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Henry A. Henry

The Life and Work of an American Rabbi, 1849-1869

Jay Henry Moses

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

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Referee, Dr. Karla Goldman

To my parents
who taught me love of family and pride in our history

and

to the memory of Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus, ל"ז, my rabbi
who taught me about the joys and sorrows of the rabbinate

this thesis is humbly and lovingly dedicated.

Contents

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My family, friends, and classmates have been kind and understanding beyond any reasonable expectation. Their patience and support in listening, again and again, to the stories which comprise this thesis have been remarkable. They are, as always, my comfort and my inspiration.

Digest

Henry Abraham Henry was born and raised in London in the early part of the nineteenth century. In 1849, he left England and came to the United States. For twenty years, Henry served various American synagogues as a preacher, *chazan*, educator, pastor, and rabbi. This thesis is the story of Henry's life and career. By extension, it examines the entire generation of American rabbis of the 1850's and 1860's, their unique circumstances, challenges, and contributions.

After an introduction which describes the context of the mid-nineteenth century American Jewish community into which Henry immigrated, the narrative follows Henry's career chronologically. Each of the chapters is devoted to one of the five locales in which Henry lived and worked during his career as a rabbi. The major themes of mid-nineteenth century American Judaism are dealt with throughout, but each chapter highlights those specific issues which most directly affected Henry's life and career during those years.

Chapter One details Henry's training and background in London. This chapter outlines his years at the Jews' Free School and at the Western Synagogue in London. Henry's early experience with preaching, teaching, writing, and ministering provide the background for his later years in America.

Chapter Two deals with Henry's first American pulpit, Congregation B'nai Yeshurun in Cincinnati, which Henry occupied from 1849 to 1851. Here particular attention is paid to the instability, competition and scandals that sometimes marred the rabbinate of the mid-nineteenth century.

Chapter Three explores Henry's two years at the Temple Society of Concord in Syracuse, New York (1851-1853). Henry's role as a pioneer among

Jewish preachers in English and vernacular preaching as a modern Jewish phenomenon are also explored.

Chapter Four chronicles Henry's four years in New York City, 1853-1857, where he served two different congregations. Since Henry's years in New York coincided with a brief boon in the area of Jewish education, his role as an educator and school superintendent is explored in depth.

Chapter Five deals with Henry's twelve years at Congregation Sherith Israel in San Francisco (1857-1869), where he was the first permanent rabbi. During these years, the Reform Movement in Judaism was gaining momentum continually. Henry's role as a crusader for orthodoxy in the face of the mounting wave toward reform is highlighted in Chapter Five.

The conclusion attempts to trace the flow of Henry's career and his devotion to the Jewish issues of his day. In particular, the conclusion focuses on the transitional nature of Henry's rabbinate and that of his contemporaries. The conclusion demonstrates how Henry's rabbinate, notwithstanding its instability and tribulations, laid the groundwork for a professional rabbinate which developed later in the nineteenth century.

Introduction

Most of the literature on the history of the Jews in America has focused on communities, significant institutions, and prominent individuals. These focal points serve as the necessary framework for the still young field of American Jewish history. In the area of professional leadership within the early American Jewish community the work to date focuses primarily on giants of each generation.[1] These were the men who founded the major institutions of American Jewish life and provided leadership and direction to a community struggling to assert a unique identity in this new land. In particular, historians have focused on the lives and works of Isaac Leeser (1808-1868) and Isaac Mayer Wise (1819-1900).[2] Leeser, based in Philadelphia, was the outstanding Jewish religious leader of the antebellum period. His periodical, The Occident, was the first Jewish journal of national significance and was published for over 25 years. Wise arrived in America in 1846, and later established the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, which became the two major institutions of American Reform Judaism. His periodical, The Israelite, begun in 1854, was very influential and is published in Cincinnati to this day. The accomplishments of these two men, as well as the extensive source materials available by and about them, explain why they have received considerable attention from historians.

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[1]Jonathan D. Sarna, "Introduction," in The American Rabbinate: A Century of Continuity and Change, 1883-1983 (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 1983), p. 1.

[2]Biographies of Leeser include Abraham J. Karp, Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia (Selingrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1987) and Lance J. Sussman, Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995). Biographies of Wise include Sefton D. Temkin, Isaac Mayer Wise, Shaping American Judaism (Washington, D.C.: Oxford University Press, 1992) and James G. Heller, Isaac M. Wise: His Life, Work and Thought (New York: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1965).

The story is not complete, however, when the major cities, synagogues, and personalities have been chronicled. In many ways, the history of the American Jewish community is the history of average Jews, struggling to balance the received traditions of European Jewish life with a new set of realities on American soil. Many of these individuals remain obscure in American Jewish history due to a lack of source material or an insufficiently developed context. Even among religious leaders, there are interesting personalities whose lives remain unexplored. They are interesting precisely because they were more typical than Leeser and Wise. If studies of the major figures gives a framework for understanding the early American Jewish community, then an exploration of more average American Jewish leadership provides the content within that framework. Such men wrote, but perhaps less prolifically than Wise and Leeser. They founded institutions, though possibly ones with a less far-reaching impact. They led, but perhaps on a smaller and less public scale. These leaders contributed to the development of a unique American rabbinate and to the growth of the American Jewish community in general. Among these early American Jewish rabbinical figures was Henry Abraham Henry. Through an analysis of Henry's life and work, this thesis will explore the unique contributions of this generation of Jewish leadership.

Henry's career must be examined within the context of mid-nineteenth century Jewish America. This period was a dynamic and interesting time for Jews in America. Jewish life had developed slowly in its first century and a half, from 1654 to the early nineteenth century. For those 150 years, a handful of congregations in eastern cities served a Jewish population estimated at only

about 3000 as late as 1820.[3] No rabbi served any of these congregations. The most significant religious leader of the period prior to 1820 was Gershom Mendes Seixas of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York. Seixas was "minister" of Shearith Israel from 1768 to 1776 and again from 1784 to 1816. In the intervening years, during the American Revolution, he served Congregation Mickveh Israel in Philadelphia. While he was not a rabbi, Seixas performed many of the duties which would come to be characteristic of later American rabbinic functionaries, including tutoring children in Hebrew, leading services, and delivering sermons.[4]

Following 1820, the immigration of Jews increased steadily over the next several decades. By 1870, as many as 200,000 Jews had immigrated to the United States. While some of these Jews came from England and elsewhere in Europe, most of the immigrants came from Germany and the surrounding provinces.[5] The traditional Hebrew designation of this area of Europe as *Ashkenaz* gave rise to the term "Ashkenazic" as the cultural identification of these Jews.[6] Most of these Ashkenazic immigrants were poor peddlers, artisans, or petty merchants. They were not well-educated, either in secular studies or in Jewish learning. Wealthier and more educated Jews generally preferred to stay in Europe, where they had more invested and were more

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[3]Naomi Cohen, Encounter With Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830-1914 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984), p. 39; Abraham J. Karp, "Overview: The Synagogue in America," in The American Synagogue: A Sanctuary Transformed, ed., Jack Wertheimer (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1987), p. 3.
[4]Leon Jick, The Americanization of the Synagogue (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1976), pp. 9-10; Jacob R. Marcus, The Handsome Young Priest in the Black Gown (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1970), p. 4.
[5]Jick, p. xii.
[6] As opposed to "Sephardic" Jews whose roots were in Muslim Spain and Portugal and whose Jewish practice and culture differed from the Ashkenazic Jews. The first Jews in America were Sephardic and the original handful of congregations continued to use the Sephardic ritual even after the Ashkenazic Jews came to constitute a majority of Jews in America.

able to withstand the economic and political instability that precipitated the emigration.

The Jews of America, newly stirred by the influx of immigrants, began to spread out and seek a new identity on American soil. New congregations sprung up in the cities with existing Jewish populations, ending the Sephardic monopoly on American congregational life. Jews also began to move westward, to cities like Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Detroit. Whenever enough Jews settled in a new area, they quickly organized themselves through basic communal institutions: burial societies, mutual benefit associations, and synagogues. The early congregations were largely based on the European models which were familiar to the immigrants. The ritual remained largely unchanged, as did the leadership pattern. The lay leadership ran the congregation and arranged for the conducting of worship services and life cycle events. They made only those adjustments that were necessary given their new environment. In the absence of the European communal structure, the board of trustees also made the rules, collected dues, and provided for other needs of Jewish life. Frequently they had no religious professionals at all; when they did, it was often a part-time employee who was a *shochet* (kosher meat slaughterer), *mohel* (ritual circumciser), *shamas* (synagogue caretaker), or some combination of these roles. Occasionally, as in the case of Seixas, the employee was a *chazan* (prayer leader) too, responsible for the chanting of religious services. These were the most basic, rudimentary tasks necessary for a functioning Jewish community. Most of the men filling these roles were indeed functionaries and not leaders. The Jewish community in America had to get the basics settled before moving on to more sophisticated notions of religious leadership. The only well-developed

conception of religious leadership it knew was the one which had dominated Jewish life for 1800 years: the rabbinate.

But no rabbis came to America prior to the 1840's. The distinction between ordained rabbis and other Jewish professionals is relevant to the question of emigration from Europe. The term "rabbi" means "my master" or "my teacher" etymologically, but its functional meaning over the centuries was more specific. A rabbi was one who was formally invested with the authority to make judgments on Jewish law through the ceremony of *smicha* (ordination, literally "laying on of the hands."). *Smicha* could be conferred only by an already recognized rabbi, and only after sufficient study and mastery of the Talmud and subsequent texts of Jewish law. But rabbis' status as communal religious judges provided them with essentially a full-time vocation. They did not fulfill most of the religious functions with which the rabbinate is associated today.

Most European rabbis, while they were not generally wealthy, were powerful in the Jewish community. Frequently, the government would grant rabbis legal authority over the Jewish community. Their scholarship in the Jewish legal tradition put them in a position to be arbiters in such matters as marriage and divorce, business disputes, and questions of religious practice. Rabbis also usually had the power of excommunication, their most persuasive tool for controlling the Jewish community. In general, centralized rabbinic authority was the rule of Jewish life in Europe.[7] In England, where Jews had achieved a relatively high level of acculturation, integration, and acceptance into the society at large by the late 18th century, they still had a

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[7]Jacob Katz, Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870 (New York: Shochen Books, 1978), pp. 20-23.

chief rabbi with a degree of religious authority.[8] While not all Jews were forced to submit to the control of the rabbinate, and many did not do so voluntarily, the chief rabbi's presence made a statement about the role of the rabbi in England. The structure of rabbinic control did begin to break down somewhat in the early modern period as Jews gained varying degrees of social and economic equality and adherence to Jewish law waned. Nevertheless, centralized rabbinical authority, though weakened, remained intact in most European Jewish communities. Despite the diminished role of the traditional ordained rabbi-scholar-judge in post-Enlightenment Europe, rabbis still had a legitimate voice in the debate over how European Jews would respond to modernity.[9] Hence few rabbis whose livelihood or sense of legitimacy depended on the communal structure in Europe would choose to leave that security for the small, unstructured Jewish community that existed in America.

In some places, especially England, another type of religious leader evolved to take a place alongside the rabbi: the minister. The minister was not an ordained rabbi, but possessed significant Jewish learning. His roles could include those of *shochet*, *mohel*, or *shamas*, as well as *chazan* and *magid* (preacher, as the custom of regular sermons in synagogues gained popularity).[10] The advent of the minister as the new type of Jewish leader in Western communities was largely contemporaneous with the growing secularization and modernization of those communities which occurred

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[8]Todd Endelman, The Jews of Georgian England, 1714-1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), pp. 122, 132 ff.
[9]Jick., p. 69.
[10]*Magid* is a Hebrew word meaning "teller" or "speaker," and came to designate itinerant preachers who would earn a living in Europe expounding Jewish texts in various communities. Rabbis rarely gave sermons; at the most, twice a year was the norm for ordained rabbis in Europe, who showed their scholarship and leadership in the setting of the *bet din*, the Jewish court. Salo Baron, "The Image of the Rabbis, Formerly and Today," Steeled By Adversity (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971), p. 148.

beginning in the early nineteenth century. In part, the increased contact between Jews and Gentiles, and the alluring possibility of emancipation and/or social acceptance, led Jews to pattern their religious life after dominant Protestant models in unprecedented ways. Such was the case with the advent of the Jewish minister.[11]

Henry was a minister of this type.[12] Whereas rabbis were unlikely to be drawn to America at this point, ministers had less to lose and more to gain by immigrating to America. Leon Jick has asserted that the minister had no future as a leader in the Jewish community in Europe, where scholarly expertise, both Jewish and secular, was increasingly replacing threat of excommunication as the source of rabbinic authority. Ministers could never compete with ordained rabbis where scholarship was the criterion; but in America, where authority rested solely in the people's willingness to grant it, ministers had a chance to carve out a meaningful niche.[13] Additionally, American Jews had already achieved a degree of acceptance and integration into secular society that was equal to any, and superior to most, European communities. If a model of religious leadership increasingly influenced by the Protestant ministry was appropriate in the context of England, it would be all the more so in America.

This was the case from the very beginning of American Jewish life. Seixas was in many ways the prototype of what American synagogues sought in a religious leader. He needed to be able to perform ritual functions, especially

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[11]Steven Singer, "The Anglo-Jewish Ministry in Early Victorian London," Modern Judaism 5:3 (October, 1985), pp. 279 ff.

[12]Some sources indicate that Henry possessed ordination from Solomon Hirschell, the Chief Rabbi of England, as I will discuss later in this thesis. But most of the ministers of mid-nineteenth century London and America were in a separate category from ordained rabbis, and Henry's functions, status, and the titles by which he was known all point to his being such a minister.

[13]Jick, p. 69.

leading services and officiating at life cycle events. He was frequently expected to teach or administer a school. Special skills like *shechita* (kosher slaughtering) and *mila* (circumcision) were bonuses. Increasingly, he was expected to preach and act as a pastor to his flock.

All of this was new to the institution of the rabbinate. Scholarship and knowledge of traditional Jewish texts--the quintessential skills valued in the traditional rabbi--were all but irrelevant in the American context. This is most aptly demonstrated by the case of Rabbi Abraham Rice. Rice came to the United States in 1840, the first ordained rabbi to settle on American soil. Rice's intention was to assume the role of Chief Rabbi of America. He expected the Jewish community of America to turn to him for leadership in establishing norms, parameters, and a system of central rabbinic governance for Jewish life akin to those of European communities.[14] Despite numerous attempts, though, Rice's efforts failed. It was not due to incompetence or lack of effort. American Jews simply would not accept the traditional Jewish authority structure. Many Jewish leaders--Isaac Leeser among them--decried the lack of a central authority for America's Jews and attributed such problems as assimilation, intermarriage, and non-observance to this lack. Leeser outlined his solution to these problems by suggesting a Central Rabbinic Council in the context of his "Plan of Union," published in the wake of a meeting in 1841 for the purpose of creating a Union of American Jews:

> The Israelites of Philadelphia, in common with their brethren in other places of America, have long since been alive to the many evils under which they labour in the great downfall of religious observance, and the want of proper religious education among them...they therefore offer the following suggestions...first, establishing a competent ecclesiastical authority, agreeably to the injunction of the law in Deut.

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[14]I. Harold Sharfman, The First Rabbi (Pangloss Press, 1988).

> xvi. 18: 'Judges and officers shalt thou appoint for thyself in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee throughout thy tribes;'[15]

While the debate over rabbinic authority continued for much of the nineteenth century, there was never enough support for such a system to have any real impact on American Judaism. Each congregation stubbornly insisted on its right to make decisions for itself. This attitude was summarized articulately by Congregation Beth Elohim of Charleston, which resolved in 1841, perhaps in response to Leeser's "Plan of Union":

> that all conventions, founded or created for the establishment of any *ecclesiastical authority* whatever...are alien to the spirit and genius of the age in which we live, and are wholly inconsistent with the spirit of American liberty.[16]

Beth Elohim was the earliest and most substantial advocate of reform among American congregations, so this reaction to Leeser's plan was not merely about the rabbinate and Jewish leadership. Nonetheless, it characterized the sentiment of American Jews generally. No central rabbinic authority--and, for that matter, no individual minister that a congregation chose to hire--would dictate a synagogue's actions in this land where freedom was paramount.[17]

Given this conflict between inherited Jewish authority structures and the new values being assimilated by American Jews, it is no surprise that the status of ministers in America was in flux in the mid-nineteenth century. The issue was dealt with at length in the American Jewish press. One strong

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[15]The Occident and American Jewish Advocate (Philadelphia: Isaac Leeser, ed.,) 3:4 (July, 1845), p. 176. This is a reprint of the original document, which was originally distributed as a circular, but Leeser noted in choosing to reprint it four years later that "many of our readers have probably never seen or heard of this plan" (ibid., p. 175). See also Lance Sussman, Isaac Leeser and the Making of American Judaism (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), pp. 125-27.

[16]Sharfman, p. 122.

[17]Jick, p. 58.

opinion was expressed by a Savannah Jew writing in The Asmonean early in 1850:

> The Christian clergyman is better fed, better clothed and better lodged, and made independent in the management of his flock...No absurd mandate from secular authority has he to obey; he is left to the dictates of his conscience in the exercise of his duties.[18]

This statement was in the context of an argument in favor of reforming Judaism. The writer went on to say that training proper ministers to serve American Jewish communities, and granting them appropriate status, would save Judaism from the "decay" precipitated by adherence to tradition. The discussion of reform was closely tied in with the issue of the role of the rabbi in the U.S. at this time. Clearly, the American Jewish community perceived gaps in its own identity and structure, and one significant gap was an established protocol for the role of the minister.

In light of this rather amorphous redefinition of the Jewish religious leadership--which spanned the entire time period of this thesis--a word on the various titles and terms appended to mid-nineteenth century American rabbinic functionaries is appropriate here. As noted previously, most of the men who came to serve the community at this time were not ordained rabbis. Most of them did not aspire to, nor were they granted, this appellation. There was no official protocol for how to refer to these rabbinic non-rabbis. The title that most of them assumed was "Reverend," a term borrowed from the same English Protestant context that gave rise to the concept of a Jewish "minister." Thus Henry was most often referred to as "Rev. H.A. Henry." Later in Henry's career, the fashion was for American rabbinic functionaries to

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[18]A Southern Jew, "A Voice From the South--Elevate the Minister," The Asmonean (New York: Robert Lyon, ed.,) 1:12 (January 11, 1850), pp. 93-4.

assume the title "Doctor." Presumably this was a result of the increased emphasis, particularly in Germany, on the rabbi's secular educational attainments. Henry was even referred to in his later years as "Rev. Dr. Henry," though he no more appropriated this title for himself than he did the title "Rabbi." Occasionally, a reverend would confer upon himself the title of "Rabbi" in an attempt to bolster his status or authority. If word of this reached the Jewish press, a scornful reaction usually ensued. Henry was accused of appropriating titles which he had not earned. Isaac Mayer Wise, commenting on Henry's role in an 1859 meeting in San Francisco for the purpose of organizing a Jewish school, shot down what he perceived to be Henry's pretensions:

> The newly made *Rabbi-Preacher,* Rev. Dr. or the Right Rev. Dr. Henry was also present. He will be kind enough to excuse us if we do not give him the right title...This is a great country, titles, words and offices are cheap. We advise every orthodox and well chanting Hazan to take an example and be wise. Never assume the title of a Rabbi-Preacher, something new both here and in England.[19]

By this time, Wise and Henry were established opponents on the issue of reform, so Wise's attempt to question Henry's status and qualifications is as much a product of those ideological differences as of any substantive claim. Interestingly, in the report of the meeting to which Wise was reacting, Henry assumed no title whatsoever. Wise was probably drawing his conclusions from the fact that Henry listed his office (but not his personal title) as "Rabbi Preacher" of his San Francisco congregation on the title page of his book A Synopsis of Jewish History, a copy of which he had sent to Wise only a few months earlier.[20] More notably, though, Henry was outspoken at the meeting

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[19]The Israelite (Cincinnati: Isaac Mayer Wise, ed.,) 6:23 (December 9, 1859), p. 182.
[20]Israelite 6:3 (July 22, 1859), p. 23.

in favor of orthodoxy; it was surely this fact that caused Wise to seek out ways of discrediting him. Bitterness or personal attacks were a routine part of the discourse in this period, especially with respect to reform. The issue of titles was merely a convenient point of departure for such an attack. Ironically, Wise himself assumed both titles, Rabbi and Doctor, without the qualifications for either!

In addition to titles, though, there was the issue of the name given to the office or position occupied by these men, individually or in the collective. Frequently, the job was referred to merely by the tasks it entailed: such was the case with *shochet, mohel,* and *shamas. Chazan,* meaning the chanter of the prayers, was sometimes rendered in English as "reader." But *chazan* came to have a slightly more generalized meaning in some cases, and was sometimes synonymous with minister, thus allowing for other tasks besides leading the prayer service. "Preacher" and "teacher" were other examples of terms used to describe the jobs done by these men. However, "minister" was the nearest thing to a general term for the rabbinic functionaries of the mid-nineteenth century. And all of these roles and titles were later grouped together under the heading of "rabbi" in the American context. Thus, even though most of them were not rabbis, I have used the terms "rabbi" and "minister" interchangeably to describe this group of people and their profession. The confusion about how to refer to them is, in fact, an apt metaphor for the uncertainty that characterized the development of the American rabbinate at this stage.

Henry's career in America was defined by several issues and causes arising out of this unique moment in American Jewish history. First, the reforming of Judaism was a controversial issue during Henry's entire tenure in the U.S. While it became increasingly clear that reform was the wave of the future for

American Jews, Henry remained a staunch advocate of orthodoxy. This stance, while it was still tenable at least until his retirement in 1869, frequently put Henry at odds with his congregants and with other rabbis who were eager to adapt Judaism to the freedom and modernity of American society. Education was another chief concern of Henry's. While education was always a very high priority for Jews throughout history, the American Jewish community struggled with the question of how best to achieve the goal of providing its children with Jewish learning when a secular American education became an increasingly high priority. A lifelong educator, Henry devoted large segments of his career to promoting and working for the cause of traditional Jewish education in America. Akin to education was the intellectual life of American Jews. Periodicals, text books, and essays and sermons vied for the attention and the financial resources of the American Jewish community. Henry was involved in this aspect of community building as well, publishing several books and contributing regularly to most of the significant periodicals of his day. This endeavor was an chance for Henry to express his ideas on contemporary issues and to gain recognition and occasionally even a small profit.

Henry's career was also marked by a significant degree of instability. He worked at five congregations in four cities during his first eight years in the America. This path was not atypical, as many rabbis moved around frequently at this time. As with the confusion over titles, Henry's erratic career path reflected the instability of the American Jewish community in general. As synagogues struggled to figure out what they expected from their ministers, and rabbis adjusted to the new norms in this country, tension and strife inevitably resulted. Since rabbis were generally subject to reelection year-to-year, neither congregations nor rabbis hesitated to make frequent changes.

Adding to this confusion was the presence of a number of men of questionable character and credentials, who took advantage of the instability of the American Jewish community to earn a fast dollar as rabbis or *chazanim*.

As they grew more comfortable in their new home, American Jews gradually started to define what they wanted from their leaders and rabbis. But during the mid-nineteenth century, they were still adjusting to the milieu of America. The rabbis who functioned during this period served as a link between the European model of Jewish leadership, which had no future in America, and the new American rabbinate, uniquely tailored to the realities of life in the United States, which was just beginning to develop. The American rabbinate would not emerge from its embryo stage to a full-fledged profession until the 1880's, when Hebrew Union College began producing native-born American rabbis. In the mean time, American Jews were served by European ministers like Henry. Although Henry's career was significantly affected by the community's growing pains, he and his peers helped lay the groundwork for a rabbinate and a Jewish community which was to thrive on America's shores.

Chapter One: England, 1800-1849

The roots of Henry's life and his career can be traced to England, where he lived until he was in his forties, and where his rabbinate took shape. In England, Henry faced virtually every issue which would later be central to his experience in America. Liturgical reform, a focus on Jewish education for children, and shifts in the roles of rabbinical functionaries were all themes for which Henry's background in England prepared him to varying degrees. There were substantial differences between the Jewish communities of Europe and America at this time, but England's particular circumstances make it an interesting source of comparison to the American scene.

Henry was born in London in November of either 1800 or 1806.[1] Little is known of his family or upbringing, though his second marriage certificate lists his father's name as Abraham Henry, and Abraham's rank/profession as "Gentleman."[2] Henry was a student at the London Ashkenazi *Talmud Torah*,[3] a formerly traditional *yeshiva* which was reorganized in 1788 to include the secular subjects of reading, writing, and arithmetic. This modernization was part of an attempt by the Anglo-Jewish elite to reform the Jewish poor; the hope was that by offering a free education to London's poor Jews, more of them would become productive members of society.[4] The *Talmud Torah* was itself reconstituted in 1817 as the Jews' Free School, designed to serve many more students. The Free School was organized under the Lancastrian monitorial system, wherein student monitors, coached by

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[1]The sources, both secondary and primary, which refer to Henry's age are divided almost equally between these two dates. For example, his gravestone at the Hills of Eternity Cemetery, Colma, CA, lists his age as 79 in 1879, while the London census of 1841 lists his age as 34.

[2]Great Synagogue, London, I-E, Folio 118, Marriages 1837-1862, p. 41.

[3]H.A. Henry, letter, Asmonean 1:25 (April 12, 1850), p. 198.

[4]Endelman, pp. 228-231.

teachers, were utilized to teach other students.[5] Henry was one of the monitors at the Free School, which in 1822 relocated to Bell Lane, Spitalfields, and later became its Headmaster.[6]

Henry was a disciple of Rabbi Solomon Hirschell, the Chief Rabbi of England from 1802 to 1842. It is unclear whether Hirschell actually ordained Henry or not. I.J. Benjamin II, the traveler whose memoir of his travels through America in the years 1859-62 is a valuable source of information about nineteenth century American Jewry, reported that Henry indeed possessed ordination from Hirschell.[7] Presumably, Benjamin's source of information was Henry himself. I. Harold Sharfman, without indicating any source for the assertion, also claimed that Henry was one of the few ordained rabbis in America in his time.[8] Most sources, though, treat Henry like the other non-ordained ministers who officiated in American synagogues until American-trained rabbis began to emerge in the 1880's. He never assumed, nor was he given by his congregants or those who addressed him, the title "Rabbi." It is clear that Henry possessed a considerable knowledge of Jewish literature and law. Yet, it is also clear that he was never thought of as an outstanding scholar by the standards set by other rabbis of his time. He was rarely asked to render halachic decisions, which was the clearest sign of scholarly status among rabbis of this time.

Henry's association with the Free School as a teacher and Headmaster began sometime during the 1820's; Benjamin noted that he was an assistant teacher at the tender age of twenty, and was a "senior teacher and inspector"

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[5]ibid., p. 243.
[6]Marcus H. Henry, "Henry Abraham Henry, San Francisco Rabbi, 1857-1869," Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly [hereafter "WSJHQ"] 10:1 (October 1977), p. 31. This article originally appeared in the Jewish Chronicle, London, March 23, 1906.
[7]I.J. Benjamin II, Three Years in America 1859-1862, Volume I, translated by Charles Reznikoff (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1956), p. 201.
[8]Sharfman, p. 235.

three years later.[9] He was certainly the headmaster of the school throughout the 1830's and up to 1842. Here his devotion to Jewish education and particularly to schooling for Jewish children was born and nurtured. "From my childhood," Henry wrote to his colleague Isaac Leeser in 1851, " I was trained as the Teacher of Youth and held the office of Head Master to the Jews' Free School in London for many many years and only retired from that office when I received a call for the ministry--not only as a reader of the Synagogue, but also as a preacher and religious instructor."[10] "The Synagogue" was the Western Synagogue, St. Alban's Place, Haymarket. Henry was hired on May 27, 1842 and remained until his departure for the United States in June of 1849.[11]

Whatever was recorded of his tenure there was destroyed in the bombing during World War II, but a few relevant details remain. The congregation published its constitution and bylaws in 1833, and they were still binding during Henry's tenure. The section entitled "Duties of the חזן (*Reader*)" contains 14 regulations. The Reader was expected to live in the apartments attached to the synagogue. He was required to read prayers on all days when the Torah was read, and to be on call to read them at any other time. He had to attend all celebratory meals of congregants, a practice still in contention in the rabbinate 160 years later! He was required to officiate at weddings and funerals, but only those approved by the lay leadership, and no others. He was expected to don his "official dress" whenever acting in his capacity as Reader. His compensation for certain tasks was laid out, including rations of *matzah* and coal. Finally, it was assured that in case of his demise, the Reader's wife

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[9]Benjamin II, p. 201.
[10]H.A. Henry, Letter to Isaac Leeser, June 12, 1851, Mss. #197, Box I, Folder 4, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH. All letters to Leeser quoted in this thesis are from this source.
[11]Matthias Levy, The Western Synagogue: Some Materials for its History (London, 1897).

would be supported by the congregation.[12] As we shall see, such detailed bylaws became common in America as well, where ministers were subject to the strict control of the lay leadership.

At the Western Synagogue, Henry began the practice of regular English sermons, which was a somewhat radical innovation at the time. According to Arthur Barnett, Henry's appointment came at a time when the synagogue was ripe for a modest degree of reform in its style of worship. The St. Alban's Place Synagogue, which Barnett characterizes as having been "mildly revolutionary" since its inception, was joined in the introduction of English sermons by the synagogues in Liverpool and Birmingham.[13] Much more will be said about the significance of this practice in the American Jewish community, but it is important not to overstate the case in the English context. At no time did Henry or the Western Synagogue cross over into the realm of halachic reform or any abrogation of orthodox practice. The issue of sermons was more a matter of *minhag* (custom) and social assimilation than of religious practice.

The Western Synagogue had a Free School of its own. The Westminster Jews' Free School was founded in 1820,[14] under the name חברת תלמוד תורה ודרך הישר בוועסתמינסתר ("The Organization of the 'School for the Study of Torah and Proper Conduct' in Westminster") as an auxiliary of the Synagogue. The object of the Free School was "that male children of the Jewish Persuasion (whose parents are unable to afford them education) be instructed in Hebrew and English, Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, that the

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[12]The Western Synagogue, Laws of the Western Congregation, St. Alban's Place (London, 1833), pp. 25-27.
[13]Arthur Barnett, The Western Synagogue Through Two Centuries (1761-1961) (London: Valentine-Mitchell, 1961), pp. 176, 187.
[14]Westminster Jews' Free School minutes, 1820-29, Western Marble Arch Synagogue, London, p. 1.

principles of religion be carefully inculcated and every exertion used to render them good & useful members of society."[15] Throughout the 1830's and 1840's, the Free School, while always maintaining a close tie to the synagogue, grew and increasingly became a separate institution. By 1843, the swelling student body precipitated a move to larger quarters. On April 30th, Henry, who was by that time the Reader at the synagogue, read the prayers and gave an address at the consecration of the new school.[16] The list of contributors to the relocation effort included the famous Rothschild family, for whom Henry was also a tutor, an almoner, and the leader of the *Pesach Seder* at their town house. [17] There must have been a significant connection between the two families, as the Baroness Lionel de Rothschild taught piano to Henry's daughter Hannah, and even had a piano made for and given to the girl in 1843. The piano still exists, and is in the possession of a descendant of Henry's.

Other activities of Henry's rabbinate in England included involvement with the Jews' Hospital and Orphan Asylum, an educational institution which was a precursor to the Jews' Free School. Henry was also active in fighting discrimination against Jews, including combating the efforts of the Society for the Conversion of the Jews.[18] The question of how to deal with anti-Jewish sentiment was of great concern to the London Jewish community, and fear of reprisals from the government motivated some Jews to discourage any public defense of Judaism. Throughout the early nineteenth century, Jews felt increasingly comfortable speaking out in public against discrimination without invoking the anger of the government or the gentile community. But some, especially the elite who had the most to lose in such situations,

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[15]ibid.
[16]Barnett, p. 130.
[17]Marcus H. Henry, p. 32.
[18]The Jewish Encyclopedia (New York and London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1904), Vol. 4, p. 349.

remained uncomfortable with the notion of Jewish self-defense. In 1829, for example, the directors of the Jews' Free School reprimanded Henry for attending meetings of the Philo-Judaean Society and participating in their debates.[19] The battle against antisemitism was one which Henry would also take up in his later years in the U.S.

One interesting incident from Henry's tenure at the Western Synagogue is recorded by Arthur Barnett. The congregation also had in its employ at the time a Mr. Henry Alexander, whose function was principally that of *ba'al koreh* or Torah Reader. During the intermediate days of *Sukkot*, in 1846, Mr. Alexander appeared in synagogue with his face smooth enough to give the appearance of his having shaved, a violation of Jewish law during the holiday. The presiding lay leader of the congregation, Myer Solomon, is reported to have forcibly removed Mr. Alexander from his place, resulting in a public scandal surrounding the issue, which was reported in the Jewish press. Barnett infers that because of ill will between the two men, Henry may have reported the alleged shave to Solomon in order to stir up trouble for Alexander. As with most such incidents, the truth is difficult to discern. It does demonstrate that competition and bitterness among Jewish clergy, which were rampant in the American context as we shall see, were not unique to it.[20]

Henry also began a long and fairly successful career as a writer in his London days. His first known publication was סֵדֶר תְּפִלּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל, a daily prayer book according to the Polish rite, which he published while Headmaster of the Free School in 1836.[21] This *siddur* is noteworthy because Henry published

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[19]Endelman, pp. 284-85.
[20]Barnett, pp. 148-150.
[21]Cecil Roth, Bibliotheca Anglo-Judaica, A Bibliographical Guide to Anglo-Jewish History (London: The Jewish Historical Society of England, University College, London, 1937), p. 310.

it with explanatory rules and directions in English, which was an unusual feature of prayer books in those days. Apparently, there was a need for such *siddurim* , presumably on the part of those who could read the Hebrew prayers themselves, but didn't know Hebrew or German well enough to understand the instructions for standing, sitting, repeating, remaining silent, or other such details as were normally found in *siddurim.*[22] To the extent that this book was designed for the students at the Free School, it may also represent an early attempt to make Jewish learning more accessible to young people. In 1837, Henry published another liturgical piece, קָרְבַּן תָּמִיד subtitled "Form of Prayer and Thanksgiving to be said by ladies when they go to the synagogue on the first time of leaving home after their accouchment." The prayer was composed by Nathan I. Vallentine, an acquaintance and colleague of Henry's. Henry translated it into English. The work is dedicated to Mrs. N.M. de Rothschild, with a glowing tribute to her charitable nature. It is possible that she was pregnant at the time, that Henry and Vallentine composed the prayer so that she would set the example for other women by being the first to use it. It is also possible that they were hoping for support for their charitable interests in return for the honor of dedicating the work to her, since they refer to her as its "Patroness."[23]

Henry was also a contributor to the *Jewish Chronicle*, London's leading Jewish periodical. In February of 1849, he published the first of a series of letters on "the Glory of the Heavens, or Reflections on the Analogy between the Works and the Word of God."[24] The letters ran for several weeks. In America, Henry would become a contributor to most of the major Jewish

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[22]Levy, p. 52.
[23]Nathan I. Vallentine, קָרְבַּן תָּמִיד: Form of Prayer and Thanksgiving to be said by ladies when they go to the synagogue on the first time of leaving home after their accouchment, translated by H.A. Henry, London, 1837.
[24]Levy, p. 52.

periodicals as well. Henry's most well-known British publication was A Classbook for Jewish Youth, known to many simply as "Henry's Classbook," originally published in 1840. This text book, a digest of information on the Bible, Jewish Holidays, and prayer customs, was "very largely used in schools and private families."[25] Significantly, the Classbook was reprinted several times in the United States, as late as 1898.

