

The Worthiest Disciple of Isaac M. Wise

Rediscovering Rabbi Louis Grossmann

Ari Lorge

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Referee, Dr. Gary P. Zola

Digest

Rabbi Louis Grossmann (1863–1926) was the descendant of a line of rabbis. Louis, and two of his brothers, upheld this tradition. He served two pulpits during the course of his career: Temple Beth El in Detroit, Michigan and K. K. B'nai Yeshurun in Cincinnati, Ohio. During his years as a rabbi, Grossmann was not only known as a devoted pastor, but he was also a leading community figure who wrote and spoke about a wide range of contemporary issues.

In 1889, Grossmann began teaching ethics and pedagogy at Hebrew Union College. He played a critical role in ensuring that all rabbinical students received practical instruction and co-curricular experience in the field of teaching. Grossmann also served the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) by reviewing curricula and texts designed for Jewish supplemental schools. Moreover, he helped to found the Hebrew Union College's Teachers' Institute in 1909, and served as the president of the Institute from 1909 to 1922. He devoted himself to raising the quality of religious school education within the Reform Jewish Movement in America. Through the articles, sermons, books, and speeches he wrote on the topic, Grossmann worked incessantly to advance the cause of Jewish education. From 1917–1919, Grossmann served as president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR). In this capacity, he responded to a wide range of unprecedented national and international events that transpired during the course of his presidency. As one of America's most prominent Jewish leaders, he played an important role in guiding American Reform Judaism through World War I and beyond.

Despite Louis Grossmann's many achievements during the course of his lifetime, a critical and scientific study of his life and career has never been written until this time. This work seeks to rectify this lacuna in the field of American Jewish History.

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Introduction

At the funeral service held for Rabbi Louis Grossmann in Cincinnati Ohio, where he had served as rabbi, professor, educator, and leader in the community, his colleague Rabbi Louis Wolsey eulogized him saying:

...Louis Grossmann was representative of all that was best in American Jewish Life. When the darkening dust of conflict and the bitter struggles of competitive ambitions have lifted, and another day, which many of us shall not live to see, shall permit another generation to view with calmness and dispassionateness the era of the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the first two of the twentieth, the name of Louis Grossmann shall be rightly appraised as one of the worthiest disciples of Isaac M. Wise...¹

Despite Rabbi Wolsey's words, Louis Grossmann remains an obscure figure in American Jewish history and the history of the Reform movement. It seems the "darkening dust" to which Wolsey referred never settled and a sharp picture of Grossmann has never fully come into focus.

Wolsey's words merit our consideration. Grossmann served two synagogues during his lifetime. He began his career at Temple Beth El in Detroit and, ten years later, he was called by Isaac Mayer Wise and Congregation B'nai Yeshurun to serve as an assistant rabbi in Cincinnati. After Wise died, Grossmann succeeded him. This made Grossmann the senior rabbi of one of the most prominent congregations in America for the remainder of his life. Grossmann was also an active participant in the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR). He served on numerous committees, assumed several positions of importance within the Conference's leadership, including its presidency during World War I and its aftermath. Grossmann also served on the faculty of Hebrew Union College (HUC) for many decades, where he taught pioneering courses on Jewish ethics and Jewish pedagogy. Grossmann was a visionary as well as an innovator within the realm of Jewish education, and

¹ James G. Heller, *As Yesterday When It Is Past: A History of the Isaac M. Wise Temple – K. K. B'nai Yeshurun*. (Cincinnati: 1942), 187.

wrote several books and articles that focused on this important topic. Finally, Grossmann served as the director of the Teachers' Institute of Hebrew Union College from its inception until his retirement in 1922. Despite all of these achievements and numerous others left unmentioned, Grossmann remains an enigmatic figure in the history of American Reform Judaism. Why do we know so little about the career of Louis Grossmann?

There are several contributing factors that may help us to explain Grossmann's relative obscurity. First, he was overshadowed by those who preceded and those who followed him. Grossmann was a quiet and mild-mannered man. While he held many important posts, he was not a larger-than-life figure, nor was he gifted at the art of self-promotion. At the same time, many of those who came before and after him in his many involvements were bold and vibrant figures. Grossmann is perhaps best remembered as the rabbi who followed Isaac Mayer Wise and was succeeded by James G. Heller at B'nai Yeshurun. And despite the fact that he became Isaac M. Wise's chosen successor, Grossmann was never identified as Wise's most prominent disciple. That honor is typically conferred on David Philipson, one of Grossmann's opponents. Moreover, even though Grossmann became the first professor of Jewish education at Hebrew Union College and was an early proponent for placing Jewish Education at the center of our movement, his contributions to that field are today almost completely unknown.

Second, Grossmann never married and he had no children. As an isolated bachelor, Grossmann did not have dedicated family members determined to honor and preserve his legacy after his death. Although he seems to have related well to the young children he taught as well as to his congregants, he did not appear to have raised up a cadre of rabbinical disciples who wanted to keep his legacy alive after his death.

Third, there were major voices in the Reform movement who opposed Grossmann during the course of his career, and worked to silence his voice and his contributions to the Reform movement. As the reader will see in the chapters below, Rabbis David Philipson and Rabbi Kaufmann Kohler were two among a noteworthy group of colleagues who opposed Grossmann's innovations and who tried to minimize his influence during the course of his career. This marginalization unquestionably diminished Grossmann's status as a rabbinical leader in the Reform movement and, ultimately, it led to the diminishment of his professional influence. There can be little doubt that Louis Wolsey was alluding to these very circumstances when he used the phrase "the darkening dust of conflict and the bitter struggles of competitive ambitions..." in his eulogy to Grossmann. Despite his having had an active and productive rabbinical career, an array of influential colleagues devalued Grossmann's leadership as well as his point of view. By the end of his career, he had become increasingly isolated and sidelined and his work was soon forgotten after he died in 1926.

Fourth, as has been noted above, Grossmann was neither a self-promoter nor an effective self-advocate. He was quiet and demure by instinct, and he has been repeatedly described as having a soft-spoken and thoughtful demeanor. Some of his peers suggest that his modest disposition was accompanied by a vacillating nature that enabled him to be easily bullied by his peers. While he excelled as a caring pastor, Grossmann was not an effective politician. He was unable to navigate the politics of the CCAR and of HUC with the same aplomb as peers such as Stephen S. Wise or Kaufman Kohler. Moreover, while Grossmann was unquestionably a man of ideas, he was not a man who knew how to transform the ideal into the real. He possessed an impractical quality, and he was unable to undertake the practical steps that were necessary in order to actualize his theoretical ambitions. His office

was disorganized, and he often needed reminders and administrative support to ensure that he was able to meet his obligations in a timely fashion. These characteristics prompted some contemporaries to consider Grossmann as “a groping dreamer.”² While descriptions of Grossmann’s administrative shortcomings appear to have been accurate, he was concomitantly a man of ideas who was sincerely determined to strengthen the overall enterprise of Jewish education. Even if some of his ideas were unpopular among his peers, and despite his unassuming demeanor, Louis Grossmann unquestionably possessed a point of view. He never stopped promoting his values and working for the betterment of the American synagogue.

Fifth, and perhaps most importantly, Grossmann was a figure whose understanding of Reform Judaism was different than those around him. He was raised in a home that valued the ideals of Orthodox Judaism, and, although he was most definitely a Jewish reformer, he was more sympathetic to the world of Orthodox Judaism than many of his rabbinical contemporaries. This further isolated his voice as he clashed with the driving forces of the time that tended to push a radical reform agenda. Over time, Grossmann became an outsider, and many of his ideas seemed to be out of step with those that were embraced by many of his peers.

Despite all of these factors, Grossmann remains a fascinating subject whose career sheds light on the evolvement of American Reform Judaism during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He made significant contributions to the field of Jewish education, and his career underscores the diversity of thought that prevailed during those early years. This critical study of the life and career of Rabbi Louis Grossmann focuses on his biography, his work as a congregational rabbi, and his pioneering contributions to the field of Jewish

² Joseph Silverman, Louis Grossman, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 37, (1927): 259-261.

education. It is hoped that this biographical examination of Louis Grossmann's work will deepen our understanding of the complex early history of American Reform Judaism.

“Children get information from the teacher, but they get character from the parent. The school enlightens, but the home moulds.”³

Chapter 1: The Start of the Journey

Early Life

Louis Grossmann⁴ was born in Vienna on February 24, 1863.⁵ He was one of Ignatz and Anna (Nettie) Grossmann’s four children. Ignatz, Louis’s father, was born in Trencsen, Hungary in 1825 and was an orthodox rabbi. There is little known about Louis’s mother, Anna. Louis Grossmann’s colleague, classmate, and friend, Rabbi Maximilian Heller, stated that Anna Grossmann was generally thought of as a, “gentle, demure woman, of retired disposition and domestic tastes.”⁶ Through both his father’s and mother’s sides of the family Louis was the descendant of generations of rabbis and Jewish scholars.⁷ His father, Ignatz studied at the *yeshivah* of Pressburg⁸ which was noted for being a stronghold of Hungarian Orthodoxy.⁹ Prior to immigrating to America, Ignatz served pulpits in Koryčany (German: Koritschan), Moravia and then, in 1866, he moved to Varaždin (German: Warasdin), Croatia. In 1873, Ignatz Grossmann was called to serve Congregation Beth Elohim in Brooklyn.¹⁰ An eleven year-old Louis arrived in America the following year, in

³ Louis Grossmann, *The Real Life*. (New York: The Bloch Publishing Co., 1914), 45.

⁴ It must be noted that in some places one will find Louis Grossmann’s name written as “Louis Grossman” with a single “n” and in other places one will find it written “Louis Grossmann” with a double “n.” In this work, his name will be written “Grossmann” since this is how it is spelled in all of his personal written and published works. Part of the confusion arises because his brother, Rudolph, favored spelling his name with a single “n.” Despite his brother’s decision, Louis clearly preferred “Grossmann.”

⁵ Jacob Rader Marcus, and Judith M. Daniels, *The Concise Dictionary of American Jewish Biography*. (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1994), 237.

⁶ Heller, *As Yesterday When It Is Past*, 187.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 6, s.v. “Ignaz Grossmann,” by Gotthard Deutsch, 1904.

⁹ Ibid, vol 10, s.v. “Presburg”

¹⁰ Ibid, vol. 6, s.v. “Ignaz Grossmann,” by Gotthard Deutsch, 1904.

1874, together with his mother and two of his brothers, Rudolph and Adolph.¹¹ The elder Grossmann later served Congregation B'nai Abraham in New York, as well as pulpits in Chicago and Kansas City.¹² Ignatz Grossmann died in 1897 and was buried in New York.¹³

Three of the four Grossmann boys, Louis, Rudolph and Julius, became rabbis. Adolph, however, became a merchant in Chicago.¹⁴ Rudolph was four years younger than Louis and was also ordained at Hebrew Union College. After ordination, Rudolph went on to serve Temple Beth El in New York as an assistant rabbi, and afterward served Temple Rodef Sholom in New York.¹⁵ Louis's brother Julius Grossmann served as rabbi in Ipolysagh, Hungary.¹⁶

Little is known about Louis Grossmann's early life. It has been stated that his father, Ignatz, was a rabbi, "of the conservative wing."¹⁷ He was a respected scholar who published learned works on Jewish law.¹⁸ Despite his characterization as a conservative or orthodox leaning rabbi, he was a contributor to Isaac Mayer Wise's periodical *Die Deborah*. According to a necrology on Louis Grossmann, written by his classmate Rabbi Max Heller, the Grossman home was "conservative" in its Jewish character, which led Louis to assume a more traditional stance within the Reform movement. Louis's upbringing brought him into close contact with Orthodoxy, and his childhood home imbued him with a respect for Orthodoxy and Jewish traditions that were not shared by many of his contemporaries.

¹¹ Year: 1874; Arrival; New York; Microfilm Serial: M237; Microfilm Roll: M237_389; Line: 54; List Number: 455; Ancestry.com.*New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957* [database]

¹² "The Rev. Dr. Ignatz Grossman," *The New York Times* (21 March 1897).

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 6, s.v. "Rudolph Grossman," by Cyrus Adler, 1904.

¹⁶ This town, mentioned in the Jewish Encyclopedia, most probably is a reference to Šahy, which was called "Ipolské Šiahy" until 1927. Up until that time, this town was called *Ipolyság* in Hungarian, though it was located in southern Slovakia.

¹⁷ Heller, *As Yesterday When It Is Past*, 187.

¹⁸ Some of his publications will be found at HUC's Klau Library, including a *מקראות קמנות* 613 מצות התורה—a collection of commentaries on Biblical law.

Heller described Grossmann's religious attitude as, "conservative in temper while liberal and progressive in affiliation."¹⁹ Heller was quick to point out, however, that Grossmann had no ill will for the more radical members of the movement, although he himself was a more moderate reformer. It is perhaps this moderation, bred into him in his childhood home, that caused him to develop a close bond with Isaac Mayer Wise, himself a moderate reformer. Louis's upbringing made him an unlikely candidate for the newly-formed Hebrew Union College (HUC). It is unclear why, but Ignatz sent his son to the fledgling school, where Louis quickly distinguished himself. Perhaps, through his work with Wise's periodical *Die Deborah* the senior Grossmann developed a relationship with Wise which led him to send his son to HUC.

Hebrew Union College

Louis Grossmann left New York City and arrived in Cincinnati in 1876 to begin his studies at HUC, which had been in existence for only one year at the time. He was around the age of 13. HUC's classes were being held in downtown Cincinnati, in the basement of Bene Israel's Mound Street Temple.²⁰ Grossmann became a member of the school's second class. During this period there was nothing glamorous about HUC. Its surroundings were modest, as were its pupils. The role of rabbi in America carried little prestige, and many of the school's pupils came from poor families or orphan houses. For most of the students, rabbinical school was one of the few opportunities open to them. Michael A. Meyer writes in his centennial history of Hebrew Union College that the school was little more than an intensive religious school. "Most of them[the pupils] were not serious about their studies."²¹ One wonders what it must have been like for the son of an Orthodox rabbi to be thrust into

¹⁹ Heller, *As Yesterday When It Is Past*, 187.

²⁰ Michael A. Meyer, *Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial History 1875-1975* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1992), 8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 8, 18.

this kind of a learning environment. What were his experiences of his classmates and the school? Sadly, he left no record. While he was a student, the school moved twice; first, to Plum Street Temple and then later, to a building on West Sixth Street.²²

During these early years, young students like Grossmann began the day in a secular high school (he attended Hughes High School) and then went to Hebrew Union College for their rabbinical studies in the afternoon.²³ The dual program was rigorous. A student spent a full school day at the high school and then took on a demanding academic load at Hebrew Union College as well. According to the school's historian, Michael A. Meyer, the academic burden—as exemplified by the course load the senior class of 1883–1884 carried—was unyielding:

...the senior class actually read forty-nine full folio pages of Talmud, forty chapters of Codes, and twenty chapters of Midrash Rabba; they also heard lectures on Talmudic literature, methodology, and terminology. In Bible they read forty chapters of Ezekiel plus Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and a number of minor Prophets; and in philosophy they studied Joseph Albo's *Sefer ha-Ikarim* and Saadia's *Emunot ve-Deot*. In addition, they wrote Hebrew compositions and heard regular lectures on Jewish history and theology.²⁴

The students maintained this same amount of coursework at HUC after receiving their high school diploma, and went on to earn a baccalaureate degree at the University of Cincinnati before receiving ordination. It is not surprising that many students did not complete the program, and others were dismissed for poor test scores.²⁵

As noted above, the students progressed in their secular studies from high school to the University of Cincinnati in order to earn a Bachelor's degree. Louis Grossmann received his Bachelor of Philosophy degree from the University of Cincinnati (UC) in the summer of

²² Ibid., 19.

²³ Roster, n.d., Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box11/Folder 10, AJA, Cincinnati, OH.

²⁴ Meyer, *Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion: a Centennial History 1875-1975*, 22-23.

²⁵ Meyer, *Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion: a Centennial History 1875-1975*, 23.

1884. This was the University of Cincinnati's seventh commencement, and Isaac Mayer Wise was invited to deliver the baccalaureate address. The notes of optimism in his address are hard to miss: "At this end of the nineteenth century, and in this city of Cincinnati, retrogression is improbable—almost impossible. The spirit and desire of our fellow-citizens are to make of this city a great metropolis, a Paris of America."²⁶ Grossmann, in the same ceremony, delivered one of the two student addresses, entitled "Earnestness of Modern Thought." His Thesis, which appears to have been written for HUC and for UC, was entitled, "Joseph Albo," and focused on the Jewish philosopher and his work.²⁷ It is possible that Grossmann wrote two works on Albo for graduation, one for UC and one for HUC. While the *American Israelite* lists the title of his thesis as, "Joseph Albo," the rabbinic thesis in HUC's Klau Library is entitled, "The Dogmatics of Joseph Albo."²⁸ Grossmann continued to study and publish on philosophical matters during his career as a rabbi.

The first record of Louis Grossmann as a student at Hebrew Union College is found in a report Isaac Mayer Wise made to the Board of Governors of Hebrew Union College on September 10, 1876. In this report Wise lists Louis Grossmann among the students who are in need of charity from the Board of Governors.²⁹ Students, at this time, had no means of earning an income. Moreover, as has been noted, due to the fact that the rabbinate was not yet viewed as a prestigious or highly desired profession in America, the early classes were comprised largely of indigent students or students from families of modest means³⁰ In Wise's report, he notes that, unlike some of the students, Grossmann's father provided him

²⁶ "The Cincinnati University," *The American Israelite* (27 June 1884).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Louis Grossmann, *The Dogmatics of Joseph Albo* (Cincinnati: HUC, June 1884).

²⁹ Report to the Board of Governors, 10 September 1876, Isaac Mayer Wise, MS 436/Digital Archive/Hebrew Union College Reports, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁰ Meyer, *Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion: a Centennial History 1875-1975*, 25-26.

with clothes and books.³¹ Since Grossmann's family was able to provide him with some of his needs, we find in the ledger of the Board of Governors that Grossmann received 20 dollars from the Board consistently throughout his career at Hebrew Union College.³² This sum was smaller than that received by many of the other "out of town" students, who required food, board, and other basic necessities. Grossmann, while in need of aid, was in a better financial position than many of his fellow students.

Grossmann's name appears frequently in Wise's monthly and annual reports. One can trace his steady progresses throughout his tenure at the school. Since he was not in the first class of the College, he benefited from the fact that the instructors had gained at least one year of experience! The school's instructors were literally writing the curriculum as they added a new grade each year.³³ Those a year ahead of Grossmann were, in many regards, the test cases for the new curriculum.

It must be noted that Louis Grossmann appears to have changed his name during his time at HUC. On the list of students found in Wise's reports, Grossmann is sometimes referred to as Louis, and at other times as Ludwig. These two names unquestionably apply to the same student since they always appear in the proper grade and never at the same time.³⁴ Moreover, in one article from the *Cincinnati Enquirer* on the 1884 ordination, they

³¹ Report to the Board of Governors, 10 September 1876, Isaac Mayer Wise, MS 436/Digital Archive/Hebrew Union College Reports, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³² Record Book, 1883-1889, Hebrew Union College, MS 5/D-1/Folder 2, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³³ Meyer, *Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial History 1875-1975*, 18-22.

³⁴ See the "Hebrew Union College Reports," (1876-1884), found in the *Isaac Mayer Wise Digital Archive*, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

http://americanjewisharchives.org/collections/wise/browse.php?i=Hebrew_Union_College_Reports

According to the website "About.com", the French name "Louis" was a more popular version of the Germanic "Ludwig": "Despite the importance and frequency of the name throughout German history, Ludwig has not been a popular German name in modern times. That may have to do with the declining popularity of Germanic names in general and the fact that the French form of the name, **Louis** (LU-EE) is a German slang word for "pimp" (*Zuhälter*). But in the 19th century, Louis was a fairly popular "German" name." See <http://german.about.com/library/weekly/aa111300a.htm>, accessed on November 22, 2012.

refer to Grossmann as both Ludwig and Louis within the same text.³⁵ Meyer has noted that at this time many students of Hebrew Union College anglicized their names, and this likely explains how Ludwig became Louis.

In Isaac Mayer Wise's Second Annual Report of the president at the Proceedings of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations held in the summer of 1877 we find Grossmann listed as a fifteen-year-old student from New York who was in Grade D. Before his ordination, however, Grossmann is found listed in these reports as a student of New York, Kansas City, and Chicago.³⁶ It can be assumed that his family moved at these times, settling in each city respectively. They likely moved to follow Ignatz Grossmann's career as a pulpit rabbi.

Louis Grossmann appears to have been a gifted student who was able to excel academically despite the demands of the rigorous curriculum. He is listed throughout the faculty minutes as earning top marks. The first such reference appears in the minutes of a meeting of the HUC faculty in October of 1879. He is listed first among the students in the "A & B Preparatory Department."³⁷ As a student at Hebrew Union College, Grossmann appears to have regularly earned high marks from his professors in each subject. Moreover, in another report made by Isaac Mayer Wise to the Board of Governors in 1877, he remarks that Grossmann is, "one of the best scholars" in his class.³⁸ By fall of 1880, Grossmann moved from the Preparatory Department to the Collegiate Class.³⁹ He was one of the five

³⁵ "Five Rabbis: Interesting Commencement Exercises of the Hebrew Union College," *Cincinnati Enquirer* (30 June 1884), 8.

³⁶ Report to the Board of Governors, 1876-1884, Isaac Mayer Wise, MS 436/Digital Archive/Hebrew Union College Reports, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁷ Record Book, October 1879, Hebrew Union College, MS 5/B-1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁸ Report to the Board of Governors, 1 February 1877, Isaac Mayer Wise, MS 436/Digital Archive/Hebrew Union College Reports, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁹ Record Book, October 1879, Hebrew Union College, MS 5/B-1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

rabbinical ordinees in HUC's second ordination class (1884). His fellow ordinees were Maximilian Heller, Isaac Rubenstein, Joseph Silverman, and Joseph Stolz.⁴⁰

In September of 1884, Hebrew Union College hired Dr. Henry (Heinrich) Zindorf to serve as Professor of History and Literature. This left Zindorf's congregation, Temple Beth El in Detroit, Michigan, without a rabbi. The vacancy was filled by the twenty-one-year-old neophyte, Grossmann. In a letter to his classmate, Joseph Stolz, dated November 28, 1884, Isaac Mayer Wise wrote that Grossmann had been elected to the Detroit pulpit by the congregation. He had been up against a rabbi from New York who had earned ordination from another school. Wise considered Grossmann's election a victory that buttressed HUC in its early years.⁴¹

Temple Beth El: Detroit, Michigan

Temple Beth El was a prominent congregation when Grossmann arrived in 1884. Founded in 1850, Beth El was Michigan's first Jewish congregation. In the 1840s primarily central European Jews began to arrive in Detroit. On September 22, 1850 twelve German-Jewish families formed Temple Beth El, which began as an Orthodox synagogue. However, the second rabbi to serve the congregation, Liebmann Adler (1812–1892), who came at the recommendation of Isaac Mayer Wise, put in place modest reforms such as sermons in German. In 1861, the congregation erected its first building and Wise was invited to deliver the dedicatory address. Despite early support for these modest reformist trends, the introduction of an organ and a mixed choir during the Friday evening services created a break in the community and a new orthodox congregation was formed by the schism.

⁴⁰ Report to the Board of Governors, June 1884, Isaac Mayer Wise, MS 436/Digital Archive/Hebrew Union College Reports, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁴¹ Isaac Mayer Wise to Joseph Stolz, 28 November 1884, Isaac Mayer Wise, MS 436/Digital Archive/Correspondence, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Temple Beth El, however, continued on the road to reform. Each succeeding rabbi brought more reforms to the congregation.

The synagogue attracted important clergy including Isidor Kalisch (1816–1886), an editor of *Minhag America* as well as an important voice during the 1855 Cleveland Rabbinical Conference, and Kaufmann Kohler (1843–1926), David Einhorn’s son-in-law who would go on to serve prominent pulpits in New York and eventually serve as the president of Hebrew Union College.⁴² Upon his arrival in 1884, Grossmann became the tenth Rabbi to serve Temple Beth El.⁴³ Significantly, however, he was the first American-trained rabbi to occupy that pulpit.⁴⁴

One year after Grossman’s arrival, the UAHC held its eleventh council meeting in Detroit, and Temple Beth El served as its host. It was at this conference that the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) was established.⁴⁵ Grossmann would become actively involved in the CCAR in addition to his other rabbinical duties.

At the outset of his service to Temple Beth El, Grossmann preached in English three of the four Saturdays in the month. However, on the first Saturday of the month, he preached in German. Moreover, in addition to Friday night and Saturday morning services, the congregation initially held a Sunday service which included a one-hour lecture.⁴⁶ Like his predecessors, Grossmann oversaw a period of expanded reform at Temple Beth El, especially with regard to liturgy. Grossmann introduced the second volume of *Minhag America* —Isaac Mayer Wise’s *machzor*—to the congregation in 1884.

Ten years later, in 1895, Grossmann encouraged the congregation to adopt the newly-

⁴² Irving I. Katz, *110 Years of Temple Beth El Detroit 1850-1960* (n.d., n.p.).

⁴³ Irving I. Katz, *The Beth El Story* (Detroit: Wayne University Press 1955).

⁴⁴ Robert A. Rockaway. *The Jews of Detroit* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986), 121.

⁴⁵ Katz, *110 Years of Temple Beth El Detroit 1850-1960*.

⁴⁶ 25th Anniversary Booklet, 14 October 1892, Temple Beth El, MS 527/Box X-255/Minute Book 1889-1908, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio

created *Union Prayer Book* as its standard liturgy.⁴⁷ Moreover, head coverings, which were once mandatory, were discarded during Grossmann's tenure. Evidently, some members of Temple Beth El were not wholeheartedly accepting of these reformist trends. At one point, Grossmann was asked by the congregation to limit his sermons and lectures to Jewish texts and warned that the introduction of new rituals was creating dissension in the community.⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that in spite of these complaints, Grossmann was considered to be a moderate reformer in comparison to many of his rabbinical peers.

In 1890 at the CCAR conference, Grossmann spoke out when many reform rabbis were advocating the replacement of bar mitzvah with confirmation. The *American Israelite* reported, "Dr. Grossmann took exception to the manner in which the essayist proposed to dispense with the traditional ceremony of Bar-Mitzwah."⁴⁹ Grossmann, while devoted to the Reform movement, was reticent to replace tradition with new forms. He would continue to speak in defense of bar mitzvah as his career took him to new communities.⁵⁰

Another instance of his moderate reform sensibility came in 1895. In the very same year that he introduced the *Union Prayer Book*, Grossmann eliminated the congregation's practice of holding a weekly Sunday service, and instead re-instituted a late Friday night service.⁵¹ Grossmann explained his rationale for the reversion in a sermon he delivered when the change occurred in 1895. In this sermon, Grossmann explained why he favored a more moderate approach to reform. His attitude towards the goals and mission of the Reform movement are best captured in a quote from this sermon: "...we must not forget that reform can only re-form, it cannot create."⁵² Later in this same sermon Grossmann

⁴⁷ Katz, *The Beth El Story*, 89-96.

⁴⁸ Rockaway, *The Jews of Detroit*, 122.

⁴⁹ "The Central Conference of American Rabbis In Cleveland," *The American Israelite* (31 July 1890).

⁵⁰ Louis Grossmann, "The Week," *The American Israelite* (7 June 1900).

⁵¹ Katz, *The Beth El Story*, 94.

⁵² Louis Grossmann, "Constructive Judaism," in *The Jewish Pulpit* (Detroit: The Franklin Press, 1895).

wrote: "... a reform that has no legitimate justification and has its call from convenience and impulsiveness, is a false, a calamitous reform and must fail."⁵³ These sentiments testify to the fact that Grossmann was influenced by Isaac Mayer Wise's preference for a moderate—as opposed to David Einhorn's more radical— approach to reform. Grossmann made the point rather explicitly when he stated, "...we are going to give up the Sunday morning service, a feature quite dear to radicalism. It will not consume much of our time to set ourselves clear with regard to our abandonment of a recent innovation and our return to a venerable custom in Israel."⁵⁴ It is exactly these stances that, in his later rabbinate, will lead to tensions between Grossmann and figures like Kaufmann Kohler.

In addition to his rabbinical duties, Grossmann also served as superintendent of Temple Beth El's Sabbath School.⁵⁵ Historical records do not leave a clear impression of Grossmann's activities in his capacity as superintendent, yet it can be noted that his experiences as an educational leader seem to have sparked a desire to devote a significant part of his rabbinate to the improvement of religious education in the Reform Jewish community. We also know that Grossmann was very active in the Greater Detroit Community. This manifested itself in major social justice and social welfare activities described below.

Between the years 1880 and 1925 mass waves of East European immigrants entered the United States of America. The historian Jonathan D. Sarna notes that around eighty percent of all Jewish emigrants from Russia between 1881 and 1914 came to America, and

Later in his life Grossmann will explain the same concept but use the word "re-form," differently. He will say in his address to the 1919 CCAR Convention, "The Reform that had been brought into this country from Germany was a revision and not a reconstruction. It reformed. It did not re-form..." He clearly expresses the same sentiment while using the phrase, "re-form," to express opposite intentions. It is clear that even into the end of his career Grossmann carried moderate Reform beliefs.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Minute Book, 14 June 1898, Temple Beth El, MS 527/Box 3/Minute Book 1871-1898, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

unlike many other immigrant communities, the Jews came to stay.⁵⁶ There were many factors which contributed to the large scale nature of the immigration. Some of these factors were consistent with earlier migrations. East Europeans came because of overcrowding, economic restrictions and social immobility, residential restrictions, and military conscription. More unique causes of immigration in this period, however, were the pogroms that swept East Europe after the assassination of the Tsar in 1881.⁵⁷ This wave of immigration changed the landscape of American Jewry forever.

By and large, the early response of the settled Jewish community to these new immigrants was a mix of sympathy and fear. The more established Jewish community—most of whom had emigrated from central Europe—felt acculturated and Americanized and viewed the new East European immigrants as a threat to the status of Jews in the American landscape. The acculturated Jews quickly set up charitable organizations, settlement houses, libraries, night schools, and vocational schools designed to absorb the new Jewish immigrants and help them to Americanize as quickly as possible.⁵⁸

The Jews of Detroit participated in these efforts to settle the East European Jews. In the early period of the mass emigration from East Europe, the Detroit community expressed concern for these newcomers. However, as it became clear that the immigration was not slowing, the population of Detroit began to view the immigrants as intruders. Nativist sentiment grew, and newspapers and politicians began to malign the new-comers, including the Jews. Grossmann was a strong voice opposing the nativists in Detroit, and spoke out in support of the immigrants.⁵⁹ In addition to speaking out, Grossmann and

⁵⁶ Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 153.

⁵⁷ Eric L. Goldstein, "The Great Wave: Eastern European Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1880-1924" in *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Rockaway, *The Jews of Detroit*, 58-59, 90-92.

Temple Beth El created institutions to support the new immigrants. In 1889, Temple Beth El organized a “Self-Help Circle” to assist Jewish refugees from Russia. One year after the Self-Help Circle was established, Beth El created a Committee for the Relief of Russian Refugees.⁶⁰

Grossmann also appeared to be an early advocate for women in the congregation. In 1891 Grossmann organized The Woman’s Club of Temple Beth El.⁶¹ It is not entirely clear what function this club served, however, it later evolved into the Detroit Section of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW). The NCJW was founded and organized and by Hannah G. Solomon of Chicago in the aftermath of the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893. The organization’s objective was to strengthen women’s connection to Judaism as well as to provide skills, training and other assistance to immigrants, social advocacy work on behalf of women and children, and other social justice work.⁶² One can assume that the club Grossmann helped to organize was involved in similar activities since it later became a branch of this august organization. Not only did Grossmann support a women’s club at Temple Beth El, but he also oversaw the promotion of women to higher ranks within the congregational structure. During his rabbinate women were appointed as members of the School Board for the first time in the congregation’s history.⁶³

In addition to his work on behalf of women, Grossmann also encouraged his congregation to help meet the needs of the poor. In 1893, Temple Beth El established a Mission Sunday School. This school was created to serve poor Jewish children in the community. It kept these impoverished youth out of the streets, and provided them with

⁶⁰ Katz, *The Beth El Story*, 91-93

⁶¹ Ibid., 92.

⁶² http://www.ncjw.org/content_1066.cfm?navID=27. See also, Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting : The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993).

⁶³ Katz, *The Beth El Story*, 94.

educational and social opportunities. Beth El's Mission Sunday School also provided religious instruction to those who could not afford it as well as to those whose parents belonged to a synagogue that did not have a religious school.⁶⁴ His work on behalf of the poor would continue in Cincinnati.

One of Grossmann's major activities in the greater Detroit community was the fight to keep the Christian proselytizing agenda at bay. Grossmann fought against general attempts throughout the late 1800's to actively evangelize Jews in Detroit. These efforts were widespread and required constant vigilance on the part of Jewish leaders.⁶⁵ Another front of this fight was to keep Bible-reading out of the Detroit public schools. Grossmann corresponded with other Jewish leaders quite a bit on the subject. Many letters which Grossmann wrote are in reaction to a book that was published by the Chicago Woman's Educational Union called *Readings from the Bible*. This work quoted several Reform Jewish leaders and rabbis as endorsing the reading of the Bible in public school. Based on Grossmann's correspondence, some of the Jewish scholars quoted in the work included Kaufman Kohler, Pereira Mendes, Moses Mielziner, Bernard Felsenthal, and Felix Adler.⁶⁶ While he fought the battle in Detroit, this fight was also going on around the country.⁶⁷

In addition to these activities, Grossmann worked on a variety of social welfare issues. He and his successor Rabbi Leo M. Franklin fought for better health laws and standards, for more stringent child labor laws, as well as for improved housing for the poor.

⁶⁴ Katz, *The Beth El Story*, 93.

⁶⁵ Rockaway, *The Jews of Detroit*, 132-134. And Katz, *The Beth El Story*, 94.

⁶⁶ Correspondences, November-December 1896, Louis Grossmann, MS 96/Box 1/Folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

In addition to Grossmann's correspondence, *The American Israelite* featured a news item in their May 20, 1897 edition. The article details the battle taking place in Detroit as well as Rabbi Grossmann's involvement and leadership. It is clear from both the article and Grossmann's correspondence that he was a central figure in the fight against Bible reading in public schools.

⁶⁷ For more information see Stephan F. Brumberg, "The Cincinnati Bible War (1869-1873) and its Impact on the Education of the City's Protestants, Catholics, and Jews" *The American Jewish Archives Journal* LIV Number 2 (2003), 11-46. and Stephan F. Brumberg, *Going to America, Going to School: The Jewish Immigrant Public School Encounter in Turn-of-the-Century New York City* (New York: Praeger, 1986), pp. xiii, 282.

Grossmann also worked on various interfaith activities during his time in the Detroit community. Pulpit exchanges took place between Temple Beth El and various Christian denominations, and Grossmann frequently spoke at church programs. His sermons were often printed in the local Detroit papers and presumably read by individuals of all faiths.⁶⁸

Alongside his interfaith work with Christian communities, Grossmann also struck up an unlikely friendship during his time at Temple Beth El in Detroit. As noted above, in 1893 the World's Columbian Exposition took place in Chicago. One of the many important programmatic events that occurred in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition was the convening of the first Parliament of the World's Religions.⁶⁹ The meeting of the Parliament of Religions was greeted favorably by the members of the newly formed CCAR, and during the CCAR's third annual convention a committee was appointed to determine whether or not the CCAR should participate in the gathering. In its report to the CCAR, this special committee recommended "that the Conference should present for discussion at the Columbian Exposition well prepared papers" on the subjects of Jewish history, ethics, polemical debates, statistics of the Jewish community, and knowledge gleaned from archaeology. Various scholars should be requisitioned to speak on the topics.⁷⁰ Later in the convention, an amendment to the report was included that called for a report by scholars of various religious backgrounds which combatted antisemitic charges.⁷¹ A joint commission of the UAHC and the CCAR met in Washington D.C. to coordinate Jewish participation at the Parliament. They later published a work which contained all the speeches given on the topic of Judaism. The CCAR members who spoke at the Parliament included Isaac Mayer Wise,

⁶⁸ Rockaway, *The Jews of Detroit*, 131-132.

⁶⁹ Norm Bolotin, and Christine Laing, *The World's Columbian Exposition : The Chicago World's Fair of 1893* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002). See also, Richard Hughes Seager, *The World's Parliament of Religions : The East/West Encounter, Chicago, 1893, Religion in North America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

⁷⁰ "The Rev. Dr. K Kohler, in the absence of the Chairman..." *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 3, (1893): 31-32.

⁷¹ "Dr. I. S. Moses then..." *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 3, (1893): 39-40.

Bernard Felsenthal, Moses Mielziner, Gotthard Deutsch, and several others including Louis Grossmann, who spoke on “Judaism and the Science of Comparative Religion.”⁷² The lecture focuses on laying out Judaism’s relationship to Christianity and other faiths, as well as on Judaism’s engagement with the new discipline of comparative religion. It owes much to the book Grossmann published earlier in his career.⁷³

Reform Jews were not the only group to seek out representation at the World’s Parliament of Religions in order to promote a fuller understanding of their faith. There was a similar sentiment among Hindus. The representative to the Parliament of the entire world’s Hindu community was Swami Vivekananda. His road to the Parliament was vastly different from Louis Grossmann’s, yet the two would become close friends. It is ironic that while Grossmann has become an obscure figure in American Jewish History, he remains a known figure in the histories of Vedanta and Swami Vivekananda.⁷⁴

Swami Vivekananda was a Hindu monk. He is largely cited as being responsible for introducing Hinduism to the Western World in the late 19th century. Scholars have stated that in India Swami Vivekananda is seen as an important inspiration for India’s nationalist struggle and as one of the most authoritative voices for Hindu India. In short, Swami Vivekananda is widely considered a national hero in India.⁷⁵ In his early years, he studied Western logic, history, philosophy, and art. He began his monastic journey as a follower of the Indian mystic Ramakrishna. His first visit to the United States was in 1893, when he came to serve as a delegate at the Parliament of Religions at the Chicago’s World Fair.⁷⁶ He

⁷² *Judaism at the World’s Parliament of Religions: Comprising the Papers on Judaism Read at the Parliament, at the Jewish Denominational Congress, and the Jewish Presentation* (Cincinnati: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations and Robert Clarke & Co., 1894).

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Email with Gordan Stavig, Ph.D., 29 June 2012.

⁷⁵ Narasingha P. Sil, *Swami Vivekananda: A Reassessment* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1997).

⁷⁶ On Ramakrishna, see Rajiv Mehrotra, *Thakur Sri Ramakrishna : A Biography*. Rev. and enl. ed (New Delhi, India: Hay House Publishers (India), 2009).

was 30 when he arrived. His message to the Parliament embraced tolerance and condemned fanaticism. He stated in his opening remarks, "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true." He quickly became a sensation in the press and at the Parliament. The *New York Herald* wrote, "Vivekananda is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation." Vivekananda spent subsequent years traveling around the Western World speaking about Hinduism and popularizing the practice of yoga. He opened the Vedanta Society in New York with chapters in other major cities.⁷⁷

It is unclear how the rabbi and the swami met. At some point during the World's Fair, however, the two struck up a friendship. In later years, Grossmann wrote in the *American Israelite*, "I have a friend, a swarthy Hindu monk. He had come to the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893 and he was spending a few weeks with me after that historic event."⁷⁸ Swami Vivekananda's message of toleration and his emphasis on the universal aspects of religion likely endeared him to Grossmann, who subscribed to Reform Judaism's commitment to universalism.⁷⁹ In 1894 Grossmann wrote that the swami had:

told us [the Western world] something of the heathen with a clearness, with a precision, with a candor, which puts to shame the confused and vehement pretension which so long has usurped an unrighteous prestige in church and religion...Let us learn from the Hindu the lesson that God lives and reigns, now and ever, that God is in every flower of the field; in every breath of the air; in every throb of our blood."⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Public Broadcasting Station, "God in America," <http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/people/swami-vivekananda.html> (accessed October 11, 2010).

⁷⁸ Louis Grossmann, "The Week," *The American Israelite* (December 13, 1900).

⁷⁹ See Vivekananda's address to the World Parliament of Religions on September 11, 1893 where among other statements he remarked, "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both toleration and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true."

⁸⁰ Louis Grossmann, "What Vivekananda Has Taught Us," (February 1894). Quoted in Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries* "Part Two The World Teacher," vol. 4 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1986). 28.

Between 1894 and 1896, while Swami Vivekananda toured the United States and the United Kingdom spreading knowledge of Hinduism, he spent time in Detroit, where he and Grossmann continued their friendship. Swami Vivekananda first visited Detroit in 1894. During this trip he was supported by the Unitarian Reverend Reed Stuart as well as by Rabbi Grossmann. At one point during the visit Grossmann was reported in local newspapers to have preached a sermon called “What Vivekananda has Taught Us.”⁸¹ Throughout this visit and the swami’s second visit—which took place in 1896—Grossmann kept in contact with the religious leader. In addition to providing him with personal support, Grossmann also defended the swami in the press against the many evangelicals who defamed Vivekananda as an idolater and a polytheist. Grossmann was merciless in his criticism of Christian evangelical judgment. In response to a Reverend Dr. Thoburn who had served as a Christian missionary in India, he wrote this statement, brimming with sarcasm:

I confess I relished his [Thoburn’s] eloquence; it is so churchy, you know. Listen to his list of arguments: ‘Perversion, distortion, mythological shadows, demon-worshiper, revolting mystic, degrading godless, nauseating compound, paganism that was dumped, emasculated, mental and rhetorical gymnastics, aristocratic yogee, cataleptic hysteria,’ and—this was probably the climax of his Christian zeal—‘pigsty looking artistic under the magic of moonshine.’ Dr. Thoburn is ingenious, but his ingenuity is medievalism revamped, and that none of us want in the city of Detroit today, even if a Hindu is in town...⁸²

On March 15, 1896, Swami Vivekananda gave one of the largest and best-received lectures of any of those he had delivered during his tours of the West. The name of the lecture was, “The Ideal of a Universal Religion,” and it was given at Temple Beth El in Detroit. Grossmann had opened up his pulpit for his friend, and introduced him to the great crowd that had assembled to hear the lecture. Detroit newspapers reported that the

⁸¹ “To-Day’s Church Services,” *Detroit Free Press* (18 February 1894): 8.

⁸² Louis Grossmann, (9 March 1896). Quoted in Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries* “Part Two The World Teacher,” vol. 4 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1986), 27.

building was filled to capacity. Every seat was taken, and people even stood in the aisles and the back of the room to hear the swami's talk.⁸³ The next day the swami departed, and the two men never met again. Their friendship was a remarkable episode in Grossmann's life. This friendship with the swami, who has become a national hero in India, has made Grossmann a presence in numerous books on Vivekananda, despite his obscurity in Reform Jewish histories.

In addition to interfaith activity, Grossmann continued his academic pursuits during his time at Temple Beth El. On March 5, 1888, HUC's president, Isaac Mayer Wise, informed the faculty that Grossmann submitted a thesis entitled, "Judaism and the Science of Religion" and was seeking the degree of Doctor of Divinity. The faculty resolved that the application for the degree be accepted.⁸⁴ After reading and considering the thesis, the faculty consented to confer upon Grossmann the degree of Doctor of Divinity.⁸⁵ Later that year Grossmann published the thesis.⁸⁶ *The American Israelite* included an article describing the book on December 7, 1888. Moreover, in an article from March 14, 1895, *The Israelite* praised another work by Louis Grossmann titled *Dictionary of Terms in Jewish Philosophy of the Middle Ages*, which he wrote in order to make the study of Medieval Jewish philosophy more accessible to students. The article goes on to report that the editors had Grossmann's manuscript before them, and it was their wish that it would soon be printed. This work was, however, apparently never published, although a manuscript exists in microfilm form at the

⁸³ Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West : New Discoveries*. 3rd ed (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1985).

⁸⁴ Record Book, 5 March 1888, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 3 September 3 1888.

⁸⁶ See *A Centennial History of HUC-JIR* Michael A. Meyer. In this period, one had to continue their studies while in the field to earn this degree from the College. It was not like it is today, where it is given to those who serve twenty five years in the field. Rather, a rabbi needed to continue academic scholarship while serving a congregation. These individuals were listed as corresponding faculty of the college in the academic catalog.

National library of Israel. It is clear that throughout his career at Temple Beth El Louis Grossmann continued to study and focus upon philosophy.⁸⁷

Grossmann also served his community through his work with the University of Michigan. On February 21, 1889, *The American Israelite* reported that Grossmann had been invited to join the faculty of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor as a Professor of Semitic Languages.⁸⁸ While it is unclear to what extent Grossmann served the university, there is a record of a major lecture he delivered to the Philosophical Society in 1890 which was later turned into a pamphlet.⁸⁹ The lecture was entitled *Maimonides*, and it focused on the figure of Moses Maimonides as a philosopher. Moreover, in 1896, the *American Israelite* reported that Grossmann was lecturing at the university on aspects of sociology.⁹⁰

In addition to his book, Grossmann also published a collection of the sermons he delivered at Temple Beth El beginning in 1895. These orations were printed under the title *The Jewish Pulpit*. This collection includes sermons on various aspects of Judaism and includes Grossmann's thoughts on a variety of topics such as Sunday services and Individualism within Judaism. *The American Israelite* praised the sermons as lectures, claiming the essays were not really sermons.⁹¹ It seems that Rabbi Grossmann's strength lay outside the realm of preaching. Near the end of his life, Grossmann wrote to Stephen S. Wise, "My preaching days are over and I am not sorry."⁹² Grossmann's letter to Wise also described his feeling that the sermon had, "lapsed to the level of diversion," and had never served Judaism.⁹³ It is clear from the letter Grossmann was relieved he was no longer obligated to

⁸⁷ *The American Israelite* (14 March 1895): 4.

⁸⁸ *The American Israelite* (21 February 1889): 4.

⁸⁹ *The American Israelite* (8 May 1890): 4.

⁹⁰ *The American Israelite* (6 February 1896): 4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Grossmann to Wise, 4 January 1922, Jewish Institute of Religion Records, MS 19/Box 17/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

preach. He was not the only one. Jacob Rader Marcus remarks in his diary that Grossmann's sermons, at times, were good,⁹⁴ but more typically Marcus wrote comments like, "Went to Grossmann's [for services] and heard a rotten sermon."⁹⁵ Moreover, accounts from congregants at his last pulpit, Kahal Kadosh B'nai Yeshurun, remember him as a poor preacher.⁹⁶ In Grossmann's CCAR memorial resolution Rabbi Joseph Silverman⁹⁷ (1860-1930) may have expressed it better than others. He wrote, "his[Grossmann's] words were effective not because of the force of eloquence, but because the people felt that behind those words was a pure motive and a sincerity of purpose."⁹⁸ The published sermons from Grossmann's days in Detroit are no exception to the general opinion. As lectures or addresses Grossmann's orations reflect serious intellectual rigor, but they lack the exhortation and inspiration that make for a moving sermon.

Grossmann remained at Temple Beth El until 1899. He had been considered for at least one other pulpit during his years in Detroit, though he did not receive any other appointments. In an 1888 letter to Grossmann's classmate Maximilian Heller, Isaac Mayer Wise wrote that Heller, Philipson, Berkowitz and Grossmann were being considered for Cincinnati's K. K. Bene Israel, but the position went to Philipson.⁹⁹

Evidently, Grossmann's relationship with Temple Beth El was mutually agreeable. He signed a long-term contract on January 1, 1896 to remain in Detroit for five more

⁹⁴ Journal, 30 March 1912, Jacob Rader Marcus, MS 210/Box 14/Folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁹⁵ Journal, 24 January 1914, Jacob Rader Marcus, MS 210/Box 4/Folder 2, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁹⁶ Oral History of Corinne Ulfelder, 21 November 1984, Isaac M. Wise Temple Archive, Cincinnati, Ohio. And Oral History of Gertrude Joseph, 20 January 1980, Isaac M. Wise Temple Archive, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁹⁷ Joseph Silverman was a member of Louis Grossmann's ordination class. After he was ordained rabbi he served two congregations in Texas. In 1888, he went on to serve Temple Emanu-El in New York City, one of the leading reform congregations in the country.

⁹⁸ Joseph Silverman, Louis Grossman, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 37, (1927): 259-261.

⁹⁹ Wise to Heller, 30 January 1888, Isaac Mayer Wise, MS 436/Digital Archive/Correspondence, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

years—until 1901—and received a very respectable annual salary of \$3,500.¹⁰⁰ In 1898, however, Grossmann received a call from his mentor in Cincinnati, who made him an offer he would not refuse.

¹⁰⁰ The average annual salary for manufacturers in the U.S. in 1890 was approximately \$1,800. See Clarence D. Long, *Wages and Earnings in the United States, 1860-1890*, *National Bureau of Economic Research Publications in Reprint* (New York: Arno Press, 1975) – available online at http://www.nber.org/chapters/c2497.pdf?new_window=1. In 1898, the First Presbyterian Church of Castle Shannon, Pennsylvania issued its first call for a pastor and hired the Rev. Edwin L. McIlvaine for a yearly salary of \$800. See <http://www.fpccs.com/page2.html>. Although the online inflation converters are imperfect, one such site concluded that \$3,500 of 1896 dollars would be worth \$94,594.59 in 2012. See <http://www.davemanuel.com/inflation-calculator.php>.

“Some of the apathy, some of the skepticism, some of the estrangement among modern Jews is chargeable to inattentive, insincere and unsatisfactory teachers.”¹⁰¹

Chapter 2: A Life and Career in Cincinnati

Kahal Kadosh B’nai Yeshurun: Cincinnati, Ohio

On September 18, 1898, the president of Kahal Kadosh B’nai Yeshurun, Jacob Ottenheimer, gave his report at the congregation’s annual meeting. In his report he noted that Charles S. Levi, the junior rabbi of the congregation, had asked to be released from his position in order to serve congregation Anshe Emeth in Peoria, Illinois. The president stated that due to Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise’s advancing years a new assistant rabbi was needed to fill the vacancy. A committee was formed to find a replacement for Rabbi Levi.¹⁰²

Levi made his announcement to the congregation that he would leave in August. The congregation, however, waited until the annual meeting on September 18th to form a committee tasked with finding a replacement. Despite the congregation’s intention, Wise appears to have taken matters into his own hands. A letter from Louis Grossmann to Isaac Mayer Wise dated September 13th demonstrates that Wise clearly knew he wanted Grossmann to take the pulpit. It is also clear that Wise and Grossmann had corresponded prior to the letter of September 13th. In this correspondence, Grossmann asked Wise if he should reach out to some of the board members of B’nai Yeshurun who were, “very friendly disposed [*sic*] toward” him, prior to the annual meeting. Grossmann quickly added that he would not do anything without Wise’s instruction.¹⁰³ Based on the dates of the correspondence one can conclude that Wise had decided, even before the committee was

¹⁰¹ Louis Grossmann, “Principles of Religious Instruction in Jewish Schools.” *Sonderabdruck aus Studies in Jewish Literature: Issued in Honor of Professor Kaufmann Kohler, PH.D.* (Berlin: George Reimer. 1913), 4-7.

¹⁰² Minute Book, 18 September 1898, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/Box 5/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁰³ Grossmann to Wise, 13 September 1898, Isaac Mayer Wise, MS 436/Digital Archive/Correspondence, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

formed, that he wanted to secure Grossmann as his junior rabbi. Moreover, due to his declining health, Wise could have been aware that he was possibly choosing a successor.

Despite Wise's work behind the scenes, on September 25th the committee met to discuss a new junior rabbi. The committee was chaired by Ottenheimer. The first major decision of the committee was that the junior rabbi must be a graduate of the Hebrew Union College. The minutes indicate that several prominent rabbis were considered. After a debate the committee authorized Ottenheimer to open negotiations with Louis Grossmann.¹⁰⁴

On September 27th, Ottenheimer wrote to Louis Grossmann stating he was their choice, provided his congregation in Detroit would release him. In the letter, Ottenheimer lists the qualities the congregation values in a rabbi, and informs Grossmann that the position is to be for five years with an annual salary of \$4,000.¹⁰⁵ It is noteworthy that Ottenheimer does not remark on the exact duties of the position in the letter. Rather, he states that he will detail the Junior Rabbi's responsibilities upon Grossmann's arrival.¹⁰⁶ The pulpit at B'nai Yeshurun must have carried so much prestige that Grossmann did not care what the day-to-day responsibilities would be; he just wanted to secure the position.

On September 28th, 1898, Grossmann responded to the letter. The tone of Grossmann's letter demonstrates his excitement. He was clearly aware that this was a move to a pulpit with greater esteem, and that the move would propel him to the national stage of American Judaism. He wrote, "I am profoundly conscious of its significance and the

¹⁰⁴ Ottenheimer to Grossmann found in minute book, 27 September 1898, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple, MS 62/Box 5/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁰⁵ The congregation stated they were seeking, "a Rabbi truly and sincerely religious, a thorough and polished student and magnetic in the Pulpit, and blessed it the many other [h]igh qualities of heart and mind; such attributes as are possessed by that Grand Old Man, whom you are to assist in our Pulpit." Sept 27 1898 Ottenheimer to Grossmann – It is clear based on this text that they sought a rabbi who could take on the mantle of Wise.

