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Development of Liberal Judaism in Palestine; 1926-1948"

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THE WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM'S PARTICIPATION
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBERAL JUDAISM IN PALESTINE;
1926-1948

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination

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Jewish Institute of Religion

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Referee, Dr. Uri Herscher

THIS IS DEDICATED TO

THE ONE I LOVE

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DIGEST

The purpose of this thesis is to reconstruct the history of the development of Liberal Judaism in Palestine between the years 1926-1948 with the aid of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. To do this, I have depended heavily on the World Union for Progressive Judaism's records and papers located in the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

The thesis is composed of six parts:

- I. The Introduction briefly describes the historical context of the thesis, particularly noting three of the initial difficulties Palestinian Liberal Judaism encountered in its development.
- II. Chapter One outlines the changing attitudes of the World Union for Progressive Judaism with respect to Zionism and the proliferation of Liberal Judaism in Palestine. These issues gave rise to numerous heated and emotional debates; some of them are contained within this chapter.
- III. Chapter Two details the work of Dr. Kurt Wilhelm of Jerusalem, the first Progressive rabbi in Palestine. The chapter indicates the uniqueness of Wilhelm's rabbinate and how his past work presents to us the prototype of what the Reform rabbi in Israel should be.

- IV. Chapter Three is an analysis of the rabbinate of Dr. M. Elk of Haifa with special emphasis on the creation of his Liberal Jewish day-school.
- V. Chapter Four describes the implementation of Liberal Judaism in Tel Aviv by Dr. M. M. Rosenberg. Unlike Wilhelm and Elk, Rosenberg was a tremendous activist with respect to the recognition of Liberal Judaism. This chapter illustrates some of the battles he waged in the pursuit of that goal.
- VI. The Epilogue briefly traces the history of Liberal Judaism from the creation of the Jewish State until the present day, both reiterating the various problems which still plague the movement, and indicating some of its recent accomplishments.

It is my hope that the material presented will serve as an aid to those engaged in the struggle for religious pluralism in Israel today.

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INTRODUCTION

To understand the development of Liberal Judaism in Palestine, it is first necessary to have an appreciation of the historical environment in which the movement arose. Between the establishment of the British Mandate and the creation of the Jewish State, the period in which Liberal Judaism evolved, Palestine was far from a static society. During the Mandate years alone (1920-1948), some 483,000 Jews from all around the world had decided to make their home in Zion.¹ It should be noted that even before the Mandate period when Palestine was under Turkish control, major population changes were taking place. In 1882, the total Jewish population of Zion was 24,000, residing primarily in the cities of Jerusalem, Safed, Tiberias and Hebron.² Most Jews at this time were engaged in either small trade or religious pursuits, completely isolated from the modern world.

The first wave of "Zionist" immigrants arriving in Palestine occurred in the early 1880's. Pogroms and persecution of Jews in Russia after the death of Czar Alexander II forced thousands of Jews to flee and find homes elsewhere. Though a quarter of a million emigrated to the United States, some of the more Zionistic went to Palestine. Those that went to Palestine were interested in agriculture and living an emancipated life. They were not overly concerned with

nationalistic goals. Though they were Zionistic, they were not nationalistic. Unfortunately, by the end of the nineteenth century, many of the agricultural settlements established by these first settlers failed.

The impetus for the Second Aliyah ("immigration") was the Kishinev pogroms of 1903. Many young Jews from Russia came to the realization that only by creating a Jewish homeland would Jewish preservation be assured. Unlike the First Aliyah, the immigrants of 1903 and thereafter had a sure sense of Jewish nationalism. Many of the immigrants thought of themselves as pioneers (Halutzim), hard working and self-reliant. The teachings of A. D. Gordon, which stressed national revival based upon physical labor, became this Aliyah's watchword. Some of the newcomers were socialists. Frustrated by the failure of the 1905 Russian Revolution, they wanted another chance to implement their socialistic beliefs. Palestine gave them that opportunity. The pioneers continued to immigrate up until the First World War; by then Palestine's Jewish population had grown to 85,000.³

The Third Aliyah consisted of generally the same types of people in the Second. The cause for the Third Aliyah was the Bolshevik Revolution. Though the United States remained open for potential immigrants, many Russians chose to emigrate to Palestine because of their Zionist conviction. From 1919 to 1923, immigration to Palestine was estimated at 35,000.⁴

During the Fourth Aliyah (1924-1926), a change occurred in the composition of the Palestinian immigrant. Whereas the majority of immigrants before the turn of the century until the 1920's were agriculturists, these new immigrants from Eastern Europe were merchants and businessmen. The 50,000 immigrants that came during this period were not Zionists as much as they were middle-class businessmen looking for a market of trade free from anti-semitism.⁵

The Fifth Aliyah (1932-1939) is the aliyah which most importantly affected the development of Liberal Judaism in Palestine. The Fifth Aliyah increased the Jewish population of Palestine by some 220,000 persons. Approximately 165,000 immigrants arrived in 1935-1936, one fifth of them from Nazi Germany.⁶ Most were highly educated and professionals in their respective fields. They had not come to Palestine by reason of religious conviction or Zionist aspiration. They were simply escapees from Nazism. These new immigrants "made a lasting contribution to the culture and public life of the country", though never actually displacing the firm grip of the East Europeans from the political institutions and the leadership positions in the community. In the long run, Germans and other Central Europeans that arrived in this aliyah had to adapt themselves to the way of life shaped by those who had arrived in Zion before them.⁷

The Liberal Jews that emigrated during this period must have felt estranged from their new environment. Freedom of religious

expression characteristic of their Judaism in their previous homelands was absent in Palestine. The concept of religious pluarlism was not part of the Palestinian consciousness. Consequently, a Liberal Jew in Palestine was something of a rarity.

Initially, Liberal Judaism's development in Palestine was hindered by three problems: the first was the limited number of Liberal Jews living in Palestine; the second was the power of the Orthodox rabbinate; and third was the lack of sufficient support from Liberal Jews in England and the United States.

The British White Paper of 1939, establishing quotas on future Jewish immigration, and the start of the Second World War destroyed any possibility of substantially increasing the size of the Liberal community. Without the ability to grow, Liberal Judaism was destined to remain a small isolated community, incapable of demanding an equal voice in community affairs.

Under the British Mandate, the Orthodox rabbinate was invested with sole religious authority. Consequently, the Liberal rabbinate, with the exception of Jerusalem's Liberal rabbi, was restricted from the free exercise of their profession.

And finally, the absence of initial support by Liberal Jews in England and the United States stunted the movement's development. American Liberal Zionists avoided any theological issues related

to Palestine. Americal Liberal non-Zionists, though more supportive of Palestinian Liberalism, were incapable of effecting change since policy making was in the hands of the Zionists. In England circumstances weren't any more encouraging. Dr. Mattuck and Dr. Montefiore, co-founders of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, were strongly anti-Zionist. As a result, it was initially difficult for them to support Liberalism in Palestine. Because of all these factors, Liberal Judaism was never really at home in Palestine.

This thesis is a detailed examination of the development of Liberal Judaism in Palestine with the aid of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. As the reader shall soon discover, it is a history of greater failure than success. It is my hope that it will nevertheless provide new insight to a problem we are struggling with today.

CHAPTER ONE

THE WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM

EARLY ATTITUDES OF THE WORLD UNION WITH
RESPECT TO ZIONISM AND JEWISH NATIONALISM

The World Union for Progressive Judaism evolved during a period of transition. Up until the twentieth century, Liberal Judaism was for the most part a particularistic religion with a universalistic goal. It was the goal of our movement to bring redemption to mankind through prophetic justice. For the nineteenth century Reformer, Zion was conceived as a spiritual state of being rather than a national homeland. Zionism understood as the resurrection of a national homeland was a completely alien notion.

The walls of the ghetto had crumbled. Israel was no longer isolated. The vision of the unification of the whole human family in truth, justice and peace was the hope of every Liberal Jew. The destruction of ancient Israel and the dispersion of its populus^{ack} was by no means a form of punishment by God; rather, by His grace, Israel had been elected to be bearers of His truth among the nations of the earth. Consequently, to return or to attempt to re-establish a political Zion would be to abandon God's divine plan for man's redemption.

The conversion of Liberal Judaism to a more sympathetic understanding of Zionism started about the time of the First Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland (1897). Anti-semitic attacks on the basis of race rather than religion prompted many enlightened Jews to question the relative success of European emancipation.

Reform leaders that had exclusively emphasized universal aspects of Judaism began to recognize Judaism's particularistic features.

It was also during this period of transition that Reform's most noted Zionistic leaders emerged: Rabbi Judah Leon Magnus, first President of the Hebrew University, Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, leading Zionist in the C.C.A.R., Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, founder of the pro-Zionist Jewish Institute of Religion and Rabbi M. L. Perlzweig, Second Minister of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue of London.

The conclusion of the First World War and the signing of the B^alfour Declaration gave concrete form to Zionistic aspirations. This was the ide^ological setting in which the W.U.P.J. came to be established. Claude M. Montefiore and Israel Mattuck, the founders of the W.U.P.J., were schooled in the ideals of emancipation and universalism. Mattuck, a graduate of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, had been invited to England to serve in the development of Liberal Judaism by Montefiore.¹ Montefiore, the great-nephew of Sir Moses Montefiore, had studied at Oxford and Hochschule fuer die Wiss^Senschaft des Judentums, Berlin.² He was Liberal Judaism's chief spiritual leader in England. What is of tremendous importance in understanding his Zionistic outlook is the fact that he served as President of the Anglo-Jewish Association. While serving as President of this association, he tried to prevent the signing of the Belfour Declaration.³

The battle lines between the Zionists and non-Zionists were clearly visible when the First International Conference of the Jewish Religions Union for the Advancement of Liberal Judaism (the precursor of the World Union for Progressive Judaism) opened in 1926. At this First International Conference, the following statement was delivered by the Union's first President, C. G. Montefiore:

... it seems to me that so far as possible, it will be best at this Conference - our first Conference - to avoid allusions to Zionism and Jewish Nationalism. I am well aware that many of us find that a certain relation to Zionism and to Jewish Nationalism is intimately connected with our whole conception of Liberal Judaism. But this relation is conceived, very differently, by different minds. To some of us, perhaps the majority, that relation leads away from Zionism and from Jewish Nationalism, to others that relation is one of close combination. The subject is one which arouses very hot feelings on either side, and I think it will be far better if we can steer clear of it entirely.⁴

President C. G. Montefiore made explicitly clear in his opening address to the convention delegates the newly formed World Union's attitude to the idea of Zionism and Jewish Nationalism. Some of the delegates at this First Conference were not willing to shelve discussion on the issue of Zionism. The Rev. M. L. Perlzweig was not content to remain silent on the issue of Zionism. Disturbed by the apparent negativism expressed by President Montefiore with respect to Zionism and Jewish Nationalism and its members, Perlzweig accused the Conference of being discriminatory towards and estranged from the majority of the world's Jews. Perlzweig expressed the following during the Conference:

To me it is a fact I cannot overlook, that the greatest congregation of Jews in the whole world, in the East of Europe, Poland and Russia, has not one single representative. All these millions of Jews remain apparently untouched, as far as we can find out, by the influence of Liberal Judaism. I venture to say that if Liberal Judaism lends itself to this suggestion that there is something inherent in it, which is absolutely incompatible with Zionism, it never will have a change of influencing the Jews of Eastern Europe.⁵

Dr. Stephen S. Wise, also in attendance at the 1926 International Conference, similarly was in disagreement with the shelving position taken by President Montefiore and the Union. Dr. Wise was rather outspoken when he made the following statement:

Mr. Montefiore is known as the most powerful and the most earnest and the most sincere -- I do not like to use the term "foe" or "enemy", let us say "opponent" of Zionism. And I have many, many fellow-Jews in Russia, Poland, Rumania, Germany and America, who wonder how I, a Zionist, and even active in the Zionist Movement, can foregather Jewishly and touching Jewish affairs with the outstanding representative of the anti-Zionist forces ... if I shared your view, Mr. Montefiore, that Zionism meant the minimizing or even the lessening of religious communion, of the spirit of religion in Jewish life, I should not be a Zionist. But I am a Zionist.⁶

Rabbi Mattuck, a member of the Union's executive board and the acting chairman at the meeting in which Rev. Perlzweig and Dr. Wise voiced their disapproval, reiterated the Union's official policy with respect to the issue of Zionism:

(1) The Conference takes no official attitude towards Zionism. That does not in any way mean to commit the permanent organization, if and when it is established. That has nothing to do with Conference. So far as this Conference is concerned it has no official attitude towards Zionism.⁷

The Union, concerned with not alienating any delegates at its conception, had in fact alienated many of its Zionist members by claiming political neutrality.