Finally, in 1845, Henry published a collection of his sermons from the Western Synagogue, entitled Six Discourses on the Principles of the Religious Belief of Israel, as Productive of Human Happiness and Moral Improvement. Henry dedicated this book to the congregation, "at whose request these discourses were composed, and before whom they were delivered,...with the warmest feelings of duty, affection, and esteem." Henry's preface to this work reflects concern regarding how his sermons might be received in print and criticized. The newness of the practice of regular sermons may have given rise to a period of adjustment, where opinions as to what constituted appropriate sermonic material may have conflicted:

> ...the present era of Judaism...has produced many differences of opinion as to the true mode of preaching the doctrines of the religion of Israel;...each has in its turn assumed a right of decision, and has taken upon itself to assert the superiority of its doctrine as the most faithful in expounding the word of God.[26]

It could be that Henry felt the need to defend the relatively new practice of English sermons in general. The sermons themselves are lengthy and well-written, in an elegant, if verbose, English. They are classical expositions, liberally laced with scriptural quotations, and with a focus on ethical and ritual behavior. They deal with the issues of brotherly love, God's love for

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[25]ibid., p. 53.
[26]H.A. Henry, Six Discourses on the Religious Belief of Israel, London, 1845.

Israel, the hereafter, Sabbath observance, visiting houses of mourning, and prudence in conversation.

Chapter Two: Cincinnati, 1849-1851

Henry's reasons for leaving the Western Synagogue and immigrating to the United States remain obscure. Notwithstanding the uncertain status that awaited them, a handful of ministers did come to America from Europe in the mid-nineteenth century with the intention of fulfilling rabbinic roles in the American Jewish community. Henry's decision to leave England for America is somewhat curious in that he was already in his forties, with a family and what seems to have been a very adequate job in London. It is possible that Henry had fallen out of favor with his congregation or with the leaders of London's Jewish community. Maybe Henry viewed the very instability of America as a benefit, if he envisioned a place where more opportunities existed for advancement. It could also be that promises of some sort were made to induce him to come.

Dr. Simeon Abrahams of New York wrote to Henry offering him work as a minister in America.[1] Abrahams was an important leader in the American Jewish community at this point. He was a physician, but was learned in Jewish lore and literature, and was often consulted as an authority on Jewish issues. Isaac Leeser described him as "well known for the interest he takes in supplying vacant congregations, or those about becoming so, with suitable ministers."[2] Apparently, the two men had met the previous year in Europe.[3] Henry sailed the Atlantic in July, 1849 with his second wife, the former Sarah Meyers, and at least four children, embarking at Liverpool and landing at the port of Boston.[4] He came with the intention of assuming the ministry of the

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[1]H.A. Henry, Letter to Isaac Leeser, June 12, 1851.
[2]Isaac Leeser, "News Items: Rev. H.A. Henry, of Cincinnati," Occident 9:5 (August 1851), p. 270.
[3]Benjamin II, p. 201.
[4]Marcus H. Henry, p. 34.

congregation in Louisville, Kentucky, but this was not to be. Henry went from Boston to New York, where he officiated at the Elm Street Synagogue, Congregation B'nai Jeshurun[5]. Apparently, no permanent work was available in New York, so Henry headed west, presumably in the direction of Louisville. However, he was detained in Cincinnati on his way to Louisville over the Sabbath, and was invited to read the prayers at the Lodge Street Synagogue, also known as Kehila Kedosha B'nai Yeshurun (holy congregation "children of Israel," *yeshurun* being a Biblical pseudonym for Israel).[6] Apparently, the congregation was sufficiently impressed with Henry's performance that they convinced him to remain in Cincinnati rather than continue on to Louisville.

B'nai Yeshurun was at an interesting juncture in its history. The incumbent minister was James K. Gutheim, who previously had been affiliated with the other principal synagogue in Cincinnati, K.K. Bene Israel (same translated meaning as B'nai Yeshurun). Gutheim was soon to become "widely known as a rabbi of liberal tendencies,"[7] so it is no surprise that his tenure at B'nai Yeshurun as lecturer and reader (1846-49) was marked principally by a trend toward modest reform of the synagogue worship. Gutheim's main emphasis was on decorum, as a more palatable alternative to the disorganized din of most traditional synagogues.[8] The congregation approved of Gutheim's initiatives to impose decorum upon worshipers,

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[5]Occident 9:5 (August 1851), p. 270.
[6]ibid.
[7]James G. Heller, As Yesterday When it is Past: A History of Isaac M. Wise Temple, K.K. Bene Yeshurun of Cincinnati, 1842-1942 (Cincinnati: Isaac M. Wise Temple, 1942), p. 32.
[8]Karla Goldman, "In Search of an American Judaism: Rivalry and Reform in the Growth of Two Cincinnati Synagogues," in Inventory of Promises, Jeffrey Gurock and Marc Lee Raphael, eds. (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishers, 1995), pp. 140-141.

though they stopped short of other reforms.[9] Clearly, a range of attitudes toward reform existed in B'nai Yeshurun at this stage; there was a significant number of congregants who favored reform and a substantial number who held fast to orthodoxy. Thus when Gutheim suggested omitting some prayers from the service, the congregation rejected the idea.[10]

The congregation's predisposition toward cosmetic reforms at this stage was a precursor to its leading role in what later became the Reform movement. Eventually, B'nai Yeshurun would hire Isaac Mayer Wise to be its minister, and from this partnership would spring the major institutions of Reform Judaism, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Hebrew Union College. But the seeds for such growth were sown before Wise made his way west in 1854. Cincinnati was the largest city west of the Allegheny mountains at this time, and it was a major commercial center because of its location on the Ohio river. Jews had been instrumental in the rise of Cincinnati as a center of commerce, and had achieved a significant degree of acceptance into the community, both economically and socially. They had made their presence known decades earlier, establishing Bene Israel in 1824. Some had attained a degree of material comfort to go along with substantial acculturation. All of these factors contributed to a desire to harmonize their synagogue experience with their newfound American sensibilities. At this stage, the reforms consisted mostly of changing those superficial elements, like decorum, which would increase social acceptance and respectability without deviating too substantially from tradition.[11] But within only a few years, Wise's election would accelerate the process quickly

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[9]Karla Goldman, "The Struggle for Authority in the Creation of Community: Tradition and Change in Cincinnati, 1840-69." Paper delivered at the Association of Jewish Studies conference, December 17, 1995, p. 3.

[10]ibid.

[11]On the origins and rise of Cincinnati Jewry, see Heller, pp. 19-26.

and with little resistance, so it is clear that the traditionalist core of B'nai Yeshurun was beginning to crumble.

One might expect that the choice of a spiritual leader in 1849 would have been consciously in line with this trend.[12] It is a valid question, then, why a congregation at such a point in its history would choose to hire a staunch traditionalist like Henry. He was eloquent and very clear in describing his approach to tradition:

> ...let us continually bear in mind this fact, that it is the word of God we are enjoined to obey; that it is *perfect*, having emanated from the source of perfection; and therefore when a system of religion comes recommended to us under the character of divine revelation, and supported by all the external evidences that the nature of revelation will admit, we ought not to reject any of its doctrines on account of their not being exactly consonant to our mind or fancy, or perhaps imperfectly understood...[13]

Henry went on in this article to suggest rigorous educational training for children, and a *bet din* (Jewish court) to wield unified rabbinic authority for American Jews. These were his "solutions"; the "problem" Henry was addressing, only a few months after his arrival in America, was the "Infidelity" resulting from abandoning the strict observance of Jewish law. This article was surely responding at least in part to the behavior Henry was observing among his Cincinnati flock. Why would a congregation building momentum toward reform have hired a man so firm and admonishing in his religious conservatism? It could be that his ability and desire to preach in English was viewed by B'nai Yeshurun as a sufficient step in the direction of modernity and acceptability in the eyes of their gentile neighbors. Wise

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[12]Karla Goldman, p. 2.
[13]H.A. Henry, "Infidelity and Religion," Asmonean 1:18 (February 22, 1850), p. 142.

himself later characterized what he felt was B'nai Yeshurun's unique attitude toward congregational leadership:

> This congregation was the first in the west, that was not satisfied with a common place Hazan, always made honorable attempts to place men at their head, who are capable to do something better, and succeeded, indeed, in obtaining the services of the Rev. Messrs. Gutheim of New Orleans, Henry of New York, and Rosenfeld of Savannah, until they finally, in calling our humble self to this position, declared at once, and unanimously, in favor of reform and progress[14]

While Henry remained a proponent of strict orthodoxy throughout his career, he too came from a background which promoted "modernizing" Jewish worship and practice. At the pace things were moving in America, the definition of "something better" was always changing. In 1849 small efforts at modernization were significant. The preaching of English sermons is only one example of such modernization in Henry's experience; the Western Synagogue in London, from which Henry had just come, also had rules of decorum in place at least as early as 1833.[15] Henry had clearly internalized this sense of the importance of decorum, as he indicated in a letter to his old friend Israel Russell in London, written shortly after his election in Cincinnati:

> Our Synagogue worship is truly a pattern to the old country. Ah! I often wish some of the members of the St. Alban's Shool were round me when at the reading-desk to witness the manner in which I am allowed to conduct the Service, to see the order, the decorum and the respectful demeanour of everyone who enters the House of God.[16]

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[14]Israelite 3:49 (June 12, 1857), p. 388

[15]The Western Synagogue, Laws of the Western Congregation, St. Alban's Place (London, 1833), p. 75. "...every person must be at his seat, and conduct himself with propriety, or render himself liable to a fine..."

[16]Barnett, p. 149.

Henry, ironically, associated decorum with the "old country!" His wish that the St. Alban's Jews could see him is an interesting comment. Does this indicate sour grapes about his departure from London? It may also be a defense of his decision to immigrate to America, where European Jews may have perceived that chaos reigned. Though decorum was likely not a source of tension between Henry and the congregation, it is difficult to ascertain precisely to what extent he differed from Gutheim on other reforms at this stage. Regardless, this was only one factor in the congregation's decision of whom to hire.

It seems likely that far more practical concerns motivated them. First, although some of B'nai Yeshurun's members had attained a degree of financial security by this time, the congregation itself, only seven years old, had not. The congregation's financial situation was so precarious that they had to take out several loans and pinch pennies in order to stay afloat. During the summer of 1849, when the congregation was looking for a minister to replace Gutheim, several candidates wrote to the Board of Trustees seeking to interview for the post. Several were turned away simply because they asked the congregation to cover their travel expenses for a visit! Henry seems to have been viewed favorably as a candidate as much because he could pay his own way as because of his rabbinic qualifications.[17] In the entire account of the search for a new *chazan*, substantive qualities like an attitude toward reform, preaching ability, or scholarship, were not mentioned at all. This does not mean that such factors were not taken into account--congregational minutes of this period are notoriously sketchy and lacking in depth--but the absence of any discussion of the candidates' qualifications is conspicuous.

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[17]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, August 22, 1849, Manuscript Collection #62, Box 3, AJA.

On September 16, 1849, Henry officially became a candidate for the position of "*Chasan*," and the following week, on September 23, the congregation held the election for the position at its annual general meeting. Significantly, the entire congregation was present at the meeting! They must have perceived that the election of a rabbi was an important decision. Although we will see that most ministers were granted little authority or respect at this early stage, it is clear that it was important to the congregation to have a rabbi, preferably one who somehow enhanced the congregation's self-image and identity. This identity was still in formation and there was conflict in the process of hammering it out. Nevertheless, hiring a rabbi was one of the lightning rods for differences between congregants. It could be that the entire membership turned out because they knew it was going to be a close vote. They might have known enough about Henry to realize that their decision would lead them down one of two divergent paths, at least in terms of reform. In any case, the votes were tallied, and Henry received 62 to Gutheim's 50;[18] the congregation would pay its new *chazan* $400 per annum.[19] To the extent that the election was a barometer of the congregation's position on reform, it was a temporary victory for the traditionalist camp. Isaac Leeser, reporting Henry's hiring in The Occident, stated that Henry "comes with a high reputation, and we trust that he will prove a useful guide to his new flock."[20] Robert Lyon, editor of The Asmonean, commented that Henry "carries with him the reputation of being a talented lecturer and an able tutor, two qualities rarely combined."[21]

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[18]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, September 23, 1849.
[19]Heller, p. 69.
[20]Isaac Leeser, "Changes in Ministers," Occident 7:8 (November 1849), p. 425.
[21]Robert Lyon, Asmonean 1:1 (October 26, 1849), p. 2.

Henry's two-year tenure at B'nai Yeshurun, like that of Gutheim and other early rabbis of the synagogue, is largely obscured by the vast historical literature detailing the long tenure and accomplishments of Isaac Mayer Wise. Adding to the difficulty of the task of chronicling this time period is the paucity of sources. Wise's life and work are so vastly explored in part because there is much more material available from his time period. For example, during Henry's years in Cincinnati, there were only two significant Jewish newspapers. As the community grew, the periodical literature expanded to meet the needs of the burgeoning Jewish population, giving more news and views later in the nineteenth century. Wise himself left also left a tremendous corpus of work, including the weekly Israelite, of which he was not only editor, but, as was the custom in those days, the main contributor.

Nevertheless, we shall try to reconstruct what we can of Henry's brief stay in Cincinnati. It seems that although he was the preferred candidate at the time of his election, the honeymoon between Henry and B'nai Yeshurun was very brief. In fact, the evidence of positive relations between the congregation and its minister is outweighed by the evidence of discord. The next mention of Henry in the minutes of B'nai Yeshurun, following his election in September, was on November 27, 1849. Henry had to petition the board even to be invited to a meeting; apparently his aim was the establishment of an unspecified "society," a term which at the time referred to small organizations within the synagogue or community. "Societies" were most often organized for literary/intellectual purposes or to support charitable causes. The modern equivalent might be anything from a synagogue committee to a Jewish communal agency. Whatever Henry's intention, his

proposition was heard, and the board "resolved that it could not be accepted as a congregational business."[22]

It is clear that Henry's role as *chazan* primarily consisted of roles in worship services, education, and life cycle events. He was neither expected nor permitted to be the leader of the congregation in any other way. As we have seen, though, this was a time when the liturgy of the congregation, both in form and in content, was up for discussion. In the spring of 1850, a Mr. Fechheimer proposed to have Henry deliver an English prayer in place of הנותן תשועה, the traditional diaspora blessing asking God's favor on the government of the nation; Fechheimer's motion passed.[23] The practice of prayers in the vernacular did have precedents in Europe; while in general this trend was a product of the self-conscious Reform Movement in Germany, prayers for the British royalty were included in Jewish ceremonies in England as early as the eighteenth century.[24] This was often one of the first reforms adopted by any community, since Jewish law does not forbid it and it served the needs of reformers so well. In Cincinnati, these needs were two-fold: first, to make prayers comprehensible and compelling to worshipers whose knowledge of Hebrew was continually waning; and second, and perhaps more important, to facilitate acceptance into American society by making sure any gentiles who encountered their service would note the patriotism of the prayer for the government.

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[22]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, November 27, 1849.
[23]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, May 19, 1850.
[24]Barnett, pp. 42-3 gives a description of the dedication of the Western Synagogue's new building in 1797, where a special prayer for the King and Queen was not only recited, but printed in the London Chronicle. Michael A. Meyer (Response to Modernity, London: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 24 ff.) has noted that the use of vernacular prayers was tied to a reorientation in the Jewish view of the synagogue. In the early German Reform Movement, the synagogue first began to be viewed as "not simply a place where the Jew fulfilled the commandment of daily prayer, but where prayer could affect the spirit of the worshiper."

Henry was instructed to read a prayer composed by Max Lilienthal of New York. Henry may or may not have read Lilienthal's "*Ribon*" ["Master," as in "Master of the World," a liturgical appellation for God], as the B'nai Yeshurun trustees called it. The Asmonean reported that Henry was instructed to compose such a prayer himself, which he did.[25] A handwritten copy of Henry's prayer survives:

> ...O Shed thy Grace O God upon the Governor of this State, Ohio, and the Mayor and the Common Council of this City. Teach them to judge the people truly--Instruct them in the path they shall tread--that their administration may prove Wise, Steady, and prosperous. Send forth thy Salvation O Lord unto this City, Cincinnati, and unto all its inhabitants. O Spread over them thy pavilions of Peace, and remove from them all Sorrows, all Troubles...[26]

The prayer is longer, but this section is sufficiently telling. The manuscript, complete with corrections, additions, and underlined words (possibly for emphasis in public recitation) is written in a steady, flowing hand. Its flowery language reflects the early English translations of classical Hebrew, as well as Henry's British roots. Mostly, though, the prayer reveals the eagerness of the Jewish community to show its devotion to and concern for its adopted homeland and its gentile neighbors.

In other areas of the synagogue liturgy, however, Henry and the congregation's leaders were frequently in conflict. In June 1850, the board of B'nai Yeshurun complained that "the mode of worship in our synagogue was not in accordance of our Constitution & By Laws," and resolved "that the Rev'd Mr. Henry be notified to say the prayers in the same form like Rev'd J.K. Gutheim did."[27] Several issues were at work here. The Constitution and

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[25]Asmonean 2:9 (June 21, 1850), p. 70. The headline reads "Emendation of the Liturgy."
[26]H.A. Henry, "A prayer for the welfare of the Federal Government and the State of Ohio," Cincinnati, 5610 (1850), small collections #4919, AJA.
[27]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, June 16, 1850.

By Laws of the congregation only mentioned the form of worship once. Stating explicitly that one of the main reasons for founding B'nai Yeshurun was dissatisfaction with the mode of worship at Bene Israel, the Constitution included a commitment "to worship...according to the rites, customs and usages of the German Jews."[28] Henry's style of chanting prayers, rooted in England with the Polish rites of worship, may have reminded these Germans too much of the services at Bene Israel which they had rejected. It is also possible that the root of the dissatisfaction was Henry's staunch adherence to tradition. Here we have evidence of a congregation in genuine conflict and flux. Some of Gutheim's reforms had been too hasty for some in the congregation; possibly, Henry would not reform quickly enough. Henry certainly demonstrated a resistance to liturgical reform throughout his career. It is no wonder that Wise, who came along only three years after Henry's departure, succeeded so thoroughly. Wise was renowned for saying or doing whatever was necessary to please the largest number of people, even if it meant contradicting himself. This emphasis on diplomacy over principle was just what B'nai Yeshurun needed to usher it through its final stage of conflict and into the era of unmitigated reform.

Another, closely-related bone of contention between Henry and the congregational leadership involved the issue of a choir. As early as 1845, a choral society was formed at B'nai Yeshurun. Heller suggests that this was the "first step made toward Reform."[29] It is unclear whether this choir functioned consistently or ever existed at all, but in January of 1850, the "Committee on Synagogue reported that they had made preparations for a choir."[30] Five months later, immediately in the wake of the complaint about Henry's

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[28]Heller, p. 27.
[29]ibid, p. 36.
[30]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, January 20, 1850.

leading of the prayers, the board decided to take action. They held a meeting "to revise a better plan for the mode of worship in our congregation which has been neclected [sic] according to our By Laws & Constitution."[31] Interestingly, the solution they offered was the appointment of a committee for the purpose of forming a choir "to act in conjunction with Rev. Mr. Henry, with full power to engage a music teacher if required."[32]

Apparently, the trustees saw a choir as the answer both to their dissatisfaction with Henry and to their ambivalent desire for change. A choir--if we can assume it was to be an all-male choir-- was, like the other reforms in question at this stage, not a halachic issue. It was a matter of aesthetics, style, and taste. The choir would contribute to decorum, artfulness, and a uniquely modern appreciation for synagogue music. The following month, the committee reported hiring a Mr. Nussbaum as Music Teacher.[33] But a month later, the committee complained that "Rev. Mr. Henry does not cooperate with them and therefore they cannot succeed."[34] It is not entirely clear that the innovative nature of the choir was the cause of Henry's unwillingness to cooperate. However, given the consistent pattern of discord between him and the board, his conservatism as opposed to the congregation's increasingly liberal bent was likely a significant factor. It should be noted, however, that Henry had varying degrees of conflict with all of the congregations in which he functioned in America. His personality may have been a factor in these conflicts as well.

At the very same board meeting where the choir committee complained about their minister, the board received and unanimously accepted a

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[31]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, June 16, 1850.
[32]ibid.
[33]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, July 14, 1850.
[34]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, August 11, 1850.

communication from Henry tendering his resignation. Henry, writing to Leeser, attributed this abrupt action to the conflict over the style of worship services;[35] it is unclear how much of this had to do with the choir issue specifically, and how much with the general complaint that he was violating the constitution or simply different from Gutheim. Regardless, this incident of Henry's temporary resignation--he would be reelected the following month for one more year--is particularly enlightening because two versions of the story survive, one in the minutes, and one in Henry's letter to Leeser. The differences between the two versions are instructive. The minutes show the board, only three days after Henry's resignation, trying to secure the services of another man who was expected to arrive soon from Europe. Apparently, the congregation's financial woes had eased somewhat, as they were prepared to double the minister's salary to $800 per year, and they even offered to pay the candidate's travel expenses from New York![36] Six weeks of silence ensued; at the next meeting, the board reconsidered the action of seeking to hire the new man, and unanimously agreed to accept Henry's petition to be reelected *chazan*, complete with the raise in pay.[37] The board offered no explanation for any of these actions.

Henry's version of the story, as related to Leeser, had much in common with the one recorded in the minutes. As mentioned earlier, Henry attributed his resignation to the worship conflict:

> ...I had some difference with the Trustees of my Congregation touching the manner in which the Synagogue Service should be performed, and...not to create any unkindly feeling among its members and at the

[35]H.A. Henry, Letter to Isaac Leeser, June 12, 1851.
[36]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, August 14, 1850.
[37]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, September 30, 1850.

> same time not to yield to the caprice of any individuals in the discharge of my religious functions, I tendered my resignation of my office...[38]

Notwithstanding this admirable effort to preserve his dignity, it seems that Henry did indeed "yield to the caprice" of his congregation. By November, the Committee on Religious Rules and Regulations reported that "the Rev. Mr. Henry has made arrangement for a choir."[39] Throughout his career, Henry displayed an ability to balance his views and principles with a survival instinct. Usually, he knew how to effectively communicate his stance on issues to a congregation without losing his job. He did not like to admit it, but he knew he served at the whim of the board of trustees in every congregation.

Henry's version of his short-lived resignation did differ in some ways from that recorded by the board. He reported to Leeser that

> ...a General Call was made upon me by the major part of my Congregation to Continue in office here as חזן [minister] at first I refused, but...a requisition was drawn up here to retain me...I could not insult a whole Congregation after the laudsome Manner they acted, and returned my election unanimously without one dissenting voice...[40]

The unanimity of the decision to retain Henry matches the board's report, but there is no other evidence of a "General Call" or a "requisition." Whether Henry deferentially "petitioned" to be reelected (it was standard practice in many congregations for rabbis to have to write the board formally requesting to be rehired each year) or they wooed him back, he remained with the congregation one more year.

Outside of the realm of synagogue worship, Henry pursued other professional goals and interests while in Cincinnati. He published and sold

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[38]H.A. Henry, Letter to Isaac Leeser, June 12, 1851.
[39]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, November 10, 1850.
[40]H.A. Henry, Letter to Isaac Leeser, June 12, 1851.

his Class Book for Jewish Youth, promoting it with advertisements in the Jewish press.[41] He contributed to the few Jewish periodicals which existed, even becoming the official Cincinnati correspondent and agent for The Asmonean, published in New York.[42] In this capacity, Henry made scholarly and creative contributions as well. One such article, entitled "Guardian Angels," a homiletical examination of the Biblical concept of angels, demonstrated Henry's religious outlook quite nicely. He was historically conscious enough to posit the spread of the idea of angels from the Bible to other cultures and religions. In questioning why angels are not mentioned in the Biblical Creation story, he acknowledged various opinions as to why "our Divine Lawgiver, Moses, should have remained silent on so interesting and important a topic." While there was a semblance of liberalism in presenting these outlooks, all of the opinions Henry offered maintained the integrity of the Bible's divine authorship. Henry concluded the point by branding such questions about the Bible's content as "useless speculation, and we dare not indulge in a spirit of conjecture."[43]

He was also involved in the education of the Jewish youth of Cincinnati through the *Talmud Yelodim* Institute. This was the first school attached to B'nai Yeshurun. It was founded in January of 1849, and its opening fortuitously coincided with Henry's arrival the following September.[44] The congregation had already engaged teachers for the school, but doubtless Henry participated in the education. It was the custom of schools at this time to hold public examinations, wherein members of the community were invited to see the progress students were making. Henry reported on the first public

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[41]Asmonean 1:16 (February 8, 1850), p. 127.
[42]Asmonean 2:3 (May 10, 1850), p. 21.
[43]Asmonean 2:10 (June 23, 1850), p. 76. A draft of this article also appears in Henry's handwritten manuscript, small collections #4919, AJA.
[44]Heller, p. 44.

examination of the *Talmud Yelodim* Institute, which took place on March 24, 1850. The examination took place in two sections, of three hours apiece! The students were examined in both Jewish and secular subjects, as well as German. Henry's comments reflected the merging of the parochial and secular elements of education:

> I was more than delighted to witness the anxiety of every child to display its powers of knowledge in the several branches of education... such anxiety was created from the fact that the basis of that instruction was...real Judaism--founded upon the *History*, the *Morality*, and all the more sublime virtues taught in the *Holy Bible*, and whilst that has been the especial care of the teachers, they have not been unmindful of the duties of every individual who shall in his turn become a citizen of the world.[45]

Henry was addressing the same tension that surrounds the issue of Jewish parochial schools to this day, namely the balance between the benefits of an intensive religious education and the need for a strong secular education. While Henry was an unabashed advocate of religious education, he also acknowledged the need to prepare students to become "citizens of the world." This is another indication of Henry's acceptance of modernity within the framework of strict tradition. A secular education was valuable, even indispensable, but not at the expense of a Jewish education.

Another task which was increasingly common for Henry and his contemporaries was to provide an official clerical presence at various Jewish events or celebrations. Increasingly, rabbis were asked to carry out the official religious components of meetings, dinners, and the like. Already on December 16, 1849, Henry participated in the seventh anniversary dinner of the Gentlemen's Hebrew Benevolent Society, the charitable arm of B'nai Yeshurun. His reading of a Psalm was auctioned off to benefit the Society and

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[45]H.A. Henry, letter, Asmonean 1:24 (April 5, 1850), p. 190.

its endeavors.[46] Similarly, when the *Talmud Yelodim* Institute celebrated its second anniversary in January of 1851, Henry was there, offering toasts to the United States and to "our Christian Brothern [sic]."[47]

Henry's resignation and rehiring in the summer of 1850 were closely tied to another important incident in his career. He was involved in somewhat of a scandal with Congregation Adas Israel in Louisville, the congregation which Henry came to America intending to serve. The controversy--it would be the first of several during Henry's rabbinate--was bitter and public. Existing accounts of the events that unfolded that summer and in the subsequent year are in conflict. The leaders of the congregation expressed their side of the story through the Jewish press. Henry defended himself in two long epistles to Isaac Leeser; the letter cited above for other purposes was primarily a defense of his actions in the Louisville scandal.

The incident began when Adas Israel invited Henry to visit them in April of 1850 to preach two sermons.[48] The Louisville congregation adhered to the standard courtesy of asking and receiving permission from B'nai Yeshurun to invite their minister for a visit.[49] Adas Israel had in its employ at the time a minister, Bernard H. Gotthelf. Isaac Leeser reported that same summer that Gotthelf's performance, apparently on a trial basis, was proving very satisfactory to the congregation. Leeser especially noted that Gotthelf's "sermons, in German, are highly spoken of."[50] Gotthelf was hired at about the same time Henry was hired in Cincinnati. The exact chronology is not clear: either the congregation hired Gotthelf after Henry backed out of his

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[46]Occident 7:11 (February, 1850), p. 575.
[47]Heller, p. 48.
[48]H.A. Henry, letter, Asmonean 1:24 (April 5, 1850), p. 190.
[49]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, May 19, 1850.
[50]Occident 8:4, (July 1850), p. 199. Leeser adds, "we sincerely trust that his situation may soon be made permanent."

original intention to go to Louisville by accepting the B'nai Yeshurun post; or Adas Israel got nervous when Henry's arrival was delayed by his stay in Cincinnati and hired Gotthelf, causing Henry to have to scramble to secure a permanent post. Since there was no evidence of bitterness at the time, it could be that the two hirings occurred simultaneously. In any case, Henry's visit to Louisville the following April was complicated by this history.

The Jews of Louisville were impressed by the sermons Henry preached. They drafted resolutions of thanks, sending copies to the Jewish periodicals and to Cincinnati. It was a common custom in this period for congregations to express their thanks for services rendered through formal, published resolutions, as well as gifts. The resolutions described Henry's discourses as "very erudite and eloquent" and indicated that "this congregation will be happy to receive a visit from the Rev. H.A. Henry, whenever his official duties will permit;" finally, they "hope he may be long spared to benefit Israel by his talents and piety." [51] Apparently some influential members of the Louisville congregation were impressed enough with Henry upon his visit that they were interested in securing his services in some capacity. They wanted Henry to take over the school associated with the congregation, and preach sermons on the Sabbath, but not to read the service as *chazan*.[52]

The members of Adas Israel knew first hand of Henry's oratorical skills. He also clearly had the requisite experience in running a school. The condition of the Louisville school at this time is another issue of some disagreement. Henry described the school as "broken up, the pupils not having made any improvements," and noted that the school was to be

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[51] Asmonean 2:3 (May 10, 1850), p. 22.

[52] H.A. Henry, Letter to Isaac Leeser, June 12,1851; this much is confirmed in an otherwise accusatory letter by M. Strauss, president of Adas Israel, Occident 9:6 (September, 1851), pp. 323-4.

separated from the synagogue to facilitate his taking it over. The Louisville correspondent for The Asmonean, on the other hand, attested that in May of 1850 the school, run by Gotthelf assisted by a Mr. Bernal, was flourishing.[53]

The controversy, though, did not involve the school so much as the ministerial post at Adas Israel. Isaac Leeser's initial report of this incident in The Occident--presumably based on a report from a member of the Louisville congregation--condemned Henry for conspiring to unseat Gotthelf as minister, in addition to accepting the legitimately vacant job of running the school. Leeser, while admitting that he did not know Henry, insinuated that he had displaced Gutheim at B'nai Yeshurun with similarly questionable tactics, and called Henry's qualifications into question as well.[54] Leeser was himself a minister whose 21-year tenure at his congregation in Philadelphia, which had always been stormy, had officially ended in 1850. Leeser, for reasons of both personal security and principle, was a crusader for the dignity of the rabbinate. He chronicled the vagaries of the ministers of this period, all the while exhorting his readers to take their religious leadership seriously.[55] He viewed the kind of politicking and backbiting in Henry's Louisville scandal as doing further damage to an already beleaguered profession. Leeser's primary message in condemning Henry was directed to the congregational leadership in Louisville. He ended his account by calling on the "Israelites of Louisville to express publicly their confidence in their minister by re-electing him by a triumphant vote," but not before calling Henry's actions "so great an outrage and so palpable a sin against the plain spirit of the Scriptures (Deut. 27:17) that we would be false to our calling as a

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[53] Anonymous, "Louisville Correspondence," Asmonean 4:17 (August 15, 1851), p. 137.
[54] Isaac Leeser, "News Items--Louisville," Occident 8:6 (September, 1850), pp. 316-17.
[55] Sussman, pp. 155-178.

journalist, did we not seize the first opportunity which has offered, to record our protest against it..."[56]

Henry's first letter to Leeser was a response to this report. He expressed surprise that Leeser would turn on him so quickly after having lauded his original appointment in Cincinnati. In denying the charges and professing his innocence, Henry claimed not to have replied publicly out of a desire to take the high road. Henry perceived that had he told his version of the truth, it would have resulted in some "assassinations [!] which would have but little defamed the character of the Jewish ministry which, you know does not command at this moment the highest respect."[57] He too was bothered by the behavior of some in the Jewish community at this time, both those in the rabbinate who acted unscrupulously and those congregational leaders who tolerated it. Henry continued by outlining his qualifications for the rabbinate, defending himself against Leeser's insinuation that he was one of the unqualified charlatans who preyed on congregations desperate for rabbis. He defended his actions in replacing Gutheim as well, describing him as having been "very unpopular by the most of the congregation." Henry also alluded to the role of reform in his election over Gutheim by insisting that he, Henry was "firmly orthodox, but not a pretender."[58] Henry seems to have perceived that the vote was indeed a referendum of sorts on the issue of reform, and that the rebellion, as it were, had been quashed when he was elected. Gutheim's "unpopular" status as Henry saw it was due to his status as a "pretender" to orthodoxy; Henry perceived himself as restoring peace in the congregation, as if Gutheim had been the source of disruption.

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[56]Isaac Leeser, "News Items--Louisville," Occident 8:6 (September, 1850), pp. 316-17.
[57]H.A. Henry, Letter to Isaac Leeser, June 12, 1851.
[58]ibid.

Interestingly, it was Henry himself who juxtaposed the incident in Louisville with the disagreements he was having over the style of worship in Cincinnati. According to his version of the story, it was all coincidental: Adas Israel invited him to preach and he impressed them. He subsequently resigned from B'nai Yeshurun out of principle over the worship issues. Adas Israel then offered him the school job, which he accepted; but he couldn't disappoint the whole Cincinnati congregation when they unanimously begged him to return, so he backed out of the Louisville job, much to the disappointment of his admirers there.