¹⁰⁶ Ottenheimer to Grossmann found in minute book, 27 September 1898, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple, MS 62/Box 5/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

exceptional honor, which it implies. I am aware of the dignity that attaches to the pulpit of K. K. Bene [sic] Yeshurun and the great prestige it has in American Judaism.”¹⁰⁷ Grossmann concludes that he will put his resignation in to the board. He states that due to the friendship he shares with the congregation and the fact that it is B’nai Yeshurun calling, they will surely accept the situation.¹⁰⁸

On September 30th Ottenheimer wrote to Louis Blitz, the president of Temple Beth El in Detroit. Ottenheimer requested that the congregation release Grossmann so he could serve his, “old teacher and friend,” Isaac Mayer Wise, and also, “serve as a Professor in the College [HUC].” According to the letter it was always understood that the junior rabbi was to serve in that capacity as well.¹⁰⁹ On October 3rd, 1898, Blitz wrote back to Ottenheimer that the Detroit congregation had had a meeting, and that they recognized the debt they owed to Isaac Mayer Wise and the Cincinnati congregation. They agreed to release Grossmann from his contract.¹¹⁰ B’nai Yeshurun had hired a new junior rabbi. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* wrote on October 1st that “A hint has been given out that in all probability Rabbi Grossman[n] will succeed Rabbi Wise.”¹¹¹ It seems clear based on this statement and Wise’s growing infirmity that the congregation and Wise himself knew they were hiring a replacement. This was no small matter. One can assume that almost any HUC graduate and many American rabbis would have coveted a spot at Wise’s congregation. The fact that Grossmann was sought after speaks to the regard in which Wise and the congregation held

¹⁰⁷ It should be noted that over time the spelling of the congregation’s name shifted. Though originally spelled “Bene Yeshurun,” as indicated in the text of Grossmann’s letter, today, the congregation spells it “B’nai Yeshurun.” Unless a direct quote, the congregation will be referenced by the current name, “B’nai Yeshurun.”

¹⁰⁸ Grossmann to Ottenheimer found in minute book, 28 September 1898, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple, MS 62/Box 5/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁰⁹ Ottenheimer to Blitz found in minute book, 30 September 1898, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple, MS 62/Box 5/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹¹⁰ Blitz to Ottenheimer found in minute book, 3 October 1898, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple, MS 62/Box 5/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹¹¹ “Associate, For Rabbi Isaac M. Wise Chosen By the Plum-Street Temple Congregation,” *Cincinnati Enquirer* (1 October 1898): 8.

him. In fact, the *American Israelite* would later describe the relationship between Wise and Grossmann as close to “that of father and son.”¹¹² Grossmann moved from Detroit to Cincinnati. Less than a year after his installation at B’nai Yeshurun, the father of the American Reform movement would pass away and Grossmann would become his successor.

By October 29th the *Cincinnati Enquirer* noted that Grossmann was renting a house in Walnut Hills.¹¹³ It is known that for a good portion of his career at B’nai Yeshurun he lived as a boarder with Samuel and Rosa Karpeles at 2212 Park Avenue in Walnut Hills.¹¹⁴ Grossmann had also lived with this couple while he was a rabbi in Detroit. Samuel and Rosa had moved to Cincinnati along with Grossmann. It is unclear how Grossmann originally met the Karpeles couple, but he was unquestionably very close to them. In his correspondence, he spoke of them as if they were family. The couple was so close to the rabbi that the three of them would vacation together.¹¹⁵ In 1909, when Samuel passed away, Grossmann wrote, “Mr. Karpeles, the man I have lived with twenty five years long, ever since I am out of the College, died last week and Mrs. K. is alone in the house.”¹¹⁶ In 1915 Rosa Karpeles grew ill. According to Grossmann, at this point he had been living with her for 31 years. He rearranged his travel schedule so he could be with her during her illness. At some point between 1914 and 1915 Grossmann moved to a new residence at 528

¹¹²“Rabbi Grossmann Passes,” *American Israelite* (30 September 1926).

¹¹³ “Rabbi Grossmann To Be Installed Next Friday – Will Reside on Walnut Hills,” *Cincinnati Enquirer* (29 October 1898): 16.

¹¹⁴“Twelfth Census of the United States: Schedule No. 1. – Population.,” 14 June 1900, accessed from ancestry.com (26 May 2012).

¹¹⁵ “List or Manifest of Alien Passengers for the United States,” 5 September 1908, accessed from ancestry.com (26 May 2012).

¹¹⁶ Grossmann to Heller, 8 November 1909, Rabbi Maximilian Heller, MS 33/Box 2/Folder 23, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Camden Avenue in Avondale. Rosa passed away in 1919,¹¹⁷ which left Grossmann without his surrogate family.¹¹⁸

Grossmann was formally installed as rabbi of B'nai Yeshurun on November 4th, 1898. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* wrote that the Plum Street Temple was completely full and many were compelled to stand in the aisles and rear of the building. The paper describes the scene as one full of pomp and ceremony. Floral arrangements decorated the *bimah* and the entire synagogue; flowers and vines dangled from the eternal light to the *menorot*. A full choir sang the service and both Wise and Philipson participated in the welcome. Wise spoke highly of his new colleague and former student.¹¹⁹

During the service, Grossmann ascended to the pulpit. He turned his back to the congregation and uttered a prayer for guidance. Afterward, he delivered his first sermon to the congregation. Despite later accounts by congregants and his own word that he was a poor preacher, the newspaper describes Grossmann as an eloquent and engaging speaker. According to the paper, the central aspect of his first address to the congregation was the duties he expected to assume; the central duty being to "...be with the congregation through tears and smiles, in gloom and in joy."¹²⁰ It is significant that Grossmann identified the pastoral role of the rabbi as one of his primary charges since it was his ability as a pastor that appears to have distinguished him as a rabbi.

The following year the temple's president gave Grossmann high marks in his annual report. He noted that during Grossmann's first year he had won the hearts and admiration

¹¹⁷ Find A Grave, "Rosa Fechheimer Karpeles," <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=55615063> (accessed 4 January 2012).

¹¹⁸ It should be noted that Grossmann was eventually buried in the same plot in Walnut Hills Cemetery as the Karpeles couple upon his death in 1926. This underscores the closeness of their relationship.

¹¹⁹ "Eloquent Was inaugural Sermon of Dr. Louis Grossman at Plum Street Temple," *Cincinnati Enquirer* (5 November 1898): 9.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

of the entire congregation.¹²¹ Grossmann, in addition to being an excellent scholar, was known in the congregation for his pastoral support. It is no accident that in Rabbi James Heller's history of B'nai Yeshurun, the main chapter on the Grossmann years is entitled "The Ministry of Brotherly Love." Old and young alike spoke of Grossmann's incredible ability to care for his flock. Upon his retirement, the students of B'nai Yeshurun dedicated an entire edition of their student publication, *The Light*, to Grossmann. They wrote poetry and articles in his honor. One high school student wrote:

...we confided our troubles and our problems to our host [Grossmann] because we were certain that he possessed an unequalled understanding of his fellowman. This proved true. For every perplexity he gave just the needed sympathy that no one else seemed to be able to impart...Every word bespoke understanding, love, kindness, goodness and knowledge.¹²²

Children and youth loved Grossmann. Moreover, adult congregants spoke of the fact that he never forgot people's birthdays or major life celebrations. Grossmann was ferocious in his correspondence and was always mailing cards to say congratulations, happy birthday, or express his condolences. He was devoted to his flock, and approached his relationships with thought, intentionality, care, and—the word that defined his philosophy—loyalty.¹²³ In fact, in memorials and eulogies for Grossmann the overwhelming theme from those who loved him, as well as from those who thought less of him, was that in his care for his congregational community he stood out as an example to be emulated:

...of all the gifts he poured out for his people, none was more intimately of his soul, and none can leave so enduring a memory, as the pastoral affection he evinced for them. He was their friend, whose greatest joy it was to know every child and every adult by name, to be a welcome member of every household, to share the vicissitudes of their lives.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Annual Report in minute book, 1898, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple, MS 62/Box 5/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹²² Student Magazine, 12 March 1922, Isaac M. Wise Temple Archive, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹²³ Oral History of Gordon Weil, Sr., 8 May 1985, Isaac M. Wise Temple Archive, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹²⁴ Heller, *As Yesterday When It Is Past*, 190.

It is no surprise, therefore, that he was able to quickly endear himself to the congregation.

One of Grossmann's central duties in the early years was to serve as assistant superintendent for the congregation's Sabbath School. At the annual meeting when the call was made to find a new assistant rabbi the congregation stated:

If we expect to rear a generation imbued with the true spirit of religion, and ready to support and maintain the institution for which we are diligently and faithfully laboring, our first duty is to shape the future religious life and thought of our children by giving them the necessary and proper religious instructions.¹²⁵

Part of Grossmann's work was to try to fulfill this vision. His personal philosophy mirrored that of the congregation. Grossmann continued his involvement in the Sabbath School throughout his tenure, and, in many ways, Jewish education would become another hallmark of Grossmann's rabbinate. It is unclear exactly when Grossmann became devoted to improving the state of Jewish education. Perhaps it was during his experience teaching religious school as a rabbinical student, perhaps it was during his time with the Sabbath School at Temple Beth El, or perhaps it was while he was at the Sabbath School of K. K. B'nai Yeshurun. Regardless, once he became the rabbi of B'nai Yeshurun he began to write on the subject. It is also during this same period of that he began teaching Pedagogy at Hebrew Union College.

Grossmann's first year of service—1899—was a notable one in the congregation. One of the major changes during this year was the switch at the temple's magnificent Moorish synagogue structure, located on Plum Street, and erected in 1866, from gas to electric light throughout the building.¹²⁶ Additionally, the community had a large birthday celebration for Isaac Mayer Wise. Wise turned eighty during the year and the congregation

¹²⁵ Annual Report in minute book, 1898, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple, MS 62/Box 5/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

and the greater Cincinnati community celebrated with him. In addition to celebration this year also included communal mourning. There were several deaths in the congregation, including Wise's daughter, Elsie Corinne.¹²⁷ All in all, 1899 was an eventful year. But a single event in 1900 would irrevocably change the congregation, HUC, Cincinnati, the Reform movement, and Grossmann's role and work.

On March 26th, 1900, Isaac Mayer Wise died. In addition to the family, Philipson, the faculty of HUC, and Grossmann were with Wise at the time of his death.¹²⁸ Wise's funeral was one of the largest Cincinnati had ever seen. It was reported that the body, which lay in state in Plum Street Temple, was visited by ten thousand individuals. Wise's funeral was a huge event attended by Jewish and non-Jewish leaders. Grossmann gave the funeral oration, using a text that Wise had picked out 30 years prior to his death. Grossmann's oration was reported in newspapers across the country, including the *New York Times*. His words impressed the news media and it was reported that he brought many in the congregation to tears.¹²⁹ Once again, this praise conflicts with his own critical accounts of his preaching, and the reports of his congregants and colleagues.

Grossmann, writing to classmate and friend Maximilian Heller said that the "funeral was really a triumph, and he [Wise] looked in his coffin like a hero of classic days."¹³⁰ In another memorial for Wise in May, Jewish leaders from across the country came to eulogize and remember the founder of most of the institutions of the Reform movement. Once

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ "Funeral of Rabbi Wise: Ten Thousand Persons Pass By the Bier in the Temple, Rev. L. Grossman's Sermon," *The New York Times* (30 March 1900).

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Grossmann to M. Heller, 30 March 1900, Rabbi Maximilian Heller, MS 33/Box 2/Folder 23, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio

again, it was reported in the papers that Grossmann's words were the most striking of all his colleagues.¹³¹ His name was published across the country.

While Wise's death propelled Grossmann onto the national stage, it is clear that he was personally affected by Wise's death. In addition to losing his senior rabbi and having all of the responsibilities of the congregation thrust upon him, Grossmann lost a mentor and a friend. As was the case for so many of the alumni who were HUC's first ordinees, Wise was both a teacher and a father. He had been in Grossmann's life since Grossmann was only thirteen years old. Grossmann was devoted to Wise and his philosophy of moderate Reform Judaism. The loss was profound. Additionally, the legacy of Einhorn's more radical Reform Judaism became dominant in the years and decades which followed.¹³² This left Grossmann at odds with much of the movement and the leadership of Hebrew Union College.

It was clear that Grossmann could not serve the congregation singlehandedly, so temple leadership quickly set about looking for someone to help Grossmann meet the needs of the community. Moreover, in addition to all of his communal work, Grossmann began to work as an editor of *The American Israelite*. He served in this capacity from 1900 to 1905. In those early years he even wrote a weekly column.¹³³ In September of 1900 the Board of Trustees began to create an amendment to the congregational constitution that would allow for a cantor to be hired. This amendment explained what the responsibilities of the cantor

¹³¹ "In Memory of Dr. Wise: Services Held in Plum Street Temple at Cincinnati," *The New York Times* (7 May 1900).

¹³² See Michael A. Meyer, *Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988), chapters six and seven for a fuller description of the tension between Wise and Einhorn's philosophies of Reform Judaism and its legacy in the "Classical Period."

Grossmann wrote explicitly of Wise's moderate Reform in a sermon he delivered: "Isaac M. Wise was neither an orthodox nor a reformer; he was an organizer. He strove to create homogeneity in American Judaism." In this sermon, and in other addresses on Wise's legacy, Grossmann adamantly speaks in favor of a united Judaism.

A Renaissance in American Judaism, n.d. Louis Grossmann Papers, MS 92/Box 1/Folder 10, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

For further indications of his devotion to Wise's belief in a united American Judaism see Grossmann, Louis. *Address Delivered to the Representatives of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations*. Cincinnati: 1919.

¹³³ Louis Grossmann, "The Week," *The American Israelite* (7 June 1900).

would include.¹³⁴ By the annual meeting at the end of September the amendment was adopted by the congregation. It was thought that a cantor would not only help Grossmann with congregational obligations but would also beautify the service.

The congregation received applications for the position following its September 1900 meeting. By February of 1901 a list of five candidates was created. Each candidate was given a Sabbath weekend to come to the congregation for a trial.¹³⁵ On Sunday June 30, 1901, Mr. Isadore H. Weinstock of New York City was elected cantor of B'nai Yeshurun.¹³⁶ His term began on August first and his salary was \$2,000; this was exactly half that of Grossmann's. His initial contract was for one year, though he remained on until 1918.¹³⁷

After Wise's death, Grossmann's salary remained the same. Despite increased responsibilities, he continued to earn \$4,000 a year. At the end of 1901, however, his salary was increased to \$5,000 a year in order to reflect the increased obligations and duties he now carried.¹³⁸ By 1903, his salary was once again raised, this time to \$6,000 dollars annually, and at this time he was unanimously re-elected for five years.¹³⁹

The president's annual reports show that in these initial years of Grossmann's service the Sabbath School continued to grow in terms of both enrollment and programming.¹⁴⁰ While 1900 shook the Cincinnati Jewish community, 1901 was a traumatic year in the life of

¹³⁴ Minute Book, 30 September 1900, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/Box 5/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 22 February 1901.

¹³⁶ For more information on Weinstock see Judah M. Cohen., *Sounding Jewish Tradition: The Music of Central Synagogue* (New York: Central Synagogue 2011).

¹³⁷ Ibid., 30 June 1901.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 24 November 1901.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 26 April 1903.

¹⁴⁰ Annual Reports, 1900 and 1901, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-5/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

the nation. President McKinley was assassinated in Buffalo. Grossmann presided over special services marking the occasion of mourning.¹⁴¹

1901 was also an important year for the congregation. Initial plans began in that year to find a building for a school and an auditorium. By the end of 1901 a property on Reading Road was identified and recommended.¹⁴² At this time, many of the Jewish residents of the city had moved away from the downtown area and had settled in Cincinnati's outlying neighborhoods, such as Avondale and Bond Hill. These neighborhoods were a good distance from Plum Street Temple, and the congregation wanted to find a communal space closer to the Jewish population.¹⁴³ The congregation began to look for a site that would be convenient for religious school attendees and their parents, while Plum Street would remain the congregation's primary house of prayer. Grossmann was the rabbi during this exciting period of growth and expansion. It was hoped that the congregation's new facility on Reading Road would spark growth and create new initiatives for the Sabbath School.

However, in addition to these uses, the new building was also intended to be a place wherein the community would gather. In this new site public lectures would be held, important meetings would take place, and a diverse array of events would be housed.¹⁴⁴ The building project was initiated in 1901, and on September 25, 1903, the "Wise Center" opened.¹⁴⁵ By November 1st, 1903, in his report to the Board of Trustees, the president of the congregation reported that over 200 students were enrolled in the new school, and 150 students received instruction in the vestry room of the temple. This makes a total of 350

¹⁴¹ Minutes, 5 September 1901, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-5/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁴² Minutes, 24 December 1901, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-5/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁴³ Heller, *As Yesterday When It Is Past*, 173-174.

¹⁴⁴ Minutes, 2 November 1902, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-5/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁴⁵ Wise Temple website history

students enrolled in the congregation's schools. At this point Friday night services had not yet taken place at the new site, nor had the temple's many clubs and organizations begun to use the facilities.¹⁴⁶ However, by November 1904 Grossmann inaugurated Friday night services at the new location.¹⁴⁷ It should also be noted that daily services were held at B'nai Yeshurun. This was in contrast with Philipson's congregation which only held Shabbat worship.¹⁴⁸ By 1907 the facility was a major center of Jewish activity in Cincinnati. In fact, the congregation's new facilities were capable of hosting a wide range of communal groups such as the HUC Board of Governors, the Women's Jewish Council, and the Council of Jewish Juniors in its new facilities.¹⁴⁹

By 1907 Grossmann wrote to the board stating that he desired that they create a special committee whose task would be to increase membership at the synagogue and enrollment in the Sabbath School. In a meeting that took place on October 27th, the board decided that this assignment would be the work of the incoming board, but they did vote to appoint a committee to create a preliminary report.¹⁵⁰ At the time that Grossmann made this call the membership of the congregation was just below 400 family units.¹⁵¹ It appears that Grossmann excelled at membership recruitment. As has been noted, his primary strength was in his interpersonal relations and pastoral caregiving. This made him an ideal rabbi for

¹⁴⁶ Minutes 1 November 1903, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-5/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁴⁷ Minutes, 6 November 1904, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-5/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁴⁸ In *The American Israelite*, under the title "The Temples," one can find a listing of service times at several congregations including Plum Street Temple and Mound Street Temple. At Plum Street services are listed for Friday evening and Saturday morning. However, there are also weekday services listed for both 7a.m. and 5:30p.m except on Saturday and Sunday when they were at 5p.m. Mound Street Temple, however, only held services on Friday and Saturday. See *The American Israelite* 1903.

¹⁴⁹ Minutes, 28 June 1907 and 29 September 1907, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁵⁰ Minutes, 27 October 1907, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁵¹ Minutes, 3 November 1907, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

membership outreach. The minutes of the congregation are littered with lines remarking that of the new members joining the synagogue a good portion were recruited and suggested by Rabbi Grossmann.¹⁵²

In 1908 the congregation marked Grossmann's completion of ten years of service to B'nai Yeshurun. There were celebrations at the synagogue and Grossmann delivered a special sermon marking the event. (That same weekend also marked David Philipson's 25th year at Bene Israel.) B'nai Yeshurun passed a resolution in honor of Grossmann during the annual meeting which lauded his abilities and his successes in and out of the congregation.¹⁵³

By 1909 the congregation's membership exceeded 400 families. This was viewed as triumph. Despite this fact, the membership was aging and the president aimed to attain new, younger members. While holiday services at the congregation continued to draw large numbers, the Friday night services and lectures held at the new Reading Road location were not well- attended.¹⁵⁴ These Friday night services were discontinued in 1910. In their place a more traditional service for Friday night was held at 5:30 in the evening.¹⁵⁵ Grossmann also began to hold weekly classes on Bible every Sunday at the Reading Road building.¹⁵⁶

The membership of the congregation rose to an all-time high in 1911. However, despite this fact the temple was in financial trouble. Expenditures were larger than receipts, and a committee of three members was formed to deal with the matter. In the end, it was

¹⁵² Minutes, 1911, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁵³ Minutes, 1 November 1908, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁵⁴ Minutes, 7 November 1909, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁵⁵ Minutes, 27 November 1910, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁵⁶ Minutes, 7 November 1909, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

decided to increase dues by five dollars.¹⁵⁷ After this and other measures the financial situation stabilized, but it took several years before the congregation returned to a healthy financial situation.¹⁵⁸ In 1912 Grossmann's contract with the congregation was once again renewed.¹⁵⁹

At the December 3rd 1912 board meeting Grossmann petitioned that the board take action in granting the organization of a sisterhood society for the temple.¹⁶⁰ This initiative was consonant with the interest he showed in women's involvement in the synagogue when he was serving his congregation in Detroit. In the end, a Sisterhood was organized and was able to participate in the national meeting of temple Sisterhoods at the Sinton Hotel. It was at this meeting that delegates from congregations around the country formed the nation's first national synagogue auxiliary for women: the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (NFTS).

The temple's new Sisterhood carried out tangible and necessary projects at B'nai Yeshurun. The women worked to improve the sanitary conditions of the school and temple, and they labored to increase attendance at services. They also undertook projects relating to the beautification of the temple. More importantly, they had the temple open up the Sabbath School rooms on Sunday afternoons, and oversaw a program wherein children of members and nonmembers could come for instruction and play during winter months.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Minutes, 3 November 1912, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁵⁸ Minutes, 5 December 1915, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁵⁹ Minutes, 3 December 1912, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Minutes, 1913, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

In addition to his work on behalf of the temple Sisterhood, Grossmann taught classes for the Jewish Woman's Council,¹⁶² spoke on behalf of a greater woman's organization of Cincinnati later called the Federation of Women's Clubs,¹⁶³ and worked with the Council of Jewish Women.¹⁶⁴ Grossmann was an advocate of an expanded role for women in the synagogue as well as in the public sphere. He worked throughout his career to support these endeavors.

In 1913 Grossmann turned fifty, and the congregation gave him a mahogany desk and a chair to mark this milestone.¹⁶⁵ The synagogue also asked that Grossmann begin delivering Sunday lectures. He did so in the same year, despite his life-long hesitancy to make Sunday the primary synagogue day for the community.¹⁶⁶ While Grossmann wrote and spoke in his early career against Sunday services, these lectures did not appear to trouble him.

Many changes occurred at B'nai Yeshurun in 1914. The congregation adopted a new constitution that sought to simplify the management structure of the synagogue.¹⁶⁷ More drastic changes came to B'nai Yeshurun and the nation in 1914 when World War I broke out in Europe. Life in every community was altered, and Cincinnati was no exception.

Initially, Grossmann preached against American involvement in the war. He asserted that there were no justifications for war, and he preached that war and all violence was futile and was never a means to settle disputes. Prophetically, he argued in 1914 that

¹⁶² "Local," *The American Israelite* (25 December 1902); 6.

¹⁶³ "Local," *The American Israelite* (11 December 1902); 6.

¹⁶⁴ "Local," *The American Israelite* (6 November 1902); 6.

¹⁶⁵ Minutes, 1913, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁶⁶ Minutes, 29 November 1914, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁶⁷ Minutes, 6 December 1914, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/C-6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

issues “settled” by war are only re-opened and finally settled by peace and arbitration.¹⁶⁸

Grossmann took up this theme in his 1914 work, *The Real Life*, as well. In it he criticized not only nations for going to war, but also international onlookers doing nothing to end the violence. Grossmann also took a stance that America was above involvement in warfare.¹⁶⁹

Eventually, Grossmann changed his position on the war, and began to preach in favor of American involvement. Despite his shift in stance, he continued to focus his sermons on supporting the community and the individuals affected by the war’s devastation, and ensuring that his congregation did not accept the violence that went along with America’s involvement. Interestingly, Grossmann preached about the need for America to defend the rights of animals during the war, and he decried the brutal death of countless horses on the battle fields of Europe.¹⁷⁰ He abhorred violence toward any creature, and one must imagine the war was hard for him to endure. By 1915 Grossmann spoke more frequently about the cruelty of war. He was appalled by the brutality of World War I’s “Total Warfare,” which was unlike anything the world had previously experienced.

Grossmann provided his congregants with a detailed account of the cruel stories that Americans were hearing from the warfront. These reports disturbed him deeply, and he was concerned over the “matter of fact” way in which these frightful accounts were being reported to the American public. He shuddered over the effect this kind of violence would have on the returning soldiers and the greater populace. He called upon the congregation to not become accustomed to the horrors of the war and to prepare for rebuilding when the

¹⁶⁸ “War: Is Denounced as Foolish and Useless by Rabbi Louis Grossman in Sermon,” *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (19 April 1914): 4.

¹⁶⁹ Louis Grossmann. *The Real Life* (New York: The Bloch Publishing Co., 1914), 55-57.

¹⁷⁰ “Dependence on Animals: Is the Theme of Discourse of Rabbi Louis Grossmann,” *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (15 November 1914): 11.

war ended. He pointed out that society would need to work with the returning soldiers and with the populace as a whole if the country was going to heal.¹⁷¹

Grossmann also worked to support the many HUC students who found themselves serving as soldiers and chaplains during World War I. There is correspondence between Grossmann and then rabbinical student, Jacob Rader Marcus. Marcus enlisted in the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in 1917, and it appears that Grossmann supplied Marcus with some materials the Jewish soldiers required, including transliterated Kaddish cards.¹⁷² Despite his sermons and pastoral work as a leader in the local community, Grossmann's work relating to the war was much more a part of his service to the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR). More of his efforts to support Jewish enlisted men will be described in a later chapter devoted to Grossmann's involvement in the CCAR.

The year 1915 provides a good case study for the range of Grossmann's services to the greater community: he was principal of the Teacher's Institute at HUC, he taught rabbinical students at HUC, and he served as vice president of the CCAR. Also during in 1915 he preached in Chicago, St. Louis, New York City, Detroit, Birmingham, and numerous other cities. He lectured to the Federation of Jewish Women's organizations of Chicago, the teachers of the city of St. Louis, the Jewish Religious School Union of the City of New York, students at the University of Michigan, and the Teachers' Association of Western Pennsylvania. He was president of the Jewish Teachers' Association of the State of Ohio, and, as has been noted, he campaigned aggressively against the teaching of the Bible in the public schools of Ohio. Moreover, he was an orator at the Emancipation Celebration of

¹⁷¹ "Brutalizing Effect: Of War Is Subject of Sermon By Rabbi Grossman," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (23 May 1915): 5.

¹⁷² Grossmann to Jacob Rader Marcus, 7 September 1917, Jacob Rader Marcus Papers, MS 210/Box 4/Folder 12, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

the colored citizens of Cincinnati held at Allen Temple.¹⁷³ This is a simple list of his work outside of the congregation. When combined with his duties in the congregation it paints the picture of a rabbi without much rest or leisure. It is worth taking some time before we come to the final years of his service to B'nai Yeshurun to describe in more detail some of Grossmann's work outside of the congregation beyond this single year.

During his years in Cincinnati, Grossmann continued to work on many of the causes he first began to champion during his rabbinate in Detroit, but he also showed a devotion to new causes. From his pulpit in Cincinnati, Grossmann continued to work hard to fight forces which sought to incorporate religious instruction in the public schools.¹⁷⁴ In a particularly dangerous episode in 1915, Wilbur F. Crafts, a noted American religious lobbyist, tried to pass a Bill in the Ohio Legislature making Bible-reading compulsory in public schools. He even claimed that Ohio's rabbis were in favor of this Bill. Grossmann went before the Committee on Education in an effort to oppose passage of this Bill, and debunked Craft's claim regarding rabbinic support of the Bill. Moreover, because of his connections to the Christian community, Grossmann was able to contradict Crafts' assertion that several Christian clergymen also supported the Bill. Grossmann fought this battle in much the same way during his time in Detroit, and, what is more, as soon as he discovered that a similar Bill was likely being introduced by the same forces in the New York Legislature, he wrote to Stephen S. Wise and urged him to oppose the proposal there as well.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Report of the Temple President, 1915-1916, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/Box 6/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

¹⁷⁴ "Rev. Grossmann: Has Sent protest to B. of E. on Proposed Religious School Training," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (3 April 1905): 10.

¹⁷⁵ Grossmann to S. Wise, 22 April 1915, Stephen S. Wise Papers, MF-2321-2425/Box 45/Folder 12, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York.

Grossmann also continued to speak out about the need to help the poor and look after the immigrant populations. He condemned the conditions that prevailed in tenement housing, and criticized employers who took advantage of their laborers.¹⁷⁶ Grossmann also continued to be a vocal critic of antisemitism at home and abroad. One must remember that Grossmann lived through the Dreyfus Affair, Leo Frank's Trial and subsequent lynching, and the massacres in East Europe—including the Kishinev Pogroms. He also helped fight antisemitism by working against laws preventing Jews from opening their storefronts on Sunday, and by combatting the evangelicals who were proselytizing Jews.¹⁷⁷ He conveyed his viewpoints on these issues throughout his various editorials in *The American Israelite*.

Grossmann spoke out on social issues which affected Jews and non-Jews alike. He continued to write and work on behalf of the East European Jewish immigrants and, in addition, he spoke out in favor of fair treatment of the African American community.¹⁷⁸ In 1914, the African American community in Cincinnati held a meeting aimed at raising \$15,000 in order to build a "Black YMCA building." Grossmann was asked to speak on that occasion, and emphasized "the interest the Jew should show in the welfare of the colored race."¹⁷⁹ He boldly declared to all present at the meeting that, "No bigot has any place in Cincinnati."¹⁸⁰ On a different occasion, Grossmann was selected in 1915 to speak at a meeting in honor of the memory of Booker T. Washington.¹⁸¹ In both instances he appears to have been the only Jewish clergyman present.

¹⁷⁶ Louis Grossmann, *The Real Life*, 13-15 and 39-42.

¹⁷⁷ "Jewish Sabbath: To Be Determined in the Case to Be Fought By Grocers," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (19 September 1908): 7.

¹⁷⁸ Louis Grossmann, "The Week," *The American Israelite* (13 June 1901).

¹⁷⁹ "Big Meeting: Of Colored People Will Be Held at Emery Hall This Afternoon-Good Speakers To Attend," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (1 March 1914): 9.

¹⁸⁰ "Enthusiasm: Marks Mass Meeting In Interest of Campaign Now Being Waged in this City for Colored Y.M.C.A.," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (2 March 1914): 12.

¹⁸¹ "Memory: Of Booker Washington Is Honored By Condon, Head of Cincinnati Schools," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (29 November 1915): 7.

It is clear that Grossmann continually advocated for causes he believed were just. In March 1919 Grossmann spoke out in favor of Irish freedom at a Friends of Irish Freedom event. He told the assembly that, “no people can be at its best unless it is rid of the handicaps of alien domination.” Grossmann unreservedly called for an end of British rule in Ireland.¹⁸²

In addition to the social issues and causes mentioned above with which Grossman was involved, he also quietly performed acts of *tzedakah*—philanthropic acts—over the course of his rabbinical career. He donated much of his salary to charitable causes, and after his death his philanthropic contributions to the city’s poor and needy was often acknowledged. Alfred Segal, a noted Cincinnati columnist who served for many years on the staff of the *Cincinnati Post*, wrote that whenever Grossmann heard of an individual in need he found the means to help without ever seeking recognition for his deeds. He gave generously to all, without regard to race, religion, or creed.¹⁸³

On one occasion, in a moment of unusual notoriety, Grossmann became the attention of local and national news. It was Grossmann’s custom to vacation abroad for the summer months.¹⁸⁴ In 1902, this vacation stirred up a controversy that captured the nation’s attention. In 1832, Russia and the United States signed a treaty of commerce and navigation. In the first article of the treaty it stated that:

They [the inhabitants of Russia or the United States] shall be at liberty to sojourn and reside in all parts whatsoever of said territories, in order to attend to their affairs, and they shall enjoy, to that effect, the same security and protections as natives of the country wherein they reside, on condition of their submitting to the laws and ordinances there prevailing...

¹⁸² “Justice: Sought By Ireland,” *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (17 March 1919): 14.

¹⁸³ Alfred Segal, “The Story of a Rabbi and a Saint: The Rabbi Gives to the Saint His love to Carry to a Child in Cincinnati on the Night Before Christmas,” *The American Israelite* (30 September 1926).

¹⁸⁴ See Congregational Minute Books within MS 62/Box 5 and 6/Minute Books 1900-1907.

As the Russian government began a campaign of violence and discrimination against Russian Jews at the dawn of the 20th century, American Jews in Russia were also subjected to hardships and discrimination. The government sanctioned these acts based upon the wording of the first article of the treaty. Moreover, beginning in the 1890s, Russia refused to honor American Jewish passports.¹⁸⁵

In advance of his trip to Russia, Grossmann applied for his traveling credentials through the office of Ohio's U.S. Senator Joseph B. Foraker.¹⁸⁶ Foraker informed the rabbi that Jews were excluded from Russia except by special permission. In his reply to the Senator, Grossmann wrote, "This Russian interdiction is intolerable because it violates an essential birthright of every law-abiding American citizen." Grossmann demanded equal rights for himself and for his fellow non-Jewish American citizens. "I demand a passport from my Government, which I can bear as a citizen of my country, without fear anywhere."¹⁸⁷

Grossmann's communication to Foraker appeared in a number of newspapers, and the issue attracted public interest. The *New York Times* reported that Grossmann refused to accept a passport as an exception to a rule; he would only accept a passport that was open to all Americans. In the end he did not receive a passport. Although the *New York Times* reported that he intended to travel to Russia so he could "welcome interference for the sake of bringing about an international settlement,"¹⁸⁸ efforts to verify that Grossmann actually tried to go to Russia that year have not been met with success. Regardless, Grossmann's action and protest received national attention. He was part of a much greater effort to

¹⁸⁵ Naomi Cohen, "The Abrogation of the Russo-American Treaty of 1832," *Jewish Social Studies* 25, no. 1 (January, 1963): 3-41.

¹⁸⁶ Foraker lived from July 5, 1846 to May 10, 1917. He first served as Governor of Ohio from 1886 to 1890 and then served as a United States Senator from 1897 to 1909.

¹⁸⁷ "Clash: With Czar May Come All of His Rights as an American Citizen Have Been Demanded By Rabbi Grossman," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (4 July 1902): 12.

¹⁸⁸ "Rabbi's Request For Passport Refused," *The New York Times* (5 July 1902).

address this issue and create change. In an unusually public way, Grossmann fought against an injustice.

Grossmann's interfaith activities, which began during the years he served in Detroit, continued throughout his tenure in Cincinnati. He deeply believed that interfaith dialogue and cooperation could lead to a more unified humanity. Grossmann was a clergy leader who fostered ties with the wider religious world where he could. He spoke at many churches in the area, and also hosted an interfaith Thanksgiving service at Plum Street Temple. This event was such a success that he later proposed and helped organize a city-wide inter-faith Thanksgiving service at Music Hall.¹⁸⁹ He maintained close ties to non-Jewish clergy and participated in a wide range of interfaith events.¹⁹⁰ When Methodist Bishop John M. Walden died in 1914 Grossmann spoke openly of the bishop's gifts to the community.¹⁹¹

Grossmann also lectured at various churches. In May of 1900, for example, he spoke at the Vine Street Congregational Church.¹⁹² Eulogies on Grossmann repeatedly emphasized his interest in interfaith work and his ability to establish bonds of friendship with people of other faiths. According to the editorial writer of *The Cincinnati Post*, Grossmann was:

a man of liberal religion who could make common cause with all men of good will of whatever faith. He went about serving his fellow-man. He was the late Rabbi Louis Grossmann who had love not only of the people of his faith, but of all others in the city who were privileged to know him.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ "At Music Hall: Jew and Gentile Will Unite Next Year in One Great Service," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (29 November 1907): 5.

¹⁹⁰ "Local," *The American Israelite* (6 November 1902): 6.

¹⁹¹ "Passing: Of Bishop Walden," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (23 January 1914): 9.

¹⁹² "Local," *The American Israelite* (17 May 1900): 6.

¹⁹³ Alfred Segal "Man," *The American Israelite* (30 September 1926): 4.

Grossman was also an early participant in the Big Brothers organization,¹⁹⁴ and was a familiar personality at the Home for Incurables in Cincinnati.¹⁹⁵ He also regularly preached and visited the Jewish Home for the Aged.¹⁹⁶ Grossmann spoke at for many local events, and delivered, for example, addresses at the dedication of the new Hughes High School Building in Clifton¹⁹⁷ and at the dedication of the Odeon of the College of Music.¹⁹⁸ Over the years he gave talks at numerous graduation ceremonies and other school occasions including at the College of Pharmacy,¹⁹⁹ Walnut hills high School,²⁰⁰ and the Cincinnati College of Music.²⁰¹ Grossmann also regularly addressed various fraternal organizations in Cincinnati, including the Fraternal Order of Eagles.²⁰²

Internationally, he participated in the American delegation to The Universal Peace Congress of 1905 in Lucerne.²⁰³ This was one of many peace conferences which took place prior to World War I. Grossmann was a firm proponent of international dialogue, and he supported the creation of League of Nations. He also attended the First Universal Races Congress held at the University of London in July of 1911.²⁰⁴

Grossmann's place in the congregation began to change when a shift in the congregational leadership occurred in 1918, as a result of a major scandal that shook the congregation. The long-time cantor, Cantor Isadore H. Weinstock, was the center of the scandal. His wife was filing a suit of divorce against him, and this news reached the Board of Trustees. At the July 30th board meeting the president read a letter he had written to the

¹⁹⁴ Jonathan D. Sarna and Nancy H. Klein, *The Jews of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati: Center for Study of the American Jewish Experience, 1989), 98.

¹⁹⁵ "Local," *The American Israelite* (26 April 1900): 6.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, (18 October 1900).

¹⁹⁷ "New Career: Opened For Hughes," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (3 December 1910): 7.

¹⁹⁸ "Local," *The American Israelite* (5 November 1903): 6.

¹⁹⁹ "Local," *The American Israelite* (7 June 1900): 6.

²⁰⁰ "Local," *The American Israelite* (14 May 1903): 6.

²⁰¹ "Local," *The American Israelite* (11 June 1903): 6.

²⁰² "Local," *The American Israelite* (4 February 1904): 6.

²⁰³ "Peace Congress At Lucerne," *The New York Times* (20 September 1905).

²⁰⁴ World Conferences Documents, 1911, Louis Grossmann, MS 92/Box 1/Folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

cantor. The letter informed Cantor Weinstock that he was suspended from his duties. Cantor Weinstock wrote a letter in reply which acknowledged the suspension, mocked the president for being unmerciful and overzealous, and stated that he was ready to fulfill his contract unless he was prevented from doing so.²⁰⁵ The situation culminated in a tense board meeting where the cantor demanded the reason for his suspension. He gave a thirty-minute address, after which the Board threatened to go into Executive session. In that session the cantor “expressed his willingness to answer questions” and cooperate. Based on the meeting minutes, it appears the cantor was denied a spot on the *bimah* during the High Holidays and was relegated to coming as a visitor. In the heat of the moment the cantor apparently made some disparaging remarks about the president and Grossmann, although Grossmann does not seem to have played any documented role in the decision to suspend him. The meeting was brought to a conclusion when Weinstock was asked how *he* would have dealt with the situation of a cantor whose wife had filed a suit for divorce. Weinstock responded that he would have suspended the man. Despite this, Weinstock was adamant that it was wrong to suspend him without meeting with him in person.²⁰⁶ But Weinstock was eventually dismissed, and went on to serve Central Synagogue in New York City. This left Grossmann alone once again, with great responsibilities inside and outside the congregation.

After the dismissal of the cantor, the congregation began to consider hiring an associate rabbi. Grossmann was a devoted pastor, but the congregation was large and needed more attention than he could give it. Grossmann was also not a young rabbi, and, in addition to his congregational duties, he was teaching at HUC, running the ‘Teachers’

²⁰⁵ Minutes, 30 July 1918, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/microfilm #2623-2624, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁰⁶ Minutes, 1918, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/microfilm #2623-2624, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Institute, and had recently served as president of the CCAR. It is not surprising that the congregation was beginning to feel the need for additional clergy.²⁰⁷ In June of 1919 the idea of electing an associate rabbi was first manifested in the congregational minutes.²⁰⁸ At the Board meeting of June 26, 1919, each Trustee was given time to respond to the suggestion that the congregation hire an assistant rabbi. Almost all the Trustees were in favor of the decision, but one Trustee, Mr. Kahn, rightly pointed out that the Board should first speak with Grossmann.²⁰⁹

At the annual meeting on December 7, 1919, an official resolution was read, recommending to the members that they empower the Board to secure a second rabbi. At the same meeting it was recommended to increase Grossmann's salary from 7,000 to 10,000 dollars a year. Both motions passed.²¹⁰ On December 30th, 1919, a committee was formed to find an associate rabbi. It was comprised of five members of the Board, the president, and Rabbi Grossmann.²¹¹ Around the end of May, letters were sent to several candidates asking for a personal interview.²¹² By September 20th, 1920, the committee reported to the Board of Directors that they had considered every living graduate of HUC. After eight months of deliberation they all decided upon James Heller, who was serving a congregation in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Heller was the son of Maximilian Heller, Grossmann's classmate at HUC and longtime friend. It was recommend that the congregation reach out to the Little Rock

²⁰⁷ Minutes, 24 November 1919, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/microfilm #2623-2624, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁰⁸ Minutes, 12 June 1919, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/microfilm #2623-2624, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁰⁹ Minutes, 26 July 1919, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/microfilm #2623-2624, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²¹⁰ Minutes, 7 December 1919, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/microfilm #2623-2624, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²¹¹ Minutes, 30 December 1919, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/microfilm #2623-2624, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²¹² MS 147 Box 1 Folder 2 correspondence

community to see if James could be released from his current contract and accept the call to B'nai Yeshurun.²¹³ Though reticent to do so, the Little Rock congregation released Heller. By October 26, B'nai Yeshurun sent a formal letter stating that Heller was elected associate rabbi and that his compensation would be 7,200 a year.²¹⁴ Clearly wanting Heller to have the news earlier than the standard post would allow, Grossmann sent a Western Union Telegram informing Heller of the unanimous election and wishing him blessing.²¹⁵ It is clear that Grossmann cared for the young man. However, during the search process, as it became evident that Heller was a favorite, Grossmann stated that his only qualification was "that the pulpit should not be used for militant promotion of Zionism."²¹⁶ It is likely that Grossmann knew Heller would be the temple's choice, and, although he liked the young man and, as will be noted below, had defended him against the administration at HUC when he was a student, Grossmann was openly against the Zionist movement which the Heller family supported. Heller's election was notable because, in Heller, the congregation found a rabbi of an entirely different character than Grossmann's.

James Heller was a recent graduate of HUC and was serving his first community, B'nai Israel of Little Rock. James grew up in a family of devoted Zionists. His personal devotion to Zionism had set him at odds with Kohler—the president of HUC—and Philipson during his career as a student at HUC. At this time, Grossmann had come to young James' defense. The two were familiar with one another, and the family had a friendly relationship with Grossmann. Yet Heller and Grossmann were very different individuals

²¹³ Minutes, 20 September 1920, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/microfilm #2623-2624, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²¹⁴ Leslie Marks to James Heller, 26 October 1920, James G. Heller Papers, MS 147/Box 1/Folder 2, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²¹⁵ Grossmann to Heller, 25 October 1920, James G. Heller Papers, MS 147/Box 1/Folder 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²¹⁶ Minutes, 20 September 1920, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/Box 1/Folder 2, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Heller was a dynamic and charismatic orator who possessed a magnetic personality. Whereas Grossmann inspired through his modest, meek, and generous spirit, Heller inspired through heated passion, vocal leadership, and strength of personality. The great differences in character between the two men would create a personal and professional distance between them, even during the brief time the two men worked together.

Upon receiving the invitation from B'nai Yeshurun Heller wrote a letter to his parents. He informed them of the situation and stated that his inclination was to decline the offer because of his contractual obligations to the Arkansas congregation. Before he acted, however, he wished to know his parents' thoughts.²¹⁷ He decided in the end to pursue the position in Cincinnati, but it was not an easy decision for him. First, Heller was fond of the Arkansas congregation and this feeling was apparently mutual. The Little Rock congregation made it clear they wished to retain his services. After informing them of his hope to heed the call and move to Cincinnati, the Arkansas community became vocal about wanting to retain him. Many of the members got together and offered to purchase a car for him in order to entice him to remain. Moreover, members of the orthodox congregation approached one of the leaders of Heller's congregation with an offer to merge into one congregation if Heller agreed to stay in town. But despite all of these enticements, Heller asked to be released from his contract.²¹⁸ Ultimately, the call to a larger congregation with a national reputation and at the center of the movement, proved too tempting. He sought the national stage, and also desired to work at HUC. Heller was a man of ambition and this was too great an opportunity.²¹⁹ He was, however, not unmoved. He wrote to his parents, "I

²¹⁷ Heller to Heller, 27 May 1920, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 7/Folder 5, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²¹⁸ J. Heller to M. Heller, 13 October 1920, Maximilian H. Heller Papers. MS 33/Box 7/Folder, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

believe that I am doing what is right, in the larger sense...but it really wrings my heart that, through no conscious fault, I am still hurting them [the congregation].”²²⁰

Reading the minutes of the B’nai Yeshurun Board after his election, it is clear that there were forces at B’nai Yeshurun who saw Heller’s arrival as a chance to change the status quo. Many in the congregation knew Heller from his student days at HUC. They took note of the fact that Heller knew where the community’s problems existed, that he knew where lethargy was present in the community, and where potential lay to be aroused. They also recognized that his reputation as an ardent Zionist was troubling to some in the community, and stated that he was not coming to preach any “ism” except Judaism. The minutes finish by stating that his appointment is the edge of a new era for B’nai Yeshurun.²²¹ One can only imagine how these words may have stung Grossmann. It is evident that many in the congregation felt that they had hit a plateau, and viewed Heller as the person who would help the congregation reach new heights.

While no one could have predicted Grossmann’s need to resign in 1921 due to health reasons, it was generally fortuitous that the congregation had hired Heller in 1920. The two men did not work long together, and during that period that they did, Grossmann seems to have been mostly unable to perform his duties. Perhaps this, more than any difference in character, caused the tensions described above between the two men. Heller could not have foreseen his quick rise to senior rabbi and all the responsibilities it entailed. He surely welcomed the position, but it was not what he expected in coming to Cincinnati. In this way, Heller’s ascension at B’nai Yeshurun mirrored Grossmann’s. By 1921,

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Minutes, 25 October 1920, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/microfilm #2623-2624, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Grossmann began the process of disengaging from the Cincinnati community. This life change will be discussed further in later chapters.

Hebrew Union College

Arrival

On November 29, 1898, Isaac Mayer Wise reported to the Board of Governors that Louis Grossmann had volunteered to teach at Hebrew Union College. Recognizing that the Board of Governors had not yet elected Grossmann to the position of instructor, Wise appointed him temporarily as the instructor of philosophy for the Second Collegiate class, and as a lecturer on pedagogics to other classes. Wise then recommended the board elect him as Professor of Theology.²²² Grossmann was officially invited by the Board of Governors to join the faculty in December of 1898. He began his work with the title of Professor of Theology.²²³ Grossmann took on this responsibility in addition to his work at B'nai Yeshurun. Moreover, while serving as a professor for about 24 years, Grossmann, throughout his career, offered his services to the College without remuneration.²²⁴

Coursework

While officially hired as a professor of theology, Grossmann's work at the College focused primarily on two subjects: Jewish ethics and pedagogy. The absence of academic catalogs prior to 1906 makes it nearly impossible to identify Grossmann's course load from his first years until then, but there is a record from that date onward. HUC's early academic handbooks state that the "important and difficult," task imposed upon the rabbi of the day

²²² Wise to the President and board of Governors of HUC, 29 November 1898, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D1/Folder 12, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²²³ Bloom to Grossmann in Letterbook, 2 December 1898, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D1/Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²²⁴ Committee on Salaries and Accounts to Board of Governors of HUC, 28 June 1900, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B2/Folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

was religious instruction of the young. "Indeed, the question how to conduct a religious school, how to teach religion and ethics, and particularly how to use the Bible as a source of inspiration and religious instruction...is one fraught with many difficulties."²²⁵ Fervently believing that education was the primary way Reform Judaism would pass on Jewish heritage and tradition, Grossmann fought throughout his career to create more opportunities for the rabbinical students to attain instruction in and experience of teaching. However, his course schedule remained somewhat static. He primarily taught the advanced Collegiate classes, not the Preparatory classes. Moreover, as a full-time rabbi in the community, and later Principal of the Teachers' Institute, the hours he could devote to instruction were limited.

He began teaching five units (roughly five hours) a week. Two units were devoted to the Junior class, and three units were devoted to the Senior class. These units were made up of three classes. The first was a course on Ethics. The Ethics course began as a lecture for the Senior class, and met for two hours the first semester and one hour the second. The substance of the class focused on the history of ethical philosophy in Judaism as well as corresponding literature. No syllabi remain, but based on the course description, it seems that among the texts studied were Jewish ethical wills in historical literature, as well as texts pertaining to charity.²²⁶ Later academic catalogs also speak of a study of Jewish proverbs.²²⁷ The academic catalog of 1913–1914 provides a more detailed understanding of the ethics class. In the first semester, students would encounter the ethics of biblical times, the post-biblical period (which looked at Midrash and Talmud), the medieval period and the major Jewish philosophers, and finally modern Jewish authors. The second term was devoted to specific texts including *Mishnah Avot*, *Pirke D'rabbi Natan*, *Tanna D'be D'Rabbi Eliezer*, *Tanna*

²²⁵ Academic Catalog, May 1906, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

D've Eliyahu, as well as *Sefer Hasidim*.²²⁸ This outline of the class confirms that Grossmann had strong textual skills and textual appreciation. In several eulogies it was noted that Grossmann had an unusual appetite and appreciation for Jewish texts. Moreover, he was familiar with the major as well as the more obscure texts of the tradition.²²⁹ It was an ambitious syllabus considering the time he was given with the students.

The other two classes began as courses for Juniors and focused on Pedagogy. The first semester dealt with teaching methods within Jewish schools. The second semester was an exploration of the history of Jewish education.²³⁰ Once again, there are no syllabi for these courses and little information about them until the academic handbook of 1913 and 1914. We cannot claim that the course outlined in that handbook was the same as those of earlier years, and, in that year, the course was described as a two-term class. The first semester focused on the history of Jewish Education. It looked at education in the biblical period, the Talmudic period, and the Middle Ages, and finally examined the establishment of Jewish schools in modern Europe. The second term focused on principles of instruction, “the function of the religious school in modern Judaism,” methods of teaching, lesson planning, and practice teaching in actual situations.²³¹ Assuming he was able to move through the syllabus, such a course exposed students to a wide array of Jewish ethical texts. This course description helps give a clearer picture of what was taught by Grossmann during this period, and perhaps in earlier years as well.

²²⁸ Academic Catalog, 1913-1914, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 5, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²²⁹ Heller, *As Yesterday When It Is Past*, 189.

²³⁰ Academic Catalog, May 1906, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²³¹ Academic Catalog, 1913-1914, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 5, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

In 1908, it seems that the total number of units Grossmann was teaching was reduced from five to three, split between the Junior and Senior class.²³² In 1910/1911, it appears Grossmann's workload was reduced to two hours and that he taught pedagogy exclusively.²³³ However, by the following academic year Grossmann was teaching three hours once again, while the catalog listed his courses as a conflation of Ethics and Pedagogics. He maintained two hours with the Junior Class, but only one with the senior class. In the academic year of 1913–1914 Grossmann's teaching hours were increased to four.²³⁴ Two hours were given to the Juniors, exclusively for the study of Jewish ethics. Two hours were devoted to the Seniors, who focused exclusively on pedagogy. In the academic year 1915–1916 the structure of the courses shifted once again. Grossmann taught courses on Ethics and Pedagogy to a combined Junior and Senior class. This structure of a combined course for both Juniors and Seniors continued for several years.²³⁵ It appears the form of the course, as well as the time allotted Grossmann, shifted constantly. This likely led to variations in the education each class received. Moreover, a single class on education throughout one's time as a rabbinical student hardly qualifies one as a proper educator. Though Grossmann expressed a desire for increased opportunities for students to be exposed to education, this did not manifest itself during his lifetime. One account by a student stated that the lessons they received in the single class focused on theory and not on practical skills. In this student's mind this limited their utility. Despite the school's

²³² Academic Catalog, May 1908, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²³³ Academic Catalog, 1910-1911, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²³⁴ Academic Catalog, 1913-1914, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 5, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²³⁵ Academic Catalog, 1915-1916, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

acknowledgment of the need for courses on pedagogy, adequate time does not seem to have been allotted for meaningful learning.

In 1909 the Hebrew Union College established a Teacher's Institute. The Teacher's Institute was financed by Jacob M. Schiff, a major Jewish philanthropist from New York City. He established a Teacher's Institute not only for Hebrew Union College, but also for the Jewish Theological Seminary. In addition to Schiff's backing, Cyrus Adler, of Dropsie College, served as a general overseer of both the Cincinnati Teachers' Institute and the New York Teachers' Institute.

In April 27, 1909, Kaufman Kohler, who was the chairman of the committee charged with planning and creating this Teacher's Institute, reported to the board of Governors that he was ready, "to submit a working plan."²³⁶ The work of the Teachers' Institute began officially that year. Grossmann was appointed to serve as its Principal and oversee the project.²³⁷ The main aim of the Teachers' Institute was to create a supply of educated and well-trained teachers to serve the needs of Jewish religious schools.²³⁸ More will be said in the following chapters of the history of this project and its sister school that was run by Mordechai M. Kaplan on behalf of the Jewish Theological Seminary.²³⁹

Grossmann ran the Teachers' Institute from 1909 until 1922, when he officially resigned from his work at Hebrew Union College.²⁴⁰ As principal, Grossmann worked to create a new breed of supplemental school teachers who had a greater knowledge of Jewish

²³⁶ Monthly Report of President, 27 April 1909, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-4/Folder 12, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²³⁷ "School: For Sabbath Teachers Will Be Established Here By Jewish Association," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (27 December 1909): 4.

²³⁸ Academic Catalog, 1909-1910, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 2, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²³⁹ Jonathan B. Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 44-58.