Berlin was the site of the First World Union for Progressive Judaism Conference in August of 1928. During the course of the Conference, Zionists were found outside the hall distributing Zionistic information and propaganda. Mr. A. Leo Weil, who was acting as chairman at the time of the propagandizing, reaffirmed Rabbi Mattuck's ruling.

We wish it distinctly understood that the World Union for Progressive Judaism has taken up no attitude whatever on that subject (Zionism), and adopted the following resolution at its meeting on April 16, 1928: "That the ruling of Dr. Mattuck at the Conference held in London in 1926, that the World Union has no official attitude on the subject of Zionism and on its compatibility or incompatibility with Liberal Judaism, be upheld, and that the Chairman at the Berlin Conference be instructed to adhere to it."⁸

Apparently, the World Union was committed to the policy adopted as only temporary during the 1926 Conference. At the 1930 Conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism, the policy undertaken in 1926 and 1928 to shelve all discussion of Zionism was still being maintained. During this Second Conference, a resolution was submitted to the Resolutions Committee which read as follows: "Whereas restriction of freedom of discussion is incompatible with the program of Liberal Jewish Conference, be it resolved that the decision of the Governing Body to exclude the discussion of Zion be rescinded."⁹ The resolution was signed by P. S. Bernstein, F. M. Isserman, Milford Stern and Benjamin Parker. The resolution was rejected.¹⁰

The Third Conference in 1934 opened with the immediate laying down of the law. Dr. C. G. Montefiore expressed the following in his opening address to the Conference. "He would remind all speakers that this was a purely religious conference and that all political questions were out of place and out of order."¹¹ Although the 1934 Conference still enforced its policy of silence as to Zionism, a dramatic change did occur in the official business of the Conference. The Secretary of the Union, Miss Lily Montagu, presented a proposal of the Governing Body. The proposal was for the purpose of forming a committee to investigate, and if possible, initiate work in Palestine. "This particular proposal attracted much sympathy."¹²

During the Fourth Conference in 1937, Dr. Mattuck proposed the following resolution which is worth quoting at length because it indicates such a dramatic turn-around in the official policy of the World Union.

Mindful of the great suffering which some Jews have to endure and moved by a deep sympathy with them, and by admiration for the way in which they have once again shown, by their courage under affliction, the historic strength of the Jewish spirit, we appeal to all Jews and men of good will to help them with the support they need to maintain their existence ... While maintaining the official attitude of neutrality towards Zionism which was adopted by our Union when it was founded, so as to allow both Zionists and non-Zionists attached to Progressive Judaism to participate in its work, we recognize with gratitude the present value of the upbuilding work that has been, and is being, done in Palestine, and express the hope that it may afford a home for the largest possible number of

those Jews who are forced by oppression or by unbearably adverse economic or political circumstances to leave their present homelands.¹³

It is ironic that this is the same man that eleven years earlier restricted any discussion of Jewish Nationalism. The world had changed a great deal since 1926. German anti-semitism had made the World Union's policy of shelving Zionism impossible to maintain. The universalism which Progressive Judaism had taken for granted was fading. For the World Union it was indeed time to reconsider.

THE WORLD UNION'S ATTITUDE WITH RESPECT TO THE
DEVELOPMENT OF LIBERAL JUDAISM IN PALESTINE

The First International Conference of the Jewish Religious Union for the Advancement of Liberal Judaism was held July 10th, 1926. Only a few weeks later, Rabbi Mattuck received a letter from a Dr. Alex Waldman of Tel Aviv. In this letter to Rabbi Mattuck, Waldman made three proposals, all of which were related to the advancement of Liberal Judaism in Palestine. These were Waldman's proposals:

1. The creation of Liberal Jewish communities in and around Tel Aviv.
2. The building of a branch of the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem.
3. The establishment of a Liberal religious retreat and social center south of Tel Aviv.¹⁴

Although Waldman's aspirations did not necessarily reflect a politically Zionist position, it did nevertheless present the new Union with an enormous ideological problem. Was the Union committed to the spread of Liberal Judaism even in Palestine? And if support was offered to Liberal efforts in Palestine, would it therefore imply that the Union had accepted Zionism de facto?

Examination of the World Union's Constitution written in 1926 suggests that the World Union was inevitably committed to the promotion of Liberal Judaism in Palestine. Article II, Section 3 of the Constitution states the following:

In those countries in which there are no Progressive congregations, the Union shall, through such representatives and organizers as the Governing Body may from time to time appoint, co-operate with and assist residents of the said countries in organizing such congregations.¹⁵

The second question posed, namely, did support of Liberal efforts in Palestine mean de facto recognition of Zionism, is a lot more difficult to answer. On the surface it would appear that the World Union was not troubled by the implications of Progressive Judaism in Palestine, but this represented only the surface. As we shall soon discover, the Union was painfully slow in either honoring appeals from or offering aid to Liberal minded Jews in Palestine. Maybe the Union supported in theory the encouragement of Progressive Judaism without regard for political realities, but when it came to Palestine, the political reality of Zionism was hard to overlook.

Miss Montagu, the secretary of the World Union, was in constant communication with either residents of Palestine or recent visitors there. In March of 1928, Miss Montagu wrote to a Mr. Epstein, who had just returned from a trip to Palestine. Miss Montagu was interested in learning from Mr. Epstein whether Progressive Judaism would be of any value in Palestine. It appeared as if the World Union was becoming interested in Palestine. But though it had expressed an interest, no direct involvement was undertaken to study the situation more carefully.¹⁶ In November of that same year, Dr. Elbogen, a member of the World Union, sent a letter to Miss Montagu. In his letter he discussed

his recent trip to Egypt and Palestine. While traveling through Palestine, he discovered a semi-Liberal congregation in Jerusalem called Jeshurun. The congregation did stress decorum but the services remained very traditional and the rabbi was not a Liberal. It was Elbogen's opinion as expressed in his letter that Progressive Judaism in Palestine must be implemented from within and not from without. The residents of Palestine were the only ones who could work towards religious Liberalism; it could not be imported from abroad.¹⁷ Evidently, the World Union agreed with this opinion because for more than four years no further serious inquiry or correspondence was carried out with respect to Palestine. It appears that the Union was waiting for the Palestinian Jews to make a move; surely, this behavior was more compatible with its policy of Zionistic neutrality.

Almost five years after Elbogen's correspondence, Miss Montagu sent a letter to Herr Kuranda who was residing in Palestine and had been interested in joining a Liberal Jewish organization. Miss Montagu was writing him to inform him that no such organization existed in Palestine.¹⁸ In December of that same year, Miss Montagu, most likely influenced by Herr Kuranda's letter, wrote to a Mr. Levy who was a resident of Palestine. In her letter she asks Levy to help organize a Progressive organization in Palestine. She made it very clear to Levy that absolutely no money could be offered to start his work, only literature and

expert advice.¹⁹ Seven years had passed since Dr. Waldman's request for World Union support for Liberal Judaism in Palestine. And thus far, the only form of assistance offered was literature and advice. The Union had not bent over backwards for Progressive Judaism in Palestine.

THE WORLD UNION FOR PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM'S DEPENDENCY
ON AMERICAN FINANCIAL SUPPORT

From the World Union's conception until the latter part of the 1920's, the financial needs of the organization were not very great. The proliferation of Liberal Judaism during this period did not necessitate financial backing from the World Union. The first communities such as Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brasil, Johannesburg, South Africa and Melbourne, Australia were financially self-sufficient. As a result, the World Union understood its role as the distributor of organizational assistance and Liberal propaganda, not financial aid.

But, by the early 1930's, two unforeseen elements changed the direction of the World Union's work. The first was a world wide economic depression and the second was the development of Liberal Judaism in Palestine. Unlike Liberal communities that developed in the late 1920's, the Palestinian Liberal communities were heavily dependent on the World Union for their financial survival. Wilhelm, Rosenberg and Elk, Palestine's three Liberal rabbis, even received living allowances from the World Union for their work. As time passed, these three rabbis increasingly looked toward the World Union to aid their Liberal ventures in Palestine. As the world depression and European anti-semitism worsened during the 1930's, the World Union was forced into a greater dependency on Liberal American support for its work in Palestine.

American contributions for work in Palestine started trickling into the World Union coffers in the spring of 1935.²⁰ Most interesting was the fact that money collected in the United States did not come from Liberal Zionist rabbis. Zionists like Wise and Silver were not interested in the religious issues of Zionism, "they played their parts entirely as political figures".²¹ Historian David Polish notes the split personality inherent in both of these leading Liberal Zionist figures.

While Wise and Silver differed in their approaches to Zionism in their congregations, they shared a common divestment of their roles in the Zionist world ... They chose not to become embroiled in the religious issue which was emerging in the Yishuv. Some of Silver's greatest support came from the Mizrachi, the Orthodox Zionist Party, and he had no inclination to jeopardize that support by becoming involved in a sectarian quarrel. At the 1948 Convention of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Silver answered a question "about the conflict that is developing between those in favor of a theocratic State in Israel and those who are not". He declared 'Actually it is none of our business. The citizens of the State of Israel will decide that question.' In this respect, both Wise and Silver scrupulously separated their Rabbinic from their Zionist roles in the Yishuv, and their Zionist followers just scrupulously overlooked the fact that these great political figures were also leaders in a less than popular Reform Movement.²²

Dr. Moses Cyrus Weiler concurred with this particular point of Polish. In an article entitled "The Religious Situation In Israel", Weiler had this to say about Liberal Zionist Rabbis:

Although it is true that even in the days of classic Jewish Reform there were world-famed Reform Rabbis who were Zionist, notably Rabbis Gustave Gottheil, Bernard Felsenthal, Max Heller, Stephen S. Wise, Abba Hillel Silver, James G. Heller, and others,

nevertheless, unlike the Orthodox Zionists, they established no institutions in Israel. They were Zionist leaders in a political sense, but not in a religious sense.²³

Not surprising, therefore, the World Union received little or no financial support from Zionist leaders.

Initially, the World Union's greatest financial supporters in the United States were Rabbis Samuel Wohl of the Isaac M. Wise Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio, and Julian Morgenstern, President of the Hebrew Union College. These two men, unlike those described above, were interested in the proliferation of Liberal Judaism in Palestine and eagerly collected money in support of that effort. So eager was Wohl in helping the World Union's work in Palestine financially that on occasion he would borrow money from local banks to send to the World Union until he could find other resources of support among Liberal Jews in America.²⁴

In the fall of 1936, the World Union implemented a fund raising scheme which had been devised by Miss Henrietta Szold, President of Hadassah. Szold received financial assistance for her medical work in Palestine by appealing to Jewish American school children.²⁵ The World Union followed her lead and in October sent a form letter from London to every major Reform congregation in America. In the letter an appeal was made for funds to aid World Union work in Palestine from congregational members and religious school children.²⁶ Morgenstern agreed to help in the fund raising drive by sending personal letters to a large number of the alumni of the Hebrew Union College also requesting contributions from the

children of their religious schools.²⁷

After the C.C.A.R.'s Columbus Platform of 1937, one would have thought there would have been an increase in the amount of funds collected. The Columbus Platform was almost a complete departure from the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885. Unlike the Pittsburgh Platform, the Columbus Platform favorably recognized the rebuilding work being performed in Palestine. Below is a portion of that Platform.

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.²⁸

Unfortunately, the Platform did little in helping increase funds collected in the United States for the World Union. Most Liberal congregations in America were very unclear as to the World Union's intentions in Palestine. During its campaign, the World Union never specified the amount of money it hoped to collect or exactly how the money was to be spent in Palestine. This made congregations understandably wary. Rabbi David Lefkowitz of Congregation Emanu-El, Dallas, Texas, wrote the following letter to Rabbi Wohl after having received a request for financial aid. I chose to include his letter because it voices a commonly held view among congregations.

I regret in your letter to the congregation and in the letter to me, personally, you failed to mention the objective; that is, the amount of money that is expected through congregational effort for the Liberal Jewish work in Palestine. Congregations like to have information so they might intelligently meet such a fine proposition as that presented in your letter.²⁹

J. B. Lightman, Executive Director of the Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Houston voiced the same kind of complaint.