Leeser was apparently impressed by Henry's letter of explanation and defense. He printed a long, elaborate, somewhat defensive apology in The Occident, remarking again that he was merely attempting to speak out against the injustices done to so many ministers on account of their powerless position vis a vis their employers. Henry apparently had forwarded, along with his letter, testimonials to his character and qualifications from the Free School and the Western Synagogue, "which ought not to have been given, in case he was not deserving of the same."[59] Leeser somewhat begrudgingly acknowledged the hastiness of his judgement of Henry, and made amends by plugging Henry's Class Book, which was about to be published in Cincinnati. He ended the apology by wishing that Henry "may not alone receive the approbation of his flock, but the support and guidance of our Maker."[60]

Notwithstanding Leeser's apology, Henry's relations with B'nai Yeshurun did not improve much during the months following the summer of 1850. He did cooperate with the choir in November as we have seen. But in March of 1851, the board of trustees rejected Henry's request for a new cloak and hat,

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[59]Isaac Leeser, "Rev. H.A. Henry, of Cincinnati," Occident 9:5 (August 1851), p. 270.
[60]ibid.

stating that "we have concluted [sic] not to furnish Canonicals to our Ministers."[61] The very simplicity of this rejection supports the general sense that Henry was not in a position of much power or influence in the congregation. However, in the ensuing months, something else fairly drastic must have happened. On July 6, the board of trustees suddenly resolved to get rid of Henry as soon as possible. Based on "Communication from a member," the board decided "we will not accept of his petition as Chasan after the expiration of the present term, as we are justified in believing that his Conduct has not been such as becoming a Minister of a Honourable Congregation..."[62] What did Henry do to deserve this accusation? No degree of difference in approach toward tradition and reform could account for this kind of language. The fact that the board did not reveal the identity of the "member" points to the sensitivity of the issue.

The Louisville situation may have played a role in Henry's termination in Cincinnati. The incident did not end with the events of the summer of 1850. Shortly after Henry's firing in July, and immediately following his letter to Leeser and Leeser's retraction, another chapter of the story ensued. On August 4, 1851, Henry returned to Louisville and, according to Mr. M. Strauss, President of the Synagogue, "canvassed most vigorously among the majority of the members of this congregation, soliciting their support at the coming election for חזן, promising them...that, *if elected*, he would commence a good school."[63] In this letter, Strauss also referred to yet a third visit, sometime between May, 1850 and the summer of 1851, wherein Henry was pushing to be hired as schoolmaster and lecturer, but still not *chazan*. This could be the event which invoked the ire of the leaders of B'nai Yeshurun. Strauss

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[61]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, March 9, 1851.
[62]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, July 6, 1851.
[63]M. Strauss, letter, Occident 9:6 (September, 1851), pp. 323-4

deprecated this tactic of Henry's as well, insisting that while Adas Israel looked forward to Henry's work with the school, "lecturer" was not an open office since *chazan* and lecturer were always the same person, and Gotthelf was that person. Strauss did not specify when this intermediate visit occurred, though it was clearly sometime between Henry's first visit in the early summer of 1850 and his firing in July of 1851. Word of Henry's shopping his services in Louisville may have reached a member of B'nai Yeshurun. Whether or not this canvassing would constitute "conduct unbecoming the minister of an honorable congregation" is another question.

Apparently, though, in this last visit of August 4, Henry was clearly pushing for Gotthelf's job. The congregation, by most accounts, was satisfied with Gotthelf as its minister. Henry insinuated to Leeser that Gotthelf was "elected at Louisville not so unanimously as it is represented to you,"[64] but there is no other evidence of dissatisfaction with Gotthelf. The accounts of this situation proffered by Leeser, Strauss, and the anonymous Louisville correspondent of The Asmonean portray Gotthelf as the competent, well-liked victim of Henry's malicious conniving.[65] Notwithstanding Strauss's "historical" approach to the roles of the minister at Adas Israel, the congregation was only consecrated two years prior to this time. A Cincinnati correspondent of The Occident was present at the consecration, on March 30, 1849, and was struck most powerfully by the discourse of the visiting preacher, none other than James K. Gutheim. The correspondent also reported that the congregation seemed badly in need of a minister, "and in all Israel is not one suited to their wants."[66] Only two years earlier, Adas Israel

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[64]H.A. Henry, Letter to Isaac Leeser, June 12, 1851.
[65]M. Strauss, pp. 323-4; Isaac Leeser, "News Items--Louisville," Occident 8:6 (September, 1850), pp. 316-17; Anonymous, "Louisville Correspondence," Asmonean 4:17 (August 15, 1851), p. 137.
[66]J.A. (Joseph Abraham?), "Consecration at Louisville," Occident 7:2 (May, 1849), p. 98.

was brand new and entirely without rabbinical leadership; it is not surprising that the roles and expectations would still be in flux when Henry appeared on the scene.

Given Henry's situation in Cincinnati, it is understandable that he would have been looking for work in August of 1851. Nevertheless, he insisted upon defending his actions yet again. In September, he wrote a second letter to Leeser, this time from Syracuse where he had already relocated. Henry insisted that Strauss's letter contained "not one particle of truth," and that Strauss had misled Henry into believing that Gotthelf's job indeed was open:

> ...Mr. Straus has acted a double part in the affair, and I hold him too contemptible to enter into controversy with him...Mr Straus... is an abominable Hypocrite for he himself said to me Mr. Gotthelf has in every way deceived us--our children are left without any Hebrew Teacher...[67]

Here Henry offered further support for the notion that Gotthelf was not universally beloved. Henry insisted to Leeser that he came to Louisville merely to sell his book, and that Strauss and others were making overtures to him about applying for the office of *chazan*, but that he refused to read or preach until the congregation officially declared the office vacant.[68]

The role of Strauss is curious. If Henry's words were true, it is strange that Strauss would write an unsolicited letter to Leeser condemning Henry unless he felt the need to demonstrate to Gotthelf or to the congregation that he supported the minister. Also, despite Henry's claim to the high road, his decision to send Leeser a personal letter is questionable. Why wouldn't he send Leeser a letter for publication, so that he could publicly refute Strauss's charges if they were false? As for the accusation of Strauss playing a "double

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[67]H.A. Henry, letter to Isaac Leeser, September 22, 1851.
[68]ibid.

part," Strauss may have wanted to get rid of Gotthelf, made overtures to Henry, and then backed off and put the responsibility on Henry when he realized he didn't have the congregation's support. Perhaps Strauss's letter revealed ill will toward Henry which may have had its roots in Henry's initial snubbing of Louisville in favor of Cincinnati.

Henry's tenure in Cincinnati did not end on an entirely bitter note. Four days after firing Henry and stating explicitly that unacceptable conduct was the reason, the board of B'nai Yeshurun relented somewhat. They accepted his letter of resignation, granted him paid leave of absence, and agreed to draft "such resolutions as they think proper" as testimonials for use in obtaining future work.[69] In all likelihood, the furor over his actions had subsided, and the board, secure in the knowledge that Henry would go quietly, wished to paint the most favorable picture of the separation as well. Ten days later, a committee brought the resolutions to the board. They tendered "best wishes for the Rev. Gentmn & his family & success to all his future undertakings."[70] They also took "pleasure in recommending him to any congregation in the Union," describing him as "a good Chazan, Lecturer, and Talmudist, and a most excellent scholar in the Hebrew and English languages."[71] The testimonials were far from glowing, but they demonstrate that the ill will was not so strong as to prevent a civil parting of ways.

We have seen that the trend toward reform and the Louisville scandal both contributed to Henry's departure from Cincinnati. Even if these issues had not arisen, Henry and B'nai Yeshurun did not seem to have much invested in each other. He was hired practically on a whim, and fired just as capriciously. His tenure there illustrates how volatile the rabbinate was at this

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[69]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, July 10, 1851.
[70]B'nai Yeshurun minutes, July 20, 1851.
[71]Occident 9: 8 (November, 1851), pp. 416-417.

stage of American Jewish history. The congregation was in conflict about its expectations of a rabbi. Clearly, they expected him to behave honorably, to reflect well on them. They expected him to help them live out their simultaneous embrace of tradition and modernity. They expected him to guide them in the process of legitimizing a new Judaism, rooted in Europe, but flowering in a uniquely American milieu. On one or more of these counts, Henry failed. As a traditionalist, coming to the U.S. in his forties, set in his ways and probably struggling to adapt to the culture, he was the wrong man for the Jews of Cincinnati. It was time to move on.

Chapter Three: Syracuse, 1851-1853

After failing to secure work in Louisville in early August of 1851, Henry left Cincinnati and headed east. We have no evidence of exactly when he left, his intended destination, or if he had any prospects for work when he set out. He seems to have been comfortable traveling, seeking out the Jewish communities in whatever city he happened to find himself, and offering his services. As there were so few rabbis in America at this time, the services of visiting ministers--especially those who could deliver English sermons--were sufficiently in demand. By the end of August, Henry had arrived in New York City. New York was already the largest Jewish community in America, with approximately 16,000 Jews.[1] It is likely that he headed to New York simply because the odds were in his favor for procuring employment there. Henry must have been eager for work; he made a decision at this point that was quite out of character. On Saturday, August 30, he delivered a sermon at Temple Emanu-El, the Reform synagogue!

Founded in 1845 as an offshoot of New York's German synagogues, Emanu-El began with a very modest program of reform. A few less central prayers and *piyyutim* (liturgical prayers) were eliminated. Like B'nai Yeshurun in Cincinnati, the first changes were purely aesthetic; decorum was the primary goal of the innovations.[2] The purchase of a new building on Chrystie Street in 1847 seems to have inspired more changes; the reforms increased slowly but steadily over the next few years. By the time of Henry's

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[1]Hyman Grinstein, The Rise of the Jewish Community of New York, 1654-1860 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1945), p. 469. Grinstein's source is the London Jewish Chronicle, and is from 1850.
[2]ibid., pp. 354-55

visit in 1851, two other significant innovations had occurred: organ music and a mixed-gender choir were now part of divine service at Emanu-El.

The rabbi was Leo Merzbacher, who is thought to be the second ordained rabbi to arrive in America. Merzbacher was not a reformer from the outset; as late as 1844, he was even asked to be a *posek she'elot* (resolver of questions in accordance with Jewish law, a traditional orthodox practice).[3] Nonetheless, he was modern and flexible enough to work with Temple Emanu-El. His one major drawback, in the view of his congregation, was his lack of facility with English. By 1855, the congregation was advertising for an assistant minister who could give sermons in English.[4] Thus, guest lecturers who could preach in the vernacular, like Henry, were probably common at Emanu-El. Henry's sermon was well-received by the leaders of the Temple. They published resolutions of gratitude in the newspaper, thanking Henry for "the deep impression made by his edifying sermon."[5]

Why would a traditionalist like Henry seemingly express his approval of an unequivocally Reform congregation by preaching there? As was so often the case for Henry and in this period in general, principle took a back seat to pragmatism. Certainly principles were the basis for many decisions, expressions, and actions at this time; but Henry was about fifty years old, with a wife and at least five children to support, and he was unemployed. He was in no position to refuse a speaking engagement if it may have led to a job.

When pragmatic concerns were not foremost, though, Jews in the mid-nineteenth century were frequently articulate and vociferous in defense of

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[3]Jick, p. 74. Jick acknowledges that the proof of his ordination is not totally reliable; his congregation called him "Mr." Merzbacher. Nonetheless, he was regarded as the second most scholarly rabbi in America, after Abraham Rice, who was the first rabbi to settle here.
[4]ibid., p. 77.
[5]Asmonean 4:21 (September 12, 1851), p. 180.

their religious principles. On the same page of The Asmonean where Emanu-El's resolutions of thanks were printed, the following polemic appeared:

> Query--Why did Mr. John D. Phillips oppose the giving to the Rev. Mr. Henry, of Cincinnati, permission to preach in the Wooster street Synagogue, although strongly recommended by Mr. Lawrence Myers, a trustee of the same Congregation?
>
> Answer--Because, the said Mr. John D. Phillips asserted that the Rev. Mr. Henry had preached a week previously in "The Temple," heard the organ, and of course unfitted himself by this act, from ever preaching again in an *Orthodox* Congregation.
>
> Oh Israel, where is thy shame!
>
> [signed] A member of the Temple[6]

This is a prime example of the kind of mocking and bitter discourse that characterized the discussions of reform. The Emanu-El congregant who wrote this letter was obviously privy to the discussion of Henry's "unfittedness" which took place among the leaders of the Wooster St. congregation. While this letter criticized the divisiveness of the orthodox faction's exclusion of anything or anybody associated with a *treyf* Reform temple--this is the "shame" referred to--it was of course adding fuel to the fire of divisiveness itself. The Wooster St. congregation was Shaarey Tefilah, which was founded in 1845 as one of the last in a long line of congregations which seceded from established synagogues, dating back to 1825.[7] This sarcastic letter reflects the strength of the convictions on issues of Reform, and the bitterness which frequently accompanied the competition between synagogues in New York.

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[6]ibid.

[7]Grinstein, p. 50. Shaarey Tefilah broke away from B'nai Jeshurun, which itself was the first secessionist congregation, breaking Shearith Israel's long monopoly on Jewish life in New York in 1825. I. Harold Sharfman (p. 170) claims that Shaarey Tefilah was the English faction of B'nai Jeshurun which broke from the German faction.

The irony here is that this parody is precisely the kind of argument Henry might have made in earnest, had the situation been otherwise. Presumably, though, the letter, while attempting to ridicule Shaarey Tefilah's leaders, reflects an actual occurrence; if so, this is a rare instance of Henry acting in such a way as to receive criticism from the right rather than the left. The rest of his career was marked by a consistent pattern of resistance to reform, a stance which he maintained whenever his livelihood was not at stake.

Henry was unable to secure permanent work in New York City. By September 19, he had made his way upstate to Syracuse, New York. He may have been invited to Syracuse, or made arrangements to stop there. Isaac Leeser reported that he stopped in Syracuse on his way *to* New York City.[8] Perhaps Henry was on his way *back* to the city after an upstate scouting trip. In any case, his timing in passing through Syracuse was fortuitous. The congregation in Syracuse, Keneseth Sholom (commonly referred to as the Society of Concord, a rough translation of the Hebrew, or the Temple of Concord), had just built an impressive synagogue building, and the ceremony of consecration was scheduled for just this time.

The Society of Concord was founded in 1839 as a humble *minyan*, meeting in the back of the Bernheimer and Block store. By 1850, the community had grown to 100 families, and had outgrown its quarters three times.[9] The last of these locations was a modest house which the congregation purchased and extensively remodeled in 1846. This house of worship was dedicated shortly before *Rosh Hashana* of that year, with Isaac Mayer Wise, who had arrived in

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[8]Isaac Leeser, "Consecration of the New Synagogue, Keneseth Shalom, at Syracuse, New York," Occident 9:7 (October, 1851), p. 375.
[9]Bernard G. Rudolph, From a Minyan to a Community: A History of the Jews of Syracuse (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1970), p. 37.

the U.S. in July, visiting as guest speaker for the occasion.[10] Two men had served as rabbinical functionaries in the congregation by this time: Abraham Gunzenhauser (1841-46) and Joseph Goodman (1846-?). Little is known of either of them. The job of *chazan* in such a community at this stage probably was not a full-time endeavor, though, and often any Jewish man with a nice voice would suffice for the role. Although Goodman had just been hired in August of 1846, the congregation still found it necessary to invite Wise to speak at the consecration. This could reflect their desire to make the occasion more festive or special. Even more likely, Goodman was not able or expected to deliver sermons at all.

The community had grown steadily throughout the 1840's; the burgeoning economy allowed ever more German peddlers to amass enough resources to start their own businesses. The Jewish population grew as Syracuse expanded from a village to a city.[11] When the community had grown sufficiently to warrant building a new synagogue, Jacob Stone, an affluent merchant who was president of the Society of Concord, led the fundraising campaign. This campaign included soliciting donations from other Jewish communities through the Jewish press, a common custom in this period.[12] The building was erected at a cost of about $10,000.[13]

Like Cincinnati, the Syracuse community was in conflict over its transition from traditional beginnings to a reform approach. The conflict would become a major issue in the Society of Concord only long after Henry had severed his association with it. Wise's officiation at the dedication of the

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[10]ibid., pp. 4-5; James G. Heller, Isaac M. Wise: His Life and Work (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1965), pp. 115-120.
[11]Rudolph, p. 34.
[12]Asmonean 2:3 (May 10, 1850), p. 20.
[13]Rudolph, p. 37.

1846 building was not a statement in favor of reform.[14] Wise had been in the United States only a few months at the time, and hardly had a program of reform in place. Max Lilienthal, one of the leading rabbis of New York already at this time, was invited to officiate but had been unable to leave New York. Lilienthal asked his immigrant friend Wise to substitute and get some much-needed experience with American congregations.[15] Nevertheless, the dispute over how much, if at all, to reform Jewish tradition had begun to take root in Syracuse by 1850.

This tension played itself out in the realms of both worship ritual and synagogue architecture. Bernard G. Rudolph characterizes this issue as a generational conflict, wherein the older, founding congregants favored orthodoxy and the younger, newer members pushed for reform. The two sides compromised in the area of architecture. The reading platform, traditionally located in the center of the sanctuary, was moved to the front of the room. The construction of a frontal *bimah*--with the reading lectern situated on it so that the service leader would be facing the congregation, rather than surrounded by them--was considered an innovation.

This change reflected the evolving role of the rabbi in synagogue life as well. As Jews and their congregations became Americanized, the rabbi increasingly became a focal point of the worship experience. Traditionally, Jewish worship, even in the communal setting of the synagogue, was a largely individual experience; the *shaliach tzibur* (prayer leader) was more of a pace setter and a guarantee that at least one representative of the community would intone every word of the liturgy. Symbolically, sanctuary

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[14]Jonathan Mesinger, The Jewish Community in Syracuse (Syracuse: PhD dissertation, University of Syracuse, 1977), p. 177. Mesinger asserts that Wise's presence *was* a move in the direction of reform; this observation is anachronistic.

[15]James G. Heller, Isaac M. Wise: His Life and Work (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1965), pp. 115-120.

design reflected this notion. The central reading desk suggested that the reader, though elevated, was just another congregant. The frontal *bimah* meant that attention was to be focused forward, not just on the ark or toward Jerusalem, but toward the rabbi. This innovation went hand-in-hand with the rise of decorum, the decline of knowledge of the prayers by the average Jew, and other trappings of Americanization.

Yet at this early stage, the new synagogue in Syracuse reflected tradition as well. A balcony was constructed around three sides of the synagogue as a women's gallery.[16] Mixed seating was not a part of the standard reform agenda at this time. Like B'nai Yeshurun, the congregation was moving slowly in the direction of reform. Again, the fact that Henry was hired in Syracuse is evidence that the congregation's general orientation and practice was orthodox at this time. Those innovations which were instituted were largely cosmetic, like the construction of the frontal *bimah.* But once reform became an issue in the building of an edifice, the door was permanently open for such discussions.

Henry was not the only rabbinical presence at the dedication of the Society of Concord's new building on September 19, 1851. Isaac Leeser, acknowledged as one of the leading rabbis in America, was invited to officiate. It was customary to invite prominent rabbis to such occasions. Clearly the leaders of the synagogue perceived the importance of the day and, lacking a prestigious rabbi of their own, sought a presence which would lend an additional air of excitement to the day. However, Leeser's acceptance of the invitation was delayed in its arrival; the Jews of Syracuse, fearful that Leeser would not come and that they would have nobody to speak on this momentous occasion, also

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[16]Rudolph, p. 38.

invited Morris J. Raphall, the rabbi of B'nai Jeshurun (the Greene Street Synagogue) of New York to take his place.

Raphall is an interesting subject for comparison with Henry. Both men were natives of England, and were connected with Chief Rabbi Solomon Hirschell, Raphall having served as Hirschell's secretary.[17] Both men were congregational ministers before leaving England; Raphall's pulpit was in Birmingham. Both were educated men, but not necessarily ordained rabbis,[18] and both were noted for their talent in delivering English sermons. The two men knew each other in England, and apparently got along. Henry, responding to a report that the two men had a conflict early in 1850, wrote that "Dr. Raphall has been known to me in his public career for many years past in the old country, and during that period, I do not recollect in any one instance, that we had any reason to be dissatisfied with each other."[19] They arrived in America within a few months of each other in 1849, Henry in July, Raphall in October. Yet the impact of Raphall's arrival was deeper and broader than Henry's.

Raphall's advent was hailed with much excitement by the press, especially New York's Asmonean. His services were immediately in demand as a speaker at many different synagogues and communal events. B'nai Jeshurun appointed Raphall for life[20]--an astonishing move at a time when, as we have seen, rabbis were lucky to be rehired from year to year--at the outlandish salary of $2000 annually. The significant difference between Henry and Raphall was the reputation which preceded them. Raphall had achieved wide fame in England as an orator, specifically on the subjects of Biblical poetry and

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[17]Sharfman, p. 277.
[18]Jick (p. 131) questions not only his ordination, but whether Raphall received a classic rabbinic education at all.
[19]H.A. Henry, letter, Asmonean 1:25 (April 12, 1850), p. 197.
[20]Occident 7:11 (February, 1850), p. 573.

Jewish History.[21] Apparently a big part of the attraction to Raphall was the impression he made on the gentile community.[22] He was so renowned as an honorable and forceful Jewish presence that he earned the distinction of being the first Jewish clergyman to deliver a prayer in the United States Congress.

In 1859, Isaac Leeser noted in his Occident that although no fewer than five members of the U.S. House and Senate were Jews, no Jewish minister had yet officiated in Congress. Leeser attributed this to the lack of a minister in the vicinity of Washington, D.C. with sufficient oratorical skills to represent America's Jews honorably.[23] Less than a year later, Raphall received the call. On February 1, 1860, Congress met to elect a Speaker of the House, a task which had proven elusive for two months. A Jew who was in town at the time recorded the momentous occasion. Observing the lawmakers' reactions to Raphall's opening prayer, he noted:

> At first their feeling seemed to be that of malicious curiosity; but as his melodious sentences, his correct elocution, and impressive intonation fell upon their ears, the change was most striking...Curiosity made room for attention, and that soon became devotion.[24]

The observer also chronicled the aftermath of the day's events, wherein Members of Congress joked that after sixty days of failing to elect a speaker under Christian inspiration, the rabbi had done the trick for them. The only criticisms of Raphall regarded his *talit* and velvet prayer cap. The writer, reflecting his own ambivalence, admitted "I wished he had been less particular and wedded to ancient customs." But his simultaneous pride was

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[21]Jick, p. 131; Grinstein, p. 92.
[22]Jick, p. 131, quoting Israel Goldstein, A Century of Judaism in New York (New York: Congregation *B'nai Jeshurun*, 1930), calls Raphall "the foremost expounder of the Jew to the non-Jew in England."
[23]Occident 17:2 (April 7, 1859), pp. 11-12.
[24]An American Jew, "The 'Rabbi' In Congress," Occident 17:46 (February 9, 1860), p. 275.

vindicated when a distinguished Congressman lauded Raphall's integrity in adhering to the custom of his people.

Raphall must have been a far more polished speaker and a more powerful public personality than Henry. Interestingly, Raphall was not a *chazan;*[25] the desire to have a distinguished English-speaking lecturer was so strong that B'nai Jeshurun hired him even though it meant they would have to hire a separate *chazan* to chant the service. Raphall's appointment made the emphasis on English preaching even more pronounced than it already was, especially in New York; it may have made it easier for Henry to find work there eventually. The role of the rabbi was changing; no exciting event in the Jewish community was complete without an eloquent English lecture, and no lecturer was more sought after than Raphall.

That oratorical ability was a significant component of the American rabbinate already at this time is evident from Raphall's impact on the community. English preaching in the United States dates back at least as far as Gershom Mendes Seixas, who was delivering occasional sermons at Shearith Israel in New York in the eighteenth century. Seixas set the precedent for ministers at the original sephardic congregations, who continued the practice into the early nineteenth century.[26] This practice was as novel in America as it was in England when Henry was among the pioneer preachers there. Traditionally, sermons were not part of the regular Jewish liturgical framework.[27] Most rabbis gave sermons twice a year, and they tended to be complicated halachic discourses rather than moralistic homilies.[28] But in the American context, the traditional rabbi was gradually replaced in many ways

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[25]Grinstein, p. 92.
[26]Sharfman, p. 175; Jick, p. 10.
[27]Jick, p. 10.
[28]Salo Baron, "The Image of the Rabbis, Formerly and Today," Steeled By Adversity (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971), p. 148.

as the model for Jewish clergy by the Protestant minister. Thus the weekly sermon with both educational and moral content crept into mainstream American Jewish practice. Also, the rabbi was increasingly expected to represent his congregation and the Jewish community publicly, and his fluency and power with English was the most important tool for this task. When the Baltimore Hebrew Congregation hired Rabbi Abraham Rice--acknowledged as the foremost Jewish legal scholar in America--they still felt the need to hire a separate preacher to deliver English sermons.[29] Throughout Henry's years in America, the emphasis on English preaching only intensified.[30] Isaac Mayer Wise summed up this trend in an 1858 article entitled "We Need English Preachers in the Synagogue":

> For the first time, during eighteen centuries of silence, Judaism has found a place here, where it may speak, hold up its celestial light to the gaze of an intelligent and inquisitive community, longing anxiously after instruction...and behold, here we are mute, few of us speak in a language which our neighbors understand...[31]

Henry possessed a skill which was valued by his community upon his arrival in 1849, and even more highly valued as his career progressed. It is very likely that Henry's facility with English preaching helped him secure or retain work at various stops during his American career. Wise's article hinted at another aspect of preaching which must have made it appealing to Henry. Rather than viewing it as an adopted Christian practice, Wise described preaching as educating from the pulpit. Henry certainly viewed his sermons as teaching tools, if his books of discourses are reliable evidence. Preaching was one aspect

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[29]Jick, pp. 71-72. Jick adds "Clearly, familiarity with Jewish sources and rabbinic credentials were of little moment. An English-speaking minister was preferred to a German-speaking rabbi."
[30]ibid., pp. 184-5.
[31]Israelite 5:2 (July 16, 1858), p. 13.

of the new American rabbi in which Henry was a pioneer. As able a preacher as Henry was, though, Raphall's skill was much more renowned and sought after.

Thus there were three rabbinical dignitaries in attendance when the Society of Concord consecrated its new building. Raphall was the featured speaker; Henry was invited to serve as *chazan*, to chant the service. This left Leeser as an observer, which allowed him to give a much more complete account of the event than we might have had otherwise. Leeser gave especially detailed description of the building itself, which evoked "astonishment" with its impressive size and seemed to Leeser "every way worthy to serve as a place for the dwelling of the God of Jacob." [32] Leeser also described the consecration service at length. The ceremony began with an elaborate processional down the front walkway of the congregation, which included all those present for the occasion, including the Syracuse German Brass Band, the Mayor and Common Council of Syracuse, and many gentile guests, who were apparently eager to witness the exotic ceremony of the Jews.[33]

The children of the congregation presented the President with the key to the synagogue, which he opened, leading the processional inside. The opening ceremonies included Henry's prayer for the welfare of the government, and his leading a choir, consisting of his sons, in the chanting of Psalm 29. Henry and Leeser carried the Torah Scrolls in seven circuits around the synagogue and deposited them in the ark. Raphall then ascended the *bimah* and gave his discourse, which lasted nearly an hour. Henry then recited a prayer for the prosperity of the congregation, which was the pretext

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[32]Leeser, Occident 9:7 (October, 1851), p. 373.
[33]Asmonean 4:23 (September 26, 1851), p. 201. This anonymous article is a shorter, but equally descriptive account of the consecration as Leeser's.

for a collection being taken up. Finally, Henry read the evening service, his sons again assisting as the choir, "in a beautiful style."[34] Apparently, Henry's objection to a choir in Cincinnati was a matter of the inclusion of women or some other, unspecified issue. His sons assisting him as a choir here is conclusive proof that he could not have objected stylistically or halachically to the presence of a choir of males.

The Friday afternoon and evening exercises were the centerpiece of an entire weekend of consecration festivities. The congregation met again on Saturday morning for *shacharit* and in the afternoon for *mincha*, which was read by Leeser. Raphall also delivered another hour-long lecture on Saturday afternoon. This ended the formal consecration exercises, but the visiting rabbis were all invited to stay for a dinner on Sunday at the home of Mr. Garson, a leader of the congregation. At this dinner, Raphall was presented with a gift, and Henry and Leeser with praise and thanks. Speeches followed, Raphall and Leeser speaking in German and Henry in English. Leeser made a point of complimenting Raphall's facility in German, a "language which to him is an acquired one, through a long residence in Germany."[35] While Raphall was so highly valued for his English oration, the congregants in Syracuse may have been more comfortable with German. In the slightly less formal setting of Mr. Garson's home, Raphall was probably more comfortable using a language which was not his native tongue.

This grand event in Syracuse highlighted several trends in American synagogues. Aesthetics were ever more important; the appearance of the building, the pomp of the ceremony, and the decorum and the emphasis on artful music, liturgy, and oration had all assumed prominence by this time. It

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[34]Leeser, Occident 9:7 (October, 1851), p. 377.
[35]ibid., p. 379.

was increasingly important to have a rabbi who would compare favorably with Christian ministers in manner and eloquence. Since the Society of Concord did not have a leader who could provide such a presence, they made sure to procure one for the occasion. The presence of gentiles added emphasis to all of these issues.

The Syracuse synagogue was without its own minister at this time. As early as July, they had been advertising for one, seeking "a gentleman competent to act as Hazan, and Teacher of the German and Hebrew languages."[36] The salary was to be $300 per year, with residence rent-free and "other resources to augment" the income. It is likely that Henry was aware of the opening, and that his officiation at the consecration ceremony was a tryout of sorts. We know that Henry did not leave Syracuse immediately following the consecration, because the following Monday, September 22, he wrote Leeser a letter from there. This was the letter in which Henry denied the veracity of Mr. Strauss's report regarding the Louisville scandal. Perhaps Leeser had brought that month's Occident with him for distribution in Syracuse, and Henry read it and responded immediately. In the same letter, Henry offered his services to Leeser as a contributor to The Occident, stating that "so far as my humble efforts can be made available they are at your service."[37] Henry also sent Leeser a copy of his Class Book, perhaps hoping that Leeser would review it favorably.

Henry was hired as *Chazan* of the Society of Concord, probably starting on the first of October.[38] Very little information remains regarding his two-year tenure there. The Syracuse community and the Temple Society of Concord

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[36]Asmonean 4:11 (July 4, 1851), p. 87.
[37]H.A. Henry, letter to Isaac Leeser, September 22, 1851.
[38]Occident 10:8 (November, 1852), p. 413. In a report from Syracuse, Leeser's correspondent indicates that Henry's tenure was to expire on October 1. Presumably it was a one-year tenure.

have few detailed records from this period. Among those works which have been written on the history of the community or the synagogue, several fail to mention Henry at all.[39] The few entries in The Occident, plus epitaphs and other notes in Henry's own manuscript, may constitute the only detailed evidence of his time there.

We know that during his tenure in Syracuse, Henry went on a "lecturing tour" through the South.[40] He was carrying with him his Class Book, hoping to supplement his modest income with its sales. One of his first stops, in January of 1852, was at Anshe Emeth synagogue in Albany, where the minister was none other than Isaac Mayer Wise. Henry's sermon on the messianic prophecies of Isaiah was "strong and conclusive, and his flow of language so beautiful and poetical, that he enraptured the whole congregation."[41]

Another stop on Henry's tour, in Charleston, South Carolina, was the scene of the second "scandal" of Henry's career. A report of ill behavior on Henry's part circulated among the congregation while he was there. The nature of this report is unknown, but whatever the charges were, they were a continuing source of indignation for Henry. Apparently, the congregation asked Henry to provide testimonials supporting his character, as proof that the charges were false, in return for which the congregation would publicly exonerate him from wrongdoing. Henry did so, but by August he had heard nothing from the congregation to clear his name. He then wrote a letter to

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[39]These include Barbara Sheklin Davis, A History of the Jewish Community of Syracuse (Syracuse: Syracuse Jewish Federation, 1986); Benjamin Friedman, "The Days of the Years: A History of the Society of the Concord," One Hundredth Anniversary, 1839-1939 (Syracuse, Society of the Concord 1939); and Jonathan Mesinger, The Jewish Community in Syracuse (Syracuse: PhD dissertation, University of Syracuse, 1977).

[40]Marcus Henry, p. 34.

[41]Asmonean 5:15 (January 30, 1852), p. 133. The report is signed with the curious appellation "Bassist," presumably an Albany congregant.

Mr. S. Vallentine, a member of the congregation in Charleston "to trace the cause of the silence of the folks of Charleston."[42] Henry was "determined not to let this matter drop into oblivion in justice to my own reputation and that of my family." He threatened a law suit for "Defamation of character to myself, and a pecuniary injury to my family," and solicited Vallentine's help in bringing the situation to a satisfactory resolution.

The source of the negative report was of great concern to Henry. Leeser was in town at the same time, and Henry was under the impression that it was Leeser who spread the evil report about him. When he confronted Leeser about this in writing, Leeser pointed the finger at Morris Raphall. Henry then confronted Raphall, who also denied being the source of the rumors. Nothing more was heard of the matter until early 1855, when Henry, now in New York City, wrote a long letter to Leeser, still trying to determine the truth of the Charleston matter. In this letter, Henry dwelt at length on his personal relationship with Leeser, his reputation, and the shame of the scandal:

> ...from the very hour I set my foot on the American shore you openly declared yourself my opponent...you vilified and maligned my public and private character... it was in your part as well as others of the Clergy nothing else but jealousy ...to crush me was the main object of all your proceedings--but it happily failed...Many many persons have in this City and in Syracuse urged me to indict you for slander in order to ascertain who was the real author of the report...Now I ask you what is all this from men who are placed at the head of congregations to teach them Religion and Morality?...I leave the matter in your hands whether you think we should remain open and sworn enemies for life, or whether you will do me the justice to set the matter at issue by declaring to me the truth throughout.[43]

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[42]H.A. Henry, letter to S. Vallentine, esq., August 2, 1852, Isaac Leeser Letters, MSS Collection #197, Box I, Folder 4, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH.
[43]H.A. Henry, letter to Isaac Leeser, January 10, 1855.

Such pettiness and backbiting were all too common during this period. Competition for scarce jobs and for status in the Jewish community at large were important issues for rabbis like Henry. Certainly the energy devoted to scurrilous tale-bearing and its aftermath took away from their ability to do their jobs and to build a community.