²⁴⁰ Secretary of Board of Governors to Grossmann, 31 March 1922, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-14/Folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

History, Hebrew, texts, and educational methods.²⁴¹ During that time he also expanded the program of the Teachers' Institute. The Institute began as a program with daily instruction for the registered students.²⁴² Grossmann helped expand the program to include, and then focus on, extension programs in other cities. Soon, Hebrew Union College faculty members were running extension programs in cities like Chicago, Detroit, Savannah, Nashville, Newark, New York City, Cleveland, and in countless other Jewish communal centers.²⁴³ In this way the Teachers' Institute was able to benefit regions and cities beyond Cincinnati.

The HUC faculty who agreed to be instructors took on this responsibility in addition to their already full schedule of coursework with the rabbinical students. Grossmann refused to take a salary for his work as principal. Beginning in 1909 he served as the senior rabbi at B'nai Yeshurun, for which he received a salary, but he also served as a Professor at the Hebrew Union College and as the Principal of the Teachers' Institute, both of which he did for free.²⁴⁴ It should also be noted that while not receiving a salary for either of these time-intensive endeavors, Grossmann also donated a significant portion of his salary from B'nai Yeshurun to charitable causes.²⁴⁵ It is hard to imagine how he managed all of these various time commitments, but Grossmann continued to take on even more responsibilities in the community.

In 1915 and 1916 there was a new development at the College: students were required to teach in a religious school. Not only were they required to teach, but they had

²⁴¹ Academic Catalog, 1910-1911, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Academic Catalog, 1914-1915, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁴⁴ Grossmann to M. Heller, 17 May 1909, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 2/Folder 23, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁴⁵ Alfred Segal, "The Story of a Rabbi and a Saint: The Rabbi Gives to the Saint His love to Carry to a Child in Cincinnati on the Night Before Christmas," *The American Israelite* (30 September 1926).

to, "teach in a Religious School for no less than three years prior to graduation."²⁴⁶ This was an innovation which Grossmann fought for, and he oversaw its implementation at the school. In Grossmann's mind, if a rabbi was an inadequate teacher then he would be incapable of fulfilling his rabbinical duties.²⁴⁷ In fact he went so far to state to the entire CCAR

...the rabbi is a teacher. I fear that, in the main, this statement is only formally true. In the first place, the prime condition for teaching is that it be methodic, continuous and frankly disciplinary. ..modern preaching is none of these...teaching, that is the instruction of the young, is an incident in the rabbinate and not, as it should be, its supreme interest...the rabbi should always look twenty-five years ahead. It is the children of his congregation, those who, under his fatherly influence, grow into religious interests and into the tradition of their fathers, to whom he bears his prime responsibility. To them and, through them to Israel. Teaching has the farthest reach and the deepest going influence. But for this the rabbi of today is least prepared.²⁴⁸

In his last years at HUC Grossmann began to increase his workload again. He introduced a course for the First Collegiate class on Religious Pedagogy as a precursor to the joint class taught to the Juniors and Seniors.²⁴⁹ Throughout his time as a professor at HUC, Grossmann also served as a thesis referee and co-referee for numerous students. In addition to rabbinical theses, Grossmann was periodically asked to review theses submitted for earning Doctor of Divinity Degrees. Beginning in 1922, Grossmann is listed as Professor Emeritus at HUC.²⁵⁰ Though he continued for some time to run the Teachers' Institute, his absence from the school beginning in 1921 and continuing to 1922 led him to relinquish all his responsibilities at the College as will be discussed in later chapters.

²⁴⁶ Academic Catalog, 1916-1917, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 8, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁴⁷ Faculty Meeting Minutes, 1914-1916, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁴⁸ Louis Grossmann, "Message of the President," *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29, (1919); 126-127.

²⁴⁹ Academic Catalog, 1919-1920, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 11, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁵⁰ Academic Catalog, 1922-1923, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-7/ Folder 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Leadership Transition

The death of Isaac Mayer Wise on March 26th, 1900, had a major impact on Grossmann both personally and professionally. Just as Wise's death fundamentally changed Grossmann's work at B'nai Yeshurun, one could argue it had an even greater effect on his work at the College. The atmosphere of HUC changed as the next president of the College came to power. Grossmann found himself an outsider under siege.

While Grossmann sought, in Wise's absence, to be a pastor to his congregation, HUC also sought out a way to continue after its creator was gone. Isaac Mayer Wise had dreamed up the idea of HUC. Once he passed away the institution lost the driving force behind its creation and early years. Moreover, his death brought to the fore many questions and uncertainties: should HUC be moved from Cincinnati, which was no longer viewed as a growing Jewish center? Should it merge with a secular University? Could it join with the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS)? And who would become the new head of HUC?

In time it was decided that HUC would stay in Cincinnati and remain independent of any other universities or seminaries. But a successor to Wise was still needed. Moses Mielziner, the longtime professor of Talmud, served as president until an appointment was made. Although Mielziner was the most senior faculty member and was beloved by all, the uncertainty that dominated the atmosphere led to reduced class sizes at HUC following Wise's death. After two candidates declined the position it was offered in 1903 to Rabbi Kaufmann Kohler of New York. Kohler was the son-in-law of David Einhorn, Wise's long-time opponent. Kohler was sought out because he was a scholar, a preacher, and a theologian. Also, Kohler held a prominent congregation on the East Coast, which led the Board of HUC to believe he could help attract East Coast Jewry to HUC as supporters. Kohler was also viewed as an individual who could stand out in the greater community. As a

distinguished rabbinic figure, it was hoped that Kohler would be a worthy counterpoint to JTS's popular and highly regarded president, Solomon Schechter, whose scholarship had attracted national attention for himself and for JTS.²⁵¹

Though Grossmann had served Temple Beth El in Detroit—a pulpit Kohler had also held for a brief period of time—and despite the fact that Grossmann's brother, Rudolph, served as Kohler's assistant for some time at Temple Beth El in New York, Grossmann and Kohler quickly became antagonists. Kohler perpetuated an ideology and theology closely in line with that of his father-in-law, David Einhorn, and Grossmann was an advocate for the legacy of his teacher and mentor Isaac Mayer Wise. Like Wise, Grossmann was much more moderate in his vision of reform and much more sympathetic to tradition. Kohler, more of a radical reformer, was not a man who suffered difference of opinion.²⁵² This tension can be seen in one of Grossmann's addresses to the CCAR:

We can understand why Wise was impatient with mere expedients. His contemporaries seem to have supplied nothing better. His reformatory nature was not only impulsive; it was also considerate. He could not be content with the petulant radicalism so loud in his day, because it was destructive. It is a foolhardy thing to pull at the roots of religion. We loosen the soil in which it thrives and who knows what delicate fibres we kill. Tinkering with the soul is a delicate operation and much of the reform that was rampant in Wise's time was repugnant to him because his sensitive soul felt the sharp edge of the injury.²⁵³

Although Grossmann is speaking of Wise and his more radical contemporaries, he was describing a situation in which he found himself as well. He, like his teacher, sought moderation in reform. It is likely this quote speaks volumes about Grossmann, despite the fact that he wrote it about Isaac Mayer Wise. It also helps contextualize the conflict between Grossmann and Kohler.

²⁵¹ Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial History 1875-1975*, 49-61

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Louis Grossmann, Message of the President to the Thirtieth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29, (1919): 114.

Kohler brought sweeping changes as he began his tenure at HUC. Not believing in the use of symbols of traditionalism he removed head coverings and prayer shawls from the chapel. He rid the classrooms of any understanding of, "Judaism as involving observance of ritual commandments."²⁵⁴ On the other hand, Kohler, deeply committed to a sense of faith and religiosity, made worship mandatory and extended worship to include a daily service. Kohler also sought to banish contrary ideologies from the school. He was not a proponent of freedom for each professor to teach as he wished or for students to study and express themselves as they wished. Rather, Kohler had an entirely different conception of what a seminary ought to be from that of the school's founder. As far as Kohler was concerned, a seminary was not a university wherein a wide range of divergent views should be fostered and tolerated. Kohler believed HUC's primary aim was to indoctrinate students in the ideology of Reform Judaism. Moreover, his own personal views on what it meant to be a Reform Jew held primacy. From this point of view, those who rebelled against Kohler's teachings were not fit to instruct future rabbis or to be ordained rabbis from HUC.²⁵⁵

The clearest example of this was his forbidding of Jewish nationalism. In fact, Kohler fought hard to ensure that several professors, Malter, Margolis, and Schloesinger, who were sympathetic to Zionism, were forced off the faculty. This created an atmosphere wherein few were willing to stand against him. When another controversy arose and Grossmann was looking for allies to stand up and speak on behalf of academic freedom to Kohler and his faithful ally David Philipson, he reached out to Judah Magnes. Magnes, a Zionist who had been on the faculty at the time the faculty members were forced out, wrote back to Grossmann about trying to find support against Kohler and Philipson. He told Grossmann that at that time, "very few persons seemed to be interested in that issue, or in

²⁵⁴ Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial History 1875-1975*, 56.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 54-57.

the question of *Lehrfreiheit* [academic freedom].”²⁵⁶ With the faculty purged of dissenters, Grossmann found himself one of the last members of the community willing to stand up for academic freedom for faculty and students, even when this freedom gave voice to ideologies he personally dismissed. Grossmann wrote in a letter to his colleague and one-time classmate at HUC, Joseph Stolz, “It is true we cannot let the College be dominated by Zionist vagaries, but we cannot afford to sacrifice the tradition we have respecting the freedom of teaching and of teachers. A College with a policy of academic limitations cannot thrive...”²⁵⁷ Kohler and Philipson did not appreciate Grossmann’s view. They began to work against Grossmann’s advancement in every arena: HUC, the Cincinnati Jewish community, and the national Jewish community.

Kohler came to power in the midst of a prolonged debate regarding the curriculum at HUC. When the issue was resolved, Kohler had extended the length of study for HUC, eliminated Modern Hebrew from the curriculum, given primacy to the study of Midrash over Talmud, diminished the role of other Semitic languages, and introduced courses on liturgy, catechism, elocution, and pedagogics. Kohler also brought Wellhausian biblical criticism to the school, an academic approach that Wise refused to embrace.²⁵⁸

In 1905 Kohler completely restructured HUC. He divided the faculty into departments, in which process he created several new departments, including a pedagogics department.²⁵⁹ In this new structure, Grossmann was a professor in two departments. He

²⁵⁶ S Wise to Grossmann, 12 February 1915, Stephen S. Wise Papers, MF-2321-2425/Box 38/Folder 8, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York.

²⁵⁷ Grossmann to Stolz, 2 April 1907, Central Conference of American Rabbis Records, MS 34/Box 3/Folder 2, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁵⁸ Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial History 1875-1975*, 55-65.

²⁵⁹ Secretary to Kohler, 2 November 1905, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-2/Folder 14, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

taught within the department of theology, focusing on Ethics, and also became the sole professor in the department of Pedagogics.²⁶⁰

In the atmosphere of Kohler's HUC, where difference of opinion was equated with insubordination, Grossmann, whose views on the ideology of Reform Judaism were moderate, had a difficult time. Moreover, Grossmann favored a freedom of expression which Kohler believed did not belong in a rabbinical seminary that sought to advance the principles of Reform Judaism. The only area wherein the two found common cause was a disregard for the Zionist movement. Still, this did not create good will between them. By all accounts, the two men were not friendly. Kohler was a dominating force, and Grossmann was a quiet, mild-mannered man who was easily bullied. As we shall see, by the end of their lives, the two men were bitter foes.

Moreover, Philipson—who was in the first class of HUC ordinees that finished one year ahead of Grossmann, and was the rabbi at the other leading Reform congregation in Cincinnati, Bene Israel—increased his stature and influence at HUC after Wise's death. Philipson and Kohler were close allies, each supporting a more radical sense of Reform Judaism than Grossmann. During Kohler's presidency, Philipson became the only rabbi invited to sit on the Board of Governors of HUC. His voice held sway especially, "in matters affecting faculty and students."²⁶¹ Like Kohler, Philipson was a forceful presence. Even his close friends spoke about the bullying tactics he employed to unnerve and belittle the mild-mannered Grossmann.²⁶² Moreover, Philipson sought to paint himself as Isaac Mayer Wise's prime disciple. Grossmann was clear competition when it came to this claim. After all, Grossmann was not only Wise's successor at B'nai Yeshurun, but also shared a

²⁶⁰ Subjects To Be Taught In Various Departments, n.d., Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Book 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁶¹ Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial History 1875-1975*, 82.

²⁶² Interview on Audio Cassette of Murray Seashengood, 1 April 1964, TR-234-TR-235, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

closer connection to Wise's philosophy of reforming Judaism than did Philipson. Moreover, the two men led communities that competed for the same pool of congregants. There were many reasons why Philipson sought to prevent Grossmann from succeeding in his ventures. Philipson's growing power certainly further isolated Grossmann at HUC.

Kohler and Philipson openly sought to undermine Grossmann's work. It seems that it did not matter if Grossmann's work would benefit the movement; the two men worked hard to marginalize him. In letters to two of his friends, Stephen S. Wise and Maximilian Heller, Grossmann refers to the two men as "the clique" in Cincinnati. He describes an atmosphere which worked hard to punish those who did not adhere to the will of the clique. Kohler and Philipson fought hard to keep Grossmann from being appointed president of the Teachers' Institute.²⁶³ More of the details surrounding this incident will be documented in the chapter below detailing Grossmann's work on education. It seems that the two men also worked against Grossmann in the CCAR.²⁶⁴

By 1911, Grossmann was sufficiently miserable at HUC to seek pulpits outside of Cincinnati. Grossmann seems even to have considered a pulpit in the United Kingdom: Stephen S. Wise wrote to Claude Montefiore about Grossmann's willingness to take the pulpit of Liberal Jewish Synagogue and his growing unhappiness with the administration of HUC.²⁶⁵ We can hear this unhappiness first-hand in correspondence between Stephen Wise and Grossmann. Stephen Wise had been writing articles praising Grossmann's work on behalf of Jewish education. Grossmann wrote that he knew Wise's motive in such praise

²⁶³ Grossmann to M. Heller, 17 May 1909, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 2/Folder 23, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁶⁴ S. Wise to Heller, 8 January 1917, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 6/Folder 8, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁶⁵ Wise to Montefiore, 17 March 1911, Archives of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, Box 11, Archives of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, St. John's Woods, London, England.

was to encourage him, and that while he insisted that Wise's praise was undeserved, he admitted that Wise's compliments were also very necessary:

I must confess I need encouragement. Everything here [in Cincinnati] is almost calculated to discourage me. Little things and little persons! What you say about the College is pathetically true. The rodent spirit has gone into the flesh of even the students...It is the subtle, underground influence that demoralizes everybody, even the boys. And that it has gotten hold of them is the saddest phase of it.²⁶⁶

This demoralized feeling remained with Grossmann so long as he was in Cincinnati.

Grossmann, Wise, and Heller were not alone in their unhappiness with the Kohler administration and its atmosphere of indoctrination. In preparation for an Executive Conference of the Board of Governors aimed at breaking some of the power of Kohler and Philipson, Grossmann and Heller began writing letters to graduates of HUC asking them to speak up against the intellectual intolerance of Kohler and Philipson. They were particularly targeting Philipson's growing influence over the school.²⁶⁷ Grossmann wrote quite candidly in these letters:

I think it is the time to show up the 'personal' influence which is being used by Philipson to intimidate the students and to 'run' things here...I feel you will come to the aid of the friends of the College who want to free it and restore to it its former moral tone.²⁶⁸

Some were unwilling to take on the fight. Magnes voiced his general agreement on the issue, but was unwilling to take on the battle despite the fact that he stated, "I have my personal opinion about Dr. Phillipsohn. This opinion is by no means flattering to him..."²⁶⁹ Others, however, stated they were willing to take a stand. One respondent wrote

²⁶⁶ Grossmann to S. Wise, 17 May 1915, Stephen S. Wise Papers, MF-2321-2425/Box 45/Folder 12, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York.

²⁶⁷ Grossmann to S. Wise, 5 February 1915, Stephen S. Wise Papers, MF-2321-2425/Box 38/Folder 8, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York.

²⁶⁸ Grossmann to Clifton Levy, 9 February 1915, Stephen S. Wise Papers, MF-2321-2425/Box 38/Folder 8, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York.

²⁶⁹ Magnes to Grossmann, 12 February 1915, Stephen S. Wise Papers, MF-2321-2425/Box 38/Folder 8, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York.

“The boys [students at HUC] should be encouraged to manifest a spirit of independent thought, for if there is anything really Jewish it is the right to think and act accordingly. You may be sure that I shall be only too willing to do my share toward establishing this broader ideal in the College.”²⁷⁰

But despite some mitigating of Philipson’s and Kohler’s power, the meeting was not a huge victory: its only clear result was that Kohler was no longer able to prevent Zionist lectures or speeches outside the chapel, or Zionist sermons being preached by students.²⁷¹ The effort achieved little else, and Grossmann had now openly pitted himself against the two men in a much more public way. It is important to note that those who fought against Kohler and Philipson did so for various reasons. Some, like Grossmann, opposed his monolithic approach to Reform Judaism and life at HUC. Others, like Heller and Stephen S. Wise, were mostly focused on issues like Zionism.

A young faculty member, Jacob Rader Marcus, writing in his journal about a faculty meeting in January 1921, at the end of Grossmann’s career in Cincinnati, wrote “K.K. [Kohler] and Grossman[n] squabbled in the meantime. I guess they have learned to hate one another in the last year or two.”²⁷² While there is ample evidence that their mutual dislike was established well before 1921, what this quote demonstrates is that by the end of both their careers at HUC their animosity was no longer kept behind the scenes. It was so strong that, after Grossmann’s death, Wise wrote to Rudolph Grossmann wondering what Grossmann could have become outside of Cincinnati. “I always felt that there was something of Cincinnati which proved fatal to Louis. It oppressed his spirit. It was as a canker to his heart.”²⁷³ Wise did not mean the city of Cincinnati. He was speaking of these

²⁷⁰ Unknown to Grossmann, 12 February 1915, Stephen S. Wise Papers, MF-2321-2425/Box 38/Folder 8, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York.

²⁷¹ Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial History 1875-1975*, 78.

²⁷² Diary of Jacob Rader Marcus, 4 January 1921, Jacob Rader Marcus Papers, MS 210/Box 14/Folder 4, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁷³ Wise to Grossman, 27 September 1926, Stephen S. Wise Papers, MF-2321-2425/Box 45/Folder 13, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York.

forces and particularly these men who, because of jealousy, petty rivalry, and ambition, sought to obliterate anyone who was willing to oppose them and their viewpoint. Grossmann, however, was no politician. He was not emotionally well-suited to flourish in the atmosphere Kohler created at HUC.

Grossmann as Reflected in the Faculty Minutes

Reading through the faculty meeting minutes from the period Grossmann served as a professor at HUC sheds light on his character as well as on the role he played while he was on the faculty of the College. There are few substantial records from the brief two year period when Grossmann served under Isaac Mayer Wise at HUC. Based on the records that exist it is clear that Grossmann, while devoted to the College, was often unable to serve as a regular faculty member. He is often absent from faculty meetings. This is likely due to his responsibilities to the greater community and his congregational community detailed above. Despite this, Grossmann served on many faculty committees over his time at the College, was a visible presence for the College community's events, served as a thesis advisor to many students, and served as a faculty advisor for students when this became a practice at the College. As early as December of 1899 Grossmann was appointed chair of a committee designed to create rules, "for the guidance of the faculty."²⁷⁴ At various times he also served as a member of the Library committee.²⁷⁵ In addition to these committees, Grossmann was also on a committee charged with suggesting a uniform pronunciation of the Hebrew language for students and faculty at the College,²⁷⁶ he served on the Committee on Academic

²⁷⁴ Minutes, 4 December 1899, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Book 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁷⁵ Committee Listing in Minutes, 30 April, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Book 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁷⁶ Committee Report, n.d., Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Book 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Standing,²⁷⁷ and in 1915–16 Grossmann became a member of the Committee on Examination and Recitation Schedule.²⁷⁸ He continued to be a member of this committee until his final years at the College.²⁷⁹

In addition to his committee work at HUC, Grossmann served as an Adviser for Students once such an advisory system had been instituted during Kohler's presidency.²⁸⁰ He was a great friend and mentor to the students. A colleague at the college, Henry Englander, wrote this of Grossmann's presence at Hebrew Union College:

Every appraisal of Grossmann's life, be it as rabbi or professor, be it as colleague or friend, will largely strike a common note. There was in him something that appealed alike to old and young, to man, woman and child, something that made us feel in his presence fully at home, that made even little children feel intuitively that he was their friend...Grossmann's chief contribution in the College was his gift of himself, his heart and soul to the students whose confidence he knew how to evoke. He was close to the students. They were his boys, as much as were the children of the religious school of this congregation his children...²⁸¹

We discover once again something at the core of Grossmann's being. He clearly cherished relationships. He was a man who gave of himself and was fully invested in others. He was a friend and confidant and made others feel cared for. Though a scholar and a teacher, one of his greatest strengths lay in his role as pastor. This extended to the HUC community as well his congregation.

Grossmann's contributions to the faculty meetings at pivotal moments in the College's history bring more of Grossmann's character into bold relief. These incidents

²⁷⁷ Academic Catalog, 1914-1915, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁷⁸ Academic Catalog, 1915-1916, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁷⁹ Academic Catalog, 1920-1921, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-7/ Folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁸⁰ Minutes, 16 February 1916, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Book 2, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁸¹ Heller, *As Yesterday When It Is Past*, 188.

clarify our understanding of the festering conflict that arose between Grossmann on the one hand Kohler and Philipson on the other.

One of the first major public instances where Grossmann makes his voice heard, and where he takes an active stand against Kohler and the Kohler administration at HUC, was through his response to the Kallen Affair. In the fall of 1914 HUC's student Literary Society invited Horace M. Kallen to speak. At that time, Kallen was serving on the faculty of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Since 1902, Kallen had been a member of the Zionist movement, and he wrote numerous essays in which he "began to formulate several philosophically grounded arguments by which he hoped to convince other American Jews, then overwhelmingly opposed or indifferent to Zionism, and non-Jews, whose respect and commitment he also sought, of the rightness of the Zionist cause." By 1914, Kallen had achieved a modicum of prominence for his innovative and influential defense of Zionism.²⁸²

Kohler learned of that the invitation had been issued, and he promptly interceded to keep Kallen from speaking at the school. The student body and many in the community were outraged. Several students from the Literary Society wrote a letter to Kallen apologizing for the behavior of president of the College.²⁸³ Kohler took this as an act of insubordination and sought disciplinary action against the students. The students were questioned before a joint meeting of the faculty and a committee of the HUC Board of Governors. Those present voted that this was indeed an act of insubordination, and the students who authored the letter were therefore stripped of many privileges. One of the students was James G. Heller, the son of Grossmann's classmate, Rabbi Maximilian Heller of New Orleans. Grossmann had no idea at the time, but the younger Heller would

²⁸² Sarah Schmidt, "Horace M. Kallen and the 'Americanization' of Zionism - In Memoriam" in *American Jewish Archives* 28, no. 1 (1976): 63.

²⁸³ Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial History 1875-1975*, 78-79.

ultimately become his assistant and successor at B'nai Yeshurun. Many speculated this was Kohler's and Philipson's attempt to punish the senior Heller who, like Kallen, was a prominent Zionist advocate and a vice-president of the American Federation of Zionists. Responding to this issue, one graduate of the College wrote to Heller, "Is there nothing to be done to end once and for all the bigoted attitude which stifles every expression of opinion that differs from the gentlemen of the College who are still living in 1840?"²⁸⁴

The sole individual on the faculty who voted against punishing these students was Louis Grossmann.²⁸⁵ Prior to the vote, Grossmann sent several letters to Maximilian Heller and Stephen S. Wise keeping them apprised of what was taking place in the meetings of the faculty and Board of Governors.²⁸⁶ In one such letter he wrote, "I was the only one who took the side of the boys [the students], Kohler got very 'mad' at me. I do not care, and I met him on his own ground."²⁸⁷ In another letter Grossmann detailed to Heller how best to approach and fight Kohler.²⁸⁸ Despite his attempts to help, he did not carry the day. The boys were indeed punished. There is no clear record of exactly why Grossmann voted against disciplining the students and stood against Kohler. Grossmann, as has been noted, was a vocal anti-Zionist. Yet he still came to the aid of these students. One might argue it was because of his relationship with Heller, or his antagonistic relationship with Kohler, or both. More likely, however, he saw these acts as threats to the development of the character of these young students. A pattern begins to emerge as one reads the minute books. While

²⁸⁴ Unknown to Heller, 28 December 1914, Stephen S. Wise Papers, MF-2321-2425/Box 38/Folder 8, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York.

²⁸⁵ Meeting Minutes, 5 March 1915, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Book 2, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁸⁶ Grossmann to M. Heller, 8 February 1915, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 2/Folder 23, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁸⁷ Grossmann to M. Heller, 6 March 1915, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 2/Folder 23, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁸⁸ Grossmann to M. Heller, n.d., Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 2/Folder 23, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

still an anti-Zionist, Grossmann often came to the defense of students who were being attacked because their beliefs and convictions did not align with the official ideology of the Kohler administration. Unlike Kohler, who saw any deviation from his own thinking and beliefs as a threat to the ideological mission of HUC as a seminary for Reform Judaism, Grossmann appears to be of a temperament that welcomed diversity of thought. He deeply believed that young people needed to be given the room they needed to explore their own personal and critical thought. This was particularly true for rabbinical students. Although he did not always agree with a student's beliefs, he was unable to watch impassively as they were punished for holding to their convictions. He believed that individuals who groveled to authority and did not speak their mind were weak.²⁸⁹ He may have felt this way also because he himself was so often an outsider in the days when Einhorn's legacy loomed so large.

The second, larger, instance where Grossmann takes a stand is during a scandal which shook the HUC community regarding the *HUC Monthly*. The *HUC Monthly* was established in 1914 as a student-run publication. It was in print until 1949 and comprised thirty-four volumes. Though its nature and character changed over time based on the student population and the administration's attitudes toward freedom of expression, students often published scholarly and serious work.²⁹⁰ At the outset of 1917, a committee was formed on which Grossmann served. The committee's purpose was to explore the possibility of some sort of faculty oversight of the *HUC Monthly*. The committee recommended that a Standing Advisory Committee of faculty would be formed which would meet with the *HUC Monthly*'s editors at the beginning of each academic year. The student body sent a letter to the faculty stating their concern over this oversight. Despite their

²⁸⁹ Grossmann to M. Heller, 8 February 1915, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 2/Folder 23, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁹⁰ Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial History 1875-1975*, 74.

concern, a committee was formed consisting of Kohler, Deutsch, and Freehof.²⁹¹ After the establishment of this committee several complaints were investigated by the faculty. These complaints were discussed with the staff, and the faculty met with the incoming student editor, Samuel Rosenberg.²⁹²

By November 27, 1920 a more serious affair took place. The faculty opened a session to discuss the newest issue of the *HUC Monthly* wherein the students made what some on the faculty considered “an indictment of Judaism and the Rabbinate.”²⁹³ The faculty suspended the *HUC Monthly*, and a committee composing of Deutsch, Freehof, and Lauterbach was created to look into the matter. By December two students were under active investigation by the committee: Samuel Rosenberg, the student editor, and Ferdinand Isserman. The article in question was an editorial written about the general experience of students going through the program. The editorial poked fun at the ordination services, the student’s need to abstain from sexual relationships outside of marriage while at the school, the faculty, the Board of Governors, and many other aspects of student life. One line which stood out to such a degree that Deutsch specifically chose to quote it back to Rosenberg was that time spent at HUC was, “one long endurance test during which belief in a real hell becomes a conviction...” When asked to explain this statement Rosenberg replied that, “this was meant as encouragement to the Freshmen...”²⁹⁴

In addition to all of these slights to the school, the editorial also ran the line, “the gross maniacal Phillipics of our prelates...” This phrase was a pun on Grossmann and

²⁹¹ Meeting Minutes, 26 February 1917, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Book 2, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁹² Meeting Minutes, 2 June 1920, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Book 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁹³ Meeting Minutes, 27 November 1920, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Book 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁹⁴ Meeting Minutes, 7 December 1920, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Book 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Philipson meant to mock the community rabbis. Grossmann found himself directly in the crosshairs of this joke. Despite that fact that he was the subject of the some of the article's ire and mockery, he still sought to defend the two boys.

Isserman was eventually called in to discuss a news item he presented later in the *HUC Monthly*. Isserman was not a student with a pristine record at HUC. He was viewed by some of the faculty as an extreme radical. In fact, in September of 1920 the faculty discussed a letter they received from his student pulpit wherein the congregation expressed its outrage at the radical sentiments he expressed in his holiday sermons.²⁹⁵ Isserman was investigated by the Discipline Committee of the faculty at that time and, though no action was taken against him, he was admonished and instructed to be more careful in his preaching.²⁹⁶ He now found himself in trouble once again because he published the names of proposed speakers for the Students' Literary Society which had not yet been approved. The faculty suspected he had done this in order to paint the president in a negative light and to force the president's hand on the issue of the speakers who were unlikely to be approved. The faculty began to actively call for both boys to withdraw from the school or risk expulsion.²⁹⁷ This created uproar in the community and among the student body.

At a later faculty meeting the issue of the students' fate was discussed. Lauterbach presented a case against Isserman. Lauterbach argued that though Isserman had not been proven guilty of one offense, the accumulation of charges against him and his attitude as a student demonstrated that he was not fit for the rabbinate. Lauterbach argued that to sign his diploma would be a breach of trust between HUC and the Jewish community.

²⁹⁵ Meeting Minutes, 29 September 1920, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Book 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁹⁶ Meeting Minutes, 9 November 1920, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Book 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁹⁷ Meeting Minutes, 7 December 1920, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Book 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Lauterbach cited several instances of what he considered misconduct performed by Isserman, including his holiday sermon which criticized America for deporting undesirable aliens. Moreover, according to Lauterbach, the list of speakers Isserman had suggested inviting to HUC was similarly “left” in their politics. Lauterbach’s speech was unequivocal in its call for Isserman’s expulsion from HUC.

After Lauterbach’s speech the faculty voted on Isserman’s expulsion. Isserman escaped expulsion with a five to four vote. Grossmann was once again among those voting against expulsion and on behalf of the student. After the first vote, a similar vote was taken regarding Rosenberg. Once again the faculty split, four voting for expulsion and five voting against expulsion. Here too, despite the fact that Rosenberg was partly responsible for the slight written against him, Grossmann voted against his expulsion. Grossmann did not begrudge the young man for the personal attack.

At this meeting Grossmann spoke at length regarding his votes. His statement conveys a clear sense of his character and how he envisioned his role as a teacher. Grossmann stated that while the students were clearly immature, the faculty members have a duty to help them grow. Expelling the students does not further this goal. Grossmann argued that expulsion is not effective in disciplining or in attempting to warn others. Grossmann told his colleagues, “Boys’ opinions and convictions must never be taken as final. They grow and change. Boys seem positive and are even provocative. But they are merely intensely serious and naively honest.” Grossmann went on to claim that teachers must enter into the minds of their pupils with sympathy, and that expulsion shows no such sympathy for one’s pupil. He then flipped the argument by stating that expulsion would send the student out into the community just as certainly as graduation. To expel the students would mean losing the opportunity to curb the troubling behavior. Instead,

Grossmann argued, the school should retain the students and seek to help them grow.

Grossmann believed that once the school admitted students they assumed responsibility for them. This responsibility was not abrogated by expulsion. The faculty remained responsible for who they were no matter how they left the school. "A teacher's responsibility does not end with a formal dismissal. Teaching is a trust and we must keep it." Grossmann also was wise enough to recognize that there are students who are "vigorous in thought and insistent on independence, and sometimes even insubordinate, [but who] turn out to be strong intellectually and morally." Grossmann's fierce opposition to HUC imposing conformity of thought and creating a culture of fear comes out in his statement that expulsion only breeds cowardice among students who come to fear expressing opinions other than the prescribed ones. Grossmann finally invoked the memory of his friend and mentor:

The policy of Isaac M. Wise, as of every real teacher, was to help young men, to help them tide over the trying years of doubt, or of cocksureness, through which honest and earnest young men must pass. Isaac M. Wise saw and wanted to see the good character of the young men behind their impulsive words, and he drew the young men toward him by his fatherly understanding and interest. This policy was as good as it was just.²⁹⁸

In this statement to his colleagues, Grossmann called into question their vision of what it means to be a teacher. Moreover, he demonstrated just how well he understood his pupils. Grossmann's words show an understanding of developmental stages as well as awareness of what inspires youth.

After Grossmann left HUC because of his health, he continued to write to the faculty and Board of Governors expressing his objection to the expulsion of the two students.²⁹⁹ With the benefit of retrospect we are able to see Grossmann proved right.

²⁹⁸ Meeting Minutes, 10 December 1920, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Book 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

²⁹⁹ Grossmann to Alfred M. Cohen, 11 March 1921, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-13/Folder 13, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Ferdinand Isserman went on to be a towering figure in the Reform rabbinate—a man who not only served his community, but who fought for others. In the end, Isserman was allowed to complete his studies. Rosenberg however eventually resigned, never becoming a rabbi.³⁰⁰

Based on this event and the Kallen Affair we can discern several aspects of Grossmann's character. First, unlike Kohler or Philipson, he favored open environments where difference of opinion was expressed. Grossmann spoke openly against expulsion because it created an atmosphere where students did not feel free to speak their minds. Moreover, Grossmann defended students who held convictions he did not share, and he eschewed hard feelings toward students who poked fun at him publically. This behavior testifies to Grossmann's open-mindedness and his tolerant spirit. He was not threatened by opposing views or hurt by the words of impetuous youth.

Moreover, it is clear that Grossmann cared a great deal for the student body. Throughout his tenure as a member of HUC's faculty, Grossmann spoke of the importance of seeing things through the eyes of the student and sympathizing with the student. He argued that teachers must create a close relationship with their pupils.³⁰¹ Grossmann assumed the posture of a defender of students against an unyielding administration and faculty. This view was shared by others at the time. Jacob Rader Marcus, a young member of the faculty at the time of the Rosenberg and Isserman affair, attended the joint meeting of the faculty and the Board of Governors which took place to decide the fate of the two students. Marcus wrote, "...all the faculty [present] except Grossman out of the city. If he

³⁰⁰ Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial History 1875-1975*, 260 note 83.

³⁰¹ Meeting Minutes, 10 December 1920, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Book 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

had been present he might have saved the day for the boys.”³⁰² It seems that Grossmann was viewed as a defender of students.

Additionally these two events point to the fact that Grossmann was not afraid to speak his mind to authority. He was not good at playing the games of internal politics. Consequently, he was often outmaneuvered during his career due to his inability remain silent when he did not agree with the majority view. Yet it is important to note that Grossmann spoke out on behalf of causes in which he believed, even when they were unpopular or even “losing” causes. It is no accident that in his HUC memorial resolution the faculty, who showed no great love of the man, stated that he was an individual with uncompromising values who was often thwarted in his plans.³⁰³

In February of 1921 Kaufman Kohler resigned from the presidency as old age overtook him. Grossmann left the College one month earlier on a leave of absence. No one, not even Grossmann himself, knew that he would not return. During his leave of absence Grossmann outlined a proposal regarding his vision of an expanded HUC. He desired to create several permanent branches of the Teachers’ Institute around the country in major Jewish centers. He saw this as a necessary step in strengthening HUC itself. Grossmann wrote a detailed plan for filling this need to Alfred M. Cohen, then president of the Board of Governors, in May of 1921. It seems the Board of Governors had issued a statement about declining enrollment. This document is so striking because of its similarity to conversations taking place at HUC today. The school sought for a way to bolster enrollment and Grossmann detailed several steps that could be taken to meet this need.³⁰⁴

³⁰² Journal of Jacob Rader Marcus, 22 January 1921, Jacob Rader Marcus Papers, MS 210/Box 14/Folder 4, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁰³ Meeting Minutes, 25 October 1926, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-4/Book 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁰⁴ Grossmann to Cohen, 16 May 1921, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/D-13/Folder 18, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

His first steps did not discuss the expansion of the HUC Teachers' Institute, but rather focused on student recruitment in general. Grossmann aptly pointed out that youth are attracted to professions that do efficient work, earn the respect of the community, and capture their imaginations. Grossmann believed the crucial period when youth could be reached and swayed toward the rabbinate was between the ages of 14 and 16. First, he believed that one's youthful ideals were needed to set one on the path to the ministry. Second, he believed that at this point parents were already concerned with the path their child will take. He believed parents thought about the economic impact of their children's desired professions. This played a big factor in their matriculation to HUC. He argued that a student's choice of the ministry or the rabbinate follow the same laws and are subject to the same conditions as all other fields of employment and therefore must be studied in the same academic and scientific fashion. Grossmann proposed several studies of former and current students and of the current Jewish community itself to help determine how best to encourage the rabbinate as a vocation.³⁰⁵

Grossmann then identified several factors that could help or hinder the path to the rabbinate. Grossmann accurately pointed out that the students at HUC who work in various communities come into contact with, form relationships with, and make impressions upon high school and middle school students. Their interactions with these students have the potential to be a vital step in their path to the rabbinate. Moreover, student rabbis' interactions with the general community can help or hinder the reputation of the school and its mission in the greater community. Grossmann believed the same held true of the graduates who go to work in congregations. If these men were good examples to the community, that would speak well of the rabbinate and the school. Should they foster

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

strong relationships with young men (there were no women in the rabbinical program at that time), they could help those young men onto a path toward the rabbinate. Moreover, the graduates must speak well of the school and seek to implant in the youths of their community an interest in and a desire to pursue the rabbinate as a career.³⁰⁶

Grossmann then proposed a new initiative that was designed to induce individuals to consider the rabbinate and, ultimately, strengthen HUC itself. Grossmann recommended that several branches of the 'Teachers' Institute be created in major Jewish centers of the United States. In his mind these branches could serve two purposes. The first would be to train excellent teachers for the religious schools of the Reform movement. The second would be to sift through the students in order to find the best candidates in the country for the school. The religious school teachers that HUC trained in these institutes would be beholden to the school, and would therefore be willing to pass on the names of promising candidates. HUC would be able to engage these candidates early enough to set them on a path to the rabbinate.³⁰⁷

Grossmann pointed out that by establishing permanent branches of the 'Teachers' Institute, it would be possible to create a broad spirit of educational reform that was sorely needed. With trained teachers, religious schools would be able to utilize modern scientific methods of teaching and have competent and knowledgeable staff. Grossmann stated that this would create a Jewish revival in America. This would give rise to a new generation of Reform Jews who would be better candidates for the rabbinate.

Moreover, Grossmann pointed out, by having this kind of educational presence in every major community, HUC would be elevated in the minds of the congregations. The school would have a real relationship to the communities it served throughout the nation.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

He believed that only through this kind of real relationship, wherein the school attempted to meet the needs of the congregations and serve them, would it be able to engender large scale popular support and foster interest in rabbinate. "The Hebrew Union College would, actually, belong to every city and every congregation," Grossmann declared.³⁰⁸

Grossmann states quite eloquently of the need to leave Cincinnati and pursue its work in the wider world:

We must step out of Cincinnati into the open America, now gestating Jewish American communities. There was a time when we could conduct a cloisteral, provincial institution. That time has passed. An academic institution must be near the life of the people and a Jewish School must be in constant and intimate touch with it. An occasional visit-lecture by one or even all of the professors, will not answer the need...The College cannot be that altogether, but it can be through its branches and its teachers' institute branches...The time of a strictly "theological" College is over...What we need more than an educated Rabbinate is an educated laity. These opportunities...must be personal.³⁰⁹

Here Grossmann touches on several important points. First, in order to engender interest in HUC, the connection must be personal. The work of the institution must be felt in the communities it serves, both through the rabbis who are its graduates, and through a physical local presence. The branches of HUC's Teachers' Institute would serve practical needs for the communities. Additionally, they would be positioned to meet the different needs of different communities. It must reach every demographic, but especially youth. Grossmann also saw these branches as serving the laity and creating a more educated American Jewish population. From Grossmann's perspective, Jewish education in America was not being given the attention it deserved. Toward the end of his career, he was making one last call for creating a systematic and large scale response to the problem. He even went so far

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

as to criticize much of his own life's work by pointing to the futility of the short term sessions of the Teachers' Institute. It was time, he argued, for a new HUC, and a new vision of what it meant to be doing what we today have come to call "outreach."

Grossmann's grand vision was to transform HUC from a cloistered seminary into a multi-faceted educational institution that would reach out actively and aggressively to local Jewish communities throughout the nation. The school would serve in more ways than simply providing rabbis to congregations. Grossmann wanted the school to reach out through teacher training and educational initiatives and influence the entire country. At the core of this radical vision is the hope for a revolution in education.

It is striking that many of these conversations have returned, although in a somewhat altered form, in our day. Calls have come to close campuses and centralize the school. It is notable that this idea created broad-based outrage. Each campus is located to meet the needs of a segment of the country. To close one or many would mean abdicating what connections exist between the school and the community. Moreover, the College has been afflicted with an enrollment crisis in recent years. Many are debating the causes and how to respond. Some see a cause in HUC's abandonment of youth outreach. Others point to the increased cost of operating HUC. Today, students are ordained or graduate with significant debt. Grossmann pointed out that many saw the rabbinate as an attractive option because it meant relatively little cost to the student and ensured income at the end of the studies. Many people point out this is not necessarily the case in the contemporary situation. It is also worth noting that many of the campuses are engaged in a process of

increasing their presence and engagement in the greater communities. Here too we see the enactment of one of Grossmann's calls. Finally, we have seen HUC's department of admissions begin to reach out once again to HUC alumni and ask them to speak of HUC to their congregations and organizations and to encourage their youth to consider a career of Jewish leadership by matriculating to HUC's rabbinical school or one of its other graduate programs of study. It is hoped that this will also help bolster enrollment. Grossmann certainly advocated for this process in his document.³¹⁰

It is notable that when the first-year students in Jerusalem this summer were asked how many of them were approached by a Jewish professional who spoke to them about HUC, all but a handful raised their hands and stated this was a serious reason why they joined the incoming class. Grossmann's notion of a personal relationship is as pertinent today as it was more than ninety years ago: if HUC seeks to increase its enrollment it will need to reach youth, and do so earlier than ever. HUC still needs to foster personal relationships with its prospective students, its rabbinical candidates, and also concern itself not only with supplying American Jewry with the Jewish professionals it needs, but it must also be concerned with the development of an educated and involved laity. This leads us to a broader conversation about Grossmann's educational activities and his legacy in the field of Jewish Education, which will be the focus of the following chapter.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

“The best teacher I ever had taught geometry. I learned from him not how to demonstrate a theorem but how to keep at work and how to do it in an orderly manner. That teacher was really a teacher of morals and character.”³¹¹

Chapter 3: Educator and Innovator

The central priority of Rabbi Louis Grossmann’s rabbinate was improving and promoting Jewish education in America. Grossmann wrote more books, lectured to more students, delivered more speeches, worked for more organizations, and gave more of his time to the cause of Jewish education in America than he did to any other cause. Grossmann’s fervor came from the fact that he saw Jewish education as the single most important tool available to American Jews to perpetuate their heritage. He was among the first to understand the importance of adapting emerging scientific methods of pedagogy to Jewish religious schools, and was an educational innovator in the American Reform movement.³¹²

Currently, the scholarship concerning Jewish education in the Reform movement points to 1922 and 1923 as the critical turning point for Reform religious school endeavors. This thesis is only somewhat accurate. The early 1920s was the period when a critical mass of Reform rabbis began to call for serious and substantial change in the movement’s approach to Jewish education. At this same time Emanuel Gamoran was hired to revitalize Jewish education in the Reform movement. However, it is sometimes suggested that this turning point was the *first time* there were voices within the movement who called for wide sweeping organizational change, greater centralization and cooperation, more experienced

³¹¹ Grossmann, *Glimpses Into Life*, 42.

³¹² John F. Ohles. “Leaders in Jewish Education in America.” *Religious Education: The Official Journal of the Religious Education Association*, vol. 75, issue 1 (1980): 90-96.

educators, better materials, and a paradigm shift in the focus of the education.³¹³ While the early 1920s did see a groundswell of support for these endeavors, and while Gamoran was able to make significant progress along all these lines, Louis Grossman called for these same measures many years earlier. Grossmann's role, however, has received little to no attention by scholars writing on the history of Reform Jewish education. This fact is most likely due to the fact that his voice has fallen into obscurity and, more importantly, his call to action produced very little practical change. Despite these facts, it is critical that Grossmann's career and writings be explored and brought back into the narrative of the evolution of Reform Jewish education over the course of the 20th century. His career demonstrates that there was a loud and prominent voice calling for educational change well before 1922. In other words, Grossmann's educational ideas suggest that the events that occurred during the early 1920s did not mark the beginning of the movement for educational reform, but rather the beginning of the manifestation of substantive changes.

It is necessary, therefore, to detail Grossmann's educational work. What follows will be three chapters each outlining a different aspect of Grossmann's work within the field of Jewish Education. In this chapter Grossmann's educational activities and involvements in various organizations, congregations and institutions are outlined.

Educational Work in Synagogues

The roots of Grossmann's keen interest in Jewish education are difficult to determine. Grossmann did not focus on pedagogic study at the University of Cincinnati. Moreover, while Grossmann was a student at HUC there were no courses on education offered to the student body. Therefore, Grossmann was ordained a rabbi and received his initial degrees

³¹³ Leon Fram, "The Conference and Jewish Religious Education," in *Retrospect and Prospect: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of The Central Conference of American Rabbis 1889-1964*, ed. Bertram Wallace Korn (New York: The Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1965), 181.

without any form of specialized training in pedagogy. We do know that during his time as a student in Cincinnati Grossmann taught in religious schools. The *American Israelite* reported in 1881 that Grossmann served as a teacher for Kahal Kadosh Bene Israel, known today as Rockdale Temple. His religious school class consisted of 45 pupils and he was the sole instructor.³¹⁴ This was most likely Grossmann's first teaching experience. One imagines that after the young Grossmann had the experience of teaching a class of 45 students, he quickly realized there was a need for formal training of religious school teachers.

After his ordination in 1884 Grossmann became the rabbi of Temple Beth El in Detroit. One of the central aspects of his work in that congregation was serving as superintendent of the religious school. Temple Beth El had a School Committee whose responsibilities were to look after, "the good care and orderly behavior of scholars, the appointment of teachers, and mainly to see to it that the precepts, inculcated at the school, were acceptable and in conformity with the ethics and liturgy of," Temple Beth El.³¹⁵ It is clear that Grossmann served in a role similar to a director of the school. He guided the direction of the school and its day to day activities, organized holiday observances and special occasions, and supervised the staff. Moreover, he attended gatherings and organizational meetings that dealt with improving Sabbath Schools. It appears Grossmann may have also been responsible for the school's textbooks, but it is not clear if that meant he wrote his own or selected which books the school utilized.³¹⁶ Based on the synagogue's minutes it is also clear that Grossmann supervised the teaching staff, organized religious services and observances for the schools, proctored examinations for the classes, and was

³¹⁴ "Reports of the several Officers and Auditing Committee of Benai Israel, as submitted at the Congregational Meeting, October 30, 1881," *The American Israelite* (11 November 1881).

³¹⁵ Minute Book, October 1886, Temple Beth El, MS 527/Box 3/Folder Minute Book 1871-1898, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

responsible for the school's overall operation. During Grossmann's tenure there was increased attention to utilizing music within the school, which the congregation felt was beneficial.³¹⁷ Grossmann also introduced a children's service into the Sabbath School schedule.³¹⁸ When he moved to B'nai Yeshurun in Cincinnati, he wrote several of his own children's services for the congregation.³¹⁹ The minutes of Temple Beth El also demonstrate that during Grossmann's time as superintendent the school tried to teach Hebrew language skills. We also know that the Sabbath School was, "often suffering from the short supply of competent teachers."³²⁰ Grossmann faced an array of difficulties as a result of this shortage of teachers.

In his capacity as a religious school superintendent, Grossmann began to display an interest in creating better teachers for his own religious school. In May of 1886 Grossmann and several teachers from the Temple Beth El religious school went to the first convention of the Hebrew Sabbath School Union in Cincinnati.³²¹ While Grossmann appreciated the convention he was frustrated by the lack of concrete materials and curriculum. In his report to the congregation he wrote of the proposed curricular outline:

...so long as we are dependent upon loose material, and so long as we lack nearly all aid of literature specially adapted to religious instruction, and so long as most teachers can bring to the instruction nothing more than their good intention, any plan is an ideality only. What is necessary of the Sabbath School, if in any way it shall accomplish anything, is a positive enthusiasm on the part of the teachers...Children have no liking for dogmatic instruction...Let the children know who we are and who our parents were...let them know Jewish history. Tell them that history, not in dry matter-of-fact, ex-cathedra style, but with a Jewish heart; tell them of Jewish hopes; tell them of Jewish joys, of Jewish sorrows; let them rejoice in past joys...let them feel the magnitude of what in ages past it meant to be a Jew,

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Minute Book, 14 November 1896, Temple Beth El, MS 527/Box 3/Folder Minute Book 1871-1898, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³¹⁹ See HUC's Klau Library, Freidus Collection, for examples of these services.

³²⁰ Minute Book, 14 November 1896, Temple Beth El, MS 527/Box 3/Folder Minute Book 1871-1898, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³²¹ For more information on this convention, see Louis Grossmann, *Report Submitted to Congregation Beth-El* (Detroit: 1886). This report includes an outline of study for a religious school that a committee at the convention drafted. It appears that the outline was drafted by Dr. Mielziner of HUC.

and you have done great work, for which you shall have a blissful reward...This we must produce; we must instill into our children that sentiment which gives to the Jew the reason why he has a brother in another Jew...Of course there is now much to be done on every side, not only the large rocks of building materials are wanting, but even the pebbles for the mortar...In a short time there is prospect that there will be a confluence of sympathetic work on behalf of the Sabbath School, the rock on which rests the entire superstructure of our future.³²²

It appears Grossmann was both inspired by what took place at the convention and frustrated at the small steps and slow pace with which the work was being undertaken. It is notable to see in Grossmann's words challenges and desires that will fuel his life-long quest to better American religious education.

After years of trying to provide substantial teacher-training to his religious school teachers, Grossmann decided to take matters into his own hands. In 1897 he opened a school for training religious school teachers at the congregation.³²³ It is impossible to know what took place in Grossmann's training school since it appears that none of the records have survived. However, this early attempt to create a cadre of skilled religious school teachers for his synagogue is notable since this same concern will become a major facet of his later work.

In December of 1894 the *American Israelite* picked up an article from the *Detroit Tribune*. The article was entitled *Home and Religion*, and it was written by Rabbi Louis Grossmann. In the article Grossmann demonstrated an early attempt to grapple with tensions and problems that would later become a major impetus for his involvement in Jewish education. Grossmann stated, "We are independent now, independent of the power of the church and the authority of its catechisms." With this independence religious choices fell upon the individual. He asserted that American Jews must assume responsibility for making their own religion. Grossmann went on to point out that who we are and what we

³²² Louis Grossmann, *Report Submitted to Congregation Beth-El* (Detroit: 1886).

³²³ Katz, *The Beth El Story*, 94.

are has always been shaped by our surroundings and our upbringing. “The faculties I have for right doing, my love for truth, or my passion for wrong and for hate and rebellion have been put into me, by the heroism, or it may be by the pathos, of what my parents were and did.” Grossmann stated that the first six years are the most receptive years of a person’s life. Grossmann closed the article with a serious claim, “It is not the catechism which makes religion; it is not the church which makes good homes, but good homes make religion, make the church.”³²⁴

In this 1894 article Grossmann grappled with questions that remained with him throughout his entire life. The home is the most important place for fostering and cultivating Jewish identity and knowledge. Despite this fact, parents were failing at the task or abrogating the responsibility altogether. Moreover, synagogues were left to fill in the gap made by this new situation, yet they were mostly inept in meeting the need. This article suggests that Grossmann may have already begun to formulate his deep belief that there was a need to overhaul the Reform movement’s education system. Moreover, with its references to religious school teaching and child development, the article most certainly establishes that, by 1894, Grossmann had begun to study pedagogy and child psychology.

While it is not clear when or if Grossmann studied pedagogy formally, there are other indications that he had begun to develop an understanding of the field while he was serving in Detroit. For example, in one of his sermons delivered in 1895 he wrote:

We hear for a long time very much of fine precepts, of wise maxims, and, I suspect, that this love for generalities has entranced Jews too. But we are forgetting almost the first lesson of sensible and practical pedagogics and are forgetting the primal fact of Judaism. You cannot achieve much good without abstractions. You are not likely to help children toward development in such a way; you will confuse their unassisted minds and you will arrest their mental and moral growth. If ministers would know more of the simple logic of the science of education, they would feel a refreshing

³²⁴ Louis Grossmann, “Home and Religion,” *The American Israelite* (13 December 1894) 4.

cathartic purging their transcendental theology but their congregations, too, would be spared much needless fussiness and much inane homiletics.³²⁵

One can see from this quote that Grossmann had studied pedagogy and had already begun to advocate for utilizing pedagogical methods in the rabbinate. Therefore, while we do not know when he was initially exposed to pedagogical study, it is clear that during his time in Detroit he has already begun reading and mastering related material.

Grossmann's move to Kahal Kadosh B'nai Yeshurun in 1898 brought him back to Cincinnati. He began his tenure as an assistant rabbi to Isaac Mayer Wise. In 1900, Grossmann succeeded him as senior rabbi. In addition to pastoral duties and responsibilities as preacher and service leader, Grossmann served as the superintendent of the synagogue's school. When he first arrived, religious education was taking place in two locations. One school was run at the synagogue's Plum Street location. A second school was run in the suburbs, and was a joint school of B'nai Yeshurun and Bene Israel. In 1898, the year Grossmann arrived, 150 students studied at the Plum Street location and around 75 at the joint school in the suburbs. Of the roughly 350 children of religious school age within the congregation, only 100 were enrolled in one of the two schools.³²⁶ Therefore the other 125 students were children of non-members.

As was discussed in chapter two, in 1901 it was decided that the congregation find its own building primarily to serve as a school in the suburbs. A new building was erected at Reading Road and Whittier Street, which became the site of the congregation's new school. The congregation continued to run two schools, one at Plum Street Synagogue and another at this new location, later named Wise Center.