Will you be good enough to supply us with information that would give us the background of the Movement, the budget involved, the proportion and nature of the appeals being made in the various communities of this country, the time span planned on, what efforts were made to enlist other religious bodies in Palestine or those interested in the development of Palestine, the provision being made by or the lack of provision incident of religious movements and religious educational movements among Jews in Palestine, and any other pertinent data that would be of interest in connection with the appeal.³⁰

It was, of course, unrealistic of the World Union to solicit without first listing its goals or providing factual information on Liberal Judaism in Palestine.

Fortunately, by 1940, the World Union was receiving financial aid from the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods.³¹ Actually, if it were not for the contributions of these organizations, the work of World Union in Palestine would have been seriously damaged.

CHAPTER TWO

JERUSALEM

Jerusalem was the first center in which Liberal Judaism secured a foothold in Palestine. An early piece of evidence concerning the beginning of Liberal Judaism in Jerusalem is a letter written by Dr. Kurt Wilhelm to Dr. Elbogen. Wilhelm had emigrated to Palestine from Germany in 1933 after having served as a Liberal rabbi in Germany for eight years. He received his rabbinic training at the Jewish Theological Seminary in Breslau and in New York. He was starting his rabbinic career in Jerusalem at the age of 33.¹ In his letter to Elbogen, Wilhelm made two interesting points with respect to the formation of Liberal Judaism. First, any Liberal rabbi working Palestine had to be a "Landesrabbiner". A "Landesrabbiner", according to Wilhelm, was a rabbi fully in touch with the people he served, capable of speaking their language and understanding their particular problems and rabbinical needs. Second, the Liberal rabbi was never to be called Liberal and was never to indicate to the Palestinian Jews that Germans were behind the movement.² We see here, as we shall see in other instances, just how concerned Wilhelm was to avoid immediately alienating Palestinian Jews. Wilhelm wanted Liberal Judaism to slowly ease its way into Palestinian life.

Unfortunately, the British Mandate made the chance of easing into Palestinian religious life rather difficult for Liberal Judaism. Though Article Fifteen of the Mandate stipulated that "The right of each community to maintain its own schools for the education of its members in its own language" and "complete freedom of conscience and the free exercise of all forms of worship"³, it in

no way guaranteed religious pluralism in Palestine. Like the Turks before them, the British interpreted community to mean religious community. There was the Jewish religious community, the Christian religious community and the Moslem religious community. Each religious community would retain autonomous religious and cultural authority through their religious courts for the adjudication of matters of marriage, divorce, adoption of children, inheritance and charitable endowments. In the eyes of the British, each religious community was a homogeneous entity.

The only variation the British Mandate incorporated to the previous Turkish system was the recognition of the Ashkenazi Jewish community. Under the British Mandate, there would be two Chief Rabbis, one Ashkenazi and one Sephardic. A Rabbinic Council of eight rabbis, four Ashkenazi and four Sephardi was established and it was the authority of this Council to elect the two Chief Rabbis from its members. The first two Chief Rabbis elected by this Council were Yaakove Meir for the Sephardim and Abraham Isaac Kook for the Ashkenazim.

The British Mandate agreed that "no person is recognized by the government as Chief Rabbi in Palestine except the Rabbis elected by the Assembly (Council) and any Bet Din (Religious Court of Law) sanctioned by it as the sole authorities in matters of Jewish Law".⁴ The Rabbinical Council became the sole authority of religious law for all Jews living in Palestine. "By implication, the Jewish religion was equated with Orthodoxy and

Jewish law was to be interpreted by Orthodox rabbis."⁵ This Rabbinical authority had "exclusive jurisdiction in matters of marriage, divorce, alimony and confirmation of wills ..."⁶

Even with the Orthodox rabbinate in full control, Wilhelm still believed there was room for a dynamic Liberal rabbinate in Palestine which had to be effective in the following areas.

Spiritual Work

Wilhelm maintained that the present Rabbinate in Palestine (that is, the Orthodox Rabbinate) was the guardian of Jewish Law. The Rabbinate watched over the ritual law and made legal decisions according to the Talmud. The Reform Rabbinate, on the other hand, had to supplement this legalistic approach with "positive religious ethics".⁷ In doing so, the Reform Rabbinate would add life to the lifeless ritualistic Orthodox.

Ceremonies

As radical as it may sound, Wilhelm believed that it should be the duty of the Liberal Rabbinate in Palestine to officiate at the weddings of all European Jews living in Palestine. Wilhelm assumed that most Europeans would be more comfortable with a Liberal European rabbi. Officiating at funerals, according to Wilhelm, would prove to be more difficult since the Liberal community in Jerusalem still had not acquired its own cemetery.

Religious Services

Wilhelm did not consider essential the arranging of Sabbath Services. He felt to do so would lead Liberal Judaism into immediate conflict with the Orthodox. One Sabbath meetings on Saturday afternoon would be a more suitable way for Liberal

minded Jews to congregate. Wilhelm did not object to the idea of High Holiday services since he didn't foresee any immediate objection from the Orthodox.⁸

Wilhelm viewed the Orthodox religious structure in Palestine as an East European transplant. It lacked any kind of form and authority.

This disregard of form and authority can be traced back to special religious conditions, even where religion is outwardly denied. The lack of authority which is characteristic of public worship in Eastern Europe, where every individual endeavors to make personal contact with the Most Holy and prays aloud, for his own soul regardless of other raised voices. This attitude in congregational life is also the source of the spiritual individualism of the Palestinian Jew and exerts an influence for both good and ill.⁹

What exactly Wilhelm meant by the term authority is not exactly clear. But what is unmistakably clear from his statement is that Wilhelm viewed Orthodox rituals and services as "religious institutions which lacked any sense of aesthetic form".¹⁰

Wilhelm was also very much aware of a large number of areligious or non-religious Jews. A large portion of the Palestinian working class had completely abandoned organized religion. "Their disbelief in God", according to Wilhelm, "rises from the socialistic doctrine, which identifies religion and church with bourgeoisie. Their non-religious attitude is also to a great extent a reaction against their religious education which was received in the 'Heders' and 'Shuls' of Eastern Europe, and further, a reaction against the anti-Zionism of the Orthodox Rabbinical Jews of their home countries."¹¹

Though they had turned away from classical forms of Orthodox Judaism, Wilhelm had confidence that these Jewish Laborists were still "striving to find answers to the eternal questions".¹² He saw the agricultural workers' revival of the harvest festivals as evidence of this innate desire to find spiritual meaning in their lives.

And, finally, there was a third group of Jews. These were the immigrants from Western Europe. It was to this group that Wilhelm felt most attached. Below is a brief description of these Western Jews as seen through his eyes:

Many individuals who are neither Orthodox nor yet agnostic are filled with a deep religious longing and are indeed seriously concerned with the religious situation of Palestine, but these men do not leave their isolation in order to form religious groups. Thousands of those immigrants who, during recent years have entered Palestine, especially from Germany, are in matters of religion completely at sea, for they miss the well-regulated religious congregational life to which they were accustomed in their home lands; the harmonious service with the melodies familiar to them from early childhood, Conservative or Liberal as the case may be. They long for the devout celebration of marriages and conduct of funerals, and they expect their Rabbi to comfort them in times of need and distress. Frequently, the radical change in their manner of life is not so much material help, as encouragement, consolation, such as could be given by a pastor.¹³

It would seem that Wilhelm was speaking about none other than himself.

WILHELM'S OFFICIAL RECOGNITION
FROM THE CHIEF RABBINATE

Wilhelm's Rabbinate in Jerusalem was unique in that he was licensed to officiate at weddings. By April 13, 1934, Wilhelm admitted to having already conducted ten weddings for couples of European origin.¹⁴ By 1936, Wilhelm would have conducted well over a hundred weddings for "modern minded immigrants".¹⁵ In 1934, Wilhelm received permission to consecrate marriages from the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, Rabbi Kook.¹⁶ He had "performed marriages in accordance with the principles of traditional Judaism, but in a form which satisfied the aesthetic feeling of the post-assimilatory Jew and which gave to the ceremony a religious-ethical background; these ceremonies differed in atmosphere from the general Jewish marriages in Palestine which were generally a mere legal proceeding".¹⁷

The thought of a Liberal rabbi consecrating at weddings is overwhelming. But when we come to know the character and temperament of the man who authorized it, the fact becomes less overwhelming. Abraham Isaac Kook was born in 1865 in the town of Latvia. As a youth, he studied a wide range of subjects. His curriculum included Bible, Hebrew language, philosophy and mysticism. In 1904, Kook emigrated to Palestine and there developed close ties with the Zionist movement. Just before the First World War, Kook traveled to London. When the war broke out, it was impossible for him to return to Palestine. He remained in London serving as a rabbi. After the war, he returned to Palestine and in 1921 was appointed the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine.¹⁸

As Chief Rabbi, Kook did not believe in chastising the secularists. According to him, the secularists had not rejected Judaism, but merely stressed and preached one aspect of it, namely "nationalism", and "this aspect, too, partakes of the divine".¹⁹ "The spirit of Israel is so closely linked to the spirit of God that Jewish nationalism, no matter how secularist"²⁰ must ultimately affirm the divine. Kook wanted to build a bridge to the secularists in order "to maintain a dialogue with them".²¹ Someday the secularist would realize that his work was rooted in the divine. Maybe Wilhelm was just the bridge Kook was looking for.

Though Wilhelm had full authority to marry, he initially did not have authority to bury. This authority was vested solely in members of the Hevra-Kaddisha "of the so-called Old Yishuv".²² Wilhelm did indicate that occasionally he was able to obtain permission to conduct in the deceased's home a memorial service which was aesthetically pleasing to modern minded Jews.²³

Approximately eight years after having received official permission to officiate at weddings, Wilhelm wrote to Miss Montagu in order to update the World Union with respect to his official rabbinic status. This is a portion of that update.

I'd like to say that the position of today is exactly the same it was from our beginnings. My relations to the Rabbinate in Jerusalem are correct; the late Chief Rabbi Kook eight years ago gave me the privilege to perform marriages in the name of the Chief Rabbinate. This did never change or was object of a question. I am an official Council member of the Hevra-Kaddisha under the supervision of the Chief Rabbinate, once or twice the (sic) year Mrs. Wilhelm and I pay visits to the Chief Rabbis in their homes and occasionally I am invited to a party by a Chief Rabbi. As Voluntary Prison's Visitor, I cooperate with Rabbinate and

Community Council. But I dare say that my rather good relations to these gentlemen are the matter of personal contact and not of official negotiations. The difficulties I had here did not come from these official circles but from political (religious-political) groups. The Rabbinate, however, kept silent, also at the time of the nasty attacks in the press after our last year's Liberal convention.²⁴

The only other information available with respect to Wilhelm's official rabbinic status is in a letter dated January 4, 1949. Wilhelm was writing to Miss Montagu during Israel's fight for survival. He was busy performing funeral services for soldiers killed in the War of Independence. The letter to Miss Montagu not only reassures us as to his continued official standing within the Jerusalem Rabbinate, but also gives us a glimpse of the tremendous strain years of war had on a rabbi in Jerusalem. The following few sentences capture this reality.

I am terribly busy in these weeks, full of unrest and duties of sad nature. I go from one house to the other, comforting people who are in grief about dreadful losses; I take an active part in preparing for funerals - wholesale funerals under the most difficult conditions ... We all here grew older in these few weeks, facing death and destruction. But I am glad to be here on my post with a real task. That gives me strength.²⁵

Wilhelm's official status allowing him to perform weddings and funerals was and still is unparalleled in the history of Liberal Judaism in Palestine and Israel. Wilhelm's contemporaries, Dr. Elk of Haifa and Dr. Rosenberg of Tel Aviv, were never to receive such official recognition. Wilhelm's rabbinate was indeed unique. He was, in fact, the true prototype of what the complete Liberal rabbi was and hopefully will be in the land of Israel.

JERUSALEM'S LIBERAL COMMUNITY

Jerusalem's Liberal community faced severe economic difficulties from its very inception. The bulk of Dr. Wilhelm's correspondence with the World Union dealt with the subject of finances. The world depression, the lack of capital among the Palestinian Jews, the lack of interest among American Jews to support Liberal Judaism in Palestine, and the lack of a financial base within the World Union itself made the Liberal enterprise in Jerusalem (as well as in Tel Aviv and Haifa), a hand-to-mouth effort.

