ideals of the early Reformers were no longer relevant because anti-

[29] Edward L. Israel, "Reform Judaism and Zionism," *HUC Monthly 24* No. 3 (January, 1937): 4.
[30] Ibid., 3.
[31] Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism,* 67.

Semitism was growing even in Western countries, including in the United States. As the Jewish philosopher, Horace Kallen, put it in his *Monthly* article,

> Zionism has itself been a force in a certain redirection and redefinition of Reform Judaism and the present to generation of Reform rabbis, being by profession obliged to take thought on these issues, are in spirit and disposition far closer to Zionism as doctrine and discipline than to the Reform of their elders.[32]

Kallen recognized that the perspective on Zionism was changing in the Reform Movement and that their generation of rabbis needed to be well-versed and open to conversing and grappling with Zionism. Zionism was only proliferating and Kallen comprehended that Reform Jews needed to be part of that conversation. It was no longer pragmatic to have one over-arching attitude towards Zionism as had been the case at the turn of the century.

Adapting More Particularistic Jewish Practices

In the 1930's, the overall agenda of the *Monthly* portrayed a more positive outlook regarding Zionism. The published articles attempted to prove the importance of Zionism in an increasingly anti-Semitic world. At the same time, one can also discern in the student writings a desire to abandon outmoded notions of universalism that were no longer applicable in their contemporary circumstances. Writing for this same May 1936 edition of the journal, Rabbi David Philipson (1862-1949), a member of HUC's first ordination class in 1883, posited his belief that universalism had helped the Reformers of the previous generation move away from their lives in the ghetto and live more comfortably among others in their nations. However, Philipson confronted the current reality in which universalism was no longer as dominant an ideal in American Jewish life as it had been in the past. Therefore, he continued, Reform Jews

[32] Horace Kallen, "A Change in Direction," *HUC Monthly* 23 No. 6 (May 23, 1936): 16.

must shift their religious beliefs and practices to adapt themselves to the current realities of their generation.[33] Philipson believed that teaching Judaism as a universalistic religious was not only a "burden" for early Reformers, but also an "entire misinterpretation of the teaching of Reform Judaism."[34] He argued that the effort to rebuild a Jewish Homeland was an ambition that had implanted hope in Jews around the world for centuries.[35] His article proposed the idea that Judaism should and could be a particularistic religion even as Americanism was the Jew's nationality. He and others like him believed they were living in an era where an opportunity had presented itself to Jews around the world to come together and develop a "movement of revival; a revival [that] signified a renewal, a transformation of values, and a return to the best and noblest in our cultural tradition."[36] Pursuing such a venture constituted a significant change in the Reform movement and for Jews all over the world.

In the May, 1937 issue, Irving Hausman (1909 – 1986), ordained in 1940, insisted that the particularistic components that characterize Zionism "constitute a moral force embracing higher values of human life and firmly rooted in the spiritual aspirations of a people."[37] Like Philipson, Hausman acknowledged that on one level nationalism can appear to be a divide in humanity. Yet universalism which was pivotally important to his Reformist forebears now appears to be nothing more than "a beautiful fantasy- a Utopia which we hope will someday become an earthly reality."[38] It is clear that many of those who contributed to this issue of the *Monthly* were unified in the conviction that nationalism had previously been viewed as isolating ideology or a philosophy that would prevent Jews from participating in American nationalism.

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[33] David Philipson, "Reform Judaism and Zionism," *HUC Monthly* 23 No. 6 (May 23, 1936): 17.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 18
[36] Irving Hausman, "Toward a Zionist Ideology" *HUC Monthly* 24 No. 6 (May 22, 1937): 26.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.

The contemporary world of the 1920s and 1930s, however, had persuaded them that a Reform Jew could be an American and, also, a Jewish nationalist.

The students at this time had a different vision for the future of their movement. Their writings were dramatically different from the Reformers who lived under different conditions at the beginning of the century. The essays written for the May 1936 issue demonstrate the changes that had occurred over the decades. However, like in all previous issues of the *Monthly*, there still remained a minority view that did not agree entirely with the growing Zionist majority. Arthur Lelyveld (1913-1996) was such a student. Ordained in 1939, Lelyveld expressed his fear that the Zionists were not realistic in their pursuits. He worried that with all the attention on Palestine, his fellow rabbinical students had forgotten about the important and necessary issues that were happening in America. He believed that, "Zionism cannot and does not hope to charm away all of the world's difficulties." American Reform Jews should devote their "energies first, to [their] own local portion of difficulties."[39] He didn't necessarily desire for anti-Zionists to have a negative influence on the changes that were happening, rather, he advocated for a more balanced representation when contributing to the conversation around Zionism. Lelyveld's article along with another piece[40] were the only two articles in this period that weren't vehemently pro-Zionist.