³²⁵ Louis Grossmann, "Constructive Judaism," *The Jewish Pulpit: Sermons Delivered by Rabbi Louis Grossmann, D. D., Temple Beth El, Detroit*. vol. 1, no. 1 (Detroit: The Franklin Press, 1895).

³²⁶ Heller, *As Yesterday When It Is Past*, 60.

Rabbi James Heller, who wrote a history of K. K. B'nai Yeshurun, stated that during his time at the congregation, "Dr. Grossmann took an especial interest in religious pedagogy. He wrote upon it extensively and busied himself with its manifold problems."³²⁷ It is clear that by the time Grossmann ran the schools of B'nai Yeshurun he was devoted to improving the state of Jewish education, and had mastered current scholarship on pedagogy. He was comfortable enough to write on the subject and began to contribute to local and national educational endeavors.

In his history of B'nai Yeshurun, Heller also recorded a proposed course of study for the Talmud Yelodim Institute written by Grossmann 1903. This curriculum contains suggested subjects of study for the school. Each year was assigned a course of study in history and Hebrew.³²⁸ Once again, it is clear that Hebrew was a central feature of Grossmann's ideal curriculum. It should also be noted that for Grossmann Hebrew study was at this time to be based on Jewish liturgy and Bible. At a time when some of Grossmann's contemporaries doubted the primacy of Hebrew study for American Reform Jews, it is clear that Grossmann wanted his students to learn how to read the Bible and some of the Jewish prayers in Hebrew. This plan is not all that dissimilar from the curriculum Grossmann wrote in 1919 which will be detailed in its own chapter.

During the Grossmann era at K.K. B'nai Yeshurun, school registration increased and then remained relatively constant. Moreover, during Grossmann's tenure it was decided that only paid teachers would serve the school. This helped to professionalize the role of the religious school teacher. With new facilities and a more competent staff of teachers it is not surprising that the school grew. Moreover, Grossmann was always interested in attracting new pupils and new families to his temple. As the demographics of the city continued to

³²⁷ Heller, *As Yesterday When it is Past*, 61.

³²⁸ Ibid.

shift, attendance at the Plum Street location began to decrease steadily. By 1921 there were very few students attending, and Rabbi Heller, Grossmann's assistant, closed the school while ensuring the congregation would take care of students' transportation to the suburban location.³²⁹ Throughout his career Grossmann valued youth outreach and actively built relationships with the youth of his synagogue. At his retirement the students of the religious school remarked that he was always teaching them in moments formal and informal and that he excelled in his ability to relate to them. The students of B'nai Yeshurun felt a strong sense of loyalty to and love for their rabbi; he was a man who was able to inspire them with his obvious love for Judaism.³³⁰ These accounts attest to the fact that even while serving as administrator, Grossmann was first and foremost a teacher in the broadest sense of the word. Never distant, he believed that through his actions he taught those around him by example. For Grossmann, any moment was an opportunity to teach Judaism. Running a school meant more than seeing to staff and curriculum, it also meant reaching out to his pupils.

Grossmann's contributions to education at the synagogue were also manifested in the creation of a group eventually called the "Wise Social Center." Grossmann created this group in order to increase both the school's registration as well as the synagogue's membership by attracting young adults to the synagogue. The Wise Social Center had what we today might be called "affinity groups," which focused on various subjects such as drama, literature, and charity. This group also organized lectures on a variety of topics, including Zionism, the World War, Women's Suffrage, Immigration, and the Modern Stage.

Grossmann's educational involvements in this period were many and varied and took place outside the congregation as well. Aside from running a religious school, teaching

³²⁹ Heller, *As Yesterday When It Is Past*, 63.

³³⁰ Student Magazine, 12 March 1922, Isaac M. Wise Temple Archive, Cincinnati, Ohio.

adult education, teaching rabbinical students at HUC, and running the Teachers' Institute, he had many other opportunities to serve as an educator. For instance, Grossmann became a strong supporter of and a teacher in the Cincinnati Kindergarten Association, an organization that sought to provide a kindergarten education for impoverished children as well as for those who did not have an opportunity to enroll in kindergarten. At the turn of the 20th century, when the Cincinnati Public Schools began to fund public kindergartens, the Cincinnati Kindergarten Association supported the establishment of a Training School program for kindergarten teachers at the University of Cincinnati's College for Teachers.³³¹ Grossmann lectured to the association and worked on its behalf.³³²

Grossmann held a series of lectures open to any of the community's religious school teachers in an effort to elevate the caliber of teaching in the Cincinnati community.³³³

Grossmann also lectured around the country on educational matters. He was invited to address synagogues, teachers associations, and regional and national conferences on education.³³⁴ Grossmann also taught classes for different community groups including the Jewish Council of Women, the Social Settlement in Cincinnati, and the Willing Workers Society, a women's auxiliary.³³⁵

Rabbi James G. Heller was installed as the associate Rabbi at B'nai Yeshurun in December of 1921. The previous June, Grossmann asked to be released of active duties at the congregation and, in November 1921, he became Rabbi Emeritus after resigning due to

³³¹ See http://ead.ohiolink.edu/xtf-ead/view?docId=ead/OhCiUAR0075.xml;chunk.id=bioghist_1;brand=default for a brief history of the Cincinnati Kindergarten Association.

³³² "Foothold In Public School system At Last Secured By Cincinnati Kindergarten Association," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (21 September 1902) 16.

³³³ "Dr. Grossmann's Lectures on Sabbath School Instruction," *The American Israelite* (7 November 1901); 6.

³³⁴ "Rabbi Grossman Will Speak From a Number of Pulpits in the East," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (12 March 1909): 9.

³³⁵ "Local," *The American Israelite* (1900-1905): 6.

his deteriorating health. Grossmann left behind a new modern school building and a program that was healthier and larger than what he inherited two decades earlier.

Professor of Ethics and Pedagogy at Hebrew Union College

Louis Grossmann's greatest contributions to the field of Jewish education likely took place within his career at Hebrew Union College. In chapter two his role as teacher and his relationship to students were discussed. In this section his innovations and contributions to advancing the cause of Jewish education will be examined in greater detail.³³⁶

Grossmann became a member of the faculty upon his arrival in Cincinnati. He was originally hired as a professor of theology, though Isaac Mayer Wise also wanted him to teach pedagogics.³³⁷ It appears that during Kohler's curricular shift Grossmann officially became a professor of Ethics and Pedagogy. With Kohler's new departments in place, Grossmann became professor of Ethics, which was under theology, and Pedagogy, which was its own department.³³⁸

It is a noteworthy fact that Grossmann was the first person to teach pedagogy to HUC rabbinical students. Prior to his appointment, rabbis were ordained without any formal training in teaching. Despite the fact that rabbis are primarily teachers, no instruction was required of the graduates of HUC. Despite the lack of formal instruction, many HUC ordinees were expected to function as religious school administrators, religious school teachers, adult educators, and in various other capacities where they were required to be effective teachers. One can only imagine that this lack of training was keenly felt by

³³⁶ One can refer to chapter two to read of the courses he taught at HUC and the details of those courses.

³³⁷ I.M. Wise to HUC Board of Governors, 29 November 1898, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-1/Folder 12, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³³⁸ Subjects To Be Taught In Various Departments, 1905, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Minute Book, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

congregants and rabbis alike. The 1906 HUC Catalog makes explicit reference to the fact that the need for courses in pedagogy was something new:

One of the important and difficult tasks imposed upon the rabbi to-day being the Religious Instruction of the young, pedagogics must necessarily form one of the branches taught in a rabbinical school. Indeed, the question how to conduct a religious school, how to teach religion and ethics, and particularly how to use the Bible as a source of inspiration and religious instruction for the child, so as to imbue it with faith in God and love for Judaism, is one fraught with many difficulties, which only a thorough training and fine psychological observation may enable to teacher to overcome.³³⁹

Grossmann began to teach the upperclassmen pedagogy. Though the structure of the courses changed while he was engaged as professor, Grossmann always taught both modern pedagogy and methods of teaching in Jewish schools as well as a history of Jewish education.³⁴⁰ While Grossmann must have felt this was an improvement to no instruction, it is clear that he also felt more was needed in order to ensure that the Reform rabbinate was full of individuals who could teach and inspire. After all, he believed that the future of Jewish life would be determined within the walls of the modern synagogue. If rabbis could not teach and inspire, that Jewish future was tenuous at best. Therefore he sought out other means, aside from the two required classes, to improve the teaching skills of rabbis and all Sabbath School teachers.

At a faculty meeting, Grossmann proposed that every student at the Hebrew Union College be required to teach in a religious school. On May 22, 1914 Grossmann's resolution was proposed to the faculty:

In view of the fact that Sabbath School teaching is one of the most important duties of the Rabbi, it is essential that all the students be afforded opportunity for training and experience in it. This faculty regulates preaching and other Rabbinical functions by the students, and it is hereby suggested that a Committee be appointed to submit to this Faculty a plan by which

³³⁹ Academic Catalog, May 1906, HUC-JIR Nearprint, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁴⁰ See HUC-JIR Nearprint Collection for Academic Catalogs from 1905-1922 to see this development.

similar regulations be established to govern students in the matter of teaching.³⁴¹

The motion was accepted and the committee was selected. Grossmann served as the committee president presiding over Morgenstern, Neumark, and Englander.³⁴² The process of arranging for this requirement to be met could not have been easy, for the rules were not in place until the academic year of 1916/1917.³⁴³ Once in place, however, they ensured that the faculty of HUC regulated the work being done by students in religious schools, that students could only teach in one school at a time, and that all students were required to teach for at least three years.³⁴⁴ This was an unprecedented clinical requirement for HUC. All rabbinical students were now required to teach in a classroom at a Sabbath School for at least three years in order that they would be adequately prepared to fulfill their rabbinical duties. Aside from the expectation that student rabbis would serve in “student pulpits,” this particular requirement constitutes one of the earliest examples of a course in “practical rabbinics” at HUC. This was also one of first requirements that ensured that all HUC rabbinical ordinees would have had practical experience in religious school teaching. It was a great victory for Grossmann as he attempted to elevate the pedagogic proficiency of HUC’s rabbinical alumni. These rules created their own set of issues in the following years as the faculty sought to ensure teaching spots for the students, but there is no question that after years of teaching, rabbinical students had, at the very least, a better understanding of the challenge of Sabbath School education.

³⁴¹ Minute Book, 22 May 1914, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Minute Book 1912-1917, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Academic Catalog, 1916-1917, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-6/ Folder 8, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁴⁴ Minute Book, May 1917, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/Minute Book 1912-1917, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Despite some victories over the years, Grossmann's courses on education were restricted to the Senior and sometimes Junior years. Additionally, sometimes both ethics and pedagogy were crammed into a single course. One semester was devoted to Jewish ethics and the other to Jewish education. This left little room for teaching rabbinical students pedagogy. As one member of the class of 1920 wrote:

I vividly recall that during my five years of study, I had no instruction whatsoever in the science of religious education, except for a few lectures in the senior year which were delivered by Rabbi Louis Grossman, and these were of a highly theoretical character...³⁴⁵

This frustration was most likely shared by Grossmann as well. It is not surprising; therefore, that he felt the work of the Teachers' Institute was so important.

Grossmann's greatest practical work in creating a higher caliber Jewish educator was his work as the principal of the Teachers' Institute of Cincinnati. This school seems to have first been proposed in Kaufman Kohler's annual report to the Board of Governors in 1906.³⁴⁶ Later in 1906 a committee which was created to look into the idea wrote a report detailing an outline of a Normal School for Teachers at HUC. It was stated that there was a "generally felt need of systematically trained Religious School Teachers for the various Religious Schools of American Jewry."³⁴⁷ This initial proposal stated that the school would have a principal appointed by the president of HUC who would supervise the work and report the results. These two men, the principal of the school and the president of the College, would be responsible for designing the curriculum. The initial program was designed as a three year commitment at the conclusion of which the pupils would receive a diploma qualifying them as Religious School Teachers. These students were also to be

³⁴⁵ Fram, *The Conference and Jewish Religious Education*, 192.

³⁴⁶ Kohler To HUC Board of Governors, 31 May 1909, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-4/Folder 12, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁴⁷ Plan for Normal School For Teachers, n.d., Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-2/Folder 16, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

required to register as students of the College for Teachers at the University of Cincinnati and take courses in Pedagogy and Psychology. Between 1906 and 1909 little if any progress occurred due to a lack of funding. In fact, in 1909, the outlined proposal was practically the same as it had been in 1906.³⁴⁸ However, in February of 1909 the proposed school slowly began to take shape.

In late February of 1909 Bernhard Bettmann wrote to Jacob H. Schiff, a leading Jewish banker and philanthropist. Schiff was a complex individual. Born in Frankfurt, Germany, Schiff immigrated to the U.S. shortly after the end of the Civil War. He is widely considered to have been one of the most important Jewish philanthropists in American history. Schiff's philanthropic work was wide-ranging. He supported East European Jews and efforts to Americanize them and he supported causes of importance to a diverse array of Jewish constituencies.³⁴⁹ In Bettmann's letter he described the long-held desire of HUC to have a normal school for the education of teachers. Moreover, Bettmann described several meetings Schiff had with Grossmann wherein Schiff expressed interest in the subject and a readiness to assist in creating such a school.³⁵⁰ Schiff responded stating that he had discussions with Grossmann, but that he was not ready to actually support such a project. Schiff informed Bettmann that JTS was trying to create a very similar institution but had been unable to do so due to insufficient funding. Schiff then proceeded to describe his feelings that both seminaries would be able to serve different needs through having such an institution because of their different locations. Schiff stated that in the East such teachers were needed because of the exploding Jewish population. However, in the "newer

³⁴⁸ Plan for Normal School For Teachers, n.d., Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-4/Folder 12, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁴⁹ Naomi W Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1999).

³⁵⁰ Bettmann to Schiff, 26 February 1909, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-4/Folder 15, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

communities [the central, southern, and western United states],” such teachers would be needed in order to keep the young from assimilating into the greater culture. Schiff ended his letter by stating he was interested in both the JTS and the HUC proposition and would be in touch.³⁵¹ It is clear that Grossmann was the initial contact with Schiff and that he had been working very hard to bring this proposal to fruition.

At the end of March, Schiff finally replied to Bettmann. During the interim Schiff, and a committee for JTS, sketched out a plan for their program. Schiff stated that he spoke to the committee about HUC’s intentions and his personal interest in the project. It appears that JTS was glad to hear of HUC’s interest and hoped that the two organizations could cooperate and perhaps even create a national movement for promoting the training of teachers for religious school. Schiff stated that Cyrus Adler and Solomon Schechter were named a committee for the JTS school and that he hoped HUC would create a similar committee to work in conjunction with the JTS committee. Schiff then promised \$100,000 to be split by both schools and asked that the remainder of the expenses be raised from other sources. Schiff closed the letter by stating that Judge Samuel Greenbaum and Cyrus Adler were to serve as two Trustees for the project and that he hoped HUC would propose a third Trustee for the funds.³⁵² By April first the Board of Governors at HUC had unanimously accepted the conditions of Schiff’s proposal. Bettmann replied naming Edward L. Heinsheimer as the third Trustee. This created the main organizational body for the two Teachers’ Institutes. Both JTS and HUC would have a specific local committee to oversee the day-to-day operations of their specific school. HUC’s local committee became a committee of the Board of Governors. However, the organization that oversaw the two

³⁵¹ Schiff to Bettmann, 2 March 1909, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-4/Folder 15, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁵² Schiff to Bettmann, 22 March 1909, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-4/Folder 15, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

schools, their mission, and their funds was this group of Trustees: Cyrus Adler, Samuel Greenbaum, and Edward L. Heinsheimer.

Bettmann also wrote that he had created his local committee. It was made up of Kohler, Philipson, and Grossmann and would report on the creation of the school in Cincinnati based upon the JTS plan. However, he also wrote that the plan would be adapted so that, “each college can independently follow its own principles...”³⁵³ One can imagine that HUC sought to ensure they could create a school that would meet its needs rather than serve as a carbon copy of what JTS was creating. By April of 1909, with the funding from Schiff, a normal school for teachers was on its way to formation, now as a joint project of HUC and JTS.

Starting in April 1909, the HUC committee, chaired by Kohler and composed also of Philipson and Grossmann, proceeded to create a plan for the school. By June of 1909, Schiff wrote to Heinsheimer expressing disapproval that work on the school would not be completed until the autumn of 1909. Despite Schiff's wishes, though, the school indeed would not take full shape until the fall.³⁵⁴ A proposal dated October 15th 1909 outlined a plan for the school to open. This document indicated that Grossmann would serve as principal of the new school.³⁵⁵

Between April's announcement that a Teachers' Institute would take shape and October's announcement that Grossmann would serve as the Institute's principal, it is clear that Kohler and Philipson had sought to prevent Grossmann from being named principal. Grossmann made note of this controversy in a letter he wrote to Maximilian Heller. Both

³⁵³ Bettmann to Schiff, 1 April 1909, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-4/Folder 15, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁵⁴ Schiff to Heinsheimer, 14 June 1909, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-4/Folder 15, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁵⁵ Committee Appointed to Make Arrangements for Opening the Teachers' School to HUC Board of Governors, 15 October 1909, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-4/Folder 15, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Kohler and Philipson were trying to, “block his way,” Grossmann wrote. “They are doing everything to prevent my becoming the Principal.”³⁵⁶ Grossmann continued, stating that he felt he was the most qualified individual to hold such a position. Moreover, he wished to make a difference and had already worked hard to see that the school would be created.

Grossmann asked that Heller write to the board because Philipson and Kohler had:

...ransacked the country, and finally have come on an unknown man, who knows nothing (avowedly) of the Science of Education, and whose only experience in teaching has been a year in a cheder. No well-known person is available, first because men of scientific educational training are rare, and the salary is small. Of course, I do not care for the money, and will work without pay.³⁵⁷

This letter is fascinating in that it exposes the lengths to which Kohler and Philipson were willing to go in order to undermine Grossmann. After all, Grossmann was the professor of pedagogics at HUC, yet they wanted to ensure this new post was kept from him. This incident documents the level of intrigue that prevailed, and also demonstrates how the “clique” of Kohler and Philipson was incredibly severe. This letter also confirms the fact that Grossmann had already come to think of himself as a formally trained expert in scientific educational methods.

In another communication to Maximilian Heller, written a few months later, Grossmann indicated that the “clique” (which was Grossmann’s euphemism for Kohler and Philipson) continued to machinate against him:

Yes, the school affair has turned out in my favor. But Philipson put up a fight, and an untiring one, and an unscrupulous one. When all had gone against him, and he found he was the only one, literally the only one, against me, he wrote a private letter to Schiff! But Schiff evidently saw through his game and referred him to Mr. Bettmann. My election was unanimous, with the exception of Philipson. You are right, the work is full of difficulties and I

³⁵⁶ Grossmann to Heller, 17 May 1909, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 2/Folder 23, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

shall have hard times. Hard because the work is new and pioneer, and because I shall have to clinch with the clique here.³⁵⁸

Grossman proved correct. The politicking continued after his election. In another letter to Heller, Grossmann described how his efforts to organize the school were being thwarted by Kohler and others who were influencing him. After discussing a specific example Grossmann wrote, “He [Kohler] wants to kill the School by ignoring it. Well, I shall do all I can to prevent that.”³⁵⁹

It seems Grossmann ultimately prevailed. The Cincinnati Teachers’ Institute opened in the fall of 1909, and Grossmann was indeed the school’s first principal. By January of 1910, in addition to students at HUC who were required to take the classes, there was a night class of fifteen students and a day class of eight students.³⁶⁰ The students who were not HUC students were comprised of University graduates, teachers in public schools, undergraduate students, and “some in the clerical professions.”³⁶¹ As was originally intended, the faculty of the Teachers’ Institute was composed of HUC faculty as well as faculty from the University of Cincinnati.³⁶²

Another controversy broke out in April of 1910, which arose from Grossmann and “the clique’s” fundamental differences in their conceptions of American Judaism. Schiff, the financial backer of the Teachers’ Institute, was an individual who sought to minimize conflicts and divisions between Jewish movements.³⁶³ Grossmann, who grew up in an orthodox home yet identified as a Reform Jew, was sympathetic to other expressions of

³⁵⁸ Grossmann to Heller, 8 November 1909, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 2/Folder 23, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁵⁹ Grossmann to Heller, 24 November 1909, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 2/Folder 23, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁶⁰ Heinsheimer to Schiff, 14 January 1910, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-5/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁶¹ Report, 29 January 1910, Hebrew Union College records, MS 5/Box D-5/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Naomi Cohen, *Jacob H. Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership*, 80.

Judaism. Schiff, likewise, saw other streams of Judaism as legitimate and worthy of support. Both men, in this sense, identified with Isaac M. Wise's hope for one American Judaism and tolerated a moderation of divergent ritual customs. By contrast, Kohler and Philipson were men who were actively engaged in advancing their own point of view. Schiff had originally hoped that the two Teachers' Institutes would forge a national organization of Jewish educational institutions. He wanted the two schools to work in concert with one another. By April 26, 1910, however, Philipson and Kohler, along with two other individuals, had concluded that the conditions in the Jewish religious world made the organization of such a unified body impossible.³⁶⁴ Philipson and Kohler were ardent reformers, who had little tolerance for other expressions of Judaism. They were disinterested in forming such an alliance. Grossmann did not agree with their approach. In fact, only one day earlier, Grossmann urged Kohler and Philipson to reconsider their decision to resist a HUC/JTS collaboration with regard to the Teachers' Institutes. Writing to David Philipson, Grossmann stated: "I am not in favor of the rejection of the proposal made by Dr. [Cyrus] Adler." In addition, Grossman asked Philipson to send his letter on to Schiff and others so that they would see that some in Cincinnati did indeed believe that a collaborative venture was desirable.³⁶⁵ Grossmann believed that a national "Teachers' Institute" would have done great good for the cause of Jewish education. This is another instance when the ideologies and beliefs of Grossmann and the more powerful forces in the movement clashed irreconcilably. Such clashes would continue to erode Grossmann's standing, and eventually he was marginalized as Kohler and Philipson continued to dominate.

³⁶⁴ Committee of Teachers' Institute to HUC Board of Governors, 26 April 1910, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-5/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁶⁵ Grossmann to Philipson, 25 April 1910, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-5/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Grossmann's counterpart at JTS was Mordecai M. Kaplan. Since the effort to have the schools cooperate and work in concert failed, the two men ran their respective schools quite differently. Grossmann was not an extremely organized and methodical individual. Kaplan, in contrast, appears to have run a very tightly organized school. Kaplan's reports were detailed, descriptive, meticulous, and were submitted punctually to Dr. Cyrus Adler. Grossmann, on the other hand, was constantly being asked for his tardy reports, and they seem to have often lacked the details of those presented by JTS. In fact, on some occasions he was given copies of Kaplan's reports in the hope that they would serve as models for his own.³⁶⁶ While it is unclear to what extent Kaplan and Grossmann were in contact, there is evidence that the two met sporadically to discuss the work of the two Teachers' Institutes.³⁶⁷

In the early years of the Teachers' Institute the school was primarily committed to its regular program for teachers in the Cincinnati area. This three year course of study was well-attended and the students were made up of both men and women. Each year after the opening year a new class was added, until the inaugural class reached its third year of study. At that point all three years of study were in place.³⁶⁸ In these early years, the program of the Teachers' Institute in Cincinnati was similar to that of the JTS Teachers' Institute. It is noteworthy that many of the "Benderly Boys"—the disciples of Dr. Samson Benderly—were trained at the JTS program.³⁶⁹ Emanuel Gamoran, who served as director of the Commission on Jewish Education of Reform Judaism for 36 years, was also a product of the

³⁶⁶ Heinsheimer to Pollak, 11 June 1910, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-5/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Bloom to Grossmann, 16 April 1912, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 22, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁶⁷ Correspondence, 28 September, 1910, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 4, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁶⁸ Statement of Work Done at the Teachers' Institute, 27 October 1910, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 4, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁶⁹ The Benderly Boys refers to a group of men, and a few women, who implemented a revolution in American Jewish education. For more information see Jonathan B. Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011), 44-58.

JTS Teachers' Institute. These programs soon began to diverge, however, with the JTS program focusing on a rigorous multi-year program and the Cincinnati school emphasizing outreach to other communities.³⁷⁰

At the outset, the proposed three year curriculum consisted of coursework in History of the Bible as Literature, History of the Israelites, History of the Jews in biblical and modern times, Biblical Geography and Archaeology, Doctrines of Judaism, Ceremonies and Rituals of the Synagogue and Home, The History of Jewish Education, Jewish Ethics, Hebrew Reading, Grammar and Translation, Model Lessons and Lesson Planning, Practical work at Sabbath Schools, Teaching, and Methods of Instruction.³⁷¹ Some of the early instructors were Grossmann, Kohler, Morgenstern, Englander,³⁷² Moses Mielziner, Gotthard Deutsch, as well as John W. Hall and Alice C. King who were from the faculty of the University of Cincinnati³⁷³ By the end of the third year of its existence, the school's organizers were eagerly looking forward to graduating its first class.³⁷⁴

Based on this, and later lists of coursework, one notes that the HUC's Teachers' Institute was committed to creating teachers with training in education as well as a mastery of certain Judaic subjects. There seems to be equal emphasis placed upon creating teachers with a knowledge of scientific methods of education as well as of Jewish studies. Another noteworthy aspect of the school's curriculum was its emphasis on Hebrew. The Teachers' Institute made Hebrew acquisition a priority. Grossmann, and the other men who shaped

³⁷⁰ Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education*, 11-183.

³⁷¹ Grossmann to Adler, 16 June 1911, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 4, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Correspondence, 28 September, 1919, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 4, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁷⁴ Grossmann to Adler, 13 December 1911, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 4, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

the curriculum, believed that in order to be an effective religious school teacher one needed a command of Hebrew.

In the third year of the Teachers' Institute's existence, a plan developed for the school to begin cooperative work with the Jewish Chautauqua Society.³⁷⁵ It appears that the hope was to create a correspondence school for the Teachers' Institute in Cincinnati.³⁷⁶ At some point prior to the end of February 1913, a preliminary plan outlining the contours of this cooperation was sent from the Jewish Chautauqua Society to the HUC Board of Governors. The committee of the Board of Governors charged to look into the preliminary report found it insulting to the HUC community in content as well as form. The report called for instructors to be organized on practical and not academic lines. They sought a faculty for this joint venture, "who are naturally in touch with the work of the teachers in our Religious Schools and have ripeness of years of experience in the field."³⁷⁷ This slight suggested that the HUC faculty were out of touch with the realities in the field. Ultimately the HUC Board of Governors rejected the plan for two reasons. First, because it, "proposes nothing for the Teachers Institute in Cincinnati to do except to establish a Summer School to be presided over by a faculty other than that of the Hebrew Union College or its Teachers Institute."³⁷⁸

A second reason was that Schiff and the Trustees did not want HUC to expand the mission of the Teachers' Institute in that direction. At the outset of 1913, as the HUC Board of Governors sought to create the correspondence school with the Jewish

³⁷⁵ Berkowitz to Heinsheimer, 8 December 1911, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 4, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁷⁶ Pollack to Berkowitz, 9 January 1913, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 12, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁷⁷ Suggested Plan of Co-operation, n.d., Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 12, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁷⁸ Committee on Teachers' Institute to HUC Board of Governors, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 12, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Chautauqua Society, they proposed the idea to the Trustees of the Teachers' Institutes and to Schiff. Schiff did not want the Teachers' Institute in Cincinnati to take on the extra work, feeling that the school was not yet, "firmly established."³⁷⁹ Despite this, the Board of Governors decided to go ahead with preliminary planning because they believed it was up to them, not to Schiff and the Trustees of the Teachers' Institutes, to determine the work of the Teacher's Institute of Hebrew Union College.³⁸⁰ This act by the Board of Governors was perceived as an attempt to move beyond their role. While each school was allowed to manage the day-to-day working of the school, it was Schiff and the Trustees who were empowered to approve of any changes to the original vision and scope of the two Teachers' Institutes. Cyrus Adler responded to the HUC Board of Governors stating that the Trustees in no way wished to interfere with the management of the HUC Teachers' Institute; however, "anything of importance outside of the character of the Institution described in the Preamble and in the third section of the Deed of Trust, ought to have their approval and had better be first submitted to the Trustees to prevent misunderstandings." His words, along with the frustration of the Jewish Chautauqua Society's plan, ensured that the joint correspondence school was quashed.

Despite this failure to expand the mission of the HUC Teachers' Institute, a new direction was soon discovered which not only pleased HUC, but the Trustees as well. Adler noted in the same letter he wrote warning the HUC Board of Governors to desist from planning for the correspondence school that early work had begun to expand the lectures of the Institute's faculty to areas outside of Cincinnati.³⁸¹ Adler heartily approved of such

³⁷⁹ Committee on Teachers Institute to HUC Board of Governors, 19 February 1913, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 22, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Adler to Bloom, 9 May 1912, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 22, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

extension lectures. This expansion of the Cincinnati Teachers' Institute would become a major project of Grossmann's and a major aspect of the work of the HUC Teachers' Institute.

Grossmann noted in a letter written in May of 1912 that members of the faculty were willing to engage in the new extension work of the Institute. They sought to meet the needs of religious schools all around the region. In this way, Grossmann hoped to reach many more populations and help to elevate the quality of Sabbath School Teachers throughout the Midwest and South.³⁸²

By the academic year of 1912/1913 the freshman class of the Cincinnati Teachers' Institute had 45 students. Additionally, many rabbinical students sought to receive the Teaching Diploma as well. As the extension sessions in other cities expanded, the regular Cincinnati school was also in a period of growth.³⁸³ It is not surprising, considering demographic realities, that the Cincinnati branch did not attract the same number of students as the New York City branch.³⁸⁴ This may have been an additional impetus for the Cincinnati branch to begin extension programs around the country. The first cities to receive these extension courses were Cleveland and Chicago.³⁸⁵ However, as time progressed, Grossmann oversaw the creation of extension programs that were run throughout the year in cities such as Louisville, Detroit, Savannah, Akron, New York City, Philadelphia, Nashville, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Augusta, Georgia, Indianapolis,

³⁸² Grossmann to President of HUC Board of Governors, 28 May 1912, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 22, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁸³ Grossmann to HUC Board of Governors, 29 October 1912, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 22, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁸⁴ Report of the Teachers Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary, 7 November 1912, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 22, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁸⁵ Grossmann to Hebrew Union College Board of Governors, 28 November 1912, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-6/Folder 22, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Jacksonville, Lincoln,³⁸⁶ Milwaukee, San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, Baltimore, Washington D.C.³⁸⁷ and various others. Many of these cities had regular yearly extension sessions a few weeks in duration, while other cities had short, one-time sessions. Grossmann even noted in one report that, “The gradual growth in the teachers’ knowledge and authoritative grasp of the subject from year to year can easily be noticed.”³⁸⁸ This meant that the HUC faculty was regularly lecturing around the country to religious school teachers with the goal of improving their knowledge and skills. Here too, one can see how Grossmann sought to achieve his vision of elevating the caliber of the Jewish educator, but it is unclear how effectual these “extension” sessions were for those who enrolled. While they likely provided some benefit, a one-week or two-week extension course did not revolutionize the Sabbath School. That being said, these sessions constituted concrete efforts to provide religious school teachers with a form of what today is called continuing education units. Moreover, the problems of inadequate Sabbath School or religious school instruction continue to plague American Judaism even today. Grossmann was working hard on a widespread systemic issue that he alone could not hope to solve, only improve. He was hopeful, however, as he conducted the work:

There is a revival of interest and a rise of the sense of responsibility with respect to Jewish Education and it puts an inevitable obligation upon us to meet the needs which are now so strongly felt. These cities and many cities in other directions of this country are entitled to our thought and service and we could render substantial and timely service to this promising movement in American Judaism if we would make our Extension Lectures more abundantly available.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁶ Academic Catalog, 1925-1926, HUC-JIR NEARPRINT, MS 20 Series N/Box C-7/ Folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁸⁷ Grossmann to HUC Board of Governors, 26 December 1916, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-11/Folder 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁸⁸ Grossmann to HUC Board of Governors, 27 April 1915, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-9/Folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁸⁹ Grossmann to HUC Board of Governors, 28 February 1916, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-9/Folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

In these words Grossmann's explicitly states that there was a growing sentiment among American Jews which made the time ripe for a reform of Jewish education.

Grossmann had many responsibilities as the principal of the Teachers' Institute. He was a regular instructor in the various levels of the regular school and in the extension work around the country. Moreover, he oversaw and shaped the curriculum of the program. Grossmann was responsible for choosing instructors, for examining classes, for making regular reports to Kohler, the Board of Governors of HUC, and the Trustees of the fund for the two Teachers' Institutes. Grossmann also coordinated the extension programs and sought out new locations to expand the reach of the school. Remarkably, Grossmann did all of this work and steadfastly refused compensation. Moreover, he undertook these responsibilities on top of his regular work as a professor at HUC, a full time rabbi at B'nai Yeshurun, and the other obligations he had assumed in the general community.

One of the most interesting developments during Grossmann's time as principal of the Cincinnati Teachers' Institute was its inauguration of an extension program in New York City. This development displayed the growing rift between the two Teachers' Institutes. After all, if the only goal of the two sister branches of the Teachers' Institutes was to improve the state of Jewish education and the caliber of Jewish educators, surely reform instructors could attend the JTS branch of the Teachers' Institute and didn't need to institute their own program in New York. By the end of 1915, though, Grossmann wrote to the HUC Board of Governor's Committee on the Teachers' Institute expressing his desire to run a summer session in New York for the teachers of Reform religious schools.³⁹⁰ The HUC Committee approved the idea; however, Schiff and the three Trustees of the fund

³⁹⁰ Grossmann to Committee on Teachers' Institute, December 1915, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-9/Folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

voted that such a summer session in New York City would be “inadvisable.”³⁹¹ Due to the disapproval of the Trustees and Schiff this plan was shelved, but it seems Grossmann did not give up. By the beginning of 1920 Grossmann was again making preparations to hold a session in New York City. He wrote to the Board of Governors that the session was beginning to take shape with the help of the Association of Reform Rabbis of the City of New York and Vicinity.³⁹² In April the session was held, and was housed at Temple Emanu-El as well as the West End Synagogue.³⁹³ Grossmann was very pleased with the initial success of the extension session. Each lecture and workshop was attended by roughly 120 teachers. After the initial New York session, the teachers and rabbis asked for additional sessions, which were carried out during the early 1920s. This expansion points to the fact that despite early hopes, denominational differences manifested themselves in the two sister schools. Despite being under the same umbrella and funding, the HUC Teachers’ Institute needed to have sessions in New York City in order to serve the teachers in Reform synagogues.

By 1916 the work and focus of the HUC Teachers’ Institute seems to have shifted. In a letter to the Board of Governors, Grossmann noted that the Teachers’ Institute did not attempt to attract a freshman class for the normal program. He explained that the Extension Department and the Summer Sessions of the Teachers’ Institute were expanding and pre-occupying the work of the Institute.³⁹⁴ This was not an expression of defeat. Rather, it

³⁹¹ Cyrus Adler, 4 January 1916, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-10/Folder 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁹² Grossmann to HUC Board of Governors, 23 January 1920, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-13/Folder 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁹³ Grossmann to HUC Board of Governors, 24 February 1920, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-13/Folder 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Grossmann to HUC Board of Governors, 30 March 1920, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-13/Folder 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁹⁴ Grossmann to HUC Board of Governors, 26 December 1916, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-11/Folder 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

appears Grossmann felt that the outreach work to other communities was a more effective use of time and resources. Another innovation introduced that year was a class organized for “Post-Graduates” of the Teachers’ Institute program.³⁹⁵ Grossmann saw to it that those who had received their teaching diploma could continue to learn and grow. With the advent of World War I, the focus of the Teachers’ Institute began to shift. Grossmann and the other faculty developed a curriculum aimed at providing pedagogic training for those students who planned to work as Army Camp workers and chaplains.³⁹⁶ The precise nature of this curriculum remains enigmatic.

As was the case with many of Grossmann’s educational endeavors, he often expressed frustration over what he perceived to be a lack of support. With regard to the Teachers’ Institute this frustration appears to have manifested itself around budget issues.* It is clear that he often felt that the budget supporting the work of the Teachers’ Institute was pitifully inadequate:

Allow me, in conclusion to make a frank statement as to the fact that the financial resources of the Teachers’ Institute are so embarrassingly limited. The cause of the training of teachers for our Religious Schools is one of the fundamental interests in American Judaism, and much of the character of the coming generation and of its participation in Jewish life depends on its having been taught rightly and effectively. Teaching is the most absorbing concern of Congregation, parents and Rabbis and all have a grave responsibility to equip the child of today who is to be Jewish adult with sound convictions and loyalty.³⁹⁷

Time and time again in his letters, writings, and sermons Grossmann made it clear that the American Jewish landscape had created a situation wherein the family no longer transmitted Judaism to the next generation. That responsibility had fallen to the congregation, and the

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Pollak to HUC Board of Governors, 29 October 1918, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-12/Folder 2, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

³⁹⁷ Grossmann to HUC Board of Governors, 26 December 1916, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-11/Folder 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

congregations were failing. Grossmann repeatedly asserted that the American Jewish community was in desperate need of inspiring, knowledgeable, and effective teachers. The very survival of Judaism depended on the success of institutions like the Teachers' Institute. If the community failed to meet this need, the result could very well mean disaster for American Judaism. Grossmann was frustrated by those who did not share his sense of urgency.

By 1920, Grossmann was beginning to take leaves of absences due to illness. His health continued to deteriorate and, by 1921, he announced he would be retiring from his many obligations. He resigned from his teaching duties at HUC, and he also stepped down from his pulpit at B'nai Yeshurun. Yet, remarkably, he apparently remained on as the Principal of the Teachers' Institute for one year! Before ultimately retiring in California, Grossmann spent some time on the East Coast seeking treatment for his illness.³⁹⁸ During this period he was able to meet the needs of the school, in particular the New York Sessions of the Teachers' Institute. As late as December 25, 1921, we find correspondence between Grossmann and the Board of Governors regarding Teachers' Institute business.³⁹⁹ On March 20, 1922, he resigned from the Teachers' Institute, his final professional responsibility.⁴⁰⁰

Prior to his resignation, Grossmann was in the process of establishing a permanent branch of HUC's Teachers' Institute in New York. Having served as the Principal of the Teachers' Institute since its inception in 1909, Grossmann had worked to ensure that the school expanded beyond Cincinnati. Grossmann spent years ensuring that the HUC

³⁹⁸ No records have been discovered which make clear from what illness Grossmann suffered.

³⁹⁹ Grossmann to HUC Board of Governors, 25 December 1921, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-13/Folder 18, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁴⁰⁰ Grossmann to Cohen, 20 March 1922, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-14/Folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Teachers' Institute was acting in several major cities on an annual basis, and dozens of other cities around the country on a more ad-hoc schedule. He had seen to it that the main focus of the teacher training program was its traveling division, and he brought the faculty of HUC to the entire country, from California to New York. His final aim was the establishment of a permanent branch outside of Cincinnati, preferably in New York.⁴⁰¹ While Grossmann was forced to retire, this plan did come to fruition in 1923 when HUC established a School for Teachers in New York. The New York program was headed by Abraham N. Franzblau (1901–1982), a young educator who would go on to serve on the faculty of HUC in Cincinnati and New York.⁴⁰² Although Grossmann had to sever all of his ties to the Teachers' Institute due to his health, his brother, Rudolph Grossman, served on the Committee for Hebrew Union College's School for Teachers in New York City.⁴⁰³ The Depression would ultimately force the New York school to close.

Grossmann's Final Educational Proposals for Hebrew Union College

Near the end of his life Grossmann began to envision an expanded role for HUC and its faculty. He sought to make the school more relevant in the life of its graduates and the life of the movement. Once again, Grossman's innovations focused on educational reform. Intensely committed to the importance of nurturing a more knowledgeable Reform constituency, Grossmann proposed two new ideas during his years in retirement, both of which were later adopted.

In late June of 1920 Grossmann wrote to the president and Board of Governors of HUC, informing them that the CCAR was giving serious consideration to the idea of

⁴⁰¹ Meyer, *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: A Centennial History 1875-1975*, 108-109.

⁴⁰² One of Franzblau's obituaries identifies him as "a founder of the Hebrew Union College (HUC) School for Teachers in New York City." See the JTA Bulletin, November 2, 1982. <http://archive.jta.org/article/1982/11/02/2994579/abraham-franzblau-dead-at-81>, accessed on February 11, 2013.

⁴⁰³ Letterhead for the Organization, 8 January 1924, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-14/Folder 22, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

establishing a summer school for its members. Grossmann served as chairman of the committee that was charged with the task of giving shape to this idea.⁴⁰⁴ The purpose of this program would be to encourage and enable members of the CCAR to pursue academic studies. Grossmann wrote that the role of the rabbi was expanding. He stated that modern clergymen needed to widen and enrich their education so they could better engage with the new ministerial challenges they were encountering. Grossmann urged the leadership of HUC to develop such a program so that HUC could be of service to its graduates.⁴⁰⁵ By July of that same year, Grossmann pushed further and suggested to the CCAR that they create not only a summer school but a Department of Continuation Studies.⁴⁰⁶

While Grossmann was at The Glen Springs Sanitarium in Watkins Glen, New York he proposed the establishment of a Graduate School at HUC. The idea for this post graduate department seems to have sprung from Grossmann's support of the CCAR Summer School. Seeing the need for continuing education for rabbis and wishing to create more than a simple summer session, he detailed an outline for a full blown department of graduate studies at the College. Grossmann suggested that this new department should have a curriculum that would be helpful to those in the rabbinate, not duplicate their undergraduate courses, and also allow for continued research and study. Grossmann stated explicitly:

The curriculum should comprise not merely book – but also field-work. Field-work in the academic sense means the scientific study of the facts as they appear in the individual and communal life. The Jew and the Jewish community, under the conditions of American history and American

⁴⁰⁴ See Volume 30 of the CCAR Yearbook (1920) for Committee Listings on page 10.

⁴⁰⁵ Grossmann to Hebrew Union College Board of Governors, 29 June 1920, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-13/Folder 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁴⁰⁶ IB:DA to Grossmann, 6 July 1920, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-12/Folder 18, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

influences, constitute [*sic*] the subject of field work study. It is of practical as well as academic significance.⁴⁰⁷

Grossmann detailed the many considerations that had to be dealt with in order to establish such a school, including details about the department's relationship to the undergraduate department, the financial situation of such a department, and the awarding of diplomas and titles.⁴⁰⁸ His plan was sent to Cincinnati, and the faculty appears to have been sympathetic to his idea.⁴⁰⁹ However, the Board of Governors deemed the financial cost to be too high, and they also expressed concern as to whether or not such a graduate school at HUC would attract sufficient interest.⁴¹⁰ In a final appeal written to his colleague Henry Englander and the HUC faculty, Grossmann asserted:

The College ought to have such a Department – whether the applications are many or few. A Graduate Department is a logical part of the College organization, and should not be trivialized on the score of supply and demand. Anyway, the students will come when there is such a Department.⁴¹¹

While nothing came of this plan, it is worth noting Grossmann's continuing work to envision a more comprehensive system of education for rabbis. Moreover, he continued to search for ways to keep HUC relevant in the lives of its ordinees and the communities of America.

Other Educational Organizations

In addition to Grossmann's work at HUC, he also was involved in several other organizations. From 1914–1915, for instance, he served as president of the Ohio Rabbinical

⁴⁰⁷ Grossmann to Englander, 10 February 1921, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-13/Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁹ Englander to Grossmann, 9 March 1921, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-13/Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁴¹⁰ Grossmann to Englander, 20 February 1921, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-13/Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁴¹¹ Grossmann to Englander, 14 March 1921, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-13/Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Association. He was also active in The Jewish Religious Education Association of Ohio. This association was organized in 1908 to provide a statewide conference for religious school teachers. The hope was that through such an association they might better serve the needs of the teachers and provide conventions where they could provide ongoing education.⁴¹² Grossmann served as its president from 1913 to 1914. The Jewish Religious Education Association sponsored regular conferences dealing with educational issues. At such conferences different speakers presented workshops and lectures on topics from lesson-planning to pedagogy to children's celebration of Jewish holidays to text books. Presenters included HUC professors, teachers from Sabbath schools, members of the UAHC staff, like Rabbi George Zepin, and community rabbis interested in educational endeavors.⁴¹³ Grossmann, too, was a regular presenter at the conventions.⁴¹⁴ Through his involvement in this organization Grossmann worked to advance the cause of Jewish education and to create a more professional and better-educated population of Sabbath School Teachers.

In addition his involvement with The Jewish Religious Education Association, Grossmann was engaged as an advocate for Jewish education in the CCAR on both a national and a regional level. As we will see below, Grossmann wrote numerous articles and delivered many orations on this topic for the CCAR. Many of these addresses were given at CCAR conventions. Moreover, Grossmann was part of the first group of rabbis to propose to the CCAR the establishment of a standing committee on religious education. He was one of the first to identify the importance of continuing education, and he advocated on behalf

⁴¹² Wolsey to Fineberg, 4 November, Jewish Religious Education Association of Ohio, MS 422/Box 1/Folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁴¹³ Suggested Program for 8th Session of Jewish Religious Education Association of Ohio, n.d., Jewish Religious Education Association of Ohio, MS 422/Box 1/ folder 2, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁴¹⁴ See the various programs for the Jewish Religious Education Association of Ohio's Conventions found throughout the collection, Jewish Religious Education Association of Ohio, MS 422/Box 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

of an engagement process that would enable the members of the CCAR to reach Jewish college students on campuses around the country.⁴¹⁵ Grossmann also was part of a CCAR committee which worked with the UAHC to establish a Sabbath School journal.⁴¹⁶

Conclusion

Through Grossmann's various involvements he worked on improving the state of Jewish Education on almost every level. He worked at the congregational level, the local and community level, and on the national level. He was actively involved in creating better teachers, more adept rabbis, and more engaged institutions. Through his actions Grossmann tried to move the Reform movement into a more progressive position with regard to religious education. In addition to his activities and involvements, Grossmann also used the pen to attempt to engender change. The following chapter will trace Grossmann's many writings on the subject of Jewish religious education.

⁴¹⁵Report of the Committee on Religious Work in Universities, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 16, (1906): 188-189.

⁴¹⁶ Report of the Recording Secretary, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 17, (1907): 44.

This was not the first attempt to create a religious school journal for American Jews. One of the earliest examples of such a publication for the Reform Jews was created by Rabbi Max Lilienthal (1815-1882) and entitled *The Visitor*. See Rabbi Ariel Boxman's rabbinical thesis for more information; *The Hebrew Sabbath School Visitor: A Critical Analysis of the Weekly Educational Magazine for Jewish Children, 1874-1893*.

“We must reconstruct our schools; they are medieval in spirit. The pupil does not come to school for the sake of the book, but he comes for the sake of himself.”⁴¹⁷

Chapter 4: Grossmann’s Writings on Jewish Education

While the previous chapter focused on Grossmann’s Jewish educational activities and endeavors, this chapter will focus on his writings in the field of Jewish Education. The chapter will progress chronologically and trace his work from his early career up to his final works. A notable exclusion from this chapter is his book, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools: A Handbook for Teachers*. This work, written in 1919, will be covered in the following chapter since it represents Grossmann’s longest and most comprehensive volume on Jewish Education.

In his inaugural sermon to Temple Beth El, delivered on December 6th, 1884, Grossmann wrote that the Sabbath-school was the origin of the Jewish future. He stated that the school required the congregation’s highest degree of energy and attention.⁴¹⁸ Even though the theme of Jewish education was not the primary focus of his inaugural sermon, his reference to the topic in his inaugural sermon suggests that he considered Jewish education to one of his, and one of the community’s, foremost responsibilities.

One of the earliest addresses Grossmann gave on pedagogy occurred at the 1903 CCAR conference held in Detroit, Michigan. The convention took place at Grossmann’s first congregation, Temple Beth El. Grossmann’s presentation was entitled *Pedagogic Methods in the Sabbath School*. Grossmann began by laying out his views on the differences between Jewish and Christian religious schools. According to Grossmann, the major difference between Jewish and Christian religious schools was that Judaism was *not* concerned with

⁴¹⁷ Louis Grossmann, “Principles of Religious Instruction in Jewish Schools,” 4-7.

⁴¹⁸ Louis Grossmann, *Inaugural Sermon Delivered in the Temple Beth-El* (Cincinnati: The Bloch Publishing and Printing Company, 1884).

indoctrinating youth regarding specific issues of faith. The Jewish religious school, he asserted, was more concerned with laying out a foundation of independent “soul-life,” which led to faith and loyalty. Grossmann failed to define “soul-life,” which leaves the statement’s meaning unclear. In this address, Grossmann defended the Jewish religious school from claims that it was simply a Christian transplant. He argued that, while their schools may have been based on Christian prototypes, Jews had been educating their youth throughout their long history, and more importantly, the purpose and goal of the religious school within the Jewish setting was radically different from that of the Christian Sunday School. Grossmann urged his colleagues to invest more time and energy in their Sunday or Sabbath Schools. He asserted that the shortcomings of these supplementary schools could be attributable to apathy and inadequate pedagogical technique:

We must challenge the current notion that we are doing something constructive in Sabbath School instruction. For we are not doing anything of the sort. Jews have been fed, throughout the eventful centuries, on more substantial food...Has it occurred to us, that indifference may be chargeable to faulty instruction and to our failure as teachers?⁴¹⁹

As early as 1903 Grossmann identified untrained and unprofessional religious school teachers to be the primary problem inhibiting the effectiveness of the Jewish Sunday/Sabbath School.

Grossmann’s criticisms of the Jewish Sunday/Sabbath School did not stop with teachers, however. He challenged the efficacy of compelling children to memorize catechisms or a roster of religious convictions. In the last half of the 19th century, many Jewish religious schools in America adopted Jewish catechisms and the rote memorization of Jewish moral precepts, borrowing these techniques from Christian Sunday Schools. Grossmann questioned this popular trend: “Catechism

⁴¹⁹ Louis Grossmann, *Pedagogic Methods in the Sabbath School*, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 13, (1903): 174.

and moralizing and text-books do not go deep into children's souls and can never transmute into the power that made the Jewish people."⁴²⁰ It is particularly interesting to note that Grossmann's words, spoken in 1903, seem to anticipate the criticisms of Jewish education that will be leveled two decades later. In the 1920s, Emanuel Gamoran also felt that moralizing, abstract concepts, theology, and catechisms were an ineffective means of Jewish education.⁴²¹ Despite common ground Gamoran advocated a different philosophy of education than Grossmann, which was in part due to the fact that he also benefitted from a much more substantial grounding in pedagogics. Grossmann did not receive the education and training that Gamoran received.⁴²² Yet Grossmann's addresses on Jewish education demonstrate that the status quo in Jewish education was being criticized two decades prior to the Gamoran era in Reform Jewish education. Grossmann's assertions seem to have been largely ignored in his day, but eventually, during the Gamoran era, the very same ideas he promoted were used to justify the need to make substantial change in Reform Jewish education during the 1920s.

Grossmann also called on the Reform movement to adopt an educational model that put, "Judaism at its center."⁴²³ Grossmann presented this challenge to the movement throughout his life. It is a theme he will draw on in future presentations as well.

In *Pedagogic Methods in the Sabbath School*, Grossmann also discussed public schools in America and the attempts to have Bible and religion taught within them. As we have noted in previous chapters, Grossmann worked tirelessly

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education*, 144-148.

⁴²² Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education*, 69-90, 144-158.

⁴²³ Louis Grossmann, *Pedagogic Methods in the Sabbath School*, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 13, (1903): 174.

throughout his career to keep the Bible out of public school instruction. More interestingly, Grossmann also spoke of how the Bible had been misused in religious schools. Bible, he argued, should be used to fit the needs of pedagogy and not theology. He argued that young students could not understand the ideas of salvation or God's creation of the world. However, they could understand a hero like King David. In short, Grossmann argued for age-appropriate teaching. He wanted to ensure that teachers understood how to create developmentally appropriate lessons and activities. Grossmann stated quite plainly that he was astounded that the movement employed teachers who had no understanding of educational psychology.⁴²⁴ Grossmann also made the case that scripture could be used to mirror the developmental changes occurring within the Jewish child. An example he gave was using Talmud during puberty. During puberty a child is undergoing revolutionary changes. The Talmud, he argued, was, "the record of a Great Adjustment[how to live after the destruction of the Temple], and...the literary record of a great crisis in Israel...when...Israel struggled into health and maturity."⁴²⁵ Grossmann argued that these parallels made the tradition come alive for children, and this type of intentionality would create a renaissance in Jewish education. He will develop this idea further in his curriculum.

This address is vitally important because it lays out, early in his career, many of the specific problems Grossmann identified in the accepted educational model that was used by the Reform movement at that time. As we continue to examine many of his other works, we will see that Grossmann continues to advocate many of these same themes over the course of his career.

⁴²⁴ Ibid, 178-179.

⁴²⁵ Ibid, 180.

In 1904 Grossmann wrote a piece for the *Hebrew Union College Annual* entitled, “Religious Education in Modern Judaism.” The piece begins by focusing on the state of education in America. Grossmann spoke of the growing movement to include Bible and “ethical and moral” teaching in public schools. He warned readers about the dangers that were inherent in this approach, and how changes in education could have a sweeping effect on the future of the American nation.⁴²⁶

It is interesting to note that Grossmann agreed with those who were asserting that the public schools were creating godless, materialistic, morally deficient citizens. He conceded that, “our public schools are deficient, and that they have a materialistic tone.”⁴²⁷ That being said, he ardently disagreed that morality and ethics could be taught with a textbook or an additional hour of religious school instruction in the public school system. He stated that the Bible could not mystically relate ethical living to children. Grossmann claimed that religious schools came into being in response to public education, and the Christian view that it needed to supplement what was being taught there. In his day, fights to incorporate religious teaching into public schools reflected the growing view among Christians that a religious crisis was occurring. Many felt that by including prayer or bible teaching into the public school curriculum they could overcome the social ills they perceived in their time. Grossmann vigorously opposed these attempts to bring religious education to public schools. In this article he also pointed out the various ways in which Christians were in need of a supplemental education very different than that of the Jewish people. He claimed that, unlike Christians, Jews did not need religious schools to create loyalty in their

⁴²⁶ For more information see Naomi W. Cohen, *Jews in Christian America: The pursuit of Religious Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). And Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830-1914* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1984).