Wilhelm's letters pleading for money are extremely reminiscent of the Old Yishuv's Halukkah System. So reminiscent in fact that one of the World Union's Vice President's and a member of the Union of American Hebrew Congregation, Ludwig Vogelstein, wrote the following letter to Miss Montagu in opposition of aid for Palestine.

I have before me your letter of May 17th (1934) regarding Palestine work and I want to caution you in regard to this matter. My objection is not based on my general anti-Zionistic feeling but on the fear that any effort on our part to introduce Liberal religious views will be misinterpreted even more so that it was in Australia. If the Jews of Palestine really want a Liberal synagogue or any Liberal religious work, they should organize it themselves and receive nothing from us but good advice and the recommendation of such names as suitable leaders as we can afford to vouch for. Any attempt on the part of the World Union to send money for this purpose either out of the Treasury or out of specially collected funds would get us into difficulties now and hereafter. I am sufficiently displeased, when I read of the begging methods of Holland and Australia, and I am confident that the Palestinian Jews would turn out to be the beggars par excellence. If one could trust the advice and judgment of Dr. Magnes one could ask him. But I am afraid that he is biased and his judgment is warped by his desire to aid everything Palestinian. For God's sake, if you have any money

for Liberal purposes, give it to Germany where it is badly needed and where it will be used honestly and intelligently by our good friends and without creating troubles and schisms.²⁶

Up until December of 1933, "good advice and the recommendation of such names as suitable leaders"²⁷ were the only things the World Union had offered to any Liberal Jew in Palestine. But on March 22, 1934, Wilhelm sent his first request for financial aid to the World Union.²⁸ Herr Felix Kaminka, an individual well acquainted with Wilhelm's work in Palestine, also wrote to the World Union at this time in support of Wilhelm's aid request. In Kaminka's correspondence with the Union, it was stressed that Wilhelm's work at first must be "experimental" and that a committee should be formed from "people of standing". This committee could be subsidized by the World Union for time needed in order to build up an independent organization. Wilhelm would be the one to see to the formation of this committee and he, along with this committee, would present to the Union a program of future work.²⁹

Wilhelm did not receive good news from the World Union. Evidently the World Union was not ready to go from "good advice" to financial aid. This is a portion of Miss Montagu's letter of rejection to Wilhelm.

Dear Rabbi Wilhelm,

I read your letter to the Executive Board last Thursday, and they were deeply interested in your report and suggestions. We realize the necessity for work in Palestine to promote ideas of Progressive Judaism, and its importance, so that we should earnestly wish to inaugurate and to support it. I am sorry, however, to tell you that for the moment it is impossible for the World Union to undertake any new work in any country whatsoever, however urgent the need, as all our funds are pledged for the work for which we are already responsible. The

only chance lies in obtaining special contributions for Progressive Jewish work in Palestine from individuals. In present circumstances we cannot be hopeful of obtaining such contributions. So vague, therefore, are our prospects of being able to initiate work in Palestine, that I am directed to advise you not to take them into consideration at all in making your personal arrangements for future work. We cannot possibly offer you any appointment for work in Palestine at present, and it is very doubtful whether we shall be able to offer you one in the future.³⁰

Dr. Elbogen, Professor at the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, and a member of the World Union, did not agree with either the decision of the World Union or the attitude of Vogelstein. He wrote to the World Union urging it to support the efforts of Wilhelm. He believed that if Wilhelm's work was to have any degree of success it was contingent on financial help from the Union. Moreover, the money would be better used in Palestine than in other nations such as Holland.³¹ Eventually, a turnabout had occurred in World Union policy by the fall of 1934. Miss Montagu informed Wilhelm by way of Rabbi Joseph Rauch, a C.C.A.R. representative to the World Union who had recently been visiting Palestine, that if Wilhelm could organize a central committee of dedicated people, money might be made available to him in the sum of one hundred pounds. This was incidentally the amount of money Wilhelm had originally requested.³²

Rauch unofficially met with Wilhelm, Dr. A. Hontke, the Director of Karen Hayesod, Mr. H. M. Kalvaryski, the ex-Director of Pica, Mr. Alfred Berger, Manager of Phoenix Company, Dr. Fritz Simon, Manager of Migdal Insurance Company, Dr. Joseph Tren, a surgeon, Dr. A. ^eFeilchenfeld, a lawyer, Dr. H. ^uGranpe, a rabbi, in the home of Dr. G. ^eHarlitz, Archive Director of the Jewish Agency on

August 5, 1934.³³ Rauch asked this group why they hadn't established a Western Synagogue and school. They informed him it was due to a lack of funds. He then asked the group that if they were to receive a subsidy of one hundred pounds, would that be sufficient to implement their plans? They all said it would and that it would not be necessary to add to it later, for once the work would be initiated, they felt sure that it would carry on unaided. Rauch was not happy with this particular group of community leaders. He felt "the real lack was not one of money but of a dynamic sacrificial leadership". At the conclusion of the meeting, Rauch suggested to the group that aid might be forthcoming more rapidly if the work they were proposing had already started.³⁴

Evidently, Rauch's suggestion was not taken very seriously, because instead of moving forward with their plan, everything seemed to come to a dead halt. Wilhelm delayed in organizing a central committee, though one would have thought that those in attendance August 5th would have made up the committee. So long was the delay in fact that Miss Montagu wrote to Rauch in order to find out what was the matter with Wilhelm's organizational efforts.³⁵ Even with the prospect of receiving help from abroad, Wilhelm must have found it more difficult than he had anticipated to organize any kind of Liberal leadership in Jerusalem.

As late as eight months after Rauch's meeting in Jerusalem, Miss Montagu was still inquiring as to Wilhelm's efforts to organize a central committee. Below is what she wrote to Herr H. Stern,

Vice President of the World Union. The letter indicates the failure of Wilhelm to organize even with the promise of available aid.

The whole situation would of course be changed immediately if some practical work could be undertaken in Palestine. The contribution from America is being sent to us. I am writing by this post to Dr. Elbogen at the suggestion of Dr. Mattuck to ask him once again if he cannot get Dr. Wilhelm to organize a committee and ask for a subsidy since you do not hear from Dr. Herlitz.³⁶

Why had Wilhelm asked for a World Union subsidy if he wasn't even capable of organizing a central committee?

By December of 1936, it appeared as if Wilhelm's efforts to begin some grassroots Progressive Judaism had taken hold. A small group of people consisting mostly of German immigrants became interested in holding Sabbath services. The desire for these services actually grew out of a concern of certain families to have their sons trained for Bar Mitzvah and to celebrate the Bar Mitzvah in a modern milieu. The services were conducted privately in the home of Wilhelm. Attendance consisted of approximately forty to fifty men and women. At last, Liberal Judaism had gone from the private realm to the public. Emeth V'Emunah was the name of Palestine's first Liberal congregation.

Also at this time, Wilhelm realized the importance of beginning a modern day school. Schools in Palestine were terribly overcrowded and if a child did succeed in gaining admittance, the

school was either Orthodox or secular in its outlook. It was Wilhelm's hope that someday a Liberal Jewish school could be built in Jerusalem from funds collected abroad.³⁸

By April of 1937, Wilhelm's congregation had increased to about one hundred members with the majority still consisting of Germans. He had also by this date established a small private school for religious studies. Wilhelm was hoping for a new location for services. He believed that a better hall for worship would stimulate more membership.³⁹ Wilhelm requested from the World Union, by way of Dr. Elbogen, additional financial support in order to acquire a more suitable hall.

Elbogen relayed Wilhelm's urgent request to Miss Montagu. Below is a portion of Elbogen's letter:

Dr. Wilhelm again writes how disturbing is the effect of the lack of a suitable hall. He has all sorts of valuable plans for the future, but again there is the obstruction of the lack of the necessary money. As you know, such propositions cannot be put into force without expense ...⁴⁰

The World Union was not insensitive to Wilhelm's needs, but by 1937 was also receiving petitions from Rosenberg in Tel Aviv and Elk in Haifa. Carrying the financial responsibility for Progressive Judaism was becoming increasingly more difficult. The World Union considered a possible solution to help eliminate this economic crunch. During the Fourth Conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (1937), Elbogen suggested that someone should go to the United States in order to solicit funds

for Palestinian Liberal Judaism. In September of the same year, Elbogen made his proposal a second time to the World Union but this time he specifically recommended Wilhelm to be the representative. Elbogen recommended Wilhelm for the following three reasons: first, Wilhelm had lived and studied in New York City; second, he spoke English fluently; and, third, he was familiar with the crucial issues and problems facing Palestinian Progressive Judaism. Rosenberg of Tel Aviv moreover would be able to cover for Wilhelm during his absence.⁴¹

It wasn't until June 13, 1938 that the Governing Body of the World Union approved Elbogen's suggestion. What delayed the Union's approval was a concern over Wilhelm's travel expenses. There was also apprehension that the funds collected might not be channeled through the World Union.⁴²

Two days after the World Union approved Wilhelm's trip, Miss Montagu wrote to Rabbi Wohl of Cincinnati. The letter gives the impression that Wohl and not Elbogen was responsible for Wilhelm's visit to the United States. Since no other evidence is available of Wohl's involvement with respect to the proposed visit, it may be assumed that Elbogen and Wohl were in communication with one another or they both came up with the same idea separately. Below is a portion of Miss Montagu's letter to Rabbi Wohl:

The Governing Body resolved to accept your advice that a visit from Dr. Wilhelm in January or February would be of use in raising funds for the furtherance of the work

in Palestine. The World Union agreed to pay the cost of his ticket to America and wishes to leave to you all the arrangements for his lecture tour and the necessary publicity in order to obtain the best possible results, since you will know best how this should be conducted. A resolution was passed to the effect that all the money collected by Dr. Wilhelm should be handed over to the World Union. The appeal for money is to be made partly for a Synagogue in Jerusalem which we think will have definite pulling power, and partly for the general work in Palestine. The allocation of the money for these two purposes is to be entirely in the hands of the World Union and will, of course, depend on the total amount collected after all expenses have been paid.⁴³

Wilhelm spent a total of five months in the United States, from January to May 1938. He had not originally intended to spend five months in the United States, but he extended his stay in order to make visits to as many congregations as possible.⁴⁴

The only firsthand information to be found concerning Wilhelm's travels in the United States was by way of Dr. and Mrs. Sheldon Blank. Wilhelm was a dinner guest in the Blank's home along with some rabbis from the Cincinnati Reform community. The Blanks do not seem to recall his ever mentioning his Liberal work in Palestine but they do remember how he engaged in a rather heated discussion concerning Jewish-Arab relations in Palestine.⁴⁵

By and large, Wilhelm's financial results were a failure. "Dr. Wilhelm attributed this mainly to the fact that a big appeal had been launched for the Joint Distribution Committee and the United Palestine Fund at the same time, and so it was difficult to get attention for the religious work in Palestine." It should not be assumed that Wilhelm went totally unnoticed. He did bring it to the attention of many Jewish communities here in America that

"Progressive religious work was being done in Palestine".

Dr. Morgenstern, President of the Hebrew Union College, agreed to raise five hundred dollars on behalf of Progressive Judaism in Palestine, that is, if it would not impede Wohl's fund raising efforts. Dr. A. H. Silver committed himself to raise funds after the United Appeal drive had concluded. Silver reaffirmed this commitment to Miss Montagu when he later was in London.⁴⁶

This was indeed a change from Silver's earlier attitude. In the summer and fall of 1937, when the World Union was soliciting funds from the U.S., Silver was asked to aid in the fund raising drive. This was his response to that request:

I am already committed to so many money-raising projects in behalf of local and foreign relief institutions, movements, etc. that I simply cannot take on any additional fund-raising obligations. I am chairman of the local Cleveland Jewish Welfare Fund and co-chairman of the National United Palestine Appeal. I am helping to raise money for the Joint Distribution Committee, the ORT, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, etc., etc., and there is, of course, a limit.⁴⁷

Wilhelm's trip to the U.S. must have left its mark on at least some Liberal leaders, though the financial success was not as high as initially hoped for. Wilhelm's trip had not in fact done a great deal to alleviate the financial burden that he and his colleagues faced.