In addition to the shift in language and tone, most of the people contributing to the *Monthly* at this time were American-born and wanted to take part in an optimistic future for themselves and the Jewish people. Yet the Reform Movement was undergoing a self-deepening and self-enriching process[41] and the rabbinical students at the College wanted to be part of that

[39] Arthur Lelyveld, "Zionists in Flight," *HUC Monthly* 24, no. 3 (January 15, 1937): 21.
[40] This will be in the Passover 1948 issue of the HUC Monthly.
[41] Louis I. Newman, "Whether We Like It or Not," *HUC Monthly 23* No. 6 (May 23, 1936): 24.

change. In his article, Louis I. Newman[42] (1893-1972) reminded the readers that Zionism is important not only because of the anti-Semitism that exists around the world:

> Zionism has afforded the additional momentum which Reform Judaism has greatly needed. It has inspired many Reform Jewish women with the ideals of Hadassah, the great women's organization with its unflagging program of medical help for the new Palestine…It has given our boys and girls in the Religious School an opportunity to learn the charming and rousing new songs which the pioneers and settlers sing in the colonies and cities of Eretz Yisrael. The New Palestine has inspired our boys and girls in their creative artwork in the Religious School.[43]

He confronted the fact that Reform Jews had never taken issue with making changes in their ritual ceremonies but with their outlook towards Zionism they were afraid to make changes. Whether Reform Jews liked it or not, Newman insisted, Zionism was coming to stay as an inescapable factor in the world of Jewish life. In Newman's eyes, there wasn't a contradiction between Reform Judaism and Zionism. Those who asserted such a claim caused serious injury to Reform Judaism.[44] According to Newman, Zionism was an opportunity for the next generation of Reform Jews to be connected to Jews all over the world and help facilitate the Jewish Homeland in Palestine.

George B. Lieberman (1910-1984), a member of the Ordination class of 1936.contended that Zionism presented Reform Jews with an opportunity to develop their own religious practice. In his essay, Lieberman asserted that while there was no formal discussion regarding the Jewish

[42] Ordained in 1918.
[43] Newman, "Whether We Like It or Not," 25.
[44] Ibid.

character of the state at Basel, it was in many ways understood.[45] Even before the Basel conference,[46] when Zionism was not yet organized or official, Judaism was infused with the spiritual nationalism of Zionism and had an intimate relationship connecting the land of Israel, the people of Israel, and the religion of Israel.[47] This spiritual bond is that which has enabled all Jews to come together and be part of the conversation that surrounds Jewish nationalism. Zionism is not attached to one religious group or another; rather, it invites Jews from all over the world to contribute to the Jewish Homeland's "religious values [that] are spun out in the course of group experiences."[48] Zionism could serve as a testing ground for the interpretation of new Jewish attitudes and practices, Lieberman wrote, and in that way Zionism could help to create a universalistic Jewish community around the world rather than trying to conform to the norms of a larger society that isn't Jewish.

Author, activist and leader in the American Reform Movement, Maurice N. Eisendrath (1902-1973), pushed this point even further by asking, "what quarrel can Reform have with a movement which is taking seriously and putting into actual practice its own professions, so long kept in the cold storage of the synagogue, hypocritically intoned in prayer and responsive readings, dutifully read and reread from Torah and Haphtorah, and then deliberately forgotten and betrayed in daily life?"[49] Eisendrath reminded readers that Zionists were bringing Judaism to life. They were taking the ancient tradition and intentionally creating a long sought-after Jewish nation for which Jews had been praying over the centuries. He urged Reform Jews to partake in this unique opportunity and be part of the conversation around creating a Jewish state.

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[45] George B. Liberman, "Soul and Soil in Jewish Nationalism" *HUC Monthly 24* No. 1 (October 15, 1936): 12.
[46] Led by Theodore Herzl, the first Zionist Congress took place in Basel, Switzerland in 1897 in order to discuss the Zionist Platform.
[47] Ibid., 11.
[48] David Polish, "The Religious Implications of Zionism" *HUC Monthly 23* No. 6 (May 23, 1936): 26.
[49] Maurice N. Eisendrath, "A New Synthesis," *HUC Monthly* 23 No. 6 (May 23, 1936): 28.