⁴²⁷ Louis Grossman, “Religious Education in Modern Judaism,” in *Hebrew Union College Annual*, ed. Ephraim Frisch (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1904), 110-123.

children. Jews, he argued, benefited from traditions that were taught in many settings other than religious schools. He stated that a Jewish child inherited a “living Judaism” which was tangible, while Christians had merely theology and abstractions.⁴²⁸ In short, Grossmann claimed that religious education for Jews was different in goal and aim than that of Christianity because it had a firmer platform upon which to build.

It seems that Grossmann’s thinking on this particular issue evolved over the course of his career. As the acculturation and assimilation processes affected Jewish life during the first decades of the 20th century, Grossmann began to question his belief that Jewish children come to the Sunday/Sabbath school with an inherited understanding of the “living Judaism.” In his later writings on Jewish education, Grossmann lamented the lack of a “living Judaism” that could implicitly form Jewish children. Later in his career, Grossmann spoke regretfully about the unfortunate abandonment of Jewish education by the parent and the home.⁴²⁹

It is fascinating to note, when reading Grossmann’s article on religious education in the modern world, the striking similarity between Grossmann’s sense of the aims of Jewish education and those that Emanuel Gamoran would advocate two decades later. In this article, Grossmann maintained that Jewish traditions provide the solid foundation for Judaism. Moreover, he spoke of an inherent sense of loyalty to a “Jewish whole.” He stated that this Jewish whole is homogeneous in the soul despite dispersion and differences in language or political allegiance.⁴³⁰ Without employing the term, Grossmann was clearly speaking about the Jewish ethnos, or the Jewish sense of spiritual nationhood, that will later be referred to as Jewish Peoplehood. He placed an emphasis on the fact that common

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Louis Grossmann, Article IV in Recent Progress in Religious Education, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 24, (1914): 325-328.

⁴³⁰ Grossmann, *Religious Education in Modern Judaism*, 110-123.

traditions and customs were shared by Jews throughout the world. This seems to be an early precursor of what Gamoran will stress in his work in the 1920's. It has been noted that Gamoran's "aim was no less than a reinjection of Jewishness into Reform Judaism, a recovery of traditions and customs long ago set aside, reclamation of the very concept of nationhood (reformulated as ethnicity or peoplehood) that Reformers had parted with in the nineteenth century as a price for citizenship."⁴³¹ Grossmann's understanding and promotion of these ideas are not as fully-formed as those which Gamoran will bring to bear, and there remain serious differences in their approaches to Jewish education, yet Grossmann clearly embraces the conviction that Jewish identity is composed of more than a series of moral precepts. He challenged that view by asserting that the foundation of Jewish identity came from an appreciation of Jewish practice, customs and traditions. According to Grossmann, these factors—and not merely vague notions of ethics, catechism, and theology—needed to be inculcated into the system of modern Jewish education.

In 1911 Grossmann published an article for *Religious Education: the Journal of the Religious Education Association* titled "Jewish Religious Education." At the outset of the article Grossmann bemoaned the condition of Jewish religious schools. He pointed to the lack of a cohesive body holding the schools together, poor administration, and teachers who were not trained in pedagogy or Judaism. These were all factors which rendered the schools ineffective. Grossmann stated that this situation endangered the future of Judaism, because Jewish tradition was not being taught anywhere but in the religious schools, and because Judaism now needed to contend with competing narratives.⁴³²

⁴³¹ Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education*, 147.

⁴³² Louis Grossmann, "Jewish Religious Education," *Religious Education: the Journal of the Religious Education Association* 6, no. 3 (August 1911): 276-281.

It appears that between 1904 and 1911 Grossmann's ideas continued to evolve and change. He wrote that while the religious school was not indigenous to Judaism, it had now been naturalized. Therefore, there was a need to lift it up to become more than what it was. "The confidence which the Christian denominations have in the Sunday school...the all too confident expectation that the Church will stand secure on the one leg of a school-hour once a week, we Jews do not share. We know that faith has a right to more..."⁴³³ Grossmann went on to explain how the facts of modern history had thrust the religious school upon Judaism while, in ages past, Jews developed a natural system of teaching Judaism because they were dispersed and had to thrive as outliers among a dominant majority. Grossmann stated that modernity had changed all of this. Modernity allowed Jews to assimilate into the dominant culture, and Jews were left with two extremes to consider: loyalty to orthodoxy or loyalty to universalism. The purpose of religious school education, Grossmann averred, was to provide a midpoint between these two extremes.⁴³⁴

He also argued that Judaism could not be taught to young people as an abstraction. It had to be taught in a way that spoke to the lives of youth. It needed be relevant to their reality or else these young people would find in it nothing worthy of attention. This, Grossmann claimed, was the work of the Teachers' Institute: to create a religious pedagogy that could meet the needs of contemporary life. Grossmann closed this article by calling on public schools and religious schools to work together in an effort to enhance each other's work. Religious schools, he argued, should not work against the aims of the public schools and the public schools should not intervene in the matter of religious identity. Rather, both

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

of these educational institutions should support one another in the overall development of a child.⁴³⁵

This article is striking for several reasons. First, in it Grossmann once again expressed his frustration with the inadequacy of a supplemental school model. He stated that Jews should not be confident a supplementary school could meet the needs of Jews living in modernity. This is a view which Emanuel Gamoran would emphasize two decades later.⁴³⁶ While Grossmann and Gamoran felt religious school education could not hope to fully meet the educational needs of the Jews in America, both men spent their lives working to bolster its ability to teach Jews Judaism.

Second, Grossmann—who lived in a time when many Christians were firmly convinced that there was a need for religious instruction in the public schools and that the nation as a whole needed to make its Christian heritage explicit—called for religious and secular education to enhance one another. As a Reform Jew, he believed in a progressive sense of history and fully embraced science. His entire concept of modern pedagogy was, in fact, an embrace of science. At the same time, Grossmann called on religious schools to embrace science and to not create a competing religious narrative that was out of touch with the modern teachings of secular learning.

The third striking feature of this article is Grossmann's critique of Jewish education. His criticisms foreshadow those which many rabbis in the CCAR began to articulate in the 1920s. Ultimately, these ideas became increasingly popular, and led to the appointment of Emanuel Gamoran as leader of the Reform Movement's Commission on Jewish Education. Grossmann was one of the first American rabbis to identify concerns that would be addressed during the years that Gamoran led the Commission: disunion among the schools,

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education*, 145.

poor administration, teachers who were not trained in pedagogy or Judaism, a Reform Jewish practice devoid of ritual and action, and a curriculum which focused on abstract concepts rather than age-appropriate material.⁴³⁷

In 1909 Grossmann delivered another address to the CCAR on the subject of religious school education. This paper was entitled *The Scope of the Religious School*. Grossmann began this paper with one of his familiar assertions: the religious school should not be a replacement for teaching Judaism in the home. While Grossmann felt that Americans were not teaching Judaism in the home, he also felt that the school could never completely compensate for this problem. Moreover, Grossmann argued that imparting information was not enough for religious education. "It is not enough to have reasoned our children into the belief..."⁴³⁸ Grossmann insisted that the religious school must be more tangible than facts, reasoning, and theory. In their religious schools, children needed to learn about Jewish life. Grossmann felt that Jewish identity was grounded in Jewish action and Jewish experiences. Grossmann once again denounced the idea of a catechism being a basis for Jewish education. Knowledge was not the end goal, action was the end goal. The religious school failed if it simply taught about Jewish life; it must inspire children to live Jewish lives.⁴³⁹

Grossmann went on to defend the religious school as an institution. He claimed that religious school was necessary because Jews still had a need to maintain Jewish particularism. Therefore, Jews needed religious schools to instill what the secular world could not provide Jewish children: an understanding of Jewish identity, Jewish practice, and responses to antisemitism. Grossmann, once again, stated that most teachers in religious schools did not

⁴³⁷ Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education*, 144-145.

⁴³⁸ Louis Grossmann, *The Scope of the Religious School*, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 19, (1909): 337.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid*, 336-347.

understand how to build lessons that were developmentally appropriate. It seems this issue remained a pervasive problem during his day. In this work, Grossmann, ever the moderate, also called for unification with other Jewish movements in the work of Jewish education. He argued that all Jews should come together to create a better system of Jewish education, and that Jewish education was a unifying cause around which all Jews could rally. “The orthodox and the reformer have equal obligations and an equal opportunity.”⁴⁴⁰

Grossmann’s desire to collaborate with other movements never materialized or garnered support.⁴⁴¹

In 1914 the CCAR convention once again took place in Detroit. One of the sessions at the convention was entitled, “Symposium on Recent Progress in Religious Education.” Louis Grossmann was one of the speakers at this symposium, and he delivered a speech on the work of the Teachers’ Institute of HUC. He began by claiming that modern Jewish education could not afford to be a “bandage” or a “patchwork cloak.” It could not be reactive. Rather, it had to be constructive and visionary. Focusing his address on the work of the Teachers’ Institute, Grossmann called for teachers to be the solution. Grossmann claimed that Jewish history was a history of education—that the need for capable teachers was not a new one. Therefore, his call for Jewish educational reform was in fact a call for Jewish revival. Grossmann urged his listeners to think of the modern rabbi in the historic role of teacher. In addition to greater rabbinic training in pedagogy, Grossmann also told his listeners that there was a pressing need for more professional and better-trained Jewish educators, who saw their job as a calling with as much to contribute to the Jewish people as

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid, 347.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid, 336-347.

As late as 1919 Grossmann continued to call for cooperation between Jewish movements in America. See Grossmann, Louis. *Address Delivered to the Representatives of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations*. Cincinnati: 1919.

clergy. He argued that American Israel desperately needed an array of professional Jewish educators:

Jewish teachers must realize that they stand on holy ground when they are in the school. Every soul there has been moulded by the hand of God. It is the special ambition of the Teachers' Institute to inaugurate and to further the study of the Jewish child. It will bring us a renaissance of the school and a reform of its work.⁴⁴²

In this speech, Grossmann clearly establishes the primacy of pedagogic science in his vision of education as well as his firm conviction that it will be a new class of professional teachers who will create a Jewish renaissance in America.

Grossmann's point of view on the role of Jewish education and Jewish educators had much in common with many of the pioneering educators who were influenced by the new ideas of functional psychology and progressive education that were popularized in the early years of the 20th century. In many respects, Grossmann's assertions about the centrality of Jewish education are aligned with those of his contemporaries working in New York, such as those expressed in a 1911 communication between Judah P. Magnes and Jacob Schiff:

Dr. Benderly [Samson Benderly], Dr. Friedlaender [Israel Friedlaender], Dr. Kaplan [Mordecai Kaplan] and myself are young and hopeful, and we are willing to make a strong fight for Jewish education, because we feel that Judaism in this country is largely dependent for its strength upon the education this generation is able to give its children...⁴⁴³

It is difficult to determine whether or not Grossmann communicated with these young educators or read their writings. There is little evidence that they collaborated, despite their connection through the two Teachers' Institutes. Nevertheless, their ideas about Jewish education and Jewish pedagogy were strikingly similar. It is notable that through them

⁴⁴² Grossmann, Article IV in *Recent Progress in Religious Education*, 328.

⁴⁴³ Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education*, 46.

Gamoran would come to Cincinnati and begin the type of revolution for which Grossmann had long hoped.

In 1914, Grossmann published his first book of short sermonettes. It was entitled *The Real Life*. The work is arranged by subject. It is comprised of a loosely connected set of short charges which are often infused with educational themes. In one of the sections, “Opening of the Schools,” Grossmann spoke to the role of schools in laying the foundations of character and good citizenship. Teachers, in his words, were therefore public servants. In another section Grossmann discussed how education should seek to instill moral values in the child. Toward the end of this charge, he wrote that one of the major goals of education was to “divert the interest in the self into interest in others.”⁴⁴⁴ The last section on education in this work spoke of the power and importance of the public school. Grossmann wrote that the public schools were vital to America’s democracy because they fortified the nation’s strength.⁴⁴⁵

In 1918 Grossmann—then serving as president of the CCAR—delivered his presidential address at the CCAR convention that took place in Chicago, IL. His *Message of the President* included an entire section devoted to Jewish Education. It came just after a discussion of World War I and how the Reform Jewish community might reconstruct itself in the post-war era. After outlining several questions which posed challenges to the state of American Judaism, Grossmann presented one answer to all of them: Jewish education. Grossmann told his colleagues that Jewish education was still widely neglected in American Judaism. It was necessary to address the challenges facing Jewish education not simply to equip adults to meet the needs of the world, but more importantly, to train and influence the young. Grossmann argued that only through religious education could the rabbinate create a

⁴⁴⁴ Louis Grossmann, *The Real Life*, 67.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid, 68-70.

homogeneous people ready to meet the modern world as Jews. He called on the CCAR to form an investigative body that would look at how religious education could help engage the next generation, how it could centralize its training and teaching methodology, and how it could create a single Jewish School Union and a single Teachers' College, ending the factionalism and redundancy that squandered so much potential. The committee was also charged by Grossmann to report on how to create and recruit a professional and expert group of teachers and educators for the task.⁴⁴⁶ It is possible to understand Grossmann's address as the beginning of a revisioning process that would ultimately culminate in the appointment of Emanuel Gamoran to lead Reform Judaism's Commission on Jewish Education in the 1920s.⁴⁴⁷

We also see in this presidential address that Grossmann believed American Judaism could unify in support of Jewish education. He spoke of his hope that American Jews might yet become "the homogeneity of the people."⁴⁴⁸ Like his teacher, Isaac Mayer Wise, Grossman embraced a vision of an educational structure that would attract most American Jews, and he remained committed to this vision throughout his career.⁴⁴⁹

Grossmann delivered his second presidential address to the CCAR in 1919. Once again, he spoke about the importance of Jewish education. Grossmann stated unequivocally to the assembled rabbinical leaders of Reform Judaism that "They [the Sunday schools] are alien in origin, their text books are conventional, their methods stilted, and their teachers untrained and untouched."⁴⁵⁰ One can sense in this speech Grossmann's frustration over

⁴⁴⁶ Louis Grossmann, A Message of the President to the Twenty-Ninth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 28, (1918): 158-187.

⁴⁴⁷ Fram, *The Conference and Jewish Religious Education*, 182-185.

⁴⁴⁸ Grossmann, A Message of the President to the Twenty-Ninth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 169.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid, 158-187.

⁴⁵⁰ Louis Grossmann, Message of the President to the Thirtieth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29, (1919): 118.

the lack of progress toward the goals he repeatedly promoted. He stated that the flaw underlying the Sunday school system was the belief that religion was detached from life, that it was a supplemental endeavor. He called on the CCAR to rethink Jewish education and make Jewish identity a top priority in the educational process of the Jewish child:

Here is a reform, an educational reform, which it is the obligation of this Conference to achieve. Judaism is in the texture of all of life, it is not an accomplishment nor an accessory...It is an all pervasive, moralizing, and, if you please, intellectualizing, of the whole of the soul, and the problem for us is to restore Judaism to the centre of the educational life of the Jewish child and educational interest into the centre of the Jewish community.⁴⁵¹

The Sunday school's greatest flaw, he maintained, was the conviction that Judaism can be compartmentalized and relegated to the space of the synagogue and to one-hour religious instruction. Grossmann stated that in order to create a real reform in Religious education, the CCAR must make plain that Judaism was in the totality of life and that it was the center of living. Grossmann called on his colleagues to remind their congregants that Judaism was not an accessory but rather the central aspect of the movement.⁴⁵²

Grossmann concluded his address by appealing, yet again, for the CCAR to appoint a committee that would investigate a plan for educational reconstruction and reform. He called for the creation of educational organs capable of centralizing educational activities. Lastly, after discussing the changing nature of the rabbinate and the need for the rabbi to be an adept instructor, an exasperated Grossmann declared:

I urge with all the earnestness I can convey that this Conference delay not one moment to give the subject of Teaching as a Preparation of the Rabbi its most scrupulous thought and that a committee of this Conference draft a plan... so that the Rabbis of the New Period...secure adequate training in the art of teaching...⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Ibid, 108-135.

⁴⁵³ Ibid, 127.

As his term as president of the CCAR came to a close, and recognizing his presidential address was likely to be one of his final opportunities to speak to a national conference of his rabbinical colleagues, Grossmann seems to have held nothing back. He stated clearly and unequivocally his beliefs regarding the importance of investing in Jewish education, and the consequences that would come if the CCAR refused to take decisive action.

Grossmann published several volumes as part of his work for the Teachers' Institute. One of his most noteworthy contributions to the field of Jewish education, however, was a book entitled *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*. Dr. G. Stanley Hall, president of Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, wrote an introduction for this book. Grossmann also published a volume entitled, *Work for Teachers in Jewish Schools*. Both works were completed in honor of the centennial anniversary of the birth of Isaac Mayer Wise.⁴⁵⁴ Both of these volumes laid out a proposed curriculum that Grossmann sought to have adopted by Reform religious schools. In his recent volume on Samson Benderly and his disciples historian Jonathan Krasner stated that the curriculum presented to Reform Judaism's Commission on Jewish Education by Emanuel Gamoran in 1923 was the first graded curriculum for Reform religious schools. It appears, however, that it was Louis Grossmann who published the first graded curriculum in his volume *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, which appeared in 1919.⁴⁵⁵

The curriculum that Grossmann proposed in this volume is a fascinating document which tells a reader much about Grossmann's educational philosophy. It will be discussed in detail in chapter five. Grossmann noted in September 1919 that these two books were

⁴⁵⁴ Grossmann to HUC Board of Governors, 31 March 1919, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-12/Folder 15, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁴⁵⁵ Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education*, 146.

introduced as text books for a number of schools in the United States.⁴⁵⁶ In writing these works, Grossmann hoped to create a more unified curriculum among Reform religious schools, and he also aspired to create materials that would aid teachers and superintendents. His efforts were a modest beginning, and the more dramatic changes he hoped to realize would not begin to transpire until Emanuel Gamoran began leading the Commission on Jewish Education.

In 1920 Grossmann delivered his last paper before a Convention of the CCAR. His lecture was entitled, *Does Sunday School Make for a Religious Consciousness?* It was written in response to a survey that was commissioned by the CCAR which asked this as a question posed to rabbis. Grossmann's oration explains to his rabbinical colleagues the reasons why such a question misses the point of Jewish education completely. It is unclear if Grossmann was already beginning to feel signs of the illness that within a year would force him to retire from Jewish leadership; however, he did not hold back in this speech from once again forcefully expressing his criticisms of the entire religious school system. As Grossmann approached old age he seems to have been willing to speak out even more critically about religious school education in Reform Judaism, and he was equally outspoken when it came to expressing his thoughts on what needed to happen in order to improve upon the status quo. This final speech also constitutes something of a general summary of Grossmann's overall critique of Jewish education, including ideas he expressed in various venues throughout the course of his career.

Grossmann posited that the root of the problem with religious schools in his day was that they held the wrong aims: they sought to teach facts about Judaism and theology. This was a point Grossmann had made repeatedly over the course of his career. According

⁴⁵⁶ Grossmann to HUC Board of Governors, 30 September 1919, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-12/Folder 15, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

to Grossmann, the teaching of Jewish facts did not advance American Jewry toward the most important goal of religious education: the creation of Jews. Jews, he argued, could not be created by imparting facts. Rather the teacher must focus on instilling in the child Jewish experiences that would lead to Jewish action.⁴⁵⁷

In addition to his curricular criticisms, Grossmann told his colleagues that the contemporary religious school utilized methods of education that were inappropriate for the age of their pupils. Grossmann expressed his conviction that Jewish children needed to be exposed to a “child-Judaism.” In his mind it was a mistake to teach children about Judaism as if they were adults. “The fact is that there is a child-religion, just as there is a child’s clothes...”⁴⁵⁸ While Grossmann did not use the term, he once again appears to be speaking about the need to ensure that religious school teachers understood the importance of age-appropriate curriculum. Grossmann found fault with the fact that most Sunday/Sabbath schools taught Judaism to children as if it were an academic subject. Teachers made their pupils memorize catechisms and attempted to teach children theological abstractions. As for Jewish history, it was presented to the children as if they were sitting in a college lecture hall. “For whom is the Sunday School – for the abstract thing we theologians call religion, or for the children...”⁴⁵⁹ Grossmann stated that what was needed in order to fix the problem was a complete overhaul of the religious school curriculum. Instead of focusing on facts and abstractions, the religious school curriculum needed to focus on Jewish experiences. Moreover, Grossmann emphasized his conviction that Jewish learning simply cannot be communicated to students by means of lectures. Rather, students must discover Judaism for themselves, and they must direct their own learning:

⁴⁵⁷ Louis Grossmann, Does Sunday School Make for a Religious Consciousness?, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 30, (1920): 294-308.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid, 298.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid, 297.

We insist that our children shall know Jewish history and the formulated articles of belief. But they require throughout their tried careers, to orientate themselves in the crossing roads of human experience...Being led to them is not half as good nor half as satisfactory nor half as wonderful nor half as happy as finding them themselves...We have taken the freshness out of it [religion] for young souls that reach out for the hand of God, who long to see things with their own eyes and to touch the world of wonders with their own hands.⁴⁶⁰

In this paper, Grossmann also reiterated his thoughts about the important role the teacher played in the process of education. He pointed out once again that Jewish teachers needed to be competent, knowledgeable, and also empathetic. Teachers must understand that children think, feel, and experience the world in their own way. Teachers must learn how to communicate with their pupils:

The teacher of religion enters into child-difficulties and into child-joys and gives them meaning...You will say that we have no opportunity for that kind of intimacy...I see rich opportunities for good neglected and wasted because there is not enough contagion of soul from teacher to pupil.⁴⁶¹

Grossmann explained in this, his final speech to the CCAR, that if the Jewish teacher is not willing to connect with the students, then the entire educational enterprise would be a failure even before it began. He remained convinced that the teacher's highest priority was to relate to the students. If the teacher is incapable of establishing a bond with the student, then no amount of pedagogic knowledge will help him or her teach the children in the class.

There appears to be an even greater tone of frustration and urgency in this final address of Grossmann's. He pulled no punches at the end of the speech: "And I believe that parents allow time where they see time is used aright. Perhaps they withhold time because they do not trust us...The Religious School will get all the time it can legitimately

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid, 306.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid, 301.

demand if only it will show an adequate efficiency.”⁴⁶² Grossmann told his rabbinical colleagues that they had failed in the duty to be guarantors of Jewish education:

All the responses [to the survey] complain more or less distinctly of apathy and indifference, and a few suggest an effective- in some instances a mechanical- means for a stir in religious work. They lodge the blame upon the parents, who are, they declare, steeped in the distractions of the hour and its fashions and levities, forgetting that the parents have themselves been pupils of the religious schools, and that the charge against the schools and the complaint of its shortcoming and failure is merely doubled. The inadequacy of religious education is a chronic condition which the mechanism of method has not only not cured but aggravated.⁴⁶³

In a great indictment of everyone at the CCAR conference Grossmann exclaimed:

Do you know why our children come to us grudgingly, and why their parents look askance at us, and why the routine work we are sticking to is so fruitless? Because we have driven out of it the soul—the soul of natural childhood—and have put into its place the phantoms of old centuries.⁴⁶⁴

Having laid out his frank critique, Grossmann outlined his own vision for the Jewish religious school:

If the religious school is to be really Jewish we must put it where Jewish teaching and learning always were, in the center of the Jewish community... We must provide for connection of the school with all of the other serious work of the congregation and community... It must cease to be an appendage and must begin to be a point of crystallization. The Jewish school had intimate relation with the synagogue, its worship, its ritual and its life [*sic*]. So much so that it is difficult to determine the point where prayer begins and learning ends. Every intimate experience of individual, or family or community, was associated with learning. Every expression of fervor was expressed in school interest, in a subvention and tender gift to study and student. Charity was synonymous with study.⁴⁶⁵

Grossmann called for the school to be the centerpiece of a synagogue. In his mind, a synagogue should be primarily a house of study. This should infuse all Jewish actions. Prayer, charity, and ritual should become extensions of learning. If Jews could once again

⁴⁶² Ibid, 301.

⁴⁶³ Ibid, 303-304.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid, 307.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid, 302.

make education the centerpiece of their Jewish expression, as it once had been, every experience could become an opportunity for Jewish learning:

We must reform the curriculum of our religious schools. It is a reform that cannot wait. Every moment of delay is an injury to innocent lives and a drain on our moral investment in child-life...the reform of religious education is a reform that goes deeper than they[previous Jewish reforms] went. It is the most radical re-construction we can undertake and we must undertake it. It will require detachment from all our pre-judgments as to how religion comes into young lives...We shall know Jewish childhood better and increase our respect for it...Every child will be an open door leading to God.⁴⁶⁶

Grossmann concluded his speech by calling for the movement to confront this reform head-on. His final clarion was a genuine recapitulation of his primary ideas on Jewish education, which had been formulated over the course of his career: (a) He believed that Jewish schools must be the center of Jewish communities; (b) He asserted that a renewal of Jewish education would lead to a renewal of Jewish identity and expression; (c) He maintained that teachers must strive to understand their pupils—how they learn and how they feel—if they hope to be effective pedagogues; and (d) He argued that the only way for a teacher to truly reach a pupil would be when that pedagogue sees the young person as the hope of the Jewish people and a bridge to God.

Grossmann published a book, *Glimpses Into Life*, in 1922. This volume, which was dedicated to the Jewish community of Cincinnati, was his last publication. *Glimpses Into Life* is very similar in form to his earlier book, *The Real Life*. Like that work it is a loose collection of sermonettes on various topics, including sections that deal with his ideas on Jewish education. Grossmann spoke of the thirst children have for moral education and its absence in schools. It appears that what he meant “moral education” was an ability to apply Judaism to life. He argued that the current approach to education succeeds in conveying knowledge or data, but it fails to provide students with the tools they need to make good use of this

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid, 307.

knowledge. Grossmann also bemoaned the shift in education taking place in his day to focus on vocational and professional education. He stated that this culture was creating youth who wanted to study only those subjects that which could ensure they earned hefty pay checks.⁴⁶⁷

What was it about Grossmann's character that caused him to be so interested in Jewish education and such an advocate for educational reforms? First, and perhaps most significantly, Grossmann was raised in an orthodox home. This was a major influence on his ideas about Judaism and Jewish education. Ritual and tradition were powerful because they were tangible. While many reformers dismissed such practices as antiquated, Grossmann intuited that there was tremendous pedagogic potential in learning that was linked to experience. In addition, within the realm of an orthodox home Grossmann experienced a Jewish education that was both formal and informal. Jewish education was infused into every aspect of life, instead of relegated to a supplementary school.

Second, Grossmann achieved a mastery of modern pedagogy. Although his education was largely on-the-job experience, his writings suggest that he read widely on the new educational ideas that were attracting attention in the first decades of the 20th century. Grossmann applied his experience and his learning to the world of religious school education, and he quickly understood the need to transform the curriculum and the overall approach to education in the Reform movement. He called for creating age-appropriate education, for ridding the schools of theology and catechisms, for a better-trained cadre of teachers, and for a focus upon experiential learning through which children would learn values and how to be Jews. Grossmann's knowledge of modern pedagogy was clearly a

⁴⁶⁷ Louis Grossmann, *Glimpses Into Life* (New York: The Bloch Publishing Co., 1922) 32-45.

second factor that contributed to his being ahead of his colleagues in calling for drastic organizational change.

Third, Grossmann was a man interested in Jewish continuity more than Jewish denominational struggle. Leon Fram posited that one of the reasons there was a groundswell of support for educational change in the 1920s was that the Reform movement had come of age. It was no longer preoccupied in justifying itself against and contending with the other movements. The movement was secure enough to begin looking to youth as its future.⁴⁶⁸ Throughout his career, however, Grossmann eschewed the rhetoric of denominational schism. He rarely participated in the animosity and struggles that periodically erupted between the modern movements in Judaism. These denominational concerns, which kept many other rabbis from focusing on the work of educational reform, did not preoccupy Grossmann. Grossmann was a man who was able to find common cause to create a better Jewish pedagogy. His desires to work beyond the movement, however, were often undermined by rabbinical colleagues who did not share his more universal point of view. While many of Grossmann's colleagues may have recognized the shortcomings of religious education,⁴⁶⁹ few were ready to substitute exposure to ritual and Jewish experience for the more familiar emphasis on catechisms and the ethical ideals of Reform.

These three factors appear to have attracted Grossmann to Jewish education and to be a proponent of educational reform over the course of his career. Many of the ideals Grossmann championed remain educational goals which the Reform movement still hopes to achieve. He was a man of educational vision who, because of various circumstances, was unable to transform that vision into a practical reality. However, it is fair to assume that Grossmann's ongoing critique of the status quo and his dogged emphasis on the importance

⁴⁶⁸ Fram, *The Conference and Jewish Religious Education*, 182.

⁴⁶⁹ Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education*, 143-153.

of Jewish educational reform paved the way for the next generation of educational reformers. It would take men like Emanuel Gamoran and others of his generation to ultimately succeed in actualizing many of the ideas that Louis Grossmann had repeatedly advocated over the course of his long career.

“...Take religious school education out of the hands of theologians and put it into the hands of teachers, where it belongs.”⁴⁷⁰

Chapter 5: A Curriculum for Reform Jewish Education

In 1919 Louis Grossmann published *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools: A Handbook for Teachers*. This work was published by the Teachers' Institute of the Hebrew Union College in commemoration of the centennial anniversary of Isaac M. Wise's birth (1819–1919). The first section of Grossmann's publication laid out his educational goals and a course of study for each grade of a religious school beginning with Kindergarten and continuing to Eighth Grade. In subsequent chapters, he focused on various educational themes and related subjects such as the use of Hebrew, the use of music, and the use of text books in religious school education.

In effect, this work, which incorporated the modern educational methods being pioneered in his day, comprises Louis Grossmann's ideal curriculum for religious school education. In the book's Preface Grossmann wrote:

In view of the fact that religion is a central influence in life, the teaching of it is a prime concern. But no subject is so conventional and so slow to avail itself of large views and the efficient practice of modern education...These pages are offered as a modest contribution, in the hope that they may call attention to the possibilities which lie in the new Reform of Jewish Education. This reform will go deeper, I am certain, into the life of the Jews, because it will be more constructive than was the synagogal reform of fifty years ago.⁴⁷¹

In the work, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education*, Jonathan Krasner wrote that Emanuel Gamoran created the, “first graded Reform religious school curriculum,”

⁴⁷⁰ Louis Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools: A Handbook for Teachers* (Cincinnati: Teachers' Institute of Hebrew Union College, 1919), 154.

⁴⁷¹ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, preface.

which he unveiled at the 1923 CCAR convention.⁴⁷² However, Grossmann's work was written in 1919. We must therefore ask three questions. Is *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools, a Handbook For Teachers*, a curriculum? Is it meant for Reform religious schools exclusively? Was its purpose to be adopted by the movement at large? While scholars debate the definition of a curriculum, we may use the definition which Gamoran himself used, "A curriculum is anything from a mere statement of what we are going to study each year to a detailed study of the subjects."⁴⁷³ According to this definition Grossmann's work is most definitely a graded curriculum.

Grossmann did not necessarily state outright that this curriculum was for the Reform movement exclusively. However, he wrote it under the aegis of the Teachers' Institute of Hebrew Union College, and dedicated the work to Isaac Mayer Wise and Congregation B'nai Yeshurun. Moreover, Grossmann was clearly a major voice in the Reform movement and its educational endeavors. While some aspects of this curriculum are more conservative-leaning than was the wider Reform movement, such as his emphasis on Hebrew and aspects of Talmudic literature, it was clearly intended for a liberal religious school.⁴⁷⁴ Despite all that, the work was not commissioned by the CCAR. It was not voted upon by a body of the Reform movement. Moreover, Grossmann's vision throughout his rabbinate was to change American Judaism, not necessarily the Reform movement exclusively. He wished, as his mentor Isaac Mayer Wise had wished, to create lasting changes for American Jewry. However, due to some of its more liberal content this curriculum could never have been adopted by Orthodox synagogues. Therefore, depending on how one interprets this work,

⁴⁷² Krasner, *The Benderly Boys*, 146.

⁴⁷³ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 33 (1923): 342.

⁴⁷⁴ This fact can be clearly seen in the preface of Grossmann's work where he stated, "This reform will go deeper, I am certain, into the life of the Jews, because it will be more constructive than was the synagogal reform..." Grossmann clearly hoped this educational reform would change all Jews. He viewed educational reform as another wave of Jewish reform based upon scientific advancement (in this case pedagogic science). Grossmann believe this development would change the lives, "of the Jews," not simply Reform Jews.

Krasner's statement may or may not stand. On the one hand, it is possible to argue that Grossmann published the first graded curriculum for *Reform* religious schools. On the other hand, since Grossmann may have hoped his work would be used in congregations outside of the Reform movement, and in light of the fact this curriculum was never formally adopted by a body of the Reform movement, it may be inaccurate to classify Grossmann's curriculum as an educational blueprint for the Reform movement. In either case, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools, a Handbook For Teachers* is a noteworthy milestone in the history of Jewish education in America that has heretofore been neglected.

Hopefully future historians will one day provide a more detailed examination of Grossmann's curriculum and his overall contribution to the evolvement of Jewish education in America. What follows constitutes a brief overview and preliminary analysis of *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools, a Handbook For Teachers*.⁴⁷⁵

Introduction

Grossmann's book begins with an introduction by Dr. G. Stanley Hall (1844–1924) of Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. Hall's scholarship focused on psychology and education, he was viewed as a pioneer in both fields, and he was highly regarded for his work on child development. Later in his career, Hall served as president of Clark University.⁴⁷⁶

Hall praised Grossmann's work as, "the best treatise on religious pedagogy that has anywhere yet appeared."⁴⁷⁷ Hall noted that Grossmann's work properly incorporated scientific pedagogy into religious education. According to Hall, no one had previously succeeded to this degree in setting out a course of study that progressively laid out a religious

⁴⁷⁵ Each section heading in this paper written in bold represents a chapter of Grossmann's book. Direct quotes are cited with their page numbers, but the reader should assume that all descriptions of the book's content can be found in the original work under the corresponding chapter heading.

⁴⁷⁶ For more information see http://www.ithaca.edu/beins/gsh/gsh_bio.htm

⁴⁷⁷ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, introduction.

educational system based on child development. He stated that Grossmann was a leader in this field.⁴⁷⁸

It should be noted that Emanuel Gamoran, the acknowledged pioneer of Reform Jewish education, ultimately rejected Hall's pedagogic theories. He made this clear while discussing the curriculum he had created during a session of the 1924 CCAR Convention.

The theory that ontogeny repeats phylogeny, that the life of the individual repeats the life of the race – of Stanley Hall, has been discredited by Thorndike,⁴⁷⁹ by means of scientific evidence. Therefore that psychology, however well-founded it may have been, until the days of Thorndike, is no longer well founded today.⁴⁸⁰

Grossmann's curriculum was clearly influenced by Hall. Gamoran, a younger man whose training and education took place more recently than Grossmann's, rejected Hall's pedagogical theories. Grossmann's goal, throughout his career, was to infuse the modern science of pedagogy into the Jewish religious school.

Kindergarten (First and Second Grade)

The first section of Grossmann's work details his attitudes and approach to the Kindergarten years. Grossmann included first and second grade classes within Kindergarten.⁴⁸¹ He began this section by noting that there was a debate in his time about whether one should include a Kindergarten in religious school. Kindergarten was a somewhat recent phenomenon in the United States. In fact, the first Kindergarten in America was established in 1873.⁴⁸² As was noted in previous chapters, Grossmann worked

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Edward Thorndike lived from 1874-1949. He spent much of his career at the Teachers College at Columbia University where Gamoran received his education. His work was primarily in the area of educational psychology.

⁴⁸⁰ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 34 (1924): 372.

⁴⁸¹ Kindergarten originally comprised children between the ages of 3 and 7. It was only in American public schools that the crystallization of the program to the age of 5 developed. For more information see Christina More Muelle, *The History of Kindergarten: From Germany to the United States*. Florida International University. <http://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1110&context=sferc>

⁴⁸² Ibid.

with the Cincinnati Kindergarten Association and was an advocate of Kindergarten. He favored the idea of Kindergarten within the religious school, and spent the rest of the chapter outlining its function and some of the content that should be covered in these grade levels.

Grossmann began by claiming that religious school traditionally had been sober in tone. Cultivating a cheerless tone in the religious school was a mistake, and Grossmann asserted that the overall tone of the institution needed to change. He argued that a change in the overall atmosphere of the religious school could most easily be effected within the context of the Kindergarten classes. According to Grossmann, the religious school had historically been viewed as a place for intellectual development. This too must change. He argued that intellectual content was merely one of many influences that shape the child's religious identity. Grossmann insisted that child development demanded that an educational experience allowed young children to engage in, "delights of fancy." This served as a basis for expanding a school's curriculum to go beyond the realm of intellectual growth only. According to Grossmann, a curricular approach that focused exclusively upon the intellectual growth of the young student was one of the major shortcomings of the religious schools. He therefore argued against rote memorization, repetition, and other pedagogic methods that force children to engage with facts rather than foster an emotional appreciation for the subjects and ideas they encounter. There was no need for textbooks in Kindergarten. Rather, the primary aim of Kindergarten education in religious school was to incorporate and foster imagination. Grossmann stated that the Jewish religious school must foster the poetic and the aesthetic; the aspects of learning that call for imagination and creativity into these early years.

One of the main foci for education that Grossmann identified in the Kindergarten was calling for the students to “think themselves into others.” He argued that a major aspect of development at this age is to engender within a child the ability to, “think itself into the thought and to feel itself into the feelings of the members of the class and into the personalities in the stories and the play that constitute any given lesson.”⁴⁸³ This type of work, however, does not lend itself to evaluation or tests. The work is not tangible through a recitation of creeds, but even though these educational objectives cannot be clearly assessed or measured with precision, they are far more important than the rote memorization of creeds.

In his chapter on Kindergarten, Grossmann outlined what he believed to be the appropriate and necessary aspects of Kindergarten education. There is a difference between adult religion and child religion, Grossmann wrote, because the emotional and intellectual development of a child necessitates a different type and style of religious education. Children should not be forced to grapple with abstract concepts, nor, as noted above, with the task of creedal memorization. The kindergartener, Grossmann maintained, should be exposed to child-myths and folk-lore. These young learners need not be compelled to learn biblical or Talmudic texts. Religious school pedagogues must strive to bring Judaism alive with the very Jewish folk-lore that had fallen into contempt by scholars. According to Grossmann, kindergarteners in the Jewish religious school needed “Jewish Grimms,” to collect this kind of literature. These moral stories would serve as the basis of the early lessons that must be taught at the Kindergarten level. These tales would inspire awe and admiration in the child, and in this way these young and impressionable students would begin to think and feel themselves into the context of these moral stories.

⁴⁸³ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 20.

Though Grossmann was a proponent of Hebrew language studies in religious school, he was opposed to teaching Hebrew to kindergarteners. He argued that at this point of development words that were not reinforced in any other setting would become “dead weight,” since the children were still striving to master their own native tongue.⁴⁸⁴ Grossmann focused on Hebrew language pedagogy in greater length in his separate chapter devoted to this subject.

In his chapter on Kindergarten, Grossmann emphasized that there was a direct relationship between the level of interest in the material being taught and the need for classroom discipline. These two topics went hand in hand at every educational level. Students who were properly engaged by pedagogues will behave. By contrast, misbehavior took place when pedagogues were not fully engaging their students.

Grossmann also emphasized that play is an essential educational strategy for kindergarteners. It is not to be thought of as an activity that was separate from the lesson. Rather, play was best utilized as a means for aiding the students in internalizing the lesson. Play activity needed to be integrated into the curriculum and not used to serve as a diversion or a break from the lesson.

Inculcating a sense of kinship with their fellow Jews was yet another curricular objective for the Kindergarten years. Grossmann argued that teachers should strive to foster a sense of religious affiliation and attachment to their fellow students which suppresses within them feelings that divide. This is not for the sake of a sense of universalism, but rather for the sake of creating a Judaism that is embrative.

Finally, Grossmann underscored the importance of using music as an educational tool for religious school kindergarteners. He strongly disagreed with those who claimed

⁴⁸⁴ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 25.

there was no such thing as original Jewish music. Grossmann maintained that such music did exist, and he expressed his hope that future Jewish educators would assemble collections of Jewish music for children. Such collections should ideally be composed primarily of “Jewish folk music.”⁴⁸⁵ The use of music in the religious school, Grossmann argued, should be more than a mere pastime. Music constituted a wonderful tool for the pedagogue, because songs could convey meaning and they could make students feel are a part of the lesson.

Third Grade

This chapter begins with a description of “child-life” in the Third Grade. Grossmann described the development of most children in this stage of life. His focus on child development and stages of child life characterize the work. Grossmann infused these concepts throughout his curriculum.

The chapter continues with a discussion of home life and the relationship between the child and various figures in the child’s life. Grossmann goes on to outline how a teacher can instruct a child by focusing upon how a child’s relationship with parents and other family can be translated into how they navigate relationships in the wider world. Properly defining and exploring these experiences could help shape the world of the child and create a basis upon which he or she, as an adult, would function in the world. For example, the subordination of a child to a parent and the coordination and cooperation between siblings are norms that can be translated to non-familial relationships. Later in the chapter, Grossmann explained that the teacher’s role in class was to foster a shift in understanding within the child from a sense of relationships being grounded in physical dependence to

⁴⁸⁵ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 28.

relationships grounded in a sense of moral relationship. Grossmann established that this is characterized by an understanding that relationships are two- sided.

Grossmann also discussed the role of God at this stage of religious school education. He indicated that children go through several stages of God-feeling or God-idea and that the teacher must be attuned to this progression from year to year. At this stage of the child's development, God is understood through the lenses of kinship, nature, and that which the child experiences directly. Grossmann suggested anchoring this sense of God into relationships familiar to a child; like that of a father. It is worth noting that Grossmann suggested a God concept that grows as a student grows.

Moving on to content, Grossmann pointed out that the major stories for this grade should be those that focus on homes. After all, this is the world of the child at this age. He therefore suggested that the homes of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be the focus of this grade. Grossmann also pointed out that a teacher must not present to children a world wherein good happens to those who are good. This, he argued, is not the experience of the child in the world. It was very important, Grossmann stressed, that religious school lessons conform to what a child experiences in the world. Dissonance between the two often leads to a child dismissing that which is taught to him in the religious school setting. Grossmann also stated that it is important to discuss the virtues and vices of each individual and each home. None of our patriarchs or matriarchs was without fault. Their failings and their successes can be edifying. "These Three homes are real homes, and describe the joys and the difficulties which every home has. They are pictures of real child-experiences, such as occur today and everywhere."⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁶ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 41.

Grossmann underscored the importance of instilling a sense of community within children who are in the Third Grade. This emphasis combated the natural sense of selfishness that exists within child-nature. By teaching children the importance of being a part of the Jewish community, Grossmann averred, religious school teachers helped them to develop a sense of community as Jewish adults. In a lament that seems as timely in 21st century America as it was when Grossmann published his volume, he wrote, "The bane of modern Judaism is the aloofness of each separate Jew, but the exquisite charm of the Jew of former ages lay in the solidarity which was ingrained in his nature."⁴⁸⁷ Grossmann concluded this chapter by speaking at length about his most cherished trait, loyalty. As we have seen in other chapters, this was a common theme of Grossmann's, and so it is not surprising to see it taken up here as well. In the context of religious school Grossmann's conversation about loyalty focused on instilling within youth a sense of loyalty to the Jewish people and loyalty to God. Grossmann feared that a generation could arise who affiliated with Judaism merely out of self-interest, rather than from a sense of loyalty to a people; a sense of kinship to all Jews everywhere.

Fourth Grade

Grossmann's chapter on the Fourth Grade also begins with a brief description of child-life at this stage of development. He discussed the advances the child has made developmentally since Third Grade and what has changed and remained constant in the nature of children.

In the Fourth Grade, Grossmann noted, admiration became a major part of the world of the child. This developmental stage should be utilized by religious school teacher through the exploration of heroes. According to Grossmann, religious school teachers should present realistic heroes with human qualities. These heroes should not be presented

⁴⁸⁷ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 43.

as perfect or without flaw since perfect people are not real. Grossmann argued that the best heroic role model is one that the child can realistically aspire to emulate. Realistic heroes for the religious school curriculum should not be martyrs or ascetics. The heroes should be adventurers since the children themselves are adventurers at this stage in their lives.

Grossmann argued for biographical instruction to begin in the Fourth Grade. Grossmann suggested the use of biblical characters. However, he cautioned the teacher on several points. First, the stories must be short and with a clear lesson. Second, it is imperative to ensure the focus on what men and women did, rather than what God made happen through them.⁴⁸⁸ The children must learn what they themselves can do, and not what God has control over. The objective as far as Grossman was concerned was not to teach fourth graders theology, but rather to emphasize the potential of the human experience. The children can learn this lesson if they are exposed to men and women they learn to admire. "Moses...is not a legislator, he is not an inspired prophet, he is not even the emancipator of a people, he is simply a man who uses rightly the opportunities that have come to him...for this class, the exodus is not an act of God, but the achievement of a man who has justice on his side."⁴⁸⁹

Grossmann suggested that the curricular material for Fourth Grade should focus specifically on the life of Joseph, the life of Moses, the Israelite's wandering, and the death of Moses. Grossmann was quick to explicate that mosaic legislation had no place in this grade. Children of this grade are not capable of truly internalizing laws, and they are not students of the law. Even the Ten Commandments are beyond them if they are not grounded in familiar experiences. The students should be so engrossed in the story that they feel inspired

⁴⁸⁸ As will be noted later in this chapter, Grossmann speaks at various points throughout his curriculum about the fact that boys and girls have different needs from religious school education and that both require exemplars of their sex and of the opposite sex.

⁴⁸⁹ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 58-59.

to go out into the world and emulate the characters. Grossmann believed these sections of the Bible provided several types of heroes with real vices and virtues to which the student can relate. The teacher must make the characters live. If the teacher does not believe in the lesson and the importance of the ideas they are hoping to transmit, they will be ineffective.

Grossmann concluded this chapter by explaining that while Third Grade was focused on a sense of dependence, in Fourth Grade the child begins exploring independence. At this stage, children are developmentally able to focus on what they can contribute. Children are no longer merely the recipients of benefits, but they begin to feel as though they can give as well. Therefore, the Fourth Grade religious school pedagogue should learn to focus on themes such as heroism, courtesy, regard for others, regard for property of others, helpfulness, perseverance, and self-control.

Fifth Grade

In accordance with a now familiar pattern of discourse, Grossmann began this chapter with a description of the changes in child development for the typical student entering the Fifth Grade. He wrote of a child's growing differentiation as well as the fact that the world of the child was expanding beyond the domestic sphere. Moreover, the child entering the Fifth Grade begins to acquire a heightened sense of responsibility and self-control. The child understands the concept of laws, personal property, as well as truth and justice. The ability to cooperate is also more pronounced at this point, and the teacher must attend to this aspect of child-life.

Grossmann also described how children are able to conceive of God at this stage of development. Children project their own personality upon their world, he explained, and consequently an educator is able to employ stories of God acting in the world of humans. Children demand to know a God who is moral and creates justice in the world. Although

children at this stage of intellectual development can absorb an academic understanding of a single God, they still want to conceive of a companion-God rather than an abstract God-Idea.⁴⁹⁰ Therefore, the character of God must be taught. “The God of the Jewish catechism is an uninteresting God and does not appeal to the feelings. He is not brought close to the heart of the child, so that he may ‘love Him with all his heart and soul and might.’”⁴⁹¹

Included in this chapter is an interesting deviation from the typical subjects Grossmann covers in each chapter. Grossmann wrote of the necessity of focusing on the natural world within Jewish education. The religious school teacher, he argued, must find a way to imbue children with a love of nature. Judaism has a great deal to say about the natural world in which we live. Urban life caused this aspect of Judaism to be neglected, but Grossmann deeply believed that Jewish pedagogues must reintroduce these ideals to their students.

In this chapter, Grossmann adumbrates the development of moral intelligence which takes place at this age. He argues that this stage is critically important to the fostering of a “Jewish conscience.” A “Jewish conscience” is a moral sense that is not concerned with mere correctness, but with goodness. A Jewish conscience, “points the way, it commands the doing and prohibits the not doing.” In Fifth Grade such a moral sense can be nurtured by an intentional educator. Grossmann fails to go into details on specific strategies for such work

⁴⁹⁰ Note that here Grossmann is being critical of a theological concept that was popular among Reformers in this period. The Reformers were weary of a personal God and preferred a more abstract understanding of God. While this was fine for adult minds which could conceive of it, Grossmann felt it was inappropriate for a child at this age. We can see this preference for a God-Idea in Reform Judaism most clearly in the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform, “We hold that Judaism presents the highest conception of the God-idea as taught in our Holy Scriptures and developed and spiritualized by the Jewish teachers, in accordance with the moral and philosophical progress of their respective ages. We maintain that Judaism preserved and defended midst continual struggles and trials and under enforced isolation, this God-idea as the central religious truth for the human race.”

⁴⁹¹ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 73.

In terms of course content Grossmann recommended having fifth graders focus on the story of Joshua, the period of the judges, and the biographies of Saul, David and Solomon. He viewed this entire sweep of time as a story of Israel's development from a people that was focused on war to a period of morality and ethical wisdom embodied in the figure of Solomon. The primary lesson in this grade should be to show the students how Israel evolved from a warring mentality to a moral nation. In this sense, the political realities found in the narrative are irrelevant. The religious school educator should underscore the story of a people trying to build an ideal home. As Grossmann suggested throughout the work, the good of each character in the narrative must be presented alongside the bad. The Jewish child must be exposed to the moral struggle in each character in order to learn from it.

The chapter ends by exploring the child's growing understanding of God. Throughout this curriculum, Grossmann emphasized the need for the religious school teacher to carefully attend to the development of the student's understanding of God.

Sixth Grade

In keeping with his now familiar pattern, Grossmann begins this chapter on Sixth Grade by expatiating on the major developmental changes that take place during the Sixth Grade. He noted the growing ability of the children in this age cohort use willpower to overcome their childhood whims. The goal of development for this age is for the student to begin to understand that in addition to rules governing their relationship with others, they must also develop a moral order that governs their individual selves. In short, the teacher must strive to help the child develop self-control. Grossmann explained that moral character does not develop until a child can see the many sides of a situation and choose for himself or herself the moral position.

In his chapter on Sixth Grade, Grossmann outlined his perspective on authority and classroom discipline. He averred that each religious school teacher must strike balance between too oppressive an authority which robs the child of the opportunity to develop a moral character, and too much leniency. A teacher must develop other means of engendering class decorum aside from exerting a strictly authoritative stance. Grossmann also points out that classroom discipline can be less problematic if by this age teachers have helped students find an inner moral compass. In short, classroom management often depends on how well the teachers in younger grades instilled within children the ability to know what is right and what is wrong.

Sixth graders are also able to engage effectively in communal prayer. Prior to this point, Grossmann argued, individual prayer may be successful, but group prayer was ineffective. He argued for the use of rituals that would help the children invest in a communal prayer experience. The very social nature of children at this age should be used to reinforce the communal aspects of Jewish prayer. However, the focus of the prayers should not be on service, but rather on Thanksgiving and Praise. Just as there is a natural evolvment in the child's God-concept and in behavior, so too must there be appropriate forms of prayer that match a child's development.

Seventh Grade

In his chapter on the Seventh Grade, Grossmann noted the important role that puberty plays to children in this age cohort. He emphasized the changes occurring in the bodies of children as they go through puberty and noted how this can affect their behavior and interpersonal relationships. He spoke about physical bullying among seventh graders, especially among those who are going through puberty. Grossmann emphasized the need for teachers to help the children in this grade establish a sense of self-assertion. He argued

that Jewish children have special need of strong direction in this realm since self-assertion was a quality that had been deemphasized among the Jew for centuries. Moreover, Grossmann argued that physical exercise must become part of the class routine. This too was something too long denied to Jewish children.

Grossmann then spent time fleshing out an idea he had mentioned briefly earlier in the book. Children who seemed to lack self-control, Grossman wrote, were likely not being fully engaged by their classroom teachers. According to Grossmann, misbehavior was often not the fault of children but rather the instructor. Grossmann theorized that if these children were given work that engaged them, it would awaken their personality and minimize discipline problems.

In Seventh Grade, Grossmann wrote, one is able to observe how the educational work that was done during the earlier stages childhood development can begin to pay off. If pedagogues invested time helping children to empathize with the feelings and needs of others in earlier grades, these efforts would show in the Seventh Grade, when students begin to comprehend the meaning of important ideas like justice and sympathy.

Grossmann emphasized the important role that questioning plays for students in this age group. Seventh graders begin to exhibit the beginnings critical thought and they manifest a questioning spirit. Part of the questioning is inquisitiveness. However, another aspect of the questioning is a type of fighting or independence-seeking. No matter the origin, the questions must be taken seriously. "Character advances by suggestions and not by discouragement," Grossmann wrote.⁴⁹²

The Seventh Grade was a time when religious school teachers should reinforce the importance of fostering a sense of loyalty and kinship among Jewish children toward the

⁴⁹² Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 100.