Notwithstanding the controversy, we know that the following High Holidays, in 1852, Henry was successfully leading his flock in Syracuse. Leeser's correspondent reported that Congregation Keneseth Shalom was well attended during the holidays, and that Henry delivered two sermons:

> The whole of the audience were delighted, and gave great credit to Mr. H., who also read the prayers on Rosh Hashanah and Kippur in a very impressive style, not only satisfying the congregation, but impressing them with feelings of devotion.[44]

The correspondent went on to report that visitors from elsewhere in the state were so moved by the services that they joined the members of the congregation in contributing financially to the synagogue. Perhaps as a result of his tour of preaching in other congregations, he was flirting with moving on yet again. Henry reported to his Syracuse congregants "overtures" from an unnamed larger congregation with a larger salary, and told them he was leaving:

> But such is the esteem in which he is held at Syracuse, that, being chosen the unanimous voice of the congregation, he has been prevailed upon to remain. They wish to engage his services for as long a period as he may be disposed to stay, although elsewhere it is customary to elect ministers annually.[45]

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[44]Occident 10:8 (November, 1852), p. 413.
[45]ibid.

It is ironic that Henry seemed to be in a rush to leave Syracuse, as it was the only place where he ever had the kind of job security indicated by the above quotation. Henry did remain, for about five more months, before accepting a job in New York.

The Syracuse years provided some evidence of another aspect of Henry's life and career. During his year and a half in Syracuse, Henry's residence was at 118 Mulberry Street, down the block from the synagogue. The Henrys must have shared these lodgings with the Henochsberg family, an early and influential clan of Syracuse Jews.[46] Apparently, the families were friendly, as Henry's son, Moses H. Henry, presented a gift to his friend Moses Henochsberg. Moses Henry was an artist; the gift was an intricate pen and ink on paper *mizrach*, a decorative wall-hanging placed on the eastern wall of Jewish homes or buildings to indicate the direction of Jerusalem (*mizrach* is Hebrew for "east"). Moses Henry created the *mizrach* in Cincinnati in 1850, and presented it to Henochsberg in 1852.

Moses Henry's notoriety as an artist was not limited to this one piece. In 1849 he created a piece that was auctioned off at the seventh anniversary dinner of the Gentlemen's Hebrew Benevolent Society in Cincinnati, where his father provided a religious presence. The correspondent for The Occident called the work "a splendid specimen of Hebrew chirography" [penmanship], and noted that the applause for the work "was not equal to the deserved praise bestowed on the youthful artist for his masterly production."[47] Another *mizrach*, created by Moses Henry in 1856, was described in great

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[46]Alice Greenwald, "The Masonic Mizrach and Lamp: Jewish Ritual Art as a Reflection of Cultural Assimilation," Journal of Jewish Art 10 (1984), p. 92. Greenwald cites correspondence with the Onondaga Historical Society for Henochsberg's residence at 118 Mulberry, and the Syracuse Standard of March 12, 1853--Henry's notice of intention to leave for New York--as proof that the Henrys resided there.
[47]Occident 7:11 (February, 1850), p. 576.

detail by Robert Lyon in The Asmonean. This piece was engraved in wood, and Lyon commented that "we are at a loss what portion of the execution most to commend--the design, the drawing, or the engraving."[48] A similar *mizrach*, perhaps the same one, was presented to Isaac Mayer Wise. Wise called it "a piece of art which excels in beauty and arrangement all we have seen in this line," and recommended that "the young man should be patronized by all friends of Hebrew literature."[49]

As to the Cincinnati/Syracuse *mizrach*, neither the connection to the Henochsbergs nor the giving of the gift is especially significant; what is of note is the content of the *mizrach*. In addition to many Jewish symbols and quotations typically found on such works of Jewish ritual art, the *mizrach* contains a number of images from the rites of the Fraternal Order of Freemasons. The Freemasons were originally a medieval craftsman's guild of masons (bricklayers) and stonecutters. In the seventeenth century, Freemasons' lodges began to admit men who were not actually craftsmen, but who wished to be a part of the Masons' social and spiritual activities. In addition to its status as a craftsmen's guild, the Order of Freemasons had developed an ideology based on a single God as a Supreme Deity accessible to all men of reason, and on the spiritual elevation of the individual through ethical and ritual practice. Given these tenets, it is not surprising that Freemasons' societies were appealing to European Jews who were at various stages of social assimilation in the eighteenth century. Also, significantly, the Freemasons derived much of their symbolism from a "presumed historical

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[48]Asmonean 13:21 (March 21, 1856), p. 180. A photostat of this astonishing piece is in the possession of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati.
[49]Israelite 2:43 (May 2, 1856), p. 347.

connection to the stonemasons and builders of Solomon's Temple, whose tools and materials became the allegorical emblems of the fraternity."[50]

Thus it would be logical that a Jewish artist with some connection to the Freemasons would include masonic imagery on a work whose Jewish significance was as a reminder of the Temple in Jerusalem. Moses Henry's connection certainly came from his father. Henry was himself a Freemason, joining the Lodge of Israel in London and eventually becoming its master.[51] So enthusiastic was Henry about the Freemasons that during his time in Cincinnati, he wrote a pamphlet entitled "An Antiquity of Freemasonry in General." Regrettably, no known copies of this work are extant. However, Henry did send an advance copy of the pamphlet to his friend Robert Lyon, editor of The Asmonean, in New York. Lyon described it as "the first of a promised series of essays on Masonry," referring to Henry as "P.M." of the Lodge of Israel, London. "P.M." likely stands for Past Master. "From a hasty glance at its pages," wrote Lyon, "we are induced to believe it will be found alike interesting to the uninitiated as to the craft."[52]

What does Henry's association with the Freemasons tell us about his rabbinate? The history of Jewish involvement in the Freemasons is complicated, since each European country's lodges developed independently.[53] However, English Jews were being admitted to lodges as

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[50]Greenwald, p. 95. Greenwald's article is the source of all information presented here about the *mizrach* and its masonic content; she gives a brief history of Jewish involvement in European Freemasons' Societies, including references to other works which give a more comprehensive history. Her one major error in emphasis is an assumption that the masonic imagery necessarily denotes an allegorical, messianic outlook on the Jerusalem Temple which became characteristic of classical Reform Judaism. She extrapolates from this, and from the later history of the Syracuse synagogue, that Henry was a Reform rabbi, or at least one with liberal tendencies.

[51]Marcus H. Henry, p. 32.

[52]Asmonean 2:17 (August 16, 1850), p. 132.

[53]Greenwald, p. 93: "The Order has, at different times and in different locations, variously admitted Jews to its membership, prohibited Jewish participation, avowed overtly Christian

early as the 1730's. Henry had nearly a century of history of Jews' membership in the English Masonic lodges behind him by the time he reached adulthood in London. This involvement clearly demonstrates a degree of cultural assimilation into English society. Unlike many other components of cultural or social assimilation, though, a Masonic affiliation was not necessarily related to any movement toward reforming Judaism. Henry saw no conflict between his Masonic involvement and his strict Orthodox Judaism. This outlook is a product of the modern interpretation of Masonic ideology, namely an emphasis on moral conduct, humanistic tolerance, and Biblical piety.

It is important not to confuse this emphasis with a similar trend that developed within the early Reform Movement in Judaism. The Reform Movement stressed these universal and moral aspects of Judaism *at the expense of* traditional orthodox practice. Henry lived at a time where the Enlightenment had prompted an emphasis on such universalistic ideals; but he never accepted them as a substitute for traditional Judaism. A Jew could love and be loved by his gentile neighbor, and they could unite in endeavors like the Masons where their common interests were expressed; this was the part of modernity Henry accepted. But when the Jew and the Christian left the Masonic Lodge, they each went to their own houses of worship, and practiced their own, entirely separate traditions. Henry never saw the need to amend traditional Jewish practice--at least in any substantial way--so as to make his assimilation into the greater society complete. Where the traditional framework allowed for it, Henry was accepting of modernizing and change within Judaism. Thus, the introduction of decorum into the service or the

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ideologies and advocated anti-Semitism, or become closely identified with Jews by critics who alleged a sinister alliance committed to the undoing of Western civilization."

addition of a choir were acceptable to Henry as cultural adaptations. These were innovations that would bring him closer to his Christian Masonic brothers without compromising his complete devotion to his ancestral faith. But as we have seen, a choir was an example which may have caused an internal conflict for Henry. As an Orthodox rabbi with a degree of social assimilation, his career became a constant series of negotiations between tradition and modernity.

During his time in Syracuse, Henry continued his creative work in the area of Biblical analysis and discourse as well. One piece, written in January of 1853, was in response to an analysis by Isaac Leeser of Exodus 33:18-23. Writing in The Asmonean, Henry prefaced his work by commenting on Leeser's discourse. This must have been a low point in the up-and-down relationship that Henry and Leeser shared over the years. Henry was likely still stinging from the Charleston incident. Whatever the cause, Henry accused Leeser of taking credit for the translation of the Biblical verses, which Henry claimed to be "nothing more than the literal version of the common English Bible." He further asserted that in Leeser's analysis, these beautiful verses were "thwarted and twisted by the erudite Philadelphia Divine, so as to spoil the reading of it." Finally, Henry claimed to be noting this merely "to show the American Jews how much, and how long they have suffered themselves to be imposed upon by the self-styled Erudite Philologist of the North."[54]

After getting in his licks on Leeser, Henry went on to discuss the text itself. His analysis focused principally on Moses's special relationship with God, and on the meaning of some of the more difficult passages in this section, wherein God promises to hide Moses in the cleft of a rock and show him God's glory. Interestingly, Henry chose to interpret many key words or

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[54]Asmonean 7:14 (January 21, 1853), p. 161.

phrases metaphorically. Combining literary, philosophical, and religious approaches, Henry constructed a literate, sophisticated reading of the text without being hyper-literal, and without crossing over any theological boundaries into historical criticism of the text.

At one point, Henry broke from strict text analysis to relate the Bible's words to the contemporary plight of the rabbi. He was discussing Moses's reaction to the people's sin of creating and worshipping the Golden Calf. Moses shattered the original tablets of the commandments, destroyed the calf, and rebuked his brother Aaron for allowing it to happen (Exodus 32:19). Henry saw this as a model of leadership which could be applied in his own day and age:

> What a warning to the Ministers of Israel in the present day--not to yield so precipitately to the fancy and caprice of the people... Ministers must be firm, consistent, God-Fearing, and positive in the discharge of their sacred functions;...Yes--they must do so; but their private as well as their public demeanour must keep pace with their preachings: אין המדרש העקר אלא המעשה "Example must accompany precept."[55]

This is one of the most revealing statements we have of Henry's own attitude toward the contemporary rabbinate of his time. He was always very concerned with hypocrisy and phoniness, insisting that a rabbi must be true to himself and to his flock in order to succeed. In his public statements, Henry also strongly advocated rabbis taking principled stands and not bowing to the will of the people. Clearly, during his entire ministry in America, he was faced with a constant barrage of pressure from his congregants to bend on one principle or another. As we have seen, Henry stood on his principles quite often, though he usually found a new flexibility when he sensed that his livelihood was on the line.

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[55]ibid.

In his short stay in Syracuse, we do not know how much Henry's principles were challenged, and how difficult it was for him to live out the maxim about example following precept. Regardless, by early in 1853, the seeds he had sown in his first two brief sojourns in New York City had blossomed, and he could not pass up the opportunity for more fulfilling or lucrative work in a more exciting Jewish community. Henry was moving on again.

Chapter Four: New York , 1853-1857

The New York Jewish community into which Henry entered in 1853 was a unique environment. "New York is the central point," wrote Isaac Mayer Wise in February of that year, "the star which, radiating east and west, guides the action of American Israelites. If anything shall be done for the cause of Judaism, it must be started in New York."[1] Prophetic words indeed, if a bit ironic for a man who would begin only a year later to spend the rest of his life trying to make Cincinnati the central point. Nonetheless, New York was already the largest center of Jewish population and energy by this time. Dating back to its origins as the port of arrival for the first Jews to land on America's shores in 1654, New York laid claim to a singular place in the history of U.S. Jewry. While it is unclear exactly when and how these immigrants formed themselves into a synagogue, we know that the Sephardic Congregation Shearith Israel was formed sometime in the seventeenth century, and remained the only synagogue in New York until 1825, a period of at least 150 years.[2]

Meanwhile, the Jewish population of New York remained small until 1825, whereupon it began to grow rapidly. Hyman Grinstein, while admitting the difficulty of accurately determining Jewish population figures, has estimated that the number of Jews in New York grew from 500 in 1825, to 16,000 in 1850, and then to 30,000 by 1855.[3] The 1820's through the 1850's also marked a period of explosion in the number of synagogues in New York. after the first break off from Shearith Israel in 1825, fifteen synagogues were

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[1]Asmonean 7:17 (February 11, 1853), p. 198.
[2]Grinstein, p. 40.
[3]ibid., p. 469.

founded up to 1852; another four appeared in 1853 alone.[4] Henry arrived in the city at a time of tremendous expansion, when the need for ministers was felt more acutely than ever. Wrote Wise:

> We know that there are but five ministers, in New York, who teach and expound Judaism, while there are nearly three times as many synagogues... The preacher alone can enliven a Synagogue; can elevate Judaism in the estimation of his auditory, can expound its sacred principles, and incite the friend of religion to noble and eminent actions in the cause of Judaism and Humanity.[5]

It is not surprising, then, that the Polish Congregation Shaarey Zedek was eager to hire a minister like Henry in 1853. Shaarey Zedek was officially founded in 1839, though its archives contain a book inscribed "Gates of Richeousness" which dates to 1837.[6] This earlier date is substantiated anecdotally by a report of the consecration ceremony of the school attached to the congregation, which will be discussed later.[7] Shaarey Zedek was an offshoot of two congregations, B'nai Jeshurun and Anshe Chesed, which were the first two synagogues to be formed by secession. B'nai Jeshurun broke away from Shearith Israel in 1825, and Anshe Chesed in turn broke away from B'nai Jeshurun in 1828. One of the major factors in the initial break of Shearith Israel's monopoly was the desire of Ashkenazic Jews to worship according to their own rites. Although by 1729 the *Ashkenazim* had outnumbered the Jews of Sephardic origin in Shearith Israel, the congregation stubbornly clung to the Sephardic ritual which it had used since its origin and which was a sign of status and longevity. Once the first

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[4]ibid., p. 473-4.
[5]As monean 7:17 (February 11, 1853), p. 198.
[6]Jacob Monsky, Within the Gates: A Religious, Social, and Cultural History, 1837-1862 (New York: Congregation Shaare Zedek, 1964), p. 28.
[7]"Consecration. Hebrew National School, attached to the Shaary Zedek Synagogue, Henry Street, N.Y.," Asmonean 9:8 (December 9, 1853), p. 60.

secession occurred, though, the door was open for any group to form its own congregation. By the late 1830's, there were enough Jews of Polish origin in B'nai Jeshurun and Anshe Chesed to cause them to band together and found Shaarey Zedek. In addition to the cultural differences symbolized by differing shades of Ashkenazic ritual, the issues of admission fees and the acceptance of converts were involved in the formation of Shaarey Zedek.[8]

Like most synagogues, Shaarey Zedek began as a humble *minyan* and gradually improved its condition. In the years 1839-1853, the congregation occupied no fewer than four locations, each one a small step up from the last.[9] Its next location, which it would occupy until 1911,[10] was the building at 38-40 Henry Street, a former Quaker church which had been owned previously by Anshe Chesed.[11] It was typical of the synagogues formed in New York in the second quarter of the nineteenth century to occupy many different quarters. They usually began by renting modest rooms; as the congregations grew and their budgets expanded, they moved to successively larger and nicer accommodations. Eventually they would buy their own building, and, if they became truly successful, they would erect a new edifice. Several spaces were passed down from one congregation to another, including some of those utilized by Shaarey Zedek.[12]

As early as August, 1852, Shaarey Zedek was advertising for a minister. They were seeking

> ...the services of a competent person to act as Hazan, Lecturer, and superintendent of a school about to be attached to their synagogue. The

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[8]Grinstein, pp. 51-2.
[9]Grinstein, pp. 54-5; Monsky, p. 57. Monsky includes the location given on the 1837 inscription, but excludes one listed by Grinstein, namely the rooms above the New York Dispensary, at the corner of White and Centre Streets.
[10]Monsky, p. 79.
[11]Grinstein, pp. 54-5.
[12]ibid., pp. 53-4.

> salary will be an adequate one, regulated by the abilities and standing of the gentleman selected. Candidates in applying will forward their credentials as to respectability, scholastic acquirements, and religious habits.[13]

Henry was officially hired at Shaarey Zedek in late March or early April of 1853. The appointment was recorded in The Asmonean on April 15, but the congregation's advertisements for a *chazan* stopped appearing in that paper on March 18.[14] However, Henry was associated with the congregation already in February, perhaps on a trial basis. The congregation's registry of *ketubot* indicates that Henry officiated at his first wedding for the congregation on February 13, 1853. He officiated at virtually all of the weddings recorded in the registry, about fifty during his three-year tenure.[15]

Shaarey Zedek had had at least two *chazanim* prior to Henry's hiring.[16] The first, in 1847, was Julius Spiro. He had officiated the previous year in Baltimore; he died suddenly and tragically at the age of 27, after only a few months in office.[17] The second was Nathan Davidson, who served the congregation from 1850-53. He had served previously as *chazan* and *shochet* at the United Hebrew Congregation in St. Louis.[18] Davidson went on to serve the Rodeph Shalom congregation,[19] (interestingly, the same congregation for which Henry would leave Shaarey Zedek), and possibly later the Polish synagogue in New Orleans.[20] Despite their travels, neither Spiro nor Davidson was recognized as a rabbinical figure of note. Henry was hired as

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[13]Asmonean 6:18 (August 20, 1852), p. 160.
[14]Asmonean 7:22 (March 18, 1853) and 7:26 (April 15, 1853), p. 305.
[15]Congregation Shaarey Zedek, *Ketubot* Registry, 1850-57, Shaarey Zedek Archives, Archival Collection #934-935, Jewish Theological Seminary Library Rare Book Room, New York.
[16]Grinstein, p. 486.
[17]Occident 4:6 (September, 1846), p. 357; Occident 5:4 (July 1847), p. 214.
[18]Occident 7:9 (December, 1849), p. 479.
[19]Occident 11:9 (December, 1853
[20]Occident 21:5 (August, 1863), p. 235. No first name is given here.

"Hazan and Lecturer," and given a three-year contract at a generous salary of $1000 annually.[21] However, there was another major component to the position which, although advertised as part of the job, was not alluded to in the report of Henry's hiring. Shaarey Zedek was making plans to open a school, and Henry's history as an educator had primed him to play a major role in New York's Jewish educational scene.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Jewish education in America in general was in a sad state. No uniform structure for the education of Jewish children had been established. The same factors which led to the decline in strict orthodox observance contributed to the demise of Jewish education. First, the scholars and others who would have demanded the highest standards for educating Jewish youth simply were not emigrating. As we have seen, most Jewish immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century were poor and lacking in education. Second, the pragmatic realities of life in America made it difficult to hold education up to the standards of the European *cheder* and *yeshiva*. With no communal structures in place, and with Jews struggling to make ends meet, education often slipped to a lower place on the Jew's list of priorities than it occupied in Europe. Even among the aristocracy, those Jews who were native-born and more affluent, Jewish education suffered. In their case, this neglect was often a matter of assimilation. An increasing emphasis had been placed on secular education, adding to the difficulty, as hours which would have been devoted to Torah and Talmud study got squeezed out by secular subjects. Finally, the American Jewish community lacked good teachers. Many of those who were hired as Jewish

[21] Asmonean 7:26 (April 15, 1853), p. 305.

educators possessed minimal knowledge themselves. As with ministers, the supply could not keep up with the demand.[22]

Another factor which had an impact on Jewish education in New York was a controversy in the 1830's and 40's about the religious character of the public schools. The Board of Education, formed in 1842, had taken over some "Free Schools" which were non-denominational, but Christian in tone.[23] In the same year, a state law was passed prohibiting state-supported schools from teaching "any religious sectarian doctrine or tenet."[24] The Board of Education effectively ignored this law and rejected appeals by Jews and others that the Christian content be removed from public education. Another problem with the public schools was that they used the monitorial system, similar to that used in the Jews' Free School of London. This system was less desirable because the class sizes were large; it relied upon older students to understand and communicate the instructor's ideas to a smaller group of students. In the private schools, small classes and direct contact with the instructor were the norm.

All of these factors combined to cause a great desire for Jewish parochial schools in New York around mid-century. In 1842, S.M. Isaacs, minister of B'nai Jeshurun, founded an all-day English and Hebrew school called the New York Talmud Torah and Hebrew Institute. This school closed in 1847 due to financial difficulties, but its formation was indicative of a growing trend.[25] This trend picked up momentum in 1845, when Anshe Chesed formed a day school, and Rodeph Shalom and Shaarey Hashamayim followed suit. Max Lilienthal, who had educational experience in Europe,

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[22]Grinstein, p. 225 ff., gives a more detailed discussion of these dynamics.
[23]ibid., p. 234 ff.
[24]ibid., p. 564. Grinstein's source is *New York Statutes*, 1842.
[25]ibid., pp. 231-2.

arrived that same year and was hired as rabbi of all three of these German synagogues. He eventually united the schools of the three synagogues into one institution, the Union School, which had as many as 250 students at one point. The school disbanded quickly, though, in 1848, when the union of the three synagogues broke down. However, each synagogue maintained its own school, and this induced many other congregations to follow suit.[26]

Among these others was Shaarey Zedek. On Monday, August 8, 1853, at 4 p.m., members of the congregation gathered for the laying of the cornerstone of the school building, which was to be attached to the synagogue on Henry Street. It was a "long-felt want--such a school in the very centre of our Empire City."[27] Joseph Levy, the president of Shaarey Zedek, led the fundraising effort for the new building, which would bear the name Hebrew National School. Henry presided over the afternoon prayers, and then opened the cornerstone ceremony. He began by praising Levy and the generous contributors to the effort. Henry, ever the homiletician, made "an edifying allusion to our ancient history and to our patriarch Jacob, who 'took up the stone and called it Beth El.'"[28] Levy himself then laid the cornerstone, placing into it a time capsule, including a prayer book, several coins, and a document showing the statistics of the חינוך נערים[29] ["education of the young," a name frequently used as the Hebrew designation for Jewish schools or the committees which oversaw them] and the congregation. The ceremony ended with Henry leading the evening prayers, and the congregation dispersed

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[26]ibid., pp. 232-4

[27]E.M. Michaelis, "The Hebrew National School attached to the congregation 'Sharay Zedek,' New York," Asmonean 8:17 (August 12, 1853), p. 136.

[28]ibid.

[29]ibid. This may be a reference to the *Hinuch Nearim* organization which was the original rebel group within Shearith Israel before they seceded to found B'nai Jeshurun. It may also have been the name of whatever supplemental educational program the congregation had up to this point.

"with fervent wishes and blissful hopes for the future prosperity of this Institution of the Congregation, and of all Israel."[30]

Later that month, Henry, in his role as Superintendant and Honorary Secretary of the school, was advertising for teachers. He sought four employees: a Principal, an Assistant Teacher for the Hebrew Department, one man to head the English Department, and a woman to educate the girls. Applicants were required to furnish testimonials as to character and abilities, and none but "practical teachers" were to apply; for those in the English Department, training from one of the "American Normal Schools" was preferred.[31] This was an ambitious program of hiring, reflecting a great degree of optimism about the school's future. The energy generated by the earlier schools had clearly set the stage for such confidence in the future of Jewish schools in New York.

Of course, even the advent of the new congregational schools, widely viewed as a positive step for the New York Jewish community, was not immune to the competition and backbiting that we have seen in the competition for ministerial posts. In October, before the Hebrew National School even opened its doors, Henry was engaged in competitive sniping with B'nai Jeshurun. That congregation had claimed recently that its Greene Street Educational Institute was the first building erected specifically as a Jewish school in the United States.[32] Henry, writing under the pseudonym "Veritas," disputed this claim, asserting that Shaarey Zedek had laid its

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[30]ibid.

[31]Asmonean 8:23 (September 23, 1853). The notice is dated August 22.

[32]This school opened its doors in January, 1853, but presumably built its building later that year. The description of the opening ceremonies, Asmonean 7:12 (January 7, 1853), describes the physical space of the school but makes no mention of whether this was a newly-constructed building or merely space within the synagogue.

cornerstone two months earlier.[33] Here Henry displayed his propensity for getting caught up in this kind of petty argument and for blowing the issue out of proportion:

> Now if the Board of Trustees of the Congregation Sharay Zedek, owing to their innate modesty, did not feel disposed to deposit the self-speaking truth within the stony repository of their history, it is so much more the astonishing that others did not hesitate to leave to posterity an incorrect account of the deeds of our days--as truth ought to be the fundamental basis of an educational institution.[34]

The drama of Henry's appeal to truth in this matter attests to the attitude toward the founding of these schools. He clearly felt that the claim to the first Jewish school building erected in America would be a very significant contribution to the status of a congregation. Thus he was swift and sure in his appeal to the primacy of his congregation's own school building.

On Sunday, December 4, the Hebrew National School's building was ready for occupancy, and the official consecration ceremony was held. The anonymous report of this ceremony in The Asmonean was lengthy and very informative. It began with a reference to the above-mentioned controversy, emphasizing with italics that this was "*the first consecration of a School-house* by the Israelites of this city."[35] The description continued with a brief history of the congregation and how it came to occupy the Henry Street building. A laudatory but non-specific tribute to the generous and humble leaders of Shaarey Zedek followed. Returning to the consecration, the writer

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[33]The attribution of this article to Henry is my own conjecture, based on the writing style, content, and the context of the argument. Veritas, "Truth," was a pseudonym used by Henry and others, usually for articles expressing strong opinions on controversial subjects, to convey the message that this opinion was the true one.

[34]Asmonean 9:1 (October 21, 1853), p. 5.

[35]"Consecration. Hebrew National School, attached to the Shaary Zedek Synagogue, Henry Street, N.Y.," Asmonean 9:8 (December 9, 1853), pp. 60-61. This is the source for the entire description of the Consecration and for Henry's sermon.

proceeded to describe the buildings of the synagogue and the school. The entire lot was 50 by 100 feet. The synagogue occupied the entire width of the lot, and was sixty feet in depth. The school building was built behind it, 40 feet wide and 20 feet deep, "leaving abundant space between the two edifices for light and air (and a tabernacle in the season), with necessary out-buildings." The brick building was three stories high, with one long room on the ground floor, and four classrooms above, "lofty and ventilated in the most approved method." The cost of the building was $4000; $500 of that came from one generous donor, Mr. Levy Cohn.[36]

Although classes had not yet begun at the school, many students were registered already, and there was a waiting list for admission. There was no indication at this point that any teachers had been hired. However, the goals, curriculum, and terms of admission of the school were laid out in a prospectus. The objects were "to afford children of both sexes a thorough religious and secular education in all its branches, including therein, the Hebrew, English, German and French languages."[37] The school was for children five years and older. There were to be four classes, presumably by age, although the distinguishing factors were not specified. The year was to be divided into four quarters; the classes would pay three to six dollars per quarter, plus a one dollar surcharge for books. The customary public examinations were to take place periodically, open to the public. All of these details bespeak the seriousness and professionalism of the operation. Such schools, as they were parochial and synagogue-based, were by definition private, but the fee structure was intended to make the education affordable for any member of the congregation. The hope was that such schools would

[36]ibid., and E.M. Michaelis, "The Hebrew National School attached to the congregation 'Sharay Zedek,' New York," Asmonean 8:17 (August 12, 1853), p. 136.
[37]ibid., either quoting or paraphrasing the prospectus.

provide a better (and, obviously, more Jewish) education than the public schools, yet a more affordable one than the exclusive private boarding schools, which we will examine shortly.

The ceremony continued with Henry reading Psalms and a prayer for the Government, and then delivering a lecture. With characteristic drama and eloquence, Henry spoke of the deep significance of the hour and of the cause of Jewish education:

> If ever I felt the importance of my mission--if ever I became sensible of the responsibility of my position--if ever I reflected upon the onerous duties devolved in me, as the Minister of Holy teachings--it is on this solemn and interesting occasion, for which, under Divine Providence, we are now assembled in Holy meeting; yes, in holy meeting, for it is not the mere congregating together, which overawes my mind, but it is the object, the great and glorious purpose for which we have been convened...

He proceeded to expound one of his favorite Biblical verses, Proverbs 22:6 ("Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it"). This same verse was the epigraph to his Class Book. Henry saw in the growth of congregational day schools the potential for a real religious revival, a return to tradition in this rootless land, with a new emphasis on religious education at its core. He championed the cause of the study of Hebrew, taking this issue as an opportunity to launch one of his more vicious attacks on reform. If our children truly learn Hebrew, he argued,

> They will understand their religion, and as it was practiced in olden times, and then they will be proof against all the attacks from *without* and more especially *within*--from the ___ who preach a *Reformed Religion* to ensnare those who are *uneducated*, and who know not to distinguish the *real* from the *false, then*, and then *only*, will their *hypocrisy* be made manifest in broad daylight.

Henry moved then to an issue which would occupy his thoughts--and those of many of his colleagues--for the rest of his career: the necessity of a school for training Americans to be teachers and rabbis. Through his own experience as an "imported" minister, Henry saw the inherent difficulties in the system of hiring European immigrant rabbis. He knew even at this early stage that the American Jewish community would be forever limited in its ability to mature and to organize until it had raised a generation of native-born religious leadership. He sounded the call in virtually the same language which he would employ many years later:

> ...let us hope that the day is not far distant, when we shall be able to institute Normal Schools for the training of our Jewish youth [as] *Teachers*, and to fill honorably the ministerial chair. You, by training them yourselves, in your own colleges, will be able to watch their daily pursuits, and will be the best judges of their proficiency, and their religious and moral learning, so that you...will not be driven to the necessity of *importing* strangers to fill those important offices, who know little of *you*, and you little of *them*.

Henry ended his lengthy discourse with a tribute to parents, teachers, and schoolmasters as the underappreciated laborers in the area of attending to the needs of the young. He particularly lamented the low esteem in which schoolmasters were generally held, taking the opportunity to reflect on his years as an educator:

> I have been tolerably well ground in the mill--full twenty-five years of my life I was engaged in the delightful duty of teaching...and experience has taught me how much the public appreciate the labour, and the anxiety of the honest Teacher. Still I was never discouraged--my reward was always at hand: the consciousness of having discharged my duty faithfully...

Henry then stated his pride at the fact that many of his pupils "fill responsible situations as Teachers in Israel, both in this and in the old country." He attributed his success to the fact that his aim was "to give my Pupils a Religious Education--accompanied by a good moral training." He promised teachers who would dedicate themselves with pure motives to this purpose despite all the difficulties of the profession that they would receive "a much higher reward than any earthly honors can bestow upon them."

This sermon represented more than merely setting the tone for the new school; it was effectively a statement of most of Henry's main concerns throughout his rabbinate. In front of a large crowd which included virtually all of his colleagues in the New York Jewish ministry[38] and other dignitaries, Henry was here making a public statement of who he was: orator, traditionalist, educator, and champion of all causes supporting traditional Judaism and its effective transmission.

A festive supper followed, with Henry presiding, flanked by Mendel Joseph, the president of the school and Joseph Levy, the president of the congregation. As was the custom at such celebrations, toasts were made, honors were distributed, and a joyous celebration of the successful completion of the day's task was enjoyed.

The Hebrew National School opened its doors for classes shortly thereafter. By the end of January, favorable reports of its progress appeared in the press. There were already ninety pupils of both sexes, with an expectation of another fifty to join the ranks for the spring quarter. Robert Lyon commented that the school "progresses as well as the most ardent friends of Education can desire." He assured his readers that "the Managers will be glad

[38]The article lists Raphall, Lyon, Isaacs, Ansel Leo of B'nai Jeshurun, M. Cohen (probably M.S. Cohen, who taught in the school--see p. 87), and Leon Sternberger of Anshe Chesed.

to have the school inspected by all those who take an interest in the welfare of the rising generation."[39]

A few months later, an interested observer took the Managers up on their offer. D. Etienne de Lara, a longtime educator in England, was present at the public examination of the "Henry Street schools" on April 9, 1854. Presumably this was the first such exam, as the school had been open about three months. His review was so glowing as to make it seem that Henry's lofty words of anticipation in December had been realized: "in the thirty years in which I have been engaged in tuition, I have never witnessed...progress so astonishing as that made by the pupils in these schools."[40] He praised the students for their abilities to read Hebrew fluently, to translate from Hebrew to English and the reverse[!], and for their knowledge of the Bible, religious duties, and complicated Hebrew syntax. Impressive accomplishments indeed for three months of instruction! Forcefully stated though it is, we have no grounds for doubting de Lara's testimony. Here the names of some of the teachers are revealed; Mr. M.S. Cohen and Mr. Zepler were the teachers for the Hebrew department.

Later in 1854, after the Hebrew National School had been open about a year, came the time for the first annual examination of the pupils. The exam was scheduled for two parts, to take place on successive Sundays, December 10th and 17th. The trustees were eager for attendance by the public, "in order that the examination may be thorough, and the efficiency of the school be properly tested."[41] Marcus Harris, a trustee of the congregation, submitted a report of the first week's examination, of the Hebrew department. "From the

[39]Asmonean 9:15 (January 27, 1854), p. 116.
[40]D. Etienne de Lara, "Henry Street Schools," Occident 12:2 (May, 1854), p. 95; Asmonean 9:26 (April 14, 1854), p. 205. The entries are identical.
[41]Asmonean 11:6 (December 1, 1854), p. 52.

short period which this institution has been in operation," wrote Harris, "there is none can boast of making more rapid strides towards instilling in the minds of our Jewish children, the root and germ of the Mosaic faith than we, and I think that those who will honor us with their company on Sunday next will see that the English Education has not in any way been diminished."[42] This persistent eagerness for public attendance at examinations reveals a new side to the phenomenon of these Jewish schools of the mid-nineteenth century. Perhaps there was a sense that without public examinations, schools were subject to wanton criticism. The performance of the students on such examinations was a way for the school to validate itself; such validation was obviously necessary. This reflects the experimental nature of such educational endeavors. The examinations could also have provided an additional experience of community or socialization for local Jews, a supplement to the *naches* of *b'nai mitzvah* or confirmation ceremonies.

The Hebrew National School remained in existence at least through the remainder of Henry's tenure with Shaarey Zedek, which ended early in 1856. The school had another annual public examination on December 30, 1855.[43] By February of 1856, though, the Board of Directors of the school was "retiring." As a parting salute, they presented Henry with a large silver pitcher, along with resolutions of thanks for the "unremitting ardour with which he...causes [the school] to be the medium of spreading the light of Education amongst its scholars." The inscription on the pitcher thanked Henry for "the zealous and faithful manner in which he discharged his duties

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[42]Asmonean 11:9 (December 15, 1854), p. 70.
[43]Asmonean 13:11 (December 28, 1855), p. 79.

as Hon. Secretary of the Board of Directors."[44] Indeed, this marked the end of the Hebrew National School.