At this same time, Eisendrath was known as a keen advocate for many social justice causes. He hosted a national weekly radio program called. "Forum on the Air," which gave him widespread public exposure.[50] Having been one of the Reformers who had moved from an anti-Zionist position to one of strong advocacy, Eisendrath had lobbied passionately on either side of the issue. Additionally, having served as a rabbi in several communities, he felt comfortable being critical of the way Reform Jews viewed Zionism in the Reform Movement. This kind of bold criticism proliferated in the *Monthly* as more and more rabbinical students began to speak about their pro-Zionist beliefs.

On the basis of the opinions expressed in *Monthly*, it is clear that HUC's rabbinical students had become excited about the Zionist enterprise in Palestine. There was simultaneously an increasing desire to extend help and support to their Jewish brothers and sisters in Eastern Europe. In an editorial written in 1937, Alexander P. Feinsilver (1910-1987), a member of that year's Ordination class insisted that Jews could transform their suffering into a blessing and have the ability to teach the world about justice. He argued that no matter how people viewed Zionism, the most important thing was never lose faith in the Palestinian venture, "for, [as] much as Palestine today needs the support of world Jewry, world Jewry needs Palestine even more."[51]

It is clear that in the 1930s, many of the Reform rabbis became increasingly excited about the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. A younger generation of religiously liberal Jews began to envision how much benefit could be derived from the flourishing of a truly indigenous Jewish culture. Many Jews, including many Reform Jews, began to understand that the growth of an autochthonous Jewish culture in Palestine would inevitably produce cultural results for Jewry that would be impossible to achieve in the Diaspora.

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[50] Kerry M. Olitzky, Lance J. Sussman, and Malcolm H. Stern, eds., *Reform Judaism in America: A Biographical Dictionary and Sourcebook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 45.
[51] Alexander P. Feinsilver, "Editorial: Palestine- A Practical Approach" *HUC Monthly* (January, 1937): 1.

A Sense of Urgency

Between 1938-1949, a majority of the *Monthly* articles that dealt with Zionism were written with a sense of urgency in that a Jewish state had to be created in Palestine in order for persecuted Jews to survive. In addition to wanting to return to the ancient Homeland, developing a Jewish identity, Jews now needed a place of refuge as Eastern and Western Europe had become a very difficult place for Jews. The rabbinical students who contributed to *Monthly* expressed this urgent concern for the welfare of their co-religionists in their essays about Zionism and the *Yishuv* in Palestine.

Harry Richmond (1890-1976), ordained in 1917, served as a chaplain in World War I. In an essay entitled "Betrayal of Palestine" that appeared in the January 1938 issue of the *Monthly,* Richmond asked why Reform leaders were so ready to do anything for the nations where Jews resided but not offer to support for Palestine?[52] He urged Reform Jews to think of themselves as a nation of people who support one another. Reform Jews, he wrote should put aside convictions that separated Jews in America into factions. He declared that, "We would rather be an individual among individuals than a nation among nations. National solidarity has left us!"[53]

In a November 1942 editorial, Charles E. Israel (1920-1999) expressed the same concerns as Richmond. In his article, Israel rebuked Reform rabbis who continued what he termed a "palace quarrel"[54] regarding whether or not to support a Jewish Army in Palestine.[55] The Jewish people's main concern was that Reform leaders seemed to have lost sight of what it actually meant to be universalistic because they continued to discuss the theory of Judaism rather than

[52] Harry Richmond, "Betrayal of Palestine," *HUC Monthly* 25 No. 3 (January, 1938): 4.
[53] Ibid., 20.
[54] Charles E. Israel, "Editorial: A Plague on Both Your Houses," *HUC Monthly 30* No. 1 (November, 1942): 3.
[55] The Jewish Army or the Jewish Infantry Brigade Group was a military formation of the British Army in WWII formed in 1944 to assist with Jewish emigration into Palestine and also defend its borders.

confronting the real challenges that Jews were facing in Europe and Palestine. Instead of a philosophical debate to decide whether Reform Jews should be pro-Zionist or anti-Zionist, Israel urged Reform rabbis to gather resources and help the people overseas. He and other writers in this issue of the *Monthly*[56] openly and bluntly challenged the Reform Movement's leaders to take action rather than debating theory.[57]