Jewish people. "Its kinships should mean much to it; they should stand in its sight as right and best. This is not chauvinism, nor prejudice; it means merely that the child should take his natural affiliations sincerely and seriously."⁴⁹³ Later on he writes, "Every Jew feels that his life touches every other Jew's. This...makes every Jew feel that he is necessary to all of his people, and that he has a constant obligation toward them." In this work, Grossmann moved from this sense of kinship, or today what we might call peoplehood, to the idea of individualism. He wrote that while much has been written in defense and in condemnation of individuality within Judaism, the truth is that it is neither fully vice or virtue. A person's sense of individuality and self-reliance must co-exist with solidarity with the Jewish people. Jewish practice and identity in America must be a balance between autonomy and connection to other Jews.

Grossmann's chapter on Seventh Grade examines (for the first time in the entire curriculum) gender differences and the role of boys and girls. It is hardly surprising that Grossmann's views on gender are reflective of this own era and seem out of touch with more modern perspectives that evolved in the last half of the 20th century. Despite the fact that Grossmann's curriculum was published nearly a century ago, there are important ideas within this section as well. Grossmann noted that proper attention at an early age to creating respect between boys and girls will help adolescents and adults function in the same way. He argued that the groundwork for fostering respect between boys and girls must be laid prior to adolescence. Should an educator seek to make an impression on youth regarding respect between the sexes they must begin this educative work earlier. If a school waited to begin this type of education (viz., mutual respect between men and women) in the adolescent years, it has waited too long. Grossmann emphasized how important it was for

⁴⁹³ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 106.

both boys and girls to have adult role models to whom they could look for guidance as they grow into manhood and womanhood. Some of his statements regarding the importance of gender equality are remarkably contemporary. One particularly striking example is Grossmann's observation that "real manliness lies in a wise and fair use of power."⁴⁹⁴

Grossmann also pointed out that a teacher had to be interested in the children's home life, as the character of the family and home was a critical aspect of the student's overall development. If teachers are unaware of that specific environment, Grossman noted, they are at a distinct disadvantage in their efforts to influence and instruct a child.

Grossmann repeatedly emphasized in his curriculum that creeds and catechisms have no place at any stage in religious school education. Young or old, he wrote, the pedagogue should steer clear of rote learning. Memorizing abstractions remained a useless undertaking: "The object of education is to establish habits of conduct."⁴⁹⁵ Grossmann proposed an education curriculum that attempted to shape Jewish adults and encourage them to live Jewish lives.

The chapter on the Seventh Grade concludes with an extended discourse on the notion of reverence and a child's place in congregational worship. Grossmann believed that children will only adopt religious tasks and reverent attitudes when they respect them. This cannot be achieved by forcing adult forms onto children. Grossmann points out that unlike Catholics, Jews do not become Jewish through some sacramental act, like the Eucharist. Synagogue worship does not serve the same function in Judaism as church attendance does in Christianity. Instead, he argues, Jewish public worship is, "the expression of the soul-kinship of the people."⁴⁹⁶ Grossmann viewed worship as the communal expression of

⁴⁹⁴ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 93.

⁴⁹⁵ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 112.

⁴⁹⁶ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 121.

common experiences, responsibilities, and “religious exaltation.”⁴⁹⁷ Grossmann argues that children cannot join in this “Composite Soul,” that is created and, moreover, congregational worship is not designed for children. Due to this, it is not necessarily instructive or positive to force children into synagogue attendance.

Eighth Grade

Eighth graders continue to experience the same inner struggles that began to appear during Seventh Grade. The pedagogue can anticipate ongoing changes in the body and mind of the Eighth grader. Grossmann urged the religious school teacher to be closely attuned to the inner-turmoil going on within the child and to help students navigate and adjust to these changes. Pedagogues can derive a great deal of satisfaction, he wrote, in having contributed to a student’s burgeoning sense of morality. It is clear that when Grossmann wrote his curriculum, many students joined the workforce after Eighth Grade. While some students continued on to high school, others began a trade after completing Eighth Grade, and this made the teacher’s role even more urgent. Since many eighth graders would be leaving behind their school years at the conclusion of this year of study, the teacher has precious little time to insure that students are well-prepared to take their place in the greater world.

According to Grossmann, puberty is a critical period in the child’s overall arc of development. Immense changes take place at this stage in a child’s development, and students need a helpful guide and an encouraging supporter. Each child is a unique individual who will have distinctive needs, but a capable teacher will know his or her students well enough to foster and facilitate their growth. Teachers who are incapable of truly understanding their students as individuals will fail at their important task. The teacher or educator is not merely someone who imparts facts. Rather, a true teacher is one who

⁴⁹⁷ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 123.

understands the significance of engaging with the whole child and who assumes responsibility for helping students develop into adulthood. Public schools are not fully invested in this task, and therefore it falls to the religious school to pursue it.

Grossmann suggested that prayer at this stage be focused on meditation and in finding the best that is inside the student. Through the process of prayer, human beings learn to extol moral achievements and proper conduct. Puberty was a time of great individualism, and the religious school teacher is able to help students grow as individuals by teaching them the meaning and significance of prayer. The Eighth Grade is also a period when skepticism and disbelief takes root in many children. Part of this may be due to the eighth graders' desire to be the center of a discussion or argumentation. An educator can establish a progression from a belief in God to a belief in cooperation with God.

During this stage in a child's development, there is also a return to hero worship, so the religious school teacher should strive to help students understand what qualities make a genuine hero. The teacher must also be careful in selecting figures for study. An educator may also become the focus of the student's hero worship, and Grossmann urged his readers to take extra care to model proper conduct.

In terms of content for the Eighth Grade, Grossmann recommended that teachers focus on Jewish life in the Talmudic period. During this period there were many biographies to be explored, and students could be exposed to the major shifts that have occurred during the history of Jewish life. The Rabbinic period is a period where religious life and religious individuals had to function without the institutions and authorities which had formerly served as their foundations. Teachers need not concentrate on textual study per se. Instead, Grossmann recommended that teachers encourage their class to explore what these rabbinical figures did, rather than what they specifically said. Action and activity was to be

the focus. Grossmann took note of the fact that, in recommending the rabbinic period as a significant theme for Eighth Grade study, he was proposing a topic of study that had largely been excised from Reform Judaism's religious schools. He wrote that he was very happy to, "restore these men of stamina to the admiration they deserve and to the emulation which they may still elicit."⁴⁹⁸

In his chapter on the Eighth Grade, Grossmann bemoaned the fact that religious school curricula typically focused on subject matter rather than activity and action. This diminished the effectiveness of the religious school by exposing students to book knowledge rather than life knowledge. This approach has contributed to the general lack of interest that prevailed in religious schools. "The passive and contemplative character of our religious teaching is little likely to appeal to active, vigorous and impulsive children and youth."⁴⁹⁹

In order to address this shortcoming in the religious school, Grossmann suggested the implementation of clubs, student-government, plays or drama and other ideas to help push activity within these grades. As was his customary approach in this book, Grossmann laid out his ideas and his philosophy in broad strokes, but he did not provide his readers with a detailed road map that would lead the way.

After completing his discussion on the content of Eighth Grade, Grossmann proceeded to concentrate on specific topics that concern the general welfare of the religious school.

⁴⁹⁸ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 143.

⁴⁹⁹ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 146.

The Relation between the Public School and the Religious School

Over the course of his career, Grossmann wrote articles on the subject of the relationship between public and religious schools.⁵⁰⁰ Therefore, it is not surprising to see a chapter on this topic in his curriculum as well. Grossmann advocated for the necessity of linking the education of the public schools to what was going on in religious school in order to provide students with a “uniform educational life.” “Much of the difficulty in the Religious School is traceable to the fact that the children find no connection between it and their public school life.”⁵⁰¹ Grossmann argued that religious school educators would be aided by this link. The religious school instructor should know what was being taught in the parallel grades of the public school, what work the pupils were doing during the school week, what classroom management technique was being employed in the public school classroom, and what methods of teaching were taking place there. The religious school teacher should then seek to create ties and connections within his or her religious school classroom. In order to make this a reality, Grossmann suggested that religious school teachers visit the public school once a week in order to understand its environment and the pedagogic spirit of the classroom their religious school students attend. Grossmann believed that religious school teachers could benefit and learn from observing the educational methods of public school teachers. Grossmann was an early voice arguing for integrating these two educational experiences that were so important to Jewish children.

Grossmann argued that supplemental religious education shaped a child’s character in ways the public school could never hope to achieve. However, religious education should be integrated and not separated from the Jewish child’s experience in the public school. The

⁵⁰⁰ See Louis Grossman, “Religious Education in Modern Judaism,” in *Hebrew Union College Annual*, ed. Ephraim Frisch (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1904). Also see Louis Grossmann, “Jewish Religious Education,” *Religious Education: the Journal of the Religious Education Association* 6, no. 3 (August 1911).

⁵⁰¹ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 149.

sharp division between religious and secular education, which Grossmann considered to be ubiquitous, was damaging to the intellectual and emotional growth of Jewish children. To divide the two implicitly reinforced the idea that that religion is separate and distinct from general life in America. The two must be integrated because, “In the public school the child learns the facts of everyday life. In the Religious School he learns to interpret them, to see their meaning and to use them for high ends.”⁵⁰² In other words, in public school we learn facts about the world. In religious school we learn how to apply them to be better people and create a better world. When religious schools function at their best these two educational venues are intertwined, and the children feel and understand this educational connection. After all, Grossmann wrote elsewhere, “Judaism is in the texture of all of life, it is not an accomplishment nor an accessory.”⁵⁰³ Judaism was lived; it could not be relegated to a corner of life. However, by making religious education supplemental and divorcing it from all other childhood educational experiences, the religious school was implicitly portraying itself as an endeavor that was disconnected from and irrelevant to modern American life.

In this section of his book, Grossmann reiterated his contention that religious school curricula must be cleansed of preaching and abstraction.

There has been too much pious talk and not enough real teaching; too much storytelling and moralizing and vacuous praying and hymn-droning, and not enough of training and building...Character is not born. It is trained by utmost patience and carefully thought-out method...Beliefs and convictions will never rise in the child soul through memory gems, Biblical quotations and paragraphs out of a catechism.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰² Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 152.

⁵⁰³ Louis Grossmann, A Message of the President to the Twenty-Ninth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 28, (1918): 158-187.

⁵⁰⁴ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 156.

Here too, Grossmann believed the teacher can learn from the public school teacher. The methods of education and the training they received could be transferred to the training of religious school teachers. Moreover, by making sure that the two methods of instruction were interrelated, religious school pedagogues would succeed in further integrating the educational life of Jewish children. In Grossmann's mind, the religious school needed to conform to the tone and style of the public school, which was pedagogically light-years ahead of the religious schools of the Reform movement.

The Teacher and the Community

In this brief section Grossmann argued that the religious school teacher must engage with the Jewish community and with Jewish life. The teacher's pupils should not feel that the teacher disappears after his or her hours of instruction. Rather, the teacher must be an example of Jewish living and Jewish life in the community, modeling what it means to live a Jewish life. The teacher must be an exemplar of Jewish identity.

Storytelling

Grossmann began this section asking, "Why do the stories of the Bible occupy the field of religious education?" He posited that many assume their inclusion in a religious school curriculum to be a given, yet he argued that such a question should not be outside the realm of exploration. Grossmann clearly was in favor of using the Bible to teach, but he believed that sound teaching methods should take priority over what might be felt as theological aims. The first question for Grossmann was, "Is using Bible sound pedagogy?" Only then did he continue with the question, "How should we teach Bible."

Grossmann wrote that most teachers include Bible stories with the intention of teaching a moral through each story. Often the moral is determined by the individual teacher who puts together these morals and stories haphazardly. Often the teacher

progresses through the stories in biblical order. This work is done without reflection or intention, Grossman complained, and without thought to child development or educational method.

Grossmann pointed out that children love stories and that a teacher is well-served by developing the art of storytelling. Moreover, there are life lessons to be gleaned from the stories of the Bible. However, a thoughtful educator will think through the lessons of the story, how the lessons relate to the child at their stage of development, and how to enact the storytelling itself. Grossmann also suggested that stories fit the attention span of children. One should avoid a story if it is longer than a child's ability to sit and listen. In short, Grossmann called for a greater level of intentionality with regard to the selecting and telling of Bible stories by religious school instructors.

Grossmann concluded his discourse on storytelling with a warning. He wrote that storytelling is only a tool. The educator must bear this fact in mind and never use a Bible story as the entirety of the content of a lesson. Educational content and meaning must be infused into these stories, and it is the teacher's job to make certain the students understand how stories relate to real life. "I do not know how much irreparable mischief has been done in our Religious School by the notion some teachers have that their...business is to tell stories."⁵⁰⁵

The Text Book

Grossmann's reflections on the use of text books in the religious school began with his critique of a widely held viewpoint: that the proper text books would solve the educational problems of religious schools. While Grossmann agreed that there was a lack of adequate text books available for the Jewish religious school, he adamantly believed that the advent of

⁵⁰⁵ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 171.

textbooks would not serve as a panacea solving all of the problems of religious school education. Moreover, he felt that a class session should be free of text books. Both teachers and students should leave text books at home, Grossmann wrote, since they hinder the student and the teacher from interacting during the class session and experiencing the excitement of a meaningful lesson.

He also noted that the textbook editions written for teachers tend to assume the teacher has no knowledge and is starting at the same place as the student. Grossmann maintained that textbooks for teachers should be different than those given to the students due to the fact that these two groups have significantly different needs. Teacher textbooks should focus on how to teach the material, not on teaching the material to the instructor. Of course, this would require religious school instructors to be well versed in Jewish knowledge. Grossmann also cautioned his readers about the danger of an overly comprehensive text book that would end up becoming a burden for the teacher who no longer feels the need to discover and experiment.

Hebrew

Grossmann's curriculum includes an independent section on Hebrew language. While he addressed Hebrew pedagogy to some degree in the descriptions of each grade's aim and work, he dealt with the subject more holistically and comprehensively here.

It is worth reproducing Grossmann's introduction to this section because it demonstrates the importance he placed on Hebrew language instruction:

Hebrew is the characteristic subject of the curriculum of the Jewish Religious School, the other subjects, biblical history, ethics and religious principles, it shares with other denominational schools. Only Hebrew is an avowedly Jewish subject. When the Hebrew is dropped out of the religious training, the Jewish school loses much of its uniqueness. The Hebrew accentuates all

the other subjects of the school and gives them their Jewish “genius” and charm.⁵⁰⁶

Grossmann bemoaned the fact that Hebrew had been widely abandoned in the religious school, and where it was still taught it was not taught well. He called on his readers to examine the teaching of Hebrew through a serious pedagogic lens. Grossmann advocated the institution of a new and modern approach to the teaching of Hebrew in the religious schools:

The bungling methods and half-heartedness on the one hand and the blind push and shove on the other are to blame [for the child’s distaste for Hebrew]. The teacher...has lacked the pedagogic conception of the subject, and where there is no spirit there can be no good work...The child is made to plod over technicalities of the Hebrew and scents [sic] no feeling with regard to it in either teacher or book.⁵⁰⁷

Moreover, he argued that while Hebrew education should begin in Third Grade, it must do more than replace words the students already have in their mother tongue. An aspect of the teaching must involve acquiring a vocabulary that was new and exciting. Grossmann felt that there were ideas and concepts in Jewish life that could not be fully understood in translation. He asserted that Hebrew could bring to life a variety of Jewish subjects and, with its acquisition; it helped religious school students comprehend new ideas and experiences. In a fascinating section in this chapter on Hebrew, Grossmann explained his rationale for teaching Hebrew. He dismissed out of hand the idea that we should teach Hebrew in order to connect Jews of all lands or in order to ensure that students feel at home in any congregation. Rather, he argued that through the teaching of Hebrew in the religious school it was actually possible to help the children achieve a more authentic Jewish life. According to Grossmann, all of the other reasons for teaching Hebrew were based on sentiment. He was not interested in sentiment, and he believed that a sentimental rationale

⁵⁰⁶ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 181.

⁵⁰⁷ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 184.

for teaching Hebrew gave children precious little motivation to learn the language.

Grossmann was interested in educational goals. He argued that without Hebrew instruction the children would grow into less capable Jews. Their ability to live their Judaism—to participate in Jewish life—was diminished without a knowledge of the Hebrew language:

The Hebrew literature is the bearer of the Jewish tradition and life and it should be made available to every generation of the Jewish people...Nowhere else are Jewish thought, Jewish morality, Jewish faith and Jewish ideal [*sic*] so unalloyed and so definite and so forcefully put.⁵⁰⁸

Without knowledge of Hebrew a child would grow into an adult incapable of accessing the fullness of Jewish tradition.

Throughout his book, Grossmann repeatedly stressed the importance of integrating the student's diverse array of educational experiences into a coherent totality. He continued to stress this same theme within this section on Hebrew. Grossmann criticized the fact that Hebrew was often divorced from other subjects in religious school. Hebrew, he insisted, should be integrated into all of other subjects taught in the religious school and not studied for liturgical purposes only. Hebrew brought Jewish life and spirit into all other subjects, and as a language it often communicated what translation could never hope to convey. By incorporating Hebrew into all other topics covered in the religious school curriculum, the student implicitly learns that the language was an integral part of the Jewish religious experience and indeed Jewish life itself.

The Picture in the Religious School

Grossmann devoted an entire section of his book to the question of how, if at all, pictures should be used in religious school settings. Grossmann argued that pictures should only be used if they helped to make the lesson concrete. Pictures should not be used simply for entertainment. Moreover, Grossmann warned readers that pictures may hinder a student's

⁵⁰⁸ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 187.

ability to imagine. A teacher should be careful not to stifle imagination through overusing pictures. However, Grossmann was quick to point out that within the Reform movement prose had dominated religious education and there was a need to invest in images.

Grossmann wished to infuse within children a love of art and a love of “beauty,” and therefore wanted teachers to strive for the proper balance between the use of imagery and allowing for a child’s imagination.

Grossmann also suggested that teachers choose images with care. It seems he was worried that many images were created without any thought to Jewish sensibilities. Most images and motion pictures relating to the Bible “degraded” and “brutalized” the stories and themes for audiences of the day. He felt that many images and some early motion pictures had no interest in a Jewish audience or in the accuracy of the original texts they purported to convey.

The Sabbath and the Holy Days

At the beginning of his discussion about how the Sabbath and Jewish holidays should be taught in the religious school, Grossmann stated that these Jewish observances were often overlooked in the curricula of the religious school. Students did not study these holidays; they were expected to observe them along with their parents. As far as Grossmann was concerned, this custom was unfortunate because children do not relate to the Jewish holidays in the same way as do their parents or other Jewish adults. Therefore, they should not be forced to observe them in the same way. The religious school teacher could help children find a different sense of meaning within the holidays, and it was their duty to create age-appropriate activities for these vital Jewish moments in time. Grossmann argued that holidays are in their essence educational and that it is a disservice to children to force an adult understanding upon them.

As an example, Grossmann demonstrated how this objective could be achieved regarding the Jewish Festivals. First, he reminded his readers of the Jewish customs and rituals that drew children into the excitement of these festivals: a child recites the four questions at the *Pesach Seder*; a child makes use of the noisemaker on *Purim* to block out Haman's name, etc. Grossmann also pointed out the important themes that may be used to enhance children's understanding of the *Shalosh Regalim*, the three pilgrimage festivals. The idea of freedom speaks to children at different ages and is the main theme of *Pesach*, and *Shavuot's* and *Sukkot's* connection to nature was certain to appeal to children. Celebrating *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, a child could understand the idea of working with God. Grossmann's illustrations offered readers concrete examples of how children may find thematic meaning in the observance of the holidays in a way that spoke to their age and interest.

Grossmann reiterated his view that religious services for children needed to be completely different in nature than adult worship services. Just as teaching must be adapted to the child's age, prayer services, too, must be adapted to meet the needs of the worshipers.

As he did with the Jewish pilgrimage festivals and the High Holy Days Grossmann also explained how an educator could help children find meaning in Shabbat. In the religious school curriculum, Shabbat could be used to direct a child toward activities in which she/he wanted to engage during the week but was too busy to do so. In this way the educator can help the child understand the meaning of Shabbat as a time of rest and renewal in an age-appropriate manner. Grossmann maintained that would be a much more effective way to teach Shabbat than by hoping the children will learn about the Shabbat by compelling them to sit through a Sabbath worship service for adults.

Grossmann continued to describe the way in which students of various ages might participate in services. He believed that finding room for children's voices would help them find meaning in worship. One comment in particular is worth including: "I might suggest children's choirs, if I did not remember that Jewish Congregations are so pretentious about the music in the Synagogue; they want 'fine' music and do not think of hearty, genuinely felt music. They think of esthetic enjoyment and forget that music is a sacred art."⁵⁰⁹ While it is not uncommon today to find a children's choir in the Reform movement, this was clearly a matter of contention in Grossmann's day. Grossmann felt keenly that inactivity bred contempt, and when children were expected to sit through services without a voice they would feel alienated from this aspect of religious life. He believed that a children's choir or music that appealed to children was one of the central ways that the youngest generation could be included in the worship service. Writing against those that felt that a professional choir was a necessity and who would not consider the idea of a children's choir, Grossmann stated "They [those who do not wish to have children's choirs] esteem artistic value and make sacrifices for it and neglect an opportunity, perhaps the best opportunity afforded them, to train elevated feelings in their children."⁵¹⁰ In short, for the sake of "artistic value," these individuals passed up the most effective means of incorporating children into congregational worship.

Ultimately Grossmann believed it was a waste of time to expect children to be involved in adult worship until after confirmation. Even then, students should be given a voice in the service. If it was not going to be through music, then there must be other ways to incorporate the voices of children. No one was served by forcing children into adult forms of worship.

⁵⁰⁹ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 209.

⁵¹⁰ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 209-210.

We may demand that children attend religious services, but we must supply them with reasons why they should. That it will benefit them remains everlastingly unproven, and perhaps not to them alone...If the teacher were free to re-interpret Jewish devotion, we should enter the finest stage in our history, and we should be relieved of much cajoling which we must now do to catch adults.⁵¹¹

Grossmann posits that if we adequately and intentionally create prayer experiences for children instead of forcing them into adult worship, we might teach them more about Jewish living and engender in them a love of worship that will abide with them into their adult years.

Grossmann concludes this section on the Sabbath and Holy Days by stressing that children's services must focus on action and symbolism. He urged teachers to be creative with Jewish worship and incorporate drama, art, and even dance. Moreover, Grossmann cautioned his readers to avoid making any reference to sin in their teaching. Children should be encouraged to pursue their better instincts through praise of good behavior rather than focusing on sin or bad things that have been done. To focus on sin is not only pointless, Grossmann contended, but potentially damaging to child development as well.

School Entertainments and School Services

In a section dedicated to extra-curricular school activities, Grossmann stressed that all school events helped to establish a sense of belonging to a community. These activities fostered an understanding of citizenship, belonging, and loyalty among the students, and helped them gain a sense that they are part of something larger than themselves, larger than their family, and larger than their classroom. It paved the way for a feeling of belonging to the Jewish people. Today, we might call this sentiment a sense of Jewish Peoplehood—something Grossmann has advocated elsewhere.

⁵¹¹ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 212.

In this section, Grossmann also reiterated several points regarding children and worship services. One innovation he included here was that religious school worship services should, in some way, prepare children to participate in adult worship services in the future. In other words, children's services must ultimately serve as a bridge toward adult worship so the child, after bar-mitzvah or confirmation, is not thrust into an unknown atmosphere. Grossmann also stressed the important role that music played in children's worship services. He advocated using song and music in children's services instead of readings or responsive reading.

Music in the Religious School

Grossmann was quite clear about the purpose of music in religious schools: "The aim of the teacher must be to restore religious music to the present-day Jewish home and to see to it that the melodies are sung as part of the pious life of the people."⁵¹² Music provided Jewish educators with an effective tool that would encourage children to learn how to identify as Jews in modern American society. Grossmann emphasized that music constituted a very important part of life, and this is why the kind of music used in worship services must be appealing to children. Those who organize worship services for young people should avoid using "alien" or foreign sounding hymns. Grossmann opined that some of the musical elements that had crept into religious schools did not aid in the teaching of Judaism. To the contrary, these alien tunes led to confusion and did not ground the child in an understanding of Judaism. It is likely he was referring to hymns and other musical forms he felt were coming from the Reform synagogue from a "Christian" atmosphere. Grossmann felt strongly that Judaism was invested with a rich musical tradition of its own, and the synagogue should draw upon it. He also advocated the introduction of music education in the religious school

⁵¹² Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 231.

to help children bring Jewish music back into their homes. Grossmann believed that if children in the Reform synagogue were introduced to a more relevant musical tradition in their religious schools, it could eventually result in a transformation of Reform religious services when the children become adults. Should music be approached with intentionality, services would become more spirited and communal singing in Jewish worship would see a resurgence. Ultimately, it seems that Grossmann's faith in music was quite profound. It is not a theme we see elsewhere in his writing, and the emphasis he places upon it, not in length but in force, is striking. He wrote, "Music can do more than anything else to impart piety to the modern home and to hold it there."⁵¹³

Charity Collections in the Religious School and Charitableness

Grossmann concluded his "handbook for teachers" with an analysis of the practice of collecting money for charity within the classroom. The custom of having religious school students bring money to donate to charitable causes appears to have been a widespread practice when Grossmann published his "handbook." Grossmann asserted that, for the most part, this ritual was meaningless and did not engender a sense of charitableness within the child. Despite his critique of this ongoing practice, he recommended having teachers and parents come together in order to determine the overall goals of this type of charitable giving to make the practice, at the very least, tolerable. Generally speaking, however, Grossmann was disapproved of this practice.

Reflection

This summary of Grossmann's work, *The Aims of Teaching In Jewish Schools: A Handbook for Teachers*, demonstrates that Grossmann's ideas were not always aligned with many of the educational and ritualistic practices that were popular in his era. Grossmann's curriculum

⁵¹³ Grossmann, *The Aims of Teaching in Jewish Schools*, 234.

and “handbook for teachers” included a strong emphasis on Hebrew, on Talmudic stories and figures, and on an experiential learning that rejected rote memorization or the recitation of Jewish catechisms. Even before Emanuel Gamoran became the Director of Education at the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Grossmann was making use of child development theories and showing how religious school education could benefit from these new ideas. Grossmann was an advocate for a more experiential approach to education, which sought to eliminate the use of intellectual abstractions and incorporated age-appropriate ideas about God and theology. He vigorously and continuously emphasized the importance of integrating the educational activities that took place in the synagogue with activities of the public school and the community at-large.

Typically the history of Reform Jewish Education is divided into pre-Gamoran and post-Gamoran periods, as though there was no serious effort to modernize before Gamoran came onto the scene. This is clearly an oversimplification. Grossmann’s work and life represents an important yet little known and rarely studied period of innovation and growth that existed in American Reform Judaism during the decades that preceded Gamoran. While Grossmann’s educational reforms were largely ignored and unheeded, they still reflect a segment of the Reform movement that was struggling to update and modernize Jewish education before the rise of Gamoran and the Benderley Boys. Moreover, Grossmann’s curriculum also demonstrates that American Reform Judaism was hardly monolithic during the epoch that is commonly referred to as “the Classical Period in American Reform Judaism.” Even while many Reform rabbis during the *fin de siècle* wanted to radically reduce the use of Hebrew, emphasize Bible study instead of Talmudic learning, and Americanize the synagogue’s liturgical practices, there were others—men like Louis

Grossmann—who wanted to maintain Hebrew, rabbinic literature, and other facets of traditional Judaism.

“The Hebrew Union College is the centre of American Judaism. This is a fact now that cannot be disputed...The graduates have made a decided record in the recent epoch of the Judaism of this country...And we have an advantage in our day. Isaac M. Wise was alone, unaided, combatted, harassed. We are a fraternity; we are friends and brothers, with like antecedents and equal toleration from the public and confidence is put into us before even we have proven ourselves worthy of it.”⁵¹⁴

Chapter 6: The Central Conference of American Rabbis

Throughout his rabbinic career, Grossmann was involved with the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), the national rabbinical assembly of the Reform movement. In order attain a full account of his rabbinate; it is imperative that his role in the CCAR be examined.

Even before the establishment of the CCAR, Grossmann was invited to participate in the Pittsburgh Rabbinical Conference, one of the most renowned rabbinical deliberations in American Jewish history.⁵¹⁵ Those who attended the Pittsburgh Rabbinical Conference produced a famous statement of principles concerning Reform Judaism that quickly became known as the Pittsburgh Platform. Despite the fact that he was invited to participate, Grossmann did not go to Pittsburgh. The minutes of the meeting record that Grossmann sent his colleagues a letter expressing regret over his inability to attend the rabbinical conference.⁵¹⁶ Although the reasons for his inability to participate were not specified in the letter, one can imagine that having not yet served a full year in his congregation he may have been unable to leave Detroit for any number of reasons. What is notable is that as a young

⁵¹⁴ A Renaissance in American Judaism, n.d., Louis Grossmann Papers, MS 92/Box 1/Folder 10, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵¹⁵ For more information see Walter Jacob, *The Changing World of Reform Judaism : The Pittsburgh Platform in Retrospect : Papers Presented on the Occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Pittsburgh Platform, February, 1985 and the Proceedings of 1885* (Pittsburgh: Rodef Shalom Congregation, 1985).

⁵¹⁶ Gunther W. Plaut. *The Growth of Reform Judaism; American and European Sources Until 1948* (New York: World Union For Progressive Judaism, 1965), 32.

alumnus of the fledging Hebrew Union College, he had been invited to participate in this rabbinical colloquium.

The CCAR itself was founded in 1889 in Detroit during a meeting of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Isaac Mayer Wise became the CCAR's president, a position he held for the remainder of his life. Moreover, the newly established rabbinical body decided that it would meet annually. Considering Grossmann's congregation hosted the 1889 meeting, it can be assumed that he was present at the Conference's birth.

The first assembly of the CCAR took place in 1890 in Cleveland, Ohio. Grossmann was in attendance. At this meeting it was decided that the CCAR would publish an English record of the proceedings of all previous rabbinical assemblies that had taken place in America and Europe. Grossmann was selected as one of the individuals who would help translate the documents from the European rabbinical conferences into English. He was primarily responsible for the compilation of the records and resolutions of the French Sanhedrin of 1807 and the Braunschweig Conference of 1844. Both of these can be found in the first volume of the *CCAR Yearbook*, the Conference's annual publication recording the organization's activities and decisions that appeared after each one of its annual conventions.⁵¹⁷

At the first conference Grossmann was also appointed to a five-person committee charged with the task of reviewing a proposal on marriage made by HUC professor Moses Mielziner.⁵¹⁸ Part of the proposal was a modernized ceremony for solemnizing weddings. After reviewing Mielziner's proposed ceremony, the committee decided that it should be

⁵¹⁷ Central Conference of American Rabbis. 1891. *Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*. [Cincinnati]: Central Conference of American Rabbis. 80

The Conference's Yearbooks were published annually until 2002 when this practice of preserving the historical record of the institution was discontinued.

⁵¹⁸ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 1, (1890-91): 25.

adopted with a few changes. The alterations are not reported in the record of the meeting. While there was no official “rabbi’s manual” for Reform rabbis (i.e., a published collection of modern life-cycle ceremonies over which rabbis typically preside), this wedding service served as a template for the newly created conference. In addition to a discussion of marriage, David Philipson also delivered a paper on the issue of confirmation. Grossmann also was part of the discussion which took place after the paper was delivered.⁵¹⁹ Once again, he was appointed to a committee that would report at the next conference regarding Philipson’s proposals concerning confirmation.⁵²⁰

It is worth noting that Grossmann was involved in many committees that reviewed liturgy over the course of his rabbinate and that in his later years he wrote many worship services for youth within his congregation.⁵²¹ Another example of his work on Reform liturgy was his appointment to the CCAR committee that was charged with the responsibility of writing a “union prayer book,” a prayer book that would be used by all of the congregations in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), along with other congregations that wanted to adopt a modernized Jewish liturgy.⁵²² Grossmann was involved in the early stages of the process. He had been involved in the development of a new service for the Yom Kippur Eve and the Sabbath Eve services. However, there was a great deal of infighting and disaccord over the membership of this committee, and after a prolonged debate Grossmann and the rest of the prayer book committee was discharged, and a new committee put into place.⁵²³

⁵¹⁹ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 1, (1890-91): 29.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵²¹ See Grossmann’s services for children found in the Klau Library.

⁵²² *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 1, (1890-91): 30.

⁵²³ Distribution of Work, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 2, (1892): 17-18.

For more information on the political controversy that affected the writing of the first *Union Prayer Book*, see Gary Phillip Zola, *The Americanization of the Jewish Prayer Book and the Liturgical Development of Congregation Ahavath Chesed*, New York City (New York: Central Synagogue, 2008).

At the third CCAR convention the matter of the Parliament of World Religions at the Columbian Exposition arose. Grossmann's participation and his subsequent friendship with Swami Vivekanada have been discussed in the first chapter of this work. It is worth noting, however, that the convening of the Parliament of World Religions constituted a significant moment for the newly established CCAR. The Parliament and the Columbian Exposition of 1893 provided the CCAR with its first opportunity to have a presence on the national scene. There were four elements to the Parliament of World Religions. The first was a general Parliament of Religions where the central themes of the major religions were presented. The second element of the program consisted of "presentations" given by representatives of a specific faith. These presentations were open to all who were interested. A third element was independent congresses for different religious denominations. These were smaller congresses designed for the purpose of providing in-depth information to the public about the specific religion and their role in the world.⁵²⁴ Grossmann was mainly involved in this third element. Therefore, the "Jewish Denominational Congress" was held in conjunction with the Parliament of World Religions and the Columbian Exposition, and was conceived of and entirely directed by the CCAR in collaboration with UAHC. The program of the "Jewish Denominational Congress," as well as the papers delivered during that event, were shaped under the auspices of the CCAR. It was an exhilarating event for the CCAR and the UAHC, and there was general agreement that the "Jewish Denominational Congress" had been a major success.⁵²⁵ The fourth and final element of the Parliament was

⁵²⁴ Dr. Gary P. Zola memo March 10 2013 re: Programs of the Parliament of World Religions

⁵²⁵ David Max Eichhorn. "The Conference and the Organized American Jewish Community," in *Retrospect and Prospect: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of The Central Conference of American Rabbis 1889-1964*, ed. Bertram Wallace Korn (New York: The Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1965), 202.

congresses established for various kindred organizations that met after the Parliament of Religions concluded.⁵²⁶

While some members of the CCAR delivered lectures to the entire World Parliament of Religions, most of the participants spoke during the second and third elements of the Parliament: The Jewish Denominational Congress and, also, the “Jewish Presentation,” which took place during the week that the “Jewish Denominational Congress” was in session. The CCAR was very eager to participate in this historic convocation, and the Conference’s leaders met in advance of the beginning of the Parliament in order to plan the Jewish activities. It was decided that the Conference would select individuals to deliver papers on different aspects of Jewish life and thought. At the CCAR’s Convention in 1892, a selection of proposed topics for papers on various themes was developed.⁵²⁷ The Conference also decided to schedule a joint meeting with the UAHC in December in Washington D.C. in order to resolve remaining questions and continue planning.⁵²⁸ Louis Grossmann was appointed by the UAHC to serve as one of five rabbis to serve as liaisons between the CCAR and the Chicago committee on the Columbian Exposition project. In addition to serving as an organizer and a liaison to the leadership of the Columbian Exposition, Grossmann was also invited to deliver a paper during the gathering. His was one of fourteen papers given on various aspects of Judaism. Eleven of the papers were

⁵²⁶ The Parliament of World’s Religions in 1893 was designed and prepared by Dr. John Henry Barrows (1847-1902). Barrows was a Presbyterian clergyman. The religions represented at the Parliament included Theism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Zoroastrianism, Catholicism, the Greek Church, Protestantism (in many forms), and many other religious systems. For more information on Barrows and the Parliament of World Religions see John Henry Barrows, *The World’s Parliament of Religions; an Illustrated and Popular Story of the World’s First Parliament of Religions, Held in Chicago in Connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893* (Chicago: The Parliament Publishing Company, 1893).

⁵²⁷ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 3, (1893): 31-32.

⁵²⁸ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 3, (1893): 40.

given by Reform rabbis, two were delivered by orthodox rabbis, and one was given by Josephine Lazarus, the poet Emma Lazarus' sister.⁵²⁹

It was also at the third CCAR convention that Grossmann's father, Ignatz Grossmann, was made an honorary member of the CCAR. This honor was bestowed upon him for, "services rendered the cause of Judaism, both by publications and otherwise."⁵³⁰ It is still unclear why Ignatz decided to send two of his sons to HUC, having been trained himself in an orthodox *yeshivah*. Ignatz wrote for Isaac Mayer Wise's publication *The Deborah*, so it is possible the two men were friends. For whatever reason, Ignatz became a supporter of liberal Judaism. At the same conference Grossmann was also appointed to the committee charged with the responsibility of developing a Hymn Book for the Conference.⁵³¹ As was the case with the Union Prayer Book, Grossmann began working on this project, but he was not able to see it through to completion. It is unclear why Grossmann did not continue to serve on this committee until the project was completed. During Grossmann's involvement the committee collected existing hymns and elicited new ones. The committee also sketched out a structure for the book, and members began a collaboration with representatives of the Cantor's Association of America. Grossmann worked on this project with several other rabbis, including Kaufmann Kohler.⁵³²

It was also at this same conference that Grossmann was appointed to serve on the committee which was responsible for creating a catechism and a systematic theology for the congregations belonging to the UAHC. Among his colleagues on this committee were his classmate Joseph Stolz, and the rabbi he would later succeed when he became Isaac M.

⁵²⁹ Eichhorn, *Retrospect and Prospect*, 201-202.

⁵³⁰ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 3, (1893): 46.

⁵³¹ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 3, (1893): 48.

⁵³² *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 3, (1893): 42-48.

Wise's associate rabbi at B'nai Yeshurun in Cincinnati, Charles Levi.⁵³³ A final interesting aspect of Grossmann's involvement in the third convention of the CCAR was his being charged to prepare a paper for the organization of, "congregational societies for young people."⁵³⁴ It appears that Grossmann never delivered such a paper. It is clear, however, that as early as 1892 many members of the CCAR were cognizant of a need to organize and engage synagogue youth. Moreover, the leaders of the CCAR evidently believed that Grossmann was the right individual to do so.

By the time the fifth convention of the CCAR convened in 1894, Dr. Henry Zindorf, who Grossmann had replaced at Beth El in Detroit, had died. Grossmann delivered a memorial address on Zindorf's behalf during the conference. At the same conference Grossmann was appointed to serve as a member of the CCAR's auditing committee. This committee was responsible for working with the treasurer and to aid specifically with the collection of dues and debts.⁵³⁵ The Committee on the Catechism, upon which Grossmann also sat, reported that it hoped to present a draft of a manual for religious instruction at the next CCAR convention. The Committee on Catechism also hoped to create and prepare a syllabus with subjects to be included in such a manual. This seems to have been one of the CCAR's earliest ventures into the creation of educational materials, or materials that CCAR rabbis could use in educational settings. There were ongoing discussions about the need to create greater uniformity in the religious schools of the UAHC and to provide supplementary materials that would serve the needs of religious school teachers.⁵³⁶ The

⁵³³ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 3, (1893): 45-46.

⁵³⁴ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 3, (1893): 48.

⁵³⁵ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 5, (1895): 31-32.

⁵³⁶ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 5, (1895): 89.

Committee on the Union Hymnal also promised that it would be presenting a draft hymnal of twenty hymns at the next conference.⁵³⁷

At the 1896 convention in Milwaukee, Grossmann demonstrated once again his keen interest in youth and education. He, along with his colleagues Samuel Schulman and Emil G. Hirsch, proposed creating a committee which would find ways to serve Jewish college students. While these three rabbis originally suggested this service be offered in the form of Jewish lectures, which may or may not have been these students' most pressing need, they saw clearly that this age cohort was in serious need of attention and outreach.⁵³⁸ It is interesting to note that on the first vote, the members of the CCAR voted against this resolution. However, after Grossmann and Shulman called for reconsideration, the resolution was ultimately adopted.⁵³⁹ It was also at this conference that Grossmann joined the Executive Committee of the CCAR and its Editorial Committee.⁵⁴⁰ Grossmann was also asked to deliver the "Conference Lecture." The title of his lecture was "Method in the Pulpit." Aspects of this lecture are fascinating to a modern reader. Grossmann attacks the place of the sermon in Reform worship. He states that the sermon that was preached in his day was not a native aspect of Judaism, but rather a transplant. He asserted that he is not opposed to the sermon, only to the culture that has arisen which has transformed the sermon into a venue for bombast. Grossmann chastised his colleagues for creating an atmosphere in the synagogue which transformed those in attendance into an audience as opposed to a congregation of worshippers. He argued that all of this had led to a decrease in spirituality in their time.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁷ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 5, (1895): 92.

⁵³⁸ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 7, (1896-97): 85.

⁵³⁹ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 7, (1896-97): 87.

⁵⁴⁰ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 7, (1896-97): 88.

⁵⁴¹ Louis Grossmann, *Method in the Pulpit*, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 7, (1896-97): 127.

Grossmann's closing statement is also worth noting. He declared "We must go back to the orthodox spirit if we cannot go back to the orthodox manner." Grossmann, as we know, was a moderate reformer during a period that witnessed an upsurge in radical reform. He also argued that Reform Jews must maintain an understanding of Jewish distinctiveness. If American Jews abandoned Judaism's historic commitment to separateness, Grossmann reasoned, what purpose was there to remaining Jewish? One should not forget that Grossmann was committed to aspects of universalism, but not a universalism that called for every group to shed itself of its unique character and quality. This was why he argued for an orthodox spirit which could serve as a counterbalance to an unchecked universalism. Considering the high value placed upon universalism in his time, as well as the radical elements of the Reform movement, it is likely that many of his colleagues disagreed with Grossmann's point of view.⁵⁴²

Throughout this period, Grossmann continued to serve as an officer and a member of the CCAR's executive committee. For example, he served as Corresponding Secretary of the CCAR in 1900 and 1901.⁵⁴³ In the following years, Grossmann served on a number of committees including the Committee on Resolutions, the Committee on the Elaboration of a Systematic Jewish Theology, the Committee on Tracts, the Committee on Publication, the Nominating Committee, and the Committee on Encyclopedia. During the 1890s Grossmann served as a Trustee of the Superannuated Ministers' Fund, together with Isaac Mayer Wise and Moses Mielziner.⁵⁴⁴

Upon his return to Cincinnati in 1899, Grossmann was invited to serve on the committee that arranged the CCAR convention and organized the commemoration of Isaac

⁵⁴² Ibid.

⁵⁴³ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 10, (1899-1900): pages prior to pagination.

⁵⁴⁴ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 10, (1899-1900): pages prior to pagination.

Mayer Wise's eightieth birthday.⁵⁴⁵ In these endeavors, Grossmann worked closely with Emil G. Hirsch and David Philipson. One of the most interesting proposals to come out of this convention was that the CCAR to create an advisory committee which would arbitrate difficulties that might arise between rabbis and congregations.⁵⁴⁶

In 1903 Grossmann delivered his first presentation on pedagogy to the CCAR. The presentation is dealt with in greater detail in chapter four, but it should be noted that within it Grossmann identified many of the issues he considered to be pressing in regard to the future of Jewish religious school teaching.⁵⁴⁷ Evidently, Grossmann's paper attracted scant interest and only a small audience gathered to hear him speak. His colleague, Abram Simon, felt compelled to address this embarrassment publically. He apologized to Grossmann, and stated his conviction that the paper and its message were critically important to the members of the CCAR despite the size of the audience.⁵⁴⁸

In 1905, Grossmann joined a new CCAR committee on Religious Work in Universities. This committee grew out of the conversation that had begun earlier, when Grossmann and others had urged the Conference to find ways to serve Jewish University students. He remained on the committee for several years. In 1906, Grossmann reported on the activities of the committee after its first year of work. He laid out the committee's purpose: because Jews were going to universities in greater numbers than ever before, the committee felt that rabbis had an obligation to serve these Jews while they were away from home and in an overwhelmingly "Christian" environment. It is important to bear in mind that Grossmann and his colleagues were focusing on the religious needs of Jewish college

⁵⁴⁵ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 9, (1898-1899): 88.

Deutsch to Grossmann, 2 January 1899, Central Conference of American Rabbis MS 34/Box 1/Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁴⁶ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 11, (1900-1901): 62.

⁵⁴⁷ Louis Grossmann, Pedagogic Methods in the Sabbath School, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 13, (1903): 173-181.

⁵⁴⁸ Abram Simon, Discussion on Pedagogic Methods in Sabbath School, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 13, (1903): 182-183.

students decades before Hillel or large Jewish Studies programs would find a place on the campuses of American universities. In his report, Grossmann stated “We have a great responsibility towards the students and we cannot afford to delay longer to arrange for their Jewish culture since they are dependent now upon influences which are entirely inadequate and often alien.”⁵⁴⁹ They called for information-gathering so that they could assess how best to implement their plans.

In 1906 Grossmann is listed as one of the two curators of the CCAR archives. It seems that Grossmann and Deutsch were initially responsible for creating and maintaining these archives in Cincinnati. While Grossmann later is relieved of this responsibility, he did initial work to establish the archive in order to preserve the historical record of the CCAR.⁵⁵⁰

What became one of Grossmann’s most enduring legacies from his CCAR years also took place in 1906. He was a member of a group of rabbis who proposed a resolution that called on the president of the CCAR to establish a standing committee of five whose purview would be Jewish Religious Schools.⁵⁵¹ This committee was later established, and Grossmann served on it for many years.⁵⁵² In the committee’s early years Grossmann served as its chairman. Later in his rabbinate he served as chairman sporadically. In his initial report to the CCAR, Grossmann—as chair—expatiates on the reasons the Conference need such a committee. He addresses many of the same themes that would be taken up elsewhere in his work and writing, but one area that he does not stress as adamantly elsewhere as he did in this report was the danger that comes from conceptualizing the religious school as a venue for supplemental rather than fundamental education. The report includes what the committee viewed to be the work they should pursue. The duties included creating a

⁵⁴⁹ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 16, (1906): 188-189.

⁵⁵⁰ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 16, (1906): no pagination.

⁵⁵¹ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 16 (1906): 66.

⁵⁵² *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 17, (1907): no pagination.

curriculum and finding ways to work in partnership with public schools. The report also included questions that committee members felt must be addressed as soon as possible. These included the role of a catechism in the school's curriculum; how to create a good teaching core; how to ensure that pedagogy, and not theology, drive the creation of lessons and textbooks; the role of Hebrew in the schools, and finally if, and how, to teach worship? The committee concluded its first report asking for permission to prepare a curriculum.⁵⁵³

At the next convention, in 1908, Grossmann, still serving as the committee's chairman, expressed his frustration to his colleagues. He spoke harshly about the lack of any union among the religious schools in the movement. He stated that even the CCAR, comprised of superintendents of the schools, was unable to create any uniformity. He was able to report the responses of two rabbis who gave their thoughts on the reason for low school attendance and registration. Grossmann's report is not as optimistic in tone as the last, and ends by stating his hope that greater thought and attention would be given to this issue by his colleagues.⁵⁵⁴ By and large, Grossmann's hope to highlight and reform Jewish education over the years was met with frustration and disappointment. In many of his papers and lectures he makes his vision explicit, yet he never garnered enough support in the movement to enact change. The committee continued to function and, while Grossmann was not its chair perpetually, he remained an active voice within it.

In 1909, Grossmann delivered yet another address to the CCAR on religious school instruction. This work was called *The Scope of the Religious School*. In it Grossmann made many of his usual calls for transforming religious education. He called for better-trained teachers, utilization of pedagogy, a different use of Biblical text, the end of the catechism, and a school system that taught how to live and view the world as a Jew rather than one that

⁵⁵³ Report of Committee on Religious Schools, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 17, (1907): 124-136.

⁵⁵⁴ Report of Committee on Religious Schools, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 18, (1908): 81-83.

teaches about Judaism. He called for a system of education that led to action rather than retention of facts.⁵⁵⁵ We elucidated on this content of this address in chapter four.

Toward the end of the first decade of the 20th century, Grossmann engaged in active politicking within the CCAR. His staunchest ally was Max Heller. The two worked together on many endeavors, and their correspondence shows that Grossmann helped stop a plan which would have upset the usual rules of succession and barred Heller from his office in the CCAR leadership. There was a custom that the rabbi elected vice president of the CCAR would be elected president for the following term. While Heller was vice president, there was a faction that did not want to see him assume the presidency due to his Zionist stance. Not surprisingly, Heller's opponents in this battle were Philipson and Kohler. More interestingly, Stephen S. Wise joined their ranks during this fight. Heller could not go to the CCAR Conference and defend himself. Grossmann wrote to Heller informing him of the plan and stating that he would work to stop it.⁵⁵⁶

I am very, very sorry that you cannot go to New York. It gives Schulman a chance, and Hirsch, and the anti-Zionist crowd... I shall have a talk with Joe Silverman and we shall see what we can do. You are entitled to the succession and we shall make a plan on that score. I think you have enough friends, and surely enough of those who respect you, and I think we can carry the day.⁵⁵⁷

It is worth noting that Grossmann makes a distinction between the anti-Zionists and himself. While he has been characterized as an anti-Zionist, this letter further complicates the picture of him as a typical anti-Zionist. These alliances and factions continued

⁵⁵⁵ Louis Grossmann, The Scope of the Religious School, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 19, (1909): 336-347.

⁵⁵⁶ Gary P. Zola, Reform Judaism's Pioneer Zionist: Maximilian Heller, *American Jewish History*, vol. 73, numbers 1-4 (September 1983-June 1984): 375-397.

⁵⁵⁷ Grossmann to Heller, 8 November 1909, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 2/ Folder 23, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

throughout Grossmann's career in the CCAR. These were also the years when major battles were being fought at HUC between similar parties.⁵⁵⁸

In 1912, after the report of the Committee on Religious Education, a lengthy discussion ensued. In 1912 organizations developed to help improve what everyone felt was a deplorable state of Jewish education in America. However, the committee itself had done little work. Some were frustrated over the lack of progress and the continued lack of cooperation and union. It was still unclear if the CCAR should work in concert with the UAHC or proceed on its own.⁵⁵⁹ Jonathan Krasner noted that this dissatisfaction and impotence remained part of the CCAR and the UAHC until the 1920's, when a critical mass of rabbis finally called for decisive action around Jewish Education.⁵⁶⁰

In 1914 there was a symposium on religious school education at the CCAR convention. The symposium consisted of five national leaders in the area of religious education and was part of the work of the Committee on Religious Education. The five speakers were Henry F. Cope (1870–1923) from the Religious Education Association, Judah L. Magnes (1877–1948) from the Bureau of Education of the New York Community, William Rosenau (1865–1943) of the Correspondence School of the Jewish Chautauqua Society, Louis Grossmann from the Teachers' Institute of HUC, and George Zepin (1878–1963) from the Department of Synagog [*sic*] and School Extension at the UAHC. Speaking as the principal of the Teachers' Institute, Grossmann's paper focused primarily on the need for better training and education of religious school teachers. More details on the paper will be found in the following chapter.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁸ See chapter two for more information.

⁵⁵⁹ Report of the Religious Education Committee, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 22, (1912): 176-201.

⁵⁶⁰ Krasner, *The Benderly Boys & American Jewish Education*, 144-146.

⁵⁶¹ Symposium on Recent Progress in Religious Education, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 24, (1914): 312-338.

Another interesting aspect of the 1914 convention was a resolution proposing that funds be used to place a cast-bronze plaque of Dr. Wise, made by the founder and principal of the Bezalel Art School, Boris Schatz (1867–1932), in an olive grove in the Herzl forest in what was then Palestine. Grossmann is listed as one of the rabbis who supported and proposed the resolution.⁵⁶² In March of 1914 Schatz held an art exposition in Cincinnati of art from the Bezalel School. Grossmann was one of the speakers at the expositions.⁵⁶³ It is interesting that Grossmann, who at that time was openly anti-Zionist, was in favor of such a proposal. In fact, the committee on resolutions struck the proposal down, insisting instead the plaque be secured and brought to HUC.⁵⁶⁴ Grossmann, though openly anti-Zionist, later in life may have undergone a change of heart. It is possible this is an early indication that he was beginning to rethink the issue of Zionism. It is also possible he simply felt it was a way to honor his teacher and mentor.

In 1915 Grossmann joined, and would later chair, a newly-formed committee on “Jews of Other Lands.” It seems to be the first CCAR committee charged with the task of responding the plight of world Jewry. This committee was created during World War I, when communities in Europe were being horrifically devastated. The first report of the committee included a disturbing description of the state of Judaism outside of the United States. The report also noted that there were individuals and even communities in Europe that would likely be sympathetic to the Reform movement, and it was suggested that the CCAR find ways to reach out these communities and to gather funds which would make it possible for young leaders from abroad to matriculate to HUC. At the conclusion of the report, the committee suggested that members of the CCAR support the International Pro-

⁵⁶² Report of the Committee on Resolutions, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 24, (1914): 156-157.

⁵⁶³ “Bezalel,” *Cincinnati Enquirer* (6 March 1914), 5.

⁵⁶⁴ Report of the Committee on Resolutions, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 24, (1914): 156-157.

Falasha Committee, which had been established in Europe to support the Ethiopian Jewish community.⁵⁶⁵ Grossmann also served on the CCAR's Special Committee on Falashas.⁵⁶⁶ It was around this period that organizations were set up to help connect the Falashas with other Jewish communities in the world who might aid them.⁵⁶⁷ In 1915, however, the committee decided that no action was to be taken until additional information could be obtained.⁵⁶⁸

Correspondence between Grossmann and Stephen S. Wise from this period illustrates the petty rivalries that existed within the Reform rabbinate. The political intrigue and backbiting that Grossmann experienced at Hebrew Union College obviously spilled into the CCAR:

We may talk honestly and do all we can candidly and openly, but all the same the intrigues flourish like mushrooms in the dark. Kohler will not be at the Conference. He told me so with his characteristic tone, half naïve half "profound." He knew, he said, what is going on. May be [*sic*] he does, for there are plenty here to bear tales...You saw Gries at Youngstown and have probably found out some new moves on the Conference chess-board...⁵⁶⁹

It is clear from this, and other letters, that intrigue was commonplace. Moreover, those who sought to undermine Grossmann's endeavors in Cincinnati, such as Kohler and Philipson, were also actively working against him in the CCAR. In one letter sent from Stephen S. Wise to Max Heller, Wise wrote that he was livid at Kohler for refusing to invite him to speak to the students at HUC while he was visiting Cincinnati. Grossmann was apparently also involved. Wise wrote,

⁵⁶⁵ Report of Special Commission on Jews of Other Lands, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 25, (1915): 112-114. Other groups like the American Jewish Committee joined the effort to support and aid this community. Also see <http://journals.sub.uni-hamburg.de/aethiopica/article/view/198> for more information on this movement.