DR. WILHELM'S LAST TEN YEARS IN PALESTINE: 1938-1948

Approximately three months before his planned trip to the U.S., Wilhelm wrote an update of his work to Miss Montagu. Below is a portion of his report to her:

I want to tell you something about our Holyday services. We finally succeeded in finding a more suitable place. Shortly before the Holydays, the Bezalel Museum fitted up an old shed into a hall for lectures and exhibitions. The people at the head met our wishes by giving to the place, through some structural alterations, a more dignified character. We bought some benches, simple in form but appropriate. On the Eve of the New Year we surprised our congregation with the most beautiful Synagogue in the town. By this Synagogue our congregation in Jerusalem has acquired the right of domicile. On the Eve of Atonement it was reckoned that there were 1,000 people present, most of them standing. There were present members of other congregations who assured us that our service was the most beautiful and dignified in the town. The increase of non-Germans was particularly noticeable, yet the German element predominated. One of my sermons was entirely in Hebrew, the next in German with a Hebrew introduction.

We have not done badly with the sale of admission tickets and with donations, but the expenses for fitting up the hall and for the purchase of benches were considerable, and there was also unforeseen expenditure ... The Museum is in the center of the Jewish residential district, but not very far from the Arab district.

Our youth work has been quite successful. We have to find a house for it. We should like to make it into a kind of Toynbee Hall so that the people could go there for a cup of tea and some harmless game. The misery here is growing more and more, and as a religious community we feel the obligation to forget their worries for a short time (sic). We are hoping to raise here the funds for doing this work.⁴⁸

Once again, Wilhelm, the perpetual optimist, was thinking of new ways to spend money before he even had it. Actually, Wilhelm should have been thinking of raising money for next year's Holiday

services because in 1931 the Bezalel Museum almost evicted the congregation from its hall. They couldn't pay their rent!⁴⁹

The Bezalel Museum continued to be used by the congregation for Holiday services through the 1940's, though Sabbath services were conducted "in the basement of a house that was intended as an air raid shelter".⁵⁰

In the late 30's and early 40's, cultural lectures by noted speakers played an important part in Wilhelm's congregation. In Jerusalem it was customary for a lecture to be given after the Friday evening service or Sabbath morning service. "Such lectures have included 'Jewish Life in Germany in the Last Five Years' by Dr. Philipp 'Bialik' by Dr. Ernest Simon; 'The Spiritual Heritage of German Jewry' by Professor Dr. Julius Guttmann of the Faculty of Philosophy of Hebrew University; and 'Ahad Haam' by Professor H. N. Torczyner."⁵¹ During the Second World War, the cultural events did not cease. This is evidenced in a letter written by Wilhelm to Miss Montagu in March 1942.

... and we in Jerusalem have together with the German Settler's Organization the best People's Institute which so far existed in the city. We have now about 40 different courses of lectures and study groups and we are happy that also Mr. Edwin Samuel lectures in this term of twelve lectures on England and English institutions. Another interesting feature of our Jerusalem group is a very active circle of about twenty men and women who meet twice a month to discuss current theological questions. Among the members of this circle are men like Martin Buber, Julius Guttmann, Hugo Bergmann, Richard Koebner,⁵² Leon Roth, Josy Bentwich, Gerhard Scholem, Ernest Simon.

Though the world was at war, it didn't seem to have impoverished the Palestinian people. So good was their existence, in fact,

it prompted Wilhelm to write the following:

We live here now almost peace like. We get whatever we want, best food in every demanded quantity, clothing in best quality. Palestine is even today a land of miracles.⁵³

From 1942 to 1947 correspondence between Wilhelm and the World Union was almost completely cut off. Therefore, we can only assume that he continued with the same activities as he had before the war, namely, conducting weddings, funerals, Bar Mitzvahs, organizing cultural sessions and teaching. It wasn't until the 15th of December, 1947 that correspondence resumed between the two. By this time the Second World War had ended and the realization of a Jewish homeland was imminent. As independence approached, both the World Union and Wilhelm were deeply interested in the future of Progressive Judaism in the new state. Wilhelm was fairly confident that Progressive Judaism would continue comfortably. In a letter he wrote to the World Union in December of 1947 he expresses this sense of confidence:

Yes, we too have thought to approach you on the possibilities how to help us here safeguarding the rights of Progressive Judaism in the Jewish Constitution to come. I personally do not worry about a real handicap in our work. There will be some separation of Church and State and there are enough progressive trends in the Yishub or better, anti-clerical groups who would not allow orthodoxy to rule. I made the experiment here that it is easier to achieve with a certain amount of tact what I really want to get than by laws and constitutions.⁵⁴

Wilhelm believed it would better serve Progressive Judaism if the World Union didn't take any official steps to ensure religious pluralism. Rather, the World Union should contact "friends" in the Zionist Movement to have them plead the Union's case.

Wilhelm was not willing to create a major conflict on an issue he didn't see as very difficult to resolve.

Up until 1948 Wilhelm never gave the slightest indication of a desire to leave his post in Palestine. As a matter of fact, he was extremely proud to be recognized "as the spiritual leader of a considerable part of the Jerusalem population".⁵⁵

And as late as January 1948, though troubled by the enormous loss of life caused by the War of Independence, he still felt fulfilled by the usefulness of his life. "I am glad to be here on my post with a real task. That gives me strength."⁵⁶

Although having served the religious needs of Palestinian Liberal Jews for more than 14 years, Wilhelm was to leave Jerusalem and accept a call to succeed Dr. Ehrenpreis as Chief Rabbi of Sweden.⁵⁷ The probable reason for Wilhelm's sudden departure is explained by Elk in a letter he sent to Miss Montagu. This is a portion of that letter.

Our friend Dr. Wilhelm has suffered very badly through the terrible explosion in Jerusalem. His apartment has been demolished; he, his wife and his daughter have been slightly injured.⁵⁸

Dr. Philipp succeeded Wilhelm in Jerusalem. Wilhelm's career as Palestine's first Liberal Rabbi had come to an end.

CHAPTER THREE

HAIFA

Dr. Max Elk, the founder of Liberal Judaism in Haifa, was educated at the Rabbinical Seminaries of Breslau and Munich, Germany. Until he emigrated in 1935, he had ministered at congregations in Munich and Stettin from 1926 to 1935.¹

ELK'S SCHOOL

The building of a Jewish day school was the vertex of Elk's rabbinic career in Haifa. It was, if you will, his labor of love. Though he was involved with the establishment of a Liberal congregation and the fight for official recognition for the Liberal rabbinate of Palestine, it was with the creation and maintenance of his school where he spent the majority of his time, finances and energies.

Elk understood his labor of love as a way of expressing Liberal Judaism's prophetic message in Palestine. He was terribly concerned with the social conditions of the Jewish people in Palestine. Haifa's population in the late 1930's was in turmoil. Refugees from Hitler's Europe were flooding into a city in which housing was far less than adequate. Crowding made a suitable home environment impossible for the immigrant youth. Consequently, there existed masses of youth with no place to go and nothing to do. Haifa's existing educational institutions at this time were not capable of providing instruction to this mass of new arrivals; they were already filled to their capacity. Elk believed that the creation of a Liberal Jewish day school would

not only bring stability to the immigrant family, but in time would also bring a new generation of Liberal Jews into Palestinian life.

In this way Elk was unique from his two colleagues. Whereas Wilhelm and Rosenberg attempted to create their communities by attracting already Liberal minded Jews, Elk was building his community through education and indoctrination. Though Elk's organizational process was much slower, in the end the foundation of his community and Liberal Judaism in Palestine as a whole would be that much stronger.

By April of 1939, Elk had already implemented a kindergarten in a converted house consisting of some eighty children. The kindergarten was staffed by one teacher, one cook (hot meals were served to the children), and two helpers. Because the house was not able to accommodate all of the eighty children at once, the children were instructed in swing-shifts. Half the children came in the morning and half came in the afternoon.

Instruction was also being offered to older children in the mornings and afternoons by Elk himself. Though the instruction by all indications seemed unstructured and the children were not divided by age, Elk claimed that there was a waiting list of children wanting to be enrolled.

In response to this need, Elk proposed the creation of a Liberal Jewish day school. The proposal became a reality on September 5

1939 when Elk's school opened. The school was named the Hillel School and it consisted of only a kindergarten and first grade. Those children who had graduated from the kindergarten the year before entered the new first grade and new younger children were admitted into the kindergarten. It was Elk's intention that every new school year a new grade would be added to the school until the school was complete. When the school opened on September 5, the student body consisted of 96 children, 16 in first grade and 82 in the kindergarten.³

Each year the school continued to grow as Elk had planned with only minor financial difficulties. But by 1944, serious economic problems started to cloud the school's future. Though the school had been extremely successful, its increasing size was ever increasing the costs. The school now consisted of five grades plus a kindergarten (not to mention that there were two first grades). Over 202 children were receiving instruction with a teacher and administrative staff of only ten (including Elk). Elk was ashamed to admit that his teachers were the lowest paid in Haifa. The physical plant could no longer handle the load of students. The school building, as stated before, was only a renovated house consisting of two floors. Sanitary conditions were increasingly more difficult to maintain. And Elk, who believed in separate educational instruction for boys and girls, found it impossible to implement his educational philosophy within the confines of his school. Not only was the physical plant lacking, but the school was

in need of maps, educational equipment, books, athletic equipment and school supplies.⁴

Many of the school's financial woes could have been attributed to Elk's open-door policy. Elk never turned any child away that wanted to study because the family was unable to pay. He didn't believe in penalizing the child because of the poverty of the family. Nevertheless, the school had to have financial stability. Elk envisioned three possibilities to ensure the financial stability of his school. The first possibility was to allow enrollment to only those students whose parents were capable of paying full tuition. The second possibility was for the school to join the "Rescheth", a national organization created by the Knesseth Israel, and receive funding from it. And the third possibility would be to make the school a school of the World Union.

The third possibility was the most desirable in Elk's mind. By opting for the first possibility, Elk would have been disregarding his social concern. Elk wanted to keep his school a people's school. He never designed it for the elite. The second possibility was also undesirable because it meant affiliation with another organization and in doing so it might have changed the liberal direction of the school. The ideal solution, therefore, would be to make "the school a school of the World Union, in the same way as there were schools of the Alliance Israelite Universelle".⁵ Below were the ways in which the

World Union could stabilize the school's finances:

1. That the World Union undertake the responsibility for the development and maintenance of the school.
2. That the World Union grant the school an annual subvention which is in relation to the necessary expenses of the school.
3. That the World Union help in making the money sufficient for the establishment and equipment of the school building.
4. That since the school cannot obtain a (new) building in a short time, the World Union should during this year (1944) help the school to have an interim building with six rooms which would be an extension of the present building which belongs to a private landlord.⁶

It should be noted at this point that the World Union was more sympathetic to Elk's school than the congregational work of Wilhelm and Rosenberg. This bias of the World Union is evidenced in a statement made by Dr. Mattuck.

I think it would be quite in order to give Dr. Elk a special grant for the school specifying its purpose and the other two rabbis cannot feel that there is any discrimination in such a subsidy, since they do not maintain a similar activity. And I should think that the money could be sent directly to Dr. Elk.⁷

Though the World Union was willing to more heavily subsidize Elk's work, they were unsure as to whether they were capable of totally financing the school. They asked Elk to forward

a list of the school's expenses "so as to know if the World Union" can "back it as a World Union school". But they warned Elk from getting too optimistic.⁸

Even though Elk looked toward the World Union for help, he was also exploring one of the other possibilities for financial stability. He contacted the "Rescheth" though he remained wary in affiliating with them since it might have resulted in compromising the liberal goals of the school.⁹

In October of 1944, a solution to at least one of the school's problems manifested itself. A school, Beth Sefer Ahad Ha-am, located on the same street as the Hillel School, asked to be united with the Hillel School. The Beth Sefer Ahad Ha-am School was no longer able to make ends meet. Elk was, of course, delighted by the opportunity. The problem of overcrowded classrooms was solved by the acquisition of another school building. And because the Hillel School had become the only day school in the immediate neighborhood, it would be tremendously advantageous for furthering the growth of the school. With the combined student bodies of the two schools, the Hillel School had increased to over 225 pupils.

With the increase of students, two new grades (seventh and eighth) needed to be organized. It was Elk's desire at this time to also organize grades nine and ten. It was his hope that the "Rescheth" would consider his school "a comprehensive Jewish day school, thereby granting official recognition and

governmental subsidy". Unfortunately, only the seventh grade was added to the curriculum which definitely hurt the school's chances for immediate recognition.