There were still those who held some reservations about Zionism and expressed concern over the creation of a Jewish Homeland because of the rocky political condition in Palestine. Harry Essrig (1912-2003), ordained in 1940, believed that Zionism constituted the struggle of an oppressed minority for national independence and social emancipation. His concerns with these ambitions were that the Jews would not have peaceful relations with the neighboring Arabs. In addition, Essrig claimed that there would need to be a great readjustment for the Jewish people who immigrated to Palestine, because they would be living in a Jewish Homeland for the first time.[58] Even though Jews have always had a connection to Palestine through the Bible, Essrig contended that it was the political factors and not the Bible that gave birth to Jewish national aspirations in the modern period.

Harry Essrig's apprehensions became somewhat of a reality when the "White Paper" was issued by Great Britain. In May, 1939, the British government instituted a policy that, among other rules, limited Jewish immigration to Palestine to only 75,000 over a period of five years. In addition, the "White Paper" placed restrictions on the rights of Jews to buy land from Arabs. Jews from all over the world petitioned to have this order overturned. Randall M. Falk (1921-2014), ordained in 1947, served as the *Monthly*'s advising editor in 1944. According to Falk, if

[56] Such as William Braude in his article, "Huzpah, Windmills and Partition" *HUC Monthly* 25 No. 3 (January, 1938): 11.
[57] Israel, "Editorial," 4.
[58] Harry Essrig, "What Can We Expect From Palestine," *HUC Monthly* 26 No. 2 (January, 1939): 5.

the provisions of the "White Paper" weren't revoked, it would cause a celebratory day for Nazis, who would unquestionably interpret the British government's decision to mean that they had license to persecute even more Jews. Falk contended that "no Jew, indeed no man who fights for freedom, can permit this heinous crime against humanity!"[59] He recognized that America and Britain have done much to help these Jews but their task is not over. Western Jews should not see the revocation of the "White Paper" as a Zionist or non-Zionist question, Falk maintained, but rather a Jewish question of salvation from cruel persecution.

Henry Montor (1905-1982), a prolific writer and prominent Zionist organizational leader, published an essay on Zionism in the April 1939 edition of the HUC *Monthly*. HUC students who read Montor's essay could not help but sense the writer's unflagging dedication to the Zionist idea:

> Those who, misinformed or malicious, say that Jewish hopes in Palestine rest on British bayonets know nothing of present-day Palestine and the thousands of Jewish watchmen, constables and soldiers upon whom the burden of defense rests. They know the land thoroughly; they have no fear either in defensive or offensive fighting.[60]

According to Montor, Palestine was the one land where Jews could go and had the right to live as human beings for a foothold on this earth.[61] Similarly, in his editorial, Robert E. Goldburg[62] (1916-1995), ordained in 1945, urged readers to elect American congressional

[59] Randall M. Falk, "Editorial: The White Paper," *HUC Monthly* (February, 1944): 3.
[60] Henry Montor, "Palestine, Not Promise, But Reality," *HUC Monthly 26* No. 4 (April, 1939): 14.
[61] Ibid., 15.
[62] Was ordained in 1945 and served as the advisory editor to the Monthly at this time.

leaders who supported the idea of developing a real democracy in Palestine in the post war world.[63]

The 1940 edition of the *Union Prayer Book* – the "Newly Revised" edition – further testified to the growing importance of the Jewish Homeland in Palestine to American Reform Jews. For the first time, the movement's prayer book included a prayer that enabled worshipers to pray for the welfare of the Jews who were toiling "to rebuild Zion."[64] This prayer conveys an optimistic and hopeful vision for the upbuilding of a fruitful Jewish Homeland in Palestine while maintaining Reform Judaism's commitment its historic universal ideals:

> Extend thy protection and help unto our brothers who struggle in the land of darkness as victims of oppression and persecution. Uphold also the hands of our brothers who toil to rebuild Zion. Thy people have always turned in love to the land where Israel was born, where our prophets taught their imperishable message of justice and brotherhood and where our psalmists sang their deathless songs for Thee and of Thy love for us and for all humanity. Ever enshrined in the hearts of Israel was the hope that Zion might be restored, not for their own pride in vainglory but as living witness to the truth of the word which shall lead the nations to the reign of peace.[65]

This prayer for Palestine in the Reform prayer book constitutes a liturgical expression of the many voices who had been insisting that the ideals of Reform Judaism and Zionism could indeed be mutually beneficial.