⁵⁶⁶ Report of Special Committee on Falashas, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 25, (1915): 90.

⁵⁶⁷ *The Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 6, s.v. "Falashas," by Max Wurmbrand, 1971.

⁵⁶⁸ Report of Special Committee on Falashas, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 25, (1915): 90.

⁵⁶⁹ Grossmann to Wise, 15 June 1915, Stephen S. Wise Papers, MF-2321-2425/Box 45/Folder 12, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York.

Louis [Grossmann] seems to be worried lest, as a result of the intimation which has come from you, the gang seek to deprive him of the Presidency. But one always expects them to do ugly and contemptible things...I want to stay away from the next Conference, but I will go if Louis is to be endangered by the rascally crowd.⁵⁷⁰

Based on this letter it seems that Wise was concerned that the Kohler/Philipson faction was trying to prevent Grossmann from ascending to the presidency of the CCAR. Grossmann's friendship and political associations with Stephen S. Wise and Max Heller also probably irked his enemies. Wise was a hugely popular figure, and he and Heller were the most prominent Zionists in the CCAR. While these quotes are from the mid to late 1910's, one can assume that this factionalism and politicking took place throughout the CCAR's existence. Moreover, as we will see, the divisions were not only along stances on major issues, like Zionism. Some alliances and factions were regional.⁵⁷¹

By 1916 Grossmann, acting as the chair of the Special Commission on Jews of Other Lands, reported that the work of the committee was being hindered by the First World War. The rest of this report consists of pieces of information that the committee wished to ascertain about world Jewry. At the same conference Grossmann was among a group of rabbis who proposed a resolution that a committee be created to address Christian missionizing to the Jews. Later in the conference Grossmann was nominated to be the vice-president of the CCAR, and served in that position the following year.⁵⁷²

In 1917 Grossmann was elected president of the CCAR. He served in this post until 1919. During this period Grossmann was arguably at the peak of his career. He was the senior rabbi at one of the most prominent congregations in the country, a professor at HUC,

⁵⁷⁰ Heller to Wise, 8 January 1917, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 6/Folder 8, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁷¹ It is worth noting that this type of politicking may have been typical. There was an attempt to keep Rabbi Maximilian H. Heller from positions in the CCAR. In this case even Stephen S. Wise, a typical ally and friend of Heller, appears to have been involved. See Gary P. Zola, Reform Judaism's Pioneer Zionist: Maximilian Heller, *American Jewish History*, vol. 73, numbers 1-4 (September 1983-June 1984): 375-397.

⁵⁷² *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 26, (1916): no pagination.

principal of the Teachers' Institute in Cincinnati as it expanded and grew, and now head of the national rabbinical organization of the Reform movement. By 1922, only three years after leaving the presidency of the CCAR, Grossmann had resigned from all of his obligations and responsibilities, forced by failing health into a life of solitude and quiet.

Grossmann's term as president of the CCAR was filled with activity. He oversaw two conventions while serving as president; the first was held in Chicago (1918) and the second in Cincinnati (1919). In 1919 the CCAR convention marked the centennial anniversary of Isaac M. Wise's birth. Grossmann helped to plan and organize the memorial, which included a speech by former U.S. President William Howard Taft.⁵⁷³ As we will see, Grossmann's presidency influenced the work of the CCAR.

Grossmann's Presidency 1917–1919

On September 10, 1917, Grossmann wrote a letter to his rabbinic colleagues as the newly elected president of the CCAR. He thanked every member and stated that it was time for each of them to be ready to contribute to the welfare of the Conference and American Judaism. He invited each member of the CCAR to enter into correspondence with him.⁵⁷⁴ Aside from the regular work of the CCAR, there were several unique aspects of Grossmann's presidency. These will be highlighted below.

World War I

The participation of American Jews in the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) during World War I created new responsibilities for the CCAR. The organization sought to meet the needs of their congregants and constituents who were serving in the nation's military. Under Grossmann's leadership, the CCAR corresponded with and worked alongside the

⁵⁷³ Program, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29, (1919): 13-15.

⁵⁷⁴ Grossmann to the CCAR, 10 September 1917, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 10/Folder 27, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

newly-formed Jewish Board for Welfare Work, later the Jewish Welfare Board (JWB), in order to ensure that the needs of American Jews were being met in the military, abroad and at home. In fact, in October 1917, a month after Grossmann's initial letter to his colleagues, the Executive Board of the CCAR wrote to the JWB stating they had received complaints from Jewish soldiers that Jewish religious services were not being held in army camps. In this same letter, the CCAR board went on to express the hope that the JWB and the CCAR would be able to collaborate on behalf of the Jewish soldiers. The CCAR offered to work together with the JWB in order to assure that its members would be allowed to serve as counselors, preachers, and service leaders in the army camps.⁵⁷⁵

At times, the relationship between the CCAR and the Jewish Welfare Board was fraught with tension. While the CCAR sought to work with the JWB as much as possible, there were times when the interests of the two organizations diverged. Both groups sought to look after Jewish servicemen, but their methods did not always align. This is not entirely surprising, considering the fact that the Jewish Welfare Board had a responsibility to every stream of Judaism, while the CCAR was primarily, though not exclusively, looking after liberal Jews. There were several occasions when the CCAR had to engage in campaigning and lobbying in order to be sure the Jewish Welfare Board did not adopt a strictly Orthodox agenda. One of the early examples of this conflict can be seen in a letter from November 22, 1917. A rabbi wrote to Grossmann discussing shifts in personnel and leadership at the Jewish Welfare Board. He wrote that at one of the JWB's meetings, in addition to conservative rabbinic leadership being represented, the Union of Orthodox Synagogues presented resolutions regarding their support of the JWB. Among the resolutions were calls for the JWB to produce a strictly Orthodox prayer book for the Jewish soldiers in the

⁵⁷⁵ Wolsey to Goldsmith, 25 October 1917, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 10/Folder 27, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

AEF.⁵⁷⁶ Moreover, the traditionalists called on the JWB to authorize Jewish chaplains who could meet the requirements of Orthodox Jews. These resolutions were designed to put the liberal rabbinate and Reform Judaism at a disadvantage in the AEF. After reporting this information, the rabbi appealed to Grossmann and the leadership of the CCAR to be present at the next meeting of the JWB in order to curb the Orthodox attempt to gain an upper hand in the work of the organization.⁵⁷⁷ Grossmann spent a great deal of time dealing with the JWB and issues such as this during his tenure as president of the CCAR.

It is interesting to note that despite the CCAR's struggles to achieve equal footing with the Orthodox in the JWB, Grossmann was an advocate for unity and harmony whenever possible. In a letter he wrote to the CCAR Correspondence Secretary, Rabbi Louis Wolsey, Grossmann stated:

You may have forgotten about the matter of the Committee on Publicity. I have not appointed it, because I feel that this is hardly a good time to go at division and accentuating division. Publicity means sharpening the lines between us the orthodox and the reform, and (subtly,) between Zionists and anti-Zionists. I believe we have more important work just now, under the pressures of War-conditions than to help in a split.⁵⁷⁸

The CCAR also had a new reason to do its part to support the Jewish community during the war. The association circulated publicity asking its members to consider serving as a chaplain and stating that the Conference would try to help those who volunteered for such service to obtain a leave of absence from their congregations.⁵⁷⁹ Moreover, in the

⁵⁷⁶ On Jews in the AEF, see Christopher M. Sterba. *Good Americans: Italian and Jewish Immigrants during the First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁵⁷⁷ Unknown to Grossmann, 22 November 1917, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 10/Folder 27, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁷⁸ Grossmann to Wolsey, 4 January 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁷⁹ Grossmann to Wolsey, 28 January 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

summer of 1918 the CCAR organized a campaign to get their members to work during the summer in cantonments around the country.⁵⁸⁰

Aside from serving in military camps in America and as chaplains abroad, one of the issues that brought the Jewish community together was the fight for a chaplaincy insignia that represented Judaism rather than Christianity. On April 12, 1918, Grossmann received a letter informing him that a CCAR member, Rabbi David Goldberg (1886–1977), who was acting as a United States chaplain, had been seen wearing a cross upon his collar as the governmentally-recognized emblem of the chaplaincy. It seems the emblem had been made optional in the Navy and that the U.S. government had supported Jewish chaplains who chose not to wear the cross on their uniform.⁵⁸¹ Grossmann wrote to Rabbi Goldberg on April 15, 1918, requesting he stop wearing the cross.⁵⁸² Goldberg did not respond until May 13, 1918. When he replied, he stated he had not been informed about being able to substitute or remove the cross. Goldberg also stated that he would write to the Bureau of Navigation to see if he could use a Shield of David in place of a cross, and enclosed a copy of the letter he wrote regarding the matter.⁵⁸³ On May 15, 1918, Wolsey wrote to Grossmann informing him that the War Department had officially granted Jewish chaplains the right to wear a Shield of David or another insignia in place of the cross. Evidently, this change was enacted after another chaplain, Rabbi Jacob B. Krohngold (1879–1945), refused to wear the cross.⁵⁸⁴ Finally, in October of 1918, Grossmann wrote to Louis Wolsey to

⁵⁸⁰ Grossmann to the CCAR, 5 June 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁸¹ Unknown to Grossmann, 12 April 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34 /Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁸² Grossmann to Goldberg, 15 April 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁸³ Grossmann to Wolsey, 13 May 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁸⁴ Wolsey to Grossmann, 15 May 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

inform him that Goldberg had confirmed to him in writing that the army's insignia had been officially changed to a Shepherd's Crook, which he now wore.⁵⁸⁵ On this matter the CCAR and the Jewish Welfare Board acted collaboratively.

Another interesting matter relating to chaplains arose during Grossmann's presidency. Grossmann, writing to Wolsey, discussed the need to find a Jewish chaplain for the deaf. He stated that a class was started for deaf adults in his community. Moreover, many people attended the class. This demonstrated to him that there was a real need for such services. He noted that many other faith traditions already had chaplains for the deaf. Assisting the hearing-impaired was becoming an increasingly salient issue at this time for the civilian population as well as for returning World War I veterans (Jewish and non-Jewish) who were coming home from the front with hearing loss.⁵⁸⁶ Grossmann sought to work with the Society for the Welfare of the Jewish Deaf in this work.⁵⁸⁷

The issue that seems to have caused the greatest divide in the Jewish community during the war years was the issue of a prayer book for Jewish servicemen. The debate over the creation of a prayer book for Jewish soldiers was already raging in 1917, and the controversy became even more contentious in the following years. In February of 1918 leaflet reprints of the Union Prayer Book (UPB) were distributed in army camps where services were being conducted by Reform rabbis. However, the CCAR was still at this time engaged in a cooperative effort with the Jewish Welfare Board, the United Synagogue of America, and the Union of Orthodox Congregations to develop a unified Army Prayer

⁵⁸⁵ Grossmann to Wolsey, 11 October 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁸⁶ Grossmann to Wolsey, 11 October 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁸⁷ Grossmann to Wolsey, 5 November 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

On the history of deafness in America, see Susan Burch, *Signs of Resistance: American Deaf Cultural History, 1900 to World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2002).

Book.⁵⁸⁸ This project sparked a lively conversation that can be seen throughout Grossmann's correspondence of 1918. Many felt that the prayer book being created through these cooperative efforts was going to be far too orthodox in character to serve the needs of liberal Jews. They therefore wanted to institute a Reform liturgy that would be familiar to liberal Jewish servicemen. However, the UPB was not written with the army community in mind, and there were those who wanted to compose a prayer book specifically for use in a military setting. Work began in March to create a separate Reform prayer book for the armed services.⁵⁸⁹

At this same time, Rabbi William Rosenau (1865–1943), who had served as the CCAR's sole representative to the Jewish Welfare Board, had evidently caused Grossmann and some other CCAR leaders to worry that he was working on his own behalf rather than for the movement as a whole. In one communication between Grossmann and Wolsey they explicitly voiced the concern that Rosenau was no longer looking after the interests of the CCAR and the reform rabbinate in his work with the JWB. Rather, he appeared to be siding with the JWB at the expense of the Conference and its positions. Most egregiously, they appear to have felt that Rosenau was voting on proposals within the JWB based on interests other than those of the Conference which he was supposed to represent.⁵⁹⁰ These feelings came to the fore in the CCAR, where Rosenau was perceived to be unsupportive of the group's efforts to create a liberal prayer book for Jewish servicemen. Concern over

⁵⁸⁸ Rosenau to Grossmann, 15 February 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁸⁹ Wolsey to Grossmann, 14 March 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁹⁰ Grossmann to Wolsey, 12 April, 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Rosenau's behavior grew great enough that some CCAR members wanted to remove him from his work with the JWB.⁵⁹¹

By May of 1918 Grossmann appointed a committee to work on the development of a Reform Jewish prayer book that would be used by the U.S. Army as an alternative to the prayer book that had been compiled by the JWB.⁵⁹² This committee was to be strictly a CCAR committee working independently from the JWB. It was clear that they hoped to create a prayer book that would be both palatable to liberal rabbis and servicemen and also superior to the JWB prayer book. One of the rabbis who declined a position on the committee to create a CCAR liturgy wrote: "...the wretched mongrel produced by the Publication Society [a reference to the JWB prayer book that was created through compromise] is an abomination. I hope you will be able to secure some able editors who will at the same time give us creditable English diction and grammar."⁵⁹³ Based on these words we can likely conclude that some or perhaps many Reform rabbis felt that the prayer book produced by JWB was far too Orthodox in character, poorly written and, due to the nature of compromise, disagreeable to all involved.

The committee that was charged with creating the CCAR's prayer book for Jewish servicemen was appointed by the Executive Board. Despite the fact that many felt this prayer book was desperately needed, other members of the CCAR objected to the way in which the project had been executed. At the CCAR conference in Chicago in June of 1918, David Philipson expressed his dissatisfaction with the fact that the Executive Board had decided to act without obtaining the approval of the membership of the CCAR. Philipson

⁵⁹¹ Unknown to Grossmann, 15 April 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁹² Grossmann to Wolsey, 7 May 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁹³ Grossmann to Wolsey, 8 May 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

argued that since the Conference as a whole had not authorized the Executive Board to appoint this committee, the whole undertaking was illegitimate. William Rosenau, who was already breaking with the CCAR's leadership at this point, spoke out against the compilation of a CCAR prayer book for the U.S. Army despite his having voted in favor of its creation. Louis Wolsey quickly took note of the fact that Rosenau's opposition seemed particularly odd since he had voted in favor of the project! Rosenau's riposte was that he did not possess all of the facts when he voted for the project. In addition, Rosenau reminded his colleagues that the JWB had only allowed for a reprint of the UPB to be used; they had not approved the creation of an entirely new liturgy. Philipson continued to argue that the Executive Board was not authorized to compile and issue an entirely new prayer book for use in the U.S. Army. Another rabbi disagreed with Philipson during the debate. He stated that the country was in the midst of a world war and that Jewish servicemen could not wait for a prayer book that would be compiled by the Conference acting as a committee on the whole. Certain actions needed to take place in a timely way. In the end, the entire matter was put to a vote, which just barely passed in favor of proceeding immediately with the creation and publication of a Reform prayer book for use in the U.S. Army.⁵⁹⁴

By July of 1918, the Executive Board of the CCAR had voted to remove Rosenau as its representative to the JWB and appoint Louis Grossman to serve in his stead. Rosenau fought back against this motion, but he was unable to sway the Board. Remarkably, when the Jewish Welfare Board learned that Rosenau was to be replaced, it informed the Executive Board of the CCAR, on July 23rd, that it would not assent to the appointment of Grossmann over Rosenau. The JWB informed the CCAR that Rosenau would continue to serve as the CCAR's official representative. This response enraged the leadership of the

⁵⁹⁴ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 28 (1918): 127-131.

CCAR, since it seemed clear that the JWB was attempting to dictate to the CCAR who its representative was going to be.⁵⁹⁵ By October of 1918, however, the matter appears to have been settled, because Rosenau continued to represent the CCAR at the JWB.⁵⁹⁶ In that same month, Grossmann stated he was very tired of the whole prayer book controversy. The CCAR's manuscript for a prayer book was being ignored by the Jewish Welfare Board, which continued to act independently. Moreover, Grossmann was clearly displeased with Rosenau, who managed to retain his post as the CCAR's representative to the JWB despite Grossmann's having wanted to oust him. As far as Grossmann was concerned, Rosenau was being obsequious in his work with the Jewish Welfare Board instead of advocating on behalf of a pro-Reform agenda.⁵⁹⁷

It appears the prayer book was not finished in time to be useful, and was never printed. A manuscript version of this text has been preserved at The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. In a letter to Wolsey from March 3, 1919, Chaplain David Goldberg stated his hope that the project had not been abandoned. He pointed out that there was a need to complete the project since there were still Jewish soldiers in active duty during peace time.⁵⁹⁸ Despite this fact, the project seems to have been abandoned.

By the end of Grossmann's presidency the war in Europe was ending. CCAR members had served as chaplains or had worked on the fronts as part of the Red Cross. Others worked with servicemen in military camps within the United States. As Grossmann

⁵⁹⁵ Wolsey to CCAR, 7 August 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 18, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁹⁶ Wolsey to Rosenau, 14 October 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 16, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

The Grossmann files do not explain how the matter was resolved only that the conflict was over.

⁵⁹⁷ Grossmann to Wolsey, 16 October 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁵⁹⁸ Goldberg to Wolsey, 3 March 1919, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 12/Folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

pointed out, in every community members of the CCAR were dealing with the aftereffects of the war.⁵⁹⁹ By 1919, the CCAR, with Grossmann at the helm, began to look to issues of reconstruction and how to respond to the post-war world.

The Paris Peace Conference

While the armistice of 1918 brought an end to hostilities in Europe, it was the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 that established the post-war world. The CCAR wanted to ensure that its interests would be represented in Paris. Between the CCAR conventions of 1918 and 1919, Grossmann sent an appeal to the American representatives at the Peace Conference.

In the appeal Grossmann, acting as president of the CCAR, wrote that the Jewish community welcomed the assembly and the CCAR was supportive of its aims and goals. He continued by stating concerns for “the Jews in Russia, Poland, Galicia, Rumania, Palestine, Turkey and Eastern Countries.” Jews in these lands, Grossmann wrote, were victims of discrimination and persecution and he hoped the Peace Conference would address their needs. Grossmann went on to state:

It is pathetic that we must ask the Peace Conference to draw the Jewish question into consideration in its decision as to the reliability of these nations which are demanding political independence and enrollment in the comity of nations. But no nation is worthy of confidence and the partnership of other nations unless it binds itself to an all-inclusive justice...⁶⁰⁰

Grossmann’s central concern in the appeal to the U.S. representatives to the Paris Peace Conference was the Jews of other lands. He hoped that this letter would help to ensure that the welfare of Jews living in East Europe would be one of the many agenda items discussed and considered in Paris. It is particularly interesting to note that Grossmann also included a paragraph about Palestine at the end of the appeal. Although his statement was moderate, it

⁵⁹⁹ Louis Grossmann, Report of the President, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29 (1919): 20-21.

⁶⁰⁰ Louis Grossmann, Message of the President to the Thirtieth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29 (1919): 130.

expressed his desire that Palestine be established by the international community as a land of liberty and equality for all. Grossmann painted a picture of a Palestine that was not a Jewish State, but in a nation in which the Jewish citizens could practice their religion and act freely. He stated that Palestine should be an example of cooperation and inclusivity for all humanity.⁶⁰¹

Grossmann received a reply to his letter from Joseph C. Grew (1880–1965), who was serving as the Secretary of the American Commissioners to the Paris Peace Conference.⁶⁰² Grew assured Grossmann that the Commissioners hoped to act, “in conformity with the spirit of American institutions,” by endeavoring to attain equality of treatment for all people no matter their race or religion.⁶⁰³ Grossmann was very pleased with this reply, and incorporated it into his President’s Message at the 1919 convention in Cincinnati.

In addition to this correspondence, a commission consisting of Henry Morgenthau⁶⁰⁴ (1856–1946), Julius Kahn⁶⁰⁵ (1861–1924), Oscar Straus⁶⁰⁶ (1850–1926), and Daniel P Hays⁶⁰⁷ (1854–1923), went to the Paris Peace Conference in order to try to achieve the incorporation of a clause that would secure “emancipation and enfranchisement of all Jews everywhere.”⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰¹ Louis Grossmann, Message of the President to the Thirtieth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29 (1919): 132-133.

⁶⁰² For more information on Grew see Waldo H. Heinrichs, *American Ambassador: Joseph C. Grew and the Development of the United States Diplomatic Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁶⁰³ Louis Grossmann, Message of the President to the Thirtieth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29 (1919): 131.

⁶⁰⁴ Morgenthau was a noted lawyer and diplomat. He served as ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during World War I. He was also spoke out against the Armenian Genocide.

⁶⁰⁵ Kahn was a United States Congressman representing the fourth district of California. Kahn died while serving as a congressman and his wife was appointed to serve the remainder of his term making her the first Jewish women to serve in the House of Representatives.

⁶⁰⁶ Strauss was the first Jewish United States Cabinet Secretary. He was the Labor and Commerce Secretary under Theodore Roosevelt.

⁶⁰⁷ Hays was the descendent of a prominent Jewish American family. He was an active member of the New York Jewish and secular community.

⁶⁰⁸ Louis Grossmann, Message of the President to the Thirtieth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29 (1919): 131-132.

These men were leaders of the American Jewish community, and Grossmann authorized the Commission to speak with the voice of the CCAR in their work on behalf of World Jewry.

The members of the CCAR Committee in charge of responding to the President's Message subsequently reported that they were gratified that the communication was taking place between their president and the American Commissioners. The committee members also stated they were pleased that Grossmann had authorized the Jewish leaders present at the Peace Conference (viz., Morgenthau, Kahn, Stauss, and Hays) to speak on behalf of the CCAR.⁶⁰⁹

Grossmann also spoke of the League of Nations in his President's Message. He saw this newly formed body as representative of a new hope in the post-war world. He fervently believed that it could bring about new era of peace.

League of Nations

By the time the CCAR convened in Cincinnati in 1919 the formation of the League of Nations led Grossmann to address this subject in his Presidential Message. Grossmann was overwhelmingly positive in his characterization of the League of Nations and its work. He saw it as the creation of a body that could address the serious problems that had plagued the world: intolerance, prejudice, and injustice. He wrote:

...the formation of a League of Nations seems to us the fulfillment of the Prophecy, the assurance of that confidence in human nature which sustained our Fathers in anxious patience, and the realization of the religious program, projected so clearly by Maimonides on lines of rabbinic tradition, culminating in the Messianic Day.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁹ Henry Berkowitz and the Committee on President's Message, Report of the committee on President's Message, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29 (1919): 95-97.

⁶¹⁰ Louis Grossmann, Message of the President to the Thirtieth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29 (1919): 129.

In addition to asserting his hope that the League of Nations would hasten the advent of a messianic era of peace, Grossmann urged his colleagues to issue a resolution stating that the members of the CCAR “regard the League of Nations as a promise of universal reconstruction not only in the politics but also of the morals of the world.”⁶¹¹

It is important to remember that Grossmann, like so many of his Reform colleagues, was principally opposed to war. In addition to men like Stephen S. Wise, Judah L. Magnes, and Abraham Cronbach, who were self-proclaimed pacifists, many other Reform rabbis preached against war. Even though Grossmann did not identify himself as a pacifist, he was a gentle man, and remained shocked and appalled at the violence and destruction caused by the war. After the unprecedented violence and destruction that was caused by the Great War, the League of Nations represented a glimmer of hope for the future. Grossmann believed that this newly-established assembly of nations would make certain that the world would never again engage in such destruction. Although he was mistaken, his convictions provide us with another example of his idealism.

Zionism

During Grossmann’s presidency Zionism became a salient issue. On November 2, 1917, only a few months after Grossman assumed the presidency of the CCAR, the Balfour Declaration was promulgated. Grossmann had openly professed an anti-Zionist position throughout his rabbinate. He did so in his writings, his sermons, and his personal letters. However, despite his own personal beliefs, he defended students and professors at HUC who stood up for their Zionist beliefs. Moreover, two of his closest friends and confidants, Max Heller and Stephen Wise, were themselves ardent and outspoken Zionists. These facts

⁶¹¹ Louis Grossmann, Message of the President to the Thirtieth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29 (1919): 131.

demonstrate that Grossmann was not a harsh ideologue when it came to Zionism. When Grossmann served as president of the CCAR he was put into a difficult position. He did not want to divide the Conference during war-time, and he did not want to marginalize his friends and supporters. Yet, he did not want to support the expanding support for Zionism that came in the wake of the Balfour Declaration. Moreover, William Rosenau, Grossmann's predecessor in the presidency of the CCAR, led an anti-Zionist charge at the 1917 CCAR Convention. In reaction to this initiative, Stephen S. Wise warned that should the leaders of the CCAR declare Zionism to be antithetical to Reform Judaism, they would create an irrevocable split in the Conference.⁶¹² During Grossmann's presidency, Zionism had become a particularly explosive topic in the CCAR, and these circumstances fueled Grossmann's desire for caution and care around the Zionist issue. Despite his yearning for moderation, Grossmann was eventually forced to take a stand that earned him the ire of Stephen Wise and Max Heller. However, he also appears to have undergone a change of heart on the issue very late in his career.

Grossmann took a clear stance on Zionism in his address to the 1918 Convention in Chicago. He said that the Zionists who sought statehood in Palestine due to religious reasons or political reasons:

...cherish a Utopia which, unlike every other kind of Utopia, looks backwards instead of forward. Both ignore concrete conditions in the Palestine they long for...the Zionists wish to build their Utopia on ground that is disputed, with materials which are under mortgage and lien, and under restraints which not even the British Declaration can remove. This is not the place to argue on the several aspects of the Zionistic Utopia and to show that it is not practicable nor founded on a true conception of Judaism...⁶¹³

⁶¹² Arthur J. Lelyveld, "The Conference View of the Position of the Jew in the Modern World," in *Retrospect and Prospect: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of The Central Conference of American Rabbis 1889-1964*, ed. Bertram Wallace Korn (New York: The Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1965), 150-151.

⁶¹³ Louis Grossmann, Message of the President to the Twenty-Ninth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 28 (1918): 173.

In this address, Grossmann did not shy away from condemning Zionism as wrong-headed. He clearly and openly spoke against it. Despite this, he was moderate in his reaction to the Balfour Declaration specifically, and spoke of it favorably. “The British Declaration is a document of great importance. No argument for our approval of it can enhance its significance...”⁶¹⁴ Grossmann went on to say that a Palestinian Jewry could be desirable—that it would be good if Jews became guards of sacred places and of peace in the region. Grossmann did, however, take issue with one aspect of the Balfour Declaration, and in a surprising way. He argued that the problem with the Balfour Declaration was that through it the Jews were receiving freedom and independence through someone else. Grossmann exclaimed:

No people has become genuinely free through somebody else. And the Jews, if they are to achieve their independence as nationalists, should not have to wait upon the British Government nor any government, for a concession...A virile nation does not buy its freedom nor petition for it, nor wait upon generosity, nor accept an alien Declaration.⁶¹⁵

In his presidential address, Grossmann also praised the Balfour Declaration for bringing Jews around the world nearer to one another. He claimed that the idea that Europe was ready to, “do justice to the Jew,” created a unified sense of excitement among the Jews.⁶¹⁶

Grossmann closed the section on Zionism in his President’s message by calling on both sides of the debate to be civil in their discourse. He stated that the danger in this dispute was the intolerance it engendered in the Reform rabbinate. Despite this warning the discourse between Reform Zionists and anti-Zionists grew uglier in the following months.

⁶¹⁴ Louis Grossmann, Message of the President to the Twenty-Ninth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 28 (1918): 174.

⁶¹⁵ Louis Grossmann, Message of the President to the Twenty-Ninth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 28 (1918): 175.

⁶¹⁶ Louis Grossmann, Message of the President to the Twenty-Ninth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 28 (1918): 176.

A second issue in which Grossmann became embroiled at this time was referred to as the “Raisin-Frisch Affair.” This situation centered on Rabbi Ephraim Frisch (1880–1957) and Rabbi Max Raisin (1881–1957). Both were Reform rabbis who lived and worked on the East Coast, and both were of East European descent. Raisin was a Zionist and Frisch was an anti-Zionist.

In the wake of the Balfour Declaration, Frisch sought to organize a committee which would work to oppose Jewish nationalism and the creation of a Jewish state. He tried to get all the members of the CCAR’s Executive Board to join this committee. They voted against this action. In a letter between Wolsey and Frisch discussing this new committee, Wolsey wrote, “...both Grossman [*sic*] and myself, as I have already written you, are heartily in favor of joining your Executive Committee, but not in our capacity as officers of the Conference. We would hardly be allowed to do that.”⁶¹⁷ Due to these difficulties, the committee never officially organized. By the time the controversy exploded, such a committee had never met, let alone created an active membership.

On August 31, 1918, on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, Woodrow Wilson sent Stephen S. Wise a telegram wherein he endorsed the work of Weitzman, the text of the Balfour Declaration, and the idea of establishing in Palestine a national home for the Jews.⁶¹⁸ Wise conveyed the telegram to the *New York Times*, which published the text on September 5, 1918. It was the promulgation of this letter that set off the Frisch-Raisin controversy. Moreover, it appears that the letter was designed to enrage the anti-Zionist element of the American rabbinate.

⁶¹⁷ Wolsey to Frisch, 3 September 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶¹⁸ “Rabbis Preach on President’s Note,” *New York Times* (7 September 1918).

In a letter to Wise, Max Heller suggested that Wilson sent the telegram because of Wise's efforts. "This was a wonderful stunt of yours, the day after the anti-Zionist rabbis got their resolution into every paper, to come down with the thunder clap of that Presidential New Year message; I don't know when anything has given me more pleasure."⁶¹⁹ According to Heller, Wise managed to obtain a New Year greeting from President Wilson that praised the Zionist program just to use it as a counterattack on the rabbinical anti-Zionists. Heller added "...the Philipsons and Frischs are desperately squirming in the mud of their stupidity." As Heller and Wise rejoiced, Frisch mounted a response.

Ephraim Frisch composed an open telegram to Wilson wherein he expressed his strong opposition to the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. He also publically announced the names of the rabbis who had joined his committee opposing Zionism, and asserted that the named colleagues supported the content of his telegram to the President. Frisch's telegram to Wilson appeared in several major newspapers across the country. In addition to Grossmann and Wolsey, David Philipson, William Rosenau, Edward Calisch (1865–1946), Leo Franklin (1870–1948), and others were listed as members of the committee.⁶²⁰ The tone of the telegram and the roster of rabbis listed by Frisch incensed Zionists. Additionally, some of those listed as committee members denied that they had joined the committee and also that they had approved the writing of the telegram. Subsequently, Frisch confessed that he was solely responsible for the letter.

Rabbi Max Raisin worked on a paper called *The American Jewish Chronicle*. He was an editor along with Dr. Samuel Max Melamed (1885–1938), another leading Zionist. The paper was very sympathetic to the Zionist cause, and Raisin used it as his venue for

⁶¹⁹ Heller to Wise, 24 September 1918, Stephen S. Wise Papers, MF-2321-2425/Box 45/Folder 16, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York.

⁶²⁰ "Rabbis Preach on President's Note," *New York Times* (7 September 1918).

retaliation against Frisch's open telegram. In its September 13, 1918 edition, there appeared an editorial entitled, "Enter the Great Rabbi Frisch." In it, Raisin berated Frisch and called him a bombast, an attention seeker, and a fool. The first two paragraphs were filled with personal attacks; Raisin went so far as to assert that Frisch was such an insignificant figure that his point of view carried no weight at all:

But let the jesting cease. We would much rather refrain from making any sort of a comment on the Frisch episode in connection with President Wilson's letter endorsing the Zionist platform, since the revered gentleman in no way deserves to be taken seriously. His position in the community has never been important enough to merit public attention, the very rabbinate he holds being but a poor imitation, by a little man, of the really imposing work carried on so ably and successfully by Dr. Wise...Distinguished neither for eloquence, learning, organizing ability or public usefulness, Rabbi Frisch has always had the itch for publicity.⁶²¹

After some more attacks on Frisch's person, the editors continue to state that his behavior was symptomatic of a widespread disease among many Reform rabbis. Moreover, they claimed that Frisch's actions misrepresented the liberal community when he claimed to speak for them. The editors condemned Frisch for the tone he used in addressing the President, and also claimed that there were many Zionists in the Reform movement. The editors most ardently objected to the following statement in Frisch's letter to the President, "the establishment of a Jewish State would tend to distract our coreligionists here from a full and perfect allegiance to American citizenship and obligation."⁶²² They claimed that to make this statement, during a war in which Jews were fighting and dying for their country, was completely inappropriate. Moreover, they stated that the claim was not just irresponsible but also ludicrous. The editorial went on to question Frisch's integrity in claiming to speak for a national committee of rabbis when no such committee yet existed.⁶²³ This assertion was

⁶²¹ Max Raisin, "Enter the Great Rabbi Frisch," *The American Jewish Chronicle* (13 September 1918): 452.

⁶²² Ibid.

⁶²³ Ibid.

partially true. In an exchange of telegrams that took place between Louis Wolsey and Frisch, it is clear that Frisch's committee had only recently been created and was not really an established entity. Most of all, the telegrams confirm that the committee had not yet met and had not taken any official action. Raisin and Melamed were accurate in their charge that Frisch inaccurately described himself as the chair of a committee that had status and standing in the Jewish community. The editorial ends with a stinging finale:

Where President Wilson has shown implicit faith in the honorable motive of the Zionist Jew, this rabbi of a tenth rate synagogue has gone on record as distrusting his own brethren in faith and race. A worse example of Jewish self-contempt has yet to be produced.⁶²⁴

The authors of the text not only criticized Frisch's actions, but also his person. There was nothing delicate or diplomatic about the text, which also spoke negatively of the CCAR's current president [Grossmann] because of his anti-Zionistic stance. Overall, the article was nothing less than a harsh personal attack, and it is easy to understand why Frisch was so livid and why the article caused such a stir in the CCAR.

Frisch wrote to Raisin shortly after the article was published. In his letter he expressed his dismay at the tone of the editorial and sought to determine how, if at all, Raisin was involved in text.

I note on the first page that you are secretary of this periodical and that you are also one of the two editors. I cannot, of course, believe that you wrote the editorial referred to because it seems inconceivable that one rabbi should write such an article against a colleague...Please write me at once to assure me that you had nothing to do with the composition of the article whatsoever.⁶²⁵

Raisin responded to Frisch on September 19. He did not seek to distance himself from responsibility in any way. In his opening paragraph he wrote, "I am in receipt of your

⁶²⁴ Ibid.

⁶²⁵ Frisch to Raisin, n.d., Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 16, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

letter of yesterdays' date and beg to state that I assume full responsibility for the editorial in question."⁶²⁶ Raisin goes on to state that he would have made the same comments about his own brother had he acted as Frisch had done. Raisin stated that he assumed Frisch knew he was now discredited in the eyes of all Jews in America.

Your action was not only stupid but it was outright base, and much as I regret to employ the term, really treacherous to the cause of our people...To get out a letter of protest to the President at a time that the entire liberal and democratic world is favoring a Jewish National reconstruction and to impugn the loyal and patriotic motives of the American Zionists is a scandal of the worst sort.⁶²⁷

Raisin maintained that the newspaper editorial was a rebuke which Frisch deserved and, as a Zionist, he had a right to defend his movement. Continuing his personal attacks, Raisin questioned Frisch's manhood and then followed with a statement that he meant nothing personal! He acted solely in order to protect his people. Raisin closed his letter with a startling and interesting statement: "I am very confident that that time is not far off when the light will dawn on you as it has dawned on so many others of our Reform rabbis, [Morris S.] Lazaron (1888–1979), [Joseph] Krauskopf (1858–1922), [Edgar F.] Magnin (1890–1984), and others..."⁶²⁸ In short, Raisin closed his letter with the hope that Frisch would have what Jonathan Sarna has termed a "Zionist conversion." As Raisin intimated, many prominent rabbis did have these conversionary experiences.⁶²⁹

Raisin and Frisch were not the only ones talking about the editorial. The "Raisin-Frisch Affair" had become the talk of the CCAR. In a particularly interesting exchange of

⁶²⁶ Raisin to Frisch, 19 September 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 16, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

⁶²⁸ Ibid.

⁶²⁹ Jonathan D. Sarna, "Converts to Zionism in the American Reform Movement," in *Zionism and Religion*, ed. Shmuel Almog (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998), 188-203.

letters, Stephen S. Wise raised the affair with his colleague Max Heller. In one letter from Wise to Heller, Wise stated:

I wonder whether you have followed the Raisin-Frisch matter. At the recent meeting of the Executive of the Central Conference Frisch of course was exonerated, vindicated and glorified. This was altogether a fitting procedure from the viewpoint of a group of men, who would have acted just as Frisch did with respect to the President's message on Zionism. I understand that things are going further. I learn from Raisin that the matter was referred to the Committee on Arbitration and Raisin wrote a letter a copy of which I enclose. It is intimated that the Arbitration Committee may either take or recommend drastic action. Raisin is inclined to resign but I told him he ought not do so. Let the thing proceed to a head and let the Conference dare to suspend or expel him because he has dared to speak out like a man against the Frischian perfidy.⁶³⁰

It is clear that the CCAR Executive Board became involved in the affair. Frisch sought recourse for the editorial. Many on the Executive Board were anti-Zionists, and had little sympathy for Raisin. While the Zionists, including Wise, were looking to use Raisin as a way of forcing the Conference to accept Zionist positions they also were critical of the tone of Raisin's position.

In a second letter from November 29, 1918, Wise wrote to Heller:
I have nothing more to say to you about the Frisch Raisin controversy. Raisin does lack tact together with many other things, but the group seems bent, according to Louis Grossmann's statement to me the other day, upon proscription, lacks every sense of public and moral responsibility [*sic*].⁶³¹

This affair is not mentioned in the CCAR Yearbooks, and I have been unable to locate any document that addresses how this event concluded. There are some letters between Wolsey and Grossmann on the issue. When creating a committee on arbitration they sought to find Zionists to put it, to ensure it did not seem they were creating a one-sided committee. Grossmann also felt, "Better to have an opponent inside than outside. He

⁶³⁰ Wise to Heller, 13 November 1918, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 6/Folder 8, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶³¹ Wise to Heller, 29 November 1918, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 6/Folder 8, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

[Heller] would not fight so hard, if at all.”⁶³² While these letters show the beginning of an attempt to handle the matter, they do not give us a full picture of how the matter was settled. Despite this fact, it is clear that the issue did not force the Zionist issue and split the CCAR.

This incident and the 1918 Convention had forced Grossmann to take explicit anti-Zionist stances. Heller and Wise, in reaction, were livid. They wrote to each other that his presidency had shown him for a fool, and it appears that they were ready to break their off friendship with him.⁶³³ Despite this, it seems that eventually Wise was willing to forgive. On November 29th, 1918, Wise wrote to Heller:

Louis Grossmann came to see me the other day very humble and penitent. I flatly refused to see him at first and told him so over the phone, objected to his calling me by my given name, calling him “Dr. Grossman,” but he insisted upon coming to see me and I was really moved to compassion. He is a pitiable looking spectacle. His President invited me to deliver the address at the annual meeting of his congregation, but of course I could not go in view of what Louis had written about President Wilson’s declaration anent Zionism. Grossman gave me an explanation both of his attitude at the Conference and his later editorials about the Wilson declaration, which would be tragic if it were not ludicrous. It is pitiable beyond words. I cannot tell you what he said, - it wouldn’t be fair and would be a breach of confidence, -- but I may tell you this, that, if he adheres to his present resolution, it will not be long before he has built a bridge that will carry him over to an attitude of approval of, and in any event of acquiescent sympathy with, Zionism. Isn’t that extraordinary?⁶³⁴

This letter indicates that Wise felt Grossmann would in time become sympathetic to the Zionist cause. Although there is no evidence that such a shift actually ever occurred, Wise’s statement is a notable. Wise was among Grossmann’s closest confidants and friends. Moreover, in the little that has been written on Grossmann, he has been described as an anti-Zionist. If his anti-Zionist feelings had become less intense, or if they had changed over

⁶³² Grossmann to Wolsey, 20 November 1912, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶³³ Wise to Heller, 29 November 1918, Maximilian H. Heller Papers, MS 33/Box 6/Folder 8, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶³⁴ Ibid.

time, this would be quite remarkable. But shortly after his presidency Grossmann was forced to retreat from public service, and all we are left with is this cryptic statement by Wise and no real ability to know if and how Grossman's feelings finally developed.

Moreover, Grossmann's presidency appears to have caused a crisis in his life. In one letter, Heller wrote to Wise, "I think his [Grossmann's] presidency has unbalanced him."⁶³⁵ It is unclear from the letter what Heller is specifically referencing; however, we also know that within two years, Grossmann will begin withdrawing from all public responsibility on the advice of physicians. He will begin to seek out solitude in sanitariums. It appears that these years were a watershed of some kind for Grossmann. His Presidency appears to have taken a serious toll on him.

Eastern Council of Reform Rabbis

Another important issue during Grossmann's presidency was the relationship of the Eastern Council of Reform Rabbis to the CCAR. In 1912 the Eastern Council of Reform Rabbis was created to counter what its founders believed to be the strong foothold neo-Orthodoxy had attained in the East. Moreover, the founders of the Eastern Council maintained that they faced issues that were unique to the East and that Western rabbis could not understand. It should also be noted that membership in the Eastern Council was contingent upon being a member of the CCAR as well. Among the Eastern Council's first members were Stephen S. Wise, Joseph Silverman⁶³⁶ (1860–1930), J. Leonard Levy⁶³⁷ (1865–1917), William Rosenau,

⁶³⁵ Heller to Wise, 24 September 1918, Stephen S. Wise Papers, MF-2321-2425/Box 45/Folder 16, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York.

⁶³⁶ Joseph Silverman was a member of Louis Grossmann's ordination class. After he was ordained rabbi he served two congregations in Texas. In 1888, he went on to serve Temple Emanu-El in New York City, one of the leading reform congregations in the country.

⁶³⁷ J. Leonard Levy (1865-1917) was an American rabbi. He was born in London, England. He began his rabbinate in Bristol but moved to Keneseth Israel Reform congregation in Philadelphia in 1893. He went on to serve Rodef Shalom Temple in Pittsburgh from 1901 to 1917. For more information see Solomon B. Freehof and Vigdor W. Kavalier, *J. Leonard Levy: Prophetic Voice* (Pittsburgh: Herrmann Printing & Litho, Inc., 1970).

Isaac S. Moses⁶³⁸ (1847–1926), and Rudolph Grossmann⁶³⁹, Louis Grossmann's brother.⁶⁴⁰

Shortly after the Eastern Council's creation, the CCAR issued a statement informing the Council that it would not be recognized as a chapter of the Conference itself. It appears the leadership of the CCAR felt threatened by the organization of the Eastern Council.⁶⁴¹ Moreover, longstanding tensions between these regions likely stoked the tension.⁶⁴² These tensions continued into Grossmann's presidency.

During Grossmann's presidency there were attempts to bring the Eastern Council of Reform Rabbis officially under the auspices of the CCAR. By 1918 the bodies were seen as separate enough to require a merger agreement. Although the two rabbinical associations had acted in cooperation previously, the Eastern Council had maintained a separate identity. This attempt to merge was a delicate matter. The Eastern Council sought to maintain some independence, and there were individuals in the CCAR who felt that merging the council into the Conference would give it status as a distinct rabbinical association on par with the CCAR—that the CCAR would be bringing in “The horse of the Greeks.”⁶⁴³

⁶³⁸ Isaac S. Moses was born in Santomichel, Posen and was the son of a rabbi. He came to America in 1870 and began teaching religious school in St. Louis. He went on to serve as a rabbi at congregations in Quincy, Illinois, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Nashville, Tennessee, Chicago, Illinois, and New York, New York. He was instrumental in the creation of the Union Prayer Book. For more information see Gary P. Zola, *The Americanization of the Jewish Prayer Book and the Liturgical Development of Congregation Ahawath Chesed New York City* (New York: Central Synagogue, 2008).

⁶³⁹ Rudolph was a few years Louis' junior. It should be noted he spelled his last name with one “n” unlike his brother. He served as an assistant rabbi at Temple Beth-El in New York from 1889-1896. He then became senior rabbi at Temple Rodef Sholom, in New York, where he remained until the end of his career.

⁶⁴⁰ “Reform Rabbis in Council” *The New York Times* (28 May 1912).

⁶⁴¹ “Eastern Rabbis Reply,” *The New York Times* (19 June 1912).

⁶⁴² See Sidney L. Regner's chapter “The History of the Conference,” in *Retrospect and Prospect: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of The Central Conference of American Rabbi* edited by Bertram Wallace Korn. In this chapter some of the history of antagonism between the rabbis of East Coast America and the rabbis of mid-America is detailed. Moreover, this chapter specifically mentions the history of regional organizations within the CCAR such as this Eastern Council as well as a Southern Rabbinical Conference.

One can also see Gary P. Zola's work for more information Gary P. Zola, “Southern Rabbis and the Founding of The First National Association of Rabbis,” *American Jewish History*, vol. 85, No. 4 (December 1997): 353-372.

⁶⁴³ Unknown to Grossmann, 19 April 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Grossmann—who showed a cautious trust in the Eastern rabbis—sought out several opinions and a committee was established to deal with the issue.⁶⁴⁴ He stated that he felt that, “they [the eastern rabbis] were sincere. But, of course, we must be on the alert.”⁶⁴⁵

While regional factions and infighting were major forces within the CCAR at this time, Grossmann sought to overcome the situation. In many ways this was a necessity, since he was good friends with Stephen S. Wise and his brother was also an East Coast rabbi. It seems that during the serious tensions that arose while the two rabbinical associations were in the midst of merger talks Grossmann traveled to New York and delivered a speech to the Eastern Council. Wolsey wrote to Grossmann about this matter. Because Wolsey was the Corresponding Secretary of the CCAR during the Grossmann presidency, he and Grossmann maintained a close relationship. Grossmann relied on Wolsey’s advice on many matters, and Wolsey appeared to be hurt that Grossmann had not told him of this meeting. Wolsey was also not fond of Stephen S. Wise, who was a major figure in the Eastern Council of Reform Rabbis. He asked Grossmann to speak plainly to him about his intentions with the Eastern Council and the CCAR. Wolsey wrote to Grossmann:

Have you been persuaded by Stephen Wise, who would not alone like to control the East, but everything east of the East and west of the East? How far upwards he wants to go, is of course, questionable with me, but I have a notion that he would like to dispute possession of the throne, [of] *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*.⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴⁴Grossmann to Wolsey, 19 April 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁴⁵ Grossmann to Wolsey, 3 May 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁴⁶ Wolsey to Grossmann, 3 May 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Grossmann wrote back to Wolsey, "Do you worry about me and the Eastern Council? I am surprised...I had nothing to do with them...I do not share your suspicions, but I feel the Board will not 'tubble' [*sic*] to the Proposal."⁶⁴⁷

A revised draft of the merger proposal came in May of 1918.⁶⁴⁸ Eventually the group officially became the Eastern Section of the CCAR instead of a separate body operating within the CCAR. This brought greater unity to the liberal rabbinate in America and centralized its power.⁶⁴⁹

Revision of the *Union Prayer Book* (UPB)

During Grossmann's presidency the CCAR continued its work to revise the UPB (Volume I for Weekdays and the Sabbath). This, too, was a controversial topic. Some felt that the prayer book needed to be "touched up," but not fully revised. Grossmann, on the other hand, felt that "a 'revision' should be a revision, and an obvious improvement, which this revision [speaking about a draft of the proposed revised text] is not."⁶⁵⁰ At the 1918 Conference in Chicago, the committee had circulated a manuscript to all the members of the CCAR and received in response an array of suggested revisions. At the same time the committee stated that it was in the process of revising Volume II (High Holy Days).⁶⁵¹ David Philipson was the chairman of the revision committee. In spite of the fact that Grossmann was a member of this committee, which also included Philipson (as chair), Kohler and Rosenau, he was surrounded by his longstanding opponents. By the time the CCAR

⁶⁴⁷ Grossmann to Wolsey, 6 May 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁴⁸ Grossmann to Wolsey, 18 May 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁴⁹ Grossmann to Wolsey, 15 April 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁵⁰ Grossmann to Wolsey, 8 May 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁵¹ Report of Committee on Revision of the Union Prayer-Book, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 28 (1918): 65-67.

gathered for its annual convention in 1918, the revised prayer book was not yet ready for final printing. Moreover, there were some objections from rabbis about the text.⁶⁵²

One such objection is recorded in the *CCAR Yearbook*. Apparently, Philipson felt the manuscript draft for the prayer book had been sufficiently scrutinized by the members of the Conference and there was no need to continue debating the matter at the convention. Yet at least one member of the Conference wanted to make a revision to the manuscript. Grossmann, acting in his capacity as CCAR president and Chairman of the discussion, allowed the rabbi to speak. Philipson appealed his decision to allow the rabbi to speak, thereby forcing him from the Chair. Leo Franklin from Detroit, because he was vice president of the Conference, assumed the role of chair as the plenary debated Grossmann's decision. After a heated exchange, Grossmann's decision was affirmed. As usual, the tension between the two men exacerbated this difference of opinion.⁶⁵³ This was not the only time when the two men's personal animosity influenced the matter of prayer book revision.

Between the 1918 Convention and the 1919 Convention, additional complications arose. Evidently, Philipson had acted unilaterally by giving the publishers (viz., Bloch Publishing, Inc.) permission to begin printing the revised edition of the UPB. In December 1918, Bloch Publishing was in the midst of binding these newly-revised copies when a mistake was discovered in the text. In order to correct this error, the publishers needed to make a new set of printing plates. This was an expensive undertaking, and it created further delays. Grossmann was quick to blame Philipson for authorizing the printing of the prayer book in spite of the fact that he had not received the approval of the others on the

⁶⁵² Lou H. Silberman, "The Union Prayer Book: A Study in Liturgical Development," in *Retrospect and Prospect: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the Founding of The Central Conference of American Rabbis 1889-1964*, ed. Bertram Wallace Korn (New York: The Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1965), 46-74.

⁶⁵³ *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 28 (1918): 104-107.

committee. Grossman bemoaned the error and the subsequent delay in a letter to Wolsey: "I am not at all surprised that Philipson has bungled the matter, It [*sic*] is on the level with his arrogance. He went at the job without authority and against instructions and this is the natural result."⁶⁵⁴

During Grossmann's presidency neither the revisions to Volume I or Volume II of the *Union Prayer Book* were completed. Despite this fact, Grossmann was president during the critical years when the UPB was being revised. He continued to serve on the committee for revision until his health forced him to withdraw from his commitments to the CCAR.

Relationship with Rabbi Louis Wolsey

Before concluding this section on Grossmann's tenure as president of the CCAR, it is worth exploring some aspects of the correspondence between Grossmann and the CCAR's Correspondence Secretary, Louis Wolsey. Before the two worked together at the CCAR, Grossmann was Wolsey's teacher during his final year of rabbinical school at HUC. Wolsey was roughly 14 years Grossmann's junior. Grossmann joined the faculty just as Wolsey was concluding his student career. Despite their relationship initially being that of teacher and student, it appears that over time the two men became close friends, and their correspondence indicates that they respected one another greatly. Grossmann certainly seems to have relied heavily upon Wolsey's opinion during his presidential term. The two men collaborated closely as they navigated a range of thorny issues like Zionism in the CCAR, the relationship between the CCAR and the JWB, and the revision of the *Union Prayer Book*. More interesting, however, is the tone of their letters, which sheds additional

⁶⁵⁴ Grossmann to Wolsey, 4 December 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

light on Grossmann's personality and character. For instance, in one letter, Wolsey chastises Grossmann quite pointedly:

It does no good to hurry you. You treat the Conference program just as you do the Teachers' Institute program. I have responsibility with the former, and not with the latter. I sent you a telegram on Saturday night, and though it is now Monday morning I have as yet no answer from you. You are very discouraging...If there is to be any slip-up on this matter, then yours is the responsibility. I certainly try to get you to do what you ought to do.⁶⁵⁵

This correspondence demonstrates that the two men felt comfortable being very candid in their conversations. Since we know they worked together and often were on the same side of an issue, I believe this directness is a testament to the trust these two rabbis had for one another. Wolsey could express his frustration openly with Grossmann. Grossmann's response to these types of messages from Wolsey confirms this to be the case, as does Wolsey's eulogy of Grossmann.