Incredibly, only a little less than a year after the unification of the Hillel School with the Beth Sefer Ahad Ah-am, Elk was looking for larger facilities! Elk projected that in the school year 1945/1946 the student enrollment would be hovering around five hundred students, thus necessitating even a larger building or buildings for his students.¹²

Somehow, Elk had learned that the city of Haifa was planning to erect a number of new school buildings at the conclusion of the Second World War. Though the Hillel School was on the Municipality's list, it was not high on the list since it was one of the youngest schools in the city. The older schools were given first priority. Elk estimated the cost of a new school to be 25,000 pounds. If he could raise approximately half of the building's estimated cost, he felt assured that the Municipality would process the Hillel School request much faster. He asked the World Union for the needed financial help.

The only other problematic area besides that of money was a site on which the school could be built. Elk investigated the possibility of buying or leasing land from the Bahais. The Bahais owned land adjacent to the Hillel School. (The

Hillel School was located at 18 Hillel Street.) He was hopeful that they might be willing to lease or sell a parcel of their land, thus enabling the school to remain in the same area. He contacted the owners with his proposition.¹³

Elk's requests for land and money went essentially unanswered. The World Union could not allocate the necessary money¹⁴ and from all indications the Bahais were not willing to let Elk have a parcel of their land.

Elk got the feeling he was fighting a losing battle. And he was becoming angry, not because of the fight, but because he felt like he was fighting the battle alone. He felt as if Liberal Jews had abandoned him, especially Americal Liberal Jews. He was aware that the World Union was heavily financed by American support and he had hoped that Americal Liberals would have been more forthcoming in their support. This anger is displayed in a letter he wrote to Miss Montagu.

You will excuse me for writing so frankly because I know your great interest in our school. It seems, however, to me that our American friends have no great interest in our school which is the only people's school which is run on Progressive lines in the world. Certainly, it is the only such school in Palestine. The American rabbis who visit Palestine do not find their way to Haifa. I read after their visit with mixed feelings what they write about the need of Progressive schools in Palestine.¹⁵

As enrollment continued to increase in 1946, 1947 and 1948, Elk was still doing everything in his power to acquire financial help for the purpose of a new school building. He even contacted Baron de Rothschild for help¹⁶ but in the end

all his attempts were greeted with failure.

Fortunately, Elk's greatest love survived and still does survive. The contribution of the school made in the development of Liberal Judaism (and still is making in Israel) may just be beginning to show its rewards.

ELK'S INABILITY TO RECEIVE RECOGNITION FROM
THE ORTHODOX CHIEF RABBINATE

Unlike Wilhelm, Elk was not licensed by the Chief Rabbinate to officiate at weddings and funerals. But, unlike Rosenberg, as we shall see later on, Elk was not as emotionally charged with respect to the rabbinical handicap. It was, of course, a problem, but because Elk's career as a rabbi was not totally centered around congregational life, the issue was not as crucial to him as it was for Wilhelm and Rosenberg. He didn't need to be officially recognized to run his school. Consequently, Elk did not become radicalized on the issue. He wasn't willing to personally fight the Orthodox establishment. If official recognition had to be fought for, he would have been just as happy if someone or something were to fight the battle for him. This was evidenced in 1938 when Max Dienemann, a Liberal rabbi from Offenbach, Germany and a member of the World Union, emigrated to Haifa. Seizing the opportunity, Elk assigned Dienemann with the task of obtaining recognition for the Liberal movement thus freeing himself of the chore.¹⁷ Unfortunately, Dienemann never fought the battle Elk wanted him to; he died shortly after his arrival in Palestine.

Without Dienemann's support, Elk had to devise an alternative plan which, as stated before, would not make him the focal point in the struggle. He considered that recognition might be accomplished by acquiring grassroot support from both his congregation and sympathetic outsiders. He believed the more successful he was in his rabbinical work, the greater would be his chances

for recognition. He was optimistic that his followers would fight the battle for him when they realized that their religious needs were not being filled by a handcuffed rabbi.¹⁸ If Elk's community really wanted to fight for their rabbi, it seems that by 1946 they would have had reason enough to fight. Below is a description of the state of affairs for a Liberal rabbi in Haifa.

The demand that we should have marriage ceremonies makes itself felt more and more. The demand comes as well from members as from non-members. But, unfortunately, so far the Oberrabbinat (Council of Rabbis) has not consented to confer to us the official right of carrying out wedding ceremonies. The ceremonies are conducted by an official representative of the Rabbis and we are limited to give sanction to the marriage ceremony by a special¹⁹ talk. This is an undignified state of affairs ...

Though the World Union was extremely interested in Elk's problem, he was not enthusiastic about its concern. He seriously questioned the World Union's effectiveness in helping resolve his problem, and in a letter dated February 1947 it almost appears as if he was annoyed by their interest.

I have already written regarding this repeatedly. I don't think that the question can be solved through a decision of the World Union to do something officially, because the Chief Rabbinate has too much power in Palestine according to the law of the country.²⁰

Elk was not interested in what World Union policies were. Rather, he was looking for those specific members of the World Union capable of helping by reason of their contacts with the right people.

I think that if Dr. Heller would talk to the right people of the Vaad Leumi we could come to a conclusion which would also give to the Liberal Rabbis in Tel Aviv and Haifa the authority to solemnize marriages as already exists in Jerusalem. Therefore,

I would suggest not to make any definite decisions, but to ask Dr. Heller to examine this question in Palestine itself.²¹

Dr. Heller was chairman of the World Union's Palestine Committee.

Elk wrote Heller personally asking him for his help. Heller never answered his letter!²²

After Heller had failed him, he again wrote the World Union, this time asking them to ask Abba Hillel Silver to speak on Liberal Judaism's behalf. Since Silver was a member of the Jewish Agency and Jewish Statehood was just on the horizon, he believed Silver might be helpful.²³ Unfortunately, once again his cry in the wilderness went unanswered.

CONGREGATIONAL WORK

One of the earliest pieces of information concerning Elk's beginnings as a congregational rabbi in Haifa comes to us in two letters he wrote to the World Union. In these letters he mentions the following information about his infant congregation.

The name of his congregation was Beth Israel. When the congregation began, Chanukah Eve 1935, it only had a membership of thirty families. Services were conducted in a rented hall in a manner and decorum befitting Liberal European worship.²⁴

As discussed, educational instruction was a very important aspect of Elk's rabbinate. The synagogue in Elk's mind was not only a house of worship but was a house of study. Consequently, adult education was one of the first congregational activities instituted by Elk. Working with Elk was a rabbi named Dr. Paul Lazarus. Lazarus was a Liberal rabbi who had also emigrated to Palestine from Germany. Elk entrusted Lazarus to institute and supervise adult education at the congregation. Lazarus lectured to the congregation Sabbath eve (after services) and Tuesday evenings. Some of his lectures concerned the following topics: "The teaching of the Bible in the schools in Palestine ...", "Messianic thoughts from the prophets to Hermann Cohen", and "The problem of Arab nationalism ...".²⁵ It would seem, by reason of the above mentioned topics, that Lazarus was interested in contemporary religious problems which would generate a good deal of lively discussion.

Unfortunately, by the spring of 1939, the rented hall which the congregation had been occupying was no longer available.²⁶

Although religious services and adult education classes were easily transferred to the Hillel School, Elk was annoyed by the change since the seating capacity of the school was far less than that of the hall. Because conducting services at only the Hillel School restricted attendance to only those that lived in the general vicinity of the school, Elk saw the necessity of offering congregational services to Liberal Jews living in other parts of the city. Elk, again with the help of Lazarus, established a branch of Congregation Beth Israel on Mount Carmel. This branch congregation conducted its religious services and adult education in a rented hotel room on the top of Mount Carmel.²⁷ Unlike the Liberal communities of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, both congregations were capable of financing their activities the whole year through by the sale of admission tickets on the High Holidays.²⁸

Descriptive information by Elk about the congregation and its activities was always sketchy. Actually, it was Lazarus who was really "responsible for the administrative side of the Congregation".²⁹ But on the tenth anniversary of the congregation, Elk wrote a brief summary of its first decade. These are some of the observations Elk made. He noted that the congregation had remained essentially German in character. It was still almost exclusively a congregation of German immigrants. Though sermons were delivered both in German and Hebrew, Elk admitted that only the German was ever understood. Adult education classes were

also conducted in German. Elk seriously regretted this aspect of the congregation's development. He had hoped that the congregation would have attracted more of the Hebrew speaking Palestinians. But on the bright side, Elk was proud of the fact that the congregation had confirmed more than one hundred young people during the first ten years. (This, of course, was a result of the Hillel School policy of having the schoolchildren participate in congregational activities.) Attendance at worship services at the Hillel School branch of Beth Israel was extremely high. Each Friday night those in attendance ranged from 50 to 120. When you compare this figure to a congregational membership of 155 the percentage is astonishing. Congregational affiliation and religious attendance ran somewhat lower at the Mount Carmel branch of Beth Israel.³⁰

CHAPTER FOUR

TEL AVIV

DR. ROSENBERG'S BEGINNINGS AS TEL AVIV'S
LIBERAL RABBI

By 1937, Progressive Jewish work had already taken root in Jerusalem and Haifa, but interestingly enough in Tel Aviv, where some 150,000 Jews made their home, no Progressive work had been initiated. At the Fourth Conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism in July of 1937, Dr. Max Dienemann, World Union representative from Germany, urged the Union to establish a Liberal community in Tel Aviv. The Union responded to Dienemann's suggestion. The following proposal was adopted during the July 6th (1937) meeting of the World Union Governing Body:

It had been brought to the notice of the Officers of the World Union that some work in Tel Aviv was urgently required, and they felt it would be extremely desirable to make use of the services of Rabbi Rosenberg, son-in-law of Dr. Elbogen, who was shortly going to Tel Aviv. Since there did not exist at present in that city any organized committee who could administer funds on behalf of the World Union, it was decided to ask Dr. Wilhelm to accept Rabbi Rosenberg as colleague; and a grant of 75 pounds to cover a period of six months was voted from a special fund to make use of Rabbi Rosenberg's assistance. He would work under the aegis of the Jerusalem Committee who would control the grant.¹

After Dr. Manfred Meir Rosenberg had been in Tel Aviv a month, he wrote an assessment of the existing religious communities there. The Jews of Tel Aviv, according to Rosenberg, were divided into three groupings: the Orthodox, the areligious, and the modern minded Western Jews. Unfortunately many of the modern minded Western Jews had already affiliated with two established congregations in Tel Aviv. It appeared as if Rosenberg had arrived in Tel Aviv a few years too late.

"One of the two congregations, the Ichud, was founded in 1933 after the influx of German Olim, by the National Conservative Zionists from Berlin"... This first congregation "appointed a leading Zionist Rabbi from Berlin, Dr. E. N. Levy." Not long after his arrival, the congregation was directed toward a more Orthodox point of view, "so as to get Dr. Levy elected into the central organization of the community of Tel Aviv". By reason of his election into the central organization of the community, Levy saw himself as the representative of the German Jewish community in Tel Aviv.

The second congregation which had attracted many of the German immigrants was called Schiwath Zion. Though the members and officers of this congregation were liberal in their religious observances, they nonetheless elected an Orthodox rabbi. It was the congregation's point of view that only a rabbi who was Orthodox would be able to offer the widest range of religious alternatives.

From Rosenberg's perspective, these two so-called Western European communities had sold their souls to the Chief Rabbinate of Tel Aviv. He did, of course, understand the dilemma of their situation. If they had altered the traditional pattern of Judaism, this would have permitted the Chief Rabbinate to take away their rabbis' authorization to officiate at life cycle ceremonies. In the end, Rosenberg realized that it was up to him to establish Progressive Judaism in Tel Aviv.²

Rosenberg had a loosely constructed idea as to how Progressive Judaism was to take root in Tel Aviv. First, the Progressive Jewish community would begin as a collection of semi-autonomous groups, or Havurot, to give them a modern name. These Havurot would be the seeds from which congregations would eventually flower. If on occasion a problem arose when the groups needed to convene, they would do so in Rosenberg's home.

Rosenberg also wanted his home to be a learning center for the various groups, thereby allowing the members to have the opportunity for not only deepening their own religious experience, but to better equip themselves to teach others of the essence of Progressive Judaism. Their study covered some of the following subjects: the layman's view of religion, Bible reading, new Hebraic poetry, Jewish life, and youth work. Rosenberg named his congregation Beth Israel.

Two major factors made the establishment of Rosenberg's new religious community difficult. First of all, there was the problem of getting official recognition from the Chief Rabbinate. This obviously wasn't going to be easy. We have already seen how the power of the Chief Rabbinate had influenced the religious expression of two Western European congregations. It is natural to assume, therefore, that Rosenberg would be running into a great deal of problems with respect to this issue.