In the 1948 fall issue of the *Monthly*, Rabbi Hyman J. Schachtel (1907-1990), ordained in 1931, contributed an essay in which he opined that Judaism was flourishing all over the world,

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[63] Robert E. Goldburg, "Editorial: The Larger Question," *HUC Monthly* (May, 1944): 3.
[64] Editors, "Editorial: The Prayer Book Revised," *HUC Monthly 25* No. 6 (May, 1938): 2.
[65] Ibid., 2.

but in Palestine was the essential element that was missing in completing the efflorescence of Jewish life around the globe. Palestine and the Diaspora, Schachtel wrote, needed to come together and exchange their loyalties in order to create a confluence of achievements.[66]

Over the course of the last decade and a half of the *Monthly*'s existence, one finds many articles on Zionism. Most of these essays were pro-Zionist, even though the essays focused on a variety of related topics. The world was an unstable place for Jews in the 1920s and 1930s. The rise of anti-Semitism, the interest in creating a thriving Jewish state and coalescing Reform ideology with the growing reality of a Jewish Homeland influenced the ideas that shaped the articles appearing in the HUC *Monthly* during this time. The HUC *Monthly* ceased publication in 1949. In 1961, Rabbi Richard Levy (1937-2019), then an HUC student on the Cincinnati campus, founded a new journal, *Variant*, which could arguably be described as the *Monthly* 's successor.[67]

[66] Rabbi Hyman J. Schachtel, "Palestine and the Diaspora: What Role Should Palestine Play in the Religious Life of American Israel," *HUC Monthly* (Inauguration Issue, 1948): 14.
[67] Meyer, "A Centennial History," 229. Richard N. Levy was ordained on the Cincinnati campus of HUC-JIR in 1964. After a distinguished career with Hillel, Levy spent the last years of his career as the Director of HUC-JIR's Rabbinical School on the Los Angeles Campus.

Conclusion

Reform Judaism's attitude towards Zionism changed dramatically during the first few decades of the 20th century. The very tone changed; the vitriol and ridicule that characterized its leaders' early denunciations of Herzlian Zionism slowly gave way to more serious and even respectful appraisals.[1] While scholars such as Naomi Cohen have documented this history in regard to the Reform movement as a whole, little has been written on how rabbinical students at Hebrew Union College, Isaac Mayer Wise's Reform seminary in Cincinnati—one of three institutional pillars of the movement—viewed this new and increasingly important political and cultural movement. The primary focus of this thesis has been to document the changing views of Zionism within the pages of the student-run journal at HUC, the *HUC Journal* (later called the *HUC Monthly*), from its inception in 1896 through to its end in 1949. Over those fifty plus years, the debate over Zionism and Reform Judaism was ever-present—both inside the walls of the College as well as in the pages of the journal.

At times, particularly during the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century, the debate over Zionism appeared more one-sided as those who opposed the advent of political Zionism dominated the discussion. However, as Zionism became more mainstream and a growing number of Reform leaders embraced the vision of a physical homeland for Jews in Palestine, the students' support of the cause became more pronounced in their writing. While there was a greater number of anti-Zionist articles at the beginning of the journal's run in the late 1890s, by the 1930s and 1940s, the opposite was true—more articles in the journal were pro-Zionist.

[1] Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism,* 62.

The articles in the *HUC Journal* (later the *HUC Monthly*) shed light on the various ways in which these rabbinical students engaged with Zionism from the very beginning. They kept themselves well-informed and explored what Zionism meant in the Reform Movement from its nascence until the mid-20th century.

The first chapter of the thesis focused on the early years of the journal, 1896 to 1919 (with a ten-year gap from 1904-1914). While some rabbinical students wrote on various aspects of cultural Zionism, the anti-Zionist viewpoints of Isaac Mayer Wise and other leaders and alumni of the College who held similar views, far outnumbered those who may have been sympathetic to the idea of Jewish nationalism. Students were greatly influenced by the leadership of the College and the Movement as a whole and by the fact that the idea of Zionism was still in its nascence. It was at this time that Reform Jews were firmly committed to the notion that their American nationality made no room for a Jewish national identity. Many Jews – including many Reform Jews – saw themselves as American nationals whose *religious* tradition was Judaism. Being fully integrated into American society was their highest priority, and many feared that a Jewish national movement would result in American Jews being accused of having dual loyalties.