Why the sudden demise, less than three years after Henry had expressed such optimism for the project? In 1855, just as many of the congregational day schools in New York were gaining momentum, they were undercut by a number of factors which combined to undo them. Finances were certainly a factor, but with sufficient enrollment, the finances would have taken care of themselves. Enrollment declined suddenly and severely in 1855, principally because of changes in the public schools. The Board of Education, which had rebuffed Jewish concerns about Christian books in the 1840's, had done a turnabout. The Board heeded an 1851 state law prohibiting the use of sectarian books, and granted local autonomy to each district to determine its curriculum. Naturally, this gave the Jews a chance to exert strong influence over the local school boards in their concentrated neighborhoods. With the threat of Christianity suddenly removed from the public schools, Jewish parents withdrew their children from the congregational day schools and entered them in the public schools in droves. The Jewish day school movement collapsed as suddenly as it had arisen.[45] The fragility of the entire endeavor was exposed by this sudden shift. The day schools, like other Jewish institutions, were a powerful force only when Jews felt squeezed out of opportunities for social integration and advancement. Other Jewish organizations, if they were to succeed, would adapt to allow for a fully American identity to exist alongside a Jewish one. American Jews wanted a Jewish education for their children, and a high quality secular education; but their desire for acculturation and Americanization was at least as powerful. If

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[44]Occident 14:2 (May, 1856), p. 92; Asmonean 13:26 (April 11, 1856), p. 205. This presentation was also chronicled in Israelite 2:39 (April 4, 1856), p. 315.
[45]Grinstein, pp. 243-45.

the public schools could offer the same level of secular education, without the fee, then there was no contest: let our children be Americans!

The collapse of the Hebrew National School was surely a blow to Henry's dreams for a religious and educational revival in America. To the extent that his self-image as a minister and educator was wrapped up in the fortunes of the school, he would have been justified in giving up or being discouraged. But Henry was a survivor. Such sudden rises and falls in fortunes were common during this period of American Jewish history, in all areas of the rabbinate especially. Rabbis needed to develop survival instincts: thick skin, perseverance, and creativity. Isaac Mayer Wise became the giant of this generation in large measure because of his abundance of these qualities.

Not only did Henry survive the collapse of the school, but he was already involved in another significant Jewish educational endeavor. It could be that Henry saw the downfall of the congregational schools coming, and made contingency plans. Max Lilienthal had founded the first private Jewish boys' boarding school in 1849. It soon became the outstanding Jewish school in the city; the famous Jewish leader Major Mordecai Manuel Noah even sent his son there.[46] In June of 1855, however, Lilienthal left New York to assume the pulpit of Bene Israel in Cincinnati. He took part of the school with him, but there were substantial resources and students still in New York. Henry took over this school in July, at least six months prior to the closing of the Hebrew National School. Lilienthal's establishment was located at 307 Tenth street, adjacent to Tompkins Square. By the time of the report of Henry taking the school over, he had already "gathered around him an able corps of assistant teachers."[47]

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[46]ibid., p. 243.
[47]Asmonean 12:13 (July 13, 1855), p. 100.

In August, ads for "Rev. H.A. Henry's Hebrew, Commercial, and Classical Boarding School" began to run on the front page of The Asmonean in the same spot formerly occupied by Lilienthal's regular ads; in October the same change appeared in The Israelite.[48] In fact, Henry reproduced large chunks of the text of Lilienthal's ads *verbatim*, perhaps as a way of signifying the continuity of the institution's high reputation. He did indicate that the school had "undergone a thorough repair, and some additional improvements for the comfort of the pupils in general." The ads described the curriculum: the students learned Religion; the Hebrew, English, German, French, and Spanish languages; ancient and modern World History; Geography, Mathematics, Bookkeeping, Composition, and Writing; also Drawing, Music, and Dancing in the area of arts. The ad emphasized that "particular attention is paid to the English education of the pupils." At a time when competition from the free public schools was significant, it was important to emphasize that Jewish parochial schooling would not mean a less thorough secular education. Five hours daily were devoted to English, but the students were also expected to converse in French and German with the teachers of those subjects. For the traditionalist element, Henry was also quick to emphasize that "every attention is paid to the Religious Instruction, Morals, and comfort of the pupils, and all are treated as members of the family." Apparently the rigorous curriculum described above left some time for spiritual matters, as "a room in the house is exclusively appropriated as a Synagogue, wherein the pupils will assemble morning and evening for Prayer. A Religious Discourse will be delivered by the Principal every sabbath during afternoon service."

[48]Asmonean 12:16 (August 3, 1855), p. 121; Israelite 2:15 (October 19, 1855), p. 119. The entire description which follows is taken from this ad, though the same ad ran continuously for a long while beginning with these issues.

Henry was appropriately focused on maintaining the high standards established by Lilienthal. When the congregational schools disbanded, not all students flocked to the public schools. Some of the parents who were more intent on providing a thorough Jewish education to their children--and who could afford to--sent them to the private Jewish boarding schools instead. Henry very likely absorbed some such students from the Hebrew National School into his boarding school.[49] Although there was a certain exclusivity to the boarding school, Henry's ad also indicated that "a limited number of day scholars will be accommodated on moderate terms." Henry was committed to providing Jewish education to as many children as possible. Also, interestingly, the ad was not intended solely for those Jews in proximity to New York; it was addressed to "the Israelites of the United States, West Indies, and the Canadas." Some of these boarding schools achieved sufficiently high reputations to attract students from afar.

By November of 1855, Henry, by now surely aware of the imminent doom of the Hebrew National School, was devoting ever more energy to the boarding school. At the solicitation of many New York families, he decided it was time to add a Girls' School to the establishment's offerings. At least one Jewish Girls' boarding school already existed at this time, that of Misses Palache, founded in 1840. Apparently the elite of Jewish society sent their daughters to this school; the tuition was a hefty $200 per year.[50] Thus there was a need for a Jewish school for girls that more modest families could afford. Henry revealed his own feelings about the need for educating Jewish girls in his advertisement for the school:

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[49]Grinstein, pp. 243, 245.
[50]ibid., pp. 242-3

> Our Jewish females are suffered to attend Christian schools from their infancy, and how can we then expect that they shall have acquired any knowledge of Judaism? a knowledge so essential for the more tender portion of the community, who in their time shall become mothers, and who will be called upon by their lisping babes to implant in their infant minds the germs of a religion, which they themselves had no opportunity of acquiring.[51]

Henry urged Jewish parents to consider the force of this argument, in the hopes that they would support him in "remedying this growing evil, which if not nipped in the bud, must lead to more serious consequences--Infidelity." He assured his readers that the girls' school would be separate from the boys department. He offered a limited number of spaces either for day students or boarders. Robert Lyon supported the endeavor, commenting that "the arrangement we regard as salutary, there being a want of educational facilities in that respect."[52] On this issue of education for females, Henry again represented a unique combination of Jewish traditionalism and modern Americanism. He focused on education's usefulness in preparing the girls for the traditional family roles they would eventually assume. At the same time, he acknowledged that the exclusively male orientation of the traditional structure of Jewish education was unacceptable in the relatively egalitarian society of nineteenth-century America.

Henry maintained his boarding school for the remainder of his time in New York, up to August, 1857. In the mean time, though, shortly after the folding of the Hebrew National School, in March or April, 1856, he severed his connection with Shaarey Zedek. We have no evidence of a reason for his leaving. His three-year contract was expired, but the congregation seems to have been happy with him, if the testimonials from the school board are

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[51]Asmonean 13:3 (November 2, 1855), p. 17
[52]ibid., p. 20.

reliable. It could be that the school's sudden collapse put the congregation in financial straits and that they could no longer afford a minister's salary. There is no record of another rabbi at Shaarey Zedek until 1863.[53] Henry secured another ministerial post without delay. The German congregation Rodeph Shalom was advertising for a "competent Hazan and Bal Kourah [Torah reader]" as early as February. Henry replaced Mr. B. Jacobs, who accepted a post in New Haven, Connecticut. He was elected as *Chazan* and Lecturer--the same titles he held at Shaarey Zedek but not exactly the same as what Rodeph Shalom was advertising for--by a unanimous vote.[54]

Rodeph Shalom was founded in 1842 by German Jews who seceded from Anshe Chesed, possibly due to dissatisfaction with that congregation's leadership.[55] The newly-arrived Leo Merzbacher, who would later serve Temple Emanu-el, ministered to Rodeph Shalom in its first few years, while he was also employed by Anshe Chesed.[56] Nathan Davidson also served as minister to Rodeph Shalom, prior to Mr. Jacobs, in 1854.[57] In 1856, the congregation made improvements to a burial ground that it shared with none other than Shaarey Zedek. It was quite common during this period for congregations to invest jointly in a burial ground. Although no other connection between these two synagogues is in evidence, they nonetheless held a joint ceremony of dedication for the newly-improved cemetery on *Tisha B'av* in August of 1856. Henry, by this time employed at Rodeph Shalom, officiated at the "most imposing and solemn" ceremony in front of a crowd of both Jews and Christians. The reporter of this event, writing under

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[53]Monsky, p. 175; this is supported by Grinstein, pp. 486-7, where his list of congregational ministers up to 1860 lists nobody after Henry at Shaarey Zedek.
[54]Asmonean 13:26 (April 11, 1856), p. 204.
[55]Grinstein, pp. 50, 53.
[56]ibid., p. 90.
[57]ibid., p. 486.

the friendly pseudonym of "Amicus," was deeply moved by Henry (whom he referred to as "The Doctor who acts as Hazan" at Rodeph Shalom) and the service he conducted.[58] "Amicus" noted that Henry's sermon, with his "usual happy and may I say eloquent style and language, moved the hearts of all, drawing tears from many present who have their friends and relatives buried there." This observer was impressed not only by Henry himself, but also commented that "the Germans conduct their synagogue service in a more becoming manner than many others in the Union." This comment is particularly interesting, since although Rodeph Shalom was founded as a German congregation, Henry had always conducted services according to the Polish rite. The differences between the two styles of prayer were subtle; probably either Henry adjusted his chanting of the prayers to match the German ritual, or "Amicus" was not sensitive to the difference.

"Amicus's" other focus in describing the cemetery consecration is interesting in its own right. He was "delighted with the liberal sentiments which fell from the learned divine," but there was a specific reason for his delight in Henry's "liberal sentiments," namely that they were

> much applauded by the American public who were present on the occasion. Such ceremonies and sermons tend to do much good for us Jews among the people we live with; much better than controversial and disputative arguments...In my humble opinion, such should be the manner in which the fast of the 9th of Ab be kept;...

For this American Jew, any opportunity to engender the favor of his gentile neighbors was desirable. Lacking the text of Henry's address, we do not know what was so "liberal" about them as to bolster the image of Jews in the eyes of the Gentiles present that day. But for "Amicus" to suggest that *Tisha B'av*--as

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[58]Asmonean 14:19 (August 22, 1856), pp. 148-9. This is the source for the entire account of this event.

particularistic and parochial a holiday as any in Judaism--was the appropriate time for ecumenical activities per se, indicates that he was so intent on acceptance in America as to lose sight of the holiday's meaning.

The only other specific evidence we have of Henry's officiation at Rodeph Shalom is a report of Thanksgiving Day services in 1856. Thanksgiving at this time was not a uniformly observed holiday; each state's Governor declared the day or not as he chose. When Thanksgiving was held, the custom developed for Jews to hold services and emphasize familiar Jewish themes of thankfulness. As the quintessential American holiday, less overt in its Christian content and in fact very much in consonance with Jewish values, Thanksgiving became a chance for American Jews to demonstrate their patriotism and the level of their successful acculturation. A synopsis of Henry's sermon from 1856[59] is of particular interest not only in its own right, but in comparison to an almost identical sermon he delivered on Thanksgiving Day in 1849 in Cincinnati![60]

Since both reports were merely summaries of the sermons, it is impossible to tell exactly how similar they were. Nevertheless, the comparison is enlightening. In both instances, Henry began by chanting a selection from Psalms. In 1849 the Psalms were not specified; in 1856 he began with Psalm 10, "O give thanks unto the Lord for he is Good; for his mercy endureth forever," and the first part of the sermon was an exposition of that verse. In both sermons, he moved shortly to the Talmudic passage about the four conditions under which Jews are particularly commanded to demonstrate their thanks to God. These four instances all involve deliverance from a dangerous or perilous situation. Henry then contrasted his congregation's

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[59] Asmonean 15:6 (November 21, 1856), p. 45.
[60] Asmonean 1:9 (December 21, 1849), p. 69.

circumstances with those instances, urging them to be thankful for how free their lives were from such conditions, especially considering the plight of Jews in some locations of the world who were without the benefit of America's munificence. His words on both occasions reflected (in addition to the age-old tradition of rabbis recycling sermons) two main thrusts. First, a strong statement of patriotism, using the occasion to demonstrate in 1849 "the loyalty of the Jews, in whatever clime or country their lot might be cast, and that they... are willing to fulfil [sic] any of the duties of the state which may be imposed upon them" by properly observing Thanksgiving. Second, Henry was eager to connect this spirit to a sense of Jewish obligation, commenting in 1856 that "we should never lose sight of an opportunity to express our thanks in humble prayer to the Almighty."

The differences between the two sermons were mostly in the details; this was to be expected, since the Cincinnati discourse was said to have been extemporaneous. One significant difference is that this earlier sermon was even more heavily-laden with pro-American sentiment than the New York sermon. This could reflect a difference between the two cities and the outlooks of the congregations, or the perspective of the individuals who reported the sermons. It might also be that Henry, after witnessing seven years of Orthodox Judaism slowly losing its grip on American Jews, was deliberately less emphatic about the benefits of life in the U.S. As in so many other instances, Henry was engaged in a delicate negotiation between the lure of entry into American society and a strict devotion to Jewish tradition. At this stage, rabbis like Henry were reflecting very genuine gratitude for the benefits of American society, yet they still held out hope that American Jews would choose *en masse* to limit their assimilation to allow for Orthodox Jewish practice.

During his four years in New York City, Henry continued the other activities which marked his career and the rabbinate of this period in general. Especially in New York, where the Jewish community was increasingly large and diverse, ministers were expected to be public figures, representing their congregations at various communal celebrations or occasions. One major event in the Jewish community was the establishment of the Jews' Hospital, later known as Mount Sinai Hospital.[61] Henry was present, along with his Board of Trustees, at the laying of the cornerstone of the Jews' Hospital in November, 1853.[62] Eighteen months later, construction was complete and a Consecration ceremony was held for the hospital.[63] Jacques Judah Lyons, *chazan* of Shearith Israel, officiated at the afternoon services, which were followed by brief English addresses by several of the most notable preachers in the city: S.M. Isaacs of Shaarey Tefilah, Raphall, Merzbacher, Lilienthal, and Henry. Isaac Leeser, attending the ceremony as an observer, was very impressed with the hospital itself. He noted, however, that the consecration service was "the usual Synagogue consecration service as conducted nearly everywhere," a decision he deemed "quite inappropriate, as it was a hospital and not a place of worship which was to be dedicated." Thus it seems that a sort of standard format for consecration ceremonies had taken hold, due largely to the fact that so many synagogues were opening in these decades. It is interesting and a bit surprising that nobody at this time was inclined or able to create a unique ceremony for a hospital as distinct from a synagogue. Nonetheless, the presence of so many clergy at this event foreshadowed the

[61]Grinstein, p. 157.
[62]Asmonean 9:6 (November 25, 1853), p. 45.
[63]Occident 13:4 (July, 1855), pp. 185-187; Asmonean 12:5 (May 18, 1855), p. 37; Israelite 1:47 (June 1, 1855), p. 373.

rapid ascendancy of the Jews' Hospital to become the most prominent Jewish organization in New York only a few years later.[64]

In the spring of 1854, Congregation Beth Israel consecrated its newly-purchased dwelling at 56 Chrystie Street, a location formerly occupied by Emanu-El.[65] Beth Israel was founded in 1843 as a breakoff from Shaarey Zedek.[66] Lacking a minister of its own, Beth Israel engaged the services of its parent congregation's *chazan* for the occasion. Lilienthal, Davidson (possibly Nathan Davidson, with Rodeph Shalom at this time), and other ministers assisted, supporting the notion that the more rabbis present, the more important the event. Henry was by this time a veteran of such ceremonies. The description of the day's events is very reminiscent of the consecration in Syracuse, with the processional, the *hakafot* [circuits] with the Torah scrolls, and the liturgical fanfare. Henry's sermon traced the history of the human impulse to worship the Creator, and specifically this history within Judaism, highlighting God's wisdom in commanding the Jews "to erect fitting tabernacles for His worship." This sermon, based on a verse from Psalms, reflected Henry's homiletical ability to tailor his addresses to the occasion. Henry ended the ceremony with a special *Mi Shebeirach* blessing on behalf of the congregation.

Later that year, the entire American Jewish community mourned the loss of perhaps its greatest philanthropist of this time, Judah Touro. Touro was born in Newport, Rhode Island, but lived as an adult in New Orleans. His funeral was a caravan from New Orleans back up to Newport, where he was to be buried. Delegations from many cities, all of which were recipients of

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[64]Grinstein, p. 187

[65]Asmonean 9:25 (April 7, 1854), p. 196. This article is the basis for the entire description of the day's proceedings.

[66]Grinstein, p. 476.

generous bequests from Touro's estate, joined in the journey to his final resting place. When the funeral procession passed through New York, a delegation of Jewish leaders accompanied Touro's body the rest of the way to Newport. Henry was among this delegation, along with James Gutheim (by this time the leading rabbi in New Orleans), Lyons, Isaacs, Raphall, and others.[67]

Along with synagogues, cemeteries, and hospitals, charitable organizations were among the first provisions made by American Jews in this time period. Henry's career was marked by a consistent concern for endangered Jews worldwide and for the poor, the widow, and the orphan in his local community. His New York years were no exception. In 1853, an epidemic broke out in New Orleans, straining that Jewish community's ability to care for its sick and bereaved. The members of Shaarey Zedek held a meeting to determine how best to aid the Jews of New Orleans. They resolved to hold a special Sunday service on September 18th, at which Henry "kindly offered to preach a Charity Sermon on behalf of our poor distressed Brethren, in the Crescent City." They published the resolution in hopes that "every one of the members...as well as all others, who feel another's woes, will be present on that day, to aid us in the good cause."[68] On November 23, 1854, Henry was present at the annual dinner of the Hebrew Benevolent Society of New York, which was founded in 1822 by Ashkenazic members of Shearith Israel. The Hebrew Benevolent Society, partly due to Mordecai Manuel Noah's association with it in the 1840's and '50's, became the leading Jewish

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[67]Occident 12:4 (July, 1854), pp. 211, 225; Asmonean 10:8 (June 8, 1854), p. 64. In the Occident report, Henry is mistakenly listed as a delegate from Congregation Beth El of Buffalo. Shaarey Zedek apparently had no delegation of its own; the three New York synagogues listed were Shearith Israel, B'nai Jeshurun, and Shaarey Tefilah. Perhaps Henry joined another delegation so as to have an official place at the funeral.
[68]Asmonean 8:22 (September 16, 1853).

charitable organization in the city. Its main source of income was the annual dinner.[69] Henry's task at the 1854 anniversary dinner was to say the first grace.[70] As a final example of Henry's involvement in charitable works, in 1855 a committee was formed to establish a House of Industry in New York. Included on the committee were Raphall, Merzbacher, Lyons, and Henry, among others.[71] Conceived as an alternative to merely doling out financial support to needy Jews, the House of Industry was an attempt to provide poor, unemployed Jews and immigrants with work. Nothing came of the effort, but it is significant that at this time creative energy was already being put into how best to provide for the needs of poor Jews.

Henry also remained active in intellectual affairs during his New York years, continuing to write, lecture, and polemicize. Isaac Mayer Wise published a book late in 1853 entitled A History of the Israelitish Nation. An uproar ensued surrounding Wise's view of Biblical history, which was seen as radical for its questioning whether the events of the Bible can all be interpreted as literally "history." Henry was among the first to get in his shots at Wise, initiating a war of words between the two men which would last for years. He wrote a vicious, sarcastic critique of Wise's book and his approach, placing Wise in the long and shameful line of Bible deniers:

> ...herewith I challenge the author to show the world his reasons for putting such a construction upon the revealed book, as also his authority--so that if we have been groping in the dark for so many ages, we may hail this period as the great day of salvation... and, if really the true spirit of the Bible has just manifested itself through his superior and elevated thoughts and aspirations, that all may bow down in adoration to so religious a development.[72]

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[69]Grinstein, pp. 145-147.
[70]Occident 11:9 (December, 1854), p. 529.
[71]Asmonean 13:11 (December 28, 1855), p. 82.
[72]Asmonean 9:13 (January 13, 1854), p. 100.

Henry, referring to himself for perhaps the only time ever as a "Theologian," stated that while some of those who have tried to deny the Bible's divinity over the centuries may be excused due to ignorance, politics, or other mitigating factors, Wise, as "one of the great Teachers in Israel" had no such excuse. On one hand, Henry's criticism was substantive. The notion of the Bible as God's word was for him an untouchable pillar of tradition. On the other hand, Henry was engaging in a battle for turf in the American Jewish community, and his words were also an attempt to discredit Wise and the reformers irrespective of the substance of their ideas. Both of these notions led to the same conclusion: Henry saw it as his holy duty to prevent Wise from disseminating his "infidelity," Henry's favorite appellation for the ideas of those who differed from him. He laid out the challenge facing him as a defender of traditional Judaism:

> I am but one of the smallest in Israel; and who am I that I shall stand foremost in the camp--but as the champion of my God and my religion, I am bold as my progenitor David, when he attacked the proud and haughty Philistine who defied the Lord and his favored Israel, and I do so only in the hope that those more learned than myself may rise up in a body to crush the weed, ere its venom shall poison the fruitful shrub, among which it finds its bed.

Henry then proceeded to delineate the objectionable portions of Wise's book. He primarily attacked Wise's alternative, rationalistic interpretations of some of the apparently divine manifestations in the Bible. Wise responded to Henry, offering a justification for one of Henry's objections and inviting more discourse. Wise argued that on the basis of scholarly research, not only was he being fair and accurate, but even conservative in his historical reading of the Bible. Uncharacteristically, Wise refrained from polemics in his reply to Henry and stuck largely to the technical issues of the content of his book and

its sources. He seemed to take Henry and his criticisms seriously. However, he ended his piece with a Hebrew aphorism translating roughly to mean "think before you speak."[73]

In a less political, more scholarly vein, Henry in January of 1855 wrote a lengthy essay, published in four installments in The Asmonean.[74] In it, he analyzed Genesis 49:10, part of Jacob's prophecy regarding Judah. Henry wrote the essay in response to "the learned correspondent of the 'Israelite,'" with whose reading of the text he (politely) disagreed. The correspondent was of course Wise, whose analysis of this verse had appeared in The Israelite a few months earlier.[75] This essay of Henry's was of an entirely different character than most of his other writings. It was scholarly, bordering even on the esoteric. He cited every Biblical commentator, from medieval to modern and from famous to obscure, plus the Talmud and many halachic works of varying notoriety. He also argued very fine points of Hebrew grammar to make his case. Henry's writing was highly technical and largely removed from contemporary Jewish realities. It was not entirely removed, though; he echoed the sentiment of his comments on Wise's book regarding the care with which Biblical interpretation should be undertaken. Quoting a rabbinic authority's dictum about the need for sages to be cautious of their words, he noted,

> how much more so, in the present age, does it become the duty of the teachers in Israel to be cautious of their words and not thwart and twist the text to suit their own views and fancies, and thus...to be the cause

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[73]Asmonean 9:16 (February 3, 1854), p. 126.
[74]Asmonean 11:12 (January 5, 1855), p. 93; 11:13 (January 12, 1855), pp. 101-2; 11:15 (January 26, 1855), p. 118. Regrettably, the first installment of the four was missing from the microfilm of The Asmonean at the Klau Library, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati. Much of this microfilm was made from Henry's original copies of the journal, donated to the College upon his death. In all likelihood Henry himself had cut the article out.
[75]Israelite 1:16 (October 27, 1854), pp. 125-6.

> indirectly of placing the mind of the biblical student in doubt as to the proper version of the text, and thus cause the name of Heaven to be profaned.

Henry went on, after dissecting Wise's approach to this text, to offer his own translation and justification. In the end, Henry did tie his reading of the verse into his own faith: a Messianic reading of the future of the tribe of Judah (through Judah's descendant David, traditionally regarded as the progenitor of the Messiah) was to him a source of great comfort.

On February 15 of that year, Henry was invited to give the inaugural address at the first meeting of a new organization, the Touro Literary Institute.[76] A club for young Jewish men, the goal of the organization was to raise the level of Judaic and literary culture among the young Jews of New York. It was a social organization as well, a fact which often obscured the intellectual aims of the Institute.[77] Henry was unavoidably detained and could not make the address as intended; Raphall spoke in his stead.[78] Henry did eventually lecture to the Institute, about two years later. He was engaged to give a series of three lectures on the topic of "Ancient and Modern Poetry." Robert Lyon commented that "we have no doubt, from Mr. Henry's very extensive reading, he will treat the theme with considerable skill and taste, and greatly edify his audience."[79] The lectures received a very favorable review, though little of their content was divulged.[80] In addition to lecturing, Henry made a donation of books to the Touro Institute.[81] The institute was just the kind of endeavor which Henry supported as furthering the best of what Judaism had to offer. However, it is indicative of the uphill battle he

[76]Occident 12:11 (February, 1855), p. 617.
[77]Grinstein, pp. 196 ff.
[78]Asmonean 11:19 (February 23, 1855), p. 149.
[79]Asmonean 15:14 (January 16, 1857), p. 108.
[80]Asmonean 15:16 (January 30, 1857), p. 121.
[81]Asmonean 11:19 (February 23, 1855), p. 150.

continually fought that the Judaic content of New York's Jewish literary institutes was waning by the end of the decade, usurped by secular and social pursuits.[82]

Henry's avowed opposition to the reforms that were happening in American Judaism found voice during his New York years as well. In a piece entitled "The Ritual and its Emendators," Henry attacked the practice of mixed seating, newly adopted at Temple Emanu-El and in other Reform settings. He attempted to demonstrate that men and women sitting together was expressly prohibited dating back to Temple times. He appealed not only to Biblical, Talmudic, and medieval texts for support, but also to the reason of his readers to support the notion that separate seating prevented indecorous conduct in the synagogue. In an expression of naïveté, Henry argued that the community would arrive at his conclusion if given the opportunity:

> ...the rules and regulations by which Israel has ever been guided should be laid fairly open before the public, who can then judge for themselves ... so that if a new Minhag America is really requisite, let it be based on more solid principles, than those advocated by the self constituted rabbins of America--and it should be done by men of acknowledged piety as well as learning--as the combination of both are highly essential in matters of faith and religion.[83]

Henry, in a bit of perhaps false modesty, went on to deny placing himself among the last class. Nonetheless, this article, like most of Henry's anti-Reform polemics, smacks of desperation. His halachic argument was thin, although he knew that *halacha* as the basis for judgement was losing its hold in America anyway. When he resorted to an appeal to reason--a term that would catch the attention of reformers--his argument was naive:

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[82]Grinstein, p. 196.
[83]H.A. Henry, "The Ritual and its Emendators," Asmonean 13:10 (December 21, 1855), p. 76.

> Reader! do not imagine for a moment that we are arbitrary in our conclusions, and that we wish you to adopt an old custom because it is old, far be it from us. We wish you to exercise your reasoning powers, and if our arguments be fallacious, we are...willing to be enlightened on the subject--but look at our authorities, and compare them with those of the present day...

Those Jews bent on sitting together (or other reforms) would be no more convinced by ancient texts' appeal to reason than by authority of *halacha*. But Henry tried to frame his arguments persuasively. Like most proud rabbis in this still Jewishly uncharted territory, he was engaged in a battle for the souls of America's Jews. Reformers like Wise and Leo Merzbacher of Temple Emanu-El were already winning. However, the momentum in favor of reform must not have been overwhelming, because Henry's opponents felt the need to respond to him.

Merzbacher responded with a scathing, bitter attack. He openly mocked Henry's learning, writing, and argumentation. Merzbacher even turned Henry's own words on him, suggesting that his modern ministerial garments represented the same kind of unacceptable imitation of gentiles that Henry claimed mixed seating was. He also claimed the orthodox architectural practices to be fraudulent, since the construction of women's galleries allowed for "constant telegraphic communication, at the twinkling of an eye, to all parts of the house." Eventually, Merzbacher turned off his sarcasm long enough to address the issue:

> And doubtless, as the ladies of our day claim more liberty, and equal rights even, and will not submit to the restrictions of former times and return into the ghettos of the Synagogues of old; the most conservative plan for decorum is, to place on the side of every gentleman the

> guardian angel of his choice, and to surround him with the members of his family.[84]

Merzbacher had rightly pointed out the weakness of Henry's case: he had tried to show a *legal* basis for the custom of separate seating, when none really existed. Unfortunately, Merzbacher's justified objection to Henry's use of the sources was overshadowed by his invective. As another writer, observing the argument, noted, Judaism originated in a cultural milieu in which mixing or equality of the sexes in religious rituals was not part of the world view. No actual legislation had ever been enacted about separate seating, because no challenge to the custom was ever anticipated![85]

Isidore Kalisch, a rabbi in Cleveland and another loyal member of Wise's camp, also took it upon himself to respond to Henry, in an article ironically titled "Impartial Illustration of Rev. H.A. Henry's Notions." His attack was as creative in its viciousness as Merzbacher's; one can only wonder how long Kalisch searched before finding just the right metaphor to disparage Henry's scholarship:

> ...although it has borrowed its colors of the most noble plants, viz. Rashi, Tosaphoth, etc., it is only a wild bad smelling and unhealthy parasitical mushroom, growing on the marshy shore of the Dead Sea of superstition and ignorance, and not *al sfat yam hatalmud,* on the bank of the ocean of talmudical learning...it would be therefore much better for him not to meddle any more with matters beyond his horizon.[86]

Such attempts to discredit opponents were not uncommon in the public forum at this time, and it is often difficult to separate rhetorical comments from substantive ones. If Henry's argument were truly so weak, one must

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[84]Leo Merzbacher, "Women-rights In the Synagogue, or Ladies and Gentlemen on equal footing in the Place of Worship," Asmonean 13:12 (January 4, 1856), p. 93.
[85]"Lara, "Women in the Synagogue," Asmonean 13:13 (January 18, 1856), p. 109.
[86]Isidore Kalisch, "Impartial Illustration of Rev. H.A. Henry's Notions," Israelite 2:29 (January 25, 1856), p. 237.

wonder why they bothered to reply to him at all. Wise, in a footnoted comment on Kalisch's article, raised this very question:

> We actually cannot perceive why our friends Kalish and Merzbacher should condescend to reply to the formless and thoughtless chit-chat of the Rev. H.A.H...There are a good many things...which he did not find; yet he talks on the subject in the good humbug-fashion of "Talk on every thing." It is not worth while to reply to it.[87]

Presumably, then, Henry's argument struck somewhat of a chord with these writers. They must have feared his opinion would influence readers, or they would not have felt the need to discredit him. Wise sometimes chose other ways of advancing his own opinions other than scholarly duels. On the issue of women singing in the synagogue--presumably as part of a choir--he reduced the argument to simple (if questionable) math:

> This question stands now so: there are in favor of it the Rabbis and Doctors Cohn of Albany, Eckman of San Francisco, Mayer of Charleston, Kalish of Cleveland, Lilienthal of Cincinnati, Merzbacher of New York and Wise of Cincinnati. There are opposed to it the Rev. Messrs. Henry of New York and Jacobs of Charleston.
> יחיד ורבים הלכה כרבים[88]

Wise, with his travels and writings, was surely aware that this was an incomplete head count of religious leaders and their attitudes on such an issue. But he, like Merzbacher and Kalisch, still felt the need to take his opponents' views into account. In 1856, conservatism like Henry's, however maligned it was in Wise's circles, was still a legitimate force in the marketplace of ideas that constituted the American Jewish community.

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[87]ibid., footnote by Isaac Mayer Wise.
[88]Israelite 2:37 (March 21, 1856), p. 301. The Hebrew phrase is the Jewish legal dictum meaning "In a case of one versus the majority, the *halacha* goes according to the majority."

Henry also took the time to express his own views on the contemporary rabbinate at this stage of his career. In the same letter to Isaac Leeser in which he demanded justice from the Charleston scandal, Henry digressed to comment about the Jewish ministry in general. In response to others urging him to sue Leeser for slander, Henry commented "I hate litigation, especially between the Clergy--we are low enough already." Henry's self-esteem as a rabbi took its share of blows, and one way he dealt with it was by distinguishing himself from those ministers who he perceived to be phony or incompetent:

> In spite of all my enemies, I have proved to the American Jews that I am what I represent myself to be: a true orthodox Israelite, capable of filling any office to which I may be appointed--and can without fear challenge any of the ministers throughout the United States in point of ability and competency for a Jewish Divine...How many of our Divines do you see fight the battles of the land? Some are afraid that their own character may be involved and others are too ignorant...these men can go to public dinners and spout a studied speech upon an old hackneyed subject, and the public are gulled by them because they can flatter and act the sycophant.[89]

Henry's frustration is evident in these words. He was a proud man, and he found himself continually beset by petty snipings and arguments with fellow ministers and lay leaders alike. Henry himself was obviously not above such behavior; it was a product of the time. Rules of decorum observed in discourse today were not always adhered to in the mid-nineteenth century. In the still young, amorphous American Jewish community, it was a battle for survival. Frequently, this battle dragged behavior down to the lowest common denominator. Whether Henry was truly disturbed by much of what he saw and experienced, or secretly enjoyed the drama, he nevertheless

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[89]H.A. Henry, letter to Isaac Leeser, January 10, 1855.

participated and survived. He possessed the necessary combination of talent and resourcefulness, and his confrontations were never more than temporary setbacks.

On April 4, 1857, Henry preached his farewell sermon at Rodeph Shalom, ending their one year together. His reasons for leaving are unknown. The sermon "made a marked impression," and the trustees "adopted a series of resolutions highly complimentary to the Rev. gentleman."[90] There was no ill will, but as we have seen, congregations and rabbis were still trying to figure out what they wanted and expected from each other; very short tenures often resulted. That same month, the office of *chazan* at the Greene Street congregation, B'nai Jeshurun, was vacated. It was reported that Henry was a candidate for the job. His chances looked good; he was described as "a gentleman whose qualifications entitle him to aspire to so responsible a position," and as one who "commands some strong friends among the congregation."[91] Nothing came of the opportunity. Henry may have been seeking a change of scenery. He also may have been desperate to secure a new job. Whatever the reason, that spring he headed west for the perilous journey to San Francisco, where the lack of sufficient rabbinic leadership was well-publicized. Now approaching the age of sixty, this was to be the last of his moves. Henry would finally settle, making San Francisco his permanent home.