The second factor that made establishment difficult was the congregation's inability in finding a suitable building for

worship and cultural activity.

The remainder of this chapter will present just how Rosenberg went about trying to overcome these two areas of difficulty.

DR. ROSENBERG'S INABILITY TO RECEIVE RECOGNITION
FROM THE CHIEF RABBINATE

Rosenberg's rabbinate was never able to bridge the abyss which separated Liberal Judaism from Orthodox Judaism in Tel Aviv. Unlike Wilhelm, Rosenberg was not allowed to officiate at weddings and funerals with the consent of the Chief Rabbinate. Whereas Wilhelm endeared himself with the Chief Rabbinate in Jerusalem, Rosenberg waged a long and bitter war against the Chief Rabbinate of Tel Aviv.

As early as 1937, Rosenberg envisioned the dangers of a Jewish nation in which Church and State remained undivided. In a letter he wrote to Miss Montagu in August of 1937, one can recognize both his readiness to do battle with his Orthodox opponents and his fear of a nation in which Church and State were united. This is a portion of that letter.

And just the possibility of the creation of a Jewish State brings the danger of a claim to supremacy of the Old Rabbinate, and then the separation of Church and State will be a thing of the past. Then we shall have a struggle for power in which the vast number of religious indifferentists must not be forced to join up with the anti-religious. For this historical moment, we shall have to be ready by training a number of men and women who know what we are fighting for, who fully comprehend the significance of this conflict and must have the means of carrying on propaganda.³

The first major flare-up between Rosenberg and the Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Moshe Avigdor Amiel, occurred in the spring of 1938. The conflict developed out of Rosenberg's desire to officiate at wedding ceremonies. Below, explained in Rosenberg's own words, is a description of the conflict which ensued between the two

religious leaders.

... The Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv has scented in me an opponent whom he will in time have to consider seriously. He therefore tries to obstruct our activities and to stop our forming a congregation with all the relevant functions. The first point of dispute arises out of the right to perform marriages. When a few weeks ago I called on Rabbi Amiel and mentioned the different functions, he had no objections to make. When I sent the first couple who wished to get married to the marriage office of the community, they were not very politely treated, though correctly. When I called the office to get the marriage certificate, I was told that it was not yet quite in order, and I should have to come again. As we had had our Omar celebration the evening before, to which I knew there was opposition in some places, I saw at once that some new obstruction was on the way. I went to the Chief Rabbi who declared that just as before he welcomed my activities, but, and there it was that the evil intrigue started, he desired to have a declaration by the other German Rabbis, that they had no objection to my work. I declined such a suggestion, since I was not a subordinate of theirs, but finally gave way to Rabbi Amiel, who had hoped that I should not be able to get such a declaration. The greater was his surprise, when on the following day I brought him that declaration. Therewith, he told me everything was in order and sent me to the secretary, when I was told that the Chief Rabbinate had decided that I could not perform the marriage ceremony. Cowardly as they are, they pretended that they could not allow another Rabbi until I forced them to come into the open and to decline me because I was Liberal. I charged them with the responsibility of such a dualism in Judaism, and declared that from now on I should give publicity of our struggle. Immediately, they gave way, and now commenced a regular cattle dealer's bargaining, the end of which was that one of the official Rabbis would say one blessing at the wedding. But the bridegroom absolutely declined this, saying that he would have no religious ceremony at all if the ceremony were not performed by me, and remarking on the insincere policy of the Chief Rabbinate. The wedding was to take place the following day. The officials of the community were forty minutes late and with them came the Rabbi. The bridegroom and myself declined every compromise and demanded the marriage certificate without the Rabbi. When this was refused, I, acting as Rabbi, gave the Ketuba and the bridegroom undertook to go to the consul to perform the civil wedding.

Therewith a small Kulturkampf has begun. The Chief Rabbinate does not accept me, and in order to give to the young people's marriage the sanctification of a religious wedding, I have committed an act of insubordination against the existing religious authority. All this is,

of course, so much propaganda for us. This became apparent immediately on the two following social arrangements, one at Professor Citron's house and one at Mrs. Groneman's. The discussions were very lively and brought us some new important people who will support us in our struggle. Unfortunately, the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, Dr. Hertzog is too weak and undecided to come to our assistance. Meanwhile, other help has come to our aid.⁴

The tensions which existed between Rosenberg and the Chief Rabbinate did not completely cut off the Liberal community from Tel Aviv's religious community. Whereas the Western Orthodox Rabbinate of Tel Aviv was hostile to Rosenberg's liberal leanings, the Eastern Orthodox Rabbinate more readily accepted it. An Eastern Orthodox rabbi named Dr. Lob of Ramatajin, Palestine, ignoring the Chief Rabbinate's attitude, went ahead and invited Rosenberg's community to a joint religious service.⁵

But, on the Western Orthodox side of the issue, the conflict seemed to be intensifying. In a letter Rosenberg wrote to Miss Montagu in the spring of 1938, he mentioned the growing difficulty.

Unfortunately, harmony with the Chief Rabbi is impossible ... Lately there has appeared a pamphlet against us with the object of exciting popular feelings, which said 'horrible dictu' - we are going to use an organ. The Chief Rabbi himself has raised this accusation against me personally, so our relations are rather tense. The question of marriage, as reported already, is still open. The Rabbinate, which is at the same time the authority for civil registration, refuses to register the wedding, but without questioning its religious validity. We had to hand the case over to a legal man to carry it further.⁶

Rosenberg looked toward the World Union to aid him in his struggle against the Orthodox. He hoped that the World Union would get in touch with Mr. Perlzweig and Dr. Stephen Wise, believing that they could help in the political strife for religious pluralism.⁷

Nevertheless, Rosenberg and his Liberal community continued to receive abuse from the Chief Rabbinate. In the later part of 1938, articles written by Rabbi Amiel against Rosenberg and his community had been appearing in Tel Aviv's Misrachi paper.⁸ Realizing that the Liberal community must also have a voice to counteract the Orthodox attacks, Rosenberg suggested the founding of a Liberal paper supported by the three Liberal communities of Palestine. Wilhelm agreed, although Dr. Elk had objections to the notion of a common publication. Due to a lack of available funds, Rosenberg's idea of propagandizing Liberal Judaism failed to materialize. By 1939, Rosenberg's financial picture was seriously darkened by the possibility of a World Union curtailment of subsidy.⁹

Though the World Union was threatening a reduction of subsidy funds, it did nevertheless demonstrate a concern with the difficulties Rosenberg was encountering with the Chief Rabbinate. This is evidenced in a letter written to Dr. Rosenberg in May of 1939.

Your report about the marriage difficulties filled us with great concern, and Dr. Mattuck thinks we may be able to get some help for you from London. I suppose no objection is made to your conducting funerals. Would you let me know about this and also whether you are allowed to use the Orthodox cemetery.¹⁰

It is highly unlikely that Rosenberg was permitted to use the Orthodox cemetery or officiate at funerals, because this was his response to Miss Montagu's letter of May 4th.

We are not acknowledged by any official religious authority and are engaged in violent controversy with them.¹¹

Moreover, in another letter dated May 5, 1940, Rosenberg described the only community in Palestine capable of performing a Liberal funeral service.

It is very important and good how our friends in Ramoth Haschawim celebrate their funerals. Ramoth Haschawim is the single place throughout our country where the Jews are buried in a coffin as we were used to in Europe. The Orthodoxy is strongly fighting against this manner because it is against the ritual law.¹²

Thus, if this was the only place where coffins were used, it can be reasoned that Rosenberg was not officiating in Tel Aviv in a Liberal manner.

The World Union became even more concerned over the plight of the Liberal rabbi in Palestine and considered a plan to resolve the difficult situation. Below is a copy of the World Union's plan which was sent to Elk and Rosenberg.

Dear Dr. Rosenberg,

We have now had an opportunity to consider carefully your request for assistance in the great problem with regard to legalizing marriages in Palestine.

The President of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in London happens to be a lawyer as well as a member of Parliament, and he is prepared to go into the matter and see what can be done, but before doing so, he would like a considered memorandum from you telling exactly of your difficulties, and of the whole situation; a paper which, if he thinks fit, he could pass on to the right authority.

I have, however, discussed this matter with Dr. Wilhelm and he will tell you what his reaction is when he gets back to Palestine. I think it will be best for our

three Rabbis to investigate the whole situation together, and then to apply for assistance in the way I have suggested, if you are not able to settle the matter quite satisfactorily on your own account. It is necessary, of course, not to give way on principle.¹³

Rosenberg, in response to the World Union's request for exact information relating to his specific difficulties, reiterated the same information he had in the past.

The Chief Rabbinate loses no opportunity to obstruct our work by speech and writing and particularly through personal relations. One of the most important instances of this is their refusal to acknowledge the legality of the marriages which I performed.¹⁴

Although Rosenberg may have been receiving a limited amount of moral support from the World Union, he certainly wasn't getting any in Tel Aviv.

In the summer of 1939, a congregation originally from Reichenberg, Czechoslovakia, re-established itself in Tel Aviv. In Czechoslovakia the congregation had been "quite liberal and progressive". No sooner had they arrived and re-established themselves in Tel Aviv that they, according to Rosenberg, had given up their liberal character. They had subordinated themselves immediately to the Chief Rabbi. Dr. Hoffman, their religious leader, had agreed to cut off all the liberal traditions and practices from the past. The congregation even went so far as to accept the Orthodox tradition of separate seating for men and women. (And this wasn't even a tradition they had practiced in Czechoslovakia!)¹⁵ Rosenberg must have felt as if the walls of Orthodoxy were closing in around him.

Fortunately, by March of 1940, Rosenberg had succeeded in establishing a mouth-piece for Liberal Judaism in Tel Aviv. His congregation, Beth-Israel, had started a monthly paper. Philosopher Martin Buber was one of the first to write for the newly formed monthly. Though he received a lot of criticism for having done so, his contribution must have added a great deal of prestige to Liberal Judaism. But more important than all, according to Rosenberg, was the fact that the monthly was self-sufficient!¹⁶

In January of 1941, Rabbi Moses Cyrus Weiler, Progressive Judaism's Chief Spiritual Leader of Johannesburg, South Africa, traveled to Palestine in order to speak on behalf of Liberal Judaism. In Tel Aviv "he was heartily welcomed by the Mayor of Tel Aviv and by the press. In all his meetings, lectures and interviews, he did not miss a single opportunity to propagandize the ideas of Progressive Judaism ..."¹⁷

The World Union, for some unknown reason, had the impression that because of Dr. Weiler's trip to Tel Aviv, a "truce" had been achieved between the Liberal movement and the Chief Rabbinate.¹⁸ This, however, was not the case.

In 1946, Rosenberg attended a conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism in London. During the "Public Session" he spoke concerning the disabilities a Liberal Rabbi faced in Palestine. (The specific details of Rosenberg's address have already been covered up until this point.) However, the World

Union's reaction to his report was far from overwhelming.

Colonel Gluckstein said that His Committee (The Palestine Committee) "had met to consider the projects before them and submitted the following resolution:

That a committee be appointed to study and to report upon the best means of assisting the Progressive Rabbis in Palestine in their efforts to attain equality of Rabbinical status in matters of Jewish law and ritual, especially as regards marriage and divorce."¹⁹

If this was all the immediate support the World Union was capable of guaranteeing, then Rosenberg would be certainly fighting the religious battle alone.

It wasn't until March of 1947 that relations had thawed a little between Rosenberg and the Chief Rabbinate. Rabbi Amiel had been succeeded by Rabbi Untermann. The new Chief Rabbi seemed unaware of the difficulties that had occurred between his predecessor and the Liberal community. Chief Rabbi Untermann was more concerned with the political turmoil of his day than the disputes which separated Liberal Judaism from Orthodox Judaism.²⁰

Though relations had thawed and communication between both parties had begun, no official change had yet come about in Rosenberg's status with respect to his capacity to officiate at life cycle functions.

In January of 1948, five months before statehood was proclaimed, an Advisory Commission on constitution and legal matters was established in the Va'ad Le'umi in Jerusalem. Wilhelm, Elk and Rosenberg sent a joint memorandum to the Commission in the hope

that their Liberal Jewish attitudes would be taken into consideration during the formulation of the Constitution. Here is a portion of their memorandum:

The question of Sabbath-Observance: We suggest that while the meaning of the Sabbath should be preserved, the form of its observance should be adapted to modern requirements and circumstances.