This letter also provides some insight into Grossmann's working habits. Grossmann appears to have earned a reputation for being tardy and completing his assignments at the last minute. Wolsey complained of this character trait, and those who worked with Grossmann on the Teachers' Institute expressed similar frustrations.⁶⁵⁶ Grossmann was involved in many activities and organizations, and it seems it was hard to get him to complete a task due to the many competing demands on his time. This, however, was not the only reason Grossmann did not always stick to deadlines and meet demands. In another letter to Grossmann, Wolsey wrote:

You certainly do give this office [correspondence secretary] unnecessary work. Your letter asking all about the Executive Board meetings you could have saved us by being just a little bit more careful. I have to treat both you and my stenographer like little children...You have always had these minutes

⁶⁵⁵ Wolsey to Grossmann, 3 June 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁵⁶ Unknown to Grossmann, 2 April 1910, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/D-5/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

and what has become of them I do not know, but having seen your study, I can well understand it.⁶⁵⁷

Here Wolsey writes of his perpetual need to provide Grossmann with material he should already have in his possession. Wolsey felt that if Grossmann were a more organized person his job would have been easier. Descriptions of Grossmann's home provide a similar picture of disorganization.⁶⁵⁸ Grossmann was not only disorganized in his personal sphere, but he also appears to have been a bit scattered in his thoughts. As a result of the various demands on his attention, Grossmann often needed to shift gears mentally. Some have described him as having been something of an "absent minded professor." Eulogizing Grossmann, his successor James Heller wrote: "As his mind was not made in the ordinary mold, so his thought and his emotion were not coined in the current pattern...By nature his approach to learning and to life was intuitional rather than rational, of the heart rather than of the mind..."⁶⁵⁹ While this statement is somewhat vague, Heller's description indicates that Grossmann's thought process was rather abstruse. Grossmann did not work or think in a linear or methodical fashion. His approach was more spontaneous and less systematic, and he seems often to have been guided by emotion and feeling. He eschewed structure and syllogism. This is perhaps why his CCAR memorial referred to him as an "ideal idealist" — a man who appeared to be "a dreamer, whose dreams never were, and never could be realized." He appears to have been a man who was more comfortable with the theoretical and less capable of handling the details and practicalities incumbent upon those who strive to translate vision into action. Grossmann's great strength was not in the day to day practicalities. Perhaps this is why he excelled in his pastoral duties. While details eluded him

⁶⁵⁷ Wolsey to Grossmann, 20 June 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁵⁸ Student Magazine, 12 March 1922, Isaac M. Wise Temple Archive, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁵⁹ Heller, *As Yesterday When It Is Past*, 189.

in his organizational work, he always remembered names and important life-cycle events, and his ministerial duties took precedence over all other work. Grossmann led with his heart more than his mind.

In Grossmann's playful response to one of Wolsey's typical chastisements, we discern a clearer sense of their relationship. Like Wolsey, Grossmann was quite candid in his correspondence, and gently teased Wolsey. The two men had different ways of working, and Wolsey's organizational abilities likely bolstered what Grossmann was able to accomplish. "You are too touchy..." Grossman rejoined to Wolsey, "I was just talking to myself. That is the way I feel when I write to you. Or, do you not want me to feel that way? Now, be a good boy, and write the letters. That is, if you think such letters should be written."⁶⁶⁰ These gentle mocking phrases in both of their letters speak to a friendship and openness between the two men. Their playful complaints also suggest that the two men recognized that they had distinctly different strengths and approaches to work.

There were times when Wolsey was incapable of motivating Grossman, and he would turn to others for help. In a letter to HUC Professor Julian Morgenstern dated February 12, 1919 Wolsey writes: "Punch up Grossmann a bit and get him to finish up the program."⁶⁶¹ Sometimes Wolsey alone could not prod Grossmann into focusing on the tasks that needed to be completed.

After the Presidency

Grossmann concluded his term as president of the CCAR at the end of 1919, when he turned his gavel over to his successor, Rabbi Leo M. Franklin. Franklin did not only succeed

⁶⁶⁰ Grossmann to Wolsey, 11 October 1918, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 11/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁶¹ Wolsey to Morgenstern, 12 February 1919, Central Conference of American Rabbis, MS 34/Box 12/Folder 1, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Grossmann as president of the CCAR, but he had also assumed the pulpit at Temple Beth El in Detroit after Grossmann left. As the past president, Grossmann was elected to serve on the Executive Board of the CCAR.⁶⁶² He spent the closing years of his rabbinical career serving on the Committees for Cooperation with National Organizations, Summer School, Jewish Ethics, and the Revision of the Union Prayerbook. In 1920, the committee on the CCAR summer school presented a plan for its curriculum and its structure. Grossmann was unable to see the summer school project come to fruition due to illness. Additionally, debate continued around the revisions of the prayer books. At his last CCAR conference in 1920 Grossmann presented a paper: *Does the Sunday School Make for Religious Consciousness?* This paper is addressed in chapter four on Grossmann's career in Jewish education.⁶⁶³ It was the last address he gave to the conference, and his final address on the subject of Jewish educational reform needed to ensure the continuity of the movement and of American Jewry.

Due to deteriorating health, the 1920 meeting of the CCAR was Grossmann's last convention. He remained listed as a member of a few committees; however it is unclear to what extent he was able to participate. We know that around this time he began to withdraw from his responsibilities on the recommendation of his doctors. By 1921 he no longer had a major role in the synagogue, the CCAR, or HUC. These concluding years, from 1921–1926, will be discussed in the final chapter. Grossmann grew ill by 1921 and rapidly was forced to give up his many obligations and projects. He traveled in the hopes that his condition would improve, but his health remained poor till his death. These final years are full of expressions

⁶⁶² Report of the Committee on Nominations, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29, (1919): 103.

⁶⁶³ Louis Grossmann, "Does the Sunday School Make for Religious Consciousness," *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 30, (1920): 294-308.

of loneliness and frustration over being distant from his friends and the work of the Reform movement.

“As the violet in the meadow, good men and women hide from the gaze of the unsympathetic and open up toward those who understand them.”⁶⁶⁴

Chapter 7: End of Life

On January 12, 1921, Grossmann notified HUC’s registrar, Henry Englander (1877–1951), that he would need to take an indefinite leave-of-absence from his teaching duties. In his letter to Englander he wrote, “As you know I am leaving the city for a vacation. I cannot tell at this moment when I shall return, but know I shall not be able to meet my classes for some weeks...”⁶⁶⁵ Grossmann instructed Englander to have the faculty use his class time at HUC as they saw fit. This letter, later recorded in the minutes of the faculty, is the earliest indication that Grossmann’s health was beginning to fail.

It is unclear at what point Grossmann grew ill. However, by 1921, upon the advice of his physician, he withdrew from the numerous obligations, committees, and involvements he had accrued. In effect, this illness forced Grossmann into retirement by 1922.

It is difficult to determine the precise nature of Grossmann’s ailments on the basis of surviving documents. The only information found in letters, meeting minutes, and other records is that Grossmann had to avoid overtaxing himself⁶⁶⁶ and avoid routine.⁶⁶⁷ Eventually, also, he was instructed to settle in California where the climate might help his condition.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁴ Grossmann, *Glimpses Into Life*, 126.

⁶⁶⁵ Grossmann to Englander in Minute Book, 12 January 1921, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box B-3/ Book 3, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁶⁶ Grossmann to Board of Trustees of K. K. B. Y. in Minute Book, 4 December 1921, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/ Microfilm #2623-2624, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁶⁷ Enelow to Grossmann, 19 December 1921, Hyman G. Enelow Papers, MS 11/Box 8/Folder 5, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁶⁸ Enelow to Grossmann, 4 April 1922, Hyman G. Enelow Papers, MS 11/Box 8/Folder 5, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Before his resettlement in California, Grossmann spent time at several different locations attempting to recover. He first sought healing at Glen Springs Sanatorium in Watkins Glen, New York.⁶⁶⁹ The earliest correspondence we have from this location is dated January 1921. In this letter, George Zepin (1878–1963), secretary of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, communicated with Grossmann over matters relating to the UAHC's Board of Editors of the Jewish Religious Literature's Committee on Curriculum of which Grossmann was the chair.⁶⁷⁰ It is safe to assume that Glen Springs was the destination to which Grossmann referred in his January letter to Professor Englander. Based on his correspondence, we know that he remained at Glen Springs until early March 1921.⁶⁷¹ However, by March 16th⁶⁷² of that same year, Grossmann had become a resident of the Psychiatric Institute in Morristown New Jersey, where he remained until at least April 8, 1921.⁶⁷³ The move to the Psychiatric/Physiatric Institute suggests that Grossmann suffered from diabetes,⁶⁷⁴ although health records from the appropriate years at Glen Springs and Morristown have proved elusive.⁶⁷⁵ Grossmann continued his professional correspondence during this time. His letters show that he kept abreast of activities at Hebrew Union College,

⁶⁶⁹ Grossmann to Englander, 10 February 1921, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-13/Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁷⁰ Zepin to Grossmann, 20 January 1921, Louis Grossmann Papers, MS 92/Box 1/Folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁷¹ Englander to Grossmann, 9 March 1921, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-13/Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁷² Englander to Grossmann, 16 March 1921, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-13/Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁷³ Englander to Grossmann, 8 April 1921, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-13/Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁷⁴ The Psychiatric/Physiatric Institute in Morristown, NJ was a location where Frederick M. Allen, M.D. worked to create new ways to treat those suffering from Diabetes. For more information see, Alfred R. Henderson, M.D. *Frederick M. Allen, M.D., and the Psychiatric Institute at Morristown, N.J. (1920-1938)*.

⁶⁷⁵ This researcher, with the help of the staff of the American Jewish Archives, was unable, as of the date of this thesis, to obtain a copy of the health records of either institution. Neither facility continues to operate. Moreover, neither facility appears to have health records from this specific period preserved through a historical society, archive, or online historical record.

and also took the time to contribute his ideas about how best to help reinvigorate the school.⁶⁷⁶

Based on a journal entry of Jacob Rader Marcus, Grossmann returned to Cincinnati in September of 1921.⁶⁷⁷ It is difficult to determine whether Grossmann remained in Morristown, New Jersey between April of 1921 and September of 1921 or if he was living elsewhere.⁶⁷⁸ Moreover, it is unclear how long he remained in Cincinnati during the visit. Marcus provides us with a picture of Grossmann in his final years. When Jacob Rader Marcus visited Grossmann in September of 1921, he wrote that he looked weak and had become pitiable due to his solitude. Marcus stated:

He[Grossmann] is out of congregational work altogether and no doubt yearns for company. I shall try to call occasionally on Grossman[sic] and Kohler[who had retired from the presidency]. Kohler is a big man and had[sic] has made history. Grossman[sic] is a pathetic figure. Moody, melancholy.[sic] No wife or children. A m[a]n who is [a] hero may remain a bachelor. An ordinary fellow dare not for the peace of his own mind. Wife and children make us all forget the inevi[t]able tr[a]gedy of life: Death.⁶⁷⁹

Continued years of illness and isolation later exacerbated the melancholy Marcus described in his journal. It should be noted that at this point Grossmann had not officially resigned from B'nai Yeshurun.

On December 4th 1921, at the Annual Meeting of Congregation B'nai Yeshurun, a matter first discussed at a November 4th meeting was brought before the entire congregation. While Grossmann initially left the city in January of 1921, by the end of the year it was clear that his condition was not going to improve. In an October letter recorded in the minutes

⁶⁷⁶ See the correspondence between Grossmann and Englander between February and June 1921, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/D-13/Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁷⁷ JRM Journal entry

⁶⁷⁸ The timeline of these years is largely based on the correspondence between Grossmann and his colleagues. There is a gap in that correspondence between April of 1921 and Jacob Rader Marcus's mention of Grossmann's presence in Cincinnati in September of 1921. This has made it impossible to determine where Grossmann resided during this period.

⁶⁷⁹ Journal Entry of Jacob Rader Marcus, 26 September 1921, Jacob Rader Marcus Papers, MS 210/Box 14/Folder 4, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

of the December 4th meeting Grossmann addressed himself to the members of his congregation.⁶⁸⁰ Grossmann wrote:

As you know I have been incapacitated from work for a considerable number of months of this year... I have all along eagerly looked forward to the day when I would be able to resume my work; but...my physicians...declare that I must avoid the strain of routine and the exhaustion it might cause.⁶⁸¹

He asked that the congregation relieve him of his duties. Despite making this request with a heavy heart, Grossmann wrote in his letter to the congregation that the one relief he had was that this absence and rest might afford him the time he needed to work on his, “studies and writings in Jewish Education and Jewish Morality.”⁶⁸² On December 4th, 1921, the congregation accepted the resignation and named him Rabbi Emeritus. In addition they passed a resolution in which they wrote:

We cannot let this occasion pass without expressing for the Board of Trustees and for the entire Congregation, the sentiments we feel as we take this momentous step. Dr. Grossmann has been more than the occupant of the pulpit of our historic Congregation; he has done more than follow worthily in the footsteps of his teacher and our leader, Isaac M. Wise; he made himself beloved by us all; he is our friend who has been with us in hours of joy and sorrow and whose heart has ever overflowed with sympathy and fellow-feeling. We wish too to voice our pride in his scholarly accomplishments, in the devotion that has prompted him to master the pedagogical literature of the world, to delve into every nook and corner, however, obscure, from which might be retrieved the treasure trove of Jewish ethical truth – and in the unselfishness and creative zeal that cause him to embody the results of his labors in treatise and pamphlet and book, that honored us as well as himself in the eye of American Israel and the entire thinking world.⁶⁸³

On March 20, 1922, Grossmann wrote to Alfred M. Cohen, the president of the Board of Governors of Hebrew Union College, and officially released himself from his final

⁶⁸⁰ Minute Book, 4 December 1921, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/ Microfilm #2623-2624, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁸¹ Ibid.

⁶⁸² Ibid.

⁶⁸³ Ibid.

commitment. "I had hoped during my illness to resume my work at the College. I find, however, in view of the unreliable condition of my health now, that it is best I should not."⁶⁸⁴ His resignation from Hebrew Union College severed the last of his official ties to his two main responsibilities; his congregation and HUC. Though Grossmann was not teaching rabbinical students during this period, it appears he had continued to work on behalf of the Teachers' Institute. Between January 1921 and March 1922 Grossmann sent monthly reports of the Institute to the Board of Governors, and worked to help establish a new section of the Teachers' Institute in New York. This new branch was wildly successful, and a few years later HUC opened a fulltime school for teachers in New York City.⁶⁸⁵ By 1922 Grossmann realized even this task was too much for him. The Board of Governors of Hebrew Union College passed a resolution and sent a gift of 250 dollars to Dr. Grossmann.⁶⁸⁶ The resolution expressed HUC's gratitude to Grossmann for his years of service, praised him as a teacher and a scholar in the fields of pedagogy and Jewish ethics, lauded him as a man of vision with regard to the Teachers' Institute, and concluded by wishing him strength to continue his great tasks.⁶⁸⁷ Though we do not know exactly when Grossmann made the move, by March of 1922 Grossmann had settled in Long Beach, California.⁶⁸⁸

Though Grossmann made the move to California for health reasons, it was an exciting time in the development of the West Coast and its Jewish communities. It has been

⁶⁸⁴ Grossmann to Alfred M. Cohen, 20 March 1922, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-15/Folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁸⁵ See Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5, Board of Governors Records, Series D between the years 1921 and 1926 for the records of the Teachers' Institute branch in New York and the Hebrew Union College School for Teachers in New York City during Grossmann's lifetime.

⁶⁸⁶ Isaac Bloom to Murray Seasongood, 28 April 1922, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-14/Folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁸⁷ Minute Book, April 1922, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-23/Minute Book Jan 1921-Dec 1922, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁸⁸ This is the date of the earliest piece of correspondence that lists Grossmann's address as Long Beach. Bloom to Grossmann, 31 March 1922, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box D-14/ Folder 6, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

noted that between 1900 and the mid 1920s the western Jewish communities grew to such a degree that they felt they rivaled, and perhaps superseded, the East Coast Jewish communities.⁶⁸⁹ Long Beach was a particularly fast-developing center in the 1920s, and Los Angeles was overtaking San Francisco as the region's center of economics, culture, and population. Economic development and government investment in the Long Beach port was, by the 1920s, turning Los Angeles into a boom town.⁶⁹⁰ Grossmann observed these happenings firsthand, and wrote about these trends to the UAHC and HUC, urging these two institutions to make their presence felt in the Los Angeles community.⁶⁹¹

Despite the growth and development of the region, it is clear that Grossmann's move to California tormented him. Grossmann never married, and he had no children. His work was his life. He had poured his energies and emotions into his congregation and his countless civic involvements. These duties filled his days, and his professional activities became the focus his world. However, because of his illness, Grossmann was "exiled" to California, where he felt sidelined and marginalized from the many institutions he had actively served over the years: Congregation B'nai Yeshurun, Hebrew Union College, the Teachers' Institute, the CCAR, and the UAHC. His letters suggest that, at times, he was resigned to his fate. At other times he expressed the hope that he might yet be able to return to some of his former responsibilities and duties.

In many respects, Grossmann attempted to remain involved in his professional concerns as best as he could. He was offered a spot on the newly-organized Commission on Jewish Education. He declined the appointment, but made sure he could stay abreast of

⁶⁸⁹ William Toll, "A Regional Context for Pacific Jewry 1800-1930," *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 218.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁹¹ Grossmann to Cohen, 16 April 1925, Union of American Hebrew Congregations Records, MS 72/Box A1-46/Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

what was taking place.⁶⁹² Grossmann was sent reports of the new educational endeavors taking place in the Reform movement under the aegis of the new Commission on Jewish Education.⁶⁹³ Moreover, his brother Rudolph and his friends Louis Wolsey and Max Heller were all members of the new Commission.⁶⁹⁴

Grossmann also continued to express his interest in the future of American Reform Judaism. As noted above, Grossmann's life in Long Beach, California inspired him to write to the leadership of HUC and the UAHC in order to encourage them to set up centers of support in the "Far West":

...the Congregations in this region, have a right to be helped by the Union and to have its service, in the presence of the very evident and insistent need. If the Union is to hold these congregations as members, it must prove that it is rendering them this service. Nor can the Union wait for a later time...there is a possibility of other organizations stepping in where the Union may leave an opening. Allow me to say that we have had a similar experience in New York, where the Institute of Religion would not have prospered, if it had not found the field unoccupied. I may also say that I called attention to the need for a Branch of the college in New York many years ago, but could not succeed to enlist willing and timely support.⁶⁹⁵

Grossmann also remained devoted to his congregation, B'nai Yeshurun, in Cincinnati. During the first annual meeting of the congregation following his resignation in 1922, the president of the temple reported that "From his temporary home in far off California [Rabbi Grossmann] sends to us on every occasion encouragement and the will to work on toward our goal."⁶⁹⁶ Moreover, one congregant recalled that even though he had

⁶⁹² Grossmann to Stohl, 28 January 1924, Union Of American Hebrew Congregations Records, MS 72/Box A1-46/Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁹³ Grossman to Egleson, 26 March 1925, Louis Grossmann Papers, MS 92/Box 1/Folder 4, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁹⁴ Minutes of the Meeting of Commission on Jewish Education, 28 and 29 January 1924, Louis Grossmann Papers, MS 92/Box 1/Folder 4, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁹⁵ Grossmann to Cohen, 16 April 1925, Union of American Hebrew Congregations Records, MS 72/Box A1-46/Folder 7, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁹⁶ Annual Meeting Minutes, 12 December 1923, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/ microfilm #2623-2624, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

moved west he, “still was loyal to the congregation.”⁶⁹⁷ This comment is made more explicit by the remarks of Corinne Uhlfelder, a member of B’nai Yeshurun. Uhlfelder had been one of Grossmann’s confirmands in 1914. She had hoped the rabbi would officiate at her wedding, but Grossmann had already become too ill. In 1923, Grossmann wrote his former confirmand to express his congratulations on the birth of her first child. The woman’s baby died later in the year, and once again Grossmann wrote her a letter of condolence.⁶⁹⁸ Despite both temporal and spatial distance, Grossmann remained involved in the lives of his former congregants. These efforts endeared him to his congregants. In the synagogue’s memorial resolution they wrote, “Although in his last years he was three thousand miles away from Cincinnati, his daily correspondence with members of the temple kept him in such close touch that he was not only present in spirit but almost in person.”⁶⁹⁹ These communications testify to the fact that Grossmann was a dedicated pastor, and he maintained his sincere concern for and his interest in the lives of those he served despite his “exile” in California.

During these final years, Grossmann also continued to write and publish. In January 1922 Grossmann’s volume *Glimpses Into Life* appeared in print. This work, like his previous volume, *The Real Life*, contained short chapters that read like sermonettes. Each chapter addressed itself to a theme. In many ways, this work, and his earlier *The Real Life*, contain Grossmann’s personal philosophy. He dedicated the book to B’nai Yeshurun.

It is clear, however, that Grossmann at times sought to escape from his exile. In the spring of 1922 Grossmann wrote to his colleague Rabbi Hyman Gerson Enelow indicating he wished to return east. Enelow advised Grossmann to remain where he was: “I am not in

⁶⁹⁷ Oral History of Gertrude Joseph, 20 January 1980, Isaac M. Wise Temple Archive, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁹⁸ Oral History of Corinne Ulfelder, 21 November 1984, Isaac M. Wise Temple Archive, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁶⁹⁹ Meeting Minutes, 29 November 1926, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/microfilm #2623-2624, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

the habit of offering advice,” his colleague wrote, “but it would seem to me that if your stay out in that beautiful country has helped you, there is no reason why you should turn your back upon it.”⁷⁰⁰ Moreover, in his correspondence with Stephen S. Wise, Grossmann revealed his deepening resentment that the geographical distance was a hindrance to his professional involvement. Writing to Wise in 1923, Grossmann expressed the growing feelings of marginalization he experienced in California and his frustration at not being able to maintain his professional interests:

It is a pity that I am so far from the things that are ‘doing’ and must be a mere observer...I should like to talk things over with you; but I must be here in distant California and fret out my disappointments and knock, in vain, at my self-chosen and none the less iron-hard prison doors.”⁷⁰¹

Grossmann’s frustrations are comprehensible. Only a few years earlier, he had been at the pinnacle of his chosen field. In 1919, for example, Grossmann was president of the CCAR, principal of the growing Teachers’ Institute, Professor of Pedagogy at Hebrew Union College, and the rabbi of one of the most prestigious congregations in America. All of this changed in less than two years. In what must have seemed like the blink of an eye, illness compelled him to set these endeavors aside. He experienced a very quick fall from the spotlight.

During these years, Grossmann experienced bouts of bitterness. He felt, at times, as though he had been cast off by friends. He expressed these sentiments to Stephen Wise in March of 1924. Complaining he had not heard from Wise in a long time, Grossmann lectured his colleague saying “You know I am sick, you know I am away from my work and you know I am far away from everything and everybody. I thought that you, above many,

⁷⁰⁰ Enelow to Grossmann, 4 April 1922, Hyman Gerson Enelow Papers, MS 11/Box 8/Folder 5, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷⁰¹ Grossmann to Wise, 7 February 1923, Jewish Institute of Religion Records, MS 19/Box 17/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

would want to be near me somehow, in true loyal friendship”⁷⁰² In fact, Grossmann’s tone became so harsh that a few months later he wrote to Wise and apologized for his words.⁷⁰³ Grossmann, who valued loyalty above all other traits,⁷⁰⁴ felt betrayed and forgotten; by his congregation, by HUC, and finally by his friends and confidants.

In addition to Grossmann’s involvement in the CCAR and its politics, Grossmann’s correspondence with Stephen S. Wise also provides particular insight into this later period of Grossmann’s life. Wise continued to be a confidant of Grossmann’s and someone who seemed to appreciate his skills and desired to keep him in good spirits.

In December of 1921, after months of physical distance from Cincinnati while in New York and a couple weeks before Grossmann left for California, Wise wrote to Grossmann and reported on his evolving plans to open the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. Wise shared his ideas with his older colleague and asked Grossmann for his thoughts and feedback.⁷⁰⁵ Grossmann wrote to Wise suggesting things such as what he should look for in his faculty.⁷⁰⁶ Wise also invited Grossmann to be a guest lecturer at JIR and speak on, “The Principles of Jewish Religious Education.” Grossmann wrote that he hoped he would be able to serve him in this capacity. Such an opportunity never materialized, however, as Grossmann began to realize the impossibility of returning to work. Although Grossmann continued in poor health, Wise made the offer several more times during their correspondence between 1921 and 1925.

⁷⁰² Grossmann to Wise, 18 March 1924, Jewish Institute of Religion Records, MS 19/Box17/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷⁰³ Grossmann to Wise, 30 April 1924, Jewish Institute of Religion Records, MS 19/Box17/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷⁰⁴ Heller, *As Yesterday When It Is Past*, 190.

⁷⁰⁵ Wise to Grossmann, 12 December 1921, Jewish Institute of Religion Records, MS 19/Box17/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷⁰⁶ Grossmann to Wise, 4 January 1922, Jewish Institute of Religion Records, MS 19/Box17/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Wise was also one of the few people who tried to help Grossmann find meaning and purpose during this difficult time of professional denouement. He suggested that Grossmann take the time he had to write and publish work which he had been too busy to complete prior to his retirement. Wise gave direction to Grossmann and tried to show the positive aspects of this newfound time. Grossmann responded that he would continue his work on his writing, and he did, in fact, publish during this final chapter of his life.

Wise also solicited Grossmann for help with his fledgling school, JIR. Grossmann was a lover of books, and had collected an enormous library over the course of his life. One letter states his library comprised of 25,000 volumes.⁷⁰⁷ Wise knew that Grossmann was unable to devote time and energy to his library while in California. Throughout his correspondence he asked Grossmann to part with his library so that it could benefit JIR, which was in need of a large Judaic library to compete with HUC's vast collection. Grossmann was not willing to oblige.

Grossmann loved his books. His library was his pride and his joy. It was described as, "the largest and most valuable library owned by any American rabbi..."⁷⁰⁸ One can imagine that without a wife and children, he had the discretionary income, time, and emotion to invest in his collection. Moreover, he took great joy in showing off his library to visitors. After visiting Grossmann in September of 1921 Jacob Rader Marcus wrote, "Grossmann showed us his books as usual. He has a wonderful library."⁷⁰⁹

Evidently, Grossmann's library was considered to be a site worth visiting, and the rabbi was capable of bringing his library's treasures to life to audiences of young and old

⁷⁰⁷ Kohut to Grossmann, 25 April 1923, Jewish Institute of Religion Records, MS 19/Box17/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷⁰⁸ Heller, *As Yesterday When It Is Past*, 187.

⁷⁰⁹ Journal Entry of Jacob Rader Marcus, 26 September 1921, Jacob Rader Marcus Papers, MS 210/Box 14/Folder 4, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

alike. For instance, the students of B'nai Yeshurun's religious school published a magazine called *The Light*. In 1922, they dedicated the first edition of this serial to their "beloved Rabbi-Emeritus." In a tribute to the delightful visits they would have at his house they wrote:

...then a few of those many books which lined the wall, and at which we had been casting interested glances, were shown to us by him. The wonder and glory of all those hundreds of books could never, never be described. There were books on all subjects and books of all kinds. We marveled that all those volumes could be collected by one person. The fact that he knew where to find any one of them in a moment was the more to be wondered at.⁷¹⁰

This passage, and the entire magazine, is an intriguing document in that it brings together the three things most dear to Grossmann: education, books, and youth. This passage demonstrates that from the point of view of his pupils, Grossmann succeeded in his efforts to bring Jewish tradition and learning to life. It is obvious that the rabbi took great joy in showing off his library and engendering the admiration of his visitors. In light of the praise Grossmann's library received from those who saw the collection with their own eyes, it is no wonder that Stephen Wise wanted to persuade his friend to donate it to JIR. At one point JIR offered to keep his library intact in one single collection and pay him 1,000 dollars every year for the rest of his life for its donation.⁷¹¹ Despite this attractive offer, Grossmann refused to part with his books.⁷¹²

Wise was comfortable enough to use a playful tone when writing to solicit Grossmann's library. In 1924, for example, he wrote, "One of our great and urgent needs is a real library...I know of one man who could lend us a great library, but I wonder whether

⁷¹⁰ Student Magazine, 12 March 1922, Isaac M. Wise Temple Archive, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷¹¹ Kohut to Grossmann, 25 April 1923, Jewish Institute of Religion Records, MS 19/Box17/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷¹² Grossman to Kohut 18 March 1924, Jewish Institute of Religion Records, MS 19/Box17/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

he will! What do you think about the likelihood?"⁷¹³ Later that same year he wrote another lighthearted appeal:

We have one great need, which we have not even begun to meet, and that is books, books, books. If only some man who had a fine library and was not in constant need of it could only see the importance of placing the library where it would be of tremendous value...⁷¹⁴

One gets the full sense of Grossmann's deep feelings for his books in his response to Wise's solicitations. On February 17, 1925 Grossmann broke his silence and wrote to Wise. It is clear he knew he was nearing the end of his life.

Sometimes I wish I had no library, for the longer my present condition continues, the more embarrassed I am by it. The thought of death is the last in the embarrassment. I know I shall have to leave my books, however much I love them. It is the worry that they go into the right hands that makes me not only anxious but, I regret to say, doubtful.⁷¹⁵

In this letter, Grossmann speaks of his library as a parent would children. He fears for their well-being when he is no longer alive to take care of them and watch over them. It may seem odd to devote so much attention here to Grossmann's library, but it was one of Grossmann's deepest loves. One can hear in this letter the deep concern he has for its future. This worry consumed him as he was torn between his friend Wise and his loyalty and commitment to Cincinnati and HUC.

It is interesting to note that when Grossmann died, he did not pass his library on to Wise. Not conceding the matter, Wise wrote to Grossmann's brother Rudolph Grossmann, Rabbi of Rodeph Shalom in New York. This correspondence included a final plea for any books in Grossmann's collection which HUC already had in its

⁷¹³ Wise to Grossmann, 14 May 1924, Jewish Institute of Religion Records, MS 19/Box17/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷¹⁴ Wise to Grossmann, 10 November 1924, Jewish Institute of Religion Records, MS 19/Box17/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷¹⁵ Grossmann to Wise, 17 February 1925, Jewish Institute of Religion Records, MS 19/Box17/Folder 9, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

collection. He wrote, "I wonder whether you could not suggest to Oko that, if there are any duplicates, and there will be thousands of them, some of them be presented to us[JIR]."⁷¹⁶

Ultimately it is unclear what happened to the entire library. It seems, based on book plates in their library, that some volumes went to B'nai Yeshurun. Moreover, records show that thousands of Grossmann's volumes were donated to the library at HUC.⁷¹⁷ This large donation is confirmed by the *American Israelite*.⁷¹⁸ However, there are records which indicate large numbers of books also went elsewhere. A *New York Times* article focusing on the fledgling Hebrew University in Jerusalem reported that the university had received thousands of volumes from the late Rabbi Grossmann including some, "5,000 books on pedagogy."⁷¹⁹ One must therefore conclude that Grossmann's massive library did not end up in any one place, but was rather scattered among different libraries. The task of dispersing the books took place after Grossmann's death and was likely the work of one or more of his brothers.

In his final years Grossmann had a habit of appearing in Cincinnati unannounced. It appears the solitude of his life in California, which he viewed as an exile, was too great a burden for him to bear. The congregation noted, "he could not refrain from joining them [the congregation] on frequent occasions despite the protest of his medical adviser."⁷²⁰ It was on one such trip that Louis Grossmann passed away.

Grossmann died on September 21, 1926 while on a visit to Detroit. He was 63. The causes of death are listed on his death certificate as acute adrenal failure, chronic

⁷¹⁶ Wise to Rudolph Grossmann, 8 December 1926, Stephen S. Wise Papers, MF-2321-2425/Box 45/Folder 13, American Jewish Historical Society.

⁷¹⁷ See the Accessions Books of the HUC KLAU LIBRARY.

⁷¹⁸ "Rabbi Louis Grossmann Laid to Rest," *The American Israelite* (30 September 1926); 6.

⁷¹⁹ "Hebrew University Makes Public Gifts of Books and Plans for Added Scholarships," *The New York Times* (4 March 1929).

⁷²⁰ Minute Book, 29 November 1926, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/ microfilm #2623-2624, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

hypertension, and chronic nephritis. A secondary cause of death listed is myocarditis, or the inflammation of the heart muscle.⁷²¹ Despite this very specific list, no autopsy was performed. Without an autopsy these causes of death are impossible to determine. This suggests the list above is the impression of a doctor.⁷²²

Grossmann died in the home of Charles Aaron, a doctor in Detroit whom he had been visiting after attending and briefly participating in High Holiday services at Plum Street. He had been ill only a few days before he died. Grossmann and Aaron were close friends, and it is likely that these two men became friends when Grossmann was serving the congregation during the early years in his rabbinical career. Records also indicate that Grossmann officiated at Aaron's wedding. In an article that appeared in the *American Israelite*, Aaron is described as an intimate friend as well as Grossmann's medical adviser. Despite the fact that two of Grossmann's brothers remained alive, he left 40,000 dollars to Aaron in his will. It was Grossmann's largest bequest. The reason behind this action is unclear. Aaron, quoted in the *Israelite*, stated that it was clear to him that Grossmann wished him to administrate the money, which he believed was intended to be used for the religious educational fund. He stated he would use the funds to support the educational work of the synagogue.⁷²³ Aaron also served as a pallbearer at Grossmann's funeral in Cincinnati—another demonstration of their strong bond. Grossmann left \$10,000 to Congregation B'nai Yeshurun of Cincinnati for the purpose of establishing an educational fund. He also gave the synagogue his collection of Biblical pictures and works of art.⁷²⁴

Though he died in Detroit, Grossmann's body was brought to Cincinnati for burial. Funeral services were conducted by James G. Heller, Grossmann's assistant rabbi (and the

⁷²¹ Louis Grossmann Nearprint Box.

⁷²² Email with Dr. James H. Cohn M.D. 14 June 2012.

⁷²³ "Rabbi Louis Grossmann Laid to Rest," *The American Israelite* (30 September 1926); 6.

⁷²⁴ Ibid.

son of his friend Max Heller), Julian Morgenstern, president of HUC, and Rabbi Leo Franklin, Grossmann's successor at Temple Beth El in Detroit.⁷²⁵ His body lay in state in the temple from ten in the morning to two in the afternoon, surrounded by an honor guard of congregational officers and trustees.⁷²⁶ Grossmann was laid to rest in Walnut Hills United Jewish Cemetery in Cincinnati, Ohio, and his grave shares a tomb marker with Samuel and Rosa Karpeles, the couple with whom he had lived as a boarder from his first year in Detroit until the couple's death. This fact strongly suggests that Grossmann considered Samuel and Rosa to be members of own family⁷²⁷

An array of eulogies and death notices appeared in the days following Grossmann's death. It is interesting to note that while some of these assessments were filled with words of praise for the deceased rabbi, others were surprisingly critical. These conflicting memorials convey the deep divisions this man engendered among congregants, colleagues, and pupils. On the one hand, he was a beloved rabbi and communal leader, and yet some of those who assessed his life made note of his shortcomings. They scorned his work and dismissed the challenges he posed to general society and to Reform Judaism.

"Rabbi Grossman was a noted lecturer on Judaism and the author of a score of books on that faith," the *New York Times* declared in its obituary, "... [he] was one of the foremost rabbis in America."⁷²⁸ The memorial resolution of K. K. B'nai Yeshurun stated, "No one in the Rabbinate of American Reform Judaism ever established with the members of his congregation closer or more cordial relations that did Louis Grossmann."⁷²⁹ In an

⁷²⁵ "Dr. Louis Grossmann. Former Cincinnati Rabbi Who Died in Detroit to be Buried Today," *The New York Times* (23 September 1926).

⁷²⁶ "Rabbi Louis Grossmann Laid to Rest," *The American Israelite* (30 September 1926); 6.

⁷²⁷ Find a Grave, "Rabbi Ludwig 'Louis' Grossmann," <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=41740482> (accessed 26 April 2013)

⁷²⁸ "Rabbi Grossman, Educator, Is Dead," *The New York Times* (22 September 1926).

⁷²⁹ Meeting Minutes, 29 November 1926, Congregation Bene Yeshurun (Isaac M. Wise Temple), MS 62/microfilm #2623-2624, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

article written by Alfred Segal in the *American Israelite*, Mrs. Lora Lederer, a member of the Board of Education, testified to the generosity and beauty of Grossmann's character. "I had a standing order to report to him [Grossmann] all cases of want and distress that I met...To all he gave alike, and I could never give him enough to do. He was the noblest and gentlest of men and the only time one saw him in anger was when he protested against wrong and injustice." According to this article, Grossmann was a truly charitable human being, who gave away most of the salary he received from his work as rabbi. He was also characterized as a kindly individual whose manner was graceful and gentle.⁷³⁰

Yet other memorials were less complimentary, and they take note of the fact that Grossmann was not without his faults. These critics noted that while Grossmann was unquestionably a caring and devoted pastor—a man of generous spirit—he was also very human. He lived with thwarted ambitions, was often disappointed by others, and suffered from the loneliness and resentment that come upon people who have deep convictions that others belittle and devalue.

Some of Grossmann's faculty colleagues memorialized him as a man of gentle character. He was described as a religious conservative who was deeply committed to educational endeavors. HUC conferred an honorary Doctor of Hebrew Laws on Grossmann posthumously, and the memorial resolution they composed takes pains to cast his familiar shortcomings in as noble a light as possible:

He was a leader of pronounced individuality, one who thought for himself and clung tenaciously to the conclusions and convictions which he could claim as his very own. Often he stood alone, but his courage never left him. Though thwarted at times in his efforts, he ultimately triumphed in the love of his congregation and the esteem of the community...Though often harassed by opposition, his graciousness never flagged. Though often

⁷³⁰ "Rabbi Louis Grossmann Laid to Rest," *The American Israelite* (30 September 1926); 6.

disappointed, his cheerfulness never waned. The example set by his trust and perseverance ranks among his noblest achievements.⁷³¹

Clearly, the authors of this resolution laud Grossmann as a man who was doggedly committed to the rectitude of his own views regardless of whether or not they won popular support. According to his colleagues at HUC, Grossmann's greatest achievement was his ability to remain cheerful and gracious while being opposed in all his efforts. A comparison of Grossmann's memorial resolution to those written about other faculty peers brings these backhanded compliments into even bolder relief.

His friend, classmate, and rabbinical colleague—Joseph Silverman (1860–1930)—wrote a much more sympathetic tribute to Grossmann for the *CCAR Yearbook*. It is interesting to contrast Silverman's remembrances of Grossmann with those written by the HUC faculty. It is clear that these memorials describe the same human being, but in contrast to the HUC memorial Silverman's portrait was far more sympathetic in tone. Silverman characterized Grossmann as an “ideal idealist, not a practical idealist.” He referred to his lifelong friend as someone who never cared to acquaint himself with the “real and sordid world.” He claimed that Grossmann kept himself “pure and childlike,” shunning that which taints the world. More than anything else, Silverman argued this quality was what attracted children to Grossmann, and what allowed Grossman to connect with them. Grossmann provided a model to children of how to live a spiritual life. Silverman also pointed out that Grossmann was first a teacher of the young and only afterward of adults. Finally, Silverman credited Grossmann with being a great pastor to his flock, and one who walked in the ways of his teacher Isaac Mayer Wise.⁷³²

⁷³¹ Meeting Minutes, 25 October 1926, Hebrew Union College Records, MS 5/Box 4/July 1925-July 1928, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷³² Joseph Silverman, “Louis Grossman,” *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 27, (1927): 259-261.

Silverman's eulogy highlighted the greatest aspects of Grossmann's character.

Grossmann, he noted, was an insightful teacher, and his young pupils loved him. He lived his Judaism and he often spoke out against viewing Judaism as an accessory to life.⁷³³ For Grossmann, Judaism was expressed in every facet of life and could not be contained or compartmentalized. He was a remarkably dedicated pastor and a charitable human being who attended to the needs of the community—both in and out of his congregation—without self-aggrandizement or fanfare. Although many contemporaries characterized Grossmann as an impractical idealist, Silverman disagreed with such a harsh analysis. As far as Silverman was concerned, Louis Grossmann was a truly noble figure whose remarkable spiritual qualities were underestimated by those who did not share his interests or inclinations:

To him life was always in the making...Some, who did not understand him, called him the 'groping philosopher,' who was always searching in the labyrinthian darkness for a path that would lead to the great illuminated world outside. Others, who entirely misunderstood him, regarded him as a dreamer- such a dreamer, whose dreams never were, and never could be realized. But, in very truth, Grossman was no idle dreamer, no mere speculative philosopher. He did not indulge in vain syllogisms...He permitted his soul rather to drift into the ethereal realms and bring back to him a spiritual message for his own guidance and as a help for his preachment. He was, what in this age might be called an ideal idealist; in another age, he would have become a mystic, perhaps a saint, seer or prophet.⁷³⁴

Evidently, Grossmann departed this world convinced that he was largely misunderstood and underappreciated. Perhaps this is what prompted his brother, Rabbi Rudolph Grossmann, to write Stephen S. Wise, Grossmann's longtime friend, and describe his brother's obsequies with a tinge of regret: "The Memorial Services were very impressive and the addresses seemed genuine. At all events, every honor was paid him in death. How much better it

⁷³³ Louis Grossmann, Message of the President to the Thirtieth Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29, (1919): 118.

⁷³⁴ Joseph Silverman, "Louis Grossman," *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 27, (1927): 259-261.

would have been had he received these acknowledgments in life?"⁷³⁵ Clearly Rudolph Grossmann felt that while alive, Grossmann was disparaged more than he was praised.

Considered together, the assessments of Grossmann's life culminate in a complicated portrait. He was described as a man with remarkable human qualities and vexing shortcomings. Grossmann was a man of vision who had a clear sense of his values. Yet he often had trouble executing his vision. His inability to win popular support for his ideals proved to be an obstacle for him in his congregation, at HUC, and in the Reform movement. Grossmann unquestionably had many successes in life, but many of the ideas he called for in his writings never materialized. To some extent this was due to the fact that Grossmann was not able to win the hearts of his peers. Grossmann was a man who had no stomach for the political fighting and intrigue. He was not a tactician, and he lacked the ability to motivate and inspire that most effective leaders require in order to execute their vision. Grossmann was a quiet and gentle soul. He was easily bullied by stronger personalities. Despite his caring and compassion, his creativity and sensitivity, Louis Grossmann found it difficult to promote his ideas in the practical world.

Louis Grossmann's memory and writings were so thoroughly disregarded by his contemporaries that his professional contributions have largely been forgotten. Historians have paid little attention to the career of the man who succeeded Isaac Mayer Wise. Yet many of Grossmann's ideas have endured. Others came along and took up the mantle of his causes. For example, there has been an increasing focus upon training rabbis in pedagogy. Today, there is even a program that allows rabbinical students to earn masters degrees in Jewish education. Additionally, there are religious schools which are paying increasing attention to teacher training and development. Some congregations have even employed full

⁷³⁵ Rudolph Grossmann to Stephen S. Wise, 6 December 1926, Stephen S. Wise Papers, MF-2321-2425/Box 45/Folder 13, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, New York.

time religious school teachers in the hopes of further professionalizing religious schools. Moreover, Grossmann's sense of a more moderate Reform Judaism has manifested itself. The Reform movement is no longer the radical movement it was in Grossmann's lifetime. It has returned to a more traditional ritual observance, has invested in greater Hebrew competency, and has begun to return to rabbinic literature.

It is clear that Grossmann did not directly create any of these changes. There is no direct causality between his writings and the current place of Reform Judaism. Yet, despite this fact, many of Grossmann's values and beliefs have remained significant in the Reform movement to this day: the importance of excellent education to the continuance and future of American Judaism, the need to find common cause with Jews across movement boundaries, a thoughtful approach to reforming our religious tradition, the necessity of investing in our youth, the need to build bridges of understanding between faith communities, and the belief that making schools the center of our synagogues will revitalize our people.

Though Grossmann's beliefs were minimized by some of his contemporary colleagues, the fact that leaders in later years and to the present have called for similar changes suggests that Grossmann's concerns remain important. As American Reform Jews we continue to struggle with education, youth engagement, the method and nature of reforming Jewish tradition, interfaith relations, and finding the path to making a vibrant American Judaism. This thesis has sought to bring Grossmann's voice back into the conversation that is always taking place between generations of Jews. It is hoped that his voice will bring added wisdom to today's Jewish community as well as to future generations as we try to answer the same questions that engaged Louis Grossmann: How do we live as Jews in the world? How do we ensure Jewish continuity for the years ahead?

Conclusion

This critical examination of Rabbi Louis Grossmann's life and career focuses broadly on his work as an American Reform rabbi. He served as a congregational rabbi at two prominent congregations in America. He also distinguished himself as a member of the faculty at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, where he became the school's first professor of pedagogy. Grossmann's activities as a teacher of pedagogy, as well as his educational innovations and his ideals concerning the nature of Jewish learning enabled him to become a true pioneer in the field of Jewish Education. During the course of his professional career, he helped to establish the Teachers' Institute of HUC, which he directed for many years. In this capacity, Grossmann carried on Isaac Mayer Wise's vision of moderate reform and a united American Judaism. In addition to these endeavors, Grossmann occupied positions of leadership within the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

As a congregational rabbi, Grossmann was involved in a wide array of activities that illuminate the work of the American rabbi during this epoch. He worked in his community to establish relationships with other religious groups, with the African American community, and with leaders in the field of public education. Grossmann enthusiastically welcomed women into congregational and national Jewish life, and he was among the leadership of the Reform movement as it sought to serve the Jewish servicemen of World War I. He also lived through pivotal events in the life of American Judaism: the establishment of HUC and the CCAR, the Columbian Exposition of 1893, World War I, The creation of the League of Nations, the growth of the Zionist movement, and the issuing of The Balfour Declaration. Learning about Grossmann's life and work allows us to better understand the impact these events had on American Jewry and American Reform leaders. When Grossmann discusses these, and other pivotal events, the contemporary reader is given eyes into that time and that

place. After exploring the life of this Reform rabbi what can we learn? What does

Grossmann's career teach us as the history of American Reform Judaism?

Grossmann challenges our conceptions and misconceptions about American Reform Judaism during the early decades of the 20th century—the era that is commonly referred to as the “Classical Period” in American Reform Judaism. Frequently, historians assume that this epoch was ideologically relatively homogenous. It is often assumed that all of the American reformers subscribed fully to the principals encapsulated in the 1885 Pittsburgh Platform. While the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 presents a view of the values of Reform Jews during that time, it does not present every view. This study of Grossmann's career challenges many of the prevailing stereotypes that characterize the ideologies of Reform rabbis of this particular time period. He was devoted to the study of Hebrew and the use of Hebrew in the prayer service. He believed that Reform Jews should be familiar with rabbinic literature, and he advocated teaching facets of the Talmud and Midrash to religious school students. He believed that Reformers should reform not re-form; he advocated that they must adapt the tradition to modern circumstances rather than create Jewish practice *de novo*. He spoke out in defense of the Bar Mitzvah ceremony at time when many Reformers considered the Bar Mitzvah passé and tended to replace the ritual with the Confirmation ceremony. He tried to maintain collegial and respectful relations with non-Reform Jews. In a time when others were seeking to remove tradition from Judaism, he wrote in one sermon, “As Jews we must learn to go back to our tradition with reverence and awe.”⁷³⁶ In all of these ways, and many others outlined in the foregoing chapters, Grossmann's ideas countervail the dominate trends that were established by his peers. Moreover, Grossmann was not the only influence to run counter to the prevailing current during that era. Like rabbinical contemporaries Max

⁷³⁶ Sermon, n.d., Louis Grossmann Papers, MS 92/ Box 1/ Folder 11, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Heller, Max Raisin, Jacob Raisin, J. Leonard Levy, Harvey Wessel, and many others who disagreed with various facets of the Pittsburgh Platform, Grossmann had his own point of view on many topics. Grossmann's career reminds us that the Reform movement has been multi-vocal throughout its history, and students of Reform Judaism's history must take care to avoid portraying the so-called "Classical" period of Reform Judaism as monolithic.

Grossmann's vision of American Judaism was lofty. It called for nothing less than a second wave of reform. Grossmann wrote:

Reform has been largely theological. That has been its weakness. For religion is more than theology and life is more than both. We discarded some articles of faith, we eliminated some prayers, we colluded with lapses from rabbinical law, and abrogated it, because it was incompatible with modern thought or irrelevant to our intellectual attitude toward God, and we re-interpreted our faith or rather we restored the original aspiration of Israel...but all this was the work of rabbis...If Reform is to be an effective uplift it must be all sided and pervasive.⁷³⁷

What would bring about this perfected reform of Judaism? For Grossmann the answer lay in Jewish education. Despite his work and a lifetime of effort, this goal eluded him. He failed to spur the educational revolution for which he called. But while there is much to learn from Grossmann's vision of religious school education, we can also learn from his inability to bring his ideas into fruition. Grossmann was not a polished politician. He was often outmaneuvered by others in the organizations and institutions he served. In 1923, three years prior to Grossmann's death, a young Emanuel Gamoran arrived in Cincinnati to serve as the Director of Jewish Education for the Reform movement. Gamoran had earned a Ph.D. in Education from Columbia, and he had studied with prominent scholars of education, including Professors John Dewey and William Heard Kilpatrick. It is interesting to note the similarities between Grossmann's philosophy of religious school education and the ideas that Gamoran ultimately brought into being. Clearly, with his distinguished

⁷³⁷ Louis Grossmann, "Message of the President," *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29, (1919); 114-115.

educational background, his diplomatic finesse, and his fierce determination to institute his vision, Gamoran was able to effect changes that Grossmann had recommended years before Gamoran entered the scene.

Grossmann's career also provides us with a perspective on the manifold problems that still confront our movement's system of supplementary religious schools. Ecclesiastes teaches us, "...there is nothing new under the sun." This is clearly the case with supplemental religious education. As we have seen, in Grossmann's day there was concern over amateur teachers, disinterested parents, the limited number of hours devoted to Jewish learning, the seemingly random or, at times, irrelevant content of the curriculum, the difficulty in keeping collegians and young adults involved in the synagogue, and how to ensure rabbis were also effective educators. These concerns continue to challenge the Jewish community in our own day.

Nearly 90 years after his death, Grossmann's rabbinical work is also instructive as it deepens our understanding of how the modern rabbinate evolved. Grossmann worked tirelessly. He was involved and led many organizations, served as a professor at HUC, headed the Teachers' Institute, traveled around the country lecturing, and was a full time congregational rabbi. Despite his many achievements, the oral histories of his congregants and his eulogies demonstrate that he was best remembered for his skills as a pastor. Grossmann's ability to connect with and care for his flock was ultimately what endeared him most to child and adult alike. He was attentive to all and took great care to cultivate and cherish relationships. A clergy person today would be hard pressed to claim they have as busy a schedule as he must have maintained. But despite all the demands on Grossmann, his congregation clearly felt that he put them first and foremost and they loved him for this.

Grossmann's rabbinate is also instructive because it sheds light on the changing nature of the rabbinate. It is clear that congregations during Grossmann's years wanted their rabbis to be significant presences in the larger community. They tolerated absences from the pulpit as their rabbis lectured, they desired their rabbis to attain degrees of higher learning, they wished their rabbis to lead organizations, and they also wanted their rabbis to publish learned volumes. All of the rabbi's activities were viewed as a reflection of the congregation itself.

Grossmann clearly understood that Reform Judaism is a dynamic enterprise wherein there exists an incessant process of dialectical exchange shifting between tradition and innovation. While he lived in a time when many of the most radical religious voices seemed to dominate the Reform movement, he was convinced that a time would come when there would be a return to tradition.⁷³⁸ The Reform rabbinate in many ways has indeed shifted the movement back toward a more conservative religious ritual practice. It is commonplace to see ritual items such as *tephillin*, *tallitot*, and *kippot* in the Reform synagogue. Reform Jewish practice has also reclaimed many aspects of traditional liturgy by incorporating Rabbinic, Hasidic, and Kabbalistic texts excised by the early reformers. Grossmann recognized that Reform Judaism was a dynamic process, and he anticipated or called for many of the changes that have ultimately come to be over the course of the 20th century.⁷³⁹ Grossmann insisted that Reform Judaism will continue to evolve and change as each generation seeks to find a meaningful Jewish expression that suits its own *Sitz im Leben*. In response to these

⁷³⁸ A Renaissance in American Judaism, n.d., Louis Grossmann Papers, MS 92/Box 1/Folder 10, AJA, Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁷³⁹ Ibid.

cultural vicissitudes, he called upon the movement to seek a, “deliberate and careful response.”⁷⁴⁰

Perhaps Grossmann’s most memorable lesson comes from a message he wished to convey to the Reform movement. He wrote that, “Judaism is in the texture of all of life, it is not an accomplishment nor an accessory.”⁷⁴¹ He stated elsewhere, “... a reform that has no legitimate justification and has its call from convenience and impulsiveness, is a false, a calamitous reform and must fail.”⁷⁴² Once again Grossmann challenged his followers with a lofty vision. As Reform Jews committed to engaging in the modern world, as Reform Jews who are continually confronted with the enticements of assimilation, as Reform Jews who struggle against a Jewish practice grounded in convenience instead of meaning—concerns relevant to Grossmann as they are to us—how do we make our Judaism more than an accessory? Grossmann called upon us to make Judaism our eyes, our ears, our mouths, our hands, and our noses; the parts of ourselves through which we perceive the world. This challenge remains relevant and meaningful in our day. Speaking in the name of his teacher Isaac Mayer Wise he stated:

There is only one kind of life, and the problem is not to piece together the bits that may have fallen apart through circumstance or necessity or history, but to see to it that they grow into one another and become one flesh and one soul. He who will integrate life will be the real reformer. Life is an organism and cannot have health except it provide it itself. And the Jewish people, that wonderful organism whose flesh holds indestructible life, and whose soul is perennial, neither exhausts itself in the unending tragedies nor comes to complete unfoldment in them. It has its genius not in ‘belief’ nor in ‘reforms’, but in that unified self which has no room for atomizations. Theology or nationalism or laicism or rabbinism or winged words like them have meaning only in the gossip terminology of pseudo-science or campaign-eloquence. I cannot imagine how one can be a Jew in one

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁴¹ Louis Grossmann, “A Message of the President,” *CCAR Yearbook*, vol.29, (1919); 13.

⁷⁴² Louis Grossmann, “Constructive Judaism,” in *The Jewish Pulpit* (Detroit: The Franklin Press, 1895).

direction of life and different in another. Life has no compartments, and religion, like life, is indivisible.⁷⁴³

⁷⁴³ Louis Grossmann, "Message of the President," *CCAR Yearbook*, vol. 29, (1919); 115.

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