The years 1853-57 in New York were busy and interesting ones indeed for Henry. At no other time in his career would he find himself in a Jewish community so large, diverse, and active. His first two brief stops, in Cincinnati and Syracuse, had given him a taste of the unique challenges and

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[90]Asmonean 16:1 (April 17, 1857).
[91]Asmonean 15:25 (April 3, 1857), p 196.

issues at work in the American Jewish community. The four years in New York exposed him to the full range of opportunities, institutions, and trends that would occupy him for the rest of his career. These years would also prepare him for the unique challenges that would await him on the wild frontier of the Old West: it was 1857, and the "Frisco Kid" set out for the city on the Bay.

Chapter 5: San Francisco, 1857-1869

Henry's last move was perhaps the most puzzling of his American travels. We have seen that his career and those of his contemporaries were somewhat unstable, but this instability generally had its limits. Although Henry had already served four congregations in less than eight years, the Jewish communities he served were, relatively speaking, settled communities within reasonable proximity to each other. Even these smaller, less risky moves were generally prompted by some reasonable expectation of work at the other end of the journey. When he left Cincinnati, he at least had plans to preach in New York and to officiate at the consecration in Syracuse. When he left Syracuse, it seems clear that he had a bona fide offer of employment in New York. And none of these journeys was so long that if things hadn't worked out, he couldn't have returned to the city from which he came, or sought work in another nearby location.

Henry's journey to San Francisco in 1857 was a different story. While there was a growing Jewish community in the Bay area with a severe shortage of rabbinical leadership, he had no real offer for work. He had, however, responded to the ads placed by one of the San Francisco congregations, Emanu-El. But the congregation was "constantly in receipt of communications in response to its advertisements" and did not extend him an offer to entice him to head west.[1] The journey, whether by land or by sea, was long and difficult. Henry was by this time in his fifties, with a wife and at least three children in tow. San Francisco itself was still very much a frontier mining town, nowhere near as settled and comfortable as New York or even

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[1]Jacob Voorsanger, *Divre Yeme Emanuel:* The Chronicles of Emanu-El (San Francisco, G. Spaulding & Co., 1900), p. 52, quoting Emanu-El's minutes, Vol. I, p. 77.

Cincinnati. The Pacific Coast was isolated in many ways from the eastern part of the United States, and the resources necessary to live an Orthodox Jewish lifestyle--kosher food, other committed observant Jews, etc.--certainly could not be taken for granted the way they could in the larger cities in the east.

San Francisco's Jewish community was different from the eastern communities Henry had served in many ways. First, the influx of settlers into Northern California generally was motivated largely by one event: the Gold Rush of 1849. There may have been some Jews in the area even before 1849, but we have records beginning only with this dramatic event which brought so many pioneers to the west in search of fortune. Among these pioneers were Jews, who, if they were not intending to search for gold themselves, were certainly seeking "the general prosperity which would inevitably result from the mass influx of people into an underdeveloped territory."[2] Before the Gold Rush, San Francisco and the surrounding communities were truly pioneer areas, with scanty populations and very little development of any kind.

If those who came to the U.S. in the mid-nineteenth century tended to be the more adventurous among European Jews, then those who ventured as far west as California were the more adventurous among the immigrants.[3] At first, the pioneers were mostly men, either single adventurers or men who were waiting to make enough money to send for their families.[4] Living conditions were harsh and crude; drinking and gambling were the only real pastimes available. The Gold Rush drove up the price of housing and basic

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[2]Rudolf Glanz, The Jews of California from the Discovery of Gold Until 1880 (New York, 1960), p. 8.
[3] Robert E. Levinson, Jews in the California Gold Rush (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1978), p. 87.
[4]Michael M. Zarchin, Glimpses of Jewish Life in San Francisco (Berkeley, CA: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 1964), p. 2.

needs, as the city's population expanded far more quickly than its resources could. Fortunes were made not only in gold prospecting, but in businesses which capitalized on the explosion in population and the needs of the newcomers. Jews, gravitating to their familiar trades of selling clothing, dry goods, and luxuries like jewelry and tobacco, were among those to profit heavily during the 1850's.[5]

The Israelites of San Francisco wasted little time in organizing themselves. The origin of San Francisco's synagogues was a controversial subject for a long time, as rival factions from the two founding synagogues, Sherith Israel[6] and Emanu-El both put forth claims to primacy.[7] The first official gathering of Jews ever held on the Pacific coast was for the High Holidays in 1849. Apparently an ad was placed in a local paper offering to convene Israelites for High Holiday services, and "about 30 responded to the call."[8] One account described a meeting "in a tent-room occupied by Lewis Franklin, situated on Jackson Street, near the corner of Kearny Street; there were about ten persons present."[9] Morris Samuel described the meeting in an oft-quoted letter to his brother in Philadelphia: "About forty or fifty Israelites have engaged a room to celebrate the ensuing Fast Day, and have invited me to attend; they

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[5]Glanz, p. 21.

[6]This name, meaning "Remnant of Israel," was originally spelled "Shearith Israel," but the "a" was dropped fairly early in the congregation's history, so we shall use the contemporary spelling here, except where quoting original sources.

[7]This controversy is dealt with at length and solved by William M. Kramer and Norton B. Stern, in their article "A Search for the First Synagogue in the Golden West," WSJHQ 7:1 (October, 1974), pp. 3-20. Their evidence and conclusions form the basis for the presentation of the issue here.

[8]Asmonean 1:6 (November 30, 1849), p. 45, quoted in Kramer and Stern, p. 3, note 3.

[9]Seixas Solomons, "A Brief Sketch of the Progress of the Israelites in California, from 1849 until August, 1854-5614," quoted in Occident 10:7 (October, 1854), p. 370-71. Solomons' account was deposited in the cornerstone of Congregation Emanu-El's new building in 1854. For a further discussion of this dispute and these sources, see Seth Hochberg-Miller, Jews of the Metropolitan West: A History of the Jews of San Francisco, 1849-1870 (Rabbinical Thesis, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, 1991), pp. 47 ff.

contemplate building a synagogue shortly."[10] The disparity in the numbers between these accounts likely does not indicate two separate services. Samuel was writing between *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*, so it could reflect simply a higher attendance on the latter holiday. More likely, there was only one gathering of Jews on those holidays, in Franklin's tent-room.

The theory that there was only one group of worshipers in 1849 is supported by the events of the ensuing year and a half. The Jews of San Francisco continued on the trend anticipated by Samuel, attempting to form one unified synagogue. On July 21, 1850, they were cooperating; a single meeting of Israelites met to prepare for the High Holidays. A committee was formed to secure a location for the services, and it reported at a meeting on September 1 its recommendation to lease "for temporary purposes...a portion of the Masonic Hall...on Kearny Street."[11] This temporary united congregation, referred to as the "Kearny Street Congregation," raised money for expenses and elected officers at the meeting.

At the services which were held that High Holiday season at Masonic Hall, the discord which led to the formation of two synagogues began. A disagreement broke out about whether to use the German or the Polish rite of worship. Tensions between "German" and "Polish" Jews were not uncommon during this period.[12] Even though almost all of these Jews were of Ashkenazic descent, the differences in their culture, language, and religious ritual were substantial enough to cause them to divide as soon as

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[10]Occident 7:9 (December, 1849), p. 480.
[11]Asmonean October 25, 1850, p. 5, quoted in Kramer and Stern., p. 5.
[12]These appellations will serve here as general categories, since the Jews of San Francisco organized themselves that way. To be sure, the "German" Jews included some from France, Prussia, and other areas of western and central Europe; "Polish" Jews included many from Russia, England, Australia, and other places. The categories were not always strictly definable.

they united. One of the groups separated from the Kearny Street Congregation and may have held separate services on *Yom Kippur*.

Nevertheless, San Francisco's Jews pushed forward with the attempt to form a permanent, united synagogue. In late March and early April, 1851, a series of meetings was held toward this end. At the last of these meetings, on April 6, after many successful arrangements had already been made for the establishment of a congregation, the project fell apart. According to one source, the cultural differences between the two subgroups of *Ashkenazim* could be suppressed on many issues, but they came to a head around the issue of *Shechita*, the ritual slaughtering of meat, which was a frequent cause of disputes in Jewish communities at this time:

> ...different feelings are cherished by the Jews of San Francisco. From the earliest date of their organization, national prejudices divided them into parties. The first division took place on the occasion of electing a Shochat, when the Polish Jews wanted the Polish candidate for the office, while the Germans flocked round their countryman. This gave rise to the two Synagogues here.[13]

However, this view was disputed by another San Francisco correspondent who claimed that the two congregations formed simultaneously and without conflict.[14] In this case, as with the scandal in Louisville, periodical editors were often presented with conflicting views of situations from opposing parties in distant locales. Journalists like Wise and Leeser were often forced to judge what was worthy of printing and which side was truthful in a given conflict. Sometimes they added fuel to the fire by taking sides, and other times they expressed frustration at the unbecoming nature of the sniping and the difficulty of their task in attempting to report the truth. Regardless, it seems

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[13]Israelite 2:19 (November 16, 1855), pp. 154-5.
[14]Israelite 2:31 (February 8, 1856), pp. 250-1.

likely that there was some sort of disagreement between the factions in San Francisco, which was bitter enough to result in the permanent division of this group into two separate synagogues. Of course, the *shechita* issue alone was not responsible; clearly this was symptomatic of the religious and cultural differences which divided the two groups. Both congregations were organized in the week following the April 6 meeting. Two days later, Emanu-El prepared a charter, while Sherith Israel was meeting at the same time to arrange for the supervision of kosher butchering and to publicize its availability. Thus the synagogues were formed simultaneously in the second week of April, 1851.[15]

At this time, there was no rabbinical leadership of any sort in San Francisco. Lay leaders performed all the necessary religious functions.[16] "A spiritual authority was wholly wanting at the time," wrote Jacob Voorsanger, "or the presence of an educational force that could command the respect of all the people."[17] The original 1849 services were led by Albert Priest, a businessman formerly of New York who was residing in nearby

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[15]This is Kramer and Stern's conclusion from the evidence they examined. Aside from various writers, Jacob Voorsanger and Martin Meyer among them, whose claims of 1850 foundings for one or both synagogues are somewhat dubious, there is one piece of convincing evidence which calls Kramer and Stern's conclusions into question. The Sherith Israel minute books, on Microfilm #2443 at the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, show several notations which may indicate an 1850 founding date. A copy of the congregation's first constitution, written in April, 1851, has written in on its cover "Held worship in April 1850, founded August 1850." It is unclear whose notes these are, though other notes in the margin later in the document in similar handwriting indicate that it may have been a later researcher, which weakens the reliability of this claim. Also, in the minutes entry for April 13, 1851--chronologically the first entry of all, though it comes later in the microfilm--has a note superscribed to it which reads "Record of previous meetings held August to date lost." Most likely, both congregations, in their competitive zeal, considered the joint Kearny street congregation to be the forbear of *their* synagogue, hence leading each to believe *it* was founded in 1850, while *the other* was the "break-off" congregation.

[16]For more examples of lay leaders functioning in rabbinic capacities, see William M. Kramer and Norton B. Stern, "The Layman as Rabbinic Officiant in the Nineteenth Century," WSJHQ 15:1 (October, 1983), pp. 49 ff.

[17]Voorsanger, p. 22.

Sacramento.[18] Lewis Franklin delivered what is thought to be the first Jewish sermon in the far west, at the Kearny Street Congregation on *Yom Kippur*, 1850.[19] Leon Dyer, an adventuresome Jew from Baltimore, headed the committee to organize High Holiday services in 1850, and may have led the services as well.[20] In 1851, Jacob Frankel volunteered to act as "reader" at Sherith Israel during the spring holidays.[21] That same year, Max Welhof was appointed by Emanu-El as Torah reader, though at a nominal salary and presumably with few rabbinic responsibilities.[22] The twenty or so children at Emanu-El were taught informally by a lay leader named Louis Cohn on Sunday mornings.[23]

There was one notable exception to this lack of Jewish professional leadership. On June 1, 1851, the trustees of Sherith Israel resolved to pay Alexander Iser $30 for "past services." These services were apparently in the roles of *shamas* and *shochet*, as they re-elected him to perform those tasks for one month at a salary of an additional $60, with plans to open up a search during that month to fill the combined post permanently.[24] Iser was re-Elected *shamas* and *shochet* in October, and served until resigning on

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[18]Kramer and Stern, "A Search for the First Synagogue in the Golden West," pp. 3-4.
[19]Samson H. Levey, ed., Lewis Franklin, "The First Jewish Sermon in the West: Yom Kippur, 1850, San Francisco," WSJHQ 10: 1 (October, 1977), pp. 3 ff.
[20]Dyer's adventures and status as a Jewish leader are detailed in Fred Rosenbaum, Architects of Reform: Congregational and Community Leadership, Emanu-El of San Francisco, 1849-1980 (Berkeley, CA: Western Jewish History Center, Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum, 1980), pp. 3-4).
[21]Sherith Israel Minutes, April 13, 1851. The report on San Francisco Jewry in Occident 10:1 (April, 1852), pp. 59-62, lists the officers elected for 1851-52 at Sherith Israel, noting that at this time "Mr Jacob Frankel volunteered to act as Priest to the congregation." Leeser's source was a copy of the *California Courier*, which credits Alexander Iser, the collector of Sherith Israel, for providing it with a copy of The California Hebrew and English Almanac. This report describes the early history of all of San Francisco's Jewish institutions to that date. It describes Emanu-El as having organized and incorporated first, but says that "About the same time" Sherith Israel formed as well.
[22]Rosenbaum, p. 5.
[23]Voorsanger, p. 22.
[24]Sherith Israel Minutes, June 1, 1851.

December 29.[25] The terms of Iser's employment are telling: he was granted "the privilage [sic] to continue in office until the trustees think proper to discharge him."[26] Here we see the roots of the congregation's approach toward its religious functionaries, a stance which would have a significant impact on Henry's career later. Iser's duties in these capacities were not specified, but it is likely that he had a liturgical role, especially since he was later referred to as the first rabbi of Nashville, Tennessee, and his scholarship and oratory were praised.[27]

Iser was replaced as *shamas* by a Mr. Myer Fabian, who served until December 26, 1852.[28] At that point, the congregation added a new aspect to the expectations of its religious functionary--the board resolved to advertise in the local paper the Daily Herald for a "Reader and Schamis and Schochet."[29] The addition of the title of "Reader" to the job description demonstrated an increasing dependence on a professional to lead services. This was a step on the way toward the desire for a rabbi. Three men answered the ad, and a Mr. Weinberg was elected unanimously.[30] Weinberg served until March 6, 1854.[31]

While Iser and Weinberg clearly performed many tasks which would fall under the purview of ministers like Henry later, it would be an overstatement to call either of them a rabbi in this context. During its first few years, Sherith Israel was struggling to stay afloat financially and to determine what was necessary to run a synagogue in its unique setting. The

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[25]Sherith Israel Minutes, October 19, 1851; December 29, 1851.
[26]Sherith Israel Minutes, October 19, 1851.
[27]Kramer and Stern, citing Occident 11:3 (June, 1853), p. 187; Fedora S. Frank, Five Families and Eight Young Men (Nashville, 1962), p. 40; and J.J. Lyons and Abraham De Sola, A Jewish Calendar for Fifty Years (Montreal, 1854), p. 159.
[28]Sherith Israel Minutes, January 11, 1852; December 26, 1852. This man's name appears nowhere else and was barely legible; hence it is not certain that the spelling is correct.
[29]Sherith Israel Minutes, December 26, 1852.
[30]Sherith Israel Minutes, January 2, 1853.
[31]Sherith Israel Minutes, March 6, 1854; in this entry, he is referred to only as the "Reader."

shamas/shochet was entirely a functionary, paid minimally to perform basic synagogue tasks. Though Henry would serve equally at the board's mercy, he was clearly viewed as a "spiritual leader" of the congregation and a leader in the Jewish community in a way that these earlier men were not.

At this early stage, Sherith Israel, like most new congregations, established a Constitution and Bylaws.[32] The 1851 Constitution allowed for the election of a *chazan*, in the context of "paid" elected officials, but nowhere specified his duties. This constitution reflected a congregation whose lay leadership was responsible for all facets of synagogue life. There were sections of great detail about election of officers, responsibility of officers, requirements for membership, and powers of the board. There were also very lengthy and detailed sections about synagogue honors in worship services. If the congregation had a sense that a rabbinical figure would have any real responsibility in congregational life, this section would have been a natural place for his duties to be outlined. But it seems that all of this business was the responsibility of the *parnass* (president): "The *Parnass* shall have the superintending of all religious matters and of the ceremonies in the Synagogue." This notion of a powerful board of trustees led by a particularly powerful *parnass* was a common phenomenon in this period when rabbis were so scarce in the American Jewish community. Although Jews often reflected the democratic values of the society around them in synagogue government, the *parnass* still retained an almost autocratic power:

> He presides over the services, was blessed at the reading of the Torah, and, generally speaking, expected the worshippers to obey him...He wielded enormous power in the early stages of congregational development in San Francisco...The sexton, the reader, and later the rabbi were directly under his charge and took orders from him. At

[32]This document is found in the microfilm of the congregation's minutes.

> Emanu-El and Sherith Israel, the parnass sat in a special seat of honor during the services.[33]

This remained the case in San Francisco throughout Henry's career there, as we shall see.

Although both congregations were founded as clearly orthodox, their members exhibited a wide range of religious behavior. Accounts conflict as to the degree of observance of early San Francisco Jews. One writer claimed that they "adhered to their faith and religion with the obduracy and determination characteristic of the Jewish people, and wherever they could they met to worship their God."[34] A more realistic portrayal of San Francisco Jewry was offered by Robert Levinson:

> They were not Orthodox in their religious practices; at best, they had a sentimental feeling about preserving their Judaism and not a day-to-day preoccupation... [they created] a kind of Judaism that was balanced somewhere between a faint appreciation for an Old World past and a present that demanded full political, social, and cultural assimilation in order for one to succeed economically.[35]

This is not to say that the Jews of San Francisco lost their commitment to the Jewish people; it merely shows that the realities of life in this rapidly expanding frontier town were not in concert with the discipline and limitations inherent in a totally observant Jewish lifestyle. Notwithstanding their religious laxity, their commitment to Judaism remained strong. In San Francisco, as in every significant population center, Jews invariably united to form synagogues, cemetery and benevolent societies, and social organizations, since "they were neither so well assimilated as to abandon their Jewishness

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[33]Zarchin, p. 102.
[34]ibid., p. 81.
[35]Levinson , p. 88.

nor consciously disposed toward such an act."[36] The approach of San Francisco's Jews toward tradition and reform continued to evolve, which will become clear in the context of Henry's tenure there.

In the years 1851-1853, both congregations progressed slowly. They formed (or strengthened existing) benevolent societies to care for the sick and deceased.[37] On the matters of burial grounds and *shechita*, the two synagogues even found common ground. This is somewhat surprising given their initial clash, but as their separate identities became entrenched, the two congregations were secure enough to cooperate on some issues. This was especially true with issues where money or practical realities provided motivation for working together, as they may have with burial grounds and *shechita*. There were many instances of joint committees from Sherith Israel and Emanu-El consulting together on the purchase and upkeep of burial grounds and on the provision of kosher meat and *matzah* for *Pesach*.[38] Both congregations occupied various rented locations during these years, many of them felled by the frequent fires which broke out in the city.[39] In part due to the fires, the city suffered economic ups and downs, which further limited their growth during these early years. By 1853, though, the situation in San Francisco had stabilized sufficiently that both congregations turned their attention to two of the most prominent concerns of new congregations in this era: a rabbi and a building.

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[36]ibid.

[37]The first of these was the Hebrew Benevolent Society (later the First Hebrew Benevolent Society), which was later associated with Sherith Israel, founded in January, 1850. The second was the Eureka Benevolent Society, founded by members of Emanu-El a year later.

[38]Sherith Israel Minutes, August 11, 1851; December 16, 28, 1851; February 22, 1852; March 25, 1852; November 24, 1853; February 12, 1854

[39]Occident 12:7 (October, 1854), pp. 371-373. This report, of which Seixas Solomons' piece is one small part, gives details of the histories of both congregations in the context of describing the ceremonies for the laying of the cornerstones of their new buildings.

The quest for permanent homes was more successful than for spiritual leaders. Sherith Israel was the first to purchase land for its building. On July 11, 1852, the board met to discuss building a synagogue, and a committee was formed to purchase a lot. At this stage, the congregation was not in a financial position to buy land or build a building. They had to accept loans from various members, totaling at least $2800 in one week.[40] On July 26, they bought a lot on Stockton Street, between Vallejo and Broadway, though even after the initial fundraising, each trustee had to kick in an additional $50 due to "insufficiency of funds in the treasury."[41] However, for over a year following that, they were unable to raise sufficient funds to begin construction. For the next year and a half, the congregation struggled, until finally, in November, 1853, they raised an additional $10,000 and resolved to build the building.[42] Perhaps one motivating factor for Sherith Israel's contributors was the fact that Emanu-El raised $20,000 toward construction of its building in November, 1853.[43] Construction of both buildings was underway by the summer of 1854, and they held appropriate ceremonies at the laying of their cornerstones, Emanu-El a few weeks before Sherith Israel.[44]

Although both congregations functioned satisfactorily without a true spiritual leader during their first few years, the desire for rabbinical leadership soon came to San Francisco. Emanu-El was advertising for a minister already in 1854, offering a liberal salary. Isaac Leeser noted that "They would prefer a middle aged man, say about thirty-five years old, and one who can speak in English and is not behind the demands of the

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[40]Sherith Israel Minutes, July 11, 18, 1852.
[41]Sherith Israel Minutes, July 26, 1852.
[42]Sherith Israel Minutes, November 24, 1853; Occident 12:7 (October, 1854), p. 371.
[43]Occident 12:7 (October, 1854), p. 371.
[44]ibid., pp. 367-73; Israelite 1:11 (September 22, 1854) pp. 85-6, reprinted from the San Francisco Herald, August 9. 1854.

time."[45] This ad already hints at the progressive leanings of the congregation. These leanings were spelled out more concretely when Emanu-El advertised for a minister again in 1857, this time through Isaac Mayer Wise and The Israelite:

> Our congregation being composed of men of every age and country, their opinion and feelings as to Minhags appears naturally divided, but 'tis evident from the spirit already manifested, that they are much inclined towards the reform style of Service. Orthodoxy seems to have but little sway among us...a man to lead our flock should be of the New School.[46]

Sherith Israel may not have been able to afford a rabbi in the mid-1850's, which would explain its failure to advertise for one. It is unlikely that Sherith Israel was not interested in securing rabbinic leadership, though one report from 1856 posited otherwise:

> the Polish synagogue employs neither Rabbi, Preacher, Hazan, Teacher, nor even a Shamash, nor is it even conscious of the want of such employees ...May [Emanu-El] succeed, and may their efforts raise the Polish school from its total stagnation and perfect moral death, so that we no more needed be ashamed when a Gentile enters our Places intended for worship.[47]

This report must be evaluated in context. It was clearly a polemic against the traditionalists, as it also characterized Sherith Israel as "by charter bound to adhere to the Polish Minhag as used in continental Europe and London with all its attendant indecorum and want of vital power." Nonetheless, it shows that the desire for a minister was associated with the trend toward

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[45]Occident 12:2 (May, 1854), p. 119.
[46]Israelite 3:46 (May 22, 1857), p. 366. This is an extract from a letter sent to Wise by the leaders of Emanu-El, asking him to serve as their agent in the search for a rabbi.
[47]Israelite 2:27 (January 11, 1856), pp. 218-19.

modernization and Americanization. Traditional-leaning congregations were seen as opposing progress in all its forms, including the realm of rabbinic leadership.

Regardless of orientation toward reform, virtually all congregations which achieved a degree of size and stability at this time sought rabbis. The fashion of the times was certainly a factor in this. As reports spread of forceful and effective ministers who impressed Jew and Gentile alike, more congregations sought such rabbis as symbols of status, modernization, and Americanization. Lay leaders also had progressively less time and inclination to fulfill ministerial functions, as their business and social concerns increased as they Americanized and acculturated.

Just at this time, in 1854, the first full-time, long-term rabbi arrived in San Francisco. Julius Eckman was born in Poland, and attained both a traditional *yeshiva* education and a German university degree. He studied with and was ordained by Leopold Zunz, the father of modern Jewish scholarship. He had previously served pulpits in New Orleans, Richmond (1849), Charleston (1851), and Mobile (1852-3 and also possibly earlier in 1846).[48] At least part of Eckman's inability to retain a job for more than a year or two was due to his traditional leanings and inflexibility. Mostly, though, he had a difficult personality which was simply not suited to the American congregational rabbinate. He lacked the finesse, charisma, and flexibility necessary to survive in a capricious and demanding community.[49]

Nevertheless, in the leadership-deprived Jewish community of San Francisco, his arrival was welcomed. Eckman arrived in San Francisco in July,

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[48]Occident 7:9 (December, 1849), p. 477; Asmonean 7:11 (December 31, 1852); Occident 9:4 (August, 1851), pp. 209-221; Reva Clar and William M. Kramer, "Julius Eckman and Herman Bien: The Battling Rabbis of San Francisco, Part I" WSJHQ 15:2 (January, 1983), p. 110.
[49]For more on Eckman, see Rosenbaum, pp. 8 ff, and Clar and Kramer, Parts I-III, WSJHQ 15:2-4 (January, April, and October, 1983).

1854, just in time to officiate at the cornerstone ceremonies for both synagogues.[50] Both congregations were thankful for a rabbinic presence at their ceremonies and were pleased that Eckman was able to deliver suitable English addresses. Eckman also organized a school associated with Emanu-El almost immediately upon his arrival. The school later disaffiliated with the synagogue and Eckman continued to run it independently under the name *Hephsi-Bah* School.[51]

Eckman's unsuitability for the pulpit was evident early on, but Emanu-El, having been snubbed by at least two other candidates, was somewhat desperate for a rabbi. Eckman officiated at the cornerstone ceremony and for the High Holidays on a trial basis, and was elected in October, at the very liberal salary of $2000. But the relationship was stormy between Eckman and Emanu-El and lasted just under a year. He also officiated sporadically at Sherith Israel, but was never hired for any long period.[52] Eckman remained on the west coast until his death in 1874, serving as an educator, journalist, and rabbinical presence, but was never again associated with any one congregation on a permanent basis.

The other significant rabbinical figure who preceded Henry's arrival in San Francisco was Herman Bien.[53] Bien was much younger than Eckman, having arrived in America in 1854 at the age of 23, and more liberal as well. He was a disciple of the radical reformer David Einhorn. He arrived in San Francisco early in 1856. Emanu-El, still extremely eager for a rabbinic presence,

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[50]Rosenbaum, p. 8.

[51]Clar and Kramer, p. 112. *Hephsi-Bah* is a Hebrew expression meaning "I delight in her." This is likely taken from Isaiah 62:4, which prophesies for Israel, "Nevermore shall you be called 'Forsaken,' nor shall your land be called 'desolate,' but you shall be called 'I delight in her...'"

[52]Clar and Kramer, p. 116. Eckman officiated at Sherith Israel during the High Holidays of 1856, while Herman Bien officiated at Emanu-El.

[53]Clar and Kramer, pp. 113-115. This is the source for all of this basic information about Bien.

hired him in March[54] and he served for three short terms, ending in February, 1857. His tenure too was marked by controversy, stemming mostly from the congregation's financial difficulties and Bien's fervent reform tendencies. Although Emanu-El would soon become a very progressive congregation, Bien's youth and zeal were apparently a bit too much for at least some members of the synagogue. Bien's rabbinic credentials were also questioned, not only by Eckman and some Emanu-El congregants, but by Isaac Mayer Wise.[55]

Bien made his most forceful impact on the San Francisco Jewish community as a journalist. In October, 1856 he launched the first Jewish weekly in the West, the Voice of Israel,[56] which lasted only until April, 1857 due to financial difficulties and competition with Eckman's Weekly Gleaner, which debuted in January, 1857. Bien went on to edit two more Jewish weeklies in San Francisco, The Pacific Messenger and later The True Pacific Messenger.[57] In the former, his partner and co-editor was Samuel H. Henry, who was one of Henry's sons. Samuel went on to become a prominent attorney and political activist in San Francisco.[58] Isaac Mayer Wise, noting the arrival of the first issue of the Messenger, dated August 17, 1860, was impressed with its general appearance, but questioned the editors' claim to neutrality on the question of reform:

> if the editors believe it possible to publish a neutral religious organ, in our days to be an expositor, they labor under a serious mistake...A

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[54]Israelite 2:52 (July 4, 1856), pp. 422-3.
[55]Israelite 3:14 (October 10, 1856), pp. 108-9.
[56]Israelite 3:20 (November 21, 1856), pp. 154-5. No known copies of this publication are extant.
[57]Clar and Kramer, part III, WSJHQ 15:4 (July, 1983), p. 341; H.A. Henry, letter to Isaac Leeser, December 25, 1860. No copies of this journal have survived either.
[58]Robert J. Chandler, "Some Political and Cultural Pressures on the Jewish Image in Civil War San Francisco," WSJHQ 20:2 (January, 1988), pp. 148 ff; Emanu-El February 16, 1912, p. 9.

> religious paper can not be at once in favor of orthodoxy and reform, or in favor of none.[59]

Here Wise revealed his own vision of the role of the Jewish press as a forum for advocacy. It is not surprising, given this outlook, that the pages of his journal were so dense with expositions and polemics pushing for reform. Wise's one major criticism of the Messenger was a reprise of his ironic scolding of a minister for assuming titles to which he had no right. In this case, the offending party was Bien, who apparently listed himself with the already customary appellation "Rev. Doctor" Bien. Wise commented that "it is highly improper for a man to assume titles in his own paper."

Henry himself was apparently a contributor and advisor to the Messenger. Wise took the appearance of an article by Henry in an early issue of the paper as an opportunity to disparage Henry, his orthodoxy, and his scholarship again:

> Who is Rev. Dr. Henry--the contributor to *The Pacific Messenger?* We would like to know all the promoted divines of our country, not to gratify our curiosity, but to acquaint our numerous readers with all our great men in this country...The Rev. Dr. Henry informs us that the Book of Job "distinguished the earliest age of Genius."...Philologists are divided in opinion; but Rev Dr. Henry settled the question, and if he can prove it he will add another laurel to his literary crown; therefore we would like to know who Rev. Dr. Henry is.[60]

Of course, Wise knew exactly who Henry was. This comment is entirely sarcastic, meant to accuse Henry of offering shallow answers to complicated questions and to ridicule his efforts at scholarship. Lacking Henry's article which prompted Wise's words, it is difficult to know how justified the criticism was. Given the history of the relationship between these two men, it

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[59]Israelite 7:13 (September 28, 1860), p. 100.
[60]Israelite 7:17 (October 26, 1860), p. 133.

is likely that he simply seized the chance to humiliate a member of the enemy camp and advance the cause of reform.

Later, the partnership between Samuel Henry and Bien dissolved, with Samuel continuing the Messenger for a short while. Bien, meanwhile, founded the True Pacific Messenger on January 18, 1861. Wise, upon receiving the first issue of the new paper, complimented Bien on this effort, but could not resist quipping, "then the first was not true?"[61] The two papers briefly overlapped early in 1861 before Henry's paper folded in February and Bien's in June. Although Bien lost the battle for Jewish journalistic supremacy in San Francisco to Eckman, he was nonetheless a dogged pioneer in the worthy pursuit of informing the Jewish world as to the affairs of the Bay area's Israelites.

When Henry arrived in San Francisco in August, 1857, there were two large congregations with relatively new buildings. Emanu-El, the German congregation, was already beginning to show its tendency toward reform. Sherith Israel, the Polish congregation, was more conservative, at least in its refusal to depart from the strict "*minhag polin*" (Polish rite) mandated by its constitution.[62] There were two rabbis in the community, both of whom were surviving, but neither of whom had asserted himself as an enduring presence in either congregation. The time was ripe for Henry, with his oratorical skills and congregational experience, to establish himself in this fledgling community.

During his first few weeks in San Francisco, Henry officiated and preached at both Sherith Israel and Emanu-El.[63] He had no guarantees of permanent

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[61]Israelite 7:35 (March 1, 1861), p. 276.
[62]Sherith Israel Constitution (1851), in the Sherith Israel Minutes.
[63]Occident 15:8 (November, 1857), p. 407; The Weekly Gleaner (San Francisco: Julius Eckman, ed.) 1:34 (September 4, 1857), p. 272-3. Sherith Israel advertised that Henry would be reading prayers and preaching on September 5. A letter from Leeser's correspondent in The Occident

employment in either synagogue, though Emanu-El had been advertising nationally for a minister since severing formal ties with Bien. The protocols for matching rabbis and congregations were still very primitive, and since Henry was not summoned to San Francisco with a specific offer, he was required to "try out" for the positions. Henry split time between the two congregations during the High Holidays of 1857, earning the customary complimentary resolutions and gifts.[64] Interestingly, Henry had to compromise a principle immediately, as Emanu-El had just purchased a melodeon to accompany its services, a fairly decisive step toward reform.[65] As with his decision to preach in New York's Temple Emanu-El with its organ, Henry was not in a position to turn down offers that could lead to full-time employment. This did not represent a change in Henry's outlook toward reform. It was yet another example of one of the defining characteristics of Henry's rabbinate: pragmatic realities often encroached on principles. The realities could be ignored, but likely at the peril of the rabbi's career.

Emanu-El likely would have hired Henry quickly as they had Eckman and Bien, but on August 9, they had resolved to offer the job, sight unseen, to Dr. Elias Greenebaum, the liberal rabbi of Landau and one of the leaders of the German Rabbinical conferences. Greenebaum later reconsidered and decided to back out of the agreement, but it was too late for Emanu-El. A correspondent for the Israelite in 1856 had indicated that Sherith Israel had moved closer to being ready to hire a rabbi. This writer was responding to a report about New York's Shearith Israel, which had chastised the

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dated September 17 indicated that while Henry was "without office," he had preached in both synagogues.

[64]Voorsanger, p. 58, quoting Emanu-El minutes, Vol. I, p. 123.