Matrimonial Questions: While the Trade Unionists claim that state and religion should be separated and ask for recognition of civil marriage, we, as a religious organization, cannot join into this demand, though even among our members you may find people who sympathize, therewith owing to a justified distrust in respect of official rabbinical bodies. We therefore suggest far-reaching reforms of the existing regulations.

The Position of Women: We claim equality for women in judicial proceedings ... and in the management of their property.

Freedom of Worship and Service: We claim the recognition of forms of worship and service adhering not completely to traditional rites and their share in the financial support granted by the appropriate official bodies which levy taxes from any individual irrespective of the congregation he belongs to; further, the recognition of Progressive rabbis as performers of all rabbinical duties by constitutional right and not by favor or on sufferance.²¹

Palestine's three Liberal rabbis remained hopeful that rabbis, such as Wise, Silver and Perlzweig, would come to their aid in the struggle for religious pluralism.

Though Rosenberg was hopeful, he was also a realist. In his last letter to Miss Montagu before the proclamation of statehood, this is what he wrote:

I cannot tell you how disappointing it was for our members that my visit to London in 1946 did not bear any fruit, and even important letters remain unanswered. If our American Zionist friends do not show the same interest as you, dear Miss Montagu,

and the Governing Body of the World Union then, I am afraid, we have little to expect.²²

This was the last round in Rosenberg's battle.

THE SEARCH FOR A SYNAGOGUE

Initially, Rosenberg's religious services were conducted in immigrants' homes, but this resulted in creating three problems: first, the size of peoples' homes restricted attendance; second, the religious services were private in nature rather than being public; and, third, a spiritual decorum was absent. Due to the fact that an increasing number of German Jews had become interested in Progressive Judaism in Tel Aviv, the congregation was forced to find a more suitable place for worship.

In April of 1938, Rosenberg acquired the use of a privately owned hall. The president of the Bialik Lodge of Bnai Brith allowed the congregation to use their facilities. Elk of Haifa supplied the congregation with an ark and other necessary religious objects for public worship.²³

The congregation hadn't been in the new location a month when Rosenberg became interested in acquiring a larger facility. Rosenberg had ambitious plans for the growth of Liberal Judaism in Tel Aviv and he was extremely impatient in developing them. Rosenberg believed that there was a direct correlation between the size of his congregation's facilities and his ability to develop Liberal Judaism. This is indicated in a letter he wrote Miss Montagu at this same time. He wrote the following:

The existence of Beth Israel depends on the provision of a hall for not less than 500 people in which meetings and services can be held. This hall must be divisible so as to shut off part for smaller meetings ... To set up a hall we require 1,000 pounds. Since the raising of such an amount is out of the question, we ask you for a subvention for this special purpose, and besides a loan without interest or at a very low rate. Without these sums it will be impossible to develop our work on a basis appropriate to our movement.²⁴

Apparently, Rosenberg was setting his goals as high as the sky. In a letter to the World Union only a month after his request for 1,000 pounds, he told the Union how he had been looking for land on which to build a new synagogue!²⁵ His ambition seemed to be getting out of control. Rosenberg hadn't even been in Tel Aviv a year and he was thinking of erecting a new synagogue. Moreover, by July of 1938, Rosenberg seemed to be hearing affirmative answers to his plans before the World Union had even acted upon them.²⁶ It is extremely obvious that his tremendous desire to erect a new synagogue made him very susceptible to false rumors. Unfortunately, the Union didn't share Rosenberg's high level of enthusiasm. They were concerned that his plans were making the World Union financially responsible rather than the Palestinians. It was the Union's hope that those sympathetic to Liberal Judaism and Dr. Rosenberg's ideas would lend the necessary support. Not wanting to make a hasty decision on the matter of Rosenberg's request, the Union consulted Wilhelm's advice.

Wilhelm supported his colleague in Tel Aviv and this is what he told the World Union:

The sooner he (Rosenberg) can dispose of the necessary means, the sooner the new congregation can be established on a wide basis in order to produce the means from itself and to keep itself going. To give you a simple formula for this idea, Tel Aviv is a parvenu place, people only give for appearances, but if there is something impressive, you will find the means for its continuance.²⁷

In the end, the World Union decided not to loan the money needed to erect a new synagogue. They felt, as I have indicated before, that the financial base for the erection of any synagogue should come from the community in which the building was to be built.²⁸ Rosenberg's plan had "been disappointed".

Realizing that the possibility of erecting a new synagogue from the financial support of Palestinians was impossible, Rosenberg undertook a more realistic approach. He moved his congregation to a larger rented hall which could seat approximately 350 to 450 people.²⁹ After some necessary improvements in the new hall, which were paid for by the World Union, it seemed to satisfy the congregation's needs until 1940.

In 1940, the desire to erect a new synagogue emerged once again. Rosenberg was disturbed that during Pesach Services more than half those who wished to gain admittance could not do so because the hall was too small. He remarked once again that the movement's success was dependent on the adequacy of his facilities.³⁰ But instead of looking towards the World Union for help as he did in the past, he lived with his problem. He knew that Wilhelm's tour to the U.S. had been a failure; therefore, why ask for additional help when the answer was already clear?

Nevertheless, due to an increase of membership, Rosenberg was asked to organize Liberal services in various other parts of Tel Aviv. It was learned by Rosenberg that a Mr. Simon Lecash, a citizen of London, England, owned a small house perfectly situated in Tel Aviv to serve those Liberal Jews incapable of crossing town to get to the larger hall for services. Originally Mr. Lecash had leased the house to the Jewish Trade Unions for a very low price. Because he had increased the rent two fold, the Trade Unions were forced out. The house had been empty for six months and Rosenberg was interested in renting it. He wrote to the World Union to see if they could communicate his desire.³¹ Unfortunately, Mr. Lecash was not willing to lease.³² Rosenberg was therefore forced to do without an additional meeting place.

SUMMARY

Because Rosenberg had been so extremely ambitious and aggressive in his role as leader of the Liberal Jewish community, it had caused him and the movement more harm than good.

His inability to deal diplomatically with the Chief Rabbinate had alienated the opposing sides, thereby making any kind of reconciliation totally impossible. Fighting fire with fire was the watchword of his work rather than pursuing a policy of peace and compromise. When the Chief Rabbinate wanted to send official representatives to a wedding he was conducting, he refused their participation. When the Chief Rabbi attacked the Liberal movement in the press, Rosenberg wanted to immediately attack back. What the Tel Aviv Liberal community needed more than a fighter was a diplomat.

Rosenberg's ambition proved not to be as dangerous as his aggressive behavior though it did keep him from formulating obtainable goals for his community. Throughout his tenure, it appears that he was more concerned with the community he didn't have than with the one he had. This attitude was clearly demonstrated in his continuous desire to expand his facilities. Rosenberg certainly was not a Wilhelm or Elk. He lacked the patient and diplomatic nature which was so necessary in the development of Liberal Judaism in Palestine.

EPILOGUE .

The creation of a Jewish State in 1948 did nothing to alleviate the handicaps of Progressive Judaism. If anything, statehood only further strengthened the Orthodox position of authority and control. Before the formation of the State, the Jewish Agency made every effort to secure a unity among various factions in Palestine. Agudat Israel (World Organization of Orthodox Jews and a religious party in Palestine) was one of the factions the Jewish Agency wanted to appease. Agudat Israel had always been wary of the establishment of a political Zion over the establishment of a spiritual Zion.

Consequently, in order to secure the party's full cooperation with any future government, the Agency had to guarantee certain religious standards in the future State. These were the religious concessions the Agency made in order to get the support of Agudat Israel:

The Jewish Agency would use its best endeavor to see to it that in the future Jewish State matters of personal status would be regulated by religious law, that the Sabbath should be the official day of rest, that Kashrut would be observed in all State maintained kitchens intended for Jews, and that religious education would be provided ...

Clearly, the Agency was more concerned with insuring future Statehood than guaranteeing religious pluralism.

The three Liberal congregations of the World Union successfully passed from a Mandated State to an Independent Jewish nation. Rabbi Lazarus continued to lead and supervise worship and adult

education at Beth Israel Congregation in Haifa. Elk's school, who's name had been changed from the Hillel School to the Leo Baeck School, was by 1951 completed. It consisted of eleven grades, enabling its pupils to be brought up to full matriculation standard. Emeth V'Emunah Congregation in Jerusalem, which Wilhelm led for many years before taking the position of Chief Rabbi of Sweden, was under the leadership of Rabbi A. Philipp. It was remarkable that Philipp like Wilhelm was licensed by the Chief Rabbinate to officiate at weddings, though no explanation seems to be apparent for such a unique responsibility. And finally, Rosenberg continued his leadership role in Tel Aviv.²

Though the three congregations and school weathered the storm of time and war, only the Leo Baeck School continued into the 1960's. Emeth V'Emunah Congregation of Jerusalem, the oldest non-Orthodox congregation in Israel, developed into a Conservative congregation.³ Beth Israel of Tel Aviv ultimately lost momentum and died. And Beth Israel of Haifa, though it never actually died, was reorganized by Rabbi Reuben Samuels, a graduate of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. In 1964, Samuels, who had emigrated to Israel and was acting as assistant principal to the Leo Baeck School, organized Or Hadash Congregation from the remnant members of Beth Israel.⁴

The three original communities had passed away, but like the

mythical Phoenix, from their ashes sprang forth new life. By 1966, seven new Liberal congregations had emerged. The seven were:

Har El Synagogue of Jerusalem (1958)
Ahvat Am Synagogue of Upper Nazareth (1962)
Kehilat Hasharon Synagogue of Kfar Shmaryahu (1962)
Emet V'Anava Synagogue of Ramt Gan (1963)
Emet V'Shalom Synagogue of Nahariya (1963)
Or Hadash Synagogue of Haifa (1964)
The Tel Aviv Progressive Congregation (Kedem) of
Tel Aviv (1966)⁵

These congregations were and still are confronted by many of the same problems that faced their predecessors. Lack of both financial support and religious pluralism have complicated the success of these communities. Lack of financial support results from a lack of membership and the lack of membership results from the fact that Israel has not been able to attract religiously Liberal Olim. The percentage of Jewish Olim living in Israel from both America and Western Europe has never been more than four percent!⁶

On the other hand, though the fight for official recognition was and still is being won by the Orthodox establishment, Liberal Judaism did win an important battle in March of 1963. On this date, Dr. Nelson Glueck opened the Biblical and Archaeological School of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Glueck had proposed the erection of the school in the mid 1950's, but because there arose an immediate protest against the plan, construction was postponed. Agudat Israel

and the Chief Rabbinate strenuously opposed the construction of the school on the grounds that the school would house a "Liberal" chapel. They were afraid that the chapel would serve not only the students enrolled, but would also attract local Israelis for worship services. Therefore, they demanded that the Municipality of Jerusalem deny permission for Glueck's planned school. Nevertheless, after years of fighting, permission was granted and the school was erected.⁷ Though 37 years had passed, Dr. Waldman's dream of a campus of the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem had become a reality.

Two decades following the establishment of the State, a notable, if not dramatic, change occurred in the character and direction of the World Union. It was certainly a change that its founding fathers never would have expected. In June of 1968, the first time in its 42 year history, the World Union for Progressive Judaism conducted its Biennial Conference in Jerusalem.⁸ But even more remarkable was the fact that at the 1972 Conference in Geneva it was decided that the World Union's central office would be moved from New York to Jerusalem. In 1973 the move was made. In 1974 the World Union voted to affiliate with the World Zionist Organization, an affiliation which became effective in January 1976".⁹ In exactly one half of a century the World Union had done a complete about-face. It had gone from an unspoken position of anti-Zionism to a very outspoken position of pro-Zionism. Though Israel may not be the homeland for the majority of the world's Liberal Jews, it has nevertheless

been designated as its religious center.

Today, the promotion of Liberal Judaism in Israel is taking place on many fronts. A.R.Z.A. (Association of Reform Zionist of America) established in 1978 is the mouth-piece of Liberal Jews to the World Zionist Organization. The Jerusalem branch of the Hebrew Union College enables native Israelis to be ordained Liberal rabbis. In 1976, Yahel, Israel's first Liberal Kibbutz was founded. And, finally, the World Union for Progressive Judaism, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College are working in conjunction to establish a World Educational Center for Progressive Judaism in Jerusalem.

A Liberal foothold in Palestine was dug for us over fifty years ago by a small but dedicated group of rabbis with the help of the World Union. Their work is our legacy, the foundation upon which we shall, with God's help, continue to build.

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