The world drastically changed with World War I and its aftermath—the rise of antisemitism; immigration restrictions and nativism; the fight for minority rights in Europe; the establishment of a British mandate in Palestine; and, to be sure, the onset of the catastrophic annihilation of European Jewry. HUC students, like many American Jews, saw the real need to create a Jewish State in Palestine as a refuge for Jews who were oppressed around the world. The second chapter covers the journal from 1920 to 1935 and we see that students more openly discussed the need for a Jewish safe haven in Palestine. Students also began imagining what a

Jewish homeland might look like—how the existence of a Jewish homeland would stimulate the efflorescence of an indigenous Jewish culture that would benefit Jewish life around the world – including American Jewry. At the same time, they were also exploring the commonalities between Reform Judaism and Zionism as a way to bridge the gap between these two movements. In other words, what could a Reform Judaism that embraced Zionism look like in America? It was at this time that the study of Hebrew literature and Zionist thinkers grew at the College as well. Opposition to Zionism still remained, but it was becoming a less dominant point of view among the writers in the student journal.

The third and final chapter deals with the last decade and a half of the journal's existence, 1935 to 1949, one of the darkest periods in modern Jewish history and, with the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, also one of its most promising. During World War II and in its aftermath, American Jews recognized the critical importance of the Zionist idea. An increasing number of Reform Jews began to sympathize with Jewish national aspirations. It was during these years that the rabbinical students expressed their most unequivocally pro-Zionist opinions in their sermons and in the *HUC Monthly*. Within the Reform movement, Zionism was becoming more mainstream. In 1935, exactly fifty years after the Pittsburgh Platform, the CCAR resolved to leave the acceptance or rejection of Zionism to the determination of the individual rabbi.[2] Additionally, a shift toward a greater emphasis on Jewish particularism as opposed to the Reform Judaism's earlier exclusive emphasis on universalism contributed to a heightened sense of Jewish peoplehood. In the past, where the Reform movement stressed that Judaism was only a

[2] Ibid., 63.

faith, a new emphasis arose on the spiritual, cultural, and civilizational facets of the Jewish historic experience.[3]

In continuing to research this topic, it would be noteworthy to also examine other newspapers and journals in which HUC rabbinical students contributed towards the conversation around Zionism in order to obtain a more complete understanding of what they were thinking about at the time and how their views of Zionism were different due to the general tone of the publications. *The Maccabean*, for example, a pro-Zionist publication, published some students' articles during this period. These rabbinical students were evidently committed to the Zionist cause that as early as 1907, which enabled *The Maccabean* to devote a whole editorial entitled "Reform Converts" referring to those individuals who were anti-Zionist in the past but had evolved into Zionists.[4] This pro-Zionist journal clearly wanted to proliferate pro-Zionist ideas and, in doing so, they were eager to give a platform to Zionist scholars, authors and thinkers, and even HUC students- the future leaders of the Reform rabbinate. This phenomenon suggests that future researchers may find that some rabbinical students during the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century were willing to express their true sentiments about Jewish nationalism in pro-Zionist publications while demurring from doing so in an HUC-sponsored publication. Other newspapers, such as the *American Israelite* that were once firmly anti-Zionist changed their sharp criticisms on Zionism and began printing statements of support for the safe haven of Jewish refugees.[5]

The *HUC Monthly* served as a platform for students to express their ideas for many years. They partook in a heavily debated subject that influenced the entire Jewish world no matter what

[3] Jonathan D. Sarna, "A Great Awakening: The Transformation That Shaped Twentieth Century American Judaism and its Implications for Today" (Boston: Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, 1995), 30.
[4] Sarna, "Converts to Zionism," 188.
[5] Cohen, *The Americanization of Zionism,* 62.

side of the issue they were on. Discussing Zionism in the pages of the journal allowed students to explore their identities as both Americans and as Jews and gave them the opportunity to discuss major issues that would ultimately become centrally important to their rabbinates. As Zionism and Jewish national aspirations became a pressing and salient concern in the middle part of the 20th century, HUC rabbinical students eagerly expressed themselves on the topic. No matter where students and faculty found themselves in debating the importance of a Jewish state, Zionism and Jewish nationalism raised important questions *vis ά vis* Jewish identity, Americanism, and the distinctive character of the Jewish people who shared a kindred past and common destiny.

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