[65]Voorsanger, p. 58.

congregation for its slavish devotion to the past and hesitancy to modernize, professionalize. and empower its leadership:

> I would request you to bring us to this golden region an article on Synagogal affairs, similar to the one you lately wrote on the Portuguese congregation of New York. This article has stirred up a little our Polish congregation, who begins to think about engaging a competent Hazan. One more reprimand and they will move.[66]

Sherith Israel actually did advertise for a Reader, but they did not make this decision until mid-July, and they advertised only locally.[67] Apparently, On September 30, 1857, two days after *Yom Kippur*, Sherith Israel hired Henry for one year, at a salary of $100 per month.[68] It was a good match. Both Sherith Israel and Henry--at least officially--were accustomed to the Polish *minhag* and an orthodox approach to Jewish practice. The congregation which would continually be the "bridesmaid" to the more modern, wealthy, and prestigious Emanu-El, had secured a legitimate, long-term rabbi before its rival.

As one of very few rabbis, and the only congregational rabbi, in Northern California, Henry was soon in demand as a representative of the Jewish community. As during his years in New York, organizations within and without the Jewish community sought an official Jewish presence at various events. Already in 1857, the Mayor of Oakland invited Henry to represent the Jewish community at the dedication of a non-denominational cemetery. He may have been the first official Jewish presence in that city.[69] Henry had somewhat of an ongoing relationship with the Jewish community of

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[66]Israelite 2:29 (January 25, 1856), p. 237. The letter was signed "V.S."
[67]Gleaner 1:27 (July 17, 1857), p. 220. This ad, indicating that the congregation planned to elect the reader at *Sukkot*, ran until the week Henry was hired.
[68]Occident 15:9 (December, 1857), p. 455.
[69]William M. Kramer "The Emergence of Oakland Jewry," WSJHQ 10:2 (January, 1978), p. 103.

Sacramento as well. In August, 1858, he visited that city, traveling by riverboat. While there, he gave several sermons and officiated at a funeral. In Henry's description, the people were very eager for learning and appreciative of his efforts.[70] On June 5, 1859, the Jews of Sacramento invited Henry back to address the crowd at the consecration of the first synagogue in the city.[71] He visited a third time in 1865, and the congregation presented him with a silver salver as a token of their gratitude for "services rendered by him on all occasions."[72]

Henry was equally active in Jewish public life within San Francisco. In 1860, he was made an honorary member of the Hebrew Young Men's Literary Association, one of the community's foremost social and intellectual clubs. He had lectured previously to this group, in April of 1858, on the topic of literature, a favorite subject of Henry's.[73] He was also named an honorary member of the Union Debating and Literary Association, formed in April, 1861. In this instance, all of the clergy in San Francisco were named honorary members and addressed the group at its inaugural meeting. Clar and Kramer noted that "Rarely could one find such a gathering of men influential in the pioneer religious, literary, and educational life of a city."[74] The notion of ministers being honorary members and frequent presenters to such groups was common within the American rabbinate. As communities like San Francisco were settled and their members increasingly assimilated, the rabbi was looked to ever more for religious and intellectual leadership. This trend was just beginning during Henry's years in San Francisco. Unfortunately for

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[70]WSJHQ 11:1 (October, 1978), pp. 60 ff., reprinted from Jewish Messenger, September 24, 1858.
[71]Gleaner 3:18 (June 10, 1859), p. 2. This event was also reported in Israelite 6:3 (July 22, 1859), p. 22, but there the date is mistakenly listed as Sunday, July 3.
[72]Occident 23:4 (July, 1865), p. 239; The Hebrew (San Francisco: Philo Jacoby, ed.) 2:18 (April 14, 1865), p. 4.
[73]Israelite April 25, 1858, quoted in Hochberg-Miller, p. 112.
[74]Clar and Kramer, Part II, p. 249.

him, the increases in stature and salary which followed from this new community orientation only became the rule after Henry's retirement.

On July 25, 1860, Henry participated in the dedication of Emanu-El's new cemetery.[75] This was particularly significant, as the two congregations were often so competitive that they would have been unlikely to share clergy very often. Nonetheless, Emanu-El was still without a minister, and for an occasion as noteworthy as a new cemetery, all involved were able to transcend petty differences for the greater good. The value of an official rabbinic presence at such an event outweighed their other differences. On February 21, 1864, Henry officiated at a dedication ceremony for a new *Sefer Torah* at Beth Israel, another rival congregation, and was given a silver goblet for his efforts that day.[76] Any tension surrounding this kind of partnership may have been augmented by the fact that one of the signers on the resolutions thanking Henry was none other than Samuel Henry! His own son was a member and a leader of another congregation! No evidence of enmity between father and son has come to light, and Samuel's involvement with Beth Israel remains a mystery.

Celebrations of all kinds were cause for the presence of a rabbi. On July 2, 1862, Henry officiated at the wedding of Joseph Goldwater, of the famous Goldwater merchandising family which later produced a couple of U.S. congressmen.[77] When Leopold King retired as the president of the First Hebrew Benevolent Society on January 4, 1863, Henry delivered a testimonial address to thank Mr. King for his services.[78] In September, 1867, Henry took part in a remarkable *brit milah* ceremony for triplet boys! The presidents and

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[75]Occident 18:18 (August, 1860), p. 148.
[76]Hebrew 1:12 (March 4, 1864), p. 4.
[77]William M. Kramer and Norton B. Stern, "Early California Associations of Michel Goldwater," WSJHQ 4:4 (July, 1972), p. 181.
[78]Occident 21:1 (April, 1863), p. 16 ff.

ministers of each of three congregations (Sherith Israel, Emanu-El, and Ohabai Shalom, to which the family belonged) were given honors in the ceremony. Whether he was performing official rabbinical duties or not, Henry was part of virtually every significant communal event in San Francisco by the 1860's.

In addition to the organizations of which Henry was an honorary member or a guest speaker, he also chose to participate in several others. One of these was the Ancient Jewish Order of Kesher Shel Barzel, a lodge somewhat akin to B'nai Brith, which was founded in 1863. Among this organization's aims were the dissemination of traditional Jewish knowledge, mutual benefit, and a forum for members' disputes to avoid civil litigation.[79] Henry was elected a trustee of the Har Hamoriah lodge of the A.J.O.K.S.B. in December, 1864.[80] The following April he delivered a lecture at a meeting of this lodge, the program of which was at least partly intellectual.[81]

But most of Henry's other organizational activities were in the areas of *tzedakah* and political action. In January, 1863, he was elected a vice president of the Friends of Zion, an organization established for relief of the poor in Palestine. This society numbered five hundred members at the time, each of whom contributed 25 cents a month to help their struggling co-religionists in the Holy Land.[82] The top three members of this organization were all rabbis. This indicates that collection and distribution of funds, contacts with distributors of the money in Palestine, and articulation of a guiding ideology were all within the purview of rabbis. This was a change from the usual charity organizations, where clergy tended to play an honorary or secondary

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[79]Occident 21:4 (July, 1863), p. 191.
[80]Hebrew 2:3 (December 30, 1864), p. 4.
[81]Hebrew 2:20 (April 20, 1865), p. 4. "Members of sister lodges" were also invited.
[82]Occident 21:1 (April, 1863), p. 42.

role. The following March, Henry was elected vice president of the local chapter of another group, the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* ("Universal Jewish Alliance").[83] Founded in 1860 and headquartered in France, the Alliance's mission was to fight antisemitism worldwide. As the first modern international Jewish organization, it had chapters all over the world.[84]

Henry's political and social involvement were not limited to such organizations as these, which dealt with ongoing issues. In his role as a leader of the San Francisco Jewish community, he was involved in communal activities which sprung up in response to specific situations. In June, 1858, a Jewish child in Bologna, Italy named Edgar Mortara was baptized by his nanny and abducted with the sanction of the Catholic church. This act gave rise to a cry of outrage from the international Jewish community. In San Francisco, a Mass Meeting was held on January 15, 1859. This meeting, attended by approximately 3000 people, was the largest such gathering in the country. Henry played a very active part in the proceedings, addressing the assembly, moving that a committee draft resolutions to express the sentiments of the meeting, and sitting on that committee.[85] By making such a strong statement, the San Francisco Jewish community showed that remoteness was soon to be eclipsed by strength as its defining characteristic.

In 1864, a minor controversy regarding the press and politics arose in San Francisco. The Jewish newspapers, which were privately owned and run, seemed to be attempting to express an official Jewish position on the Civil War. San Francisco's leading Jews, concerned that the public might mistake one editor's view for a statement representing all Jews, circulated a petition

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[83]Hebrew 1:16 (April 1, 1864).
[84]Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, The Jew in the Modern World (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 273.
[85]Israelite 5:34 (February 2, 1859), pp. 269-70; Occident 16:12 (March, 1859), pp. 605-7.

disclaiming any one publication's right to speak for the Jewish community at large. Henry was one of the signers of the petition.[86] This was a clear statement that notwithstanding occasional attempts at unity over some issues, the Jewish community did not have a single, unified view on the war. This was a very sensitive issue of public image at a time when Jews were very concerned about how their gentile neighbors--be it in Boston, Montgomery, or San Francisco--viewed them.

In 1865, the nation was shocked and grief-stricken when President Lincoln was assassinated. Jewish congregations, themselves mourning and eager to join in the national expression of grief, held special memorial ceremonies for the slain leader. Lincoln died during Passover, so Sherith Israel's services for the seventh day of Passover (an official holiday) were marked by emotional outpourings in Lincoln's honor:

> ...when the name of Andrew Johnson, the President, was mentioned the congregation was moved to tears, and immense grief was the expression of the reading preacher. The sermon was then delivered, lamenting the great affliction that has befallen this country, and admonishing the hearers to mourn for the illustrious departed.[87]

Henry then followed with a special prayer asking for God's blessings and grace upon President Lincoln's soul, and for comfort for his mourners. Sherith Israel also drafted resolutions in Lincoln's memory. Not only did they express mourning and regret at his loss, but they resolved that the synagogue should be "clothed with suitable badges of mourning" and then adjourned the meeting, deeming it inappropriate to conduct further business.[88]

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[86]Clar and Kramer, Part III, p. 351.
[87]William M. Kramer, "They Have Killed Our Man But Not Our Cause," WSJHQ 2:4 (July, 1979), pp. 196-7, quoting the Daily Alta California, April 19, 1865, p. 1.
[88]ibid. The resolutions were originally printed in Hebrew 2:20 (April 21, 1865), p. 4.

In addition to his involvement with the literary societies of San Francisco Jewry, Henry continued his intellectual and writing pursuits during these years. In 1859, he published A Synopsis of Jewish History. This book carried an extended title page description: "From the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, to the days of Herod the Great; Giving an account of the different Sects of those days; the introduction and use of Synagogues and Schools; the origin and introduction of Prayer among the Jews; the Ureem and Thumeem; the Mishna or Oral Law; the Gemara-Completion, usually styled the Talmud."[89]

This work was slightly more arcane than the Classbook, and it is not surprising that it failed to achieve the latter's popularity. It is clear from this book's content and style that it was less specifically intended for children, though this was at least a secondary motive for most of his writings. Henry stated in the preface that its purpose was to arouse curiosity and desire for further study on the part of the reader. Perhaps in anticipation of criticism of the book, he also offered the following:

> We have endeavored to furnish a synopsis of useful information, selected from the history and teachings of the chosen people of God, in such a manner as to suit the capacity of all readers since it is free from sectarian bias, and therefore may prove useful to all denominations.

Many similar books at this time were geared to promote the efforts of reformers or traditionalists. Henry was attempting to dissociate himself from this practice and to reach out to the broadest possible audience. The motivation for this approach was more likely potential profitability than ecumenical altruism.

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[89]H.A. Henry, A Synopsis of Jewish History (San Francisco: Towne & Bacon, 1859), title page.

Synopsis consisted of two parts. The first part, the actual history, was ten chapters covering the period indicated by the title: the 400+ years from the return from Babylonian captivity to the time of King Herod. The second part contained fourteen chapters, covering the wide variety of subjects listed on the title page. In terms of content, Henry made many understandable, and a few unusual choices. The historical segment was concise, clear, and fairly thorough for a short (Section I is less than 100 small pages) history book. The chapters on the various sects were similarly brief and informative. However, his fascination with the Ureem and Thumeem seems thoroughly out of place in a work otherwise concerned with only the very broad picture of Jewish history and literature. He devoted five pages to a discussion of this arcane mystery of the breast plate of judgement from the book of Exodus. It is unclear whether Henry thought this issue really fit into the scope of the work, or whether he was simply interested in it and wanted to have his thoughts and research on it published. It could be that he needed to beef up the book so that it would be more substantial and therefore sell more copies. Henry wanted to contribute to contemporary scholarship, though this motive was probably secondary in most of his writing. More than any of his works, Synopsis seems to have been an attempt to supplement his income. Isaac Leeser wrote up a digest of Synopsis for his paper, but declined to offer an opinion on it, claiming to have been criticized for his judgmental reviews in the past. He did, however, comment that since the book was so brief, it should be regarded "merely as a school book," but also noted that it "would be introduced into schools and families, if it could be afforded at a low enough price."[90] Isaac Mayer Wise acknowledged receipt of Synopsis in The Israelite, but also

[90]Occident 17:4 (July, 1859), p. 191.

declined substantial comment, noting only that "This is a nice little book for the young to glean an idea of Hebrew history."[91]

In 1863, Henry planned the publication of what would be his final book, Discourses on the Book of Genesis. He sent a prospectus to Leeser in October, indicating his publishing plan, promising to send Leeser copies to sell. "My plan is to secure sufficient subscribers to pay the expenses so that I have no outlay," Henry noted, "altho' it is attended with some trouble."[92] He published the book in March, 1864, printing 1500 copies at a cost of $700, selling them for a dollar apiece in San Francisco. He hoped to sell one thousand copies there, and send others to Leeser and elsewhere for sale in the east.

Discourses was specifically intended as an introduction to the Torah for children. Henry set out his aims in the preface:

> The necessity of a book like the present for the young is sufficiently obvious, if we consider the great indifference now shown to scriptural study... The author hopes that this work..will, by smoothing the way, rather allure the young to a more intimate acquaintance with the Sacred Volume.[93]

Henry was concerned that the Bible was simply too complex or subtle for young people to understand, and that this was causing them to lose interest in studying it. He set about remedying this by composing these twelve discourses, one on each weekly Torah portion in Genesis. These chapters were less discourses than summaries of each section, conveying the salient points of each Bible story from Genesis. By providing the essential contents of the book in digest form, and in contemporary English, Henry hoped that the

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[91]Israelite 6:3 (July 22, 1859), p. 23.
[92]H.A. Henry, letter to Isaac Leeser, October 13, 1863.
[93]H.A. Henry, Discourses on the Book of Genesis (San Francisco: H.H. Bankcroft and Company, 1864), from the preface.

stories would have more appeal to the young. The summaries were interspersed with Henry's commentary, and in this way they were indeed discourses. So, for example, at the end of the first discourse, after having summarized the fall of Adam and Eve, he ended the chapter with a prayer reinforcing the story's message:

> Grant, O Lord, that our hearts may not be misled by our passions or false teachings. May we ever be inclined to act according to thy will, and coerce our desires to be subservient to thee; to observe thy statutes, and serve thee with a perfect heart, for, from thee alone, emanate all the blessings of life.[94]

Discourses was dedicated to Sherith Israel, "with the warmest feelings of duty, affection, and esteem, by their obliged and faithful minister, the author." Henry indicated in the preface that he intended to produce similar volumes on the other four books of the Torah, but noted that that would "depend on the encouragement this, the first volume, will receive." Writing to Leeser in March, Henry commented that "The book [Discourses] is well received here , all the press have noticed it favorably except the Gleaner..."[95] Apparently the encouragement was not enough, though, as no other volumes appeared. While Discourses was a somewhat crude attempt to make the Bible accessible to American youth, it was nonetheless a fairly progressive educational work for its day. Henry showed with this publication that his commitment to education was thoroughgoing; where educational materials were insignificant to achieve basic goals like Torah study, he was prepared to provide them himself.

Henry showed the more adult side of his intellectual and writing pursuits by his work in The Hebrew, a Jewish newspaper published in San Francisco by

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[94]ibid., p. 20.
[95]H.A. Henry, letter to Isaac Leeser, March 30, 1864.

Philo Jacoby beginning in 1863. Most notable among Henry's contributions to this paper was his translation of Leon Hollaenderski's *Les Israelites de Pologne* (History of the Polish Jews) from the French. This work appeared in weekly installments during March and April of 1864.[96] Henry also had sent a copy to Leeser for his review in January.[97] This is the only evidence, aside from an occasional literary phrase scattered in his other writings, of Henry's knowledge of French. While Henry admitted that his learning was exceeded by many of his peers, his proficiency in English, Hebrew, and French (and likely German as well) and his use of these languages are indicative of a very good education and a substantial intellect.

Very soon upon his arrival in San Francisco, Henry set out to engage himself in his areas of interest and expertise within the rabbinate. Already in October it was reported that he was planning to begin a school.[98] There were already two Jewish schools in operation in San Francisco, Emanu-El's and Eckman's. Throughout the 1850's and '60's, Jewish education was somewhat unstable in San Francisco. There were day schools, afternoon schools, and Sunday schools, and combinations thereof. They were operated by individuals like Eckman, congregations, and the community. Schools were continually opening, closing, and reorganizing. It is difficult even to plot the course of Jewish education in San Francisco during this period. One report, from 1858, described a low point in the up-and-down course of Jewish education in San Francisco:

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[96]Hebrew 1:12, 1:15-20, March and April, 1864; Abraham G. Duker, "Polish Political Émigrés in the United States and the Jews, 1833-1865," Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society 39 (1949-50), p. 159.
[97]H.A. Henry, letter to Isaac Leeser, January 25, 1864, quoted in William M. Kramer and Norton B. Stern, "Letters of 1852 to 1864 Sent to Rabbi Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia from the Far West," WSJHQ 20:1 (October, 1987), p. 58.
[98]Occident 15:9 (December, 1857), p. 454.

> San Francisco--All the schools prove a failure. those of Messrs. Bien, Henry, and Solomon are no more. Dr. Eckman's school also has no more than 25 to 40 pupils. Things are much declining here notwithstanding the good will of the members and the money sacrifices.[99]

This mildly chaotic situation reflected in some ways the state of the San Francisco Jewish community. It was important to the Jews of San Francisco to educate their children, but they were unsure how best to do it. Education was a costly venture which competed with many other priorities in an erratic economic climate. On October 23, 1859, a mass meeting was held for the purpose of organizing a community-wide Jewish school. Henry was one of those invited to address the meeting, which he began by reminding those present that since there were Torah scrolls in the hall, the men were required to cover their heads. Henry's words, predictably, advocated the establishment of the school upon orthodox principles. He also offered his services, presumably to teach or administer in the school.[100] This meeting led to the formation in 1861 of the Harmonia school. Eckman was one of the principals, and Henry apparently had no connection to it.

Nonetheless, Henry continued to teach himself and to advocate for the cause of Jewish education. He tutored a Catholic woman named Annie White for conversion (she changed her name to Hannah Abrams, reflecting her entry into the covenant of Abraham), and then officiated at her wedding to Morris Frederick in 1859.[101] He also served as a tutor and study partner for

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[99]Israelite 5:10 (September 10, 1858), p. 78.

[100]Gleaner 3:38 (October 28, 1859), p. 5; Israelite 6:23 (December 9, 1859), pp. 182-3. Isaac Mayer Wise, commenting on Henry's speech, asserted, "The good man wants an orthodox school, i.e. one in which he is the teacher," implying that Henry's motives for advocating orthodoxy were selfish.

[101]Israelite 6:17 (October 28, 1859), pp. 134-5. This article, reprinted from the Daily Alta California, September 13, 1859 was also published as "A Conversion and Marriage in San Francisco in 1859," WSJHQ 5:1 (October, 1972), p. 33-35. Interestingly, the Archives of Sherith

Abraham Wolf Edelman, who later became a pioneer rabbi in Los Angeles.[102] In 1862, Henry preached a *Shabbat Shuvah* sermon on the topic of the need for a religious education for the young. This sermon led to the formation during *Sukkot* of a committee at Sherith Israel to encourage parents to send their children to school.[103] At this time Sherith Israel had its own school with Henry at the helm, as evidenced in part by his reelection that fall to the office of Minister and School Superintendant.[104] By the following spring, the school was described as "improving, both as regards the number of scholars and the knowledge there imparted."[105] Later in 1863, Henry was trying to establish a day school at Sherith Israel "to be conducted on the old principles." The congregation rejected this idea, but resolved to elect an assistant teacher for Henry; Isaac Leeser's correspondent indicated that the likely choice was Henry's son, "a youth of about fifteen."[106] The congregation was clearly committed enough to the school to include education as a separate component of Henry's job and to provide the school with the necessary staff, but the choice of Henry's son--surely cheaper and less competent than an experienced adult--shows that their interest had limits.

Education and its virtues remained a favorite topic of Henry's throughout his career. At the inaugural meeting of the B'nai Brith Literary & Social Circle on March 3, 1867, Henry was the featured speaker.[107] His speech was replete

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Israel contains a letter from Alexander Badt, the longtime secretary of the congregation, to Henry's son Marcus in 1904, responding to his request for information about the family burial plot. Apparently, Marcus Henry had some connection with Hannah Abrams, since he seemed to be asking if she could be buried there.

[102]Martin A Meyer, Western Jewry: An Account of the Achievements of the Jews and Judaism in California, (San Francisco, Emanu-El, 1916), p. 88; WSJHQ 3:4 (July, 1971), p. 194.

[103]Occident 20: 8 (November, 1862), p. 476.

[104]ibid., p. 477.

[105]Occident 21:4 (July, 1863), pp. 190-91.

[106]Occident 21:8 (November, 1863), p. 432. This probably refers to Alfred Kaufman Henry, who was born in London in 1849 and died in San Francisco in 1876, at the age of 27. Alfred is the only one of Henry's children to be buried with him and his wife.

[107]Occident 25: 9 (December, 1867), pp. 543, 559 ff.

with high praise for the appreciation of culture and literature, obtained in higher learning of all branches. He also spoke in glowing terms about the nobility and importance of organizations such as the one which was forming that day. But he also took the opportunity to push for more emphasis on religious education, which he still found wanting at this time:

> My duty here happily places me upon ground where the strength of the cause will more than compensate for the weakness of the advocate... Those who have power and influence are in duty bound to...ameliorate the present religious, social, and moral condition of the Israelites on the Pacific coast.[108]

Apparently, the school which he had been running for several years at Sherith Israel was not sufficiently attended or funded according to Henry's standards. But his goals in promoting the cause of Jewish education went beyond merely giving more attention to the standard schooling of the masses of Jews. Henry echoed, nearly word for word, the vision he had propounded fourteen years earlier in New York at the consecration of the Hebrew National School of Shaarey Zedek:

> Let us hope that the day is not far distant when we shall have normal schools to train Jewish youths as teachers and ministers. I need not tell you, my friends, of the advantages thus to be gained. Educating them in your own colleges, you will watch their daily pursuits and thus see their proficiency and their religious and moral bearing. You will then not be driven to the necessity of importing strangers who know little of you, and of whom you know still less.[109]

Henry saw the training of rabbis as the ultimate in Jewish education. Remarkably, he was not discouraged about the prospect of an American seminary after fourteen years of setbacks in the area of Jewish education!

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[108]ibid., p. 565.
[109]ibid.

Little did Henry know that Isaac Mayer Wise would finally cajole this vision into existence a mere eight years later, when he founded Hebrew Union College. The members of the B'nai Brith society responded to Henry's talk with hearty applause, and one of them described it as a "masterly effort."[110]

Despite Henry's persistent cries that the Jews of San Francisco needed to devote more energy to the Jewish education of their children, he had his troubles with the school at Sherith Israel. In October, 1867, the trustees of Sherith Israel complained that Henry had not been attending the school punctually, claiming that "neglects on his part do not only great injury to the School, but are the cause of complaints and dissatisfaction."[111] The following February, "The School Committee reported that Dr. H.A. Henry attends but irregular to the duties as principal and superintendant of the School, and owing to that fact, the school is making little or no progress."[112] They followed with a threat that if Henry did not improve his performance, they would dock him $50 per month salary, claiming that that portion of his salary--one third--was specifically designated for his educational duties. There was no evidence of this breakdown of his salary when Henry was hired or rehired, but the board obviously felt comfortable creating an arbitrary division when it suited their needs. Henry's poor performance is mysterious. One possible explanation is that Henry's advancing age prevented him from devoting the same energy to the school that he once had (Henry would retire shortly thereafter). Nevertheless, this incident is an aberration in a career consistently motivated by a passion for education and for youth.

It was also in San Francisco that Henry's role as a crusader for traditional Judaism reached its peak. As we have seen, San Francisco's Jewish

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[110]ibid., p. 543.
[111]Sherith Israel minutes, October 30, 1867.
[112]Sherith Israel minutes, February 15, 1868.

community was never a bastion of orthodoxy, and Jewish observance was erratic long before the appearance of an organized program of Reform. Henry's arrival in San Francisco was a step forward for orthodoxy. Traditionalists now had a legitimate voice which would be expressed through the media of the pulpit, the press, and the classroom. His traditionalism was likely a factor in his hiring at Sherith Israel and not at Emanu-El. From very early on, Emanu-El was more inclined to modify its practices in response to the realities of the world around it. During Henry's first High Holiday season there, Isaac Leeser reported that "nearly all" of San Francisco's Jews had their places of business closed on *Rosh Hashana*, calling this "evidence that religion is not quite forgotten; it only needs to be remembered oftener than it is; and we trust that it soon may be."[113] But by 1859, Emanu-El already had made the fairly radical innovation of a mixed-gender choir.[114] Two years later, Leeser reported that "congregation Shearith Israel, under the charge of Rev H.A. Henry, continues to keep the orthodox form of Judaism."[115] The lines were drawn. These two congregations, rivals by virtue of culture since their inception, found in reform a new topic on which to distinguish themselves from one another. Each viewed its approach toward reform as a mark of its superiority. Sherith Israel, with the staunch traditionalist Henry, was the congregation which faithfully upheld tradition. Emanu-El, especially when Elkan Cohn arrived in 1860 to fill the long-standing vacancy as its rabbi, was the congregation on the cutting edge of modernity.

Henry's role as a symbol of Sherith Israel's traditionalism set the stage for one of the more interesting events of his career. In 1862, he wrote a letter to the Occident, complaining about Eckman's and Bien's behavior. Writing

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[113]Occident 15:8 (November, 1857), p. 407.
[114]Occident 17:13, (June 23, 1859), p. 78.
[115]Occident 19:5 (August, 1861), p. 231.

under the pseudonym Theophilus (an ironic choice, since this Greek name meaning "Friend of God" is usually associated with the New Testament), he accused these "outsiders" of "committing many outrages in defiance of both congregations," stating of Eckman that "whatever the *Kehilloth* (congregations) reject he lays hold of."[116] One of his specific accusations of Eckman was that he had married a childless widow to a *kohane* (descendant of the Priestly class) after Henry had refused to do so, breaking two Jewish laws: one preventing a *kohane* from marrying a widow at all, and another (called "levirate marriage") requiring the brother of a deceased man either to provide his brother's widow with a child or to be released from this obligation through a ceremony called *chalitza*. Theophilus's implication was that Eckman was destroying the community by undermining the authority of the congregations and taking on the rabbinical functions that they, out of principle, refused to authorize.

Eckman reprinted this letter in the Gleaner, questioning Theophilus's motives for not dealing with the issue directly.[117] The following week, the woman whom Eckman married to the *kohane* responded to Theophilus in the Gleaner, sending a copy of the letter to Leeser as well.[118] "Mrs. C" asserted that Theophilus was indeed Henry, and she accused him of misrepresenting the situation. She claimed that she and her husband, upon deciding to marry in 1859, had consulted an authority who had assured them (erroneously) that the prohibition against a *kohane* marrying a widow applied only to the High

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[116]Occident 10:1 (April, 1862), p. 16. We know that "Theophilus" is Henry because in a private letter to Leeser, dated January 17, 1862, Henry wrote "No doubt ere this reaches you the news of my misfortune has been made known to you thro' the public press...I have ventured to send you a communication containing facts and signed it 'Theophilus.'"

[117]William M. Kramer and Norton B. Stern, "An Issue of Jewish Marriage and Divorce in Early San Francisco," WSJHQ 21:1 (October, 1988), p. 50, quoting Gleaner May 23, 1862.

[118]Anonymous ["Mrs. C"], letter to Isaac Leeser, May 19, 1862; Gleaner May 30, 1862. Her letter is also quoted and referred to extensively in Kramer and Stern's article.

Priest and not to just any priest. The concern over levirate marriage and *chalitza* was apparently less pressing for them. Meanwhile, they had a close relationship with Henry, attending Sherith Israel regularly and visiting at the Henry home. According to Mrs. C., Henry had agreed to officiate at their wedding regardless of the halachic prohibitions, even filling out the *ketubah* in advance of the ceremony.

Apparently, some members of the Sherith Israel board regarded this matter as controversial. One, A.B. Ephraim, a vice president of the congregation, had known a brother of Mrs. C's deceased first husband and raised concern over Henry marrying her to a new husband without releasing her brother-in-law from his levirate obligation by doing *chalitza.* Interestingly, the board did not forbid Henry from performing the marriage; Mrs. C claimed he came to her the day before the wedding and said that "the Trustees leave it to me and I cannot marry you." Her theory was that Henry was prepared to officiate at the wedding, but Ephraim and others were trying to catch him breaking the rules of tradition. Mrs. C was angry, not that Henry refused to marry them--she said she was prepared not to marry Mr. C if it were a sin or if Henry told her the marriage was forbidden--but that he had caved in to the board's ruse and in fact gone back on his willingness to perform the marriage. She and Mr. C then applied to Eckman, who gladly performed the ceremony, prompting Henry's "Theophilus" letter.

What do we learn about Henry, Sherith Israel, and reform from this incident? First, nobody--not Henry, not the trustees of Sherith Israel--was clear on the norms and the boundaries of Orthodox Judaism in the American setting. In fact, when Henry, in a last-ditch effort to save face before Mrs. C, suggested that they perform the ritual of *chalitza*, he told her they would have to go to Germany to do it! Lacking any central authority or mutually

agreed upon standards, each congregation and/or rabbi made decisions about Jewish practice for themselves. Mrs. C's story was a perfect example of a case which would have been settled by a *bet din*, a Jewish court of ordained rabbi-judges, in Europe. But in America, as Leeser and many others frequently lamented, there was no authoritative arbiter of Jewish norms. Sherith Israel's board was probably not trying to trap Henry as Mrs. C claimed--if they wanted to get rid of him, they had ample opportunity each year not to rehire him. They may have been genuinely looking for him to set the parameters of Jewish observance and either sanction the disregard of certain Jewish laws or forbid it. Regardless, Henry knew he stood for orthodoxy, specifically in opposition to Cohn and Emanu-El, which set out on a deliberate program of reform in the Isaac Mayer Wise mold, and to Eckman and Bien, who had the freedom to make their own rabbinic choices without a board to answer to. Had he been bound only by his own convictions, Henry may or may not have refused to marry Mr. and Mrs. C. Despite all the detail available about this incident, this question remains unanswered. But with Eckman's freedom and willingness to do the wedding, even Henry's refusal was meaningless. Henry assumed the role of "Theophilus" out of frustration at his own lack of rabbinic freedom. If he had to make choices as difficult as the one which so bitterly disappointed his friends Mr. and Mrs. C, the last thing he needed was free agent rabbis like Eckman and Bien undermining the Jewish principles upon which he (usually willingly) acted. Henry expressed this frustration in his *Shavuot* sermon in 1862, just a few days after the publication of Mrs. C's letter:

> ...these very teachers [like Eckman and Bien]...act in defiance of the law, commit acts in opposition to the acknowledged customs and usages of Israel, even when the congregations refuse to perform certain ceremonies. But what avail all our complaints? The ministers of true

> religion are not properly supported by their congregations...to stop such acts which disgrace Israel in the eyes of God and man. We fear not to speak out. We are not blinded by worldly prospects. Our acts in our official capacity are our own, and we are not ashamed to publish them to the world.[119]

Henry frequently expressed his views on reform in sermons like this one. In the same *Shavuot* sermon, he took advantage of the holiday's theme of the giving of the Torah to reinforce the binding nature of the system of laws which God gave to the Jews at Sinai. Basing his sermon on a text from the Jerusalem Talmud (*Berachot* 9) warning that the Torah may be neglected in its old age, Henry took upon himself the text's rejoinder to "exercise all your power to enforce it."[120] Henry ridiculed the notion, promulgated by reformers, that traditional Judaism was "no more suited to the times." He argued that the Torah's very antiquity--coupled, of course, with its divine origin--made it all the more relevant in modern times. He longed for the days of loyal adherence to tradition:

> Say, my brethren, where are the good old times, when every house in Israel was sacred to God and His Laws, when the true fear of God was equally practised in the palace as in the humble cottage? Where art thou, oh! blessed past, when joy and happiness were found in God, in His temple, and in his divine institutions?

This sermon, delivered immediately in the wake of the public airing of the marriage scandal, bespeaks anything but the ambivalence which Mrs. C attributed to Henry. He was a firm, consistent enemy of reform, and if his public expressions are to be trusted, this view was based on a deep and sincere

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[119]H.A. Henry, "The Perpetuity of the Law," a sermon delivered at Sherith Israel, *Shavuot* 1862. Occident 20:5 (August, 1862), p. 257-8.
[120]ibid., p. 252. This is presumably Henry's translation of the Talmudic passage.

faith in the divinity of the Torah and the binding nature of the rabbinic law as its natural extension.[121]

In 1863, Leeser's correspondent in San Francisco noted that the tide of reform had been stemmed. Two major steps toward reform had failed: the attempt to abolish the second day of festivals, and the adoption of Leo Merzbacher's reform prayer book. The correspondent noted that on Passover, Henry and Cohn delivered sermons from the same text, "which they of course handled in different ways."[122] The two rabbis had indeed become symbols of the opposing camps with regard to reform. The two men were not always in disagreement, though, as Cohn's reform progressed in stages. Later in 1863, on *Shabbat Shuva*, Leeser's correspondent reported that not only did the two rabbis choose the same subject for their sermons, but they made the same points. Henry focused particularly on the need for Sabbath observance, a point he had touched on in the previous *Shavuot* sermon as well. "Some of the wholesale dealers did not relish the preacher's remarks," noted the writer for The Occident, "since he blamed them mostly, as they are the rich, and therefore blameworthy for the bad example they set in profaning the day of rest; though the people in general approved of the remarks."[123] Although the realities of American cosmopolitan life were gradually drawing San Francisco's Jews away from traditional observance, there was still substantial support for traditionalism on the part of the people at large. If the people's

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[121]There is only one other incident besides the Mr. and Mrs. C marriage scandal which calls Henry's strictness into question. In September, 1865, Henry converted a woman to Judaism who had already been married to a Jewish man, Mr. Appel, for a year. Hebrew 2:41 (September 20, 1865), p. 4. Although the woman was converting, it would seem Henry was lending his tacit approval to the interfaith marriage by officiating at the conversion. Perhaps Mr. Appel's status made it problematic for Henry to refuse, or they went through a Jewish wedding ceremony after the conversion.

[122]Occident 21:4 (July, 1863), p. 190.

[123]Occident 21:8 (November, 1863), p. 431.

approval of his remarks is accurate, Henry still had an audience for his ideas, albeit a shrinking one.

In later sermons, Henry continued to rail against reform, both its ideology in the abstract and its concrete manifestations. In 1867, Leeser published in the Occident a discourse by Henry on Leviticus 19:12, a restatement of the commandment not to swear falsely or vainly by God's name. He vigorously decried the practice of Jews taking oaths in court or praying in synagogue with their heads uncovered, linking this action to a desecration of God's name. He then denounced reform in any form or place, accusing "unauthorized men" of promulgating "false doctrines, with an aim to "draw off the people from the pure Judaism in which they were content and happy."[124] Henry rightly traced the roots of organized reform to Germany, lamenting its advent:

> Alas! now-a-days, among those men Judaism is considered by them as only a remnant of by-gone times, no more to rise in its pristine beauty and comliness [sic], which was the... glory of its adherents. In sorrow we declare fearlessly that the cause of all this may be dated from the period when the Israelites received their emancipation in Germany, which is acknowledged to be the hot-bed of *infidelity*.

Either Henry sensed at this late date that he was losing the battle against reform, or he thought that he just had not been sufficiently persuasive in his expressions against it. Either way, his last published sermon, from *Chanukah* 1866, was his most stirring and passionate tirade against reform. In this discourse, based on Proverbs 29:10 ("...happy is the one who observes the Torah"), he compared the Assyrian defilement of the Temple with innovations in American synagogues:

> Certain classes must ape their gentile neighbors in order...to induce their people to come to their synagogue, which is now made more a

[124]Occident 25:1 (April, 1867), pp. 12-17; 25:2 (May, 1867), pp. 60-72.

> place of *exercise*, or, if I might so term it, a place of *recreation*... it attracts not only the *ignorant* and *unlearned*, but even those who pretend to be religious and pious...men who...endeavor to delude the people from the good old paths to their new ones, as more accommodating to the tastes of the present supposed enlightened age. But then, we ask, what is the result? Need we pause for a reply? -- *irreligion, apathy, callousness.*[125]

No matter how passionate his convictions or articulate his exhortations, however, Henry was fighting a losing battle against reform. Interestingly, though he had little formal authority in the congregation, his traditionalism held sway at Sherith Israel throughout his tenure there. Although he had some support for his traditionalist views in the early 1860's, the trend favoring reform was growing in Sherith Israel as virtually everywhere in America, and surely he was in the minority on this issue for his last several years there. In 1869, immediately upon Henry's retirement, the board began to entertain the notion of certain reforms. A resolution to abolish separate seating for men and women, discussed and tabled only weeks after Henry's retirement, passed six months later.[126] Henry had held off the tidal wave of reform at Sherith Israel, but when the stalwart was removed, the floodgates opened. Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, Sherith Israel quickly caught up with the rest of the reform congregations throughout America. In the 1870's alone, the congregation introduced an organ and mixed choir, eliminated some prayers, and instructed the rabbi to face the congregation while leading prayers. They also began the practice of Confirmation and modified their cemetery and mourning customs.[127]

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[125]Occident 25: 5 (August, 1867), pp. 289-297.
[126]Sherith Israel minutes, October 30, 1869, April 24, 1870, quoted in Jerome Grollman, The Emergence of Reform Judaism in the United States. Rabbinical Thesis, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, 1948.
[127]Grollman, pp. 90-98.

Reform was only one of the issues by which Henry's relationship to his congregation was defined. Sherith Israel was a typical mid-nineteenth century American synagogue in many ways: it began as a humble, orthodox congregation, its members bound together by a combination of cultural, religious, and social factors. What was unique about Sherith Israel stemmed mostly from the specific circumstances of San Francisco as a community and the presence of Emanu-El as a constant competitor and barometer of change. At this stage of American Jewish history, rabbis were essentially hirelings, expected to fulfill their religious functions and follow the direction of the board of trustees. Although rabbis were often communal leaders and public presences, they generally did not possess power or authority in their congregations. As the second half of the nineteenth century progressed, rabbis gradually gained stature and authority, but Henry's years in San Francisco were marked by challenges to his dignity and rabbinic self-esteem in the face of a status which was at times embarrassingly low.

We have seen that the original constitution of Sherith Israel scarcely acknowledged the possibility of rabbinic leadership. When the constitution was updated, the outlook on rabbinical leadership had changed substantially. Though the later version seems to have been finalized in 1870, it is likely that much of the substantial "revision" had taken place already by 1856, the second date listed on the title page.[128] Like the original document, this version contained long sections about each board officer, about membership requirements, and about contributions. However, unlike the earlier document, there were extensive sections detailing the responsibilities and the status of the paid employees of the congregation, including the minister and

[128]Both versions of the constitution are in the Sherith Israel minutes, microfilm #2443 at the AJA.

the reader. This constitution made it clear that the minister was the religious functionary of the congregation, particularly with respect to life cycle events, education of the young, and regular religious services. While the lay leadership of the congregation seemed prepared to divest itself of some of the *responsibility* for the religious life of the congregation, it did not seem prepared to give up even the slightest amount of *control* over this arena. Thus the minister was told not only when, where, and what his responsibilities were, but also *how* he was to carry them out--which marriages were appropriate or inappropriate, how often to give sermons, what the character of synagogue services would be, etc. There is no hint that the rabbi was what he would eventually become in America, that is, the religious *leader* of the synagogue, answerable to the board, but not utterly controlled by it.

Henry was certainly expected to perform at auspicious moments in the congregation's history. On May 5, 1861, the congregation opened a new cemetery, the Hills of Eternity. Emanu-El had opened its new cemetery only a few months earlier, and Sherith Israel had to match its rival's progress. As with Emanu-El's dedication ceremony in which Henry participated, the dedication of Hills of Eternity was a community event, involving Cohn and Eckman in addition to Henry.[129] Two weeks later, on May 19, Sherith Israel had a ceremony for the presentation of a new Torah scroll and other religious objects. Henry led the ceremony and delivered the address.[130] Four years into the job, he was firmly established as the official presence of his congregation and its religious functionary. On *Erev Rosh Hashana* that year, the trustees rewarded Henry with the gift that he had been refused in Cincinnati: "a very

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[129]Benjamin, p. 200.
[130]Occident 19:6 (September, 1861), p. 323 ff.

handsome black silk cloak and velvet cap as a token of their appreciation of his services."[131]

But the moments of Henry's involvement in milestones of the congregation or their expressions of thanks were the exception. Not only did Henry fulfill all of the rabbinical roles at Sherith Israel (some congregations did have readers or teachers who were separate from the minister or preacher), but he had to write a formal letter to the board requesting his reelection from year to year. His very status at the congregation was subject to the whim of the board. Notwithstanding gifts like the cloak and hat, Henry never received a raise during his twelve years of full-time service to the congregation.[132] It is possible that the congregation could not afford to raise his salary, though the fact that they built a building in 1854 and were looking to build another already by 1867 seems to indicate that money was not the issue. It could be that they were not particularly happy with his performance--a subject we will revisit shortly--though had they been truly dissatisfied they could have simply fired him. More likely, the congregation realized that the rabbi had no leverage, given his age, their geographical location, and the setup of the congregation, which gave absolute governing authority to the board.

Henry's lack of status and leverage at Sherith Israel, if it was not clearly established by the school committee's threat to dock his pay, was confirmed by an incident which occurred near the end of his career. In April, 1869, Henry and Charles Meyer, the president of Sherith Israel, engaged in a heated power struggle over Henry's duties and status. At a board meeting, Meyer complained to the trustees that although Henry had shirked his duties and

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[131]Occident 19:8 (November, 1861), p. 424.

[132]Technically, he was hired for $100 per month for his first year, but every year thereafter his salary remained fixed at $150 per month.

disregarded Meyer's authority before, he had overlooked these incidents until now, when "patience ceases to be a virtue." Meyer went on to describe the incident which had provoked his ire:

> Dr. Henry has not only ignored and disregarded my orders given for the performance of last Saturday's Services, but seems to think that he is justified and has a right to do so, for when I censured him for having disobeyed my orders, he gave me the vulgar answer "I shall not play the second fiddle," insulting not only me, and the whole Board, but also our Constituents or Body at large, who have elected us to conduct the Congregation's affairs.[133]

After a discussion, the board responded by moving to suspend Henry from his job for 30 days for disobeying the president's orders. The motion carried by a vote of 5-2.

It is unclear whether this was the culmination of long-standing enmity between the two men, or a one-time flare up of otherwise peaceful relations. The clash of egos between rabbis and lay leaders is probably as old a phenomenon as the rabbinate itself, but an episode like this one may represent the low point of rabbinical leverage. The "American rabbi" was a concept in formation, and the absence of a seminary, a union, or a precedent for rabbinical status made the rabbi's position in America precarious. The punishment levied on Henry is proof that the constitution's grant of absolute power to the board was not a mere formality, but a reflection of the reality of the situation.

Interestingly, a special trustee meeting was called ten days later, and Henry's suspension was rescinded. Meyer thanked the board for supporting him by punishing Henry, "thereby sustaining his, their, and the dignity of the congregation at large," but respectfully asked them to reconsider their action.

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[133]Sherith Israel minutes, April 30, 1869.

The trustees dutifully reinstated Henry without giving any indication as to why Meyer had a change of heart.[134] It could be that Henry, sensing that he had gone too far in his defiance, apologized and was forgiven, or that Meyer had regrets about the harshness of the punishment. It is also conceivable that the congregation needed Henry to perform some function before the end of the suspension. The absence of any explanation notwithstanding, the incident shows the sometimes impulsive nature of congregational decision-making in this era.

Henry's rabbinic career came to an end during the autumn of 1869. Of the prayer services he was assigned to lead on *Yom Kippur* that year, Henry was only able to lead *kol nidre*.[135] Henry, in his sixties, may have been slowed by illness already. At the congregation's annual meeting a few days later, Henry and two others applied for the position of reader, but the congregation decided not to elect anyone at that time.[136] It was clear to the board that Henry was to retire at this point, and while they did not fire him, his retirement was clearly not voluntary. His pension was discussed, and the board settled on $100 per month.[137] A week later, they were discussing placing ads for a *chazan* in the New York Jewish press.[138] This entire process was carried out routinely, with little fanfare and little appreciation for twelve years of service.

In his retirement, Henry continued to be active for a short while. He co-officiated at the dedication of Sherith Israel's new synagogue building on August 26, 1870, with Rabbi Aron Messing, his successor. He also officiated at

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[134]Sherith Israel minutes, May 10, 1869.
[135]Sherith Israel minutes, September 9, 1869; September 30, 1869.
[136]Sherith Israel minutes, October 3, 1869.
[137]ibid. The board debated between the figures of $50, $75, and $100 per month before deciding to grant Henry the largest amount as a monthly pension.
[138]Sherith Israel minutes, October 11, 1869.

Messing's wedding that July.[139] But for the most part, Henry faded into obscurity as Sherith Israel hurtled forward into modernity. A career which had spanned five decades, two continents, and at least five cities, quietly receded into history.

[139]Norton B. Stern, "An Orthodox Rabbi and a Reforming Congregation in Nineteenth Century San Francisco," WSJHQ 15:3 (April, 1983), p. 277.

Conclusion

In the period prior to the 1840's, it is scarcely possible to speak of an American rabbinate. The Jewish community was so small and so dominated by lay leadership that Gershom Mendes Seixas and Isaac Leeser stand out as the only two ministers who made a significant impact in this era. Over the next three decades, this situation changed dramatically. Dozens of rabbis arrived from Europe to serve the growing and spreading Jewish community. As the tens of thousands of Ashkenazic immigrants settled, acculturated, and raised their children as Americans, these ministers tried to respond to the changing reality of American Jewish life. But the European ministers could only go so far in meeting the needs of their constituents. Ultimately, the immigrant minister typified by Henry gave way to a unique American rabbinate in the last decades of the nineteenth century. This new "American Rabbi" was typically American-born, or at least thoroughly Americanized. He was likely trained at Hebrew Union College, the first rabbinical seminary in North America, and was influenced by Isaac Mayer Wise's vision of Reform. He was trained to be a preacher, teacher, and pastor much more than a scholar-judge. The new American Rabbi was also the leader of his congregation, a symbol of status and legitimacy for a lay leadership which was increasingly less authoritative in the context of the congregation. In short, the hireling minister of the mid-nineteenth century became the professional rabbi of the late nineteenth century.[1]

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[1]This transition has been noted in Jonathan Sarna, "Introduction," The American Rabbi (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 1985). Sarna has acknowledged in particular the increase in status which occurred as the rabbinate became more professionalized, beginning in earnest in the 1880's.

But the groundwork for this new rabbinate was laid in the 1850's and 1860's. During these decades, ministers and lay leaders struggled to define the role of the rabbi in congregational and communal life. As a result, Henry and the rabbis of his generation faced a great deal of instability. All of the major issues which would come to define American Jewish life were in flux during Henry's career. Rabbis and leaders hammered out the degree and the nature of reform, amid much bitterness and controversy. They struggled to find the proper format and curriculum for the Jewish education of children. And the rabbis' role in the congregation and in the community was in flux as American Jews molded them into a synthesis of the European Rabbi-Scholar and the American Protestant Minister.

When Henry arrived in 1849, the reform of Judaism was in its infancy. A few congregations, under the influence of a few individuals, were actively seeking a new expression of Judaism which would reflect their new American sensibilities more accurately. The Reform Movement in Germany had produced a few rabbis who would have an impact on American Judaism, but they were few in number and limited in influence at this point. Although many American Jews were not fully observant, they were much more lapsed orthodox Jews than ideologically committed Reform Jews. The promotion of an ideology of reform to justify changes in religious practice was a fringe phenomenon. The rabbi in an American synagogue, as an agent of the board of trustees, was expected to reflect the congregation's official orthodoxy. He was rarely expected to provide leadership or vision for the congregation. Thus, in Cincinnati, Henry was asked to compose an English prayer and to work with a choir, but his commitment to orthodoxy was tolerated and even supported. Even twenty years later in San Francisco, when the Jews had

grown more distant from their roots, Henry's orthodox outlook was accepted and he may even have been pressured to maintain a strong official position.

As Henry moved through America, reform underwent a gradual but steady increase in strength and ideological content. With the arrival and rise to prominence of Isaac Mayer Wise, among others, the trend toward reform blossomed into the Reform Movement. Wise, through his conviction, dynamism, and writing, became the model for the American rabbi as the leader and ideologue of his community. Henry spent much time and energy responding to the growth and spread of Reform Judaism. Over time, his sermons and writings became progressively more pointed and proscriptive. As the Reform Movement gained influence and legitimacy, Henry felt the need to speak out ever more strongly against it. Wise's emergence as the visionary of Reform Judaism was an important step in the quest of American rabbis for legitimacy and influence. In some ways, rabbis were looked to more for leadership during these later years of Henry's career. But any increase in Henry's authority as a rabbi was somewhat counteracted by the decreasing popularity of his anti-reform ideas. Nevertheless, the more unpopular his stance became, the more passionately Henry seemed to feel he had to defend it.

Notwithstanding the resistance of Henry and others, the Reform Movement dominated the American scene in the years following Henry's retirement. Until the Eastern European immigration brought a new wave of orthodoxy to the United States (the full impact of which was not felt nationally until the turn of the century), the American rabbinate was a Reform rabbinate. The transition that occurred in the 1850's and 1860's was largely one in which "Americanization" and "Reform" became increasingly synonymous with respect to the rabbinate. However, Henry's traditional

outlook provided a necessary counterpoint to the growing Reform Movement. In some ways, Henry could be seen as the example of what the new American Rabbi would *not* be. The American Rabbi would not be a strong reminder of Europe either culturally or religiously. He would initiate, rather than resist, the adaptation of Judaism according to the norms of the surrounding culture. He would be very sensitive to the practical demands of American life. By and large, the American rabbi would be prepared to abandon Jewish tradition and law when it conflicted with his modern American sensibilities. The presence of Henry as a representative of the "outdated" model helped give shape to the new American model. The Cincinnati and San Francisco communities each moved away from tradition in the decade following Henry's departure. In some measure, when their orthodox minister moved on, the congregations were free to evolve more naturally according to the current trends in American Judaism.

As with most issues, ideology took a back seat to pragmatism in the debate about reform in the Jewish community of mid-nineteenth century America. While Henry's official reaction against reform grew ever harsher, he either chose or was forced to look the other way regarding certain issues. He decried lack of Sabbath observance and praying with an uncovered head on one hand, but may have been willing to compromise on issues of marital status for Mrs. C on the other. The fact that his annual reelection was never a guarantee was a strong counter-force to Henry's sense of himself as a principled rabbi. He was careful never to push any buttons that would provoke his lay leadership enough to threaten his career permanently, especially once he was settled in San Francisco. While the American Jewish community was in transition, ideological commitment was a luxury Henry could not always afford.

One of Henry's most significant contributions was in the area of promoting the cause of Jewish education. On the surface, it would seem that he made little headway during his twenty years in the United States; education of Jewish children remains a struggle to this day. While Henry's commitment remained steady, his educational influence reached its peak in New York in the mid-1850's. This was largely a matter of fortuitous timing, as sociological forces had converged to create an environment particularly conducive to the success of Jewish schools. In every other stop along Henry's career, the results of his push for Jewish education were more mixed, again depending on the sociological factors unique to those times and places. But for the American Jewish community in general, Henry had accurately perceived the need for a school to train native rabbis and teachers. While his hopes for a broad commitment to Jewish education for all children may not have been realized fully, he proved visionary in his hope for a seminary. The founding of Wise's Hebrew Union College in 1875 likely elicited mixed feelings from Henry. On one hand, Wise was Henry's enemy on the issue of reform, and Henry surely didn't relish the notion of Wise molding the future leaders of the American Jewish community in his own ideological image. On the other hand, an American seminary was so long a dream of Henry's that he must have welcomed its advent regardless of its leanings toward "infidelity." Henry must have supported the school to some extent; his son Marcus actually enrolled at the College in 1877, though he later withdrew.[2] Also, Henry's library, a substantial private collection of Judaica and Hebraica, was donated to HUC upon his death.[3]

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[2]WSJHQ 10:1 (October, 1977), p. 2.

[3]Benjamin, p. 202, comments that "I had extensive opportunities to examine the libraries of various American rabbis and ministers. I found none, however, that was the equal of Dr. Henry's. It is not only large and select, but includes the best authors and editions of all our

When Henry arrived in America, his ability to deliver English sermons was a rare and treasured skill. Congregations were just beginning to seek actively ministers who were also preachers. Owing to the scarcity, though, many congregations were satisfied with a *chazan* as their rabbinical functionary. As the decades passed, the English sermon became increasingly central to the American Jewish experience to the point where it was one of the primary tools for judging a rabbi's capability. This remains the case today. Though sermonizing was partly an import from Christian ministerial practices, by the end of Henry's career it was a valued and expected skill for American rabbis. In at least this sense, Henry was somewhat ahead of his time, and although his accomplishments as a preacher were modest, his ability to speak may have earned or salvaged jobs for him. Regardless, preaching has been an indispensable aspect of the American rabbinate ever since.

Scholarship and intellectualism took on a new look for the American rabbi as well. Mastery of the Talmud and traditional Jewish sources was not only less necessary for the new American rabbi, but it was also increasingly insufficient. The rise of the rabbi as a secular scholar has its roots in Germany, where rabbis like Julius Eckman also earned Ph.D. degrees. In America, where much of the populace achieved relatively low levels of education, the rabbi was frequently one of the most educated members of his community. This certainly reinforced his status as a leader in his congregation. Hebrew Union College would stress the model of the rabbi who was not merely a scholar of Jewish law, but a refined and educated person who would earn the respect of

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Hebrew literature." Several copies of The Occident and of Henry's books in possession of the Klau Library, HUC-JIR, Cincinnati, are inscribed as follows: "Presented to the Library of the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio, by Marcus M. Henry, San Francisco, California, March 1881, Adar Shinee, 5641." Presumably this bequest was in accordance with Henry's wishes.

any American. This entire phenomenon was symbolized by the tendency of American rabbis to assume the title "Doctor." This sign of intellectual status--whether earned or pretentious--lasted well into the twentieth century. Henry was a bit ahead of his time in intellectual realm as well. While he did not have a Ph.D. degree, he certainly possessed a well-rounded education and a refined intellect. He exercised these talents in his frequent lectures, books, and writings, as well as his affiliation with intellectual societies throughout his career. He frequently was called "Dr. Henry" in the last ten years or so of his career, though it is not clear whether he sought this title himself or whether it was simply granted to him as it became fashionable.

The rabbi's role as the official representative of the Jewish community became entrenched in the overall image of the American rabbi during Henry's career. Upon his arrival, when rabbis were so scarce, lay leaders were often the official presences at events both Jewish and communal. However, as rabbis like Henry adapted to the Christian model of minister as life cycle officiant and pastor, they were increasingly expected to represent their synagogues or their communities. This trend intensified as more rabbis learned English and Americanized, and congregants became more proud to show their rabbis off as Jewish representatives.[4] The American Jewish community's tendency to "look upon their ministers as those who are good for any service required but otherwise should be as much as possible excluded from active representation in public affairs" as Marcus Jastrow put it, waned as its rabbis emerged to fit a new image.[5] While in Cincinnati and Syracuse Henry's activities outside the congregation were minimal, in New York and San Francisco he was a more visible public presence, called upon for an ever-

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[4]Sarna, p. 7.

[5]Sarna, p. 7, quoting "Organization of the American Jewish Historical Society...On Monday the Seventh Day of June 1892," (typescript, American Jewish Historical Society).

wider variety of public appearances. Events like Raphall's prayer in Congress in 1860 symbolized and reinforced this development in the American rabbinate.

The new American rabbi would surely be a leader in his congregation and his community. But congregations in America, as we have seen, had begun as almost entirely lay-led institutions. This may have been of necessity, since even non-ordained *chazanim* like Henry were scarce prior to the 1840's. Nonetheless, if rabbis were to become the leaders of their congregations and communities, it would only be because lay leaders consciously gave over authority to them. This could only happen if rabbis could articulate a vision of Jewish community and leadership which was in line with the needs and sensibilities of their constituencies. Traditional authoritarian structures had proven ineffective in America. Rabbis like Henry, Rice, and Leeser, who pushed for the establishment of such structures anyway, were tolerated, but never truly looked to for visionary leadership. Wise's gift was for giving people a vision of leadership in which they could comfortably invest authority. Henry missed out on this opportunity, but he did so out of principle. This decision limited his potential for influence and success, but again, he provided an important counter view to round out the context for the development of reform.

In congregational life, the increased status of rabbis had practical results as well. In this area, Henry witnessed transition but didn't benefit much from it. Salaries increased with the rabbi's rise to prominence, and with the increasing wealth of the Jewish community, though Henry's salary was modest and relatively steady throughout his career. Rabbis were given more authority within congregations too, though this was in large part thanks to leaders like Wise who fought bitterly early in his career for power in congregational life.

But Wise's vision, hard work, and struggle paid off; lay leaders began to be willing to give up some of their control. Wise met with little resistance to his initiatives once he arrived in Cincinnati. By asserting his leadership in the Cincinnati Jewish community, Wise helped to redefine that community's identity and that of rabbis in general.[6] Henry never achieved the kind of leverage in his community that Wise did. But he was certainly part of the struggle for control over issues of liturgy, life cycle, and education.

The resources of American Jewish history, remarkable as they are in many ways, leave a great challenge to its students. Our task is to reconstruct lives and to articulate their significance within a context which was so sketchy and so much in flux that it is exceedingly difficult to capture. Nonetheless, patterns emerge, particularly with regard to rabbinical leaders. Thankfully for historians, rabbis had much to say about the creation of a Jewish community in America. Henry Abraham Henry was one voice in the swirl of ideas which eventually settled into one of the great Jewish communities in history. Rabbi, educator, preacher, and writer, Henry gave up stability and familiarity in England to participate in the great experiment on the other side of the ocean. His career here, filled with scandal and struggle as it was, is a source of education and inspiration as we strive to learn from our past in order to shape the future of the American Jewish community.

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[6]On Wise's impact in Cincinnati, see Karla Goldman, "In Search of an American Judaism: Rivalry and Reform in the Growth of Two Cincinnati Synagogues," in Inventory of Promises, Jeffrey Gurock and Marc Lee Raphael, eds. (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishers, 1995), pp. 147-150.

Afterword

Henry fell ill in 1872, and lingered for seven years in a state of poor health. On September 4, 1879, he died in San Francisco, and was buried at the Hills of Eternity Cemetery in that city. Isaac Mayer Wise memorialized Henry in The Israelite of September 19, 1879:

> ...his demise is greatly regretted by very many Jews and Christians who admired the noble-looking old gentleman, who never made an enemy... All our rabbis turned out, and men and women...came to pay the last tribute of respect to the man who had devoted sixty years of his life in the school room and the pulpit. Thus they go, one by one, the teachers in Israel, and new men take their places and the old will only be remembered when the burial ground is visited. Peace to they ashes, tried and true friend! And if any faults were thine, may they have been buried with thee. Farewell!

Henry's grave remains to this day in the front row of honor at the cemetery, which has since relocated to Colma, California. His gravestone bears the following inscription:

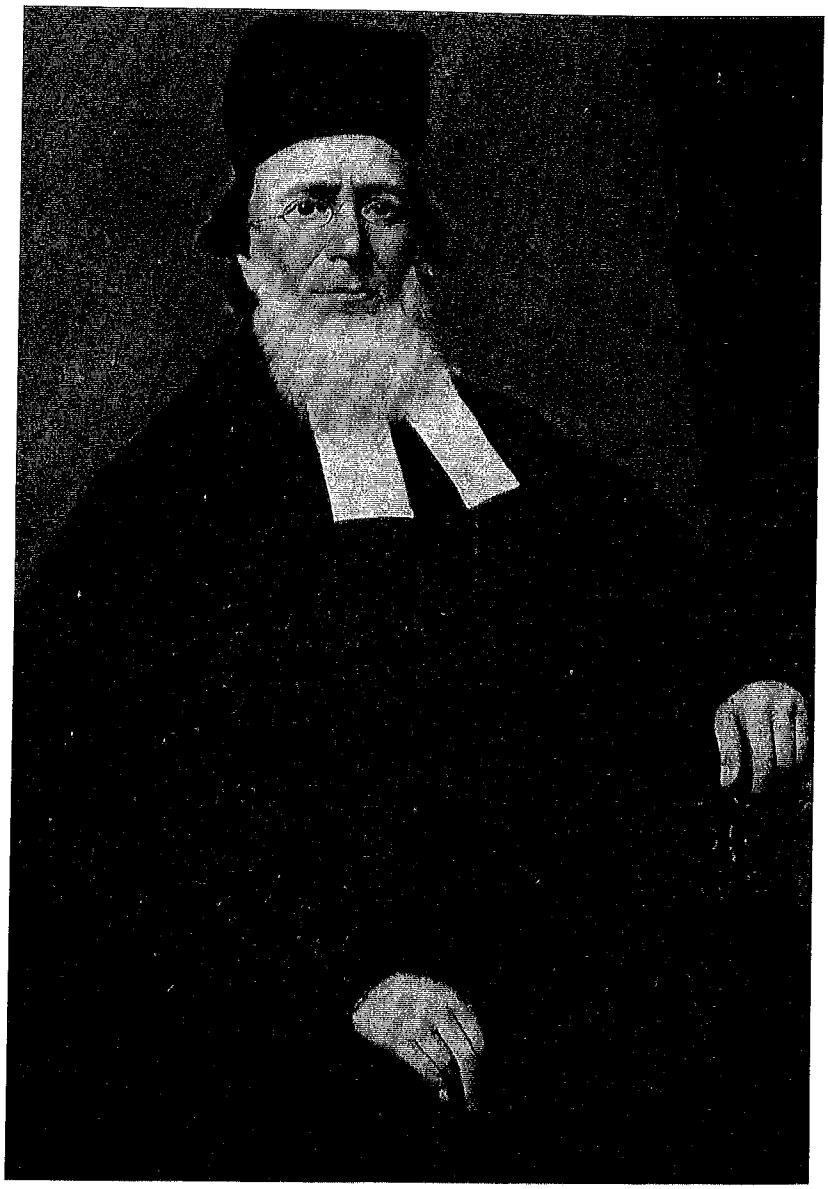
צדיק באמונתך חיית
בקהל רב דורש טוב היית
ימי חייך תמו, לשמים עלית

This little poem is actually an acrostic; the first letter of each line spell out "Tzvi," Henry's Hebrew name. Although much is lost in the translation, I would offer the following English rendering of this epitaph:

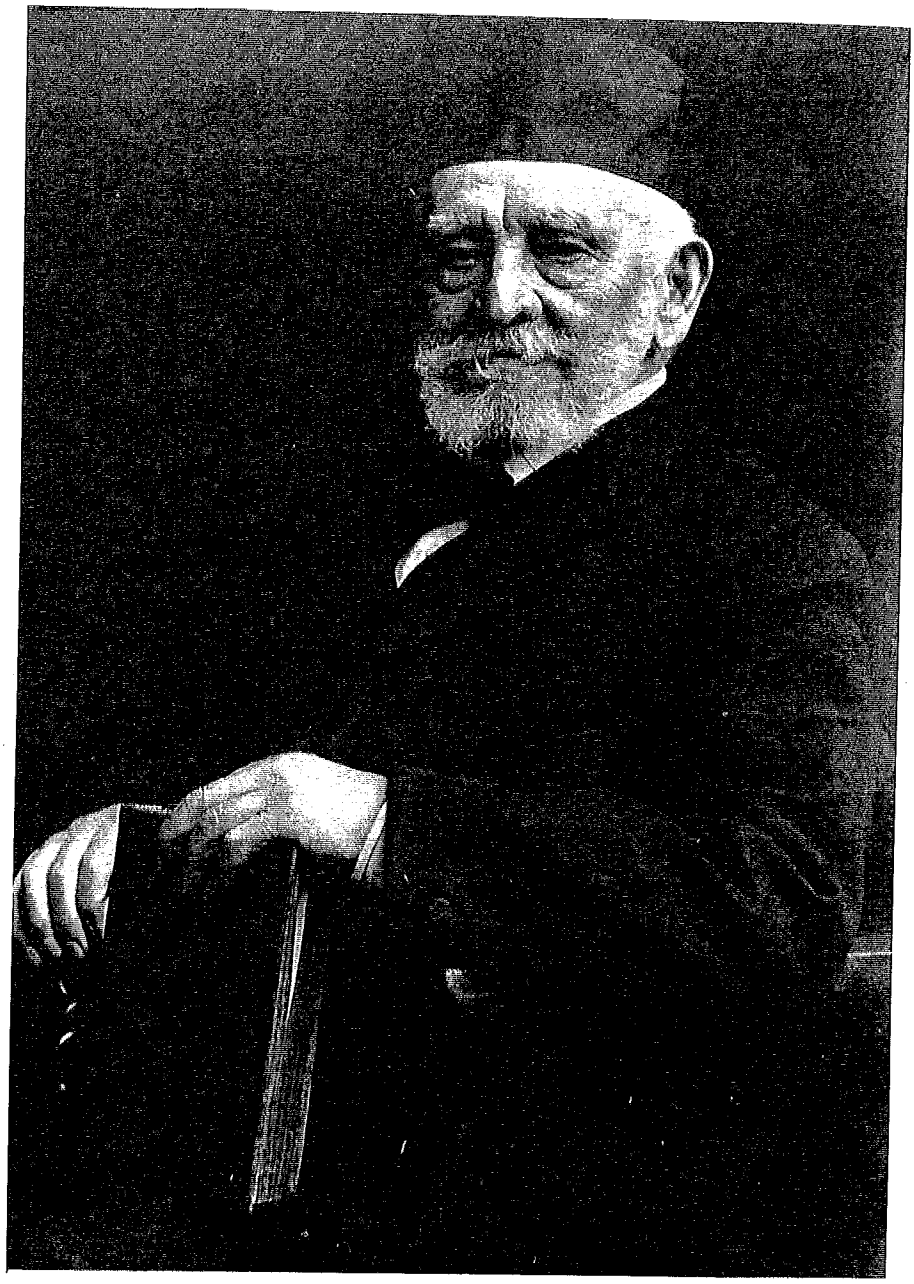
A righteous man, to truth you were a friend
A good rabbi and preacher in the congregation to the end
The days of your life have ceased, to the heavens you ascend

Henry's descendants are difficult to trace. Many branches of his family seem to have either disappeared through childlessness or disaffiliated with Jewish life. At least one line of ancestry is traceable. During Henry's years in Cincinnati, his only daughter, Hannah, married a man named Nathan Moses. Nathan was the son of Hyman Moses, who was a founder of Cincinnati's Jewish Hospital and the leading collector of funds for Jewish charitable causes, especially the relief of the poor in Palestine. Hannah and Nathan Moses named their last child Henry, presumably after Hannah's father. This son, Henry Moses (b. 1870), had a son in 1906 and named him Henry Nathan Moses. He, in turn, had a son in 1936 and gave him the name Henry Charles Moses. By this time, Rev. Henry was ancient history; this generation was no longer aware of the origin of the name Henry. But when Henry Charles Moses had a son in 1969, the Henry connection was preserved through the child's middle name: Jay Henry Moses.

I did not know of Henry A. Henry's existence when I decided to become a rabbi. It was--apparently--a coincidence that I entered the same profession as my great-great-great grandfather. I have often wondered what he would think of our family and of me and my career. Part of me imagines him turning over in his grave at the thought of a descendant of his walking with an uncovered head and profaning the Sabbath while claiming the title of rabbi. Yet somehow I know he would be proud that his love of teaching Jewish youth and his commitment to the survival of the Jewish people still live on after five generations. One of Henry's enduring dreams was the establishment of a rabbinical seminary to train young American Jews "to fill honorably the ministerial chair." I can only hope that my life and work merit that description, and that I may help the seeds Henry planted with his dreams take root, blossom, and reach heavenward.



Oil painting of Henry A. Henry on display at Congregation Sherith Israel, San Francisco, CA.



Photograph of Henry A. Henry, given to the American Jewish Archives by Moses L. Sternberger, Henry's great grandson-in-law.

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